### Global Youth Trends – Summary Per Region

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<tr>
<th>Trend groups</th>
<th>Region/Trend</th>
<th>Arab</th>
<th>Asia-Pacific</th>
<th>Europe</th>
<th>Eurasia</th>
<th>Latin America and the Caribbean</th>
<th>North America</th>
<th>Sub-Saharan Africa</th>
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<td><strong>Economy</strong></td>
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<td>Increasing number of “idle” or NEET youth</td>
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<td>Concern about decent jobs and wages</td>
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<td>Participation in the Informal Economy</td>
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<td><strong>Note 1</strong></td>
<td>Difficult and long transition from school to work for many</td>
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<td>Higher enrolment rates in all levels of education (especially for girls and young women)</td>
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<td>Dropouts from primary and secondary levels still evident problem</td>
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<td>Technology as the most desired field of study</td>
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<td>Increased need for media literacy (especially for online media)</td>
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<td><strong>Education</strong></td>
<td>Unmet need for sexual and reproductive health education</td>
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<td>HIV/AIDS and other STDs as a major health threat</td>
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<td>Low levels of contraceptive use evident</td>
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<td>Obesity, the number of overweight youth and diabetes on the rise</td>
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<td><strong>Note 2</strong></td>
<td>Unmet need for family planning evident</td>
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<td>Alternative modes of political participation on the rise</td>
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<td>Online interaction (texting and social media) as main channels of communication</td>
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<td>Youth volunteering more than previous generations</td>
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<td>Youth gangs and armed conflict main threats to youth security</td>
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<td>Youth today less devout (less religious) than their parents</td>
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<td>Families increasingly single-parent (divorce rates on the rise)</td>
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<td><strong>Politics, Society, and Security</strong></td>
<td>Youth increasingly mobile – locally and internationally, &quot;brain drains&quot; increasing</td>
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**Legend**

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<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Very important/evident</th>
<th>Important/evident</th>
<th>Somewhat important/evident</th>
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<th>Data not found</th>
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About the Research

As part of Resolution F (THE STRATEGY FOR SCOUTING: CLEARER FOCUS), the 39th World Scout Conference requested from the World Scout Committee to “...do a thorough evaluation of the Strategy for Scouting in the coming triennium, where the evaluation should

- Include a thorough analysis of needs and trends among young people both within Scouting and in society in the future”.

This report has been prepared in response to this request, while keeping in mind the necessity of producing a general overview of global, macro trends, which are relevant for Scouting on World level.

The researcher was tasked with reviewing secondary sources – already existing literature on the topics of economic, educational, sociological and health related trends among young people between 7 and 30 years of age.

The literature reviewed amounts to a basis of 105 resources consulted and quoted, including various types of reports, published academic articles and website entries, all in English language.

The research was conducted over a period of three months (June, July and August 2013) followed by a period of review, and the majority of resources used were freely accessible online, with some exceptions of the academic articles.

During the research, it became evident that the existing resources (freely available online) do not focus on the 7 to 14, as much as on the 14 to 30 age group. Thus, it was agreed at the initial stage of the research to give priority to the later group, and include information (when available) about the prior group.

The research outline aimed at covering the trends in the following:

- **Social trends** (Parents, parenthood & families, cultural trends affecting youth, youth (sub)cultures, evolution in activities during free/leisure time, demographical aspect / age and gender distribution, impact of civil society/NGOs on youth, belonging to a community/identity building, spirituality/religiosity, immigration/emigration (could be also observed partially under economic trends),
- **Political trends and trends in media** (freedom of expression, ways of expression, youth participation in governance, the impact of armed conflict on youth, types of media used by young people)
- **Educational trends** (Trends in schools, universities, formal educational programme, trends in how young people learn,
- **Technological trends** (Impact of digital technology, internet, social media, mobile phones, etc., youth trends regarding growing mobility of world population)
- **Legal trends** (Evolution of age of adulthood, age of consent, evolution of

other legal frameworks having an impact on youth)

- **Economic trends** (Job market/youth (un)employment, career planning, impact of economical crisis on youth population)
- **Environment trends** (The importance of being „green”/ecologically aware, effects of pollution on youth and children).

The research does not cover all of these trends for all regions, because of:

- Unavailability of reliable resources on the specific topics (in English)
- Time constraints in producing the Report.

The fields marked gray in the Table on page 2 show which data (for which regions) was unavailable.

This report is prepared for key decision-makers in WOSM, and it will in particular serve as a basis for the development of Vision 2023 and the Triennial Plan. Due to the specific character of this audience, only macro data was used during research, and it will therefore provide little assistance to National Scout Associations working on their strategies.
Summary

Despite the high youth unemployment rates, tough and long transition from school to work for many, poverty and violence in some regions, young people overall are generally optimistic about their personal future. They have confidence in themselves (more than in their countries’ governments) and are increasingly identifying themselves as global citizens, with three values "transcending borders:

- The need for connection, relationships and community;
- The need for social or personal justice, (…)
- The need to see things as they are.

The majority of young people today believe that their best days lay ahead of them. Below is a list of some of the main trends identified in economics, education, health and society, politics and security, which summarize the challenges and opportunities youth worldwide are facing today.

• Economics:
  o Youth unemployment is of major concern for all regions, without exemption, although the reason for the increase in the rates has different sources (in some cases it is the recent financial crisis, in others a chronic bad state of economy, etc.).
  o The transition from education to employment is often: 1) long (many young people procrastinate as much as possible the entry to the labour market – by staying in education, since they are aware of the low chances they would have for finding a job) and 2) difficult (since in many regions the skills and knowledge taught in schools does not correspond to the needs of the economy).
  o Young people are searching for employment are mainly concerned with having decent work conditions and fair wages.
  o The informal economy is becoming an increasingly popular "employment resort" – especially in Eurasia and Sub-Saharan Africa.
  o “Idle” or “NEET” (Neither in education, employment or training) youth is growing in numbers, especially in Latin America, North America and Europe.
  o Poverty is still an issue in some parts of the world (Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia), and working poverty is of particular importance in other (some parts of South-East Asia).

• Education:
  o Higher enrolment rates are evident across the world – in all levels of education, and the trend is especially pronounced for girls and young women in particular. In almost all regions of the world, young women constitute the majority of university students.
  o Tertiary education enrolment rates are witnessing the greatest increase of all education levels.
  o Dropouts from primary and secondary education are still of great concern for some regions (such as Latin America and South Asia)
  o Technology is considered to be the best field of study for ensuring personal success and wealth.
  o Levels of young people’s media literacy have been identified as a growing concern in some regions (North America and the Arab region), with a special emphasis on online media (in particular: social media).

• Health:
  o HIV/AIDS is still affecting many young people, and some regions have even identified an increase in the number of young people infected by it.
  o Lack of reproductive health knowledge in many regions leads to teen pregnancies, unsafe abortions, low levels of contraceptive use and spread of STDs.
  o An unmet need for family planning is evident in many regions (Sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America, South and South-East Asia).
  o Obese and overweight youth are growing in numbers in many parts of the world (especially in North America, Europe and East Asia), and this trend is also causing a rise in the number of young people living with diabetes.
Society, Politics and Security:
- Today's youth is very mobile – they migrate within their countries (most common: rural-urban migration), as well as internationally – different patterns are visible among regions. Developing regions are witnessing a “brain drain” towards the developed countries, since a lot of their young and well educated people are leaving in search for better living conditions.
- The average age of first marriage is increasing worldwide, and the divorce rates have also been on the rise in most parts, as well as single parent families.
- Young people today prefer alternative ways of political participation (such as expressing their opinions on the Internet, inviting friends for petitions online, participating in issue-specific protests, or joining civil society organizations).
- Young people in some regions are extremely vulnerable and exposed to violence caused by armed conflicts or gang conflicts (especially in the Arab region, Sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America).
- Today’s youth is less devout than their parents, and in general, more open to exploring other religions than their own.
- Young people today across the globe spend more time in volunteer activities, in particular, those organized by different NGOs – mostly on a local level.
- Overall, today’s youth is concerned about their environment.
- Young people today interact more and more online, and social media and entertainment websites are their main pages visited when surfing the Internet.
An Optimistic Generation

One out of five persons in the Arab region is between 15 and 24 years of age. According to the latest Arab Youth Survey (ASDA’A Burson-Marsteller) results, the number one trend among Arab youth is that they are optimistic of the future and believe that “[their] best days lay ahead of [them]”. Although this trend varies across the region (Iraqi youth being the most optimistic and the Libyans the least), it is still evident that, in the aftermath of the Arab Spring, the majority of Arab youth believes that their countries are going in a positive direction.

Fair Payment as the Highest Priority

A fair wage is considered the top priority by 82% of young Arabs. Furthermore, work-life balance, opportunities for personal development and the length of the working day/vacation time have also topped the list of priorities for Arab youth when considering a job application. To second the primary assertion of an “optimistic generation”, 60% of youth in the Arab region believe that the regional economy is going in the right direction.

Despite to all the optimism, YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT rose over the past decade, with the trend particularly affecting young Arab women. „In 2009, more than 20% of the youth labour force in the region was unable to find a job, which constituted more than half of the total unemployment rate”. However, the unemployment rates vary considerably from country to country (for instance, 6.3% in the United Arab Emirates and 38.9% in Jordan).

Regional Overview: Youth in the Arab Region

“The region’s labour force youth participation rates are among the lowest globally, currently standing at around 35 percent, compared to the global average of 52 percent.

The economic loss of youth unemployment exceeds US$ 40 – 50 billion annually across the Arab World, equivalent to the GDP of countries like Tunisia or Lebanon.”

Education for Employment: Realizing Arab Youth Potential

The situation is even more difficult for young women (aged 15 to 24): only 15% of them are working in the Middle East, and 16% in North Africa.

Opportunity for Action, Preparing Youth for 21st Century Livelihoods

Employers indicate that only a third of new graduates are ready to work when first hired, and more than half of the employers have to provide substantial training for new employees in order to ensure work readiness.

When it comes to choosing the place where they would like to work, the youth dominantly (47%) picks the Gulf States.

Interestingly, the greatest concern of young Arabs, far beyond “the economy”, „the threat of terrorism”, the „events of the Arab Spring” and „unemployment” is the concern about rising living costs.

MIGRATION has its plusses and minuses. On the plus side, it reduces unemployment at home and increases the income of local population gained through remittances, and it also enables youth who migrate to gain valuable professional experiences. On the minus side, it evokes a “brain drain” and reduces productivity at home.

“Four main factors are contributing to youth emigration from the region: (1) the increasing number of Arab youth population; (2) the growing number of young well-educated workers facing poor employment conditions; (3) population density; and (4) unresolved conflicts.”

A generation on the move: Insights into the conditions, aspirations and activism of Arab youth

Democracy shaped according to the Arab culture

Comparing the opinions of young Arabs in 2013 to those from 2012 indicate a decline of 10% in the number of respondents who believe that living in a democratic country is very important (from 68% in 2012 to 58% in 2013). Participants of the Arab youth Forum indicate a number of threats in the political sphere: exclusion of civil society from decision taking, the absence of political freedoms, politicizing Islam, corruption, lack of good governance and a peaceful rotation of power, lack of respect for minorities and lack of possibilities for youth to participate in the governing of the countries. The Forum participants indicate that “democracy cannot be imported from outside, but it should be shaped according to the Arab culture.”
Out of 22 countries in the region, only 9 have either developed YOUTH POLICIES or are in the process of formulating them. Nevertheless, recent unrest in the region has presented a compelling rationale for governments to bring youth issues firmly into the focus of the national agenda." Regional Overview: Youth in the Arab Region

The ASDA'A survey identifies civil unrest and lack of democracy as the region’s two greatest obstacles. Additionally, youth indicate that “lack of Arab unity” (27%), the “Palestinian-Israeli conflict” (26%) and the “lack of political direction” (25%) as the obstacles to prosperity as well.

