Launch Report: Mapping the Progress of Youth, Peace and Security in the EU
Wednesday, 18 September 2019, Brussels

On 18 September 2019, 27 representatives of European Union (EU) bodies, CSOs, and young peacebuilders gathered in Brussels for the launch of the report, Mapping the Progress of Youth, Peace and Security in the European Union. The event was organised by UNOY Peacebuilders with support from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland, Cordaid, and Search for Common Ground, and hosted by the European Peacebuilding Liaison Office (EPLO). The EU is a key player in Youth, Peace, and Security and has made significant progress in a short space of time.

Introduction

The United Network of Young Peacebuilders (UNOY Peacebuilders) commissioned a study on the EU's support to youth-led peacebuilding, building on a recommendation from The Missing Peace: Independent Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security. The study maps and assesses the EU's current support to youth participation in peacebuilding through its external outreach, funding, and programming. The resulting report, ‘Mapping the Progress of Youth, Peace and Security in the European Union’, was launched in Brussels on 18 September 2019. The event was opened by moderator Lorenzo Angelini (EPLO), who noted the timely arrival of the report, with the newly elected European Parliament and appointment of a new European Commission in 2019.

Presentation by the author of the report

The author of the report, Paloma Lainz—a young researcher and peace activist—presented her key findings:

❖ Young people are working on peace and security through conflict prevention, mediation, and peacebuilding; their work, however, has not been sufficiently recognised and supported.
❖ Following years of campaigning by young peacebuilders, UN Security Council resolution 2250 is the first global policy document to recognise the positive role young people play in the maintenance and promotion of peace and security.
❖ The study highlights how far the EU has come in less than four years since the adoption of resolution 2250 in 2015, while providing insights into the gaps of support for youth-focused peacebuilding.
- 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 are among the key milestones in the EU’s recognition of the role of youth in peace and security.
- The new EU youth strategy and goals and European consensus on development move away from limiting associations of youth to education, employment, and volunteerism to recognising young people as agents of change in society.
- There is a progressive mainstreaming of youth across policy areas, particularly with the appointment of youth focal points in different EU bodies. It is important to formalise, reinforce, and expand this network to support the mainstreaming of the Youth, Peace and Security (YPS) agenda in all EU bodies.
- A growing number of EU funding mechanisms support young people working on peace and security. However, dedicated funding for peace and security in conflict and post-conflict settings does not integrate a youth lens and is not always accessible and adapted to youth groups. The programmatic and administrative flexibility of Erasmus+ could help to formulate other youth-focused funding mechanisms for peacebuilding.
- EU is a key player in YPS and has made significant progress in a short space of time. The report provides a foundation to guarantee the meaningful participation of young people in EU-supported conflict prevention and peacebuilding processes.

**Contributions from panelists**

**Christian Cito Cirhigiri** shared that his organisation, Peacemaker 360, like most youth organisations part of UNOY Peacebuilders, struggle to establish partnerships with international organisations due to administrative restrictions:
- Nearly half of youth-led peace organisations are working with a budget of less than 5,000 USD a year, with 97% staff composed of volunteers, as demonstrated by the study, Mapping a Sector: Bridging the Evidence Gap on Youth-Driven Peacebuilding, carried out by UNOY and Search for Common Ground.
- In July 2019, UNOY brought together 60 young peacebuilders in Bogotá, Colombia for the Young Peacebuilders’ Forum. This regional forum provided a unique space for young people to discuss their concerns and perspectives across four sub-themes, highlighting their unique contributions to peace and security issues in the Americas.
- It is important to institutionalise a youth lens in in-country monitoring and reporting by EU delegations, particularly in conflict-affected or post-conflict settings, as well as to develop toolkits and training curricula for EU staff to ensure youth-sensitive interventions.

**Matilda Flemming** reflected on how Search for Common Ground (SFCG) seeks to be a constructive partner for youth organisations in peacebuilding:
- The majority of youth peacebuilding work is carried out by informal groups with very small budgets, which are hard to reach by donors like the EU. SFCG is currently developing the Youth 360 initiative, which will provide training, mentorship, and small grants to youth organisations. Young people will lead the funding decisions and decide on success markers.
- As the biggest development donor, with the world’s largest youth programming, the EU should work on YPS as both an internal and external agenda. The Progress Study calls the donor community to allocate 1.8 billion USD to a global YPS fund. The EU could potentially become a major contributor.
- The EU is supporting the Erasmus+ Virtual Exchange, which is managed by SFCG and
other CSO partners. The pilot project is intended to complement physical Erasmus+ exchange programmes by facilitating online discussions on divisive topics among young people in the EU and Southern Mediterranean region, supporting the prevention pillar of resolution 2250.

