

URBACT



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Integrated Action Plan



Project NextGen YouthWork - Developing a hybrid and sustainable future for youth work, financed by URBACT IV (2021-2027) Programme.





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1&2. Introduction & Local Context

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1.1 The URBACT Programme and The Action Plan

This Action Plan is realized on the frame of the project NextGen YouthWork – Developing a hybrid and sustainable future for youth work, financed by URBACT IV (2021–2027) Programme.

URBACT IV is dedicated to supporting sustainable and integrated urban development through cooperation, knowledge exchange, and capacity building among cities, financed by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) together with IPA III and NDICI instruments. Its mission is to empower cities to design and implement integrated, participatory, and place-based solutions, fostering cooperation and knowledge exchange across Europe. By supporting the green, digital, and just transitions, URBACT IV contributes directly to building “a Europe closer to citizens.”

The NextGen YouthWork project aims to address the most pressing challenges regarding the increasing role of digitalization in the lives of young people and the role of youth workers in this context. The project addresses the need for long-term strategies to profile the “Digital Youth Worker” of the future. At the same time, it aims to exchange knowledge and experience between participating cities to design short-term actions that respond to the needs of young people on various topics.

The project was a great opportunity for the City of Iasi to get in contact and learn from a variety of cities all over Europe – Eindhoven (Netherlands) – lead Partner, Veszprém (Hungary), Oulu (Finland), Perugia (Italy), Cartagena (Spain), Aarhus (Denmark), Viladecans (Spain), Tetovo (Macedonia), Klaipėda (Lithuania).

2.1

Local Context



Officially appointed Historical Capital of Romania, Iași is the main urban centre in North–Eastern Region, being one of the most important cities in Romania and one of the most important university centres in the country. Its position, close to the border with the Republic of Moldova and approximately 200 km from the border with Ukraine, gives it a privileged status in cross–border relations and will be a major opportunity for development and logistic hub during the reconstruction of Ukraine.

In this context, Iași is distinguished as a particularly important city in this area, having a regional function structured on the following components:

1. regional cultural center,
2. regional academic center,
3. regional medical center,
4. regional economic center,
5. regional political and administrative center.

In terms of infrastructure, recent years have seen an improvement in public spaces, the rehabilitation of many historical and cultural monuments, and the enhancement of iconic buildings. High–speed internet, renowned universities, a young and active population have led to the rapid development of the IT and outsourcing sectors, and Iași has become a city of progressive young people.

Cultural festivals, nightlife, shopping and business or educational conferences enrich the palette of reasons why more and more young people choose to settle in Iași. This is a main reason for awarding to Iași the title of **Romanian Capital of Youth in 2019**.



The city's potential has been highlighted in a 2018 report of the World Bank, titled Rethinking Lagging Regions. It described Iași as “the most dynamic city” in the North East region. Also, as university centre, the city attracts a constant flow of young and well-educated people.

Declared Romanian Tourist Destination in 2022, Iași has a vibrant cultural life, the artists' communities have at their disposal generous spaces (many of them recently restored) to carry out their activity – National Theatre (the oldest in Romania), the Moldova State Philharmonic, the Opera House, the National Athenaeum, the Central University Library (the oldest in Romania), the high quality foreign cultural centres and festivals, an array of cultural, religious and historical monuments.

Iași is known nationally and internationally due to many events organized as part of a good collaboration between cultural institutions and local public authorities that have provided most of the budget and logistical support. One of the most relevant is Iași International Festival of Literature and Translation (FILIT), a celebration of books, literature and youth, that brings together hundreds of book professionals worldwide, writers, readers, artists animating the city with exclusive and international reaching cultural events, being one of the largest literary festivals in Europe under the Patronage of the European Commission (www.filit-iasi.ro) Other success stories: International Theatre Festival for Young Audiences awarded with the “Remarkable Festival” at the “Europe for Festivals, Festivals for Europe” competition, CLASSIX, bringing together in Iași over 60 international classical music personalities from 14 countries, ROCANOTHERWORLD – rock&art festival, movies festivals, medical conferences, educational events, the largest Orthodox pilgrimage in Romania.

Further more, there are the important Jewish, Greek, Armenian, Italian, Roma and Lipovan communities

which contribute to the multicultural and openness profile of the city.

Iași has recently been named the city where young people are the happiest in Romania, according to a national survey by the Romanian Youth Council. With an average happiness score of 7.49 out of 10, Iași ranks well above the national youth average of 6.69. Several factors contribute to this positive perception: young residents appreciate the city's accessibility, affordable housing, and welcoming environment for students and young professionals. They also highlight Iași's cultural vibrancy, safety, and the sense of fairness in local governance.

However, the same study points out several challenges that young people still face. Many respondents mentioned limited career opportunities, especially in highly specialized or creative industries, as well as difficulties in finding stable, well-paid jobs after graduation. Other concerns include insufficient green spaces in certain areas and the need for better public transportation and youth-oriented infrastructure. Despite these issues, Iași remains one of Romania's most attractive cities for young people, balancing a strong academic tradition with a growing digital and cultural scene that continues to inspire optimism among its residents.

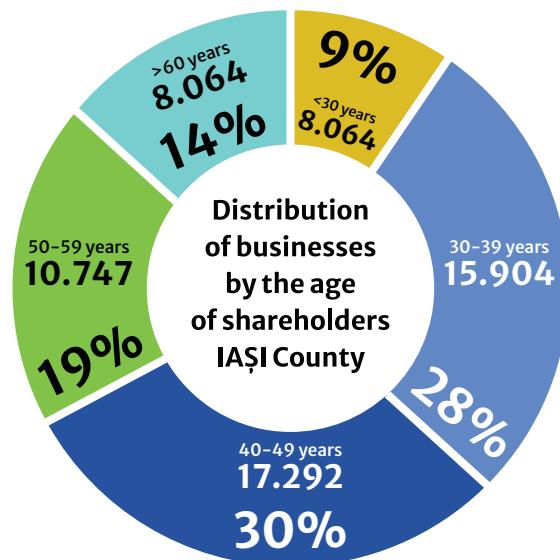
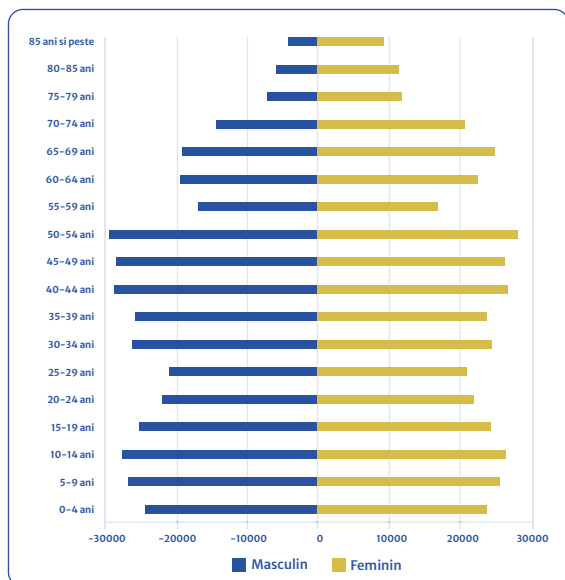
2.1 Youth, Demographics, Education

The demographic dependency ratio for Iași County is 59.1 young and elderly people per 100 adult people, higher than the national demographic dependency ratio of 55.5 young and elderly people per 100 adult people. The demographic aging index for Iași County has a value of 83.2 elderly people (65 years and over) per 100 young people (under 15 years), lower than the demographic aging index at the national level which records a value of 121.2 elderly people (65 years and over) per 100 young people (under 15 years)

Age Pyramid – Resident population of Iași County, by age groups and sexes, provisional results



Presentation: Youth Population in Iași – 2021 Census



According to the 2021 Population and Housing Census, Iași had a total population divided into 45.1% active and 54.9% inactive individuals. Among the inactive population, young people — particularly students and pupils—represent a major demographic group.

Key Figures

STUDENTS / PUPILS

55,837

•37.4% of the inactive population

ACTIVE YOUNG ADULTS

122,492

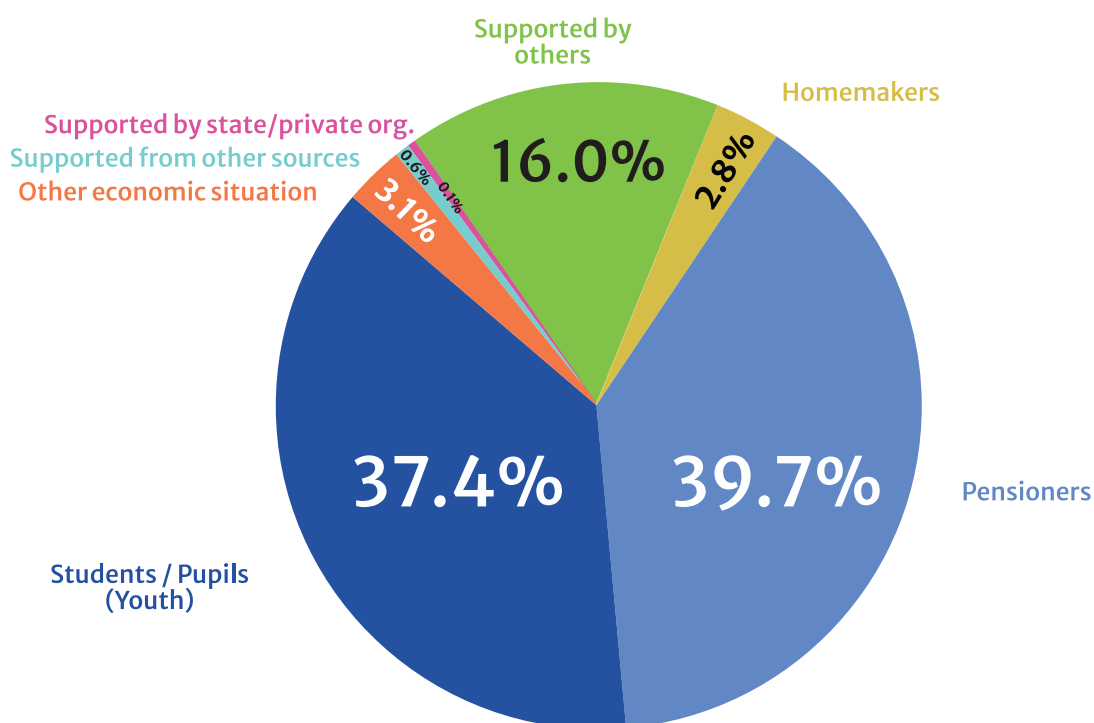
•included within the 122,492 active population

TOTAL YOUTH

60–65000

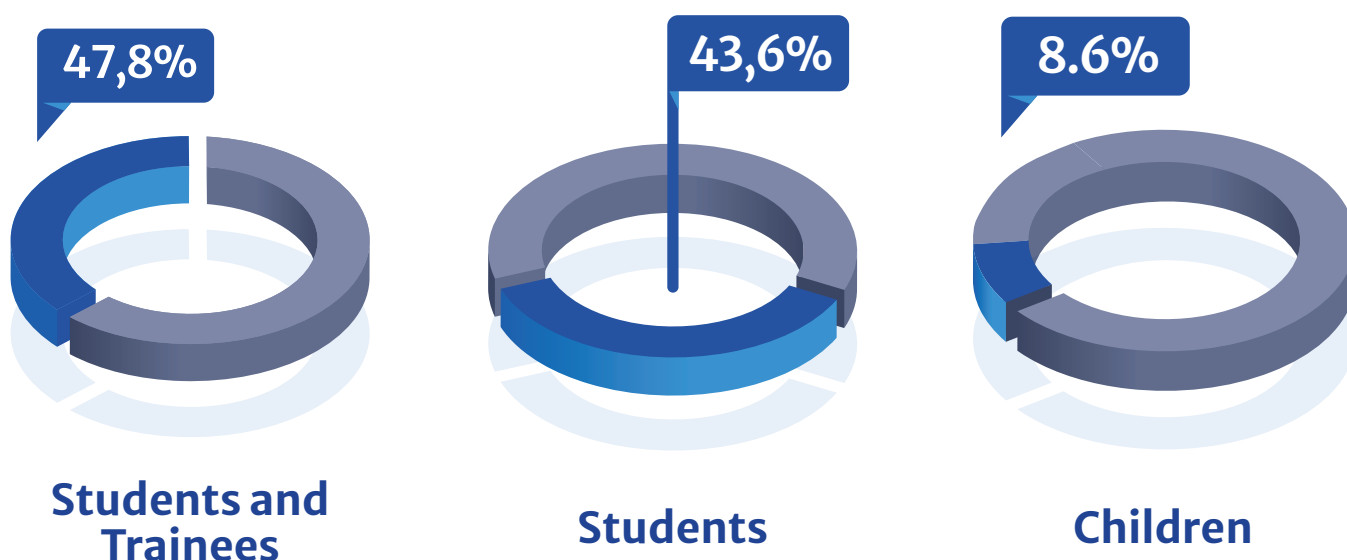
approximately 60,000–65,000 people, showing that Iași has one of the youngest demographic profiles among Romanian cities.

