

## **THE CONCEPT of Youth Policy for 2020-2030**

### **1. General assessment of the current situation**

The National Development Strategy of the Kyrgyz Republic for 2018-2040, approved by Presidential Decree No. 221 of October 31, 2018 (hereinafter the National Strategy), established that Kyrgyzstan will strive to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals adopted by United Nations General Assembly Resolution 70/1 of September 25, 2015.

According to the National Strategy, human development is the basis of state policy in the social sphere, economy, social protection and pension insurance, health care, education and science, youth policy.

In order to implement the National Strategy and the Sustainable Development Goals, it is envisaged to actively involve young people in the development of the country, creating an effective system of youth development for the full implementation of state youth policy.

State youth policy is primarily aimed at providing opportunities for youth to develop human potential, the formation of youth as a major resource for the development of the state and society, the promotion of youth initiatives in the political, economic and social spheres, the formation of a responsible attitude of young citizens to their health, ancestral heritage, interaction with the world around them and their own decisions.

An integral system of measures to support youth initiatives and the social adaptation of certain categories of youth (young families, young people in difficult life situations) should be created; individual programs, mechanisms and models of state and business investment in the development of the most capable, gifted and talented young people should be prepared and implemented.

In accordance with the Program of activities of the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic, approved by the Resolution of the Jogorku Kenesh of the Kyrgyz Republic on April 20, 2018 № 2377-VI, in the youth sphere should be approved and provided with resources a full youth development policy that takes into account the priorities of value orientation, and involvement of the most active strata of youth to jointly counteract the threats of alien propaganda and destructive ideologies, including through the promotion of information and media literacy.

To implement these policy documents, the Concept of Youth Policy for 2020-2030 (hereinafter referred to as the Concept) was developed, which is a strategic document designed to respond to the challenges facing the Kyrgyz Republic in youth development and define the goals, priorities and tools of state policy in relation to youth.

The key provisions of the Concept are based on the results of the national research "Index of Youth Wellbeing and Development in the Kyrgyz Republic. The Youth Well-being and Development Index in the Kyrgyz Republic is an innovative tool for our country in assessing the situation in the youth sphere. It is based on international tools to determine the Global Youth

Development Index and Youth Well-Being Index, adapted to the conditions of the Kyrgyz Republic.

The concept defines long-term benchmarks for the development of youth policy actors, as well as the parameters of investment in youth programs, projects, public youth associations and youth policy infrastructure. The concept is inter-sectoral in nature and involves close inter-agency cooperation in its implementation.

Youth is currently a strategic resource for the development of the state, which contains a huge socio-economic, cultural, creative and scientific potential.

The concept considers young people as an active subject of transformation of society, the driver of development and leadership of the country, as well as the object of socialization, a valuable human resource for economic growth and the welfare of generations. The development of an independent personality of a young citizen, the formation of his positive outlook and competences in demand are recognized as the main priorities. Young people from all regions of the country actively participated in the drafting and discussion of the Concept.

According to the Law of the Kyrgyz Republic "On the Fundamentals of State Youth Policy," young people include citizens of the Kyrgyz Republic and stateless persons aged 14 to 28.

According to the National Statistical Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic, as of January 1, 2018, the population of the country was 6 million 256 thousand 730 people, including 1 million 610 thousand 309 young people (25.7% of the total population). As a percentage, this represents 50.9 per cent of men and 49.1 per cent of women. At the same time, there is a downward trend in the number of young people: at the beginning of 2017, the proportion of young people was about 27%. Every year about 350 thousand young people enter the labor market, which requires the creation of jobs to provide them with jobs. The local labor market is unable to provide all young people with jobs, forcing young people to migrate to other countries.

It is expected that by 2020 a steady decline in the share of births of children will begin. The share of the adult and elderly population in the population structure will grow, which will entail serious social, economic and political transformations, for which both the governance system and young people themselves must be prepared.

Earlier, the state adopted a number of strategic documents on the development of youth policy.

