

Youth Partnership

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



An agenda for strengthening investment in youth research in Eastern Europe and Caucasus countries



Report of the seminar organised by the EU-Council of Europe youth partnership

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1. Key conclusions and recommendations for an agenda for strengthening youth research in Eastern Europe and Caucasus countries

Understanding the role of research in youth policy. There is still a tradition to define youth policy as the remit of the **state** only. In the Soviet Union, state policy often meant the official line but did not necessarily assume any public interest, involvement, or public good element, therefore there is a distinction between what constitutes state policy and what could be public policy for the benefit of everyone, not only on paper. So, there are challenges to identify the role of research within youth policy and to link the research to youth policy formulation. The [Law on Youth of Moldova](#) and National [Youth Policy Document of Georgia](#) have integrated a Western understanding of public policy and the quality of those documents is significantly.

Despite an important presence of international organizations, there are state research institutions exploring youth issues. In some countries, the majority of the youth studies are conducted by the formal education sector. For example, National Institute for Higher Education is the key agency in Belarus, responsible for youth research. Ukrainian State Institute of Family and Youth Policy is a state organization responsible for youth research at the national level. At the same time, the lack of clear frameworks and research standards for youth research often leads to a situation where the quality of national research is lower than when done or commissioned by international organizations, or the research stops when the international donors finish the project. Also, there is no evaluation of the impact of research results on policy formulation and funding. UN Agencies such as UNICEF, UNDP and UNFPA play a significant role in institutionalizing youth research in the countries of the region. Due to international cooperation Armenia, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine have begun developing regular national youth reports, covering similar themes and following similar research standards. At the same time, there have been successful experiences in the creation of a national research institute – the Youth Studies Institute (YSI), co-founded in 2013 with the support of UNDP in Armenia.

There is a general pattern of annual reporting to the government by national authorities responsible for youth policy. Nevertheless, there is no clear evaluation on how the reports influence policy development. It is not clear if these reports remain an internal exercise or whether they serve the purpose of adjusting policy priorities, strategies and programmes that respond to the reality of young people. There is also a lack of monitoring research and the impact of research on policy changes.

There is still a gap between the approaches of traditional research structures and independent research groups, supported or often subcontracted by international organisations. As the nature of international organizations is to work by request of the government, project-based research groups are more aware of youth policy and the value of youth research for policy development. However, such structures generally do not have any stakes in how the results are used and are not always interested to see the impact of their

work. In a way, research targeting young people is often lacking the main objective of creating interest and engaging young people in the full policy-making cycle – from understanding the reality to developing solutions.

At national level, the following actions could contribute to a stronger role for youth research in understanding young people and in gathering knowledge for policy-making

- Invest in youth research by establishing formal or non-formal thematic networks
- Develop cooperation among and with higher education structures focusing on youth
- Develop scholarships for youth researchers and support networking
- Support and encourage qualitative research, not only survey-based or quantitative studies
- Support academic formats on
- Develop national dialogue on youth research and regular exchange forums
- Bridge the gap between state structures and private initiatives;
- Introduce participatory research practices involving young people so that it makes sense for youth policy and practice.

Regional cooperation, comparative baseline studies and peer learning could be further developed. Youth policy in the region is not as established as in the countries of the European Union or South-Eastern Europe, and this is a major challenge in the development of youth policy, sharing best practices and cross-border research activities.

Cooperation between international organizations representative offices and projects in region on the methodology of youth research will help to strengthen the systemic approach to youth research in the region. Given the key role of international organizations in youth research and the similarity of their project activities in the region, it would be useful to establish professional links between representative offices of international organizations for the exchange of approaches and methodology. This, in turn, will allow for the provision of comparative analysis and to define better research solutions. It also may be a tool to advocate for the role of research for monitoring and formulating policies and to collect/share the best research practices of the region.

