



## **Youth and Social Policy Review of Seven Countries in Europe and Central Asia**

**Environmental Scan related to UNFPA Core Programme Areas**

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**for the  
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Yael Ohana  
15 December 2006

**Part I**  
**Young People and the UNFPA Programming Context**

## ***Introduction: Young People and the UNFPA Mandate***

It has long been acknowledged that United Nations agencies need to respond supportively but differentially within a common United Nations programme to the needs of young people at national level as these relate to the core mandates of those agencies. In other words, UN agency programming, including that of UNFPA, should facilitate the development and implementation of population, social and family policies, which take into account young people in all their diversity.

In a recent discussion paper, the UNFPA Country Technical Services Team for Europe and Central Asia in Bratislava, Slovakia, (henceforth, CST Bratislava), observed that the prime strategic goal of UNFPA in relation to young people is the

*“Attainment of the highest standard of health, development and equality, free of discrimination, coercion and violence for all young people in Europe and Central Asia ...”<sup>1</sup>*

In practise, for UNFPA this means complementary and youth friendly interventions for young people in specific and local contexts that

- seek to reduce poverty
- provide health care and preventative education on health related risks, specifically in relation to sexuality and reproduction
- support comprehensive sexuality education through a variety of formal and non-formal methodologies
- help prevent gender based violence and other obstacles to gender equality and women’s empowerment
- and enhance youth participation through the process.

To be able to support such interventions to the best effect and in a timely manner, UNFPA and its national and local operational partners, need to better understand the needs of young people in the context of UNFPA programming and in terms of the benefits of investment in young people, as well as in youth policy development. UNFPA should be in a position to advise and assist competent national and local authorities on questions related to youth policy development in relation to its own core mandate.

As a first step in a broader process, with the aim of assisting UNFPA and potentially other United Nations agencies to contribute constructively to future youth policy development and appropriate youth programming, a background study of youth realities and policy provisions in several countries under the remit of CST Bratislava has been commissioned. Further steps have included the convening of a youth policy expert meeting to interpret and supplement the study’s findings and the preparation of guidelines for the improvement of youth friendly programming and advocacy by UNFPA and other United Nations agency in-country offices, contained in the final chapter of this study.

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<sup>1</sup> Robert Thomson, “Comprehensive Attention to Young People – Situation Analysis and Direction Setting for further UNFPA contribution to Adolescent and Youth Health and Development in the countries of Europe and Central Asia”, Internal Working Document for the Workshop on Social and Population Policies – Youth and Population Policies, Bratislava, 27 December 2005.

## ***Why Now?***

The challenge of contributing constructively to the development of appropriate youth programming is being actively explored in several United Nations agencies, including UNFPA and other international organisations, notably, the Council of Europe, the European Union and the World Bank.

There are several arguments for why interest in the better integration of youth policy development expertise into country level programming has grown throughout the UN system in recent years, and specifically in UNFPA. These arguments range from normative and ethical considerations to emerging trends in demographic and socio-economic development.

### **Demographic and socio-economic considerations**

Many aspects of the relationship between national policies and demographic trends are either disputed or not well understood. It remains difficult to disentangle the effects of specific policy initiatives from the effects of broader social, political and economic conditions. Nevertheless, ongoing demographic developments in Europe and Central Asia and globally, such as the development of youth bulges in the poorest developing countries at the same time as the decline in overall population size and its concomitant ageing in Europe and several middle income countries, have highlighted the specific and often vulnerable position of young people in relation to UNFPA issues (especially, with regard to their sexual and reproductive health and rights).

European fertility rates have been on the decline since the 1960s. In Central Asia, the trend may have begun a little later but it is well established by now. Some countries in Europe and Central Asia have recently entered the category of “lowest-low fertility” countries, with the fertility rate having plummeted to well under the replacement rate of 2.1 children per woman. While the reasons underlying this trend remain disputed, government policy has tended to focus on pro-natalist policies (if only for political reasons). There is growing consensus, however, that low fertility among today’s and tomorrow’s parents, in other words, young people, cannot be tackled through pro-natalist policies exclusively. And there is growing concern among experts and practitioners that, in some cases, human rights in relation to reproduction are being put into question<sup>2</sup>.

Factors commonly agreed to underlie the continuing decline in fertility, including among young people, seem not to be primarily bio-medical in nature. While environmental and lifestyle risks may have increased, clinical infertility seems to have remained stable at 10 to 12 percent of the European population. And, while it is forecasted that infertility may increase, that increase is projected to be marginal.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Jane Gauthier, “Human Rights Considerations in Addressing Low Fertility”, in *Entre Nous – The European Magazine for Sexual and Reproductive Health*, no. 63, WHO Regional Office for Europe, pp. 8-9.

<sup>3</sup> Karl G. Nygren and Gunta Lazdane, “Current Trends of Fertility and Infertility in Europe”, pp. 10-11 and Hans-Peter Kohler, “Determinants of Low Fertility in Europe”, pp. 12-13, both in *Entre Nous – The European Magazine for Sexual and Reproductive Health*, no. 63, WHO Regional Office for Europe.

In many low fertility countries, including in Europe and Central Asia, first births are taking place with significant delay. According to Hans-Peter Kohler, Professor of Sociology at the University of Pennsylvania in the United States,

*“Very low fertility in Europe is ... caused by the combination of several factors: (a) Socio-economic incentives to delay childbearing that make postponed fertility a **rational response** (emphasis added) to high economic uncertainty in early adulthood, increased returns to education, shortages in the labour market and similar factors; (b) Social feedback effects on the timing of fertility that reinforce the adjustment of the individual’s desired fertility to socio-economic changes and (c) Institutional settings, characterised by labour market rigidities, insufficient child-care support and a prevalence of relatively traditional gender roles”.*<sup>4</sup>

Hence, socio-economic factors and institutional arrangements that are not conducive to combining work and childcare, as well as resistance to traditionally established social roles for the different genders, seem to be a strong motive for young people, young women in particular, to delay making decisions about family formation, generally, and when to become parents, in particular. Hans-Peter Kohler, further remarks that

*“... the reasons underlying the postponement of childbearing are often a rational response to the specific situation of young adults that is characterised by a high level of uncertainty due to high unemployment, uncertain labour market prospects and rapid socio-economic change. Young adults thus face an incentive to delay decisions that imply long-term commitments, such as the decision to have children, and prefer to invest in education, human capital and labour market experience”.*<sup>5</sup>

Clearly, then, it is not only a matter of how many babies are born but also when. Young women in Europe are having their first babies later and later and more women than ever before are choosing to remain childless. According to Nikolai Botev, Population and Development Adviser at CST Bratislava,

*“... most researchers interpret this as part of the general trend towards postponement of choices that are irreversible or hardly reversible, usually associated with the ideational and other changes called ‘second demographic transition’. Again in line with the predictions of the second demographic transition theory about the importance of individual autonomy and self-expression, the differences between individuals within a population in the timing of parenthood are also increasing”.*<sup>6</sup>

Furthermore, the size of the youth population in this region, while shrinking, is anything but insignificant. Indeed, recent research indicates that while fertility is shrinking, fertility rates in the countries of Europe and Central Asia covered by UNFPA remain higher than in all parts of

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<sup>4</sup> Hans-Peter Kohler, “Determinants of Low Fertility in Europe”, in *Entre Nous – The European Magazine for Sexual and Reproductive Health*, no. 63, WHO Regional Office for Europe, pp. 12-13, *op cit*.

<sup>5</sup> *Op cit*.

<sup>6</sup> Nikolai Botev, “Is Europe Trapped in / by Low Fertility?”, in *Entre Nous – The European Magazine for Sexual and Reproductive Health*, no. 63, WHO Regional Office for Europe, pp. 3-7.

Europe<sup>7</sup>. The following table provides indicative figures based on census data for the number of young people aged 15 to 24.

**Table 1: Youthful Populations:**<sup>8</sup>

Country	Population (thousands)	Pop. 15-24 (thousands)	% pop. 15-24
Albania	3,563	686	19.25
Armenia	2983	607	20.35
Azerbaijan	8016	1557	19.42
Belarus	9809	1600	16.31
Bosnia & Herzegovina	4430	634	14.31
Bulgaria	7450	1016	13.64
Estonia	1333	207	15.53
Georgia	4677	737	15.76
Kazakhstan	15186	3132	20.62
Kyrgyzstan	5146	1116	21.69
Latvia	2290	360	15.72
Lithuania	3597	552	15.35
Moldova	4332	820	18.93
Poland	38558	6179	16.03
Romania	22330	3371	15.10
Russian Federation	142776	23767	16.65
Tajikistan	6815	1536	22.54
Turkey	69661	13262	19.04
Turkmenistan	4952	1031	20.82
Ukraine	46959	7388	15.73
Uzbekistan	26851	5851	21.79
	431,714	75,409	17.84
	<b>Total (000s)</b>	<b>Total (000s)</b>	<b>Average</b>

As can be seen from the above table, the size and proportion of the youth population varies greatly across the region (for example, while there are more than 23 million young Russians, but there are proportionately fewer young people in the overall populations of Bulgaria and Bosnia

<sup>7</sup> The countries of Europe and Central Asia involved in UNFPA activities include: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Estonia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Poland, Romania, Russian Federation, Tajikistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan. Country list taken from: [www.unfpa.org/europe\\_asia/](http://www.unfpa.org/europe_asia/). Accessed on 15 November 2006.

<sup>8</sup> Figures are valid for 2005. Data taken from the United States Census Bureau, <http://www.census.gov/ipc/www/idbsum.html>. Kosovo's population is very difficult to estimate although UNDP estimates that approximately 60% of the population is under 25. (<http://www.kosovo.undp.org/Projects/YPCPP/ypcpp.htm>). UNMIK estimates the population at between 1.9 and 2.4 million, with 40% under 20 (<http://enrin.grida.no/htmls/kosovo/SoE/popullat.htm>). Accessed on 15 November 2006.

& Herzegovina). Such figures do not take into account the fact that there are an estimated one million “youth migrants” who have left the region, whether voluntarily or involuntarily.<sup>9</sup>

Notwithstanding the still significant human capital represented by young people in the region today, governments in various parts of Europe, not least in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, have become increasingly nervous about below replacement levels of fertility and the increasing instance and lengthening of childbearing postponement. In fact, the youth and general fertility issue has generated something of a moral panic in national and European politics. Issues such as how to ensure health and pension coverage for future and growing generations of elderly people at the same time as the active workforce that pays tax becomes smaller and smaller has become a particularly emotive issue. Parties and governments on the right have a tendency to see increased fertility as the only solution to this multifaceted problem, although research indicates that both immigration and social welfare reforms are potentially helpful in the long-term for addressing the problem of a shrinking labour force<sup>10</sup>. Of course, political parties also respond to the thinking of their voters and it is indicative that “progressive” positions on issues like immigration, labour market reform and fertility do not usually win large numbers of votes.

A closer look at the socio-economic situations that condition the choices that young people make in relation to family formation and parenthood, and which underlie the above trends in Europe is, therefore, certainly warranted. The overriding socio-economic condition of young people in this region, national differences notwithstanding, is characterised by risk and vulnerability with young people demonstrating frailty of lifestyles, social support networks and coping skills. It is widely acknowledged that this has to do with continuing political and economic transitions affecting the countries. Indeed, there has been an increase in youth mortality and a decrease in life expectancy in the region (0.5 million young people died of all causes in the region in the decade from 1989 to 1999). There is also evidence that a large number of young people lack good health and engage in risk behaviour. Disturbing increases in girls under-18 giving birth have been recorded in several countries of the former Soviet Union. There has been little positive change in the areas of female education and employment practises. Adolescent fertility has nevertheless decreased in line with overall fertility in the region since the mid-1990s.

Nevertheless, young people in this region are the best-educated and most mobile generation ever. In every sense, young people are driving growth in the region’s economies both through economic activity at home and through remittances from work abroad. In this region, young people have to assume financial responsibility for unemployed and unemployable parents and grandparents. Therefore, finding a job, any job, is a primary concern and many have no choice but to resort to the grey economy in order to make ends meet.

In the parts of the region covered by this study economic and political transition remains to be fully completed and democracy remains at best to be consolidated and at worst embryonic. Government capacity to respond to the economic and social challenges of declining fertility in a

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<sup>9</sup> Robert Thomson, “Comprehensive Attention to Young People – Situation Analysis and Direction Setting for further UNFPA contribution to Adolescent and Youth Health and Development in the countries of Europe and Central Asia”, Internal Working Document for the Bratislava Workshop on Social and Population Policies – Youth and Population Policies, 27 December 2005, *op cit.*

<sup>10</sup> RAND Europe, “Population Implosion? Low Fertility and Policy Responses in the European Union”, RAND Europe Research Brief, RAND 2005 and David E. Bloom and David Canning in “Europe’s Looming Population Bust”, in “Entre Nous – The European Magazine for Sexual and Reproductive Health”, no. 63, WHO Regional Office for Europe, pp. 14 - 16.



youth friendly manner is far from developed in many parts of Europe. This is often significantly exacerbated by gaps in financial and human resources and by the precedence of other priorities. But legitimate constraints notwithstanding, the commonly negative image of young people as risk taking, irresponsible and ungrateful, combined with ideological or religious approaches to the question of low fertility, often lead to governments choosing hard-line pro-natalist policies, not all of which can be considered fully in line with the universal human rights principles promoted by organisations like UNFPA.

Further complicating this picture of youth realities is the ongoing process of globalisation that is affecting all countries in manifold ways, not least socio-economically. Globalisation has ambivalent effects on the lives of young people. While many, if not most, are well able to take advantage of the opportunities it offers, given their great technological awareness, curiosity, sense of adventure and willingness to be mobile, a significant proportion of young people are not only missing out on these opportunities but are suffering adverse consequences of the process of globalisation. Globalisation poses significant threats to young people in the fragile period of transition, including the threat of being trafficked, the threat of being infected by HIV, the threat of not being able to find legal and adequately protected work but having to work to support elders or a young family, the threat of being caught in a conflict, the threat of falling into chronic poverty. The list is endless.

It stands to reason, therefore, that if the motivation of young women and men to postpone childbearing socio-economic, then addressing those concerns might make young people more amenable to becoming parents. In the end, research also shows that young people continue to enter into the stage of independent family formation in their twenties, even if this is not legitimated by marriage (religious or secular), and that most would like to have children eventually.

A recent study of European Union countries with declining fertility rates and other recent work on effective policies for addressing the demographic decline in Europe have shown that a mixed approach in government policy making can slow fertility decline over the long term<sup>11</sup>. In particular, such research underlines that better social support to offset the socio-economic problems of young people, including being more likely to be unemployed or once employed not to be able to afford child care, can be crucial. While the jury is still out on the extent to which such policies are effective because the results do not become manifest immediately, evidence from France and the Nordic countries suggests that policies that favour family formation in combination with support to parents to continue working (adequate access to affordable childcare), take a progressive approach to gender roles (including providing for paternity leave) at the same time as increasing financial support for families to have more than one child do help to stop, and in some cases have even reversed, the decline in fertility rates.

The level of economic development of a given country, its general instance of poverty, its general level of political development, the extent to which the political and economic transition has been completed and to which democratic institutions and the market economy have been consolidated and other such factors all determine what is considered a priority in government policy. Government policy, even social and family policies, can, nonetheless, be ambivalent towards young people. For the moment, most of the countries addressed by this study seem to be very worried about low fertility and the shrinking size of the working age population and this

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<sup>11</sup> RAND Europe, "Population Implosion? Low Fertility and Policy Responses in the European Union", RAND Europe Research Brief, RAND 2005, *op cit*.

has had the positive side effect of stimulating interest in the life chances of young people. But, recognition for the legitimate challenges that continue to impede young people from engaging in childbearing remains patchy at best and absent at worst. International agencies such as UNFPA have begun a process of awareness-raising by recognising the vulnerability of young people to such ambivalence and by recognising that low fertility and childbearing postponement has strong roots in economic and social factors often largely independent of fertility and infertility.

### **Normative and ethical considerations**

While evidence of pressing demographic and socio-economic trends has served to rekindle interest in young people, several other arguments also exist for why it is in the interest of both governments and institutions to take the specific needs of young people into account in the development of social and family policies, and even better, to develop youth specific policies. These are normative or ethical arguments.

First and foremost is the human rights argument. Young people should have access to development and especially adequate and correctly adapted sexual and reproductive health information and services, because it is their human right according to the Universal Declaration on Human Rights and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. This implies that governments are duty bound to put resources behind their policies and young people should get their fair share of attention and relevant policy resources and support in the framework of the programme of action to implement the recommendations of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD).<sup>12</sup>

The second is the participation argument. Young people should be considered, consulted and take an active part in the determination of policies that affect them directly. It is commonly accepted today that participative policy making is more effective and leads to more efficient use of scarce resources.

The implication of such arguments is that “being young” is something that all young people should have the opportunity to enjoy in full health and without fear or oppression. Young people should be guaranteed the means to remain “youthful”, to develop confidence that they have a present as young people and not just a future as adults, and to complete their transitions without experiencing the adverse effects of the vulnerability that transition implies.

The recently published World Bank World Development Report on Young People puts the complexity of this vulnerability into sharp focus. It describes five distinct “life transitions” that take place in the youth phase, although notably, they do not have to take place at the same time. These are: learning after primary school age, starting a productive work life, adopting a healthy lifestyle, forming a family and exercising citizenship. The report states that

*“... The transitions overlap ... Some young people have uncomplicated lives and only undergo one or two of these transitions at a time. Others may already be budding multi-taskers: they are in school, working part-time, married, driving fast, and participating in their local council”<sup>13</sup>.*

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<sup>12</sup> For more information consult the following website: [http://www.unfpa.org/icpd/icpd\\_poa.htm](http://www.unfpa.org/icpd/icpd_poa.htm).

<sup>13</sup> International Bank for Reconstruction and Development / World Bank, World Development Report 2007 – Development and the Next Generation, Washington DC, September 2006, pp. 9-10.

It goes on to further elaborate the interdependence of the transitions, underlining the importance of a holistic policy approach, stating that

*“... Because basic skills in schools are learned early, failure to invest in education can greatly increase the costs of pursuing healthy lifestyles and of working. By the same token, risky behaviours leading to a young man’s premature death or a girl’s unexpected early pregnancy can significantly lower the returns to schooling. Prolonged unemployment can lead to disinterest in investing in further schooling, possible mental distress, delayed family formation, and negative manifestations of citizenship”.*<sup>14</sup>

It is also noteworthy that these transitions can take significantly different trajectories according to gender, and that the vulnerability of girls and young women needs special care and attention, being markedly distinct from that of boys.

Such normative arguments have become something of a standard discourse in manifold policy declarations made by the United Nations and other international institutions, notably in European institutions (e.g. the Council of Europe and the European Union). The United Nations World Programme of Action for Youth and the Millennium Development Goals are two such key UN documents. Within the context of the Council of Europe, government and civil society experience is evolving towards the elaboration of a framework convention on youth policy. The European Commission has published a White Paper on Youth. These processes are equally driven by an acceptance that young people should be subjects, not only objectives, of policies affecting them and that these policies must be grounded in a profound respect for human rights.

### ***The Emergence of a Sharper Policy Focus***

Thus, the policy focus on youth seems to be becoming sharper. As a result of the strategic positioning exercise undertaken by the UNFPA Adolescent and Youth Cluster in 2005 to 2006, in which CST Bratislava took part, UNFPA is actively contributing to the emergence of a clearer policy direction in relation to youth and its place in UN programming. This is in fact a process for assessing the implications for young women and men of legislation, policies and programmes. This exercise asks if youth concerns and experiences are integrated dimensions of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes and if so, whether young people and older people benefit equally. In this respect, it is an exercise to assess the visibility and support UNFPA gives to young people and to predict the results in terms of health benefits, social and personal improvements. There is an evident parallel with similar deliberate attention given to women, the disabled and indigenous peoples. While it appears that UNFPA programmes in Europe and Central Asia assume that youth will benefit equally from policies and programmes, thus ignoring the differential impact on age groups, there is, nevertheless, growing recognition at the level of Country Offices that youth-specificity in social, economic and health planning is potentially advantageous for overall human development.

Several key sources of policy in UNFPA have been influential in the initiation of this strategic repositioning exercise and have pushed forward the development of awareness for the need to develop the capacity of this key actor for the delivery of youth friendly policy, including the

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<sup>14</sup> International Bank for Reconstruction and Development / World Bank, World Development Report 2007 – Development and the Next Generation, Washington DC, September 2006, *Op cit*, p. 10.

Cairo Youth Declaration and the ICPD Programme of Action, The UNFPA Framework for Action on Adolescents and Youth and “The Case for Investing in Young People as part of a National Poverty Reduction Strategy – Reference Notes on Population and Poverty Reduction”.<sup>15</sup> The latter points to the extensive potential advantages and benefits for overall development, if the youth dimension is sufficiently taken into account in the elaboration of specific development tools, particular National Poverty Reduction Strategies. It is notable because its starting point and basic assumption is that young people are a positive force in society and that with support they can determine the course of development for the better. It marks a change in attitude to previous policy approaches in institutions at global, European and national levels that see young people as the recipients of development rather than as its actors.<sup>16</sup>

Given all the above considerations, it would appear that the time is ripe for making concrete the already implied relationship between youth policy and population and development strategies with a view to the integration of family, social and youth policies. This will be a cutting edge contribution to the advancement of youth rights as well as the capacity of international institutions and their implementation agencies, such as the United Nations, to enhance their capacity to deliver appropriate and supportive youth programmes in their core mandate areas.

## ***The Study***

### **Objectives**

Considering the above context, the objectives of the present study are to:

- conduct an environmental scan of existing social and youth specific policies in seven countries covered by UNFPA in Europe and Central Asia;
- describe the situation of young people in the seven countries with a view to better understanding their needs in relation to UNFPA core programme areas (particularly, sexual and reproductive health);
- assess the extent to which UN in-country programming is providing complementary responses to such needs, taking into account existing government provision;
- provide a basis of information on which experts in the area of youth policy development may be consulted on possible approaches to the improvement of UN in-country programming

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<sup>15</sup> An exemplary case for this has been made in the one or two Human Development Reports that focus on youth, for example Croatia in 2004. See Review of aspects of missions undertaken in 2005 to countries of Europe and Central Asia by CST Bratislava, Robert Thomson, 24 March 2006, *op cit*.

<sup>16</sup> The full text of the documents may be found as follows: The Cairo Youth Declaration (<http://youth.unesco.or.kr/youth/english/resources/sub1.asp?no=75&id=2#img>) and the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) ([http://www.unfpa.org/icpd/icpd\\_poa.htm](http://www.unfpa.org/icpd/icpd_poa.htm)), The UNFPA Framework for Action on Adolescents and Youth UNFPA, “The Case for Investing in Young People As Part of a National Poverty Reduction Strategy”, Reference notes on population and poverty reduction, Paper commissioned by the United Nations Population Fund, New York and prepared by Mr. Richard Curtain ([http://www.unfpa.org/upload/lib\\_pub\\_file/424\\_filename\\_Investing.pdf](http://www.unfpa.org/upload/lib_pub_file/424_filename_Investing.pdf)). See also UNFPA and the Alan Guttmacher Institute, “Adding It Up – The Benefits of Investing in Sexual and Reproductive Health Care”, Washington and New York, 2003, available at <http://www.guttmacher.org/pubs/addingitup.pdf>.

In view of these objectives, CST Bratislava is particularly concerned to find out more about the situation of young people in the countries concerned, in relation to the following key aspects:

#### Youth demography

- the changing share of the youth population in the *demographic compositions* of the countries;
- trends in the *mobility* of young people, distinguishing as necessary such trends from migration.

#### Socio-economic conditions of youth

- the *influence of economic development* and concomitant changes in education and in youth culture (especially, in relation to the situation of girls and young women);
- trends in *family social support* structures that affect the current generation of youth;
- trends in the *level of youth unemployment*, measures taken in response to the impact of globalisation on the youth employment situation and strategies to create decent and productive work for young people;
- key efforts in designing *mechanisms for youth access to the labour, education and training markets*;
- the *profile and localisation of young people experiencing poverty*;
- key efforts in developing and implementing *sustainable human capital development approaches* (solidarity between the generations) and *socio-economic promotion of youth*.

#### Youth lifestyles, sexuality, union formation

- trends related to *values and lifestyles*, including the age of initiation of sex, trends in obesity, nutrition and eating disorders, alcohol, tobacco and other substance use;
- key efforts to ensure *sexual and reproductive health and human rights from a youth perspective*, both for young parents, as well as for their children, covering but not restricted to identity development, transactional sex, psychological issues around fertility postponement, desire for children and perception of parenthood, assisted fertility, sexuality (for example, homophobia);
- trends in *union formation, childbearing and postponement of marriage* among young people.

#### Youth participation

- key efforts in building and sustaining a culture of *youth political and social participation*;
- youth *involvement in knowledge management* within participation structures;
- efforts in building and sustaining *adult-youth partnerships* including adolescents, youth leaders, educators, the public health system, community groups and local leadership.

#### Youth policies

- evidence of *national governmental policies* on selected specific youth-related issues deemed relevant from the above list;
- the state of development of national youth policies by government.

## Methodology

This study has relied entirely on secondary source material gathered from a variety of sources, in particular governmental, intergovernmental and non-governmental agencies dealing specifically with youth issues, youth policy development, social policy, family policy, demography and issues related to fertility, at both national and international levels.

A synthetic rather than country by country approach to the presentation of the relevant information concerning young people and their treatment in policy has been chosen. Nevertheless, the starting point for these syntheses has been the preparation of country files compiling relevant sources of information concerning the treatment of young people in a variety of social policy areas and later the preparation of country reports summarising the most relevant information and trends concerning the socio-economic and social policy coverage of young people in each country. These country reports are presented in annex to this study and provide a more in depth treatment of the country specific issues facing young people and policy makers seeking to deal with them.

Several models of youth and social policy assessment have also been consulted to establish a basis for making situation assessments in relation to each of the countries considered and in relation to UNFPA programming efforts targeted at young people in the seven countries. In particular, the study assesses from the point of view of the “adequacy” of policy and programme delivery mechanisms, diversity and sophistication of policy and programme interventions, philosophical compliance with “standards” in youth policy development, assumptions of universal effectiveness vs. “policy gaps” as well as the so-called “5-C’s” (Coverage, Capacity, Competence, Co-ordination and Cost) model for youth policy assessment, developed in the context of the National Youth Policy Review Process of the Council of Europe’s Directorate of Youth and Sport<sup>17</sup>. Such models provide a kind of map, by which data collection can be oriented and assessments can be checked against benchmarks established by experts from all the sectors concerned with youth policy making. The generic nature of such models notwithstanding, they provide a useful set of guidelines to researchers who seek comprehensive frameworks for their macro level comparative work.

At the same time it is clear that local conditions, national and regional traditions, historical and political situations and a variety of actors all play a role in determining the situation in a given country. Whatever the methodological approach chosen, as a variety of models for analysis might just as well serve the same purpose, this should make it clear that the model is only as useful as its flexibility to take into account such local circumstances.

The broad based selection of sources of information consulted in this study notwithstanding, the availability of relevant data about young people and their life situations, as well as about policies targeting young people is limited. It should be noted that statistical information and policy analyses are rarely directly comparable and their results are often not disaggregated by sex or by age. Where relevant information is available, it is very often only available in local languages, further complicating the data collection process.

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<sup>17</sup> Howard Williamson, “Youth Policy in Cyprus – The Conclusions of the Council of Europe’s International Review”, Council of Europe, Directorate of Youth and Sport, 2004.

The quantitative and qualitative data presented, and as a result, their interpretation, may, therefore, not be complete or fully representative of specific national situations, due to the absence of fully comparable data and up to date sources.

“Desk only” reviews have their limits. It has not been possible in the context of this review to verify the accuracy of either the country reports or the cross-country analysis through field visits and in person interviews with relevant experts and stakeholders from government, the civic sector and the international organisations present in each country, both of which are standard in the youth policy reviews and advisory missions organised by the Council of Europe in cooperation with member state governments.

### **Geographical Scope**

Seven countries covered by CST Bratislava have been chosen for treatment in this study, as follows, representing the full diversity of national situations to be observed in the region:

**Bulgaria** is in the phase of accession to the European Union, and at the present time, social policy development is almost exclusively conditioned by EU social inclusion directives designed to achieve *acquis communautaires*. While the political transition to democracy has been largely achieved, the economic and social transition has taken longer to consolidate. The socio-economic conditions of transition directly affect the life circumstances of young people in Bulgaria. Young people in Bulgaria benefit from inclusion in EU and Council of Europe youth programmes.

**Turkey** is in the phase of pre-accession negotiations to the European Union, and as for Bulgaria, social policy development is predicated on the move towards the fulfilment of *acquis communautaires*. It has a large youth population and is therefore considered to have enormous human capital potential. However, Turkey’s level of economic development is weak and large numbers of young people struggle for independent living. Turkish young people benefit from inclusion in EU and Council of Europe youth programmes. Freedom of association in Turkey is nevertheless limited and, hence, there is no strong tradition of youth organising and participation, despite a significant level of youth activism in the environment and development fields through social and charity organisations. Such restrictions that exist and generally pervasive patriarchal attitudes, especially in certain regions of Turkey, tend to adversely affect minorities and women. It is notable that the age of becoming a full citizen with the right to be elected was only recently reduced to 25.

**Albania and Bosnia & Herzegovina** are countries in the Western Balkans participating in the European Union stabilisation and association process and both also have Poverty Reduction Strategies (PRSPs), through which social and economic interventions are shaped under a World Bank-inspired Comprehensive Development Framework. Both countries benefit from inclusion in EU and Council of Europe youth programmes. Bosnia & Herzegovina remains a significantly divided society, even ten years after the Dayton agreements, and the memory of war is still vivid in the minds of many young people and to an extent conditions their assumptions about the future. Albania has a comparatively large youth population and higher fertility rates than in other parts of Eastern Europe. The country is riven by poverty, especially in rural areas, and young people have a sense of having diminished life chances.

**Armenia and Ukraine** benefit from the European Union neighbourhood policy, although eventual membership in the European Union remains something of a distant prospect according to recent policy studies.<sup>18</sup> Both have been active in conducting poverty reduction analysis in view of preparing strategies to that effect. Young people in both countries benefit from inclusion in EU and Council of Europe youth programmes. Armenia is an extremely isolated country, adversely affected by ongoing conflict and disagreement with its neighbours, Turkey and Azerbaijan. Young people in Armenia suffer this isolation in manifold ways, including less obvious psycho-social burdens such as diminished mobility, diminished awareness of the wider world beyond Armenia's domestic concerns and diminished horizons. With the Orange Revolution, Ukraine had an important democratic breakthrough. Young people were at the front line of people power. But, recent political developments in Ukrainian politics have caused many young people to become disillusioned in the face of what is perceived as backsliding on promises of reform and development.<sup>19</sup>

**Uzbekistan** is a country at the crossroads of Europe and Asia. Historically, it was one of the wealthiest countries of Central Asia and today still benefits from great natural resource wealth, although this is very unevenly distributed across social groups in society. Notably, it is also the most populous of Central Asia. Uzbekistan benefits from Asian Development Bank support and from membership in the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation whose principles guide social policies and economic planning. While Uzbekistan is a post-Soviet republic in the process of both social and economic transition, recent events have demonstrated the nature of the regime and its desire to maintain its power. The precarious position of civil society and international institutions working for human rights in the country at present is not an encouraging sign. Young people in Uzbekistan may only participate in Council of Europe and EU programmes for young people as third country participants, in other words, as partners to or invited guests at activities organised by youth organisations based in programme countries of either the EU or the Council of Europe. Uzbekistan, nonetheless, participates in the Central Asian Youth Network established by the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), of which the seat is Tashkent.

These countries have been chosen for treatment in this study because, in the first place, they demonstrate the diversity of social and political conditions affecting Europe and Central Asia and its young people. It is also noteworthy that each country benefits from different opportunities according to the political and strategic alliances made and the forms of regional integration it participates in (voluntarily or involuntarily). This can also be seen as having an important long-term impact on the life chances of young people in the region. Finally, but necessarily importantly, these countries are also indicative of the “specificity” of the Europe and Central Asia region in terms of demographic development within the overall scope and coverage of UNFPA's Division of Arab States, Europe and Central Asia (DASECA).

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<sup>18</sup> Ronald D. Asmus (Editor), “Next Steps in Forging a New Euroatlantic Strategy for the Wider Black Sea Region”, German Marshall Fund of the United States, Washington DC, 2006.

<sup>19</sup> Taras Kuzio, ‘Ukraine’s ‘Orange – Blue’ Foreign Policy’ in Ronald D. Asmus (Editor), “Next Steps in Forging a New Euroatlantic Strategy for the Wider Black Sea Region”, German Marshall Fund of the United States, Washington DC, 2006.



**Part II**  
**Understanding Young People and Youth Policy**

## ***Who are Young People? Statistical and Sociological Definitions of Youth***

There are two commonly accepted approaches to defining “youth”. The first, most commonly used by governments and international institutions alike, is the biologically-based or statistical definition. The second, and that most commonly found to underpin research on young people and especially youth transition, is the sociological definition. These differ considerably and the preference given to one or other definition has important implications for youth policy development and its effectiveness.

A statistical or biologically-based definition of youth considers young people as those who belong to a particular age cohort. It assumes that the youth phase of life begins once certain biological features of growing into adulthood begin. Usually puberty as initiation into adolescence is taken for the starting point and full independent adult life, often marked by leaving the family home to form one’s own, is usually considered as the end point. As there are commonly accepted statistical averages for the age when such changes happen in the life of a human being, it has become accepted practice to refer to the youth life phase in terms of an age range. Most governmental agencies and international organisations accept the United Nations age range of 15 to 24 for “youth”, although this is by no means a universal standard<sup>20</sup>.

Applying a sociological definition of youth means to define the life-phase by its social characteristics. In other words, it recognises that a young person’s experience of the phase is mediated by social realities and the ability of the person to interact with them, for example, having a job or being unemployed, studying or working, living in a rural or urban setting, being male or female, engaging in certain kinds of behaviour (for example, risk taking).

While most institutions of government responsible for youth and international institutions that have some form of youth targeted programming operate those programmes within the parameters of statistically defined age groups differentiating between children, adolescents, young people and young adults, practitioners, researchers and grassroots programme implementers have become increasingly vociferous about the fact that a purely statistical definition of the youth “stage” of life is inadequate to the aim of consistent, effective and youth friendly programming.

According to Howard Williamson, Professor of European Youth Policy at Glamorgan University in Wales and youth researcher,

*“Sociologists have long argued that “youth” is socially constructed rather than biologically determined. Historically, there may have been a case to be made that socially constructed “youth” coincided largely with biologically and psychologically determined adolescence. By the latter part of the twentieth century, however, such a connection has largely been fractured, with increasing theoretical assertion that “youth” had become a prolonged stage in the life-course. It has become characterised by multiple contexts of transition (from earlier “childhood” to later “adulthood”) and imbued with less certainty that such transitions would ever take a linear form (economic independence, independent living and separate family formation) and greater risk. In other words, “youth” as a concept embodied different issues and*

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<sup>20</sup> In Council of Europe programmes, participants are accepted from approximately age 16 and can be up to 35 years of age, especially if they are engaged professionally in the field. In the European Union, programmes targeting the participation of young people are aimed at the age range 15 to 25.

*visions, not just in relation to the “age range” that it encapsulated, but also in terms of its character (a resource or a problem)”.*<sup>21</sup>

A sociological perspective is useful because it implicitly accepts the idea that young people are not all the same, despite the fact that they may all have being young in common. This acceptance of the “heterogeneity of youth”<sup>22</sup> is a solid basis for providing differentiated policy responses to the needs of young people, even if they inhabit the same age group, and it can be helpful in understanding why and how certain groups of young people persistently respond in an adverse manner to programming conceived with their benefit in mind.

Considerations such as the length of the transition from childhood to full adulthood, including the fact that the moment in the life course at which this may be considered complete is not necessarily a matter of a particular age, but of the achievement of certain life conditions, are important. Attendant to this are regional and national differences in economic and social development, as well as certain cultural considerations, such as the extent to which secularisation is widespread in a given society. Therefore, by way of example, the fact that a young woman has her first child at the age of 16 rather than at the age of 20 may not be as significant for the completion of her transition to adulthood as whether or not she is in a stable relationship, has completed her education and / or has a means to support herself and her baby independently of the patronage available from husband, partner or parents.

A further issue of importance to consider in this relation is the notion of “parallel youth modernities”. Based on evidence gathered in the process of national youth policy reporting undertaken by the Council of Europe’s Directorate of Youth and Sport, it has been established that

*“(Some) young people ... may display ‘post-modern’ characteristics in terms of their values and lifestyles. But ... a significant minority of young people ... were retreating (or being forced back) into ‘pre-modernity’... ”.*<sup>23</sup>

This situation is particularly noticeable when making comparisons within Europe among countries with different levels of development and in different stages of political and economic transition. This notwithstanding, the same argument can be made in relation to intra-country comparisons between social strata, minority and majority groups and rural and urban inhabitants.

Taking such a sociological perspective into account means using a more differentiated approach to the idea of “being young” and to give positive value to that life stage as more than just a transit stop between being a child and being an adult, between being dependent and autonomous. It also means understanding the manifold processes that are intrinsic to that phase of life from the perspective of the personal development of the individual and their relationship to the specific risks that that phase of life presents for the young person. Effective policies for supporting adolescent sexual and reproductive health, therefore, may have to take into account that experimentation is a key characteristic of youth phase and adapt programming so that it provides young people with effective tools for safe experimentation rather than criminalizing certain kinds of behaviours deemed risky and unacceptable. Taking the sociological perspective

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<sup>21</sup> Howard Williamson, “Supporting Young People in Europe”, Council of Europe publishing, 2002, p. 31.

<sup>22</sup> *Op cit*, p. 32.

<sup>23</sup> *Op cit*, p. 33.

seriously means allowing young people to “be young” for as long as they need to be and to be inclusive of individualised paths through transition.

While for the United Nations system 10 to 19 is considered adolescence and 15 to 24 is accepted as the range within which the “youth” stage of life takes place, this study accepts the sociological perspective. Hence, while any recommendations that may be derived from this youth policy review may be applied in practise to people aged between 15 and 24, it is the conviction of this author that they may be equally applied to people under the age of 15 or over the age of 24 based on an analysis of the life conditions of the person or group in question. Young people in a given country may become initiated into fully consensual sexual relations taking the necessary precautions to avoid unwanted consequences at a relatively early age, but it does not necessarily follow that they have completed their transition to adulthood on several other crucial fronts, such as entry into the labour market or family formation. Given trends in education and labour markets, transitions are becoming more and more differentiated with education and labour market entry taking place over longer and longer periods of time. Traditional boundaries of age and life phase are becoming blurred and extended. Youth transitions have become more differentiated and overlap.<sup>24</sup>

### ***What is Youth Policy For?***

According to a report prepared by six large-scale international youth organisations, entitled “National Youth Policies – A Working Document from the point of view of ‘Non-Formal Education’ Youth Organisations”,

*“... Young people need to develop themselves, to test their own potential abilities and to discover the world around them. They need to have access to knowledge and competence to understand the real world. They need to acquire an active and responsible role in social life, and through that role, a status and a stake in society”<sup>25</sup>.*

Experts in Europe and elsewhere in the world have several decades of experience in developing the conceptual basis for evidence based, holistic and cross-sectoral approaches to the development of youth policy at national and European level, taking into account life course theory and acceptance of youth as a socially constructed concept.

According to Lasse Siurala, Director of Youth for the city of Helsinki and youth researcher,

*“A public policy has to be anchored in the conditions and aspirations of its target group and in the political objectives set by the respective public authorities. A public youth policy should reflect the challenges and obstacles young people face in their transition from childhood to adulthood ... policy responses must differentiate*

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<sup>24</sup> International Bank for Reconstruction and Development / World Bank, “World Development Report 2007 – Development and the Next Generation”, Washington DC, September 2006, Figure 8, pp. 9 – 10.

<sup>25</sup> The participating organisations included: World Alliance of Young Men’s Christian Associations, World Young Women’s Christian Association, World Organization of the Scout Movement, World Association of Girl Guides & Girl Scouts, International Federation of Red Cross & Red Crescent Societies and The International Award Association. Document available at: [http://www.icnyp.net/www/files/bigsix\\_nyp.pdf](http://www.icnyp.net/www/files/bigsix_nyp.pdf).

*according to the increasingly complex, unpredictable and vulnerable trajectories of young people today”<sup>26</sup>.*

Further, the final declaration of the 6<sup>th</sup> Council of Europe Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth that took place in Thessaloniki, Greece, in 2002, states that national and international youth policies

- “... need to be as comprehensive as possible, taking into account the overall needs of young people and recognising their diversity and their many facets and resources. In particular, youth policies should*
- be anchored in universal values of pluralist democracy and human rights and pursue objectives such as justice, respect for identities, access to one’s own culture, equal opportunities, including therein men and women, and social cohesion;*
  - have a cross-sectoral dimension as well as a local, regional and national dimension;*
  - integrate the educational dimension in a long term perspective, taking into consideration young people’s aspirations; promote their access to autonomy as well as their sense of responsibility and commitment, through, notably, voluntary youth work;*
  - facilitate active participation of young people in decisions which concern them, and encourage them to commit themselves in their community life;*
  - facilitate the access of young people to the labour market, by means of appropriate projects and training schemes which are likely to increase their professional opportunities;*
  - facilitate the access of young people, notably from disadvantaged groups, to information which concerns them, and in particular, to the new communication technologies;*
  - promote youth mobility by reducing administrative and financial obstacles and encouraging the development of quality projects;*
  - promote non-formal education/ learning of young people as well as the development of appropriate forms of recognition of experiences and skills acquired notably within the framework of associations and other forms of voluntary involvement, at local, national and European levels;*
  - promote co-operation between Child, Family and Youth policies”<sup>27</sup>.*

In a discussion of the European context, Lasse Siurala defined the purpose of youth policy as being

*“to create conditions for learning, opportunity and experience which allow and enable young people to develop the knowledge, skills and competencies to be actors of democracy and to integrate into society, in particular playing an active part in both civil society and the labour market.”<sup>28</sup>*

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<sup>26</sup> Lasse Siurala, “A European Framework for Youth Policy”, Directorate of Youth and Sport, Council of Europe Publishing, 2005.

<sup>27</sup> Council of Europe, Committee of Ministers Document, reference number, CM (2002)192 (restricted) 13 December 2002, p. 7.

<sup>28</sup> Lasse Siurala, “A European Framework for Youth Policy”, Directorate of Youth and Sport, Council of Europe Publishing, 2005, *op cit*, p. 50.

If we acknowledge the “transitional” nature of the youth life stage, then the outcome of policies addressing the transition phase should be “to enable young people to be active citizens socially as well as in work life”. Becoming an active citizen is widely acknowledged to no longer be just a matter of formal rights, but of substantive means. It requires the autonomy to develop and express one’s ideas and identity. In Europe, youth policy has progressively come to be viewed as a vehicle for supporting young people in gaining the requisite autonomy for active citizenship.<sup>29</sup>

In the view of this author, the concept of autonomy is important for adequate youth programming. It is a counter point to static notions of youth as variably dependent or independent, the fact that adolescence is the life phase during which the emotional and psychological need of young people for “independence” develops and becomes visible notwithstanding. The notion of autonomy implies agency on the part of the young person possessing it. Youth policies that conceptualise the effects of the emotional and psychological needs of young people for independence and then the need to develop the autonomy and agency of young people, necessarily imply differentiated approaches. They take into account individual and collective situations and a variety of conditions and can have an emancipatory function.

Making reference to the work of Howard Williamson, Lasse Siurala further points out that

*“... there is a rationale for looking at youth transition as a broader and seamless process from childhood to post-adolescence. The policy challenge is to differentiate measures for ‘children’, ‘early-adolescents’, ‘adolescents’ and ‘post-adolescents’ and to ensure ‘seamless transitions’ between the phases. The potential of this approach is to create synergies across administrative sectors like the social, child, youth, education and employment fields. The threat is that the youth field gets ‘squeezed out’ or ‘swallowed up’ by the bigger social, education and employment sectors.”<sup>30</sup>*

As mentioned earlier, there are several pressing arguments in favour of increased policy interest in the situation of young people in this region. The elaboration of a youth policy can also serve a number of useful purposes for a national government or for an international institution.

In the first place, investment now can avoid major costs later. This is also called the macro-economic argument and pertains to the fact that better attention to young people and their specific needs, as manifest in a well resourced and cross-sectoral youth policy approach that underscores youth autonomy and responsibility, can offset what are often considered typical ‘youth related’ problems, such as school failure, adolescent pregnancy, juvenile delinquency and violence, long-term unemployment and welfare dependency and high risk behaviours associated with young people, including substance use or joy-riding, and their (adverse) consequences for adult life.

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<sup>29</sup> Lasse Siurala, “A European Framework for Youth Policy”, Directorate of Youth and Sport, Council of Europe Publishing, 2005, *op cit*, p. 8.

<sup>30</sup> *Op cit*, p. 9.

Research notes that it is infinitely more expensive to treat the health outcomes encountered in later life as a direct result health risks taken during youth than to provide resources early on to prevent young people from engaging in risky behaviour in the first place (a good example of this is smoking).<sup>31</sup>

In the second place, policies that stimulate autonomy promote human development and have the added value of making young people aware, more resilient and better protected from abuse. Non-formal educational approaches and opportunities, for example, help young people to develop essential life-skills and citizenship competencies that can have spill-over effects in the public sphere, in terms of active participation in public life and institutional politics and in terms of a responsible social role among peers. Taken from this perspective and despite the fact that this is a common misconception in the public sphere, it follows that youth policies should neither be limited to nor exclusively about young people's leisure time.

The fact that a government accepts such arguments, notwithstanding, there remains an important tension in youth policy making that continues to hinder the ability of policy at national and international level to adequately foster youth autonomy. This tension is inherent to the objectives of youth policy, which at one and the same time seek to prevent young people from causing social problems and yet to help them to be young. The "prevention driven" approach, which has a tendency to see all youth issues in terms of problems that have to be solved and which can have something of a stigmatising effect on young people, has also been traditionally referred to as the "paternalistic" approach to youth policy making. Tendencies towards paternalism, at whichever level of the policy making scale they may take place, are diametrically opposed to ensuring youth autonomy and agency and can even have harmful side effects. This applies equally to social, family and fertility policies as applied to young people, which in many countries, notably several in the region treated by this study, have tended towards pro-natalism, including the recasting of the role of young women and adolescent girls exclusively in terms of their "reproductive" function and of young men in traditional properly productive gender stereotypes, to the exclusion of diversity and individual pathways to mature adult living and parenthood. Clearly, this cannot be considered an approach fully in respect of human rights.

### ***Assessing Youth Policy Provision***

In recent years, several initiatives to develop standards for the assessment of youth policies at international level have been undertaken at the international level. Most noteworthy and developed among these is the Council of Europe's National Youth Policy Review system, which invites governments to undertake a stocktaking of their national youth policies and submit them to the scrutiny of an international team of experts from a variety of sectors relevant to youth policy (including youth researchers, youth educators, governmental and non-governmental policy makers and representatives of youth organisations), followed by the public presentation and publication of the results of both the national and international work conducted. While the implementation of the recommendations of the international review team is voluntary, many of the governments that have elected to conduct a review have used those recommendations as a

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<sup>31</sup> International Bank for Reconstruction and Development / World Bank, "World Development Report 2007 – Development and the Next Generation", Washington DC, pp. 9 – 10, September 2006, WHO, "The Reproductive Health of Adolescents: A Strategy for Action", A Joint WHO/UNFPA/UNICEF Statement. World Health Organization, Geneva, 1989 and See also UNFPA and the Alan Guttmacher Institute, "Adding It Up – The Benefits of Investing in Sexual and Reproductive Health Care", Washington and New York, 2003, available at <http://www.guttmacher.org/pubs/addingitup.pdf>.

basis for reforming their national youth policies. On the basis of the results of the approximately fifteen national youth policy reviews so far conducted in Council of Europe member states, an international group of experts has elaborated a series of indicators for youth policy, that today are used by governmental and non-governmental actors alike to benchmark quality and effectiveness in the policies they implement<sup>32</sup>. A similar initiative, although exclusively in the non-governmental field, has been undertaken by an association known as the International Council on National Youth Policy. This association also conducts periodical reviews of national youth policies and compiles relevant material published by both international institutions and youth organisations on its website for public access and reference<sup>33</sup>.

The United Nations' World Plan of Action for Youth and the review processes periodically undertaken (most recently in 2005, UN WPAY +10), the continuing publication of regular World Youth Reports by the Department for Economic and Social Affairs and the youth specific reporting undertaken by some countries in the context of their Millennium Development Goal reporting, have also contributed to raising awareness for the need to elaborate quality standards in the youth policy making field, although much can still be improved in the area of inter-agency cooperation and synergy building in relation to the implementation of that programme<sup>34</sup>. In particular, the World Bank has begun to take heed of such processes and in recent years has begun to elaborate its own youth strategy building exercise in consultation with youth experts and representatives and in consideration of accepted quality standards.<sup>35</sup>

Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge several mitigating factors. First, at global level, truly participative processes of decision-making concerning UN and World Bank programming approaches in relation to youth are still a far off prospect. Second, interagency cooperation and coordination is less than adequate in relation to youth. In fact, one could even go as far as to say that competition is a more appropriate description of what actually happens, no matter the rhetoric of synergy. There is certainly no common consensus among the agencies of the United Nations concerning the idea of mainstreaming youth policy development principles. These (non) relationships sometimes have adverse consequences for the supposed beneficiaries of policy, as when disagreement exists among international agencies it is not helpful or supportive of advocacy for change at the national level. The rhetoric of youth is, thus, more easily instrumentalised by political actors with ulterior motives (access to budgets, legitimisation by international organisations, coalition building).

Finally, one must not forget or underestimate the strength of global and European youth specific non-governmental organisations (often referred to as International Non-governmental Youth Organisations or INGYOs) in this field. As the representatives of young people who have made a voluntary commitment to engage with their issue or cause, such organisations are active in voicing the concerns of young people. In the Council of Europe system, for example, they have the power to influence the institution's decision making concerning the priorities, types of activities and budgets allocated to young people, with equal rights as their governmental counterparts. This system is known as co-management and since its inception in the early 1970s,

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<sup>32</sup> For more information consult the website of the Council of Europe's Directorate of Youth and Sport (DYS) on [www.coe.int/youth](http://www.coe.int/youth) or contact Andre Jacques Dodin at the DYS for more information (c/o [sylvie.fritsch@coe.int](mailto:sylvie.fritsch@coe.int)).

<sup>33</sup> For more information visit [www.icnyp.net](http://www.icnyp.net) or contact the ICNYP secretariat at [icnyp@jef.at](mailto:icnyp@jef.at).

<sup>34</sup> For more information visit <http://www.un.org/youth>.

<sup>35</sup> For more information about the World Bank's Strategy on Children and Youth visit the following websites: <http://www.worldbank.org/childrenandyouth> and <http://youthink.worldbank.org/>.



it has been emulated, replicated and adapted across Europe in very different contexts, from local youth service provision to national youth policy<sup>36</sup>.

### ***Traditions and Tendencies in Youth Policy Making in Europe and Central Asia***

Policy-making in each of the countries covered in this study relate to young people as objects (and subjects) in distinct ways. Youth policy experts believe that the attitude to youth enshrined in the social and political traditions of a country can offer insight into the collective conception of the future in a given country. That conception, sometimes positive (youth as a resource to be developed), sometimes negative (youth as a problem to be protected or prevented), is significantly conditioned by the history and politics of a given country. But, it is also conditioned by the existence or absence of a national tradition in the field of youth sociology.

It is impossible to speak about a single tradition of youth policy making across a region as diverse as Europe and Central Asia, and this for historical and contemporary reasons, including diverse national political traditions and differing levels and extents of involvement in regional or global integration processes. While one must be wary of over-generalisation, some sub-regional characteristics can, nevertheless, be identified.

Western Europe has a long standing tradition developed over the entire 20<sup>th</sup> century along with modern social sciences, in particular psychology and sociology. In the late modern period, from the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century onwards, and in parallel with the development of the Western European welfare state, plenty of time and resources were devoted to youth affairs and to youth policy development, including the development of youth specific channels of political and social participation, especially in the aftermath of the 1968 youth protests, and a distinct field of youth research emerged. Within the context of Western European intergovernmental institutions, notably the Council of Europe, co-operation in the field of youth policy development began in the mid 1960s. Today, this long and well-developed tradition is often looked to as a model for progressive youth policy development and several regions and continents have sought to emulate it, despite growing criticism that the model is far too dependent on the availability of significant public resources and, therefore, is not economically viable.

In Central and Eastern Europe, the Cold War meant that there could be no independent development of youth studies, although a tradition of Juventology did develop in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century<sup>37</sup>. Nevertheless, successive state socialist governments were clearly interested in young people. In many of the countries of the former-Soviet Bloc the “youth agenda” was instrumentalised by state socialist regimes and youth participation was officially regulated and controlled through mass youth movements closely related to the ruling communist parties, with all the authoritarian conservatism of the system applying also to youth lifestyles and life experience. In the wake of the collapse of state socialism in Central and Eastern Europe in 1989 and after, mass youth participation and any kind of youth “organising” was viewed with

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<sup>36</sup> For a full definition of co-management refer to the glossary of youth policy terms in the appendices to this study as well as to the website of the Directorate of Youth and Sport of the Council of Europe ([www.coe.int/youth](http://www.coe.int/youth)). Further information about INGYOs active in Europe and globally and how they participate in youth policy making is also available on the website.

<sup>37</sup> Mahler (1983) envisioned Juventology as an integrative youth theory aiming to reveal the extent to which young people have power over present and future conditions and the extent to which they are governed by the established social authority. Source: Mahler, F. 1983 ‘Introducere in Juventologie’, Bucuresti (English summary in IBYR Newsletter No. 1/1984), Siyka Kovacheva, “Keys to Youth Participation in Eastern Europe”, Council of Europe Publishing, 2001.

significant suspicion by the majority of young people and parents. Organisations, parties and the whole concept of civil society were discredited, as was anyone not seen to have been wholly independent and in opposition to the system, even if paradoxically, it was civil society that to a large extent brought about the changes in the region. The new governing elites had to start from scratch with the development of a radically different youth policy approach and they looked to the Council of Europe and the European Union for advice as to how to go about this. The post-Communist democracies of Central and Eastern Europe have had some success in reforming their youth sectors and policies, having embraced modern and often progressive concepts of youth policy based in principles of human rights, participation and autonomy. Nevertheless, in the years since the change and in practice, it has been difficult for many of these countries to implement the progressive, reformist and European-inspired policies they adopted due to a lack of both capacity and means. Many, now, struggle with authoritarian conservative tendencies that are gaining ground in the field.

In South Eastern Europe, and in particular in the countries of the former-Yugoslavia, young people were both the victims and perpetrators of a vicious ethnically motivated war that has left many of them scarred physically, emotionally and morally for life and that has divided communities in the most impenetrable manner. In the post-war period, young people were the *avant garde* of change, overthrowing their authoritarian leaders using non-violent methods, spurning the idea that people in the Balkans are somehow pre-disposed to bloody violence. In the post-authoritarian period, significant numbers of the young people who were involved in the civic movements that led to the change were brought into positions of power and authority, creating something of a “reform generation”. Many of the countries concerned were keen to elaborate European minded and progressive youth policies, aware that the business of reconstructing the social fibre of a cohesive and peace-loving community would depend to a great extent on the post-war generation and their ability to overcome insipient hatred of the “other”, whoever that may have been. Nevertheless, in the aftermath of revolution, a certain disillusionment and passivity set into the youth civic sector, as many of the promises were seen not to have been kept, as social and economic conditions for young people continued to worsen and as the ruling elites began to court nationalistic constituencies despised for their role in the war period in order to maximise their share of the votes.

Turkey lies at the crossroads of Europe and Asia (this region is also referred to as the greater Middle East in certain circles<sup>38</sup>) and is something of an exception in all respects. Geographically Turkey has a foothold in Europe, but is culturally often considered not to be, and is politically made to feel uncertain about where its allegiance should lie, particularly since September 11, 2001. Further, it is a secular democracy with a majority Muslim population, demonstrating social tendencies across the spectrum from pre-modern to post-modern. Nevertheless, its particular brand of democracy demands loyalty to the Atatürkian vision of the unitary Turkey and to a secularism that has often been branded oppressive of religious freedom and to freedoms of association, conscience and expression. Given its historical development, it is hardly surprising that Turkey has no significant indigenous tradition of youth sociology or of progressive policy making in the youth field. On the other hand, Turkey has a significant youth population and is a country in the throes of modernisation and development in all spheres from political to economic. This has created growing interest in youth policy development and awareness for the need to harness the human capital represented by its specific population dynamics. Furthermore, young people in Turkey are actively engaged in a broad variety of social, cultural and political

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<sup>38</sup> Ronald D. Asmus (Editor), “Next Steps in Forging a New Euroatlantic Strategy for the Wider Black Sea Region”, German Marshall Fund of the United States, Washington DC, 2006.

activities and this has raised the awareness of government to take seriously young people's access to channels of meaningful participation.