When it comes to youth participating in parliaments, they are almost entirely excluded, and “only four countries (Egypt, Jordan, Tunisia and Yemen) have established specialized youth-related legislative committees”.

The Arab region’s youth are very proud of their ARAB IDENTITY, which is especially noticeable after the Arab Spring. “Nearly nine out of ten young Arabs (87%) agree with the statement: ‘Following the events of the Arab Spring, I am more proud to be an Arab’.

About 40% of the region’s youth think that “traditional values are out-dated and belong in the past”, and state that they are “keen to embrace modern values and beliefs”. Arab Youth Survey (ASDA'A Burson-Marsteller)

Most young people want to be cool. And being cool means to be “different, unique and noticed”, but most of all – socially approved and respected by others. Dana El Baltaji, I want my MTV

Nevertheless, the two common elements that still greatly characterize Arab youth’s identity are family and religion. A generation on the move: Insights into the conditions, aspirations and activism of Arab youth

Between the desire to be cool and the moral obligation to respect family and religious values, young Arabs need to strike a balance, even though the messages received from their parents, educational and religious institutions on one side and the “vibrant satellite TV industry” on the other are at times very conflicting.

Marwan M. Kraidy, Youth, Media and Culture in the Arab World

The United Arab Emirates are perceived a model nation for the majority of the Arab youth, while France has the most favourable view by Arab youth when considering countries outside of the ARAB region

When considering the political trends among youth from the Arab region, the discussion about the effects of the Arab Spring is inevitable. Hoffman and Jamal show from their research that an additional precaution is necessary when making conclusions about the influence of globalization and modernization on young Arabs.

Their research shows that, while part of the common conclusions about this part of the population still stands (“they are, on average, less religious, more educated, more likely to be unemployed, more likely to protest, and less likely to vote”), others, in particular the conclusions about the reasons behind youth mobilization and their aims, should be reconsidered. Hoffman and Jamal claim that “[y]oung Arabs are generally more supportive of political Islam than their older counterparts, and tend to support Shari’a law more than older citizens. They are more likely to identify themselves primarily as Muslims than are older generations. They are, in general, happier with their governments’ efforts to create prosperity. Interestingly, despite their high unemployment rates, the Arab youth are both more satisfied with their countries’ economic conditions and more optimistic about the future economic prospects.”

Social Media on the Rise

Although news consumption has declined after the Arab Spring events, the use of social media is still on the rise. However, it is important to notice that the vast majority of Arab youth (about 85%) use social media primarily for entertainment purposes (followed by connecting with existing friends and family and making new friends).

Over 80% of Arab youth generally use the Internet every day, but despite this high number, TV is still the most reliable source of news and the most commonly noted type of spending free time is watching TV channels.

Perceptions about restrictions on the Internet vary greatly, with about 52% of young Arabs thinking that the Internet should be less restricted or completely free, while 40% think that it should be more restricted and 8% think that it should be completely banned.

Overall, some authors consider Arab youth to be more of a “media consumer” than “media producer”, and that they accept the content received through various media uncritically. Although considered to be “tech savvy” and quickly able to adapt to using new types of media, it is generally perceived that the youth of the region has a weak level of media literacy.
Adequacy of Education

The UN notes that there has been very significant progress made in the Arab region when it comes to education on all indicators. Still, the region faces many challenges, such as: "high illiteracy among youth (reaching 16.6%), student dropouts from primary education, low enrolment of girls in comparison to boys, deterioration of education quality, and a general mismatch between education curricula and the labour market's skill demands". Another report documents that "only a third of the surveyed youth believe their education prepared them adequately for the job market, and they express strong doubts about both program quality and relevance".

An interesting shift is visible in the tertiary education: there are more female than male students present. There are many possible reasons for this, such as: "[women’s] low economic activity rates and higher admission exam scores, (...) young women are less likely than their male counterparts to drop out to join the labour force or to study abroad". The gross enrolment ratio between 1998 and 2008 improved from 18% to 22% across Arab countries. It is also interesting to note that post-secondary education is still largely provided from the public sector, with only 15 to 20% of students enrolled in private institutions.

Lifestyles and Health

Urbanization is growing in the region, with about 56% of the Arab region population currently living in cities. It is expected that by 2050 this rate will rise to 75%. However, it is important to notice that this rate varies greatly from country to country (for example, Kuwait has an urbanization rate of 98%, while more than a half of the populations of Egypt, Mauritania, Somalia and Yemen live in villages). Family values remain very important to young Arabs across the region (for example, 88% Moroccan youth claims to feel very strong attachment to their families). Even though marriage is still seen as a “contentious and often controlled family affair” (especially for young women), there have been some noticeable changes in this respect in situations when young women have a higher education level and employment. The average age of first marriage has also registered an increase in comparison to previous generations.

The events of the Arab Spring have seen a rise in women empowerment, which has been identified as the main component of addressing gender discrimination in the region. "An analysis by the World Bank concludes that with the increase in age at marriage, traditional forms of managing youth sexuality around the Middle East are in decline and young people may increasingly engage in risky behaviours to dissipate their sexual energy (Abu-Raddad 2010, 132)".

Only half of the Arab youth population is aware and has knowledge of sexually transmitted diseases. This alarmingly high number coincides with the fact that "issues related to unwanted pregnancies, HIV infection and AIDS, as well as female genital mutilations remain taboo in cultures that continue to be reluctant to discuss such concerns openly". This corresponds to the claims of the Arab Youth Forum Participants that no clear action or serious attempts have been taken by the government to address these issues.

According to the Arab Youth Forum, diseases relating to the environmental pollution are spreading alarmingly. Furthermore, big problems for the environment are: "pollution resulting from car exhausts, the spread of solid waste and the inefficiency of recycling processes of this waste".

"Traditionally, CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS in the Arab world have been commonly viewed as ‘governmental-non-governmental registered organizations – GNGOs’. They are not perceived as the initiators of the events of the Arab Spring, and many argue that they "rode the current quite late" (in joining the revolts). Rama Halaseh, Civil Society, Youth and the Arab Spring

Although there has recently been a “visible increase in the presence of youth in the activities of human rights and advocacy NGOs, especially in election monitoring” the example of Egypt demonstrates best the number of people attracted by the work of CSOs: only 2% of youth participate in volunteer work. Dina Shehata, Youth Mobilization in Egypt: New Trends and Opportunities

Nevertheless, the Arab Spring evoked interest among youth for new possibilities for engaging in civic activism, and one of the most promising is “social entrepreneurship” (…) with new programmes of innovative activism that aim to achieve social benefits throughout society on a sustainable basis, such as the Injaz (‘achievement’) program in Jordan and Alashanek Ya Balady Association for Sustainable Development (AYB-SD) in Egypt. A generation on the move: Insights into the conditions, aspirations and activism of Arab youth

Youth, Violence and Security
In a region where currently “ten out of twenty-two countries are either under occupation, undergoing civil war or settling border disputes” xxx, the consequences on youth and its security are very harmful. Youth is being increasingly involved in armed conflict, as victims as well as perpetrators, and the concern for their rehabilitation and reintegration in society upon the end of a conflict is growing xxxi. “Many governments in the MENA [Middle East and North Africa] region lack the capacity to provide effective protection or to bring those responsible for violating the rights of children to justice. Reducing the risk of conflicts requires commitment from states to address the root causes of conflicts and engage in preventive measures before tensions erupt. As a consequence, the capacity of young people to contribute positively to longer-term post-conflict reconstruction and development interventions is often ignored, thereby limiting the durability of peace”. xxxii
YOUTH TRENDS IN ASIA-PACIFIC

Asia-Pacific: Home to over 45% of the World’s Youth

Asia, the Pacific and Australia are home for over 45% of the total number of young people in the world. When it comes to the sub-regional distribution, South Asia is the leader with 20% of its population being between the ages of 15 and 24, and its youth population accounting for 26% of the world youth populationxxxiv. In South-East Asia and the Pacific, young people amount for 18% of the total population, in East Asia this percentage is 17xxxiv, and in Australia, it is 13.5%xxxv. Many countries of the Asia-Pacific region experienced the peak of their youth bulge in the 1980s – with a higher-than-usual percentage of their populations being young (aged between 15 and 24 years), as a result of previously high fertility rates. The attenuation of the youth bulge is already evident in some countries, where a constant decline in the participation of youth in the total population is dropping, and this trend is expected in all countries of the regionxxxvi. The youth bulge can often become a threat, although mostly perceived as an excellent opportunity for economic growth (since there is a larger-than-usual work force at disposal). Even though the Asia-Pacific region is seen as the most dynamic world region in terms of economic growth today, it still faces many challenges, particularly when it comes to employing the large number of young people. Today, Asia-Pacific is home to about 40% of the world’s unemployed youthxxxvii. Observed as a whole, Asia-Pacific has a youth unemployment rate of over 13.1%, which is three times higher than the unemployment rate of the adult populationxxxviii. The rapid growth of Asian populations in the previous decades caused much pressure on public health, education and employment programmes. From 1960 to 2000, the number of young people has doubled or more than doubled in almost all Asian countries (except China, Japan and North Korea)xxxix. However, between 2000 and 2040, the number of young people is expected to grow much slower, at an annual rate of about 0.2%, and already now, it is noticeable for nearly all countries of East Asia and some countries of South and South-East Asia that the process of rapid population expansion is overxl. The projected youth population of Asia in 2040 is 706 million, about 14% of the total populationxl. Australia has seen an increase of 4.8 years in the median age of its population (the age at which half of the population is older and half is younger): from 32.1 years in 1990 to 36.9 years in 2010xli. The ageing of its population is expected to cause “significant implications for Australia, including for health, labour force participation, housing and demand for skilled labourxlii.

Many Asian countries (and Australia as well) have large populations of indigenous people. In fact, it is estimated that “over 60% of the world’s indigenous peoples live in Asia”. However, they are often very disadvantaged in comparison to others. In Bangladesh, only “18% of the country’s indigenous people were literate, compared with a national figure of 40%”. In Vietnam, the national literacy rate is reported at 87%, while the literacy rate for some indigenous people groups is not even 4%. World Youth Report 2007, Young People’s Transition to Adulthood: Progress and Challenges

Aboriginal youth are the most social disadvantaged group of young people in Australia and significantly over-represented as users of social welfare.” It is estimated that 22% of youth out of home care are indigenous youth, even though they comprise only 3.6% of the total youth population of Australia. Strengthening youth citizenship and social inclusion practice – The Australian Case: Towards rights-based and inclusive practice services for marginalized young people

“Unemployed, yet, Optimistic

The challenges the governments of the region’s countries face “in integrating youth and developing their full potential, most critically perhaps in the area of employment” xliii are enormous. This statement is even further underlined by the following facts:

- “In many countries of the region, youth unemployment constitutes over 30% of the total unemployment,
- Youth unemployment is 3 to 4 times higher than non-youth employment,
- Unemployment among youth affects both educated and uneducated,
- In most developing countries of the region, unemployment is mainly an urban phenomenon, whilst underemployment is mainly a rural problem,
- Rural youth tend to be less skilled and less well educated than their urban counterparts, as well as likely to be more adversely affected by technological changes,
- In some countries, unemployment rates are higher for the more educated than for those who are less educated. However, lack of
access to the most basic level of education is the major obstacle depriving many young people of the opportunity to increase the productivity of their human resources potential.\(^{xlv}\)

The global youth work force amounted to 633 million in 2005, out of which about 353 million (55.7%) were in Asia, and it is expected that by 2015, this number will grow to 361 million.\(^{xlv}\) Indeed, some of the East Asian countries managed to take economic advantage of the growth in production capacity (which was a direct consequence of the youth bulge), however, the possibilities for benefiting further from the large youth population will depend heavily on the countries’ support for developing the potentials of young people.\(^{xlvi}\)

