

# Country Youth Profile



KAZAKHASTAN



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## 1. Socio-Economic Profile

1.1 The Republic of Kazakhstan is the world's largest landlocked, transcontinental country located in Central Asia<sup>1</sup>. It is Central Asia's largest country and economy and has an estimated population of 18,514,380 in 2019<sup>2</sup>. Kazakhstan transitioned from a lower-middle-income to an upper-middle-income economy in 2006<sup>3</sup>. The country's gross domestic product (GDP) per capita has risen six-fold since 2002, and the poverty incidence has fallen sharply, revealing significant progress in the country's performance in the World Bank's indicator of shared prosperity<sup>4</sup>. However, 26% of the population lived below the national poverty line in 2016<sup>5</sup>. The country experienced a strong increase of 4%<sup>6</sup> growth in its GDP in 2017 from 1%<sup>7</sup> in 2016; the GDP growth continued to the first quarter of 2018 registering a 4.1% increase<sup>8</sup>. Real GDP for 2018 is projected at 3.7% and 3.3% in 2019<sup>9</sup>.

1.2 Kazakhstan's standing on the United Nations Development Program's (UNDP) 2017 Human Development Index (HDI) position of 58<sup>th</sup> among 189 countries<sup>10</sup> is two steps below its 2016 rank of 56<sup>th</sup><sup>11</sup>. While Kazakhstan's 2017 HDI is lower than the average in countries in the very high human development category, it was above the average for countries in Europe and Central Asia<sup>12</sup>. In comparison with the Russian Federation and Ukraine, two countries with similar HDI and population size, Kazakhstan fall between both countries who ranked 49<sup>th</sup> and 88<sup>th</sup>, respectively<sup>13</sup>.

1.3. The official definition of youth in Kazakhstan is for persons between the ages 14-29 years<sup>14</sup>. The United Nations and the Asian Development Bank classify youth as persons aged 15-24 years, and the Commonwealth identifies young people aged 15-29 as youth. The youth population in Kazakhstan in 2017 was 3,994,393 million representing 22.3% of the country's total population<sup>15</sup>. Of which 56.9% and 43.1% lived in the urban and rural areas respectively<sup>16</sup>. The age structure of Kazakhstan's youth based on the data above was categorized into three groups: the youngest 14-18 years accounted for 27.9%, average 19-23 years old were 32.3% and senior category 19-24-28 years 39.9%<sup>17</sup>. Kazakhstan's rank on the Commonwealth Secretariat's Global Youth Index in 2016 stood at 61<sup>st</sup> out of 183 countries<sup>18</sup>. Kazakhstan recorded the highest improvement an improvement of 10% among Russia and Eurasia countries between 2010 and 2015<sup>19</sup>.

1.4. Kazakhstan's Marriage and Family Code stipulates 18 years as the minimum age for both girls and boys<sup>20</sup>. However, if there is a good cause for reducing the marriage age, it cannot be reduced by more than two years<sup>21</sup>. It must be stated that the reduction in marriageable age is only permitted with the consent of those entering the marriage, and their parents or guardians<sup>22</sup>. UNICEF reported that 7% of girls marry by their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday<sup>23</sup> Kazakhstan

1 Global Edge (Nd), Kazakhstan, <https://globaledge.msu.edu/countries/kazakhstan/memo>

2 World Population Review (2019), Kazakhstan Population, <http://worldpopulationreview.com/countries/kazakhstan-population/>

3 World Bank (2018a), Kazakhstan At-A Glance, <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/kazakhstan/overview>

4 Ibid

5 ADB, (2018a), Basic Statistics, <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/419891/basic-statistics-2018.pdf>, P.1

6 Asian Development Bank (ADB) (2018b). Asian Development Outlook-2018: How Technology Affects, Jobs, <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/411666/ado2018-highlights.pdf>, P.12

7 World Bank. (2017). Kazakhstan's Economy Has Bottomed Out, Now Searching for New Sources of Growth, <http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2017/05/17/kazakhstan-economy-to-accelerate-in-2017-says-world-bank>

8 World Bank (2018b), Kazakhstan, The Quest for a New Growth Model: The Urgency of Economic Transformation, <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/178631527661848309/pdf/126685-28-5-2018-17-22-8-KAZCEUSpringfinalfinaleng.pdf>, P.1

9 Ibid:13

10 UNDP (2018), Kazakhstan Country Note, [http://hdr.undp.org/sites/all/themes/hdr\\_theme/country-notes/KAZ.pdf](http://hdr.undp.org/sites/all/themes/hdr_theme/country-notes/KAZ.pdf), P.3

11 United Nations Development Program. (2017). Kazakhstan Country Note, [http://hdr.undp.org/sites/all/themes/hdr\\_theme/country-notes/KAZ.pdf](http://hdr.undp.org/sites/all/themes/hdr_theme/country-notes/KAZ.pdf), P.4

12 UNDP 2018, op.cit:3

13 Ibid: P.3

14 GoKZ (2018), Youth Policy of Kazakhstan: State Programs, Values and Socialization, [https://strategy2050.kz/en/news/youth\\_policy\\_of\\_kazakhstan\\_state\\_programs\\_values\\_and\\_socialization\\_\\_51269/](https://strategy2050.kz/en/news/youth_policy_of_kazakhstan_state_programs_values_and_socialization__51269/)

