



# WORKING WITH AND FOR YOUTH

**Practical ideas to foster youth engagement  
in policies, processes and programs**

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# Foreword

Youth all around the world are standing up for democracy, human rights, fundamental freedoms, and the rule of law. They are organized, courageous, and are dedicated to creating a more peaceful and sustainable future. These young women and men are actively working to improve human rights, advance equality, enhance access to justice, address the challenges posed by climate change, and so much more. Their ideas can help enhance the policies and programming we pursue in order to address the challenges of today and tomorrow.

This is particularly crucial given the challenges we currently face. The Covid-19 pandemic has taken a real toll – not least on youth who were confronted with such a major disruption at such a crucial time in their lives – whether at school or in the early days of their professional careers. The pandemic has had a major detrimental effect on equality and has exacerbated pre-existing cracks in the practice of participatory democracy. We've also seen horrible violence with the war against Ukraine. The war has destroyed lives and livelihoods and the impacts are felt across the OSCE region and around the world. In these circumstances, it is more important than ever to ensure engage youth in addressing these challenges. Their perspectives can help us shape better policies and plans. And their buy-in is essential if we are to succeed.

Yet, far too often, youth lack access to power structures – formal and informal, which results in limited opportunities to influence processes. But they are committed to their futures. They continue to strive to create workable solutions and build sustainable peace and prosperity.

It is more important than ever to invest in youth leadership. To empower youth and support other organizations that wish to join these efforts, the OSCE developed a platform for exchange and dialogue among stakeholders and practitioners that promote the meaningful inclusion of young men and women.

One way in which we've done this is through the Youth Digital Roundtable Series, organised in partnership with PeaceNexus. This series focused on how to draw on a range of tools and approaches to prevent conflict and build sustainable peace. It included careful attention to the human dimension of security, because efforts to promote secure and just societies can only be effective if the rights and needs of the people that policies are meant to serve are kept ever in focus. We are grateful to the speakers and participants for sharing their experiences from their local, national and international perspectives.

It is our sincere hope that this paper will be a useful tool for policymakers, public servants and youth practitioners seeking to develop new policies and strategies aimed at improving the inclusion of youth in work on peace and security. We also hope that it will inspire further dialogue and co-operation between youth practitioners on how to advance youth engagement in policies, processes and programmes - because this is essential to realizing truly inclusive, just, and sustainable security for all.



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