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Regional Expert Advisory Working Group (REAWG) on the Role of Rural Youth in the WBs



NATIONAL REPORT NORTH MACEDONIA

Association of Agricultural Economists of North Macedonia

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7 June 2023, Skopje



Bayerisches Staatsministerium für
Ernährung, Landwirtschaft und Forsten



Macro-level trends

25 713 km² – 2,097,319 inhabitants (resident population 1,836,713)

50.4 percent male / 49.6 percent female

	Units	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Total area	km ²	25,713	25,713	25,713	25,713	25,713	25,713	25,713	25,713	25,713	25,713
Population (000)	000	2,061	2,065	2,069	2,071	2,072	2,075	2,076	2,076	2068.8	1836.7
Population density	inhabitants/k m ²	80	80	80	81	81	81	81	81	80	71
GDP (at current prices)	mill. EUR	7,585	8,150	8,562	9,072	9,656	10,038	10,698	11,340	10636.1	11735.2
Value added (at current prices)	mill. EUR	6,561	7,092	7,435	7,927	8,370	8,700	9,286	9,899	9319.5	9972.5
Economic growth (real change in GDP)	%	-0.5	2.9	3.6	3.9	2.8	1.1	2.7	3.6	-6.1	4.0
GDP per capita	EUR	3,680	3,948	4,141	4,382	4,659	4,839	5,153	5462	10079.2	:
GDP per capita in PPS	EUR	8,800	9,200	9,600	10,000	10,500	10,700	11,300	11,900	11200.0	13400.0
GDP per capita in PPS (EU-27_2020 =100)	%	34	35	36	36	37	37	37.0	38.0	37.0	42.0
Inflation	%	3.3	2.8	-0.3	-0.3	-0.2	1.4	1.5	0.8	1.2	3.2
Total employment	000	650.6	678.8	690.2	706.0	723.6	740.6	759.1	797.7	794.9	795.1
Male	000	393.1	407.5	419.6	423.9	439.7	450.3	458.5	477.4	471.6	472.9
Female	000	257.5	271.3	270.6	282.1	283.8	290.4	300.5	320.2	323.3	322.1
Unemployment rate	%	31.0	29.0	28.0	26.1	23.7	22.4	20.7	17.3	16.4	15.7
Migration (rural/urban)	000	:	:	1.3	1.4	1.6	1.8	1.7	1.7	1.4	1.0
Emigration (total population)	000	1.4	1.0	0.8	1.0	0.6	0.4	0.4	0.8	1.1	1.4
People at risk of poverty rate	%	26.2	24.2	22.1	21.5	21.9	22.2	21.9	21.6	21.8	:
Gini Coefficient	%	38.8	37.0	35.2	33.7	33.6	32.5	31.9	30.7	31.4	:

Macro-level trends



2012-2021	
Unemployment rate (Urban)	average in %
Male	23.6
Female	22.9
Unemployment rate (Rural)	
Male	22.9
Female	23.1

Rural areas in North Macedonia

- **88.7 percent** of the territory,
 - **47.5 percent** of the total population is situated.
- The agricultural sector is still one of the most important sectors for the country's economy, accounting for roughly **10 percent of total Gross Value Added over the last decade** (decreasing trend of both agriculture's share of total GDP, as well as a decrease in agricultural employment).
- The farmers in the country are **small-scale farmers** and **60.8% of the farmers use agricultural area up to 1 ha**. The average agricultural area used by the farmers is **1.8 ha of with 2.1 LSU** (livestock units) per agricultural holding.
 - **This puts farmers and people living in the rural areas for which agriculture is the primary or only income, in a relatively unfavourable position** (i.e., in terms of inability for efficient use of the production factors - low factor productivity (including labour), the lowest salaries and pensions in the country, lack of social capital and lack of trust, reflected in the small interest for organized activities of small-scale farmers through cooperatives).

