

## The role of Sustainable Development Goals in Improving the Economic Status of Youth in Serbia

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**Abstract.** *For a long time, young people in Serbia have been facing numerous economic challenges like high unemployment, the problem of underemployment and informal work, a large NEET population (youth Not in Employment, Education, or Training), and intensive socio-economic disparities. These challenges have a negative effect on further economic progress and social prosperity and also disrupt progress toward multiple Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The focus of this paper will be directed towards the research of the socioeconomic position of young people in the context of sustainable development. Furthermore, we will analyse the most relevant SDGs that have a decisive influence on improving the position of young people in the 21st century. The main purpose of the work will be to analyze the position of young people on the labor market, their opportunities, but also the limitations they face, and the ways to overcome the mentioned problems and improve their position. It will provide a research study by mapping Serbia's youth socio-economic challenges to specific SDGs and targets. The relevant data and policy analysis will show how each SDG is relevant to improving youth economic outcomes in Serbia.*

**Keywords:** labour force, NEET population, sustainable development goals, youth unemployment.

**JEL Codes:** J24, Q01

### 1. Introduction

The importance of sustainable development and the goals that have been focused on the realization of sustainable development for a long period are and will be of exceptional significance for research in the modern world. The analyses always start from the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 key goals for sustainable development. Interest in young people and their contribution to the achievement of sustainable development goals is increasing every year, and what is important to analyze in this paper is the impact of sustainable development goals in relation to employment, education, and youth equality. And as for their economic status and position on the labor market, we are analyzing how the goals of sustainable development can contribute to improving the economic situation of young people. Therefore, in the paper, we will first begin with a brief review of the basic idea and importance of the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development, with a focus on the three goals that are the most relevant to the analysis for this paper. The three goals of sustainable development aimed at young people and relevant to the analysis of this paper refer to: (1) Sustainable Development Goal 4 - Quality Education - Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all; 2) Sustainable Development Goal 8-Decent work and economic growth - Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all; 3) Sustainable Development Goal 10 - Reduced Inequalities - Reduce income inequalities and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all (UN, 2016).

As we have stated, the greatest focus will be directed to the analysis of the three stated objectives, because within the framework of SDG 4, the contribution to the development of skills and lifelong learning,

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a very important factor for improving the competencies of young people, was analyzed. The SDG 8 is important from the aspect of better business opportunities on the labor market, and the importance of improving and focusing on youth entrepreneurship and finding jobs, which will provide young people with dignified work and satisfaction during its implementation, as well as the economic benefits that come with it. And the goal under number 10 is directly related to the extremely important issue of inclusive policies and reducing structural inequalities, which, as a result, have very negative impacts on young people and their opportunities for advancement. However, what is also important to emphasize is the fact that young people have a significant role in implementing efforts for sustainable development at all levels defined by the Agenda, but for this paper, the focus is only on these three stated goals.

Given that many of the above-mentioned questions, problems, and opportunities faced by young people are almost universal, the first part of the paper is directed towards general guidelines and data that can provide us with a broader picture of the mentioned issues, and then the focus of this paper will be directed towards the situation and position of young people in Serbia and its progress in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

## **2. Research Elaboration**

### **2.1. Importance of the SDGS of Employment, Education, and Equality for Youth**

To illustrate and explain the impact and relevance of the SDGs on improving the Serbian youth socio-economic status, the research approach combines the following research methods: problem-oriented analysis, indicator-based evaluation, and critical analysis, including a policy review. The study is using both qualitative and quantitative methods. For a better understanding of the situation, the recent labour and other relevant statistics were used for the analysis within the quantitative component of the research. Qualitative analysis is used for critical analysis and mapping the current state of youth in the labour market and its link with the Sustainable Development Goals and their targets. The research relies on both primary data obtained from the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, Eurostat, UN SDG base, etc, and secondary data from research papers, reports, and policy analysis, making sure that the time frame covers the most recent available statistical data. The goal is to provide a context-specific evaluation of the progress of Serbia toward the fulfillment of the relevant SDGs, point out existing challenges and problems, and provide a solid base for policymaking.

Since the beginning of the 21st century, many studies that have dealt with the socioeconomic position of young people, both at the local and international levels, have not shown satisfactory results in their research. All the major global changes and crises that have taken place, including the world economic crisis, the pandemic crisis, and the large number of wars in the world, have only contributed to the fact that the disadvantage of young people remains a worrying issue in many countries.

