

Country Reports

Phase 1 (2006)

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Albania

Youth Demography

Albania is a relatively small country located in the Balkan Peninsula with 3,544,808 inhabitants (estimated July 2004)¹ that covers 28,748 square kilometres. With its rather torn history of Balkan wars and dictatorship during communism, Albania witnessed a series of economic and social crises during the 90s, which resulted in high level of migration from, as well as within the country.

It is estimated that during the period 1990 – 1995 the number of emigrants that fled the country ranged from 300.000 – 600.000 persons. Today the composition of the country, divided in 12 regions, and in turn divided in 36 districts and 65 municipalities, is represented by 58% of the population living in rural and mountainous areas with lowest income and fewer social and health services, and access to education². The resting 40% of the Albanians live in urban areas, with 20% inhabiting the capital of Tirana³. High levels of internal migration caused Tirana absorbing almost 50%, and Durres, the largest port city 40%, of the internal migrants. Out of the 17% of the young people aged between 15-24 years (of the overall population), 20% are thought to have been migrating in search for economic opportunities abroad (INSTAT, 2002).⁴

Overall Albania, in comparison to other European countries, with an average age of 28,6 years⁵, with 40% of the population being under 18 years old⁶, and a GDP per capita of only 1,499 USD (data 2003)⁷, can be considered the youngest and the poorest population in Europe.

The table below illustrates population rates for Albanian society⁸:

	Total	Male	Female
Age structure (2004 est.)	0-14 years: 26.4% 15-64 years: 65.3% Over 65 years: 8.3% (about 40% under 18; about 50% under 25)	489,363 1,184,670 135,177	446,586 1,130,065 158,947
Median age (2004 est.)	28.2 years	27.6 years	28.7 years
Population growth rate	0.51% (2004 est.)		
Birth rate	15.08 births/1,000 population (2004 est.)		
Net migration rate	-4.93 migrant(s)/ 1,000 population (2004 est.)		
Infant mortality rate	22.31 deaths/1,000 live births	23.01 deaths/1,000 live births	21.54 deaths/1,000 live births
Life expectancy rate	77.06 years	74.37 years	80.02 years
Fertility rate	2.05 children born/woman		
Literacy (age 9 and over can read and write)	86.5% (2003 est.)	93.3% (2003 est.)	79.5% (2003 est.) female youth literacy : 96.4%

¹ Project Einstein, SEE Volunteers in SEE, Research Document, p. 44

² UNDP Albania Draft country Programme, p.2

³ UNDP Albania Draft country Programme, p.2

⁴ NSP Albania, 2004-2010, p.9

⁵ MDG Report Albania, p.64

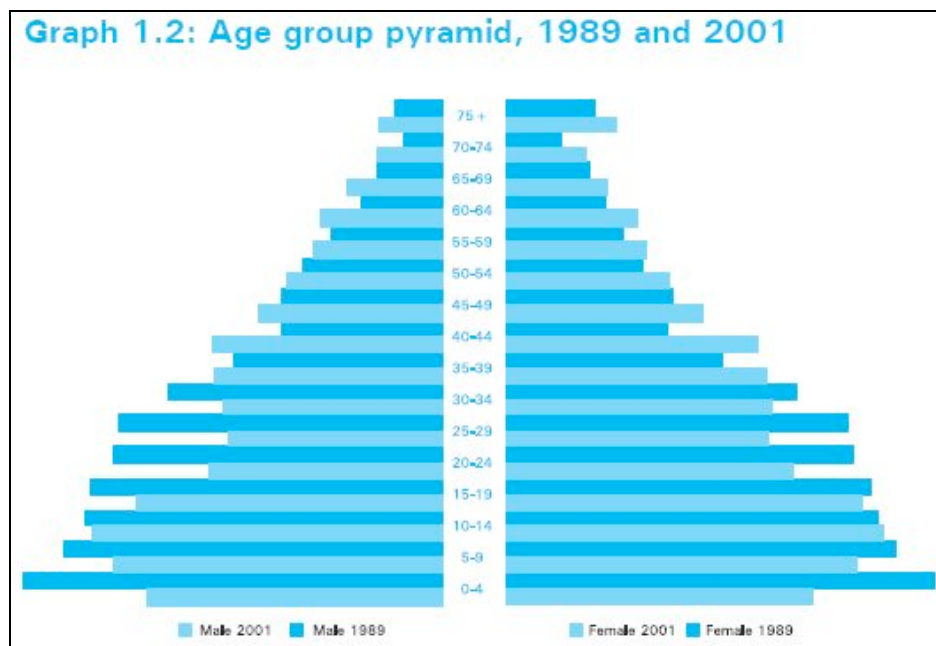
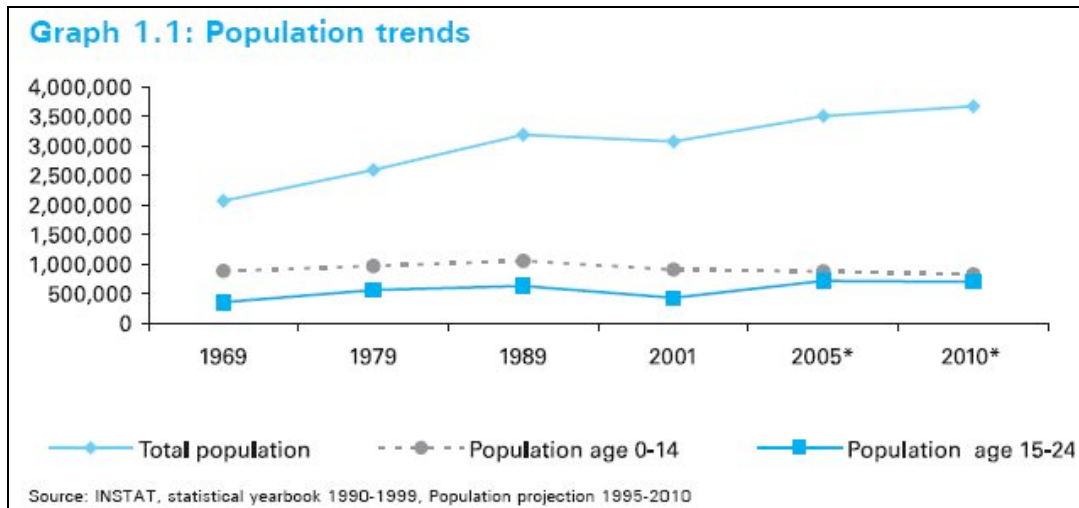
⁶ NSP Albania, 2004-2010, p.9

⁷ UNDP Albania Draft Country Programme, p.2

⁸ Project Einstein, SEE Volunteers in SEE, Research Document, p. 44

Poverty, high unemployment, neighbouring conflicts, social insecurity, declining health and education indicators, as well as an increase in crime and gender discrimination accompanied the developments of the conditions of the current generation of young people, causing more and more of them leaving Albania mainly to the neighbouring Italy or Greece. Changes in population dynamics are the most dramatic consequences of the demographic transition, which is characterized by smaller families and a decline in household size⁹. Still young people represent a significant number in the Albanian society with a potential to contribute to its transformation and development.

In the graphics below you may find information on the Albanian population trends¹⁰:



⁹ UNDP Albania Draft country Programme, p.2

¹⁰ UNICEF, "Youth and Transition".

According to UNICEF report 'Youth and Transition: Confronting Albania's Key Resource', there are five key areas that impact on the life of Albanian youth today. These are:

1. Internal and external youth migration.
2. An increasing number of young people entering in conflict with the law, which is manifested by an increase of violence.
3. Exposure to new health risks that includes risks of trafficking, HIV AIDS and STD.
4. Declining level of education, in terms of access and quality that would correspond to the needs of the labour market.
5. Huge youth unemployment that represents the major part of the overall unemployment, and again stimulates young people procuring work in neighbouring Greece and Italy.

The high levels of external migration brought about some positive as well as negative effects. From an economic point of view, migration contributed to the improvement of the living conditions of the Albanian families, as well as provided investments for the small and medium enterprises. Remittances, which today according to the UNICEF report¹¹ represent 20% of the GDP, acted as a softener of the social tensions. Almost 30% of investments to the Albanian economy were finances by remittances of family members working abroad. On the other hand, the massive migration weakened the strong traditional ties of the Albanian families. The high male emigration resulted in the increase of the women headed families in the absence of men. According to the UNICEF report, sociologists have noted an increased violence among these families, including gender discrimination, raise of juvenile crime and child trafficking.

According to the National Strategy on Children, about 4,000 children have migrated broad, unaccompanied by their parents (3,000 in Greece and 1,000 in Italy), suffering mistreatment, physical and sexual abuse, employment in hard work, trafficking and other illegal activities. The report further noticed frequent exploitation of children by their parents or by Mafioso and criminal gangs for profit-bearing aims¹².

Unfortunately, except of the trends of economic and at times education migration, there is no much other information on youth mobility. However, it can be said that since Albania's accession to the Council of Europe in 1995, young Albanians participate fully in the programmes of the Youth Directorate in the field of youth training, research and youth policy. Furthermore, the 2003 European Commission Third Country Youth Programme Report¹³ highlights some of the challenges related to youth mobility.

These include on the on hand difficulties with the procedures for obtaining visa, which also impacts on the possibility of young Albanians to carry out projects; and lack of information about the Youth Programme on the other. The lack of information is rooted deeply in the post-communist culture of both the national institutions (such as the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports) as well as the respective youth organisations. The field report indicated that Albanian youth organisations are 'unwilling to share information about the Programme, because for their point of view having information is power.'¹⁴ This reluctance to disseminate information about

¹¹ UNICEF, Youth and Transition, p. 17.

¹² Albanian National Strategy on Children, pp. 3-6.

¹³ Interim evaluation of third country cooperation of the youth programme 2000-2002, final report, volumes 1 and 2, European Commission, 2003.

¹⁴ Ibid. Volume 1, p. 89.

possibilities to participate in international youth programmes, as well as disseminate the results of the implemented projects, is detrimental for the young people and the whole youth field.

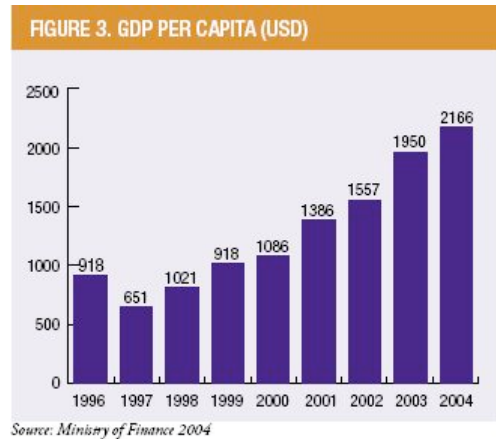
The low visibility of the European programmes for young people seems to be of a strategic character that favours some among the overall population and keep the rest of young people in the country uninformed, conversely to the great curiosity and excitement about the possibilities to take an active part in the greater Europe.

Socio-Economic Conditions of Youth



In spite of the gradually improving economic growth¹⁵, the levels of poverty and extreme poverty remain very high. According to the UNDP Country Programme, ‘almost 30 per cent of the population lives on less than \$2 per day. Of this number, nearly 15 per cent live in extreme poverty, on less than \$1 per day. Unemployment is high, at 22.7 per cent, and even higher among youth and women¹⁶’.

Poverty in Albania can be related to the heritage of the feudal past, where the backward agricultural system together with the outdated agricultural machinery paralysed the functioning of the country until the privatisation process of the agricultural land took place. This however divided the land in such small entities (1.3 ha on average) that combined with the bad infrastructure, problems with irrigation and lack of market access, made it impossible to make any profit.¹⁷ This caused a ‘temporary’ massive emigration of young men to cities, which made life very hard for young women, who were left to take care of the land, livestock and the families. This has contributed to the withdrawal of young women from education and possibilities to seek other kind of employment. A gradual migration of families towards the cities brought poverty to the peri-urban areas that were not prepared for such fast growth. Most internal migrants had to face conditions of a complete lack of infrastructure including water supply, sewage, and roads.



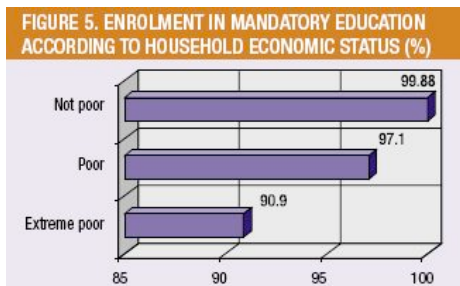
The already weak social safety net, poor service infrastructure in health care and education do not manage to cover the needs of the rural and peri-urban population; also the support offered is not sufficient¹⁸.

¹⁵ In the past 5 to 6 years, the Albanian economy has achieved economic growth that has ranged from 4.7 percent to 12.7 percent in line with GDP per capita. The sectors with the highest level of growth are in construction, trade and transport – according to the UNDP MDG Report, p.31

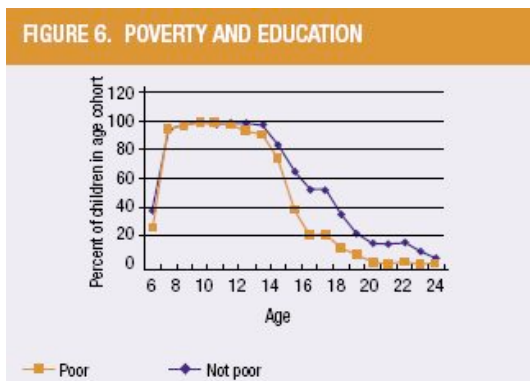
¹⁶ UNDP Albania Draft country Programme, p.2

¹⁷ National Strategy for Socio-economic development p.12

¹⁸ UNDP MDG Report, p.30



As a result the enrolment to basic and secondary education has declines, especially in the case of young women living in rural areas. Nationally, over 8 out of 10 children enrolled in the first grade complete the elementary education. Differences between urban (87% of enrolled children complete elementary education) and rural (77%) areas are becoming more significant, while enrolment levels have fallen by over a third for both preschool and secondary education compared to 1990¹⁹.



Gaps in education became even more remarkable in third level and professional education. In rural areas only 1 adult in 40 holds a university degree, versus 1 in 5 in Tirana, and 1 in 10 in other urban areas. According to the UNICEF report, ‘the average schooling for those over 21 is 8.5 years, with adults in rural areas 3.5 years less of formal education and about 2 years less than adults in other urban areas²⁰.

Gender discrimination, especially in the rural areas, where young women are considered inferior and are taught that they should come last, has become a strongly embedded phenomenon. The traditional patriarchal and puritan mentality shape discriminatory practices on sexuality issues, which in the deteriorating economic and social conditions gave rise to gender based violence and illicit trafficking for prostitution purposes. Ill-nourishment, anaemia, and youth pregnancy endanger the life and health of many young women and adolescents.

Gender discrimination, especially in the rural areas, where young women are considered inferior

Information on contemporary youth cultures in rural or urban areas is lacking. From the few surveys available it seems that most Albanian youth live in a fairly negative atmosphere, and do not see Albania as a country in which they can fulfil their dreams for the future. They rather seek new opportunities and better life abroad, even at the risk of losing their life²¹.

Changes in population dynamics are the most dramatic consequences of the demographic transition, which is characterized by smaller families and a decline in household size²². Although family still remains the basic cell of the Albanian society, in recent years the number of divorces and hospital-based abortions (legalised in 1992) has increased dramatically. According to the Child Rights report, ‘in 1997, one in every three pregnancies ended with abortion with the highest rate for women between 25 and 34 years of age. Children are considered as property of the family and not as an active part of it and the father remains the main figure²³. The increase in the instance of single parenthood, very young families and divorce, as well as significantly lower fertility and changing attitudes towards marriage (increase in age of marrying and number of children) is of concern. Statistics on the living arrangements of unmarried young people and their lifestyles are lacking.

¹⁹ UNICEF Youth and transition, p. 52

²⁰ UNICEF, “Youth and Transition”, p. 52.

²¹ UNICEF, “Youth and Transition”, *op cit*.

²² UNDP Albania Draft Country Programme, p.2.

²³ Child Rights Report, Children Human Rights Centre Albania, p. 3.

In a situation of lack of appropriate structures of support for young families and children, family remains the main source of help, as well as sorrow. Child abuse is a wide spread phenomenon in Albania that does not have any limits in the level of age, education, social or economical status of the family, though marginalized children are obviously more exposed to violence and abuse. The child abuse in Albania is carried out mainly by the parents, but also by relatives. In recent years, abuse of children has grown extreme, including murders within family. It seems that this dark area remains completely untouched by the governmental services and policies. Albanian government does not provide any specialised services for the treatment and rehabilitation of abused children and so far no measures to support the establishment of such infrastructure have been noticed. Furthermore, neither legislation nor penalties are in place against the abusing persons. Institutions such as police, social services, health and education are not prepared to recognize the signs of abuse, nor are obliged to report on such cases²⁴. This of course affects the whole generation of young people, who grow up in conditions of over-reaching violence. The efforts of civil society organisations in this area are not sufficient, and needs for further training of teachers, social workers and so on, are huge.

Although the governmental strategy on social protection and social care promises actions that would together with economic growth and sustainable development reduce the social unrest, the following social support policies may not respond to some of the deeper needs of the Albanian society.

- Promotion of employment and support for training the poor, so that they are able to meet labour market demand,
- Social protection and economic assistance for poor families,
- Social care for social marginalized groups, and
- Social insurance²⁵

Unemployment

Considering the demographic situation in Albania together with its socio-economic conditions and the levels of youth migration, it is clear that youth unemployment is one of the main issues on the political agenda. In 2001, the employment rate at a national level reached 77% of the active population, but for the age group 15-24 years old, the employment rate was just 53%. Taking into account that four out of ten employed young people do temporary and occasional jobs, this situation is serious²⁶. However, youth employment seems not to be properly addressed by the government despite the fact that many structures and mechanisms to assist young people have been already put in place. In spite of the striking statistics, it seems that there is a general acceptance among the Albanian society that young people have more opportunities than other age groups. This has at times amounted to protests by older population declaring that discriminatory practices have taken place.

According to the Report on Youth employment Opportunities in Albania²⁷, most of the current initiatives lack a long-term perspective as well as the assistance from national and local authorities.

While youth employment opportunities are higher in larger cities, especially in trade and hotel services, industry, education, health; in rural areas and small towns they are almost non-existent.

²⁴ Child Abuse in the Albanian Family, Children Human Rights Centre Albania, p. 29.

²⁵ National Strategy for Socio-economic development, pp.21-22.

²⁶ UNICEF, "Youth and Transition", p.59.

²⁷ Youth Employment Opportunities Albania, p. 34.

On the other hand, low-skilled and low-paid jobs in rural areas are mostly filled by juveniles, which raise the unemployment by young adults²⁸. Large scale unemployment encourages not only youth emigration for a better life, but also involvement of young people in drug trade, prostitution, human trafficking, crime and deviance – among the long-term unemployed youth.

Information on and services for labour market are inadequate, family, relatives and friends are the most important providers of information and help for the young unemployed. Labour offices created in 1992 are still in development, in terms of services provided and coverage. Services such as job counselling, labour market information, professional training, advice, or micro-credit support, are rarely offered²⁹.

Specifically targeted employment programmes for vulnerable and disadvantaged youth, among them disabled, orphaned and Roma minorities do not exist. Gender perspective is often lacking in governmental employment policies, too.

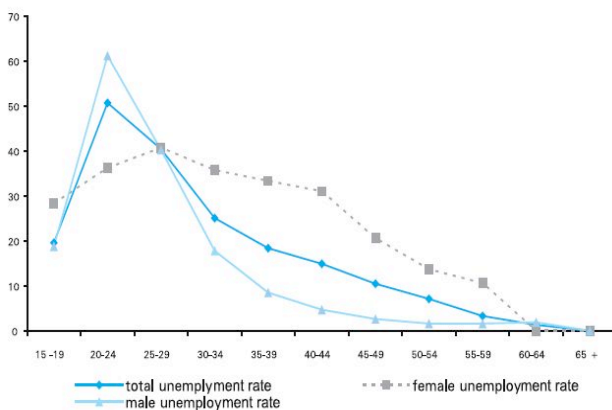
When considering the implications of globalisation and requirements of the modern European information and knowledge society, young people of Albania are left far behind. With a restrictive information policy, low access to information technology, deficient system of vocational training³⁰, and brighter perspectives on better future, young people in Albania are facing a difficult path to adulthood with decent work and life conditions.

The 2001 National Strategy for Social and Economic Development aims to address the youth unemployment through development of labour promotion programmes and support of training programmes for and disadvantaged youth.

The proposed measures include³¹:

- An **increased access to labour services** for a wide range of unemployed people, especially for disabled and rural youth, and improve labour information and counselling services.
- Increased **youth employability** through adoption of **active market policies** for a smooth transition from school to the workplace, and creation of new jobs.

Graph 5.4: Unemployment rate by age group and gender, 2001



Source: INSTAT; Population census 2001

- A **launch and support micro-credit schemes, public works, community labour programs, social business and professional training**, with particular focus on disadvantaged young such as those in poverty, the disabled, youth leaving institutions, formerly trafficked, and young people with criminal/delinquent records.
- A **creation of career counselling** services that involve students, teacher and parents in understanding the correlation between education choices

and employment possibilities.

²⁸ UNICEF, “Youth and Transition”, p.10.

²⁹ UNICEF, “Youth and Transition”, p.60.

³⁰ Albanian National Youth Strategy, p. 26.

³¹ UNICEF, “Youth and Transition”, pp. 64-65.

- The **development of sustainable lifelong learning opportunities** to meet changing labour market needs.

So far, no monitoring of the implementation of these measures was found. It is likely that it was not in the capacity of the government to implement most of these measures.

In line with the Strategy for Socio-economic Development, the implementation of policies can create a favourable business climate for youth through micro-credit, public and community work programmes and promote job opportunities for young people, encouraging them to build their future in Albania³².

The National Youth Strategy³³ designs its policy of young people's employment and self-employment in two areas: business development among youth and young people's employment. Specific recommendations are being designed for:

- Self-employment possibilities – encouraging governments, businesses and organisations fostering schemes of grants for the first steps of youth entrepreneurship, providing financial and technical support. Cooperation of different actors is encouraged through the Committee for Promoting continuous Cooperation.
- Employment possibilities for specific youth groups – targeting young women, disadvantaged youth, young people who finished military service, immigrant youth, refugees, unsheltered, street children and indigenous youth. Youth organisations and young people themselves should be directly involves in planning and implementing of these programmes.
- Inclusion of youth in the voluntary services in the community – creating an alternative to military service and stimulating young people to benefit from the work in the local communities and youth organisations.
- Needs arising from the differences in the technological development – urge to invest in ICT training for young people.
- Information on the labour market – setting up of youth information networks on possibilities of employment.
- Increased economic interest in farming and purchasing of a more attractive rural environment – increase of educational and cultural services in the rural areas in order to make them more attractive to rural youth. Rural-urban exchange should be encouraged.
- Vocational training with the aim of enhancing benefit from and generating incomes by youngsters themselves – in order to improve the methods of agricultural production and marketing.
- Youth-targeted grants – development of grants providing training and technical and financial assistance.
- Cooperation among the young people from the rural and urban areas for the production and trade of goods – NGOs should be directly involved in the marketing of products and their distribution.

While there is still a lack of clarity in relation to the implementation of the youth employment measures with regard to the information and services provided, there are now four youth-friendly information centres in Albania (first opened in May 2003, and last two opened in

³² UNICEF, “Youth and transition”, p.23.

³³ National Youth Strategy – Third policy on young people's economic, social and cultural development, pp. 24 – 29.

October 2006). However their focus seems to be primarily on health care and counselling services in the area of health and abuse.

The main success story in the area of youth employment, seems to be the “Youth Albania Professional Services (YAPS)” – a social business, which with the help of UNICEF and other partners from the private sector, government and civil society, has created four business ventures (mail and parcel delivery, cleaning, appliance service and repair, and media and publicity monitoring) that currently employ around 80 young people. YAPS employ young people coming out residential care, members of ethnic minorities, those with disabilities, women and girls that have been trafficked and extremely poor. YAPS, which became operationally self-supporting after six months, provide real employment while helping young people to reintegrate into society³⁴.

Social enterprises and businesses with social objectives seem to provide a possible solution to the youth unemployment and as a result also address issues of social exclusion.

Poverty

According to the UNICEF report Youth and transition, poverty incidence among younger people is above the national average, and is highest among rural children. In rural areas, 4 out of every 10 children under 5 live in poverty. Almost half of the poor in Albania are below the age of 21³⁵. The report states that poor individuals live in larger, younger households. Poverty rates are highest, above 50%, among large households with 7 or more members. About 40% of the poor live in these households, which also account for almost 50% of the poverty gap.

Among the rural youth, there are other vulnerable groups that represent a rather large part of Albanian society. These are in particular: Roma and Evgiit children and young people, young people leaving children’s homes or orphanages, because they have passed the age of 14 years³⁶, and other minority groups. These groups, apart from being poor, face discrimination in public health care and education. Roma children in particular are exposed more than others to illiteracy, child labour, abuse and exploitation for prostitution, begging and crime³⁷.

The formulation of the National Youth Strategy can be definitely considered as an important step for the improvement of the socio-economic situation of young people in Albania. Also a great number of measures in the area of support in information, counselling services and training have been proposed. However, to assess the level of implementation of these measures is impossible due to the lack of information in this area.

The only specific information has been in the area of the social enterprise development involving and promoting the employment of vulnerable youth.

Youth Lifestyles, Sexuality, Union Formation

According to the UNICEF report Youth and transition, the opening of Albania to the free world was accompanied by disruptive socio-economic trends that include new risks and violence.

³⁴ UNICEF, “Youth and Transition”, p. 69.

³⁵ UNICEF, “Youth and Transition”, *op cit*.

³⁶ UNICEF, “Youth and Transition”, p.62.

³⁷ National Strategy on Children, pp. 3-6.

Before transition, youth in Albania tended to marry and have their first child relatively young. After the 1990s, this situation changed: youth are less likely to marry, but more likely to have sex at a younger age. Research shows that two thirds of boys and one third of girls have had sexual relations before the age 16. The average age for first sexual experience is 17 for boys and 16 for girls³⁸.

The new trends characterized by new increased risks and changes in lifestyles include increase of youth deaths caused by poor road conditions, banditry, firearms and blood feud. Accidental deaths among young people jumped from 60 per 100,000 in 1996 to almost 120 in 1997. Most of the victims were males.

Furthermore, irregular and ineffective prevention programmes against the use of harmful substances have resulted in a rapid increase of young smokers and drug users. While the official date on young Albanians who are at risk of substance abuse is missing, it seems that the proportion of young female and juvenile smokers has increased dramatically.

The “Young Voices” opinion survey carried out in 2001 shows that Albanian children and young people are highly exposed to harmful substances such as tobacco, alcohol and drugs. The use of harmful substances during adolescence is often seen as a way of rebelling against parents and as a rite of passage to adulthood. Interviews with 400 children and young people aged 9-17 years found that:

- 89 % of young people and 47 % of children have tried tobacco; 65 % of young people and 16 % of children are addicted to it
- 67 % of young people have tried alcohol; 19 % are addicted to it
- 12 % of young people and children report ‘contacts’ with inhaling substances or illegal drugs, and 3 % are addicted to them³⁹.

Traditionally, sexual and reproductive health in Albania was limited to mother and child care services. For more than 50 years Albania was following a pro-natalist policy that prohibited modern family planning, sexual education as well as abortion (that was again legalised in 1991).

Today the Ministry of Health is facing the challenges of development of specific policies that take into consideration the opinions of women, young people and children and address issues of changing lifestyles and risks related to it. The Reproductive Health Survey⁴⁰ (2002) informed on the following:

- 21% decline in the Total Fertility Rate (TFR) between 1993 and 2002;
- Women 20-29 years of age at birth contribute 65% of the fertility rate;
- TFR for women with post-secondary education is estimated to be 2.0 compared with 2.7 for women with primary school education;
- Median age of first intercourse for all women is 21.1, first marriage is 21.9 and first live birth is 23.4;
- 9 out of 10 Albanian women have heard of at least one modern method and 87% have heard of at least one traditional method, predominantly withdrawal;

³⁸ Youth and transition, p.42

³⁹ Youth and transition, p.41

⁴⁰ Reproductive Health Survey, implemented in 2002 in cooperation of Institute of Public Health, Albanian Ministry of Health, Institute of Statistics, Division of Reproductive Health, Georgia, USA, USAID, UNFPA and UNICEF, Published in May 2005.

- 81% of women have heard of the condom, only 2/3 of women have heard of oral contraception or tubal ligation, and less than 35% have heard of other modern methods;
- Males have principally heard of the condom (89%) and withdrawal (89%). Knowledge of other modern methods is very low, reaching only 33% for oral contraceptives;
- More than 90 percent of women 15-44 years of age (92%) agree that age appropriate sex education topics concerning human reproduction, contraception and sexually transmitted infections should be taught in school. For men 15-49 years of age, 84% agree;
- For young adult women 15-24 years of age, two-thirds (64%) have discussed sex education topics with a parent before they reached age 18, but only 15% discussed HIV/AIDS and 8% discussed contraception;
- For young adult men, only 11% discussed any sex education topic with a parent before age 18, and only 9% discussed HIV/AIDS and 2% methods of contraception;
- 77% of young adult women and 64% of young adult men said that they were taught some sex education topic in school by age 18. However, only about 1/2 of females and males received information about HIV/AIDS and only 30% of males and 24% of females received information about contraceptive methods;
- 1/3 of young adult women reported sexual experience and 14%, or 42% of those with sexual experience, had premarital sex; almost all (99%) reported to be their fiancée or boy friend. Among young adult males, 29% reported having had sexual experience and 27%, or 91% of those with sexual experience, had premarital sex. Most men with premarital sexual experience reported their first partner to be a girl friend (43%), a lover (19%) or a friend (14%). Only 1% reported that their first sexual encounter was with a prostitute.
- 18% of unmarried males and 5% of unmarried females, 15-24 years of age were sexually active at least once in the past three months. Only 15% of sexually active unmarried males reported using a modern method at last intercourse similar to the 11% of sexually active unmarried females.

These statistics show that Albanian young people in many ways follow the European trends of pre-marital sex, and openness to sexual education and needs for reproductive health. However, access to information and resources is still scarce. It is however likely that the situation has changed with the opening of the 'Youth-friendly information centres' that provide information services and counselling on issues related to health, and sexual education, as well as assistance to sexually abused young persons.

However, there is a lack of information in relation to homophobia and other psychological issues. Often in the name of morality, culture or religion, young people are denied their right to education about health risks associated with different behaviours and about important tools and services to reduce this risk⁴¹.

Demographic change has highlighted new characteristics in recent years, such as significantly lower fertility and changing attitudes towards marriage, with an increase in single parents, young families and divorces⁴².

A decrease in the marriage rate and an increase in the age of marriage were among the first indications of changing family patterns in Albania. The number of marriages in 2001 dropped 12

⁴¹ UNICEF, "Youth and Transition", p.10.

⁴² *Op cit*, p. 19

percent in comparison with 1990. The average marriage age increased from 27.2 years in 1993 to 29.3 years in 2001 for men and from 22.6 years in 1993 to 24.1 years in 2001 for women⁴³.

It seems that the reasons for increase in the average age of marriage have an influence on declining fertility and a longer time span between marriage and birth of the first child, and also between the first and subsequent children. It seems that young people's priorities have shifted to focus on education, career choice, well-being, self-expression and social stability. These trends must be seen as a result of fundamental changes in society and not a reaction to economic conditions.

