



# Vision of the Future of Youth in Berane 2026-2028





**June 2026**


## 1. Purpose and basis for of the Vision of the Future of Youth document

 This document is based on the inputs gathered during several **participatory workshops on active citizenship and democratic participation**, including the accompanying pre- and post-workshop surveys. The **PURPOSE** of this document is to translate the voices of **young citizens** into a clear strategic direction for **improving youth policy, participation and living conditions** in **Berane**. In line with this purpose, the document is focused on the main *challenges* faced by young people, the *priorities* they identified, and the *measures* they proposed, with a *direct call* to decision-makers for action.

 The workshops were designed as a combination of *education, dialogue and practical youth advocacy*. The workshop events were attended by an average of 70 participants per event. Participants discussed *participatory democracy, electoral processes, active citizenship, public advocacy and local youth priorities*, while also working on **mini action plans** and a **shared vision document**. The methodology was deliberately participatory: *group discussions, simulations, voting on priorities, and direct exchange with local officials* were all used to help young people move from concerns to concrete proposals.

 The process of developing this *document* was itself an example of *participatory youth engagement*. During the workshops, participants were not only recipients of information but active contributors to the *identification of problems, prioritization of needs and formulation of recommendations*. Through *group work, discussions, practical simulations and exercises*, young people demonstrated their willingness to **engage in public affairs and advocacy** when provided with meaningful opportunities and supportive environments.

 Before the workshops, participants often assessed their **knowledge of democratic participation and public advocacy** as *moderate* rather than *high*. At the same time, many expressed uncertainty regarding their role in **decision-making processes**. Following the workshops, **most participants** reported *increased understanding of democratic processes, greater confidence in civic engagement, and a strong interest in participating in future youth initiatives*.

 These findings indicate that *investment in youth participation mechanisms* can generate tangible improvements in **civic awareness and motivation**. The process behind this document

confirms that young people possess both the **capacity** and the **willingness** to contribute to the *development of their local community*. The challenge is not a *lack of interest* among youth, but the need for more systematic opportunities for **participation, dialogue and influence**.





## 2. Take Action! Because, who if not you?






📌 These workshops and activities, including this document, are undertaken as part of the project “**Take Action! Because, who if not you?**” (**Take Action**). This project is implemented under the European Union’s **Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values (CERV)** Programme and has a duration of 18 months. The project is coordinated by the Youth Center Dalj (Croatia), in partnership with the **Municipality of Erdut** (Croatia), the **Municipality of Berane** (Montenegro), and the **NGO Montenegrin Iskra Berane** (Montenegro). The total project budget amounts to 340,775 EUR.


📖 The **main purpose** of the project is to *strengthen democratic participation of citizens, particularly young people, in local decision-making processes*. Through **cooperation** between the

public and civil sectors, the project seeks to create more **opportunities** for young people to *actively engage in shaping public policies and contribute to the development of their communities*. Special emphasis is placed on strengthening **participatory democracy** by establishing mechanisms that enable citizens to take a more active role in local governance and influence decisions affecting their everyday lives.


 Project activities are based on the exchange of experiences and good practices between partners from **Croatia** and **Montenegro**, with the aim of *improving democratic processes and enhancing the quality of life* in rural areas. Young people have been identified as the primary target group and, through various activities, will be *empowered to participate more actively in the social and public life* of their communities. One of the key outcomes of the project will be the establishment of **youth councils** (or similar youth representative bodies) within local government units, creating a framework for **regular dialogue** between *young people and local authorities*. This will enable municipalities to gain a better understanding of the **needs and interests of young people**, as well as other citizens, thereby contributing to a more *inclusive and effective decision-making process*.


 The **project objectives** are:


- To strengthen civic and democratic participation of young people in local decision-making processes. 
- To develop and promote participatory democracy models through greater citizen involvement in local governance. 
- To establish and empower youth councils as mechanisms for representing the interests of young people. 
- To enhance cooperation between local authorities and civil society organizations through a multi-sectoral approach. 
- To facilitate the exchange of knowledge, experience, and good practices between partners from Croatia and Montenegro in the field of democratic governance. 
- To increase the capacity of local communities to involve citizens in the development and implementation of public policies.


