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# REVIEWS ON YOUTH POLICIES AND YOUTH WORK IN THE COUNTRIES OF **SOUTH EAST EUROPE,** **EASTERN EUROPE & CAUCASUS** - AZERBAIJAN -



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## 1. Introduction

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Azerbaijan is located at the crossroads of Europe and Central Asia and covering a total area of about 86,600 sq. km. Azerbaijan has a border on the north with Russia, on the east by the Caspian Sea, on the south by Iran, on the west by Armenia and on the northwest by Georgia. Azerbaijan also shares a short border with Turkey through its autonomous enclave of Nakhichevan, which is separated from the rest of Azerbaijan by Armenian territory.

On October 1991 Azerbaijan got its independence again. The republic's first years of renewed independence were troubled by political upheaval, economic decline, and a war with Armenia over Nagorno-Karabakh territory which is internationally recognized part of Azerbaijan by a number of pivotal institutions such as United Nations and European Union, Organization of Islamic Conference, OSCE and etc

Beginning from 1995 socio-political stability was established and conditions for democratic development as well as political and economic reforms have been provided. As result of these processes, favourable environment for the development and better opportunities of young people have been created and the Government has commenced to pay more attention on implementation of proper policy concerning youth problems. Azerbaijan's economy has grown at a phenomenal rate in the past few years and particularly since the start of the oil production boom in 2004: in 2005 and 2006 the real GDP growth rate was the highest in the world.

Population of Azerbaijan is more than 9 000 000, the number of youth on age 14-29 is more than 2.900.000 ( 31,4 % of the total population). The youth policy always has been and is being occupying one of priorities in government policy. One of the main components of the state program being implemented for the last 15 years in Azerbaijan is youth policy. The Ministry of Youth and Sport established in 1994 successfully functions in the country, and the main objective of this structure is implementation of government policy regarding youth.

A special state program has been adopted – Azerbaijani Youth, covering complex actions, aimed at capacity building of youth, improving socio-economical condition, health care and moral-patriotic education. The program covered the period 2005 - 2009. Like in any post-Soviet transition societies, Azerbaijani youth has faced with a number of problems; some of them are being successfully overcome with special state programs. One of the key issues of youth is job placement and employment. This problem always reflects itself in all global state projects and in the same time this is an important part of internal politics implementing by the government.

A special attention is paid to the physical development of youth. In the capital and in regions modern sport complexes are being constructed, sportive achievements of youth are highly encourage, all conditions are created for strengthening potential of youth not only in sport sphere but also in the field of culture and science.

## 2. Executive summary

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Youth policy is a system of activities undertaken by the State to promote comprehensive development of young people and to ensure their active involvement in society. Youth policy, currently pursued in the republic, covers a wide range of tasks: education of young people, their training, health, intellectual and moral development, recreational activities, solution of their problems, protection of rights, and participation in social, political and cultural life of the state.

By the initiative of the Ministry the First Youth Forum of Azerbaijan was held on February 2, 1996. The day of convocation of First Forum was declared as the Youth Day by the President. The National Youth Forum is the biggest youth platform. It starts at a very grass root level and used to be held once in 3 years. The proposals from local level are transferred to regional level and the regional meetings' results are brought to the National Forum of youth. The President of the country and his cabinet take part in this Assembly and each Minister chairs relevant working groups together with a young people.

The law "On youth policy" adopted on May 6, 2002, defines goals, directions, organizations and legal grounds and coordinates cooperation between youth institutions. The law reflects the main principles of the youth policy, defines the upbringing of the youth in the spirit of respect to the history of Azerbaijani nation, its cultural heritage, customs and traditions, the state language and symbols, the national-moral and universal values on the basis of the principles of patriotism, statehood, Azerbaijani identity, secularism, as well as the mobilization of their creative potentials for the development of the country and for the solution to the national problems and the inadmissibility of restricting their rights and freedoms in any form as the main guidelines.

According to the Law the main objectives of youth policy in the Republic of Azerbaijan are:

- creating conditions for physical, mental and moral development of youth and help them to develop their abilities and skills;
- elaboration of a legal framework;
- implementation of national and international youth programs;
- monitoring developments in the youth field;
- assessment of youth programs in all social spheres;
- implementation of projects related to information, human rights, health, intercultural learning etc.;
- supporting activities of youth associations and NGOs;
- allocation of annual grants and the monitoring of the use of the funds allocated by the state for youth work;
- developing international co-operation in the youth field;
- work with young people from minorities and refugees.

Each of the priorities mentioned above implies a set of policy measures to be implemented on local, regional and national level.

A five year State Program 2005-2009 was developed by the Azerbaijani government to realize the significance of young people who play a decisive role in the development of statehood and in shaping the future of their societies. The state program covered young people between the ages of 14 and 29, is a large and highly significant stratum of the population in Azerbaijan.

The state program covered seven main areas namely:

1. The upbringing of young generation as patriots and citizens through strengthening the spirit of patriotism for homeland and respect for history, cultural heritage, state language and symbols, national-spiritual values of the Azerbaijani nation;
2. Prevention of the delinquency, drug addiction and other risky behaviours among youth;
3. State care to talented and creative youth through creating a supportive environment and favourable conditions that enable them to develop their potential;
4. Facilitation of youth's entrepreneurial activities, their training on fundamental principles of market economy, upgrade qualification and reduce unemployment;
5. Support addressing the problems encountered by youth in need of social protection, including young families; to take measures on youth health protection, to develop mass-scale physical culture and sport;
6. Provision of conditions for proactive participation of youth in country's public-political life through enhancing access to information, capacity building and involvement.
7. Development of youth international cooperation and tourism through building and strengthening international relations of Azerbaijan and representation of Azerbaijani youth and youth organisations in international events.

At the moment a big number of youth unions exist in Azerbaijan, more than 200 are registered as youth non-governmental organizations. The main youth work institution which is the coordinating body and a cooperation platform for Azerbaijani Youth is the National Assembly of Youth Organizations of the Republic of Azerbaijan (NAYORA).

