YOUTH COUNT?

An analysis of the influence of youth non-governmental organizations on youth policy formulation

Master Thesis

Cătălina Dumbrăveanu
Student number: 452148
First reader: Oliver Blarel
Second reader: Koen Stapelbroek
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ABSTRACT

Key words: youth policy; National Youth Councils; policy formulation; process-tracing case study.

Youth policies are important for ensuring the transition from childhood to adulthood, empowering young people, and ensuring their social inclusion and active participation in all life dimensions. In order to make sure that their real needs are reflected in the policies, young people should be involved in policy-making. Currently, there are a growing number of non-governmental organizations that advocate for the interests of youth. Among them, youth non-governmental groups and, particularly, National Youth Councils stand out due to their capacity to represent the voice of young people and realize activities aimed to contribute to youth sector development. Due to the principle of participatory policy-making, which is at the core of democratic systems, very often such organizations are engaged in policy-making. This thesis aims to investigate and explain these groups typical process of influencing youth policy formulation in countries that overcame a communist regime, by analyzing two cases – Georgia and the Republic of Moldova.

Drawing upon a policy network theoretical approach, this research presents a causal process tracing in a small-N case study. Subsequently, two in-depth analyses are conducted, concluding with a cross-case comparison. The process tracing is demonstrated through desk research and interviews, and starts with an overview of the institutional framework that enables youth organizations to participate in policy-making, followed by an analysis of the policy actors – the National Youth Councils and the governmental agencies responsible for youth sector development, with a focus being placed on their resources and strategies. Last, the process of policy formulation is presented, together with an assessment of the policy priorities and the extent to which these reflect the visions of each of the policy actors.

The findings of this study are in line with the launched theoretical hypotheses. These reveal that the influence of youth councils on policy formulation is conditioned by the governmental approach towards participatory policy-making and by the resource dependence between policy actors. Additionally, youth councils often emulate the government's practices and strategies that they are working with. Both stable political context and well-defined institutional framework are necessary for such organizations to be effective in their mission. These conclusions can be used for improving the policy process and for creating a more representative and comprehensive youth policy. If desired, the research could be expanded to further address the influence of youth organizations in other phases of the policy cycle.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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ABBREVIATIONS

ACF   Advocacy coalition framework

CNTM   National Youth Council of Moldova

CoE   Council of Europe

CPT   Causal-Process Tracing

CSO/s   Civil Society Organization/s

EaP   Eastern Partnership

EC   European Commission

EPYRU Eastern Partnership Youth Regional Unit

EU   European Union

GEL   Georgian Lari

MDL   Moldovan Leu

MSYAG Ministry of Sports and Youth Affairs of Georgia

MYS Ministry of Youth and Sports of the Republic of Moldova

NCYOG National Council of Youth Organizations of Georgia

NGO/s   Non-governmental organization/s

NYC/s   National Youth Council/s

OHCHR Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

OPG   Open Government Partnership

PNA   Policy Network Approach

UN   United Nations

UNDESA United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs

UNESCO United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

UNICEF United Nations Children's Fund

UNFPA United Nations Population Fund

USAID   United States Agency for International Development

YFJ   European Youth Forum

1. INTRODUCTION

The first chapter presents an introduction to the researched topic in the following manner. First, the background of the research is broadly set, focusing on youth and youth policies. Next, the objectives of the study are presented and the central research question is highlighted. The fourth sub-chapter refers to the societal and academic relevance of the study, and the choice of the research design - selected for achieving the research objectives and ensuring its relevance - is outlined. Lastly, a reading guide for the thesis is provided.

1.1 Youth and youth policies matter

It is common saying in many parts of the world that the future belongs to young people. Their energy, creativity, and innovativeness can ensure the economic progress, the social development and the transformation of the future. In order to harness this huge potential, efficient, quality youth policies must be provided today.

Historically, the term 'youth' has been used to describe the psychological and biological period of adolescence (Williamson, 2002). According to the Oxford English Dictionary (2017), it denotes both (i) a life span - "the period between childhood and an adult age" and (ii) the characteristics of a young person - "the qualities of vigor, freshness, or immaturity as associated with being young". The academic literature, reviewed in the second chapter, presents definitions of 'youth' from psychological, sociological and anthropological perspectives. All three fields of study highlight the challenging character of this period, referring to specific individual struggles, the quest for autonomy and for finding a meaningful role in the society (Gaudet, 2007).

The data shows not only an increase over the past few decades in the sheer number of young people age 10 to 24, but also an increase in the diverse classifications of youth at national and international levels. UNFPA (2014a) reports that there are approximately 1.8 billion aged between 10 and 24. Being in transition from childhood to adulthood, they face numerous challenges such as disparities in term of resources and opportunities among social groups, insecurities related to labor market integration, and limited opportunities for political participation. These challenges highlight the need for comprehensive, quality national youth policies to address these aspects and to empower young people. The importance of youth in different spheres (political, economic, demographic, etc.) varies from country to country, but it seems that states become more and more engaged in tackling youth related issues, aiming to improve the living standards, increase the participation and ensure a rights-based approach towards the young. Nowadays, more 60% of the world countries have a national youth policy

(Youthpolicy.org, 2014). Ideally, such policies should provide an overarching framework that would ensure the development of knowledge, skills, and competency of young people, stimulating the civic engagement, facilitating the transition from childhood to adulthood and their integration into the society and into the labor market (Siurala, 2005).

In line with the promotion of the principle of good governance, at the beginning of the millennium many international organizations started emphasizing the need for a participatory approach towards the development of youth policy, where the policies would not only address the needs of young people and empower them, but include them in the policy-making process at national and local levels to ensure their relevance. Nevertheless, even though countries recognize the importance of youth participation, only a limited number present such practices at national level. In many democratic systems, there are a growing number of civil society representatives, such as young leaders, youth workers, trainers and researchers, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) which advocate for the interests of youth, trying to bring their issues on the political agenda and to engage in a constructive dialogue with the authorities, in order to contribute to quality policy outcomes. The main non-governmental structures which represent the voice of the young people in relationship with the authorities are the National Youth Councils (NYCs). In some countries, their emergence is actually a result of youth policies that prioritize the stimulation of youth civic participation. In others, NYCs develop independently from a grassroots, individual centric level. Nevertheless, in democratic countries, where the policy-making became more participatory, including a wide range of non-governmental stakeholders, such organizations can have, in theory, a say in the process.

But is this also true of countries which are still transitioning towards democracy? Much of the available literature is focused on largely democratic countries, and not the former communist Eastern European states, which were part of the Soviet Union until the beginning of the 1990s. However, these are particularly interesting to analyze, due to the differences inherent in their system where the youth and country at large are and have struggled to align their idealistic view of democracy with the remnants of the old regime, in the form of institutional frameworks that impede their voice to be heard. Is the youth policy-making concentered only in the hands of the authorities or the youth NGOs able to influence the process? If so, how? The puzzle of these questions stays at the core of the current research. An extensive presentation of the background of the study is presented in Chapter 2.

This thesis addresses only the phase of policy formulation, which connects the agenda setting with decision making, policy implementation and impact achievement. This stage of the policy cycle has a

high importance because it implies elaborating and prioritizing solutions to the policy issues from the public agenda, and accordingly – setting goals for their achievement. Based on these, further concrete actions will be implemented. Additionally, quality policies require a deep understanding of the policy issue at stake. Hence, the process of policy formulation should engage a variety stakeholders. However, national styles of policy formulation and generally – policy-making - are formed in time, being dependent on the political regimes, institutional frameworks and the level of civic engagement. As such, investigating cases of youth policy formulation in the context of relatively new democracies would actually present how is framed the future of young people in these countries.

The following sub-chapter sets the concrete objectives of the current research.

1.2 Research objectives

Broadly, this research aims to contribute to filling the literature gap, concerning the process of national youth policies development.

Particularly, the dissertation intends to determine the influence of youth non-governmental organizations, represented by National Youth Councils, advocating for the rights and for the interests of young people on the formulation of the national youth policy. The study tests a theoretical framework deriving from the field of public administration, exploring the application of the Policy Network Approach (PNA) in the youth sector, in two post-communist Eastern European countries: Georgia and Republic of Moldova (further referred as `Moldova`).

The purpose of the research is threefold. First, it aims to understand how the national institutional framework determines the influence of NYCs on policy formulation. Second, it investigates the activity of youth non-governmental organizations in two democratizing countries and their advocacy strategies. Third, it presents the role of the governments, as facilitators of participatory policy in the particular sector of youth policy. Based on these aspects, the author purposes to identify possibly transferable good practices.

1.3 Research question

Following the research objectives, the main research question of this thesis is:

> **How do youth non-governmental organizations influence the formulation of youth policies in the Eastern European democracies?**

The independent variable of the research question is considered the youth non-governmental organizations, while the dependent variable is considered to be the youth policy formulation. The concepts behind the variables are presented in Chapter 2, in the literature review, then operationalized later in Chapter 4. The research question is answered by applying a Policy Network Approach, which is focused on the interdependent relations between policy actors and their repercussions on the policy process. The specific hypotheses drawn from it are discussed in Chapter 3.

1.4 Societal and academic relevance

1.4.1 Societal relevance

This study goes beyond a merely theoretical dimension and has a strong societal relevance, particularly for the policy-making process.

First, a research into the field of youth policy development broadly suggests how much importance is given to youth in the analyzed countries and to what extent youth counts for policy makers.

Second, it proves under which circumstances non-state actors, such as youth NGOs, can have an influence on youth policy-making. By providing an insight into participatory policy-making strategies, it reveals the particular factors that enable an efficient collaboration between the authorities and the NYCs, and determine their influence in policy formulation. This knowledge might serve as a basis for adapting the strategies of the organizations, in order to increase their impact and have a stronger say in the process, and of the governments, in order to ensure a more effective civic participation.

Finally, the case study highlights transferable knowledge and good practices, which could be of tremendous value for the youth policy development in other countries that share similar political and societal contexts, such as Armenia and Ukraine.

1.4.2 Academic relevance

The study is a contribution to the literature on policy analysis. It is positioned at the 'crossroad' between public policy and public management.

So far, very little research has been conducted on youth policy development, what the role of non-governmental stakeholders in this process is and how the policy is actually formulated. Most publications on the subject limit at presenting the existent policies in different countries. In many cases, researchers approach policy implementation without considering the factors that influence the policy development at other particular stages of the policy cycle. Moreover, little academic attention was dedicated to the role of NGOs in this process. The current research aims to contribute at filling this gap.

The relevance of focusing on two Eastern European countries – Georgia and Moldova - is linked to the specific political context of the region – since the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1989, these countries are in the process of reforming their political system, institutionalizing and strengthening democracy. In the last years, both of them have gained praise for their progress in this regard from the European Union (EU). As participatory policy-making, which envisions that different public groups are engaged in the process, is a characteristic of democratization, looking at the influence of NGOs on youth policy formulation highlights weather the principles of participatory policy-making are applied in these countries, in this particular policy field.

1.5 Design of the study

The thesis presents a qualitative research method. For answering the research question, an observational, explanatory, small-N research design is chosen. The theoretical framework is tested trough causal process tracing (CPT). Accordingly, the author looks back at the process of youth policy formulation in the selected countries and. This ex-post analysis contributes at understanding the causal mechanism between the youth NGOs and their influence on policy, revealing how the independent variable mattered for the outcome of interest. Further, an integrative comparative case study is realized.

For the research purpose, empirical information is gathered mainly through desk research. Interviews are used as a complimentary source. An elaborate presentation of the chosen research design is realized in Chapter 4.

1.6 Reading guide

The thesis is structured in 7 chapters. This first chapter introduces the subjects of research, highlighting its objectives, the central research question, the relevance and the design of the study. Subsequently, a comprehensive literature review focused on youth policy development and the influence of non-governmental organizations on policy formulation is realized. The third chapter overviews the potential theoretical explanations for the question of interest, arguments the choice of a policy network approach and outlines the inferred hypotheses. The research design, the case study selection and the methods for collecting data are presented in Chapter 4. The following chapter proceeds with the analysis of two distinct case studies. These are compared and discussed in Chapter 6. The final chapter presents the findings of the study, its limitation and its policy and research implications.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter encompasses a comprehensive literature review, presenting and analyzing the main academic writings referring to the subject of interest – the influence of NGOs on policy formulation, particularly in the youth policy field. The chapter starts by providing essential background information on the conceptualization of 'youth' and 'youth policies', for increasing the understanding of the matter of research. Following, the ways in which NGOs can impact policy-making are presented. The last part describes their contribution to youth policy formulation.

2.1 Conceptualizing 'youth'

In the academic world, there is a debate on the concept of 'youth'. In sociology, it is presented as a social construction referring to a life period of transition, which suggests different meanings, depending on existing values and moral, social and political concerns (Jones, 2009). The factors that influence various definitions of youth and make a general interpretation difficult are related to (i) macro-, (ii) meso- and (iii) micro-social contexts such as (i) socioeconomic conditions, (ii) community values or (iii) family and personal values (Gaudet, 2007).

The simplest and most predominant perspective on youth presents it as a homogenous age-group (Valli, 2016). Such definitions are useful for statistical purposes but the diversity of interpretations existent at national and international levels usually hamper cross-country comparisons. The United Nations (UN) Secretariat refers to 'youth' as persons between 15 and 24 years old, recognizing, at the same time, that the term varies across countries and societies, and that other international entities may have different classifications (UNDESA, 2013). International institutions seem to agree on the general explanation that youth is a fluid category, transitioning from "the dependence of childhood to adulthood's independence" (UNESCO, 2017). Therefore, the classification of youth emphasizes as well the time span between leaving compulsory education and the first employment experience. This aspect is also taken into consideration at the national level. Because it became harder for young people to find the first job, the national classifications tend to expand the age boundaries determined at international level. Researchers draw attention to the fact that, besides categorizing ages, policy makers should consider the dynamic traits of youth, as well as the social conditions in which young people develop (Cieslik and Simpson, 2013).

The EU considers youth as a complex transition from a state of security to development but does not provide a concrete, official definition for it. However, based on the interpretations presented by the member states, the EU Youth Strategy 2010 – 2018 targets the group aged between 15 and 30 (EC, 2011).

Beyond helping to understand the concept of 'youth', definitions are important, as they lead to differentiated policy responses that aid in addressing the needs of specific groups. The diverse interpretations of 'youth' as a concept tend to lead toward a wide range of policy responses across countries.

2.2 Conceptualizing 'youth policy'

The interests towards youth policies arose in the 1960s when the UN and the Council of Europe (CoE) included aspects related to youth support on their agendas. Over the years, these organizations developed numerous documents referring to youth policy, with the main goal to define standards for such policies at national level. An important achievement in this regard was the adoption of the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond in 1995 and the Lisbon Declaration on Youth Policies and Programmes, at the first World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth, in 1998. Governments from around the world committed to implementing national youth policies, for ensuring the development of young people, agreeing on 15 priority areas, starting from education and employment to information and communication technology and leisure time activities (UN, 2010). As such, a framework of guiding principles for national youth policies was determined. These principles were reconfirmed in 2014, at the First Global Forum on Youth Policies, where it was agreed that youth policies should be: rights-based; inclusive (open and freely accessible); democratic and participatory; gender-responsive; comprehensive (cross-sectional and transversal; coherent and coordinated); knowledge and evidence-based; fully resourced (fairly budgeted and financed; competent and professional); accountable (monitored and evaluated) (Youthpolicy.org, 2016).

The World Bank (2007) draws attention to the fact that, even when countries engage in youth policy development, these often fail in three circumstances: (i) if youth are not a cross-sectoral priority at national level and governmental actions towards youth issues are not coordinated; (ii) when young people are not engaged in the design and implementation of the policies that concern them and (iii) because there are insufficient examples of successful youth policies that could be replicated in other countries.

At the European level, the CoE and the EU are key actors in the youth policy field. Even though they provide different institutional frameworks, they currently work closely together, advocating for youth rights and fostering the development of cross-sectorial youth policies in their member states (Denstad, 2009). Both governments and researchers support the idea that youth policy is "a necessary dimension of public policy" but the concept itself remains contested and is interpreted in various ways, while an agreement on common standards related to all phases of the policy-making process in the youth

field are missing (Williamson, 2002:5). Politicians often reiterate the importance of young people, especially during electoral campaigns, yet youth policy remains mostly a marginal, non-priority field of national social policy (Wallace and Bendit, 2009).

According to the CoE, "a national youth policy is a government's commitment and practice towards ensuring good living conditions and opportunities for the young population of a country" (Denstad, 2009: 13).

It is important to note that, in order to be more than merely symbolic, the policy should have clear goals and a long-term vision, presenting a broad, overarching framework that considers policies across various domains, which impact the youth directly or indirectly.

Based on the literal definition of the term, the policies addressing young people include two core elements – the age group that they target and the character of the envisioned policy, which can present a positive approach – youth a resource or o negative one – youth as a problem. A national youth policy might take the form of a law or a strategic document, articulating the governmental priorities regarding youth and the allocation of resources for achieving them.

There is no standard formula for the elaboration of quality, effective youth policies. The way in which a policy is formulated presents a country-specific, official commitment towards younger generations and reflects a clear, common vision for its development. Accordingly, stakeholders from the sector, meaning all interest groups and individuals, mainly young people, governmental agencies, NGOs which develop activities with and/for youth should be engaged in the process. UNESCO (2004) identifies six necessary steps for youth policy formulation. First, the policy should present its beneficiaries, by explaining the term 'youth' (1). Second, it should identify specific needs of young people through a consultative process and collection of data (2). Third, the process should determine strategic goals (3) through a participatory process (4). Priority areas should be set according to the real needs of the young people (5), and participatory policy-making can foster this outcome. Most of the current youth policies highlight education, employment and health as priorities. Therefore, policy formulation should consider overcoming the lines between policy sectors (6). This requires the involvement of all relevant institutions and ministries at the formulation stage. Their engagement in this phase is crucial, as it ensures their commitment to policy implementation. Overall, the peculiarities of national youth policies are determined by specific societal, economic, cultural and geographical factors. Policy learning can occur between countries through adaptation of good practices to specific national contexts.