 The project also contributes to **strengthening cooperation** between *civil society organizations* and *local governments*, encourages networking and multi-sectoral collaboration, and promotes the values of **active citizenship**, **democratic engagement**, and **collective action**. Through the implementation of planned activities, the project is expected to increase *youth participation in decision-making*, develop sustainable models of *participatory democracy*, and strengthen the capacity of local communities to *engage citizens* in **shaping public policies**.

### 3. Main challenges affecting young people

 The workshop discussions and surveys show that young people in Berane face a combination of *social, economic, institutional and community-related challenges*. The **MOST VISIBLE CONCERN** is the limited sense of influence young people feel over decisions that affect their lives. Although many participants believed youth can influence community decisions, a **substantial number** were uncertain, which suggests that opportunities for real participation are not yet sufficiently visible or trusted.

 Participants also identified **unemployment** and **economic uncertainty** as **CENTRAL PROBLEMS**. Linked to this are **youth migration**: the departure of young people in search of work and better prospects, as well as the feeling that the local environment does not yet offer enough reasons to stay, build a career and plan a future. For young people in the community, this means watching their friends, family and peers leave in search of a better life. Education, practical experience and institutional support were also highlighted as important gaps.

 According to the **2023 Population Census** in Montenegro, the Municipality of Berane has 24,645 inhabitants, representing a *significant decline* compared to previous census periods (33,970 inhabitants in 2011) and confirming a long-term trend of **population decrease**.

 Young people constitute a *significant share of the municipality's population*. According to the 2023 census data, 3,170 residents belong to the 10–19 age group, while 3,046 residents are between 20 and 29 years of age. In total, more than 6,200 young people aged 10 to 29 account for approximately **one quarter** of Berane's total population, confirming that young citizens represent an **important development potential** for the local community.

💬 However, like most municipalities in northern Montenegro, Berane faces a pronounced challenge of **youth migration**. An increasing number of young people are leaving the municipality in search of *higher-quality education, better employment opportunities, professional development, and a higher standard of living*. The **emigration of young people** represents one of the most significant *development challenges*, as it directly contributes to a decline in *the working-age population*, slowing *economic growth* and weakening the *social potential* of the local community.

🧠 Another *set of challenges* concerns the **quality of the local environment and everyday life**. Specifically, young people had pointed to:

- waste disposal in the Lim River 🏠
- illegal parking 🚗
- insufficient sewerage infrastructure 🗑️
- poor road and park conditions 🏠 🧑
- stray dogs 🐕
- illegal logging 🌲 and
- a lack of enough sports, cultural and social content for youth. 🎮 🗣️

📌 As the **UNDERLYING CAUSES** of these problems, young citizens identified *low trust, poor organization, weak law enforcement, and corruption*.

✍️ A *further challenge* is **low participation in democratic processes**. Young citizens want clearer, more practical *civic education* and more *opportunities to speak, act and be heard*. Across the workshops, participants repeatedly returned to the **issues** of:

- low voter turnout among young people 🗳️
- lack of information about elections 🗳️ and
- the need to reconnect election debates and topics with the real concerns of youth. 🗣️

🧠 An **IMPORTANT FINDING** from both the surveys and workshop discussions is the perception that young people are often *excluded* from **meaningful decision-making**. While participants generally agreed that youth should be involved *in elections, public consultations and community problem-solving*, many expressed doubts about whether institutions genuinely take

youth opinions into account. This perception contributes to **disengagement** and **weakens trust in public institutions**.

💡 The discussions also revealed *concerns* about the **quality of information available to young people**. Participants frequently emphasized that many of their peers lack **sufficient knowledge** about *democratic processes, local governance and mechanisms* through which they can **influence public policies**. This **information gap** creates barriers to participation and reinforces feelings of *distance* from institutions and political processes.

