Executive summary

- Youth, Peace and Security (YPS) is gaining traction at EU level, as demonstrated by the EU conference on Youth, Peace and Security: Promoting Youth in Peacebuilding in 2018 and the Council Conclusions on the role of young people in building a secure, cohesive and harmonious society adopted in the same year.

- The EU’s perceptions about youth and its role in peace and security has moved away from limiting associations of education, employment or voluntarism. This has resulted in an increase in the number of programmes for and with youth. They cover the topic of peace and security, often with a focus on preventing and countering violent extremism.

- The EU is taking steps to mainstream YPS. It is progressing slowly. There is a need for systemic change and the inclusion in the peace and security field. To date big steps forward are often the result of individual priorities.

- Engagement with youth civil society will help the EU to enact the required changes. This can be achieved through increased consultation, coordination and collaborations with youth networks and civil society platforms.

- The EU should generate and open up existing dedicated funding instruments for YPS initiatives that are flexible and accessible to all youth, including those who face multiple forms of marginalisation.

- To ensure cross-cutting implementation of the YPS agenda, the EU and its bodies should mainstream YPS in policy making, programming, funding, and monitoring.

Introduction

The adoption of the United National Security Council Resolution 2250 (UNSCR 2250) highlighted the importance of youth, peace and security (YPS). The EU has helped to progress the YPS agenda by making changes to programming and introducing relevant events. It has also committed to progressing this further and working to mainstream the topic.

This policy brief will highlight how far the EU has come in less than four years, whilst providing insight into the gaps of support for youth-focused peacebuilding. It will highlight key findings from the study Mapping the Progress of Youth, Peace and Security in the EU and propose key policy recommendations to guide the EU’s successful implementation of UNSCR 2250. This will guarantee the meaningful participation of youth in conflict prevention and peacebuilding processes facilitated by the EU.

1. EEAS, Summary report of the EU conference on Youth, Peace and Security: promoting youth in peacebuilding, implementing UNSCR 2250, 2018
2. Council Conclusions of 7 June 2018 on the role of young people in building a secure, cohesive and harmonious society in Europe, 7103/18 JEUN 28 EDUC 96 CULT 27 RELEX 225
4. Lainz, P. Mapping the Progress of Youth, Peace and Security in the EU
5. High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/ Vice-President of the European Commission
7. Adopted in the Africa Europe Youth Summit, 2017
8. EEAS Deputy Secretary-General
9. EEAS, Summary report, 2018
10. Simpson, G. The Missing Peace, 2018
THE JOURNEY OF YPS

DECEMBER 2015
UN Security Council adopts resolution 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security

MARCH 2016
World Vision, Search for Common Ground, UNOY Peacebuilders and Save the Children co-founded the European Partnership for Children & Youth in Peacebuilding (EYPB)
UNOY Peacebuilders form European Youth Advocacy Team (E-YAT) to push for implementation of resolution 2250 at the European level

NOVEMBER 2016
UNOY Peacebuilders’ first E-YAT mission to the EU in Brussels, in collaboration with World Vision

JANUARY 2017
UNOY Peacebuilders give a briefing on YPS to the EU’s informal Task Force on UNSCR 1325

MAY 2018
Adoption of EU Council Conclusions on the role of young people in building a secure, cohesive and harmonious society in Europe
EU conference on Youth, Peace and Security: Promoting Youth in Peacebuilding is hosted in the European Parliament, organised by the EEAS

SEPTEMBER 2017
The EU holds a youth consultation as a contribution to the Progress Study

OCTOBER 2017
Adoption of EU-AU Youth Agenda and Abidjan Youth Declaration

JANUARY 2018
EEAS & UNOY Peacebuilders brief the EU’s Youth Working Party on the importance of adopting Council Conclusions on YPS

APRIL 2018
Mr Christian Leffler welcomes the development of a progress study at UN SC Open Debate on YPS, as well as the envisaged adoption of a new UN Security Council Resolution on YPS.

