

Youth Partnership

Partnership between the European Commission
and the Council of Europe in the field of youth



CONTRIBUTION OF NON-PROGRAMME COUNTRIES TO EU YOUTH WIKI CHAPTER I : GEORGIA YOUTH POLICY GOVERNANCE

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At the proposal of the European Commission, the EU-CoE youth partnership is contributing to the EU Youth Wiki with knowledge and information on a number of Erasmus+ non-programme countries from South-East Europe and Eastern Europe and the Caucasus. The contributors use the guidelines of the EU Youth Wiki when drafting their country contributions, but due to limited resources and support, present lighter versions of the required information. This chapter is part of piloting the EU Youth Wiki “Light” contributions for Georgia.

1.1 TARGET POPULATION OF YOUTH POLICY

Definitions and age range

There is no general legal definition of young people in Georgian legislation. The Georgian Constitution does not contain any references to youth or young people. The voting age, also defined by the Constitution, is 18.¹

The National Youth Policy of Georgia (NYP) defines “youth” as all people aged 14-29.²

The Statistical Office of Georgia (GeoStat) does not distinguish “youth” as a separate statistical category. Relevant population statistics are divided into the following age brackets: 10-14, 15-19, 20-24 and 25-29. This makes extracting exact statistics about the legal category of “youth” difficult as there is a one-year overlap (14-year-olds).³

Categories

The current National Youth Policy (2014) distinguishes the following categories as young people with “special needs” (fewer opportunities):⁴

Young people with disabilities	Young people who do not go to school	Underage pregnant girls/parents
Young people living and/or working on the street	Young people deprived of parental care	Young people living in mountainous regions

¹ Constitution of Georgia (2010), available at <http://www.parliament.ge/uploads/other/28/28803.pdf>, accessed 1 August 2017.

² National Youth Policy Document of Georgia, Ministry of Sport and Youth of Georgia, available at http://msy.gov.ge/index.php?sec_id=210&lang_id=GEO, accessed 4 August 2017.

³ National Statistics Office of Georgia, available at http://geostat.ge/?action=page&p_id=472&lang=geo, accessed 5 August 2017.

⁴ National Youth Policy Document of Georgia, Ministry of Sport and Youth of Georgia, available at http://msy.gov.ge/index.php?sec_id=210&lang_id=GEO, accessed 7 August 2017.

Young people with severe and incurable diseases	Young people in conflict with the law	Young people using drugs and psychotropic substance
Young people from the families of internally displaced persons	Young people who consume excessive amounts of alcohol and tobacco	Young people residing in the occupied territories of Georgia
Young victims of trafficking	Former convicts	Young victims of violence
Young people living in the adjacent urban areas of the occupied territories	Young people who have entered and transitioned out of state care	Children of war heroes and disabled veterans

Demographic trends

The total number of people aged 15-29 in Georgia in 2016 was 746 100, which constituted 20.05% of the total population. Between 2013 and 2016, the share of young people (aged 15-29) in the total population of Georgia decreased from 22.48% to 20.05%.⁵ The trend was visible across the sexes and age sub-groups, without exception.

The share of females in the population aged 15-29 in 2016 was 363 400 (48.71% of the total young people aged 15-29) and the share of males aged 15-19 in 2016 was 382 700 (51.29% of the total young people aged 15-29). The share of females in the population aged 15-29 in 2013 was 49.21%, while the share of males aged 15-29 in 2013 was 50.79%.⁶

⁵ As a result of Georgia's population census in 2015, there has been a major adjustment in the size and profile of the population. The overall number of residents was adjusted from 4.49 million to 3.71 million.

⁶ National Statistics Office of Georgia, available at http://geostat.ge/?action=page&p_id=472&lang=geo, accessed 9 August 2017.

