



THIRD ROUND

APPLICATION FORM



<https://www.youthforum.org/topics/youthcapital>



1-VISUAL FOR PODGORICA'S EYC CANDIDACY

EUROPEAN YOUTH CAPITAL (EYC) SECOND ROUND APPLICATION FORM

1. APPLICANT

Municipality	Capital City Podgorica
Region	Central Region
State	Montenegro
Total population	179.505
Population under 35 years old	81.748

2. MUNICIPAL LEGAL REPRESENTATIVE

Surname	Mujovic		
First Name	Sasa		
Position	Mayor		
Address	Street/Number Njegoseva 13	Street/Number er Njegoseva 13	Street/Number Njegoseva 13
Phone	0038220664444		
E-Mail	gradonacelnik@podgorica.me		

Municipal Service Coordinator			
Surname	Borovinic Bojovic		
First Name	Jelena		
Position	President of the City Assembly		
Address	Street/number Njegoseva 20	Postal code 81000	City Podgorica
Phone	0038220482031		
E-Mail	predsjednica@podgorica.me		
Webpage of the city	www.podgorica.me		
Contact person (if different than the two persons above)			
Surname	Anđušić		
First Name	Slađana		
Position	Secretary for local self-government and cooperation with civil society		
Address	Street/number Vuka Karadžića 16	Postal code 81000	City Podgorica
Phone	0038220447180; 0038220447187		
E-Mail	lokalna.samouprava@podgorica.me kanc.za.mlade@podgorica.me		

3. SUPPORTING YOUTH STRUCTURE(S)¹

Name of Organisation	National Youth Council of Montenegro (Mreža za mlade Crne Gore)			
Address of Organisation	Street/Number Princeze Ksenije 91	Postal Code 81000	City Podgorica	State Montenegro
Phone	0038269768686			
E-Mail	mrezazamlade.cg@gmail.com			
Web page	www.mmcg.me			
	Contact Person			
Surname	Perazić			
First Name	Vladimir			
Position	Secretary General			
Address	Street/Number Vasa Raickovica 5	Postal Code 81000	City Podgorica	State Montenegro
Phone	0038269768686			
E-Mail	vladimir.mmcg@gmail.com			

Informal consortium of civil society organisations active in Podgorica coordinated by
(more details in the Annex II):

Name of Organisation	NGO Center for Youth Education (Centar za omladinsku edukaciju)			
Address of Organisation	Street/Number Trg Nikole Kovacevica/13	Postal Code 81000	City Podgorica	State Montenegro

¹ Please refer to the Annex II for clarification.

Phone	0038267886858			
E-Mail	info@nvocoe.me			
Web page	www.nvocoe.me			
	Contact Person			
Surname	Radovic			
First Name	Jugoslav			
Position	Executive Director and Founder			
Address	Street/Number Milosa Obilica	Postal Code 81000	City Podgorica	State Montenegro
Phone	0038267886858			
E-Mail	jugoslav@nvocoe.me			

Each supporting organization brings a clear, complementary role rooted in its expertise and track record of collaboration with the City. Together, these organizations will co-lead on the programme design and implementation and also guarantee transparency, inclusivity, and meaningful co-decision-making. Youth organizations will take active roles in established Steering Committee and thematic working groups aligned with EYC focus areas, as well as in project monitoring and evaluation through the Quality Assurance Team. These channels ensure that young people are not consulted in a symbolic way, but instead have institutionalized power to shape priorities, oversee implementation, and hold decision-makers accountable.

The diversity of organizations in the Steering Committee reflects the city's principle that inclusion is the rule, not an exception. For Montenegro, it is natural that Roma youth organizations, disability associations, LGBTIQ+ groups, pupils and students, youth activists, entrepreneurs, cultural activists, peer-educators, scouts and youth workers all sit at the same table. This collective approach means that no group is being "fitted in," but rather that all groups co-create as equal partners.

Each organization will contribute through its strengths as outlined in the Annex. The municipality has worked with all these partners in previous initiatives, from Roma inclusion projects, cultural festivals, and volunteering actions, to health and well-being programs and youth entrepreneurship incubators. This history of collaboration demonstrates both capacity and reliability in managing joint projects of significant scale.

4. PODGORICA'S HOSTING INFRASTRUCTURE

Podgorica, capital of Montenegro, is strategically prepared to host the European Youth Capital (EYC) 2028, offering a blend of modern infrastructure, diverse accommodation and sustainable transport options. The city's commitment to accessibility and ongoing infrastructural projects further solidify its readiness to support a wide array of international meetings, youth-oriented events, and large-scale public gatherings. Podgorica plans to prioritize and repurpose existing infrastructure to reduce new construction to few strategic venues (e.g. multifunctional center which will be built with sustainability and accessibility as core principles). Here are the key aspects of Podgorica's infrastructure (visual map provided in the annex):

1. Venues for youth and public events

Podgorica has a diverse and well-distributed network of over 30 venues suited for youth-focused events, ranging from smaller workshops to large-scale public gatherings. These spaces include youth hubs, cultural centers, sports arenas, and professional conference facilities. Most of the major venues are at least partially adapted for persons with disabilities, and many are fully accessible—including the City Assembly building, largest sports arenas and hotels.

Key youth-specific venues: Youth Center Podgorica, DKC “Pomorandža”, Youth Club “Zabjelo”, and the modern Zona mladih hub. These venues accommodate 40–100 people and are ideal for non-formal education, community activities, and creative programs. Additionally, Birziminium Hub supports digital skills and entrepreneurship development, with tech-equipped rooms (20 ppl capacity) and barrier-free access; and CKZ Ribnica (Center for Cultural Events) hosts music and culture events and is municipal partner hosting such youth events for 500-600 people.

High-capacity, centrally located culture venues: KIC “Budo Tomović” with its main (444-seat) and multimedia (100-seat) halls; Montenegrin National Theatre (CNP) and City Theatre, each with halls accommodating between 120 to 378 attendees; Music center, Library, Museums and Galleries (e.g. Kuslev House and Gallery Risto Stijović), used for concerts, projections, exhibitions and literary events, though not all are fully accessible.

Sports and large-scale event infrastructure: Morača Sports Center (5,500 seats), City Stadium (11,615 seats), and Stadium of Small Sports (2,150 seats), as well as other local sport facilities provide excellent settings for large-scale events such as festivals, concerts and competitions. The University Sports Center (770 seats) offers a convenient, youth-accessible indoor venue next to student housing.

Professional events, conferences, and high-profile meetings can be hosted at Science & Technology Park, as well as Hotel Hilton, Hotel Voco, and Hotel Ramada, each equipped with multiple conference halls (30–500+ seats) and fully accessible facilities.

Innovation and co-working spaces like M-tel fabrika, NEST, Upbeat Hub, UDG Entrepreneurial Nest and the Science & Technology Park, provide space for panels, hackathons, workshops and seminars.

Open-air venues: Podgorica's natural landscapes, including its five rivers and green spaces like Gorica Hill, Tološi Forest, old Roman settlement Doclea (Duklja) provide picturesque settings for open-air events. These areas, as well as city's squares and parks are suitable for informal gatherings, youth fairs, and eco-friendly activities.

Furthermore, municipalities of Cetinje, Danilovgrad, Tuzi and Zeta are all within 20min drive from

Podgorica city center and localities and venues in those municipalities will be utilized as needed.

2. Accommodation capacity

Podgorica's accommodation options cater to a range of budgets and preferences. The total estimated accommodation capacity across hotels, dorms, and rentals ranges between 3,000 to 4,000 beds, with additional support potentially coming from nearby municipalities such as Zeta, Tuzi, and Danilovgrad (all within 10-20minutes drive from Podgorica city center).

Hotels: High-end hotels such as Hilton Podgorica Crna Gora, Crowne Plaza, Hotel Voco, and Hotel Ramada offer full accessibility, quality amenities, and central locations. Combined, these venues can host several hundred guests and also serve as event sites.

Student dormitories: Located in university areas and adjacent to key venues like the University Sports Center, dormitories will play a central role in accommodating young EYC participants affordably. A new dormitory is planned by 2028 in partnership with the Ministry of Education to increase capacity.

Private rentals: Platforms like Airbnb and Booking.com provide flexible housing options for longer stays and group travel. Accessibility features vary but can be filtered in booking platforms.

3. Transportation and accessibility

Podgorica's transportation infrastructure is well-developed, ensuring seamless connectivity for participants traveling to and within the city. As part of the survey on youth mobility needs conducted during the European Mobility Week 2025, an interactive map of all existing public transport lines was added to the [Podgorica – European Youth Capital 2028 website](#), enabling young people to easily access route information and plan their movement across the city. In addition, the official candidacy website includes an Accessibility button, designed to ensure that persons with disabilities can easily access and navigate the platform, reinforcing the inclusiveness of the entire application process.

- **International access:** Podgorica International Airport connects the city to major European hubs and is located 11 km from the city center. The airport has implemented features to assist visually impaired passengers, including tactile guide paths and Braille signage. Other nearby airports are Tivat (MNE, 87km), Tirana (ALB, 140km) and Dubrovnik (CRO, 136km).
- **Public transportation** - The city's bus network covers 25 lines with over 670 stops. Data is integrated into Google Maps for ease of navigation. Some buses are equipped with accessibility features and all "blue" buses are currently free for pupils of primary and secondary schools. Plans are underway to improve accessibility, expand and modernize the bus network, further enhancing mobility during the EYC. Additionally, taxis are affordable with a fare of 60-90 eurocent per km.
- **Sustainable and green mobility** – Current developments include public bike-sharing systems and expanded pedestrian zones, as well as bike lanes, micro-mobility zones, slower and limited car travel in the urban center. The secretariat of transport plans to introduce further improvements to provide a safe and an eco-conscious way for EYC's participants to explore the city. Currently the city is investing in electric vehicle infrastructure (Zelenilo acquired three MG4 electric cars powered almost entirely by solar panels installed on the company's headquarters building) and one taxi company has only electric cars on offer. Podgorica is developing and implementing a range of innovative,

eco-friendly practices aimed at improving energy efficiency, urban sustainability, and resilience to climate change. These initiatives include the installation of **solar panels** on public buildings to promote renewable energy use, the **greening of urban spaces** such as bus stops to enhance biodiversity and reduce the heat island effect, and the **application of nature-based solutions** to strengthen the city's capacity to adapt to climate impacts. The city is also advancing the concept of **rainwater collection and reuse** as a sustainable way to manage water resources in urban areas. In addition, the introduction of **green roofs** on key public buildings will further improve energy performance, reduce CO₂ emissions, and contribute to a healthier urban environment. Through these practices, Podgorica demonstrates a strong commitment to sustainability, innovation, and climate resilience — key priorities in creating a greener and more livable city for future generations.

