Citizenship is one of the most basic rights of every child, young person and adult. It is the recognition that a particular individual has a legitimate claim to be part of a country and therefore to contribute to and partake of the nation's assets. Citizenship confers specific rights – such as the right to a name, a passport, access to basic education, health care and certain social benefits, or the right to marry and to vote – that are acquired over the course of a young person's life, some at birth, some during childhood and others during adolescence.

Indeed, many of the important rights and responsibilities associated with citizenship are acquired simultaneously or in very close succession during adolescence. Typically, by 16, young people have reached the age of consent and the age of criminal responsibility, and they have acquired the right to apply for a driver's licence and to work full time. By 18, young persons are usually considered young adults, fully autonomous and able to take on all the responsibilities and duties of citizenship. They are legally considered old enough to make decisions affecting their health, such as whether to smoke or to drink alcohol; they may be liable or eligible for military service, and they have the right to vote and, with it, the right to formal participation in the political life of the country.

The right to vote in free and democratic elections has long been a benchmark of social and political justice, but experience has shown that being entitled to this right does not automatically translate into increased participation in political and social life. In a number of Western democracies, for example, young people have long had the right to vote, but voter turnout among youth has historically been low, and it has been falling over the past two decades. So, a question arises: How can social and political participation be made more meaningful for young citizens?

In the past, in democratic and communist countries alike, youth have been raised to citizenship through a process of socialization that involves controlling and regulating the activities of young people until they have internalized existing social norms, and then they are allowed to take their place in existing institutions. Today, however, there is a body of opinion which argues that the way to prepare young people to become active and engaged citizens is to encourage their participation in decision-making processes at all stages and in all areas or settings of their lives, including the family, school, workplace, and community. (See Chapter 1, Box 1.1.)

In recent years, ways have been articulated to develop policies and programmes which can help realize the rights of youth and enhance the contribution of youth to society (Box 6.1). Significant work has been carried out in Western Europe, but this new focus on youth is also highly relevant to the new democracies of Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States, where the young people raised during the transition are growing up with expectations and possibilities which are vastly different from those of their parents.

Indeed, the period during which the transition generation has been growing up – from children aged 5-14 in 1989 to teens and young adults aged 15-24 in 1999 – has been a period of major changes in what citizenship means in the region. While not all the changes have been positive, the fact remains that this generation is approaching adulthood in anticipation of exercising full human rights, after following several generations who experienced a much narrower and less participatory conception of citizenship. The role which the new generation of young citizens will play will depend upon how much these citizens are recognized as partners and valuable resources for advancing human development and social and political transformation in the region.

Section 6.1 looks at the participation of young citizens in the political and social life of the transition countries. It presents information on their readiness to vote, their trust in political institutions and their attitudes towards democratic institutions and values. The section also looks at the participation of young citizens in civil society and the function of youth organizations, clubs and associations. Section 6.2 highlights approaches to youth policy, an area where consensus is emerging out of debates in both the East and the West. Section 6.3 offers some insights and conclusions on the state of youth in the transition region, drawing on the evidence and analysis in all six chapters of the Report. It points out areas for policy action, public and private.

■

Promoting youth participation: laying the groundwork for policies and programmes

The current international emphasis on youth participation has its roots in the International Youth Year declared by the United Nations for 1985. Since then, there has been a series of international meetings and declarations which have set out a framework for youth programmes and policies.

- In 1995, the UN adopted the "World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond" to provide a policy framework and guidelines for action to national governments and non-governmental organizations. The programme has three themes – participation, development and peace – and identifies 10 priority areas for action ranging from education and health to juvenile justice. The final and concluding priority is "the full and effective participation of youth in the life of society and in decision-making."

- In 1998, the Third World Youth Forum held by the United Nations in Braga, Portugal, brought together representatives of youth and youth-serving organizations, the UN and intergovernmental organizations under the theme "Youth Participation for Human Development". The forum adopted a "Youth Action Plan" which emphasized the need to promote the participation of all young people, including youth from indigenous cultures and youth with disabilities, living in poverty, or subjected to violence.

- In 1998, the first World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth met in Lisbon (immediately after the Braga Youth Forum). The Lisbon Declaration on Youth Policies and Programmes includes eight sets of measures, one of which is participation. Its description of participation reflects an awareness of the need to employ gender-sensitive measures which ensure equal access for young women and young men, to facilitate access by youth to legislative and policy-making bodies, and to give higher priority to marginalized, vulnerable and disadvantaged young persons.

European institutions have been developing their interpretation of the principles set out in international declarations. During the 1990s, maximizing young people's contribution to the building of society became the most widely asserted goal of youth policy in contemporary Europe. The Council of Europe has played a major role in the discussion and, since 1989, has been the main link for political cooperation with those transition countries which have opted for democratic political systems. In 1995, the Council's Directorate of Youth and Sport created a new European Youth Centre in Budapest to help implement its programmes.

- One of the first statements made under the aegis of the Council of Europe was the European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Municipal and Regional Life, which was adopted in 1992 by the Standing Conference of Local and Regional Authorities. The first part of the charter describes guiding principles for sectoral youth policies, such as the promotion of youth employment, social and health prevention policy, the provision of information centres and databanks for young people, and the promotion of equal participation by young women and men. The second part of the charter outlines the institutional structures needed to favour youth participation at the regional level. It recommends, for example, the establishment of youth councils made up of young people elected by their peers.

- In 1996, the Council of Europe adopted Recommendation 1286 in which Article 8 addresses participation as a means of realizing the rights enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. It calls for "the views of children to be heard in all decision-making which affects them, and to enable them to participate actively, responsibly and in a manner appropriate to their capacity, at all levels of society – in the family, in local communities, in schools and other institutions, in judicial hearings and in national government, and to teach children how to act as responsible citizens, to encourage them to take an interest in public affairs and to reconsider the age at which young people can vote."

- In 1997, the Council of Europe adopted Recommendation No. R (97) 3 on youth participation and the future of civil society. The governments of member states were urged to foster partnerships between youth organizations and authorities at the national, regional and local levels, to encourage young people to participate in the voluntary sector, and to promote cooperation between young people and local and national youth structures in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe within the framework of existing European programmes.

- A European Union white paper on youth policy is being prepared for presentation in early 2001. The European Union has been particularly active in promoting exchanges and mobility among young people through its "Youth for Europe" and "European Voluntary Service" programmes (united in 2000 as a single EU "Youth Programme") and especially through its education programmes (Socrates, Leonardo). The EU has also been active in providing information services for young people through its Eurodesk network.

6.1 The Political and Social Participation of Young People

Young generations have an important part in the social and political life of their countries. In Central and Eastern Europe, the Baltic States and the Commonwealth of Independent States, youth have a special opportunity to participate in consolidating democracy, developing civil society anew and, in many countries, building recently independent nations. The identification of young persons with and their participation in these historical changes can help ensure the sustainability of the reform process. Through their participation in new democratic institutions and socio-cultural activities, young people can also help shape society and so make it into one with which they identify.

While in Western societies the participation of young citizens typically includes transforming established systems in a relatively stable environment, in the transition countries young people are faced with building new political systems and civil societies, while coping with much greater risk and uncertainty. The participation of young citizens in the transition countries has not necessarily been hampered by economic instability and falling standards of living – even though there are worrying signs of the exclusion of many young people from school, work, families, and communities. The presence of younger adults in high government posts is potent evidence of the doors opened by the transition to people who have fresh ideas, energy and dynamism, characteristics generally associated with younger age. The success of many young people in seizing the opportunities created by the transition extends not only to politics, but also to emerging civic organizations and grassroots movements.

New opportunities for political participation

The involvement of young people in politics can take a variety of forms. One of the most common ways to gauge political commitment is to look at levels of voter turnout.
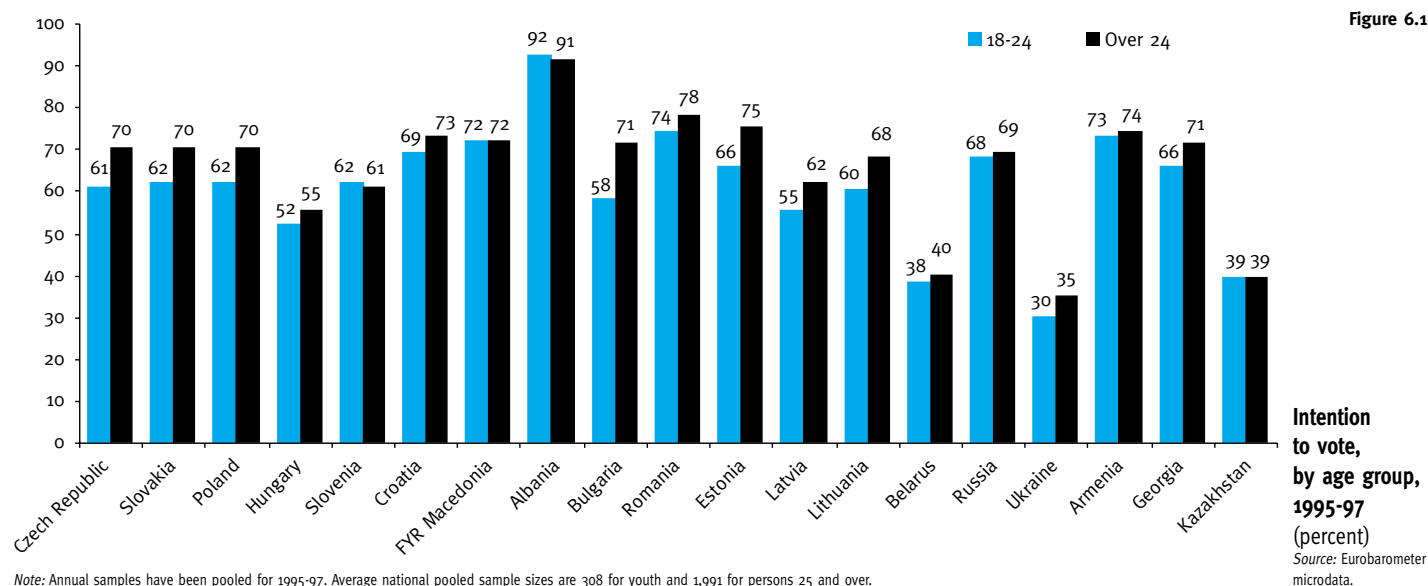
Voting is the most basic of democratic acts, and the vigour of a democratic society is often measured by the extent to which its citizens take part in elections.