In a world where we constantly emphasize the importance of sustainable development, respect and appreciation of equality, equal rights to life and dignified work and earnings, environmental protection and sustainable business, it is important to look at the role of young people in this, because young people are part of all the above processes, but also more widely. These are just some of the things that are listed and described through the goals of sustainable development, which is why it is important to once again state the importance and role of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, especially in the context of young people. Therefore, one of the first ideas of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was to try to ensure the development of all countries, resulting in economic growth with aims related to improving health and education, reducing inequality, and tackling climate change (Del Arco et al., 2021). In the document entitled *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, 17 sustainable development goals with their 169 tasks included in the new Agenda build on and supplement the unachieved Millennium Development Goals, with a focus on three dimensions of sustainable development: economic, social, and environmental (UN, 2015). According to the report *World Youth Report: Youth and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (UN, 2018), to improve the position and development of young people, the decisions resulting from the 2030 Agenda are reviewed, to look at things that were important for young

people and how they can be helped to accelerate the goals that ensure a better position and conditions for young people.

According to Ansell et. al. (2020), in order to understand young people, it is crucial to study them in the contexts of their social lives. Because of that, we would start with three important aspects and three different goals of sustainable development directly involved in a very important question for youth (UN, 2025):

1) Sustainable Development Goal 4, which aims to "ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all".

2) Sustainable Development Goal 8, which aims to "promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all" - with some specific addresses to the global challenges of youth employment.

3) Sustainable Development Goal 10, which aims to ensure that equality and prosperity are available to everyone, with the idea that only then can we expect the entire world to prosper (UN, 2025a).

In order to achieve the set goals of sustainable development, cooperation and coordination of all interested parties are necessary, and young people are one of the most important actors. Therefore, in the further part of the work, we will present the key determinants of each of the three goals and show the results achieved so far, which are directly related to young people.

## **2.2. Sustainable Development Goal number 4 - "Quality Education"**

Education and lifelong learning are the key themes in a number of goals and major elements of SDGs, but the most relevant is recognized in the goal SDG 4 - "Quality Education", especially in the context of youth and how SDG contributes to skills development and lifelong learning of youth.

According to the last results from *The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2024* (UN, 2024), analyzing the key findings from SDG 4 in almost all regions, progress is noticeable - reduction of differences between boys and girls in terms of schooling and education at all levels. In some places, there is even a higher percentage in favor of girls, which was not the case until now. When it comes to the percentage of young people who have completed primary and secondary school, for the period 2015-2023, we present the following data (UN, 2024): the primary school completion rate increased from 85% to 88%, the lower secondary education completion rate from 74% to 78%, and the higher secondary education from 53% to 59%. However, what is also very important to point out refers to the general impression regarding educational systems everywhere in the world, that its vulnerability, because in many countries there is a percentage decline in mathematical skills, as well as reading skills. And what is certainly considered a priority in the coming period is related to greater financial investments in education, continuous training of teachers with regard to a greater degree of inclusivity, the use of new technologies, and modern digital tools.

Some of the mentioned things are directly related to the problems that young people have in the labor market, because the level of their education and knowledge does not fit into the new tendencies and needs of the labor market. That is why we have such a need to improve knowledge and acquire new skills, not only through formal, but also through informal training and seminars (popularly called "soft skills"). That is why one of the goals of SDG 4 is to promote lifelong learning opportunities for all, and in this case, especially for youth, to prepare them better for the future and to give them the opportunity for a better position in the competitive labor market.

## **2.3. Sustainable Development Goal number 8 - "Decent work and economic growth"**

Analyzing the importance of Sustainable Development Goal 4, which emphasizes the importance of education for young people and improving their competences on the labor market, the goal that directly relies on these key values is Goal 8 (SDG 8: decent work and economic growth). In order to encourage the economic growth and development of a country, and in the World Bank Group report from 2019, it is indicated that one of the key solutions lies in solving the problem of gender inequality in the workplace (S. Amulya Jeevanasai et al., 2023). And other international institutions (International Labor Organization, 2017 and UNDP, 2021), which deal with issues related to the right to dignified work and economic growth,

consider that inequality between the sexes, differences in the opportunities available to them, differences in earnings and obstacles that exist on the way, are still present everywhere in the world, especially in developing countries. This is why many countries are struggling and working to create the necessary conditions for all people to have decent jobs, especially for young people, who already have a lot of difficulties in the labor market.

