

## Youth related research paper analysis

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*Work in progress document*

**Note: The document analyzes the Youth Policy documents and policies before Draft Strategy of the RA State Youth Policy for 2021-2025.**

*The extent to which the existing laws, policies, services, and systems are conducive for youth civic engagement and recommend and advocate for appropriate changes, if necessary.*

In general, the research papers studying youth sector in Armenia, show that there are major gaps in youth-related state policies and there is no official or non-official body to coordinate youth related processes in Armenia. Youth sector is defined in sector-specific documents and other youth-related documents<sup>1</sup>. Particularly, Development Strategy of Armenia 2014–2025 and the Program of the Government of the Republic of Armenia 2017–2022, specify and define overall guidance for the sector. Nonetheless, there is a lack of all-inclusive and comprehensive youth policy. Before the revolution in 2018, there were a couple of youth documents, such as Concept of State Youth Policy (1998) and Strategy for the State Youth Policy 2013–2017, however those documents were highly criticized for not being representative and responsive for the youth and did not provide sector specific targets and outcomes for them. Government Programme 2019 has the same issue in regards to youth development strategy. The youth-related sector specified in the document was not developed in a participatory manner and provides only some general objectives for youth, such as enhancement of young people’s social, political, civic, socio-economic and cultural involvement<sup>2</sup>. There are no specific deadlines, deliverables, indicators or a roadmap to measure the policy and its implementation.<sup>3</sup>

Despite the fact that youth related documents have never been responsive to youth needs, until 2019 there was a Youth Studies Institute, which served as a research center to provide data for evidence-based policy making for youth. After the dissolution of the institute, no other institution or body was established to replace YSI<sup>4</sup>.

Another issue stated in the research paper is that youth policy is fragmented and there is no body or platform that coordinates youth policy across various sectors. Previously, this function was fulfilled by Council of Youth Affairs and now, after the dissolution of the latter, the cross-sectoral cooperation is weak<sup>5</sup>. Since 2019, coordination of youth sector in Armenia has been handed to MESCS, however the main functions of the Ministry, as well as its legal and operational grounds are not clear.

Beside the structural and coordination issues of the sector mentioned above, there are other sector-related issues specified in the different research papers, which is not addressed by any policy document. As it is mentioned, the youth policy of Armenia does not incorporate or

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.am.undp.org/content/armenia/en/home/library/the-right-to-a-future--youth-that-transforms-armenia.html>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.am.undp.org/content/armenia/en/home/library/the-right-to-a-future--youth-that-transforms-armenia.html>

<sup>3</sup> <https://pjp-eu.coe.int/documents/42128013/58896112/Armenia-Youth-Wiki-Chapter-5.pdf/356ca22b-b3fe-aff1-360f-a3ee87d8779b>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.am.undp.org/content/armenia/en/home/library/the-right-to-a-future--youth-that-transforms-armenia.html>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.youthpower.org/sites/default/files/YouthPower/files/resources/Armenia%20Brief%20FINAL%2011.19.19.pdf>

highlight international concepts regarding human rights or any human rights' framework to fulfil. Those documents do not specify any vulnerable groups either<sup>6</sup>.

Among many identified issues, one of the youth-related specific areas that is not regulated and was mentioned in most of the research papers is volunteering experience in Armenia. There is no law that regulates volunteering, it does not count as a work experience and there is no mechanism to regulate any aspect of volunteerism. In addition, it is worth mentioning that volunteerism is more popular in civil society sector rather than state or business sectors<sup>7</sup>.

*Current level of youth engagement in civic activities at local and national level to identify key factors contributing to or constraining youth civic participation.*

