

Youth Partnership

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



CONTRIBUTION OF NON-PROGRAMME COUNTRIES TO THE EU YOUTH WIKI

CHAPTER V: ARMENIA PARTICIPATION

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Updated: December 2022

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Published: August 2019

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5.1 GENERAL CONTEXT

Main concepts

The Decision of the Government of the Republic of Armenia (RA) N54 of 25 December 2014 on Approving the [Youth State Policy Concept of the RA for 2015-2025](#) (the Concept) defines “youth” as follows: “Young person: a 16-30 (inclusive) year old citizen of the Republic of Armenia, as well as 16-30 (inclusive) year old foreign citizens residing in Armenia and having residence permits (residency status), persons with no citizenship and those with refugee status in the Republic of Armenia (under appropriate grounds established by the law).”

The promotion of youth participation in political, economic and cultural life is one of the main objectives of state policy in the economic, social and cultural spheres.¹ The legal and policy framework for youth participation in the RA is composed of the Constitution of the RA (the constitution),² the Law of the RA on the Rights of the Child,³ the Law of the RA on Education,⁴ the Law of the RA on General Education,⁵ the Law of the RA on Local Self-Government,⁶ the Law on the Normative Legal Acts,⁷ and other legal Acts. According to the Statistical Committee of the RA, young people in Armenia made up 709 617, or about 27%, of the total population as of 2016.⁸

Recent years have been highly turbulent for Armenia and young people have had a special role in, and are impacted by, that fact. The “Velvet Revolution” in 2018, military conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan in 2020 and 2022, the Covid-19 pandemic, and many other events regularly changed the aspirations, perspectives and expectations of young people in relation to all aspects of life in the country. Throughout this period, changes in political, economic, security, and social contexts affected all citizens, and young people in particular. The interest and motivation that young people had in 2018 regarding public affairs in Armenia was rewarded by some young leaders receiving political and administrative positions in the public sector. However, for a large group of young people, no substantial change happened to allow their participation in decision-making processes.

¹. Article 86(12) of the constitution (Hayastani Hanrapetutyun Sahmanadrutyun), adopted through a referendum on 5 July 1995 and amended through referendums on 27 November 2005 and 6 December 2015, available at www.president.am/en/constitution-2015/, accessed 15 August 2019.

². www.arlis.am/documentview.aspx?docID=143723.

³. www.arlis.am/documentview.aspx?docID=69115.

⁴. www.arlis.am/documentview.aspx?docID=68299.

⁵. www.arlis.am/documentview.aspx?docid=160449.

⁶. www.arlis.am/documentview.aspx?docID=73271.

⁷. www.arlis.am/documentView.aspx?docid=142147.

⁸. The 2018-2022 Draft Strategy on Youth Policy (Hayastani Hanrapetutyun Eritasaradkan Petakan Qaghaqakanutyun 2018-2022 Razmavarutyun Naxagits).

According to the National Human Development Report [The Right to a Future: Youth that Transforms Armenia](#) conducted in 2018-2019 by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), civil participation is still the predominant form of participation of young people. According to the report:

CSO-based involvement is one of the most popular formats in the civic sector. This format for involvement refers to the issues related to the youth's informal education, participation in community life, social entrepreneurship, inclusion of the disabled, assistance to vulnerable social groups, media literacy, and civic education. Such programmes are implemented not only in the CSO format, but also through active civic groups in the community. From the civic perspective, these programmes have resulted in revealing knowledgeable, self-motivated, responsible individuals and groups in the youth sector. This has played an important role in raising the youth's civic activism levels, something that was also significant during the Velvet Revolution.

There is a clear need for young people and decision makers to learn, and find ways to conduct structured dialogues that will invite and ensure meaningful youth participation.

Institutions of representative democracy

The constitutional referendum held on 6 December 2015 changed the country's system of governance from a semi-presidential to a parliamentary regime. Peaceful, anti-government mass protests, the so-called Velvet Revolution, where young people played a vital role, started in April 2018 and resulted in a change of political power in May 2018. Extraordinary parliamentary elections were held in December 2018. After the formation of the national assembly (NA), the President of the RA (the President) appointed the prime minister (PM) proposed by the majority of the NA, and the [Government of the RA](#) (the government) was formed within a period of 15 days. Before June 2019, the [Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports](#) (MESCS) constituted the main authority in charge of the drafting and implementation of youth policies in Armenia. The changes in the government structure⁹ reduced the number of ministries from 17 to 12 and the number of deputy PMs from three to two. As a result, the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Sports and Youth Affairs merged with the Ministry of Science and Education into [the Ministry of Science, Education, Culture and Sports of the RA](#). Although the proposed amendments, especially the exclusion of the word "youth" from the name of the ministry, raised concerns among the youth non-governmental organisation (NGO) sector and activists, youth activists emphasised the importance of content rather than form.

The [Constitution of the RA](#) (constitution) embodies the principle of separating and balancing powers. State power is divided between the executive, the legislature and the judiciary.

Judicial power is exercised by the courts. The justice system consists of the [Constitutional](#)

⁹. The amendments and supplements to the law [On the Structure and Functions of the Government of RA](#) entered into force on 1 June 2019 (accessed on 17 June 2019). The main purpose of the amendments is to increase the effectiveness of the state administration system by reducing the number of state administration bodies.

[Court](#), the Court of Cassation,¹⁰ courts of appeal, courts of first instance of general jurisdiction, and the Administrative Court. The Supreme Judicial Council is an independent state body that guarantees the independence of the courts and judges.

The [NA](#) is the representative body of the people that implements legislative power. It exercises supervision over the executive power, adopts the state budget, ratifies, suspends and revokes international treaties, and performs other functions prescribed by the constitution. The NA is composed of at least 101 deputies elected for a term of 5 years through a two-tier proportional electoral system: a closed national list and 13 open district lists and, additionally, up to four seats are reserved for the four largest national minorities. A deputy, a faction of the NA and the government have the right to put forward legislative initiatives. Laws, NA decisions, statements and addresses, except for cases prescribed by the constitution, are adopted by the majority of the votes of the deputies participating, provided that more than half the total number of deputies have participated in the voting. The NA establishes [standing committees](#) for the preliminary review of draft laws and other issues, and for the submission of opinions/conclusions thereon to the NA, as well as for the exercise of parliamentary supervision.¹¹ As of December 2022, there are 11 standing committees.¹² Youth issues are within the sphere of the activities of the [Standing Committee on Science, Education, Culture, Diaspora, Youth and Sport](#).

The president is the head of state and is elected by the NA for a term of 7 years. The president signs and promulgates laws adopted by the NA, makes changes in the composition of the government, concludes international treaties, appoints and recalls diplomatic representatives to foreign states and international organisations, approves, suspends or revokes international treaties not requiring ratification, confers the highest diplomatic ranks, appoints and dismisses the supreme command of the armed forces and of other troops, decides on issues in respect of granting and terminating citizenship of the RA, and of granting pardon to convicts, as well as performing other duties prescribed by the constitution.¹³

The government, as the supreme body of the executive power, develops and implements the domestic and foreign policies of the state and exercises the general management of the bodies of the state administration system. It is composed of the PM, deputy PMs and ministers. The PM is elected by parliamentary majority and appointed by the president. The PM proposes candidates for deputy PMs and ministers to the president. The PM determines the main directions of policy of the government, manages the activities of the government and coordinates the work of the members of the government. The members of the government are entitled to adopt secondary regulatory legal acts. The government implements a single state policy on financial and economic, credit and tax matters. The government submits a report

¹⁰. The Supreme Court addresses cases in all areas except for the field of constitutional justice.

¹¹. Articles 88-119 of the constitution.

¹². Standing committees of the NA, available at www.parliament.am/committees.php?lang=eng, accessed 10 June 2019.

¹³. Articles 123-136 of the constitution.

for each year to the NA in respect of the implementation process of its programme and the results thereof.¹⁴

The bodies of the state administration system are the ministries, as well as other bodies subordinate to the government, the PM and the ministries.¹⁵ The government implements its territorial policy in marzes (regions) through marz governors who are appointed and dismissed by the government. Marz governors co-ordinate the activities of the territorial subdivisions of the state administration bodies, except in cases prescribed by law.¹⁶ Local self-governance (LSG) is the right and capacity of LSG bodies to decide, under their own responsibility, on public issues of community importance – in the interests of residents of the community. LSG bodies are the councils of elders and the community mayors (elected for a term of 5 years). LSG is exercised in communities.¹⁷ Residents of a community may directly participate in the administration of community affairs, by resolving public issues of community importance through a local referendum.¹⁸ LSG bodies have their own powers, for the purpose of performing the mandatory and voluntary tasks of a community, as well as those delegated by the state. The mandatory tasks of a community are prescribed by law, whereas voluntary tasks are prescribed by decisions of the council of elders of a community. The council of elders adopts secondary regulatory legal acts subject to enforcement within the territory of the community. The community head executes the decisions of the council of elders, and carries out the general management of the staff of the community.¹⁹ The administrative-territorial units of the RA are the marzes and the communities.²⁰ The marzes comprise rural and urban communities. Yerevan, the capital of Armenia, is a community. The territory of Armenia is divided into ten marzes.²¹

Elections of the NA and of the council of elders, as well as referendums, are held on the basis of universal, equal, free and direct suffrage, by secret ballot. Elections are administered by a three-tier system comprising the Central Election Commission (CEC), territorial election commissions and precinct election commissions.