Finally, while the Cold War experience of Central Asia can also be compared to that of all other Soviet Bloc countries under communist rule, the post-communist development of the region has been very different than that of its neighbours in East Central Europe. In Central Asia, which to the largest extent can be seen as a "developing" region, despite its natural resource wealth, a political transition of sorts did take place with the collapse of communism. However, by virtue of state socialist elites remaining in power under a new system nominally entitled "democracy", little in the political context has changed for citizens, young people among them. The ongoing authoritarianism of regimes in place in the region, state abuses of power and endemic corruption, internal interethnic conflicts, threats to territorial integrity and interstate tensions along with ongoing and chronic poverty, have led to a paradoxical situation whereby the youth issue is either considered the last priority among many areas needing government attention and financial investment in a situation of resource penury, or a very high priority because the authoritarian state requires stabilisation through the cooptation of young loyal subjects.

### *Conclusion*

It is clear that fluctuations in interest in youth issues in the different countries are common and that several factors influence the way in which such fluctuations take place, including history, politics and current economic and social conditions. But, it is notable that in some countries in the region, the contemporary interest in youth issues may have been provoked by concern over tendencies among young people towards lower fertility and parenting postponement. While it is legitimate to question how growing numbers of old people can be taken care of financially if the working age population is shrinking, exhortations by political actors towards inter-generational solidarity might be misleading and probably need to be interpreted with caution. It is clear from historical experience that youth policy can be instrumentally conceptualised. Today, and in light of the genuine concern of an increasing number of international agencies over the objective decline in population and its tendency not to be able to replenish itself in this region, it has become ever more important to be aware of what youth policy is for and how it can act in service of young people, so that it is not allowed to become a vehicle for the instrumentalisation of young women and their reproductive functions, to the detriment of their human rights. Inter-generational solidarity can be developed but only the basis of a true dialogue, in the sense of a mutually negotiated communication process involving partners on an equal footing.

**Part III**  
**Trends in the Situations and Needs of Young People**

## *Trends in the Situations and Needs of Young People*

International research has provided empirical evidence of certain ongoing and emerging trends in the situations of young people worldwide. These relate, in particular, to the prospects young people have for finding work and their experiences once on the labour market, their access to education and their experience of it, their experiences of citizenship in all its four dimensions (political, social, economic and cultural) and their ability (or inability) to act autonomously and in a constructive manner for both the society in which they live and their own life chances. Such trends are inextricably linked to the effects of ongoing processes of globalisation on the lives of young people, which as mentioned above, have ambivalent consequences for the life realities and chances of young people.

According to the United Nations World Youth Report 2003,

*“... the impact of globalisation [on the lives of young people] is still evolving and uncertain ... The only certainty is that globalisation is characterised by increasing market power, and there is always the danger that such power will be abused ... In this context, it is important to recognise what Doreen Massey has described as the ‘power geometry’ associated with globalisation. What benefits one group or country may create problems for another sector of the population ... Although young people are not powerless, their economic position is such that they are more vulnerable than any other social group to the uncertainties and risks associated with economic and cultural globalisation.”<sup>39</sup>*

Hence, the notion of vulnerability has come to be inextricably linked with the transition period of youth for a growing number of young people worldwide. According to “How Big Is Your World? – An Anthology”, the final report of a large international event by the same title that brought together nearly four hundred participants, representing different fields of expertise within the youth field in May 2004 to analyse the ambivalent relationship between globalisation and young people,

*“... Whether young people live in the developed world, where a lack of corporate responsibility and the need for government to deliver on economic growth, creates risks for young people’s transitions from education to the world of work or whether they live in developing countries, where abject poverty, the lack of a functioning state or the presence of conflict threaten their daily existence, the condition of youth in the context of globalisation has become highly insecure.”<sup>40</sup>*

Although it is not useful to over-generalise, the key conclusion of the event, confirmed by United Nations World Youth Reports published in both 2003 and 2005 and by the World Bank’s recently completed Human Development Report on Youth, is that globalisation is an important challenge for youth policy making in four areas cutting across the life chances of young people, namely the areas of poverty and exclusion, rights and access, diversity and living together and political participation and governance. In relation to each of these areas, young people, irrespective of their geographical location, experience opportunities and risks. In many cases, the

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<sup>39</sup> United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, “World Youth Report 2003 – The Global Situation of Young People”, United Nations Publication, 2004, pp. 303-304.

<sup>40</sup> Yael Ohana (Editor), “How Big Is Your World – An Anthology”, Council of Europe Publishing, Strasbourg, September 2005, p. 176.

existence of specific evidence based policies for addressing such issues can determine whether a young person is able to take avert the risks by globalisation and take advantage of the opportunities it offers.

In relation to their socio-economic futures, young people legitimately fear falling into poverty and exclusion. In almost all countries of the world, young people remain disadvantaged in entry into the labour market, in terms of the availability of legal, correctly remunerated and protected work and once on it, in terms of differential wages and prospects. On the question of rights, young people legitimately feel disappointment because they see the shrinking of social and educational rights previously considered *acquis*. On the issue of diversity, young people are concerned by the tendency towards marginalisation of those considered “different” in some way and would prefer to live in societies acceptant of diversity. At the same time, they are also concerned for the sustainability of their cultural traditions. Finally, in relation to political participation and governance, young people legitimately feel disenfranchised from “traditional” political processes, not seeing their concerns represented in the public sphere and not finding ways to engage their motivation and political ideals.

The World Youth Report 2005 outlines some important and relatively stark facts about the situation of young people worldwide including that

- According to data from 2002, 209 million young people, or 18 percent of the world population of young people, are living on less than US \$1 per day and that a further 515 million young people are living on less than US \$2 per day. The life chances of young people are significantly conditioned by whether they are born into poverty or not;
- Despite the fact that since 1995, the education completion rate among young people has consistently increased, some 113 million children are not in school and 130 million young people are illiterate;
- Global youth unemployment has increased to an unprecedented high, reaching 88 million at last count;
- The primary cause of mortality in young people is HIV/AIDS, followed by violence and injuries. Some 10 million young people are currently living with the disease. Young people are particularly vulnerable to infection.
- Young people are starting to have sex earlier and are marrying later. Where they have the choice, they postpone becoming parents. Even though early pregnancy is on the decline in some countries, it remains a significant problem;
- The use of synthetic drugs by young people, particularly in recreational situations, has increased significantly, with many governments responding by criminalising young people concerned and using measures including incarceration;
- The digital divide affects a huge number of young people, effectively marginalising them from participation in the information society<sup>41</sup>.

Such a bird’s eye overview notwithstanding, some young people fare far worse as a result of globalisation than others. While public youth policy making in the field of youth should be targeted at all young people, some young people may be legitimately considered as more in need of policy attention than others. According to the World Youth Report 2005, some global trends affect young people disproportionately negatively. Therefore, the situations of young people

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<sup>41</sup> United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, “World Youth Report 2003 – The Global Situation of Young People”, United Nations Publication, 2004, pp. 3-5.

caught in conflict situations, of those affected by HIV/AIDS and of those who demonstrate a propensity to high-risk behaviour in the youth phase (substance use, unprotected sex, etc) are of extreme concern. The situation of young women and girls in general also needs special attention. In relation to the situation of even the most vulnerable young people, young women and girls tend to be disadvantaged.<sup>42</sup>

In relation to the above trends, Europe and Central Asia may occupy something of an ambivalent position. This notwithstanding, young people in the region are significantly vulnerable to the problems outlined above, even if it has been noted that young people have also been able to develop remarkable resilience to the challenges they face and to their own vulnerability.

By way of example, adolescent reproductive and sexual health is indicative. The social and cultural development of the countries in the region, diversity notwithstanding, has been conditioned significantly by its political history of state socialism and authoritarianism and recent political and economic transitions. Values and attitudes relating to family formation, sex and reproductive practices continue, on the one hand, to be conditioned traditionalism and conservatism. The return of “official” religion has certainly had an important influence. The current authoritarianism evident in the political development of many countries in the region is also taking its toll on the attitudinal development of young people. In the absence of independent media and alternative references for value formation, “official propaganda” becomes truth. On the other hand, young people are more than ever exposed to media images glorifying experimentation, risk-taking and promiscuity, even if individualisation is less widespread than in Western Europe. In the absence of adequate role models, youth friendly services and comprehensive sex education provision, vulnerability is almost inevitable. Many of the countries in this region have also been subject to state failure or torn apart by conflict. Families and faith communities have had to take over the provision of welfare for ever larger groups of people, creating a strong social role and authority for such institutions and their values in the post-conflict society and once a functioning state has been re-established. While on the one hand this can have positive effects, such societies also tend to be significantly intolerant towards “deviance” and young people demonstrating any sexual behaviour other than that officially acceptable or lifestyles that do not correspond to the majority understanding of normality can easily become marginalized and demonised, only adding to their vulnerability.

As explored in a previous section of this study, a sociological understanding of young people means taking a differentiated approach to their needs and concerns. In other words, it means to consider the diversity that young people may represent, despite their common features of age and youthfulness. For policy and policy makers, this is highly challenging and demands that policies for young people take into account the diverse situations and needs that young people live. The above trends can provide insight into the situations and needs of young people at the same time as demonstrating the diversity of ways in which young people may experience their situations. Indeed, if anything, the trends outlined above can provide policy makers with a basis on which to better assess the ways in which young people’s experiences of their situations may be determined by other factors, such as gender, sexual orientation or ethnicity, and not just age.

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<sup>42</sup> United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, “World Youth Report 2005 – Young People Today, and in 2015”, United Nations Publication, October 2005, pp. 3-7.

**Part IV**  
**Youth and Social Policy in Seven Countries of Europe and Central Asia**



## Introduction – Youth Populations in Europe and Central Asia

In line with European trends, the share of young people (variably defined by age range) living in this region and in these seven countries is gradually getting smaller, as a result of declining fertility and growing economic migration, even if the process of demographic decline has begun later and is taking place at a somewhat slower rate than in other parts of Europe. Nevertheless young people represent a significant share of the population, often proportionately larger than in other regions or countries of Europe (especially Western Europe). Such “youth bulges” could have significant development potential for the countries concerned.

Overall **Albania**, in comparison to other European countries, with an average age of 28,6 years<sup>43</sup>, with 40% of the population being under 18 years old<sup>44</sup>, and a GDP per capita of only 1,499 USD (data 2003)<sup>45</sup>, can be considered the youngest and the poorest population in Europe. Out of the 17% of young people aged between 15 to 24 years (of the overall population), 20% are thought to have migrated in search for economic opportunities abroad.<sup>46</sup> Poverty, high unemployment, neighbouring conflicts, social insecurity, declining health and education indicators, as well as an increase in crime and gender discrimination accompany the current generation of young people, causing more and more of them to leave Albania, mainly to neighbouring Italy or Greece. Changes in population dynamics are the most dramatic consequences of the demographic transition, characterized by smaller families and a decline in household size<sup>47</sup>. Still young people represent a significant number in the Albanian society with a potential to contribute to its transformation and development.

According to the Armenian Statistical Yearbook for 2005, published by the National Statistic Service of the **Republic of Armenia**, the number of people aged 16 to 30 is 840,200, which represents 26,1% of the general population<sup>48</sup>. According to the same document, the subjects of state youth policy are a) citizens of the Republic of Armenia aged 16 to 30, b) foreign citizens aged of 16 to 30, who do not have Armenian citizenship, but whose presence in the Republic of Armenia imposes certain responsibilities on state bodies, c) NGOs registered in the Republic of Armenia, in which the age of the members does not exceed 30 or NGOs that deal with the affairs of young people up to the age of 30 and d) young families, in which one of the parents is younger than 30 years of age<sup>49</sup>.

In legislation young people in **Bosnia & Herzegovina** are defined as individuals between 14 and 29 years of age. It is estimated that there were 950,330 young people between the ages of 15 and 30 in Bosnia & Herzegovina in 2000 (24% of the country's total population). Total population is fairly consistently measured at about 3,9 million. Following the 1992 to 1995 war and subsequent hardships, there has been massive emigration of working-age people.<sup>50</sup> This is reflected in the widespread desire of young Bosnians to move abroad, in some cases permanently.<sup>51</sup> Estimates currently run at 62% of young people wishing to leave the country.

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<sup>43</sup> Millennium Development Goals, Report Albania, p.64

<sup>44</sup> NSP Albania, 2004-2010, p.9.

<sup>45</sup> UNDP Albania Draft Country Programme, p.2.

<sup>46</sup> INSTAT, 2002, NSP Albania, 2004-2010, p.9.

<sup>47</sup> UNDP Albania Draft Country Programme, p.2.

<sup>48</sup> Armenian National Youth Policy Report, p. 19.

<sup>49</sup> *Op cit.*

<sup>50</sup> PRB-UNFPA Country Profile, 2005, p. 298.

<sup>51</sup> OIA Evaluation of youth policy in Bosnia & Herzegovina  
[www.un.org/esa/socdev/unyin/documents/wpaysubmissions/bosnia.pdf](http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unyin/documents/wpaysubmissions/bosnia.pdf).

Young people, however, still make up 20% of the entire electoral body<sup>52</sup>. The median age is 38.<sup>53</sup> Many young people, particularly men, died in the conflict or left as refugees (the population in 1990 was 4.3 million, roughly 10% higher than today<sup>54</sup>). GDP per capita is \$6,029 PPP.<sup>55</sup> Between 2000 and 2025, the population aged 10 to 24 is expected to decline from 900,000 (24% of total) to 700,000 (18%).<sup>56</sup>

**Bulgaria**, with a population of 7,801,273 persons (2003), with 1,077,137 young people aged 15 – 25, and 1,697,274 young people aged 18 – 35 years<sup>57</sup>, is considered one of the leading countries in the world in terms of low birth rate (9 per 1000) and negative natural population growth (population growth was –5.1 per 1000 in 2000)<sup>58</sup>. The population has decreased by over one million since the last population census prior to the period of transition – 8,948,649 (1985), and nearly by half a million since the first census after the beginning of the transition – 8,487,317 (1992) <sup>59</sup>. Bulgaria has also witnessed a trend towards an increase in young people’s emigration among those aged 10 – 35 (especially in the period 1985 and 1992)<sup>60</sup>, which mainly represented highly educated, well-prepared and competitive young people<sup>61</sup>. The proportion of urban population increased to 69 per cent, with prevalent migration from villages to towns. These trends lead to considerable qualitative and quantitative changes in the number of young people.

In 2005, the population of **Turkey** was estimated at 73,2 million, with 13,5 million people aged 15 to 24 (or 18,4% of the overall population). The population aged 0 to 14 was 21,4 million (or 29% of the overall population).<sup>62</sup> However, in line with European trends, the share of the population aged 15 to 24 is dropping gradually, from 20% in 2000 to a projected 17% in 2015. This is in line with a general slowing down of the population growth rate, related primarily to dropping levels of fertility, although significant disparities between rural and urban contexts apply.<sup>63</sup> These figures demonstrate that approximately 50% of the Turkish population is young. Emigration patterns have changed, though, since the 1980s, when a significant percentage of young people left the country to work abroad.

<sup>52</sup> Independent Evaluation of the Bosnia & Herzegovina National Youth Policy, p.2.

<sup>53</sup> PRB-UNFPA Country Profile, 2005, p. 298.

<sup>54</sup> *Op cit.*

<sup>55</sup> *Op cit*, p. 299.

<sup>56</sup> Population Reference Bureau, [http://www.prb.org/TemplateTop.cfm?Section=PRB\\_Country\\_Profiles&template=/customsource/countryprofile/countryprofiledisplay.cfm&Country=500](http://www.prb.org/TemplateTop.cfm?Section=PRB_Country_Profiles&template=/customsource/countryprofile/countryprofiledisplay.cfm&Country=500).

<sup>57</sup> Elitza Neshevska, Deputy Minister of Youth and Sports (responsible for youth affairs at the Ministry of Youth and Sports of the Republic of Bulgaria), “Youth Policy in Bulgaria” in Forum 21, European Journal of Youth Policy, [www.coe.int/youth/forum21](http://www.coe.int/youth/forum21).

<sup>58</sup> Lilia Raycheva, Katya Hristova, Dessislava Radomirova, Rossen Ginev, “YSPDB report about situation of young people in Bulgaria, youth NGOs and youth policy and relations with government”, Youth Society for Peace and Development of the Balkans, Plovdiv, Bulgaria, *op cit*.

<sup>59</sup> Bulgaria: Childhood in Transition in Children Welfare in Ageing Europe, p. 3.

<sup>60</sup> Lilia Raycheva, Katya Hristova, Dessislava Radomirova, Rossen Ginev, “YSPDB report about situation of young people in Bulgaria, youth NGOs and youth policy and relations with government”, Youth Society for Peace and Development of the Balkans, Plovdiv, Bulgaria, *op cit*.

<sup>61</sup> Elitza Neshevska, Deputy Minister of Youth and Sports (responsible for youth affairs at the Ministry of Youth and Sports of the Republic of Bulgaria), “Youth Policy in Bulgaria” in Forum 21, European Journal of Youth Policy, [www.coe.int/youth/forum21](http://www.coe.int/youth/forum21), *op cit*.

<sup>62</sup> World Population Prospects, United Nations Populations Division, available at <http://esa.un.org/unpp/index.asp?panel=2>.

<sup>63</sup> World Population Prospects, United Nations Populations Division, available at <http://esa.un.org/unpp/index.asp?panel=2>, *op cit*.

The first national population census in **Ukraine** (2001) indicated that 5,312 000 adolescents aged 12 to 18 resided in Ukraine with overall population of more than 48 million. Young males constitute 51,1% of the youth population. and young females 48,9%. 69,9% of young people live in urban areas. The birth rate in rural areas remain traditionally less influenced by the economic, demographic and political factors, therefore the ratio of adolescents in the rural areas remain more stable than in the cities. According to the recent inter-census period the number of adolescents has increased by 4,2%, which is due to the period of the highest childbearing activity in the late 1980s. According to the 2001 census, the share of adolescents among children and youth under 28 was 29,4%, which amounted to 11% of the overall population in Ukraine<sup>64</sup>. Ukraine as many other countries in Europe, has a negative natural population growth of -7,5 per 1000, and migration of -0.5 per 1000<sup>65</sup>.

Like in much of the Central Asia, youth matters are important for **Uzbekistan** where the median age is just 24 years of age<sup>66</sup> and approximately 60% of the country population consists of young people under the age of 25 and 36% cent is under the age of 15.<sup>67</sup> Most of the 26 million members of the population live in the rural areas (64%), while only 36% live in the cities. The birth rate still remains the major factor in the growth of the population, however, it continues to decrease from year to year and this tendency has become constant. After an insignificant increase in the number of births in 2004, the number of births in 2005 decreased again from 540.4 to 538 thousand. More than two thirds of the newborns (69,1%) were registered in rural areas. With intensive demographic growth and a significant proportion of families living on the poverty line, providing the new generation with decent work is becoming an important day to day challenge<sup>68</sup>. There are no clear indications on the extent of youth migration from Uzbekistan.

In the following sections, information concerning the situation and life conditions of young people in the seven countries is presented in an aggregated and synthetic manner, backed up with relevant and illustrative examples from each of the countries. The findings of the individual country reports have been compared to present a certain number of common trends and to identify special or exceptional cases, using the following five thematic categories, taking into account UNFPA information needs about young people and social, family and other relevant policies pertaining to their welfare and development:

- population and fertility
- development and socio-economic conditions
- the health of young people
- gender equality and the participation of young women
- participation of young people

Each discussion shall address two categories of trends. In the first place, trends apparent in the situations and life conditions of young people in the countries concerned, which may be relevant for the region more broadly are described. In the second place, an assessment of the policy

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<sup>64</sup> UNDP, Ministry of Health of Ukraine, Ukrainian Family Planning Association, “Reproductive and Sexual Health of Adolescents in Ukraine - Situational Analysis”, 2004, p. 6.

<sup>65</sup> United States Central Intelligence Agency, General Statistical Information about Ukraine, available at <https://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/up.html>.

<sup>66</sup> <http://www.unfpa.org/news/news.cfm?ID=869>

<sup>67</sup> <http://www.unfpa.uz/ca010101.html>

<sup>68</sup> Eurasia Studies Program – Summary of a Conference hosted by The National Bureau of Asian Research in Washington, D.C. on March 2, 2006.

“environment” in the countries under consideration in relation to the specific needs of young people for support and development is made.

The concluding section of the chapter as a whole will focus on the presence or absence of specific youth policies in the countries concerned and tendencies in relation to youth policy making. It assessES the opportunity and potential for the elaboration of holistic, cross-sectoral policies pertaining to young people in the countries concerned and possibly in the region.

Throughout this chapter, occasional references will be made to initiatives of a complementary nature to government policy undertaken by the UN, international and local NGOs and other relevant actors. It is noteworthy that examples of good practise have ideally been undertaken in cooperation with all relevant stakeholders including government, but there are some cases where government involvement was missing. It is hoped that such examples, taken in conjunction with the assessments made in this chapter, will provide clues for the development of more broad based and effective youth friendly advocacy and programming in UNFPA core programmeareas. A more in-depth discussion of the complementary nature of UN programming more broadly will be undertaken in Part V of this study.

### **Population and Fertility**

As has been explored in some depth in Part I of this study, European fertility rates have been on the decline since the 1960s. In Central Asia, the trend may have begun a little later but it is well established by now. Some countries in Europe and Central Asia have recently entered the category of “lowest-low fertility” countries, with the fertility rate having plummeted to well under the replacement rate of 2.1 children per woman. Nevertheless, while recent research indicates that fertility continues shrinking, fertility rates in most of the countries covered by this study Central Asia region of UNFPA remain higher than in other parts of Europe, especially if one takes regional differences into account.

#### **Fertility**

**Albania** demonstrates significantly lower fertility (21% decline in the Total Fertility Rate (TFR) between 1993 and 2002 according to the Ministry of Health) and changing attitudes towards marriage (Median age of first marriage is 21,9 and first live birth is 23,4) in comparison to the pre-transition period.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Reproductive Health Survey, implemented in 2002 in cooperation of Institute of Public Health, Albanian Ministry of Health, Institute of Statistics, Division of Reproductive Health, Georgia, USA, USAID, UNFPA and UNICEF, Published in May 2005.

**Armenia** has witnessed a net reduction in the absolute and relative number of marriages and births from 1990 to 1998, referred to as the “transition period”. The total fertility rate is estimated at 1.33 children per woman (estimate for 2006).<sup>70</sup>

The total fertility rate in **Bosnia & Herzegovina** is around 1.5 for women 15 to 49.<sup>71</sup> This was already low (1.7) in 1990, especially considering that the Bosnian population fits a profile associated with higher than average birth rates (more than half rural, largely Muslim). One great problem is that statistics in general, including those on fertility, are not broken down by rural-urban category.

**Bulgarian** family and fertility demography has been affected by postponement processes, characterized by a negative national birthrate increase to –5,6 per 1000. The recent studies indicate that a significant proportion, about 2,9 million of households (70,5%) is without children. Over the past ten years, there is a slight increase in the average age of first birth for Bulgarian women from 22 to 23,8 years. More and more women enter marriage at later ages, compared to the years before. However, while in the 80s approximately every tenth child was born out of marriage, in 2001 it is almost every second. The new tendency in Bulgaria is that 17,6% of the population aged 15 – 29 live together without being married<sup>72</sup>.

In **Turkey**, a general slowing down of the population growth rate has been observed. This is related primarily to dropping levels of fertility: from 3,1 lifetime births per woman in 1990, to 2,7 in 2005 (UNFPA;<sup>73</sup> the UN Population Division estimates 2.21 TFR by 2010-15<sup>74</sup>), although there are great regional disparities in fertility, with already 2,4 births per woman in urban areas against 3,1 in rural areas.<sup>75</sup>

The phenomenon of lowest-low fertility in **Ukraine**, where population growth is -1.1 one of the world's lowest. Although Ukraine has witnessed political and economic transformations in the past decade, it has maintained a young age at first birth and nearly universal childbearing. It seems that the persistence of traditional norms for childbearing and the roles of men and women, concerns about medical complications and infertility at a later age and the link between early fertility and early marriage still prevail<sup>76</sup>.

In **Uzbekistan** the birth rate has decreased 1,7 times from 1991 to 19,8 per 1000 in 2002 and this tendency seems to be constant. In this period the annual population growth rate fell from 2.2% to 1.2%. More than two thirds of the newborns (69.1%) were registered in rural areas. It is interesting to note that with use of contraceptives, there was a drop of the abortion rate from 40 for every 1000 live births to 9 for 1000 births.<sup>77</sup>

<sup>70</sup> Source: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Demographics\\_of\\_Armenia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Demographics_of_Armenia) accessed on 30.11.2006.

<sup>71</sup> PRB-UNFPA Country Profile, 2005, p. 298, available at [http://www.prb.org/pdf06/2005UNFPA\\_CountryProfiles\\_EEuropeCAsia.pdf](http://www.prb.org/pdf06/2005UNFPA_CountryProfiles_EEuropeCAsia.pdf).

<sup>72</sup> Elena Koytcheva, “Contemporary union formation in Bulgaria: The emergence of cohabitation”, paper prepared for presentation at the XXV International Population Conference of the International Union for the Scientific Study of the Population, Tours, France, July 18-23, 2005.

<sup>73</sup> UNFPA, <http://www.unfpa.org/profile/turkey.cfm>.

<sup>74</sup> World Population Prospects, *op. cit.*

<sup>75</sup> *Op cit.*

<sup>76</sup> [http://taylorandfrancis.metapress.com/\(dkzj303300ozhb55kvh3yc2v\)/app/home/contribution.asp?referrer=parent&backto=issue,5,10;journal,6,67;linkingpublicationresults,1:300383,1](http://taylorandfrancis.metapress.com/(dkzj303300ozhb55kvh3yc2v)/app/home/contribution.asp?referrer=parent&backto=issue,5,10;journal,6,67;linkingpublicationresults,1:300383,1).

<sup>77</sup> <http://www.unece.org/stats/trends2005/profiles/Uzbekistan.pdf>.

It is noteworthy that falling fertility can also be the result of war and violent conflict. Young people caught up in the throes of war can neither afford nor wish to bring children into the world. This has exacerbated the declining fertility rates of countries affected by war, such as Armenia or Bosnia & Herzegovina.

Our study reveals mixed results as concerns age of initiation into sex and the instance of pre-marital sex. From the available information, it is not possible to conclude that in general all the countries demonstrate trends in sexuality and sexual activity commensurate with other parts of Europe or globally. In other words, not all countries demonstrate a rise in the instance of pre-marital sex or a decrease in the age of initiation into sex, although arguably this could easily be the result of the lack of reliable data than any other factor.

For example, in Albania 1/3 of young adult women reported having had a sexual experience and 14%, or 42% of those with sexual experience, had had premarital sex and almost all (99%) reported it to have taken place with their fiancée or boyfriend. Among young adult males, 29% reported having had a sexual experience and 27%, or 91% of those with sexual experience, had had premarital sex. Most men with premarital sexual experience reported their first partner to be a girl friend (43%), a lover (19%) or a friend (14%). Only 1% reported that their first sexual encounter was with a prostitute. On the other hand, in Bosnia & Herzegovina, a recent study revealed that first sexual encounters take place between the ages of 16 and 20, which in comparison to other countries in Europe is not young. There is almost no data available concerning the sexuality of young people in Turkey. Pre-marital sex is widely considered taboo. It is, however, common knowledge that sexually active young people who can afford to must frequent private clinics to acquire contraception as a result of the stigma attached to pre-marital sex.

The age of marriage or alternative union formation (such as, long term partnership) on the other hand is definitely increasing, even in some of the more traditional societies, including Albania and Turkey, although one must be wary of the significant regional and urban-rural differences that exist in those countries. A more detailed discussion of counter tendencies, such as the under legal age marriage of girls, is undertaken in both the country reports for those countries and the section on Gender later in this chapter. A notable exception is Armenia, however, where the average age at first marriage for young women decreased slightly during the period 1990 to 1998 (referred to as the period of “transition”). This is attributed to the fact that young women have experienced a reduction in their educational and employment opportunities during the transition and, hence, get married younger. The trend is the opposite for young men, however, with evidence that their age at first marriage is increasing steadily.<sup>78</sup>

It is also becoming more common for young couples to defer becoming parents for the first time to a stage of life when socio-economic conditions are better and more secure. A more in-depth discussion of the reasons for this in general is outlined in Part I of the study. Concrete examples of this can be found in all the countries of surveyed in this study. For example, although family still remains the basic cell of the Albanian society, in recent years the number of divorces and hospital-based abortions (legalised in 1992) has increased dramatically. According to the Child Rights report, in 1997, one in every three pregnancies ended with abortion with the highest rate for women between 25 and 34 years of age.<sup>79</sup> There is evidence of an increase in the instance of single parenthood, very young families and divorce, about which the government is concerned.

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<sup>78</sup> Armenian National Youth Policy Report, 2005.

<sup>79</sup> Child Rights Report, Children Human Rights Centre Albania, p. 3.

In policy terms, several countries had pro-natalist policies under state socialism, with reproductive health services being significantly limited to mother and child services and services for mothers to be, the notable example being Albania. Most of these countries legalised abortion and made it available through public health services, and in theory, family planning services have been legalised, although access to and information about such services can be problematic and unavailable for young potential clients. Often such services are provided by private clinics and are little known. On the other hand, improvements in legislation have not necessarily been accompanied by improvements in implementation or the quality of information and service in the field of family planning and the availability of contraception remains patchy.

Traditional attitudes to family planning and strong moral pressure on young women to fulfil reproductive roles are common in the countries surveyed. Where government is not responsible for this pressure, through pro-natalist policies, then family, religious and social institutions are, with notable examples being Albania, Armenia and Turkey. In cases where government does pursue pro-natalist policies, this can often be linked to authoritarian political regimes and populist approaches to governance, with the fate of the “strong nation” being causally related to the ability of young women to produce bouncing national babies, a notable example of which is Uzbekistan. During the recent Council of Europe International Youth Policy Review Expert Team visit to the Ministry of Health of Armenia, the representative stated that their objective is to “produce healthy mothers and soldiers”. It is noteworthy that such attitudes in policy making run contrary to the widespread formal accession of the countries surveyed to international best practise, for example commitments made to implement the rights based ICPD Programme of Action.

### ***Conclusions***

The countries in question face several key challenges in relation to the position of young people in social policy directly influenced by population dynamics.

In the first place, the evidence base for adequately informed policy making is often not available, due to the fact that the instruments available to the countries in question for following population dynamics are not able to keep up with the rapidity of the changes taking place. Some common methods for gathering population information, such as household surveys, are also not well adapted to the changes taking place in the nature of social and family relations to be able to provide a timely and fully accurate evidence base to policy making in this field. In relation to young people, household surveys have the disadvantage of making young people invisible, because they do not adequately take into account the age of the household members and the changing nature of their positions in relation to family members of other age groups. Youth demography is also changing at such a rapid pace that the ten-year time frame for collection and analysis of census data in relation to population change is far too slow. By the time the data becomes available to policy makers, the trends have in fact already changed and policies taking into account the “evidence” will be obsolete.

A second challenge is that of who should be responsible for the collection of relevant population data. There is clearly a lack of experience and capacity (in terms of financial and human resources and in terms of knowledge) at both local and national levels in the countries covered by our study in relation to how to conduct relevant and methodologically sound census and survey activities that take into account the youth dimension of population dynamics. UN agencies have a certain level of capacity in the field of population dynamics but they may not be

sensitive enough to the need for specific youth related research to be integrated into the standard activities and their mandates are not always adapted to lending a hand in practise.

In relation to the question of low and ever decreasing fertility, two trends may be observed, both of which demonstrate that young people consider primarily their perspectives for the future, or lack thereof, in making decisions about whether and when to have children. In the first place, and particularly among traditional, rural and ethnic minority communities, young people, especially young women, who have little or no perspective of studying or finding a job, whether because of poor social perspectives or because of traditional female roles, continue to start families early, if compared to Western Europe. This is, to some extent, commensurate with the situation in other “developing” regions, where children are seen as the guarantee of economic and social security and where, therefore, one witnesses significant population growth. Nevertheless, if one looks at urban areas, the trend towards postponement of having children is visible. Young people indicate that they postpone decisions on becoming parents to a later stage of life because they feel their socio-economic situation is not conducive to having children at a younger age.

It can, therefore, be concluded that if young people had more confidence in their life chances, they would potentially be amenable to having children sooner. It is not possible to say if this would encourage them to have more children in the long run, because the ability to afford having children and the costs that go with it, seem to be an important factor. This also implies that limiting access to contraception and social constructions to keep young women in the home (e.g. not providing adequate services to support the combining of educational or professional activities with childrearing) may not have the desired effect of increasing fertility. In fact, there is evidence to suggest that limited access to contraception can have negative side effects, such as increasing the vulnerability of young people, young women in particular, to contracting STDs and increases in unwanted pregnancy and abortion.

One can, therefore, conclude that there is a significant need for the development of progressive family policies, that take into account the above decision making process on the part of young people in relation to founding a family, and which provide enhanced support to young parents, so that they feel confident enough that if they do bring more children into the world, they will be able to provide for them adequately. If combined with comprehensive sexual health education, accessible and affordable childcare facilities and access to contraception, such policies could see young people making choices in favour of having more children sooner and a decrease in the instance of unwanted pregnancy terminated by abortion.

## **Development and Socio-Economic Conditions**

### **Poverty and Vulnerability**

The political and economic transition, as well as war or frozen conflict, have taken their toll on the socio-economic conditions of young people, particularly as regards their poverty and vulnerability.

In countries like Albania, Armenia, Turkey, Ukraine and Uzbekistan, the largest majority of young people live in relative poverty, often employed in the grey rather than the formal economy if they have any access to the labour market at all, earning irregular or no income and partially responsible for making sure that their families (as young parents or as working children) manage to make ends meet. In countries like Bosnia & Herzegovina, however, poverty is something of a



newer phenomenon, dating back to the economic decline of Yugoslavia and the devastating effects of war. Young people find it most difficult to find and keep correctly paid and protected work, even when they are highly qualified. The nature of poverty in Bulgaria is similar to that of Bosnia & Herzegovina, the fact that Bulgaria was not devastated by war notwithstanding. With accession to the European Union guaranteed and the investment of government and EU in combating youth unemployment the position of young people seems to be improving.

In both Turkey and Armenia, lack of capacity and infrastructure to absorb such devastating shocks as earthquakes, have exacerbated problems of poverty for the whole population. Young people, as other vulnerable categories of the population, are disproportionately affected by the longer term effects of such natural disasters, including the isolation associated with the destruction of essential infrastructure and the disruption to the most basic social services, especially education.

### Youth Poverty

In comparison to other European countries, **Albania**, with an average age of 28,6 years<sup>80</sup>, with 40% of the population being under 18 years old<sup>81</sup>, and a GDP per capita of only 1,499 USD (data 2003)<sup>82</sup>, can be considered the youngest and the poorest population in Europe. Almost half the poor in Albania are under the age of 21.

In **Armenia**, almost 26,1% of the population is aged between 16 and 30, many of which live under the poverty line. According to the World Bank, population living under the poverty line still represents 40% of the overall population, the data however differs, and some sources refer to up to 80% of the population. Women and children are amongst the most vulnerable groups together with migrants and the disabled.

In **Bosnia & Herzegovina**, 40% of the overall population considers that it can barely meet its basic daily needs. Almost a 25% of the overall population of the country is aged between 15 and 30 and, therefore, considered young.

The poverty line in **Bulgaria** has been rising in the past few years (to Euro 52.5 a month in 1999), whilst the percentage share of poor households has been declining. Overall, the poverty rates in EU candidate countries, member states, and Bulgaria do not differ significantly<sup>83</sup>. More specifically, Bulgarian poor are more likely to be found among the youth in rural areas (29.1 % in 2003 compared to 18.7 % in urban areas). Although only a fifth of the population lives in households with five or more members, they account for about 41 % of the poor. Furthermore, Roma households representing about 6 % of the population count for over a fifth of the poor. Finally, the risk of poverty is slightly higher in households headed by women, usually single parent households.

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<sup>80</sup> Millennium Development Goals Report Albania, p.64.

<sup>81</sup> NSP Albania, 2004-2010, p.9.

<sup>82</sup> UNDP Albania Draft Country Programme, p.2.

<sup>83</sup> Lilia Raycheva, Katya Hristova, Dessislava Radomirova, Rossen Ginev, "YSPDB report about situation of young people in Bulgaria, youth NGOS and youth policy and relations with government", Youth Society for Peace and Development of the Balkans, Plovdiv, Bulgaria, *op cit*.

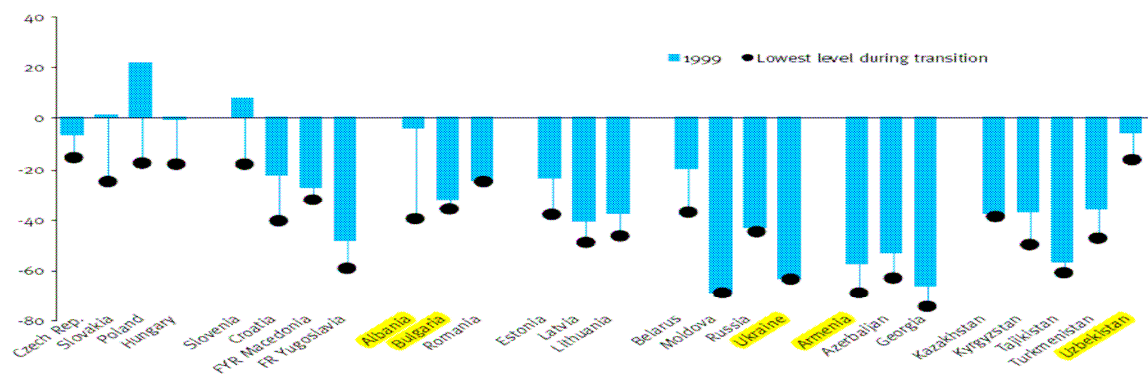
Almost 50% of the overall population of **Turkey** is aged under 25 years of age. Serious poverty is widespread with significantly large provinces in the East and South demonstrating incomes of just 7% of the EU average. Young people aged 30 or under, are significantly overrepresented among rural to urban migrants living in appalling conditions in urban and peri-urban temporary settlements that have become permanent.

Since 1988, when absolute poverty in **Ukraine** was 1,6%, the rates have been increasing. In 1999, the latest year for which data are available, 81,7% of the population lived on US\$ 4.30 or less per day. According to an ILO/UNDP survey, 46,8% of the Ukrainian population identified themselves as “poor,” and an additional 36,9% identified themselves as being “not well off”; out of these 42 percent of the poor are children and youth (0 to 24) compared to only 30 percent in the overall population. Starting from similar levels of poverty across locations in 1999, poverty incidence in rural areas in 2003 is more than twice that of large cities.

27.5% of **Uzbekistan’s** population (6,8 million people) can be classified as poor in 2001, based on the 2,100 calories poverty line. As in many developing countries, being poor in Uzbekistan is connected with a low level of living standards, directly related to the quality of access to health care, education services, basic public utilities, such as clean water and adequate sanitation. Most of the poor households are concentrated in rural and remote areas. About 70% of the whole population lives in rural areas and 30.5% of the poor are there, as compared to 22,5% in urban areas. A common characteristic of poor families is that the head of household is unemployed and there are many children (about 50% are in this situation).

Some more specific characteristics of poverty in these countries are clearly recognisable. In all these countries, social institutions and public welfare systems are fragile and in some they have completely broken down. Young people have little choice but to invent coping strategies for themselves or to rely on their families for assistance when they are in financial or social difficulty. Those without family support or lacking in demanded skills and competencies, clearly fall by the wayside. Few young people can afford to leave the family home during their studies or even when they first to begin to work.

**Figure 1: GDP in 1999 and at its lowest level during the transition (1989 = 100):<sup>84</sup>**



<sup>84</sup> UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre, “Young People in Changing Societies - A Summary”, Regional Monitoring Report, n. 7 - 2000, August 2000, p.2.

In addition, the rural-urban divide is significant for tracking poverty among young people and internal migration from rural to urban and peri-urban areas is exacerbating youth poverty. In regions where agriculture is a predominant income generating activity, young people are faced with the fact that farming is not a viable means for maintaining a family and often go to the city in search of better opportunities. More often than not, those cities are equipped neither to provide them with employment nor with decent living conditions.

Some young people are more vulnerable than others, even among poor young people. Young women, young people from minority backgrounds (especially, Roma, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender [LGBT] and disabled young people) and young men outside of work and education systems are the most vulnerable, hardest hit and least able to pull themselves out of poverty once they have fallen into it. A notable and worrying development is that, in the face of fewer opportunities, young women are retreating into the family and being withdrawn from economic and public life. Notable also, is the situation of rural youth, especially young women, who more often than not are excluded and isolated from mainstream opportunities in education, employment, mobility and resulting from technological advances (for example, the availability and affordability of information and communication technologies).

For example, as a result of the war, many young people in Armenia have become disabled or are refugees. Both sets of young people are significantly vulnerable. In the first place, those young men injured in the war have had difficulty to reintegrate mainstream society and the government has not been able to provide them with significant opportunities to gain relevant skills or access to the labour market. Similarly, refugee young people have significant difficulties to integrate mainstream society, living in temporary accommodation and dependent on public assistance for survival. Both of these groups of young people have significant psycho-social problems, as a result of the trauma of war and of displacement, that impede their integration.

Roma young people and LGBT youth suffer not only from poverty but from extensive discrimination, often in the form of physical violence, making them even more likely to remain in poverty and even more socially vulnerable. Young men outside of school and work are at particular risk of becoming involved in crime and high-risk behaviours including drug dealing, substance use and violence. Many countries do not have modern and dedicated juvenile justice systems that can protect young people from the notorious violence and abuse among offenders. It is noteworthy, that this is a particular problem in South Eastern Europe, where young people are less likely to finish secondary school, more likely to be idle and unemployed, as well as more likely to become heroin addicts, commit suicide or to become victims of homicide. Social exclusion and disaffection of boys is directly linked to violence, which in ethnically divided societies can escalate and re-ignite conflict. In all of these cases, poverty, social, cultural and political exclusion interact to reinforce each other. Gender is also an important factor, usually a marker for more severe and longer lasting poverty.

While most of the countries in question have policies that aim at alleviating poverty in general and some have poverty reduction strategies, implementation is problematic. Monitoring the progress and effectiveness of programmes that aim at addressing the root causes of poverty is also problematic. Legislation and policy formulation is of course a positive first step, but without concrete steps to uphold such laws and resources to translate them into real practise, there will be no sustainable improvement in living conditions among the poor.

On the one hand, governments cite a lack of financial resources and human capacity to adequately cover the significant cost of alleviating widespread poverty and providing poor people

with adequate services. Objectively, many of the countries have histories of endemic society-wide poverty, structural problems in the economy and poor economic growth and corruption. But, another, deeper, problem is that of political will and priorities. It is notable that none of the countries covered by this study are found to have specific cross-sectoral poverty prevention and alleviation programmes that address the structural nature of the poverty of young people, even if in some specific areas, like employment or education, there exist targeted programmes.

If the above discussion demonstrates one thing, it is that a significant proportion of young people are extremely vulnerable as a result of the socio-economic conditions they are forced to endure. That vulnerability is a complex phenomenon, resulting from a combination of long term poverty, often inherited from poor parents, and passed on to poorer children. And, while most of the governments concerned have clearly accepted the necessity to treat the most negative consequences of chronic poverty in the whole population, not all have grasped the more profound problem of vulnerability that causes young people to hover around the poverty line, never really managing to pull themselves out of poverty once they fall below the line. The difference in approach may seem like a nuance. But, in a policy making context it can make the difference between the short term alleviation of the symptoms of poverty and the longer term sustainability of a development strategy that takes into account the human rights of each young person, irrespective of the level of development of the country they live in.

## Unemployment

A considerable factor underlying the situations of poverty and the enduring vulnerability experienced by young people described above is the disproportionate manner in which young people are affected by unemployment. Youth unemployment figures provide an overview of the gravity of the situation: young people are most often two times more likely to be unemployed than their elders.

### Youth Unemployment

While for the overall population of **Albania**, in 2001 employment is said to have reached 77% of the active population, for the age group 15 to 24 only 53% was considered to be actively employed. 4 out of 10 employed young people have “temporary” or “occasional” jobs.

Official statistics in **Armenia** state that only 4% of young people are registered as unemployed (accounting for approximately 34,000 persons or 28% of the total number of registered unemployed). In a specially commissioned survey, however, it was found that 22% of those polled said they were without work. Considering the lack of incentive to register as unemployed (it does not provide any significant advantage) and the obvious existence of a grey economy, it is estimated that the actual level of youth unemployment is closer to 30%.<sup>85</sup>

In **Bosnia & Herzegovina**, it is estimated that between 45% and 60% of young people are unemployed, with the unemployment rate being the highest for the 21 to 25 age group. According to statistics for 2002, “unemployment is 2.6 times higher for 19 to 24 year olds than for 25 to 49 year olds and 3.6 times higher than for 50 to 60 year olds”.<sup>86</sup>

<sup>85</sup> Armenian National Youth Report, 2005, pp. 30 – 31.

<sup>86</sup> UNDP Youth Report p.17.

According to the official data, youth unemployment in **Bulgaria** (aged up to 29) decreased in 2003, namely from 172,747 unemployed young people in 2002 to 134,285 in 2003. Unemployed young people represent 26.8% of all unemployed citizens<sup>87</sup>. Unemployment rates for men have been slightly higher than for women, and unemployment among younger people is about double the average rate.

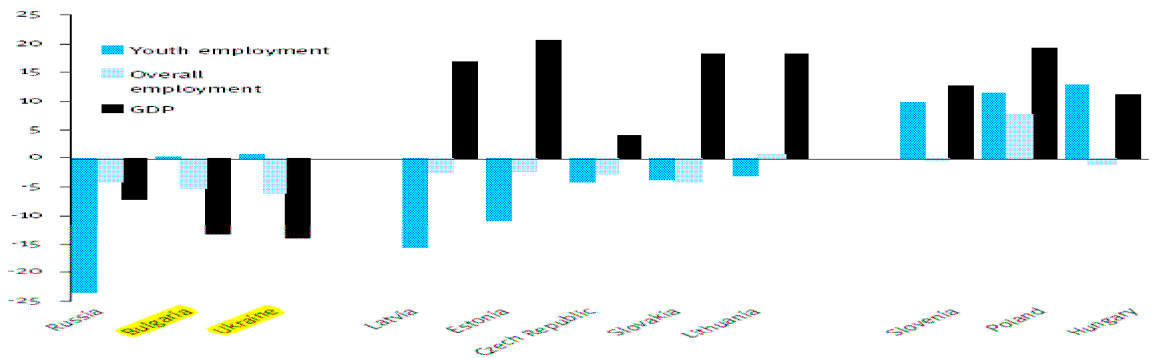
In **Turkey** the unemployment rate is 10,3% on average. But, for young people under 25 it runs at 19,6% and young people make up approximately 43% of all registered unemployed in the country.

The total unemployment rate in **Ukraine** in 2001 was 11.1%, keeping in mind that national rates are based on estimates of people available for and seeking employment and that countries have different definitions of labour force and unemployment. The percentage of young Ukrainians, 15–24 years of age, without work but available for (and seeking) employment was 24% in 2000 – the latest year for which data were available (ILO, 2005)<sup>88</sup>.

In **Uzbekistan** youth unemployment seems to be gradually increasing at the same rate as overall unemployment<sup>89</sup>. The level of overall unemployment is high, especially in rural areas. However, no reliable statistical data is available. Officially, unemployment is 0,6% with 20% underemployment (2004 estimate)<sup>90</sup>. Many young people have difficulty finding work due to the limited opportunities as well as their lack of practical (entrepreneurial) skills.

As visible from the chart below, youth employment has remained stable (albeit at lower levels than in 1989) in both Bulgaria and Ukraine, despite continuing drops in GDP. However in Albania, Armenia and Bosnia & Herzegovina, the rate of youth employment has fallen.

**Figure 2: Youth Employment and Economic Growth 1995-98 (percentage change)<sup>91</sup>:**



<sup>87</sup> Elitza Neshevska, Deputy Minister of Youth and Sports (responsible for youth affairs at the Ministry of Youth and Sports of the Republic of Bulgaria), “Youth Policy in Bulgaria” in Forum 21, European Journal of Youth Policy, [www.coe.int/youth/forum21](http://www.coe.int/youth/forum21), *op cit*.

<sup>88</sup> [http://www.euro.who.int/eprise/main/who/progs/chhukr/demographic/20050131\\_1](http://www.euro.who.int/eprise/main/who/progs/chhukr/demographic/20050131_1)

<sup>89</sup> <http://www.unece.org/stats/trends2005/profiles/Uzbekistan.pdf>

<sup>90</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Economy\\_of\\_Uzbekistan](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Economy_of_Uzbekistan)

<sup>91</sup> UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre, “Young People in Changing Societies - A Summary”, Regional Monitoring Report, n. 7 - 2000, August 2000, *op cit*, p.13.

Research reveals that there are several specific reasons why youth unemployment is endemic in this region. In the first place, the legacy of the breakdown of the state socialist economies of Central and South Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union is obvious. Market economies have in many ways benefited young people, who in principle are the best educated and most mobile generation ever. But, in the neo-liberal economic climate of competition, people are somewhat dispensable and the legal framework protecting young people from the vagaries of globalisation and downsizing is weak.

Secondly, the market economy does not guarantee anyone that they will be able to find a job, only that they will have the opportunity to compete for one. Poor economic growth and a lack of foreign investment in some of the countries have meant the labour market is not able to produce an adequate number of new jobs into which young people could be absorbed. Thirdly, education is not well adapted to the needs of the modern labour market. Essential skills including computers, communications and languages may not be taught, or the qualifications of young people studying in the region may not be recognised or valued at the same level as Western educational qualifications. In addition and probably even more worrying, is that vocational training has almost completely broken down and remains so under-funded that it cannot offer appropriate or necessary training in demanded technical skills.

A problem affecting young people pretty much everywhere is also visible in the countries surveyed. Employers' demands are often unreasonable. Many young people cannot get a job because they have no work experience. But, they cannot get any work experience because they cannot get a job. Young people also have difficulty to develop their entrepreneurial skills, having in the first place little capital to establish a business and little leeway for experimentation, as any loan they may take in order to establish a business has to be paid back with interest. It is particularly difficult for young women to be taken seriously in the business world in societies where traditional gender roles remain entrenched in the local culture. Finally, Armenia and Bosnia & Herzegovina have experienced war, with differential effects, not least the destruction or significant disruption of the economy, the influx of thousands of refugees requiring gainful employment or the emigration of thousands of refugees to escape the destruction, with all the negative effects this can have on the functionality of the economy.

Although economic growth is generally understood as the precondition for increased youth employment, specific measures focusing on the structural nature of youth unemployment and aimed at the creation of jobs rather than at decreasing or alleviating unemployment are currently insufficient in all the countries covered by the study, despite the rhetoric of governments which claim to take youth unemployment seriously. Notable examples are the Albanian National Strategy for Social and Economic Development which made significant commitments although the government had neither capacity to implement nor has it monitored progress. Another example of a promising strategy insufficiently followed through is a PHARE study conducted in Bulgaria in cooperation with the European Commission entitled "Clearing the Path to Employment for Youths"<sup>92</sup>. The study exhaustively covers the reasons for youth unemployment and even attitudes and willingness of employers to employ young people, but it is not clear if the project has gone beyond analysis.

It is noteworthy that young women, in general and, ethnic or other minorities (Roma and LGBT, in particular) and young people living in rural settings are most marginalized from employment. For example, in rural areas of Turkey adolescent girls are often used as unpaid workers in the

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<sup>92</sup> For more information about this project, visit <http://www.mlsp.government.bg/en/projects/bg0202-01/>.

home, thereby not receiving any income or entering the formal labour market and not having the opportunity to become integrated into the social security system. Twice as many young city dwelling women in Turkey are unemployed as their male equivalents. Twice as many young women in Armenia are unemployed than their male equivalents. Laudable efforts to integrate young disabled people and refugees into society have not been able to mitigate the fact that they are still almost twice as likely to be unemployed as their able bodied or non-refugee equivalents. Women with only vocational or low level educational qualifications demonstrate the highest incidence of unemployment in Ukraine. On average, a woman's average wage is 69.3% of that of a man (data for 2002). In Bulgaria, Roma young people have great difficulty to find stable and properly paid work. This is often due to their inadequate and often segregated schooling. Young women are also more marginalized from employment opportunities in Bulgaria than men. In Bosnia & Herzegovina the problem of youth unemployment is exacerbated by the fact that the labour market cannot absorb the available labour force.

Flourishing shadow economies offer opportunities for young people to earn some money, but also subject them to significant risks. Many young people are forced to take drastic decisions in order to find work, entering the sex industry or organised crime. Migration for economic reasons, including illegal immigration to Western Europe or to more economically developed parts of the world, is a recurrent theme for young people from most of these countries. Faced with the choice between economic exclusion and unemployment at home and the possibility of work in a country of Western Europe, many young people prefer to take their chances. In so doing, they risk being trafficked or deportation if they are caught by the authorities. Internal migration from rural to urban areas in search of work is also hazardous and often ends in young people swapping one kind of poverty for another.

While certain sectors of the economy offer higher opportunity for young people to find employment (for example, trade, hotel services, health and education), young people are often unaware of such opportunities or do not have the knowledge or skills to take advantage of them. In rural areas, young people are over-represented among low skilled and low paid workers and do not necessarily have the relevant skills to access the jobs available in the above mentioned sectors. The business community also seems to have something of an ambivalent attitude towards youth employment, often complaining that they are loath to hire young people because they do not demonstrate the necessary skills for functioning adequately in the modern business environment. Members of the business community in these countries do not necessarily demonstrate an awareness of the responsibility and special role they could have in dealing with youth unemployment.

In terms of policy, all of the countries concerned have some active measures to alleviate the hardship of unemployment and some measures aimed at increasing employment among young people. It is noteworthy, however, that many of the social security measures are linked to prior participation in the formal labour market. For example, it is estimated that in Turkey up to one in six citizens is not covered by work related social security measures. This bias towards formal wage earners discriminates mostly against women and the never-employed, a substantial proportion of which are young people. In Armenia, unemployment insurance is only available to those who have already been employed for one year or more and in addition the procedures are so complicated that few people consider claiming the US\$4 available per month.

Notable exceptions notwithstanding, there seems to be a certain lack of awareness on the part of government or an unwillingness to admit that youth unemployment is specific and structural in nature, requires another kind of policy measure, involving long term economic growth, the

creation of new jobs, special efforts to adapt education and training to the needs of the labour market and efforts to make the labour market more flexible. In addition, long standing and discriminatory attitudes on the part of the business community and public officials undermine the confidence and self-esteem of young people need to be overcome. In the face of chronic unemployment significant numbers of young people migrate as seasonal workers or enter the informal economy in neighbouring countries.

Nevertheless, youth unemployment has recently gained both national and international attention. The instances of extreme violence witnessed in some European cities involving large numbers of unemployed, marginalised and disenfranchised young men have got world leaders to thinking that unemployment and violence must somehow be linked. International initiatives such as the United Nations and ILO initiative “Youth Employment Network” (YEN), have certainly helped to put the issue back on the discussion table. In addition, for those countries participating in its first round of activities, YEN has been instrumental in providing capacity and expertise to countries usually lacking adequate data about the extent and penetration of the problem. This has helped to understand the situations on the ground better and to provide an evidence base on which to discuss viable policy strategies.

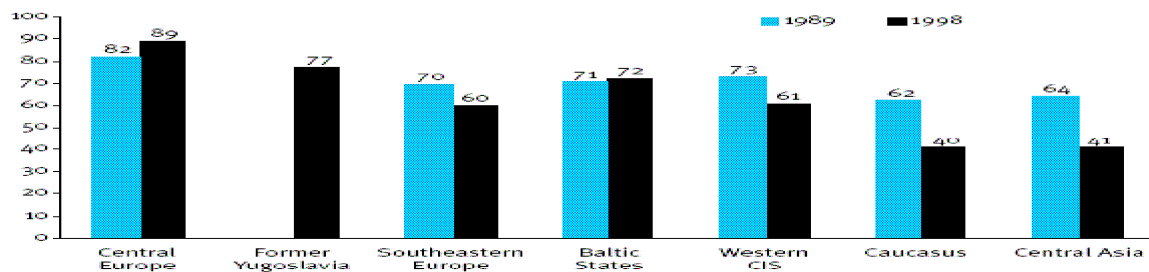
### Education

Europe was one of the first regions in the world to have achieved almost universal primary school education, despite ongoing inequality in certain countries between boys and girls and the ongoing discrimination of children from minorities (notably Roma and disabled children). This was a field where few expected the results achieved to be rolled back.

It is noteworthy then, one might even say shocking, that the rate of basic school completion, almost universal in 1989, has fallen by 10 to 20 percentage points in the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States by 1997. Other parts of Eastern Europe also show that significantly fewer children are completing basic education, with rates in Albania and Bulgaria in 1997 all below 80% of the overall school going population.

In the area of upper secondary enrolment, the countries of Central Europe have seen modest rises, overall. All other parts of the region have seen major falls (Figure 2). Central Asia has demonstrated constant and dramatic decline as demonstrated by the figures for Tajikistan and Turkmenistan. Worryingly, Uzbekistan also follows this trend.

