

Policy Workshop – Young Voices: European Engagement and the EU’s image

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Zoom

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The EU together with its Member States is the top investor and development assistant provider in the world. Yet, in public perception, there seems to be a discrepancy between the EU’s financial contribution and its visibility. This again might lead to the impression that the EU’s role in important partner countries is diminishing. The EU wishes to counter this narrative, especially among young people. In this regard, on July 15th, the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung Multinational Policy Development Dialogue (MDPD) hosted an online, closed-door policy workshop on the topic of “Young Voices: European Engagement and the EU’s image”, which was based on a [video series](#) dedicated to the same topic. This event brought together young people from different continents working in EU funded projects and programmes and EU policy makers to discuss and collect concrete policy recommendations, so-called “game changers”.

In his keynote speech, Mr Renaud Savignat, Member of EU Commissioner Jutta Urpilainen’s cabinet outlined the current EU Youth Engagement strategies and the planned Youth Action Plan in External Action¹, which is expected to be published later this year. He therewith provided the basis for further discussion. Following that, the participants had the chance to debate in breakout sessions dedicated to the thematic areas of Freedom and Security, Climate and Energy, and Participation and Democracy. The discussions were moderated by three youth representatives and focused on the participant’s experiences working with the EU, the challenges of their collaboration, as well as possibilities of overcoming these obstacles. The results were collected and structured on a MIRO-Board for visualizing the far-reaching policy recommendations,

¹ ‘Youth Action Plan – Involving Young People in EU External Action’, Have your say, accessed 19 July 2022, https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/have-your-say/initiatives/13156-Youth-Action-Plan-involving-young-people-in-EU-external-action_en.

which were later also presented and discussed in plenum. Within the breakout session dedicated to Democracy and Participation, participants highlighted the lack of trust in the political institutions and the lack of information on the inner workings of the EU. This resulted in disinterest which needed to be addressed through improved programme design and enhanced visibility. The discussion dedicated to EU Youth engagement in the sphere of Freedom and Security revolved around the application of the UN Youth Peace and Security Agenda² on EU level and within its external action. In addition, participants echoed the need for making information about the EU and its initiatives available and more visible. Finally, in the “Climate and Energy” breakout session, participants similarly called for EU support for mapping of initiatives. Furthermore, there should be increased efforts to make use of the networks already existing on the ground and the expertise available within these.

Ms Agnieszka Skuratowicz, Head of Unit Education, Youth and Culture of the Directorate General for International Partnerships at the European Commission reacted in her closing remarks to these findings. She gave an outlook on how these recommendations can be taken up within the Commission’s future work on engaging young people in the EU’s external action. She emphasized the value of the personal perspectives of each of the participants and highlighted the need for EU action to be inclusive and to engage with local stakeholders directly. In addition, she argued that not only outside the EU institutions expertise needs to be build but also policy makers need to be capacitated to engage properly with relevant youth stakeholders. Finally, she drew the connection to the upcoming Youth Action Plan in External Action, which aims at addressing some of the issues discussed during this event.

Following this event, the outcomes will now be synthesized in a broader policy paper. For further information, please contact Janne Leino at janne.leino@kas.de.

² United Nations, ‘United Nations Security Council Resolution 2419’, 6 June 2018, <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N18/173/81/PDF/N1817381.pdf?OpenElement>.