

# State Program for Youth Worker - An Innovative Form for Training Specialists about Youth Work

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## ABSTRACT

In accordance with the tasks and measures for the implementation of the State Targeted Social Program “Youth of Ukraine” for 2016 – 2020, the Government’s Priority Action Plan for 2018 and in order to provide young people with knowledge and skills through non-formal education as a modern form of meeting the educational needs of an individual implementation plan of the program “Youth Worker” was developed. The article covers the formation and development of the program “Youth Worker”; the educational content of the program is outlined in accordance with the training modules; statistical data and reports of the program were studied; the forms of realization of the program “Youth Worker” are covered. To achieve the goal of the study a set of general scientific methods was used: analysis of scientific publications to outline the essence of the problems of formation and development of the program “Youth Worker”; analysis and synthesis - to highlight the peculiarities of the development of the program “Youth Worker” in Ukraine; systematization and generalization of problems of formation and development of the program “Youth Worker” in Ukraine to formulate conclusions based on the results of the study. The purpose of the study is to substantiate the formation and development of the program “Youth Worker” in Ukraine. Formation and development of the program “Youth Worker” in Ukraine is an innovative form of training professionals to work with young people.

**Keywords:** Youth worker, Youth work, “Youth worker” program, Social work, Youth policy

## INTRODUCTION

Recommendations cm/rec (2016)7 of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe to member states on access to rights for young people, adopted at the meeting of the Ministers’ Deputies on September 28, 2016, aimed at the “recognition of non-formal education and youth work (Strasbourg process) and ensuring compliance with the standards and quality of vocational education and training, as well as higher education and qualifications (Bologna and Copenhagen processes)” (Access of young people to rights, 2016).

In accordance with the tasks and measures to implement the State Targeted Social Program “Youth of Ukraine” for 2016 – 2020, the Government’s Priority Action Plan for 2018 and in order to provide young people with knowledge, skills through non-formal education as a modern form of meeting the

educational needs of the individual, the Procedure for Implementation of the Youth Worker Program was developed (State Target Program, 2018).

The program provides a set of interrelated tasks and activities for the implementation of state policy in the youth sphere, the formation of knowledge and skills necessary for the self-realization of young people. The program is implemented at the national, regional and local levels. It is based on the principles of partnership, as well as the principles of non-formal education.

The program is designed for representatives of civil society institutions working with youth and civil servants responsible for the implementation of state policy in the youth sphere at the national, local, regional levels and other persons involved in youth work.

Taking into account the strategic goals, needs and objectives of the Program, the Ministry of Youth and Sports together with the State Institute of Family and Youth Policy annually determine the content of basic and specialized training programs for trainers, as well as the issue of holding a competition of best practices of youth work in Ukraine, the All-Ukrainian Forum of Youth Workers and workers, youth exchanges, internships and other activities within the framework of the Program.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

The training program “Youth Worker” has been active in Ukraine, at the national level since 2014. It is based on the principles of non-formal education. It was initiated by the Ministry of Youth and Sports of Ukraine, the State Institute for Family and Youth Policy and the United Nations Development Program. Program Administrator - L. Mukoseeva; responsible for the program at the Ministry of Youth and Sports - O. Kravchenko, at the UNDP in Ukraine - A. Ostriko; trainers of basic training: Ya. Khrapsky, V. Panchenko, L. Mukoseeva, K. Romanenko, E. Palamarchuk, S. Milinchuk, D. Mayorov, O. Levchenko, V. Zabolotna, I. Simonova, M. Tsyganin, D. Dubynska, S. Gromtseva, A. Aliyev, O. Malchenko, A. Tymchenko, J. Romanyuk, S. Mitrokhin, O. Harutyunyan, S. Zuev, O. Kotelenets, J. Kharkivska-Dzioba, T. Nesvat, D. Nikolaenko, V. Yatsuk, O. Kravchuk, I. Bondar, O. Shelest, Z. Tkachuk, O. Salivonchik, K. Emshina; trainers of specialized trainings: D. Dubynska, S. Gromtseva, O. Malchenko, S. Mitrokhin, O. Harutyunyan, J. Kharkivska-Dzioba, V. Yatsuk, I. Bondar, O. Shelest, Z. Tkachuk, O. Salivonchik, K. Emshina. The Youth Worker training program is one of the tools for social and political recognition of youth work in Ukraine. The mission of the program is to introduce and unite people who work with young people through short-term training sessions for representatives of the state and public sectors; to provide them with knowledge for work in the youth sphere and thus to unify approaches to youth work in Ukraine. The main target audience of the program are leaders and activists of public and charitable organizations working with youth; civil servants responsible for the implementation of youth policy at the local and regional levels; employees of other organizations involved in working with youth. Methodical support of the program is provided by the State Institute of Family and Youth Policy.