👥 Another *recurring issue* was the **limited availability of spaces** where young people can *gather, develop ideas, and organize activities*. Participants highlighted the importance of *youth centers, sports facilities, cultural events and educational opportunities* as essential elements of a **healthy and inclusive community**. The challenges facing young people are interconnected. **Economic insecurity, limited participation, insufficient information, and inadequate youth infrastructure** reinforce one another and contribute to *migration, disengagement and reduced confidence in the future*.



## 4. Vision and guiding principles 🗨️

### 🌍 THE STRATEGIC VISION OF YOUTH:

*Berane is a community in which young citizens are informed, heard, respected, engaged and able to shape decisions that affect their lives. In this vision, young persons are not passive beneficiaries of policies, but active citizens and partners in local development. They participate in public life, cooperate with institutions, and contribute to solutions for the problems of the community.* 👤👤👤




📌 This vision rests on **FOUR PRINCIPLES**, outlined as follows:


- First, **participation** must be *real*, not symbolic: young people should have *reliable channels to influence policy*. ✍️
- Second, **opportunities** must be *inclusive, practical, and accessible to different groups of youth*. 🗣️
- Third, **youth policy** should be *connected to everyday life, especially employment, mobility, infrastructure and public spaces*. 👤👤
- Fourth, **decisions** should be made *transparently and in cooperation with young people, civil society and local institutions*. 📝


! The future envisioned by participants is one in which young people are recognized as **valuable contributors to community development** rather than *passive observers*. During the workshops, participants repeatedly emphasized the importance of **partnership** between *youth* and *institutions*. They expressed a desire for **greater transparency, responsiveness and openness** from *local authorities*, as well as *more opportunities* to contribute to **policy development**.


🗣️ The workshops also demonstrated that young people value **collective action** and **cooperation**. The *public advocacy exercises and simulations* showed that participants are prepared to work together across different interests and backgrounds when addressing common community challenges. This willingness to cooperate should be recognized as a **strategic resource** for *local development and social cohesion*.


🌍 The **Vision** promotes a culture of **ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP** in which *democratic participation* becomes a normal and expected part of youth life. Young people should have:


- access to information 
- opportunities to express their views  and
- confidence that their contributions can lead to **meaningful change**. 


 A successful youth policy is not only about **addressing youth problems**, it is about **creating conditions** for young people to become *active partners in shaping the future* of their community. During the workshops, participants were encouraged not only to identify current challenges but also to imagine the kind of community in which they would like to **live, study** and **work**. Their responses consistently described a municipality where young people feel **valued** and are **actively involved** in local development.



 Looking ahead to 2028, young people envision Berane as a municipality where they have *genuine opportunities* to **develop their potential, participate in public life, and build their future**. Young people are **informed** about issues that concern them, **confident** in expressing their views, and able to see the **tangible impact** of their engagement in the development of their community.


 The future envisioned by young people is characterized by **trust, open communication, and partnership** with decision-makers. Institutions *communicate openly* with young citizens and *youth perspectives* are considered in *policy-making processes*. **Cooperation** between local authorities, schools, civil society organizations, businesses and young people becomes a **standard practice** rather than an exception. In this vision, youth participation is an integral part of **local governance** rather than an occasional consultation or project activity. Young people have access to *effective channels* for **civic engagement**, including a **representative youth body** that maintains **regular dialogue** and **cooperation** with local institutions.

 Every legal or strategic act and major policy decision concerning youth is drafted and adopted in **consultation** with **youth representatives**. Youth representatives are part of working groups for drafting local policy documents and regulations. Decision-makers take into account their *concerns, suggestions* and *proposals* when drafting an act. Young people feel that **their opinions matters**, that institutions listen to them, and that their contributions can influence decisions affecting their *daily lives* and *future prospects*.

 Young people also envision a community that offers **realistic opportunities** for *personal and professional development*. In this future Berane, young people have access to *quality education, practical training opportunities, internships, mentorship programmes*, and clear pathways to **employment**. Local institutions, schools and the business and civil sectors *work together* to create conditions that encourage young citizens to remain in the municipality, develop their skills, and build **successful careers**.