According to the results of the latest report, *The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2024* (UN, 2024), in 2023, a global unemployment rate of 5% was recorded (which is considered a historical minimum). In the period from 2010 to 2014, global real GDP per capita grew by an average of 2.1%, while in the period from 2015 to 2022. was at 1.6%. The average global level of national respect for labor rights, in the period 2015 - 2022, fell by 7%.

#### **2.4. Sustainable Development Goal number 10 - “Reduced Inequalities”**

The main purpose of SDG 10 is to reduce inequality within and among countries regardless of gender, race, religious beliefs, or economic status. Because when every individual is self-sufficient, the entire world prospers (UN, 2024, 2015). Achieving these objectives can help to lessen inequality within and between nations, which will benefit women, girls, and the general populace. Numerous sources and academic studies back up these claims (Kapur, 2019).

Based on the report for 2023, the data confirm that the situation is still quite unfavorable in terms of all relevant factors that are analyzed within this goal. In 2023, the largest number of refugees in the world was recorded, as well as the death rate that befell them on migration routes. As before, developing countries still remain in an unenviable position when it comes to being fairly represented in international economic decision-making. Workers' earnings have not kept pace with productivity, and the decline is also present in the share of labor in GDP (UN, 2024). All this directly affects young people in all countries around the world - on their position, protection, equality in work, and what comes from it. That is why this goal of sustainable development is directly related to the analysis of the socioeconomic status of young people.

### **3. Results and Discussions**

#### **3.1. Economic Challenges Faced by Youth in Serbia**

Since the beginning of the 21st century, Serbia has been going through a significant economic transition reforms and rebuilding. Despite the obvious improvements in economic activity and macroeconomic indicators, the population and especially youth, are still facing significant economic difficulties. According to data from the latest population census (Popis, 2022), young people aged from 15-29 make up 15,8% of the total population in Serbia. This makes a 4% decrease from the previous census in 2011, indicating that it is necessary to improve their position, economic status, and future perspective. Another indicator of the unfavorable position for young individuals is a continuously high rate of youth migration and is often discussed as a reason behind the improvement of youth activity statistical data. All these challenges are very important in the context of further progress towards the previously mentioned SDGs. Since Serbia agreed to participate in the Agenda 2030, it is essential to focus on creating favorable living and working conditions for youth to successfully achieve the SDGs. Therefore, in this part of the paper, we will discuss various challenges in the youth labour market in Serbia and map them with SDG obligations to better understand the current state and position.

As previously mentioned, SDG 8 tends to “promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all” (UN, 2024). Serbia’s youth situation coincides with different targets developed within this goal. From the aspect of youth socio-economic situation, the most relevant is target 8.5, aiming to improve employment prospects for everyone, including youth, and 8.6, pursuing a substantial decrease in the proportion of youth not in employment, education, or training (NEET). Regarding these two goals, Serbia’s performance is showing positive trends, but there is still a significant need and potential for improvement.

For a long time, youth unemployment, followed by the migration of young people, has been one of the main problems of the Republic of Serbia. Various government attempts were made to improve their socio-economic situation, and certain results have been achieved.

*Table 1: Youth (15-24) Activity Key Indicators, 2016-2025 (%)*

Year	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Rates %									
<b>Active</b>	30.3	30.6	30	29.6	28.0	33.3	32.0	31.9	32.4
<b>Employed</b>	19.7	20.9	21.1	21.5	20.2	24.5	24.2	23.9	24.9
<b>Unemployed</b>	34.9	31.9	29.7	27.5	27.7	26.4	24.3	25.0	23.0
<b>NEET</b>	17.7	17.4	16.5	15.3	15.9	16.4	13.0	12.4	12.9

(Source: SORS, 2018, 2020, 2022, 2024, 2025)