Industrial expansion has created many job opportunities for young people all over the continent, especially in the vibrant economies of Hong Kong, the Republic of Korea, Singapore, the Taiwan province of China, and later on in China, Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand, and more recently in Cambodia, Lao People’s Democratic Republic and Vietnam. Young people are in high demand in these expanding markets, mainly because of their ability to adapt quickly to new circumstances, openness for migration for work, and better knowledge of modern technology. However, younger workers are also susceptible to accepting lower wages (because of the high competition), short-term contracts and minimal benefits.\(^{xlvii}\) All this makes them increasingly vulnerable and exposed to maltreatment from the employers. In South-East Asia, young people are five times more likely to be unemployed than adults, and in South and East Asia this ratio is almost three to one. In Australia, recent data shows that more than 50,000 young people were unemployed in May 2013, which represents and increase of 15,000 people from the same time last year.\(^{xlix}\)

Yet, in spite of all the troubles, young Asians are the most optimistic Millennials when it comes to their opinions about the direction in which the global economy, their region’s economy and their countries’ economy is heading to.\(^{li}\) As an illustration, about 91% of Chinese youth are in favour of globalization and view it as an opportunity, and 82% of them believe that the future of their country is bright.\(^{lii}\) About 85% of those surveyed claim that “technology has made it easier to get a job”, but 66% also claim that it has “widened the gap between the rich and the poor”.\(^{lix}\)

### Significant Improvements in Education

Today, more children than ever before are attending school throughout Asia, with “gross primary enrolment rates exceed[ing] 100 per cent in many countries, reflecting the participation of many children outside the official primary school age range.\(^{lviii}\) The period between 2000 and 2004 in particular saw a sharp increase in the net primary enrolment of both boys and girls. Quality and relevance of education are key concerns for young Asians, since it is supposed to prepare them for the job market. About 44% of those surveyed believe that “the most important way to make a difference is by improving access to and the quality of education”, and the same percentage of them believes that the most important field of study to ensure personal future success is technology, followed by economics (20%) and foreign languages (13%).\(^{lxiv}\)

Higher enrolment rates have also been achieved in lower secondary education, particularly in East Asian and some South-East Asian countries (for example, the Republic of Korea and Malaysia’s enrolment rates at secondary level are over 90%, and in Sri Lanka it is as high as 98%).\(^{lxv}\) However, Afghanistan and Pakistan still have these rates as low as 40%.

The upper secondary education enrolment rates decline sharply – with East Asia and the Pacific standing at 50% and South Asia at 40%.\(^{lxvi}\) Ensuring a smooth transition from lower to upper secondary education is seen as one of the biggest challenges for many Asian countries, and it is especially significant when it comes to technical and vocational training, since it has very low enrolment rates in many countries of the continent (and especially in South and South-West Asia, where the rate is as low as 2%).\(^{lxvii}\) In East Asia and the Pacific this rate is somewhat higher (14%), and in Central Asia this rate is just slightly lower (13%).\(^{lxviii}\).
**SUCCESS STORIES IN EDUCATION** are spread throughout the region:

"In just two generations, the Republic of Korea has made enormous strides and is now ranked among the world’s top countries in terms of educational performance, as evidenced by its superior level of achievement within the framework of the OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA)." *World Youth Report 2007, Young People's Transition to Adulthood: Progress and Challenges*

"In Bangladesh, the Basic Education for Hard-to-Reach Urban Working Children project was set up to provide quality non-formal training in basic literacy, numeracy and life skills. Between 2004 and 2011, the programme reached almost 200,000 children in six cities. Evaluations showed that the project was effective in developing an appropriate curriculum and materials that were tailored to the children’s needs, allowing them to overcome the limitations of their environment and receive a quality education." *The State of the World’s Children 2012, UNICEF*

"Project Smile in Pakistan’s Punjab province offers a broad range of services to children who live or work on the street, and who may be ostracized because people associate them with drug use and other risky behaviour. A mobile team of trained health and social workers provides participants with access to services including medical care, food, clean clothes, counselling, referral for drug treatment, and training." *The State of the World’s Children 2012, UNICEF*

"To promote integration, Singapore’s One People initiative assists underachieving students from lower-income families and strengthens bonds between children from different backgrounds – for instance, by prompting children to reflect on the experience of living in the multiracial and multicultural city-state." *The State of the World’s Children 2012, UNICEF*

"At independence in 1948, the Sri Lankan population achieved a mean level of education second only to Japan in the Asia region. (...) The proportion of the population with no schooling declined from 22.9% in 1973 to 8.6% in 1996/1997. Over the same period, those with secondary education increased from 27.3% to 35.5%, and with post-secondary education from 6.6% to 20.7%." *Economic Globalisation, Youth Expectations and Social Class: The case of Sri Lanka*

Besides the gains in primary enrolment rates, the most impressive improvement has been achieved when it comes to tertiary education enrolment rates. Observed globally, the number of students in tertiary education doubled from 1990 to 2004, amounting 132 million. East Asia and the Pacific were the forerunners, with over 25 million new students enrolled during this period. Just in China, the number of university students doubled between 1998 and 2002 and then again by 2004, when the student body of China amounted for 15% of the global student body. India has a registered annual rate of growth of university students at 13.4% since the 1990s. Along with the increased number of students studying at home universities came a significant proportion of those who chose to compete for places at foreign universities. Asian students are now applying for studies mainly in North America, Australia and some European cities, with very high acceptance rates. In the United States alone, between 1983 and 2003, universities awarded 141.826 doctoral degrees to persons of Asian origin (out of which 120.698 were in science and engineering). Still, when it comes to the general picture, tertiary education enrolment rates are below 25% in most countries of the region (25% in Central Asia, 26% in East Asia and the Pacific and 13% in South and West Asia). In 2009, in Australia, "the majority (81%) of young people aged 15-24 years (from a total of around three million) were fully engaged in either education or work" and "almost a half (49%) were studying full-time for a qualification, while almost a third (31%) were in full-time employment". Yet, many young people in the region do not see education as the main precondition to a good life: 13% of young Indians "consider becoming famous one of the components of a good life" (compared to a global average of less than 3%).

**Disadvantaged Youth**

Despite all the great achievements, there are still many challenges ahead of Asian societies, especially those affected with poverty, since it is often the cause of children dropping out of school and joining the labour force at a premature age. Poor urban neighbourhoods are home to most children that are in the category of "the least likely to attend school". A research conducted in Delhi, India in 2004/2005 showed that the attendance rate for primary school children living in slums was 54.5%, while the overall city rate was 90%. When it comes to secondary education in Bangladesh, the differences were even bigger: "18 per cent of children in slums attended secondary school, compared with 53 per cent in urban areas as a whole and 48 per cent in rural areas". Poverty ranges between 12 and 40 per cent in...
urban Asian areas, and "in many Asian cities, 30 to 40 per cent of the population live in slums". 
Discrepancies in education are noticeable in some of the developing countries of the region when it comes to comparing the success of urban and rural students. In particular, achievements of students from rural areas in Cambodia, India and Sri Lanka are much lower than of those from rural areas of Japan and the Republic of Korea.

Young girls are still particularly vulnerable to exclusion from education – “typically, fewer girls than boys remain in the education system once they have completed primary school. However, there are a few exemptions: "at the secondary level, female enrolment exceeds male enrolment in Bangladesh, Brunei Darussalam, Macao Special Administrative Region of China, Sri Lanka, and the Islamic Republic of Iran" and in "Brunei Darussalam, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Malaysia, Mongolia, the Philippines and Thailand, females outnumber males in tertiary education.

After decades of exclusion, GIRLS have started to benefit significantly from primary education in many countries throughout the continent in the past twenty-thirty years. For instance, India and Nepal have almost reached gender parity at the primary education level. By 1998, Bangladesh, the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Maldives and Sri Lanka have all reached gender parity at this level of education. Still, Afghanistan and Pakistan remain among the countries with the widest gender gap between girls and boys at this level of education. World Youth Report 2007, Young People’s Transition to Adulthood: Progress and Challenges

In Australia in 2012, “similar proportions of men (60%) and women (62%) aged 15-24 years were participating in education. However, women had significantly higher participation rates in than men in all age groups between 25 and 64 years in the corresponding levels of education. “In 2011, the apparent retention rate through secondary school to Year 12 for full-time students was higher for females (84%) than for males (75%). Available statistics suggest that "less than 5% of children with disabilities are enrolled in school" in the Asia-Pacific region. Nevertheless, there have been some efforts made in improving access to education for these children, for instance, in the Republic of Korea, "83.6 per cent of children and youth with disabilities (aged 6-18 years) are enrolled in either special or regular school programmes at the primary or secondary level.

In 2002 in Australia, 47% of indigenous young people (15-24 years of age) were either participating full-time in education, work or in a combination of part-time education and part-time work, which contrasts to the overall enrolment rate of 60%.

Health and Family-related Issues

Youth in the Asia-Pacific are exposed to various diseases and infections, not only because of low hygiene and sanitation levels in some areas, but also because of low levels of awareness and knowledge about different diseases and the ways of transmission. Young people aged 10 to 24 account for 50% of all new HIV infections in the region and in absolute numbers, there is currently 2.2 million young people living with HIV/AIDS in Asia. In India and Nepal, high increases in the number of infected female prostitutes have been recorded over the past 20 years: in Bombay, for example, the figure increased from 1% in 1986 to 18% in 1990, and it was estimated that the figure stood at 35% in 1995. In 1995, UNICEF estimated that over 15.000 boys were engaged in homosexual prostitution, characterizing them as “particularly vulnerable” to HIV/AIDS. It is important to note that there are significant discrepancies within the Asian continent, with Japan, the Republic of Korea, Hong Kong and Singapore being the least affected and Thailand, Malaysia and Vietnam being the most affected.

Still, significant improvements can be noticed when it comes to raising awareness among young people about their reproductive health. For instance, in South-East Asia, the contraceptive prevalence rate (the proportion of women of reproductive age who are using – or whose partner is using – a contraceptive method at a given point in time) has increased by over 165% over the past three decades, the infant mortality rates have gone down and the life expectancy has increased by 10 years.

East Asia is leading in the number of single people within the whole Asian continent. The proportion of single women aged between 15 and 24 has increased from 70% in 1950 to 91% in 1990. In South Asia, the proportion was even more evident: from 18% to 42% for young women, and from 56 to 77 per cent for young men, however, these percentages are expected to rise throughout the continent. In Australia, “the median age at first marriage is 29.7 years for men and 28 years for women in 2011”. The majority of young men in Thailand, Taiwan and the Philippines have their first sexual experience outside of marriage, however, as a contrast, the rates for young women vary greatly: in Taiwan, “70 per cent of women aged 15 to 24 who have experienced sex had their first sex outside of marriage, compared with only 30 per
Asians are "dangerously overweight" in urban areas. It is estimated that one third of South Asians are "dangerously overweight".

Although the average age of first marriage is increasing throughout Asia, many girls who are still in their teenage years bear a child, especially in parts of South and South-East Asia. "In 2004, 33 per cent of the teenagers in Bangladesh and 21 per cent in Nepal were pregnant or had borne a child."

In Australia, "women who become mothers do so typically at age 25 to 34 years. In 2010, the median age of women who gave birth to their first child was 28 years."

Substance abuse among youth is of great concern for many Asia-Pacific societies. Recent research shows that "while the prevalence of cigarette use among young people in Asia is among the lowest in the world, the region ranks highest in terms of other tobacco use (this category includes but is not limited to chewing tobacco, snuff, dip and cigars)." Gender disparities are noticeable in many countries of the region when it comes to smoking – for instance, in China and India, about 30% of young men smoke, while only 1% of young women do so, while, by contrast, young women in Japan and the Republic of Korea are much more likely to smoke than their female counterparts in other countries of the region. About 15% of Australians of age 17 reported smoking, and this number has not changed significantly in comparison to previous years.