 They provide young citizens with **opportunities for employment and professional skill development**, including *internships, apprenticeships, educational and youth employment programs, activities and events*: entrepreneurship workshops, skills-development trainings, career orientation events, mentoring programs, networking events with employers, vocational education activities, scholarship promotion activities, career counselling sessions, youth employment information campaigns, etc. As a result, **migration is significantly reduced** because young people increasingly see Berane as a place where they can *achieve their goals* and maintain a *good quality of life*. +++ seeing their friends leave

 Equally important, young citizens also imagine a community with **vibrant and accessible public spaces** that encourage *social interaction, creativity, recreation and healthy lifestyles*. After school or work, young people could relax by going to the park or by the river, take a walk through the forest, and *spend the day in nature*. They could even visit an art exhibit or attend a *cultural event*. Alternatively, a young person could call up their friends and visit the local open gym, or go to one of the sports terrains and play. Perhaps join or watch a *sports event* being held that day or weekend. The possibilities are there. 


 The river, forests, parks, sports facilities, cultural venues, youth centers, and public gathering spaces are *clean, well maintained, welcoming and safe*. **Public spaces** are not only functional but also designed to support the *needs and interests* of young people. **Environmental protection** has become a *shared community priority*, resulting in cleaner public areas, better waste management, protected natural resources, and a healthier environment with **greater community awareness** for *current and future generations*.





✦ Strengthening youth participation and civic education creates informed and engaged citizens. Expanding employment and development opportunities helps young people envision their future in Berane. Improving infrastructure and public spaces enhances quality of life and community well-being. Finally, institutionalizing youth participation ensures that young people remain active partners in local development. Together, these priorities form the foundation for achieving the shared vision of Berane as a municipality where young people choose not only to live, but also to contribute, innovate, and lead by 2028.


✍ The **strategic priorities** presented in the following chapter focus on **practical measures and actions**, intended to achieve a *broader vision* of what Berane should look like for young people by 2028. This **vision of the future of youth** of Berane provides the *key pathways* by which this desired future can be achieved.




## 5. Strategic priorities and measures

 The analysis of *workshop discussions, youth advocacy group proposals, and survey findings* revealed **four interconnected strategic priorities** that young people consider essential for *improving their position and future prospects* in Berane. While participants identified a broad range of **specific challenges and needs**, their proposals consistently converged around **FOUR KEY AREAS**. Together, these priorities represent a comprehensive framework for addressing both the *immediate concerns* and *long-term aspirations* of young people:

- strengthening **youth participation and civic education** 
- improving **employment opportunities, skills development, and career prospects** 
- creating a more **youth-friendly local environment** through investments in infrastructure, public spaces, and environmental protection  and
- establishing **permanent mechanisms** through which young people can **participate in decision-making** and **cooperate with institutions**. 

 Importantly, participants emphasized that these priorities should not be treated as separate policy areas but as *mutually dependent elements of a broader vision for youth development*. Young people who are *informed and engaged* are more likely to **participate in community life**. Young people who have *access to employment opportunities and quality public spaces* are more likely to **remain in their municipality**. And young people who are given *meaningful opportunities to contribute to decision-making* are more likely to develop **trust in institutions and democratic processes**. For this reason, the measures proposed in the following sections should be implemented through an integrated approach that promotes *participation, opportunity, inclusion, sustainability, and partnership* as the foundations of a **youth-friendly and future-oriented municipality**.

### 5.1. Strengthen youth participation and civic education

 The workshops showed that young people respond best to *interactive learning, dialogue, simulations and practical exercises*. Participants asked for more *debates, discussions, more real-life examples*, and more opportunities to practice *public advocacy*. **THE FIRST PRIORITY** should therefore be sustained **civic education in schools** and **through youth activities**, with a

focus on *elections, democratic participation, public advocacy* and *decision-making* at the local level.

