



OSCEval News is the evaluation newsletter of the Office of Internal Oversight.

Its aim is to provide insights into the OSCE's work in evaluation, by sharing key evaluation findings and conclusions, as well as new developments regarding the OSCE's overall evaluation culture.

Evaluation is a management tool that contributes to decision-making, strategic planning, and organizational learning.



This edition of OSCEval News is dedicated to the

## Evaluation of the OSCE's Work With and For Youth

This evaluation was conducted by the Office of Internal Oversight (OIO) with the help of one external consultant in 2019. It includes three country studies on the OSCE's work in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, and Kyrgyzstan, and one cross-cutting report.

### Introduction

In recent years, the OSCE's commitment to promote the role and the inclusion of youth in its peace and security agenda, dating back to its founding document, the Helsinki Final Act, was strengthened by specific Ministerial Council declarations in 2014, 2015 and 2018. These declarations and several other ministerial and parliamentary acts have recognised the potential of young people to contribute to political, economic and social development and to the OSCE's work across the three dimensions of its comprehensive concept of security. In line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and its pledge that 'no one will be left behind', and OSCE commitments, youth has been continuously on the agenda of the Chairpersons-in-Office (CiO) of the OSCE.

The OSCE does not have any official organization-wide agreed strategy or plan for the work with and for young people. An internal *Framework for Strengthening OSCE Efforts on Youth and Security* (hereinafter referred to as the Framework) was developed in 2018-2019 by the Secretariat under an extra-budgetary project. It is expected "to lay the foundation for a more unified and coherent OSCE approach to working with youth and for youth", and offers recommendations to executive structures supporting the implementation of youth-related commitments. Specific guiding documents for the work with and for youth also exist at the level of some executive structures.

As the topic of youth has previously not been subject of any Office of Internal Oversight independent evaluation, and since there are calls for more knowledge on which to build future strategies and interventions, this evaluation was initiated in 2019. As both a retrospective and forward looking assessment, the evaluation aimed to provide relevant inputs for upcoming activities and to feed into future policies and approaches.

### Purpose

For the purpose of the evaluation, OSCE interventions were analyzed in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, and Kyrgyzstan. The sample included two types of OSCE projects: interventions directly targeting young people (youth-targeted), and interventions not directly targeting young people (non-targeted). For the latter it was assessed to what extent and how youth perspectives had been integrated as a cross-cutting topic. The evaluation did, however, not aim to pursue a project-by-project analysis, but rather to draw some general conclusions from the experience at Mission level for the OSCE's work with and for youth. To complement the analysis of activities of the three selected field structures, a rapid assessment of projects planned across the organization in 2018 was undertaken in order to establish to what extent youth perspectives had been taken into consideration OSCE-wide.

### Evaluation Findings and Conclusions

#### Relevance

Data collected for this evaluation showed that the OSCE's youth-related interventions in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Kyrgyzstan were aligned with CiO priorities, OSCE commitments and the agendas of governments. They overall responded to the needs of young women and men, and addressed the challenges young people deal with in their countries. The evaluation, however, identified weaknesses with regards to how the needs of young women and girls, men and boys had been identified, in most cases without conducting any systematic needs assessments. For non-targeted projects, it was also noted that youth perspectives did not represent an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of most of them. In fact, in many instances the integration of youth perspectives was limited to the implementation of one or more youth-targeted 'standalone' activities within the context of larger projects.



Across the OSCE, it was found that in 2018, excluding the youth-targeted projects, less than one fifth of all available project proposals integrated youth perspectives in a more meaningful way.

### Effectiveness

Projects were usually effective in the short run in terms of generating new knowledge and raising awareness of important topics among young people such as of the risks of violence and radicalisation that lead to terrorism, and the importance of enhancing tolerance among different ethnic groups.

As a result, many young people who had been engaged in OSCE activities reportedly demonstrated new types of behaviour, for instance in terms of interacting differently with peers from other ethnic groups. In the three countries, several projects were also successful in contributing to changes in procedures, policies and practices.