In particular, the National Program "Jashtyk" on development of youth in Kyrgyzstan till 2010 approved by Presidential Decree #152 of 18 June 2000, National Program "Kyrgyzstan Jashtary" for 2006-2008 and Concept of development of state youth policy of Kyrgyz Republic till 2010 approved by Presidential Decree #173 of 14 April 2006 were implemented.

In addition, to date, the Program of the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic "Development of Youth Policy for 2017-2020", approved by the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic on August 10, 2017 № 471, most of the activities of which are actually implemented, except for the development of the draft Concept of Youth Policy for 2020-2030.

However, it should be recognized that the previous strategic documents were of a sectoral nature and in practice it proved impossible to organize the activities of various stakeholders in the government and non-government sectors.

An important step in solving this problem was the resumption of the Youth Affairs Council under the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic. This Council was formed to ensure the constructive and coordinated work of state agencies, local self-government bodies, and public associations to implement state youth policy. It has an important role to play in developing recommendations to strengthen and expand relations between state bodies, local self-government bodies, and public, youth, and international organizations on youth development.

## 2. Achievements and challenges

Along with the successes achieved, various issues of youth development remain relevant. First of all, it is necessary to move away from the idea of a monolithic concept of "youth," which consists of many groups with specific needs and problems of a gender, age, social, economic, cultural, and political nature.

This is clearly demonstrated by the data of the National Statistical Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic, the findings of research, including international ratings, and expert assessments. The real state of the youth sphere is reflected in the results of the national research "Youth Wellbeing and Development Index", which was measured in 2017 at the request of the State Agency for Youth, Physical Culture and Sports under the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic by the public association "Youth Development Institute". The final value of the Index of Well-being and Development of Youth in the Kyrgyz Republic was 0.53 (with the ideal value of 1), which was calculated based on the values of the Index of Well-being and Development of Youth in the Kyrgyz Republic in the following areas: civic participation - 0.51, economic opportunities - 0.32, education and science - 0.66, culture - 0.36, health - 0.52, information and communication technologies - 0.51, safety and security - 0.71, family - 0.62.

In the sphere of civic participation, we should note the insufficient level of coverage of youth in social and political activities, such as representation of youth in political parties, interaction of youth with representatives of public administration, both executive and legislative bodies of state power. Young people do not see themselves in political activity and believe that their rights and freedoms are not fully respected.

It is important to note that young people see the creation of conditions for self-realization, the need to take into account the needs of young people and reflect them in state programs/plans, and the need to encourage/encourage youth organizations as goals of youth policy.

Despite the existence of a legislative base in the sphere of youth policy, there are a number of problems in the issues of funding.

Economic opportunities for youth require more attention from the state.

Currently, there are not sufficient conditions to create a positive balance of migration. Despite the measures taken, the level of youth migration remains high. This indicates that in the migration balance the number of those who want to live and realize themselves abroad prevails than in our country. The reasons for this situation are the country's weak position in indicators: innovation potential (123rd place), market size (121st place), competitiveness of companies (119th place), state of infrastructure (113th place).

Low-paying jobs do not allow young people to have income to support development, as a large share of it is spent to support basic needs. This is due to the general situation of low labor productivity, the lack of experience and skills of young people, as well as the mismatch of skills with current labor market needs. At the same time, in all age groups the employment rate of men is higher than the employment rate of women.

Currently in the Kyrgyz Republic there is a significant level of unemployment among young people than in the country as a whole among all age groups.

According to the National Statistical Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic, the number of unemployed in the 15-29 age group tends to decrease. The number of unemployed 15-19 years old was 22.3 thousand people in 2016, from 20-29 years old - 79.6 thousand people. It should be noted that the number of the unemployed aged 15-19 years has been decreasing at a faster rate since 2013. The 20-29 age group is the most numerous and accounts for about 43% of the total number of the unemployed.

Youth entrepreneurship is an important resource for the development of small and medium-sized businesses. Young entrepreneurs are more receptive to innovation and have a greater propensity to take risks in business. The majority of young people in Kyrgyzstan show an unpreparedness to start their own businesses. Among the reasons that prevent young people from starting and successfully running their own businesses, the most important are the lack of appropriate education, inaccessible and expensive credit, and legal illiteracy.

