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



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## 1. Introduction

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The main purpose of this overview is to provide world community, national organizations and associations of the generalized and systematic information about the processes existent in field of youth affairs, the social situation of young people in the Republic of Belarus, values, priorities, challenges and future directions of youth policy development in the country.

While working on the overview government statistics, information and analytical materials from the ministries and departments, youth and children's public associations of Belarus, as well as scientific and informational materials were used. Involvement of different youth policy stakeholders has allowed systematic and comprehensive approach to information analysis.

Nevertheless, it should be noted that the available information is not always possible to solve the problem of comparative analysis in full. Some data provided by the monitoring entities, do not take into account certain provisions of the Act of 07.12.2009 "On State Youth Policy" (hereinafter - the Law) (including certain specified age periods that characterize the concept of "youth"). For this reason, sections of the report have varying degrees of detail. In accordance with Article 27 of the Republican State bodies subordinate to the Government of the Republic of Belarus, carried out work to bring the regulations into conformity with the law, which will receive full and objective information to indicate the position of youth in all spheres of social and economic life of the Republic of Belarus.

At present, there is a lack of literature in which the youth would have considered the problems from different angles and with the involvement of factual material. The proposed paper attempts to some extent fill this gap.

## 2. Executive summary

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Youth is an important social segment of the society, whose support has always been an urgent task for the state and society. Nowadays, this category is more than a quarter of population of the Republic of Belarus. Interests and abilities of young people are defining and of great importance in the areas of social life, family, education, sports, army. Implementation of such critical functions as the reproduction of the population, protection of the state, provision of labor resources depends on young generation. In modern Belarus the role of youth is also increasing in the economic sphere (small business, new technologies, banking institutions).

Youth is not a self-developing system, its life influenced by existing socio-economic and political conditions in society. The social situation of Belarusian young people is determined by several factors, among which economic factors are still the most important. However, protecting the interests of the main part of the youth is not in the traditional forms of social protection in the form of benefits and compensations. The main part of youth needs services provided by labor exchange, legal support centers, hotlines, which can compensate the lack of life experience, as well as providing opportunities for the implementation of positive initiatives.

In the Republic of Belarus at the state level youth policy is coordinated by the Department of Youth Affairs of the Ministry of Education, which was established in May 2004 and consists of 7 staff members.

Coordination in the field of youth policy at the level of local executive bodies is carried out by 159 youth departments with a total number of employees 197 people. These structural units on its activities are guided by instructions of the relevant executive committees as well as by the Ministry of Education (Presidential decree № 723, December 7, 2001).

In accordance with the Law № 65 "On State Youth Policy" dated December 7, 2009, and by Decree of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of the Republic of Belarus a new position of youth work specialists was entered to enterprises, organizations, institutions and agencies. Since 2009 youth work was carried out by 5,049 professionals.

The main mechanism of realization of state youth policy in 2009 was the program "Youth of Belarus" for the period from 2006 till 2010, which was approved by the Presidential Decree № 200 on April 4, 2006.

The priorities of the program are following:

- Patriotic education;
- Development of youth employment system, creation of conditions for active and effective participation in socio-economic life;

- Promotion of healthy lifestyles, prevention of crime, alcoholism, drug addiction and trafficking;
- Development of tourism and international youth cooperation;
- Informational support of youth work system.

### 3. Situation of Youth

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#### 3.1 Definition of youth

According to the Law on youth, the definition of youth is following:

Citizens of the Republic of Belarus, foreign citizens and persons residing permanently in the Republic of Belarus, at the age of fourteen to thirty one years old are considered to be Youth.

#### 3.2 Key figures on young people

Population of the Republic of Belarus is 9, 67 millions of people among them 2, 52 millions are young people aged from 14 to 31 years, representing 26% of the total population. During the period from January 2008 to January 2009 the number of people aged from 14 to 31 years decreased for 33,973 people.

Over the past decade - from 1999 to 2009 - the number of people in Belarus fell by from 10 million to 9.670.000 and continues to decline, especially by increasing mortality and declining fertility. As noted by demographers for the past two decades, life expectancy for men declined by 4.2 years and women - by 2.2 years and amounted to 63.2 and 75 years accordingly. The difference in life expectancy between men and women accounted for nearly 12 years, which is twice higher than in developed countries. Since 2004, the country has fallen into a "demographic hole" - when the number of children aged 0-15 years was less than the number of persons aged 60 years and older. According to demographers, depopulation will increase, because after 2010 the most active childbearing age takes a very few cohorts born in the 90's: "Now there is a decrease in the contribution of fertility generation 80's, when the country carried a baby-booming, that is why it is decreasing. In accordance with the classification of the UN, the population is considered to be old, if the proportion of persons over 65 years is 7%, while in Belarus it is twice more. In 2009, the number of residents, usually referred to young people (16-30 years old, although the Law defines the age range "from fourteen to thirty-one years) was approximately equal to the number of those who have reached retirement age (men aged 60 and older, women 55 years and older): about 22% -23%. This suggests that in the next decade, fewer and fewer young people will have to feed the growing number of elderly citizens, which certainly complicates the life prospects of young people (*see table 1*). 79% of young people live in urban areas and 21% in rural areas. The most numerous age group is from 25 to 30 years old (*see table 2*).

The largest number of young people (558,663 people) lives in Minsk, the capital of Belarus. According to the preliminary data for the year 2009 109.3 thousand children were born in the Republic of Belarus, which is 1.4 thousand more than in 2008.

The age structure of the population retains a tendency to reduce the number of children and adolescents and growing number of elderly people (*see table 3*).

According to the information provided by the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Belarus, the number of persons who arrived to the country for permanent residence in 2009, was 19,982 persons (in 2008 - 17,413), the number of departures from the Republic for permanent residence - 7643 (2008 - 9268), migration growth - 12,249 (2008 - 8145).