Inactive Population Structure in Iași (2021) – Focus on Youth



This data reflects Iași's status as a university city and a regional educational hub, attracting young people from across Romania. The large student population fuels innovation, volunteerism, and participation in cultural and digital sectors (e.g., esports, creative industries).

In 2023, in the municipality of Iași, 47.8% of the school population represents students and trainees enrolled in university education (bachelor's, master's, postgraduate courses, doctorate and postdoctoral programs for advanced research), 43.6% are students enrolled in pre-university education, and 8.6% are children enrolled in kindergartens and nurseries.





Education infrastructure in Iași

Pre-university education.

In the over 130 kindergartens, schools, state and private high schools in Iași, over 60,000 students study, trained by approximately 3,500 teachers

1. Number of pre-university education units (kindergartens, schools, high schools) – 127
2. Number of units that have been rehabilitated in the last three years > 20
3. Total number of students 54,614
4. Number of students who benefit from modern teaching / learning technologies – access / use of computers and the Internet 54,614
5. Number of students who benefit from support for participation in education (scholarships, supplies, meals, other facilities) 550
6. Number of units that have sports halls / swimming pools 35
7. Number of students participating in national school olympiads 600

University education

The universities of Iași occupy top positions in international rankings made according to very strict standards, alongside prestigious educational institutions from abroad. Iași is the second university center of the country and attracts a total number of over 60,000 students.

The city of Iași is one of the oldest and largest centers of culture and education in Romania. In Iași there are 5 major state higher education institutions (University “Alexandru Ioan Cuza”, Technical University “Gheorghe Asachi”, University of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine “Ion Ionescu de la Brad”, University of Medicine and Pharmacy “Grigore T. Popa”, National University of Arts “George Enescu”) and 2 private universities (University “Petre Andrei”, University “Apollonia”). The universities train specialists in all fields that have contributed to the existence of a vibrant cultural environment in Iași, a valuable and continuously expanding IT industry, and the international recognition of the city as a medical capital.

Number of students in Iași Municipality, Academic year 2022–2023

Number of students	Number
University “Alexandru Ioan Cuza”	24.178 , 45,6 %
Technical University “Gheorghe Asachi”	12.903 , 24,4 %
University of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine “Ion Ionescu de la Brad”	4.108, 7,8 %
University of Medicine and Pharmacy “Grigore T. Popa”	10.160, 19,2 %
National University of Arts “George Enescu”	1.618, 3,1 %
TOTAL	52.967, 100 %

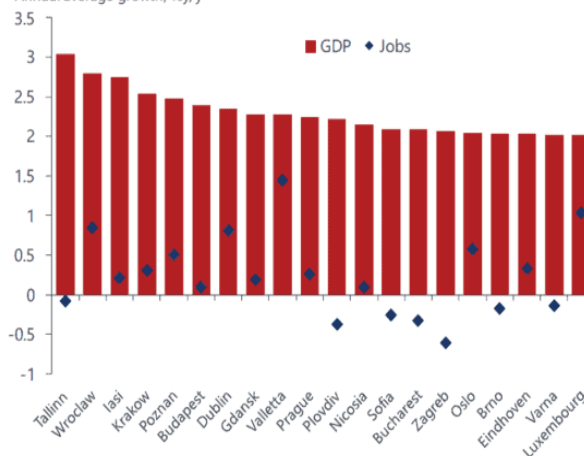
2.2 Economy, Innovation & Digital Sector

The students are organized in associations which are an important voice in the local community, some of them being very active and involved in various development projects and volunteering initiatives.

All these associations, foundations and non-governmental organizations contribute in many cases to solving problems in the city, which state institutions do not have the possibility, or the legal attributions, to solve, through partnerships with local authorities, or through independent activity, with the support of external funding programs. An extensive list of students and youth associations is attached.

Growth across the fastest-growing major European cities 2025–2040

Annual average growth, %/y



Source: Oxford Economics

<https://www.oxfordeconomics.com/resource/europe-fastest-growing-major-cities>

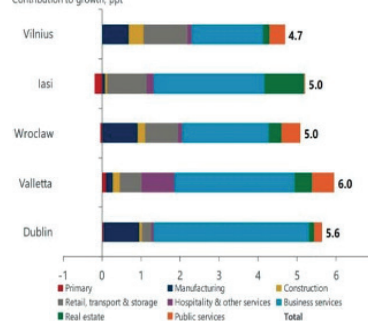
Economics

According to a recent analysis by Oxford Economics, Romania has two cities among Europe's major cities with the fastest growth over the last 15 years; Iași is one of them. Iași's economic expansion between 2010–2025 has been driven largely by the IT & communications sector: about half of its growth comes from that field. The fact that Iași is a strong university city has helped develop a tech-skills cluster, attracting multinational investments (e.g. Amazon has a Development Centre here). Also, the real-estate sector has contributed: housing market growth has had a significant effect.

Looking forward, growth for Iași is expected to continue, though more modestly, with many of the same drivers (technology, service business) remaining important. To sustain growth, Iași must continue investing in innovation, education, and sustainable urban development, while improving living standards and accessibility. The city's strong academic environment and dynamic youth sector, however, give it a solid foundation for long-term resilience and prosperity.

Chart 3: Business services sectors have been the main contributors to expansion for the fastest-growing major European cities

Sectoral contribution to GVA for Europe's fastest-growing major cities, 2010–2025
Contribution to growth, ppt



Source: Oxford Economics, Eurostat

Innovation in IT

Students passionate about robotics and artificial intelligence in Iași can develop their knowledge at the workshops organized at the Iași High School of Informatics. The first robotics laboratory in a pre-university education unit in Iași was inaugurated here. It is part of the CyLiis workshops and was established in partnership with a private company.

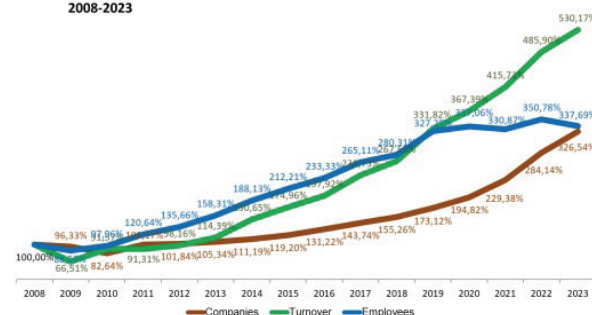
2.2 Economy, Innovation & Digital Sector

Adservio is the online school management platform established in Iași Municipality that connects teachers with parents and students, thus bringing visible improvements to the Romanian education system. Offering much more than a digital catalog, the platform involves transferring time-consuming physical activities into automatic actions. The information is accessible from any location, from school, from home, from the country or abroad, at any time and on any medium: desktop computer, laptop, tablet, mobile phone. Today, most schools and high schools in Iași Municipality are connected to the Adservio platform.

The main investments made in recent years have been in the IT and Telecom industry, some of the largest companies in the field have opened branches in Iași

(Amazon Development Center for Romania, Continental, SCC Services Romania etc)

Trend of active companies in
IT&C
2008-2023



Unemployment

Despite an improvement in recent years, youth employment is low in Romania. In 2022, the employment rate of young people aged 15–24 was 19.7%, 4.9 percentage points lower than in 2020, and the youth unemployment rate was 22.8%. Unemployment affects graduates of lower, medium and low levels of education more than those with higher education. For example, in 2020, the unemployment rate, according to the International Labor Office, for people with medium education was 5.1%, and for those with low education, 8.1%, much higher than the rate recorded for the unemployed with higher education, which was 2.2%.

In Iasi City, according to the data analysed for 2024, the number of unemployed decreased by 7.9% from January to June. The share of unemployed registered at the end of the month in Iași municipality remains constant from month to month with an average of 0.25% of the total population.

Facilities for Youth in Iasi

Student/Youth Culture House initially built between around 1960, with large halls, in the typical „communist” huge buildings, very disfunctional, is a place where young people could spend their free time attending spectacles, theatre, music or literature groups. Currently, the institution annually hosts a wide range of traditional festivals, “Luceafărul” Theatre for Children and Youth from 1987, also brutalist architecture, not very appealing for youth. However, The International Festival for Young Public (FITPT) is one of the events which gathers famous international artists each October, with over 200 actors from 15 countries.

Children’s Palace organizing non-formal activities involving children in educational projects. The activities are divided in over 100 groups, on various fields – visual arts, music and dance, civic culture, science and technique or sport and tourism.

New successful initiatives – good practices of Iasi City

Fab Lab Iași – started as part of an international network of “Fab Labs” that aims to facilitate innovation and digital production. This is a private initiative located in the premises of the Technical University of Iasi. It is a flexible coworking and connection space, with a community passionate about education, technology, design and personal development. But the specificity is that here in Iasi a real youth community is created around the Fab Lab, developing also non-formal activities, long-life learning, getting involved in community projects. Due to various partnerships with private entities now in Iasi function a network of 3 Fab Labs and 1 mobile Fab Lab that brings internet and technology closer to isolated communities near Iasi.

ZBOR Hub in Iași – created in 2024

is another private initiative created with the support of Fab Lab, part of a network of youth-hubs in Romania, initiated by BCR (Banca Comercială Română). It aims to be a “space of exploration” for young people — physically and online.

ZBOR Hub Iași provides various services for youth, free of charge, along several “directions” or pillars. Some of the main offerings:

- informal education): workshops, training, debates, seminars in areas like digital skills, AI, digitalization.

- entrepreneurship) and mentorship: support for young people who want to build projects, pitch ideas, etc.
- personal development), financial education, digital skills, sustainability, and lifestyle.
- networking: a place to meet other young people, exchange ideas, collaborate, volunteer. Safe space, inclusive, where people can experiment. Many report that it's also a social place, not just educational — a place to feel supported and trying new things. Also, they run specific events like: Pitch-days for young entrepreneurs, including international teams, ateliers with mental health / emotional support (e.g. psychologists / psychotherapists).

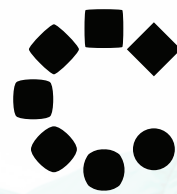
Why it seems important

- It gives young people in Iași a place to grow outside formal schooling — to try, fail, explore, build.
- Helps fill gaps: many youths say they lacked places to experiment, talk, learn skills beyond what's taught in class. ZBOR seems to address that.
- Builds community: people volunteer, become part of the team, get to organize or propose events. For many, it is also a social anchor.
- It covers a lack of dedicated premises for youth and youth workers



**FABLAB
IAȘI**





Romanian Creative Week

Beside these “physical” good practices from Iasi, a special mention must be made for the several major Youth festivals that managed to get young artist and youth volunteers involved, to contribute in person and digitally to the organization and promotion of some large, international events:

Romanian Creative Week – the largest event dedicated to creative industries in the European Union. Hosted annually in Iași, it serves as a dynamic platform for artists, innovators, and entrepreneurs to showcase and explore the intersections of art, design, technology, and culture, bringing together over 1,000 Artists from Romania and abroad, 200+ Events including exhibitions, performances, workshops, and conferences held across more than 50 locations in Iași, on seven Thematic Pillars: Design, Arts & Crafts, New Media, Content Creation, Creative Entrepreneurship, Innovation & Digital, Sustainability & Creative Communities. RCW not only highlighted Iași as a cultural hub but also reinforced its commitment to fostering creativity and innovation of Youth including artists, entrepreneurs, and cultural enthusiasts, contributing to the city's vibrant cultural scene.

