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Feasibility Study

about a Recommendation of the Committee of
Ministers to Governments of Member States on
Peace Education in Non-formal learning and
Youth work

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Acknowledgements

This document contributes to the growing body of work on peace education in non-formal learning and youth work settings. We hope it will be used to support thinking, dialogue, reflection, and action to strengthen the role of peace education and young people in working toward a culture of peace and nonviolence and away from a culture of war and violence.

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The document is authored by Dr. Phill Gittins.

The opinions expressed in this work are the responsibility of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the official policy of the Council of Europe.

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This study aims to support the statutory bodies within the youth sector of the Youth Department of the Council of Europe (CoE), particularly the Joint Council on Youth, in assessing the need, relevance, and feasibility of developing a **Committee of Ministers (CM) Recommendation to the governments of Member States on Peace Education in non-formal learning and youth work.**

This document provides an overview of peace education, exploring what it is, why it matters, and how it can be done. It also identifies and describes relevant standards, texts, and initiatives related to peace education and peacebuilding-related activities involving young people, summarising progress made and identifying current gaps. The document concludes with a proposal that outlines what should be addressed, included, or suggested in the recommendation to build on ongoing efforts and address some of the current gaps, with the goal of improving the recognition, viability, accessibility, delivery, effectiveness, and impacts of peace education initiatives across the 46 Member States of the CoE and beyond.

The evidence for this study is derived from three main sources:

- 1) desktop research, which includes standards, texts, and initiatives from the CoE and other entities (for further details, see Sections 1.1 and 4);
- 2) survey data and interviews with experts in peace education, peacebuilding, education, non-formal learning, and youth work policy and practice, including members of the Joint Council on Youth and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (see Appendices II and III); and
- 3) lessons learned from practical experience.

The feasibility study was commissioned to provide evidence-based answers and arguments to two main questions:

1. Why would such a recommendation be useful, relevant and necessary in the framework of the Council of Europe today?
2. What should the recommendation address, contain or recommend in order to be meaningful and support peacebuilding and peace education with/by young people?

1.1 About the need for a recommendation

The rationale for why a recommendation is needed, what it should include, and who would benefit from it and how is briefly outlined here, with further elaboration in Section 5.1.

Why is a recommendation needed?

There are several compelling reasons why this recommendation is both timely and important.

Alignment with Council of Europe and EU priorities

The need for a recommendation is driven by the Council of Europe's (CoE) and European Union's (EU) key commitments to promoting peace and security (see Sections 4 and 5 for more details). The CoE was founded on the belief that "the pursuit of peace based upon justice and international co-operation is vital for the preservation of human society and civilisation" (Statute of the Council of Europe, 1949). Similarly, the EU's Lisbon Treaty, adopted in 2007, aims "to promote peace, its values, and the well-being of its citizens" (Lisbon Treaty).

Challenges facing Europe and the global community

Another key driver for the recommendation is the urgent need to better address the major challenges facing Europe and the global community today and in the future. These include escalating wars, militarism, violence, insecurity, polarisation, and human rights violations, as well as declining levels of peace, security, tolerance, mental health, social cohesion, democracy, and the rule of law. These issues are intensified by existential threats like climate change, nuclear war, and emerging technologies.

The consequences of wars and their human, societal, environmental, and economic costs are both predictable and deeply alarming: killing and causing physical harm on a wide scale, increasing insecurity, impoverishing societies, destroying infrastructure and the environment, and undermining prospects for multilateral collaboration. Globally, approximately 1.5 billion people currently live in violence or under the threat of violence, with over 50 active armed conflicts, more than 114 million people displaced due to war, violence, persecution, and human rights violations, and the global economic cost of violence reaching \$19.1 trillion.¹

War is not only the cause of the risk of nuclear apocalypse, a leading cause of death, injury, and trauma, a leading destroyer of the natural environment, and the foremost cause of refugee crises and property destruction. War is also the primary justification for government secrecy and authoritarianism, and a major driver of racism and bigotry. Additionally, war is a major escalator of government repression and individual violence, the main impediment to global cooperation on pressing global challenges, and diverts vast financial resources away from areas desperately in need of funding to save and improve lives. War is a crime under the Kellogg-Briand Pact and, in almost every instance, violates the United Nations Charter.²

The role of young people in peace and security

To effectively rise to the scale of the often intertwined challenges we currently face, and to achieve lasting peace and a world beyond war, we must prioritise children and youth, as Mahatma Gandhi emphasised over 60 years ago. Today, the essential role of young people in peace and security is more urgent than ever and is recognised in various standards, texts,

¹ See: World Bank. (2024). *Fragility, Conflict and Violence Overview*, Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI). (2024). *Armed Conflict Database*. Institute for Economics & Peace. (2024). *2024 Global Peace Index*.

² See: World BEYOND War, <https://worldbeyondwar.org/world-beyond-war-is-both-pro-peace-and-anti-war/>

and initiatives from the CoE, consistent with global trends. Examples include the *Youth Sector Strategy for 2030*, *Education Strategy 2024-2030*, *Motion for a resolution Doc(2023)15821* on the CoE's role in preventing conflicts, restoring the credibility of international institutions, and promoting global peace, *Recommendation CM/Rec(2023)4* on Roma youth participation, the *Reykjavík Declaration (2023)* on education, *Recommendation CM/Rec(2022)16* on preventing and combating hate speech and ensuring freedom of expression, *Recommendation CM/Rec(2021)2378* on strengthening the role of young people in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, *Recommendation CM/Rec(2019)4* on supporting young refugees in their transition to adulthood, *Recommendation CM/Rec(2018)7* on education for democratic citizenship and human rights, *Recommendation CM/Rec(2012)13* on quality education for all, and *Recommendation CM(1997)20* on combating hate speech, discrimination, and intolerance.

Collectively, these initiatives underscore the CoE's commitments to peace and the need to strengthen the capacities and contributions of young people, as well as the youth work and education sectors, in promoting inclusive and peaceful societies as an essential part of the CoE's core mission to promote and protect human rights, democracy, and the rule of law.

The need for peace youth work is also reflected in various other international frameworks such as the *UN Security Council Resolutions on Youth, Peace, and Security (YPS)* — *UNSCR 2250 (2015)*, *UNSCR 2419 (2018)*, and *UNSCR 2535 (2020)*, which reaffirm the critical role of young people in advancing peace, security, human rights, and sustainable development.

The benefits of peace education and youth work on individuals, the economy, and society as a whole.

Lasting peace and security, along with human rights and sustainable development, depends on the ability of global citizens to understand and address threats to these ideals, and to transform conflicts — both large and small — without resorting to violence. This is where peace education is essential. Since conflict is a natural part of life, and violence pervades nearly all aspects of society, peace education is a vital component of peacebuilding and should be accessible to people of all ages everywhere who are engaged in or affected by the spectrum of conflicts and violence present today — whether in war zones, areas impacted by conflict or violence, deeply divided or fragile societies, or even in relatively peaceful settings.

This study argues that there is no viable approach to achieving peace, human rights, democracy, and the rule of law that does not include young people's meaningful representation, inclusion, and participation in peace education and YPS-related efforts.

Research supports this claim, demonstrating the value and impacts of peace education and YPS efforts are wide-ranging and include:

- **Individual impact:** Through learning the fundamentals of peacebuilding, these initiatives support young people's capacity, well-being, and sense of agency, enabling them to contribute to positive change, especially in the areas of peace and security. They empower youth to build confidence, harness their power, and develop the competencies

needed to become curious, critical, competent, compassionate, and creative agents of change, capable of addressing issues affecting their lives and the world around them.

- **Economic impact:** Through exploring the legacies, root causes, effects, and ongoing threats to peace, these initiatives not only support young people to understand the personal, social, political, cultural, and/or environmental factors that influence peace and conflict. They also support economic growth by equipping young people to deal with challenges, setbacks, and conflicts without resorting to violence.
- **Social impact:** By strengthening young people's capacity to develop peaceful ways of being with self, others, and the wider world, these initiatives promote the development of healthy, just, and right relationships grounded in honesty, empathy, and respect. This, in turn, helps build trust among people and groups, tackle discrimination, promote inclusion, and contribute to creating more inclusive and peaceful societies.

Peace education and related peacebuilding activities involving young people should not be regarded as a 'youth issue'. They yield significant returns on investment, directly impacting young people's lives while also contributing to the social and economic development of communities to which they belong. These initiatives promote critical thinking, leadership development, nonviolent conflict transformation, democratic participation, and social action – all essential for advancing peace, security, and economic prosperity.³

The benefits of peace education and YPS-related efforts — for young people and the broader economic and social landscape — are widely acknowledged by prominent institutions and embedded in regional and global frameworks, including those of the CoE, OSCE, UN, and others. This consensus was echoed in many interviews, with Max Lucks, a German politician and member of the Parliamentary Assembly of the COE (PACE), stressing the need to “take young people more seriously.” He pointed out that “young people should not be viewed as only representatives of the diverse youth generation they are part of; they have a much bigger role to play.” He further argued that this is not just about listening to young people, although this is essential: it also involves recognising that investing in, empowering, and supporting youth involvement in peace education, research, and action is fundamental to advancing the CoE's broader mission to promote human rights, democracy, and the rule of law.

Filling gaps in existing policies and practices

The peace and security landscape has changed over the past 10 years, with notable progress in the discourse surrounding peace education and YPS-related initiatives (discussed further in Section 4.2). Governments, civil society, the private sector, and international youth and peacebuilding organisations consistently point to the need to improve youth participation and mainstreaming in politics, policy, and practice, calling for stronger legal and political support at all levels and greater investment in research, training, and funding for these initiatives.

³ Expert Interviews with Yevheniia Kravchuk (October 10, 2024) and Lydia Ruprecht (October 10, 2024).

However, there is a notable paradox: while lasting peace and security cannot be achieved without the meaningful inclusion of young people, they are often systematically excluded from decision-making processes, education, capacity-building opportunities, research, and actions related to peace and security issues that directly affect them and their communities. This exclusion is not only problematic but also ironic, as young people are disproportionately impacted by war and violence, yet they are frequently cited as one of the primary groups that wars and conflicts claim to protect.

Significant gaps persist between policy and practice, as political commitments, legislation, support, resources, and accountability mechanisms — particularly at the national and local levels — continue to lag behind advancements in global and regional frameworks.

Peace education, especially in non-formal learning and youth work sectors, too often remains undervalued and underutilised.⁴ Most young people, in most countries across Europe and beyond, do not have access to peace education and other peacebuilding-related activities. While youth involvement in YPS-related efforts may be at an all-time high, it is far from widespread. There is a growing body of work on YPS work (policies, scholarship, theory, research, and practice), most of it is done *about, to, or for* young people, rather than *with and by* them. Frequently, young people are portrayed as victims or perpetrators of violence or as beneficiaries of others' peace and security efforts, rather than being recognised and positioned as key partners, resources, multipliers, and leaders in the design, planning, implementation, and evaluation of peace education and YPS-related initiatives. It is vital to harness the transformative power of peace education and young people as key change agents in moving the world towards a culture of peace and away from a culture of war and violence.

In summary, the ongoing efforts by the CoE and the global community to engage and empower young people as peacebuilders and leaders offer a solid foundation upon which to build. The recommendation would make a supportive contribution to these initiatives, assisting Member States, civil society, and other stakeholders to maintain and further develop the delivery, quality, and effectiveness of peace education and YPS-related efforts across Europe and beyond. Its added value lies in its potential to:

- Contribute positively to the CoE's and EU's pursuit of peace.
- Effectively address the urgent challenges facing Europe and the global community.
- Promote the meaningful inclusion of young people in peace and security matters.
- Enhance visibility, recognition, engagement, investment, and impact in peace education and YPS-related efforts.
- Address gaps in current policies and practices.

It is important to clarify that the arguments presented in this study do not imply that peace education and YPS-related efforts can fully address every issue on their own. Peace education and YPS-related efforts can and should be combined with other approaches, whether as distinct standalone efforts or as part of existing initiatives such as education for human rights or sustainable development, intercultural and interreligious dialogue and learning, or

⁴ Expert Interviews with Dr. Edward Brantmeier (September 2, 2024) and Lydia Ruprecht (October 10, 2024).

confidence-building activities, to improve the prospects for developing inclusive and peaceful communities within the CoE and beyond.

What should the recommendation include?

Six key themes emerged from the desk research, surveys, and interviews as vital for advancing the development of peace education within non-formal learning and youth work settings. These themes should be included in the recommendation, as they can support the CoE and other stakeholders in sustaining and improving their peace work across Europe and beyond:

- **Involve** young people equitably and meaningfully in peace education
- **Pursue** a holistic and comprehensive approach
- **Contextualise** the work to address local needs and broader commitments
- **Embed** peace education across non-formal learning and all learning spaces
- **Coordinate** efforts across sectors and all levels of society
- **Invest** in peace education to benefit youth, the economy, and society as a whole

Section 5.1 offers a more detailed exploration of these key themes. Section 4.2 discusses some of the current gaps in the field that the recommendation will aim to address.

Who would benefit from the recommendation and how?

The primary audiences for this document and the subsequent recommendation include the CoE, its Member States, and other stakeholders. What follows is a brief overview of who would benefit from the recommendation and how. A more detailed account of its significance for the CoE, the wider international community, and society at large can be found in Section 5.2.

The recommendation would benefit a diverse range of stakeholders, including the CoE, Member States, young people, policymakers, education and training providers, as well as UN bodies, international non-governmental organisations (INGOs), intergovernmental organisations (IGOs), movements, alliances, campaigns, coalitions, networks, and service organisations. Given the limited attention paid to peace education in non-formal learning and youth work settings, the recommendation would be expected to inform and influence peace education provision across Europe and beyond. It could support the creation and development of frameworks and resources, lead to further education, training, and professional development opportunities within the education and youth sectors, and contribute to youth peacebuilding initiatives while aligning with existing regional and international standards. Additionally, the recommendation would serve as a reference point that can be used to ground advocacy, research, and practice within the fields of peace education and YPS-related work.

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

2.1 Background to the study

In January 2023, the Youth Department of the CoE organised a Consultative Meeting about renewing the role of peace education in intercultural youth activities, with the purpose of reviewing the approaches and practices in use in youth activities for peacebuilding and conflict transformation in the CoE (including the activities at the European Youth Centres and activities supported by the European Youth Foundation), with a view to renewing the role of peace education and conflict transformation in the programme Youth for Democracy. The Joint Council on Youth endorsed the conclusions of the meeting and tasked the secretariat with preparing a feasibility study about the opportunities and needs for a recommendation on peace education in non-formal learning and youth work.

