APY

Research

# Youth Participation in Policy Development and Decision-Making

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## Keywords:

Youth participation, youth policy, civic participation, policy-making, decision-making, youth work.

# Introduction

Youth is considered the driving force of society, the main source for achieving change, and one of the groups with the biggest contribution to the establishment of democracy. Youth participation in the public, political and civic life of the state is considered one of their political and civil rights. However, currently, young people face many obstacles and challenges in realizing it (the difference between political and civic participation is described in the annex). It should be noted that in literature, civic participation is considered a type of political participation, but in this study, an attempt was made to separate political participation by considering it from the perspective of affiliation or membership in political parties, holding political positions, showing political activity).

Currently, one of the most relevant issues and key questions of policy-making at the international, regional, and local levels is "to what extent and how the individuals directly affected by the given policy (beneficiary groups) participate in the policy-making processes„. In order to promote public and political participation in society and make it more efficient,

the given society shall be provided with knowledge and skills and, most importantly, a relevant platform to apply them. Attempts to unlock the potential of the youth, as well as to build their capacities, have been repeatedly discussed by representatives of various state agencies, civil society, and international organizations. Moreover, the changes in certain policies in the educational and social sectors in the Republic of Armenia, as well as the sectoral strategies and relevant action plans, indicate that at the level of documents, the state is making attempts to promote youth participation in policy-making and decision-making. However, we should also understand how young people position themselves in these processes as citizens of the Republic of Armenia, and how effective they consider the efforts of the state to promote youth participation in policy-making and decision-making.

The goal of this research study is to reveal the extent to which youth in Armenia are involved in policy-making and decision-making processes.

The research sub-goals are as follows:

- Identify issues and needs related to youth participation in the policy-making and decision-making processes, by studying the experiences and opinions of the groups involved in that process.
- Evaluate the current situation by studying the identified issues and needs, as well as the documents.
- Develop effective proposals that will address the identified gaps and needs.

Qualitative and quantitative methods of implementation and document analysis were combined within the framework of the research study, in particular, desk research of the existing legal framework and literature, an online quantitative survey, expert interviews and focus group discussions with the youth living in urban and rural communities in different provinces of the Republic of Armenia.

The research consists of 3 main stages.

- Focus group discussions with youth living in different provinces of Armenia (four expert interviews were conducted);

- In-depth interviews with state institutions and civil society representatives (8 expert interviews);
- An online survey among youth
  - 187 young people took part in the survey, of which 29% are male, 70% are female and 1% are representatives of other genders. 34.9% of participants represent Yerevan, and 65.1% represent all provinces of the Republic of Armenia.

In preparing the final report for this research study, an attempt was made to deviate from the classical research structure: separate sub-sections and a literature review, desk research, and fieldwork. Instead, the research team tried to analyze and summarize the information - issues and needs - identified as a result of desk research, literature review, and fieldwork from different viewpoints through separate question-subsections.

The main question-subsections are two in number:

- Who is a young person?
- What is youth participation? What kind of participation do young people have in decision-making and policy-making processes?
  - political/civic participation at the community level;
  - political/civic participation at the state level.

Attempting to explore different areas of participation, this research focuses on the study of political and civic participation, trying to understand them at the community and state levels.

# Conclusions and recommendations

## Conclusion 1

Misunderstanding of the term "Youth„ at all levels (state, community, civil society, and young people) and the issue of harmonizing it with international documents.

### Recommendation 1

Study the international and regional documents, specify the different age groups of the society, in this case, the youth and children, clearly defining and fixing the age range of youth and the subdivisions of these ranges.

## Conclusion 2

A clear lack of a unified approach by the state, civil society, and youth regarding participation.

### Recommendation 2

Taking into account the successful experience of using Hart's Ladder of Participation by the expert community and some youth groups, it is recommended to adopt this model of participation at the state level to allow for more measurable and clear assessments of the situation with current youth participation when conducting situational research.

### Recommendation 3

Introduce that approach in the state documents related to the youth sector and use it at other levels (regional and community).

## Conclusion 3
State and community levels

Lack of knowledge and skills related to participation at the state and community levels among youth (including lack of information about the activities and functions of various agencies).

### Recommendation 4

Promoting cooperation between various departments of the ministry, local governments, and civil society organizations in order to develop participation skills in decision-making and policy-making processes among youth. It is important that municipal governments serve as essential institutions for young people to gain experiential knowledge and develop their skills.

## Recommendation 5

Pay close attention to the misunderstandings and misperceptions of the words politics and policy among youth, trying to remedy the situation through various actions (campaigns, integration of educational materials).

## Conclusion 4

**State and community levels (in cooperation with local and international organizations)**

Lack of capacities and skills, knowledge, as well as communication skills among municipal employees.

## Recommendation 6

Develop a series of comprehensive trainings for local government employees, by observing the capacity-building best practice of international and local organizations, providing them with relevant knowledge and skills, especially on how to communicate with youth and community residents. Also, include modules on promoting youth participation and relevant participation tools during these trainings.

- Develop and introduce similar mandatory training for community leaders (because according to Article 46 of the Law on Local Self-Government, working with youth is one of the responsibilities of the community leader[1])

## Recommendation 7

Youth from the same community can also be involved in the trainings to make the practical work more practical and authentic, and to promote dialogue.

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1. Law of the Republic of Armenia on Local Self-Government, 2002, https://bit.ly/3F3c5ho:

## Recommendation 8

At the community level, organize events about the role and importance of youth among community employees, raising awareness of local authorities and solving misconceptions and stereotypes about the role of youth.

## Conclusion 5    State and community levels

Lack of communication strategies at the level of various state agencies, including local governments.

## Recommendation 9

Develop and implement communication strategies at different levels to fill the information gap among young people, as well as to promote cooperation between local government, state, social and international organizations, and the youth.

## Recommendation 10

Non-traditional and innovative methods of communication and participation should be included in these strategies, taking into account the rapidly developing world and the needs of the youth.

## Conclusion 6    State and community levels (in cooperation with non-governmental organizations)

Frivolous and biased, stereotypical attitude towards youth by the state, local authorities, as well as society.

### Recommendation 11

Develop public campaigns under "Youth Matter„ or other titles, ensuring public awareness on the role and significance of youth. These will help influence public perceptions, reducing the reproduction of stereotypes.

### Recommendation 12

Develop and introduce mechanisms for evaluating youth participation (which will not be limited to the adoption and implementation of the bill on recognizing voluntary work). Among the best options may be the assessment of the activity of the most active young people in the communities and at the regional level, the competition for the best reform proposal, and the coverage of youth participation success stories.

### Conclusion 7                                        State level

The non-substantive nature of youth organizations at the state and community levels, or their complete absence.

### Recommendation 13

It is necessary to evaluate the activity and efficiency of youth-related state agencies or their affiliated bodies in the past and present (in particular, the activity of the National Youth Council of Armenia, the currently disbanded Youth Events Holding Center SNCO, and the Youth Studies Institute). This will help to understand how the state can create organizations that will support the work of the Department for Youth Policy, Supplementary and Continuing Education of the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport (realizing that

currently, the human resources of this department are not sufficient for direct cooperation and communication with youth, as well as for carrying out various programs).

## Recommendation 14

Create the position of "youth worker„ adjunct to local governments, who will have the same level of responsibility as the community social worker, but will deal exclusively with youth-related issues and will become a link in the ministry-community youth chain, voicing the issues and needs of young people.

## Recommendation 15

In order to strengthen the institution of youth councils adjunct to local governments, and to the ministry, create a youth council adjunct to the prime minister (there used to be such a council, but it is no longer functioning), which will have the authority to make changes in youth policies, as well as make recommendations. Create regular communication mechanisms with youth through this division, as a result of which youth will be invited to the municipality not merely to discuss local government issues.

- It is recommended to use the "constructive dialogue for and about youth„ method recommended by the European Union. This is an established process of participatory policy development in the youth sector, which can be extended to other sectors as well.[2]

## Recommendation 16

2. Structured Dialogue on Youth, https://bit.ly/3ipzstQ.

At the regional level (following the example of the Aragatsotn Province), create an umbrella organization of local NGOs, which should organize and synchronize the activities carried out with the youth of the province or support their establishment.

- As of now, there is the Youth Organizations Union (YOU) initiative, which unites 24 NGOs under one umbrella. This initiative can be further expanded and made into a dialogue platform at the national level.

## Conclusion 8

Absence of legal and political documents promoting youth participation in the youth sector.

### Recommendation 17

Develop a clear strategy for public discussions at the stage of circulating the new bill on youth, discussing it widely with all relevant beneficiary groups. Following the adoption of the bill, review and circulate the Draft of the State Youth Policy Strategy, or develop a vision and standards of the youth policy, which will clearly express the position of the state on youth policy.

