



Chairpersonship Youth Forum – from Helsinki to the next 50 years: Chair's summary

The OSCE Chairpersonship Youth Forum was held on 29 and 30 July 2025 in Helsinki, Finland. The event marked the significance of the Youth, Peace and Security (YPS) agenda and the 10th anniversary of United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2250. The event provided a platform for young experts and leaders, alongside representatives from selected international organizations, to engage in holistic discussions on YPS and the OSCE's role in advancing it.

The Forum brought together nearly 130 participants, including young experts from 51 States in the OSCE area, to provide recommendations for an OSCE-wide YPS Roadmap, which Finland will launch during its Chairpersonship. Based on the discussions, the participants formulated a set of recommendations that were formally presented to the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Finland, Elina Valtonen, as well as to the OSCE Secretary General, Feridun H. Sinirlioğlu.

This Chair's summary report captures the key outcomes of the Forum, structured around four thematic sections aligned with the event's objectives.

Objective 1: Assess current engagement: Review the OSCE's current involvement in YPS initiatives to identify strengths, gaps, and additional needs

Discussions underscored the active role youth already play in peace and security across the OSCE region, particularly through civic initiatives. Simultaneously, the OSCE executive structures are implementing a range of youth-focused projects and activities—from Model OSCE Conferences and capacity-building programs to scholarships, initiatives aimed at enhancing youth's political and public engagement, and support for young media professionals, journalists, and youth from minority communities.

Diplomatic efforts also reflect this engagement, including the work of the Chair's Special Representative on YPS, the Vienna-based Group of Friends on Youth and Security (co-chaired by Spain, the United States, and Kyrgyzstan), the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly's Special Representative on YPS, and the Network of Young Parliamentarians.

While these initiatives provide a solid foundation, a more robust framework and stronger institutional commitment are needed to ensure that youth are not merely seen as beneficiaries, but as essential partners and co-leaders in shaping the OSCE's peace and security agenda. This shift is crucial to move beyond tokenism and toward meaningful inclusion.

Despite international support, national-level implementation remains limited, with only two OSCE participating States having adopted National Action Plans on YPS. Concerns were raised about the persistent underrepresentation of youth in governance and the detrimental effects of current security challenges, particularly Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, which has severely disrupted the lives of Ukrainian youth and eroded young people's sense of security.

Engaging youth in relevant processes and consultations not only enhances the comprehensiveness and sustainability of policies but also strengthens young people's trust in institutions – contributing directly to societal resilience and security.

There is a recognized need to further institutionalize the youth perspective within the OSCE's work. This requires both increased political support and adequate financing. The existing network of youth focal points within the OSCE executive structures, along with the OSCE Pool of Young Experts, provides a strong basis for mainstreaming YPS. These networks should continue to receive support from participating States and be more effectively utilized across the Organization.

Finally, discussions emphasized the importance of intergenerational collaboration, considering the diverse age structures and varying definitions of youth across OSCE participating States.

Objective 2: Define OSCE's unique role: Help clarify what makes the OSCE uniquely positioned compared to other international and regional organizations in advancing the YPS agenda

As a regional organization operating under the UN Charter, the OSCE is uniquely positioned to support and advance the YPS agenda. The OSCE's mandate spans the entire conflict cycle – early warning, conflict prevention, crisis management, and post-conflict rehabilitation. This broad scope allows it to integrate youth perspectives at every stage of peace and security efforts.

Although the YPS agenda originated within the context of armed conflict and peacebuilding, its scope has since expanded to encompass a wide range of interconnected security challenges affecting young people today. These include systemic issues such as human rights violations, inequality, and weak governance, as well as emerging threats related to climate change, cyber security, and disinformation – all areas in which the OSCE, with its comprehensive security concept, is actively engaged and possesses significant expertise.

The OSCE's field presence in several participating States offers clear added value compared to other actors. These features enable the OSCE to maintain direct connection to local communities, engage youth in context-specific initiatives and ensure their voices are reflected in policy and practice. Simultaneously, the unique mandates of the OSCE's autonomous institutions enable the Organization to offer specialized expertise that supports youth inclusion across diverse thematic areas. Furthermore, The OSCE has a long-standing tradition of working closely with civil society, including youth-led organizations. These partnerships enhance the legitimacy and effectiveness of its YPS initiatives.

