

The Georgian National Youth Policy Document

Preamble

For Georgia long-term democratic and socio-economic development Youth is a significant asset for the country. Youth age is an important period during which biological and psychological growth and development of individuals and their integration into the society takes place. During this period, young people try to develop skills and abilities in order to play their roles across various areas of the public life without hindrance, and to fully realize their potential.

Developing a clear and shared vision about the youth, their role and needs is an essential prerequisite for the development of relevant policies, approaches and mechanisms.

Taking into account the best practices existing at the European and international level the Georgian National Youth Policy (hereinafter referred to as the "the Youth Policy") regulates a wide range of issues related to the development of persons of 14-29 years of age with the joint efforts of state agencies, the youth, the civil society, the private sector and international and local organizations.

For effective implementation of the Youth Policy goals and objectives it is vitally important that the resources, services and programs envisioned by the Youth Policy to be focused on children starting from their school-age.

The Youth Policy is a conceptual document. Government of Georgia acknowledges that Gender Equality and human rights are core values underlying young people's sustainable development, therefore, is committed to mainstream equality principles in each governmental action carried out in regard to the young people.

I. The Goal and Objectives of the Youth Policy

The Youth Policy aims at encouraging establishment of relevant environment for a comprehensive youth development to fully realize their potential and be actively involved in all the spheres of the public life.

In order to achieve this goal, the Youth Policy encompasses following priorities:

1. Creating opportunities for the youth to be involved in social, economic, cultural and political life;
2. Creating opportunities for appropriate and high quality education, worthy employment and professional growth for the youth;
3. Establishing a healthy lifestyle and improving access to and quality of the healthcare services provided in the youth friendly environment;
4. Increasing awareness among young people on the civil rights and responsibilities, and creating a safe and secure environment for young people, protecting their rights and supporting the young people with special needs.

II. Principles of the Youth Policy

The activities of the state in respect of the youth are based on the following principles:

1. Evidence, knowledge, and experience-based decision making;
2. Accountability and transparency;
3. Equality;
4. Recognition, respect and protection of the rights;
5. Accessibility;
6. Youth friendliness;
7. Cooperation and involvement;
8. International cooperation.

III. Definition of the Key Terms Used in the Policy Document

The definitions of terms given below provides for unanimous understanding of the activities set out in the Youth Policy:

1. **A young person** is a person of 14-29 years of age.
2. **A young family** is a registered couple where both of them are young.
3. **Young people with special needs:**
 - 3.1. Young people with disabilities;
 - 3.2. Young people who do not go to school;
 - 3.3. Underage pregnant girls/parents;
 - 3.4. Young people living and/or working on the street;
 - 3.5. Young people deprived of parental care;
 - 3.6. Young people who have entered and transitioned out of the state care;
 - 3.7. Young people with severe and incurable diseases;
 - 3.8. Young victims of trafficking;
 - 3.9. Drugs and psychotropic substance young abusers;
 - 3.10. Young people who consume excessive amounts of alcohol and tobacco;
 - 3.11. Young people in conflict with the law;
 - 3.12. Former convicts;
 - 3.13. Young victims of violence;
 - 3.14. Young people from the families of internally displaced persons;
 - 3.15. Young people residing in the occupied territories of Georgia –in accordance with the State Strategy of Georgia on Occupied Territories: Engagement through Cooperation and Action Plan for Engagement Strategy;
 - 3.16. Young people living in the adjacent urban areas of the occupied territories;
 - 3.17. Young people living in mountainous regions;
 - 3.18. Children of war heroes and disabled veterans.
4. **Youth work** is educational activities with young people and for young people, which are carried out beyond the formal education, the family and work context and contributes to development and well-being of young people and their active participation and integration in the society.
5. **A youth worker** is a person who carries out youth work.
6. **Volunteerism** is a socially useful activity, which is carried out on the basis of the freely expressed will of a person to assist others and is not motivated by any financial or material benefit.
7. **A youth organization** is a non-entrepreneurial (non-commercial) legal entity established on the basis of the legislation of Georgia whose charter defines that the

main scope of activities of youth organization includes issues related to the youth development.