As youth policies were included on the national political agendas relatively recently, in the second half of the twentieth century, academic research on the subject is scarce and fragmented. Only in the last few years have think-tanks and NGOs became more engaged in assessing the development of such policies at the national and regional level, trying to identify some quality standards, which could be applied at international level (YFJ, 206). Specific, periodic evaluations are presented by institutions, such as the CoE and the European Commission (EC).

A large body of literature is focused on youth policies in the EU, where the Treaty of the Functioning of the EU, which was adopted in 1993, provides the legal basis for their development. The treaty mentions in article 165 that EU should develop policies "encouraging […] youth exchanges and exchanges of socio-educational instructors, and encourage the participation of young people in democratic life in Europe" (EurLex, 2017). In 2009, the EU adopted a first Strategy on Youth, and this was followed by a growing amount of research on the Europeanization of youth policies in the member states, often supported from the European budget (Chisholm, Kovacheva and Merico, 2011). Williamson (2007) views the development of youth policies as a natural consequence of the issues faced by young people rather than as a result of the institutional initiatives in this regard. Country specific social and economic circumstances influenced more such policies than the European discursive and legislative frameworks.

Wallance and Bendit (2009) are among the first who made a comparative analysis of youth policies in the EU member states, drawing on a report published by the EC. Reflecting on the philosophies of governmental interventions, they highlight that there are two major policy approaches. The first focuses on youth as a 'problem', which leads to policies aimed to deal with unemployment, social exclusion and/or preventing crime. The second approach views youth as a 'resource'. Hence, it is focused on the empowerment of young people, achieved through better education and stimulating participation. The second approach is the one promoted by the UN and the EU institutions and is related to the rights – based approach towards youth (instead of a 'need based' policy).

In line with this classification, another group of authors focuses on youth policies either by assessing their contribution to solving certain social issues in national contexts or by referring to their impact on specific positive outcomes related to youth. For instance, the impact of youth policies on social inclusion is presented in numerous papers. Barry (2005) notes that, in Great Britain, young people have a high risk of social exclusion during their transition period to adulthood and analyses the development of British policies, aimed at solving this issue. Referring to the same problematic transition period, Roche et al. (2004) present the importance of coherence in the policies aimed to ensure greater youth

inclusiveness, as this matter is linked with other policy domains, such as economy and education. Nevertheless, as argued by Persdee (1990), policy makers should be aware not to approach youth only as a transitory life period, but consider its own meaning and ensure the positive, long-term effect of their interventions as well. Concerning the policies which approach youth as a 'resource', most of the scholars address their impact and correlation with the civic and political participation (Bessant, 2003; Farthing, 2010).

When developing case studies, most authors focus on the analysis of youth policies at national level, in individual countries, without providing a comparative cross-country analysis. The research is limited mainly by the fact that there are national variations of what is classified as 'youth' and, therefore, different understandings of what a youth policy should entail and how it is implemented (Williamson, 2002). Additionally, most of the literature limits at presenting specific policies and/or aims to assess their impact, without investigating the factors that caused the policy development (Palanas, Soler and Vila, 2014).

A significant amount of research on youth policy was accomplished by the Youth Department of the CoE, which gathers knowledge and information on the situation of the young people across Europe; elaborates guidelines, programs and legal frameworks for youth policy development in the 47 member states and provides educational and financial support in this regard (CoE, 2017). In this context, a series of international reviews of national youth policies were published in the late 1990s. However, if in the case of EU countries scholars provide additional analysis of youth policy, academic research on the development of youth policy in other countries, which are members of the CoE but not the EU, is rather scarce. For instance, the assessment of youth policies in the European Neighborhood countries was supported by a series of recent projects sponsored by the EC, which encouraged the development of a comparative analysis of youth policy in the Mediterranean Countries (Kovacheva, Popivanov, Kabaivanov, 2017). In the Eastern Partnership (EaP), the publishing of a series of national reports on existent policies and youth work was sustained by the CoE and the EC (Asanidze, 2011a; Buruiana, 2011). Same as in the case of the policy review in the EU member states, these focus only on presenting the policies in place and, partially, assessing their effectiveness. There is only one paper which elaborates a comparative study of the youth policies across the six countries of the EaP (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine), presenting the current legal frameworks, with a particular focus on youth employment policies (Motamed-Afshari and Fras, 2015). Hence, this thesis brings a contribution at covering the gaps in research regarding the factors that influence the youth policy development, looking particularly at the phase of policy formulation and the influence of youth NGOs in that process.

2.3 The influence of non-governmental organizations on policy formulation

In order to determine the influence of non-governmental organizations on youth policy-making, wider studies addressing how the civil society influences policy-making are analyzed, identifying specific aspects related to NGOs impact in the European context, particularly in post-communist, Eastern European countries. Next, most important academic publications and independent researchers referring to the contribution of NGOs to youth policy, and particularly – National Youth Councils - are discussed.

There are numerous views and definitions of what NGOs are but a universally accepted one is missing. Some scholars refer to them as "pressure groups", "lobby groups", "advocacy groups", "private voluntary organizations" or "non-profit organizations" (Vakil, 1997). Such terms are, however, unspecific. They suggest rather the type of activity that NGOs developed, and can be assigned as well to other categories of organizations. For understanding the concept of NGOs, the following aspects should be considered: what are the goals of such structures, who are their members, what activities do they develop, for whom, at which level and from which financial sources (Werker and Ahmed, 2007).

NGOs aim to represent and to make the voice of different social groups heard, contributing to the public good by improving local situations and doing often a work that governments cannot or are not willing to do (Ulleberg, 2009). This mandate classifies NGOs a part of civil society, which is a broader concept. It includes a wide range of institutions and groups, such as research institutes, think tanks, professional associations, media organizations, academic institutions, trade unions, community groups, religious groups, grassroots organizations and social movements, which operate distinctly from the state and market, are constituted by people with similar values, needs and interests and aim to engage with the state, in negotiating matters of public concern (Pollard and Court, 2005).

Being value-based organizations, NGOs can be joined by those with similar interests, norms and values. Depending on the scope of the organization, specific membership criteria might be highlighted in the document regulating its work, such as the Statute. Even though NGOs are voluntarily created and their work is not-for-profit, some organizations might have employed, remunerated stuff, due to the highly professionalized character of their work.

The activity of NGOs is independent of the politics. Its variety can be broadly classified as (i) "operational", which implies mobilizing resources with charity purposes, for a certain activity, project or program implementation; (ii) "campaigning", which has the main interest to mobilize people for an issue or event and (iii) "advocating", which defends or promotes a certain cause and seeks to influence policies

in this regard (Leverty, n.d., Willetts, n.d.). In practice, organizations can develop all three types of activity. The target group of such activities is determined by the scope and the mission of the organization.

NGOs can work at different levels – local/community level, regional, national or/and international (Vakil, 1997). Nowadays, they operate virtually everywhere around the world, differing in scope and areas of intervention. Their funding is provided from conventional sources, mainly ensured by governments and donors or non-conventional, gather through the fundraising efforts of the organization (Fundsforngo.org, 2009).

Globally, the number of the organizations that can be classified as NGOs increased significantly in the last decades. While scholars seem to agree that NGOs create positive outcomes for the society, there is a debate about their actual power to influence policy-making. This debate is rooted in the broader literature on the contribution of civil society to policy. Ghaus-Pasha (2004) states that among the civil society organizations (CSOs), NGOs have very often a leading role in stimulating citizen participation in the policy-making process. Ideally, they can contribute to policy-making by "setting agendas, negotiating outcomes, conferring legitimacy, and implementing solutions" (Simmons, 1998: 84).

The involvement of NGOs and civil society, in general, in policy-making became a practice in the developed, democratic countries around the 1980s, in the context of the broader debate on 'governance'.

Roughly four decades ago, a tremendous interest in the scientific community for the concept of 'governance' began to swell and continues today. Due to the disparity of views, the literature about it is eclectic, using the term with a variety of meanings, in different scientific fields (Jessop, 1995; Stoker, 1998; Pierr and Petes, 2000). The common point on which authors seem to agree is that the concept became actual, because "the boundaries between and within public and private sectors became blurred" (Stoker, 1998: 17). Among all definitions, two major groups can be identified. The first, looking at the distinction between 'government' and 'governance', emphasizing the importance of increasing the efficiency of the governance process through a new public management approach, which adapts the strategies of the private sector to the public one (Rhodes, 1996; Kettl, 2000). The second group of definitions refers to the interconnection between societal actors, and the public and private spheres in the process of policy-making (Kickert, Klijn and Koppenjan, 1997; Kennett, 2010). Specifically in this group, one can find explanatory provisions about the impact of NGOs on public policy development.

The assessment of the influence of non-state actors can, as well, be realized from two perspectives: a normative one, in line with the principle of 'good governance', and a management one, focused on public governance.

The normative perspective is intensely promoted and supported by the UN, the World Bank and other international institutions contributing to development. In this context, 'good governance' refers to a series societal, political and administrative principles, which envision that civic participation, transparency and accountability are important for policy-making (Leftwich, 1993). In line with these principles, the activity of NGOs is crucial for democracy.

Nevertheless, the way in which NGOs impact policy development is dependent on two main factors: (i) access to policy-making, which is the precondition for exercising influence on a policy, and (ii) capacity to influence policy-making (Tsui, Hearn and Young, 2014). These factors are approached in the literature that looks at governance as a political science and public administration paradigm. Among the distinct research strands of public governance, the public policy governance perspective provides theories, which could explain the influence of non-governmental actors on policy-making, referring to the interaction between governments and stakeholders in the process of creating and managing the policy process (Osborne, 2010). Here, 'governance' includes the theories and the practices of governance, which emphasize the power-play between governmental and private actors, markets, networks and voluntary sectors, and their role in policy-making. According to this approach, different types of actors with various social interests interact, in order to influence specific policies and the patterns of governing (Bevir, 2011). Such theories as policy communities, policy networks, advocacy coalition framework (ACF), reflected in the public governance literature, provide over-arching mechanisms for understanding how the relationship of the actors interested in a policy issue can influence the policy outcome. Chapter 3 builds up on these explanatory frameworks.

Empirical research assesses the influence of NGOs on policy-making from four main perspectives: (1) by looking at the level on which such organizations work; (2) by relating their impact to the political context in which they operate; (3) by presenting and assessing the effectiveness of their activities and (4) by looking at their sources of legitimacy (Pollard and Court, 2005).

The first perspective classifies NGOs according to the level at which they operate: local, national or global. A second approach claims that the extent to which organizations can influence policy-making is dependent on the political context (Grugel, 1999) and looks at the relationship between the civil society and the state. The third explanatory mechanism for the influence of NGOs on policies is focused on the

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activities that these develop. Such type of analysis provides a more practical insight into concrete steps that NGOs can take to increase their policy influence (Lewis, 2001). Covey (1994) is among the first to present a clear description of the strategies that can be used by NGOs to influence national policy formulation. The first enounced strategy is education that implies that organizations provide information and evidence to governments, in the support of a specific policy alternative. The second one is persuasion, according to which organizations act like pressure groups. Collaboration is the next described strategy, envisioning that civil society works together with the governments. In the cases when civil society believes that the governmental decisions are illegitimate, it can use the strategy of litigation. The last identified strategy is the confrontation, which uses protests as a main tool.

Many studies, documenting the practices of NGOs participation in the policy-making process focus on the EU member states and refer mostly to their capacity to influence politics at the supranational level. Comparatively few academic studies look at civil society participation in policy-making in the non-EU countries. Carrying a socialist past, these present hybrid democratic regimes and are going through continuous reform processes, facing numerous internal challenges such as widespread corruption, limited freedom of media, issues in the functioning of governance and low levels of political participation (The Economist, 2016). In this context, the activity of civil society is crucial for stimulating democratic transition (Grigoryan, 2014).

At the beginning of the 2000s, the social sciences researchers started paying attention to the correlation between democratization and civil society development in this region. Andrew Green (2002) presents a rigorous analysis of the legal framework of more than twenty former communist European countries and concludes that there is a strong association between the development of democratization and that of civil society. The study does not provide any insight, however, in the concrete contributions that CSOs bring to the process of democratization and the author points the need of contextual studies of their engagement in policy-making processes. Sharing a similar field of interest but looking at the reverse correlation, Howard (2003a, b) emphasized the importance of civil society for the consolidation of democratic systems in the post-communist Eastern Europe. The author notes that, in spite of the similarities between all countries, which share a communist past, in terms of civil society development there is a slight difference in those from Central Europe and those which actually were part of the former Soviet Union. However, he concludes that the civil society was relatively week, compared with other regions. The author argues that, due to the inherited practices and traditions established by the regime which collapsed, change will occur slowly, either naturally, due to the change of generations or in the case

when the state will legally enable the development of civil society and will become more engaged in supporting and working with non-governmental organizations.

In the following years, more attention started being devoted to the subject by independent and associated researchers, particularly due to the interest in this regard of major donor institutions such as the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the German Marshall Fund and others, providing development aid and support to transitioning, developing countries.

A quarter century after the collapse of communism in Europe, the capacity and the activities of civil society organizations at national level remain very diverse. In the case of those countries, which adopted a policy in favor of the European integration, mainly the EaP members, USAID (2015) points that the role of civil society increased, expanding from advocacy to monitoring and evaluating policies and the exhaustive reforms that their countries engaged with. Nevertheless, the situation varies from country to country. Assessing the state of civil society in the region, the European Policy Centre highlights that Belarus and Azerbaijan have no legal or financial framework, enabling the activity of independent organizations. Moreover, in the countries where non-governmental organizations are accepted and recognized, the authorities are rather reluctant to engage them in policy formulation or accept their policy recommendations. As a good example is provided the case of Moldova, where NGOs increased their policy influence, by strengthening their capacities and becoming more professional (Lada, 2011).

When it comes to NGOs working in the youth field and their policy engagement, the UN agencies highlight their importance for creating tangible, comprehensive policies instead of symbolic rhetoric. In the EaP, where the number of registered youth NGOs increased during the last decade, their influence on youth policy is mostly exercised through NYCs, which serve as mediators between such organizations and the public authorities (Tadevosyan and Minassian, 2011). Even though countries recognize the importance of participatory policy-making practices, whether a government will engage or not in them depends on the national institutional settings and the political and administrative systems, which determine the division of power across institutions (Angel, 2005). According to the World Bank (2007), approximately two-thirds of the countries where there are attempts of youth NGOs individually and umbrella organizations such as NYCs to influence policy-making, do not listen to them in the process. Even this data, however, is already outdated. Other concrete and detailed information about youth policy-making participatory practices are scarce.

Most of the limited research about the strategies of youth NGOs, developed for influencing policy-making, is realized by NGOs themselves. The European Youth Forum (YFJ), an umbrella organization of more than one hundred national youth councils and international youth organizations, advocating for youth rights at European level, supports the development of national youth policies, documents such practices and monitors progress in this regard in the EU member states. Its last report on the subject, realized by Holtom, Williamson and Watkins (2016) inquired the NYCs from over 20 countries across Europe, in order to identify the key issues in developing and implementing youth policy strategic documents. After realizing a desk-based review of youth policy in 10 of the countries, a series of interviews with NGO representatives and an online survey in the all targeted countries, the authors identify different types of contributions that such organizations can have to policy-making at national level and four broad models of involvement: formal collaborative models; more informal/ad-hoc models; facilitative models and confrontational models. The publication provides generic information but misses deeper per country analysis and, having a rather practical policy implication, is not grounded in any theoretical framework.

In light of these findings and the gaps in the literature, several aspects should be highlighted. First, even though the academic interest towards the CSOs and NGOs' influence on policy-making in democratizing Eastern European countries is increasing, little attention has been devoted to this topic in the field of youth policy. Second, most of the existent publications limit at presenting the youth policies of different countries, and sometimes – their historical evolution. Third, the role of youth NGOs in the policy process is acknowledged but their contribution to distinct phases of the youth policy development is rather an unexplored research area. Hence, it is worth to investigate: how do youth NGOs influence youth policy formulation in the Eastern European democracies?

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical chapter sheds light into the potential explanations for the influence of NGOs on policy formulation. The literature that refers to the research question approaches it from two major perspectives. The first body of literature looks at it from the perspective of the paradigm of 'good governance'. The second applies theories related to policy formulation, such as Policy Network Approach, Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF) and policy entrepreneurship. These theories are complementary and will be reviewed in this chapter.

The chapter begins with the specification of theories. The policy cycle framework is presented, which helps to understand what the policy-making process entails. Some of the theories associated with policy formulation, which might be feasible for explaining the phenomena of interest, are presented and

discussed. The next sub-chapter is dedicated to policy network theoretical approach. Further, the most important criticism on the selected theory is considered. In the last part of the chapter, hypothesizes based on the PNA are presented.

3.1 Selection and specification of theories

3.1.1 The Policy Cycle Framework and Policy Formulation

The influence of non-governmental actors on policy formulation can be explained through several theoretical lenses. Most of these are framed in the literature referring to the impact of stakeholders on policy-making.