To further strengthen its role, the OSCE could establish formal coordination mechanisms and strategic partnerships with other international actors – in a similar manner as the EU–UN partnership on youth in peacekeeping – ensuring complementarity and coherence in advancing the YPS agenda.

Objective 3: Enhance youth participation: Suggest ways to improve meaningful engagement with and for youth, ensuring that their voices and perspectives are included in decision-making processes

As defined by young participants in the working groups, meaningful youth engagement at the OSCE requires systematic integration of youth across all structures and policies – not limited to traditional “youth matters.” This involves rejecting tokenistic approaches and fostering genuine partnerships, processes, and support.

Meaningful partnerships involve treating youth as equal stakeholders, fostering intergenerational collaboration, sustaining long-term engagement and ensuring mutual benefit, recognizing young people’s expertise and time, and providing tangible benefits for young people and youth(-led) organisations.

Meaningful processes include engaging youth as co-designers and co-managers, promoting peer learning and youth-led movement building, establishing accountability and feedback mechanisms, and ensuring safe and inclusive participation rooted in a “do no harm” approach.

Meaningful support requires recognizing youth diversity, offering clear and accessible information, building capacity through education and community spaces, and providing financial support to remove barriers, and fairly compensating youth contributions.

Objective 4: Provide actionable recommendations: Create specific recommendations and options for future action within the OSCE, with the aim of contributing to the OSCE-wide YPS Roadmap

Based on the working group discussions, the participants proposed recommendations under three strategic pillars to guide the Chair’s drafting process of the OSCE-wide YPS Roadmap (please find the full paper of recommendations attached).

Cultivating political buy-in: Securing political commitment from participating States and future Chairpersonships is essential. Tailored messaging should position youth as allies in peace and security, supported by, inter alia, awareness campaigns and social media outreach. Evidence-based advocacy, including economic and social impact analyses, strengthens the case for youth inclusion. Strategic partnerships with governments, academia, civil society, and other international actors are vital to amplify youth voices.

Institutionalizing youth participation: Participants called for a comprehensive OSCE Youth Strategy, supported by advisory mechanisms like youth boards and dedicated YPS teams/units within the OSCE structures. National Action Plans should be developed and supported by systematic data collection and reporting. Youth participation should be mainstreamed across OSCE processes, with regular cooperation among and coordinated support to the Youth Focal Points.

Empowering youth agency and expertise: Dedicated funding for YPS activities, including through mechanisms like the Helsinki+50 Fund, is needed. Capacity building should target both youth leaders and OSCE staff, leveraging both physical and digital platforms. Strengthening alumni networks from OSCE youth programs and establishing knowledge-sharing platforms would foster peer learning and best practice exchange. Transparent decision-making and structured youth delegate programs are key to meaningful youth engagement.

Next steps:

Finland is currently in the process of drafting the OSCE-wide YPS Roadmap guided by the recommendations produced at the Youth Forum and consultations with relevant OSCE structures and interested Delegations. The Roadmap is expected to be finalised and launched by the end of the year.

In the meantime, the Chair encourages continued active discussion of the YPS agenda within relevant OSCE fora, including committee meetings and the Group of Friends of Youth and Security. Finland will keep delegations informed of progress on the Roadmap through these platforms.

Annexes:

Final agenda of the Youth Forum

Participants' recommendations paper submitted to the CiO and SG

Disclaimer: This document is a product of the participants of the OSCE Chairpersonship Youth Forum and does not necessarily reflect the views of the Chairpersonship.

OSCE Chairpersonship Youth Forum

– from Helsinki to next 50 years

Helsinki, 29–30 July 2025

Participants’ recommendations to OSCE Chairperson-in-Office, Elina Valtonen, and OSCE Secretary General, Feridun H. Sinirlioğlu

On 29–30 July 2025, the Finnish Chairpersonship of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) convened the OSCE Chairpersonship Youth Forum in Helsinki.

