

## Participation of Young People in Public and Political Life of Ukraine

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### Abstract

The article examines the young Ukrainian mindsets and behavior during 2000-2020. The author made an attempt to highlight attitude of contemporary young adults to public and political life of the country considering various factors affecting their activity. The purpose of the study was to explore not only the views and values, but also the activity of young Ukrainians who engaged in various forms of democratic processes. Results reveal that views and convictions of Ukrainian young people have sustained considerable transformations. Among the major factors that influenced mindsets and behavior of young people were *the Revolution on Granite*, *the Orange revolution* and *the Revolution of Dignity*. Among others, results reveal that young people participate in activity of political parties in Ukraine. Author also managed to identify spheres of young adults' involvement and analyze them from young people standpoint. At the same time, the study shows the reasons for passive position towards public and political life in Ukraine. Young Ukrainian people activities were analyzed at the national level.

**Key words:** young people, Ukraine, participation, public life, political life, political parties, values.

### 1. Introduction. Youth as an integral part of Ukrainian society.

The UN defines youth as those between 15-24 years without prejudice to other definitions by Member-States. The Ukrainian legislation defines youth as being individuals between the ages 15-34 [21, p. 7].

At the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century (2010 as compared with 2000) the youth aged 15–34 in Ukraine dropped by 1.8%. However, the proportion of the youth in total population grew from 28.3% to 29.8% [15, p. 8]. In 2010, the youth in Ukraine within the age range 14-35 accounted about 15 million people. Age contingent of Ukraine in 2017 consisted of the following age groups: 15-24 years – 9,86 %, 25-54 years – 43%. In 2020 the picture of the age contingent changed: 15-24 years: 9.28%; 25-54 years: 43.66% [31].

In social stratification of Ukraine young people compose one of the biggest social groups. No doubt, the youth with their interests play a significant role in political and public life of Ukrainian state. So, young people's political and public participation will help us understand modern level of democratic development of Ukraine and political processes there. Prior works supported two controversial ideas about activity of young Ukrainians, on the one hand, and their apathy, on the other. So we are going to clarify the issue about young people's public and political stance.

**Objective of the paper.** The purpose of the paper is to highlight the role of young people in public and political life of Ukraine during 2000-2020. The paper shall examine participation of young people in public and political activities. The paper should also highlight the question of their interests, incentives and priorities. In addition, it should reflect on a question as to what extent the existence of “youth wings” represents an effective vehicle for providing real access to politics to young people. Participation of young politicians in elections as candidates from political parties will also be discussed in the paper.

## **2. Literature review.**

The problem of political activity and youth participation is in the focus of numerous scholars. Different aspects of youth participation, youth policy, young organizations, NGO, their influence on institutionalization and state formation, development of civil society, attitude of students from higher educational institutions towards political processes were studied by foreign and Ukrainian scholars. Among foreign scholars there are significant works dedicated to the issue discussed. Seminal contributions have been made by N. Diuk whose studies, such as “Youth as an Agent for Change: the Next Generation in Ukraine” (2013)[8] and “The Next Generation in Russia, Ukraine, and Azerbaijan (2012)[9] suggest that education and views of the youth were critical elements in public and political activity of young people.

A. Denis (2019) [7] shifted her attention to Ukrainian political parties youth wings, historical observation of their formation, process of young people involvement and their participation in parties’ activities. G. Sasse (2018) [25] concluded that public polls in 2017 demonstrated political apathy of Ukrainian youth. A. Mangas (2016) [16], suggested that youth was a significant factor of activity in Ukrainian society. However, the role of young people reminds more consumers of politics than creators and active participants of political life while they promote tolerance and equality. A recent study by A. Tereshchenko (2010) [28], indicated that young Ukrainians had the potential to engage in various forms of democratic participation. The author argues that locality and schools may provide youth with an important space for civil engagement and for exercising democratic citizenship. A report, represented by USAID in 2020 [32], focused on youth civil participation, steps for engaging youth in civil life.

Previous studies have shown: 1) attitude of young people towards such crucial issues as education, employment, volunteerism and armed conflicts (Orgerth et al., 2019) [21]; 2) the values and priorities of the youth, their social and economic needs, civil position and activity (Vološevych et al., 2015) [33]; 3) historical observation of youth activity during 2013-2014 (Komarnytskyi & Yurchyshyn, 2019) [13].