### 3. Situation of Youth

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#### 3.1 Definition of youth

Youth policy is one of the main priorities of the Government of the Republic of Azerbaijan. The year 2007 was announced the Year of Youth in Azerbaijan. The basic document regulating youth issues in the country is the Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan «On youth policy», adopted on 2002 (a number of changes have been introduced to the Law on 8th of May, 2007). According to the Law there are some definitions regarding youth and youth policy:

- youth – citizens of Azerbaijan aged from 14 to 29 years;
- youth policy – a system of measures aimed at creating a state of socio-political, socio-economic, organizational and legal conditions and safeguards to ensure the full development of youth, its active participation in society;
- young family – a family created by the entry of young people in marriage not more than 35 years, or lone parent aged, having in his/her custody at least one child;
- talented young people - young people, who have different special abilities in the field of education, science, technology, culture, sports and other spheres;
- youth organizations – associations and foundations that are created in accordance with legislation to address the problems of youth, the protection of their rights, provide spiritual needs.

#### 3.2 Key figures on young people

Population of the Republic of Azerbaijan constitutes more than 9 million people. The number of youth 14-29 years of age is more than 2,9 million or 31,4 % from the general population. 49% out of them are men, 51% - women. Slightly more young people live in urban areas – 53% and 46 % live in rural areas accordingly.

Since 2003 number of population of Azerbaijan is increasing stably. In 2009 number of birth made up 17,2%, number of death made up 5,9% per 1000 population. Thus, the natural increase in 2009 was 11,3% per 1000 population.

Over the last 5 years the ratio of children born by young mothers has increased by 12%, as a whole it is possible to tell that 82% of newborns have appeared in young families. Life expectancy at birth in 2009 was 70,9 for men and 76,1 for women.

Around 78 000 marriages have been registered in 2010, out of them 75% were the marriages concluded by young men under 29 years. For the last five years the number of the young people concluding marriage has increased on 12%.

There are more than 70 nationalities and ethnics live in the territory of Azerbaijan. The biggest of them are Azerbaijanis - 91,2%, Lezgins - 2,1%, Russians - 1,4%, Armenians - 1,4% and Talishs – 1,1%.

### **3.3 Living conditions and situation of young people**

#### **3.3.1 Culture**

Azerbaijanis are proud for their history, material and cultural monuments, literature, arts and music heritage.

The Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the Republic of Azerbaijan is dealing with the issues of policy of cultural development. The Ministry of Culture and Tourism has already elaborated strategies and programmes in different spheres of state cultural policies such as the "State Programme on Development of Library-information spheres 2008-2013", "State Programme on Development of Azerbaijan Cinema 2008-2018", "The Development Programme on improving the activities of children's music and art schools in the Republic of Azerbaijan from 2009-2013", "The State Programme on Azerbaijan Theatre 2009-2019", drafts of the "Culture Concept of the Republic of Azerbaijan" and "The State Programme for Safeguarding Azerbaijan's Intangible Cultural Heritage for 2011-2020", etc.

The main cultural policy priorities have been declared as:

- upgrading and updating cultural policy legislative, administrative, financial, informational, personnel, infrastructural and international mechanisms;
- preservation and restoration of national tangible and intangible cultural heritage (historical and cultural monuments, museum exhibits and library stocks, folklore and crafts);
- support for professional creativity in theatre, music and fine arts fields; and
- revival of the national cultural industries (cinema, publishing, etc.).

State Program (2006-2010) on the development of the creative potential of the children (youth) with special talent opened the broad perspectives for the development of the potential capabilities and discovering of the talented children and youth. According to decree of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan on "Establishing of the special scholarship for the talented youth", dated September 13, 1997 the increasing of the amount of the presidential scholarship to 300 AZN was a support to the talented youth.

State creates all conditions for cultural development of youth. Quite a big network of libraries, youth creative centers, theatres, art galleries, cinemas, musical schools, conservatories, etc. is functioning in the country. Students of high school institutions also study the subject "Cultural

studies”, which train them to create, develop and pass on the tangible and intangible culture to the next generations.

### **3.3.2 Education and Training (formal education, vocational education, drop outs, success figures, literacy rate)**

Educational system in Azerbaijan includes preschool education, general education, specialized education, training beyond the diploma, graduate, postgraduate education as well as classes and education outside the school, free training and retraining. The Law on Education defines daytime, evening, correspondent and distant education.

The educational level of young people grows from year to year. At the beginning of 2010/2011 educational year 58 state and 4 private vocational education schools with 53.000 students and 36 state and 15 private high education schools with 140.000 students has been functioning in Azerbaijan. The number of Azerbaijani youth studying in high schools abroad is growing stably. For the last 5 years the number of Azerbaijani students abroad doubled and reached 2055 people. It is worth to note, that 63% out of them graduates of Baku schools and 37% graduates of other cities' and districts' schools. Youth has an exceptional role in scientific potential of the country. Currently youth constitute 17,3% of researchers in scientific institutions.

Vocational education as a component of general education is considered one of the leading forces that give impetus to socio-economic development. High-quality vocational education enhances the scientific and technological knowledge of the individuals in the professional field. In this regard, measures taken at national level to develop vocational education create conditions for a proper response of the active part of the population to changes in local and international labor market. In the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education are 108 vocational and technical institutions, including 47 vocational schools, a vocational education center, and 59 professional schools. 8 of them are subordinate to the confinement.

Steps to prepare highly qualified professionals play an important role in the transformation of each state in advanced industrial countries a high level. In this regard, industrialization and technological development create harmony with the process of formation of highly qualified personnel. Improving the social status of vocational education, strengthening of material base, the establishment of a national vocational curriculum and the National Qualifications Framework, the development of non-formal vocational education for adults, creating a network of private vocational education and other matters of this kind will make the future directions of development of vocational education.

Non-formal education creates favorable conditions for the development of interest, aptitudes, abilities, intelligence and creativity of children, adolescents and young people, their good physical development, and organizes interesting vocation and leisure. Non-formal education and training is

organized on a voluntary basis, and implemented with the assistance of family, educational institutions, public organizations, creative unions, associations, foundations, labor groups and individual citizens. Extracurricular educational institutions include: children's and youth creative palaces, houses, clubs and centers of artistic, aesthetic, technical, environmental, tourism and local history areas, youth sports and chess schools, etc. Children, pupils and students involved in extracurricular institutions use their services for free, and benefits. The content and format of work during non-school educational institutions are determined by boards of these institutions.