¹⁴. Articles 146-156 of the constitution.

¹⁵. Aragatsotn Marz, Ararat Marz, Armavir Marz, Gegharkunik Marz, Lori Marz, Kotayk Marz, Shirak Marz, Syunik Marz, Vayots Dzor Marz and Tavush Marz.

¹⁶. Article 160 of the constitution.

¹⁷. Article 179 of the constitution.

¹⁸. Article 183 of the constitution.

¹⁹. Article 182 of the constitution.

²⁰. Article 121 of the constitution.

²¹. Article 7 of the constitution.

5.2. YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN REPRESENTATIVE DEMOCRACY

Young people as voters

Citizens of the RA, having attained the age of 18 by the day of an election to the NA, or by the day of a referendum, have the right to vote and the right to participate in referendums. Anyone who has attained the age of 25, has held citizenship of only the RA for the preceding 4 years and has been permanently residing in Armenia for the preceding 4 years, has the right of suffrage and has command of the Armenian language, may be elected as a member of the NA. Armenian citizens, having attained the age of 18 by the day of an election or referendum, shall have the right to vote and be elected during the elections of LSG bodies, and the right to participate in local referendums. Persons declared as having no active legal capacity by a court decision, as well as persons sentenced and those serving a sentence for a grave criminal offence committed intentionally, shall not be entitled to vote, be elected or participate in a referendum. Persons sentenced and those serving the sentence for other criminal offences shall not be entitled to vote either.²² Prisoners convicted for lesser offences are not disenfranchised. Judges, prosecutors, military personnel, police officers, other categories of civil servants and election commissioners may not stand as candidates.

At present, there is no plan to lower the voting age limit. Neither [the Constitutional Law of the RA on Electoral Code](#) nor [the Constitutional Law of the RA on Political Parties](#) constitute any quota for seats reserved for young people or contain any provisions aimed at facilitating young people standing as political candidates.

According to the [CEC](#), as of 9 December 2018 (parliamentary elections), the total number of voters was 2 593 140, out of which the number of registered voters was 2 591 276 and the total number of voters who voted was 1 261 105 (48.66%).²³ At present, there is no available data on youth participation in the recent (June 2021) elections or research on youth attitudes towards the post-2020 political developments. The Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) Election Observation Mission, in its Statement of Preliminary Findings and Conclusions, concluded that the elections (the 2020 parliamentary elections):

... were competitive and generally well-managed within a short timeframe. However, they were characterized by intense polarization and marred by increasingly inflammatory rhetoric among key contestants. The legal framework is generally comprehensive, but the fact that amendments were adopted so close to the elections caused some legal uncertainty. The election administration conducted its work in a transparent, collegial and professional manner and enjoyed electoral stakeholders' confidence. Voters were provided with a broad range of options, and fundamental rights and freedoms were generally respected, with contestants being able to campaign freely. However, the negative tone and the personality driven nature of the campaign hindered a policy-focused debate. Generally, women were sidelined throughout the campaign.

²². Article 48 of the constitution.

²³. The CEC, results of the 2018 parliamentary elections, available at www.elections.am/parliamentary/, accessed 9 June 2019.

Election day, including the vote count, was assessed positively overall.²⁴

Young people as political representatives

Armenian citizens having attained the age of 18 and having legal capacity are eligible for membership of a political party.²⁵

According to the official page of the NA, out of 107 deputies at the 8th convocation of the NA of the RA there were 14 members under the age of 30 (13%) on the date of the election. The average age of members in 2022 is 40. Women's representation numbers only 37 (35.51%).²⁶ The government has 15 members (in 2022); none of them are under 30 years of age.²⁷ Out of ten marz governors, none are under the age of 30.²⁸

A person registered as a candidate for membership of the NA or an elected deputy, before assuming the powers of a deputy or for the period in which they have the status of a candidate for deputy, shall not be subject to be called for drills or military training or be drafted for compulsory military service.²⁹ Every citizen has the right to establish a political party together with other citizens and the right to join any political party. Judges, prosecutors and investigators may not be members of a political party. The law may prescribe restrictions on the right to establish a political party and the right to join any political party for servicemen of the armed forces, national security, the police and other militarised bodies.³⁰

5.3. YOUTH REPRESENTATION BODIES

Youth councils and/or youth advisory bodies

The [National Youth Policy Council for the PM of the RA](#)³¹ was set up in 2009 with a view to

²⁴. Available at www.osce.org/files/f/documents/5/4/502386_0.pdf.

²⁵. Article 12(2), the Constitutional Law of the RA on Political Parties (Kusakcutyunneri Masin Sahmanadrakan Orenq) adopted by the NA on 16 December 2016, available at www.arlis.am/DocumentView.aspx?DocID=110534, accessed 14 June 2019.

²⁶. https://data.ipu.org/node/8/data-on-women?chamber_id=13324.

²⁷. www.gov.am/am/gov-members/.

²⁸. www.gov.am/am/regions/.

²⁹. Article 90(2) of the Constitutional Law of the RA on Electoral Code (HH Yntrakan Orensgirq HH Sahmanadrakan Orenq), adopted on 25 May 2016, last amended on 13 June 2018, available at www.arlis.am/DocumentView.aspx?DocID=123532, accessed 10 June 2019.

³⁰. Article 46 of the constitution.

³¹. Decision N785-A of 17 September 2009 on Establishing the National Youth Policy Council for the PM of the RA and Approving its Statute (Hayastani Hanrapetutyun Varchapetin Arynter Azgayin Eritasardakan Qaghaqakanutyun Khorhurd Steghtselu ev Kanonadrutyuny Hastatelu Masin HH Varchapeti Voroshumy N785-A, 17 September 2009).

contributing to the design and implementation of national youth policy, encouraging youth involvement in different spheres of public life and assisting youth organisations with their activities. Members of this council included representatives of youth, youth civil society organisations (CSOs) and relevant governmental bodies. It was facilitated by the PM of the RA. Unfortunately, the National Youth Policy Council has not been active since 2013; nevertheless, it is worth mentioning that it had a substantial impact on the development of the youth ecosystem in Armenia and provided co-management systems for decision-making processes. The re-activation of this council would require a review of its architecture, mandate, legal basis and list of members.

[Youth Councils for the Governors \(Marzpets\)](#)³² were established to ensure youth participation in various spheres of public life, to support and promote the development and implementation of youth state policy in the marzes (regions) and to promote the activities of youth organisations. The councils' functions include raising the effectiveness of youth policy in the marzes and ensuring co-operation between state, regional and community bodies on youth issues; assessing youth policy in the marzes and submitting recommendations to the Marzpet; discussing regional and community programmes related to youth issues; creating favourable conditions for youth participation in various fields of public life; discussing educational, social, health, environmental, legal and other issues related to youth; and submitting recommendations to the Marzpet and others. The councils are formed for a period of 2 years; upon the expiry of this term, new councils are formed. Each council is composed of two representatives (one from the state body (usually a deputy head of community or head of staff), the other a young person (usually from the NGO sector)) from each community with a population of at least 3 500. The chair of the council is the Marzpet and the secretary of the council is an elected NGO representative. The councils meet on a quarterly basis, but this varies widely between marzes and depends on the leadership in place. Alongside high levels of turnover at the senior levels of marz administration, there are also challenges regarding institutional memory and the transferability of the achievements of these councils from one administration to the next.

According to the Law on Local Self-Governments, community mayors can establish advisory bodies to support them on relevant topics. Several communities have established youth councils for the community mayors. They have different levels of activity, often depending on the interest and attention they receive from the local administration, available internal and external funding, and support from third parties. The Youth Council for the Mayor of Yerevan³³ was established in 2020, and is active. During regular meetings, issues related to youth are discussed and addressed. Communities with active youth councils for mayors include Kapan, Gyumri and Gavar.

³². Decision N85-A of 10 February 2014 on Approving the Statute of the Youth Council for the Governor (Marzpet) (Hayastani Hanrapetutyun Marzpetin Arynter Eritasardakan Khorhrdi Orinakeli Kanonadrutyuny Hastatelu Masin HH Varchapeti Voroshumy N85-A, 10 Petrvari 2014).

