

Young people hold the key to preventing violent extremism, say peacebuilding agencies at the European Development Days

- A new EU strategy aimed at preventing violent extremism is needed, one that combines security and peacebuilding approaches, puts young people in a leading role and invests in long-term solutions
- EU stabilization plans should include increased investment in already existing peacebuilding activities that target or are led by young people
- Globally 85% of young people live in developing countries, where their voices are absent from decision making, especially in fragile contexts (I'd put this bullet point first)

“We, children and young people, should respect everyone in all their diversity when it comes to freedom of expression. We are agents of change and peace”, says Theresa, a young delegate from Lebanon, ahead of the European Development Days.

Interpeace, Search for Common Ground and World Vision have worked together for years to amplify young people’s voices in their societies, at EU level and around the world. Their call for a more central role for youth in conflict prevention has not gone unnoticed.

“The EU has shown a growing commitment to involving young people in peacebuilding” says Scott Weber, Interpeace Director General. “However, for the EU and its member states to develop effective responses to prevent violent extremism, the meaningful participation of youth at all levels, needs to be a priority. That’s what this debate will be about – understanding the perspectives of young peacebuilders where different contexts and conflicts are concerned. .”

“A silent majority of young people are change makers who contribute positively to preventing or countering violent extremism” says World Vision Brussels’ Director of Advocacy Deirdre de Burca. “If we lose our focus on young people, they will feel marginalised and will therefore be more vulnerable to recruitment, injustice and discrimination.”

An inter-agency report released less than a year ago showed that when involved in peacebuilding processes, young people’s engagement increases peaceful cohabitation, reduces discrimination and violence, and increases support to vulnerable groups.

“Young people hold the key to preventing or countering violent extremism” says Sandra Melone, Executive Vice-President at Search. “We need to move from tackling symptoms to addressing the factors driving participation in violent extremism.”

As part of the European Development Days, the three agencies will convene high level speakers with various background and from different institutions and organisations, including Elisabeth Pape, Head of Unit Fragility and Resilience (DG DEVCO); Malgorzata Wasilewska, Head of Division Conflict Prevention, Peacebuilding and Mediation Instruments (EEAS); Séverin Yao Kouamé, Director of Indigo – Interpeace; Elmortada Iamrachen, Imam from Morocco – Search for Common Ground, and Theresa, a young delegate – World Vision Lebanon.

Organisers hope this debate will further reinforce the call enshrined in UN Security Council Resolution 2250 to foster young people’s participation in peacebuilding at all levels.

ENDS



What: Promoting Young People as Peacebuilders - How Engaging Youth Can Prevent Violent Extremism?

When: Thursday, 16 June, 09:15-10:30

Where: Tour & Taxi, Room D4

Notes to editors

World Vision is a relief, development and advocacy organisation dedicated to working with children, families and communities worldwide to reach their full potential by tackling the causes of poverty and injustice. It works in close to 100 countries in most regions of the world including Latin America and the Caribbean, Europe, Africa, the Middle East and the Asia Pacific Region.

World Vision Brussels' office represents World Vision members in 12 European countries, including 10 EU member states, as well as the wider international World Vision partnership.

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Interpeace is an independent, international peacebuilding organization. We were initially established in 1994 by the United Nations to develop innovative solutions to build peace. We have a proven and recognized approach to enable people to build lasting peace. History shows us that peace is possible. From 20 years of experience in peacebuilding, we know that peace cannot be imported from the outside and must be built from within a society. This is why Interpeace tailors its approach to each society and ensures that the work is locally-driven. Together with local partners on the ground, we jointly develop peacebuilding programmes. We help establish processes of change that connect local communities, civil society, government and the international community.

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Search for Common Ground (SFCG) is the world's largest peacebuilding NGO, with over 700 employees working and offices in 35 countries across the Middle East, Africa and Asia. For over three decades Search has pursued its mission to end violent conflict, promoting collaborative, non-adversarial approaches through community dialogue, mediation and media.

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