Fertility rate has declined among women 19 to 24 years of age, however no big changes are evident in the fertility rate for 15-19 year olds since the 1990s. The liberalization of lifestyles, the lack of sex education and less education in general could all be factors influencing the increase in fertility rates in this age group.

Youth Participation

Albania's young people are fighting vigorously to have a voice, to be part of the solution. The experiences of social business and Youth Parliament and the youth television show *Troç* demonstrate the courage and high motivation of young people to participate in society. These activities demonstrate their desire for a positive future for Albania - which they are willing to build for themselves and their children.⁴⁴

The issues of participation of young people in the running of the society had to go through a re-definition of the roles and relationships between the state and civil society, in which young Albanians are still in the process of finding their own role and responsibilities. In a situation, where the goal of 90% of secondary school students was to emigrate⁴⁵, in order to improve their standard of living, find employment and basically have a future for their lives, it is extremely difficult, and at the same time important, to develop ways of restoring confidence in society and establish and inter-generational dialogue that would lead to a meaningful change.

"I know more about what is beyond the Adriatic Sea than I do about my own country," says Endri Shabani, Chairperson of the Albanian Youth Parliament. However, arguing that young Albanians are uninterested in the developments of their own country would be misleading. Media coverage and information on the developments in the country is almost non-existent, difficult local transportation and lack of debate on what it means to be a young Albanian, including only very limited citizenship education in schools contribute to the misunderstanding of the living conditions and the present diversity, as well as opportunities of young Albanians.

However, there are some positive initiatives as well. The governmental commitment to developing spaces for youth participation expressed in the National Strategy on Youth Policy is certainly a start. In addition, young people are represented in governmental and civil society coalitions that advocate for youth. For instance, young people are represented in steering committees and advisory boards, including one, which advocated the government to implement the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

⁴³ UNICEF, "Youth and Transition", p. 19.

⁴⁴ UNICEF, "Youth and Transition", p. 11.

⁴⁵ Silvia Golombek (Editor), Foreword by Rick Little, "What Works in Youth Participation: Case Studies from Around the World", International Youth Foundation.

According to a UNICEF report, young Albanians see value in activities that are fun and develop their knowledge, skills and cultural understanding, and at the same time preventing high-risk behaviour⁴⁶. The variety of social organisations, sports and recreation clubs, non-governmental organisations enjoys youth involvement up to 10%, which represents the European average. Although mistrust of governmental and public institutions towards the civil society persists, the situation is gradually improving, also with the help of international agencies. However, the dependence of the NGO sector on foreign funding may be seen as an impediment in promoting youth participation among youth serving NGOs. The lack of financial resources for youth and other civil society initiatives has often contributed to the break of continuity of youth initiatives promoting and developing active participation. International funding may have provided an interim solution, however sustainability of non-governmental action is still limited to the support provided by the Balkan Children and Youth Foundation that operates in Albania, Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo and Serbia and Montenegro. In spite of this, it seems that Albanian NGOs working with and for young people demonstrate stronger capacities in planning and implementing youth programmes that offer young people possibilities for engagement and participation in issues that concern them⁴⁷.

There are three major programmes, co-developed and co-funded by UNICEF that seem to have a great impact on the promotion of young Albanians in the running of their society:

- Albanian Youth Parliament – through which Albanian 14-18 years old young people regularly pressures the government on policies important to youth and seek to improve youth participation in public debate and connect young people to the democratic process. Among its main achievements was a raise of the amount of funding on education from 2.7% to 3.2% of the GDP; prevention of the creation of a garbage dump in Tirana which would have been an environmental hazard to the nearby community by petitioning and collaborating with other organisations; and stopping of a construction of a power plant on a seaside tourist area near Vlora. ⁴⁸.
- Troc “Straight Talk” youth television show – that allows young people to speak out on national issues. The show raises the standard on how broadcast journalism is done in Albania, and the reporters are all under the age of 18.
- Youth-Friendly Health Services – establishment of up today four information centres providing youth counselling and awareness raising on health issues, including sexual and reproductive health.

Youth Policies

Although it is hard to assess the national governmental policy, which seems fairly new, the draft National Youth Strategy seems coherent and complete, addressing well all the important issues in relation a healthy and independent development of young people in Albania.

Divided in three main policies of youth participation, human rights and social and cultural development, it raises issues adapted to the Albanian context in an exhaustive manner. The question however remains with regard to the implementation and monitoring of this strategy, and its translation into specific actions to be implemented at the national, as well as local and municipal levels.

⁴⁶ UNICEF Newsletter Albania n. 25, Youth Participation, January – March 2006.

⁴⁷ *Op cit.*

⁴⁸ *Op cit.*

It is also very hard to assess any of the more specific thematic policies, as it seems at various levels, Albania is still in the process of defining and re-defining its strategies in a more coherent and focused manner. The creation of youth health information centres is definitely a good start, it will however become crucial to enlarge the services of the centres to providing information on other issues such as employment, high-risk behaviour, and provide opportunities for participation, leisure and capacity building, as well as regional and international cooperation.

More specific assessment of youth policy implementation would necessitate more in-depth research, including targeted interviews with governmental and civil society actors working in the field.

Armenia

Youth Demography

Armenia, a small and isolated country located in heart of the Caucasus conflict region having borders with the Russian Federation, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Turkey and Iran, covers 29,743 square kilometres and has 3,215,800 inhabitants of whom, according to population figures from 1st January 2005, were 1,550,600 were male and 1,665,200 female. The country is divided into 11 Marzes (provinces) including the capital city Yerevan with Marz status, 47 urban and 870 rural communities. 64.1% of the population lives in urban areas and 35.9% in rural areas⁴⁹.

Armenia has a strong sense of traditional cultural heritage, as demonstrated by the significant role still played by the Armenian Apostolic Church that has maintained its position during Communism. Armenian history has been characterised by a variety of conflicts and huge levels of migration, resulting in one of the largest Diaspora communities in the world, with an estimated 10 million Armenians living abroad. Due to a devastating earthquake in 1988, soon followed by the collapse of the Soviet Union, the war with Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh and the ensuing frozen conflict, Armenia exists at the edge of poverty and demonstrates the clear need for structural reform in the political, economic and social spheres.

In the recent Armenian National Youth Policy Report⁵⁰, young people are defined as young people aged 16 to 30, who are citizens of Armenia, foreign citizens living in Armenia, NGOs that serve young people and young families that have at least one member is younger than 30. These young people represent 840,200 persons, which is equivalent to 26,1% of the overall population⁵¹.

However, a better-defined “concept of youth” that would take into consideration criteria other than age and the full diversity of traditions represented by the youth of Armenia is still lacking. Furthermore, during the Council of Europe International Youth Policy Review⁵², other definitions of “youth” were discussed. These included the 0 to 18 definition of *children* used by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, and references to young people aged 14 who are permitted to leave school and work if their parents give their consent⁵³.

⁴⁹ Council of Europe, “Recent demographic developments in Europe”, Council of Europe Publishing, 2005, (CD ROM).

⁵⁰ Armenian National Youth Policy Report, p. 19.

⁵¹ National Statistical Service of the Republic of Armenia, Armenian Statistic Year Book 2005.

⁵² Howard Williamson, International Youth Policy Review of Armenia, International Youth Policy Report, 2006, p.15.

⁵³ *Op cit.*

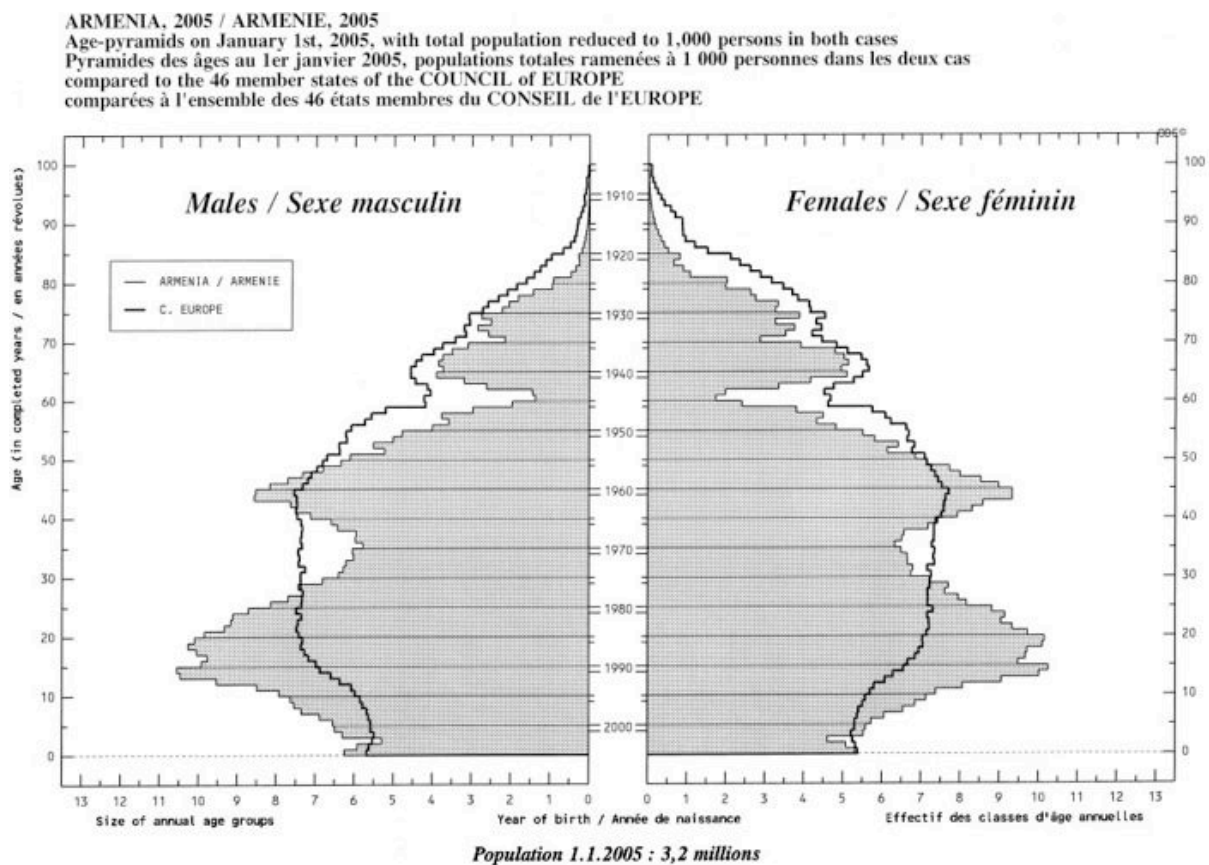
The age composition of the youth population can be better understood on the basis of the following table:

Table 1: The population by age groups

The population by January 1, 2003 Source: RA National Statistical Agency	Age groups:			
	10-24	10-14	15-19	20-24
Total number (in thousands)	915.4	320.1	318.0	277.3
Girls	460.9	163.2	159.8	137.9
Boys	454.5	156.9	158.2	139.4
City residents	574.8	190.0	199.6	185.2
Village residents	368.4	157.9	118.4	92.1

Population growth in Armenia was 0,1% in 2004, which represents a slight increase in the birth rate, with natural growth of 0.4% and the migration rate having stabilised at approximately 0,3%.

The following population tree provides a comparison of Armenian population trends in comparison to those observed in other Council of Europe member states.



Armenia's society is characterised by isolation, a growing gap between rich and poor, increasing poverty, high real unemployment, geo-political conflict in the surrounding region, indications of declining health and education. On the other hand, Armenia is also characterised by social

stability, demonstrating only a slow increase in crime and delinquency, as well as relative social solidarity and support from the Armenian Diaspora.

In comparison to European trends, young Armenians still follow rather traditional life courses, with young women moving rapidly from schooling into married life and motherhood (a transition that is still strongly encouraged in Armenian culture) and young men following the school – military – unemployment path (this is particularly the case in rural areas).

Migration

A cursory glance at Armenian history makes it clear that migration has always been part of the Armenian tradition. According to the National Youth Policy Report (2005) there were four main migration waves in the last two decades. The first occurred as a result of the 1988 earthquake in the northern region of Armenia. The conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh in 1989 led to a second wave of migration and caused several hundred thousand refugees to flee into Armenia from Azerbaijan⁵⁴. The third wave, throughout the 1990s, took place as a result of the collapse of the Soviet Union and the concomitant decline in socio-economic conditions, worsened by impact of the earthquake and the conflict, resulted in an estimated 1.1 million migrants to other countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States and elsewhere. This figure represents approximately 70% of the Armenian population⁵⁵. It is thought that young people represent 20% of the overall number of migrants. The existence of the long established Armenian Diaspora facilitated a lot of the recent migration and has reinforced seasonal migration, a tradition among Armenians. The fourth wave began in 1999 to 2000 and continues until today. It is characterised mainly by the ever-declining socio-economic conditions in Armenia and family reunification, which leads to a permanent change of residence⁵⁶. Although the most recent estimates (from 2004) refer to a relatively low official negative migration in the range of 7-8000 persons, it is probable that illegal migration has increased due to stricter border control and visa regimes. In the context of such illegal migration, young people, particularly young women, are vulnerable to illegal trafficking⁵⁷.

According to the International youth policy review, *“The issue of migration (both legal and illicit) and trafficking is also a major focus of the State Youth Policy Strategy. Even prior to the acceptance of the youth strategy, the government of Armenia had already taken legislative steps to comply with international standards in establishing the prevalence of trafficking, carrying out preventive activities, as well as providing support and assistance to those affected”*.

While this can hopefully contribute to decreasing the number of young Armenians being trafficked, it is very unlikely that the tendency towards migration will change if the socio-economic conditions of young Armenians do not improve.

⁵⁴ See V.E. Khojabekyan, “Reproduction of the population of Armenia and movements in XIX-XX centuries and at the beginning of the XXI century”, Yerevan 2001, pg. 283 and 289.

⁵⁵ Source: “Social-economic state of the Armenian Republic in January-December, 2000”, informative-analytic monthly report, the Republic of Armenia National Statistic Service, Yerevan, 2001.

⁵⁶ Armenian National Youth Policy Report, *op cit*, p. 41-44.

⁵⁷ Armenian National Youth Policy Report, *op cit*, p. 148-150.

Although it seems that only very few young people under the age of 16 have had the opportunity to travel outside Armenia (usually, only to Georgia and Russia)⁵⁸, the National Report states that about 29% of young people over the age of 16 have travelled abroad, mainly to visit their relatives and families. According to the National Youth Report young people go abroad for the following reasons: to find a job (19,3%), to find a well-paid job (17,2%), to join other family members (16,6%), for rest, travel and tourism (15,6%).

Trends in internal migration are not readily apparent. Although the National Youth Report suggests that in the past five years, 10% of young people moved from the countryside to cities, the International Youth Policy Review also found that young people also have good reasons to stay in the countryside, in spite of the low level income. The high level of family support available together with a gradual growth in opportunities for young people to contribute to regional development, were among the reasons identified.

Nevertheless, in response to the wider international context, Armenia has become actively involved in the promotion of the European Charter on the Participation of Youth People in Local and Regional Life, European Neighbourhood Policy and the Youth Programme of the European Union (and its cooperation agreement with the Caucasus region), which has broadened the opportunities for young people's international mobility.

Socio-Economic Conditions of Youth

It is more than apparent that although Armenia is formally a country in transition to a liberal market economy and that regime change took place a decade ago, the isolation of the country from its neighbours together with slow pace of structural reform has not led to smooth and sustained development. While the average of 10 to 12% in economic growth has led to an improvement of the GDP per capita, the success of a few industries did not manage to create employment for the population at large. The widening gap between the minority of those who profited from the transition, and the mass of the impoverished (50% of the population is considered to live in poverty) has led to growth in the informal (and illegal) economy, with estimates that up to 40% of economic activity takes place outside the formal economy. The lack of democratic tradition combined with corruption has resulted in a highly polarised but nevertheless strangely safe society. This difficult economic situation poses serious challenges for the healthy and safe transitions of young people in Armenia.

In spite of the difficulty of the context, it seems that Armenian young people are both expected and eager to gain a higher education, which is considered of high value in Armenian society. There are 80 universities⁵⁹ in the country and the general expectation of young people to gain a degree that would guarantee them entry to the labour market contrasts with the reality of labour relations and the broader society, which is only accessible through "connections". Taking into consideration Armenian commitment to the Bologna process, this situation represents a great challenge, as the majority of universities do not prepare students to work in their chosen field or profession, something particularly true for nurses and lawyers. Attempts to reform the educational system have focused on the development of "informed and involved citizens capable

⁵⁸ Howard Williamson, International Youth Policy Review of Armenia, International Youth Policy Report, 2006, *Op cit.*

⁵⁹ There are 20 state universities in Armenia and between 50 and 70 private universities and colleges, which apparently have a much lower status.

of making decisions”⁶⁰ through the provision of adequate knowledge. This point is crucial, as the educational system provides young people with encyclopaedia knowledge rather than with skills and capacity to think and act independently.

Access to primary and secondary education is certainly an issue in remote rural areas, where poverty is greater. Nevertheless, attendance remains fairly high. Even so, the National Youth Report estimates that 6-7% of children aged 7 to 16, notably girls, do not attend school. Providing equal opportunities poses a huge challenge to Armenian society, although according to the National Youth Policy Report “*the traditions of equal involvement in elementary education go back to the 19th century*”.⁶¹

Progress has been observed in the attempts made to integrate young people with disabilities into school and the wider society. Due to the impact of the earthquake and the war, there was a great increase in the number of young people with a disability. This resulted in more awareness of the issue of disability and changes to the traditionally segregated system, focusing on the better integration of disabled young people in the school system. This is in particular true for young people with physical disabilities, although resources to improve the access of wheelchair users still seem to be still lacking.

The following challenges in relation to the education, training and labour market can be identified, on the basis of the International Youth Policy Review⁶²:

- a relative absence of vocational training that would balance the involvement in and complement higher education;
- a growing gap between state and private universities creating a double standard system, where young people from private universities are disadvantaged when entering the labour market;
- a need for a shift from traditional education based on memorisation of information towards more learner centred and active learning, that would lead to personal and enterprise development, and would include the development of skills and competences leading towards independent thinking and action;
- the development of easily accessible information and guidance systems on career opportunities and transitions to labour market;
- the need for recognition and appraisal of the role and function of non-formal education within learning schemes.

Special attention should be paid to the creation of equal opportunities in relation to gender. In spite of the fact that women with higher education account for 60% of the Armenian female population, their participation in decision-making processes is extremely low. Traditionally, women are active in the areas of education, health care and culture, which represent for them the only opportunities for involvement in the labour market.

However, according to the National Youth Policy Report, “*State Youth Policy must encompass a sufficient number of resources, alongside already existing entities, in order to implement an effective policy aiming at the provision of equal rights and opportunities both for men and women at the level of the younger generation*”. Although, the “2004-2010 National Programme on the Improvement of Women’s State and

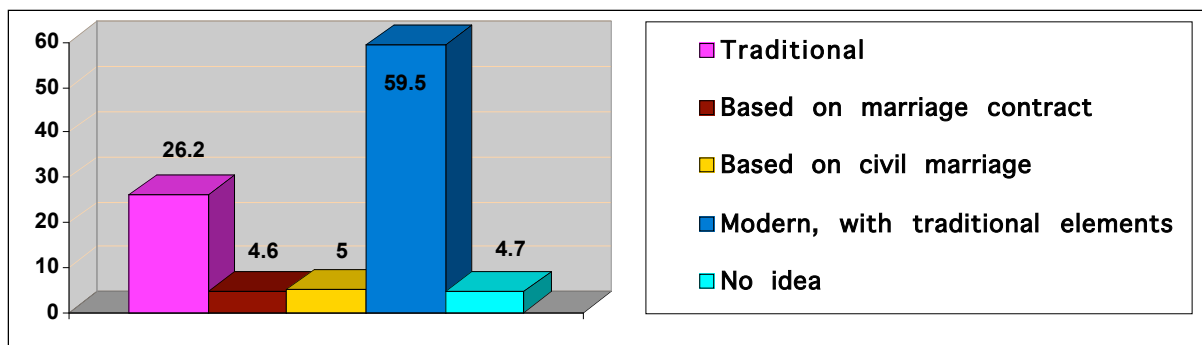
⁶⁰ Armenian National Youth Policy Report, *op cit*, p.63

⁶¹ Armenian National Youth Policy Report, *op cit*, p.131

⁶² Howard Williamson, International Youth Policy Review of Armenia, International Youth Policy Report, 2006, *Op cit*, pp. 25-32.

Role in the Society” has been approved in 2004, its implementation remains in question, although some examples of projects with a gender dimension seem to exist. However, in spite of these intentions and the encouragement of young women to gain an education, it seems that there is an expectation for young women to take the ‘school – marriage - motherhood’ route. This continued traditionalism constitutes a significant challenge for the modernisation of Armenian society.

Further, the role of the family is crucial in the Armenian society. The National Youth Policy Report states that “*family occupies the most important disposition in the social life. Family is one of the main social institutions of the society and accordingly it must be the object of special attention, getting assistance for full implementation of its activities*”.⁶³ In relation to the conception of the state concerning Youth Policy, the young family is considered as a subject of youth policy. A young family is defined as one in which the age of one of the parents is not more than 30, or a single parent, whose age does not exceed 30 years.



This table represents what young Armenians think a family should be like. The prevalence of traditional values (72,9% of young people think families should have the same religion, and 40,9% think that should have the same nationality) has only recently been supplemented by some more modern attitudes and values.

The traditional Armenian family, characterised by life in the countryside and lots of members, especially children, has given way to a modern family which lives in a city, has 1 or 2 children or eventually even none. Although it seems that 76,4% of young people wish to have 2 to 4 children and 13,4% think of 5 and more, there are 72,7% of young people that realistically think of having only 1 or 2 children and only 12,2% think of having 3 children⁶⁴. This tendency seems to follow the European trend of having fewer children. Marriage remains the pre-condition for starting a family, and although in the years 2000 to 2004 the number of marriages increased (by 54%), mainly due to the improvement of socio-economic conditions, the number of divorces over this period also increased substantially (by 46%), though it is not clear in which age group these divorces took place and for which reasons.

The main concerns of young people before getting married are financial, as well as housing, work and health. Although having a job is certainly a condition, having a place to live seems less important, as many young married couples live with one of their parents. Most Armenian young people think their children should grow up together with their grandparents, who certainly will give them more love than the school or the nursery.

⁶³ Armenian National Youth Policy Report, *op cit*, p. 35.

⁶⁴ Armenian National Youth Policy Report, *op cit*, p. 38.

According to the National Youth Policy Report, 95% of young people are unaware of the existence of social support provided to young families by the state or regional communities. Although the State provides a sum of 35,000⁶⁵ dram per child born and for the first year of the child's life the mother receives an allowance of 3,900 dram monthly, it is only possible to receive this financial support if the mother applies to the Social Protection Fund at regional level no later than a month after the birth of the child.

Basic health services for children up to 7 years old are free of charge. So is primary education in public schools. However, only children who have no other form of social protection are entitled to receive free textbooks. It is noteworthy that, although the family is considered the foundation of Armenian society, challenges to the promotion of child protection and any other intervention targeted at “children in especially difficult circumstances” or “vulnerable families” remain widespread. In this sense social work is considered something of an intrusion into family life and is restricted to children who had *already* been abandoned and were *already* being looked after in institutional care.

Some other measures to assist the improvement of the socio-economic conditions of young people have been put in place by the government. One of them is the Mortgage Credit System, which helps 54,7% of young married couples to get housing in or outside of cities. However, this support is only partial and most young people rely on their parents for any further support they require. Social support structures seem to be effective if organised and provided on time. Poverty reduction activities with families conducted by the World Bank over the last 10 years has reduced poverty by approximately 10%. However, it is clear that without a state intervention strategy supporting families, no major improvement for many young families will be made.

Unemployment

Considering the Armenian context, prevalent socio-economic conditions, trends in education and migration, it is clear that youth unemployment is one of the main issues on the political agenda, as young people seem to experience a variety of difficulties to enter the labour market⁶⁶.

There are no reliable data on the market and labour related issues for Armenia. Although a variety of statistical evidence exists, there seem to be considerable discrepancies in how youth employment and unemployment is being calculated. It seems that there are numerous exceptions to who can be counted as unemployed and who cannot. One of the conditions is that a young person can register as unemployed only if s/he was employed previously for a period of at least one year. Furthermore, young people who are landowners cannot be counted as unemployed even if they are not involved in agriculture professional and are not using the land for agricultural purposes. However, the National Youth Policy Report⁶⁷ indicates that according to official data, there are 33,900 registered unemployed young people benefiting from employment services, which represents 4% of the young aged 16 to 30 years of age.

⁶⁵ At time of research (November / December 2006), 1 USD was equal to approximately 350 Armenian Drams.

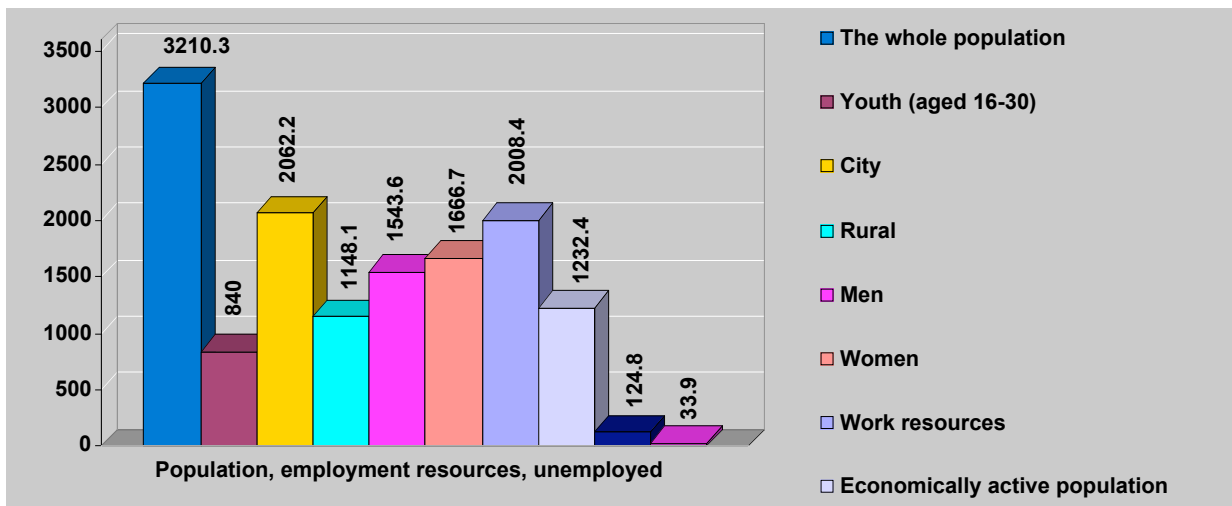
⁶⁶ World Bank Poverty Report No. 24339-AM, Armenia Poverty Update, December, 2002, Human Development Sector Unit, Europe and Central Asia Region, 2002

⁶⁷ Armenian National Youth Policy Report, *op cit*, p. 30.

Young unemployed people by to age groups⁶⁸:

N	Age group	From general number of unemployed young people (%)	Young men (%)	Young women (%)
1	16-18	0.7	0.6	0.4
2	18-22	20	34	66
3	23-30	79.3	38	62

This table clearly states that young women suffer from unemployment more than young men. The National Youth Policy Report argues that this picture is commensurate with general population indices. According to data for the end of August 2005, 70.3% of officially registered unemployed persons were women.⁶⁹



As demonstrated by the above table, the population of Armenia was 3210 thousand in 2004, of which there were 840,000 young people (aged 16 to 30) or 26% of the overall population.⁷⁰ Although there are 124,800 unemployed persons registered with the Unemployment Service and 33,900 or 28.5% of these are young people⁷¹, it is considered significantly possible that real youth unemployment, amounts to as much as 40%. Nevertheless, there are suggestions that unemployment has decreased in recent years as a result of information gained from economic growth indices. It is also notable that the number of taxpayers has decreased. As a result, it is difficult to make clear assessments of the extent of youth unemployment. It can, however, be concluded that it is high and probably increasing, especially among young women.

Based on the previous description of the challenges in the education system, it is clear that a significant number of highly educated young people are facing unemployment. Furthermore, young people in the regions (rural youth) are subject to both unemployment and underemployment mainly as a result of dependence on the seasonal work in the agricultural sector (in or outside the country), which most young people, especially young men find unsatisfying and boring.

⁶⁸ Armenian Statistical Annual Report, 2004.

⁶⁹ Armenian National Youth Policy Report, *op cit*, p. 30

⁷⁰ Armenian National Youth Policy Report, *op cit*, p.28

⁷¹ Armenian Statistical Annual Report, 2004.

The 2004 Youth Policy Strategy states the following challenges to improving youth employment⁷²:

- imperfection of the legal and legislative framework promoting economic activities among youth;
- major economic and social transformations;
- limited professional and economic opportunities and insufficient incentives, lack of youth awareness on existing economic opportunities;
- insufficient preparedness for the life among youth (capacities to find their place in the reality, to realize him/herself, to express him/herself, to communicate, etc.), which results in social refusal and marginalisation of the youth;
- presence of bureaucratic system, high level of corruption, lack of trust in state bodies.

In order to deal with this situation the government, proposed a number of measures that would guarantee young people with a job perspective by focusing on creating conditions for youth entrepreneurship, other new employment opportunities, as well as developing professional orientation of young people, investments in re-training and in small enterprise and youth farms for proceeding of agricultural products, through its 1998 Conception of State Youth Policy. That document, strengthened by the 2004 Youth Policy Strategy, defined more specifically the following measures of support:

- specialised job agencies for young people are established and provide early professional guidance in the regional youth centres;
- regulations and information for studying, training and internships abroad will have been developed;
- young people will have access to information, training and financing for small business and self-employment initiatives;
- young farmers will have been equipped with skills and capacities to implement innovative ideas improving the efficiency of the agrarian sector.

It is noteworthy that specific indicators for each of these measures were defined and even though no monitoring of the actual implementation of these plans has been made available, it is likely that at least some of these measures have been put in place. Other than that, no specific youth employment strategy has been defined.

In addition, during its work the International Youth Policy Review team of the Council of Europe has furthermore encountered several interesting proposals:

- The development of a law concerning work experience, to give students the right to a paid or unpaid internship during their studies;
- The development of volunteering possibilities that would be “counted as important and legitimate experience”;
- The development of specific measures addressing the predicament of young people who have not completed their general education and have no educational qualifications by the Department of Social Security;
- A proposal to establish a tax holiday for the first two years of employment (this was suggested by young people and was considered to be impossible by governmental officials due to the conditions of the free market economy, which was challenged by the Council of Europe expert team arguing for the necessity of pro-youth employment programmes);

⁷² Youth Policy Strategy in Armenia, Ministry of Youth and Culture, Yerevan, 2004, pp.13-14.

- Running several formats of training courses, SME business programmes and enhancement of public works programmes (in place since 2001).

Again, the reporting on the actual implementation and success rates of the already developed programmes is unfortunately not available.

Poverty

The overall incidence of poverty in Armenia is especially high among young people. According to the 2002 World Bank Poverty Update, the following groups were identified as facing particularly high risk of being poor: very young children and the elderly, unemployed and adults not participating in the labour market, people residing in high altitude and earthquake regions and individuals residing in apartments.

