

INFORMATION AND REFERENCE MATERIAL on current problems of protecting youth rights and the results of the work of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in the Russian Federation in this area

1. SOCIOLOGICAL INFORMATION: REALIZATION OF YOUTH RIGHTS IN RUSSIA

According to the UN, there are 1.2 billion young people in the world between the ages of 15 and 24 (16% of the world's population). In Russia, the number of young people (from 14 to 35 years old) is about 40 million.

According to VCIOM research, **Russian young people assess the situation in their lives as rather good**: 78% of 18- to 24-year-olds and 72% of 25- to 34-year-olds hold this view. Most young people in Russia describe themselves as more or less happy, 84% of 18-24-year-olds and 88% of 25-34-year-olds¹.

According to a research conducted by the "Code: Russia" project team as part of the "Woman Leaders" platform "Russia - Land of Opportunity" (507 respondents between the ages of 18 and 35 from 41 regions of Russia took part)², young people are most concerned about **unemployment** among the current problems - this answer was given by 34% of the respondents.

The top five also included **low income** (21%), **lack of recreational infrastructure** (17%), **low quality education** (13%) and **inaccessible accommodations** (12%).

10% of respondents named "inactivity of youth" and "vicious habits" as the main problems. Respondents also mentioned lack of prospects, high prices, fee-based sections and groups, paid education, lack of work with young people, corruption, generational conflict and Internet addiction.

*Sociological survey conducted by the Youth Council
under the High Commissioner for Human Rights in the Russian Federation
"Problems of Realization of Youth Rights in Modern Russia"³*

¹ Youth Day // URL: <https://wciom.ru/analytical-reviews/analiticheskii-obzor/den-molodezhi> (date of access: 28.04.2023).

² Forever Young, Forever Loyal. Public Opinion Research. Kommersant newspaper. No. 128 of 19.07.2022, p. 3 // URL: <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/5469639> (access date: 10.10.2022).

³ Note: More than 1,000 people (from 14 to 35 years old) from 43 regions of the Russian Federation took part in the survey. Sociological survey "Problems of realization of youth rights in modern Russia" // Official Telegram channel of the Ombudsman for Human Rights in the Russian Federation. URL: <https://t.me/ombudsmanrf/2017> (accessed 14.03.2023)

The Youth Council under the Commissioner for Human Rights in the Russian Federation, in cooperation with young sociologists representing the Sociology Department of The Lomonosov Moscow State University, conducted a **survey entitled "Problems of Realization of Youth Rights in Modern Russia"**.

The online survey showed that **young people in Russia sometimes found themselves in situations where they felt lack of knowledge of their rights** (42.7% of respondents). At the same time, the majority of respondents mentioned self-study (63.2%) and the experience of studying law at universities (62.9%) as the main sources of legal knowledge.

In general, respondents assess their own legal literacy as above average, and believe that they know their duties well.

However, **the majority of respondents still note the necessity of improving the legal literacy of young people** (64.5% consider this measure "very necessary").

More than a half of the respondents did not face problems in education, employment, and other life situations. Nevertheless, young people **are concerned about problems when applying to educational institutions** (17.8%), **are not satisfied with the quality of education** (30.3%), **face difficulties in finding a job due to lack of experience** (28.6%), and **express concern about low salaries** for young graduates (33.2%).

2. STATE SYSTEM FOR YOUTH RIGHTS PROTECTION

A multilevel state system for youth rights protection has been created and is being implemented in the Russian Federation.

International guarantees of youth rights protection comprise a system of international legal and policy documents¹.

A system of youth legislation was created. A new stage in the development of youth policy started in **2020 with the amendments to the Constitution of the Russian Federation**, which modified **Article 72(f)** of

¹ Sustainable Development Goals // Official website of the United Nations. URL: <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/ru/sustainable-development-goals/> (accessed on 10.04.2023); Official website of the UN. URL: <https://www.un.org/ru/39017> (date of access: 10.04.2023); UNHRC accepted the resolution on youth rights // RIA "Novosti". URL: <https://ria.ru/20211010/molodezh-1753879800.html> (date of access: 10.04.2023).

the Russian Constitution to refer youth policy to the joint responsibility of the Russian Federation and its' constituent entities.

