

Findings and Recommendations to Strengthen the Implementation of the Youth, Peace and Security Agenda within Civilian Crisis Management

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1 Introduction

Civilian crisis management operations often take place in fragile, conflict-affected, or post-conflict countries, where young people constitute a significant majority of the population. Unstable conditions affect youth in many ways, yet they are frequently excluded from formal decision-making processes and peace-building efforts. Despite the recognition in the Youth, Peace, and Security (YPS) agenda,

which states that the participation of youth is a critical factor in building sustainable peace, efforts to target, support, and engage young people within civilian crisis management operations have been limited.

The foundational framework for the YPS agenda was established by the first Youth, Peace and Security resolution, 2250,¹ adopted by the UN Security Council in 2015. This

¹ The full resolution 2250 is available in the United Nations Digital Library: <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/814032?ln=en&v=pdf>

resolution, along with the subsequent resolutions 2419² (2018) and 2535³ (2020), recognises the active and positive role of young people in peace- and security-building and calls on member states to support the meaningful participation of young people in all stages of peace processes. Resolution 2535 specifically calls on UN Peacekeeping Operations to strengthen their engagement with youth.

This policy brief aims to assess the current state of YPS implementation in civilian crisis management, drawing from Finnish secondees. Through their insights, the brief highlights both the progress achieved and the challenges faced in integrating youth-centred approaches into peace-building efforts. Based on these findings, the brief offers recommendations for advancing the YPS agenda more comprehensively in operations.

Key Recommendations

- Including the YPS agenda in the mandate of each civilian crisis management mission, along with a detailed plan and clearly defined actions for practical implementation. Central to these actions should be a focused effort to engage local youth in the operational area, with an emphasis on creating opportunities for their active and meaningful participation.
- Designating a dedicated youth expert within missions and incorporating the agenda as a cross-cutting theme across all mission activities.
- Providing the experts with sufficient information about the YPS agenda, along with practical guidance on its implementation.

² The full resolution 2419 is available in the United Nations Digital Library: <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/1628896?ln=en&v=pdf#files>

³ The full resolution 2535 is available in the United Nations Digital Library: <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3872061?ln=en&v=pdf>

2 Methods

The data for this policy brief was collected through a questionnaire sent to experts seconded by CMC, complemented by in-depth personal interviews conducted with individual experts. The questionnaire and interviews examine the concrete actions taken by the experts in their work in line with the YPS agenda, as well as the challenges they have identified in enhancing agenda-related activities within operations.

The questionnaire and invitation to the interviews were sent to experts seconded by CMC who are currently working in an operation or

secretariat, or who have returned home within the past year. A total of 25 experts responded to the questionnaire, and seven experts participated in the interviews. The respondents work in the missions and secretariats of various organisations (image 1). Although the policy brief aims to provide a broad overview of how the agenda appears in the work of our experts, it is worth noting that the majority of the questionnaire respondents served in EU missions. This also reflects Finland's focus on EU missions in civilian crisis management.⁴

In which organization's operation or secretariat are you serving?

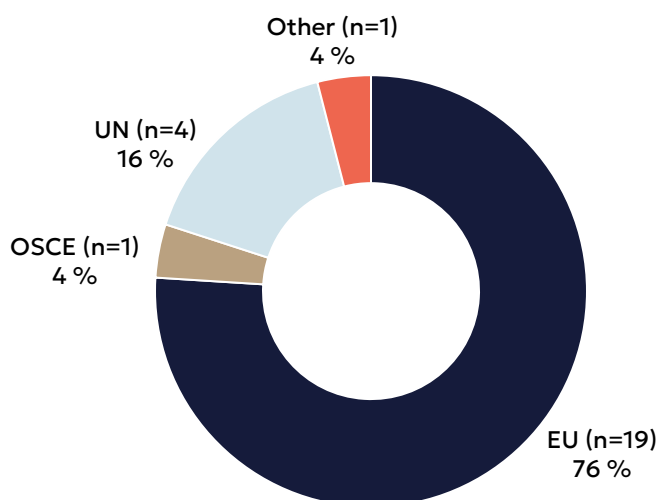


Image 1: *Organisations where the experts served*

⁴ Finnish participation in civilian crisis management <https://www.cmcfinland.fi/asiantuntijakentalla/siviilikriisinhallinta/>

