

**Mariam Gelkhauri**

## **Youth Organizations of Political Parties in Georgia as a Tool for Political Socialization of Youth (2020 Parliamentary Elections)**

### **Abstract**

The article discusses the role of youth organizations of political parties in the political socialization of young people during the 2020 parliamentary elections in Georgia. In-depth interviews with young representatives of 9 political entities (which crossed the 1% threshold) revealed opportunities for political socialization of youth. It was found that political parties in their ranks do little to encourage young people to develop politically and develop their political careers from youth organizations of political parties.

In today's political parties, there is a practical attitude towards the members of youth organizations, which leads to the nihilistic attitude of the youth towards the parties and politics in general, which is why they often leave the party. The pre-election activities of the youth organizations of the parties during the 2020 parliamentary elections were different from the activities of the post-election period. It has been found that the number of young people in the youth wing has dropped dramatically since the election due to a reduction in resources or initiatives by the party.

**Keywords:** *Youth organizations, political parties, parliamentary elections, political socialization*

### **Introduction**

Politics is a field of public activity that determines the daily life of each person. Nowadays, there is a perception that "politics is a dirty business", in 17 in-depth interviews conducted in the course of the present study, the majority of respondents pointed to the dirtiness of the policy, given the people involved in it. Therefore, the demand for the emergence of new faces in the political process is likely to be high in the society. Youth is a segment of society which can "improve politics."<sup>1</sup> Their fighting spirit, initiative, protest, objective and critical attitude to events, are important in the process of building a healthy society. Against the background of the technological development of the modern world, young people are better able to keep pace with innovative processes, including in politics. The involvement of young people in political processes is a prerequisite for the establishment of a Western political class, there is the new political faces that can change the existing reality. At the same time, it is important to promote a healthy political socialization of the youth. In the present paper, our aim is to directly define the role of party youth organizations in the political socialization of youth. It is interesting how much the youth organizations of political parties played the role of agents of political socialization of the youth in the period before and after the 2020 parliamentary elections in Georgia.

Political socialization is the process by which citizens crystallize political identities, values, and behaviors that are relatively sustainable throughout life. As early as 1959, Hyman defined political socialization as the "study of social patterns of an individual that is consistent with his or her social position as a mediator in various areas of society" (Hyman, 1959). The process of political socialization takes place in the life of each individual and is driven by the participation of many social agents such as

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<sup>1</sup> In-depth interview with the MP of the "United National Movement", May 15, 2021)

parents, friends, teachers, institutions, political parties, the media and more. Later, Merelman extended the concept of political socialization and defined it as "a process in which people acquire a relatively stable orientation around politics and their political system" (Merelman & Herman, 1986, pp. 279-319). In theories of political socialization, it is believed that the experience of early life significantly determines subsequent political attitudes such as political values and identity, as well as political involvement and political behavior. A more modern definition of political socialization stems from Glasberg and other authors. This perception, in turn, shapes and defines individuals' perceptions of who they are and how they should behave in the political system in which they live (Glasberg & Shannon, 2011, p. 56).

In order to determine the role of political parties in the process of political socialization of youth during the 2020 parliamentary elections in Georgia, we set out the tasks in the study, namely:

1. Identify the activities of youth organizations in political parties in the pre-election and post-election period, successful activities
2. Reasons for young people to leave the youth organization of parties (demotivators)
3. Experience of involvement of parties in youth organizations in the biographies of MPs
4. The share of the youth segment (up to 25-30 years old) in the electoral lists of nine parliamentary parties

The involvement of young people in political processes and their appropriate political socialization is important because it is politics that determines their future. It is especially important to be involved in the activities of political parties because, in the future, these political parties will be transformed into the government. The voice of youth in politics means talking about the many challenges that youth face today and why most of them have to leave the country. When a person becomes involved in politics from an early age, he or she has a greater chance of learning, mastering, developing, and creating a political "background" and consciousness. The younger generation is the part of society that stands out for its purposefulness, energy, drive for change. The desire of young people to get involved in politics means to make their small contribution to the process of building the country. We suggest that young people involved in youth organizations of political parties in Georgia, to some extent, play the role of agents of political socialization of youth, and the more youth are involved in youth organizations of political parties, there is the higher the political socialization of young. As part of the qualitative research, targeted sampling, 17 in-depth interviews were conducted with youth organizations of political parties, young people involved in them, leaders of these organizations, experts, politicians, who are the objects of research in the paper.