The main activities of non-school educational institutions are:

1. Lessons in circles;
2. Holding cultural events, contests and sports competitions;
3. Rule-methodical work.

Work with children, adolescents and young people involved in these institutions are carried out even on weekends and holidays.

There are 374 non-school institutions in the system of the Ministry of Education. 332,120 students are attracted in these institutions, their education and training involved 11,751 teachers. Currently, the Ministry of Education has 81 children's creative centers.

### **3.3.3 Employment & Entrepreneurship**

4 605 young people applied to state employment service in the first quarter 2010, out of them 2 238 were provided with job, 659 were involved to vocational education and 91 people were involved to public works. For April, 2010 the number of officially registered unemployed young people made up 19 430 persons, and number of young people received the status of the employed, was made up 258 persons.

At the moment everything is being conducted for the purpose that, everyone has constant, well paid work in Azerbaijan. Particularly, realization of State program for development of regions will be helpful in creation of new enterprises and working places. The main part of unemployed people is women and youth. The situation worsened due to the existence of million refugee and IDPs as a result of occupation of 20% of Azerbaijan territory by Armenia.

According to State Statistics Committee data for 2009 the share of the occupied youth in total number of the occupied population (4 071 006) makes 25,7%

On methodology of the International Labor Organization the number of economically active young people at the age of 15-29 years which actively search for work and are ready to start it makes 138 700 persons. Out of them 66 400 are men and 72 300 are women. The number of the unemployed people over 15 years makes 260 200 persons, out of them youth make up 138 700 persons or 53,3 %.

The youth labor market in Azerbaijan is characterized by high mobility. The analysis shows that in Azerbaijan, as well as in many countries of the world, the situation connected with youth employment, in general, remains strained on many objective reasons. The superfluous offer of labor on a labor market was generated under the influence of economic, demographic, migratory, etc. factors. Position has aggravated presence of 1 million refugees and the compelled immigrants as a result of occupation by the Armenian armed forces of 20 % of territory of Azerbaijan. Besides, earlier operating developed system of professional training practically has stopped the existence, and new, satisfying market requirements for the present isn't created.

One of the main reasons of youth unemployment is that in comparison with other groups of the population for youth lower competitiveness as they don't have enough experience is characteristic, and employers began to make higher demands at acceptance for work. Besides, the youth is at a loss in a choice of a trade in the absence of the corresponding information, and also because of certain dynamism on a labor market which forms supply and demand on those or other trades.

Each year, the number of uneducated and unemployed youth is in increase. There are the serious difficulties connected with employment of young women. Among graduates of secondary and higher educational institutions girls have high enough relative density, however at employment employers prefer boys. As a result girls face an unemployment problem is much more often.

For a solution of a problem of unemployment the government carries out special measures due to which there was possible a decrease in level of poverty of the population, decrease in a rate of unemployment by creation of workplaces, strengthening of social protection of vulnerable groups of population, creation of conditions for decent employment, including youth. The Ministry of Youth and Sport in collaboration with state structures and International Labor Organization worked out the draft of National Action Plan for Boosting Youth Employment. Azerbaijan has joined the group of Lead Countries of the Youth Employment Network, which is a world-wide initiative supported by the United Nations and the World Bank under the technical leadership of International Labor Organization.

#### **3.3.4 Health & Well-being (health insurance, age of coverage, mortality, morbidity, violence)**

As a result of strengthening of struggle against drug abuse, creation of favorable conditions for playing sport activities, and also wide promotion of a healthy lifestyle, criminal rate connected with drugs made by youth has decreased (from 25,8% in 2004, to 23,5% in 2009). However the number of addicts steadily grows in the country - there were 22 394 drug addicts in 2008 in the country and 23 927 people in 2009 (has increased by 7%). Out of them the youth made up 2 742 people (13%) and 3 822 (16%) accordingly. Azerbaijan is included into number of the countries with low level of prevalence of a HIV, but in fact, the observation depicts out that the number of virus infected

people is still in increase. In 2008 there were registered 1815, and in 2009 – 2 264 people infected with a HIV. Out of them the youth made up 533 people (30 %) and 626 (28 %) accordingly.

### **3.3.5 Human and Youth rights**

Young people in Azerbaijan obtain right to vote at 18 and right to be elected in municipality authority at 21 years. At 25 year they have right to be elected to the Parliament, at 35 – to be elected as a President.

Young men in Azerbaijan in age from 18 to 35 years are obliged to serve in military service. Young men should attend pre-service military training in secondary schools.

In recent years Azerbaijan Republic carried out comprehensive reforms in different spheres of social life. The Constitution adopted on November 12, 1995 set the beginning of a new era of state-building which bases on the protection of basic human rights. The Constitution constitutes the core of the maintenance of human rights in the country. The third chapter of the document titled “Basic rights and liberties of a person and citizen” is composed of 48 articles which encompasses broad spectrum of human rights.

Steps taken with a purpose of adapting the legal system of Azerbaijan to International standards envisaged in the European Convention on Human Rights and other international documents hold important place among the reforms in the field of democratization of the country.

The adoption of many different laws/codes of Azerbaijan Republic those are of great importance strengthened the legislative basis of the Republic.

On February 22, 1998 The President of the Republic issued a decree “On the Measures regarding maintenance of human rights”. With the Presidential order dated to June 18, 1998 the State Program regarding the respect for human rights was approved. On the basis of the abovementioned State Program and in accordance with the commitments of Azerbaijan before the Council of Europe (COE) a new for Azerbaijan institution – Ombudsman was established in 2002.

Azerbaijan is a multi-ethnic state and ethnic groups living here practice different faiths. The rights of all religious minorities are provided, secured and respected in the country. Besides Muslim mosques, different churches, synagogues and temples function in Azerbaijan. According to Article 18 of the Constitution religion is separated from state.

One of the main steps with regard to sustaining respect for human rights was the adoption of National Action Plan on the Protection of Human Rights. Developed on the proposals by different government bodies, including the Ministry of Youth and Sport, the National Action Plan was approved by the President Ilham Aliyev’s order, dated to December 28, 2006.