Flows of foreign labor migration of young people in Belarus are characterized by the following indicators. In 2009 4,835 people came to Belarus to work under the contract (2,463 people in 2008), 4,178 people have left Belarus (in 2008 - 6,204 people). Analyzing the distribution of migrants by age, we can conclude that leave for employment abroad is more common among young Belarusians. So, about 1,732 young people aged 20 to 24 y.o. and 602 persons aged from 18 to 19 years left Belarus in 2009.

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

#### **Education**

Belarus is one of those countries which focused on youth education issues like accessibility and quality. The basic law on education, laws on general secondary, vocational, special education were applied for the effective functioning of the educational system. By the decree of the President of the Republic of Belarus, equal rules of admission to higher and secondary special educational institutions for all educational establishments were approved. The rules are based on the principles of objectiveness and social justice. For the moment the parliament is preparing the Code of the Republic of Belarus "On Education", which will bring in a whole all laws relating to the education. The Republic of Belarus is going to be the second country in the world after France, which has such a comprehensive document.

There are 3,583 educational institutions in Belarus including: 615 basic schools, 2505 secondary schools, 212 gymnasiums, 29 lyceums. They train 983.4 thousand students (237 thousands in rural areas and 746.4 thousand in urban areas). However, in comparison with 2008 the number of educational institutions has and as a result the total number of students has decreased by 74,790 persons (7.1%).

In 2009, the Ministry of Education continued its work towards improvement of the quality of special education and ensuring its availability for students with special needs, in order to assist them in the process of social adaptation and integration into society. Monitoring made by the Ministry of Education and its departments in all regions of the country showed that in 2009, among 2,7 thousands 73.8% of graduates with special needs continued their education, 14.5% are employed and 17,8% unemployed. Nowadays, there are 199 public secondary education establishments and 12 private educational establishments. Government pays a lot of attention to the system of vocational (professional) education due to the lack of qualified professionals, who are of great demand in manufacture and production sphere. It should be also mentioned that among young people it is getting more popular to enter colleges and other vocational (professional) education establishments as it gives the possibility on one hand to get a profession and to be transferred to the third year of university studies on the other hand. Due to the reason mentioned above the number of young people entered vocational (professional) educational establishments increased in comparison with the year 2008. In 2009 105.7 thousands of young people entered professional colleges, it means 10 thousands more then in 2008. The development of higher education in the Republic of Belarus is carried out in accordance with the strategy of the country towards innovative changes in industrial and social spheres. The aim of the strategy is further increase of quality of the higher education based on the latest achievements of science and technology, in order to meet the needs of the society and state in the highly qualified specialists.

In 2009/2010 academic year among the total number of students entered state (public) universities, 40% of students study on a budgetary (paid by the state) basis and 60% of young people study on a fee basis. All the graduates, who studied on the budgetary basis has to pass obligatory distribution (so called guaranteed working place) to the state enterprises for 2 years minimum. Those graduates, who want to avoid obligatory distribution, have to reimburse the state with costs of education.

### **Social support of Youth**

One of the priorities of the state youth policy is social support for young people, it includes scholarship support, a range of benefits for entering higher educational establishments, and other support measures.

The winners of national and international subject Olympiads, young people from socially vulnerable groups have the right to enter higher educational institutions on preferential basis. There are different types of scholarships to support students with achievements in academic, scientific and social work. In 2009, 90% of eligible students, were provided with scholarships. Those students, who achieved success in their study and show good results, get bonuses for their scholarship. This

year, due to the Law of the Republic of Belarus "On social protection of citizens affected by the Chernobyl catastrophe", 10.181 university students from Chernobyl area were accommodated in hostels. Belarusian students also have the right to get reimbursement of their travel costs up to 50% in case city of studies and residence is different. Young people who receive their first higher education on a fee basis are supported by having possibility to get students loan low percentage of refinancement. The state motivates young people to show better results of studies, by giving the possibility to be transferred from fee based education to free education.

### **Support of gifted and talented Youth**

In order to support gifted and talented youth, special fund of the President of the Republic of Belarus was founded. In 2009, the Fund awarded 1,695 of students, teachers, and eight associations of pupils and students. Among them, 355 students and 978 pupils received scholarships. Each year Presidential Fund awards with scholarships young artists and creative youth. In 2010, 25 young scientists were awarded with presidential scholarship. There are several data bases were created in order to register talented and gifted youth. In order to systematize the data banks of gifted and talented Youth, Presidential Decree "On some questions of formation, maintenance and use of data banks of Gifted and Talented Youth" was ordained.

### **Youth employment**

One of the hottest issues for modern youth is employment. Employment is the most important part of life which provides young person with social independence. In this regard, the State guarantees the first job for graduates of different educational establishments by implementing the system of obligatory distribution. As a result the percentage of unemployed youth is decreasing. For example, in 2000 among the total number of unemployed, there were 53,9% of young people, in 2007 – 48,1%, in 2009 – 46,6%. During 2009, Ministry of social protection and labor in cooperation with other interested bodies worked on the identification, registration and assistance in employment process for young people, who are not enrolled in any educational institutions, unemployed, and also of those young people, who stopped their education in secondary schools due to different reasons. One of the most effective measures of prevention of unemployment in the Republic of Belarus is organization of professional training for young people. Those young people who didn't manage to get a profession or enter the university have possibility to get a professional training paid by the state in order to be competitive in the labor market. During 2009 about 16.8 thousand unemployed people aged 16-29 years were provided with professional training. In order to provide unemployed youth with professional knowledge and skills of practical work in the production, improve its competitiveness in the labor market and to increase their employment opportunities,

Fund organized a program called “Youth Practice”. Within this program 1,504 young people were employed in different companies. During 2009, considerable attention was paid for temporary employment of pupils and students in their spare time. Social protection bodies employed about 40 thousands of pupils and students for time of their holidays. 84% of them are pupils of 8-11 classes. Solving the problem of youth employment in their spare time society pays a lot of attention for the development of youth services. There is a wide range of youth NGO's providing young people with the possibility of participation in different youth programs like Students brigades and volunteer projects. One of the biggest youth NGO's which provides young people with participation in the program “Students brigades” is Belarusian republican youth union.

