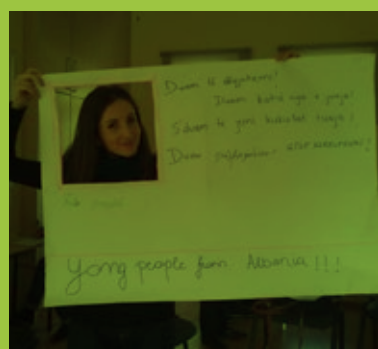


# Youth Voice Regional Campaign

## Brief overview



Eastern Europe  
and Central Asia





# Youth Voice Regional Campaign

– Brief overview

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# Campaign description

## What?

The Youth Voice regional campaign is aiming to ensure broad consultation and coordination with the young people in the region and their full participation in ongoing discussions concerning the new development agenda.

## When?

From October 2014 until November 2015.

## Where?

At both the regional and national level in Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia.

## Why?

The post-2015 agenda process required joint and intensified advocacy efforts.

## Coordination

Coordination of the Youth Voice campaign is being carried out by a **Regional Youth Leadership Group** that is composed of representatives of the following youth networks/institutions: **ASTRA Youth, PETRI Center Sofia, YouAct, Youth Coalition, Y-PEER and YSAFE**, in close collaboration with the Adolescents and Youth Cluster in the **UNFPA Eastern Europe and Central Asia Regional Office (EECARO)** and **UNFPA country offices**.



Regional Youth Leadership Group representatives

**YOUACT**

  
youth coalition

**YSAFE**  
Youth Sexual Awareness For Europe

**Y-PEER**  
Youth Peer Education Network

 **ASTRA**  
YOUTH

**Y-PEER PETRI**  
SOFIA



Ukraine, Network of EuroClubs

**80 organizations  
from 23 countries  
joined the campaign**

## Participating organizations

Following an open call launched in October 2014, 80 organizations from 23 countries in Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia signed up to join the Youth Voice regional campaign. Youth-led or youth-serving organizations expressed their interest in contributing to the campaign by:

- **Writing articles for publication on the regional online advocacy platform**
- **Sharing resources in the library on the regional online advocacy platform**
- **Making the case for investing in youth by taking and sharing a selfie with a message**
- **Organizing national advocacy campaigns**

## National advocacy campaigns

### Phase I

**Mobilize and gather youth voices from participating countries  
(October – December 2014)**

In 2014, **17 countries held consultations with 7,500 young people** to gather diverse youth voices. They then developed a youth vision for the future they want through a consultative process and formulated key messages that will be used for the follow-up activities in Phase II.