In addition to joining different international documents in this field, Azerbaijan Republic also cooperates with international organizations for this purpose. Different organizations of UN, OSCE, Council of Europe and European Union are of special importance among them.

The Government pays particular attention to the development of civil society and considers it as one of the main pillars of a genuine democracy. A clear manifestation of this is the Presidential Decree of 27 July 2007 on the endorsement of the Conception of the State Support to non-governmental organizations. The Conception aims at the creation of a stable and effective system of relationship between the public authorities and NGOs, involvement of the NGOs in the addressing of challenges to the development of the state and the society, and at the acceleration of the development of the civil society. As envisaged by the above-mentioned decree, on 13 December 2007 the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan issued a Decree on the establishment of the Council for State Support to NGO's.

Azerbaijan has acceded to a number of international instruments concerning the rights of the child. The Convention on the Rights of the Child has been translated into Azerbaijani language and included in school curricula. Legal experts, judges, lawyers, staff at children's institutions, teachers, health and social workers have all been involved in this initiative. The 2006-2015 State program for the placement of children living in state institutions in families (deinstitutionalization) and alternative care was approved by a presidential order of 29 March 2006. The program reflects the principle enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

### **3.3.6 Sport, Leisure & Lifestyles**

Development of physical culture, sport and Olympic movements in the country are the main priorities of youth policy of the government, supported by the president of the Republic of Azerbaijan Mr. Ilham Aliyev. Different kinds of sports are in trusteeship of government bodies, ministries and companies. For the purpose of development of sport, the government in addition to local tournaments organizes a big number of international tournaments in Azerbaijan. The program on creation of universal Olympic sportive – tourist complexes at the regions is realized. Sportsmen's participation is supported and achievements at the international level financially stimulated by the government. More attention is paid to child and adolescent sport. In professional level of sport, there are no problems exists if we compare it within the child sport. Especially there is a great need to new public use clubs, sections and sportive complexes. Although, in recent years many sport grounds, schools and their sportive base were reconstructed, still lots of things need to be done. Especially active works on construction of schools and their sportive base should be conducted in various regions.

A special attention is paid to the physical development of youth and promotion of healthy lifestyle among them. All conditions are created for strengthening potential of youth in sport and other spheres. In the capital, as well as in regions modern sport complexes, stadiums, basins are being constructed and sportive achievements of youth are highly encouraged. In 2010 Azerbaijani sportsmen gained 675 medals at different international tournaments, out of them 206 were on Olympic sport types. Young sportsmen also achieved great success at Adolescents First Summer Olympic Games; they took 11 place out of 204 countries.

Leisure and recreation - the most important areas of daily choice options of leisure time associated with the interests, needs, values, income and the amount of time not employed with study and work. A significant part of youth leisure time is not considerable. Young people prefer to watch TV, listen to music and hanging out with friends. Depending on the age preferences of young people are changing: an option to communicate with friends in their spare time is more popular among younger. Older are read more, visit exhibitions and concerts. Among the distinguished leisure activities by students are: walking in the city, attend movies, theaters, museums.

On average, every third young Azerbaijanis now says that their spare time they spent on computers, programming, Internet, computer games. The same applies to young people striving for self-improvement, gaining of additional knowledge, skills, skills training - an interest in filling these forms of leisure in recent years, too, is gradually improving.

Rationally usage of leisure time by youth and creation of appropriate infrastructure of spare time is prevention of deviant form of behavior of youth. The problem of leisure time is related to identification and development of talented youth in different directions, with the assistance of revealing cultural, intellectual and sportive capacity of youth. This found its reflection in the programs related to development of sport, education as well as at the State program on Azerbaijani Youth (2005 – 2009 years).

### **3.3.7 Mobility**

The statistics clearly demonstrates that the majority of the young live in more urbanized cities rather than rural areas. Young people prefer live in cities owing to the fact that living conditions are better and it is easier to find jobs. The number of students who prefer to stay in the big cities after graduation is increasing from year to year. After gaining independence, Azerbaijan faced a lot of social-economic problems which caused emigration of many young people to Russia, Turkey and other countries. However for the last years due to the economic growth one can observe reverse tendency: the number of those who leave the country is slightly higher than the number of entering. For example, the number of those who entered the country was 4 158 and those who left the country was 4 186 in 2009.

One of the main factors of the migration process in Azerbaijan is the existence of 1 million refugee and internally displaced people as a result of conflict with Armenia over Nagorno Karabakh. According to the data by World Bank, 36 percent of refugee and IDPs formally are unemployed. The major part of them, which is about 80%, were employed in agricultural fields. However, at the moment many of them have lost the chance to continue working in agrarian sector. They also lost the right to be owner of land, as only people who have permanent residence can take part in privatization process.

There are no mobility programs for young people in Azerbaijan and any kind of travel discounts, except those proposed by each transportation company.

In education system the students study abroad, also foreign students got offered higher-education in Azerbaijan. International students are mainly studying at Baku State University, Azerbaijan State Oil Academy, The University of Architecture and Construction, State Economic University, Nakhichevan State University, University of "Gafgaz", Azerbaijani Diplomatic Academy and Khazar University

### **3.3.8 Participation and Volunteering**

At the moment a big quantity of youth unions exists in Azerbaijan, 200 of which are registered as youth nongovernmental organizations. 74 unions are members of National Association of Youth Organizations of Azerbaijan established in 1995. The number of NGOs is increasing as well as support of the government of the activity of youth NGOs via grants of Public Council for supporting of NGOs under the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan and grants of the Ministry of Youth and Sport.

Beside the youth organization is the main component of the state youth policy; it is the main factor conditioned the participation of the youth in the formation of the youth society.

Azerbaijani youth represented in the respectful international youth organizations of the world and Europe and promote the realities of about Azerbaijan from the high tribunes. Today Azerbaijani young people actively contribute with the new initiatives in the direction of the establishment of international youth platforms.

Activity of youth organizations in Azerbaijan covers almost all sectors, including the education system (increasing the quality of education, study at the best institutes of higher education of the world, combating against corruption), social sector (fight against unemployment issues, enhancement of competitiveness of young specialists, support to vulnerable groups), youth participation, etc.

