



Youth Index 2015

Georgia

Policy Paper



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Summary

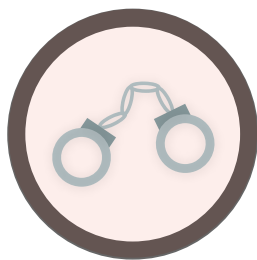
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General overview

In recent years Government of Georgia has taken the important steps to mainstream youth issues. The strong leadership of the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs made it possible to put youth development high on the public agenda. On April 2, 2014 Government of Georgia approved "National Youth Policy Document of Georgia"¹. The vision elaborated by the Government recognizes Georgian youth as a significant asset for the country's long-term democratic and socio-economic development. The Youth Policy aims at encouraging establishment of relevant environment for a comprehensive youth development to fully realize their

potential and be actively involved in all the spheres of the public life. The Youth Policy is a conceptual document and all the state strategies and programmes concerning the young people should be consistent with the principles and spirit of the Youth Policy, even if they are not specified in the document.

The Youth policy regulates a wide range of issues related to the development of the young people and has four strategic domains: 1. Participation, 2. Education, employment and mobility, 3. Health and 4. Special Support and protection.



Risk Behaviour
and Violence



Employment



Health



Participation

A young person is defined as the person of 14-29 years old, but the Policy states that for its effective implementation it is vitally important that Policy's resources, services and programmes should be focused on school-age children as well.

State institutions and governmental agencies are responsible for the implementation of the Youth Policy within their scope of competencies. The ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs of Georgia coordinates the Youth Policy implementation process. Governmental Interagency Coordinating Council was established under the leadership of the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs consisting of the representatives of all ministries and other key stakeholders to provide overall supervision, coordination and revision of the youth policy.

The main instrument for the implementation of the Youth Policy is the Action plan enabling achievement of the goals outlined in the Youth Policy Document. The first action plan was prepared by the Interagency Coordinating Council and approved by the Government of Georgia on March 5, 2015 for the years 2015-2020². The Action Plan encompasses more than 200 time-bound programmes, projects and activities with clearly defined responsible line agencies, sources of funding and indicators. They are consistent with the main strategic domains of the Youth Policy.

One of the principles, the youth policy and the relevant state activities are based on, is evidence, knowledge, and experience-based decision making. It means that the policy should be implemented, evaluated and revised based on the highest quality research available and taking into account the views and expertise of the young people directly affected by the policy. The Government takes responsibility to support researches on the youth issues in order to conduct an annual

performance evaluation of the priorities and directions defined in the Youth Policy.

High quality researches can play a significant role in the youth policy development. It helps to decide and convince others why certain issues should be prioritized, which policies are likely to work, how to implement policies and to monitor and evaluate implementation of the national youth policy.

During the development of the youth policy Document and its Action Plan several actions were conducted to inform the documents, including review of the researches and collecting data available on the situation of the young people, their needs, problems and interests. In 2013 high-quality and comprehensive National Youth Survey was conducted by the National Statistics Office of Georgia (GeoStat) in accordance with the Grant Agreement signed with UNICEF and in close cooperation with the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs of Georgia and UNFPA³. The study aimed to promote identification of the basic needs and problems faced by young people in Georgia as well as promote knowledge and evidence-based youth policy development. The report was based on an analysis of the findings of the fieldwork and information provided by a number of administrative sources.

However generally speaking there is a lot of information missing and the quality of some of the information is not very high. Furthermore, in many state institutions there is not a culture of using research to develop and implement the policy. For instance, National Youth Policy Action Plan represents mostly a compilation of the activities already implemented or planned by the relevant state institutions, rather than a combination of programmes, elaborated specifically for the Action Plan and designed to address the identified needs and problems of youth, while a nation-wide study on the situation of young

people in Georgia was conducted before the adoption of the Action Plan.

Absence of the evidence-based knowledge about the situation of the young people makes complicated monitoring and evaluation of the Youth Policy as well. It is foreseen a concrete timeframe for the regular revision of the Youth Policy in every two years. Concrete and clear data about the young people is crucial to evaluate how effectively youth policy is implemented, what kind of impact it has on the young people and which sectorial policies face significant achievements or failures. The other problem is lack of the human, administrative, organizational and financial capacities to implement knowledge and evidence-based policy in many state institutions which are responsible for the implementation of the youth policy different directions.

There is also no comprehensive research about the situation of young people compared to other members of the society and how various sectorial policies address the specific needs of the youth. Practice shows that in many fields of life young people are in more disadvantaged situation than adults and public policy should be more targeted at the youth.

