

National Youth Policy Document of Georgia

Preamble

From democratic and socio-economic development standpoint youth of Georgia represent a special value for the country. Youth age is the important period during which biological and psychological growth and individual integration to the society takes place. During this period, young people try to develop their skills and abilities in order to freely demonstrate their role in any sphere of the social life and to fully realize their potential.

Formation of clear and common vision towards the young people, their role and needs is significant and shall be established on this basis the relevant approaches and mechanisms.

"Georgian National Youth Policy" (hereinafter referred to as the "Youth Policy") considering the best practices at the European and international level and with the joint efforts of State Agencies, youth, civil society, private sector and international and local organizations as well, regulates the wide range of issues related to the development of 14-29 aged people.

For the comprehensive youth development and effective implementation of the goals and objectives of the Youth Policy it is significant the resources, services and programs provided by the Youth Policy to be focused on children from their school-age.

Youth Policy represents a conceptual document and it shall become the basis for the governmental actions carried out towards the young people.

I. Goals and Objectives of the Youth Policy

Young Policy aims to encourage establishment of the relevant environment for the comprehensive youth development where youth will be able to fully realize their potential and be actively involved in any sphere of the social life.

In order to achieve this goal, youth policy ensures:

1. Possibility for youth to be involved in social, economic, cultural and political life;
2. Appropriate and high quality education, employment and professional growth opportunities for the youth;
3. Establishment of a healthy lifestyle and access to health services and improvement of its quality in the friendly environment for youth;
4. The raise of young people awareness on civil rights and duties, establishment of a safe and secure environment for young people, protection of their rights and support of young people with special needs.

II. Principles of the Youth Policy

State activities towards the youth are based on the following principles:

1. Reliable data, knowledge, and experience-based decision making;
2. Accountability and transparency;
3. Equality;
4. Recognition, respect and protection of the rights;
5. Accessibility;
6. Friendliness towards the youth;
7. Cooperation and involvement;
8. International cooperation.

III. Definition of the Main Terms Used in the Policy Document

Definition of terms listed below provides single understanding of the activities determined by the Youth Policy:

1. **The youth:** 14-29 years old person.
2. **Young family:** registered couple where both of them are young.
3. **Youth with special needs:**
 - 3.1. Youth with disabilities;
 - 3.2. Youth who do not go to school;
 - 3.3. Underage pregnant/parents;
 - 3.4. Youth living and/or working in the street;
 - 3.5. Youth deprived of parental care;
 - 3.6. Youth who have entered and transitioned out of the state care;
 - 3.7. Youth with severe and incurable diseases;
 - 3.8. Youth who are the victims of trafficking;
 - 3.9. Youth who use narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances unlawfully;
 - 3.10. Youth who use excessive amounts of alcohol and tobacco;
 - 3.11. Youth in conflict with the law;
 - 3.12. Former convicts;
 - 3.13. Youth who are victims of violence;
 - 3.14. Youth from the families of internally displaced persons;
 - 3.15. Youth living on the occupied territories of Georgia – in accordance with the State Strategy of Georgia on Occupied Territories: Engagement Through Cooperation and Action Plan for Engagement;
 - 3.16. Youth living in the adjacent urban areas of the occupied territories;
 - 3.17. Youth living in mountainous regions;
 - 3.18. Children of war heroes and disabled veterans.
4. **Youth activities:** educational activities with youth and for young people, which is conducted out of the formal education, marital and employment context and contributes to youth development and prosperity, their active participation and integration to the society.

5. **Youth worker:** a person who conducts the youth activities.
6. **Volunteering:** socially useful activity, which is carried out on the basis of the freely expressed will of a person to assist others and is not motivated by any financial or material benefit.
7. **Youth organization:** a non-entrepreneurial (non-commercial) legal entity established on the basis of the legislation of Georgia whose statute defines that its main activities are issues related to the youth development.
8. **Stakeholder:** a physical person, an institution with any legal organizational form, international governmental and non-governmental and/or local non-governmental organization, whose one of the segments is represented by the youth.
9. **Structured dialogue:** instrument, which allows the youth to fully participate in the friendly environment in defining priorities, development, evaluation and monitoring process of the Youth Policy.
10. **Youth friendliness:** taking into account the age, development, needs, abilities and interests of youth while development of Youth Policy and decision-making on the youth-related issues.
11. **Formal education:** structured educational system, from general education including higher education, which may also include special vocational training programs.
12. **Non-formal education:** any scheduled, voluntary program of individual and social education, which is not part of the formal educational programs and is designed to develop competencies (knowledge, skills, abilities and attitudes).
13. **Formal outdoor education:** lifelong ongoing educational process, whereby person without special efforts, by environmental influence and on a daily experience unintentionally gains attitudes, values, skills and knowledge.
14. **Mobility:** Free movement of pupils, students and academic staff in order to participate in teaching, learning and research activities in Georgia as well as abroad, which is accompanied, according to the law, by recognition of qualifications or education and credits obtained during the study.

