

YOUTH STRATEGY

ARGUMENT

The population of Moldova, and young people in particular, must have access to training in basic skills such as the ability to learn and solve problems, to develop scientific, cultural and technical abilities, to use information technology, speak foreign languages, develop entrepreneurial skills and use initiative, so they can become active, free, and responsible citizens.

Moldova is a country with limited natural resources so investment in human resources is a key strategy. Making up one quarter of the country's population, young people are its most valuable resource. Youth strategy identifies particular fields for investments that will produce tangible effects. An annual investment of at least 1 USD for each young person will guarantee high results by reducing future debts to society. These measures, once implemented, will reduce costs, risks, and development opportunities which are lost because of:

- Lack of qualifications;
- Worsening health conditions and continued risky behavior within certain large social groups;
- Brain drain, illegal migration and human trafficking;
- Inadequate policies.

Effective policies in the field of youth would be an advantage for the entire society.

The private sector is the main beneficiary. It benefits from a more active labor force who are more confident of their strengths, more qualified and better prepared to create and take advantage of new economical and social development opportunities.

This youth strategy is based on a commitment to consider youths as a major resource of society and to offer them the chance to become free, active and responsible citizens. The strategy takes an integrated intersectoral approach, working together with youths to address and respect their needs. The objective of the strategy is to improve life conditions and to increase youth participation in the whole spectrum of social, cultural and political activities that influence them. Young people are the core of this strategy not only as beneficiaries but as active participants that contribute to this dynamic process.

In the context of the Economic Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy, the aim of the Youth Strategy is to outline a large spectrum of government activities addressed to youth, establishing the following priorities specific to youth for the forthcoming years:

- facilitating youth access to services and information in order to create a favorable environment for their development;

- enhancing youth participation in social life
- creating jobs for the young;
- consolidating the human and institutional capacity of the youth sector to enhance young people's level of knowledge.

The issues of health, education, social protection, and employment that affect young people's lives are tackled by specific sector strategies of the Economic Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy.

I. INTRODUCTION

Social transformations of the '90s in Moldova created numerous opportunities, particularly for young people. Due to their age and creative potential, they had the chance to take full advantage of the new openings offered by pluralistic democracy, the liberalized economy and a society that is integrating into Europe and opening to the world. Youth Strategy will allow young people to achieve their potential, to contribute actively to the development of society as a whole, and to manage their lives successfully. This is especially important as youth represents the biggest age category of our society: people aged between 15 and 29 constitute about one fourth of the country's population. This makes Moldova the youngest country in Europe and implies considerable responsibilities to justify the expectations of young people.

Today we face a difficult social and economic situation that affects most of the population. Many people of all age categories are poor and marginalized because of unemployment, economic and social insecurity and the increase of criminality.

Young people suffer the most. The transition from adolescence to maturity, from education and training to professional life, from being a dependent family member to becoming an independent citizen is fraught with difficulties and risks in any society. It is because young people are developing and searching for a place in life that they represent the category most sensitive to political, economic and social changes. It is not surprising that the transformation of our society has a particularly rough effect on young people. They face the difficulty of managing their transition to maturity while the country itself goes through the similar process of transformation. This situation makes young people from Moldova more vulnerable and susceptible to more risks than young people from other European countries. Their vulnerability is increased by the fact that in recent years the quality of public services in health care, education, training, and culture has decreased.

Although young people all face the same difficulties, they are not a homogenous group. Neither are the problems faced by youth today similar to those experienced by their parents. The modern world requires ongoing improvements in

education and training for young people to compete in the labor market, to take advantage of information and communication technologies, to face health challenges such as HIV/AIDS. Young people must be helped to make informed choices about many aspects of their lives, while at the same time respecting their much-valued sense of personal autonomy. Due to democratic transformations in our country, young people express a wide spectrum of opinions and have various values, and each one of them has very specific problems and needs. But regardless of their residence they seem to share many worries and concerns, such as:

- access to information;
- the high unemployment rate;
- access to healthcare services especially with respect to the issue of sexually transmitted diseases;
- rising prices and the difficulty of earning an adequate income;
- the growing level of criminality in society and especially among their peers;
- general uncertainty about the future.

Sadly, the majority of young people have a gloomy vision of the future. One in four young people say they do not know what the future will bring and one in ten say they live for today. One in four believes that the future will be no better than the present, about 15 per cent believe it will be more depressing, and only one third believe that the future will bring a better life. Young people seem to have lost their hope for a prosperous life. That is the reason why it is not enough to tell them they are the future. As figures show, young people want to be in the centre of attention of the state, education authorities, and business world immediately, not some time in the future. Every person is young just once and the young have to be supported in taking their chances while they can.

All these issues, identified by young people themselves, require immediate attention and an adequate reaction. The government thinks that most of these problems are the result of gaps in our former youth policies. In order to solve these problems, the authorities should:

- elaborate medium and long-term national strategies to address the existing problems and needs of young people;
- ensure young people have access to high quality public services such as education, training, extracurricular programs, health care, other information, counseling etc. throughout the entire territory of the country;
- provide sufficient human, administrative, and financial resources for these services and for specific youth programs and policies;
- create mechanisms to monitor, analyze and describe the situation of youth based on research carried out by specialized institutions.

The purpose of the Strategy is to solve problems faced by today's young people in Moldova. The Strategy will allow young people to be fully involved in socially useful activities and will prepare them for the future. Young people are a resource for the present and the future of the country, which must be mobilized for Moldova to prosper. Thus, any form of support provided to young people should be seen as an investment by the state.

A society that does not treat young people as a resource will not compete effectively in the global economy. That is the reason for placing this unique resource, young people, at the center of attention.

The Youth Strategy is an integral part of the Economic Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy. The government, aware of the importance of young people's role in the destiny of the country, is making the development and implementation of the Youth Strategy a priority of state policies. The Department of Youth and Sports is responsible for its implementation and will involve all the institutions working with young people.

According to the *Law on Youth No. 279-XIV of February 11, 1999*, the Youth Strategy is addressed to all people aged between 16 and 30 who live in Moldova. In implementing the Strategy, special attention will be paid to young people with special needs and limited opportunities, as well as to young people from rural areas, poor or single-parent families, homeless or institutionalized young people, young people in conflict with the law and those with disabilities. Also, the Strategy is addressed to young families (in which either spouse is under 30 years old, or families with a single parent under 30) and to parents in general and people who work with young people (youth workers, teachers, educators, psychologists, animators, youth leaders, social assistants, etc.). Some actions can be directed towards even younger people as teenagers share many of the same problems.

In the process of developing the Strategy and the Action Plan for its implementation, the following terms specific to youth policies were used:

Youth, Young People – people between childhood and adulthood, people who are 16-30 years old.

Young Family – a married couple in which any of the spouses is less than 30 years old; a family that consists of a single parent under 30 years old and a child or children.