15 Ibid

16 Ibid

17 Ibid

18 Commonwealth Secretariat (2016), 2016 Global Youth Development Report and Index, <http://cmydiprod.uksouth.cloudapp.azure.com/sites/default/files/2016-10/2016%20Global%20Youth%20Development%20Index%20and%20Report.pdf>, P.122

19 Ibid: 51

20 UNFPA (2012) Child Marriage in Kazakhstan (Overview), <https://eeca.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/unfpa%20kazakhstan%20overview.pdf>, P.2

21 Ibid:2

22 Ibid:2

23 Girls Not Bride (2017), Kazakhstan Country Profile, <https://www.girlsnotbrides.org/child-marriage/kazakhstan/>

has committed to eliminate child, early and forced marriage by 2030 in line with the target 5.3 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)<sup>24</sup>. Kazakhstan also co-sponsored the 2013 and 2014 UN General Assembly resolutions on early and forced marriage and signed a joint statement at 2014 Human Rights Council calling for a resolution on child marriage<sup>25</sup>.

**Table 1: Youth at Glance in Kazakhstan**

Categories	Females %	Males %
Age of marriage	18	18
Labor force participation (ILO 2008)	43.8	49.9
Unemployment (ILO 2013)	4.3	3.6
NEET (2017 <sup>26</sup> )	11	6
Net enrollment (UNESCO, 2010)	100	99.7
Literacy Rate (UNESCO, 2010)	99.85	99.94
Out of school (WEF-GGGI, 2018)	0.5	5.4

## 2. Youth in National Development: Institutional and Policy Framework

2.1. Kazakhstan's youth sector was managed by three different ministries, Culture, Information, and Public Consent, Culture and Education and Science between 1998 and 2017<sup>27</sup>. Since 2018, the development and implementation of youth policy, as well as inter-sectoral coordination is undertaken by the Ministry for Religious and Civil Society Affairs<sup>28</sup>. Youth as a social category gained official recognition in Kazakhstan with the development of the country's first national youth policy in 2004<sup>29</sup>.

2.2. The current legal framework for youth in Kazakhstan is the 2015 State Youth Policy adopted on 9<sup>th</sup> February. The goal of the policy is to create conditions for the full, spiritual, cultural, educational, professional and physical development of young people, and allow them to participate in the decision-making process, and to channel their potential for the development of their country<sup>30</sup>. Among the policy's objectives are:

- The protection of rights and legitimate interest of young people;
- Involvement of youth in the socio-economic and socio-political life of the country; and
- Education of citizenship and strengthening of the sense of Kazakhstan patriotism<sup>31</sup>.

2.3. To improve the implementation of the State Youth Policy, the Kazakhstan President established the Youth Policy Council by Decree of the Head of State on 1<sup>st</sup> July 2008. Its main task includes the development of recommendations for the implementation of a comprehensive state policy on youth, informing the President of Kazakhstan on the situation in the youth environment, and analyzing the effectiveness of the implementation of the state youth policy<sup>32</sup>. Other youth legal frameworks include the State Program for Education Development (2011-2020)<sup>33</sup>.

24 Ibid

25 Ibid

26 OECD (2018), Education Policy Outlook-Kazakhstan, <http://www.oecd.org/education/Education-Policy-Outlook-Country-Profile-Kazakhstan-2018.pdf>, P.11

27 GoKZ, 2018 op.cit

28 Ibid

29 Youth Policy (2014), Kazakhstan Fact Sheet, <http://www.youthpolicy.org/factsheets/country/kazakhstan/>

30 GoKZ (2015), On State Youth Policy, <http://adilet.zan.kz/eng/docs/Z1500000285>

31 GoKZ 2018, op.cit

32 Ibid

33 IAC (2014), About the Progress of the State Program of Education of Education Development, 2011-2020 in 2014, <http://iac.kz/en/events/about-progress-state-programme-education-development-2011-2020-2014>

Employment Program 2020<sup>34</sup>, Business Road Map 2020<sup>35</sup>, and State Health Development Program (2011-2015)<sup>36</sup>.

2.4. In its assessment of the Youth Policy Council in 2017, the GoKZ notes that since 2008 when the Council was established, it has hosted 19 meetings, including 10 in the regions to discuss the main components of the Youth Policy: educational and cultural programs, employment, housing, healthy lifestyle, and the development of physical culture<sup>37</sup>. Additionally, the National Youth Policy was adopted in 2015, with target indicators for evaluating the activities in the youth sector. Also, funding in the sector has increased over the last three years, to nearly KZT 2 billion and KZT 17.5 billion have been allocated on a nationally and locally respectively<sup>38</sup>. The Council's future agenda includes combatting youth employment, reducing the proportion of marginalized youth, eradicating consumerism, and decreasing the risk of radicalization among young people<sup>39</sup>.