Overview of the institutional setting and legal framework for supporting youth

YOUTH GUARANTEE

Introduced in 2017

- **primary aim to address the employment challenges faced by young people (aged 15-29) as well as to reduce the societal costs of youth unemployment and underemployment.**
- According to the Ministry of Labour the “youth guarantee” was intended to provide young people (15-29) – NEETs with employment offers for further education and training, or a traineeship within four months registered in the Employment Agency as unemployed persons-active jobseekers.
- It follows the model from the Recommendation of the Council of the European Union (EU)
- **Already implemented throughout the country**, including all NEETs in the age category 15 to 29 years, who legally reside in the country.
- Continues with **measures for the activation of young people who are registered as unemployed for the first time** - active job seekers, such as re-engagement within a period of 4 months, individual counselling; providing job search assistance services; motivational training, youth allowance, and self-employment programs, etc (Dimeska, 2022).

Overview of the institutional setting and legal framework for supporting rural youth



Other programs supporting rural youth

Program for financial support of rural development

- MAFWE - through the program for financial support of rural development offers measures to support young farmers, through measure 112 (aid for young farmers to start an agricultural activity, where a grant of EUR 10 000 is awarded, as well as measure 113 that supports agricultural production, with a grant of EUR 20 000)

IPARD

- **Attracting young farmers to start an agricultural activity will be stimulated through a package of benefits offered through several policies**

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FGD - Composition of focus groups

Kriva Palanka



34 years old (engaged in agriculture)

36 years old (not engaged in agriculture)



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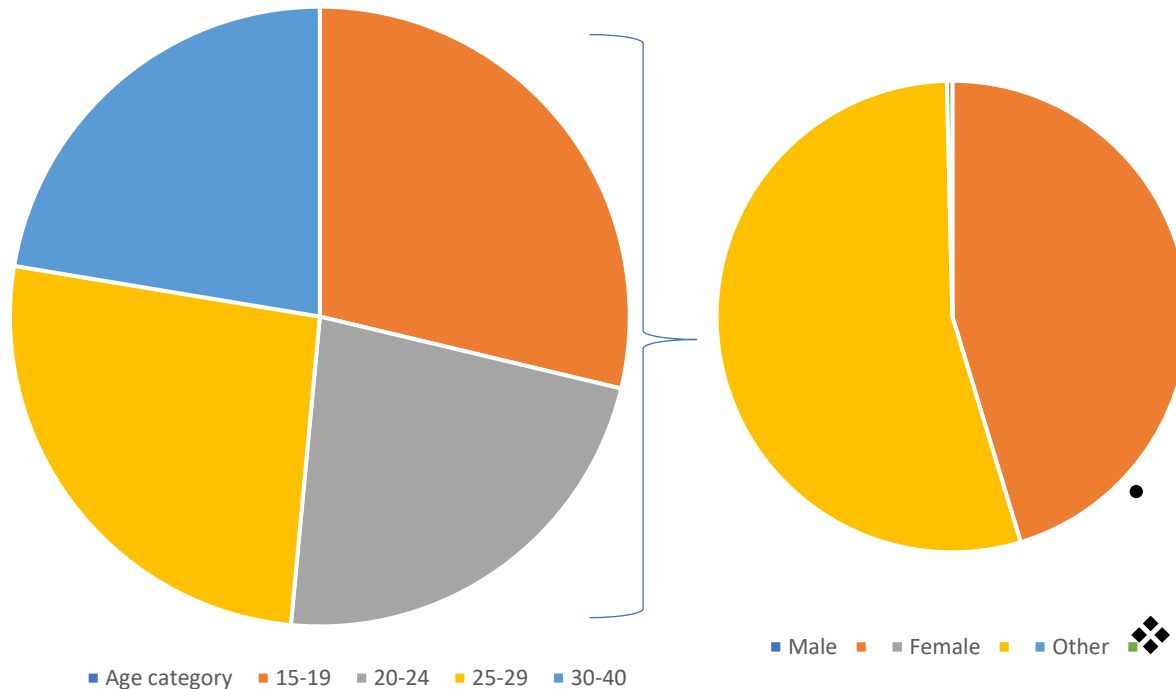