📌 To that end, **PRACTICAL MEASURES** should include:

- regular youth forums with municipal representatives 👤👤
- public consultations on local youth policy 💬
- simulations of decision-making 🏛️
- training for youth in communication 🗣️
- public speaking 🎤
- negotiation and advocacy 🤝

🗣️ Young people also suggested that **campaigns** should use **social media, peer-to-peer communication** and **messages** delivered by *students, athletes and local youth activists* rather than by political authorities using only formal bureaucratic language.

📊 Survey results indicate that participants responded particularly positively to interactive learning methods, including:


- debates 🗣️
- group discussions 💬
- simulations 📋 and
- practical exercises. 👤👤

🌐 These approaches enabled participants to connect *abstract democratic concepts* with *real-life issues* affecting their communities. Future youth policies should therefore prioritize **experiential** and **participatory** forms of **civic education**.






🏛️ Participants also emphasized the need for **stronger communication between institutions and young people**. *Regular consultations, youth forums, and digital participation tools* could help


bridge this gap while ensuring that youth perspectives are incorporated into local decision-making processes.


## 5.2. Improving youth employment, skills, and future opportunities

 **THE SECOND PRIORITY** is **youth employment**, and also one of the **clearest priorities**. Participants linked **job creation** to dignity, belonging, and the decision to remain in Berane. Specifically, many workshop participants linked **youth migration** directly to *limited employment prospects* and *perceived lack of opportunities*. Beyond **job creation**, young people highlighted the importance of **practical skills**, **professional development**, and **access to information** about *educational and career pathways*. This suggests that youth policy should adopt a *holistic approach* that connects *education, employment, entrepreneurship, and personal development*.

 As such, the following **PROPOSED MEASURES** are aimed towards building stronger links between youth and employers:

- support for youth entrepreneurship 
- internships 
- apprenticeships 
- scholarships  and
- career orientation. 

 The **municipality** should also work with **schools, businesses, and national institutions** to identify realistic **local employment** pathways.

 Particular attention should be given to *creating opportunities* that allow young people to gain **practical experience** through:

- internships 
- volunteering 
- mentoring  and
- project-based learning. 

🌐 Such experiences strengthen **employability** while also encouraging **civic engagement** and **community attachment**.

### 5.3. Improve local infrastructure and youth-friendly spaces and communities

✍️ As **THE THIRD PRIORITY**, young people clearly want *visible improvements* in the **local environment**. A *youth-friendly town* is one where public space is safe, useful, and attractive for young people's daily life, not only for occasional events. To that end, many proposals and suggestions from the participants and the youth advocacy group demonstrate a *strong interest* in improving the *physical environment* of Berane.

📌 Specifically, young citizen had proposed and expressed strong support for the following **PRACTICAL MEASURES**:

- repairs to roads and parks 🏠 🌳
- better sewerage infrastructure 🚰
- stronger controls against illegal parking 🚗
- improved waste management ♻️
- better protection of public spaces 🌳
- more sports and cultural facilities (such as tennis and padel courts) 🎾 🧑🏫
- more open-air fitness spaces 🏃

🔥 These measures matter not only as **infrastructure projects**, but as signals that young people are meant *to stay and build their lives in Berane*. With that in mind, the aim of **these measures** is to improve:

- environmental protection 🌿
- public cleanliness 🧼
- road infrastructure 🏠
- public spaces 🌳
- sports facilities 🎾

- cultural and recreational opportunities. 🗣️

🌐 These priorities show that young people view **quality of life** as an essential component of **local development**.

✍️ The emphasis on **environmental issues** here is particularly noteworthy. Concerns related to *waste disposal, pollution of the Lim River, illegal logging, and protection of public spaces* indicate that young people see **environmental sustainability** as a key part of their **future vision** for the municipality.



