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***V.A. Nebozhenko**, student*
Scientific supervisor – N. A. Mikhailova
BSEU (Minsk)

THE BRSM AND THE FORMATION OF CIVIC AGENCY: YOUTH ENGAGMENT AS A PATHWAY TO PEOPLE'S POWER

Youth is the embodiment of our spirituality, purity, and innocence. It embodies the ideas of maintaining global understanding, preserving a clean planet, developing art, and so on [3]. Among other things, it is the future of our country. Its movement determines the further vector of development, but until the early 2000s, the issue of interaction between youth and authorities remained unresolved. For this purpose, various public associations were created. The most authoritative and influential youth

organization is the Belarusian Republican Youth Union (BRSM), The purpose of this article is to study the public association BRSM as a direct actor in youth policy, as well as its contribution to the civic maturity of young people and the formation of citizens capable of self-governance.

The BRSM was formed on September 6, 2002, as a result of the merger of the Belarusian Youth Union (BYuM), which was the successor of the Komsomol that operated during the Soviet period, and the Belarusian Patriotic Youth Union (BPYS) created in May 1997, which enjoyed the support of the President of the Republic of Belarus, A.G. Lukashenko. Members of the BRSM can be citizens permanently residing in the Republic of Belarus, aged from 14 to 31 years, who recognize the Charter and program documents OSO «BRSM». Currently, BRSM has about 7,000 primary organizations and is one of the largest public associations in Belarus, with more than 400,000 members. This indicates that most young people see BRSM as a useful organization that can help them solve various problems and tasks. I have been very fortunate to have personal and quite extensive experience in this area. I have been involved with BRSM since my first year, when I became the group organizer of my class. This clearly shows how deeply BRSM works with young people.

Work with young people begins as early as school: one of the first events is the 'Farewell to the Pioneer Tie, when students transition from BRPO to BRSM. After that, regular campaigns and projects are held to support children in difficult life situations. During their university years, the organization opens up new opportunities: the chance to earn their first money, express themselves creatively, and develop leadership qualities. Every year, the «Student of the Year» contest is held, where young people get the chance to make themselves known. In 2024, about 150 students participated in the preliminary rounds, and the best advanced to the final [1]. Competition becomes a stimulus for growth, and participating in the BRSM helps to acquire public speaking, event organization, and teamwork skills. Many students progress from activists to faculty secretaries, mastering management and communication – this is the path I have taken as well. From that moment, the deepening of involvement in this activity begins, along with a real understanding of its goals and opportunities. Now you carry the idea to the masses. At this stage, you are learning to navigate various situations, communicate, organize, and create. You are learning to listen to students and act according to their wishes. There are also committees in every university, which include the faculty secretaries. They are managed by the university secretaries and the committee. Within the committees, sectors are created: the information sector, responsible for social media; the documentation sector, handling paperwork; and the labor sector, overseeing employment matters. Everyone can choose a direction that matches their interests.

The organizational structure of the BRSM is built around the Central Committee, which serves as the governing body between congresses and coordinates the organization's activities. It is composed of secretaries, regional leaders, and other members, with its size and composition determined by the Congress [4]. The Congress, held every five years or on extraordinary occasions, addresses major issues and adopts amendments to regulations and the Charter. Supporting bodies include the Bureau, which makes operational decisions, the Central Control Commission, which oversees territorial committees, and the Secretariat. Their authority lasts until the next Congress. Below the Central Committee are regional and sectoral committees, as well as the Minsk City Committee (MCC), which functions as a regional body with district committees under its jurisdiction. The MCC has its own Bureau, Secretariat, and Plenum, which meets twice a year or as needed, with a five-year term of authority. Key decisions are made at conferences.

All territorial committees operate according to the Charter, which defines nine main areas of activity. These include civic-patriotic education, aimed at fostering patriotism and gratitude for historical victories through projects like Digital Star and We Are Citizens of Belarus; promotion of healthy lifestyles through exercises, competitions, and games to counter deviant behavior; development of volunteerism to instill compassion and willingness to help; international cooperation through youth forums at home and abroad; work in the information space to build media literacy and digital skills with initiatives such as Press Code and IT Youth; legal education to strengthen political culture and literacy through projects like «The Power of Law»; support for youth initiatives, including contests such as «Student of the Year», «Miss Student», and «100 Ideas for Belarus»; and finally, the student labor brigade movement, which provides young people with work experience, respect for labor, and opportunities to earn, marked by events like the opening and closing of the «Third Work Semester».

At the moment, I am the chief specialist of one of the districts of the city of Minsk. This work is not only busy but also responsible. I serve as the administrative backbone of the committee. However, this does not prevent me from actively participating in the events of the Minsk city organization of the BRSM. Quite recently, a volunteer festival was organized where each district set up various interactive spaces for children. While the children played and received prizes, the hearts of everyone present were filled with joy.

Summing up and referring to the words of the leader of our country, A.G. Lukashenko, who said: «As they say: Well, not everyone has to be in the BRSM. Not everyone will be there, of course. Some don't want to, and so on. But the BRSM must strive for everyone. Not just to come there, tell some fairy tale, or drag people in by force, but through its activities. Normal, informal activities. Not just so that the President or someone else can see it on TV. It must not be just formal» [2].

This organization nurtures future politicians and administrators within its walls. It strives to foster the development of each individual. It cultivates interest among young people in participating in the life of the country. This is also implemented through various dialogue platforms where everyone can discuss their ideas with a guest speaker and ask questions. Youth spaces are created for these events, and often deputies of different levels and delegates of the All-Belarusian People's Assembly are invited, thereby showing our youth an example of people's power, how it works, and the idea of working for the benefit of society. From the very beginning of my journey, I learned to hear and listen to what the people want to achieve. I learned to work for their benefit, to find an approach to everyone. The active members of BRSM, in turn, learn to show and express what they truly need for further development.

BRSM is a mechanism that operates continuously. It is a process aimed at a goal, consisting of various components and functioning through mutual assistance. It is a leading public organization that supports every young person in the Republic of Belarus. And every individual – whether you are just a member of BRSM or its most outstanding activist – is a part of this process.

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