In addition, the following actions could be developed in regional cooperation context:

- Collaborate on international journals focusing on youth
- Develop exchanges with other countries from the region and with countries that have extensive youth research networks and structures in place
- Support regular encounters on youth research
- Based on cooperation examples from other regions, develop common initiatives in bilateral or multilateral formats;
- Youth Partnership should involve new researchers from EECA countries on ad hoc basis (via its open calls) and on a more permanent basis, associating them to PEYR and EKCYF.

2. Background and common features of youth research in the region

The countries of the region of Eastern Europe and Caucasus have started to consider youth policy standards and recommendations from the Council of Europe and European Union since the beginning of the 2000s. The involvement of youth organisations and youth leaders into Youth and Youth in Action Programmes supported the development of new visions of youth policy. Since 2008 the EU-CoE Youth Partnership Programme has paid attention to the dialogue between various stakeholders, by organizing discussions between researchers, youth leaders and state representatives. The first [workshop on youth policy development](#) took part 18-19 June 2008 in EYC Budapest. The participants identified main challenges for youth policy development, among them difficulties with the understanding “policy” as a concept. [The symposium on youth policy in Eastern Europe and the Caucasus](#) took place 14-15 July 2011 in Odessa, where the summary report from the EECA, based on national reports on youth policy, was presented. The main conclusions of the report relevant for the youth research were:

- **A youth research component is lacking or very weak and often youth information is assumed as research by policymakers,**
- The foundational documents framing youth policy date back to 1990s and largely rely on old, Soviet structures and models,
- Youth participation is missing in the research, planning, implementation and evaluation of youth policy/programs;
- Critical resources are lacking and external donors drive scattered demands in research on youth.

The lack of a youth research component relates to the weak models of youth policy governance and the lack of complete legislation from Soviet experience. The first attempts to design Soviet youth policy and youth research happened in the late 1980s. The initiator of the Soviet Law on Youth ([On the general principles of state youth policy of the USSR, 1991](#)) Prof. Igor Illinskiy, who coordinated the youth research group beginning in 1974 [claimed](#) in 1989, that “... *no governing body in the country has the much needed complete knowledge, characterizing the biological, psychological and social development of the younger generation. There are many reasons for this circumstance. But first of all, it is due to the fact that the task of getting such a picture has never been set. The real situation in this area, like in all others, was practically of no interest to anyone. Moreover, the need for a special and active study of youth problems in academic, party and state scientific institutions has always been questioned*”. Illinskiy’s approach had an impact on developments in youth research and youth policy in the post-soviet countries. By the new Soviet youth law he introduced the main definitions and concepts, which can still be picked in current political discourse. Despite the fact that the new law was adopted a few months before the collapse of the USSR, in 1990s youth policies of the new countries have developed under the influence of this Soviet law. Youth research was understood as 1) an academic domain with the main aim to [deliver information](#) on the situation of youth (problems of youth) and 2)

guidelines for upbringing young people (eliminating the problems). There was no space to discuss participatory youth policy as a concept and to elaborate monitoring or evaluation tools.

Current political discussions on whether a youth policy is needed show that there is still a need to clarify the concept, what to do with youth policy, and even whether young people should be identified as separate target group for policy. The governance system of the new post-Soviet countries was more or less defined by policy fields, coming from soviet system, but the discussions and conceptualization of youth policy on the level of governance had started approximately 10 years after independence of the countries. Youth policies are also connected to sports with sports being disproportionately favoured both politically and financially.

2.1. Soviet model of youth policy

Of great importance for formulation of the Soviet model of youth policy was the publication of a controversial article of Prof. Igor Ilyinsky in the theoretical journal of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union "Communist" titled "On social problems of youth" (1985). It provided new interpretations of the social development of young people under new conditions and made steps to formulate the concept of youth policy. The article also discussed the issue of "*social problems of youth*" for the first time (as a rule, communist ideology did not recognize that a group of people can have common problems and proscribed social challenges only to the individuals, and the younger generation was understood as those who should benefit from communism, but not to have problems generated by the system). Therefore, studies from several research projects and discussions were conceptualized in a new Law on Youth.