FILIT – The Iași International Festival of Literature and Translation brings together in Iași, one of the largest literary festivals in Europe. Similar to the Festival Mandarache of Cartagena, in Spain, our project partner. These festivals have a great impact on young people, both readers/writers or volunteers, involved in a very high number in the high number of events (readings, conferences, writing contests, digital content, meetings with famous writers etc).

Iasi International Theatre Festival For Young Public (FITPTI) accredited by the European Association of Festivals based in Brussels Outstanding Festival, is engaging young artists, young creators, and volunteers, promote innovation and experiments, in an international environment.

Relevant Documents and Strategies

At the European level – Youth, Youth work and digitalization are approached very differently ways in the different regions of Europe, the Eastern countries having less regulations in the field comparing with Western and Northern countries, even if the European Commission published the European Youth Strategy since 2018 (aiming at engaging, connecting and empowering young people) and in 2020 published Shaping Europe's Digital Future, (focusing on digital transformation for the public good and the promotion of an open, democratic, and sustainable society). Also, also good references are the Digital Youth Work (Council of Europe, 2019) and the Recommendations on Youth Work (Council of Europe, 2020).

At National level, when this project started in Romania, similar to Italy, there was no legislative framework for youth work as a professional or voluntary activity aimed at young people. Youth work is carried out mainly at the local level by NGOs. Recently, a first draft of a national law of youth and youth workers, was released in public debate and a good analysis of existing situation was realized at national level. For the moment the legislation and institutions refer mainly to youth with disabilities, addictions or in various disadvantaged situations. No funds or facilities are available at the national level for youth or youth workers in general, youth initiatives being financed or supported mainly at local level, based on local decisions/regulations.

At the Local Level, the vision for Iași as formulated in the Integrated Urban Development Strategy 2015–2030 is that the city should become an intelligent European metropolis, with a competitive economy and an identity built on the historical tradition, its culture and universities. The strategy's first strategic objective is to support the city's competitiveness through innovation, by supporting Iași's key domains such as ICT and the creative sector. In addition, Iași has a "Cyber City" strategy, which targets the transformation of Iași into a hub for robotics and artificial intelligence.



The Integrated Strategy for Urban Development of Iasi proposes an extensive portfolio of projects, setting the municipality's priorities for the period 2015–2030 including Objective 3 – Iasi – a strong community – (3.3) Diversified Services for social care covering the needs of all categories in the Metropolitan Area of Iasi

The Digital Transformation Strategy of the Municipality of Iasi – The Smart City concept is implemented along the 6 strategic pillars, namely: smart governance, smart living, smart mobility, smart people, smart economy, and smart environment. These pillars are strongly interconnected with impact on social inclusion. Even if is not targeting especially the youth, in fact the main beneficiaries of it are the young people, more open to new technologies and digital services and create the premise for digital youthwork and inclusive digital services.

Development Strategy of Iasi County 2021–2027 –

The Strategy is oriented to upgrade the educational infrastructure and to increase the digitization of administrative services, amongst other objectives.

The launch of the **Romanian National Strategy for Youth 2024–2027** in May 2024 was an important signal that public authorities must work more closely and promote their own policies / strategies for youth.

The strategy identifies the weak points in the field at national level, very relevant for Iasi, too, such as:

1. Low budget allocated for youth programs, personnel and infrastructure at the central and local levels;
2. Lack of inter-institutional coordination for the implementation of youth policies;
3. Incomplete territorial coverage of youth centers and insufficient development of youth centers which, currently, are not spaces

- intended for young people to which they have permanent access and in which they benefit from activities and services, but are projects within a national program, under-funded, with only a few activities per year and without special staff permanently employed; (In fact, they are "Sports, Family Youth Directorates" with a bureaucratic role, in which young people cannot carry out activities)
4. Relatively low number of young people who use the services of youth services (related to career);
 5. Lack of local/county strategies for youth;
 6. Youth advisory councils established in few administrative-territorial units, especially at the level of county capital municipalities and counties;
 7. Unclear legal situation of county youth foundations;
 8. Lack of legislative regulations regarding the activity of camps for children and youth;
 9. Lack of occupational standard "youth counsellor";
 10. Demographic aging combined with the continuous decrease in birth rate;

Visual Representation of the Strategy



11. Low interest in stimulating youth creativity within formal education;
12. Low involvement of young researchers in the research, development and innovation system;
13. High incidence of school dropout and early school leaving among students from disadvantaged backgrounds;
14. Low share of young people participating in continuing education;
15. Young people are the most affected by poverty, especially young people belonging to vulnerable groups
16. International migration of the age group 25–29;
17. Difficult integration of young people into the labour market, especially for certain vulnerable groups, e.g. Roma, young people with disabilities, young people leaving the protection system, detention centers;
18. Reduced access to decent housing among young people;
19. Low percentage of young people employed temporarily/part-time;
20. High in-work poverty rate of employees with part-time employment contracts;
21. Insufficient number of family doctors that young people can access – 424 localities in Romania do not have a family doctor;
22. High number of minor mothers;
23. Lack of health education as a mandatory subject in the curriculum;
24. High share of young people who smoke or consume illicit substances;
25. Lack of infrastructure dedicated to mass sports;
26. Low involvement of young people in sports activities;
27. Lack of mapping of the problems and needs of young people in rural areas; 2
8. Lack of leisure spaces in rural areas;
29. Low level of information of young people in rural areas regarding educational and job offers;
30. Lack of youth centers in rural areas;

The General Objectives of the National Romanian Strategy are:

- OG1.** Strengthening the legislative, institutional framework and collaboration with the non-governmental youth sector
- OG2.** Facilitating young people's access to quality education and culture, integrating and improving different forms of learning
- OG.3.** Increasing youth employability and supporting entrepreneurship
- OG.4.** Developing social and individual responsibility of young people (health, safety, sustainable development)
- OG.5.** Strengthening active citizenship, digital transformation and supporting the involvement of youth organizations through national and European programs
- OG 6.** Creating and supporting opportunities for young people in rural areas, with a view to reducing the urban-rural gap

It must be also mentioned that on 2024 the Ministry of Family, Youth and Equal Opportunities included the "youth worker" in the official list of recognized occupations and carried out a first professional training program within the framework of the project "National Working Group – Romania, 2022 – 2024", creating a first generation of 28 youth workers, part of the member organizations of the National Working Group for the European Union Dialogue with Youth. No other official mention of this 'occupation' can be found before 2024 in Romanian administrative documents, so this year is an important first step in recognizing the importance of youth workers and the role they must play in the society.

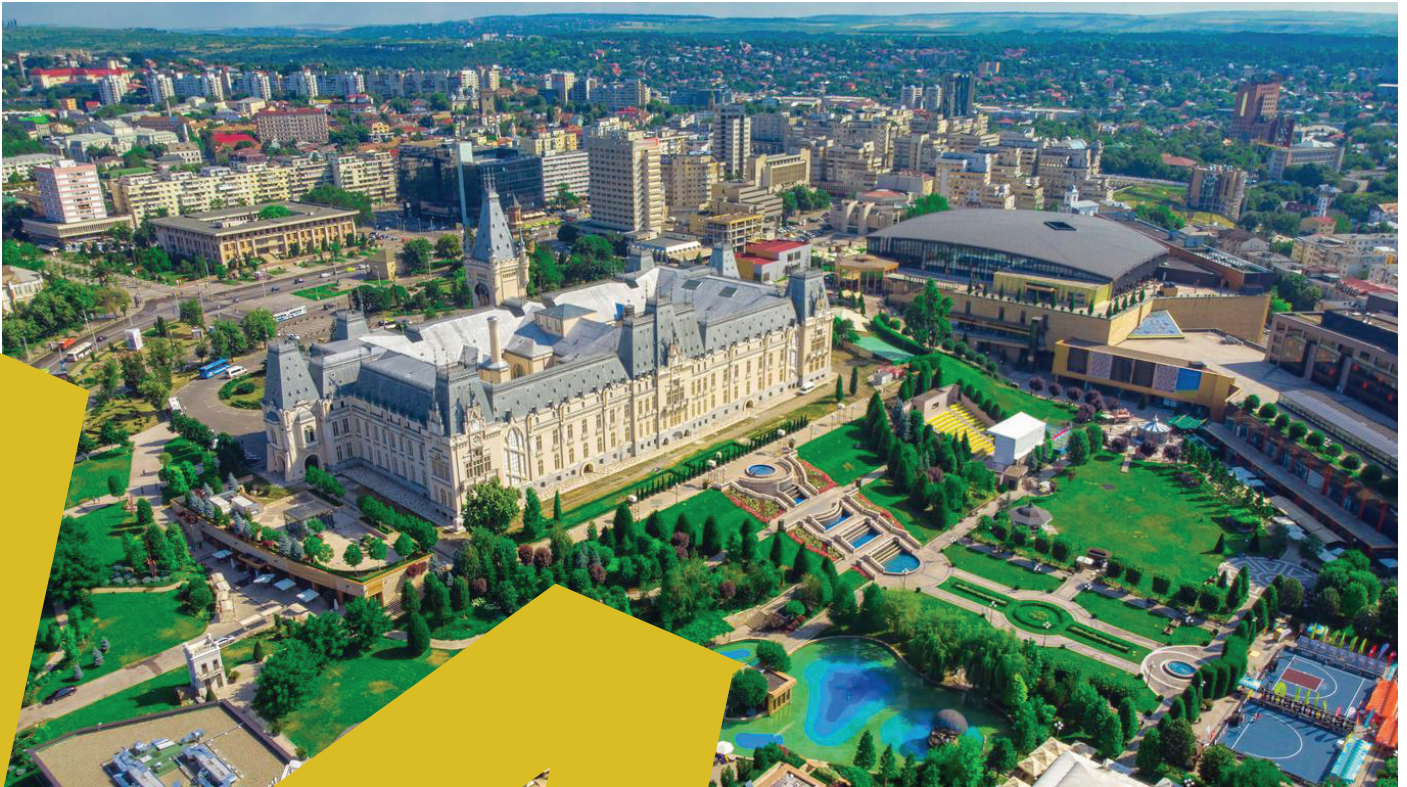
IASI City perspectives

A dedicated survey to youth conducted in 2021–2022 in the frame of The “Happy City – Youth Cities” initiative, collected data from a total of 1349 young people from Iași.

The distribution by age group was as follows: 19–24 years (754 respondents), 14–18 years (326 respondents), 25–29 years (207 respondents), over 30 years (44 respondents) and under 14 years (12 respondents). This age diversity provides a broad perspective on the needs and aspirations of young people at different stages of their lives.

The analysis of the responses revealed several essential aspects regarding the perception of young people about Iași City.

On average, young people rated the level of happiness in the city at 7.49 out of 10, which indicates a relatively high degree of satisfaction. In terms of safety, the city achieved an average score of 6.48, and the city's health was rated at 5.48 out of 10. These scores reflect both strengths and areas that need improvement to create a more youth-friendly and safe urban environment. The majority of respondents (24.8%) gave a score of 7.5 for their happiness, indicating a relatively high level of satisfaction among young people in Iași.



Average level of happiness
rated by young people of Iasi is

7.49



The average happiness score is 7.5, suggesting that, in general, young people in Iași feel quite happy. The distribution of responses varies, with a small percentage of respondents (1.2%) giving a very low score and a higher percentage (20.4%) giving a higher score, showing a diversity in the perception of happiness. It is interesting to note that although the majority of young people feel quite happy, there is still a small percentage who feel very unhappy. The significant percentage of 20.4% who gave a higher score suggests that there is a sizable group of young people who feel extremely happy in Iași. This data are a useful tool for local authorities and community organizations to better understand the level of satisfaction of young people and to develop initiatives that improve overall well-being.

Another important aspect highlighted by the survey is the diversity of young people's needs. For example, many young people mentioned the need for more green spaces in the city, not only improve air quality, but also provide places to socialize and relax, essential for young people's physical and mental health. Urban mobility is another essential pillar for young people in Iași. An efficient and accessible public transport system is crucial to ensure connectivity between different areas of the city. Young people emphasize the need for more frequent, cleaner and punctual public transport, as well as the creation of dedicated lanes for buses and trams. These measures will not only reduce time spent in traffic, but will also contribute to reducing pollution and improving the quality of urban life.