## **Literature Review**

Teona Turiashvili, a researcher at the Institute of Politics, presents a report that helps us to understand the political activity of young people in Georgia and the main mechanisms of political involvement, their level of awareness. At the beginning of the paper, the author emphasizes that "young people are deprived of in-depth information about political processes" in Georgia (Turiashvili, 2016, p. 2). Based on data from Caucasus research resources, cites data on low awareness of youth political processes. Also, based on a variety of facts, the researcher reviews the importance of youth involvement in political processes, citing various statistics, which clearly prove the low level of political participation of the young in the country.<sup>2</sup> By presenting the main challenges of young people, the author tries to show us the reasons which

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<sup>2</sup> See. Right there. P. 3

influence low political activity.<sup>3</sup> According to the report, the young wing of political parties rarely has the function of recruiting members of the political elite and preparing them for political careers. We think our research will support this assumption. Finally, the researcher summarizes the main messages of the report and offers quite productive recommendations that serve to increase the political education and political interest of young people. Based on the analysis of the above processes, the author offers a logical conclusion that "political nihilism prevails among young people."<sup>4</sup> The author's conclusion is important in our attachment to the research topic. As noted in the paper, youth for parties is an additional resource for the election campaign. The opaque recruitment system in parties ultimately alienates young people from political parties and further leads to distrust of young people towards political entities.

The Institute for Multiparty Democracy in the Netherlands's (NIMD) Georgian Legislative Reform Assistance Program includes a paper by Davit Jijelava's research entitled "Youth Development in Georgian Political Parties: Finding Ways to Use Party Resources" (Jijelava, 2012). This study focuses on youth organizations of political parties. The author emphasizes the youth wing as an important human resource for any political party. The study shows that young people are skeptical to start and develop their careers from the youth wing of political parties, because as the researcher notes, such politicians are small in Georgia compared to other countries, so it is logical that young are looking for other ways to develop a political career such as from a business or NGO, and so on. Here the researcher points out the reasons that motivate young people to distance themselves from politics and party activities. Speaking about political participation, Davit Jijelava, based on statistics in the study, analyzes the change in the dynamics of participation in the elections of the Georgian electorate in 1992-2008. The study also analyzes the youth political and civic organizations of Georgia, the author's historical perspective fundamentally responds to youth research. It is noteworthy that in his paper, the researcher analyzed the party background of 137 Georgian MPs at the time, of which only 27% were found to have party affiliation or any experience of working or being in a party. He then compares these figures with countries with strong democracies, such as Belgium, where politicians have ten times more experience of activism. It is interesting to note the researcher based on these data, according to which the origin of politicians is mostly not related to political parties, ie they are political "outsiders" and since the parties are not ideologically divided, therefore, the views of politicians are different.

The further part of the research is related to the involvement of young people in the activities of political parties. First, there is a talk about the functions of youth organizations, the role of the young, and their role as a resource in political parties. Here the author once again emphasizes the lack of the ideological base of the parties, hence making an adequate conclusion: Showing the initial ideological connection of political parties with young people is only illusory and encouraging. The recorded interviews with the youth wing of the major political parties, the researcher develops a kind of profile of young activists, which interestingly describes the characteristics, status, differences, or similarities that these young people possess.<sup>5</sup> We think that these kinds of findings, for the in-depth analysis of the real picture, allow for quite productive conclusions.

Under the title "Challenges and Realities of Political Participation and Civic Involvement in Central and Eastern Europe" (Podolian, Ekman, & Gherghina, 2016), the researchers present different ways of involving citizens in politics. The introduction of the article thoroughly substantiates the urgency of the

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<sup>3</sup> According to the author, according to the CRRC survey, employment, poverty and education are the three main problems for young people

<sup>4</sup> See, Right there, P. 6

<sup>5</sup> For example, according to the professions in the study, lawyers are more prevalent in party activities

issue related to the events of the last decade in Central and Eastern Europe. One of the most important virtues of the article is the variety of literature presented, which makes it sharply scientific. The article connects with the challenges of political participation in Central and Eastern Europe, the authors with a broad analysis of the scientific literature, present the challenges that are observed in this direction. A comparison of political participation in the democracies of Western Europe makes the contrast between these countries more clear.

"Youth Political Participation in Political Parties: A Literature Review of the Factors Affecting Participation at the Macro, Meso, and Micro Levels" - In this study, Regina Weber seeks to explain the challenges that young people face in the modern world. Also, with various diverse literature and the example of Western European countries, she talks about the reasons for the non-involvement of young people in political parties. The author's assumption reflects the perspectives of members of youth organizations in European political parties, whose involvement further becomes a precondition for their political careers (Weber, 2017, pp. 27:379–396). An overview of the importance of youth organizations in Western parties will help us to understand the political conjuncture of modern democracies towards young people, which will transparently show the contrast between Georgia and other Western democracies.