The above mentioned issues have been discussed by Ukrainian authors. We can’t, but mention E. Libanova whose work was devoted to youth Policy in Ukraine with focus on social and demographic aspects (Libanova et al., 2010) [15]; K. Zarembo, who analyzed attitudes and values of young Ukrainians (2017) [35]. O. Korniiievskii and V. Yakushyk (1997) as well as V. Holovenko (1997) brought some information about the background of the youth movement and political activity in Ukraine [14; 11]. N. Panina (2006) has driven further development of youth

participation in Ukraine, especially in the process before and during *the Orange Revolution* [22].

The literature review shows that civil and political participation of youth in Ukraine is fragmentary and does not represent a complete picture of the issue under discussion.

**3. Methodology.** Among methods used in the research we find useful the following ones: a case study of Ukraine; event analysis; use of secondary data; comparative analysis; content analysis.

**The case method** provides an in-depth understanding of the phenomena, their constitutive processes, and the actors involved. So, it is used to provide description of youth activity in Ukraine since 2000 up to 2020; their convictions and interest; cooperation with political parties; description of political activity; time periods in youth development.

Event analysis as a qualitative research technique is used to describe and explain social interactions and behaviors of Ukrainian young in terms of public and political activity. Event analysis is useful in obtaining and managing multiple perspectives on youth political activity while situating the events of 2000-2020 within appropriate social and political contexts. It studies the impact of the important events (*the Revolution on Granite, the Orange Revolution and the Revolution of Dignity*) on attitude and stance of young people.

Secondary data analysis (official statistics) provided us with data regarding beliefs, values and priorities of young people of Ukraine within the time period. We used it to examine an alternative perspective on the original question of previous studies whether young people politically active.

Comparative analysis is used in the study of young people involvement into political activity within the period under discussion. The comparative approach furthered our understanding of the internal policy of Ukraine, a role of young people in its functioning. Empirically, it reinforced attempts at working out differences (similarities) in attitudes and activity of young people within the above mentioned time period.

Content analysis was applied to documents' critical analysis and obtaining data from media sources.

The main body of the paper is divided into four sections: first, political convictions and priorities of young people; second, political parties; third, political activity of Ukrainian youth; fourth, time periods of youth development during 1991-2020.

#### **4. Political convictions and priorities of young people.**

In order to study the problem in depth it is necessary to focus on the profile of youth within a political system of Ukraine, because it can tell us about the nature of the political system of the country, effectiveness of its functioning and prospects for future change. The origin of the problem can be partly traced in the past when young people in the former Soviet Union were not expected to participate in political processes in the running of the country. In comparison with their peers in the

USSR, young generation, grown in independent Ukraine was more inclined to take part in the social and political life and eventually play a crucial role in the reforms.

After the dissolution of the Soviet Union political activity of young people was quite low due to strong stereotypes inherited from the previous one-party policy. Only in 1999 first political parties emerged. Traditionally a political party is formed and starts up functioning only after realization by its members a necessity of political self-organization for protection of its interest and participation in the process of decision-making at a state level. Only in 1999 it became obvious young people needed a political party for declaration and implementation of their interests.

The first Ukrainian youth political parties in the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century were as follows: Youth Party of Ukraine (1999); Young Ukraine (1997); New Generation (1999). Those political organizations predominantly consisted of young people. Their purpose was to defend young people interests [4, p. 98-101].

The period of 2000-2003 was marked by a low profile of young people, who were dissatisfied with economic situation in Ukraine, limited opportunities for political activity and dominance of “old soviet elite” in the state bodies and other institutions. As a result young people took a passive stance towards politics. According to results of sociological polls (conducted in May 2002), in the group of young people, aged 14-28, only one third of them lacked interest in political life; 28% of them said they were interested in cases when it concerned them; 36% tried to be aware of political news and 1% of youth was not interested and did not participate in political life [17, p. 131-132]. Regarding values, young people preferred traditional ones – family, jobs and friends to politics.