INTERVIEWS - Composition of respondents

Interviewees	Position of the interviewee in the institution and role in youth issues	Name of the institution and short description
Goce Georgievski	Head of Department for Rural Development	Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy (MAFWE) in Skopje
Natasha Dimeska	Chief of Ministry Cabinet	Ministry of Labour and Social Policy
Angel Sekulovski	Project Coordinator for EU funds & other donor institutions at Municipality of Debrca	Debrca municipality
Dragi Dimitrievski	University Professor	Faculty of Agricultural sciences and food –Skopje/UKIM Institute of agricultural economics (Department of agricultural policies)
Emelj Tuna and Ivana Janeska Stamenkovska	University Professors	Faculty of Agricultural sciences and food -Skopje/UKIM; Members of the COST Action CA18213: Rural NEET Youth Network: Modeling the risks underlying rural NEETs social exclusion
Biljana Petrovska Mitrevska	National Federation of Farmers (NFF)	NGO working on rural women and youth projects issues
Kristijan Balevski	Age group of under 30 years old	First organic cooperative Member of the Chamber of Organic Producers (COP) - one of the owner of BALESKI-ORGANIC

SURVEY - Composition of survey

(Total 268)



- The **gender distribution of the sample is almost even**, with a slight prevalence of women (55 percent of the sample are women, and 45 percent are men).
 - The male prevalence is evident in the latest age category of the youth sample (30-40 years old).
 - Most of the youth in the sample are **single**, except for those aged between 30 and 40 years old, and there is **no big gender difference regarding the marital status of youth**.
- Most of the youth in the sample **do not have children**, except those aged between 30 and 40 years old.
- ❖ **A typical situation in rural households is to have two or even three generations of people living together.**

Education

Indicators		2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Labour active population by level of education						
Urban	Without primary education	44 661	46 037	48 614	51 009	52 687
	Primary education	195 264	190 839	195 094	209 774	208 181
	High school education	474 839	460 817	481 833	472 832	477 817
	Higher education	221 540	208 407	219 172	209 889	204 349
Rural	Without primary education	61 465	58 031	57 665	55 117	51 381
	Primary education	286 306	286 487	271 359	271 796	269 146
	High school education	324 983	353 194	333 202	326 990	336 194
	Higher education	70 878	78 890	77 882	82 530	82 948

Early school leavers (data for 2018 – 2020) - Age Class (18-24) – around 6% for both genders

Education

FGD:

- Youth considers that the **quality of education is good** (especially younger groups).
 - the conditions in primary education are very poor
 - **higher education is considered, as a key factor affecting the out-migration of rural youth** - not willing to come back home
- **Young people cannot enter jobs easily after they finish high school**
- **Lack vocational education**
- Young people are **not aware of which skills are missing** for them to better fit into the labor market
- **Decreasing reputation of agricultural higher education, in general.**
 - More practical work is required during the studies.

Interviews:

- Education and training of critical importance for rural youth - **fewer opportunities in the rural areas**
 - **the lack of access to social and educational services and poor infrastructure.**
- Educational and work mobility of young people necessary – temporal migration, but at the same time to reduce the risk of it turning into a permanent one. **Informal education** for using different types of funds as well as applying for Erasmus funds
- **public policies should contribute to improving the quality of life in rural areas** (ensuring quality education)



Education - Survey



- The majority of youth between the age of **15 and 24 years old are still in education**
 - Only **small percent** (12-14 percent) of the youth **from the older age categories still attend some kind of formal education** - There is not a big gender difference regarding this issue.
- Rural youth within the age category of **15-19 stay in rural areas**
 - These are mainly high school students and since there is available education in their neighborhood, they take the school there.
- As for **higher education, they have to move to the places where it is available**
 - There are not any gender differences regarding this issue.
- There is a right-skewed distribution on the opinion whether there is a high-quality education for rural youth
 - meaning that rural **youth is generally satisfied with the level of quality of the education**, and this opinion does not differ between the females and males.