### Phase II

**Reach out to decision-makers from participating countries  
(January – November 2015)**

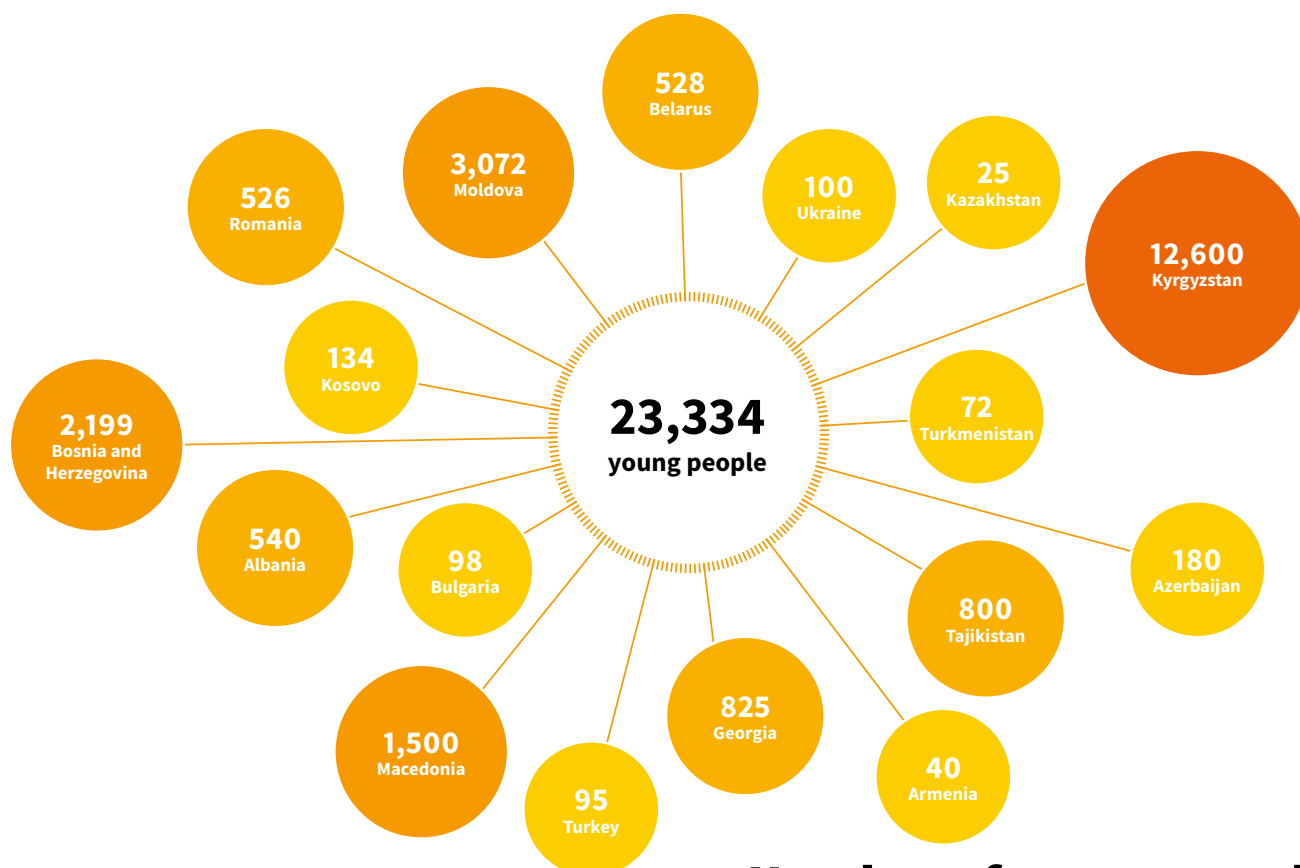
The outcomes from the consultations held in 2014 were used for follow-up activities in 2015, focusing on reaching out to decision-makers from participating countries and presenting the youth vision and the advocacy messages developed during national consultations.