According to the poll of public opinion conducted by O. Yaremenko Ukrainian Institute for Social Research, in 2009, 15–20% of respondents aged 18–34 always stated that they did not care for politics at all. At the same time, young people, nevertheless, remained rather politicized, one in every ten respondents watched the political life in Ukraine regularly (in August 2009 this answer was given by 11% of respondents) and more than one third of respondents (33% in August 2009 and 36% in October of the same year) kept abreast of the main political developments. However, young people were less politicized than older respondents: while only 10% of youth aged 18–28 and 12% of respondents aged 29–35 followed the political life on a permanent basis, a respective proportion among respondents aged 36–59 was 21% and 31% – among those aged 60 years and over [15, p. 201-202].

The monitoring held by the Ukrainian Institute for Social Research confirmed that in 2010 there was the crisis of credibility of the population in general and youth in particular for the basic social institutes, especially to governmental bodies. Over the whole period of the research among all age groups, youth demonstrated less credibility almost for all society institutes. For example, in December 2007 the level of credibility (total of answers “I trust fully”) for political parties was 21% of total respondents and 15% of youth aged 18–35; for the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine – 23% and 20%, respectively; for the President of Ukraine – 35% and 32%, for oblast councils – 32% and 27%, for head of state district administrations – 36% and 31%, etc. This trend was maintained in December 2009 [15, p. 204-205]. For example, in December 2008 the number of respondents who did not trust Verkhovna Rada of

Ukraine was 12.5 times higher than the number of those who trusted it (in December 2009 – by 7.6 times), political parties – by 7.5 times (4.5 times), the President of Ukraine – by 5.7 times (8.6 times).

Meanwhile, both universal values (family, children, love were characterized as very important by 81%, 72% and 70% of respondents) and material priorities (economic well-being, good employment opportunities and occupational activities – 77% and 70%, respectively) were rated very high by young people. In other words, young people were unlikely to prefer family and children to professional activity or economic well-being; they wanted to combine these types of values [15, p. 29-30].

Within time position of young people towards politics slightly changed. For instance, polls conducted in 2011 indicated that young people lacked trust to the government and state institutions. The results of the investigation proved the idea that young Ukrainians had more negative attitude towards the president and the government than Russians. Ukrainian youth were more suspicious about reliability of Law Enforcement Bodies, such as militia, courts and prosecutors offices. Instead, Mass Media and Church deserved their trust more [9].

In 2011 young people in Ukraine were more passive than active. Their participation in social and political life of the country could hardly be higher than 5%. As a result, by data of the “Democratic Initiatives” Fund, probability of young people participation in 2012 was 10% lower than older generations [27]. The level of confidence in political institutions among Ukrainians was low, with the exception of the army, which enjoyed a good reputation. Those negative attitudes towards the institutions of the state were also evident among the young – citizens aged from 14 to 35, approximately 32 % of the total population – according to opinion surveys carried out in recent years [16].

N. Diuk found out that in comparison between 2009 and 2012 there were differences in youth values among those who were 18-34 and their attitude towards politics. Survey asked whether freedom or well being was more important. In 2009 young Ukrainians chose well being as their priority (39% for well being against 34% for freedom) while in 2012 most of them selected the issue of freedom and well being was less important (only 29 % selected it) [9, p. 9].

2014 was marked by notable events: *the Revolution of dignity*, elections of the President of Ukraine, elections to Ukrainian Parliament, occupation of the Crimea and Russian aggression in the East of Ukraine. Only 34% of youth aged 18 to 29 (34,25%) took part in parliamentary election in 2014, but they showed the lowest electoral activity, while the representatives of the age group from 50 to 59 demonstrated the highest electoral activity (49,11%) [3, p. 50].

Typically young people perceive simpler forms of political appeals better than complex electoral initiatives. That's why a significant share of youth regarded radical political forces, such as *Praviy Sector* (32%) and *Oleh Lyashko's Radical Party* (22%) with favor. This phenomenon could be explained by radical ideas that were traditionally popular with young people. *Samopomich Union* could be seen as an exception because a significant share (24%) in the structure of its electorate were people aged from 18 to 29. This could be explained by the fact that the political force's activities and political platform reflected the mood of the young intelligentsia,

positioning itself as a new "fresh" wave of politicians, expected and desired in the Ukrainian society in general, and by the youth in particular [3, p. 52].