2.2 Aim, audiences, and objectives of the study

This feasibility study aims to explore and better understand the opportunities and needs for a **Committee of Ministers (CM) Recommendation to the governments of Member States on Peace Education in non-formal learning and youth work**. The primary audience for this study includes the CoE, its Member States, partners, and other stakeholders, particularly in the fields of youth work and education. Specifically, the study seeks to assist the statutory bodies within the Youth Department of the Council of Europe, including the European Steering Committee for Youth, the Advisory Council on Youth, and the Joint Council on Youth, in assessing the need, relevance, and feasibility of developing the proposed recommendation. The study also serves as a reference for those interested or involved in peace education, peacebuilding, conflict transformation, peace and conflict studies, youth, peace, and security, reconciliation, social cohesion, intercultural and interreligious dialogue, intergenerational engagement, and related activities. This includes policymakers, practitioners, researchers, scholars, donors, and other stakeholders from civil society, government, UN agencies, the private sector, and the general public.

To meet the needs of its target audience, the study has three main objectives:

1. **To provide an overview of peace education** — what it is, why it matters, and how it can be done — discussing its purpose, principles, content, and pedagogy (Section 3).
2. **To map existing standards and texts relevant to peace education and YPS-related efforts**, summarising progress made and identifying current gaps (Section 4).
3. **To outline the added value of a CM Recommendation on peace education in non-formal learning and youth work**, exploring why such a recommendation is needed, what it should include, and who would benefit from it and how (Section 5).

2.3 Research base of the study

The evidence for this study is drawn from a combination of desk-based research, survey data, and interviews with leading experts and organisations in the fields of peace, education, security, reconciliation, and youth work broadly defined. This process involved reviewing key standards, texts, and practices in these areas, summarising progress, identifying gaps, and gathering recommendations for improvement. The study also draws on lessons learned from practice, including the author's more than twenty years of experience consulting, researching, teaching, writing, organising, and speaking on topics such as peace, security, war, education, and youth work, in diverse contexts and with many different groups. The author is an experienced and professionally qualified youth and community worker with a PhD specialising in peace education, youth, peace and security, and participatory action research.

The findings of this study are grounded in and build upon established standards, principles, texts, and best practices in peace education, peacebuilding, non-formal learning, and youth work. This includes key strategies and documents from the CoE such as the CoE Parliamentary Assembly *Resolution 2378 (2021)*, the CoE *Youth Strategy (2015-2025)*, the CoE *Education Strategy (2024-2030)*, and the CoE *Reykjavik Declaration*. It also includes UNESCO's *Recommendations on Education for Peace, Human Rights, and Sustainable Development (2023)*; the *UN Security Council Resolutions on Youth, Peace, and Security (YPS)* — *UNSCR 2250 (2015)*, *UNSCR 2419 (2018)*, and *UNSCR 2535 (2020)*; *The Missing Peace: Independent Progress Study on Youth, Peace, and Security (2018)*, and the *UN Sustainable Development Goals*, including SDG 4.7 which includes a focus on education for the "promotion of a culture of peace and nonviolence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity."

2.4 Definitions and scope of the study

For this study:

- **Peace education** refers to a wide range of activities aimed at educating *about*, *for*, and *towards* a culture of peace and nonviolence, based on human rights, and *away* from a culture of war and violence.⁵
- **Non-formal learning** includes "planned, structured programmes and processes of personal and social education for young people designed to improve a range of skills and competencies, outside the formal educational curriculum."⁶
- **Youth work** is "a broad term covering a wide variety of activities of a social, cultural, educational, environmental and/or political nature by, with and for young people, in groups or individually." The European Union and the CoE generally define "youth" as individuals between the ages of 13 to 30.

These are distinct fields of study and practice, yet they intersect through several cross-cutting themes, including values, agency, education, process, inclusion, participation, relationships,

⁵ While the term 'peace education' is widely accepted, and recommended here, other terms may be used to reflect cultural sensitivities. For instance, in Northern Ireland, 'Education for Mutual Understanding' is often used.

⁶ <https://www.coe.int/en/web/youth-portfolio/youth-work-essentials>

power, empowerment, engagement, hope, communication, transformation, citizenship, and social action. While the focus may vary, they share common ground in these themes.

A note about definitions

It may be helpful to elaborate on the definition of peace education presented in this study.

Peace can be viewed more as a verb than a noun — an active, iterative process that is embodied, experienced, built, nurtured, and practiced. Peace is also relative; no nation or territory exists in a state of complete warfare or absolute peace, allowing room for progress in every context. As Rogers⁷ notes, we are all engaged in a “process of being and becoming,” and as Freire suggested,⁸ we are all “unfinished.” This notion applies not only to individuals but also to states, regions, and the planet. We undergo shifts — including transitions from violence to peace — with conflict serving as a conduit. Even in times of war, there are always individuals and groups striving to turn challenges into opportunities for positive change.

The definition of peace education presented in this study does not imply that we are entirely at war or completely at peace. Rather, it invites us to think about war and peace as existing along a broad spectrum. At one end, there is a culture of war and violence, often marked by human rights violations, which we seek to move away from. At the other end lies a culture of peace and nonviolence, rooted in human rights, which we seek to move towards.

In summary, the intention is not to be polarising. Instead, it seeks to encourage dialogue that acknowledges and engages with the pervasive culture of war and militarism often normalised in many aspects of society, while focussing on actions needed, both individually and collectively, to make further progress and shift the world away from destructive conflicts defined by war and violence, towards more constructive forms of conflict that pursue peace by peaceful means, improving the prospects for lasting peace and security for all, everywhere.

A note about terminology

Language is important: Some interviewees felt that explicitly naming “peace education” was not always necessary since it is often integrated into various related activities. However, others argued that identifying it as “peace education”, instead of other phrases like teaching about peace through human rights, is important for several reasons: it can help reduce ambiguity, facilitate the creation of targeted monitoring and evaluation systems, and influence decisions around resource allocation. When peace education is clearly articulated in policies, it can be assessed against relevant metrics, which can in turn impact funding as Member States make budgetary decisions. Research indicates that clearly defining initiatives as ‘peace-oriented’ can also help to build trust, clarify purpose, and enhance local legitimacy and community support.⁹

⁷ Rogers, C. R. (1961). *On Becoming a Person: A Therapist's View of Psychotherapy*. Houghton Mifflin.

⁸ Freire, P. (1994). *Pedagogy of Hope: Reliving Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Continuum.

⁹ Schirch, L. (2005). *Ritual and Symbol in Peacebuilding*. Lynne Rienner Publishers. For similar arguments, refer to the works of John Paul Lederach, Susan Campbell, Cynthia Cockburn, David Francis, and others.

Scope

This study primarily focuses on peace education within non-formal learning and youth work settings, while also advocating for its embedding across all areas of life — spanning formal, non-formal, and informal education, cultural contexts, and involving people of all ages across sectors and levels of society. To avoid repetition, the phrase "peace education and Youth, Peace, and Security (YPS)-related efforts" is used to refer to a broad spectrum of activities, including peacebuilding (in and through education), conflict transformation, reconciliation, social cohesion, intercultural and interreligious dialogue, intergenerational cooperation and engagement, and any other peace and security-related activities done *with*, *by*, and *for* young people. These efforts may be directly identified as *peace youth work* or *youth peace work* or they may be delivered indirectly, intersecting with education for human rights, sustainable development, democracy, global citizenship, confidence-building, and similar activities.

3. PEACE EDUCATION: WHAT IT IS, WHY IT MATTERS, AND HOW IT CAN BE DONE

Peace education does not have a single definition; it is perceived, interpreted, and practised in many different ways. Nevertheless, it can be understood as a broad term that includes any and all activities aimed at moving us *toward* a culture of peace and nonviolence, rooted in human rights, and away from a culture of war and violence. Several key elements are central to this understanding. First, the focus on culture underscores the wider context in which peace and education efforts should be situated.¹⁰ Second, human rights serve as a foundational basis for peace education, ensuring that respect for dignity, freedom, and justice is central to the development of inclusive and peaceful societies. Third, it addresses the dual challenge of dismantling the culture of war and violence while building cultures that promote peace and nonviolence.¹¹ As stated in UNESCO's constitution, "Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed." This not only underscores the significance of peace education but also affirms that its foundation lies in a strong commitment to nonviolence — peace must be pursued by peaceful means — thereby rejecting the use of war and violence as tenable approaches to dealing with conflict.

The critical need to abolish war is a recurring theme in the discourse of leading organisations, scholars, and practitioners working in the areas of peace, security, and development. For instance, one of the three pillars of the UN is *peace* and *security*, and the UN Charter emphasises that the establishment and maintenance of peace and security rely, in part, on our capacity to "save succeeding generations from the scourge of war." UNESCO asserts that lasting peace requires not only "the absence of war and armed conflicts" but also the presence of human security, sovereignty, territorial integrity, cooperation, solidarity, peaceful conflict resolution, sustainable development, and the protection of rights and justice.¹²

Peace education can be organised around three core domains (Figure 1). It can integrate various intelligences (intellectual, emotional, relational, spiritual, cultural, environmental, and practical), enabling learners to engage with the full spectrum of human experience — head, heart, body, and hands — in support of a more peaceful world. While these domains are discussed separately for conceptual clarity, they often overlap. The diagram illustrates how each domain interacts with and supports the others, promoting a holistic and comprehensive approach to peace, education, and youth work. For instance, cognitive understanding (Head - Knowing) can influence practical application (Hands - Doing) and experiential embodiment (Heart & Body - Being) - all of which can contribute to an individual's processes of being and becoming a peacebuilder, who is both well-grounded and well-rounded.

- **Education *about* peace (Head – Knowing):**

This domain includes conceptual aspects such as *knowledge* and *understanding* of key themes, concepts, and theories related to peace, conflict, violence, war, and power; the drivers of change; *cognitive skills* such as analysis, prognosis, diagnosis, strategic

¹⁰ Expert Interview with Dr David Adams, September 6, 2024.

¹¹ Gittins, P. (Ed.). (2020). *A Global Security System: An Alternative to War*. 5th ed. World BEYOND War.

¹² UNESCO. (2023). *Recommendation on Education for Peace, Human Rights and Sustainable Development*.

planning, problem-solving, and decision-making; and “*critical consciousness*” defined as “the ability to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions and take action against the oppressive elements of reality.”¹³

- **Education *for* peace (Heart & Body – Being):**

This domain includes experiential and relational aspects such as *values* of love, hope, equality, freedom, human rights, democracy, and solidarity; *attitudes* of compassion, empathy, diversity, inclusivity, and respect; as well as *intrapersonal skills* like self-awareness, emotional regulation, reflective practice, and resilience; and *interpersonal skills* such as active listening, nonviolent communication, and conflict transformation. This involves *embodying* peaceful ways of being with oneself, others, and the world.

- **Education *towards* peace (Hands – Doing):**

This domain includes practical aspects, such as the *applied skills* and *behaviours* vital for effective activism and organising, including transforming conflict through nonviolent direct action, community engagement, coalition building, public speaking, project management, fundraising, and advocacy. This involves *praxis* – iterative cycles of personal and collective critical reflection and action in real-world settings.

Peace and security work is as much about mindset as it is about knowledge, skills, and attitudes. While these competencies are essential, what underpins them all is a person’s mindset.¹⁴ A focus on mindset is crucial, as it shapes our worldview, frames how we interpret experiences, perceive challenges, and understand relationships, and guides how we develop and apply our knowledge, skills, and attitudes. One may understand the benefits of peace and the costs of war, gain peacebuilding skills, and cultivate peaceful attitudes, but without a broader peace-oriented mindset — which includes a commitment to nonviolence and the abolition of war — these efforts may fall short. This mindset may come naturally to some, while others may need to work consciously to cultivate it. Nevertheless, in all cases, the prospects for achieving lasting peace and security will be undermined if one’s mindset is not aligned with the goal of ending all forms of violence and pursuing peace by peaceful means.

¹³ Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Herder and Herder.

¹⁴ Thank you to Dr Sara Habibi-Clarke for highlighting this point. While knowledge, understanding, values, attitudes, and skills relevant to peace and security work are important - all of this must be rooted in a particular mindset that pursues peace by peaceful means and rejects all forms of violence.

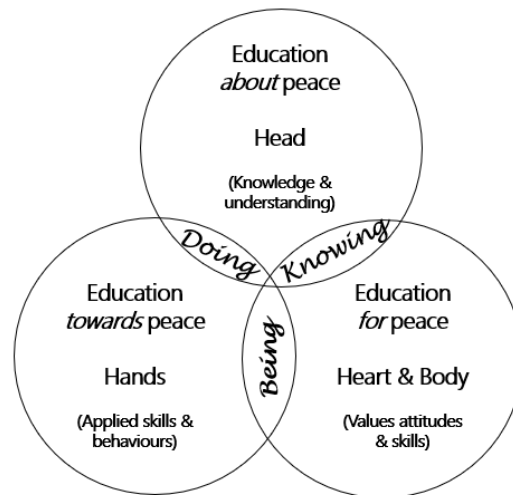


Figure 1: Visual representation of the three core domains of peace education¹⁵

In practice, peace education can take many different forms and foci and be referred to by various names. Major strands include education about/for peacebuilding, conflict resolution, disarmament and de-militarism, violence prevention, nonviolence, global citizenship, democracy, sustainable development, human rights, international law, environmental protection, gender equality, justice, Indigenous ways of knowing/being/doing, restorative practices, intercultural learning, values and ethics, and social-emotional learning.¹⁶ Some view these strands as separate, while others see them as overlapping and complementary.

In all instances, the general stance remains the same: there is no one way to think about and engage in peace education. Nonetheless, several key areas need to be addressed including the purpose (why the work is needed), principles (how to approach it), content (what to teach or explore), and pedagogy (how to teach or facilitate). These aspects should be tailored to the people involved (e.g. 'who' encompasses those designing the intervention or benefiting from it), while taking into account the nature of the conflict and considering factors of space (where) and time (when).¹⁷

Figure 2 depicts the contextualisation process with arrows that demonstrate its recursive and bidirectional nature. These processes are interrelated rather than isolated. The recommendation in this regard is to start with the question of 'why' — for it is only by gaining clarity around what the intervention aims to achieve ('the purpose') that we can begin to develop appropriate strategies (principles, content, pedagogy) to work towards this aim. When formulating these strategies, it is vital to consider the factors of space and time. Questions about peace, education, and youth work — including their contextualisation, curriculum, pedagogy, and practice — are rooted in broader questions of power, politics, and policy.

¹⁵ Adapted from Gittins, P. (2023) *Peace Education and Action for Impact*. World BEYOND War.

