



## LEGAL, ADMINISTRATIVE, AND PRACTICAL FOUNDATIONS OF THE MECHANISMS OF STATE YOUTH POLICY

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### Abstract

This article provides an in-depth analysis of the legal, administrative, and practical foundations of state youth policy in the Republic of Uzbekistan. The study examines the legal framework established following the adoption of the Law "On State Youth Policy" in 2016, as well as the activities of key institutions such as the Youth Union, the Agency for Youth Affairs, and the Ministry of Youth Policy and Sports. In addition, practical mechanisms such as the "Youth – Our Future" program, the "Youth Register," and the "Five Important Initiatives" are analyzed in terms of their effectiveness in ensuring youth employment, education, and social protection. Based on presidential decrees, government resolutions, official statistics, and international experience, the article highlights the positive outcomes, existing challenges, and future prospects of youth policy in Uzbekistan. While acknowledging the institutional strengthening of youth policy, the author also draws attention to pressing issues such as youth unemployment, bureaucratic obstacles, and low civic engagement. The conclusion offers recommendations for improving the youth engagement system.

**Keywords:** youth policy, state policy mechanisms, legislation of the republic of Uzbekistan, youth union, agency for youth affairs, ministry of youth policy and sports, youth – our future program, youth register, five important initiatives, social protection, legal foundations, youth employment, public administration.

### Introduction

The proportion of young people in the population of the Republic of Uzbekistan is very high. According to official statistics, at the beginning of 2023, there were more than 9.65 million young people aged 14 to 30, making up 26.8% of the total population. Therefore, issues related to youth education, employment, social protection, and their integration into society are among the priority directions of state policy. Since gaining independence, Uzbekistan has developed a unified state policy aimed at comprehensive support for young people. In particular, the adoption of the Law "On the State Youth Policy" in 2016 marked a new stage in this direction.

This law is the main document regulating youth-related relations, defining the concept and principles of youth policy. According to the definition in the law, state youth policy is a system of socio-economic, organizational, and legal measures carried out by the state aimed at the social development of youth and the creation of conditions for the development of their intellectual, creative, and other potentials.

Furthermore, the law provides a clear age range for the definition of "youth"—individuals who have reached the age of 14 but have not yet turned 30 are considered part of the youth population.

### Methodology

This scientific article primarily employs a qualitative analytical method. The normative-legal documents related to state youth policy in Uzbekistan—such as laws, presidential decrees and resolutions, and government programs—were examined and analyzed in detail. The collected information was subjected to content analysis, based on which conclusions were drawn regarding the legal foundations, governance system, and practical outcomes of the youth policy mechanisms.

Throughout the study, the current situation was illustrated with statistical data and relevant examples; identified problems and shortcomings were discussed using comparative and critical analysis. As a methodological approach, the analysis of legal documents was integrated with monitoring of practical results, and the conclusions were substantiated through evidence-based reasoning.

### Results

**Normative and Legal Foundations:** State youth policy in Uzbekistan is based on a solid legal framework consisting of a series of normative documents. The most fundamental of these is the Law "On the State Youth Policy" (Law No. O'RQ-406, adopted on September 14, 2016), which defines the goals and objectives of youth policy. This law imposes obligations on the state to ensure the rights and freedoms of young people and to support their comprehensive development into a well-rounded generation. According to the law, all relations in the field of youth policy are regulated exclusively by this law and other legal acts adopted in accordance with it. Since 2016, political attention to youth issues has significantly increased. On July 5, 2017, by Presidential Decree, the Uzbekistan Youth Union was established on the basis of the former "Kamolot" movement. This decree defined the role and responsibilities of the Youth Union in implementing youth policy, emphasizing its function as a mass organization that mobilizes young people for national development in cooperation with the government and NGOs. The designation of June 30 as the official "Youth Day" from 2017 onwards also reflects the growing importance given to youth issues. In subsequent years, several strategic documents related to youth policy were adopted. On June 27, 2018, the Presidential Decree approved the "Youth – Our Future" State Program, aimed at supporting youth entrepreneurial initiatives, including the creation of a special fund for this purpose. In 2019, the "Uzbekistan Youth – 2030" Concept was introduced for public discussion, outlining new models for youth engagement. On June 30, 2020, the Presidential Decree No. PF-6017 marked a new phase of reforms in youth policy, with the establishment of the Agency for Youth Affairs as a dedicated coordinating state body.