The Forum brought together young participants across the OSCE region to discuss the OSCE’s engagement on Youth, Peace and Security (YPS), reflect on what meaningful youth participation looks like in practice and develop recommendations to inform the drafting of the OSCE-wide Youth, Peace and Security roadmap, that Finland will launch during its OSCE Chairpersonship in 2025.

This paper reflects the outcomes of that process. It offers recommendations for the Finnish Chairpersonship on how to support the OSCE and its participating States to build on existing efforts and further integrate the YPS agenda across all dimensions of the OSCE’s work.

The discussion focused on two areas in particular: How to define meaningful youth engagement in peace and security and what options there are for OSCE’s future action in YPS.

Principles for Meaningful Youth Engagement

Meaningful youth engagement at the OSCE requires the systemic integration and mainstreaming of youth into all relevant structures and policies. This means ensuring that young people are involved in policy discussions across all sectors, beyond traditional “youth matters”, recognizing that all policies affect youth. It also means a commitment to not engaging in tokenistic “tick box” exercises. Achieving this requires the OSCE to foster meaningful partnerships, meaningful processes and meaningful support.

1) Meaningful partnerships, including:

- *Respect and Equal Partnerships:* Youth need to be recognized as equal partners, stakeholders and experts in building and maintaining peace and security.
- *Intergenerational Collaboration:* Meaningful youth participation requires intergenerational dialogue and collaboration, a commitment to intergenerational fairness and justice, and meeting youth where they are.
- *Sustained Engagement:* Youth engagement must build on long-term relationships and sustainable platforms or mechanisms, including support for youth-led structures and organisations, avoiding one-off or ad-hoc interventions.
- *Mutual Benefit:* Youth engagement processes must recognize young people's expertise and time, and provide tangible benefits for young people, youth organisations and youth more broadly — not just for institutions or decision-makers. Engagement is not meaningful if it only serves the goals of others.

2) Meaningful processes, including:

- *Co-creation and Co-management:* Youth should be engaged as co-designers and co-managers of processes which impact them.
- *Peer Learning and Movement Building:* Processes should support peer learning and youth-led movement building to foster collaboration, exchange, and collective agency.
- *Accountability and Follow-up:* Robust mechanisms for accountability, follow-up and feedback need to be in place to ensure that youth insights are taken up and commitments are honored.
- *Ethical and Safe Practices:* Participation needs to be safe, inclusive and youth-sensitive in order to be meaningful, rooted in a “do no harm” approach. This requires trauma sensitivity and taking into account digital, physical, and psychosocial wellbeing.

3) Meaningful support, including:

- *Inclusivity and Diversity:* The non-homogeneity of youth must be recognized, with appropriate mechanisms to support inclusive participation of diverse youth groups, prevent discrimination and ensure space for new voices.
- *Access to Information:* Meaningful youth participation is founded on the clear and transparent provision of information and processes. Information must be clear and accessible, adaptable and generationally appropriate, avoiding jargon, to ensure that the content is readily understood by all citizens, including young people.

- *Capacity Building and Empowerment:* For youth to be able to engage in a meaningful way, they need to be supported to engage with the topics at hand from an early age, through both formal education and informal community spaces, so they perceive themselves as valued agents of change.
- *Financial Support and Compensation:* Engagement opportunities must be adequately funded to overcome financial barriers to participation. This can include fair compensation for work, reimbursement of expenses, and paid opportunities.

Recommendations for OSCE action on Youth, Peace and Security

1) Cultivating Political Buy-in

- *Political Commitments:* Secure political commitments from individual participating States, future Chairpersons, tailor persuasive messaging to resonate with different stakeholders, and show governments that young people are allies.
- *Awareness Raising and Visibility:* Use relevant platforms and opportunities to raise awareness on YPS, leverage soft power and visibility opportunities, increase social media presence, and showcase success stories and youth-led initiatives. In addition to executive summaries, simplified summaries of crucial documents should be introduced to make OSCE work in general and the YPS agenda more accessible.
- *Link to Broader Agendas:* Frame the YPS agenda by highlighting alignment with national and international priorities, including SDGs, WPS, and human rights.
- *Research and Evidence-Based Policy:* Make a compelling investment case by demonstrating economic returns and social impact, conduct social and economic return investment analyses, and support research that supports the need for youth participation.
- *Strategic Partnerships and Collaboration:* Build strategic alliances with key stakeholders including governments, academic sector, civil society, and international partners, involve civil society and youth-led organizations as equal partners, and foster international partnerships between national organizations and NGOs.