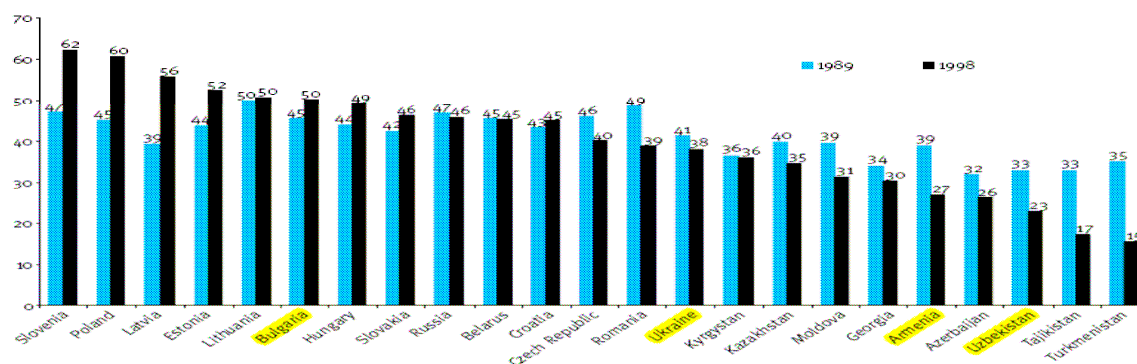
**Figure 3: Enrolments in upper secondary education, by sub-region, 1989 and 1998 (average percentage of 15 to 18 year-olds):<sup>93</sup>**



<sup>93</sup> Young People in Changing Societies – A Summary, Regional Monitoring Report n. 7 - 2000, UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre, August 2000, *op cit*, p.8.



**Figure 4: Youth enrolments in secondary and tertiary education, 1989 and 1998 (percentage of 15 to 24 population):<sup>94</sup>**



While the availability of public education and its affordability in most of the countries surveyed remains high, young people complain that education is of low quality, highly bureaucratized and inefficient and especially, that is not relevant. For example, in Bosnia & Herzegovina, both students and employers complain that education is not adapted to labour market realities and does not provide skills for the modern economy. This is also considered a significant problem in Turkey and although the government does have a five year plan to address it, the World Bank warned that relevant resources have not been allocated for the plan to be realised. In Armenia, where there are eighty universities and a very high instance of university graduation, the education is not related to labour market demands and vocational educational provision is absent altogether. In Ukraine, neither higher nor vocational education is considered as adequately preparing young people, especially young women, for labour market participation.

The economic transition in some countries and traditions of elite education in others have led to situations of inequality being perpetuated by current tertiary education conditions. In Bulgaria and Turkey, for example, a “good quality” education, which euphemistically refers to a “Western” or more common again an “American” education, is only available to those who can pay significant fees (sometimes in the thousands of dollars) and, therefore, to very few young people whose families can afford to foot their education bill. The commodification of education is a problem throughout the region. In Armenia, approximately two thirds registered universities are private institutions which demand significant fees and yet offer below tertiary level education. State tertiary education is considered of a higher quality. In a society where such value is put on getting an education, students will take whatever they are offered, regardless of quality or whether it prepares them for the labour market. It is paradoxical that this commodification of education and the associated drop in quality is taking place in countries which are also participating in the European Union Bologna Process of harmonisation of educational standards.

Another significant problem related to education across all the countries, is that young people have absolutely no guarantee of employment even if they have a high quality education and performed well in high school or at university. Not surprisingly, many young people do not see the point of studying to end up unemployed, underemployed or poorly paid. Other young people study with the aim of leaving the country and converting their “2<sup>nd</sup> class degree” into a

<sup>94</sup> UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre, “Young People in Changing Societies - A Summary”, Regional Monitoring Report n. 7 - 2000, August 2000, *op cit*, p.8.

better “Western” one through higher studies in the West. This is the cause of significant brain drain is a legal, but disguised, form of economic migration, as few graduates come back.

One final but significant consideration for education in the region is widespread exclusion of young women and young people from minority backgrounds from educational opportunity, progress and success. There are significant gender differences in access to education and educational participation. Whether in the area of basic enrolment, secondary completion or tertiary enrolment and completion, all countries but particularly Albania, Armenia, Turkey and Uzbekistan, demonstrate significantly lower figures for female educational participation than for male and in some cases, the disparities are increasing not declining. Discrimination and segregation of minorities, particularly Roma and the disabled, to infamously poor quality and poorly resourced special schools where abuse and neglect are common and where school failure is endemic, is common. In the case of Roma children and adolescents this is particularly evident in Bulgaria (although it has begun to address the problem seriously through international initiatives undertaken by the Open Society Institute, the Council of Europe and in anticipation of EU accession). In the case of disabled young people, and while equal rights are in theory guaranteed, practise reveals discrimination, Turkey being the notable example. The exception to this trend is Armenia, which has succeeded to integrate the disabled of all age groups into mainstream education due to the fact that such a large proportion of people were seriously injured and rendered disabled during the war from 1988 to 1994 and in the earthquake of 1999. Nonetheless, this represents a sad manner for the taboo surrounding being disabled to be overcome. One significant obstacle is the poor adaptation of buildings and public spaces for the needs of people with physical disabilities. It is noteworthy, that the sources consulted for the other countries rarely mention disabled people, it at all.

### **Some issues that need particular attention in the elaboration of youth friendly policies**

This brief survey of the socio-economic condition of young people raises four specific issues that any serious, progressive and needs based youth policy approach by government must take into account.

#### **Human Trafficking**

In the cases of Albania, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Bulgaria and Ukraine, human trafficking, especially of girls and young women for use as slaves in the sex industry, most often in Western Europe and tourist zones in Southern Europe and the Gulf Region has grown to epidemic proportions. The socio-economic condition of young women, often marginalized from mainstream education and employment opportunities, and not being sufficiently informed about the risk of being trafficked, leads many to be unwittingly tricked into leaving their home countries to supposedly become waitresses, maids or other service personnel in hotels. Others voluntarily enter the informal economy in order to earn some money and are involuntarily subjected to criminal activity, becoming embroiled in the seedy underworld, and eventually ending up in prostitution locally.

#### **Juvenile Crime**

In the cases of Albania, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Bulgaria and Ukraine there is very high instance of youth crime, foreseen to grow. There are many causes of youth crime and not all are the same across countries. Much youth crime takes place in the context of the shadow economy and organised crime, in which young people are both perpetrators and victims of crime. It is also noteworthy that young men, most often those with a history of school failure and unemployment, are disproportionately represented among perpetrators of juvenile crime.

Armenia is an exception to this trend. Crime altogether is very low, and young people are not significantly disproportionately represented among either perpetrators or victims of crime. The tendency towards youth crime is plausibly causally linked to the general marginalisation from mainstream opportunity of young people, particularly young men.

### **Migration**

The migration of young people, whether internal rural to urban as in the case of Turkey or international, as in the case of Albania, Armenia and Bosnia & Herzegovina, has become a kind of “exit strategy” for getting away from what a lot of young people consider to be their “hopeless situation”. However, this kind of economic migration, while often chosen, cannot be considered truly “voluntary”. The vulnerability of migrants to trafficking, violence and fatal risks is well known, especially in the case of so-called “illegal” migration. A large proportion of such migrants are young people, who would they have had any other choice, would likely have stayed at home, got a job and founded a family. It is, therefore, imperative that youth related programming take into account root causes of youth migration in the countries of origin, rather than only the negative consequences in the countries of destination. In addition, dealing with economic migration at source would also strengthen the local economies, by lessening the brain drain and can break the vicious circle of only the least qualified and able remaining in the country of origin.

### **Vulnerable Groups**

As mentioned above, it is evident that some groups of young people fare worse than others and, therefore, special attention and maybe even special measures to ensure that they enjoy human rights to the full are necessary. While from country to country such vulnerable groups may differ, and specific intra-national situations notwithstanding, it is possible to conclude that adolescent girls and young women, Roma young people, disabled young people, LGBT youth and refugee young people are particularly hard hit by the socio-economic conditions prevailing in these countries and are least able to compensate for the discrimination they face as a result of intolerance on the part of the general population and / or public authorities.

### ***Conclusions***

Challenges posed to social policy by poor socio-economic conditions and even poorer socio-economic perspectives that affect a large proportion of young people in a disproportionately negative manner are significant.

In the first place, there is a lack of recognition of the structural nature of the exclusion of young people. This is evidenced by a lack of specific policies for tackling young people’s socio-economic conditions. It is also evidenced by the fact that the youth dimension is almost entirely ignored as an indicator in standard tools of poverty measurement. Often, young people’s poverty is not studied as a category in its own right and, therefore, poverty statistics tend to be “blind” to the specificity of youth poverty.

Secondly, the structural exclusion of large numbers of young people from the labour market and from socio-economic opportunity is extremely worrying from the perspective of social cohesion. There is significant evidence of the growing gap between rich and poor in all the countries surveyed. The majority of the poor are drawn from the ranks of those unable to access or to maintain participation in the formal labour market, which puts young people, especially, young women, at the frontline.

Thirdly, education is seen as something of a panacea for correcting such disparities, but in all the countries surveyed the lack of available employment seems to be the true underlying cause for the continuing marginalisation of young people from the labour market. Turning out ever larger numbers of highly qualified and mobile young people only exacerbates the problem of there not being enough correctly paid and protected jobs to go around. At the same time, the levelling effect of education is consistently being undermined by decreases in enrolment and completion of girls in both primary and secondary education, as well as by the commodification of education. The benefits of non-formal education, understood as the development of social communication and citizenship skills rather than as second chance education, are not fully understood in the countries concerned. Although it is useful for the preparedness for the labour market of young people, it cannot help young people get jobs that do not exist and it should not be subordinated to employability logics exclusively.

Fourthly, little is known about the needs of the labour market and little has been done so far to develop the ability of the education systems in the countries concerned to train adequately qualified personnel to fill the gaps in the labour market.

It is possible to conclude, therefore, that economic reform is needed to alleviate the current socio-economic deprivation that a large number of young people face, that is causing a significant proportion to migrate (legally or illegally) and that special measures are needed in order to create employment for young people. Educational measures can complement such reform efforts, by seeing to it that young people get a relevant education for participation in the labour market and that young women, in particular, leave education with a qualification.

While economic growth is an important factor, special measures across all the sectors concerned are also needed to help the most disenfranchised to gain access to correctly paid and protected employment. Significant numbers of young people are currently “employed” in the grey and black economies. Efforts to formalise these economies could also create new opportunities for young people’s labour market participation and recognition.

The United Nations system has had a lot of success mainstreaming good practise concerning the socio-economic empowerment of women in their complementary programming at country level. Several elements of that good practise could be informative for the improvement of the situation of young people. The development of the entrepreneurial skills of young people, when combined with the availability of micro-credit for starting a business, has proven its worth in the case of poor women. It is a model of intervention that the United Nations could help governments concerned to develop and implement. Providing assistance to relevant government bodies for the improvement of in-school career and employment orientation services could also constitute a relevant contribution.

Awareness for the transversality of the youth issue has to be further developed within the UN system as well as in the countries concerned, which implies that capacity building for both UN and governmental staff is necessary.

### **The Health of Young People**

The health situation of young people in the region today is difficult to assess in black and white, good or bad, terms. For example, young people are in general strong, physically more capable than their elders and have not yet developed chronic health problems that will impede their professional or social activity, by simple virtue of their age. On the other hand, young people are

more prone to certain health risks in the period of adolescence and youth exactly because the life phase is characterised by curiosity, experimentation and risk-taking.

Sadly, and despite significant investment by international institutions in educational activities relating to HIV/AIDS prevention, unsafe sex among young people in these countries continues, either out of ignorance of the risk of not using a condom or as a result of deliberate risk-taking. In countries, where injecting drug use has become endemic, like Ukraine, HIV infection has been accelerated significantly, as users are prone to selling sex to finance the purchase of drugs. Drug users are also often heterosexual males, who advertently or inadvertently infect their female heterosexual partners. In South Eastern Europe, attitudes to sex and male machismo create situations of peer pressure in which young women are often pressured into having unprotected sex. For example, in Bosnia & Herzegovina, research into the reproductive health situation demonstrates that various factors (pro-natalism, misperceptions of contraceptives and lack of access) mean contraceptive use is very low, and abortion is a favoured method of contraception, with 30% of all pregnancies ending in an abortion.<sup>95</sup>

In general, the instance of early pregnancy across the countries surveyed does not seem to be rising at an alarming rate, contrary to much of the rhetoric. Adolescent motherhood is not the chosen outcome of early pregnancy, however. It seems that young women prefer to have an abortion. At the same time, contraceptive use is also rising. Such impressions are inconclusive, however, and this study has not been able to find sufficient data to support strong conclusions. However, the education of young people as regards contraception is a definite gap in public health provision and both abortion and early pregnancy could be prevented significantly with better government action in the field of comprehensive sexuality education.

Research shows that only a minority of young people in South Eastern Europe engage in safe sex by using condoms and that, if used, they are associated with contraception rather than with the prevention of HIV/AIDS or other STD transmission. Combined with trends in earlier initiation into sex and the postponement of the formation of stable and permanent family relationships, HIV/AIDS and other STDs are a growing threat to the health of young people in this region.

### **HIV and AIDS**

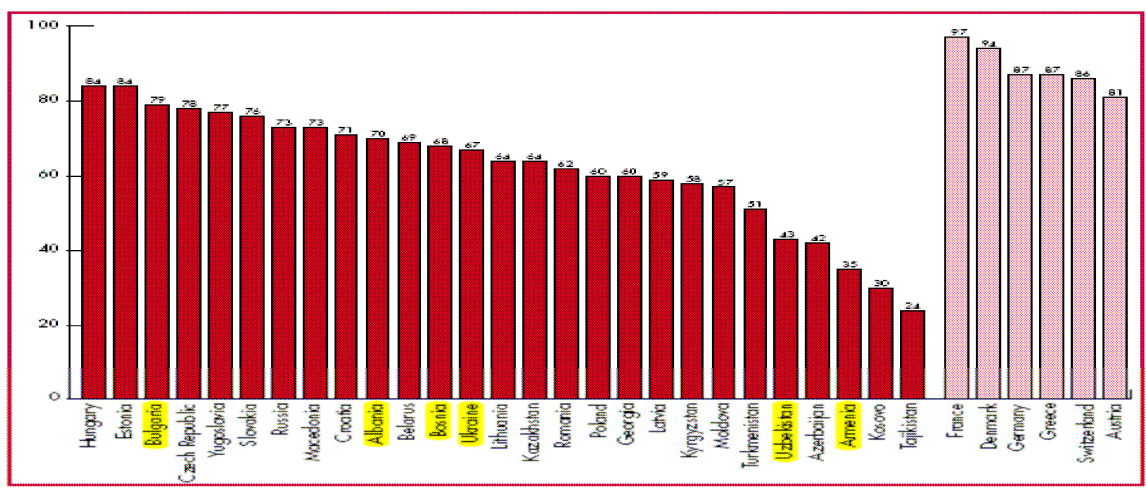
About 1 million people in Eastern Europe and Central Asia are living with HIV/AIDS: more than double the figure of 420 000 at the end of 1999. Given the high levels of other sexually transmitted infections and the high rates of injecting drug use among young people, the epidemic looks set to grow considerably. Most HIV positive people are not aware that they are infected.

In those countries where traditional family and religious values determine public morality, such as for example Albania, Armenia, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Turkey and Uzbekistan and to a lesser extent Bulgaria, HIV/AIDS or STD transmission are often not considered as an important risk or threat. But, this is a false assumption. Such young people, especially the young women, often most ignorant of basic reproductive and sexual health knowledge because neither are taught at home or at school, are often most at risk of inadvertently contracting STDs because they do not know about the risks of unprotected sex and they know nothing about how to prevent becoming

<sup>95</sup> PRB-UNFPA Country Profile, 2005, p. 298.

infected. It is noteworthy that research also shows that the correlation between knowledge of STD transmission and sexual behavioural change is not strong. This is a particularly delicate problem among rural young women who are married to men, who may have several other partners or who may engage in sex with other men. In addition, the religious or moral conservatism of both parents and public authorities often intimidate young people, women in particular, into keeping silent about sexual health, even if they are concerned that they may be infected with HIV/AIDS or another STD.

**Figure 5: Incidence of knowledge of condom use as a means of preventing HIV by percent among adolescents (14-17 years):<sup>96</sup>**



**Figure 6: HIV prevalence among adults aged 15-49 years (%):<sup>97</sup>**

Country	Value	Latest Year
Armenia	0.1	2003
Bosnia and Herzegovina	<0.1	2003
Bulgaria	<0.1	2003
Ukraine	1.4	2003
Uzbekistan	0.1	2003

Smoking and alcohol consumption are growing problems among young people. As elsewhere in Europe and the developed world, and despite restrictive regulations regarding smoking in public and the advertising of cigarettes and alcohol, both smoking and the consumption of alcohol are on the rise in the region, especially among girls and young women. Excessive alcohol consumption and even juvenile alcoholism is becoming more common, leading young people in many of these societies to be branded as hooligans and drunkards and even leading to repressive measures. The notable exceptions to this trend are Albania, Armenia and Turkey, where the

<sup>96</sup> UNICEF, Young Voices Survey, quoted in Marc Suhrcke, “Young People and HIV/AIDS: Awareness and Attitudes”, in Common Health, Volume 11, Number 11, Spring 2005, available at: <http://www.aiha.com/index.jsp?sid=1&id=9217&pid=4315>.

<sup>97</sup> Graph generated from WHO Core Health Indicators Database on [http://www3.who.int/whosis/core/core\\_select\\_process.cfm](http://www3.who.int/whosis/core/core_select_process.cfm).

instance of alcohol consumption and substance abuse is low and rising at a slower rate than in the other countries. This might be the result of certain religious and family values their maintaining importance in the societies concerned. Smoking, on the other hand, is widespread, inexpensive and growing in all of the countries and is even becoming more widespread among young women, who traditionally do not engage in such behaviour.

**Figure 7: Prevalence of current tobacco smoking among adults (15 years and older) (%) females:<sup>98</sup>**

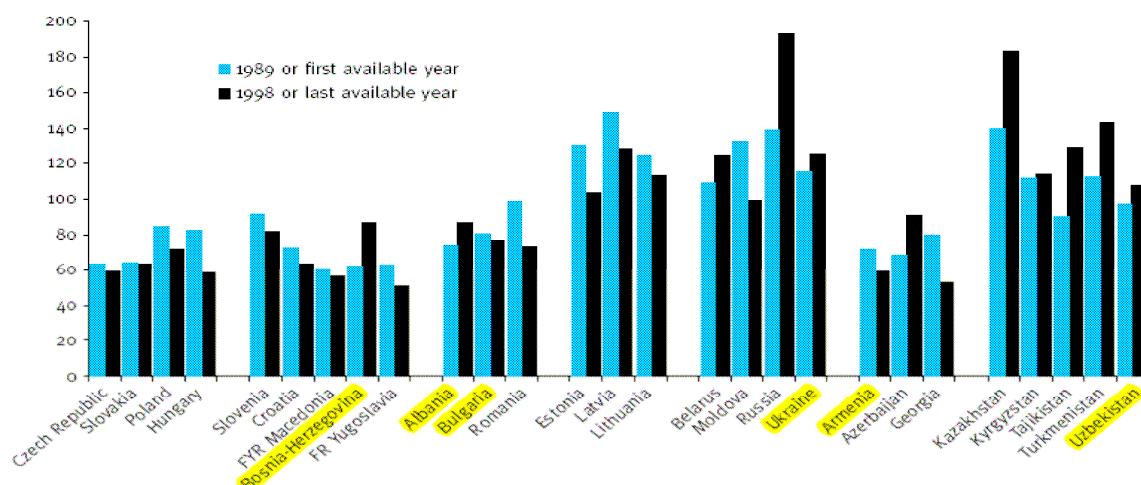
Country	Value	Latest Year
Albania	3.0	2002
Armenia	3.1	2001
Bosnia and Herzegovina	34.2	2003
Turkey	18.6	2003
Ukraine	10.2	2003
Uzbekistan	0.9	2002

Substance abuse, including injecting drug use (for a minority) and glue sniffing (for a higher number of young people) is on the one hand common among some of the least privileged young people in the region and at the same time an elite phenomenon. For example, Roma young people, and especially street children, cannot afford so-called “designer drugs” but have access to other health damaging substances, especially solvents, alcohol and cigarettes. A growing minority of young people has become addicted to heroin and other “hard drugs”, resorting to crime and prostitution to pay for their consumption. Finally, and again a growing minority of young people, have access to sufficient funds to feed cocaine and speed, ecstasy and other “designer drugs”. For example, Ukraine is notable in that the instance of drug use among young people has shot up since independence from the Soviet Union in 1992.

Mortality among young people in these countries is also on the rise. In most cases, the cause of mortality is injury or violence. The table below provides a picture of the increase in mortality among young people in several of the countries between 1989 and 1998. It is certainly noteworthy, that with the exception of Armenia and Bulgaria, youth mortality has not decreased but rather increased, sometimes quite significantly, in the countries in this study and the overall regional picture confirms the trend towards higher mortality among 15 to 24 year olds. It is noteworthy also that rates of youth mortality are higher for males than females, a fact with significant policy implications.

<sup>98</sup> Graph generated from WHO Core Health Indicators Database on [http://www3.who.int/whosis/core/core\\_select\\_process.cfm](http://www3.who.int/whosis/core/core_select_process.cfm) on 14.12.2006.

**Figure 8: Mortality rates among 15 to 24 year olds, 1989 and 1998 (per 100,000 relevant population):<sup>99</sup>**



The pervasive increase in violence in these countries, with the notable exception of Armenia, which demonstrates a relatively low instance of crime, and the ambivalent position of young people, especially young men as both perpetrators and victims of violence, is a very worrying development. In Albania, migration has caused a rise in the instance of female headed families which is thought to have had negative effects on male youth discipline (absence of male role models). Such families are also vulnerable to violence from men outside their families.

### **Some issues that need particular attention**

This brief review of the health condition of young people raises two specific issues that need to be taken into account if government is to be able to develop youth friendly health services for young people.

#### **Risk taking**

Young people in the countries are just as likely to engage in risky behaviour as any other young people for the sake of experimentation. But, more than other young people they are also prone to inadvertently taking significant health risks, especially in the area of sexual health, given the fact that they are so badly informed about sexual health risks, especially HIV/AIDS and STDs. The development of more liberal lifestyles, with the decline of both state and family control of behaviour, has not been accompanied by any significant spread of knowledge of how to be safe (in the case of sex) or to minimise dangers (in the case of drugs). This is largely due to denial of the problem by those responsible for public health and education.

#### **Sexual health promotion and education**

If in recent years, reproductive health education has been available in schools, it is clear that sexual health education has been absolutely missing from public health services in most of the countries surveyed, as have effective prevention activities covering STDs, HIV/AIDS and unwanted pregnancy.

<sup>99</sup> UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre, “Young People in Changing Societies - A Summary”, Regional Monitoring Report n. 7 - 2000, August 2000, *op cit*, p.4.



## ***Conclusions***

It is important to acknowledge that the vulnerability of young people determines the extent to which they are at risk and that that risk often not within the individual control, especially if that young person does not benefit from the explicit support of a family or a community. The discourse of risk-taking and prevention has the unfortunate tendency to stigmatise and even criminalise those concerned. In fact, it is an inherently paternalistic discourse, because it assumes that young people's behaviour can and should be changed. For those young people for whom risk-taking is caused by their vulnerability or can be considered involuntary, another approach would be needed.

The majority of young people do not engage in high-risk behaviour voluntarily. For those young people, specifically targeted sexual health education, relevant youth specific sexual health services and adequate sexual health information delivered in an attractive, friendly and easily accessible setting are essential for encouraging "healthy lifestyles" among young people. For the most vulnerable young people, those who fall prey to the health risks discussed, including substance use, STDs, HIV/AIDS and early pregnancy, support mechanisms rather than criminalisation and marginalisation are needed.

The United Nations has long standing experience of providing complementary capacity in this area, in particular at the level of health service and education delivery. Today, it is necessary to mainstream the youth dimension and youth sensitivity through those complementary programmes and to disseminate such good practise as exists to local providers, so that young people feel empowered to use such services available to them. In particular, good practise in the field of educational approaches to sensitive issues such as youth sexual health should be disseminated to health and education professionals. To this end, it will be a significant contribution if UN agencies develop effective partnerships with religious organisations and communities that are aware of the necessity to ensure the sexual health of young people in a human rights perspective.

## **Gender equality and participation of young women**

While the awareness of government and the public at large as regards the human rights of women has improved significantly over the past 20 years worldwide, and significant improvements have been made in some fields, the transition from state socialism to procedural democracy and the market economy in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia, has contributed to some decline in women's position within society and their substantive treatment in all but one of the countries surveyed by this study (i.e. Turkey). While the formal equality between the sexes "guaranteed" under state socialism did not reflect gender equality in those societies, the position of women relative to men, certainly in the economic realm, is notably worse today, even if this is the result of social attitudes toward gender relations being more accurately expressed.

In all of the countries surveyed, significant problems of gender inequality continue to exist and as mentioned already, young women are substantially more vulnerable overall, compared to young men at the same age. Patriarchy, paternalism and traditional religious and family values tend to restrict the actions of all young people, but have particularly negative effects in determining the fates of young women, particularly those in rural areas. This is notably the case in Albania, Turkey and Uzbekistan, especially in isolated rural communities. Armenian culture encourages young women to follow the "school – marriage – motherhood" route. While the

instance of such control and coercion may be lower in countries like Bulgaria or Ukraine it is nonetheless common, as it is to some degree in all countries.

The context of integration with European institutions and the associated emphasis on human rights is common to most of the countries covered by this study. Although it is not treated as seriously as it could be by the European Union, gender equality is one cross-cutting concern, and European institutional pressure has served as a primary means of promoting women's human rights. This means, in particular, that formal legal obstacles to gender equality, such as matters of property and land ownership, inheritance and the legal status of married individuals, have been or are in the process of being removed, with the exception of Uzbekistan for which no information was found. Such moves by governments are the "easy" route to equality, and great inequalities still persist in the areas where reducing or eliminating them would require creative policy-making, significant and sustained commitment of financial and human resources and efforts to change social mentalities.

In all countries, there are social expectations about the appropriate role of women in society. There tends to be lower value placed on women's labour market participation (and by extension, girls' education) and insufficient recognition paid to the unpaid work undertaken by women and girls, be it in caring for family members, managing the household or providing labour in agricultural settings. In the long run, such attitudes contribute to female poverty and, for young people, restrict the opportunities of young women to live the lives they may wish to lead. Moreover, it is felt that such arrangements are correct, and any attempt to change them meets with hostility and in some cases violence. Such control and coercion of young women is particularly true when it comes to sexuality and reproductive rights. For example, research reveals that in Bosnia & Herzegovina young women's sexuality is on the one hand denied and is taboo. On the other hand, in practise, the ability of women to negotiate contraceptive use and independent decision making over sex is significantly limited by traditional gender roles and the resurgence of patriotic values.

Undervaluing of education for girls leads to lower female literacy rates (for example, this is the case in Albania, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Turkey, Uzbekistan) and limits young women's potential for economic independence from men (at the same time as poor quality education limits the employment opportunities for young people and their potential for independence from their families, in general). In cases where there are costs associated with education, particularly for poor families in rural settings, education for sons is often prioritised over that for daughters.

Most young women manage to gain education, only to face numerous obstacles to equality with men in employment and the associated economic independence. Sex-segregation of employment by sector is common to all societies, but in the countries in this study, ideas of women's and men's jobs are noticeably strong (in Ukraine, Turkey, Armenia and Uzbekistan, for example). Needless to say, "women's jobs" tend to be lower-status and less well paid. Unemployment among young women is generally even higher than among young men, and young women are even more prone to temporary and insecure employment than their male counterparts. In times of economic instability, women and young people are the groups most likely to lose their jobs, making young women's positions especially precarious.

Violence against women takes many forms and exists to some extent (sometimes intensely) in all countries. This violence varies from the exceptional crime of honour killings in Turkey, through the more widespread trafficking of women and girls for sexual exploitation and domestic servitude (throughout the region, and especially problematic in Albania), to the universal

problem of domestic violence, affecting the majority of women in some form, with often a third of women suffering physical violence. In our study, Albania demonstrates the highest instance of domestic violence, but the rate in Bulgaria is also high and in Ukraine violence in the family is known to be increasing. Young women experience such violence at the hands of fathers and male relatives as well as lovers and husbands. In Uzbekistan, for example, the practise of “paediatric gynaecology”, a leftover from soviet pro-natalism is compulsorily practised by public health workers on adolescent girls, who have not benefited from any form of sexual education and who are not aware of the nature of the procedures they will undergo or the reasons. Further, sexual harassment in public and in the workplace is a problem, particularly for women.

Children of both sexes are at risk of violence and sexual abuse by family members and others (a notable example is Albania), and child abuse and domestic violence have similarities in being areas of violence where laws and their implementation are often both weak and the issues suffer from being located within the “private” realm. Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender young people are also substantially vulnerable to violence, physical and psychological, in the countries surveyed. Their invisibility in any form of reporting is remarkable and the absence of scientific research on this matter notwithstanding there is anecdotal evidence from the civic sector of a culture of violence and social, educational and employment discrimination against people belonging to sexual minorities.

Levels of knowledge of contraceptive methods vary a great deal, as do rates of use, which are fairly high in Ukraine and very low in Bosnia & Herzegovina. This can be due to ignorance, lack of access, stigma, a lack of affordability and many other reasons. It is noteworthy that with the exception of Turkey, where the incidence of abortion is low, despite being legal and publicly available, all other countries demonstrate a tendency towards the use of abortion as an alternative to contraception. Some figures are indicative: Over 30% of pregnancies in Bosnia & Herzegovina and in Albania end in abortion and rates are high in Bulgaria. Knowledge of STDs and HIV/AIDS is also fairly widespread in some cases (such as Uzbekistan, Bosnia & Herzegovina and Bulgaria, although very low in others, such as Turkey), but this knowledge does not lead to substantially lower levels of risky sexual behaviour. All countries apart from Turkey exhibit very low fertility and birth rates, and several countries have more or less official pro-natalist policies. In cases such as Albania and Bosnia & Herzegovina, the paternalist mindset in society discourages the use of contraceptives. Pro-natalism, more generally, poses a significant potential threat to gender equality and women’s empowerment and independence.

Incentives for women to bear and raise children rather than engage in paid work, discouragement of contraceptive use and restrictions on access to safe abortion services, are all potential scenarios resulting from efforts to raise the birth rate, and in an environment where such efforts are being made, it must be a priority for UNFPA to ensure respect for rights (for example, by encouraging the integration of work and family life, promoting male involvement in childcare and subsidising such services). There are examples of successful policies (in France and Sweden), which could provide guidance, but their success requires long-term planning and commitment by governments.

The fragility of social institutions, including the family, has had a strong impact on adolescent girls and young women. While the age at first marriage is increasing, childbearing under 24 years is still predominant in several countries. Young families in these societies are living in conditions where public structures are less supportive than previously. For example, public provision of childcare largely vanished with the end of socialism.

When it comes to participation in public and political life, young women face the double obstacles of being young and being women. While there are no legal restrictions on their participation as women, there may be restrictions (such as minimum age for election) as young people. However, more significant are the social restrictions: the widespread view that politics is a male domain, combined with common domestic demands made on women, make it more difficult for women to find the necessary support to enter the field and more difficult to be taken seriously as political actors, and it is more difficult for women to balance such activities with their home life. As well as being ends in themselves, measures to increase young women's participation in political life, such as quotas, training of candidates and the restructuring of political life to be more family-friendly, will help change social mindsets, which are sceptical toward such roles for women and youth.

There is some cause for optimism, however, involvement in youth activism is one area where female and male participation rates are fairly close. In general, young people are more open to gender equality than older generations, in line with their greater propensity for liberal lifestyles and values. However, social norms and attitudes still make it easier for men to progress from youth activities into further roles in public life, especially if these are "political" rather than "socio-cultural". And, most young people and young women are still not involved in youth organisations. More than 50% of participants in organised youth activities in Armenia are women and there are similar results for Albania. It is noteworthy though that youth work has become something of a feminised profession across Europe. However, youth participation in political parties, remains the preserve of men. There are in some ways great overlaps between the concerns of youth activists and the concerns of women's activists: both groups face difficulty in participation in public life and in the labour market in adult male dominated societies. Some techniques adopted by the women's movement (such as gender-responsive budgeting) might be adaptable for advocacy by and for youth.

### ***Conclusions***

The issues that confront young women are in many cases not different from those confronting young men: both sexes are at risk of STDs through low levels of public knowledge and public health services and both suffer the consequences of poor quality education and preparation for working life. The aspirations of both sons and daughters and young citizens both male and female are frustrated by sceptical, controlling attitudes among those who are older and in positions of authority and who are prone to reinforce rather than break down distinctions between generations.

While many interventions on behalf of youth will benefit both sexes, it must be remembered that men and women have different experiences of everything from poverty to sexual ill health. It is imperative, therefore, to disaggregate data by gender, as well as by age, as some issues which may seem like "youth issues" on first look may contain significant gender inequalities within them. Some problems, such as violence, long-term economic dependence and exclusion from education, disproportionately affect women including young women. Low levels of public participation and unacceptable levels of violence cut across the experiences of all the countries studied.

Finally, it should be remembered that decisions to include gender concerns at the vital formative stage with which youth policy is concerned will have positive consequences throughout women's lives, for subsequent generations of young women and for both sexes in society as a whole. Programmes that already apply gender mainstreaming approaches, and many of the good

practises developed by the UN in this respect, will benefit greatly from increased sensitivity to the concerns and aspirations of young women.

## **Participation of Young People**

### **Values**

In the countries surveyed young people place significant hope in the process of European integration. In other words, young people see the European project, and their country's prospects for joining the European Union as, in the first place, a comment on the "fitness" of their state and in the second place, as a comment on their level of "civilisation". In addition, they invest a lot of hope in the prospects of economic development and freedom of movement considered inherent to the European integration process. This is the case in Bulgaria, joining the European Union in 2007 and also in Albania and Bosnia & Herzegovina which both have stabilisation and association agreements. While Armenia and Ukraine are not yet at the point of being invited to join, they have in different ways indicated their wish to do so or at least to become closer associated to the EU. Nevertheless, and especially in the latter countries, it should be noted that there are dissenting voices, also among young people, and the fact remains that for each of these countries accession is a long way off, is not even promised and in the case of Turkey, has even been openly called into question.

Another matter is that young people in most of these countries have to struggle with contradictions between traditional values present in their home lives and family homes and their attraction to modern life brought to their attention by the media and advances in information technology and international mobility. Many young people who come from a traditional family background do manage to construct an identity that allows them to respect the wishes and values of their parents at the same time as actively participating in modern social and cultural life. It is notable, however, that young women and young people who belong to sexual minorities have a significantly harder time negotiating such identity issues.

Unfortunately, there is often little space or opportunity for young people to explore their value orientations in a safe and protected environment. This is particularly the case in traditional societies or politically authoritarian settings, for example, Albania, Armenia, Turkey and Uzbekistan. It is also notable that conscientious objection is not recognised in Turkey and Uzbekistan and it is even criminalized in Armenia.

### **Volunteering and associative life**

In most of the countries, some form of volunteering is common among young people. This does not imply ongoing membership in a youth or other form of civil society organisation (that remains the preserve of only about 10% of young people) but a significant proportion of young people at some time during their youth seem to get involved in some kind of voluntary activity. Most often, this volunteering is a form of community service or could be considered charity or social work and is conducted on the local level around issues of direct concern to the young people or through bodies or organisations that have a presence in their lives, for example, schools, sports clubs, religious groups or churches, and so on.

The act of performing community service and volunteering is not always commonly understood or viewed as a strategy for youth and societal development. Its "political" nature is often not understood by the young people participating in or running youth activities. Especially in the areas of socio-cultural work with young people, leisure time activities and non-formal educational activities, it is often the "animators" or "peer group leaders / educators" that refuse

the potential for change represented by their activities and who do not want to be associated with “political activities”. Closely related to this and another factor common to the countries of Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, is that young people are often sceptical of any form of associative action, as many have inherited the memory of having to go through the motions of “participation” in party controlled youth organisations and collectivistic Soviet-style rituals. Any form of activity that smacks of “propaganda” including lobbying, advocacy and civic activism is often viewed with suspicion as politically motivated or even worse as motivated by the desire of the individuals involved to enrich themselves. There are regional differences within countries, for example, youth in Eastern Ukraine are involved in activities which are considered more “Political”, such as participation in a political party or seeking to influence policy making, while those in Western Ukraine, who have less affinity towards the reform process of the current tend to be much more involved in social “non-political” NGO activity. A similar situation is noticeable in Armenia.

Turkey is something of an exception in this respect. Young people are significantly active on a grass roots basis despite the restriction of certain forms of association and some democratic freedoms (including that of expression). For Turkish young people associative activity has a tendency to be related to social or ecological issues and often takes place during student life. There seems to exist a kind of unspoken social pact concerning the place and role of young people in society that is in part related to the country’s political history and “bad memories” of violent political unrest involving a large number of young people. Young people are also taught and expected to respect their elders, authority and government. The harassment of minority organisations and human rights activists is a sad example of the ambivalent nature of democracy in Turkey in respect of associative life, although conditions for NGOs have improved recently with changes to the Law on Associations. In the past, such associations have been able operate only through the use of “front” organisations usually sports and leisure clubs.

A large number of young people, however, are simply not involved in any form of associative life and do not volunteer on a regular or irregular basis. There are certainly several objective reasons for such. Many young people are simply too busy making ends meet and getting an education in the countries concerned to have time or energy to get involved in anything voluntary. Some young people, by virtue of physical or social isolation (rural youth, young women living in traditional homes, LGBT and disabled young people, for example) simply do not have access to such opportunities that may exist for their participation. And some may simply not have the means (financial, transportation, educational, linguistic, etc) to get involved, even if opportunities for their participation are available. Even youth research often ignores the fact that active participation, volunteering and getting involved in youth activities or civil society is not only a matter of the availability of opportunities on an equal basis. Support mechanisms are also needed to make it possible for young people to use the opportunities that exist. One commonality among all the countries surveyed is the general lack of availability of such public participation support structures at local level, the level closest to the young people’s life realities.

### **Participation in political decision making and processes and representation**

It remains a fact that young people everywhere are more likely to participate more in the implementation or consumption of youth policy than its design, even though policy development “good practise” consistently demonstrates that policies designed with the participation of their beneficiaries are more effective. None of the countries in this study have significant traditions of youth participation in decision or policy making and some openly discourage it or avoid the issue. An exception is Albania, which has piloted a National Youth

Parliament that has been instrumental in the development of a National Youth Strategy<sup>100</sup>. Armenia has also redoubled its efforts to include youth representatives in its policy making activities, as a result of the International Review of Armenian Youth Policy that took place under the auspices of the Council of Europe Youth Policy Review Process from 2005 and 2006.

Unfortunately, not all the countries surveyed in this study have a fully functioning National Youth Council, recognised by international bodies such as the European Youth Forum, and accepted by government as a legitimate partner for policy making and consultation on issues related to young people. Where there is a functioning National Youth Council, youth policy development receives greater political attention and youth organisations have a communication platform with public authorities. The results of our review of the seven countries demonstrates that there are significant deficiencies in the willingness of local and national authorities to work in partnership with young people and their civil society representatives to ensure the active participation of young people in the political and social life of their local environment.

International mechanisms exist for to guide those who wish to develop such partnerships, for example, the “Revised Charter for the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life” – a policy document adopted by the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe<sup>101</sup>, but the initiative must come from below.

On the question of “formal” political participation of young people (i.e. participation in the formal political electoral process as voters and / or as candidates) and its supposed drop-off, youth researcher Siyka Kovacheva, Associate Professor of Sociology (retired) at the University of Plovdiv, Bulgaria, had the following to say:

*“While voting levels have started to decline in many European countries, this trend is not all-pervasive. When young people feel democratic development in their countries is threatened, they enter the ballot boxes in great numbers, as in Bulgaria in 1997 and in Slovakia in 1998. Youth participation is usually high when combined with two other forms of activities: unconventional and civic. Young people quickly mobilise around single issues, such as the spill from the Prestige oil tanker in Spain or the protests against the war in Iraq, which were particularly widespread in countries such as the United Kingdom and Spain, whose governments supported the war effort. Political self-expression through the arts and sport, voicing environmental concerns, human rights, gay and lesbian politics and consumer boycotts have spread to post-communist countries (Roberts and Jung, 1995; Ule et al. 2000)”.*<sup>102</sup>

It is noteworthy, that Kovacheva’s arguments have more recently been borne out during the popular uprising in Yugoslavia (now Serbia), during the Orange Revolution in Ukraine, during

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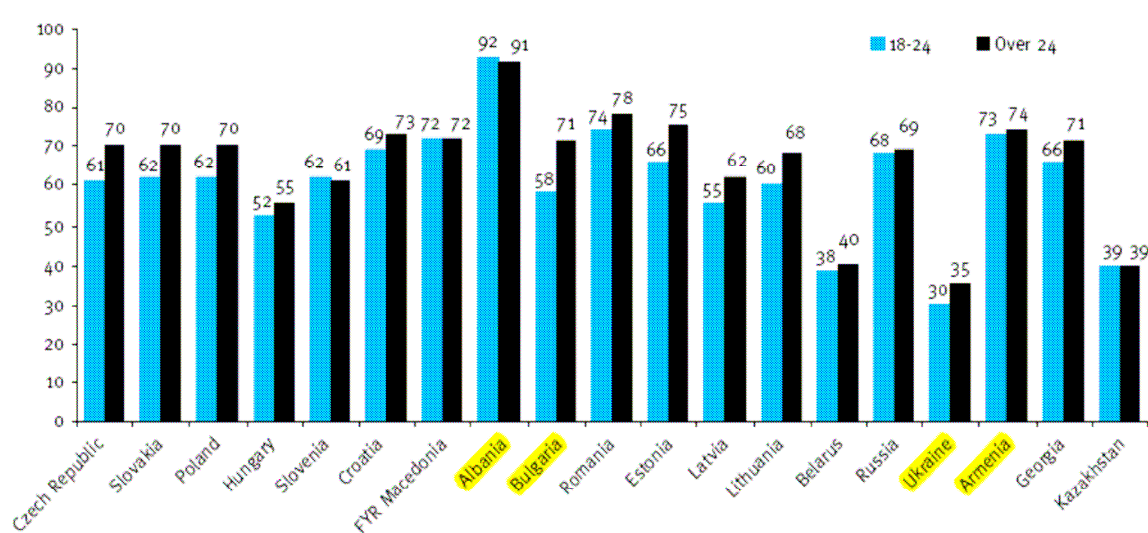
<sup>100</sup> For more in depth information concerning the National Youth Parliament and National Youth Strategy in Albania, please refer to the country report in the appendix to this study.

<sup>101</sup> For the full text of the Revised European Chart on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life visit the following website:  
[www.coe.int/t/e/cultural\\_co-operation/youth/TXT\\_charter\\_participation.pdf](http://www.coe.int/t/e/cultural_co-operation/youth/TXT_charter_participation.pdf).

<sup>102</sup> Siyka Kovacheva, ‘Will youth rejuvenate the patterns of political participation?’, in Joerg Forbrig (Editor), “Revisiting Youth Political Participation – Challenges for Research and Democratic Practice in Europe”, Council of Europe Publishing, March 2005, p. 25.

the Rose Revolution in Georgia and even during the failed attempt of youth civic movements in Belarus to ensure free and fair elections in March 2005.<sup>103</sup>

**Figure 9: Intention to vote by age group 1995-97 (percent):<sup>104</sup>**



In addition, the forms of political participation young people are involved in have significantly diversified over the last twenty years and it is commonly acknowledged that voting and membership of a political party are only one form of democratic political participation among many, some of which are not obvious or well known due to the fact that they take place in new and innovative public spaces, including the internet<sup>105</sup>.

While one should avoid sweeping statements about countries and contexts that are so different, it seems fair to state that, on the basis of our results, the governments in question do not fully accept the need for the young to be actively involved in the design of youth policy rather than only its consumption, with the evident exception of Albania. It is possible to draw this conclusion because in all but Albania, no formal mechanism for the consultation of young people or their legitimate representatives on issues and policies that are of direct concern to them were found, even if most of the governments concerned do regularly speak about the value of youth participation. It remains unfortunate that governments continue to have something of an instrumental approach to the value of youth participation in decision making, considering it an interesting vote-getting platform or crowd-pleaser during election years, but rarely acting on promises made.

<sup>103</sup> Joerg Forbrig, David R. Marples and Pavol Demes, (Editors), “Prospects for Democracy in Belarus”, German Marshall Fund of the United States, 2006.

<sup>104</sup> UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre, “Young People in Changing Societies – A Summary”, Regional Monitoring Report n. 7 - 2000, August 2000, *op cit*, p.19.

<sup>105</sup> For further on this issue see Joerg Forbrig, (Editor), “Revisiting Youth Political Participation – Challenges for Research and Democratic Practice in Europe”, Council of Europe Publishing, March 2005 and Philip C. Schmitter and Alexander H. Treschel, “The Future of Democracy – Trends, Analyses, Reforms”, Council of Europe Publishing, 2004.



Even if there may be objective reasons for not being able “to put money where the mouth is”, such as the cost of doing so to governments with bigger problems and more important priorities to worry about (pensions, employment, poverty, education), good practise in the youth participation field does indicate that a) youth participation does not have to be prohibitively expensive when piloted locally in cooperation with youth organisations and young people and b) that national and local budgets do exist for various such purposes and are often simply not used. Another objective problem is the lack of human capacity that governments display in relation to youth participation. Basic standards elaborated by international institutions such as the Council of Europe (of which all the countries but Uzbekistan are members) and the United Nations (of which all are members), such as the principle of co-management (see glossary for full definition), are often not known, not fully understood or not implemented at national and local level. Although in some cases, such as Armenia and Ukraine, the respective National Youth Councils believe that they have instituted co-managed representative structures, their inclusiveness and actual representativeness can be questioned. Further, many functionaries at local level, the level at which youth policy budgetary allocations are supposed to be dispensed, give the impression of never having met or even been a young person themselves. Few local administrations have yet grasped the advantages of hiring young people to work on and with young people.

Finally, and probably most worryingly of all, some governments even actively discourage the active participation of young people in the public sphere and civic activism. In cases where young people are understood as a potential threat to the ruling elite or to the regime in power, and potentially several of the countries under review could be considered such, basic human rights such as freedom of association and expression, while maybe not restricted by law, are undermined. Means and finances are not made available to ensure basic participation opportunities and young people are socialised into believing that it is not good to criticise or contradict elders or people in positions of authority. It is also notable that government and in – country development agencies will selectively provide support to “aligned” youth organisation and exclude others. While none of the above represents an illegal act, they could be understood as “managing democracy” and they certainly undermine its spirit of. This has been the case in Ukraine until the Orange Revolution, in Armenia and in Uzbekistan. In Turkey, certain causes receive unwarranted negative attention from the authorities, resulting in banning and repression in some cases. This is particularly the case for human rights groups, Kurdish and student groups and organisations of sexual minorities.

### ***Conclusion***

It would be alarmist to give the impression that young people are thoroughly disengaged from politics and the public sphere. In some countries the participation opportunities of young people are improving. European integration (in its widest sense, as not just being invited to join the EU but as being involved in broad based forms of European cooperation) is helping this process along. Efforts are being made to develop youth participation channels all the way up to global level and United Nations agencies including UNFPA are experimenting with youth activities with a participative dimension, rather than a representative one. However, inter-agency cooperation in this field is relatively weak and there is a lot of duplication, especially when it comes to the question of representative youth platforms. It is notable that at the country and continental level there has been something of a tendency to create new structures rather than working with or trying to empower existing ones, for example, National Youth Councils or regional youth platforms that already exist and have difficulty to develop without support. Cooperation with the international non-governmental youth sector is also improving. But, it remains difficult that the tendency of UN and other international agencies to work only with the

biggest of the international non-governmental youth organisation (such as the Guides or Scouts or the Red Cross/Red Crescent Youth). While this is not a problem per se, there diversity of forms of youth participation goes far beyond the representativeness of such organisations. Consultation with such organisations, while necessary and important, cannot claim to be participative in the true sense.

## **Conclusion: Specific Youth Policies**

### **Youth policy**

As mentioned in previous sections, countries have different approaches to youth policy, determined by many factors including political traditions and social conditions. This and the fact that youth policy concerns also cut across most other social policy areas notwithstanding, some specific youth targeted policies are necessary to ensure coordination and effectiveness, as well as evidence based policy making. It goes without saying that this means that youth specific policies are also multidimensional, taking into account social issues, gender questions and problems affecting the whole population, such as conflict and ageing.

Our review reveals that three of the countries have an explicit youth policy (Armenia, Bulgaria and Turkey) and one country is in the process of its elaboration (Albania). For the other three countries it is not possible to conclude whether there is or is not a fully-fledged and integrated youth policy in place. In the case of Bosnia & Herzegovina the problem, as for other areas of social policy, continues to be the complex political structures of the state that are constantly subject to change. In Ukraine, although it is difficult to ascertain from the public information available, it seems that the government has some kind of youth strategy. But, with the creation of the united National Youth Council in November 2006, there has been a positive move towards the negotiation of a national youth policy. For Uzbekistan, it is not possible to conclude due to a lack of information.

Turkey, Bulgaria and Bosnia & Herzegovina, however, do not seem to take a multidimensional approach to youth policy. On the other hand, there have been efforts in Albania and Ukraine to improve the multidimensionality of youth policy, including through consultation activities with representative youth NGOs, National Youth Councils and other relevant stakeholders. It is noteworthy that youth policy development in countries such as Armenia is almost entirely driven by external donor priorities. This undermines the democratic nature of youth policy making and the credibility and sustainability of youth organisations.

In some specific and key areas of youth policy, the following trends are visible:

### **Information**

If one considers the general trends identified in the areas of health, education, employment, participation and human rights, it is clear that there is a general lack of good quality, up to date and easily accessible information targeting young people specifically. Modes of delivery are an issue, as where information services do exist they are neither attractive nor centrally located, and most often they do not exist. Another issue is human resources. Clearly, in the age of information and communication technologies, youth information services demand a certain level of skill and qualification to be adequately delivered. Qualified youth information professionals should staff youth information centres. Such qualified personnel being aged 30 or under can also be a factor in the extent to which such information services are used by young people. Such services should also, in principle, be public services and free of charge to make them accessible.

Therefore, they should be established with the active participation of local authorities as one of the key stakeholders in the process of youth information, although there are many successful examples of NGO led and run information services. In the countries reviewed which have had experiences of establishing youth information services, outreach increased and the services concerned were used by a significant number of young people, indicating demand.

### **Youth specific services**

The long term benefits of targeted youth specific services have yet to become clear to policy makers in the countries surveyed. This may be due to the long history of bureaucratised service delivery by poorly trained and even less motivated public servants, who would rather be anywhere but at work. It is no surprise that there is a general lack of service culture in the public administrations in the countries concerned. A further problem and one more specifically related to youth policy making is that of the “image of youth” current in the policy making community concerned. As mentioned on previous occasions, paternalism and the idea that youth should be seen (especially during elections) and not heard (especially when it comes to financial resources) is still quite widespread and, in general, the further down the ladder one goes towards the local and the further away from the capital city one travels, the situation tends to get worse. When one takes into account that young people are generally known to be at high risk when it comes to key service areas such as health, especially sexual health, or unemployment, it is unfortunate that even if any specific measures are in place to address their vulnerability, even fewer youth specialised services have been established to deliver them. Notable exceptions do exist, but needless to say, one pilot youth-targeted sexual health clinic in a capital city in one country, no matter how well resourced it is, cannot reach even a minority of young people at risk of being infected by HIV or requiring abortion counselling.

### **Research**

It is simply amazing how little good quality, up to date, locally initiated and run research is available in the countries concerning the situation of young people and their place in social policy. Evidence based policy making is impossible without this. If research is initiated and conducted locally, it is most often conducted by NGOs and targeted to specific issues, which in principle is quite positive, although it is notable that the international development community, almost exclusively, determines the research agenda. A good example is research into HIV/AIDS among young people, which is certainly important, but not as urgent in some countries as say child trafficking and adolescent prostitution (for example, in South East Europe), even if clearly the problems are linked. Ideally, government commitments and the development of an active youth sector to carry out all relevant and important research activities are needed.

The absence of a youth specific research agenda in a given country can be to do with the fact that few of the countries have a tradition of youth research and sociology. It may also simply be a matter of a lack of awareness for the necessity of evidence to underpin policy making. It is notable that international cooperation and capacity can help to remedy such gaps. A good example is Armenia, where by requesting an international youth policy review by the Council of Europe in 2004 a national youth policy review was commissioned necessitating the establishment of an inter-disciplinary research group, partly financed by UNDP, involving the State University of Yerevan, a selection of NGO representatives and some governmental experts. But, several open questions remain. It is unclear at the end of the international review process whether this research group will be made permanent, will be provided with resources for developing a serious research agenda and whether it will be independent from the government.

Of course, the international community is also active in commissioning international research projects concerning young people in specific and across countries, involving external and international experts. Notable in this respect is the common focus on development issues as they relate to young people rather than youth focused research. But, it has to be admitted that this is improving with the growing interest that international institutions such as the UN and the World Bank demonstrate in young people. Of concern, however, remains the lack of longitudinal and cross-country studies (these are admittedly highly resource and time intensive), the tendency towards quantitative rather than qualitative research and the lack of comparability of the resulting data among the studies undertaken. This significantly complicates any form of trend analysis and the establishment of regional or international evidence based policies. In addition, when developing high quality youth focused research, it is important not to neglect other key indicators, primarily gender and minority status.

An innovation in the field of youth research and something that seems to be growing in importance for the region concerned is Diaspora led research and blogging. This phenomenon has been identified for Albania, Armenia, Turkey, Ukraine and Uzbekistan and consists of Diaspora (expatriated) communities undertaking and financing the creation of research projects using internet as a means of accessing young people in the countries concerned (notably in local languages). This phenomenon should be monitored and probably engaged with as a means for compensating for the general lack of public youth research on young people in the countries concerned, although it is worth bearing in mind that the priorities of Diaspora communities may differ and even run counter to the priorities and needs of the young people living in the country concerned.

Finally, our survey reveals a need for the following three issues to be researched in their own right or included in the development of research projects regarding young people: 1. community-based, non-formal education as a means for providing life and livelihood skills; 2. income-generation opportunities aimed at linking young people to the workplace, and 3. joint development of national youth policies with national youth councils or groups.

### ***Conclusions***

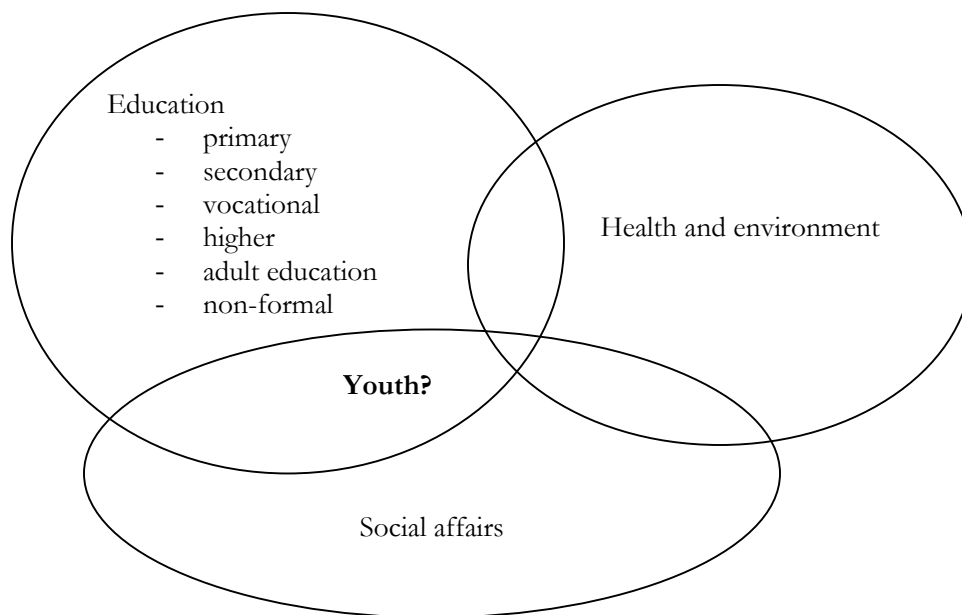
One can infer a lot about the priority given to a public policy by the amount of resources dedicated to it in the state budget. In this respect, money most definitely talks. It remains unfortunate that often more money is spent on the subsidisation of the existence of cows (within an agricultural policy) or on the purchase of weapons, than invested in young people's development. Provocative as this statement may seem, it is neither untrue nor uncommon. Neither do reports on investments in the development of youth policy usually make news or bring in the votes.

In the context of our study, it was not possible to make a significant analysis of the investments made by each of the countries in youth policy. Nevertheless, two significant points should be made in relation to such financial investments. First, there is a cost to not investing in youth. In the long run, a youth generation that feels it has perspectives and that is motivated to participate in the constructive development of society can only have positive effects for that society. The opposite is also true. One might even question whether this is not more crucial to the health of a given society than the number of babies it produces. Second, government and public policy makers who want to work in the direction of the development of effective youth policies could learn a lot from the gender mainstreaming community. Gender sensitive budgeting, for example, has become an effective basis for the provision of adequate resources to an essential policy area

and for raising the awareness of other policy sectors for the need to consider the gender dimension throughout the policy planning and implementation process. To date few governments, even those that have specific youth policies, have instigated process of youth sensitive budgeting. UN agencies can contribute with capacity and experience to such a process.