This agency was tasked with a wide range of responsibilities, from organizing meaningful leisure activities and preventing juvenile delinquency to supporting talented youth and protecting their rights. On January 18, 2021, Cabinet of Ministers Resolution No. 23 officially approved the "Concept for the Development of State Youth Policy in Uzbekistan until 2025." This concept was developed in accordance with the principle of "Working with and for youth" outlined in the UN Global Youth Strategy "Youth 2030," and it established the priority directions of youth policy in Uzbekistan for the years 2021–2025. To implement the concept, a Roadmap for 2021–2022 was adopted, and it was determined that annually updated roadmaps would guide further actions starting from 2023.

The concept identified key priorities such as improving the legal framework for youth, enhancing the quality and inclusiveness of education, ensuring youth employment, expanding

the implementation of the “Five Important Initiatives,” supporting socially vulnerable youth, promoting volunteerism, and increasing youth civic engagement. As a result, from 2016 to 2021, significant laws and decisions were adopted, fundamentally renewing and expanding the legal foundations of youth policy in the country.

**Youth Policy Governance and Institutions:** Several key institutions operate to implement youth policy in Uzbekistan. One of the main ones is the **Uzbekistan Youth Union**, which was established in 2017 as a successor to the former “Kamolot” movement. It functions as a non-governmental but state-supported organization. The Union focuses on protecting the rights of young people, fostering patriotism, and implementing projects aimed at increasing youth social activity. Moreover, the Union is designated as a collaborative structure assisting the government on youth-related matters. In 2018, the **“Youth – Our Future” Foundation** was established under the Youth Union. This foundation provides financial support to young entrepreneurs through the allocation of preferential loans, leasing services, and guarantees for credit collateral within the framework of the state program. Specifically, the foundation introduced a mechanism in which commercial banks received resources at an annual interest rate of 5%, allowing them to issue preferential loans and leases to young entrepreneurs at 7% interest, with up to 50% guarantee coverage for approved projects. Subsequently, in accordance with the 2020 Presidential Decree (PF-6017), the foundation was reorganized as an independent non-governmental non-profit organization. This transformation aimed to enhance the foundation's operational independence and effectiveness. Since 2021, its financing sources and management system have been significantly improved.

According to the 2020 Presidential Decree, the **Agency for Youth Affairs** was established as a specially authorized body within the state governance system. The agency operates through its central office and regional branches in the Republic of Karakalpakstan, all regions, and districts (cities) across the country. The agency has a broad range of tasks and functions: implementing the **Five Important Initiatives** in regions, organizing meaningful leisure activities for youth, fostering patriotism and legal literacy, developing legislative proposals to protect youth rights and interests, preventing juvenile delinquency, implementing social projects in cooperation with non-governmental organizations, and supporting the rehabilitation of vulnerable or at-risk youth, among others. With the establishment of this agency, the vertical structure of youth governance was significantly strengthened. Youth departments were created within regional and district administrations, increasing responsibility for addressing local youth issues. On **January 19, 2022**, a new initiative introduced by Presidential decision created the position of **“Youth Leader”** at the neighborhood (mahalla), village, and settlement levels. These youth leaders are appointed with the recommendation of the Uzbekistan Youth Union and are tasked with forming a “Youth Balance” database covering all citizens aged 14 to 30 in their communities. Their main responsibilities include identifying the needs and problems of youth and entering this data into dedicated platforms. In particular, youth leaders are responsible for updating electronic systems such as the **“Youth Register”** and the **“Youth Portal”**, coordinating targeted support for individuals, and facilitating youth participation in sports, cultural events, festivals, and social initiatives. They also work closely with troubled or delinquency-prone youth to provide guidance and prevention. As a result of these organizational changes, the youth policy implementation system was integrated into a single vertical structure following the **“neighborhood – district – region – republic”** model.