There are several reasons why the participation of young citizens in national and local elections or referendums is important. First, young people may have political interests which differ from those of older voters and which should be represented. Second, while young people may feel that they have less impact than older generations in many situations, the right to vote is an equalizer in that each person has one vote and thus possesses the same ability as others to exercise influence in political elections. Third, participation in the decision-making process promotes awareness of citizenship issues. It can also be argued that young people should be encouraged to develop the habit of voting in order to enhance and maintain democracy for the future.
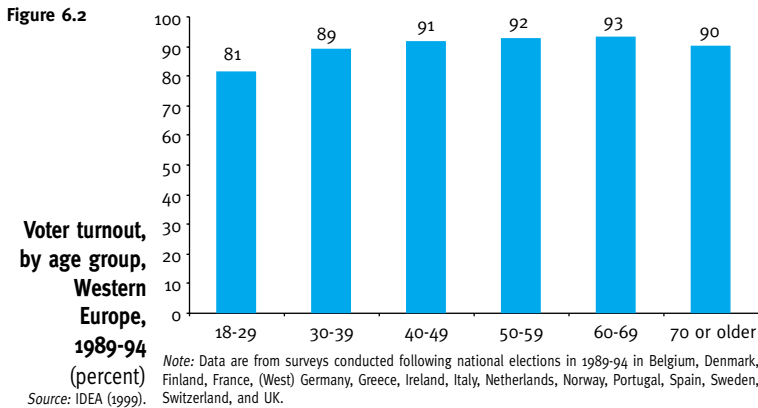
Before the transition, there was no genuine choice of political parties or representatives in elections. Nonetheless, voting was a legal obligation, and failure to vote was met with formal and informal sanctions. Thus, there was a tradition of voting, but no tradition of voting to influence events. With an average turnout of 99 percent, elections were largely a formality, and young people over 18 were compelled to cast their votes, as were all other adults.

As Chapter 1 notes, the view of young people in the region on the transition is generally more favourable than that of older people. But is this support manifest in higher turnout rates in nationwide elections?

Using information from opinion polls organized by the European Union in 19 countries in the region during 1995-97, Figure 6.1 illustrates the extent to which young and older people in the transition countries have been prepared to exercise their right to vote. In most countries, about two-thirds of respondents said they would cast their

Figure 6.1

■ 18-24   ■ Over 24

Intention to vote, by age group, 1995-97 (percent)
Source: Eurobarometer microdata.

Note: Annual samples have been pooled for 1995-97. Average national pooled sample sizes are 308 for youth and 1,991 for persons 25 and over.

Figure 6.2

Voter turnout, by age group, Western Europe, 1989-94

(percent)

Source: IDEA (1999).

Note: Data are from surveys conducted following national elections in 1989-94 in Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, (West) Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and UK.

votes if a general election were to be held tomorrow. The survey shows that the intentions of younger and older adults correlate to a large degree, but there is a certain generation gap. In this case, one that falls short on the side of youth: in 15 of the 19 countries represented in the diagram young people were less prepared to vote than were adults over age 24.

It is, however, a common experience in democratic societies that young voters exhibit lower turnout rates than do older age groups. Some studies have suggested that youth turnout in elections in the transition region throughout the 1990s was equal to, if not higher than, that of their Western peers. Indeed, apart from Central Europe and the Baltic States, the difference between young and older age groups presented in Figure 6.1 is not very substantial.

Voter participation rates by youth in some CIS countries, as well as the former Yugoslavia, are no doubt affected by the fact that many of these youth are citizens of new sovereign states. Young people may more readily associate themselves with the newly independent nations and show an enhanced sense of civic pride.
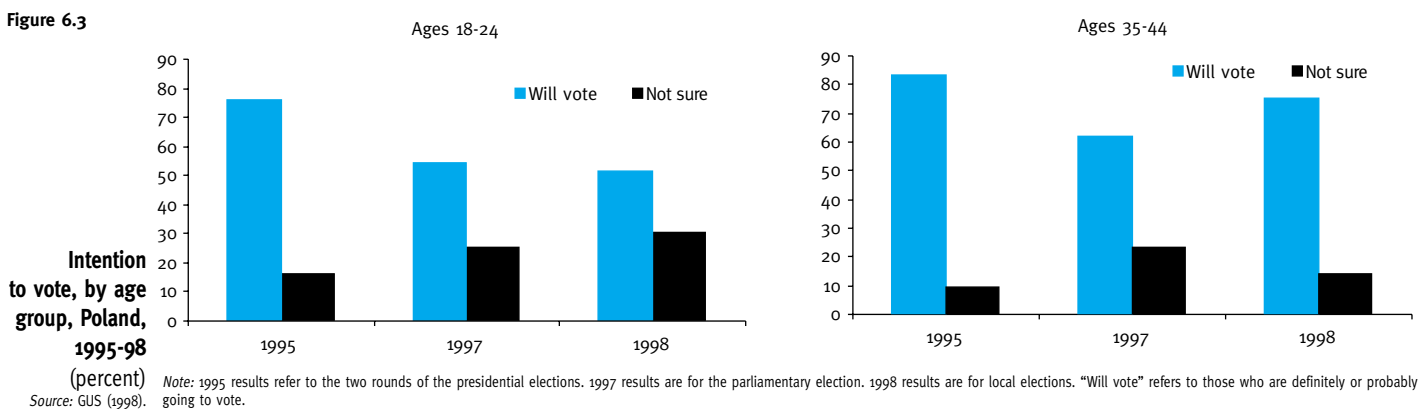
Figure 6.2 shows selected international evidence on the pattern of voter turnout by age. The data refer to post-election surveys carried out in 15 Western European countries in 1989-94. The diagram illustrates that the turnout rate is lowest among the youngest age category (in this case, 18-29), at about 80 percent; the rate increases into middle age, peaking among electors aged 60-69 (93 percent),

before declining slightly for the oldest age group. Overall, the turnout level among electors aged 18-29 is about 10 percentage points lower than the average.

Why do younger voters show generally lower turnout rates than older adults? The lower rate is sometimes attributed to the fact that young people are still learning about citizenship and the political choices available to them. Often, they are not yet sure how to vote. Figure 6.3 shows the extent to which indecision may deflate young voter turnout rates. The figure presents pre-election survey data on voting intentions in Poland, a transition country where voting patterns by age are generally very similar to those found in Western countries. As the diagram indicates, in the 1997 national elections, 25 percent of 18-24 year-olds (and 30 percent in the 1998 local elections) were not sure if they were going to vote. As young people grow older, they acquire resources that enable them to participate in elections, including familiarity with the electoral process and with political parties.

The data reviewed here so far refer to later transition years, by which time several countries, like Poland, were enjoying some economic progress, though others were still experiencing economic instability. The question naturally arises whether and to what extent voter participation rates can be associated with either satisfaction, or impatience among citizens about the economic and social returns of the transition process. As earlier Regional Monitoring Reports have pointed out, in several countries leading in reform, elections repeatedly produced changes in governments in the 1990s, indicating voter frustration with a transition process that had been slower and more painful than foreseen. Official election data in various transition countries show no more than 50-60 percent average turnout rates.

Various studies in the West have found that voter turnout levels have been declining for all age groups over the past two decades, and in some countries the turnout rates among young people have decreased more quickly than average. In Finland, for example, the turnout of 18-30 year-olds in national elections fell from 72 percent in 1975 to 59 percent in 1991, while overall turnout receded from 78 to 72 percent in the same period. These

Figure 6.3

Intention to vote, by age group, Poland, 1995-98

(percent)

Source: GUS (1998).

Note: 1995 results refer to the two rounds of the presidential elections. 1997 results are for the parliamentary election. 1998 results are for local elections. "Will vote" refers to those who are definitely or probably going to vote.

falling rates have triggered concern because they are seen as a sign of disaffection towards the country's political institutions.

Although they allow only a crude comparison between 1995-97 and earlier years, the Eurobarometer data used in Figure 6.1 suggest that there has also been a decline in the propensity to vote in more than half of the transition countries surveyed. However, there appears to be no clear linkage between political participation and the economic returns – positive or otherwise – of the transition, and the data indicate little change in the gap in turnout rates between young and older people.

In the new democracies in Central and Eastern Europe and the CIS, people's attitudes towards government are encumbered by a traditional lack of trust in the state and, simultaneously, by overly high expectations with regard to the state's ability to secure them adequate standards of living.

Even though young people may display less distrust or have lower expectations than older generations, the questioning attitude typical of youth may make them sceptical or critical towards any authority. It can therefore be anticipated that young people will show a considerable degree of frustration at the difficulties democratic governments have in tackling the inherited or the new problems of their countries.