2.5. The GoKZ declared 2019 the 'Year of the Youth' in November 2018, and the project was launched in January 2019<sup>40</sup>. The 'Year of the Youth' focuses on creating housing, employment and adequate education for young Kazakhs<sup>41</sup>. The government plans on building 1, 000 rental apartments annually for working youth in Astana, Almaty, and Shymkent<sup>42</sup>. The National Chamber of Entrepreneurs 'Atameken' has been chosen to continue work on business education for the youth. The GoKZ intends to expand the program of business grant support to 20,000 grants for young people, and approximately 32 billion tenge (\$ 84.4 million) will be allocated to the project. A fund to support startups by young people will also be created<sup>43</sup>.

2.6. On education, the government pledged that the availability and quality of higher education would be improved. In addition to the 20,000 grants under the Five Social Initiatives of 2018 and 75,000 new places in dormitories, scholarships will be made available to students engaged in volunteering. Furthermore, grant funding for projects by young scientists will be increased by 3 billion tenge (\$7.9 million) annually. Also, distance learning and evening education and the Open University will be introduced as part of the package for youth education. The Zhas Maman (Young Specialist) program, the modernization of educational institutions in the regions, one top university and ten top colleges would update their technical base and invite foreign professors expertise to raise the level of teaching to international standard. More than 60 billion tenge (\$158.2 million) will be allocated annually for these projects<sup>44</sup>.

2.7. The Zhasyl El (Green Country) movement will be used to launch the Green City–Green Village program, involving the planting of greenery in all settlements of the country, including both cities and villages. The student construction movement will be developed alongside the green project, especially in the construction of large projects such as the new Center in the Turkestan region<sup>45</sup>. Finally, the Youth Movement of the People's Assembly of Kazakhstan used the platform of the 'Year of the Youth' to introduce its plan to plant an apple orchard in Astana, which was accepted by the President of the country<sup>46</sup>.

### 3. Education

3.1. As per the latest report (2013-14) on UNESCO's Education for All (EFA) Development Index, Kazakhstan has ranked first by achieving universal primary education (99%), adult literacy (99%), gender parity (99%), and a nearly 100% of transition from primary to secondary general education<sup>47</sup>. Articles 19 and 30 of the country's Constitution

34 GoKZ (2014), Employment Roadmap 2020 Covers About 370 Thousand People in Kazakhstan, <http://www.government.kz/en/razvitie-regionov/21342-employment-road-map-2020-covers-about-370-thousand-people-in-kazakhstan.html>

35 GoKZ (ND), Single Business Support <http://economy.gov.kz/en/pages/single-business-support-and-business-development-program-business-roadmap-2020>

36 Kazakhstan 2050, op.cit

37 GoKZ (2017), Youth Policy Under the President of Kazakhstan to Deal with Unemployment, [https://www.inform.kz/en/youth-policy-council-under-president-of-kazakhstan-to-deal-with-unemployment\\_a3102770](https://www.inform.kz/en/youth-policy-council-under-president-of-kazakhstan-to-deal-with-unemployment_a3102770)

38 Ibid

39 Ibid

40 GoKZ (2019), Government Approves Year of Youth Roadmap, [https://www.inform.kz/en/government-approves-year-of-youth-roadmap\\_a3510841](https://www.inform.kz/en/government-approves-year-of-youth-roadmap_a3510841)

41 In Depth News (2019), Year of the Youth 2019 Stirs Up Kazakhs, <https://www.indepthnews.net/index.php/archive-search/central-asia/2477-year-of-the-youth-2019-stirs-up-kazakhs>

42 Ibid

43 Ibid

44 Ibid

45 Ibid

46 Ibid

47 World Bank (2015), World Bank Group-Kazakhstan Partnership Program Snapshot, <http://www.worldbank.org/content/dam/Worldbank/>

guarantee every Kazakh citizen free and compulsory education through primary and secondary education in State schools<sup>48</sup>. In addition, the right to free higher education is on a competitive basis<sup>49</sup>. Kazakhstan has almost achieved parity in primary and secondary schooling and literacy. The net enrollment in primary school in 2017 was 86.29% for girls and 86.21% for boys; secondary school net enrollment in 2017 was 100% and 99.7% for girls and boys respectively<sup>50</sup>. The literacy levels for both sexes stood at 99.74% for women and 98.83% for men. It is therefore unsurprising that the country is currently positioned 15<sup>th</sup> in the world and 9<sup>th</sup> in literacy level on youth education ranking<sup>51</sup>. 3. 2. However, gender-based difference is noticeable after basic comprehensive education (Grade 9) as young men move to technical and vocational training studying in fields such as hydrocarbon, energy, transport, and construction sectors with more prospects and better economic remuneration<sup>52</sup>. On the other hand, young women remain in general education in comprehensive schools pursuing studies in humanities, health, and education traditionally associated to female's area of employment<sup>53</sup>.

Tertiary net enrollment for females and males was 55.47% and 43.88%, respectively<sup>54</sup>. As per the government statistics, the same trend is observed in postgraduate enrollment with female dominance in both master's at 60.2% and doctoral studies 61.7%<sup>55</sup>. The OECD's statistics on females in postgraduate studies in the same period was 64% for master's and 58% for doctorates<sup>56</sup>.