Culture and entertainment play a vital role in the lives of young people, offering them opportunities for socialization, personal development and creative expression. Young people in Iași want more cultural and entertainment events, similar to those in the West. Festivals, concerts and other cultural activities not only enrich community life, but also contribute to

attracting tourists and promoting the city nationally and internationally. By supporting and organizing these events, Iași can become a vibrant and dynamic cultural center.

Education is another essential aspect for young people in Iași. Non-formal education, through workshops, courses and other educational activities, complements the traditional education system and provides young people with the necessary skills to adapt to a constantly changing world. Investments in education and vocational training are essential for the development of a qualified and competitive workforce. One of the main problems identified by young people in Iași is the lack of access to non-formal education opportunities.

Many young people face difficulties in finding and participating in workshops, courses and other educational activities due to high costs, lack of information or inaccessible locations

A sense of belonging to the community is essential for social cohesion and civic engagement of young people. Volunteering initiatives, community projects and other activities that promote social cohesion are vital to creating an environment where young people feel valued and involved. By promoting these initiatives, Iași can become a city where young people feel at home and are motivated to contribute to the development of the community.

Following a detailed analysis of the responses, five pressing needs were identified that will be addressed within the framework of the youth strategy of the city of Iași:

- Spaces for young people and for spending free time
- Accessible connections in the city
- Cultural and entertainment events
- Education for the future and non-formal education
- Community belonging

Among the aspects that have been improved in the youth sector are the increase in youth motivation for non-formal activities, student representation, the cohesion of existing associations at the county level, and the emphasis on youth involvement. Also, several non-formal education sessions were organized in rural areas, and collaboration between local NGOs was strengthened to apply for the Youth Capital of Romania contest.

Other improvements include consulting young people and training them in various areas of interest, increasing the number of events in which young people are involved, and the emergence of more projects that give young people the chance to express themselves.





3. Needs and Challenges

- 3.1 Youth Needs (survey results)
- 3.2 Organizational Needs (NGOs & stakeholders)
- 3.3 City-Level Challenges (mobility, culture, spaces)



3.1 Youth Needs (survey results)

The perception of 27 organizations in Iași was analyzed to understand their perspective on the city of Iași and the activities carried out. Various organizations participated in the survey, a large part of which actively involve a large number of young people or are led by young people. These organizations operate mainly on a voluntary basis, getting involved in multiple areas relevant to young people.

The sectors of activity of these organizations include non-formal education and youth work (55.6%), representation of youth interests (51.9%), higher education (48.1%), recreational and cultural activities (25.9%), civic participation and advocacy (25.9%), research (22.2%), employment and vocational training (22.2%), and human rights (18.5%). Some of these organizations operate at the level of educational institutions (55.6%), at the local level in Iași (22.2%) and, in some cases, at the county, regional or international level.

The main beneficiaries of the activities of these organizations are young people, who represent a significant part of the local community (74.1%). The involvement of young people in the leadership and composition of the organizations is essential, most of them being formed and led exclusively by young people (70.4%) or having a majority young leadership (18.5%).

1. Empowering youth – Community involvement

According to the surveys, young people from Iași want to feel part of the community. They highlighted the importance of volunteering initiatives, community projects and other activities that promote social cohesion and civic engagement. However, young people face numerous challenges and problems related to community belonging and participation in community life.

Lack of clear, transparent regulations of the public authorities for youth engagement

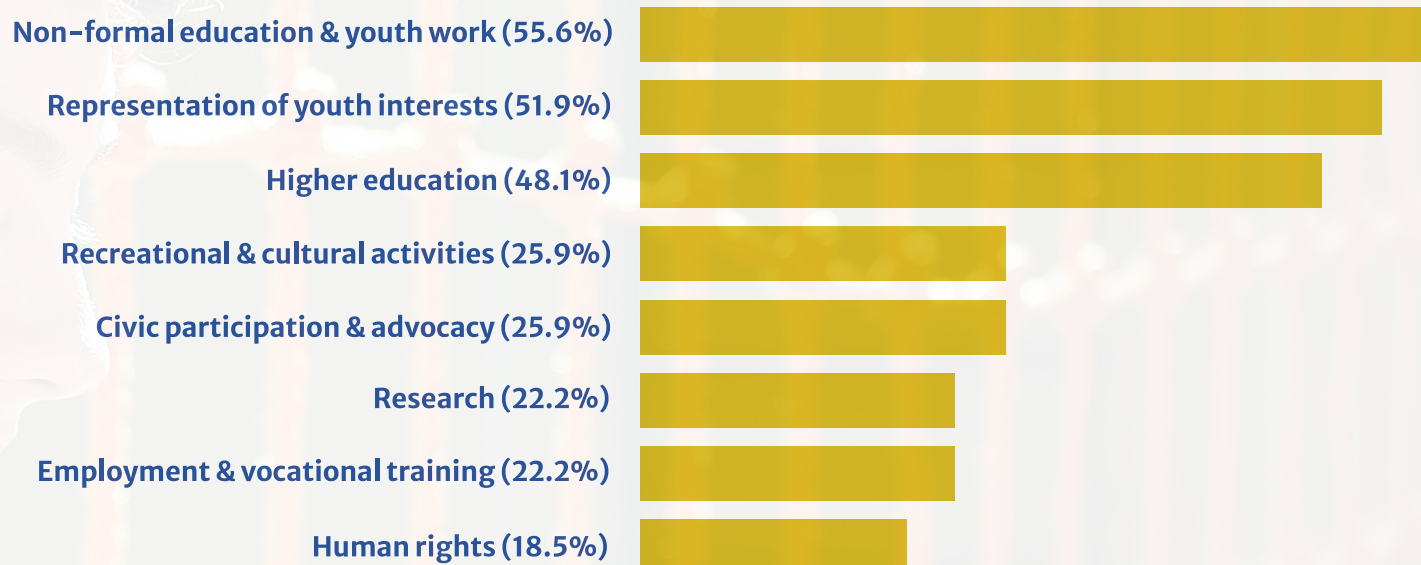
Community projects and volunteering initiatives are essential for involving young people in the development and improvement of city spaces. However, the involvement of young people in such projects is often limited by the lack of resources and support from local authorities. Without an adequate framework and sufficient resources, many volunteering initiatives remain at the intention stage, without producing significant changes in the community.

Lack of volunteering initiatives/information – Many young people face difficulties in finding and participating in volunteering activities due to insufficient information, limited resources or lack of support from local authorities. This situation can considerably limit the possibilities for civic engagement and personal development of young people. Young people are not aware of the available initiatives, and limited resources and lack of support can create difficulties in organizing and carrying out volunteering activities, thus reducing their attractiveness and efficiency.

Insufficient community projects/ youth consultations

Community projects are essential for promoting social cohesion and civic engagement. However, young people in Iași felt a lack of community projects that offer them opportunities to get involved and contribute to community development. This situation creates a feeling of isolation and disconnection from the community, negatively affecting the well-being and personal development of young people, difficulties in developing social and leadership skills, which are essential for community integration and professional success.

Sectors of Activity



Key Characteristics



Voluntary Basis



**Majority Youth Leadership
(70.4% + 18.5%)**



**Young Beneficiaries
(74.1%)**



3.2 Organizational Needs (NGOs & stakeholders)

Lack of support for youth initiatives

Another important aspect mentioned by young people in Iași is the lack of support for their initiatives. Many young people believe that they do not benefit from sufficient guidance and support from public authorities to put their ideas and projects into practice.

Material challenges and needs

Among the material needs of the organizations that completed the survey is the need for a stable headquarters and adequate logistical materials to carry out their activities. Most organizations (70.4%) have a headquarters with a valid lease or rental contract, but 22.2% do not have their own headquarters, and 7.4% have expired contracts.

Regarding logistical materials, 33.3% of the organizations say that they have them, but they depend on the support of partners. 18.5% of the organizations have difficulties in procuring the necessary materials, but 14.8% say that they have them in full.

Procurement of logistical materials is carried out through direct purchases (63%), purchases within projects (59.3%), purchases through partners (48.1%), donations (40.7%) and contributions from members (37%). However, 59.3% of organizations face logistical problems, and the proposed solutions to prevent these situations include establishing long-term partnerships, efficient budget management, organizing fundraising campaigns and attracting sponsorships.

Youth organizations in Iași need constant support to secure their headquarters and the logistical materials necessary to carry out their activities. Partnerships with local institutions, companies and authorities, as well as efficient management of financial resources, are essential to meet these needs.

Human resource needs and challenges

Adequate human resources for carrying out current activities and projects are a need of the organizations

in Iași that completed the form. Most organizations rely on volunteers, and the number of employees varies significantly. For example, some organizations have no employees at all, while others have up to 220 employees or active volunteers. Approximately 48.1% of organizations do not consider that they need more employees to carry out current activities, but 22.2% would need additional employees for specific projects. The organizations' human resources are generally well prepared for carrying out current activities, but there are also challenges related to the motivation and involvement of volunteers. The problems encountered include lack of time, low or no remuneration, lack of responsibility and difficulties in organizing in the context of the pandemic. To address these issues, organizations suggest solutions such as personal development training, mentoring programs, team-building, local volunteer reward offers, and training workshops.

Also, 74.1% of organizations meet all legislative requirements regarding employees and volunteers, but 25.9% face difficulties due to a lack of employees or volunteers to deal with these issues, lack of funds, or administrative delays.

Partnerships with local institutions, businesses, and authorities, as well as effective human resource management, are essential to meet these needs.

Financial challenges and needs

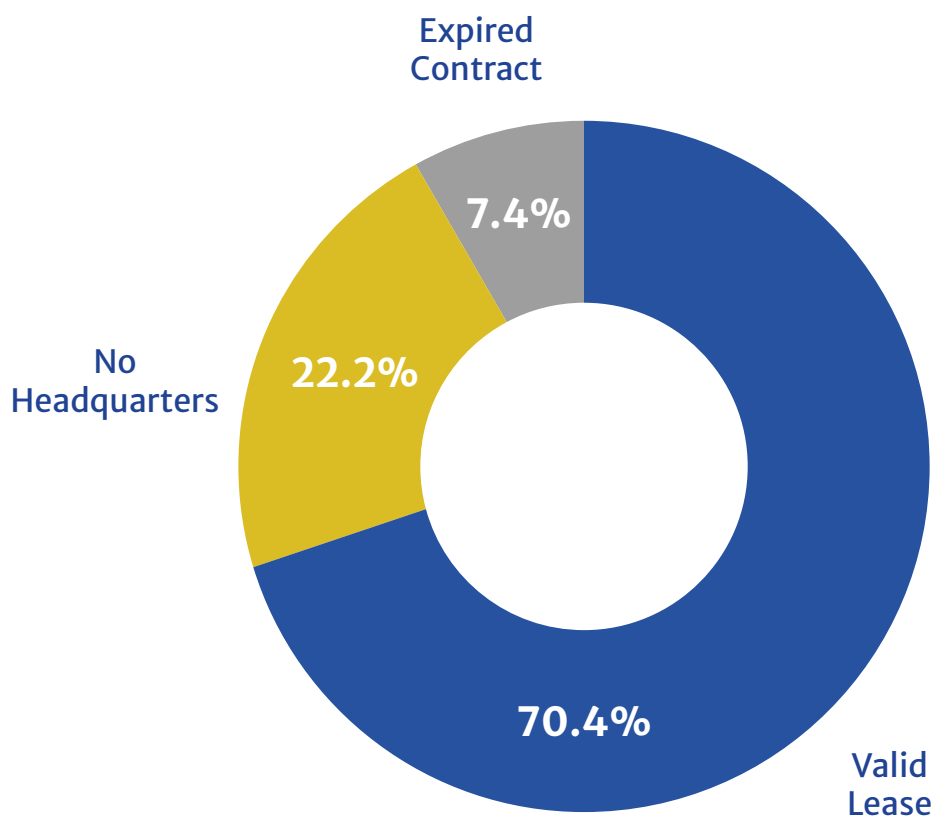
Among the financial needs of the organizations that completed the survey is securing the necessary funds to carry out daily activities and projects. On average, organizations rated the availability of funds for daily activities at a level of 6 out of 10, and for projects at 6.3 out of 10. These ratings indicate that many organizations are facing financial difficulties.