By focusing on policy formulation, this thesis looks only at one specific phase of the policy process. In the field of political science, the policy process is generally perceived as a policy cycle, constituted from several phases. This model provides a framework for systemic or stage-specific research on public policy. The most common way to describe chronologically the policy process is by referring to its five key stages, as described by Howlett and Ramesh (1995) and illustrated in Figure 1.

The engagement of citizens in this process "is at the very heart of the idea of democracy", together with the political representation by elected officials, which is another characteristic of the democratic systems (CoE, 2001). Democratic regimes ensure a series of enabling factors that make participation possible: the fundamental human rights are protected, while the rights to freedom of association, freedom of assembly and freedom of expression are guaranteed by law (OHCHR, 2014). The policy process can engage a multitude of actors, increasing the transparency of the process and holding the governments accountable, but the access of such actors to policy-making is at the discretion of national authorities.

In European democratic countries, the responsibility for the policy-making process is divided mostly between the legislative and executive branches of power. National constitutions define who are the legislative and executive actors, and the concrete delineation of their respective duties. Depending on the form of government, the legislative power can be represented by a unicameral or bicameral parliament, both of which are tasked with representing the citizens and are mainly in charge of debating and adopting legislation. The executive can be formed of the government, led by a Prime-Minister, its Ministries, and agencies, and/or the head of state. The main responsibility of the executive is the governance of the state, meaning the implementation of laws. In practice, however, the division of responsibilities between branches is not strict. The legislation can be initiated both by the legislative and

executive powers (UNDP, 2010). This means that both the parliaments and the governments and/or the head of the state can be in charge of policy formulation.

Figure 1: The Policy Cycle Framework
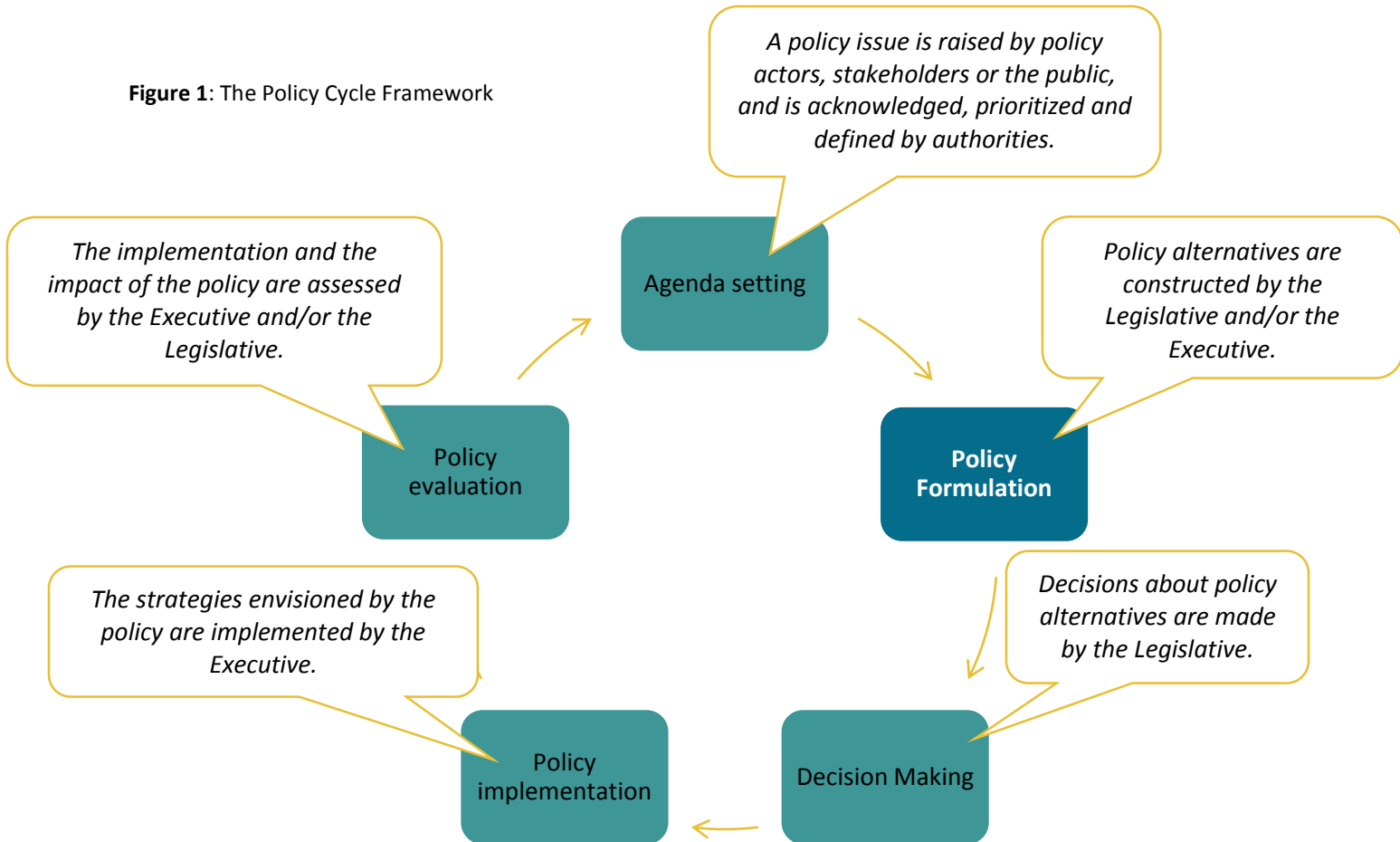
Source: Adaptation based on Howlett and Ramesh (1995)

Specific institutional settings determine the fact that, in one country, there might be differences between policy-making practices across policy sectors (Bovens, t'Hart and Peters, 2001). The figure 1 presents who is most likely to be the authority in charge of each phase of the policy cycle and what these phases entail. For the purpose of this research, the authority analyzed as the initiator of policy formulation is the government and its particular Department or Ministry responsible of Youth. The reasons for this choice is twofold. First, this is the actor in the relationship with whom the advocacy strategies of youth NGOs are presented by the literature. Then, the countries that have a national youth policy usually have a governmental authority in charge of it, while at parliamentary level, if there is no specific committee in

charge of youth matters, it is more challenging to track who were the politicians driving the youth policy and to understand their incentives and motivation for engaging with NGOs.

The phase of policy formulation comes after the agenda setting when a problem is defined. Hence, at its basis is the decision to create a new policy or to adjust an existing one. This process includes finding answers about how to deal with a specific policy issue, which priorities should be considered, what goals are followed, how these could be attained, the costs, and which external conditions could influence the success of the policy (Cochran and Malone, 1999). After the policy alternatives are constructed, the concrete policy proposal is drafted (Young and Quinn, 2002).

Knowledge or scientific policy advice is essential for policy formulation (Jann and Wegrich, 2007). Defining the policy alternatives requires an extensive consideration of the policy issue, therefore the process should include interactions between the government and other public and private actors (Lindblom and Woodhouse, 1993). Rosenzweigova, Skoric and Asipovich (2016: 19) claim that policy formulation stage "may and should be influenced by other sectors of society, such as [...] the NGOs". In this way, it is ensured that policies are appropriate for the needs of the community. Moreover, NGOs involvement in policy formulation is in line with their mandate of social representation. Their engagement can increase the quality of the policies, due to the specific expertise that they detain, and can enhance the legitimacy of the government, as the policy that will result will reflect not only the interests and the views of the ruling majority but also – of various social groups. However, fewer participants are expected to contribute at policy formulation than at agenda setting, based on their capacities, expertise, and resources (Sidney, 2007).

Broadly, the process of policy formulation can be examined and discovered through a multitude of theoretical lenses, provided by the literature on public policy analysis, public administration and management (ibid). In selecting a particular theoretical framework for answering the research question, an important factor is the fact that the governments of democratic countries are willing to engage the actors who are interested and are working in a field relevant to a policy issue in the policy-making process. Such actors, individuals or groups who make a difference or can affect or be affected by the achievement of the policy's objectives, are presented in the literature as stakeholders (POLICY Project, 1999; Brinkerhoff and Crosby, 2002). Accordingly, only the approaches looking at stakeholders, as the independent variable in the causal mechanism, explaining this specific stages of the policy process, are considered.

The choice of the Policy Networks Approach, developed by the Dutch school of thought, is in line with the findings presented in the literature review. An exhaustive presentation of this approach is presented in the sub-chapter 3.2. In what follows, other suitable theories for answering the research question are discussed, and the reasons for discarding them are enounced.

3.1.2 Advocacy Coalition Framework

The shape of the policy can be explained by looking at the actors involved in the process, their beliefs, perceptions, preferences and motivations of being engaged in the policy process, the Advocacy Coalition Framework, developed by Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith seems appropriate for investigating the central question of this thesis (Sidney, 2007). Similar to the PNA, the ACF considers the relationships between stakeholders (the policy makers, as actors who are responsible for policy decisions, and the actors who can influence their policy choice, who are consulted and participate in the policy-making process) within policy sectors. The ACF was designed in the mid-1980s for addressing the complex process of public policy development. During the following decades, it has been improved and largely applied to a wide range of policy issues, such as environment, health, finance, education, and others, across all continents (Jenkins-Smith, Nohrstedt, Weible & Sabatier, 2014). According to Sabatier (1993: 25), advocacy coalitions are "people from a variety of positions who share a particular belief system – that is, a set of basic values, causal assumptions, and problem perceptions – and who show a nontrivial degree of coordinated activity over time", in order to achieve complex policy goals. The analysis of the policy processes is realized at the level of policy subsystems. A policy subsystem is defined by the policy topic, territorial boundaries and the actors who are concerned with a policy issue and attempt or succeed in influencing it: policy makers, governmental authorities, interest groups, NGOs, representatives of the private sector, researchers and the media (Weible and Sabatier, 2006).

Organizing actors in coalitions, based on their shared values, beliefs, policy goals and coordination practices helps to simplify policy subsystems. The policy output and outcomes emerged in a subsystem are influenced by the institutional settings and the characteristics of the actors, their belief systems and political resources (Sabatier, 1998). According to Sabatier (ibid: 111), the subsystems can be emergent, meaning that it is just forming based on rather new political issues or mature, where actors from similar fields of expertise form different, competing coalitions, struggling to achieve their particular policy objectives for a rather long period of time, of a decade or more. Even though policy issues related to youth were partially on the political agenda for some time, a holistic approach towards youth sector is a relatively new concept in the public policy analysis, as revealed by the literature review. From this

perspective, the mechanism of understanding the causality of phenomena, provided by ACF, could be less applicable to the particular domain of interest. Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith (1993) refer to mature policy subsystems, in which well-defined coalitions compete. Accordingly, the fact that the youth policy emerged relatively recently as a distinct domain of public policy can be translated in the ACF into a nascent policy subsystem. Hence, the advocacy coalitions themselves would be only emerging and difficult to assess, without the strong characteristics of mature ones, presented by the theory. Moreover, the framework emphasizes the impact of coalitions on policy learning and policy change. In the context when many countries are only developing national youth policies, an analysis of policy learning and change could be too early. Overall, the ACF can provide interesting revelations about the influence of NGOs on the policy process in some subsystems but the assumptions that could be derived in the case of youth policy are questionable.

3.1.3 Multiple-Streams Framework

Another suitable theory for understanding the influence of NGOs on policy-making is the Multiple-Streams Framework, elaborated by Kingdon (1984). The framework presents the role of stakeholders as key agents, who create or harness policy windows of opportunity for bringing a policy change. The main provision of the theory is that the policy dynamics reside in three streams: 'the problem stream', consisting of the problem indicators and triggering events; 'the political stream', referring to the balance of power between actors, the public mood, and the legislative and administrative turnover; and 'the policy stream', including the multitude of policy ideas and solutions, the timing of the policy process and the policy feedback. When these streams converge a policy window emerges, and policy entrepreneurs have an opportunity to submit their policy proposal to the government's agenda (Cairney and Zahariadis, 2016). In the phase of agenda setting, NGOs could be the actors who take policy initiative and contribute to bringing attention to specific issues at specific times (Mintrom and Norman, 2009). Through this contribution, they become direct or indirect contributors to policy formulation (Cohen, 2011). Even though the framework provides clear specifications for understanding the characteristics and the motivations of the policy entrepreneurs, the success of their attempts to influence policy-making should be dependent of the coupling of the streams. Limited attention is dedicated to the strategies of the entrepreneurs, the criteria and the conditions for their success (Cairney & Zahariadis, 2016). By addressing the institutional contexts, the network approach provides as well an insight into the problem and the policy streams, but is more insightful concerning the political stream, by looking at the strategies of the actors.

The conceptual frameworks described above are complementary and present a political perspective on public policy, emphasizing the role of power, dependency, and interests in the process of policy-making. However, the main aspects, which they aim to clarify vary. While the policy network approach looks more in depth at the interactions between the policy actors, the multiple streams analysis and the advocacy coalition framework are more appropriate for understanding policy change. The next sub-chapter elaborates on the chosen theoretical framework: the policy network approach.

3.2 The Policy Network Approach

There is a link between the characteristics of policy networks and the normative models of direct democracy. The existence of policy networks is a form of democratic participation, which confers greater legitimacy to the governments and is able to ensure political accountability (Sörensen and Torfing, 2007; Enroth, 2011). The PNA provides insights about the way in which the complex relations between actors interested in a policy issue take place and the role of institutional arrangements during the policy process.

The research focused on policy networks is abundant; as a result, there are numerous definitions, perspectives and research approaches to the subject. The relations of power between stakeholders started being described as 'policy networks' around the 1970s, beginning with references to the United States. A comprehensive presentation of the concept of policy networks and an extensive literature review is realized by Rhodes (2006). According to him (2006: 426), the "policy networks are sets of formal institutional and informal linkages between governmental and other actors structured around shared [...] beliefs and interests in public policy-making and implementation". The networks are usually interpreted as horizontal inter-dependences between actors from various fields, liked in subsystems, policy communities or other types of networks with specific traits (Heclo, 1978; Rhodes, 1997; Dowding, 2001). They can engage both in influencing policy-making, as well as taking over some of the tasks and responsibilities of the government in the policy implementation phase (Stoker, 1998). Rhodes concludes that the generic term of 'policy networks' is used by scholars as "(i) a description of governments at work, (ii) as a theory for analyzing government policy-making, and (iii) as a prescription for reforming public management" (ibid). These categories are complementary and often overlapping in empirical studies. However, the first corresponds more to the American and Anglo-Saxon literature, addressing the interest intermediation and the power relations between stakeholders (Jordan, 1990). The second is reflected by German scholars, focused on inter-organizational analysis, while the third can be found both in the German and the Dutch schools of thought, looking at the process management of policy networks

(Rhodes, 1997; Börzel, 1998; Mayntz, 2003; Enroth, 2011). The theoretical framework of this thesis is based on the later perspective.

The network approach to policy is presented by the public policy governance stream, which devotes great attention to the interdependence between the government and the actors from other spheres during policy-making. This interest is also common for the proponents of the interactive perspective on policy-making or interactive governance. The interactive governance is one of the forms of governance, which envisions that steering, control, and coordination are the results of interactions between stakeholders. These might have diverse interests but they "interact in order to formulate, promote, and achieve common objectives by means of mobilizing, exchanging, and deploying a range of ideas, rules, and resources" (Torfing, Peters, Pierre and Sorensen, 2012: 14). Additionally, the network approach draws upon the inter-organizational theory and considers as well the institutional settings, in which the interactions between stakeholders take place. As such, the policy network theory refers to "the nature and conditions of strategic action in an institutional context that shapes the perceptions, preferences, and interactions of the network participants" (Enroth, 2011: 23). According to Klijn and Koppenjan (2000), theoretical assumptions can be derived from the network approach, regarding four aspects: (i) the functioning of the networks, (ii) the policy process, (iii) the policy outcomes and (iv) network management. Each of the aspects is further presented below.

i. Regarding the functioning of the networks, the theory presents a bottom-up approach to policy-making, suggesting that the actors engaged in the process are mutually dependent of each other's resources, therefore they interact in policy networks. Their interaction is necessary for the realization or for facilitating the achievement of each actor's goals (Enroth, 2011). Successful interactions in policy networks depend on the awareness and acceptance of mutual dependencies, similar perceptions and a management system, which provides the incentives for cooperation and reduces the risks of such behavior (Klijn & Koppenjan, 2000). When the actors allocate a different priority to the same issue, engagement in policy networks would be challenging or stagnating. When they equally prioritize the issue but have divergent preferences, the interaction can have a conflicting nature. However – the resources' dependence can foster their agreement through bargaining (Wilks and Wright, 1987). Also, the mutual dependence of specific knowledge, skills, and experience increases the effectiveness and the efficiency of interactions between actors and explains their cooperation, even in the cases when there are sudden fluctuations in the external

circumstances (Laws and Hajer, 2006). Cooperation would be difficult if the actors don't acknowledge their dependence on others' resources. Hence, the subjective perception of the resource needs is important. Moreover, institutional settings (the formal and the socially-constructed rules) also impact the development of the policy process and its result. The competence of networks varies across policy domains and across countries, depending on the political and administrative traditions and the rule of law (Jann & Weigrich, 2007).

ii. The policy process can be seen as a game of interactions, in which the players compete for resource advantage (Rhodes, 1997). The fact that they all possess certain relevant resources for the achievement of the policy outcome gives them veto power during the policy process. In specific policy sectors, where the policy outcome is of interest for a smaller group of actors, who are able to organize effectively, it is likely that non-governmental actors will have a greater influence on the policy (Hazlehurst, 2001). Through interactions, the rules that determine the actor's behavior and the resource distribution are socially constructed/shaped. Rules are important in the process, because they provide guidance for the bargaining process between network members, and, at the same time, fuel the trust of the participants. Without trust, successful cooperation is unlikely. In order to maximize their resources and influence, the actors would develop strategies of action, based not only on their perception of the addressed policy issue and the desired outcome but by the perceived position of other actors as well (Klijn & Koppenjan, 2000). These factors make the policy process more complex.

iii. The policy is an outcome of the relationship between the actors in policy subsystems, which are built around specific issues and resources. The issues are related to the policy sector, which the actors aim to influence. As the complexity of policy issues increased over time, it is difficult for individual actors to tackle them independently. The resources determine one actor's access to policy-making and his influence in the process (Smith, 2000).

iv. An essential part of the process is the network management or the coordination of actors. A successful policy process depends on this because it helps the actors to agree on common objectives. Horizontal coordination can be realized through network management, aiming to improve the interaction of the actors in an existent network or to generally reorganize the structure of the network (Klijn, Koppenjan and Termeer, 1995; O'Toole, 1998). Strategies of network coordination can enhance the cooperation through incentives, process management and associated risk reduction (Klijn & Koppenjan, 2000). The government can take the role of the network manager, due to its special position, guaranteed by the resources that it

possesses, its power to determine the legal and organizational framework in which the networks operate and by its legitimate status, in democratic countries (Mayntz, 2003). Through strategies such as brokering, facilitating, mediating and arbitrating, the governments can facilitate the process of negotiations in the network and foster the finding of a commonly-agreed policy solution (Kickert and Koppenjan, 1997). Some scholars debate whether the government should be involved in policy networks at all, due to concerns that private groups could be susceptible to influence the government for their own gain. However, in the case of networks involving non-governmental organizations, which are also public actors, the risk of the government becoming interested in private benefits is reduced, as (i) both structures share a similar mandate of representation and working towards providing public goods and (ii) NGOs can monitor the relationship of the government with private actors and notice any conflict of interests. The incentive of the government to cooperate with stakeholders reside in its desire to be re-elected, therefore the knowledge and expertise that they can gain in policy networks can improve the policy outcome and enhance their public support (Pappi and Henning, 1998). Other roles that a government can assume, in the relationship with networks are the one of network founder – bringing together the stakeholders to address a policy issue; an actor who cooperates with other public and private ones, in the form of a hierarchical supervision or independent actor, who is not part of the policy network. The latter option imposes greater costs, as more governmental resources would be spent for overcoming the information imperfection. Sometimes, these roles might be mixed and therefore leading to the confusion of the rest of the members of the network (Klijn & Koppenjan, 2000).

