**Activity 1.3.2 - Development of a comprehensive Youth-friendly services guide**

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|---|---|
| Subject | Best Practices Research Report produced with successful models from selected countries, analysed and contextualized for Albania. |
| Identification Number | EC-NEAR/TIA/2024/EA-RP/0084 |
| Date | various |
| Venue | Project Office, NYA Tirana, Albania |
| Activity code | 1.3.2 - Development of a comprehensive Youth-friendly services guide |
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# RESEARCH REPORT ON GOOD PRACTICES

*Successful models of youth-friendly services and their applicability in the Albanian context*

*September 2026*

*This publication has been produced with the assistance of the European Union. The contents of this publication are the sole responsibility of the Author and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Union.*

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**List of Abbreviations:**

Report – "Research Report on Good Practices, Successful Models of Youth-Friendly Services and Their Applicability in the Albanian Context";

YFS - Youth-friendly services;

YC - Youth Centers;

AHU – Adolescent Health Units;

EU - European Union;

NFYP - National Fund for Youth Policies;

NYA- National Youth Agency;

NYC - National Youth Council;

LYC - Local Youth Councils.

# 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## 1.1 Purpose

"The research report on good practices, successful models of Youth-Friendly Services, and their applicability in the Albanian context" (the Report) examines how youth services are organized and operate in Italy, Germany, and Greece. The analysis focused not only on the services but also on the conditions that make them functional: the institutional and legal framework, the planning and financing methods, the role of local self-government, provider capacities, coordination and referral, youth participation, and monitoring mechanisms.

The purpose of the report is not to identify a single model to be copied in Albania. The value of comparative analysis lies in identifying elements that can be integrated into the existing Albanian system, taking into account the legal and institutional framework, the capacities of institutions and providers, financial resources, and territorial differences. In this sense, the report serves as an analytical basis for developing an Albanian approach to youth-friendly services (SHMR) and for identifying elements that can be included in standards, delivery models, coordination mechanisms, and monitoring tools.

## 1.2 Good Practices

The selection of Italy, Germany, and Greece enabled the comparison of three different experiences in organizing and providing services for young people. Italy was reviewed for its experience with community and territorial youth services, especially through Youth Aggregation Centers (QAR). Germany was analyzed through the Jugendhilfe system and open youth work, with attention to the role of local self-government, coordination, and inclusion. For Greece, the model of Adolescent Health Units (LAUs) was analyzed, which combines prevention, counseling, and psychosocial support.

These cases have not been treated as models ready to be transferred. They have been used to understand which components of a service make it more accessible, more convenient, and more youth-oriented, and which of these elements depend on how the system is organized in each country.

## 1.3 Analysis methodology

The analysis was mainly based on documentary research and the examination of institutional, legal, and professional sources. For each country, the legal and strategic framework, youth policies, service organization, delivery standards, the role of local self-government and civil society organizations, participation mechanisms, financing, coordination, monitoring, and sustainability were analyzed.

An important element of the methodology is analysis at three levels: user, delivery, and system. This approach enables the connection of two aspects that are often addressed separately: the young person's concrete experience while using the service and how institutions, providers, and coordination mechanisms create the conditions for that experience.

The comparison has been used to distinguish not only the similarities and differences between countries but also the elements that have the potential to be adapted to Albania. In this process, it has been taken into consideration that a functional practice in a country cannot be transferred without changes if institutional, financial, or territorial conditions are different.

### 1.4 Key findings

The analysis shows that, despite the differences between the three countries, the ShMR rely on several common elements. Young people should be able to find and understand information, have real access to the service, and receive support that meets their needs. This requires not only an available service but also appropriate communication, clear points of contact, orientation and referrals, coordination among providers, and the opportunity to express opinions and influence the improvement of the service.

The three models bring different lessons. The Italian experience shows the importance of closeness to the community and spaces that simultaneously serve for information, guidance, activities, and support. The German experience highlights the importance of planning and accountability at the local self-government level, as well as linking services within a coordinated system. The Greek experience demonstrates the value of a multidisciplinary approach and the link between prevention, needs identification, and further support.

An important conclusion for Albania is that the development of ShMR does not necessarily require the creation of a new service system for young people. It is more appropriate for the youth perspective to be gradually integrated into existing and new services, improving how they are planned, communicated, accessed, offered, and monitored.

### 1.5 Contextualization in Albania

From the comparative analysis, it appears that the contextualization process in Albania should start from the existing system and not from the creation of parallel structures. The five dimensions proposed for ShMR can be used as a starting point to examine where current services function and where obstacles arise for young people.

In this approach, special importance is given to existing services and points at the local self-government level, coordination and referral mechanisms, clear communication, the use of digital and community channels, and the involvement of young people in identifying needs and evaluating services. Implementation should be accompanied by monitoring results and systematically using young people's opinions to determine the necessary changes.

### 1.6 Main recommendations

Following the findings of the Report, it is recommended that the development of ShMR in Albania be supported through a gradual and integrated process. The main steps include:

- **Mapping and evaluation of existing services**, using the five dimensions of the ShMR and identifying the barriers faced by young people.
- **Defining a common framework of principles and standards** that can be used by service providers in different sectors and levels.
- **Identifying priority services for adaptation**, based on the needs of young people, access barriers, and the importance of the service.
- **Improving the way of delivery**, especially information, procedures, schedules, access channels, guidance, and referral.
- **Strengthening coordination between the central, local, and provider levels**, using existing mechanisms and clearly defining roles and responsibilities.
- **Creating or adapting access and orientation points**, using existing structures and spaces and connecting them to the service network.
- **The structured inclusion of young people**, from identifying needs to monitoring and improving services.
- **Testing of adapted elements**, in several priority fields and services, before expanding them on a larger scale.
- **The creation of a joint monitoring and evaluation system** that measures not only activities and the number of users but also access, youth experience, results, and achieved changes.
- **The gradual integration of ShMR into public planning and financing**, so that successful practices do not remain dependent solely on projects and temporary funding.

## 2. INTRODUCTION

### 2.1 Context

The development of ShMRI is linked to the need for more accessible, inclusive, tailored, and quality services that respond to the diverse needs and circumstances of young people. The approach to ShMRI is not limited only to creating dedicated services for young people but also includes adapting existing services so that they are more understandable, accessible, and tailored for new users.

In Albania, the development of youth policies and the strengthening of institutional mechanisms to support young people have created an important foundation for improving services. However, the shift from the framework of policies and strategies to concrete services requires clear models, standards, and mechanisms for planning, organizing, delivering, coordinating, participating in

youth, and monitoring them. Studying good international practices creates opportunities to understand how these elements are organized in different contexts and which of interest may be relevant to Albania.

Research on international practices does not aim to identify a model that can be copied or directly applied in Albania. The focus is on principles, mechanisms, and practices that can be adapted to the Albanian institutional, legal, territorial, and social framework. For this reason, the analysis does not only examine the type of services offered but also how they are planned, organized, financed, coordinated, offered, and improved in response to the needs and circumstances of young people.

### 2.2 Analysis methodology

The report is based on a comparative and functional approach that examines how ShMRs are organized and operate in the three selected countries. The analysis is not limited to describing the services but also considers the conditions enabling their functioning: the institutional and legal framework, planning, financing, provider capacities, coordination, youth participation, and monitoring and improvement mechanisms.

The research has mainly relied on documentary analysis and the review of institutional and professional sources. This includes legislation and strategic documents, public policy documents, guidelines and standards for services, documents of responsible institutions, materials from international organizations, relevant European Union (EU) documents and standards, as well as available information on providers and specific service models.

The resources have been examined not only to highlight the formal existence of policies, standards, and mechanisms, but also to understand how they translate into concrete structures, procedures, and ways of delivering services to young people.

For each country, a concrete model or practice has been chosen, based on its importance for the principles of the ShMR and the lessons it can offer for the Albanian context. The selection does not aim to represent the entire youth service system of each country. It focuses on specific elements that help understand how a service can become more accessible, inclusive, quality, adapted, and participatory. The analysis is organized on three interconnected levels:

- **The user level**, which examines the young person's experience, accessibility, and how the service is experienced and used;
- **The level of delivery**, which analyzes organization, capacities, processes, and the manner of service delivery;
- **The system level** where policies, institutions, funding, coordination, and monitoring mechanisms are reviewed.

This structure helps connect two levels of analysis that are often treated separately: how the system works and the young person's concrete experience in using the service.

For each model, it has also been examined what works, under what conditions it operates, what the institutional, organizational, and financial prerequisites are, and which elements can be adapted in Albania. This approach allows distinguishing between practices closely related to the country's context and principles or mechanisms that may also have value in another context. The findings of the analysis are used to highlight common factors identified in the models examined, the main differences, and elements with potential for adaptation in Albania.

### 2.3 Criteria for site selection

For the analysis of good practices, Italy, Germany, and Greece have been selected. The selection was made by considering changes in their institutional models and service organization, as well as elements that may be of interest for the development of SHMR in Albania:

- **Italy** – Italy is included in the analysis due to its historical, cultural, and geographical proximity to Albania, as well as some similarities in territorial organization and the provision of public services. The Italian experience offers examples of integrating the needs of young people into organized services and spaces at the community and territorial level. The chosen practice is the model of community and territorial youth service, illustrated through QAR[1] with a focus on access, socializing, personal development, socio-educational activities, and connection with the community.
- **Germany** is a major partner and economic destination for Albanian immigrants, offering a strong model of decentralized youth services and a strong focus on the inclusion of vulnerable groups. Germany has been involved due to its consolidated experience in organizing services for children and youth through a decentralized and coordinated system at the local level. The role of municipalities in planning, financing, and delivering services, along with the focus on involving young people facing social, economic, or other barriers, makes this model important for comparative analysis. The chosen practice is the experience of Jugendhilfe[2] and open youth work, which enables examination of how national and local responsibilities, services, and various actors are intertwined in supporting young people.
- **Greece** – is included due to its direct geographical proximity to Albania and the historical, cultural, and economic ties between the two countries. The Greek experience is of particular interest for analyzing services oriented towards the needs of young people in the fields of health, psychosocial well-being, and social integration. The chosen practice is the NjShA model[3], combined with interventions in the community and schools and with the support of social organizations. This model offers an example of integrating prevention, counseling, education, and psychosocial support through multidisciplinary approaches oriented towards user needs.

[1] Youth Aggregation Centers – CAG.
[2] Youth welfare.
[3] Adolescent Health Units.