UN Security Council Resolution 2250 (2015)

UN Security Council Resolution 2250 is the first thematic resolution relating specifically to young people, peace and security. The resolution defines youth as persons of the age of 18-29 years old and further notes the variations of definition of the term that may exist on the national and international levels. The resolution identifies five pillars of action for Member States:

- 1. Participation** of young people in decision-making, and peace negotiations and agreements.
- 2. Protection** of civilians, especially young people and their human rights in armed conflicts.
- 3. Prevention** of violence where young people are included and provided with quality education for peace.
- 4. Partnerships** with young people that promote peace, development and equality.
- 5. Disengagement and reintegration** of youth affected by armed conflict is considered.

The resolution also requested the Secretary-General to carry out a progress study on the youth's positive contribution to peace processes and conflict resolution.

UN Security Council Resolution 2419 (2018)

UN Security Council Resolution 2419 complements the resolution 2250. It especially recognises the role youth can play in conflict prevention and resolution. The resolution calls on all relevant actors, to consider ways to increase the inclusive representation of youth for the prevention and resolution of conflict, including when negotiating and implementing peace agreements, to take into account, the meaningful participation and views of youth, recognizing that their marginalization is detrimental to building sustainable peace and countering violent extremism as and when conducive to terrorism.

How would you assess your knowledge of the core principles and goals of the YPS agenda?

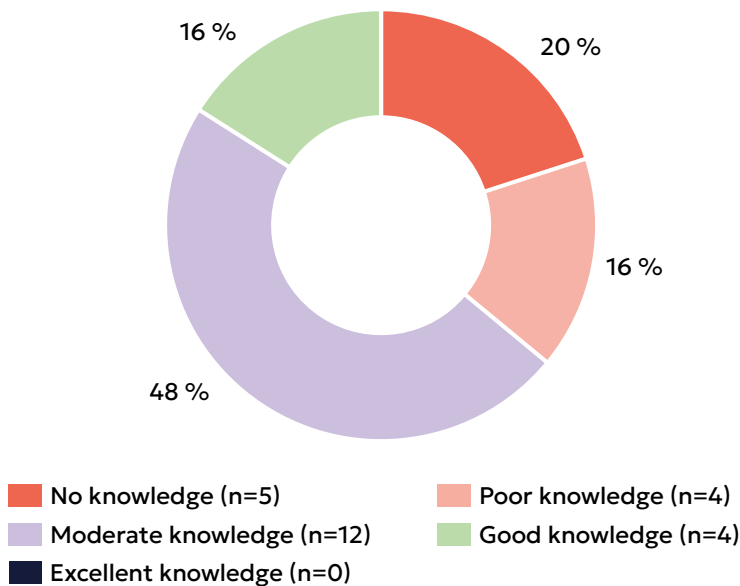


Image 2: Experts' knowledge of the core objectives and principles of the YPS agenda

3 Findings

3.1 Experts' knowledge and awareness of the YPS agenda

To effectively and comprehensively implement the YPS agenda in civilian crisis management operations, it is essential that experts have a clear understanding of its core principles and objectives.

The study examined experts' capacity to implement the YPS agenda in operations by asking them to assess their knowledge of the agenda's core principles and objectives (image 2). The largest group of respondents (48 %) rated

their familiarity with the agenda as moderate, suggesting they possess a general understanding of the topic but do not consider their knowledge to be comprehensive. Nearly half of the experts reported that they either had no knowledge of the agenda or very limited knowledge. Only 16 % of respondents assessed their understanding of the agenda as good. None of the respondents considered their knowledge to be extensive, which may suggest a lack of in-depth

Have you undertaken YPS agenda training provided by organisations outside the operation?

