

# Eastern Partnership Youth Policy Analytic Report

## Report Summary

December 2015

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This publication has been produced with the assistance of the European Union.  
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## Introduction

The 'Eastern Partnership Youth Policy Analytic Report' (EYPAR) was prepared between September and December 2015, following a request by the European Commission (DG NEAR) to provide a study on youth policy developments in the EaP region<sup>1</sup>. The report was developed under the framework of the Eastern Partnership Youth Regional Unit Project (EPYRU)<sup>2</sup>, and is based on data available from this project, as well as other relevant sources identified for this purpose.

The report includes information on the current legal frameworks for youth policies in each of the six EaP countries (Republic of Armenia, Republic of Azerbaijan, Republic of Belarus, Georgia, Republic of Moldova, and Ukraine) and analyses the current situation on mainstreaming youth issues across relevant policy spheres in EaP region, with a particular focus on youth employment policies. These are accompanied by references and examples of good practice of cross sectoral cooperation and recommendations on youth policy development and possible measures of EU support.

The current document provides a brief summary of the information contained in the EYPAR.

## Aims and Impact

The main aim of the report is to set out the current state of youth policy in all six EaP countries, using the EU Youth Strategy 2010-2018<sup>3</sup> framework and benchmarks in four policy areas: employment and entrepreneurship, education and training, social inclusion and participation of young people in youth policy-making. Furthermore, the report identifies gaps and provides recommendations on effective mechanisms for horizontal, cross-sectoral cooperation in these areas, as well as for general implementation and evidence-based policy-making.

By determining elements that are considered essential for developing youth policies, the report seeks to inform policy, research and practice across the EaP region and to serve as a basis for development of more comprehensive (evidence-based, participatory and cross-sectoral) national youth policies and deeper EU-EaP co-operation, notably within the EaP multilateral thematic platform IV (people-to-people contacts)<sup>4</sup>.

The results and recommendations provided by this report may also be used:

- As a basis for allocation of tasks and responsibilities to the new EaP youth programme 2016-2019;
- For the preparation of a possible framework for youth policy support by the donor community;
- To support already established working relationships with all EaP youth-related institutions aiming at enhancing cross-sectoral policy cooperation in the region.

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<sup>1</sup> Eastern Partnership: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine

<sup>2</sup> For more information please visit the project website: [www.eapyouth.eu](http://www.eapyouth.eu)

<sup>3</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/youth/policy/youth\\_strategy/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/youth/policy/youth_strategy/index_en.htm)

<sup>4</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/education/international-cooperation/eastern-partnership\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/education/international-cooperation/eastern-partnership_en.htm)

## Methodology and Research Dimensions

### Key Terms

#### Youth policy

The purpose of youth policy is to create conditions for learning, opportunity and experience which ensure and enable young people to develop the knowledge, skills and competences to be actors of democracy and to integrate into the society, in particular, by playing an active part in both civil society and the labour market. The key measures of youth policies are to promote citizenship learning and the integrated policy approach.<sup>5</sup>

#### Evidence-based youth policy

Evidence-based youth policy concerns the use of research to define policy, above all at the level of directives and measures, by allowing policymakers to be informed and to discuss relevant matters before decisions are made and actions defined<sup>6</sup>. It should guarantee that directives and measures are based on concrete evidence, experience and knowledge about the lives of young people through a continued cycle of cooperation between researchers, policy makers and youth work. Evidence-based policy-making requires the involvement of a range of stakeholders including NGOs as well as the organised and non-organised young people themselves. Ideally, the results are shared with other relevant policy fields in order to ensure a multifaceted perspective on youth specific issues and to promote cooperation across different policy sectors in a dynamic fashion.

#### Cross-sectoral cooperation

Youth policy includes a number of components going beyond traditional policy sectors, e.g. education, employment and health. The need to find ways of co-ordinating policies across different sectors is essential for quality youth policy. Integrated youth policies require multi-stakeholder cooperation and coordination on matters related to young people across different sectors.

#### Conceptual framework and guiding questions

To enable a logical flow of the analytical process, the report follows a single conceptual framework for policy analysis, seeking to answer five guiding questions:

1. What is the situation of young people in the country? How does the broader country context (social, political, cultural and economic situation of the country) influence the situation of young people?
2. What are the public policies and programmes (including cross sectoral policy cooperation) that are most relevant to the situation of young people? How are they developed? How far are they based on evidence? (this will not be limited to 'youth policy' only)
3. Which impact do these policies and programmes have on young people? How are these monitored and evaluated? (within the targeted key policy areas)
4. Which elements of policies and programmes are missing or need further attention and support?
5. What support measures and procedures can be identified to improve youth policy and youth programming at national and regional level?