The request for new politicians among young people was also reflected in the voting for the little known political forces which weren't involved in the big-scale election campaign. Thus, the share of voters aged from 18 to 29 was 27% of their electorate. The results could be explained not only by the voting for new political ideas and forces, but also disillusionment in politics after the *Revolution of Dignity* [3, p. 53]. However, for many young people the *Revolution of Dignity* represented a turning point in which the perception that politics was something bad, and something best not to get involved with, was changing [6, p.10].

2015 was not significantly different from previous years. 54% of young people aged 14-34 took part in at least one of the civil initiatives over the last 12 months (by directly participating or supporting it financially) [33]. 18% said they were eager to participate in governance system improvement, corruption fighting, public services improvement and reforms promotions. 26% of Ukrainian youth would participate as volunteers in greening their towns, 24% – in assisting the needy, orphans and disabled, 23% – in fund-raising for ATO participators and territory cleaning. The least of the young people – 7% would participate in protests [33, p. 65]. 4% of young people participated in governance system improvement, corruption fighting, public services improvement and reforms promotions. 6% had never taken part in such activities. 14% of youth were quite conscious, because they took part in political actions (meetings, demonstrations, protests and other public actions) for political reasons and without money. 30% didn't take part, but were interested in [33, p. 59].

62% of the interviewed Ukrainian youth didn't participate in the activities of any civil organization over the last 12 months. 13% participated in volunteer initiatives, 11% in the activities of charitable or humanitarian organizations activities, 10% in the activities of sport or leisure organizations [33, p. 60]. Answering a question what prevented them from more active participation in civil activity, 33% of the interviewed Ukrainian youth indicated that they worked a lot and thus lacked time for the activities. 20% of the respondents said that they did not believe their participation could make a difference or there were no reliable organizations. 23% of Ukrainian youth permanently monitored political life in Ukraine. Another 41% monitored the main events in political life, while leaving secondary events outside their attention. 21% of the interviewed Ukrainian youth were seldom interested in politics. 12% were not interested in politics at all [33, p. 63].

While the youth were active participants of three Ukrainian revolutions in its modern history (*the Revolution on the Granite* (1990), *the Orange Revolution* (2004) and *the Revolution of Dignity* (2013–2014)), it is well accepted idea that youth is the most electorally passive group in Ukraine. Being politically active is important for only one in five young Ukrainians [20].

It turned out that young Ukrainians did not trust political leaders. The level of distrust toward them set a record: they were strongly or relatively distrusted by three quarters of Ukrainian youth (74%) [35, p. 7]. The most interesting issue for Ukrainian youth was Ukraine's politics at the national level: 13% of all respondents chose options "very interested". Only 7% of respondents believed that the interests of

young people were rather well or very well represented in Ukrainian politics [35, p. 19].

The level of trust toward the state institutions was also critically low. 65% of young people were not interested in politics at all. With age, this rate decreased: while 55% of the age group of 14–17 were not interested in politics at all, only 36% of the age group of 25–29 agreed with this statement.

58% of respondents strongly agreed that democracy was a good form of government in general, while 49% believed that political opposition was necessary for a healthy democracy. However, 51% of respondents supported the idea that Ukraine required “strong leadership”; in this case, respondents could mean both dictatorship and a strong democratic leader, such as Margaret Thatcher or Konrad Adenauer. It is noteworthy that contrary to stereotypes, this thesis was mostly supported by young people in the North (63%) with the least supporters in the East (38%). 54% believed that politicians ignored the position of the youth. On the other hand, most respondents were not ready to do politics: 67% chose the answers “not at all”, while only 4% chose the option “gladly” [35, p. 26].

4% supported online petition (76 % never did it before); 3% participated in demonstrations (77% never did it before); 3% participated in volunteer or civil society organization activities (75% didn't do it); 2% worked in a political party or political group (82 % never did it) though 10 % were eager to do it; 3% participated in political activities online/social media (81 never did it) [35, p. 27].