Employment, economic opportunities and mobility



- The majority of the labour-active population in the country is concentrated in the cities,
 - high rate of migration from rural to urban areas in the country

Employed population by level of education

		2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Urban	Without primary education	3,787	4,709	6,665	5,360	4 303
	Primary education	38 394	38 186	40 339	35 186	31 356
	High school education	232 940	228 451	251 742	249 178	251 784
	Higher education	144 439	139 312	151 695	169 138	170 325
Rural	Without primary education	12 075	11 762	12 671	10 950	7 394
	Primary education	82 165	86 243	81 805	79 784	74 320
	High school education	178 010	197 591	197 922	188 432	196 186
	Higher education	48 839	52 801	54 812	56 882	59 420

Employment

FGD:

- **Local businesses** offer employment opportunities to young people
- not a large span of professions that are required in the local labor market
- **Agriculture is not a very attractive business** since it is not profitable and there is no stable purchase nor good profit margins due to low purchase prices
- **Job-related migration**
- **not feeling discriminated at the labor market based on their gender** - mostly based on the **social status of the family and the family's political engagement.**
- **property is usually inherited by the male heir**- an exception is made if the heirs are only female, in which case, the property is transferred equally to each female heir.

Interviews:

- **Lack of skills and the opportunity for training** are major reasons for increasing unemployment.
- **“youth guarantee”** important - with the primary aim to address the employment challenges faced by young people (aged 15-29) as well as to reduce the societal costs of youth unemployment and underemployment.
- **Different opportunities for young people in rural areas exist**, for the development of the economy and the creation of new jobs.
 - But at the same time, there are **no basic conditions and basic infrastructure for the development of this opportunity** at the moment.



Employment, economic opportunities and mobility

- Only 14 percent of the youth that belongs to the high school category have paid jobs (working for money)
 - As the age limit of the sample increases, so does the percentage of their employment.
- The majority of the youth from 30 to 40 years old have a paid job
 - The **share of men working for money is slightly higher than women.**
- A very **small proportion of youth has defined themselves as commercial farmers and even smaller as farmworkers i.e. employed in agriculture for salary.**
 - Young farmers within the 25-29 age category are the most common in this category, although the share is still very low (only 12 percent are considering themselves commercial farmers).
- The percentage of youth employed for a wage is generally very low within the age categories where youth is still in some kind of education (15-24 years old)
- More than half of the sample belongs to young people that are of working age (25-40 years old) are employed.

Employment, economic opportunities and mobility

- There is a slight difference between men and women searching for a job i.e. 34 percent of men, and 23 percent of women are looking for a job.
- Being an entrepreneur, but in non-agricultural business is the most preferred job among rural youth
 - especially for those between the age of 15-19 and 30-40 years old.
 - The second choice is to be employed in a **large private enterprise**, while the third choice is to work in a **state-owned enterprise**.
- **Farming is not a preferred job among rural youth!**
- Job preferences are also different among male and female respondents
 - Men tend to be entrepreneurs, while
 - women feel more confident working for a large enterprise, whether it is private or state-owned.
- There is a disagreement within the sample that there are jobs out there available for rural youth - This attitude is equally shared by both men and women.
- **Rural youth often do not find jobs that match their skills!**
- **Most of the respondents agree that rural youth migrate to find better jobs**
 - A large proportion of rural youth (68 to 82 percent) would move abroad for a job.



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Migration – Internal

	2017		2018		2019		2020		2021	
	women	men	women	men	women	men	women	men	women	men
Internal migration rate of the population aged 0-14	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.10	-	-	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Internal migration rate of the population aged 15-29	13.20	1.90	12.10	1.70	12.70	1.60	5.90	1.10	15.10	2.30
Internal migration rate of the population aged 30-64	4.00	2.30	3.70	2.10	2.90	1.60	3.20	1.80	4.50	2.70
Internal migration rate of the population aged 65 and more	1.20	1.30	1.00	1.30	1.00	1.30	1.00	1.20	1.20	1.60
Average Internal migration rate	4.60	1.38	4.20	1.30	5.53	1.50	2.53	1.03	5.20	1.65



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External migration

Age		Total	Citizens of NMK		Foreigners
2019					
Total	Жени	343	293	50	
	Мажи	455	319	136	
0-14	Жени	21	18	3	
	Мажи	30	24	6	
15-29	Жени	130	106	24	
	Мажи	131	86	45	
30-64	Жени	177	155	22	
	Мажи	267	186	81	
65+	Жени	15	14	1	
	Мажи	27	23	4	
2020					
Total	Жени	474	446	28	
	Мажи	608	491	117	
0-14	Жени	52	48	4	
	Мажи	59	57	2	
15-29	Жени	176	162	14	
	Мажи	184	150	34	
30-64	Жени	213	203	10	
	Мажи	337	259	78	
65+	Жени	33	33	0	
	Мажи	28	25	3	
2021					
Total	Жени	647	605	42	
	Мажи	765	625	140	
0-14	Жени	65	61	4	
	Мажи	66	60	6	
15-29	Жени	195	176	19	
	Мажи	251	218	33	
30-64	Жени	351	334	17	
	Мажи	421	321	100	
65+	Жени	36	34	2	
	Мажи	27	26	1	