### **Situation of young families**

According to the research, made by the Center of analysis and information of the Republic of Belarus, family is one of the most valuable priorities for Belarusian youth. Despite the different demographic trends, the value of family for young people is steadily increasing (*see table 4*).

In comparison with 2008, the number of registered marriages in the Republic of Belarus increased by 2,1%, the number of divorces decreased by 4.4% (*see table 5*).

According to the official statistics the average age for marriage is getting slightly older. Today the average age among women is 23, 9 y.o., among men – 26 y.o. As a result the average maternity age has changed (*see table 6*).

According to the data of the research made by the Center of information and analysis, about 56% of young families are planning to have two children, 24.9% of people prefer to have one child and only 5% are not planning kids at all.

The state system provides support services for young families as follows:

- psychological and pedagogical counseling on education of children;
- special medical care for pregnant women under the age of 30 years;
- favorable crediting;
- at birth of children families receive financial assistance;
- long-term favorable crediting for housing, purchasing goods, etc.

During 2009, about 22,831 of young families were provided with favorable crediting for construction or purchase of apartment, amounting to 1,259 122.6 million.

At the same time, the housing problem has not yet been removed. According to the state statistics around 370,117 of young families are still in need of housing.

## Youth Health

Health of young people remains one of the major concerns of both the state and youth. Health of young generation is influenced a lot by several reasons: ecological problems (including the effects of the Chernobyl disaster), passive lifestyle and spread of harmful habits. According to sociological studies conducted by the Center of information and analysis, only 28,7% of young people regularly do sports, the majority (46,3%) - from case to case, 24.8% of young people not engaged in sports at all. As a result - every fourth student has several chronic diseases; many school graduates have medical limitations when choosing a profession. Mortality of young people aged 15-17 decreased in 2009 in comparison with 2008 by 12,3% and amounted to 37.3 per 100 000 population at this age (2008 - 42,5%). During 2009, the state continued to work towards the preservation of reproductive function of young women. It means help for infertile women, treatment of gynecological diseases, sexually transmitted infections, prevention of abortion, and promotion of contraception. As a result of the work done there we can observe tendency of reduction of the number of abortions among young women. Serious danger for the people is drug addiction, which brings another danger of HIV infection. There are 10 757 people with HIV, among them 7,178 (66.7%) of young people aged 15 to 29 years. Unfortunately, there is a positive dynamics of HIV identification. However, there is positive dynamics to identify cases of HIV infection in the country. In 2009, there were 466 cases of HIV among people aged from 15 to 29. It is 39 cases more than in 2008. The most common way of transmission is sexual transmission.

Due to cooperation of the United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA) with the state structures and Youth NGO's, the Project "Reproductive Health Information and Services for Teenagers and Youth" was completed. As a result of this Project, the Youth Health Centers were set up in 4 regional towns of Belarus and 23 district towns of the Minsk Region. Optional courses on reproductive health of adolescents and young people were prepared for higher and specialized secondary medical educational institutions.

At present the possibility of financial and methodical support of 2 regional Youth Health Centers is studied within the framework of cooperation between the government of the Republic of Belarus and the United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA).

Within the cooperation between Ministry of Health and UNICEF the following programs and projects were realized: "Health and Development of Children and Young People, HIV/AIDS Prevention"; "Health and Development of Infants", "Monitoring of Iodine Supply in Children aged 7-18 years on the Territory of the Republic of Belarus", "Expansion of Services on the Protection of Adolescents Health" and "HIV-Infection Prevention among Women and Children".

Aiming to build young people's positive behavior and to promote healthy way of life, the State continued its work on popularization of sports, by making sports accessible for young people. For

the last years quite a lot of well-equipped sportive centers were built in the country in order to involve youth to the sports activities. Besides, due to cooperation between the State and youth NGO's a wide range of sport events were organized aiming to promote sports and healthy way of life among young people.

## 4. Youth policies and youth work ---

### 4.1 Institutions, actors and structures

In the Republic of Belarus at the state level youth policy is coordinated by the Department of Youth Affairs of the Ministry of Education, which was established in May 2004 and consists of 7 staff members.

Coordination in the field of youth policy at the level of local executive bodies is carried out by 159 youth departments with a total number of employees 197 people. These structural units on its activities are guided by instructions of the relevant executive committees as well as by the Ministry of Education (Presidential decree № 723, December 7, 2001) (*see table 7*).

There are 2 Youth Councils in the Republic of Belarus:

Belarusian Committee of Youth Organizations. 38 members. Not active. Legal, supported and recognized by the State.

RADA (calls themselves as an alternative youth policy project, not registered, no open information, does not interact with other actors of Youth Policy in Belarus.)

In Belarus today operate 13 international youth public organizations and 1 International Youth Union of public associations, 62 republican youth organizations and 2 republican youth union of public associations. The governing body of most international and national organizations is located in Minsk. At the periphery international and republican youth associations are rare. Republican youth public associations to a great extent also are aimed at fulfilling the educational function (14 organizations) and the implementation of social protection of certain categories of youth (8 organizations). Among the national organizations the 8 are the unions, based on membership of a particular profession (performed or received), 9 communities of interest, mainly in the field of arts, culture and sport, 5 organizations specializing in philanthropic activities. In various regions of Belarus there operate approximately 150 local youth associations, as well as 10 regional offices and 4 offices of urban republican public associations. In Minsk or within its administrative units there operate 65 youth associations. In Minsk there are a quarter of organizations that are child's ones with basic education and educators, they are about the same as well as covering other youth groups, organizations, sports orientation. Among the target groups of youth organizations of Minsk there have also been distinguished a number of disability organizations and with the target group of students.

