

# Youth in Russia

Review

Moscow, 2010

## **Youth in Russia: a literature review**

### **Resume**

The review has been prepared by Yael Ohana, International Expert at Frankly Speaking Training Development, and edited and adapted by Russian experts in youth studies and youth policy: Val.A.Lukov, Yu.A.Zubok, V.G.Leonov, M.L.Agranovich.

When commissioning the writing of this literature review, the UN Team Group on Youth Policy working in Russia pursued two following goals:

- to support the process of youth policy development in Russia, having determined the key topics and issues which should be in the focus of attention during youth policy discussion by means of critical analysis of the documentation, resources and information from stakeholders who can provide data regarding the priority needs of the youth;
- carry out an extensive review of the literature published during the last five years in Russia and in other countries, both in Russian and English languages, regarding youth in Russia, making an emphasis on the existing and available academic research (both empirical and theoretic), and analyse the youth policy which is being currently implemented in the country from their standpoint.

In the current review the main attention is focused on the following thematic sections which are relevant for characterizing youth policy:

I. DISCUSSIONS REGARDING YOUTH AND THE BASIS FOR YOUTH POLICY IN RUSSIA. Publications have been reviewed in which an attempt is made to present a generalized image of the Russian youth. The approaches of Russian researchers to the development of youth-related theories have been identified. The opinions of the participants of discussions regarding youth policies have been presented.

II. CURRENT STATUS OF THE RUSSIAN YOUTH. In the section “Demography and health” topics related to the demographic crisis, the attitude of youth to family and its reproductive behaviour, the housing problem, the state of health of the youth have been reviewed. In the section “Education and employment” the attention is focused on literature covering problems concerning access to quality education and employment for young people. In the section “Social integration” materials of empirical research and conclusions regarding the adaptation of youth to the social situation are presented, as well as practices of social solidarity and social communication experience

typical for this age group, the perception of their own status by young people, information related to leisure time activities typical among young Russians, their access to leisure infrastructure. On the basis of this research special risks regarding social adaptation have been reviewed, including social orphanhood, homelessness, youth crime.

III. VALUE ORIENTATIONS, IDEOLOGICAL AND POLITICAL PROCESSES AMONG THE YOUTH ENVIRONMENT. In this part of the review research results are presented which disclose the problem of values and value orientations among young people (the hierarchy of youth values, values of national originality, spirituality, patriotism, attitude to military service, orientation towards professional values), as well as a number of problems consolidated in the section “Citizenship”, where the political activity and political culture are considered, the young people’s citizenship, their ability to fulfil civil commitments, the conditions created for their manifestation of their civil engagement, extremist youth subcultures, participation in social life, in decision-making.

These and other issues are presented in the form of an analytical review of the existing literature. A wide range of sources has been used in the review. They included: Russian and international scientific literature sources, in particular the [JSTOR](#); [Muse](#); [SpringerLink](#); [Academic Search Elite](#); [Sage](#); [EcSocMan](#); [EastView](#) databases; (academic) electronic magazines «Russian Education and Society», [Russian Social Science Review](#), [Herald of the Russian Academy of Sciences](#), [Socis](#), [Vlast](#), [Vestnik Obshchestvennogo Mnenia](#), [openDemocracy](#), [Social Reality](#), [Entre Nous](#), [STI Online](#); sources from the Internet which provide an analysis of the current social, economic and cultural development: [Russian Analytical Digest](#); [Russia Profile](#); [EU-Russia Centre](#); [The Woodrow Wilson Center](#); professional literature devoted to youth and youth policy issues: [European Knowledge Centre on Youth Policy](#); [Forum 21 – European Journal on Youth Policy](#), as well as scientific monographs, compilations of scientific papers, articles in scientific literature published in Russia; publications of international organizations dealing with empirical and political analysis: United Nations agencies, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Council of Europe, the European Union; international sources of statistical information and data: the database for statistic data of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, data from the US Population Reference Bureau; publications of specialized NGOs concerned with the interests of children and youth in Russia and throughout the world, as well as related issues, for example: [Doctors of the World](#); [Digital Civil Rights in Europe](#); [Human Rights Watch](#); [Amnesty International](#); [Child Rights Information Network](#) etc.

The results obtained during analytical work with the literature became the basis for general conclusions and recommendations regarding the development of future research in the area of youth and youth policy. These conclusions and recommendations include the following:

1. It has been determined that the main trends in research regarding Russian youth are: Status of Russian youth in the context of its development and the description of various problems related to it; Values of the young people, especially in relation to the so-called 'new Russian reality' of the market economy, the institutes of democracy and law-based government; Citizenship of the young Russians: how the Russian youth understands their relationship with the state and with the nation, as well as with the so-called Russian national values; Educational opportunities for young people in Russia, in the widest sense of the word – from the educational potential of the young population to the functioning of the education system; Demographic problem in Russia, interpreted as the question as to why young Russians do not make the desired contribution to increasing the birth rates.

