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GLOBAL PROBLEMS AND INTERNATIONAL YOUTH POLICY IN AZERBAIJAN

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Abstract. Globalization, considered an irresistible process, is rapidly changing the world's political, economic, social, and environmental landscape and transforming the international system from a functional and institutional perspective. These processes are also characterized by an expanding range of problems. Progressive humanity is seeking rational solutions to existing problems, employing various mechanisms and instruments to this end, and putting forward concrete plans. One example is "Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development", presented by the UN in 2015. Youth is the most vulnerable segment of the population, exposed to the impact of global problems. This impact is most clearly manifested in the areas of healthcare, education, and employment.

Key words: global issues, youth policy, youth health, youth education, youth employment.

Introduction. Ensuring the interests, development and safety of youth in the new realities created by globalization and digitalization, and, in turn, unlocking their potential requires improving the institutional foundations of international youth policy. Currently, such non-governmental organizations as the United Nations Office for Youth Affairs, the Council of Europe Department for Youth Affairs, the Committee for Monitoring Intergovernmental Cooperation in the Field of Youth of the Council of Europe, the European Youth Foundation, the Youth Forum of the Islamic Conference on Dialogue and Cooperation, and the Council of the CIS Member States for Youth Affairs and others, as well as the Association of Students studying Economics and Business, the European Association of Law Students, the International Youth Chamber, The International Federation of Medical Students Associations, the World Scout Movement, Youth for Mutual Understanding, and others.

The establishment of the position of UN Assistant Secretary-General for Youth Affairs also proves that youth policy is at the center of the international agenda. In December 2023, Uruguayan Felipe Polye became the first person appointed to this position.

The Republic of Azerbaijan, as a member of the international community, participates both in international youth policy and in the implementation of systematic and targeted measures related to youth at the national level. The main goal of the state youth policy implemented in the republic is the physical, mental and spiritual development of the younger generation, the expansion of their capabilities and skills, the solution of their problems and the protection of their rights. At the same time, expanding the international representation and connections of young people and creating conditions for them to make themselves known on the international stage are among the priorities of this policy.

In the Law "On Youth Policy", adopted in 2002 and amended in subsequent years in accordance with the general trends and development processes taking place in the republic and the world (Azərbaycan Respublikası. Gənclər siyasəti haqqında Azərbaycan Respublikasının qanunu), the participation of Azerbaijani youth in international events and the creation of opportunities and conditions for the development of relations with Azerbaijani youth living abroad are among the tasks that the state must fulfill. In addition, it is planned to use the opportunities of the Youth Foundation of the Republic of Azerbaijan to strengthen peace, cooperation and mutual understanding in the world, as well as to stimulate activities related to youth policy in the social and humanitarian fields, especially in the fields of science, education and culture, and the State undertakes to support the activities of this Foundation.

Since 2005, state programs called “Azerbaijani Youth” have been implemented in the republic at the expense of state funds. Along with youth development, healthcare, integration into society, unlocking its potential and other important issues, these programs also focus on expanding its international relations in the context of the rapid development of globalization and the information society.

The purpose of this article is to analyze the impact of global problems caused by the processes of globalization on the situation of youth, as well as to explore the features and priorities of the state youth policy in Azerbaijan in the fields of health, education and employment, taking into account the objectives formulated within the framework of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Discussion. In 2005-2021, three government programs related to youth policy were implemented: “The State Program for the Youth of Azerbaijan (2005–2009)” (Azərbaycan Respublikası Prezidenti. Azərbaycan Gəncliyi Dövlət Proqramı (2005–2009-cu illər), 2005, pp. 2343–2360), “The Youth of Azerbaijan in 2011-2015” (Azərbaycan Respublikası Prezidenti. Azərbaycan gəncliyi 2011–2015-ci illərdə dövlət proqramı, 2011, pp. 1524-1536) and “The Youth of Azerbaijan in 2017–2021” (Azərbaycan Respublikası. Azərbaycan gəncliyi 2017–2021-ci illərdə dövlət proqramı, 2017). Within the framework of these programs, the following areas of activity were identified: strengthening the international relations of Azerbaijani youth, expanding its representation in international youth organizations, expanding the participation of Azerbaijani youth in youth programs of international and regional organizations, popularizing Azerbaijan, its historical and national cultural heritage abroad, studying the world experience of working with youth, exchanging experiences in this area, the development of friendly and cooperative relations between Azerbaijani youth and the youth of the world, as well as raising awareness among young people about environmental protection.