Thus, the analysis of the youth third sector in Belarus has shown its very modest scale: in general, youth organizations represent about 10% of the total number of registered associations of the country. Secondly, it is obvious that the majority of registered organizations are aimed at solving

social problems of youth. Socio-political problems of young people also did not go unheeded, but solved in a different way. There are three major youth organizations in the country - the Belarusian Republican Youth Union (BRYU), the Belarusian Republican Pioneer Organization (BRPO) and the Belarusian Committee of Youth Organizations (BCYU), whose main task, as emphasized at the meeting with their leaders in October 2006 Head of State - "to reflect the interests of the new generation and become the medium, which helps young people to form and defend a constructive citizenship, to participate actively in political and public life".

Activities of more than 50% of public associations are estimated as multidirectional. These associations are working in different directions and unite the representatives of different social groups of young people. Many of the organizations are implementing programs to promote children's and youth sports and creativity, organization of temporary employment and employability of youth, prevention of delinquency and promotion of healthy lifestyle. Youth NGO's pay special attention to the development of active citizenship among youth.

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

### **4.2.1 Youth policy**

During the "Perestroika" period a lot of former Komsomol members initiated democratization of soviet society, mass media and youth organizations. A wide range of youth NGO's aiming to take an active part in reforming social life based on democratic values and principles appeared during that period. Belarusian youth movements and organizations played an active role in the process of revival of national culture and language.

After Belarus gained independence, a range of documents was adopted proclaiming that Belarusian youth policy is the most important sphere of the State, the most important part of the concept of demographic development and the most important direction of social policy.

State youth policy is realized by the range of governmental and non-governmental institutions, which interact in the process of the realization of the main directions of the youth policy. Each of these institutions acts within its competence and expertise.

The major subjects of the state youth policy are: President of the Republic of Belarus Council of Ministers, the Parliament.

Discussions on formation and realization of the state youth policy are often in the agenda during the meetings of the National Assembly of the Republic.

A very important role in shaping and implementing of Youth Policy is played by the Council of Ministers, as well as local administrative and executive bodies of the Republic of Belarus.

Significant role is played by such bodies as: the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, Ministry of Economy, Ministry of Culture. Major role in shaping and implementing of Youth Policy plays the Department of Youth Affairs of the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Belarus.

Looking at those organizations and institutions that participate in the formation of Youth Policy, it should be noted that at present all governmental structures more or less participate in realization process of State Youth Policy. Belarusian Republican Youth Union, different youth NGO's and other institutions also take active part in realization of Youth Policy in the country. Currently in Belarus there are more than 130 youth and children's organizations.

At the present period of time Belarusian Youth Policy has substantial legislative basis, which was established for more than 10 years of existence of independent State. During this time, basic concepts and priorities of the State Youth Policy were formulated. It is based on the principles of the Constitution of the Republic of Belarus. The main idea that underlies the concept of Youth Policy is that the State as the main subject of youth policy aims to ensure full legal and social status of young citizens of the Belarus, to protect their rights and freedoms.

The concept of State Youth Policy aims to create legal, economic and organizational conditions and guarantees for personal fulfillment and development of young people and youth associations, movements and initiatives. The concept of youth policy is based on the fact that the efficient organization of the social development and education of young people will help to overcome the spiritual and moral crisis in the society, to achieve public consensus and create prerequisites for the prosperity of a strong, democratic Belarus. It focuses on creation of effective mechanisms to involve young people and youth organizations in solving youth problems and forming Youth Policy, to develop a new model of development of Belarusian society.

Council of Ministers plays a very important role in the process of implementation of Youth Policy in our country and every three years adopts a special program "Youth of Belarus". During the last ten years Council of Ministers adopted a number of important decisions aimed to solve the most actual youth issues.

Nowadays, the State is considered to be the main actor in the field of Youth Policy and has the largest resources for effective implementation of Youth Policy. Other actors of Youth Policy, such as NGO's, are to act in the conditions, which are set by the State.

The concept of State Youth Policy is also aimed to create effective institutional mechanisms for the implementation of Youth Policies. It defines ways of interacting between Youth Policy actors, the mechanisms of interaction between NGO's and the State.

In relation to the younger generation, the State Youth Policy provides strategy to ensure social, economic, political and cultural development of the country, developing young citizens' patriotism and respect for history and culture of the Fatherland, other nations, human rights.

The main directions of Youth Policy at the present stage.

In order to work out the main directions, goal and objectives of the State Youth Policy, the State should take into account all the aspects of the modern stage in the development process of the society.

Modern generation grew up in a wreck and the overthrow of authority, destruction of conventional values and ideals, the destruction of the existing system of education. But it also grew in terms of political freedom, political pluralism and the political struggle. In these circumstances strong state youth policy is of special importance.

The modern concept of the State Youth Policy in Belarus highlights the following directions:

1. Improving living conditions of young people. Improvement of legislative and regulatory acts aimed to develop various forms of state support for accommodation of young people and young families (subsidies, long-term loans, non-budgetary sources of funding). Support for initiatives of young people, legal entities, aimed to solve the housing problems of young people in the regions.

2. Employment of youth. Development of systems to promote youth employment, guaranteed their first job, providing temporary employment of students, development of employment centers system and professional orientation of youth. Problems of the youth employment take the most important place in the structure of the State Youth Policy. World statistics shows that the proportion of youth in the structure of the unemployed population is high in all economically developed countries. The new Labour Code, which was approved on 1 January 2000 is to play key role in support of youth rights for work. There is a separate chapter, "Peculiarities of regulation of youth labor" in the new Labour Code, which dealt with many of the problems of employment of young people: benefits, working hours, etc.

