

UN YOUTH POLICY AND YOUTH LEADERSHIP IN THE UNION STATE OF BELARUS AND RUSSIA

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Abstract: The research article focuses on the UN youth policy and youth leadership in the Union State of Belarus and Russia. Youth are the main driving force behind sustainable development, social and political change, economic growth and innovation. The global community views youth as full partners in building a better world. The involvement of young people in societal affairs is a pervasive aspect of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. With the development of technology, young people have easy access to information, including false information. It is easier to manipulate; stable ideas and beliefs, political views and preferences are not formed in it. Employing the avenue of democratic progress, certain nations grapple with the challenge of integrating youth involvement in the changes and advancements set in motion by governmental authorities. In this regard, it becomes relevant to attract young people to active public participation, interact with them, support them in protecting their rights and create conditions conducive to their cooperation at the international level. The objective of the research is to explore the feasibility of involving young individuals in public engagement on a global, regional, and national scale. The subject of the research is the youth policy of the UN, the Union State of Belarus and Russia, the Republic of Belarus and the Russian Federation. The methodological basis is a comparative, geographic and systematic approach in relation to the subject of research. The article analyzes the activities of the international community and states in the implementation of youth policy. The practical conclusions of the study can be used to increase the level of public participation of young people and improve the forms of implementation of youth policy.

Keyword: Key words: youth policy, youth, sustainable development goals, Union State, UN.

1.0 Introduction

Youth is a strategic resource for the development of the world. She offers innovative ideas and solutions, acts as a catalyst for social progress and stimulates political change.

Internationally, the United Nations stands as the cornerstone for safeguarding and aiding young people. As per the UN criteria, youth is defined as individuals aged between 15 and 24 years [United Nations, 2012]. In the Russian Federation, the category “youth, young citizens” includes persons aged 14 to 35 [Konsul'tatntPlyus 2021]. In the Republic of Belarus, young citizens are citizens between the ages of 14 and 31 [Natsional'nyy tsentr pravovoy informatsii Respubliki Belarus' 2016]. As of January 1, 2021, in the Russian Federation, young people aged 15 to 24 years amounted to 14 million 50 thousand, which is 9.57% of the total population of the Federationⁱ, in the Republic of Belarus - 901 thousand, which is 9.58% of the entire population of the republicⁱⁱ.

The number of young people is expected to grow. With such figures, sustainable development and peace cannot be achieved if young people are not involved and the conditions for unlocking their potential are not created. Increasing the rights and opportunities of young people, stimulating their development and participation in public life are goals and means at the international, interstate and state levels.

1.1 UN Youth Strategy

The UN has a unique unifying role and mandate to serve the peoples of the world. This makes it possible to act as a source of protection for young people, create platforms to meet the needs of young people, voice their views and increase participation in public life at various levels. The implementation of the youth strategy sets an example of UN leadership.

The UN Youth 2030 Strategy was officially launched on 24 September 2018 in New Yorkⁱⁱⁱ. It strengthens efforts at the global, regional and national levels to increase the capacity, meet the needs and protect the rights of young people, and ensure their participation in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

2.0 Priority goals of the Youth 2030 strategy:

1. Study, improve and revitalize existing forms of UN cooperation with youth organizations and movements, as well as youth outside of any organization, in order to ensure coherence in efforts to involve youth from the most marginalized groups in the development process globally, regionally and nationally. levels.
2. Supporting youth in gaining greater access to quality education and health care.
3. Increasing access of young people to decent employment.
4. Promotion of the right of young people to participate in solving public issues, political and civil processes, as well as in the activities of various platforms and institutions.
5. Strengthening national, regional and global partnerships and collaboration, including between youth organizations and governments, through youth, peace and security coalitions, and work to mitigate climate change and reduce disaster risk [Youth2030, 2018].

Currently, in accordance with the Youth 2030 strategy, UN offices are adopting new strategies and plans for youth, making efforts to raise funds to finance youth projects. Support for youth organizations and initiatives has been reflected in a number of new measures to fund youth-led groups.

The United Nations encourages young people to engage positively in international fora and intergovernmental forums, such as the General Assembly, the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, the Commission for Social Development, and the ECOSOC Youth Forum.

Due to technological progress and not formed stable political views and beliefs, young people are easier to misinform. Therefore, in carrying out international youth cooperation, it is necessary to recall the speech of the first Soviet representative to the UN at the XXXVII session of the General Assembly. A.A. Gromyko spoke about the impossibility of acting in the spirit of psychological warfare and interference in the internal affairs of the state [Pravda, 1977]. The UN and its subsidiaries can achieve the goals of the youth strategy by 2030 if work with youth is systematic, supported by strong policies and processes. To ensure accountability and transparency in the UN's work on youth, a marker system needs to be developed at the global, regional and national levels.