The youth organizations in Azerbaijan promote volunteerism, support the development of civil

society, implement projects to solve social and ecological problems, organize educational seminars, social polls and conferences among different groups of population and support public activities which positively affect young generation.

### **3.3.9 Religion**

When Azerbaijan was under control of the Soviet Union in between 1920-1991, religious worship was discouraged. Today Azerbaijan enjoys freedom of religion. The state has no official religion, though the great majority of people are Muslims.

Religion has not become one of the dominants of public and social life. A number of positive and well-respected outcomes of Islam are characterized with the respect to parents, teachers and women as well as other moral qualities. Generally, religion is deemed as a restriction to the usage of alcohol and narcotic drugs.

Religion has not become one of the dominants of public and social life. Azerbaijani youth sees in Islam (lots of positive moments, especially respect to parents, teachers and women as well as other moral qualities. (The religious factor also considered as a restrictive to usage of alcohol and narcotic drugs) (

### **3.3.10 Social Inclusion (excluded groups, youth at risk) and Housing.**

The phenomenon of social integration is of paramount importance in the study of transformation processes in youth between contemporary radical technological, informational and social developments in Azerbaijan and the world at large.

In the evolution of content and methods of social adaptation one can observe correlation with the changing socio-economic structures and forms of social activity of people. Naturally, that cultural development increases the amount of transmitted younger generation of knowledge and skills differentiate, as well as specialize their methods of transmission - from the actual practice of including children in adult activities to systematic training. In industrial society, social integration of acquired public status is an efficient organization and planning.

Social integration of youth in the socio-economic conditions of industrial and information development of human civilization of the XXI century has a significant impact on demographic trends and planning for marriage and family relations.

Government supports young families. Within the framework of this direction, the Ministry of Youth and Sport has three-dimensional functions: events and campaigns aimed at solution of young families' problems, activity for working out proposals for improvement of legislative base

(concerning support of young families), the measures for solving housing problems of young families.

The last problem is one of the most actual, as it has huge influence to many social indicators. Especially, it affects to indicators of middle age of marriage and birth rate. For solution of this problem, the government has started realization of state program on mortgage crediting. Within the framework of this program a social mortgage program is being realized for youth. Houses constructed and provided to young families of internally displaced people from occupied territories of Azerbaijan at temporary settlements.

### **3.3.11 Values and Attitudes.**

In regard to peculiarities of Azerbaijan mentality, marriage considers first of all solution of job placement problem, existence of stable source of income and provision with property. For young generation the first supreme goal is to be employed, to stabilize his or her financial demand and to find a solution in housing problems. Accordingly, the young can focus later on marriage. The average age for marriage among young women is 23; among young men is 28 years. Stabilization of middle age tells about some moving to positive side in socio-economic condition of youth and stabilization of situation. Also, it might be indicator of over assessment cultural system related to socio-economic conditions in getting married. In other words, the youth do not seek to wait for improving of their socio-economic situation before getting married and tries to solve it while being at marriage. It favors gerontological processes related to ageing and leaving reproductive age. In general, the dynamics of marriage and divorce for recent years approved for slow increase. Comparing with the number of marriages, increase in divorce seems insignificant. If consider that the quantity of divorce statistics lays on age group over 35, then, we come to the conclusion that a special problem with the number of divorced people among youth is not observed.

## 4. Youth policies and youth work

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### 4.1 Institutions, actors and structures

#### 4.1.1 State structures

The main state body dealing with youth issues is the Ministry of Youth and Sport. The Ministry was established in 1994 by the Decree of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan. The Statute of the Ministry states that it is the body of the central executive power that implements the state policy and regulations related to youth issues.

According to the “Law on Youth Policy”, adopted in 2002 the main objective of youth policy in the Republic of Azerbaijan is to create conditions for physical, mental and moral development of youth and helping in realizing their abilities and skills.

The organizational structure of the Ministry consists of several departments:

- general department on youth affairs;
- general department on sport;
- international relations department;
- educational department;
- economic department;
- logistic department;
- secretariat.

General Department on Youth Affairs is responsible for implementation of the youth policy overall the country. The General Department consists of 5 divisions with general staff of 25 people. The divisions are as follows:

- On the work with youth NGOs;
- On the promotion of healthy lifestyle and social programs;
- On the work with talented youth and organization of leisure time;
- On patriotic education and citizenship;
- On the work with students and students’ organizations.

There are two organizations accountable to the Ministry:

- State Academy on physical culture and sport;
- Center of scientific researches on youth issues.

The territory of Azerbaijan consists of 84 administrative units (cities and districts). Each of the unit has Department of youth and sport with the staff from 5 to 8 people. These departments are accountable to local governments and the Ministry of Youth and Sport.

The Ministry of Youth and Sport cooperates with analogous bodies in different countries. Thus, the

Ministry has bilateral agreements in the field of youth policy with more than 25 governmental institutions of other countries.

#### 4.1.2 Youth NGOs

Being as one of the important factors of the development of civil society, youth organizations are also main instrument ensuring the development of youth. That is why the work with youth organizations as well as state attention to this sphere is one of the main directions of youth policy.

At present about 200 youth organization were registered at the Ministry of Justice. In 2005-2009 years there was increase in establishment and registration of youth organizations. For this period about 150 youth organizations were established, out of them 129 were officially registered. By now approximately 20 youth organizations applied to the Ministry of Justice for registration.

Youth organizations can be combined on the following directions of activity:

<b>Directions of activity</b>	<b>Number of organizations</b>
Participation in European integration and international exchange programs	<b>12</b>
Participation in solving the problems of rural youth	<b>31</b>
Cooperation with international students' and youth's organizations	<b>26</b>
Participation in the work with diaspora and lobbying activity	<b>7</b>
Research and promotion human rights and liberties, legal problems and moral values among youth	<b>9</b>
Awareness raising of youth in the spheres of education, science, culture and ecology	<b>20</b>
Support to development of culture based on national-moral values	<b>18</b>
Awareness raising of youth in the IT sphere	<b>5</b>
Development of intellectual games among youth	<b>4</b>
Encouraging of entrepreneurial activity of youth	<b>6</b>
Participation in strengthening the role of students in civil society	<b>12</b>
Participation in solving educational, health and social problems of youth	<b>24</b>
Participation in development of bilateral youth cooperation	<b>4</b>

With the aim of coordination of activity of youth organizations as well as public expertise of the documents relating to youth Public Council on Youth Issues is functioning under the Collegium of the Ministry of Youth and Sport. Members of this Council discuss drafts of laws, state programs, national plans of action, conceptions and other legal documents, as well as issues on strengthening activity of youth in public life

Since recent time youth organizations pay more attention to activity in regions of Azerbaijan. Alongside with branches of the big central organizations, here has started the process of establishing and functioning of local organizations. Most of them were officially registered.

