

# Youth is a strategic resource of Uzbek society



***Youth is a resource of key social and cultural patterns of change in contemporary civilisation and culture. According to specialists, youth policy is not so much a normative genre of managerial activity as a cognitive and vital attitude. It is aimed at the application of everything advanced and viable in actual human civilisation - to work with youth, writes Abror Yusupov, head of department of the Institute for Strategic and Regional Studies under the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan.***

Youth at all times has always been a complex, multidimensional and at the same time unified multifaceted social phenomenon. Accordingly, youth policy in modern states is also a multidimensional and multifaceted phenomenon. The multiplicity of approaches to it further underscores its complexity. At the same time, youth as an object of youth policy today is changing its status, transforming into its subject.



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At the same time, youth policy has taken a firm place in the theory and practice of international relations. It has become an integral element of interstate cooperation. Today there are over 1,8 billion young people in the world.

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In recent years, more than 10 international instruments have been adopted within the framework of the United Nations alone. The political basis and practical recommendations for national action and international support to improve the situation of young people around the world were laid by the World Program of Action for Youth, adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1995. The Program of Action covers fifteen priority areas of activity related to youth and contains proposals for action in each of these areas.

The UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development proclaimed that the well-being, participation and empowerment of youth are key factors for sustainable development and peace around the world. Young people are therefore taken into account in all 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals and 169 targets to achieve them.

UN Secretary-General Guterres said, "Peace, strong economic growth, social justice, tolerance - all these and more depend on harnessing the power of youth."

According to Guterres, "it is young girls and boys who face the major challenges of growing up, self-identifying and gaining independence. Because of the pandemic, things did not go the way they had dreamed and planned. Many have already dubbed them the 'quarantined generation'."

### **The modern youth or the lost generation?**

Contemporary youth is the most active and mobile social group, requiring special attention from state institutions and a need for socialization and adaptation. At the same time, they are increasingly seen as the most important and promising part of society.

Despite the persistence of the so-called "conflict of fathers and children" (a sociological phenomenon in which the cultural values of the younger generation are very different from the cultural and other values of the older generation), positive shifts in the process have been observed.

Observations show that each generation has its own central event according to which it is labelled by those around it, e.g. generation of sixties, seventies ("age range")<sup>[4]</sup>, etc. Nevertheless, there is an ongoing public debate about today's youth in the context of comparing them to the older generation. It is often noted that today's youth is lazy.

However, many experts do not agree with this. On the contrary, they work as hard as previous generations; the problem is that the demands on their skills and the need to constantly adapt to something new are unparalleled in human history.

At the same time, it is worth noting that the most important indicator of young people's social well-being is a success orientation ("achievement" strategy). Research shows that this particular strategy is becoming the defining one for modern youth today.

Modern science provides different definitions of today's youth. In particular, generation Z (for whom digital technology has been absolutely familiar since their birth). An American psychologist at San Diego University J. Twenge suggests calling it the Internet generation, or iGen. Before them were millennials - those who came of age at the turn of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

At the same time, one cannot ignore the fact that today's youth are unnecessarily rushed. Often the psychological frame of contemporary youth is dominated by the principle **"everything, now and at once"**. At the same time, we have to admit that each generation is a product of the previous one, and we cannot blame young people for that. Of course, young people today are not what they used to be. Each new generation is unique in its own way.



Periods of time when the generation prevails among high school students and students. **Source.:** <https://ria.ru/20190126/1549897539.html>

### **Key reforms and priorities of State policy in Uzbekistan**

Uzbekistan is a country with a dynamically developing young society. As experts say, over the next two decades today's children and young people will become the greatest resource in Uzbekistan's history. This is a precious "demographic dividend" for the country. If the right investments are made in the development of young people today, they can become the generation that will bring Uzbekistan to a new level of socio-economic development.

In the Republic of Uzbekistan, State youth policy is defined as a priority area of State activity in order to create socio-economic, legal and organizational conditions and guarantees for the social formation and development of young people and the disclosure of their creative potential in the interests of society.

In this context, safeguarding the legal rights and interests of young people has always been at the center of attention in the country.

The Strategy for Action on the Five Priority Development Areas of the Republic of Uzbekistan for 2017-2021 has a separate section on improving state youth policy.

It covers a set of priorities designed to increase the effectiveness of state policy with regard to the country's youth.

**An analysis of Uzbekistan's youth policy reforms in recent years reveals a number of peculiarities.**

**First**, the improvement of the legal and regulatory framework and the adoption of new legislation in line with modern requirements.

Over the last five years, there has been a significant increase of positive reforms in the country aimed at improving the state policy in relation to youth. In particular, the Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On State Youth Policy" has been adopted. It is the first document that President Mirziyoyev signed after his election to this position.