## 3.2. Skills-Based Training

3.2.1. Before the modernization of the technical and vocational education (TVE) sub-sector under the second phase of the GoKZ 's State Program for Education and Development (SPED) 2016-2019<sup>57</sup>, the sub-sector was in decline<sup>58</sup>. For example, by 2012, the number of TVE institutions declined by 30% since Kazakhstan gained independence in 1991<sup>59</sup>. Also, the number of students in the sub-sector declined by 5.6% in 2015<sup>60</sup>. This figure translates to a fall of 4.4% or 909, 900 persons for students aged 15-18 years and by 4% or 1.75 million for those aged 19-24 years<sup>61</sup>. Furthermore, only 22% of Kazakh see TVE as a respectable professional pathway compared to 71% of European Union citizens<sup>62</sup>. Finally, a survey by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) notes that the low level of personnel training is an obstacle to the development of the business sector<sup>63</sup>. For instance, the Kazakhstani workers lack computer-aided design skills, are less experienced in complicated welding constructions and technical English<sup>64</sup>.

3.2.2. The overall goal of the GoKZ's SPED is to improve the quality of vocational education and training and to ensure that it is oriented towards the labor market, to increase the employability of both youth and adults, as well as improve the quality and international compatibility<sup>65</sup>. As such, the development objective of the World Bank's project is to raise the relevance, quality, and efficiency of TVE through an improved policy framework and institutional capacity<sup>66</sup>. The program aims at:

document/Kazakhstan-Snapshot.pdf, P.5-6

48 GoKZ (2012), Promotion and Protection of All Human Rights, Civil, Political, Economic Social, and Cultural Rights, Including the Right to Development, <http://adilet.zan.kz/eng/docs/O1200000010>,

49 Ibid

50 UNESCO (2017), Kazakhstan Country Data, <http://uis.unesco.org/en/country/kz?theme=education-and-literacy>

51 In Depth News, op.cit

52 ADB (2013), Kazakhstan Country Gender Assessment, <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/institutional-document/34051/files/kazakhstan-country-gender-assessment.pdf>, P. 25& 26

53 Ibid: 25 & 26

54 UNESCO, op.cit

55 OECD (2017), Reforming Kazakhstan: Progress, Challenges and Opportunities, <https://www.oecd.org/eurasia/countries/OECD-Eurasia-Reforming-Kazakhstan-EN.pdf>, P. 145

56 Ibid:145

57 Ibid:

58 GoKZ (2018), Kazakhstan Develops Technical and Vocational Education-Statistics, [https://www.inform.kz/en/kazakhstan-develops-technical-and-vocational-education-statistics\\_a2985137](https://www.inform.kz/en/kazakhstan-develops-technical-and-vocational-education-statistics_a2985137)

59 GoKZ (2012), Promotion and Protection of All Human Rights, Civil, Political, Economic Social, and Cultural Rights, Including the Right to Development, <http://adilet.zan.kz/eng/docs/O1200000010>,

60 GoKZ 2018 op.cit

61 Ibid

62 Ibid

63 Ibid

64 Ibid

65 GoKZ 2012, op.cit

66 Ibid



- Updating the content of TVE taking into consideration the country's industrial and innovative development;
- Improving the image of TVE among the population;
- Ensuring the availability of TVE and the quality of its personnel training;
- Improving the management and monitoring of TVE development; and
- Ensuring high-quality training of competent personnel<sup>67</sup>.

To this end the GoKZ has:

- 432 trustees, 16 regional and 14 branch councils, and the National Council have been established to assist in the expansion and improvement of the TVE system;
- The number of TVE institutions increased by 1.6% since 2016;
- A project to increase IT-knowledge formation, "Free Vocational Educational for All", will cover unemployed and self-employed young people as well as people of working age who do not have a professional education;
- 3,250 places allocated in 2014 for technical and vocational training positions to students: in 2014-15, 1,000 places were granted, in 2015-16, 1, 200 places and 2016-17, 1,050 places.
- 348 colleges introduced dual education, with the involvement of 1,715 enterprises, covering more than 22,000 students in ten priority areas including oil and gas, energy, tourism, mining, mechanical and chemical engineering, and mechanical electronics.
- 535 senior managers of local authorities and state-run TVE institutions received training in modern management techniques through 31 seminars, workshops and training sessions<sup>68</sup>.

3.2.3. However, there are no recent data on enrollment rates in technical and vocational education and training (TVET). According to ADB's statistics on TVET education for 2010/2011, men dominated in engineering, hydrocarbon, transport, and energy, and women in social services, economics, and management, food technology and technology of consumer goods and commodities<sup>69</sup>.

### 3.3 Inclusive Education

3.3.1 The GoKZ signed the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) in 2008 and ratified the convention in 2015<sup>70</sup>. The ratification of the CRPD is part of the Kedergisiz Keleshek (Future Without Barriers) program of Nur Otan party, the ruling party<sup>71</sup>. The Future Without Barriers focuses on Kazakhstan's disabled, to ensure they are included in the country's development as it begins to embody its middle-income status and progress toward joining the world's 30 most developed countries, the goal of its long-term development strategy, Kazakhstan 2050 Strategy<sup>72</sup>. As per the Ministry of Healthcare and Social Development on the ratification of the CRPD, "will provide the 627,000 disabled persons living in Kazakhstan, and their families, additional guarantees of enjoyment and protection of their constitutional rights and freedoms<sup>73</sup>. The Future Without Barriers program seeks to focus on helping disabled Kazakhstani find permanent employment, eliminate physical barriers, create a legal framework to ensure disabled people realize their rights, raising public awareness of and positive attitudes toward people with disabilities and developing inclusive education<sup>74</sup>.