Ministry of Education in cooperation with the Ministry of Labour adopted a joint resolution "regulations for enterprises, institutions and organizations to provide first working place for graduates of public schools" (1999), which is aimed at resolve the problems of employment of graduates of public schools.

3. Socio-economic support for young families. Development of Centers aimed to assist young families in dealing with economic, legal, social, domestic, psychological problems.

4. Activities aimed to support civil, spiritual, moral, patriotic and environmental education of youth.

5. Support of scientific and technological creativity, inventiveness and innovation of young people. Support for young people participation in realization of comprehensive programs on solving scientific and technical problems and implementation of innovations and inventions. Strengthening of the financial support and promotion of scientific and technical creativity of youth, and improving the system of support for young scientists, experts, inventors and innovators.

6. Support for young workers (both urban and rural), involving young specialists in agricultural production and retention of young professionals in rural areas. Creating attractive conditions for life and work of the working and rural youth. Development and support of youth entrepreneurship in rural areas.

7. Strengthening of international youth cooperation. Development and strengthening cooperation between Belarusian youth and youth from other countries, development of international relations and participation of youth in international youth programmes.

8. Support and promotion of sports and tourism among young people. Support of talented and creative youth.

9. State support of children's and youth NGO's. Support of youth initiatives and provision of space for self-realization of youth. Organizational-methodological and financial support for youth and children's NGO's, their involvement in the process of implementing the State Youth Policy.

In our republic there are many different public and state programs for youth, children and adolescents. Many of them initiated by the President of the Republic of Belarus, Alexander Lukashenko, for example, the program "Children of Belarus", which includes program "Children of Chernobyl", "Children with disabilities, etc. It should be also mentioned that special fund of social support for gifted students was created by the President of the Republic of Belarus.

10. Legal protection and social integration of young people. Development of legislation to ensure legal protection and social inclusion of young people. Implementation of modern forms and methods of work aiming to prevent drug abuse, HIV and sexually transmitted diseases. Increasing the role of the society in protection of youth rights, creating legal tools for informing and consulting. Development and promotion of juvenile justice.

11. Promoting health care and preservation of reproductive function of young women, support of motherhood.

12. Development of training and retraining of governmental clerks and professionals working with youth, leaders of youth and children's organizations. Creation of a methodological framework to develop training plans and programs, teaching materials. Development of effective teaching methods, taking into account professional and social peculiarities.

13. Development of support system for promotion of State Youth Policy. Providing conditions for access to the information, development and support of youth media, conducting research, realization of publishing projects.

#### **4.2.2 Youth work**

In Belarus, there is no official definition of youth work, either quality standards for youth work. Due to that reason there is no official statistics on the number of youth workers in the country. Nevertheless, it should be mentioned that there is a range of representatives of Youth NGO's, who passed through different European trainings for youth workers and work as multipliers in Belarus. Besides that, the State institute of advanced studies and retraining founded a special study course for youth workers, who will get official certificate of a youth worker.

#### **4.2.3 Youth research**

There are two research institutions in Belarus: Governmental organization and independent organization.

Information-Analytical Center under Administration of the President of the Republic of Belarus (IAC) is a leading governmental organization providing information-analytical support of the President of the Republic of Belarus and Administration of the President of the Republic of Belarus in strategic areas of political, social-economic and cultural life of society. The Center was established in 2006. The mission of the Center is to promote sustainable and efficient development of the Republic of Belarus by way of analyzing various spheres of Belarusian state functioning and working out proposals on their improvement. Annually the Center elaborates a set of issue-related materials, meant to be used for informational and methodological support of various levels of ideological vertical power structure of the Republic of Belarus. Throughout the year IAC conducts monitoring and on-line sociological studies, aimed at receiving valid and reliable data on various aspects of social-economic and socio-political life of the Republic. The Center is also responsible for the research in the sphere of Youth Affairs. The latest researches on youth affairs were completed in March 2009 and September 2010. The Center publishes results of its research on the official web-page [www.iac.gov.by](http://www.iac.gov.by) (the information available only in Russian language).

Independent Institute of Socio-Economic and Political Studies (IISEPS) was established in February 1992 by group of academics, journalists, politicians and businessmen. Now IISEPS is registered as public institution in the Lithuanian Republic. IISEPS' mission is to promote formation of civil society and free market economy in Belarus through study socio-economic and political process of transition from totalitarianism to democracy and active promotion of values and

principles of liberalism. The most popular publication of ISEPS on the Youth Affairs is “Youth and Civil society: Belarusian variant”, published in 1999.

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

The Constitution of the Republic of Belarus guarantees the right of young people for spiritual, moral and physical development, and emphasizes that the State undertakes to create all necessary conditions for free and effective participation of youth in political, social, economic and cultural development of the country. Many articles of the Constitution also guarantee right for health care, housing, education (Articles 45, 47, 49, 51). All these rights also apply to young citizens of the Republic of Belarus. Constitutional framework of Youth Policy is also proclaimed in other legal acts that are accepted in our country.

The most important document, which defines the framework of State Youth Policy in Belarus is the Law "On general principles of State Youth Policy in Belarus", adopted in April 24, 1992. State youth policy - a system of socio-economic, political, organizational and legal measures aimed to support young citizens of the Republic of Belarus under the age of 31. The aim of the State Youth Policy is social formation and development of youth, and support of its potential. According to the law, the basic principles of State Youth Policy in Belarus are:

- combination of state and public interests with the interests and rights of young citizens;
- consistency and complexity;
- scientific validity;
- consideration of the interests and needs of young people;
- protection of rights and interests of young people;
- transparency and openness;
- participation of young people in design and implementation of Youth Policy.