In drawing the assumptions about the research question, this dissertation examines three distinct aspects of the theoretical framework: the functioning of the network, the policy process, and the network management. Overall, paying attention to the interactions between youth NGOs and governmental authorities in policy network reveals the process of arriving at a common agreement about the policy formulation. Hence, analyzing the interactions between actors leads to determining their influence on the process.

3.3 Criticism on the selected theory

There are several controversies among scholars who look at policy networks. This sub-chapter elaborates on the main academic criticism to the selected theory and how the current research responds to it.

There is a debate in the political science weather policy network are an analytical tool, a theory or a metaphor developed on the grounds of sociological network analysis (Börzel,1998). The main criticism, provided by Dowding (1995), argues that the framework is not developed enough for revealing causal mechanisms and cannot provide an explanation for the policy outcomes, based on the characteristics of the network. However, the author (2001: 90) also agrees that a network approach "can demonstrate structural effect on policy formulation". This is particularly the phase of the policy cycle at which this thesis looks at, without evaluating the general outcome of the policy. Moreover, the network approach proposed by Klijn and Koppenjan (2000) presents the prime attributes of a quality theory. First, it has an explanatory power for four network-related dimensions: the functioning of the networks, the policy process, the policy outcomes and the network management and it is applicable to various policy sectors in democratic systems. Second, it provides a framework for understanding the process of governing, simplifying the complex reality of policy-making by looking particularly at the policy networks. Third, it is framed in a way that facilitated the inferring of hypothesizes for each of the four network-related dimensions. Even though some of the variables such as the perception of the actors are not clearly defined, this aspect is at the discretion of the researcher who tests the issue empirically and is tackled in Chapter 4. Fourth, the deduced assumptions are falsifiable. For instance, if the actors engaged in a policy network are not aware of their resource dependence for achieving a policy goal- if their perceptions about the policy are divergent and there is no structured management system to foster their cooperation – the functioning of the network would not be possible. Last but not least, it has a prescriptive richness, which means that the causes that it points at can be modified through human action and the conditions for a successful policy-making process through policy networks. Accordingly, the theory could be useful for policy makers and other actors engaged in the network, for envisioning future developments and adjusting their strategies for improving the outcome (Van Evera, 1997). In summary, the engaged PNA is useful in analyzing, explaining and evaluating policy processes.

In what follows, the theoretical assumptions, derived from the PNA, are presented.

3.4 Hypotheses

According to the policy network approach, two main hypotheses are anticipated:

Hypothesis 1: There is a mutual resource dependence between youth non-governmental organizations and the government. If both actors are aware of it, they interact in a policy network. The type of interaction is determined by the national institutional framework.

<u>Hypothesis 2:</u> The youth non-governmental organizations and the government developed strategies aimed to influence the way in which the policy is formulated, based on their perception of youth issues, desired policy outcome and other actor's position and resources. The NGOs' influence on policy formulation depends on the strategies of the government – if this took the role of network manager and was able to enhance the cooperation - as well as their own resources, which determine their bargaining power and their capacity to organize efficiently.

The next chapter presents how the research addresses them.

4. RESEARCH DESIGN

Based on the theoretical framework, a conceptual framework is elaborated, describing how the research question is addressed. The chapter starts by operationalizing the hypotheses presented in Chapter 3 into measurable variables. Next, the author elaborates on the choice of the research design, argues the case selection and acknowledges the limitations of the research. The author concludes by presenting the ways in which data will be collected, and discussing the reliability and validity of the research.

4.1 Operationalization

This sub-chapter defines and conceptualizes the key concepts that constitute the research, in order to clarify and organize the data. The particular meaning of the concepts related to the research question are explained and the criteria for measuring them are presented.

4.1.1 Independent and Dependent Variables

The independent and dependent variables present a cause-effect mechanism and are framed in the research question.

The independent variable, which is a causal element for the subject of interest, is youth non-governmental organizations. For the purpose of this research, the independent variable is operationalized as NGOs legally registered at the national level, which are non-partisan and self-governed by young people; are characterized by some degree of voluntary involvement and are not focused primarily on profitmaking; are based on shared values, interests and prioritization of young people in their work; and have as one of their purposes to represent the interests of the youth vis-à-vis the government and advocate for them. This definition draws upon the literature review on non-governmental organizations and limits the sample of inquiry to national youth councils.

The dependent variable, which is affected by the independent one, is youth policy formulation. The dependent variable is also referred in this thesis as the 'study variable'. As 'youth policies' are assessed those national, overarching policies, which facilitate the transition from childhood to adulthood and the integration of young people into the society and the labor market. These can be framed as laws or strategies. The researcher investigates only the policy that is currently in place. By looking at 'policy formulation', this research looks back in time at the process of designing the policy, starting with the moment when the decision to create a new one or to adjust an existent one was taken. From this perspective, the thesis presents an ex-post analysis.

The research question refers to the 'policy influence' of youth NGO. This is understood as the way in which NGOs "are able to interact with the policy process and affect the policy positions, approaches and behaviors" (Court, Mendizabal, Osborne, and Young, 2006: 6). The interest of the author is to identify how the influence of national youth councils on youth policy formulation happens, not to what extent do the organizations influence the policy formulation. Therefore, the relationship between the independent and dependent variable cannot be quantified but only traced.

There are several conditional variables, which determine the preliminary conditions for a change in the dependent variable. Their value influences the level of impact of the independent variable on the dependent one (McNabb, 2010). One of them is the governmental strategy. Accordingly, if this stimulates and supports participatory policy-making, youth NGOs could have an influence on policy formulation. When referring to the 'government' and its strategies, this research considers only the specific government agency or department responsible for youth-related matters, such as the Ministry of Youth. According to the theoretical hypotheses, another conditional variable is the 'institutional framework'. When analyzing it, the researcher looks at the set of formal rules, such as laws, regulations that are related to youth sector. Another potential conditional variable is the political context, in which the causality occurs.

4.2 Research Design

Generally, theories can be tested through experimentation and observation, which, in turn, can be realized by using small-N or large-N studies (Van Evera, 1997). The author selects an *observational, explanatory, small-N research design,* which seeks to scrutinize and understand the causal mechanism between the independent and dependent variable in a small number of cases.

4.2.1 Research Design Selection

The research design proposed by this thesis presents an *explanatory qualitative* approach. Accordingly, non-statistical inquiry and data processing methods are used. Explanatory designs are suitable for explaining the causes of an event or phenomenon, differences in outcomes and interpreting cause-effect relationships, because they offer insight into the matter of concern and facilitate a deeper understanding, interpretation and critical analysis of the subject (Schwandt, 1997; White, 1999). Based on the aim to understand the causal mechanism between the youth NGOs and their influence on youth policy formulation, a *small – N design* is preferred. The first reason for choosing a small-N design is that the assessment of the causal mechanism between research variables is easier. Second, large-N studies looking at the causal process that explains the influence of NGOs on policy formulation would be difficult to perform, as individual cases were not properly analyzed up to the moment and there is little research to build upon and engage in a large-N study. Moreover, there is the risk that analyzing a larger group of units of analysis would actually offer little insight about the question of interest. Small case design research has the advantage of inferring conclusions not only about whether the theoretical assumptions are true, but also, the reasons for it. If the found evidence will support the hypotheses, the research could be expanded to other cross-case comparisons.

The most suitable research approach for identifying complex causal relations is the case study, which allows deeper analysis and understanding of specific cases, without aiming to produce generalization (Ragin, 1987). The thesis seeks to realize an *integrative comparative case study* and the next sub-chapter elaborates on its selection.

For carrying out the case study, the theoretical framework will be tested through *causal-process tracing* (CPT). The CPT supports observation in particular cases, when the outcome of interest is the result of a junction of factors, looking at the series of events, circumstances or the decision-making process through which it was achieved (Van Evera, 1997). Even though in general, case studies are more appropriate to identify whether and how a variable mattered, rather than assessing to which extent (how much) it mattered, CPT allows determining how exactly did the independent variable influence the dependent one (George and Benett, 2005; Blatter and Haverland, 2014). This research refers to this relationship as the 'causal mechanism', while the conditions which determine the occurrence of the outcome of interest – the influence of youth NGOs on youth policy formulation – are framed as 'causal configuration'.

By paying attention to the causal mechanism between variables over time and offering specific insights about the policy formulation process, the CPT provides evidence for supporting or refusing the hypothesizes presented in the theoretical framework. Through process tracing, the sufficient or/and necessary conditions and the causal configurations for producing the outcome of interest are identified. However, the aim of CPT is to determine the distinct causal conditions which are necessary and which combined are sufficient for the outcome (Blatter & Haverland, 2014). A necessary condition (X) determines the presence of the outcome (Y): Y would be possible only if this causal factor (X) is present. X does not always lead to Y, but Y cannot occur without X. A condition would be sufficient (Z) when the outcome (Y) is always caused by its presence. The outcome can intervene even the causal factor Z is not present. Based on the theoretical framework, several expectations are set about the necessary and sufficient conditions in the researched case, as follows: The presence of policy networks in the youth sector are a necessary condition for youth NGOs influence on youth policy formulation. These are, however not sufficient for the outcome. The involvement of the government as a network manager and its strategies of increasing civic participation should be a sufficient condition. Nevertheless, there are conditions which are both necessary and sufficient. This happens in the case when the outcome exists if and only if the condition is present (Rohlfing, 2012). The strategies of youth NGOs for influencing policy-making and their resources are a sufficient and necessary condition, which means that their influence would be possible if and only if in the presence of this condition.

When it comes to causal configurations, these can appear in two ways – as conjunctions, when several conditions are necessary to intervene simultaneously, at a specific point in time, for producing an outcome or as 'causal chains', when some conditions are necessary and sufficient for triggering, over time, other causal conditions which lead, eventually, to the outcome of interest (Blatter & Haverland, 2014). Because CPT assesses developments over time, it allows observing the order in which the causal mechanism occurs. The current research aims to determine the causal configuration which leads to an influence of NYCs on youth policy formulation, by assessing empirical data for the hypotheses stated in Chapter 3. For this purpose, the selection of the case study is important, and the following sub chapter elaborates it further.

4.2.2 Case Selection

The case selection had two considerations. First, the interest of the author towards youth NGOs influence on policy formulation in democratizing EaP countries and the gap in research in this regard, revealed by the literature review. Second, the need of information accessibility and availability, which are

key criteria in selecting the case study, in a CPT research design. These are necessary for gaining an extensive overview over the contextual background, the development over time of the investigated causal configuration and for ensuring a deeper understanding of the motivations and perceptions of the key actors.

Based on these criteria, two most-likely cases were chosen: Georgia and Moldova. Most-likely cases have a high probability of confirming the research hypothesis, and are selected based on the expectation of the researcher about how likely it is to observe a confirmation of the theoretical assumptions in a given case. As such, the prospect of confirming the hypotheses through research is "conditional on the assumption that the hypothesis is correct and conditional on features of the selected case" (Rohlfing, 2012: 84 -85).

The expectation about the likelihood to find empirical confirmation of the expressed hypotheses is based on several aspects. The cases present similar, prototypical historical background conditions (Van Evera, 1997). Besides their former shared communist past, the countries prove the most significant progress in democratization and participatory policy-making, among the rest of the states with similar background and aims for development, included in the EaP (Aleksanyan, 2016; Gavarmadze, 2016; Macrinici, 2016). Moreover, the level of development of the civil society in general, and youth NGOs, in particular, is significant in both Georgia and Moldova (USAID, 2015). Therefore, a strong, positive result regarding the causal mechanism of interest is expected.

During the literature review process, both the availability and richness of data were considered. Most data about the subject of research is available electronically. The access to official information is facilitated by the fact that the researcher is fluent in the spoken languages of the investigated countries - Russian or Romanian.

The study proceeds realizing two distinct within-case analyses through process tracing, acknowledging that there could be a difference in the characteristics or the 'value' of the variables across cases. The researcher has the certainty about the similarity in the independent variable – the existence of NYCs. However, there could be a difference in the dependent variable – the influence on youth policy formulation. By tracing the causal process separately, in each individual case, the researcher aims to elucidate if there is a difference in the relationship between variables in the investigated countries. Following, a comparison between cases is realized, as the within-case study can serve as a basis for cross-case analysis, especially when the causes or the outcome cannot be quantified (Mahoney, 2010). In spite of potential differences in the national contexts, capacities of the youth NGOs and the strategies of the

governments, a comparison between cases is possible and important for increasing the societal relevance of the study. The comparison is realized at the level of theoretical temporal dimension and not the chronological time, meaning that the researcher considers the time span in which the theoretical hypotheses are assessed, not a similar timeframe. This is because the national youth policies were developed at specific pace in each country. Because of the resemblance of policy concern – youth policy formulation – addressed in both cases, the findings can reveal transferable best practices. Therefore, the research presents *an integrative comparative case study,* determining whether the causal process is similar and to which extent (Rohlfing, 2012).

The following sub-chapter clarifies how the empirical information was gathered.

4.3 Research Methods and Data Collection

The selected research methodology corresponds to the process tracing design, which is based on the idea that causality occurs in time and space. According to Blatter and Haverland (2014: 81; 111 - 118), three main dimensions of inquire should be addressed in CPT - (i) 'comprehensive storylines'; (ii) 'smoking guns' and (iii) 'confessions'- in order (i) to understand the context in which the causality develops; (ii) to reveal certain and consistent empirical evidence about the process, taking into account the temporal and spatial contiguity and (iii) to understand the action-formation mechanism that bridges the distance between the cause and the effect. These correlate to the macro, meso and micro level of analysis. For identifying the 'storylines', 'smoking guns' and 'confessions', and answering the question of interest, both secondary and primary sources of evidence are needed. Hence, the process of data collection was realized through desk research and interviews. Additionally, combining these research methods meets the interest of triangulation.

4.3.1 Desk Research

The desk research is the main data collection method of this thesis and is realized by looking at documents. In qualitative research, a multitude of sources can be considered such as: agendas, administrative papers, advertisements, background papers, correspondence, draft reports, journal articles, minutes of meetings, newspapers, publications, press releases, reports, and generally – any documented record that is relevant for an investigation (Yin, 2009). These can provide consistent information, which might be difficult or impossible to obtain otherwise, as well as evidence to complete or cross-check the information from other sources.

For the purpose of this research, the following documents are used as data sources: national legislation, official documents and reports, press releases, position papers, strategic documents, public

statements, minutes of the meetings between actors, print and online newspapers, governmental and organizational web-sites, academic and independent research papers.

4.3.2 Interviews

The second method used for collecting empirical information is through interviews. This contributed at gaining insights and ensuring a deeper understanding of the causal configurations.

Interviews are a method that can offer insights about the investigated process, completing the gaps in the information gathered through desk research and revealing the motivations of the actors, which are usually difficult to infer from documents only. This investigation method is in line with the 'confessions' technique, characteristic for CPT. Different types of interviews can be realized in social sciences research: structured, semi-structured or open ended, focused, unstructured or spontaneous and surveys (Berg, 2001). For the purpose of this research, semi-structured individual interviews were conducted. This method was preferred to structured interviews, as the later could limit the responses to the framework of understanding of the researcher, because it encompasses a standard series of questions, which are addressed similarly to everyone and very often close ended. Semi-structured interviews are performed according to a pre-established conversation guide, but have a flexible structure. Therefore, the interviewees can express more elaborately their perceptions and perspectives (McNabb, 2010). The conversation guides used by the author are presented in Appendix 1 and 2.