In this respect it is important to clarify where the responsibility for a given policy issue lies. As explored in other parts of our study, youth policy is public policy and, hence, it should be reiterated that public institutions, in other words, government, is responsible for its development and implementation. Clearly, non-governmental and even intergovernmental actors are crucial to the process and must be accorded equality of participation and mandate in the process of designing policies, but it is nevertheless up to government to take first, the lead in kicking off the process and second, the responsibility for ensuring adequate resources are dedicated to implementation. In addition to clarity of responsibility comes the question of accountability. One responsible public actor must be tasked with coordinating youth policy making efforts, which more often than not take place in the intersection between different sectors of social policy rather than in just one.

The following simple graphic clearly demonstrates the problem.



Intergovernmental and non-governmental actors most certainly have a role to play in advocating for change, in co-designing policy strategies, in implementing initiatives and documenting and disseminating good practise, but they can neither replace good government nor good governance at the national level in respect of youth policy. Social institutions such as the family, religious bodies and civil society are crucial but they are not government.

The context of all the countries covered is one of social and economic and sometimes even political transition. Even if the transition is completed only to varying degrees in the different sectors and in the different countries, the experience of dynamic change and flux is common to all. But, the idea of transition is differentially understood. The question is transition from what to

what. In Eastern Europe, Central Asia and Turkey there has been a lot of discussion about transition in terms of democratisation, when in fact it is more often than not about economic liberalisation. Young people can be active agents of change within processes of transition, but our analysis shows that they are often structurally excluded or marginalised from economic participation. If the transition is so focused on economics, then the extent to which young people have adequate space for becoming active is questionable. Concomitant developments in democratisation, where they take place, do not automatically translate into a democratisation of governance and participation, clearly evidenced by the strange dynamics of youth mobilisation during “colour revolutions” and the subsequent fall off in participation and civil society vibrancy in the reform process that may or may not take off in their aftermath.

In Ukraine, for example, it is not possible to assess the extent to which recent positive developments in the youth field (such as the establishment of one national youth council) have anything to do with the reform process kicked off by the Orange Revolution. At the governmental level the situation remains unclear, in terms of responsibilities for policy making and implementation, and capacity remains weak. The youth activists that were so instrumental in creating the change have not necessarily been integrated into the post revolutionary reform process and many have become disillusioned.

The above context has significant implications for the future of youth policy making in the countries surveyed, as do other factors, including differing concepts and approaches to the place and role of young people in relation to (democratic) states. The history of youth policy making in Western Europe shows exemplifies this point. In France, where the underlying and pervasive image of young people is that of troublemakers, a “preventative” model of youth policy making has emerged. In the Anglo-Saxon tradition, young people are viewed as citizens of a liberal society, and, therefore, the focus of youth policy has traditionally been on “autonomy” with young people understood as individuals who need to be developed. In Germany, the post-war development of youth policy has focused on enshrining rights and responsibilities in legislation and on ensuring the rule of law (as in many other areas), so the focus has been on rights and services.

What will characterise the youth policy making approach of the countries surveyed in the future? Tendencies towards the institution of “intergenerational dialogue”, as a euphemism for the replacement of the financial responsibility of the state for the social welfare of ever growing ageing populations by that of families and towards the instrumentalisation of youth work for the purposes of the employability of young people and a highly liberalised model, according to which equality of opportunity is guaranteed, but where the state has little or no responsibility for supporting the rights of young people, are already visible. At the same time, in relation to “deviant” young people, tendencies towards prescriptive policy and control, including a strong focus on “prevention” are also visible. For example, the policing of young people by “civility agents” in plain clothes is already taking place in Geneva in Switzerland.

In the context of this study, it was not possible to develop a detailed assessment of the local activities being conducted in the seven countries by United Nations agencies, consultation with several offices and at the expert review meeting has, nonetheless, revealed some emerging trends in in-country programming approaches to youth. In the first place, it is important to underline the complementary nature of United Nations programming approaches, in that they attempt to create synergies with existing policy provision, provide co-financing, advocate to get issues onto government agendas and provide capacity building to a variety of actors from the relevant policy fields, all of which is sorely needed in the seven countries concerned.

In relation to at least one specific domain of youth policy (sexual and reproductive health of young people), UNFPA has undertaken to engage in a “Substantive Documentation and Implementation Review” in three of the countries covered by our survey (Albania, Bosnia & Herzegovina and Bulgaria) among others.

At the same time, several good practices initiated in other thematic fields could be adapted to the youth issue and in some countries concerned by our study this is actively being discussed. In particular, the practise of establishing interagency task forces on specific issues (previously, HIV/AIDS or Gender Issues) to ensure coordination and synergy between the actions of the different UN agencies, as well as the development of common strategic approaches to youth needs that cut across UN programming on the national level and advocacy for the better treatment of youth issues within government policies, is of particular interest.

If anything, the above discussion implies that UN agencies are well placed to act as positive examples to governments lacking both experience and capacity in this field. But, in order to do so, they themselves will have to mainstream through their own internal procedures, a human rights based approach to programming targeting young people, in which young people are understood as a resource rather than as problem. A further positive contribution will be advocating for and facilitating the development of real “intergenerational dialogue” on the question of the position of young people and their contribution to the constructive development of society. But, again for that to happen, international institutions have to take on board the necessity of empowering both existing and new structures of youth participation and representation in the process of international policy making in the field of youth and related sectors.

**Part V**  
**Directions for Future Action**



## **Introduction**

In terms of general conclusions, our review of the countries concerned reveals that social and economic inequality is a significant challenge to human dignity and the human rights of young people, especially of vulnerable groups. If one, therefore, considers the demographic importance of young people in these seven countries and in the region covered by UNFPA as a whole (amounting to some 75 million human beings), then one can conclude that young people are generally underrepresented and, more worrying, disenfranchised. Unfortunately, public perceptions of young people tend to be negative and awareness of the “positive” role young people can have as partners in social change and development is limited. In the political sphere, youth issues are often referred to, but political promises are rarely translated into actions. Inter-generational dialogue, in the sense of two-way, mutually negotiated and facilitated communication on issues of common concern and priority, from positions of equality, is not yet visible in the countries concerned.

Nevertheless, young people demonstrate significant resilience in the face of their many challenges. The time is now opportune for strategic investment by public authorities in young people to help them live up to their “human capital” potential and there are examples of good practice that could be developed and multiplied as part of more coherent youth policy development strategies. Reform of legislation, in line with the provisions of international conventions and regional best practices, can be a good starting point for youth specific policy development. Capacity building of governmental officials is needed to develop the ability of social policy to take into account the youth dimension.

In relation to the UNFPA core programme areas and its strategic aim quoted in the opening pages of this study, our study reveals three main conclusions that should inform advocacy and programming efforts. In the first place, fertility is rapidly declining in the region due to a complex of factors mostly determined by the poor socio-economic conditions of young people and their perception of even poorer future socio-economic perspectives. In the second place, improvement of the current trend is not foreseeable without significant efforts to increase the socio-economic confidence of young women, men and families. In the third place, investments in sexual and reproductive health education and services, including significant investments in family planning, youth specific sexual health services and services that support young families in combining work life and parenting, are necessary.

## **Advocacy**

Taking the above into account, UNFPA at both the regional and national levels is well placed, along with other agencies, to assist national governments in developing experience and capacity in the youth field. It can lead by example through mainstreaming good practices, including in the area of youth participation, in its own internal programming and procedures. In so doing, it will contribute to the emergence of a rights-based approach to United Nations programming on youth, which in turn can enhance the perception of young people as a resource. In order to achieve this, however, advocacy is required in two directions: for action on youth and with action.

The following advocacy guidelines are based on the results of our survey of the seven countries and the expert review workshop that took place in the European Youth Centre, Budapest 4 - 6 December 2006.

UNFPA can make a significant contribution to the health, social development and well-being of young people by speaking up for youth while at the same time dedicating programme resources to meet Population and Development Surveys (PDS) and Sexual and Reproductive Health goals, whether through data collection, information and comprehensive sexuality education, reproductive health service provision or commodity security.

It must advocate for a change in the approach taken to poverty and for actions necessary for the enhancement of the participation, role and status of youth, internally, in the wider United Nations system, as well as externally, to government and civil society actors.

### **Know the facts!**

- Are there general trends to be observed in the way in which youth issues are dealt with in policy (both existing and emerging) and by policy makers?
- What is the statistical basis that provides evidence of trends the identified?
- Is that evidence adequately collected and collated? Is the evidence comparable?
- What kind of evidence is available from studies, surveys and trend analyses?
- Are statistics adequately disaggregated (gender, age groups, minority status, rural/urban location, un/married, etc)?
- What is the extent of identified problems?

### **Know what you are working on!**

- Understand better the purpose and implications of youth policy
- Develop sensitivity for what youth policy is for
- Understand how youth policy interventions need to be different for mainstream youth and for more vulnerable groups
- Check what is being advocated. For example, if advocacy is for healthy lifestyles, then is attention also paid to the need for adequate future economic perspectives?

### **Know who you are working for!**

- Know the young people policies and programmes are trying to address
- Define range and meaning of the youth cohorts
- Identify the range of specific vulnerability categories of adolescents and youth concerned
- Understand the consequences of bulges and of adolescent and youth contributions to fertility
- Identify who speaks for and represents young people in their dealings with UNFPA and other development agencies: for example, young people themselves, their elders, the richer or more educated among them, political actors, the disenfranchised, the outspoken among them.
- Assess if that representation is tokenistic or participative by using a ladder of participation levels

## **Know where you are working!**

- Know the context: transition in terms of both the life phase of the young people and in terms of the stage of development of the countries where they live (political, economic, social, cultural, etc)
- Identify opportunities for partnership in youth policy making: is youth policy making characterised by cooperation or competition? Are efforts coordinated?
- If not, position UNFPA to support coordination.
- Identify the place and role of international frameworks (EU *acquis communautaires*, PRSPs, CRC, ICPD, International Ministerial Conferences on Youth, World Programme of Action on Youth, etc) in the policy making process
- Make sure you have an identified national at least one counterpart who is responsible within the governmental system, and at least one in the civil society sector
- Understand the place of youth policy in the overall system of national governmental policy making
- Identify the cost of youth interventions and assess the weight within the national budget as a first step towards “youth budgeting” on the model of “gender budgeting”. Consider the cost of non-investment and of “generational investment”.

## **Programming**

The above advocacy guidelines should help inform a revision of programming practises at the operational level. The results of this survey and the expert review workshop suggest that the following programming steps could be integrated into UN country team initiatives. Governmental activities could also benefit from following this step by step approach.

### **Step 1: Identify actors influencing youth policy and implementing various youth related initiatives**

This implies undertaking research into which actors are involved in youth policy development processes and into the activities they are conducting in relation to young people. Then, with the involvement of all United Nations agencies concerned, this implies the initiation of mappings exercise, to better understand the strengths and weaknesses of the United Nations, state institutions and partners in the non-governmental sector in relation to current and projected youth issues.

### **Step 2: Identify the concepts of youth underlying current government policy**

This implies developing an understanding of the concepts of youth that commonly determine models of youth work in the society concerned. In addition, this implies understanding how youth is perceived in contemporary society and how young people are accompanied (or not) through the transition process (for example, in legislation or policy). In order to do so, it is essential to identify and assess the roles of the different actors concerned, meeting points between those different actors, normative laws prescribing budgets to be allocated to youth related policies, etc.

### **Step 3: Identify concepts of young people as agents of change within societies in transition**

This implies understanding the actual role played by young people in the transition process from state socialism or any other regime to the market economy and the rule of law, as well as the gains or benefits they may or may not have gleaned from being involved.

### **Step 4: Assess the state of specific youth policy making in the country concerned**

Check the following indicators for assessing the role of the state: the presence and role of national government, local and regional authorities, NGOs, relevant sectoral public institutions. Further check the availability of budgets and the structure of funding for youth policy, as well as the youth share of in the budgets of relevant government sectors – social affairs, health, education, justice, etc. Try to find out what is happening in the intersections between the different ministerial responsibilities and the place that youth has in the inter-sectoral domain, if any. Gather evidence of young people's channels of access, level of participation and opportunity for consultation in policymaking. Check the extent to which there exists political will for the active participation and involvement of young people in the design of youth policy.

In addition to the above general programming steps, and on the basis of relevant internal advocacy work, the following concrete actions could be led by UNFPA country teams at the country level, as a contribution to mainstreaming the youth agenda and to improving the capacity of the UN to provide complementary support to government policy concerning young people:

- Create a United Nations Interagency Group on Youth
- Develop a reporting system on youth to ensure that the evidence collected as part of the step by step preparation for programming outlined above can be adequately verified and supplemented by the different agencies concerned and documented for further use in the evidence based youth policy making process
- Create an enlarged United Nations theme group on youth with the aim to
  - Stimulate interest in youth issues and programmes by ensuring youth related activities and funding are discussed and agreed by all concerned, including partners from outside the UN system;
  - Develop support mechanisms to ensure that principles of co-management are respected in youth programmes developed and implemented
  - Discuss the joint or complementary funding of a youth advisor to a level political functionary within the state government in order to ensure synergy between governmental and UN interventions
  - Improve the dissemination of information and knowledge gathered within the process, and its comparability, through the develop common approaches for the collection of information and the evaluation and monitoring of progress towards the common objectives identified

Based on the results of this review, it is the opinion of this author that taking the above steps would represent a net improvement in both coordination and sharing of experience between different UN agencies in the field of youth. It would also make a net contribution to mainstreaming youth policy development principles and a human rights perspective at international and national levels, in complementarity to ongoing efforts of other actors in the sector.

## Appendices

## Glossary of Youth Policy Terms

**Ability** refers to capacities that someone can already demonstrate that s/he possesses, such as having the ability to speak a certain language.

**Adolescence** has been defined as including those aged between 10 and 19 (see below for youth and young people. As adolescence is a period of physical, psychological and social maturing from childhood to adulthood, it may fall within a broad age range.

**(Active) Citizenship** is active participation of citizens in economic, social, cultural and political fields of life. In the youth field much emphasis is on learning the necessary competences through voluntary activities. The aim is not only to improve the knowledge, but also motivation, skills and practical experience to be an active citizen.

**Civic Service** is a voluntary service managed by the State - or on behalf of the State - e.g. in the social field or in civil protection.

**Civil Society** refers to the arena of unforced collective action around shared interests, purposes and values. In principle, its institutional forms are distinct from those of the state, family and market. Often civil society is understood as a “third sector”, while the state is “the second sector” and business “the first sector”. In practice, the boundaries between state, civil society, family and market are often complex, blurred and negotiated. This makes the exact definition of civil society difficult: Is the integrity of civil society threatened by public or business subsidies to non-governmental organisations? Are all organisations “qualified” as civil society organisations: What is the status of skinheads, neo-Nazis, Animal Liberation Front, extremist political organisations etc? Should there be a commitment to values like pluralist democracy, human rights and rule of law to be qualified as a civil society organisation? To what extent a free and vigorous press is an essential element of civil society: is state monopoly or commercial ownership of the media good for a free civil society? The debate about civil society ultimately is about how culture, market and state relate to each other. Civil society actors include non-governmental organisations, citizen advocacy organizations, professional associations, faith-based organisations, and trade unions, which give voice to various sectors of society and enrich public participation in democracies. Sometimes less organised actions and activities like movements, community groups, protests and demonstrations may be seen as civil society actors. Civil society commonly embraces a diversity of spaces, actors and institutional forms, varying in their degree of formality, autonomy and power).

**Civilian Service** is an alternative to compulsory military service in some countries, but not voluntary.

**Co-management** refers to a model of youth participation practiced in the Council of Europe Youth sector. Representatives of both government and young people decide together on priorities, main budget envelopes, implementation of the work priorities and on allocation of resources for youth activities of the Youth sector.

**Competence** is often used interchangeably with the term skill, but they do not really mean the same thing. Competence means the ability to apply knowledge, know-how and skills in a stable/recurring or changing situation. Two elements are crucial: applying what one knows and can do to a specific task or problem, and being able to transfer this ability between different situations.

**Empowerment** refers to helping people to help themselves. A concept used in many contexts: management (“The process of sharing information, training and allowing employees to manage their jobs in order to obtain optimum results”), community development (“action-oriented management training aimed at community members and their leaders, poverty reduction, gender strategy, facilitation, income generation, capacity development, community participation, social animation”), mobilisation (“Leading people to learn to lead themselves”) virtual advocacy (Citizens Internet Empowerment Coalition, [www.ciec.org](http://www.ciec.org)) as well as helping women, sick people, minorities and youth to better manage their life.

**Evaluation** means to make a reasoned judgement about or to give a plausible account of something. It does not imply any specific purpose (such as grading individual performance), nor does it imply any particular method of evaluation (such as a written test), and nor does its outcomes automatically suggest that something is of greater value or importance than something else (such as Council of Europe activities in comparison with European Union activities).

**Evidence-based youth policies** are youth policies that are not only based on political and moral objectives, but also on accurate information on the social situation of young people across the society and their changing expectations, attitudes and life-styles. One important source of information is independent, objective and professional research and statistics. Furthermore, reliable empirical information on implementation of policies is needed to learn from experiences and further develop goal-setting, policy approaches and youth work methods and activities.

**Formal Learning** is purposive learning that takes place in a distinct and institutionalised environment specifically designed for teaching/training and learning, which is staffed by learning facilitators who are specifically qualified for the sector, level and subject concerned and which usually serves a specified category of learners (defined by age, level and specialist area of interest). Learning aims are almost always externally set, learning progress is usually monitored and assessed, and learning outcomes are usually recognised by certificates or diplomas. Much formal learning provision is compulsory (school education).

**Formative evaluation or assessment** refers to a dynamic process over time, which tries to capture the developmental dimensions of learning, performance and achievement. It records the pathways and the changes between two points in time, with the primary accent on what lies between those points and how the journey has unfolded.

**Identity** is the feeling or sense of belong of an individual to a group or culture. It can be formed through common habits, characteristics and ideas, which may be clear markers of a shared cultural identity, but essentially it is determined by difference: we feel we belong to a group, and a group defines itself as a group, by noticing and highlighting differences with other groups and cultures. Identity (or ‘self’) is very much a social construction: for example feminist studies argue that gender identities must be understood in relation to the (often male) expectations of women, girls, mothers and wives. It is further argued that today’s (late modern) identities are often fragmented, overlapping and continuously under construction. This makes the task of educational actors, like youth workers, whose objective it is to support young peoples’ identity growth, increasingly challenging.

**Informal Learning** from the learner’s standpoint at least, is non-purposive learning which takes place in everyday life contexts in the family, at work, during leisure and in the community. It does have outcomes, but these are seldom recorded, virtually never certified and are typically neither immediately visible for the learner nor do they count in themselves for education,



training or employment purposes. Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning is one way in which the outcomes of such learning can be made more visible and hence open to greater recognition.

**Intercultural Learning** is a process of becoming more aware of and better understanding one's own culture and other cultures around the world. The aim of intercultural learning is to increase international and cross-cultural tolerance and understanding. The learning process itself is constant movement of cultural awareness – from the freedom and comfort of expecting others to be like oneself, to the shock and constraint of one's emotions and projections when they prove not to be. The Council of Europe pioneered intercultural learning as a pedagogical tool.

**Juventization** is a pro-active, problem-solving approach to youth participation perceiving it as the active involvement of young people in the social transformation of their societies.

Mahler (1983) envisioned **Juventology** as an integrative youth theory aiming to reveal the extent to which young people have power over present and future conditions and the extent to which they are governed by the established social authority.

**Knowledge**, in the everyday world, appears to have a self-evident meaning: it is what someone individually knows or the sum of what a given civilisation collectively knows. But what does it mean to know something? What is it that is known, how do we come to know it, why does it count as something worth knowing, and what do we do with it when we know it? In educational practice knowledge is what there is to learn, but it is not necessarily useful and worthwhile of its own accord. It has to be joined up with skills and competences (to become useful) on the one hand – and no less importantly, with principles and values (to become worthwhile) on the other hand.

**Learning Outcomes** are the results of a learning process, which may be expressed in a variety of ways. In fact, the outcomes that are recorded and measured at any one point in time are interim moments in a learning process, that is, a snapshot frame in a film (which could also run backwards).

**Learning providers** are organisations or a set of institutionalised arrangements that deliver learning, that is, that manage and monitor the provision of courses of some kind, whether formal or non-formal. Learning providers may also design and/or execute the courses they offer, and they may operate in either the public or the private sector. They may or may not be subject to some form of state or professional regulation to assure quality and standards.

**Mentoring** is a structured process for providing personal guidance and support to someone who is younger, less experienced or new to the game – whatever the context may be, but most commonly in education, training and employment contexts. Mentors act as critical but non-judgemental friends, provide a role model and a source of useful information and advice, and can take on a coaching task (helping to improve performance). They may be freely chosen, but may also be allocated using a set of matching criteria. Formal mentoring programmes are likely to specify a given time-period for the mentoring relationship.

**National Agencies** are structures established by the national authorities in each country in order to assist with management and to assume responsibility for implementation of most of the youth programme.

**National Youth Councils** are umbrella organizations for youth NGOs and sometimes also other actors in youth work. National youth councils function primarily as a service organization to their members, but can also be a lobby and advocacy body. A similar role in international level is played by the European Youth Forum, where National youth councils play a strong role (see [www.youthforum.org](http://www.youthforum.org)).

**Non-formal Learning** is purposive but voluntary learning that takes place in a diverse range of environments and situations for which teaching/training and learning is not necessarily their sole or main activity. These environments and situations may be intermittent or transitory, and the activities or courses that take place may be staffed by professional learning facilitators (such as youth trainers) or by volunteers (such as youth leaders). The activities and courses are planned, but are seldom structured by conventional rhythms or curriculum subjects. They usually address specific target groups, but rarely document or assess learning outcomes or achievements in conventionally visible ways.

**Open and Distance Learning** combines two distinct categories of learning provision and participation which frequently occur together. Open learning is purposive learning that takes place where, when and how the learner chooses. It may also be self-directed learning, that is, the learner also voluntarily chooses what and why to learn. Open learning may be formal or non-formal in character. Distance learning covers the spectrum from correspondence learning ('by post') to eLearning (IT supported learning, whether as content, pedagogy or medium). It may or may not be designed as open learning, and can include highly formalised and closely assessed types of learning processes and outcomes.

*"Participation is not an aim in itself, but an approach to becoming active in citizen participation as a means of taking an active role both in the development of one's own environment and in European co-operation"* (European Steering Committee for Youth 1997:7). Such an approach was accepted in the design of a study of youth experiments in European Union member states. The operational definition used accepts ample interpretation: *"power based on the possibility of exerting influence on the economic and social aspects of life in the broad community"*.

**Qualification** can simply be a synonym for a certificate or diploma. In the world of formal education and training in Europe it is usually an official record or document testifying to the fact that a person has successfully completed a given course or reached a given standard of achievement for a specified field, skill or competence.

**Skill** means having the knowledge and experience needed to perform a specific task or job – someone who has learned what to do (possesses the knowledge) and how to do it (can transfer the knowledge into real practice), which also means that someone else can observe the skill in action.

**Social Capital** consists of civil society norms and networks that enable citizens and their institutions to perform more productively. Without adequate supplies of social capital – that is, civic engagement, healthy community institutions, norms of mutual reciprocity, and trust – democracies and market economies may begin to falter. REF: 8

**Social Recognition** points to the status and esteem ('feel good factor') that individuals, organisations or sectors receive as a consequence of displaying certain characteristics, reaching certain achievements or engaging in certain activities – such as learning. It might also extend to material rewards, such as higher incomes for those with higher level qualifications.

**Standards and Quality Standards** are terms that can be used in several different ways. To say that an organisation uses standard methods of youth work might simply mean that it uses what the commentator judges to be the usual methods, that is, those used most commonly. The comment might well also convey the judgement that the methods in question are those generally recognised in the youth sector to be appropriate. This carries the suggestion that standard methods reflect professional norms, that is, they are seen to be good and valuable methods. At this point the term standards takes on a distinctive flavour, because it introduces the idea that some youth work methods are better than others (depending, of course, to some extent on the purpose and the participants). This raises the question of the bases for such quality judgements, which take the form of criteria, that is, attributes that should be present (or not present in some instances) if a particular youth work activity and its methods are to be seen as of good quality. The criteria that are applied are not necessarily the same for all cases, although some criteria may apply in all cases.

**Teacher** is the word traditionally used to refer to those who shape, guide and accompany learning processes in schools, colleges and – to some extent – higher education. They may teach vocational subjects, but it is not common to use the word ‘teacher’ for those who work in company-based contexts.

**Validation** refers to making visible and valuing the full range of qualifications and competences held by an individual, irrespective of where these have been acquired. The purpose of this validation may be formative (supporting an ongoing learning process) as well as summative (aiming at certification).

**Values of Youth Sector** refer to the European Convention on Human Rights, rule of law, free elections and pluralism, gender equality, social justice, minority protection, children and youth rights, access and inclusion.

**Voluntary Activities** are understood as comprising all kinds of voluntary engagement. They are characterised by the following aspects: open to all, unpaid, undertaken of own free will, educational (non-formal learning aspect), and added social value.

**Voluntary Service** is understood as being part of voluntary activities and is characterised by the following additional aspects: fixed period (no matter if short or long-term), clear objectives, contents and tasks, structure and framework, appropriate support, legal and social protection.

**Young People** are persons 10 – 24 years old (for the purposes of the United Nations system) or 13 – 30 years old (for the purposes of European youth policies - this age is used both by the European Commission and Council of Europe).

**Young People with Fewer Opportunities** are young people from a less-privileged cultural, geographical or socio-economic background, or with disabilities.

**Youth** as defined by the United Nations General Assembly are those persons falling between the ages of 15 and 24 years inclusive. This definition was made for International Youth Year, held around the world in 1985. All UN statistics on youth are based on this definition, as illustrated by the annual yearbooks of statistics published by the United Nations system on demography, education, employment and health. By that definition, therefore, children are those persons under the age of 14. It is, however, worth noting that Article 1 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child defines ‘children’ as persons up to the age of 18. This was

intentional, as it was hoped that the Convention would provide protection and rights to as large an age-group as possible and because there was no similar United Nations Convention on the Rights of Youth. Many countries also draw a line on youth at the age at which a person is given equal treatment under the law – often referred to as the ‘age of majority’. This age is 18 in many countries, and once a person passes this age, they are considered to be an adult. However, the operational definition and nuances of the term ‘youth’ often vary from country to country, depending on the specific socio-cultural, institutional, economic and political factors. Within the category of ‘youth’, it is also important to distinguish between teenagers (13 to 19) and young adults (20 to 24), since the sociological, psychological and health problems they face may differ.

The purpose of **Youth Policy** is to create conditions for learning, opportunity and experience which ensure and enable young people to develop the knowledge, skills and competences to be actors of democracy and to integrate into society, in particular playing active part in both civil society and the labour market. The key measures of youth policies are to promote citizenship learning and the integrated policy approach.

**Youth Political Participation** refers to groups of young people, who meet on a regular basis, with the aim of raising awareness, or challenging policies and/or practices, at a local, national or international level. Modern participation representative participation and direct participation with all their variants, such as NGO based structures, co-management, youth parliaments, school councils, youth hearings, demonstrations. Post modern or emergent and future forms of participation, various types of expressive, emotional, aesthetic, casual virtual and digital participation.

**Youth Trainers** are people who train others to work with young people, using non-formal methods, focusing on personal and social development and with an emphasis on fostering intercultural competence.

**Youth Workers** are people who work with young people in a wide variety of non-formal and informal contexts, typically focusing on personal and social development through one-to-one relationships and in group-based activities. Being learning facilitators may be their main task, but it is at least as likely that youth workers take a social pedagogic or directly social work based approach. In many cases, these roles and functions are combined with each other.

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<http://enrin.grida.no/htmls/kosovo/SoE/popullat.htm>

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<http://www.worldbank.org/childrenandyouth>

<http://youthink.worldbank.org/>

<http://www.un.org/youth>.

<http://www.prb.org/>

<http://www.coe.int/youth>

<http://www.coe.int/youth/forum21>

<http://youth-knowledge.net/>

<http://www.unicef.org/>

<http://www.unesco.org/>

<http://www.who.org/>

<http://www.unaids.org/>

## Country Reports



## Albania

### Youth Demography

Albania is a relatively small country located in the Balkan Peninsula with 3,544,808 inhabitants (estimated July 2004)<sup>106</sup> that covers 28,748 square kilometres. With its rather torn history of Balkan wars and dictatorship during communism, Albania witnessed a series of economic and social crises during the 90s, which resulted in high level of migration from, as well as within the country.

It is estimated that during the period 1990 – 1995 the number of emigrants that fled the country ranged from 300.000 – 600.000 persons. Today the composition of the country, divided in 12 regions, and in turn divided in 36 districts and 65 municipalities, is represented by 58% of the population living in rural and mountainous areas with lowest income and fewer social and health services, and access to education<sup>107</sup>. The resting 40% of the Albanians live in urban areas, with 20% inhabiting the capital of Tirana<sup>108</sup>. High levels of internal migration caused Tirana absorbing almost 50%, and Durres, the largest port city 40%, of the internal migrants. Out of the 17% of the young people aged between 15-24 years (of the overall population), 20% are thought to have been migrating in search for economic opportunities abroad (INSTAT, 2002).<sup>109</sup>

Overall Albania, in comparison to other European countries, with an average age of 28,6 years<sup>110</sup>, with 40% of the population being under 18 years old<sup>111</sup>, and a GDP per capita of only 1,499 USD (data 2003)<sup>112</sup>, can be considered the youngest and the poorest population in Europe.

The table below illustrates population rates for Albanian society<sup>113</sup>:

	Total	Male	Female
Age structure (2004 est.)	0-14 years: 26.4% 15-64 years: 65.3% Over 65 years: 8.3% (about 40% under 18; about 50% under 25)	489,363 1,184,670 135,177	446,586 1,130,065 158,947
Median age (2004 est.)	28.2 years	27.6 years	28.7 years
Population growth rate	0.51% (2004 est.)		
Birth rate	15.08 births/1,000 population (2004 est.)		
Net migration rate	-4.93 migrant(s)/ 1,000 population (2004 est.)		
Infant mortality rate	22.31 deaths/1,000 live births	23.01 deaths/1,000 live births	21.54 deaths/1,000 live births
Life expectancy rate	77.06 years	74.37 years	80.02 years
Fertility rate	2.05 children born/woman		
Literacy (age 9 and over can read and write)	86.5% (2003 est.)	93.3% (2003 est.)	79.5% (2003 est.) female youth literacy : 96.4%

<sup>106</sup> Project Einstein, SEE Volunteers in SEE, Research Document, p. 44

<sup>107</sup> UNDP Albania Draft country Programme, p.2

<sup>108</sup> UNDP Albania Draft country Programme, p.2

<sup>109</sup> NSP Albania, 2004-2010, p.9

<sup>110</sup> MDG Report Albania, p.64

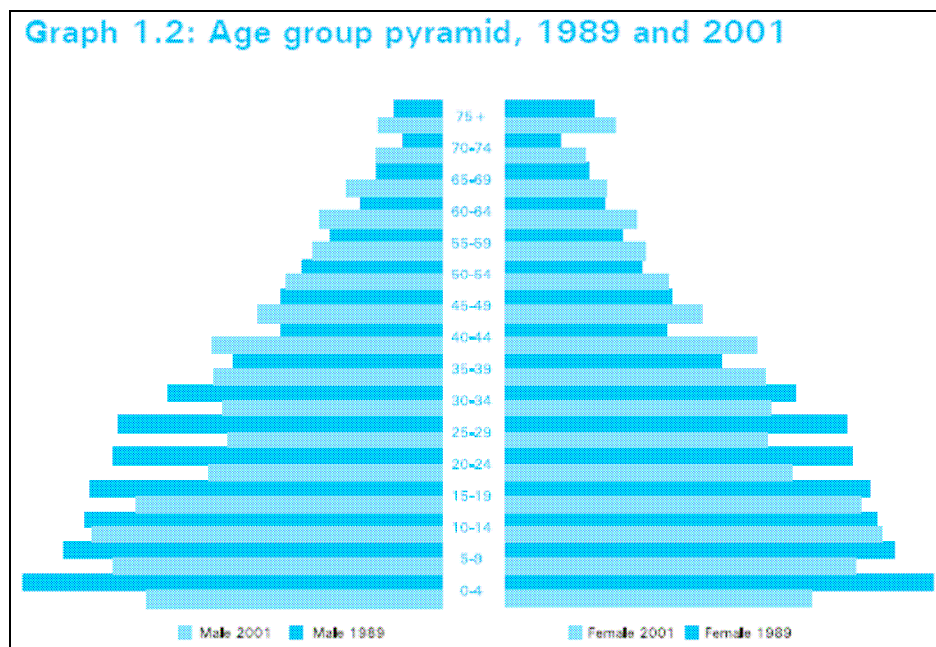
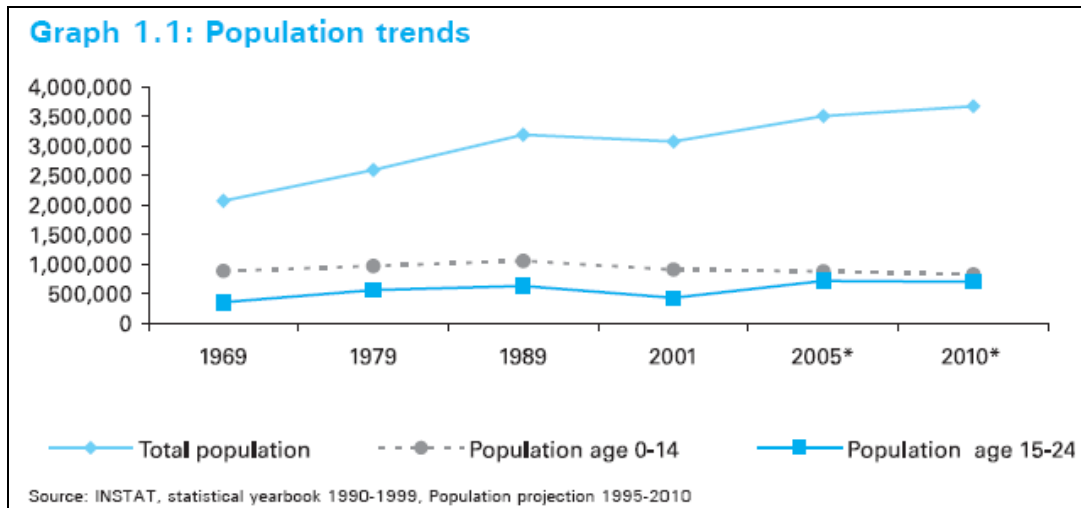
<sup>111</sup> NSP Albania, 2004-2010, p.9

<sup>112</sup> UNDP Albania Draft Country Programme, p.2

<sup>113</sup> Project Einstein, SEE Volunteers in SEE, Research Document, p. 44

Poverty, high unemployment, neighbouring conflicts, social insecurity, declining health and education indicators, as well as an increase in crime and gender discrimination accompanied the developments of the conditions of the current generation of young people, causing more and more of them leaving Albania mainly to the neighbouring Italy or Greece. Changes in population dynamics are the most dramatic consequences of the demographic transition, which is characterized by smaller families and a decline in household size<sup>114</sup>. Still young people represent a significant number in the Albanian society with a potential to contribute to its transformation and development.

In the graphics below you may find information on the Albanian population trends<sup>115</sup>:



<sup>114</sup> UNDP Albania Draft country Programme, p.2

<sup>115</sup> UNICEF, “Youth and Transition”.

According to UNICEF report 'Youth and Transition: Confronting Albania's Key Resource', there are five key areas that impact on the life of Albanian youth today. These are:

1. Internal and external youth migration.
2. An increasing number of young people entering in conflict with the law, which is manifested by an increase of violence.
3. Exposure to new health risks that includes risks of trafficking, HIV AIDS and STD.
4. Declining level of education, in terms of access and quality that would correspond to the needs of the labour market.
5. Huge youth unemployment that represents the major part of the overall unemployment, and again stimulates young people procuring work in neighbouring Greece and Italy.

The high levels of external migration brought about some positive as well as negative effects. From an economic point of view, migration contributed to the improvement of the living conditions of the Albanian families, as well as provided investments for the small and medium enterprises. Remittances, which today according to the UNICEF report<sup>116</sup> represent 20% of the GDP, acted as a softener of the social tensions. Almost 30% of investments to the Albanian economy were financed by remittances of family members working abroad. On the other hand, the massive migration weakened the strong traditional ties of the Albanian families. The high male emigration resulted in the increase of the women headed families in the absence of men. According to the UNICEF report, sociologists have noted an increased violence among these families, including gender discrimination, raise of juvenile crime and child trafficking.

According to the National Strategy on Children, about 4,000 children have migrated abroad, unaccompanied by their parents (3,000 in Greece and 1,000 in Italy), suffering mistreatment, physical and sexual abuse, employment in hard work, trafficking and other illegal activities. The report further noticed frequent exploitation of children by their parents or by Mafioso and criminal gangs for profit-bearing aims<sup>117</sup>.

Unfortunately, except of the trends of economic and at times education migration, there is no much other information on youth mobility. However, it can be said that since Albania's accession to the Council of Europe in 1995, young Albanians participate fully in the programmes of the Youth Directorate in the field of youth training, research and youth policy. Furthermore, the 2003 European Commission Third Country Youth Programme Report<sup>118</sup> highlights some of the challenges related to youth mobility.

These include on the one hand difficulties with the procedures for obtaining visa, which also impacts on the possibility of young Albanians to carry out projects; and lack of information about the Youth Programme on the other. The lack of information is rooted deeply in the post-communist culture of both the national institutions (such as the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports) as well as the respective youth organisations. The field report indicated that Albanian youth organisations are 'unwilling to share information about the Programme, because for their point of view having information is power.'<sup>119</sup> This reluctance to disseminate information about

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<sup>116</sup> UNICEF, Youth and Transition, p. 17.

<sup>117</sup> Albanian National Strategy on Children, pp. 3-6.

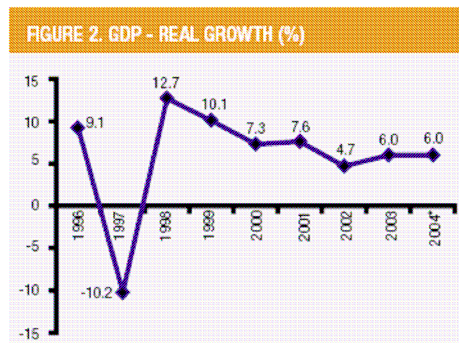
<sup>118</sup> Interim evaluation of third country cooperation of the youth programme 2000-2002, final report, volumes 1 and 2, European Commission, 2003.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid. Volume 1, p. 89.

possibilities to participate in international youth programmes, as well as disseminate the results of the implemented projects, is detrimental for the young people and the whole youth field.

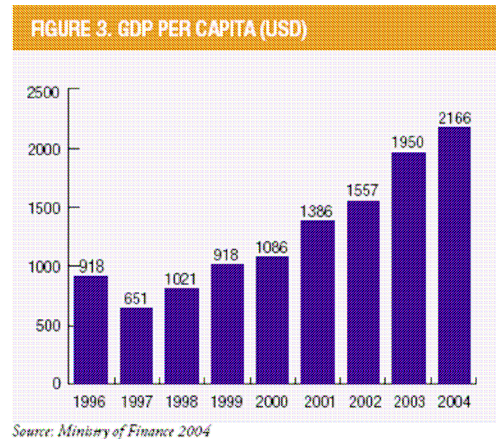
The low visibility of the European programmes for young people seems to be of a strategic character that favours some among the overall population and keep the rest of young people in the country uninformed, conversely to the great curiosity and excitement about the possibilities to take an active part in the greater Europe.

### Socio-Economic Conditions of Youth



In spite of the gradually improving economic growth<sup>120</sup>, the levels of poverty and extreme poverty remain very high. According to the UNDP Country Programme, ‘almost 30 per cent of the population lives on less than \$2 per day. Of this number, nearly 15 per cent live in extreme poverty, on less than \$1 per day. Unemployment is high, at 22.7 per cent, and even higher among youth and women<sup>121</sup>’.

Poverty in Albania can be related to the heritage of the feudal past, where the backward agricultural system together with the outdated agricultural machinery paralysed the functioning of the country until the privatisation process of the agricultural land took place. This however divided the land in such small entities (1.3 ha on average) that combined with the bad infrastructure, problems with irrigation and lack of market access, made it impossible to make any profit.<sup>122</sup> This caused a ‘temporary’ massive emigration of young men to cities, which made life very hard for young women, who were left to take care of the land, livestock and the families. This has contributed to the withdrawal of young women from education and possibilities to seek other kind of employment. A gradual migration of families towards the cities brought poverty to the peri-urban areas that were not prepared for such fast growth. Most internal migrants had to face conditions of a complete lack of infrastructure including water supply, sewage, and roads.



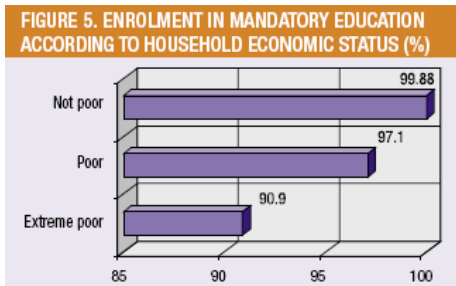
The already weak social safety net, poor service infrastructure in health care and education do not manage to cover the needs of the rural and peri-urban population; also the support offered is not sufficient<sup>123</sup>.

<sup>120</sup> In the past 5 to 6 years, the Albanian economy has achieved economic growth that has ranged from 4.7 percent to 12.7 percent in line with GDP per capita. The sectors with the highest level of growth are in construction, trade and transport – according to the UNDP MDG Report, p.31

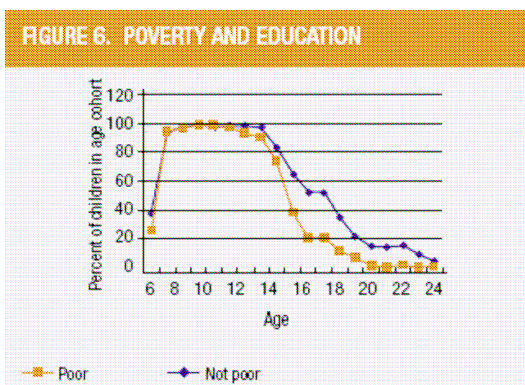
<sup>121</sup> UNDP Albania Draft country Programme, p.2

<sup>122</sup> National Strategy for Socio-economic development p.12

<sup>123</sup> UNDP MDG Report, p.30



1990<sup>124</sup>.



As a result the enrolment to basic and secondary education has declines, especially in the case of young women living in rural areas. Nationally, over 8 out of 10 children enrolled in the first grade complete the elementary education. Differences between urban (87% of enrolled children complete elementary education) and rural (77%) areas are becoming more significant, while enrolment levels have fallen by over a third for both preschool and secondary education compared to

Gaps in education became even more remarkable in third level and professional education. In rural areas only 1 adult in 40 holds a university degree, versus 1 in 5 in Tirana, and 1 in 10 in other urban areas. According to the UNICEF report, ‘the average schooling for those over 21 is 8.5 years, with adults in rural areas 3.5 years less of formal education and about 2 years less than adults in other urban areas<sup>125</sup>.

Gender discrimination, especially in the rural areas, where young women are considered inferior and are taught that they should come last, has become a strongly embedded phenomenon. The traditional patriarchal and puritan mentality shape discriminatory practices on sexuality issues, which in the deteriorating economic and social conditions gave rise to gender based violence and illicit trafficking for prostitution purposes. Ill-nourishment, anaemia, and youth pregnancy endanger the life and health of many young women and adolescents.

Gender discrimination, especially in the rural areas, where young women are considered inferior

Information on contemporary youth cultures in rural or urban areas is lacking. From the few surveys available it seems that most Albanian youth live in a fairly negative atmosphere, and do not see Albania as a country in which they can fulfil their dreams for the future. They rather seek new opportunities and better life abroad, even at the risk of losing their life<sup>126</sup>.

Changes in population dynamics are the most dramatic consequences of the demographic transition, which is characterized by smaller families and a decline in household size<sup>127</sup>. Although family still remains the basic cell of the Albanian society, in recent years the number of divorces and hospital-based abortions (legalised in 1992) has increased dramatically. According to the Child Rights report, ‘in 1997, one in every three pregnancies ended with abortion with the highest rate for women between 25 and 34 years of age. Children are considered as property of the family and not as an active part of it and the father remains the main figure<sup>128</sup>. The increase in the instance of single parenthood, very young families and divorce, as well as significantly lower fertility and changing attitudes towards marriage (increase in age of marrying and number

<sup>124</sup> UNICEF Youth and transition, p. 52

<sup>125</sup> UNICEF, “Youth and Transition”, p. 52.

<sup>126</sup> UNICEF, “Youth and Transition”, *op cit*.

<sup>127</sup> UNDP Albania Draft Country Programme, p.2.

<sup>128</sup> Child Rights Report, Children Human Rights Centre Albania, p. 3.

of children) is of concern. Statistics on the living arrangements of unmarried young people and their lifestyles are lacking.

In a situation of lack of appropriate structures of support for young families and children, family remains the main source of help, as well as sorrow. Child abuse is a wide spread phenomenon in Albania that does not have any limits in the level of age, education, social or economical status of the family, though marginalized children are obviously more exposed to violence and abuse. The child abuse in Albania is carried out mainly by the parents, but also by relatives. In recent years, abuse of children has grown extreme, including murders within family. It seems that this dark area remains completely untouched by the governmental services and policies. Albanian government does not provide any specialised services for the treatment and rehabilitation of abused children and so far no measures to support the establishment of such infrastructure have been noticed. Furthermore, neither legislation nor penalties are in place against the abusing persons. Institutions such as police, social services, health and education are not prepared to recognize the signs of abuse, nor are obliged to report on such cases<sup>129</sup>. This of course affects the whole generation of young people, who grow up in conditions of over-reaching violence. The efforts of civil society organisations in this area are not sufficient, and needs for further training of teachers, social workers and so on, are huge.

Although the governmental strategy on social protection and social care promises actions that would together with economic growth and sustainable development reduce the social unrest, the following social support policies may not respond to some of the deeper needs of the Albanian society.

- Promotion of employment and support for training the poor, so that they are able to meet labour market demand,
- Social protection and economic assistance for poor families,
- Social care for social marginalized groups, and
- Social insurance<sup>130</sup>

## **Unemployment**

Considering the demographic situation in Albania together with its socio-economic conditions and the levels of youth migration, it is clear that youth unemployment is one of the main issues on the political agenda. In 2001, the employment rate at a national level reached 77% of the active population, but for the age group 15-24 years old, the employment rate was just 53%. Taking into account that four out of ten employed young people do temporary and occasional jobs, this situation is serious<sup>131</sup>. However, youth employment seems not to be properly addressed by the government despite the fact that many structures and mechanisms to assist young people have been already put in place. In spite of the striking statistics, it seems that there is a general acceptance among the Albanian society that young people have more opportunities than other age groups. This has at times amounted to protests by older population declaring that discriminatory practices have taken place.

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<sup>129</sup> Child Abuse in the Albanian Family, Children Human Rights Centre Albania, p. 29.

<sup>130</sup> National Strategy for Socio-economic development, pp.21-22.

<sup>131</sup> UNICEF, "Youth and Transition", p.59.

According to the Report on Youth employment Opportunities in Albania<sup>132</sup>, most of the current initiatives lack a long-term perspective as well as the assistance from national and local authorities.

While youth employment opportunities are higher in larger cities, especially in trade and hotel services, industry, education, health; in rural areas and small towns they are almost non-existent. On the other hand, low-skilled and low-paid jobs in rural areas are mostly filled by juveniles, which raise the unemployment by young adults<sup>133</sup>. Large scale unemployment encourages not only youth emigration for a better life, but also involvement of young people in drug trade, prostitution, human trafficking, crime and deviance – among the long-term unemployed youth.

Information on and services for labour market are inadequate, family, relatives and friends are the most important providers of information and help for the young unemployed. Labour offices created in 1992 are still in development, in terms of services provided and coverage. Services such as job counselling, labour market information, professional training, advice, or micro-credit support, are rarely offered<sup>134</sup>.

Specifically targeted employment programmes for vulnerable and disadvantaged youth, among them disabled, orphaned and Roma minorities do not exist. Gender perspective is often lacking in governmental employment policies, too.

When considering the implications of globalisation and requirements of the modern European information and knowledge society, young people of Albania are left far behind. With a restrictive information policy, low access to information technology, deficient system of vocational training<sup>135</sup>, and brighter perspectives on better future, young people in Albania are facing a difficult path to adulthood with decent work and life conditions.

The 2001 National Strategy for Social and Economic Development aims to address the youth unemployment through development of labour promotion programmes and support of training programmes for and disadvantaged youth.

The proposed measures include<sup>136</sup>:

- An **increased access to labour services** for a wide range of unemployed people, especially for disabled and rural youth, and improve labour information and counselling services.
- Increased **youth employability** through adoption of **active market policies** for a smooth transition from school to the workplace, and creation of new jobs.
- A **launch and support micro-credit schemes, public works, community labour programs, social business and professional training**, with particular focus on disadvantaged young such as those in poverty, the disabled, youth leaving institutions, formerly trafficked, and young people with criminal/delinquent records.
- A **creation of career counselling** services that involve students, teacher and parents in understanding the correlation between education choices and employment possibilities.
- The **development of sustainable lifelong learning opportunities** to meet changing labour market needs.

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<sup>132</sup> Youth Employment Opportunities Albania, p. 34.

<sup>133</sup> UNICEF, “Youth and Transition”, p.10.

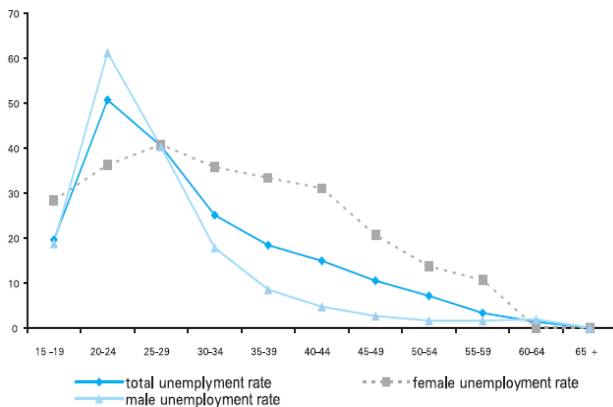
<sup>134</sup> UNICEF, “Youth and Transition”, p.60.

<sup>135</sup> Albanian National Youth Strategy, p. 26.

<sup>136</sup> UNICEF, “Youth and Transition”, pp. 64-65.

So far, no monitoring of the implementation of these measures was found. It is likely that it was not in the capacity of the government to implement most of these measures.

Graph 5.4: Unemployment rate by age group and gender, 2001



Source: INSTAT; Population census 2001

In line with the Strategy for Socio-economic Development, the implementation of policies can create a favourable business climate for youth through micro-credit, public and community work programmes and promote job opportunities for young people, encouraging them to build their future in Albania<sup>137</sup>.

The National Youth Strategy<sup>138</sup> designs its policy of young people’s employment and self-employment in two areas: business development among youth and young people’s employment. Specific recommendations are being designed for:

- Self-employment possibilities – encouraging governments, businesses and organisations fostering schemes of grants for the first steps of youth entrepreneurship, providing financial and technical support. Cooperation of different actors is encouraged through the Committee for Promoting continuous Cooperation.
- Employment possibilities for specific youth groups – targeting young women, disadvantaged youth, young people who finished military service, immigrant youth, refugees, unsheltered, street children and indigenous youth. Youth organisations and young people themselves should be directly involves in planning and implementing of these programmes.
- Inclusion of youth in the voluntary services in the community – creating an alternative to military service and stimulating young people to benefit from the work in the local communities and youth organisations.
- Needs arising from the differences in the technological development – urge to invest in ICT training for young people.
- Information on the labour market – setting up of youth information networks on possibilities of employment.
- Increased economic interest in farming and purchasing of a more attractive rural environment – increase of educational and cultural services in the rural areas in order to make them more attractive to rural youth. Rural-urban exchange should be encouraged.
- Vocational training with the aim of enhancing benefit from and generating incomes by youngsters themselves – in order to improve the methods of agricultural production and marketing.
- Youth-targeted grants – development of grants providing training and technical and financial assistance.
- Cooperation among the young people from the rural and urban areas for the production and trade of goods – NGOs should be directly involved in the marketing of products and their distribution.

<sup>137</sup> UNICEF, “Youth and transition”, p.23.

<sup>138</sup> National Youth Strategy – Third policy on young people’s economic, social and cultural development, pp. 24 – 29.



While there is still a lack of clarity in relation to the implementation of the youth employment measures with regard to the information and services provided, there are now four youth-friendly information centres in Albania (first opened in May 2003, and last two opened in October 2006). However their focus seems to be primarily on health care and counselling services in the area of health and abuse.

The main success story in the area of youth employment, seems to be the “Youth Albania Professional Services (YAPS)” – a social business, which with the help of UNICEF and other partners from the private sector, government and civil society, has created four business ventures (mail and parcel delivery, cleaning, appliance service and repair, and media and publicity monitoring) that currently employ around 80 young people. YAPS employ young people coming out residential care, members of ethnic minorities, those with disabilities, women and girls that have been trafficked and extremely poor. YAPS, which became operationally self-supporting after six months, provide real employment while helping young people to reintegrate into society<sup>139</sup>.

Social enterprises and businesses with social objectives seem to provide a possible solution to the youth unemployment and as a result also address issues of social exclusion.

## **Poverty**

According to the UNICEF report *Youth and transition*, poverty incidence among younger people is above the national average, and is highest among rural children. In rural areas, 4 out of every 10 children under 5 live in poverty. Almost half of the poor in Albania are below the age of 21<sup>140</sup>. The report states that poor individuals live in larger, younger households. Poverty rates are highest, above 50%, among large households with 7 or more members. About 40% of the poor live in these households, which also account for almost 50% of the poverty gap.

Among the rural youth, there are other vulnerable groups that represent a rather large part of Albanian society. These are in particular: Roma and Evgiit children and young people, young people leaving children’s homes or orphanages, because they have passed the age of 14 years<sup>141</sup>, and other minority groups. These groups, apart from being poor, face discrimination in public health care and education. Roma children in particular are exposed more than others to illiteracy, child labour, abuse and exploitation for prostitution, begging and crime<sup>142</sup>.

The formulation of the National Youth Strategy can be definitely considered as an important step for the improvement of the socio-economic situation of young people in Albania. Also a great number of measures in the area of support in information, counselling services and training have been proposed. However, to assess the level of implementation of these measures is impossible due to the lack of information in this area.

The only specific information has been in the area of the social enterprise development involving and promoting the employment of vulnerable youth.

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<sup>139</sup> UNICEF, “Youth and Transition”, p. 69.

<sup>140</sup> UNICEF, “Youth and Transition”, *op cit.*

<sup>141</sup> UNICEF, “Youth and Transition”, p.62.

<sup>142</sup> National Strategy on Children, pp. 3-6.

## Youth Lifestyles, Sexuality, Union Formation

According to the UNICEF report Youth and transition, the opening of Albania to the free world was accompanied by disruptive socio-economic trends that include new risks and violence. Before transition, youth in Albania tended to marry and have their first child relatively young. After the 1990s, this situation changed: youth are less likely to marry, but more likely to have sex at a younger age. Research shows that two thirds of boys and one third of girls have had sexual relations before the age 16. The average age for first sexual experience is 17 for boys and 16 for girls<sup>143</sup>.

The new trends characterized by new increased risks and changes in lifestyles include increase of youth deaths caused by poor road conditions, banditry, firearms and blood feud. Accidental deaths among young people jumped from 60 per 100,000 in 1996 to almost 120 in 1997. Most of the victims were males.

Furthermore, irregular and ineffective prevention programmes against the use of harmful substances have resulted in a rapid increase of young smokers and drug users. While the official date on young Albanians who are at risk of substance abuse is missing, it seems that the proportion of young female and juvenile smokers has increased dramatically.

The “Young Voices” opinion survey carried out in 2001 shows that Albanian children and young people are highly exposed to harmful substances such as tobacco, alcohol and drugs. The use of harmful substances during adolescence is often seen as a way of rebelling against parents and as a rite of passage to adulthood. Interviews with 400 children and young people aged 9-17 years found that:

- 89 % of young people and 47 % of children have tried tobacco; 65 % of young people and 16 % of children are addicted to it
- 67 % of young people have tried alcohol; 19 % are addicted to it
- 12 % of young people and children report ‘contacts’ with inhaling substances or illegal drugs, and 3 % are addicted to them<sup>144</sup>.

Traditionally, sexual and reproductive health in Albania was limited to mother and child care services. For more than 50 years Albania was following a pro-natalist policy that prohibited modern family planning, sexual education as well as abortion (that was again legalised in 1991).