¹⁶ See: Jenkins, T. (2021). *Significant approaches and themes of peace education*. In Jenkins, T., & Segal de la Garza, M. (Eds.), *Mapping Peace Education*. Global Campaign for Peace Education. <https://map.peace-ed-campaign.org/approaches-themes/>

¹⁷ Gittins, P. (Forthcoming). *A Collaborative approach to developing peace education programmes*. Information Age Publishing, Peace Education Series (under contract).

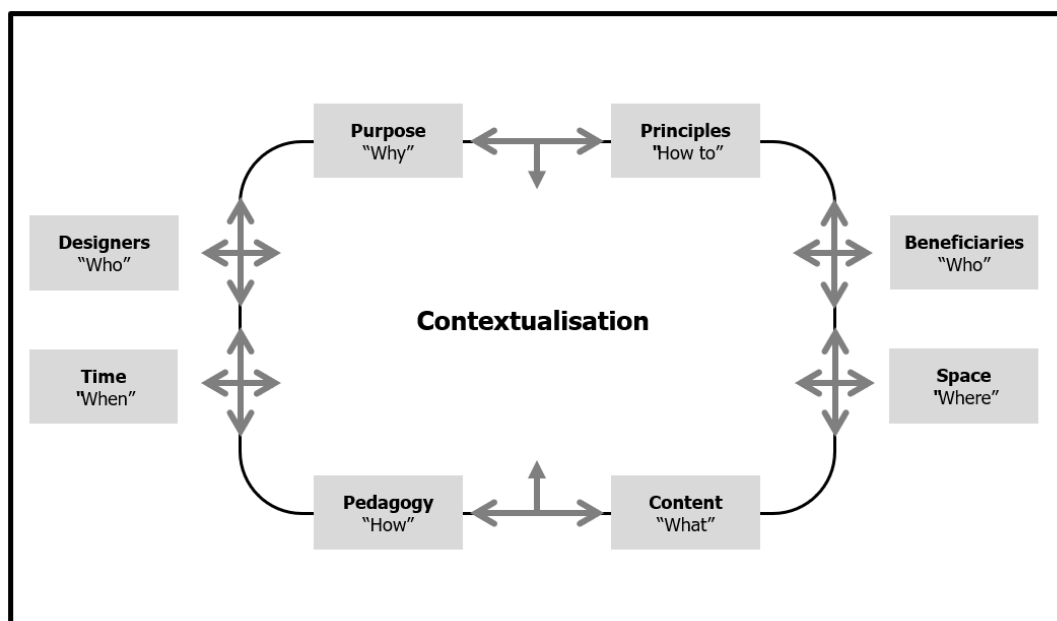


Figure 2: Visual to communicate the contextualisation process¹⁸

3.1 The purpose of peace education

Purpose refers to the overall direction, intention, or goal — essentially, what we are working towards. Like many aspects of peace education, there are no definitive answers to this, as decisions must be informed by the needs of people within the context, the available capacities and resources, and engagement with local and/or broader priorities and targets, all informed by evidence. Nevertheless, there is a shared understanding that a primary purpose of peace education is to support efforts aimed at moving towards a culture of peace and nonviolence, based on human rights, and away from a culture of war and violence. Every peace (education) effort, regardless of its participants and context, is guided by this purpose, in one way or another. Figuring out the most effective ways to pursue this shared commitment is not straightforward; it requires informed decision-making about the principles, content, and pedagogy. This leads us to the next areas for exploration, which addresses the principles.

3.2 The principles of peace education

Principles refer to the fundamental rules, values, or norms that guide the work. There is growing consensus that peace education can be anchored in a set of shared principles applicable across diverse contexts. While views on these principles vary, this study suggests aligning efforts with the *UNESCO Recommendation on Education for Peace, Human Rights, and Sustainable Development* (2023). The recommendation is one of the most comprehensive attempts to date to articulate “how education can help create lasting peace and sustainable development.” It offers guidance on developing policies, legislation, and practices, including a common language, action areas, and establishes a global consensus on guiding principles

¹⁸ Source: Adapted from Gittins, P. (2017) *Developing context-specific peace education programmes with and for host populations* (Doctoral Thesis). University of Kent.

and norms that can be clearly defined, defended, and applied to advance education for peace and justice. As a legal instrument, it requires Member States to monitor progress made. Despite this, few institutions have yet to take action based on this guidance.

A thorough review of the UNESCO Recommendation is highly recommended. Nonetheless, there is a sense in which the 14 principles can be broadly grouped as follows: universal access, rights-based approaches, equity and inclusion, solidarity and care, gender equality, cultural respect, safety and well-being, lifelong learning, knowledge creation, freedom of expression, community engagement, a global perspective, dialogue and cooperation, and global citizenship. This study supports a 'principles before practice' approach, one that allows peace educators to base their work on a broad set of established guiding principles, such as those outlined in the UNESCO Recommendation or the YPS agenda, without being restricted by a rigid agenda or specific set of practices. It is essential to recognise that, while these principles are widely acknowledged, they need to be contextualised to ensure they are fit for purpose.

3.3 The content of peace education

Content refers to the topics, themes, and issues explored in educational endeavours. Ideally, peace education enables people to learn about and develop the kinds of mindsets, knowledges, attitudes, and skills needed to understand and address threats to peace and security in their life-time, while supporting them to achieve success in both life and work. In a VUCA world — characterised by Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, and Ambiguity — the argument here is that the content should be both timely and timeless, based on the assumption that peace, education, and youth work must continually evolve to address the needs of humanity, all living beings, and the planet's ecosystems in a rapidly changing world.

- **Timeless topics** are those that have always been and will continue to be important to engage with, regardless of space and time.
- **Timely topics** are those that are particularly important to engage with today, in light of contemporary opportunities and challenges.

Table 1: Some examples of timeless and timely topics.

Note: This list is not exhaustive, and some topics may overlap.

Timeless topics	Timely topics
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conflict: Understanding conflict and ways to deal it with without violence. • Peace: Understanding and cultivating negative and positive peace.¹⁹ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Culture of war and peace: Addressing the root causes of large-scale organised violence, and peaceful alternatives. • Systems thinking. Interconnectedness of social, economic, political, environmental,

¹⁹ Galtung, J. (1969). *Violence, Peace, and Peace Research*. Journal of Peace Research, vol. 6, no. 3, pp. 167-191.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Violence: Understanding direct, structural, and cultural violence and the principles, tactics, and effectiveness of nonviolence.²⁰ • Power: Use/misuse of power, drawing on ideas of 'power over,' 'power within,' 'power with,' and 'power to'. • Democratic participation. Understanding and engaging in democratic decision-making processes. • Cultural competence: Learning about and engaging with diverse cultures. • Sustainability: Learning to live together in sustainable ways. • Mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS): Addressing trauma, mental health, and well-being. • Cooperation and collaboration: Working together across generations, cultures, sectors, and disciplines. • Relationships: Healthy and just relationships with self, others, and nature. • Grit and resilience: The ability not recover from difficulties and adapt to change, while staying focused on longer-term goals. 	<p>and technological systems, exploring how they inform and influence one another.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ecological crisis, including climate crisis: Addressing environmental degradation, the escalating threat of climate collapse, and preventative strategies. • Media literacy. Examining how mainstream and alternative media can be used to influence war, conflict, and peace, including misinformation, disinformation, malinformation, propaganda or peace journalism. • Digital literacy: Skills to critically evaluate and navigate the digital landscape, including misinformation, disinformation, malinformation, and propaganda. • Emerging technologies: Exploring the science, ethics, and applications of emerging technologies — such as artificial intelligence, augmented and virtual reality, biotechnology, drones, and cybersecurity — and their influence on peace and war. • Human rights. Understanding, promoting, upholding, and defending human rights • Prejudice, stereotypes, & bias: Detecting, preventing, and combating all forms of discrimination including addressing hate speech and hate crime.
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The scope of timely and timeless topics covered in peace education can be broad, exploring the inner and outer dimensions. It ranges across micro (interpersonal and intergroup), meso (groups, organisations, communities), to macro (national, international, transnational, and environmental) levels, extending from the human psyche to the entire universe. This includes various levels: individual, community, state, region, globe, and cosmos (see Figure 4).

In practice, peace education can take many forms that generally fall into two main categories. Some approaches focus more on exploring psycho-social factors, addressing issues such as peace, conflict, violence, and power at the personal, relational, familial, group, organisational, and community levels. Other approaches focus more on structural, cultural, and environmental factors, engaging with larger systems and dynamics such as geopolitical contexts, the military-industrial-media-academia complex (MIMAC), and processes of ecological peace.

²⁰ Galtung, J. (1969).

Examples of this work could include interventions aimed at enhancing mental health and emotional intelligence, as well as transforming conflicts through nonviolent communication and action. Other efforts might focus on strengthening intercultural and interreligious dialogue, promoting social cohesion, and addressing intolerance, bigotry, and other forms of discrimination. Additionally, peace education can contribute to combating genocide, addressing individual, collective, and intergenerational trauma, and challenging gender-based violence, toxic masculinity, and patriarchy. It may also involve strengthening civic participation, advocating for restorative justice, preventing and countering violent extremism, promoting planetary stewardship, and working toward the abolition of war.

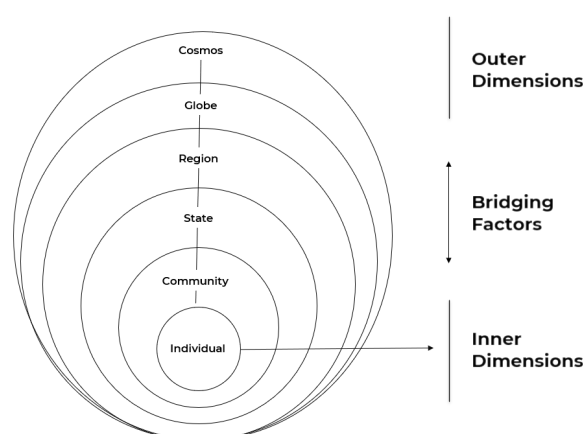


Figure 4: Levels of engagement in peace education: From the individual to the cosmos

Figure 4 highlights how bridging factors influence and are influenced by both inner and outer contexts. These factors may involve *relational practices* (e.g., collaboration and coordinated efforts across different spaces, places, and sectors, including multi-issue, multi-lateral, multi-stakeholder, and multi-generational cooperation), as well as *formal and informal processes* (e.g., purpose, process, outcomes, leadership, oversight, political commitments, legal frameworks, contextualisation strategies, local ownership and agency, resourcing, research, communications, and monitoring and evaluation systems). The challenge lies in finding the right balance between inner and outer work, between the personal and the political, in ways that link with broader structural, cultural, and environmental processes to promote wider reach and impact while keeping human/local agency and relational practices at the core.²¹

Many competencies developed through peace education — such as critical thinking, systems thinking, needs analysis, reflective practice, problem-solving, collaborative enquiry, creativity, communication, teamwork, and leadership skills — are transferable and in high demand among today's employers. By engaging with a mix of timeless and timely topics, peace education can help people to learn and apply both the 'hard' (technical/analytical) and 'soft' (psych-social) skills helpful for effective peacebuilding in the 21st century, while also supporting them in their personal lives and work — key goals of education and youth work.

²¹ Many organisations and individuals are carrying out important work aimed at taking up this important yet difficult challenge. See, for example, Jenkins, T. (2021). Critical comprehensive peace education: Finding a pedagogical nexus for personal, structural and cultural change. In Abdi, A. & Misiaszek, G. (Eds.) (2021). Palgrave Handbook on Critical Theories of Education. Palgrave.

3.4 The pedagogy of peace education

Pedagogy refers to the approaches, methods, and structure used to engage content and issues in educational endeavours. There is broad agreement that the 'how' of peace education is just as important as the 'what'.²² This means that just as much emphasis and thoughtful consideration should be given to the learning journey and process itself ('the means') as to the content being taught and the intended destination and outcomes ('the ends').

Peace education should be open-ended and not rely on one single approach. Instead, it can draw on a diaspora of traditional and transformative approaches to facilitate learning. These approaches include, but are not limited to, reflective practice, mindfulness, contemplative exercises, focussing activities, group work experiences, dialogue processes, trust-building approaches, arts-based strategies, role plays, simulations, cultural exchanges, youth parliaments, exhibitions, cultural immersions, service and project-based learning, storytelling, and peer learning and mediation. When appropriate, these approaches should model and promote democratic decision-making, participatory inquiry, peaceful coexistence, and both individual and collective action.²³ They should also promote inclusive learning environments that practice diversity, inclusion, tolerance, and mutual respect. Additionally, they should accommodate various learning styles — such as visual, auditory, and kinaesthetic — and be open to engaging multiple senses to support a more holistic way of thinking about education.

Common characteristics of pedagogies for peace may include:²⁴

- **Inner and outer dimensions:** It explores the internal and external worlds of individuals and their interactions (online and in the physical world) with their environment, promoting empathy and compassion toward themselves, others, and nature.
- **Holistic approach:** It combines resistance and regeneration to protect, restore, and enhance the well-being of humans and the environment²⁵ while acknowledging their interdependence in promoting ecological systems, biodiversity, and sustainability.²⁶
- **Comprehensive approach:** It recognises that comprehensive peace includes both negative peace and positive peace, compromising both the absence of war and direct physical violence, as well as structural and cultural violence.²⁷
- **Transformational:** It supports the development of the whole person, engaging with the rationale and cognitive dimensions (knowing – head), as well as the intuitive, embodied, emotional, relational, and spiritual aspects of learning (being – heart and body), along with the behavioural, experiential, and practical dimensions (doing – hands).
- **Relationship-driven:** It prioritises the development of sustainable, just, and right relationships between humanity and the planet.

²² Expert Interview with Joakim Arnøy, August 27, 2024.

²³ Expert Interview with Dr Felisa Tibbitts, 20 August, 2024.

²⁴ Adapted from Gittins, P. (2023) *Peace Education and Action for Impact*. World BEYOND War.

²⁵ Expert Interview with Dr Felisa Tibbitts, 20 August, 2024.

²⁶ The UN Human Rights Council Resolution 48/13 (2021) and the UN General Assembly Resolution A/RES/76/300 (2022) acknowledge the "right to a healthy environment."

²⁷ Galtung, J. (1964). *An Editorial*. Journal of Peace Research, 1(1), 1-4.