# Country

# achievements

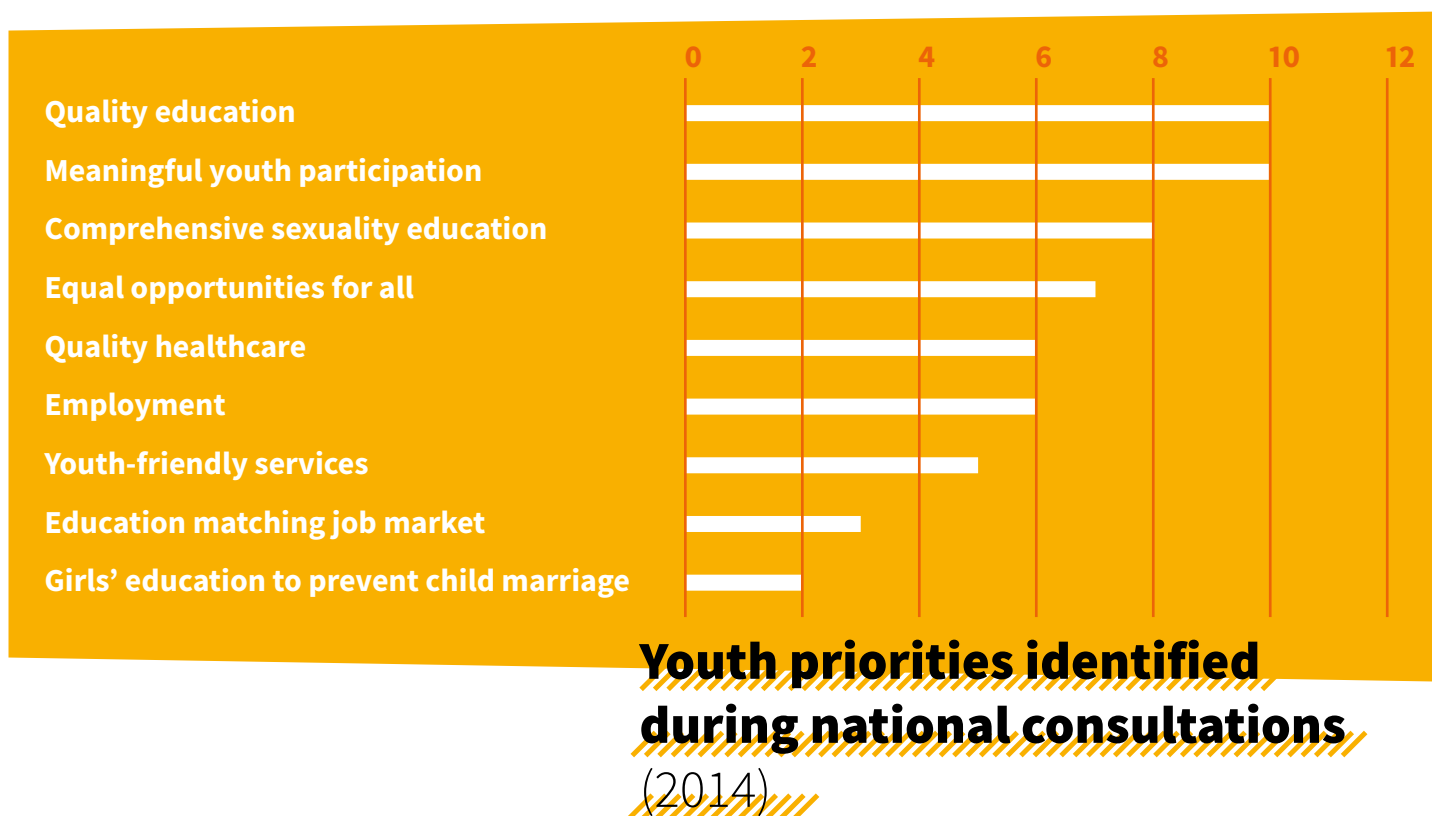
During the campaign roll-out, country teams mobilized and engaged young people from diverse social, ethnic and cultural backgrounds and marginalized communities in a variety of initiatives:

- Consultation meetings and workshops
- Focus group discussions
- Interviews
- Public discussions
- Situational analysis
- Roundtable discussions
- Postcards and letter writing
- Taking photos with messages
- Debate tournaments
- Art events
- Painting, graffiti and anime competitions
- Photography exhibitions
- Youth camps
- Training sessions
- Outreach activities and street actions
- Flash mobs
- Peace marches



**Number of young people  
involved in national  
consultations**

In all countries, young people voiced their needs and recommendations and agreed on the priorities they would like to present to their national stakeholders.



The youth vision developed through a consultative process in each participating country was presented to a broad range of stakeholders, calling for the inclusion of youth priorities in local and national development plans and in the new development agenda.





Albania, Erion Veliaj, mayor of Tirana

## ALBANIA

The meeting and signing of a declaration and agreement by the mayor of Tirana was one of the main achievements, and similar actions were carried out by mayors in five other districts. In total, 17 decision-makers made public statements and supported the inclusion of youth-specific targets and objectives in their plans.