R. Weber, by defining the concept of individualization, seeks to explain the changes in the attitudes of the younger generation that have emerged in the modern world and that lie in the popularization of individualism. This section of the paper explains well the reason for the changes that have reduced party membership. The following section of the study discusses the main trends of change and their impact on three aspects of youth party membership in particular: 1) reduction of membership, 2) professionalization of party structures, and 3) the role of youth organizations.

"Youth Organizations in Political Parties: Political Recruitment and the Transformation of Party Systems" (Marc Hooghe and Dietlind Stolle) - This article focuses on reducing the political participation of young people, which, according to the authors, is due to a loss of interest in political and public activities. According to the article, this trend is due to the reduction of traditional mobilization channels. The article raises a very interesting question - "Young people may still be interested in activities in political parties, but are the political parties themselves interested in young people?" (Stolle & Hooghe, 2005, p. 45) In further discussion, the authors cite informative statistics on the example of Germany, Belgium, and other countries to see how much youth activity has declined. As a result of the article, the authors point out the importance of researching youth organizations.

### **Political Nihilism of the Youth**

Although according to recent surveys, most young people participate in elections, very few of them are involved in political processes. The particularly small number of youth are involved in youth organizations of political parties. "Dirty" politics ultimately leads to the nihilism of young people towards political activism. They become active only when it comes to the fundamental values of the country, including the foreign course. Various challenges in Georgia since gaining independence have further increased young people's nihilism towards politics. A closed political space forces a large number of young people to go to another country and establish themselves there. Nowadays, young people in political processes have less opportunity for self-realization and voice of initiatives, in this regard, the situation is especially difficult in political parties. Respondents we interviewed confirm that very few young people around them are interested in politics because young people find it difficult to join a party and establish themselves:

*"We are often disappointed... you work hard, you defend the party and you strengthen it, and in the end, the sponsors of the parties appear in the lists. That is why young people lose the desire to be involved."<sup>6</sup>*

The reason for all this is, sometimes, the selfish attitude of the older generation of politicians towards the younger generation. According to the interviewed experts, another reason for the indifferent attitude towards youth politics is the current politicians themselves. The current Georgian political class does not trust the young involved in their party structures. The reasons for this are different. Often, there are age-old stereotypes in society, so such attitudes of political entities further reinforce the distrust of young people. The research revealed several factors of youth political nihilism, of which the personification of political parties is one of the most common, as well as frequent mistrust of young people by politicians based on their less experience.

It is in the face of such distrust that political nihilism is intensifying among young people, although we can not blame the parties alone. In interviews with us, experts often focused on the problem of young voters' attitudes, because for them "faces are more important than ideologies." The demand for "leaders" and "messiahs" has been particularly noticeable in Georgia over the past 30 years, with the majority of the public voting for leaders rather than the party's future visions or healthy communication. Due to this attitude of the voters, the parties are also forced to base their election campaign on specific leaders, as the current politicians tell us, otherwise the parties will simply lose the voters. The personified attitude of the parties is evidenced by the fact that some of the parties registered during the 2020 parliamentary elections, especially the newly established parties, mentioned their leader's name in the title, for example, "Lelo - Mamuka Khazaradze", "Citizens - Aleko Elisashvili", "Irakli Okruashvili - Victorious Georgia" and others. (cesko.ge, 2020). This tendency is also confirmed by the current MPs:

*"We have political parties based on leaders, where the new generation finds it difficult to establish itself"*

The research revealed another reason why political entities are less interested in the young segment. Due to the political nihilism of the youth, the interest of the parties in Georgia is to gain the highest possible support for the elections. For them, youth is not a target segment, they think that youth do not go to the polls (although the situation is different according to recent studies), so the parties are focusing more on the older generation.

## **Activities of Youth Organizations of Political Parties in the pre-election period**

In order to understand the role of young people in the youth organizations of political parties and in political parties in general, we have identified the activities carried out by the youth organizations of political parties. In the framework of the research, we studied the activities of the youth wing of 9 political entities in the period before and after the 2020 parliamentary elections.

The activity of young people during the election period of political parties differs significantly from the ongoing processes during the non-election period. Elections are a defining process of cyclical activity for young people. Moreover, mainly political parties attract young people in election campaigns as "seasonal work, 2-3 months."<sup>7</sup> In the view of politicians, during the election period, directly on election

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<sup>6</sup> In-depth interview with a member of the youth organization of the "Labor" party. May 25, 2021

<sup>7</sup> In-depth interview with expert-analyst. June 7, 2021

day, young people are more effective and principled because they can not stand injustice and defend their votes much better.

In the run-up to the 2020 parliamentary elections, young people were mobilized by political parties. Some political parties were relatively more actively involved with young people in the election campaign, with experts estimating that such were mainly opposition political parties. Such as "European Georgia", "Labor", "Lelo for Georgia" and "Strategy Aghmashenebeli". It is noteworthy that the representatives of this party are actively talking about the involvement of young people in election campaigns and confirming their important role.

