Youth Policy - A National Focus of Russia

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The Russian Governmental Decree No. 1760-r of 18 December 2006 confirmed the strategy for state youth policy in the Russian Federation, which had been developed by the Ministry for Education and Science of the Russian Federation. It was the first time in the history of the country that a document was adopted, which defines the principles and focal areas of state policy in one of the most important areas of the socio-economic development of society.

The adopted strategy considerably extends the opportunities of the young generation for self-realization, and it also ensures the promotion of numerous initiatives on the state level. It is a document, which encompasses all areas of youth policy and provides for the further development of all these areas on the basis of practical experiences.

The strategy of state youth policy aims at the full development of the young persons’ potential in the interest of the state, and it provides for the participation of young citizens in drafting, assessing and implementing the key areas of state youth policy and the modalities for its implementation.

The text of the strategy defines state youth policy as the system to develop focal areas and activities, which are oriented towards creating conditions and opportunities for a successful socialization and an effective self-realisation of youth as well as the development of its potential in the interests of Russia and - consequently - the socio-economic and cultural development of the country as well as an improvement of its competitiveness.

State youth policy is designed and implemented by state bodies and institutions of local self-government with the involvement of civic (volunteer) associations for children and youth, non-governmental organisations, other legal entities and individuals.

The Department for Youth Policy, Education and Social Protection for Children in the Ministry for Education and Science of the Russian Federation will ensure the working coordination. The Administration for Youth Issues in the Federal Education Agency will guarantee the implementation of concrete actions on the Federal level.

In practical terms and in the individual regions of Russia, the players are the bodies of state power implementing such actions in the subjects of the Russian Federation and the institutions of local self-government.

An all-Russian data base for the main emphases of state youth policy in the Russian Federation (dmp.mgou.ru) was established as an official source of information within the Federal information portal for youth and children in Russia, www.molros.ru.
The civic children and youth organisations continue to develop. The number of civic associations dealing with youth work in its various orientations has increased by almost 10 percent over the past five years, and the number of civic associations associated with education facilities has grown by almost five percent. A Youth Assembly was established within the Federation Council, and a civic Youth Chamber was set up at the State Duma of the Russian Federation, and similar consultation fora were established in the regions.

The current strategy is primarily targeted at citizens of the Russian Federation between 14 and 30 years of age, and this group also includes young persons in difficulties and young families.

The strategy includes a definition that the objective of state youth policy is the development and self-realization of the young persons’ potential in the interest of Russia. Taking into account the medium-term trends in Russia’s socio-economic and socio-political development, state youth policy in the Russian Federation is implemented with the following main emphases:

- integration of youth in social practices and information for youth on potential development opportunities;
- development of creative youth activities;
- integration of young people in difficulties into the life of their society.

The Russian state youth policy will be implemented in the context of seven projects: “The Russian Youth Information Network ‘New View’”, “Russia’s Volunteer”, “Careers”, “Young Family of Russia”, “Team”, “Your success is up to you” and “A step towards you”.

The modalities for the implementation of the strategy include calls for tender for projects and actions, which will contribute to a solution for the tasks described in the strategy. Participants in the tendering process are the youth work bodies of the subjects of the Russian Federation as well as non-governmental organisations working in the youth field.

Actions for the implementation of the strategy of state youth policy will be funded by resources, which have been earmarked for such purposes in the Federal budget. The strategy also provides for the preparation of a system of assessment criteria to measure successes in implementing the state youth policy by considering their impact on the changes affected in the situation of youth in Russia.

It is recommended that Federal law enforcement services and executive bodies in the subjects of the Russian Federation take into account the rules of the strategy, when they carry out actions to implement the Russian state youth policy.

Pursuant to the Governmental Decree, the Ministry for Education and Science developed an action package for the implementation of the strategy with the involvement of civic youth associations.