Identifying the essence of global challenges, predicting their possible consequences and taking preventive measures to prevent them is an extremely important issue from the point of view of ensuring the national security of the state and requires a strategic approach. The implementation of the “Strategy for the Development of Azerbaijani Youth for 2015–2025” (Azərbaycan Respublikası Prezidenti. 2015–2025-ci illərdə Azərbaycan gənclərinin inkişaf strategiyası, 2015, pp. 90–98) is aimed at developing the potential of the republic’s youth in accordance with the requirements of the time and forming an active civic position among them. The organization of forums where youth issues are discussed, increasing their knowledge, skills and initiatives, expanding their representation in government bodies, non-governmental organizations, international structures, expanding their relationships with Azerbaijani youth living abroad, etc. were identified as means of achieving these goals.

In order to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at the national level, the National Coordinating Council for Sustainable Development was established in Azerbaijan in 2016. In addition, five national priorities were identified that should be implemented in the field of socio-economic development of the country by 2030: 1) a steadily growing competitive economy; 2) a dynamic, inclusive and socially just society; 3) competitive human capital and a center for modern innovation; 4) large-scale return to the liberated territories and 5) a country with a clean environment and “green growth” (Azərbaycan Respublikası. Azərbaycan 2030: Sosial-iqtisadi inkişafa dair milli prioritetlər, 2021).

In Azerbaijan, young people involved in the implementation of both the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and national priorities put forward various innovative proposals, participate as volunteers in the implementation of socio-economic and environmental projects, and conduct youth education activities. At the beginning of 2025, the population of Azerbaijan was 10,224.9 thousand people, including 2,300.8 thousand people aged 14-29 years, that is, young people. Thus, 22.5% of the country’s population were young people, of whom 52.4% were men and 47.6% were women (Azərbaycan Respublikası Dövlət Statistika Komitəsi. Azərbaycan gəncləri: Statistik məcmuə, 2025, pp. 19, 21). As can be seen from the statistics, more than a quarter of the population is young people, which means that the younger generation is the main driving force in the implementation of both domestic and foreign policy of the republic.

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The rapid increase in the number of young people with mental and behavioral disorders is particularly concerning. In 2015, 2,584 people in this category were registered in Azerbaijan, while in 2024, this number increased to 7,100. In 2015, there were 9.7 patients per 10,000 young people aged 14–29, while in 2024, this number increased to 30.9 (Azərbaycan Respublikası Dövlət Statistika Komitəsi,

2025, pp. 107–108). Thus, from 2015 to 2024, the number of young people with mental and behavioral disorders increased by 2.7 times, while the number of patients per 10,000 people increased by 3.1 times.

Alcoholism and drug addiction are also among the diseases observed among young people. In 2015, 41 young people were diagnosed with chronic alcoholism and alcoholic psychosis for the first time in the country, while drug addiction and toxic substance abuse were diagnosed in 520, while in 2024, these numbers were 32 and 1,499, respectively. For every 100,000 young people, the incidence of chronic alcoholism and alcoholic psychosis was 1.5 in 2015 and 1,499 in 2024, while the incidence of drug addiction and toxic substance abuse was 19.5 and 65.1, respectively (Azərbaycan Respublikası Dövlət Statistika Komitəsi, 2025, p. 113).

In Azerbaijan, alongside domestic measures, protecting the health of the younger generation is also implemented within the framework of international youth policy. In agreements signed by the Ministry of Youth and Sports of the Republic of Azerbaijan with relevant organizations in foreign countries, the issue of protecting the health of young people was identified as one of the main areas of cooperation. Azerbaijan's cooperation with the World Health Organization and the projects it implements are also of great importance in terms of protecting the health of the population, including youth. The WHO is implementing projects in the country such as the Mental Health Program, DOT (short-course treatment for tuberculosis), MECACAR (polio eradication program), and the diphtheria control program, among others (Azərbaycan Respublikası Xarici İşlər Nazirliyi. Azərbaycan Respublikası və Ümumdünya Səhiyyə Təşkilatı).