³³. www.yerevan.am/uploads/media/default/0001/99/3430fbf91b8bc9cc2bc929dc83ff7bcb34c0ba3d.pdf.

Youth parliament

At present, there is no youth parliament in Armenia. The [Youth Parliament](#), founded in 2004 under the Standing Committee on Science, Education, Culture and Youth Affairs of the NA, was registered as an NGO in 2005 and ceased its operations in 2013.

Youth council

The National Youth Council of Armenia is an umbrella organisation for over 70 youth organisations from different sectors and a full member of the European Youth Forum. It has not carried out its representative function since 2013 and exists only in a *de jure* capacity. Considering this gap, in 2019 six active youth CSOs established a network called [Youth Organizations Union \(YOU\)](#), which has 23 active members (as of December 2022).

According to the [Report on the Monitoring and Evaluation of the 2013-2017 Strategy of State Youth Policy of the RA](#) conducted by the Youth Studies Institute and the Youth Events Holding Centre in 2016, “the lack of participation platforms at national, regional and local levels are underlined both in research studies and in expert interviews. This means that the National Youth Council does not operate, and youth councils attached to regional administration have limited involvement and are passive.” The report highlights:

... the lack of awareness and knowledge among a large number of young people related to the public administration system, to the participation opportunities in decision-making in the community and to human rights. The importance of enhancing youth participation in the level of decision-making in communities is emphasised in the research on the Youth Situation in Rural Communities. In the case of having free time young people do not spend it on solving community problems, and they do not have the abilities and desire to suggest ideas and implement them. The lack of motivation for social life participation is partially due to the scepticism towards state institutions and the lack of information.

It also notes that:

... stereotyped perceptions, the absence of certain target activities and integration issues hinder the involvement and participation of vulnerable groups, such as young people with disabilities, those who returned from detention or compulsive medical treatment, LGBT groups, young people without parental care, Syrian-Armenian refugees, youth living in remote villages, women living in regions and particularly in villages, extremely poor people and others. The involvement of the youth of ethnic minorities in youth events organised by the government was also highlighted.

The above-mentioned issues related to participation were addressed in the [Draft State Youth Policy Strategy for 2018-2022](#) and the [Draft State Youth Policy Strategy for 2021-2025](#).

Higher education student council(s) and school student council(s)

The Law on Education, the Law on General Education, the Law on Higher and Postgraduate

Professional Education and the Law on VET Education,³⁴ as well as a number of normative legal acts state that secondary, vocational education and training (VET) and higher education institutions are obliged to have pupil/student representation and/or self-governing bodies, and that students should be represented at the governing bodies of these educational institutions.

The establishment of higher education student councils(s) are regulated by laws. The [Law on Higher and Postgraduate Professional Education](#) states that:

... the learners at a higher education institution may unite within student councils, student scientific societies and other student organisations. The procedure for the establishment and of the rules of procedure of student councils and scientific student societies are approved by the authorised public administration body for education (Ministry of Education, Science, Culture, and Sports). The activities of student councils and student scientific societies are financed through the extra-budgetary means of the higher education institution. The amount of financing is defined by the management board of the higher education institution.

According to the Law on Higher and Postgraduate Professional Education, the highest governing body for higher education institutions is the board. The board is composed of representatives from the faculty, students and representatives of the founding institution, and the relevant line ministry (the MESCS). The board should have at least 20 members. The formation and operation of student councils is described in the by-laws of each higher education institution, which are approved by the government. Student councils have often been affiliated with political parties, but in the last few years this affiliation is seemingly decreasing.

The government is working on a reform package for the education sector. There are draft modifications suggested by the MESCS, which will decrease student representation at the governance body of the higher education institutions; these suggested modifications caused demonstrations and petitions among the students.

Similarly, the Law on VET Education states that one of the governing bodies for VET institutions is the board, which is composed of representatives of the faculty, students, the founding institution, and the relevant line ministry (the MESCS). Board members for VET institutions number as many as 20.

The [Law on Education](#) states that:

The academic and teaching staff, research workers and students (trainees, attendees) of higher education institutions shall enjoy academic freedoms. They shall be entitled to participate in the discussion of all issues related to the activities of the university and in the activities of elective bodies. At least 25% of the total number of members in the management bodies of higher education institutions shall comprise students who shall be nominated and elected by the elective and self-governing student representative body of the relevant level, i.e. by the Student Council. The Statute of the Student Council of a higher education institution shall be approved by the authorised public administration body for education.

³⁴ . www.arlis.am/documentview.aspx?docID=68301.

The [Law on General Education](#) states that:

For the purpose of effective organisation of the educational activities of an educational institution, advisory bodies, i.e. pedagogical, parental, pupil councils, subject related methodology units, shall be established, the procedure for the establishment and the competences whereof shall be defined by the Statute of an educational institution. The members of the pupil council shall participate in the management of an educational institution in an advisory capacity.

According to the Law on General Education and subsequent normative legal acts, schools are required to have pupil councils. These councils are formed of pupils from 6th to 12th grade (and possibly also include students from 5th grade) appointed from each class at the beginning of the school year, and they serve a 1-year term. The council elects a president, who further represents pupils at the school board meetings, but they have no voting rights. Pupil councils meet once per month. In 2020, a pupil council for the Minister of Education, Science, Culture and Sports³⁵ was created, which is composed of pupils from 8th to 12th grade. It meets on a quarterly basis.

Student and pupil councils are obligatory elements of educational institutions' self-governance and operations. There is growing attention from the MESCS in terms of ensuring the independence of, and the meaningful representation of students'/pupils' rights through, these councils. Reports, minutes and other documentation on the work of student and pupil councils are checked during regular inspections by the Educational Inspectorate,³⁶ along with other documentation of the educational institutions.

The recent [Report: On “Young Voices” Survey Results](#) conducted by Save the Children in Armenia, World Vision in Armenia and the RA's Human Rights Defender Office in 2017³⁷ highlighted the following findings:

Relating to awareness:

... 82% of respondents³⁸ stated that they do agree that children's opinion should be important for politicians and decision-makers; 70% of children stated that they learned of child rights in schools, 54% mentioned that they are aware of the UN Convention on the Child Rights (CRC), only 32% mentioned that they learned about the UNCRC in schools; 82% of surveyed children have been able to express their views about issues that concern them, within the family during the last year, whereas only 26% of them were given an opportunity to speak about the community issues. According to the survey data 7 out of 10 children (70%) reported that they learned of child rights at schools. More than half of the respondents (54%) gave an affirmative answer regarding their awareness of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Based on the evidence it might be stated that participants of both survey and focus groups were mainly aware of their basic

³⁵ <https://escs.am/am/static/council>.

³⁶ www.eib.am/hy.

³⁷ https://armenia.savethechildren.net/sites/armenia.savethechildren.net/files/library/YV_brief%20version_Final%20eng.pdf

³⁸ https://armenia.savethechildren.net/sites/armenia.savethechildren.net/files/library/YV_brief%20version_Final%20eng.pdf

rights. Respondents were able to list several child rights with the majority naming at least three basic rights of a child. These figures were one of the most inspiring and surprising findings of the survey. However, only 32% mentioned that it is at the school that they were presented at the Convention. This means that the primary source of information about the Convention is not the school, which is a case for education sector policy-makers to consider strengthening the curricula on human rights, with particular focus on this fundamental document on child rights.

Relating to participation and influence:

... 64% of children are convinced that they should influence education/school issues and 76% of respondents would like more influence, and opportunities to affect the issues that concern them; 80% of surveyed children want to have more influence and more opportunities to affect their entertainment and out-of-school activities and 58% of them insist on an improvement of the space for entertainment activities within the school infrastructure. 8 out of 10 respondents (80%) declared that they want more influence on issues that affect them. Children usually have no formal opportunities to make their voices heard. Only 26% of children think that they were given an opportunity to speak about the community issues, whereas 82% of surveyed children mentioned that they were able to express their views about the family issues during the previous year. It is also worth mentioning that as the age of respondents increases, the percentage of “Yes, there are many opportunities to express your opinion to decision makers” also increases. More than 6 out of 10 respondents were unaware of their school’s development plan.

There is a significant lack of awareness regarding membership in school student councils:

... 41% didn’t know whether they could become a School Student Council member, while 44% were sure it’s an easy task. Nearly half of the respondents (50%) said that their parents could easily become a member of the School Parent Council, while 42% were unaware of the process. The figures may be attributed to the lack of awareness among children regarding the school governance system, including Parent, Teacher’s and Children’s Councils, as well as their mandates and procedures for memberships; and this may be addressed via an awareness campaign. In total, 64% of children were quite convinced that they could influence education/school issues. In addition, 76% of respondents would like more influence, and opportunities to give their views on issues that concern them.

According to the information received from the child protection unit of the RA’s Human Rights Defender Office, the latter conducts training in schools on how to form and actively participate in councils’ work.