Peter Torda noted that the European External Action Service (EEAS) has collaborated with civil society since the start of its work on YPS:

- The AU-EU Youth Hub is the first initiative to channel youth voices into funding opportunities tailoring funding opportunities for civil society organisations in Africa. It is a pilot which involves young people in EU programming, which may inspire lessons for similar initiatives.
- The EEAS has also contributed to the First International Symposium on Youth Participation in Peace Processes and Peacebuilding in Helsinki 2019, and has committed to developing a framework for mediators to support youth inclusion in mediation processes.
- Partnership is key to the EU and is more than a funding relationship. It is crucial to open channels of communication with the EU’s leadership, channelling youth voices to political processes. In the political guidelines for the next European Commission, President-Elect Ursula von der Leyen emphasises that the ‘future of Europe will depend on our young people’.

Discussion with the audience

Is there a risk that the YPS agenda is taking political attention away from Women, Peace and Security?

- The exclusion of women, young people, and other social groups is the manifestation of a deeper problem: systems of patriarchy. It is important to build alliances between women and youth groups to ensure local ownership in peace processes, which is likely to increase the chances of a lasting outcome.

What are the possible next steps for the EU?

- The year 2020 is an important one: the UN system will celebrate its 75th anniversary; it will be 20 years since the adoption of UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace and Security; and the 5th anniversary of UNSCR 2250 on YPS. It will be a time to reflect on and learn from the progress made thus far, which can influence future implementation efforts.
- The adoption of actionable Council of the EU guidelines on YPS and a regular reporting mechanism on their implementation.
- The High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice-President of the European Commission (HR/VP), Federica Mogherini, chaired a high-level meeting, The Role of Women in Peace and Transition Processes, in September in Brussels. As a result, the creation of a youth-accessible YPS fund, focal points on Youth/Women, Peace and Security in selected EU delegations, and instruments for safety and physical protection of young and women peacebuilders will be explored.
- The Directorate-General for International Development and Cooperation (DEVCO) is currently reviewing Guidance note on the use of Conflict Analysis in support of EU external action, which will embed both a youth and gender dimension.

How can we ensure to engage ‘hard-to-reach’ youth?

- There is a need to diversify partnerships beyond large-scale, high-resource organisations. EU delegations can play an important role in connecting with grassroots youth groups. As a global network of youth peace organisations, UNOY can be an
interlocutor. The 2017 ‘Mapping of Youth-Led Organisations Working on Peace and Security’ by UNOY and SFCG could also be used to identify potential youth groups to partner with.

**How can we move beyond tokenistic approaches in ensuring meaningful youth participation?**

- There are many EU events that engage youth, often resulting in the formulation of a set of policy recommendations. It is important to **ensure a feedback loop** where young people can move their contributions and recommendations forward, and participate in the post-event decision-making.
- The EU has strict requirements on financial investment and procurement in its international development cooperation. Initiatives such as the youth 360 pilot are much needed to **strengthen the organisational capacities of youth peace organisations**, and to ease their access to EU funding.
- The Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace (IcSP) supports around 60 programmes that have a link to youth in peacebuilding; of which, many target young people as beneficiaries or have a focus on preventing and countering violent extremism. **How can youth roles become more diverse and more actively shape EU programming?**

**Closing remarks by Ambassador Riitta Resch, Head of the Embassy of Finland**

Ambassador Riitta Resch, Head of the Embassy of Finland, welcomed the concrete commitments shared during the discussion in Brussels. The Ambassador welcomed the report for instilling further action in support of the YPS agenda at the EU level, which she hoped would make faster progress than the Women, Peace and Security agenda. She ensured everyone that the new government of Finland, sworn in in June 2019, continues to have a strong focus on conflict prevention and inclusive peacebuilding:

- Finland hosted the **First International Symposium on Youth Participation in Peace Processes and Peacebuilding** on 5-6 March in Helsinki, gathering approximately one hundred mediation experts, of whom half were youth with first-hand experience of peace processes in conflict-affected areas. The Symposium contributed to the report, ‘**We Are Here: An Integrated Approach to Youth Inclusive Peace Processes**’.
- Finland is the first country to prepare a **National Action Plan for the implementation of resolution 2250**, through a participatory approach. **Finland's 2250 network** is leading the consultation process, gathering the contributions of young people and civil society.
- The Finnish Presidency of the Council of the EU is a unique opportunity to support YPS within the EU. Finland is wholeheartedly committed to doing so.

The Ambassador closed the discussion by noting that **there is no lasting peace agreement without women and youth**. Young people are not a single-layered group, and that special efforts must be made to include youth from minority and marginalised groups.

**The United Network of Young Peacebuilders (UNOY Peacebuilders)** is shaping the global agenda for youth, peace and security. In partnership with our members, we reached nearly 10 million young people in 2018. By translating local peacebuilding into international policy, UNOY Peacebuilders is developing joint approaches to common peace and security challenges. The study has been commissioned by the UNOY Peacebuilders, and financed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland and Cordaid.

**To read the full report, go to** [www.unoy.org/mapping-the-progress](http://www.unoy.org/mapping-the-progress) | **More info:** gizem.kilinc@unoy.org