67 GoKZ (2017), Kazakhstan Develops Technical and Vocational Education Statistics, [https://www.inform.kz/en/kazakhstan-develops-technical-and-vocational-education-statistics\\_a2985137](https://www.inform.kz/en/kazakhstan-develops-technical-and-vocational-education-statistics_a2985137)

68 Ibid

69 ADB (2013), Kazakhstan Gender Assessment, <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/institutional-document/34051/files/kazakhstan-country-gender-assessment.pdf>, 26 & 27

70 UN (ND), United Nations Treaty Collection, [https://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg\\_no=IV-15&chapter=4&lang=\\_en&clang=\\_en](https://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg_no=IV-15&chapter=4&lang=_en&clang=_en)

71 Edge (2015), Kazakhstan Making Strides in Disability Access, Acceptance, <https://www.edgekz.com/kazakhstan-making-strides-in-disability-access-acceptance/>

72 Ibid

73 Ibid

74 Ibid

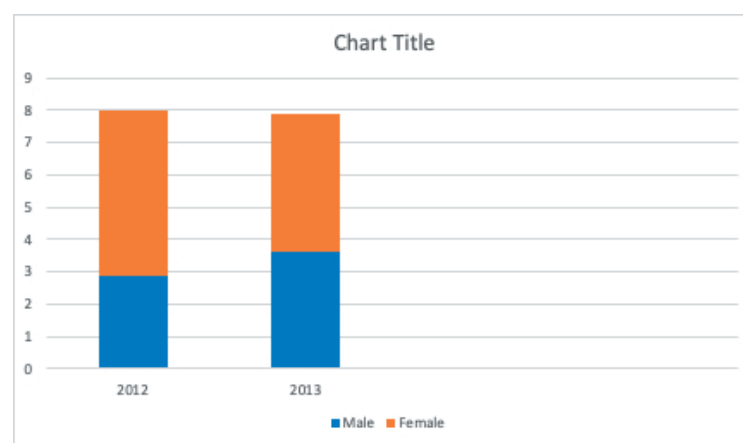
3.3.2. The GoKZ worked on a new national plan for persons with disabilities in 2018 to replace the 2016 plan set to expire at the end of 2018<sup>75</sup>. The plan's seven areas of work include preventing disabilities, inclusive education, barrier-free living (infrastructure development), economic independence, improvement in social rehabilitation, modernizing the social service system and raising awareness on people living with disabilities<sup>76</sup>. On inclusive education, it would be introduced in 30% of preschool, 70% of schools and 40% of technical and professional education institutes across the country<sup>77</sup>. Unfortunately, the details of the program were not disclosed to the public at the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection press briefing<sup>78</sup>.

3.3.3 The UNHCR, the UN's refugee agency in partnership with the Kazakhstan Red Crescent society, implements the GoKZ's multipurpose cash grant as part of its objective to promote equal access to primary and secondary education for all<sup>79</sup>. The grant covers the cost of school uniforms, books, stationery, bridge training and language classes<sup>80</sup>. There were 596 refugees and 154 asylum-seekers in Kazakhstan as of 1<sup>st</sup> July 2017<sup>81</sup>. Of this number, 177 were children of school-going age, and in schools due to the GoKZ's commitment to promoting equal access to primary and secondary education to all children irrespective of their status<sup>82</sup>. Furthermore, UNHCR advises refugees and asylum-seekers to seek further education and training by providing them access to international web-platform Coursera since August 2017<sup>83</sup>.

## 4. Economic Empowerment

### 4.1 Unemployment and Employment

Figure 2: Youth Unemployment Rate in Kazakhstan, 2012 & 2013



4.1.1. According to the International Labor Organization's (ILO) latest data on youth unemployment rate in Kazakhstan in 2012 stood at 3.0% (2.9% for men and 5.1% for women) and 3.9% in 2013 (3.6% and 4.3% for men and women respectively)<sup>84</sup>. Furthermore, the youth unemployment rate was lower than the adult rate of 5.0% in 2015 (4.3% for men and 5.7% for women)<sup>85</sup>, which can be argued that it is one of the few countries with not only a lower youth unemployment rate, but the rate is lower than the adult unemployment rate<sup>86</sup>. In addition to corroborating Kazakhstan's low unemployment rate, the OECD stated that employed youth are usually engaged in poor quality

75 Astana Times (2018), Kazakhstan Develops New National Plan for People with Disabilities, <https://astanatimes.com/2018/10/kazakhstan-develops-new-national-plan-for-people-with-disabilities/>

76 Ibid

77 Ibid

78 Ibid

79 UNHCR (2017), UNHCR Supports the Rights of Refugee Children to Education, <https://unhcr.kz/eng/news-of-the-region/news/2660/>