The Law indicated some principles of state youth policy:

- involvement of young people in direct participation in the formulation and implementation of policies and programs that affect the whole of society, especially young people;
- ensuring the legal and social protection of young citizens, necessary to meet the age-related social needs;
- providing the young citizen with social services for education, upbringing, spiritual and physical development, vocational training, the nature, types and quality of which ensure the comprehensive development of the individual and preparation for an independent life (autonomy);
- supporting social activity in the field of social, spiritual and physical development of youth.

The aim of state youth policy was defined as: **creation of socio-economic, organizational, legal conditions and guarantees for the social formation and development of young citizens**, their fullest self-realization in the interests of the whole society.

The Law also indicated:

- legal and social protection of young people,

- independence and right for self-government in formal educational establishments,
- right and guarantee for social services,
- autonomy and support.

The Law also set up the creation of Youth Social Services, cooperation with non-state organizations in delivery of social services and cooperation with youth organizations. Later, post-soviet countries preserved the framework of social services, nevertheless in some cases they had been merged with the social policy.

2.2. The issue of sports and patriotism

As already mentioned, youth policy in the region is often merged with sports. From a management perspective, these policies are united, although young people remain a major target for sport policy. Budget allocations and legislation are also more developed in sport. Since research does not address this area, there is no clear vision of the impact of sport policy on youth policy.

Patriotic/national-patriotic education is also not studied in the context of youth research. Often it may have special budget allocation and be formally separated from youth policy. This segment, which does not fit into European standards, is either understood as citizenship education or as a contradiction to democratic citizenship education. The relations between education for democratic citizenship and patriotic educations have not been sufficiently researched. On political level, the same understanding of “being good citizens” and “being patriot of own country” is promoted in Azerbaijan and Belarus, when the concept of democratic citizenship and patriotism is still under discussion in Armenia, Georgia and Ukraine. Moldova has incorporated patriotic education into democratic citizenship education with the focus on building national identity.

Nevertheless, it is part of youth policy and sports, although if the research is conducted with the participation of international partners, these things are removed from the field of research. For example, the question of the identity or values of youth at the beginning was a sphere of interest of foreign researchers. The results of such research were not taken into political discussions within the countries.

2.4 International structures often drive or control the agenda

Youth policy is generally not among priority policy fields in the countries of EECA and as such their development has followed trends often promoted by the agenda of international organisations, such as the UN System, Council of Europe, even World Bank. It is not specifically youth policy that is not considered important, but generally the policy-making process prioritises a developmental model promoted by international organisations that offer both budgetary support (International Monetary Fund, European Union) and structural and programmatic one (World Bank, European Union, United Nations). In this case, the success of youth policy relies on a small group of active individuals from civil society and government. In

this landscape, youth research is often reduced to surveys and opinion-polls dictated by such international funding which requires justification of initiatives that are often replicated from one country to another.

2. Current youth research models by countries

This chapter is an attempt to present the picture of youth research by country, as collected from open sources and during the [Seminar on strengthening investment in youth research in Eastern Europe and Caucasus](#) held by the EU-CoE youth partnership in Chisinau on 19 September 2018.

The Soviet Union was a highly centralized country, with the Communist party leadership exerting particular control on how research was planned and carried out. Therefore, at the moment of the collapse, a lot of the research potential remained in Russia and new countries had to build or reorganize their national research structures quickly. By duplicating specialised laws, they simply replicated the Soviet model without spending resources on research. On the other hand, international organizations and donors, who at some point began to finance and conduct research, inspired new developments. International cooperation also became more accessible for scientists and researchers, being a channel for introducing new tools and forms of research. Nowadays, the scope, methods and tools of youth research are becoming more diverse and universal and are carried out in line with international practices. Some of the challenges of the current model include lack of resources for youth research, lack of qualitative research and preferred choice of general or thematic polls and surveys, as well as a general lack of investment in youth researchers. The most important weakness is the lack of sustainable monitoring of youth policy, strategies or programmes. Such an understanding of policy-making is of course not conducive to strong youth research. Still, each country has strong elements that could be further developed and built into a more coherent national youth research system. Below is an attempt to present the picture of youth research by country.