Furthermore, the report mentioned the following factors as contributing to the increase of poverty: large household size, lower levels of education among the family, women headed families, number of unemployed within the family unit as well as the amount of livestock. Although this report refers mainly to households and families as a basic measurement unit, it also refers to children and young people, in particular young women, as being the most vulnerable groups.

In addition, National Youth Policy Report identifies two groups of vulnerable young people: the refugees and the invalids; still a particular attention is also focused on regional (rural) youth.

The different migration waves brought about 385.000 refugees came to Armenia. The young refugees are in particular excluded from employment and housing, which make them more vulnerable. Only a few NGOs, among them the YMCA Armenia, seem to have specific programmes targeting young refugees living in remote areas.

Young invalids represent 27% of the population in the active age. Disability represents an additional challenge to the already vulnerable young people. Although there are policies aiming at a better integration of young disabled, as well as some respectable work of NGOs, in particular PYUNIC, acceptance and recognition of the needs of as well as the existence of suitable support structures for young disabled is far from perfect.

Again it is apparent that there is a gap between the official discourse and its legal provisions and the factual evidence in the discriminating practices. This is in particular remarkable in the case of the more invisible minorities such as the LGBT, who according to the report of the International Helsinki Federation do not enjoy any legal provision under the current legal status.⁷³ Furthermore, although there are evident concerns about young women being trafficked, domestic violence seems to be again an issue not to be talked about.

The governmental request to the Council of Europe to implement an International Youth Policy Review, which went (almost) hand in hand with the development of the National Youth Policy Report, can be considered as an important and strategic investment to the improvement of the socio-economic situation of young Armenians. The current initiatives offering support for young people in the area of the information, counselling and training need to be however strengthened and a more coherent and complementary approach needs to be developed, implemented and

⁷³ International Helsinki Federation on Human Rights, 2005, p.14.

monitored. It is a fact that the access to information and good practice in terms of the implementation of the identified measures, whether in the 2004 State Youth Policy Strategy, or as part of the two Youth Policy reviews, remain problematic.

Youth Lifestyles, Sexuality, Union Formation

Young people in Armenia are exceptional in the orientation of their values toward patriotism and spiritualism. Partly through the obvious influence of a highly nationalistic and religious social upbringing, young people in Armenia seem more oriented toward the traditional values of their society, and of older generations, than is found elsewhere. Notwithstanding, this phenomenon, the government is concerned about the erosion of patriotic values and the importance of national culture among young people. The national youth policy report highlights the effects of the hard socio-economic circumstances on young people's values, bemoaning the subordination of high spiritual values to "daily instable and superficial value priorities".⁷⁴ Another notable tendency among young people and throughout society is the value placed on education, although it is often understood as an exercise in pure self-improvement, without necessarily implying labour market participation, especially for women (see the section on education above).

The role of the Armenian Apostolic Church is central to Armenian national life and is also important for young people, providing both spiritual and material support. This religious and traditional mindset makes young Armenians less likely to engage in risk-taking behaviour or in pre-marital sex. Rates of STD and HIV infection are consequently low, although in such a setting the ability of a population to withstand an outbreak is questionable. A national HIV/AIDS centre has been established and World Vision has also established a programme to prevent the spread of the disease. The vast majority of HIV transmission occurs through injecting drug use and heterosexual sex. Knowledge of HIV transmission among young people is worryingly low at around 28%.⁷⁵

Health

Although there are concerns about the accuracy of official data, the Council of Europe International Youth Policy Review team concluded that the use of drugs including alcohol was not a significant problem in Armenia. Attitudes toward healthcare, however, are a cause for concern. Government and society seem to share the attitude that the family (i.e. the mother) is the first stop for non-critical health matters and only a quarter of young Armenians would take such matters to a doctor.⁷⁶ The government is ambivalent toward "modern", youth-friendly health service provision and it has been observed that NGOs provide much more appropriate responses to the health needs of young people.⁷⁷ It is perhaps unsurprising that the exception to this rule seems to come with regard to sexually-transmitted infections, where a majority of young people turn to medical institutions for help.

Just under two thirds of young Armenians report using a condom regularly during sexual activity. Rates of sexually transmitted infections are rising and reporting is very low (estimated at less

⁷⁴ Armenian National Youth Policy Report, *op cit*, p. 88-89.

⁷⁵ Howard Williamson, International Youth Policy Review of Armenia, International Youth Policy Report, 2006, *op cit*, p. 34.

⁷⁶ Armenian National Youth Policy Report, *op cit*, p. 93.

⁷⁷ Howard Williamson, International Youth Policy Review of Armenia, International Youth Policy Report, 2006, *op cit*, p. 33.

than 1% in a survey in 2000)⁷⁸. There is significant social stigma attached to sexual ill health and taboos around sex, especially for young women. This negatively affects the quality of healthcare. Notwithstanding that the International Review Team reported high levels of unwanted pregnancy⁷⁹, the abortion rate in Armenia remains incredibly low at around ten per 100,000 of population.

Number of pregnancies terminated for 100 000 people of population, according to years:					
Years	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Recorded number	11,8	10,4	9,8	10,7	10,6

The policy environment in regard of sexual and reproductive health is not encouraging, with no national plan or strategy to improve these among youth. Levels of activity more broadly related to improving health, such as physical exercise and engaging in sports, are also low (with 70% of young people not engaged in any such activity)⁸⁰. Fertility in Armenia is very low, under 1.4 in 2004, despite the fact that women still have their first child early (22.5 years).⁸¹ Rates of both marriage and divorce have risen slightly in recent years, but this is not a significant trend.⁸² The age of marriage has increased steadily through the 1990s.⁸³

There is a clear need for more strategic provision of youth-friendly information and services especially in the sensitive area of sexual and reproductive health and the prevention of health-risk behaviour. Although international agencies and the NGO sector play an important role in developing youth friendly health related activities, greater involvement is needed from the government through a more holistic response to the present health challenges. This could be developed in partnership with the respective UN agencies (in particular UNICEF with its pilot Personal and Social Education programme of learning within the education curriculum) as well as civil society. However it is crucial that the Ministry of Health assumes its responsibility in coordinating the development, implementation and monitoring of the youth health strategy and in providing information and access to health care⁸⁴.

Youth Participation

The concept of participation in Armenia, similarly to other post-communist countries, is in the process of being redefined in terms of the different roles and responsibilities of the state and the emerging civil society. The role of young Armenians in society is, therefore, in the process of changing and developing and represents a challenge on several fronts.

⁷⁸ Armenian National Youth Policy Report, *op cit*, p. 107.

⁷⁹ Howard Williamson, International Youth Policy Review of Armenia, International Youth Policy Report, 2006, *op cit*, p. 33.

⁸⁰ Armenian National Youth Policy Report, *op cit*, p. 94.

⁸¹ Council of Europe, “Recent demographic developments in Europe”, Council of Europe Publishing, 2005, CD ROM.

⁸² *Ibid*.

⁸³ UNICEF, “Young People and Transition”, Armenia Country Paper, pp. 17-19.

⁸⁴ Inspired by the recommendations of the International Youth Policy Review Team, International Youth Policy Review of Armenia, International Youth Policy Report, 2006, p. 34-35.

The first challenge is the inherited lack of trust of young people in institutions, governmental entities and the activities of NGOs. According to the National Youth Policy Report, only 7% of young people trust in the work of NGOs, compared to 5% in political organisations and 6% in trade unions⁸⁵. Although one of the main goals of the Armenian Youth Policy Strategy is to stimulate participation of young people in society⁸⁶, the government needs to face the reality of the general attitudes of young people towards participation, which the Armenian Youth Policy Strategy considers as “low and problematic” and refers to civil society as “not sufficiently developed”.⁸⁷

The recent governmental consensus on the concept of youth participation, as having economic, political, social and cultural dimensions, is commensurate with that of the UN World Programme of Action for Youth. The government recognises the importance of the variety of actors such as political parties, NGOs, trade unions, students unions and other youth associations, as well as the mass media, all of which are considered crucial instruments in ensuring youth participation.

One governmental priority has indeed been the promotion of youth participation through project funding for youth organisations. Considering the gradual increase of the modest state budget for youth (since 1998) improvements have been noticed although the lack of trust towards governmental structures as well as NGOs still persists. In particular, transparency about who gets funding and who does not and who decides about that remain an issue.

The National Youth Policy Report provides extensive information on youth political and social participation analysing the different opportunities for young people to participate in civic life through students’ councils, youth organisations as well as the less formalised youth clubs and the challenges of reinforcing those by strengthening opportunities for youth leadership to develop skills and knowledge on how to involve and motivate young people in developing activities that would interest them and respond to their needs.

A critical review of the challenges to youth political participation was also undertaken in the report, highlighting that traditional channels of participation through involvement in political parties are fairly limited. Only 30 out of the 60 political parties have youth wings, however, their activities are not regular and organised, even if representative. It appears that the real opportunities to take part in the decision-making or develop certain skills or leadership competencies are limited. Passive attitudes combined with the instrumentalisation of young people who seem to be needed only prior to the elections and the overall detachment of political elites from the real needs of young people only deepen the mistrust towards the political system. The fact that in the 2003 elections only two members of parliament out of the five under 30 years of age elected to the National Assembly belonged to a political party, again demonstrates the unattractiveness of the formal political participation among young.

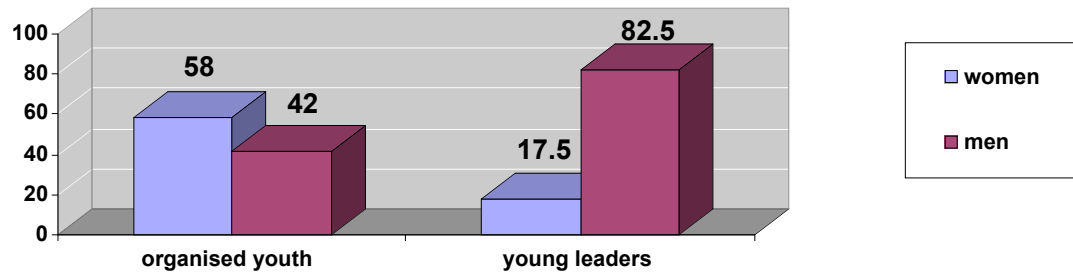
The National Youth Policy Report, furthermore, provides information about the differential levels of participation among young women and young men in Armenia. While 60% of young women have a higher education, only 5% of those elected to the National Assembly are women. However, according to research, 33.8% of young people between 16 and 30 are likely to elect a female community leader, 39.7% will elect a woman president, 46.5% will elect a woman deputy

⁸⁵ Armenian National Youth Policy Report, *op cit*, p.113.

⁸⁶ Youth Policy Strategy in Armenia, Ministry of Youth and Culture, Yerevan, 2004, p.4.

⁸⁷ *Op cit*, p.7.

and 55.2% will choose a woman as their direct boss at their office. The same survey indicates that over 50% of organised youth are women⁸⁸.



The above table provides an indication of the extent to which young women are disadvantaged in decision-making.

According to the International Youth Policy Review team, the main lack in the current youth policy are the issues of opportunities for and access to participation for rural young people, small groups of ethnic minorities, refugees and internally displaced persons and other invisible minorities⁸⁹. While some opportunities for engagement exist, they are mainly secured by privileged educated urban organised young people, favoured by the political elites. This situation needs to be transformed together with the traditional dependency culture, which relies paradoxically on those elites for something to happen. As the majority of Armenian young people are concerned with survival, whether economic, social or educational, their motivation and capacity to participate actively in the society is limited.

The lack of a transparent and impartial youth information strategy and youth friendly services that would provide counselling and guidance for young people on issues relevant for their life and development (such as employment, vocational training, health, mobility, as well as other possibilities of participation) contributes to the limited access and opportunities for participation among youth. Some governmental efforts to strengthen the youth information system are notable and slow progress can be observed. However, whether this information is available for all young people, especially in the different more remote regions (marzes), rather than the privileged minority, remains a question.

In any case the commitment of the National Youth Policy Strategy in relation to youth participation refers to three key areas⁹⁰:

1. Incorporation of young people's opinions in the policy-making processes through clearly defined governmental strategies at all levels;
2. Providing young people with opportunities for more quality free time, as well as access to information and skills and competencies through non-formal education;
3. Recognition of the value of volunteering as a form of participation, non-formal educational and social integration.

⁸⁸ Armenian National Youth Policy Report, *op cit*, p.130-131.

⁸⁹ Howard Williamson, International Youth Policy Review of Armenia, International Youth Policy Report, 2006, p. 46.

⁹⁰ Youth Policy Strategy in Armenia, Ministry of Youth and Culture, Yerevan, 2004, p.7.

Although specific measures in the form of indicators on how this should be achieved until 2007 have been defined, implementation remains unclear considering the limited financial resources and the non-transparent political situation in Armenia.

Youth Policies

The request for and the subsequent implementation of an International Youth Policy Review by the Council of Europe have created momentum for the development of youth policy in Armenia. The elaboration of the national and international youth policy reports, together with the dynamics that they have created, represent an opportunity to broaden the debate on youth policy development from an inner circle of experts to a larger group of actors in the youth field.

According to the International Youth Policy Review Team, building on the existing “Conception of Youth Policy in Armenia” (1998) and the Youth Policy Strategy (2004), with the involvement of the diverse youth policy actors in a more open and evidence based dialogue, would certainly ensure more coherence and structure in the definition of the youth policy framework in Armenia and could facilitate joint decision-making on what should constitute an immediate priority, given limited resources.

Today, there seems to be some continuity in the governmental commitment to work in partnership with the international community and the NGO sector in the planning and the implementation of youth policy and, in particular, on the development and provision of youth friendly services and information. Through the “Centre for Organising Events”, although criticised for being significantly aligned with the political administration, the government supports youth organisations in their work towards youth policy implementation. Nevertheless, there remains a need for a less political and more professionalised approach to youth policy development, allowing the youth sector to further develop and strengthen its competence through youth research, training and the dissemination of good practice in the relevant youth policy areas.

The International Youth Policy Report concludes: “There are, nonetheless, youth policy initiatives that must be attempted and developed: the promotion of participation, the provision of information, the securing of trust in official procedures and institutions, the encouragement of enterprise and healthy lifestyles, effecting change in the structure and content of the general education curriculum. There are perhaps also other more 'private troubles' (such as sexuality and possibly disability) which have not yet come to be acknowledged as 'public issues' that should be legitimate components of youth policy”.⁹¹

Last but not least, Armenia, as a signatory to the Revised Charter on the Promotion of Youth Participation in Local and Regional Life, should work towards the strengthened engagement of young people in issues that concern them at the local and regional levels and create more opportunities for youth participation and decision-making in a way that would respect Armenian traditions, as well as foresee the world young people want to live in, in the future.

⁹¹ Howard Williamson, International Youth Policy Review of Armenia, International Youth Policy Report, 2006, p.58.

Bosnia & Herzegovina

Youth Demography

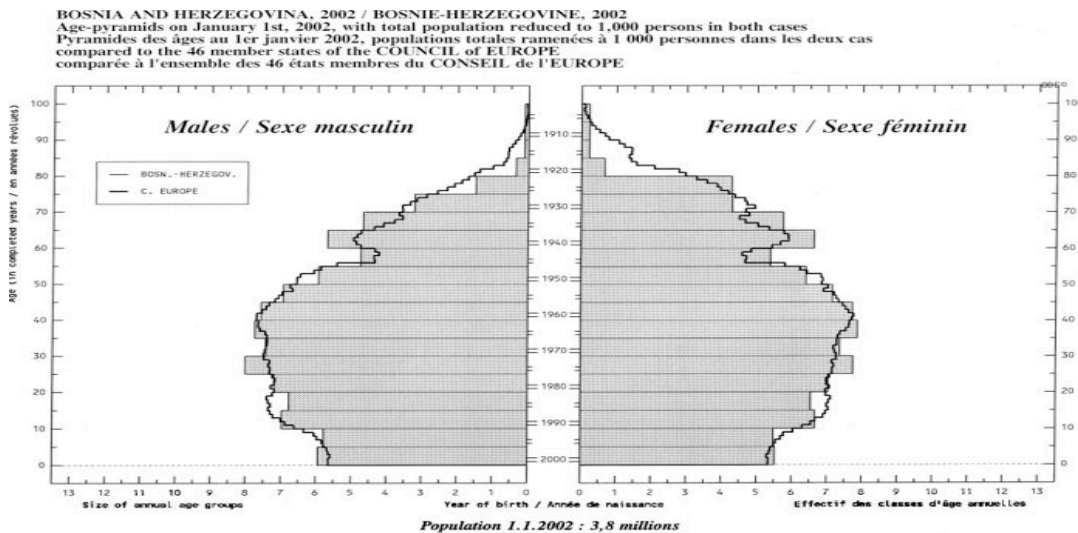
Bosnia & Herzegovina (henceforth, BiH) is a small and young state, with a long and rich history, that emerged from the recent Balkan crises that followed the breakdown of state-socialist Yugoslavia. The war and post-war period have given rise to various waves of migration, during which more than 92,000 young people fled the country during 1996-2001, amounting to a total of 120,000⁹².

Today, BiH is in the uneasy processes of reconstruction and transition towards peace and independent democracy, as well as the improvement of social, economic and political conditions. Youth policy plays an important part in this process.

The post-war BiH is divided into ten cantons, and although it is not clear how many young people live in rural compared to urban areas, it is apparent that there are many inequalities between the different groups of young people living in and migrating from and to the cities and the different localities. Overall, the 2000 estimates indicate that there are about 950,330 young people aged 15 to 30 living in BiH, which represents 24 % of the overall population⁹³.

Although a more conceptual understanding of youth in BiH has not yet been clearly defined, the 2005 review of the World Programme of Action for Youth in BiH refers to young people in BiH as individuals aged between 14 and 29 years of age, which represent 20% of the entire electoral body⁹⁴. Other sources, such as the UNDP Human Development Report, refer to 14 to 30 year olds as young people.

The table below refers to the population structure of BiH, which seems to follow European trends in low fertility and ageing of the population.



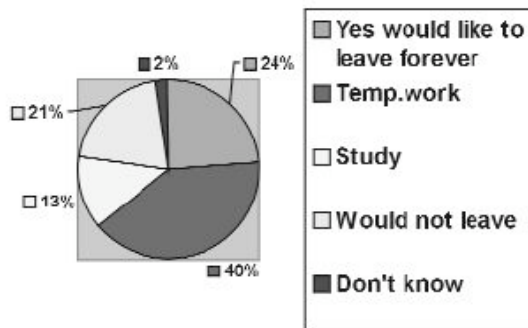
⁹² UNDP Youth in Bosnia & Herzegovina, “Are Youth Part of the Problem or Part of the Solution?”, 2003, p. 7.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Independent Evaluation of the BiH National Youth Policy, 2005, p.2.

Post-war BiH is still characterised by a high level of migration. The most recent estimates indicate that 77% of young people want to leave Bosnia, out of which 24% wish to leave without return and 18% who have already taken concrete measures to migrate⁹⁵. The reasons why one out of four young people in BiH wish to leave the country include the deteriorating socio-economic conditions, in particular the inefficiency of the educational system, poor employment opportunities, the lack of perspectives of the future and the volatile political situation.⁹⁶

Graph 2: If the opportunity was offered to you, would you leave BiH?



However, there are also positive developments in relation to youth mobility. Increased youth networking in the Balkan region supported by international organisations have helped young people to feel less isolated. Youth mobility in the region as well as in Europe would further strengthen young people’s sense of belonging, ownership of and responsibility for their local realities.

Furthermore, the possibility to increase youth participation in educational programmes and vocational training abroad may further improve the problematic educational system in BiH. There are hopes that the Human Rights Ministry (in the sector for the Diaspora) will develop strategic approaches on how to involve youth Diaspora more actively in BiH developments.⁹⁷

Socio-Economic Conditions of Youth

Slow economic development, high rates of unemployment and the overall increase in the instance of poverty, impact heavily on the socio-economic situation of the post-war generation of young people in BiH. According to the UNDP Report on Youth⁹⁸, the labour market is not developed enough to absorb graduates leaving education. Without employment, young people are the most vulnerable to poverty and prolonged dependency on their parents or the state.

Specific data on the proportion of young people living below the poverty line are not available. However, considering that 19% of the overall population lives under the poverty line and an additional 40% indicate that they have just enough to cover their basic needs, it is unlikely that the living conditions of young people are very comfortable, given that young people (16-30) represent 24% of the population.⁹⁹

The UNDP 2003 Youth Poll indicates that 57% of young people have not seen any change in their living conditions between 2000 and 2003, while 16% saw it worsen and 24% experienced an improvement. In spite of these figures, young people seem more optimistic about their living standards in the future. While only 11% think the living standards would get worse, 46% said it would improve and 38% indicated that it would stay the same. It is interesting that the 14-18 age group seems to be more optimistic than the 25-30 age group and in comparison to the rest of

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ UNDP Youth in Bosnia & Herzegovina, “Are Youth Part of the Problem or Part of the Solution?”, 2003, p.25.

⁹⁷ *Op cit*, p.34

⁹⁸ *Op cit*, p.14

⁹⁹ Ibid.

the older age groups. It also seems that rural youth is more positive about their future than the urban youth.¹⁰⁰

In spite of relative optimism, the instance of youth unemployment is extremely high. The official unemployment rate is around 40%, but it does not consider informal employment and work in the black economy. The International Youth Policy Report from the Advisory Mission of the Council of Europe (2005) indicates that youth unemployment is twice as high among the 19-24 age group as among the 25-30 age group and three times higher than for the 50-60 age group.¹⁰¹ Small fluctuations in the labour force in the formal economy, in particular in public administration, public companies, non-privatised and recently privatised companies, make it less possible for young people to find work in these sectors. This tendency is worrying as the inflexibility of the formal labour market will encourage young people to seek employment in the informal and black economy.

Education

Various sources, however, point to the problem that the majority of young people are not prepared to enter employment, as a result of the old-fashioned education system. About 80% of young people are unsatisfied with the contents of their education and feel unprepared in terms of skills and knowledge. In general young people in BiH are not convinced that their education will help them find a job. Only 33% of young men and women were sure they would find a job after school in 2000, while only 7% of rural youth felt secure about their opportunities for employment. Young people, especially young men with higher education, showed more optimism. Although rural youth express more optimism about the improvement of their living conditions in general, their certainty to find employment after finishing their education is lower than in urban areas. This tendency is supported by the fact that rural youth is more inclined to seek employment outside the country. It is clear that there is a strong need for reform of the educational system so that it responds to the needs of the labour market as well as a need for special attention to be paid to the development of rural areas.

The report of the International Youth Policy Advisory Mission of the Council of Europe mentions, among others, the following recommendations in the sphere of education:¹⁰²

- To change the “two schools under one roof” system to an integrated intercultural education which works with the issues of diversity, dignity and human rights and contributes to the development of the shared and common citizenship for all regardless ethnicity, religion, etc;
- Increased sensitivity with regards to the history curriculum that should encompass the review of textbooks while recognising and representing the complexities of the region’s past and the development of the capacity to think critically among the students.
- To develop an adequate monitoring system that would provide specific information on the attendance of school, in particular focusing on the dropouts of girls and other vulnerable groups, such as the ethnic minorities and the Roma children.
- To develop anti-bullying policies that would involve both parents and pupils and imply teacher training on issues of harassment and discrimination on ethnic and other basis.
- To recognise the role and strengthen the use of non-formal education in schools through suitable policies as well as teacher training;

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ International Youth Policy Advisory Mission Report, Council of Europe, April 2005, pp. 37-38.

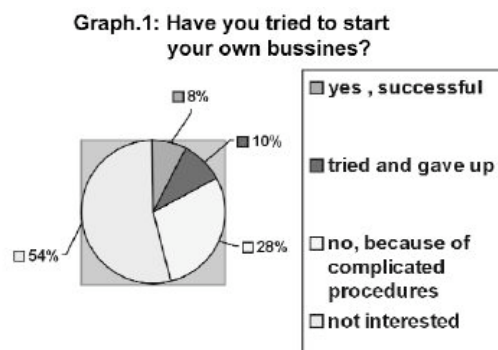
¹⁰² *Op cit*, p.3.

- To strengthen participatory mechanisms in schools and in higher education by further developing the students' councils (and other staff-student consultative committees at higher education level), which should be consulted at all levels of government.
- To harmonise the higher education system across the state in compliance with the Bologna criteria and the Lisbon convention.

Nevertheless, the UNDP report shows that apart from the challenges of the education system itself, the majority of young people seem ignorant or confused in relation to the areas of economy in which opportunities for employment are most likely to be available.¹⁰³ This demonstrates that youth-friendly information services, that would provide guidance to young people on the career opportunities available in the labour market, are lacking. Although previously, parents performed this advisory function, in the post-war context, it is clear that young people need professional support from outside the family. The establishment of counselling services providing advice to young people on their education, vocational and continuous skills training, as well as employment targeted in particular at disadvantaged groups and information on study programmes abroad, would enlarge the scope of opportunities for young people to participate in the labour market and in the society.

Some examples of research and good practice in the field of skills training and educational reform exist, such as the UNV/UNDP Youth Entrepreneurship Project in Brcko and the European Union PHARE Vocational Reform Programme. However, a coherent strategy that would address the issue of young people's education for employment in its complexity is still lacking. The few examples represent a good base for the actors in the youth field, in particular the respective Ministry, to build upon, in order to develop a more strengthened programmatic approach. A comprehensive monitoring system of poverty dynamics, especially how it affects young people, school attendance and education outcomes, while considering gender, ethnicity and locality, are essential for youth policy design and should be reinforced. Young Roma, young people with disabilities (and other invisible minorities such as the LGBT young people) are especially vulnerable to discrimination and exclusion from education. In the municipality of Modrica only one child of the 116 Roma returnee children was enrolled in education. This situation is extremely difficult, as a great number of parents, reportedly up to two thirds, themselves have no schooling.¹⁰⁴ Although some positive examples of projects integrating vulnerable children into education and society exist, specific policies targeted at children with specific needs are missing.

Unemployment



Levels of youth unemployment are extremely high, and range between 45% and 60% depending on the region. As mentioned previously, the official youth unemployment rate is about 40%, mainly among the unskilled and low educated 21-25 age group, and in particular young women and vulnerable young people. It is likely that the unemployment rate is higher as official figures do not include the group of young people that decide to prolong their education in order to avoid the entry into the official labour market and who satisfy themselves with odd jobbing

¹⁰³ UNDP Youth in Bosnia & Herzegovina, "Are Youth Part of the Problem or Part of the Solution?", 2003, p.14.

¹⁰⁴ UNDP Youth Report, p. 12.

in the informal economy (up to 50% of the overall population).¹⁰⁵ The challenge remains to develop strategies to integrate the informal market into the formalised economy. It seems, however, that until now, no specific measures targeting young people that would facilitate this integration process were taken.

Ideas to what should be done are not lacking, however the complex system of BiH governance, where young people are hardly represented or consulted, seems not to be very open to changes and reform. Specific measures could include internship programmes for young people that would reward companies with tax incentives, the promotion of first employment benefits and measures allowing young people to move from the informal to the formal economy.

The Youth Entrepreneurship Project in Brcko

One example of how young people can be motivated and supported during the process of starting a business is the Youth Entrepreneurship Project in Brcko (YEP), which UNV/UNDP started last year. Young people interested in establishing their own business or improving existing businesses attend business planning trainings. Young entrepreneurs between the ages of 18 and 30 receive advice on their business management and on how to obtain small loans from microcredit institutions. YEP has also created a network of young entrepreneurs. In the first year, 28 participants took part in two training sessions and 60 people (22 with existing jobs, 38 that are training participants and microcredit recipients) have become members of the entrepreneur network. Fifteen loans totaling 40,000 KM have been distributed. After the first year, 15 businesses were either established or improved.

Furthermore, the UNDP Youth Report refers to a number of recommendations¹⁰⁶ for strengthening of the information policy for young people so as to enable them to receive regular updates on the researched actual situation in the labour market. Other recommendations include the provision of career counselling, guidance and entrepreneurship training to young people, capacity building at both governmental and NGO levels focused on development and the implementation of youth employment measures, encouragement of youth mobility and networking between youth in BiH, the BiH Diaspora and young people in SEE and the rest of Europe. The table¹⁰⁷ on the left briefly describes one of the successful projects implemented with the support of the UNDP/UNV that should be further developed and multiplied in the other regions of BiH. Such and similar initiatives if implemented at a larger scale could address some of the negative effects of relatively long post-educational youth

unemployment and prevent economic migration.

Although the most recent updates on the developments in BiH were not available at the time of writing, it seems that most of the reforms in designing specific mechanisms improving access to the labour, education and training markets were not yet implemented, nor described in a clear youth employment strategy. However, elements for such strategy are described in the 2003 UNDP Report on Youth and the Report of the Advisory Mission on Youth Policy by the Council of Europe. It is obvious that some additional youth specific research would be necessary in order to provide the more specific evidence necessary for defining more specific targets.

¹⁰⁵ *Op cit*, p.17.

¹⁰⁶ *Op cit*, p.34.

¹⁰⁷ *Op cit*, p.16.

In relation to education, the UNDP Report on Youth further identified:¹⁰⁸

- Implement overall and radical reform of all aspects of the education system;
- Include young people, parents and teachers in the reform process through student, teacher and parent councils and unions;
- Design curricula to allow for more practice and application of theoretical approach;
- Make sure that curricula better reflect the constantly varying labour market situation;
- *Improve communication between universities and secondary and vocational schools on one side and local markets and employers on the other;*
- Increase municipality budgets so that municipalities can allocate part of their budgets to establish career-counselling centres; enable schools to appoint their own counsellors;
- Swiftly implement the reform of human rights subjects and religious instruction, and include children with special needs; put in place mechanisms (because related legislation does not exist) to allow for inclusive education;
- Conduct research on gender and Roma discrimination in schools.

These various initiatives supported by international organisations are certainly important, however a more strategic approach needs to be developed in consultation with young people and the other international actors working in the youth field, at the different levels of the BiH governance, where the BiH government would take on the responsibility for the reform processes and the establishment of a youth-friendly infrastructure enabling better information, access and conditions for employment in the formal labour market.

Gender

The establishment of the Gender Agency in cooperation with UNDP may contribute to the monitoring of the discrimination against women and young girls and to the mainstreaming of gender equality across BiH. However, gender equality should be further promoted through institutional and social mechanisms and should involve the relevant governmental and non-governmental partnerships in order to transform the fairly low participation of women in society. The MDG report indicates that the women's share of the labour market in BiH is only 37,2%, which is the lowest among the countries in South East Europe¹⁰⁹.

Furthermore, gender discrimination in schools has been frequently reported at the level of the cantons, in particular in the Zenica-Doboj region, where parents do not allow their daughters to attend education for cultural or economic reasons. The traditional patriarchal values intermixed with conservative religious attitudes towards women, who are expected to be good wives and mothers, are still predominant at various levels of society.¹¹⁰

Poverty

Poverty in BiH needs to be considered in relation to post-war development, which impacted heavily on a whole generation and made young people feel marginalized, leaving them on the periphery of society. As a result young people in BiH have additional difficulties in finding employment, poor opportunities for participation in the society, while their dependency on parents and families is increasing. Parents and families represent a source of additional income

¹⁰⁸ *Op cit*, p.33.