There are three biggest youth platforms which are very active in youth issues in Azerbaijan: "IRELI" Youth Public Union which unites 12 000 members, Azerbaijan Students' Youth Organizations Union and National Assembly of Youth Organizations of the Republic of Azerbaijan (NAYORA). NAYORA was created by 12 youth organizations on November 21<sup>st</sup>, 1995 and registered by the Ministry of Justice on January 31<sup>st</sup>, 1996. NAYORA has currently 74 member organizations. NAYORA is a member of European Youth Forum since 2000.

As a result of active work of youth organizations and implementation of successful projects at local and regional level 4 organizations: Azerbaijan Youth Organization of Students-Democrats (Baku), "Youth without borders" public Union (Baku), Azerbaijan Volunteers Union (Baku) and "Bridge to the future" Public Union (Ganja) were honored with award "Young Active Citizen" founded by the Council of Europe. This title awarded by the Secretary General of the Council of Europe to organizations functioning in Europe. Besides, due to active work youth organization "Reliable Future" was awarded with the diploma of the Council of Europe.

#### **4.1.3 Students' organizations**

Since 2005 students' self-government structures – Students Youth Organizations (SYO) were created in 39 state and 13 private high education schools, as well as in 56 state and 4 private vocational schools. This period section on work with students and students' youth organizations were created within Ministry of Youth and Sport. Out of study work with students is conducted only with SYOs' participation and covers wide scope of events – civic education, discovering and supporting of talented youth, leisure time activities, support of bilateral and international cooperation, participation in international events. Thus, the network of SYOs was created in the country and its activity is not confined within institutions.

To support organizational formation of SYOs the Ministry of Youth and Sport provide trainings and support social projects. However taking into account the "autonomy" of high schools, SYO need the attention, real support and understanding of their objectives from the management.

Certain part of youth, particularly student youth understand the importance of youth participation in

public life. In this regard they are keen to enhance their participation and influence to processes of the society. Establishment of the Union of students youth organizations of Azerbaijan (USYOA) in November 2009 was the logical consequence of this desire. The aim of USYOA is to unite students' organizations on the basis of common interests, to increase public activity of students, protection of their rights, providing of effective leisure time, support their intellectual development and strengthening connections between students of different high schools. Along with social projects USYOA implements the project facilitating the increase of authority of organization among students. At the same time organizational development of the Union is going on.

According to results of the survey held in 2008, youth are optimistic about their future: 46.4% of respondents claim that they are satisfied with ongoing development process and new challenges in various spheres seem very good in the upcoming years, 33.9% of respondents think that recent development has been noticeable and it goes better. Negative expectations have 2,2% of respondents.

## **4.2 Context of youth policies and youth work**

### **4.2.1 Youth policy**

Youth policy is one of the main priorities of the Government of the Republic of Azerbaijan. Youth policy - a system of measures aimed at creating a state of socio-political, socio-economic, organizational and legal conditions and safeguards to ensure the full development of youth, its active participation in society.

On February 2 1996, by the initiative of the Ministry the I Forum of Azerbaijani Youth was held. I Forum of Youth noticeably contributed to the revitalization of work done with young people. Given the significance and the large number of applications from young people, the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan in 1997 signed a decree according to which day of the Forum - February 2, was declared as "The Day of Azerbaijani Youth".

According to the resolution adopted at I Forum, the next Youth Forum was held in 3 years - on March 2-3, 1999. Head of State participated at the forum and gave his recommendations to all state agencies regarding the youth issues. Among them was creation of conditions for youth to realize their knowledge and skills, the most efficient use of their potential in the process of building an independent state, etc.

As a positive outcome, a number of new changes took place after the II Forum. The most important was improving the legal framework of youth policy. In order to accelerate the process of physical, moral and ethical-patriotic education of children and young people, to settle their economic and social problems the Law "On youth policy" was adopted.

The basic principles of youth policy are:

1. Education of youth on the principles of patriotism, Azerbaijani identity, statehood, secularism, in a spirit of respect for the history, cultural heritage, customs and traditions, the state language and symbols of the Azerbaijani people, to a national moral and human values;
2. Ensuring the active participation of youth in the socio-political, socio-economic and cultural life of society, the mobilization of its creative potential to solve national problems;
3. Compliance with gender equality in the implementation of youth policy;
4. Unacceptable limitations in one form or another of the rights and freedoms of young people because of age, except in cases specified by law.

#### **4.2.2 Youth work**

Since 1994 more than 20 legal documents (laws, governmental programs, decrees of the President and the Cabinet of Ministers) were adopted, regulating a youth policy both directed to development and protection of the rights of young citizens. The basic document is the Law «On youth policy» of the Azerbaijan Republic. The main operational document to implement the law was state program “Azerbaijani youth (2005-2009)”. These documents regulate youth work in Azerbaijan. According to them, directions of youth work are as follows:

Patriotic and civil education of youth. In this direction the Ministry of Youth and Sport created clubs of patriotic education of youth in regions. Every year the Ministry of Youth and Sport together with Ministry of Education, Ministry of Defense and State Border Service organizes the patriotic military-sportive games such as “Shahin” (falcons), “Jesurlar” (braves) and Serhed” (border) for different group of teenagers and youth. The ministry is working with militaries (soldiers) and conducts events at military bases with conscripts and youth demobilized from the army.

Prevention of crimes, drug abuse, AIDS and other negative phenomena. The main activities in this direction are conducted jointly with State Anti Drug Commission and its Working Group. Activity of the ministry includes conduction of wide range prevention campaigns, enlightenment works and social researches in this sphere.