Alcohol consumption varies considerably between countries, and is extremely low among youth in India and Indonesia, which contrasts to almost half of young men who drink in the Philippines, the Republic of Korea and Thailand. In Australia, three out of four 12- to 17-year-olds had tried alcohol at some stage in their life, and 51% report consuming it in the year prior to the survey (held in 2011).

Asian countries in general report very low rates of drug use among youth, however, recent research points out to a growing problem with drug abuse, especially in urban areas. In contrast, in Australia, about 15% of 12- to 17-year-olds report using cannabis at some stage in their life.

Obesity is becoming a growing concern for many Asian societies, and it is often perceived as a consequence of globalization and the "internationalization of the food industry", which is changing diets of young Asians, especially those in urban areas. It is estimated that one third of South Asians are "dangerously overweight". In 2007-08, "one-quarter of all Australian children, or around 600,000 children aged 5–17 years, were overweight or obese, up four percentage points from 1995 (21%)."

When it comes to the environment, Chinese youth are the ones most concerned about pollution in the region and worldwide (51% of them consider it being the greatest global threat).

Young Asians: Readily Challenging Traditional Authorities

"Youth more readily challenge traditional authority structures that sometimes constrain or guide their development, but they also experience disorientation and anomie caused by the day-to-day experience of clashes between traditional and modern norms and values. In many Asian societies, patriarchal power is fading away, and youth is experiencing greater levels of autonomy than the previous generations, particularly when it comes to choosing a partner. Interestingly, overall, religion as an authority is also fading: 51% of young Asians say that they are "less devout" than their parents, and 82% state that they would consider marrying someone with different religious beliefs. However, there are some exceptions: for instance, in Indonesia and Pakistan, "nearly all young adults say they believe in God" and "three-fourths or more of young adults reported that God is important and that religion is important in their lives". Additionally, family relations are still considered invaluable in many Asia-Pacific countries, with India topping the list (98%) and Japan rating lowest in the region (79%)."

The fast expansion of the Internet enabled greater connectivity and interaction among young Asians, and it is estimated that those who have access to the Internet (45% of the world’s Internet users live in Asia) spend on average 6 hours online daily. Although generally perceived as opening a window of opportunity to many young Asians, by some it is also seen as a negative influence: in China and Japan, for instance, there is a growing amount of "narrowly nationalistic, sometimes fiercely xenophobic discussions online". Nevertheless, Internet, and especially social networks are reaching out to more and more youth in Asia (Facebook and Twitter, but also more and more: QZone, Tencent, Weibo, WeChat, KakaoTalk, LINE, etc.). In Australia, 49% of girls of secondary school age use Facebook, while the same is true for 36% of boys.
Considerable progress can be noticed in the field of political participation, especially when it comes to breaking down intergenerational barriers. More and more young people in the region are becoming socially active, volunteering and supporting the development of their communities.

Yet, it is interesting to note that the widespread uprisings of youth globally have seemingly not affected Asian youth, even though their societies have experienced economic downturns due to the financial crisis, and carry more troubles from the past (such as corruption).

Youth in Australia appear to be keen on exercising their political rights, although only half of them claim that they would vote in federal elections if they were not obliged to do so.

One of the probably most pronounced trends among Asian youth today is the high scale of emigration. It is estimated that between 2000 and 2003, "more than 2 million workers left Asian countries, compared with 1.4 million during the period 1990 – 1994". Most of these emigrants are young people: for example, "almost one third of Asian-born migrants arriving in Australia in the five years preceding the 2001 census were between the ages of 15 and 24". World Youth Report 2007, Young People’s Transition to Adulthood: Progress and Challenges
**Diverse Population Developments**

The total population of Eurasian countries combined amounts to about 280 millions, out of which 143 is in Russia. It is estimated that, by 2025, Ukraine, Georgia and Belarus will all record sharp population declines (-24%, -17% and -14% respectively). Contrastingly, the Caspian and Central Asian countries will experience a steady population growth (for example: 28% in Tajikistan, 33% in Uzbekistan, 21% in Azerbaijan, 35% in Turkmenistan and 18% in Kyrgyzstan). The youth population’s situation also differs greatly between these two groups, with the latter having much higher percentages of young people (for example: 40.8% in Kazakhstan, 41.7% in Azerbaijan, 46.7% in Kyrgyzstan, 51.7% in Tajikistan and 48.5% in Uzbekistan). Russia, Armenia and Georgia’s populations are older than those of the Central Asian states, and young people’s share among those of the working age (15 to 64) ranges from 34.7% in Russia to 39.4% in Armenia. The increases in the number of young people caused a shortage of jobs in the economies in transition in the past years, since there were more and more young people on the job market, and not enough jobs to provide them with.

**Eurasian Youth: In Search for Decent Jobs**

During the socialist time, employment rates were consistently high (and in accordance with the ideological aim of achieving full employment), which contributed to a persistent oversupply of labour in the economy. This, however, resulted in soaring unemployment rates once the countries of the region were exiting the socialist system, and it especially affected the youth population. Due to largely primary-exports oriented economies in the region (for example: the primary export rate in Azerbaijan in 2003 was 93%, in Kazakhstan 82%, in Moldova, Kyrgyzstan and the Russian Federation between 60 and 70%), there is little emphasis put on the restructuring and diversification of the economies, which, in return, does not allow for more job creation.

From the early stages of transition, the countries of the region had youth unemployment rates comparable to those of OECD, but the situation changed dramatically between 1993 and 2003, when the rate of youth unemployment declined by 13 per cent in the developed market economies, but rose by almost 25 per cent in the economies in transition; by 2003, there was a differential of 5.2 percentage points between the two regions.

The developments afterwards vary greatly within the region itself: Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova are facing the worst economic situation (when compared to other countries in the region), while the majority of Caucasus and Central Asian countries are witnessing great developments in their economies (mainly a consequence of the exporting of their natural wealth). Even with these positive developments in mind, the region still faces many challenges when it comes to youth unemployment. The transition from school to work is being prolonged as much as possible, and more and more young people use this prolonged schooling as a ‘safety valve’ to cushion the negative impact of joblessness. Those who are not able for financial or other reasons to continue their schooling, often join the large and growing informal economy of the region.

**Employment in the INFORMAL ECONOMY** is seen as the “last resort in the survival strategy” for the whole population, and youth in particular (who are disproportionately represented in this sector). Such activity is particularly high in the Caucasus states, and it is estimated that it ranges from 50% of the work force in Georgia and Azerbaijan, to about 40% in most of the remaining CIS (Commonwealth of Independent States) countries. World Youth Report 2007, Young People’s Transition to Adulthood: Progress and Challenges

“In Russia, almost 90 percent of the 3 million krysha (guards hired to protect businesses) and chelnoki (“shuttle traders” or street vendors) are young people, and it is doubtful that they could find other jobs if they wanted to do so.” Post-Soviet Youth: Engagement in Civil Society – Belarus and Beyond, Larissa Titarenko

Another challenge the region as a whole, and especially the rural parts, faces is poverty. It especially affects those under 16 years of age (for example, in Russia, the poverty level of those under 16 was 24.4%, compared to that of the total population of 20.6% in 2003). In Armenia, in 2001, the respective figures were 57% and 51%, and in Azerbaijan they were 52% and 49%.

**Increasing Tertiary Education Enrolment**

The first years of independence were characterized by sharp cuts in the budgets for social sectors across the region – and education was not spared. This, in return, caused an increase in the number of
illiterate youth and a decrease in the general enrolment rate\textsuperscript{cxxvi}. However, almost all countries of the region managed to successfully reverse this trend, even though some had more modest achievements than others\textsuperscript{cxxxvii}.

Nevertheless, the quality of education provided was deeply affected by the budget cuts. Some countries of the region face serious problems regarding poorly equipped schools and an insufficient number of textbooks available (such as Tajikistan)\textsuperscript{cxxxviii}. A large disparity in the quality of education is especially noticeable when comparing urban to rural areas.

Another challenge is seen in restructuring and adapting the secondary educational system from a mainly vocational education (which trained youth for jobs that are no longer marketable in today’s demand-driven economy) to a more contemporary system. The vocational system, has, however, maintained its presence largely throughout the region (although with significant changes)\textsuperscript{cxxxix}. In Russia, for example, the modern-adjusted secondary vocational education was rated very poorly, and the students with degrees from this type of training often comprise the majority of those without a job\textsuperscript{cxxx}.

The higher education enrolment rates, on the other hand, have increased in most of the countries of the region. The Central Asian countries have witnessed an increase of nearly 47% in the numbers of young people in tertiary education (from 1999 to 2004)\textsuperscript{cx}\. Here, it is important to note that the developments in this field were not directly correlated with the economic development of a country – for instance, Kyrgyzstan had the highest increase in university students among the countries of the region (the student population increased 3.4 times, yet the country still faces economic difficulties)\textsuperscript{cxxx}. One problem, which arises from the large number of those with completed tertiary education, is the increased number of employers who expect their employees to have a diploma, even though it is not necessary for the type of work they would be doing. The case of Russia proves this: according to a study conducted in 2005, “70% of top managers are interested in employees (and ready to employ them) with a level of education higher than that required by a position”\textsuperscript{cx}\textsuperscript{xIx}.

A mismatch between the demand for certain professions and the number of those educated for them is evident in almost all countries of the region: the countries’ labour markets are often flooded with economists, lawyers and psychologists, who “face serious problems with their employment”\textsuperscript{cx}\textsuperscript{xx}. The number of young women enrolled in tertiary education has exceeded that of young men in many countries of the region, and their gross enrolment ratio has almost doubled from 2002 to 2007\textsuperscript{cxxxv}.

MIGRATION within the region is very pronounced. “Russia is the second largest migrant receiving country in the world (with 75% of immigrants coming from other CIS), while Ukraine [is] the fourth and Kazakhstan the ninth largest receiver of migrants. The majority of migrants from poorer CIS economies travel to resource-rich CIS countries, but migrants also move towards the EU and Turkey. Germany is the major receiver of migrants from CIS countries and Ukraine and Kazakhstan the major senders”. Regions 2020: Demographic Challenges for European Regions, Directorate General for Regional Policy

When comparing the youth populations across the region, young Russians seem to be most keen to stay in their country, while both Ukrainians and Azerbaijanis express a stronger tendency to emigrate and work abroad. The Next Generation, Nadia Diuk

HIV/AIDS Pandemic

The Eurasia region has the fastest-growing number of new infections with HIV, and young people account for about half of the total number\textsuperscript{cxxxvii}. “In Ukraine, 25 per cent of those diagnosed with HIV are under 20 years of age. In Belarus, 60 per cent of those diagnosed are aged 15-24 years, and in both Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan approximately 70 per cent are under 30.\textsuperscript{cxxxviii} In Azerbaijan and Tajikistan, the number of those infected and living with HIV “almost quadrupled between 2003 and 2005”, and in the same period, the number doubled in Georgia and almost tripled in Uzbekistan\textsuperscript{cxxxix}. The main mode of HIV transmission is through drug injection with contaminated needles, and other drug injection instruments, and young people are those who account for the majority of injecting drug users in the region (for example, in Russia, young people under 30 years of age contribute with 80% to the total number of HIV infections related to injecting drug use)\textsuperscript{cxl}. HIV/AIDS prevention education is accessible to only 40% of school students, and this number is even lower for those who are not in school (3%)\textsuperscript{cxI}.

Research conducted in the CIS countries “indicated that only 7 per cent of young men and women aged 15-24 years were equipped with comprehensive and correct knowledge about HIV/AIDS\textsuperscript{cxII}.