#### 5.4. Build permanent youth representation and institutionalized youth partnership

👤👤 The establishment of a **youth advocacy group** during the workshops represents an important foundation for *future youth engagement and participation*. Survey findings from the latest workshops show a high level of interest in continuing *advocacy activities* and *participating in future initiatives*. This demonstrates that young people are prepared to engage on a long-term basis when they perceive **participation** as *meaningful and impactful*. 🇺🇦

✍️ Therefore, **THE FOURTH PRIORITY** should be the establishment of **permanent mechanisms for participation** in decision-making and **cooperation** with **institutions**. One of

the strongest outcomes of the workshops was the emergence and formation of a **youth advocacy group**. Young people expressed readiness to continue *working together, communicate through shared channels*, and develop *mini action plans* and *public advocacy initiatives*. 🗨️

📌 As such, **PROPOSED MEASURES** include several proposals:

- First, the municipality should **institutionalize** this energy by establishing and supporting a **Youth Center, Youth Council** or similar representative body, with a clear **mandate** and **regular contact** with local authorities. 🏛️
- **Youth representation** should not be occasional. It should be built into planning, budgeting, and monitoring. Young people, via Youth Center or similar representative body, should be invited to comment on the Local Youth Action Plan, urban planning, cultural and sports policy, and environmental priorities. 👤👤👤



🗨️ Additionally, local institutions should move beyond occasional consultation and **establish permanent mechanisms** for **youth involvement**. Such mechanisms should include:



- regular meetings 🗨️
- participatory planning processes 🗨️ and
- opportunities for youth representatives to contribute to policy discussions. 👤👤


🌐 These proposed priorities are **mutually reinforcing**. *Strengthening participation, expanding opportunities, improving infrastructure, and institutionalizing youth partnerships* together create the **conditions for sustainable youth development** and **stronger community resilience**.





## 6. Messages from Young Citizens

 The process of developing this Vision document provided young people with an opportunity not only to **identify problems** and **propose solutions**, but also to **articulate the messages** they want *decision-makers, institutions, and their peers* to hear. Through workshops, group activities, simulation exercises, surveys, as well as discussion of topics such as **low youth voter turnout**, participants expressed a clear desire for **greater inclusion, stronger trust in democratic processes, and more opportunities to influence the future of their community**. Their messages reflect both *concern* and *optimism*: concern about the barriers that *discourage participation*, and optimism that *meaningful change is possible* when young people are **informed, engaged, and treated as equal partners** in decision-making and policy creation. The messages presented below represent a synthesis of the *views, priorities, and recommendations* that emerged throughout the consultation process and serve as a **direct voice of youth** within this Vision document. 

 This chapter is particularly important because it demonstrates that **low youth participation** is not a result of *apathy* or *indifference*. On the contrary, the workshops revealed a generation that is not only interested in *community issues, concerned about employment, education, quality of life, and environmental protection*, but also **willing and motivated to contribute to solutions**. However, young people also emphasized that participation requires **trust, information, visible results, and genuine opportunities to be heard**. Their messages therefore represent both a **call for action** and a **roadmap** for building stronger **cooperation between youth, institutions and the wider community**. 

 These are **THE MESSAGES** from **young citizens** to the **public**, to their **fellow young people**, and to **decision-makers**:

1) *Our voice matters only if it is heard.* 

 Young people want to participate in democratic processes, but many feel that their opinions are ignored and that decisions are made without them. If institutions want greater **youth participation**, they must create genuine opportunities for young people to influence decisions and see the **results of their engagement**.

2) *Low youth turnout is a symptom, not the problem.* 🗳️

💬 Young people identified distrust in political actors and institutions, lack of information, weak civic education, feelings of powerlessness, corruption, and the belief that voting does not bring real change as major reasons for **low turnout**. Increasing participation therefore requires **rebuilding trust**, not only encouraging voting.

3) *Talk about the issues that affect our lives.* 🗣️

💬 Participants repeatedly stressed that young people become interested when democratic processes are connected to *real-life concerns* such as **employment, housing, student opportunities, public transport, environmental protection, and quality of life in the community**. Elections should not be presented as abstract political events but as decisions that directly affect young people's future.

4) *Young people trust other young people.* 👤 👤 👤


💬 One of the strongest messages from the workshops was that communication should happen *peer-to-peer*. Participants emphasized that young people are more likely to listen to *students, athletes, local activists, and their peers*, rather than to traditional political campaigns or lectures delivered "from above."