- **Value-laden:** It is guided by core values (human rights, democracy, rule of law, peace, equity, and love), with policy and practice decisions being shaped by these values.
- **Action-oriented:** It is driven by pragmatic goals that connect groups and individuals, engaging them in processes that empower and enable them to work towards understanding and transforming the world.
- **People and human-centred:** It places individuals at the centre, focussing on their inherent dignity and rights, as well as their safety, security, needs, and talents.²⁸
- **Appropriate environments and infrastructures:** It aims to create 'safe,' 'brave,' 'dialogic,' and 'youth-friendly' spaces and places,²⁹ where youth can express themselves, exchange ideas, and be present with themselves and others.
- **Inclusivity and diversity:** It seeks to ensure that all young people are included, recognising and valuing diverse backgrounds, and addressing barriers to participation.
- **Intersectionality:** It strengthens capacities to recognise intersectionality and the interconnectedness of systems (social, economic, and political etc) in shaping peace.
- **Interdisciplinarity:** It should draw from whichever 'discipline' or field might be helpful for cultivating a culture of peace and nonviolence.³⁰
- **Critical:** It seeks to raise critical consciousness, questioning existing norms and challenging taken-for-granted practices that undermine peace and security.

Underpinning all this are two key ideas. First, peace education involving youth should be grounded in "the everyday lives of young people."³¹ This involves situated learning that sees peace not as an abstract concept, but as something tangible and immediately relevant to their lives, relationships, and the world around them.³² It could involve exploring how peace, conflict, violence, and related issues look, feel, and are embodied and experienced in their daily interactions.³³ Additionally, it may entail looking into the past, present, and into the future — exploring historical events, current issues, and areas for development.

The second key idea is that young people should be encouraged and supported to critically reflect on and take action to address the issues that affect them. Ideally, this begins by meeting young people 'where they are at,' in the 'here and now,' and then working with them to "imagine alternatives" and develop strategies that promote learning and growth through iterative cycles of critical reflection, dialogue, and action.³⁴ Echoing Elsie Boulding's assertion that "we cannot work for a world we cannot imagine," Dr. Paul Galles, a Luxembourg politician and member of the Parliamentary Assembly of the CoE (PACE), argued that "imagination" should be a key theme in peace, education, and youth work. He referred to the notion of "preparing for the future by imagining it" as a framework and pedagogical tool that can be

²⁸ The phrase 'in the centre' is preferred over 'at the centre' to challenge traditional hierarchies and binaries among teachers/students, educators/learners, youth/adults, as well as between humans, other living beings, and nature. The aim is to promote an inclusive approach in which each element forms and informs the others.

²⁹ Expert Interviews with Dr Sara Habibi-Clarke (August 22, 2024), Joakim Arnøy (August 27, 2024), Dr. Michael Ogunnusi (October 1, 2024), and Dr. Andrew Boyd (October 8, 2024).

³⁰ To note: Peace education, like peace and conflict studies in general, has primarily drawn from sociology, political science, and critical pedagogy, with less known about or engagement with other disciplines.

³¹ Expert Interviews with Dr. Celina Del Felice, August 22, 2024.

³² Expert Interviews with Dr. Vanessa Tinker (August 28, 2024) and Patricia Garcia (October 1, 2024).

³³ Expert Interview with Dr. Michael Ogunnusi, October 1, 2024.

³⁴ Expert Interview with Dr. Edward Brantmeier, September 2, 2024.

used to help young people envision more viable pathways for transitioning from a culture of war and violence to one of peace and non-violence based on human rights.³⁵

In summary, all four key elements — **purpose**, **principles**, **content**, and **pedagogy** — require thoughtful and deliberate decision-making. These and other questions can help guide this process: What purpose should peace education pursue? What principles should guide its efforts? And what content and pedagogy should be used to work towards these goals? There is no one answer to these questions: peace education, like peace and youth work in general, cannot be reduced to standardised procedures or prescriptive formulas for ‘what works best’.

While the analysis in this study provides guidance on the right kinds of questions to consider and themes to address in peace education and YPS-related efforts, they should not be regarded as the only options. Peace education should continually evolve, remaining open to change as people, communities, conflicts, and the planet continue to change. In short, it is vital to maintain a rigid focus on providing opportunities for everyone, everywhere, to access peace education, while remaining flexible about what it should look like in each context.

³⁵ Expert Interview with Dr. Paul Galles, October 16, 2024.

4. PEACE EDUCATION IN NON-FORMAL LEARNING AND YOUTH WORK

This section offers an overview of the political, policy, and programmatic contexts that motivate, inform, and underpin the study. It begins by assessing the progress made, with special attention to relevant standards and documents, and then discusses some current gaps in the field. The next section presents a proposal outlining what should be included in the recommendation to begin to build on ongoing work and address these gaps.

4.1 Progress made

A variety of standards and documents have been adopted, by key organisations, such as the CoE, UN, and UNESCO, that relate to peace education and YPS-related efforts. The table below introduces and describes some of the most important ones.

Year	Title / Information about the standard or text	Institution
2023	Recommendation on Education for Peace, Human Rights and Sustainable Development Described as "the only global standard-setting instrument that lays out how education should be used to bring about lasting peace and foster human development," this document emphasises integrating peace education into curricula worldwide to cultivate a culture of nonviolence, tolerance, and respect for human rights.	UNESCO
2023	Motion for a resolution, Doc (2023) 15821 on the role of the Council of Europe in preventing conflicts, restoring credibility of international institutions and promoting global peace This study affirms that "the CoE has a pivotal role in conflict prevention, rebuilding the credibility of international institutions, and fostering global peace."	CoE PACE
2023	A New Agenda for Peace This is "an action-oriented framework that addresses contemporary challenges to peace and security through a comprehensive approach that includes conflict prevention, conflict resolution, and peacebuilding."	UN
2021	Resolution (2021) 2378 on strengthening the role of young people in the prevention and resolution of conflicts This resolution emphasises that "young people play an essential role in promoting peace, security, and human rights."	CoE PACE
2021	Security Council Resolution 2601 (UNSCR 2601) The resolution "strongly condemns the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict and calls for effective measures to prevent violations against children in conflict situations."	UN
2020	Security Council Resolution 2535 (UNSCR 2535) This resolution "reaffirms the critical role of youth in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, calling for enhanced support for youth-led initiatives and their active engagement in peacebuilding efforts."	UN
2021	We Are Here: An Integrated Approach to Youth-Inclusive Peace Processes Global Policy Paper, building on UNSCR 2250 and 2149, highlighting the "positive roles young people play in shaping political and peace processes".	UN
2020	Security Council Resolution 2535	UN

Year	Title / Information about the standard or text	Institution
	This resolution "urges Member States to ensure the meaningful participation of youth in peacebuilding and conflict prevention, and to support their efforts to contribute to lasting peace."	
2018	Security Council Resolution 2419 (UNSCR 2419) This resolution "stresses the importance of including youth in peace processes and encourages Member States to ensure that youth perspectives are considered in peace negotiations and the implementation of peace agreements."	UN
2017	Human Rights Council Resolution 35/28 This resolution "affirms that peace is a vital requirement for the full enjoyment of all human rights by all."	UN
2016	Declaration on the Right to Peace This declaration "affirms that everyone has the right to enjoy peace such that all human rights are promoted and protected." It recognises "the right to live in peace, free from conflict, and to participate in peacebuilding efforts."	UN
2015	Missing Peace: Independent Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security This study demonstrates "young people's positive role in sustaining peace. It proposes concrete recommendations for the peace and security community to work with young people in new ways" summarised as "Invest, Involve, and Partner."	UN
2015	Security Council Resolution 2250 (UNSCR 2250) The first resolution that "recognizes the important role that young people play in the promotion and maintenance of international peace and security and calls for their increased participation in conflict prevention, peacebuilding, and conflict resolution."	UN
2015	Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) - Agenda 2030 A collection of 17 Global Goals adopted by the UN that provide a "shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future" including SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions), SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 4.7 understood as peace education.	UN
2015	Youth Strategy 2030 This strategy aims to "empower young people to realize their full potential and to contribute to the realization of human rights, peace, and security." It emphasizes "the active engagement, participation, and leadership of youth in all areas of development, peace, and security."	UN
2010	Recommendation CM/Rec (2010)10 on the role of women and men in conflict prevention and resolution and in peace building This recommendation urges members States "to promote gender equality in conflict prevention, resolution, and peace-building processes."	CoE PACE
2010	Recommendation CM/Rec (2010)7 on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education This charter "provides a framework for promoting democratic citizenship and human rights education, emphasizing the essential role of education in fostering democracy, peace, and respect for human rights."	CoE CM
2006	Resolution on the Recognition of the Value of Non-Formal and Informal Learning	Council of the

Year	Title / Information about the standard or text	Institution
	This resolution "highlights the importance of non-formal and informal learning in fostering personal development, social inclusion, and active citizenship. It underscores the need for better recognition and validation of these learning experiences within the European youth field."	European Union
2003	Recommendation CM/Rec (2003)8 on the Promotion and Recognition of Non-formal learning/Learning This recommendation "emphasizes the value of non-formal learning and learning in the personal development of young people, calling for its promotion and recognition as essential for lifelong learning."	CoE CM
1999	Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace This declaration "reaffirms the commitment to fostering a culture of peace through education, dialogue, and cooperation," emphasizing the need to 'promote peace, tolerance, and understanding at all levels of society.'"	UN
1999	The Hague Agenda for Peace and Justice for the 21st Century This agenda, developed by NGOs and endorsed by the UN, argues for "a comprehensive approach to peace and justice," calling for 'strengthened efforts in peace education and the promotion of human rights globally.'	NGOs/UN
1992	Agenda for Peace This "is an action programme for the UN to address the challenges of conflict in the post-Cold War world, including preventive diplomacy, peacemaking, peacekeeping, and post-conflict peacebuilding."	UN
Various	National Action Plans (NAPs) on Youth, Peace, and Security Several countries have developed NAPs to operationalise the YPS agenda. These plans focus on youth engagement in peace processes, conflict prevention, and the protection of young people in conflict-affected areas.	Member States

Numerous other texts and initiatives within the CoE and the EU address peace education and YPS-related issues, even if they do not explicitly mention them by name. These include, but are not limited to, The CoE [Education Strategy 2024-2030](#), the [Reykjavík Declaration](#), the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) [annual report](#) (2024): impact on the Middle East conflict on the youth and pupils/students in schools, the 2021 [statement](#) on preventing and combating ultranationalistic and racist hate speech and hate-motivated violence in relation to confrontations and unresolved conflicts in Europe, the ECRI's [General Policy Recommendation No. 10](#) on combating racism and racial discrimination in and through school education (2022), the ECRI's [General Policy Recommendation No. 9](#) on preventing and combating antisemitism (2016), and [recommendation 32](#) in ECRI's [General Policy Recommendation No. 5](#) on combating anti-Muslim racism and discrimination (2013).

Outside of the COE, notable examples include the [United Network of Young Peacebuilders \(UNOY\) Strategy for 2021-25](#), the [United Nations Alliance of Civilizations \(UNAOC\) Plan of Action for 2024-2026](#) and the [KAICIID Strategic Plan 2024-2027](#). The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) also has a number of documents outlining its commitments to the YPS agenda including the [1975 Helsinki Final Act](#), The 2014 Basel Ministerial Council "[Declaration on Youth](#)" The 2015 Belgrade Ministerial Council "[Declaration on Youth and Security](#)", and The 2018 Milan Ministerial Council "[Declaration on the Role of Youth in Contributing to Peace and Security Efforts](#)" among others.

Much can be said about the above. Three points are addressed here.

First, these standards and documents vary, but they all affirm the international community's recognition that youth involvement in peace education and conflict transformation efforts is crucial for advancing peace, security, human rights, and sustainable development. They also provide valuable guidance to help Member States effectively translate policy into practice.³⁶

Second, gaps persist between policy and practice. While there is widespread support for regionally and globally agreed legal instruments, standards, and texts — such as CoE Parliamentary Assembly *Resolution 2378 (2021)*; *UNESCO's Recommendations on Education for Peace, Human Rights, and Sustainable Development (2023)*; the *UN Security Council Resolutions on Youth, Peace, and Security (YPS)* including *UNSCR 2250 (2015)*, *UNSCR 2419 (2018)*, and *UNSCR 2535 (2020)* — many governments, particularly in Europe, have been slow to implement them at national and local levels. Most have not translated these regional and global policies into concrete, actionable steps, with many lacking national action plans or related strategies — Finland being a notable exception with its YPS national action plan.

Third, there is no Committee of Ministers' Recommendation specifically addressing peace education within non-formal learning and youth work. However, there is precedent within the CoE for advancing the implementation of the YPS agenda and promoting youth-inclusive peacebuilding processes. For instance, the CoE Parliamentary Assembly *Resolution 2378 (2021)* urges Member States to fulfil their commitments to the YPS agenda by strengthening the role of young people in the prevention and resolution of conflicts.

Reviewing progress is helpful because it gives a sense of what is possible, what has been accomplished so far, and what still requires attention. The following focuses on the latter.

4.2 Current gaps

While work on the theoretical, methodological, and practical aspects of peace education and YPS-related efforts continue, there are sufficient grounds to improve this work in several areas. This section discusses six current gaps in the field that require further attention.

The need to address 'who' participates in peace education and 'how'

Young people can take on multiple roles in peace education and YPS-related efforts, the main ones being 'beneficiaries' and 'partners.' As beneficiaries, they participate in and benefit from policy, practice, and research efforts (the 'with' aspect of the work). As partners, they are meaningfully included in designing, delivering, evaluating, or leading these initiatives (the 'by' aspect). Though these roles differ, they may overlap. Acknowledging notable progress, there is an urgent need to develop this work further in at least two key areas.

³⁶ For example: Global Coalition on Youth, Peace, and Security (2022). *Implementing the Youth, Peace and Security Agenda at Country-level: A Guide for Public Officials*. New York: Office of the UN Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth.

First, the work can be improved in terms of *'who'* participates, ensuring that a diverse range of young people benefit from peace education and YPS-related efforts. Policy and research consistently highlight the importance of creating inclusive spaces for engaging diverse young people in peace and security-related activities equally, regardless of their age, background, or context — be it war, armed conflict, violence-affected, deeply divided, fragile, or relatively peaceful settings.³⁷ However, there is a tendency to "preach to the converted"³⁸ and rely on "self-selecting"³⁹ participants, engaging the "usual suspects". Consequently, much more can be done to reach out to and engage with a broader spectrum of young people, particularly those most in need from both rural and urban areas. This includes "hard-to-reach, vulnerable, and at-risk" groups, such as Roma, Traveller, and LGBTIQ+ communities.⁴⁰

Second, the work can be improved in terms of *'how'* young people participate. Most of the research, theory, policy, and practice related to peace education and other YPS-related efforts is done *about, to, or for* young people, rather than *with* and *by* them.⁴¹ While youth are increasingly being asked to give their opinions, tell their stories, and participate in peace and security activities, their involvement in initiating, designing, implanting, evaluating, or leading these efforts is frequently the exception rather than the norm.⁴² Too often, young people are positioned as passive recipients rather than active partners. It is crucial to move beyond viewing youth as mere beneficiaries, subjects of others' work, or recipients of adult-imposed solutions, and to instead recognise, support, and value their roles as leaders, co-creators, designers, multipliers, scholars, authors, and collaborators.