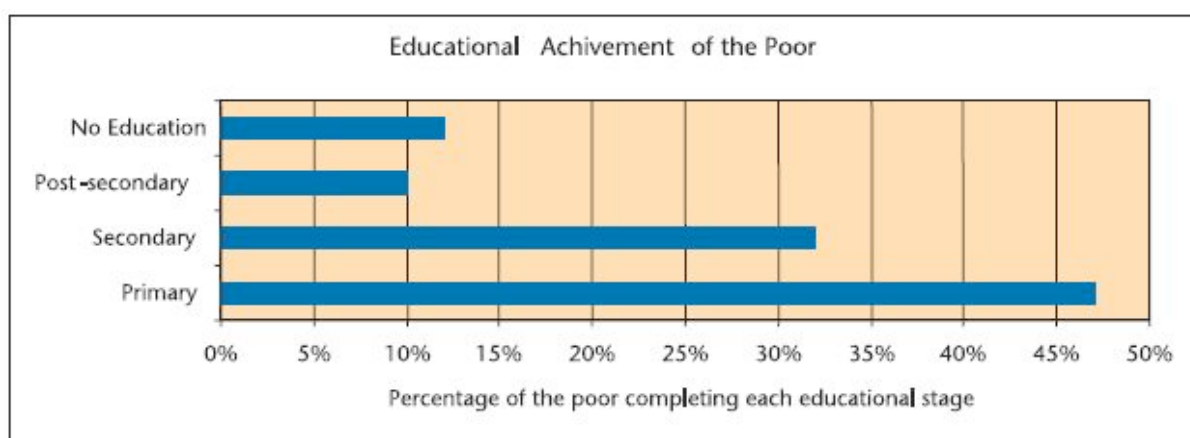
¹⁰⁹ UNDP MDG Report, 2004, p.30.

¹¹⁰ UNDP Youth Report, *op cit*, p.12.

for 65% of young people, while 7 % regularly receive money from relatives in BiH and 7 % regularly receive money from abroad.

According to a UNDP survey, 58% of young people had no income and many young people tend to spend more than they earn. Although half of all youth is involved in education and, therefore, usually does not have a regular income, or any income at all as it is socially accepted that students do not work. But also with relatively little income, young people often contribute to the family budgets. In 17% of families young people are the main contributors.

There are clear urban – rural disparities, although rural youth spend less than the urban youth. Rural youth, as mentioned previously, seem to be more positive about future than those with little more opportunities living in the cities. The 14-18 generation is more optimistic about their future perspectives than the 25-30 generation, which only demonstrates the heaviness of the impact of war on the generation of young people who lived through it and inherited its aftermath. According to the UNDP MDG report 31.5% of poor and poorly performing primary school graduates do not continue to secondary schooling.¹¹¹



Furthermore, there is a significant difference in income levels and, therefore, income dependency and poverty between the genders. Young women in BiH are much poorer and have fewer possibilities to take part in the society, especially in some of the regions. Only 10 % of young women in comparison to 25% young men are the major contributors to family budgets.

Similarly, depending on the region, it is often the young people from minority backgrounds who are more vulnerable and at risk of poverty. This is particularly true for Roma youth across the country. They are the most vulnerable and marginalized, with the least perspectives for future.

The UNDP and UNFPA reports note a general feeling of insecurity and uncertainty, a lack of trust and low self-esteem among young people in BiH, in general, which is intensified by the increasing poverty in financial, as well as social and cultural, terms and the lack of perspective for the future. The majority of young people spend their free time in front of the television or listening to the radio, which are among the sole opportunities for leisure available to them. Young people lack adequate cultural and sport venues and most often have the choice between staying at home or 'hanging out' in a café.

¹¹¹ UNDP MDG Report, *op cit*, p. 26.

In general, the psychological and socio-cultural impact of the war should be considered together with the political and economic situation. More specific research on youth and poverty should be developed examining the respective dimensions of youth, gender, locality as well as other identity issues especially in terms of minority-majority relationships.

There are no coherent approaches to the socio-economic promotion of youth. Although some good practice exists, such as the above-mentioned Youth Entrepreneurship Project in Brcko and the EU PHARE vocational reform project and the Regional Dialogues about Employment of Youth and Entrepreneurship in BiH (December 2005 to February 2006), the continuity of these projects as well as their overall strategy is not clear. There are also some emerging youth training initiatives, such as the Izbor Plus (www.izborplus.ba), that provide some curriculum for young people, and in particular youth workers, to develop their skills and competences. An assessment of how many of such initiatives are running and of their impact should be the subject for further research.

Youth Lifestyles, Sexuality, Union formation

The majority of young people in BiH spend their free time in “cafés” (78%), only 29% take part in sports activities, 15% work regularly with internet and only 3% go regularly to the movies. However, about 50% indicated that they read books, which seems comparable to other countries in transition, which have higher poverty rates. More than half of young people in BiH smoke (55%) and consume alcohol (60%), however according to the Advisory Mission on Youth Policy of the Council of Europe, concerns about young people’s alcohol and drug abuse seem a little exaggerated and would require validation through more research and the provision of more evidence.

The age of initiation into sex in BiH ranges between 16 to 20 years of age (not very low), which may be due to the simple fact that most young people live with their parents until their late 20s. However, more specific data on this issue is not available. It is noteworthy that according to research conducted by UNDP, young people do not have enough information on reproductive health, as it is not even covered in the education system. In the context of traditional families, discussions about sex are left for café chitchat with friends (31% of youth). Basic information is also received through the media (37% of youth). 32% of young people indicated not having received any information about sexual health at all.¹¹² Risk-taking is also an issue among young people, among whom injuries, poisoning and car accidents represent the main causes of death. There seems to be an increasing tendency towards suicide among young men. The reasons cited for this are their low self-esteem, insecurity, poor relationships with parents and the society at large.

The relatively high level of risk behaviour raises the problem of a lack of youth-friendly, easily accessible, health counselling services. Although health prevention culture is rather far away from the thinking of young people, it may also be due to the hierarchical and inaccessible traditional health care system that provides mainly medical care, rather than guidance and advice.¹¹³ For instance, the importance of sports, healthy diet and leisure activities that usually represent an integral part of young people’s well-being and healthy development, seems to be ignored by the post-war society. These may not represent problems at the moment, but may raise concerns for future generations.

¹¹² UNDP Youth Report, *op cit*, p. 19.

¹¹³ UNDP Youth Report, *op cit*, p. 19.

There is no accurate data on the incidence of HIV/AIDS and STIs among young people in BiH. The UNDP Report on Youth indicates that the majority of young people in BiH do not feel at risk of HIV/AIDS and STIs. However, only 48% young people in BiH use contraceptives regularly, and according to the MDG report, 70% of young girls aged 15-19 that live with a man do not use any form of contraception. Some health agencies working in the field reported that abortion is the main form of “contraception” among young girls. If contraception is used, it is mainly to prevent pregnancy, rather than to prevent STIs. Unfortunately, any specific information on youth abortion rates are not available.

Recent years have seen several programmes addressing the issue of sexual and reproductive health among youth people. Youth friendly services were established in cooperation with UNFPA and the IRC in Brcko, Banja Luka, Mostar and Bihac, where through Youth Information Centres young people can find advice and some form of counselling. However, these centres need to be further sustained and owned at the local level. Furthermore, their research and reporting function should be reinforced so that they provide evidence for policy-making and further programme development for and with youth.¹¹⁴ These few examples of youth-friendly services should be further strengthened and mainstreamed, in particular in smaller communities in order to provide appropriate guidance and counselling to young people. In addition, school education curricula should be reviewed to include sexual and reproductive health education, which could benefit from relevant youth work experiences, as well as peer education practices, as they are based on the work of grass roots organisations and international agencies.

Special attention should be given to anti-discrimination work in relation to LGBT young people, who in the traditional society seem to suffer from segregation both in education and employment, and are also more vulnerable in relation to HIV/AIDS and STIs, as their knowledge of the importance of the contraceptive use is not very high. This is in particular important for young male homosexuals, who tend to have their first experiences with older partners. According to the UNICEF report *‘blind dating is common and not knowing the partner does not prevent engaging in sexual intercourse’*¹¹⁵, while the use of condoms is not very common.

The Council of Europe Advisory Mission has summed up the challenges in the following recommendations¹¹⁶:

- More data need to be collected in relation to the health of young people;
- Development of age-appropriate counselling services, including telephone help lines, website based information. In particular important for rural youth;
- Launch of a major information campaign on sexual and reproductive health (via schools, youth work and mass media) – need to provide advice and guidance in partnership of teachers, youth and social workers, health promoters and peer educators;
- Need to address young people with special needs, among them disabled, LGBT – especially need to normalise the issues of sexual preference and choice;
- Importance of sport and recreational activities for health reasons;
- Sport as a way to promote social inclusion and participation in inter-community learning and reinforcement of citizenship.

¹¹⁴ UNDP Youth Report, *op cit*, p. 21-22.

¹¹⁵ RAR on HIV/AIDS among Especially Vulnerable Young People in SEE, UNICEF/CIDA, 2002.

¹¹⁶ International Youth Policy Advisory Mission Report, Council of Europe, April 2005, *op cit*, p. 5.

There was no data available on union formation, childbearing and postponement of marriage among young people in BiH.

Youth Participation

There are some good practices of youth work in BiH, which achieves a lot with very limited resources. However, the youth organisations seem to struggle for survival, with no or few places for young people to meet and little financial resources for the running of the organisation, with minimal equipment, doing creative work that would gain the attention of young people at large is not easy. The finances available at the municipal level are low, if they exist at all, organisations largely depend on outside sources and are rather donor driven, which affects their sustainability and the possible impact they could have in their communities. The general lack of resources naturally reinforces competition among youth organisations and youth groups, which reduces possibilities for cooperation and networking, as well as the quality of youth work.

The already weak position of youth organisations is even more damaged by the negative image young people have in society, as well as the lack of trust and respect the work of youth organisations received in their communities. Youth organisations are often perceived as a “strange” alternative, promoting negative trends, as well as drug use. Trust building in society and the recognition of non-formal education, as a positive contribution of youth organisations is required.

Overall participation in the more than 250 political and social organisations that exist in BiH is relatively low, with only around 9% of young people being active in an organisation and only 8% of young people being active as volunteers.¹¹⁷ The belief among young people that they have an actual influence in the society is very low. Only 1% of young people believe that they can make any form of impact on politics. It seems that less than 6% of young people hold representative office at the different levels of governance (state, municipality and cantons). Although 6% of young people are members of a political party, the general attitude towards political institutions is negative with only less than 25% of young people attending elections due to disappointment, lack of interest or feeling that they are not represented by the mainstream politicians. However, it seems that 10-15% of the municipality counsellors at municipality assemblies are young people below 30 years of age.¹¹⁸ This is an interesting tendency that could enable inter-generational dialogue and encourage the development of more consultative mechanisms that would involve young people in decision-making in a more active way.

It seems however that the legal provisions for civil society development are not very favourable. The Council of Europe report states that the framework within which the NGOs in BiH operate should be reviewed and reformed. This should strengthen the position of civil society as well as guarantee a more active participation for NGOs in the overall reform process in BiH.¹¹⁹ There is a long-term need to invest in youth work structures for training, qualification and careers. Most of the trainings so far have been implemented by international agencies, reportedly of a high quality, however, further investments need to be made in national and local capacities that could be so far facilitated through distance learning and mentoring. BiH should also make use of the

¹¹⁷ Independent Evaluation of the BiH National Youth Policy, *op cit*, p.2.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ International Youth Policy Advisory Mission Report, Council of Europe, April 2005, p. 42.

existing programmes of the EU, the Council of Europe and SALTO, especially their programme for SEE (www.salto-youth.net/see).¹²⁰

The UNDP Report on Youth further identified the following recommendations in relation to youth and political life¹²¹:

- Take necessary steps to act collectively to include youth and other neglected groups;
- Encourage cooperation between youth and institutions and support youth initiatives at all institutional levels;
- Provide a favourable atmosphere for the active participation of young people;
- Strengthen all forms of youth associations;
- Encourage authorities, especially at the local level, to work more closely with young people;
- Continue facilitating the implementation of the European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Regional and Municipal Life of 1992;
- Amend entity defence laws to comply with international standards on conscientious objection;
- Disseminate information to youth on the right to conscientious objection.

Youth Policies

There is no integral comprehensive youth policy in BiH, no national plan and strategies targeted at youth on the part of the different governmental and non-governmental actors. Although there is a high expectation to develop a more focused youth policy by the current government, which also requested the Council of Europe Youth Policy Advisory Mission in 2005, little further progress seems to have been made since. The role and work of the BiH Youth Information Agency (www.oiabih.info) has been critical in awareness raising and training (the SIROP series) on youth policy issues and its development since 2002, however, to date governmental and non-governmental partners have not yet undertaken to develop any clear information strategy targeting young people in BiH together.

There is only very limited information on the functioning of the informal Youth Coordination Group which is supposed to involve international organisations dealing with youth issues in BiH, established at the initiative of international development agencies. Their advisory function on youth policy development could be instrumental for the strengthening of the structures and mechanism for youth policy delivery.

The current status of the institutions responsible for youth issues is unclear. According to the UNDP report the responsibility is divided between the Ministry of civil affairs, the office of the Chairman of the Council of Ministers BiH and the Ministry of Human Rights in BiH, which runs the Council for Children. Although the decision on the establishment of a Youth Commission, that would be responsible for the coordination of youth issues, was taken already at the end of 2004, it seems that the Youth Commission started to function only in June 2006. Information on its work can be found on the following website: www.mladi.gov.ba, in Serbian, Croatian and Bosnian language, though the English version is not yet available.

The establishment of the Youth Commission is a great step towards policy development, as well as the realisation of a youth strategy and a more specific youth programme that would be

¹²⁰ *Op cit*, p.45.

¹²¹ UNDP Report on Youth, 2003, *op cit*, p.33-34.

practicable and possible to evaluate. It is, however, too soon to say anything about the functioning of this body. The Youth Commission's composition is not yet clear and neither are the consultative and participatory mechanisms established to involve youth organisations and young people. Due to the fairly complicated system of governance in BiH, it is also difficult say more than coordination and strategic approaches towards youth policy development are definitely much needed. Furthermore, communication between the governmental structures and young people should be reinforced and / or established, where they do not exist.

The following table¹²² gives an indication of the fact that trust needs to be strengthened on both sides:

How can you define the communication between Youth and Governance?			
<i>Answers</i>	Total	e.g. in Srbac	e.g. in Šipovo
a) excellent	1,3 %	2 %	0 %
b) good	3,5 %	14 %	0 %
c) satisfactory	7,9 %	24 %	0 %
d) bad	41,6 %	39 %	14 %
e) no communication	45,4 %	21 %	84 %

Finally, the existing local youth councils should be strengthened and the communication between the civil servants and young people at the level of the municipalities and cantons should be further developed¹²³ in cooperation with the newly established Youth Commission.

¹²² Special Report on Youth Policy Development in Bosnia & Herzegovina on the theme "Youth and Governance", 2002, p.10.

¹²³ UNDP Youth in Bosnia & Herzegovina, "Are Youth Part of the Problem or Part of the Solution?", 2003, p.33.

Bulgaria

The transition process in Bulgaria has in the past few years been driven by the European Union pre-accession agenda, which has created focus on issues of youth employment, participation in the civic life and youth mobility. This also created incentives for the further development of youth policy and youth-friendly information services. However, improving the socio-economic conditions of young people, their well-being and healthy transition into adulthood, remains a challenge.

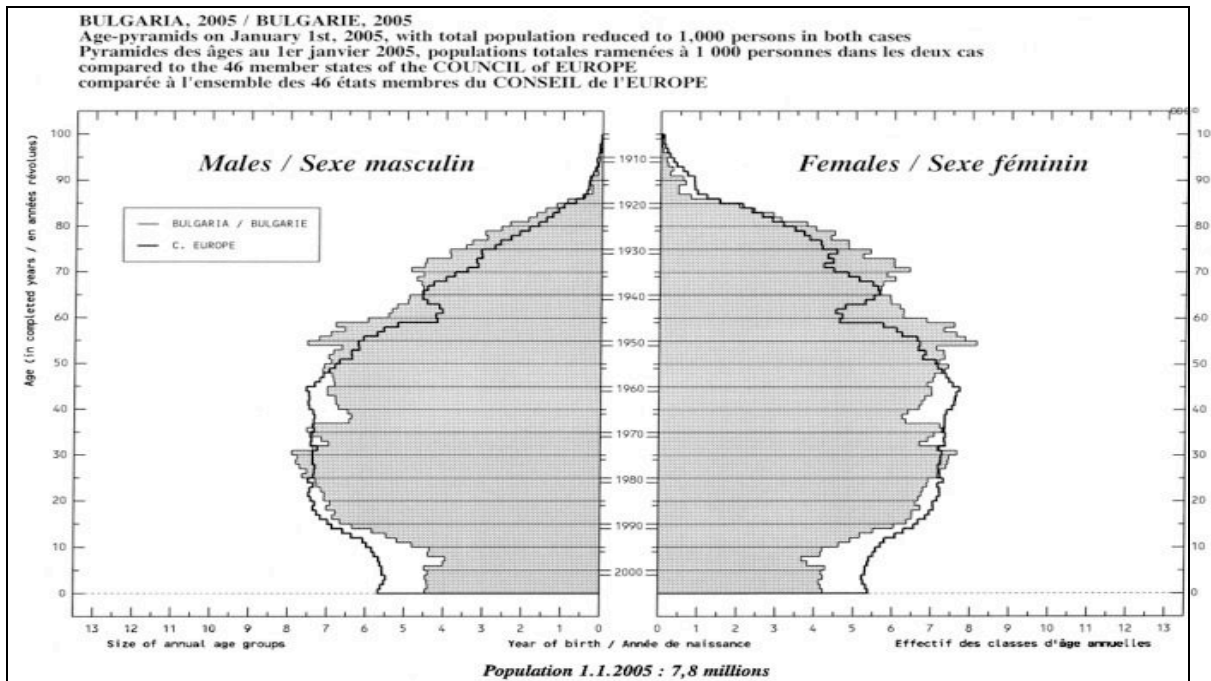
Youth Demography

At the end of 2004, the population of Bulgaria was estimated at 7,761,049. In comparison to date for the previous year, the population decreased by half a percent. At the end of 2003, there were 1,077,137 young people 15 to 25 year olds living in Bulgaria, and 1,697,274 young people between the ages of 18 and 35.

Bulgaria demonstrates a significant ageing of the population and a very low birth rate. It also demonstrates a trend towards the increase of the rate of emigration among young people. The ageing of the population and the decrease in the proportion of young people is attributed to a variety of factors including the declining birth-rate, the slow but steady rise in the rate of mortality and an increase in the number of young people aged 10 to 35 emigrating.¹²⁴

The population dynamics of the country can be observed from the following tables:

Age Pyramid on January 1 2005:



¹²⁴ Youth Society for Peace and Development of the Balkans, YSPDB report about situation of young people in Bulgaria, youth NGOs and youth policy and relations with government, Plovdiv, Bulgaria.

Ageing of the Bulgarian population 1950 - 2000

Table 1. World population ageing 1950-2050. Bulgaria.

Indicator	Age	1950	1975	2000
Ageing Index		38.0	73.2	137.6
Broad age groups	0-14	26.8	22.0	15.7
	15-59	63.1	61.9	62.6
	60+	10.2	16.1	21.7

Source: United Nations, 2002: 56-157.

On the basis of data from censuses taken in 1992 and 2001, it is estimated that the net migration of the population for the same period is estimated at 221,900 or 2.7 % of the population. According to the census data during the same period 18,450 returned or entered the country. Thus, the emigration flow could be estimated at 240,300, indicating that the country has lost some 30,000 people each year during the period between the two last censuses.¹²⁵ Many Bulgarians, especially those living in small villages and towns, where they live in difficult social conditions, emigrate in search of new opportunities. This tendency is more development among young people, even though they encounter difficult social conditions in the new country. In Bulgaria, the object of youth policy, and therefore, young people, are persons aged 16 to 18 and 18 to 35.

Socio-Economic Conditions of Youth

In relation to the socio-economic conditions of young people, the following key issues can be identified:¹²⁶

Poverty

According to the World Bank Poverty Report on Bulgaria¹²⁷ poverty is widespread in the whole population, significantly more widespread among ethnic minority groups, such as the Roma, and disproportionately negatively affects young people, but especially young women and in rural areas. The following characteristics describe poverty in Bulgaria:¹²⁸

The poverty rate in rural areas was estimated at 29.1 percent in 2003, compared to 18.7 percent in urban areas. Welfare differences by location, however, become sharper when Sofia city is compared to other, urban or rural, areas. Even taking into account the differences in characteristics (such as education, family size, etc.) between rural and urban households, the per capita consumption of households living outside Sofia is 10 to 25 percent lower than that for households living in the capital city. Only a fifth of the population lives in households with five or more members, but they account for about 41 percent of the poor. People living in households with two or more children account for over a third of the poor. Ethnicity is a strong correlate of poverty: Roma households account for about 6 percent of the population according

¹²⁵ Recent demographic developments in Europe, Council of Europe, Council of Europe Publishing, (CD ROM), 2005.

¹²⁶ Youth Society for Peace and Development of the Balkans, YSPDB report about situation of young people in Bulgaria, youth NGOS and youth policy and relations with government, Plovdiv, Bulgaria, *op cit.*

¹²⁷ World Bank and International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, Country Partnership Strategy for the Republic of Bulgaria for the period 2007 to 2009, May 2006, p.35.

¹²⁸ IBRD, IFC and World Bank, Country Partnership Strategy for Bulgaria for the Period FY 07 – FY 09, p.15.

to the survey, but for over a fifth of the poor. Per capita consumption in a Roma household is only half of the consumption of a similar non-Roma household. Finally, poverty is not gender neutral. The risk of poverty is slightly higher in households headed by women, usually single parent households. When differences in education, location and other characteristics are taken into account, per capita consumption in these households is 10 percent lower than in those headed by men.

World Bank Development Policy Loans would support policies that promote further poverty reduction and social inclusion, by granting the poor, Roma in particular, equitable access to basic social services and supporting their insertion into the labour force, and increasing labour participation of youth, older unemployed and disabled.

A further problem exacerbating poverty is the lack of support for families, especially young families. Bulgaria used to have the lowest family allowance among the Central and Eastern European countries, but has nearly doubled the amount paid, from a modest US \$2.5 to \$5, but it has also introduced a rigorous income test with a monthly threshold of \$70 per person. It is estimated that significantly fewer poor children will be reached by this social support than before.¹²⁹

Unemployment

One of the main causes of poverty in Bulgaria is unemployment. Despite World Bank data indicating that youth unemployment has been reduced as a result of recent measures¹³⁰, the level of youth unemployment is still high.

According to official statistical data, young people still account for 26.8% of all unemployed citizens¹³¹ and it is noteworthy that unemployment among younger people is about double the average rate. Unemployment rates for men have been slightly higher than for women. Regional differences in unemployment are quite pronounced, for example from Sofia with just 5.17% unemployment to Targovishte with 33.55% occupying the two extremes.¹³² Despite the shrinking of the labour force due to the decreasing number of young people in the population, the number of jobs available to absorb young people under 29 years of age has also declined causing youth unemployment to climb fast recently. One of the reasons underlying this development, according to a survey conducted between 2000 and 2002, is that the number of employers that could potentially employ young people, has sharply declined.

While the majority of employers claimed they would be willing to hire young people, they nevertheless complained that there are obstacles to hiring young people including economic factors (low purchasing power of the population and the limited access of companies to external

¹²⁹ Tine Rostgaard, "Family Support Policy in Central and Eastern Europe - A Decade and a Half of Transition", Early Childhood and Family Policy Series N° 8, 2004, The Danish National Institute of Social Research, Copenhagen, UNESCO Education Sector, 3-5 September 2003, Budapest, p.18.

¹³⁰ The World Bank and IBRD provides the following figures: The share of long term unemployment reduced from 63.7% in 2001 to 59.3% in 2004 against 43.4 in EU-15 in 2003, Youth unemployment rate reduced from 38.4% in June 2001 to 25.8% in 2004, against 14.7% in EU-15 in 2003, Employment rate (LFS) increased from 50.9% in September 2001 to 56.6% in January 2005 against 64.8 in EU-15 in 2003 in the Country Partnership Strategy for the Republic of Bulgaria, for the period 2007 – 2009, May 2006, p.35.

¹³¹ Elitza Neshevska, Deputy Minister of Youth and Sports, responsible for youth affairs Ministry of Youth and Sports of the Republic of Bulgaria, "Youth Policy in Bulgaria", Forum 21, available at: www.coe.int/youth/forum21.

¹³² International Youth Foundation, "What Works in Youth Employment in the Balkans?", 2004, p. 16.

markets) lack of professional skills and work experience, social skills and motivation of youths, lack of communication and partnership of employers with VET schools and labour office, as well as lack of incentives encouraging youth employment and also some deficiencies of the current effective programmes. In the opinion of employers, they would be encouraged to employ young people and participate in measures for youth employment promotion, provided changes in the legislation are made.

It also noteworthy that while youth entrepreneurship is identified as a positive measure for improving the employment of young people, few opportunities and support mechanisms for youth entrepreneurship have been implemented and in the context of those that have been, many of the youth businesses fail due to the general economic climate and the lack of experience of the young people managing the businesses.

Key institutional actors see the causes and problems for youth unemployment as mainly determined by:

- **Economic problems** and processes of restructuring of the economy; lack of investments in the regional economies; low level of labour remuneration; limitation of demand of labour force, including between 18 and 29 years of age; high and often inadequate requirements of the employers towards the labour force between 18 and 29 years of age; the hidden youth employment (in tourism, services, agriculture)
- **Problems in the legislation**, e.g. the extension of retirement age; insufficient development and support for the small and medium-size business; lack of mechanisms, encouraging the start-up of business; insufficient incentives for the employers
- **Inconsistency of the vocational education and training** of youths after their graduation with the demand of labour force; slow adaptation of the VET schools and the education system as a whole towards the labour market requirements; inertia of the VET system; lack of practical orientation in the secondary schools
- **Youths lacking length of employment and work experience**
- **Youths lacking practical skills**
- **Low educational attainment and lack of training of youths.**

Some of the problems related to youth unemployment in some of the regions are:

- **Lack of initiative to start own business**; lack of business culture and knowledge; lack of access to financing of youths; lack of traditions in the area of self-employment
- Youths are **demotivated** for work
- **Insufficient and limited access** to youth employment promotion measures; lack of sustainability of the currently effective measures
- Youths **dropping-out of the educational system** because of poverty
- **Lack of coherence** between the labour market institutions and vocational schools
- **Illiteracy** of youths from minorities
- **Lack of access** to information and consulting services for youths

According to the above mentioned survey, unemployment affects all groups of youths, whereas the problems of the smaller settlements are not less significant than the ones in the big district towns. Therefore, the measures to be implemented for youth employment promotion should be broadly diversified and their priority should correspond to the particulars of each region of the country. A differentiated and, where the nature of measures allows, an individual approach to youth unemployment issues is more than necessary.

Nevertheless, a large percentage of young people between the ages of 15 and 18 have no other choice but to work, because they have no other source of independent income or because they are expected to contribute to the family budget or to cover their own costs. The average age of young working people is 16. Unfortunately, they are often exploited by their employers who pay them less than the minimum wage. In addition, few have access to health and social insurances. Essentially, such young people work illegally. Parents often encourage their children to work to alleviate the family budget.

Some measures that have been put in place to further develop the employability of young people include the following programmes developed by the Bulgarian national authorities:

- National program "Computer training for youths";
- National program "Enhancing employability and encouragement of entrepreneurship among young individuals";
- National program for educational and labour inclusion of young people dropping out of the secondary educational system;
- National program for education, vocational training and employment of the Roma population;
- National program for ensuring employment through activities aimed at improvement of the ecological situation;
- National program for ensuring alternative employment for persons out of work as a result of privatization of large companies and monopolies.¹³³

Further priorities of the government in the sphere of employability include:

- The promotion of entrepreneurship among women and young people;
- Creation of subsidized employment directed to the unemployed disadvantaged groups in the labour market (young people, women, disabled persons, lone mothers, mothers with up to 3 year old children, orphans, long-term unemployed with no vocational training and elementary or lower education, unemployed over 50 years of age).

Education

Bulgarian society places a great deal of emphasis on education. Only a relatively small number of Bulgarian children do not attend school but a certain proportion drop out. However, educational enrolment has begun to drop. Poverty, as well as distance from educational centres, hinders the school attendance of many young people.

Young people characterise education as lacking diverse and interesting teaching methods, uninteresting and not sufficiently motivating for young people to attend. Other problems include that the children of different ethnic groups (but, especially, the Roma) themselves do not have sufficiently developed language skills to follow classes and that their parents have no interest in sending them to school. A further, and endemic problem, is the segregated schooling of young people from specific ethnic minority groups (especially Roma) and young people with disabilities in so called "special schools", which are thoroughly under resources and which isolate those young people from the rest of society, reinforcing negative stereotypes about them. Many problems continue to exist, despite the partial progress in overcoming segregation in education through legislative and institutional changes towards integrated education of the children with disabilities,

¹³³ Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (Bulgaria), "The New Social Policy Strategy", p. 7.

desegregation of Roma schools and improving the quality of education of the children with special educational needs and Roma children¹³⁴.

The Bulgarian education system demonstrates several significant weaknesses including, and importantly, that the education system produces graduates with qualifications which do not match the demand of the labour market. Despite the fact that education spending increased from a crisis-level low of 2.6% in 1997 to 3.7% of GDP in 2001, which is still a fairly low rate by international standards, contributing to a declining state of buildings and teaching material, the investment in the education system remains insufficient. The government is currently pursues a strategy to improve the efficiency of education spending without major increases in public expenditure by gradually decentralising the management of resources and by increasing the low student-teacher ratio.

However, between the school years 1997/98 and 2003/2004 the number of students and educational institutions decreased by 10% and the number of teachers by only 6%, meaning that the student-teacher ratio has dropped further from 12:4 to 11:8. At the same time, net enrolment rates have increased, in particular in the group of 15 to 18 year-olds (from 70% to 83%) and in the group of 19 to 23 year-olds (from 25% to 30%), most likely in response to the situation on the labour market, which is characterised by poor job prospects for young people in the period under consideration, but also because of better returns to education.

Some legislative changes were made in 2004 to improve the quality of higher education and academic research. Expenditure on the National Action Plan for Employment 2003 was €120 million (about 0.7% of GDP), which includes a significantly higher amount spent on active labour market policies than in 2002. Total expenditure on research and development has remained low at around 0.5% of GDP since the mid-1990s, of which only about one quarter was spent by the business sector. management.

75.6% of young people aged 20 to 24 have attained at least upper secondary education attainment level. The main challenge in the education sector is to adjust the system to a declining school-age population following the general demographic decline and emigration, among whom many better educated and younger people¹³⁵.

Other socio economic issues challenging the development of the contemporary youth generation in Bulgaria include:

Gender equality: While improvements have been made in the official status of young women as a result of the approximation of European legislation and standards in anticipation of European Union accession, gender inequality is still widespread and young women in Bulgaria are vulnerable to the widespread problem of domestic violence and trafficking. In addition, they are often more likely to have difficulty to enter the labour market and to access properly paid and protected employment.

The Equal Opportunities for Women and Men Section, established within the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy in 2004, is in charge of developing, coordinating and implementing the state

¹³⁴ Save the Children, "Inclusive Education in Bulgaria: How Much Remains to Be Done?", Position paper.