Several sociological surveys and polls in the region have found, indeed, a considerable degree of mistrust among youth towards the formal institutions of the new democracies. A national survey of young people aged 18-25 carried out in Latvia in 1998, for example, revealed among youth an overall lack of identification with political parties: 89 percent of respondents thought the activity of political parties did not refer to them; 61 percent were not interested in political parties, and almost half said none of the parties had any interest in the problems of young people. A 1998 survey entitled "Young Russians' Lives and Views" that was commissioned by the US Information Agency and conducted among young people aged 18-29 by the Russian Centre for Public Opinion and Market Research suggests that two of every three youth in Russia have a highly negative opinion of the primary institutions for the delivery of democracy.

While such expressions of disaffection are worrying, there is also evidence that many young people have a strong sense of democratic values. For example, in the 1998 survey of young people in Russia, more than two-thirds of respondents thought it "impermissible" to cancel presidential elections, limit opportunities to travel abroad, or ban meetings and demonstrations, and more than half thought it "impermissible" to impose censorship on the media (Table 6.1).

The 1998 sociological survey in Latvia confirms that, although young people are often distrustful of political parties, they are not uninterested in political events. As Table 6.2 shows, 85 percent of respondents were definitely interested in and "more or less" interested in the

Table 6.1

Youth attitudes towards democratic structures and civil liberties, Russia, 1998
(percent of respondents)

	Permissible	Not permissible	No opinion	Total
Cancel presidential elections	15	69	16	100
Ban meetings, demonstrations	19	67	14	100
Limit travel abroad	19	68	13	100
Impose censorship on the media	28	55	17	100

Source: Dobson (1998).

Note: Summary of the answers of young people to the question: "Let's suppose that a leader came to power who wanted to establish strict order in our country. In your opinion, would it be permissible or impermissible to do the following to establish order: . . . ?" Sample size was 1,248 Russians aged 18-29.

Table 6.2

Young people's level of interest in political life, Latvia, 1998
(percent of respondents)

	I'm interested, and I understand	More or less interested	I'm not interested
Political life in Latvia	17.8	67.5	14.7
Work of parliament	4.5	49.5	45.9
Work of government	6.6	57.2	36.2
Activities of political parties	3.0	35.6	61.4

Source: CSBL (1999).

political life of the country, compared to less than 15 percent who were not interested. More than 60 percent had at least some interest in the work of the government, and more than half had at least some interest in the work of parliament.

The implication of the above is that young people in the region are not resolutely alienated from political life, but, rather, that they may not be finding appropriate channels to participate. Factors such as education and ethnicity also make a difference; surveys in various countries have found a positive correlation between political interest and education, while there is some evidence that youth belonging to ethnic minorities often feel poorly represented by political institutions.

Being politically active and socially committed certainly involves much more than merely casting a vote for a political party. In Voices of Youth 16, young Latvians interviewed for this Report talk about what participation means to them. In Western democracies, lower youth voter turnout has been accompanied by greater youth involvement in more informal or issue-based movements, such as environmental groups. In many CEE countries, young people were visibly active in the protests which led to the fall of communism. With the demise of communist youth organizations and of censorship and monopoly over the political, social and cultural activities of youth, there is now a much greater scope for the expression of youth interests, commitments and initiatives in the various forums of civil society.

Participation: youth talk about taking part and being heard

Young people in Latvia talk in focus groups and individual interviews about their desire to participate in society and in decision-making in various areas of their lives. All the respondents are already involved in volunteer activities.

- "I want to be needed by society and by the people of Latvia. I do not want to live in any other country, and I want to dedicate my life to my country. I need to get appropriate education and experience for this." (Mara, 21)

- "[Influencing political decisions] is very important to me. Even if these decisions do not affect the whole country, I would like to be able to express my opinion." (Maija, 21)

- "We used to have a society which stuck together; it was not possible to survive in any other way. Nowadays, it is possible to live independently. Thus, everyone should contribute something to decision-making." (Edmunds, 24)

- "I would like others [at school] to respect my opinion and to be interested in it." (Albert, 15)

- "It does not happen frequently that teachers consult with their students. This might only be the case for some minor decisions such as classroom cleaning or a party for our class." (Katia, 16)

- "I am involved in a students committee in my spare time. Students are the future generation, and it is important and rewarding to assist them and to protect their interests." (Eva, 19)

- "We have two types of older colleagues at work. Some treat young people well and understand us. Others, however, think that young people are not worth speaking to." (Irina, 17)

- "My parents consult me if there is an important decision to be made, but it does not always happen. I think that my opinion has some weight, but it is not really significant." (Katia, 16)

Youth participation in civil society

Young people participate in civil society through a wide range of activities, including social organizations, sports and recreation clubs, and non-governmental organizations. In these settings, young people can find platforms where their opinions can be articulated and expressed and where they can simply enjoy being young. Youth organizations, in particular, provide a space where young people can develop and represent their interests. In the transition countries, much of this type of participation is still emerging and evolving as a new relationship forms between the state and civil society.

In the past, youth belonged to mass organizations controlled by the state, such as the Komsomol in the former Soviet Union. Membership was not obligatory, but was strongly encouraged, and failure to join could lead to penalties such as denial of access to certain jobs or places in higher educational institutions. It is estimated that, in the Soviet Union in the late 1980s, 65 percent of 14-28 year-olds were Komsomol members. In some Central and Eastern European countries membership was even more widespread; in Bulgaria, for example, 80-90 percent of youth in this age group were members of the equivalent organization.

These communist youth institutions were used as vehicles to control and socialize youth with the intent of preserving the status quo. However, they did provide structured settings where young people could meet and enjoy sports and other activities. With the demise of these organizations, young people have lost not only access to low-cost sports and leisure facilities, but a mechanism for exercising a cohesive presence in society. What they have gained are opportunities to take part in a much broader range of organizations and to make individual choices about when and how to participate.

During the transition the share of youth formally joining in social organizations has been low. Although there is now a great variety of associations, there is also a tendency among young people to reject organized activities – a backlash, perhaps, to the flag-waving conformity of the communist youth groups. On the basis of a Council of Europe study carried out in the late 1990s, it has been estimated that less than 10 percent of young people on average are members of social organizations in the region; in some countries the share is less than 5 percent.

Individual country reports for the same study have revealed, for example, that there were some 600 youth organizations in Romania in 1994, but only 2-3 percent of young people were members, and in Hungary, while almost 13 percent of young people were active in some kind of political youth organization between 1988 and 1993, the share has since dropped below 5 percent. Information from a sociological study in Latvia suggests that, in 1998 less than 2 percent of students aged 15-18 were members of a youth organization. The participation of the 18-25 age group is higher, but still only 2.4 percent; a greater share, 16 percent, are members of leisure clubs.

Organizations which are specifically focused on youth can now generally be divided into those which are sponsored by the state or by a political party and those being created in the growing NGO sector. Some organizations remain politically oriented; both newly formed political parties and the successors of communist parties in some countries have formed youth sections. In Russia, the liberal Yabloko Party has a youth branch, as does the Russian National Unity Party. Other groups are non-political, but aim to help young people broaden their interests and develop skills (for instance, AMAVET in Slovakia). Some are cultural in orientation and, for example, promote folk music or have a religious affiliation. Others represent national minority groups. Thus, organizations exist in Slovakia for young Hungarians and Roma. Still others are work related, such as associations of young entrepreneurs.

Many of the new youth organizations in the region are run by NGOs. However, most NGOs suffer from their lack of a past in the region and the wariness of governments

and populations towards them. They do, however, tend to possess expertise and the ability to respond to the needs of young people on a local basis.

Table 6.3 presents survey data on attitudes towards NGOs in five CIS countries. In Ukraine and Belarus around 60 percent of 18-24 year-olds think the right to form an NGO is important, a somewhat more positive view than that of older people; in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan 48-60 percent of the young people surveyed believe NGOs are necessary. Government attitudes are also changing. In Albania, for example, the government has appealed to NGOs to play a role in youth organizations involved in projects to combat racism. Still, many NGOs suffer from funding problems, and many are shortlived.

Mass organizations have been replaced by a plurality of non-governmental and civil organizations and groups. In a 1999 Hungarian survey, one-quarter of the youth organizations in the country reported membership above 500 persons, while half of them reported membership of 200 or less. There has also been a splintering of more general organiza-

Table 6.3

Young people's attitudes towards NGOs in five transition countries, 1996 and 1999
(percent)

	NGOs are necessary		Would work for an NGO		The right to form NGOs is important	
	18-24	25+	18-24	25+	18-24	25+
Ukraine	32	23	30	25	61	49
Belarus	–	–	–	–	60	56
Kazakhstan	48	45	19	21	–	–
Kyrgyzstan	60	50	45	41	–	–
Uzbekistan	58	56	–	–	–	–

Source: IFES (2000).

Note: In Belarus, the question was whether the right to freedom of association is important. Based on unpublished data from surveys in Ukraine and Belarus in 1999 and in the other three countries in 1996.

tions into separate groups with distinct purposes – leisure and sports clubs, youth wings of political parties, cultural and social groups.

Table 6.4 lists the types of activities which various youth organizations in Hungary were offering to young peo-


Box 6.2

Young people and sports

Regular physical activity is considered important for young people not only because of its direct benefits for physical health, but because, as research has shown, it enhances self-esteem and contributes to moral and social development.