### Recommendation 18

- In order to promote youth participation at the community level and not to leave the establishment of local government-youth connections to the goodwill of individuals or organizations, it is mandatory to have sections in the 5-year development plans that will be aimed at cooperation with youth and their capacity building. This can be one of the first mandatory steps to support

youth and cooperation with them through policies at the community level.

- In addition to stipulating it at the community level and in the development plan, it is recommended to introduce a requirement in the Draft Law on Youth to define and introduce mandatory sections in the community 5-year development plans regarding the vision of the development of the youth sector and the budget for youth affairs.

## Recommendation 19

Develop platforms for the involvement of youth, which will be more effective and accessible; not to be limited by the small number of existing platforms, and try innovative and creative methods to achieve youth involvement in decision-making processes. Through these platforms and mechanisms, try to reach those who, for certain reasons, have always been left out of these processes.

**For instance,** as a result of cooperation with universities, local authorities, craftsmanship, and vocational educational institutions, as well as community and local organizations, create an online and offline forum platform aimed at discussion of projects related to youth, where certain polls, opinion exchange windows will be placed, to include different groups of youth. In order to make this platform more attractive, incentives can be developed and introduced (for example, prizes, invitations to participate in programs, and other opportunities).

Lack of desire and motivation among youth to participate in political processes as a result of misconceptions regarding political participation.

**Recommendation 20**

Organize courses aimed at promoting not only civic participation but also political participation, developing the knowledge and skills of youth also at that level.

**Recommendation 21**

At the party level, develop clear steps to take the participation of youth to a different level, other than just decorative participation. Create educational programs at the party level to ensure political education for youth.

**Recommendation 22**

Since the current National Assembly is considered one of the youngest parliaments in the region and the world and some of the young MPs have already proposed legislative amendments that have been successfully adopted, clear steps should be developed to present them to the public and achieve changes in public perceptions through success stories. Also, at the local government level, try to track such initiatives and publicize them. On the one hand, this will break the stereotypical public perceptions towards young people, on the other hand, it will motivate other young people to show more active participation in political processes, having a direct influence on decision-making and policy-making processes.

# Analysis

## Part 1.
## "Who are the youth?"

There is currently no universally agreed definition of "youth" and their age group in the world, which is why the United Nations in its documents and reports defines "youth" as persons between the ages of 15 and 24 years, noting that, however, UN member states are free to have their own local definitions as well.[3] The European Union defines young people as being between 16 and 29 years old.[4]

According to the draft of the "2021-2025 Strategy of the State Youth Policy of the Republic of Armenia" developed by the Ministry of Education,

3. Youth, UN, https://bit.ly/3EWmjRL.
4. Youth - Overview, Eurostat, European Union, https://bit.ly/3Va3pgg.

Science, Culture and Sports of the Republic of Armenia (hereinafter referred to as MoESCS) and introduced in May 2021: "Youth are 13-30 (inclusive) year old citizens of the Republic of Armenia, as well as 13-30 (inclusive) year old foreign citizens residing in Armenia and having residence permits (residency status), asylum seekers and those with refugee status in the Republic of Armenia (under appropriate grounds established by the law)."[5] This definition also mentions certain age subgroups: 13-18 or 24-30. Unlike the previous strategy, where a person aged 16-30 was considered young, with this draft, this threshold was lowered, taking into account certain circumstances, including international experience (note that according to the 2011 census, about 1/3 (26.6%) of the population of the Republic of Armenia were young people).[6] However, it should be noted that the current and proposed amendments conflict with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which regards persons aged 0-18 as children (the Republic of Armenia ratified this convention in 1993). And in the two strategies mentioned above, the age groups of youth coincide with the age group of children defined by the convention.

During the focus group discussions, when asked who are considered youth, the young people not only mentioned the legal definition, stressing that for them a person between 15 and 30 years old is young, but also highlighted a number of characteristics that are important for a young person and particularly an active one.

> *"Age does not matter at all. Those people who can invest their effort and energy in solving a problem are considered young."*

5. Draft of 2021-2025 Strategy of Youth State Policy of the Republic of Armenia, MoESCS, 2021, page 9, https://bit.ly/3i7IjAq.

6. Census 2011, https://bit.ly/3AKyPBC.

Another participant highlights:

> *"The person who constantly tries to change something does not put up with something and does not remain silent when witnessing problems is considered young. It's a different question to what extent the efforts made are a success.„*

Another young person states:

> *"If I'm not mistaken, a person aged between 15 and 27 is considered young, but I want to point out that it doesn't matter at all. I think that for me, a person who takes initiative, is active, motivated, and open to innovation is young.„*

By retrieving the main characteristics of youth from these definitions, it can be noted that when describing themselves, young people mention several main characteristics, namely: activity, motivation, ability to make continuous attempts, openness to innovation, and diligence. This also comes to prove the general approach in the literature that the main characteristic of youth is the transition from dependence to independence.[7]

Comparing with the different parts of the draft strategy, we can observe that these characteristics are also used at the state level. Moreover, in his congratulatory message on Youth Day in 2022, the Minister of Education, Science, Culture, and Sports V. Dumanyan also noted that youth are those who are open to innovations and experimental ideas.[8]:

Thus, comparing the international experience, literature, local legal

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7.  National Human Development Report, UNDP, 2018/2019, page 28, https://bit.ly/3U690CU

8.  Vahram Dumanyan's congratulatory message on the occasion of International Youth Day, 12/08/2022 https://bit.ly/3GMbgMj:

framework, and the opinions of young people, it can be concluded that youth in the Republic of Armenia encompasses the group of 13 or 15 to 30-year-olds who are active, motivated, proactive, and innovative.

# Part 2.
# What is youth participation?
## What kind of participation do youth have in decision-making and policy-making processes?

Participation is a rather complex and multi-layered concept, which is considered a continuous process, not a one-time action. It is one of the pillars of democracy, which gives an opportunity to the citizens of the respective country to influence the decision-making and policy-making processes (directly or indirectly). As a group leading to independence from dependence, youth have a crucial role in participatory processes, which is why youth participation is considered one of the components of a democratic society.

A number of international, and regional organizations try to define youth participation, for instance, in accordance with the Preamble of the Revised European Charter on Participation of the Young People in Local and Regional Life. "The active participation of young people in decisions and actions at local and regional levels is essential if we are to build more democratic, inclusive, and prosperous societies. Participation in the democratic life of any community is about more than voting or standing for election, although these are important elements. Participation and active citizenship are about having the right, the means, the space, and the opportunity and, where necessary, the support to participate in and influence decisions and engage in actions and activities to contribute to building a better society."[9] This definition makes it clear that youth participation is not only participation in elections. As already mentioned, it is multi-layered and includes social and cultural, as well as political, civil and economic participation.

During the focus group discussions on youth participation, many opinions

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9. Revised European Charter on the Participation of Young People, in Local and Regional Life, Council of Europe, 2015, preamble, https://bit.ly/3U6jWQH.

were voiced, some of which summarize the above definition, and others are directly related to the definition of a young person.

One of the young people says:

> "I think that we are a direct type and example of participation, that despite the opportunities to leave the community, we chose to stay in the community and carry out certain activities in various fields."

Another participant states:

> "For me, youth participation is divided into two main types:
> - Direct - when the representatives of the mentioned age group are active in the life of the community and the country, starting from elections, and public hearings to volunteer work and initiatives.
> - Indirect - when, willingly or unwillingly, a given individual or group becomes a participant in certain processes; for example, they participate in training because they were asked to, attend an event because their friend organized it, etc.

In addition to this, another participant emphasizes:

> "I would also add the mixed type, when, for example, a young person actively participates in certain processes, initiates or organizes certain events, steps, but leaves them unfinished due to some circumstances or lack of motivation"

According to young people, on the one hand, participation means participating in the life of one's community in different ways and carrying out activities in different fields, which, on the other hand, fits into the direct and mixed levels of the three-level (direct, indirect and mixed) participation mentioned by others. It is interesting that the three-level participation system mentioned in these definitions coincides with the definition of "participation" in the MoESCS draft youth strategy, according to which: "Participation implies direct and mediated (through youth CSOs) involvement of young people, active youth groups in decision-making processes in all spheres of public life. The vision of ensuring full participation implies a shift from awareness to proactiveness and involvement in joint decision-making with policymakers.[10]

According to this definition, one of the visions of the Ministry is the transition from indirect to direct youth participation, which in turn can be manifested at different levels according to the three-level hierarchy mentioned by the young people. However, the most relevant question is how open, participatory, or direct the decision-making process will be by the ministry, local authorities, or youth organizations.