- **Accessibility for persons with disabilities** - Podgorica is actively working to improve infrastructure for individuals with disabilities, including the installation of tactile paths and sound traffic lights. Specialized taxi services are available. Progress in improving accessibility is made with ramps and elevators in some public buildings (including venues planned for use by EYC), and designated seating in public transport. Continued efforts are planned to ensure that infrastructure used during the EYC is fully inclusive and compliant with international accessibility standards.

4. Planned infrastructure projects

Podgorica plans several infrastructural projects that will additionally provide accessible and sustainable spaces for youth activities and bolster its capacity for EYC 2028:

- **Construct a new student dormitory** in partnership with the Ministry of Education.
- **Establish the Ubli Youth Club** to enhance youth engagement in rural areas.
- **Initiate development of the multifunctional youth center** for cultural and creative activities.
- **Open a Center for sustainable development, as envisaged in the city's development strategy**, focused on innovation and sustainable development.

5. Past experiences and current practices

Podgorica and its partner institutions have proven capable of hosting complex, multi-sectoral events that combine cultural, educational, and sports dimensions. During the **Games of the Small States of Europe 2019**, Montenegro welcomed over 800 athletes from nine countries, with several disciplines— including swimming—held at Podgorica's Morača Sports Center, a venue meeting international standards for accessibility and logistics. This experience strengthened coordination between local authorities, sports federations, and volunteer networks. Furthermore, in the cultural field, Podgorica annually hosts **UnderhillFest**, an international documentary film festival that gathers regional and European filmmakers, youth audiences, and NGOs active in human rights and creative education. Through screenings, workshops, and public debates, the festival successfully reaches out to different youth groups.

Building on this foundation, the city will apply a **multidisciplinary event-management model** for the European Youth Capital 2028, integrating youth participation, volunteering, and digital coordination tools throughout all stages of planning. Future EYC activities will mobilize hundreds of local volunteers, young people, youth workers, and student organizations, trained in youth work principles as well as logistics, communication, sustainability, and hospitality—ensuring that large-

scale events are both efficiently executed and serve as learning and empowerment opportunities for young people.

5. INFORMATION ON PODGORICA CAPITAL CITY

Podgorica, the capital of Montenegro, is a dynamic and evolving city hosting one third of Montenegro's population and leading on various developments and trends, including growing awareness of the importance of youth-centered development. Young people (15-29 age), according to the 2023 census, represent 18% of the population in Podgorica, showing negative demographic and brain-drain trends. While significant steps have been taken to support young people, including the establishment of a Municipal Youth Office and the adoption of local youth policy documents, systemic challenges persist, also related to national level and vertical coordination, and now the city intends to tackle them together with young people. Here is an overview of the city's youth landscape, including its historical evolution, current policies, structural support, and strategic links at national and European levels. The analysis is drafted by expert on youth participation, youth work and youth policy and grounded in a participatory process that included:

- Focus groups with young people (in partnership with Centre for Youth Education)
- Consultations with young people, CSOs, the Youth Office, municipal departments and the Ministry of Sports and Youth
- Deliberations of working group for EYC candidature
- Review of recent research, existing statistical data from international partners (UNDP, UNICEF), civil society organizations (Sociological Center of Montenegro-SOCEN, Network for European Policies-MASTER), and local administration sources

1. Historical and policy context

Historically, youth-related initiatives in Podgorica were driven primarily by NGOs, with limited integration into municipal frameworks. Youth support was often fragmented and inconsistent, and many NGOs worked at a national level without tailoring programs to local needs. As a result, youth engagement was sporadic and often disconnected from institutional support. Every third young person indicates lack of youth engagement at the local level as a problem, and 2/3 of young people believes this could be solved by engagement with the civil sector and municipal youth office.² Moving towards a solution, 1/3 of respondents see the local Youth Council as the most effective mechanism for engaging young people in decision-making.³ This was further confirmed by a focus group with youth conducted by the Centre for Youth Education for the purpose of informing Podgorica's EYC candidature.

Recently, the city has made efforts to institutionalize youth policies by adopting several key strategic documents: the Local Action Plan for Youth (LAPM), the Decision on the Creation of Youth Clubs and the latest Decision on the Establishment of the Podgorica Youth Council to

² Source: Local Youth Action Plan for 2024, Capital City Podgorica <https://www.mladi.podgorica.me/dokumenta/>

³ Source: Local Youth Action Plan for 2025-2026, Capital City Podgorica <https://www.mladi.podgorica.me/dokumenta/>

streamline youth participation in decision making. These documents reflect Montenegro's international commitments, such as the Council of Europe's Charter on Youth Participation, the European Social Charter, and the UN Conventions on the Rights of the Child and Persons with Disabilities. Young people and youth organizations have played an active role in shaping these documents through working groups, public consultations, and presentations. The LAPM is also aligned with Podgorica's broader development strategy, linking youth policy with education, employment, health, urban planning, and sustainability. Law on Youth and National Youth Strategy provide a framework that in some aspects supports those developments and in others it represents additional barrier. During EYC candidacy consultations, young people confirmed distrust and disappointment due to lack of functional solutions that the current youth policy framework offers in Montenegro. This further highlighted the relevance of local level policies and concrete measures, and show-casing of co-creation with young people as model fit for future.

Over the past decade, Podgorica has increasingly aligned its policies and initiatives with European standards, recognizing young people as essential drivers of democratic life, sustainable development, social innovation and cultural enrichment. So far, implementation of LAPMs brought significant competence development among young people and improvements in youth employment. Additionally, through public calls, the city supported young entrepreneurs, creatives, sports and start-up initiatives. The EYC candidature symbolizes the city's ambition to put young people in the "driving seat", provide them with means, spaces, opportunities and support through youth work to fulfil this role and thus solidify its position as a forward-thinking capital that prioritizes the needs and aspirations of its youth. The LAPM 2025-2026 reflects this ambition with a more than triple annual budget in comparison to previous years and focus on larger-scale and longer term systemic interventions to support youth empowerment, inclusion, and development. Adopted LAPM envisages preparation for EYC in the 2025-2026 period and focuses on key issues young people are facing. Dialogue and consultations with youth in the framework of this consultancy clearly brought youth needs to surface: wellbeing and mental health in relation to normalization of violence and societal polarization; understanding of youth subcultures and need for different types of cultural events and programmes; need for economic subsidies and incentives to improve quality of life and support youth businesses and endeavors; better learning opportunities and support to gain and improve life skills; meaningful participatory mechanisms and feedback loops on shared youth ideas.

2. Youth services

The city aims to create an environment where all young people—especially those with fewer opportunities, including youth with disabilities, Roma youth, rural youth, LGBTIQ+ youth, and economically disadvantaged youth—have equal access to opportunities, resources, and spaces to develop their potential. Currently youth support structures in Podgorica include spaces opened by Ministries, municipality (different secretariats), youth organizations and young entrepreneurs:

- Youth club "Zona mladih", opened by municipality managed by youth organisation
- Youth club Zabjelo and DKC "Pomorandža", opened and run by youth groups
- Youth Center Podgorica, opened and managed by Ministry of Sport and Youth
- Rural youth club Ubli, newly opened by municipality (two more in pipeline: in 2026 - Tološi (suburb with least public infrastructure) and in 2027 - Konik (suburb with largest Roma population in the city))
- Birziminium Hub for youth entrepreneurship, opened and managed by municipality

- Entrepreneurship House, opened and run by Association of young entrepreneurs
- "Kružni tok" space for young creatives, opened and run by young entrepreneur
- "Mahovina" board game club, opened and run by young entrepreneur
- Youth health counselling service, opened and run by Ministry of Health and local Health Center

These facilities offer a range of activities—from non-formal education to creative programming and social inclusion projects. However, their long-term sustainability and accessibility vary.

Human capital offering support and services to young people is primarily based in the civil sector. The National volunteer center and ESC contact point (ADP Zid), as well National youth council (MMCG) with its 43 member organisations, Scout Association (SICG), Union of high school students (USCG) and University Students Parliament (SPCG), all with a strong membership base build on strong tradition of youth volunteerism, with a network of motivated young people in Podgorica and beyond ready to support their peers and others. Youth mobility card association (COE) and Young European Ambassadors Network (part of Regional Communication Program established by the European Commission) bring strong connection to European values and youth networks. Additionally, Forum MNE and newly formed Association of Youth Workers (UPOR), respectively build capacities and gather youth workers to sustain high standards and quality support to diverse youth. Those, and all CSOs supporting candidacy with their thematic expertise have pledged to mobilize their membership and local volunteers, and for EYC 2028 additionally engaging volunteers and volunteering teams through European Solidarity Corps. Furthermore, Youth Office's capacities will be gradually built.