The main sources of income for these organizations include sponsorships (88.9%), member contributions (66.7%), funded projects (48.1%), project-generated income (40.7%), and donations (37%).

Main Sources of Income



Headquarters Situation





However, 25.9% of the organizations had financial debts, and 37% regularly experienced financial problems.

Reported financial problems include high costs of necessary materials, lack of funds for project implementation, high taxes on employee salaries.

To prevent these problems, the youth organizations suggest solutions such as a better regulation for local authorities support/funding, contacting sponsors, establishing strategic partnerships, training volunteers to write projects, introducing dues, and creating a dues fund.

Information accessibility

Among the information needs of the organizations that completed the survey are the accessibility and clarity of internal documents, as well as the efficiency of procedures and working methods. Most organizations (77.8%) have the statute and internal operating regulations accessible to any employee or member, and 55.6% consider them to be precise and clearly developed. However, only 33.3% state that these documents are updated in accordance with the current context of the organization.

Approximately 22% of organizations encounter informational problems, and the proposed solutions include creating a department dedicated to identifying funding sources, finding useful platforms for personalized guides, organizing trainings for association presidents, and improving communication between institutions and organizations.

Youth organizations in Iași need support for improvements of accessibility and updating of internal documents, efficiency of procedures and working methods, as well as solutions for informational problems. They consider that implementing dedicated departments within local/national authorities, organizing trainings and improving communication are essential to meet these needs.

Digitalization is considered essential for the success of organizations,

with 83.3% of respondents stating that digital tools are of major importance. Organizations use various digital tools to carry out activities, such as Facebook groups and pages (100%), pages on other social media platforms (66.7%), online solutions for communication and document management (66.7%), online conferencing applications (50%) and team or project management software (16.7%).

Among the main objectives of organizations in terms of using digital tools are creating functional websites and online communication, promoting online transparency, organizing working meetings and training courses, increasing reach and improving interaction with students and beneficiaries. Organizations also want to create effective awareness for volunteers and develop their skills in using digital tools.

Digitalization plays a crucial role in the activity of youth organizations in Iași, and support for the development and use of digital tools is essential for improving their efficiency and impact.

2. Education for the future and non-formal education:

Non-formal education and personal development programs are essential for preparing young people for the future and have been always highly requested in most of the projects demands for funding from the Municipality of Iași. Young people mention the importance of these educational opportunities outside the formal system that include workshops, courses and other activities aimed at developing their skills and competencies necessary to adapt to a constantly changing world.

Lack of non-formal education opportunities and paid opportunities – Many young people face difficulties in finding and participating in workshops, courses and other educational activities due to high costs, lack of information or inaccessible locations. In general, young people need free opportunities for them, financed from alternative sources since especially

those under 18 often do not have their own income. Also, the lack of information about non-formal education opportunities can lead to low participation, as young people are not aware of the available programs. Inaccessible locations, such as those located in peripheral areas or difficult to reach by public transport, or, in general, opportunities that are not adapted to the needs of young people with disabilities (either due to space or content or delivery itself) can create additional difficulties.

Programs not adapted to the real needs of young people – The quality of non-formal education programs is another essential aspect mentioned by young people in Iași. Many of them complain about the poor organization, lack of professionalism and poor quality of the free courses and workshops offered. Moreover, these programs are not directly adapted to the real needs of young people or are not promoted in a way that is attractive to young people. Digitization is also a “must” for most of the participation

Low diversity of non-formal education programs – Another important aspect mentioned by young people in Iași is the diversity of non-formal education programs. Many of them consider that the current offer of courses and workshops is limited and does not reflect their interests and needs.

Accessibility of educational resources – Many of them face difficulties in accessing educational materials, such as books, articles, online platforms and other resources necessary for personal and professional development on their own. This situation can significantly limit the learning and development opportunities of young people. Lack of access to educational resources can create difficulties in preparing for exams, carrying out projects and developing the skills needed for a career.

Lack of support mechanisms, mentoring or career guidance – Young people also need dedicated support mechanisms where they can access mentoring, coun-

selling, career guidance, or even accessible opportunities for psychotherapeutic interventions. Many of them believe that they do not benefit from sufficient guidance and support from experienced people.

3.3 City-Level Challenges (mobility, culture, spaces)

3. Youth dedicated spaces in Iași: – lack of adequate infrastructure for recreational and social activities: need of Youth centers, more green areas, recreation and sports spaces, Cultural and artistic spaces

Insufficient or non-existent Youth Centres are in most areas of the city. Public authorities offer do not include facilities such as game rooms, reading rooms, spaces for non-formal artistic and creative activities, non-formal education, sports and fitness rooms, as well as spaces for community meetings and events. This lack of infrastructure dedicated to young people can lead to social isolation, boredom and even risky behaviors.

Insufficient Green areas – In Iași, there are several public parks and gardens that are highly appreciated by young people, such as Copou Park, the Botanical Garden and the Exhibition Park. However, many young people highlighted the need to expand and improve these spaces, as well as to create new green areas in underserved neighborhoods. The lack of adequate green spaces can lead to a low quality of life, stress and health problems related to pollution.

Limited Recreation and sports spaces In Iași, there are several sports facilities that are highly appreciated by young people. However, many young people highlighted the need to expand and improve these facilities, as well as to create new recreation and sports spaces in underserved neighborhoods. The lack of these facilities can lead to sedentary lifestyles and health problems related to lack of physical activity.

Insufficient Cultural and artistic spaces – Access to such spaces is essential to provide young people with opportunities to develop their artistic talents and participate in cultural events.

In Iași, there are several cultural and artistic spaces that are highly appreciated by young people, such as the National Theater, the State Philharmonic and

various art galleries. However, many young people highlighted the need to expand and improve these facilities, as well as to create new cultural and artistic spaces in underserved neighborhoods.

Unavailable Socializing and meeting locations, places where young people can meet informally and socialize in a pleasant and safe environment. The lack of these facilities can lead to social isolation and even risky behaviors. Young people directly mentioned the need for spaces dedicated specifically to them for leisure and quality free time.

4. Accessible connections in/to the city:

Iași is one of the largest cities in Romania, with a population of approximately 400,000 inhabitants and an area of 93.9 km². In a city of this size, accessible and efficient connections are essential for ensuring mobility and access to various services and activities. Young people represent a significant part of the city's population and face numerous challenges related to public transport and mobility infrastructure. There are also a considerable number of young people and families living in the Iași metropolitan area. They often face additional transport-related problems, such as low frequency of trips, lack of adequate infrastructure and long travel times

Insufficient frequency and punctuality of means of transport – Many young people complain about delays and waits between journeys, which negatively affect their daily schedule and reduce their accessibility to various activities and services in the city. This problem is visible mainly during peak hours, when buses and trams are often overcrowded and waiting times increase considerably. The lack of punctuality of public transport can also create stress and frustration, negatively affecting the mental well-being of young people. However, the situation improved lately with the implementation of the digital schedules of public transport in all Ptstations and PT app available.

Low accessibility for people with disabilities – can lead to the social exclusion of people with disabilities, being a form of indirect discrimination. This situation can also create additional difficulties for families and friends of people with disabilities, who have to find alternative solutions to ensure their mobility.

Public transport safety – Many of them face unsafe situations in public transport, such as excessive crowding, antisocial behaviour and lack of supervision. Unsafe situations can create stress and anxiety, negatively affecting the mental well-being of young people.

Need for Integrated public transport with other means of transport such as bicycles and electric scooters, is essential to ensure accessible and efficient connections in the city. Currently, many young people in Iași face difficulties in the combined use of different means of transport.

The lack of adequate infrastructure for bicycles and electric scooters can discourage the use of these environmentally friendly means of transport. It can also create unsafe situations for bicycle and scooter users, increasing the risk of accidents and injuries.

5. Cultural and entertainment events:

Young people in Iași highlighted the need for cultural and entertainment events that reflect current trends and provide opportunities for socialization and personal development. The current offer of events is often perceived by young people as insufficient and not adapted to the interests and expectations of young people.

Lack of diversity in cultural events – According to young people, cultural and entertainment events in Iași should be more diverse. Festivals and concerts organized in the city are often perceived as repetitive and lacking innovation, which reduces their attractiveness for young people. This lack of diversity can lead to reduced participation in cultural and entertainment events, negatively affecting the social and

cultural life of young people. It can also create a feeling of isolation and boredom, leading young people to seek entertainment opportunities in other cities or even abroad.

Reduced accessibility to events – Many of youth face difficulties in participating due to high ticket costs, inaccessible locations or lack of information about the organized events. These barriers can considerably limit the participation of young people in the cultural life of the city. High ticket costs can discourage young people from participating in events, especially those with low incomes or students. Also, inaccessible locations, such as those located in peripheral areas or difficult to reach by public transport, can create additional difficulties for young people who do not own personal cars. Lack of information about events can lead to reduced participation, as young people are not aware of the available opportunities.

Lack of adequate spaces for events – Many of them believe that the city does not have enough modern and well-equipped venues to host festivals, concerts and other large-scale activities. This lack of infrastructure can significantly limit the possibilities of organizing events and negatively affect their quality. The lack of adequate spaces can lead to events being organized in improvised or inappropriate locations, which can create discomfort and insecurity for participants. It can also limit the number of participants and reduce the attractiveness of events for young people.

Inadequate event scheduling – it is mentioned that events are often scheduled at inappropriate times or overlap with other important activities, which considerably reduces their possibilities to participate. Inadequate scheduling of events can lead to schedule conflicts and difficulties in time management for young people. It can also create situations where events overlap, causing young people to choose between different activities and thus reduce participation in each of them.



Lack of promotion of events – The lack of promotion of cultural and entertainment events is another important aspect mentioned by young people in Iași. Many of them believe that events are not sufficiently promoted and that information about them does not reach the target audience. This situation can lead to low participation and loss of opportunities for socialization and personal development for young people.

Lack of adequate promotion can create difficulties in accessing information about events and can lead to their reduced visibility. It can also limit the possibilities to attract participants and negatively affect the success of events. Negative impact on personal and social development

The lack of quality of some cultural and entertainment events can have a significant negative impact on the personal and social development of young people in Iași. Participation in such events provides opportunities for socialization, skill development and creative expression, contributing to the formation of a cultural identity and improving the quality of life. Without access to quality cultural and entertainment events, young people may experience a sense of isolation and boredom, which can lead to mental health problems and risky behaviors. The lack of such opportunities can also limit the development of social and professional skills, negatively affecting career prospects and integration into the community.

Lack of opportunities for local artists – Many of them believe that the city does not provide sufficient platforms and resources to support and promote local talent, which can significantly limit the development of the local cultural and artistic scene. The lack of opportunities for local artists can lead to the loss of talent and their migration to other cities or countries where there are more opportunities to assert themselves. It can also negatively affect the diversity and quality of cultural and entertainment events, reducing their attractiveness to young people.

Perception of the relationship with other entities

Regarding the problems encountered in collaborating with other public institutions or public authorities, 51.9% of respondents state that they have not encountered any problems, while 22.2% have encountered difficulties. The problems reported include lack of effective communication, delay in receiving information from public institutions, budget cuts without prior notice, and misunderstanding of the difference between the organizer and the funder. The solutions proposed to prevent these problems include the development of a common activity plan, debureaucratization, more efficient and transparent communication, and the creation of regulations by consulting the sectors involved.

Evaluation on youth collaboration with local stakeholders

Youth organizations in Iași collaborate with various public institutions and authorities, but there is room for improving effective communication and collaboration. The proposed solutions to prevent problems include debureaucratization, more efficient and transparent communication, and the creation of regulations by consulting the sectors involved. Youth organizations in Iași frequently collaborate with private sector entities, with 59.3% of respondents stating that they have such collaborations. Examples of collaboration contexts include sponsorships and collaborations on entrepreneurship programs, civic and socio-cultural education, greening and environmental awareness actions, cultural activities, and training courses. The organizations also received sponsorships from various private companies for events, collaborated with psychological offices and clinics to offer internships and free or discounted counseling sessions, and organized workshops, webinars, and conferences.