In order to develop the provisions of the Russian Federation Constitution, the **Federal Law of December 30, 2020. No. 489-FZ "On Youth Policy in the Russian Federation"** was developed. Prior to this, there was actually no unified approach to youth policy and no understanding of how it should be implemented in modern conditions.

The main directions of youth policy include supporting young families, promoting education, scientific and technical activities, solving housing problems of young people, providing guarantees in the sphere of labor and employment, promoting the employment of young citizens, promoting the participation of young people in volunteer activities, fostering citizenship, patriotism, tradition continuity, respect for the national history, historical, national and other traditions of the nations of the Russian Federation, etc.

The law reflects, inter alia, the proposals of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in the Russian Federation (hereinafter the "Commissioner") **regarding support for orphans and children left without parental custody. In 2023 its updating will continue as the Commissioner has made proposals to expand work on legal education and upbringing of young people.**

In accordance with the above-mentioned regulations, the legal framework of measures of social support for young people continues to be formed, including the approved **"Long-term program to promote youth employment for the period up to 2030"**.

Moreover, the Ombudsman and her representatives take part in the **development of the Concept of the Strategy for the Implementation of Youth Policy in the Russian Federation until 2030 (hereinafter the Structure)** (*the structure of the Strategy takes into account the Ombudsman's proposals on the necessity of expanding legal education and upbringing of young people*).

1. PROTECTION OF YOUTH RIGHTS IN THE ACTIVITIES OF THE OMBUDSMAN FOR HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION¹

As it has been shown by appeals to the Ombudsman and monitoring of law enforcement practices, despite the efforts made, young people still face numerous problems in the realization of their rights, freedoms and legitimate interests.

EDUCATIONAL ISSUES

Education in professional educational organizations

In 2022, the Commissioner received 225 appeals on vocational education, their topics are shown on picture 1.



131 – in matters of admission

27 – disapproval of expulsion

13 – educational process in universities

11 – receiving documents on education, recognition of documents on foreign education

10 – conflict management

9 – providing dormitory accommodation, social help for students

8 – labor rights of university students and teachers

6 – student health care

¹ Current state on December 31, 2022 (based on a review of the 2022 and 2021 Commissioner's Report).

- 4 – partial mobilization of students
- 3 – closed educational organizations
- 3 – other

*pic. 1. Topics and number of appeals
on professional education in 2022.*

The growth of appeals on this topic has occurred due to **complaints about enrollment (admission) in colleges and universities**. Compared to 2021, their number quadrupled and amounted to 131. The main category of applicants on this issue were **students from Donbas and Ukraine, and also citizens of Russia expelled from foreign universities due to discriminatory policies of unfriendly countries**.

Every student who faced such a situation was given the opportunity to continue their studies at Russian universities. We provided all possible assistance to citizens who encountered various difficulties in applying for a transfer.

A third-year student of the Riga Aeronautical Institute (RAI) L. was forced to leave Latvia because of unfriendly actions of foreign countries. She tried to go to study in Russia, but faced problems while submitting documents to the university. The student could not cope with them and turned to the Commissioner for Human Rights in the Republic of Bashkortostan, M.I. Zakomaldin, and he, in his turn, to us. We asked the leadership of the Russian Ministry of Education and Science to resolve the issue of L.'s transfer. As a result, the applicant was accepted at the St. Petersburg State University of Civil Aviation on a budgetary basis (file no. L-270 of 23.03.2022).

Analysis of appeals on the subject of vocational education allows us to highlight some of the **problems** that participants in the educational process face.

1. Accessibility of higher education

In 2022 that dynamic was affected by the *increase in the country's population* due to the reunification of the DPR and LPR and Zaporozhye and Kherson regions with the Russian Federation, as well as the *Russian students who have been discriminated against abroad to return to their homeland*. In this sector we should support the measures taken by the state to increase the number of budget-funded places in universities, as well as to

strengthen the authority of the Russian Government to make a decision on the redistribution of the established educational institutions for admission limits for education at the expense of the federal budget in priority specialties.

At the same time, according to a number of experts, there is an *inequality in the accessibility of higher education due to social and territorial features*. It is difficult for low-income citizens to enter universities because of the concentration of budget-funded places in large centers, the reduction of its extramural segment, and the need to move to another city, which is often associated with additional expenses. The Ombudsman's *proposals to establish the obligation of universities to provide out-of-town students with places in dormitories or to assist them in renting accommodations and to increase the amount of scholarships remains relevant*.