During the expert interviews, some of the experts working in the youth sector noted that currently, young people are mostly in the first three levels of Hart's Ladder of Participation, which means they are manipulated, used as decoration to create an imitation of participatory processes (see Hart's Ladder of Participation in the box).[11]

One of the experts notes:

> „In a broad sense, today youth participation in decision-making and policy-making can be considered at the level of tokenism.„

10. Draft of 2021-2025 Strategy of Youth State Policy of the Republic of Armenia, MoESCS, 2021, page 8, https://bit.ly/3i7IjAq;

11. Youth-Driven Development Guidelines, KASA Swiss Humanitarian Foundation, Yerevan, 2017, page 8, https://bit.ly/2OLACf9;

This means that youth are mostly invited to participate in activities organized by "older people„, without having any influence in decision-making and actions. And in worse cases, no importance whatsoever is given to the youth.

During the quantitative survey, when asked how they imagine "youth participation in decision-making and policy-making processes", young people mainly indicated the influence of the opinion expressed by youth in decision-making (47.3%), the involvement of youth in public/political organizations (6.8%), youth participation in community life (21.5%) and development and implementation of initiatives by youth (5.8%):

Figure 1:

**How do you understand the phrase «youth participation in decision-making and policy-making process»?**

- The opinion of youth has impact on decision-making
- Youth are engaged in public/political institutions
- Youth actively participate in community life
- Youth take initiative, cooperating with older adults
- Other
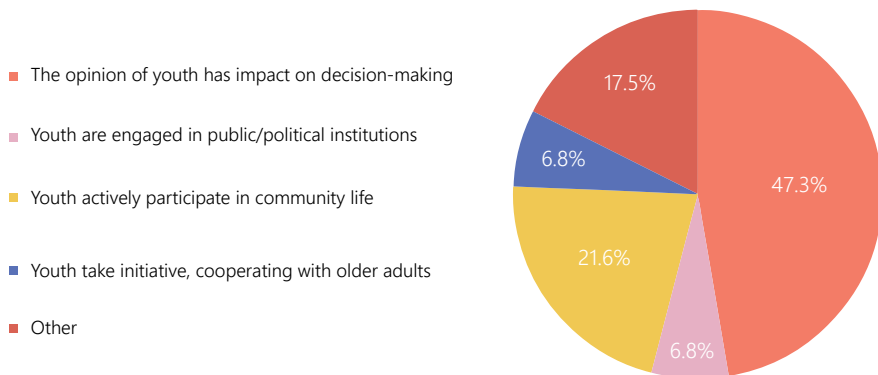


Three of these responses correspond to the last three levels of Hart's Ladder of Participation: joint decision-making, autonomy, and cooperation. However, experts emphasize that now young people have greater potential and are more open than a few years ago, but due to certain issues, especially older youth are not able to take a more active part in decision-making and policy-making processes.

> *"Compared to previous years, young people are now more active, brave, and responsible. Today's youth definitely have greater potential, but economic and social issues contribute to this potential not being realized."*

In fact, in addition to the circumstance that there is a clear issue with regard to the information, cooperation, and dialogue in including young people in participatory processes at different levels, another problem is that today, apart from participation, youth face a number of social and economic problems that affect the quality of their lives both as citizens in terms of participation and as individuals in terms of daily life.

In addition to the fact that youth participation is considered one of the issues on the agenda of international and regional organizations and states, it is also a right enshrined in a number of international legal documents. For example, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights includes the freedom of opinion and the right to participate in peaceful assembly, as well as the right to vote. Articles 12 to 14 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child state that children have the right to express their views freely, and the right to seek information and receive it in different formats, as well as the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and freedom of association.[12]  And a number of documents of the Council of Europe consider the promotion of participation of children and young people under 18 and the creation of appropriate platforms, also developing manuals for the promotion and evaluation of participation (Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life has already been discussed).

## Part 2.1. Situational analysis of civic participation

In this section, civic participation will be considered at two main levels: youth involvement or participation in community and state-level decision-making, policy-making, and community activities.

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12. Convention on the Rights of the Child, UN, 1989, https://bit.ly/3XxslQ9:

**Community level**

Ensuring youth participation in community life is considered one of the most important levels of development of an individual as a citizen, in which they are able to develop their skills to raise problems based on their own needs and the needs of those around them, and try to solve them with their own capacities or those of their community, have a sense of responsibility towards their own community and initiatives. Participation in community life begins in the school years. Every successful experience can inspire youth, and in the case of unsuccessful attempts, there is a high probability that they will no longer show initiative.

Participatory processes at the community level are not limited to the implementation of certain programs or activities by youth for the community. However, even for the implementation of programs, young people need different types of support. The participant of one of the expert interviews refers to this issue:

> *"If there are non-governmental organizations or representatives of these organizations in the community, they are considered catalysts of youth involvement in community life or community projects. If there are no such organizations, it is difficult to say what type of youth participation we will have."*

It is crucial that youth are not left out of opportunities to cooperate with local self-government bodies, to be involved in their work, to work with these bodies on their own initiatives, and to have their influence in the decision-making process. However, at present, the above-mentioned processes make room for a number of misconceptions, and one of the most common mistakes is perhaps presenting the consultation as a real participation and not grasping the differences between them. Various thinkers note that participation in community life means taking an active role in the community and thereby achieving changes in decision-making

processes and having control over them (mainly this influence is manifested by taking collective actions). In contrast, consultation is the exchange of information that may or may not lead to some change.[13] Analysis of the quantitative data indicates that to the question of what circumstances there are preventing youth participation in community life, 30.4% of the respondents indicated a lack of cooperation between the municipality and youth, and 4.3% indicated that the community rejects new programs. According to 21.7% of the respondents, another circumstance is the lack of programs and organizations aimed at youth involvement, which proves that there is a lack of connection and cooperation between local government and young people at the community level (see Figure 2).

Figure 2:

**What are the circumstances and/or factors impeding youth participation in your community?**



- Lack of cooperation between youth and community/ community administration
- Lack of youth involvement in projects/organizations
- Rejection of new projects in the community
- Lack of opportunities
- Lack of awareness

30.4%  30.4%  21.7%  13.0%
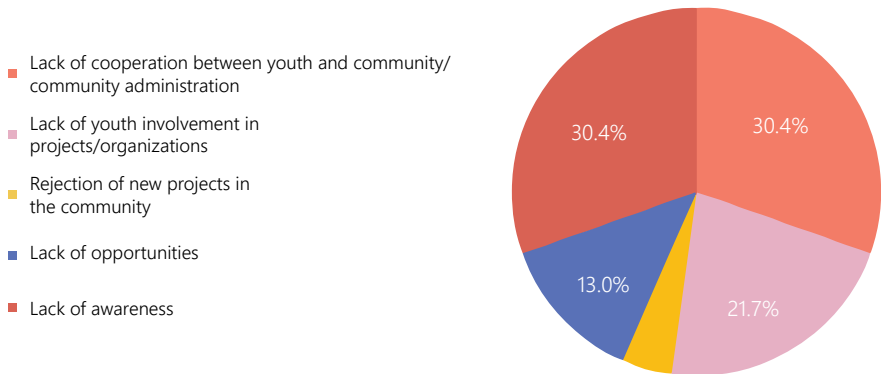
The experts also state that one of the obstacles that usually hinders youth participation at the community level is inefficient and out-of-date communication methods, as a result of which, on the one hand, young people are not sufficiently informed about the activities of local governments, and on the other hand, there is a failure to create youth-local government cooperation, which also leads to a lack of trust in local governments among young people.

13. Definition of Participation, (Part of 2004 Report "Designing Social Capital Sensitive Participation Methodologies„), 2004, https://bit.ly/3gyTbqI.

One of the experts notes:

> "In local governments, there is a lack of information, knowledge, and skills regarding tools for youth participation. Broadcasting the meeting of the council of elders online is not sufficient to ensure participation, because only the employees of the municipality participate online in those meetings, and they must participate in their official capacity."

Another expert notes:

> "If there are no non-governmental organizations in the community, it is difficult to say whether young people would be informed about the functions of the local government, the meetings of the council of elders or would participate in the same meetings and demand that the information about them be open and accessible to everyone."

Lack of education and awareness among local governments and youth is another obstacle to participation. Quantitative data and focus group discussions make it clear that youth education mainly has a positive effect in terms of participation in community life and decision-making. However, both experts and young people say that there is a lack of education, knowledge, and skills, both among local government employees and youth. Experts identified two main directions in education: 1. Who teaches or tries to educate young people? 2. What approaches and values are they trying to spread?

One of the experts notes:

> *"In formal education, there are mechanisms that attempt to ensure youth participation, such as the social studies subject, student councils, which are the first chain of elections and assuming responsibility, but their effective application has a very localized nature. It turns out that in some cases this structure works effectively, in others it does not. However, the new educational reforms consider participation at the level of 8 basic abilities, which can ensure a more effective approach."*

Quantitative data also indicate that young people value the impact of education. According to Figure 3, 52% of the respondents definitely agree and 42% agree that education has an important role in youth participation in decision-making and policy-making.