The law defines state youth policy as a system of social-economic, organizational and legal measures implemented by the state and envisaging creation of conditions for social formation and development of intellectual and creative potential of youth.

A comparative analysis shows that, unlike the previous Act "On the basis of State youth policy" of 20 November 1991, the new Act contains a number of new provisions.

In particular, it has laid down the priority areas of State policy in the light of contemporary requirements. This includes ensuring the social, economic, political and other rights and interests of young people, providing them with accessible, high-quality education, promoting their physical, intellectual and moral development, creating conditions for employment and work, ensuring respect for the law and for national and universal values, protecting them against actions that undermine their moral principles and lead to radicalism, violence and cruelty, supporting talented children and young families, promoting a healthy lifestyle, developing youth sport, etc.

The Act also provides that State, regional and other programs may be adopted to support young people in order to implement its provisions.

The Act also seeks to strengthen the role and place of civil society organizations, particularly youth organizations, citizens' self-governance bodies and the media in the implementation of State youth policy. Legal mechanisms are defined for the mandatory participation of civil society institutions in the development and implementation of State and other programs, the organization and implementation of measures to foster a healthy and harmoniously developed younger generation, the enhancement of the role and activity of young people in public life and public control over the implementation of legislation and State programs in this area.

Most importantly, effective measures for the protection and support of young persons are enshrined in legislation. For example:

- **legal and social guarantees** - ensuring rights and freedoms, free medical care and general education, conditions and guarantees of higher education within the limits of state grants, employment, provision of privileges in the area of labor, allocation of preferential loans for construction and purchase of housing, material support for low-income young families, development of recreation and leisure system

- **state support for talented young people**: the awarding of prizes, scholarships and educational grants; the organization of sports schools, competitions, contests, exhibitions, conferences and seminars;

access to training programs for gifted young people; and the creation of conditions for young scientists and specialists.

Overall, the new Act on State youth policy aims to improve State governance in the area of youth policy by strengthening the powers of each of the entities involved in that process. At the same time, the adopted document has expanded and established additional State guarantees that will stimulate the all-round development of young people in Uzbekistan and their involvement in private enterprises, which has become the locomotive of the country's economic growth.

In order to create new and international standards for the implementation of State policy on youth in the country, the **Concept of Development of State Youth Policy in Uzbekistan until 2025** has also been approved and is being implemented.

The Youth Affairs Agency and interdepartmental councils on youth issues, chaired by the Prime Minister, have begun to operate within the framework of the concept. A Youth Commission has been set up in the Legislative Chamber of the Oliy Majlis and Youth Parliaments have been established in the chambers of the Oliy Majlis.

In addition, the National Human Rights Strategy of the Republic of Uzbekistan and the State Program for Implementing the Strategy of Action on the Five Priority Development Areas of the Republic of Uzbekistan for 2017-2021 in the Year of Youth Support and Health Promotion are being implemented.

**Second**, a fundamental change in the approach to youth policy, based on the principle **"for youth and with youth"**.

In that context, it is worth mentioning the implementation of **five important initiatives** put forward by the President of Uzbekistan. They involve the broad involvement of young people in culture, the arts, physical education and sport, raising their awareness of information technology, promoting reading and ensuring women's employment. Particular attention is paid to the most important task of ensuring employment for young people and creating the conditions for them to earn a decent income.



**As part of five important initiatives**, 2.9 million students in educational institutions are involved in various clubs (sports, arts and culture, science, robotics, computer technology, etc.). Based on the American T.E.A.M. up program, master classes have been organized for 3,000 students.

In addition, a book club was created and in a short period some **270,000 boys** and girls became its members. As part of the **Book Challenge** project, **over 600,000** different books were donated to schools.

An additional **36,000** clubs have been set up to provide meaningful leisure activities for young people and some **874,000** boys and girls are involved in them. Within the framework of five major initiatives, **97,000** art supplies, sports equipment and computers were donated to educational institutions, libraries and training centers.

Analyzing the work in this direction, it is noteworthy that all required conditions have been created for the younger generation to fully develop as an individual.

A noteworthy step has also been the launch of the **Youth Press Club**, which has become a platform for quality and timely coverage of events in the life of young people. The club will host **an open dialogue** between representatives of government agencies, the expert community and the media to constructively discuss youth issues. This platform will also serve to increase the activity of young people in the socio-political life of the country.

The establishment of **the Institute for the Study of Youth Problems and Training of Perspective Personnel under the Academy of Public Administration** under the President of Uzbekistan can be

called a "social lift" for young people. This conclusion is based on the fact that the Institute has been entrusted with such ambitious tasks as compiling a database of promising young staff of State authorities and voluntary organizations, creating a system for monitoring their professional development, preparing proposals for their promotion to managerial positions, and organizing training courses for retraining and further training of promising young staff of State authorities, State and economic administration and society.