¹³⁵ Regular Report of the European Commission on the Bulgaria's Progress towards Accession, 2004.

policy on equal opportunities for men and women. The responsibilities include a number of various activities, such as¹³⁶:

- Involving state institutions and organizations in the development of a policy on protection of women against risks, by conducting the respective research and surveys and introducing new forms of work organization;
- Developing and coordinating the implementation of a National Action Plan on Equality for Men and Women;
- Developing gender training programmes, designed for civil servants and creating focal points in the individual ministries and institutions.

In part, young women benefit from the above measures, but it is noteworthy that a specific youth dimension in the above programmes is absent.

However, within the next five years the Ministry of Youth and Sports will launch a wide-scale project within the European Voluntary Service Programme and in cooperation with the Sports Directorate and European Union Integration and International Cooperation Directorate. The project is aimed at stimulating the equality of girls and women through sports (for example: sports initiatives with predominant participation of men, such as football. Mixed teams of girls and boys will be involved in the project). The Ministry of Youth and Sports will apply approaches for gender equality by creating a sustainable healthy environment for personal development of girls, based on sports and informal trainings.

Conflicts in the family: The poor social condition of families in Bulgaria is thought to be at the root of an increase in conflicts in the family, including the instance of domestic violence. In addition, there has been an increase in the instance of single parenthood and such individuals often struggle to raise their children on their own. It is noteworthy that, there exist no social services to support families in difficulty, such as family consultation offices, where families could seek help or advice.

Increasing criminal behaviour among young people: Many children are being raised in family circumstances that are not considered conducive to their well being. Thus, criminal activity among young people against peers and parents has increased. According to local experts, this increase in juvenile criminality can be attributed to the lack of investment and attention given by the authorities to the welfare of children and young people. It is significant that young people, especially young women and girls, are sold into prostitution in Bulgaria itself or in the European Union, especially Germany and Italy and are significantly vulnerable to human trafficking.

Precariousness and vulnerability: Further, many children grow up in lowest income families, in which both parents are unemployed in the long term. The Roma minority accounts for a large proportion of such families. The children from the lowest income bracket families are most vulnerable to becoming victims of family or street violence and often are not in a position to satisfy their most basic physiological needs. Such children are often given up to state care and end up in foster homes. Many however end up on the street engaged in the sex industry or in crime in order to simply survive.

¹³⁶ Bulgarian Governmental Report on the Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action (1995), adopted at the IV UN World Conference on Women and Outcome of the 23rd Special Session of the General Assembly (2000).

Youth Lifestyles, Sexuality, Union Formation

In terms of values, research indicates that health and family are considered most important by Bulgarian citizens, as both as necessary for a “good life”¹³⁷. Research also indicates that Bulgarian citizens suffer from what is characterised as social anomy, which has been on the increase since the change of regime from state-socialism to democracy and market economy, and which expresses itself in the increased individualisation and materialism of the society and especially of young people and in changing attitudes to and practices of family formation.

The transition is considered by many observers to have destabilised the traditional family. In contradistinction to the state socialist period, when the government had an explicit policy of encouraging marriage and fertility, the absence of such an initiative today, are considered to have substantially Bulgarian citizens’ orientation towards forming a family. The number of marriages continues to decrease every year, but the number of divorces is rising. The number of children living with only one of their parents has, therefore, also increased. Nevertheless, the legislative framework for divorce usually favours mothers raising the children and fathers having visitation rights, especially when the children are under the age of 10.

The number of marriages has dropped steadily, but this trend has become more intensive in the period 1990-2002 with a total decrease of about 30,000 or 50%, from 59,874 to 29,218. There was a slow increase over the following two years. 31,038 marriages were registered in 2004 compared to 30,645 in 2003. This development has led to a fall of the crude marriage rate from 6.9% in 1990 to 3.7% in 2002 and a slight increase in 2004 to 4.0%. First marriages of both men and women constituted almost 84% of all marriages in 1998 and this proportion decreased gradually to 81% in 2004. The mean age at first marriage has increased in 2004 to 28.8 years for men and 25.5 years for women, compared to 26.6 and 23.5 years in 1998 respectively. In 2004 there were 14,669 divorces which represent about 473 divorces per 1000 marriages or 1.9 divorces per 1000 inhabitants. The average duration of marriage was 14 years in 2004 and, compared to previous years, is increasing, 13.2 years in 2003 and 11.1 years in 1998. The trend for the duration of marriage shows a decrease of 18% in the relative share of divorces during the first ten years of marriage in 2004 compared to 1998, respectively from 53% to 35%.¹³⁸

Data from the latest population census show that 24.5% of households with children have a single parent: unmarried, widowed or divorced. 21% of children in Bulgaria are raised by only one parent: 17 per cent by their mothers and 4 per cent by their fathers (National Statistical Institute of Bulgaria, 2003). More and more young people prefer to live with their partners and to raise children together as a family, but without concluding a common law marriage (National Statistical Institute of Bulgaria, 2001).

More and more young families or couples living in so-called ‘free unions’ postpone childbirth for reasons of their professional careers. Matching their professional responsibilities with raising children is a problem for almost all parents employed in the private sector, especially those who are female, and to a lesser extent, those working in the public sector. The reason is, that despite the willingness of employers, especially of those developing their own business, to respect the legal rights of parents (two-years maternity leave, the right of sick-leave for taking care of sick children, etc.), they indicate that they are under pressure to remain competitive and, therefore,

¹³⁷ National Centre for Social Opinion Studies, 1996.

¹³⁸ Recent demographic developments in Europe, Council of Europe, Council of Europe Publishing, (CD ROM), 2005, *op cit.*

cannot afford to provide such benefits to their employees, whose jobs they say are dependent on the success of their businesses. Other families chose for one parent to stay at home to take care of the children while the other one is employed. Usually mothers commit themselves to the household and children and it is indicative that the share of permanently jobless women is higher than that of men.

Fertility

There were 69,886 live births in Bulgaria in 2004, about 2,500 more than in 2003. The number of live births reached its lowest level, about 64 to 65,000, during the period 1997 to 1998. In 2004 the crude birth rate was 9.0%, compared to 8.6% in 2003 and 7.9% in 1998.

The substantial increase in the proportion of births outside marriage in recent years continued in 2004. 46.8% of births in 2004 were conceived outside marriage compared to 46.2% in 2003. This represents an increase of about 17% compared to 1998. The proportion of births outside marriage reflects the emergence of new family patterns such as consensual unions. This is confirmed indirectly comparing the average age of mother at birth of first child (24.5 years) with the average age of women at first marriage (25.5 years). Thus, the increase of births outside marriage is not necessarily synonymous with children being born outside of some type of family union¹³⁹.

There was a considerable decrease of the total fertility rate in the past years from 1.81 in 1990 to 1.24 in 1996 and 1.09 in 1997. After a small rise in 2000 (1.27), in 2003 the total fertility rate returned to the same level as in 1999 and 1995: 1.23. 2004 was the peak of 1.29 for this fertility indicator during the last decade. This fertility rate is far from the two children per family necessary for ensuring even simple family reproduction. In 2004 a concentration of births was recorded among women aged 20-29 years (around 62.8% of total live births), thus leading to the conclusion that the decrease in the number of live births is rather a result of avoiding or postponing birth. The average age of women giving birth in 2004 was 25.8 years and 24.5 years at the birth of a first child. These two indicators, particularly the latter, seem to remain fairly stable over time.¹⁴⁰

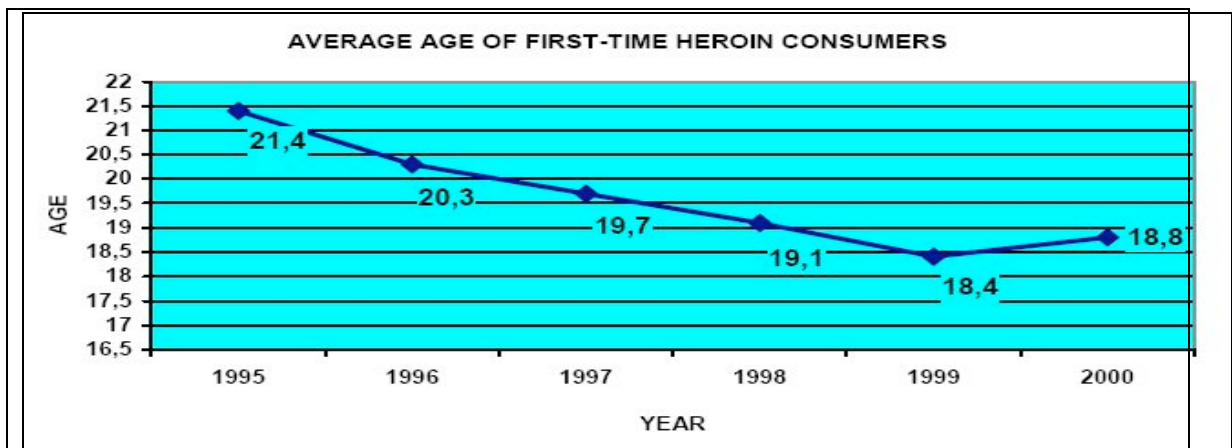
Year	Total	Men	Women
1990	8,669,269	4,269,998	4,399,271
1995	8,384,715	4,103,368	4,281,347
2000	8,149,468	3,967,423	4,182,045
2001	7,891,095	3,841,163	4,049,932
2002	7,845,841	3,816,162	4,029,679
2003	7,801,273	3,790,840	4,010,433

¹³⁹ Elena Koytcheva, "Contemporary Union Formation in Bulgaria: The Emergence of Cohabitation", paper for presentation at the XXV International Population Conference of the International Union for the Scientific Study of the Population, Tours, France, July 18-23, 2005.

¹⁴⁰ Recent demographic developments in Europe, Council of Europe, Council of Europe Publishing, (CD ROM), 2005, *op cit*.

In the face of such low fertility, the approach of the Bulgarian authorities has tended towards pro-natalism. This has often been as a result of pressure from religious groups and conservative political parties and is a tendency observed in most countries of Central and Eastern Europe. Family and school, the traditional mainstays in children's lives, have dramatically lessened in significance, especially in Bulgaria's cities. The growing influence of television through numerous broadcasting and cable outlets combined with the explosion of new information and communication technologies tend to shape the everyday existence of children. Addiction to drugs, alcohol and tobacco products, aggressiveness, anti-social behaviour and a lack of positive role models all challenge Bulgarian society significantly.¹⁴¹

It is estimated that one in five schoolchildren has used drugs, one in two knows where to buy some, and two children in every class have used hard drugs.¹⁴² Over the past 10 to 12 years the activities of criminal groups have been focused mainly on the trafficking and distribution of drugs outside Bulgaria. However, they are increasingly turning to domestic supply and using young people in Bulgaria as a target market for a range of illegal drugs, including heroin, considered to be the greatest threat.¹⁴³ Currently almost the whole range of illegal narcotic substances is on offer in Bulgaria. This has resulted in a significant increase in the percentage of the general population and young people, students in particular, involved in drug use (and abuse). The most widely used drug is marihuana. According to a representative survey conducted in 2000, 24% of secondary school students in Sofia have tried cannabis at least once. This accounts for a three-fold increase compared to 1995 (9.2%).



It is estimated that about 200-300,000 people are addicted to heroine, and about 150,000 have experimented with “soft drugs” and amphetamines or other new drugs, including methamphetamines are known on the street by the name of “Piko” which are replacing cannabis and heroine. These stimulants are faster and stronger than amphetamines. According to the most recent data, 20,000 people between the ages of 15 and 30 years have experimented with various stimulants; however, unofficial data suggests the numbers to be about 100,000 people. Over 130,000 Bulgarians smoke marijuana, according to the Ministry of Health.

¹⁴¹ Lilia Raycheva, Katya Hristova, Dessislava Radomirova, Rossen Ginev, “Bulgaria: Childhood in Transition” in *Children Welfare in Ageing Europe*, p. 55.

¹⁴² 2005 Annual Youth Report for Bulgaria (results in brief), in *Social Rights Bulgaria, Networking Bulgarian NGOs Online*.

¹⁴³ National Anti-Drug Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria, 2003 – 2008, p.5.

Generally, there is a tendency of marginalisation of individuals who are involved in substance abuse. There is evidence that they leave early or drop out of school and that many are involved in crime. Young people affected by drug use in this way, are a growing group that need a wider range of medical, social, legal, educational, employment and other services and care.

Health¹⁴⁴

The health status of young people in Bulgaria is dependent on various social and economic factors. One main problem is the lack of regular, physical activity, which leads to a sharp deterioration of their health status.

The contemporary health problems that can be observed among children and young people include the following:

- Increased alcohol abuse among young Bulgarians between 15 and 24 – in 2001 this percentage was 70%, whereas in 1996 it was 50%;
- Increased instance of smoking in the 15 to 24 years age group has increased to 41.3% in 2001, in comparison to 38.8 % in 1996;
- Increased instance of HIV infection, AIDS and cases of STIs. 2001 data shows 41% in the 20 to 29 year age group and 7 % in the 14 to 19 year age group HIV cases reported was 447 people as of August 2003;
- Increased instance of drug abuse including experimentation with new forms of drug, such as meta-amphetamines;
- Increase in under-18 pregnancies, with the birth and abortion rates for the 15 to 19 year age group at about 77 per 1000 people;
- A decrease of the age at which sexual initiation takes place. Young people aged 17 to 18 already have an active sexual life, but only 35% use condoms.

In Bulgaria, the health care sector focuses its main health promotion activities in the following areas:¹⁴⁵

- Speeding up the adoption of the Public Health Act by the National Assembly, as it reflects the contemporary views on reproductive health issues;
- Training programmes, designed for women, children, pregnant women, which could impact the health of mothers and children;
- Training, aimed at upgrading the qualification of doctors from the primary health network, obstetricians and paediatricians;
- Implementing and promoting mechanisms for improving the quality of medical services in medical institutions in order to reduce the maternal and infant mortality rate.

The government has elaboration several programmes to help prevent socially significant diseases, paying special attention to children and young people including the “Health Control” programme, the “Prevention of Non-Infectious Diseases” programme, the “Prevention and

¹⁴⁴ Youth Society for Peace and Development of the Balkans, YSPDB report about situation of young people in Bulgaria, youth NGOS and youth policy and relations with government, Plovdiv, Bulgaria, *op cit.*

¹⁴⁵ Bulgarian Governmental Report on Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action (1995), adopted at the IV UN World Conference on Women and Outcome of the 23rd Special Session of the General Assembly (2000).

Monitoring of Infectious Diseases” programme and the “Secondary Prevention of Diseases” programme.¹⁴⁶

It is noteworthy that beyond the above, little information was available for assessing the extent of the health problems of young people, notably their sexual and reproductive health, their knowledge of such health issues and measures for increasing their ability to mitigate such health risks.

Youth Policies¹⁴⁷

In 2003 the Ministry of Youth and Sport established the Strategy for National Youth Policy. This strategy includes different programmes and activities for the development of a real youth policy between 2003 and 2007. The strategy is being elaborated with the direct assistance of experts, representing the responsible institutions, such as the UN Social Development Unit. An interdepartmental expert council was formed and assigned the task of drafting the strategy. *“Creating prerequisites for tolerance, solidarity and gender equality among young generation”* is the stated goal of the strategy. In addition, The Youth Programme of the European Commission, coordinated by the Ministry of Youth and Sports in Bulgaria, and one of the European components of the national strategy under elaboration, envisages its role as *“to contribute to the elimination of any form of discrimination and promote equality across social strata”*.

The main priorities of the new strategy include

- high-quality care for the life, health and physical activity of young people;
- getting young people engaged in the social life of the country and reducing their social passivity when making decisions on issues that concern them;
- optimal use of the possibilities of formal and non-formal education;
- equal access to all sources of youth information;
- stimulation of youth mobility, co-operation and exchange of non-formal experience.

In the medium term the strategy will seek to develop national, regional and local youth policy by

- creating mechanisms for co-ordination among the various institutions dealing with youth issues, the non-governmental youth organizations present on the national level, the leading European and world organizations working on youth issues, etc;
- organizing conferences, seminars and workshops on the subject of youth policy development; signing co-operation agreements with district and municipal administration bodies, with the National Association of Municipalities of the Republic of Bulgaria, as well as with other municipality associations; making more popular the Revised European Charter on the Participation of Young People in the Local and Regional Life.
- encouraging the self-organization of Bulgarian young people and creating conditions for establishing new organizations and for expanding the capacity of the existing ones; encouraging carrying out socially beneficial activities in the country; encouraging young people to take part in volunteer activities; establishing co-operation among youth organizations on the local, regional and national level.

¹⁴⁶ National Healthcare Strategy 2007 – 2012, Highlights / Resume, p.1.

¹⁴⁷ Youth Society for Peace and Development of the Balkans, YSPDB report about situation of young people in Bulgaria, youth NGOs and youth policy and relations with government, Plovdiv, Bulgaria, *op cit*.

The long-term goal of the strategy is to expand the role of young people in civil society in the context of the EU accession of Bulgaria, including the implementation of best European practices of work with young people.

Nevertheless, relations between the youth civil sector and the government seem to be complicated. Bureaucracy, a lack of communication between the NGOs and the government and the constantly changing staff in the institutions are all barriers to the successful implementation of the above mentioned plan to develop a youth policy and to the implementation of existing measures for supporting youth participation and civic engagement. The more prominent NGOs based in the capital city have to help the smaller NGOs, as little support is available from the central government (in their opinion).

The introduction of the network EURODESK in Bulgaria has improved methods of communication. There are 35 EURODESK info points in Bulgaria at the moment. Its main goal is to help NGOs find partners for projects for presentation to the European Union and other funding opportunities.

Among young people themselves, the non-governmental sector in Bulgaria is considered to have a bad reputation. Many organisations registered as “NGOs” are involved in illegal activities, especially money laundering. Scandals among Bulgarian foundations have made sensational headlines the Bulgarian popular media. Given the above situation, youth NGOs find themselves under rigorous scrutiny and a large number of active youth NGOs struggle financially, as they cannot access resources inside the country. Many survive almost entirely on foreign funding, which is not widely available and is complicated to access. It is also notable that many youth NGOs lack of resources for active and effective work, not having offices, computers or quality Internet connections.

NGOs also lack qualified staff due to the fact that volunteering is not very popular in Bulgaria. Many youth NGOs are involved in political activities, which is felt by a lot of young people to distract them from the real problems of young people and hence makes them irrelevant in the eyes of their potential members. A further problem is that there is quite a lot of competition and rivalry among youth NGOs. This puts certain young people off getting involved.

Beyond the above, not very encouraging sketch of the youth civil sector, little information was available concerning the instance of youth participation through official channels. In particular, it is unclear what kind of representative platforms have been used or put in place in order to ensure the participation and consultation of young people on the development and implementation of the National Youth Strategy. The extent to which young people are consumers or actors of youth policy development is also unclear. Finally, the evidence base on which the National Youth Strategy is being developed is not entirely clear, given that there seems to be a significant lack of up to date, independently and systematically collected and collated data on the situation and needs of young people in Bulgaria, despite its participation in the Youth and other programmes of the European Union for the last decade.

Turkey

Introduction

Half the Turkish population is aged under 25, a proportion which will not change significantly for the next twenty years. The potential of this young population has been increasingly recognised in the past decade, as democracy has developed and relations with European countries and institutions have become closer.

The context of youth and youth activism

Out of the disaster of the 1999 earthquake came a blossoming of non-governmental organisations, including youth organisations that remains today. Both recognition by government and self-recognition by civil society led to confidence in citizen participation in social affairs, and many of those involved in NGOs – particularly those engaged in voluntary work – are young people. While recent amendments to the Law on Associations arguably made it easier for non-governmental organisations to set up and operate,¹⁴⁸ the reality is more mixed. Although youth organisations have not been primary targets of enforcement by the government, there have been several examples in recent years of human rights and minority groups being harassed or denied freedom to assemble, based on technicalities around registration and on restrictions as to what aims are permissible for associations to pursue. There is an atmosphere of potential confrontation between the government and civil society, particularly human rights groups, student groups and Kurdish groups.¹⁴⁹

Change in the social context of being young in Turkey has been slower. Whether religion, nationalism-patriotism or family structure is emphasised, Turkey remains a patriarchal society and one in which (just as is common elsewhere) youth is “a social category under the strict control of adults”; the Project Coordinator of *Youth is the Key*, an EU-youth project aimed at dialogue between Turkish and European youth, refers to an “Iron Triangle” of

The Concept of Youth in Turkey:¹⁵⁰

A Turkish concept of Turkish youth is not easy to define, as there is no youth law or single legal definition – rather, there are different definitions in different laws and regulations. For example, the in accepting the convention on the Rights of the Child, the Turkish Government accepted children as “every person until 18 years old”. But according to Criminal Justice Law, judges in child courts can still give punishment to the children after 12 years old. There is neither a law nor a sole governmental body responsible for youth. Youth services are carried out by various departments in different public institutions, including the General Directorate of Youth and Sports, the Ministries of National Education, Labour, Health, and Culture and Tourism, the Social Services and Child Protection Agency, the General Directorate of Social Services and local authorities. The drafting of a progressive and comprehensive law on youth and youth services would be a significant achievement and should form a central part of any UNFPA-UN programming on youth in Turkey.

¹⁴⁸ “In recent years some amendments in the Law of Associations and Foundations have been made, and the things about the NGOs are easier now. Youth can express their thoughts much more freely now”, Atalay, 2004, p.2.

¹⁴⁹ International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights, 2006 www.ihf-hr.org/viewbinary/viewdocument.php?doc_id=7081.

¹⁵⁰ Atalay, 2004, *op. cit.*

political system, family and school by which young people's participation in society is constrained.¹⁵¹ The memory of violent political unrest in previous decades, often involving young people, remains an obstacle to full acceptance of a strong role for youth in society, and more generally for non-governmental voices. More recently, the ill effects of the 2001 economic crisis hit hardest those with the least secure employment – young people and women. The combination of disillusionment with the political leadership in the country, exclusion from participation in electoral politics (the minimum age for electoral candidates was recently lowered to 25) and lack of opportunity to effect change through non-electoral means has on some accounts created a “generation of cynics.”¹⁵²

However, the social and political environment may be changing. The current government speaks the language of youth empowerment:

“Youth is not only a wealth of the nation, but also a source of dynamism and potential for change. Hence, possessing a young population is an important opportunity for Turkey. Building the confidence of the society to the youth and that of the youth to Turkey is among our Government's main targets.”¹⁵³

But, as the women's NGO movement in Turkey can attest, the step from stating such goals to adequate funding and political will for their realisation can take many years and constant, vigilant effort.

The European Context

Although the past decade has seen an increasing importance of potential accession to the European Union for the direction of politics in Turkey, the sustainability of this focus and enthusiasm cannot be taken for granted and is even now diminishing somewhat. Conflicts continue over Cyprus, human rights and freedom of expression, and the Armenian massacres of 1915, and there are concerns over the sheer size and poverty of the Turkish population and the competitive capacity of the economy; combined with a lack of patience on both sides, these factors mean that with even the most optimistic outlook, Turkish membership of the EU is not likely within the next decade or fifteen years.

Youth Demography

In 2005, the population of Turkey was estimated at 73,2 million, with 13,5 million people aged 15 to 24 (18,4%). The population aged 0 to 14 was 21,4 million (29%).¹⁵⁴ The 15 to 24 share of the population is dropping gradually, from 20% in 2000 to a projected 17% in 2015. This is in line with a general slowing down of the population growth rate, related primarily to dropping levels of fertility: from 3,1 lifetime births per woman in 1990, to 2,7 in 2005 (UNFPA;¹⁵⁵ UNPD

¹⁵¹ Yılmaz, 2006. See footnote 9, citing Emre Erdo_an.

¹⁵² Ünlühisarçıklı, 2006.

¹⁵³ Atalay, 2004, *op. cit.*

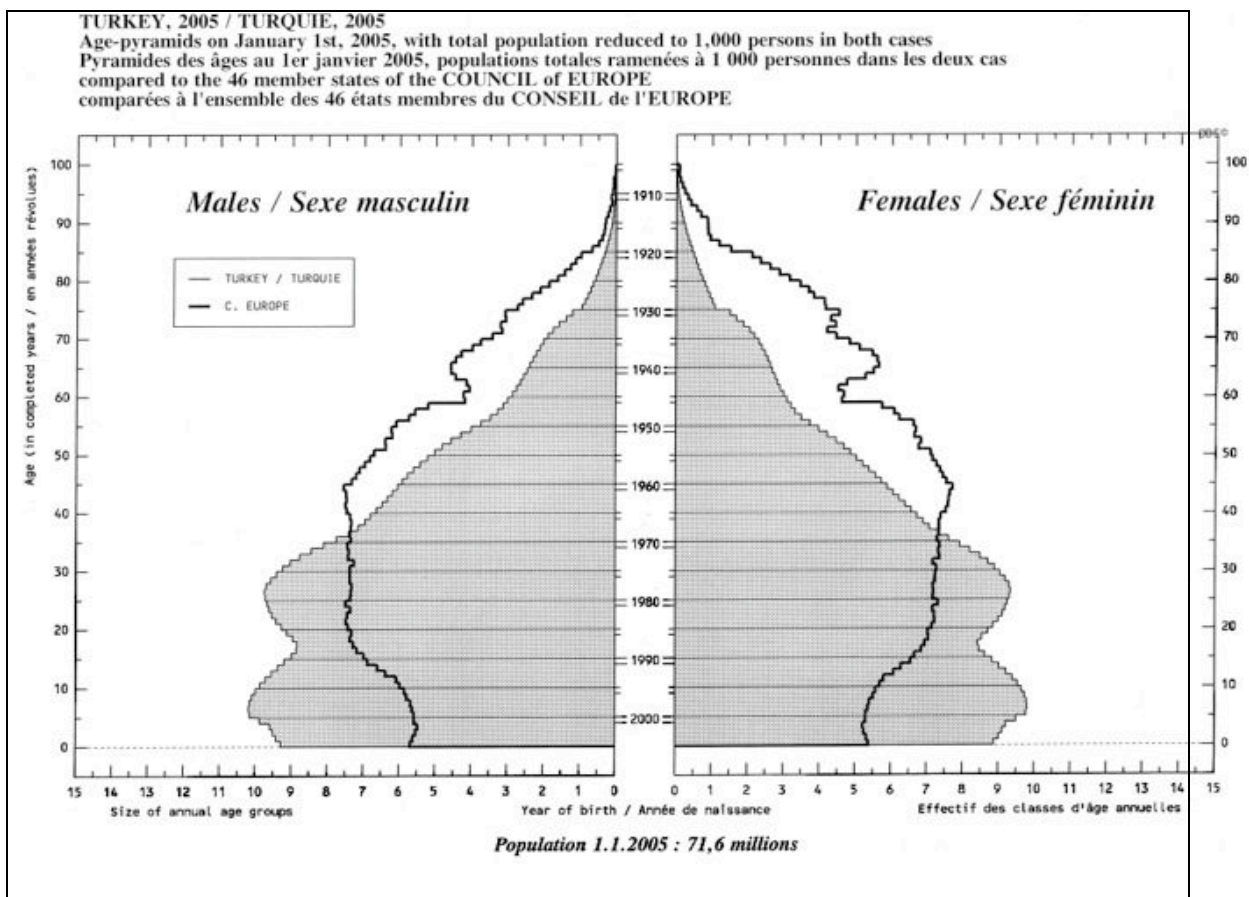
¹⁵⁴ World Population Prospects, UN Populations Division, available at <http://esa.un.org/unpp/index.asp?panel=2>.

¹⁵⁵ UNFPA, <http://www.unfpa.org/profile/turkey.cfm>.

estimates 2,21 TFR by 2010 to 2015¹⁵⁶); there are great regional disparities in fertility, with already 2.4 births per woman in urban areas against 3,1 in rural areas.¹⁵⁷ Clearly, a country where half the population is aged under 25 ought to have a great interest in youth policy.

While the youth share of population is decreasing, the growth rate of the elderly populations is twice that of the total population.¹⁵⁸ Following the demographic trend across Europe, the child dependency ratio is shrinking and the old-age ratio is growing,¹⁵⁹ learning from experience to the west, Turkey has a chance to ensure (among other things) sustainable productive employment for current and future generations of youth to stave off a social security crisis in decades to come.

These findings are illustrated in the table below¹⁶⁰:



¹⁵⁶ World Population Prospects, *op. cit.*

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Govt of Turkey report to UNECE, 1998, p.8

¹⁵⁹ World Population Prospects, *op. cit.*

¹⁶⁰ Table has been found in the CD ROM on the Recent Demographic Developments in Europe, Published by the Council of Europe's European Population Committee.

Mobility

The population of Turkey has undergone a rapid structural change with regard to urbanisation, starting in the 1950s. The 1970 census indicated that about one-third of the population (32,3%) were living in settlements which are considered as urban (with a population of 20,000 or more – under 20% in 1950). By 1990 the percentage was 51,4, and a 1997 population count found 65% of the population living in urban settings.

Although this urbanisation led to considerable bottlenecks in urban services, significant environmental problems and to the emergence of *Gecekondus* populated by groups not assimilated to the urban way of life, means of living in overburdened areas were nonetheless found. However, the opportunities for migration to such peripheral urban dwellings are increasingly

limited and the social support structures available there are disappearing (see the section on poverty below). Based on data from 2000, women make up roughly 45% of all internal migrants aged 15-24; the lowest ratio of female-to-male migration is in city-to-city migration (80%), and the highest in village-to-village (110%). There is 3.6 times more migration to cities (from villages or other cities) than to villages (from cities or other villages), although there is also 3.3 times more migration between cities than from villages to cities.¹⁶²

International migration began seriously in the 1960s, as emigration for employment. From 1974 to the late 1980s, emigration slowed down greatly, and was largely for the reunification of families. Today, most emigration is possible through marriage.¹⁶³

Integration and cooperation with regional youth organisations has a positive effect on youth mobility. For example, the Euromed Youth Forum is interested in increasing the mobility of young people and removing obstacles to their travel (such as visa costs), and is particularly interested in increasing the mobility of young women.¹⁶⁴

External migration and asylum

Turkey has dealt with several large inflows of asylum seekers from Iran and Iraq, and ethnic Turks from Bulgaria in the past two decades. Although most Iraqis and Iranians who entered Turkey subsequently left, many of the Turks from Bulgaria stayed. Several measures have been taken by the Turkish authorities for their resettlement, vocational education and placement in jobs relevant to their training background.¹⁶⁵

Young people are more inclined to emigrate¹⁶¹

Desire to move to the EU is

- 24% for 18-24 year-olds;
- 26 % among students and part time employees;
- 21 and 23 % respectively among junior high school and high school graduates;

There is no difference between urban and rural areas. The data is not broken down by gender.

¹⁶¹ ARI Movement, 2006, p.10.

¹⁶² TURKSTAT, 2000 Population Censes, Section 34.

¹⁶³ Government of Turkey report to UNECE, 1998, p.8.

¹⁶⁴ http://ec.europa.eu/youth/program/eval/midterm_main_report.pdf.

¹⁶⁵ Government of Turkey report to UNECE, 1998, p.8.

The Socio-Economic Conditions of Youth

Employment

The general context of globalisation and a desire to rely less heavily on agriculture and informal arrangements for employment, and the additional potential context of European integration, are changing patterns of employment in Turkey. New potentials for employment in the knowledge and services sectors, along with the desire for greater added value, productivity and returns to the economy, are making greater demands of the education and training system.