State Policy Related to Youth – a system of measures meant to ensure social, economic, political, legal and organizational conditions that foster personal development.

Legislation on Youth – norms that allow involvement of youth and youth NGOs in the decision-making process and create a legislative framework favorable to the efficient work of public administration of youth.

Social Service for Young People – a specialized institution providing information, consultation, and social assistance services for youth.

Institution Working with Youth – an organization that carries out activities with and for young people.

Youth Association – a public organization, consisting of young people, that works in education or youth development and aims to solve the problems young people face.

Formal Education – „official” education including schools, lyceums, colleges and, universities.

Formal Education System – a chronologically and hierarchically structured system, starting with kindergarten, elementary school, gymnasium and lyceum, and up to higher education institutions; the entirety of institutions in which education programs are prepared, organized, implemented, planned and evaluated.

Non-Formal Education – education through youth organizations, clubs, community groups and other forums for young people, where they have the opportunity to gain experience by working as volunteers in a group.

Informal Education – the process of learning during time spent with family and friends, reading a book or a newspaper, watching TV, or walking in the street; spontaneous educational activities outside the formal education system which are adapted to the needs and interests of the beneficiaries with the aim of promoting life skills and specific knowledge and enhancing the values and objectives of democratic and civil societies.

Education for Democratic Citizenship – a variety of educational methods and procedures that promote knowledge contributing to the development of active and responsible citizens.

Education for Life Skills Formation – a variety of educational methods and procedures that promote knowledge that helps prevent risky behaviors and dangerous attitudes and that cultivates respect for differences.

Life Skills – adaptive and positive behavioral abilities which allow people to face the requirements and challenges of everyday life; a group of psychological, social and interpersonal skills that help people to make informed decisions, solve problems, think critically and creatively, communicate effectively, establish

healthy relationships, empathize with others, adapt and manage their lives in a healthy and productive manner; personal actions directed towards oneself or others, and actions aimed at changing the environment to become more favorable to health.

Life Skills Based Health Education – an approach that aims at creating or maintaining certain conditions promoting a healthy life style through developing knowledge, abilities and skills, using a wide array of learning experiences with an emphasis on participative methods.

Civic Participation – expression of the rights of the young to be part of the process of influencing life; taking part in forming policy at state, regional, city or village level; this is one of the most important aspects of the rights and responsibilities of youth.

Peer Education – a process in which well-trained and motivated young people carry out informal educational activities organized with their peers (of the same age, social context, or interests) to promote knowledge, abilities, concepts skills and responsibility for health. Peer education can take place in small groups, through individual contact or in contexts such as schools, universities, clubs, churches, workplaces, streets, homes, or any other place where young people meet.

Peer Educator – a person that educates peers, providing them with information, helping them to develop skills and make positive changes in their attitudes and behaviors. Peer educators have to be of the same age as or a little bit older (1-2 years at most) than members of the target groups. It is recommended that young people of both sexes are involved in peer education programs. In most cases peer educators are lyceum students (15-18 years old). In some cases peer educators can be younger (13-15 years old), but in such cases the support of an adult coordinator is crucial.

Social Prevention – creation of favorable social conditions in the economic, social, educational, and cultural fields; in the context of using spare time, enhancing life standards for individuals, social groups and the whole society, spiritual development, humanization, and creating an environment optimal for social integration.

Youth Friendly Services – new ways of providing services by making sure all young people have access to information and basic interventions directed towards the marginalized and vulnerable in areas such as information and counseling, general health, sexual and reproductive health, voluntary and confidential counseling and testing of HIV, mental health, etc.

Spare Time – all activities performed by people of their own will for relaxation, entertainment or developing abilities; voluntary social participation or

creative activity of a person when he/she is free of social, work, and family obligations.

Young People's Mobility – a form of intercultural experience that provides young people with the opportunity to participate actively in the construction of society and creates conditions for individual development through common activities in all areas of social life; an instrument to help young people understand cultures, others as well as their own.

II. SITUATION OF YOUTH FROM MOLDOVA

The government considers that the present situation of young people in Moldova is greatly influenced by the transition period and lack of knowledge of the circumstances in which young people live, as well as the fact that many young people do not have access to services and information.

The general vulnerability of young people is exacerbated by the situation the country is now in. They are susceptible to a number of economic, physical, and psychological risks. The effects can be seen in the existence of a large group of excluded or marginalized young people, with increasing drug abuse, violence, sexually transmitted infections and HIV/AIDS, and a lack of optimism about the future combined with a general feeling of helplessness and uncertainty.

The present situation of young people in Moldova can be addressed under by four different but interdependent headings:

- educational (and training) opportunities and access to information;
- economic opportunities;
- health conditions;
- participation in social life and study for active citizenship.

(1) Education, training, and access to information prepare young people for their active integration into society. Although modern complex societies and job markets demand a more and more advanced level of education and continuous training, many young people in Moldova prematurely abandon school, very few get adequate professional training, and the financial resources allocated for a qualitative and competitive education system are ridiculous. Teaching methods do not stimulate the development of critical and independent thinking, which is needed in modern society. Once in the job market, most young people discover they have not been equipped with the skills and competencies needed for an independent life. This is especially important in professional education, which requires particular attention.

(2) Employment opportunities are insufficient and a lot of young people do not have good economic prospects in Moldova. Economic opportunities vary from one area to another and young people from rural areas are the most affected. Young people with disabilities suffer even more. There are a lot of reasons for this, but for Moldova to prosper economically it must realize the energy and creativity of all young people. The impossibility of fulfilling their professional potential in Moldova makes many young people go elsewhere, depriving the country of its most valuable resource.

One of the most negative aspects of this tendency is the emergence of human smuggling and trafficking. This crime committed against young people and the state can be stopped only by offering young people better economic prospects in Moldova and by promoting a realistic migration policy. Young people are not properly informed about the economic opportunities of Europe. The number of new enterprises, especially in the legal sector of the economy, is still small. Young people need more financing, assistance and legal help to get involved in independent economic activities, which will help slow down the alarming growth of young people involved in criminal activities, especially thefts and misappropriation.

(3) Young people are generally thought to be healthy, but they get involved more in risky behaviors. The last decade exposed young people to a number of new risks. Many start smoking at an early age, use alcohol, drugs and other toxic substances, and practice unprotected sex, leading to the spread of sexually transmitted infections and HIV/AIDS and an increase in the number of unwanted early pregnancies. All these are major dangers that undermine the reproductive and sexual health of young people. Extensive poverty has a dramatic impact on young people's health, but they are not aware of the risks their behavior can expose them to. They have to be informed about the importance of a healthy lifestyle, using friendly services to minimize the risks and problems.