2. Providing proper quality of professional education

In **organizations that provide training in secondary vocational education programs**, these problems are associated with *a lack of specialists with knowledge of modern technology, insufficient provision of institutions with digital services, modern educational laboratory and educational-production equipment*.

In this regard, it is necessary to take measures to provide the material and technical base of the relevant institutions and to improve the teachers' qualifications. In addition, the network of production and education centers, where students can obtain practical skills, needs to be expanded - a relevant task was outlined by the President of the Russian Federation in his message to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation in February 2023.

In **the system of higher education** *the polarization of the quality of education between the leading universities and other higher education institutions remains a relevant problem*. As a result, formally exercising their right, a student in a number of cases does not receive quality knowledge and in the future cannot compete with graduates of leading universities in employment.

The solution of the problem should be carried out within the framework of the national higher education reform, which has been widely discussed since the actual rejection of the Bologna system by Russia in April 2022. It is expected that the new system of higher education will synthesize the best practices of the USSR and the experience of recent decades, its basis will be the traditional fundamental education of specialists for a period of 4 to 6 years with the possibility to continue training in magistracy, residency and postgraduate studies.

It is important to ensure the flexibility of educational programs and practice-oriented knowledge. It is also worth attention to the establishment of partnerships with friendly countries in the field of higher education, the development of university infrastructure to attract foreign students to study, the organization of student exchanges.

3. Ensuring a proper level of student scholarships

The current law defines a stipend as a monetary payment assigned to students in order to stimulate and support their mastering of educational programs. But this approach creates background for the reduction of guarantees of the students' rights. One of its consequences is that the *established size of the scholarship fund does not actually provide any vital human need*. The monitoring and appeals to the Ombudsman show that university students often have to literally survive due to low stipends, being unable to exercise their right to education.

In this regard, it is reasonable to legally define a stipend as a monetary payment assigned to students in order to support their adequate living standards during the period of learning of educational programs. In addition, it is important to establish that the amount of the scholarship cannot be lower than the subsistence level in the subject of the Russian Federation, where the educational institution is located.

HOUSING ISSUES

1. In 2022, there was a significant number of appeals from young people regarding housing for orphans (505) and young family members (60).

In 2022, 38,000 cases concerning housing right of orphans were processed by the territorial offices of the Federal Bailiff Service; as a result, 9,800 cases were resolved successfully while orphans provided with housing.¹

A former pupil of the Tambov Region orphanage, P., 48 years old now, appealed to the Commissioner for assistance with finding accommodation. In this connection, we, in cooperation with the Tambov Region Commissioner for Human Rights, V. Repin, filed several lawsuits to the courts to protect P.'s housing rights. The court hearings lasted over a year, as a result of which the court obliged the competent authorities to provide the applicant with housing. In April 2022 he was provided with accommodation (case file no. 9150 of 23.05.2022).

The main reasons for the long-term non-provision of housing for people in this category seem to include *insufficient regional budget funds for the construction or purchase of housing for orphans; the lack of sufficient housing in the regions of specialized housing funds; inefficient use of allocated budget funds for construction (the purchase of housing); violations at the stage of the procurement of housing.*

In this connection, the proposal by the Accounts Chamber of the Russian Federation to *amend the Rules for the Provision and Distribution of Subsidies from the Federal Budget to the Budgets of the Constituent Entities of the Russian Federation to Provide Housing to Orphans* seems timely in that the amount of subsidies is determined by taking into account the actual needs of the regions in providing housing to orphans².

The current situation may be influenced by the *establishment in the legislation of alternative measures of housing support for orphans*, such as the provision of certificates for the purchase of housing and the creation of a system of protection against their misuse. A corresponding draft law has been prepared by the Ministry of Education of the Russian Federation and

¹ Letter from the FSSP of Russia (out. № 00011/23/43532-DA of 28.02.2023).

² Letter from the Accounts Chamber of the Russian Federation (out. № 12/47/12-02DSP of 08.02.2022).

is currently under consideration in the State Duma as a legislative initiative of the Russian Government¹.

