

**Minutes**

**of the Seminar in Tbilisi 18. – 19. November 2013  
on Elaboration of Legal Documents on Youth Policy**

**Participants:**

Mr. Armen Papyan, Head of Youth Policy Department, Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs, Republic of Armenia)

Ms. Marne Sargasyan, Chief Specialist, Unit on Cooperation and Youth Policy Management Analysis, Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs, Republic of Armenia.

Ms. Narmin Bagirova, Head of Sector for Social Programmes. Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs, Republic of Azerbaijan.

Ms. Natalia Pshanichnaya, Deputy Head, Dept. of Youth Issues, Ministry of Education, Republic of Belarus.

Ms. Rati Brigadze Deputy Minister, Ministry of Sports and Youth Affairs, Georgia.

Ms. Irma Nozdze, Senior Specialist, Law Dept., Ministry of Sports and Youth Affairs, Georgia.

Mr. Constantin Turcanu, Dept. of Youth Affairs, Ministry of Youth and Sports, Republic of Moldova.

Ms. Aliona Dumbraveanu, Senior Consultant, Youth Programmes Dept., Ministry of Youth and Sports, Republic of Moldova.

Ms. Natalia Radchuk, Head of Dept. of International Cooperation, Ministry of Youth and Sports, Ukraine

Hans-Jürgen Maeth (Team Leader, EPYRU)

Barbara Bello (International Expert)

**Monday 18/11/2013**

According to the Agenda:

Mr. Hans –Jürgen Maeth opened session by introducing himself and main goals of conference.

Representatives of participant countries – Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine introduced themselves in sequence.

The first speaker , Ms. Barbara Giovanna Bello (International expert), represented the concepts and main challenges of Youth Policy of EU, followed by presentations of Mr. Maeth about examples of Legal Documents on Legal Documents of EU countries.

One by one, delegates made presentations about Current Situation of Legal Basis of Youth Policy in their countries.

The principle issues which raised questions and discussion were on youth age and regulations concerning non-formal education.

Specific articles in legislature appeared to be different in each of the 6 countries. It transpired that main priorities of development of youth strategy were almost the same, but differences occurred in legal documents and executive methods.

### Discussion

#### Definition of Youth Age

- **Mr. Bregadze** mentioned that Georgia is working on determining youth age in Georgia and preparing changes in legislation. He wanted to know what is the position of EU in this case from Ms. Barbara Bello and also from representatives of ministries.
- **Ms. Barbara Bello** talked about differences between legislations of different countries. According to her EU does not specifies concrete age for youth – it is not written in the law, but there are many regulations and legal documents which specify this age, for example Youth in Action 14-28, Erasmus 14-35 etc.
- **Ms. Pshanichnaya** explained that Belarus has a clear regulation on youth age definition ( 14-31); this is acceptable and fits exactly to the needs of the country. The main argument as to why youth age begins at 14 years was that youth in Belarus get ID cards at this age and also become part of whole youth strategy system of Belarus – which includes formal and non-formal education, employment and career development for young people.
- **Mr. Papyan** said that youth age in Armenia is 16-30 and this is acceptable at this moment. To the question why 16 and not 14 , he replied that from his personal point of view this is a consequence of attitudes in the countries of the Caucasian Region (He made parallel between Georgia and Armenia). Children stay dependent on their families longer than maybe in some other countries; it is unacceptable for Armenian people to think about 14 year old child as a young person. **Mr. Bregadze** asked about marital age. **Mr. Papyan** said that in Georgia marriage is legal at 18, but it can be accepted at 16 if there is permission from parents. The situation is the same in Armenia, but he talked about ethnic minority “Iezids” who asked from the government to give them permission for younger marriages for girls from 13 years. **Barbara Bello** made a comment about this issue –

how it is possible to manage this case from the legal point of view, how does government identify whether a girl belongs to that ethnic minority or not? As it appeared this is indicated in Passports of this ethnic minorities.