The implications of this are far-reaching, with one of them being the need to depart from and broaden the traditional ways in which the field approaches policy, practice, research, theory, and scholarship involving young people. At its core, it is about democracy — nurturing spaces for young people to influence decisions that affect their lives and others — and agency — providing opportunities for young people to express their agency in diverse ways and ensuring they are engaged as active subjects rather than passive objects. Meaningful participation is key; it is about people being accountable, engaged, and invested in the process.

The need for a holistic and comprehensive approach

Peace education and YPS-related efforts must constantly adapt to meet the needs of humans, all living beings, the planet, and even the cosmos. This study advocates for a holistic and comprehensive approach that centres on relationships, which have both inner and outer dimensions (See Figure 3):

³⁷ Expert Interview with Johan Friestedt, September 5, 2024.

³⁸ Expert Interview with Dr. Sara Habibi-Clarke, August 22, 2024.

³⁹ Expert Interview with Anja Jokić, August 27, 2024.

⁴⁰ Expert Interview with Dr. Wolfram Bechtel, September 5, 2024.

⁴¹ See also: Gittins, P. (2020). *The Role of Youth in Peace and Security*. In Gittins, P. (Ed.) *A Global Security System: An Alternative to War*. 5th ed. World BEYOND War.

⁴² Expert Interview with Angela Longo, August 30, 2024.

- **Inner dimensions** refer to the internal processes (intrapersonal, rational, cognitive, psychological, emotional, spiritual, embodied, and experiential) taking place within an individual's inner world.
- **Outer dimensions** refer to the external, relational, processes (interpersonal, sociological, spiritual, cultural, structural, and environmental) occurring in the broader outer world.

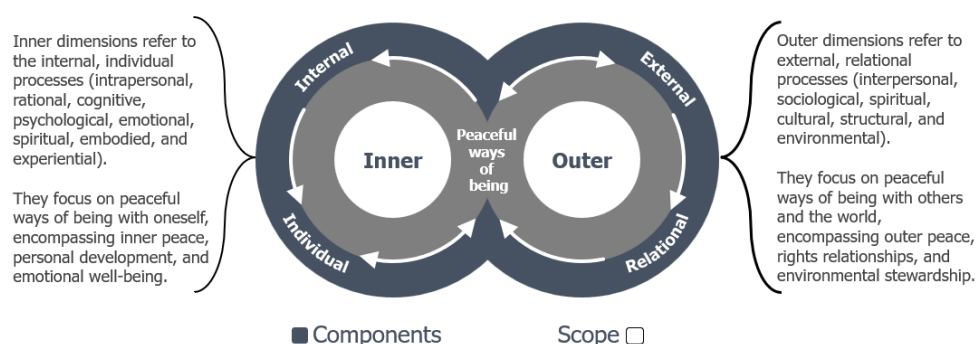


Figure 3: Interweaving inner and outer dimensions of a holistic and comprehensive approach to peace, education, and youth work

Both dimensions are important. On one hand, there is a growing recognition that processes conducive to cultivating inner peace — such as mindfulness, meditation, yoga, journaling, visualisation, gratitude, and other reflective, contemplative, and spiritual practices — can significantly contribute to broader relational, structural, and cultural change. On the other hand, the wider systems and context in which individuals live and work can shape their agency and actions related to outer peace. Ideally, peace education should weave together the inner and outer dimensions, linking individual and relational processes to promote the development of “peaceful ways of being with self, others, and the wider world.”⁴³

Underpinning the holistic and comprehensive approach developed here are the following ideas:

- **Whole-person development:** it promotes education and growth of the whole person, integrating the rationale, intuitive, embodied, emotional, relational, spiritual, ethical, cultural, behavioural, experiential, and practical dimensions of peace work.
- **Peace by peaceful means.** it recognises that sustainable peace and security for everyone cannot be achieved through war and militarism. This understanding is critical, as war and armed conflict are among the greatest threats to peace. However, it can be challenging for some, because it requires engaging with both negative and positive peace, addressing and rejecting all forms of violence, and committing to nonviolence.

⁴³ In this context, “wider world” refers to our relationship with all living beings, the planet, and the cosmos.

- **Human and ecological flourishing:** It acknowledges the inextricable link between human flourishing and ecological flourishing, recognising that environmental violence and climate change affect all living beings, not only our own species.

The holistic and comprehensive approach is rooted in human rights but also acknowledges that, while prioritising individuals over states and institutions can have benefits, placing people at the centre can sometimes go too far. While it is indeed important — and necessary — to include human-centred, human security, youth-led, intergenerational, and similar approaches that may prioritise humans, finding the right balance between advancing human rights, needs, and dignity while respecting planetary boundaries is equally important.

Given our shared existence on Earth, a unifying vision that prioritises ecocentrism over egocentrism is essential, recognising humanity as an integral part of the natural world rather than separate from it. Central to this approach is the development of new relationships — a reimagining of peace, education, and youth work that is accountable to and engages with people, other living beings, and nature. This perspective situates the agenda within a broader context that is not confined to work done *with*, *by*, or *for* humans. Instead, it addresses the often interconnected issues, challenges, and opportunities related to peace, conflict, and security among humans, ecosystems, and the natural world.

This unifying approach encourages moving beyond a triangular, hierarchical, human-first perspective towards more circular, inclusive, and interconnected ways of thinking, being, and acting (see Figure 5). Such an approach is essential for restoring balance and ensuring the survival and flourishing of both humans and ecological systems. It is *inclusionary* because it seeks the well-being of all life forms, and *relational* because it centres the interconnectedness between humanity and nature. By shifting focus away from purely human interests, it places relationality among all life forms and the natural world at the heart of our thinking. In this context, it is important to note that while humans depend on nature, nature does not rely entirely on us — Earth will continue to support diverse life even without humanity.

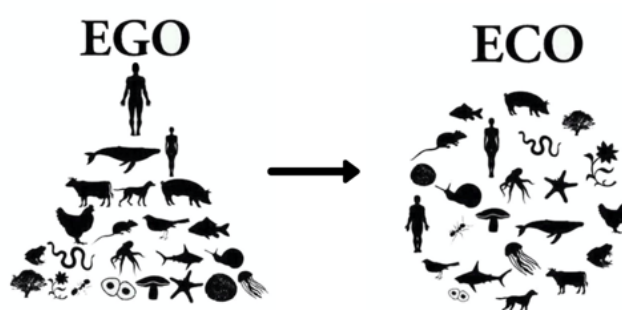


Figure 5: From Ego to Ecocentrism: Towards a unifying approach⁴⁴

⁴⁴ Thank you to Rukmini Iyer for her valuable advice, our back-and-forth communications on this theme, and for sharing the image with the author and granting permission for its use.

The particular way of thinking about peace, education, and youth work presented here is rooted in the work of others and draws on the agreed-upon language, concepts, and frameworks established by states, leading organisations, and scholars. It encompasses key ideas related to right relationships, global citizenship, and planetary boundaries.⁴⁵

However, peace education faces its own set of challenges. It is often critiqued on the grounds that it is too focused on the rational and cognitive aspects of learning, too focused on either negative or positive peace without addressing the connections between preventing war and direct violence and the presence of positive peace with justice, and too focused on human activity at the expense of the protection and well-being of all living beings and nature.

The need to move beyond one-size-fits-all approaches

Understandings of peace varies greatly across space, time, cultures, and individuals. This highlights the need to avoid a one-size-fits-all approach to peace, education, or youth work. Different things work for different people, in different contexts, at different times. for different reasons. Peace education is contextualised when it is designed to fit the needs of the people and context involved, taking into account factors such as 'space' (the dynamics of groups and conflict), 'time' (when the intervention occurs), and 'place' (where the intervention occurs). This has implications for policy and practice. Because there are "many peaces"⁴⁶ and 'many violences,' attention should be directed towards the co-creation and experimentation with a plurality of theories, models, and practices of peace education-in-context⁴⁷ rather than relying on prescribed theories, models, or templates intended for application in all situations.

Context-specific peace education is essential, but it can be challenging. A guiding question in this context might be: What specific approach to peace education might be most helpful for this particular group, considering their needs, issues, and resources at this particular moment ('the time aspect') and within the particular setting where the intervention will take place ('the space/place aspect')? There are many ways to address these questions, one of the most effective being to ask the people for whom the intervention is being designed.

Peace education efforts designed with and by young people are more likely to address the needs of youth and the contexts where they live. Ideally, this involves opening up a dialogue, listening to, and working collaboratively with, youth and local populations to negotiate and determine what is most helpful for their specific situations. Key here is not so much the outcomes of this process but the collective work which goes into making decisions collaboratively. At a minimum, those designing peace and youth work efforts should conduct background research to understand these dynamics and guide decisions about what needs to

⁴⁵ See: UNESCO (2023). *Recommendation on Education for Peace, Human Rights and Sustainable Development*. See also: Reardon, B. (2021). *Comprehensive peace education: Educating for global responsibility* (2021 edition). Peace Knowledge Press; and Johan Rockström and colleague's work on "planetary boundaries", outlined in: Rockström, J. et al (2009). A safe operating space for humanity. *Nature*, 461, 472–475.

⁴⁶ See: Dietrich, W. & Sützl, W. (1997). *A Call for Many Peaces*.

⁴⁷ Gittins, P. (2017) *Developing context-specific peace education programmes with and for host populations* (Doctoral Thesis). University of Kent.

be done and how. In all cases, those responsible for designing the intervention, whether they are researchers or practitioners, or both, should strive to become “reflective practitioners” and “critical design experts”.⁴⁸ This involves developing the capacity to critically reflect on their own process of being and becoming, peace and youth workers, as well as engaging with often taken-for-granted assumptions about language and terms used, how peace is conceptualised and understood, as well as what it means to embody, experience, live, and build peace.⁴⁹

In practice, there is a tendency within peace, education and YPS-related work to rely on top-down, externally imposed models and knowledge. Despite recent scholarly advancements calling for more youth-led, contextual, local, hybrid, adaptive, decolonial, indigenous, transrational, critical, and post-critical approaches to peace, education, and related efforts, a significant gap remains between rhetoric and reality. This is a pattern that repeats itself across the fields of peacebuilding, humanitarian aid, and youth work more generally.

Top-down approaches to peace education and YPS-related work can be problematic, not only because the interventions designed may reflect the ideas and ideologies of the creators — who are typically disconnected from the local context — but also because they can lead to misunderstandings, resistance, and pushback from local communities that are often excluded from the design process. This dynamic can waste resources, erode trust between local and external actors, and undermine local agency, customs, and values, all of which are crucial for the success of peace, security, education, and youth work initiatives. Consequently, many peace education and YPS-related interventions may be failed by design, as they do not adequately engage with and address the needs and priorities of the host populations.

The need to embed peace education in non-formal learning and all learning spaces

Embedding peace education across non-formal learning spaces is *necessary* because young people spend significant time outside formal education in settings like youth clubs, community centres, and cultural venues. Non-formal learning and youth work spaces often reach hard-to-reach, disadvantaged, and at-risk groups more effectively than formal education.⁵⁰ They are particularly effective at leveraging the arts, valuing and celebrating the contributions of actors and institutions in these spaces, and preserving intangible cultural heritage, traditions, and know-how transmitted from generation to generation.⁵¹ These spaces are often key drivers of innovation, influencing other fields including formal education, as they offer “less control”, “more freedom”, and a “greater sense of privacy”⁵² than traditional schooling, enabling creative and collaborative experimentation in youth work practice. By centring work around young people’s interests, non-formal learning and youth work spaces can provide young people with opportunities to explore everyday challenges they face, such as peace and conflict with themselves and others, which may not always be addressed in formal education.

⁴⁸ See Schön's (1983) work on reflective practice and Bekerman & Zembylas's (2014) ideas about critical design experts.

⁴⁹ Gittins, P., Som, C. (2023). *Peaceful ways of being with self*. In Peace-building Practitioner Textbook. Women Peace Makers.

⁵⁰ Expert Interview with Davide Capecchi, October 8, 2024.

⁵¹ Expert Interview with Lydia Ruprecht, October 10, 2024.

⁵² Expert Interviews with Dr. Edward Brantmeier (September 2, 2024), Lydia Ruprecht (October 10, 2024), and Dr. Paul Galles (October 16, 2024).

Those involved in peace education face challenges similar to those involved non-formal learning and youth work, including resource scarcity and mobilisation, professional development and institutional capacity building, as well as issues related to engagement and retention, recognition and visibility, and proving and improving impact. Those interested in peace education and YPS-related efforts must also rise to the challenge of being competent in both peace work and youth work, finding ways to bring these two fields together in mutually productive and complementary ways. The notion of 'double engagement,' referring to the interplay between 'peace work in youth work' and 'youth work in peace work', emerged during the interviews. Some interviewees stressed the need to better prepare youth workers and educators to facilitate discussions with young people around controversial topics such as peace, conflict, and war, while others focussed on the importance of equipping peace educators and peacebuilders to understand and engage more effectively with young people.⁵³

Just as many peace educators, peacebuilders, and peacebuilding-focused organisations lack familiarity with the fundamentals of non-formal learning and youth work, educators, youth workers, and youth-focused organisations are often unaware of the theories and practices of peace education and peacebuilding. It is critical to build the capacity of the education (non-formal, informal, and formal) and youth work sectors to develop a broad, holistic understanding of peace education and peacebuilding, along with specialised skills to support young people's meaningful engagement in peace and security-related processes. Similarly, it is vital to strengthen the peace education and peacebuilding community's understanding of the science, art, and ethics of non-formal learning and youth work politics, policy, and practice.

While peace education in non-formal learning settings is necessary, it alone is not sufficient to achieve widespread impact. Non-formal learning spaces often reach only a limited segment of the youth population, leaving others underserved, and typically lack the consistency, systemic support, and resources provided by formal education systems. To make peace education accessible to all young people, it must be embedded into all educational and cultural settings,⁵⁴ and be supported by robust policies and programmes.

In this context, three points are worth noting: first, all educational interventions have an impact — either positive or negative. Second, as has been widely discussed, schools can be both part of the problem and part of the solution, contributing to direct, structural, and cultural violence, either facilitating or hindering peacekeeping, peacemaking, and peacebuilding efforts, or creating spaces that protect young people from violence while supporting their development as agents of peace.⁵⁵ Third, the approach to peace education and youth work outlined in this document differs significantly from traditional approaches to formal education, globally, which often contributes more to "destructive conflict" than to "constructive conflict"

⁵³ Expert Interviews with Paul Klahre (September 3, 2024), Dr. Vanessa Tinker (August 28, 2024), Patricia Garcia (October 1, 2024) & Dr. Michael Ogunnusi (October 1, 2024).