Despite the fact that the Kyrgyz Republic shows good results in a number of indicators in education and science, there are still problems such as the overall rate of coverage of youth education, which is only 62.2%, i.e. about 37.8% of young people do not study in schools, professional lyceums, colleges.

Young people are engaged in housekeeping, work at enterprises, employment, or are employees. Young people of school age (15-17) mostly work in family businesses or as employees. Older youth (18 and older) are more likely to be employed, in businesses, or to be employees. Their diversion from education is due to low household incomes, forcing them to leave educational institutions.

Another problem is the quality of education due to the lack of qualifications of teachers in the system of secondary and higher vocational education, the state of the educational and production infrastructure, which needs to be updated and overhauled, and insufficient information support for school education.

The sphere of culture represents the most problematic area in working with young people. Only 16% of young people read books or visit cultural sites (theaters, museums, exhibitions). The main reasons for this situation: young people are extremely poorly informed about the significance and role of culture in the socio-cultural and psychological formation of a person; the culture of youth behavior in the leisure sphere is not formed; insufficient influence of parents and other significant environment, who practically do not give time to cultural leisure.

Only 58.6% of young people are covered with cultural activities, i.e. about 41.4% of young people do not attend cinemas, theaters, museums, libraries, exhibitions, hobby groups. It should be taken into account that young people in their free time mostly work part-time or help their parents with household chores. At the same time, 7.5% mostly spend their time in social networks and computer games. In addition, approximately 8% of youth attend religious institutions daily (or several times a week), and approximately 12% of all youth attend every Friday.

The state expenditures on culture are dominated by expenditures on salaries of cultural workers, but not on the purchase of books, museum exhibits, and theatrical props.

The state of culture of the youth is evident from the negative manifestations that take place in a number of communities, first of all in the cities. The older generation speaks of the irresponsibility of some young people, which manifests itself in the inability to manage their resources, often reinforced by a dependant attitude towards the state and parents; asocial manifestations and marginalization are increasing. This situation can lead to a decrease in the ability to work and economic activity in the future.

The health of young people in the Kyrgyz Republic also requires more concentrated attention, both from the state and from young people themselves.

The structure of morbidity among young people is largely related to the current socio-economic situation in our country. Tuberculosis, HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted infections are in the first place in the structure of causes of infectious diseases among the young population. Thus, as of July 1, 2019, of all registered cases of HIV infection in the country among citizens of the Kyrgyz Republic (8,711 cases) 29.71% accounted for young people aged 15-29 years. One of the most frequent causes of death among the young working-age population of the country remains mortality due to external causes. Reproductive health is an important component of young people's

health. The teen pregnancy rate is 50 per 1,000 women of this age, according to the 2018 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey. However, this rate in rural areas is 2 times higher than in urban areas. In rural areas, the rate is 64 and in urban areas it is 32 per 1,000 women. This points to the importance of sexuality education among adolescents, improving the provision of health services and information for young people, which are necessary to improve health, including reproductive health and the socioeconomic well-being of young people. Prevention of early pregnancy is an important intervention to improve maternal health and reduce maternal and infant mortality.

Most young people do not care about their health. Young people, especially in the regions, are poorly informed about healthy lifestyles. There is an increase in congenital anomalies and neoplasms. Measures should be taken to change the situation in which the share of young people who lead an active lifestyle is low and less than 30% of young people have access to infrastructure for physical exercise and sports. The share of young people who regularly and "occasionally" engage in physical culture and sports is 36%.

The provision of clean drinking water also has a direct impact on young people's health. According to data of the National Statistical Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic, the share of population with sustainable access to clean drinking water is 89.1%. At the same time, access of population to clean water worsened compared to 2012, when the indicator was 93.2%. The reasons for incomplete provision of access to clean drinking water are lack of funding within the framework of public investment of water supply systems, the high cost of building water supply infrastructure in highland and remote settlements.