Although the role of the student council is in ensuring self-governance, supporting development and the improvement of learning processes, advocating students’ rights and raising educational and other issues, the [Report on the Monitoring and Evaluation of the 2013-2017 Strategy of State Youth Policy of the RA](#) highlighted some obstacles. According to the results of the monitoring:

... young people participating in focus group (FG) discussions mentioned that sometimes government ensures artificial participation by using the youth for political purposes. This problem is more acute for the youth in regions. The FG participants representing a student group of Yerevan stress that there are no young people even in the governing councils of universities, which means that the youth voice is not properly taken into account here as well ...

... student councils are politicised, which means that the platforms uniting the youth and making their voice audible for decision-makers do not exist or are not sufficiently effective.

Participation platforms in the educational system need serious improvement. The student and schoolchildren unions are of a formal character and do not serve their purposes, in some cases due to lack of awareness. As of December 2022, student councils are in the process of reform, and, besides the formal student councils, informal student councils/self-organised bodies have been also formed.

Other bodies

Intergovernmental/international organisations and large-scale initiatives also have effective youth participation structures. The UNDP in the RA formed a youth participation club called [“I am the community”](#) composed of alumni from “I am the community” summer camps. At the moment, the “I am the community” club has over 200 members. They discuss and provide recommendations on ongoing reforms on sectors that are of interest to their members. The club has had a number of recommendations on ongoing policy reforms accepted.

Child and youth participation in NA sessions is very rare. During recent years, special sittings dedicated to Universal Children’s Day (on 20 November) have been organised by UNICEF Armenia and the NA. During the events, children aged 14-18 “took over” the parliament and sent powerful messages on important issues such as children’s needs in education, health, nutrition and social inclusion, as well as the need to end violence, to deputies, government ministers and the general public. Occasionally, schoolchildren or students, within the framework of the Open Doors programme, at the invitation of the deputies, are hosted at the NA and take part in Q&A sessions.

The [Armenian Youth Foundation’s](#)³⁵ (AYF’s) regional centres (10) started operating in 2011. The mission of the centres was to: organise and implement youth state policy programmes in their respective marzes; organise multi-stakeholder discussions, seminars and meetings; co-operate with community councils, Marzpets and NGOs; identify and solve issues relating to youth; promote youth activism and strengthen youth organisations; ensure youth participation in different spheres; develop youth skills and abilities in regions through different (health, educational, environmental, cultural, sport, socio-economic and intellectual) programmes, activities and trainings. The AYF and its regional centres were state funded, but also received support for their establishment from OSCE. The centres became rather passive in 2016-2017. The AYF was officially dissolved in 2021;³⁹ its headquarters and regional centres’ buildings were sold or allocated to other purposes.

The Youth Events Holding Centre (YEHC) state non-commercial organisation operated under the Ministry of Sports and Youth Affairs. It was responsible for the implementation of programmes developed by the former Ministry of Sports and Youth Affairs; youth-related studies and research; youth policy monitoring and evaluation. The YEHC included the Youth Studies Institute in its structure. In 2019, the organisation stopped operating as a result of

³⁹ . www.azdarar.am/announcements/org/131/00932956/.

governmental restructuring and optimisation.

In 2017, the “[Restart](#)” civic initiative was created and later on it was registered as an NGO by a group of students from different universities with a view to implementing reforms (depoliticising student councils and making them transparent) in the universities. The goal of the initiative is to identify the problems facing universities and to contribute to their solutions, as well as to create a system of higher education that will provide quality education, objective assessment criteria and a link with the labour market. At present, Restart implements various public-civil activities by promoting informal education, forming platforms for the discussion of public issues, participating in observation missions and encouraging informed participation in universities.

5.4. YOUNG PEOPLE’S PARTICIPATION IN POLICY MAKING

There are no specific legal provisions or policy guidelines on youth consultation; however, there are several legal acts that refer to consultation mechanisms. According to the constitution, at least 50 000 citizens with the right of suffrage shall be entitled to propose, upon a popular initiative, a draft law to the NA. Residents of a community may directly participate in the administration of community affairs by resolving public issues of community importance through a local referendum. The procedure for holding a local referendum, as well as other ways of direct participation for residents of a community in the administration of community affairs, is prescribed by law.

More specifically, the legal framework on consultation mechanisms includes the [Law on Local Referendum](#), the [Law on Regulatory Legal Acts](#), which sets the requirement for public discussion and consultation, and the Decision of the Government establishing detailed procedures for arranging and carrying out public discussions, including publication of the draft legal acts on a unified website (www.e-draft.am): the Decision of the Elders Council of the city of Yerevan N45-N of 10 September 2013 on Approving the Procedure for Organising and Conducting Open Public Hearings and (or) Discussions and Providing Information regarding it to the Elders Council of the city of Yerevan. The [Law on Local Self-Government](#) also stipulates the participation of community residents in local public life; however, it should be reviewed in terms of youth participation.

Additionally, the [Law on Education](#) (Article 28.1) states that “students are entitled to participate in the discussion of all issues related to the activities of the university and in the activities of elective bodies”. The [Law on General Education](#) (Article 20.6) states that “a student has the right to participate in the management of the educational institution as prescribed by the Statute of the educational institution”, and the [Law on Higher and Postgraduate Professional Education](#) (Article 17.3) states that a student at a higher education institution is entitled to take part in the activities of the relevant management bodies of the higher education institution. However, neither guidelines nor mechanisms, nor procedures for consultation, are provided.

There is no official data on young people’s participation in consultation processes. For information on the extent of youth participation, please see Section 5.3.

Large-scale initiatives for dialogue or debate between public institutions and young people

There are different platforms, programmes and initiatives that support youth consultation mechanisms. Examples include:

- the discussion and development of the draft State Youth Policy Strategy for 2021-2025⁴⁰ and draft State Youth Policy Strategy for 2018-2022, with the involvement of state and local self-government bodies, international and intergovernmental organisations, youth NGOs, youth, experts and youth workers, and other legal entities and individuals;
- the dissemination and organisation of the (online) discussion of the International Strategy for Youth Co-operation of the Commonwealth of Independent States Member States in 2021-2030;
- the online grants system (<http://cragrer.am/>) allowing youth NGOs (not operational as of 2018), youth workers and youth to register on the website in order to apply for or to evaluate state grant programmes;
- the Armenian Youth Capital of the Year contest, which aims to contribute to the drafting and implementation of youth programmes in communities, and to develop partnerships between the cities in the youth policy field and organisations and infrastructure in marzes and other places.

In June 2019, Yerevan Municipality launched the [Active Citizen](#) electronic platform, which allows the residents of Yerevan to present their projects. The projects selected by the residents of Yerevan will be implemented by the municipality. At the same time, this platform is a means of getting informed about citizens’ concerns, of searching for solutions, and of holding electronic referendums.

From 2017 to 2018, the Centre for Strategic Initiatives, with technical and financial support from the European Union (EU), implemented the “Young Experts Scheme – Armenia” ([“YES Armenia”](#)) programme, which aims to support the development and implementation of strategic initiatives and key reform projects. Twenty-one young Armenians and Armenian citizens (aged 25-35) were offered a training and skills development and mentoring/coaching programme and had the opportunity to work in and for ministries, government agencies, and other government institutions for 12 months on priority government projects. The list of sectors/projects included support for the establishment of a new governance model for public schools; development of the tourism sector; development and operationalisation of the digital economy; establishment of a public-private partnership system; agricultural, energy, health and environment sectors; development of investment projects and other projects in

⁴⁰ www.e-draft.am/projects/3268.

government priority areas. The young experts also participated in the development of around half a dozen laws and many by-laws, and in government decisions. Whether to also include support for local authorities in the continuation and scaling up of the “YES Armenia” programme is under discussion.⁴¹ As of September 2018, the Centre for Strategic Initiatives has been dissolved according to the Decree of Government N1003 dated 14 September 2018.⁴²

The National Democratic Institute, under the USAID-funded [Strengthening Electoral Processes and Political Accountability \(SEPPA\)](#) project, supports internships and fellowships for young professionals in the NA. This initiative started in 2020 and engages 27 young professionals annually. It provides an opportunity for young Armenians to get acquainted with parliamentary democracy, apply their knowledge and skills in daily work, participate in professional development training, and create a solid foundation for public service careers. Parliamentary interns and fellows have worked with more than 40 deputies from the three parliamentary factions, as well as with ten committees. They conduct media monitoring, run social media platforms for the deputies, work with constituents, conduct research and legal analyses, and more.⁴³

5.5. NATIONAL STRATEGY TO INCREASE YOUTH PARTICIPATION

Existence of a national strategy to increase young people’s political and civic participation

The promotion of youth civic, economic, and political participation is highlighted in several policy documents.