Today the Ministry of Health is facing the challenges of development of specific policies that take into consideration the opinions of women, young people and children and address issues of changing lifestyles and risks related to it. The Reproductive Health Survey<sup>145</sup> (2002) informed on the following:

- 21% decline in the Total Fertility Rate (TFR) between 1993 and 2002;
- Women 20-29 years of age at birth contribute 65% of the fertility rate;
- TFR for women with post-secondary education is estimated to be 2.0 compared with 2.7 for women with primary school education;

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<sup>143</sup> Youth and transition, p.42

<sup>144</sup> Youth and transition, p.41

<sup>145</sup> Reproductive Health Survey, implemented in 2002 in cooperation of Institute of Public Health, Albanian Ministry of Health, Institute of Statistics, Division of Reproductive Health, Georgia, USA, USAID, UNFPA and UNICEF, Published in May 2005.

- Median age of first intercourse for all women is 21.1, first marriage is 21.9 and first live birth is 23.4;
- 9 out of 10 Albanian women have heard of at least one modern method and 87% have heard of at least one traditional method, predominantly withdrawal;
- 81% of women have heard of the condom, only 2/3 of women have heard of oral contraception or tubal ligation, and less than 35% have heard of other modern methods;
- Males have principally heard of the condom (89%) and withdrawal (89%). Knowledge of other modern methods is very low, reaching only 33% for oral contraceptives;
- More than 90 percent of women 15-44 years of age (92%) agree that age appropriate sex education topics concerning human reproduction, contraception and sexually transmitted infections should be taught in school. For men 15-49 years of age, 84% agree;
- For young adult women 15-24 years of age, two-thirds (64%) have discussed sex education topics with a parent before they reached age 18, but only 15% discussed HIV/AIDS and 8% discussed contraception;
- For young adult men, only 11% discussed any sex education topic with a parent before age 18, and only 9% discussed HIV/AIDS and 2% methods of contraception;
- 77% of young adult women and 64% of young adult men said that they were taught some sex education topic in school by age 18. However, only about 1/2 of females and males received information about HIV/AIDS and only 30% of males and 24% of females received information about contraceptive methods;
- 1/3 of young adult women reported sexual experience and 14%, or 42% of those with sexual experience, had premarital sex; almost all (99%) reported to be their fiancée or boy friend. Among young adult males, 29% reported having had sexual experience and 27%, or 91% of those with sexual experience, had premarital sex. Most men with premarital sexual experience reported their first partner to be a girl friend (43%), a lover (19%) or a friend (14%). Only 1% reported that their first sexual encounter was with a prostitute.
- 18% of unmarried males and 5% of unmarried females, 15-24 years of age were sexually active at least once in the past three months. Only 15% of sexually active unmarried males reported using a modern method at last intercourse similar to the 11% of sexually active unmarried females.

These statistics show that Albanian young people in many ways follow the European trends of pre-marital sex, and openness to sexual education and needs for reproductive health. However, access to information and resources is still scarce. It is however likely that the situation has changed with the opening of the 'Youth-friendly information centres' that provide information services and counselling on issues related to health, and sexual education, as well as assistance to sexually abused young persons.

However, there is a lack of information in relation to homophobia and other psychological issues. Often in the name of morality, culture or religion, young people are denied their right to education about health risks associated with different behaviours and about important tools and services to reduce this risk<sup>146</sup>.

Demographic change has highlighted new characteristics in recent years, such as significantly lower fertility and changing attitudes towards marriage, with an increase in single parents, young families and divorces<sup>147</sup>.

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<sup>146</sup> UNICEF, "Youth and Transition", p.10.

<sup>147</sup> *Op cit*, p. 19

A decrease in the marriage rate and an increase in the age of marriage were among the first indications of changing family patterns in Albania. The number of marriages in 2001 dropped 12 percent in comparison with 1990. The average marriage age increased from 27.2 years in 1993 to 29.3 years in 2001 for men and from 22.6 years in 1993 to 24.1 years in 2001 for women<sup>148</sup>.

It seems that the reasons for increase in the average age of marriage have an influence on declining fertility and a longer time span between marriage and birth of the first child, and also between the first and subsequent children. It seems that young people's priorities have shifted to focus on education, career choice, well-being, self-expression and social stability. These trends must be seen as a result of fundamental changes in society and not a reaction to economic conditions.

Fertility rate has declined among women 19 to 24 years of age, however no big changes are evident in the fertility rate for 15-19 year olds since the 1990s. The liberalization of lifestyles, the lack of sex education and less education in general could all be factors influencing the increase in fertility rates in this age group.

### **Youth Participation**

Albania's young people are fighting vigorously to have a voice, to be part of the solution. The experiences of social business and Youth Parliament and the youth television show *Troç* demonstrate the courage and high motivation of young people to participate in society. These activities demonstrate their desire for a positive future for Albania - which they are willing to build for themselves and their children.<sup>149</sup>

The issues of participation of young people in the running of the society had to go through a re-definition of the roles and relationships between the state and civil society, in which young Albanians are still in the process of finding their own role and responsibilities. In a situation, where the goal of 90% of secondary school students was to emigrate<sup>150</sup>, in order to improve their standard of living, find employment and basically have a future for their lives, it is extremely difficult, and at the same time important, to develop ways of restoring confidence in society and establish an inter-generational dialogue that would lead to a meaningful change.

*"I know more about what is beyond the Adriatic Sea than I do about my own country,"* says Endri Shabani, Chairperson of the Albanian Youth Parliament. However, arguing that young Albanians are uninterested in the developments of their own country would be misleading. Media coverage and information on the developments in the country is almost non-existent, difficult local transportation and lack of debate on what it means to be a young Albanian, including only very limited citizenship education in schools contribute to the misunderstanding of the living conditions and the present diversity, as well as opportunities of young Albanians.

However, there are some positive initiatives as well. The governmental commitment to developing spaces for youth participation expressed in the National Strategy on Youth Policy is certainly a start. In addition, young people are represented in governmental and civil society coalitions that advocate for youth. For instance, young people are represented in steering

<sup>148</sup> UNICEF, "Youth and Transition", p. 19.

<sup>149</sup> UNICEF, "Youth and Transition", p. 11.

<sup>150</sup> Silvia Golombek (Editor), Foreword by Rick Little, "What Works in Youth Participation: Case Studies from Around the World", International Youth Foundation.

committees and advisory boards, including one, which advocated the government to implement the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

According to a UNICEF report, young Albanians see value in activities that are fun and develop their knowledge, skills and cultural understanding, and at the same time preventing high-risk behaviour<sup>151</sup>. The variety of social organisations, sports and recreation clubs, non-governmental organisations enjoys youth involvement up to 10%, which represents the European average. Although mistrust of governmental and public institutions towards the civil society persists, the situation is gradually improving, also with the help of international agencies. However, the dependence of the NGO sector on foreign funding may be seen as an impediment in promoting youth participation among youth serving NGOs. The lack of financial resources for youth and other civil society initiatives has often contributed to the break of continuity of youth initiatives promoting and developing active participation. International funding may have provided an interim solution, however sustainability of non-governmental action is still limited to the support provided by the Balkan Children and Youth Foundation that operates in Albania, Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo and Serbia and Montenegro. In spite of this, it seems that Albanian NGOs working with and for young people demonstrate stronger capacities in planning and implementing youth programmes that offer young people possibilities for engagement and participation in issues that concern them<sup>152</sup>.

There are three major programmes, co-developed and co-funded by UNICEF that seem to have a great impact on the promotion of young Albanians in the running of their society:

- Albanian Youth Parliament – through which Albanian 14-18 years old young people regularly pressures the government on policies important to youth and seek to improve youth participation in public debate and connect young people to the democratic process. Among its main achievements was a raise of the amount of funding on education from 2.7% to 3.2% of the GDP; prevention of the creation of a garbage dump in Tirana which would have been an environmental hazard to the nearby community by petitioning and collaborating with other organisations; and stopping of a construction of a power plant on a seaside tourist area near Vlora.<sup>153</sup>
- Troc “Straight Talk” youth television show – that allows young people to speak out on national issues. The show raises the standard on how broadcast journalism is done in Albania, and the reporters are all under the age of 18.
- Youth-Friendly Health Services – establishment of up today four information centres providing youth counselling and awareness raising on health issues, including sexual and reproductive health.

## Youth Policies

Although it is hard to assess the national governmental policy, which seems fairly new, the draft National Youth Strategy seems coherent and complete, addressing well all the important issues in relation a healthy and independent development of young people in Albania.

Divided in three main policies of youth participation, human rights and social and cultural development, it raises issues adapted to the Albanian context in an exhaustive manner. The question however remains with regard to the implementation and monitoring of this strategy,

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<sup>151</sup> UNICEF Newsletter Albania n. 25, Youth Participation, January – March 2006.

<sup>152</sup> *Op cit.*

<sup>153</sup> *Op cit.*

and its translation into specific actions to be implemented at the national, as well as local and municipal levels.

It is also very hard to assess any of the more specific thematic policies, as it seems at various levels, Albania is still in the process of defining and re-defining its strategies in a more coherent and focused manner. The creation of youth health information centres is definitely a good start, it will however become crucial to enlarge the services of the centres to providing information on other issues such as employment, high-risk behaviour, and provide opportunities for participation, leisure and capacity building, as well as regional and international cooperation.

More specific assessment of youth policy implementation would necessitate more in-depth research, including targeted interviews with governmental and civil society actors working in the field.

## *Armenia*

### **Youth Demography**

Armenia, a small and isolated country located in heart of the Caucasus conflict region having borders with the Russian Federation, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Turkey and Iran, covers 29,743 square kilometres and has 3,215,800 inhabitants of whom, according to population figures from 1st January 2005, were 1,550,600 were male and 1,665,200 female. The country is divided into 11 Marzes (provinces) including the capital city Yerevan with Marz status, 47 urban and 870 rural communities. 64.1% of the population lives in urban areas and 35.9% in rural areas<sup>154</sup>.

Armenia has a strong sense of traditional cultural heritage, as demonstrated by the significant role still played by the Armenian Apostolic Church that has maintained its position during Communism. Armenian history has been characterised by a variety of conflicts and huge levels of migration, resulting in one of the largest Diaspora communities in the world, with an estimated 10 million Armenians living abroad. Due to a devastating earthquake in 1988, soon followed by the collapse of the Soviet Union, the war with Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh and the ensuing frozen conflict, Armenia exists at the edge of poverty and demonstrates the clear need for structural reform in the political, economic and social spheres.

In the recent Armenian National Youth Policy Report<sup>155</sup>, young people are defined as young people aged 16 to 30, who are citizens of Armenia, foreign citizens living in Armenia, NGOs that serve young people and young families that have at least one member is younger than 30. These young people represent 840,200 persons, which is equivalent to 26,1% of the overall population<sup>156</sup>.

However, a better-defined “concept of youth” that would take into consideration criteria other than age and the full diversity of traditions represented by the youth of Armenia is still lacking. Furthermore, during the Council of Europe International Youth Policy Review<sup>157</sup>, other definitions of “youth” were discussed. These included the 0 to 18 definition of *children* used by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, and references to young people aged 14 who are permitted to leave school and work if their parents give their consent<sup>158</sup>.

The age composition of the youth population can be better understood on the basis of the following table:

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<sup>154</sup> Council of Europe, “Recent demographic developments in Europe”, Council of Europe Publishing, 2005, (CD ROM).

<sup>155</sup> Armenian National Youth Policy Report, p. 19.

<sup>156</sup> National Statistical Service of the Republic of Armenia, Armenian Statistic Year Book 2005.

<sup>157</sup> Howard Williamson, International Youth Policy Review of Armenia, International Youth Policy Report, 2006, p.15.

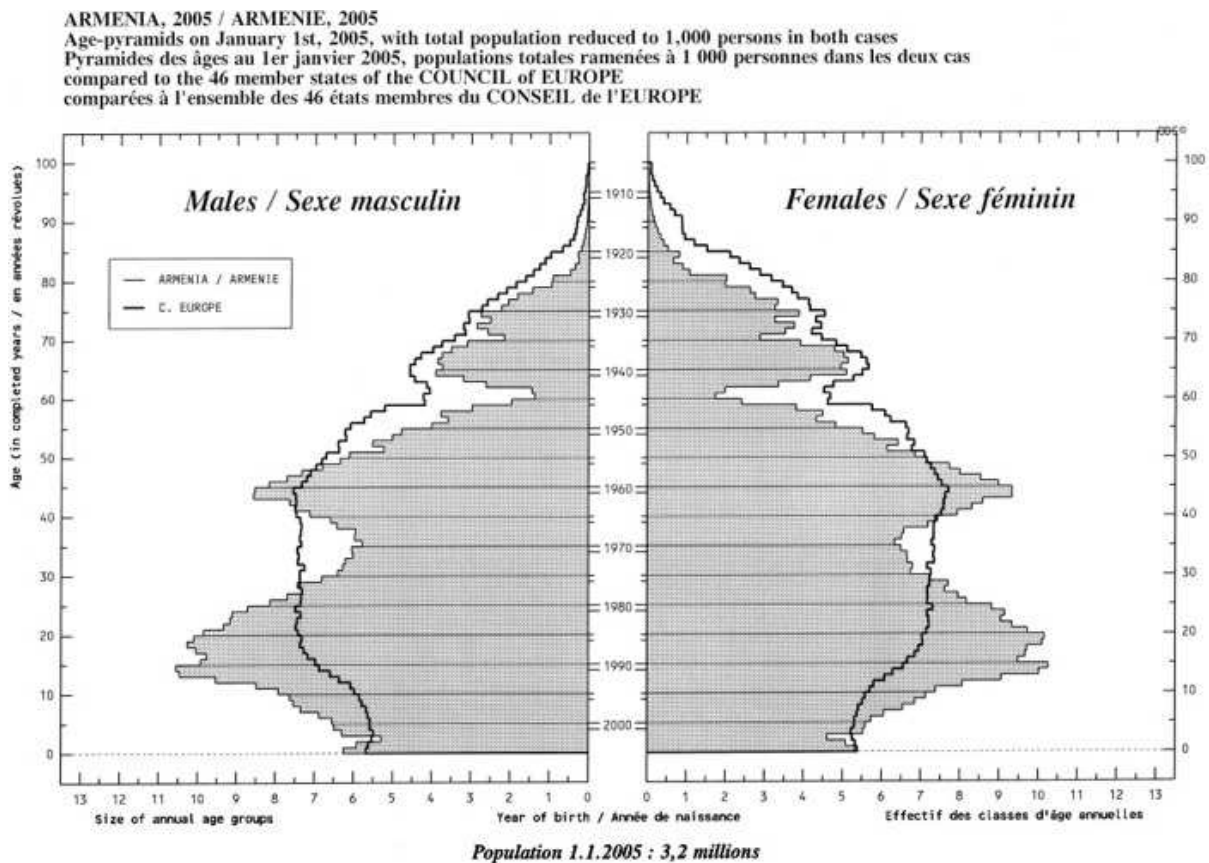
<sup>158</sup> *Op cit.*

Table 1: The population by age groups

The population by January 1, 2003 Source: RA National Statistical Agency	Age groups:			
	10-24	10-14	15-19	20-24
Total number (in thousands)	915.4	320.1	318.0	277.3
Girls	460.9	163.2	159.8	137.9
Boys	454.5	156.9	158.2	139.4
City residents	574.8	190.0	199.6	185.2
Village residents	368.4	157.9	118.4	92.1

Population growth in Armenia was 0,1% in 2004, which represents a slight increase in the birth rate, with natural growth of 0.4% and the migration rate having stabilised at approximately 0,3%.

The following population tree provides a comparison of Armenian population trends in comparison to those observed in other Council of Europe member states.



Armenia's society is characterised by isolation, a growing gap between rich and poor, increasing poverty, high real unemployment, geo-political conflict in the surrounding region, indications of declining health and education. On the other hand, Armenia is also characterised by social stability, demonstrating only a slow increase in crime and delinquency, as well as relative social solidarity and support from the Armenian Diaspora.



In comparison to European trends, young Armenians still follow rather traditional life courses, with young women moving rapidly from schooling into married life and motherhood (a transition that is still strongly encouraged in Armenian culture) and young men following the school – military – unemployment path (this is particularly the case in rural areas).

## Migration

A cursory glance at Armenian history makes it clear that migration has always been part of the Armenian tradition. According to the National Youth Policy Report (2005) there were four main migration waves in the last two decades. The first occurred as a result of the 1988 earthquake in the northern region of Armenia. The conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh in 1989 led to a second wave of migration and caused several hundred thousand refugees to flee into Armenia from Azerbaijan<sup>159</sup>. The third wave, throughout the 1990s, took place as a result of the collapse of the Soviet Union and the concomitant decline in socio-economic conditions, worsened by impact of the earthquake and the conflict, resulted in an estimated 1.1 million migrants to other countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States and elsewhere. This figure represents approximately 70% of the Armenian population<sup>160</sup>. It is thought that young people represent 20% of the overall number of migrants. The existence of the long established Armenian Diaspora facilitated a lot of the recent migration and has reinforced seasonal migration, a tradition among Armenians. The fourth wave began in 1999 to 2000 and continues until today. It is characterised mainly by the ever-declining socio-economic conditions in Armenia and family reunification, which leads to a permanent change of residence<sup>161</sup>. Although the most recent estimates (from 2004) refer to a relatively low official negative migration in the range of 7-8000 persons, it is probable that illegal migration has increased due to stricter border control and visa regimes. In the context of such illegal migration, young people, particularly young women, are vulnerable to illegal trafficking<sup>162</sup>.

According to the International youth policy review, *“The issue of migration (both legal and illicit) and trafficking is also a major focus of the State Youth Policy Strategy. Even prior to the acceptance of the youth strategy, the government of Armenia had already taken legislative steps to comply with international standards in establishing the prevalence of trafficking, carrying out preventive activities, as well as providing support and assistance to those affected”*.

While this can hopefully contribute to decreasing the number of young Armenians being trafficked, it is very unlikely that the tendency towards migration will change if the socio-economic conditions of young Armenians do not improve.

Although it seems that only very few young people under the age of 16 have had the opportunity to travel outside Armenia (usually, only to Georgia and Russia)<sup>163</sup>, the National Report states that about 29% of young people over the age of 16 have travelled abroad, mainly to visit their relatives and families. According to the National Youth Report young people go abroad for the

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<sup>159</sup> See V.E. Khojabekyan, “Reproduction of the population of Armenia and movements in XIX-XX centuries and at the beginning of the XXI century”, Yerevan 2001, pg. 283 and 289.

<sup>160</sup> Source: “Social-economic state of the Armenian Republic in January-December, 2000”, informative-analytic monthly report, the Republic of Armenia National Statistic Service, Yerevan, 2001.

<sup>161</sup> Armenian National Youth Policy Report, *op cit*, p. 41-44.

<sup>162</sup> Armenian National Youth Policy Report, *op cit*, p. 148-150.

<sup>163</sup> Howard Williamson, International Youth Policy Review of Armenia, International Youth Policy Report, 2006, *Op cit*.

following reasons: to find a job (19,3%), to find a well-paid job (17,2%), to join other family members (16,6%), for rest, travel and tourism (15,6%).

Trends in internal migration are not readily apparent. Although the National Youth Report suggests that in the past five years, 10% of young people moved from the countryside to cities, the International Youth Policy Review also found that young people also have good reasons to stay in the countryside, in spite of the low level income. The high level of family support available together with a gradual growth in opportunities for young people to contribute to regional development, were among the reasons identified.

Nevertheless, in response to the wider international context, Armenia has become actively involved in the promotion of the European Charter on the Participation of Youth People in Local and Regional Life, European Neighbourhood Policy and the Youth Programme of the European Union (and its cooperation agreement with the Caucasus region), which has broadened the opportunities for young people's international mobility.

### **Socio-Economic Conditions of Youth**

It is more than apparent that although Armenia is formally a country in transition to a liberal market economy and that regime change took place a decade ago, the isolation of the country from its neighbours together with slow pace of structural reform has not led to smooth and sustained development. While the average of 10 to 12% in economic growth has led to an improvement of the GDP per capita, the success of a few industries did not manage to create employment for the population at large. The widening gap between the minority of those who profited from the transition, and the mass of the impoverished (50% of the population is considered to live in poverty) has led to growth in the informal (and illegal) economy, with estimates that up to 40% of economic activity takes place outside the formal economy. The lack of democratic tradition combined with corruption has resulted in a highly polarised but nevertheless strangely safe society. This difficult economic situation poses serious challenges for the healthy and safe transitions of young people in Armenia.

In spite of the difficulty of the context, it seems that Armenian young people are both expected and eager to gain a higher education, which is considered of high value in Armenian society. There are 80 universities<sup>164</sup> in the country and the general expectation of young people to gain a degree that would guarantee them entry to the labour market contrasts with the reality of labour relations and the broader society, which is only accessible through "connections". Taking into consideration Armenian commitment to the Bologna process, this situation represents a great challenge, as the majority of universities do not prepare students to work in their chosen field or profession, something particularly true for nurses and lawyers. Attempts to reform the educational system have focused on the development of "informed and involved citizens capable of making decisions"<sup>165</sup> through the provision of adequate knowledge. This point is crucial, as the educational system provides young people with encyclopaedia knowledge rather than with skills and capacity to think and act independently.

Access to primary and secondary education is certainly an issue in remote rural areas, where poverty is greater. Nevertheless, attendance remains fairly high. Even so, the National Youth

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<sup>164</sup> There are 20 state universities in Armenia and between 50 and 70 private universities and colleges, which apparently have a much lower status.

<sup>165</sup> Armenian National Youth Policy Report, *op cit*, p.63

Report estimates that 6-7% of children aged 7 to 16, notably girls, do not attend school. Providing equal opportunities poses a huge challenge to Armenian society, although according to the National Youth Policy Report “*the traditions of equal involvement in elementary education go back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century*”.<sup>166</sup>

Progress has been observed in the attempts made to integrate young people with disabilities into school and the wider society. Due to the impact of the earthquake and the war, there was a great increase in the number of young people with a disability. This resulted in more awareness of the issue of disability and changes to the traditionally segregated system, focusing on the better integration of disabled young people in the school system. This is in particular true for young people with physical disabilities, although resources to improve the access of wheelchair users still seem to be still lacking.

The following challenges in relation to the education, training and labour market can be identified, on the basis of the International Youth Policy Review<sup>167</sup>:

- a relative absence of vocational training that would balance the involvement in and complement higher education;
- a growing gap between state and private universities creating a double standard system, where young people from private universities are disadvantaged when entering the labour market;
- a need for a shift from traditional education based on memorisation of information towards more learner centred and active learning, that would lead to personal and enterprise development, and would include the development of skills and competences leading towards independent thinking and action;
- the development of easily accessible information and guidance systems on career opportunities and transitions to labour market;
- the need for recognition and appraisal of the role and function of non-formal education within learning schemes.

Special attention should be paid to the creation of equal opportunities in relation to gender. In spite of the fact that women with higher education account for 60% of the Armenian female population, their participation in decision-making processes is extremely low. Traditionally, women are active in the areas of education, health care and culture, which represent for them the only opportunities for involvement in the labour market.

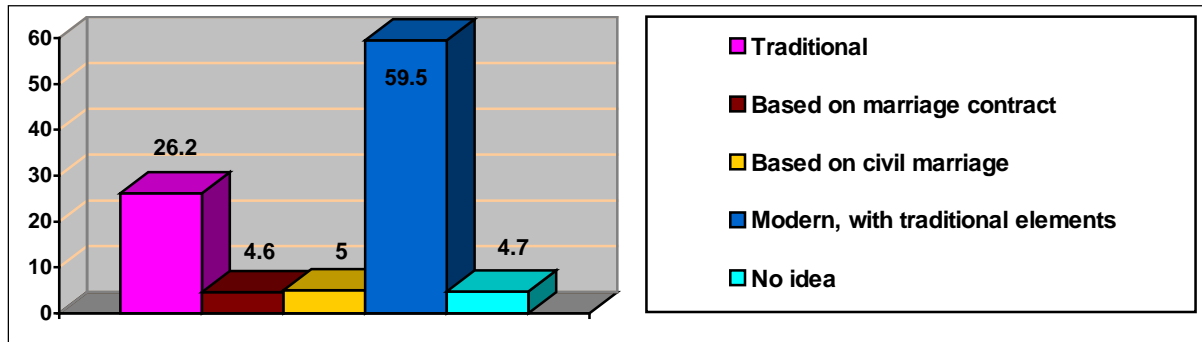
However, according to the National Youth Policy Report, “*State Youth Policy must encompass a sufficient number of resources, alongside already existing entities, in order to implement an effective policy aiming at the provision of equal rights and opportunities both for men and women at the level of the younger generation*”. Although, the “2004-2010 National Programme on the Improvement of Women’s State and Role in the Society” has been approved in 2004, its implementation remains in question, although some examples of projects with a gender dimension seem to exist. However, in spite of these intentions and the encouragement of young women to gain an education, it seems that there is an expectation for young women to take the ‘school – marriage - motherhood’ route. This continued traditionalism constitutes a significant challenge for the modernisation of Armenian society.

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<sup>166</sup> Armenian National Youth Policy Report, *op cit*, p.131

<sup>167</sup> Howard Williamson, International Youth Policy Review of Armenia, International Youth Policy Report, 2006, *Op cit*, pp. 25-32.

Further, the role of the family is crucial in the Armenian society. The National Youth Policy Report states that “*family occupies the most important disposition in the social life. Family is one of the main social institutions of the society and accordingly it must be the object of special attention, getting assistance for full implementation of its activities*”.<sup>168</sup> In relation to the conception of the state concerning Youth Policy, the young family is considered as a subject of youth policy. A young family is defined as one in which the age of one of the parents is not more than 30, or a single parent, whose age does not exceed 30 years.



This table represents what young Armenians think a family should be like. The prevalence of traditional values (72,9% of young people think families should have the same religion, and 40,9% think that should have the same nationality) has only recently been supplemented by some more modern attitudes and values.

The traditional Armenian family, characterised by life in the countryside and lots of members, especially children, has given way to a modern family which lives in a city, has 1 or 2 children or eventually even none. Although it seems that 76,4% of young people wish to have 2 to 4 children and 13,4% think of 5 and more, there are 72,7% of young people that realistically think of having only 1 or 2 children and only 12,2% think of having 3 children<sup>169</sup>. This tendency seems to follow the European trend of having fewer children. Marriage remains the pre-condition for starting a family, and although in the years 2000 to 2004 the number of marriages increased (by 54%), mainly due to the improvement of socio-economic conditions, the number of divorces over this period also increased substantially (by 46%), though it is not clear in which age group these divorces took place and for which reasons.

The main concerns of young people before getting married are financial, as well as housing, work and health. Although having a job is certainly a condition, having a place to live seems less important, as many young married couples live with one of their parents. Most Armenian young people think their children should grow up together with their grandparents, who certainly will give them more love than the school or the nursery.

According to the National Youth Policy Report, 95% of young people are unaware of the existence of social support provided to young families by the state or regional communities. Although the State provides a sum of 35,000<sup>170</sup> dram per child born and for the first year of the child's life the mother receives an allowance of 3,900 dram monthly, it is only possible to receive

<sup>168</sup> Armenian National Youth Policy Report, *op cit*, p. 35.

<sup>169</sup> Armenian National Youth Policy Report, *op cit*, p. 38.

<sup>170</sup> At time of research (November / December 2006), 1 USD was equal to approximately 350 Armenian Drams.

this financial support if the mother applies to the Social Protection Fund at regional level no later than a month after the birth of the child.

Basic health services for children up to 7 years old are free of charge. So is primary education in public schools. However, only children who have no other form of social protection are entitled to receive free textbooks. It is noteworthy that, although the family is considered the foundation of Armenian society, challenges to the promotion of child protection and any other intervention targeted at “children in especially difficult circumstances” or “vulnerable families” remain widespread. In this sense social work is considered something of an intrusion into family life and is restricted to children who had *already* been abandoned and were *already* being looked after in institutional care.

Some other measures to assist the improvement of the socio-economic conditions of young people have been put in place by the government. One of them is the Mortgage Credit System, which helps 54,7% of young married couples to get housing in or outside of cities. However, this support is only partial and most young people rely on their parents for any further support they require. Social support structures seem to be effective if organised and provided on time. Poverty reduction activities with families conducted by the World Bank over the last 10 years has reduced poverty by approximately 10%. However, it is clear that without a state intervention strategy supporting families, no major improvement for many young families will be made.

## Unemployment

Considering the Armenian context, prevalent socio-economic conditions, trends in education and migration, it is clear that youth unemployment is one of the main issues on the political agenda, as young people seem to experience a variety of difficulties to enter the labour market<sup>171</sup>.

There are no reliable data on the market and labour related issues for Armenia. Although a variety of statistical evidence exists, there seem to be considerable discrepancies in how youth employment and unemployment is being calculated. It seems that there are numerous exceptions to who can be counted as unemployed and who cannot. One of the conditions is that a young person can register as unemployed only if s/he was employed previously for a period of at least one year. Furthermore, young people who are landowners cannot be counted as unemployed even if they are not involved in agriculture professional and are not using the land for agricultural purposes. However, the National Youth Policy Report<sup>172</sup> indicates that according to official data, there are 33,900 registered unemployed young people benefiting from employment services, which represents 4% of the young aged 16 to 30 years of age.

Young unemployed people by to age groups<sup>173</sup>:

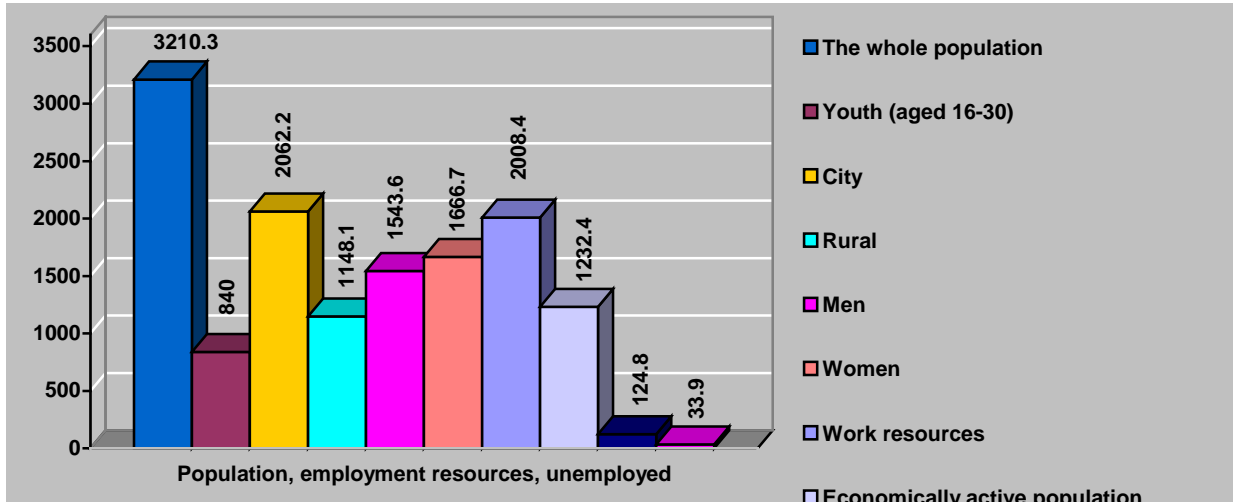
N	Age group	From general number of unemployed young people (%)	Young men (%)	Young women (%)
1	16-18	0.7	0.6	0.4
2	18-22	20	34	66
3	23-30	79.3	38	62

<sup>171</sup> World Bank Poverty Report No. 24339-AM, Armenia Poverty Update, December, 2002, Human Development Sector Unit, Europe and Central Asia Region, 2002

<sup>172</sup> Armenian National Youth Policy Report, *op cit*, p. 30.

<sup>173</sup> Armenian Statistical Annual Report, 2004.

This table clearly states that young women suffer from unemployment more than young men. The National Youth Policy Report argues that this picture is commensurate with general population indices. According to data for the end of August 2005, 70.3% of officially registered unemployed persons were women.<sup>174</sup>



As demonstrated by the above table, the population of Armenia was 3210 thousand in 2004, of which there were 840,000 young people (aged 16 to 30) or 26% of the overall population.<sup>175</sup> Although there are 124,800 unemployed persons registered with the Unemployment Service and 33,900 or 28.5% of these are young people<sup>176</sup>, it is considered significantly possible that real youth unemployment, amounts to as much as 40%. Nevertheless, there are suggestions that unemployment has decreased in recent years as a result of information gained from economic growth indices. It is also notable that the number of taxpayers has decreased. As a result, it is difficult to make clear assessments of the extent of youth unemployment. It can, however, be concluded that it is high and probably increasing, especially among young women.

Based on the previous description of the challenges in the education system, it is clear that a significant number of highly educated young people are facing unemployment. Furthermore, young people in the regions (rural youth) are subject to both unemployment and underemployment mainly as a result of dependence on the seasonal work in the agricultural sector (in or outside the country), which most young people, especially young men find unsatisfying and boring.

<sup>174</sup> Armenian National Youth Policy Report, *op cit*, p. 30

<sup>175</sup> Armenian National Youth Policy Report, *op cit*, p.28

<sup>176</sup> Armenian Statistical Annual Report, 2004.

The 2004 Youth Policy Strategy states the following challenges to improving youth employment<sup>177</sup>:

- imperfection of the legal and legislative framework promoting economic activities among youth;
- major economic and social transformations;
- limited professional and economic opportunities and insufficient incentives, lack of youth awareness on existing economic opportunities;
- insufficient preparedness for the life among youth (capacities to find their place in the reality, to realize him/herself, to express him/herself, to communicate, etc.), which results in social refusal and marginalisation of the youth;
- presence of bureaucratic system, high level of corruption, lack of trust in state bodies.

In order to deal with this situation the government, proposed a number of measures that would guarantee young people with a job perspective by focusing on creating conditions for youth entrepreneurship, other new employment opportunities, as well as developing professional orientation of young people, investments in re-training and in small enterprise and youth farms for proceeding of agricultural products, through its 1998 Conception of State Youth Policy. That document, strengthened by the 2004 Youth Policy Strategy, defined more specifically the following measures of support:

- specialised job agencies for young people are established and provide early professional guidance in the regional youth centres;
- regulations and information for studying, training and internships abroad will have been developed;
- young people will have access to information, training and financing for small business and self-employment initiatives;
- young farmers will have been equipped with skills and capacities to implement innovative ideas improving the efficiency of the agrarian sector.

It is noteworthy that specific indicators for each of these measures were defined and even though no monitoring of the actual implementation of these plans has been made available, it is likely that at least some of these measures have been put in place. Other than that, no specific youth employment strategy has been defined.

In addition, during its work the International Youth Policy Review team of the Council of Europe has furthermore encountered several interesting proposals:

- The development of a law concerning work experience, to give students the right to a paid or unpaid internship during their studies;
- The development of volunteering possibilities that would be “counted as important and legitimate experience”;
- The development of specific measures addressing the predicament of young people who have not completed their general education and have no educational qualifications by the Department of Social Security;
- A proposal to establish a tax holiday for the first two years of employment (this was suggested by young people and was considered to be impossible by governmental officials due to the conditions of the free market economy, which was challenged by the Council of Europe expert team arguing for the necessity of pro-youth employment programmes);

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<sup>177</sup> Youth Policy Strategy in Armenia, Ministry of Youth and Culture, Yerevan, 2004, pp.13-14.

- Running several formats of training courses, SME business programmes and enhancement of public works programmes (in place since 2001).

Again, the reporting on the actual implementation and success rates of the already developed programmes is unfortunately not available.

## **Poverty**

The overall incidence of poverty in Armenia is especially high among young people. According to the 2002 World Bank Poverty Update, the following groups were identified as facing particularly high risk of being poor: very young children and the elderly, unemployed and adults not participating in the labour market, people residing in high altitude and earthquake regions and individuals residing in apartments.

Furthermore, the report mentioned the following factors as contributing to the increase of poverty: large household size, lower levels of education among the family, women headed families, number of unemployed within the family unit as well as the amount of livestock. Although this report refers mainly to households and families as a basic measurement unit, it also refers to children and young people, in particular young women, as being the most vulnerable groups.

In addition, National Youth Policy Report identifies two groups of vulnerable young people: the refugees and the invalids; still a particular attention is also focused on regional (rural) youth.

The different migration waves brought about 385.000 refugees came to Armenia. The young refugees are in particular excluded from employment and housing, which make them more vulnerable. Only a few NGOs, among them the YMCA Armenia, seem to have specific programmes targeting young refugees living in remote areas.

Young invalids represent 27% of the population in the active age. Disability represents an additional challenge to the already vulnerable young people. Although there are policies aiming at a better integration of young disabled, as well as some respectable work of NGOs, in particular PYUNIC, acceptance and recognition of the needs of as well as the existence of suitable support structures for young disabled is far from perfect.

Again it is apparent that there is a gap between the official discourse and its legal provisions and the factual evidence in the discriminating practices. This is in particular remarkable in the case of the more invisible minorities such as the LGBT, who according to the report of the International Helsinki Federation do not enjoy any legal provision under the current legal status.<sup>178</sup> Furthermore, although there are evident concerns about young women being trafficked, domestic violence seems to be again an issue not to be talked about.

The governmental request to the Council of Europe to implement an International Youth Policy Review, which went (almost) hand in hand with the development of the National Youth Policy Report, can be considered as an important and strategic investment to the improvement of the socio-economic situation of young Armenians. The current initiatives offering support for young people in the area of the information, counselling and training need to be however strengthened and a more coherent and complementary approach needs to be developed, implemented and

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<sup>178</sup> International Helsinki Federation on Human Rights, 2005, p.14.



monitored. It is a fact that the access to information and good practice in terms of the implementation of the identified measures, whether in the 2004 State Youth Policy Strategy, or as part of the two Youth Policy reviews, remain problematic.

### **Youth Lifestyles, Sexuality, Union Formation**

Young people in Armenia are exceptional in the orientation of their values toward patriotism and spiritualism. Partly through the obvious influence of a highly nationalistic and religious social upbringing, young people in Armenia seem more oriented toward the traditional values of their society, and of older generations, than is found elsewhere. Notwithstanding, this phenomenon, the government is concerned about the erosion of patriotic values and the importance of national culture among young people. The national youth policy report highlights the effects of the hard socio-economic circumstances on young people's values, bemoaning the subordination of high spiritual values to "daily instable and superficial value priorities".<sup>179</sup> Another notable tendency among young people and throughout society is the value placed on education, although it is often understood as an exercise in pure self-improvement, without necessarily implying labour market participation, especially for women (see the section on education above).

The role of the Armenian Apostolic Church is central to Armenian national life and is also important for young people, providing both spiritual and material support. This religious and traditional mindset makes young Armenians less likely to engage in risk-taking behaviour or in pre-marital sex. Rates of STD and HIV infection are consequently low, although in such a setting the ability of a population to withstand an outbreak is questionable. A national HIV/AIDS centre has been established and World Vision has also established a programme to prevent the spread of the disease. The vast majority of HIV transmission occurs through injecting drug use and heterosexual sex. Knowledge of HIV transmission among young people is worryingly low at around 28%.<sup>180</sup>

### **Health**

Although there are concerns about the accuracy of official data, the Council of Europe International Youth Policy Review team concluded that the use of drugs including alcohol was not a significant problem in Armenia. Attitudes toward healthcare, however, are a cause for concern. Government and society seem to share the attitude that the family (i.e. the mother) is the first stop for non-critical health matters and only a quarter of young Armenians would take such matters to a doctor.<sup>181</sup> The government is ambivalent toward "modern", youth-friendly health service provision and it has been observed that NGOs provide much more appropriate responses to the health needs of young people.<sup>182</sup> It is perhaps unsurprising that the exception to this rule seems to come with regard to sexually-transmitted infections, where a majority of young people turn to medical institutions for help.

Just under two thirds of young Armenians report using a condom regularly during sexual activity. Rates of sexually transmitted infections are rising and reporting is very low (estimated at less

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<sup>179</sup> Armenian National Youth Policy Report, *op cit*, p. 88-89.

<sup>180</sup> Howard Williamson, International Youth Policy Review of Armenia, International Youth Policy Report, 2006, *op cit*, p. 34.

<sup>181</sup> Armenian National Youth Policy Report, *op cit*, p. 93.

<sup>182</sup> Howard Williamson, International Youth Policy Review of Armenia, International Youth Policy Report, 2006, *op cit*, p. 33.

than 1% in a survey in 2000)<sup>183</sup>. There is significant social stigma attached to sexual ill health and taboos around sex, especially for young women. This negatively affects the quality of healthcare. Notwithstanding that the International Review Team reported high levels of unwanted pregnancy<sup>184</sup>, the abortion rate in Armenia remains incredibly low at around ten per 100,000 of population.

Number of pregnancies terminated for 100 000 people of population, according to years:					
Years	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Recorded number	11,8	10,4	9,8	10,7	10,6

The policy environment in regard of sexual and reproductive health is not encouraging, with no national plan or strategy to improve these among youth. Levels of activity more broadly related to improving health, such as physical exercise and engaging in sports, are also low (with 70% of young people not engaged in any such activity)<sup>185</sup>. Fertility in Armenia is very low, under 1.4 in 2004, despite the fact that women still have their first child early (22.5 years).<sup>186</sup> Rates of both marriage and divorce have risen slightly in recent years, but this is not a significant trend.<sup>187</sup> The age of marriage has increased steadily through the 1990s.<sup>188</sup>

There is a clear need for more strategic provision of youth-friendly information and services especially in the sensitive area of sexual and reproductive health and the prevention of health-risk behaviour. Although international agencies and the NGO sector play an important role in developing youth friendly health related activities, greater involvement is needed from the government through a more holistic response to the present health challenges. This could be developed in partnership with the respective UN agencies (in particular UNICEF with its pilot Personal and Social Education programme of learning within the education curriculum) as well as civil society. However it is crucial that the Ministry of Health assumes its responsibility in coordinating the development, implementation and monitoring of the youth health strategy and in providing information and access to health care<sup>189</sup>.

## Youth Participation

The concept of participation in Armenia, similarly to other post-communist countries, is in the process of being redefined in terms of the different roles and responsibilities of the state and the emerging civil society. The role of young Armenians in society is, therefore, in the process of changing and developing and represents a challenge on several fronts.

<sup>183</sup> Armenian National Youth Policy Report, *op cit*, p. 107.

<sup>184</sup> Howard Williamson, International Youth Policy Review of Armenia, International Youth Policy Report, 2006, *op cit*, p. 33.

<sup>185</sup> Armenian National Youth Policy Report, *op cit*, p. 94.

<sup>186</sup> Council of Europe, "Recent demographic developments in Europe", Council of Europe Publishing, 2005, CD ROM.

<sup>187</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>188</sup> UNICEF, "Young People and Transition", Armenia Country Paper, pp. 17-19.

<sup>189</sup> Inspired by the recommendations of the International Youth Policy Review Team, International Youth Policy Review of Armenia, International Youth Policy Report, 2006, p. 34-35.

The first challenge is the inherited lack of trust of young people in institutions, governmental entities and the activities of NGOs. According to the National Youth Policy Report, only 7% of young people trust in the work of NGOs, compared to 5% in political organisations and 6% in trade unions<sup>190</sup>. Although one of the main goals of the Armenian Youth Policy Strategy is to stimulate participation of young people in society<sup>191</sup>, the government needs to face the reality of the general attitudes of young people towards participation, which the Armenian Youth Policy Strategy considers as “low and problematic” and refers to civil society as “not sufficiently developed”.<sup>192</sup>

The recent governmental consensus on the concept of youth participation, as having economic, political, social and cultural dimensions, is commensurate with that of the UN World Programme of Action for Youth. The government recognises the importance of the variety of actors such as political parties, NGOs, trade unions, students unions and other youth associations, as well as the mass media, all of which are considered crucial instruments in ensuring youth participation.

One governmental priority has indeed been the promotion of youth participation through project funding for youth organisations. Considering the gradual increase of the modest state budget for youth (since 1998) improvements have been noticed although the lack of trust towards governmental structures as well as NGOs still persists. In particular, transparency about who gets funding and who does not and who decides about that remain an issue.

The National Youth Policy Report provides extensive information on youth political and social participation analysing the different opportunities for young people to participate in civic life through students' councils, youth organisations as well as the less formalised youth clubs and the challenges of reinforcing those by strengthening opportunities for youth leadership to develop skills and knowledge on how to involve and motivate young people in developing activities that would interest them and respond to their needs.

A critical review of the challenges to youth political participation was also undertaken in the report, highlighting that traditional channels of participation through involvement in political parties are fairly limited. Only 30 out of the 60 political parties have youth wings, however, their activities are not regular and organised, even if representative. It appears that the real opportunities to take part in the decision-making or develop certain skills or leadership competencies are limited. Passive attitudes combined with the instrumentalisation of young people who seem to be needed only prior to the elections and the overall detachment of political elites from the real needs of young people only deepen the mistrust towards the political system. The fact that in the 2003 elections only two members of parliament out of the five under 30 years of age elected to the National Assembly belonged to a political party, again demonstrates the unattractiveness of the formal political participation among young.

The National Youth Policy Report, furthermore, provides information about the differential levels of participation among young women and young men in Armenia. While 60% of young women have a higher education, only 5% of those elected to the National Assembly are women. However, according to research, 33.8% of young people between 16 and 30 are likely to elect a female community leader, 39.7% will elect a woman president, 46.5% will elect a woman deputy

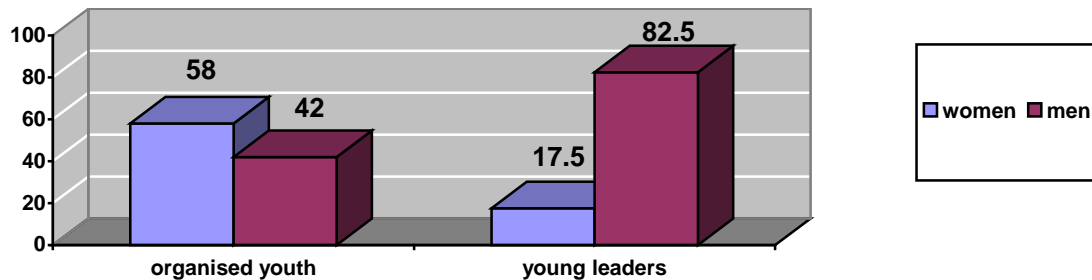
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<sup>190</sup> Armenian National Youth Policy Report, *op cit*, p.113.

<sup>191</sup> Youth Policy Strategy in Armenia, Ministry of Youth and Culture, Yerevan, 2004, p.4.

<sup>192</sup> *Op cit*, p.7.

and 55.2% will choose a woman as their direct boss at their office. The same survey indicates that over 50% of organised youth are women<sup>193</sup>.



The above table provides an indication of the extent to which young women are disadvantaged in decision-making.

According to the International Youth Policy Review team, the main lack in the current youth policy are the issues of opportunities for and access to participation for rural young people, small groups of ethnic minorities, refugees and internally displaced persons and other invisible minorities<sup>194</sup>. While some opportunities for engagement exist, they are mainly secured by privileged educated urban organised young people, favoured by the political elites. This situation needs to be transformed together with the traditional dependency culture, which relies paradoxically on those elites for something to happen. As the majority of Armenian young people are concerned with survival, whether economic, social or educational, their motivation and capacity to participate actively in the society is limited.

The lack of a transparent and impartial youth information strategy and youth friendly services that would provide counselling and guidance for young people on issues relevant for their life and development (such as employment, vocational training, health, mobility, as well as other possibilities of participation) contributes to the limited access and opportunities for participation among youth. Some governmental efforts to strengthen the youth information system are notable and slow progress can be observed. However, whether this information is available for all young people, especially in the different more remote regions (marzes), rather than the privileged minority, remains a question.

In any case the commitment of the National Youth Policy Strategy in relation to youth participation refers to three key areas<sup>195</sup>:

1. Incorporation of young people's opinions in the policy-making processes through clearly defined governmental strategies at all levels;
2. Providing young people with opportunities for more quality free time, as well as access to information and skills and competencies through non-formal education;
3. Recognition of the value of volunteering as a form of participation, non-formal educational and social integration.

<sup>193</sup> Armenian National Youth Policy Report, *op cit*, p.130-131.

<sup>194</sup> Howard Williamson, International Youth Policy Review of Armenia, International Youth Policy Report, 2006, p. 46.

<sup>195</sup> Youth Policy Strategy in Armenia, Ministry of Youth and Culture, Yerevan, 2004, p.7.

Although specific measures in the form of indicators on how this should be achieved until 2007 have been defined, implementation remains unclear considering the limited financial resources and the non-transparent political situation in Armenia.

## **Youth Policies**

The request for and the subsequent implementation of an International Youth Policy Review by the Council of Europe have created momentum for the development of youth policy in Armenia. The elaboration of the national and international youth policy reports, together with the dynamics that they have created, represent an opportunity to broaden the debate on youth policy development from an inner circle of experts to a larger group of actors in the youth field.

According to the International Youth Policy Review Team, building on the existing “Conception of Youth Policy in Armenia” (1998) and the Youth Policy Strategy (2004), with the involvement of the diverse youth policy actors in a more open and evidence based dialogue, would certainly ensure more coherence and structure in the definition of the youth policy framework in Armenia and could facilitate joint decision-making on what should constitute an immediate priority, given limited resources.

Today, there seems to be some continuity in the governmental commitment to work in partnership with the international community and the NGO sector in the planning and the implementation of youth policy and, in particular, on the development and provision of youth friendly services and information. Through the “Centre for Organising Events”, although criticised for being significantly aligned with the political administration, the government supports youth organisations in their work towards youth policy implementation. Nevertheless, there remains a need for a less political and more professionalised approach to youth policy development, allowing the youth sector to further develop and strengthen its competence through youth research, training and the dissemination of good practice in the relevant youth policy areas.

The International Youth Policy Report concludes: “There are, nonetheless, youth policy initiatives that must be attempted and developed: the promotion of participation, the provision of information, the securing of trust in official procedures and institutions, the encouragement of enterprise and healthy lifestyles, effecting change in the structure and content of the general education curriculum. There are perhaps also other more 'private troubles' (such as sexuality and possibly disability) which have not yet come to be acknowledged as 'public issues' that should be legitimate components of youth policy”.<sup>196</sup>

Last but not least, Armenia, as a signatory to the Revised Charter on the Promotion of Youth Participation in Local and Regional Life, should work towards the strengthened engagement of young people in issues that concern them at the local and regional levels and create more opportunities for youth participation and decision-making in a way that would respect Armenian traditions, as well as foresee the world young people want to live in, in the future.

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<sup>196</sup> Howard Williamson, International Youth Policy Review of Armenia, International Youth Policy Report, 2006, p.58.

## *Bosnia & Herzegovina*

### **Youth Demography**

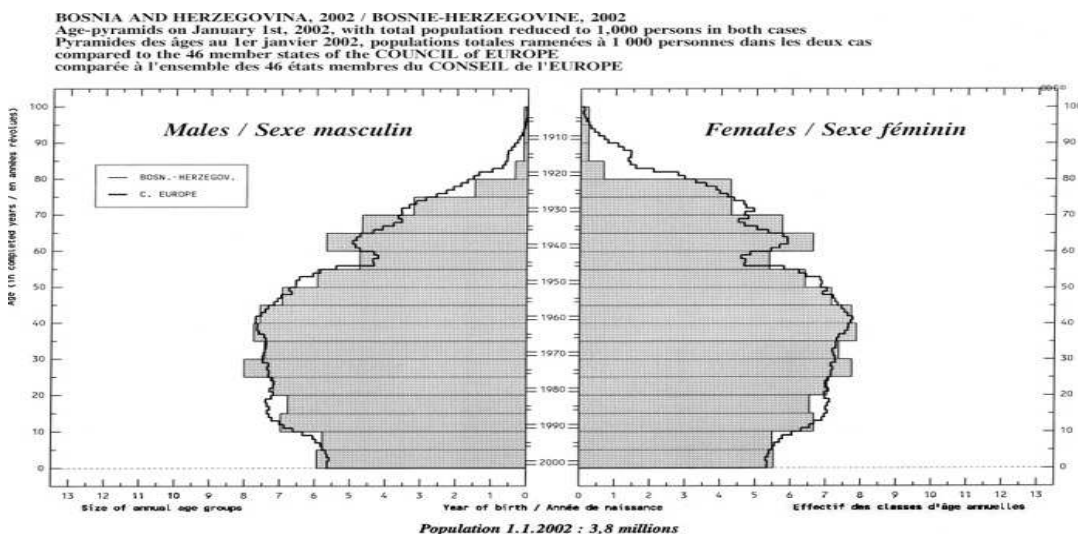
Bosnia & Herzegovina (henceforth, BiH) is a small and young state, with a long and rich history, that emerged from the recent Balkan crises that followed the breakdown of state-socialist Yugoslavia. The war and post-war period have given rise to various waves of migration, during which more than 92,000 young people fled the country during 1996-2001, amounting to a total of 120,000<sup>197</sup>.

Today, BiH is in the uneasy processes of reconstruction and transition towards peace and independent democracy, as well as the improvement of social, economic and political conditions. Youth policy plays an important part in this process.

The post-war BiH is divided into ten cantons, and although it is not clear how many young people live in rural compared to urban areas, it is apparent that there are many inequalities between the different groups of young people living in and migrating from and to the cities and the different localities. Overall, the 2000 estimates indicate that there are about 950,330 young people aged 15 to 30 living in BiH, which represents 24 % of the overall population<sup>198</sup>.

Although a more conceptual understanding of youth in BiH has not yet been clearly defined, the 2005 review of the World Programme of Action for Youth in BiH refers to young people in BiH as individuals aged between 14 and 29 years of age, which represent 20% of the entire electoral body<sup>199</sup>. Other sources, such as the UNDP Human Development Report, refer to 14 to 30 year olds as young people.

The table below refers to the population structure of BiH, which seems to follow European trends in low fertility and ageing of the population.



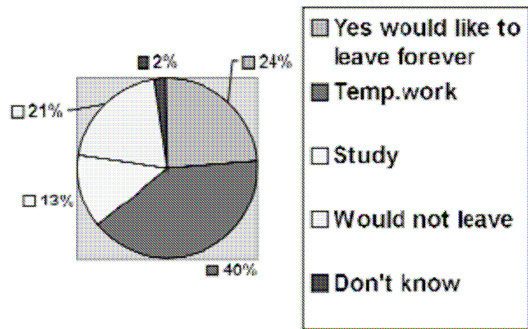
<sup>197</sup> UNDP Youth in Bosnia & Herzegovina, “Are Youth Part of the Problem or Part of the Solution?”, 2003, p. 7.

<sup>198</sup> Ibid.

<sup>199</sup> Independent Evaluation of the BiH National Youth Policy, 2005, p.2.

Post-war BiH is still characterised by a high level of migration. The most recent estimates indicate that 77% of young people want to leave Bosnia, out of which 24% wish to leave without return and 18% who have already taken concrete measures to migrate<sup>200</sup>. The reasons why one out of four young people in BiH wish to leave the country include the deteriorating socio-economic conditions, in particular the inefficiency of the educational system, poor employment opportunities, the lack of perspectives of the future and the volatile political situation.<sup>201</sup>

**Graph 2: If the opportunity was offered to you, would you leave BiH?**



However, there are also positive developments in relation to youth mobility. Increased youth networking in the Balkan region supported by international organisations have helped young people to feel less isolated. Youth mobility in the region as well as in Europe would further strengthen young people’s sense of belonging, ownership of and responsibility for their local realities.

Furthermore, the possibility to increase youth participation in educational programmes and vocational training abroad may further improve the problematic educational system in BiH. There are hopes that the Human Rights Ministry (in the sector for the Diaspora) will develop strategic approaches on how to involve youth Diaspora more actively in BiH developments.<sup>202</sup>

### Socio-Economic Conditions of Youth

Slow economic development, high rates of unemployment and the overall increase in the instance of poverty, impact heavily on the socio-economic situation of the post-war generation of young people in BiH. According to the UNDP Report on Youth<sup>203</sup>, the labour market is not developed enough to absorb graduates leaving education. Without employment, young people are the most vulnerable to poverty and prolonged dependency on their parents or the state.

Specific data on the proportion of young people living below the poverty line are not available. However, considering that 19% of the overall population lives under the poverty line and an additional 40% indicate that they have just enough to cover their basic needs, it is unlikely that the living conditions of young people are very comfortable, given that young people (16-30) represent 24% of the population.<sup>204</sup>

The UNDP 2003 Youth Poll indicates that 57% of young people have not seen any change in their living conditions between 2000 and 2003, while 16% saw it worsen and 24% experienced an improvement. In spite of these figures, young people seem more optimistic about their living standards in the future. While only 11% think the living standards would get worse, 46% said it would improve and 38% indicated that it would stay the same. It is interesting that the 14-18 age group seems to be more optimistic than the 25-30 age group and in comparison to the rest of

<sup>200</sup> Ibid.

<sup>201</sup> UNDP Youth in Bosnia & Herzegovina, “Are Youth Part of the Problem or Part of the Solution?”, 2003, p.25.

<sup>202</sup> *Op cit*, p.34

<sup>203</sup> *Op cit*, p.14

<sup>204</sup> Ibid.

the older age groups. It also seems that rural youth is more positive about their future than the urban youth.<sup>205</sup>

In spite of relative optimism, the instance of youth unemployment is extremely high. The official unemployment rate is around 40%, but it does not consider informal employment and work in the black economy. The International Youth Policy Report from the Advisory Mission of the Council of Europe (2005) indicates that youth unemployment is twice as high among the 19-24 age group as among the 25-30 age group and three times higher than for the 50-60 age group.<sup>206</sup> Small fluctuations in the labour force in the formal economy, in particular in public administration, public companies, non-privatised and recently privatised companies, make it less possible for young people to find work in these sectors. This tendency is worrying as the inflexibility of the formal labour market will encourage young people to seek employment in the informal and black economy.

