



*Ministry of Education
Social and Youth Administration*

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The Israeli National Youth Policy

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1. Background

In a world which is changing at a dizzying rate in various areas and in various directions, we, who are dealing in education, are confronted with a serious challenge in answering the question of what to prepare the youth for, and how to prepare today's youth to become an active part of tomorrow's adult life. The shift from a safe, supporting childhood environment into an exposed, competitive youth environment – the shift from an influencing environment which boundaries are the family, the home, the neighborhood, the friends, into an influencing environment which boundaries are “practically boundless” - the global village, requires significant preparation. The switch from a world based on the technological revolution to a world based on the information revolution requires from all of us, all those involved with youth, a broader and more responsible view, more suitable to the new and changing environments in which today's youth live.

One of the major ways to deal with this challenge and with the need for such a broad and dynamic view on youth, is the creation of a national youth policy dealing with the many areas of life with which today's youth are involved. Beyond the operational significance that such a move can have for the ones involved in developing youth educational services, it conveys a very clear message of focusing the national attention on this population, which makes up over a third (34%) of Israel's citizens today. In the world, there are countries where the youth makes up over 50% of all its inhabitants, and may even reach 66%.

In any event, such a move of creating a national youth policy presents an opportunity to examine the moral, social and national aspects of the state's responsibility towards those youngsters living amongst it.

This trend of creating a national policy is gradually gaining greater and greater importance in many countries throughout the world. In June 1998, the Youth Unit at the United Nations' Division for Social Policy and Development reported that out of the 185 UN members, 73 countries (40%) created a national policy on the matter of their youth, and had moved into the operational phases of executing and realizing their national youth policy. Approximately 20 other countries had created national coordination mechanisms on issues involving youth and youngsters. Such a move has the purpose of uniting the resources and knowledge, which are currently scattered and separated among many different organizations dealing with youth and youngsters at various levels (municipal versus national, public versus private etc.).

2. The Current Status in Israel on the subject of National Youth Policy

In Israel, there is no national youth policy. No organization exists on a national level and which is responsible for a complete and integrated view which could coordinate the different services handling youth and youngsters. Over the last two decades, the experience in Israel mainly focused on creating a national policy for specific youth related issues, such as: preventing the use of drugs and alcohol by the Anti Drug Administration, preventing dropouts by the Ministry of Education, preparing the youth for significant military service by the Ministry of Defense and the military, etc. However, to this day, there has not been a central entity guiding the formation of a national policy, based on a complete and integrated view of the various youth related areas. Despite the recommendations by various parliamentary and public committees throughout the years since the State of Israel was born all recommending to form and create coordination mechanisms among the various ministries and services dealing in youth, operational modes of action have not been established to this day, and in fact, no such mechanisms are operating at all. Undoubtedly, this situation does not contribute to the maximum effectiveness of the Israeli youth related services.

In Israel, similarly to other countries around the world, the youth services are scattered among a large number of government ministries. Today, at least 11 different ministries are involved in developing youth related programs and services. These include the Office of the Prime Minister and the Ministries of Education, Culture and Sports, Labor, Welfare, Health, Internal Security (and the police), Defense (and the military), Immigration, Housing (weak neighborhood rehabilitation) and the Ministry of Justice .

The state (the public sector as a whole) invests large resources in the youth population, in various fields of life, such as in education, employment, leisure, culture, welfare, health, military service, etc. These various efforts are currently scattered among a large number of government ministries, each of them creating its own policy as to its own field of responsibility. These responsibilities stem from the

laws, of which each ministry is in charge (“legal mandate”), as well as responsibility stemming from a professional - moral view by the ministry, supported by a work plan which is approved by the parliament and its committees (“social mandate”). These areas of responsibility are usually connected, they complement each other, and at times, they even overlap.

In addition to the government ministries, a few dozen volunteer organizations (NGOs) have been active in this field during recent years. Recently, the private business sector has also become active in helping youth and youngsters. All of these invest considerable resources into the development of a youth related educational and social national program. The large quantity of organizations dealing with the subject, with no national policy or at least some coordination mechanisms, can result in redundancies and a waste of resources in which shortage always exists as far as certain subjects and populations are concerned.

Only recently (2007), did the Israeli government pass its first resolution as to getting a national program concerning children and youth at risk into operation. This program is based on a report by a public, inter - ministry, inter - sector committee (the Schmid Committee) that had studied the subject and submitted its recommendations. These recommendations are being implemented these very days, and actually, they form the first operational outline for national policy on the subject of children and youth at risk, under the responsibility of several government ministries.

In addition, the Ministry of Education, headed by the Minister of Education Prof. Yuly Tamir, is currently trying to drive a move which would forward the coordination of actions by all of the entities and organizations dealing with Israeli youth in general (not necessarily youth at risk) as part of the program “Youth in the Center of Things”. The program leads to the establishment of a “round table” at the local municipality level, around which all relevant entities and organizations are seated, as well as members of youth itself, for the purpose of determining the needs and programs which would take place on a local level for and with the participation of youth.

3. What Should a National Youth Policy Cover?

A national youth policy must cover all areas of life that the youth, and young adults, are concerned with. It should refer to and determine the development, planning, budgeting and operation procedures of the youth services, determining the areas of responsibility for the various ministries and other entities, establishing the boundaries and priorities, and approve the entities authorized to establish and provide youth services. The best example on this matter is the preparation by the European countries establishing a national European program concerning youth (the white paper for a “Youth Policy in EU Countries” was first submitted to the European parliament in Brussels for consideration on November 21, 2001, and was submitted for final approval during the summer of 2002).