According to the law, the highest state authorities of the Republic determine the general organizational, social, economic and legal principles of Youth Policy. The law defines the basis of the legal status of young people and youth associations, regulates and establishes the basis of state body on youth affairs of the Republic of Belarus.

The document notes the particular role of the State in relation to young people, it emphasizes that the government is an institution that can compensate age-related deficiencies of social status of young citizens of the Republic. The law guarantees young people their right for work and education. In addition, the Law defines financial mechanisms for implementation of Youth Policy and principles of social services for youth.

An important stage in the formation of the legislative framework for national Youth Policy was the Presidential Decree of June 17, 1996 № 215 "On Priority Measures for the implementation of State Youth Policy in Belarus". In accordance with the Decree, a range of measures were defined:

- for qualitative improvement of the socio-economic and social conditions of life of young people,
- creating favorable conditions for spiritual, cultural and physical development,
- forming legal and moral culture,
- establishing social guarantees for various categories of young people in education, labor and employment,
- organization of leisure activities,
- real support for young families and talented young people, youth and children's organizations,
- support of international cooperation of Belarusian youth with foreign peers.

On the basis of the above mentioned laws, important working paper on the implementation of state youth policy has been developed - the National Programme "Youth of Belarus" for years 2006 - 2010.

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

By his Decree No 200, of April 4, the President of the Republic of Belarus approved the national programme "Youth of Belarus" for the years 2006-2010.

The programme has been elaborated with a view to implementing further the State Youth Policy. The programme's main objectives are: to raise prestige of quality education and to create greater opportunities for receiving it, to support creative and research-engaged youth, to educate patriotic citizens, to develop the permanent employment system, to propagandize a healthy way of life, to help young families, to develop youth tourism, to take preemptive measures against the spread of crime, drunkenness, and drug addiction among young people.

The main purpose of the state program is to develop the potential of young people for self-realization and participation in building a strong and prosperous Belarus through the creation of optimal socio-economic, legal and organizational conditions. As part of the national program the following tasks are supposed to be done:

- raising the educational level of young people, their willingness to work;

- patriotic education of young people, forming their legal and political culture, motivation to active participation in public life;
- improve conditions for active and effective participation of youth in the socio-economic life of society;
- improving positive youth initiatives, relevant ideologies and ways of socio-economic development of Belarus;
- promotion of healthy lifestyles, strengthening the health of young people;
- improving the social protection of youth and young families;
- development of youth tourism and the international youth cooperation.

Republican program "Youth of Belarus" for 2006-2010 is targeted and designed to ensure coordination of all government agencies, as well as children's and youth associations. Responsible executives of the program are: the Ministry of Architecture and Construction, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Housing, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Information, Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Defence, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, Ministry of Industry, Ministry of Agriculture and Food, Ministry of Sports and Tourism, Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, Ministry of Emergency Situations, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Finance, the State Border Troops Committee, National Academy of Sciences, Academy of Management under the President of the Republic of Belarus, Institute of Social and Political Studies under the Presidential Administration of the Republic of Belarus National Television and Radio, the local executive and administrative bodies, the National Bank, Open Joint Stock Company "Savings Bank" Belarusbank public association Belarusian Republican Youth Union", public association" Belarusian Republican Pioneer Organization", Federation of Trade Unions, National Union of Public Associations" Belarusian Committee of Youth Organizations, youth and children's associations.

Estimated results of the national program:

- Optimization of the system of public administration in the sphere of State Youth Policy;
- Improving the efficiency of the education system and expanding the range of educational services provided for young people.
- Creating an integrated system of education of a citizen-patriot.
- Improving the quality of life of young people from rural areas, reducing migration of young people, including young professionals working in rural areas;
- Reducing the number and proportion of unemployed youth, development of temporary and seasonal employment of youth;
- Revival of the value and importance of the family in the public consciousness, strengthening families, increasing the birth rate;

- Reducing the number of offenses and other antisocial manifestations among young people;
- Activation of socially significant activities of children's and youth organizations, increasing number of young people actively involved in their work;
- Reducing the level of political extremism among youth, increasing the electoral activity of young people;
- Consolidation of the youth movement to build a strong and prosperous Belarus.

### **Situation of non-formal education in Belarus**

Nowadays the phenomenon of non-formal education exists in the Republic of Belarus only in the third sector. Representatives of youth NGO's take part in different trainings and seminars organized by European partners on the methods of non-formal education in the field of youth work. In 2006 the first festival of non-formal education was organized by non-formal network of NGO's, which work in the sphere of non-formal education, called Organization of Civic Education. It is very important to mention, that the festival managed to attract attention of the state education system representatives to the phenomenon of non-formal education. During the III festival, which took place in Minsk last year, Deputy Chairman of the commission on Education, Culture, Science and the scientific and technological progress of the House of Representatives proclaimed that in the nearest future the new code on education will be adopted, which will include also paragraphs about non-formal education. Unfortunately, today the phenomenon of non-formal education has no legislative background in the country.

### **4.5 European and International dimension**

One of the key points in the State Youth Policy is international cooperation. The fourth platform "Human contacts" as part of "Eastern Partnership" initiative has become the starting point for the development of relations with Europe. The first meeting of the platform was held in Brussels in June 2009 with the assistance of the European Commission, where the main directions of youth policy in Belarus were presented. During the meeting Belarus proposed to pay special attention on Youth Affairs within "Eastern Partnership". Belarus sent 12 pilot projects proposals to be included to the existing EU program.

In January 2010, Head of Directorate of Youth and Sports of Council of Europe R.-R. Weingartner and Chairman of the Steering Committee on Youth Affairs of the Council of Europe H. Vanhoy visited Minsk. During the meeting in the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Belarus representatives of Council of Europe had a chance to meet representatives of Youth NGO's, which involved in different projects financed by European Commission, European Youth Foundation, etc.