**Practical Outcomes and Indicators:** As a result of the implemented policies and programs, a number of positive developments have been recorded in recent years. For instance, in 2022, a total of 4 trillion UZS in preferential loans was allocated to support youth entrepreneurship, financing business projects for 150,000 young people and creating 325,000 new jobs. In rural areas, 43,000 hectares of land were allocated to youth for farming and entrepreneurship, ensuring employment for 435,000 young individuals. In addition, more than 32,000 young people were provided with necessary tools, equipment, and computers for vocational activity through state subsidies. Significant efforts have also been made in terms of **social support for youth**. For example, in 2022, education loans totaling 1.7 trillion UZS were allocated to 130,000 students. Contract fees for 53,000 students from low-income families were partially covered by the state. Over 15,000 young people received financial assistance for mandatory military service, and national language certification exam fees were covered for 13,000 individuals. Moreover, 81,000 students were provided with housing rent support during their studies.

Under the “**Youth Register**” (**Yoshlar Daftari**) system, in 2022 alone, over 300,000 young people across the country received support worth 600 billion UZS in various areas. These support measures included one-time financial aid, grants to start businesses, assistance with employment for unemployed youth, free training programs, healthcare support, and more. For example, the “Youth Register” fund provided sponsorship for medical treatment of seriously ill youth, vocational training and equipment for unemployed individuals, and reimbursement of language course fees for those wishing to work abroad.

As a result, out of more than 340,000 youth listed in the “Youth Register” during 2021–2022, approximately 243,500 were employed or had their social problems resolved within a short period. Another notable achievement in the implementation of youth policy has been the **improvement of dialogue between state institutions and youth**, and the increasing engagement of young people in public processes. In recent years, events such as local governors’ youth-focused meetings (“Meetings with Youth”), youth forums organized by ministries, and mobile public receptions have been introduced. Youth leaders and representatives of the Youth Union have begun participating in monitoring the implementation of state programs at the local level. Furthermore, since 2021, the roles of **youth advisors and assistants** have been introduced in higher education institutions, enterprises, and organizations to support youth engagement.

In general, the comprehensive measures adopted in recent years have had a significantly positive impact on increasing youth employment, expanding access to entrepreneurship and education opportunities, and supporting vulnerable segments of the youth population. The statistical indicators presented above clearly demonstrate this progress.

### Discussion

The above-mentioned results demonstrate that state youth policy in Uzbekistan has consistently developed over recent years, achieving significant progress. First and foremost, the strengthening of the legal foundations and the establishment of new institutional structures have created favorable conditions for the full and effective implementation of youth policy. For instance, the 2016 law and subsequent presidential decrees elevated youth issues to the level of national policy, resulting in the introduction of comprehensive youth programs between 2017 and 2023. The creation of the Uzbekistan Youth Union and the establishment of the Agency for Youth Affairs were critical steps in improving governance.

These structures have ensured that responsible bodies for youth affairs exist both at the central and local levels. The cooperation among these institutions has fostered integration and cohesion within the system. For example, the agency's efforts to monitor and address youth issues at the local level—by involving the Youth Union and youth leaders—have increased the precision and targeting of the policy implementation.

Another notable aspect, as also reflected in the 2021 Concept, is the principle of collaboration with civil society institutions (NGOs and volunteer movements) in implementing youth policy. Today, hundreds of NGOs in the country cooperate with government agencies on various youth-related issues—such as rights protection, education, environment, and sports—by implementing joint projects. This demonstrates the growing societal support for youth policy initiatives. However, analysis also indicates that some challenges remain unresolved. In particular, the issue of youth unemployment continues to be pressing. According to official statistics, 722,000 young people in Uzbekistan are currently registered as unemployed. While this figure has decreased compared to previous years due to implemented reforms, it still remains high. Specifically, more than 6,000 university graduates and nearly 30,000 vocational and technical school graduates from 2022 have not been able to find employment.

