

Youth Partnership

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



CONTRIBUTION OF PARTNER COUNTRIES TO EU YOUTH WIKI CHAPTER I: AZERBAIJAN YOUTH POLICY GOVERNANCE

Narmin Aslanbayova
September 2021

Disclaimer: The opinions expressed in this work, commissioned by the European Union–Council of Europe youth partnership, are the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official policy of either of the partner institutions, their member states or the organisations co-operating with them.

Contents

1.1. TARGET POPULATION OF YOUTH POLICY.....	3
1.2. NATIONAL YOUTH LAW.....	3
1.3. NATIONAL YOUTH STRATEGY.....	5
1.4. YOUTH POLICY DECISION MAKING.....	8
1.5. CROSS-SECTORAL APPROACH WITH OTHER MINISTRIES.....	10
1.6. EVIDENCE-BASED YOUTH POLICY.....	10
1.7. FUNDING YOUTH POLICY.....	11
1.8. CROSS-BORDER CO-OPERATION IN THE YOUTH FIELD.....	12
1.9. CURRENT DEBATES AND REFORMS.....	13

1.1. TARGET POPULATION OF YOUTH POLICY

According to Article 1 of the [Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan “On youth policy”](#) (“Genjler siyaseti haqqında” Azərbaycan Respublikasının Qanunu), adopted in 2002, “youth” are defined as persons from 14 to 29 years of age. The same article defines “young family” as a family formed by the marriage of persons under the age of 35, as well as a single parent under the age of 35 having in his/her custody at least one child.

According to the data of the [State Statistical Committee](#) of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the population of the country is 10 119 100 (at the beginning of 2021). The number of young people in the total population aged from 14 to 29 amounts to 2 305 300 or 22.8% of the overall population of Azerbaijan. The male population amounts to 1 207 800 (52.4%); the female population amounts to 1 097 500 (47.6%). As a rule, for statistical purposes young people are divided into three sub-groups: aged 15-19 years, aged 20-24, and aged 25-29. The most numerous youth age group is young people aged 25-29, with a total of 869 500 people.

There are more definitions related to the age of youth in the Law “On youth policy”:

- youth in need of social protection – youth under the age of 18 who have lost their parents and are deprived of parental care; disabled youth and those under the age of 18 with limited health opportunities; youth without a job and (or) income; and internally displaced persons (Article 1);
- young scientist and researcher – a scientist and researcher no older than 35 years (Article 1);
- youth organisations – non-governmental organisations established by individuals between the ages of 16 and 35 and (or) youth organisations in accordance with the Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan “On non-governmental organisations (public associations and foundations)” in order to identify and solve the problems of young people, protect their rights, meet their spiritual needs, etc. Membership of youth organisations is terminated from the age of 35 (Article 9-1).

[The Criminal Code of the Republic of Azerbaijan](#) under Article 20 defines the age for criminal liability as 16 years at the time of committing a crime, with the exception of cases provided for by the Criminal Code, when criminal liability occurs at the age of 14.

1.2. NATIONAL YOUTH LAW

The Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan “On youth policy” was adopted on 9 April 9 2002. This Law defines the goals, principles, directions, organisational and legal bases of the youth policy in the Republic of Azerbaijan and regulates the relations in this field.

The Law consists of three chapters.

The first chapter, *General provisions*, covers main definitions, legislation on youth policy, goals and principles of youth policy and responsibilities of the state in the field of youth policy implementation.

Changes made to the Law on 5 March 2019, along with previous definitions such as youth, youth policy, young family and talented youth, introduced new definitions, such as youth in need of social protection, youth at risk, young scientists and researchers, student self-government and voluntary activities of youth. Youth policy was defined in the Law as a system of measures aimed at creating socio-political, socio-economic, organisational and legal conditions and guarantees by the state in order to ensure the comprehensive development of youth and their active participation in society. The main goal of youth policy in the Republic of Azerbaijan is to create conditions for the physical, mental and spiritual development of young people, to help them realise their opportunities and skills, to solve their social and economic problems and to ensure the protection of their rights.