The sphere of information and communication technologies in the Kyrgyz Republic is developing dynamically, but it is obvious that the country still lacks infrastructure, information technology, especially in rural areas. We should recognize the generally low level of coverage of young people with Internet access, even taking into account the uptrend of the past few years.

At the end of 2016, according to the International Telecommunication Union, Internet access in the Kyrgyz Republic for the entire population did not exceed 34.5%. In 2012 the figure was 19.8%, in 2013 - 23%, in 2014 - 28.3%, in 2015 - 30.25%.

According to a 2015 study by the Internet Society, an international professional organization dedicated to the development and availability of the Internet, the affordability of services, in terms of cost, is one of the two most important barriers to expanding access to the Internet in the Kyrgyz Republic (the other barrier is the relevance of content to the audience). The cost of mobile broadband Internet access in the Kyrgyz Republic averages 10% of monthly income per capita, which exceeds the 5% threshold recommended by the Commission of the International Telecommunication Union and UNESCO on the development of broadband access.

The state educational system does not provide most students with the necessary technical skills in information and communication technologies to continue to be successful in education, employment and functioning in society. Skills include using a computer, tablet and other devices; working with electronic documents, e-mail; searching for and processing information online; knowing basic software; and conducting research using online sources.

Particular attention needs to be paid to the issue of youth mastering the possibilities of the Internet - the individual "digital dividends" for the development of society for self-development, information education, and civic engagement. Only 26% of young people use the Internet to access educational resources, 26.8% to access news and information resources, and 5.7% to obtain government services.

The safety and security of young people in general is not alarming. However, it is important to keep in mind that 2.4% of young people have personally experienced physical, psychological or sexual violence recently.

According to the 2015 International Public Safety Survey in the Kyrgyz Republic, 6.6% of respondents aged 16 to 24 years reported that they had been victims of racketeering - violence or the threat of violence if the victim refuses to comply with the perpetrator's demand - during the past five years.

According to the National Statistical Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic, the number of detected perpetrators of crime among young people (from minors to 29 years old) decreased by more than 10% in 2013-2016.

There is a trend of increasing religiosity among young people and recruitment of young people from the Kyrgyz Republic to violent extremist/terrorist groups, especially in the south of the country.

According to open source data, 863 members of Islamic State(1) between 2010 and June 2016 were citizens of the Kyrgyz Republic, 188 of whom were women.

The family among youth continues to be an important stable social institution. On average, the number of marriages among young people is more than 5 times higher than the number of divorces. A significant proportion of young people (81.7%) plan to start a family. There are some changes in the views of young people related to the form of marriage and family status. The rite of marriage (nikah) is also considered a marriage by 70.5% of men and 64.5% of women of young age (21-30 years old). About 38% of young people (18-30 years old) do not support the legislative initiative to ban religious ceremonies before registration in the civil registry offices. There is a problem of early marriage in the country. According to the 2018 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey, one in 11 teenage girls ages 15-19 are currently married. About 13 percent of women ages 20-24 were first married civilly or formally before age 18. As the results of the survey "Gender in the Perception of Society" show, bride kidnapping is still very widespread. Throughout the Kyrgyz Republic, 22% of married women have gone through them, and one-third of them have not given their consent. The custom of bride abduction is most widespread in Talas and Issyk-Kul oblasts, where 60% and 45% of married women have undergone it. The highest rate of forced kidnappings (without the woman's consent) was in the Naryn region, where 68% of those abducted had not given their consent.

Young people feel state support for children, but the child allowances they receive are insufficient to cover expenses related to child maintenance and development. Concessional loans and credits for young parents are also unavailable.

Despite the relatively favorable situation with regard to their future, many young people have limited ideas about the future. This is due to the fact that they face a number of barriers that hinder their self-realization. Key development actors perceive young people not as an equal partner, but as an object. This attitude toward young people is present both in the public consciousness and in families. This generates other problems, such as belittling the role of girls, mistrust of young people's decision-making abilities, and so on.