After elaborating the conversation guides, specific key informants were identified: (i) the leaders and/or (ii) managers of NYCs during the period of policy formulation and (iii) governmental representatives, in charge of or engaged in the process. They were approached in person, via telephone or through written communication, via email. The interviewees were selected based on the author's expectation that they possess essential knowledge and can provide valuable information about the youth policy formulation process and youth NGOs involvement.

The interviews aimed to identify the perceptions of the respondents about the resource dependence, youth issues, desired policy outcome and the position of other actors, and to gain a deeper understanding of the strategies of youth NGOs, for engaging in policy-making and of the government, for ensuring civil society participation in youth policy formulation. Additionally, youth NGOs representatives were inquired about their ex-post level of satisfaction with the policy formulation. As mentioned in the Operationalization sub-chapter (4.1.1), the degree of influence of youth NGOs on policy formulation cannot be measured numerically. The ex-post satisficing criterion (Teisman, 1992 as cited by Kickert et al., 1997), addressing their perceptions and assessment about the extent to which their goals were met in the

policy formulation, can support a positive or negative appreciation of their level of influence in the process.

Six interviews were conducted in person, via telephone, or online, via Skype or Email. The fact that most of them were addressed in their native or second language facilitated the establishment of a relation of trust with the researcher and a smoother dialogue. The risk that the testimonies of the respondent could be incomplete or subjective because they were speaking about past events, was taken into account. Therefore, they were asked for additional, documented sources that could supplement the information that they provided. Their recommendations were considered when realizing the desk research.

Concluding the research design, table 2 presents the steps of the process-tracing, data collection and the level of analysis, followed by a discussion of the reliability and validity of the study.

Table 1: Process-tracing steps according to the theoretical assumptions, operationalization, data collection sources and level of analysis

Hypothesizes	Steps of the process-tracing analysis	Operationalization	Data sources	Level of analysis
There is a mutual resource dependence between youth NGOs and the government. If both actors are aware of it, the entities interact in a policy network. The type of interaction is determined by the national institutional framework.	1.Institutional framework	Laws and regulations	Official documents and the legislation of the investigated countries.	Macro level ('comprehensive storylines')
	2.The actors and their resources	Youth NGOs: National Youth Councils; The government: Ministry responsible of Youth affairs; Resources – humans and financial	Official documents, statutes, annual state budgets, legislation, policy evaluation reports*, public statements, newspapers, official web-sites.	Meso level ('smoking guns')

	3.The resource dependence	Perceived sufficiency of human and financial resources	Public statements, interviews; annual budgets; policy evaluation reports.	Meso level ('smoking guns')
The youth NGOs and the government developed strategies aimed to influence the way in which the youth policy is formulated, based on their perception of youth issues, desired policy outcome and other actor's position and resources. The NGOs' influence on policy formulation depends on: the strategies of the government, as well as their own resources.	4.Perceptions of youth NGOs and the government	The prioritized youth issue by each actor; the main goal they aim to achieve through the policy; their perception of the other.	Internal documents: statute, strategic documents; interviews, public statements, press releases, position papers, reports, official web-sites.	Micro level ('confessions')
	5.Strategies of youth NGOs and the government	Formal and informal strategies of the actors, as elaborated in their internal documents or proved through actions.	Interviews, strategic documents, legislation, official minutes of the meetings between actors, public reports, official web-sites.	Meso and micro level ('smoking guns' and 'confessions')
	6.Youth NGOs ex post satisfying perception	Perceived satisfaction of the organizations.	Interviews	Micro level ('confessions')

* In case there was another youth policy previously in place.

4.4 Reliability and Validity

The reliability of the study refers to the consistency of results, in the case of a repeated measurement or observation of the same phenomenon (Kellstedt and Whitten, 2009). As this research realizes a process-tracing case study, it provides an in-depth, detailed analysis of the process of youth policy formulation and the influence of NGOs. For increasing the reliability of the results, two data gathering techniques are used. Desk research is combined with interviews. The clear and specific questions of the interview offer valuable insights about the process. In the same time, the potential biases that the respondents could express, by offering answers that would present themselves in a better light, are balanced by the evidence found in documented, official sources. An alternative interpretation of the findings should reveal the same conclusions, based on similar questions and sources.

The validity of the research is ensured if the result of the study corresponds to what was intended to be measured or assessed, according to the specifications of the engaged concepts (Ibid.). Being focused on two countries and assessing in detail the influence of youth NGOs on youth policy formulation, as prescribed by the theoretical framework, in this context, the research has a high internal validity.

In terms of external validity, the extent to which the conclusions of the study could be generalized is limited. However, the research does not strive to reveal broadly applicable conclusions. These could have a 'possibilistic generalization' (Blatter & Haverland, 2014), for other countries from the region, which share a similar historical background and political contexts, such as Armenia or Ukraine. Because possible configurations necessary for youth NGOs to produce an impact on youth policy formulation, in similar contexts, are revealed, the findings of the study could serve as a learning lesson for both youth NGOs and the governments of these particular countries.

In spite of the careful consideration of the reliability and validity of the study and its design, the research design has its limitations. These are acknowledged in the following sub-chapter.

4.5 Limitations for the research design

Two main limitations of the research are envisioned. The research provides an ex post analysis. Hence, in spite of an elaborate CPT technique, gathering empirical evidence might prove challenging, and

this can lead to gaps in the causal chain. This risk is tackled through triangulation. Desk research and interviews are used, to ensure that relevant information is not missed.

The case study aims to conclude with a cross-country comparison. However, the differences in the institutional settings might limit the comparative assessment. Additionally, it is important to notice that factors that prove to be necessary in one case, for the causality to occur, might not be in another one. Therefore, generalizing the findings only based on CPT is difficult.

Taking into account these considerations, the next part of the thesis is dedicated to the cases analysis.

5. ANALYSIS

The fifth chapter presents two within-case analyses, in line with the theoretical framework and the previously elaborated research methodology. The cases of Georgia and Moldova are analyzed separately, looking at three dimensions: the institutional framework; the policy actors and their resources, and the national youth policy and its formulation. Lastly, the perceptions of the policy priorities and the ex-post satisfaction of the NYCs are outlined.

5.1 The Influence of the National Council of Youth Organizations of Georgia on youth policy formulation

5.1.1 Institutional framework

Table 2: Georgia. Country Profile

Country Profile (2016)	
Population	3.72 million
Young people (14-29 years old)	< 814 thousands
	22 % of total population

Georgia is a semi-presidential democratic republic, which declared its independence in April 1991. The head of the state is the President, who is also part of the executive branch of power, together with the Cabinet, formed by Ministries and led by a Prime-Minister. The Parliament represents the legislative power (Constitutional Law of Georgia, 2010). Table 3 presents a general overview of the country's population.

There is no general document, specifying a mechanism for ensuring participatory policy-making or certain standards for such processes. The General Administrative Code of Georgia (2016, art. 28), which

sets the framework of action for public authorities, mentions only that public institutions are obliged "to ensure proactive publication of public information". Since 2011, the country is part of the Open Government Partnership (OPG), which is a multilateral initiative, which aims to increase the commitment of the signatory governments towards transparency, strengthen the democracy through new technologies, citizens' empowerment and fighting corruption (OGP, 2016). Under this framework, the Georgian government committed to more than 20 reforms and started cooperating intensely with the civil society for improving policies, providing better services and increase the transparency of its work in various domains, at local and national level. Moreover, the country enhanced its e-governance services, meaning that official information became more accessible, and the citizens can not only make use of it but also –interact virtually with the authorities by leaving comments, sending feedback or communicating through instant messages.

Various documents and regulations provide specific prescriptions regarding the engagement of civil society and other stakeholders in the policy-making process, in different policy sectors. These refer to working groups, consultations and public hearings as the most common methods of citizens' engagement. However, it is not mandatory for the government to organize any kind of public consultations or to engage the civil society in drafting legislation (Gavarmadze, 2016). The engagement of civil society in general and NGOs, in particular, in policy formulation happens more often at local than at national level. Usually, concrete mechanisms and rules for participatory practices are defined separately, by the authority in charge of coordinating such processes. The common practice for drafting legislation is to consult expert working groups, formed (according to the case) by private sector representative and/or NGOs. A draft law is prepared by the authorities and presented for consultation afterward. Nevertheless, the timeframe for feedback and consultation is not standardized and there is no notice of the acceptance or rejection of the feedback received from the expert groups and argumentation of such decisions (Ibid.).

5.1.2 Policy actors and their resources

This research looks at two actors engaged in the youth policy-making process: the governmental agency in charge of youth sector development and the NYC, as a representative structure for the youth organizations. In what follows, an overview of each of them will be realized. When looking at resources, two dimensions are considered - the human and the financial resources.

In the Georgian government, the agency responsible for developing and implementing the national youth policy is the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs (MSYAG). Its establishment in 2010 marked the beginning of a greater state attention towards youth development.

The Ministry is structured in six departments. The Youth Affairs Department, responsible for youth sector development, is composed of two divisions: the Division on collaboration with youth organizations and the Youth programs division (Structure MSYAG, 2013). These collaborate closely with the Analytic Department, which is in charge of analyzing the international experiences in the field. In terms of human resources, the Youth Department has 18 employees. For cross-checking the information presented in this study, the former Deputy Head of the International Relations and European Integration Department of the MSYAG, Mr. Anatoli Korepanov, who was engaged in the process of youth policy formulation and whose public presentations are used as a reference, was approached.

In 2016, the financial resources of the Youth Department constituted 6.8 million Georgian Lari (GEL), which equals approximately 2.5 million Euro (Law on the State Budget of Georgia, 2016; National Bank of Georgia, 2017). There was no budget allocated for it in the year when the Ministry was created – 2010. Since then, the amount allocated for the Ministry tripled but the overall share of the total state budget remains under 1%. The specific allocation for the Youth Department fluctuated over time. If in 2011 this represented only 2.5% of the budget of the Ministry, in 2014 this allocation was raised to 20% of that respective budget. The increase can be related to the adoption of a new youth policy in the same year, and was the highest allocation for youth activities in the past seven years. Figure 2 presents, on the primary axis, the evolution of Georgian governmental budget and the fluctuation of MSYAG budget and its youth department, on the secondary axis. The period reflected is 2010 – 2016. The amounts are presented in millions of Georgian Lari. The detailed data used for creating the chart are annexed to the research in Appendix 3.

Figure 2: The evolution of Georgian annual state budget, allocations for the Ministry of Sports and Youth Affairs and the activities of its Youth Department, 2010 - 2016 (millions GEL)
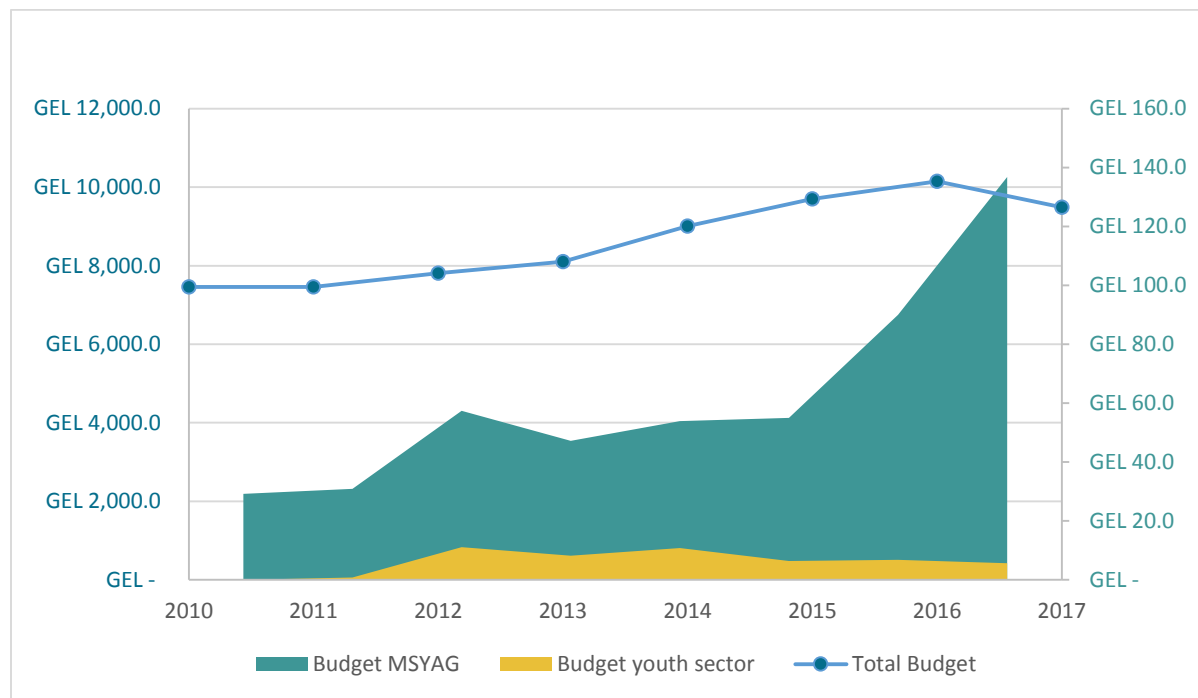
Data source: The Laws on the State Budget of Georgia, 2010; – 2017.

As figure 2 reveals, the change in the annual budget of the Ministry is mostly in line with the increase in the general state budget, save for one exception in 2013. In contrast, the budgetary decrease of the Youth Department in the last two years (2015 and 2016) contradicts the remarkable growing trend in the overall budget of the Ministry. Hence, the resources designated for the youth sector cannot support the sustainable development of the youth organizations (E. Tsvariani, personal communication, June 8, 2017). Nevertheless, a major part of the youth sector budget is allocated to youth organizations through grant schemes (Gogoladze et al., 2015). Therefore, in order for NGOs to receive financial support, their priorities have to be aligned with those of the Ministry.

Besides the MSYAG, there are also other national authorities which have a say in the process of youth policy-making. These and their main responsibilities are presented in table 4 (Asanidze, 2014; Tsereteli, 2016).

Table 3: Main authorities engaged in national youth policy-making in Georgia

Authority	Main responsibilities in the youth sector
Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs	- Developing, implementing and monitoring of the State Youth Policy Development Action Plan - Developing youth related research activities - Coordinating the Coordination Council
Sport and Youth Affairs Parliamentarian Committee	- Coordinating the national youth policy - Ensuring the development of relevant legislation - Ensuring support for the youth organizations
Coordination Council on the development of youth policy in Georgia	- Ensuring the cross-sectorial implementation of youth policy - Monitoring the policy implementation - Drafting recommendations for improving the relevant legislation - Revising the Action Plan periodically

According to the Eastern Partnership Youth Regional Unit (EPYRU, 2013), the main barrier that the government faces in tackling youth issues and contributing at their development is the insufficiency of exhaustive research in the field. Therefore, NGOs are recognized as competent partners for policy development. In this context, the Ministry organizes annually a Forum of Youth Organizations, which gathers representatives of youth NGOs, youth workers, representatives of international organizations and the governments (MSYAG, 2015). The Forum serves as a platform for communication between the governmental and non-governmental field, where youth NGOs can provide feedback and suggestions for improving the national youth policy. However – due to the limited time provided and its distant

periodicity, it can be used only partially as an advocacy platform, because it is rather as a channel through which the government communicates the stakeholders about its activity (Tsereteli, 2016).

Among the NGOs active in the youth sector, the National Council of Youth Organizations of Georgia (NCYOG) has a special role. Founded in 1995, the Council serves as an umbrella structure for 45 youth and children organizations from across the country. Through various local and international projects and initiatives on youth topics, the NCYOG aims to facilitate the cooperation between its members, strengthen their capacities, support the Georgian young people, stimulate their civic and political participation and advocate for the solving various youth issues at the governmental level and towards international organizations (NCYOG, 2017). The information about the activity of the Council and its policy implications, revealed through desk research, is supplemented with the insights received from the Chairperson of the organization, Ms. Ekaterine Tsvariani.

According to its governance documents, the strategic directions of development for the organization are set by the General Assembly, which gathers the representatives of all member organizations. These are implemented by a governing Board, activating on a voluntary basis and a Secretariat. Currently, there are 9 Board members, responsible for specific areas of activity and representing the organization in the relationship with stakeholders, at national and international level. One of the challenges of the Council over time was ensuring its financial sustainability and maintaining a fully functional Secretariat, due to the project-based financial sources dependence.

The organization is very active at international level, in the field of youth policy. Since 2000, it is a member of the YFJ, where it was, over time, an important member of several expert and working groups on topics such as youth rights and quality standards for youth policies (YFJ, 2017). At the regional level, the Council cooperates with the similar structures for other EaP countries and attempts to foster the strategic collaboration within the region. This advocacy experience and expertise on youth policy development at European and regional level were used by the organization as an important resource for influencing the youth policy formulation in the country (E. Tsvariani, personal communication, June 8, 2017).

Besides, the organization has the capacity and is engaged in research on youth-related subjects. One of the main studies that it developed was realized prior to the creation of the Ministry, with the support of UNDP, and presents and in-depth analysis of the situation of Georgian young people at that time (NCYOG, 2009). This was used for drafting the first state youth policy, in 2011 (National Policy of

Youth of Georgia, 2011). Therefore, it can be inferred that from the very beginning of the functioning of the MSYAG, the Council was considered by the authorities as a reliable actor in the field. Nowadays, a part of the activities of the Council is realized in partnership with the Ministry. For instance, the two structures worked together for supporting the voluntary work in Georgia and as a result, a national database of volunteers and volunteering opportunities was created. This is in line with the strategy of NCYOG, to develop projects that encourage active citizenship, with the purpose to increase youth participation (NCYOG, 2017). Broadly, the areas of activity of the NCYOG cover the priorities of the current national youth policy, which is presented in the next sub-chapter.