IV. Strategic Directions of the Youth Policy

In order to carry out priorities of the Youth Policy the State shall ensure the development, implementation and evaluation of the relevant timeframe specified Action Plan, in following four strategic directions:

1. Participation;
2. Education, employment and mobility;
3. Health;

4. Special support and protection.

1. Participation

1.1. Civil rights and responsibilities

For the democratic development of the State, active participation of youth in the social, economic, cultural and political life is very essential. For this purpose, first of all, it is necessary for youth to thoroughly understand their civil rights and responsibilities.

The Government of Georgia will raise youth awareness on civil rights and responsibilities.

To accomplish this, the Government of Georgia will:

- 1.1.1. Ensure and raise youth awareness on civil rights and responsibilities through formal as well as non-formal education;
- 1.1.2. Facilitate access to information for youth concerning the rights of minorities and public groups with special needs;
- 1.1.3. Promote the integration of minorities and youth with special needs in public life;
- 1.1.4. Facilitate the development of formal and non-formal education programs in order to strengthen civil responsibility and national consciousness of youth.

1.2. Youth Activities

Youth activities aim to promote youth development, welfare, their active participation and integration into society. To achieve this goal, youth activities create a comfortable, safe and pleasant environment where the youth can demonstrate their abilities, learn from each other and evolve. Particular emphasis is given to the non-formal education in youth activities.

The Government of Georgia will develop youth activities.

To accomplish this, the Government of Georgia will:

- 1.2.1. Facilitate the strengthening of youth activities, professional development of youth workers, their professional growth and sharing of international experience by them;
- 1.2.2. Care that the experience and outcome gained as a result of youth activities, to be acknowledged and recognized;
- 1.2.3. Support youth involvement in international youth programs;
- 1.2.4. Promote the development and implementation of non-formal education programs.

1.3. Decision-making skills and abilities

Georgia, as the party of 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 Government of Georgia aims the youth to have the opportunity and the relevant skills and abilities to participate in decision-making process.

To accomplish this, the Government of Georgia will:

- 1.3.1. Provide young people with information concerning their opportunities be actively involved in the decision-making process;
- 1.3.2. Encourage the implementation of educational programs that will help young people to develop their skills and abilities that are necessary for the decision-making;
- 1.3.3. Facilitate the development of instruments and mechanisms that provide the institutional participation of young people in decision-making process;
- 1.3.4. Promote the establishment of necessary infrastructure and adapted environment, that provides the highest possible involvement of young people, including young people with disabilities;
- 1.3.5. Develop recommendations and proposals in order to ensure further involvement of young people in local and regional life;
- 1.3.6. Provide an opportunity to engage youth in the decision-making process that is related to them as well as in the execution and evaluation process of these decisions.

1.4. Youth Initiatives

It is important youth to develop the projects based on their experience, which serve the needs of the young people of the same age and is useful not only for the beneficiaries but also for the entire community.

The Government of Georgia aims to create favorable environment for youth and youth organizations to initiate the projects and to support and fund the projects initiated by them.

To accomplish this, the Government of Georgia will:

- 1.4.1. Support young people to develop their skills and abilities that are essential for project management;
- 1.4.2. Encourage grant programs in which youth organizations are entitled to participate;
- 1.4.3. Promote broadcasting of youth initiatives that will enhance the incentives of the newly established youth groups, increase public awareness concerning the achievements of young people and stimulate donors to support youth projects;
- 1.4.4. Promote the sustainable development of the youth organizations.

1.5. Volunteering

Voluntarism is one of the effective means of non-formal education which aims to raise public awareness among the youth and establish skills and values of disinterested labor that will be beneficial for the society.