## AZERBAIJAN

The Azerbaijani Youth in Action for a Better Future Declaration was officially presented to the Youth and Sports Ministry and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. A follow-up conference brought together six senior government representatives and two members of parliament, who stated their support and commitment to consider youth perspectives in the formulation of national development frameworks.

## BULGARIA

A Youth Declaration asking for comprehensive sexuality education was endorsed during a roundtable with 45 government representatives, NGOs, business representatives and young people and was shared with the deputy minister of education and the head of the Permanent Parliamentary Commission on Education. The National Assembly adopted a new Law on Education, which includes civic, health and intercultural education.

## KYRGYZSTAN

Youth activists shared their messages with the UN resident coordinator and Kyrgyzstan's representative at the UN. The foreign minister made a speech at the UN General Assembly in September, in which he stated: "We support a comprehensive approach to addressing the issue of poverty and the fight against hunger through education, health, gender equality, the rule of law, economic development and the fight against climate change". A meeting brought together key actors to initiate a youth-government partnership for achieving the 2030 sustainable development goals.

## ARMENIA

The Youth Declaration was presented and discussed with the UN team and with representatives from the Youth and Sports Ministry. As follow-up, support was raised for implementing youth-led projects that address the priorities identified.

## BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Two thousand young people sent messages to the presidency and presidencies of both entities, and 20 meetings with stakeholders were organized. More than 100 school representatives took part in five round tables on youth needs in education. The campaign country team is planning to establish a working group as a mechanism for official collaboration between government institutions and the youth NGO sector.

## GEORGIA

During the high-level National Youth Forum, an advocacy paper was presented to decision-makers and government representatives. The Youth Advisory Panel foresees its role as a mediator between youth and the government.

## KAZAKHSTAN

A youth consultation report was presented to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Health Care and Social Development and parliamentarians during a roundtable meeting.

## KOSOVO

Meetings were organized with 17 local decision-makers from departments that were relevant to the youth issues identified during the consultations. During the final meeting, young people engaged in dialogue with representatives from the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Youth, Culture and Sports.



Kyrgyzstan, -We will try to fulfill all recommendations of young people -  
instagram post from Janar Akaev, Member of the Parliament



## MACEDONIA

The youth recommendations on post-2015 were endorsed by 49 NGOs, including political parties' youth wings, and were delivered to a representative from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, who shared it with the Macedonian delegation to the UN General Assembly. Following the adoption of the sustainable development goals, the campaign team continued to engage young people in online and offline activities.

## ROMANIA

Messages were incorporated into a statement by UN youth delegates during the 70th session of the United Nations General Assembly. The campaign will conclude with a round table with the Youth and Sport Ministry and other stakeholders that will explore the possibility of establishing a youth advisory board that will be recognized by the government and will have a monitoring role for all youth-related laws and policies.

## TAJIKISTAN

Messages highlighting the importance of the active participation of youth in dialogue and implementation of the new development agenda were presented during a meeting with national stakeholders.

## TURKMENISTAN

The campaign fostered an active discussion platform for defining youth priorities for the new development agenda and trends in the development of youth policy in Turkmenistan.

## UKRAINE

The main focus was an assessment of the National Programme on Reproductive Health for the 2010-2015 period, and this momentum was used to get decision-makers and civil society to turn their attention to the most important issues among young people. On the basis of the assessment recommendations, youth priorities are to be reflected in the new programme for 2016-2020.

## MOLDOVA

The recommendations that emerged from the youth consultations, public discussions and situational analysis were included in a declaration titled "Youth is a priority for the Government in a prosperous country". This was presented during 10 bilateral meetings with representatives from various ministries.



Romania, UN youth delegate statement at 70th UNGA

## TURKEY

The messages created and developed by young people were presented to 80 decision-makers from different sectors. The structured dialogue process was used for various meetings, and youth-adult partnership was highlighted as a key way of enabling young people to transform their ideas into action.