Currently, the most important task for the Kyrgyz Republic is to build human capital. It is formed by investing in improving the level and quality of life of the population, including upbringing, education, health, knowledge (science), entrepreneurial ability, labor information support, citizen and business security, economic freedom, as well as culture, art.

The concept is based on an analysis of the current state of youth policy in the Kyrgyz Republic and the main trends in its development. It identifies the long-term priorities of state youth policy, the achievement of which will form a sustainable basis for the further development of young people, and also identifies target indicators and develops a mechanism for its implementation.

The novelty of the Concept is the complex coordinated approach to its implementation and the focus on specific target indicators linked to the Youth Well-Being and Development Index in the Kyrgyz Republic.

### **3. Purpose and principles of the Concept**

The purpose of this Concept is to create an effective system of youth development, creating conditions for the implementation of state youth policy, the formation of an active civic position and values of young people, providing a stable innovative development of the country, promoting the social development and self-development of young people.

The development of the Concept meets international quality standards for youth policy and is based on the following principles:

- legality - the supremacy of the Constitution of the Kyrgyz Republic, laws in the implementation of the rights of young citizens and their associations;
- the priority of humanistic and patriotic values in the formation and implementation of state youth policy;
- the focus on the all-round development of young people;
- protection of the rights and legitimate interests of young people, non-discrimination of young citizens on age, gender, ethnic and other grounds, equality of conditions for the full participation of youth in the socio-economic, political and cultural life of society;
- expanding opportunities for young people to choose their life paths, achieve personal success, and realize their innovative potential in the interests of social development and young people themselves;
- recognition of the special needs of different groups of young people, especially those in difficult life situations;
- involvement of young citizens in policy formation and implementation;
- openness and transparency in the implementation of measures in the sphere of state youth policy;
- inclusion and coordination of the interests of all citizens and organizations involved in the formation and implementation of state youth policy;
- scientificity - study, analysis and forecasting of the situation in the youth environment to develop measures in the sphere of state youth policy;
- consistency - combining interrelated activities within the framework of state youth policy implementation.

### **4. Priorities**

The achievement of the goal of the Concept will be carried out in three key priority areas, step by step.

Priority direction 1.

Formation and improvement of mechanisms, tools, institutions, enabling the participation of youth in achieving its goals.

Priority direction 2.

Increase the active participation of young people as equal participants in development and responsible decision-making.

Priority direction 3.

Comprehensive and systematic improvement of youth competitiveness.

## **5. Tasks for each of the priorities**

Tasks to achieve the priority 1:

- to conduct on a regular basis an inventory of normative legal acts affecting the interests of youth in order to improve legislation and identify gaps;
- to ensure that decisions are made based on the analysis of the situation in the field of youth policy;
- improve the collection and analysis of data on youth;
- on an ongoing basis to implement the state social order aimed at ensuring the rights and interests of young people;
- to involve young people in the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the Concept;
- to develop and implement national and regional programs for youth development, employment and self-realization of young citizens;
- development of community, student and school self-government, capable of influencing decision-making at all levels.

Tasks to achieve priority 2:

- to raise awareness among policy participants about the rights and needs of youth, the value of their participation in decision-making related to youth;
- create conditions to encourage young people to actively participate in public life;
- create conditions for active participation of local self-government bodies in creating conditions and involving youth in decision-making processes.

Tasks to achieve priority 3:

- Introduce a systematic, result-oriented approach to the upbringing, education, training, invention, and scientific work of young people;
- create a system to support youth initiatives and social adaptation of certain categories of young people;
- to introduce programs, mechanisms and models of investment by the state and business in the development of the most capable, gifted and talented young people;
- to include measures to develop youth entrepreneurship and increase access to financial resources in the strategies and programs of ministries, state committees and administrative departments;
- to increase investment in the formation of cultural values in young people, based on national values and the world's best achievements
- to strengthen work with young people in the digital space, using modern methods;
- to develop young people's citizenship skills (volunteering, civic participation, social activity) and youth cohesion at both republican and local levels, allowing young people to take a civic position and stay away from involvement in destructive and extremist groups.