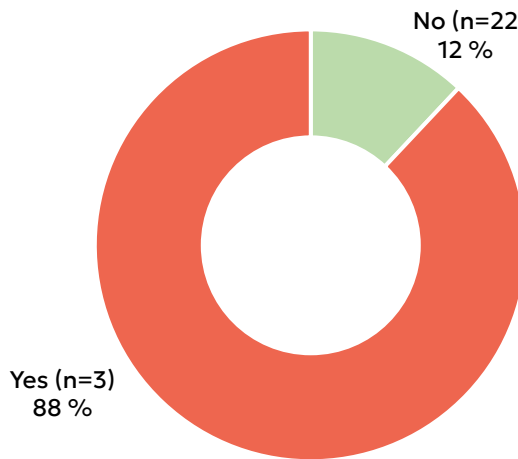


Image 3: Experts' participation in YPS training outside the operation

expertise on the subject among the participants.

Overall, the findings highlight that awareness and understanding of the

YPS agenda should be increased to ensure that experts have the necessary capacity to promote the agenda in operations.

3.2 Availability and participation in YPS agenda-related training

To effectively implement the YPS agenda in operations, proper knowledge and tools are crucial. Therefore, training on the agenda is essential. However, the study reveals that the majority of experts have not participated in training related to the YPS theme, which partly explains the lack of knowledge about the agenda observed in the previous section.

The low levels of participation in such training are mainly due to limited availability. For example,

only two out of twenty-five experts reported that the operations in which they serve occasionally offer YPS-related training, yet only one of them reported participating. Participation in training outside the operation has also been minimal, with only three experts reported having attended (image 3).

Although some experts reported acquiring familiarity with the agenda through their previous professional roles, they emphasised the

Has the Youth, Peace and Security agenda been highlighted in the operation or secretariat?

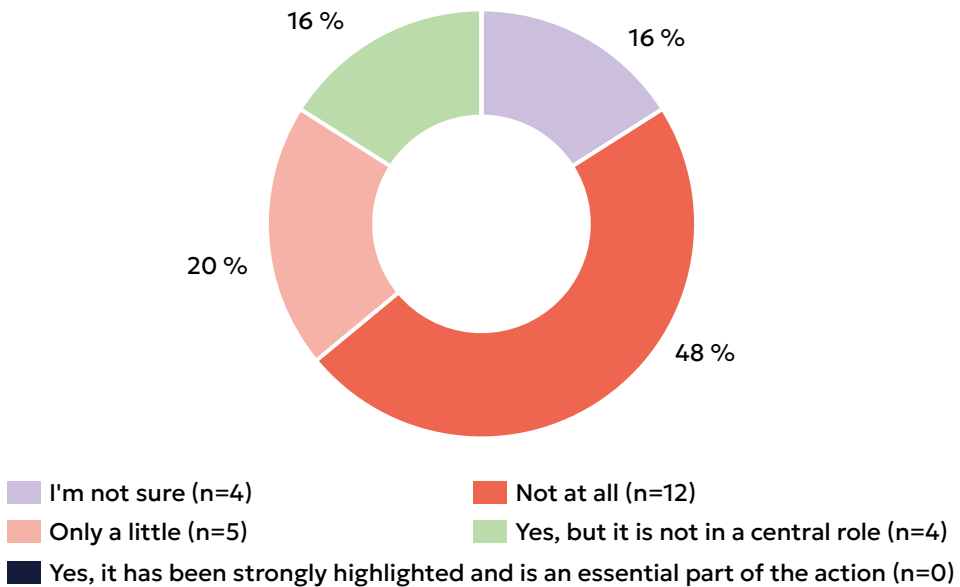


Image 4: *Visibility of the YPS agenda in operations and secretariats*

importance of training. For instance, one interviewee noted that, despite having prior knowledge about the agenda, participating in the training

provided them with a more comprehensive understanding and served as the starting point for integrating the agenda into practice.