## Education

Various sources, however, point to the problem that the majority of young people are not prepared to enter employment, as a result of the old-fashioned education system. About 80% of young people are unsatisfied with the contents of their education and feel unprepared in terms of skills and knowledge. In general young people in BiH are not convinced that their education will help them find a job. Only 33% of young men and women were sure they would find a job after school in 2000, while only 7% of rural youth felt secure about their opportunities for employment. Young people, especially young men with higher education, showed more optimism. Although rural youth express more optimism about the improvement of their living conditions in general, their certainty to find employment after finishing their education is lower than in urban areas. This tendency is supported by the fact that rural youth is more inclined to seek employment outside the country. It is clear that there is a strong need for reform of the educational system so that it responds to the needs of the labour market as well as a need for special attention to be paid to the development of rural areas.

The report of the International Youth Policy Advisory Mission of the Council of Europe mentions, among others, the following recommendations in the sphere of education:<sup>207</sup>

- To change the “two schools under one roof” system to an integrated intercultural education which works with the issues of diversity, dignity and human rights and contributes to the development of the shared and common citizenship for all regardless ethnicity, religion, etc;
- Increased sensitivity with regards to the history curriculum that should encompass the review of textbooks while recognising and representing the complexities of the region’s past and the development of the capacity to think critically among the students.
- To develop an adequate monitoring system that would provide specific information on the attendance of school, in particular focusing on the dropouts of girls and other vulnerable groups, such as the ethnic minorities and the Roma children.
- To develop anti-bullying policies that would involve both parents and pupils and imply teacher training on issues of harassment and discrimination on ethnic and other basis.
- To recognise the role and strengthen the use of non-formal education in schools through suitable policies as well as teacher training;

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<sup>205</sup> Ibid.

<sup>206</sup> International Youth Policy Advisory Mission Report, Council of Europe, April 2005, pp. 37-38.

<sup>207</sup> *Op cit*, p.3.

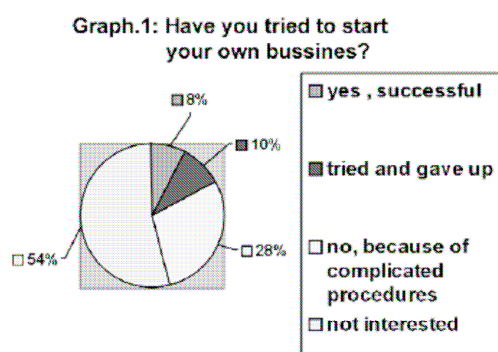


- To strengthen participatory mechanisms in schools and in higher education by further developing the students' councils (and other staff-student consultative committees at higher education level), which should be consulted at all levels of government.
- To harmonise the higher education system across the state in compliance with the Bologna criteria and the Lisbon convention.

Nevertheless, the UNDP report shows that apart from the challenges of the education system itself, the majority of young people seem ignorant or confused in relation to the areas of economy in which opportunities for employment are most likely to be available.<sup>208</sup> This demonstrates that youth-friendly information services, that would provide guidance to young people on the career opportunities available in the labour market, are lacking. Although previously, parents performed this advisory function, in the post-war context, it is clear that young people need professional support from outside the family. The establishment of counselling services providing advice to young people on their education, vocational and continuous skills training, as well as employment targeted in particular at disadvantaged groups and information on study programmes abroad, would enlarge the scope of opportunities for young people to participate in the labour market and in the society.

Some examples of research and good practice in the field of skills training and educational reform exist, such as the UNV/UNDP Youth Entrepreneurship Project in Brcko and the European Union PHARE Vocational Reform Programme. However, a coherent strategy that would address the issue of young people's education for employment in its complexity is still lacking. The few examples represent a good base for the actors in the youth field, in particular the respective Ministry, to build upon, in order to develop a more strengthened programmatic approach. A comprehensive monitoring system of poverty dynamics, especially how it affects young people, school attendance and education outcomes, while considering gender, ethnicity and locality, are essential for youth policy design and should be reinforced. Young Roma, young people with disabilities (and other invisible minorities such as the LGBT young people) are especially vulnerable to discrimination and exclusion from education. In the municipality of Modrica only one child of the 116 Roma returnee children was enrolled in education. This situation is extremely difficult, as a great number of parents, reportedly up to two thirds, themselves have no schooling.<sup>209</sup> Although some positive examples of projects integrating vulnerable children into education and society exist, specific policies targeted at children with specific needs are missing.

## Unemployment



Levels of youth unemployment are extremely high, and range between 45% and 60% depending on the region. As mentioned previously, the official youth unemployment rate is about 40%, mainly among the unskilled and low educated 21-25 age group, and in particular young women and vulnerable young people. It is likely that the unemployment rate is higher as official figures do not include the group of young people that decide to prolong their education in order to avoid the entry into the official labour market and who satisfy themselves with odd jobbing

<sup>208</sup> UNDP Youth in Bosnia & Herzegovina, "Are Youth Part of the Problem or Part of the Solution?", 2003, p.14.

<sup>209</sup> UNDP Youth Report, p. 12.

in the informal economy (up to 50% of the overall population).<sup>210</sup> The challenge remains to develop strategies to integrate the informal market into the formalised economy. It seems, however, that until now, no specific measures targeting young people that would facilitate this integration process were taken.

Ideas to what should be done are not lacking, however the complex system of BiH governance, where young people are hardly represented or consulted, seems not to be very open to changes and reform. Specific measures could include internship programmes for young people that would reward companies with tax incentives, the promotion of first employment benefits and measures allowing young people to move from the informal to the formal economy.

#### **The Youth Entrepreneurship Project in Brcko**

One example of how young people can be motivated and supported during the process of starting a business is the Youth Entrepreneurship Project in Brcko (YEP), which UNV/UNDP started last year. Young people interested in establishing their own business or improving existing businesses attend business planning trainings. Young entrepreneurs between the ages of 18 and 30 receive advice on their business management and on how to obtain small loans from microcredit institutions. YEP has also created a network of young entrepreneurs. In the first year, 28 participants took part in two training sessions and 60 people (22 with existing jobs, 38 that are training participants and microcredit recipients) have become members of the entrepreneur network. Fifteen loans totaling 40,000 KM have been distributed. After the first year, 15 businesses were either established or improved.

Furthermore, the UNDP Youth Report refers to a number of recommendations<sup>211</sup> for strengthening of the information policy for young people so as to enable them to receive regular updates on the researched actual situation in the labour market. Other recommendations include the provision of career counselling, guidance and entrepreneurship training to young people, capacity building at both governmental and NGO levels focused on development and the implementation of youth employment measures, encouragement of youth mobility and networking between youth in BiH, the BiH Diaspora and young people in SEE and the rest of Europe. The table<sup>212</sup> on the left briefly describes one of the successful projects implemented with the support of the UNDP/UNV that should be further developed and multiplied in the other regions of BiH. Such and similar initiatives if implemented at a larger scale could address some of the negative effects of relatively long post-educational youth

unemployment and prevent economic migration.

Although the most recent updates on the developments in BiH were not available at the time of writing, it seems that most of the reforms in designing specific mechanisms improving access to the labour, education and training markets were not yet implemented, nor described in a clear youth employment strategy. However, elements for such strategy are described in the 2003 UNDP Report on Youth and the Report of the Advisory Mission on Youth Policy by the Council of Europe. It is obvious that some additional youth specific research would be necessary in order to provide the more specific evidence necessary for defining more specific targets.

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<sup>210</sup> *Op cit*, p.17.

<sup>211</sup> *Op cit*, p.34.

<sup>212</sup> *Op cit*, p.16.

In relation to education, the UNDP Report on Youth further identified:<sup>213</sup>

- Implement overall and radical reform of all aspects of the education system;
- Include young people, parents and teachers in the reform process through student, teacher and parent councils and unions;
- Design curricula to allow for more practice and application of theoretical approach;
- Make sure that curricula better reflect the constantly varying labour market situation;
- *Improve communication between universities and secondary and vocational schools on one side and local markets and employers on the other;*
- Increase municipality budgets so that municipalities can allocate part of their budgets to establish career-counselling centres; enable schools to appoint their own counsellors;
- Swiftly implement the reform of human rights subjects and religious instruction, and include children with special needs; put in place mechanisms (because related legislation does not exist) to allow for inclusive education;
- Conduct research on gender and Roma discrimination in schools.

These various initiatives supported by international organisations are certainly important, however a more strategic approach needs to be developed in consultation with young people and the other international actors working in the youth field, at the different levels of the BiH governance, where the BiH government would take on the responsibility for the reform processes and the establishment of a youth-friendly infrastructure enabling better information, access and conditions for employment in the formal labour market.

## **Gender**

The establishment of the Gender Agency in cooperation with UNDP may contribute to the monitoring of the discrimination against women and young girls and to the mainstreaming of gender equality across BiH. However, gender equality should be further promoted through institutional and social mechanisms and should involve the relevant governmental and non-governmental partnerships in order to transform the fairly low participation of women in society. The MDG report indicates that the women's share of the labour market in BiH is only 37,2%, which is the lowest among the countries in South East Europe<sup>214</sup>.

Furthermore, gender discrimination in schools has been frequently reported at the level of the cantons, in particular in the Zenica-Doboj region, where parents do not allow their daughters to attend education for cultural or economic reasons. The traditional patriarchal values intermixed with conservative religious attitudes towards women, who are expected to be good wives and mothers, are still predominant at various levels of society.<sup>215</sup>

## **Poverty**

Poverty in BiH needs to be considered in relation to post-war development, which impacted heavily on a whole generation and made young people feel marginalized, leaving them on the periphery of society. As a result young people in BiH have additional difficulties in finding employment, poor opportunities for participation in the society, while their dependency on parents and families is increasing. Parents and families represent a source of additional income

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<sup>213</sup> *Op cit*, p.33.

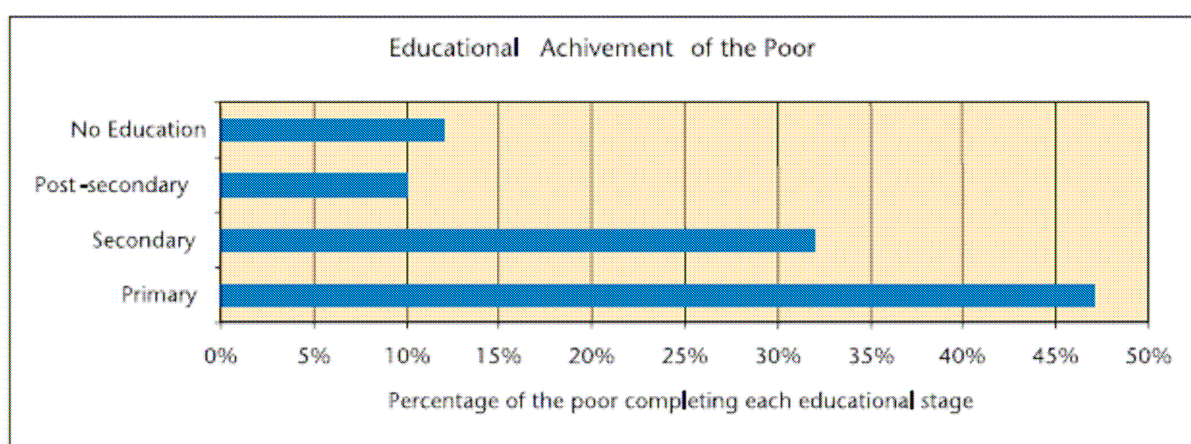
<sup>214</sup> UNDP MDG Report, 2004, p.30.

<sup>215</sup> UNDP Youth Report, *op cit*, p.12.

for 65% of young people, while 7 % regularly receive money from relatives in BiH and 7 % regularly receive money from abroad.

According to a UNDP survey, 58% of young people had no income and many young people tend to spend more than they earn. Although half of all youth is involved in education and, therefore, usually does not have a regular income, or any income at all as it is socially accepted that students do not work. But also with relatively little income, young people often contribute to the family budgets. In 17% of families young people are the main contributors.

There are clear urban – rural disparities, although rural youth spend less than the urban youth. Rural youth, as mentioned previously, seem to be more positive about future than those with little more opportunities living in the cities. The 14-18 generation is more optimistic about their future perspectives than the 25-30 generation, which only demonstrates the heaviness of the impact of war on the generation of young people who lived through it and inherited its aftermath. According to the UNDP MDG report 31.5% of poor and poorly performing primary school graduates do not continue to secondary schooling.<sup>216</sup>



Furthermore, there is a significant difference in income levels and, therefore, income dependency and poverty between the genders. Young women in BiH are much poorer and have fewer possibilities to take part in the society, especially in some of the regions. Only 10 % of young women in comparison to 25% young men are the major contributors to family budgets.

Similarly, depending on the region, it is often the young people from minority backgrounds who are more vulnerable and at risk of poverty. This is particularly true for Roma youth across the country. They are the most vulnerable and marginalized, with the least perspectives for future.

The UNDP and UNFPA reports note a general feeling of insecurity and uncertainty, a lack of trust and low self-esteem among young people in BiH, in general, which is intensified by the increasing poverty in financial, as well as social and cultural, terms and the lack of perspective for the future. The majority of young people spend their free time in front of the television or listening to the radio, which are among the sole opportunities for leisure available to them. Young people lack adequate cultural and sport venues and most often have the choice between staying at home or ‘hanging out’ in a café.

<sup>216</sup> UNDP MDG Report, *op cit*, p. 26.

In general, the psychological and socio-cultural impact of the war should be considered together with the political and economic situation. More specific research on youth and poverty should be developed examining the respective dimensions of youth, gender, locality as well as other identity issues especially in terms of minority-majority relationships.

There are no coherent approaches to the socio-economic promotion of youth. Although some good practice exists, such as the above-mentioned Youth Entrepreneurship Project in Brcko and the EU PHARE vocational reform project and the Regional Dialogues about Employment of Youth and Entrepreneurship in BiH (December 2005 to February 2006), the continuity of these projects as well as their overall strategy is not clear. There are also some emerging youth training initiatives, such as the Izbor Plus ([www.izborplus.ba](http://www.izborplus.ba)), that provide some curriculum for young people, and in particular youth workers, to develop their skills and competences. An assessment of how many of such initiatives are running and of their impact should be the subject for further research.

### **Youth Lifestyles, Sexuality, Union formation**

The majority of young people in BiH spend their free time in “cafés” (78%), only 29% take part in sports activities, 15% work regularly with internet and only 3% go regularly to the movies. However, about 50% indicated that they read books, which seems comparable to other countries in transition, which have higher poverty rates. More than half of young people in BiH smoke (55%) and consume alcohol (60%), however according to the Advisory Mission on Youth Policy of the Council of Europe, concerns about young people’s alcohol and drug abuse seem a little exaggerated and would require validation through more research and the provision of more evidence.

The age of initiation into sex in BiH ranges between 16 to 20 years of age (not very low), which may be due to the simple fact that most young people live with their parents until their late 20s. However, more specific data on this issue is not available. It is noteworthy that according to research conducted by UNDP, young people do not have enough information on reproductive health, as it is not even covered in the education system. In the context of traditional families, discussions about sex are left for café chitchat with friends (31% of youth). Basic information is also received through the media (37% of youth). 32% of young people indicated not having received any information about sexual health at all.<sup>217</sup> Risk-taking is also an issue among young people, among whom injuries, poisoning and car accidents represent the main causes of death. There seems to be an increasing tendency towards suicide among young men. The reasons cited for this are their low self-esteem, insecurity, poor relationships with parents and the society at large.

The relatively high level of risk behaviour raises the problem of a lack of youth-friendly, easily accessible, health counselling services. Although health prevention culture is rather far away from the thinking of young people, it may also be due to the hierarchical and inaccessible traditional health care system that provides mainly medical care, rather than guidance and advice.<sup>218</sup> For instance, the importance of sports, healthy diet and leisure activities that usually represent an integral part of young people’s well-being and healthy development, seems to be ignored by the post-war society. These may not represent problems at the moment, but may raise concerns for future generations.

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<sup>217</sup> UNDP Youth Report, *op cit*, p. 19.

<sup>218</sup> UNDP Youth Report, *op cit*, p. 19.

There is no accurate data on the incidence of HIV/AIDS and STDs among young people in BiH. The UNDP Report on Youth indicates that the majority of young people in BiH do not feel at risk of HIV/AIDS and STDs. However, only 48% young people in BiH use contraceptives regularly, and according to the MDG report, 70% of young girls aged 15-19 that live with a man do not use any form of contraception. Some health agencies working in the field reported that abortion is the main form of “contraception” among young girls. If contraception is used, it is mainly to prevent pregnancy, rather than to prevent STDs. Unfortunately, any specific information on youth abortion rates are not available.

Recent years have seen several programmes addressing the issue of sexual and reproductive health among youth people. Youth friendly services were established in cooperation with UNFPA and the IRC in Brcko, Banja Luka, Mostar and Bihac, where through Youth Information Centres young people can find advice and some form of counselling. However, these centres need to be further sustained and owned at the local level. Furthermore, their research and reporting function should be reinforced so that they provide evidence for policy-making and further programme development for and with youth.<sup>219</sup> These few examples of youth-friendly services should be further strengthened and mainstreamed, in particular in smaller communities in order to provide appropriate guidance and counselling to young people. In addition, school education curricula should be reviewed to include sexual and reproductive health education, which could benefit from relevant youth work experiences, as well as peer education practices, as they are based on the work of grass roots organisations and international agencies.

Special attention should be given to anti-discrimination work in relation to LGBT young people, who in the traditional society seem to suffer from segregation both in education and employment, and are also more vulnerable in relation to HIV/AIDS and STDs, as their knowledge of the importance of the contraceptive use is not very high. This is in particular important for young male homosexuals, who tend to have their first experiences with older partners. According to the UNICEF report *‘blind dating is common and not knowing the partner does not prevent engaging in sexual intercourse’*<sup>220</sup>, while the use of condoms is not very common.

The Council of Europe Advisory Mission has summed up the challenges in the following recommendations<sup>221</sup>:

- More data need to be collected in relation to the health of young people;
- Development of age-appropriate counselling services, including telephone help lines, website based information. In particular important for rural youth;
- Launch of a major information campaign on sexual and reproductive health (via schools, youth work and mass media) – need to provide advice and guidance in partnership of teachers, youth and social workers, health promoters and peer educators;
- Need to address young people with special needs, among them disabled, LGBT – especially need to normalise the issues of sexual preference and choice;
- Importance of sport and recreational activities for health reasons;
- Sport as a way to promote social inclusion and participation in inter-community learning and reinforcement of citizenship.

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<sup>219</sup> UNDP Youth Report, *op cit*, p. 21-22.

<sup>220</sup> RAR on HIV/AIDS among Especially Vulnerable Young People in SEE, UNICEF/CIDA, 2002.

<sup>221</sup> International Youth Policy Advisory Mission Report, Council of Europe, April 2005, *op cit*, p. 5.

There was no data available on union formation, childbearing and postponement of marriage among young people in BiH.

## Youth Participation

There are some good practices of youth work in BiH, which achieves a lot with very limited resources. However, the youth organisations seem to struggle for survival, with no or few places for young people to meet and little financial resources for the running of the organisation, with minimal equipment, doing creative work that would gain the attention of young people at large is not easy. The finances available at the municipal level are low, if they exist at all, organisations largely depend on outside sources and are rather donor driven, which affects their sustainability and the possible impact they could have in their communities. The general lack of resources naturally reinforces competition among youth organisations and youth groups, which reduces possibilities for cooperation and networking, as well as the quality of youth work.

The already weak position of youth organisations is even more damaged by the negative image young people have in society, as well as the lack of trust and respect the work of youth organisations received in their communities. Youth organisations are often perceived as a “strange” alternative, promoting negative trends, as well as drug use. Trust building in society and the recognition of non-formal education, as a positive contribution of youth organisations is required.

Overall participation in the more than 250 political and social organisations that exist in BiH is relatively low, with only around 9% of young people being active in an organisation and only 8% of young people being active as volunteers.<sup>222</sup> The belief among young people that they have an actual influence in the society is very low. Only 1% of young people believe that they can make any form of impact on politics. It seems that less than 6% of young people hold representative office at the different levels of governance (state, municipality and cantons). Although 6% of young people are members of a political party, the general attitude towards political institutions is negative with only less than 25% of young people attending elections due to disappointment, lack of interest or feeling that they are not represented by the mainstream politicians. However, it seems that 10-15% of the municipality counsellors at municipality assemblies are young people below 30 years of age.<sup>223</sup> This is an interesting tendency that could enable inter-generational dialogue and encourage the development of more consultative mechanisms that would involve young people in decision-making in a more active way.

It seems however that the legal provisions for civil society development are not very favourable. The Council of Europe report states that the framework within which the NGOs in BiH operate should be reviewed and reformed. This should strengthen the position of civil society as well as guarantee a more active participation for NGOs in the overall reform process in BiH.<sup>224</sup> There is a long-term need to invest in youth work structures for training, qualification and careers. Most of the trainings so far have been implemented by international agencies, reportedly of a high quality, however, further investments need to be made in national and local capacities that could be so far facilitated through distance learning and mentoring. BiH should also make use of the

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<sup>222</sup> Independent Evaluation of the BiH National Youth Policy, *op cit*, p.2.

<sup>223</sup> Ibid.

<sup>224</sup> International Youth Policy Advisory Mission Report, Council of Europe, April 2005, p. 42.

existing programmes of the EU, the Council of Europe and SALTO, especially their programme for SEE ([www.salto-youth.net/see](http://www.salto-youth.net/see)).<sup>225</sup>

The UNDP Report on Youth further identified the following recommendations in relation to youth and political life<sup>226</sup>:

- Take necessary steps to act collectively to include youth and other neglected groups;
- Encourage cooperation between youth and institutions and support youth initiatives at all institutional levels;
- Provide a favourable atmosphere for the active participation of young people;
- Strengthen all forms of youth associations;
- Encourage authorities, especially at the local level, to work more closely with young people;
- Continue facilitating the implementation of the European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Regional and Municipal Life of 1992;
- Amend entity defence laws to comply with international standards on conscientious objection;
- Disseminate information to youth on the right to conscientious objection.

## Youth Policies

There is no integral comprehensive youth policy in BiH, no national plan and strategies targeted at youth on the part of the different governmental and non-governmental actors. Although there is a high expectation to develop a more focused youth policy by the current government, which also requested the Council of Europe Youth Policy Advisory Mission in 2005, little further progress seems to have been made since. The role and work of the BiH Youth Information Agency ([www.oiabih.info](http://www.oiabih.info)) has been critical in awareness raising and training (the SIROP series) on youth policy issues and its development since 2002, however, to date governmental and non-governmental partners have not yet undertaken to develop any clear information strategy targeting young people in BiH together.

There is only very limited information on the functioning of the informal Youth Coordination Group which is supposed to involve international organisations dealing with youth issues in BiH, established at the initiative of international development agencies. Their advisory function on youth policy development could be instrumental for the strengthening of the structures and mechanism for youth policy delivery.

The current status of the institutions responsible for youth issues is unclear. According to the UNDP report the responsibility is divided between the Ministry of civil affairs, the office of the Chairman of the Council of Ministers BiH and the Ministry of Human Rights in BiH, which runs the Council for Children. Although the decision on the establishment of a Youth Commission, that would be responsible for the coordination of youth issues, was taken already at the end of 2004, it seems that the Youth Commission started to function only in June 2006. Information on its work can be found on the following website: [www.mladi.gov.ba](http://www.mladi.gov.ba), in Serbian, Croatian and Bosnian language, though the English version is not yet available.

The establishment of the Youth Commission is a great step towards policy development, as well as the realisation of a youth strategy and a more specific youth programme that would be

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<sup>225</sup> *Op cit*, p.45.

<sup>226</sup> UNDP Report on Youth, 2003, *op cit*, p.33-34.



practicable and possible to evaluate. It is, however, too soon to say anything about the functioning of this body. The Youth Commission's composition is not yet clear and neither are the consultative and participatory mechanisms established to involve youth organisations and young people. Due to the fairly complicated system of governance in BiH, it is also difficult say more than coordination and strategic approaches towards youth policy development are definitely much needed. Furthermore, communication between the governmental structures and young people should be reinforced and / or established, where they do not exist.

The following table<sup>227</sup> gives an indication of the fact that trust needs to be strengthened on both sides:

<b>How can you define the communication between Youth and Governance?</b>			
<b>Answers</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>e.g. in Srbac</b>	<b>e.g. in Šipovo</b>
a) excellent	1,3 %	2 %	0 %
b) good	3,5 %	14 %	0 %
c) satisfactory	7,9 %	24 %	0 %
d) bad	41,6 %	39 %	14 %
e) no communication	45,4 %	21 %	84 %

Finally, the existing local youth councils should be strengthened and the communication between the civil servants and young people at the level of the municipalities and cantons should be further developed<sup>228</sup> in cooperation with the newly established Youth Commission.

<sup>227</sup> Special Report on Youth Policy Development in Bosnia & Herzegovina on the theme "Youth and Governance", 2002, p.10.

<sup>228</sup> UNDP Youth in Bosnia & Herzegovina, "Are Youth Part of the Problem or Part of the Solution?", 2003, p.33.

## *Bulgaria*

The transition process in Bulgaria has in the past few years been driven by the European Union pre-accession agenda, which has created focus on issues of youth employment, participation in the civic life and youth mobility. This also created incentives for the further development of youth policy and youth-friendly information services. However, improving the socio-economic conditions of young people, their well-being and healthy transition into adulthood, remains a challenge.

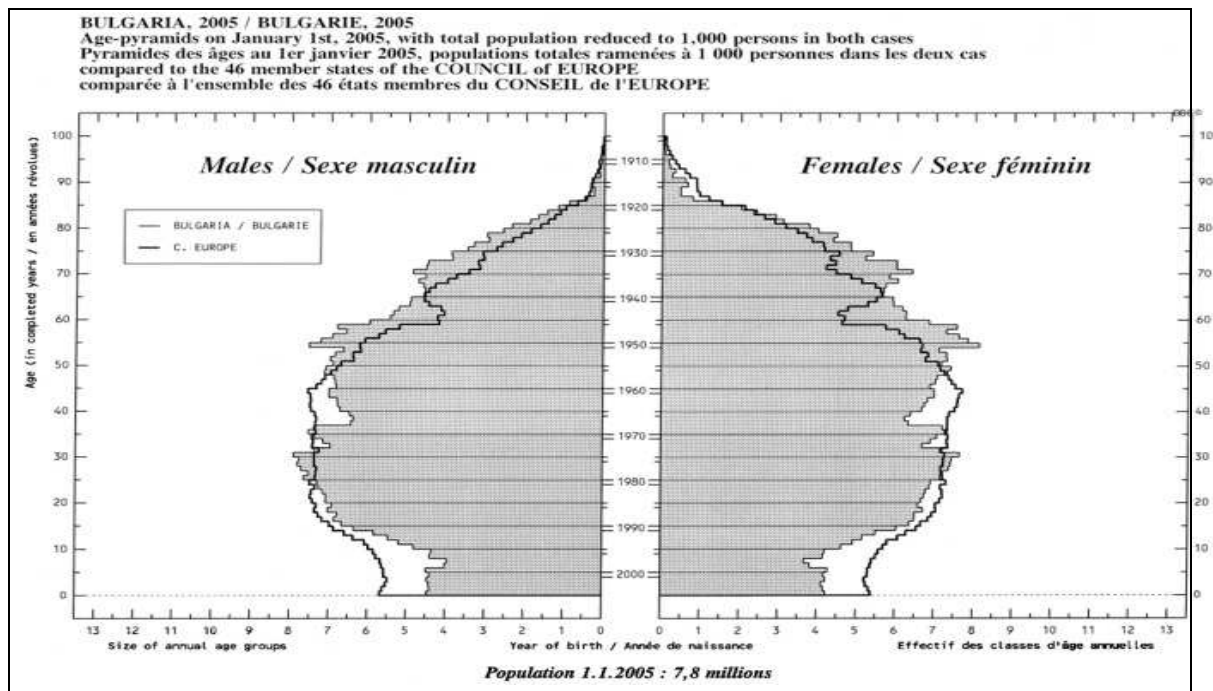
### **Youth Demography**

At the end of 2004, the population of Bulgaria was estimated at 7,761,049. In comparison to date for the previous year, the population decreased by half a percent. At the end of 2003, there were 1,077,137 young people 15 to 25 year olds living in Bulgaria, and 1,697,274 young people between the ages of 18 and 35.

Bulgaria demonstrates a significant ageing of the population and a very low birth rate. It also demonstrates a trend towards the increase of the rare of emigration among young people. The ageing of the population and the decrease in the proportion of young people is attributed to a variety of factors including the declining birth-rate, the slow but steady rise in the rate of mortality and an increase in the number of young people aged 10 to 35 emigrating.<sup>229</sup>

The population dynamics of the country can be observed from the following tables:

Age Pyramid on January 1 2005:



<sup>229</sup> Youth Society for Peace and Development of the Balkans, YSPDB report about situation of young people in Bulgaria, youth NGOs and youth policy and relations with government, Plovdiv, Bulgaria.

## Ageing of the Bulgarian population 1950 - 2000

Indicator	Age	1950	1975	2000
Ageing Index		38.0	73.2	137.6
Broad age groups	0-14	26.8	22.0	15.7
	15-59	63.1	61.9	62.6
	60+	10.2	16.1	21.7

*Source: United Nations, 2002: 56-157.*

On the basis of data from censuses taken in 1992 and 2001, it is estimated that the net migration of the population for the same period is estimated at 221,900 or 2.7 % of the population. According to the census data during the same period 18,450 returned or entered the country. Thus, the emigration flow could be estimated at 240,300, indicating that the country has lost some 30,000 people each year during the period between the two last censuses.<sup>230</sup> Many Bulgarians, especially those living in small villages and towns, where they live in difficult social conditions, emigrate in search of new opportunities. This tendency is more development among young people, even though they encounter difficult social conditions in the new country. In Bulgaria, the object of youth policy, and therefore, young people, are persons aged 16 to 18 and 18 to 35.

### Socio-Economic Conditions of Youth

In relation to the socio-economic conditions of young people, the following key issues can be identified:<sup>231</sup>

#### Poverty

According to the World Bank Poverty Report on Bulgaria<sup>232</sup> poverty is widespread in the whole population, significantly more widespread among ethnic minority groups, such as the Roma, and disproportionately negatively affects young people, but especially young women and in rural areas. The following characteristics describe poverty in Bulgaria:<sup>233</sup>

The poverty rate in rural areas was estimated at 29.1 percent in 2003, compared to 18.7 percent in urban areas. Welfare differences by location, however, become sharper when Sofia city is compared to other, urban or rural, areas. Even taking into account the differences in characteristics (such as education, family size, etc.) between rural and urban households, the per capita consumption of households living outside Sofia is 10 to 25 percent lower than that for households living in the capital city. Only a fifth of the population lives in households with five or more members, but they account for about 41 percent of the poor. People living in households with two or more children account for over a third of the poor. Ethnicity is a strong

<sup>230</sup> Recent demographic developments in Europe, Council of Europe, Council of Europe Publishing, (CD ROM), 2005.

<sup>231</sup> Youth Society for Peace and Development of the Balkans, YSPDB report about situation of young people in Bulgaria, youth NGOs and youth policy and relations with government, Plovdiv, Bulgaria, *op cit.*

<sup>232</sup> World Bank and International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, Country Partnership Strategy for the Republic of Bulgaria for the period 2007 to 2009, May 2006, p.35.

<sup>233</sup> IBRD, IFC and World Bank, Country Partnership Strategy for Bulgaria for the Period FY 07 – FY 09, p.15.

correlate of poverty: Roma households account for about 6 percent of the population according to the survey, but for over a fifth of the poor. Per capita consumption in a Roma household is only half of the consumption of a similar non-Roma household. Finally, poverty is not gender neutral. The risk of poverty is slightly higher in households headed by women, usually single parent households. When differences in education, location and other characteristics are taken into account, per capita consumption in these households is 10 percent lower than in those headed by men.

World Bank Development Policy Loans would support policies that promote further poverty reduction and social inclusion, by granting the poor, Roma in particular, equitable access to basic social services and supporting their insertion into the labour force, and increasing labour participation of youth, older unemployed and disabled.

A further problem exacerbating poverty is the lack of support for families, especially young families. Bulgaria used to have the lowest family allowance among the Central and Eastern European countries, but has nearly doubled the amount paid, from a modest US \$2.5 to \$5, but it has also introduced a rigorous income test with a monthly threshold of \$70 per person. It is estimated that significantly fewer poor children will be reached by this social support than before.<sup>234</sup>

### **Unemployment**

One of the main causes of poverty in Bulgaria is unemployment. Despite World Bank data indicating that youth unemployment has been reduced as a result of recent measures<sup>235</sup>, the level of youth unemployment is still high.

According to official statistical data, young people still account for 26.8% of all unemployed citizens<sup>236</sup> and it is noteworthy that unemployment among younger people is about double the average rate. Unemployment rates for men have been slightly higher than for women. Regional differences in unemployment are quite pronounced, for example from Sofia with just 5.17% unemployment to Targovishte with 33.55% occupying the two extremes.<sup>237</sup> Despite the shrinking of the labour force due to the decreasing number of young people in the population, the number of jobs available to absorb young people under 29 years of age has also declined causing youth unemployment to climb fast recently. One of the reasons underlying this development, according to a survey conducted between 2000 and 2002, is that the number of employers that could potentially employ young people, has sharply declined.

While the majority of employers claimed they would be willing to hire young people, they nevertheless complained that there are obstacles to hiring young people including economic

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<sup>234</sup> Tine Rostgaard, "Family Support Policy in Central and Eastern Europe - A Decade and a Half of Transition", Early Childhood and Family Policy Series N° 8, 2004, The Danish National Institute of Social Research, Copenhagen, UNESCO Education Sector, 3-5 September 2003, Budapest, p.18.

<sup>235</sup> The World Bank and IBRD provides the following figures: The share of long term unemployment reduced from 63.7% in 2001 to 59.3% in 2004 against 43.4 in EU-15 in 2003, Youth unemployment rate reduced from 38.4% in June 2001 to 25.8% in 2004, against 14.7% in EU-15 in 2003, Employment rate (LFS) increased from 50.9% in September 2001 to 56.6% in January 2005 against 64.8 in EU-15 in 2003 in the Country Partnership Strategy for the Republic of Bulgaria, for the period 2007 – 2009, May 2006, p.35.

<sup>236</sup> Elitza Neshevska, Deputy Minister of Youth and Sports, responsible for youth affairs Ministry of Youth and Sports of the Republic of Bulgaria, "Youth Policy in Bulgaria", Forum 21, available at: [www.coe.int/youth/forum21](http://www.coe.int/youth/forum21).

<sup>237</sup> International Youth Foundation, "What Works in Youth Employment in the Balkans?", 2004, p. 16.

factors (low purchasing power of the population and the limited access of companies to external markets) lack of professional skills and work experience, social skills and motivation of youths, lack of communication and partnership of employers with VET schools and labour office, as well as lack of incentives encouraging youth employment and also some deficiencies of the current effective programmes. In the opinion of employers, they would be encouraged to employ young people and participate in measures for youth employment promotion, provided changes in the legislation are made.

It also noteworthy that while youth entrepreneurship is identified as a positive measure for improving the employment of young people, few opportunities and support mechanisms for youth entrepreneurship have been implemented and in the context of those that have been, many of the youth businesses fail due to the general economic climate and the lack of experience of the young people managing the businesses.

Key institutional actors see the causes and problems for youth unemployment as mainly determined by:

- **Economic problems** and processes of restructuring of the economy; lack of investments in the regional economies; low level of labour remuneration; limitation of demand of labour force, including between 18 and 29 years of age; high and often inadequate requirements of the employers towards the labour force between 18 and 29 years of age; the hidden youth employment (in tourism, services, agriculture)
- **Problems in the legislation**, e.g. the extension of retirement age; insufficient development and support for the small and medium-size business; lack of mechanisms, encouraging the start-up of business; insufficient incentives for the employers
- **Inconsistency of the vocational education and training** of youths after their graduation with the demand of labour force; slow adaptation of the VET schools and the education system as a whole towards the labour market requirements; inertia of the VET system; lack of practical orientation in the secondary schools
- **Youths lacking length of employment and work experience**
- **Youths lacking practical skills**
- **Low educational attainment and lack of training of youths.**

Some of the problems related to youth unemployment in some of the regions are:

- **Lack of initiative to start own business;** lack of business culture and knowledge; lack of access to financing of youths; lack of traditions in the area of self-employment
- Youths are **demotivated** for work
- **Insufficient and limited access** to youth employment promotion measures; lack of sustainability of the currently effective measures
- Youths **dropping-out of the educational system** because of poverty
- **Lack of coherence** between the labour market institutions and vocational schools
- **Illiteracy** of youths from minorities
- **Lack of access** to information and consulting services for youths

According to the above mentioned survey, unemployment affects all groups of youths, whereas the problems of the smaller settlements are not less significant than the ones in the big district towns. Therefore, the measures to be implemented for youth employment promotion should be broadly diversified and their priority should correspond to the particulars of each region of the country. A differentiated and, where the nature of measures allows, an individual approach to youth unemployment issues is more than necessary.

Nevertheless, a large percentage of young people between the ages of 15 and 18 have no other choice but to work, because they have no other source of independent income or because they are expected to contribute to the family budget or to cover their own costs. The average age of young working people is 16. Unfortunately, they are often exploited by their employers who pay them less than the minimum wage. In addition, few have access to health and social insurances. Essentially, such young people work illegally. Parents often encourage their children to work to alleviate the family budget.

Some measures that have been put in place to further develop the employability of young people include the following programmes developed by the Bulgarian national authorities:

- National program “Computer training for youths”;
- National program “Enhancing employability and encouragement of entrepreneurship among young individuals”;
- National program for educational and labour inclusion of young people dropping out of the secondary educational system;
- National program for education, vocational training and employment of the Roma population;
- National program for ensuring employment through activities aimed at improvement of the ecological situation;
- National program for ensuring alternative employment for persons out of work as a result of privatization of large companies and monopolies.<sup>238</sup>

Further priorities of the government in the sphere of employability include:

- The promotion of entrepreneurship among women and young people;
- Creation of subsidized employment directed to the unemployed disadvantaged groups in the labour market (young people, women, disabled persons, lone mothers, mothers with up to 3 year old children, orphans, long-term unemployed with no vocational training and elementary or lower education, unemployed over 50 years of age).

## **Education**

Bulgarian society places a great deal of emphasis on education. Only a relatively small number of Bulgarian children do not attend school but a certain proportion drop out. However, educational enrolment has begun to drop. Poverty, as well as distance from educational centres, hinders the school attendance of many young people.

Young people characterise education as lacking diverse and interesting teaching methods, uninteresting and not sufficiently motivating for young people to attend. Other problems include that the children of different ethnic groups (but, especially, the Roma) themselves do not have sufficiently developed language skills to follow classes and that their parents have no interest in sending them to school. A further, and endemic problem, is the segregated schooling of young people from specific ethnic minority groups (especially Roma) and young people with disabilities in so called “special schools”, which are thoroughly under resourced and which isolate those young people from the rest of society, reinforcing negative stereotypes about them. Many problems continue to exist, despite the partial progress in overcoming segregation in education through legislative and institutional changes towards integrated education of the children with disabilities, desegregation of Roma schools and improving the quality of education of the children with special educational needs and Roma children<sup>239</sup>.

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<sup>238</sup> Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (Bulgaria), “The New Social Policy Strategy”, p. 7.

<sup>239</sup> Save the Children, “Inclusive Education in Bulgaria: How Much Remains to Be Done?”, Position paper.

The Bulgarian education system demonstrates several significant weaknesses including, and importantly, that the education system produces graduates with qualifications which do not match the demand of the labour market. Despite the fact that education spending increased from a crisis-level low of 2.6% in 1997 to 3.7% of GDP in 2001, which is still a fairly low rate by international standards, contributing to a declining state of buildings and teaching material, the investment in the education system remains insufficient. The government is currently pursues a strategy to improve the efficiency of education spending without major increases in public expenditure by gradually decentralising the management of resources and by increasing the low student-teacher ratio.

However, between the school years 1997/98 and 2003/2004 the number of students and educational institutions decreased by 10% and the number of teachers by only 6%, meaning that the student-teacher ratio has dropped further from 12:4 to 11:8. At the same time, net enrolment rates have increased, in particular in the group of 15 to 18 year-olds (from 70% to 83%) and in the group of 19 to 23 year-olds (from 25% to 30%), most likely in response to the situation on the labour market, which is characterised by poor job prospects for young people in the period under consideration, but also because of better returns to education.

Some legislative changes were made in 2004 to improve the quality of higher education and academic research. Expenditure on the National Action Plan for Employment 2003 was €120 million (about 0.7% of GDP), which includes a significantly higher amount spent on active labour market policies than in 2002. Total expenditure on research and development has remained low at around 0.5% of GDP since the mid-1990s, of which only about one quarter was spent by the business sector. management.

75.6% of young people aged 20 to 24 have attained at least upper secondary education attainment level. The main challenge in the education sector is to adjust the system to a declining school-age population following the general demographic decline and emigration, among whom many better educated and younger people<sup>240</sup>.

Other socio economic issues challenging the development of the contemporary youth generation in Bulgaria include:

**Gender equality:** While improvements have been made in the official status of young women as a result of the approximation of European legislation and standards in anticipation of European Union accession, gender inequality is still widespread and young women in Bulgaria are vulnerable to the widespread problem of domestic violence and trafficking. In addition, they are often more likely to have difficulty to enter the labour market and to access properly paid and protected employment.

The Equal Opportunities for Women and Men Section, established within the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy in 2004, is in charge of developing, coordinating and implementing the state policy on equal opportunities for men and women. The responsibilities include a number of various activities, such as<sup>241</sup>:

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<sup>240</sup> Regular Report of the European Commission on the Bulgaria's Progress towards Accession, 2004.

<sup>241</sup> Bulgarian Governmental Report on the Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action (1995), adopted at the IV UN World Conference on Women and Outcome of the 23<sup>rd</sup> Special Session of the General Assembly (2000).

- Involving state institutions and organizations in the development of a policy on protection of women against risks, by conducting the respective research and surveys and introducing new forms of work organization;
- Developing and coordinating the implementation of a National Action Plan on Equality for Men and Women;
- Developing gender training programmes, designed for civil servants and creating focal points in the individual ministries and institutions.

In part, young women benefit from the above measures, but it is noteworthy that a specific youth dimension in the above programmes is absent.

However, within the next five years the Ministry of Youth and Sports will launch a wide-scale project within the European Voluntary Service Programme and in cooperation with the Sports Directorate and European Union Integration and International Cooperation Directorate. The project is aimed at stimulating the equality of girls and women through sports (for example: sports initiatives with predominant participation of men, such as football. Mixed teams of girls and boys will be involved in the project). The Ministry of Youth and Sports will apply approaches for gender equality by creating a sustainable healthy environment for personal development of girls, based on sports and informal trainings.

**Conflicts in the family:** The poor social condition of families in Bulgaria is thought to be at the root of an increase in conflicts in the family, including the instance of domestic violence. In addition, there has been an increase in the instance of single parenthood and such individuals often struggle to raise their children on their own. It is noteworthy that, there exist no social services to support families in difficulty, such as family consultation offices, where families could seek help or advice.

**Increasing criminal behaviour among young people:** Many children are being raised in family circumstances that are not considered conducive to their well being. Thus, criminal activity among young people against peers and parents has increased. According to local experts, this increase in juvenile criminality can be attributed to the lack of investment and attention given by the authorities to the welfare of children and young people. It is significant that young people, especially young women and girls, are sold into prostitution in Bulgaria itself or in the European Union, especially Germany and Italy and are significantly vulnerable to human trafficking.

**Precariousness and vulnerability:** Further, many children grow up in lowest income families, in which both parents are unemployed in the long term. The Roma minority accounts for a large proportion of such families. The children from the lowest income bracket families are most vulnerable to becoming victims of family or street violence and often are not in a position to satisfy their most basic physiological needs. Such children are often given up to state care and end up in foster homes. Many however end up on the street engaged in the sex industry or in crime in order to simply survive.



## Youth Lifestyles, Sexuality, Union Formation

In terms of values, research indicates that health and family are considered most important by Bulgarian citizens, as both as necessary for a “good life”<sup>242</sup>. Research also indicates that Bulgarian citizens suffer from what is characterised as social anomy, which has been on the increase since the change of regime from state-socialism to democracy and market economy, and which expresses itself in the increased individualisation and materialism of the society and especially of young people and in changing attitudes to and practices of family formation.

The transition is considered by many observers to have destabilised the traditional family. In contradistinction to the state socialist period, when the government had an explicit policy of encouraging marriage and fertility, the absence of such an initiative today, are considered to have substantially Bulgarian citizens’ orientation towards forming a family. The number of marriages continues to decrease every year, but the number of divorces is rising. The number of children living with only one of their parents has, therefore, also increased. Nevertheless, the legislative framework for divorce usually favours mothers raising the children and fathers having visitation rights, especially when the children are under the age of 10.

The number of marriages has dropped steadily, but this trend has become more intensive in the period 1990-2002 with a total decrease of about 30,000 or 50%, from 59,874 to 29,218. There was a slow increase over the following two years. 31,038 marriages were registered in 2004 compared to 30,645 in 2003. This development has led to a fall of the crude marriage rate from 6.9% in 1990 to 3.7% in 2002 and a slight increase in 2004 to 4.0%. First marriages of both men and women constituted almost 84% of all marriages in 1998 and this proportion decreased gradually to 81% in 2004. The mean age at first marriage has increased in 2004 to 28.8 years for men and 25.5 years for women, compared to 26.6 and 23.5 years in 1998 respectively. In 2004 there were 14,669 divorces which represent about 473 divorces per 1000 marriages or 1.9 divorces per 1000 inhabitants. The average duration of marriage was 14 years in 2004 and, compared to previous years, is increasing, 13.2 years in 2003 and 11.1 years in 1998. The trend for the duration of marriage shows a decrease of 18% in the relative share of divorces during the first ten years of marriage in 2004 compared to 1998, respectively from 53% to 35%.<sup>243</sup>

Data from the latest population census show that 24.5% of households with children have a single parent: unmarried, widowed or divorced. 21% of children in Bulgaria are raised by only one parent: 17 per cent by their mothers and 4 per cent by their fathers (National Statistical Institute of Bulgaria, 2003). More and more young people prefer to live with their partners and to raise children together as a family, but without concluding a common law marriage (National Statistical Institute of Bulgaria, 2001).

More and more young families or couples living in so-called ‘free unions’ postpone childbirth for reasons of their professional careers. Matching their professional responsibilities with raising children is a problem for almost all parents employed in the private sector, especially those who are female, and to a lesser extent, those working in the public sector. The reason is, that despite the willingness of employers, especially of those developing their own business, to respect the legal rights of parents (two-years maternity leave, the right of sick-leave for taking care of sick children, etc.), they indicate that they are under pressure to remain competitive and, therefore,

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<sup>242</sup> National Centre for Social Opinion Studies, 1996.

<sup>243</sup> Recent demographic developments in Europe, Council of Europe, Council of Europe Publishing, (CD ROM), 2005, *op cit.*

cannot afford to provide such benefits to their employees, whose jobs they say are dependent on the success of their businesses. Other families chose for one parent to stay at home to take care of the children while the other one is employed. Usually mothers commit themselves to the household and children and it indicative that the share of permanently jobless women is higher than that of men.

### Fertility

There were 69,886 live births in Bulgaria in 2004, about 2,500 more than in 2003. The number of live births reached its lowest level, about 64 to 65,000, during the period 1997 to 1998. In 2004 the crude birth rate was 9.0%, compared to 8.6% in 2003 and 7.9% in 1998.

The substantial increase in the proportion of births outside marriage in recent years continued in 2004. 46.8% of births in 2004 were conceived outside marriage compared to 46.2% in 2003. This represents an increase of about 17% compared to 1998. The proportion of births outside marriage reflects the emergence of new family patterns such as consensual unions. This is confirmed indirectly comparing the average age of mother at birth of first child (24.5 years) with the average age of women at first marriage (25.5 years). Thus, the increase of births outside marriage is not necessarily synonymous with children being born outside of some type of family union<sup>244</sup>.

There was a considerable decrease of the total fertility rate in the past years from 1.81 in 1990 to 1.24 in 1996 and 1.09 in 1997. After a small rise in 2000 (1.27), in 2003 the total fertility rate returned to the same level as in 1999 and 1995: 1.23. 2004 was the peak of 1.29 for this fertility indicator during the last decade. This fertility rate is far from the two children per family necessary for ensuring even simple family reproduction. In 2004 a concentration of births was recorded among women aged 20-29 years (around 62.8% of total live births), thus leading to the conclusion that the decrease in the number of live births is rather a result of avoiding or postponing birth. The average age of women giving birth in 2004 was 25.8 years and 24.5 years at the birth of a first child. These two indicators, particularly the latter, seem to remain fairly stable over time.<sup>245</sup>

**Birth Rate, Death Rate and Natural Population Growth by 1,000 people between 1945 and 2003**  
Population as of 31/12/2003 by year and sex

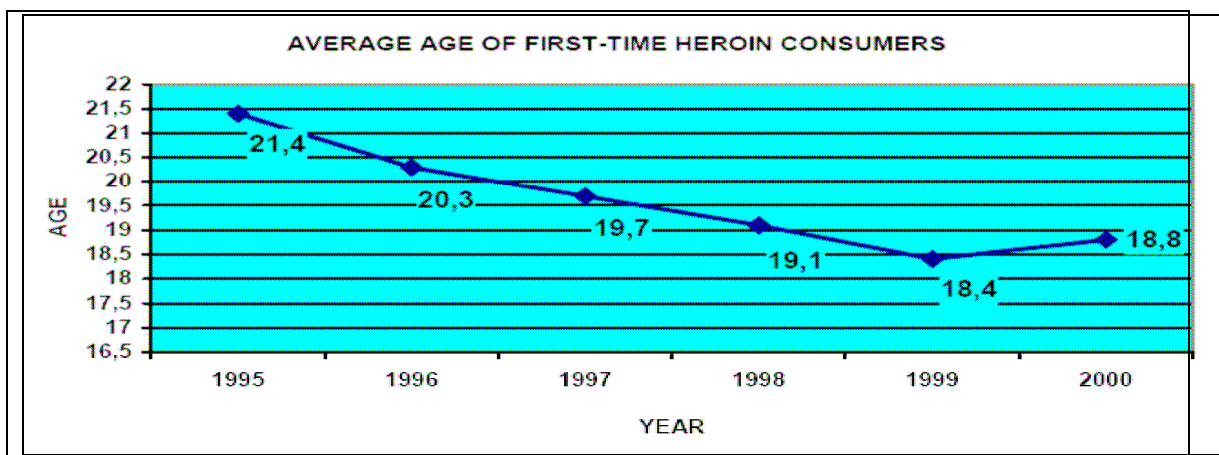
Year	Total	Men	Women
1990	8,669,269	4,269,998	4,399,271
1995	8,384,715	4,103,368	4,281,347
2000	8,149,468	3,967,423	4,182,045
2001	7,891,095	3,841,163	4,049,932
2002	7,845,841	3,816,162	4,029,679
2003	7,801,273	3,790,840	4,010,433

<sup>244</sup> Elena Koytcheva, “Contemporary Union Formation in Bulgaria: The Emergence of Cohabitation”, paper for presentation at the XXV International Population Conference of the International Union for the Scientific Study of the Population, Tours, France, July 18-23, 2005.

<sup>245</sup> Recent demographic developments in Europe, Council of Europe, Council of Europe Publishing, (CD ROM), 2005, *op cit.*

In the face of such low fertility, the approach of the Bulgarian authorities has tended towards pro-natalism. This has often been as a result of pressure from religious groups and conservative political parties and is a tendency observed in most countries of Central and Eastern Europe. Family and school, the traditional mainstays in children's lives, have dramatically lessened in significance, especially in Bulgaria's cities. The growing influence of television through numerous broadcasting and cable outlets combined with the explosion of new information and communication technologies tend to shape the everyday existence of children. Addiction to drugs, alcohol and tobacco products, aggressiveness, anti-social behaviour and a lack of positive role models all challenge Bulgarian society significantly.<sup>246</sup>

It is estimated that one in five schoolchildren has used drugs, one in two knows where to buy some, and two children in every class have used hard drugs.<sup>247</sup> Over the past 10 to 12 years the activities of criminal groups have been focused mainly on the trafficking and distribution of drugs outside Bulgaria. However, they are increasingly turning to domestic supply and using young people in Bulgaria as a target market for a range of illegal drugs, including heroin, considered to be the greatest threat.<sup>248</sup> Currently almost the whole range of illegal narcotic substances is on offer in Bulgaria. This has resulted in a significant increase in the percentage of the general population and young people, students in particular, involved in drug use (and abuse). The most widely used drug is marihuana. According to a representative survey conducted in 2000, 24% of secondary school students in Sofia have tried cannabis at least once. This accounts for a three-fold increase compared to 1995 (9.2%).



It is estimated that about 200-300,000 people are addicted to heroine, and about 150,000 have experimented with “soft drugs” and amphetamines or other new drugs, including methamphetamines are known on the street by the name of “Piko” which are replacing cannabis and heroine. These stimulants are faster and stronger than amphetamines. According to the most recent data, 20,000 people between the ages of 15 and 30 years have experimented with various stimulants; however, unofficial data suggests the numbers to be about 100,000 people. Over 130,000 Bulgarians smoke marijuana, according to the Ministry of Health.

<sup>246</sup> Lilia Raycheva, Katya Hristova, Dessislava Radomirova, Rossen Ginev, “Bulgaria: Childhood in Transition” in *Children Welfare in Ageing Europe*, p. 55.

<sup>247</sup> 2005 Annual Youth Report for Bulgaria (results in brief), in *Social Rights Bulgaria, Networking Bulgarian NGOs Online*.

<sup>248</sup> National Anti-Drug Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria, 2003 – 2008, p.5.

Generally, there is a tendency of marginalisation of individuals who are involved in substance abuse. There is evidence that they leave early or drop out of school and that many are involved in crime. Young people affected by drug use in this way, are a growing group that need a wider range of medical, social, legal, educational, employment and other services and care.

### **Health<sup>249</sup>**

The health status of young people in Bulgaria is dependent on various social and economic factors. One main problem is the lack of regular, physical activity, which leads to a sharp deterioration of their health status.

The contemporary health problems that can be observed among children and young people include the following:

- Increased alcohol abuse among young Bulgarians between 15 and 24 – in 2001 this percentage was 70%, whereas in 1996 it was 50%;
- Increased instance of smoking in the 15 to 24 years age group has increased to 41.3% in 2001, in comparison to 38.8 % in 1996;
- Increased instance of HIV infection, AIDS and cases of STDs. 2001 data shows 41% in the 20 to 29 year age group and 7 % in the 14 to 19 year age group HIV cases reported was 447 people as of August 2003;
- Increased instance of drug abuse including experimentation with new forms of drug, such as meta-amphetamines;
- Increase in under-18 pregnancies, with the birth and abortion rates for the 15 to 19 year age group at about 77 per 1000 people;
- A decrease of the age at which sexual initiation takes place. Young people aged 17 to 18 already have an active sexual life, but only 35% use condoms.

In Bulgaria, the health care sector focuses its main health promotion activities in the following areas:<sup>250</sup>

- Speeding up the adoption of the Public Health Act by the National Assembly, as it reflects the contemporary views on reproductive health issues;
- Training programmes, designed for women, children, pregnant women, which could impact the health of mothers and children;
- Training, aimed at upgrading the qualification of doctors from the primary health network, obstetricians and paediatricians;
- Implementing and promoting mechanisms for improving the quality of medical services in medical institutions in order to reduce the maternal and infant mortality rate.

The government has elaboration several programmes to help prevent socially significant diseases, paying special attention to children and young people including the “Health Control” programme, the “Prevention of Non-Infectious Diseases” programme, the “Prevention and

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<sup>249</sup> Youth Society for Peace and Development of the Balkans, YSPDB report about situation of young people in Bulgaria, youth NGOs and youth policy and relations with government, Plovdiv, Bulgaria, *op cit.*

<sup>250</sup> Bulgarian Governmental Report on Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action (1995), adopted at the IV UN World Conference on Women and Outcome of the 23<sup>rd</sup> Special Session of the General Assembly (2000).

Monitoring of Infectious Diseases” programme and the “Secondary Prevention of Diseases” programme.<sup>251</sup>

It is noteworthy that beyond the above, little information was available for assessing the extent of the health problems of young people, notably their sexual and reproductive health, their knowledge of such health issues and measures for increasing their ability to mitigate such health risks.

### **Youth Policies<sup>252</sup>**

In 2003 the Ministry of Youth and Sport established the Strategy for National Youth Policy. This strategy includes different programmes and activities for the development of a real youth policy between 2003 and 2007. The strategy is being elaborated with the direct assistance of experts, representing the responsible institutions, such as the UN Social Development Unit. An interdepartmental expert council was formed and assigned the task of drafting the strategy. *“Creating prerequisites for tolerance, solidarity and gender equality among young generation”* is the stated goal of the strategy. In addition, The Youth Programme of the European Commission, coordinated by the Ministry of Youth and Sports in Bulgaria, and one of the European components of the national strategy under elaboration, envisages its role as *“to contribute to the elimination of any form of discrimination and promote equality across social strata”*.