Ukrainian young people were less politically active than, for instance, their peers in Central and Eastern Europe: while Ukrainian national elections of 2014 were attended by 45% of young people, this figure was about 60% in Poland, over 50% in Hungary, above 70% in the Czech Republic, and slightly less than 80% in Slovakia [20].

Moreover, democracy did not make it to the top three most important social values of Ukrainian youth; instead, the top three included economic prosperity of the citizens (28%), employment (21%), and security (16%) [35, p. 22].

Young people rarely participated as candidates in elections. Thus, in the beginning of 2018, the Verkhovna Rada of the VIII convocation consisted of only 21 deputies belonging to the age group of young people (up to 35), with no deputies younger than 27. There were 174 deputies aged 35-45 and no one aged 21 [12]. From this point of view the Ukrainian Parliament was not significantly different from neighboring countries. For instance, there were 48 deputies, considered to be young, in Poland. 10 of them were no older than 30, the youngest one was 22. A similar picture was in Romania, where there were 46 deputies who were barely 35 years old and two of them were younger than 27. Comparing a share of young deputies in the overall structure of Parliament we concluded that Ukraine stayed far behind its neighbors, because young people were only 5% of the whole number of deputies, while in Poland they were 10 % and in Romania they were even more than 14 % [12].

In 2019 10% of Ukrainians admitted that they were engaged in civic activity while 87% said they did not [23, p.3].

## 5. Political parties.

Political activity of the youth presupposes actions of young people directed toward political system as means for pursuing their own goals. The most evident form of political activity is participation in political parties, electoral campaigns, political demonstrations, protest actions etc.

Political parties in Ukraine have their branches and organizations ideologically oriented to them. Along with it, political parties, by means of their programs, try to provide support for young people during elections, declaring social orientation of their youth politics.

At the same time, young people form their own non-governmental organizations. Among those, for instance, European Youth Parliament of Ukraine (EYP Ukraine), Opportunities for Ukrainian Youth, Development and Initiative, Ukrainian Youth Centre, Info Centre for Erasmus+ Youth etc offer platforms as forums for open-minded dialogue and cooperation.

From the historic point of view, political parties were interested in cooperation with young people. At the dawn of the Ukrainian Independence, the leaders of political parties were interested in socio-political activity, dedication and ideas of young people, as the formation of political parties started “from below”, when party groups emerged as informal associations initiated by activists [1, p. 107]. On their path from informal associations to officially registered political organizations, parties benefited from the loyalty and ideas of young people, in return, providing them with opportunities for self-realization.

After a while (from the mid 90s), there was a noticeable decline in the socio-political activity of young people caused by the spread of a new way of establishing political parties, namely, forming of organizations “from above” by using the resources accumulated on the non-partisan basis, such as the political potential and organizational capabilities of the party founders. Under this approach, the issue of powers distribution was solved based on preliminary agreements between potential leaders without considering the interests of both youth of the party and youth in general. Under such circumstances, the romantic revolutionary mood and ardent desire to change the world inherent in young people, not only became unnecessary for party-building but could even prevent party leaders to achieve their personal goals [1, p. 107].

Within time interest to young people increased only before elections. Before the 2014 elections political parties included few names of young people into their electoral lists. It was done intentionally in order to obtain the votes of young Ukrainians due to their role in *the Revolution of Dignity*. So, to position themselves as pro-young political forces all political parties, which entered Ukrainian Parliament in 2014 had included candidates under 35 into their electoral lists. Oleh Liashko Radical Party list comprised half of candidates under 35 (104 out of 223, 46,6%). As a matter of fact, only 6 young candidates out of 104 entered the Parliament through the party’s electoral list which constituted 5,7% of all nominated young candidates by the party [7, p. 40].

The “Samopomich” Union Party had 61 registered candidates in the electoral list with 24 of them who referred to the category of “young people” (39,3% of the party’s



list). 9 people of all young candidates, nominated by the party, entered the Parliament. The People's Front Party held the third place in nomination of the young candidates – 75 people per total 225 places in the list (33,3%). 14 young candidates obtained a seat in the Parliament through the party's electoral list which constituted 18,6% of all nominated young candidates by the party. The "Opposition Bloc" included 58 out of 191 candidates under the age of 35 (30,3%), only 2 of them joined the legislature body on the Election Day. The "Petro Poroshenko Bloc" nominated 52 young people out of 200 candidates in the electoral list. 7 of all nominated young candidates entered the Parliament. The All-Ukrainian Union "Batkivshyna" included the least of the young candidates into its electoral list – 46 out of 223 with only 5 young people who entered the Parliament [7, p. 40].