In Turkey, the low participation of women in paid employment continues to be an area of concern – women are primarily employed as unpaid family workers, which alongside their low levels of land and property ownership limits their economic independence and increases their vulnerability to poverty. This is especially true of young women, although on the national scale far fewer young women are employed in agriculture than in their mothers' generation.¹⁶⁶ However, even as women are decreasingly employed in agriculture and moving into wage employment, their position has not necessarily improved – there has been a steady decline in women's participation in the formal labour market, and a shift into the unregistered economy. Even as more (young) women are wage earners, fewer are offered the social protection of formal labour market participation.¹⁶⁷

Even where women work formally for wages, there is segregation of employment by gender. "Women's jobs" tend to be lower-paid, lower status and less secure (for example during times of economic instability). As is the case across Europe, the lack of affordable childcare and the strength of gender roles mean that women with children have difficulty combining paid work with domestic and parenting responsibilities.¹⁶⁸

Unemployment

Unemployment for the general population is 10.3%, while for those under 25 it runs at 19.6%.¹⁶⁹ According to data from the Turkish Labour Organisation, young people are 43% of the whole unemployed people in Turkey¹⁷⁰. For young women, it is not only lack of education that limits economic opportunity – the unemployment rate among young women who live in the city and who are at least high school graduates is twice as much as for men in the same situation.¹⁷¹

Since 2000, there has been unemployment insurance. The government identifies several programmes aimed at increasing employment among young people,¹⁷² although none of these is specifically youth-focused. There are many initiatives of various sizes in Turkey, which aim at supporting entrepreneurship among women, and there are overlaps between the specific

¹⁶⁶ Women over 50 "constitute the majority of the workforce employed in agriculture", Kurmus, p. 6.

¹⁶⁷ The participation of women in the workforce was 34 % in 1990, 27.9 % in 1998 and 25.9 % in 2001. (Ibid., p.10)

¹⁶⁸ Government of Turkey 2004 response on Beijing, pp. 20-21.

¹⁶⁹ Austrian Academy of Sciences 2004, www.oew.ac.at/vid/popeurope/download/notes_sources_definitions.pdf.

¹⁷⁰ Atalay, p.9.

¹⁷¹ Government of Turkey 2004 response on Beijing, p.11

¹⁷² http://www.abgs.gov.tr/tarama/tarama_files/26/SC26DET_Youth.pdf. The Medium-Term Programme (2006-8) around the Social Risk Mitigation Program and the KOSGEB Entrepreneurship Programmes.

experiences of women and of young people (in terms of ownership, capital, access to credit, being taken seriously), which may give potential for sharing good practices.

Vulnerable groups

The Social Services and Child Protection Agency provides various protective services for young people, including homes for children aged up to eighteen who are orphaned, destitute or are victims of abuse or neglect.¹⁷³ There is a Directorate for the Disabled which aims to support disabled people to live within society, though the positive effects of such efforts are not felt by a large proportion of disabled people.¹⁷⁴

Social protection

The welfare system in Turkey has historically been linked to formal employment – until the end of the 1980s, it was assumed that workers in the informal economy would over time become integrated into the formal economy. Within formal employment, social security provision (covering retirement and, more relevant here, healthcare) is related to employment status: among major providers, there is one fund for state employees, one for wage earners, and one for the self-employed. These cover a little under half of the population, and there is an additional Green Card healthcare program covering those not covered by any other form of healthcare. Estimates vary, but anywhere between one in nine and one in six citizens are not covered by work-related social security provision.¹⁷⁵ The bias toward formal wage earners most discriminates against women and the unemployed, a substantial proportion of whom are young people. Some of these are covered by relatives' insurance, however, and the introduction of unemployment insurance in 2000 also goes some way to alleviating poverty related to unemployment.

Education

Notwithstanding the timescale, some level of increased integration with the European Union is inevitable, which may include greater movement of labour even in the absence of accession. As the World Bank puts it, high-quality education for all young people is vital to avoid Turkish citizens becoming the low-paid service workers of Europe.¹⁷⁶ As in other aspects of Turkish society, gender and regional disparities persist in education. Although the 1997 law raising compulsory education from five to eight years has by now had a positive effect on girls' primary school enrolment, this remains at around 93% of boys'.¹⁷⁷ Secondary school and higher education enrolment ratios are far worse, at around 75%; that this indicator is based on enrolment rather than graduation means the real gap may be bigger.¹⁷⁸ Regional differences are striking also, with only 14% of girls in the southeast attending secondary school in 2003.¹⁷⁹ Literacy among 15-24 year olds is 98.4% for boys and 94.8% for girls.¹⁸⁰

In general the legislative environment is fairly positive (for example, young people who start working at 15 must also attend vocational training courses run by the Ministry of education), but implementation remains a problem in many areas. The picture of government commitment to

¹⁷³ Atalay, p. 72.

¹⁷⁴ Engin and Aydin, 2005, p. 2.

¹⁷⁵ Bugra and Keyder 2003, pp. 17-18.

¹⁷⁶ World Bank 2006, p. 1 (5 of 19).

¹⁷⁷ Millennium Development Goal Report 2005, pp. 26-7. The ratio fell to 85% immediately after the extension of compulsory education, but has since returned to around 93%.

¹⁷⁸ MDG Report, p.26-28

¹⁷⁹ World Bank 2006, p. 4.

¹⁸⁰ MDG Report 2005, p. 21.

improving educational opportunities particularly for the poor and for girls is mixed – on the one hand, commitments are increasingly backed up with funds.¹⁸¹ Regional boarding primary schools are being used to encourage school attendance for children from rural areas faced with transport difficulties, and the government is recognising that more significant than cultural resistance to girls’ schooling is the problem of the real expense of schooling for parents who have very little money. On the other hand, the World Bank research finds that “financial resources do not appear to be allocated with the aim of reducing inter-regional, inter-provincial, or urban-rural educational disparities.”¹⁸²

One of the major problems with the educational system is its failure to adequately prepare young people for the labour market. The government recognises this, and has established a number of policies in its present five-year plan to overhaul the education system.¹⁸³

According to the Director General for Youth and Sport, **non-formal education** aims to:¹⁸⁴

- teach reading and writing and provide continuing education to students with incomplete education;
- provide education opportunities that shall facilitate the students’ adaptation to scientific, technological, economical, social and cultural developments;
- give education that protects, improves, introduces and comprises national cultural values;
- help the students in acquiring the concepts and habits of collective living, supporting, helping, working and organizing collectively;
- provide opportunities that shall ensure acquisition of professions in line with the economic development and employment policy;
- teach the balanced nutrition and a healthy life style;
- teach people from various professions the knowledge and skills they need to improve themselves; and
- to provide the habit of using one's free time in a useful way.

As well as improving the quality of education overall and improving the 75% female-male enrolment ratio in secondary and tertiary education, raising the quality and social status of vocational education is important for providing greater skills choice and employability to young people in Turkey. At present, vocational education gives little greater access to the labour market than general secondary education, which aims to prepare students for university. The Ministry of Education and EU/World Bank are implementing programmes to increase the relevance of vocational education.¹⁸⁵ Education for disabled children and young people is formally guaranteed on an equal basis with non-disabled people.¹⁸⁶ However, the existing situation is far from equal, with illiteracy running at high rates for

disabled people and access to tailored education being limited, by geographical location and by wealth.¹⁸⁷

There are a variety of institutions providing non-formal education in Turkey, which is understood as education for those who have not attended or have dropped out of school, or are

¹⁸¹ Government of Turkey 2004 response on Beijing, p. 7. Partnership with the private sector has also been explored as a means of funding the expansion of educational opportunities – see page 4 of the World Bank ESS 2006.

¹⁸² World Bank, 2006, p. 10.

¹⁸³ World Bank 2006, full report (p. 10 of 162 in PDF).

¹⁸⁴ Atalay, p.5.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid, p. 6.

¹⁸⁶ Article 15, Law on Disabled Persons, 2005 (no. 5378).

¹⁸⁷ Engin and Aydin, 2005.

continuing education as adults.¹⁸⁸ Some services are particularly focused on girls and young women who have fallen out of formal education at some point. Non-formal education covers basic skills (such as literacy) and the general (academic) curriculum, but has strong emphasis on apprenticeships and vocational training.¹⁸⁹

Poverty

Poverty in Turkey has a significant regional dimension – incomes in the eastern provinces are around 35% of the national average (as little as 7% of the EU average), and serious poverty is widespread. The reasons for this include the preponderance of agriculture in the economy, low educational quality and enrolment, particularly for girls, and a historical and ongoing lack of public investment (related in part to the fact that the population in this region is predominantly Kurdish). Two decades of armed conflict in some parts of the region have damaged infrastructure and social cohesion and deterred investment. The Ministry of Education and EU/World Bank are implementing programmes to increase the relevance of vocational education.

The government is acting to tackle the problem of poverty in the eastern regions, particularly through investments in education and girls' education. A recent report raised the idea that the Turkish government should make cash transfers – a “citizenship income” – to millions of poor people in the east of the country, helping to lift the regional economy and meet EU standards on social inclusion.¹⁹⁰

As the most mobile section of the population, young people under thirty are also over represented in the other notable form of poverty in Turkey, that of poverty among rural to urban migrants living on the peripheries of large urban settlements.¹⁹¹ There has for many years been a trend of such migration, but in the last decade the socio-economic fate of these migrants has shifted. Previously there was a pattern of short-term poverty among recent migrants, which was not sustained and did not lead to social exclusion; people benefited from non-state (family and neighbour) social support structures and were able to set themselves up with homes and enough economic opportunity to escape poverty. A variety of factors, including the increasing scarcity of land for new homes and changes in local government attitudes to new settlers (in part related to changing priorities in the presence of economic development and globalisation) mean that these rural-urban migrants have a much harder time establishing themselves either economically or within communities; poverty and social exclusion, and cultural and political exclusion reinforce one another. People continue to come, particularly since there are few opportunities in their hometowns ravaged by poverty and in many cases armed conflict.

Gender Equality

Despite the legislative framework also being positive for gender equality,¹⁹² Turkey still has a strongly patriarchal culture, which is reflected in discriminatory traditions and practices. On

¹⁸⁸ Atalay, p. 72.

¹⁸⁹ Turkey, 2005 Almanac on non-formal education, <http://www.byegm.gov.tr/YAYINLARIMIZ/kitaplar/turkey2005/content/english/396-397.htm>.

¹⁹⁰ Kurmus, p. 17.

¹⁹¹ For this paragraph, please see the report *New Poverty and the Changing Welfare Regime of Turkey*, Bugra and Keyder 2003.

¹⁹² Government of Turkey 2004 response on Beijing, p. 20.

almost all indicators, women lag behind men.¹⁹³ Be it regarding employment segregation, low educational achievement, son preference or difficulty being accepted as actors in public and political life, women in Turkey suffer generally more extreme versions of the discrimination seen in most countries of Europe and Central Asia. And as positive as the statutory framework may be, the national gender equality mechanism, an office under the Prime Ministry, still operates with a lack of funds and political acceptance necessary to make it as effective as it could be.

Violence against women is a pervasive problem, with 40% of women reporting being subject to physical violence by their husbands.¹⁹⁴ Only in 2004 were sexual crimes redefined as crimes against the individual rather than crimes against public decency. The concept of honour, used to control young female sexual and social behaviour, is strong in the eastern and south eastern regions. Although the practice of honour killings is being taken increasingly seriously by the government and judiciary, there is concern among women's groups that the criminalisation of "custom killings" does not go far enough to fully prevent the phenomenon.¹⁹⁵ Another category of violence, which overwhelmingly affects young women, is the serious problem of human trafficking.¹⁹⁶ Although the problem has been increasingly recognised in recent years, the government's approach seems to be more criminal- than victim-oriented.¹⁹⁷

Despite serious problems remaining, the situation is undoubtedly improving. The women's movement in Turkey has been active for many years, and has received a boost in the last decade from the orientation of Turkish politics toward the European Union and the associated demands including in the field of gender equality. Emphasis on reducing gender and regional disparities runs through a large proportion of development work in the country.¹⁹⁸ The current and coming generations of young women are in a position to reap the benefits of gender- and human rights-focused policy making in Turkey. However, young women in particular must continue pushing for improvement in their situation, as the achievements thus far are not irreversible. Particularly in the event that relations with the EU cool and the weight from that quarter exerts less pressure, it will be down to the women's movement nationally to sustain the focus on gender. The same goes for the Turkish youth movement, especially as cooperation with EU-oriented youth organisations has been so key for encouragement to date.

Youth Values and Lifestyles

In a 2003 survey, only 1% of 15-year-olds have been drunk alcohol twenty times or more, and alcohol consumption is lower than anywhere else in Europe.¹⁹⁹ Although alcohol consumption in Turkey remains far below that anywhere else in Europe, there was a notable rise from 1985 to

¹⁹³ Ibid.

¹⁹⁴ This rises to 90% for psychological violence. Women for Women's Human Rights: www.wvhr.org/id_589.

¹⁹⁵ Government of Turkey's 2005 CEDAW report, p. 2; and the shadow report, available from Women for Women's Human Rights at www.wvhr.org/images/shadowreport.pdf.

¹⁹⁶ US State Dept Trafficking report 2006 <http://www.gvnet.com/humantrafficking/Turkey-2.htm> (extract, full report here: <http://www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/tiprpt/2006/>).

¹⁹⁷ Also the EU's approach: http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/fiche_projet/document/TR%200304.02%20Fight%20against%20trafficking%20in%20human%20beings.pdf.

¹⁹⁸ See, for example, the recent statement by the new head of UNDP in Turkey: <http://www.turkishdailynews.com.tr/article.php?enewsid=59898>.

¹⁹⁹ Global Alcohol Policy Alliance 2004.

2000, in contrast to the trend across the rest of Europe.²⁰⁰ Figures are not broken down by sex, but we may assume that outside major urban centres, alcohol consumption is predominantly a male habit. The use of illegal drugs by Turkish youth is much lower than the European average. Article 58 of the Turkish constitution reads that “*the state shall take necessary measures to protect the youth from addiction to alcohol, drug addiction, crime, gambling, and similar vices, and ignorance*”.

There are predictable concerns among some that the youth are becoming corrupted, and there are religious and nationalist sentiments tied up with the more radical statements concerned with young people’s moral depravity.²⁰¹ While the group in that case may not be representative of the mainstream, such a paternalistic-nationalistic attitude is common. As noted in the introduction above, there is a strong public feeling that children and young people, half the population, have more place being seen than heard.

In the 2002 amendments to the Civil Code, the legal minimum age for marriage was raised to 17 for women (up from fifteen, and equal with men).²⁰² According to Turkey’s 2005 MDG report, the average age of marriage has increased to 19.5 years for women and 23.6 years for men;²⁰³ the 2004 Turkish government response on implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action stated that average age at first marriage for women aged 45-49 was 18.4, while for women aged 25-29 it was twenty.²⁰⁴ However, child marriage is still practiced in some parts of the east and southeast. Divorce and extra-marital births are both rare, though increasing (particularly in urban areas).²⁰⁵

With the increase in compulsory schooling from five to eight years, and particularly if ongoing efforts to keep girls in school are successful, it is expected that the average age for marriage and first childbearing for girls will increase.²⁰⁶ There is no data on women’s age at the birth of their first child, but the average is probably within two years of average age for marriage; although two thirds of currently married women report using contraception, only 40% use modern methods.²⁰⁷

The 2002 legal reforms also changed the legal status of spouses within a marriage, removing the notion of the head of household and equalising the male and female spouses with respect to children, property and individual freedom.²⁰⁸

Trust and Tolerance

In a survey cited in a spring 2006 article in Turkish Policy Quarterly, Turkish youth display alarming levels of intolerance and mistrust.²⁰⁹ Only 4.6% of young people in Turkey trust other people in general, which reflects the attitudes of the larger Turkish population (where less than 10% trust people in general). According to the European Values Survey, the EU average is 40

²⁰⁰ UNECE data on alcohol consumption over time: <http://www.unece.org/stats/trends/ch6/6.19.xls>.

²⁰¹ Article in The New Anatolian, English-language Turkish newspaper, www.thenewanatolian.com/tna-1113.html

²⁰² Govt of Turkey 2004 response on Beijing, p. 6.

²⁰³ MDG Report 2005, p. 27

²⁰⁴ Government of Turkey 2004 response on Beijing, p. 8.

²⁰⁵ Government of Turkey report to UNECE, 1998, p. 2

²⁰⁶ For efforts to increase girls’ enrolment and keep girls in school, see for example the UNICEF-Ministry of Education programme *Girls, Let’s go to School!* (<http://www.unicef.org/turkey/pr/ge6.html>).

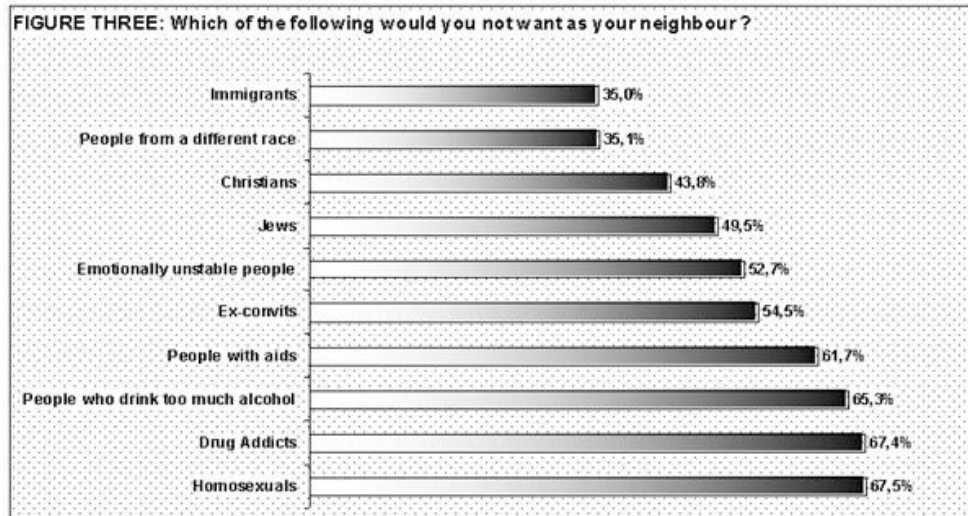
²⁰⁷ Westoff 2005, p. 4.

²⁰⁸ Govt of Turkey 2004 response on Beijing, p. 6.

²⁰⁹ Ünlühisarcıklı 2006

percent. This low level of trust may help explain the low levels of political and NGO participation in Turkey, as well as why the financial markets and banking sector cannot gain depth and why family businesses are preferred to larger partnerships.

A problem across Europe, intolerance is also very present among Turkish youth, indicating that despite being in some ways very critical of their parents' generation, there are still shared attitudes:²¹⁰



The author, Özgür Ünlühisarcıklı, head of the Turkish social movement ARI, states that acquired differences (such as race, or, presumably, religion) are tolerated more than chosen differences (such as alcohol or drug habits, or, presumably, homosexuality). Ünlühisarcıklı also states that association with the EU and European youth organisations has positive effects for youth in Turkey, presenting opportunities for successful cooperation and participation which will hopefully lead to some increase in trust and tolerance among the population, at both national and European levels.

Youth Sexual and Reproductive Health

According to what figures are available, Turkey has a low incidence of STIs including HIV/AIDS. However, data is utterly inadequate, and there are no measures of the level of knowledge of sexual health matters among the youth population (or wider population). Nor is there sufficient monitoring of STD incidence among high-risk groups such and sex workers.²¹¹ As is common elsewhere, the youth population is generally at highest risk of contracting STIs, due to high mobility and more liberal lifestyles, including unsafe sexual practices.

Ignorance, encouraged by stigma and historically low levels of government interest in sexual health, increases the risk of the spread of HIV in both the high-risk and general populations. Turkey is a popular tourist destination, with 14 million visitors every year. Several million come from nearby CEE and CIS countries, some of which have high incidences of STIs and HIV/AIDS. An approach to STIs and HIV/AIDS, which treat these as public health problems

²¹⁰ Ibid.

²¹¹ MDG Report on Turkey, p.49-50

and integrates education around STIs into school curricula are vital, and such have begun to happen in recent years.²¹²

Despite the efforts of youth peer educators and certain NGOs, the 2005 MDG progress report still expresses concern at the low numbers of youth-friendly sexual health services. State family planning clinics have spread a great deal since the 1980s, and theoretically provide access to modern contraceptives to the whole population (although at the municipal level, there have been known to be problems with distribution). These clinics also collect data around uptake of contraceptives, but this is far from adequate: data on youth sexuality are very limited – neither UNFPA nor UNAIDS has any data on youth sexual behaviour, knowledge of STIs or HIV/AIDS or contraceptive use.

Due to social stigmatisation of sex outside marriage and concerns about confidentiality, unmarried (predominantly young) people tend to go to private clinics for their contraceptives, and while these institutions are legally obliged to provide data to the national statistical institute, this does not happen reliably (partly because under-reporting is beneficial from a tax perspective). Resort to private clinics also increases the cost of contraception, with the associated disincentive to contraceptive use.

Following the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development, and the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women, a comprehensive approach to reproductive health, with particular regard to women's health, has replaced traditional mother-and-child health provision. The new approach takes particular notice of adolescent sexual and reproductive health.²¹³

As noted, the birth rate has decreased steadily and significantly in recent decades. Abortion was made widely available following a 1983 law, though Turkey has one of the lowest rates of abortion in the Eastern Europe/Central Asia region (0.7 per woman). There is significant unmet need for family planning, which is correlated with educational level – women with secondary education are more than five times as likely to have used a modern method of contraception than those who didn't complete primary school.²¹⁴ This in turn largely reflects regional divergence, as most of the latter group lives in the southeast and east.

Recent years have seen several programmes and measures, some with UNFPA, to improve childcare and reproductive health, particularly in the less developed regions and poorer segments of the society. It can be said that there is government commitment in terms of funds and attention paid to the matter of reproductive health, as opposed to sexual health – for example, after USAID wound up its programme of contraceptive provision, the government took over funding and facilitating distribution of contraceptives across the country. Serious gaps remain though, particularly and unsurprisingly with respect to provision in rural areas, where services are coming up from a very low level. There are also concerns about the level of male involvement in reproductive health programmes.²¹⁵

²¹² Ibid.

²¹³ GDSPW Report on Beijing, p.16

²¹⁴ DHS 2005, p. 42.

²¹⁵ GDSPW Report on Beijing, p.21

Youth Policy and Youth Participation

Efforts to create an integrated national youth policy and national youth council are ongoing. For several years, various organisations have run conferences and held other events across the country aimed at formulating the aims of a youth council and convincing key actors of the need to support their creation. The institutional arrangement of any national Council will probably be based on subsidiarity with the local youth platforms already set up in municipalities across the country. Under the Local Agenda 21 initiative, a National Youth Parliament was set up in 2004,²¹⁶ which is also playing a crucial role in advocating for a national youth council and youth law.

Youth participation in political or social organisations is 4% for women and 6% for men, and under 5% (both sexes) for participation in youth organisations; however, this is around the EU average, and no country has more than 10% participation.²¹⁷ Social-political participation generally rises with educational level.

The European context is an important one – quite apart from the positive reforms related to EU candidature, Turkish youth organisations have benefited greatly from association with their counterparts in the EU (such as the European Youth Forum) and the Council of Europe. There has been EU funding given to support networking among youth organisations.

The General Directorate for Youth and Sport runs a range of extra-curricular activities for young people, including camps and sports events; it also oversees the registration of youth organisations and represents the government in national and international youth policy related activities. The agency responsible for youth within the State Planning Organisation aims to ensure cooperation between all actors involved in the formulation of the youth policy and preparations for the youth council.²¹⁹ Other state bodies involved in youth work include the Ministry of Education and the GD for Social Services and Child Protection. As well as leisure

Good practice:²¹⁸

Gençnet is the biggest youth platform in Turkey. For six years it has aimed to change Turkish social and political life by fostering the fundamentals of participatory democracy in the lives of Turkish citizens and policymakers. Targeting young people in Turkey aged 18 to 25, its mission is to create a new youth-based understanding of public service and volunteerism, and to promote the growth and leadership of a strong civil society. Gençnet's activities serve as a forum for Turkish youth to increase their civil participation. At annual workshops held in cities all over Turkey, the Gençnet practitioners meet with university students, local NGO members and youth leaders to design solutions to problems identified in the local community. This hands-on and practical approach is designed to allow young people to develop their problem-solving skills; a number of local projects have materialised out of the workshops. The project MUMKUN (Possible) aimed at strengthening ties between the population of Mu_la and the local university students. Consisting of many civic activities and initiatives, the project is an excellent example of how young people can make a difference in the local community.

²¹⁶ Mehmet Atalay, p. 75.

²¹⁷ Survey on The Perceptions of the Turkish Society About European Values, ARI Movement, 2006, p.17

²¹⁸ Yılmaz 2006

²¹⁹ Atalay, p. 75; also Youth for Habitat (Local Agenda 21) www.youthforhab.org.tr/eng/ugp/izmir/izmir.htm. The National Youth Agency website is www.yib.gen.tr (in Turkish).

activities and encouraging participation, state bodies are also concerned with vulnerable groups and encouraging youth employment.²²⁰

Youth activities are especially important for creating routes for young women into positions of social and political decision-making. For lack of economic power and public social acceptance, and in the face of political life organised (as is so common) by men according to their behaviour patterns, women have historically played little role in public life in Turkey. Through civic education around their rights and potential for participation in decision-making, provided in youth organisations and to the wider population via the education programmes of the gender research centres in fifteen universities across the country, women are able both to change their own minds about what role they can play, and change the perceptions of people in a society where gendered behaviour patterns are very strong.²²¹

The European Youth Forum study visit to Turkey in 2004 found that the youth movement there has a strong grass-roots nature and is generally very democratic. Moreover, and encouraging given the issues of trust noted above, the EYF found “a real process of cooperation and horizontal integration.” There are also good communication channels open with political parties and with student councils in universities.²²² The EYF encourages its member organisations and other civil society actors in Europe to develop long-term cooperation with Turkish youth organisations. Exchange on youth policy development and involvement of YNGOs in the implementation of such policies at the national and local level will strengthen the role of YNGOs in Turkey; YNGOs outside Turkey can also learn valuable lessons from the youth NGO experience within that country.²²³

Conclusion

In many ways, the situation of youth in Turkey reflects that in many other parts of Europe and certainly the countries in this study – generally low levels of participation, a society and establishment cautious toward young people, need for improvement in education and labour market access to address high levels of youth unemployment and desire to leave; and increasing attention paid in political circles to a range of youth issues, confidence among young activists and patterns of solidarity and networking with youth organisations on a regional scale.

In the context of European integration, but also likely to continue given the attractiveness of Turkey as a meeting-point of civilisations, a range of small and large youth projects have been supported by international donors. This suggests a high level of trust and confidence toward youth NGOs’ work on the part of the international community.²²⁴ The problems of Turkish youth are many, and it will take the committed efforts of youth activists, supported by the expertise of organisations such as UNFPA, both to create the political environment in which these problems can be solved and to maintain the momentum for youth involvement in the development of the country as a whole.

²²⁰ Government of Turkey 2006 assessment of compliance with EU membership criteria, Chapter 26, p.9 www.abgs.gov.tr/tarama/tarama_files/26/SC26DET_Youth.pdf.

²²¹ Govt of Turkey 2004 response to Beijing, p.22

²²² YFJ Study Visit in Turkey, p.15

²²³ EYF Study Visit in Turkey, p.11

²²⁴ European Youth Forum Study Visit to Turkey, pp. 10-11.

Ukraine

Youth Demography

With a land surface of 603,700 km² Ukraine, is one of the largest countries in Europe. The recent Orange Revolution brought new hope to the country, which until 2004 remained one of the few authoritarian and non-democratic regimes in Europe. Post-revolutionary state and society face new challenges of democratic governance and of deteriorating socio-economic conditions. The socio-economic gap between the industrialised East and the largely agricultural West of the country is huge. Dependency on Russia for gas and, therefore, the its expectation that Ukraine will support Russia's current government, are in contradiction to the Ukrainian aspirations to join NATO and the European Union.²²⁵

The Ukrainian population was 47.1 million in mid-2005. It is estimated that 60% of this population is under the age of 25 and the median population age is just 24. However, the trend of population growth is declining at about -0.7% annually and the population is predicted to decline to 41.65 million in 2025.²²⁶ The youth population is also expected to decrease, from 11.1 million 10-24 year olds in 2000 to 7.2 million in 2025. The fertility rate is low, at 1.2 births per woman. Rural areas (where approximately 30% of the population lives) have witnessed slower falls in fertility rates. This indicates that the fertility rate in urban areas is very low indeed.

Table 1: World Bank World Development Indicators 2004²²⁷

Total population (000)	46 989
Annual population growth rate (%)*	-0.7
Population 0-14 years(%)	15
Rural population (%)*	32
Total fertility rate (births per woman) *	1.2
Infant mortality rate (0/00) *	15
Life expectancy at birth (years) *	68
HIV rate (%) in adults (15-49 years)*	1.4
Poverty (% of pop. on less than \$2 a day) *	31
GDP per capita (PPP) US\$ *	5 491
GDP growth rate (%)*	9.4
Total debt service as a % of GNI *	7.5
Children of primary school-age who are out-of-school (%)	16

The majority of the population reside in urban areas, which are the net beneficiaries of economic growth, while poverty in rural areas is increasing. The UNICEF school-leavers survey found a general openness toward travelling abroad for work.²²⁸ Most rural dwellers would go only for

²²⁵ http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/country_profiles/1102303.stm

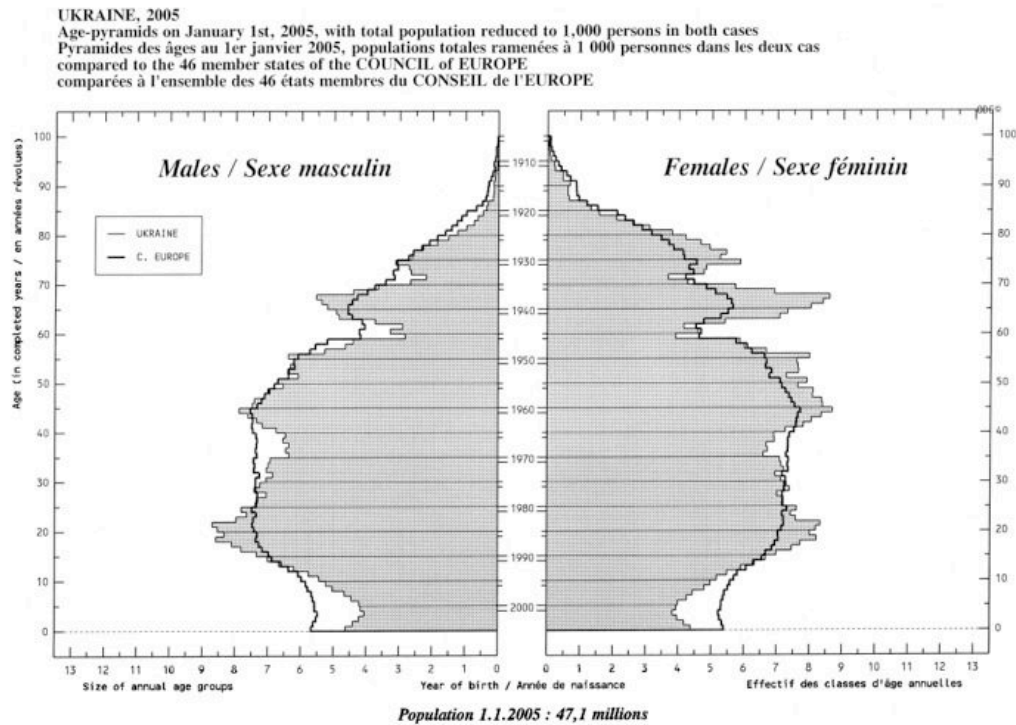
²²⁶ P o p u l a t i o n R e f e r e n c e B u r e a u , http://www.prb.org/TemplateTop.cfm?Section=PRB_Country_Profiles&template=/customsource/countryprofile/countryprofiledisplay.cfm&Country=471.