3.3 Visibility of the YPS agenda within operations

The YPS agenda has not yet been firmly integrated as a visible component of civilian crisis management operations, a conclusion supported by research findings. None of the experts participating in the study indicated that the YPS agenda was prominently included in the operations or their activities (image 4). Instead, 48 % reported that the agenda was entirely absent from the operations. In some

cases, the agenda is present to a limited extent, although it does not occupy a central role or remains only marginally addressed.

In addition to assessing the visibility of the YPS agenda, experts participating in the study were asked whether concrete measures were being implemented within operations to advance the agenda (image 5). It is important to examine these aspects separately,

Have concrete actions been implemented in the operation or secretariat to promote the Youth, Peace and Security agenda?

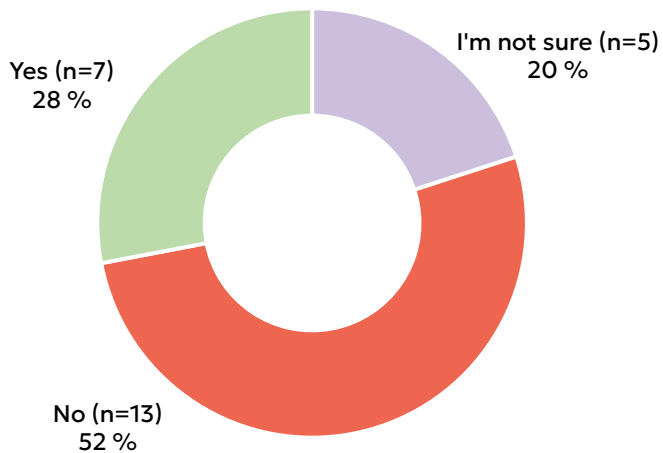


Image 5: YPS agenda-related activities in operations and secretariats

as the agenda may be referenced in operations without any concrete actions being taken to promote it. For instance, the EU’s mini-concept on YPS⁵ published in October 2024 notes that YPS is mentioned in the Operation Plans (OPLANs) of three EU Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) missions, but no measures to implement it are specified. Furthermore, certain operations include efforts to engage, involve, and support local youth; however, these initiatives are not directly related to the YPS agenda.

Slightly over half of the experts (52 %) reported that the agenda had not been advanced through concrete measures within the operation, while

28 % indicated that concrete measures had been undertaken. One-fifth expressed uncertainty on the matter.

The findings are consistent with those observed in image 4. Based on these findings, it can be inferred that in operations where the agenda is visible, concrete measures are likely to be implemented. However, this conclusion cannot be generalised, as the proportion of respondents who reported the visibility of the agenda in the operation was higher than the proportion who reported the implementation of concrete measures.

The proportion of respondents who expressed uncertainty in their responses is nearly the same in both questions. This may suggest that the

⁵ European External Action Service (2024): *Civilian CSDP Compact: Mini-concept on civilian CSDP support to host States to tackle peace and security challenges in line with principles of the Youth, Peace and Security (YPS) agenda.*

experts lack sufficient information on whether activities involving youth in the operations are specifically guided by the YPS agenda. For example, several experts acknowledged having

worked with youth, but simultaneously expressed uncertainty about whether their efforts were directly aligned with the YPS agenda.

3.3.1 Current efforts to implement the YPS agenda in operations

The study indicates that actions taken to promote the YPS agenda and their scope vary across operations. According to the data, the EU CSDP mission in Armenia stands out as the clearest example where the YPS agenda has been integrated into the operation's structures and activities. However, this does not suggest that other operations have completely overlooked young people. In fact, the data shows that many operations make efforts to reach and involve youth, but often these actions are not directly tied to the YPS framework.

It is noteworthy that the CSDP mission in Armenia has formally expressed its commitment to advancing the YPS agenda.⁶ However, in accordance with the EU's mini-concept on YPS,⁷ no specific tasks related to it are outlined in the mission's OPLAN. Notably, an expert working within the mission has independently taken the initiative

to embed the agenda into the operation's structures and activities. This has involved integrating YPS into the mission's human rights plan, offering training to staff on YPS-related topics, and encouraging the participation of local youth, for example, by inviting them to attend civil society meetings.