The best example of good practices in ZBOR HUB (presented before).

Regarding the collaboration with other associations and NGOs, The Federation of Non-Governmental Youth Organizations of Iași (FONTIS) is considered capable of representing local youth structures in relation to decision-makers, with 37% of respondents stating that it can do this completely, and 33.3% considering that it can represent local structures most of the time.

Organizations' perceptions of their relationship with the municipality

Organizations collaborate with public institutions or public authorities, with 74.1% of respondents stating that they have such collaborations. Examples of collaboration contexts include partnerships with the Iași City Hall, the County Directorate of Sports and Youth, various embassies, middle schools, high schools, theological seminaries, local entrepreneurs, universities, shopping malls and cultural institutions. Other examples include collaborations with the University of Medical Sciences Iași, Antidrog Iași, partnerships for open government at the local level, digital transformation strategies and open data platforms.

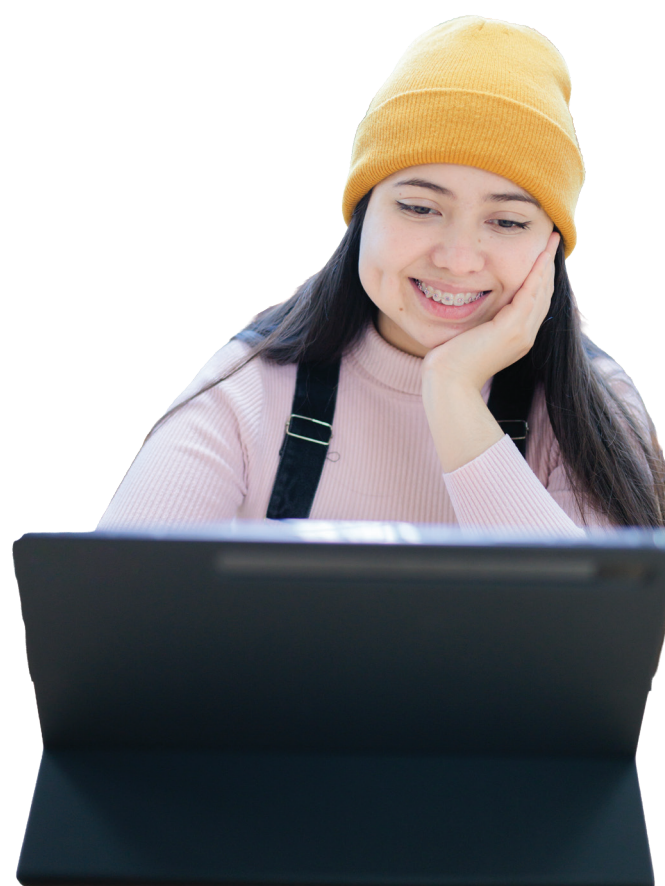
The level of satisfaction of organizations with collaboration with various public institutions and authorities varies. In general, collaboration with the Iași City Hall and the Local Council is rated at an average level, while collaboration with the Iași County Council is lower. Collaboration with universities in Iași and other cultural and educational institutions also presents varying levels of satisfaction, with some institutions receiving lower ratings.

Organizations consider future collaboration with other public institutions or public authorities with which they currently collaborate or have collaborated previously, with 44.4% of respondents stating that they will continue these collaborations with all institutions. Also, 96.3% of organizations consider

future collaboration with public institutions or public authorities with which they have not collaborated previously.

37% of the youth organizations in Iași that completed our survey collaborate with the municipality in various contexts, and 51.9% of respondents state that they do not have such collaborations.

Examples of collaborations include organizing events in partnership, consultations, information and training sessions, projects financed from the budget allocated to non-reimbursable financing by the Local Council, and projects such as the Iași Freshman Days. Other examples include the Local Action Plan for Open Government, the Open Data Platform, and the Digital Transformation Strategy.



The majority of organizations (88.9%) consider collaborating with the municipality in the future. Regarding meetings and discussions with the municipality, 44.4% of respondents state that they have had such meetings with the participation of several organizations, and 7.4% have had individual meetings. The topics addressed in these meetings were of interest to both the organizations and the public interest.

To improve the relationship with the municipality, the organizations suggest a series of measures, such as clear regulations, reducing the response time to collaboration invitations, improving communication, digitizing the institution, decision-making transparency, and involving young people in the activities carried out by the municipality. Other proposals include channeling grant support, organizing more activities and meetings with representatives of associations, and creating a friendlier contact and availability for implementing projects at the municipal level.

Regarding the problems encountered in collaborating with the municipality, 63% of respondents say they have not encountered any problems, while 3.7% reported difficulties. The problems reported include the lack of communication with the public and the lack of a clear response to non-winning projects in funding competitions. The solutions proposed to prevent these problems include more efficient and transparent communication and providing clear feedback on projects.

Future prospects

Regarding future prospects, most organizations (59.3%) have a strategy, and these strategies mainly cover time frames of 1 year (75%) and 1–3 years (25%). Among the main objectives that organizations aim for in the future at an internal level are attracting new members and increasing the number of volunteers, carrying out at least two funded projects annually and implementing new events or projects.

Organizations' perceptions of their relationship with the municipality

88.9%

consider collaborating with the municipality in the future

44.4%

of respondents state that they have had such meetings with the participation of several organizations

7.4%

have had individual meetings

SWOT Analysis

- Strengths
- Weaknesses
- Opportunities
- Threats

Strengths

- Prestigious academic center: 5 universities with over 60,000 students annually attracting tens of thousands of students from all over the country and abroad. This environment stimulates intellectual training, research and civic involvement of young people.
- Regional research and innovation hub: Projects such as the Regional Center for Artificial Intelligence Research (CRCIA) and iBrains strengthen the city's position in the technological and medical fields.
- Investments in urban mobility: Acquisition of modern trams, electric buses and rehabilitation of public transport infrastructure.
- Valuable cultural and historical heritage: Palace of Culture, National Theatre, Braunstein Palace (European Cultural Center) – tourist attractions and identity symbols.
- Access to European funds: The city benefits from funding for energy efficiency, green infrastructure and digitalization.
- Access to cultural and educational resources –Young people benefit from modern libraries, museums, theatres, festivals and cultural events that contribute to their personal and professional development.
- Ecosystem of start-ups and innovation
The emergence of entrepreneurship hubs, business incubators and tech initiatives (e.g. FabLab, Rubik

Hub) offers young people opportunities to transform their ideas into concrete projects.

- Civic involvement and volunteering

There are numerous NGOs, student associations and volunteering initiatives that encourage the active participation of young people in community life.

- City with a vibrant and multicultural atmosphere
Ethnic, religious and cultural diversity creates an open, tolerant and stimulating environment for young people.

A SWOT analysis was conducted also with Iași County Students' Council on July 2025 and they identified the following Strengths

- discounts and free cultural activities/festivals for Youth in Iași;
- public transport discounts dedicated to youth;
- access to European projects;
- free education access in public schools;
- extracurricular activities organized by the schools;
- artistic activities within the school;



- 5 Universities, 60k+ Students
- Research Centers (AI & Medical)
- Startup & Tech Ecosystem



- Rich Heritage & Multicultural
- Free/Discounted Culture & Transport
- Abundant Extracurriculars



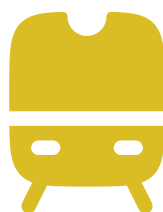
- Active NGOs & Student Groups
- Modern Green Mobility
- EU-Funded Development

Weaknesses

- Lack of regulations and policies for youth workers and youth workers at local level
 - Lack of a special service dedicated to young people in general at the local authority (not even social services are dedicated to young people but to people with various types of problems and addictions)
 - lack of digital youth workers capable to deal with digital modern threats
 - lack of access to non-formal education opportunities, due to high costs, lack of information in accessible locations, or digital unavailability.
 - limited accessibility to educational resources – need of more digitized content in Romanian language
 - uneven urban development: Significant differences between central and peripheral areas in terms of access to services and quality of life.
 - lack of major entertainment, event, and sports facilities for youth
 - Lack of public spaces dedicated to youth – although there are some (mainly private) initiatives, the city needs more youth centers, accessible co-working spaces, and modern recreational areas.
 - Limited urban mobility – Public transport is being modernized, but remains congested and insufficiently connected to university and peripheral areas.
 - Unequal access to opportunities – Young people from disadvantaged backgrounds or from rural areas around Iași face difficulties in accessing digital content, educational and cultural resources.
 - Migration of youth to other cities or abroad – Many graduates choose to leave Iași due to the lack of competitive professional opportunities or low salaries.
 - Fragmentation of the offer of services for young people at many institutions (which do not have a proactive approach to contacting young people)
 - the reduced involvement of young people in volunteering and cultural activities,
 - insufficient funding of the youth sector and the difficulties in organizing events
- Iași County Students' Council findings
- lack of spaces for extracurricular activities;
 - congestion in schools (2 shifts) due to lack of premises
 - unpredictability of public transport due to traffic
 - lack of bike paths and parking lots at schools
 - lack of green spaces
 - management of PT dedicated to students (not respected)
 - lack of field/gym at some high schools
 - old laboratory equipment
 - lack of job information
 - lack of practical laboratories at technological high schools (Bachelor of Economics)
 - limited digital public services for youth access



- No Dedicated Local Youth Service & Regulations
- Fragmented Services & Insufficient Funding
- Limited Digital Youth Work Capacity



- Lack of Dedicated Youth Spaces
- Congested Transport
- Shortage of Green Spaces & Bike Paths



- Poor Access to Digital Tools
- Outdated School Facilities & Labs
- High Youth Migration Rate

Opportunities

- new Strategy for Youth and acknowledgement of Youth Workers at national level
 - decentralization of competences for youth management and premises to local administration next years
 - Digital transformation: Implementation of the ePortal platform for fast and efficient public services.
 - Development of the Iași Metropolitan Area: Joint projects with surrounding localities for infrastructure, transport and economy.
 - Creative industries and start-ups: Support for young entrepreneurs and artists through creative non-formal spaces and funding programs.
 - European and international youth programs – Access to Erasmus+, the European Solidarity Corps, grants and international mobilities offer young people the chance to develop and connect globally.
 - Digitalization and alternative education
 - Online platforms, free courses, hackathons and bootcamps offer modern alternatives for learning and professional training.
 - Increasing involvement in public policies
-
- Public consultation initiatives, participatory budgeting and youth advisory councils can transform young people into active actors of change.
- Iași County Students' Council findings
- personal development through local public authorities or schools' initiatives;
 - endowments on European projects/ Erasmus projects
 - volunteering
 - educational, vocational counselling
 - Public transport improvements – new trams + digital applications.
 - Velo City project – if it will be concluded
 - funding for youth clubs (art, sports, etc.)
 - partnerships with private companies for school/practice arrangement



- New Youth Strategy & Worker Recognition
- Decentralization to Local Youth Management
- Increased Public Policy Involvement



- ePortal for Public Services
- Iași Metropolitan Area Development
- Support for Creative Industries & Startups



- European Youth Programs (Erasmus+)
- Digital Learning
- Improved Vocational Counseling & Volunteering
- School & Transport Upgrades (Velo City)