The second chapter defines the *Main directions of youth policy*, which are as follows: Spiritual and moral upbringing of youth and participation in cultural life; State care for talented youth; Young people in need of social protection and youth at risk; Protecting the health and physical development of young people; Ensuring youth employment; State assistance to young families; Youth organisations; State support to youth organisations.

The third chapter defines *Organisational, material and financial support for the implementation of youth policy*. Article 11 prescribes participation of youth in the formation and implementation of youth policy; Article 12 prescribes participation of local self-government bodies in the implementation of youth policy; and Article 13 defines material and financial support for the implementation of youth policy, which mean that youth policy activities are financed from the state budget, as well as other sources not prohibited by law.

A number of changes and amendments were introduced to the Law on 8 May 2007 and on 5 March 2019:

- 1) The changes made to the Law in 2007 related to the establishment of the infrastructure for youth policy. Thus, it was envisaged to establish a Youth Foundation, as well as youth centres called youth houses. By Decree of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan dated 11 December 2011, the Youth Foundation was established under the Ministry of Youth and Sports. The process of establishment of youth houses started in 2008 and is still under way.
- 2) The changes made to the Law in 2019 introduced new definitions in the youth policy field, added new principles of youth policy and new responsibilities of the state in the implementation of the youth policy, and set up new directions of the state youth policy.

For the first time, two new groups of youth with fewer opportunities were identified in an updated Law:

- youth in need of social protection – youth under the age of 18 who have lost their parents and are deprived of parental care, disabled youth and those under the age of 18 with limited health opportunities, as well as youth without a job and (or) income and internally displaced persons;
- youth at risk – youth released from prisons, subjected to violence, victims of human trafficking, engaged in forced labour, associated with religious extremist and terrorist organisations, those abusing alcohol, drugs and psychotropic substances and their precursors, as well as those living with HIV/AIDS and other dangerous diseases.

The changes to the Law in 2019 introduced additional principles of youth policy, among which was “ensuring the participation of young people in the formation, implementation and evaluation of youth policy and taking into account their opinion”. The Ministry of Youth and Sport of the Republic of Azerbaijan has a practice of consulting youth and their representatives when designing key documents on youth policy.

1.3. NATIONAL YOUTH STRATEGY

With the aim of ensuring intellectual, physical and spiritual development of youth and their participation in the socio-economic, public-political and cultural life of the country, [the Azerbaijani Youth Development Strategy for 2015-2025](#) (2015-2025 illerde Azərbaycan gənclərinin İnkişaf Strategiyası) was approved by Order of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan dated 26 January 2015.

The Azerbaijani Youth Development Strategy for 2015-2025 (hereinafter the Strategy) is the first strategic document in the country in the field of youth. The elaboration of the Strategy derives from the actions envisaged in the development concept “Azerbaijan 2020: A look into the future”. The Strategy outlines the goal and objectives, implementation mechanisms and expected results from the implementation of the Strategy.

The goal of the Strategy is to develop the potential of Azerbaijani youth in accordance with the requirements of modern times, in the period 2015-2025, and to use this potential in the best interests of the Republic of Azerbaijan, to develop an active citizenship among the new generation. To achieve this goal there were 32 objectives defined, which mainly touch upon the spheres such as patriotic education, employment, intellectual development, decision making and support of youth with fewer opportunities.

Target groups of the Strategy

The Strategy’s target groups are youth and young families whose definitions are outlined in the Law “On youth policy”. In order to assure a comprehensive approach to the target group, the Strategy determines the status and identification criteria of the following social groups:

- students in higher grades of general education schools and primary specialty education institutions;
- students in general specialty and higher education institutions;
- young scientists;
- youth studying and working abroad;
- youth doing their military service;
- young entrepreneurs and farmers;
- youth working in industrial and service spheres;
- civil servants and youth represented in elective authorities;
- creative and talented youth;
- young athletes;
- youth represented in political parties and non-governmental organisations;
- unemployed youth;
- married youth;
- youth from vulnerable families;
- refugee and IDP youth;
- youth with impaired health or disability;
- youth suffering from narcotic addiction or AIDS, etc.