Almost all respondents surveyed in this study confirm that the level of youth involvement during the election period is radically different from the non-election period. Most of them also talk about the "black" work done by young people in the pre-election period, which includes, for example, putting up posters, distributing agitation materials, waving flags in rallies and majoritarian campaigns, and so on. Naturally, the representatives of specific parties distinguish their party in this regard and note the general background that unfortunately this is the case, but, in fact, they confirm such activities carried out by young people.

The involvement of young people in the pre-election period is as high as possible. Young people are busy with almost all the difficult work of the election campaign. In the interviews, young people talk about their activities in the youth organizations of political parties. Mostly, the youth at this time are engaged in agitation activities, going door-to-door, handing out flyers, filling out support forms. It is also very important to go door-to-door with other majoritarian candidates or other agitation meetings. Members of youth organizations in several parties have called for greater involvement of young people in the election period, such as Labor and Lelo, which include activities such as training of election observers. Representatives of the youth wing of the "Labor Party" confirmed their involvement in the development of certain areas of the party's election program, which is unprecedented and rarely or almost never happened in other parties in the run-up to the 2020 parliamentary elections. Interestingly, in relatively small and newly established parties, young people were more likely to be mobilized in positions of responsibility in 2020, such as Chief of Staff, in senior positions on proportional electoral lists (young people aged 25-29 – "Labor", "Lelo For Georgia"), rather in government and large opposition parties. The head of a youth organization in one of the districts of the ruling party tells us about the activities carried out in the pre-election period of 2020. Their activities were mainly of two types: centrally planned and regional, which mainly included sports, educational outings, meetings with candidates, various tourism and cultural projects, cultural exhibitions, and city or district development activities. There are indeed a variety of events, but a large part of the youth here also regrets that such activation of youth organizations by political parties during the election period is based on other goals (we will discuss this topic in detail below).

### **Activities of youth organizations of Political Parties in the post-election period**

Unlike the election campaign period, the activity of youth organizations decreases in the post-election period. However, the 2020 parliamentary elections were specific. After the elections, political parties still needed to mobilize certain masses, especially the youth, as the boycott process featured numerous rallies in which the voices of young people were important to political parties.

In general, the biggest challenge for political parties in the post-election process is to mobilize and maintain a youth organization, as agitation activities are no more. Moreover, the material resources of political parties are exhausted. Even in the post-election period, they simply no longer have the finances

to sustain the entire team. This means that the motivation of a certain part of the team is not valuable and ideological. Experts and politicians are actively talking about the lack of ideological visions of the parties, which leads to the outflow of people from the parties.

The main activity of the youth organizations after the 2020 elections was to participate in various protest rallies with appropriate attributes. The peculiarity of the post-election period was that it took place against the background of a pandemic, so the members of the youth organization point out the disruptive factors caused by this virus. However, some parties actively involved young people in various fields, for example "Strategy Aghmashenebeli" implemented a project to monitor parliamentary activity, which included not only the youth of their party, but all interested young people and gave them the opportunity to better participate in active political processes in parliament.

Some opposition parties have been actively involved in social protests since the election, such as the "Labor Party" Representatives of public movements close to the UNM also took an active part in the protests, especially during the first round of elections after the boycott. As for the various activities carried out in the party structures, in which young people were involved, these activities mainly involved various pieces of training, seminars, "binding" of young people with representatives of specific topics in the parties, regional outings of interest, for example, political union "Lelo" youth leadership tells us about their planned tour with the participation of young people in western Georgia, where they got acquainted with various regional challenges. The situation is different in other parties, where despite the efforts of young people, during the non-election period, there is no desire on the part of the parties for various activities.

*"Everything ends after the elections, no activity, no meeting."<sup>8</sup>*

### **Successful activities of youth organizations of political parties**

Members of the youth organizations of the parties surveyed in the research process tell us about their experiences during their time at the party. Basically, their successful activities include events such as protests, performances, for example, a member of the youth organization "European Georgia" recalls the original communication with the population during the agitation period. A young member of the party "Lelo" will single out the activities carried out as a result of Posner's visit, as a result of which Vladimir Posner's visit to Georgia was canceled. The former leader of the youth wing of the "Patriots Alliance" also remembers the action performance, as a result of which the national exhibits in the museum were protected from damage. Relatively large and diverse projects are being talked about by young members of major parties, such as one of the leaders of the civil movement "Shechtsale", which is close to the UNM, recalls a project in which about 600 young people participated. They underwent training and seminars, as a result of which they acquired knowledge and developed leadership skills. The former member of the ruling party's youth organization recalls a variety of activities during the election campaign, outing tours, and exhibitions. The former leader of the Georgian Dream youth organization singled out the ruling party's youth organization in 2016 as a member of the International Youth Organization, which held a large-scale summit, but the same young man left the Georgian Dream youth wing in 2017 based on reducing projects and then he joined the opposition party.