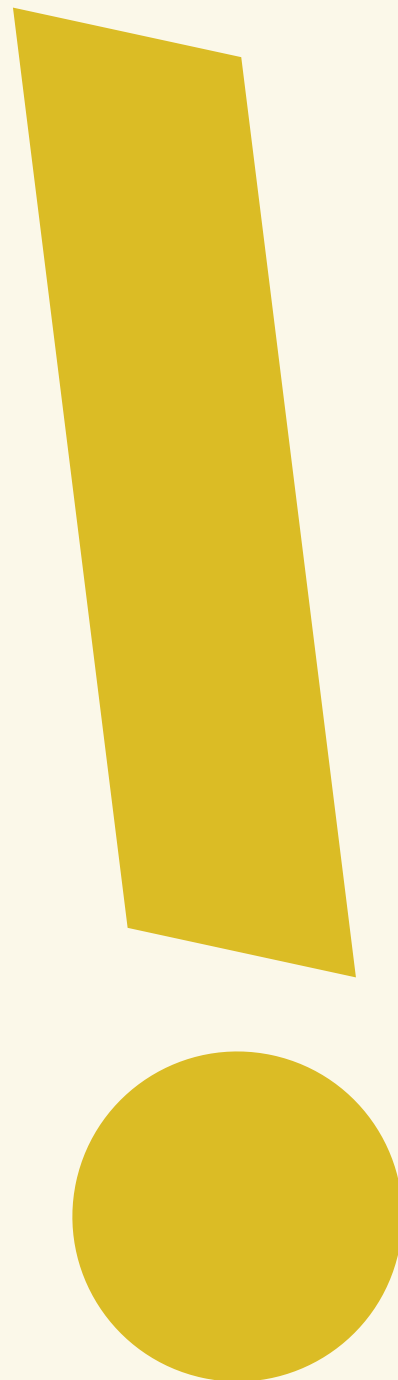
Threats

- Hybrid war and digital fake news affecting the young generations and democracy in Romania –
- extended digital “hate” among social media users
- digital gaps and digital divide
- The war in Ukraine and the refugee situation
- lack of a coherent local youth strategy – without an integrated vision supported by the authorities, youth policies can remain fragmented and reactive.
- Social polarization: Economic disparities between different social categories and urban areas. North East Region if Romania is considered one of the poorest in the EU
- Regional competitiveness: competition with cities such as Cluj–Napoca, Timișoara or Brașov in attracting investments and talents.
- Dependence on external funds: The implementation of major projects depends on constant access to European and government funding, their instability can affect the continuity of initiatives.
- Social challenges – around 15,000 socially assisted people (elderly people, disabled people, single parent families, long term no income people) – financed from the local budget
- Economic challenges – economic pressure and job insecurity – Young people face difficulties in finding a stable and well-paid job, which can affect confidence in the future and motivation to get involved.
- Environmental challenges – Iasi is considered one of the polluted cities of Romania, due to the lack of winds and geographical characteristics (the city is situated between seven hills); traffic congestion





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The Four Pressing Needs of Iași Youth



1

Dedicated Youth & Recreational Spaces

Addresses the critical lack of modern Youth Centers, informal social hubs, and new green areas for recreation and safe socialization

Accessible City Connections & Mobility

Focuses on issues with urban mobility, including unreliable public transport, low accessibility for people with disabilities, and poor integration with alternative transport like bicycles.



2

Dedicated Youth Spaces

Lack of modern Youth Centers, safe social hubs, and new green areas for recreation and informal activities.

Community Voice & Support

Highlights the need for increased civic engagement, with youth feeling a lack of support for their initiatives, insufficient consultation opportunities, and limited accessible volunteering pathways.



4



4. Insights from Partners And Local Stakeholders

4.1 Iași Stakeholder Group Findings

4.2 Testing Actions (May & Nov 2024)





4.1 Iași Stakeholder Group Findings

Activities implemented with the ULG members

Iași had 2 ULG meeting (February, November 2024), 2 Small Scale Testing Actions (May, November 2024), a study visit to Iași (in May 2025)

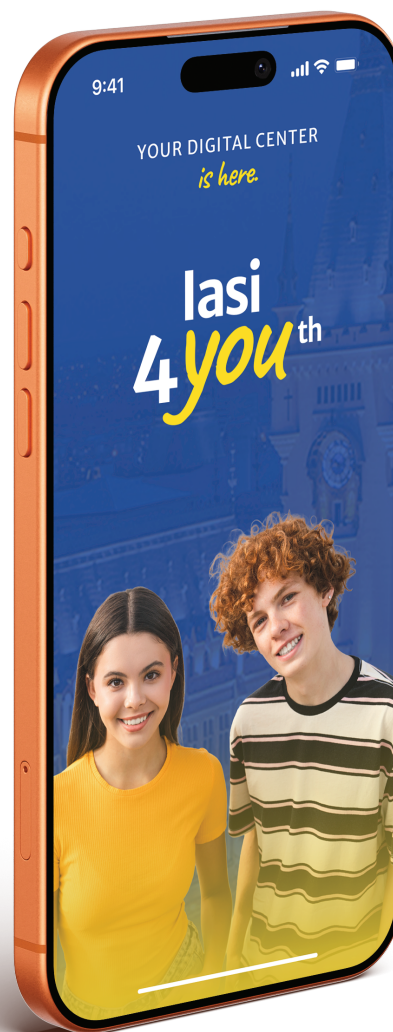
During the 1st ULG meeting have been identified new ULG members, good practices from Youth Associations and NGOs, discussed legislation and other topics related to youth work, necessity of Youth Centers, projects financing for Youth from the Municipality, other ideas and initiatives to support youth and youth workers.

It has to be reminded that in Romania the legislation concerning youth and youth workers is still focussing on vulnerable people only and not on youth in general, so local initiatives are quite relevant for a wide public. Due to these elements, one of the ULG meeting conclusions was that a Center for Youth managed by the Municipality can be a important resource for many youth people searching for a place to implement their ideas, to

The 2 ULG meeting focused on ideas from stakeholders regarding the future Youth Center activities, equipment, information available. The good practices identified from other project partners (Cartagena, Aarhus, Veszprém, Viladecans) have been presented as a starting point for the brainstorming. For a more dynamic meeting the participants have been invited to work on Menti platform, so the ideas have been identified in a fun and collaborative way. So far, 2 different locations have been identified for a future Youth Center, one in an existing Citizens Center and another one in a newly built multi-purpose center, not opened yet, that is highly covering the desired profile for a Youth Center (it will have a library, a sport field, large halls for various activities, including educational)

An interesting idea have been launched, to create, beside the physical Center a "Digital Youth Center" / APP Iași4YOUTH to provide various information for youth, from job opportunities, European initiatives, democracy, Municipal financing opportunities to presentation of Youth Associations and their events, opportunities for volunteering / youth work, cultural or sport events etc.

During the 2nd ULG meeting the stakeholders completed a Menti chart that will be an useful tool for the planning the future testing actions and activities of the Municipality.



Menti Chart Results

Translation: What is the first word you think when you hear "Youth Center"?



Translation: What services should provide a Youth Center in Iasi?



The Menti included also questions about the projects implemented by the stakeholders attending the meeting in 2024, the ways to involve youth in their projects, other suggestions, ideas of projects for 2025, discussions about organizing the Youth Fair in 2025

Other relevant activities for the project

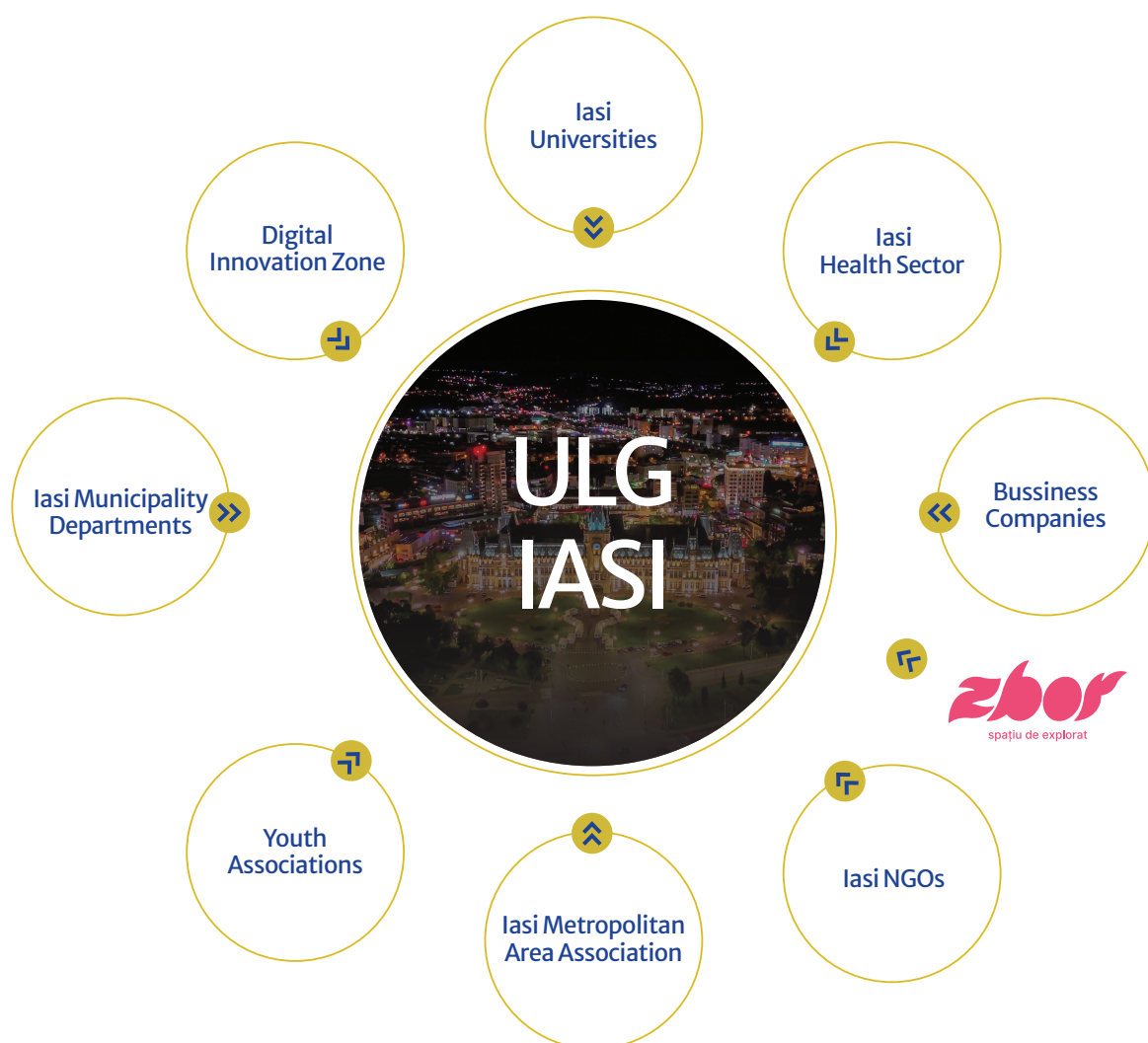
- 2 days Youth Fair (cofinanced by Iasi Municipality) on July 2024 with participation of Youth Associations promoting their activities and searching for new volunteers / youth workers
- Evaluation of Youth projects to be financed by the Municipality – on August 2024

(20 projects for youth have been selected and co-financed, in various fields, from leisure time,

sport, to education for inclusion, democracy, AI, fake news, career etc)

- National URBACT CAMPUS have been held in Iasi on October 2024.

- the Festival of Literature and Translation to identify similar initiatives to Mandarache Project in Cartagena and transfer the good practice from Cartagena to Iasi in the field of reading contest for youth – October 2024



4.3 Testing Actions (May & Nov 2024)

The 2 Small Scale Testing Actions on May 15 and November 15, 2024 included training and interactive learning with youth about the importance of EU values, active citizenship, vote, democracy, involvement in community decision, how to deal the digital fake news.

The first TA addressed students from Iasi University, the 2nd pupils from Iasi High Schools, around 100 people in total.

Due to the Romanian recent political and social developments Iasi Municipality intends to continue these training sessions with young people and youth workers, making it a permanent activity in partnership with NGOs and/or local universities and high-schools





5. The Vision

5.1 Vision

5.2 Strategic Objectives (SO1, SO2, SO3)

5.3 Horizontal Principles





5.1

THE VISION

Iași – a smart, inclusive, and participatory city where young people drive digital innovation, civic responsibility, and accessible public services.