As a result of implementation of the Strategy, it is expected to achieve the following by the end of 2025:

- increased education level and number of those studying at vocational schools among youth;
- enhanced level of employment of young alumni with jobs corresponding to their specialties;
- decreased level of unemployment among youth;
- providing schoolchildren and students of higher education, secondary specialty and primary specialty institutions with dormitories to improve their accommodation conditions during their education period;
- providing alumni of higher education and secondary specialty institutions with jobs corresponding to their specialties in their regions;
- establishing a basic household and employment infrastructure to stimulate movement of youth to regions with insufficient human resources;
- forming a young and competitive human resources capacity to meet the demands of the labour market;
- consistently improving the mechanisms of improving the housing conditions of youth and young families;
- increased spirit of patriotism of youth;
- increasing the level of elementary military preparedness of youth and involving military experts in this process;
- realising innovative ideas and creative initiatives of youth and establishing foundations for putting them into practice;
- increased numbers of youth working in the spheres of science and technology;

- increased interest of youth in culture and fine arts including the spheres of theatre, cinema and architecture; organising performances, exhibitions and master classes of creative youth in regions of the country; and presenting and decently publicising their creative works in foreign countries;
- increased number of young entrepreneurs;
- decreased number of law breaches among youth; and
- developing international relations of youth and their relations with youth from countries of priority importance for Azerbaijan.

The Ministry of Youth and Sports ensures co-ordination in the direction of execution of the responsibilities under the Strategy, and reports to the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan on work performed in relation to the implementation of the Strategy at least once a year.

The State Programme

The main operational document in the sphere of youth is [the State Programme “Youth of Azerbaijan in 2017-2021”](#) (hereinafter the State Programme) (“Azerbaijan genjliyi 2017–2021-ci illerde” Dövlət Programı). This is the third programme of this kind. The other two programmes were implemented in 2005-2009 and in 2011-2015 accordingly. All state programmes were approved by Orders of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

The Ministry of Youth and Sports of the Republic of Azerbaijan co-ordinates implementation of the activities provided by the State Programme and reports to the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan on the implementation of the activities envisaged in the State Programme once a year.

The goal of the State Programme is to achieve more effective implementation of youth policy in the Republic of Azerbaijan, to create conditions for active participation of youth in all spheres of society, to support their creative and innovative potential, to protect the health of the younger generation, to increase attention to education and employment of youth, to use information and communication technologies effectively, and to develop voluntary movement in the country.

The Action Plan of the State Programme “Youth of Azerbaijan in 2017-2021” outlines activities in the following directions:

1. civic and patriotic education of youth;
2. protecting the health of young people and supporting young people in need of special care;
3. supporting youth employment and entrepreneurship;
4. support of creative activity of youth and organisation of leisure time;
5. supporting students’ scientific, cultural and social activities;
6. awareness raising of youth on human rights, gender equality, ecology and other issues;
7. supporting the activities of youth organisations and participation of young people in public life;
8. expanding international youth co-operation and exchange;
9. youth and information technologies;

10. supporting the intellectual activity of young people and motivating them towards science;
11. improving the regulatory framework in the field of youth work and increasing the efficiency of the implementation of youth policy.

1.4. YOUTH POLICY DECISION MAKING

Ministry of Youth and Sports

The main state body dealing with youth issues is the Ministry of Youth and Sports of the Republic of Azerbaijan. The ministry was established in 1994 by Decree of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

[The Statute of the Ministry of Youth and Sports](#) was approved by Decree of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan dated 18 April 2006. The Statute states that it is a central executive body in charge of public policy and regulation in the field of youth, physical education and sports in the country.

The areas of activity of the ministry are as follows:

- participates in the formation of a unified state policy in the relevant field and ensures the implementation of this policy;
- directs the creative potential, strength, knowledge and skills of the young generation to nation building, and implementation of economic and social development programmes;
- carries out patriotic and civic education of youth;
- operates in other directions determined by the legislation.

Youth Foundation

By Order of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan dated 19 December 2011, [the Youth Foundation](#) was established under the Ministry of Youth and Sports. By new Decree of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan dated 29 December 2012, the foundation's name was changed to "Youth Foundation under the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan", while the public legal entity "Youth Foundation of the Republic of Azerbaijan" was established under the foundation by Decree of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan dated 7 March 2018.