Armenia

Armenia wrote the first National Youth Report in 2007. This was followed by one in 2011 and 2012. National Youth Strategies have been elaborated based on these reports. There is a research Institution - Youth Studies Institute - founded with the support of UNDP. The institute is the part of state Youth Events Holding Centre under the Ministry of Youth and Sports. The Institute aims to provide data for evidence-based youth policy.

In 2011 the UNDP contributed to the Armenia [National Youth Report](#) with the study on youth aspirations. The study covered the following topics: family, education, employment, migration, leisure, participation and social moods.

From 2013 to 2017, the Youth Studies Institute and the Youth Events Holding Centre conducted a number of studies including those funded by the MoSYA:

- [The Issues of Youth Employment of the RA \(2013\),](#)
- [Assessment of the Effectiveness of State-funded Youth Programmes and Mapping of Youth Non -Governmental Organizations \(2014\),](#)
- [Research on Youth Work and Youth Workers \(2015\),](#)
- [Labour market demand study: institutionalisation prospects of cooperation between employer-young people-educational institutions \(2015\),](#)
- [Independence Generation: Youth study \(2016\),](#)
- [Monitoring and Evaluation of the 2013-2017 Strategy for the Youth State Policy of the Republic of Armenia \(2017\).](#)

Cooperation with UNDP shows that the government formulated requests to international institutions for the development of youth policy. Armenia is already developing its third youth strategy, which is based on research results. However, there are no studies that would reveal how successfully the previous strategies have been implemented.

Armenia has a typical combination of youth and sport policy within one ministry, with more attention and financial resources being devoted to sport. The legislative base on sport is more developed than the one on youth. In particular, the law on children's and youth sports, as one that probably concerns youth policy, deserves attention.

The evaluation of the 2013-2017 youth strategy cycle has created the grounds for a systematic approach to developing measurable indicators, a database of projects financed by public money and the success factors as well as young people's aspirations for the next cycle of youth strategy. research findings are used for the development of the 2018-2022 Strategy for the Youth State Policy of the Republic of Armenia.

It should be noted that there is no legally required standard for annual youth report. The National Youth Act is still under development.

Azerbaijan

Unfortunately, due to the absence of researchers from Azerbaijan either in EKCYP or in PEYR, information on the country is lacking.

Belarus

Youth issues in Belarus are within the portfolio of the Ministry of Education. There are several institutions conducting youth research in the country, mostly related to universities and groups of academic researchers. There is an annual State Report on the Situation of Youth and

Statistical book on Children and Youth. UNICEF also supports reports on situations of children in the cities within the [framework of the project activity](#) (creating the local centers friendly for adolescent/children and youth councils).

Below is a list of examples of the research papers by the institutions conducting qualitative youth research in Belarus:

- The Ministry of Education of the Republic of Belarus. [Sociological monitoring on youth policy implementation \(2016\)](#),
- The National Statistical Committee of the Republic of Belarus. [Children and Youth in the republic of Belarus. Statistical book \(2018\)](#),
- The Information and Analytical Center under the Presidential Administration of the Republic of Belarus. [Survey on values of Belarusian youth \(2018\)](#),
- Office for European Expertise and Communications Research. [Capacity of Youth Non-Governmental Organizations and Initiative Groups for Cooperation in Addressing Common Objectives \(2016\)](#),
- The National Report [On the situation of the youth in the Republic of Belarus \(2015\)](#),
- The Institute of Sociology of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus. [The Specificity of Youth as a Subject of Socio-Cultural Space in the Context of Globalisation and Informatization of Modern Society \(2015-2016\)](#),
- The Centre for Sociological and Political Studies of the Belarusian State University, [Youth in Sovereign Belarus: Strokes to the Portrait \(2012\)](#).

Youth research covers areas of family, employment, education and science, participation, values, delinquency, social-economic situation. There is also research on cultural identity available, which is not typical for the region. Belarusian youth researchers elaborate cross-border projects mostly with Russia, so the methodology and design of research are similar and are generally driven by presentation of statistics. 2015-2018 the group of researchers provided [Lithuanian-Belarusian youth “generations study”](#) giving the picture of young generations in both countries.