The [Government’s Programme for 2021-2026](#) highlights youth in education, employment, economy, the diaspora, and other fields. Additionally, Article 4.6 is dedicated to youth; it states:

The state policy for youth is aimed at encouraging participation of youth in public life and nation-building, discovering the potential of youth, creating the conditions and promoting the mechanisms required for socialisation, self-realisation, involvement and growth, targeted at the strengthening of the national security of the Republic of Armenia, the enhancement of socio-economic and cultural life, as well as establishment and realisation of a citizen as a happy person and a person who has a sense of legal consciousness and social responsibility.

Youth participation in socio-political, socio-economic and cultural life and its promotion is

⁴¹. See more about the programme at www.euneighbours.eu/en/east/stay-informed/news/yes-armenia-programme-concludes-beneficiaries-discuss-its-results, accessed 10 June 2019.

⁴². www.arlis.am/documentview.aspx?docid=125311.

⁴³. www.ndi.org/our-stories/armenian-youth-provide-essential-support-parliament.

one of the main principles of the concept. However, this document does not have a substantial impact on the youth participation situation in Armenia.

As already discussed, in education-related policies, youth participation is prioritised and clear mechanisms are described to ensure youth participation in the management of educational institutions. The quality of this participation is debatable at all levels. Comprehensive research on this topic is ongoing under the [USAID-funded Armenia Civics for Engagement project implemented by Project Harmony](#) and its partners. The results will be published in March/April 2023.

Volunteering

Volunteering as a form of participation exists in Armenia and actively engages with various sectors of public life, and has also been a response to the humanitarian crisis caused by the Covid-19 pandemic and the military conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan in Nagorno-Karabakh. Volunteering has taken various forms to support those in need, increasing the pressure for legislation in this field, which unfortunately is absent. There have been several attempts to develop legislation in this field, the last in 2020. The [Draft Law on Volunteering](#) was publicly discussed, but was not adopted. There are articles on volunteering in sectoral laws, such as the [Law on Charity](#) and the [Law on NGOs](#), but there are no regulatory frameworks/mechanisms in place to regulate volunteer work. This especially limits the ability of public sector institutions, including social services and emergency situation/humanitarian institutions, to engage volunteers.

De facto youth organisations actively engage young people as volunteers to implement their programmes and events, and to build up the competences of young people. Educational institutions also promote and recognise volunteering, e.g. the American University of Armenia requires extracurricular activities, including volunteering, for admission to undergraduate studies.⁴⁴ The Slavonic University and the French University often provide tuition fee waivers for volunteering experience or other civic activities. This shows positive trends and support towards the development of volunteering activities.

Scope and contents

The government's programme for 2021-2026 has set the following steps/objectives to realise its aims regarding youth:

- create a legal environment and provide the necessary resources for discovering the potential of youth, for the comprehensive development, self-establishment and self-expression of youth;
- help discover and enhance the potential of youth in their places of residence, create

⁴⁴. <https://admissions.aua.am/ugrad/faqs/#>.

opportunities for organising intellectual leisure so they can express their interests;

- encourage the establishment and development of youth centres in communities, informal education, and the wider recognition and dissemination of youth work and volunteerism;
- develop the participatory capacities and skills of the councils of pupils and university students, youth centres and youth organisations, and support youth organisations operating at local and national levels, placing emphasis on the development of civic, interpersonal, technological, creative and other capabilities of youth in the marzes;
- encourage critical thinking among youth, develop their research skills, their ability to take the initiative, and provide them with good command of information technologies and computer literacy;
- expand the scope of professional orientation projects and introduce new models for gaining future profession-related experience;
- assist youth in being competitive in the labour market of the 21st century;
- support the entrepreneurial capacity building of youth and the establishment of youth enterprises by reforming the legislation on social entrepreneurship and introducing new state programmes to provide support to businesses;
- expand inclusiveness regarding young persons with disabilities;
- raise the level of knowledge and skills among youth in relation to civil defence and taking action in emergency situations;
- ensure exchanges of experience in the youth sector between Armenia and the EU, the Eurasian Economic Union, the Commonwealth of Independent States and other regional partners, and promote partnerships and the implementation of joint programmes between the youth organisations and structures of Armenia and its diaspora.

These points are quite similar to the strategic directions/results planned under the draft State Youth Policy Strategy for 2021-2026. Even though the document was not adopted, its development preceded the development of the government's programme for 2021-2026, hence many of the objectives correlate. Also, this is the first time that this level of document has used concepts such as youth work, volunteering and social entrepreneurship – a clear step forward.

Responsible authority for the implementation of the strategy

As of 1 June 2019, the Ministry of Sports and Youth Affairs was merged with the Ministry of Education and Science and the Ministry of Culture into the MESCS,⁴⁵ which is now the main authority in charge of the development, implementation, and evaluation of the government's policies aimed at the promotion of youth participation, the development and realisation of youth potential, and the development of spiritual-cultural aspects, national identity, patriotic

⁴⁵. The Law on the Structure and Functions of the Government (Hayastani Hanrapetutyun Orenqy Karavarutyun Karucvacqi ev Gorcunutyun Masin), adopted on 23 March 2018 and last amended on 1 June 2019. Available at www.arlis.am/DocumentView.aspx?DocID=132717, accessed 10 June 2019.

upbringing and legal awareness.⁴⁶ The Youth Policy, Supplementary and Continuous Education Department is one of the main structural subdivisions of the MESCS responsible for youth matters.

As stated in the statutes of the MESCS, among the goals and objectives of the ministry are: the development and implementation of the state youth policy; the creation of conditions for the realisation and development of youth potential, the full self-realisation of young people and the promotion of youth participation; increased youth participation in public, political, civil, economic and cultural life. For the realisation of its goals and objectives in the field of youth policy, among others, the MESCS develops and applies effective mechanisms for the realisation and development of youth potential; carries out activities aimed at promoting youth participatory processes and raising legal awareness; (together with local state authorities) ensures the implementation of youth territorial policies; promotes the development of international youth co-operation and exchanges; co-operates and participates in the activities of international youth organisations; supports the capacity building of youth organisations.

Until 2018, the Ministry of Sports and Youth Affairs relied on the Youth Events Holding Centre for the implementation/execution of programmes and activities related to youth policy, but after dissolving the Youth Events Holding Centre in 2018, the government did not mandate any state organisation to support the ministry with the implementation. Thus, the Youth Policy, Supplementary and Continuous Education Department heavily relies on subcontractors and grantees to execute its work plan.

Revisions/updates

According to public statements⁴⁷ from the officials of the MESCS, there are plans to develop the Law on Youth in 2023. The discussion on the development of the Law on Youth has been active since 2019, but the drafting process has not yet started (as of December 2022).

Since 2019, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs has shown an increased interest in youth matters, with a focus on disadvantaged young people, including young people affected during the war/military conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan in 2020 and 2022. As of December 2022, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs is finalising the development of the State Employment Strategy and will start working on its Action Plan at the beginning of 2023. It is expected to hold public discussions on this strategy in February 2023. At this point it is clear that youth and women are a priority and will be targeted in the coming active labour market support programmes.

⁴⁶. Ibid, Annex to the Law on the Structure and Functions of the Government, Article 9.

⁴⁷. <https://escs.am/am/news/8445>.

5.6. SUPPORTING YOUTH ORGANISATIONS

Legal/policy framework for the functioning and development of youth organisations

Youth organisations are mostly registered as NGOs and foundations. The 2016 amendments and supplements to the [Law on NGOs](#)⁴⁸ allowed NGOs to be engaged in entrepreneurial activity in accordance with their statutes. Also, the last amendments allow NGOs to engage volunteers to realise their statutory goals. If the youth organisation is registered as a foundation, the [Law on Foundations](#)⁴⁹ regulates the functioning of the organisation. Exceptionally, some youth organisations/centres are registered as Community non-commercial organisations and limited liability companies.

It is worth mentioning that there are various non-formal, unregistered youth groups and initiatives that are formed around a cause, need, opportunity, person, or an existing programme. Such groups play an especially important role in small, rural communities and often operate in innovative and new directions. With time, such initiatives might become more structured and register as a legal entity, such as the [Restart Foundation for Science and Education](#), [School of Local Democracy EF](#), [Health Fund for Children of Armenia](#), and a number of organisations that were registered as a result of the IMPACT and SKYE Clubs of World Vision, and the Eurasia Partnership Foundation's Youth Bank project.