1.2 NATIONAL YOUTH LAW

The development of national youth policy in the Republic of Georgia started in 1994 with the creation of the first governmental structure responsible for development of youth policy in Georgia – the Department of Youth Affairs of the Republic of Georgia. Although operating for only a short period of time, it initiated the creation of the first two youth laws, applicable still today:

- the Law Concerning State Support to Children and Youth Unions (22 June 1999);⁷
- the Law on the Protection of Under-age Children from Harmful Influence (28 September 2001); this law is currently under review in the Georgian Parliament.⁸

At the same time, two youth decrees have been enacted:

- Decree No. 132 of 6 April 2000 on “Public Youth Council based with Administration of President of Georgia” (the Council ceased to operate in 2004);⁹
- Decree No. 92 of 12 March 2001 of the President of Georgia on “State concept for supporting Georgian youth” (not implemented due to budgetary constraints).¹⁰

Until 2010, youth was not a policy priority – further attempts to develop the legal basis of youth policy have failed, either due to lack of support or rapid reforms implemented after the 2003 Rose Revolution.

The situation changed with the establishment of the new Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs of Georgia (MSY) in 2010. The newly established MSY set about preparing a new National Youth Policy. The MSY applied an inclusive approach taking into account best practices at European and international level. The National Youth Policy development has expanded to include a wider range of government ministries, youth organisations, local government, international organisations and researchers. This process started in May 2011 with a series of semi-structured consultations with a range of stakeholders combined with a number of research activities on the basis of existing data, strategies and programmes at both national and local level, conducted by an expert team hired by the United Nations Fund for Children (UNICEF).

⁷ The Law Concerning State Support to Children and Youth Unions (22 June 1999), Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs of Georgia, available at http://msy.gov.ge/files/Ministry/kanonebi/kanoni/kanoni_bavSvTa_da_axalgazrduli_kavSirebis_saxelmwifoebri_mxarda_Veris_Sesaxe.pdf, accessed 7 August 2017.

⁸ The Law Concerning the Protection of Under-age Children from Harmful Influence (28 September 2001), sakanonmdeblo matsne, available at <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/15652>, accessed 9 August 2017.

⁹ Presidential Decree 132 of 6 April 2000 “Public Youth Council based with Administration of President of Georgia”, sakanonmdeblo matsne, available at <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/113752>, accessed 31 July 2017.

¹⁰ Presidential Decree 92 of 12 March 2001 of the President of Georgia “State concept for supporting Georgian youth”, sakanonmdeblo matsne, available at <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/114682>, accessed 27 July 2017.

Following the consultation and research phases, relevant policy statements and strategies as well as other inputs for a Draft Youth Policy Document were developed, shared publicly for comments and later amended based on the feedback received. The National Youth Policy Document was adopted on 17 August 2012 (Resolution No. 1608).¹¹

After the change of government following the 2012 parliamentary elections, the National Youth Policy was revised. On 17 May 2013, the Interagency Coordination Council on the Development of State Youth Policy of Georgia (ICC) was created.¹² Members of the Council included deputy ministers from all government ministries, as well as representatives of the Parliamentary Committee of Sports and Youth Affairs, the Public Defender of Georgia, UNICEF and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). The main aim of the Council was to revise the youth policy law. After revisions made by the Coordination Council according to the priorities and principles of the new government, the new youth policy law (NYP) was adopted on 2 April 2014 (Decree No. 553).¹³

The 2014 NYP aims to encourage the establishment of a suitable environment for a comprehensive youth development which will enable the youth to fully realise their potential and be actively involved in all areas of public life.¹⁴

The main aim of NYP is to be achieved through the following activities:

- opportunities for young people to participate in public, economic, cultural and political life;
- access to high-quality education, employment and professional growth;
- promotion of a healthy lifestyle, accessibility to medical services and improvement of quality in a youth-friendly environment;
- raising awareness of civil rights and obligations, creation of a safe atmosphere, respect for young people's rights and support for young people with special needs;

The policy is based on the following principles:

- decisions are made based on reliable evidence, knowledge, and experience;
- accountability and transparency;
- equality;
- respect for and recognition of rights;
- accessibility;
- youth friendliness;
- partnership and participation;

¹¹ National Youth Policy Document – Decree of the Government of Georgia No. 1608 (2012), *sakanonmdeblo matsne*, 17 August 2012.