(4) In spite of opportunities that have appeared as pluralist democracy develops in our country, the level of participation of youth in public and political life is still low. Few young people are members of associations and their participation in elections is insufficient. To improve the situation, it is necessary to facilitate access to information and services. Young people want to start their own business, to obtain economic autonomy, but in most cases they are dependent on their parents because they lack the income to afford separate lodgings. That is why the state will promote conditions in which young people can develop as citizens and spend their time productively.

The infrastructure for sports and youth activities has dramatically deteriorated, especially in rural areas, due to negligence and commercial use. The Youth Strategy will approach these issues through promoting youth involvement and enhancement of young people's active role as citizens.

A detailed analysis of the situation of youth in Moldova is provided in Annex No. 1.

III. PRINCIPLES OF YOUTH STRATEGY

The government considers youth issues a priority of its policy. It is aware that young people have to be supported, and not regarded only a category of the population that faces difficulties and creates problems. Young people are the most valuable economic and social resource of the country, and through its policy the Government will support and prepare young people for an autonomous life, guided by the ideals declared in the United Nations Charter: peace, dignity, tolerance, liberty, equality, and solidarity.

The starting points for all strategic actions are the real needs, problems, and interests of young people. Young people will be provided with the opportunity to express freely their opinions on the matters that concern them and to be heard by central and local public administration, either directly or through a representative body, and to take part in the formation of youth policies. These objectives will be achieved through:

- consolidating collaboration with civil society, and particularly with youth associations;
- promoting dialogue and interministry cooperation on youth issues;
- consolidating European and international cooperation in youth and related issues;
- creating an adequate legal framework based on European standards;
- making measures provided in the Youth Strategy and Action Plan for its implementation more flexible, and prompting the authorities on changes made in young people's environment.

In accordance with the Constitution of the Republic of Moldova, Universal Declaration on Human Rights, European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, Convention on the Rights of the Child and other relevant international legal tools, the Youth Strategy and actions in the field will be guided by observing four key principles:

- **Guarantee of Non-Discrimination** – every young person has equal rights, regardless of race, color, sex, age, religion, ethnic and social origin, political orientation, family, residence or any other characteristic;

- **Guarantee of Equal Chances** – every young person, regardless of their origin, will be given a chance to develop their potential as individuals and citizens;
- **Respect for Young People as Citizens** – young people are full citizens and have the same rights and obligations as any other group in society, including the rights to freedom of expression, opinion and meeting;
- **Encouragement of Youth Participation** – young people have to be supported in exercising their rights, so that they are able to participate fully in the life of society.

IV. PRIORITY ACTIONS

To improve the situation of young people, the government has developed a vision to guide its actions: **the Republic of Moldova is a state where young people prosper and can fully realize their potential as citizens.**

The purpose of this Strategy is to build a society in which the state ensures the rights of young people and satisfies their physical, educational, psychological and cultural requirements, and in which young people get actively involved in building their own future.

We are aware that this requires a coordinated government policy. The Youth Strategy is a flexible and dynamic document that orientates the government's actions in all fields related to youth, such as education, economic and social policies, work places, health and justice. At governmental level, the Strategy outlines a series of actions addressed to youth, establishing the following specific priorities:

- facilitate youth access to services and information;
- increase the level of youth participation in social life;
- enhance youth employment opportunities;
- consolidate human and institutional capacity in the youth sector and raise young people's level of knowledge;
- cultivate patriotism in the young generation and respect for national values.

Priority A: Youth Access to Services and Information

Youth must have better access to quality services and information. Cultural activities and productive ways to spend spare time must be developed further and provided for a larger number of young people. Culture is a fundamental element of young people's identity, important for self-development and communication, and can determine their lifestyle. There are insufficient state and private institutions that create space for non-formal education and support young people in developing

their creativity and their own culture. It is extremely difficult for young people to spend their spare time through institutions, programs and centers, a problem which exists in cities but is worse in rural areas where the opportunities are virtually non-existent. Youth services are very important for young people because they can provide high-quality information, which is essential for them to make decisions about their personal development and private life, to be aware of risks and how to behave to avoid them.

Objective: to facilitate access to information, youth friendly services and productive recreation

Expected Results

1.1. Information, services, and recreational opportunities are adequate to meet young people's needs.

1.2. Starting in 2004, social messages about self-realization and healthy lifestyles will be spread by the mass media. Information packages on citizen's rights and healthy lifestyles will be produced and distributed as resources allow.

1.3. Before 2006, a network of youth friendly services will be developed, including in healthcare, education and social assistance.

1.4. Before 2009, at least 90 per cent of students will have free access to information on their rights, opportunities and benefits in all areas that concern them (education, healthcare, social protection, recreation, etc.)

1.5. Before 2006, young people will be provided with a life skills based education program as a mandatory course in institutions of pre-university education

1.6. Young families, including single-parent ones, will be provided with assistance in getting lodging, childcare and advice, especially for young mothers.

1.7. Special needs of underprivileged and socially excluded young people will be addressed through a special assistance program.

1.8. A range of activities will be offered to young people through revitalizing the infrastructure for working with youth.

1.9. To optimize young people's access to information, services and quality recreation, all local resources will be mobilized – local authorities, schools, churches, the private sector, institutions and NGOs.

1.10. Talented young people will supported through special measures to help develop their abilities.

1.11. A legal framework will be created to enable young people to participate in international mobility programs.

1.12. Youth workers in will be given theoretical and practical training to run daily recreational activities.

Expected Results Success Measurement Indicators

1.1.

- by 2004, a qualitative and comprehensive evaluation of young people's opportunities to spend their spare time will be performed and the areas for short- and long-term improvement identified;

1.2

a) all young people in secondary education will be informed about citizen's rights by 2006;

- at least 50 per cent of young people in secondary education will receive information on healthy lifestyles by 2006, rising to 90% by 2009;
- informational campaigns on youth related issues will be carried out;
- by 2006, the number of young people infected annually with sexually transmitted diseases will be reduced by 10 per cent;

1.3. – 1.6.

- by 2009, youth friendly centers will be established in at least 60 per cent of districts;
- the number of people benefiting from youth friendly services in health, education, and social assistance will increase;
- by 2006, the number of adults involved in providing youth friendly services will increase by 1500;
- more documents will be published and distributed about youth information and training activities;
- at least 300 young people will be trained each year to become peer educators in healthy lifestyles;
- each peer educator will organize at least one activity per year on training and informing in his/her locality;
- before the end of 2006, at least 400 000 young people will have benefited from the activities organized by peer educators;

1.5. – 1.7.

- a policy addressing the needs of young families, including financial and social needs, will be promoted;
- a program addressing the special needs of disadvantaged and socially excluded young people will be developed, implemented and financed;

1.8. – 1.11.