2) Institutionalizing Youth Participation

- *OSCE Youth Strategy:* Adopting an OSCE-Wide comprehensive Youth Strategy
- *Advisory Mechanisms:* Establish dedicated units for YPS affairs at the OSCE Secretariat and executive structures and youth advisory boards to the Secretary

General and field missions with internal and external youth members to advise OSCE staff on YPS. Develop a clear OSCE definition of 'youth' to guide these mechanisms and positions.

- *National Action Plans (NAPs) and Policy Integration:* Advocate for the development and drafting of NAPs, internationalize existing NAPs through regional exchange and adaptation of lessons learned, integrate youth perspectives into NAPs for mainstreaming, and utilize NAPs as a common framework for YPS work.
- *Data Collection, Monitoring, and Reporting:* Establish mechanisms for mandatory reporting of youth programs and OSCE commitments on youth, integrate YPS into common reporting frameworks, systematically collect and analyze age-disaggregated data, and implement YPS-focused monitoring frameworks.
- *Mainstreaming and Systemic Integration:* Work towards mainstreaming the YPS agenda, integrate youth-specific segments into all relevant fora and throughout processes, and clarify youth participation as a distinct thematic area within broader policy frameworks.
- *Youth Focal Points:* Establish regular cooperation for the YPS Focal Point Network, allocate dedicated time and budget for Youth Focal Points, and establish youth focal points in each OSCE Permanent Delegation.
- Unifying existing sets of recommendations developed by the previous chairs into an action on Youth Peace and Security
- Recognising and institutionalising existing mechanisms of youth participation (for example Network of Young Parliamentarians within OSCEPA)

3) Empowering Youth Agency & Expertise

- *Financial Support and Funding Mechanisms:* Establish earmarked budgets for YPS programs and mechanisms of meaningful youth participation as an organisational priority, including support for National Action Plans (NAPs), and create dedicated funding streams and earmark funding for YPS activities within existing funding mechanisms such as the Finnish Chairpersonship's Helsinki +50 Fund.
- *Capacity Building and Training:* Develop and enhance capacity building programs for YPS actors and youth leaders, provide training-of-trainers (ToT) for both youth leaders/civil society and OSCE staff on YPS, and facilitate international capacity building and knowledge exchange. This needs to strike a balance between both physical and digital, AI-powered, platforms.

- *Supporting Continued Engagement:* Establishing new and strengthening existing alumni networks of the OSCE youth-related programs (for example, OSCE Scholarship for Peace and Security, WIN Project, YW4P (Young Women 4 Peace Initiative Central Asia) Dialogue Academy for Youth Women Supporting and strengthening cooperation between alumni networks of the OSCE youth-related programs to increase peer-to-peer learning and cooperation across the entire OSCE region
- *Knowledge Sharing and Best Practices:* Establish a cross-agency YPS learning platform and a digital knowledge-sharing platform/database to exchange experiences, share good examples, and map best practices in YPS across the region. This also covers youth engagement in mapping of relevant YPS actors, the assessment of impact as well as development of operational guidelines on YPS. This also covers youth engagement in mapping of relevant YPS actors, the assessment of impact as well as development of operational guidelines on YPS.
- *Chairpersonship:* Enhancing the transparency of decision-making processes by establishing clear timelines and entry points for civil society participation, with particular attention to enabling youth civil society to contribute meaningfully
- *Youth Delegates and Internships:* Implement an OSCE Youth Delegate program, include youth delegates in OSCE election observation missions, and introduce special YPS internships in missions.