8. **A stakeholder** is a physical person, or an institution with any legal and organizational form, international governmental and a non-governmental and/or local non-governmental organization the scope of activities of which includes the youth as a segment.
9. **A structured dialogue:** is an instrument, which allows the youth to fully participate in the friendly environment in defining priorities, development, evaluation and monitoring process of the Youth Policy.
10. **Youth friendliness** means taking into account the age, development, needs, abilities and interests of the youth in course of developing the Youth Policy and making decisions on youth related issues.
11. **Formal education** is a structured educational system, from general education including higher education, which may also include special vocational training programs.
12. **Non-formal education** is any scheduled, voluntary program of individual and social education, which is not part of the formal educational programs and is designed to develop competencies (knowledge, skills and attitudes).
13. **Informal education** is a lifelong ongoing educational process, whereby person without special efforts, by environmental influence and on a daily experience unintentionally gains attitudes, values, skills and knowledge.
14. **Mobility** means a free movement of pupils, students and academic staff in order to participate in teaching, learning and research activities both in Georgia as well as abroad, which is accompanied, according to the law, by recognition of the education and credits obtained during the qualification or study period.

IV. Strategic Directions of the Youth Policy

In order to carry out priorities of the Youth Policy, the State shall ensure the development, implementation and evaluation of a relevant action plan with specified timeframes, in following four strategic directions:

1. Participation;
2. Education, employment and mobility;
3. Health;
4. Special support and protection.

1. Participation

1.1. Civil Rights and Responsibilities

For the democratic development of the state active participation of the youth in the social, economic, cultural and political life is of special importance. For this purpose, first of all, it is necessary that the youth fully understands their civil rights and responsibilities.

The Government of Georgia aims at raising the youth awareness regarding their civil rights and responsibilities.

Objectives of the Government of Georgia are the following:

- 1.1.1. Ensure awareness raising of the youth of their civil rights and responsibilities through formal as well as non-formal education;
- 1.1.2. Facilitate access of the youth to information concerning the rights of minorities and public groups with special needs;
- 1.1.3. Promote the integration of minorities and young people with special needs in the public life;
- 1.1.4. Facilitate the development of formal and non-formal educational programs in order to strengthen civil responsibility and national consciousness of the youth.

1.2. Youth Work

Youth work aims at promoting the youth development, their well-being, active participation and integration into the society. To achieve this goal, youth work creates a comfortable, safe and pleasant environment where the youth can demonstrate their abilities, learn from each other and evolve. Particular emphasis is given to the non-formal education in youth work.

The Government of Georgia aims at developing the youth activities.

The objectives of the Government of Georgia are the following:

- 1.2.1. Facilitate strengthening of youth work, raising qualification of young workers and their professional development and sharing of international experience by them;
- 1.2.2. Ensure that the outcomes and experience gained as a result of youth work be acknowledged and recognized;
- 1.2.3. Support youth involvement in international youth programs;
- 1.2.4. Promote the development and implementation of non-formal educational programs.

1.3. Decision-making Skills and Opportunities

Georgia, as part to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life recognizes the right of young people to participate in the decision-making process.

The goal of the Government of Georgia is to ensure that young people have opportunities and relevant skills to participate in the decision making process.

The objectives of the Government of Georgia are the following:

- 1.3.1. Provide young people with information on opportunities to be actively involved in the decision-making process;
- 1.3.2. Encourage the implementation of educational programs that will help young people to develop the skills that are necessary for decision-making;
- 1.3.3. Facilitate the development of instruments and mechanisms that will ensure institutional participation of young people in decision-making process;
- 1.3.4. Promote building of necessary infrastructure and adapted environment, that will ensure maximum involvement of young people, including young people with disabilities;
- 1.3.5. Develop recommendations and proposals in order to ensure more involvement of young people in local and regional life;
- 1.3.6. Provide opportunities to engage the youth in the decision-making process affecting them as well as in the implementation and evaluation process of the decisions.

1.4. Youth Initiatives

It is important that young people develop projects based on their experience, which will serve the needs of the peers and will be beneficial not only for the end users of the specific assistance projects, but also for the entire community.

The Government of Georgia aims at creating favorable environment for the youth and youth organizations to initiate the projects, and at supporting and funding the projects initiated by them.

The objectives of the Government of Georgia are the following:

- 1.4.1. Support young people to develop the skills and abilities that are necessary to manage projects;

- 1.4.2. Encourage grant programs in which youth organizations are entitled to participate;
- 1.4.3. Promote youth initiatives that will further motivate newly established youth groups and will increase the public awareness of the achievements of young people, and encourage donors to support youth projects;
- 1.4.4. Promote sustainable development of youth organizations.

1.5. Volunteering

Volunteering is one of the effective means of non-formal education which aims at raising the civic awareness among the youth and developing skills and values of free of charge labor that will be beneficial for the public.