Meeting with members of parliament from the region

# Testimonials

## from young people

### MOLDOVA

Our organization is working with some of the most marginalized communities in Moldova. During the campaign, we mobilized youth and had face-to-face meetings with decision-makers in order to discuss priority questions and recommendations that young people have, especially the most vulnerable ones.

For me, one of the main achievements is the fact that we built a general understanding in our community that positive changes begin with taking personal responsibility for change, getting involved, and having the ability and opportunities to talk about change. During one of our bilateral meetings with the Ministry of Social Security and Labour, while we were discussing problems and solutions for youth issues, a very important idea was mentioned: government structures work to ensure that society is getting better, but it is difficult to consider society's priorities when society doesn't say anything.



CONSTANTIN

SANJA



### BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

In my country, there is a general lack of belief in the idea that young people can influence the decisions and work of institutions in the country. Our parents raised us to think that our presidents and politicians are untouchable. The Youth Voice letter campaign changed my opinion about this. In one of our activities, 2,000 young people sent letters to the president and also to the presidents of both entities. Now we are waiting for their answers. But no matter what happens, this will still be a very valuable activity because it showed us that we can reach out to our decision-makers, that we can voice our concerns and speak up for our priorities, because we have the right to highlight the issues that are important to us and ask institutions to take our points of view into consideration. We felt more empowered and enthusiastic, as we understood that, together, we have the strength to lead such initiatives and hold our politicians accountable for their actions.

## AZERBAIJAN

Since I was born and grew up in the Aghdam district, I know how vulnerable and unaware youth are about local, regional and global agendas. As Aghdam is a border district in a conflict area, young people, and especially girls, have a lack of information, general education and financial education, which makes them very vulnerable. I have worked with adolescents and youth, both girls and boys, who were participating in their first training and were completely unaware of topics like gender, sexual reproductive health, HIV/AIDS. Through training and consultations, we not only increased young people's knowledge about relevant topics but also encouraged them to share their opinions and ideas about the change they wanted to see. I could observe how this increased their knowledge, confidence and understanding of how powerful their opinion might be.

One of the main challenges that we faced was reaching out and involving girls and youth from remote districts in training and consultations. It was an advantage that we, as young peer educators, used a peer-to-peer approach to reach out to these groups, involving them and talking to them about the most sensitive issues. Though there were still challenges due to the short time frame, we managed to increase their confidence and helped them feel safe so that they could share their stories and talk about how they wanted their future to look.



SAADAT

## DITMAR



## ALBANIA

We lost our father when I was only 7 years old. At the time, people would tell me: "Ditmar, you now have to grow up fast and become the man of the family". School was always a priority for me, for my brother and for my mother, who made every effort to support our education. I attended a school in the village, but thanks to SOS Children's Villages, I managed to register in one of the best schools in Shkoder. Later, I took part in the SOS Children's Villages project, where I found psychological, social and economic support.

I remember I was very shy as a small child, I could hardly speak. But with the support of the organization's psychologist, I became who I am today: an empowered young person, who can speak freely. Now I am taking part in youth activities supported by the UNFPA, and I am leading the Youth Voice campaign and Y-PEER network's campaigns for the Shkodra region. I was also selected to attend a regional training course organized by PETRI in Sofia, Bulgaria, and since then, I have been leading and coaching other youngsters from my community.

**Read their full stories at**  
**<http://eecayouthvoice.org/>**

# Interviews with decision-makers



**MACEDONIA** Sanja Zografska-Krsteska

*Assistant Director for Multilateral Economic Relations, Economic Diplomacy Directorate, Ministry of Foreign Affairs*

**1. Ms. Zografska, for readers outside of Macedonia, can you briefly describe your experience and personal involvement with Y-PEER Macedonia? How did you like working with the Macedonian Y-PEERians?**

I had an opportunity to work with young representatives from Y-PEER Macedonia on two occasions. First, during the selection of the best-designed postcard from the Y-PEER competition, on which youth representatives wrote their recommendations for the future they wanted. Second, at an informal event that I was invited to called “coffee with a diplomat”, where, among other issues, we discussed how Macedonia prepared for the UN Sustainable Development Summit, what the expectations of youth were from the post-2015 development agenda, if there was room for greater cooperation between youth organizations and government institutions, including the MFA, etc.