JUNE 2018
Adoption of UNSCR 2419, highlighting the role of regional bodies in the implementation of YPS agenda

SEPTEMBER 2018
Release of The Missing Peace: Independent Progress Study on Youth, Peace & Security

NOVEMBER 2018
Adoption of the new EU Youth Strategy 2019-2027 and EU Youth Goals

JANUARY 2019
HR/VP Federica Mogherini reiterates EU support to Youth in Mediation during AU-EU Ministerial breakfast
EU-AU Joint Communiqué, the representative of the EU and the AU underline their commitment to the implementation of UNSCR 2250 at regional level

MARCH 2019
First International Symposium on Youth Participation in Peace Processes in Helsinki

APRIL 2019
Publication of call for proposals by the AU-EU Youth Cooperation Hub

See previous page for footnote references
Perceptions of youth

Young people are incredible advocates for peace and stability. However, their contribution to policy change and ability to meaningfully participate politically can be stifled by narrow perceptions of their role in society. The new EU Youth Strategy and Youth Goals 2019-2027 move away from limiting associations of youth policy with education, employment or voluntarism. This is done under a dual approach to youth, which aims to “tackle youth-relevant issues on the one-hand by mainstreaming initiatives across policy areas and on the other hand by specific initiatives in the youth sector”. Peace and security are absent in both the Youth Strategy and Youth Goals, which represents a major gap in the recognition and support of young people working in this field.

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New European Consensus on Development “Our World, Our Dignity, Our Future” recognises young people as agents of change and development, and as essential contributors to the Agenda 2030. However, the Consensus has a narrow definition of youth needs. It limits them to participation within local communities and on issues in education or employment. This reinforces stereotypical assumptions that increased accessibility to education and employment are stand-alone solutions to young people’s involvement in violent extremism and other forms of violence, despite the lack of supporting evidence.

Emergence of Youth, Peace and Security

UNSCR 2250 outlines the responsibility of member states and other relevant actors to increase their political, financial, technical and logistical support to youth-led peacebuilding. The resolution requested that the UN Secretary-General “carry out a progress study on the youth’s positive contribution to peace processes and conflict resolution.”

The resulting study, The Missing Peace: Independent Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security strongly recommended that regional bodies and mechanisms support the development of policy frameworks that address youth, peace and security issues. In 2018, the UN Security Council adopted follow-on Resolution 2419 (UNSCR 2419), calling once more on all relevant regional and sub-regional bodies to consider developing and implementing policies and programmes for youth and to facilitate their constructive engagement.

The EU has positioned itself as a key actor on YPS. For instance, The EU conference on Youth, Peace and Security: Promoting Youth in Peacebuilding and the Council Conclusions on the role of young people in building a secure, cohesive and harmonious society (Council Conclusions) adopted in 2018 under the Bulgarian Presidency, are among the key milestones in the recognition of the role of youth in peace and security (figure 1).

The progress towards the mainstreaming of YPS is still slow, and big steps forward are often the result of individual priorities as opposed to a real systemic change and inclusion in the peace and security field. Despite momentum after the 2018 EU conference on YPS and the adoption of the Council Conclusions, no concrete and detailed commitments have been put forward to lead to a successful implementation of UNSCR 2250.

The Council Conclusions call for:

- Cross-sectoral cooperation based on innovative methods of communication, sharing of good practices and effective dialogue, through increased coherence, coordination and collaboration between EU institutions;
- building on the evidence-based approach, to strive for cohesive and harmonious societies;
- active and meaningful youth participation in building peaceful and inclusive societies;
- intercultural dialogue between youth in and beyond Europe;
- building resilience and critical thinking through non-formal and informal learning.

Locating the Youth, Peace and Security portfolio in the EU administration

A number of EU institutions and departments are now covering the YPS portfolio. The degree of support to the progress of YPS varies among these EU programmes, policies and activities, as shown in figure 2. Two of the key drivers of the EU's changes on the topic are the European External Action Service (EEAS) and the political leadership of Bulgaria. The EEAS were the key coordinators behind the first EU conference on YPS. Bulgaria held the presidency of the Council of the European Union from January to June 2018, during which several key YPS actions were implemented.

In addition different EU institutions and Directorate-Generals (DGs) including DG DEVCO, the EEAS, the FPI and the IcSP, each appointed a youth focal point bringing a youth lens to all policy areas. For instance, the DG DEVCO youth focal point is mapping all youth actions managed and facilitated by this DG. If adequately communicated externally and monitored regularly, it will result in a clearer understanding of the degree of implementation of YPS in DG DEVCO’s programming and activities, and to identify possible capacity gaps.