5.1.3 National youth policy of Georgia and its formulation

Georgian National Youth Policy	The Georgian National Youth Policy Document (2014); State Youth Policy Development Action Plan 2015-2020 (2015).

The Georgian national youth policy is an inclusive one, targeting all persons from 14 to 29 years old. Its` legal ground resides in two documents. First, there is the Georgian National Youth Policy Document, adopted on 2nd of April, 2014, through the Decree No. 553. The document serves as a conceptual framework for the governmental actions regarding young people. The concrete activities, the timeframe and measurable target results which it should achieve are set by the Youth Policy Development Action Plan. This was adopted on 5th of March, 2015 and serves as the main instrument for the sustainable and structured development of the national youth policy (Tsereteli, 2016). Figure 3 presents the principles respected by the policy, its main aim and objectives.

Figure 3: The aim, principles and objectives of Georgian national youth policy

Source: Adaptation based on The Georgian National Youth Policy Document (2014).

For a long time, the development of an integrated youth policy at country level was hampered by political instability, armed conflicts in the autonomous regions of Abkhazia and Ossetia, lack of political interest towards youth development, limited resources, and capacities of youth organizations to advocate for their causes (Asanidze, 2011b). The current Georgian youth policy is based on a previous policy document - the National policy of youth of Georgia – adopted in August 2012, though the Government's Decree No 1608 (EPYRU, 2013).

The policy document started being elaborated by the Ministry of Sports and Youth Affairs in 2010, with significant support from the local offices of UN agencies – mainly by UNICEF, and UNFPA, that became involved at a later stage. The Ministry organized a series of consultation workshops with the young people enrolled at universities, represented by student associations or student government. Also, an online platform was created – youth.gov.ge – for a more inclusive and extensive consultative process (Korepanov, 2011). After all suggestions gathered during the consultations were reviewed, a Discussion Paper was drafted by the Ministry. The Paper considered as well the suggestions of other governmental agencies, local public authorities, researchers and international organizations and best practices in the field, gathered by the MSYAG from August to October 2011. Also, the Ministry reviewed the institutional

framework – existing laws, policies and programs, as well as the available budget for streamlining the new policy.

A public conference took place in November 2011, with the participation of governmental representatives, public authorities and international organizations, in order to achieve consensus on the main priorities presented in the Discussion paper, for including them in the future policy document. Additionally, the MSYAG conducted a research on youth issues across the country. Drawing upon its results and the recommendations gathered from the stakeholders, a draft variant of the policy was prepared. This was presented online, for receiving feedback from the relevant actors. The process of policy formulation was criticized by youth NGOs and youth workers, who were very little included during it and claimed that the contribution of young people to youth policy is insignificant, therefore their real needs are not addressed. This led to both lack of quality and credibility of the policy among stakeholders (Asanidze, 2011b). After the policy approval by the legislative in August 2012, as a response to the criticism that the text policy does not envision any strategic action plan for its implementation, and does not meet the needs of the youth sector, a working group called the 'Coordination council on the development of youth policy of Georgia' was created in May 2013, at the initiative of the MSYAG, in order to revise the policy and work on a draft version of the strategic action plan. The members of the council were the representatives of various Ministries; of the parliamentary committee in charge of sports and youth affairs; the Public Defender's Office; UNICEF and UNFPA (Asanidze, 2014).

The process of policy revision and action plan elaboration took place in parallel. During the policy review, a milestone was a national conference on youth policy, which took place in June 2013 and gathered representatives of the government, NGOs, researchers and international organizations, for discussing the ongoing process and receiving feedback. The main priorities set by the policy at that time were civic participation; health; education, employment and mobility and special support and safety.

In the same time, a working group was established by the MSYAG, including the civil society, for drafting a first version of the Action Plan together with the Coordination Council (Korepanov, 2015). This was finalized in September, then consulted with other stakeholders. Their suggestions were received and considered during the autumn of the same year, so a final version of the action plan could be created. This was presented during another national conference of stakeholders, in December 2013 (MSYAG, 2013a). Nevertheless, from the 209 actions envisioned by the Plan, the realization of none is fully assigned to the NCYOG, the organization being recognized only as a partner for some of them (State Youth Policy Development Action Plan 2015-2020).

Meanwhile, for creating an evidence-based document, the Ministry in partnership with UNICEF and the National Statistics Office conducted first a research during October-November 2013, in order to identify the state of young people across Georgia, their main needs, and issues. The research was realized through field meetings and surveys and was published at the beginning of 2014 (MSYAG, 2014). A new version of the State's Youth Policy Document was adopted in April 2014 (Resolution No 553). The current policy priorities are youth participation in social, economic, cultural and political activities; provision of high-quality education, employment, and professional growth opportunities; health; youth rights support and protection. It is important to note that the Georgian national youth policy recognizes youth organizations as important policy actors (Georgian National Youth Policy Document, 2014). The strategy for implementing the policy, framed in the 'Youth Policy Development Action Plan for 2015 -2020', was eventually adopted in March 2015 (Tsereteli, 2016). In figure 4, the steps of the current national youth policy formulation are presented.

Figure 4. The steps of the current Georgian national youth policy formulation

The policy process was initiated by the Ministry but during it, the NCYOG was actively involved. In response to the consultative calls of the Ministry, the Council approached its member organizations, asking for feedback. Based on that, it prepared a position paper, which presented its vision for the new policy. During the process, it provided multiple recommendations to Ministry, which were later reflected

in the policy document and the action plan for its implementation, as described in the next sub-chapter (E. Tsvariani, personal communication, June 8, 2017).

5.1.4 Perceptions of the priorities and the degree of satisfaction with the policy formulation process

Overall, the adopted policy reflects the visions of both actors. Among the priorities envisioned by the MSYAG for the youth sector are youth social inclusion and participation; the support of student auto-governance structures; promotion of a healthy lifestyle and the development of non-formal education. Additionally, the Ministry devotes great attention to supporting the youth form the regions and enhancing the relations with the young people from Abkhazia and Osetia (MSYAG, 2013b). The aspects related to social inclusion and non-formal education were prioritized as well by the NCYOG and its member organizations. Both are reflected in the first Chapter of the Georgian National Youth Policy Document (2014), which sets the specific objectives to use non-formal education for raising awareness on youth rights and responsibilities, foster social integration of minorities and people with special needs, and increase civic participation. Moreover, volunteering is consider one of the means of non-formal education, hence being supported by the policy. The issue of social inclusion is tackled as well in the fourth part of the document that guarantees the provision of support for socially disadvantaged youth.

Other important policy dimensions that the National Council advocated for were the strengthening of the youth sector, including providing support for youth organizations and youth work (E. Tsvariani, personal communication, June 8, 2017). Subsequently, one of the policy objectives targets the development of a favorable environment for youth organizations, by providing support and funding for their projects. Even though, in practice, this mechanism is still poorly organized, the fact that it is included in the policy proves that the recommendations of the NCYOG were taken into account. According to the Chairperson of the National Council of Youth Organizations of Georgia, the organization is satisfied with the policy formulation process, because the outcome reflects the goals that it has advocated for.

The next sub-chapter analyzes the process of youth policy formulation in Moldova. A comparison between cases is presented in Chapter 6.

5.2 The influence of the National Youth Council of Moldova on youth policy formulation

5.2.1 Institutional framework

Table 4: Moldova. Country Profile (2016)

Country Profile (2016)	
Population	3.55 million
Young people (15-29 years old)[1]	< 836 thousands 24 % of total population

Moldova is a democratic, parliamentary republic, which became independent in August 1991. According to its Constitution (Article 72 – 74; 1994), the Parliament adopts the legislation and approves the strategies for realizing the domestic and foreign policy. The laws, as well as policy proposals made by deputies, are drafted by the Government, which is also responsible for implementing the state's policies. Following, the proposals are examined by the Parliament. After its favorable vote, the laws should be promulgated by the President. The Table presents an overview of the structure of its population (Statistica.md, 2017).

The legal framework ensures the civil society has the right to be informed and to engage actively in the policy-making process. The access to information is stipulated by the Law No. 239 from 13/11/2008 on Transparency in the Decision Making Process, which envisions that it is mandatory for the authorities to publicly provide information when the first draft of a law is prepared. There is also a provision allowing for stakeholders to submit their feedback during 10 working days. The civil society can make recommendations to the draft legislation by submitting their comments and opinions, as well as through public declarations or press conferences. The authority in charge of drafting the legislation should make the feedback reports public, highlighting to what extent was this accepted and why. Additionally, since 2012, when the country joined the OGP, complete e-government services have been developed.

During policy formulation, several forms of consultation of civil society can be used by Moldovan authorities: public debates; public hearings; round tables; working groups; ad-hoc meetings at the initiative of the authorities or of the civil society. Continuous provision of information is also considered a form of consultation (Parliament Decision No. 373, 2005). The influence of NGOs can be exercised most significantly during consultations in expert working groups or round tables because these would usually focus on their area of expertise. In the review process of an existent legislation, NGOs can be either part of the working group mandated with the revision (if selected by the authorities) or contribute through suggestions, when the draft of the legislation is publicly presented. However, there is no document setting standards for what organizations should be engaged in policy consultations, and as a common practice, those active in a particular area are invited.

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[1] As defined by the National Strategy on Youth Sector Development 2014 – 2020.

A structure meant to increase the civil society contribution to policy-making is the National Participation Council. Created in 2010, this gathered 30 active national NGOs as its members and served during its first mandate as a consultative body for the government. Even though the Council is still formally in place, in practice, its` activity stopped in 2015 due to the insufficiency of quality applications for new members.

5.2.2 Policy actors and their resources

The main authority in charge of youth matters in Moldova is the Ministry of Youth and Sports (MYS). Established in 2009, it has as a mission to elaborate, promote and implement state's policy concerning youth and sports, to determine the strategy for developing these domains and improving the related institutional framework, through monitoring and evaluation of the policies. In this context, the collaboration and coordination of activities with national and international youth organizations for advancing youth policies are a basic function of the Ministry (Governmental Decision No. 766 from 26/11/2009). Moreover, its establishment document states that the activity of the Ministry should contribute at increasing youth participation.

As part of the MYS, there is one Collegial council composed of representatives of different governmental agencies, public authorities, international organizations and youth NGOs. The members of the Collegial Council are proposed by the youth and sports Minister and approved by the government. Additionally, the current law on youth envisions the creation of a National Agency for the Development of Youth Activities and Programs. This should be coordinated by the MYS and should work for improving the quality of the youth programs and activities at local level. The provisions of the law in this regard will be effective starting with July 2017, therefore the Agency is not further analyzed in this study (Law No. 215 on Youth adopted on 29/07/2016). Table 6 presents the main national authorities engaged in youth policy-making until the first half of 2017.

Table 5: Main authorities engaged in national youth policy-making in Moldova

Authority	Main responsibilities in the youth sector
Parliamentary Committee for culture, education, research, youth, sports and mass-media	- Monitoring the implementation of the National Strategy for Youth Sector Development;

	- Ensuring the legal framework concerning economic, social and institutional aspects for youth policy development; - Supporting in the Parliament the legislative initiatives concerning youth
Ministry of Youth and Sports	- Elaborating, implementing, monitoring and evaluating the national youth policy; - Realizing youth related projects and activities; - Supporting the activity of youth NGOs through the competitive allocation of annual grants
Collegial Council of the Ministry of Youth and Sports	- Ensuring the cross-sectoral implementation of youth policy; - Adopts rules of procedure, instructions and other steering documents, for youth policy implementation; - Decides upon the grants allocation for youth NGOs. Monitoring the policy implementation (Ibid.).

Data sources: Governmental Decision No. 766, 2009; the official web-site of the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova, 2017.

The Ministry is organized in two Directions: Sports and Youth. The Youth Direction encompasses the secretariat, the legal department, a human resources service and a department focused on e-governance. The Collegial Council is considered as well part of this Direction. In terms of human resources, directly responsible for youth policy, there are five employees – a Chief, a Deputy Chief and three consultants (MYS, 2017a, b). For the purpose of this research, the Chief of the Youth Direction, Mr. Ion Donea, was approached, in order to provide explain the process of youth policy development and provide insights about the activity of the Ministry.

In terms of financial resources, the budget of the Ministry was always lower, compared with other state agencies. Since its establishment, in 2009, the state budget allocate for MSY remained under 1%, increasing slightly from 0.23% in 2009 to 0.38% in 2016. Moreover, the percentage of the budget of the Ministry, directed specifically for the activities of the Youth Direction (excluding the Annual program of Grants, launched in 2011 and the stuff salaries), increased from 6 % in 2009 to approximately 11% in 2016, but remains very low, comparing with the budget allocated for Sports (Law on the Annual State Budget for 2009; 2010; 2011; 2012; 2013; 2014; 2015; 2016). In 2016, the budget allocate for youth sector constituted 14 million Lei (MDL), which equals approximately 0.6 million Euro (National Bank of Moldova, 2017).

In Figure 5, the evolution over time of the Moldovan annual state budget is presented on the primary axis. On the secondary axis, the allocation for the Ministry of Youth and Sports and, particularly, the budget dedicated to youth sector are shown. The amounts refer to millions and are indicated in lei (MDL), Moldovan national currency. The chart reflects the time span since the MYS was created – 2009 – until the year when the current Law on Youth was adopted – 2016. Concrete data about the yearly budgeted amounts, allocations for the MYS and its Youth Department, as well as their percentage value per year, are presented in Appendix 4.

Figure 5: The evolution of Moldovan annual governmental budget, allocations for the MYS and the activity of its Youth Department, 2009 – 2016 (millions MDL)
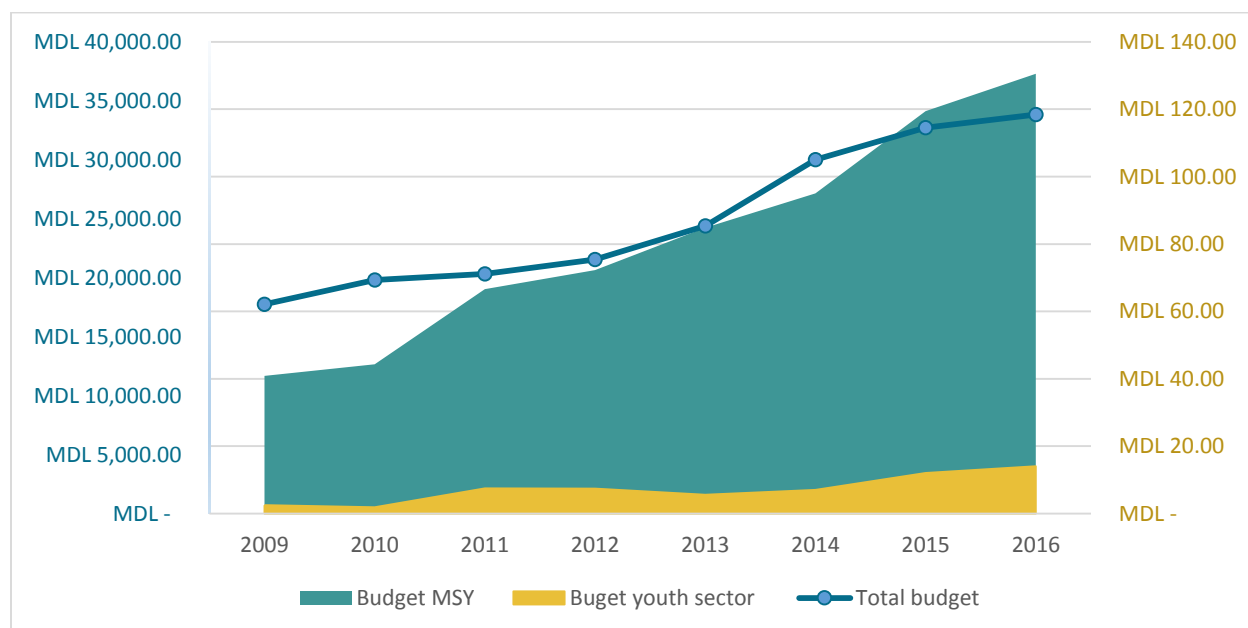
Data source: The laws on the Annual State Budget from 2009 – 2016.

As the figure 5 shows, over time, the budget of MYS and the allocation for youth activities increased almost three times, but this is in line with a general increase in the state spending budget and does not necessarily reflect an increased prioritization of youth matters. The Evaluation Report of the Youth Sector Strategy 2009-2013 presented that there were drawbacks and gaps in implementing the foreseen activities at the national and local level, only around 56% of them being realized. This can be explained both by the limited resources and the capacity of coordination of MYS (UNFPA, 2014b). The presence of more financial resources over time didn't necessarily imply the capacity of providing more quality actions. The slight increase in the budget starting with 2015 was not a consequence of the adoption of a new national youth strategy during the previous year but related to increasing with 28% of the number of regions and organizations beneficiary of youth projects and programs. Therefore, the capacity of strategic management of the MYS is questioned by independent research (Petrov, 2015).

The main methods used by the MYS for consulting and communicating with the civil society derive from the Law on Transparency in the Decision Making Process (2008). According to the National Participation Council (2013), as a practice, the Ministry initiates public debates, consulting events and working groups meetings, communicating directly with the stakeholders and publishing online all policy documents. Hence, a strong cooperation with the civil society and, particularly, youth organizations, is attested. Their experience and expertise were used to a great extent in shaping, implementing and monitoring policies. The tracing of the development of Moldovan Law on Youth, presented in the sub-chapter 5.2.3, confirms this fact.