### **The Purpose of Youth Organizations in Political Parties (to develop a political career?)**

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<sup>8</sup> In-depth interview with a member of the youth organization the party " For Georgia"

Various activities in political parties serve specific purposes. The youth organization is one of the mainstays of the parties, especially during the election campaign. Numerous reasons for the need for youth organizations for parties were mentioned in conversations with party representatives as well as experts in the field. As the young people themselves point out, "youth organizations are the equivalent of blood transfusions for political parties and having a child for a family."<sup>9</sup>

The lack of ideological visions of political parties largely reflects the attitude of young people towards political parties. Polled politicians cite a lack of ideological visions of political entities, which leads to a selective attitude of people to the people of the parties, "the current situation is like a business."<sup>10</sup> Today's political class sees rivals in youth hence their diligence, combativeness, and individualism often remain leveled. Especially, this happens in the youth organizations of political parties. This systemic problem is created by party closure. For this reason, it is often difficult for members of youth organizations to communicate with leaders, they do not participate in decision-making, and this creates an unhealthy attitude towards the younger generation in political parties. nowadays, no political entity in Georgia has a real youth policy in the form of a written plan. On the one hand, the reason for this is the tense political background, on the other hand, the concentration of parties on the election results and vote protection process.

*"The last place for young people to realize themselves today in Georgia can be a political party, unfortunately for me, because political parties can not give the energy, can not radiate the kind of perspective that young people want a close, sincere, long relationship with them."<sup>11</sup>*

As a result of communication with political parties, we have found that the involvement of youth organizations and young people in general in the process of fundamental party building is limited. Only a few parties ("Lelo" and "Labor") emerged involving young people in important activities such as writing the party's election program and putting voter lists to the forefront. Based on quantitative analysis, we calculated the share of 25-29-year-olds in the proportional and majoritarian electoral lists. The majority candidates of this age were found to be in the nine political parties, a total of six young people, or only 4% of the total number of majoritarians (out of 163 majoritarian candidates), while in the proportional list platoon, the same political entities had nine young people, or 6% (out of 180 candidates. (See Table №1)). Another empirical data revealed in our study is that among the 150 MPs of the 10th convocation (after the 2020 elections) in the youth (aged 18-25), only 5% or 8 people were found to be political youth in political parties. Experience of involvement in organizations. This fact further reinforces our assumption that there is less development of young people's political careers within the youth wing of the parties. It is possible that these people are involved in political processes in other directions, but the number of MPs from youth organizations in the legislature is small.

**Table №1:**

<b>Political Parties</b>	<b>Proportional Lists (25-29)</b>	<b>Majoritarian Lists (25-29)</b>
<b>„Georgian Dream“</b>	0	0

<sup>9</sup> In-depth interview with the head of the youth organization of the party "Lelo" May 11, 2021

<sup>10</sup> In-depth interview with the MP of the "National Movement" May 15, 2021

<sup>11</sup> In-depth interview with an opposition MP. May 12, 2021



"United National Movement"	1	0
"European Georgia"	0	0
„Lelo For Georgia“	3	3
„Strategy Aghmashenebeli“	1	0
"Alliance of Patriots"	0	0
“Girchi”	3	0
"Citizens"	0	0
“Labor Party”	3	3
<b>Total Candidates</b>	180	163
<b>Percentage:</b>	6%	4%

Today, Georgian political parties do not value young people, their human resources are mainly focused on gaining votes before the elections. Because "it is more attractive for political parties to campaign with young people."<sup>12</sup> The role of young people in political parties is mainly limited to assisting with the so-called "mass". If you start communicating two months in advance, it means that you are doing it for the votes, it is important even in the non-election period."<sup>13</sup> In addition, during the election campaign, young people are a kind of striking force, they are engaged in such "black" activities as catching attributes on rallies, shouting, making noise - posters, flyers, agitation, collecting lists of supporters in political parties, it is young people who carry out. The tendencies of the parties to keep young people viciously also manifested themselves through various incentive methods, such as staying in tents in exchange for monetary compensation.