The main purpose of the Foundation's activities is to provide targeted funding in the form of grants for projects and programmes of public and social significance, including at the international level in science, education, culture and other social spheres related to youth policy; organisation of conferences, seminars, festivals, Olympiads and other events, as well as projects that provide financial assistance to young people.

Other main actors

In the Parliament of the Republic of Azerbaijan of the 5th convocation, elections to which took place on 1 November 2015, the Committee of Youth and Sports was established. The activity of this committee contributes to the further development of youth and sports in Azerbaijan, creates new opportunities for young people and improves legislation in these areas.

By Order of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan dated 1 June 2017, the Department for Youth Policy and Sports Issues was established in the structure of the Presidential Administration.

Youth and Sports Departments

The territory of Azerbaijan consists of 84 administrative units (cities and districts). Within the local government of each unit there is a Department of Youth and Sport with 5-8 staff. These departments are accountable to local governments and the Ministry of Youth and Sports.

Youth houses

In 2008 the process of creating a network of youth houses started. Youth houses are social service institutions created with the aim of strengthening patriotic work among young people, organising their leisure time and harmonious development, providing legal and informational assistance, providing psychological support and youth rehabilitation. At present in the regions of the republic there are about 30 youth houses. They are subordinate to the Ministry of Youth and Sports.

1.5. CROSS-SECTORAL APPROACH WITH OTHER MINISTRIES

In implementing the state youth policy, the Ministry of Youth and Sports closely co-operates with the relevant state bodies, such as the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of Population, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the State Committee for Family, Women and Children Issues, etc.

In some legislative documents (e.g. the Azerbaijani Youth Development Strategy for 2015-2025, the State Programme “Youth of Azerbaijan in 2017-2021”) the Ministry of Youth and Sports is indicated as the main co-ordinating body.

According to its statute, the ministry interacts with other executive authorities, local self-government bodies and non-governmental organisations in performing its duties and exercising its rights.

During monitoring of the implementation of the State Programmes “Youth of Azerbaijan” (for 2011-

2015 and 2017-2021), the Inter-Ministerial Council was established, which gathers once or twice a year. The head of the Council is the Minister of Youth and Sports, and members of the council are represented by deputy ministers/heads of all agencies, indicated as executors in the State Programme.

Within the framework of some specific programmes, the ministry co-operates with relevant agencies. For example, within the framework of the National Employment Strategy and Plan of Action the ministry co-operates with the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of Population, and within the framework of the “Action Plan for the implementation of the Strategy for Children for 2020-2025” the ministry co-operates with the State Committee for Family, Women and Children Issues, etc.

1.6. EVIDENCE-BASED YOUTH POLICY

Care for youth, which makes up 22.8% of the country’s population, is the most important part of the state policy. There is comprehensive regulatory framework in the field of youth policy. Young people make extensive use of the opportunities created by the adopted documents. Taking into account that the problems of youth, being one of the priority issues of national policy, are in the focus of the country’s leadership and with the aim of providing statistical information to relevant structures and the public, the State Statistical Committee regularly publishes a statistical publication titled “Youth of Azerbaijan”. The last issue, [“Youth of Azerbaijan - 2021”](#), includes the following sections: demographic indicators, health care, education and science, employment and unemployment, leisure, households consisting of young families, and crime.

From 2006 to 2019 the Centre for Scientific Research on Youth Issues, accountable to the Ministry of Youth and Sports, carried out research on different themes. The ministry, together with some international organisations, commissions surveys into different research companies or youth NGOs. The surveys touch on various topics, such as youth reproductive health, the level of awareness on HIV/AIDS among youth, youth participation, integrated youth-friendly services, etc. The data obtained are used when drafting new documents regarding youth issues or tracking progress in the implementation of youth-related programmes.

1.7. FUNDING YOUTH POLICY

Youth policy is one of the high priorities of social policy of the state. According to Article 13 of the Law “On youth policy”, youth policy activities are financed from the state budget, as well as other sources not prohibited by law.

Below are the data on youth policy budgets (in Azerbaijani manats (AZN)) from 2017 to 2021:

- 2021 – AZN 12 524 000

- 2020 – AZN 6 781 000
- 2019 – AZN 8 327 000
- 2018 – AZN 10 032 000
- 2017 – AZN 9 986 000

AZN 1 = €0.50 (September 2021).