As mentioned in most of the research papers, the momentum of youth engagement and civic participation has been the Velvet Revolution in 2018. However, neither before nor after the revolution, youth is a part of decision-making processes in Armenia either formally or informally. Because of the lack of effective state channeled mechanism to engage young people in policy making, youth involvement in civic or political activities is mainly constrained to voting, demonstrations and engagement with civil society organizations. The latter is the most common and widespread format, however, due to limitations it does not cover all the various groups of the youth<sup>8</sup>. Another format of youth engagement and participation were civic initiatives mainly common since 2008 and served as a basis for Velvet Revolution in 2018. The main characteristics of this movements and initiatives were protection of public good, cultural and urban spaces, resistance to policies undermining citizens' rights etc. Among those initiatives are Mashtots Park case, public transportation fee etc. However, those civic initiatives would mostly engage young people in Yerevan, leaving younger generation in the regions behind<sup>9</sup>. The relatively increased civic and political participation, mostly in urban spaces, is mainly related to the factor that there are active CSOs, which organize capacity building trainings and initiatives to support youth engagement in decision-making processes. However, this is not a systematic solution and those processes engage only a small segment of young people. There is still a huge segment of younger people who are uninformed and are included neither in formal or informal education. As a result, they are left out of all those processes and their issues are neither heard, nor addressed<sup>10</sup>. To sum up, the main problems that hinder active engagement of youth in decision-making processes is the lack of engagement mechanisms, capacity and knowledge. The main channels are still demonstrations, voting and small scale civic initiatives with the support of CSOs.

*Institutional practices of CSOs and local and national authorities on youth engagement and programming and identify areas for improvement.*

In regards to participation and engagement at national or local level, there is no any legal provision or guideline re the youth consultations. The main mechanisms are legal acts for consultations in general, such as the initiatives to propose a draft law to the National

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.am.undp.org/content/armenia/en/home/library/the-right-to-a-future--youth-that-transforms-armenia.html>

<sup>7</sup> [https://kolba.am/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Labor-market-mapping-in-the-regions-of-Armenia\\_Baseline-Study\\_2019\\_English.pdf](https://kolba.am/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Labor-market-mapping-in-the-regions-of-Armenia_Baseline-Study_2019_English.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.youthpower.org/resources/armenia-youth-situational-analysis>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.am.undp.org/content/armenia/en/home/library/the-right-to-a-future--youth-that-transforms-armenia.html>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.am.undp.org/content/armenia/en/home/library/the-right-to-a-future--youth-that-transforms-armenia.html>

Assembly. At community level, it is a little bit different, however again no specific mechanism for youth. At local level, referendums may be conducted for community-specific issues or an issue can be presented to community council through petitions. The Law of the RA on Local Self Government also stipulates community participation in local public life; however, it should be reviewed for youth participation<sup>11</sup>. In many communities, youth council has been established, which mainly serves as a gathering space for young people. However, those councils have limited resources to serve as a platform for raising youth-related issues. Additionally, they are not accessible for everyone, mainly for the most active ones. In this regard, youth from marginalized or vulnerable groups are not actively involved<sup>12</sup>.

In order to boost youth participation and engagement at regional and local level, Youth Council adjunct to the Governor (Marzpet) was established in 2014. Despite the fact that Youth Councils adjunct to the Governors (Marzpets) function in all marzes/regions, however, they are not active. Those councils have the following working mechanism: they are formed for the period of two years and have two representatives: one is a state body representative and the other represents CS sector from each community of that region. Council meetings are held each quarter<sup>13</sup>.

At local level, communities in Armenia are still in the phase of development and are still weak. “Kinship-based and district-orientated lifestyles are mostly typical of rural and provincial communities”<sup>14</sup>. This kinship-based culture is still present in the communities and shapes the lifestyle and public administration at local level. This phenomenon is especially decisive during local and national elections, when the younger generation are subordinated. Luckily, CSOs at local level, somehow ease that environment by enhancing the capacities of youth and women, marginalized and vulnerable groups. Those young people, who are members of CSOs or participants of youth trainings have a change to alter the traditional mindset. Currently, Armenia has about 400 registered active youth CSOs, 19% of which work on youth issues, 15% deal with human rights problems. Despite the fact that those CSOs play an active role, however, they also face challenges especially when recruiting young girls and women, mostly in small rural areas<sup>15</sup>.

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<sup>11</sup> <https://pjp-eu.coe.int/documents/42128013/58896112/Armenia-Youth-Wiki-Chapter-5.pdf/356ca22b-b3fe-aff1-360f-a3ee87d8779b>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.am.undp.org/content/armenia/en/home/library/the-right-to-a-future--youth-that-transforms-armenia.html>

<sup>13</sup> [https://ystudies.am/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Armenia\\_YouthWiki-Chapter1.pdf](https://ystudies.am/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Armenia_YouthWiki-Chapter1.pdf)

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.am.undp.org/content/armenia/en/home/library/the-right-to-a-future--youth-that-transforms-armenia.html>

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.am.undp.org/content/armenia/en/home/library/the-right-to-a-future--youth-that-transforms-armenia.html>

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