

EU Youth, Peace and Security network

Preamble

Young people represent a majority of the population in fragile countries, and are often the primary victims of conflicts and protracted crises. At the same time, they can be the strongest protagonists of positive change.

With this in mind, the European Union is stepping up its support for concrete youth involvement in policy making, including in mediation and peace processes. Both the mid – term revision of the Youth Action Plan in European External Action, as well as the tailoring of the next European Youth Strategy show increased attention to the active involvement of young generations in the peace and security dimension.

Regular and meaningful dialogues with young activists, integrated in a formalised framework occur frequently, the most recent example being the Youth Policy Dialogue led by the HRVP, in Montenegro, back-to-back with the Summit with the Western Balkans.

The moment has therefore arrived to further scale up policy progress through the medium of the engagement directly with young people. This would be taken forward by adapting the paradigm from an essentially event-driven, top-down service-oriented approach (with results that tend to remain at a theoretical level) to bottom-up self-organised demand-driven concept through which greater youth ownership and responsibility for the organisation and implementation of YPS agenda is at the centre of a genuine partnership between institutional policy makers and young activists (with concrete results that have an impact on the field). Furthermore, local activists often represent a direct link both towards the needs on the territory and towards their national governments, which is crucial to advance on the preparation and implementation on the National Action Plans on peace and security.

Context

In November 2025, the EU Youth, Peace and Security Coalition (which the European External Action Service is part of) organized the Second EU Youth, Peace and Security (YPS) Conference in Brussels. It was a rich one-week event, with 58 panels, interactive round tables, workshops, cultural events and event-launching receptions that saw the presence of 126 young peacebuilders from 86 countries of the world and culminated with the adoption of the “Joint Declaration of young peacebuilders on Youth, Peace and Security”.

The main operational deliverable of the Conference, based on article 63 of the Joint Declaration that calls for “[...] the creation of a joint follow-up framework under the coordination of the EEAS, in partnership with youth networks and civil society, to monitor progress on the integration of the YPS agenda into EU external policies and financial instruments [...]”, has been the setting up of a permanent structure, the “Youth, Peace and Security network”, that includes, at the time of writing (June 2026), 654 young activists from all over the world.

The network is divided in six regional chapters:

- Europe (153 members);
- Eastern and Southern Africa (173 members);
- West Africa (134 members);
- Central Africa (55 members);
- Latin America and the Caribbean (48 members);
- Asia and Middle East (96 members);

The objective of the network is to operationalise the YPS agenda through direct, grassroots action by promoting the priorities and tackling needs on the ground identified by its young members.

Each regional chapter has from two to five volunteer young coordinators.

- These coordinators have general coordination meetings (that ensure the general steering) once per week;
- They have meetings with their regional groups every two weeks;
- There are general meetings of the whole network once per month;
- In addition, the network organises the “Regional Series” webinars once per month.

The projects

Every four months the Youth, Peace and Security network labels **up to two youth-suggested YPS projects per region**, that are presented at regional level, up-streamed by the respective regional coordinators and adopted by the young activists at the general monthly network meeting. The projects that were labelled for the period June – October 2026 are:

Asia and Middle East

- Digital Bridge: Women, Technology and Cross - Border solidarity initiative;
- Seeds of Civil Peace: Youth - led regional action for resilience, dialogue and community recovery;

Latin America and the Caribbean

- Weaving Leadership for Democracy and Youth Security;

West Africa

- Promoting Peace, Unity, and Social Cohesion through peace caravan initiatives in West Africa;

Central Africa

- Rotating regional peace caravans within the Great Lakes region: Rwanda, Burundi and DRC;
- Youth, Peace and Security Ambassadors’ Incubator: Advancing Youth Leadership and Social Cohesion.

Once a project is labelled, the entire network does its best to identify possible support (financial, technical, training, exchange of best practices, bridge-building, etc...) for it.

Capacity building and youth empowerment

The topics for the network's "Regional Series" webinars are suggested in turn by each regional group. This concerns what the young peacebuilders believe are the most urgent priorities to be addressed and tackled in their region.

The first such webinar took place on 21 May 2026 and was dedicated to the fight against the recruitment of young people by organised crime in Italy. The momentum was excellent, because it almost coincided with the adoption of the first Italian National Action Plan on YPS.

Follow up is being ensured by the network – in this case by the Europe regional group - on the basis of the contents and outcome of the webinar, set out in the webinar report.

Furthermore, the YPS network actively participates in events and initiatives related to the YPS agenda by receiving and providing input, that is then inserted in the workflow as appropriate. The most recent examples:

- Participation of an YPS network activist from Georgia in the Youth Policy Dialogue with the HRVP in Montenegro on 4 June 2026;
- Participation of an EU YPS network activist from France in a YPS event in Marseille, entitled: "Policrisis: Youth Resilience in the Face of Conflicts, Forced Migration and Climate Change", on 3 June 2026.

The policy framework

All the above actions are informed and influenced by major policy developments on YPS and by the myriads of events and activities and events surrounding it and in turn inform and influence them.

In other words, the network is, in its essence, the operationalisation of the YPS agenda on the ground and at the same time ensures continuous momentum for it on the policy level (EU system, UN system, International Financial Institutions, States...) and among the community of practitioners (NGOs, Think Tanks, Academia...).

Of particular interest is the positive influence this work can have on the creation and/or implementation of the National Action Plans on Youth, Peace and Security where strong links are created between the young activists and their national administrations.

Another very promising strand is the adaptation of the Joint Declaration (adopted at the Conference) to local and regional realities. This process already started for Africa by a dedicated group of young activists.

Sustainability and way forward

Sustainability is ensured by the by the volunteer hard work of the 18 regional coordinators, that ensure a working Secretariat.

Visibility is ensured by a dedicated young volunteer working only on communications, that maintains the network's website and functional mailbox, as well as its presence on appropriate social media platforms.

Overall objective

While for the moment advised, guided and mentored, progressively the Youth, Peace and Security network should become a completely independent ideology-powered youth-led reality able to self-organise and self-perpetuate itself to become a strong and reliable interlocutor of the EU Institutions and beyond.