- the private sector will be actively involved in the raising funds for organizing recreational activities for youth;

- by 2006, a scholarship program for at least 200 talented young people in education and culture will be created;
- by 2006, bilateral agreements on youth exchange programs will be signed with at least 10 countries ;
- at least 100 young people will take part in international youth exchange programs each year;
- by 2006, at least 25 per cent of young people from Moldova will participate in organized recreational activities on a regular basis;

1.12.

- the number of volunteers trained as spare time animators will increase;
- there will be an increase in extracurricular courses and activities for young people wishing to learn foreign languages or computers and take part in arts or sports.

Priority B: Participation of Young People in Development of Civil Society and Active Citizenship

Patriotic values and respect for Moldova's culture, history and traditions have not settled in the consciousness of young people. There is a need for a new system of patriotic education to develop young people's personalities through encouraging devotion to the country, willingness to serve the state and be useful to society. The Strategy aims to create a single system of patriotic education for young people.

Patriotism means an affectionate attachment to the country, respect for its history, culture and heritage, and cultivating morally upright and civic-minded citizens with a sense of responsibility who are committed to help the country develop and prosper.

Most of the time, young people in our society are excluded from the decision-making process. They do not vote in significant numbers. But this does not mean they have no interest in issues that concern them or they are not ready to search for solutions to their problems. Because they don't take part in decision-making, society is not aware of the problems young people face. Young people are distant from public institutions and the democratic process because there is no tradition of young people participating in the establishment of a prosperous society. They are still frustrated, discouraged and disinterested, and finally become indifferent to political and social life. This situation is not acceptable for the modern European democracy that is being built in Moldova. Young people must participate actively in social, economic, cultural, and political life.

Economic activity of young people is essential for their well-being, and public institutions and society in general must set up the necessary mechanisms to make this participation possible, effective and significant. Like everyone else, young people have responsibilities, and like everyone else they must have rights, without

discrimination. To make the most of their rights and responsibilities, young people must be able to make their own decisions and have access to information, jobs, decent housing, medical services, education, an unpolluted environment, freedom of movement and so on. This can only happen if they are energetically included in the community's life. This is the principle behind all actions concerning youth, either directly or indirectly, which influences their life and aim to find innovative and forward-looking solutions to their problems.

Objective: to stimulate young people's participation in decision-making processes

Estimated Results

2.1. Development in young people of important qualities such as patriotism, civic maturity, social responsibility, sense of duty, respect for traditions and cultural and historical values, readiness to overcome obstacles, etc., will help actively involve them in solving society's problems.

2.2. Society in general and state authorities in particular have recognized young people's right to participate in the decision-making process in the social, economic, and political life of the country.

2.3. Young people will be informed about opportunities to participate in the life of their communities, and will use them actively.

2.4. By 2006, authorities at all levels will put in place effective mechanisms to involve young people.

2.5. Voluntary work will be appreciated as encouraging young people to integrate socially and contribute to the development of their communities.

Estimated Results Success Measurement Indicators

2.1.

- By 2009, legislation on local public administration will be reviewed to comply with the European Charter on Participation of Young People in the Life of Local and Regional Communities;
- The European Charter on Participation of Young People in the Life of Local and Regional Communities will be implemented fully in at least 50 per cent of Mayoral Offices before the end of 2006, and in 80 per cent of Mayoral Offices before 2009;
- By the end of 2004, the government will have approved regulations recognizing the role of local youth councils;
- Each year the number of youth activities financially supported by authorities at all levels will grow by 20 per cent;

2.2.

- The number of young people from rural areas involved in youth associations will grow by 10 per cent each year;

- 50 new local youth councils will be created each year;
- The level of participation in activities organized by local youth councils will grow;
- The number of activities organized by local youth councils will grow;

2.2. – 2.3.

- Before the end of 2009, at least 50 per cent of Mayoral Offices will have created effective consulting mechanisms – youth committees and youth consulting councils that will involve young people in decision-making;
- By 2005, the budgets of Mayoral Offices will include financing of youth projects conducted by young people themselves;
- By 2005, a law on voluntary work will have been approved;
- By 2009, the Republic of Moldova will sign and ratify the Convention of the Council of Europe on Transnational Voluntary Services.

Priority C: Employment Opportunities for Young People

The unemployment rate among young people in Moldova is alarmingly high, and the problems faced by young people entering the job market must be tackled. The education system does not prepare young people adequately to face the ever-changing requirements of the job market, a phenomenon known as “knowledge disparity”. This must be changed through professional education and training that develops the skills and competencies required in today’s job market. We must also help young people to develop basic CV and interview skills, cultivate entrepreneurship and foster their ability to use initiative by creating a business-friendly environment. The experience of other countries in transition shows that young people entering the workplace benefit from having had longer education or vocational training, but this will be useful only if new and innovative methods are used. There must be effective cooperation between vocational and education institutions, employment centers, the private sector and decision-makers on national and local level. Creating employment opportunities for young people is a cornerstone of the national employment strategy.

Objective: Enhancement of Employment Opportunities for Young People

Estimated Results

3.1. A larger number of young people have been employed or started their own business.

3.2. Young people have obtained the skills and abilities they need to succeed in the job market.

3.3. A system of vocational education has been created which meets the requirements of the job market.

3.4. Young farmers have obtained the skills and abilities to implement innovative ideas that improve the efficiency of the agricultural sector.

3.5. Young people have more legal opportunities to work abroad[?].

3.6. The “brain drain” has been stopped and reversed.

Estimated Results Success Measurement Indicators

3.1. – 3.2.

- The number of young people that find a job for over a six-month period will grow by 20 per cent every year;
- The number of young people trained at courses of professional improvement and re-qualification will grow;
- A program allowing young people to benefit from preferential access to credit for their business plans will be created;
- A larger number of young people will have benefited from preferential access to credit;
- A system of financial incentives for companies to create new jobs for young people will have been created;
- A larger number of young people will have benefited from school or extracurricular business training;
- By 2009, there will be at least 300 new businesses started by young people;

3.3. – 3.6.

- By the start of the 2005-2006 academic year, a new curriculum of vocational training that will eliminate “knowledge disparity” will have been put in place;
- Fewer skilled young people will have left the country;
- More skilled young people will have returned to the country;
- Bilateral agreements will have been signed in order to regulate employment opportunities abroad;
- a special program for young farmers will be set up to help them obtain financial resources for both agricultural and non-agricultural operations.

Priority D: Human and Institutional Capacity of the Youth Sector and Knowledge Level of Young People

Youth Strategy is intersectoral – coherently integrated actions need to be made in a number of administrative or policy-making sectors. Coordinated measures will be taken that serve young people’s interests and integrate them in the social, economic, political and cultural life of the country. The task of coordinating these measures will be carried out by the Department for Youth and Sports. Organizations and individuals who work with and for young people must be provided with favorable conditions and support. Youth specialists must be trained with a level of higher education and youth volunteer leaders must also be provided

with training opportunities. The Department will integrate national, regional and local youth programs and link them with activities of non-governmental organizations. Also, it must become possible to investigate and evaluate the situation of young people in Moldova on an ongoing basis. Investments in a national centre for research and investigations in the field of youth will be recovered by promoting more effective and successful policies.