This amount includes the budget allocated for youth policy by the Ministry of Youth and Sports. This includes expenses for the maintenance of youth houses, youth and sports departments in cities and regions of the country, the republican centre for the health and recreation of children, as well as for activities related to youth. In 2020, the budget was cut in half due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

By Decree of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan dated 2 July 2013, the Presidential Youth Award was established. The award is presented to talented young people who have distinguished themselves in the fields of science, education, culture, youth policy and youth work, social and public activities, innovation and entrepreneurship. The award consists of a cash prize in the amount of AZN 10 000, a diploma, a badge and a certificate of that badge. The award is financed from the state budget of the Republic of Azerbaijan and is given once a year, on 2 February, by Order of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

By Decree of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan dated 22 June 1996, the “Golden Book” of young talents of Azerbaijan was established. The names of young talents are written in the Golden Book by Decision of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan. These young talents get a special monthly scholarship in the amount of AZN 400 at the expense of the reserve fund of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan until they reach 25 years of age.

1.8. CROSS-BORDER CO-OPERATION IN THE YOUTH FIELD

International youth co-operation is carried out in many directions: the Commonwealth of Independent States countries, the European Union (Eastern Partnership, Youth in Action, Erasmus+, EU4Youth), the Youth Department of the Council of Europe and many others.

The EU4Youth project covers the years 2017-2023 and fosters the active participation of young people in society and their employability by developing youth leadership and entrepreneurship through a variety of actions, including capacity building, fellowships, support to policy dialogue, as well as providing grants to organisations active in these areas. The countries covered by the project are Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine.

For the first time, special bilateral co-operation activities between the Ministry of Youth and Sports of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Youth Department of the Council of Europe have been

included in the Council of Europe's Action Plan for Azerbaijan for 2014-2016. These activities are grouped into capacity-building activities for young leaders and activists from Azerbaijan, human rights education, and democratic citizenship projects. These activities have served to support the role of non-governmental youth organisations in the implementation of the Council of Europe's Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education.

International youth co-operation within the framework of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) is managed by the Council for Youth Affairs of the CIS member states. The council has a mandate to develop co-operation among authorities in charge of youth issues in the CIS. The council carries out its activities on the basis of the Intergovernmental Agreement of the Member States of the Commonwealth of Independent States on co-operation in the sphere of work with youth of 25 November 2005. In 2020, the Strategy for International Youth Co-operation of the Member Nations of the Commonwealth of Independent States for 2021-2030 was adopted. For the purpose of implementation of this strategy, the action plan was adopted for a period of two years (2021-2022).

The Ministry of Youth and Sports co-operates with relevant bodies in different countries. Thus, the ministry has bilateral agreements or memorandums of understanding in the field of youth policy with about 30 governmental institutions of other countries (Turkey, Georgia, Iran, Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Latvia, Bulgaria, Hungary, Croatia, Serbia, Malta, Greece, Jordan, Egypt, Iraq, Qatar, Kuwait, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Korea and Mexico).

1.9. CURRENT DEBATES AND REFORMS

The Order of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan on approval of [“Azerbaijan 2030: National Priorities for Socio-Economic Development”](#) dated 2 February 2021 defined the following five national priorities of the country's socio-economic development which should be implemented over the next decade:

1. a steadily growing, competitive economy;
2. a dynamic, inclusive society based on social justice;
3. areas of modern innovations and competitive human capital;
4. the great return to the territories liberated from occupation;
5. a clean environment and a country of “green growth”.

These national priorities are of particular importance to the fulfilment of commitments arising from “Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development” of the United Nations.

As stated in the above-mentioned order, relevant state bodies (institutions) shall take necessary measures in order to fulfil the tasks arising from the national priorities.

Currently, the Ministry of Youth and Sports together with relevant state bodies is developing a draft of a new State Programme “Youth of Azerbaijan for 2022-2026”. The new programme should be drafted on the basis of the national priorities.

Taking into consideration the amendments made to the Law “On youth policy” in 2019 concerning young people with fewer opportunities, more attention will be paid to youth in need of special care and youth at risk.