Public financial support

Until 2018, the Ministry of Sports and Youth Affairs offered grants for youth CSOs operating in Armenia through its online grant system. Public financial support still continues, but not through the online grant system. According to the Monitoring and Evaluation Report of the 2013-2017 Strategy, out of 183 programmes that were implemented in a 4-year period, 55% were aimed at youth participation.⁵⁰ Even with highly positive feedback from youth organisations and youth experts regarding the [www.cragrer.am](#) grant system, it is not compatible with the Law on Public Procurement,⁵¹ thus it cannot be operated anymore. This law requires public entities to use a unified platform for public procurement announcements ([www.procurement.am](#)) and requires the use of an electronic procurement system ([www.armeps.am](#)) to facilitate the procurement process.⁵² As a result, all public bodies have to follow the same procedures to procure goods and services, and to disburse grants. The Armepps system is new for civil society, thus many small organisations face challenges in finding grant opportunities, or applying and managing contracts from public sources. At the

⁴⁸. HH Orenqy Hasarakakan Kazmakerputyunneri Masin, adopted on 16 December 2016, last amended on 16 January 2018, available at [www.arlis.am/DocumentView.aspx?DocID=119456](#), accessed 10 June 2019.

⁴⁹. HH Orenqy Himnadramneri Masin, adopted on 26 December 2002, last amended on 4 May 2018, available at [www.arlis.am/DocumentView.aspx?docid=1340](#), accessed 10 June 2019.

⁵⁰. Ibid, see p. 85.

⁵¹. [www.arlis.am/documentview.aspx?docID=110820](#).

⁵². [www.arlis.am/documentview.aspx?docid=160124](#).

beginning of 2022, several calls for proposals in the youth field from the MESCS did not receive any applications and had to be re-announced, in a few cases more than once.

According to the [2023-2025 Mid-Term State Expenditure Programme of the RA](#), the state budget for youth programmes ranges from 1.9 billion Armenian dram (AMD) (€4.8 million) for 2022 to AMD 2.96 billion (€5.95 million) for 2025. Around 90-94% of the budget is allocated to the Support to Young Families Programme,⁵³ which offers a subsidy to young families to purchase their first house/apartment. In fact, the budget increase for youth programmes is entirely spent on this programme. For the remaining youth programmes, the budget is the same across 2023-2025: AMD 165 million (around €400 000) per year.

Some financial support is available also from the budget for LSG. Yerevan, Gyumri, Ijevan, Gavar, and a few other communities offer limited support for youth and/or other civil society projects.

Initiative to increase the diversity of participants

The major source of funding for youth organisations in Armenia is international donors – with the largest ones being the EU, USAID, etc. – and sub-grants under projects of larger organisations and UN agencies. Inclusion, diversity, the active participation of beneficiaries, and other democratic values are required for projects funded through these donors. Such projects often include capacity building, development of recommendations and facilitation elements, and act as a catalyst for youth participation in decision-making processes. Additionally, such projects often have spill-over effects, when beneficiary youth participate in decision-making processes beyond their specific projects' scope or when the democratic values spread into the organisations and institutions of beneficiaries and other constituencies.

The EU is leading in terms of the scale and scope of funded projects. A number of youth projects are funded under EU4Youth, Erasmus+, the European Solidarity Corps, and other EU programmes, but there are also many bilateral or regional programmes oriented at economic and regional development, democracy, technology, labour, gender, culture, education, and other topics targeting young people as their beneficiaries. A list of projects funded by the EU in Armenia can be accessed via this [link](#) (this list does not include projects funded through Erasmus+, Creative Europe, Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs, European Solidarity Corps, etc.).

In 2021 and 2022, USAID funded two large-scale initiatives targeting youth economic and civic participation respectively. The Armenia Workforce Development⁵⁴ project will support youth empowerment, workforce readiness and skills development. Assistance will promote a productive and self-reliant workforce, bridge the mismatch between labour market supply and demand, and address policy and regulatory constraints on the labour market. The Armenia

⁵³. www.arlis.am/DocumentView.aspx?docid=56403.

⁵⁴. www.usaid.gov/armenia/our-work/economic-growth-and-trade.

Civics for Engagement⁵⁵ project aims to strengthen the institutional capacity of local CSOs and improve CSO capacity in relation to evidence-based policy analysis, input and effective communication. Several other projects work with youth, even though they are formally dedicated to democracy and the rule of law, human rights, regional development, etc.

5.7. LEARNING TO PARTICIPATE THROUGH FORMAL, NON-FORMAL AND INFORMAL LEARNING

Policy framework

The “[Concept of non-formal education in Armenia](#)” was adopted in 2006 by the Decree N50 of the Government of Armenia dated 14 December 2006. Also, the [Law on Education](#) defines:

- **formal education** as a certain level of basic programmes of general education and professional (vocational) education implemented by the relevant educational institution(s) and leading to a qualification degree or certification;
- **non-formal education (instruction)** as a supplementary instruction programme of education to those implemented through the relevant educational institution(s) or organisation(s) and/or services competent to perform that function, but that does not lead a qualification degree or official recognition, except for the cases provided for by the laws of the RA;
- **informal education** as outcomes of studies achieved as a result of daily and family life, rest, leisure, work and other different actions that, as a rule, are not planned by a person as goal-oriented studies, are not organised and co-ordinated in terms of time or resources, and do not lead to official recognition of the outcomes, except for the cases provided by the legislation of the RA;
- **supplementary education (instruction)** as non-formal studies through supplementary educational programmes, the maximum duration whereof may be up to 5 months.

Furthermore, the state, in co-operation with social partners, ensures the development of professional (vocational) education and the system of instruction in accordance with the needs of the labour market, and guarantees the proportionate operation of formal, non-formal and informal education systems and the recognition of the outcomes thereof.⁵⁶ The procedure for organising and implementing supplementary educational programmes, as well as the procedure for evaluating and recognising the outcomes of non-formal and informal instruction, are established by the [Decision of the Government N 1062-N of 10 September 2015 on the organisation and implementation of a supplementary educational programme](#)⁵⁷

⁵⁵. www.usaid.gov/armenia/our-work/democracy-human-rights-and-governance.

⁵⁶. Ibid, Article 6.2(1).

⁵⁷. HH Karavarutyan Voroshumy Lracucich Krtakan Tsragreri Kazmakerpman ev Irakanacman Kargy, Inchpes naev Voch Formal ev Informal Usucman Ardyunqneri Gnhatman ev Tchjanachman Kargy Sahmanelu Masin N1062-N, 10 September 2015.

and the [Order of the Minister of Education and Science N83-N of 5 February 2016 on Establishing the List of Professions subject to Assessment and Recognition of the Results of Non-formal and Informal education](#). Nevertheless, this order has not been used beyond civil society projects and requires revision to align it with education sector reforms and evolving labour market demands.

Formal learning

Civic education (*Hasarakagitutyun*) is taught as a separate subject in schools. According to the [Order of the Minister of Education and Science N800-N of 26 June 2018 on Approving the Model Curriculum for the 2018-2019 Academic Year of Educational Institutions Implementing General, Specialised and Special State Programmes of Basic General Education](#),⁵⁸ the topic is taught to 8-12th grade school students (ranging from 0.5 to 2 academic hours per week). In the 8-9th grades, it aims to develop communication and interpersonal skills and to introduce some basic concepts, such as freedom, responsibility, justice, tolerance, the concept of human rights, the types of rights and their protection and guarantees, democracy and civil society, etc. In secondary school, the subject includes components of aesthetics, ethics, psychology, economics, law, political science and philosophy, and is aimed at the promotion of patriotism, civic values, raising national self-consciousness, raising the role of the individual and society in the process of establishing democracy, and assessing and preserving national and universal cultural values.

Under the Armenia Civics for Engagement project, Project Harmony and its partners will revise and pilot new educational standards and a programme for civic education at schools.

Non-formal and informal learning

The Law on Education states that students (trainees, attendees) of higher education institutions shall enjoy academic freedoms and shall be entitled to participate in the discussion of all issues related to the activities of the university and of the elected bodies.⁵⁹ The Law on General Education stipulates that the members of the pupil council shall participate in the management of an educational institution in an advisory capacity,⁶⁰ and that a student has the right to participate in internal and external school events and in the management of the educational institution as prescribed by the statutes of the educational institution.⁶¹

In the framework of the subject of civic education, students are taught about democracy and civil society and encouraged to present a community-based research project (see more above

⁵⁸. HH Krtutyun ev Gitutyun Nakharari Hramany Hanrakrtakan Himnakan Yndhanur, Masnagitatsvatc ev Hatuk Petakan Tsragrer I8akanacnaogh Usumnakan Hastatutyunneri 2018-2019 usumnakan tarva Orinakeli Usumnakan Plannery Hastatelu Masin N 800-N, 26 July 2018.

⁵⁹. Article 28(1-2) of the Law on Education.

⁶⁰. Article 10(6) of the Law on General Education.

⁶¹. Ibid, Article 20(4, 6).

(Formal learning)).