During the meeting participants discussed perspectives of future cooperation of Council of Europe and Republic of Belarus in the field of Youth Policy, based on the “Agenda 2020”

It should also be mentioned that Belarusian NGO’s are quite involved to the Youth in Action programme. SALTO EECA supports the network of Belarusian multipliers of Youth in Action programme. According to the statistics of SALTO EECA, Belarus, unfortunately, is not on the leading positions among the EECA countries, which reached the best numbers of involved youth and NGO’s, but the dynamics is growing. . Within the cooperation between SALTO and Belarusian network of multipliers, “Youth work reality in Belarus” study visit was organized in May 2009. The study visit was supported by the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Belarus and by the Delegation of European Commission. The aim of the study visit was to show that there are possibilities for international cooperation both on the level of the State and on the level of NGO’s. Participants of the study visit had a chance to meet representatives of different Belarusian NGO’s and managed to plan common activities for the future. Besides that, this study visit was a very good beginning of the future cooperation between the Delegation of European Commission and Department of Youth Affairs of the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Belarus.

#### **4.6 Budget/Funding**

In the Republic of Belarus there are following sources of funding:

- Membership fee
- Income from entrepreneurial activities
- Private donations
- International grants (UNICEF, World Bank, etc.)
- State funding and social order

In October 22, 2003, the President of the Republic of Belarus issued Decree №460 “About international technical support in the Republic of Belarus”. Since that time Belarusian NGO’s can get support from International donors within international technical support only when the appropriate programme (project) is approved by the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus and the project itself is registered in the Ministry of Economics.

In November 28, 2003, the President of the Republic of Belarus issued Decree №24 “About the procedure of obtaining and using of foreign free grants”. According to this Decree, Belarusian NGO’s can obtain free grants from Foreign donors only for the aims mentioned in the Decree and after the registration of the grant in the Department of Humanitarian Aid of the Republic of Belarus.

According to the Decree № 24, there are not so many aims which allow Belarusian NGO's obtain funding:

- Elimination of the consequences of disasters;
- Realization of scientific research, educational programmes;
- Conservation of historical heritage and natural reserves;
- Medical treatment and support;
- Social support for poor and disadvantaged families;
- Other aims, defined by the Administration of the President of the Republic of Belarus.

After issuing above mentioned Decrees Belarusian NGO's lost the possibility of obtaining grants from International donors. The procedure of the grants registration brought a lot of difficulties, especially for Youth NGO's with young members, who have not so much experience in Belarusian bureaucracy. Besides that, Belarusian authorities reduced the quantity of registered in Belarus international organizations, which provide technical support for Belarusian NGO's.

When foreign sources of funding were reduced, representatives of NGO are focused on attraction of financial resources from business. However, in July 1, 2005 the President of the Republic of Belarus issued Decree № 300 "About obtaining and using of sponsors' support". According to this Decree, NGO's can obtain sponsors' support only for the aim, which are listed in the Decree and other aims which are approved by the decision of the president of the Republic of Belarus.

According to the law "About NGO's" published in October 29, 2005, Belarusian NGO's cannot realize entrepreneur activities (e.g. selling T-shirts with the logo of your NGO).

As for the funding from the State funding and social order, the majority of NGO's are not eligible for obtaining this support. There is a special register, which includes only 16 NGO's eligible for the support from the State. And even among these 16 not every NGO can obtain reasonable funding, because more than 90% of the budget goes to the Republican NGO "Belarusian Republican Youth Union".

From above mentioned information we can conclude the following:

- 1- No Financial support to NGOs from the State institutions. Only 2-3 organizations get support;
- 2- All grants received for projects have to be registered in the Department of Humanitarian Aid of the administration of the President.
- 3- The majority of donors in the country provide financial support mainly for very specific projects (work with disabled people, ecology, ect.). Practically, there is no foundation supporting actual youth participation and development of youth organizations.

## 5. Trends, needs, challenges and expectations

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Positive results of youth situation improvement reached by the interactive work of all youth policy stakeholders. However, there are still a lot of problems to be solved, which negatively influence the situation of youth:

- No substantial independent professional research on the situation of youth in the country;
- Decrease of the population of the country including people at the age from 14 till 31 y.o.;
- Increase of morbidity rate among young people with mental and behavior disorders under the supervision of psychiatrists;
- Increase of crimes among young people;
- Young people are not involved in the decision making process and are not interested in the State Youth Policy;
- State Youth Policy doesn't really meet the needs of young people.

It should be also mentioned that the effectiveness of the realization of the State Youth Policy influenced by the following factors:

- Absence of a separate state body on Youth Affairs;
- Reduction of financial support for realization of events included to the program "Youth of Belarus"

In order to improve the situation of youth in the Republic of Belarus and to develop positive tendencies in the field of Youth Policy, the following issues are to be solved:

- To involve young people to the decision making process;
- To provide freedom of effective participation of young people in political, social, economical and cultural development of the society;
- To provide equal opportunities for young people in employment;
- To improve the system of social protection of young people;
- To provide free access to the information for young people;
- To support youth initiatives and NGO's;
- To develop the system of training and retraining for youth workers, leaders of youth NGO's;
- To develop international cooperation in the field of Youth Policy by supporting international dialogue between Belarusian and International youth NGO's.

Support in the field of education, training, exchange programmes and cross-border cooperation for youth are among the European Union's stated priorities. Across Europe, an increasing number of young people are participating in exchanges and different kinds of programmes. Unfortunately, this

is not the case for the youth of Belarus, at present one of Europe's most isolated countries. Although young people make up the most pro-European segment of Belarusian society, their access to EU programmes remains limited.