Objective: Development of the Professional and Skilled Youth Sector

Estimated Results

4.1. The need for professional structures and quality standards for the youth sector has been acknowledged.

4.2. Professional structures in the youth sector have more support.

4.3. Cooperation between governmental and non-governmental youth structures grew significantly.

4.4. At all levels – national, regional, and local – youth strategies have been put in place, including action plans based on scientific evidence and research.

4.5. Youth policy standards promoted by the United Nations, the Council of Europe, the European Union and other international bodies, are better known and applied in work and youth policies.

4.6. A mechanism to report funds allocated from state and local budgets for youth actions has been established.

Estimated Results Success Measurement Indicators

4.1.

The Department for Youth and Sports will be adequately empowered and endowed to function as an autonomous structure responsible for the preparation, coordination, and implementation of youth policies;

The status of youth workers will be regulated by government acts;

A special curriculum on training of youth workers and recreational animators will be put in place;

There will be at least one youth worker with special professional training working in every local authority;

By the end of 2004, the Department for Youth and Sports will have established principles to license persons that work with youth, taking into consideration experience in Europe;

By the end of 2005, a national centre for research and investigation in the field of youth will have been established;

By 2005, regulations on the skills and competencies of recreational animators will have been approved;

4.2. – 4.5.

Starting in 2006, reviews of the situation of youth will be conducted on an ongoing basis, at least once a year;

The government and local authorities will have created mechanisms to support financially youth projects and NGOs that provide services to youth;

The Department for Youth and Sports, in collaboration with other institutions, will organize continuous training for youth workers;

The results of research will be considered when forming youth policies;

The Department for Youth and Sports will take part in meetings about international cooperation in the field of youth and will report on these meetings;

The Department for Youth and Sports will inform and support the non-governmental sector about issues of international cooperation;

4.6.

n) Starting in 2004, the Department for Youth and Sports and local councils will report annually, at local and national level, on the funds allocated and spent on youth actions.

V. IMPLEMENTATION, MONITORING, FINANCING, AND EVALUATION

The Department for Youth and Sports will ensure the implementation of the Strategy by producing two action plans for the period between now and 2009, the first plan covering 2004-2006 (Annex No. 2). The branch ministries, particularly those of education, culture, healthcare and labor and social protection, will contribute to the development of these action plans by providing information and by coordinating, developing and adjusting their own activities.

Coordination and monitoring will be ensured through interdepartmental meetings at the level of vice-ministers. With the vice-prime-minister as chair, the decision-makers will determine every three months what steps should be taken next to implement the Strategy and formulate the objectives of the relevant ministries, and will evaluate the process once a year. The Department will prepare and chair these sessions to coordinate the implementation of the Strategy. There will be periodic consultations with young people and civil society on specific measures. When possible and appropriate, the Strategy will be implemented with the support of local authorities, the non-governmental sector and international agencies. The government will supervise the overall activity to make sure the Strategy is implemented in accordance with the Economic Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy in the Republic of Moldova.

The expenditures associated with the Action Plan for the implementation of the Youth Strategy for the period 2004-2009 represent the mid-term expenditures that will be annually reflected in the state budget. The Government invites the

international community to provide funds for financing certain actions and support projects in the field of working with youth.

The Council of Europe (Youth Department) will perform a comprehensive evaluation of progress in the national youth policy at the end of the first stage of Strategy implementation. The Republic of Moldova will ask the Council of Europe to carry out an evaluation in 2006. Evaluation costs are part of the mid-term expenditures.

YOUTH SITUATION ANALYSIS

Economic decline and delay of reforms in key areas had aggravated the condition of the whole population of Moldova, considerably reducing their well-being, and that includes the young generation.

To identify the most acute problems faced by youth in the country, statistical data and sociological polls have been considered, which leads to defining the following areas to be reviewed: **youth well-being, youth education, youth health, and active citizenship.**

A. Youth well-being

Economic problems and poverty directly affect education, health care, jobs and places to live for youth, which in turn generate other problems, such as unemployment, migration, human trafficking, juvenile delinquency, and marginalization of certain groups of young people.

a. Unemployment

Transition to a market economy has led to a high rate of unemployment among young people. In the year 2002 youth in Moldova represented 21.5 per cent of the economically active population of the country, and at the same time were the social segment most affected by unemployment. According to data of the National Agency for Use of Labor Force, there were 30,600 unemployed young people registered in 2002, making 48.3 per cent of the total number of unemployed people.

The real number of unemployed young people, estimated by the Department of Statistics and Sociology in accordance with the methodology of the International Labor Bureau (ILB) – Labor Force Inquiry, is much higher. In 2002, the unemployment rate among people aged 15-29 was twice higher than the overall unemployment rate (6.3 per cent), reaching an average of 12.9 per cent.

The impact of youth unemployment can be seen in the growing number of young people leaving for abroad and the spread of anti-social behavior.

Employment is a major problem for youth. When asked what would be their reason for leaving the country if they were offered the chance to leave for abroad, 61.3 per cent of young people answered that they would leave to look for a well-paid job, 17.5 per cent would leave to seek a permanent place to live, 12.4 per cent would go for studies and only 8.1 per cent would like to go on holiday.

Neither state nor private institutions accept young people without experience for well-paid positions, a situation that also affects young people with disabilities. The lack of a framework that would encourage or support the employment of youth increases the unemployment rate.

The main reasons for the increasing number of unemployed youth are as follows:

1. Firstly, due to delays in economic and social reforms, unemployment derives from the low level of economic development.

2. Lack of planning at national level of supply and demand for professionals or of a program for employment of graduates. There is a strain on law, economics, and foreign languages departments in the higher education system, and these faculties end up educating people who become unemployed as the labor market cannot offer opportunities for all the graduates.

3. Legislation gaps, bureaucracy, corruption, distrust, and lack of confidence do not permit young people to start their own legal businesses and entrepreneurship activities.

4. Limited access of young people to services provided by education institutions and labor force offices, as well as inadequate information about employment opportunities.

5. Insufficient training of young people for life (CV writing, job-seeking skills, communication abilities, etc.) contributes to social rejection and marginalizing of young people.

Consequences:

1. Some reforms of the labor market in rural and urban areas led to a decrease of jobs. As a result many rural localities and small towns have been in decay, depriving youth of basic services. This situation in turn inevitably causes massive movement of young people from villages to cities to seek jobs and a better lifestyle, and actions to reduce domestic migration are rather sporadic.