It should be noted that in Belarus, there is a journal of scientific articles on youth ["Modern youth and society"](#). It is only one periodical scientific journal on youth in the EECA region.

Belarus seems to have one of the most complex state-driven or state-supported research infrastructure focusing on youth. It is worth questioning how participatory and representative it is of voices critical of the state as, in general, independent civil society is heavily censored or even persecuted.

Georgia

Evidence-based youth policy is a stated principle of youth policy in Georgia. [The Georgian National Youth Policy Document](#) adopted in 2014 recognizes youth research as a part of decision making process, stating that: «*the Government of Georgia shall provide for conduct of research on youth issues in order to conduct an annual performance evaluation of the priorities and directions defined in the Youth Policy*».

The previous Ministry of Sport and Youth included in its structure research and analytical units. Similar to other countries in the region, indicators on data gathering regarding youth have been developed by the National Statistics Office in cooperation with international organizations, mainly UNICEF and UNFPA. Evidence-based youth development in Georgia has been strongly dependent on financing provided by international donors (see UNICEF and Friedrich Ebert Stiftung reports below). 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 ones of the government.

At the end of December 2017, the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs was merged with the Ministry of Culture as Ministry of Sport and Culture. Youth policy should be governed by a special agency under the new Ministry. The future of youth research is still unclear.

Recent studies:

- Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung. [National survey “Generation in Transition: Youth Study 2016 – Georgia”\(2016\)](#)
- UNICEF. [National Youth Survey in Georgia – Analysis of the Situation and Needs of Youth in Georgia” \(2016\)](#)

Moldova

Moldova is represented as the country with the most thorough reform of youth policy and the adoption of European practices into the legal framework.

Since 2016, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Research (the Ministry of Youth and Sport and the Ministry of Education have become one institution) is responsible for research, monitoring and evaluation of the youth strategy. According to the National Strategy of Youth Sector Development 2020, the responsible Ministry is to report to the government, by 31 March of each year, on [the implementation of the Strategy and the Action Plan](#). The former Ministry of Youth and Sports created a Reference Group - with a monitoring role in the Strategy implementation process, exercising periodical evaluation of implementation, fostering advocacy and dialogue with the responsible actors in the Strategy implementation process.

In addition, programmes and projects established with different international partners, develop mechanisms for improving the youth policy database and the extent of inter-sectoral cooperation, such as the Youth Inclusion Project, implemented by the Organization for

Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). The OECD provided "[Youth Well-being Policy Review of Moldova](#)" and contributed to the [National Youth Survey](#) (financed by EU). These [surveys](#) focused on the areas of democracy and participation, employment, health, education, societal perspectives, leisure, informational sources and social environment:

- Young Moldova: Problems, Values and Aspirations" (conducted by CBS-AXA for OECD);
- [Youth Health and and Health-Risk Behaviour](#) (carried out in 2017 by the Centre for Demographic Research, INCE);
- Study on the institutional and youth policy framework (conducted by IDIS Viitorul);
- Study on Behavioural and Social Determinants of Adolescent Health conducted by Neovita Youth Friendly Health Centre
- Studies on educational system, good governance and civil society engagement by Public Policies Institute.

There is only one survey in the region presenting research on the youth centres and youth services. The Ministry, in cooperation with UN Agencies, also invites youth workers to act as local correspondents for youth work best practices and to help to collect data on activities, needs and solutions for youth work and youth centres at the local level.

Ukraine

The Ministry of Youth and Sports of Ukraine is responsible for policy implementation, including research, monitoring and evaluation. Ongoing youth research is provided by the State Institute of Family and Youth Policies. The annual youth report traditions has started in 2014 and is conducted by involvement of research companies via open tender. The research covers area of demographic characteristics, values, family, employment, education, health, migration moods, political engagement, citizenship participation, volunteering and identity. The results of research are presented in [National youth report](#).