My whole experience of working with Y-PEER Macedonia was very pleasant, joyful and informative. It is always rejuvenating to be around young people who are full of energy and enthusiasm. I was impressed by how well informed they were about the process related to the post-2015 development agenda and how articulate their views were. It was a learning experience for me that reconfirmed how significant the potential of youth is for development.

**2. As we discussed at the event when we delivered our youth recommendations, you stressed the role of youth in society. What’s your point of view on the importance of youth participation and inclusion in decision-making processes?**

The importance of youth participation in decision-making was identified much



earlier by the MFA. Special attention was paid to this issue during the Macedonian Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe in 2010. In fact, it was one of the Chairmanship's priorities. I believe that decision-making on issues that directly concern youth should not be made without their consultation and involvement. If young people are our future, then they should be given a chance to shape the future they think will best suit their needs and interests.

**3. How do you see our cooperation progressing in future years? How can we deepen our relationship and act together to improve conditions for young people in Macedonia?**

The MFA has established several avenues of direct or indirect communication and involvement with youth representatives: when preparing reports to the human rights treaty bodies; at training seminars and courses organized by our Diplomatic Academy; at lectures/briefings on the activities of respective directorates in the MFA or by the diplomatic missions abroad offered to interested domestic and foreign students. As we are witnessing constant changes of social interactions, the necessity for diplomacy to expand contacts with different actors, including youth representatives, will grow in future. Young people have always been considered the driving force of society and agents for change. If government institutions, including the MFA, want to be on top of events, they will have to create innovative ways to engage young people, stimulate their creativity and profit from their ideas.



**MOLDOVA** Anna Gherganova

*Head of human resources development and employment policies, Ministry of Labour, Social Protection and Family*

**1. What are the challenges facing today's young people?**

In my opinion, many of the challenges that today's young people in the Republic of Moldova are facing are related to employment. Successful integration in the labour market promotes youth social integration. By having a decent job, young people will have an incentive to improve their economic capacity, continuous learning and contribute to the socio-economic development of the country.

It should be noted that one of the most serious challenges for young people in today's Moldova is to get a job in a decent working environment.

Today, the unemployment rate among youth is twice as high as the unemployment rate of the rest of the population. An analysis of the labour market shows that the

main reason for this is the low level of youth training compared to the requirements of employers. This is mostly linked to the lack of work experience. Continuous learning and self-development are very important in a dynamic labour market, so this should be taken into account by young people.

**2. What was your impression of the meeting with young people taking part in the Youth Voice campaign?**

I consider these meetings very relevant and useful for ministers, as policy developers in a particular area, because they help them learn about the problems that youth face first-hand. Through these meetings, they also discuss proposals to resolve issues.

**3. What is the role of youth, and how can young people help adults resolve current issues and problems?**

The role of young people is very important in searching for methods to solve their problems. In order to play that role, young people should actively participate in decision-making concerning youth policy.

**4. What are you personally planning to do for young people next year?**

Considering my functional responsibilities, the main task for us is to improve the integration of young people in the labour market by improving the integration of graduates of educational institutions, who, according to statistics, are the most vulnerable population category regarding employment. Activities include improvement of youth competitiveness within the labour market and stimulation for youth employers.



**ROMANIA** Adrian Calin Buzgau

*Undersecretary of State, Youth and Sports Ministry*

Today, I had the pleasure of being visited by Anca and David, two Romanian youth delegates at the UN. After their visit at the New York Summit, they had numerous meetings with youth all over the country. I was glad to find out about young people's intense interest in being more actively involved in programmes designed for them at the national and international level. I think this was a great opportunity and a good example for the healthy development of our society.