3. Youth structures

Conditions are created with a local policy framework for youth representation in local governance through the Youth Council and its advisory mechanisms (establishment of this body in accordance with the recently adopted decision is expected until the end of 2025). Currently, youth organizations directly communicate with the Youth Office and municipal secretariats on specific thematic focuses. This cooperation enables regular consultation, and to an extent also integration of youth perspective and co-creation of municipal programs. However, intended creation of Youth Council should provide needed focal point and consistency in long-term strategic support for youth engagement. Furthermore, intention is that the established co-management principle in the governance of EYC will serve as inspiration for future of youth participation in the city. Participatory mechanisms and structures that are going to be proposed and tested in the lead-up to EYC and during EYC 2028, will be assessed and sustained if found meaningful and impactful. All in line with strategic focus and motto voted by young people – "Youth Makes the City".⁴

4. Regional, European and international links

For Podgorica, and for Montenegro as prospective next EU member, EYC candidacy brings opportunity for connectivity and exchanges between policy makers and municipal officers, youth workers and particularly young people from Podgorica and their peers across Europe. Podgorica has actively engaged in a range of international and regional initiatives focused on youth participation, environmental protection, innovation, and mental health. For example, through EU-funded projects like Reopen Doors and RE Mediators, the city has supported the civic

⁴ Source: Local Youth Action Plan for 2025-2026, Capital City Podgorica <https://www.mladi.podgorica.me/dokumenta/>

engagement and employment of young Roma, especially women and girls, while promoting awareness of cultural and natural heritage. Podgorica is also a member of major networks such as EUROCITIES, B40 (including its Youth Summit), CIVITAS, City Climate Contract and the Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy, reflecting its commitment to democratic participation, sustainable development, and urban innovation. In these partnerships, youth involvement could be greater, thus one program pillar focus on green and sustainable youth ideas intends to address it. Other partnerships, including Fast-Track Cities and Mayors for Peace, emphasize health equity and environmental action, while involvement in platforms like the Council of Europe's Congress of Local and Regional Authorities underscores its dedication to youth inclusion and local democracy across Europe. Podgorica's municipal Youth Office is in particular connected to the broader European youth ecosystem through initiatives such as **SALTO SEE and Europe Goes Local** where capacity building and networking opportunities are being utilized. Through this collaboration, Podgorica hosted one regional youth participation lab in 2023, and has offered to host European event under EGL framework in 2026. Additionally, youth organisations active in Podgorica are members of European youth networks, MMCG has applied for membership to European Youth Forum and UPOR is member of Alliance of Youth Work Associations (AYWA). These partnerships enhance city's ability to exchange practices, pilot European initiatives, and align with EU youth strategies. Furthermore, city cooperates closely with regional and international organizations including RCC, RYCO, OSCE, UNICEF and UNDP on issues related to young people. The candidature expects all to pull together and contribute to EYC as a platform to connect its young people and their organisations with European youth networks and strengthen its alignment with EU values of inclusion, innovation, and sustainability. By becoming the EYC, Podgorica seeks to learn from and contribute to best practices across Europe, including from previous EYCs with whom contacts have been established, fostering long-term regional and international partnerships. Representatives from Tirana EYC2022 has shared their experiences and lessons learned with Podgorica's candidacy wider team during public event in the city Assembly.

6. MOTIVATION BEHIND PODGORICA'S CANDIDACY FOR EUROPEAN YOUTH CAPITAL 2028

Podgorica's candidacy for the European Youth Capital 2028 is driven by a clear strategic goal: to establish a sustainable, inclusive, and youth-centered local ecosystem aligned with European youth policies and standards. The city seeks not only to respond to the current challenges faced by young people but also to lay the institutional foundation for long-term civic empowerment, social equity, and urban-rural integration of young people. Theory of change is outlined in Annex.

1. Why candidacy for the EYC Title?

The decision to apply was sparked by a shared vision among youth organizations, city's parliament, municipal institutions and civil society actors to transform Podgorica into a city where young people are active drivers of social change. Montenegro's ongoing EU accession process adds urgency and relevance to this ambition, as the city seeks to implement European principles on youth participation, inclusion, and sustainability at the local level and serve as a role model for other municipalities in MNE and beyond.

Empowering and connecting young people - Podgorica sees young people as central actors in shaping a better future. The EYC 2028 title is viewed as a powerful tool to amplify their voices, facilitate peer exchange across Europe, and strengthen their engagement at the local, national, and European levels. Podgorica is the capital of Montenegro – a small country with 623 thousand people, out of which one third lives in Podgorica. Thus this candidacy is as much for young people of Podgorica, as is for all young people of Montenegro – both in terms of opportunities and participation at events, and in terms of expected domino effect of good practices to other municipalities. Special attention is given to including underrepresented youth from rural areas, Roma, LGBTIQ+, young people with disabilities and others with fewer opportunities. Additionally, Podgorica and Montenegro are well situated within Balkan peninsula, on the Adriatic Coast and Dinarides mountains range – to be easily accessible and utilize natural connections between young people cross borders.

Deepening European integration and cooperation - Podgorica's candidacy reflects its aspiration to strengthen European identity among young people and promote institutional alignment with EU youth policy frameworks, including the EU Youth Strategy, the Charter on Youth Participation, and the European Youth Work Agenda. The city aims to facilitate connections with European youth networks and promote joint initiatives with other EYC cities and European partners. This European dimension will be reinforced by institutional support from the Ministry of European Affairs and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs whose letters of support are included in the application annex. Furthermore, the Delegation of EU, Unicef and Social Impact Award International have pledged their support (also in the annex). Symbolism of year 2028 for Montenegro's EU accession and candidacy of Podgorica for title of EYC2028 offer additional potential and boost for this process to provide a meaningful and profound impact on young people's connection to European identity.

Strengthening youth participation and civic engagement – Podgorica's candidacy already gave an important boost to embedding meaningful youth participation across sectors. The city aims to incentivize youth activism and start building generations of empowered leaders by creating a culture of ongoing civic engagement in policy making and community development. Thus, youth participation, currently one of the weakest aspects in the city, is reflected upon and potential solutions co-designed with young people during June consultation events. Current list with modalities to be put in place and tested include:

- **Youth Council of Podgorica** as a formal advisory body already formed and will contribute with monitoring and evaluation and legacy of EYC!
- **Local Youth Dialogue**, modeled on the EU Youth Dialogue / proposed by MMCG to be introduced and tested at local level (MMCG has experience on coordinating pilot Youth Dialogue at national level with support of EU delegation to Montenegro in 2022)
- **Subcommittee on Youth within the City Assembly** to facilitate relevant discussions and policy level decisions with specific focus on youth / initiative by youth representatives in the working group and promptly implemented by president of city assembly during 2025.
- **Green participatory youth budgeting**, allowing youth to decide on allocation of a portion of municipal funds for greening the city / model proposed by the youth working group and explored through EGL practices – to be co-created and testing starting already from 2026.

- **Youth Innovation Fund** to support youth initiatives and encourage their engagement, innovation and entrepreneurship for the city's development/ model proposed by youth workers – to be co-created and testing starting already from 2026.
- Investment in accessible **youth infrastructure** (different modalities of youth spaces) across urban and rural districts / initiative implemented by Youth Office in collaboration with youth organizations and NGOs, municipal secretariats as well as ministries of education and sport and youth.
- **Youth Podgorica digital platform** to improve access to information and awareness of opportunities for young people / proposed by young people during June consultations
- **Youth volunteer network** to mobilize and build capacities of local volunteers, and improve access to information and awareness of opportunities for other not-usually-engaged young people / proposed by Steering committee member during the September meeting.

Promoting environmental sustainability and green innovation - Podgorica's commitment to global and European trends emphasize urban resilience and equity, which are outlined in the currently discussed proposal for new Strategic Development Plan of Podgorica. The city has strong strategic interest in environmental transition, including accessible infrastructure, alternative mobility, green initiatives, and social and inclusive policies that benefit all, including young people. EYC candidacy and environmental agenda meet at positioning young people as co-designers in the areas of urban planning, alternative mobility projects and green economy initiatives. During the **European Mobility Week**, a survey was conducted among young people, who expressed the need for better-integrated cycling lanes and improved public transport — including night lines on weekends and more frequent bus departures on existing routes. Current proposals stemming from youth consultations include urban redesign and reimagining of public spaces with an emphasis on youth-friendly green infrastructure and alternative mobility – thus programme features youth-led green budgeting and public calls for innovative youth sustainability projects co-funded by the city and EU programs.

Fostering youth well-being and mental health - In the transitional context and aftermath of covid19 pandemic, young people's quality of life has been significantly reduced. Their calls for focus on their well-being has grown louder. Thus Podgorica commits to a holistic approach to improving quality of life for all young people by establishing well-being hubs in each youth club, expanding sexual and reproductive health education for all genders, providing free mental health and peer support services, including through digital and anonymised platform and launching awareness campaigns on mental health and well-being. Furthermore, the EYC candidacy will provide a platform to focus on enhancing access to physical recreation, fitness and structured play. Finally a large-scale youth wellbeing event is planned in synergy with nature, on camping grounds, connecting and approaching the issue from more angles.

Investing in youth infrastructure and capacity – Podgorica's motivation is to re-imagine public spaces/institutions and create *opportunities, means* and *support* for young people to actually "make a city". This includes capacitating at least two generations of local community youth workers, and new youth infrastructure to ensure inclusive, sustainable and continuous support to youth. Current proposals include:

- Expand the youth club network citywide and co-create a plan to utilize public spaces for youth-friendly purposes.

- Provide capacity-building for youth workers and youth organizations to ensure quality management of youth clubs and outreach to diverse young people.
- Strengthen the Youth Office as a central local service and information hub for youth.
- Establish a multifunctional youth center with hostel facilities, meeting Council of Europe Quality Label standards.

2. The application process: A collaborative effort

The application was developed through an open and participatory process, marked by transparency and collaboration:

- A public call invited youth organizations to join the EYC 2028 Working Group.
- The working group includes representatives from the Youth Office, local institutions, the Ministry of Sports and Youth, National Youth Council (MMCG), youth organisations and NGOs working with youth, including with fewer opportunities.
- The group worked in partnership with an external expert to ensure alignment with EU youth policy tools and the EU Youth Policy Toolkit.
- Consultations with youth were held —both online and in person—throughout 2024.
- MMCG and City organized consultations with youth (6th June) and youth organizations and youth workers (12th June) to further focus and prioritize the EYC 2028 program and ground it in systemic interventions to sustain youth development in the long-run.
- In **mid-June**, consultations were organized with the **NGO sector**, aimed at gathering inputs from civil society organizations regarding their views and suggestions on the **Podgorica – European Youth Capital 2028** candidacy.
- In **early September**, a **youth dialogue** was held at the **High School Slobodan Škerović**, engaging students in discussions about the **needs of young people in the capital** in relation to the candidacy.
- In **mid-September**, a similar event was organized at the **Faculty of Law, University of Montenegro**, continuing the youth dialogue on the same topic.
- In **mid-September**, members of the **Working Group** also took part in the **UNDP National Youth Dialogue** on youth challenges, where they received valuable inputs that were incorporated into the application.
- In **September**, the **first meeting of the Steering Committee** was held, during which decisions were made **in accordance with the two-thirds majority of young members**, ensuring participatory and youth-led decision-making throughout the process.
- As the **final activity**, a **panel discussion** took place at the **City Assembly of Podgorica**, focusing on youth needs within the candidacy process, with participation from representatives of **Tirana** — the **former European Youth Capital**, and **Manel Sánchez**, Director of the **European Youth Card Association (EYCA)**.