The main priorities of the new strategy include

- high-quality care for the life, health and physical activity of young people;
- getting young people engaged in the social life of the country and reducing their social passivity when making decisions on issues that concern them;
- optimal use of the possibilities of formal and non-formal education;
- equal access to all sources of youth information;
- stimulation of youth mobility, co-operation and exchange of non-formal experience.

In the medium term the strategy will seek to develop national, regional and local youth policy by

- creating mechanisms for co-ordination among the various institutions dealing with youth issues, the non-governmental youth organizations present on the national level, the leading European and world organizations working on youth issues, etc;
- organizing conferences, seminars and workshops on the subject of youth policy development; signing co-operation agreements with district and municipal administration bodies, with the National Association of Municipalities of the Republic of Bulgaria, as well as with other municipality associations; making more popular the Revised European Charter on the Participation of Young People in the Local and Regional Life.
- encouraging the self-organization of Bulgarian young people and creating conditions for establishing new organizations and for expanding the capacity of the existing ones; encouraging carrying out socially beneficial activities in the country; encouraging young people to take part in volunteer activities; establishing co-operation among youth organizations on the local, regional and national level.

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<sup>251</sup> National Healthcare Strategy 2007 – 2012, Highlights / Resume, p.1.

<sup>252</sup> Youth Society for Peace and Development of the Balkans, YSPDB report about situation of young people in Bulgaria, youth NGOs and youth policy and relations with government, Plovdiv, Bulgaria, *op cit*.

The long-term goal of the strategy is to expand the role of young people in civil society in the context of the EU accession of Bulgaria, including the implementation of best European practices of work with young people.

Nevertheless, relations between the youth civil sector and the government seem to be complicated. Bureaucracy, a lack of communication between the NGOs and the government and the constantly changing staff in the institutions are all barriers to the successful implementation of the above mentioned plan to develop a youth policy and to the implementation of existing measures for supporting youth participation and civic engagement. The more prominent NGOs based in the capital city have to help the smaller NGOs, as little support is available from the central government (in their opinion).

The introduction of the network EURODESK in Bulgaria has improved methods of communication. There are 35 EURODESK info points in Bulgaria at the moment. Its main goal is to help NGOs find partners for projects for presentation to the European Union and other funding opportunities.

Among young people themselves, the non-governmental sector in Bulgaria is considered to have a bad reputation. Many organisations registered as “NGOs” are involved in illegal activities, especially money laundering. Scandals among Bulgarian foundations have made sensational headlines the Bulgarian popular media. Given the above situation, youth NGOs find themselves under rigorous scrutiny and a large number of active youth NGOs struggle financially, as they cannot access resources inside the country. Many survive almost entirely on foreign funding, which is not widely available and is complicated to access. It is also notable that many youth NGOs lack of resources for active and effective work, not having offices, computers or quality Internet connections.

NGOs also lack qualified staff due to the fact that volunteering is not very popular in Bulgaria. Many youth NGOs are involved in political activities, which is felt by a lot of young people to distract them from the real problems of young people and hence makes them irrelevant in the eyes of their potential members. A further problem is that there is quite a lot of competition and rivalry among youth NGOs. This puts certain young people off getting involved.

Beyond the above, not very encouraging sketch of the youth civil sector, little information was available concerning the instance of youth participation through official channels. In particular, it is unclear what kind of representative platforms have been used or put in place in order to ensure the participation and consultation of young people on the development and implementation of the National Youth Strategy. The extent to which young people are consumers or actors of youth policy development is also unclear. Finally, the evidence base on which the National Youth Strategy is being developed is not entirely clear, given that there seems to be a significant lack of up to date, independently and systematically collected and collated data on the situation and needs of young people in Bulgaria, despite its participation in the Youth and other programmes of the European Union for the last decade.

## Turkey

### Introduction

Half the Turkish population is aged under 25, a proportion which will not change significantly for the next twenty years. The potential of this young population has been increasingly recognised in the past decade, as democracy has developed and relations with European countries and institutions have become closer.

### The context of youth and youth activism

Out of the disaster of the 1999 earthquake came a blossoming of non-governmental organisations, including youth organisations that remains today. Both recognition by government and self-recognition by civil society led to confidence in citizen participation in social affairs, and many of those involved in NGOs – particularly those engaged in voluntary work – are young people. While recent amendments to the Law on Associations arguably made it easier for non-governmental organisations to set up and operate,<sup>253</sup> the reality is more mixed. Although youth organisations have not been primary targets of enforcement by the government, there have been several examples in recent years of human rights and minority groups being harassed or denied freedom to assemble, based on technicalities around registration and on restrictions as to what aims are permissible for associations to pursue. There is an atmosphere of potential confrontation between the government and civil society, particularly human rights groups, student groups and Kurdish groups.<sup>254</sup>

Change in the social context of being young in Turkey has been slower. Whether religion, nationalism-patriotism or family structure is emphasised, Turkey remains a patriarchal society and one in which (just as is common elsewhere) youth is “a social category under the strict control of adults”; the Project Coordinator of *Youth is the Key*, an EU-youth project aimed at dialogue between Turkish and European youth, refers to an “Iron Triangle” of political system, family and school by which young people’s

#### The Concept of Youth in Turkey:<sup>255</sup>

A Turkish concept of Turkish youth is not easy to define, as there is no youth law or single legal definition – rather, there are different definitions in different laws and regulations. For example, the in accepting the convention on the Rights of the Child, the Turkish Government accepted children as “every person until 18 years old”. But according to Criminal Justice Law, judges in child courts can still give punishment to the children after 12 years old. There is neither a law nor a sole governmental body responsible for youth. Youth services are carried out by various departments in different public institutions, including the General Directorate of Youth and Sports, the Ministries of National Education, Labour, Health, and Culture and Tourism, the Social Services and Child Protection Agency, the General Directorate of Social Services and local authorities. The drafting of a progressive and comprehensive law on youth and youth services would be a significant achievement and should form a central part of any UNFPA-UN programming on youth in Turkey.

<sup>253</sup> “In recent years some amendments in the Law of Associations and Foundations have been made, and the things about the NGOs are easier now. Youth can express their thoughts much more freely now”, Atalay, 2004, p.2.

<sup>254</sup> International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights, 2006 [www.ihf-hr.org/viewbinary/viewdocument.php?doc\\_id=7081](http://www.ihf-hr.org/viewbinary/viewdocument.php?doc_id=7081).

<sup>255</sup> Atalay, 2004, *op. cit.*

participation in society is constrained.<sup>256</sup> The memory of violent political unrest in previous decades, often involving young people, remains an obstacle to full acceptance of a strong role for youth in society, and more generally for non-governmental voices. More recently, the ill effects of the 2001 economic crisis hit hardest those with the least secure employment – young people and women. The combination of disillusionment with the political leadership in the country, exclusion from participation in electoral politics (the minimum age for electoral candidates was recently lowered to 25) and lack of opportunity to effect change through non-electoral means has on some accounts created a “generation of cynics.”<sup>257</sup>

However, the social and political environment may be changing. The current government speaks the language of youth empowerment:

*“Youth is not only a wealth of the nation, but also a source of dynamism and potential for change. Hence, possessing a young population is an important opportunity for Turkey. Building the confidence of the society to the youth and that of the youth to Turkey is among our Government's main targets.”<sup>258</sup>*

But, as the women’s NGO movement in Turkey can attest, the step from stating such goals to adequate funding and political will for their realisation can take many years and constant, vigilant effort.

### **The European Context**

Although the past decade has seen an increasing importance of potential accession to the European Union for the direction of politics in Turkey, the sustainability of this focus and enthusiasm cannot be taken for granted and is even now diminishing somewhat. Conflicts continue over Cyprus, human rights and freedom of expression, and the Armenian massacres of 1915, and there are concerns over the sheer size and poverty of the Turkish population and the competitive capacity of the economy; combined with a lack of patience on both sides, these factors mean that with even the most optimistic outlook, Turkish membership of the EU is not likely within the next decade or fifteen years.

### **Youth Demography**

In 2005, the population of Turkey was estimated at 73,2 million, with 13,5 million people aged 15 to 24 (18,4%). The population aged 0 to 14 was 21,4 million (29%).<sup>259</sup> The 15 to 24 share of the population is dropping gradually, from 20% in 2000 to a projected 17% in 2015. This is in line with a general slowing down of the population growth rate, related primarily to dropping levels of fertility: from 3,1 lifetime births per woman in 1990, to 2,7 in 2005 (UNFPA,<sup>260</sup> UNPD estimates 2,21 TFR by 2010 to 2015<sup>261</sup>); there are great regional disparities in fertility, with

<sup>256</sup> Yılmaz, 2006. See footnote 9, citing Emre Erdoğan.

<sup>257</sup> Ünlühisarcıklı, 2006.

<sup>258</sup> Atalay, 2004, *op. cit.*

<sup>259</sup> World Population Prospects, UN Populations Division, available at <http://esa.un.org/unpp/index.asp?panel=2>.

<sup>260</sup> UNFPA, <http://www.unfpa.org/profile/turkey.cfm>.

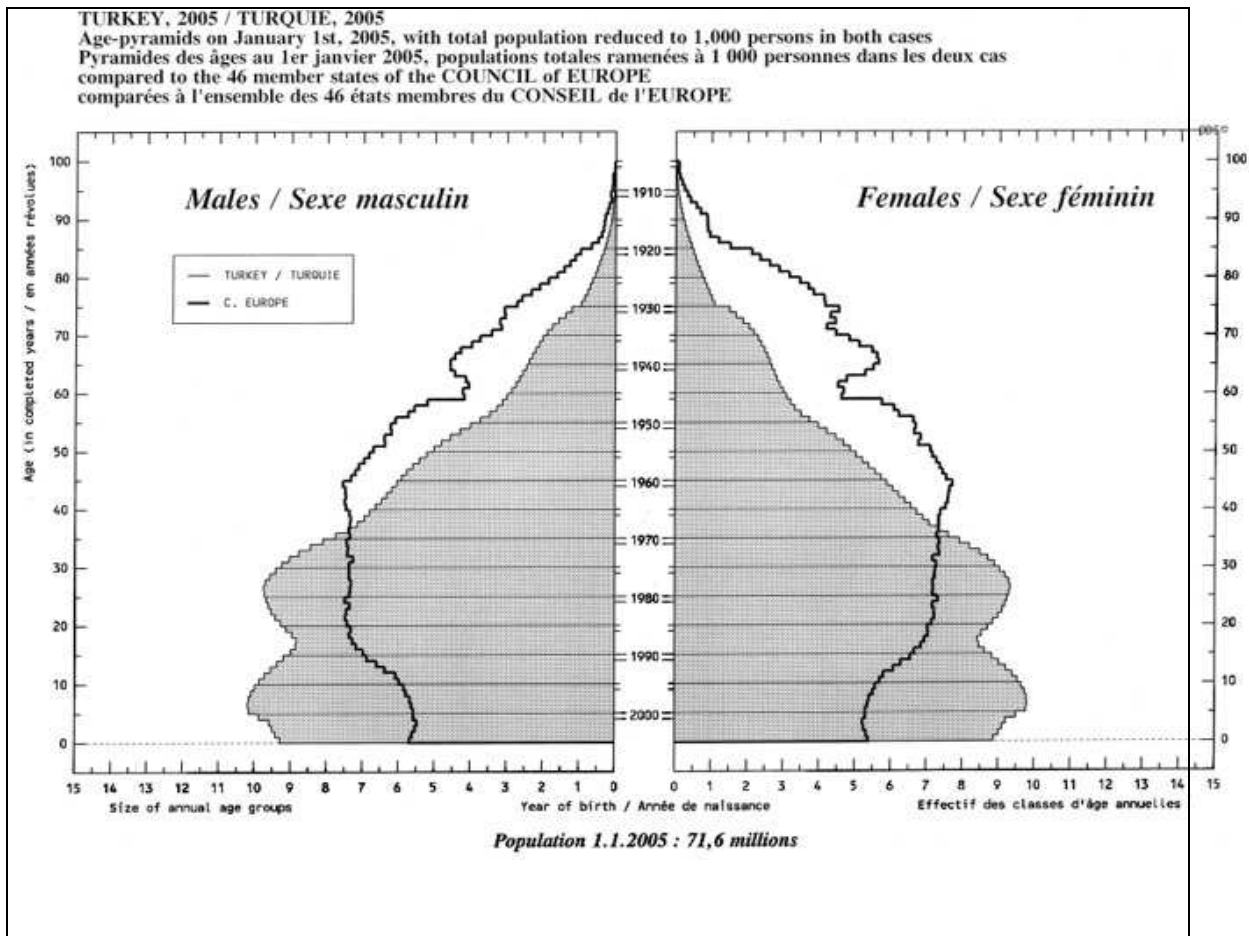
<sup>261</sup> World Population Prospects, *op. cit.*



already 2.4 births per woman in urban areas against 3,1 in rural areas.<sup>262</sup> Clearly, a country where half the population is aged under 25 ought to have a great interest in youth policy.

While the youth share of population is decreasing, the growth rate of the elderly populations is twice that of the total population.<sup>263</sup> Following the demographic trend across Europe, the child dependency ratio is shrinking and the old-age ratio is growing;<sup>264</sup> learning from experience to the west, Turkey has a chance to ensure (among other things) sustainable productive employment for current and future generations of youth to stave off a social security crisis in decades to come.

These findings are illustrated in the table below<sup>265</sup>:



<sup>262</sup> Ibid.

<sup>263</sup> Govt of Turkey report to UNECE, 1998, p.8

<sup>264</sup> World Population Prospects, *op. cit.*

<sup>265</sup> Table has been found in the CD ROM on the Recent Demographic Developments in Europe, Published by the Council of Europe's European Population Committee.

## Mobility

The population of Turkey has undergone a rapid structural change with regard to urbanisation, starting in the 1950s. The 1970 census indicated that about one-third of the population (32,3%) were living in settlements which are considered as urban (with a population of 20,000 or more – under 20% in 1950). By 1990 the percentage was 51,4, and a 1997 population count found 65% of the population living in urban settings.

Although this urbanisation led to considerable bottlenecks in urban services, significant environmental problems and to the emergence of *Gecekondu*s populated by groups not assimilated to the urban way of life, means of living in overburdened areas were nonetheless found. However, the opportunities for migration to such peripheral urban dwellings are increasingly

limited and the social support structures available there are disappearing (see the section on poverty below). Based on data from 2000, women make up roughly 45% of all internal migrants aged 15-24; the lowest ratio of female-to-male migration is in city-to-city migration (80%), and the highest in village-to-village (110%). There is 3.6 times more migration to cities (from villages or other cities) than to villages (from cities or other villages), although there is also 3.3 times more migration between cities than from villages to cities.<sup>267</sup>

### Young people are more inclined to emigrate<sup>266</sup>

Desire to move to the EU is

- 24% for 18-24 year-olds;
- 26 % among students and part time employees;
- 21 and 23 % respectively among junior high school and high school graduates;

There is no difference between urban and rural areas. The data is not broken down by gender.

International migration began seriously in the 1960s, as emigration for employment. From 1974 to the late 1980s, emigration slowed down greatly, and was largely for the reunification of families. Today, most emigration is possible through marriage.<sup>268</sup>

Integration and cooperation with regional youth organisations has a positive effect on youth mobility. For example, the Euromed Youth Forum is interested in increasing the mobility of young people and removing obstacles to their travel (such as visa costs), and is particularly interested in increasing the mobility of young women.<sup>269</sup>

## External migration and asylum

Turkey has dealt with several large inflows of asylum seekers from Iran and Iraq, and ethnic Turks from Bulgaria in the past two decades. Although most Iraqis and Iranians who entered Turkey subsequently left, many of the Turks from Bulgaria stayed. Several measures have been taken by the Turkish authorities for their resettlement, vocational education and placement in jobs relevant to their training background.<sup>270</sup>

<sup>266</sup> ARI Movement, 2006, p.10.

<sup>267</sup> TURKSTAT, 2000 Population Censuses, Section 34.

<sup>268</sup> Government of Turkey report to UNECE, 1998, p.8.

<sup>269</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/youth/program/eval/midterm\\_main\\_report.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/youth/program/eval/midterm_main_report.pdf).

<sup>270</sup> Government of Turkey report to UNECE, 1998, p.8.

## The Socio-Economic Conditions of Youth

### Employment

The general context of globalisation and a desire to rely less heavily on agriculture and informal arrangements for employment, and the additional potential context of European integration, are changing patterns of employment in Turkey. New potentials for employment in the knowledge and services sectors, along with the desire for greater added value, productivity and returns to the economy, are making greater demands of the education and training system.

In Turkey, the low participation of women in paid employment continues to be an area of concern – women are primarily employed as unpaid family workers, which alongside their low levels of land and property ownership limits their economic independence and increases their vulnerability to poverty. This is especially true of young women, although on the national scale far fewer young women are employed in agriculture than in their mothers' generation.<sup>271</sup> However, even as women are decreasingly employed in agriculture and moving into wage employment, their position has not necessarily improved – there has been a steady decline in women's participation in the formal labour market, and a shift into the unregistered economy. Even as more (young) women are wage earners, fewer are offered the social protection of formal labour market participation.<sup>272</sup>

Even where women work formally for wages, there is segregation of employment by gender. "Women's jobs" tend to be lower-paid, lower status and less secure (for example during times of economic instability). As is the case across Europe, the lack of affordable childcare and the strength of gender roles mean that women with children have difficulty combining paid work with domestic and parenting responsibilities.<sup>273</sup>

### Unemployment

Unemployment for the general population is 10.3%, while for those under 25 it runs at 19.6%.<sup>274</sup> According to data from the Turkish Labour Organisation, young people are 43% of the whole unemployed people in Turkey<sup>275</sup>. For young women, it is not only lack of education that limits economic opportunity – the unemployment rate among young women who live in the city and who are at least high school graduates is twice as much as for men in the same situation.<sup>276</sup>

Since 2000, there has been unemployment insurance. The government identifies several programmes aimed at increasing employment among young people,<sup>277</sup> although none of these is specifically youth-focused. There are many initiatives of various sizes in Turkey, which aim at supporting entrepreneurship among women, and there are overlaps between the specific experiences of women and of young people (in terms of ownership, capital, access to credit, being taken seriously), which may give potential for sharing good practices.

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<sup>271</sup> Women over 50 "constitute the majority of the workforce employed in agriculture", Kurmus, p. 6.

<sup>272</sup> The participation of women in the workforce was 34 % in 1990, 27.9 % in 1998 and 25.9 % in 2001. (Ibid., p.10)

<sup>273</sup> Government of Turkey 2004 response on Beijing, pp. 20-21.

<sup>274</sup> Austrian Academy of Sciences 2004, [www.oeaw.ac.at/vid/popeurope/download/notes\\_sources\\_definitions.pdf](http://www.oeaw.ac.at/vid/popeurope/download/notes_sources_definitions.pdf).

<sup>275</sup> Atalay, p.9.

<sup>276</sup> Government of Turkey 2004 response on Beijing, p.11

<sup>277</sup> [http://www.abgs.gov.tr/tarama/tarama\\_files/26/SC26DET\\_Youth.pdf](http://www.abgs.gov.tr/tarama/tarama_files/26/SC26DET_Youth.pdf). The Medium-Term Programme (2006-8) around the Social Risk Mitigation Program and the KOSGEB Entrepreneurship Programmes.

### **Vulnerable groups**

The Social Services and Child Protection Agency provides various protective services for young people, including homes for children aged up to eighteen who are orphaned, destitute or are victims of abuse or neglect.<sup>278</sup> There is a Directorate for the Disabled which aims to support disabled people to live within society, though the positive effects of such efforts are not felt by a large proportion of disabled people.<sup>279</sup>

### **Social protection**

The welfare system in Turkey has historically been linked to formal employment – until the end of the 1980s, it was assumed that workers in the informal economy would over time become integrated into the formal economy. Within formal employment, social security provision (covering retirement and, more relevant here, healthcare) is related to employment status: among major providers, there is one fund for state employees, one for wage earners, and one for the self-employed. These cover a little under half of the population, and there is an additional Green Card healthcare program covering those not covered by any other form of healthcare. Estimates vary, but anywhere between one in nine and one in six citizens are not covered by work-related social security provision.<sup>280</sup> The bias toward formal wage earners most discriminates against women and the unemployed, a substantial proportion of whom are young people. Some of these are covered by relatives' insurance, however, and the introduction of unemployment insurance in 2000 also goes some way to alleviating poverty related to unemployment.

### **Education**

Notwithstanding the timescale, some level of increased integration with the European Union is inevitable, which may include greater movement of labour even in the absence of accession. As the World Bank puts it, high-quality education for all young people is vital to avoid Turkish citizens becoming the low-paid service workers of Europe.<sup>281</sup> As in other aspects of Turkish society, gender and regional disparities persist in education. Although the 1997 law raising compulsory education from five to eight years has by now had a positive effect on girls' primary school enrolment, this remains at around 93% of boys'.<sup>282</sup> Secondary school and higher education enrolment ratios are far worse, at around 75%; that this indicator is based on enrolment rather than graduation means the real gap may be bigger.<sup>283</sup> Regional differences are striking also, with only 14% of girls in the southeast attending secondary school in 2003.<sup>284</sup> Literacy among 15-24 year olds is 98.4% for boys and 94.8% for girls.<sup>285</sup>

In general the legislative environment is fairly positive (for example, young people who start working at 15 must also attend vocational training courses run by the Ministry of education), but implementation remains a problem in many areas. The picture of government commitment to improving educational opportunities particularly for the poor and for girls is mixed – on the one

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<sup>278</sup> Atalay, p. 72.

<sup>279</sup> Engin and Aydin, 2005, p. 2.

<sup>280</sup> Bugra and Keyder 2003, pp. 17-18.

<sup>281</sup> World Bank 2006, p. 1 (5 of 19).

<sup>282</sup> Millennium Development Goal Report 2005, pp. 26-7. The ratio fell to 85% immediately after the extension of compulsory education, but has since returned to around 93%.

<sup>283</sup> MDG Report, p.26-28

<sup>284</sup> World Bank 2006, p. 4.

<sup>285</sup> MDG Report 2005, p. 21.

hand, commitments are increasingly backed up with funds.<sup>286</sup> Regional boarding primary schools are being used to encourage school attendance for children from rural areas faced with transport difficulties, and the government is recognising that more significant than cultural resistance to girls' schooling is the problem of the real expense of schooling for parents who have very little money. On the other hand, the World Bank research finds that "financial resources do not appear to be allocated with the aim of reducing inter-regional, inter-provincial, or urban-rural educational disparities."<sup>287</sup>

One of the major problems with the educational system is its failure to adequately prepare young people for the labour market. The government recognises this, and has established a number of policies in its present five-year plan to overhaul the education system.<sup>288</sup>

According to the Director General for Youth and Sport, **non-formal education** aims to:<sup>289</sup>

- teach reading and writing and provide continuing education to students with incomplete education;
- provide education opportunities that shall facilitate the students' adaptation to scientific, technological, economical, social and cultural developments;
- give education that protects, improves, introduces and comprises national cultural values;
- help the students in acquiring the concepts and habits of collective living, supporting, helping, working and organizing collectively;
- provide opportunities that shall ensure acquisition of professions in line with the economic development and employment policy;
- teach the balanced nutrition and a healthy life style;
- teach people from various professions the knowledge and skills they need to improve themselves; and
- to provide the habit of using one's free time in a useful way.

As well as improving the quality of education overall and improving the 75% female-male enrolment ratio in secondary and tertiary education, raising the quality and social status of vocational education is important for providing greater skills choice and employability to young people in Turkey. At present, vocational education gives little greater access to the labour market than general secondary education, which aims to prepare students for university. The Ministry of Education and EU/World Bank are implementing programmes to increase the relevance of vocational education.<sup>290</sup>

Education for disabled children and young people is formally guaranteed on

an equal basis with non-disabled people.<sup>291</sup> However, the existing situation is far from equal, with illiteracy running at high rates for disabled people and access to tailored education being limited, by geographical location and by wealth.<sup>292</sup>

There are a variety of institutions providing non-formal education in Turkey, which is understood as education for those who have not attended or have dropped out of school, or are continuing education as adults.<sup>293</sup> Some services are particularly focused on girls and young

<sup>286</sup> Government of Turkey 2004 response on Beijing, p. 7. Partnership with the private sector has also been explored as a means of funding the expansion of educational opportunities – see page 4 of the World Bank ESS 2006.

<sup>287</sup> World Bank, 2006, p. 10.

<sup>288</sup> World Bank 2006, full report (p. 10 of 162 in PDF).

<sup>289</sup> Atalay, p.5.

<sup>290</sup> Ibid, p. 6.

<sup>291</sup> Article 15, Law on Disabled Persons, 2005 (no. 5378).

<sup>292</sup> Engin and Aydin, 2005.

<sup>293</sup> Atalay, p. 72.

women who have fallen out of formal education at some point. Non-formal education covers basic skills (such as literacy) and the general (academic) curriculum, but has strong emphasis on apprenticeships and vocational training.<sup>294</sup>

### **Poverty**

Poverty in Turkey has a significant regional dimension – incomes in the eastern provinces are around 35% of the national average (as little as 7% of the EU average), and serious poverty is widespread. The reasons for this include the preponderance of agriculture in the economy, low educational quality and enrolment, particularly for girls, and a historical and ongoing lack of public investment (related in part to the fact that the population in this region is predominantly Kurdish). Two decades of armed conflict in some parts of the region have damaged infrastructure and social cohesion and deterred investment. The Ministry of Education and EU/World Bank are implementing programmes to increase the relevance of vocational education.

The government is acting to tackle the problem of poverty in the eastern regions, particularly through investments in education and girls' education. A recent report raised the idea that the Turkish government should make cash transfers – a “citizenship income” – to millions of poor people in the east of the country, helping to lift the regional economy and meet EU standards on social inclusion.<sup>295</sup>

As the most mobile section of the population, young people under thirty are also over represented in the other notable form of poverty in Turkey, that of poverty among rural to urban migrants living on the peripheries of large urban settlements.<sup>296</sup> There has for many years been a trend of such migration, but in the last decade the socio-economic fate of these migrants has shifted. Previously there was a pattern of short-term poverty among recent migrants, which was not sustained and did not lead to social exclusion; people benefited from non-state (family and neighbour) social support structures and were able to set themselves up with homes and enough economic opportunity to escape poverty. A variety of factors, including the increasing scarcity of land for new homes and changes in local government attitudes to new settlers (in part related to changing priorities in the presence of economic development and globalisation) mean that these rural-urban migrants have a much harder time establishing themselves either economically or within communities; poverty and social exclusion, and cultural and political exclusion reinforce one another. People continue to come, particularly since there are few opportunities in their hometowns ravaged by poverty and in many cases armed conflict.

### **Gender Equality**

Despite the legislative framework also being positive for gender equality,<sup>297</sup> Turkey still has a strongly patriarchal culture, which is reflected in discriminatory traditions and practices. On almost all indicators, women lag behind men.<sup>298</sup> Be it regarding employment segregation, low educational achievement, son preference or difficulty being accepted as actors in public and

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<sup>294</sup> Turkey, 2005 Almanac on non-formal education, <http://www.byegm.gov.tr/YAYINLARIMIZ/kitaplar/turkey2005/content/english/396-397.htm>.

<sup>295</sup> Kurmus, p. 17.

<sup>296</sup> For this paragraph, please see the report *New Poverty and the Changing Welfare Regime of Turkey*, Bugra and Keyder 2003.

<sup>297</sup> Government of Turkey 2004 response on Beijing, p. 20.

<sup>298</sup> Ibid.

political life, women in Turkey suffer generally more extreme versions of the discrimination seen in most countries of Europe and Central Asia. And as positive as the statutory framework may be, the national gender equality mechanism, an office under the Prime Ministry, still operates with a lack of funds and political acceptance necessary to make it as effective as it could be.

Violence against women is a pervasive problem, with 40% of women reporting being subject to physical violence by their husbands.<sup>299</sup> Only in 2004 were sexual crimes redefined as crimes against the individual rather than crimes against public decency. The concept of honour, used to control young female sexual and social behaviour, is strong in the eastern and south eastern regions. Although the practice of honour killings is being taken increasingly seriously by the government and judiciary, there is concern among women's groups that the criminalisation of "custom killings" does not go far enough to fully prevent the phenomenon.<sup>300</sup> Another category of violence, which overwhelmingly affects young women, is the serious problem of human trafficking.<sup>301</sup> Although the problem has been increasingly recognised in recent years, the government's approach seems to be more criminal- than victim-oriented.<sup>302</sup>

Despite serious problems remaining, the situation is undoubtedly improving. The women's movement in Turkey has been active for many years, and has received a boost in the last decade from the orientation of Turkish politics toward the European Union and the associated demands including in the field of gender equality. Emphasis on reducing gender and regional disparities runs through a large proportion of development work in the country.<sup>303</sup> The current and coming generations of young women are in a position to reap the benefits of gender- and human rights-focused policy making in Turkey. However, young women in particular must continue pushing for improvement in their situation, as the achievements thus far are not irreversible. Particularly in the event that relations with the EU cool and the weight from that quarter exerts less pressure, it will be down to the women's movement nationally to sustain the focus on gender. The same goes for the Turkish youth movement, especially as cooperation with EU-oriented youth organisations has been so key for encouragement to date.

### **Youth Values and Lifestyles**

In a 2003 survey, only 1% of 15-year-olds have been drunk alcohol twenty times or more, and alcohol consumption is lower than anywhere else in Europe.<sup>304</sup> Although alcohol consumption in Turkey remains far below that anywhere else in Europe, there was a notable rise from 1985 to 2000, in contrast to the trend across the rest of Europe.<sup>305</sup> Figures are not broken down by sex, but we may assume that outside major urban centres, alcohol consumption is predominantly a male habit. The use of illegal drugs by Turkish youth is much lower than the European average

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<sup>299</sup> This rises to 90% for psychological violence. Women for Women's Human Rights: [www.wvhr.org/id\\_589](http://www.wvhr.org/id_589).

<sup>300</sup> Government of Turkey's 2005 CEDAW report, p. 2; and the shadow report, available from Women for Women's Human Rights at [www.wvhr.org/images/shadowreport.pdf](http://www.wvhr.org/images/shadowreport.pdf).

<sup>301</sup> US State Dept Trafficking report 2006 <http://www.gvnet.com/humantrafficking/Turkey-2.htm> (extract, full report here: <http://www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/tiprpt/2006/>).

<sup>302</sup> Also the EU's approach: [http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/fiche\\_projet/document/TR%200304.02%20Fight%20against%20trafficking%20in%20human%20beings.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/fiche_projet/document/TR%200304.02%20Fight%20against%20trafficking%20in%20human%20beings.pdf).

<sup>303</sup> See, for example, the recent statement by the new head of UNDP in Turkey: <http://www.turkishdailynews.com.tr/article.php?enewsid=59898>.

<sup>304</sup> Global Alcohol Policy Alliance 2004.

<sup>305</sup> UNECE data on alcohol consumption over time: <http://www.unece.org/stats/trends/ch6/6.19.xls>.

Article 58 of the Turkish constitution reads that “*the state shall take necessary measures to protect the youth from addiction to alcohol, drug addiction, crime, gambling, and similar vices, and ignorance*”.

There are predictable concerns among some that the youth are becoming corrupted, and there are religious and nationalist sentiments tied up with the more radical statements concerned with young people’s moral depravity.<sup>306</sup> While the group in that case may not be representative of the mainstream, such a paternalistic-nationalistic attitude is common. As noted in the introduction above, there is a strong public feeling that children and young people, half the population, have more place being seen than heard.

In the 2002 amendments to the Civil Code, the legal minimum age for marriage was raised to 17 for women (up from fifteen, and equal with men).<sup>307</sup> According to Turkey’s 2005 MDG report, the average age of marriage has increased to 19.5 years for women and 23.6 years for men;<sup>308</sup> the 2004 Turkish government response on implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action stated that average age at first marriage for women aged 45-49 was 18.4, while for women aged 25-29 it was twenty.<sup>309</sup> However, child marriage is still practiced in some parts of the east and southeast. Divorce and extra-marital births are both rare, though increasing (particularly in urban areas).<sup>310</sup>

With the increase in compulsory schooling from five to eight years, and particularly if ongoing efforts to keep girls in school are successful, it is expected that the average age for marriage and first childbearing for girls will increase.<sup>311</sup> There is no data on women’s age at the birth of their first child, but the average is probably within two years of average age for marriage; although two thirds of currently married women report using contraception, only 40% use modern methods.<sup>312</sup>

The 2002 legal reforms also changed the legal status of spouses within a marriage, removing the notion of the head of household and equalising the male and female spouses with respect to children, property and individual freedom.<sup>313</sup>

### **Trust and Tolerance**

In a survey cited in a spring 2006 article in Turkish Policy Quarterly, Turkish youth display alarming levels of intolerance and mistrust.<sup>314</sup> Only 4.6% of young people in Turkey trust other people in general, which reflects the attitudes of the larger Turkish population (where less than 10% trust people in general). According to the European Values Survey, the EU average is 40 percent. This low level of trust may help explain the low levels of political and NGO participation in Turkey, as well as why the financial markets and banking sector cannot gain depth and why family businesses are preferred to larger partnerships.

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<sup>306</sup> Article in The New Anatolian, English-language Turkish newspaper, [www.thenewanatolian.com/tna-1113.html](http://www.thenewanatolian.com/tna-1113.html)

<sup>307</sup> Govt of Turkey 2004 response on Beijing, p. 6.

<sup>308</sup> MDG Report 2005, p. 27

<sup>309</sup> Government of Turkey 2004 response on Beijing, p. 8.

<sup>310</sup> Government of Turkey report to UNECE, 1998, p. 2

<sup>311</sup> For efforts to increase girls’ enrolment and keep girls in school, see for example the UNICEF-Ministry of Education programme *Girls, Let’s go to School!* (<http://www.unicef.org/turkey/pr/ge6.html>).

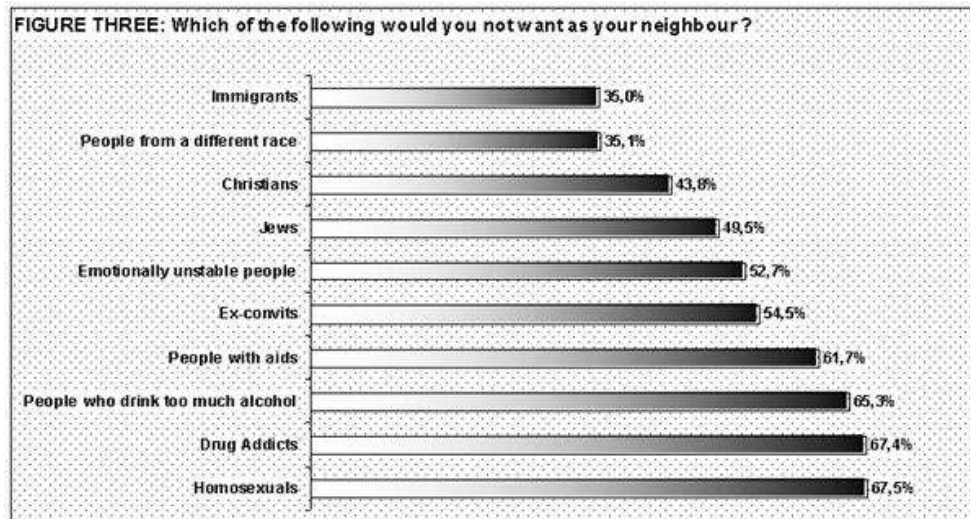
<sup>312</sup> Westoff 2005, p. 4.

<sup>313</sup> Govt of Turkey 2004 response on Beijing, p. 6.

<sup>314</sup> Ünlühisarcıklı 2006



A problem across Europe, intolerance is also very present among Turkish youth, indicating that despite being in some ways very critical of their parents' generation, there are still shared attitudes:<sup>315</sup>



The author, Özgür Ünlühisarcıklı, head of the Turkish social movement ARI, states that acquired differences (such as race, or, presumably, religion) are tolerated more than chosen differences (such as alcohol or drug habits, or, presumably, homosexuality). Ünlühisarcıklı also states that association with the EU and European youth organisations has positive effects for youth in Turkey, presenting opportunities for successful cooperation and participation which will hopefully lead to some increase in trust and tolerance among the population, at both national and European levels.

### Youth Sexual and Reproductive Health

According to what figures are available, Turkey has a low incidence of STDs including HIV/AIDS. However, data is utterly inadequate, and there are no measures of the level of knowledge of sexual health matters among the youth population (or wider population). Nor is there sufficient monitoring of STD incidence among high-risk groups such and sex workers.<sup>316</sup> As is common elsewhere, the youth population is generally at highest risk of contracting STDs, due to high mobility and more liberal lifestyles, including unsafe sexual practices.

Ignorance, encouraged by stigma and historically low levels of government interest in sexual health, increases the risk of the spread of HIV in both the high-risk and general populations. Turkey is a popular tourist destination, with 14 million visitors every year. Several million come from nearby CEE and CIS countries, some of which have high incidences of STDs and HIV/AIDS. An approach to STDs and HIV/AIDS, which treat these as public health problems and integrates education around STDs into school curricula are vital, and such have begun to happen in recent years.<sup>317</sup>

<sup>315</sup> Ibid.

<sup>316</sup> MDG Report on Turkey, p.49-50

<sup>317</sup> Ibid.

Despite the efforts of youth peer educators and certain NGOs, the 2005 MDG progress report still expresses concern at the low numbers of youth-friendly sexual health services. State family planning clinics have spread a great deal since the 1980s, and theoretically provide access to modern contraceptives to the whole population (although at the municipal level, there have been known to be problems with distribution). These clinics also collect data around uptake of contraceptives, but this is far from adequate: data on youth sexuality are very limited – neither UNFPA nor UNAIDS has any data on youth sexual behaviour, knowledge of STDs or HIV/AIDS or contraceptive use.

Due to social stigmatisation of sex outside marriage and concerns about confidentiality, unmarried (predominantly young) people tend to go to private clinics for their contraceptives, and while these institutions are legally obliged to provide data to the national statistical institute, this does not happen reliably (partly because under-reporting is beneficial from a tax perspective). Resort to private clinics also increases the cost of contraception, with the associated disincentive to contraceptive use.

Following the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development, and the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women, a comprehensive approach to reproductive health, with particular regard to women's health, has replaced traditional mother-and-child health provision. The new approach takes particular notice of adolescent sexual and reproductive health.<sup>318</sup>

As noted, the birth rate has decreased steadily and significantly in recent decades. Abortion was made widely available following a 1983 law, though Turkey has one of the lowest rates of abortion in the Eastern Europe/Central Asia region (0.7 per woman). There is significant unmet need for family planning, which is correlated with educational level – women with secondary education are more than five times as likely to have used a modern method of contraception than those who didn't complete primary school.<sup>319</sup> This in turn largely reflects regional divergence, as most of the latter group lives in the southeast and east.

Recent years have seen several programmes and measures, some with UNFPA, to improve childcare and reproductive health, particularly in the less developed regions and poorer segments of the society. It can be said that there is government commitment in terms of funds and attention paid to the matter of reproductive health, as opposed to sexual health – for example, after USAID wound up its programme of contraceptive provision, the government took over funding and facilitating distribution of contraceptives across the country. Serious gaps remain though, particularly and unsurprisingly with respect to provision in rural areas, where services are coming up from a very low level. There are also concerns about the level of male involvement in reproductive health programmes.<sup>320</sup>

## **Youth Policy and Youth Participation**

Efforts to create an integrated national youth policy and national youth council are ongoing. For several years, various organisations have run conferences and held other events across the country aimed at formulating the aims of a youth council and convincing key actors of the need to support their creation. The institutional arrangement of any national Council will probably be based on subsidiarity with the local youth platforms already set up in municipalities across the

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<sup>318</sup> GDSPW Report on Beijing, p.16

<sup>319</sup> DHS 2005, p. 42.

<sup>320</sup> GDSPW Report on Beijing, p.21

country. Under the Local Agenda 21 initiative, a National Youth Parliament was set up in 2004,<sup>321</sup> which is also playing a crucial role in advocating for a national youth council and youth law.

Youth participation in political or social organisations is 4% for women and 6% for men, and under 5% (both sexes) for participation in youth organisations; however, this is around the EU average, and no country has more than 10% participation.<sup>322</sup> Social-political participation generally rises with educational level.

The European context is an important one – quite apart from the positive reforms related to EU candidature, Turkish youth organisations have benefited greatly from association with their counterparts in the EU (such as the European Youth Forum) and the Council of Europe. There has been EU funding given to support networking among youth organisations.

The General Directorate for Youth and Sport runs a range of extra-curricular activities for young people, including camps and sports events; it also oversees the registration of youth organisations and represents the government in national and international youth policy related activities. The agency responsible for youth within the State Planning Organisation aims to ensure cooperation between all actors involved in the formulation of the youth policy and preparations for the youth council.<sup>324</sup> Other state bodies involved in youth work include the Ministry of Education and the GD for Social Services and Child Protection. As well as leisure activities and encouraging participation, state bodies are also concerned with vulnerable groups and encouraging youth employment.<sup>325</sup>

Youth activities are especially important for creating routes for young women into positions of social and political decision-making. For lack of economic power and public social acceptance, and in the face of political life organised (as is so common) by men according

**Good practice:**<sup>323</sup>

Gençnet is the biggest youth platform in Turkey. For six years it has aimed to change Turkish social and political life by fostering the fundamentals of participatory democracy in the lives of Turkish citizens and policymakers. Targeting young people in Turkey aged 18 to 25, its mission is to create a new youth-based understanding of public service and volunteerism, and to promote the growth and leadership of a strong civil society. Gençnet's activities serve as a forum for Turkish youth to increase their civil participation. At annual workshops held in cities all over Turkey, the Gençnet practitioners meet with university students, local NGO members and youth leaders to design solutions to problems identified in the local community. This hands-on and practical approach is designed to allow young people to develop their problem-solving skills; a number of local projects have materialised out of the workshops. The project MUMKUN (Possible) aimed at strengthening ties between the population of Muğla and the local university students. Consisting of many civic activities and initiatives, the project is an excellent example of how young people can make a difference in the local community.

<sup>321</sup> Mehmet Atalay, p. 75.

<sup>322</sup> Survey on The Perceptions of the Turkish Society About European Values, ARI Movement, 2006, p.17

<sup>323</sup> Yılmaz 2006

<sup>324</sup> Atalay, p. 75; also Youth for Habitat (Local Agenda 21) [www.youthforhab.org.tr/eng/ugp/izmir/izmir.htm](http://www.youthforhab.org.tr/eng/ugp/izmir/izmir.htm). The National Youth Agency website is [www.yib.gen.tr](http://www.yib.gen.tr) (in Turkish).

<sup>325</sup> Government of Turkey 2006 assessment of compliance with EU membership criteria, Chapter 26, p.9 [www.abgs.gov.tr/tarama/tarama\\_files/26/SC26DET\\_Youth.pdf](http://www.abgs.gov.tr/tarama/tarama_files/26/SC26DET_Youth.pdf).

to their behaviour patterns, women have historically played little role in public life in Turkey. Through civic education around their rights and potential for participation in decision-making, provided in youth organisations and to the wider population via the education programmes of the gender research centres in fifteen universities across the country, women are able both to change their own minds about what role they can play, and change the perceptions of people in a society where gendered behaviour patterns are very strong.<sup>326</sup>

The European Youth Forum study visit to Turkey in 2004 found that the youth movement there has a strong grass-roots nature and is generally very democratic. Moreover, and encouraging given the issues of trust noted above, the EYF found “a real process of cooperation and horizontal integration.” There are also good communication channels open with political parties and with student councils in universities.<sup>327</sup> The EYF encourages its member organisations and other civil society actors in Europe to develop long-term cooperation with Turkish youth organisations. Exchange on youth policy development and involvement of YNGOs in the implementation of such policies at the national and local level will strengthen the role of YNGOs in Turkey; YNGOs outside Turkey can also learn valuable lessons from the youth NGO experience within that country.<sup>328</sup>

## **Conclusion**

In many ways, the situation of youth in Turkey reflects that in many other parts of Europe and certainly the countries in this study – generally low levels of participation, a society and establishment cautious toward young people, need for improvement in education and labour market access to address high levels of youth unemployment and desire to leave; and increasing attention paid in political circles to a range of youth issues, confidence among young activists and patterns of solidarity and networking with youth organisations on a regional scale.

In the context of European integration, but also likely to continue given the attractiveness of Turkey as a meeting-point of civilisations, a range of small and large youth projects have been supported by international donors. This suggests a high level of trust and confidence toward youth NGOs’ work on the part of the international community.<sup>329</sup> The problems of Turkish youth are many, and it will take the committed efforts of youth activists, supported by the expertise of organisations such as UNFPA, both to create the political environment in which these problems can be solved and to maintain the momentum for youth involvement in the development of the country as a whole.

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<sup>326</sup> Govt of Turkey 2004 response to Beijing, p.22

<sup>327</sup> YFJ Study Visit in Turkey, p.15

<sup>328</sup> EYF Study Visit in Turkey, p.11

<sup>329</sup> European Youth Forum Study Visit to Turkey, pp. 10-11.

## *Ukraine*

### **Youth Demography**

With a land surface of 603,700 km<sup>2</sup> Ukraine, is one of the largest countries in Europe. The recent Orange Revolution brought new hope to the country, which until 2004 remained one of the few authoritarian and non-democratic regimes in Europe. Post-revolutionary state and society face new challenges of democratic governance and of deteriorating socio-economic conditions. The socio-economic gap between the industrialised East and the largely agricultural West of the country is huge. Dependency on Russia for gas and, therefore, the its expectation that Ukraine will support Russia's current government, are in contradiction to the Ukrainian aspirations to join NATO and the European Union.<sup>330</sup>

The Ukrainian population was 47.1 million in mid-2005. It is estimated that 60% of this population is under the age of 25 and the median population age is just 24. However, the trend of population growth is declining at about -0.7% annually and the population is predicted to decline to 41.65 million in 2025.<sup>331</sup> The youth population is also expected to decrease, from 11.1 million 10-24 year olds in 2000 to 7.2 million in 2025. The fertility rate is low, at 1.2 births per woman. Rural areas (where approximately 30% of the population lives) have witnessed slower falls in fertility rates. This indicates that the fertility rate in urban areas is very low indeed.

**Table 1: World Bank World Development Indicators 2004<sup>332</sup>**

<b>Total population (000)</b>	<b>46 989</b>
Annual population growth rate (%)*	-0.7
Population 0-14 years(%)	15
Rural population (%)*	32
Total fertility rate (births per woman) *	1.2
Infant mortality rate (0/00) *	15
Life expectancy at birth (years) *	68
HIV rate (%) in adults (15-49 years)*	1.4
Poverty (% of pop. on less than \$2 a day) *	31
GDP per capita (PPP) US\$ *	5 491
GDP growth rate (%)*	9.4
Total debt service as a % of GNI *	7.5
Children of primary school-age who are out-of-school (%)	16

The majority of the population reside in urban areas, which are the net beneficiaries of economic growth, while poverty in rural areas is increasing. The UNICEF school-leavers survey found a general openness toward travelling abroad for work.<sup>333</sup> Most rural dwellers would go only for

<sup>330</sup> [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/country\\_profiles/1102303.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/country_profiles/1102303.stm)

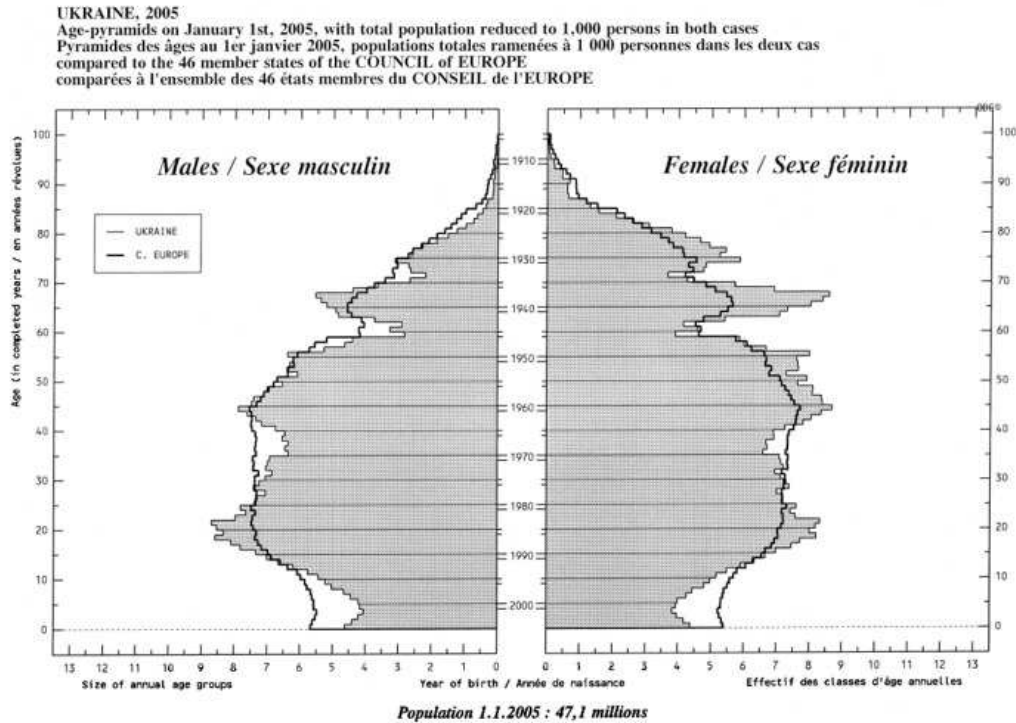
<sup>331</sup> Population Reference Bureau,  
[http://www.prb.org/TemplateTop.cfm?Section=PRB\\_Country\\_Profiles&template=/customsource/countryprofile/countryprofiledisplay.cfm&Country=471](http://www.prb.org/TemplateTop.cfm?Section=PRB_Country_Profiles&template=/customsource/countryprofile/countryprofiledisplay.cfm&Country=471).

<sup>332</sup> [http://www.uis.unesco.org/profiles/EN/EDU/countryProfile\\_en.aspx?code=8070](http://www.uis.unesco.org/profiles/EN/EDU/countryProfile_en.aspx?code=8070)

<sup>333</sup> UNICEF Education, "Early School Leavers – Ukraine", p. 9.

seasonal work and would return home quickly, while urban dwellers are more open to going abroad for longer and potentially to staying. (It should be noted that this study was among early school leavers, therefore not the most highly qualified section of the youth population, who might be more inclined to travel abroad.

In a country where the unemployment rate is 24% among young people aged 15-24, there is a growing instance of migration for seasonal or full time work. The official data indicate that the out-migration rate was around -0.5 per 1000. Unfortunately, no specific information on youth migration is available.



### Socio-Economic Conditions of Youth



Ukraine has embarked on the liberalisation process of its economy by taking on a number of measures with the clear objective of accession to various international organisations, such as the WTO and to move Ukraine towards a higher level of economic development. According to the World Bank Poverty report<sup>334</sup>, over the past years (1998 - 2003) the absolute poverty rates have been declining fast in comparison with other neighbouring countries to about 19% in 2003.

<sup>334</sup> World Bank, Poverty Report on Ukraine, 2003, Summary, p.1.

However, these developments were accompanied with growing inequality between the urban and rural areas and Ukraine has witnessed an increase in the poverty gap between the poor agricultural areas in reconstruction and rapidly growing big city economies. Inequalities in regional development are also demonstrated in the differences between the less poor, more urban and industrial Eastern region and the poorer rural and agricultural West of the country. According to its findings the World Bank, even with economic growth, overall unemployment has been rather stagnant. Underemployment, however, especially in the agricultural sector and the precarious labour markets of small towns, has been increasing<sup>335</sup>. Household surveys indicate that about 20% of the population lives in large households, with four or more members, however, these represent about 40% of the poor.

This has specific implications for children and young people 0-24, who represent 42% of the poor aged, compared to the remaining 30% of the overall population.<sup>336</sup> With the current “youth bulge” in Ukraine and the tendency towards an ageing population, in particular in rural areas and small towns, poverty among large young families in rural areas is increasing, which has an impact on the ever-decreasing fertility.

Although literacy among young people is almost universal (99.8%), one can note a tendency towards decreasing enrolment in primary (83%) and secondary education (82%) among both girls and boys.<sup>337</sup> In particular, the poorer young people living in rural areas and small towns are more likely to drop out of school than those living in large cities.<sup>338</sup> According to the UNICEF Report on Early School leavers,<sup>339</sup> stability in young people’s lives represents the main factor remaining in school. Furthermore, it was found that belief in young peoples’ abilities, as well as efforts to improve their self-esteem, would contribute to improving their condition and their chances for staying in school.

One problem lies in the lack of motivation among poor and poorly educated families to send their children to school because of to generate extra income for the family: each young person represents a certain potential as an earner. In such cases, investments in social benefits and social security policy are crucial in order to prevent young people from becoming engaged in risky activities when entering the informal and black economies. Although specific data on youth involvement in the grey economy is not available, it can be only assumed that for the young drop outs, there are only two ways of surviving: migration for seasonal or temporary work and work in the grey economy at home.

The main concerns of young people in Ukraine today, as identified through a research conducted by a Ukrainian NGO, are:<sup>340</sup>

- Lack of information about legislation on entrepreneurship;
- Lack of information and absence of start-up resource for young people who would like to start a business;
- Growth of unemployment among young people in the regions;
- Inefficient management into youth business-associations and their weak structure.

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<sup>335</sup> Ibid.

<sup>336</sup> World Bank, Poverty Report on Ukraine, 2003, Summary, *op cit*, p.3.

<sup>337</sup> [http://www.uis.unesco.org/profiles/EN/EDU/countryProfile\\_en.aspx?code=8070](http://www.uis.unesco.org/profiles/EN/EDU/countryProfile_en.aspx?code=8070)

<sup>338</sup> World Bank, Poverty Report on Ukraine, 2003, Summary, *op cit*, p.1.

<sup>339</sup> UNICEF Education, “Early School Leavers – Ukraine”, p.9.

<sup>340</sup> All-Ukrainian Youth Organization, Democratic Transformation of Ukraine, Thesis for YES, by Oleksandr Hontaruk.

In the absence of a coherent youth policy, the Ministry of Education and Science, together with the UNDP, in light of ongoing processes for the approximation of European standards in Ukraine, developed a youth oriented strategy with the focus on the reform of higher education, innovation and science. The strategy, entitled 'Education Modernisation in Ukraine', addresses among others the following issues:

- Broader involvement of professional teaching circles as well as the public (parents, private sector, trade unions, children's and youth organisations) in solving urgent issues related to education, and in searching for solutions;
- Equal access to education that would stipulate the creation of a favourable educational environment for all students with components of health care, developing a creative potential, and professional orientation;
- Adaptation of the educational content to the needs of society in forming a personality that is competent and mobile on the modern labour market, has a civil position and does efficient work, facilitates one's own development and is able to learn for the rest of one's life;
- Need to optimise the implementation of special state programs aimed towards using information technologies, computerisation and updating the technological basis of schools, as well as providing all with compulsory Internet access;
- Need to aim the state educational policy towards developing an arsenal of innovative forms of preparation and advanced qualification training for teachers as well as creating an equal access to them in all regions of Ukraine and endowing them with a permanent nature;
- Need to strengthen the community involvement in planning school work, the attestation of the head, its deputies and teachers. In order to manage innovative activities, the modern head of a comprehensive educational institution must be familiar with innovative pedagogy and educational management as well as be motivated to do managerial work;
- Need to improve the quality of education in Ukraine by participating in international comparative studies in order to be able to assess of the productivity and efficiency of Ukrainian education, and the implementation of a national system of monitoring the educational quality, which stipulates putting all major parameters of measuring quality in compliance with international standards;
- Need to develop a comprehensive national program to consolidate the efforts of ministries and governmental agencies dealing with youth policies, education, the media, private, industrial and the entrepreneurial sectors, which would cover the complex measures for children and youth to form a sound personality with an active civil position.
- Need to create relevant resource centres at the local level in the regions that would facilitate the dissemination of updated information among teachers, students and parents in the regions, and expand their multiple possibilities.<sup>341</sup>

This impressive study, containing many up-to-date recommendations, needs to be considered in light of the current economic context, in which there is a marked insufficiency of financial means for the education sector, in particular for innovation and research. Ukraine has a conservative educational community, with aging professors and teachers, who will not make the transformation of the education system easier. However, the priority of the government, in line

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<sup>341</sup> Ministry of Education and Science in Ukraine with UNDP support, "Education Modernisation in Ukraine – Analytical Overview", 2004, pp.31-32.



with the Bologna process, is to *“to satisfy citizens’ right to receive concrete educational and qualifying skills, according to their abilities and to ensure their mobility in the labour market”*.<sup>342</sup>

Although tertiary education does not respond to the requirements of the labour market, focusing largely on the awarding of the degrees,<sup>343</sup> there seems to be a clear governmental commitment to work towards much needed adjustments and reforms. Overall, the education strategy should be harmonised with the, yet to be developed, youth employment strategy and programming for professional and vocational training, as well as completed with the recognition of the emergent non-formal educational sector.