5) *Participation must begin before elections.* ✍️


💬 Young people do not want to be approached only during election periods. They want **continuous dialogue, opportunities to participate** in local initiatives, youth councils, consultations, advocacy campaigns and community projects throughout the year. **Participation** should become a normal part of community life.


6) *Education creates participation.* 📖


💬 Young people believe that **greater knowledge** about democracy, elections and public advocacy leads to **greater participation** and **stronger communities**. Survey responses consistently highlighted the importance of workshops, debates, simulations, discussions and civic education activities.


7) *If we do not participate, others will decide for us.* 

 During the motivational workshops, participants developed one of the clearest messages for their peers: *If you do not vote, someone else will vote and decide instead of you.* They emphasized that **every vote matters** and that one vote is not insignificant when many young people make the same choice.

8) *We want to be partners, not observers.* 


 The workshops demonstrated that young people are ready to organize, advocate, propose solutions, and work with institutions. The formation of the **youth advocacy group** and the willingness of participants to continue engagement show that young people do not want to remain *passive observers* of **local development**, they want to help shape it.

9) *We care about our community and our future.* 





 Young people want institutions that listen, opportunities that allow them to *stay and build their lives here*, as well as democratic processes that connect to the realities they face every day. *Give us information, include us in decisions, trust us with responsibility, and we will contribute.* Low youth turnout is not a sign of indifference, it is a signal that young people want a **stronger voice**, **greater trust**, and a more **meaningful role in shaping the future of Berane.**





## 7. Call to decision-makers


 We call on the Municipality of Berane, public institutions, schools, NGOs and all relevant partners to establish **YOUTH PARTICIPATION** as a permanent policy priority. Young people have already shown that they are ready to *engage, learn, cooperate and propose solutions*. They do not lack ideas, they lack enough *space, trust* and *institutional follow-through*.


 **Decision-makers** should therefore:

- open stable channels for consultation with young citizens 
- support the establishment and functioning of youth representative structures 
- include youth priorities in local budgets and development plans  and
- improve communication with young people and report publicly on progress. 

 The **message from young citizens** is clear: *when youth are informed, respected and involved, they become partners in solving local problems and shaping the future of the community*.


 The findings generated through this process provide a **clear mandate for action**. Young people have identified their **priorities, proposed realistic solutions, and demonstrated readiness to contribute to implementation**. Their expectations now lie with institutions to respond with **concrete measures, sustained dialogue and transparent accountability**.


 Particular attention should be paid to ensuring that youth participation extends *beyond consultation* and becomes *integrated* into **policy development, implementation and evaluation**. Young people should be invited not only to *express opinions* but also to *help design solutions* and *monitor progress*. The workshops demonstrated that when young people are trusted with responsibility, they respond with **creativity, commitment** and **practical ideas**. The success of the project activities and the positive survey results suggest significant untapped potential for **civic leadership** among young people in Berane.


 The analysis of workshop discussions, youth advocacy group proposals and survey results reveals a **generation of young people** that is **informed, motivated** and **willing to contribute to positive change**. Their priorities are clear: *greater participation, better opportunities, stronger institutions, improved infrastructure, and a community that values youth perspectives*. Achieving

this vision requires **long-term cooperation** between **young people, local authorities, educational institutions, civil society organizations** and **the wider community**. If these partnerships are strengthened, Berane can become a municipality in which young people not only choose to remain but also **actively shape its future development**.

## 8. Youth Declaration 🌐

 *We, the young people of Berane, commit ourselves to active participation in democratic processes, community development and cooperation with institutions. We recognize our responsibility to contribute to positive change, promote dialogue, respect diversity and actively engage in shaping the future of our community.*

 *We invite and call upon decision-makers to recognize young people not only as beneficiaries of public policies but as equal partners in creating solutions, defining priorities and building a more inclusive, prosperous and sustainable municipality.*

 *We believe that through mutual trust, cooperation and shared responsibility, Berane can become a community where young people have opportunities to develop their potential, remain in their hometown and actively contribute to its progress.*

In Berane, June 2026. 