
CASPIAN REGION: VISION OF FUTURE THROUGH EYES OF YOUNG PEOPLE

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26.04.2018

Vestnik Kavkaza, 25 Apr 2018

The Youth Initiative of Greater Eurasia conducted a social survey "Caspian Region: vision of future" and presented its results during a video conference between Moscow, Baku, Astrakhan and Atyrau. During a video conference, Russian, Azerbaijani and Kazakh experts, political scientists, sociologists, representatives of state authorities and NGOs, professors and students shared their vision of the youth dimension of regional cooperation of the Caspian countries.

According to the governor of the Astrakhan region Alexander Zhilkin, "the region successfully cooperates with all the Caspian countries, so we can only welcome the desire of the young people of the Caspian countries to establish close cooperation within the framework of the "Youth Initiative of Greater Eurasia," and create conditions for communication on a personal level to implement joint youth initiatives."

Presenting the results of the survey, editor-in-chief of the "Press Club Unity," Ekaterina Shishkina, noted that the respondents' answers allow them to fix the ideal model for interaction between the youth projects of the Caspian countries: "Choice of the strategic priorities by the youth audience in Russia, Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan is linked to the emphases identified by state strategies and development programs. This circumstance can explain the Kazakh audience's accentuated attention to green economy issues and the focus of the Baku youth to the prospects for the development of the energy sector of the Caspian region. This circumstance shows that the level of involvement of the youth audience of all three countries in the system of public policy priorities is high. The survey showed that the youth of the three countries consider it possible to implement the model of effective cooperation at the regional level. Joint youth initiatives in the format of Russian-Azerbaijani-Kazakh projects are in greatest demand, but in view of the increased activity of Iranian youth structures, prospects for this interaction to develop into the format of Greater Eurasia are evident."

According to Shishkina, the main direction of joint youth projects should be creating of the most pragmatic formats of cooperation, for example, project activities in advanced training of young professionals, whether journalists, political scientists or historians. "Topics of joint projects should be based on a value understanding of the region's prospects through resolving the Caspian's

environmental problems, ensuring security, developing tourism resources and increasing power capacities of the Caspian region. Up to 2030, educational initiatives will become an important direction of youth projects. These can be network universities, multilateral models of online learning, as well as the formation of new competencies, those in demand on the labor market," Shishkina said.

Director of the Center for International Programs of the Russian Youth Union, Alexei Ezhov, expressed the opinion that youth can solve many problems on traditional principles of friendship, good-neighborliness and international cooperation. "The Youth Initiative of Greater Eurasia project is a humanitarian platform for creating projects," Yezhov said.

The representative of the "Youth Initiative of Greater Eurasia" project Jamilya Alekperova is sure that the youth of the Caspian countries have a common view and approaches to the development of the Caspian region as a territory for peace, stability and development: "In Astrakhan, Baku and Atyrau, young people demonstrate similar positions in assessing key areas of cooperation in the field of ecology, trade, infrastructure projects and education. There is an important emphasis on expanding humanitarian youth initiatives and educational projects. The "Youth Initiative of Greater Eurasia" project will allow to consolidate the potential of youth organizations, which already work in this sphere, and involve new partners into this interaction. The majority of respondents believes that there will be a common information space between the Caspian littoral states in 5-7 years."

The coordinator of the "Greater Eurasia" expert platform Sergei Masaulov believes that the study titled "Caspian Region: vision of future" is interesting because it has some difference in views, but there is a general set-up of student youth of the three countries for joint activities. "We have entered a complex period of world development. Wars are fought in various forms, and one of the most difficult and most serious forms of war is the so-called futuricide, when people are deprived of the future. It was important to understand whether this future can be built on the basis of partner organizations, on opportunities of partners. The search showed that the Caspian region is a very important region for us in geostrategic terms, the formation of a possible future partnership. It is impossible to create effective structures from above. It should be based on a real initiative... It was very nice to see what the youth of the three countries think about it," Masaulov said.

According to an associate professor of the Russian State University for the Humanities, an expert of the Russian International Affairs Council, Alexander Gushchin, joint youth projects of the Caspian countries allow us to reveal the potential of the idea of Greater Eurasia. "Sociological research has shown that young people have an understanding of the common neighborhood ... For whom the Greater Eurasia initiative is being formed? It will be realized in a

deferred perspective. The young people themselves will implement this initiative. A sociological survey shows, on the one hand, the relevance of this idea, and, on the second hand, it involves the part of society, which will be the beneficiary of this partnership in several decades in our common Eurasian space. Such initiatives will also help to attract countries of neighboring regions, the South Caucasus, Central Asia, because the Caspian region is a link between other Eurasian regions."

According to Gushchin, it is necessary to develop an educational and scientific cluster in this process: "It is hardly possible to talk about progress without implementing specific educational programs related to obtaining bachelor's and master's double diplomas. We should think about implementing such initiatives both in the humanitarian and in the natural sciences. Then in a few years we could say that we already have a certain concrete result in the educational and scientific sphere, whether joint educational programs or an organization of funds and grant support for research in the Caspian countries."

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