### 2.4 Criteria and dimensions of the analysis

To ensure a structured and comparable analysis, a common analytical framework has been used for each model. This framework examines both the way the service is organized and the institutional and practical conditions that affect its functioning.

| The dimension of analysis | What is being examined |
|---|---|
| **Legal and institutional framework** | Legislation, responsible institutions, division of competencies, and coordination mechanisms. |
| **Youth policies** | Objectives, priorities, and approach to the needs of young people. |
| **The service system** | Types of services, mode of organization, target groups, and access methods. |
| **Service standards** | Accessibility, inclusiveness, quality, adaptability, security, privacy, participation, coverage, monitoring and evaluation, gathering feedback. |
| **The role of local government** | Planning, financing, delivery, coordination, and monitoring at the local level. |
| **The role of civil society** | Providing services, mediation, innovation, support for vulnerable groups, and community engagement. |
| **Youth participation** | Consultation, co-creation, mechanisms for gathering opinions, and involvement in decision-making. |
| **Financing mechanisms** | Sources of funding, public funding, co-financing, and provider financing. |
| **Coordination and partnerships** | Inter-institutional cooperation and cooperation between the public sector, private sector, and civil society. |
| **Monitoring and evaluation** | Indicators, gathering opinions and measuring results, and improvement mechanisms. |
| **Sustainability** | Institutional, financial, and human capacities and the possibility of continuing the model after the initial funding is completed. |

Beyond these dimensions, for each model, the factors supporting its functioning have been examined, including its relevance to Albania, transfer potential, and any adjustments that may be required. In this way, the analysis aims to distinguish between practices that can be adapted with limited changes and those that require deeper legal, institutional, organizational, financial, or capacity changes.

## 3. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR YOUTH-FRIENDLY SERVICES

### 3.1 Youth-Friendly Services

Within the framework of this Report, ShMR are understood as public services or those provided by other providers, organized and adapted to respond to the needs, characteristics, and various circumstances of young people.

A ShMR can be a service specifically created for young people or an existing service adapted to become more accessible, inclusive, suitable, and safe for new users. This means that being an ShMR is not determined solely by the target group of the service, but by how it is planned, organized, offered, and improved.

ShMR addresses young people in their diversity, taking into account age, needs, social and economic circumstances, the territory where they live, and barriers that may limit access to and use of services. Special attention is given to young people who face increased barriers or a higher risk of exclusion from services.

### 3.2 Key Features of Youth-Friendly Services

ShMR are not determined solely by the type of service or by the fact that it is offered to young people. They differ in how the service is designed, planned, organized, and delivered in order to effectively respond to the needs of young people and create conditions for access, inclusion, participation, and safe and quality use of the service. Therefore, it is important to analyze the dimensions and elements of ShMR:

i. **Accessibility -** Services must be accessible and usable by young people, reducing barriers that might hinder their access. It includes physical, geographical, financial, informational, digital, and temporal dimensions. This means, among other things, convenient locations and schedules, affordable costs, understandable information, and various access channels.
ii. **Adaptability to the needs of young people -** A ShMR must take into account the age, needs, interests, circumstances, and diversity of young people. This means that the service is not provided uniformly but can be adapted in terms of content, communication, procedures, schedules, and delivery methods, according to users' needs.
iii. **Quality and safety -** Services must be provided professionally, reliably, and safely, respecting the rights, dignity, and privacy of young people. Quality relates to staff competencies, clarity of procedures, professional standards, user safety, and orientation towards results and continuous improvement.
iv. **Youth Participation -** Young people are considered not only as service recipients but also as actors in their development and improvement. Participation can be realized through

consultation, co-authoring, involvement in implementation, service evaluation, and other mechanisms that enable young people to influence decision-making.

v. **Inclusion and access to youth facing barriers -** ShMR must take into account the diversity of young people and identify barriers that may lead to exclusion or inequality in access. The approach implies special attention to young people facing social, economic, territorial, physical, digital, or other barriers, aiming to ensure that services are accessible even to groups at risk of being left out.

vi. **Information and communication -** Information must be understandable, up-to-date, and accessible through channels suitable for young people, using clear language and various forms of communication.

vii. **Coordination and referral -** ShMR should operate in connection with other services and actors, through coordination and referral mechanisms. This helps avoid service fragmentation and ensures a more integrated and continuous response to the needs of young people.

viii. **Digitalization -** Technology and digital channels can improve access, information, communication, and service delivery. A ShMR should consider the possibility of appropriately using digital tools for young people, while also taking into account equal access, digital skills, privacy, and information security.

ix. **Gathering opinions and continuous improvement -** The opinions and experiences of young people should be used to understand whether the service is meeting their needs and where changes are needed. Mechanisms for gathering opinions, monitoring, and evaluation should be linked to concrete processes for improving the service. In this way, ShMR is treated as a dynamic process that adapts based on evidence and user experience.

These characteristics form the common basis for the analysis of selected practices in Italy, Germany, and Greece. They are not treated as isolated criteria, but as interconnected elements that influence the experience of the young person, the way the service is delivered, and the functioning of the system that supports it.

### 3.3 Being a good practice

Within the framework of this Report, a practice is considered good when there is sufficient evidence on how it is organized and implemented and when it presents elements that can offer valuable lessons for the development of the ShMR. The evaluation of the practice takes into account several aspects:

- **institutional organization** – roles, responsibilities, capacities, and mechanisms that support it;
- **implementation** – the way the practice operates within an institution, service, or territory;
- **results and user experience** – evidence of the use, results, or experience of young people, where such evidence is available;

- **coordination and sustainability** – how the practice connects with other actors and the conditions for its continuity;
- **importance for Albania** – elements that can offer lessons for the institutional framework and the way services are organized in Albania.

The term "Good Practice" in this Report is not used to imply that the selected model is necessarily better than other alternatives. It refers to practices that, based on available information and evidence, present valuable elements to be analyzed and lessons learned. For each of the selected countries, a specific model or practice has been identified, which has been examined in relation to the characteristics of ShMR, the way it is organized and delivered, the context in which it has developed, and the possibility of adapting some of its elements in Albania.

### 3.4 Dimensions of comparative analysis within youth-friendly services

To provide a comparative analysis of selected models in Italy, Germany, and Greece, the analysis is based on a common comparative framework. This framework links the user experience with the way the service is delivered and with the institutional conditions that support it.

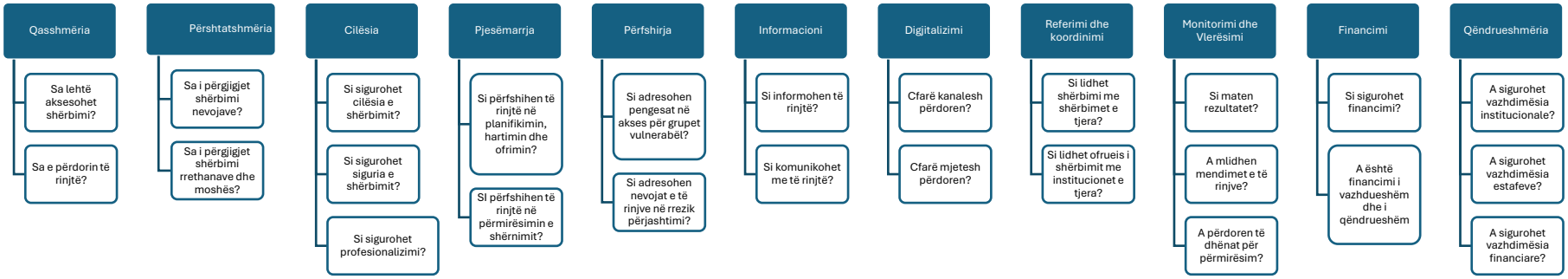



*Figure no. 1 Dimensions of Comparative Analysis*

## 4. ITALY

The Italian model of youth policies and services is characterized by a multi-level organization, where youth policy responsibilities and instruments are distributed among the national level, regions, autonomous provinces, and local authorities. In this model, the national level determines the general directions and priorities, while the territorial level is responsible for adapting interventions according to local characteristics and needs.

Italy does not present a single national catalog of youth services with the same organizational forms throughout the territory. On the contrary, the services have developed through a network of public, private, and civil society structures, which operate at different levels and offer various forms of information, guidance, support, education, participation, and socialization.

### 4.1 Institutional and Governance Framework

At the national level, the determination of fundamental principles for youth empowerment belongs to Parliament, and the responsibility for their concrete drafting lies with the Minister responsible for youth. Under the Minister, the Department for Youth Policies and the Universal Civil Service operates, constituting the operational structure for referral, implementation, and coordination of the youth strategy and the promotion of youth rights.

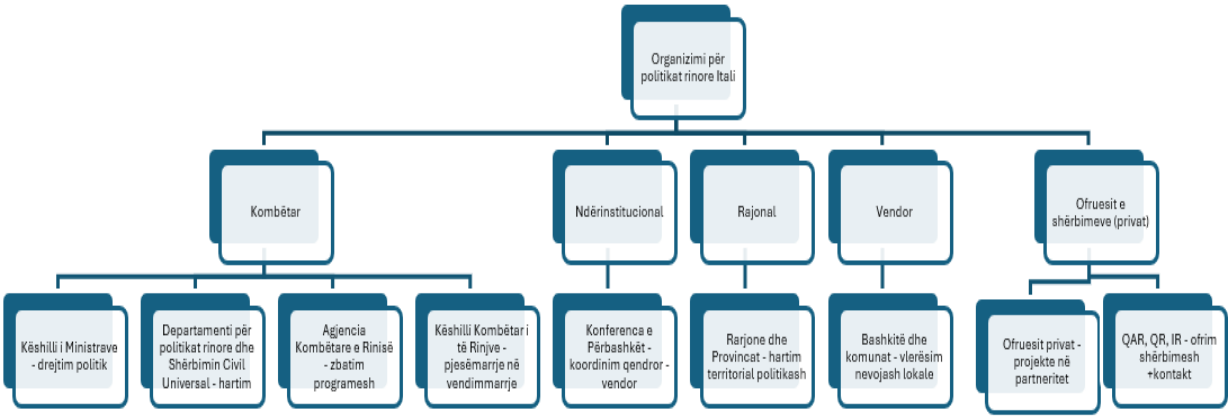
Alongside them operates the Italian Youth Agency, a public body endowed with legal personality and regulatory, organizational, managerial, financial, and accounting autonomy, which administers European programs and implements youth measures.

At the territorial level, youth is organized and functions through Autonomous Regions and Provinces, which can draft laws/documents within the youth framework. With the contribution of Provinces and Municipalities, the Regions can thus determine the needs, proposals, protection measures, and rights within the framework of programming and implementing youth measures in their respective territories.

In Italy, there is no inter-ministerial coordination mechanism dedicated to youth policies, nor a clear legal framework or specific political commitment that organically regulates intersectoral cooperation practices in youth policy-making. However, within the Council of Ministers, for the development of measures specifically targeted at young people, the Department for Youth Policies and Universal Civil Service relies on the assistance of the Departments for policies related to: family; sports; persons with disabilities; cohesion; information and publications; education, health.

At the national level, the National Youth Council serves as a space for debates and exchange of experiences among member youth associations and Italian and European institutions, alongside which it plays a consultative and proposing role on youth policy issues. It supports the Regional Youth Councils and those to be established through consultancy activities, training, and Capacity

Building Programs. At the local level, Regional Youth Forums/Councils operate as a space for meeting, confrontation, and development of cooperation among service providers.




**Youth policies**

The development of youth policies is carried out through the use of knowledge and empirical data. To ensure this, public and private institutions have been established, such as the National Observatory for Childhood and Adolescence; the National Center for Documentation and Analysis of Childhood and Adolescence, the National Institute for Public Policy Analysis, the National Council of Economics and Labor, the National Research Council, and the National Institute of Youth Statistics.