The Policy of the Government of Georgia will promote volunteerism among the youth, engagement of unemployed young people, dissemination of international volunteerism and involvement of volunteers in the areas such as sports, social welfare, culture, human rights and environmental protection, humanitarian assistance, health care, poverty reduction, agriculture and etc.

The Government of Georgia aims to develop volunteering.

To accomplish this, the Government of Georgia will:

- 1.5.1. Draw out a National Strategy for the Development of Volunteering and regional and local programs integrated to it;
- 1.5.2. Prepare the legislative amendments, if necessary, in order to ensure promotion and popularization of the work carried out by volunteers;
- 1.5.3. Facilitate the development of international volunteerism.

1.6. Culture, creativity and leisure

Young people themselves identify cultural, entertainment and leisure opportunities as a priority. Participation in cultural and creative activities builds skills young people can use in

all aspects of their lives and prepares them for employment in the cultural and tourism sectors. Further, young people must be encouraged to practice their culture and traditions.

The Government of Georgia will support the involvement of young people in cultural, creative and leisure activities.

To accomplish this, the Government of Georgia will:

- 1.6.1. Contribute to increasing the number and enhancing the scope of cultural, creative and recreational programs for young people;
- 1.6.2. Support youth involvement in preserving and maintaining the monuments of cultural heritage;
- 1.6.3. Allow young people living abroad to receive information about the cultural, creative and recreational life of their country, to take part in it and to maintain contacts with young people living in Georgia.
- 1.6.4. Ensure that young people living on the occupied territories receive information about the cultural life of their country, take part in it and maintain contacts with young people living in other regions of Georgia.
- 1.6.5. Promote the tourism development among the youth;
- 1.6.6. Encourage the preservation of cultural and ethnic diversity.

1.7. Environmental protection

Environmental activities and the active participation of young people is an important social strategy, aimed at formation of a person who has the appropriate knowledge of his environment, owns the practical skills and abilities and has a responsible attitude towards the environment.

The Government of Georgia aims to raise environmental awareness and involve young people in environmental activities.

To accomplish this, the Government of Georgia will:

- 1.7.1. Facilitate access to environmental information;
- 1.7.2. Encourage environmental awareness among young people through formal and non-formal education;
- 1.7.3. Promote the youth involvement in the environmental activities.

2. Education, Employment and Mobility

2.1. School to work transitions

Transition from education system to work is the challenge faced by all young people. Educational sector shall ensure the young people to develop such knowledge and competencies which guarantee them to labor efficiency, competitiveness and employment.

The Government of Georgia will increase qualifications, competitiveness and employability of the young people.

To accomplish this, the Government of Georgia will:

- 2.1.1. Improve the quality of general education, as well as promote vocational and higher education system development that is demand-oriented on a labor market, which, in turn, will contribute to a successful education and employment of young people;
- 2.1.2. Provide information to young people concerning vocational and higher education, as well as professional military and special education and the employment opportunities as well;
- 2.1.3. Encourage innovation-oriented programs that will contribute to school to work transitions of young people;
- 2.1.4. Promote the youth involvement in international education and exchange programs;
- 2.1.5. Promote the development of qualification enhancement and professional training programs.

2.2. Equal chances for educational success

Within the framework of the State Policy, the Government of Georgia will ensure all young people to receive quality education. The Government of Georgia will ensure that young people living in the occupied territories of Georgia have the same education opportunities, as the youth living in the other regions of Georgia

The Government of Georgia will ensure that each young person receives the relevant conditions for the proper education regardless of their race, color, language, sex, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property or social status, place of residence.

To accomplish this, the Government of Georgia will:

- 2.2.1. Support young people of lower socio-economic status, youth with disabilities and young people with special needs to attend general, higher and vocational education programs;
- 2.2.2. Promote the youth from ethnic minorities to attend general, higher and vocational education programs;
- 2.2.3. Improve the national language learning;

- 2.2.4. Provide and enhance access to education for young people living in the occupied territories of Georgia;
- 2.2.5. Ensure professional development for teachers working with young people with special needs taking into account the specifics for each type of group.

2.3. Economic opportunities and life conditions for young people in the regions

Young people in the regions and remote communities need the same services and opportunities as their urban peers.

The Government of Georgia will increase efforts to improve the social and economic living conditions of young people in the mountainous areas and in the areas adjacent to the occupation lines.