*"There are parties, including the opposition, that needs youth as flag bearers and young people can not develop by waving a flag."<sup>14</sup>*

Nowadays, in Georgia, for the most part, the attitude of political parties towards young people is exploitative, which is confirmed by the young people themselves in interviews with us:

*"Having young people for political parties comes out roughly, but I understand that they have young people who are a free working hand, full of energy, mobile, young people can be used more easily in various jobs";<sup>15</sup>*

*"Unfortunately, the parties do not have young people, they use them incorrectly - for black business, for the ceiling of the flag, they do not use the potential, because they do not look at it in the long run. "They do not care what the future holds."<sup>16</sup>*

<sup>12</sup> In-depth interview with a member of the "Change" movement. May 15, 2021

<sup>13</sup> In-depth interview with a member of the youth organization "European Georgia", May 21, 2021

<sup>14</sup> In-depth interview with a member of the "Strategy Aghmashenebeli" youth organization, June 5, 2021

<sup>15</sup> In-depth interview with a member of the youth organization of the party "Lelo", May 17, 2021

Another reason young people are in the party ranks is the voice of young people, which if not heard in the party, will make it difficult for them to deliver a future-oriented campaign and message to the electorate. Taking into account the interests of different groups, knowledge of youth challenges, political parties in the Western reality, it is with these motives that young people are recruited into their ranks, the opinion of the youth segment is important to them because they are the ones who deliver the message of youth. However, in the Georgian reality, the main reason for communication with the younger generation is to win the hearts of voters in the electoral process for political entities, because without youth in the election campaign, the party will not be able to properly gain the support of the young segment.

*"It is unfortunate that today political parties are playing with young people to reach a wider mass of society;"<sup>17</sup>*

*"It is an important privilege for politicians to stand by the side of the youth."<sup>18</sup>*

For a political party, youth organizations are a kind of indicator for establishing themselves in the international arena and society. Young people think that this kind of attitude of the parties is a deception of society. By attaching many young people, political entities show the public that young people are important to them, although, in reality, members of the youth wing are not involved in making important party decisions.

*"Young people are being trafficked, certain attitudes are being created in the consciousness of vulnerable groups as if young people are supporting them"<sup>19</sup>*

Eventually, even with such attitudes, the youth are instrumentalized, such attitudes of the parties are not seen by the general public, but instead, they see the youth at rallies, holding flags and thinking that the voice of the youth is important in this political party. In fact, other people often find themselves in advanced positions. Youth organization for parties is important for pragmatic reasons, which means increasing the number of supporters and positive attitude towards the youth party. At present, there is no ideological difference of opinion, controversy, the debate over programs and plans between youth organizations as well as between political parties. The polarized political environment even leads to confrontation between leaders, which is then hierarchically transmitted to the lower levels to the youth. As a result of all this, *"young people are programmed, they no longer have questions."<sup>20</sup> "They needed robots to do some blackwork."<sup>21</sup>*

Nowadays, proper political socialization of young people is less observed in the ranks of political parties themselves. The vicious motives of the above-mentioned parties to involve young people in their party activities prevent young people from proper political socialization. Today, almost no political party develops young people towards a political career. The survey found that there are debate, training, agitation campaigns in political parties, although the parties do not care to raise young politicians as leaders. According to experts, the reason for this can be considered that the party elite still comes from the

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<sup>16</sup> In-depth interview with the former leader of the youth wing of the "Georgian Dream", currently a member of the party "Lelo", May 13, 2021

<sup>17</sup> In-depth interview with the former leader of the youth organization of the party "Alliance of Patriots", May 21, 2021

<sup>18</sup> In-depth interview with the head of the youth organization of the party "Lelo For Georgia", May 11, 2021

<sup>19</sup> In-depth interview with the former leader of the youth organization of the party "Alliance of Patriots", May 21, 2021

<sup>20</sup> In-depth interview with a member of the youth organization of the party "Lelo For Georgia", May 17, 2021

<sup>21</sup> In-depth interview with the former leader of the youth organization of the party "Alliance of Patriots", May 21, 2021

1990s. "When we did not have politics. The current situation is still post-Soviet, which is very hierarchical and closed and hinders young people in political development. (Young people) are not promoted in terms of career in the modern party elite."<sup>22</sup> We do not have 21st-century politicians in Georgia yet. In addition, the concentration on political party leaders, the lack of intra-party democracy, and the vertical and bureaucratic principle of governance hinder young people from developing their political careers. In the course of the research, we spoke with a representative of one of the non-governmental organizations that left the party's youth organization and joined the public movement, due to undemocratic intra-party governance, opaque lock-in system, and protectionism, as well as pressure and bullying from various segments of society (according to the respondent's experience, partisanship is a reason for public ridicule).