Monitoring and evaluation of youth policies are carried out through: the National Youth Council, regional or territorial observers on youth. Starting from 2025, at the national level, the implementation of the Belt Impact Assessment is mandatory, aimed at the preliminary analysis of government normative acts – with the exception of decree-laws – in order to evaluate the environmental and/or social effects and consequences of the measures adopted on youth and future generations.

Youth policy financing is carried out through the National Youth Policy Fund (NFPF) and EU funds. NFP is distributed among institutions at the national level, regions, and provinces through an agreement approved at the Joint Conference organized between them. Regions and provinces enjoy full autonomy in the use of funds approved in the youth field, but their use is subject to continuous reporting and monitoring at the central level.

**The youth service system.**

Italy does not have a single, national model for providing services to young people. It is built on an intertwined territorial ecosystem, where the service adapts to the needs of young people and the territorial characteristics of service delivery. The service delivery system is a system that has integrated services offered through public and private service providers:

- **Informagiovanni -** Information and guidance for education, training, work, leisure, and opportunities.
- **Youth Aggregation Centers** are centers providing recreational and educational services for leisure time, aiming to assess minor participation at the proposition, decision-making, and management levels, as well as interactions on important issues for civil coexistence and the development of socializing and inclusion skills in school, social, and family life.
- **Youthwork -** Educational support, personal and social development, participation, and autonomy.
- **Support educational groups** – these are groups that include boys and girls at higher risk, aiming to accompany and assist them in their studies.
- **Socio-educational animation on the street, -** an activity aimed at groups of adolescents and young people in meeting places, aimed at preventing risk factors.
- **Socio-educational animation in an open environment -** outdoor education carried out in Summer Centers and sacred places/Rest Centers.
- **The Civil Service for Adolescents -** an educational experience for young people based on involvement in volunteer activities, in close cooperation with schools and the regional school office.
- **Adolescent Information Centers** – as an informational service oriented towards the needs and interests of adolescents within the offices of "Informagiovani."
- **Other socio-educational animation activities in the field of adolescence at the regional level -** Games/laboratories, Gathering/social centers; Summer day centers; Centers with socio-support functions; Day centers with social protection functions.

The service system is organized as an interconnected node system, where Informagiovani is the first entry node into the system, followed by the network of services.

### 4.2 Legislation and strategic documents

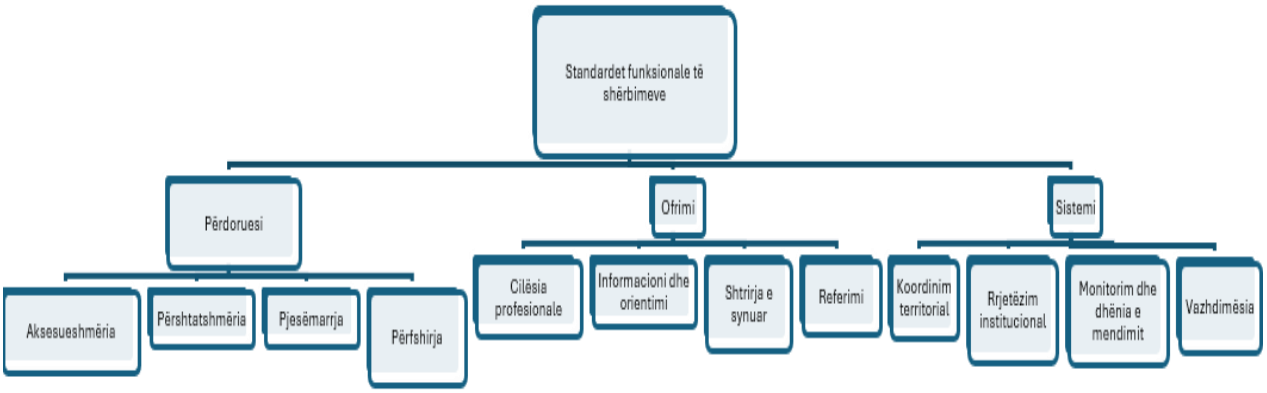
Legislation in the field of youth consists of the national youth law – joint legislation between the state, Regions, and Autonomous Provinces. The regions adopt their own legislation within the framework of youth, with 18 out of 20 Italian regions having adopted their own legislation in this field.

Legislation in the field of youth is implemented through the National Youth Strategy, which is approved by the inter-institutional coordination mechanism, the Joint Conference. The implementation of youth policies and the objectives set out in the Strategy obliges the Regions to develop three-year plans for its execution.

**Standards for services**

In Italy, the standardization of youth services adapts to territorial organization, meaning there is no unified national package of standards for ShMR. Specific standards and requirements are mainly defined at the regional and local levels, while at the national level a general framework for

youth policies and youth work is developed. However, in the analyzed territorial models, several functional standards are repeated:




### 4.3 Youth Aggregation Centers

QAR[4] can be defined as a service unit directed at young people and children/adolescents. Its organization is not found in a specific national law but is regulated by regional legislations, which allow significant flexibility in establishing and managing the service, but do not favor a homogeneous offer of services throughout the national territory. QAR is not understood as a service specialized in a specific issue and addressed to a predetermined user, but as a meeting place where, with the help of trained operators, one gets to know oneself and others within a protected environment and with creative activities.

The birth of QAR occurred around the 1980s, when the community understood the crisis affecting traditional educational agencies, such as schools and religious institutions, and took on the "youth issue," modifying and expanding the structures already present in the territory. QAR is organized into three management levels: local; private through agreements with local institutions; religious institutions, but secular in terms of service delivery.

The organization of the service appears very diverse and varies from center to center in terms of opening hours, the users it is addressed to, the quantitative and qualitative presence of young people, but above all in the educational proposals implemented. There are QAR focused on a single issue or a specific type of user, and QAR that includes activity labs and informal moments; QAR that includes different categories of young users, pre-adolescent and young adults.

The administrative capacities of QAR undoubtedly include educators and animators, although situation analysis and intervention design require teamwork and close collaboration with other

[4] Turin Youth Aggregation Center

operators. The pedagogical aspect plays an important role in service management and requires psychological and sociological services on communication and peer groups to achieve a unified vision of the youth it interacts with. One of the functions that most characterizes working in QAR is that it serves as a bridge connecting the youth world with the older one, while maintaining a unique language and style of the youth. QAR remains an exclusive territory for young people, a kind of "protected space" where they can build their relationships by confronting the outside world and gradually emerging from it.

### 4.4 Main features of the model




### 4.5 Factors contributing to the model's operation

- ✓ **Institutional Support -** The involvement of municipalities and other public authorities creates the institutional basis for planning, financing, and integrating QAR into territorial policies and services. Public support also helps build links with schools, social services, and other local actors.
- ✓ **User-Oriented Design -** The activities and mode of operation are adapted to the interests and needs of the youth in the area. The open space and flexibility of activities enable the center to respond to the demands of young people.
- ✓ **Trained staff -** The socio-educational staff is essential for building trusting relationships with young people, facilitating activities, identifying needs, and guiding towards other services.
- ✓ **Coordination -** The connection between QAR, municipalities, schools, civil society organizations, and other services creates a more integrated approach. Coordination reduces the isolation of the center and turns it into a node within the local youth services ecosystem.

- ✓ **Digital tools -** Digital channels expand the ways in which young people are informed, communicated, and engaged with the center. They can complement, but not replace, physical access and direct contact with staff.
- ✓ **Youth Participation -** Involving young people in identifying needs, designing activities, and gathering feedback increases the suitability of the service. Participation also creates opportunities for young people to take an active role in the life and development of the center.
- ✓ **Sustainable financing –** Predictable funding is important for staff continuity, activities, space maintenance, and medium-term planning. Combining public support with other resources can increase the capacity to maintain and develop the service.
- ✓ **Monitoring and gathering feedback** - Systematic collection of data on service usage, participation, and youth experience helps identify problems and adapt activities. Gathering feedback links monitoring with concrete improvements in the service.

## 5. GERMANY

### 5.1 Institutional and Governance Framework

In Germany, the main framework for services to children and youth is SGB VIII – Kinder und Jugendhilfe. The law stipulates that Jugendhilfe aims at the individual and social development of young people, reducing disadvantages, and enabling equal participation in society.

At the federal level, the government (Bund) defines the legal framework and general orientations of youth policy. The federal authority supports and promotes the activities of the Southwest Hillfe of international importance, and the government is advised by the Federal Council for Youth (Bundesjugendcuratorium) on fundamental youth policy issues. It is an advisory body that provides expertise and advises the Federal Government on policy issues concerning children and youth.

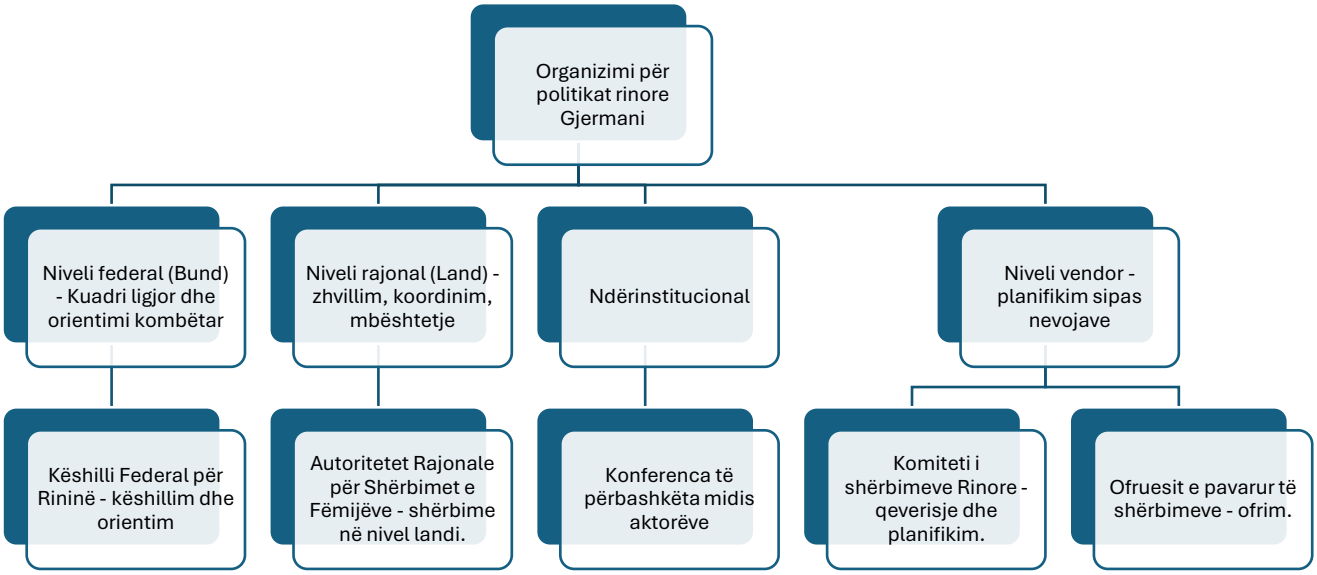
The Länder level plays an important role in the development and support of the Jugendhilfe system. The law requires state authorities to promote the development of Jugendhilfe, support public and independent providers, and contribute to the sustainable development of institutions and services. At this level also operate the Regional Authorities for Child and Youth Services (Landesjugendämter), which have responsibilities at the local level and support the development of services.