The Health Behaviour in School-Aged Children survey, sponsored by WHO, included questions on exercise among young people in seven Central and Eastern European countries in both 1993-94 and 1997-98. Students were asked how often and how many hours a week they took part in "vigorous intensity activity" outside school. Vigorous activity was defined as "the equivalent of at least slow jogging, which might be expected to leave the participant feeling out of breath and sweaty." The 1997-98 survey found that regular exercise was strongly associated with perceived health status, feeling confident, making friends, spending time with them outside school, and having access to a family car (which is more closely associated with higher household

income in Eastern Europe than in Western Europe).

Figure 6.4 shows the share of 15-year-old male and female respondents who reported getting regular exercise in 1993-94 and in 1997-98. The earlier survey found the levels somewhat lower in Eastern Europe than in Western Europe, which may reflect the closing of sports facilities and the higher cost of new private clubs in the early 1990s. The later survey revealed a clear reduction in the share of young people exercising regularly in six transition countries, where the dropoff appeared more robust than in the Western countries surveyed. A comparison of the two diagrams indicates that in both surveys a considerably lower share of girls than boys reported regular exercise and that activity among girls had declined especially in the CEE countries (with the exception of the Czech Republic). Given the positive impact of sports on self-esteem and self-confidence, increasing the involvement of girls can be seen as an important means of advancing gender equality.
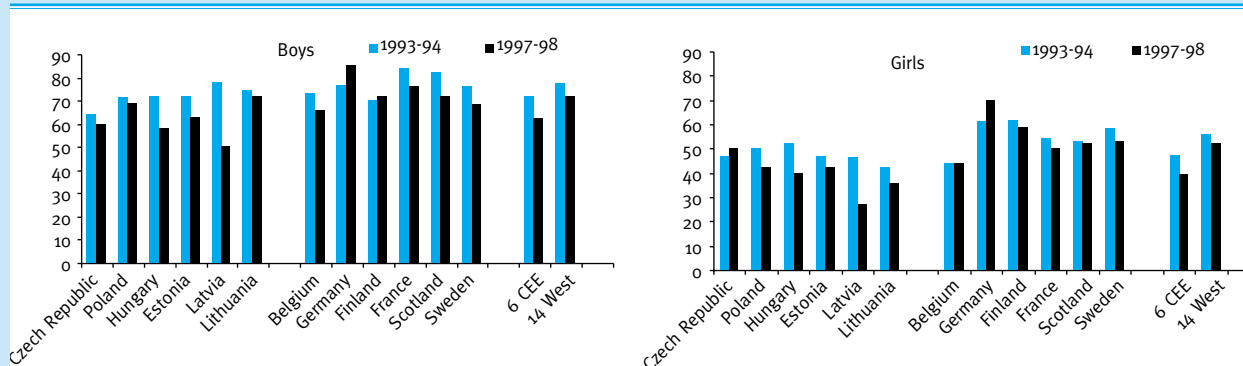
Figure 6.4

Share of 15 year-olds exercising two or more times a week, 1993-94 and 1997-98 (percent)

Sources: Currie et al. (2000); King et al. (1996).

Note: Caution is needed in interpreting the data. The questionnaires were administered in different countries at different times of year, and there may be seasonal variations in the opportunities for outdoor activity.

Box 6.3

The Western image: Russian youth living with cultural globalization

Throughout the 1990s, young people in Russia were being increasingly exposed to Western youth culture, particularly through greater access to the media, consumer products and travel. Internet use is limited, but growing in major centres, especially among youth. Estimates suggest that in 1999 between 1 and 3 percent of the population had access to the Internet. Young people constituted almost half of the frequent users, and people under 35 made up over three-quarters of this group.

Given the prominence of Hollywood movies and new-style nightclubs in Russia's cities, it might be expected that young Russians are gorging on the forbidden Western fruits denied their parents. However, recent research shows that they are not simply passive consumers of "ready-made" youth culture, but are involved in a much more complex process of adaptation and reformulation. Young Russians are, in effect, contributing their own voices to global youth culture.

Since 1996, the Centre for Russian and East European Studies at the University of Birmingham, together with Ulianovsk State University in Russia, has been studying the impacts of cultural globalization on the cultural practices of Russian youth. The project has involved empirical research in the cities of Moscow, Ulianovsk and Samara. About 1,000 young people aged 15-25 have been surveyed in the two provincial cities, and a further 270 young respondents have taken part through in-depth interviews or focus groups. The results of the research trace two important processes under way in the post-Soviet cultural life of young people.

First, young Russians have increasingly complex and differentiated perceptions of "the West". Although the images of the West remain dominated by the US, young Russians increasingly differentiate between the US and Europe, a change from the single, coherent "other" perceived in Soviet times. Moreover, young Russians are becoming more discriminating about how

sweet the "forbidden fruit" of the West really is. While young people continue to have a positive image of Western life in terms of material comfort and individual and creative freedom, they are critical of features which they perceive as superficial, overly pragmatic, and lacking in community feeling and spirituality. Young Russians describe Western electronic music as "music for the body" and Russian folk or rock as "music for the soul".

Second, now that exposure to Western culture is more widespread rather than reserved for a privileged few, various groups of young Russians are responding to Western culture in different ways. Among the many style-based movements, two broad identities among youth can be discerned: "progressive" and "normal".

"Progressive" is how young people in the dance and club scene refer to themselves. They are the music-centred descendants of the *stiliagi* rock 'n' rollers of the 1950s and the *tusovki* of the 80s, who included highly visible urban tribes like punks, hippies, bikers, and fans of heavy rock. The new economic and leisure opportunities of the 1990s, combined with the impact of "rave" parties and electronic dance music, have meant that tusovki gather increasingly in cafes, bars and clubs rather than parks, squares and underground stations as they did a decade ago. The progressives project an open and outward-looking mindset which embraces innovation, creativity and the latest Western life styles. At the same time, a concern for authenticity is being expressed, often in the form of a criticism that Western culture seems soulless and commercial.

"Normal" is used to describe the majority of young people who spend time with their friends in neighbourhood courtyards, listen to pop music and engage in organized sports and leisure activities. These people tend to see "progressive" youth as different and to reject their worldview and emphasis on style and individual pleasure. "Normals" follow mainstream fashion and understand music as the background for, rather than the focus of, peer group activities, such as drinking, talking and meeting members of the opposite sex.

Figure 6.5 illustrates the variety of strands in the individual responses being worked out by young people to the growing opportunities for cultural expression and the parallel increase in the exposure to the cultural effects of globalization.

Figure 6.5
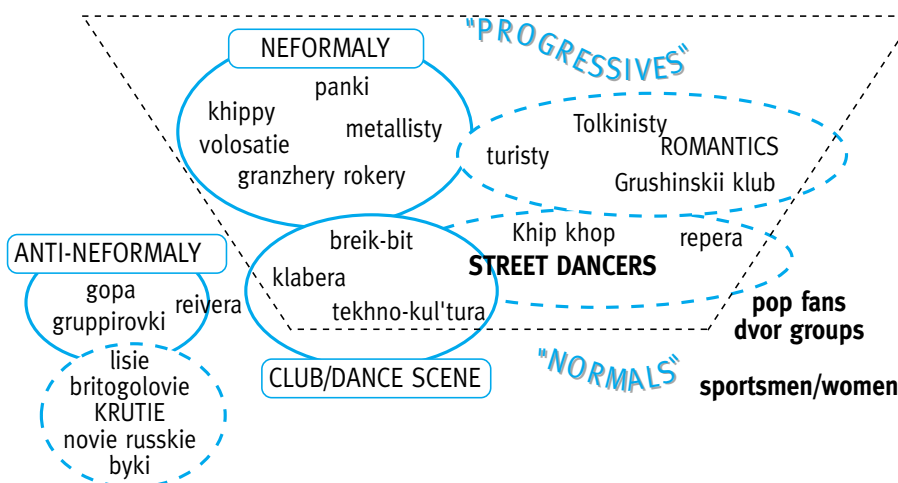
Mapping the youth scene in Samara, April 1998
Source: Pilkington et al. (forthcoming).

ple in 1999. The data confirm that sports is by far the most popular type of activity: over 80 percent of youth organizations offer sports activities, compared to 46 percent which conduct cultural activities, 29 percent representing professional groups, and only 2 percent declaring themselves as political organizations.

Sports and leisure facilities tend to be more popular than other types of organizations, but leisure facilities, such as sports clubs, are now usually relatively expensive and thus inaccessible to many young people. Commercial leisure activities are growing, but many young people are excluded due to a lack of financial resources. Attempts have been made to resist this trend; for example, in Bulgaria the Council of Ministers adopted a decree in 1995 enabling local authorities to forbid the privatization of cultural, educational and sports facilities for children and young people. However, such measures will only have limited effect unless local authorities have the resources to maintain low-cost public infrastructure. Evidence from WHO-sponsored surveys, presented in Box 6.2, throws light on regular exercise among youth in several transition countries.

As in the West, youth in the transition region are becoming a distinct category of consumers, an identity their parents had little chance to indulge under central planning. The collectivist ideology and conformist practices of the past are being replaced not only by individual cultural expression, but also by the individualism of consumerism. This consumer culture goes hand-in-hand with the greater role and influence of the mass media, particularly television and advertising, in transition countries.

Many young people find themselves with few resources to satisfy their desire for individual self-expression, which is now often associated with different styles of clothing and dancing and different tastes in music. But, as the example of Russia in Box 6.3 demonstrates, limited resources have not kept young people from experimenting with a large variety of styles and engaging in – rather than just consuming – a global youth culture which has its origins in the West.

Some young people have more difficulty adapting to this fresh search for individual identity or the emphasis on consumerism. For example, Nadia, 17, who was interviewed in Uzbekistan for this Report, talked about her perception of the differences in values and experiences between her generation and older people.