*"Unfortunately, we are in Georgia. It is still the case that if you have a boss, maybe he will join the party, and if he turns out to be smart at all, he will become a man in 10-15 years. The parties have similar attitudes towards the youth."*<sup>23</sup>

Speaking about the development of political careers, the minority of the representatives of the youth organizations of the parties say that the youth organizations help the youth to develop their political careers, for example, one of the members of the organization called the United National Movement, where the members of the movement "Kmara" were united (however, in this case, we can not consider "Kmara" as a youth organization). The political and personal development of a young person is done to some extent by joining a party, but in order to establish a career, young people automatically have to fall victim to influences, follow the game, limit themselves to the obedience of leaders, and it is this pragmatism that erases their initial moral values. It is difficult for political parties to realize that *"as I grow, so will the party grow."*<sup>24</sup>

The situation at the party "Girchi" is completely different. There is no separate youth wing in their ranks. Due to the ideology of "Girchi", bureaucratic divisions in all spheres of society are unacceptable for them. In the course of the survey, several respondents expressed the desire that there be no separate youth organization in political parties at all, in their view, it is this division that leads to unhealthy attitudes towards young people within the party structure.

To study the political involvement of the youth, we also used the method of quantitative research, in particular, content analysis, which examined the biographies of the parliamentarians of the 10th convocation, and found out how many of them had any experience of party activity in the youth. These data helped us to determine the extent to which young people involved in the activities of political parties have the opportunity to further their political careers. According to the data, out of the current 150 MPs (under the age of 25), according to official and supplementary materials, only about 5% have experience of party activism in their youth, ie 8 people, and another 7 people had indirect ties to the ruling parties in their time.

### **Why do youth leave the youth organizations of political parties?**

Most of the young people, after a certain period, leave the youth organizations of the political parties. The research revealed the main demotivators that cause young people to distance themselves from the party permanently or temporarily. Basically, the reasons for leaving the party youth organization are more

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<sup>22</sup> In-depth interview with expert-analyst, June 7, 2021

<sup>23</sup> In-depth interview with a member of the youth organization of the party "Lelo For Georgia", May 17, 2021

<sup>24</sup> In-depth interview with a member of the youth organization of the party "Lelo For Georgia", May 17, 2021

individual and are based on pragmatic motives - starting a job, starting a family. Political parties reduce the allocation of financial resources after the elections, the reason for this may be that they simply no longer consider it necessary to spend financial resources after the elections, or simply, these resources are exhausted, especially for small parties. The 2020 election period, however, turned out to be relatively different, as post-election parties still had to maintain human resources amid large-scale rallies. However, as a rule, the number of young people in the youth organization decreases dramatically after the elections.

After the election, when parties reduce the allocation of financial resources to young people involved in the party, they are forced to leave or move to a passive role, because to recall the Maslow pyramid, people primarily have to meet the biological needs that financial resources need. So young people go where they can to generate these resources. According to some respondents, it is right when political parties provide financial support for young people. Because, in their view, *“young people cannot fall from the air. When a young person invests so many resources, it is necessary to support him.”*<sup>25</sup>

*“I’m in a youth organization and I’m helping you with something. I need to have some benefits that will help me develop. It makes a lot of sense.”*<sup>26</sup>

In addition to pragmatic goals, the youth may leave the youth organization of a political party for more fundamental reasons. Speaking about the party demotivators of the youth, the expert politicians name the important reasons that push the youth not only to distance themselves from the party but also to develop a feeling of political nihilism. The fundamental decisions of the parties are often decided at the level of a small group or specifically a party leader. In this process, the initiatives and views of the members of the youth wing remain beyond consideration. When a young person realizes that the political party has been actively using him in the pre-election agitation processes, and then the processes go into a passive phase and his role in the party becomes insignificant, naturally the young person feels hopeless. Against this background, individuals do not have the experience, the ability to fight, or the political will to voice and implement their own ideas and initiatives, even if they are different, within the party, which ultimately creates the feeling that politics is really "dirty" and fighting this filth is futile. This is one of the reasons why young people leave a party or youth organization. On the other hand, there are youth demotivators of the electorate, the political elite, and from the state, such as the fact that supporting a losing party is taboo. Voters often have stereotypical attitudes towards young candidates, they become the subject of ridicule and have less support from the electorate.

Politicians and the young people themselves name the individual psychological reasons of the young people, which is why young people often leave parties such as willpower, a difference of priorities, the feeling that the smartest, the unacceptability of losing. After the election results of the parties, part of the members of the youth organization remains disappointed. Sometimes, the low outcome of political parties leads to the distancing of young people. However, we think that the election result of a separate party alone does not determine the demotivation of young people. Due to the fact that political entities can not offer young people the opportunity for long-term development, young people are forced to leave the youth organizations of the parties.