At the local level, there is the Local Authority for Children, Youth, and Families (Jugendamt), which is the main institution for planning and organizing services, operating through two structures: the Youth Services Committee (Jugendhilfeausschuss) and the independent service providers (Freie Jugendhilfe). This structure combines decision-making and representation with professional administration of services.

Inter-institutional coordination is organized among institutions at the federal level, the Länder, local authorities, and independent providers who cooperate in the planning and delivery of services. It also includes institutions that impact the lives of young people, including schools, health services, employment services, vocational training institutions, social services, and justice structures.

Inter-institutional coordination mechanisms include joint conferences, coordinating structures, or other appropriate mechanisms.

Civil society organizations constitute part of the independent service providers; they are involved in all service delivery cycles and are a structural part of the service system. Based on agreements made with state institutions, these organizations can offer youth services, programs, and activities, while public authorities are responsible for the overall security of the system. When suitable independent providers exist, the law stipulates that public authorities, in principle, use and support these capacities instead of creating parallel offerings themselves.




**Youth policy**

Youth policy is cross-sectoral; it is characterized by a participatory approach oriented towards creating conditions for young people to develop, participate in society, and face the challenges of transitioning into adulthood. Youth policy is not limited only to providing social services to young people but is related to areas such as education, employment, democratic participation, social inclusion, mobility, digitalization, culture, health, and territorial development.

An important principle is the participation of young people in the drafting and implementation of policies that affect them. A concrete example is the drafting of the Federal Youth Strategy in this field, which was developed through consultations and various formats of dialogue with young people, aiming for their perspectives to be considered in different areas of public policy. This approach has been further developed through the National Action Plan for the Participation of Children and Youth, which aims to strengthen opportunities for the participation of children and youth.

Child and youth policies aim to reduce disadvantages and create opportunities for social participation, paying special attention to young people who need support by establishing an inclusive system. German youth policy is also characterized by the link between national policy and territorial implementation. While the federal level sets the framework and supports programs of national importance, the states and local authorities play an important role in adapting and delivering concrete services for young people. In this sense, youth policy is directly linked to local planning and the network of public and independent providers.

### 5.2 Youth Service System - Jugendhilfe

Jugendhilfe represents a broad and decentralized system of services for children, youth, and families. It is not limited to a single type of service but includes preventive, socio-educational, counseling, supportive, and protective interventions. From the perspective of youth services, the system includes, among others:

- **Youth** labor – youth work, which includes extracurricular, cultural, sports, social, and community educational activities, as well as forms of counseling and support for young people;
- **Jugendsozialarbeit** – social work with youth, especially oriented towards young people facing social disadvantages or difficulties in education, vocational training, employment, and social integration;
- **Schulsozialarbeit** – social work in schools, which links social and educational support with the school environment and helps prevent exclusion and social difficulties;
- **Counseling and support services** offered to young people and families according to their needs;
- **Protection and support measures** aimed at the safety, well-being, and development of children and youth.

Services can be offered in various structures: youth centers, community centers, schools, counseling centers, social structures, and other community spaces. Alongside services based on a physical structure, forms of work that take place directly within the community and in the spaces where young people are located are also used.

An important feature is low-barrier access. Depending on the type of service, young people can directly contact the provider, local structure, service provider, or a youth center. For services requiring specialized intervention, support may be linked to referral and cooperation mechanisms between institutions.

This makes the system more of a network of services rather than a single point of supply. A young person may have initial contact with a youth center, school, an independent organization, or a social service and, if needed, be directed toward another service.

Another characteristic is the diversity of providers. Public authorities retain responsibility for securing the system, while independent organizations and other providers contribute to the development and delivery of services. This creates opportunities to use diverse expertise and adapt the offer to local needs.

Youth participation is part of the system's very functioning. Young people are not treated only as beneficiaries of services but also as users, interlocutors, and participants in processes related to offers and decisions that affect them.

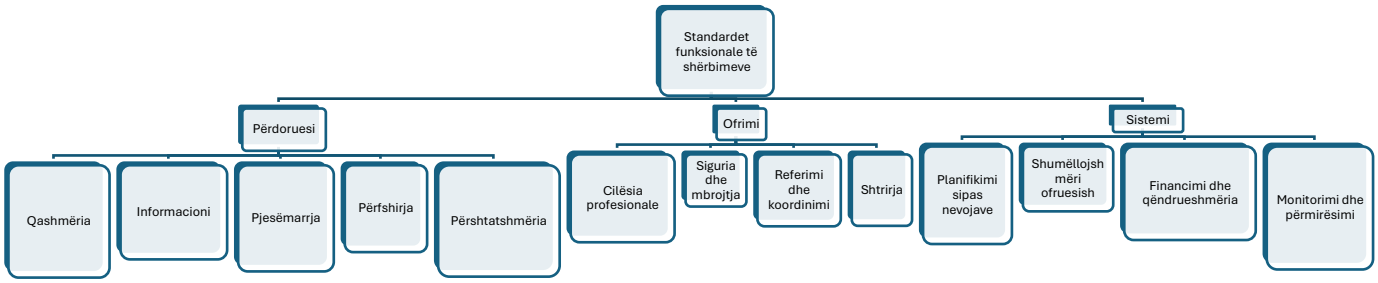
### 5.3 Legislation and strategic documents

The German youth services system relies on a combination of the federal legal framework, cross-sectoral strategies, and national policy documents. National legislation defines the provision of an integrated service system rather than a framework for a single service. The participation of children and young people according to their age and development is mandatory in decisions regarding the public service system.

At the policy level, the Federal Youth Strategy provides a cross-sectoral approach, while national documents on participation and legal reforms have strengthened the orientation towards participation, inclusion, and protection of children and youth. The National Action Plan for the Participation of Children and Youth has also been adopted – an instrument to strengthen the participation of children and youth in decision-making. Legislation and strategic documents are subject to continuous changes in line with social changes and the needs of young people.

**Standards for services.**

In Germany, there is no official national document that approves standards for youth services. Germany has established binding general principles that are drafted and approved at the federal level and translated into more detailed standards at the state and local levels. The current legislation obliges institutions and independent providers to develop and implement criteria for monitoring and evaluating the service system. Standards are subject to a continuous process of change and improvement.



## 5.4 Main features of the model




## 5.5 Factors contributing to the model's functioning

- ✓ **Institutional support -** A clear legal framework defines responsibilities and rights. Local self-government has a defined role in planning, coordinating, and ensuring services at the local level. Planning creates the link between identified needs and the supply of services. The shared responsibilities of institutions enable the adaptation of services to the local context.
- ✓ **User-Oriented Design -** Services are planned taking into account the needs, interests, and specific situations of young people. The offer is not limited to a single model but is adapted according to local needs. Young people are considered not only as beneficiaries but also as actors in determining the services they need. Access with low barriers facilitates the first contact with the service.
- ✓ **Trained and professional staff -** Services are supported by professionals from social, educational, and youth fields. Professional competencies are adapted to the type of service and the needs of the target group. Interdisciplinary collaboration enables addressing the complex needs of young people. Professional development contributes to maintaining and improving the quality of services.
- ✓ **Coordination -** Jugendhilfe operates through a network of actors and services, rather than an isolated structure. Public institutions choose to cooperate with independent providers, schools, health services, employment, vocational education, and other actors. Inter-institutional cooperation mechanisms facilitate referral and continuity of support and expand the system's capacity.
- ✓ **Digital tools -** Digital channels complement physical contact and are used for information, communication, and orientation. They can reduce barriers to access, especially for initial information. Digital communication creates more suitable channels for how young people

seek and receive information. Digitalization functions as a supporting element rather than a complete replacement for human contact.

- ✓ **Youth Participation -** Youth participation is integrated within the framework of Jugendhilfe. Young people are involved in issues that directly affect them. The needs, interests, and perspectives of young people are taken into account in the planning and development of offerings. Participation helps make services more user-friendly.
- ✓ **Sustainable financing -** Public support creates the financial foundation for the continuous functioning of the system. Financial responsibilities are distributed among different levels of governance and according to the type of service. Collaboration with independent providers enables the mobilization of various capacities and resources. Continuity of funding is important for the sustainability of staff, services, and relationships with young people.
- ✓ **Monitoring and gathering feedback -** Jugendhilfe's planning is based on an analysis of needs and existing supply. Data on usage and needs help tailor services. Young people's opinions are a source of information about the quality and suitability of services. Monitoring and evaluation create the foundation for continuous improvement, rather than services remaining static.

## 6. GREECE

### 6.1 Institutional and Governance Framework

The Greek model of youth service governance is decentralized and cross-sectoral, where policies and services for young people are developed through cooperation between central institutions, regional authorities, municipalities, and civil society organizations. Responsibilities for youth are not concentrated in a single institution but relate to areas such as education, employment, healthcare, social inclusion, culture, sports, and civic participation.

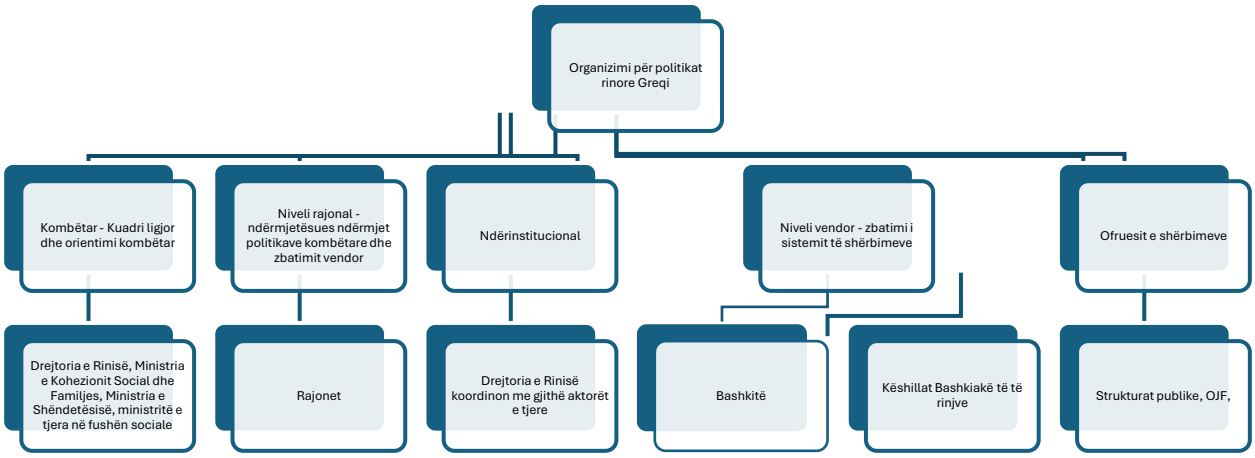
At the national level, the Council of Ministers sets national guidelines for youth policy, develops programs, and coordinates intersectoral interventions. The Youth Directorate is part of the Ministry of Social Cohesion and Family and is responsible for coordinating and implementing youth policies, drafting and evaluating programs, and coordinating with ministries, regions, municipalities, and other organizations in youth development.