The application is grounded in existing strategic documents (e.g. LAPM, SDG-aligned urban strategy, MoUs between the Youth Office and CSOs) and informed by national and European commitments such as the Council of Europe's Charter on Youth Participation, the European Social Charter, European Youth Work Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

3. Podgorica's EYC 2028 key goals

Podgorica envisions becoming a youth-centered city that is dynamic, inclusive, and sustainable, where young people actively participate in governance, drive social change, and lead innovation. Young people played a central role in defining the EYC strategic directions in this regard. The

outcomes of final consultations are being formally documented and integrated into the EYC 2028 strategic objectives of Podgorica’s candidacy. Podgorica aims to use EYC 2028 as a launch-pad:

Purpose and long-term goal	Program pillar	Connection with EU Youth Goals
Institutionalize youth participation and strengthen youth civic engagement	I. Youth participation and civic engagement	1. <i>Connecting EU with Youth</i> ; 4. <i>Information & Constructive Dialogue</i> ; 9. <i>Space and Participation for All</i>
Nurturing innovative practices, youth creativity and entrepreneurship for city’s green and sustainable development	II. Innovation creativity and youth entrepreneurship, and III. Environmental sustainability and green initiatives	7. <i>Quality Employment for All and</i> 10. <i>Sustainable Green Europe</i>
Ensure all youth—regardless of background—have equal access to opportunities and support, as well as wellbeing, through quality youth work and cross-sectoral collaboration	IV. Well-being and mental health and Mainstreamed across all Program pillars	2. <i>Equality of All Genders</i> ; 3. <i>Inclusive Societies</i> ; 5. <i>Mental Health & Wellbeing</i> ; 6. <i>Moving Rural Youth Forward</i> ; 8. <i>Quality Learning</i>
Anchor European values into everyday lives of young people and in local governance	Mainstreamed across all Program pillars	1. <i>Connecting EU with Youth and</i> 11. <i>Youth Organisations & European Programmes.</i>
Build a resilient urban youth policy system communicating across key sectors (culture, health, sport, environment, tourism and economy)	Mainstreamed across all Program pillars	

The legacy of EYC 2028 will be a city where young people not only influence decisions, but actively lead change—socially, economically, and environmentally. Through targeted investment, institutional commitment, and cross-sectoral partnerships, Podgorica is ready to become a youth-powered city of the future.

7. PODGORICA’S EYC PROGRAM FRAMEWORK

Podgorica’s EYC 2028 programme is designed as a dynamic, inclusive, and youth-led roadmap for long-term transformation of the city and its engagement with youth. It directly responds to the challenges identified by young people and builds on their ideas to create a participatory, resilient and future-oriented city. The program was co-created through a comprehensive participatory process with seven key events involving over 300 young people and 40 youth organizations, using tools such as focus groups, structured workshops, consultations, and online engagement and utilizing communication channel with unorganized youth through website <https://eyc2028.podgorica.me/> and official Facebook page for the EYC2028 candidacy <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61581618576590>.

Key proposals from young people guided refinement of program focus and further specification of concrete actions. At final stages of the process, with the working group handing over to 2/3 youth Steering Committee, the commitment was confirmed to co-design and implement the program in a way that would fit the purpose and meet youth needs. Namely, the EYC program is set to embed new governance practices, physical youth infrastructure and digital tools that will remain beyond 2028 for the benefit of all youth and the city.

All programs will be accessible to youth with disabilities, Roma youth, LGBTIQ+ youth, rural youth, migrants, and other underserved groups through language accessibility, physical adaptation of spaces, and outreach activities and campaigns. All flagship programs will include mobility and knowledge-sharing components with youth from EYC cities and EU members, cooperation with the European Youth Forum and use of the EU Youth Strategy pillars. Sustainability will be ensured through green procurement, digital-first tools, energy-efficient operations, and policy alignment with Podgorica's sustainable development strategy.

This program framework reflects the ambition, creativity, and lived experiences of Podgorica's youth. It is not only a vision for 2028—it is a roadmap for transforming Podgorica into a permanent European leader in youth participation, innovation, and equity, as stated by mayor during consultations with young people. Furthermore, Podgorica's EYC 2028 programme is deeply aligned with European youth policies and values, particularly those outlined in the EU Youth Strategy and Youth Goals, revised Charter on Local and Regional Participation of young people and the European Youth Forum's key priorities (as representative European voice of young people, to which young people from Podgorica and Montenegro will hopefully soon contribute). It actively promotes European identity through international partnerships, regional solidarity and programs that reflect current European themes such as inclusion, green transition, digital participation, and youth employment. Initiatives like the Youth Dialogue and the green participatory youth budgeting echo the EU Youth Dialogue and EGL best practices. EYC program intends to build capacities and commitment to establish meaningful European partnerships through Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps, reinforcing democratic participation and learning of young people from Podgorica with their peers across Europe. Furthermore, the program is designed to attract young people from across Europe through flagship events, youth mobility programs, and collaborative initiatives with European networks. Cultural exchange events, transnational hackathons, and the enhancement of the youth Podgorica digital platform through full integration with the existing **myEYC mobile application**—the official digital version of the European Youth Card in Montenegro—will make Podgorica a hub for youth mobility, creativity, and networking throughout 2028. This integration will enable young people to access local services, youth benefits, city events and participation tools through a single, user-friendly channel already in use by over 50,000 young people in the country.

It is the working group's strong belief that Podgorica's candidacy stands out for its commitment to innovation and youth-led experimentation. Key innovations proposed by young people in this phase include a digital platform with three key elements: participatory, informative and wellbeing; a Green Youth Participatory Budgeting focusing youth decision making on topic that concerns them most; and a youth entrepreneurship festival showcasing youth initiatives, projects and businesses in sustainable tourism and creative industries. Furthermore, youth organisations insisted on a feedback mechanism providing young people with information about decisions and actions related to their initiatives, suggestions and ideas (part of the official website www.eyc2028.podgorica.me). Furthermore, in the final stages of the application finalization, young people demanded more attention to diverse youth subcultures and opportunities to

influence the cultural scene in the city. Young people also emphasized the need that this process brings tangible result in terms of improved quality of life for young people – starting from public transport and quality of education in Podgorica’s schools, to opportunities to receive support for green, cultural, innovative and entrepreneurial idea and to shape the city for young people. More is expected to come during the coming years through co-creation and co-implementation momentum that will set new standards for youth policy in Podgorica and Montenegro, but also provide replicable models for other EYC cities.

Through this blend of European engagement and local innovation, Podgorica aims to redefine what it means to be a youth-friendly capital in Southeastern Europe—open, collaborative, and forward-looking. The timing of Podgorica’s EYC 2028 year is especially significant, as it will unfold in parallel with Montenegro’s EU accession process. For young people in Podgorica, this represents more than symbolic alignment—it reflects their lived reality and aspirations as young Europeans. The EYC platform will amplify their voice in shaping not only local but also European futures, promoting values of democracy, inclusion, and solidarity through hands-on civic engagement and youth diplomacy. This dual momentum—toward European integration and youth empowerment—will distinguish Podgorica’s EYC and inspire other aspiring EU cities.

Intended program impact is sustaining Podgorica as a European leader in youth participation, sustainability, and innovation, with long-term legacy youth participatory mechanisms embedded in governance. Key expected outcomes of this program are:

1. Youth policy and governance structures are participatory and inclusive.
2. Youth trust in local institutions grows.
3. New opportunities for entrepreneurship, innovation, culture, well-being and sustainability are accessible to youth.
4. Podgorica strengthens its European integration role.



Expected direct results are grouped in five categories as presented in the graph:

Podgorica EYC2028 Program is built around four key pillars with a strong inclusive and European backbone shaping the nature and intent of each proposed action. Each pillar consists of a certain number of key actions, with most focusing on strengthening youth participation and civic engagement of youth. Additional, to all thematic actions strong quality assurance, monitoring and evaluation will be accompanying the program implementation against indicators looking at outreach to and number of young people involved and activities delivered, events hosted, as well as number of youth proposals funded.

I. Youth participation and civic engagement

Launch Youth Dialogue
Launch Youth Subcommittee of the City Assembly
Launch Youth Council of Podgorica,
Develop Youth app ePodgorica (I) - "Map youth space" - digital participatory tool
Open Multifunctional Youth Center
Open School-based youth clubs
Open Youth clubs in local communities
Mobile outreach "Youth Van"
Capacity build new generations of youth workers
Launch Youth-led awareness campaign to launch EYC and inform young people
Organize "Podgorica=Europe" workshop series
Organize European Youth Capital Award Ceremony in Podgorica
Organize European Youth Forum event and Statutory Meeting in Podgorica.