"In the school class," she said, "the children divide themselves into the rich ones and the poor ones. They are classified according to the way they are dressed. . . . In our generation, everyone looks out for himself."

Not surprisingly, given her comments, this young woman has found a way to participate in and contribute to society through volunteer work. "Voluntarism" existed in

Voices of Youth 17

Volunteer work: making a difference

The opportunities for volunteer work are expanding in the transition region. These young people discussed their experiences in focus-group research for this Report in Latvia.

- "I like doing voluntary work because it allows me to meet very interesting people, the ones who motivate me to do things." (Gaatis, 18)

- "It is nice to feel that you are surrounded by people who are willing to share their time with others." (Maija, 21)

- "This job gives me new insights, new friends and new possibilities." (Andris, 20)

- "I am doing it because I can see the results of my work, and it is extremely rewarding." (Eva, 19)

- "This is my life. I cannot imagine myself sitting in front of the TV in the evening, while I could help someone in the meantime." (Irina, 17)

- "It is very unpleasant when you are trying hard to help people and they ask what you are getting out of this and why you are doing this job for free." (Ilse, 21)

- "If you do something and succeed, your motivation is increased." (Ina, 16)

the region before the transition, but, under communism, the public face of voluntarism often took the form of a top-down initiative or a mass effort, for example a weekend shift at one's factory job or tidying up streets and public places.

The opportunities for new types of voluntarism are expanding in the region. Frequently, they represent ways for young people to satisfy their desire to contribute to society or to pursue their own personal and social development. They also function as alternatives to work in environments in which employment opportunities are lean; then they can be a means of building the experience and connections that may lead to a job or to future learning opportunities. Sometimes volunteer activities are simply interesting pastimes, and sometimes they allow young people to see direct results from their efforts, as Voices of Youth 17 describes.

Volunteer work can provide substantial rewards for young individuals, as well as for the broader community, as poignantly illustrated in Box 6.4, which describes a youth participation project in Kosovo refugee camps. This case highlights the capacity of participatory approaches to promote empowerment among youth rather than dependence, even in the most difficult circumstances.

Table 6.4

Activities of youth organizations in Hungary, 1999
(percent of youth organizations reporting a given activity)

Sport programmes	81.6
Cultural programmes	46.0
Professional training	28.8
Interest groups	23.5
Other programmes for young people	17.7
Publishing activity	17.1
Provision of services to young people	14.5
Environmental protection	11.3
Religious activity	6.7
Other activities	6.7
Political activity	1.8

Source: DOSZ and JTM (1999).

Youth participation in Kosovo refugee camps

A youth participation project undertaken in six Kosovo refugee camps in the Kukes area of Albania in the spring of 1999 shows how young people can make a difference in their own lives and their immediate communities even in desperate circumstances.

There were about 40,000 refugees living in the camps. Half the refugees were youth aged 15-25 who were being increasingly affected by boredom, loss of direction and erosion of self-confidence. The project set out to address these problems by empowering young people to take part in camp life and, in the process, develop organizational and leadership skills that could be transferred through them back to life in Kosovo.

With the help of the Albanian Youth Council, a Kosovar Youth Council with elected members was set up in each camp. Formal dialogues were established between the councils and other camp "players", such as managers, representatives of international agencies, and other refugee groups. The aim was to give youth a voice and an active role in camp life.

The young people eventually took more initiative and became better organized, and they acted as partners themselves for many UN agencies and NGOs working to alleviate the crisis. Their activities included setting up camp schools, organizing camp cleanups, sports tournaments and concerts, raising funds for poor families, distributing information on landmines, and influencing the decisions of camp managers.

Young people involved in the project were interviewed about their experiences.

"We had been completely shocked and traumatized," said one. "Now we are living better, trying to engage in sport. Before the youth council I was bored. Now everything has changed."

"Now with the youth council we can all contribute to help each other," remarked another. "We have a say in how the camp is run and are getting more space."

6.2 New Approaches to Youth Policies

So far, this chapter has examined the relationship between youth and society from the perspective of youth. However, the other side of the coin is just as important: How does the larger society view its youth? This section examines public policy as the instrument through which society expresses its views. Most countries, whether they are established democracies or are in transition, do not have a single, coherent youth policy. Instead, a youth perspective is incorporated into other major policy areas, such as labour market, housing, education, and social policies. Youth policy is then understood as a collective term for a constellation of separate policy aims concerning the lives of young people.

However, as Box 6.1 notes, there has been a growing realization in the international community that youth issues cross not only sectoral, but also geographical borders. Accordingly, the attention being given at the international and supranational levels to youth issues is growing. This process has facilitated the development of a more holistic approach to youth policy and a clearer concept of what is required to enable young citizens to exercise their rights and responsibilities now and in the future. The process has resulted in attempts by various Western European countries to develop more coherent long-term national youth policy and has stimulated the European Union and the Council of Europe to work towards a European statement on youth policy.

During the first years of transition, youth as a specific policy constituency was not a high priority on national political agendas in the transition region. However, concerns about the present and future circumstances of young people began to attract notice, and, since the mid-1990s, more attention has been paid to the reorientation of youth policies. There is an emerging recognition that young people are not simply adults-in-waiting, but individual citizens with clear rights which must be addressed. Nonetheless, most transition countries are still struggling with the formulation of youth policies and the search for resources to implement concrete measures.

The youth policy debate

Youth policy in Western Europe and other established democracies is in flux, and the last decades have witnessed a change in concepts and approaches. It is useful to look at this experience. The example of Western European countries is important in the process of the reformulation of youth policies both for those transition countries which have officially applied for EU membership – the Czech Republic, Bulgaria, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovenia, and Slovakia – and for those which are participating in the broader forum of the Council of Europe.

During the postwar period in Western Europe, "youth" emerged as an identifiable group with its own culture, consumer goods and markets – and with its own set of

problems. This emergence of youth as a distinct segment of the population coincided with a growth in leisure time and an expansion in the time being taken by young people to transit from education to work and from the family home to independence. There was a growing awareness of the need to develop specific policies for this new group. The emphasis was, however, on educating young people into becoming good citizens through a top-down approach, and many policy measures focused on the "reintegration" of problem youth into the mainstream. The goal was socialization, and the vehicle was often leisure activities, as in Eastern Europe.

In Western Europe during the 1970s, there was a new emphasis on the need to involve young people in political decision-making processes, and some concrete steps were taken to give young people a voice, such as the creation of local youth councils in some countries. However, the economic downturn of the 1980s changed both the circumstances and the policy environment revolving around youth. The budget resources for youth services were decreasing, even as the social problems among youth were growing. Efforts were focused on high-risk populations, such as school dropouts, the homeless and youth in conflict with the law. However, policy interventions were implemented in a rather fragmented way.

In general, the 1980s also saw a philosophical shift away from the welfare state towards more individual responsibility. At the same time, there was a realization that youth could not be treated as a single homogeneous group and that there was a need for individualized and flexible approaches. This spawned the trend towards decentralization in policy development, with responsibility devolving to local governments and the engagement of local youth organizations.

Throughout the 1990s the youth policy debate in Europe was increasingly influenced by the goal of encouraging youth participation in all aspects of society, and this fed into the discussion on the need for an overall national policy. Every country has its own mix of policy objectives and policy measures, but four recurring policy goals can be identified:

- Promoting the participation of young people and providing the opportunity for them to participate and develop as individuals and citizens.

- Protecting vulnerable youth and preventing the marginalization and social exclusion of subgroups in the young population.

- Preventing and counteracting anti-social and self-harming behaviour among young people.

- Guaranteeing and protecting the political, legal and social rights of young people, including the creation of the legal frameworks and institutional structures necessary to protect young people's rights and provide social services.

Within these broad policy goals, there are also two identifiable approaches to the design of policy measures. The first can be called "reactive", the second "proactive". In reality, the two approaches can be used in concert to provide an integrated strategy. However, these approaches can also be linked, though not exclusively, to different perceptions of youth – either as a problem group, or as a valuable resource.

The first approach reacts to problems, so that, in policy terms, youth becomes cast as a troubled constituency. Policy measures tend to be paternalistic and aimed at instilling the acceptance of prevailing social norms. As an "emergency response", this approach can be successful in tackling the immediate or emergent needs of vulnerable

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Box 6.5

European youth policies stress networks and information

For young people to be more active and more responsible for their own choices, many Western governments and organizations consider the provision of information and counselling as priorities. According to the Council of Europe, "young people have a right to full, comprehensible and reliable information, without reservations, and to counselling on all problems concerning them in all sectors, without exception, so that they may have complete freedom of choice, without any discrimination or ideological or other influence." So, greater emphasis is being placed on information both as a need and as a resource in the pursuit of policy objectives.

A number of examples exist of facilitated access to information in youth policy measures in Europe. In France, there is a network of youth information centres consisting of a national centre, 23 regional centres and eight centres in départements, including overseas. In Austria, a youth information service, set up in 1994, provides general information of interest to young people, information on Europe, leisure and creative projects, and an Internet "mailcorner" – together gathering about 30,000 inquiries a year.

The Internet offers a powerful enabling tool for collecting and supplying this information and for establishing and maintaining a dialogue between users and providers of youth services. In 1998, the Fifth Conference of European Ministers Responsible for Youth put forward the idea of "studying the feasibility of a European youth media circle which should allow young people, in particular disadvantaged young people, to have access to media and new technologies, and thus promote a direct dialogue between young people in order to find common solutions to their problems."

sections of the youth population. The problem is that reactive policies often stand alone, rather than forming part of a cohesive strategy.