⁵⁴ Expert Interview with Paul Klahre, September 3, 2024.

⁵⁵ See: Cremin, H. & Bevington, T. (2020). *Positive Peace in Schools: Tackling Conflict and Creating a Culture of Peace in the Classroom*. Routledge. Banks, C. & Hajir, B. (2020). *Peace education in formal schools: Why is it important and how can it be done?* International Alert. See also: Berrett, H. (2020). *Schools as safe spaces in Colombia: A framework for peacebuilding*. Palgrave Macmillan.

and peace.⁵⁶ The key question is: how can different groups work together to embed peace education across sectors and all levels of society? The following addresses this question.

The need for coordinated efforts across sectors and all levels of society

The complex challenges of today and tomorrow — such as war, climate change, and emerging technologies — cut across generational, cultural, sectoral, and disciplinary boundaries. Effectively addressing these challenges requires coordinated efforts at global, regional, national, and local levels. Echoing the African proverb, "No one of us is as strong as all of us," many interviewees highlighted the value and importance of strategic coordinated partnerships for peace, emphasising that no one person, group, or organisation can "do it alone."⁵⁷

Recognising the complexity of the current peace and security landscape, this study advocates for a whole-institutional, multi-stakeholder, and whole-society approach, as recommended by the UN and others, to enhance inter-agency coordination and multilateral collaboration. This approach involves uniting governments, UN agencies, the private sector, and civil society — including young people, youth workers, educators, non-profits, community groups, NGOs/INGOs, and the general public — to work across various generations, cultures, sectors, disciplines, and societal levels. Such coordinated partnerships can build trust, improve understanding, and engage "more people" and "more key people,"⁵⁸ ultimately broadening the reach and impact of peace and YPS-related efforts. This strategy can also address power dynamics, strengthen dialogue, stimulate networking, transform relationships, and promote common ground, mutual accountability, collective intelligence, and knowledge exchange.

Coordinated partnerships across sectors and all levels of society broaden the scope of the work beyond the local context and singular sectors, adding extra complexity and challenges. Nevertheless, in an increasingly globalised world, connecting people and linking local efforts to broader aspirations is an important goal of many peace and security efforts. From this perspective, the challenge lies in navigating the "creative tensions" and finding the right balance embracing local customs, talents, and knowledges, while also engaging with ideas and practices from external sources, whether through alignment, adaptation, or resistance. The challenge also lies in ensuring that local and small-scale efforts engage with national policies and priorities, which can either support or undermine peace and security. These initiatives should also engage with broader regional or international commitments and aspirations. The more micro-level peace education and YPS-related initiatives can be linked to meso- and macro-level efforts, the more likely it is that the work will advance the prospects for 'peace writ large' in ways that are 'youth-led, adult-supported, community-rooted, and globally-minded'. Ultimately, the challenge can be summarised as figuring out how to scale up peace and security efforts without losing sight of the needs at the local, grassroots level.

As one interviewee put it, coordinated partnership work that connects local initiatives with broader commitments can help people feel they are "part of something bigger than

⁵⁶ Davies, L. (2016). *Conflict and chaos: The role of education in post-conflict reconstruction*. Routledge. See also: Harber, D. (2004). *Schooling as Violence: How Schools Harm Pupils and Societies*. Routledge.

⁵⁷ Expert Interview with Kingsley Godwin, August 26, 2024.

⁵⁸ CDA Collaborative Learning Project. (2003). *Reflecting on Peace Practice Project*. CDA.

themselves”.⁵⁹ Achieving this in practice is not straightforward. The Global Campaign for Peace Education (GCPE), the Global Coalition on Youth, Peace, and Security (GCYPS), World BEYOND War (WBW), KAICIID, and the Regional Youth Cooperation Office (RYCO) are all examples of organisations and entities working to find the right balance between localisation and globalisation, seeking to align local needs with broader regional and global commitments.

While recognising the progress made and the valuable work being done to coordinate peace education and YPS-related work across various levels, fragmentation and ineffective coordination and collaboration among stakeholders remain a major challenge.⁶⁰ Interviewees noted that those involved in peace, education, and youth work frequently operate in “silos”, contributing to duplicated efforts and competitive dynamics among stakeholders.⁶¹ Too often, the learning from ‘individual’ or ‘small-scale’ initiatives stays within the local context and does not connect with or contribute to wider regional or global efforts. Addressing these coordination and partnership challenges is crucial for peace education and YPS-related efforts to realise their potential and make further progress on peace and security issues.

The need for greater investment in peace education

Organisations such as the CoE, UN, UNESCO, RYCO, OSCE, UNOY Peacebuilders, Search for Common Ground, and Peace Direct all point to the need for greater investment to improve the provision, quality, impact, and sustainability of peace education and YPS-related efforts. Without adequate investment, the transformative potential of peace education and young people as change agents and peacebuilders cannot be fully realised. Despite this, many youth-led organisations face chronic underfunding. Research shows that these organisations typically function with minimal funding, with most operating on an annual budget of \$5,000.⁶² This limits their ability to plan, sustain and expand peace work with young people. The reliance on volunteerism and small grants further undermines their long-term effectiveness and impact.

Securing greater investment in peace education and YPS-related efforts requires not only high-level support and policymaking but also localised actions. Developing global and regional policy standards and instruments is one thing; translating these into national and local programmes is another. Several factors contribute to the underinvestment in these efforts, with *good governance* and *political commitments* being particularly significant. Strong political commitment is essential for effectively translating global and regional policies into national and local priorities.⁶³ Without this commitment, securing the necessary human, financial, and logistical resources to effectively localise peace, education, and youth work initiatives becomes challenging. The gap between policy and practice often stems from a lack of political backing, impacting resource allocation. Therefore, good governance and political commitments at the

⁵⁹ Expert Interview with Saji Prelis, August 23, 2024.

⁶⁰ Expert Interview with Anja Jokić, August 27, 2024.

⁶¹ Expert Interview with Djordjo Cvijović, September 9, 2024.

⁶² Search for Common Ground (2023). *Building Evidence for Peacebuilding Investments: A Snapshot of Youth-Led and Youth-Supporting Peacebuilding Programs in Kenya Yields Five to Ten-Fold Social Returns on Investment* (SROI).

⁶³ Expert Interviews with Thorsten Afflerbach (August 30, 2024) and Frank Power (August 30, 2024).

national and local levels are essential for improving the provision, quality, impact, and sustainability of peace education and YPS-related efforts.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

This section addresses, firstly, why a recommendation is needed, secondly, what it should include, and thirdly, who it would benefit and how. It concludes with some final reflections.

5.1 Recommendation

Why is a recommendation needed?

This section presents the rationale for the recommendation. The argument can be summarised as follows: there can be no peace or human rights without peace education and the meaningful engagement of young people. It also explains how the recommendation would set itself apart from and complement the ongoing efforts of the CoE, its Member States, and other partners while addressing current gaps and providing new contributions.

NO HUMAN RIGHTS WITHOUT PEACE AND EDUCATION

Human rights, peace, and education are separate but interrelated and mutually reinforcing.

- **Human rights** and peace are strongly linked, with the right to peace being recognised as a human right by the UN, essential for the promotion and achievement of all other rights. Without peace, the attainment of human rights is severely compromised, as war and violence lead to violations of rights such as safety, freedom, and dignity.
- **Peace** and the development of inclusive and peaceful societies are crucial not only for the effective functioning of democratic systems but also for creating the conditions necessary to protect freedoms and rights. Conversely, respecting and ensuring human rights and international law contributes to lasting peace by addressing the root causes of war and violence, such as injustice, inequality, discrimination, oppression, and exclusion.
- **Education**, also recognised as a human right by the UN, links both human rights and peace by empowering people with the competencies needed to understand, protect, and promote their rights and to work towards inclusive and peaceful societies that are based on tolerance, nonviolence, human rights, democracy, and rule of law.

Peace is crucial for enhancing the quality of life, ensuring economic prosperity, protecting the planet, and promoting social progress. The UN and various organisations recognise the link between peace and sustainable development, with Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16 — focused on peace, justice, and strong institutions — being essential for achieving all 17 SDGs. Despite this, peace is on the decline both locally and globally, with violence at a 30-year high, the UN reporting unprecedented levels of violations, and the largest number of

armed conflicts since 1946. Currently, approximately a quarter of the world's population resides in conflict-affected areas.

Globally and regionally, militarised approaches to peace and security dominate the agenda, prioritising weaponry over diplomacy and armed conflict over nonviolent solutions that rely on dialogue and the rule of law. Such a strategy not only perpetuates violence, but also redirects resources from peacebuilding to arms trade and military expenditure. In 2022, global military spending reached a record \$2.24 trillion, with Europe's military budget rising by 13%, the largest increase in 30 years. Meanwhile, the U.K. reduced peacebuilding-related spending by \$300 million between 2016 and 2021, and Sweden cut its peacebuilding budget by 40% while increasing defence spending by 17%. Global peacebuilding expenditures are estimated to account for roughly 0.045% of military spending, though actual figures may vary.⁶⁴

If there is one key takeaway from all this, it is this: first, war and militarism do not lead to lasting peace – they only make us less safe and secure. Second, because wars typically result in war crimes and human rights violations, under international law, particularly the Geneva Conventions, there is an urgent need to educate widely about the large-scale violence of war and realign military spending and resources to more productive activities such as youth work, education, health, and peacebuilding, in order to advance the prospects for upholding human rights, democracy, and the rule of law while also achieving sustainable peace and the SDGs.

NO PEACE WITHOUT PEACE EDUCATION

Peace education is one of the most powerful tools for enabling young people to learn about and meaningfully engage in peace and human rights. It is important to the CoE and its partners because it supports the development of young people as critical, compassionate, caring, creative, and competent citizens.⁶⁵ Through peace education, young people strengthen their competencies to address violence, transform conflict, promote peace, and understand human rights and needs, while promoting social cohesion, reconciliation, and security. Other international entities such as the UN, UNESCO, the Global Campaign for Peace Education, World BEYOND War, and the Commonwealth all underscore its importance, advocating for peace education's vital role in helping to work towards inclusive and peaceful societies.

Despite the increased attention to peace education in recent years, the focus so far has largely been on formal education, with considerably less emphasis on non-formal learning and youth work sectors. This is significant, as young people spend much of their time in non-formal settings, where some of their most impactful and enduring learning takes place. Consequently, there are both knowledge gaps and practice gaps in peace education within non-formal learning and youth work contexts. Addressing these gaps is crucial to realise the potential of peace education and empower youth to become transformative agents of peace.

⁶⁴ SIPRI. (2023). *Trends in World Military Expenditure, 2022*. Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. Also, Gittins, P. (Forthcoming). *Youth & Conflict*. Council of Europe.

⁶⁵ Adapted from Banks, C. & Hajir, B. (2020). *Peace education in formal schools: Why is it important and how can it be done?* International Alert.

NO HUMAN RIGHTS OR PEACE WITHOUT YOUNG PEOPLE

One of the most significant developments in peace and security work in recent years has been the growing recognition of the vital role of young people in these efforts. As one of the largest and fastest-growing demographics, young people are vital in addressing the world's most pressing challenges — from climate change and nuclear threats to record-high military spending and the highest conflict levels since WWII. Given the current state of the world, investing in and empowering young people to work towards a culture of peace and nonviolence and away from a culture of war and violence is more critical than ever.

The good news is that the perception of young people is evolving from viewing them predominantly as mere problems to recognising them as powerful agents of change. Previously seen mostly as victims or perpetrators of violence, young people are now increasingly acknowledged for their power and potential as peacebuilders, leaders, and allies. This shift is evident in the adoption of the *UN's Youth, Peace, and Security* (YPS) agenda, as well as various resolutions and recommendations from the CoE Committee of Ministers.

Investing in the youth peace work initiatives not only helps to transform the lives of young people, by strengthening their peacebuilding, conflict transformation, and leadership competencies but also delivers significant societal and economic benefits. Socially, peace education promotes personal development, builds confidence, fosters resilience, enhances social cohesion and reconciliation, encourages civic engagement, and improves relationships among youth and peers, while reducing violence and promoting inclusivity. Economically, every dollar spent on peacebuilding can potentially save up to \$16 in conflict costs, and \$1 invested in youth-led initiatives can yield \$5 to \$10 in social returns.⁶⁶ In short, youth peacebuilding not only saves and improves lives; it also offers exceptional value for money.

Despite growing social and political recognition from organisations like the CoE, UN, and UNESCO, there is still a significant gap in 'financial recognition' for peace education and YPS-related activities. Young people often face systemic exclusion, sometimes referred to as the "violence of exclusion," which hampers their full participation in civic spaces across various dimensions — sociocultural, financial, political, legal, digital, and physical — further exacerbated by the widespread impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.⁶⁷ Thus, while the importance of involving youth is widely acknowledged, the corresponding political commitments and financial investments necessary for the practical implementation of policy at national and local levels too often remain inadequate. Addressing this gap remains a key challenge for Member States, civil society, and the private sector across Europe and beyond.

⁶⁶ See: Search For Common Ground. (2023). *Building Evidence for Peacebuilding Investments: A Snapshot of Youth-Led and Youth-Supporting Peacebuilding Programs in Kenya Yields Five to Ten-Fold Social Returns on Investment* (SROI). Also, Gittins, P. (Forthcoming). *Youth & Conflict*. Council of Europe.

⁶⁷ United Nations (2021). *If I Disappear Global Study on Protecting Young People in Civic Space*.

What should the recommendation include?

This study has considered progress made, identified and discussed current gaps, and pinpointed areas for further development in peace education within non-formal learning and youth work. This section proposes key elements to be included in the recommendation. Organised into six thematic areas, these elements are designed to address the gaps identified in the study. They are summarised here before being explored in greater detail below:

- **Involve** young people equitably and meaningfully in peace education
- **Pursue** a holistic and comprehensive approach
- **Contextualise** the work to address local needs and broader commitments
- **Embed** peace education across non-formal learning and all learning spaces
- **Coordinate** efforts across sectors and all levels of society
- **Invest** in peace education to benefit youth, the economy, and society as a whole

Here is a closer look at each of these elements in turn:

INVOLVE YOUNG PEOPLE EQUITABLY AND MEANINGFULLY IN PEACE EDUCATION

The recommendation should call on Member States, including Ministries of Youth, Foreign Affairs, and Education, as well as youth, education, and peacebuilding institutions, policymakers, and other stakeholders, to fulfil their commitments to youth-inclusive peacebuilding processes. This involves invoking regional and international standards and texts – such as the CoE Parliamentary Assembly *Resolution 2378 (2021)*, *UNESCO Recommendation on Education for Peace, Human Rights, and Sustainable Development*, and the *UN Security Council Resolutions 2250, 2419, and 2535*.