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<sup>5</sup> REF: *Siurala, Lasse (2005): European framework of youth policy*

<sup>6</sup> M. Molgat, E. Boudreau, M. Hahn-Bleibtreu: 'Researchers, research and the development of youth policy: some considerations about the nature of evidence' in Youth Policy in a Changing World, Opladen, Berlin, Toronto 2012

These questions form the main analytical framework of this report and facilitate an analysis of the situation of young people embedded in the wider socio-political context of each country.

### **EU Youth Strategy 2010-2018**

The EU Youth Strategy 2010-2018 is a key reference document for the report for two reasons: The Strategy has played a substantial role in EPYRU's operations, and it is increasingly considered as a basis for the development of national youth strategies within EU-EaP cooperation.

The EU Youth Strategy is action-based and covers eight policy areas<sup>7</sup> which are also priority issues for youth policy development in the EaP countries.

Policy development is based on the following principles: evidence-based policy-making, mutual learning, regular progress-reporting, dissemination of results and monitoring, structured dialogue with young people and youth organisations and mobilisation of EU programmes and funds. This strategy sees youth work as a support to all fields of action and cross-sectoral cooperation as an underlying principle.

The strategy has two main objectives:

1. To provide more and equal opportunities for young people in education and the job market
2. To encourage young people to actively participate in society.

According to the strategy, these objectives shall be achieved through a dual approach including:

- Specific youth initiatives, targeted at young people to encourage non-formal learning, participation, voluntary activities, youth work, mobility and information,
- 'Mainstreaming' cross-sector initiatives that ensure youth issues are taken into account when formulating, implementing and evaluating policies and actions in other fields with a significant impact on young people, such as education, employment or health and well-being.

### **Key policy areas and benchmarks**

The activities conducted under the framework of EPYRU have closely matched to EU priorities in the sphere of youth, particularly in the areas:

- Employability, skills development, and lifelong learning
- Social inclusion of youth and access to services and opportunity
- Health, including healthy lifestyles
- Promotion of participation in democratic life and active citizenship of young people.

Due to time constraints for collecting primary level data as well as limited amount of available secondary level data, EYPAR pays particular attention to benchmarks set under three EU youth strategy policy areas: 'Employment and Entrepreneurship', 'Education and Training' and 'Social Inclusion'. Participation, as a fourth policy area, is primarily analysed with regard to involvement

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<sup>7</sup> EU Youth Strategy 2010-2018 – Eight key policy areas: Education & Training, Employment & Entrepreneurship, Health & Well-being, Participation, Voluntary activities, Social Inclusion, Youth & the world, Creativity & Culture.

of young people in youth policy elaboration, implementation and evaluation. EYPAR prioritises employment issues as a core priority area of ENP East programme in the field of youth<sup>8</sup>.

### **Benchmarks**

The report tests each of the three targeted policy areas according to benchmarks identified under the framework of EU youth strategy 2010-2018.

Particular attention is given to official measures (processes, programmes, policies, strategies etc.) which:

#### *Policy area: Employment and Entrepreneurship*

- Address the concerns of young people in employment strategies;
- Invest in skills employers look for;
- Develop career guidance and counselling services;
- Promote opportunities to work and train abroad;
- Support quality internships/apprenticeships;
- Improve childcare and shared family responsibilities;
- Encourage entrepreneurship

#### *Policy area: Education and Training*

- Ensure equal access to high quality education and training
- Develop youth work and other non-formal learning opportunities
- Provide links between formal education and non-formal learning
- Improve the transition between education and training and the job market
- Reduce early school leaving

#### *Policy area: Social inclusion*

- Realise the full potential of youth work and youth centres as a means of inclusion;
- Encourage a cross-sector approach to address exclusion in areas such as education, employment and social inclusion;
- Support the development of intercultural awareness and combat prejudice;
- Support information and education for young people about their rights;
- Address the issues of homelessness, housing, and poverty;
- Promote access to quality services – e.g. transport, e-inclusion, health, and social services;
- Promote specific support for young families.

### **Methodological approach**

As the goal of this report is to provide recommendations for further support to evidence-based youth policy within EaP, a comprehensive approach for the review of the youth policies at national level has been adopted.

To answer the key research questions a conceptual and comparative framework was developed and later partly adapted to specific country context. Particular attention was paid to evidence and good practice.

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<sup>8</sup> REGULATION (EU) No 232/2014 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 11 March 2014 -Establishing a European Neighbourhood Instrument.