Figure 3:

**Education plays an important role in youth participation in decision-making and policy-making at the community level.**

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Disagree
- I don't know/can't say

42.4%   51.8%
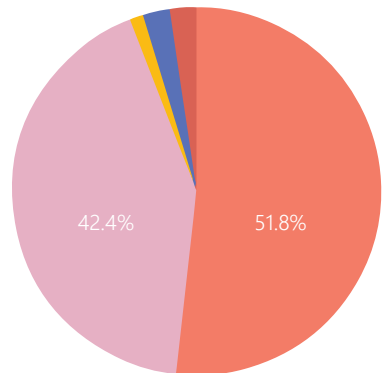
Another important issue, which sometimes arises from the lack of education itself, is the presence of stereotypical thinking in communities. Sometimes stereotypes are also gender-based, encompassing such ideas as: "A girl cannot be active, it is shameful,, "Are you a snitch?, "Our relative works in community administration. Do you want to make his life miserable?, Sometimes these stereotypes are more general in nature and are reproduced by adults: "Let the young people speak and act, we are already old,, "Young people are making noise again. They only know how to create problems, and so on.

Young people from different communities of the Republic of Armenia stated that sometimes it is difficult for them to carry out certain activities in the existing stereotypical environment because every new initiative is met with opposition.

One of the young people says:

> "Sometimes they say you are a girl, it's a shame, stay at home. Sometimes when we try to organize an event and expect the support of older people, they say that we are the youth and we are responsible for it. However, in reality, they wash their hands of the job and wait for us to slip up.,

Referring to gender stereotypes, another young man says:

> "Once we tried to organize a cleanup day and some of the boys in the community said that a boy should not be engaged in cleaning. Some came, stood and watched from a distance, and laughed at the participating boys.,

Another expert noted:

> *"Girls also face stereotypes. After a certain level, the family can forbid the girl to take an active part in community life.*

Experts also note that sometimes the state itself has a stereotypical attitude towards youth, resulting in young people not being taken seriously. As a result, at different levels, youth are viewed as mere complainers and/or a group that can be a decoration without any influence.

In contrast, experts point out that although young people are used as decoration, they have more potential, but this potential is not being realized.

One of the experts notes:

> *"Young people sometimes have much greater potential in terms of education and skills, but good practices are not publicized, like, for example, what activities are conducted by youth in their communities. This results in the formation of certain stereotypes. Instead, for example, the criminal culture has a great impact on the active citizenship of boys, discriminating against those who try to be active in the community.*

The next most common phenomenon among active young people is raising issues and not following up on them. Experts note that in certain cases, young people are ready to raise an issue, propose steps to solve it, as well as support the solution process, but sometimes their capacities and motivation are limited to merely raising issues.

One of the experts notes:

> *"Sometimes non-governmental organizations are not at all mandatory in communities; they can provide certain education and not even be a bridge for community-youth cooperation. These young people only lack information. There are young people who, after receiving information, are willing to cooperate, only at the level of raising the issues. However, we have also witnessed examples when young people not only raise the issue but are also persistent and support its effective solution. In this case, the problem is different and related to how open the local authorities are.*

One of the most important issues identified during focus group discussions and quantitative data analysis is that local governments are not willing to cooperate with young people in different formats.

A participant of one of the discussions notes:

> *"There were instances when we tried to address certain questions to the municipality, but the answers were mostly evasive: sometimes there are no resources, sometimes it's just not the time, sometimes we are young and do not understand the seriousness of the issue.*

Another participant emphasizes drawing on their own experience:

> *"I can't imagine that local authorities can help me with anything, but I would also really like them not to try to interfere.*

Experts also note:

> *"A lot depends on the desire and willingness of local authorities to cooperate on different issues. Organizations can invest a lot of resources in the community, but in the end, when the matter reaches local authorities, the process may come to a dead end."*

It is important to note that if young people show persistence in solving a certain problem, the probability that the problem will be solved increases significantly. Until now, the most widespread issues faced by youth, which also received certain solutions, were environmental ones, including issues related to waste management in communities, transport (inter-communal and to the capital), and lack of entertainment places for young people.

According to experts, in some cases, these issues do not require much effort. Sometimes public pressure is enough, and in recent years, young people have been using social networks to put pressure on local authorities, resulting in apparent changes. In some cases, local authorities enter into dialogue and establish a relationship with young people, on the one hand avoiding public disapproval, on the other hand, having the opportunity to quickly respond to a given issue through direct information.

One of the experts notes that the sense of ownership of the community among young people in rural and urban communities is different, and especially in small communities, young people are more connected to their community, which is perhaps one of the factors contributing to community participation. At the same time, however, as a result of urbanization, internal migration from small or rural communities to the city greatly hinders youth from participating in decision-making and policy-making processes in certain communities.

Almost all the experts who participated in the research referred to another problem related to the cooperation of the municipalities - the success of the municipality due to the efforts of one or several employees, in the con-

text of the lack of systematic effective operation of the institution. Public and social sector experts noted that the quality of local government activity at the community level is directly dependent on the head and employees of the given community. If some employees or the head of the community quit or there is a change of position, the cooperation with the community administration is directly affected by those changes. In order to avoid this, first of all, it is necessary to make the local governments more established through legal regulations and policies, thinking of such mechanisms that will make the institution work, avoiding the mess that results from each and every change.

The expert notes:

> *"We need institutions and systems that do not depend on one person and will not fail because of every personnel change. Even in case of changes, it should be clear that the cooperation, inclusiveness, accountability, and transparency of the organization will not decrease."*

The analysis of quantitative data reveals that although the work with many municipalities depends on individuals, the processes of developing documents and involving youth are not non-participatory, on the one hand, and on the other hand, the education of youth does not motivate them to participate in that process.

Figure 5 shows that 71% of youth did not participate at all in the 5-year community development plan and/or annual development plan discussions.

Thus, at the community level, youth still face many obstacles to participating in decision-making and policy-making processes. Sometimes issues arise even while trying to organize events or activities in the community. The non-open practices and lack of clear mechanisms of municipalities on the one hand, and the gap in knowledge, skills, and capacities of both employees of local authorities and youth, on the other hand, further contribute to this situation.

**Did you participate in the discussions of the 5-year community development plan and/or annual development plan?**

- Yes, I participated
- Yes, I participated and made recommendations
- No, I did not participate
- There were no such discussions in our community
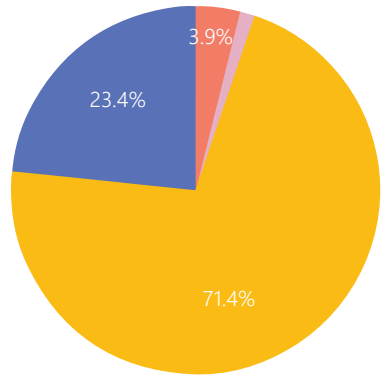


With respect to change and improvement of cooperation with local authorities, when completing quantitative questionnaires, young people singled out the following 5 recommendations subject to change (see Figure 5).

Figure 5:

**What would you change in the community-youth cooperation?**

- Enhancement of cooperation between youth
- Awareness-raising
- Increase in the number of community administration employees who are ready for cooperation
- Enhancement of cooperation between the community administration and youth
- Appreciation of the role of youth by community administration
- Implementation of projects contributing to the skills development of youth
- Other
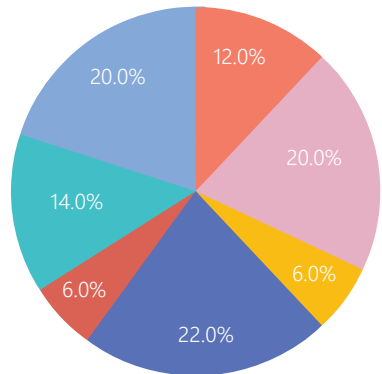
As we can see, the capacity building of the youth and employees of municipalities is also the focus of the attention of youth. Meanwhile, on the other hand, the issue of the awareness level and awareness-raising is important at all levels.

**State level**

At the state level, youth participation in decision-making and policy-making faces broader and multi-layered issues. On the one hand, many of the issues are similar to those existing at the community level, on the other hand, their dimensions are larger. The problem of access to information at both the community and national levels is evident.

One of the experts notes that making information available to youth at the state level is a major issue. The experts and the participants of the focus group discussions stated that they mostly participated in public discussions or youth forums organized by the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture, and Sports (MoESCS) in an indirect or mediated way (due to being members of networks of local NGOs and international organizations).