²²⁷ http://www.uis.unesco.org/profiles/EN/EDU/countryProfile_en.aspx?code=8070

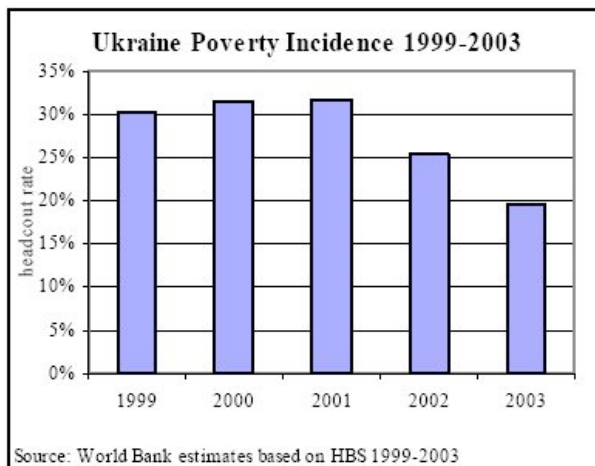
²²⁸ UNICEF Education, "Early School Leavers – Ukraine", p. 9.

seasonal work and would return home quickly, while urban dwellers are more open to going abroad for longer and potentially to staying. (It should be noted that this study was among early school leavers, therefore not the most highly qualified section of the youth population, who might be more inclined to travel abroad.

In a country where the unemployment rate is 24% among young people aged 15-24, there is a growing instance of migration for seasonal or full time work. The official data indicate that the out-migration rate was around -0.5 per 1000. Unfortunately, no specific information on youth migration is available.



Socio-Economic Conditions of Youth



Ukraine has embarked on the liberalisation process of its economy by taking on a number of measures with the clear objective of accession to various international organisations, such as the WTO and to move Ukraine towards a higher level of economic development. According to the World Bank Poverty report²²⁹, over the past years (1998 - 2003) the absolute poverty rates have been declining fast in comparison with other neighbouring countries to about 19% in 2003.

²²⁹ World Bank, Poverty Report on Ukraine, 2003, Summary, p.1.

However, these developments were accompanied with growing inequality between the urban and rural areas and Ukraine has witnessed an increase in the poverty gap between the poor agricultural areas in reconstruction and rapidly growing big city economies. Inequalities in regional development are also demonstrated in the differences between the less poor, more urban and industrial Eastern region and the poorer rural and agricultural West of the country. According to its findings the World Bank, even with economic growth, overall unemployment has been rather stagnant. Underemployment, however, especially in the agricultural sector and the precarious labour markets of small towns, has been increasing²³⁰. Household surveys indicate that about 20% of the population lives in large households, with four or more members, however, these represent about 40% of the poor.

This has specific implications for children and young people 0-24, who represent 42% of the poor aged, compared to the remaining 30% of the overall population.²³¹ With the current “youth bulge” in Ukraine and the tendency towards an ageing population, in particular in rural areas and small towns, poverty among large young families in rural areas is increasing, which has an impact on the ever-decreasing fertility.

Although literacy among young people is almost universal (99.8%), one can note a tendency towards decreasing enrolment in primary (83%) and secondary education (82%) among both girls and boys.²³² In particular, the poorer young people living in rural areas and small towns are more likely to drop out of school than those living in large cities.²³³ According to the UNICEF Report on Early School leavers,²³⁴ stability in young people’s lives represents the main factor remaining in school. Furthermore, it was found that belief in young peoples’ abilities, as well as efforts to improve their self-esteem, would contribute to improving their condition and their chances for staying in school.

One problem lies in the lack of motivation among poor and poorly educated families to send their children to school because of to generate extra income for the family: each young person represents a certain potential as an earner. In such cases, investments in social benefits and social security policy are crucial in order to prevent young people from becoming engaged in risky activities when entering the informal and black economies. Although specific data on youth involvement in the grey economy is not available, it can be only assumed that for the young drop outs, there are only two ways of surviving: migration for seasonal or temporary work and work in the grey economy at home.

The main concerns of young people in Ukraine today, as identified through a research conducted by a Ukrainian NGO, are: ²³⁵

- Lack of information about legislation on entrepreneurship;
- Lack of information and absence of start-up resource for young people who would like to start a business;
- Growth of unemployment among young people in the regions;
- Inefficient management into youth business-associations and their weak structure.

²³⁰ Ibid.

²³¹ World Bank, Poverty Report on Ukraine, 2003, Summary, *op cit*, p.3.

²³² http://www.uis.unesco.org/profiles/EN/EDU/countryProfile_en.aspx?code=8070

²³³ World Bank, Poverty Report on Ukraine, 2003, Summary, *op cit*, p.1.

²³⁴ UNICEF Education, “Early School Leavers – Ukraine”, p.9.

²³⁵ All-Ukrainian Youth Organization, Democratic Transformation of Ukraine, Thesis for YES, by Oleksandr Hontaruk.

In the absence of a coherent youth policy, the Ministry of Education and Science, together with the UNDP, in light of ongoing processes for the approximation of European standards in Ukraine, developed a youth oriented strategy with the focus on the reform of higher education, innovation and science. The strategy, entitled 'Education Modernisation in Ukraine', addresses among others the following issues:

- Broader involvement of professional teaching circles as well as the public (parents, private sector, trade unions, children's and youth organisations) in solving urgent issues related to education, and in searching for solutions;
- Equal access to education that would stipulate the creation of a favourable educational environment for all students with components of health care, developing a creative potential, and professional orientation;
- Adaptation of the educational content to the needs of society in forming a personality that is competent and mobile on the modern labour market, has a civil position and does efficient work, facilitates one's own development and is able to learn for the rest of one's life;
- Need to optimise the implementation of special state programs aimed towards using information technologies, computerisation and updating the technological basis of schools, as well as providing all with compulsory Internet access;
- Need to aim the state educational policy towards developing an arsenal of innovative forms of preparation and advanced qualification training for teachers as well as creating an equal access to them in all regions of Ukraine and endowing them with a permanent nature;
- Need to strengthen the community involvement in planning school work, the attestation of the head, its deputies and teachers. In order to manage innovative activities, the modern head of a comprehensive educational institution must be familiar with innovative pedagogy and educational management as well as be motivated to do managerial work;
- Need to improve the quality of education in Ukraine by participating in international comparative studies in order to be able to assess of the productivity and efficiency of Ukrainian education, and the implementation of a national system of monitoring the educational quality, which stipulates putting all major parameters of measuring quality in compliance with international standards;
- Need to develop a comprehensive national program to consolidate the efforts of ministries and governmental agencies dealing with youth policies, education, the media, private, industrial and the entrepreneurial sectors, which would cover the complex measures for children and youth to form a sound personality with an active civil position.
- Need to create relevant resource centres at the local level in the regions that would facilitate the dissemination of updated information among teachers, students and parents in the regions, and expand their multiple possibilities.²³⁶

This impressive study, containing many up-to-date recommendations, needs to be considered in light of the current economic context, in which there is a marked insufficiency of financial means for the education sector, in particular for innovation and research. Ukraine has a conservative educational community, with aging professors and teachers, who will not make the transformation of the education system easier. However, the priority of the government, in line

²³⁶ Ministry of Education and Science in Ukraine with UNDP support, "Education Modernisation in Ukraine – Analytical Overview", 2004, pp.31-32.

with the Bologna process, is to *“to satisfy citizens’ right to receive concrete educational and qualifying skills, according to their abilities and to ensure their mobility in the labour market”*.²³⁷

Although tertiary education does not respond to the requirements of the labour market, focusing largely on the awarding of the degrees,²³⁸ there seems to be a clear governmental commitment to work towards much needed adjustments and reforms. Overall, the education strategy should be harmonised with the, yet to be developed, youth employment strategy and programming for professional and vocational training, as well as completed with the recognition of the emergent non-formal educational sector.

Unemployment

According to a 2001 ILO/UNDP survey, 46.8% of the Ukrainian population identified themselves as “poor”, with a further 36.9% feeling they were “not well off”.²³⁹ Some of the findings contained in the World Bank’s 2005 poverty assessment of Ukraine are striking: 42% of those in poverty are children and young people (from 0 to 24), compared to 30% in the population as a whole.²⁴⁰ It is also noted that, starting from similar levels in 1999, “poverty incidence in rural areas in 2003 is more than twice that of large cities”.²⁴¹

Although the official unemployment rate in Ukraine is estimated at 11,1% (2001), according to the ILO, the average youth unemployment rate (15-24 years) was about 25,2% for 2001²⁴² with a slight decrease in 2002 to 20%.²⁴³ Taking into consideration the fact that young people are often involved in educational activities, it is estimated that in fact youth unemployment rates are at least twice as high as for the adult population. This demonstrates a clear lack of capacity to facilitate the entry of young people into the labour market. It is noteworthy, that 49% of the overall workforce is made up of However, female youth employment is estimated at only 13% among the 15-19 age group and at 60% among the 20-24 age group, in comparison to 14% and 72% for young men respectively.²⁴⁴

Although their overall rate of unemployment is fairly similar to that of young men, young women in Ukraine face notable difficulty in escaping poverty and achieving economic independence through discriminatory hiring practices. There exist very strong conventions concerning which jobs are appropriate for young women, and these are overwhelmingly low-paid, low-status jobs, which moreover, reinforces stereotypes about women in society, particularly regarding their physical appearance.²⁴⁵ Opportunities for young women to find

²³⁷ Olena Shestavina, “Interaction of Ukrainian Educational Policy and the EU Neighbourhood Policy in the context of the Bologna Process”, Donetsk National University, Ukraine.

²³⁸ The Education Sector in Ukraine:

<http://ec.europa.eu/education/programmes/tempus/countries/higher/ukraine.pdf>.

²³⁹ http://www.ilo.org/public/english/protection/trav/aids/publ/country_profile_1_ukraine.pdf

²⁴⁰ World Bank,

http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTUKRAINE/Resources/328335-1138375819937/Executive_Summary.pdf p. 3 of 13

²⁴¹ Ibid, p. 2.

²⁴² http://www.euro.who.int/eprise/main/who/progs/chhukr/demographic/20050131_1.

²⁴³ UNECE Employment Trends

²⁴⁴ UNECE Employment Trends

²⁴⁵ Human Rights Watch report, Discrimination against Women in the Ukrainian Labor Force (2003): <http://www.hrw.org/reports/2003/ukraine0803/>. See e.g. pp. 20, 25, 28 for the restricted employment opportunities available to young women (pdf).

employment in “male” sectors are almost non-existent. Another difficulty is that recruitment practices favour married young women and young mothers staying at home. Although the discrimination is often hidden in the procedure, compliance with Ukrainian law provides employers with the excuse to exclude young women, who often end up not being offered a job because of being too young, on the one hand, or because of already having children, on the other.²⁴⁶ In the labour market overall, a further and pressing problem is the pay gap between women and men: though women earned 86% of men’s wages in 1996 (up from 65% in 1992), this had fallen back to 69% in 2002.²⁴⁷

As is common, reforms of the education system are recommended. The UNDP 2004 overview on education modernisation recommends, among other measures, the broader involvement of non-traditional partners (including youth organisations) in solving educational problems.²⁴⁸ But, the necessary addition to the received wisdom of the necessity to align education to labour market needs is the existence of jobs in those labour markets. It is noteworthy that despite being the cohort with the lowest labour market participation rates (largely due to educational participation), young people have twice the unemployment rate of adults, showing the inability of the market to absorb their labour. The highest youth unemployment rates are among those, particularly women, who graduate from the vocational training system.²⁴⁹

However, specific youth employment strategies at the national and local levels do not seem to exist. Although some entrepreneurship programmes are emerging, the majority of the young Ukrainians do not have access to them. A clear indictment on the youth information system, there is evidence that counselling and career guidance are not available. One can only assume these are yet to be developed, as indicated in the Education Modernisation Strategy. It is highly recommended to conduct more research on the specificities of youth under- and unemployment and accordingly design strategies and specific programmes that would address the issue of the employability of young people in Ukraine, and in particular, of young women in professions of their own choice.

Youth Lifestyles, Sexuality, Union Formation

The growing attention given to the problem of domestic violence by legislators and governments in recent years highlights the seriousness of the problem. A law for the prevention of violence in the family and a cabinet decree on domestic violence both came into force in 2002, and the issue was also given prominence during the 2004 parliamentary hearings on the status of women. Despite this attention, however, violence in the family shows signs of increasing, and young women are particularly vulnerable because of their age and gender.²⁵⁰

²⁴⁶ Human Rights Watch report, Discrimination against Women in the Ukrainian Labor Force (2003): <http://www.hrw.org/reports/2003/ukraine0803/>, p.28.

²⁴⁷ UNFPA, Reproductive and Sexual Health of Adolescents in Ukraine (situation analysis 2004), http://www.unfpa.org.ua/unfpa/downloads/publications/ASRH_SitRep.pdf

²⁴⁸ UNDP Education Modernisation analytical overview 2004, p.31-32

²⁴⁹ World Bank 2005

http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTUKRAINE/Resources/328335-1138375819937/Executive_Summary.pdf p. 6 of 13.

²⁵⁰ Stop VAW 2005 newsletter, regarding Ukraine on domestic violence (pp. 6/17) and gender discrimination (pp. 6/14)

Although age at first marriage has risen slightly in recent years, this remains just 25.2 for men and 22.4 for women. As noted, fertility in Ukraine is very low. The country is exceptional, however, in that it has seen only a negligible increase in the age of first childbearing by women, and almost all women still have at least one child. Studies suggest that this is due to a combination of traditional attitudes toward family and gender roles, the persistence of early marriage and concerns about the health implications of postponing childbearing.²⁵¹

The major increase in contraceptive use seen since 1990 goes some way toward addressing the serious sexual and reproductive health consequences of the practice of using abortion as an alternative to contraception. This increase is identified as primarily for the prevention of pregnancy, and therefore, sexually transmitted diseases among young people remain a problem. Since 1995, there have been huge increases in STIs among 15-17 year old girls.²⁵² This increase notwithstanding, it is estimated that only 65% of young people use condoms regularly and this, despite Ukraine's current position as the European country with the most serious HIV epidemic. Knowledge of HIV/AIDS is not widespread, and the seriousness of infection not well understood. It is estimated that around 25% of 12-14 year olds have no knowledge of HIV/AIDS at all.

Two thirds of new HIV infections are among young people, and sexual transmission, primarily heterosexual, is the mode of transmission increasing fastest. HIV incidence is highest among the 20-24 year old cohort.²⁵³ The outbreak of the epidemic occurred among injecting drug users, among whom rates of infection have grown enormously since Ukraine became independent, but the virus is no longer concentrated in this group. Increasing numbers of women are being infected.²⁵⁴ Although much emphasis has been put on training young peer educators and reproductive health specialists,²⁵⁵ a nationwide campaign on issues of sexual and reproductive health is necessary in order to raise the awareness and knowledge of the STIs, as well as to change the attitudes of young people towards HIV/AIDS.

Ukraine follows the trend seen elsewhere of some degree of change in traditional family arrangements, which in part prompted the President to create the Ministry for Family, Children and Youth. Among the purposes of this ministry are to ensure fulfilment of state responsibilities on family, childhood, maternity and paternity protection and to guarantee social formation and development of young people following Article 106 (Item 15) of the Constitution.²⁵⁶ Ukraine witnesses the tendency towards the lowest-low fertility; defined as total fertility below 1.3, with total its fertility -1.1 in 2000. Contrarily to Europe, where this trend is attributed to the postponement of the initiation of childbearing, Ukraine has maintained a young age at first birth and nearly universal childbearing. According to the Ukrainian Reproductive Health Survey, reasons for this include the validity of the traditional norms for childbearing and the roles of men and women, as well as concerns about medical complications and infertility at a later age, and the link between early fertility and early marriage²⁵⁷.

²⁵¹[http://taylorandfrancis.metapress.com/\(dkzj303300ozhb55kvh3yc2v\)/app/home/contribution.asp?referrer=parent&backto=issue,5,10;journal,6,67;linkingpublicationresults,1:300383,1](http://taylorandfrancis.metapress.com/(dkzj303300ozhb55kvh3yc2v)/app/home/contribution.asp?referrer=parent&backto=issue,5,10;journal,6,67;linkingpublicationresults,1:300383,1)

²⁵² UNFPA, Reproductive and sexual health of adolescents in Ukraine (situation analysis 2004).

²⁵³ World Bank, Socio-Economic Impact of HIV/AIDS in Ukraine:

²⁵⁴ UNAIDS 2006 report http://data.unaids.org/pub/GlobalReport/2006/2006_GR_CH02_en.pdf

²⁵⁵ About UNFPA in Ukraine:

²⁵⁶ http://www.kmu.gov.ua/control/en/publish/article?art_id=10267130&cat_id=73007.

²⁵⁷[http://taylorandfrancis.metapress.com/\(dkzj303300ozhb55kvh3yc2v\)/app/home/contribution.asp?referrer=parent&backto=issue,5,10;journal,6,67;linkingpublicationresults,1:300383,1](http://taylorandfrancis.metapress.com/(dkzj303300ozhb55kvh3yc2v)/app/home/contribution.asp?referrer=parent&backto=issue,5,10;journal,6,67;linkingpublicationresults,1:300383,1)

Youth alienation from traditional social and familial institutions is not equal across the country. There is a strong regional dimension, in that even economically unsuccessful young people in rural (Western) areas can become socially integrated through religion and local life. In these areas, there is also a tendency towards active participation in the nationalist politics dominant in the region.²⁵⁸ Those in the West also generally have a more positive outlook toward the direction of politics in the country, and are more likely to be involved in social and community-based NGOs, than their Eastern counterparts (who are in turn more inclined towards membership in trade unions and political parties).

Youth Participation

The dynamics of the Orange Revolution certainly activated new hope for young people, as articulated by the PORA student/youth movement that was instrumental in efforts to stop government corruption and promote active participation of young people in society and electoral politics.²⁵⁹ However, the transition of PORA and other youth civic movements that were involved in the Orange revolution into the further deepening and development of the post-Orange revolution democracy has not been as straightforward as one might assume.

Participation of young people in demonstrations prior to and during the revolution brought a positive momentum in society, through which many negative attitudes towards young people were overturned and reconciled. However, assuming a direct link between the involvement in the revolution and the later participation of young people in organised civil society or in public life would be misleading. It is not possible to assess the extent to which recent positive developments in the youth field are causally linked to the reform process kicked off by the Orange Revolution. At the governmental level the situation remains unclear, in terms of responsibilities for policy making and implementation, and capacity remains weak. The youth activists that were so instrumental in creating the change have not necessarily been integrated into the post revolutionary reform process and many have become disillusioned.

According to the 2003 European Youth Forum Study Visit Report, out of the approximately 11 million young people living in Ukrainian, only about 7% are active in a youth organisation. It is quite unlikely that this number has increased as a result of the revolution. However, youth organisations in Ukraine are numerous, with up to 4,500 local and regional organisations, including approximately, 100 all-Ukrainian public organisations for youth and 9 for children being officially registered ²⁶⁰. Since the realisation of this survey, it is possible that the number of the registered organisations has further increased, given the improved political climate for associations.

Ukraine has a vivid youth organisational history and has witnessed various national youth organisational platforms being created. These have commonly competed for the recognition and trust implicit in being given the function of the legitimate National Youth Council. Current information indicates that a united National Youth Council was finally established in late 2006, after pressure from the European Youth Forum, and the government's intention to cooperate on the European integration agenda, and in particular with the Council of Europe, in preparation of the 2008 Youth Ministers' Conference. The newly established National Youth Council or *Narodna Rada*' has currently about 80 members organisations.

²⁵⁸ Irina Predborska, Katya Ivaschenko, Ken Roberts, "Youth Transitions in East and West Ukraine".

²⁵⁹ <http://www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2005/06/97b3e0ec-2814-44ec-a021-1183c7144672.html>

²⁶⁰ European Youth Forum, Study Visit Report, 2003.

However, the participation of young people in youth organisations is often determined by their involvement in education, as students seem to be the driving force of the Ukrainian youth NGO scene, although reportedly the average age of youth leaders varies between 25 and 40. At the local level, some of the youth organisations gained status over recent years and participate in local and regional life through consultations with the local governments.

However, the nature of activities and services provided by the youth organisations are not clear. The current focus on structures and formal functioning does not provide enough information on the different forms of youth participation in social or political life or about the services provided to young people by the youth civic sector. It is more than likely that the majority of activities are still predominantly focused at sports and leisure, which can be instrumental in preventing school-dropout and the engagement in risk behaviour, but which does not represent the full extent of the potential of non-formal education through youth organisations.²⁶¹

According to the European Youth Forum report, most regional authorities (*oblast*) have a youth department and policies developed in close cooperation with youth NGOs.²⁶² The GURT Service Centre has particular status, providing information services with a specific focus on youth organisations, which represent 20-25% of its beneficiaries.

GURT's director has summed up the challenges of further developing the youth field in Ukraine as follows:

- the youth NGO sector does not yet offer a career perspective, and that is why young people leave the sector quickly;
- there is a very strong hierarchy in communication with donors, and NGOs do not manage to establish long-term relationships;
- donors refuse to provide administrative grants or to include salary and remuneration as eligible costs to be covered by grants. This makes the experience of many NGOs very negative and they become discouraged;
- there is limited European funding, often it comes from the embassies of other countries;
- of up to 50,000 registered NGOs (not only youth specific), only about 10% are actively functioning, and about 1,000 of them are using international funding.

Although youth organisations can benefit from the 2-5% direct business tax, they first need to be registered in order to do so. It seems that regional NGOs are more active, as they can access resources from local donors. Although some cooperation with local authorities and schools exists at the local level, regional exchange and cooperation remains very limited. Providing youth-friendly services, information and training seems to only be emerging in the Ukrainian context and a coherent cross-sectoral youth policy should certainly consider specific approaches that would contribute to the overall specialization, qualification and recognition of youth work and provide more opportunities for young people to participate in the development of their society.

Although reportedly co-management mechanisms exist, established with European standards in mind, issues of representation, cooperation between governmental and non-governmental actors and the amount of resources allocated to this field are not available and, therefore, no conclusion in this relation can be made.

²⁶¹ UNICEF Education, "Early School Leavers – Ukraine", p.5.

²⁶² European Youth Forum study visit report, 2003.

Youth Policies

Although a coherent cross-sectoral youth policy in Ukraine does not seem to exist, the Ukrainian Parliament adopted the National Programme for the Support of Youth for 2003-2005, which was apparently returned by the presidential veto for reconsideration to the parliament. The destiny of this programme is not clear, as up-to-date information seems only to be available in Ukrainian language.

Ukraine has, however, adopted various legal documents concerning young people, among them the 1993 law on assisting the social condition and development of youth.

Other youth related legal provisions include:

- The Declaration on the General Basis of State Youth Policy in Ukraine (1992);
- The Law of Ukraine on People's Associations (1992);
- The Law of Ukraine on the Promotion of Social Development of Youth in Ukraine (1993);
- The Law of Ukraine on Youth and Children's NGOs (1998);
- The Law of Ukraine on Social Work with Children and Youth (2001);
- Decision of Constitutional Court to Consider Non-Constitutional some Articles of Youth Movement by the Ukrainian National Committee of Youth Organisations (13.12.2001);
- Directions of the President of Ukraine concerning Regulation of Separate Questions in State Youth Policy;
- Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine about Order of Competitive Selection and State Financing of Programmes made by Youth and Children's NGOs;
- Direction of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine about main Measures of State Youth Policy Realisation in 2003.

In spite of the existence of various provisions, there seem to be serious gaps in coordination, programming and delivery of youth policy in Ukraine, in spite of the existence of various state institutions that claim to be responsible for youth policy, including the Ministry for Family, Youth and Sports, the State Committee for Family and Youth Affairs, the Regional Administration Departments for Family and Youth Affairs and the Parliamentary Committee for Youth Policy, Sports and Tourism. The legislative framework is clearly crucial for any programmatic planning but at times the focus on law-making is counter-productive. Although the Ukraine is proud of the horizontal aspects of youth policy being included in the law for the support of young families, a law for the support to young families wishing to buy/build a house which offers them long-term credits, softer measures that would include better information services, communication policy and so on seem to be absent and would be needed for young people and families to take advantage of the legal mechanisms put at their disposal. Of course, the work of the State Committees responsible for the development of the different laws, such as the draft law on youth employment, the draft law on housing for young people and the National long-term programme for the support of young people, is unimportant. But, it must be reiterated that the development of mechanisms of youth policy delivery, their adequate financing and accountability are equally important.

However, some mechanisms of delivery are already emerging. In 2003, for the first time, youth organisations could participate in an open tender for support to projects involving young people in addressing social problems such as alcohol and drug abuse, HIV/AIDS and others. However, it is not clear whether the existing delivery mechanisms were developed and implemented in consultation with young people through some kind of youth representative body, such as the recently established National Youth Council. It seems however that the Committee on Youth

organises parliamentary hearings on the situation of young people in the Ukraine on different themes on a yearly basis. As a result, it was reported members of parliament are currently working on four major issues including support of student self-government, new types of work, such as youth parliaments, lobby and representation, follow-up of the state's work in the field of youth, settling some contentious issues among different youth platforms; and ensuring transparent and accessible state funding for youth projects. Again a specific youth friendly information policy is absent, moreover it seems that the information are being kept in certain circles and not shared widely.

Among other initiatives, some work seems have been done in relation to the “National Doctrine on Youth Policy” and the Revised European Charter on Youth Participation in Regional and Local Life, and how to achieve the UN Millennium Development Goals. During the recent All-Ukrainian United Nations Youth Summit, young people had an opportunity to draw up recommendations on different items of youth policy. The “National Doctrine on Youth Policy of Ukraine” should promote youth participation in decision making at all levels and ensure youth involvement in the development, implementation and monitoring of youth policy in Ukraine.²⁶³

These positive initiatives should be further strengthened by research into the socio-economic conditions of young people taking into account the diversity of their values, lifestyles and aspirations for a better future. Further co-operation should be developed with the Council of Europe in light of the forthcoming Council of Europe Youth Ministers' conference, which is being planned in 2008 in Kiev²⁶⁴. This cooperation could result in a Council of Europe International Youth Policy Peer Review process that would contribute to the strengthening of the youth policy in Ukraine.

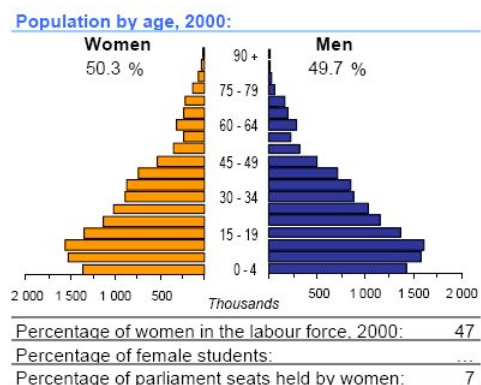
²⁶³ <http://www.un.kiev.ua/en/pressroom/news/579/>.

²⁶⁴ The Partnership of the Council of Europe and the European Commission in the Area of Youth, overview of the planned activities in Ukraine, p. 6.

Uzbekistan

Youth Demography

Uzbekistan, a landlocked country of 447,400 km², positioned on the Great Silk Road between Europe and Asia, is the most populous country in Central Asia and also has the largest army. It has 26 million inhabitants with, 36% living in urban areas and 64% in rural areas²⁶⁵, out of which around 27.5% are classified as poor. Unemployment is high and increasing. Young people under the age of 25 represent 60% of the country's population, and 36% are under the age of 15²⁶⁶. The table on the left illustrates the size of the current youth generation²⁶⁷.



While in economic transition to the liberal market, Uzbekistan remains one of the world's biggest producers of cotton and benefits from natural resources that include oil, gas and gold. The country's wealth, however, is very unevenly distributed.

Politically, and in formal terms, Uzbekistan is a "procedural democracy". But, several democracy watchdogs classify it as having an authoritarian regime, in which information circulates among a very small and protected political and social elite that also holds a large part of the country's wealth. This year, certain UN agencies were asked to discontinue their activity in Uzbekistan, including UNHCR.²⁶⁸ Young people have, therefore, limited space for action and limited autonomy.

In a short research paper on the opportunities for young people's development in Central Asia, however, one author gives three arguments for optimism in relation to the situation of young people Uzbekistan:

- the country managed to avoid serious civil disturbances or social, ethnic or military conflicts.
- it preserved the growth potential of its agricultural sector—the important sector for employment and income generation.
- it managed to achieve macroeconomic balance in a relatively short time through appropriate fiscal and monetary policies²⁶⁹.

However, whether these developments can lead to an improvement of living conditions, social cohesion and the protection of the vulnerable is highly questionable. Although the UNFPA in

²⁶⁵http://www.yesweb.org/2006/Publications_Papers%20august%202006/Agenda%20Links/Second%20Session/rising%20employment%20opportunities%20for%20youth%20in%20uzbekistan.pdf, p. 3

²⁶⁶ <http://www.unfpa.uz/ca010101.html>

²⁶⁷ <http://www.unec.org/stats/trends2005/profiles/Uzbekistan.pdf>

²⁶⁸ Uzbekistan is the only Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) country that is not a party to either the 1951 Refugee Convention or its 1967 Protocol <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/news/opendoc.htm?tbl=NEWS&id=4444cb6516>

²⁶⁹ Rising employment opportunities for the youth in Central Asian countries through skills development and promotion of interaction of education system and labour market http://www.yesweb.org/2006/Publications_Papers%20august%202006/Agenda%20Links/Second%20Session/rising%20employment%20opportunities%20for%20youth%20in%20uzbekistan.pdf, p. 3

Uzbekistan believes that the “*Uzbek Government makes sure that young people receive enough attention and their issues are solved, especially in the areas of education, reproductive health services, HIV/AIDS and drug use prevention, and promotion of healthy lifestyle*”²⁷⁰, the absence of a coherent youth policy, developed and implemented in consultation with young people demonstrates simply that the government may not be doing enough.

Although the youth literacy rate remains relatively high, 99.7%²⁷¹, the poor access to and quality of education services, health care, basic public utilities, such as clean water and adequate sanitation, contribute to very low living standards, which particularly severe for the vulnerable sections of the society, in particular young people. Poverty, vulnerability and lack of perspective among young people often leads to risk-behaviour that includes involvement in the illicit economy, drug abuse, and increases the likelihood of becoming victims or perpetrators of violence, which may result in political instability and conflict²⁷². In order to reverse these trends, a different socio-political contract needs to be put in place.

However, according to research published on behalf of the President, “*there are laws ensuring reliable constitutional and legal human rights, thereby providing social guarantees and support for the people. They include laws on employment, on social protection of invalids and handicapped people, on state pension maintenance, on education, and on the basic principles of youth policy pursued by the government*”²⁷³.