Ensuring the equitable and meaningful representation, inclusion, and participation of young people in peace education and YPS-related efforts would enable them to strengthen their capacities to:

- Understand and develop positive relationships with themselves, others, and their world.
- Make positive contributions to peace and security policy, practice, and research.
- Become more resilient and engaged global citizens.
- Analyse the root causes and effects of a culture of war and violence.
- Understand, prevent, resolve, and transform conflicts non-violently.
- Promote and defend human rights, democracy, and the rule of law.
- Foster social cohesion and engage in intercultural and interreligious dialogues
- Exercise personal and political agency and power.
- Recognise and challenge stereotypes, biases, discrimination, and intolerance.
- Build confidence, cultural competencies, leadership, and civic engagement skills.
- Achieve success in their personal and professional lives.

The recommendation should address ‘*who*’ participates in peace education and YPS-related efforts and acknowledge the diversity of young people, their needs, talents, and experiences.

It should call on stakeholders to consider this diversity when developing policies and programming, ensuring the inclusion of marginalised, vulnerable, and at-risk youth from both rural and urban areas, both offline and online, and from diverse backgrounds and contexts — whether affected by war, conflict, violence, or relatively peaceful environments.

The recommendation should also address '*how*' young people participate. Beyond being beneficiaries, youth should have opportunities to be meaningfully engaged as partners throughout all stages of the decision-making and action processes — from identifying issues, initial conceptualisation, planning, and developing strategies⁶⁸ to implementation, evaluation, ownership, leadership, and communicating the value to different stakeholders in different ways. Central to this is the aim of involving designers and beneficiaries in the inquiry process together. In short, peace education and YPS-related policy, practice, and research should be done *with*, *by*, and *for* young people, rather than being done *on*, *to*, or *about* them. As one interviewee put it, "Nothing about [young people] without [young people]."⁶⁹

Ideally, peace education and YPS-related efforts could be organised as communities of practice (CoP) or encounter groups that bring together diverse (young) people from diverse backgrounds, identities, perspectives, and experiences, enabling reflection, learning, and exchanges across geographical, national, ethnic, socio-economic, and cultural divides. These opportunities should be ongoing and "not just one-offs", ⁷⁰ establishing pathways for young people to return - as peer educators, mentors, or through 'train-the-trainer' and other developmental roles - to support both short-term impact and long-term sustainability.⁷¹

PURSUE A HOLISTIC AND COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH

The recommendation should address the need for a holistic and comprehensive approach to peace education that not only supports the protection and well-being of people but also ensures the preservation of biodiversity and non-human ecosystems while addressing the existential threats posed by climate change and ecological instability. This study suggests that such an approach comprises three key elements: first, it should support the development of the whole person; second, it should work towards a culture of peace and nonviolence and away from a culture of war and violence; and third, it should challenge the hierarchies between humans and other entities, ascribing importance to the rights of people and the planet, in line with international principles such as the "right to nature" and the "right to a healthy environment," as articulated in documents like the Earth Charter and other UN initiatives.

These three key elements are interconnected: prioritising the holistic development of individuals encourages a greater understanding of the connections between people, ecosystems, and the cosmos; abolishing the war system and other forms of violence that are often normalised creates a stronger foundation upon which a culture of peace and non-violence can be built; and addressing hierarchies between humans and nature encourages

⁶⁸ Expert Interview with Joakim Arnøy, August 27, 2024.

⁶⁹ Expert Interview with Dr Felisa Tibbitts, 20 August, 2024.

⁷⁰ Expert Interview with Saji Prelis, August 23, 2024.

⁷¹ Expert Interview with Djordjo Cvijović, September 9, 2024.

healthier and more equitable treatment for all entities, thereby advancing the prospects for the survival and flourishing of humanity, ecological systems, and the natural world.

CONTEXTUALISE PEACE EDUCATION TO ADDRESS LOCAL NEEDS AND BROADER COMMITMENTS

The recommendation should encourage Member States to develop peace education and YPS-related initiatives that are youth-specific, conflict-sensitive, community-rooted, and contextually appropriate.⁷² These approaches should address the unique needs of young people and the dynamics of conflict while being mindful of local contexts and cultures. They should be open to exploring issues related to terminology, ensuring that the term 'peace education' resonates with the context and, if needed, considering alternative terms.⁷³

There is also a need to find the right balance between contextualising peace education and YPS-related efforts to local needs and leveraging youth and community capacities and resources, while uniting around broader core values and principles of peace, democracy, and human rights proposed by entities such as the CoE, the UN, and UNESCO. Contextualising peace education and YPS-related efforts - in a way that balances local needs with wider aspirations - increases the likelihood that these efforts will Do No Harm, be relevant, support local agency, buy-in, and ownership, and generate both local and wider impact.

There are many ways in which peace education and YPS-related efforts can be contextualised:

- **A basic approach** might rely on secondary sources from desk research to make informed decisions.
- **An intermediate approach** would involve consulting young people and other stakeholders to ensure that decisions are negotiated and made collaboratively.
- **An advanced approach** would actively engage young people and other stakeholders as partners or leaders in all phases of decision-making and action, from initial conceptualisation and design to implementation, evaluation, and communication.

At the heart of effective and impactful peace, education, and youth work is a commitment to participation and partnership;⁷⁴ the more those designing interventions can listen to, engage with, and learn from young people and communities who intend to benefit from the activities, the more likely these efforts will be fit for purpose. This is not to suggest an uncritical shift from externally imposed practices to unquestioning acceptance of the needs expressed by local populations. Instead, it calls for a collaborative approach to learning, inquiry, and

⁷² Adapted from Lopes Cardozo, M., Higgins, S., Maber, E., Brandt, C. O., Kusmallah, N., & Le Mat, M. (2015). *Literature Review: Youth Agency, Peacebuilding, and Education*. Research Consortium on Education and Peacebuilding, University of Amsterdam.

⁷³ Expert Interview with Sarah Keating, September 10, 2024.

⁷⁴ Expert Interview with Lydia Ruprecht, October 10, 2024.

action,⁷⁵ based on dialogue and co-creation, where decisions are made through ongoing negotiation and may require compromise⁷⁶ and flexibility from all parties involved.

EMBED PEACE EDUCATION ACROSS NON-FORMAL LEARNING AND ALL LEARNING SPACES

The recommendation should advocate for embedding peace education across non-formal learning and youth work sectors. To fully realise its potential, however, peace education should be embedded across all educational and cultural contexts – ranging from early childhood care and education to primary, secondary, and higher education, as well as technical and vocational training, teacher training, adult education, informal education, and popular education. Thus, the recommendation should stress the need to find more spaces for peace education across all learning spaces while encouraging collaboration between these spaces.⁷⁷

Collaboration across generations and cultures, within the public, civil, and governmental sectors - including youth, non-formal educators, youth workers, teachers, and parents - should also be encouraged to improve the reach, visibility, and recognition of these efforts.⁷⁸ The recommendation should also encourage flexibility in how the work is delivered. This could include traditional venues such as classrooms, youth clubs, and community settings, as well as experiences like homestays, youth camps, youth exchanges, and cultural immersions⁷⁹ along with exchanges for educators and youth workers. These environments can bridge divides, share best practices, mobilise knowledge, and support deeper learning.

COORDINATE EFFORTS ACROSS SECTORS AND ALL LEVELS OF SOCIETY

The recommendation should address the need for greater coordination and partnership work across sectors and all levels of society. It should encourage collaboration across identities, generations, cultures, sectors, and disciplines, for it is only through broad involvement that the transformative power of peace education can be realised. The recommendation should also highlight the benefits of taking a whole-institution, multistakeholder, and whole-society approach, as recommended by the UN and other organisations. This approach can promote trust, strengthen relationships, facilitate the exchange of best practices, support co-production and communities of practice, and aid in the development and evaluation of initiatives. It can also help to connect local and broader goals while encouraging global and regional cooperation with UN agencies, intergovernmental organisations such as the European External Action Service of the EU, and major NGOs — including youth and peacebuilding organisations — ultimately enhancing coordination, collaboration, and overall impact.

The recommendation should emphasise that the CoE is well-positioned to champion, nurture, and/or support strategic, coordinated partnership work within and between its member states,

⁷⁵ Gittins, P. (Forthcoming). *A Collaborative approach to developing peace education programmes*. Information Age Publishing, Peace Education Series (under contract).

⁷⁶ For an interesting account of the role of compromise in YPS advocacy, see Berents, H. (2024). *What we give up to get where we're going: compromise in the institutionalizing of youth peace advocacy*. Globalizations, 1–16.

⁷⁷ Expert Interview with Veronika Botsova, 10 September, 2024.

⁷⁸ Expert Interview with Hiya Jain, 26 August, 2024.

⁷⁹ Expert Interview with Djordjo Cvijović, September 9, 2024.

helping to foster a more unified — rather than fragmented — peace education and YPS movement within the region. The CoE’s co-management structure exemplifies the type of strategically coordinated and joined-up approach proposed here, serving as a model for others to follow by experimenting with innovative and effective ways of promoting equitable partnerships and power-sharing among young people, policymakers, and other stakeholders. This structure enables diverse governmental and non-governmental representatives to work together on youth-related issues, enables intergenerational engagement, facilitates information sharing and progress tracking, supports networking, encourages shared decision-making processes, nurtures partnerships, and connects local efforts with broader practices.

INVEST IN PEACE EDUCATION

The recommendation should call on governments to prioritise peace education by securing political commitments to implement international standards and texts at regional, national, and local levels. These commitments should be anchored in relevant laws, policies, and frameworks to ensure effective practical implementation, including integration into monitoring and evaluation processes. These commitments should also be supported by sufficient human, logistical, and financial resources, with more streamlined, flexible, and accessible funding mechanisms to meet the needs on the ground. This could involve a multi-tiered investment strategy that addresses both short-term and long-term needs,⁸⁰ ensuring resources are available to adapt to changing circumstances and respond to immediate demands — such as crisis response — while establishing sustainable funding pathways to support lasting change and impact. Both short-term and long-term investments in peace education are necessary and have been shown to yield positive results, yet the latter is preferable as it tends to support the development of more strategic work and is more likely to yield transformative results.⁸¹

Budgets should cover research, capacity-building, and training for all relevant stakeholders, as well as essential operational and logistical needs, including learning materials and resources. Furthermore, budgets should allocate funds for establishing and strengthening infrastructures for peace education and YPS-related work across the CoE and its member states. This includes both physical places and spaces — such as youth clubs, community centres, museums, and other relevant venues — and virtual spaces and platforms as well as blended learning options.⁸² These places and spaces should be inclusive, safe, and youth-friendly, designed to support “people-to-people interaction,” learning, and growth that bridges generational, cultural, religious, and ethnic divides.⁸³ While investing in infrastructure, institutional support, and strengthening coordination and partnership efforts at broader regional and national levels is essential, it is equally vital to ensure that adequate funding reaches those on the ground, where the benefits are most directly felt.⁸⁴

⁸⁰ Expert Interview with Dr Celina Del Felice, August 22, 2024.

⁸¹ Jenkins, J. (2023). *What can education concretely (and realistically) do to mitigate contemporary threats and foster lasting peace?* White Paper. Global Campaign for Peace Education.

⁸² Expert Interview with Joakim Arnøy, August 27, 2024.

⁸³ Expert Interviews with Dr Sara Habibi-Clarke (August 22, 2024), Dr. Wolfram Bechtel (September 5, 2024) & Johan Friestedt (September 5, 2024).

⁸⁴ Expert Interview with Joakim Arnøy, August 27, 2024.

The recommendation should make clear that investing in peace education and YPS-related efforts is not solely a 'youth issue.' This investment will not only benefit young people but also lead to broader economic and societal gains. Engaging young people meaningfully in peace and security education, policy-making, research, and action processes can help build their agency, competencies, confidence, and leadership skills, while also contributing towards shared goals such as improving youth inclusion, promoting social cohesion, strengthening civic participation, preventing violence, and fostering a more inclusive and peaceful world.

All six thematic areas — involving young people, pursuing a holistic and comprehensive approach, contextualising the work, embedding peace education, coordinating efforts, and investing adequately — are interconnected. Involving young people meaningfully and equitably and pursuing a holistic and comprehensive approach can enhance the relevance, reach, and impact of the work. Contextualising the work to address local needs and broader commitments can increase the chances of achieving local and broader impacts. Embedding peace education across non-formal learning and all other learning spaces can enhance its visibility and legitimacy, thereby reinforcing the need for coordinated efforts across sectors and all levels of society, linking local-level efforts with wider aspirations. Adequate investment is necessary for supporting and sustaining these interconnected efforts effectively.

Who would the recommendation benefit and how?

In this context, a **Committee of Ministers (CM) Recommendation to the governments of Member States on Peace Education in non-formal learning and youth work** would offer significant benefits to a wide range of stakeholders including:

- **The Council of Europe:** The recommendation would align closely with the broader goals of the CoE which states that “the pursuit of peace based upon justice and international cooperation is vital for the preservation of human society and civilization.” Peace education is crucial to advancing these goals. The recommendation would support several key priorities of the CoE’s Youth Department, including “promoting peace, intercultural dialogue, and social cohesion through youth work,” “providing opportunities for peace education, peacebuilding, conflict transformation, and active youth participation in these processes,” and “enhancing the social, economic, and political participation of young people from rural areas and disadvantaged neighbourhoods.” More specifically, the recommendation would shape and guide activities related to peace, education, and other related areas carried out by or in collaboration with the European Youth Foundation (EYF), the Advisory Council on Youth, and during the [Youth Peace Camp](#) – a flagship activity of the CoE youth sector aimed at promoting inclusive and peaceful societies.
- **Member States, including national and local governments and agencies,** such as Ministries of Youth Education, International Development, European Integration, Foreign Affairs, and Community Safety would benefit from the recommendation as they seek to understand the significance of peace education and peacebuilding efforts involving young people. It could support them in developing national strategies or action plans, aid implementation through relevant legislation, and help establish accountability measures

to assess, prove, and improve the delivery of peace education and YPS-related services. Although not legally binding, it would raise awareness of, and strengthen Member States's commitments to, the CoE framework, address the needs of their societies, and align with international standards set by the UN and others.