The goal of the study is to trace the formation and development of the program “Youth Worker” in Ukraine in order to promote best practices, theoretical and methodological justification for the training of youth workers.

Materials and research methods: a set of general scientific methods was used to achieve the goal: analysis of scientific publications - to outline the essence of the problems of formation and development of the program “Youth Worker”; analysis and synthesis - to highlight the features of the development of the program “Youth Worker” in Ukraine; systematization and generalization of problems of formation and development of the program “Youth Worker” in Ukraine to formulate conclusions based on the results of the study.

In Ukraine, youth worker is not a profession. This specialty is not taught in vocational (technical) or higher education institutions.

The Youth Worker program is aimed at training specialists to work with young people. The main objectives of the program: the system of training youth workers (representatives of government agencies and NGOs working with youth) through non-formal education; exchange of experience in the implementation of youth policy at the local level with the active participation of young people; intensification of youth participation in the formation of youth policy and participation in community life.

The program is implemented through the organization and conduct of training of basic and specialized levels, training for trainers, competition of best practices of youth work in Ukraine, forums of youth workers, youth exchanges.

As representatives of the state and public sectors are involved in the training, such a combination forms a team-based, cross-sectoral approach in the organization of youth work at the regional level. During the implementation of the Program (since 2014) more than 2,800 youth workers from all regions of Ukraine were trained, in particular during 2019 1055 specialists were trained.

Youth workers work in different types of organizations and institutions. These can be both specialized institutions for young people (youth centers, educational institutions, inter camps, etc.) and non-specialized institutions (educational institutions, cafes, hospital departments, etc.) (Dzoba et al. 2020).

According to the Procedure for Implementation of the Youth Worker Program (2018), a set of interrelated tasks and measures for the implementation of state policy in the youth sphere, the formation of knowledge and skills necessary for self-realization of young people is provided. The main goal of the Program is to promote the level of competencies of youth professionals, in particular the training of civil servants, creating favorable conditions for the effective development and implementation of sound youth policy in Ukraine.

The main objectives of the Program are: improving the competencies of youth professionals, including training of civil servants in the formation and implementation of public policy in the youth sphere through short-term training courses at the national, regional and local levels; generalization of information about the graduates of the Program and best practices of youth

work in Ukraine; establishing an effective dialogue between state authorities and civil society institutions to promote youth development in Ukraine; advising young people on participation in the formation of state policy in the youth sphere; exchange of best international and national practices of youth work and implementation of youth policy.

## RESULTS

The program was one of the priorities of the State Targeted Social Program “Youth of Ukraine 2016 – 2020”, a tool for implementing European approaches to youth work and aimed at official recognition of “youth work”, “youth worker” profession, and is a priority in the State Targeted Social Program “Youth of Ukraine” for 2021 - 2025, implementation of programs for the training of specialists working with youth, ensuring the functioning of youth centers.