## Conclusion

In the run-up to the 2020 election, youth involvement in party youth organizations during the pre-election campaign was extremely important for the political parties themselves. With the help of the

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<sup>25</sup> In-depth interview with a member of the youth organization party “For Georgia”

<sup>26</sup> In-depth interview with a member of the youth organization party “For Georgia”

youth, political entities tried to gain the support of the electorate. It was important for political entities to maintain youth organizations in the aftermath of the politically tense situation after the 2020 elections, however, overall the work of youth organizations weakened after the elections, with youth and political development no longer a priority for parties. Members of the youth organizations of the parties with parliamentary mandates participate in various activities, however, mainly these activities serve to popularize the parties in the pre-election period or to protest any political event where parties form a mass of young people and appear in society and internationally as active political forces.

A study of the activities of youth organizations found that mainly the activities of young people in political parties are limited to the performance of "blackwork", which requires a lot of energy, enthusiasm, and fighting spirit. As for political socialization, for political parties, political education of young people was not a priority during the 2020 election period. Only a handful of parties emerged in the 2020 elections that put young representatives at the top of their proportional and majoritarian lists, even in very small numbers. There are almost no political entities in Georgia that write about the party program and ask the opinion of the members of the youth organization. A very small number of MPs in the 10th convocation, a total of 5%, found the experience working in youth organizations of parties, which means that youth organizations of political parties are one of the last places for political development. It is because of this attitude that political nihilism reigns among young people and politics are perceived as a "dirty deed".

The reasons for the political nihilism of youth are:

- Dirtiness of the policy
- Social challenges
- Distrust and selfishness on the part of politicians
- The skeptical attitude of the electorate towards young people
- The personification of political parties
- Perception of youth in the electoral process by the parties as a non-profit segment

The research showed that the activity of young people during the election period of political parties is significantly different from the ongoing processes during the non-selection period. In the pre-election period, youth activism in the parties is a kind of "seasonal work" that is done after the elections. The involvement of young people is important for the parties because the young are more efficient, fair, and principled during the election period, so they follow the election process much better. Some political parties had relatively more youth involved in the election campaign. According to experts, such were mainly opposition political parties. However, mainly, the activities of young people in the pre-election period involve the performance of so-called "black" work, which is the most difficult. The pre-election period also included sports, cultural and educational events for the youth, which were aimed at popularizing the party. The research revealed that in relatively small and newly formed parties, in 2020, more young people were mobilized for responsible positions, such as chief of staff, senior positions on proportional electoral lists, writing election programs.

In the post-election period, the activity of youth organizations is declining as agitation activities cease. The main activity of the youth organizations after the 2020 elections was to participate in various protest rallies with appropriate attributes. Also, various training, seminars, "binding" of young people in the parties with representatives of specific topics, regional trips based on interest. The study highlighted the successful activities carried out by the parties during the 2020 election period with the involvement of young people. Basically, their successful activities included events such as protest performances. In the

case of large parties, relatively large-scale youth projects were also identified. Youth organizations are important for parties with pragmatic motives, which include:

1. Increase the number of supporters
2. Positive attitude of the youth towards the party

The study found that none of the political entities has a real youth policy in the form of a written plan, the proper political socialization of young people in the youth organizations of political parties is less observed. Today, almost no political party develops young people towards a political career. The political and personal development of a young person is an accompanying process of joining a party, although young people automatically become victims of influence in order to establish a career. Parties do not care to raise young politicians as leaders. This fact is due to:

- Concentrate on the leaders of political parties
- Non-democratic intra-party governance
- Opaque, locked-in party system; Protectionism
- Pressure and bullying from the community

Research has shown that there are various motivators for young people to leave the party. In particular, pragmatic demotivators include: starting a service, starting a family, cutting off finances from political parties. All of the psychological demotivators often find in young people a lack of willpower, a reluctance to lose, a sense of being the smartest, frustration with the low results of the party, and a sense of the futility of fighting. Psychological demotivator also includes voter skepticism towards young people, at which time the young person loses motivation for political activity because he can not feel support from voters. As for value demotivators, it is more fundamental and is related to an ideological contrast with the party, as well as rejection and non-acceptance of their decisions and visions within the party. Also, it is common for young people to leave the party with the demotivation of political development, they simply can no longer see the prospects for development in the parties.

The data presented in the paper gave us the opportunity to test our hypothesis related to the political socialization of young people. It was found that the active involvement of young people in the youth organizations of political parties does not increase their level of political socialization for the various reasons listed above. As a result of the research, our hypothesis was not justified, because today, in Georgian political parties, there is no will and opportunity for proper political socialization of young people. In the future, in order to improve the current situation, it is necessary to increase the role of youth organizations in political parties through various activities, involving young people in the political decision-making of the party, as well as writing an election program. We think that the activism of both the ruling party of the political parties and the youth themselves is necessary for these changes because without a fight it is impossible to make the necessary changes for public development.

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