3.0 Sustainable Development Goals Youth Ambassadors

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, containing 17 global goals, was adopted at the UN Summit on Sustainable Development on September 25, 2015^{iv}. The Sustainable Development Goals are a call to action from 193 countries. States acknowledge that efforts to combat poverty must be coordinated with measures to promote economic growth, address concerns related to employment, social protection, health, and education, and fight climate change and environmental degradation.

Young people are full partners in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The strategy of international youth cooperation of the CIS member states for 2021-2030 considers youth cooperation as an important factor in ensuring sustainable progress in the CIS, and also provides for the formation of an active life position among young people aimed at supporting the sustainable development of the CIS member states^v. For this purpose, the national program "Youth ambassadors of the Sustainable Development Goals" is being implemented in the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Republic of Belarus, the Kyrgyz Republic, the Russian Federation, and Turkmenistan.

The Sustainable Development Goals Youth Ambassador is a young representative of civil society, selected on the basis of proven success in the implementation of one Sustainable Development Goal for a period of 1 year in order to inform and involve his peers in solving the key problems of humanity. Youth Ambassadors popularize the Sustainable Development Goals among young people, inform them about the mechanisms for achieving sustainable development indicators at the local and national levels, help young people acquire knowledge and professional competencies, master the ideas and principles of sustainable development.

Since 2017, the National Council of Youth and Children's Associations of Russia has been annually conducting a competitive selection of Youth Ambassadors of the Sustainable Development Goals of Russia^{vi}. Youth Ambassadors

of the Republic of Belarus are the winners of the competition "Youth Ambassadors of the Sustainable Development Goals - the future of the planet is in our hands"^{vii}.

Through group ideas, inventive solutions, and collaboration, young people may contribute to political discourse at the UN through the Youth Forum of the Economic and Social Council. The Forum allows representatives of youth-led and youth-oriented organizations, youth advocates and other youth stakeholders to engage in dialogue with UN Member States and explore ways and means of promoting youth development and engagement^{viii}.

As part of the X Youth Forum of the Economic and Social Council, on April 6, 2021, the National Council of Youth and Children's Associations of Russia held a side event "Realizing the Potential of Youth of the CIS Countries in the Framework of the Decade of Action." The event was held online and gathered 80 participants on its site^{ix}.

The meetings of the Youth Ambassadors of the Sustainable Development Goals with representatives of government bodies are important for the state system for managing sustainable development processes. A similar event took place on April 29, 2021 at the Belarusian State Pedagogical University named after Maxim Tank^x. At the meeting, issues of interaction between the supervising ministries and Youth Ambassadors were discussed, the idea of holding a thematic session "Youth and Sustainable Development Goals" in the National Children's Educational and Health Center "Zubrenok" was voiced.

Programs to involve young people in achieving sustainable development are a successful mechanism. However, young people from the CIS countries are not sufficiently integrated into the international youth agenda. This is evidenced by the low level of involvement in work at key international platforms, including the UN. This is due to the low level of awareness of the opportunities for young people provided by international organizations, the language barrier.

4.0 Union State Youth Parliamentarism

The main task of modern youth policy in Belarus and Russia is to create conditions for the maximum use of the innovative potential of the young generation in the interests of the development of the Union State^{xi}.

The first meeting of the Youth Chamber at the Parliamentary Assembly of the Union of Belarus and Russia was held in June 2018 in Brest. The Youth Chamber consists of 40 members, of which 20 are citizens of the Republic of Belarus and 20 are citizens of the Russian Federation.

The main goals and objectives of the Youth Chamber:

- involvement of young parliamentarians and youth of Belarus and Russia in the process of building the Union State;
- support for the Parliamentary Assembly of the Union of Belarus and Russia's initiatives pertaining to the protection of young people's rights and legitimate interests; involving young people in parliamentary activities;
- formation of legal and political culture, social and civic activity of youth;
- coordination of interaction between youth organizations, active youth of Belarus and Russia [Parlamentskoye sobraniye Soyuza Belarusi i Rossii, 2020].

In July 2020, the first convocation of the Youth Council (Parliament) at the National Assembly of the Republic of Belarus began work and is a consultative and advisory body. The National Assembly of the Republic of Belarus's first convocation of the Youth Council (Parliament) convened in July 2020 and is a voluntary consultative and advisory body. The Youth Council (parliament) includes 70 people representing all regions and the city of Minsk. Its members participate in various commissions, at meetings of sessions, travel with deputies to the districts, and attend receptions of citizens. Previously, the absence of a youth structure of such a level hampered the work of Belarusian representatives in the Youth Chamber at the Parliamentary Assembly of the Union State and the Youth Interparliamentary Assembly of the CIS member states.