In connection with the strategy’s implementation in the “Russia’s Volunteer” area, the following projects were carried out: establishment of databases on the need and the opportunities for developing volunteer work by young people in the Russian regions, initiation training for young people in volunteer work (the concrete design of the projects may differ; it may range from psychological and teaching assistance or medico-social assistance provided by student volunteers to parents and children in substitute families on the one hand, to ecological squads etc. on the other).
In the context of implementing the “Careers” emphasis, projects will be carried out with the following orientation: recruiting young people to the vocational orientation activities of job clubs, student brigades, youth job fairs and other forms of youth occupation; introducing the types and techniques for vocational and socio-legal education and orientation for young people, assistance in planning and realising a successful career for young people on the labour market; launching effective programmes for the development of social skills for young people, which are indispensable for a career on the labour market; developing interactions between the players on the labour market in view of finding solutions for the job placement questions asked by young people; creating the conditions for maximum flexibility when integrating young people in unfamiliar types of occupations, and in guaranteeing their legal rights and interests; promoting and popularising initiatives and enterprises run by young people in the socio-economic sector as well as technological and scientific/industrial development activities.

For the implementation of the strategy in the “Young family of Russia” area, projects will be implemented in the following fields: promotion of family values among young people; developing modalities for the promotion of young families such as the creation of start-up opportunities, which are indispensable when establishing a family; preparing orphans and children, who have not experienced parental care, for a successful establishment of a family; supporting young families in getting housing; developing multifunctional support centres for young families.

In the context of implementing the “A step towards you” focus, projects will be carried out with the following orientation: identifying typical and re-emerging groups of young people, who have experienced difficulties; developing self-help groups and groups for the mutual support of young people, who has experienced difficulties; disseminating programmes for young people with integration barriers in view of a development of their skills and abilities to lead an independent life; supporting youth projects aimed at the integration of young people in difficulties into the civic, socio-economic and cultural life as well as an improvement of their situation in society.

When implementing the focal areas “Team” and “Your success is up to you”, projects are carried out to resolve the following issues: disseminating successful models and forms of involving young people in designing the life of society; developing models and programmes to develop leadership skills among young people; recruiting youths for a participation civic and socio-political life, integration of young people in the activities of self-government bodies in various areas of society; recruiting young people to participate in the election of legislative bodies; recruiting young people to co-operate in the executive and representative bodies of power; integrating young people in international projects in view of preparing the leaders of civic youth organisations and their work in international youth representation bodies; developing young entrepreneurs and business activities by young people; encouraging youth to develop and research issues, which are significant for the development of the country; recruiting young people to arts, science and athletics clubs; introducing a system for developmental games, role-plays and athletic games, competitions and festivals in line with the activity profiles and interests of young people; integrating Russian youth in innovative international projects in education, science, culture and technology; communicating and popularising the successes of Russian youth in the international community.
In the area of “The Russian Youth Information Network ‘New View’”, the following projects are planned: developing an information system and a social explanatory programme on the full range of issues impacting on the life of youth in society; developing information and consultation assistance for young people; developing youth information projects and programmes; disseminating the values of Russian society among young people with social advertising; developing special projects to compensate for the opportunities of youth in rural and remote areas with respect to the search, use and dissemination of current information; participating in international youth information projects, which are oriented to the mutual penetration of Russian and global cultural values.

The juvenile justice system has recently developed into one of the major responsibilities of state youth policy in view of establishing a special system of interacting institutions for the protection of the rights and interests of minors, the prevention of child neglect, impoverishment and crimes committed by minors.

In the Federal education system, the political functions for preventive activities for children and youth at risk are now concentrated in the Department for Youth Policy, Education and Social Protection for Children. Its work is supplemented by political activities for the education, informal education of children and youth, vocational training as well as the socio-pedagogical and psychological improvement of children.

**The Office’s activities in recent years**

The proposal for a Federal law on the “Principles of legislation on juvenile justice in the Russian Federation” has been submitted to the State Duma, and it has met with a lot of interest among scientists and professionals working for the protection of minors’ rights.