There are numerous projects and initiatives focusing on the development of social and civic competences, and implemented by youth organisations – mainly thanks to international funding – such as the IMPACT and SKYE Clubs implemented by World Vision, the “I am the community” summer camps implemented by the UNDP, the UPSHIFT programme implemented by UNICEF, the Local Democracy School by the Community Finance Officers Association, the Youth Bank project from the Eurasia Partnership Foundation, and many others.

A good example of non-formal education in Armenia is the [COAF SMART](#) educational centre and rooms, which opened in 2018 in a rural community of Lori to provide residents of rural communities with an opportunity to obtain a non-formal education and skills development, offering free training in information technology, art, communication, ecology, healthy lifestyle, business and civic competences. Another example is [TUMO](#), an innovative non-formal education programme where young people are in charge of their own education across a wide range of learning targets at the intersection of technology and design. It is made up of autonomous activities supported by coaches, alternating with hands-on workshops taught by the centre’s specialised staff and industry professionals from across the globe.⁶² The Swiss humanitarian foundation [KASA](#) is also a great example of how to develop youth civic competences. It has developed and piloted various methodologies on youth work, community engagement and mobilisation, interactive games, and tools for the civic and economic empowerment of youth. KASA integrated learning badges into their programmes and operations, and runs training centres in Yerevan and Gyumri.

Quality assurance and quality guidelines for non-formal learning

The results of the [Report on the Monitoring and Evaluation of the 2013-2017 Strategy of State Youth Policy of the RA](#) drew attention to some issues that still remained unsolved in the field of non-formal education, mainly the need “for the introduction of a system of recognition of non-formal education results in the report on youth employment issues, so that for employers the knowledge and skills acquired through non-formal education are considered as complying with the minimum requirements; the need for a non-formal education recognition (Publication of National Study Register; see more about the procedures in section 2.7, pp. 19-20, Voluntary Activities, 2018); and the need for the interconnection of formal and non-formal educational system.” It is also noted that: “Within four years around 19 000 young people have participated in the observed programmes in different ways. In more than 66% of cases of the programme reports (99 reports), the format of the programme is marked as ‘non-formal education’.”

⁶². See more at <https://tumo.org/>.

Educators' support

In 2020, the [National Centre for Vocational Education and Training Development](#) along with five other institutions functioning under the MESCS were merged into one – the [National Centre for Education Development and Innovation Foundation](#) (NCEDI). The Foundation is responsible for development and innovation in the education sector and it operates under the MESCS. Alongside others, the NCEDI is partnering with Project Harmony to develop new educational standards and programmes for civic education in schools. The preliminary results are expected in 2023.

The National Centre for Vocational Education and Training Development was founded in 2008 and is part of the NCEDI. This structure contributes to the development of preliminary (craftsmanship) and vocational education. They closely collaborate with intergovernmental, international, and local CSOs to develop [programmes/guidelines](#) and [handbooks](#) on entrepreneurship, skills development, organic agriculture, income and expense accounting, etc., and information on [trainings](#) and other materials. This structure promotes work-based learning/dual education in VET.

There are also other organisations that provide opportunities for teachers, trainers, non-formal education workers and youth workers in terms of continuous training and certification relating to the development of civic and social competences, such as the [Paradigma Educational Foundation](#), which aims to enhance teachers' and educators' teaching/learning skills and abilities, and the [Armenian Centre for Democratic Education – Civitas](#), which aims to contribute to educational and social development and civil society building in Armenia.

5.8. RAISING POLITICAL AWARENESS AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE

Information providers and counselling structure

At present, the MESCS with its Youth Policy, Supplementary and Continuous Education Department is the main authority in charge of state support for youth participation in public, political, civil, economic and cultural life. According to its statutes, it carries out activities aimed at raising the legal awareness of young people and promoting youth participatory processes. Besides this, the [RA's Human Rights Defender Office](#) is also a responsible body for the dissemination of information about democratic rights and democratic values for young people and for counselling them if necessary. Unfortunately, these efforts are not substantial compared to the overall number of children and youth.

A number of CSOs also provide information on democratic rights and values. The Youth Initiative Centre (YIC) NGO in Gyumri is in charge of co-ordinating the activities of the [Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps Info Centre in Armenia](#), which aims to provide information on opportunities for young people and youth organisations within the Erasmus+

Youth and European Solidarity Corps programmes of the EU, and to support stakeholders with the implementation of their projects. [Armenian-CIVITAS](#) also promotes human rights and environmental education, enhances students' commitment to fundamental values and principles of democracy, and implements educational and social projects that promote leadership, responsibility, peace and tolerance.

Youth-targeted information campaigns about democratic rights and democratic values

It should be noted that youth were very instrumental in the civil rights movements, such as “Electric Yerevan” (mass protests against an increase in electricity rates), the “100 drams campaign” (a movement against an increase in public transport tariffs in Yerevan), and “Dem Em” (a movement against reforms to the pension system). They actively used social media, flash mobs, and activist-style techniques to deliver and raise their voices. The Velvet Revolution in 2018 gave confidence and motivation to the youth and younger generation to engage in public affairs (in contrast to growing apathy prior to 2018). Some of the active young people close to the movement received high level political and administrative positions. Unfortunately, the motivation and interest of young people was not converted into structured dialogue post 2018.

There are numerous training programmes, human rights summer schools and winter schools, social innovation camps,⁶³ debate clubs, public speaking platforms, youth advocacy campaigns⁶⁴ and awareness campaigns aimed at: enhancing legal and human rights education; contributing to awareness raising about the country's reforms regarding society, decentralisation, transparency, accountability and corruption; increasing public participation and bringing a positive change in their communities. They are organised by local and international organisations, such as GIZ Armenia, the Armenian Lawyers Association, the Helsinki Committee of Armenia, Transparency International, the “Article3” Club, the Eurasia Partnership Foundation, the Media Initiatives Center, the Caucasus Research Resource Centers, the Jinishian Memorial Foundation, World Vision Armenia, the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, the Friedrich Ebert Foundation, and many others.

There are also schools for young leaders. The [Yerevan School of Political Studies](#), founded in 2005, is an institution with no party affiliation aiming to contribute to the building of an open democratic society based on the respect of the rule of law, the strict observation of human rights and the development of civic initiatives. Since its foundation it has trained more than 350 young leaders. National and international experts deliver lectures, seminars and conferences on topics such as European integration, democracy, human rights, the rule of law and globalisation.

⁶³. For example, “Mardamej”; see more about the programme at <https://epfarmeria.am/hy/news/mardamej-social-innovation-camp-call-for-applications-2019>, accessed 22 June 2019.

⁶⁴. See more at www.wvi.org/armenia/youth-empowerment, World Vision Armenia, Youth Empowerment, accessed 15 August 2019.

In 2017, the Bright Armenia political party established the [Liberal Political School](#), which aimed to create an educational platform where young professionals are given theoretical and practical knowledge about politics and liberalism, and to prepare a new generation of leaders who are willing to bear and spread liberal values and become pioneers of democracy. The school is not active at the moment. Other political parties also used to have youth wings and initiatives to build youth competences after the Velvet Revolution in 2018 and NA elections in 2021, but many of these initiatives became passive.

The USAID-funded [SEPPA](#) project implemented by the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) in partnership with International Republican Institute and other organisations supports public sector institutions in building their capacity in terms of communications and media outreach. The awareness-raising project aimed to increase knowledge of the electoral procedures specifically by targeting first-time voters and highlighting the importance of transparent and credible elections that translate the will of the voters into political representation and promote the democratic rights of voters with intellectual disabilities and first-time voters with disabilities. The First Time Voters manual as well as exercises and practical tests helped young people to make use of the knowledge acquired and to avoid mistakes in polling stations during the 2021 NA elections. The Practicing Democratic Citizenship: First Time Voters awareness raising campaign, implemented by the Yerevan School of Political Studies, was a part of the Elections4All project funded by the EU.

Furthermore, it should be noted that according to [the 2017-2019 National Strategy of the RA on Human Rights Protection](#), the topics of electoral law and electoral rights were introduced in schools' curricula from 2019 in order to increase secondary-school students' awareness about electoral processes.

Besides the above-mentioned examples, there are many other youth-targeted campaigns about democratic rights and values. For example, the [TUMO Center for Creative Technologies](#), with support from the EU, created an entertaining and well-designed free mobile game: the Next Generation: Anti-Corruption Game and Cartoon for 12- to 18-year-olds. It was dedicated to the fight against the many forms of corruption, as well as to giving talented recent graduates the opportunity to apply their skills to their first “real world” project.⁶⁵

In 2018, UNICEF Armenia and the Gyumri YIC NGO jointly implemented the [UNICEF Global UPSHIFT programme in Armenia](#) aimed at empowering 12- to 18-year-old adolescents and youth to be more proactive in terms of practising civic engagement and advocating for their rights and positive changes at local/community and national levels. In 2022, the project was also rolled out to Ijevan and Gavar communities.