2. Certain problems have been revealed which 1) have been well studied before earlier and apparently have been entirely left out by contemporary researchers studying youth in Russia; 2) have not been studied in detail; and 3) have not been studied at all. These include such problems as: Subjective experience of what it means to be young in Russia (including gender issues and sexuality issues); Degree of contacts between Russian youth and the outer world (cultural globalization); Relations between Russian youth and the Russian 'near abroad' /former Soviet republics/ and the Russian-speaking communities abroad; (Dynamic) nature of connections between generations and the subjective experience of the youth in this aspect; Nature and character of social interactions among contemporary youth in Russia, including virtual communication channels; Participation of the young people (social, cultural, etc.) in the civil and social life, formal and informal mechanisms of such participation, as well as participation in the official decision-making processes regarding youth policy at the local, regional and federal levels; Lifestyle of modern youth, subcultures, leisure practices, including gender and other aspects; Access issues for young people, including consumption, recreation, education and employment accessibility; Quantitative measurements of the degree of youth problem manifestation (e.g. poor health, drugs, crime, lack of education, sex work) among young people, and in particular among the most vulnerable youth subgroups (homeless youth, youth taken care of through social security, juvenile delinquents, injection drug users, HIV-positive youth).

3. It has been shown that currently research regarding youth in Russia is mostly focused on studying those who are either at the lowest or at the highest steps of the society's social scale. At the same

time, the majority of 'usual' young people are as if dropped out from the field of vision. This is proved by the nearly total absence of studies regarding so-called 'marginal groups'. Young countryfolk, young people from rural areas, HIV-positive youth, young disabled people, youth considered as foreigners are very rarely represented in the studies.

4. The approaches to the United Nations' contribution towards the development of informed youth policy have been substantiated, including the three following areas:

**a). Development of the agenda for research work devoted to youth issues.** At present no consensus has been reached regarding the agenda for research work required in order to develop a youth policy in Russia which would be based on research results. This should not restrain: 1) the UN Team Group's on Youth Policy (UNYG's) own research agenda, taking into account the partnership goals and the specific goals of the agencies composing it, and 2) open discussion of these issues by UNYG together with various partners in the national sector of work with youth, i.e. with governmental, non-governmental and research communities. Acting in this way, UNYG as a result will create an opportunity for all the stakeholders at different levels to take part in discussions related to youth policy, which takes place very rarely.

**b). Merging of research and policy development.** This activity implies collaboration between various communities on issues concerning the contents of research and youth policy, as well as in relation to processes by means of which this policy is carried out. It would be advisable for UNYG to think over their strategy regarding proactive collaboration with a wider range of communities interested in youth policy, in addition to the existing UNYG strategy for collaboration with the authorities responsible for youth.

**c). Collaboration with the research market.** It would be worthwhile for UNYG to think about how to develop a more profound understanding of the youth-related research market, recognizing gaps and unmet needs. Then UNYG will possess the basic information for decision-making as to where it is better to make their investments into, as well as to substantiate the preferable problems for financing to the national officials. This process should include a wider range of issues in the area of youth policy than those followed by the governmental officials responsible for youth.

5. A position has been formulated in accordance to which actions regarding research should be carried out within the framework of a wider strategy of presence within the Russian youth environment. The involvement strategy as a possible role for UNYG in relation to youth policy in Russia should be focused on such areas as: mutual augmentability of the aspects of national health, development, social policy, labour policy and other areas (in their relation to youth policy); determining the areas where joint actions between UN and the Government will enable to use the limited resources most efficiently (a strategic understanding of the goals and resources); advocacy

for the implementation of the mechanisms for the policy enabling youth to take part in the Government; encouraging relations with youth NGOs dealing with the development of youth policy (including those which work in the area of education, healthcare or social work), as well as support of their activity by means of existing youth policy mechanisms; combined development of monitoring and evaluation mechanisms in order to determine the indicators and evaluate the effectiveness of youth policy implementation; providing technical support and empowerment of governmental structures in the area of youth policy, an area where at present they are weak or lacking. In order to enhance the effectiveness of the work of UN and their youth programs in Russia it has been suggested to allot another five activity areas: expanding the participation of young people in the development of youth programmes, e.g. involving local youth organizations and regional communities in the activity of the UN agencies; development of mechanisms for combined evaluation of the UN work in the area of youth programmes by the recipients of financing and the national partners; evaluation of the abilities of the agencies and the UN Team Group to provide technical support to governmental structures in the development of youth policy; determination of joined activities in the area of youth policy in Russia with the involvement of other international institutes (e.g. the Council of Europe, the European Union, the Commonwealth of Independent States, the Council of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation) interactively with the appropriate authorities.