The Russian State Institute for Social Issues established the Science and Education Institute for Juvenile Justice.

Every year, there are conferences and seminars of scientists and practitioners on issues, which are associated with the development of a juvenile justice system, the prevention of negative social phenomena among young people as well as the specificities of the legal culture of Russian youth, and these events are coordinated by the youth policy bodies and the human rights commissioners of the subjects of the Russian Federation.

In 2006, the all-Russian conference on “Juvenile justice. Legal and educational aspects” was held in Rostov-on-Don. At this conference, the experience of the Rostov District was assessed in developing and testing a model for the co-operation of the law courts and institutions in the preventive system in order to organise rehabilitation and re-socialisation activities for minors, who have experienced a difficult situation in life.

**Civic children and youth organisations**

An important yardstick for the development of Russia in the present phase is the development of a civil society. For this reason, the development of a social commitment of young people and their civic self-awareness is one of the key issues of state youth policy on all levels, as it encourages young people to participate in civic children and youth organisations, youth parliaments, governments and other consultative structures, which have been set up with legislative and executive bodies on all levels, and to join in bodies of student self-government.
The basic principles for the activities of children and youth organisations in the Russian Federation are laid down in the Constitution of the Russian Federation, the Civil Code of the Russian Federation, the Federal Acts “On non-profit organisations” and “On civic associations” as well as the Federal Act of the Russian Federation “On education”.

The most important act regulating the co-operation of bodies of state power and civic children and youth organisation is the Federal Act “On state support for civic children and youth organisations”. State support of children and youth organisation is considered to cover all actions taken by bodies of state power in the Russian Federation in the aim of developing and guaranteeing the legal, economic and organisational conditions, the security and incentives for the activities of such associations, which are oriented towards developing social maturity as well as the development and self-realisation of children and youth in the life of society and the preservation and protection of their rights.

In the strategy of state youth policy in the Russian Federation, which was approved by the Russian Governmental Decree No. 1760-r of 18 December 2006, it is clearly underlined that “state youth policy is designed and implemented by the bodies of state power and bodies of local self-government with the involvement of civic children and youth organisations...”. One of the principles for the implementation of state youth policy is the principle of “cooperation between the state, the institutions of civil society and representatives of industry”.

As of 1 January 2006, the Federal Register of Civic Children and Youth Organisations receiving state support, which is kept pursuant to the act “On state support of civic children and youth organisations” included 31 organisations, of which eight were children's organisation and 23 were youth organisations, 29 were all-Russian organisations and two were international organisations.

In the current stage, the development process of civic children and youth organisations has been largely completed, which started in the 1990s and is based on the diversity of organisational types and the wide range of young people’s choices with respect to appropriate organisations. A return to the model of a single and unitary children and youth organisation is not possible: this idea is not popular among youth and youth organisations and is in contradiction to the changed conditions in society.

In the current phase, those civic organisations may be characterised by their diversity as regards the orientation of their activities (vocational, creative, athletic, ecological, military-patriotic, bourgeois-patriotic, charitable) and their diversity regarding their types and modalities or the programmes and projects being implemented. Society recognizes the social significance of these civic children and youth organisations. In contrast to informal societies (groups, cliques, gangs etc), these organisations offer opportunities for young people to become a subject of law and social activity. They integrate the subject into a system of social relations and help it in understanding new social roles.

The voluntary affiliation to an organisation is now considered as an indispensable standard for the work of societal organisations.

The current civic organisations are not large in terms of membership. Their membership varies between several hundred and several ten thousand persons. The biggest civic youth organisations include the all-Russian organisation “Russian youth union” (RYU), the all-
Russian organisation “Union youth housing complex of Russia” (Union JHV of Russia), the all-Russian organisation “Youth union of jurists in the Russian Federation” and the all-Russian organisation “National youth league”. The biggest children organisations include the International Union of Children's Associations “Union of pioneer organisations - Federation of children's organisations“ (UPO-FCO) and the all-Russian organisation “Social Children and youth initiatives” (SCAYI). The Scout movement, which emerged at the beginning of the 1990s, became more active.