## Unemployment

According to a 2001 ILO/UNDP survey, 46.8% of the Ukrainian population identified themselves as “poor”, with a further 36.9% feeling they were “not well off”.<sup>344</sup> Some of the findings contained in the World Bank’s 2005 poverty assessment of Ukraine are striking: 42% of those in poverty are children and young people (from 0 to 24), compared to 30% in the population as a whole.<sup>345</sup> It is also noted that, starting from similar levels in 1999, “poverty incidence in rural areas in 2003 is more than twice that of large cities”.<sup>346</sup>

Although the official unemployment rate in Ukraine is estimated at 11,1% (2001), according to the ILO, the average youth unemployment rate (15-24 years) was about 25,2% for 2001<sup>347</sup> with a slight decrease in 2002 to 20%.<sup>348</sup> Taking into consideration the fact that young people are often involved in educational activities, it is estimated that in fact youth unemployment rates are at least twice as high as for the adult population. This demonstrates a clear lack of capacity to facilitate the entry of young people into the labour market. It is noteworthy, that 49% of the overall workforce is made up of However, female youth employment is estimated at only 13% among the 15-19 age group and at 60% among the 20-24 age group, in comparison to 14% and 72% for young men respectively.<sup>349</sup>

Although their overall rate of unemployment is fairly similar to that of young men, young women in Ukraine face notable difficulty in escaping poverty and achieving economic independence through discriminatory hiring practices. There exist very strong conventions concerning which jobs are appropriate for young women, and these are overwhelmingly low-paid, low-status jobs, which moreover, reinforces stereotypes about women in society, particularly regarding their physical appearance.<sup>350</sup> Opportunities for young women to find employment in “male” sectors are almost non-existent. Another difficulty is that recruitment

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<sup>342</sup> Olena Shestavina, “Interaction of Ukrainian Educational Policy and the EU Neighbourhood Policy in the context of the Bologna Process”, Donetsk National University, Ukraine.

<sup>343</sup> The Education Sector in Ukraine:

<http://ec.europa.eu/education/programmes/tempus/countries/higher/ukraine.pdf>.

<sup>344</sup> [http://www.ilo.org/public/english/protection/trav/aids/publ/country\\_profile\\_1\\_ukraine.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/public/english/protection/trav/aids/publ/country_profile_1_ukraine.pdf)

<sup>345</sup> World Bank,

[http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTUKRAINE/Resources/328335-1138375819937/Executive\\_Summary.pdf](http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTUKRAINE/Resources/328335-1138375819937/Executive_Summary.pdf) p. 3 of 13

<sup>346</sup> Ibid, p. 2.

<sup>347</sup> [http://www.euro.who.int/eprise/main/who/progs/chhukr/demographic/20050131\\_1](http://www.euro.who.int/eprise/main/who/progs/chhukr/demographic/20050131_1).

<sup>348</sup> UNECE Employment Trends

<sup>349</sup> UNECE Employment Trends

<sup>350</sup> Human Rights Watch report, Discrimination against Women in the Ukrainian Labor Force (2003): <http://www.hrw.org/reports/2003/ukraine0803/>. See e.g. pp. 20, 25, 28 for the restricted employment opportunities available to young women (pdf).

practices favour married young women and young mothers staying at home. Although the discrimination is often hidden in the procedure, compliance with Ukrainian law provides employers with the excuse to exclude young women, who often end up not being offered a job because of being too young, on the one hand, or because of already having children, on the other.<sup>351</sup> In the labour market overall, a further and pressing problem is the pay gap between women and men: though women earned 86% of men's wages in 1996 (up from 65% in 1992), this had fallen back to 69% in 2002.<sup>352</sup>

As is common, reforms of the education system are recommended. The UNDP 2004 overview on education modernisation recommends, among other measures, the broader involvement of non-traditional partners (including youth organisations) in solving educational problems.<sup>353</sup> But, the necessary addition to the received wisdom of the necessity to align education to labour market needs is the existence of jobs in those labour markets. It is noteworthy that despite being the cohort with the lowest labour market participation rates (largely due to educational participation), young people have twice the unemployment rate of adults, showing the inability of the market to absorb their labour. The highest youth unemployment rates are among those, particularly women, who graduate from the vocational training system.<sup>354</sup>

However, specific youth employment strategies at the national and local levels do not seem to exist. Although some entrepreneurship programmes are emerging, the majority of the young Ukrainians do not have access to them. A clear indictment on the youth information system, there is evidence that counselling and career guidance are not available. One can only assume these are yet to be developed, as indicated in the Education Modernisation Strategy. It is highly recommended to conduct more research on the specificities of youth under- and unemployment and accordingly design strategies and specific programmes that would address the issue of the employability of young people in Ukraine, and in particular, of young women in professions of their own choice.

### **Youth Lifestyles, Sexuality, Union Formation**

The growing attention given to the problem of domestic violence by legislators and governments in recent years highlights the seriousness of the problem. A law for the prevention of violence in the family and a cabinet decree on domestic violence both came into force in 2002, and the issue was also given prominence during the 2004 parliamentary hearings on the status of women. Despite this attention, however, violence in the family shows signs of increasing, and young women are particularly vulnerable because of their age and gender.<sup>355</sup>

Although age at first marriage has risen slightly in recent years, this remains just 25.2 for men and 22.4 for women. As noted, fertility in Ukraine is very low. The country is exceptional, however, in that it has seen only a negligible increase in the age of first childbearing by women,

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<sup>351</sup> Human Rights Watch report, *Discrimination against Women in the Ukrainian Labor Force* (2003): <http://www.hrw.org/reports/2003/ukraine0803/>, p.28.

<sup>352</sup> UNFPA, *Reproductive and Sexual Health of Adolescents in Ukraine* (situation analysis 2004), [http://www.unfpa.org.ua/unfpa/downloads/publications/ASRH\\_SitRep.pdf](http://www.unfpa.org.ua/unfpa/downloads/publications/ASRH_SitRep.pdf)

<sup>353</sup> UNDP Education Modernisation analytical overview 2004, p.31-32

<sup>354</sup> World Bank 2005

[http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTUKRAINE/Resources/328335-1138375819937/Executive\\_Summary.pdf](http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTUKRAINE/Resources/328335-1138375819937/Executive_Summary.pdf) p. 6 of 13.

<sup>355</sup> Stop VAW 2005 newsletter, regarding Ukraine on domestic violence (pp. 6/17) and gender discrimination (pp. 6/14)

and almost all women still have at least one child. Studies suggest that this is due to a combination of traditional attitudes toward family and gender roles, the persistence of early marriage and concerns about the health implications of postponing childbearing.<sup>356</sup>

The major increase in contraceptive use seen since 1990 goes some way toward addressing the serious sexual and reproductive health consequences of the practice of using abortion as an alternative to contraception. This increase is identified as primarily for the prevention of pregnancy, and therefore, sexually transmitted diseases among young people remain a problem. Since 1995, there have been huge increases in STDs among 15-17 year old girls.<sup>357</sup> This increase notwithstanding, it is estimated that only 65% of young people use condoms regularly and this, despite Ukraine's current position as the European country with the most serious HIV epidemic. Knowledge of HIV/AIDS is not widespread, and the seriousness of infection not well understood. It is estimated that around 25% of 12-14 year olds have no knowledge of HIV/AIDS at all.

Two thirds of new HIV infections are among young people, and sexual transmission, primarily heterosexual, is the mode of transmission increasing fastest. HIV incidence is highest among the 20-24 year old cohort.<sup>358</sup> The outbreak of the epidemic occurred among injecting drug users, among whom rates of infection have grown enormously since Ukraine became independent, but the virus is no longer concentrated in this group. Increasing numbers of women are being infected.<sup>359</sup> Although much emphasis has been put on training young peer educators and reproductive health specialists,<sup>360</sup> a nationwide campaign on issues of sexual and reproductive health is necessary in order to raise the awareness and knowledge of the STDs, as well as to change the attitudes of young people towards HIV/AIDS.

Ukraine follows the trend seen elsewhere of some degree of change in traditional family arrangements, which in part prompted the President to create the Ministry for Family, Children and Youth. Among the purposes of this ministry are to ensure fulfilment of state responsibilities on family, childhood, maternity and paternity protection and to guarantee social formation and development of young people following Article 106 (Item 15) of the Constitution.<sup>361</sup> Ukraine witnesses the tendency towards the lowest-low fertility; defined as total fertility below 1.3, with total its fertility -1.1 in 2000. Contrarily to Europe, where this trend is attributed to the postponement of the initiation of childbearing, Ukraine has maintained a young age at first birth and nearly universal childbearing. According to the Ukrainian Reproductive Health Survey, reasons for this include the validity of the traditional norms for childbearing and the roles of men and women, as well as concerns about medical complications and infertility at a later age, and the link between early fertility and early marriage<sup>362</sup>.

Youth alienation from traditional social and familial institutions is not equal across the country. There is a strong regional dimension, in that even economically unsuccessful young people in rural (Western) areas can become socially integrated through religion and local life. In these

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<sup>356</sup>[http://taylorandfrancis.metapress.com/\(dkzj303300ozhb55kvh3yc2v\)/app/home/contribution.asp?referrer=parent&backto=issue,5,10;journal,6,67;linkingpublicationresults,1:300383,1](http://taylorandfrancis.metapress.com/(dkzj303300ozhb55kvh3yc2v)/app/home/contribution.asp?referrer=parent&backto=issue,5,10;journal,6,67;linkingpublicationresults,1:300383,1)

<sup>357</sup> UNFPA, Reproductive and sexual health of adolescents in Ukraine (situation analysis 2004).

<sup>358</sup> World Bank, Socio-Economic Impact of HIV/AIDS in Ukraine:

<sup>359</sup> UNAIDS 2006 report [http://data.unaids.org/pub/GlobalReport/2006/2006\\_GR\\_CH02\\_en.pdf](http://data.unaids.org/pub/GlobalReport/2006/2006_GR_CH02_en.pdf)

<sup>360</sup> About UNFPA in Ukraine:

<sup>361</sup> [http://www.kmu.gov.ua/control/en/publish/article?art\\_id=10267130&cat\\_id=73007](http://www.kmu.gov.ua/control/en/publish/article?art_id=10267130&cat_id=73007).

<sup>362</sup>[http://taylorandfrancis.metapress.com/\(dkzj303300ozhb55kvh3yc2v\)/app/home/contribution.asp?referrer=parent&backto=issue,5,10;journal,6,67;linkingpublicationresults,1:300383,1](http://taylorandfrancis.metapress.com/(dkzj303300ozhb55kvh3yc2v)/app/home/contribution.asp?referrer=parent&backto=issue,5,10;journal,6,67;linkingpublicationresults,1:300383,1)

areas, there is also a tendency towards active participation in the nationalist politics dominant in the region.<sup>363</sup> Those in the West also generally have a more positive outlook toward the direction of politics in the country, and are more likely to be involved in social and community-based NGOs, than their Eastern counterparts (who are in turn more inclined towards membership in trade unions and political parties).

## Youth Participation

The dynamics of the Orange Revolution certainly activated new hope for young people, as articulated by the PORA student/youth movement that was instrumental in efforts to stop government corruption and promote active participation of young people in society and electoral politics.<sup>364</sup> However, the transition of PORA and other youth civic movements that were involved in the Orange revolution into the further deepening and development of the post-Orange revolution democracy has not been as straightforward as one might assume.

Participation of young people in demonstrations prior to and during the revolution brought a positive momentum in society, through which many negative attitudes towards young people were overturned and reconciled. However, assuming a direct link between the involvement in the revolution and the later participation of young people in organised civil society or in public life would be misleading. It is not possible to assess the extent to which recent positive developments in the youth field are causally linked to the reform process kicked off by the Orange Revolution. At the governmental level the situation remains unclear, in terms of responsibilities for policy making and implementation, and capacity remains weak. The youth activists that were so instrumental in creating the change have not necessarily been integrated into the post revolutionary reform process and many have become disillusioned.

According to the 2003 European Youth Forum Study Visit Report, out of the approximately 11 million young people living in Ukrainian, only about 7% are active in a youth organisation. It is quite unlikely that this number has increased as a result of the revolution. However, youth organisations in Ukraine are numerous, with up to 4,500 local and regional organisations, including approximately, 100 all-Ukrainian public organisations for youth and 9 for children being officially registered <sup>365</sup>. Since the realisation of this survey, it is possible that the number of the registered organisations has further increased, given the improved political climate for associations.

Ukraine has a vivid youth organisational history and has witnessed various national youth organisational platforms being created. These have commonly competed for the recognition and trust implicit in being given the function of the legitimate National Youth Council. Current information indicates that a united National Youth Council was finally established in late 2006, after pressure from the European Youth Forum, and the government's intention to cooperate on the European integration agenda, and in particular with the Council of Europe, in preparation of the 2008 Youth Ministers' Conference. The newly established National Youth Council or '*Narodna Rada*' has currently about 80 members organisations.

However, the participation of young people in youth organisations is often determined by their involvement in education, as students seem to be the driving force of the Ukrainian youth NGO

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<sup>363</sup> Irina Predborska, Katya Ivaschenko, Ken Roberts, "Youth Transitions in East and West Ukraine".

<sup>364</sup> <http://www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2005/06/97b3e0ec-2814-44ec-a021-1183c7144672.html>

<sup>365</sup> European Youth Forum, Study Visit Report, 2003.

scene, although reportedly the average age of youth leaders varies between 25 and 40. At the local level, some of the youth organisations gained status over recent years and participate in local and regional life through consultations with the local governments.

However, the nature of activities and services provided by the youth organisations are not clear. The current focus on structures and formal functioning does not provide enough information on the different forms of youth participation in social or political life or about the services provided to young people by the youth civic sector. It is more than likely that the majority of activities are still predominantly focused at sports and leisure, which can be instrumental in preventing school-dropout and the engagement in risk behaviour, but which does not represent the full extent of the potential of non-formal education through youth organisations.<sup>366</sup>

According to the European Youth Forum report, most regional authorities (*oblast*) have a youth department and policies developed in close cooperation with youth NGOs.<sup>367</sup> The GURT Service Centre has particular status, providing information services with a specific focus on youth organisations, which represent 20-25% of its beneficiaries.

GURT's director has summed up the challenges of further developing the youth field in Ukraine as follows:

- the youth NGO sector does not yet offer a career perspective, and that is why young people leave the sector quickly;
- there is a very strong hierarchy in communication with donors, and NGOs do not manage to establish long-term relationships;
- donors refuse to provide administrative grants or to include salary and remuneration as eligible costs to be covered by grants. This makes the experience of many NGOs very negative and they become discouraged;
- there is limited European funding, often it comes from the embassies of other countries;
- of up to 50,000 registered NGOs (not only youth specific), only about 10% are actively functioning, and about 1,000 of them are using international funding.

Although youth organisations can benefit from the 2-5% direct business tax, they first need to be registered in order to do so. It seems that regional NGOs are more active, as they can access resources from local donors. Although some cooperation with local authorities and schools exists at the local level, regional exchange and cooperation remains very limited. Providing youth-friendly services, information and training seems to only be emerging in the Ukrainian context and a coherent cross-sectoral youth policy should certainly consider specific approaches that would contribute to the overall specialization, qualification and recognition of youth work and provide more opportunities for young people to participate in the development of their society.

Although reportedly co-management mechanisms exist, established with European standards in mind, issues of representation, cooperation between governmental and non-governmental actors and the amount of resources allocated to this field are not available and, therefore, no conclusion in this relation can be made.

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<sup>366</sup> UNICEF Education, "Early School Leavers – Ukraine", p.5.

<sup>367</sup> European Youth Forum study visit report, 2003.

## Youth Policies

Although a coherent cross-sectoral youth policy in Ukraine does not seem to exist, the Ukrainian Parliament adopted the National Programme for the Support of Youth for 2003-2005, which was apparently returned by the presidential veto for reconsideration to the parliament. The destiny of this programme is not clear, as up-to-date information seems only to be available in Ukrainian language.

Ukraine has, however, adopted various legal documents concerning young people, among them the 1993 law on assisting the social condition and development of youth.

Other youth related legal provisions include:

- The Declaration on the General Basis of State Youth Policy in Ukraine (1992);
- The Law of Ukraine on People's Associations (1992);
- The Law of Ukraine on the Promotion of Social Development of Youth in Ukraine (1993);
- The Law of Ukraine on Youth and Children's NGOs (1998);
- The Law of Ukraine on Social Work with Children and Youth (2001);
- Decision of Constitutional Court to Consider Non-Constitutional some Articles of Youth Movement by the Ukrainian National Committee of Youth Organisations (13.12.2001);
- Directions of the President of Ukraine concerning Regulation of Separate Questions in State Youth Policy;
- Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine about Order of Competitive Selection and State Financing of Programmes made by Youth and Children's NGOs;
- Direction of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine about main Measures of State Youth Policy Realisation in 2003.

In spite of the existence of various provisions, there seem to be serious gaps in coordination, programming and delivery of youth policy in Ukraine, in spite of the existence of various state institutions that claim to be responsible for youth policy, including the Ministry for Family, Youth and Sports, the State Committee for Family and Youth Affairs, the Regional Administration Departments for Family and Youth Affairs and the Parliamentary Committee for Youth Policy, Sports and Tourism. The legislative framework is clearly crucial for any programmatic planning but at times the focus on law-making is counter-productive. Although the Ukraine is proud of the horizontal aspects of youth policy being included in the law for the support of young families, a law for the support to young families wishing to buy/build a house which offers them long-term credits, softer measures that would include better information services, communication policy and so on seem to be absent and would be needed for young people and families to take advantage of the legal mechanisms put at their disposal. Of course, the work of the State Committees responsible for the development of the different laws, such as the draft law on youth employment, the draft law on housing for young people and the National long-term programme for the support of young people, is unimportant. But, it must be reiterated that the development of mechanisms of youth policy delivery, their adequate financing and accountability are equally important.

However, some mechanisms of delivery are already emerging. In 2003, for the first time, youth organisations could participate in an open tender for support to projects involving young people in addressing social problems such as alcohol and drug abuse, HIV/AIDS and others. However, it is not clear whether the existing delivery mechanisms were developed and implemented in consultation with young people through some kind of youth representative body, such as the recently established National Youth Council. It seems however that the Committee on Youth

organises parliamentary hearings on the situation of young people in the Ukraine on different themes on a yearly basis. As a result, it was reported members of parliament are currently working on four major issues including support of student self-government, new types of work, such as youth parliaments, lobby and representation, follow-up of the state's work in the field of youth, settling some contentious issues among different youth platforms; and ensuring transparent and accessible state funding for youth projects. Again a specific youth friendly information policy is absent, moreover it seems that the information are being kept in certain circles and not shared widely.

Among other initiatives, some work seems have been done in relation to the “National Doctrine on Youth Policy” and the Revised European Charter on Youth Participation in Regional and Local Life, and how to achieve the UN Millennium Development Goals. During the recent All-Ukrainian United Nations Youth Summit, young people had an opportunity to draw up recommendations on different items of youth policy. The “National Doctrine on Youth Policy of Ukraine” should promote youth participation in decision making at all levels and ensure youth involvement in the development, implementation and monitoring of youth policy in Ukraine.<sup>368</sup>

These positive initiatives should be further strengthened by research into the socio-economic conditions of young people taking into account the diversity of their values, lifestyles and aspirations for a better future. Further co-operation should be developed with the Council of Europe in light of the forthcoming Council of Europe Youth Ministers' conference, which is being planned in 2008 in Kiev<sup>369</sup>. This cooperation could result in a Council of Europe International Youth Policy Peer Review process that would contribute to the strengthening of the youth policy in Ukraine.

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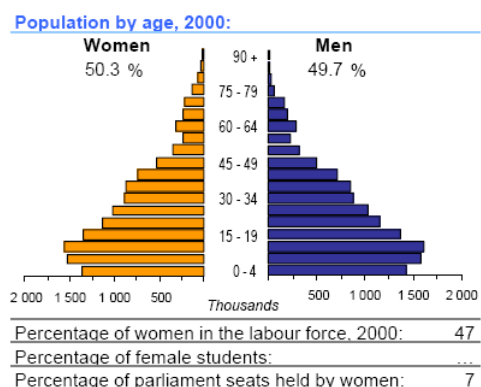
<sup>368</sup> <http://www.un.kiev.ua/en/pressroom/news/579/>.

<sup>369</sup> The Partnership of the Council of Europe and the European Commission in the Area of Youth, overview of the planned activities in Ukraine, p. 6.

## Uzbekistan

### Youth Demography

Uzbekistan, a landlocked country of 447,400 km<sup>2</sup>, positioned on the Great Silk Road between Europe and Asia, is the most populous country in Central Asia and also has the largest army. It has 26 million inhabitants with, 36% living in urban areas and 64% in rural areas<sup>370</sup>, out of which around 27.5% are classified as poor. Unemployment is high and increasing. Young people under the age of 25 represent 60% of the country's population, and 36% are under the age of 15<sup>371</sup>. The table on the left illustrates the size of the current youth generation<sup>372</sup>.



While in economic transition to the liberal market, Uzbekistan remains one of the world's biggest producers of cotton and benefits from natural resources that include oil, gas and gold. The country's wealth, however, is very unevenly distributed.

Politically, and in formal terms, Uzbekistan is a "procedural democracy". But, several democracy watchdogs classify it as having an authoritarian regime, in which information circulates among a very small and protected political and social elite that also holds a large part of the country's wealth. This year, certain UN agencies were asked to discontinue their activity in Uzbekistan, including UNHCR.<sup>373</sup> Young people have, therefore, limited space for action and limited autonomy.

In a short research paper on the opportunities for young people's development in Central Asia, however, one author gives three arguments for optimism in relation to the situation of young people Uzbekistan:

- the country managed to avoid serious civil disturbances or social, ethnic or military conflicts.
- it preserved the growth potential of its agricultural sector—the important sector for employment and income generation.
- it managed to achieve macroeconomic balance in a relatively short time through appropriate fiscal and monetary policies<sup>374</sup>.

However, whether these developments can lead to an improvement of living conditions, social cohesion and the protection of the vulnerable is highly questionable. Although the UNFPA in Uzbekistan believes that the "*Uzbek Government makes sure that young people receive enough attention and*

<sup>370</sup> [http://www.yesweb.org/2006/Publications\\_Papers%20august%203\\_2006/Agenda%20Links/Second%20Session/rising%20employment%20opportunities%20for%20youth%20in%20uzbekistan.pdf](http://www.yesweb.org/2006/Publications_Papers%20august%203_2006/Agenda%20Links/Second%20Session/rising%20employment%20opportunities%20for%20youth%20in%20uzbekistan.pdf), p. 3

<sup>371</sup> <http://www.unfpa.uz/ca010101.html>

<sup>372</sup> <http://www.unecce.org/stats/trends2005/profiles/Uzbekistan.pdf>

<sup>373</sup> Uzbekistan is the only Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) country that is not a party to either the 1951 Refugee Convention or its 1967 Protocol <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/news/opendoc.htm?tbl=NEWS&id=4444cb6516>

<sup>374</sup> Rising employment opportunities for the youth in Central Asian countries through skills development and promotion of interaction of education system and labour market [http://www.yesweb.org/2006/Publications\\_Papers%20august%203\\_2006/Agenda%20Links/Second%20Session/rising%20employment%20opportunities%20for%20youth%20in%20uzbekistan.pdf](http://www.yesweb.org/2006/Publications_Papers%20august%203_2006/Agenda%20Links/Second%20Session/rising%20employment%20opportunities%20for%20youth%20in%20uzbekistan.pdf), p. 3



*their issues are solved, especially in the areas of education, reproductive health services, HIV/AIDS and drug use prevention, and promotion of healthy lifestyle*<sup>375</sup>, the absence of a coherent youth policy, developed and implemented in consultation with young people demonstrates simply that the government may not be doing enough.

Although the youth literacy rate remains relatively high, 99.7%<sup>376</sup>, the poor access to and quality of education services, health care, basic public utilities, such as clean water and adequate sanitation, contribute to very low living standards, which particularly severe for the vulnerable sections of the society, in particular young people. Poverty, vulnerability and lack of perspective among young people often leads to risk-behaviour that includes involvement in the illicit economy, drug abuse, and increases the likelihood of becoming victims or perpetrators of violence, which may result in political instability and conflict<sup>377</sup>. In order to reverse these trends, a different socio-political contract needs to be put in place.

However, according to research published on behalf of the President, *“there are laws ensuring reliable constitutional and legal human rights, thereby providing social guarantees and support for the people. They include laws on employment, on social protection of invalids and handicapped people, on state pension maintenance, on education, and on the basic principles of youth policy pursued by the government”*<sup>378</sup>.

According to official statistics, the 2000 net migration rate was -0.7 migrants per 1,000 persons, with approximately 1,4 millions of migrants living in Uzbekistan, which includes refugees mainly from Tajikistan and Afghanistan<sup>379</sup>. However the real migration flow are difficult to assess. It is more than likely that emigration has increased due to the socio-economic conditions and the political oppression. Youth migration makes young people particularly vulnerable to the influences of the criminal groups, militant ideology or religious fundamentalism present in the region<sup>380</sup>. On the other hand, migration gave birth to the Uzbek Diaspora, who according to research contributes with fuelling unbiased information into Uzbekistan<sup>381</sup>. With the mainstreaming of the ICT, in particular the Internet and the mobile communication, the isolated Uzbekistan started to breathe a little fresh air<sup>382</sup>. However, possibilities to travel for young Uzbeks are fairly low, which only increases their willingness to migrate.

## **Socio-Economic Conditions of Youth**

According to a presidential address, the structural transformation of the economy aims at macroeconomic balance and the stimulation of economic growth and takes into consideration the needs of women and youth in relation to employment and development.<sup>383</sup> It must be

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<sup>375</sup> <http://www.unfpa.uz/ca010101.html>

<sup>376</sup> <http://globalis.gvu.unu.edu/country.cfm?Country=UZ>

<sup>377</sup> <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=2342&l=1>

<sup>378</sup> Abduvali Isadjanov, Institute for Strategic and Regional Studies under the President of the *Republic of Uzbekistan* Additional Paper Submitted to Colloquium (1), UZBEKISTAN - LEGAL ASPECTS OF FULFILMENT OF ECONOMIC RESTRUCTURING AND REFORMS, p.277

<sup>379</sup> <http://www.nationsencyclopedia.com/Asia-and-Oceania/Uzbekistan-MIGRATION.html>

<sup>380</sup> Eurasia Studies Program – *The following is a summary of a conference hosted by The National Bureau of Asian Research in Washington, D.C. on March 2, 2006*

<sup>381</sup> Ibid.

<sup>382</sup> Ibid.

<sup>383</sup> Address of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Islam Karimov at the Cabinet Ministers Session on the results of social and economic development of Uzbekistan in 2005 and major priorities of economic reform in 2006, p. 13

acknowledged that recent economic growth has indeed brought some development and reduction in poverty, accompanied by the improvement in life expectancy, infant and maternal mortality rates and education enrolment rates. However, the main concern remains income poverty, with 2003 World Bank research data indicating that 27,7% of the Uzbek population lives in poverty, out of which one third lives in extreme poverty.<sup>384</sup>

Poverty especially impacts on the large families living in the rural areas, the disabled and the active working population with low paid jobs, in particular women and young people.<sup>385</sup> The harsh socio-economic conditions force many young Uzbeks to seek education and employment outside of the country.

## Education

Increasing the quality of education and training represents a major challenge in Uzbekistan, where 60% of the population is under 25 years of age. The first moves to reform the education system began already in 1991 with the gradual transition to a market economy, by focusing on a development of an adequate system of education and training.

The strategic 1997 National model clearly formulated three reform phases:

- **First phase (1997-2001)** - *creating legal, regulatory, scientific methodical, financial basis for its overhauling and developing on the basis of the preservation of positive potentials of the existing system in professional training.*
- **Second phase (2001-2005)** – *full-scale implementation of the National program, its adjustment by using accumulated experience, development of labour market and real social – economic conditions.*
- **Third phase (2005-to present)** - *accomplishment and further development of a system of professional training on the basis of analysing and synthesizing of cumulative experiences according to perspectives of social – economic development of the country*<sup>386</sup>.

Although no clear reporting system exists, it seems that over the years, many of the proposed changes have been implemented. The 2004 Presidential Decree aiming at reforming the education system and improving the teaching standards for teachers in the period of 2004 - 2009 was according to the official sources put in place<sup>387</sup>. However, the extent to which concrete measures were implemented remains unclear.

According to official data, Uzbekistan achieved the universal access to primary and secondary education already in 1990, with virtually no difference between the number of girls and boys (90.0% of boys to 90.5% of girls). Information on school dropouts and vulnerable young people are not available. Uzbekistan is proud of its 2003 99,3% literacy rate, and with official information stating that 75% adults have specialised secondary, professional or higher education.<sup>388</sup> However, practise reveals that young people, especially in the rural areas, are obliged to remain in their traditional communities and to engage in casual labour or subsistence agriculture or to migrate in order to work.<sup>389</sup> The lack of opportunities and possibilities to make a free choice about profession and lifestyles impacts on young people's sense of vulnerability and

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<sup>384</sup> UNDP Human Development Report on Uzbekistan, 2005, p. 39.

<sup>385</sup> Ibid.

<sup>386</sup> [http://www.yesweb.org/2006/Publications\\_Papers%20august%203\\_2006/Agenda%20Links/Second%20Session/rising%20employment%20opportunities%20for%20youth%20in%20uzbekistan.pdf](http://www.yesweb.org/2006/Publications_Papers%20august%203_2006/Agenda%20Links/Second%20Session/rising%20employment%20opportunities%20for%20youth%20in%20uzbekistan.pdf)

<sup>387</sup> <http://www.unicef.org/uzbekistan/overview.html>

<sup>388</sup> <http://www.un.uz/eng/mdg2.htm>

<sup>389</sup> Eurasia Studies Program – *The following is a summary of a conference hosted by The National Bureau of Asian Research in Washington, D.C. on March 2, 2006*

make them exposed to risky alternatives of violence, extremism, religious indoctrination or crime.

Furthermore, young people who manage to enter the higher education system, become subject to the political mobilization of President Karimov's machinery. While the compromised young people may end up being co-opted into the system, the ones who refuse to cooperate may end up in jail with no perspective of contributing to the development of society. A privileged position is maintained by the so-called "gilded youth", who were educated abroad and are connected to the current regime and, therefore, may have some possibility to influence the development of the country<sup>390</sup>.

However, those who recognise the challenges of education refer to the lack of coherent mechanisms for monitoring and assessing the quality of education. There is, for example, lack of textbooks, good quality school facilities, qualified teachers and financial shortages in households that limit their ability to pay fees or for school materials that cost a lot. Furthermore, the new National Programme for School Education Development (2004-2009) developed in cooperation with ADB, UNESCO, and UNICEF tackles the quality of and the educational infrastructure, with the main shift being the focus on the development of child-centred schools<sup>391</sup>.

According to the US based Asian Research Centre the reform should involve:

- Nuanced process of socialization: Future politicians in Uzbekistan will be defined by a broad range of both experiences and pressures—and will view the United States through the prism of these influences.
- Educational opportunities and influence of patronage politics: Education is the main divider among youth in Uzbekistan today. Patronage politics also impacts the educational and professional opportunities available to young Uzbeks.
- Emergence of cross-national communities: Uzbek out-migration produces a unique opportunity for international organizations to increase their influence on Uzbek society. At the same time, the cross-national Uzbek community is a potentially volatile constituency.
- Competing perspectives and influences: Russia could serve as a proxy for influencing events in Uzbekistan. Uzbek Diaspora communities could also impact change in the country.
- Funding for new technologies: The Internet, mobile technology, satellite TV, and radio broadcasts provide avenues of information to the outside world and thus should be promoted.
- Educational opportunities and exchange programs: Given that young Uzbek professionals educated in the West might become future influential elites, the West could benefit from strengthening support for exchange programs.<sup>392</sup>

Similarly to many transition countries, developing entrepreneurial skills among young people has become a priority<sup>393</sup>. International institutions, such as the OSCE<sup>394</sup>, work towards increasing opportunities for young people in order to integrate them better in the society, avoid their

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<sup>390</sup> Ibid.

<sup>391</sup> <http://www.un.uz/eng/mdg2.htm>

<sup>392</sup> Eurasia Studies Program – *The following is a summary of a conference hosted by The National Bureau of Asian Research in Washington, D.C. on March 2, 2006*

<sup>393</sup> [http://www.osce.org/tashkent/item\\_2\\_16217.html?print=1](http://www.osce.org/tashkent/item_2_16217.html?print=1)

<sup>394</sup> [http://www.osce.org/tashkent/item\\_2\\_16217.html?print=1](http://www.osce.org/tashkent/item_2_16217.html?print=1)

migration and at the same time stimulate the economy. While several programmes were launched in cooperation with the only recognised Republican Youth Social Movement ‘Kamolot’, the accessibility of the programmes can be put in question. In a country where the information system seems to function only among some, the outreach and impact of this programme may be rather limited. However, some good practice in acquiring skills in business development among young people exists, and should be further supported, if possible in a more open and unbiased manner.

Although youth information services targeting young people are practically absent, there are some emerging initiatives seemingly developing from the Diaspora. An interesting example is a youth-blog,<sup>395</sup> providing information on youth issues. Another interesting project “Tech Age Girls”, targeting young women, provides encouragement, support, and training to a group of young talented women with a potential to become leaders in their field<sup>396</sup>. Examples of programmes targeting vulnerable young women were not available at the time of writing.

Although no general social support structures for young people were found, the Uzbek government guided by UNICEF has embarked on revising existing policies and practices related to children with disabilities or institutionalised in the state care system. In spite of the growth in the number of street children and an increase in the instance of child trafficking, there is still an underestimation of this phenomenon by the governmental officials. According to some sources the National Coordination Council has been established to look after the new laws protecting children without parental care and improve the juvenile justice system. In this way, some youth courts were established, incorporating ‘child-friendly environments’ in police stations, courts and institutions; and through the introduction of new legislation on penal systems and institutions *“We need to start thinking about empowering families, giving them the support services, giving them the means, including the financial means, to help them look after their children. We have to start working with the community to take away the barrier preventing disabled children from integrating. They don’t need any sympathy. They are as able as us if they are given an opportunity,”* Mr. Hossaini, a governmental representative, stated.<sup>397</sup> However, the implementation and monitoring of these good incentives remains questionable.

## Unemployment

In spite of the gradual decrease of the number of birth especially in the rural areas, the intensive demographic growth rate, children, adolescents and young adults not only represent 60% of the overall population, but also comprise a huge part of the unemployed. Although young people are on average more educated than the older generation, their access to the labour market is more limited. This in practice may indicate that more education among young people will not improve their job prospects. Other reasons might include the structural unemployment and the very probable discrepancy between the education system and the needs of the economy in a globalised world in terms of skills and competences.

The fact remains that a comprehensive future oriented study of the demands of the labour market as well as mechanisms for support of employment targeted at young people are lacking. No information policy or services, such as career counselling or other types of professional guidance, are available for the future graduates or for young people at large.

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<sup>395</sup> <http://uzbekistan.neweurasia.net/?cat=3>

<sup>396</sup> [http://exchanges.state.gov/education/citizens/students/worldwide/connections/uzbek\\_techage.htm](http://exchanges.state.gov/education/citizens/students/worldwide/connections/uzbek_techage.htm)

<sup>397</sup> <http://esr.oxfordjournals.org/cgi/content/abstract/20/5/403>

## Unemployment<sup>398</sup>

	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Employment (% change over previous year)	1.4	1.4	1.0	1.1	1.7	...	...
Unemployment rate (%)	0.3	0.4	0.5	0.6	...	...	...
Youth unemployment rate (%)	0.3	0.4	0.5	0.6	...	...	...
Total expenditure on education (% GDP)	...	7.7	7.7	...	...	...	...
Total expenditure on health (% GDP) <sup>a/</sup>	3.0	3.3	2.9	3.0	2.6	2.4	...

a/ Total health expenditure as % of gross domestic product, WHO Regional Office for Europe.

Since the beginning of the transition to the government intended to harmonise the education system with the requirements of the labour market. However, the practice shows that what exists on paper is not always translated into day-to-day reality. It is estimated that only 30 – 40% of young adults have stable jobs or enjoy regular income-generating activities. The rest of young people, in particular in rural areas, remain vulnerable to poverty cycle in which *'extremist groups prey on disenfranchised young males lacking viable job opportunities, and young women enter into marriage without skills to provide for their new families'*<sup>399</sup>.

In a situation of a growing period of transition towards adulthood among young Uzbeks, creating a dependency of young people on their parents up to their twenties, the government has been focusing mainly on the entrepreneurial development as well as stimulation of small businesses and farmer entities.

The main governmental priorities have been translated in the following measures<sup>400</sup>:

- Creation of new micro-firms, development of family business and small private enterprises, stimulation of the micro-crediting system;
- Extension out-works in cooperation with the large industrial enterprises;
- *Acceleration of the development of labour-consuming spheres of light and food processing industry focused on deep processing of local raw material and manufacture of ready, competitive production;*
- Development of the sphere of services for the period until the year 2010, first of all in countryside;
- Stimulation of the livestock population, first of all of cattle, in private subsidiary, dehqan (peasant) and farm economies.

According to the government, many reforms do not require huge investments but create employment for women and village youth, and considerably increase the incomes of the families.<sup>401</sup> The few examples from practice demonstrate that public private partnerships are necessary in order to promote the employability of young Uzbeks. Besides, there is a great need for an integral youth employment strategy that would take in to consideration the requirements of the education, training and labour market.

<sup>398</sup> <http://www.unec.org/stats/trends2005/profiles/Uzbekistan.pdf>

<sup>399</sup> <http://www.mercycorps.org/countries/uzbekistan/565>

<sup>400</sup> Address of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Islam Karimov at the Cabinet Ministers Session on the results of social and economic development of Uzbekistan in 2005 and major priorities of economic reform in 2006, p. 13

<sup>401</sup> Address of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Islam Karimov at the Cabinet Ministers Session on the results of social and economic development of Uzbekistan in 2005 and major priorities of economic reform in 2006, p. 13

### Example of Good Practise

Last August, Maftuna took steps to break the cycle by attending a skill-building institute sponsored by Mercy Corps. The five-day Youth Professional Development Institute focused on equipping young people with employable skill sets. Topics included basic business skills, how to research and land a job, tools for mitigating conflict and information about disease prevention and health. More than 115 young adults from 30 different communities attended.

The “Basic Business Education” course provided tips on how to present yourself to potential employers and taught participants practical on-the-job skills. Subjects included job interviewing, skills assessment, time management and collaborative problem solving. Upon returning to their communities after the institute, 19 participants found employment, including Maftuna<sup>402</sup>.

### Poverty

The first ever poverty reduction strategy in Uzbekistan was developed in 2004 aiming at improvement of the living standards (i-WISP). In cooperation of the UN and the ADB, the government adapted the MDGs in order to provide a comprehensive framework for the Living Standards Strategy<sup>403</sup>. According to the MDG report, the Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy aims to reduce the poverty rate to 20% by 2010. The Government also estimates that by 2015 the percentage of poor population can be reduced to from the current 27% to 14%.

This means that the main target should be on the most vulnerable groups – young people, in particular those living in rural areas, families with many children, the disabled, the unemployed, people with lower level of education and households with women breadwinners. Pregnant women and those with many children or with disability are especially disadvantaged. The highest concentration of the poor population is in the southern and northern regions of Uzbekistan, and the lowest is in Tashkent region and certain oblasts of the central region. In the southern region, the poverty rate is almost 4 times higher than in Tashkent region and often results in higher incidence of malnutrition, especially among children and iron deficiency, which is huge (61% of children under 3 are reported to suffer from iron deficiency anaemia).

The low level of living standards is however exclusively related to economic poverty, but also to the quality and access of health care, education services, basic public utilities, such as clean water and adequate sanitation.

There are some key issues that influence the socio-economic development of youth people:

- the issue of religion – that serves both as an ‘escape route’ from everyday problems and at the same time a ‘channel’ through which it is possible to criticise the present system. Extreme religious movements, such as the radical Islamist groups, are rather successful in recruiting the disillusioned young people, offering simplistic answers to questions about the socio-economic reality of every day life. On the other hand, some young people joined the new Christian churches, which provide a Western oriented alternative;
- the draft law on Juvenile Justice was planned to be presented in Uzbek Parliament by the end of 2006. The Legal Problems Studies Centre, developed cooperation among experts from different governmental agencies, Parliament, NGOs and universities to adjust *‘the*

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[http://www.yesweb.org/2006/Publications\\_Papers%20august%203\\_2006/Agenda%20Links/Second%20Session/rising%20employment%20opportunities%20for%20youth%20in%20uzbekistan.pdf](http://www.yesweb.org/2006/Publications_Papers%20august%203_2006/Agenda%20Links/Second%20Session/rising%20employment%20opportunities%20for%20youth%20in%20uzbekistan.pdf)

<sup>403</sup> <http://www.un.uz/eng/mdg1.htm>

*relations that occur in the process of ensuring the rights and legal interests of juveniles in conflict with law, juvenile victims and witnesses in regard to juvenile justice system. The draft law is based on restorative justice, which emphasizes the need to give a chance to for young offenders to be re-educated and reintegrated into society.*<sup>404</sup> It is however not clear whether under current political situation this rather progressive law developed in cooperation with the not so much wanted UN agencies is going to be still followed up, as it also implies the establishment of youth courts with appropriately trained professional personnel.

## Health

Young people in Uzbekistan, when they have the opportunity to voice their concerns indicate that these include unemployment and the opportunity to start a business (entrepreneurship) and having access to a decent quality education.<sup>405</sup> But, recent research indicates that health and lifestyle issues are also a pressing problem in this country and in the region of Central Asia, generally.

The Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) remains high and the Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR) shows an increasing trend. Links between the deteriorating conditions of children and women's health and the quality of ante/peri-natal services, together with the low level of knowledge of families in managing pregnancy and detecting early childhood illness are thought to be the cause. Poor nutrition is another major health issue for women and children, with high rates of iodine deficiency disorder (IDD), iron-deficiency anaemia, a major contributing factor to maternal mortality, and vitamin A deficiency.

From 1987 through 2004, Uzbek authorities reported 5612 HIV cases. They also reported that 52 of the infected individuals developed AIDS, all but 2 of whom died. About 70% of the HIV cases are associated with a transmission mode; among them, approximately 82% were infected through injecting drug use. The first HIV case was registered in 1987, and until 1998 the cumulative number did not exceed 51. Most of these early cases (about 60%) were attributable to heterosexual contacts. Since 2000, there has been a sharp increase in newly registered HIV/AIDS cases. Currently, the dominant mode of transmission is injecting drug use (59.3% of the cases), followed by heterosexual contact (11.3%) and less than 1% for sex between men. The epidemic is concentrated in the capital, Tashkent, and Tashkent oblast. About 76% of all cases are registered there. However, at least a few cases have been reported in each of the 13 Uzbek regions<sup>406</sup>.

## HIV/AIDS Estimates<sup>407</sup>

Number of people living with HIV	31 000 [15 000 – 99 000]
Adults aged 15 to 49 HIV prevalence rate	0.2 [0.1 – 0.7]%
Adults aged 15 and up living with HIV	31 000 [15 000 – 100 000]
Women aged 15 and up living with HIV	4100 [1700 – 13 000]
Deaths due to AIDS	<500 [<1000]

<sup>404</sup> [http://www.unicef.org/uzbekistan/media\\_5042.html](http://www.unicef.org/uzbekistan/media_5042.html)

<sup>405</sup> <http://uzbekistan.takingitglobal.org/>

<sup>406</sup> [http://www.unaids.org/en/Regions\\_Countries/Countries/uzbekistan.asp](http://www.unaids.org/en/Regions_Countries/Countries/uzbekistan.asp)

<sup>407</sup> [http://www.unaids.org/en/Regions\\_Countries/Countries/uzbekistan.asp](http://www.unaids.org/en/Regions_Countries/Countries/uzbekistan.asp)

In Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan, for example, one-third of young women (aged 15-24) have never heard of AIDS, according to a 2001 survey (UNAIDS 2003). With 56% of the Uzbek population under 25, the importance of educating young people on HIV/AIDS prevention issues. A “Knowledge Attitude Practice (KAP)” survey among youth in Tashkent schools and high schools revealed that more than 65% of youth have a basic understanding of HIV/AIDS (not good understanding of modes of transmission). Their most important sources of information on HIV/AIDS are TV shows, public events and surprisingly, schoolteachers. About a quarter of all respondents to the surveys conducted gave incorrect answers regarding the modes of transmission of HIV and other STDs. While HIV/AIDS incidence has been concentrated among high-risk groups in Uzbekistan, it is possible to anticipate an epidemic among the larger population and especially among young people. Most (up to 80%) of schoolchildren do not know the ways of avoiding the risk of infection with HIV or other STDs, however at the same time, higher level of awareness was found in the groups at higher risk. In the group of those who use drugs, where the highest risk of sexual behaviour has been found, attention should be given to predominance of such answer, as “trust to the partner”, as the main reason of not using protection. The highest concern is caused by a lack of knowledge on the need to use disposable syringes amongst the overwhelming majority of the respondents: 66% in the group of “those who use”, 70% in the group of “those who want to try” and 83% in the group of “the rest”. Most of the interviewed adolescents (45%) sympathize with HIV-infected people and wish to help them; at the same time, a rather large number (25%) of schoolchildren consider that they should be isolated and do not wish to have contact with them.

Peer educators when asked to speak about their work demonstrate the difficulty of working in the current Uzbek social climate, stating *“I visit households, schools and orphanages talking to young people about the dangers of early marriage, how to prevent sexually transmitted infections and HIV, and the need for birth spacing and family planning, among other topics,” “This is a conservative community, and when I started working as a peer educator, some parents did not want me to discuss sexual and reproductive health issues with their children.”*<sup>408</sup>. The work has not always been easy, because it involves chipping away at cultural taboos, including fears that open discussion of sexuality and reproductive health will lead to premarital sex or promiscuity. Nevertheless, The KAP results also revealed approximately 44% of young people would like to take an active role in the prevention of drug use and transmission of the HIV virus through peer-to-peer education and participating in social events.

In spite of the fact that certain work for prevention of use of alcohol and smoking is undertaken at schools, it was demonstrated by the study that significant part of schoolchildren use tobacco and alcohol products. According to survey data, on the average, 20% of children smoke, with frequency of episodic smoking of 1-5 cigarettes a day. 25% of schoolchildren do not consider the risk caused by episodic use of cigarettes as high, while almost among 60% of respondents consider risk from regular smoking to be high. About 25% of the schoolchildren who took part in the survey use alcohol, most of them episodically. The prevalence of alcohol abuse is related to the extent of risk in the groups. It is interesting, that actually the same number of respondents from groups of “those who want to try” (41%) and “the rest” (34%) do not see any particular harm even from regular use of alcohol.

Drug abuse is a major issue for Uzbekistan, particularly in view of its geographical proximity to Afghanistan. The number of injecting heroin users has risen dramatically and this has also led to a spread of HIV/AIDS through the practice of reuse and sharing of syringes, together with

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<sup>408</sup> <http://www.unfpa.org/news/news.cfm?ID=869>



unsafe sexual practices.<sup>409</sup> According to the KAP survey, young people's main reasons for taking up drugs are curiosity and peer pressure. Furthermore, according to another survey taken with 5,500 school children aged 14-17 in grades 9-11 in urban secondary schools in 6 regions of Uzbekistan, around 92.3% of youth in the capital, Tashkent, have a negative attitude to drug use<sup>410</sup>. The results show that 3% of the respondents already have experience with drugs and that another 2% feel the urge to try them. 33% of those who have experience with drugs do not identify themselves with drug users. Schoolchildren know about how to acquire drugs but with different levels of ease: Anasha (marihuana) (20% of respondents), Inhalants (20% of respondents), Heroin (18% of respondents), Opium (16% of respondents) Tranquillisers (14% of respondents). Most respondents sympathize with drug users, while around one third of them consider that drug users have to be isolated from society. Most of the respondents were willing to get more information about the consequences of drug use from parents, teachers, school doctors and the mass media.

According to Dr. Klara Yadgarova, head of the Mother and Child Care Directorate of the Ministry of Health, *"The reproductive health of adolescents requires special attention, but most are too embarrassed to visit a primary health-care facility or district hospital for advice and services."*<sup>411</sup>

### **Example of Good Practise**

Pilot programmes in Khiva and a handful of other Uzbek cities are overcoming the barriers of young people to engage in sexual and reproductive health education by offering training in practical skills such as carpet weaving and computer technology in youth centres, along with an array of youth-friendly health services and referrals. Attracted by word of mouth and a mass media campaign, young people come to the youth centre to learn, read or socialize. Whatever their reason for dropping in, however, they also have an opportunity to learn about reproductive health and family planning, says Lola Erniazova, the head of the Khiva branch of the Uzbek Association for Reproductive Health (UARH), which is implementing the youth centre project in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and UNFPA, the United Nations Population Fund. The UARH initiative also uses trained peer counsellors to reach out to young people, both at the youth centres and through other outreach activities. Madina Madaminova, 23, who lives in the heart of Khiva and runs her own small business selling cosmetics has been a volunteer peer educator for the past three years. Trained under an UNFPA-financed programme, Madina is now on the cutting edge of change in her community.

The reproductive health of women and adolescents in the Province of Khorezm, where Khiva is located, as in three other provinces where UNFPA is active, has improved significantly. *"We used to have 40 abortions for every 1,000 live births, but now that ratio has dropped fourfold, to 9 abortions for 1,000 births,"* says Lola. *"Our maternal mortality ratio has also been cut in half, from a national average of 65 deaths for every 100,000 live births to 31"*. An increase in contraceptive use has played a major role in reducing the number of abortions and improving maternal health. Contraceptive prevalence continues to increase: currently some 67 per cent of married women use modern methods of contraception.

<sup>409</sup> <http://www.unicef.org/uzbekistan/overview.html>

<sup>410</sup> [http://meero.worldvision.org/faq\\_categorie.php?categorieID=13#85](http://meero.worldvision.org/faq_categorie.php?categorieID=13#85)

<sup>411</sup> <http://www.unfpa.org/news/news.cfm?ID=869>

In terms of health measures, Uzbekistan can be credited with some ongoing achievements and recent improvements. Immunization coverage of over 90% has been maintained and Uzbekistan is certified as polio free, two significant achievements in the country. A National Action Plan has been developed to address health issues, whilst documents have been signed with the World Bank (WB) to continue support of the primary health care reform initiative and with the Asian Development Bank (ADB) to improve the efficiency of the health care delivery system for woman and child health. Although HIV/AIDS prevalence is low in numerical terms, the number of new infections is rising rapidly in Uzbekistan and Central Asia, threatening to have “devastating consequences on health and development” according to the World Bank. In response, a national HIV/AIDS strategy and a national programme have been introduced.<sup>412</sup> However, it is noteworthy that this study could not find any publicly accessible information in a relevant language concerning union formation and sexuality among young people in Uzbekistan.

### **Youth Participation**

There are not many information on youth participation in Uzbekistan, except that participation is a subject to governmental control. According to some sources youth leaders, running the still few existing ‘youth organisations’ and leisure and sports facilities, are usually remote elder governmental officials, who make sure the activities are available to the privileged groups.

Although some initiatives were taken by the UNDP and other UN agencies to remind that youth activities are targeted at young people to play a role in developing the future of each country<sup>413</sup>, as well as introducing the gender equality debates, the real impact of these events seem to be contra-productive to the wishes of the system. The few organisations working with you, such as the Forum of Art and Culture of Uzbekistan and International Language School, were possibly persecuted for these actions.

UNFPA in Uzbekistan was particularly successful in motivating volunteers to participate in the Uzbek Association for Reproductive Health (UARH) and providing the Y-Peer training. It attempted to involve the representatives of the Ministry of Health of Uzbekistan, the Ministry of Public Education of Uzbekistan, Kamolot Youth Organization, Women’s Committee of Uzbekistan and other organizations in encourage and promote cooperation. Again the sustainability of these initiatives is in the current state of affairs questionable.

Another seemingly success activity was the functioning of the Children’s Parliament/Council of Young Generation (“Yosh Avlod Kengashie”) of Uzbekistan, established in 2002, encouraging discussions about young people on issues that concern them, though partly driven by the international agenda, the rights of the child, human rights, gender issues, HIV/AIDS prevention, drug use prevention, micronutrient deficiencies, and so on<sup>414</sup>. Young people we re also invited to propose solutions, which were supposed to be consulted with the respective officials at the national and local levels. Again the future of the parliaments is at the moment unclear.

Since 2002, there was also the UNITeS Uzbekistan Local ICT Volunteers Scheme (UNITeS Uzbekistan) functioning under the United Nations Volunteers Programme with *‘the primary goal to assist in building ICT capacity among local non-commercial organizations through mobilizing young volunteers. The volunteers undertake different assignments to help these organizations; e.g. train them in basic computer*

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<sup>412</sup> <http://www.unicef.org/uzbekistan/overview.html>

<sup>413</sup> <http://www.unfpa.uz/ca010101.html>

<sup>414</sup> [http://www.unicef.org/uzbekistan/media\\_4814.html](http://www.unicef.org/uzbekistan/media_4814.html)

*skills, create web sites and databases or repair their broken computers*’. In general, the ICT environment in Uzbekistan is rather underdeveloped with only 0.6% of Internet users. Apparently, this activity has started to receive recognition by the government.<sup>415</sup>

Another initiative is the Central Asian Youth Network (CAYN) established in 2004 by the OSCE providing opportunities for exchange for young people in the region.<sup>416</sup>

## **Youth Policies**

Since the Uzbek independence, the government claim to have been working ‘constantly to enhance the situation of children and women’<sup>417</sup>. The State Youth Policy Act, adopted in November 1991 gives priority to the assistance to the young generation to receive education and make full use of their knowledge in promoting freedom and democracy encouraging genuine creativity and innovation<sup>418</sup>. However the recent developments in Uzbekistan deny almost all of this action. There seems to be a great discrepancy between the written and the done. The absence of a clear youth policy strategy and the coordinated youth programmes may be indicative to the real engagement of the different actors in youth policy. However, in a country where accessibility of and reliance on information is questionable, information provided through the desk research may simply not be sufficient in order to provide a clear picture.

However partial youth policy exists, through the various institutions and networks. Agenda 21 on sustainable development mentions the role of youth at several occasions (chapter 25 a and b, 28), where it sees youth as a partner in promoting dialogue between youth and the government at all levels, as well as access to information and opportunity for them to be consulted and ensuring participation of young girls in the educational system.

The Uzbek government together with the UNESCO support the "Kamolot" youth fund and the "Umid" fund in order to support talented young people. The material, practical and methodological assistance in improving educational and training work should be delivered by the urban district authorities. However the youth involvement in the political and economic life or in the development of State policy remains critical, although there seemed to be some noticeable progress<sup>419</sup>. Furthermore, the area of youth friendly services is ‘in its infancy’<sup>420</sup>. Again the willingness of the government to invest into young people, some of whom are often considered as ‘state enemy’, remains questionable.

There are a number of relevant youth policy recommendations offered to the governments and donor agencies of Central Asia by their international partners, however their implementation represents a huge challenge<sup>421</sup>:

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<sup>415</sup> <http://www.unites.org/html/news/2002/n221002.htm>

<sup>416</sup> <http://www.osce.org/tashkent/13330.html>

<sup>417</sup> <http://www.un.org/esa/earthsummit/uzbek-cp.htm>

<sup>418</sup> <http://www.un.org/esa/earthsummit/uzbek-cp.htm>

<sup>419</sup> <http://www.un.org/esa/earthsummit/uzbek-cp.htm>

<sup>420</sup> ICP Regional Report, An Exploration of Movements Toward National Youth Service Policy in 15 Countries in Eastern Europe and the Balkans, Findings from the *Global Youth Service Policy Scan*, June 2006, p.16

<sup>421</sup> <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=2342&l=1> 2003.

### Education

- Aim to raise education spending to pre-independence levels of 5-6 per cent of GDP.
- Improve basic school infrastructures, such as buildings, heating, and power, particularly in rural areas.
- Make retraining of teachers a higher priority, including new teaching methodologies such as bilingual education.
- Increase teaching resources available to schools, such as improved classroom materials and textbooks, and real access to computers.
- Encourage critical thinking in students by improving the quality of teaching, textbooks and methodologies, including the use of classroom interaction instead of rote learning.
- Tackle corruption by enforcing greater transparency in examinations through national examination systems outside the control of individual teachers.
- Balance the rising financial strain on parents with increased involvement in school management by parent groups.

### Social Integration

- Allow the formation of youth-based organisations free of state control and with real access to decision-making.
- Allow and encourage the formation of youth-oriented electronic and print media dealing with issues from the viewpoint of young people.

### Economic prospects

- Develop training opportunities and strong economic incentives for young entrepreneurs and ease restrictions on registration of businesses and access to financing.
- Encourage links between higher education and the job market, including work experience programs and incentives for companies to hire students.

### To donors

- Provide greater resources for improved school infrastructure (with tighter control over expenditure).
- Provide greater resources for improved teacher retraining, particularly in new methodologies that are designed to boost critical thinking and involve more open methods of interacting with students.
- Provide greater resources for teaching, including textbooks, classroom materials, and equipment, and link provision of computers and other equipment with follow-up and training.
- Increase programs designed to boost school attendance in poor, rural areas, including school food programs, and design incentives for female students to complete schooling.
- Minimise risk of a complete collapse in higher education for young people by establishing special study abroad educational programs for them, including those who have already left the country.
- Provide greater resources for sports and leisure facilities for youth, focusing on local, low-cost initiatives, and support efforts to establish young groups, youth clubs and youth NGOs.