Non-parliamentary parties, which declared their wish to participate in the electoral campaign in 2019, for example, the political party "Za zhyttia", the All-Ukrainian Union "Svoboda", "Syla Lyudey" and others, were also actively engaged in the formation of youth wings. Among them was the youth organization of the "Democratic Alliance" party. It was founded under the name of "Christian-Democratic Youth of Ukraine" in 1996, while the party was registered in 2011.

According to their goals, youth wings of political parties should serve as mediators between political parties and young voters, attracting and motivating them to join the ranks of their supporters. Unfortunately, in many cases they were poorly performing their functions. There were few reasons of the failure. First of all, they did not have adequate technique, such as clear communication strategies and useful methods to get feedback from young voters. On the other hand (despite the need for new faces in politics), parties were reluctant to attract young people to politics through their youth wings.

## **6. Political activity of Ukrainian youth.**

In political activity of Ukraine's youth we can identify interesting tendencies. Several times over two decades, young Ukrainians acted as a catalyst for mass street protests. In 1990 students carried out a hunger strike, entitled *the Revolution on Granite*. It mobilized thousands of Ukrainians on the eve of the Soviet Union dissolving. In 2004 young Ukrainians played a crucial role and launched *the Orange Revolution*. In 2013 demonstrations and protests broke out because of Ukrainian president refusal to sign up the EU Association agreement.

All the cases prove that young people acted as *agents for change*. During *perestroika* young people set clear demands: to hold multiparty Parliamentary elections for Ukrainian Parliament; a resignation of the Prime-Minister; to prevent the signing of a new Union Treaty; to nationalize the property of the Communist Party of Ukraine.

Unfortunately, from *the Revolution on Granite* to *the Revolution of Dignity*, the percentage of young people among the protesters gradually decreased. Due to the poll results, almost 90% of respondents agreed with the statement that Ukraine needed a strong leader; 61% said that politicians acted "on the instructions of foreign governments and international organizations". 63% of respondents agreed that "important decisions and laws should be adopted immediately, even with a procedure

violation.” 73.6% of respondents agreed with the message “I trust politicians of common origin the most” [34].

In 2004 students went out into streets of Kyiv, protesting the results on the country's presidential election. The regime changed and it was a clear mark of peaceful bloodless revolution in post-Soviet state. In 2013 young people again served as a catalyst of changes in Ukraine, but then as a mature generation which demanded changes for future in Europe. In the first two cases young people who led the protests were in most cases excluded from the post-protest political arrangements (1990), or else their ideals and aspirations were forgotten. They were not even invited to take up any important government positions (2004) [8, p. 181]. The protests were supported by the groups such as “For Truth” and “Ukraine Without Kuchma” movement. They consisted of young people. In November 2004, after the second round runoff between two candidates, when it became known that the election results were in the process of being falsified, a group of activists from the youth group *Pora* initiated a strike in the Centre of Kyiv. It is remarkable that *Pora* made transition from radicalism to a civic group aiming to build a civil society. *Pora* as a political party participated in the March 2006 parliamentary elections, but gained only 1.47% of the vote [8, p.187].

*The Revolution of Dignity* proved that young Ukrainians were eager to serve as *agents of change*, but they had to apply new approaches pursuing their goals. After the events of 2014 the youth had to meet the demands for more active participation in political and public life of Ukraine. After the events of 2014 only few of them were supported by political parties and elected to Ukrainian Parliament. Most of them were again ignored.

The 2019 elections reinforced this trend of political activity of young people. The number of young people in government agencies had grown unprecedentedly; the president, parliament and government were the youngest in history.

Table below demonstrates how involvement of people in public life was changing within time.

Table 1.