¹² Decree of the Government of Georgia No. 112, 17 May 2013, *sakanonmdeblo matsne*, available at <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/1924373>, accessed 19 July 2017.

¹³ National Youth Policy Document of Georgia (2014), Ministry of Sport and Youth of Georgia, available at http://msy.gov.ge/index.php?sec_id=210&lang_id=GEO, accessed 8 August 2017.

¹⁴ National Youth Policy Document of Georgia (2012), *ibid*.

- international co-operation.

The government ensures the creation, implementation and evaluation of the youth policy action plan in line with the following four thematic directions:

- participation;
- education, employment and mobility;
- health;
- special support and protection.

The four areas cover the following specific activities:

Participation	Education, employment and mobility
Civil rights and responsibilities Youth work Decision making Skills and opportunities Youth initiatives Volunteering Culture, creativity and leisure Environmental protection	Transition to work system Equal chances for educational success Economic opportunities and living conditions for young people Residing in the regions Mobility
Health	Special support and protection
Healthy lifestyle Sexual and reproductive health and rights Mental health Prevention of abuse of psychoactive drugs	Social assistance Crime prevention, re-socialisation and reintegration rights Violence and inhuman, derogatory treatment and dignity defamation

Particular emphasis is given to youth with fewer opportunities and those with “special needs” (the Georgian term for fewer opportunities).

1.3 NATIONAL YOUTH STRATEGY

The Georgian Youth Policy Action Plan for 2015-2020, adopted on 5 March 2015, serves as a main strategy document for youth policy implementation in Georgia.¹⁵ The Action Plan was developed by the Interagency Coordinating Council and is based on the strategic directions as indicated in the National Youth Policy Document.

The document suggests a series of events and activities under each strategic direction and provides information concerning their impact, outcome, output, indicators of completion, main responsible body, period of implementation and source of funding. The strategy, however, does not reveal any information on budgetary considerations and planning what could compromise its realistic chances of implementation.

Only a few of the listed programmes have been created specifically for the Action Plan. Most of the actions are a compilation of activities already under implementation or planning by each ministry, but are relevant to the priorities of the National Youth Policy. The new actions described in the Action Plan mainly include the actions developed by the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs of Georgia under the chapter of Participation of the National Youth Policy Document of Georgia, where examples of new actions include (among others):

- development of youth work;
- recognition of the youth work results;
- support for participation of young people in international programmes.

Already existing actions were consolidated from the existing activities/programmes of the relevant ministries (Health, Education, Justice, etc.) under the chapter of Health, Protection and Education of the National Youth Policy Document as well as under the Youth Chapter, for example the No Hate Speech Movement, Youth Summer Camps, Inclusion of Disabled Youth into Sport Activities, among others.¹⁶

The Youth Policy Action Plan is implemented in co-operation between different government bodies in the frame of their own activities and programmes; at the same time those governmental bodies are also members of the Interagency Coordinating Council. According to the Action Plan, ministries shall be supported by international organisations, NGOs and local municipalities in the implementation of the Action Plan. The structure of such

¹⁵ The Georgian Youth Policy Action Plan 2015-2020 (2015), sakanonmdeblo matsne, available at <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/2766763>, accessed 3 August 2017.

¹⁶ The Georgian Youth Policy Action Plan 2015-2020 (2015), sakanonmdeblo matsne, available at <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/2766763>.

support is not clear, as it depends strongly on the needs and type of actions as well as on goodwill and institutional experience in working with the civil society sector.

1.4 YOUTH POLICY DECISION MAKING

According to the NYP, all state institutions and government agencies are responsible for the implementation of the state youth policy according to their competence and all Georgian state programmes and strategies concerning youth have to be in line with strategic directions and the principles of national youth policy.

The Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs of Georgia is principally responsible for the co-ordination of the National Youth Policy in addition to meeting the commitments undertaken within the National Youth Policy and the Action Plan.¹⁷

The NYP determines the following decision-making and co-ordination mechanisms within the process of youth policy implementation:

- The Interagency Coordinating Council is the main body for the development of the youth policy. It shall meet at least once every six months and its activities will be co-ordinated by the MSY.
- 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 recognises 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 youth participation in the Youth Policy.
- The Government of Georgia shall work out mechanisms to involve all the stakeholders in decision-making, co-ordination and implementation processes of the Youth Policy;
- The Government of Georgia shall commission research on youth issues in order to perform an annual performance evaluation of the priorities and directions defined in the Youth Policy.¹⁸

The Interagency Coordination Council is responsible for the development, monitoring and evaluation of youth policy across different policy sectors with the MSY co-ordinating its activities. The ICC meets every six months. It is considered competent when 50% of the members are present and votes by simple majority.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ National Youth Policy Document of Georgia (2014), Ministry of Sport and Youth of Georgia, available at http://msy.gov.ge/index.php?sec_id=210&lang_id=GEO, accessed 8 August 2017.

Interagency Coordination Council – Members*	
Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs of Georgia	Ministry of Correction of Georgia
Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia	Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia
Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Protection of Georgia	Ministry of Environment of Georgia
Ministry of Culture and Heritage Protection of Georgia	State Minister of the Diaspora Affairs of Georgia
Ministry of Justice of Georgia	State Minister for Integration in European and Euroatlantic Structures of Georgia
Ministry for Regional Development and Infrastructure of Georgia	State Minister for Reintegration of Georgia
Minister of Economy and Sustainable Development of Georgia	On request:
	Parliamentary Committee of Sports and Youth
Ministry of Finance of Georgia	Ombudsman office of Georgia
Ministry of Internally Displaced People from Occupied Territories, Resettlement and Refugees of Georgia	UNICEF
	UNFPA
Ministry of Energetics of Georgia	
Ministry of Defence of Georgia	
Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia	
Ministry of Agriculture of Georgia	

* In addition, the Council can invite observers (without voting rights) to its working meetings from among the following groups: experts, MPs, representatives of governmental entities of Georgia and other organisations, such as representatives of the European structures in Georgia.¹⁹

The Interagency Coordination Council's objectives are to provide support for the implementation of the youth policy's strategic aims and objectives including monitoring and co-ordination of governmental bodies' actions; revise and improve the National Youth Policy documents including creation of recommendations for an improved legal framework; maintain close co-operation with the key stakeholders in the process of creation of long-term programmes; and identify needs at municipal (local) level in support of civil integration of young people with fewer opportunities.

¹⁹ Ibid.

1.5 CROSS-SECTORAL APPROACH WITH OTHER MINISTRIES

Georgia's National Youth Policy implementation is based on both cross-sectoral (co-operation between governmental, non-governmental and private sectors) and inter-agency (co-operation between central and local authorities) dialogue. Members of the Co-ordination Council are all members of the government (ministries), and according to the statute of the Council the following agencies can participate in the meetings of the council: Committee of Sport and Youth Affairs of the Parliament of Georgia; Public Defender's Office of Georgia; UNICEF in Georgia; UNFPA in Georgia. The council meets at least quarterly. The council is co-ordinated by the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs of Georgia.

The main aims of ICC are:

- promotion of implementation of main directions of youth policy;
- co-ordination of effective implementation of functions of different line ministries;
- monitoring of implementation of youth policy;
- periodic revision of the action plan;
- drafting recommendations for improvement of legislation in the field of youth;
- planning of relevant interventions;
- invitation to Council meetings, and drafting the meeting agenda.²⁰

ICC's activities to date include:

- reviewing and adopting the National Youth Policy;
- reviewing and adopting the National Youth Policy Development Action Plan 2015-2020.

²⁰ Decree of the Government of Georgia No. 112, 17 May 2013, *sakanonmdeblo matsne*, available at <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/1924373>, accessed 19 July 2017.