2. Economic factors, lack of security and hope for the future led to external migration. The majority of those who migrate abroad have higher education – these are young people with professional training, who would be useful for the national economy. Young people find different ways to leave for abroad, but in most cases these are illegal.

3. The thoughtless reform of the education system has led to a significant reduction in the number of trade schools, limiting the opportunities of young

people who graduate gymnasiums to obtain a profession which matches their abilities and consequently a chance for employment.

Unemployment affects youth, making them lose confidence in themselves and their abilities, and consequently has a negative impact on both youth and society. Only a complex review of the causes of unemployment among young people, and a search for new solutions, can improve the situation.

b. Migration and human trafficking

Human trafficking and forced prostitution are regarded as severe forms of abuse and are pretty common in Moldova.

Most of the people trafficked from Moldova to the West are young women. According to a UNDP report, the number of Moldovan citizens who have left the country – temporarily or permanently – varies between 600.000 and 800.000 people. Women represent 70 per cent of the total number of emigrants from Moldova. Their average age is between 18 and 45 years old and most of them come from socially vulnerable, poor families that frequently have many children. With an illegal status abroad, many of them become victims of criminal networks, including trafficking that has become a highly organized and very profitable business activity.

Women and girls who become victims of trafficking are very young. According to a survey conducted by „CIVIS” Centre for Sociological, Political and Psychological Research and Analysis, out of 24 trafficking victims interviewed by CIVIS almost half were under 18 years old, over half were aged between 18 and 24 years old and only a few were older. Half of those interviewed knew they could be trafficked abroad. Most of them mentioned that they would not have become the victims of traffickers if they had been informed about human trafficking.

The main factors that lead to human trafficking in Moldova are: **economic** - poverty, unemployment; **social** - lack of opportunities for young generation, lack of respect for law among young people, lack of life knowledge, low levels of education, lack of community support of the young generation, alteration of social values and lack of information campaigns about the danger of trafficking; **political** - lack of adequate social policies to support the young generation, lack of effective governmental strategies on migration, and lack of effective regional strategies to combat human trafficking.

There have been no studies or multilateral analyses conducted on human trafficking in Moldova. Prevention and recuperation services are under-developed and in most cases are provided exclusively by the non-governmental sector.

To change this situation, actions should be taken in four areas: institutional and legislative frameworks, social services specialized for potential victims of trafficking and actual victims of trafficking, and training of specialist personnel.

c. Juvenile Delinquency

Criminal offences committed by children and young people represent roughly 10 per cent of the total number of registered offences. According to official statistics (data of the Information Centre of the Ministry of Internal Affairs), the number of children in conflict with the law has been continuously increasing.

Among those registered, criminal offences against private and public property are the most common. Annually, according to official statistics, such offences represent 75 to 80 per cent of the total number of criminal offences committed by minors. In descending order, these are: robbery, hooliganism, inflicting bodily injuries, rape, and murder. Most criminal offences are committed by teenagers of 16-17 years old, mostly boys. Most of the offences are committed by minors from urban localities.

The main causes of this problem are a lack of legislation that deals clearly with children in conflict with the law, and of a juvenile justice system that would respond to the special needs of children. There are neither specialized judicial institutions – Juvenile Courts or specialized judges - nor investigators, prosecutors and lawyers who have special competence in cases involving minors. The lack of an adequate legal and institutional framework leads to infringement of minors' rights either during investigation or detention or both. This phenomenon is generated by family conflicts, school abandonment and the very low level of respect for law among teenagers who violate laws.

According to a survey conducted by the Centre for Information and Documentation on the Rights of the Child in Moldova in 2002, 71.8 per cent of those interviewed believe that the phenomenon of juvenile delinquency is not given proper attention. Over 80 per cent of the respondents consider the actions that have been taken to prevent offences among adolescents to be insufficient. Those interviewed expressed the opinion that the main responsibility for preventing delinquency among minors resides with the family (36.6 per cent), Government (16.5 per cent), community (15.7 per cent), police (15.4 per cent) and school (10 per cent).

d. Marginalized Youth and Youth with Disabilities

Presently in the country over 16,300 persons between 16 and 30 years of age are registered as disabled. Youth with disabilities in the Republic of Moldova face many more difficulties in both pre-university and high education institutions, employment and social integration. The majority do not have the financial resources to buy necessary medicines and equipment. While there are no any other forms of aid, governmental support is insufficient. Young people with disabilities tend to be overlooked by the mass-media. They are denied any practical possibility of movement and tend to stay closely linked with their families.

The marginalizing and social rejection of this category of young people is caused most of all by a lack of viable associative and state entities to promote social and integration programs and spread awareness about education and employment opportunities.

e. Issue of dwelling space

According to official statistics, over 22 thousand marriages are registered annually, out of which approximately 19 thousand (86.36 per cent) are between people of 16 to 29 years old. At the same time there are 9.7 thousands of divorces registered annually, 1/3 of which are divorces of young families. From this number, one in two young families mention as causes for divorce lack of a residence, lack of a permanent income, and instability in the community.

The lack of state programs to support youth in finding dwellings is as imminent as ever. At the end of the 1990s the market of private residencies replaced the state one. Due to high prices, young people cannot afford to acquire private residencies, and this has knock-on effects such as late marriages, a small number of children in families, and high rates of divorces in young families.

But this reality has other causes too: difficulties in obtaining economic independence, widespread unemployment among young people, extended education periods, etc. There are many causes keeping youths at home, too, such as a more comfortable and a cheaper life, mutual understanding between youth and their parents, and financial and emotional security.

B. Youth education

The transition period brought changes in education system as well. There were reforms, supported by international organizations, aimed to prepare young people for a democratic society and market economy.

The right to education in our country is guaranteed by the Constitution, the Law on Education, and the European Charter on the Rights of Pupils and Students that provides for free and compulsory education for children between 5 and 16

years old. The system of formal education is structured hierarchically starting with a preschool cycle and followed by primary, gymnasium, and lyceum education.

a. Pre-university Education

In the years since independence, the education system of Moldova has suffered a major setback. The number of students enrolled in secondary education is lower than in primary education, caused by the lack of pre-school institutions in most villages and the poverty of the rural population. The high rate of school abandonment in primary education demands urgent measures.

According to estimates of the Ministry of Education, every year approximately 20,000 students graduating compulsory gymnasium education do not continue their education and instead become unemployed. At present, not all areas of the country are covered by the network of lyceums, as most are situated in urban areas. Also, the system of vocational education deteriorated severely, a fact that makes it hard for students to enter into professional training after they graduation the gymnasium.