Generally, youth in the Eurasia region are living in societies where poor health behaviours are normalized – the World Bank’s assessment of the
state in Russia is an illustrative example: "The poor health status of Russia’s economically active adult population – its human capital – is imperilling sustainable economic and social development"\textsuperscript{cxlili}. Arguably the biggest issue is the abuse of legal substances – alcohol and tobacco. For example, 27\% of boys aged 15 to 18 smokes, while 30\% teenagers drink in Russia alone\textsuperscript{cxliii}.

Youth in Politics: Supportive or Revolutionary?

Young people in the region have different perceptions of the role their government has, and equally, the governments of the different countries have a different approach to their youth policies. In Russia, the government puts a strong emphasis on depicting youth as supporters of its policies. The youth movement “Nashi” (“Ours”) used to be a prime example of this kind of tactic\textsuperscript{cxliv}. Formed in 2005 (with the strong support from the Kremlin), the movement has long been a fierce fighter against government critics, and has in particular been seen as a government response to the “colour revolutions”\textsuperscript{cxlv} of Ukraine, Georgia and Kyrgyzstan. The 2012 incident for which three members of the punk band Pussy Riot were jailed in Russia caused a worldwide concern for human rights and freedom of expression in Russia, especially after the re-election of Vladimir Putin for president in 2012\textsuperscript{cxlvii}. Unlike Yeltsin’s Western-oriented youth policies, “Putin’s doctrine actively discouraged promotion of western political and cultural influences”\textsuperscript{cxlviii}.

In Belarus, young people are mainly seen as “an object of ‘patriotic’ upbringing that is under full control of the state institutions”\textsuperscript{cxlivii}. President Lukashenka allows the civil society only very limited chances to influence the government’s decisions\textsuperscript{cxlviii}.

Although the region is often criticised for its lack of respect for human rights, some improvements can be noticed. For example, in 2006, Kazakhstan has ratified the UN Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the UN Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the development of human rights’ Ombudsmen\textsuperscript{cl}. However, the region still faces many challenges in when it comes to respecting human rights, especially political rights and the freedom of expression.
YOUTH TRENDS IN EUROPE

Young Europeans: Pessimistic but Active

Young Europeans are the least optimistic among global youth about the direction in which the economy of their region (and the global economy) is heading. However, when it comes to their opinions about the direction in which their countries’ economies are headed, Eastern and Central Europeans are far more optimistic (69%) than their Western counterparts (41%). However, this pessimism does not translate into political and social apathy: on the contrary, young Europeans vote more, volunteer more and strive for more (and higher quality) education. 

In 2011, there were about 95.2 million young people (aged 15 to 29) in the EU-27, and, additionally, the countries-candidates for accession (at the time: Croatia, Montenegro, Iceland, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia and Turkey) contributed an additional 22 million people to this number. The percentage share of young people in the overall populations of European countries varies significantly – from 15% in Italy to 22% in Poland and Slovakia, and this share has been dropping steadily over the course of the past twenty-five years. Most European countries have aging populations, and according to EUROPOP 2008, "the old-age dependency ratio (will) increase by almost 30 percentage points" over the next 50 years (meaning that each person in working age will then be supporting about twice as many older people as today).

Widespread "over-qualification"

Prior to the financial crisis of 2008, the share of young people in education and employment was fairly balanced. However, in the aftermath of the crisis, the balance was disrupted: the share of students started to go up rapidly, while the share of those employed started declining. In June 2012, the youth unemployment rate in the EU rose to 22.6% (compared to 15% in February 2008). Although youth unemployment rates for the 15 to 24 age category generally rose in all European countries, the figures vary significantly: from less than 10% in Germany, the Netherlands, Austria, Norway and Switzerland, to over 30% in Lithuania, Portugal, Slovakia and over 45% in Spain and Greece. Young people aged between 25 and 29 generally fare better than the previous category (mainly because of greater job stability, more long-term contracts, etc.). Nevertheless, the unemployment rates in this category have risen as well: Spain and Greece were well above the EU average of 12.6% in 2011, with rates exceeding 26%.

The transition from education to work for most young Europeans happens between 20 and 24 years of age. However, in the recent years, this process has been procrastinated: "over a third of the unemployed aged 15 to 24 had been jobless for one year or more in 2011." As a consequence of these developments, more and more young Europeans turn to additional education and training, in order to enhance their opportunities at the extremely competitive labour market. The majority of young Europeans identify a "structural mismatch" ("no available jobs in their city or region") as the first or second challenge they face when searching for a job, but many also identified "poorly paid available jobs" and "low employability in the field of studies" as their main concerns.

"Vertical skills mismatch" or "over-qualification" is widespread among Europeans with a tertiary education degree. It is estimated that, on average "just over one fifth of the 25 to 34 age group was either inappropriately qualified or over-qualified", with the largest proportions in Spain, Cyprus and Ireland, "in which almost one in three young people were employed in a job which did not require their tertiary qualifications".

In general, young Europeans are the most concerned with their progress from school to workplace environment, and they are the most convinced that they will not have enough money to retire comfortably. Career guidance is provided in most European countries, however, its effect is perceived differently among young Europeans benefiting from

"The growth in IMMIGRATION FROM THIRD COUNTRIES over the last 30 years has significantly offset the steady decrease in the population of EU nationals". While the median age of a EU national was 40.6 in 2009, for non-EU nationals living in the EU it was 27.5 years. Because immigrants usually arrive in their prime working and childbearing years, they contribute to "rejuvenating" the population in two ways: firstly, "because they themselves are relatively young; secondly, because they bear children". Status of the Situation of Young people in the European Union, European Commission, 2012

When choosing between a multicultural or integration model, "most young Europeans overwhelmingly opt for immigrant integration, as shown by the responses of the Spaniards (68%), Germans and French (67%) and British (66%)". 2011 World Youths: A Worldwide Survey.
it. Surveys show that around half of the respondents from Czech Republic, France, Slovenia and Slovakia have "greatly appreciated the quality of these activities", however, only one fourth of respondents from Germany, Ireland, Greece and Finland found career guidance effective in preparing them for the job market. The average number of years spent in schooling varies significantly between European countries; for example, young people from Luxembourg and Slovenia spend on average 15 years in school, while young Finns spend 20.5. The EU-27 rate for completed secondary education has seen a steady increase, and is today at 79%. Furthermore, the average rate of completing a Bachelor programme was 72% in 2008.

The attainment rate in tertiary education saw a rise of almost 50% on average in the EU-27 between 2000 and 2011, with the highest rates in Luxembourg and Ireland, "where almost half of the young people aged 30 to 34 have graduated from tertiary education" (compared to Italy and Romania, where this rate was about one fifth). The average rate of completing a Bachelor programme was 72% in 2008.

The European youth is considered to be increasingly mobile. The ERASMUS programme for student mobility alone enables 230’000 young European students to live and study abroad for a semester or more. The ERASMUS Programme – studying in Europe and more

However, research indicates that 77% of young Europeans had not experienced living in another country. The 25- to 29-age category is over-represented in the population of those who have gone abroad for work, and the highest proportions of those in this category came from central Europe (20% in Poland, 27% in Slovakia). Status of the Situation of Young people in the European Union, European Commission, 2012

In the EU, about 80% of young people use the Internet on a daily basis, and the countries reporting the highest levels of usage are Denmark, Germany, Estonia, the Netherlands, Slovenia, Finland and Sweden, while the countries reporting the lowest levels are Bulgaria, Ireland, Greece and Romania. Privacy issues are of big concern for many young Europeans, however, they are still largely active on social networks. The countries most enthusiastic (with the largest number of active users) about social media are mainly from Eastern Europe: Latvia, Hungary (with over 80%), Poland, Slovakia and Cyprus, which contrasts to lower rates in, for example, Germany (37%).

**Health-related Issues**

Overall, young people in Europe have expressed lower levels of dissatisfaction with medical care in comparison with the general populations of European countries (with the exception of Bulgaria and Latvia). Malta has the largest proportion of obese young people in Europe (9%), while this percentage is less than 2% in Bulgaria and Romania.

Danish youth reported the highest rates of experiencing drunkenness (37%), followed by Ireland, Spain, Hungary, Slovakia and the United Kingdom. Young people mainly indicate peer pressure as the factor that influences alcohol consumption the most, rather than socio-economic status, which could explain the success of school-based programmes in reducing the levels of alcohol consumption among adolescents. Statistics from the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA) found that, within the population of 15 to 16-year-olds, 6% have tried one of the following substances: ecstasy and amphetamines, cocaine, crack, LSD or other hallucinogens, heroin and GHB. Cannabis is usually the "first illegal substance used", and although a majority of cannabis consumers do not take other drugs, "they are between 4 and 25 times more likely to report the use of cocaine than is the general population." In the age category 15 to 24, "cannabis use is most prevalent in the Czech Republic, Spain, France, Italy, Slovakia and the United Kingdom (Scotland)."

Condom use among 15-year-olds is between 60 and 90 per cent, while the contraceptive pills are less prevalent and the differences in numbers of girls who use them vary greatly from country to country (for instance, only 2% of girls in Greece use them, compared to 62% in Germany). A downward sloping trend in the number of legal abortions throughout Europe is evident; numbers have decreased quite substantially in the Baltic countries and Romania, with the only exception of Spain, where a rise has been noticed.

Young people (especially young men) are much more often victims of road accidents than adults. In some European countries the differences between the numbers of injuries caused by road accidents is much higher in the youth population than in the overall population of the country (as in the Czech Republic, Spain, Cyprus and Slovenia).

**Political Participation: “Not in Decline, but in Transition”**

Conventionally, young Europeans have been perceived as inactive and uninterested in politics, primarily because the rates of youth participation in traditional political participation modes (like
elections) have been declining. These kinds of statements today are misleading, especially because young Europeans are more keen to use different, “new” modes of political engagement (like participation via Internet), and research shows that they are often even more concerned with politics than adults. The nature of political actions has changed significantly: they have become more individualized, ad-hoc, issue-specific and less linked to traditional societal cleavages. Through new forms of political participation, young people can feel that they influence political decisions more directly and effectively. However, these trends in political participation are not equally spread throughout Europe. For instance, when it comes to political participation via the Internet, youth from Northern Europe interacts with their political representatives and public authorities much more readily than their counterparts in Eastern and Southern Europe. Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands and Finland all report rates of over 40% youth using the Internet for expressing their political views, while these rates are much lower in Belgium, Cyprus, Poland, Slovakia and Sweden.

Even though youth are keener on using new modes of participation, they still believe that elections are the most effective way to achieve a change. A Eurobarometer survey showed that in 2011, roughly 8 in 10 said that they had voted in a political election at the local, regional, national or EU level in the past three years. Interestingly though, when compared by age groups, youth has a higher belief than older adults in the effectiveness of voting on European level (63 compared to 51 per cent). This collides with the high levels of “feeling European” among youth: when compared with other age groups, youth aged 15 to 24 identified most strongly with European citizenship. However, “being European” is still one of the least important identity factors (48% young Europeans see it as important), followed by their ethnic group (45%) and religion (35%), while nationality, interestingly, receives much higher rankings (66%).

It is interesting to note that there are only three European countries with significant shares of young parliamentarians (about 7%), and they are: Belgium, Estonia and the Netherlands (the European Parliament has a similar rate as well). The weak level of youth representation in state parliaments is partially due to an overall low rate of youth participation in political parties (the European average is at 4.5%).

Proactive European Youth and their Values

The weak level of youth participation in political parties is counterbalanced by the fact that European youth have the same rate of participation in civil society organizations as those above 30 years of age. This corresponds to research findings emphasizing the disillusionment of youth with traditional ways of political participation (political parties are often perceived by young people as unresponsive to their needs). In Ireland, one in four young people participate in activities of a local organization, and in Italy, Malta, Sweden and the United Kingdom, 10% of youth participate in activities of NGOs. In 2011, on average, 25% of young Europeans were involved in voluntary activities, and when compared with previous years’ rates, it can be concluded that the rate has been rising. However, this rate varies considerably across different European countries. For instance, one in three young people from Denmark, Ireland, the Netherlands and Slovenia have volunteered in the year prior to the survey, while this is true for only one in five young people from Greece, Italy, Hungary, Poland and Sweden.