- **Ms. Bagirova** – Youth age in Azerbaijan is 14-29 and as she said they are working to make changes in youth policy development strategy and plan to change the age to 16-35 which will better fit the interests of the country. She also mentioned some problems caused by early marriage, officially for girls this age officially was 17 and for boys 18 but now the age is same for both -18. It can be legal at age of 17 only with permission of parents. She also mentioned some cases of religious marriages and the only way government is able to prevent this process is an informational campaigns. Young people in Azerbaijan can apply with their youth projects for funding, get involved in debates during their school period and in this way government tries to protect them from different kind of social disadvantages and give them right direction for socialization.
- **Mr. Bregadze** – the main point of this seminar is to talk about legal issues and in this case I think that youth age should be explained not only with time when one gets ID card or driving license, because it does not mean a lot, - a child can get a passport even in an earlier age -. He used examples of criminal law in some countries it is very strict, and also children labor laws are different. His main point concerned the difference between Children’s Rights and Youth Rights, because inaccuracy in law can cause a lot of problems.

**Main problematic issues that showed up during discussion:**

1. Weak and debatable (in the legal point of view) arguments in defining youth age;
2. Border line between Children’s Rights and Youth Rights;
3. Determining difference between organizations oriented on children and youth because of crossing age problem; in almost in all cases children are defined age 0-18, and youth age 14-28 - they cross 14-18 years period;

**Mr. Bregadze** mentioned that the reason why Georgia planned and participates in this seminar is that it is in the process of changes in legislation, actually creating youth policy and strategy; it is not necessary to base this to UN or EU regulations only, but to find legal arguments that will be acceptable for Georgia, legal and not political or psychological or physiological.

**Ms. Barbara Bello** indicated that finding common legal arguments would be difficult in view of differing law regulations. Main aim of EU youth strategy is to give same opportunities to each youngster and to catch the right moment when to start involving young people into social and political etc processes. In many countries children graduate from schools at age of 15, so it can be counted as the first step from childhood to youth life.

Important to mention gender issues as regards early marriages; usually this are arranged marriages and young girls have to marry older men, after that they quit school and this is in effect a violation of rights.

**Second Topic of Discussion – Youth Law or Policy (legislature)**

Main point of discussion - s what is more important , to have concrete laws concerning youth, to have regulations in separate fields, or to have strong long term youth policy and strategy?

For 4 participants (Georgia, Azerbaijan, Moldova, Ukraine) countries it was important is to have legal document, law which will define each particular article concerning youth .

As it became clear during discussion Youth law is a combination of regulations from different fields – education, criminal law, human rights and etc.

In case of Belarus youth affairs are controlled by Ministry of Education and regulated by Law about education. There are Specific articles included in this law concerning youth affairs.

As **Natalia Pshanichnaya** explained – the first step in our case was law making process (2009) and then we started to work on policy and strategy. Before 2009 all regulations concerning youth were included in different articles, so all we had to do was to combine this all together.

**Mr Papyan** suggested that actually Law about Youth is combination of regulations from different articles, so in his view it is more important and effective to make long lasting strategy and correct policy.

Discussion turned to was what is the main purpose of ministries of youth? What is their main field of work?

**Mr. Bregadze** talked about the function and priorities of Ministry of Sports and Youth affairs of Georgia:

“We are not the ministry of education so we don’t interfere into educational and scientific processes; we are more concentrated on non-formal education. Our main goal is to fillll the free time of young people with healthy and interesting activities. We organize different training courses, summer and winter camps, cultural events and festivals.

“That’s one of reasons why there should be separate laws for youth affairs, it should regulate all processes. For example the government’s policy is to promote healthy lifestyle, but it should be clear which ministry is responsible and who it is promoting this policy. I think Germany is a leader in this sphere, a good example is their social aspect of youth law, it has clear regulations and specific directions.”

**Mr. Papyan** also talked about priorities and strategies of his Ministry. As regards participation of youth, the ministry has launched online granting system, and is working on e-learning and online library systems to raise the involvement of youth from regions and give them an opportunity to receive education. The Armenian ministry also works on social projects such as low interest loans for young families and special programs for young people with disabilities. With help of Moldavian colleagues (including consultations with **Mr. Turcanu,**) Armenia has launched a Business Grants program for young people who live in villages.