The Public Union of Doctors and Medical Students, established in Azerbaijan in 2007 to promote the development of healthcare and medical science, is represented in the International Federation of Medical Students' Associations. Membership in the Federation creates conditions for the participation of Azerbaijani youth in international exchange programs in the field of medicine (AzerMDS. Mübadilə proqramı).

The global crisis in the education sector is one of the most serious challenges of our time. It is important to remember that the educational process directly affects the younger generation, and any positive or negative event or result achieved in this area has a significant impact on the development of young people, their place and status in society, and their overall destiny. Despite some positive trends observed in current global education averages, challenges still remain.

One of the main causes of the global education crisis is limited access to education. According to projections, by 2030, approximately 84 million children worldwide will be out of school. At the same time, there are problems with the quality of education. For example, in sub-Saharan Africa, approximately 70% of ten-year-olds cannot read a simple text. Furthermore, education funding does not meet the required level. About \$100 billion is needed annually to improve the quality of education in developing countries. A teacher shortage is also one of the causes of the crisis. Globally, there is a shortage of approximately 44 million teachers. As UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres noted, we will not be able to build a more peaceful, sustainable, and equitable global society without a fundamental change in the global community's attitude towards education. According to data contained in the UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report 2026, by 2024, 1.4 billion children in schools worldwide will be out of school. There were 327 million people enrolled in education in the country, a 30% increase since 2000. The number of out-of-school adolescents and young adults decreased by 33% from 2000 to 2015, but increased by 3% from 2015 to 2024. In 2024, 273 million people remained out of school (UNESCO. Global education monitoring report 2026: Access and equity – Countdown to 2030, 2026, p. XXII).

The development of education in Azerbaijan, the universal inclusion of youth in education, and the expansion of international ties in the field of education are among the key components of state policy. The targeted policy pursued in the field of education is already attracting attention with its positive results.

The country is seeing positive trends in youth engagement in education. In 2009, for every 1,000 young people aged 14-29 in Azerbaijan, 710 had higher, specialized, vocational, or complete secondary education. Ten years later, in 2019, this figure was 744 (Azərbaycan Respublikası Dövlət Statistika Komitəsi, 2025, p. 122).

Creating conditions for young Azerbaijanis to study at prestigious universities abroad is one of the priorities of the republic's international youth policy. In the 2024-2025 academic year, the number of young people sent by the state to study at universities abroad was 1,111. Of these, 478 were sent to Turkey, 321 to Hungary, 198 to Russia, 72 to China, 13 to Romania, 12 to Kazakhstan, 4 to the United Kingdom, 3 to the Republic of Korea, 3 to Italy, 3 to Spain, 2 to Tajikistan, 1 to the United States, and 1 to Slovakia (BMT-nin Sivilizasiyalar Alyansının Gənclər Forumu işini başa çatdırıb, 2016, p. 125).

Issues related to improving the level of education of young people and broadening their scientific horizons are included in virtually all agreements and memoranda signed by the Ministry of Youth and Sports of the Republic of Azerbaijan with foreign partners.

In 2016, at the Youth Forum held as part of the 7th UN Alliance of Civilizations Global Forum in Baku, calls and goals related to education were also discussed (BMT-nin Sivilizasiyalar Alyansının Gənclər Forumu işini başa çatdırıb, 2016).

Azerbaijani youth have participated in the European Union's Tempus, Erasmus Mundis, Jeanne Monnet, and other projects. The Republic participates in the Erasmus+ program as a partner country, and a National Erasmus+ Office has been established in Baku to facilitate its implementation. Furthermore, since 2019, the Erasmus Student Network – Azerbaijan has been operating in Azerbaijan, helping young people study abroad through Erasmus+ programs.

Relations between Azerbaijan and international non-governmental organizations working in science and education are also developing. The republic's educational institutions participate in projects with international organizations such as the Association of Students Studying Economics and Business, Students of Free Enterprise, the Union of Young Researchers of the Turkic World, the European Law Students' Association, and others.