The recommendations presented here represent the collective insights and experiences of the participants. They are intended to support the OSCE Chairpersonship, other participating States and the OSCE executive structures in further developing and implementing the YPS agenda in ways that are practical, inclusive and sustainable.

Participants emphasized that youth engagement is most effective when young people are seen as partners in shaping peace and security, not only beneficiaries of it.

The participants commend the Finnish Chairpersonship for convening the Forum and for its leadership in advancing YPS during 2025 and hope these recommendations will serve as a useful contribution to the OSCE-wide YPS Roadmap and to ongoing efforts to promote inclusive peacebuilding and security across the region.

Chairpersonship Youth Forum

– from Helsinki to the next 50 years

29–30 July | Helsinki



Final Agenda

Tuesday, 29 July

11:30-12:45

Registration of participants, buffet lunch

13:00-13:30

Opening session

MC: Emilia Uljas, Vice-chair of Youth, Peace and Security Network of Finland

Welcoming remarks:

- Jouni Laaksonen, Ambassador, Head of Task Force for the Finnish OSCE Chairpersonship, Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland

Keynote speech:

- Yuliia Martyniuk, Head of PR and Communications Department at TVORY! Youth Center Network and Lviv – European Youth Capital 2025 initiative (online)

Video featuring former OSCE CiO Special Representatives on Youth and Security

Opening remarks:

- Santeri Leinonen, Special Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office on Youth, Peace and Security

13:30-14:45

Focus session: Taking stock of the OSCE's and other international actors' work and good practices on Youth, Peace and Security

Several international and regional organisations have incorporated the YPS agenda into their activities, including the United Nations, European Union, Council of Europe, and the OSCE. Good practices have been identified in areas such as building political support and agenda setting, institutionalizing YPS, strengthening agency and institutional capacities, improving investments and resources, and strengthening the evidence base.

This focus session will discuss these good practices, as well as collaboration among international actors in the YPS field, contributing to the understanding of the OSCE's niche and value add in this setting.

Guiding questions:

- What are examples of good practices on the implementation of the YPS agenda?
- What are the main obstacles to advancing the YPS agenda and how can we overcome them?
- How different actors cooperate and coordinate on the YPS agenda?
- What should the OSCE's future engagement with and for youth focus on? Where does the OSCE bring added value?

Panelists:

- Nina Brandt, Chief of Section, Partnerships, Advocacy and Communications, United Nations Youth Office
- Ville Savoranta, Knowledge Management & Organisational Learning Policy Officer, Civilian Planning and Conduct Capability, European External Action Service
- Anja Jokic, Bureau member, Council of Europe Advisory Council on Youth
- Lucija Tacer, OSCE Parliamentary Assembly's Special Representative on Youth Engagement
- Assel Murat, Assistant Project Officer on Youth and Security, OSCE Secretariat

Moderator: Saji Prelis, Director of Children & Youth Programs, Search for Common Ground / Co-Chair, Global Coalition, Youth, Peace, and Security

14:45-15:30

Setting the tone for working together

Moderators:

- Saji Prelis, Director of Children & Youth Programs, Search for Common Ground / Co-Chair, Global Coalition, Youth, Peace, and Security
- Sölvi Karlsson, Specialist, Children and Youth, Search for Common Ground

15:30-16:00

Coffee break

16:00-17:30

Parallel working groups: Checklist for meaningful youth engagement

The positive role young people can play in peace and security efforts has been increasingly recognized on the international level since the

adoption of UNSRC 2250. Calls for youth participation have become more frequent, but there is still room for improvement.

The aim of this session is to discuss what the elements of meaningful youth participation are and to outline them in the OSCE context.

During the session, participants will work in smaller groups.

Guiding questions:

- What does meaningful youth engagement entail? What should we keep in mind when engaging with and for youth?
- What are the most relevant do's and don'ts? What helps or hinders inclusive, sustained youth participation in security-related processes?
- What principles can ensure a structured, inclusive, and effective approach to integrating youth as co-leaders, equal partners and experts in peace and security?