Another acute issue for our education system is the small number of extra-curricular programs that provide young people with an opportunity to occupy their spare time outside the school in productive ways that develop their potential and creativity. There is a lack of interactive teaching and new, non-formal education methods that would provide young people with training in becoming active citizens. Education needs to be redefined with an emphasis on life skills (social responsibility, human rights, conflict resolution, team work, communication skills, environment and national heritage protection, etc.).

b. Higher Education

An impressive number of universities does not imply there are no difficulties for young people to study there. Only state higher education institutions can partially provide for the accommodation needs of the students, and for an important segment of students this remains a difficult problem. The number and amount of state scholarships do not allow them to cover even their basic expenses.

The issue of students' association and representation is still unsolved, with the presence of students within faculty councils and university senates being rather formal and insignificant. Students' leagues that in the beginning of the 90s asserted themselves as protectors and promoters of students' rights have mostly disappeared.

c. Non-formal Education

Non-formal education remains a haphazard process which is not adjusted to the needs and interests of young people. Non-formal education is extremely important for countries in transition to open societies as it helps provide continuous education by covering the gaps in formal and extracurricular education. In recent years, non-formal education programs have mostly promoted by non-governmental organization and youth centers and the number of benefiting young people is limited.

C. Youth health

Young people are generally thought to be healthy. They are active, do new things and experiment. But sometimes their behavior becomes risky and can have an immediate impact on their health. Youth health in Moldova is threatened especially by HIV/AIDS, drug abuse, sexually transmitted infections and tuberculosis, and medical assistance services, as a rule, are not accessible for young people. According to WHO estimates 70 per cent of premature deaths among adults are largely due to risky behaviors during adolescence.

The accelerated pace of life makes young people's bodies grow and develop faster, but their psychological and emotional growth is not so fast. In Moldova, eight out of ten young women have had sexual relationships before the age of 20. And only two out of ten young people use a condom during their first sexual intercourse. Young women severely endanger their reproductive health, often to the point of infertility.

Frequently, young people contract HIV through intravenous drug injection. Substance use is another major threat for the health of young people – one third of the registered drug addicts in Moldova are between 15 and 18 years old and the number of addicts below 18 years old doubles every two years. An increasing number of teenagers are occasional users and it is estimated that the real number of adolescent drug users and drug addicts is at least 10 times bigger than the registered number.

Cigarettes and alcoholic drinks are often associated with young people. A study¹ conducted in 12 countries with transition economies found that one fifth of school children are regular smokers. According to the National Scientific and Practicing Centre for Preventive Medicine and the National Narcology Center, 27 per cent of boys and 7 per cent of girls aged 16 to 18 use tobacco. Participants in the Children and Youth Forum of Moldova "A better world for children", held in April 2002, identified use of alcohol, tobacco and drugs, sexually transmitted infections, individual hygiene and malnutrition as key problems affecting the health of the young generation.

¹ UNICEF „Adolescence. A time that matters”, February 2002

The health problems of young people from Moldova have a range of causes, such as: inadequate legislation; irresponsible attitudes towards their own health; lack of programs and information on health education; lack of human resources for health education; modest financing of medical institutions; lack of necessary technical conditions; lack of solidarity between generations and accordingly of friendly health services; poor knowledge of sexual health and limited access to birth control; lack of complex medical and psychosocial assistance for adolescents, and the low quality of existing services; limited access to information on healthy lifestyles; modest knowledge among parents about healthy lifestyles; negative influence of the mass media over youth by promoting violence and aggressiveness, etc. For a clearer view of the situation in this area we will review the most acute issues separately.

a. Sexual and Reproductive Health

The health and even survival of many young people around the world is threatened by unprotected sex and early, unintended pregnancy. Moldova is not an exception. Bad practices affecting sexual and reproductive behavior represent an increasing risk for young people who have started exploring their sexuality. The consequences of abortions, premature births, HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted infections are key dangers threatening the reproductive and sexual health of Moldovan youth.

1. Unintended Early Pregnancy

Ministry of Health data shows that young people underestimate the importance of looking after their own reproductive health. 12.5 per cent of young women between 15 and 24 years old have never undergone an ordinary gynecological examination. As a consequence, the number of unintended pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections among young people is increasing. According to data of the National Scientific-Practical Centre for Public Health and Sanitary Management in 2002, a total number of 1713 abortions among young women between 15 and 19 years old were registered, out of which 46 ended in various kinds of complications.

2. HIV/AIDS and Sexually Transmitted Infections.

According to the data of National AIDS Centre, Moldova is ranked fourth among the CIS countries in growth of HIV/AIDS, after Ukraine, Belarus and Russian Federation. From 1987 to 2002, 1688 persons living with HIV were registered in Moldova. In 2002, 206 new cases of HIV were discovered. The epidemic has affected all administrative units of the country, the indicator of average prevalence in the country being 38.47 of 100,000 people. Most affected regions are the city of

Balti – 430.72, Balti district – 147.0, the city of Chisinau – 68.68 and Causeni area – 20.04.

HIV infection is spreading mostly among intravenous drug users, but in the last three years the proportion of cases among intravenous drug users has been decreasing, while the number caused by sexually transmitted infection is increasing. It is hard to estimate the exact number of cases of sexually transmitted infections, especially among teenagers. It is believed that the real number of cases is twice as high as the number of reported cases, because it has been established that the rate of sexually transmitted infections among pregnant women is twice as high as suggested by official data.

b. Mental Health

Adolescence is a time when **behavioral deviations** frequently occur and often they are not diagnosed or treated. Young people with behavioral deviations are at a major risk of abandoning school, coming into conflict with the law and failing to develop into fully capable adult citizens. Use of alcohol and drugs often leads to abuse, violence and crime and has adverse effects on school and professional performance. In addition, alcohol and drug users run an increased risk of seriously damaging their health through intoxication, overdoses, accidents, traumas, physical and mental degradation, and catching sexually transmitted infections including HIV.

b¹ Use of Alcohol

Use of alcohol among young people is very common in all countries with transition economies. Alcohol is a significant factor that causes accidents, crimes, domestic abuse and violence and contributes to mental illnesses. UNICEF's Report for 2000-2001² informs that in 1999 in Moldova there were 245 new cases of alcohol abuse registered for a 100 000 population among people ages 15. At the same time, 521 teenagers were officially reported as being alcohol dependant.

b² Use of Tobacco

Tobacco use is very common in Moldova. According to the data of the National Scientific and Practicing Centre for Preventive Medicine and National Narcology Center, currently 47 per cent of men and 30 per cent of women smoke tobacco. Among young people, those figures are 12 per cent of boys and 5 per cent of girls.