Long-term outcomes were mostly observed at local level. Significantly more resources for the work with and for youth and larger interventions would be needed to create visible changes at provincial and national level as well. The evaluation also observed the need for better monitoring and evaluation practices, in particular relating to the integration of youth perspectives in non-targeted projects, for which youth-related indicators were often missing.

### Sustainability

The assessment of the sustainability of the OSCE's work with and for youth showed mixed results. Several interventions with counterparts were only continued thanks to the repeated support provided by the OSCE. Given that public funds for youth-related projects are scarce in the three countries included in the evaluation, the continued support of international organizations and donors proved to be essential. Many positive examples were collected concerning the development of individual and organizational capacities. The ability of public authorities to develop and implement youth strategies and measures and to involve young people in these processes had also increased to a certain extent.

### Youth and Gender

Most frequently, gender was mainstreamed in the work with and for youth by encouraging equal access to and participation of both young women and men in the activities organised by the OSCE. Some projects also included gender considerations with regards to the thematic areas addressed. It was noted that even though the situation has improved in recent years, overall gender had not been fully mainstreamed in the interventions with and for youth.

### Mechanisms for the OSCE's work with and for youth

Overall, with regards to the OSCE's mechanisms for the work with and for youth, most managers interviewed were of the opinion that an overall OSCE-wide policy framework in this area would strengthen the position of the field structures and provide them with a stronger mandate to pursue the youth agenda more systematically, effectively and with a more sustainable perspective. In the absence of such a policy, the Secretary General's newly-developed *Framework for Strengthening OSCE Efforts on Youth and Security* is considered helpful and a step in the right direction.

## The way forward

This evaluation has shown that youth-targeted projects implemented by the OSCE Missions to Bosnia and Herzegovina and to Serbia, as well as by the Programme Office in Bishkek, have achieved good short-term and some longer-term results.

A few good practices of youth mainstreaming were also identified. Given that the latter is an area where more work is planned for the future, and which is found to be challenging by many, these should be shared across executive structures.

**To support the organization in this endeavour, this thematic evaluation offers the following emerging lessons for the OSCE's future work with and for youth:**

- ⇒ *In the absence of an OSCE-wide official policy on youth, adopted by participating States, the development of the Secretary General's Framework for Strengthening OSCE Efforts on Youth and Security has been welcomed by many. It needs to be further promoted and shared in order to obtain a coherent and effective organization-wide approach to youth.*
- ⇒ *The Framework could be further strengthened by proposing clearer objectives for youth mainstreaming, which is not a goal in itself, and by providing more guidance on how to mainstream gender in the work with and for youth.*
- ⇒ *The lack of proper assessments of the needs of young women and men, including of the root causes of their problems, might limit the relevance of the OSCE's work for young people.*
- ⇒ *Integrating youth perspectives is often wrongly understood to be synonymous with the integration of youth-targeted interventions in non-targeted projects. The proper integration of youth perspectives in all phases of the project cycle is found to be challenging by many. This is an area where clarity of terminology, awareness raising, capacity development, and tools are needed.*
- ⇒ *Lack of data on mid- and long-term outcomes makes it difficult to demonstrate results and to develop a convincing narrative on how the integration of youth perspectives contributes to comprehensive security.*
- ⇒ *A large part of the OSCE's projects with and for youth pertain to the Human Dimension. In order to fully implement its commitments on Youth and Security, the OSCE might need to intensify its efforts to include youth perspectives in the Politico-Military and in the Economic-Environmental Dimensions.*
- ⇒ *More concentrated and more continuous efforts are needed to really have an impact on the lives of young people in participating States.*
- ⇒ *Overall, the OSCE engagement with and for youth benefits from learning lessons from the work for gender equality, while recognizing that youth mainstreaming is different to gender mainstreaming in commitments, scope and objectives.*

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