To accomplish this, the Government of Georgia will:

- 2.3.1. Increase the geographical accessibility of educational institutions;
- 2.3.2. Promote the development of formal and non-formal educational programs for the youth living in the regions and the areas adjacent to the occupation lines;
- 2.3.3. Support the development of educational programs for the professions required in the regions;
- 2.3.4. Promote the economic development of regions, especially the mountainous regions and areas adjacent to the occupation lines that will create opportunities for young people to be employed on a local level;
- 2.3.5. Support the development of cultural centers, activities and infrastructure in the regions.

2.4. Mobility

For the youth development the existence of learning abroad opportunities is significant. After receiving education abroad students gain important knowledge, skills and abilities that increase their competitiveness. In this regard, the right of mobility helps the young people.

The Government of Georgia will support the mobility of students and academic staff in the teaching, learning and research process, both in Georgia and abroad.

To accomplish this, the Government of Georgia will:

- 2.4.1. Promote the young people's awareness about mobility opportunities;
- 2.4.2. Provide the development of mobility support programs;
- 2.4.3. Create a favorable environment for the development of funding system for studying abroad;
- 2.4.4. Ensure that young people living in the occupied territories be able to pursue further education in the rest territory of Georgia or abroad.

3. Health

3.1. Healthy lifestyles

It is extremely important that young people owned enough information about the healthy lifestyles, were aware of its importance and benefit from preventive services. It is necessary to strengthen young people's individual responsibility and equip them with the knowledge, skills and abilities that will make them better care of their health.

The Government of Georgia will encourage the spread of healthy lifestyle behavior amongst young people.

To accomplish this, the Government of Georgia will:

- 3.1.1. Promote and raise awareness and education on healthy lifestyles among young people;
- 3.1.2. Ensure that preventive services for young people (including young people with special needs) were created, developed and turned out to be more accessible;
- 3.1.3. Promote creation of a safe environment in recreation and entertainment venues and establishments for young people;
- 3.1.4. Help young people to organize properly their leisure time and therefore, support the recreation and entertainment programs for youth, that will be integrated with physical activity and recreational and educational events;
- 3.1.5. Take care of the young people to be involved in sports activities, and in this regard, will contribute to the expansion, improvement and adaptation of sports infrastructure;
- 3.1.6. Support promotion of a healthy lifestyle through the way of sports activities, mass media campaigns and other events;
- 3.1.7. Revise the existing legislative framework and initiate relevant amendments in order to improve the regulatory mechanisms that promote a healthy lifestyle.

3.2. Sexual and reproductive health and rights

It is important that young people had the information about sexual and reproductive health and rights. The availability of information on reproductive health and modern contraception contributes to the reduction of the incidence of abortions and Sexually Transmitted Infections, including HIV infection among young people. In addition it promotes avoidance of risks and negative consequences associated with the early marriages, early pregnancy and related maternal and child health risks.

The Government of Georgia will increase the awareness on sexual and reproductive health and ensure medical services to be more accessible and improve its quality.

To accomplish this, the Government of Georgia will:

- 3.2.1. Support the improvement of awareness of young people, including those with special needs, concerning the sexual and reproductive health programs and services;
- 3.2.2. Ensure that high-quality sexual and reproductive health services were delivered to young women and men, including the groups with special needs;
- 3.2.3. Give priority to improvement of financial and geographical accessibility of sexual and reproductive health services that are determined for the youth, delivering the services to youth-friendly environment and through the way of protection of confidentiality;
- 3.2.4. Support the development of formal and non-formal educational programs on the issues of sexual and reproductive health that are in compliance with the modern requirements of young people

3.3. Mental Health

Development of psychiatric and psycho-social rehabilitation services for young people is very important.

The Government of Georgia will support services aimed at improving young people's mental health status.

To accomplish this, the Government of Georgia will:

- 3.3.1. Care for creation/improvement of the access to youth-oriented mental health services and raise young people's awareness on existing services;
- 3.3.2. Promote the raising of public awareness and knowledge about the mental health in order to prevent mental health problems and decrease stigma;
- 3.3.3. Support the social integration of young people with mental health problems.

3.4. Prevention of illegal consumption of psycho-active substances

It is important to carry out an active campaign for prevention of illegal consumption of psycho-active substances among the young people.

To accomplish this, the Government of Georgia will:

1. Develop strategies, programs and services for youth that will be focused on the prevention of illegal consumption of psycho-active substances.