When it comes to participating in activities of organizations that deal with global issues, a general low interest level is visible across Europe. About 3% young Europeans participated in NGO activities dealing with climate change, while this number was slightly higher (5%) for activities of NGOs dealing with human rights or global development issues. This corresponds to low levels of those young Europeans who believe they can make a global difference: an average of 27% of them believe so (compared to a global average of 40%).

Finally, when discussing values young Europeans see as important in and for their communities, it is worth noting that about 77% of European youth see family as the foundation of society, while 44% of them believe that spiritual values should be given greater importance in society.
"Youth trends in Latin America and the Caribbean"

Utilizing the "Window of Opportunity"?

The Latin America and Caribbean (LAC) region has about 106 million young people (between 15 and 24 years of age), which constitutes 20% of the total population of the region. The so-called demographic "window of opportunity" opened in the beginning of the 21st century, when the proportion of the region’s youth population started rapidly rising (in comparison to other categories – children and adults), which meant a possibility for increased productivity (hence: economic growth), since the percentage of the working force rapidly started increasing. However, this "window of opportunity" cannot be fully utilized if the region does not offer adequate education and employment possibilities for the rising number of young people.

"Don’t Tell Me Where the Jobs Are; Tell the Companies Who I am!"

Young people comprise the biggest proportion of the working force of the LAC region. However, they also comprise the largest proportion of those unemployed – 46% of the total number of those unemployed is between the age of 15 and 24. The "idle youth" (those who do not work or study) has been a persistent phenomenon over the course of the last two decades – even though there was a modest decrease in the numbers: about 6% less "idle youth" in 2009 (18.5% of the youth population between 15 and 18 years of age), compared to 1989 (24.3%). This decline coincided with a general growth of the GDP and the decline of poverty levels in the whole LAC region. One of the reasons for such a percentage of youth belonging to this group is a high percentage of dropouts from school, even at primary level (51% of idle youth did not complete primary school, 33% did not complete secondary school and 13% did not complete high-school). Unemployment rates vary across gender: female unemployment rates are much higher in some countries (Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Uruguay and Venezuela), while in others the rates are more balanced (Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Panama and Paraguay). Contrary to popular belief, some studies suggest that the unemployment rates in the LAC region are not caused by protracted unemployment periods among youth, but are rather a consequence of the "shopping-around" young people practice when looking for jobs that suit them best. Proponents of these ideas suggest that the "young people's unemployment phase is a dynamic, fast-moving, non-linear process." Although poverty levels vary from country to country, some trends are noticeable in general: children constitute the poorest category of the population, followed by young people between 15 and 19 years of age, gender-based income differences are visible only among older youth and young adults and rural youth is in general poorer than urban youth (due to a shortage of opportunities in comparison to the urban areas and the centeredness of rural production on agriculture, which is characterized by mostly temporary employment and low payment).

Education: the Vehicle to Progress

Levels of education of the population vary greatly between Latin American and Caribbean countries. Still there can be some general conclusions made. The average coverage of primary education is at 95% of the population for the region, however, there are some countries below this average (Panama, Paraguay, Ecuador, El Salvador, the Dominican Republic, Guatemala and Nicaragua). The more critical age is from 15 to 18, when most dropouts from school happen. On average, there only 33% of this age group is actually in school, meaning that only one out of three teenagers of that age is enrolled in secondary schooling (with Venezuela, Paraguay, El Salvador and Honduras having the sharpest declines of those enrolled in secondary school). There are 10 million of these youngsters, aged between 15 and 18 who are neither in school or working (19% of the total 15-18 population). However, a progress has been noted in virtually all countries of the region when it comes to the length of time spent in school (although some countries have only made a modest progress). For instance, Argentina, Brazil, Guatemala and Peru have seen...
an increase in the average age spent in school of 1.5 years\textsuperscript{ccxvii}. But what is even more important is the noticeable progress towards a more educationally homogenous population (since there is a persistent decline in the difference between the average number of years spent in school for each country and the regional mean)\textsuperscript{ccxviii}. For most countries a gender disparity when it comes to literacy and education is not noticeable. Some countries have more literate females than males (Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Honduras, Mexico and Venezuela), and this situation is similar to the situation in tertiary education\textsuperscript{ccxix}.

An urban/rural disparity is noticeable, and even within urban areas there are significant differences in the levels of education. In the urban areas, comparing from the 1990s to the 2000s, the number of years spent in school climbed from 8.7 to 9.5 years, which represents a significant gain, however, it has to be noted that even with these rates in urban areas, in total, the majority of the youth population of the region does not finish secondary school\textsuperscript{ccxi}.

**Politics and Youth: "Voting With Their Feet"**

Although young people from the region have a tradition of being politically active (example of the Penguin revolution in Chile in 2006 when youth asked for a better education), recent evidence suggests that "the political fervour characterizing many Latin American societies in the past may have diminished\textsuperscript{ccxii}. When surveyed, only one third of young people from Latin America stated that they had interest in politics, and about 60% said they preferred democracy as a political system\textsuperscript{ccxiii}. Less than a third of Latin American youth are "very satisfied" or "rather satisfied" with the exercise of democracy by their governments (with only Chile having a majority of those who are satisfied), which "coincides with very low levels of public trust in key government institutions associated with democratic governance"\textsuperscript{ccxiv}. Research provides two possible explanations for this behaviour, one being the shift from adolescent idealism to adulthood realism when growing up and the other being a migration ("vote with their feet") of those young people who are most likely to be very critical of their government, and decide to move, searching for a better future\textsuperscript{ccxv}.

Even though gender disparities in political activism are noticeable across the region (men are more likely to be politically active than women), this difference diminishes when comparing the more educated groups of youth. Generally, more educated youth have a greater awareness of the political situation are more eager to demand their rights by engaging in political activism\textsuperscript{ccxvi}.

**Sexual and Reproductive Health and Risky Behaviour**

Even though the region’s overall fertility rate has been declining, the number of early pregnancies is still on the rise among adolescents\textsuperscript{ccxvii}. An unmet need for family planning is evident across the region, and the consequence of it is 10 million unwanted pregnancies each year\textsuperscript{ccxviii}. After Sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America is the region with the highest number of adolescent mothers, with "30 – 50% of sexually active unmarried women aged 15 to 24 not using any contraceptive method\textsuperscript{ccxix}".
Abortion is only legal in Mexico City, Puerto Rico and Cuba, and although Africa and Asia lead in the absolute numbers of abortions per year, Latin America "has the highest unsafe abortion ratios in the world, with 31 unsafe abortions per 1,000 women aged 15 to 44, and 39 unsafe abortions per 100 live births"\textsuperscript{ccxxix}. Even though there is a high percentage of unsafe abortion, maternal mortality has seen a dramatic decrease of 41% when comparing from 1980 to 2008\textsuperscript{ccxxvii}. However, it still remains one of the main causes of death among adolescent girls in Latin America. Although a lack of awareness and education in sexual and reproductive health is the main cause of such a situation in the region, a very powerful opposition to sexual and reproductive health rights has a very strong presence – lead by the Catholic Church\textsuperscript{ccxxvi}. The work of this opposition censures open debates about issues relating to sexual and reproductive health and contraception, and the work of NGOs operating in this domain is limited to ensuring that the situation does not worsen even more, as well as filing court complaints for some cases\textsuperscript{ccxxviii}.

An estimate of 1.6 million people aged between 15 to 49 from the Latin America region are living with HIV, with Belize, Guatemala and Honduras having the highest rates\textsuperscript{ccxxv}. The fight against HIV/AIDS currently receives the most funding, which cut down dramatically the amount allocated for all other areas of sexual and reproductive health, including family planning\textsuperscript{ccxxv}. The predominant religion, Catholicism, has seen a decrease in the number of believers (for example: in 1950, 99% of Brazilians were Catholic, but today they account for only 63% of the population, while at the same time "the Protestant population has mushroomed from 1 per cent to 22 per cent during the same period" – out of which most are Pentecostalists)\textsuperscript{ccxxx}. However, some sources indicate that the election of the new pope from the region might bring a new strength to the Catholic Church in the intense competition it is in with Pentecostalism for maintaining current believers and recruiting new ones, where an emphasis on the poor of the global South (especially young women and girls) is seen as crucial\textsuperscript{ccxxxii}. One of the biggest challenges for the Latin American and Caribbean societies is addressing the "adverse effects of globalization and the related spread of neo-liberalism [which] have also arguably led to increasing social polarization, with those 'disconnected' at the local level more likely to

**INDIGENOUS YOUTH** are one of the most vulnerable groups in the region. It is estimated that the native population in Latin America is between 30 and 50 million, and a large percentage is concentrated in Bolivia, Ecuador, Guatemala, Mexico and Peru. International Labour Organization, Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean (2008): Decent Work and Youth, Latin America.

An estimate of 15 million indigenous youth and children live in Latin America and the Caribbean. Indigenous adolescents are often exposed to extreme poverty, discrimination and exclusion, which at times lead to a "disproportionally high level of alcoholism, drug addiction and suicides". UNICEF: Fast facts on Adolescents and Youth in Latin America and the Caribbean

In Guatemala, indigenous women are "twice as likely as non-indigenous women to die due to pregnancy-related causes". Sexual and Reproductive Health and rights in Latin America: an analysis of trends, commitments and achievements (2011)

**Globalization and Youth**

Young people from the region mainly reside in urban areas (80% of them). This is caused by the much more diverse "opportunities for access to training, employment, services and diverse forms of recreation – and also a possibility of faster, more direct contact with the technological transformations that are taking the world by storm\textsuperscript{ccxxvi}. The region currently has modest rates of Internet usage, with 29 persons out of 100 being Internet users\textsuperscript{ccxxvii}. Out of that number, 46% access the Internet through their mobile phones, but even so, the region is considered to have the lowest usage of smart phones (17% compared to the global average of 27%)\textsuperscript{ccxxviii}. The favourite web sites for Latin Americans are social media sites (such as Facebook and Twitter, or in Brazil Orkut), followed by communication sites (Hotmail) and national news and entertainment sites\textsuperscript{ccxxx}. The environment has proven to be of significant concern of young people from Latin America and the Caribbean. Prior to the Rio +20 Summit, a group of young people from the region met to exchange and discuss ideas on the main themes of the Summit from the perspective of their region and consequently called upon the leaders of the countries from the region to "commit to agreements and to develop concrete actions to establish mechanisms and policies that will ensure the transition towards a low-carbon economy, efficient in resource use and socially inclusive, in the context of Latin American and Caribbean reality, so as to embark on a path to sustainable development"\textsuperscript{ccxxix}.
experience crime and violence. The next chapter examines these phenomena in more detail.

**Youth Violence**

A recent World Health Organization report indicates, "Although Latin America is not the most dangerous region in the world, Latin American youth rank first in the world in terms of deaths from violence". When comparing the number of deaths resulting from violence in the youth population to the overall population, it is evident that the rates for the youth are 3.2 times higher than for the rest, with an average of 110 homicides per 100,000 inhabitants (in comparison to 33.8 for the whole population). The example of Mexico is striking: only 17% of Mexican youth trust their police force, and it comes as no surprise, considering the fact that "most of the 40-some people who die there daily are under 25 years old".

Most of this violence is related to youth gangs, and it is generally perceived that much of the violence is caused by "intense resentment and frustration bred by inequities in society and by the failure of adults to address youth concerns". Inequities in this sense do not only stand for the large differences in income, but also for "exclusionary factors concerning unequal access to employment, education, health, and basic physical infrastructure".