Another priority is to deal with demographic issues and in this field the Armenian ministry has a program concerning Reproductive Challenges. Young women who study at university will be able to continue their education with specific help from government after childbirth and they will not have to quit as it happens most of the time.

Also particular attention is paid to development of cultural values and of course popularization of non-formal education.

With this presentation the first day of the seminar was ended.

For the further discussions sides agreed to prepare some specific legal documents concerning all the topics mentioned during 18/11 session and continue detailed analyses of main problematic issues during the second session on 19/11.

## **Tuesday 19/11/2013**

Topics of Discussion:

I- Youth Participation in Policy Making Process and Political processes in General

II – Prevention of Drug, Alcohol and Tobacco usage

III- Definitions of non-formal education

## **I- Youth Participation in Policy Making Process and Political processes in General**

Main points of discussion were – Law about political parties; role of youth in decision making process and main “tool” for raising participation of youth in political processes.

As it appeared during dialogue Law about political parties especially - law about freedom of word inside parties or regulations about this is quite undeveloped of seems to be less democratic, As **Mr. Bregadze** mentioned this is mostly caused because we (participants of seminar) are post-soviet states.

**Mr. Bregadze's** main point was that without free and righteous situations inside this political elements it is impossible to create normal political situation in country – on Georgia's example, we have very high political activity rate, our young people get involved into political processes at quite young age and because of less-democratic situation this can't be defined as a good process. Voting age in Georgia starts at 18 but as Mr. Bregadze mentioned because of disadvantageous environment it is very hard for

young person to make decisions and choices, Georgia counts more than 200 political countries and this number shows up everything about political situation in Georgia.

During discussion it appeared that most of the participant countries think that it is more important to involve youth in policy making decisions than to concentrating on making them more active in politics.

The presentative of Armenia brought some statistics as an example.

- According to poll (2012) Armenian youth is not very interested in political processes:
- Not Interested 26%, Not very interested 21%, Not interested at all 46%
- Social participation rate was very high - 66%.

Thus Armenia is concentrated on social activity of youth rather than political.

Belarus is oriented on preparing strong leaders, they try to develop leadership skill in young people and for this purpose they have Youth Parliament and self-government structure in schools and universities. They also work to raise participation of youth in election processes.

**Mr. Maeth** noted that contemporary youth is more oriented to economical welfare and social stability than political activities. So in the countries with economic problems it is hard to raise participation in politics because interests are different, from this point of view countries with sustainable economics can achieve better results in this sphere.

It showed up that each participant country uses special youth councils for implementing goals concerning youth participation in political and social processes.

Conclusion from each side was that government should provide strong platform and fundamentals and after that it will be more effective to raise participation of youth in political activities and this should be long lasting process.

## **II – Prevention of Drug, Alcohol and Tobacco usage**

In this case situation was almost same in Moldova, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia and Ukraine.

Situation was totally different in Belarus.

Belarus appeared to have very straight regulations and prevention methods in this sphere such as – financial sanctions for people who sell cigarettes or alcohol to under-age young people.

- There is severe censor in Media (they are not allowed to use commercials about alcohol and tobacco).
- Young people under 16 are not allowed to be outside after 10 o'clock in the evening without parent(s)

- Young people under 18 are not allowed to be outside after 11 o'clock in the evening without parent(s)

Ukraine also uses some kind of “commendant hour” for young under-age people.

Mostly these processes are controlled by interior or health ministries of all 6 countries.

### **III- Definitions of non-formal education**

**Ms. Barbara Bello** made a presentation concerning most active institutions and organisations involved in youth policies and programmes (CoE, EU Commission, Salto, etc...) and their regulations (EU). She provided participants with links where to find several documents and regulations for both definitions of formal and non-formal education.

**Mr. Hans Maeth** also presented Recommendations of Council of Europe on the validation of non-formal and informal learning – with included annex about definitions of non-formal education.

At the end of seminar each participant made concluding speech about benefits and importance of this events for them.