80 Ibid

81 Ibid

82 Ibid

83 Ibid

84 ILO (ND), Kazakhstan Country Data, [https://www.ilo.org/ilostat/faces/oracle/webcenter/portalapp/pagehierarchy/Page21.jspx?\\_adf.ctrl-state=11126fz1q\\_4&\\_afLoop=1342547154727690&\\_afWindowMode=0&\\_afWindowId=null#%40%40%3F\\_afWindowId%3Dnull%26\\_afLoop%3D1342547154727690%26\\_afWindowMode%3D0%26\\_adf.ctrl-state%3D15ngzb61p\\_4](https://www.ilo.org/ilostat/faces/oracle/webcenter/portalapp/pagehierarchy/Page21.jspx?_adf.ctrl-state=11126fz1q_4&_afLoop=1342547154727690&_afWindowMode=0&_afWindowId=null#%40%40%3F_afWindowId%3Dnull%26_afLoop%3D1342547154727690%26_afWindowMode%3D0%26_adf.ctrl-state%3D15ngzb61p_4)

85 Ibid

86 Ibid

and low paying jobs that are mainly in the informal sector<sup>87</sup>. Informal sector jobs lack social protection and labor rights which render workers susceptible to exploitation. Although Kazakhstani youth have access to several income-support programs, such as employment benefits and targeted social assistance, they are insufficient in case of job loss<sup>88</sup>. Additionally, coverage of youth unemployment benefits in Kazakhstan is comparatively low to OECD countries, as no unemployment assistance is offered to young job seekers, and severance payment is low<sup>89</sup>.

4.1.2 Despite the country's low youth unemployment rate, the President of Kazakhstan established the Council for the Development of Youth Entrepreneurship in 2013 to identify and propose solutions to youth entrepreneurship problems<sup>90</sup>. Other structures for entrepreneurship development include the Damu Enterprise Development Fund and the Business Roadmap 2020 (BRM 2020)<sup>91</sup>. Youth employment programs in Kazakhstan include the following projects:

- Program for the Development of Productive Employment and Mass Entrepreneurship (2017-2021) for young people under the age of 29, including the unemployed and self-employed. Its goal is the promotion of employment of the population and the involvement of citizens in entrepreneurship. The program's potential beneficiaries have been divided into three categories; the first group is aged 18-21 years classified as dependants, refers to individuals who are educated, with certain practical skills, but are unwilling to either continue working or studying. The second group aged 22 to 24 years, focuses on young women with children and single mothers, and the third category 25 to 29 years includes freelancers who prefer flexibility, non-institutionalized jobs, shadow sector and those who prefer casual earning. The program's focus is creating consultative centers for young people, advancing technical and professional education, improving dual education, raising awareness about support and development initiatives and the development of youth entrepreneurship<sup>92</sup>.

- The roadmap on the employment and socialization of youth not in employment, education or training (NEET) is for citizens aged 18-29 years including those who graduated from universities in 2018 was launched in October 2018<sup>93</sup>. The goal of the roadmap is to create an enabling environment for the application and development of youth potential and increasing their competitiveness in all spheres of public life<sup>94</sup>. The roadmap has 11 program areas: education, employment, health protection, affordable housing, entrepreneurship development, upgrading financial capability, legal culture, increasing intolerance to corruption, strengthening patriotism, support of talented youth, development of infrastructure and coverage of state youth policy implementation in mass media<sup>95</sup>.

- The Zhasyl (Green Country) project has been running since 2005 and is Kazakhstan's biggest social project funded by the government. The project provides opportunities for youth to use their spare time constructively in the summer. They are involved in planting, greenery, and landscaping various parks and other spaces. The program is open to high school or college student, as well as unemployed youth and young rural dwellers. In 2018, it was projected to create new summer jobs with an allocation of 637 million KZT (more than US\$19 million) to pay project participant 35, 000 KZT (almost US\$ 108) monthly<sup>96</sup>.

## 4.2 Ecosystem and Entrepreneurship

4.2.1 The entrepreneurship ecosystem includes government programs to boost the sector, and private sector initiatives.

- Government Initiatives

- The Damu Entrepreneurship Development Fund introduced special provisions in 2013 in its "Express guarantee"

87 OECD 2017, op.cit: 137

88 Ibid:137

89 Ibid:137

90 GoKZ (2014), Kazakhstan Sets Up Councils for Youth Entrepreneurship Development, [https://www.inform.kz/en/kazakhstan-sets-up-council-for-youth-entrepreneurship-development\\_a2730462](https://www.inform.kz/en/kazakhstan-sets-up-council-for-youth-entrepreneurship-development_a2730462)

91 OECD 2017, op.cit: 79

92 GoKZ (2018c), Implementation of the Program for the Development of Productive Employment and Mass Entrepreneurship, 2017-2021, [http://egov.kz/cms/en/articles/zanyatost\\_2020](http://egov.kz/cms/en/articles/zanyatost_2020)

93 GoKZ (2018d), Kazakhstan Government Adopts Program to Support Youth, [https://www.inform.kz/en/kazakh-gov-t-adopts-program-to-support-youth\\_a3395227](https://www.inform.kz/en/kazakh-gov-t-adopts-program-to-support-youth_a3395227)