At the regional level, regions act as intermediaries between national policies and local implementation. They can support and coordinate programs in areas affecting young people, including education, social inclusion, employment, health, and territorial development. In this way, youth services are not organized by just one national structure but are adapted to the needs and capacities of the territories.

At the local level, municipalities are the main actors in implementing youth policies. Municipalities can develop programs and services for young people through their structures, linking youth policies to various fields for which they are responsible, such as education, culture, sports, civic participation, etc. Municipal Youth Councils are established in municipalities, serving as mechanisms for youth participation in local issues and for identifying their needs. They aim to identify and monitor the needs and problems of young people and to strengthen their participation in local matters.

Inter-institutional coordination links youth policy with other public policies, where the Youth Directorate has the duties of coordinating ministries, regions, municipalities, and other organizations to develop synergies and joint programs for youth.

Service providers include: public structures; municipalities; educational and healthcare institutions; civil society organizations; youth organizations; social and community organizations. Providing services with a variety of providers creates an ecosystem of services that starts from obtaining information, education, social support, health services, career guidance, or psychosocial support from various structures.




**Youth policy**

Youth policy develops as an intersectoral policy, linked to several other public policies such as education, employment, social inclusion, health, civic participation, culture, and local development. Institutional responsibilities for youth are distributed among central and local structures and territorial actors, while concrete implementation is carried out through programs and services at the local level.

The Youth Directorate plays an important role, developing youth policies closely linked to social inclusion goals, supporting young people, and strengthening their participation. A concrete element of Greek youth policy is the "National Youth Capital," which is also set as one of the main objectives of the Ministry of Social Cohesion and Family. The program aims to encourage the participation of young people aged 15–29 in community life, strengthen the connections between youth and local authorities, and encourage municipalities to develop local actions and strategies for youth.

Youth policies are linked to concrete services offered in various fields, where vulnerable groups should benefit without barriers or with low barriers to these services.

**The youth service system.**

The youth service system is an ecosystem of services distributed across different sectors and levels, not as a single national network with a standard ShMR package. The service system is organized with services and structures covering participation, health, social inclusion, education, employment, and youth support:

- **Information and guidance** – Information about opportunities, rights, education, training, employment, and programs for youth.

- **Education and skills** - Education, vocational training, lifelong learning, and skills development.
- **Employment** - Career guidance, activation, and support for entering the labor market.
- **Health and Well-being** - Health services for adolescents, prevention, counseling, and psychosocial support.
- **Social inclusion** - Support for youth and families facing barriers, including social services and specialized support.
- **Participation** - Youth Municipal Councils, consultation, local initiatives, and mechanisms for participation in decision-making.
- **Culture, sports, and community** - Cultural, sporting, creative, and community activities, mainly at the local level.
- **Services for specific groups** - Services tailored for young people with disabilities or in special social situations.
- **Adolescent Health Units** are a specialized model within the health sector, not the entire youth services system.

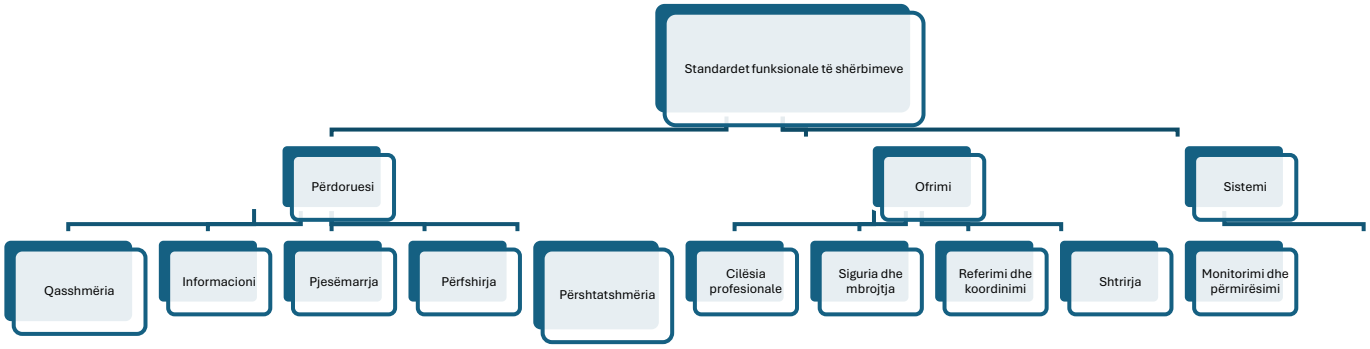
### 6.2 Legislation and strategic documents

Greek youth legislation is not organized as a single law; it is more of a framework distributed among sectoral policies and laws, with youth connected to education, employment, social inclusion, health, participation, and local governance. This also aligns with Greece's strategic youth framework, which includes areas such as employment, education, housing, social cohesion, and welfare.

This framework is complemented by national strategies and local youth participation mechanisms, creating the foundation for a diverse service ecosystem. The "Youth 17-27" Strategy is the National Youth Strategy developed in 7 main pillars to consolidate conditions of autonomy and equality for young people.

**Standards for services.**

Greece does not have a single national package of standards for all ShMRs.




### 6.3 Youth-Friendly Service Model: Health Units for Adolescents

Greece has developed NJSHs, established as multidisciplinary environments, based on the guidelines of the World Health Organization for ShMR.

A NJSHA is a service structure focused on adolescent health and well-being; it is not an isolated point but part of the healthcare network and the relationships with schools, families, and other services when referral or additional support is needed. The approach is multidisciplinary, where a specialized service is connected to the broader service system. Various professionals collaborate to address the needs of adolescents and aim to combine care, prevention, information, and counseling. The service can address issues related to physical and psychological health, health education, and other needs related to the development and well-being of adolescents. The service is primarily oriented towards adolescents aged 10–19 years. Depending on the specific service and the national framework, there may also be interaction with parents, families, schools, and other professionals.

NJSHa are part of the public funding of the health system, while support for specific services and programs can also be linked to national programs and institutional partnerships. The model is linked to health structures and the healthcare network, placing the service as close as possible to the environments where adolescents live, learn, and seek support.

NjShA is characterized by simple, understandable access to services tailored to the needs of adolescents, reducing barriers that might prevent them from seeking services. This includes clear information, a friendly environment, respect for privacy and confidentiality, as well as the possibility to be guided or referred to other services when needed.

### 6.4 Main features of the model




### 6.5 Factors contributing to the model's operation

- ✓ **Institutional support -** The integration of the service within the healthcare system gives the model an institutional foundation and enables its connection with other care structures.
- ✓ **User-Oriented Design -** The service is organized around the characteristics and needs of teenagers: easy access, tailored communication, privacy, confidentiality, and a friendly environment.
- ✓ **Trained and professional staff** – The multidisciplinary approach requires skilled professionals to work with adolescents and identify needs that go beyond a single health problem.
- ✓ **Coordination -** Connecting with professionals and other services enables a more integrated response and avoids fragmentation of support. Referral is especially important for cases requiring specialized support.
- ✓ **Digital tools -** Digital tools can expand access to information and communication with adolescents and complement physical contact with the service.
- ✓ **Youth participation -** Listening to adolescents and involving their perspective helps ensure that the service is truly tailored to how they experience and use it.
- ✓ **Sustainable financing -** Public funding and integration into existing health structures create conditions for continuity; financial sustainability remains an important condition for maintaining staff, activities, and quality.

- ✓ **Monitoring and gathering feedback -** Collecting data, user opinions, and periodic evaluation enable the identification of bottlenecks and the adaptation of the service to changing needs.

## 7. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF MODELS AND PRACTICES

### 7.1 Comparative Analysis of the Institutional and Organizational Framework

This analysis shows that all three models place public responsibility for services within a framework that also includes other territorial and social actors, but their organizational approaches differ. Germany presents the more structured model – an integrated service system – while Italy relies more on territorial organization and diversification of services. Greece, on the other hand, presents a more sectoral and cross-sectoral ecosystem, where youth services are distributed across different fields and structures.

| *Elements* | *Italy* | *Germany* | *Greece* |
|---|---|---|---|
| ***Good Practice*** | Youth Aggregation Centers | Youth welfare | Adolescent Health Units |
| ***Legal framework*** | National + Regional + local. | National. | National + local |
| ***The governance model*** | Several levels and territorial. | Several levels and decentralized. | Several levels and cross-sectoral. |
| ***The service system*** | Territorial | Integrated and decentralized. | Distributed across sectors and levels. |
| ***Central government*** | Orientation, policy, and funding. | Legal framework and national orientation. | Policy, programs, and coordination. |
| ***Local government*** | Very important in organizing services. | Very important. | Municipalities implement and adapt policies. |
| ***Planning*** | Distributed between levels | Related to local planning | Distributed between the central and local levels. |
| ***Service providers*** | Municipalities + private providers + youth organizations. | Public + Independent providers + NGOs. | Public + sectoral services + NGOs. |
| ***Coordination of services*** | Territorial network. | Local structures + cross-sectoral network. | Interministerial and cross-sectoral cooperation |
| ***Financing*** | National + territorial + EU | Fonde publike. | Public funds + EU + programs. |

### 7.2 Comparative Analysis of Service Delivery Standards

| *Dimensions* | *Italy – QAR* | *Germany – Jugendhilfe* | *Greece – NjShA* |
|---|---|---|---|
| ***accessibility*** | Open, voluntary access with low barriers. | Low barriers; the needs of the youth; vulnerable groups. | Low barriers; the needs of young people; privacy, confidentiality, appropriate communication. |
| ***Information*** | Information point, orientation, and connection with territorial sources. | Information, counseling, service identification, understandable language. | Information, counseling, language suitable for adolescents. |
| ***Participation*** | Young people participate and are decisive in activities. | Co-creation and co-decision. | Adolescents are active actors in care and counseling. |
| ***Inclusion*** | Young people with different needs. | Adapting services according to needs. | Adapting services according to the needs and vulnerable groups as part of the policies. |
| ***Quality*** | Regional and local level: recreational activities with socio-educational work, professional support. | Professionalism, continuity, adaptability, and improvement. | Professionalism, multidisciplinary approach, privacy, specific needs. |
| ***Digitization*** | Communication, information, registration, engagement, expansion of communication channels. | Physical services, contact. | Information, communication, physical services, contact |
| ***Referral*** | A connecting point with other services. | A network of services, cooperation, inter-institutional coordination, no fragmentation. | The entry point and connector with others. |
| ***stretch*** | Connections with the community, educational institutions, NGOs, local services. | Young people who do not come to the service; cooperation with institutions, contact in their environment, eliminating obstacles. | Cooperation with institutions, schools, and the community, as well as with young people who do not seek services. |
| ***M&V*** | Participation, service delivery. Gathering opinions leads to the adaptation of programs. | The entire service cycle, needs analysis, consultation, continuous improvement. | The entire service cycle, needs analysis, consultation, continuous improvement. |

