



## Highlights from the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly Meeting with Young Political Leaders<sup>1</sup>

*Call for Action - Helsinki +50 Process*

*Thursday, 27 May 2021, 14:30 – 17:00 CEST*

### *Main points discussed:*

- The meeting allowed the participants to share their understanding and vision for the involvement of young people in multilateral decision-making mechanisms such as the OSCE, with a view to developing a common strategy.
- The participants agreed that the inclusion of a youth perspective is not only a national matter but also a global issue that requires collective action. They emphasized the need for change within multilateral frameworks such as the OSCE and the importance of political will from the international community.
- It was also underlined that in addition to those changes in the multilateral framework, young people need adequate resources and the recognition that they should play a more prominent role.
- The topic of youth inclusion was also linked to the issue of effective democracy, as no strong and sustainable democracy can be founded without youth participation. The model of deliberative democracy was mentioned, as a way to reach youth more effectively.
- Participants highlighted the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on young people and its role in revealing the fragility of youth, particularly in terms of youth unemployment, job quality, and access to social services.
- At the same time, the Covid-19 crisis also brought to the fore the role young people play in bridging intergenerational dialogue and building intergenerational solidarity through innovative ideas and communication technologies.
- Climate change was identified as a key topic for the agenda of an international cooperation platform like the OSCE. It was also stressed that youth could play a crucial role in all the three dimensions of security, including environmental and economic security.
- Lack of trust has been identified by participants as one of the most significant obstacles to the effective inclusion of young people. In fact, there was a perception that in an

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<sup>1</sup> The Highlights from the OSCE PA Call for Action - Helsinki +50 related meetings are not intended to be official conclusions, nor an exhaustive list of all issues raised during the debate, but rather a compilation of points recorded for possible future reference. As this compilation is not exhaustive, any comments or suggested additions are welcome.

organization like the OSCE there is an insufficient level of implementation of the notion of youth inclusion when it comes to the design and follow-up of broader strategies and individual policies and measures.

- One of the most detrimental consequences of this is a lack of employment opportunities for YP in organizations like the OSCE. Participants mentioned the difficulty to get a paid internship, or any entry-level job for young people. This led to the question of how to facilitate the entry of young people into policy- and decision-making mechanisms.
- Examples of initiatives at national level mentioned included the Law on Youth in Macedonia and a HCNM's project in Georgia (paid internship for young representatives of minorities). It was suggested that such initiatives could be replicated in other countries.
- The challenge of defining youth was pointed out by the participants, in particular regarding age groups. The OSCE Advisory on Youth explained the absence of a working OSCE definition, and the role of parliamentarians in changing legislation in this regard.

### *General suggestions:*

1. Promote a **paradigm shift**, as a result of which institutions should promote new youth policy aimed at addressing young people's issues:
  - These policies should be based on proposals designed for and with the youth.
  - Youth should be considered not as victims nor as simple consumers of security, but as key partners.
2. Encourage the **establishment of co-decision mechanisms or co-management systems** involving the youth.
  - They should be given not only voice but also real decision-making capacity.
  - Young people need to be penholders in decision shaping mechanisms and have a say on the agenda of the organization.
  - Participants put forward the system of the Advisory Council on Youth of the Council of Europe as an example of co-decision making mechanism, which could serve as an inspiration to establish a similar system to include youth perspective in policy making at the OSCE level.
3. **Capacity building** was identified as a key area where the OSCE could better promote youth participation in decision making.
  - in particular through training, education programs in different areas and topics of the OSCE, scholarship, creation of a youth advisory group, or youth networks, summer academies/schools (the OSCE Academy in Bishkek was mentioned in this regard);
4. Some participants also suggested that young people should not overlook the more **traditional ways to enter the decision-making process**:
  - to vote and get elected, to belong to a political party. Existing methods should not be disregarded.

5. In addition to working on new reforms and initiatives, it was deemed important to better communicate on what is already being done, to increase **the visibility of the initiatives** for youth the OSCE is already implementing at all levels.

### *Suggested initiatives at OSCE PA level:*

1. **Establish and promote the OSCE youth parliamentary forum** called by the PA during the 2018 Berlin Annual Session and discussed during the young parliamentarians meeting in Washington DC on Washington D.C. on 3-4 February 2020.
  - Main goal: provide a formal space of participation of young people in the OSCE PA's decision-making process and effectively allow **co-decision shaping and making**.
  - The example of IPU's forum of young parliamentarians, which meets yearly to discuss the agenda from the youth perspective, was mentioned.
2. **Running for office in the OSCE PA decision making bodies** was suggested as a complementary solution for young parliamentarians to be directly involved in the OSCE PA decision-making mechanism.
  - The PA SG announced the vacancy of some positions in the Bureau and encouraged young parliamentarians to try to run for key positions, for instance in the Bureau, thus influencing its policies by providing a youth perspective.
3. **Establish a platform for experience-sharing and networking** to effectively connect youth across the OSCE area.
  - In that regard, the establishment of a youth platform/network was suggested, to allow the politically active youth of the OSCE to share ideas and experience in legislation, to increase direct contact between young parliamentarians from different countries.
  - The question of the participation modalities of such a platform remains open: it will be for the parliamentarians to decide on whether such a platform should be open only to young parliamentarians or also to all other young politicians, thus becoming more of a civil society forum.
  - It was also highlighted that creating such platforms would not be enough: they need in addition to have a clear role, resources, and trust.
4. **Foster synergies between the governmental and the parliamentary** side of the OSCE on youth issues. To improve this synergy, two main ideas were put forward:
  - Promote more cooperation between the OSCE's Group of Friends on Youth and Security and the OSCE PA's work.
  - Appoint an OSCE PA Youth Special Representative, as a counter part to the existing OSCE Special Representative, and keep the youth issues high on the agenda.
5. Next step: organize a follow-up meeting after the summer break on the suggestions put forward and how to turn those ideas into concrete initiatives and actions in the OSCE network.