1. Providing housing for young families

The rules for the provision of social payments to young families for the purchase (construction) of housing and their use states that a local government body while composing a of list of young families - applicants for social payments for the purchase of housing or creation of individual housing construction, *shall include in the first place in the lists young families - participants in the target program, registered as in need of better housing before March 1, 2005, as well as young families with three or more children.*

In some regions young families with three or more children mostly participate in the activities aimed at providing housing to young families, which means that *young families that are not in the privileged categories are practically deprived of the opportunity to receive social payments* for the purchase (construction) of housing under the programs in question. As a solution to this problem it is suggested that a regional government should determine *the procedure for sharing the queue with both young families of a privileged category of citizens and young families that do not belong to this category* and determine the time limit for young families' residence in the territory of a municipal area.

2. Providing students with dormitories

Russian law establishes the right of students to receive living quarters in dormitories, but *this right can only be exercised if the educational organization has appropriate facilities, and the procedure for providing such facilities is established by local normative acts of such an organization.*

To solve the mentioned problems it seems advisable to consider the **development of student rights guarantees related to the provision of dormitories in the federal legislation.** It seems that the duty of assistance

¹ Draft Federal Law No. 261079-8 "On Amendments to the Federal Law 'On Additional Guarantees for Social Support of Orphans and Children Deprived of Parental Care'" // GAS "Legislative Drafting": official website. URL: <https://sozd.duma.gov.ru/bill/261079-8> (accessed 24.01.2023).

in ensuring the housing rights of students should be assigned to educational organizations. In addition, state support for the construction and repair of dormitories requires development.

It is also important to use alternative mechanisms and positive experience of the regions. For example, in the Republic of Tatarstan, based on the agreement between Kazan (Volga Region) Federal University, online housing reservation platform and the Guild of Realtors of the Republic of Tatarstan launched a service to find affordable housing for nonresident students who for some reason are not provided with dormitories¹.

OTHER

Among other problems typical for the young generation is the problem of **cybersecurity in the conditions of rapid development of information technologies**. In this area of interest is the experience of several countries to develop recommendations for the safe use of the Internet, social networks for parents, students and teachers, carried out by the institutions of state human rights protection in cooperation with the largest IT-specialists.

Ensuring the **leisure time** of young people, especially in the countryside, requires attention. It seems that the government should make more efforts to develop sports and creativity among young people, to involve young people in constructive and creative activities - youth public organizations and the implementation of youth projects. There are wide opportunities for self-realization in the framework of the All-Russian forum campaign, which includes a set of all-Russian and district youth forums held by Rosmolodezh in cooperation with federal and regional governmental bodies.

2. LAW ENLIGHTENMENT WORK OF THE YOUTH COMMISSIONER

The Commissioner traditionally assigns special importance to working with young people, especially interested in learning more about human and civil rights and freedoms, forms and methods of their protection, as well as improving the quality of legal education.

¹KFU students will be offered a service to find rental housing // KFU official website. URL: <https://media.kpfu.ru/news/dlya-inogorodnikh-studentov-kfu-zarabotaet-sistema-po-voprosam-razmescheniya> (date of application 23.11.2021).

The Commissioners and employees of the Office **implement their own projects**, and also **participate in or use for educational purposes the platforms of projects implemented by other government agencies, universities and public organizations.**

For example, as part of the "The Territory of Senses" All-Russian Youth Educational Forum under the auspices of Rosmolodezh, meetings of human rights commissioners with young human rights activists and leaders of volunteer projects are held annually.

The main educational projects of The Ombudsman for a youth audience

– **All-Russian Uniform Human Rights Lesson** - the audience of the educational project for 2017-2022 amounted to more than 37 million schoolchildren and students;

– **"Legal Navigator" (in cooperation with the Department of Education and Science of Moscow)** - online quizzes, trivias, contests on knowledge of constitutional rights, freedoms and duties, as well as the competence of the institution of state human rights protection are held annually for schoolchildren of different ages;

– **Magister's program "International protection of human rights" (together with OHCHR)** - from 2015 to 2022, more than 3,700 master's students participated in educational events at the Office of the Commissioner;

– **"Multimedia Workshop on Legal Education and Social Support for Students" (together with the All-Russian Student Union)** - videos about students' rights and benefits, which are distributed on popular Internet resources and social networks;