> *"Awareness raising is insufficiently carried out at the state or national level. If, for instance, various organizations do not try to cooperate with the ministry or other state agencies and share information about various events with youth, there will be a clear information gap between the state and the youth."*

One of the experts on youth participation at the state level states:

> *"At the state or national level, youth participation is ensured through the mediation of various organizations. When developing various policies and participating in these processes, these organizations (whether local or international) involve youth. To be honest, to expect that young people will enter relevant platforms to express their opinions on various legislative drafts is a very unique phenomenon."*

Conversely, according to the results of the quantitative survey, 83% of youth who participated in the survey did not participate in any discussion organized by state institutions, and 72.6% did not participate in discussions on youth issues. Most of the participants mentioned that they took part in these processes through local and international organizations. This comes to prove that various organizations are the link in the state-youth chain.

In addition, experts and youth talked about young people who are not members of any organization or initiative. These youth are in unfavorable conditions from the perspective of participating in public debates and forums. Moreover, young people who are already facing socio-economic issues, or have disabilities and are not members of any organization, simply do not have the opportunity to speak up and raise issues.

One of the experts notes:

> *"While youth who are members or supporters of organizations have the opportunity to participate in various events organized by state agencies due to the fact that the given organization cooperates with ministries or various state agencies, those who are not members of any organization are generally deprived of such opportunities."*

Another expert highlights:

> *"It is important to admit that there are young people (and there are many of them) who are left out of all kinds of processes. I think that state institutions should adopt other approaches to work with these young people. For instance, they should go to communities, travel around, organize certain home visits with local authorities and reach different levels of society every year at least to a certain extent. I think a position of a youth worker could also be introduced in the communities (just like the position of a social worker), who will deal with the youth issues in the community and will link the community, for instance, with the ministry."*

It is important to note that, in addition to local and international organizations that operate in certain provinces and communities, it is required to create an umbrella state position - the "youth worker„ who will work with youth in the community and raise their problems and needs. To achieve this, it is important to take steps to address the reproduction of stereotypes about youth in communities. Otherwise, just as the youth face prejudiced attitudes, so may the youth worker be taken lightly.

While talking about the youth strategy, some of the experts also spoke about participatory processes.

> *"Each document that attempts to bring certain changes in the youth sector (including the strategy) should be developed with and for youth outlining what the state will do for young people (taking into account and summarizing the ideas of youth as well).„*

Another expert notes:

> *"It is necessary to involve all the young people in the process of developing documents. It is important that an unmotivated young person who has never participated in anything, went from class to home and vice versa, sits in community pavilions all day, has a certain authority in the neighborhood, find themselves in that document. To achieve this, the state should talk to youth."*

Another issue mentioned by the experts is the lack of accessibility to the participation platforms. For example, during the focus group interviews, most of the young people were unable to mention the platforms through which it was possible to express opinions about draft laws, and the other part spoke only about the "e-draft", stating:

> *"I know that the e-draft platform exists, but it is very difficult to use. For example, signing up on the website is already a big headache. Besides, there were cases where I made recommendations, but I never received any response."*

One of the experts notes:

> *"You see, e-draft is not enough, moreover, it is not even accessible. We cannot expect a young person who lacks knowledge, skills, and information to be able to use this platform. On the other hand, isn't it possible to develop and operate more interesting and innovative platforms? There is another issue here... Does the Department of Continuing Education and Youth Policy of the Ministry have enough resources to operate different platforms?"*

When talking about resources, most of the experts mentioned the National Youth Council, the currently disbanded Youth Events Holding Center SNCO and youth study platforms. Many realistically stressed that one department of the MoESCS cannot address all the above-mentioned issues. It was proposed to create Youth Councils under the ministry, the Prime Minister's Office and the local authorities, as well as to understand which agencies will deal with the issues of the youth sector, moreover, after the development and approval of the strategy and/or vision, who will be responsible for its implementation. In addition to this, it should be noted that there is a clear lack of awareness among youth regarding responsible persons in the youth sector.

The analysis of quantitative data and focus group discussions shows that most of the young people stated that they have never heard about the Department for Youth Policy, Supplementary and Continuing Education (Figure 6 summarizes this data: 78% of the respondents have not heard about this Department).

**Have you heard about the Department of Youth Policy, Supplementary and Continuing Education of the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports?**

- Yes
- No

22.0%

78.0%
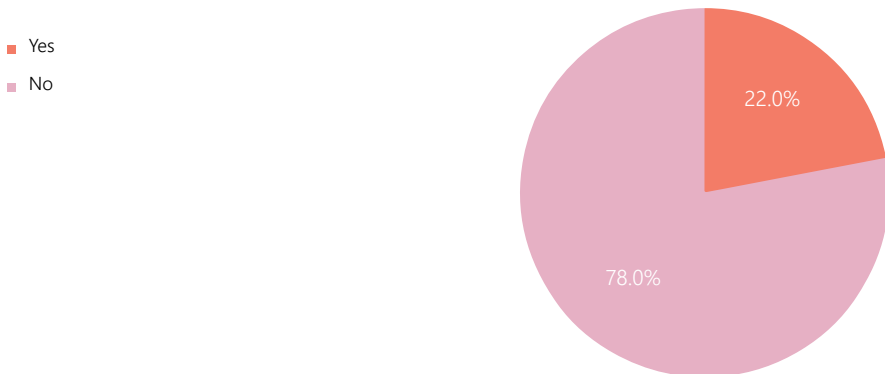
Thus, there are also many obstacles to youth engagement in the decision-making and policy-making processes at the national or state level. On the one hand, it is clear that at the moment, youth communicate with representatives of state agencies, in particular, the Department for Youth Policy, Supplementary and Continuing Education of MoESCS mainly through local and international organizations, but on the other hand, those young people who are not members of any organization or initiative are deprived of the opportunity to participate in forums and public discussions. The other most discussed issue is the clear gap and lack of information regarding the above-mentioned Department, followed by the inaccessibility and non-innovativeness of the existing participatory platforms.

During the quantitative survey, 5 main recommendations were singled out (see Figure 7), most of which were also mentioned during the focus group discussions.

Youth themselves state that the issue of access to information is quite relevant but, most importantly, they see a need for the formation of youth bodies.

**What would you change in the state-youth cooperation?**

- Increase of access to information
- Youth involvement in the decision-making process
- Enhancement of cooperation between youth
- Enhancement of cooperation with the state and formation of efficient youth bodies
- Implementation of education programs for youth
- Other
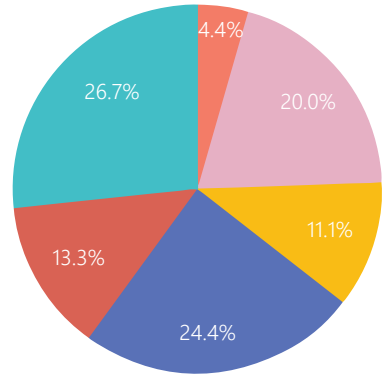


## Part 2.2. Situational analysis of political participation (obstacles and needs)

The political participation of youth, in particular joining and supporting parties, groups and ideas, assuming political and/or state positions, being politically active, etc. are currently of concern at both the local, regional and international levels. Many of the studies conducted by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development show that among youth there is a lack of participation in elections, membership in political parties and initiatives, as well as a lack of motivation to engage in politics and trust in political institutions.

Conversely, youth still continue to be active in informal political processes, participating in protests (after April-May 2018, youth in Armenia participate less in protests), signing petitions (this, in turn, does not imply any long-term commitment and obligation, but reflects the individual's attitude and value system regarding this or that issue[14]), etc.

In recent years, youth in Armenia have been more passive in terms of

14 New and Innovative Forms of Youth Participation in Decision-Making Processes, Council of Europe, 2017, p. 17, https://bit.ly/3u42IJb.

political participation. Experts note that the hostilities of September-November 2020 and the subsequent political events contributed to the passivity. On the other hand, although after the events of April-May 2018, a tendency among youth to engage in politics was noted, following which people who were previously engaged in civic activism made the transition to politics, joining parties, assuming political posts, etc. However, in certain cases, youth involvement in parties has an imitative nature, and insufficient investment is made in new generations and youth, as a result of which they do not rise above the level of decoration and tokenism. For example, during the last few elections, many of the parties and alliances included young people in the electoral lists, but it is difficult to say to what extent they were really initiators or decision-makers. This was also mentioned by civil society and party representatives.