Better knowledge of young people is one of the youth policy cornerstones, which directly influences the decision-making process. For the purpose of ensuring a knowledge and evidence-based youth policy and In order to keep and develop young people, it is essential

to know what they need and what issues and challenges young people have to face.

In recent times the positive steps was taken to improve the situation. The Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs of Georgia and UNFPA Country Office in Georgia are creating monitoring plan of the National Youth Policy and Youth Policy Monitor webpage. Monitoring Plan foresees impact, outcome and output indicators for the goals and objectives of the National Youth Policy strategic domains, sources of data collection, frequency of the data collecting and responsible state institutions. Monitoring Plan provide consistent updated information about various fields related to the lives of young people. This will enable to establish the permanent mechanisms for collecting data and implement the knowledge and evidence-based policy.

The most important information related to young people will be available on the Youth Policy Monitor webpage⁴, which will launch fully from 2016. Youth Policy Monitor is the online summary of information, data and publications both from the administrative sources and fieldwork available about the situation of young people in Georgia and will be updated regularly. The goal of the monitor is to inform policymakers, researchers and other interested parties and is compiled on the basis of existing reports and datasets and presents a picture of how the youth population in Georgia is doing.

Recommendations

To improve the situation in terms of the knowledge and evidence-based policy implementation there is a need to have more research and data that is relevant to youth issues and of high quality, which in its turn will increase the chances that the National Youth Policy has a positive impact on the young people. For this to be achieved, in addition to the steps described above, it is essential:

- 1.** to ensure capacity building of the civil servants and key state institutions which are responsible for the specific issues of the youth development;
- 2.** to support researchers working in different disciplines and institutions both public and private with an interest in and expertise on young people;
- 3.** to provide funding for high quality research and data collection on youth issues and specific research and data collection in line with the goals outlined in the National Youth Policy Document;
- 4.** to support dissemination and discussion of data and research by the different stakeholders;
- 5.** To ensure a knowledge and evidence-based policy making practice in order by making assessments about the situation of the youth, taking the aspects concerning young people into account in developing different policies and evaluating the potential effects of policy changes.

1. Participation



Young people play important and creative role in the country's political and socio-economic development and can be sources and catalyzers of the positive changes. Their inclusion in public life and politics is even more crucial for the developing countries as the youth can be a force for the transformative social changes and their fresh ideas and new leadership can help to overcome existing challenges and problems. The international community has recognized the importance of the youth participation in public life and political systems through number of international conventions and resolutions (European Union, Council of Europe, United Nations).

The National Youth Policy Document of Georgia considers of special importance the active participation of the youth in the social, economic, cultural and political life. Georgia, as part to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life recognizes the right of young people to participate in the decision-making process.

The data analysis show that young people are actively participating in the elections. According to the National Youth Survey, 71.3% of 18-29 years old people in Georgia voted in the 2012 parliamentary elections, while 26.5% did not participate. Only 2.2% of respondents failed to answer this question⁵. The youth turnout rate is even higher than total voter turnout - 61.3%, published by the Central Election Commission of Georgia. However these data doesn't reflect a distinct reality of the youth participation in the elections. It should be mentioned that 2012 parliamentary elections showed the highest activity of the population since 2004 and the voter turnout was decreasing during the next elections (in 2013 and 2014) as well. Data about the participation of the young people in other elections isn't evident as Central Election Commission of Georgia doesn't

calculate the voter turnout according to the age groups.

But participation in the public life is more than voting in the elections. A basic principle is that the participation of young people should extend across the electoral cycle. The evidence shows that youth is not represented adequately in formal political institutions and processes such as Parliaments, political parties, local self-governments and public administrations.

During the 2012 parliamentary elections young people registered as the voters made 18.6% of the total population and 23.2% of the total voters. More than one-fifth of the population comprised young people, but they weren't represented in national parliament correspondingly. Total number of the elected members of the Parliament aged 18-29 was 5 out of 150 (3.3%).

Before the 2012 elections constitutional amendment was adopted and the minimal age for having the right to be elected as the member of the Parliament was decreased from 25 to 21. This constitutional change was foreseen to empower young people and to create new opportunities for them to be more active in politics. But this change hasn't resulted in the adequate youth representation to the parliament as only one member was elected under the age 25.

The same situation was during the 2014 local self-government elections. Young people were represented among elected mayors with 2 persons out of 71 (2.8%).