From 2014 to 2019 inclusive, 2882 people became participants in the program. According to the results of the report on the implementation of the program “Youth Worker - 2019” the following activities were conducted:

- 52 regional level training courses in 20 regions of Ukraine (except Khmelnytsk, Lviv, Zaporizhia, Chernivtsi and Kyiv). During the basic training, participants receive motivation to develop the competencies of a youth worker and determine their own path of development; learn what youth policy is, what the content of youth work is, why it is important to focus on the participation and involvement of young people, what it means to be a youth worker in the community and how to develop their own competencies in youth work. The total number of people willing to take part in the training was 1587 people; Participants and graduates in 2019 were 76% (682 people) women and 24% (219 people) men, of whom 66% (591 people) work in the state sector and 34% (310 people) in the public sector.

- 7 specialized training courses, which are designed for basic level graduates and have a narrow specialization. They are designed to improve the skills of youth workers and promote the development of their competencies in various aspects of youth work. Topics of specialized trainings: “Formation of a healthy lifestyle of youth”, developer - J. Kharkivska (the purpose of the training - to acquaint participants with the Concept of “Healthy Lifestyle”, the state policy on forming a healthy lifestyle, to inform about the theoretical and methodological basis of social projects for the formation of a healthy lifestyle, ways to conduct self-analysis of factors influencing a healthy lifestyle); “Involvement and coordination of volunteers”, developer – A. Bondarenko (the purpose of the training - to develop competencies of participants in key theoretical and practical aspects of volunteering and management of volunteer programs; to inform about the nature, role and forms of youth volunteering, global and local approaches to involvement, management and motivation of volunteers; to acquaint participants with the best international and national practices and tools of work with volunteers); “Inclusion and open youth work in youth centers”, trainers – J. Borenko, L. Mukoseeva (the purpose of the training - to form participants’ understanding of inclusiveness in youth work and provide practical competencies to implement inclusive

approaches in youth centers); “Civic education for youth workers”, developed by A. Donets, J. Borenko (the purpose of the training is to increase the ability of youth workers to support and ensure active participation of young people in decision-making processes at the local and regional levels).

In 2019, with the support of the Ministry of Youth and Sports of Ukraine together with the State Institute for Family and Youth Policy, the United Nations Development Program in Ukraine and the international technical assistance program “Decentralization brings better results efficiency” DOBLE began the second stage of the comprehensive program “Youth Worker in the amalgamated territorial community”. However, this program is intended only for representatives of united territorial communities that cooperate with DOBLE (Dnipropetrovsk, Ivano-Frankivsk, Kirovohrad, Mykolaiv, Ternopil, Kharkiv, Kherson regions). The program consists of 3 stages: Stage I – basic training of the Youth Worker program, Stage II – specialized training “Advocacy in the amalgamated territorial community”, Stage III – specialized training “Volunteering in the amalgamated territorial community”. The first stage of the program “Youth Worker in the amalgamated territorial community” was attended by 152 participants (Report on the results of the program “Youth Worker - 2019”).

After analyzing the results of the survey of participants in the basic training “Youth Worker” in 2019, we find that most participants fully or partially consider themselves to be youth workers, before the training course - 95,2%, and respondents after the training - 97,7%. 4,7% did not consider themselves youth workers before the training, and 0,8% did not consider themselves after the training.

According to the participants, the most interesting and useful basic training were the following modules: “Youth Policy” - 25,1%, “Youth Work in the Community” - 64,2%, “Personal Competencies of a Youth Worker” - 39,9%. Useful and thorough knowledge that the participants mastered in the basic training, and would apply in their practice, they called: “Youth Policy” - 32%, “Youth Work in the Community” - 76%, “Personal competencies of a youth worker” - 48,8% (Report on the results of the program “Youth Worker - 2019”).

The basic training course “Youth Worker” consists of 4 training modules: the first one - “The essence of youth policy. Content and organization of work with youth”, the second - “Social request. Project competition and other mechanisms of financial aid from the state budget. Partnership between governmental and non-governmental organizations”, the third - “Project Management”, the fourth - “Personal Competencies” (Murashkevych et al. 2014).