In order to improve State youth policy based on foreign experience and to develop cooperation in this area, cooperation has been established with 13 foreign youth organizations. Moreover, in 2018 Uzbekistan was accepted as an equal member of the SCO Youth Council and, in 2020, of the Forum of Youth Organizations of CIS Member States.

The commitment to protecting the rights of young people was reaffirmed in the President's address to the 46th session of the United Nations Human Rights Council, where an initiative was put forward to hold a World Conference on Youth Rights under the auspices of the United Nations. On 12-13 August 2021, **the World Conference on Youth Rights "Youth Involvement in Global Action"** was held on the occasion of the International Youth Day. The event resulted in the unanimous adoption of the **Tashkent Youth Declaration on "Youth Involvement in Global Action"**. The Tashkent Youth Declaration calls for special attention to vulnerable categories of young people and greater involvement of young people in decision-making at all levels.

**Thirdly**, the creation of conditions for the self-realization of young people.

It is common knowledge that in order to effectively realize the potential of young people, it is first and foremost necessary to create the right conditions. This, in turn, is inextricably linked to the whole chain of education.

In order to solve this issue, new type of educational institutions, particularly, presidential, creative and specialized schools have been established. In 2020 alone, 56 such schools have been created in mathematics, 28 in chemistry and biology and 14 in information and communication technology.

In the last five years, 64 new institutions of higher education have been established in the country, and today their number has reached 141. Admission quotas to higher education institutions have been more than tripled. Coverage of young people in higher education has reached 28 per cent, compared to 9 per cent in 2016.

At the same time, **the Concept of Development of Higher Education in the Republic of Uzbekistan until 2030** has been approved and is being implemented in order to identify priority areas of systemic reform of higher education in the country, to raise the training process to a new level, modernize higher education, and develop the social sphere and sectors of the economy on the basis of advanced educational technologies.

One of the most pressing issues for Uzbekistan's young people is **employment**. In the past three years, 841,147 young persons have been employed and a new system has been introduced for the employment of unemployed young persons, the Youth Notebook.

The country's "youth notebook" includes 648,000 unemployed people, of whom 283,000 were employed in the first quarter. In particular, 175,000 young people have been allocated 45,000 hectares of land. It is noteworthy that the cost of driving training and a month's military service for young people from "Notebook" and orphanages will be covered by the state budget.

The government program **"Yoshlar - kelajagimiz" (Youth is our future)** is being actively implemented, aimed at providing employment for young people through assistance business initiatives, start-ups, ideas and support for young people

It provides training for unemployed young people in professions and business skills that are in demand in the labor market and also increases their social and economic activity in general.

As part of the "Yoshlar - kelajagimiz" project, soft loans worth a total of 1 trillion 830 billion soums were provided for 8,635 business projects of young entrepreneurs, as a result of which 42,421 new jobs were created.

To develop entrepreneurial skills among young people there are 19 «**Yosh tadbirkorlar**» (**Young entrepreneurs**) co-working centers and 212 «**Yoshlar mehnat guzari complexes**».

**Fourth**, structural changes involving young people in public and state affairs.

In order to consistently implement the new legislation on 30 June 2017, at the congress of the public youth movement, formerly known as Kamolot, the country's leader took the initiative to transform it into the Youth Union of Uzbekistan. This decision was reflected in a presidential decree of 5 July of the same year, declaring 30 June as Youth Day.

The Youth Union has begun to fulfil such functions as the formation of a harmoniously developed new generation, historical consciousness and historical memory, a healthy way of life and ecological culture, spiritual and moral education with the inculcation of a sense of patriotism, protection of rights and legitimate interests, support for young people's desire to master modern professions, involvement in business activities, shielding young men and women from the influence of religious extremist organizations and much else.

It is well known that the development and effective implementation of state youth policy is a task not only for the executive, but also for the legislative (representative) bodies of state power. Parliaments strive to involve young people in the decision-making process and to involve them in various formats of parliamentary activity.

To that end, a "**Youth Parliament**" has been set up under the Senate of the Oliy Majlis to effectively address the problems of young people in the country.

*According to the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), the proportion of young parliamentarians in the world today is about 2.6 per cent. In Uzbekistan, the figure is over 6 per cent, and the country ranks among the top 20 in the IPU ranking. Youth under 30 are not represented in 25 per cent of parliaments.*

The Youth Affairs Agency of the Republic of Uzbekistan, with its regional branches, has also been established to raise State youth policy in Uzbekistan to a new level, develop effective solutions to problems, and effectively organize and coordinate the activities of the competent bodies.

The main tasks and directions of activity of the Agency are defined as following: elaboration and implementation of unified state policy, strategic directions and state programs in spheres and directions related to youth, preparation of proposals on improvement of normative and legal acts aimed at support of youth in the country, protection of its legal rights and interests, conducting state control over observance of legislation in the field of youth policy.