Generally speaking many Georgian youth are politically active through various civil movements instead of engaging with and in political parties. Traditionally they are most active in universities and students are greatly involved in public issues of state importance, but very often they are excluded from the political leadership and political institutions. As a result, the participation of young people

in formal, institutional political processes is relatively low when compared to adult population. This challenges the representativeness of the political system and can have negative impact on the quality of democratic governance.

In order to address to the needs and problems of young people, and to guarantee that their perspectives are recognized, young people's active and meaningful participation in their community and in democratic processes is of crucial importance. Young people face poverty, barriers to education, multiple forms of discrimination and limited employment prospects and opportunities.

According to the National Youth Survey⁶ the vast majority of 15-29 years old people in Georgia (90.4%) believe that young people have a right to take part in resolving issues that concern them. However only 10.9% of people aged 15-29 take part in decision-making processes related to issues that affect young people in Georgia. Furthermore those who participated in decision-making processes related to issues that concern young people, the majority (50.8 per cent) were partly involved in the processes. Only 37.6 percent of young people fully participated in such processes, while 11.5 percent were formally involved. The level of the participation of the young people (10.9%) cannot be assessed as high and it is even lower than overall rate of the population participation (14%).

Meaningful youth participation and leadership require that young people have the right, the means, the space, the opportunity and where necessary the support through relevant evidence-based programmes and policies at all levels. Young people should be treated as potential agents of change - as part of the solution, not a problem to be resolved by others. National Youth Policy Document of Georgia foresees raising awareness of the youth on their rights

and freedoms, strengthening, civil responsibility and national consciousness, providing young people with the opportunities to be actively involved in local and regional life and in the decision-making process and developing the necessary skills, supporting youth initiatives and volunteering. According to the policy document Government of Georgia recognizes that young people have a right to be involved in the decision-making process that affects them and takes responsibility to develop structured dialogue as a mechanism for ensuring the youth participation in the Youth Policy.

Through Youth Policy Action Plan several programmes and activities are designed to support youth participation, such formal and non-formal educational activities, trainings, capacity building of the student and school self-governments and youth organizations, funding youth-related projects, supporting creation of the local youth councils, organizing regional and national youth forums and etc.

When National Youth Policy was in its elaboration phase young people were invited to participate in the process and number of different activities was launched for this purpose: National Youth Consultation and 57 workshops across Georgia with diverse groups of young people, National Youth Policy Conferences, online platform for policy discussion and National Forum of Youth Organizations of Georgia. Besides annually Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs supports Forum of Youth Organizations, which is initiated by the local NGOs and aimed to promote constructive dialogue between state institutions and non-governmental organizations active in the field of youth.

However, these examples represent only unitary practices and are not an established or permanently practiced mechanism and instruments. There is no effective policy that

can guarantee young people's participation in the public life and decision-making process. The youth often play a rather consultative role on an ad-hoc basis in the process of policy development and implementation while this is highly dependent on the good

will of the decision-makers. There is a general situation when public institutions and processes, fail to appeal to this segment of the population due to the lack of the relevant policies and programmes that target specifically, and effectively, the youth.

Recommendations

The active participation of the young people in the public life is a crucial for building democratic and developed society. For ensuring broader and meaningful participation of the youth it is essential:

1. to implement recommendations of the Revised European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life in practice;

2. to establish institutionalized mechanisms of dialogue between young people and state institutions enabling young people to participate in the decision-making process that affect them. Based on experiences around the world with youth participation, structured dialogue can lead to better decisions and increased efficiency, especially in developing youth policy;

3. to build capacity of the local and regional authorities in terms of ensuring meaningful youth participation, as the closest state institutions to the young people;

4. to inform young people and to raise their awareness about their rights and freedoms;

5. to build both individual capacities and the capacities of the youth organizations;

6. to support development of political party youth wings and provide capacity-building for their members in a multi-partisan manner;

7. to promote voluntary work and community activism among young people;

8. to identify and address specific legal barriers to youth participation and consider proposals for a youth-friendly legal framework.

2. Employment



Transition from the education to the labour market is the one of the most important challenges for the young people. Youth unemployment rates are historically several times higher than the adult rates in every country in the world. The world is facing a worsening youth employment crisis: young people are three times more likely to be unemployed than adults and almost 73 million youth worldwide are looking for work⁷.

Young people aged 15-29 years old have the highest unemployment rate among the population in Georgia - 27.1%, which is more than two times higher than the same figure for the adult population of 30-59 years of age (11.2%)⁸. Young people face a competitive labour market where, due to the lack of jobs and their professional experience, finding a job is relatively difficult for them. A large proportion of the unemployed young people in this age group is actively looking for work and ready to start working, but without success. 17.9% of them are long-term unemployed – for one year or more, while the majority (53.3%) is trying to get their first job.