Engagement of Ukrainians in public activity

	May 2013	December 2017	May 2018	December 2018	August 2019	November 2019
Yes	8,1	6,6	7,4	9,8	7,5	10.4
No	85,2	87,1	88,0	83,4	88,6	87.0
Hard to say	6,7	6,2	4,6	6,8	3,9	2.5

The data demonstrates the results of the poll conducted by Ilko Kucheriv Democratic Initiatives Foundation [23, p.12]. There was a tendency to changing attitude and engagement in public life since 2013. In comparison with previous years, people had stronger ideas about active stance in public life, especially in 2019.

## 7. Periods of youth development during 1991-2020 pp.

Youth is a social and demographic unit that undergoes certain periods of its development, social maturity and adaptation to public and political life. Its activity depends on social, economic, political and cultural norms and standards of society

they live in. Up-to-date state of Ukrainian society gives us an opportunity to consider young people as a component of social system that performs a very peculiar role in humanity development.

Studying the issue of political and social activity of young people, scholars offered classifications of Ukrainian youth movement. Taking them into consideration, we can observe how the forms of their participation since 1980-s till nowadays changed. O. Korniiievskiy and V. Yakushyk distinguished four stages of modern youth movement: 1) informal (mid 80-s – autumn of 1989) as the period of hot discussion in the society, reevaluation of traditional values; 2) youth initiative (autumn of 1989 – autumn of 1990) – intensification of youth activity, evolution of political platform from more general demands to anticommunist slogans; 3) integrative (the end of 1990-s – summer of 1991). It was intensification of political differentiation, youth movement turned to be more state-oriented; 4) postcommunist (since 1991), formation of state and non-state institutions [14, p. 42-43; 5, p. 10].

There is another classification developed by O. Holove'nko who identified seven periods in youth movement in Ukraine. It deals with the stages of its development in a more detailed way. The first stage covered the period between mid 80-s till autumn of 1989. It was the time of the birth of youth movement in Ukraine when youth organizations, new groups and unions started functioning. The second stage (1989-1990-s) was more organized. Youth organizations and groups were growing and the culmination of the period was the students' hunger strike in Kyiv in October 1990. It was the time when Ukrainian Students' Union and the Union of Ukrainian Independent Youth were founded. The third period (1991–1992) was known as ideological, political and organizational crisis in the youth movement. Independence of Ukraine, proclaimed in 1991, made a lot of young people apathetic about politics. The fourth period (1993–1996) looked like efforts to find organizational forms of activity in youth environment and developing a mechanism of a dialogue between the youth and the state bodies. Young people were intensifying their cooperation with political parties. During the fifth period (1996–1999) Ukrainian youth were making steps to unite their efforts. There was a popular idea to nominate a single leader from youth to communicate with state bodies and international organizations. Young people enthusiastically participated in electoral campaigns. So, during 1997-1999 young Ukrainians became more politically oriented. The sixth period started in 1999 as a result of young political parties' formation and ended in 2004, before the Orange Revolution. Popularity of young organization significantly increased and party's membership was rather prestigious for young people [11, p. 98-100]. The seventh period dated back to post *Orange Revolution* time and was characterized by slow decrease of political activity of the youth.

The drawback of both classifications is a time limit, because they do not say anything about the period between 2005 and 2020. From our point of view the period between 2005 and 2020 can be further divided into: 1) the period of stability (2005-2013); 2) the period of political activity among young people 2013-2020).

In the beginning of 2000 Ukrainian Statistics Service published a report which said that 47 civil organizations in Ukraine were registered as international or all ukrainian while in 2005 there were accordingly 144 and in 2011 – 237. Over the

period more and more youth organizations reoriented their activity to international cooperation, in particular with EU states [24, p. 14].

One of the leaders in Ukraine is European Youth Parliament (EYP) which has been functioning in Ukraine since 2000. It is pursuing the goals: to facilitate European integration, to develop civil society, to establish relationships with other European youth organizations and form a positive image of Ukraine. During 2004–2010 the number of Ukrainian delegates at international sessions increased from 4 to 9 [26, p.11]. It took part in the international sessions of European Youth Parliament. One more activity of this organization was holding youth summits NGO G20. For instance, the third summit NGO G20 was held in Kyiv in May 2013. There were several questions on the agenda: to promote a dialogue and contribute to development of cooperation among youth organizations in Ukraine, to develop a civil movement, to discuss common projects for youth organizations [18, p. 13].