II. Innovation, creativity and Entrepreneurship

Develop Youth app ePodgorica (II) - "Today for me"
Youth EYC information ambassadors network
Launch Startup academy & incubator
Launch Cultural entrepreneurship lab
Launch Youth Innovation Fund "Youth Bank"
Organize Festival of youth entrepreneurship
Organize Social Impact Award Summit

III. Environmental sustainability and green initiatives

Launch Green Participatory Youth Budgeting
Launch Youth-led awareness campaign (2) - Peer-to-peer information and education on waste sorting and climate impact

IV. Wellbeing and mental health

Organize Advocacy campaign for youth work support modalities in schools.
Launch Youth-led awareness campaign (3) to fight stigma surrounding mental health and wellbeing of young people.
Develop Youth app ePodgorica - "My wellbeing"
Develop Well-being hubs in each youth club/center
Create recreational zones in each local community tailored to youth
Organize Sexual and reproductive health education
Organize Annual cross-sectorial European youth event on integrated support to wellbeing of young people.
Youth Music Festival "Univercity 8"

I. Youth participation and civic engagement - empowering young people to lead and influence policies and decisions that shape city planning, budgeting, and policy development, through following 12 actions (clustered under three subheadings):

- **Participatory mechanisms:**

1. **Youth Dialogue** (inspired by EU Youth Dialogue) to ensure continuous and structured engagement between youth and decision-makers. To prepare youth for meaningful participation youth workers and organisations will be capacitated to organize live forums and thematic conferences with youth-led panels, targeting high school and university age young people. (in collaboration with EU delegation and European Youth Forum)
2. **Youth Subcommittee of the City Assembly**, providing a permanent institutional focus on youth issues and monitoring the situation for and position of youth.
3. **Youth Council of Podgorica**, with clearer mandates, budget oversight, and active participation of marginalized youth; capacitated and supported in regular and sustainable functioning as democratic and participatory mechanism.
4. **Youth app ePodgorica (I) - "Map youth space"** - digital participatory tool enabling young people to identify youth friendly spaces, as well as unsafe or underutilized areas in their neighborhoods and propose improvements.

- **Spaces for youth participation and beyond:**

5. **Multifunctional Youth Center** (co-working + cultural space + youth hostel) aligned with Council of Europe's Quality Label planned for 2028.
6. **School-based youth clubs** as model for integration of youth participation mechanisms in high schools to enable student debates, consultations and initiatives with support of youth workers/activists (in collaboration with Ministry of Education)
7. **Youth clubs in local communities:** Decentralized spaces equipped for arts, innovation, and community action (in collaboration with Ministry of Sport and Youth) and already put in motion launch of Ubli 2025, Tološi 2026 and Konik 2027); including open call for use of city spaces by youth organisations in particularly marginalized neighborhoods.
8. **Mobile outreach "Youth van":** Youth workers' and peer educators' teams organizing street festivals, creative workshops, info-sessions and other activities with (NEET) youth in every neighborhood and village on the territory of Podgorica.
9. **Capacity for supporting youth:** Capacity building 50 youth workers through accredited youth activist program

- **Link to European civic engagement**

10. **Youth-led awareness campaign (1)** to launch EYC and inform young people about all different ways to join and participate and about European perspectives (in collaboration with the Ministry of European affairs).
11. **"Podgorica=Europe" workshop series** on European values and youth featuring intercultural programs and exchanges with peers from EU (in collaboration with EU info corner and EU delegation in Montenegro).
12. **European Youth Capital Award Ceremony** in Podgorica and **European Youth Forum event and Statutory Meeting** in Podgorica.

II. Innovation, creativity and youth entrepreneurship, providing conditions and resources, building thriving ecosystem for youth-led business, innovation and cultural expression, through following 7 actions (clustered under three subheadings):

- **Accessible and relevant information for youth**

1. **Youth app ePodgorica (II)** - "Today for me" - A digital platform listing cultural and educational events and other youth opportunities aligned with Human rights and European values, integrated with the European Youth Card. (in collaboration with Ministry of Culture)
2. **Youth information ambassadors network** – setting up physical and digital info points (in youth clubs, libraries, schools, student dormitories, cultural institutions, public spaces) and capacity building of young people to act as peer information

resource persons in high schools, faculties, neighborhoods and villages reaching out particularly to NEET, Roma and other young people often lacking information – all regarding EYC2028, opportunities in Podgorica and European programs.

- **Tailored capacity building:**

3. **Startup academy & incubator:** A year-round program with modular learning, business plan development, mentorship and seed funding. (in collaboration with private sector)
4. **Cultural entrepreneurship lab:** Focused on helping young artists commercialize their work. (in collaboration with Ministry of Culture)

- **Support to young entrepreneurs:**

5. **Youth Innovation Fund “Youth Bank”:** Pull-up fund shared by public and private investors to support youth tech, social entrepreneurship, and creative ideas through open calls. (in collaboration with private sector)
6. **Festival of youth entrepreneurship:** Annual event on the city square, showcasing youth ventures.

- **Large-scale youth event:**

7. **Social Impact Award Summit:** Hosting European event bringing together public and private social innovation actors and youth, also a strategic opportunity to test during 2026 the city's and the EYC coordination team's readiness to organize large-scale, high-profile European events.

III. Environmental sustainability and green initiatives, positioning young people as active leaders in Podgorica's ecological transformation and sustainable development, through following 2 actions:

1. **Green Participatory Youth Budgeting,** portion of municipal budget for sustainable development decided by young people - piloted in EYC with “greening city” ideas and transparent reporting, accompanied by a **digital platform** for young people to submit green ideas, followed by a public vote and funding. (ideas from consultations already include projects like rooftop gardens, vertical planting, micro-parks, digital bus tracking, real-time app notifications, new bus stops, digital ticketing, plastic exchange stations)
2. **Youth-led awareness campaign (2):** Peer-to-peer information and education on waste sorting and climate impact.

IV. Well-being and mental health, creating citywide network of support and prevention systems for youth mental and emotional health, so that young people thrive physically, emotionally and socially, through following 8 actions (clustered under three subheadings):

- **Youth well-being campaigns:**

1. **Advocacy campaign** to propose school counselling & support model with guaranteed 1-on-1 sessions with youth worker and/or school psychologists.
 2. **Youth-led awareness campaign (3)** with influencers, health institutions, and schools to fight stigma surrounding mental health and wellbeing of young people.
- **Support programs:**
 3. **Youth app ePodgorica - “My wellbeing” (III):** Anonymized chat and video support, resource libraries, and scheduling tools hosted by city’s health counselling services. (in collaboration with Ministry of Health)
 4. **Well-being hubs** in each youth club/center to offer safe, inclusive and accessible spaces with psychological, physical, mentoring and peer support services in every (in collaboration with Ministry of Health and local primary care health centres)
 5. **Inclusive recreation:** Creation and utilization of recreational zones in each local community tailored to youth with fitness classes, underrepresented sports and mindfulness sessions. (in collaboration with Ministry of Sport and Youth)
 6. **Sexual and reproductive health education:** Comprehensive, rights-based, and gender-sensitive curricula and services across schools and youth centers. (in collaboration with Ministry of Health and Ministry of Education)
 - **Large-scale youth event:**
 8. **Annual youth event:** Cross-sectorial European event in nature, utilizing scout camping grounds and bringing together youth, health experts, parents, youth workers and educators to discuss integrated support to young people.
 9. **Youth Music Festival “Univercity 8”:** A city-wide youth music and arts event featuring live performances and DJ sets, celebrating creativity, diversity, and youth culture across Podgorica. Some of the specific programs will be: **Exhibitions across the city:** Open-air displays featuring works of young regional designers, photos of murals from other European Youth Capitals, and architectural highlights of Europe’s cultural landmarks presented in key public parks across Podgorica. **Street art initiative:** Five large-scale murals across the city inspired by Montenegro’s national parks (Prokletije, Durmitor, Skadar Lake, Biogradska Gora, and Lovćen), highlighting the connection between urban culture and environmental awareness.

8. MANAGEMENT

Podgorica’s EYC 2028 will be governed through a multi-sectoral, inclusive, and participatory structure rooted in co-management. Youth will hold the majority in all strategic and executive bodies to ensure leadership, accountability, and impact. City’s intention is to test and refine governance structures before 2028 to ensure maximum effectiveness during and sustainability beyond the title year. Youth participation rules and leadership pathways will be integrated into all

components of the program, creating capacity for co-creation, institutional memory and systemic youth influence during and beyond EYC2028. Role and responsibilities division between main bodies is presented in the graph:



1. Podgorica EYC Steering Committee - Strategic oversight body

The Steering Committee (SC) was established by Mayor's decision (in Annex) to lead the process and be responsible for high-level decision-making, budget alignment, cross-sectoral cooperation, and leading on long-term strategic impact. SC met for the first time in person on 15th September discussing the agenda points proposed by the working group that was leading the process so far. The SC will continue to guide the strategic direction of the EYC and alignment with Podgorica's long-term development and national and European youth policies. Comprising 41 members, it follows a youth-majority principle (at least 2/3 under the age of 35) and ensures cross-sectoral cooperation, as among the members are:

- Youth organizations, youth clubs and centers and representatives of marginalized groups (Roma youth, youth with disabilities, LGBTQ+ youth), young volunteers, young European ambassadors as well as representative high-school pupils and student organizations—each with two representatives.
- Organizations with specific expertise of youth work, youth information and mobility, youth wellbeing and volunteering – Forum MNE, Youth Card Association (COE), Juventas, Scout Association.
- Representatives of municipal institutions (Urban Planning and Sustainability, Culture, Sports, Social Affairs, Entrepreneurship and Innovations, Tourism, Information Systems, Finances).

- National-level actors including the Ministry of Sports and Youth and the National Youth Council – due to relevance, outreach and impact potential also with two representatives each.

The Steering Committee composition ensures that young people, particularly marginalized youth are well-represented and active in governance processes. The SC had, in this final stages of fine-tuning application, steered the program towards greater synergies with existing youth initiatives and utilizing expertise of youth civil sector, as well as prioritizing informing and motivating diverse sub-groups of young people to engage in the buildup to EYC2028.

As a sustainability principle, further on, SC will combine in person meetings with online ones, while possible subcommittees may have a need to continue meeting only in person.

2. Podgorica EYC Executive Board – Coordination and delivery

The Executive Board (EB) of 8 people will operate on a 50-50 co-management model (youth and city officials) and will oversee program implementation. The members are drawn from Municipal services (Youth Office, Assembly Service) and Ministry of Sport and Youth (to strengthen national alignment), as well as National youth council (MMCG), youth representative structure that will have one member of secretariat, and three selected representatives from relevant member organizations thematically focused on topics of EYC candidacy, experienced in youth work and gathering youth from different groups.