In order to present the influence of youth NGOs on youth policy-making, this thesis considers the National Youth Council of Moldova (CNTM) as a representative structure for such NGOs.

CNTM was created in 1999 and aims to represent the interests of the young people and youth organizations from the country. It serves as a unique, national platform that currently unites 58 youth NGOs. The main objectives of the organization are to contribute to the development, implementation and evaluation of youth policies; to support the development of youth NGOs and young people from the country; to represent their interests towards national and international institutions, and to stimulate their civic participation. In order to achieve these goals, the organization on four priority directions: (i) youth policies; (ii) youth education; (iii) youth rights and social inclusion and (v) the development of youth organizations and initiatives (CNTM, 2017).

The functioning of the organization is ensured by four structures: the General Assembly, which gathers the representatives of all member organizations; the Executive Board, elected by the General Assembly for implementing its decisions and establishing the working priorities of the Council; the Secretariat, which is responsible for the daily activity of the organization; and the Censors Board, in charge of monitoring the financial activity of the NGO.

An examination of the Council`s resources from 2010 to 2017 quickly illustrates that its` capacities have been profoundly strengthened. In terms of human resources, the Board maintained a relatively constant numerical structure of minimum five and maximum seven members, delegated from and elected by the member organizations. Coordinated by a President, the Board activates on a voluntary basis and takes the necessary decisions for the functioning of the Council. Also, Board members are in charge of maintaining the dialogue with the member organizations, as well as national and international stakeholders in the youth sector (CNTM Statute, 2009). The supervision of each strategic direction is realized by the Board, but the concrete projects and activities in this regard are implemented by the Secretariat, led by a Secretary General. There is not much fluctuation in the number of employees since 2009 to 2016. There were nine people working in the office in 2009, increasing to eleven in 2016. However, the number of full-time employees grew, and there is nowadays a coordinator for each priority direction. Moreover, there is a significant increase in the number of volunteers who work with the secretariat's team. The volunteers` numbers swelled from 1 in 2009 to over 30 in 2016 (CNTM, 2009a; 2016a). Additionally, the Council has a pool of trainers, who are contracted to provide training and expertize to youth organizations. This overall increase in human resources is reflected in a diversification of the provided services. If at the beginning of its activity it had the capacity to only implement projects, this expanded over time to the ability to advocate for the interests of youth and to monitor and evaluate the policies affecting them. For instance, starting with 2011, CNTM realizes the annual evaluation of the local budgets allocated for the youth sector. The reports from 2011 and 2012 showed a lack or limited coordination between the central youth authority and the local ones, which led to inefficient use of resources. This proves that, at that time, the Ministry has a limited capacity for monitoring of the public funds and a resource dependence can be inferred (Mihalaș, 2012).

The financial resources of the organization are ensured mainly through grants, allocated by national and international donors. Some of the activities of CNTM are sponsored by the MYS itself, through its annual grant scheme. A smaller amount is secured through fundraising activities. Figure 6 presents the evolution of CNTM's budget from 2009 to 2016, compared with the budget allocated for the youth sector.

The chart does not cover the year 2012, as public financial information about it is incomplete. The data used for creating the chart are presented in Appendix 4.

Figure 6: The annual Budget of CNTM compared with the budget of the Youth Department of MYS, 2009-2016, millions MDL
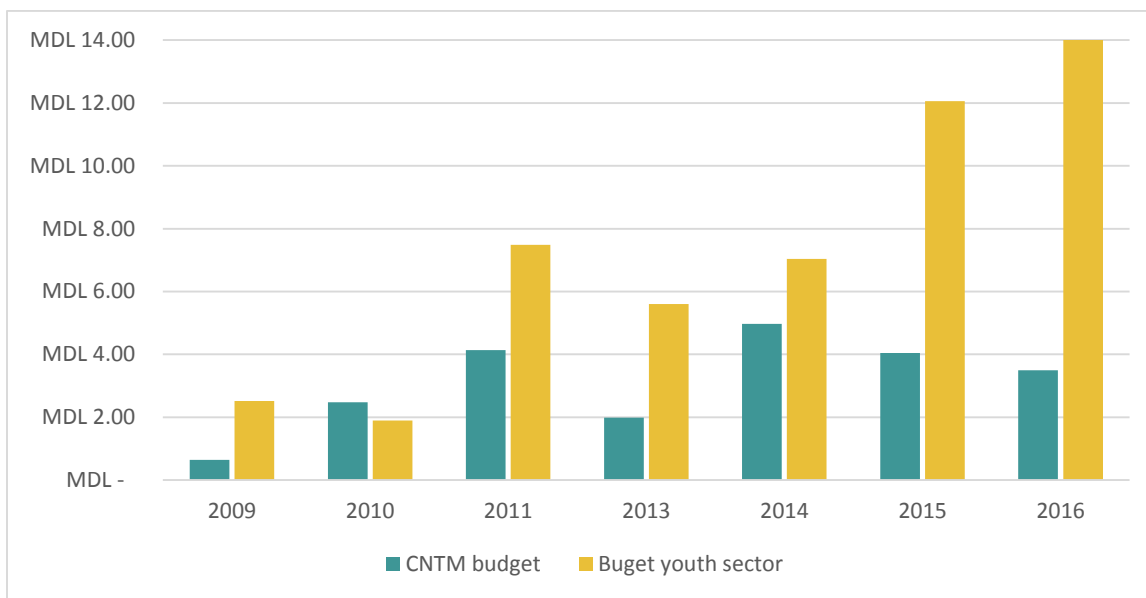
Data source: CNTM 2009b; 2010; 2011; 2013; 2014; 2015; 2016b; the laws on the Annual State Budget from 2009 – 2016.

Several facts can be inferred from Figure 6. The budget of CNTM is fluctuating but from 2009 on it did not decrease under 2 million MDL. Every year, its amount can be equaled to a significant part of the budget of the Ministry allocated for youth. Even in 2015 and 2016, when the later increased, CNTM's budget equals one-fourth of it. Such an addition could be an important contribution to the youth sector.

The next sub-chapter sheds more light on the relationship between these two policy actors by presenting the national youth policy, and then tracing the process of its` formulation and the engagement of its` respective stakeholders.

5.2.3 National youth policy of Moldova and its formulation

The current Moldovan Law on Youth was adopted in July 2016. Its main purpose is to create opportunities for the participation and multilateral development of young people, in order to enable them to fully engage in the society. The policy should ensure quality educational, health and socio-economic services for youth. According to it, 'youth' are the social group aged 14 to 35. This reflects a change

Moldovan National Youth Policy	The Law No. 215 on Youth from 09/07/2016; The National Strategy for Youth Sector Development 2014 – 2020 and its Action Plan adopted on 10/12/2014.	compared with the previous Law on youth, adopted in 1999, which classified youth as the period from 16 to 30 years old. The main priorities set by the policy are: - Ensuring economic opportunities for youth;

- Ensuring youth participation in the decision-making process;
- Fostering a healthy lifestyle, by preventing risky behavior and enabling the necessary conditions for physical development of youth;
- Providing social services and programs for youth.

The achievement of these priorities should be realized respecting the following core principles: (i) cross-sectoral cooperation; (ii) non-discrimination; (iii) timely and accessible provision of information to young people, about their rights and opportunities; (iv) active involvement of youth in decision-making; (v) equal and commonly agreed distribution of responsibilities between authorities and youth; and (vi) reflection of the youth policies in other policy domains (Law No. 215 on Youth adopted on 29/07/2016).

A first initiative to change the Law on youth adopted in 1999 emerged in 2003 but wasn't approved by the Legislature (Unimedia, 2010a). A few years later, in 2006, CNTM declared that there is a need to adjust the law and delineated the necessary premises for this process (Darie, 2006). However, the public discussion in this regard didn't advance until the line Ministry was created.

The process of formulating a new youth policy started in 2010. That year, in partnership with the MYS, the relevant Parliamentary Commission and UNFPA, CNTM launched a project aimed to facilitate and promote youth participation in decision making, focusing on the Law on Youth (Unimedia, 2010b). In this context, 8 public debates were organized at the local level, involving young people, youth workers, youth NGOs, local youth councils, youth branches of political parties and the Resource Centers for Youth. In parallel, the MYS organized a series of working meetings with representatives of other Ministries, in order to ensure a cross-sectorial approach (I. Donea, personal communication, June 9, 2017). The process of regional and ministerial consultation lasted for almost a year. Following, in February 2011, the conclusions of the process gathered in a draft policy proposal and its cost-benefit analysis were presented during a public conference. The priorities emphasized by the proposal were the promotion of non-formal

education; the support of youth entrepreneurship and the co-management of the policy implementation ("RM ar putea avea", 2011). The process of endorsement of the proposal lasted until the end of the year 2011, and during it – most of the content of the proposal was changed and did not reflect anymore the aspirations set during the public consultation process. Therefore, the Ministry took the decision to stop the policy elaboration process (I. Donea, personal communication, June 9, 2017).

The initiative started over during the summer of 2013 but lengthy adjournments were cause by political instability, as the government changed its composition three times over the next two years. The former draft policy proposal, dating from 2012, was on the basis of a new series of consultations in 2014 and 2015. The Ministry made the draft available again for online consultations and distributed it to youth organizations, NGO networks, and Ministry partners via email for feedback. Additionally, a series of consultative meetings with the civil society, including the youth branches of political parties, was conducted to assure that the views of the parliamentary political parties would be reflected in the policy. Following the framework of the previouse attempt, an expert group was created consisting of prominent stakeholders in the field. After the new policy proposal was approved by other Ministries, and it passed the legal and anti-corruption check, it was sent for approval to the Government. This gave its consent to the policy in May 2016 (Governmental Decision No. 776 from 21/06/2016) and the proposal was passed to the Parliament. Here, the relevant Parliamentary Commission had meetings with youth NGOs and following the proposal was eventually approved in a second reading, on 29th of July, 2016. The steps of the process of policy formulation and adoption are summarized in figure 7.

Figure 7.The process of formulation of the Moldovan Law on Youth and its actors

2010
- Start of policy formulation
- CNTM, supported by the MYS and UNFPA

2011
- Regional consultations by CNTM
- First policy draft presentation

2012
- Policy process stopped by the MYS

2013 - 2015
- Repeated policy formulation initiatives
- Consultations of the stakeholders
- CNTM engaged in response to MYS initiatives

2016
Policy approval by the Parliament
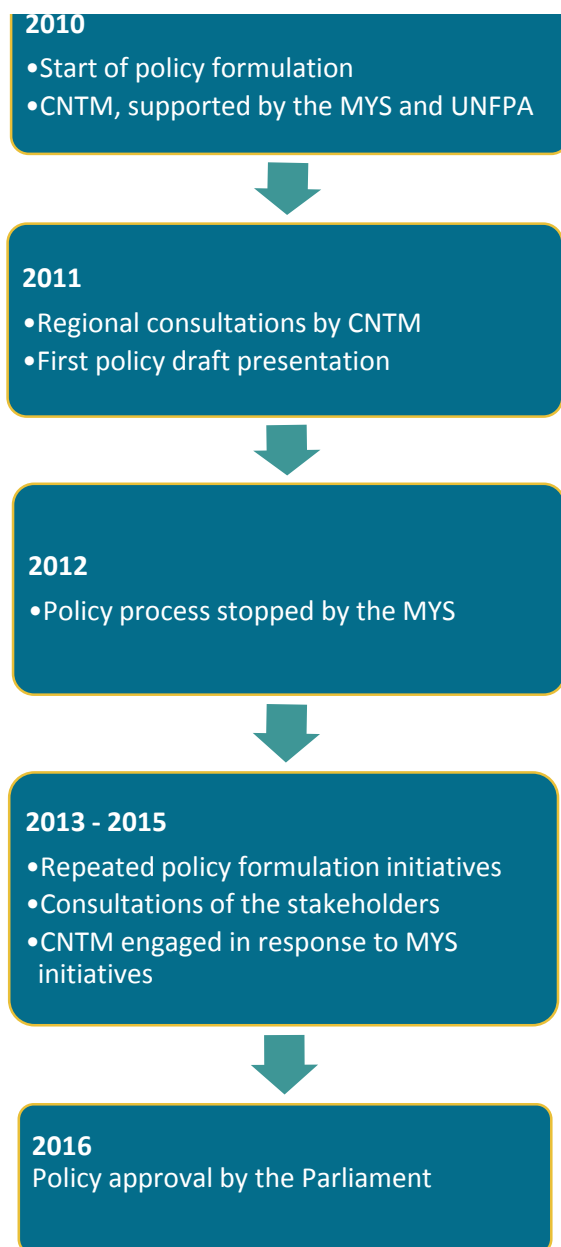
Another component of the Moldovan youth policy is the National Strategy on Youth Sector Development 2014 – 2020, adopted in November 2014. This sets the priorities for the development of youth sector and defines a specific action plan, in line with the provisions for cooperation in the youth field at EU level.

The aim and the objectives of the current strategy are presented in figure 8.

Figure 8. The aim and objectives of the National Strategy on Youth Sector Development 2014 -2020

Policy Aim: to develop and strengthen the youth sector, therefore contributing at the creation of an adequate environment for personal and professional fulfillment of each young person.

O1: Promoting youth participation in decision making

O2: Diversifying and strengthening the services for youth

O3: Developing economic opportunities for youth

O4: Strengthening the youth sector

The elaboration of Strategy for 2014 – 2020 started based on the evaluation report of the National Strategy on Youth 2009 – 2013, realized with the support of UNFPA. The UN agency also facilitated the civil society consultation during the drafting of the new Strategy proposal. In the spring of 2013, at the request and with the support of MYS, the NGO Pro-Comunitate began working on the Strategy elaboration. An independent consultancy agency – Keystone Moldova – was contracted for realizing an exhaustive research on youth and youth sector development. Meanwhile, Pro-Comunitate developed a series of regional consultations with the youth sector stakeholders, young people, youth workers, public administration representatives. In the same time, MYS created a consultative group formed of stakeholders from the civil society, international organizations and other governmental agencies, which was consulted in order to validate the priority directions, identified during the field activities of Pro-Comunitate (National Strategy for Youth Sector Development 2014 – 2020). After the NGO presented to MYS the draft proposal of the strategy, the MYS continued the process of online consultations. As a result, the draft was finalized in the autumn of 2014, and after approval by all stakeholders, was adopted by the Government in November of the same year.

An interesting fact is that the Strategy refers to young people from 15 to 29 years old, in line the previous Law on Youth, from 1999. This is also the age group that the National Office of Statistics counts as youth and provides segregated data for (Statistica.md, 2017). The discrepancy between 'youth'

interpretation in national legislation is based on the desynchronized elaboration of the new Law on Youth and the National Strategy, which came in place before the adoption of the new law. Even though the drafting of the Law started earlier than the process of Strategy elaboration, this was affected by the domestic political circumstances.

Figure 9: The development process of the National Strategy of Youth Sector 2014-2020.

2013
Start of the Strategy formulation process by the NGO Pro-Comunitate, at the request of the MYS

- Field research
- Regional consultations
- Consultation of the stakeholders before, during and at the end of the process

2014
Strategy approval by the Government

The engagement of CNTM in the formulation of the National Strategy came as a reaction to the initiatives of the Ministry in this regard. Before the drafting of the strategy started, CNTM presented its vision for each phase of the policy cycle and highlighted the contribution that it, as an organization, could bring to the Strategy implementation in terms of expertise and logistic capacity (A. Petrov, personal communication, June 12, 2017). It has to be mentioned that CNTM proves a participatory approach for providing policy feedback and proposals, meaning that it engages the entire team (the Board and the Secretariat) and the Member organizations in the process.

When discussing with international partners such as UN agencies, the Council always advocated for advancing both policy documents – the Strategy and the Law. Particularly, concerning the formulation of the Law on Youth, the organization approached the leadership of the Ministry and presented its` vision of the policy, with a special emphasis on the importance of timeliness in the policy process (A. Petrov, personal communication, June 12, 2017). Also, the organization engaged its member organizations in debating the policy proposal, which raised the societal expectations and the public pressure, for the law to be approved (A. Băluțel, personal communication, June 7, 2017).

The following sub-chapter considers the priorities set by each actor for the national youth policy.

5.2.4 Perceptions of the priorities and the degree of satisfaction with the policy formulation process

The priorities highlighted by the national youth policy reflect an agreement of the stakeholders who were engaged in the policy formulation process. Even though these are of equal importance, each stakeholder had its preference.

Numerous suggestions were given by CNTM on the Law on Youth. The main changes that the current Law presents, compared to the previous one, refer to three domains that are covered by the Council's activity: (i) youth work; (ii) non-formal education and (iii) co-management (Consultation request on the Law on Youth from 16/06/2014). The organization lobbied for the inclusion of these aspects in both the Law and the Strategy. In regard to youth work, CNTM fostered the consultation process of local youth workers. Also, it advocated for the formalization of its statute of main representative organization for the youth associations (D. Curoșu, personal communication, June 3, 2017). This aspect, however, was not included in the policy document. Additionally, CNTM proposed revising several definitions in order to create a similar legal context to the European one, a suggestion which was incorporated. The organization supported the definition of youth in the age range of 14 – 30, proposed by the Ministry. The increase of the age limit to 35 occurred in the phase of consultation of other state authorities and was made based on political considerations (A. Petrov, personal communication, June 12, 2017).