One of the experts notes:

> *"Now there are more young people involved in electoral processes but this does not mean that they really participate in political processes. Moreover, it does not provide sufficient ground to assume that decision-making has become more youth-centric. Yes, the current parliament may be one of the youngest parliaments, but it is difficult to say to what extent the decisions are in the interests of youth."*

Another expert notes:

> "*Different parties have youth wings, the oldest is perhaps the youth wing of ARF but it is difficult to say whether these young people are decision-makers at the party level.*
>
> *Another issue is that youth are currently entering politics without acquiring civic knowledge and skills. In the parties, some of them are considered supporters or assistants due to which these young people do not receive sufficient political or civic education. Later, the same young people will express the desire and ambition to enter politics, and I will at least refrain from calling their political activity sufficiently effective. I think that from this point of view, political schools are quite successful, for example, those organized by the Bright Armenia Party or the Republican Party of Armenia.*"

While speaking about the obstacles to the political participation of youth, another expert also noted:

> "*Parties do not have clear strategies and policies to involve youth in their parties. If we look at the current code, which stipulates that in the case of elections at the local authorities and National Assembly level, candidates must represent parties, it is very important that the parties operating in Armenia have a vision in terms of involving youth in parties through capacity building and ensuring political participation. Although some parties have political schools, I believe that they are not sufficient. It is necessary to take clear steps from the regional to the National Assembly level,,*

While speaking about women the same expert noted:

> *"Women are targeted a lot in our society, and they are constantly afraid that they can be targeted even for the smallest reason. I should mention that before the 44-day war, women (including young women) were much more motivated to participate in politics than now."*

Most of the experts pointed out that in order to effectively promote the political participation of youth, political forces and parties themselves need to be educated and trained so that they can not only transfer their skills and knowledge to the youth in the right format but also change their attitude towards the role of youth.

In discussions with young people, many avoid talking about politics, citing very common notions: "Politics is immoral," "Politics is dirty," "I am too young to get my hands dirty," "It is better for me to do certain projects in the community than to engage in politics" and so on.

One of the experts who coordinated the program of interns with the National Assembly noted:

> *"It was quite difficult to send interns to the factions. For example, the interns did not want to go to this or that faction. Instead, most of the young interns wanted to work for the sectoral committees. I should also mention that following this program, some of the interns had the desire and opportunity to be employed in the National Assembly."*

Another important issue is the misunderstanding of the terms politics and policy among youth. Sometimes, when young people hear about policy-making, they imagine political activities and influence on them, but what is meant is public policies. Due to misunderstandings, there is a de-

crease in youth participation during public discussions, trainings, forums, and other events.

Summing up, it should be noted that the question of whether young people are considered decision-makers received mostly similar negative answers from experts (note that representatives of state agencies and the public/political sector were involved in the expert survey phase). Only two of the experts noted that youth participate in decision-making and policy-making, but what influence they have is a different question.

During one of the interviews, one of the experts highlighted:

> *"Youth are participants in decision-making and policy-making but they are not decision-makers. They may be agents of influence but most of the processes do not succeed because the decision-makers are not ready to implement the proposed changes."*

One of the experts notes:

> *"We should be honest. Presently, youth try to affect decision-making and policy-making, but it's hard to say what the consequences are, or maybe it's a different question."*

One of the experts notes:

> *"Youth are able to participate in decision-making at the political level mainly if they hold posts. Interestingly, even from this perspective, I have not noticed that the reforms or legislative changes proposed by youth are covered from the perspective of successful political youth participation (it is further problematic when women propose or bring forth these changes)."*

Following the focus group discussions, most of the young people stated that becoming a member of the Council of Elders is a form of political participation at the local level. When asked if they would like or consider becoming a member of the Council of Elders, mostly negative answers were received.

> *"I don't think I see myself as a member of the Council, but I also don't know to what extent my voice will be heard or if I will be able to make certain changes. Also, I don't want to be associated with any party, and now in order to become a member of the Council of Elders, it is necessary to be on the party lists."*

Youth do not have motivation for political participation or activism at the local level assuming that it is quite binding while at the same time there is a doubt as to how much influence they can have in the decision-making processes at the community level.

As for the level of Hart's Ladder of Participation they see youth at, the first four levels were mostly mentioned: manipulation, decoration, imitation/tokenism, and informing. Considering also the answers that were received through focus group discussions and quantitative data analysis, youth participation is limited to the 3rd level of imitation/tokenism.

One expert notes:

> *"Although participation in electoral processes has been liberalized, there are examples at the local level that young people and women nominated in the elections have been targeted and subjected to pressure."*

To promote the political participation of youth, political parties are required to change their attitude and develop clear steps to really include this group in their activities.

Experts note:

> *"If we want to achieve real activation of youth, we must start demonstrating political will and acknowledgment of the importance of the role of youth within the parties. Youth should be included in state agencies in different ways, for example, at the level of Youth Councils."*

> *"Education, as well as non-formal education processes, should contribute not only to increasing the activity of civic participation but also political participation. We should acknowledge that youth are not only activists."*

Experts have also extensively noted the need for parties to develop a vision and strategies for working with youth.

> *"The parties should develop clear strategies the implementation of which will promote the political participation of youth but at the same time, it is necessary to ensure their educational development. One cannot achieve quality without the other."*

In view of the international and regional documents, it should be noted that, apart from the fact that the Republic of Armenia has undertaken a number of commitments to promote youth participation at various levels of decision-making and policy-making, it is necessary to take urgent steps for the development of strategic documents in the youth sector and their implementation. In turn, each of these activities should be aimed at

identifying the needs and eliminating the obstacles to youth participation.

In addition to participation and especially youth participation. the study of legal documents, literature, the opinion of youth, and the expert community highlight the freedom to express an opinion, and the opportunity to initiate actions and have an impact as the main elements of participation. However, the effectiveness of these elements is questioned due to the lack or absence of platforms to test them. This, in turn, leads to the development of unauthentic, non-transparent, non-cooperative, non-need-based policies, decision-making, and their implementation.

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# Annex 1.