Before 2015, research in the youth field was fragmented. In 2015 the Ministry of Youth and Sports committed to providing comprehensive annual youth research. The national surveys are supported by UN agencies in Ukraine. The survey "[Youth of Ukraine – 2015](#)" includes analysis of the state of youth today, mechanisms of personal fulfillment and inclusion of youth in social processes and public life, activity of youth organisations and social challenges faced by youth, including financial security of young people and their families, youth employment, access to high-quality education, provision of housing, reasons for social behaviours, status of health and practice of healthy lifestyle. The survey conclusions were taken into account while drafting the "Youth of Ukraine" Programme. In 2016 a new survey "[Values of Ukrainian Youth](#)" explored the issues of social development of young people, mechanisms of self-realisation and engagement, participation in civil society organisations, level of national-patriotic education, practice of healthy lifestyle, challenges in access to education, the labour market and housing. In 2017 the

survey on [“Civic literacy in Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova”](#) organised by the UNDP office was taken into account in elaborating citizenship education programmes. The FES poll on [Ukrainian Generation Z](#) focused on attitudes and values has been published by FES in 2017.

Nevertheless, there is no evaluation on how the research results influence policy development. The new national youth law has not been adopted and evidence based youth policy is not requested by acting law. There are the same disproportions between youth and sports issues in the Ministry, moreover the area of national-patriotic education is separated from other youth policy issues. There is no clear connection between evidence and policy formulation.

Comparison of research themes.

Common research topics are:

The surveys and researches, conducted on national level and/or with the support of international donors cover the topics of:

- values and identity;
- family, family planning and marriage;
- education and training;
- employment;
- migration and mobility;
- free time, leisure;
- citizenship and participation.

Specific research topics are:

- foreign policy views (Georgia, Ukraine)
- social moods (Armenia)
- well-being and health disparities (Moldova)
- media and information, youth an risks of globalisation (Belarus).

The research results are published as publications, reports and infographic charts. The youth research related regular journal of scientific articles on youth ["Modern youth and society"](#) is issued in Belarus.

3. Cross-national surveys in the region

Beside the international organizations (mainly UN Agencies) working directly with the governments on research issues related to National Youth Report format, there are other large-scale research projects.

- In 2012 the Director of National Endowment of Democracy Nadia Duik published the cross-national youth research titled ["The Next Generation in Russia, Ukraine, and Azerbaijan: Youth, Politics, Identity, and Change"](#), representing findings from 2003 and 2010. The comparative analysis from three countries gives perspective on national identity, emigration, leisure, trust and corruption, politics, values, employment and finance. The research raised questions that had little to do with youth.
- In 2016 the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Foundation published "Generation Studies" for Armenia, Georgia and Ukraine. The research is based on the typical methodology used previously for South-Eastern Europe. This research covers areas of democracy and participation deeper than "official" research, and the findings can often be different.

4. Youth as age group in national system of data collection and processing

Youth is not a separate group of statistics.

The systems for collecting statistical information about youth in the region have common features. In particular, young people do not stand out as a separate age group. Statistics divided young people into the age subgroups (15-19, 20-24, 25-29 etc.). In that case, general information about youth is collected (number, gender, geographical distribution, etc.). But at the same time, economic, industrial, and entrepreneurship statistics do not provide systemic indicators on youth as a separate group.

Armenia. Age of youth: 16-30 years. Statistics are divided youth into three subgroups: from 15 to 19 years old, from 20 to 24 years old and from 25 to 29 years old. Young people aged 30 years are included in the sub-group of people of 30-34 years old.

Belarus. Age of youth: 14-31. Statistics are divided youth into three sub-groups: aged 15-19 years, aged 20-24, and aged 25-29.

Georgia. Age of youth: 14-29. Statistics are divided youth into following subgroups: 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).

Moldova. Age of youth: 14-35. Statistics define young population as persons aging 15-29. Part of this category are: high school students, university students, high school and university graduates, employed youth, qualified and non-qualified youth looking for a job, young families, etc.

Ukraine. Age of youth: 14-35. Statistics define young people as four age groups: 30-34, 25-29, 20-24 and 15-19 years.