The Executive Board final composition will be proposed by Steering Committee, ideally to include:

- Two co-chairs (one representing youth, one from the municipality).
- Four thematic implementation teams' coordinators
- One monitoring and quality assurance team' coordinator
- One communication team' coordinator

Each team coordinator in the executive board will form their implementation team composed of both youth organizations and city institutions, young people and responsible municipal staff with exceptional expertise and responsibilities in their respective fields to ensure smooth implementation and functioning. The proposed composition of the teams will be verified and adopted by the Steering Committee.

Four thematic implementation teams, each in charge of specific thematic program clusters, will be composed of experts from relevant municipal bodies and institutions, as well as youth and other civil society organisations with specific expertise selected through open call. Alongside MMCG and its members with specific thematic expertise (selected through internal call) and other relevant youth (work) organisations selected through open call, members of thematic teams from municipal bodies and institutions will be:

- Youth participation – Municipal Youth Office
- Innovation – Secretariat for entrepreneurship and innovations, Secretariat for information system, Secretariat for culture
- Sustainability – Secretariat for urban planning and sustainable development
- Well-being – Secretariat for social welfare

Communication and outreach team co-led by youth and Municipal public relations service “Media Biro” will work closely with public broadcasters at local and national level and external

communication agency to provide and disseminate information to various audiences (more details in section 9).

The European cooperation team will similarly be composed of young people and municipal officers and will be in close communication and collaboration with European and international partners to seek programmatic and financial synergies and ensure sustainable flagship projects are launched during EYC2028.

Monitoring and quality assurance team is envisaged to consist of Municipal Assembly Service, newly formed Municipal Youth Council and external M&E expert to ensure objective and comprehensive M&E framework (more details in section 11).

As a sustainability principle, the Executive Board (EB) will meet both online and in person as assessed needed and will utilize digital project management and communication tools to ensure smooth functioning. Coordinators will establish, with their teams, the specific communication channels and workflows in-line with the overall EB functioning principles.

The proposal for the appointment of the **Executive Board** is submitted in the **Annex** of this application.

3. Coordination, partnerships, and sustainability

The Podgorica Youth Office will act as the main operational link between governance bodies, city services, and community partners. Its experienced team will be further enlarged and capacitated ahead of 2028 (3 additional people planned in 2026 already) to play an instrumental role in supporting EYC's structures facilitating the logistical and organizational aspects of the EYC. Strong Youth Office will remain as one of EYC's structures able to utilise cross-sectoral cooperation of various secretariats (such are Secretariat for Sport; Culture; Entrepreneurship; Transport; Environmental protection) and local public institutions (such are Tourist organisation of Podgorica, Cultural-information center (KIC), Museums and Galleries, City's Theatre, Center for Information system, Greenery, Communal services) for and beyond EYC program.

Vertical coordination will involve national actors and European and international partners. Specifically, direct communication and cooperation with the European Youth Forum will be managed by the Youth Office and European cooperation team, who will involve all strategic partners. Podgorica started communication and exchange with former EYC cities from the region (Novi Sad, Skopje, Sarajevo, Tirana) and is looking to formalize working relationships with those and other former and upcoming EYC cities for knowledge exchange and alignment on youth policies.

The National Youth Council (MMCG) and the Municipal Youth Council of Podgorica, will have key roles in implementation and monitoring of the EYC2028 programme respectively. National Youth Council is a well established youth representative structure bringing youth expertise to the design and implementation of the programme. On the other side, the municipal youth council is a municipal body established under the amended Decision on the Formation of the Youth Council of the Capital City (May 2025) with support and expertise provided through the EGL framework. This body gathers young people and experts on youth and is set to serve as a permanent institutional mechanism for youth participation and a key instrument for advancing local youth policy and codifying youth co-management. This new body will be composed of young representatives from youth organizations, student bodies, and marginalized groups, alongside institutional stakeholders, ensuring balanced representation and legitimacy. As a core legacy of the European Youth Capital 2028 initiative, the Municipal Youth Council will not only play a strategic advisory role but will be directly integrated into the governance of the EYC program. Namely, it will act as a primary body for monitoring, quality assurance, and evaluation, working in

tandem with the local Assembly Subcommittee on Youth to ensure that youth perspectives are meaningfully embedded in policymaking, implementation, and oversight processes.

9. COMMUNICATIONS AND OUTREACH

“**Mladi stvaraju grad**” (“Youth Makes the City”) is more than a slogan—it’s the central message and driving force of Podgorica’s communications campaign for the EYC 2028. The city presents itself as a canvas for youth-driven change, where young people are not just beneficiaries of policies, but active creators of their urban, social and European futures. The communications strategy is built to inform, activate, inspire, and connect, ensuring widespread engagement while staying rooted in the values of inclusion, sustainability, democratic participation and co-creation with young people. However, the initial communication strategy will be further developed by the designated team to fully integrate youth perspective and intent to reach out to diverse youth groups, including marginalized youth and specific youth sub-cultures. Youth representatives in the steering committee already emphasized the importance that communication with young people is dynamic and that capacitated peer-information ambassadors are the best mechanism ensuring youth information, motivation and engagement. Furthermore, EYC Podgorica 2028 website will be further accompanied by social media channels (Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat, as well as Facebook for parents and supportive adults) using youth-friendly visuals, videos, and interactive polls.

Key goals of [the communication strategy](#):

- Maximize visibility of the EYC title and Podgorica’s candidacy across Europe and Montenegro.
- Engage and empower young people from all backgrounds to shape and participate in the EYC programme.
- Build trust in democratic institutions and highlight the value of structured youth participation.
- Promote European values and reinforce their relevance in the daily lives and identities of Podgorica’s youth.

The strategy targets diverse audiences through tailored messages that resonate with their roles and expectations.

Target Group	Key Message
Young People in Podgorica	This is your city. Your voice, actions and ideas will shape its future.
Youth Organizations & Civil Society	Let’s collaborate to build a youth-friendly Podgorica for 2028 and beyond.
Local & National Institutions	Strong youth policy is a legacy of development — invest in long-term change.
Businesses	Youth-friendly approaches make a difference – support young people meaningfully.
European & Regional Partners	Podgorica is ready to be Europe’s youth bridge in the Western Balkans.

To reach these groups, a wide range of communication tools will be used. Specific communication tools are selected based on youth media habits and best practices from previous EYC cities. Digital platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, and LinkedIn are central to the strategy due to their high engagement rates among youth and shareability potential. The official website, eyc2028.podgorica.me, will serve as a central hub for updates, events, participation opportunities, and storytelling. Podcasts and video series will provide accessible, youth-led content, amplifying the lived experiences and perspectives of Podgorica's young people. Traditional media, including public broadcasters at national level RTCG and local Gradska TV, with their tv, radio and online channels, will ensure that messages reach a broader, intergenerational audience. The campaign will also be supported by a network of young ambassadors—well-known and trusted young voices—who will act as visible champions of the initiative. Physical visibility will be ensured through public info stands, murals, and outdoor branding, while influencer marketing will help reach underrepresented or disengaged youth demographics through authentic peer voices.

The strategy places a strong emphasis on the inclusion of youth with fewer opportunities. Specific outreach mechanisms will be used to reach young people from rural and suburban areas through mobile information points and outreach events. NEET youth will be engaged in cooperation with employment services and community initiatives. Youth with disabilities will be reached through accessible communication formats, such as easy-to-read documents and subtitled video content. Roma and minority youth will be engaged through close partnerships with community-based NGOs. Participation is designed to be barrier-free, encouraged through simple entry points — open calls, youth panels, direct idea submissions — reducing barriers and creating a welcoming narrative.

Youth-led Awareness Campaigns are an integral part of EYC program aiming at informing, motivating and educating young people and the public on sustainability, inclusion, innovation, well-being, participation, European values through targeted messaging. Furthermore, environmental sustainability is fully integrated into the communications approach. The campaigns will follow a digital-first policy to minimize the use of printed materials, with outdoor branding produced from recycled or reusable materials. All events will follow green event guidelines, emphasizing waste reduction, recycling, and sustainable logistics. The campaigns will promote climate-conscious behavior, including the use of sustainable mobility and highlighting green initiatives already active in the city.

All communication materials will carry the official EYC logo, integrated with Podgorica's campaign identity. A public design competition for young creatives will determine the final visual identity, rooted in symbols of Podgorica such as rivers and urban contours, reflecting fluidity, youth energy, and connectivity.

Current communication was kicked off in June 2025 with citywide panels and consultations, followed by a digital activation with official website <https://eyc2028.podgorica.me/> and outreach and information events with and for young people.

In summary, communication strategy for EYC 2028 will be further developed to reach the main objective: to promote the EYC title and to inspire a generation of young people in Podgorica to feel European and to co-create the future of their city.

10. PREPARATION FOR THE EYC

Podgorica's roadmap toward the European Youth Capital title is structured around progressive investment in the youth sector, strategic institutional development and capacity building, and the full activation of European youth policy instruments. It envisages a city-wide transformation rooted in strategic investment, sectoral growth, and long-term alignment with European youth standards. The process is divided into three core phases: groundwork and testing, consolidation and scaling, and final mobilization for the EYC year. Each stage of the roadmap is designed to strengthen the foundation, scale up what works, and enter the EYC year with an ecosystem ready to deliver and sustain its legacy well beyond 2028.

In the initial phase (during 2026), priority will be given to expanding financial support for youth organizations. The city already increased and structurally adjusted budget lines tied to the Local Action Plans for Youth (LAPM), with an intent to add a new dedicated fund for "EYC Preparation and Innovation". This funding will empower youth organizations to test pilot initiatives, co-develop flagship events, and experiment with participatory formats tailored to the EYC framework. These projects will serve both as capacity-building exercises and as live testing grounds for content and formats planned for 2028.

Parallel to funding, structured investment will be made in human resources and knowledge infrastructure. The city will scale up its support for youth workers through accredited vocational training programs aligned with national and European standards. These capacity-building efforts aim to professionalize the sector and create a larger, more skilled pool of youth workers - facilitators able to co-lead EYC implementation with confidence.