The analysis of the statistical data in Table 1 indicates that there is a relatively low level of the active young population in Serbia. Despite the slight increase of 0.5% in 2024, it is still considered relatively low. Then, the level of youth unemployment has shown a trend of decrease during the observed period, with a slight increase in 2023 due to the slower recovery from COVID-19 and ongoing macroeconomic constraints. The decreasing trend continued in 2024 with 2% decline in the youth unemployment level. Despite the encouraging results, the level of youth unemployment remains significantly higher than the level of unemployment, which stood at 8,9% in 2024 (SORS, 2025). This indicates that young people are still facing difficulties in entering and participating in the labour market. Lastly, to fully understand the socio-economic situation of youth in Serbia, it is essential to analyze the NEET rate. Besides focusing on those who are formally employed or searching for a job, this indicator is addressing young people disengaged from work but also from any form of education or training. The share has decreased during the observed period, and at the current level of 12.9% and therefore Serbia has made progress toward Target 8.6 aimed at significantly reducing the NEET level. However, the percentage remains high and indicates lost economic productivity and increased risk of social exclusion and poverty.

SDG 8.5 is clear about the dedication to provide decent work, and therefore, it is important to discuss the quality and type of work, and not only focus on job availability. Another challenge for young people in Serbia is the high level of informal work. According to research conducted by the National Youth Council of Serbia (2024) 37% of participants have permanent employment contracts, and 17% are working without a contract - "off the books" or in the informal economy. Informal work is devastating for the economy and society by undermining labour standards and wages. Young individuals are feeling lower job satisfaction, and often they are discouraged, insecure, lacking health and social security, and a steady income.

Another challenge for employed youth in Serbia is the underemployment situation in which they are not using their knowledge and skills or are not able to get enough working time as they would like. When asked whether they are employed in a position related to their field of study, 61% of young participants responded that they are not, while 18% are employed in a related position. Only 21% of youth are working in a job for which they acquired appropriate education. This continues to highlight the mismatch between the needs of the labor market and the education system, as well as the ineffective career guidance processes for young people, which partially overlap with target 8.4, aiming for quality education and lifelong learning.

To address these challenges, in July 2021, Serbia supported the Western Balkans Declaration on sustainable youth labor market integration and accepted an EU initiative to invest in human capital called the Youth Guarantee. As stated in the Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan 2023-2026 (Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia, 2023), the program addresses youth unemployment through cross-sector and social partner collaboration. It ensures that young people under 30 receive an offer for employment, further education, or training within four months of becoming unemployed or completing formal education. The implementation plan was adopted at the end of 2023 and launched in 2024 across 28 municipalities and three



employment service areas. Aligning with Target 8.b, which encourages the development and implementation of a global youth employment strategy, Youth Guarantee aims to improve youth labour market inclusion. Another crucial measure of the government of the Republic of Serbia is the National Youth Strategy 2023-2030 which focuses on better organization of youth work and giving equal opportunities to young individuals to develop their potential and enhance their position in the workforce. These are evidence of strategic actions to tackle youth socio-economic status and unemployment in line with SDG 8.

One of the main preconditions for a prosperous professional career is the level and quality of education. It is essential for the employment prospects and economic outcomes of young individuals since it builds their professional capacities and equips them with the skills and knowledge needed for a dynamic labour market. But, if young people cannot see good opportunities to work and gain adequate wage, if they don't have permanent contracts and they feel insecurity at their workplace, there is a high chance that they will become discouraged from pursuing education. In this situation, they don't see a clear link between educational achievement and satisfactory employment.

Based on the Labour force survey (SORS, 2025) the indicator "Early school leaving," which represents the percentage of young people aged 18 to 24 who, at best, have completed primary education and have not continued further education (i.e., have not participated in any education or training in the past four weeks), stood at 6.2% in 2024. Compared to 2023, it increased by 0.4 percentage points. Since a certain percentage of Serbian youth still leave school early, we can conclude that target 4.1, aiming for universal completion in secondary education, is not being met. But even those who have finished secondary education often face challenges entering the labour market and finding suitable and stable employment, often due to a lack of adequate skills required by employers, as stated in several research studies. This leads us to Target 4.4, which addresses the need for increasing youths' skills, especially technical and vocational, and raising their employability. Based on the National Statistic Office of the Republic of Serbia research about the usage of Information and Communication Technologies (SORS, 2023a) although 95.8% of young people old stated that they use the computer daily less than 50% of them are familiar with some of the basic and advanced e-skills required by the market and only 7.3% can use advanced skills. Considering that technology and digitalization are the leading sectors in the national economy, this lack of professional IT skills is concerning and requires more attention.