1.6 EVIDENCE-BASED YOUTH POLICY

Evidence, knowledge and experience-based decision making are considered key principles of the national youth policy in Georgia. According to the NYP, it is the responsibility of the Government of Georgia “to support research on the youth issues in order to conduct an annual performance evaluation of the priorities and directions defined in the Youth Policy”.²¹ The ministry has a research and analytical unit that analyses current policy implementation using 52 indicators. The main six areas of evaluation are duration, geographical coverage, gender, sources of information (government body and research body) and the responsible line ministry.

During the creation of the 2012 National Youth Policy Document, the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs has conducted several consulting and research activities to ensure a comprehensive evidence base for the national youth policy. These activities were conducted by a national and international team supported by UNICEF on the basis of existing data, strategies, programmes and possibilities both at national and local level as well as semi-structured consultations with young people and NGO representatives by organising relevant conferences, a forum and numerous meetings.²²

In 2014, GeoStat conducted a comprehensive survey on youth in Georgia in accordance with a grant agreement signed with UNICEF.²³ The survey aimed to inform the development of the National Youth Action Plan, and provide an example of a comprehensive and holistic policy approach to youth-related matters in Georgia in line with the Youth Policy’s strategic direction. How far this document played a role in developing the Action Plan is not yet clear, as it was published just after the Action Plan was developed. There is no evidence of the survey’s impact on the structure, objectives, priority areas or the revision of the youth policy document.

The most recent comprehensive youth study conducted in Georgia was “Generation in Transition: Youth Study 2016 – Georgia”, which was conducted by the Friedrich Ebert Foundation in 2016. The study focused on investigating various aspects of youth, starting from basic socio-economic characteristics of young people, including experience and attitudes related to “employment, education, democracy, foreign policy, family and friends, identity values, religion, lifestyle, and concerns and aspirations”.²⁴ It is not clear how much the

²¹ National Youth Policy Document of Georgia, Ministry of Sport and Youth of Georgia, available at http://msy.gov.ge/index.php?sec_id=210&lang_id=GEO, accessed 9 August 2017.

²² Decree of the Government of Georgia N1608, 17 August 2012, National Youth Policy Document.

²³ National Youth Survey in Georgia – Analysis of the Situation and Needs of Youth in Georgia”, available at http://unicef.ge/uploads/Final_Eng_Geostat_Youth_SitAN_1.pdf.

²⁴ National survey “Generation in Transition: Youth Study 2016 – Georgia”, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, available at http://www.fes-caucasus.org/news-list/e/?tx_news_pi1%5Bnews%5D=47&tx_news_pi1%5Bcontroller%5D=News&tx_news_pi1%5Baction%5D=detail&cHa

findings of the 2016 research will be considered by youth policy makers in Georgia.

The MSY lacks a permanent mechanism ensuring continued collection of data on and monitoring of youth policy as well as evaluation of the youth policy action plan. For the sake of obtaining updated data in order to adjust the youth policy document and the youth policy action plan, the MSY is in the process of establishing a monitoring plan with the aim of collecting relevant data on a regular basis and publicly available statistics on youth in Georgia. The MSY has sought co-operation with UNFPA in developing mechanisms to monitor the situation of young people and implementation of the youth policy but no final decisions have been taken in this regard to date.

In principle, the Youth Policy Action Plan for 2015-2020 foresees a concrete timeframe for regular revision of the achievements and failures of the Youth Policy implementation every two years. The evaluation had been scheduled for the years 2016, 2018 and 2020, but the 2016 evaluation has not been conducted and according to the MSY it will be jointly conducted in 2018. Key youth policy institutions including the MSY, local authorities as well as general research organisations in the youth field are facing a serious lack of human, administrative, organisational and financial capacities to implement evidence-based data and knowledge collection (this is not a youth policy-specific issue). Consequently there is a need to strengthen the analytical unit of the Youth Department of MSY, and develop human, administrative and organisational capacity for implementing evidence-based youth policy.

Evidence-based youth development in Georgia has been strongly dependent on financing provided by international donors (see UNICEF and Ebert Foundation reports above). This kind of one-off co-operation lacks sustainability, partly because international donors have their own agenda and goals that may not be fully compatible with the government.