The Youth Office itself will undergo institutional strengthening during this period. This includes the recruitment of additional staff with expertise in youth work, project management, communications, and EU program implementation. This team will form the operational backbone of the EYC year, supported by interdepartmental cooperation mechanisms established in advance. A dedicated EYC Coordination Unit will be set up to streamline communication and monitor progress across all pillars of the EYC agenda.

Throughout this preparatory timeline, Podgorica will intensify its alignment with European youth policies. The EYC program explicitly integrates the EU Youth Dialogue and participatory budgeting, ensuring young people are actively involved in co-shaping the process. The city will also scale its participation in Erasmus+, European Solidarity Corps (both individual and team volunteering), Europe Goes Local (EGL) and European Youth Work Agenda (EYWA) initiatives. These programs will be used to foster international exchange, build transnational partnerships, and offer hands-on experience for local actors in managing European-scale projects.

In the mid-term phase (during 2027), the focus will shift to scaling proven initiatives, embedding EYC themes and launching wide public engagement campaigns. Annual youth forums and public consultations will be held to refine priorities and test outreach formats. Cooperation with national ministries will be reinforced to secure policy-level support and ensure alignment with national youth development objectives. At European level, visiting other EYCs and their events will be prioritized to maximize learning. By the final year before the EYC, all key systems—financial, organizational, programmatic, and communicational—will be fully operational. Podgorica intends to host a large-scale pre-EYC youth event, gathering partners and stakeholders across Europe

to test implementation readiness. This will serve as a celebration of youth participation and European cooperation, as well as a stress-test and a visibility milestone.

11. MONITORING, EVALUATION AND LEARNING

To ensure accountability, learning, and legacy-building, Podgorica will establish a youth-centered monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) process that spans all phases of the EYC 2028 journey. It will be carried out by a dedicated Monitoring and Quality Assurance Team composed of representatives from the Sub-Committee of City Assembly, the newly established Municipal Youth Council, and an external expert in monitoring and evaluation. This structure is designed to ensure institutional alignment, youth-led oversight and methodological rigor.

Young people and youth organizations will play a central role throughout the evaluation process. Through their involvement in co-developing indicators and leading participatory assessments, youth will help ensure that the evaluation focuses on what matters most to them—particularly the accessibility, meaningfulness, and user-friendliness of EYC activities. MMCG will act as the primary facilitator of youth engagement, working with both formal youth organizations and informal groups to reach a wide range of young people, especially those with fewer opportunities, such as Roma youth, youth with disabilities, LGBTIQ+ youth, migrants, and youth from rural areas.

The MEL will be implemented in three phases. During the preparatory phase (2026–2027), baseline data will be collected, pilot tools tested, and the EYC 2028 monitoring strategy finalized. Throughout the implementation year (2028), quarterly updates, mid-year reviews, and continuous feedback sessions with youth will ensure ongoing learning. Finally, in 2029, a comprehensive final report will be produced, highlighting lessons learned and policy recommendations. The European Youth Forum will be informed about interim updates regularly, ensuring transparency and alignment with EYC standards.

The monitoring should lead to learning and adjustments for the EYC2028, while evaluation should provide the team with learning and adjustments to be made in the aftermath and for the purpose of sustainability and legacy for all young people. The following table shows the initial thinking alongside the draft Logical Framework (in the Annex) that will be further developed by the designated Monitoring and Quality Assurance team.

Key learning questions	Our starting point	What we want to see at the end of 2028
How effective are launched youth participation mechanisms?	Youth Office with 3 employees in charge of implementing Local Youth Plan and providing the main channel for youth engagement.	Youth participation mechanisms are aligned with EU standards and functional: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Youth Dialogue - Municipal Youth Council - Assembly’s Committee on youth Strengthened Youth Office with at least 5 employees capacitated for working with youth and supporting the above mechanisms.

<p>How inclusive are EYC2028 programs to diverse youth and how effective is outreach to marginalized groups?</p>	<p>Steering committee reflects diversity of youth representation</p>	<p>EYC2028 programme is assessed by young people as highly inclusive and effectively includes diverse young people outreached through mobility teams, youth clubs in various localities and activities in different parts of city for different youth subcultures and accessible to marginalized groups (Roma, NEET, subcultures, LGBTIQ, rural, poverty stricken).</p>
<p>What's the impact of EYC2028 on youth well-being and improvement of systemic support?</p>	<p>Young people engaged during 2025 in consultations report lack of quality content, weakened solidarity and lack of systemic support for improvements of quality of life.</p>	<p>EYC2028 programme is assessed by young people as attentive to and contributing to their wellbeing and EYC2028 flagships are integrated into systemic support to youth wellbeing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Youth app ePodgorica "My wellbeing" - Well-being hubs in youth clubs - Inclusive recreation in open spaces - Sexual&reproductive health education - Annual Youth Wellbeing Forum
<p>What's the impact of EYC2028 on youth empowerment?</p>	<p>Young people engaged during 2025 in consultations report lack of trust in institutions and opportunities to be heard and their ideas supported. Youth work capacity is not systematically invested in and built.</p>	<p>Young people assess they feel empowered through engagement with the EYC2028 programme. EYC2028 investment in youth spaces and capacities of youth workers to reach to and support youth are successful in informing, empowering and supporting diverse young people to develop and share their ideas. EYC2028 launched mechanisms are showing positive results and trends of youth empowerment and engagement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Green Participatory Youth Budgeting - Youth app ePodgorica "Map your space"
<p>What's impact on city's cultural, entrepreneurial and innovative practices towards youth?</p>	<p>Young people engaged during 2025 in consultations already shared innovative ideas and reported lack of support for making them reality (e.g. skate park, observatory, more safe spaces for youth subcultures)</p>	<p>Young people assess the support to cultural, entrepreneurial and innovative youth endeavors as relevant. EYC2028 flagships are integrated into systemic support to cultural, entrepreneurial and innovative ecosystem:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Youth app ePodgorica "Today for me?" - Startup academy & incubator - Culture entrepreneurship lab - Youth Innovation Fund "Youth bank" - Festival of youth entrepreneurship
<p>How sustainable are created structures for youth participation?</p>	<p>2026 budgetary allocations across city institutions for EYC2028 and democratically created youth structures.</p>	<p>Democratic standards are upheld and annual budgetary allocations are in continuity sustaining EYC2028 mechanisms beyond 2028.</p>
<p>How is EYC2028 contributing to Podgorica's and Montenegro's youth connection to European identity?</p>	<p>Young people are largely (71,1%) in favor of MNE's EU integrations however only 43,3% feel European according to Youth Study 2024</p>	<p>EYC2028 programme creates opportunities for peer interactions and exchanges bringing Europe closer to Podgorica's and Montenegro's youth.</p>

Methods will be directly integrated in the programme and will include surveys, interviews, digital dashboards, direct feedback loops and youth-led focus groups, all designed to be participatory and accessible, and with environmental sustainability in mind.

Key results, as well as lessons learnt and success stories will be summarized in reports shared widely in youth-friendly formats and multiple languages (Braille's, Albanian and Romani relevant for significant youth cohorts in Podgorica and Montenegro, as well as English). A dedicated youth-friendly report will be published, co-authored and co-presented by young people through public events, visual campaigns, podcasts, and digital platforms. Insights will feed into a Youth Policy Legacy Paper that will inform future municipal strategies and be disseminated nationally and regionally, including through the EYC learning network of current and aspiring EYC cities.

12. IMPACT AND LONG TERM LEGACY

The European Youth Capital 2028 will mark a turning point for Podgorica, embedding youth participation, as well as social inclusion, innovation and environmental sustainability as permanent pillars of the city's development. The immediate impact, visible one year after the title year, will include a more structured and representative youth participation system, improved infrastructure for youth services, and enhanced access to opportunities—especially for youth with fewer opportunities. Structures, Municipal Youth Council and Subcommittee on Youth within the City Assembly, as well as dynamic participatory mechanisms like the Youth Dialogue, Green Participatory Youth Budgeting and Youth Innovation Fund will have built trust between institutions and young people, increasing youth confidence in local governance, while initiatives focusing on spaces for youth like youth clubs in communities and schools and enhancing wellbeing of all young people in Podgorica will reduce exclusion and social distance.

The working group envisions that by 2033 the legacy of EYC 2028 will be tangible in multiple dimensions. Institutionally, Podgorica will have fully integrated youth participation into its governance model through permanent structures such as the Youth Council and Youth Budgeting Committee. Civic engagement will be mainstreamed in schools and local communities, supported by trained youth workers and sensitivised teachers. Legally, youth-related policies will be backed by data from the EYC monitoring system and aligned with the City's Development Strategy and broader national and EU youth frameworks.

On the urban level, lasting changes will include a decentralized network of youth clubs and multifunctional spaces for learning, creativity, and mental well-being, alongside enhanced digital tools for participation. Well-being hubs and safe spaces introduced during EYC 2028 will continue to operate within youth clubs as core community centers for youth empowerment and mental health support. Green investments and participatory eco-budgeting will form the backbone of Podgorica's new identity as a youth-led green capital.

Youth economic empowerment will persist through structures like the Youth Innovation Fund and the Entrepreneurship Incubator, which will help sustain start-ups and cultural enterprises. These will contribute to long-term job creation and support Podgorica's positioning as a regional innovation and creative hub. The EYC year will leave behind not only stronger intercultural dialogue but also digital tools such as the Youth Podgorica Digital Platform -ePodgorica app –

“Today for me”, a comprehensive platform for youth events and mobility benefits, co-designed with youth. The app, integrated with the European Youth Card, will serve as a resource hub beyond 2028. The same app will continue to provide opportunities for participation “Map your space” and support “My well-being”.

On a European level, with EU integration projected for 2028, Podgorica will remain active in EU and regional youth programs, partnerships and regular knowledge-sharing with previous EYC cities. Experience from EYC2028 will provide additional impetus for alignment with EU youth policies, as well as for shaping them, and participating in EU Youth Programmes and cross-border cooperation. The city will maintain cooperation with the European Youth Forum, and its model for participatory governance will be shared with other municipalities in Montenegro, region of Western Balkans and Europe through other platforms and networks that Podgorica participates in (such as Europe Goes Local framework).