² UNICEF Moldova, Child and Family Condition in the Republic of Moldova. Evaluation and Analysis 2000-2001, 2002

As shown by the same study conducted by the National Scientific and Practicing Centre for Preventive Medicine and District Centers for Preventive Medicine in the year 2000, at an age of 10-11 years not a single pupil was reported as a tobacco smoker. From 12 to 15 years old, 5.2 per cent of pupils admitted that they have smoked tobacco at least once, while from the age of 16 to 18 years old 15.5 per cent of the students smoke. Even among those aware of the damaging effects of tobacco, 7 per cent of pupils smoke.

b³ Use of Drugs

In the last couple of years the number of drug-addicted persons has increased dramatically due to easy access to drugs and a lack of technical and monitoring equipment. Moldova has become a transit for European drug traffickers and opium manufacturers from Central Asia. The risk of young people using drugs is exacerbated by inadequate information on the consequences; lack of effective communication and support from family, school and community; uncertainty about the future; and the poor socio-economic condition of the family and the country, which causes stress. Another reason is the lack of friendly and secure spaces where young people can spend their spare time, which was pointed out by 56.7 per cent of young people who participated in the project „Promoting Young People’s Ideas” conducted by the National Youth Resource Centre. According to the National Narcology Dispenser, though the data for 2002 indicate that the spread of drug use has stabilized, the situation is still a cause for concern. In the year 2002, 1679 drug addicted persons were identified (among which 1/5 were teenagers), 429 more than in the year 2001, and during the first six month of this year another 649 drug addicts were registered, bringing the total number of registered drug addicts to over 8400. The number of sick people under the age of 18 is doubling every 2 years. UNICEF Report „Children and Family Condition in the Republic of Moldova”³ for 2000-2001 concludes that the most risky age from a narcology perspective is between 15 and 18. The Division for Mother and Child Medical Assistance indicated that in 2002 the worst situation was found in Chisinau city, where 1347 persons under 18 years old were registered as drug users, in Balti city – 529 persons, in Soroca district – 56 persons and in Edinet district – 48 persons. 90% of the young persons who use drugs have an incomplete primary education, only 7 per cent have lyceum education and 3 have higher education.

D. Active Citizenship

a. Access to information and life style of young people

³ UNICEF Moldova, Child and Family Condition in the Republic of Moldova. Evaluation and Analysis 2000-2001, 2002

In a recent sociological survey conducted by *European Youth Exchange-Moldova Associations*, out of 5108 youths interviewed across the country about the problems faced by today's youth in Moldova, they put in second place the problem of limited access and sometimes lack of access to information (newspapers, school bulletins, Internet, Radio, TV), and lack of media outlets for presenting the problems of young people in the country.

The causes mentioned most often for young people lacking access to information are the lack of friendly services and the fact that the mass media does not focus on the issues of young people and makes little effort to spread useful information to young people. Furthermore, young people from villages do not have access to newspapers, international radio and TV channels. Mass-media should be used as a two-way information channel between young people and authorities, the former transmitting information about their ideas and possible ways of implementation.

b. Youth participation

To be a citizen, a full member of society, means to be respected and to respect others. To be a citizen means to participate, to enjoy certain rights and observe certain obligations. To be a citizen means to be an active member of a community that encourages social unity and promotes a feeling of affiliation, where there is a place for differences and diversity, and where democratic values there are at the root of development and members of the society feel they have a common identity.

According to the report „Young people and mass-media in the Central Eastern Europe, CIS and Baltic states”, Moldova has the smallest number of young people interested in politics, fewer than 5 Per cent. Also only 10 per cent of Moldova's youth declared that they trust authorities, which is the lowest rate in CIS and Baltic states. Especially for this reason young people are less motivated to be active in political and social arenas.

The causes of this situation vary, but first of all there is no tradition of young people participating in the political, social and economic life of the country. It is strange but true that adults distrust and even fear admitting young people into local and central administration institutions, because young people are better prepared professionally, have a different view on the modern world and speak foreign languages which enable them to be better informed and form and maintain partnership relations with their peers from other countries. There is also a lack of a legal framework and mechanisms for encouraging young people to participate and get involved in the decision-making process, and modest knowledge among those who govern us about the provisions of European Charter on Youth Participation in Local Administration Process. Another cause is lack of a real partnership between public institutions and NGOs, which have real capacities and potential to improve youth participation in decision-making processes.

Civil society represents the so-called third sector in transition countries. Being part of civil society, youth organizations are believed to play a significant role in building a democratic society and state of law. The lack of tradition of volunteer activity or governmental strategy on NGOs, financial problems and insufficient experience and technologies are the main factors which have a direct impact on diminishing the results of activity of youth NGOs.

Another obstacle is the low level of youth involvement in social life. The main cause seems to be an extensive acceptance of individualism among young people and a lack of tradition of volunteer activities and consequent lack of interest for contributing to NGOs activity and community in general. Another cause is that young people prefer to be involved in spontaneous activities than formal organizations that require discipline and commitment to some routine activities.

Young people often see NGOs as an opportunity to develop the leadership capacities necessary for a political career. This makes such associations vulnerable, because it can turn them into an arena of fighting for power. Still, it is very important for NGOs to be popular among young people as they will be aware of the problems faced by the new generation and will be able to represent their interests.

Lack of funds, experience and mechanisms for financial support of NGOs has held back the Government from establishing a viable partnership with the third sector. Thus, most of the resources needed for programs come from international donors.

As revealed by results of a sociological survey conducted by the *European Youth Exchange-Moldova* Association, the majority of the respondents (**81 per cent**) mentioned that the basic problem of today's youth is organizing and spending spare time.

When young people try to organize their spare time creatively they face a lot of problems. Public institutions from small towns and villages do not provide creative opportunities for recreation. Even in big cities these opportunities are limited due to lack of funds and institutional support. Though sports are still popular, young people are less involved in them than before transition.

Cultural and touristic mobility, international cooperation and youth exchange are modestly developed in Moldova because of the economic situation of young people and their parents. The majority of young people do not know what are the famous natural and historical monuments in Moldova.

In recent years the deterioration of the cultural and sports infrastructure for young people in rural areas had a direct impact on young people's opportunity to

assert themselves. There were youth centers financed and supported by state before the 1990s which served as places for young people to meet. Since the worsening of the economic condition during the transition period, many of them have been closed while others came to serve different purposes. Those that still function organize far fewer activities.

All small towns and rural localities need a cultural revival to make youth more active. Though transition poses other important problems, the issue of providing more choice and opportunities for young people should not be neglected. The fact that young people in small towns get bored and do not know how to spend their spare time is one of the causes of them departing to bigger towns and the capital. Moreover, there are no programs of leisure activities and cultural occupations for young people, or supporting mechanisms for promoting talented youth. There are few handicraft workshops and artistic studios, only low quality cultural activities, and young people have limited access to services provided by cultural, sports and associative institutions. The local and national mass media do not provide information on opportunities for recreation, nor on opportunities for helping young people develop their interests and talents.

The survey conducted to shed light on the condition of the young generation served as a ground to elaborate the Strategy for Youth in the medium term, accompanied with a plan of immediate actions to improve the condition of youth.