As mentioned above, the lack of political will as well as low general understanding of evidence-based policy at different levels of governance in public policy, including ministries and local government, further impedes harmonious development of evidence-based policy-making in the youth field.

1.7. FUNDING YOUTH POLICY

Budget of the Ministry of Youth and Sports of Georgia: 2011-2016

The budget of the Ministry of Sport and Youth is divided into two main categories:

- budget for all costs related to Sport activities and administration;
- budget for all costs related to Youth activities and administration.

The budget assigned for the youth-related cost declined sharply from 10.82 million Georgian lari (GEL) in 2011 to GEL 3.85 million in 2017 – a decrease of 64.5%. The decrease in budget occurred gradually each year, most notably between 2016 and 2017, from GEL 6.63 million to GEL 3.85 million, a decrease of 41.2%.²⁵ As a result, the number of national youth programmes operated by the ministry dropped from 11 to four.²⁶

According to MSY, this decrease is part of the overall trend to limit the Georgian Government's central budget expenses.

²⁵ Law of Georgia on the State budget for the year 2017, Sakanonmdeblo Matsne, available at <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/3495562?geo=on>, accessed 9 August 2017.

²⁶ Law of Georgia on the State budget for the year 2014, Ministry of Finance of Georgia, available at http://mof.ge/2014_wlis_saxelmwifo_biujetis_kanoni, accessed 6 August 2017.

1.8. CROSS-BORDER CO-OPERATION

MSY is involved in numerous cross-border and regional co-operation programmes and platforms in the youth field, including:

- Eastern Partnership – Visegrad Group co-operation, covering a memorandum of understanding (MoU) and action plan;
- bilateral co-operation plan with Lithuania, based on biannual meetings (MSY);
- bilateral co-operation with Armenia, based on an MoU and a bilateral action plan (its recent cycle has just come to an end and a new one is being drafted);
- bilateral co-operation with Azerbaijan, based on a MoU and bilateral action plan (recently finished, due to be renewed);
- trilateral co-operation between Turkey, Azerbaijan and Georgia, based on an MoU and action plan, including expert group meetings and youth camps (part of a governmental agreement covering many areas, not only youth);
- bilateral co-operation with Ukraine – MoU signed and a new one planned;
- bilateral co-operation with Moldova, in draft stage;
- bilateral co-operation with Iran, MoU recently signed.

Georgia is also part of a number of multilateral programmes that cover regional and bilateral co-operation. The European Union-funded Eastern Partnership Territorial Co-operation Programme (EaPTC) provides support for Georgian-Armenian and Georgian-Azerbaijani cross-border co-operation between local authorities and civil society organisations (CSOs). Youth is one of the priority areas and a number of youth organisations from Georgia (mainly CSOs) are involved in delivery of the projects funded under EaPTC. Under the Georgia-Armenia cross-border co-operation programme, covering the Samtskhe-Javakheti and Kvemo Kartli regions in Georgia as well as Shirak, Lori and Tavush regions in Armenia, four funded projects are implemented in the field of youth.²⁷

In August 2017, the ministry and one of its legal entities received grants under the EU Eastern Partnership Youth Window.

²⁷ EaPTC Georgia-Armenia (n.d.), available at <http://eaptc.eu/en/program/view-armenia-georgia.html>, accessed 6 August 2017.

1.9. CURRENT DEBATES AND REFORMS

A group of experts was hired by the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs of Georgia in 2015 to develop a National Strategy for Youth Work Development. Strategy documents have been developed and some actions proposed in the strategy document are planned to be piloted in 2017. However, the Strategy document was not officially adopted by the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs and therefore is not officially published.

The most notable development was the establishment of the Youth Workers Association of Georgia in 2017. The Association works with the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs and a few interested international organisations, piloting a youth worker qualification programme and therefore lay foundations for national recognition and policy support for youth work in Georgia. A new youth work law is in its draft stages in the parliament but no fixed dates have been set for its approval and/or implementation.

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