The unemployment rate is highest in the 20-24 age group with 30.5% of these young people unemployed. The 25-29 age group unemployment rate (23.5%) is also very significant, as stabilizing their position in the labour market and starting independent family life is one of the most important challenges for this age group comparing with other youth age groups.

The employment rate for men is much higher than that for women, while the unemployment rate for young people is higher in urban than in rural areas. The reason for this is that many young people in rural areas are self-employed, mostly engaged in low productive agriculture.

Since 2012 unemployment rate of young people was reduced from 29.3% to 27.1% as

in 2014 (respectively 30.7% in 2013), but the unemployed rate compared to the adult population aged 30-59 wasn't changed dramatically: from 0.48 in 2012 to 0.41 in 2014 (0.42 in 2013 respectively).

According to the researches, unemployment is particularly high among youth in Georgia due to poor labor market conditions. Entry into the labor market is difficult. High youth unemployment in Georgia predominantly reflects depressed labor demand (although, a skills mismatch also contributes to youth unemployment). New labor market entrants (as opposed to incumbents) suffer from the lack of job creation in the country are the most vulnerable to unemployment. Poor employment prospects for young people contribute to poverty, create frustration and give rise to social tensions. Hence, high youth unemployment poses not only an economic and social, but also a significant political problem.

Skills mismatch also contributes to youth unemployment. The skills possessed by the young people often differ from the skills required by employers and many young people with higher education diplomas seem to lack some important employability skills.

The low employment rate among youth in Georgia is also affected by the big number of young people in NEET. Many youth are not in education, employment or training (NEET). This figure is two to three times higher than in most EU countries. The high share of NEET is yet another indication that the productive potential of young people is grossly underutilized in Georgia⁹.

Unemployment reason may be also that the young are less likely than the adults to settle for a job in the “secondary market” of work that is poorly paid, does not meet the criterion for good working conditions, and is not perceived to be relevant to the education they have attained¹⁰.

The education to work transition system is one of the priority fields of the National Youth Policy Document and it aims at increasing qualifications, competitiveness and work efficiency of young people. The policy approach mainly focuses on the improving the quality of the educational system, which should ensure equipping the young people with such knowledge and competencies that will lead to labor efficiency, competitiveness and employment.

The National Youth Policy Action Plan foresees the following programmes directly focused on youth employment:

- Introducing the carrier guidance programmes in the higher and professional education institutions;
- Improving professional standards in accordance of the labour market demands;
- Implementing the profession orientation programme for the secondary school students;
- Study of the labour market demands about on the consumable and competitive professions;
- Improving/developing employment services;
- Organizing employment services;
- Training of the young people who are looking for the job;

- Creating the internship opportunities in the state institutions.

On August 2, 2013 Government of Georgia approved “State Strategy of Georgia for the Formation of the Labour Market” with the relevant action plan¹¹. The Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Affairs of Georgia is responsible for the coordination, monitoring and reporting of the implementation of the strategy. According to the strategy the main goals of the state policy in the field of labour market are:

1. rational use of the country’s human resources;
2. Support of the effective employment;
3. Reduction of the unemployment;
4. quality improvement of the labour force.

Despite the fact that youth are the most disadvantaged unemployed segment of the population, state policy doesn’t foresee any specific programmes and strategies to support youth employment. All the programmes and measures outlined in the state policy are designed for the whole population and young people are only the part of them. The vast majority of the programmes of the National Youth Policy Action Plan are designed in the same manner as well.

Recommendations

For the purpose to reduce unemployment among young people and to provide them decent employment opportunities, it is essential:

- 1.** to address the concerns of young people in state employment strategies;
- 2.** to invest in the skills employers look for and support professional development of the young people;
- 3.** to develop career guidance and counseling services;
- 4.** to promote opportunities to study, train and work abroad;
- 5.** to support entrepreneurship among young people.

3. Health



Young people's health and development issues are under specific focus all over the world. The big number of the diseases and death causes of the adults are connected to the living conditions and behavior norms, which are formed in a youth age.

Many young people in Georgia demonstrate unhealthy lifestyle behaviors, behaviors formed during childhood and young adulthood. These include: misuse and abuse of tobacco, alcohol and drugs; gambling.