Whilst there are varying levels of information available in each of the countries, a common approach was adopted for all countries to ensure consistency in the results achieved. The report team has applied a mixed-method approach based on using both primary and secondary level information.

These include:

- Review and analysis of existing documents gathered by EPYRU as well as additional documents collected during the desk phase<sup>9</sup>.
- Conducting semi-structured background and individual interviews with key stakeholders (line ministries, youth organisations, young people) at a national level<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>9</sup> Please refer to Annex 1 for complete list of documents

<sup>10</sup> Please refer to the Annex 2 for complete list of key stakeholders

## Eastern Partnership Youth Policy Analytical Report - Conclusions

The EaP Youth Policy Analytical Report is divided into following four sections:

1. Key terms and major areas of concern.
2. Conceptual framework and key research dimensions.
3. National Youth Policy Report of each EaP country: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine, including an overview of demographics, youth policy frameworks, sectoral policies (employment and entrepreneurship, education and training, social inclusion and participation), evidence-based approaches to policy-making, mainstreaming youth across policy sectors, conclusions and recommendations
4. Regional conclusions and recommendations in the fields of: demographics and statistical evidence (EU Youth Indicators), policy, key issues and challenges and areas of EU-EaP co-operation.

In addition to the detailed information provided concerning recent youth policy developments and possible recommendations for improvement within each national report, the following key conclusions were made with regard to the situation across the entire region.

### Summary of Regional Statistical Conclusions

- All EaP countries have legal definitions of ‘youth’ and/or ‘young people’ and youth is a visible statistical category.
- Statistical information is often incompatible with official definitions of youth.
- Most countries of the region have a range of definitions of vulnerable groups across different sectors of public policy but vulnerable groups are often not clearly identified at the level of youth policy.
- Definitions and methodologies of data collection in the areas of employment, education and training as well as social inclusion vary greatly between countries of the region, making a regional comparison of compatible indicators difficult. Comparable EU youth indicators are mostly not available, while each country follows its own logic and understanding in these areas.
- The proportion of young people in Eastern Partnership dropped across the region between 2011 and 2014 yet it remains at above the EU average.
- Most of young people in the region live in cities, but rural youth remain a significant part of the youth population in most countries.

### Summary of Regional Policy Conclusions

#### Youth policy documentation and legal framework

- Youth policy in the entire Eastern Partnership region is a highly dynamic policy area and the legal basis for youth policy has grown considerably over the last couple of years. All six countries of the region are currently in the process implementing a series of updated national youth programmes and policy action plans.
- Most key youth policy documents identify similar priority areas.

## Youth policy implementation and coordination

- Implementation and co-ordination mechanisms vary greatly from country to country.
- With the exception of Azerbaijan, funding opportunities open to all youth organisations are very limited and the granting process is not always transparent across the entire region.
- A strong imbalance can be observed between the centralised (government-level) and decentralized (regional) activities.

## Cross-sectoral cooperation

- Majority of the national action plans and programmes developed in support of youth policy implementation in the EaP countries have a clear cross-sectoral nature but the approach itself and related terminology have not yet found universal acceptance among all stakeholders.
- There is a tendency among governmental administration to favour inter-ministerial co-operation over cross-sectoral co-operation and to confuse the two terms.
- Non-governmental stakeholders are only sporadically involved.

## Evidence-based youth policy-making

- Evidence-based youth policy has become a common term across the EaP region and can be found in most of the key policy documents.
- Lack of a shared understanding of the term ‘youth research’ is a common issue across all countries of the region. Regular youth research lacks substance and is mostly limited to analysis of official statistical data.
- Mechanisms for youth policy monitoring and evaluation are often nominally part of administrative procedures but there is very limited evidence of permanent mechanisms for continued collection of data, monitoring and evaluation.
- Lack of political will as well as low general understanding of evidence-based policy at different levels including both government and local/community level is a significant obstacle for youth policy development.

## Participation of young people in policy cycle

- Youth participation is one of the key priorities identified within youth policy documents in the Eastern Partnership region. However, while countries declare that participation is an important priority, there is little evidence of its implementation.
- Participation of young people in the youth policy cycle is mostly limited to the implementation phase, with little evidence of participation of young people in policy development or evaluation.
- Most participation measures remain ad hoc and mostly aimed at organised youth through youth organisations.

## Youth employment and entrepreneurship policies

- Youth employment is a key policy priority in the region.
- Comprehensive policy frameworks for youth employment (with a clear set of policy priorities, targets and outcomes) are rare within youth policy documents; where relevant programmes exist they are very limited in scope and outreach.