According to official statistics, the 2000 net migration rate was -0.7 migrants per 1,000 persons, with approximately 1,4 millions of migrants living in Uzbekistan, which includes refugees mainly from Tajikistan and Afghanistan²⁷⁴. However the real migration flow are difficult to assess. It is more than likely that emigration has increased due to the socio-economic conditions and the political oppression. Youth migration makes young people particularly vulnerable to the influences of the criminal groups, militant ideology or religious fundamentalism present in the region²⁷⁵. On the other hand, migration gave birth to the Uzbek Diaspora, who according to research contributes with fuelling unbiased information into Uzbekistan²⁷⁶. With the mainstreaming of the ICT, in particular the Internet and the mobile communication, the isolated Uzbekistan started to breathe a little fresh air²⁷⁷. However, possibilities to travel for young Uzbeks are fairly low, which only increases their willingness to migrate.

Socio-Economic Conditions of Youth

According to a presidential address, the structural transformation of the economy aims at macroeconomic balance and the stimulation of economic growth and takes into consideration

²⁷⁰ <http://www.unfpa.uz/ca010101.html>

²⁷¹ <http://globalis.gvu.unu.edu/country.cfm?Country=UZ>

²⁷² <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=2342&l=1>

²⁷³ Abduvali Isadjanov, Institute for Strategic and Regional Studies under the President of the *Republic of Uzbekistan* Additional Paper Submitted to Colloquium (1), UZBEKISTAN - LEGAL ASPECTS OF FULFILMENT OF ECONOMIC RESTRUCTURING AND REFORMS, p.277

²⁷⁴ <http://www.nationsencyclopedia.com/Asia-and-Oceania/Uzbekistan-MIGRATION.html>

²⁷⁵ Eurasia Studies Program – *The following is a summary of a conference hosted by The National Bureau of Asian Research in Washington, D.C. on March 2, 2006*

²⁷⁶ Ibid.

²⁷⁷ Ibid.

the needs of women and youth in relation to employment and development.²⁷⁸ It must be acknowledged that recent economic growth has indeed brought some development and reduction in poverty, accompanied by the improvement in life expectancy, infant and maternal mortality rates and education enrolment rates. However, the main concern remains income poverty, with 2003 World Bank research data indicating that 27,7% of the Uzbek population lives in poverty, out of which one third lives in extreme poverty.²⁷⁹

Poverty especially impacts on the large families living in the rural areas, the disabled and the active working population with low paid jobs, in particular women and young people.²⁸⁰ The harsh socio-economic conditions force many young Uzbeks to seek education and employment outside of the country.

Education

Increasing the quality of education and training represents a major challenge in Uzbekistan, where 60% of the population is under 25 years of age. The first moves to reform the education system began already in 1991 with the gradual transition to a market economy, by focusing on a development of an adequate system of education and training.

The strategic 1997 National model clearly formulated three reform phases:

- **First phase (1997-2001)** - *creating legal, regulatory, scientific methodical, financial basis for its overhauling and developing on the basis of the preservation of positive potentials of the existing system in professional training.*
- **Second phase (2001-2005)** – *full-scale implementation of the National program, its adjustment by using accumulated experience, development of labour market and real social – economic conditions.*
- **Third phase (2005-to present)** - *accomplishment and further development of a system of professional training on the basis of analysing and synthesizing of cumulative experiences according to perspectives of social – economic development of the country*²⁸¹.

Although no clear reporting system exists, it seems that over the years, many of the proposed changes have been implemented. The 2004 Presidential Decree aiming at reforming the education system and improving the teaching standards for teachers in the period of 2004 - 2009 was according to the official sources put in place²⁸². However, the extent to which concrete measures were implemented remains unclear.

According to official data, Uzbekistan achieved the universal access to primary and secondary education already in 1990, with virtually no difference between the number of girls and boys (90.0% of boys to 90.5% of girls). Information on school dropouts and vulnerable young people are not available. Uzbekistan is proud of its 2003 99,3% literacy rate, and with official information stating that 75% adults have specialised secondary, professional or higher education.²⁸³ However, practise reveals that young people, especially in the rural areas, are

²⁷⁸ Address of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Islam Karimov at the Cabinet Ministers Session on the results of social and economic development of Uzbekistan in 2005 and major priorities of economic reform in 2006, p. 13

²⁷⁹ UNDP Human Development Report on Uzbekistan, 2005, p. 39.

²⁸⁰ Ibid.

²⁸¹ http://www.yesweb.org/2006/Publications_Papers%20august%203%202006/Agenda%20Links/Second%20Session/rising%20employment%20opportunities%20for%20youth%20in%20uzbekistan.pdf

²⁸² <http://www.unicef.org/uzbekistan/overview.html>

²⁸³ <http://www.un.uz/eng/mdg2.htm>

obliged to remain in their traditional communities and to engage in casual labour or subsistence agriculture or to migrate in order to work.²⁸⁴ The lack of opportunities and possibilities to make a free choice about profession and lifestyles impacts on young people's sense of vulnerability and make them exposed to risky alternatives of violence, extremism, religious indoctrination or crime.

Furthermore, young people who manage to enter the higher education system, become subject to the political mobilization of President Karimov's machinery. While the compromised young people may end up being co-opted into the system, the ones who refuse to cooperate may end up in jail with no perspective of contributing to the development of society. A privileged position is maintained by the so-called "gilded youth", who were educated abroad and are connected to the current regime and, therefore, may have some possibility to influence the development of the country²⁸⁵.

However, those who recognise the challenges of education refer to the lack of coherent mechanisms for monitoring and assessing the quality of education. There is, for example, lack of textbooks, good quality school facilities, qualified teachers and financial shortages in households that limit their ability to pay fees or for school materials that cost a lot. Furthermore, the new National Programme for School Education Development (2004-2009) developed in cooperation with ADB, UNESCO, and UNICEF tackles the quality of and the educational infrastructure, with the main shift being the focus on the development of child-centred schools²⁸⁶.

According to the US based Asian Research Centre the reform should involve:

- Nuanced process of socialization: Future politicians in Uzbekistan will be defined by a broad range of both experiences and pressures—and will view the United States through the prism of these influences.
- Educational opportunities and influence of patronage politics: Education is the main divider among youth in Uzbekistan today. Patronage politics also impacts the educational and professional opportunities available to young Uzbeks.
- Emergence of cross-national communities: Uzbek out-migration produces a unique opportunity for international organizations to increase their influence on Uzbek society. At the same time, the cross-national Uzbek community is a potentially volatile constituency.
- Competing perspectives and influences: Russia could serve as a proxy for influencing events in Uzbekistan. Uzbek Diaspora communities could also impact change in the country.
- Funding for new technologies: The Internet, mobile technology, satellite TV, and radio broadcasts provide avenues of information to the outside world and thus should be promoted.
- Educational opportunities and exchange programs: Given that young Uzbek professionals educated in the West might become future influential elites, the West could benefit from strengthening support for exchange programs.²⁸⁷

²⁸⁴ Eurasia Studies Program – *The following is a summary of a conference hosted by The National Bureau of Asian Research in Washington, D.C. on March 2, 2006*

²⁸⁵ Ibid.

²⁸⁶ <http://www.un.uz/eng/mdg2.htm>

²⁸⁷ Eurasia Studies Program – *The following is a summary of a conference hosted by The National Bureau of Asian Research in Washington, D.C. on March 2, 2006*

Similarly to many transition countries, developing entrepreneurial skills among young people has become a priority²⁸⁸. International institutions, such as the OSCE²⁸⁹, work towards increasing opportunities for young people in order to integrate them better in the society, avoid their migration and at the same time stimulate the economy. While several programmes were launched in cooperation with the only recognised Republican Youth Social Movement ‘Kamolot’, the accessibility of the programmes can be put in question. In a country where the information system seems to function only among some, the outreach and impact of this programme may be rather limited. However, some good practice in acquiring skills in business development among young people exists, and should be further supported, if possible in a more open and unbiased manner.

Although youth information services targeting young people are practically absent, there are some emerging initiatives seemingly developing from the Diaspora. An interesting example is a youth-blog,²⁹⁰ providing information on youth issues. Another interesting project “Tech Age Girls”, targeting young women, provides encouragement, support, and training to a group of young talented women with a potential to become leaders in their field²⁹¹. Examples of programmes targeting vulnerable young women were not available at the time of writing.

Although no general social support structures for young people were found, the Uzbek government guided by UNICEF has embarked on revising existing policies and practices related to children with disabilities or institutionalised in the state care system. In spite of the growth in the number of street children and an increase in the instance of child trafficking, there is still an underestimation of this phenomenon by the governmental officials. According to some sources the National Coordination Council has been established to look after the new laws protecting children without parental care and improve the juvenile justice system. In this way, some youth courts were established, incorporating ‘child-friendly environments’ in police stations, courts and institutions; and through the introduction of new legislation on penal systems and institutions *“We need to start thinking about empowering families, giving them the support services, giving them the means, including the financial means, to help them look after their children. We have to start working with the community to take away the barrier preventing disabled children from integrating. They don’t need any sympathy. They are as able as us if they are given an opportunity,”* Mr. Hossaini, a governmental representative, stated.²⁹² However, the implementation and monitoring of these good incentives remains questionable.

Unemployment

In spite of the gradual decrease of the number of birth especially in the rural areas, the intensive demographic growth rate, children, adolescents and young adults not only represent 60% of the overall population, but also comprise a huge part of the unemployed. Although young people are on average more educated than the older generation, their access to the labour market is more limited. This in practice may indicate that more education among young people will not improve their job prospects. Other reasons might include the structural unemployment and the very probable discrepancy between the education system and the needs of the economy in a globalised world in terms of skills and competences.

²⁸⁸ http://www.osce.org/tashkent/item_2_16217.html?print=1

²⁸⁹ http://www.osce.org/tashkent/item_2_16217.html?print=1

²⁹⁰ <http://uzbekistan.neweurasia.net/?cat=3>

²⁹¹ http://exchanges.state.gov/education/citizens/students/worldwide/connections/uzbek_techage.htm

²⁹² <http://esr.oxfordjournals.org/cgi/content/abstract/20/5/403>

The fact remains that a comprehensive future oriented study of the demands of the labour market as well as mechanisms for support of employment targeted at young people are lacking. No information policy or services, such as career counselling or other types of professional guidance, are available for the future graduates or for young people at large.

Unemployment²⁹³							
	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Employment (% change over previous year)	1.4	1.4	1.0	1.1	1.7	...	...
Unemployment rate (%)	0.3	0.4	0.5	0.6	...	...	...
Youth unemployment rate (%)	0.3	0.4	0.5	0.6	...	...	...
Total expenditure on education (% GDP)	...	7.7	7.7	...	...	...	...
Total expenditure on health (% GDP) ^{a/}	3.0	3.3	2.9	3.0	2.6	2.4	...

a/ Total health expenditure as % of gross domestic product, WHO Regional Office for Europe.

Since the beginning of the transition to the government intended to harmonise the education system with the requirements of the labour market. However, the practice shows that what exists on paper is not always translated into day-to-day reality. It is estimated that only 30 – 40% of young adults have stable jobs or enjoy regular income-generating activities. The rest of young people, in particular in rural areas, remain vulnerable to poverty cycle in which *‘extremist groups prey on disenfranchised young males lacking viable job opportunities, and young women enter into marriage without skills to provide for their new families’*²⁹⁴.

In a situation of a growing period of transition towards adulthood among young Uzbeks, creating a dependency of young people on their parents up to their twenties, the government has been focusing mainly on the entrepreneurial development as well as stimulation of small businesses and farmer entities.

The main governmental priorities have been translated in the following measures²⁹⁵:

- Creation of new micro-firms, development of family business and small private enterprises, stimulation of the micro-crediting system;
- Extension out-works in cooperation with the large industrial enterprises;
- *Acceleration of the development of labour-consuming spheres of light and food processing industry focused on deep processing of local raw material and manufacture of ready, competitive production;*
- Development of the sphere of services for the period until the year 2010, first of all in countryside;
- Stimulation of the livestock population, first of all of cattle, in private subsidiary, dehqan (peasant) and farm economies.

According to the government, many reforms do not require huge investments but create employment for women and village youth, and considerably increase the incomes of the

²⁹³ <http://www.unece.org/stats/trends2005/profiles/Uzbekistan.pdf>

²⁹⁴ <http://www.mercycorps.org/countries/uzbekistan/565>

²⁹⁵ Address of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Islam Karimov at the Cabinet Ministers Session on the results of social and economic development of Uzbekistan in 2005 and major priorities of economic reform in 2006, p. 13

families.²⁹⁶ The few examples from practice demonstrate that public private partnerships are necessary in order to promote the employability of young Uzbeks. Besides, there is a great need for an integral youth employment strategy that would take in to consideration the requirements of the education, training and labour market.

Example of Good Practise

Last August, Maftuna took steps to break the cycle by attending a skill-building institute sponsored by Mercy Corps. The five-day Youth Professional Development Institute focused on equipping young people with employable skill sets. Topics included basic business skills, how to research and land a job, tools for mitigating conflict and information about disease prevention and health. More than 115 young adults from 30 different communities attended.

The “Basic Business Education” course provided tips on how to present yourself to potential employers and taught participants practical on-the-job skills. Subjects included job interviewing, skills assessment, time management and collaborative problem solving. Upon returning to their communities after the institute, 19 participants found employment, including Maftuna²⁹⁷.

Poverty

The first ever poverty reduction strategy in Uzbekistan was developed in 2004 aiming at improvement of the living standards (i-WISP). In cooperation of the UN and the ADB, the government adapted the MDGs in order to provide a comprehensive framework for the Living Standards Strategy²⁹⁸. According to the MDG report, the Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy aims to reduce the poverty rate to 20% by 2010. The Government also estimates that by 2015 the percentage of poor population can be reduced to from the current 27% to 14%.

This means that the main target should be on the most vulnerable groups – young people, in particular those living in rural areas, families with many children, the disabled, the unemployed, people with lower level of education and households with women breadwinners. Pregnant women and those with many children or with disability are especially disadvantaged. The highest concentration of the poor population is in the southern and northern regions of Uzbekistan, and the lowest is in Tashkent region and certain oblasts of the central region. In the southern region, the poverty rate is almost 4 times higher than in Tashkent region and often results in higher incidence of malnutrition, especially among children and iron deficiency, which is huge (61% of children under 3 are reported to suffer from iron deficiency anaemia).

The low level of living standards is however exclusively related to economic poverty, but also to the quality and access of health care, education services, basic public utilities, such as clean water and adequate sanitation.

There are some key issues that influence the socio-economic development of youth people:

- the issue of religion – that serves both as an ‘escape route’ from everyday problems and at the same time a ‘channel’ through which it is possible to criticise the present system.

²⁹⁶ Address of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Islam Karimov at the Cabinet Ministers Session on the results of social and economic development of Uzbekistan in 2005 and major priorities of economic reform in 2006, p. 13

²⁹⁷

http://www.yesweb.org/2006/Publications_Papers%20august%203_2006/Agenda%20Links/Second%20Session/rising%20employment%20opportunities%20for%20youth%20in%20uzbekistan.pdf

²⁹⁸ <http://www.un.uz/eng/mdg1.htm>

Extreme religious movements, such as the radical Islamist groups, are rather successful in recruiting the disillusioned young people, offering simplistic answers to questions about the socio-economic reality of every day life. On the other hand, some young people joined the new Christian churches, which provide a Western oriented alternative;

- the draft law on Juvenile Justice was planned to be presented in Uzbek Parliament by the end of 2006. The Legal Problems Studies Centre, developed cooperation among experts from different governmental agencies, Parliament, NGOs and universities to adjust *'the relations that occur in the process of ensuring the rights and legal interests of juveniles in conflict with law, juvenile victims and witnesses in regard to juvenile justice system. The draft law is based on restorative justice, which emphasizes the need to give a chance to for young offenders to be re-educated and reintegrated into society.'*²⁹⁹ It is however not clear whether under current political situation this rather progressive law developed in cooperation with the not so much wanted UN agencies is going to be still followed up, as it also implies the establishment of youth courts with appropriately trained professional personnel.

Health

Young people in Uzbekistan, when they have the opportunity to voice their concerns indicate that these include unemployment and the opportunity to start a business (entrepreneurship) and having access to a decent quality education.³⁰⁰ But, recent research indicates that health and lifestyle issues are also a pressing problem in this country and in the region of Central Asia, generally.

The Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) remains high and the Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR) shows an increasing trend. Links between the deteriorating conditions of children and women's health and the quality of ante/peri-natal services, together with the low level of knowledge of families in managing pregnancy and detecting early childhood illness are thought to be the cause. Poor nutrition is another major health issue for women and children, with high rates of iodine deficiency disorder (IDD), iron-deficiency anaemia, a major contributing factor to maternal mortality, and vitamin A deficiency.

From 1987 through 2004, Uzbek authorities reported 5612 HIV cases. They also reported that 52 of the infected individuals developed AIDS, all but 2 of whom died. About 70% of the HIV cases are associated with a transmission mode; among them, approximately 82% were infected through injecting drug use. The first HIV case was registered in 1987, and until 1998 the cumulative number did not exceed 51. Most of these early cases (about 60%) were attributable to heterosexual contacts. Since 2000, there has been a sharp increase in newly registered HIV/AIDS cases. Currently, the dominant mode of transmission is injecting drug use (59.3% of the cases), followed by heterosexual contact (11.3%) and less than 1% for sex between men. The epidemic is concentrated in the capital, Tashkent, and Tashkent oblast. About 76% of all cases are registered there. However, at least a few cases have been reported in each of the 13 Uzbek regions³⁰¹.

²⁹⁹ http://www.unicef.org/uzbekistan/media_5042.html

³⁰⁰ <http://uzbekistan.takingitglobal.org/>

³⁰¹ <http://www.unaids.org/en/Regions/Countries/Countries/uzbekistan.asp>

HIV/AIDS Estimates³⁰²

Number of people living with HIV	31 000 [15 000 – 99 000]
Adults aged 15 to 49 HIV prevalence rate	0.2 [0.1 – 0.7]%
Adults aged 15 and up living with HIV	31 000 [15 000 – 100 000]
Women aged 15 and up living with HIV	4100 [1700 – 13 000]
Deaths due to AIDS	<500 [<1000]

In Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan, for example, one-third of young women (aged 15-24) have never heard of AIDS, according to a 2001 survey (UNAIDS 2003). With 56% of the Uzbek population under 25, the importance of educating young people on HIV/AIDS prevention issues. A “Knowledge Attitude Practice (KAP)” survey among youth in Tashkent schools and high schools revealed that more than 65% of youth have a basic understanding of HIV/AIDS (not good understanding of modes of transmission). Their most important sources of information on HIV/AIDS are TV shows, public events and surprisingly, schoolteachers. About a quarter of all respondents to the surveys conducted gave incorrect answers regarding the modes of transmission of HIV and other STIs. While HIV/AIDS incidence has been concentrated among high-risk groups in Uzbekistan, it is possible to anticipate an epidemic among the larger population and especially among young people. Most (up to 80%) of schoolchildren do not know the ways of avoiding the risk of infection with HIV or other STIs, however at the same time, higher level of awareness was found in the groups at higher risk. In the group of those who use drugs, where the highest risk of sexual behaviour has been found, attention should be given to predominance of such answer, as “trust to the partner”, as the main reason of not using protection. The highest concern is caused by a lack of knowledge on the need to use disposable syringes amongst the overwhelming majority of the respondents: 66% in the group of “those who use”, 70% in the group of “those who want to try” and 83% in the group of “the rest”. Most of the interviewed adolescents (45%) sympathize with HIV-infected people and wish to help them; at the same time, a rather large number (25%) of schoolchildren consider that they should be isolated and do not wish to have contact with them.

Peer educators when asked to speak about their work demonstrate the difficulty of working in the current Uzbek social climate, stating *“I visit households, schools and orphanages talking to young people about the dangers of early marriage, how to prevent sexually transmitted infections and HIV, and the need for birth spacing and family planning, among other topics,”* *“This is a conservative community, and when I started working as a peer educator, some parents did not want me to discuss sexual and reproductive health issues with their children.”*³⁰³. The work has not always been easy, because it involves chipping away at cultural taboos, including fears that open discussion of sexuality and reproductive health will lead to premarital sex or promiscuity. Nevertheless, The KAP results also revealed approximately 44% of young people would like to take an active role in the prevention of drug use and transmission of the HIV virus through peer-to-peer education and participating in social events.

In spite of the fact that certain work for prevention of use of alcohol and smoking is undertaken at schools, it was demonstrated by the study that significant part of schoolchildren use tobacco and alcohol products. According to survey data, on the average, 20% of children smoke, with frequency of episodic smoking of 1-5 cigarettes a day. 25% of schoolchildren do not consider

³⁰² <http://www.unaids.org/en/Regions/Countries/Countries/uzbekistan.asp>

³⁰³ <http://www.unfpa.org/news/news.cfm?ID=869>

the risk caused by episodic use of cigarettes as high, while almost among 60% of respondents consider risk from regular smoking to be high. About 25% of the schoolchildren who took part in the survey use alcohol, most of them episodically. The prevalence of alcohol abuse is related to the extent of risk in the groups. It is interesting, that actually the same number of respondents from groups of “those who want to try” (41%) and “the rest” (34%) do not see any particular harm even from regular use of alcohol.

Drug abuse is a major issue for Uzbekistan, particularly in view of its geographical proximity to Afghanistan. The number of injecting heroin users has risen dramatically and this has also led to a spread of HIV/AIDS through the practice of reuse and sharing of syringes, together with unsafe sexual practices.³⁰⁴ According to the KAP survey, young people’s main reasons for taking up drugs are curiosity and peer pressure. Furthermore, according to another survey taken with 5,500 school children aged 14-17 in grades 9-11 in urban secondary schools in 6 regions of Uzbekistan, around 92.3% of youth in the capital, Tashkent, have a negative attitude to drug use³⁰⁵. The results show that 3% of the respondents already have experience with drugs and that another 2% feel the urge to try them. 33% of those who have experience with drugs do not identify themselves with drug users. Schoolchildren know about how to acquire drugs but with different levels of ease: Anasha (marihuana) (20% of respondents), Inhalants (20% of respondents), Heroin (18% of respondents), Opium (16% of respondents) Tranquillisers (14% of respondents). Most respondents sympathize with drug users, while around one third of them consider that drug users have to be isolated from society. Most of the respondents were willing to get more information about the consequences of drug use from parents, teachers, school doctors and the mass media.

According to Dr. Klara Yadgarova, head of the Mother and Child Care Directorate of the Ministry of Health, *“The reproductive health of adolescents requires special attention, but most are too embarrassed to visit a primary health-care facility or district hospital for advice and services.”*³⁰⁶

Example of Good Practise

Pilot programmes in Khiva and a handful of other Uzbek cities are overcoming the barriers of young people to engage in sexual and reproductive health education by offering training in practical skills such as carpet weaving and computer technology in youth centres, along with an array of youth-friendly health services and referrals. Attracted by word of mouth and a mass media campaign, young people come to the youth centre to learn, read or socialize. Whatever their reason for dropping in, however, they also have an opportunity to learn about reproductive health and family planning, says Lola Erniazova, the head of the Khiva branch of the Uzbek Association for Reproductive Health (UARH), which is implementing the youth centre project in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and UNFPA, the United Nations Population Fund. The UARH initiative also uses trained peer counsellors to reach out to young people, both at the youth centres and through other outreach activities. Madina Madaminova, 23, who lives in the heart of Khiva and runs her own small business selling cosmetics has been a volunteer peer educator for the past three years. Trained under an UNFPA-financed programme, Madina is now on the cutting edge of change in her community.

³⁰⁴ <http://www.unicef.org/uzbekistan/overview.html>

³⁰⁵ http://meero.worldvision.org/faq_categorie.php?categorieID=13#85

³⁰⁶ <http://www.unfpa.org/news/news.cfm?ID=869>

The reproductive health of women and adolescents in the Province of Khorezm, where Khiva is located, as in three other provinces where UNFPA is active, has improved significantly. *“We used to have 40 abortions for every 1,000 live births, but now that ratio has dropped fourfold, to 9 abortions for 1,000 births,”* says Lola. *“Our maternal mortality ratio has also been cut in half, from a national average of 65 deaths for every 100,000 live births to 31”*. An increase in contraceptive use has played a major role in reducing the number of abortions and improving maternal health. Contraceptive prevalence continues to increase: currently some 67 per cent of married women use modern methods of contraception.

In terms of health measures, Uzbekistan can be credited with some ongoing achievements and recent improvements. Immunization coverage of over 90% has been maintained and Uzbekistan is certified as polio free, two significant achievements in the country. A National Action Plan has been developed to address health issues, whilst documents have been signed with the World Bank (WB) to continue support of the primary health care reform initiative and with the Asian Development Bank (ADB) to improve the efficiency of the health care delivery system for woman and child health. Although HIV/AIDS prevalence is low in numerical terms, the number of new infections is rising rapidly in Uzbekistan and Central Asia, threatening to have “devastating consequences on health and development” according to the World Bank. In response, a national HIV/AIDS strategy and a national programme have been introduced.³⁰⁷ However, it is noteworthy that this study could not find any publicly accessible information in a relevant language concerning union formation and sexuality among young people in Uzbekistan.

Youth Participation

There are not many information on youth participation in Uzbekistan, except that participation is a subject to governmental control. According to some sources youth leaders, running the still few existing ‘youth organisations’ and leisure and sports facilities, are usually remote elder governmental officials, who make sure the activities are available to the privileged groups.

Although some initiatives were taken by the UNDP and other UN agencies to remind that youth activities are targeted at young people to play a role in developing the future of each country³⁰⁸, as well as introducing the gender equality debates, the real impact of these events seem to be contra-productive to the wishes of the system. The few organisations working with you, such as the Forum of Art and Culture of Uzbekistan and International Language School, were possibly persecuted for these actions.

UNFPA in Uzbekistan was particularly successful in motivating volunteers to participate in the Uzbek Association for Reproductive Health (UARH) and providing the Y-Peer training. It attempted to involve the representatives of the Ministry of Health of Uzbekistan, the Ministry of Public Education of Uzbekistan, Kamolot Youth Organization, Women’s Committee of Uzbekistan and other organizations in encourage and promote cooperation. Again the sustainability of these initiatives is in the current state of affairs questionable.

³⁰⁷ <http://www.unicef.org/uzbekistan/overview.html>

³⁰⁸ <http://www.unfpa.uz/ca010101.html>

Another seemingly success activity was the functioning of the Children's Parliament/Council of Young Generation ("Yosh Avlod Kengashie") of Uzbekistan, established in 2002, encouraging discussions about young people on issues that concern them, though partly driven by the international agenda, the rights of the child, human rights, gender issues, HIV/AIDS prevention, drug use prevention, micronutrient deficiencies, and so on³⁰⁹. Young people were also invited to propose solutions, which were supposed to be consulted with the respective officials at the national and local levels. Again the future of the parliaments is at the moment unclear.

Since 2002, there was also the UNITEs Uzbekistan Local ICT Volunteers Scheme (UNITEs Uzbekistan) functioning under the United Nations Volunteers Programme with *'the primary goal to assist in building ICT capacity among local non-commercial organizations through mobilizing young volunteers. The volunteers undertake different assignments to help these organizations; e.g. train them in basic computer skills, create web sites and databases or repair their broken computers.'* In general, the ICT environment in Uzbekistan is rather underdeveloped with only 0.6% of Internet users. Apparently, this activity has started to receive recognition by the government.³¹⁰

Another initiative is the Central Asian Youth Network (CAYN) established in 2004 by the OSCE providing opportunities for exchange for young people in the region.³¹¹

Youth Policies

Since the Uzbek independence, the government claim to have been working 'constantly to enhance the situation of children and women'³¹². The State Youth Policy Act, adopted in November 1991 gives priority to the assistance to the young generation to receive education and make full use of their knowledge in promoting freedom and democracy encouraging genuine creativity and innovation³¹³. However the recent developments in Uzbekistan deny almost all of this action. There seems to be a great discrepancy between the written and the done. The absence of a clear youth policy strategy and the coordinated youth programmes may be indicative to the real engagement of the different actors in youth policy. However, in a country where accessibility of and reliance on information is questionable, information provided through the desk research may simply not be sufficient in order to provide a clear picture.

However partial youth policy exists, through the various institutions and networks. Agenda 21 on sustainable development mentions the role of youth at several occasions (chapter 25 a and b, 28), where it sees youth as a partner in promoting dialogue between youth and the government at all levels, as well as access to information and opportunity for them to be consulted and ensuring participation of young girls in the educational system.

The Uzbek government together with the UNESCO support the "Kamolot" youth fund and the "Umid" fund in order to support talented young people. The material, practical and methodological assistance in improving educational and training work should be delivered by the urban district authorities. However the youth involvement in the political and economic life or in the development of State policy remains critical, although there seemed to be some noticeable

³⁰⁹ http://www.unicef.org/uzbekistan/media_4814.html

³¹⁰ <http://www.unites.org/html/news/2002/n221002.htm>

³¹¹ <http://www.osce.org/tashkent/13330.html>

³¹² <http://www.un.org/esa/earthsummit/uzbek-cp.htm>

³¹³ <http://www.un.org/esa/earthsummit/uzbek-cp.htm>

progress³¹⁴. Furthermore, the area of youth friendly services is ‘in its infancy’³¹⁵. Again the willingness of the government to invest into young people, some of whom are often considered as ‘state enemy’, remains questionable.

There are a number of relevant youth policy recommendations offered to the governments and donor agencies of Central Asia by their international partners, however their implementation represents a huge challenge³¹⁶:

Education

- Aim to raise education spending to pre-independence levels of 5-6 per cent of GDP.
- Improve basic school infrastructures, such as buildings, heating, and power, particularly in rural areas.
- Make retraining of teachers a higher priority, including new teaching methodologies such as bilingual education.
- Increase teaching resources available to schools, such as improved classroom materials and textbooks, and real access to computers.
- Encourage critical thinking in students by improving the quality of teaching, textbooks and methodologies, including the use of classroom interaction instead of rote learning.
- Tackle corruption by enforcing greater transparency in examinations through national examination systems outside the control of individual teachers.
- Balance the rising financial strain on parents with increased involvement in school management by parent groups.

Social Integration

- Allow the formation of youth-based organisations free of state control and with real access to decision-making.
- Allow and encourage the formation of youth-oriented electronic and print media dealing with issues from the viewpoint of young people.

Economic prospects

- Develop training opportunities and strong economic incentives for young entrepreneurs and ease restrictions on registration of businesses and access to financing.
- Encourage links between higher education and the job market, including work experience programs and incentives for companies to hire students.

To donors

- Provide greater resources for improved school infrastructure (with tighter control over expenditure).
- Provide greater resources for improved teacher retraining, particularly in new methodologies that are designed to boost critical thinking and involve more open methods of interacting with students.
- Provide greater resources for teaching, including textbooks, classroom materials, and equipment, and link provision of computers and other equipment with follow-up and training.

³¹⁴ <http://www.un.org/esa/earthsummit/uzbek-cp.htm>

³¹⁵ ICP Regional Report, An Exploration of Movements Toward National Youth Service Policy in 15 Countries in Eastern Europe and the Balkans, Findings from the *Global Youth Service Policy Scan, June 2006, p.16*

³¹⁶ <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=2342&l=1> 2003.

- Increase programs designed to boost school attendance in poor, rural areas, including school food programs, and design incentives for female students to complete schooling.
- Minimise risk of a complete collapse in higher education for young people by establishing special study abroad educational programs for them, including those who have already left the country.
- Provide greater resources for sports and leisure facilities for youth, focusing on local, low-cost initiatives, and support efforts to establish young groups, youth clubs and youth NGOs.