Certain operations include youth-related activities that are not associated with the YPS agenda. For instance, one of the experts pointed out that youth have been a significant focus of their work, although this focus is not associated with the YPS framework. The expert reported engaging in regular collaboration with local youth organisations and youth councils within the operational area, while also serving as a liaison between the mission and the Ministry of Youth. Similarly, another expert, working in a different operation, emphasised the pivotal role of local youth in the mission's activities,

⁶ https://www.eeas.europa.eu/euma/remarks-head-eu-delegation-armenia-and-head-eu-mission-armenia-occasion-human-rights-day_en

⁷ Mini-concepts provide guidance and strategies for the effective implementation of EU's Civilian CSDP Compact. The Compact is available on the EU External Action Service website: https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/civilian-csdp-compact-towards-more-effective-civilian-missions_en

despite the absence of efforts to promote the YPS agenda. For example, youth have been instrumental in initiatives carried out by the mission and local institutions aimed at combating human trafficking.

In some cases, youth have been recognised in the operation, but the focus has mainly been on emphasising their need for protection rather

than increasing their participation. This highlights that there is still significant need for improvement in advancing the YPS agenda, as its core aim is to change the perception of youth as victims of conflict and to create more opportunities for them to engage in meaningful and inclusive participation.

3.4 Challenges in advancing the YPS agenda within operations

Effective and comprehensive implementation of the YPS agenda requires a thorough understanding of the factors that hinder its progress. To this end, the experts involved in the study were asked to share their perspectives on the most significant

challenges in advancing the agenda in operational contexts (image 6).

More than half of the experts (56 %) indicated that insufficient information or training poses a barrier to advancing the agenda. Nearly 48 % highlighted the absence

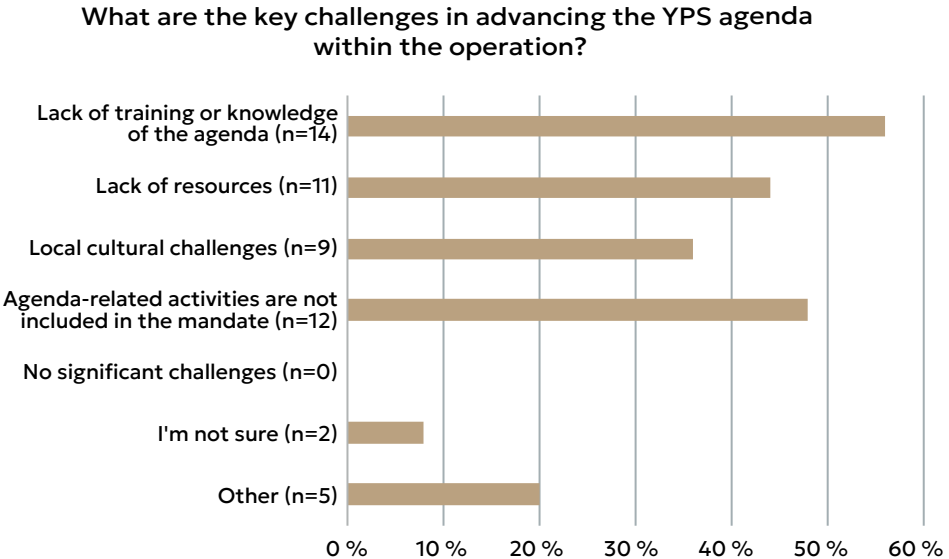


Image 6: The primary challenges in advancing the YPS agenda within operations

of agenda-related activities in the operational mandate as a key challenge. A lack of resources was also identified as a significant obstacle by 44 % of the respondents. Furthermore, 36 % noted that local cultural challenges hinder the implementation of the agenda.

It is noteworthy that these challenges are interconnected and often occur simultaneously. For instance, the absence of the YPS agenda within the mandate can result in insufficient allocation of resources for YPS-related work. Consequently, experts may not receive necessary training on the subject.