### 7.3 Comparative Summary

A comparison of the three models shows that there is no single way to organize the ShMRI. Each model links the 5 dimensions of the ShMR with a different institutional structure.

| *Dimensions* | *Italy* | *Germany* | *Greece* |
|---|---|---|---|
| ***The logic of the model*** | Youth services and spaces adapted to the territory | An integrated system of services for children and youth | Services distributed across sectors and levels. |
| ***Contact points*** | Youth centers and spaces, as well as local services | Extensive network of structures and services | Sectoral structure or service, as needed |
| ***Relationship with the territory*** | Strong territorial adaptation | Institutionalized Local Planning | Adaptation through municipalities and local structures |
| ***The role of providers*** | Variety of providers and service forms | Structured Public–Independent Providers | Mixing of public and sectoral structures with NGOs |
| ***Participation*** | Connected to youth spaces and activities | Integrated into the Jugendhilfe system | Linked to participation mechanisms and service |
| ***Accessibility approach*** | Open access and low barriers | Need-based access and reduced barriers | Access tailored to the user's needs |
| ***Coordination of services*** | Territorial networks | Systemic and intersectoral coordination | Coordination between sectors and levels |
| ***The most distinctive feature*** | Youth space and territorial flexibility | Integration and decentralization of the system | User-oriented service orientation |

### 7.4 Common factors contributing to the functioning of models

#### 7.4.1. Common Success Factors

Although Italy, Germany, and Greece have different institutional models and different ways of organizing services, the analysis identifies several common elements that contribute to the creation and functioning of ShMR.

- **Institutional framework -** Defining responsibilities between levels and institutions creates the basis for organizing services.
- **User-Oriented** - The services take into account the age, needs, situation, and experience of young people.
- **Accessibility and low barriers** - Striving to make contact with the service as simple, understandable, and user-friendly as possible.
- **Youth participation** - Young people are involved in consulting, planning, development, or evaluation of the offer in various forms according to the model.
- **Professionalism** - Services rely on staff with appropriate competencies and, when necessary, multidisciplinary teams.
- **Coordination and referral** - The services are interconnected and create opportunities for orientation and continuity of support.
- **Territorial adaptation** - Models allow a certain degree of adaptation to the needs and capacities of the territory.
- **Monitoring and gathering feedback - Information on the use, needs, and experience of young people is used to adapt and improve the offer.**
- **Financial and institutional support** - The sustainability of services requires resources and integration into existing institutional mechanisms.
- **Communication and digital channels** - Information and digital communication are used as complementary channels to make the service more accessible to young people.

### 7.5 Main Differences

| Dimensions | Italy | Germany | Greece |
|---|---|---|---|
| **The logic of the model** | A multi-level model, with an important role for Regions and Municipalities | An integrated system, supported by law | National youth policy combined with local programs and mechanisms |
| **Distribution of competencies** | Shared competencies between the state, regions, and local government | Strong competencies at the levels of the states and local authorities | A more visible role at the central level, with implementation and initiatives at the local level |
| **Local structure** | Municipalities/Regions and territorial structures for youth | Local + Committee for Youth Welfare (Jugendhilfeausschuss) | Municipalities + local youth structures/councils |
| **Service planning** | Related to territorial planning and regional policies | Planning aid for youth as an institutionalized instrument | More connected to local strategies, programs, and initiatives |
| **The role of non-public providers** | Partnership with NGOs and youth organizations | Independent organizations are a structural part of the system | NGOs and youth organizations as partners in programs and initiatives |
| **Access to services** | Community, territorial, and socio-educational approaches | Integrated social, preventive, and individualized approach | A specialized, preventive, and needs-oriented approach for adolescents |
| **Informing young people** | Developed youth information infrastructure, including information and digital channels | Integrated information and counseling in Jugendhilfe services | Information on opportunities, participation, and youth programs |
| **Participation** | Through various youth structures and mechanisms | Related to decision-making and planning of Jugendhilfe | More visible at the local level, through youth councils |
| **Digitization** | Relatively strong role in information and access | Completes physical services and counseling | In development alongside traditional mechanisms |
| **Financing** | Combination of national, regional, and local resources | Closely linked to public responsibilities and the Jugendhilfe system | Combination of public funding and dedicated programs |
| **Sustainability** | It relies on integration at territorial levels | Strongly institutionalized through the legal framework | It depends more on integration into local policies and structures/programs. |
| **Distinctive feature** | Territorial and multi-level network | Institutionalized system of services | Activation of the local level and youth participation |

**Italy** and the QAR model:

"*The model focuses on space and community. QAR creates an accessible point where young people can meet, receive support, engage in activities, and connect with other services*."

**Germany** and the Jugendhilfe model:

*The model focuses on **system and coordination**. Jugendhilfe is not a single service, but a system planned according to needs, where various public and non-public services are connected in a network."*

**Greece** and the Administrative Unit model

"*The model focuses on **adapting the service to the user**. NJSH shows how a specific service can be reorganized around the adolescent's needs, combining access, privacy, professional quality, prevention, and referral."*

## 8. ADAPTING TO THE CONTEXT OF ALBANIA

### 8.1 The current Albanian context

The Albanian model of governance for youth policies and services is organized in a multi-level and cross-sectoral manner, where responsibilities for youth are shared among central institutions, the National Youth Agency (AKR), local self-government units, and civil society actors.

At the national level, the Council of Ministers and the Ministry responsible for youth (currently, the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Youth) determine the strategic orientations and national policies for youth, while the strategic framework is specifically defined by the National Youth Strategy 2022–2029 and its Action Plan. The ministry responsible for youth is responsible for directing and coordinating youth policy, while cooperating with other ministries to integrate the youth dimension into sectoral policies.

AKR is the main public institution specialized in implementing youth policies and programs. It supports the implementation of national policies, manages and develops programs for youth, supports youth organizations, and contributes to strengthening youth participation and empowerment.

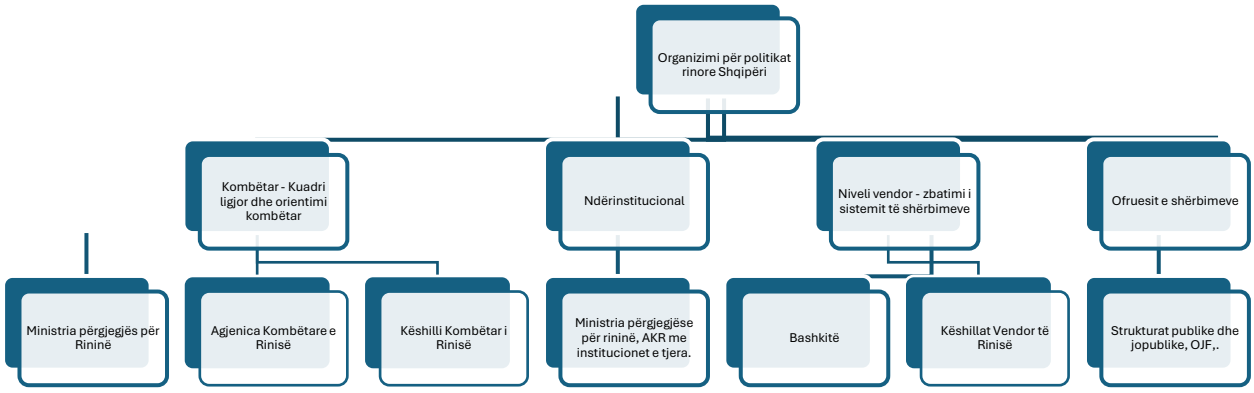
Additionally, at the national level, the National Youth Council (NRC) is organized and operates. The NRC is a structured mechanism aimed at dialogue between central state institutions and young people within the framework of youth policies.

At the local self-government level, municipalities are the main actors in implementing policies and services in the territory. Within the framework of decentralization and the responsibilities of local self-government, municipalities can develop and support initiatives and services related to youth, through their structures and institutions and in cooperation with other local actors. At this level, youth policies are connected to areas such as social services, culture, sports, non-formal education, employment, youth spaces, and civic participation.

At the local level, Local Youth Councils (KVR) operate as mechanisms for youth participation in local issues. The RCC aims to create a structured channel between young people and the municipality, contributing to the identification of needs, consultation, and inclusion of young people in local decision-making processes. This creates significant potential for linking youth participation with the design and improvement of services.

Inter-institutional coordination is an important element, as issues affecting young people are spread across several policies and institutions. The ministry responsible for youth and AKR cooperate with line ministries, municipalities, public institutions, local government agencies, and civil society organizations to ensure that youth policy objectives are reflected in concrete interventions and services.

Service providers include: central public institutions, municipalities, educational and healthcare institutions, social service providers, youth organizations, and civil society organizations, as well as community structures and other public or non-public actors. This creates a distributed ecosystem of youth services, where a young person can receive information, education and guidance, social support, health services, career guidance, psychosocial support, or opportunities for civic participation from various institutions and providers.




**Youth policy**

Youth policy in Albania is built on an intersectoral and multi-level approach, where responsibilities for policy development and implementation are distributed among central institutions, the ministry responsible for youth, AKR, local self-government units, and civil society actors. Youth policy is not treated as an isolated field but relates to education, employment and skills, welfare and social inclusion, health, culture, sports, civic participation, and youth empowerment.

The National Youth Strategy 2022–2029 constitutes the main strategic document, defining priorities, objectives, and measures to improve conditions and opportunities for young people. Youth policy is intertwined with sectoral policies of other ministries, seeking the integration of young people's perspectives into various fields of public policy.

At the local level, municipalities are responsible for adapting and implementing policies and interventions in accordance with the needs of local communities. Local youth policies can be linked to social services, non-formal education and education, culture, sports, employment, youth spaces, and civic participation.

Youth participation is an important part of youth policy development. KVR, youth organizations, and other consultation mechanisms create channels for youth involvement in identifying needs,

policy consultation, and decision-making processes. This creates the opportunity for youth policy to develop not only for young people but also with young people. The implementation of youth policy is also supported by civil society organizations, youth organizations, and international partners, who contribute through programs, projects, funding, research, advocacy, and capacity building. These actors complement public interventions and create additional opportunities for participation, skills development, and social inclusion of young people.

**The youth service system.**

The Albanian youth services system is distributed and cross-sectoral, as there is no single integrated youth service system. Services related to the needs of young people are provided by various public and private institutions and are integrated into sectors such as education, employment, social services, healthcare, culture, sports, information, and civic participation. For this reason, young people may need to contact several institutions or different providers to address interrelated needs.

- **Responsible ministries and public institutions** —for various sectors—design and manage services in the respective fields.
- **Municipalities -** provide and coordinate services across the territory. Depending on local organization, young people can access social services, cultural and sports activities, youth spaces, non-formal education activities, information and guidance, as well as various support programs for young people.
- **Youth centers and youth spaces** – can function as points of contact and information for young people, offering or mediating activities, programs, orientation, non-formal education, participation opportunities, and connections with other services. Their role may vary depending on the territory and organizational model.
- **Civil society organizations and youth/youth organizations** - They provide or support services and programs in areas such as youth empowerment and participation, career guidance, social inclusion, skills, health and well-being, psychosocial support, volunteering, and community development. In many cases, they complement public services or provide interventions for specific groups of young people.
- **Digital services** constitute an increasingly important component of access to services. Platforms like e-Albania enable online access to a large number of public services.