The proactive approach favoured in recent years has strong links to the youth participation debate. It encourages measures that enable young people to use their capacities and to participate in the development of society, including in those areas of immediate concern to them. The debate on participation has promoted awareness of the need to involve young people in the development of the policies and programmes that will affect them, and this raises a number of issues.

Young people are a very diverse group, and they are active in an increasingly complex world; programmes and opportunities must reflect this diversity and complexity. So, it is often necessary to involve a wide variety of youth constituencies. Typically, this involvement is most effective at the local level. However, such a decentralized participatory model can be plagued by a fragmentation in efforts and a lack of coordination, and this underlines the crucial nature of a clear national framework for youth policy and, perhaps, a national coordinating body.

In Western Europe there is a growing consensus on the necessity for a national youth policy that embraces individual locally based measures and programmes, needs-led initiatives that are guided by young people's perceptions of their problems and wants, and a preference for policies that are "proactive", as well as "activating" in character, that is, ones that encourage autonomy and responsibility among young people.

The reformulation of youth policy in the transition countries

Youth policy in the transition period has been characterized by a phase of deconstruction of past organizations, approaches and institutions and a phase of reconstruction. This process has so far largely involved the search for a suitable distribution of responsibilities among government ministries and levels of government, as well as attempts to reconceptualize the approaches to youth policy.

The process of the reformulation of youth policy in the transition region suffers, in many ways, from the lack of previous debate on the subject and the shadow cast by the former communist youth organizations. The new youth groups which might act as partners in policy formulation must be built up from scratch (even though some, like the Scouts, had rich traditions in many countries prior to communism). There is also the question of resources: governments are retreating from social policies which are costly and unprofitable in political and economic terms. One such area is housing, in which, because of privatization, the pre-transition policy of providing youth with cheap rental apartments has been abandoned, although some countries have made efforts to establish savings or credit schemes to help young people obtain housing, especially young couples with children. According to one estimate for the Czech Republic in the late 1990s, almost half of the families including adults under age 34 did not have their own housing.

In line with the overall thrust towards reducing the role of the state in the lives of citizens, including young citizens, there is a general aversion in the region to top-down approaches and large national entities. In the Czech Republic, government representatives have said they do not want to create formal structures like those which once existed to deal with youth issues. In Azerbaijan, two years of hard discussion were required before 10 youth organizations were finally able to form the National Youth Organization in 1995. Previously, the various organizations feared losing their independence or seeing the rebirth of the Komsomol. In Poland, attempts following the 1993 elections to create a national body for the coordination of youth policy failed. In Hungary, MISZOT, a democratic forum for youth organizations that had been established in 1988, was eventually dissolved. While the lack of an umbrella youth organization may create problems and hinder the development of an integrated youth policy, it also creates more room for grassroots initiatives and generates pressure on the government for decentralized policy-making. This in turn may contribute to bringing the citizens a step closer to democracy – much in line with the original goals of the transition.

During the 1990s many transition countries succeeded in establishing national youth councils, while in others more than one body now exists to coordinate the activities of various youth organizations, for example, the Democratic Union and the Albanian National Youth Council in Albania, the Croatian Youth League and the Croatian Students' League in Croatia, and the Slovak Youth Council and the Slovak Youth Assembly in Slovakia. In several countries broad coordinating structures have been successfully established, such as the Council of Lithuanian Youth Organizations set up in 1992 and the Albanian Joint Advisory Committee on the Coordination of Youth Work. In other countries, such as Poland, there is no central government coordinating body, but attempts have been made to represent youth at the local government level. Youth town councils have been established in over 40 of the most important Polish towns. The members of the youth town council in Cracow, for instance, are appointed from among secondary school students. They take part in the work of the local town council and offer advice particularly in the areas of culture, education and sports.

Certainly, during the reconstruction phase, new players have emerged, including domestic and foreign NGOs and international organizations. Several transition countries are already involved in EU youth programmes, especially those Central European countries which are

Table 6.5

National structures for youth policy in selected transition countries, late 1990s

	Government bodies and coordinating structures	Parliamentary representation	Youth policy statement	National association of youth organizations
Albania	Youth Directorate, Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport; Joint Advisory Committee on the Coordination of Youth Work, with representatives of the Ministry and NGOs		Youth bill in preparation	Democratic Union; Albanian National Youth Council
Armenia	Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth; Interministerial Council; Departments for Youth Affairs being established in the 10 regional government offices	Standing Committee on Science, Education, Youth Affairs and Sport		National Council for Youth Affairs (1997)
Azerbaijan	Ministry of Youth and Sport			National Youth Organization (NAYORA)
Belarus	Youth Committee of the Council of Ministers	Subcommittee on Youth	"The Basis of State Policy in the Field of Youth"	
Bulgaria	Committee for Youth, Physical Education and Sport (1997); Interministerial committee to coordinate national youth policy	Committee on Youth, Sport and Tourism	"Youth of Bulgaria", policy programme for 1997-2000	National Youth Council (1997)
Croatia	Youth Department within the National Office for the Protection of the Family, Motherhood and Youth (1997)	Committee for Family, Youth and Sport		Several, including: Croatian Youth League; Croatian Students' League
Czech Republic	Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport	Committee for Science, Education, Culture, Youth, and Sport; Subcommittee for Youth		Several councils, including Consultative Council; Youth Council of Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia; Youth Council of the Bohemian and Moravian Lands
Estonia	Youth Department, Ministry of Education; Committee on Youth Affairs (1995)			Estonian Youth Council
Hungary	Ministry of Youth and Sports (1998)	Committee on Education, Science and Sport; Subcommittee on Youth		National Youth Council (MAGYIT); National Children and Youth Parliament (OGYIP)
Latvia	Youth Affairs Department, Ministry of Education and Science; Committee for Youth Education and Youth Affairs		"Concept of Youth Policy" (1997)	Youth Council of Latvia
Lithuania	State Council for Youth Affairs (representing government bodies and NGOs)	Youth Affairs Committee		Council of Lithuanian Youth Organizations (LiJOT) (1992)
Moldova	Directorate on Youth within the Youth and Sports Department			National Youth Council (1995)
Poland		Subcommittee on Youth Affairs, Committee on Education		Polish Youth Council
Romania	Youth Directorate, Ministry of Youth and Sport	Subcommittee on Youth, Committee on Education and Science		
Russian Federation	State Committee for Youth Affairs	Subcommittee on Childhood and Youth Affairs (Duma)	"Youth of Russia Programme" (1998-2000)	National Council of Youth Unions
Slovakia			"The Principles of State Policy in the Youth Sector in the Slovak Republic" (1992); "The Concept of Prevention and Youth Development" (1995)	Slovak Youth Council; Slovak Youth Assembly
Slovenia	Youth Department; Joint Committee on Youth Affairs, representing government and NGOs		National Youth Programme (1996)	National Youth Council
Ukraine	Ministry of Youth and Sport	Commission on Youth Sports and Tourist Affairs (Supreme Council); Youth Parliament (1998)	Declaration on the Basic Principles of the National Youth Policy of Ukraine (1992)	

Sources: COE (1998a); Gazsó (2000a, 2000b) for additional information on Hungary; MYS (2000) for additional information on Azerbaijan.

Note: The COE (1998a) study was carried out in 1995 and revised in October 1998. Information was supplied by the member countries. Institutional changes in all of the countries are still in progress. The table should therefore be considered indicative rather than exhaustive. When available, the year when the structures were created or the programmes were initiated is given in brackets.

immersed in advanced negotiations to join the European Union. For example, in 1995, the Hungarian government set up the Mobilitas Youth Service, a national agency charged with implementing the EU's "Youth for Europe" programme and other bi- and multilateral agreements. Some CIS countries are also taking part in European initiatives. Thus, young people in Georgia are participating in EU youth programmes.

The initial distrust is gradually being overcome and replaced by an acceptance of NGOs as partners in youth policy formulation and implementation. Nonetheless, very few youth organizations possess the assets to maintain a presence and participate in higher levels of decision-making – assets such as experience and expertise, a recognized status and a strong position from which to negotiate, communication skills, infrastructure, and staff.

This raises the risk that, unless youth policies are developed within government that incorporate bottom-up approaches, local initiatives will remain stuck at the local level and the diversity of youth needs will not be adequately reflected in lawmaking and law enforcement. Despite the understandable aversion to large structures mentioned above, a youth agency within the government

or attached to parliament is required so that support can be channelled to these local initiatives and responses to them can be coordinated. It is encouraging that some countries, for example Albania, Lithuania and Slovenia, have established national advisory committees on youth affairs that include representatives of government bodies and NGOs.

Indeed, another sign that youth issues are moving up the policy agenda in the region is the trend to create youth ministries or to extend the responsibilities of the government agencies charged with youth issues. These central agencies coordinate or at least harmonize the youth-related work of various ministries in areas such as health care, education, defence, and finance and have direct responsibility for youth issues that fall outside the mandate of other government agencies. Thus, the Ministry of Youth and Sports was established in Hungary in 1998 and is the first youth agency to exist at ministerial level since 1989.

Table 6.5 offers an indicative picture of youth structures in the region. It sets out information supplied by some of the transition countries to the Council of Europe for a study of youth policies and legislation. The table shows that Albania, Armenia, the Czech Republic, and Romania have

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Box 6.6

Youth policies and programmes in CEE/CIS

Although youth programmes in the transition region are diverse, trends are emerging in the formulation of youth policies. The four most visible strands of youth policy to appear so far can be summarized as follows:

● Programmes that deal with prevention and interventions related to health and risk-taking behaviour. For example, the "Youth of Russia" programme (1998-2000) includes measures to tackle the health problems of young people affected by drug addiction, alcoholism and infectious diseases. In Ukraine, there is a programme aimed at the prevention among young people of alcoholism, drug addiction, lawbreaking, and other anti-social behaviours. In Lithuania, one of the objectives of the new State Council for Youth Affairs is to offer support to young people in prison.