"Almost 80% of regular crimes (except those related with intra-family violence, white collar or organized crime) are committed by youngsters between 12 and 25 years old." However, it is also important to note that young people comprise the majority of the victims as well. Irrespective of these facts, young people, when denied opportunities for education and employment, see the gangs as their means to obtaining these things. Gangs are seen as substituting families and schools and at times even the labour market (they are usually linked to small-scale drug dealing and they usually finance themselves through illegal activities – theft and robbery). Not even measures such as allowing "adolescents under 18 to be tried as adults in court" (adopted in 8 countries of the region) prevent such misbehaviour.

A particularly disturbing phenomenon occurs in the Central American region, where a lot of post-conflict demobilization of guerrilla groups (and regular armies) resulted in a vast number of lethal weapons being shifted to private users (usually gang members). A big number of youngsters who were members of regular or irregular armies were trained to use these weapons, and upon the end of the conflict (since they had no education or work opportunities) started to join gangs.

Finally, it is important to note that delinquency is highly linked to urban areas, mainly "due to poor urban management that has characterized many cities". It is considered that the "no city" effect (no social cohesion or integration) generates favourable conditions for the increase in juvenile delinquency.

**A Positive Turn: Youth Volunteer Service**

In a society that faces many challenges, the work of the non-governmental sector in supporting the prosperity of communities is highly appreciated. A study observing 374 NGOs from Latin America and the Caribbean found that "93% of the most prominent hosts of youth volunteer service programmes" are NGOs, with the government agencies and some businesses and corporations providing for the remaining 7%. The areas in which NGOs work are "children, youth and family services (19%), community development (16%), law and advocacy (11%) and culture, recreation and art (8%)". The NGOs surveyed were mostly externally funded (either by individuals, corporations and the government), and the most likely work setting is when volunteers (who are mainly young people) work with other youth and children in low-income communities. Generally, a very high level of youth ownership was noticed across all surveyed NGOs: "they are active contributors to the design, implementation and evaluation of these programmes as well as agents of service delivery".
YOUTH TRENDS IN NORTH AMERICA

The United States and Canada: Optimistic Youth, Pessimistic Parents

There is an estimate of 51.7 million young people aged between 14 and 24 living in the United States and Canada (47.1 and 4.6 respectively). The share of young people in the US declined by 5% from the 1980s to 2010 (from 20 to 15% of the total population), while in Canada this decline was even sharper: from 48.1% of the population in 1971 to 29.9% in 2010.

Even though the recent financial crisis hit the levels of optimism of the population in general in both countries, the majority of young people maintained high levels of optimism about their future, while more than half of Canadian and US parents believe that their children will be worse off economically than people today.

Higher Unemployment Rates for Youth

In both the US and Canada the participation of young people in the labour force declined over the past few decades, with an especially evident drop in the past few years, caused by the crisis. In the US, the unemployment rate for 16- to 24-year-olds was evidently higher than the rate for 25- to 29-year-olds (19 and 11 per cent respectively). A similar pattern is visible in Canada, where, on average, the unemployment rate for 15- to 24-year-olds was 9% higher than that of 24- to 55-year-olds (16 and 7 per cent respectively).

When comparing by gender, in the US, young males had higher rates of unemployment than females, and when comparing by race, young Blacks (31%) had a higher unemployment rate than young Whites, Hispanics and Asians (15 to 21%).

As a comparison, in 2000, the employment rate for those aged between 16 and 24 in the US in 2011 was 60%, while in 2011 it was 45.5%. In 2009 in Canada, “employment fell by 0.5% for core-age workers (aged 25 to 54), and by 4.8% for youth (aged 19 to 24).”

In 2005, in the US, “nearly 7 out of 10 high school seniors reported that they expect work to be a central part of their lives, and almost 90% said they value a job that offers a reasonably predictable future.”

The lower employment rates for youth aged between 16 and 24 in both US and Canada over time can be explained by at least two factors: firstly, there has been a significant improvement in the number of those young people deciding to opt for a higher level of education instead of work at this age, and secondly, because the majority of job changes occur precisely within this category (in the US, for example, “two-thirds of all job changes occur within the first 10 years of a young person’s working life.”

Even though both the US and Canada are developed countries, poverty affects a significant number of young people and children. The child poverty gap “closed slightly” in Canada, however, in the US, “in spite of a falling rate of child poverty, the gap between the average incomes of poor families with children and the poverty line widened”.

Growing Up in North America: The Economic Well-Being of Children in Canada, the United States and Mexico. Canadian Council on Social Development, the Annie Casey Foundation, Red Por Los Derechos de la Infancia en Mexico.

Poverty rates in the US “were generally lower for young adults with higher levels of educational attainment. (...) This pattern persisted by sex and race/ethnicity.”

America’s Youth: Transitions to Adulthood, Education Statistics Services Institute – American Institutes for Research

North American Youth Strive for a Higher Education

School enrolment rates have traditionally been high in both the US and Canada. In the US, about 98% of 14- and 15-year-olds were enrolled in school (with this number being quite persistent over time). However, youth between 18 and 24 years of age has much higher rates of school enrolment than their predecessors. In 1980, the enrolment rate for them was 46%, while in 2009 this rate was 69%. In Canada in 2006, about 23% Canadians held a university degree, while an additional 20% has a college degree. In the US, the “total undergraduate enrolment of all ages in degree-granting institutions also increased between 1980 to 2009, from 10.5 to 17.6 million students, with enrolment increasing for each racial/ethnic group as well.”

Furthermore, the US rate of college students rose from 26% in 1980 to 38% in 2003. School dropouts have been slowly but constantly decreasing over time (e.g. by 4% from 1990 to 2009 in the US). However, differences across race/ethnicity are evident in the US – in 2009, 18% of young Hispanics (16- to 24-year-olds), 9% Blacks and 5% Whites were status dropouts (neither enrolled in school or being employed).

In the US, “the proportion of students in college who were Black increased from 10 to 12 per cent” from 1975 to 2003, while at the same time this
proportion increased for the Hispanic students by 7 per cent (from 4% at in 1975 to 11% in 2003)\textsuperscript{cclxxviii}. In Canada, "over half (51%) of recent immigrants—those who arrived from 2001 to 2006—had a university degree in 2006", and this constitutes "more than twice the proportion of degree holders among the Canadian-born population (20%), and was also higher than the proportion of 28% among immigrants who arrived before 2001"\textsuperscript{cclxxix}. The young adult immigrant population (aged between 25 and 34, accounting for 23% of the total population of that age group) also accounts for almost half (49%) of the doctorate degree holders in Canada\textsuperscript{cclxxx}.

In Canada, people have twice the SOCIAL MOBILITY compared to that of the US. \textit{Rich Rewards, The Economist, June 2013}

Students whose parents hold a tertiary education degree from the US are "four times as likely to be in the top half of test scores than children with parents without tertiary education". In Canada, they are around twice as likely. \textit{Social Mobility and Education Gaps in the Four Major Anglophone Countries, The Sutton Trust, 2012}

When it comes to gender balance, there have also been quite some visible changes in both the US and Canada. In 1959-1960, the percentage of bachelor’s and master’s degrees held by females was 35 and 32 per cent respectively. However, in 2001-2002, these percentages were much higher: 57% for bachelor’s degrees and 59% for master’s degrees\textsuperscript{cclxxi}. Canada has had a similar pattern occurring: today, 33% of women aged between 25 and 34 hold a university degree, compared to 25% of men. However, in the 55- to 64- age group the percentages are quite different: 16% of women compared to 21% of men\textsuperscript{cclxxii}.

\textbf{Obesity and Substance Abuse as Main Threats to Health}

In the US, in 2003, "12% of high school students were overweight, while 15% were at risk of becoming overweight"\textsuperscript{cclxxiii}. When differentiating between children and adolescents the difference is even starker: the number of overweight children in the US has doubled since 1980, and for the adolescents this figure has tripled\textsuperscript{cclxxiv}. Obesity is highly interrelated with diabetes: a recent research indicates that both diabetes type 1 and 2 have increased substantially among North American youth in the past decade\textsuperscript{cclxxv}. The situation in Canada is quite similar: a study from 1978 showed that 15% of Canadian children were either overweight or obese, while a study in 2007 has shown that 29% of adolescents have unhealthy weights\textsuperscript{cclxxvi}. If the current trend continues, it is projected that by 2040, 70% of Canadians over the age of 40 will be overweight or obese\textsuperscript{cclxxvii}.

\textbf{Substance abuse} is another issue of concern in both the US and Canada. In 2008 in Canada, 27% of surveyed youth reported use of alcohol, while 18.8% reported marijuana use and 8.2% reported illicit drug use\textsuperscript{cclxxviii}. For alcohol, marijuana and tobacco males were more likely than females to report substance abuse, while for illicit drugs there was no significant difference\textsuperscript{cclxxix}. An increase in all above mentioned substances abuse is noticed when comparing by age: 12\textsuperscript{th} graders (17- to 18-year-olds) are 14 times likelier to use alcohol than 7\textsuperscript{th} graders (12- to 13-year-olds) and almost 9 times more likely to use marijuana\textsuperscript{cclxxx}.

In the US, in 2004, "16 per cent of all high school seniors reported smoking cigarettes daily in the past 30 days, 29 per cent reported having five or more drinks in a row within the past 2 weeks, and 23 per cent reported using illicit drugs one or more times in the past 30 days"\textsuperscript{cclxxxi}. Interestingly, though, alcohol use decreased by 24 per cent from 1980 to 2004, as well as the percentage of the youth who reported smoking cigarettes (from 37% in 1975 to 25% in 2004)\textsuperscript{cclxxxi}.

The phenomena of \textbf{teenage mothers} is much more evident in the US than in Canada (in the US children are twice as likely to be born to a teenage mother than in Canada\textsuperscript{cclxxxii}). The birth rate in the US for unmarried teenage females aged between 15 and 19 has increased from 1980 to 2008 – from 28 to 37 births per 1000 females\textsuperscript{cclxxxiii}. The numbers have also more than doubled for females aged between 20 and 24 in the same time span\textsuperscript{cclxxxiv}. In 2000, "among 15- to 17-year-olds, more than one third of all hospital stays [we're] related to childbirth and pregnancy\textsuperscript{cclxxxv}.

\textbf{Family and Religious Values}

The structure of families has changed significantly in the recent years. There has been a sharp decline in the US in the number of young adults aged between 18 and 24 with their own families: from 42% in 1960 to 19% in 2003\textsuperscript{cclxxxvi}. A change in median age of marriage is also noticeable: in 1950, the average age for males was 23 and for females 20, while in 2007 they were 27 and 25 respectively\textsuperscript{cclxxxvii}. In Canada, the number of single-parent families has almost tripled in comparison to the 1950s\textsuperscript{cclxxxviii}.

A study from 1998 has classified the US in the cluster of "sexually conservative" countries (in which all forms of premarital sex is strongly disapproved), while Canada was classified in the group of "sexually permissive" (with a significantly higher rate of approval for homosexual...
relationships). However, gay and lesbian households and families have seen a dramatic up-rise in the United States in the recent years: in 2012, there were two million children being raised by non-heterosexual parents. The US society has seen a soaring number of NGOs and projects fighting for LGBT rights in the recent years, followed by lively debates in several states about gay/lesbian marriages and rights for adoption. Religion has a different role in the US and Canada. In 2009, in the US, “approximately 28 per cent of high school seniors reported that religion was very important in their life, 27 per cent reported that religion was pretty important, 25 per cent reported that religion was not important.” In Canada, however, over half of those aged between 15 and 29 stated no religious affiliation, or did not report attending religious services.

New Media and Participatory Politics

When it comes to media, there have been interesting shifts in the behaviour of the young population. For instance, although TV is still the number one pastime in the United States, the proportion of young people watching TV is constantly dropping, due to a shift of their interest towards Internet videos, social networks, mobile phones and video games. “Fully 95 per cent of all teens ages 12 - 17 are now online, and 80 per cent of online teens are users of social media sites.”