Therefore, the important task is the modernization of the curriculum, especially STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) and IT education due to the quick progression in this area and strengthening links between educational institutions and employers. Furthermore, formal education should be supported with practice, internship, and experience rather than just theory and examples. Also, lifelong learning (part of SDG 4) is important for youth: programs for re-skilling or up-skilling unemployed youth can help reduce the NEET population. The government should fully or partially finance effective educational programs to raise the labour capital and soft skills among young people and prepare them for decent work. Improving access to second-chance education and training for early school leavers would contribute to all three goals SDG 4, 8 and 10. Also, promoting different career opportunities can attract youth interest, which is particularly important for discouraged young workers.

In Serbia, young people are exposed to different types of inequalities mainly: socio-economic, regional, income and wage and one of the extremes in this area are marginalized groups. Socio-economic inequalities among Serbian youth, resulting in different levels of education, are another important challenge. Not every young individual in Serbia has an equal opportunity to be educated or achieve good academic results. Young individuals from rural areas, lower-income households, with disabilities, or minority communities (such as Roma) or with disabilities, frequently have lower educational results and, because of that, unpromising employment chances (European Commission 2024). Roma youth suffer from very high dropout rates and often do not complete secondary education, especially Roma girls, resulting in low chances in the formal job market and leading to poverty risk. In order to make progress in SDG Target 4.5 and eliminate disparities, Serbia has accepted inclusive education policies, but the gap is still present. Serbia's effort on education reform, vocational training, and youth skill development aligns with SDG 4 targets and complements its

pursuit of SDG 8. Therefore, the effort is still needed to make sure that everyone gains a quality primary and secondary education, and if interested in pursuing further vocational/tertiary education is an option as well.


























Furthermore, we have the ongoing regional inequalities present in Serbia for decades that are affecting the future of young people and their working prospects. Based on the data from the Labour market survey (SORS 2025), the unemployment level of youth between 16 and 24 years is 21.3% in the Belgrade region, 20.0 in the Vojvodina region, 22.2% in Šumadija and Western Serbia, and 29.6% in the South and Eastern Serbia region. This illustrates different situations and opportunities for young individuals and their economic inclusion depending on the region, often making them migrate towards bigger cities or abroad. This is creating other problems like abandonment of villages and land, causing the local population to decline and aging and overcrowding, and infrastructure and environmental pressure in urban areas.

### 3.2. Impact of Sustainable Development Goals of Youth in Serbia


According to the latest report presented in Serbia on progress in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals for 2023, compiled by the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia (2024), we highlight some of the conclusions that directly relate to the SDG goals, which we have analyzed in this paper.


When it comes to the degree of progress of the set goals, the report provides the following tabular overview for Serbia for the year 2023 (Table 2), from which we can draw the following conclusions. The Report states that when it comes to "Achieved goals according to the standards defined at the global level", among the three goals that we have singled out for analysis, this value stands out only for goal number 8 and that for standard 8.b.1. which refers to the existence of a developed and operationalized strategy for youth employment. In the "Area of progress in achieving the goals of sustainable development", results were recorded for all three goals, and we will single out only those that directly concern young people. So, with SDG 4, we highlight standard 4.3.1. which refers to the increased participation of young people and adults in formal and informal education and training. In SDG 8, we highlight standards 8.5.2 and 8.6.1, which refer to the reduced unemployment rate and the reduced share of young people who are not covered by education, employment, or training. With SDG 10, we single out standard 10.4.1, which refers to the growth of the share of labor income in GDP, which consists of wages and transfers for social protection.

*Table 2: Overview table of progress towards sustainable development goals for SDG 4, 8, and 10*

SDG	Indicators								
4	4.1.1	4.1.2	4.2.1	4.2.2	4.3.1	4.5.1	4.6.1		
									
8	8.1.1	8.3.1	8.4.2	8.5.1	8.5.2	8.6.1	8.7.1	8.10.1	8.b.1
									
10	10.1.1	10.2.1	10.3.1	10.4.1	10.5.1	10.7.2	10.7.3	10.a.1	10.b.1
									

*Legend:*

 - Achieved goals according to the standards defined at the global level.