94 Kazinform (2018), Government Approves Draft Roadmap for Employment and Socialization of Youth, [https://www.inform.kz/en/kazakhstan-boosts-youth-policy-implementation-with-new-road-map\\_a3463779](https://www.inform.kz/en/kazakhstan-boosts-youth-policy-implementation-with-new-road-map_a3463779)

95 Ibid

96 Central Asia News (2018), Kazakh Government to Create 18,000 Jobs for Youth This Summer, [http://central.asia-news.com/en\\_GB/articles/cnmi\\_ca/features/2018/05/24/feature-02](http://central.asia-news.com/en_GB/articles/cnmi_ca/features/2018/05/24/feature-02)



program for entrepreneurs under 30 years of age and in business for less than a year. This removes the sectoral restrictions usually associated with the guarantee program and guarantees up to 20 million KZT. One of the aims of the initiative is to promote the development of youth entrepreneurship in the spheres of trading, catering, and other types of activities, which were not previously a priority in the BRM 2020 program, but which may better align with the type of business started by young entrepreneurs. Between 2010 -2017, 816 young entrepreneurs had received loan-related financing under this framework totaling KZT 9.2 billion<sup>97</sup>.

- In partnership with Youth Business International (YBI), Youth Business Kazakhstan (MOST) was established in 2015. This is an initiative of the Social Public Fund of Kazakhstani Leaders (SPFKL) and the Young Entrepreneurs Club (YEC). Supported by the Damu Entrepreneurship Development Fund and KazMicroFinance (KMF). MOST provides a free-of-charge integrated package of support to develop their own business, in accordance with the global approach of the YBI. The YEC undertakes the educational and mentoring parts of the program, access to finance is provided through cooperation with the Damu Entrepreneurship Development Fund and the KMF, and the SPFKL oversees the program implementation and provides access to contacts in governmental bodies and other potential partners and supporters<sup>98</sup>.

- The Astana International Financial Center (AIFC) was officially launched in July 2018. The AIFC is positioned as a financial hub for the Countries of Central Asia, the Caucasus, the Eurasia Economic Union, the Middle East, Western China, Mongolia, and Europe. About 55 companies had already registered with the AIFC at the launch, and the number is envisaged to grow to 500 by 2020<sup>99</sup>.

- Nazarbayev University launched Kazakhstan's first business incubation program in 2018. The goal of the ABC Incubation is to support new ideas, innovative business projects at an early stage that solve the real problems of the industry. As a result of the program, startup teams will develop not only a successful business plan but also a working prototype their future product. The program is aimed at teaching, practicing and developing a viable business model, as well as attracting potential customers to promote and launch their product. The program duration is 12 weeks, which includes technology entrepreneurship training, necessary services, and infrastructure for product development, personal mentoring, tracking, seminars, expert sessions with successful entrepreneurs and professionals in their field. The priority directions of the program are industry 4.0, medicine, agriculture and green campus<sup>100</sup>.

- Tech Garden is an innovative cluster established by the Government of Kazakhstan to foster technology innovation ecosystem and further development of economic and social sustainability that will boost investment in research and development (R&D) and technology transfer and commercialization. Special economic zone and its tax benefits for participants is the key element of the innovative cluster<sup>101</sup>.

#### 4.2.1 Private Initiatives

- Istartup helps launch and develop IT projects that can compete in the international market<sup>102</sup>.

- Garage Incubator-The project's program is intensive and lasts three months. It incorporates Steve Blank's lean startup approach and experiences of incubators in Singapore, Ukraine, Belarus, Russia, and Malaysia. It empowers entrepreneurs with basic needs to turn their ideas into a minimal viable product, prepare them for the next development stage acceleration program and attract private investments<sup>103</sup>.

## 5. Youth Engagement and Civic Participation

5.1. At independence in 1991, Kazakh youth formed various institutions and organizations such as 1) school and

97 OECD (2018b) SME and Entrepreneurship Policy in Kazakhstan, [https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/employment/sme-and-entrepreneurship-policy-in-kazakhstan-2018/national-programmes-for-smes-and-entrepreneurship-in-kazakhstan\\_9789264301450-9-en#page44](https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/employment/sme-and-entrepreneurship-policy-in-kazakhstan-2018/national-programmes-for-smes-and-entrepreneurship-in-kazakhstan_9789264301450-9-en#page44) P. 186

98 Ibid:187

99 Fintech News (2018), Kazakhstan Strives to Become an Attractive Destination for Fintech Startups, <http://fintechnews.sg/25146/fintechkazakhstan/fintech-kazakhstan/>

100 Nazarbayev University (2018), The First Business Incubation Program Starts at Nazarbayev University, <https://nu.edu.kz/news/astana-business-campus-pleased-announce-launch-first-business-incubation-program-nazarbayev-university-young-entrepreneurs-students-innovators-abc-incubation>