– **Youth human rights chatbot "Pravobot" in Telegram (together with the All-Russian Student Union Youth Council under the**

Ombudsman) - legal analyses of individual life situations to inform young people on how to protect their rights;

– **Incubator of youth human rights projects and initiatives (as part of the Youth Council)** - educational webinars and trainings on social design, media promotion and grant support for youth projects;

– **The Commissioner's Mentoring Project and participation in the interagency project Women: Mentoring School (formerly Women's League) (Ministry of Education and Science of Russia)** (in 2022 - students participated in outreach and educational projects of the Commissioner and Youth Council events, received personal consultations on their own projects);

– **Festival "Integration" for people with disabilities** - legal lectures and master classes are held (including for students with disabilities);

– **All-Russian competition "Innovative technologies in legal education on the rights and freedoms of citizens, forms and methods of their protection"** (the main audience - young people).

A significant event of 2022 was the update of the **federal state educational standard for secondary general education (grades 10-11)**. As a result of joint work with the Russian Ministry of Education, the requirements for mastering the **subject "Social Studies"** include the **formation of knowledge about the system of human and civil rights**, as well as state and public institutions, including **the institution of commissioners for human rights**.

3. THE YOUTH COUNCIL UNDER THE COMMISSIONER

The Youth Council under the Ombudsman for Human Rights in the Russian Federation (hereinafter the Council) is an advisory collective body formed for the purpose of developing proposals to ensure the rights, freedoms and lawful interests of young people, involving young

citizens in human rights activities, assisting in the formation of an active civil position in issues of civil rights and freedoms.

The goal is to involve young citizens in human rights activities and to increase cooperation between the institution of state human rights advocacy and the younger generation.

Established **September 1, 2021**.

Membership - 40 people¹; including representatives of youth public (expert) councils under the Human Rights Commissioners in regions of the Russian Federation, youth, student, and other public associations, and educational organizations located on the territory of the Russian Federation (young scientists). Seventeen youth councils under regional commissioners for human rights have been created and are in operation.

Main areas of work

1) Participation in activities of the Ombudsman and in the work of legal awareness and education

Council members take an active part in all large-scale activities of the Human Rights Institute.

Specifics of work in 2022-2023 embrace emphasis on **free legal assistance to evacuees and compatriots subjected to discrimination abroad** (hotline of members of the Council from the Association of Lawyers of Russia to provide legal assistance to evacuees and compatriots abroad; joint project with the Commissioner "One day of free legal assistance to evacuees forced to leave the DNR, LNR and Ukraine"); **volunteering and humanitarian assistance** (delivery of humanitarian goods, work in volunteer centers and temporary accommodation sites); **assistance to servicemen** (consultations by members of the Council together with regional human rights ombudspersons).

2) Realization of the Council members' own projects

For example, joint projects with the All-Russian Student Union "**Multimedia Workshop of Legal Education and Social Support for Students**", "**City of Students**", "**Soft skills mentor**"; projects of Council

¹ As of April 28, 2023.

members "**School of Countering Extremism**", "**# Strong Youth**", in the regions - a youth legal forum "**#We Work**" (Council of the Commissioner for Human Rights in Murmansk region) or "**StopCyberbullying**" week (Council of the Commissioner in Saint Petersburg).2) *Реализация собственных проектов членов Совета*

In 2022, 29 events were held under the auspices of the Federal Council, and more than 100 events were held in the regions.

3) *Informing about the situation in the field of observing and protecting youth rights and freedoms* (personal reception of young people, visits to hostels, holding meetings of the Council, exchange of information, work on appeals of Council members in case of revealing facts of violation of citizens' rights, etc.)

3) *Assistance in the implementation of cooperation with government agencies and civil society institutions that protect the rights and freedoms of young people.*

Cooperation with **Rosmolodezh, the Association of Volunteer Centers, and youth human rights organizations.**

3) *Participation in the development of regulatory, policy documents and other materials*

Participated as experts in the work of the Commission of the State Council of the Russian Federation on "Youth Policy", **formed and directed proposals to improve the Federal Law "On Youth Policy in the Russian Federation"** and the developed **Concept of the Strategy of Youth Policy in the Russian Federation until 2030** (*in terms of expanding legal education and upbringing of young people*).