 - Area of progress in achieving the goals of sustainable development.

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- ▼ -Areas of departure from the goals of sustainable development.
  - ▲ - Areas of inconsistent trends.

(Source: SORS, 2024)

Summarizing the results and the impact of sustainable development goals on young people in Serbia, based on the Report of the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia (2024), we can single out the following. When it comes to goal number 4, there has been moderate progress towards it within the sub-goal that directly deals with lifelong learning among young people, with an emphasis on a noticeably higher percentage of participants in various forms of both formal and informal education, in the observed period of 2021-2022. When it comes to goal number 8, it is of great importance to highlight the progress in terms of the reduced rate of youth unemployment (both male and female population), achieved progress in terms of dignified work, and progress in the field of incentives in the education and employment process. And as far as target number 10 is concerned, there is a moderate deviation from the target recorded in terms of financial investments for development (SORS, 2024).

Many of the mentioned things were achieved with the support of the Government of Serbia, which with its strategies and program reforms contributed to the support of young people in order to achieve the goals of sustainable development and the goals of improving the position of young people on the labor market and their better and more secure economic position. First of all, by adopting the National Strategy for Sustainable Development, Serbia expressed its serious intention to make sustainable development a part of its development commitment and direction. And some of the important documents for young people that followed those changes are: Strategy for youth in the Republic of Serbia for the period from 2023 to 2030, Strategy for the development of education and upbringing in the Republic of Serbia until 2030 with an Action Plan, Employment strategy in the Republic of Serbia for the period from 2021 to 2026, Program of economic reforms for the period from 2023 to 2025, Strategy for scientific and technological development of the Republic of Serbia 2021–2025., Strategy of smart specialization in the Republic of Serbia for the period from 2020 to 2027 (4S) and others. This is only a small part of the documents that contributed to Serbia working on the adequate implementation of the goals defined in Agenda 2030, especially in terms of achieving the goals and sub-goals of sustainable development aimed at young people. In the following period, the focus should be directed towards improving the implementation of the adopted documents, because very often in practice, precisely the absence of the practical part and its implementation, leads to worse results and the lack of real improvement of the position of young people. Which is why sometimes the results indicate progress and successful changes, but in reality, young people still do not feel these changes, nor can they fully apply and realize them in practice.

What is also important to note is the attitude of young people towards changes and how and to what extent they can influence them. According to Mojsilović (2018) comparative analysis of youth policy in Serbia with youth policies in EU countries (Netherlands, Poland and Croatia) showed that Serbia still has a lot of work to do in terms of improving the quality of youth policies, strengthening their implementation, and monitoring. Also, this refers to the role of young people in the way of reaching those changes. Namely, as much as young people are talked about as an active and very important participant in achieving the goals of sustainable development, Orsini (2022) believes that the marginalization of young people as actors in global politics is still present, because most research still focuses on young people as passive victims or recipients of international politics, and not as decisive actors in decision-making.

#### 4. Conclusions

The socio-economic status of Serbian youth is a complex issue and is closely interrelated with the country's Sustainable Development Goals. One of the most severe problems is labor market volatility, characterized by high youth unemployment, with the continuous presence of informal employment and underemployment. Another indicator is a significant percentage of NEET population combined with gender,



regional, and socio-economic inequalities. Present educational challenges and skill mismatches between the supply and demand of young labor force are calling for additional effort and action knowing that only the improvement of education and training can push economic progress and social stability in the long term. Well-strategized support for rural youth, minority youth, and other disadvantaged groups is of vital importance so that no one is neglected.

Despite the significant progress from the beginning of the 21st century, Serbia still has a long way to go to provide the necessary conditions for young individuals to learn and study, work, and continuously develop their professional skills to lead the country to prosperity.

Therefore, Serbia has recognized the 2030 Agenda and SDGs as a certain form of guidelines when formulating and designing its policy framework. The majority of relevant policies explicitly address youth employment and inclusion, aligning national targets with the SDGs. By mapping these challenges to specific SDGs and targets, this analysis makes clear that certain progress has been made, but we are still in need of comprehensive, analytically supported, and more inclusive solutions. Since Serbian youth is the carrier of our future with great potential to contribute to the overall national prosperity, it is essential to fully support and encourage their productive potential. Together we can create communities in which young people live and will choose to stay.

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