● Youth unemployment is also being addressed through various youth policy measures. In Romania, the government promotes a system of ongoing training, ensuring interaction between training institutions and the labour market so that young people can move easily from one system to the other. In Azerbaijan, protection for the business activities of young people has been incorporated into youth policy. Likewise, in Georgia "supporting youth entrepreneur activities" is considered a priority.

● Fostering cultural and national identity among young people is regarded as an important part of nation-building in several newly independent countries. Youth policy is therefore expected to contribute to the diffusion of patriotic values. In Azerbaijan, the spread of a "spirit of love, devotion and defence of the motherland" through the promotion of cultural and historical heritage is a priority in youth affairs. In Moldova, youth policy is supposed to reflect "national and universal values, and historical and cultural peculiarities of the Republic". Russia also pursues the "creation of suitable structures to aid the spiritual, moral, civic, and patriotic education of young people, based on their own personal development."

● Several youth policy initiatives focus on the need to promote the integration of ethnic minorities and refugees in society. In the Baltic States, policies pay particular attention to the cultural and social integration of young people from ethnic minorities through multicultural learning and youth participatory initiatives at the local level. The youth affairs committee of the Lithuanian parliament supports the cultural and social integration of young people from ethnic minorities and deals with young people's eligibility for national service, education in citizenship through the army, and the difficulties young people face in rural areas. Reducing ethnic conflict and promoting multiculturalism are also challenges in countries with persistent minority and refugee problems, such as FYR Macedonia and Azerbaijan.

similar ministerial structures, while other countries (Russia, Ukraine and Slovakia) have youth committees or departments responsible for youth affairs. Still other countries (Latvia, Estonia and Croatia) give responsibility for youth matters to a special department within a ministry (for example, the ministry of education).

Youth programmes in the region are becoming increasingly diverse, and, as in Western countries, they range from smaller schemes responding to the needs of very specific groups to programmes that tackle big national issues. One important goal – international youth exchanges and participation in programmes of Western countries – has already been mentioned. It appears that there are four other dominant goals of youth policies in the region: preventing risky health and social behaviours, enhancing youth employment, fostering national identity and cultural heritage, and promoting the integration of ethnic and other minorities into society. Box 6.6 offers some examples of relevant policy measures.

Clearly, many of these programmes have been created in response to new social problems among youth, including risk-taking behaviours and social exclusion. Still, how much they reflect a "reactive" approach or how much

they encourage autonomy and build on the responsibility of young people is difficult to say and requires specific investigation.

Given their education, their mobility, their language skills, and their tendency to look outward, youth can more easily be considered the natural winners of the transition in countries in which economic recovery has been achieved, education enrolment and employment are rising, and membership in the European Union is on the horizon. In these countries, it may also be easier to develop youth policies which view young people as a rich national resource. In countries which are still trapped by economic problems and in which the tendency to look inward is stronger, youth may be more readily seen as a problem group in need of more schooling, jobs and social control.

In both cases the recognition that young people are not an homogenous group is gaining ground, and "one-size-fits-all" policies are being replaced by more decentralized and more targeted interventions. There is little evidence thus far, however, that policies and services relevant to youth are being built on adequate research, systematic youth involvement, monitoring, and evaluation.

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6.3 Conclusions and a Policy Agenda

This Report focuses on the lives, choices, challenges, and opportunities of a unique segment of the youth of the world – the young people living in the 27 countries of the former Eastern bloc. It investigates the adolescent and early adult years of the children of the fading cold war, those for whom the precious process of growing up has coincided with the deconstruction and at times painful demolition of the structures which governed the lives of their parents. These young people have come of age in societies which are undergoing profound and rapid change.

One key dimension of the lives of this "transition generation" has been precisely the exposure to huge change, an experience that is recognized as a risk factor for youth when it is associated with uncertainty. Preceding generations had to face only a relatively brief, well-structured transition from childhood to adulthood, growing up as they did in the stable, if oppressive, conditions common behind the Iron Curtain. In those days, most adolescents were in school, and those who were not had jobs; people married relatively young and readily found employment; the school and working environments both involved a high degree of social control. In a manner similar to youth in agrarian and rural societies, the youth of the industrialized countries under state socialism emulated their parents, who had few choices, but predictable futures.

The transition has shaken up this predictability and exposed the region to new ideas, new information and new influences; it has called value systems into question and

devalued the authority and the knowledge of older generations; it has transformed former political and economic structures. At the same time, it has increased communication and created a cascade of new opportunities in society, particularly for young people.

Youth outcomes and basic causes

The analysis in this Report finds great changes in the most intimate sphere in the lives of youth: family formation. Marriage rates have plunged in all countries. In 1998 the number of women aged 16-24 becoming spouses was reduced by half with respect to nine years earlier. Fertility rates also fell. These trends, when added to the significantly higher rates of youth who are not in employment, suggests that there has been a huge shift towards longer paths in the transition from youth to adult life.

There are also indications that new patterns are emerging in the way young adults are living. More youth are cohabiting, spending longer years in education and combining study and work, especially in Central Europe and the Baltic States. An increasing share of these young people have access to the Internet and will spend time abroad on their own or through organized programmes such as student exchanges or temporary work arrangements. The Report finds evidence that young people are overrepresented in the new private sector, and, despite an overall rise in wage inequality, the gap between the wages of youth and

the wages of older people is strikingly narrow in the transition countries. Youth appear to be supportive of economic and political reforms and the greater freedom and personal liberties these have entailed.

The longer transition from youth to adulthood should by no means be understood to indicate that youth populations are generally more dependent or troubled. Often, these longer paths are associated with the greater opportunities available in social environments that are increasingly becoming characterized by a global culture, more communication and greater efficiency and by more flexibility, mobility and space for individual choices, life styles and diversity. The longer youth transition may therefore reflect changes in the broader environment, where learning is becoming a lifelong process, secure "jobs for life" are the exception rather than the rule, families have fewer children, and the divisions between youth and adulthood are less and less marked.

The Report nevertheless finds ample evidence that the passage through the years of youth has also become more complex and risky in the region. Much larger pools of young people are neither in school, nor in the labour force; youth unemployment rates are high, and the shares of the long-term unemployed among jobless youth are rising. Many more young people are working in jobs which offer few career prospects, do not provide social security coverage and entail working conditions which may be unsafe or even exploitative. There is evidence of a deterioration in the overall health of youth, involving poorer nutrition and higher rates of tobacco, alcohol and drug use. Sexually transmitted infections have reemerged as serious problems in many countries and pose a major threat to the health of youth. In several countries HIV-AIDS rates have climbed, and in some countries – where transmission has occurred through populations of injecting drug users – infection rates have soared to frightening levels.

Accident rates among youth are high in international comparisons, often strikingly high, despite relatively low levels in the use of automobiles or other motorization and in access to organized leisure activities. In many countries, the number of deaths of young people from injuries or natural causes is greater now than it was before the transition. The incidence of suicide and violence among youth has increased, at times to alarming levels. More young people are in conflict with the law now than pre-transition, and there are indications that offenders are younger and more likely to be repeat offenders. Some surveys have found surprisingly tolerant attitudes among youth towards unlawful behaviours; others have revealed disturbingly little trust in the state and its institutions.

What are the root causes of these problems, and how can transition societies counter the negative trends?

The findings of the Report suggest that there is a positive correlation between changes in youth participation in education and employment on the one hand and economic growth and market reforms on the other. Schooling and job opportunities are generally associated with healthy behaviours, less conflict with the law and stronger civic commitments. One obvious way to improve youth outcomes is, therefore, to strengthen the commitment to the market and to democratic reforms, a forward-looking strategy which can build on young people as a key resource and potential ally in the reform process.

However, the Report finds that higher school dropout rates, more social exclusion and various negative health behaviours among youth are also showing up in countries which are frontrunners in reform and which are posting signs of strong economic growth. Nor does it seem plausible that the lack of economic growth is a satisfactory explanation alone, since many well-established and dynamic market economies are experiencing similar problems.

There is an association between youth outcomes and socio-economic variables such as family income, parental education, rural or urban location, or ethnicity. Family and parental factors tend to explain a considerable portion of the differences in schooling, learning achievement, health, and job opportunities (and even peer associations and marriage choices) in every society. As analysis in this and earlier Regional Monitoring Reports has shown, such factors also played an important role before the transition. However, inequalities in family income and in access to services (often resonating with ethnic and geographic divisions) have grown during the transition, and the gaps are appearing as bigger differences in youth outcomes.

A socially more sensitive approach to the reforms would therefore also be a more youth-friendly strategy. Stronger public policies and private initiatives on the social side would facilitate equal opportunity in education, access to basic health services and family support for young women and men; youth would also benefit from less ethnic tension and lower rates of crime and violence. To achieve this, however, youth concerns need to be represented in strategies and programmes.

Under communism, school enrolment, the frequency of contacts with the health care system and reliance on particular risk-taking behaviours, such as drug abuse, were far less an individual choice among youth. The passage through the years of youth was highly structured, and behaviours were tightly controlled. Today, young people are citizens of free societies and have rights and make choices, and, because the structures and controls of the former state have collapsed, the influence of family background is more visible than before. However, it is worth recalling that, in some countries, the more elevated socio-economic status of parents can have a negative association with healthy behaviour among youth and that sometimes closing the gender gap unfortunately means more substance abuse and higher crime rates among young women.