### 8.2 Legislation and strategic documents

The Albanian youth framework is based on specific youth legislation, national strategic documents, and sectoral legislation that regulates services and rights important to young people.

Law no. 75/2019 "On Youth" (as amended) constitutes the main legal basis for youth policy in Albania. The law defines the principles, institutional responsibilities, and mechanisms for the

development of youth policies, as well as creates the basis for youth participation and the functioning of youth structures at the central and local levels.

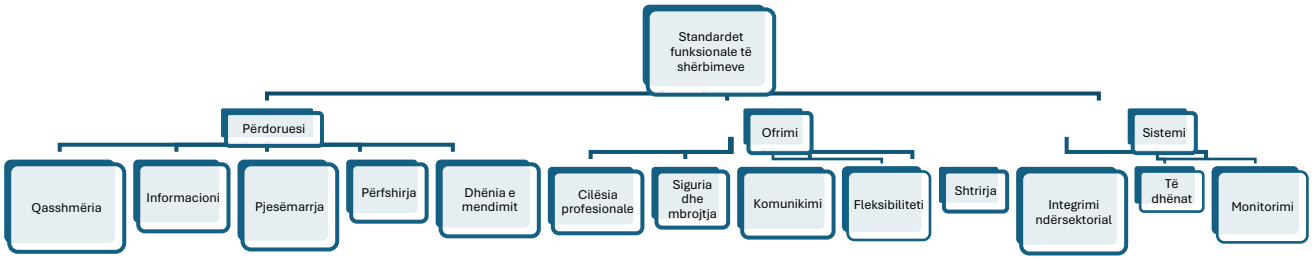
The National Youth Strategy 2022–2029 is the main strategic document guiding Albanian youth policy. It sets objectives and measures in areas related to youth participation and empowerment, skills development and employment, welfare, social inclusion, and youth support.

Law no. 139/2015 "On Local Self-Government" (as amended) establishes the basis for the role of municipalities in addressing the needs of communities and in providing local functions and services. Sectoral legislation complements the specific framework for youth. The rights and needs of young people are affected by legislation in the fields of education, employment, social protection, health, non-discrimination, personal data protection, culture, sports, and civic participation.

**Standards for services.**

In Albania, the requirements and standards for providing public services are mainly determined sectorally, according to the nature of the service and the relevant legal and institutional framework. There is no unified horizontal framework that jointly defines the criteria for services specifically targeted at young people, regardless of the sector or provider.

A young person using services in various fields may face different demands, procedures, and forms of delivery. This situation does not imply a lack of standards for services in specific sectors, but rather indicates the absence of a common framework for the youthful dimension of services.




### 8.3 Main Features of the Current System

From the analysis of the institutional framework, policies, and the way services are provided to young people in Albania, the current system presents several key characteristics:

- **Multi-level approach** - Youth policies and services are developed at several levels of governance, including central and local levels.
- **Intersectoral organization** - Youth services are not limited to a single sector but are offered through various sectoral institutions and programs.
- **Distribution of services among different providers** - Services and opportunities for youth are offered by central and local public institutions, sectoral institutions, youth centers and spaces, civil society organizations and youth organizations, as well as other non-public actors.
- **The importance of the local level** - Depending on local capacities and priorities, municipalities can support youth spaces, activities, social services, non-formal education programs, community initiatives, and youth participation mechanisms.
- **The existence of mechanisms for youth participation** - KVR, youth organizations, and consultation mechanisms create channels for youth involvement in identifying needs, policy consultation, and decision-making processes.
- **Common Framework for ShMRI** - Although there are standards, rules, and sectoral requirements for different services, they do not form a common framework that defines the criteria for ShMRI horizontally.
- **Integration of physical and digital services** - Access to services is realized through physical points of delivery, community structures, and other contact channels, while digital channels are taking on an increasingly important role in information and access.
- **Dependence on capacities and territorial conditions** - The manner and level of service delivery may vary between municipalities and territories, depending on institutional capacities, financial resources, existing structures, and local partnerships.
- **Need for stronger coordination and orientation between services** - The distribution of services between sectors and different providers creates the need for mechanisms that help young people identify the right service, receive clear information, and, when necessary, refer them to another service.
- **Approach to ShMR** - The current model creates a foundation on which a more unified approach to ShMR can be built. This approach can serve as a complementary framework to sectoral standards, placing experience, needs, and youth participation at the center.

### 8.4 Assessment of the adaptation of international practices for Albania

The analysis of selected models in Italy, Germany, and Greece shows that each of them offers elements that may be of interest for the development of ShMR in Albania. However, these elements cannot be transferred directly, as they have developed within different legal, institutional, financial, and social systems. For this reason, adaptation should be understood as the process of translating the valid principles and functions of these models into existing Albanian structures and mechanisms, and not as a copy of a foreign model.

In this regard, from the Italian model, the function of the youth space as an access point for information, orientation, activities, and interaction with the community is of particular interest. For Albania, this function can be strengthened through existing youth centers and spaces, without necessarily requiring the creation of new structures.

From the German model, the connection between local planning, coordination, and the network of providers is of interest. For Albania, this element is important in assessing the role that the local level can play in identifying the needs of young people, planning services, and coordinating actors who provide support to young people.

From the Greek model, it is of interest to orient the service towards the specific needs of the user, especially through a combination of professional support, information, counseling, prevention, and referral. These elements can be used to improve how existing services identify the needs of young people and connect them with the appropriate services.

Beyond the differences between models, the analysis highlights several elements that can be considered transferable to the Albanian context: accessibility, user orientation, youth participation, coordination between services, clear information, inclusion, professionalism, and continuous improvement.

### 8.4.1 Adaptation approach for Albania

From the analysis of the Albanian context, the adaptation of the ShMR should start from the existing system and not create a parallel system. The process can begin with identifying services and structures important to young people, evaluating user experience, and identifying barriers that limit access, information, participation, or effective use of the service. On this basis, necessary changes can be determined in the way of informing, communicating, providing, referring, and involving young people.

Adaptation can be seen at three interrelated levels. At the user level, the focus is placed on the young person's experience, accessibility, understanding of information, and the ability to express needs and provide feedback. At the delivery level, attention is focused on how services are organized and delivered, including communication, access channels, procedures, schedules, staff capacities, and referral mechanisms. At the system level, the focus is related to inter-institutional coordination, planning, common standards, participation mechanisms, financing, and monitoring.

This approach positions the ShMR as an improving dimension of existing services, rather than as a new category of services. Implementation can be gradual, starting with feasible changes in access, information, and communication, and continuing, as needed, with changes in organization, coordination, and monitoring mechanisms. In this way, adaptation can be linked to the real capacities and conditions of institutions and territories, while the experience of young people is used as one of the main resources to identify needs and improve services.

### 8.4.2 Conclusion of the evaluation

Overall, the comparative analysis shows that Albania does not need to copy one of the analyzed models but can benefit from the different functions and principles they offer. From the Italian model, proximity to the community and the role of youth spaces as points of access, information, and interaction are of interest; from the German model, planning according to needs, coordination, and connection between different actors and providers; while from the Greek model, the service orientation is oriented towards user needs, professional support, and referral mechanisms.

These elements can be part of an Albanian approach to the ShMR, which is built upon existing structures and services and adapts them according to the needs and experience of young people. In this sense, ShMR can be treated as a horizontal approach to improving the way design, access, delivery, coordination, and evaluation of services are made, meeting rather than replacing sectoral standards and requirements.

The proposed approach thus aims to create a clearer link between the user, the delivery, and the system: the needs and experiences of young people should inform how services are organized; providers should have mechanisms for information, access, support, and referral; while the system should ensure coordination, common standards, participation, monitoring, and continuous improvement.

Detailing how these elements can be adapted in Albania, the structures where they can be applied, the necessary changes, the responsible actors, and the implementation conditions is presented in Annex no. 1 "Matrix for adapting international practices for Albania."

## 9. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CONTEXTUALIZATION IN ALBANIA

In the Albanian context, the following recommendations aim to create an integrated approach to ShMR, building on existing structures and strengthening the link between the political and strategic framework, institutions, service providers, and the youth themselves. The recommendations distinguish between interventions that can be implemented by adapting existing practices and those that require institutional, organizational, financial, or regulatory changes.

### 9.1 Legislation and strategic documents

The development of ShMR requires a clear framework that defines the principles, responsibilities, and standards that must be respected in providing services to young people. In this regard, it is recommended to:

- the existing legal and sub-legal framework is reviewed to identify provisions that could support the integration of ShMR principles into existing services;
- the dimensions of the ShMR are defined: accessibility, adaptability, inclusion, quality, participation;

- common guidelines/criteria are developed for ShMR, which can be used by central institutions, municipalities, and service providers;
- the possibility of integrating the objectives for ShMR into the relevant strategic documents, including youth policies and sectoral documents, is being examined;
- it is ensured that the development of ShMR is linked to existing sectoral policies.

A national guiding document for ShMR could serve as a practical tool to translate general principles into concrete requirements for planning and service delivery.

### 9.2 Institutional Organization

The experience of the analyzed countries shows the importance of a clear division of roles between the central level, the local level, and service providers. For Albania, this requires a mechanism that ensures coordination without creating unnecessary parallel structures. It is recommended:

- strengthening the role of AKR as a central actor in promoting, coordinating, and supporting the development of ShMR;
- defining the role of AKR in guiding policies and ensuring coherence between youth policies and services;
- assessing the possibility of creating or formalizing an inter-institutional mechanism for ShMR, involving central institutions, local government representatives, and providers;
- strengthening the role of municipalities in identifying the local needs of young people, planning services, coordinating providers, and monitoring access and quality;
- the development of cooperation mechanisms between municipalities, central institutions, public services, and civil society NGOs;
- the definition of contact points and responsibilities for the Internal Medical Service at the institutional and local levels.

In this model, the central level would have a role in guidance, standardization, coordination, and support, while the local level would play an important role in identifying needs, planning, and organizing delivery, in accordance with the local context.

### 9.3 Design, Organization, and Service Delivery

One of the main lessons from international practices is that a user-friendly service is not defined solely by the type of service, but by the user's experience accessing and using it. It is recommended:

- assessing the needs of young people before creating or reorganizing the service;
- adapting procedures, schedules, contact channels, and information to how young people use the services;
- the use of existing youth spaces as points of access, information, guidance, and reference;
- gradual development of one-stop or integrated access point models, where young people can receive information and guidance for more than one service;
- creating clear channels of reference between services and institutions;

- defining a clear process from identifying the need to guidance, referral, follow-up, and completion of support.

One-stop access does not necessarily imply the physical integration of all services into one structure. It can also be realized through a coordinated information and orientation point that connects the young person with the respective service.