The policy of the Government of Georgia will promote volunteering among the youth, engagement of unemployed young people, spread volunteering at the international level and involvement of volunteers in the areas such as sports, social welfare, culture, human rights and environmental protection, humanitarian aid, health care, poverty reduction, agriculture and etc.

The Government of Georgia aims at developing the culture of volunteering.

The objectives of the Government of Georgia are the following:

- 1.5.1. Draw out a National Strategy for the Development of Volunteering and regional and local programs integrated with it;
- 1.5.2. Prepare legislative amendments, if necessary, in order to provide for incentives and popularization of volunteer work;
- 1.5.3. Facilitate the development of international volunteering.

1.6. Culture, Creativity and Leisure

Opportunities of cultural activities and leisure for young people are of priority. Participation in cultural and creative activities develops the skills of young people that will prove useful in all aspects of their lives and will facilitate their employment in the cultural and tourism sectors. Furthermore, young people must be encouraged to learn the culture and traditions of their country.

The goal of the Government of Georgia is to support involvement of young people in cultural, creative and leisure activities.

Objectives of the Government of Georgia are the following:

- 1.6.1. Support increment and enhancement of the scope of cultural, creative and recreational programs for young people;

- 1.6.2. Support youth involvement in preserving and maintaining the monuments of cultural heritage;
- 1.6.3. Increase awareness of young compatriots residing abroad about the cultural, ingenious and recreational life of their home country; facilitate their engagement in it and maintain direct contacts with peers residing in Georgia.
- 1.6.4. Facilitate participation of the young people residing on the occupied territories in the cultural life of the country, and facilitate maintaining contacts among the young people separated by the occupation lines;
- 1.6.5. Promote tourism among the youth;
- 1.6.6. Encourage preserving cultural and ethnic diversity.

1.7. Environmental Protection

Environmental activities and the active participation of young people is an important social strategy, aimed at developing a person who has appropriate knowledge of environment and subsistence, and is equipped with practical skills to interact with the environment and has a responsible attitude towards the environment.

The Government of Georgia aims at raising environmental awareness and involving young people in environmental activities.

Objectives of the Government of Georgia are the following:

- 1.7.1. Facilitate access to environmental information;
- 1.7.2. Encourage environmental awareness among young people through formal and non-formal education;
- 1.7.3. Promote the youth involvement in the environmental activities.

2. Education, Employment and Mobility

2.1. The to Work Transition System

Transition from the educational system to work is a challenge faced by all young people. The educational sector shall ensure equipping the young people with such knowledge and competencies that will lead to labor efficiency, competitiveness and employment.

The Government of Georgia aims at increasing qualifications, competitiveness and work efficiency of young people.

The objectives of the Government of Georgia are the following:

- 2.1.1. Improve the quality of general education, as well as promote development of the vocational and higher education system that is demand-oriented on a labor market, which, in turn, will contribute to successful education and employment of young people;
- 2.1.2. Provide information to young people concerning vocational and higher education, as well as professional military and special education and the employment opportunities;
- 2.1.3. Encourage innovation-oriented programs that will contribute to school to work transitions of young people;
- 2.1.4. Promote the youth involvement in the International educational and exchange programs;
- 2.1.5. Promote the development of qualification improvement and professional retraining programs.

2.2. Equal Chances for Educational Success

Within the framework of the State Policy, the Government of Georgia will ensure that all young people receive quality education. The Government of Georgia will ensure that young people residing in the occupied territories of Georgia have the same education opportunities, as the young people residing in the other regions.

The Government of Georgia aims at creating relevant conditions for education for all the young people regardless of their race, color, language, sex, religion, political and other opinions, national, ethnic or social belonging, property or social status, and place of residence.

The objectives of the Government of Georgia are the following:

- 2.2.1. Support young people living in poor social and economic conditions, the young persons with disabilities and with other special needs to attend general, higher and vocational education programs;
- 2.2.2. Promote participation of young people from ethnic minorities to attend general, higher and vocational education programs;
- 2.2.3. Improve teaching of the state language;
- 2.2.4. Provide and enhance access to education for the young people living in the occupied territories of Georgia;
- 2.2.5. Ensure professional development of teachers working with young people with special needs taking into account the specificity of each type of group.

2.3. Economic Opportunities and Living Conditions for Young People Residing in the Regions

Young people residing in the regions and remote communities need to be provided with the same services and opportunities as their urban peers.

The Government of Georgia aims at increasing efforts to improve the social and economic living conditions of young people residing in the regions, mountainous areas and in the areas adjacent to the occupation lines.