The promotion of economic growth and the development of civil society, if accompanied by investments in

public health, education and social protection, can create a foundation for sound youth policies, but they do not necessarily result in better youth outcomes. There is a need – and ample room – for the design of more specific youth-friendly policies. How can these policies be developed, and what sort of changes and interventions are required in the transition countries?

An agenda for youth-friendly interventions

The first goal that youth-friendly policies must aim at is to ensure that youth becomes recognized as a distinct population group with particular needs and capacities. It is curious, but revealing, that in the traditional approaches to youth, the only domain where this elementary condition was at least formally met in the region was juvenile justice.

The second goal of youth-friendly policies should be to open a meaningful dialogue with youth on the issues that affect their lives and the decisions they face. This dialogue should be multifaceted, supported by detailed research and

political commitment, and designed to aid the development and reformulation of policy responses.

This Report, reviewing national data and international surveys, identifies the following thematic issues as most in need of programme and policy intervention, further research and debate, in the multinational context of the transition.

- Programmes that target youth mortality due to accidents and violence.

- Support services and interventions to reduce stress, youth depression and suicide.

- Programmes against substance abuse, including smoking, excess alcohol consumption and drug use.

- Reproductive and sexual health programmes focused on safe sex, adolescent fertility and sexually transmitted infections.

- Access to information, life skills, youth-friendly services,

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Box 6.7

A framework for adolescent health programming

Assessment of the level of adolescent programming
(The further one progresses down the list in the provision of answers for a country, the deeper the level of programming.)

- What is the nature of political commitment to adolescents and young people across the sectors covering health, development, protection, and participation?
- Have priorities been set through relevant recent research and through systematic youth involvement? What are the priorities in terms of key problems and selected solutions?
- Where some interventions are ongoing, have they reoriented existing resources or generated additional investment? Is sensitization and training on adolescence provided to health and social workers, educators and youth workers, law officers, and religious leaders? Are young people recruited to provide input to youth services?
- Is there a systematized effort to monitor and evaluate policies, programmes and activities (whether funded by government or other agencies) using available indicators of success, quality and impact?

Major types of interventions
(A country requires at least a little of each type in order to ensure adequate coverage.)

- Supportive policy environment for youth-work service providers and safe spaces for young people and their families.
- Availability, accessibility and renewal of appropriate,

understandable information for each age range.
- Relevant educational curriculum delivered using the life skills approach and interactive methodologies to build competence and ability.
- Adequate counselling facilities in educational, health care and residential settings mediated by trained providers, whether professional, peer, or other volunteers.
- Youth-specific and youth-friendly health and social services which adequately address key health and development problems.

Coverage and involvement in the following areas are essential
(The settings and actors involved will differ from country to country and within countries according to the culture and traditions of groups, including ethnic, sexual and linguistic minorities and the disabled.)

- Community and religious groups.
- Youth-serving organizations and youth movements, clubs and associations.
- Street work with especially vulnerable groups.
- Family and home support networks.
- Schools, colleges, universities.
- Workplaces, vocational training centres.
- Residential care centres, centres for justice administration.
- Television, radio, Internet service providers, magazines and newspapers.
- Sports, leisure, discotheques, and shopping facilities.

peer programmes, and supportive environments to counter the threat of HIV-AIDS.

- Programmes addressing the root causes of poor basic education completion rates, weak vocational and technical education enrolment, and high dropout rates.

- Equal opportunity in education, including paths to tertiary education.

- Access to language courses and to the Internet.

- Access to life skills education and non-formal learning.

- Recognition of the special needs of marginalized groups of young people, including ethnic minorities.

- Access to a first job.

- Working conditions and career perspectives in the private sector.

- The issue of public sector employment of youth.

- Active labour market measures, including certain types of programmes which are particularly successful among youth in the transition countries.

- Primary and secondary prevention of youth getting into conflict with the law.

- Positive sentencing options in juvenile justice, including alternatives to the deprivation of liberty.

- Programmes that enhance civic values and education in good citizenship.

- Partnerships with and communication among civic and grassroots youth groups and organizations.

To illustrate the scope and the depth of the actions needed in these fields, Box 6.7 outlines a framework based on experience gained in adolescent health and development interventions in various countries of the world. It is clear that political commitment is essential, and, even though interventions may target only one major area, such as health, a multisectoral approach and the involvement of a range of activities and actors are recommended. This comprehensive and multilayered approach reflects the recognition that youth issues are interrelated and often have common roots, that youth is not a homogenous group, though, as a group, youth have particular needs and capacities, and that some segments of the youth population are more vulnerable than others and may need additional support.

International experience is not sufficient in itself for the development of meaningful programmes and cannot replace country-specific research on the particular needs of youth in given economic, social and cultural contexts. An international perspective is nonetheless important. It can often be helpful in supplying useful guidance for youth-friendly policies and in highlighting common underlying problems.

From the analysis and the data provided in this Report, the following cross-cutting issues emerge.

- Little trust between youth and service providers and state planners.

- Little discussion and dialogue on sensitive issues relevant for youth.

- Lack of appropriate recognition of psychosocial factors in youth development.

- Narrow sectoral approaches to youth health, development, or employment.

- Lack of common terminology and approaches to youth issues.

- Overemphasis on technicalities of service delivery and underrecognition of factors that determine service delivery, such as confidentiality and affordability.

- Little involvement of youth in service planning and provision.

- Little recognition of youth as an asset and as able partners.

- Little research and few surveys and statistics targeted at youth and young families.

- Little dialogue at national and local levels on youth issues.

While it is essential to call attention to factors which hamper the effectiveness and efficiency of interventions and service provision, it is also essential to call attention to and build upon existing strengths. While the region has a weak track record in communication and in the supply of information to youth, a major element of any youth-related policy and youth advocacy, it has strong traditions and staff who are often well trained in providing quality services for children up to age 18. This is a huge asset, and, although the 10 years of the transition may have eroded some of these capacities, they have also seen the appearance of new types of services, the launch of reforms and the expansion of the range of providers.

These services and supports are clearly important for adolescents. It is also important for all young people because, as analysis has repeatedly found in various countries and settings, much of the success or the failure which surfaces in adolescence and young adult ages is rooted in childhood. In other words, to reap the rewards of positive policies and programmes for youth, it pays to make the appropriate investment earlier in life with child-friendly policies and programmes. Well-articulated youth policies, through their impact on young mothers and families, can then benefit from the fact that young children are healthier and better cared for. Finally, while it is important that policies distinguish youth from children, it is also true that many issues and challenges are shared and call for action across the board.

The decade of transition has eroded many doctrines once closely held in the region, and this dissolution can be liberating. It may, for instance, help uproot the belief that children and adolescents have no need for rights and dignity, that young people are passive recipients of social values, public services, economic goods, and political priorities. It may promote the understanding that, in mind, body and spirit, the 65 million members of the youth nation in the region form an immense asset for the 27 transition countries and beyond in this time of rapid economic and social transformation.

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Jan and Ira: a tale of two futures

Jan and Ira are just two of the 200 young individuals from the region whose voices have reached this Report. They come from different countries and very different circumstances, but they are both intent on doing the best they can for themselves and for their countries. Their stories illustrate what a great resource youth can be in the nation-building of the transition.

Jan, 24, is a project manager for an international company in the Czech Republic. He is married and comes from an educated, hard-working family. His father is a lecturer at the university; his mother is a bank officer, and his sister is studying economics. Jan himself graduated from a secondary technical school and, like his father, from the faculty of electronics at the technical university. His parents have been very supportive of his education.

"They motivated me to study," he says. "Although it was not easy for them, they were willing to pay for my language course." His father also steered him toward his current employer when he was researching his thesis. Jan wrote on a topic suggested by the company and then began working for the firm while he was studying. Upon graduation, the company sent him on a three-month study trip to Finland and hired him full time as a project manager.

Jan feels his education, foreign language skills, initiative, and involvement with his future employer as a student all helped him get the job. He likes his work and feels it is a good start to his career.

"My work motivates me," he says. "It is demanding; I have an opportunity to learn new things. It offers professional growth."

Jan hopes to become a line manager in the company and feels he has the support of his boss and colleagues.

"[Managers] respect our opinions because they are aware of the fact that society and the market is changing opinions of young people and that this could be of high importance, particularly because young people see things differently."

Ira, 19, is a single mother who lives with her 14-month-old daughter, her mother and her father in Ukraine. She and her father have jobs, and her mother stays at home and cares for the baby.

"I was 16 when I got pregnant," she explains. "My parents were shocked. When my partner learned that I was pregnant, he gave me some money to have an abortion. But I was scared to have an abortion, as it usually has some side effects, negative, for one's health. We got married anyway, but after six months we divorced."

Having a partner and a traditional two-parent relationship is desirable, but not a priority for Ira. If she had her say, Ira would make sure family planning was taught in school and young women could have direct access to women's health centres. Meanwhile, she deals with the realities of young motherhood.

"It is too difficult to work and study simultaneously if you have a child," she says. "Now I am only working." She believes the government should support young mothers who are still going to school. Ira also recognizes that being a young single mother makes her financially vulnerable.

"I think that having a baby creates some additional problems in looking for a job."

She remains undaunted, however.

"I am very happy with my child," she says. "I love her so much. Of course, a child ties my hands in a way, but I am sure I will reach my goals." These goals include going on to study economics at university, getting a good job as a manager in finance and providing a sound education for her daughter. But will Ira's country benefit from her dreams?