17:30-17:40

Break

17:40-18:00

Wrap-up of Day 1

Moderator: Santeri Leinonen, Special Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office on Youth, Peace and Security

18:40-19:00

Guided walk to the restaurant

19:00-21:00

Social event and dinner

Helsinki Bryggeri Brewhouse, Sofiankatu 2

Wednesday, 30 July

08:30- Coffee served

08:45-09:00 Icebreaker

09:00-10:00 Spotlight session: National Action Plans on Youth, Peace and Security, lessons learnt and recommendations from Finland

In 2021, Finland, as the first country in the world, published a National Action Plan (NAP) on YPS. Co-designed with youth, the NAP built on the YPS resolution's five pillars, customizing their implementation to the Finnish context in a way relevant to Finnish youth. Currently, Finland is in the process of finalizing its second YPS NAP, a document that builds on the work and experience gained during the past few years.

In the OSCE area, Kyrgyzstan was the second pS to adopt a YPS NAP in April 2025. Thus far, in the world, altogether nine countries have adopted NAPs, with many others in the planning and/or preparation stage.¹

Guiding questions:

- Why do NAPS matter and why should States adopt them?
- Looking back, what are the key ingredients for the success of developing YPS NAPs in Finland?
- What lessons did Finland learn from the first NAP process that were integrated into the second?
- How has the inclusive approach of different actors been ensured when drafting and implementing the YPS NAPs? What role did youth-led organizations play and what lessons were learned from the process?

Panelists:

- Mika Poutala, Minister of Youth, Sport and Physical Activity
- Camilla Ojala, Global Citizenship Education and Peacebuilding Specialist, YMCA Finland
- Adina Nivukoski, United Nations Youth Delegate of Finland
- Katja Ahlfors, Ambassador-designate to Senegal; Senior Adviser, Unit for Northern and Western Africa, Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland

Moderator: Paula Pättikangas, Chair, Youth, Peace and Security Network of Finland

¹ More information available at <https://ypsmonitor.com> and <https://cnxus.org/theme/ypsnapscop>.

10:00-10:30

Coffee break

10:30-12:15

Parallel working groups: Options for OSCE action

The OSCE has demonstrated its commitment to youth and security through various initiatives and activities. While these initiatives provide a firm basis for action, they require a stronger framework and institutional commitment to ensure youth are not seen only as beneficiaries but also as partners and co-leaders in shaping the OSCE's peace and security efforts.

The aim of this session is to support the Chair in compiling concrete recommendations for the OSCE-wide YPS Roadmap. Working in small groups, the participants will discuss and identify possible action points to be included in the document.

Guiding questions

- How can we build and ensure political buy-in for the YPS agenda within the participating States?
- What are the most effective ways for the OSCE to institutionalize youth participation across its peace and security work?
- Which actions, mechanisms or partnerships would strengthen young people's agency and expertise to ensure sustained youth input into OSCE decision-making and operational work?

12:15-14:15

Lunch break

During the lunch break, from **13:00-14:00**, participants of the Forum can engage with organisations/OSCE structures showcasing examples of their YPS-related work in a marketplace setting, in the immediate proximity to the lunch venue.

14:15-15:30

Plenary session: Compiling recommendations discussed in working groups

This session offers the opportunity for all participants to hear about options identified in different working groups and elaborate on them further in a plenary format.

Moderators:

- Saji Prelis, Director of Children & Youth Programs, Search for Common Ground / Co-Chair, Global Coalition, Youth, Peace, and Security
- Anu Apo, National Coordinator for Youth, Peace and Security and Women, Peace and Security, Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland

- 15:30-15:50** **Fireside chat with OSCE Chairperson-in-Office, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Finland, Elina Valtonen**
- Moderator:** Emilia Uljas, Vice-chair of Youth, Peace and Security Network of Finland
- 15:50-16:10** **Recommendations of Youth Forum handed over to the Chairperson-in-Office and Secretary General**
- Elina Valtonen, OSCE Chairperson-in-Office, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Finland
 - Feridun H. Sinirlioğlu, OSCE Secretary General
- 16:10-16:15** **Group photo**
- 16:15-17:00** **Closing remarks**
- Volker Türk, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
 - Santeri Leinonen, Special Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office on Youth, Peace and Security