5.2 STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

SO1 Creating a strategic framework at local level dedicated to Youth and Youth workers

Specific Objectives

- 1.1 Updating local policies and strategies including dedicated provisions for youth work and digital youth work
- 1.2 Iasi Regulation on granting financial incentives for youth projects
- 1.3 Building a mechanism of recurrent consultations between young people /Youth Association and local authorities (such consultations exist with Universities' rectors)
- 1.4 Framework for volunteering

Activities

- 1.1.1 Promoting the findings and the IAP Iasi to the local decision makers
- 1.1.2 Propose a dedicated part to youth and (digital) youth work to be included in Iasi Strategies based on the findings of the project NGYW
- 1.2.1 Organising consultation with Municipal staff to update the existing Regulation for incentives for NGOs to include dedicated part for Youth and youth organizations
- 1.2.2 Establish a permanent youth consultative body to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the Regulation
- 1.3.1 Organizing an initial public meeting with Iasi ULG and other Youth Associations identified during the project and the City Hall representatives to establish a calendar for future meetings where young people can shape the priorities
- 1.3.2 Ensuring the necessary resources to implement the calendar of consultations (premises, dedicated staff from Municipality, reminder to participants and decision makers)
- 1.3.3 Appointment of Municipal staff for follow-up of identified topics
- 1.4.1 Create a dedicated digital page on Municipal

website to present legislative provisions for volunteering, volunteering opportunities and needs

- 1.4.2 Organizing consultations with youth organizations to improve the information and facilities for volunteering provided

Problems and needs covered

- Lack of clear, transparent regulations of the public authorities for youth engagement
- Insufficient community projects/ youth consultations
- Lack of support for youth initiatives
- Lack of volunteering initiatives/information

SO2 Empower Youth in Iasi – Reinforcing Youth organizations / NGOs active citizenship in local community

Specific Objectives

- 2.1 Empower Youth by facilitating better access to non-formal learning, culture, sport
- 2.2 Facilitate youth participation to local projects and decision – making
- 2.3 Access to education for responsible digitization, democracy and fake news combat
- 2.4 Facilitate access to career plans, employability and entrepreneurship
- 2.5 Facilitate access to European projects

Activities

- 2.1.1 Develop partnerships with cultural institutions (museums, libraries, theatres) to provide free or discounted youth access
- 2.1.2 Offer free access to youth to Municipal sport premises
- 2.1.3 Cofinance/support the local Youth Hub "Zbor" to offer for workshops in digital skills, civic education, sports, and personal development.
- 2.1.4 Organize community-based sports programs (street sports festivals, inclusive sports days, youth tournaments)

2.2.1 Open Days at Municipal Premises: Allow youth to visit and explore available projects, meet staff, and pitch ideas for collaboration

2.2.2 Use the regular Youth–Municipality meetings established to discuss local issues and co design solutions.

2.2.3 Train young people in democracy, leadership, and public speaking to increase their civic engagement capacity.

2.2.4 Introduce participatory budgeting for youth, allowing young people to propose and vote on local projects.

2.2.5 Dedicated page on Municipal website for a digital participation platform where youth can submit ideas, vote, and track project progress.

2.3.1 Organize workshops on critical thinking, and identifying misinformation, fake news, cyberbullying, and online safety

2.3.2 Partner with journalists, IT specialists, and NGOs to deliver training on democracy, civic rights, and safe digital behaviour.

2.4.1 Support the local Youth Hub "Zbor", FabLab or other NGOs to organize meetings with business representatives providing information about career opportunities, vocational training, mentoring, informal meeting with business leaders

2.4.2 Organize/provide support for job fairs and career expos specifically targeting young people

2.4.3 provide information online (on Municipal website or on Iasi4YouTH app) about available jobs and trainings opportunities in partnership with the Agency for Labour Force Iasi

Problems and needs covered

Lack of non-formal education opportunities and paid opportunities – high costs, lack of information or inaccessible locations.

Low diversity of non-formal education programs

Accessibility of educational resources

Lack of support mechanisms, mentoring or career guidance

Information accessibility limited

SO3 Improved access to quality digital public services for youth and youth workers

Specific Objectives

3.1 Digital, transparent, accessible and efficient contact with local authorities on Iasi ePortal

3.2 Digital support for young people (Information platform/app Iasi4YouTH)

3.3 Volunteers platform

3.4 Open data for Youth

Activities

3.1.1 Develop a unified Youth Services section on the Iasi ePortal, integrating youth-related procedures (permits, requests, consultations, registrations)

3.1.2 Monitor monthly transparency dashboards showing service performance, response times, and youth satisfaction.

3.2.1 Co-design with youth and launch the "Iasi4YouTH" mobile app centralizing information on education, jobs, volunteering, events, mobility, and youth rights.

3.2.2 Create a real-time events calendar for youth activities, trainings, cultural events, and opportunities.

3.2.3 Integrate a personalized recommendation system suggesting opportunities based on user interests (AI-based matching).

3.2.4 Develop a "Youth Help Desk" section offering guidance on mental health, legal rights, scholarships, and social services.

3.2.5 Include a "Report a Problem" feature allowing youth to signal local issues directly to the municipality.

3.2.6 Offer notifications for deadlines (job fairs, consultations).

3.2.7 Promote the app through schools, universities, youth centers, and social media campaigns to ensure wide adoption.

3.3.1 Develop a centralized digital platform connecting youth with volunteering opportunities in NGOs, institutions, cultural events, and community projects.

3.3.2 Partner with local NGOs and institutions to publish regular volunteering calls and micro volunteering tasks.

3.3.4 Introduce a “Volunteer Passport” automatically generating proof of participation and competencies gained.

3.4.1 Create a dedicated Youth Open Data section on the municipal open data portal.

3.4.2 Publish datasets relevant to young people, such as: youth employment data, cultural and sports infrastructure, mobility and transport routes, youth budget allocations

3.4.3 Collaborate with universities and IT communities to promote open data research and student projects.

3.4.4 Ensure datasets are updated regularly and follow EU standards (machine readable formats, meta-data, APIs).

Problems and needs covered

Information accessibility

Digitalization – considered essential for the success of organizations

Lack of volunteering initiatives/information



5.3 HORIZONTAL OBJECTIVES

Diversity, Equal Access & Inclusion

Sustainability

European Transformation

Cross-Border Connection (Moldova & Ukraine)

Horizontal objective of Diversity, Equal Access And Inclusion

Creating an environment in which every young person, regardless of origin, belief, physical and social condition, has equal opportunities for well-being, perspectives and action.

Horizontal objective of European Transformation

Achievement of the mission and objectives defined in line with the National Strategy and European Youth Strategy, the European Youth Goals and the Sustainable Development Goals 2030.

Horizontal objective of bridging with the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine

Special emphasis on the role of the Iași urban area as a bridge between youth communities in Romania, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine.

IAP's objectives relevance to the general national objectives

SO1 Creating a strategic framework at local level dedicated to Youth and Youth workers is in line with the General Objective of the National Romanian Strategy OG1. Strengthening the legislative, institutional framework and collaboration with the non-governmental youth sector

SO2 Empower Youth in Iasi – Reinforcing Youth organizations / NGOs active citizenship in local community is in line with The General Objectives of the National Romanian Strategy OG2. Facilitating young people's access to quality education and culture, integrating and improving different forms of learning,

OG.3. Increasing youth employability and supporting entrepreneurship

OG.4. Developing social and individual responsibility of young people (health, safety, sustainable development)

SO3 Improved access to quality public services through digitalization for youth and youth workers in line with the General Objective of the National Romanian Strategy OG.5. Strengthening active citizenship, digital transformation and supporting the involvement of youth organizations through national and European programs





6. Monitoring Framework

6.1 Indicators

6.2 Responsibilities & Frequency

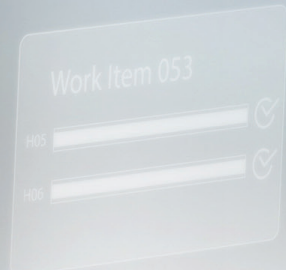
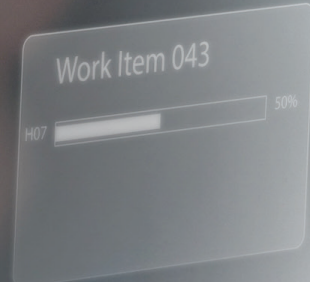
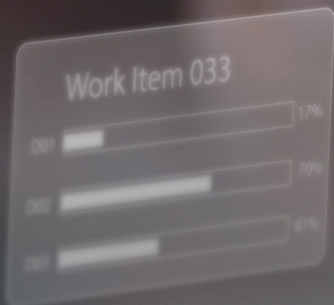
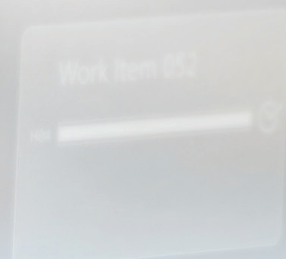
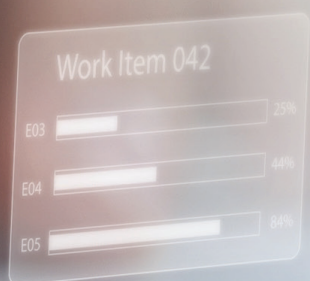




In Progress

Test

Completed





6.1 Indicators

6.2 Responsibilities & Frequency

Objective	Output Indicator	Baseline Value	Target	Source	Responsibility	Frequency
SO1 Creating a strategic framework at local level dedicated to Youth and Youth workers						
1.1 Updating local policies and strategies including dedicated provisions for youth work and digital youth work	Updated documents	0	1	NA	The European Project Department, The Local Council	once
1.2 Iasi Regulation on granting financial incentives for youth projects	Regulation created	0	1	Local Budget	The Department for NGOs, The Local Council	once
1.3 Building a mechanism of recurrent consultations between young people /Youth Association and local authorities (such consultations exist with Universities' rectors)	– Initial meeting of ULG, City Hall, Youth Associations – calendar of activities No of	0	1	Local Budget	The Department for NGOs, NGYW project representatives The Department for NGOs	once
	– calendar of activities No of	0	1	Local Budget	The Department for NGOs, Mayor	1/year
	meetings/ year	0	3	Local Budget	The Department for NGOs, Mayor	3/year
1.4 Framework for volunteering	dedicated webpage	0	1	Local budget/ private funds	The Department for NGOs, Mayor	once
	Updated information	1	3			3/year

MONITORING

Objective	Output Indicator	Baseline Value	Target	Source	Responsibility	Frequency
SO2 Empower Youth in Iasi – Reinforcing Youth organizations / NGOs active citizenship in local community						
2.1 Empower Youth by facilitating better access to non-formal learning, culture, sport	No of workshops / year	0	>3	Local budget/ private funds, Universities funds	The Department for NGOs, NGYW project representatives, Zbor Hub, Iasi Universities, Youth Associations	>3/year
	No of workshops / year	0	>4		>3	>4/year
	No of workshops / year	0	>2000		>3	>4/year
2.2 Facilitate youth participation to local projects and decision-making	Nr of young people involved	0	>10	Local Budget	The Department for NGOs, The Local Council	>3/year
2.3 Access to education for responsible digitization, democracy and fake news combat	No of workshops / year	0	>3	Local budget/ private funds/ universities funds	The Department for NGOs, Zbor Hub, Youth Associations, Iasi universities	>3/year
	Nr of young participants	0	>30			
2.4 Facilitate access to career plans, employability and entrepreneurship	No of meetings with business environment	0	>3	Private funds, local budget	Zbor Hub, Youth Associations, Iasi universities, Municipal Department for Business Development	>3/year
	No of youth attending	0	>50			
	No of Job Fair	0	1			1/year
	Web page dedicated to	0	1			–

Objective	Output Indicator	Baseline Value	Target	Source	Responsibility	Frequency
SO3 Improved access to quality digital public services for youth and youth workers						
3.1 Digital, accessible contact with local authorities on lasi ePortal	Dedicated section for youth on ePortal	0	1	local budget	Municipal Directorate for Digitalization	1
3.2 Digital support for young people (Information platform/app lasi4YOUTH)	App created (based on co-creation with youth)	0	1	Pitching, private funds,	Zbor Hub, Youth Associations, lasi universities, Municipal Directorate for Digitalization	1
	No of users / year	0	>100			
3.3 Volunteers platform	Dedicated webpage	0	1	Local Budget	Municipal Directorate for Digitalization	1
3.4 Open data for Youth	Information available	0	1	local budget, private funds	Municipal Directorate for Digitalization	1

THE FOCUS

S01

Focus: Strengthening local
policy and collaboration.

S02

Focus: Non-formal learning
and civic engagement.

S03

Focus: Bridging the gap
between education and the
labor market.

ANNEX 1– IASI LIST OF ULG MEMBERS

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