This highlights the gap between the education system and the labor market. Thousands of young specialists who cannot find jobs in their field are working either in the informal sector or in areas unrelated to their profession. In a video-conference meeting held in April 2023, the President of Uzbekistan paid special attention to this issue and tasked each ministry with revising the qualification requirements for their respective fields and forming training requests in collaboration with higher education institutions. Therefore, at the current stage, ensuring youth employment and increasing their participation in the national economy remain among the most urgent and strategic challenges.

When addressing the issue of **youth civic engagement**, it is evident that there has been a positive increase in recent years. However, full participation of all youth in societal life has not yet been achieved. For example, while the proportion of youth participating in local elections, community initiatives, and social projects is growing, certain groups of young people still remain disengaged from political and civic processes.

In this regard, initiatives led by the Uzbekistan Youth Union and other organizations—such as the formation of **youth parliaments** and **youth councils**—are noteworthy. Nevertheless, there remains a pressing need to **revitalize these structures** and ensure that their decisions and proposals are implemented in practice.

Efforts are also being made to ensure youth participation in **state governance** through the development of talent pools, such as the “**Youth Personnel Reserve**” project. However, this area still lacks clearly defined mechanisms and consistent application at all levels.

The **issue of financing** also deserves thorough discussion. Implementing youth programs naturally requires significant financial resources. In recent years, both the state budget and international financial sources have contributed substantial funding to youth-related initiatives. For instance, hundreds of billions of UZS were allocated to the “**Youth – Our Future**” program during 2018–2019, while **regular transfers from local budgets** were provided to support **Youth Register (Yoshlar Daftari)** funds in 2022–2023. On the initiative of the President, a new “**Youth Initiatives of New Uzbekistan**” Fund was created in 2023 with a planned capital of **USD 100 million**. This fund is intended to provide **interest-free or**

**concessional loans** to finance **startup projects of talented and proactive youth**.

Such large-scale financial support is expected to ensure the **sustainability** of projects within the framework of youth policy. However, the **efficiency of funding** must also remain in focus—allocated resources must be used in a targeted and result-oriented manner. Unfortunately, in some regions, there have been cases where allocated funds remained unused or certain types of assistance were funded redundantly. To address this, the government has begun issuing decisions to direct **Youth Register funds primarily toward vocational education and employment support**, while also ensuring that beneficiaries can access **multiple services simultaneously**. Such measures are aimed at promoting the **correct and effective distribution of resources** to maximize real outcomes.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, it should be emphasized that since gaining independence, the issue of youth has become one of the most important directions of state policy in the Republic of Uzbekistan. In recent years, a solid legal foundation has been established in this field—from constitutional norms to specialized laws and presidential decrees—ensuring the rights and freedoms of young people.

The governance system has been improved through the formation of dedicated institutions such as the Youth Union, the Agency for Youth Affairs, and relevant ministries. A coherent mechanism for implementation—from neighborhood to the central government—has been established. Major national programs such as “**Youth – Our Future**,” “**Youth Register**,” and the “**Five Initiatives**” have been launched, contributing significantly to youth employment, education, and social protection. The facts and figures presented throughout this study clearly demonstrate the practical impact of youth policy—thousands of young people have become entrepreneurs, started their own businesses, acquired vocational training, and gained employment, while vulnerable youth have received targeted support.

At the same time, the country continues to seek and implement reforms to address remaining challenges. There is still considerable work to be done in reducing youth unemployment, integrating the education system with the labor market, organizing meaningful leisure for youth, and protecting them from harmful influences. Analytical findings show that while current measures are producing results, they must be implemented more precisely and in a targeted manner. In line with the President’s directives, each ministry and agency is now directly responsible for working with youth within its own structure, intensifying support measures. At the local level, responsibility has also increased: every district and sector leader is now personally accountable for resolving the problems of vulnerable youth assigned to them.

It is also noteworthy that Uzbekistan’s youth policy efforts are increasingly aligned with international standards. In particular, the national **Concept for the Development of Youth Policy until 2025** is declared to be consistent with the **United Nations Youth Strategy**. This alignment brings Uzbekistan’s youth policy closer to globally recognized best practices. Looking ahead, it is essential to **continue studying international experiences**, and to **analyze and improve youth policy through scientific approaches on an ongoing basis**, ensuring its relevance, effectiveness, and long-term sustainability

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