⁶⁵. Delegation of the European Union to Armenia, https://eas.europa.eu/delegations/armenia/56747/eu-supports-programmes-aimed-educating-next-generation-about-anticorruption_en, accessed 23 June 2019.

Promoting intercultural dialogue among young people

The [Young European Ambassadors \(YEAs\)](#) initiative is funded by the EU and aims to foster co-operation and sustainable links between young people and youth organisations from the EU and its eastern partner countries: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine. In 2018, 67 young Armenians were selected to act as YEAs. The YEAs are part of the Young European Neighbours network, an online platform that facilitates the mutual exchange of ideas and information on the EU, as well as the engagement of young people in informative activities. Many other youth programmes of the EU also support intercultural dialogue, including Erasmus+, the European Solidarity Corps, Creative Europe, and others. They have had a major impact on the development of the youth sector and youth work in Armenia.

The United States, Germany, Poland, the United Kingdom, Russia and many other countries have bilateral/multilateral educational and cultural programmes, exchanges and volunteering programmes, all of which directly and indirectly support intercultural dialogue among young people. Such initiatives have proven their effectiveness in creating people-to-people contact.

Additionally, the government is working to ensure intercultural and professional contacts with the children and youth from the diaspora. Such programmes are implemented by several line ministries, e.g. MESCS,⁶⁶ the Ministry of Economy, the Ministry of High-Tech Industry, and the Office of the High Commissioner for Diaspora Affairs. More information on programmes for representatives of the diaspora can be accessed via this [link](#).

Promoting transparent and youth-tailored public communications

At present, there is no youth-tailored policy framework nor guidelines that public institutions or actors should/could follow in order to enhance the transparency of their policies and decision-making procedures and the appropriateness of their communication style. The USAID-funded [SEPPA](#) project, implemented by IFES in partnership with the International Republican Institute, the National Democratic Institute and other partners, supports line ministries and other public institutions in developing communication strategies and competences to establish more effective and engaging communications towards the general public and youth in particular.

5.9. E-PARTICIPATION

According to [Freedom on the Net 2022](#), released by Freedom House, the internet penetration rate in Armenia is 76.5% (up from 66.5% in 2019), 96% of households have internet access, and overall Armenia scored 74/100 (on a scale of 0 (least free) to 100 (most free)), thus being categorised as a free country on the net.

⁶⁶. <https://escs.am/am/category/diaspora-rograms>.

Various e-participation tools are introduced on a regular basis in all areas of public administration. Electronic management systems are used for requesting information, taxation, public procurement, managing pre-school and school registrations and administration, public discussions, payments, and many other public services. Over 50 services are offered online by LSGs. Of course, not all cohorts of the population use or are able to use these systems, but it is clear that e-solutions are rapidly entering all aspects of life.

There are different electronic platforms in Armenia⁶⁷ enabling people, including youth, to directly or indirectly participate in political processes. Although these systems are not specifically designed for young people, there is no age restriction and youth, as a more digitally savvy population cohort, are often the most active users. Those platforms allow policy-making processes to be more inclusive and participatory, and allow public institutions and services to be more accessible, transparent and accountable. Although people are encouraged to use electronic platforms, according to the official data less than 10% of the population use them.⁶⁸

E-DRAFT platform

[E-DRAFT](#) is an electronic platform that facilitates online public discussions on drafts of normative legal Acts developed by public bodies. It is managed by the Ministry of Justice and was created with financial support from the EU in 2017. It provides an opportunity to present the drafts of regulatory legal Acts to the public, to organise online public discussions, and as a result, allows the active participation of civil society representatives in policy-making activities. The platform allows users to vote and provide recommendations on posted draft legal Acts. The Law on Regulatory Legal Acts requires only certain types of draft legal Acts to be posted on the E-DRAFT platform.⁶⁹

E-REQUEST

A unified portal for online requests, www.e-request.am, which is being improved (December 2022) to make it more accessible, provides an opportunity to submit a request, application or complaint to any state or local government body authorised to provide information and receive feedback online. The platform allows users to track the application, see the progress of a request and who exactly is managing it at any given moment. Through the E-REQUEST system it is also possible to book meetings with public officials.

⁶⁷. The EU is the main supporter of electronic governance in Armenia. In 2008-2018 the EU provided close to € 25 million for the e-governance reforms in Armenia. Available at https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/63855/node/63855_en, accessed 14 June 2019.

⁶⁸. Lurer: Discussion on electronic governance, available at www.youtube.com/watch?v=tc2iQiqjmY0&feature=share&fbclid=IwAR1-JAeNprSancT7i_GO97Fsz_vjs81uan1oNILU-ZBU2ZpYdNidgKwxQMw, accessed 14 June 2019.

⁶⁹. The detailed procedure for arranging and carrying out public discussions, including the publication of draft legal Acts on a unified website, is defined by the [Decision of the Government N1146-N of 10 October 2018 on Establishing a Procedure for Organising and Conducting Public Discussions and Repealing the Decision of the Government N296-N of 25 March 2010](#).

E-Citizen

[E-Citizen](#) is a platform where citizens and residents can access their personal information, including passport and family data, real estate listings, registered legal entities, traffic violations, income details, etc. This platform also allows third parties to request information on a physical person (following written permission from that person). Requests from third parties about receiving personal data are also visible on the platform. The platform reduces the amount of bureaucracy and paperwork involved with receiving services from public and private companies.

Dasaran.am

An educational social network, [Dasaran.am](#)⁷⁰ (“classroom” in Armenian) connects all schools in Armenia to a unified online platform. Its mission is to provide structures that help to promote and deliver quality and equal-access education, monitor educational process, increase levels of transparency, and encourage communications between parents, students and teachers. The platform has received various prizes and recognition from the international community as an innovative system in education.

Other e-platforms

Another website, <https://azdararir.am/en/>, is an online platform allowing a registered user to submit a report on corruption cases. [E-gov.am](#) is an electronic governance tool that helps to integrate the systems and databases of state agencies in order to ensure good communications between citizens and the government and link up the online services offered by the government (such as Interactive Budget, Register Business Online, Judicial Information System, SNCO Financing Disclosure, Single Source Procurement Disclosure and others) on one website. [Arlis.am](#) is an online database that offers full information on legal acts, including incorporations, modifications and links to other legal acts.

As mentioned above, the online grant system www.cragrer.am was launched in 2010 by the former Ministry of Sport and Youth and was aimed at promoting the transparent allocation of funding for youth NGOs, deepening co-operation with them and supporting youth initiatives, as well as increasing public trust. However, the current (December 2022) public procurement regulations do not allow this system to be used.

5.10. CURRENT DEBATES AND REFORMS (December 2022)

Forthcoming policy developments and ongoing debates

There are several ongoing reforms and processes that will have an impact on youth participation in Armenia.

⁷⁰. Founded in 2009 and launched in 2010.

After having a critical role in the Velvet Revolution in 2018, young people have a stronger interest in public affairs in Armenia. The war between Armenia and Azerbaijan in Nagorno-Karabakh in 2020 and the military conflict in 2022 shifted the focus of the general public and youth towards security and social issues. In addition, ongoing reforms in youth-related topics (education, employment) and the lack of structured dialogue with youth reduce the interest and belief of youth in democratic processes.

The [Government's Programme for 2021-2026](#) has very specific objectives for youth-related matters. Even though it is in line with the recommendations from youth sector stakeholders, there is no dialogue on the progress of the implementation or the priorities.

The MESCS plans to develop the Law on Youth in 2023. The process will open up a space for dialogue on the topic of youth with all interested stakeholders, and can increase the attention given by other public bodies to youth as well. It can also attract commitments from the side of government towards youth and the youth sector. There is also a risk that, though the process of drafting the law might engage a wide range of stakeholders, it may not translate into tangible impacts and may only address bureaucratic/administrative issues.

Mainstreaming youth participation into other domains seems realistic at this point. Economic development, high tech industry, the employment sector – all of these prioritise the engagement of youth with their programmes (considering the role and potential young people have, and the greater impact they can provide). Here the role of the government is to design programmes that target both disadvantaged youth and high achievers. Public administration reforms are another place where youth participation can increase the role of youth and contribute towards future-driven solutions.

2022 reform recommendations regarding the higher education sector and the manner in which discussions with youth are held do not end in productive dialogue. The suggestions to reduce the role of young people in the governance of higher education institutions does not seem to be in line with the Government's Programme for 2021-2026, nor is it in line with the commitments to make education more student-centred. Decision makers and youth should look for more effective dialogue formats and set precedents for further reforms.

The development of a new educational standard and programme for civic education will be an important step. A project-based civic education approach that promises to build up the civic competences of the generations to come is under discussion.

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[Youth State Policy Concept of the RA for 2015-2025](#)

[2023-2025 Mid-Term State Expenditure Programme of the RA](#)

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