Of the three major EU initiatives in the field of higher education, Belarusians are only eligible to participate in the TEMPUS programme. In fact, many of the EU's programmes designed to help CIS countries, such as the TACIS programme, have experienced great difficulties in Belarus. Most of the pro-European youth groups and initiatives in Belarus are not recognized by the government, and therefore have little chance to benefit from EU programmes. Access to these programmes for groups which truly deserve support would be enhanced if the EU was able to work directly with individual youth organizations, what is quite difficult due to the Belarusian legislation.

On a positive note, Belarusian youth groups are able to take part in the EU's Youth Programme via the third country status. This programme offers broad opportunities for intercultural learning and cooperation among young people in Europe. Unfortunately, the Youth programme is not well known in Belarus, and only a few NGO's are currently taking part in it. A key reason for such low participation is a lack of information. The EU's Information Center for CIS countries is based in Warsaw, which makes it difficult for Belarusian groups to obtain information about programmes or to seek assistance in applying. For organizations and groups which have heard about the programme, there is the additional problem of finding partners in member states with which to carry out their projects.

## 6. Sources of information

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List of literature; further reading (including information on existing research)

“Report on the situation of Youth” \ Department of Youth of Affairs of the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Belarus, <http://www.minedu.unibel.by/main.aspx?guid=4811> ;

Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Belarus, <http://www.minjust.by/en> ;

Information analytical center under the administration of the President of the Republic of Belarus, <http://iac.gov.by/> ;

Research on Belarusian Youth, RADA National Council of youth and children’s NGO’s;

V. Matskevich, S. Matskevich, T. Vodolazhskaya «Approaches to standards and standartization in non-formal education».\ Aducatar, № 3(9), 2006;

National Committee of Statistics of the Republic of Belarus, <http://belstat.gov.by/homep/ru/indicators/pressrel/demogr.php>

Belarus. 1991-2006. Results (Ed. M. Zagorski, B. Sehovich, A. Starkevich, etc.), Minsk. 2008.

Belarus needs a new family policy, <http://news.tut.by/151129.html>

## Annexes

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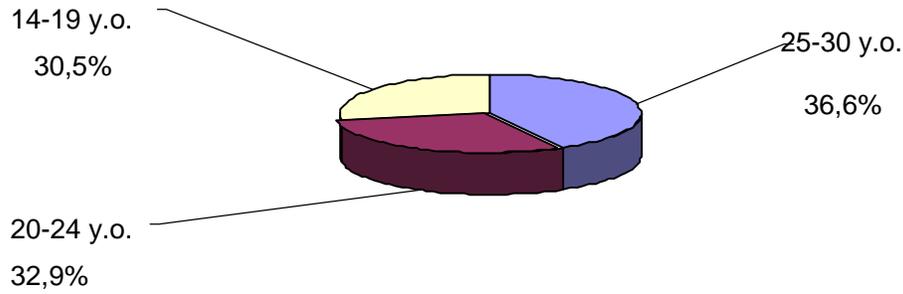
### Statistics

Table 1

Dynamics of the population aged 14 to 31 years in the Republic of Belarus					
№	Name of the region	Years			
		2006	2007	2008	2009
1.	Brest region	367739	364305	359885	356700
2.	Vitebsk region	328366	324409	318782	313903
3.	Gomel region	384637	381046	376344	371986
4.	Grodno region	280820	278234	274315	272304
5.	Mogilev region	302985	298991	293009	287207
6.	Minsk region	377469	376657	374059	367812
7.	Minsk	563989	567248	566154	558663
	Total:	2606005	2590890	2562548	2528575

**Table 2**

Structure of the age composition of youth in the Republic of Belarus

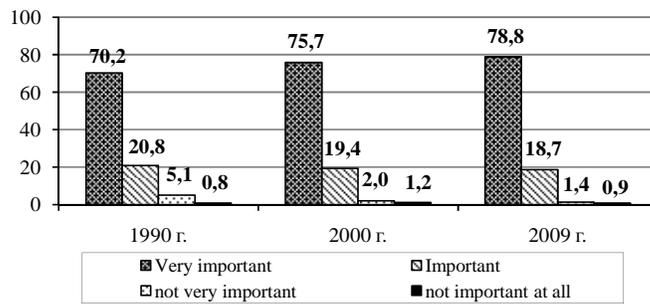


**Table 3**

Year	2007	2008	2009
Among overall population:			
Younger working age	1574,5	1547,0	1529,1
Working age*	6066,0	6053,3	6038,4
Older working age	2073,9	2089,5	2104,4

\* males – 16-59 y.o., females – 16-54 y.o.

**Table 4**



**Table 5**

**Number of marriages and divorces**

	2008		2009	
	total	for 1000 citizens	total	for 1000 citizens
Marriages	77201	8,0	78800	8,3
Divorces	36679	3,8	35056	3,7

**Table 6**

Years	Number of babies born for 1000 women at the age			
	15-19 y.o.	20-24 y.o.	25-29 y.o.	30-34 y.o.
2006	21,0	86,3	77,1	41,5
2007	21,9	88,9	83,0	46,3
2008	21,7	90,3	90,4	52,1
2009	22,1	91,9	93,2	56,0

**Table 7**

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION							
Department of Youth Affairs							
Department of Youth Affairs of Brest region executive committee	Department of Youth Affairs of Vitebsk region executive committee	Department of Youth Affairs of Gomel region executive committee	Department of Youth Affairs of Grodno region executive committee	Department of Youth Affairs of Minsk executive committee	Department of Youth Affairs of Minsk region executive committee	Department of Youth Affairs of Mogilev region executive committee	
District Departments on youth affairs	District Departments on youth affairs	District Departments on youth affairs	District Departments on youth affairs	District Departments on youth affairs	District Departments on youth affairs	District Departments on youth affairs	
Specialists on youth work	Specialists on youth work	Specialists on youth work	Specialists on youth work	Specialists on youth work	Specialists on youth work	Specialists on youth work	