- **Young people:** The recommendation would show young people that their needs and concerns are being listened to and addressed. It would prove that their advocacy for improved access to peace education and peacebuilding is being acted upon, positioning youth-led peace and security efforts as a public good and a priority for governments.
- **Policymakers and local authorities:** Given the limited focus on peace education in non-formal learning and youth work sectors, the recommendation could serve as a resource and framework for shaping policy and practice including the drafting of new legislation, development of curricula and standards, training of non-formal educators, youth workers, and teachers, and incorporating peace education into national and local youth strategies.
- **Education and training providers:** The recommendation could contribute to the creation or development of frameworks, strategies, policies, programmes, and resources to support the training, education, capacity building, and professional development within the education and youth work sectors. This may include, but is not limited to, the development of a Council of Europe Charter and Reference Framework of Competences for Peace Education, which could serve as an important resource for the field. It could also lead to the creation of accompanying teaching materials and guidance to assist Member States in implementing competence-based education for peace, equipping young people with the skills necessary to promote inclusive and peaceful societies, as well as supporting educators and youth workers in addressing sensitive issues related to peace and security.
- **European Commission:** Programmes like Erasmus+ and Horizon 2020 could benefit from the recommendation in various ways. Erasmus+ could use it to guide and shape peace education initiatives, while Horizon 2020 could use it to inform research and innovation projects focused on peacebuilding, education, and youth engagement.
- **International non-governmental organisations (INGOs), intergovernmental organisations (IGOs), and faith-based organisations** could all benefit from using the recommendation as an advocacy tool. INGOs like Search for Common Ground and Save the Children, IGOs such as the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), the Regional Youth Cooperation Office (RYCO), the Commonwealth Secretariat, and KAICIID; along with faith-based organisations like Religions for Peace (RfP), Catholic Relief Services, and World Vision could use the recommendation to influence policy planning and development, enhance programme support, and call for increased investment in youth-focussed peace work and peace-focussed youth work.
- **Youth and peacebuilding-focused non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and foundations:** The recommendation could serve as an important tool to inform and

influence the significant number of organisations around the world working toward a culture of peace through peace education and youth work. It could support their advocacy efforts for greater promotion, recognition, investment, and resources, in line with standard-setting instruments and values of the CoE, UN, and others. Examples include Peace Direct, Interpeace, War Child, PeaceJam, NewGen Peacebuilders, Education for Global Peace, International Alert, Conciliation Resources, Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation, Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, and Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, and Conducive Space for Peace.

- **Movements, alliances, campaigns, coalitions, networks, and service organisations:** Groups such as World Scouts, World BEYOND War, the Alliance for Peacebuilding, the Global Campaign for Peace Education, the Global Coalition on Youth, Peace, and Security, UNOY Peacebuilders, the Global Peace Education Network, the Peace Education Network (UK), and Rotary International could use the recommendation for advocacy, research, opinion-shaping, capacity-building, or training purposes.
- **The UN and its associated agencies, bodies, and departments.** The recommendation would contribute to the UN's efforts to build a culture of peace through peace education and by strengthening young people's capacities as peacebuilders. This includes entities such as UNESCO, UNICEF, the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR), the UN Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO), and the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA). Additionally, the recommendation would align with and support the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), specifically SDG 4 (Quality Education), SDG 4.7 (Education for Peace and Nonviolence), SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions), and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals).
- **Research institutions, academia, and journals:** The recommendation would make an original contribution to the field, adding to knowledge on how peace education can support broader peacebuilding efforts, particularly *with, by, and for* young people. It could also serve as a key resource for researchers and academics, influencing research agendas and offering evidence-based insights and arguments. Potential beneficiaries working on issues of peace, education, and youth work-related issues may include research institutions such as the Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP), the United States Institute of Peace (USIP), and the International Peace Institute (IPI); universities like the University of Bradford, University of Kent, University of Cambridge, University of Oxford, Uppsala University, University of Zurich, University of Amsterdam, and the Norwegian University of Science and Technology; as well as relevant journals such as *Peace Education*, *Youth, Peace, and Security Studies*, *Peace & Conflict Studies*, and *Peacebuilding*.

5.2 Conclusion

Peace and education are fundamental human rights. As shown in this study, recognition of the importance of peace education in non-formal learning and youth work is growing; however, it continues to be underfunded and underutilised. Various regional and global frameworks, including the CoE Parliamentary Assembly *Resolution 2378 (2021)*, the *UNESCO Recommendation on Education for Peace, Human Rights, and Sustainable Development*, as

well as *UN Security Council Resolutions 2250, 2419, and 2535*, highlight the urgent need to address this gap.

A Committee of Ministers (CM) Recommendation to the governments of Member States on Peace Education in non-formal learning and youth work would add considerable value by addressing current gaps in this area. It would guide Member States in their commitment to ensuring the meaningful participation and inclusion of young people in matters of peace and security. This would enable the CoE to make an important contribution to a critical and growing area of political, policy, and practical significance, allowing the CoE to play a vital role in shaping discourse and practice while enhancing its profile.

The recommendation should be regarded as a living and evolving document. To support its operationalisation and effective implementation on the ground, it could be accompanied by resources and assistance for Member States and other stakeholders. This might include guidance on policy development and translating it into practice; the development of standards, competencies, frameworks, roadmaps, plans, and implementation guidelines; as well as additional training opportunities for youth work and education sectors to design, implement, and evaluate their own peace education and YPS-related interventions. Additionally, it could entail establishing robust monitoring and evaluation practices for tracking progress and supporting states in fulfilling their obligations through impact assessments and accountability frameworks; reviewing domestic legislation, policies, and practices to identify challenges and opportunities for localising the work across the CoE Member States; and commissioning and conducting research to understand and strengthen the case for peace education and YPS work, in Europe and beyond, contributing to the growing body of evidence-based practice.

The recommendation would provide an opportunity for the CoE to position itself as a flagship for peace education and YPS-related efforts across the region and beyond. The CoE could function as a resource centre, infrastructure, and hub — both in-person and online — conveying dialogues, coordinating and facilitating platforms, coalitions, and networks that unite diverse stakeholders from ministries, government agencies, civil society (including young people and youth-focused organisations), UN entities, donors, academia, and intergovernmental bodies to share best practices and develop innovative strategies for enhancing peace and security in and through non-formal learning and youth work. Additionally, it could involve establishing or supporting a growing regional community of practice that connects, coordinates, and assists organisations, groups, and individuals committed to studying, enhancing, and showcasing the impact of peace education on personal, relational, political, structural, cultural change, and/or ecological change.

Ultimately, the recommendation would fit within the broader framework of the CoE and the EU, contributing to new ways of thinking and practices that support their efforts to promote peace and address key issues impacting young people and communities across their Member States. By ensuring that access to peace education for young people becomes the norm rather than the exception, and by bringing the YPS agenda from the margins to the centre of peace and security work, the recommendation would support the development of new generations of peacebuilders across the region, equipping them with the mindset, knowledge, skills,

attitudes, support, and resources needed to move from a culture of war and violence towards a culture of peace and nonviolence. This, in turn, would strengthen the CoE's overall work in promoting human rights, preserving democracy, and upholding the rule of law.

Appendix I: List of standards and documents reviewed⁸⁵

- Altiok, A., & Grizelj, I. (2019). *We Are Here: An Integrated Approach to Youth-Inclusive Peace Processes*. United Network of Young Peacebuilders (UNOY).
- Brander, P., Keen, E., Gomes, R., Lemineur, M., Ondrácková, B., Surian, A., & Suslova, O. (2015). *Compass: Manual for Human Rights Education with Young People*. CoE.
- Clarke-Habibi, S. (2019). *Educating for Intercultural Dialogue, Peacebuilding, Constructive Remembrance, and Reconciliation: A Toolkit for Trainers in the Western Balkans*. Tirana: UNICEF Albania and RYCO.
- Council of Europe. (2012). *Youth Transforming Conflict Toolkit (T-Kit 12)*. Strasbourg: CoE.
- Council of Europe. (2015). *Compass: Manual for Human Rights Education with Young People*. Strasbourg: CoE.
- Del Felice, C. & Wisler, A. (2008). Unexplored power and potential of young peacebuilders. *Peace, Conflict & Development*, 11, 1-22.
- Lopes Cardozo, M., Higgins, S., Maber, E., Brandt, C. O., Kusmallah, N., & Le Mat, M. (2015). *Literature Review: Youth Agency, Peacebuilding, and Education*. Research Consortium on Education and Peacebuilding, University of Amsterdam.
- Commonwealth Secretariat (2020). *Youth Mainstreaming in Development Planning: Transforming Young Lives*. London: Commonwealth Secretariat.
- Novelli, M., Lopes Cardozo, M., & Smith, A. (2017). *The 4Rs Framework: Analysing the Contribution of Education to Sustainable Peacebuilding in Conflict-Affected Contexts*. *Journal on Education in Emergencies*, 3(1).
- Simpson, G. (2018). *The Missing Peace: Independent Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security*. United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and Peacebuilding Support Office
- Search for Common Ground. (2023). *SROI Evaluation of Conflict Prevention, Peace, and Economic Opportunities for the Youth*.
- Search for Common Ground (2016). *Transforming Violent Extremism: A Peacebuilder's Guide*. Washington, D.C.: Search for Common Ground
- Spalding, S., Odgers-Jewell, C.-J., Payne, H., Mollica, C., & Berents, H. (2021). *Making Noise and Getting Things Done: Youth Inclusion and Advocacy for Peace: Lessons from Afghanistan, South Sudan, and Myanmar*.
- UNICEF. (2016). *Youth as Peacebuilders Toolkit*.
- United Nations General Assembly. (1999). *Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace*.
- United Nations General Assembly. (2010). *World Programme of Action for Youth*.
- United Nations. (2018). *Youth 2030: The UN Youth Strategy*.
- United Nations (2015). *Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. New York: United Nations.
- Wisler, A., del Felice, C., & Karako, A. (Eds.). (2015). *Peace education evaluation: Learning from experience and exploring prospects*. Information Age Publishing.

⁸⁵ Note: This list is not exhaustive and does not include the standards and documents referenced in Section 4.1.

Appendix II: List of interviewees

	Contact	Organisation / Role	Date
1	Dr. Felisa Tibbitts	Utrecht University , UNESCO Chair in Human Rights and Higher Education. Human Rights Education Associates (HREA) , Executive Director	20-Aug-24
2	Dr. Sara Habibi-Clarke	United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) , Learning Specialist	22-Aug-24
3	Dr. Celina Del Felice	Agency for Peacebuilding , President	22-Aug-24
4	Saji Prelis	Search for Common Ground , Director, Children & Youth Programs. Global Coalition on Youth, Peace & Security , Co-Chair	23-Aug-24
5	Eoin O'Leary	Search for Common Ground , Policy Officer EU Coalition on Youth, Peace & Security , Co-Chair	23-Aug-24
6	Kingsley Godwin	The Commonwealth Secretariat , Chairperson of the Commonwealth Youth Peace Ambassadors Network (CYPAN)	26-Aug-24
7	Hiya Jain	Rotary International , Co-Chair of the Advisory Council on Youth	26-Aug-24
8	Anja Jokić	Council of Europe , Member of the Youth Advisory Council	27-Aug-24
9	Frank Power	Council of Europe , Head of Division, Policy Planning and Confidence-Building Measures	27-Aug-24
10	Joakim Arnøy	Narvik War & Peace Centre (Norway) , Researcher. UiT The Arctic University of Norway , PhD-fellow, Centre for Peace Studies	27-Aug-24
11	Dr. Vanessa Tinker	Collegium Civitas , Lecturer	28-Aug-24
12	Thorsten Afflerbach	Council of Europe , Head of the Inclusion and Anti-Discrimination Programmes Division	30-Aug-24
13	Angela Longo	Council of Europe , Head of Unit: Directorate General of Democracy and Human Dignity	30-Aug-24
14	Dr. Edward Brantmeier	Journal of Peace Education , Editor-in-chief James Madison University , Professor	2-Sep-24
15	Paul Klahre	World Scouting , Youth Representative - Peace and Humanitarian Action,	3-Sep-24
16	Johan Friestedt	Council of Europe , Executive Secretary of the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI)	5-Sep-24
17	Dr. Wolfram Bechtel	Council of Europe , Secretary of the Steering Committee on Anti-Discrimination, Diversity and Inclusion (CDADI)	5-Sep-24
18	Dr. David Adams	UNESCO , Former Director of the Unit for the International Year for the Culture of Peace. Culture of Peace News Network , Founder & Coordinator	6-Sep-24
19	Djordjo Cvijović	Regional Youth Cooperation Office , Local Program Officer	9-Sep-24
20	Sarah Keating	Council of Europe , Head, Division of Formal and Non-Formal Education	10-Sep-24
21	Veronika Botsova	Rotaract Europe , Former President	10-Sep-24
22	Max Lucks	Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) , Member - Germany	27-Sep-24
23	Patricia Garcia	Institute for Economics and Peace , Partnership Development Manager	1-Oct-24
24	Dr. Michael Ogunnusi	De Montfort University , Lecturer in Youth & Community Work, and Education	1-Oct-24

25	Dr. Andrew "A.J." Boyd	International Dialogue Centre (KAICIID) , Senior Program Manager	8-Oct-24
26	Davide Capecchi	International Dialogue Centre (KAICIID) , Chief Programme Officer	8-Oct-24
27	Yevheniia Kravchuk	Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) , Member - Ukraine	10-Oct-24
28	Lydia Ruprecht	UNESCO , International Coordinator of the UNESCO Associated Schools Network. Coordinator: Recommendation on Education for Peace, Human Rights and Sustainable Development	10-Oct-24
29	Dr. Paul Galles	Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) , Member - Luxembourg	15-Oct-24

Appendix III: Survey and interview questions

Survey

- What do you think should be the primary purpose(s) of peace education in youth work and non-formal learning settings?
- What principles should guide the ways of thinking, being, doing, and relating in peace education efforts?
- What topics or content do you believe should be included in peace education?
- Which pedagogical approaches or learning methods do you find most meaningful and effective in peace education?
- Please list recommended organisations, groups, or campaigns working on peace education in youth work and non-formal learning settings. For each organisation, please include at least 1 sentence (or more) to summarise their work and a link to their website for more information.
- Why is peace education with/by young people important? Please share your thoughts and any supporting evidence, including relevant academic and policy literature.
- What recommendations do you have to make peace education and peacebuilding with/by young people more meaningful and effective?
- Any additional thoughts or ideas relevant for this study?
- Your Full Name
- Your Email
- Your Organisation

Interviews

- What can or should be done to enhance peace education and peacebuilding initiatives in and through non-formal learning and youth work?
- What standards and documents inform and influence the provision of peace education and peacebuilding efforts *with, by, and for* young people?