The objectives of the Government of Georgia are the following:

- 2.3.1. Increase geographical accessibility of the educational institutions;
- 2.3.2. Promote development of formal and non-formal educational programs for the youth residing in the regions and the areas adjacent to the occupation lines;
- 2.3.3. Support development of educational programs for the professions demanded in the regions;
- 2.3.4. Promote economic development of the regions, especially the mountainous regions and areas adjacent to the occupation lines that will create employment opportunities for young people at the local level;
- 2.3.5. Support development of the cultural centers, activities and infrastructure in the regions.

2.4. Mobility

For the youth development opportunities to study abroad is significant. After receiving education abroad students gain important knowledge and skills that increase their competitiveness. In this regard, the academic mobility helps the young people.

The goal of the Government of Georgia is to support the academic mobility of students and academic staff in teaching, learning and research processes both in Georgia and abroad.

Objectives of the Government of Georgia are the following:

- 2.4.1. Promote awareness raising of the young people about academic mobility opportunities;
- 2.4.2. Develop academic mobility support programs;
- 2.4.3. Create a favorable environment for developing the funding support system for studying abroad;
- 2.4.4. Ensure that young people residing in the occupied territories be able to pursue further education in the Georgia proper or abroad.

3. Health

3.1. **Healthy Lifestyle**

It is extremely important that young people have enough information about the healthy lifestyle and be aware of its importance, and benefit from preventive services. It is necessary to strengthen young people's individual responsibility and equip them with the knowledge and skills that will enable them to take a better care of their health.

The Government of Georgia aims at promoting healthy lifestyle amongst young people.

The objectives of the Government of Georgia are the following:

- 3.1.1. Promote awareness rising and education of young people on healthy lifestyle;
- 3.1.2. Ensure that preventive services for young people (including young people with special needs) are available, developed and accessible for them;
- 3.1.3. Support creating a safe environment in recreational and entertainment venues and establishments for young people;
- 3.1.4. Assist young people in organizing their leisure time properly and support recreation and entertainment programs for youth, that will integrate the physical activities and recreational and educational events;
- 3.1.5. Ensure that the young people are involved in sports activities, and in this regard, contribute to the expansion, improvement and adaptation of sports infrastructure;
- 3.1.6. Facilitate popularization of a healthy lifestyle through sports activities, mass media campaigns and other events;
- 3.1.7. Revise the existing legislative framework and initiate relevant amendments in order to improve the regulatory mechanisms that promote a healthy lifestyle.

3.2. **Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights**

It is important that young people have information about sexual and reproductive health and rights. Young peoples' increased awareness and knowledge on reproductive health and modern methods of family planning contributes to the reduction of the incidence of abortions and sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV. In addition, it contributes to reducing the incidence of early marriages and adolescent pregnancy and negative consequences, and related maternal and child health risks.

The Government of Georgia aims at increasing the awareness and education about sexual and reproductive health and rights and improving accessibility to and quality of medical services.

Objectives of the Government of Georgia are the following:

- 3.2.1. Support young peoples' (including those in special needs) increased awareness about existing sexual and reproductive health programs and services;
- 3.2.2. Deliver of high-quality sexual and reproductive health services to young women and men, including those with special needs;
- 3.2.3. Improve financial and geographical accessibility to sexual and reproductive health services for young people as well as ensure service delivery in youth friendly environment with confidentiality guaranteed;
- 3.2.4. Support development of modern educational programs regarding sexual and reproductive health issues and rights based on the best modern international standards for formal and informal education systems.

3.3. Mental Health

It is important to develop psychiatric and psychosocial rehabilitation services for young people.

The Government of Georgia aims at developing such services for improving young people's mental health.

Objectives of the Government of Georgia are the following:

- 3.3.1. Ensure establishment and increase access to youth-friendly mental health services and raise young people's awareness on the existing services;
- 3.3.2. Facilitate public awareness and knowledge rising about the mental health in order to reduce stigma;
- 3.3.3. Support the social integration of young people with mental health disorders.

3.4. Prevention of psychoactive drug abuse

It is important to carry out a vigorous campaign to prevent abuse of psychoactive drugs among the young people.

The objectives of the Government of Georgia are the following:

1. Develop strategies, programs and services for the youth that will be focused on preventing psychoactive drug abuse.

4. Special Support and Protection.

4.1. Social Assistance

It is important to launch a targeted social assistance program, which will identify socially vulnerable families and provide them with subsistence allowance. In order to implement a national social assistance program it is important to take into account the social-economic conditions of the relevant target groups, especially that of the young people.