## Hart's Ladder of Participation

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **8. ՀԱՄԱԲՈՐՁԱԿՑՈՒԹՅՈՒՆ** | Նախաձեռնություն ամբողջությամբ երիտասարդին է: երիտասարդները համագործակցում են մեծահասակների հետ օգտագործելով նրանց գիտելիքներին ու փորձառությունը հօգուտ նախաձեռնության: | Բուհի ուսանողները ղողշում են ստեղծել ուսանողական գիտական ընկերություն, որը պետք է մշակի նորարարական հետազոտքիր զարգավարներ, որոնք կարող են կիրառվել բիզնեսում։ Ընկերությունը կազմում է իր կառավչման խորհուրդը, որտեղ որոշվում է նաև ներգրավել համապատասխան ֆակուլտետի ճանաչված դասախոսների և մի քանի խոստումնոտ գիտնականների, որոնք կարող են նպաստել այդ ընկերության զարգացմանը: |
| **7. ԻՆՔՆՈՒՐՈՒՅՆՈՒԹՅՈՒՆ** | Նախաձեռնությունն ամբողջությամբ երիտասարդներին է: երիտասարդներն իրենք են մշակում նախաձեռնությունը, հայթայթում միջոցները և իրականացնում այն: | Երիտասարդական խումբը որոշում է ադետաից տուժած այն ընտանիքների համար, որոնք դեռ ապրում են տնակներում, լուծել բնակարանային խնդիրներ։ Նրանք կազմում են ֆոնդհայթայթման «քրաուդֆանդինգային» ծրագիր, հավաքում են միջոցներ և իրականացնում են բնակարանների ապահովման ծրագիցը քաղաքական ինքնուրույն և ըստ իրենց իսկ որոշված ծրագրի: |
| **6. ՀԱՄԱՏԵՂ ՈՐՈՇՈՒՄՆԵՐԻ ԿԱՅԱՑՈՒՄ** | Նախաձեռնությունն ամբողջությամբ մեծահասակներին է: երիտասարդների ու մեծահասակները նախաձեռնության իրականացման ընտացքում հավասարազոր ձայնի իրավունք ունեն: | Համակառավարման մեխանիզմ. կառավարությունը ստեղծում է իրեն առընթեր երիտասարդական քաղաքականության խորհուրդ, որտեղ 50/50 սկզբունքով ներգրավված են երիտասարդական կազմակերպությունների անդամներ, փորձագետներ և համապատասխան նախարարությունների ներկայացուցիչներ, որոնք համատեղ որոշումներ են ընդունում երիտասարդական քաղաքականության զարգացման ուղղությունների վերաբերյալ: |
| **5. ՏԵՂԵԿԱՑՈՒՄ ԵՎ ԽՈՐՀՐԴԱԿՑՈՒՄ** | Նախաձեռնությունն ամբողջությամբ մեծահասակներին է: Երիտասարդների տեղեկացված են և իրենց կարծիքը հաշվի է առնվում: Այն կարող է ընդունվել կամ չընդունվել: | Քաղաքի բարեզարդական ծրագրերի մշակման ժամանակ քաղաքային իշխանությունները աղգանց գործընկերների միջոցով հնարավորություն են ստեղծում երիտասարդական իմզերին մասնակցել, բույցեի բաշխմանմ՝ ըվեարկելով այդ կամ այն բարեգործական ծրագրի համար: Նրանց կարծիքները հաշվի են առնվում վեր |
| **4. ՏԵՂԵԿԱՑՈՒՄ** | Նախաձեռնությունն ամբողջությամբ մեծահասակներին է: Երիտասարդները տեղեկացված են նախաձեռնության նպատակի և բուլոր գործընթացների մասին, իսկ մասնակցում են որպես կատարողներ: | Կազմակերպություններն իրականացնում են ծրագրեր երիտասարդների համար, Երիտասարդ անհատներ մասնակցում են կազմակերպության թիմային իմցերի համար տրամադրվող բաազբային ծառայությունների վստահցմանը, սակայն դրանք չեն մասնակցում կազմակերպության կառավարմանը, ծրագրերի մշակմանն և նյութական ռեսուրսների բաշխմանը: |
| **3. ԻՄԻՏԱՑԻԱ** | Նախաձեռնությունն ամբողջությամբ մեծահասակներին է: Երիտասարդներն իրականում են «մասնակցելու» մեծահասակների աշխատանքին։ Այդ իմզը կազացնում են մեծահասակների կողմից թեկարդված կամ ոչ մեկին չհետաքրքրող որևէ ազդեցություն չգործող որոշումներ: | Քաղաքական կամ հասարակական ղլղորում ռազմավարական ծրագրերի մշակման ընթացքում երիտասարդների որոշ խումբեր շրջանում անց են կացվում հանրային լսումներ, սակայն դրանց կողմից առաջարկված զարգավարների ներառման իրական հնարավորություններ և մեխանիզմներ չկան: |
| **2. ԴԵԿՈՐԱՑԻԱ** | Նախաձեռնությունն ամբողջությամբ մեծահասակներին է: Երիտասարդներին օգտագործում են որպես գաղտագործ՝ մասնակիցների գործունեությունը հավելյալ լշո և դրական տպավորություն հաղորդելու համար: | Նախագահական կամ այլ ընտրությունների ժամանակ հետասառոնոութությամբ հաճախ ցույց են տալիս թելիածնների այցեր ղղցրգեներ և մանկապարտեզներ։ Պատառսանների և թուղիկների վրա տպագրվում է թելիածոոիի լուսանկարը երեխաներին գրկած կամ երիտասարդների հետ ննարկումևեր վարելիս: |
| **1. ՄԱՆԻՊՈՒԼԱՑԻԱ** | Նախաձեռնությունն ամբողջությամբ մեծահասակներին է: Երիտասարդներն են գործարկման նեքսա են գտնվում և հետնում իրահանաչների: Երիտասարդները չգիտեն՝ ինչո են մասնակցում այդ միջոցառումներին ու զալոս են՝ այլ դրդապատճառներից ելնելով: | Միջոցառման կազմակերպիչները բաժանվում են երիտասարդներին տարբեր պաստերներով և տեքստերով շապիկներ և տանում որև թեմայի հավաքի կամ ֆլեշմոբի մասնակցելու։ Որպես կանոն նրանց չի բացատրվում տվյալ միջոցառման ետությունը, նպատակը, իրենց դերն ու մասնակցության իմասը: |

# Annex 2.

<u>Political participation and civic engagement</u>[15]

| Civic participation | | Political participation | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| (latent political participation) | | (manifest political participation) | | |
| Engagement | Civic engagement | Formal political participation | Activism | |
| (attention) | (action) | | (extra-parliamentary participation) | |
| | | | Legal | Illegal |
| **Individual forms** | | | | |
| Personal interest in politics and societal issues<br><br>Attentiveness to political issues | Activities based on personal interest in and attention to politics and societal issues | Electoral participation and contact activities (staying in contact with politicians through various methods) | Extra-parliamentary forms of participation: to make once voice heard or to make a difference through individual means (e.g. signing petitions, political consumption[16]) | Politically motivated unlawful acts on an individual basis |
| **Collective forms** | | | | |
| A sense of belonging to a group or a collective with a distinct political profile or agenda<br><br>Lifestyle-related politics (e.g. identity, clothes, music, food, values) | Voluntary work to improve conditions in the local community, for charity, or to help others (outside one's own family and circle of friends) | Organized political participation: membership in conventional political parties, trade unions, and other organizations | Loosely organized forms or network-based political participation: new social movements, demonstrations, strikes, and protests | Illegal and violent activities and protests: demonstrations, riots, squatting buildings, damaging property, confrontations with the police or political opponents |

15.  Political Participation and Civic Engagement: Towards a New Typology, Joakim Ekman, Erik Amnå "Human Affairs", 2012, p. 292, DOI: 10.2478/s13374-012-0024-1.

16. Քաղաքական սպառում - որոշակի քաղաքական դրդապատճառներից ելնելով, հրաժարվել կամ բույկոտել որոշակի ապրանքներ ու ծառայություններ:

# Annex 3.

<u>Questionnaire for focus group discussions</u>

- **Part 1 – Youth issues in the Republic of Armenia**

1. First, please introduce yourself by stating your region and community, what you do (student or employed), and what activities you are engaged in.
2. Do you live in your community? If not, why?
3. Think for a moment and try to define who youth are. Please indicate how you understand "youth participation." What types of participation can you think of?
4. What are the main issues and obstacles that youth face today in self-realization as individuals and citizens? At which level are there more of them?
5. How would you define political and civic participation? Which is more common among youth? What kind of political and civic activity do you demonstrate?

- **Part 2 – Community participation**

1. How would you define community participation? What are its forms of expression? Which of the ones you mentioned have you tried?
2. Do you think education affects participation and its levels? How is it expressed in the case of youth?
3. How do youth in your community participate in community life? What is the most common form of participation? What steps or measures do they take to participate in decision-making or community life? Are there any obstacles that preclude youth from starting certain initiatives?
4. Are there any NGOs operating in your community? Are there any organizations operating in your community? How do they cooperate

with the municipality and the residents of the community?

5. Do local authorities cooperate with youth in your community? What actions are being taken? What is the attitude of youth towards local authorities?

6. What issues do you see in community-youth cooperation and relations? What would you change?

● **Part 3 – State level**

1. How would you define participation at the state level? What kind of participation do youth have in decision-making in the Republic of Armenia?

2. What are the agencies that deal with youth issues? What steps and activities do they carry out?

3. Have you participated in any events organized by these agencies? What discussion or event was it?

   ● Do you know about the Department of Youth Policy, Supplementary and Continuing Education of the MoESCS? What activities does it carry out?

4. Did you participate in public discussions or youth forums? What recommendations did you make, and what developments took place? Was your voice heard? What organizations were they organized by?

5. Do you have any suggestions regarding the above two questions and types of discussions? How do you evaluate them? What would you change?

6. What youth-related documents in the Republic of Armenia are you familiar with? How do you evaluate their effectiveness?

7. In terms of youth-state cooperation, what would be the most effective and most preferable type of cooperation for you, and why?

# Annex 4.

- Introduce yourself, and talk a little about your experience.
- To what extent are you involved in working with youth, and what activities do you carry out in the youth sector?
- How would you evaluate the social and political activity of youth? What obstacles do you see?
    - Political
    - Social
- In general, are youth in Armenia considered decision-makers, and/or do they have an impact on decision-making?
- Considering all the obstacles, what steps can be taken to promote social and political activity among youth?
    - Steps by the state.
    - Local authorities
    - By civil society.
- Do you think the level of education affects the participation and/or activity of youth, including decision-making? What kind of effect can it have? Does the current education system promote youth activity?

- **Community level**

- How effective do you consider youth participation in community life and at the community level?
    - What kind of activities do they mainly carry out at the community level?
    - What are the main issues of interest to youth at the local/ community level?
- What successful examples can you remember of young people

achieving success or changes at the community level?

- Are local authorities interested in cooperation with youth? In what ways do they mainly engage youth or promote their activity at the local level?
- Are the forms of participation you mentioned effective? How would you evaluate the process? What problems do you see? How should these problems be addressed at the local level?

- **State level**

- Are you aware of the developments in the youth sector and youth policy? In your opinion, how necessary and urgent is it to have a youth policy and strategy? What will it change in the lives of young people?
- In what ways do youth take part in raising issues and making decisions at the state level? Is their voice really heard?
- Have you participated in public discussions and closed meetings organized by state institutions where youth issues were discussed? What were the developments of those meetings? Were young people involved in those meetings?
  - Do you think these meetings were effective for youth and the state?
  - Was there feedback after the meetings? Were the results communicated to the participating parties?
- In what ways do the state and state agencies promote active youth participation in decision-making processes? On a scale from 1 to 10 (very effective, not effective at all), where would you put Armenia at the moment?
- What would you change in the state strategy and agenda to promote youth participation in decision-making? Mention specific actions that can effectively support this process.