- Career guidance is a key measure across all countries; it is often linked with higher education institutions, with a focus on university graduates and students.
- There is a tendency across the region to improve employment and employability at regional/rural level through the provision of opportunities for apprenticeship and through youth work camps.
- Emphasis tends to be placed more on supply side measures, while interventions to increase labour demand for youth (investing in skills employers look for) are less frequent, especially at rural level.
- Lack of cross-sectoral approach in policy cooperation in addition to conflicting priorities in various policies and action plans lead to repetition of actions, lack of coherence and low impact of these measures.
- Young entrepreneurs face numerous challenges mainly of financial nature (e. g. insufficient start-up capital, high taxation rates and not favourable credit conditions) while few initiatives address these challenges.

### Education and training policies

- Regulations for ensuring that young people have equal access to high quality education and training are in place in most of the EaP countries.
- Considerable obstacles hinder access to education for young people with fewer opportunities, including those with disabilities and those from rural and deprived areas.
- Although there are measures in place to increase capacity and staff training, the impact and efficiency of such measures cannot be measured due to lack of reporting.
- Most of the EaP countries have already started to develop frameworks to ensure recognition of youth work and non-formal education as well as assuring quality in these areas.
- Measures for improving the transition between education and training and the job market are limited in scope and outreach.
- Reducing early school leaving is not a policy priority.

### Social inclusion policies

- Definitions and approaches to social inclusion vary greatly between countries of the region.
- Sporadic endeavours have been identified for establishing or reviving regional and local youth centres.
- It is not clear whether some youth centres are used as an infrastructure for political and government purposes or to support social inclusion of young people.
- Lack of youth work expertise is a major risk and hinders effective use of youth centres.
- Lack in cross-sectoral approach in addressing exclusion - priority is given to protection rather than active inclusion.
- Measures addressing homelessness and poverty as well as promoting access to services are scarce.
- Good support is provided regarding improvement of personal health (although with no youth-specific focus) other support areas lack efficiency and do not clearly consider poverty issues.

## **Key issues and problems to be addressed**

### **Cross-sectoral cooperation**

- Despite numerous efforts (including capacity-building activities implemented in the framework of EPYRU) to mainstream youth issues and improve cooperation across different sectors, the line ministries in charge of youth face considerable difficulties in development and implementation of adequate cross-sectoral frameworks. This is partially due to limited understanding and tradition in cross-sectoral cooperation (also in other policy areas), also possibly due to the use of inadequate methodologies incompatible with the national nature of political characteristics of each country, and due to low capacities of respective bodies created (e.g. Inter-ministerial councils) in terms of knowledge and scope. A major problem resulting from these difficulties is particularly related to inconsequent budgetary agreements making long-term planning of such cooperation vague and unpredictable.

### **Youth work and youth policy implementation at regional level**

- Strong centralisation of public policies across all EaP countries, without due consideration for regional needs, combined with frictions between national and local norms and regulations are key administrative obstacles in the process of implementation of youth policies at regional/local level.
- Low capacities and competencies in reaching out to young people, especially those with fewer opportunities and in need of social support are the main gaps identified at regional level for providing and enhancing social inclusion of young people.
- National youth policy documents pay little attention to regional issues. This is due to two major causes: lack of knowledge of local issues and little presence of local representatives in decision making and policy elaboration.

### **Evidence-based policy-making**

- Lack of understandings of the term derives from general confusion among the line ministries with regards to 'youth information'. Different institutions still have different understandings of the term 'youth', their age/gender specific problems and needs, and above all categorization - e.g. living environment, educational background, social and economic background, health and mental status.
- Regular youth research lacks substance and is mostly limited to analysis of official statistical data - often incompatible with youth policy definitions. Research pursued by external agencies is frequently outdated and unsustainable as it depends on external institutions' agendas, goals and funding. These lack consistency in data collection standards and setting relevant indicators compatible with national youth policies.
- Mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation of existing youth policy instruments have significant shortcomings. There is very limited evidence of permanent mechanisms for continued collection of data, monitoring and evaluation of youth policy across the whole EaP region. Both governmental and non-governmental institutions involved in policy development and implementation lack basic expertise and capacity in monitoring and the use of evaluation methodologies.

## **Participation of young people in the youth policy cycle**

- Youth participation in the entire youth policy cycle is low. Most participation measures are ad hoc, do not follow long-term strategies and above all their impact is unknown due to lack of monitoring measures. Youth often plays only a consultative role, and there is little evidence of meaningful and responsible participation of young people in policy elaboration or their involvement in monitoring and evaluation of youth policies. Participatory measures are not comprehensive, as they often neglect non-active and non-organised youth and a range of independent stakeholders.