### 9.4 Participation

Youth participation should be treated as part of the planning and improvement of services and not just as periodic consultation. It is recommended:

- the systematic involvement of the KKR, KVR, youth organizations, and civil society in the consultation processes;
- the use of consultations with young people to identify needs and barriers to access;
- involving young people in the design and testing of new services;
- the use of focus groups, surveys, public consultations, and digital mechanisms for gathering opinions;
- the creation of regular feedback mechanisms for user experience;
- the gradual transition from consultation to co-creation, where young people participate in defining how a service should function;
- documenting and communicating how young people's opinions have been taken into account in decision-making.

The principle "Nothing for the youth, without the youth!" can be used as a guiding principle for this process, ensuring that participation is linked to concrete decision-making and not just to gathering opinions.

### 9.5 Inclusion

ShMR should be accessible to all young people, but equal access does not necessarily mean identical treatment. It is recommended:

- for each service, obstacles that may hinder young people's access should be identified;
- to establish concrete measures to address them. These measures may include physical and digital access, information in appropriate forms, community outreach, flexible hours, support in orientation and referral, and cooperation with organizations working with the relevant groups.

The principle of "Leaving no one behind" should be integrated as part of the planning, delivery, and monitoring of ShMR.

### 9.6 Communication and digitalization

Clear and accessible information is a fundamental component of a ShMR. It is recommended:

- the use of clear, understandable, and youth-appropriate language;
- publishing information through various channels, combining physical and digital channels;
- the use of institutional pages and social networks for information and guidance;
- developing content tailored for communication tools;
- ensuring that the information is up to date and clearly contains the criteria, procedures, documents, costs, and relevant contacts;
- gradual development of opportunities for information, application, communication, or online follow-up, depending on the nature of the service;
- studying the possibilities for digital orientation and referral systems between services;
- ensuring digital accessibility and the protection of personal data.

Digitalization should be seen as a tool for expanding access and improving communication, not as an automatic replacement for physical channels. For young people facing digital barriers, alternative forms of access should also be made available.

### 9.7 Monitoring, Evaluation, and Gathering Opinions

The development of ShMR requires a simple and usable system to measure not only the number of services or users but also their quality, accessibility, and outcomes. It is recommended to identify:

- accessibility indicators, including use by different groups of young people;
- indicators for the use and scope of the service;
- indicators for quality and delivery time;
- indicators of user satisfaction and experience;
- indicators of results and changes that the service aims to create;
- indicators for the referral and continuity of support;
- indicators for youth participation in the design and improvement of the service.

Gathering opinions from young people should be a regular part of the monitoring process. The collected data should be used for decision-making and improvement, not just for reporting.

### 9.8 Financing and sustainability

The sustainability of ShMR requires that financing is not based solely on short-term projects, but requires a combination of public resources and partnerships, adapting financing mechanisms to the nature of the service. It is recommended:

- gradual integration of ShMR costs into public planning and budgeting;
- the use of the state budget for functions and mechanisms of national importance;
- the inclusion of ShMR in municipal budgets, according to local needs and priorities;
- the use of grants and funding schemes for piloting and developing new models;
- encouraging co-financing between the central and local levels and other partners;

- developing partnerships with civil society organizations, educational institutions, the private sector, and other actors, according to the nature of the service;
- linking funding to defined objectives, results, and indicators;
- assessing the sustainability of any new model before its expansion.

In cases where a service is piloted through external financing or for the first time, the design phase must specify what happens after the funding ends, who will assume the functions, which costs will continue, and from which source they will be covered.

### 10. Summary of recommendations

The analysis of the selected models shows that ShMR do not constitute a separate or unified category of services, but rather an approach to how services are planned, organized, delivered, and improved in response to the needs of young people. Although the analyzed systems differ in institutional organization, level of decentralization, financing methods, and types of services, they share some important principles that are also relevant to the Albanian context.

**I. What we learn from the three countries**

- The Italian model highlights the importance of spaces and services close to the community, which can function as points of access, information, guidance, activity, and connection of young people with the community. The experience of QAR shows that a youth service can also be built by adapting and activating existing structures, creating a more accessible environment better suited to the needs of young people.
- The German model highlights the importance of decentralized organization, local planning, and service coordination. The experience of Jugendhilfe and open youth work shows the importance of linking needs identification, planning, financing, service delivery, and youth participation. This highlights the important role that the local level can play in creating services that respond to the conditions and needs of the community.
- The Greek model highlights the importance of orienting the service towards user needs, a multidisciplinary approach, and mechanisms for prevention, support, and referral. The experience of the Adolescent Health Units demonstrates the importance of collaboration between professionals and different sectors, as well as creating functional connections with other services, depending on the user's needs.

Beyond their differences, all three models show that a functional ShMR requires a combination of accessibility, adaptability, inclusion, quality, participation, and elements such as information, coordination, quality, and continuous improvement mechanisms. These elements do not operate in isolation but as part of an interconnected system.

**II. From models to adaptation in Albania**

- Some elements can be adapted in Albania with relatively limited changes. This particularly includes: clear and tailored information for young people; use of digital channels and social

networks; consultation and involvement of young people; regular mechanisms for gathering opinions; adjustment of schedules, procedures, and contact methods; use of existing youth spaces as points of information, guidance, and activity; inclusion of the youth perspective in the design and improvement of services; use of user data and feedback for continuous improvement.

- Some elements have significant transfer potential but require changes in the way services are organized. This includes local coordination mechanisms, service mapping, referral procedures, inter-institutional cooperation, needs-based planning, and deployment approaches.

## III. What needs to be adapted to the Albanian context

- Adaptation should initially focus on strengthening existing structures, rather than creating a parallel system of youth services. This implies clarifying the roles between the central and local levels, reinforcing the coordinating role of institutions responsible for youth, involving municipalities in the planning and delivery of services, and creating more functional connections among providers.
- Regarding the adaptation of the regulatory and strategic framework to create a common reference for ShMR, it is necessary that standards and guidelines be sufficient to ensure a common level of quality, but also flexible for implementation in different local contexts.
- Adapting financing and sustainability mechanisms requires that the creation of new models be evaluated not only for piloting potential but also for how it can be financed and institutionalized after the initial funding ends. For this reason, sustainability must be considered from the service design phase.

## IV. Towards Youth-Friendly Services in Albania

- At the user level, priority should be given to improving access, information, communication, inclusion, and participation of young people. Services must be understandable, accessible, and adapted to the different circumstances of users.
- At the delivery level, the methods of designing and organizing services, the capacities of providers, referral mechanisms, and cooperation between services must be strengthened. Within this framework, integrated points of information and orientation can be gradually developed, which can also function as a coordinating and referential function, without necessarily requiring the creation of a new physical structure.
- At the system level, a clearer institutional and regulatory framework is needed, coordination mechanisms, ShMR standards, more sustainable funding, and monitoring and evaluation mechanisms that measure not only activities and the number of users but also accessibility, youth experience, quality, results, and the use of feedback for improvement.

## Annex no. 1 – "Matrix for adapting international practices for Albania"

| Field / element | Source model | What can be taken as a lesson | The level of adaptation in Albania | Possible adaptation action | Level | Ma |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **The access point for youth** | ITALY–QAR | Youth spaces can function as points of information, orientation, activity, and interaction | Within existing structures | Assessment and strengthening of the functions of existing youth spaces | User/Offering | Mu you you org |
| **Information and guidance** | Italy/Greece | Clear and accessible information facilitates the use of services | Within existing structures | Improving content, language, channels, and the way information is presented | User/Offering | Inst mu pro |
| **Needs-based planning** | Germany–Jugendhilfe | Planning is linked to the needs of the territory and the capacities of the providers | Institutional/organizational | Integrating the needs of young people into local service planning processes | The System | Mu resp inst pro |
| **Service mapping** | Germany/Italy | Identifying services and actors facilitates orientation and coordination | Within existing structures | Creating or updating service maps and touchpoints | The System | Mu inst pro |
| **Inter-institutional coordination** | Germany | The connection between public institutions and various providers increases the coherence of services | Institutional/organizational | Defining coordination channels, roles, and responsibilities | The System | Cer inst mu pro NG |
| **Referral between services** | Greece/Germany | The user should be able to orient themselves toward the most suitable service according to their needs | Institutional/organizational | Identification of contact points, basic referral procedures, and, depending on the case, case follow-up | Offering/System | Pro mu sect inst |
| **User needs orientation** | Greece–NjShA | The organization of the service takes into | Within existing structures | Involving the youth perspective in the design, | User/Offering | Pro inst you |



Support Albanian youth civic participation, community engagement and volunteerism, through promoting inclusive, gender responsive and structured dialogue and strengthening youth capacities at the central and local levels
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| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | account the specific needs of the user | | adaptation, and evaluation of services | | |
| **accessibility** | All three models | It relates not only to physical space but also to information, time, costs, and digital channels | Within structures / Institutional | Identification of obstacles and adjustment of access methods according to the characteristics of the service | User/Offering | All |
| **Youth participation** | All three models | Participation can be used to identify needs and improve services | Within structures / System | A more systematic link between participation mechanisms and the planning and evaluation of services | User/System | AK mu KK you org |
| **Communication and language** | Italy/Greece | The way of communication affects the understanding and use of the service | Within existing structures | Using clear, understandable, and non-stigmatizing language | User | All |
| **Combining physical and digital channels** | Italy/Greece | Digital channels can complement and expand physical access | Within existing structures | Development of digital channels while preserving physical alternatives for users facing digital barriers | User/Offering | Inst mu pro |
| **Inclusion and addressing barriers** | All three models | Services must take into account various barriers that affect access and usage | Within the structures/Institutions | Identification of specific barriers and adaptation of information, access, and delivery methods | User/Offering | Pro mu org |
| **Professional capacities** | Germany/Greece | The quality of service is also related to the competencies of the staff and professional cooperation | Institutional/organizational | Identifying the necessary competencies and planning professional development | Offering | Inst mu pro |
| **User feedback** | All three models | User experience can be used as a resource to | Within existing structures | Establishing regular mechanisms for collecting, | User / Offering | Pro mu |



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| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | improve the service | | analyzing, and using feedback | | |
| **Monitoring and evaluation** | All three models | Monitoring must go beyond measuring activities and take into account access, quality, and results | Institutional/System | Gradual integration of ShMR indicators into existing monitoring and reporting mechanisms | The System | Inst mu pro |
| **Financing and sustainability** | Italy/Germany | The continuity of services requires institutional and financial support | Systemic development | Inclusion of costs and service functions in public planning and budgeting, as appropriate | The System | Cer inst mu pro |
| **The common framework for ShMR** | Elements from all three models | Common principles can complement existing sectoral standards | Systemic development | Drafting common guidelines or criteria for the ShMR, without replacing sectoral requirements | The System | The resp you sect inst mu |
| **Central-local coordination** | All three models | The link between central policy and local implementation is important for the coherence of services | Systemic development | Strengthening coordination mechanisms and clearer definition of roles in implementation, monitoring, and improvement | The System | The resp you mu sect inst |



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