16. Council Conclusions of 7 June 2018
17. EEAS, Summary report of the EU conference on Youth, Peace and Security: promoting youth in peacebuilding, implementing UNSCR 2250, 2018
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institutional bodies</th>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Nature and scope of the activity</th>
<th>Useful for the progress of YPS?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>The European Commission</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>The Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture (DG EAC)</strong></td>
<td>EU Youth Strategy &amp; Goals</td>
<td>Policy documents setting the Youth strategy and priorities</td>
<td>+++</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>EU Dialogue</td>
<td>Engagement platform for young people on youth related policies</td>
<td>++</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Erasmus +</td>
<td>Programme that supports young people, through diverse activities such as Erasmus+ Virtual Exchange.</td>
<td>+++</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Creative Europe</td>
<td>Programme that supports audio-visual, cultural and creative sector, accessible to young people.</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Europe for Citizens</td>
<td>Programme which aims is to contribute to citizens’ understanding of the EU, its history and diversity and to encourage the democratic participation of citizens at EU level</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development (DG DEVCO)</strong></td>
<td>New Development Consensus</td>
<td>Policy framework for development cooperation, which aligns the Union’s development policy with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.</td>
<td>+++</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Development Cooperation Instrument</td>
<td>Funding instrument with the prime objective to reduce poverty, however tackles variety of areas, including security and stability. EU-AU cooperation Hub folds into this funding mechanism (details on Hub below).</td>
<td>++++</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Instrument Contributing to Stability and Peace (IcSP)</td>
<td>Funding instrument to support stabilisation initiatives and peacebuilding activities in partner countries. It is co-managed between the Service for Foreign Policy Instruments (FPI) and DG DEVCO</td>
<td>++++</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Partnership Instrument</td>
<td>Funding instrument to advance and promote EU interests and partnerships.</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance II</td>
<td>Funding instrument by which the EU supports reforms in the ‘enlargement countries’ with financial and technical help.</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

18. Here + represents low capacity to support YPS and ++++ high capacity.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>European Development Fund (EDF)</th>
<th>The EU's main instrument for providing development aid to African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries as well as overseas countries and territories (OCTs)</th>
<th>++</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI)</td>
<td>Funding mechanism to improve relations with neighbouring countries. For example, CSOs in Israel and Palestine are funded through the EU Peacebuilding Initiative, and facilitated by the EU delegation in Israel. This initiative especially targets CSOs and has supported a number of youth organisations in activities for conflict transformation.</td>
<td>+++</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**The European External Action Service (EEAS) is the diplomatic service and foreign and defence ministry of the European Union (EU)**

| EU conference on Youth, Peace and Security: Promoting Youth in Peacebuilding | First EU conference on YPS. | ++++
|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----|
| Regional consultation for the *The Missing Peace*. | Initiative carried out by the EEAS | ++++

**The European Parliament**

| Young Political Leaders Programme | Platform for youth engagement at the European Parliament | ++ |

**The Council of the European Union**

| Education, Youth, Culture and Sport Council (EYCS) | Council Conclusions on the role of young people in building a secure, cohesive and harmonious society in Europe (supported by the EEAS) | +++ |
Funding and Programmes

As the world’s largest donor the EU has a range of programmes designed to support youth. For example, the Erasmus+ Programme gives young people and youth organisations several funding opportunities to support and reinforce their capacity as actors of change. These funding opportunities are flexible enabling all types of youth organisations to apply, including informal groups of youth. The Erasmus+ programme has no specific focus on youth working in conflict settings or peacebuilding and is only open to those based in member states or neighbouring countries.

There is also a growing number of EU funding mechanisms for young people working on peace and security, such as the call for proposals shaped by the AU-EU Youth Cooperation Hub under the Development Cooperation Instrument. This trend must be maintained. To date dedicated funding for peace and security in conflict and post-conflict settings rarely integrates a youth lens and is not always accessible and adapted to youth groups and organisations.

To implement the YPS agenda there is an imperative to introduce the breadth of programming as seen at IcSP, coupled with the programmatic and administrative flexibility of Erasmus+.

The AU-EU Youth Cooperation Hub is a platform supporting 42 youth experts which aims to turn ideas into action. The work carried out by these young experts is based on the Abidjan Youth Declaration and the AU-EU Youth Agenda, organised in six thematic clusters including a peace and security cluster. These experts were invited to shape calls of proposals for projects worth €10 million across all areas that were released by the EU in April 2019.

The Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace (IcSP) is mainstreaming YPS, with around 60 programmes that include youth in peacebuilding, crisis management and violent conflict situations. These new programmes are very welcome and impactful. However, the administrative requirements of the IcSP may compromise the participation of young people and youth organisations. To implement the YPS agenda there is an imperative to introduce the breadth of programming as seen at IcSP, coupled with the programmatic and administrative flexibility of Erasmus+.

A number of EU-supported YPS programmes, such as Extremely Together and the One Young World Peace Ambassadors, focus on countering and preventing violent extremism (C/PVE). Over-emphasising youth participation to this thematic area is problematic. There is a tendency to frame youth first and foremost as passive actors being ‘pushed and pulled’ towards radicalisation. It is important to allocate efforts and resources to support youth in all conflict transformation and peacebuilding processes, avoiding an over-emphasised relation made between youth and C/PVE.

Role of Member States

Some Member States are at the forefront of the implementation of the YPS agenda. Most champion countries, like Finland and Sweden, were already prioritising YPS before momentum at EU level. This does however, not underestimate the capacity of the EU to encourage and support Member States in the implementation of the YPS agenda. It also paints a positive picture for the future if the EU momentum can grow or be sustained and gradually fed through to Member States.

Although there are spaces for youth engagement within the EU institutions such as the EU Youth Dialogue and European Parliament Young Political Leaders Programme (YPL), the capacity to support a meaningful participation of youth in EU processes, including policy making and programming is less evident. The low participation rate by Member State and EU staff as well as lack of transparency and engagement with youth in the follow-up steps to the dialogue, detract the value and legitimacy of the process.

These platforms have not integrated YPS participation in a systematic and continuous manner, despite sometimes focusing on the YPS agenda such as in the annual programmes of the YPL in 2018 and 2019. It is important to strive for the strengthening of a formal and continuous platform for youth participation in policy making on peace and security issues to ensure that any type of EU engagement is youth-sensitive.

Engagement with youth stakeholders

Outside influences on Youth, Peace and Security

CSOs are successfully engaging with the EU institutions to influence and support policy making and programming. Some of these CSOs, such as the European Youth Forum, European Peacebuilding Liaison Office (EPLO) are well established and engage regularly with the EU institutions. The mechanisms, set-up by these organisations, serve other CSOs that have a stronger focus on YPS in order to successfully and sustainably interact with the EU bodies in the progress of the YPS agenda. Solid and sustainable engagement with grassroots youth organisations is crucial to progress the YPS agenda. YPS focused organisations, such as the United Network of Young Peacebuilders (UNOY Peacebuilders) can enable this.
Youth, Peace, Security is gaining traction at EU level. The perceptions about youth and its role in peace and security have significantly evolved. These changes in the discourse coupled with policy developments have resulted in a considerable increase in the number of programmes for and with youth related to peace and security and more specifically about preventing and countering violent extremism. Programmes by youth, however, are rarely seen at EU level.

There is a desire to develop more programmes by youth, in which young people would be regarded not solely as beneficiaries, instead involved in the design and implementation. The development and success of this new approach to programming can solely be achieved by securing meaningful engagement and participation of youth with the EU.

However, the mainstreaming of YPS is still far from a reality. Whilst the pace of commitments and programming is increasing, this still happens on an ad hoc basis with limited scope. Existing platforms and mechanisms for youth and CSO participation operate within the frame of specific projects or are not always able to engage with a diverse representation of youth. Young people have also flagged their difficulties to meaningfully engage with the EU. This is due to limited communication and transparency of the activities taking place at this level. Similar issues are associated with the EU funding mechanisms for YPS. There is no dedicated YPS funding window or any guarantee that programmes will integrate a youth lens.