In the current stage, political parties increasingly establish their own youth organisations: the all-Russian organisation “Young guards unified Russia”, the youth organisation of the “Equitable Russia” party, the “Young agrarian union” (a youth organisation of the Russian Agrarian Party), the Union of Communist Youth, the URF youth organisation (Union of Right-Wing Forces), the youth organisation of the LDPR party and others.

There is a trend towards establishing civic associations - projects. This category includes the following associations: “Ours”, “Young Russia”, “The locals” and others. These associations usually do not have a state registration. Their activities are oriented towards organising mass rallies and actions.

An important criterion for current civic organisations is their uneven distribution across the country. A large majority of children and youth associations is concentrated in the big cities – Moscow, St. Petersburg, Novosibirsk, Yekaterinburg, Volgograd and Saratov – as well as some major industrial centres in the territory of the Russian Federation.

In the mid-1990s, youth counselling structures were initially established, and these structures are working under the umbrella of the bodies of legislative and executive power in the subjects of the Russian Federation (civic (volunteer) youth chambers, parliaments, governments, councils etc.).

At present, more than one third of the subjects of the Russian Federation already have parliamentary youth structures on the regional level.

In a number of Russian regions, the consultative structures have the right to speak on behalf all young people, to actively co-operate with the bodies of power, and they turn from an object in the implementation of state youth policy to a subject in that policy.

An important step in the development of the parliamentary movement was the foundation of the Parliamentary Youth Assembly at the Federation Council in the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation as well as the Civic Youth Chamber set up at the State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation.

Student self-government is an important factor in the development of democratic forms of administration in the system of tertiary and vocational education and an important element for the self-realisation and the expression of the will of student bodies as the most active element of youth. At present, every third university institution and every fourth facility for vocational training has a body for student self-government.

In the 1990s, the process got under way for a consolidation of civic associations in the form of associated structures, federations, roundtables and councils on the federal and the regional levels.
The all-Russian civic organisation developing into the consolidating structure for the student unions were the “Russian Association of student union organisations at universities” (RASUU), which was founded in 1991, and the Student Coordinating Council at the Central Committee of the Union of Employees in Public Education and Science of the Russian Federation.

An important uniting factor for children and youth organisations in Russia was the foundation of the “National Council for Children and Youth Associations in Russia”, the umbrella association of civic associations, in 1992. The National Council has 72 affiliated organisations.

**Co-operation of the Russian Federation and the Council of Europe in youth policy matters**

The youth policy co-operation between the Council of Europe and the public bodies in charge of implementing youth policy in the Russian Federation started in 1992. The main objectives of the co-operation were a promotion of the development of youth policy on the federal and regional levels, support for non-governmental youth organisations as well as the promotion of cooperation between state bodies and civic organisations.

In the context of this cooperation, training courses were held for young leaders - including long-term workshops on the situation in children and youth organisations (together with the Directorate for Social Affairs of the Council of Europe) as well as a number of training sessions on the situation of youth and the situation of youth policy in the Federal Districts of the Russian Federation. Furthermore, Russian representatives participated in workshops of international youth organisations, attended language courses and training courses for the youth sector organised by the Council of Europe. The implementation of the three-year Framework Programme for Co-operation in the period from 2003 to 2005 was generally assessed as being successful and positive by the Ministry for Education and Science of the Russian Federation as well as the Directorate for Youth and Sports of the Council of Europe.

For the further development of this co-operation in youth policy matters between the Council of Europe and the Russian Federation, which both sides consider to be useful, a Framework Programme for Youth Policy Co-operation was prepared for the period from 2006 to 2008. This Framework Programme is currently in its implementation phase.