Experts highlighted that the lack of explicit inclusion of the YPS agenda in mission mandates leads to the responsibility for YPS-related work

being assigned to individuals who personally prioritise it. For instance, an expert who had worked with local youth within a mission remarked, “If I hadn’t taken all those initiatives and been so proactive, no one else would have done it either”.

The absence of the agenda and related tasks from the mandates has, in some cases, led to experts who consider it important having to engage in internal advocacy within the missions to ensure that activities related to the agenda are implemented in the operation. Experts recognised the need for the agenda to be included in the mission mandates and official documents from the beginning, so that the responsibility for promoting it would not fall on an individual expert.

4 Action proposals

To strengthen the implementation and impact of the YPS agenda within civilian crisis management

operations, the following actions are recommended.

4.1 Integrating the YPS agenda into mission mandates and frameworks

One of the most significant factors hindering the advancement of the YPS agenda is its absence from the mission mandates. In some cases, the agenda is briefly referenced within the mandate, but no specific actions for its practical implementation are outlined.

A fundamental prerequisite for the systematic and effective promotion

of the agenda is its explicit inclusion in the mandate of each mission, along with a detailed plan and clearly defined actions for practical implementation. Central to these actions should be a focused effort to engage local youth in the operational area, with an emphasis on creating opportunities for their active and meaningful participation.

4.2 Strengthening resources for YPS implementation

One of the main obstacles to advancing the YPS agenda within operations is the lack of resources, especially in terms of personnel. Typically, the responsibility for the agenda falls to a single expert who is also tasked with multiple other priorities, which results in them having limited time and capacity to effectively address all aspects of the agenda.

A common practice in many operations is to appoint a gender expert to support the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda. A similar strategy could be implemented

for the YPS agenda by designating a dedicated youth expert within missions. However, it is essential to note that this does not mean that the responsibility for the YPS agenda should rest solely with this individual expert. Instead, the agenda should be incorporated as a cross-cutting theme across all mission activities, ensuring that its principles are reflected in the work of all personnel, learning from the lessons identified in the process of mainstreaming the WPS agenda.

4.3 Building knowledge and capacities: YPS training for experts

Experts often lack sufficient knowledge of the YPS agenda, and opportunities to access or participate in relevant training are limited. This knowledge gap hinders their ability to effectively advance the agenda in their work. To address this challenge, it is essential to provide the experts with sufficient information about the agenda, along with practical guidance on its implementation. This requires the establishment of regular and systematic training initiatives.

Seconding organisations should integrate the YPS agenda into the orientation and training of outgoing experts, emphasising its core values and relevance within the framework of civilian crisis management. However, the seconding organisations and governments must

also promote the integration of the YPS perspective into civilian crisis management training and exercises and related international discussions. Without clear programmes and instructions of the international organisations related to the YPS perspective in training, the seconding organisations might not include it in their training. National action plans on YPS can also make the seconding organisations increase their YPS training. In addition, operations should provide mission-specific training targeted at the local context, and practical actions required for its implementation in the specific context of each mission.

UN Security Council Resolution 2535 (2020)

UN Security Council Resolution 2535 complements the earlier YPS resolutions and focuses on operationalising the YPS agenda. It calls Member States, regional organisations and the UN system, including peace operations, to implement the YPS resolutions. The resolution requests the Secretary General to provide guidance for all peacekeeping and other relevant UN missions on the implementation of the YPS agenda and urges all peacekeeping and other relevant UN missions to develop and implement context-specific strategies on YPS, bearing in mind their respective mandates.

Research and development at CMC Finland

Research and development is one of the statutory tasks of CMC Finland. It aims to support the training, recruitment and duty of care functions of the CMC, as well as partaking in discussions about current issues related to civilian crisis management. The research and development activities carried out at CMC Finland are practical, and research projects are often carried out as part of larger consortia. We analyse, for example, the recruitment and training path of experts seconded by the CMC and gather feedback to develop the CMC's core functions. The R&D unit also maintains situational awareness and partakes in the national implementation in crosscutting themes, such as sustainable development as well as the Youth, Peace and Security and Women, Peace and Security Agendas.