Among today's global challenges, unemployment and the provision of decent work deserve special mention. The main causes of unemployment include economic crises and the resulting recessions, structural changes in the economy influenced by digitalization, automation, and robotics, demographic factors, and other factors. Unemployment plays a key catalytic role in the emergence of economic, social, and political contradictions in society. Compared to other segments of the global working population, young people face unemployment more frequently.

According to the International Labor Organization, the global unemployment rate in 2024–2025 was 4.9%, and the number of unemployed increased from 182.9 million to 184.2 million. The unemployment rate is projected to remain unchanged in 2026 and decline to 4.8% in 2027 (International Labour Organization, 2026, p. 7). While these statistics indicate a satisfactory quantitative situation, they do not reflect qualitative indicators. A certain portion of the employed population works in difficult, low-quality conditions and receives very low incomes. For example, in 2025, 284 million workers worldwide lived in poverty, earning less than \$3 a day. In addition, 2.1 billion people, or 57.7% of all workers, worked informally (International Labour Organization, 2026, p. 1). This situation creates serious problems for the social security of these people working without an employment contract.

The global youth unemployment rate was approximately 2.5 times higher than the global average. In 2024, 12.3% of youth (66.2 million people) and 12.4% (67.3 million people) were unable to find work. It is expected that 67.5 million people will be unable to enter the labour market in 2026 and 68 million in 2027. Along with unemployment, the number of young people excluded from vocational training continues to grow. In 2025, there were 257 million young people worldwide who were not in employment, education, or training, accounting for 20% of the total youth population. In 2023, this figure was 19.7% (International Labour Organization, 2026, pp. 6–7). Based on statistical data,

it can be noted that barriers and inequalities exist in youth access to the labour market, and they are subject to discrimination.

Employment rates in Azerbaijan are not significantly different from global averages. In 2024, the total working-age population of the republic was 5,312,100, with 5,029,800 employed and 282,300 unemployed. This means that 94.7% of the working-age population was employed and 5.3% was unemployed. Regarding youth, in 2024, of the 1,297,600 young people of working age (15-29 years) in Azerbaijan, 1,179,500, or 90.9%, were employed and 118,100, or 9.1%, were unemployed. 58,100 people, or 49.2%, were men, and 60,000 people, or 50.8%, were women (Azərbaycan Respublikası Dövlət Statistika Komitəsi, 2025, pp. 133, 137).

Ensuring youth employment is one of the priority areas of Azerbaijan's international youth policy. Partnerships have been established in this area with the UN, the World Bank, the European Union, the International Labour Organization, and other relevant international organizations.

In 1995, the UN General Assembly adopted the "World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond" (United Nations General Assembly. World programme of action for youth to the year 2000 and beyond (A/RES/50/81), 1995). One of the 10 areas of action defined in the program is related to youth employment. Azerbaijan participates in the implementation of this program, and the necessary steps are being taken at the national and state levels to ensure youth employment. The Norwegian SYSLAB centers established by the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of the Population of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the UNDP in Baku, Sumgayit, Ganja, Masalli and Zagatala have helped integrate young people into the labor market. The main goal of the project "Creating Inclusive and Decent Jobs for Socially Vulnerable Groups" in the country, with the participation of UNDP, is to promote the employment of people with disabilities. Pilot projects "Supporting the Employment of Young People with Higher Education, First-Time Job Seekers" and "Youth Employment Subsidy Program" were implemented in Baku and Goychay with the assistance of the International Labor Organization (Azərbaycan gənclərin məşğulluğunun dəstəklənməsində çox ölkələrə nümunədir).

Cooperation between the International Labor Organization and Azerbaijan also includes the implementation of joint measures to create decent working conditions, protect workers' rights, and ensure their social protection. This is evidenced by the signing of the "Decent Work Country Program for 2025–2029" between Azerbaijan and the International Labor Organization on November 25, 2025 (Azərbaycan Respublikası Əmək və Əhalinin Sosial Müdafiəsi Nazirliyi).

Conclusion. Based on the above, it can be concluded that in today's globalized world, overall development is accompanied by the emergence of various problems. In addition to uniting international efforts to address existing challenges, it is important to take the necessary steps at the national level. Azerbaijan places particular emphasis on addressing issues related to the health, education, and employment of the younger generation in its international youth policy, employing various mechanisms to achieve this goal and achieving positive results.

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