Despite the fact, that current tobacco use rate among youth (26.5%) is less compared to the adults, it's still high number. The surveys indicate that the average age of starting smoking among 18-24 year old youth is 17.2, in boys - 17.3 and in girls - 16.4. The average length of smoking is 4 year, in boys - 3.9 and in girls 5.3. 50% of the 16 years old youth have smoked cigarettes at least once and smoked and it is easy to buy cigarettes for 60% of them¹². According to the "Global Youth Tobacco Survey", 12.3% of the 13-15 years old adolescences are current users of tobacco, 7.8% of the girls and 16.5% of the boys¹³.

Alcohol use among 18-24 year old youth is a bit higher compared to 35-44 years old adult population: 22.9% to 22.4%. In Georgia annually adolescences consume 6.4 litters of alcohol and this figure is approximately twice less than the same in the total Europe region. But the surveys indicate that 15-16 years old have received alcohol at least once and considers it as a positive fact¹⁴.

As for the HIV incidence among young people 15-24 years old in 2013 the number of new incidents of HIV infections was almost doubled and comprised 4.9% of the total registered new HIV incidents. In recent rate of

the HIV infected pregnant women under 24 was reduced to 18% in 2012 and decline trend was fixed among the HIV infected pregnant women under 24¹⁵.

National Youth Policy Document address health issues in four directions: healthy lifestyle, Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights, Mental Health and Prevention of psychoactive drug abuse.

Among others National Youth Policy proposes the following programmes to ensure youth health:

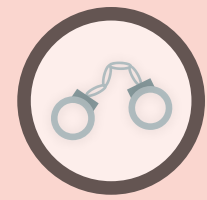
- Increasing youth awareness about tobacco and alcohol abuse;
- Enhancing tobacco and alcohol supervision measures;
- Establishing preventive services on HIV;
- Voluntary consultation and examinations of HIV high risk groups;
- HIV programme implementation in the penitentiary system;
- Review and improvement of the legal acts controlling selling the tobacco and alcohol to the adolescences and children;
- Informing young people, parents, teachers and medical staff about HIV infection;
- Ensuring reproductive youth friendly health services;
- Introducing reproductive health issues into the educational programmes;
- Promoting sport and physical activities among young people.

Recommendations

For the purpose to encourage the spread of healthy lifestyle behavior amongst young people it is essential:

- 1.** to promote healthy behaviors among youth through school programmes, public media, and within comprehensive sexuality education;
- 2.** to improve legal framework in order to ban exposing children to unhealthy lifestyle behaviors;
- 3.** to support development of the skills among youth to resist tobacco and alcohol use;
- 4.** to increase awareness among youth about HIV prevention;
- 5.** to strengthen youth friendly reproductive health services.

4. Risky behaviour and violence



One of the goals of the National Youth Policy is creating a safe and secure environment for young people, protecting their rights and supporting the young people with special needs. Young people may be at increased risk for a whole range of poor outcomes including delinquency, dropping out of school, becoming a victim of violence or exploitation, unemployment, homelessness, substance abuse and addiction, poor mental health and exclusion from society, especially those of the special needs.

The data analysis shows that young people are less convicted for the crimes compared to adult population (6748 to 8324 registered crimes), but the total ratio of the crimes are even higher.

Road accident that resulted in death and trauma in youth population is also less compared to adult population (1905 to 2725 accidents), but total ratio is higher.

Drug abuse was registered by young people is more than two times higher compared to adult population (1608 to 746).

Among victims of the violence (total number 419) in 187 cases the victims were young people and ratio of the youth exceeds the total ratio.

For the special support and protection National Youth Policy works in three directions:

1. Social Assistance,
2. Crime Prevention, Re-socialization and Reintegration, and
3. Rights, Violence and Inhuman, Derogatory Treatment and Dignity Defamation.

The National Youth Policy proposes: elaboration of the legal acts targeted at road safety, increasing awareness and knowledge about the drug abuse, creating safe protected environment from drug in public entertainment spaces, establishing crisis centers and shelters for the victims of violence, ensuring nonviolence environment at schools, increasing awareness about results after committing the crime, improving crime prevention services and programmes.

Recommendations

For the purpose to create safe environment for young people and to reduce risks of committing illegal behaviors, it is essential:

1. to promote the reintegration of young people in need of special support through educational and employment programs and participation in voluntary work, sports, social and cultural activities;
2. to contribute to raising awareness amongst young people and the general public about human and child rights, violence, and about the services that exist for victims of violence and abuse and encourage the conduction of

training courses at schools and higher educational institutions to promote awareness of child and human rights;

3. to professionalize the specialists working with young victims of violence and abuse with special attention to those working with young people facing discrimination;
4. to develop the existing rehabilitation services (crisis centre, shelter) that target young victims of violence and abuse and increase their accessibility.

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