Assistance to talented youth. For the purpose of revealing talented children and youth, the ministry conducts all kind of competitions of singers, artists, writers, and designers and so on. For encouragement and development of talented youth, special prizes and rewards established. Concerts, festivals, exhibitions, photo, theater and movie contests are organized. More attention paid to the intellectual capacity of youth. For development of scientific capacity, scientific-practical seminars with participation of students from institutes of the country are organized. These events promote the constructive scientific dialog, exchange of experience and ideas.

Support of the youth entrepreneurship and ensuring of youth employment. Within framework of this direction, the Ministry investigating other countries experience with the aim to create business – consultation centers for young entrepreneurs. At the beginning stage courses and seminars are conducted for entrepreneurs on business, legislation, crediting and other necessary subjects. Those courses and seminars are designed both for experienced and beginners. Every year labor fair is conducted at the state economic university for graduates of higher schools.

Support to young families. Within the framework of this direction, the Ministry functions in 3 directions: events and campaigns aimed at solution of young family's' problems, activity for working out proposals for improvement of legislative base (concerning support of young families), the measures for solving of housing problems of young families.

Creation of favorable conditions for provision of active participation of youth in public – political life of the country. There are about 200 youth non-governmental organizations exist in the country. Government supports youth non-governmental organizations in two ways: via grants given by Public Council for support of NGOs under the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan and via grants given by the Ministry of Youth and Sport to youth NGOs. Ministry supports also youth exchange programs.

International cooperation of youth. Within the framework of present directions projects and initiatives supported aimed at creation and development of relations and cooperation with international organizations, membership and presentation of Azerbaijani concerns at international events relating to youth issues. Also, Azerbaijan became the arena of different international youth forums, conferences and camps.

#### **4.2.3 Youth research**

There is no any comprehensive research on youth. The Ministry of Youth and Sport, some international organizations commission surveys to different research companies or youth NGOs. The surveys touch on various topics, such as youth reproductive health, the level of awareness on HIV/AIDS among youth, youth participation, etc. Obtained data is used while drafting new documents regarding youth issues.

### **4.3 Legislation and provision of youth work**

A high political commitment by the state government is providing a favorable environment for development of youth work. Many interventions and high level directions are enforced to enhance the status of youth under the support and patronage of the President stressed in several speeches.

The Law of Azerbaijan Republic on Youth Policy defines objectives, principles, directions, organizational-legislative foundations of youth policy in Azerbaijan Republic and regulates relations in this field. It was adopted to stress and pull efforts towards enhancing the status of different youth groups including marginalized ones. The law strives to draw favorable conditions and development of youth through creating different opportunities, enhance their participation at different levels and provide support mechanism for better living i.e. entrepreneur and finally encouraging different youth development organizations.

A state programme interpreting the Youth Law into a practical framework of action was developed in 2005 for a five year cycle till 2009. It succeeded to infiltrate the state priorities within the ministries plans and to continue to be a reference document when it comes to the youth development vision and work.

At the beginning of 2011 the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan issued a Decree about State Program “Azerbaijani youth in 2011-2015”. According to this Decree the President Administration is obliged to establish a working group, which should work out the draft of a new Program. It is expected to adopt new Program in June 2011.

#### **4.4 Strategies, Programmes, Action Plans in youth work and non-formal education/learning**

Main programme on youth was the program «Youth of Azerbaijan (for 2005-2009) ». In the framework of this program about 800 events were held, out of them 97 were international. By the Order of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan the year 2007 was proclaimed as Year of Youth. Within the framework of this year a big number of youth events were organized. At present Ministry of Youth and Sport prepares the new draft program “Youth of Azerbaijan (for 2011-2015)” and also draft of National Action Plan on Boosting of Youth Employment. At the same time Ministry of Youth participates in implementation of all state programs, which provided work with youth.

#### **4.5 Strategies in cross-sectorial policies**

In implementation of the state youth policy the Ministry closely cooperates with the relevant state bodies, such as the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of Population, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, State Committee for Family, Women and Children etc.

For example, in implementation of the State program “On education of youth abroad for 2007-2015 years» we cooperate with Ministry of Education. Within the framework of the program the talented youth are being sent to prestigious educational institutions in 24 countries of America, Europe and Asia. We cooperate with Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of Population within the framework of National Employment Strategy, etc.

#### **4.6 European and International dimension**

In 2007-2010 years Ministry of Youth and Sport together with several national youth NGOs via youth exchange implemented various projects within the framework of the European Commission’s “Youth in action” program. These projects were implemented in Azerbaijan, as well as in other countries, where Azerbaijan was supposed to be a party.

For this period more than 120 projects of about 40 youth organizations with the participation of more than 650 young people were implemented. The projects were financed on behalf of national agencies in Turkey, the UK, France, Slovenia, Netherlands, Luxemburg, Poland, Moldova, and Romania. The only condition for participation of Azerbaijani youth in these projects was active participation in the process of European integration.

The Ministry of Youth and Sport have bilateral agreements in sphere of youth cooperation with Ukraine, Belarus, St.-Petersburg (Russia), Moldova, Uzbekistan, Lithuania, Jordan, Iran and other countries.

Representatives of youth of Azerbaijan were initiators of creation of various international youth platforms, such as the Youth Forum of the Organization of Islamic Conference «For the sake of dialogue and cooperation», the Youth forum of the countries of GUAM, Association of young lawyers of Eurasia, etc. Youth of Azerbaijan took an active part in the European campaigns «All different - all equal» and «Youth in action». According to official data of the European Youth Fund for last 4 years Azerbaijan is in the lead on realization of projects of the youth organizations all over Europe.

#### **4.7 Budget/Funding**

Youth policy is one of the high priorities of social policy of the state. The budget of the Ministry is increasing annually, so the scope of activities of youth policy is increasing consequently. Here is the data on youth policy budget from 2005 to 2011 year.

- 2005 – 700 000 AZN

- 2006 – 1 050 000 AZN
- 2007 – 1 906 080 AZN
- 2008 – 2 470 183 AZN
- 2009 – 3 545 309 AZN
- 2010 – 4 012 800 AZN
- 2011 – 4 979 637 AZN

1 EUR = 1.1456 AZN (15 April 2011)

## 5. Trends, needs, challenges and expectations

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Azerbaijan is one of the youngest states in Europe, with 31,4 % of the total population from 14 to 29.