The aspects that are crucial for the youth sector are, according to the Chief of the Youth Direction of MYS, providing quality youth services, empowering youth workers and recognizing their work; supporting the resource centers for youth, and non-formal education (I. Donea, personal communication, June 9, 2017). These can be identified both in the provisions of the law and in the National Strategy, in its second priority – Services for the youth sector.

The aspects prioritized by CNTM during the consultation of the Strategy were, according to the former Vice-President of CNTM, Adrian Băluțel, whose mandate lasted from 2013 to 2015 (the period of consultations): employment, youth centers and local youth councils' networks development. All these are reflected in the document. Additionally, CNTM advocated for a cross-sectorial approach towards youth issues. Even though this is envisioned in the action plan of the strategy, which assigns concrete tasks for relevant governmental agencies, there are difficulties of implementation in practice. The Strategy indicated the NYC as the main partner of the Ministry for drafting the proposal of a new Youth Law (National Strategy for Youth Sector Development 2014 – 2020). In the view of Mr. Donea, CNTM

influenced more the Strategy formulation than the Law. This is because greater responsibilities are assigned to the organization by the Strategy. For instance, 20 of the 129 actions proposed by the Action Plan of the Strategy are delegated to CNTM. Moreover, the Council should contribute to monitoring and evaluating the annual implementation of the Strategy. From this perspective and taking into account the inclusive approach of the MYS, the leadership of CNTM at the time of policy adoption is satisfied with the policy formulation process.

In Chapter 6, the findings revealed by each case analysis are compared and discussed.

6. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

In what follows, a comparison of the case studies is realized, looking at the three main dimensions of analysis, presented in Chapter 5: the institutional framework; the resource dependence of the youth councils and the line Ministries, and the policy formulation process.

6.1 Cross-case comparison

6.1.1 Institutional frameworks

From the analysis of the institutional frameworks in Georgia and Moldova, two relevant findings are noticed.

First, the democratic political system and the legislation enable participatory policy-making in both countries. Nonetheless, the difference between them can provide an explanation for the degree of involvement of NYCs in policy formulation. For instance, in Georgia, there is no general document setting standards for such practice. Even though its` importance is acknowledged, no quality criteria have been determined, such as the establishment of a timeframe for the process. Most important, the engagement of civil society in policy-making is envisioned by the legislation but is not mandatory. On the contrary, Moldovan legislation requires the authorities to inform the stakeholders when a draft of a policy is prepared and determines a concrete period for feedback provision. Also, there is an additional structure aimed to enhance the participation of civil society in policy-making – the National Council for Participation. Even though this is not feasible at the moment, its` existence proves that there is a solid framework for ensuring NGOs engagement in the policy process.

Second, it can be inferred that the peculiarities of the institutions are crucial for determining the character of the relationship between policy actors. The characteristics of each political system shape the role of the governmental agency in charge of youth sector development during the process of policy-

making. This finding is in line with the provision of policy networks theoretical approach. Specifically, the fact that in Moldova the Ministry of Youth and Sports presents itself as a network manager for youth policy development is influenced by the responsibilities that are legally assigned to it. In Georgia, this responsibility is shared across authorities and the role of the Ministry in policy formulation is diminished by the existence of a Coordination Council, which involves stakeholders from other structures as well.

The strategies of the Ministries of Youth of both countries for formulating the youth policy are shaped according to these aspects. The fact that a stronger and more structured interaction between the NYC and the MYS in Moldova is evident is a direct consequence of both a better developed institutional framework and the legal distribution of responsibilities across state actors.

6.1.2 The resource dependence of the policy actors

A resource dependence can be observed from the empirical data about the human and financial capacities of each of the analyzed actors, and this is confirmed by their interviewed representatives. In both countries, the NYCs - which represent the voice of the young and were created much earlier than the Ministry in charge of the youth sector - possess expertise and knowledge about the policy field. These assets, together with the research capacity, supplement the capacities of the governmental authorities to formulate, implement, monitor and evaluate the national youth policy.

Looking first at the NYCs, it is observed that the NCYOG is older and more experienced than CNTM, but faces more challenges in terms of human and financial resources. Even though it's governing Board is larger, the lack of a sustainable Secretariat affects its capacity to have such a continuous and diversified activity, as the National Youth Council of Moldova does. Nevertheless, the research capacities of both NYC position them as important, recognized actors in the youth policy domain.

In regards to official government budgets, the Ministries from both countries face the challenge of being allocated a small percentage of the state budget. Therefore, any contribution that can be made by youth NGOs through their resources to the development of youth policy brings added value to the field. Additionally, in Moldova, the MYS has also limited human resources. In this context, the cooperation with youth organizations is necessary for providing both quality policies, as well as quality actions. On the other hand, the Youth Department of the Ministries is mandated to provide financial support to youth NGOs, and this can serve as an incentive to NYC to closely collaborate with authorities in the phase of policy formulation, for aligning their objectives. Overall, the most important resource that the Ministries

have, compared with youth NGOs, is their ability to decide the framework in which the activity of such organizations take place and the extent to which these are listened to in the process.

Being aware of this resource dependence, the policy actors developed a reciprocal relationship. The Ministry engages the NYCs in policy-making, albeit to different extents in each country, giving them the possibility to influence the policy, and the NYC contribute through their resources at the achievement of Ministries' missions.

6.1.3 Policy formulation processes

The youth policy formulation process in Georgia and Moldova present both similarities and differences.

Three resemblances are evident. The first is that both countries have a national youth policy composed of an overarching law and a strategy for its implementation. Secondly, the UN agencies – UNICEF and UNFPA – stimulated the policy development in both countries, by providing their financial support and expertise. This implies that the intervention of the international organizations is a necessary catalyst for youth policy development. Lastly, the NYCs were involved in the process and able to pursue the integration of their priorities in the policy. The differences appear regarding the used strategies.

In Georgia, the MSYAG was the initiator of the process of youth policy-making. In the case of State National Youth Policy Document, the policy was elaborated by the authorities, members of the Coordination Council and the NCYOG was consulted only after the policy was drafted. A bigger involvement of the organization was possible in the formulation of the Strategy when it was included in the working group created by the Ministry. Here, the process of policy formulation evolved in a logical sequence, from the development of the legal framework, setting the main principles and aims to be achieved for youth development, to the elaboration of a strategy for its implementation; in Moldova, the process happened in a reverse sequence, due to political factors.

The process of formulation of the Moldovan national youth policy was coordinated by the Ministry of Youth and Sports. However, the elaboration of the Law on Youth was first led by the NYC, in partnership with the MYS. The Council took an active role, realizing consultations in the regions and working in an equal position with the authorities. For the Strategy development, the MYS ensured the consultation of stakeholders, by creating expert working groups and online consultations, and engaging

experts in the field. CNTM influenced the policy formulation process by participating in consultations, where it presented its research-based input, as well as through public pressure.

The fact that both organizations were more able to influence the Strategy for implementing the youth policy than the legal document which is at its basis reflects that, in the case when the Government is the decisive authority for adopting a policy, the youth NGOs can have a greater influence on its content, due to the resource dependence. In the case when the Legislative adopts the policy document, its content might be more influenced by political interests and not necessarily reflect the aspirations of the youth organizations.

Even though the entire process is positively evaluated, the cooperation between the two structures could have been more systematized and better organized, and this could be ensured by an improved institutional framework.

7. CONCLUSIONS

The last chapter of this thesis starts by discussing the answers to the addressed research question. In the second sub-chapter, the limitations of the study are described. The thesis concludes with the presentation of the policy and research implications.

7.1 Central research question

The central research question addressed in this thesis is: *How do youth non-governmental organizations influence the formulation of youth policies in Eastern European democracies?*

Based on the policy network approach, two hypotheses have been analyzed and validated, by being applied to two countries – Georgia and Moldova and looking at NYCs as representatives of youth NGOs. The first hypothesis suggests that the resource dependence between NGOs and the government fuel their interaction in a policy network. Additionally, the theory provides that the type of interaction is determined by the national institutional framework. The findings of the case study support these assumptions, as summarized further.

The study has shown that, in both countries, the governmental agencies responsible of youth development have limited financial resources and research capacity. Therefore, the engagement of NYCs in policy-making contributes at achieving their mission and is more than a method of simply conferring legitimacy to their actions. In such a context, the influence of NGOs on policy formulation is possible, because they provide support for evidence based policies, and can contribute at its realization.

Particularly, the case of Moldova reflects that, when the Ministry handles their tasks capably with limited human resources and logistic capacity, a greater responsibility is assigned to the NYC regarding the policy implementation, monitoring and evaluation. The delegation of more responsibility towards the Council is a consequence of its resources, which increase its bargaining power.

The second hypothesis refers to the strategies of the investigated policy actors. The study reveals that the strategy of the NYC are conditioned by the approach of the government towards civil society. In Georgia, the strategy adopted by the NCYOG in case of the formulation of both State Document on Youth Policy and its Action Plan comes as a response to the initiative of the line Ministry to consult the stakeholders in the process of policy-making. CNTM proves a similar strategy, but it also takes initiative and lobbies actively for the adoption of the Law on Youth.

The differences between countries in the process of policy formulation – its length and its cross-sectorial character – reveal the importance of the political stability for the development of youth policy. The strategies of the authorities for stimulating participatory policy-making are a sufficient condition for youth NGOs to influence the policy, but a stable political context and a well-defined institutional framework are necessary for this to happen. This study does not argue which approach presented by the NYCs is better, but it notes that both organizations were able to achieve the inclusion of their policy priorities and objectives in the policy, when these were complimentary to the perceived priorities and objectives of the government.

7. 2 Limitations of the research

Gathering data for tracing the youth policy formulation and the influence of NYC in the process wasn't effortless. Particularly, the development of the case study of Georgia was challenged by the scarcity of information about the NCYOG. Most of the online available sources reflect only its projects, without any reference to policy contribution. Specific information about the financial resources of the organization is not public and the reference persons contacted for filling the informational gaps were reluctant to offer elaborated insights. Hence, this case study infers the financial resources dependence only from the governmental provided information, presenting a less detailed causality tracing than in the case of Moldova.

As foreseen according to the chosen research design, the findings of this research cannot be generalized but they provide relevant information for the policy-making process in the analyzed countries. As such, several policy recommendations are further enounced.

7.3 Policy recommendations

The research is relevant for policy-making from three perspectives.

Broadly, the study reveals that in Georgia and Moldova, youth policy became a priority in the last years. However, a policy framework was developed but the allocation of funds for policy implementation is deficient. Therefore, the engagement of youth organizations, which have the interest and capacity to bring a contribution to the sector, in policy-making can be a solution for filling this resource gap.

By analyzing the institutional framework, enabling participatory policy-making in both countries, the research highlights the improvements that could be realized, in order to have a better engagement of civil society in the process: such practices should be mandatory, and supported by a concrete standards. These circumstances enable a better and more effective interaction between policy actors in the youth field.

The practice of consulting youth NGOs in youth policy-making can be advanced to working together with such NGOs, when these have enough capacities. The specific methods used by NYC for advocating for youth are transferable, and can be used by similar organizations form other Eastern European countries that share similar political and societal context.

Additionally, the study confirms the hypothesis that youth NGOs can influence youth policy formulation but the final outcome of such an engagement remains un-addressed. Therefore, the study has also some research implications, as further enounced.

7.4 Research implications

The development of youth policy is under-researched by academia. This thesis aims to fill this gap and opens the door for other studies.

The research of NYCs' influence on youth policy formulation in Georgia and Moldova nuances a participatory policy-making process in Eastern Europe, in a field of increased interest. In a broad sense, the analyzed examples prove that the developments in public policy in relatively recent democratized countries are occurring according to the rationale of public policy governance, focused on stakeholder's engagement at different stages of the policy process. When the institutional framework enables such interactions, the official interests and those of NGOs can be aligned at the stage of policy formulation. The involvement of youth organizations is both symbolic and significant, as they represent the voice of those to whom belongs the future. How much this is taken into account in different policy fields could be a subject of further research.

Additionally, the current research can be advanced by adopting different theoretical and/or methodological approaches. Using different theoretical lenses can enhance the understanding of the subject of interest. For instance, applying the multiple-streams framework can reveal to what extent other factors, such as specific events or the timing of the policy process, determined the influence of youth NGOs on youth policy-making. If desired, further research could assess the role of youth organizations among other stakeholders, by looking at their influence on youth policy formulation through the ACF perspective. Both theoretical frameworks can be applied for studying the change in youth policies, in countries where these are in place for a longer period of time. Moreover, the current research can be expanded by analyzing the contribution of NYCs to policy implementation. As the overall effectiveness of the adopted youth policies remains debated, a study in this regard could bring a contribution to policy development.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Conversation Guide 1

Respondents: leaders and/or managers of National Youth Councils from Georgia and Moldova

Introduction

Presentation of the aim of the research: to understand and to assess the influence of youth NGOs on youth policy formulation.

Duration: 45 – 60 min.

Consent for recording the interview. Specification of the preference for anonymity.

Pre-established but flexible order of questions.

Questions

- What is the mission of your organization?
- What resources does the organization possess for achieving it? Please refer to the human and financial resources.
- Do you consider that the institutional framework (political system, legislation) facilitate an effective interaction between your organization and the authorities (government, parliament, public administration)?
- Are there any mechanisms that ensure participatory policy-making in the youth sector?
- How do/did you perceive the relationship between the National Youth Council and the Ministry of Youth?
- How do you think that the resources possessed by the Ministry could enhance the impact of your organization's work?
- What was the role of the Ministry in the process of youth policy formulation?
- Was your organization involved in the process and, if so, how?
- How did the Council attempt to influence the process? What were its strategies?
- In your view, what are the main issues that should have been addressed by the national youth policy?
- In your opinion, what were the main outcomes that the national youth policy should achieve?

- To what extent do you think that the way in which the policy is designed reflects the priorities of your organization for the youth sector development?
- To what extent do you think CNTM had the resources and the capacity to organize efficiently, in order to influence the youth policy process?
- Overall, how satisfied is your organization with the process of youth policy formulation?

Conclusion:

Additional comments, relevant for the subject of inquire.

Are there any sources that you could recommend, to provide more insights about youth policy development in your country?

Thank you very kindly for your answers and your time.

Respondents: representatives of the Georgian and Moldovan governmental authority, in charge of youth policy elaboration and implementation**.**

Introduction

Presentation of the aim of the research: to understand the strategies of the government for youth policy formulation and its relationship with youth NYCs.

Duration: 45 - 60 min. Consent for recording the interview. Specification of the preference for anonymity.

Pre-established but flexible order of questions.

Questions

- What was the role of the Ministry in the development of national youth policy, and particularly – in the phase of policy formulation?
- When has the youth policy formulation process started and how did it develop? Which were its main stages?
- Which areas of intervention did the Ministry consider as a priority?
- How is the Youth Department of the Ministry organized?
- Could you please describe the relationship of the Ministry with youth NGOs, and particularly – the National Youth Council?
- Do you think that the resources that the youth organizations possess could enhance the impact of government's work in the youth sector and, if so, how?
- How were the youth organizations involved in youth policy formulation? What was the government's strategy, for developing the youth policy (for youth policy formulation)? If possible, please provide concrete information about the number of activities.
- In your view, to what extent do you think that youth NGOs managed to influence the current youth policy?

Conclusion

- Other aspects, which would be relevant for the purpose of the research.
- Could you recommend any sources, for a better understanding of the national youth policy?

- Thank you for the answers and for the interview.

Appendix 3. Budgetary data. Georgia.

The annual budget of the government of Georgia (expenses), allocations for the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs and particularly – for the Youth Department (millions GEL).

Year	Total Budget	Budget MSYAG	Budget Youth Sector	% of State Budget allocated to MSYAG	% of the budget of MSYAG allocated to Youth Department
2010	GEL 7,459.2	GEL 29.2	GEL -	0.39	N/A
2011	GEL 7,459.2	GEL 30.9	GEL 0.80	0.41	2.58
2012	GEL 7,806.8	GEL 57.4	GEL 11.10	0.73	19.33
2013	GEL 8,104.2	GEL 47.2	GEL 8.20	0.58	17.37
2014	GEL 9,009.8	GEL 53.9	GEL 10.80	0.59	20.03
2015	GEL 9,703.1	GEL 55.0	GEL 6.40	0.56	11.63
2016	GEL 10,145.0	GEL 90.0	GEL 6.80	0.88	7.55
2017	GEL 9,489.0	GEL 136.8	GEL 5.65	1.44	4.13

Appendix 4. Budgetary data. Moldova.

The annual budget of the government of the Republic of Moldova (expenses), allocations for the Ministry of Youth and Sports and particularly – for the Youth Department; the annual budget of the National Youth Council of Moldova (millions MDL).

Year	Total budget MYS, M	Budget MSY, M	Budget youth sector, M	% of state budget allocated for MYS	% of the budget of MYS, allocated for the youth sector	Budget CNTM, M
2009	MDL 17,748.36	MDL 40.87	MDL 2.51	0.23	6.14	MDL 0.64
2010	MDL 19,798.24	MDL 44.31	MDL 1.89	0.22	4.26	MDL 2.47
2011	MDL 20,315.71	MDL 66.61	MDL 7.49	0.32	11.25	MDL 4.13
2012	MDL 21,544.18	MDL 72.26	MDL 7.42	0.29	10.26	N/A
2013	MDL 24,394.79	MDL 84.83	MDL 5.60	0.34	6.6	MDL 1.99
2014	MDL 30,010.94	MDL 95.02	MDL 7.04	0.31	7.4	MDL 4.97
2015	MDL 32,724.70	MDL 119.43	MDL 12.06	0.36	10.09	MDL 4.04
2016	MDL 33,824.40	MDL 130.51	MDL 14.06	0.38	10.77	MDL 3.49