A study entitled “Participatory Politics: New Media and Youth Political Action” indicates that the social networks have had an increasing influence on youth’s engagement in participatory politics – “acts such as starting a political group online, circulating a blog about a political issue, or forwarding political videos to friends.” The study emphasizes that participatory politics is not seen as an alternative means of political activism, but rather as a supplement to regular, institutional activities (such as voting). The research shows that “U.S. citizens who were 18 or older and who engaged in at least one act of participatory politics were twice as likely to report voting in the November 2010 elections as those who did not engage in participatory politics.”

Similarly, youth in Canada perceive themselves as being “politically savvier” than previous generations, meaning that they understand the political system and feel more capable of influencing it than any other previous generation.

One of the challenges the US society in general faces today is the increasing need for media literacy education for young people. Youth in the US are concerned about the quality of news they receive via social media channels. About 84% of the surveyed youth stated that they would benefit from learning how to differentiate between trustworthy and untrustworthy media sources.

Violence and Security Issues

Arrest rates of young adolescents in the US have been steadily decreasing: “in 1995, the arrest rate for youth was 128 per 1000 persons, compared with 85 arrests per 1000 persons in 2009. The violent crime victimization rate (measured by the number of violent crime victims per 1000 persons) has also declined from 1995 to 2002.

In Canada, on the other hand, the situation is different: the violent crime rate among youth has raised by 3% just between 2005 and 2006, and when observing the rates for 12- to 17-year-olds, an increase of 12% is visible from 1997 to 2006. It has to be noted though that, overall; the youth crime rate in Canada has dropped by 6% from 1996 to 2006, and by 25% in comparison to 1991.

Deprived neighbourhoods are common in many US cities, and high levels of absolute poverty and crime often characterize them. Research has shown that neighbourhood deprivation affects self-esteem levels in adolescents; however, different approaches to supporting disadvantaged youth have proven to have diverse effect on their perception of themselves. Namely, programmes directed at family and school level approaches (implemented mainly in Canada) have been seen as having a greater impact than programmes implemented on neighbourhood level (mainly implemented in the US).

Volunteer and community work can be observed as one of the means for alleviating the hard circumstances some youth face in North American societies. In the US, the proportion of high school students participating in volunteer activities has risen over the past years: from 24% in 1980 to 34% in 2001. In Canada, the percentages are even higher: in 2010, 58% of Canadians aged between 15 and 24 were volunteering.
**YOUTH TRENDS IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA**

**The Youthful Sub-Saharan Africa**

Young people (aged 15 to 30) constitute on average, 30% of the population of African countries. In 2010, there were 364 million Africans (including North Africans) aged between 15 and 34 years, with the bigger proportion being in Sub-Saharan Africa. Projections for 2050 estimate that youth aged 15 to 24 will constitute: 18.6% of the population in Central Africa, 18.5% in Eastern Africa, 18.8% in Western Africa, 15.6% in Southern Africa, and 13.9% in North Africa of the total African population. When observed as a whole, the African continent is experiencing a youth bulge. However, sub-Saharan Africa is expected to reach its youth bulge’s peak only in 2025, with the decline starting around 2035.

As in the majority of other world regions, youth in Africa believe that improving access to and quality of education are the most important way to make a difference in their society.

**Prevalence of the "Second Economy"**

Although formal employment opportunities for young people are considered to be minimal in most sub-Saharan African countries, the rates of employment are still higher when compared to North Africa. Of the total African work force population – young people constitute 36.8%, and even though the youth unemployment rate for the region is considered to be 11.9%, stark differences are visible when comparing between countries (e.g. Malawi and Rwanda have youth unemployment rates below 5%, while Ghana, Zambia and Zimbabwe have rates above 20% and Mauritius, Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia, Swaziland and South Africa have rates above 30%).

Two reasons are considered to be the main factors causing the high unemployment rates in many African countries: a mismatch between educational systems and the skills needed in the labour market, and the saturated public services and small private sector bases that are unable to employ large numbers of people. Once these factors are combined with a number of others ("discrimination based on the lack of experience, information gaps between job seekers and potential employers, barriers to the creation and development of business opportunities") it is evident that the youth is left with very few opportunities. This, in return, causes many of them to start seeking for employment in the informal sector. It is considered that in Africa “two in three urban residents get their livelihoods from the informal economic sector”. The informal sector is considered to be growing at an annual rate of 7% and it is estimated that it will provide nearly 90% of jobs in Africa in the near future.

Extreme poverty (proportion of people living on less than US$1.25 per day) is considered to be decreasing in most of sub-Saharan African countries. The overall rate has decreased from 53% in 1990 to 51% in 2005. However, the region still has 15 of the world’s 19 poorest countries, and the youth of these 15 countries accounts for 37% of the total number of 51 million young people living in these 19 countries.

Studies have shown that the school-to-work transition (“estimated by the difference between the average school-leaving age and the average age of first entry to work”) in most sub-Saharan African countries is long and difficult and can take up to 5 years in many countries. In urban areas, labour recruitment is perceived as heavily dependent on social ties and family networks: “in sub-Saharan Africa, systems of reciprocal exchanges and obligations within the extended family play an essential role in various spheres of life such as marriage, health, housing, schooling, or migration.”

**Increasing School Enrolment Rates**

"According to the 2010 Millennium Development Goals Report (UN, 2010), the net enrolment ratio in primary education in sub-Saharan Africa increased from 58% in 1999 to 76% in 2008. The
literacy rates among youth have also witnessed an increase, with currently 76% of young people being able to read and write\textsuperscript{ccxiv}. However, although some countries (Cape Verde, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Mauritius, Seychelles and Zimbabwe) have reached almost full literacy, others are still at 50% or even lower rates (Burkina Faso, Chad, Ethiopia, Mali and Niger)\textsuperscript{ccxvi}. It is also important to note that the gender gap in literacy has been shrinking: the rate of literacy in girls and young women has increased from 58% in 1985 to 66% in 2008, and the increase has been smaller in boys and young men (from 72% to 76%)\textsuperscript{ccxvii}.

"According to the United Nations (2010), only 6% of sub-Saharan were using the \textbf{INTERNET} in 2008". However, increases per year are evident, and cyber-cafés are becoming increasingly common in most African countries. \textit{State of the African Youth Report 2011}

However, when it comes to identifying the aspect in which education is most important, African and Middle Eastern youth see \textbf{TECHNOLOGY} as the lead (followed by economics and foreign languages). \textit{Telefonica Global Millenial Survey: Global Results}

Observing the whole African continent, it is visible that transition from primary to secondary school is often hindered by numerous factors, and it is therefore not surprising that "less than half of primary school students progress to secondary school in 9 out of 38 countries for which data were available in 2007" ("only five countries – Algeria, Botswana, Ghana, Seychelles and South Africa – have transition rates exceeding 90%")\textsuperscript{ccxviii}. However, when it comes to tertiary education, sub-Saharan Africa is the world’s leading region in the growth of enrolment rates. In 1970, there were 200,000 students enrolled in tertiary education, while in 2007 this number was over 4 million\textsuperscript{ccxx}. Nevertheless, "only 6% of the tertiary education age cohort was enrolled in tertiary institutions in 2007, compared with the global average of 26%\textsuperscript{ccxxiv}. According to UNESCO, this is because of the very low base at which sub-Saharan Africa started in the 1970s, which made the increases more visible\textsuperscript{ccxxv}.

It is interesting to note that in 2007, there were "as many as 218,000 students from sub-Saharan African countries enrolled in tertiary education institutions outside of their home countries"\textsuperscript{ccxxvi}. An estimate from the International Organization for Migration indicates: "Africa has already lost one third of its human capital and is continuing to lose its skilled personnel at an increasing rate\textsuperscript{ccxxvii}.

**HIV/AIDS: The Main Health Concern**

It is estimated that in 2007, there were 3.2 million young people living with HIV in sub-Saharan Africa, and that "more than one out of two deaths among young African females is as a result of AIDS or AIDS-related diseases\textsuperscript{ccxxviii}. While HIV/AIDS tops the list of natural causes of death of young people in the region (followed by maternal conditions, tuberculosis, sexually transmitted diseases other than HIV/AIDS and malaria), unnatural causes of death – in particular road traffic accidents and violence – are a major threat to boys and young men in particular\textsuperscript{ccxv}. Use of modern contraceptive methods has had a limited increase in the past decades, and although the average for the region is 21.5%, in many countries it is less than 10%\textsuperscript{ccxxvii}.

A high (and unmet) need for \textbf{family planning} is evident across the region. Research indicates "that from 2005 to 2010, 27.5% and 25.8% of total births among women 15-19 and 20-24 years of age, respectively, were unintended in the 42 mainland countries of sub-Saharan Africa\textsuperscript{ccxxvi}. The unsafe abortion rate of women aged 15-19 accounts for 57% of the total number\textsuperscript{ccxxvii}.\n
\textbf{Substance abuse} in sub-Saharan Africa varies greatly across countries. When it comes to alcohol, recent data shows that the consumption among children aged 13 to 15 ranges between less than 5% in Senegal to over 60% in Seychelles\textsuperscript{ccxxvii}. Use of tobacco ranges from 4.6% among females in Eritrea to 42.6% among males in Mali\textsuperscript{ccxv}.

**Little Trust in Countries’ Political Systems**

According to the AfroBarometer data, "young people are consistently less trusting than their elders of public institutions including national assemblies, independent electoral commissions and, to a less extent, opposition political parties\textsuperscript{ccxxi}. Furthermore, in comparison to other world regions, the Middle East and Africa show the least belief in the values of the political system of their countries presenting their own values\textsuperscript{ccxlii}. Voting apathy is considered to be a dominant feature of African youth, and is considered to be at a constant high mainly because of the low proportion of youth who register for voting in the first place\textsuperscript{ccxlii}.\n
Conflicts and armed violence are unfortunately common in almost three quarters of all the countries in sub-Saharan Africa, and they have many adverse effects on the youth population. Children are almost always the first victims of war: "two million children have died in the past decade as a consequence of armed conflict within the sub-

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YOUTH SERVICE INITIATIVES play a significant role in the reconstruction of post-conflict societies. In Sierra Leone, for instance, "young soldiers struggle to reintegrate into normal life and service-led projects such as The Reintegration Skills Training and Employment Generation (STEG) have been an effective tool in helping them to develop a more positive outlook as well as develop their identity as young citizens". The State of Youth Volunteering in Africa, 2011

However, youth violence is not always immediately connected to armed conflict. A national study conducted in South Africa, one of the African countries with particularly high rates of crime, indicates that "close to half (49.2%) of the [4,409] respondents aged 12-22 years were personally acquainted with individuals in their communities who had committed criminal acts, including stealing, selling stolen property and mugging or assaulting others".

Regional Efforts in Creating a Better Future for Youth

There has been significant effort on regional level for creating and implementing youth policies, for example, the African Union has launched a new youth desk (through the New Partnership for Africa’s Development – NEPAD), which gives the youth a platform for dialogue and an opportunity to contribute to policy debates. Also, the African Youth Charter (adopted in 2006 by the African Union Heads of State) defined “the rights, duties and freedoms of young people, which underpins youth empowerment”, with currently 23 countries having ratified it and 37 having signed it. Furthermore, the African Union has adopted the Second Education plan of Action (2006 – 2015), the 2009 – 2018 Ten Year Plan of Action for Youth Empowerment and Development, the Youth Volunteer Corps Programme and the African Youth Day. These actions lead to the goal of creating a better future for sub-Saharan African youth, however, the main activities still need to be undertaken at national and local level, and even though there has been some progress at these levels too, there is still much more that needs to be done.
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