A state program interpreting the Youth Law into a practical framework of action was developed in 2005 for a five year cycle till 2009. It succeeded to infiltrate the state priorities within the ministries plans and to continue to be a reference document when it comes to the youth development vision and work.

In an endeavor that the state program to reach all youth and different segment especially vulnerable and at risk, it appears that some groups did fall out e.g. IDP, children/adolescent and youth in caring institutes (e.g. orphans etc.) or at least with no sufficient focusing and attention. Although the formulation process of the State program engaged representative of young people, experts and other main ministries yet, along the way, some key players were not engaged i.e. private sector and middle managers from different organizations, who can play a major role in hindering or facilitating the implementation process of the state program.

A State program or any other framework for youth development needs to perceive the role of young people in society as a “resource” not as a “problem”. This dichotomy reflects its measures within the vision of the state program. As young people are perceived troublemakers, burdens and potential threat, the state program targeted specific segments of the youth population, with very limited or no co-ordination between different sectors, taking the perspective of seeing young people as a resource in society – as valuable proactive citizens in their own right and capacity as young people to vulnerable young people and victims or potential perpetrators because of their upbringing or personal traits. The natural focus of any vision for youth, framework or agenda whether a state program or youth strategy or a youth policy is to ensure the active participation of all young people in society and to explore and find ways that empower them to realize their full potential as citizens.

On the other hand, the absence of a monitoring and evaluation tools within a framework on at the national level prevents correction and detection of discrepancies between targeted outcomes and results, and with the absence of an action plan it makes it almost impossible to develop a monitoring and evaluation tool with strong mechanisms to measure the advancement of youth.

Different structures in the current stage are presented in the arena of youth development; under this section we will be highlighting the most visible and influencing structures:

The Ministry of Youth and Sports is making tremendous efforts to support the youth segment. These efforts includes playing a major role in ensuring involvement of concerned non-

governmental institutions in the implementation of State Programme at one hand; coordination and cooperation efforts with international and UN agencies at the other; and a successful inter-ministerial cooperation.

The challenge that state program didn't include mechanisms for ensuring good inter-ministerial cooperation. This form of coordination could have taken any shape e.g. a committee of state secretaries or a team of senior government officials or a commission etc. The inter-ministerial collaboration was extremely essential through the formulation process of the state programme and implementation.

As a coordination body, MOYS has a major role to enhance a number of dimensions whether we look at a state program or possible future effort to formulate a national youth strategy or even an organizational strategy:

- Promote a general culture for youth development and build on the current impetus including youth participation as a fundamental value in the efforts concerning youth.
- Develop open channels of dialogue with different bodies, parties, line ministries, NGOs to support mutual understanding on directions, interests etc...
- Exchange of information, experiences and lessons learnt among different stakeholders to youth-related issues which presents a main pillar in youth development.
- Create mechanisms and tools for collaboration, cooperation and networking;
- Provide capacity building opportunities starting with its own staff and other concerned parties on youth development and participation including young people;

About the situation of present youth, their problems and successes different point of views expressed. The problems of Azerbaijani youth are divided into two groups: difficulties that peculiar to all over the world and problems that are specific for Azerbaijan, such as the problem of refugees and IDPs the number of which reached million people. The critical problems for youth are problems of social characteristics; this is firstly housing issues, unemployment and problem of young families, disabled and other vulnerable group of population. Among these problems we may underline some the most actual for eradication which are realized by different state programs.

The problem of job placing, employment and social protection:

The problem of employment is one of the leading problems for solution of which directed government activity. In one's time it found its reflection at pre election campaign of the President Ilham Aliyev. To date it remains the core part of huge government programs, the main elements of which are opening of new working places, support to entrepreneurship, and solution of problems such as employment and social protection of population. First of all, they are: State employment

strategy, State program on reducing the level of poverty, State program for development of regions and etc. Within the frameworks of these programs, regional projects are realized aimed at reconstruction and creation of new economic infrastructure as well as support to agriculture and farming. For the support of latter, there's a special program under the Ministry of Agriculture – “The program on development of rural economy and crediting”.

The problem of leisure time, development of abilities and physical health:

Rationally usage of leisure time by youth and creation of appropriate infrastructure of spare time is prevention of deviant form of behavior of youth. The problem of leisure time is related to identification and development of talented youth in different directions, with the assistance of revealing cultural, intellectual and sportive capacity of youth. The program has been found its reflection in the programs related to development of sport, education as well as at the State program Azerbaijan Youth 2005 – 2009 years.

Moral problems:

The present category belong mainly problems of moral education of youth, problem of drug addiction, AIDS, criminality and deviant behavior among youth. For solution of each of mentioned problem, special programs are being implemented. Special government commissions formulated, departmental structures under respective ministries involved to the realization of government politics in regard to youth.

The problem of acquisition of property:

The problem is one of the most actual, besides that it renders huge influence to many social indicators. Especially, it affects to indicators of middle age of marriage and birth rate. For solution of this problem, the government has started realization of state program on mortgage crediting. As well as, within the framework of this program a social mortgage program is being realized for vulnerable parts of society as well as talented youth. Houses constructed and provided to young families for internally displaced people from occupied territories of Azerbaijan at temporary settlements.

## 6. Sources of information

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### 1. Publications of the Ministry of Youth and Sport of Azerbaijan

- Legislative acts on state youth policy 2010;
- Publications on results of National Youth Forums of Azerbaijan (1996, 1999, 2003, 2005 and 2008);
- State program Youth of Azerbaijan 2005-2009.

### 2. Publications of State Statistical Committee

- Demographic indicators of Azerbaijan 2010;
- Statistical yearbook of Azerbaijan.

### 3. Results of survey of National Youth Council of Azerbaijan (NAYORA) "News from Youth"

### 4. State employment strategy 2006-2015

### 5. Reviews of the project results such organizations as IRELI Public Union, Education Center for Youth, NAYORA, Debate in Civil Society, Young Lawyers Association, Bridge to the Future Public Union, YUVA humanitarian Organization and tetra.

### Internet publications:

<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0015/001578/157806e.pdf>

<http://www.un-az.org/>

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