There are a rising number of opportunities in youth specific or YPS mechanisms. To ensure that youth and youth organisations can harness these to implement UNSCR 2250 the European Union and its bodies should:

Mainstream Youth, Peace and Security

1. Adopt actionable Council of the EU guidelines on YPS and a regular reporting mechanism on their implementation.
2. Mandate resources to ensure cross-cutting implementation of the YPS agenda at EU delegation level and in headquarters.
3. Formalise, reinforce and expand the network of youth focal points across DG DEVCO, EEAS, FPI and IcSP to include representatives in all EU bodies and policy areas, including the European Parliament, in order to promote coherence, joint action and accountability and support the mainstreaming of YPS agenda.
4. Develop toolkits and training curricula for EU policy officers, mediators, and other relevant staff in delegations and headquarters to ensure that dedicated capacities and expertise are in place for youth-sensitive interventions and meaningful engagement with young people and youth organisations.
5. Institutionalise a youth lens into context and conflict analyses and country reporting by EU delegations, particularly in conflict affected or post-conflict settings.
**Meaningful youth engagement**

6. Improve the accessibility and impact of existing participation platforms, such as the EU Dialogues to enable diverse groups of young people to channel their concerns and needs to the EU institutions and develop joint solutions. Ensure youth participation in the decision making following these dialogues, including policy making and programming, for example through permanent EU-funded youth advisory boards.

7. Increase the use of participation mechanisms such as the CSDN to engage with youth on YPS-related issues and to feed into its efforts to support the implementation of the YPS agenda.

8. Invest in YPS coalitions and youth-adult collaboration platforms, such as the EYPB and the EU-AU Youth Hub, and establish ongoing consultation, coordination and collaboration with these platforms on the implementation of YPS agenda at EU level.

**Develop relevant programmes**

9. EU programmes and projects related to youth, peace and security should be designed, implemented, monitored and evaluated with and by young people themselves.

10. Learn from the good practice on supporting youth civic engagement, mobility and dialogue developed by the Erasmus+ Programme to inform the EU’s investments in youth, peace and security worldwide.

11. Promote sustainable, long-term and collaborative initiatives for and with young people, including joint initiatives that build on existing efforts and interventions at scale. Avoid short-term projects that can only benefit a few.

12. Ensure inclusive representation of young people in all programmes. Actively seek to represent the experiences and needs of broader constituencies of youth. Do this by engaging with them through their roles in youth organisations, informal groups and movements.

13. Make special efforts to ensure the inclusion of youth that face multiple forms of marginalisation, including: young women, refugees, internally displaced people, indigenous youth, youth with disabilities, the LGBTQI community, young people living in rural communities, among others.

14. Employ youth-sensitive and youth-informed conflict analyses to advise programming and funding priorities in fragile and conflict-affected settings.

**Provide with funding opportunities**

15. Generate and open up existing dedicated funding instruments for YPS initiatives that are flexible and accessible to all youth, including youth that face multiple forms of marginalisation.

16. Introduce quotas for the inclusion of at least one youth-led organisation in partnerships implementing YPS programming

17. Ensure that the administrative and financial eligibility criteria of YPS focused funding is youth-accessible and that small and informal youth groups are not precluded from applying for funding. This could be achieved by also offering smaller grants, or sub-granting through a youth-led network or larger peacebuilding CSOs.

18. Prioritise funding for peacebuilding projects that promote young people’s leadership and agency, and de-prioritise funding that focus on economic empowerment and P/CVE.

**Ensure transparency and monitoring**

19. Create youth markers measuring and reporting on YPS commitment across EU programming and funding to ensure greater transparency, visibility, and accountability of the EU’s efforts to implement UNSCR 2250 and UNSCR 2419.
This policy brief is based on the findings of a study on the EU’s support to youth participation in peacebuilding. The study was commissioned by the United Network of Young Peacebuilders (UNOY Peacebuilders), and financed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland and Cordaid.

UNOY Peacebuilders would like to thank the researcher of the study, Paloma Lainz, whose analysis and commitment to young people building peace have formed the foundation of this policy brief. We would also like to express our gratitude to Angela King, Darlington Ikechukwu Uzor and Liz Kearsley for their engagement in the development of this policy brief.

We would like to acknowledge the following organisations for their critical contributions: the Bulgarian Permanent Representation to the EU, the Finnish Permanent Representation to the EU, the European Commission Directorate General for Cooperation and Development, the European Commission Directorate General for Education and Culture, the European External Action Service, the EU Instrument Contributing the Stability and Peace, the European Peacebuilding Liaison Office, the European Youth Forum, Interpeace, Search for Common Ground, World Vision and the European Advocacy team of UNOY Peacebuilders.

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