In the interim, politically conservative European organizations had youth wings in their structure. Among them: European Peoples' Party, an organization that united all national parties of European level. It should be mentioned that the Youth European Peoples' Party (YEPP) had a few Ukrainian organizations as its members: "Youth of Democratic Alliance" (YDA), all-Ukrainian Youth Public Organisation "Young Rukh" (Young Rukh), all-Ukrainian Youth Public Organization "Batkivshchyna moloda" (BM) [29]. "Young Rukh" organization, which was a youth wing in the structure of right-wing organization of Rukh, supported Euro-Atlantic integration of Ukraine and carried out the activities, such as participation in *the Orange Revolution* and *the Revolution of Dignity*, the action "Ukraine is paving way to NATO" and others [19].

Numerous all-Ukrainian youth organizations, such as "Young Rukh", "Youth of Democratic Alliance", "All-Ukrainian Association for Youth Cooperation "Alternative-V" [2], European youth of Ukraine [10] as well as other ones, were developing cooperation with European political and civil organizations. By the statistical report 2011 all-Ukrainian youth organizations held membership in 21 international youth organizations while 15 of them were included to European youth forum [30, p. 27].

So, activity of youth organizations was not only promoting cooperation with foreign partners, but also spreading ideas of Euro-Atlantic integration of Ukraine and forming a positive image of the state.

## **8. Discussion and conclusion.**

Despite activity of young people and their participation in major events in Ukraine there are still problems and hindrances. The first one is the influential role of oligarchs and financial groups in Ukrainian politics, which dictate the up-to-date agenda. The second one is the role of stereotypes about politics and power as "dirty business", which is castigated by society. The third one is lack of confidence in the Government and institutions. The fourth obstacle is immaturity and inexperience of young people. Number five is division of the youth. There are various groups of young people in modern Ukraine with different goals ranging from political to ecological agenda. The sixth roadblock for young people is a deep economic, cultural

and ideological crisis in Ukraine that still bears the imprint of the Soviet legacy. Number seven is the old system that resists any transformations that could endanger its own survival. Number eight is lack of stable political and social traditions in Ukraine, primitive level of political culture and focus of young people on materialistic values and well-being.

Meanwhile, young people realize that their participation in political and social life is crucial. All the above mentioned factors undermine desire of youth to participate in political life in Ukraine.

Political participation of young people in the life of Ukrainian society is a vital topic due to intentions of Ukraine to join the European Union. The question is complicated, because there are internal and external factors that have considerable influence on activity of young people. Internal factors, such as unemployment, low level of economic development, corruption and others undermine trust and hopes of young people. Nevertheless, there are external factors that stimulate activity of young people. They are as follows: a liberalized visa regime with European countries, opportunities to travel abroad, western style of life as a model for young people and support of international organizations interested in development of youth movement in Ukraine.

A lot of scholars are inclined to think, mostly because of sociological polls, that young people in Ukraine are politically passive. At the same time, activity of Ukrainian youth organizations, wings of political parties, cooperation with European partners prove the idea that young people are much more active than they are thought of. The results of their involvement in Euro-Atlantic cooperation are impressive (the growth of the number of participants in international sessions; close ties with European democratic organizations; political agenda Ukrainian young people deal with). We have to admit that data, provided by public polls, does not always paint a complete picture, i.e. it does not provide us with correct information. But we usually trust it and use it as a reliable source. Our point of view is supported by active involvement of young people in three revolutions in Ukraine, their participation in volunteer organizations etc.

In summary, this paper draws the following conclusions. Young people political parties (or parties' wings) serve as foundation for political experience and further political development of the youth.

The majority of active young people are not in politics, however many civil groups carry out activities related to political life: election monitoring, tracking politicians and their promises, promoting accountability on the local level, participating in other "watchdog" type of organizations, various investigative journalism and blogging initiatives, and other efforts. These activities help young people form their nascent political culture.

All the above mentioned situations of youth participation prove the fact that despite failures and mistakes young Ukrainians were and are the agents of change who despite the obstacles pave way to democracy and civil society development.

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