4. Special support and protection.

4.1. Social assistance

Of particular importance is the launch of the Targeted Social Assistance Program, which identifies socially vulnerable families and provides them with subsistence allowance. For the implementation of National Social Assistance Program it is important to take into account the social-economic situation of relevant target groups, especially the youth.

The Government of Georgia will contribute to increase the opportunities provided by social assistance programs, in order to better meet the needs of young people affected by poverty.

To accomplish this, the Government of Georgia will:

- 4.1.1. Support implementation of research and experience-based social assistance and other social programs taking into account the needs of youth living in difficult socio-economic conditions;
- 4.1.2. Contribute to ensuring that young people leaving government care have access to Targeted Social Assistance and other social programs;

- 4.1.3. Contribute to ensuring that young families have access to Targeted Social Assistance and other social programs;

4.2. Crime prevention, re-socialization and reintegration

For the equal and full-scale development of young people with special needs, especially the youth under the public care, being in conflict with the law or young people who left the state care, it is important to involve them in additional supporting programs and alternative services. Also, another priority is the re-socialization, reintegration and support of young people being homeless, including youth living and working in the streets, victims of violence and trafficking and youth with disabilities.

The Government of Georgia will prevent crime and ensure reintegration and re-socialization of young people with special needs.

To accomplish this, the Government of Georgia will:

- 4.2.1. Care for crime prevention measures and harmonize mechanisms for identification, referral and response;
- 4.2.2. Promote educational and employment programs for young people in need of special support;
- 4.2.3. Support the youth in need of special support to be involved in volunteer, public and non-formal educational activities and programs.

4.3. Rights, violence and abuse

State Policy shall ensure protection of youth from violence and protection referral procedures must be developed in order to increase the effectiveness of response to complaints.

The Government of Georgia will raise awareness amongst young people on their rights, promote a culture of non-violence and safety among young people and provide special protection and support to young victims of violence and abuse.

To accomplish this, the Government of Georgia will:

- 4.3.1. 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;
- 4.3.2. Develop rehabilitation services that target young victims of violence and abuse;
- 4.3.3. Contribute to the timely involvement of young victims of violence and abuse in the referral mechanism;
- 4.3.4. Promote the assistance to women being victims of violence.

V. The Youth Policy Actors, Decision-making and Coordination Mechanisms

1. Youth Policy Actors

State institutions and governmental agencies are responsible for the implementation of Youth Policy within their competences and they will pay attention that the strategies and programs implemented in relation to the young people are consistent with the principles and aspirations of the Youth Policy, even if they are not specified in the Youth Policy.

For the implementation of youth policy the State shall ensure development, implementation and evaluation of the relevant timeframe specified Action Plan.

Except the commitments undertaken by the Youth policy and the Action Plan, the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs of Georgia shall coordinate the development of National Youth Policy.

Other important actors of the Youth Policy are:

1. The Parliamentary Committee on Sports and Youth Affairs of Georgia;
2. Local municipalities;
3. Youth;
4. Youth organizations;
5. Stakeholders;
6. International organizations;
7. The Media;
8. Researchers.

2. Decision-making and coordination mechanisms

In order to develop the Youth Policy the Interagency Coordinating Council is established. This Council shall meet at least once per quarter. It will be coordinated by the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs of Georgia.

For the purpose of establishment national/local permanent mechanism the Government of Georgia shall hold a dialogue with local authorities which ensure the involvement of local authorities in the development of Youth Policy.

The Government of Georgia shall develop mechanisms that aim to involve all the stakeholders in decision-making, coordination and implementation process of the Youth Policy.

The Government of Georgia is aware that young people have a right to be involved in the decision-making processes that affect them. The Government of Georgia shall use a structured dialogue as a mechanism for ensuring youth participation in the Youth Policy.

In order to assess annually rates and performance indicators of the priorities and directions determined by the Youth Policy, the Government of Georgia will provide survey on the youth issues.

VI. International Dimension of the Youth Policy

Youth Policy will be implemented in cooperation with the International Community. Georgia considers it important and recognizes the role of United Nations and its agencies, as well as the role of NATO, the U.S., the EU and the Council of Europe in the Youth Policy development. In addition, Georgia attributes special importance to Regional Cooperation within the framework of the Youth Policy, in order to promote with joint efforts the development and welfare of young people living in the Caucasus.