**Fifth**, a system of support, assistance and encouragement has been created for the representatives of young people.

The Mard uglon (The brave patriot) State Prize and the Kelajak bunyoodkori (The builder of the future) medal have been established to reward dedicated young people who achieve high results and attain outstanding achievements in various areas.

At the national level, interdepartmental councils on youth issues are organized under the leadership of the Prime Minister and at the regional level under the chairmanship of the khokims. The new post of deputy hokim and deputy interior minister for youth affairs has been created in the local executive authorities and internal affairs bodies.

The President of Uzbekistan has rightly noted that young people are "a powerful force in the nationwide

movement to build the New Uzbekistan. For the enthusiasm, courage and noble aspirations inherent in youth to be transformed into practical action, it is necessary to set concrete goals. These are precisely the specific goals set by the Tashkent Youth Declaration, which "promotes and supports the rights of young people, taking into account the principles of **Nothing about us without us and No one should be left behind**.

President of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev's initiatives to further promote and protect the rights of young people are also receiving broad support in the international arena.

In particular, the initiative to adopt a **Convention on the Rights of Young People**, proposed by Uzbekistan at the 72nd session of the UN General Assembly, is gaining increasing support among the international community.

A group of friends on the rights of young people, comprising 22 States, has been set up as part of this work, the main purpose of which is to support initiatives in the area of youth policy and encourage efforts to draw up an international legal instrument on the rights of the younger generation.

The Uzbek leader's call was included in the Office of the **United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)** report Youth and Human Rights, which stresses the need to "*renew and strengthen the commitment to realizing the rights of youth*" and "*take all necessary measures to ensure that young people can enjoy their rights without discrimination*". Among the measures that most effectively promote the rights of young people, the OHCHR supported the consideration of an international instrument on youth rights.

**The Samarkand Web Forum** held in August 2020 focused on topical issues of youth rights protection. The forum adopted the Samarkand resolution "Youth-2020: Global Solidarity, Sustainable Development and Human Rights", which has been presented as an official document of the 74th session of the UN General Assembly.

It is encouraging that the socio-political and academic community has adopted new expressions in the field of youth, such as "**Tashkent Youth Declaration**" and "**Samarkand Youth 2020: global solidarity, sustainable development and human rights**".

According to the Global Progress Report on the UN Youth Strategy 2020, Uzbekistan has been ranked as one of the top countries in 2020 with the best performance in response and recovery from the pandemic with the participation of young people, as well as creation of cultural and architectural opportunities for young people.

In addition, Uzbekistan has been identified as one of the top ten countries (fast-track countries) in the fast-track implementation of the UN Youth Strategy 2030, with a number of youth initiatives supported by the organization. Uzbekistan ranks **82nd** out of **150** countries in the Youth Progress Index.

*This ranking measures the quality of life of young people around the world based on three dimensions - "youth needs", "foundations of well-being" and "opportunities" - and provides a comprehensive picture of what life is like for young people today regardless of economic indicators.*

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To summarise the above, in the context of globalisation, IT development, dynamic growth of needs and various challenges to young people, this issue is more relevant than ever. In this connection, mobilization and coordination of efforts of not only governmental bodies but also of youth representatives themselves remain important.

It should be noted that the implementation of modern youth policy is impossible without scientific understanding in order to make effective managerial decisions in the sphere of work with youth. In this context, Uzbekistan's experience with youth demonstrates a model of transition from **situational to**

## **anticipatory management.**

Because of analysis, it can be emphasized that the **framework** of Uzbekistan's state youth policy rests on **a triple confluence of youth empowerment, economic development and the provision of accessible education.**

Moreover, as mentioned above, Uzbekistan today stands **at an important demographic juncture.** This period is also referred to as the '**window of demographic opportunity**', which actualizes the necessary investment in the development of the younger generation.

*The term "demographic dividend" describes the economic growth that can be achieved by having a large share of the working-age population in the total population. In this case, the main driver is the country's demographics. As mortality and fertility decline, the age structure of the population changes. As birth rates fall, the number of dependent minors in relation to the working-age population also falls. And this is precisely where the dividend can be paid: A growing share of the working-age population relative to other age groups means that each working-age person has fewer dependents and thus a higher net income. This stimulates consumption, production and investment, which in turn can boost economic growth. **Generations 2030 Uzbekistan. UNICEF contribution.** Source: <https://www.unicef.org/uzbekistan/media/401/file/Поколение/202030.pdf>.*

The above said allows us to state that Uzbekistan has set a firm course towards enhancing the role of young people in the socio-political life of the country. In this regard, emphasis is being placed on comprehensive support for youth initiatives on the part of both the State and youth organizations.

On this basis, it may be asserted that, at the new stage of development, Uzbekistan's young people are becoming a strategic resource for society as the most promising target group.

## **Source**