# Annex 5.

- **Part 1 - Demographic issues**

*(these questions are designed to acquire a general demographic understanding among survey participants)*

1. **Sex**
   - Male
   - Female
   - Other

2. **Age group**
   - 15-19
   - 20-24
   - 25-29

3. **Region**
   - Aragatsotn
   - Ararat
   - Armavir
   - Gegharkunik
   - Lori
   - Kotayk
   - Shirak
   - Syunik
   - Vayots Dzor
   - Tavush
   - Yerevan (city)

4. **Community**

_____

5. **Do you currently live in your community (if the answer is"no", proceed to the next question„; if the answer is "yes„, proceed to question 7)**
   - Yes
   - No

6. **Where do you currently live (region, community)?**

_____

7. **Education**
   - 1st - 9th grades
   - 10th-12th grades
   - Craftsmanship and secondary vocational education
   - Higher education
   - No education

8. **Major**

_____

9. **Employment**
   - Employed
   - Self-employed
   - Running a household
   - Job seeker (unemployed)
   - Job seeker (seeking a change of job)
   - Pupil/ student

10. **At which of the following levels did you most participate and/or have your input in decision-making and policy-making processes (more than one answer)**

- Community
- State
- Other

11. **How do you understand the phrase "youth participation in decision-making and policy-making processes„?**

_____


- **Part 2**

*(this section is aimed at revealing what kind of participation youth have in community life and decision-making processes at the community level)*

12. **Education plays an important role in youth participation in decision-making and policy-making at the community level**

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- I don't know/can't say

13. **The education you received helps you actively participate in introducing programs and making decisions in your community**
    - Strongly agree
    - Agree
    - Disagree
    - Strongly disagree
    - I don't know/can't say

14. **How do you evaluate your participation in raising and solving the problems of your community?**
    - I don't participate at all
    - I am passive, but I have some participation
    - I participate regularly
    - I am very active
    - I don't know/can't say

15. **Do individuals or groups affect your participation in the decision-making and policy-making processes (if the answer is "no", proceed to question 17)?**
    - Yes
    - No

16. **Indicate which of the following individuals and groups have this effect (select a maximum of 3 answers)**
    - Mayor
    - Municipality employee/s
    - School/kindergarten employee/s
    - School/kindergarten students

17. **Did you participate in the discussions of the 5-year community development plan and/or annual development plan (if the**

**answers are "no" and "there are no discussions," proceed to question 20)?**

- Yes, I participated
- Yes, I participated and made recommendations
- No, I did not participate
- There were no such discussions in our community.

18. **How did you learn about those discussions (select a maximum of 3 answers)?**

- Social media
- E-mail address
- Print media
- Announcements posted in the community
- Residents of the community
- Municipality employee
- Other

19. **In the case of participation, what recommendations did you make? Were they accepted?**

_____

20. **Indicate how often your municipality carries out the following to involve the youth in community life:**

|  | Never | Sometimes | Often | Always | I don't know/ I can't say |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Invites them to moderate events/discussions. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Presents the activities it has performed and carried out. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Talks about the importance of the role of youth. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Invites youth to participate in community events. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Invites youth to public discussions. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Organizes discussions especially for youth, listens to their opinions on this or that issue and pays special attention to them in the decision-making process. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Uses recommendations made by youth to address this or that issue. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Involves youth in decision-making, listens to their opinions, assesses their needs, and. as a result, develops and implements an action plan together with them. |  |  |  |  |  |

**21. Indicate how often youth in your community carry out the following activities:**

|  | Never |  | Often |  | I don't know/ can't say |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|  |  |  |  |  |  |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| They do volunteer work and share their experience with the community. | | | | | |
| They are members of organizations and/or initiatives operating in the community. | | | | | |
| They participate in the events undertaken by organizations/ initiatives operating in the community. | | | | | |
| They organize events together with organizations/initiatives operating in the community. | | | | | |
| They participate in the events carried out by the municipality. | | | | | |
| They are members of the Youth Council adjunct to the Mayor. | | | | | |
| They participate in public discussions and council meetings organized in the community, give speeches, and express opinions. | | | | | |
| They are engaged in addressing community issues, support the municipality in its initiatives, and come up with projects. | | | | | |

22. **Are there any circumstances and/or factors impeding youth participation in your community (if the answers are "no„ and "I don't know„„ proceed to question 23)?**

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

23. **Name the main 3 of these factors.**

_____

24. **What would you change in the community-youth cooperation?**

_____

- **Part 3**

*(this section is aimed at revealing what kind of participation youth have in state decision-making and policy-making processes)*

25. **Education plays an important role in youth participation in decision-making and policy-making at the state level.**

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- I don't know/can't say

26. **The education you received helps you actively participate in introducing youth programs and making decisions in Armenia.**

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- I don't know/can't say

27. **Have you ever participated in discussions organized by ministries or other state agencies (if the answer is "no,, proceed to question 29)?**
- Yes
- No

28. **Indicate in what thematic discussions you participated.**
_____

29. **Have you participated in any discussions related to youth issues?**
- Yes
- No

30. **What agency and/or organization was it organized by?**
_____

31. **According to you, which organizations in the Republic of Armenia deal with youth issues the most?**
- Local NGOs
- Ministry of Education, Science, Culture, and Sports
- Youth initiatives
- Municipalities
- Regional administrations
- International organizations
- The National Assembly
- Student unions and councils
- Other

32. **Have you heard about the Department of Youth Policy, Supplementary and Continuing Education of the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports (if the answer is "no,, proceed to question 35)?**

- • Yes
- • No

**33. 33.  Where did you hear about the Department of Youth Policy, Supplementary and Continuing Education (if you are not familiar, proceed to question 33)?**

- I met the representatives of this Department
- I read about their activities on social media platforms
- I heard about their activities on TV
- I participated in the events organized by them
- I applied for support
- I did not hear and am not familiar with their activities

**34. What are the functions of the Department of Youth Policy, Supplementary and Continuing Education (select more than one answer)?**

- Ensures training, preparation, and requalification of professionals
- Ensures the implementation of scientific research activities in the fields of culture and youth issues
- Signs international agreements in the youth sector and ensures their implementation
- Sends young people to participate in exchange and other educational programs
- Cooperates with and participates in the activities of various youth organizations
- Develops and/or presents recommendations for various financial documents on the improvement of the financing system, tax policy, work organization, remuneration, and pension security
- Defines directions for scientific and technical development in the youth sector, and supports the technical equipment of cultural, children's, and youth organizations.

- Develops youth policies, strategies, and other documents and ensures the promotion of youth policy through mass media
- Grants scholarships by setting priorities and appropriate criteria
- Supports the development of youth entrepreneurship, the establishment, and development of information and documentation, advisory and social services, as well as career orientation and employment youth services and centers.
- Supports addressing socio-economic issues of youth and exercise of their rights and legitimate interests
- Discusses the citizens' applications, and provides solutions as appropriate and needed

**35. Indicate how often you and your friends perform the following activities:**

|  | Never |  | Often |  | I don't know/ can't say |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| We participate in the events organized by the Ministry. |  |  |  |  |  |
| In cooperation with specific groups and organizations, we participate in discussions on youth issues. |  |  |  |  |  |
| We participate in public awareness campaigns on the role of youth. |  |  |  |  |  |
| We study the documents submitted by the Ministry for public discussions, develop recommendations and participate in public meetings and discussions with state agencies and international organizations. |  |  |  |  |  |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| We participate in youth exchange programs to develop our skills and share them with local youth. | | | | |
| We are members of local organizations/initiatives, we do volunteer work. | | | | |
| We work in international and local organizations in the field of youth issues. | | | | |

36. 36.Did you participate in the discussions of youth sector documents?

- Yes
- No

37. What recommendations or issues did you raise?

_____

38. Are you familiar with the draft RA youth policy strategy (if the answer is "no," proceed to question 40)?

- Yes, I have heard/I know that such a document exists
- Yes, I am aware and have read it
- Yes, I am aware, I am familiar with the document and I have participated in its discussions
- No, I am not familiar with it
- No, I am not interested

39. What organization was the discussion organized by? Indicate what recommendations or issues you raised.

40. **Are there any circumstances and/or factors that impede the participation of youth in Armenia (if the answers are "no„ and "I don't know„ proceed to question 39)?**

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

41. **Name the main 3 of these factors.**
_____

42. **What would you change in the state-youth cooperation?**
_____

43. **Is there anything else you would like to mention?**

*Thank you for participating in the survey, your answers and feedback are very important to us.*