The way to create a national youth policy requires the following:

- Deciding upon a government ministry (or statutory entity) which would lead and be responsible for the coordination and establishment of a national youth policy.
- Defining and establishing a mechanism for policy planning and formulation, for tracking its execution, and for amending and updating it due to new and changing needs.
- Defining and establishing a mechanism for coordination and resource unification, by creating joint inter - ministry and inter - organizational work committees (each ministry dealing with youth would define a function that is responsible for planning and coordination).
- Defining and establishing mechanisms for the participation of youngsters and youth in all decision making processes concerning their lives.
- Establishing guidelines for the operation of youth services (education, employment, leisure, culture, social matters, etc.) and youth programs: who can operate them, under which terms, etc.

In order to create such a national mechanism, one of the three following options would have to be determined and established as to the responsibility for leading such a move, creating the policy and later, directing it. The options for such mechanism would be as follows:

- a. **Option one:** Establishing a designated ministry for youth. This option currently exists in many developed and developing countries (over fifty countries according to UNESCO data). They considered the advantages of establishing a special ministry for handling the matter as twofold: First, this would relay a clear message as to the importance of the subject, and second, it would create a mechanism for planning, development and coordinating among the youth services operated by the different entities and organizations – especially NGOs.

Advantage: There would be an entity taking national responsibility for bringing the subject of youth into the public agenda, as well as attempting to coordinate and operate all of these services through the second and third sectors (business sector and volunteers).

Drawback: This may cause other ministries, which currently view this as an important matter that should be invested into and handled as a high priority, to drop their level of responsibility. This may also lead to a situation of budgets, of other ministries, “fleeing” away from youth related activities. In addition, establishing a new ministry carries a high cost, which does not seem politically, socially and economically realistic at the moment.

- b. **Option two:** Establishing a public authority that would deal with youth related matters. This would be a statutory authority for coordinating and

uniting the resources of all Israeli ministries working on youth related matters. In the past, this option has been suggested by the various committees as the preferred option, the background for which having been the accumulated experience of establishing similar public authorities such as the anti - drug authority, the inmate rehabilitation authority, the postal authority, etc. This authority would concentrate within itself all of the youth related resources, and would lead the providing of services while unifying all related state budgets.

Advantage: Concentrating all resources under one roof, for the purpose of planning and developing of services for the Israeli youth. This would enable the enlisting of non - governmental resources as well (state budgets are gradually dwindling).

Drawback: Of course, this model takes the responsibility from all the entities which had been involved in this matter. It can cause budgets, which are currently dedicated to youth related subjects, to “flee” into other areas. As a rule, this course of action would transfer the state’s direct responsibility over youth related matters into the hands of an external entity, and would lead to a situation where the government is only indirectly responsible for the subject.

- c. **Option three: Establishing a minister committee for youth related matters, headed by the Minister of Education (since this ministry is concerned with all of the Israeli youth).** Such a committee would be given the status of a social cabinet, and would work on establishing the national policy, which would include a clear allocation of responsibilities among the ministries and organizations, the unification of knowledge and resources, and determine the priorities for the advancement of youth related subjects and services. Minister committees currently exist for dealing with various matters. Some of these are ad hoc (the minister committee for the issue of violence in general and household violence specifically) while others deal with permanent issues (the minister committee for immigration and immigrant absorption).

Based on the accumulated experience, and based on today’s political – social - economical situation, **this is the preferred and recommended option**, as it can be implemented on a shortened timetable, and also, since it makes possible the effective coping with the problem, while leaving the responsibility for the matter with the state, and preventing the “fleeing” of ministries and budgets which are currently dedicated to the subject. Such model would require the establishment of a limited organizational - professional mechanism, which would lead the processes of establishing the policy, making the decisions and monitoring the execution and reporting. **The drawback for this option** is the need for true and honest cooperation among the ministers in order to create a national policy free of irrelevant vested interests.

Government Ministries which Lead the Matter of Youth Policy around the World

- The Czech Republic: **Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports** (the Youth Chamber)
- Finland: **Ministry of Education** in cooperation with a national youth council
- Spain: **Ministry of Social Services** through the inter - ministry committee for children and youth
- Germany: **Ministry of Women and Youth Related Matters**, with a youth representative in parliament and representatives of NGO organizations
- Estonia: **Ministry of Education** through the youth department
- Italy: **Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Youth Exchange Unit**, in cooperation with: the Ministry of Solidarity and Social Involvement, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Internal Affairs, Ministry of Employment, Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Industrial Affairs
- France: **Ministry of Youth and Sports**, through the department for youth and their integration in society, in coordination with the Ministries of Education, Culture, Social Affairs and Welfare and Employment
- Canada: **Secretary of State for Professional Training and Youth**, through the department for the development of human resources
- South Africa: **Office of the Vice President**, by the national youth commission
- Chile: **Special Ministry for Youth and Sports**, in cooperation and coordination with other ministries
- Mali: **Ministry of Youth and Youngsters**, in cooperation and coordination with other ministries
- Egypt: **Ministry of Youth**, in cooperation with the youth services of other ministries
- Denmark: scattered among various ministries which develop youth services
- India: **Ministry for the Development of Human Resources**, the department for youth and sports
- Japan: the **Youth Administration at the Office of the Prime Minister**, inter - ministry coordination
- Hungary: scattered among various ministries which develop youth services
- Latvia: the **National Commission for Youth Related Affairs**, a non - governmental body which is provided with the required authorities
- Poland: the **Secretary of State for Youth Related Affairs**, inter - ministry coordination
- Turkey: the **General Administration for Youth and Sports**, as part of the youth services division
- The US: **there is no government entity in charge** - there is a commissioner for youth and family services

(Information on national youth policies can be obtained through the UN's internet site)