101 Startup Kazakhstan (2018), Startup Kazakhstan, <https://gust.com/programs/startup-kazakhstan>

102 Istartup (2018), Istartup <http://istartup.kz/>

103 Astana Times (2018), Garage Incubator Selects 14 Projects Ahead of Astana Hub Accelerator Launch, <https://astanatimes.com/2018/02/garage-incubator-selects-14-projects-ahead-of-astana-hub-accelerator-launch>

student governments, 2) youth parliaments and 3) youth governments to protect their rights and interests<sup>104</sup>. They advocated for a new country, a new economy and new policy<sup>105</sup>. Some of their organizations included Zhas Otan, Abyroi, Association of Young Leaders, Youth Parliament of Kazakhstan, Youth Media Alliance of Kazakhstan, Kaisar, Kahar, and Union of Patriotic Youth of Kazakhstan<sup>106</sup>. The vibrancy in the youth sector did not last long as some of the organizations disappeared, some other were disbanded. As a result, most of the organizations that survived are mostly state-owned and pro-government<sup>107</sup>. Given this reality, the most prominent organization currently operating in Kazakhstan is Zhas Otan, the youth wing of the Democratic Party, Nur Otan<sup>108</sup>.

5.2. Zhas Otan was created as a public organization at the first congress of Nur Otan on May 14<sup>th</sup>, 2008, in Astana. The organization has branches across the country, as well as at the district and city levels. The central council of Zhas Otan includes deputies of the mazhilis of the parliament of Kazakhstan, Mashikhats of all levels, leaders of youth NGOs, young athletes and cultural figures. The mission of the organization is the consolidation of Kazakhstan youth on the basis of the policy platform of the President of the country with a view to ensuring the modernization leap in the development of the country. The goal is to create a strong and authoritative political youth organization capable of leading the youth. The following measures were put in place to fulfill its mission-ensuring that youth gain experience in socio-economic, political, civil and other socially significant activities in the country. At another level, it entails protecting the rights and interests of young people-ensuring the completeness and quality of the implementation of rights and state guarantees for young people as provided by current legislation<sup>109</sup>.

- The Kazakhstan Youth Corps Program funded by the World Bank commenced in 2014. Its objective is to promote young people's community engagement and life skills through a community-based service-learning program, especially for vulnerable youth. The project has three components: a) community-based service learning and skills, b) life skills development and management training, and c) outreach to vulnerable young people<sup>110</sup>. More than 2,000 young people who are not in regular work or study, have participated in different social and entrepreneurial activities since 2017. It is expected that by 2020 about 8, 500 youth would have participated in the program<sup>111</sup>.

- Kazakhstan's National Volunteering Strategy was unveiled in December 2018 as part of the World Banks' funded Youth Corps Development Project. The priority areas of the strategy are motivation and stimulation of volunteers, information support and recognition of the volunteers' contribution to the development of Kazakhstan, as well as the continuing education of volunteers<sup>112</sup>.

5.3. A Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung report noted that 77.7% of youth were satisfied with the level of democracy in their country, 17.1% did not know, and only 5.2% were unhappy with the political situation in the country<sup>113</sup>. Concerning the political views of the respondents, 35.8% had right-wing views, 46.4% had liberal-leaning views, and the remaining 17.8% were in the middle of the political spectrum<sup>114</sup>. The level of respondents' views on engagement in politics and citizens' initiatives was low at 15.1% and 21.3% respectively in urban areas compared to 18.5% and 25.6% in the respectively in the rural areas<sup>115</sup>.

## 6. Development Partners in the Youth Sector

- The World Bank
- Islamic Development Bank
- British Council

104 Zhabina, Z.H.R. and Abdrazakova, L. (2017), The National Youth Policy of the Republic of Kazakhstan as an Instrument of Ideas, Solidarity and Tolerance Among the Youth, <https://articlekz.com/en/article/19729>

105 Ibid

106 Ibid

107 Ibid

108 Ibid

109 Ibid

110 World Bank (2018b) Kazakhstan Youth Corp Program, <http://projects.worldbank.org/P127966/kazakhstan-youth-corps-program?lang=en>

111 World Bank (2018c), World Bank in Kazakhstan: Country Snapshot, <http://pubdocs.worldbank.org/en/530541539098312156/Kazakhstan-Snapshot-Oct2018.pdf>, P.4

112 Astana Times (2018b), National Volunteering Strategy Presented in Astana, <https://astanatimes.com/2017/12/national-volunteer-strategy-presented-in-astana/>

113 Ebert, F. (2018), Youth in Central Asia: Kazakhstan, <https://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/kasachstan/13343.pdf>, P.129

114 Ibid:132

115 Ibid: 138

- Government of Norway
- The United Nations System
- European Union

## 7. Recommendations

- i. The IsDB should work with the GoKZ to advocate for age and sex-disaggregated data in the youth sector;
- ii. IsDB should assist the GoKZ in mainstreaming youth development across all sectors of the society in particular in sectors related to education, employment, entrepreneurship, governance etc;
- iii. The IsDB should work with the GoKZ to increase female students' participation in male dominated TVET courses ensuring their practical and strategic needs are taken into account;
- iv. The IsDB should advise the GOKZ to institute gender quotas and other affirmative actions across its youth programs;
- v. IsDB should work with GoKZ to increase youth civic participation in the country; at the national, regional, local level;
- vi. IsDB should provide technical support to assist the GoKZ to implement SDG target 8b (develop and operationalize a national strategy for youth employment, as a distinct strategy or as part of a national employment strategy).

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