The implementation of the basic training was conducted in different cities of Ukraine. The author of the article (N. Levchenko) also took part in the basic training of the Youth Worker program (2018), as well as in the organization of the basic training in Uman (2019, 2021).

Thus, the training of youth workers is a responsible and important step of state structures in the implementation of youth policy.

Youth workers play an important role in the community by supporting young people in their daily lives, setting an example for adolescents and

children. Such workers must develop a range of people management skills, including the ability to be a strong leader, sensitive to individual and cultural differences, to be very flexible, patient and understanding; be able to work in a team and independently.

## DISCUSSION

Researchers believe that the program strengthens the staffing of the youth sphere, involving representatives of various industries and sectors. The main condition for participation in it is the experience and desire to work with young people (Dzoba et al. 2020).

O. Tashkinova, M. Gontar considers the program “Youth Worker” as the most famous Ukrainian volunteer organization, which actively involves volunteers to work with young people and actively develops volunteering in Ukraine. The authors note that the implementation of the “Youth Worker” program in Ukraine is a unique opportunity to raise the professional level of representatives of civil servants and public associations working with youth, which will increase the number of young people involved in youth policy-making and strengthen, at the national level, the interaction of state and youth public institutions on the social development of youth (Tashkikova and Gonchar, 2020).

O. Heinak considers the “Youth Worker” program to be a form of non-formal education, the purpose of which is to provide young people with opportunities for independent development and active involvement in public life. The author highlights the results of his research and notes that since 2017, there has been a trend of increasing the number of graduates of the program, but in 2020 this number decreased. O. Heydyk believes that the main reason was the quarantine measures introduced due to the pandemic of coronavirus disease COVID-19, which affected offline communication, that reduced the number of conducted events. The quantitative ratio of submitted applications and graduates of the basic training of the “Youth Worker” program: 2017: 1482 applications submitted, 764 graduates; 2018: applications - 1578, graduates - 776; 2019: applications - 1587, graduates - 901; 2020: 846 applications, 484 graduates. During 2017 – 2020, 2925 people became certified youth workers. The “Youth Worker” program is based on the principles of non-formal education, which makes it accessible to public sector representatives and leaders (Heinak, 2021).

Coordinators of youth work and the active involvement of young people in social activities are provided by youth workers. According to N. Dziuba, L. Mukoseeva, N. Tilikina, O. Shkarupa, a youth worker is a specialist who works with young people and organizes youth work in the community and has the appropriate level of professional training.

Scholars note that the purpose of the youth worker is to form a youth policy and create conditions for comprehensive self-realization of youth in various spheres of public life, unleashing their potential, protecting the interests and rights of youth (Dzioba et al. 2020).

V. Bezsmertna believes that the only mechanism for regulating the introduction of non-formal education in Ukraine is the order of the Ministry of

Youth and Sports of Ukraine On approval of the Procedure for implementing the program “Youth Worker” from 18.10.2021 №1178/32630, according to which the program is implemented on the principles of non-formal education as a modern form of meeting educational needs in order to provide young people with knowledge and skills (Bezsmertna, 2019).

## CONCLUSION

After analyzing scientific sources, we conclude that the formation and development of the program “Youth Worker” in Ukraine is an important stage in the implementation of youth policy, youth work, and promotion of the specialty “youth worker”. Every year, the popularity of the program that promotes the training of youth workers is growing. The results of the surveys show that more than 90% of participants consider themselves youth workers and apply all the acquired knowledge and skills in their practical activities. However, in order to promote the program in all regions of Ukraine, it is necessary to plan and estimate its implementation both at the local level and in the relevant region’s state structures.

This study does not cover all the problematic issues of the stated topic. The analysis and systematization of the international experience of training youth workers are promising.

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