

Forum: 4th Committee (Political)

Issue: Increasing the Role of Youth in Political Decision-Making

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Introduction & Background information

At the moment, young people make up 18% of the world's population; 85% of the youth live in developing countries and 209 million of them are forced to exist on less than 1 dollar a day; 113 million teenagers have no possibility of getting access to proper education and health services. This statistics shows physical problems that the youth suffer from, but another important aspect is their psychology. Experts allocate these trends: gradual decreasing of values of work, freedom, democracy, and even inter-ethnic tolerance; the replacement by consumerist attitudes towards world, intolerance and pack-running. Protest behavior, typical for the youth, acquires severe and aggressive forms in times of crisis. Thus there is criminalization of young people. However, they are the ones, who are most flexible and have the greatest ability to enable themselves to adapt and benefit from new opportunities, which are provided by the globalization. The youth has special level of mobility, intellectual activity and health that distinguishes them from the others. All this demonstrates the huge impact of young people on the politics in general and on the youth policy in particular. In modern days governments are being interested in involvement of youth in, for example, the election processes. Although the results of some researches say that many young people prefer the idea of political indifference.

Definition of key items

Youth

A special social group of people, aged between 14-16 and 25-35 years.

Politics

An activity of public authorities and state administration, reflecting the social system and economic structure of a country.

Youth policy

A system of government priorities and measures aimed on the creating conditions and opportunities for successful socialization and effective self-realization of young people.

Political indifference

Constant indifference regarding the country's political situation.

AIESEC

An international non-governmental not-for-profit organization that provides young people with leadership development and cross-cultural global internship and volunteer exchange experiences across the globe, with a focus to empower young people so they can make a positive impact on society.

Major countries and organizations involved

Mostly governments of developed countries are interested in increasing the role of youth in politics like the USA, the UK, countries of the EU.

Organizations which could be involved in the issue: The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the UN, Council of Europe, AIESEC.

Relevant treaties and UN resolutions

Bases of the European Charter on the participation of young people in society at local and regional level have been laid on the first and second conferences on youth policy, organized by the Standing Conference of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe, in Lausanne (June 1988) and in Llangollen (September 1991). Shortly thereafter, in March 1992, the Permanent Conference adopted Resolution 237 and Article 22, which states the adoption of the Charter.

General Assembly Resolution on Policies and Programmes involving Youth (A/RES/68/130); The Commission for Social Development Resolution 2006/15 on Youth Employment, and the UN General Assembly Resolutions A/RES/60/2 (2005) and A/RES/58/133 (2003) on Policies and Programmes involving Youth have a number of references to youth participation in policy making.

UN General Assembly Resolution A/RES/57/165 (December 2002) on Promoting Youth Employment "Encourages Member States to prepare national reviews and action plans

on youth employment and to involve youth organizations and young people in this process”

Public recognition of young people as key actors in social development processes has been strengthened through the United Nations’ Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)⁸, the most widely ratified international agreement, which recognizes that participation in different processes is a right of all children and young people.

The strong commitment of UNDP and other UN entities to foster youth political participation is based on several international conventions and declarations, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the World Program of Action for Youth and the Convention of the Rights of the Child.

Previous attempts to solve the issue

Several countries have already tried to attract more youth to take part in political decision-making. For example, in some German lands citizens get right to vote in regional and municipal elections at the age of 16. In Ireland there are special Advisory Boards on the base of schools, where students have discussions on socially important problems at the national level. In the UK children are involved in the parliaments at the level of urban communities. In Netherlands, in the city of Tilburg operates an Institute of youth ambassadors (from the age of 18). Their responsibilities are: representing of the interests of young people in municipalities; participation in decision-making; regular meetings and discussions with politicians.

Possible solutions & problems

The gap between the youth and local authorities creates disbelief in the possibility of changing something. This encourages young people to direct their destructive energy and resentment against the central government and provokes the youth to participate in riots, extremist movements and actions.

The main directions of increasing the role of youth policy are:

- youth involvement in public life, its awareness of the potential development
- support of talented youth and development of their creative activity
- integration in full life those, who are in difficult situations

The experience of the countries successfully involving youth into political life should also be taken into consideration.