Migration – FGD/Interviews

- The current situation is extremely unfavorable with a tendency to **lose the vitality of rural areas, as a result of large migrations**
 - especially the abandonment of these areas by young people and their relocation to urban areas and beyond the borders of the state – a **key challenge for public policies and for institutions that have any contact with rural environments.**
- **Everyday migration** of young people from the village to urban centres and even abroad is a serious problem for the rural areas and the country in general.
- Therefore, the **needs of the youth should be addressed through joined activities of the rural youth, the NGOs, and the municipality, and young people should be supported to get closer to the sources of ideas and initiatives, as well as to financial resources to realize their needs.**

Rural infrastructure and access to health services - survey

- Most of the rural youth **strongly disagree** on the question of **having property in the living place** - This opinion is **stronger among women** respondents.
- Rural youth do consider themselves to be investing in improved infrastructure in rural areas in order to provide equitable delivery of public services, data connectivity, and housing opportunities for young people - Men respondents feel they perform better on this issue.
- **Rural youth mainly strongly agree that they are working toward better mental health & well-being conditions in rural youth, and this attitude is mostly emphasized within the latest age category (30-40 years old)**
 - There is no big gender difference on this issue.

Civic engagement and political participation and inclusion

- **Youth participation** - young people are in most instances **excluded from the dialogs** that are creating their future, **and from planning and policy processes that affect their lives and well-being.**
- **Extension offices should have a more active role** in engaging rural youth in agriculture - partnering with extension providers to provide programs to help rural youth build careers and roles in agribusiness.
- Insufficiently developed institutional system of informing and communicating with young people (especially in rural areas) about youth programs and other measures.
 - Need to establish clear guidelines and directions for strategic development. It will help in structural and organizational strengthening, as well as strengthening the youth through its position in the sector of agriculture and rural development.
- **Forming a local council and youth centre as well as structural funds** for the quality of life of young people, as well as subsidizing employment through the creation of new jobs through the support of entrepreneurship.

Civic engagement and political participation and inclusion - survey

- Most of the rural youth consider that **government officials are not interested in youth problems**, and the policies are not adjusted to their needs.
- Rural youth are also **not engaging themselves in volunteer activities nor they are part of a group or party member**.
- Around **21 to 36 percent of rural youth advocate political views**, and this is the most emphasized in the latest age category (30-40 years old), having a slight higher frequency among men.
- Rural youth that are minors do not vote, therefore they do not vote, while around half of the respondents in the age category of 20-24 years old, and over 70 percent of those within the age of 25-40 years old do usually vote
 - There is a slightly higher percentage of men in comparison to women that do vote.

Preliminary conclusions

- well developed legal framework and majority of institutions are set and existent - with emphasize on the youth guarantee fund – implementation, enforcement and coordination among different institutions is often missing.
- Fewer opportunities in the rural areas for good quality education – especially for higher education - migration
- Young people cannot enter jobs easily after they finish high school
- Lack of vocational education
- Different opportunities for young people in rural areas exist
 - **no basic conditions and basic infrastructure for the development of this opportunity**
- **Evident de-motivation in young people – especially in the case of rural youth!**

Preliminary conclusions

- **Major factors that affect the quality of life of the rural youth and induce their out-migration are the following:**
 - **Poor infrastructure**, including access to health services and weak institutional settings,
 - **Lack of educational opportunities;**
 - **Lack of employment and economic opportunities**, especially for desired job positions;
 - Disappointment in the National politics and institutional inconsistencies
 - Political situation.
 - **Low profitability and unresolved legal and property rights**, hinder entrepreneurship and the idea of farming as a - considering that agriculture is a main economic opportunity in rural areas.

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THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION!

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