## **Areas of EU-EaP cooperation**

The report team recommends six potential areas for EU-EaP cooperation:

1. Enhancing monitoring and evaluation capacities of line ministries with particular focus on long-term, regular and strategic monitoring and evaluation.
2. Supporting the establishment of sustainable, comprehensive and effective youth research structures at national and regional level as well as increasing understanding and capacities among all stakeholders (line ministries, NGOs) in ensuring evidence-based approach to youth policy.
3. Support in establishing a regional (EaP) youth policy monitoring structure offering support in youth policy development in the region, with a focus on evidence-based policy-making, monitoring, evaluation and participation.
4. Strengthening decentralized action and responsibility at local and regional level.
5. Improving capacities of local and regional youth NGOs in good governance and cooperation with local/regional authorities.
6. Enhancing competences of young people in participation methods and decision-making.

## Regional recommendations for Eastern Partnership policy-makers

### Implementation

- 1) *Enhancing communication strategies both within the sector and outside of it*  
Improved internal communication is necessary for greater inter-agency and cross-sectoral co-operation (see below). External communication should consider systematic and planned use of accessible media and youth-oriented channels, including new media and interactive tools accessible to all audiences, regardless of their background and skills.
- 2) *Greater consideration for local needs and modalities*  
Policy-making processes need to consider local needs and specificity of local communities. The processes should include stakeholders from across all relevant domains such as civil society organisations, local youth councils and youth work institutions, among others. Greater emphasis needs to be placed on local measures in national youth policy instruments. It should be complemented by capacity-building measures for local stakeholders in youth policy development mechanisms.
- 3) *Greater consideration for social inclusion, including young people with fewer opportunities and those from rural and deprived urban areas.*  
Youth policy needs to consider the needs of socially excluded and vulnerable groups. Youth policy instruments need to include clear inclusion mechanisms. This needs to be preceded by thorough research and evidence-gathering on their characteristics and needs.
- 4) *Enhancing the capacity of policy-making institutions and developing staff competences.*  
Youth policy-making bodies need to have relevant resources and capacity to assure a high quality policy cycle. This can be achieved by capacity-building and strengthening the position of line ministries vis a vis other public bodies, and developing staff competences in all aspects of youth policy.
- 5) *Enhancing the recognition of youth work and non-formal learning*  
Youth work is an essential component of the youth policy cycle. Youth work sector needs greater recognition, capacity and support. Non-formal learning needs greater recognition and relevant validation tools, including those relevant to volunteering.

### Cross-sectoral cooperation

- 1) *Reducing bureaucratic obstacles in favour of higher efficiency*  
Cross-sectoral co-operation is essential for effective and impactful youth policy. The awareness of its relevance should be increased among youth policy actors, and greater emphasis should be placed on less bureaucratic implementation versus more efficiency.
- 2) *Going beyond inter-agency and cross-institutional work*  
Systematic cross-sectoral co-operation at all stages of the policy cycle and at all levels (local, national and regional) is crucial for effectively addressing all needs of young people. It should go beyond inter-agency and cross-institutional work and consider systematic and meaningful involvement of non-governmental actors as partners and resources.

## **Evidence-based youth policy-making**

### *1) Enhancing data collection measures*

Quality data (including statistics) is essential to youth policy development. Policy-makers should consider a unified regional approach to youth policy indicators to improve compatibility of data. A greater focus on detailed and tailored youth policy data is necessary, including closer co-operation between statistical institutions and youth policy institutions.

### *2) Enhancing youth research*

Independent and robust research on youth issues should be the foundation of policy development. Policy-making institutions should ensure that they have relevant research expertise, either internal or external. Research needs to be clearly considered and its results integrated in the policy-making process.

### *3) Enhancing monitoring and evaluation mechanisms*

Comprehensive monitoring and evaluation mechanisms need to be built into the policy-making cycle right from the onset. Monitoring measures should be regular and independent. Evaluation results should be duly recorded and considered in future policy development. Measuring impact should always be part of the policy cycle and inform policy developments.

## **Participation of young people in youth policy-making**

### *1) Full participation of young people in youth policy-making*

Young people should have a key role in the policy-making process. Voices of young people regardless of their background, institutional or political affiliation should be considered at all stages of the policy cycle through a structured and comprehensive policy dialogue.

### *2) Capacity-building for participation*

Active youth participation is in the best interest of both young people themselves and policy-makers. The latter should thus ensure that young people and participation channels (organisations, groups, institutions) have appropriate capacity and tools at their disposal.