The city is committed to sustaining youth-focused activities through dedicated funding lines in the municipal budget, continued support through Youth Office and local Youth Council, and the integration of EYC tools and platforms into Podgorica’s long-term strategies. The Monitoring and Quality Assurance practices will continue with the Subcommittee on Youth within the City Assembly tracking progress, contributing to evidence-based youth policy and keeping youth issues high on the political agenda.

All aspects of the legacy plan will uphold principles of sustainability and environmental responsibility—through the use of digital-first tools, green procurement practices, inclusive urban planning, and carbon-conscious operations.

13. BUDGET INDICATIONS

Podgorica’s candidacy for European Youth Capital 2028 is backed by a solid and forward-looking financial strategy, anchored in a clear political commitment from public institutions at all levels. The total projected EYC budget amounts to **€5.5 million**, with **94% (€5.15 million)** secured from **public sources** and the remaining **6% (€345,000)** to be mobilized through **private sector contributions**. Intent is to attempt to secure greater financial contribution from the private sector and other available public funding. Conservative outlook at prospects of private sector and EU contribution to the budget is grounded in current modest capacity of the city to fundraise, however, the intent is to invest in building these capacities and secure more funding from private sources, EU youth programmes and other EU funds. Full documentation of public sector financial commitments, including letters of intent from the City of Podgorica and the Government of Montenegro (relevant Ministry of Sports and Youth) is included in the annex.

This budget spans from 2026 through 2029, covering preparatory activities, full implementation in the title year, and post-2028 legacy programs and evaluation. Funding is structured to ensure not only the success of EYC 2028, but also long-term investment in youth development well beyond the title year. The 3,95 million euro is allocated for the program budget, out of which 1,96 million in capital investments. Program budget is presented across thematic pillars in following ratio (detailed overview in the annex):

1. **Youth Participation** – 50,63%
2. **Innovation** – 20,89%
3. **Environment** – 6,20%
4. **Well-being** – 19,75%

Additionally 2,53% of the program budget is planned for program support and includes quality assurance, monitoring and participatory evaluation, as well as cooperation with EYC cities.

While the significant majority of funding is secured from public sources, the City will implement a targeted fundraising strategy to engage the private sector beyond the currently set 6% target. This includes:

- Corporate sponsorships for major events.
- Public-private partnerships for youth infrastructure upgrades.
- Support for youth-led initiatives through CSR and foundation channels (e.g. Youth Bank).

A dedicated liaison sub-team will manage partnerships and sponsorship engagement throughout the EYC process.

Beyond the EYC-specific budget, Podgorica is demonstrating strong commitment to long-term investment in youth. The annual budget for the Youth Office grew from €25,000 in 2024 to €90,000 in 2025, representing a 3.6x increase in direct support to youth organizations. Overall, the city budget has grown from €100 million in 2020 to a projected €156 million in 2025, showing the city's capacity and political will to sustain and expand youth investment. This upward trajectory is aligned with Podgorica's broader ambition to modernize as a youth-driven, inclusive, and innovation-oriented European capital. EYC 2028 will accelerate this progress and ensure financial sustainability of youth initiatives by embedding youth policies and funding lines into long-term strategic documents and annual municipal budgeting processes.

<i>Total EYC budget (EUR)</i>	<i>From the public sector (EUR)</i>	<i>From the public sector (%)</i>	<i>From the private sector (EUR)</i>	<i>From the private sector (%)</i>
5,500,000	5,155,000	94%	345,000	6%

The breakdown of the public sector part of the EYC budget

<i>The public sector EYC budget</i>	<i>EUR</i>	<i>%</i>
EU	155,000	3%
National Government	1,000,000	19,4%
Municipality	4,000,000	77,6%

The breakdown of the **EYC budget** – Programme and other lines.

<i>Programme budget (EUR and %)</i>	<i>Communications and outreach budget (EUR and %)</i>	<i>Salaries, office, administration budget (EUR and %)</i>	<i>Other budgetary chapters (Contingency (1%), Emergency youth fund (1%)) (EUR and %)</i>	<i>Total EYC budget</i>
3,950,000 EUR 71,82%	400,000 EUR 7,27%	1,000,000 EUR 18,18%	150,000 EUR 1,36%	5,500,000 EUR 100%

The breakdown of the EYC budget for the **capital expenditure**

<i>Total EYC budget from the public sector to cover capital expenditure</i>	<i>EUR</i>	<i>%</i>
Contribution from: National Government	490,000	25%
Contribution from: Municipality	1,470,000	75%

14. EUROPEAN YOUTH FORUM EVENTS

Podgorica is fully prepared and honored to host the European Youth Capital Award Ceremony and, if agreed with the European Youth Forum, the Statutory Meeting (Council of Members). These events are viewed as key milestones to mark the city's role on the European youth map and celebrate its commitment to participatory and inclusive governance.

The city is ready to allocate a portion of the EYC budget in the amount of 185.000 Eur for these high-profile events (150.000 for EYC award and 35.000 for European Youth Forum Statutory Meeting) and will actively partner with local businesses and cultural stakeholders to secure additional resources and sponsorship. These partnerships are already being developed through the EYC working group network and the broader civic-private cooperation model established during the application process.

The proposed main venue is the Science and Technology Park of Montenegro—a modern, centrally located space equipped with cutting-edge technical facilities and capable of hosting large audiences in a professional and accessible environment. This venue is fully aligned with the EYC program's values of innovation, co-creation, and youth participation.

Podgorica's logistical readiness is backed by a diverse range of accommodation options—from high-end hotels like Hilton and Voco to budget-friendly hostels and student dormitories. Podgorica International Airport ensures efficient access to European destinations, while the city's compact structure and public transport system allow for easy and sustainable mobility.

The city's experienced event management teams will work in close coordination with youth organizations, volunteers, and municipal institutions to ensure smooth execution and a meaningful, youth-led atmosphere throughout. Young people will play active roles not only in planning and logistics but also in welcoming delegations, moderating sessions, and creating a cultural and social program that reflects Podgorica's diversity and creativity. Podgorica can offer

visits to youth spaces throughout Podgorica for peer-exchanges and youth ePodgorica app – to ease navigating the city from local youth lived experiences.

15. CONTINGENCY PLANNING

Podgorica's EYC 2028 initiative is built on a strong foundation of youth engagement and political backing in local government and assembly. While transitions in governance are a natural part of democratic systems, Podgorica's EYC candidacy is uniquely backed by a wide political consensus. Both ruling and opposition political forces have expressed strong support for the initiative, seeing it as a non-partisan and future-oriented investment in the city's youth and overall development. This consensus is reflected in the creation of the Subcommittee of Youth within the City's Assembly with representatives from across the political spectrum, ensuring continuity and legitimacy regardless of political shifts. Still, there are potential risks that may affect the implementation and impact of the program.

Furthermore, one of the EYC 2028 initiative's greatest strengths lies in its culture of co-creation. Youth organizations and informal youth groups are not only program beneficiaries but co-designers and co-implementers. Co-management Steering Committee, as models of inclusive and participatory governance provides a buffer against disruption, as shared ownership increases resilience and buy-in from across sectors. The program's adaptability—shaped through youth consultations, pilot phases, and embedded feedback loops—also ensures flexibility in response to emerging challenges. The EYC's structural design, particularly the Monitoring and Quality Assurance Team, will serve as an additional safeguard. By collecting real-time data on accessibility, usefulness, and youth experience, the team will be able to flag potential issues early and recommend course corrections, making the overall system more adaptive and resilient.

However, even with proactive planning, institutional cooperation and youth-led flexibility there are risks to EYC implementation. Continuing to present candidacy in a sincere manner, the working group identified as one of the key risks the agility of the current administrative and institutional system. Despite ongoing reforms, parts of the system remain under-capacitated and relatively slow in responding to new challenges and demands. To fully capture the transformative potential of EYC 2028, it is critical that timely investment in capacity building—particularly for youth workers, educators, and municipal staff—is ensured. Delays in these areas could hinder the responsiveness, scalability, and inclusiveness of proposed initiatives. To mitigate this, a series of targeted training programs and onboarding workshops will be launched prior to and during 2028. These will be supported by national institutions and international partners, and embedded into the city's broader strategic planning and fundraising efforts.

16. ANNEXES

ANNEX I: Written proof of the town or city's interest in running for EYC 2028 (to be signed by the head of executive of the municipal authority).
ANNEX II: A signed and stamped statement of support by an independent local or regional youth council. If no local youth council exists, a relevant coalition of local youth NGOs should support the application with the municipality, in written form.
ANNEX III: A proof of the bank transfer of the application fee of €700, to the Youth Forum bank account details provided above.
ANNEX IV: A statement declaring any external support (e.g. consultant services) requested to prepare the application, if applicable.
ANNEX V: A general presentation of the EYC 2028 Short-Listed City and its proposals, to be published on the official website of the European Youth Forum. Format: maximum 2 pages long designed PDF document, in English and including a brief summary.
ANNEX VI: Detailed city map indicating the main program venues and sites involved in the European Youth Capital project.
ANNEX VII: Support letters from President of Montenegro, President of the Parliament of Montenegro, Ministry of Ecology, sustainable development and development of northern region, Women's Leaders Network, Union of Municipalities of Montenegro, Montenegrin Olympic Committee, NGO Organization of Montenegrins Studying Abroad, NGO Biciklo.me
ANNEX VIII: Letters of intent for financial contribution to EYC candidacy by Municipal Secretariat for financial affairs and budget analyses and Ministry of Sport and Youth
ANNEX IX: Media coverage of consultations with youth and youth organizations
ANNEX X: Program budget overview (excel)
ANNEX XI: Decisions on newly formed governance and youth participation bodies
ANNEX XII: Draft log-frame matrix
ANNEX XIII: Overview of contribution of supporting youth structures

ANNEX XIV: Proposal for the appointment of the Executive Board

ANNEX XV: Decision of the Government of Montenegro on supporting the candidacy