The Youth Chamber at the Parliamentary Assembly of the Union State is expanding cooperation with the regions of the Russian Federation and the Republic of Belarus. In the format of a videoconference, on February 19, 2021, a joint meeting of the Council of the Youth Chamber at the Parliamentary Assembly of the Union State and the Youth Parliament of the Orenburg Region at the Legislative Assembly of the Orenburg Region took place. Members of the Youth Chamber at the Parliamentary Assembly and the Youth Parliament of the Orenburg region exchanged experience in the development and implementation of projects and noted priority areas for joint work. Following the meeting, a draft cooperation agreement was considered^{xii}.

The relevance of the youth component of the Belarusian-Russian integration processes today is beyond doubt. In March 2021, a meeting of the Parliamentary Assembly Commission on Social and Youth Policy, Science, Culture

and Humanitarian Issues was held in the format of a videoconference, where issues of implementation and creation of projects and programs of the Union State in the social sphere were discussed^{xiii}.

Youth parliamentarism helps to identify the leaders of a new generation, instills in young people a legal and political culture, civic consciousness, teaches them to think in state categories. At the same time, it is necessary to think over new interesting joint projects that will serve to preserve and strengthen friendly relations, increase the competitiveness of the Union State in the context of globalization.

5.0 Youth leadership at the state level

The involvement of young people in social and socio-political activities has a great impact on the development of leadership skills. A leader is a person with great authority, capable of making decisions in the interests of the community to which he belongs and which promotes him to the role of its leader, capable of managing almost any situation and making decisions quickly [Ponomarov, A.V., Lantsev, A.O., Kyrchikov, M.S., 2020: 8].

In the field of management, a young leader is capable of innovating. He more easily masters modern organizational, informational, socio-cultural technologies. In order to find and support talented leaders of a new generation in the Russian Federation, the project of the presidential platform "Russia - a country of opportunities" - "Leaders of Russia" is being implemented^{xiv}. Over the three years of the competition's existence, more than 270 appointments have been made out of 313 winners^{xv}.

To develop leadership qualities in higher education institutions, a variety of programs are created. A special place in the education of youth leadership in the Republic of Belarus is occupied by the Academy of Management under the President of the Republic of Belarus^{xvi}, which accumulates information about persons included in the promising personnel reserve.

Currently, it is necessary to form modern leaders who are able to skillfully organize a team, apply SMM marketing and event management technologies, use various digital platforms as channels for promoting youth content, and generate interesting and useful materials on youth topics.

Political parties and public associations play an important role in expressing the political will of young people. There are 35 registered political parties in the Russian Federation^{xvii}. More than 50 youth organizations are members of the National Council of Youth and Children's Associations of Russia^{xviii}. The purpose of its activity is to unite the efforts of youth, children and other public associations of Russia.

In the Republic of Belarus, as of January 1, 2021, 15 political parties, 25 trade unions, 3021 public associations are registered^{xix}. 16 youth and children's associations enjoy state support^{xx}.

The largest and most influential youth public organizations in the Republic of Belarus are the Belarusian Republican Youth Union (hereinafter - BRYU) and the Belarusian Republican Pioneer Organization. More than 400 thousand young people are in the ranks of the Belarusian Republican Youth Union, the pioneer organization unites more than 660 thousand children and adolescents. It is planned that the share of active youth in various forms of socio-political, economic, social and cultural life by 2025 will amount to 86% [Natsional'nyy tsentr pravovoy informatsii Respubliki Belarus', 2021].

The key goal of the Belarusian Republican Youth Union is to implement the political socialization of Belarusian youth. The Open Dialogue project has become one of the most effective forms of direct contact between the authorities and youth, an instrument for the development of civil society^{xxi}.

At the Open Dialogue platform, the author of the study voiced the idea of creating a political party in the Republic of Belarus on the basis of a youth organization^{xxii}. This will increase the involvement of young people in the social and political sphere. Activities in youth political parties contribute to building the political career of leaders of the new generation and can turn them into major political actors.^{xxiii}

6.0 Conclusions

Based on the study, the following conclusions and recommendations can be formulated:

1. The UN is the leader in the implementation of youth policy at the global level. An international marker system is needed to ensure accountability and transparency in youth work.
2. Youth ambassadors of the Sustainable Development Goals from the CIS countries are not sufficiently integrated into the international youth agenda. It is necessary to raise the level of awareness of the activities of international organizations and strive to eliminate the language barrier.
3. Youth parliamentarism of the Union State instills in young people a legal and political culture, civic consciousness, teaches them to think in state categories. New joint youth projects will serve to preserve and strengthen friendly relations, increase the competitiveness of the Union State in the context of globalization.

4. A young leader is able to innovate in the field of management. It is necessary to form modern leaders who are able to apply SMM marketing technologies, use various digital platforms as channels for promoting youth content.
5. Activities in youth political parties contribute to building the political career of young people. The creation of a political party on the basis of a youth organization will increase the activity of young people in public and political life.

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