The Government of Georgia aims at increasing the opportunities offered by social assistance programs in order to better meet the needs of young people affected by poverty.

Objectives of the Government of Georgia are the following:

- 4.1.1. Support implementation of research and experience-based social assistance and other social programs taking into account the needs of the youth living in social and economic hardship;
- 4.1.2. Facilitate access of young people leaving government care to targeted social assistance and other social programs;
- 4.1.3. Facilitate access of young families to targeted social assistance and other social programs;

4.2. Crime Prevention, Re-socialization and Reintegration

For an equal and full-scale development of young people with special needs, especially the young people under the public care, in conflict with the law or young people who left the state care, it is important to involve them in additional supporting programs and alternative services. Besides, re-socialization, reintegration and support of homeless young people (including those living and working on the streets) victims of violence and trafficking and young people with disabilities is prioritized.

The Government of Georgia aims at preventing crimes and ensuring reintegration and re-socialization of young people with special needs.

The objectives of the Government of Georgia are the following:

- 4.2.1. Provide for crime prevention measures and alignment of identification, referral and response mechanisms;
- 4.2.2. Promote educational and employment programs for young people who require special support;
- 4.2.3. Facilitate involvement of the young people who require special support in volunteer, public and non-formal educational activities and programs.

4.3. Rights, Violence and Inhuman, Derogatory Treatment and Dignity Defamation

The state policy shall ensure protection of youth from violence and development of protection referral procedures for young people in order to increase the effectiveness of response to complaints on violence.

The Government of Georgia aims at raising awareness of young people about their rights, promoting the culture of non-violence and safety among young people and providing special protection and supporting young victims of violence, inhuman and derogatory treatment and dignity defamation.

Objectives of the Government of Georgia:

- 4.3.1. Support awareness raising of young people and the general public about human and the child rights, and violence, and about the services that are available to assist victims of violence, inhuman and derogatory treatment and dignity defamation;
- 4.3.2. Facilitate improvement of rehabilitation services intended for young victims of violence, inhuman and derogatory treatment and dignity defamation;
- 4.3.3. Facilitate timely involvement of young victims of violence inhuman and derogatory treatment and dignity defamation in the referral mechanism;
- 4.3.4. Facilitate assistance to female victims of violence.

V. The Youth Policy Actors, Decision-Making and Coordination Mechanisms

1. Youth Policy Actors

State institutions and governmental agencies are responsible for the implementation of the Youth Policy within their scope of competences and they shall ensure that the strategies and programs concerning the young people are consistent with the principles and spirit of the Youth Policy, even if they are not specified in the Youth Policy.

For the implementation of the youth policy the state shall ensure development, implementation and evaluation of the Action Plan with specified timelines and milestones.

The Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs of Georgia shall coordinate development of the National Youth Policy in addition to meeting the commitments undertaken by the Youth policy and the Action Plan.

Other important actors of the Youth Policy are:

1. The Parliamentary Committee on Sports and Youth Affairs of Georgia;
2. Local municipalities;
3. The youth;
4. Youth organizations;
5. Stakeholders;
6. International organizations;
7. The Media;
8. Researchers.

2. Decision-Making and Coordination Mechanisms

In order to develop the Youth Policy the Interagency Coordinating Council is established. The Council shall meet at least once per quarter. Its activities will be coordinated by the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs of Georgia.

The Government of Georgia shall hold a dialogue with local authorities in order to develop a national/local permanent mechanism which ensures the involvement of local authorities in the development of Youth Policy.

The Government of Georgia shall work out mechanisms designated to involve all the stakeholders in decision-making, coordination and implementation processes of the Youth Policy.

The Government of Georgia recognizes that young people have a right to be involved in the decision-making process that affects them. The Government of Georgia shall implement structured dialogue as a mechanism for ensuring the youth participation in the Youth Policy.

The Government of Georgia shall support researches on the youth issues in order to conduct an annual performance evaluation of the priorities and directions defined in the Youth Policy.

VI. The International Dimension of the Youth Policy

The Youth Policy shall be implemented in cooperation with the international community. Georgia recognizes the important role of the United Nations and its agencies, as well as the role of NATO, the U.S.A., the EU and the Council of Europe in Youth Policy development. Furthermore, Georgia attributes special importance to the regional cooperation within the framework of the Youth Policy in order to channel joint efforts and facilitate the development and well-being of young people living in the Caucasus.