



# The Road to Resilience

for Europe and Central Asia's  
Children and Youth:  
Call to Action



EUROPE & CENTRAL ASIA  
REGIONAL PLATFORM FOR  
DISASTER RISK REDUCTION



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# Introduction

Climate change is intensifying environmental disasters and the challenges they present – and, as children, we carry the greatest burden. The types of climate-induced disasters we are seeing across Europe and Central Asia, such as flooding and heatwaves, put our lives at risk, undermine our development, and disrupt the vital services we need to learn and grow.

This year's floods in Europe and Central Asia have swept away entire communities, destroying homes, diminishing livelihoods and leaving families destitute. In 2023, floods, avalanches and earthquakes impacted over 15.2 million people in Türkiye alone. Around 160 million children in Europe and Central Asia live in countries at a medium to high risk of exposure to a wide range of hazards, shocks and stresses related to climate change and environmental degradation, according to UNICEF's Children's Climate and Environment Risk Index. Half of children in Europe and Central Asia – around 92 million children – are exposed to frequent heatwaves, putting them at risk of heat stroke and other illnesses.

National and local disaster risk reduction (DRR) strategies that recognize children's unique vulnerabilities and needs during disasters are essential to protect us, therefore securing the health and productivity of our societies into the long-term.

This Call to Action, put together by more than 40 young people from Europe and Central Asia, was discussed and adopted on 6 November 2024 during the ECARP-DRR in Montenegro.

# Empowering children and young people

At the Europe and Central Asia Regional Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction (ECARP-DRR) and COP29, the UN, partners and governments are championing children's involvement in risk reduction strategies from the earliest stages of planning. This youth-inclusive approach also has been outlined in the call for youth involvement in the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030. It also builds on the Global Goal on Adaptation and COP28's Global Stocktake Decision, which called for an expert dialogue on the disproportionate impacts of climate change on children.

Ahead of ECARP-DRR and COP29, consultations conducted across more than 20 countries in Europe and Central Asia gathered insights from more than 2,700 children and youth on DRR and the climate crisis, including recommendations for governments and policymakers. Children and young people noted an increase in climate-related disasters, like heatwaves, droughts, and floods, affecting their communities. Priorities included improved access to education post-disaster, increased disaster support for vulnerable groups<sup>1</sup>, and stronger governmental action on climate initiatives, with 59 per cent of respondents advocating for global climate efforts and 18 per cent calling for increased funding in climate change mitigation and DRR.

We have drawn on these survey and focus group responses for our Call to Action and recommendations below.

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<sup>1</sup> This document will define vulnerable groups as those including the mentally and physically disabled, at-risk children and youth, migrants, internally displaced people and returning refugees, HIV/AIDS- affected individuals, religious, sexual and ethnic minorities and, in some societies, girls and women.





## Call to Action

As climate change impacts escalate, placing children and youth at heightened risk from disasters, **it is critical that governments swiftly implement policies and dedicate resources to support children and youth-led DRR initiatives.** Inaction is not an option.

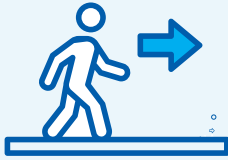
Specifically, we call for the following:

- I. Governments must allocate 10 per cent of national DRR budgets to child and youth-driven projects by 2026 and track progress through annual reports:** Youth must be integral to decision-making processes, contributing their perspectives to national and global climate strategies. This requires urgent, united efforts from governments, NGOs, and international organizations to address the mounting climate crisis.
- II. Governments must establish national children and youth disaster risk reduction advisory councils:** Governments should create formal advisory councils by 2026 that allow youth leaders to participate in policy discussions on disaster risk reduction and climate resilience. These councils will provide a structured framework for youth engagement in national strategies, ensuring that young people's perspectives are integrated into policy development.
- III. Children and youth must be systematically included in disaster risk reduction decision-making:** By 2026, governments should formally integrate children and youth into national DRR and climate change councils, ensuring at least two youth leaders are involved in decision-making processes related to climate adaptation and mitigation. This approach will ensure that children and youth perspectives are considered in policy development, particularly in urban planning, implementation of Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and disaster resilience strategies. Progress should be tracked through annual reports that evaluate youth engagement in key DRR discussions.
- IV. Create international fellowships for youth in disaster risk reduction:** By 2026, countries and international organizations should establish and fund international fellowship programmes that empower youth, including vulnerable groups, to engage in global DRR and climate resilience initiatives. These fellowships will provide opportunities for children and youth to contribute to the design and implementation of DRR projects, with a focus on loss and damage mitigation within frameworks like the Santiago Network. The success of these programmes will be measured by the annual number of fellowships awarded.
- V. Support child- and youth-led initiatives in their communities:** Children and youth are leading various disaster risk reduction initiatives, from community disaster preparedness programmes and advocating eco-friendly urban development to promoting sustainable agriculture. To scale

these efforts, governments must provide youth with the necessary resources and support to take on leadership roles. By 2027, at least 30 per cent of community-based DRR activities should be youth-led. This goal can be achieved through partnerships between government agencies, local youth organizations, and international bodies, providing both financial backing and mentorship to empower emerging leaders.

- VI. Allocate 10 per cent of the Loss and Damage Fund for child and youth-led Initiatives:** By 2026, at least 10 per cent of the Loss and Damage Fund should be dedicated to child and youth-led programmes that address climate-induced loss and damage. This allocation will empower children and youth to develop and implement school and community-based solutions, ensuring their active participation in efforts under the Santiago Network. The distribution and effectiveness of these funds must be monitored through annual progress reports, ensuring transparency and equitable access for youth from communities of vulnerable groups.
- VII. Engage children and youth in NDC consultation and implementation processes:** By 2025, governments must formally engage children and youth in the formulation and oversight of Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs). This will ensure that children and youth priorities—such as climate education, disaster risk reduction, and funding for child and youth-led adaptation initiatives—are integrated into national climate objectives. Progress will be assessed based on the frequency of child and youth consultations and the inclusion of their recommendations in NDC reports submitted to the UNFCCC.
- VIII. Establish financial resources for child- and youth-led disaster risk reduction forums and events:** By 2025, governments and international organizations must allocate dedicated funds for child and youth-organized DRR conferences and events to foster collaboration and the exchange of innovative ideas. This initiative will enhance child and youth participation in international platforms, such as global and regional DRR platforms, COPs, empowering children and youth to share best practices, propose solutions, and advocate for climate justice. Progress will be tracked by the annual number of child and youth-led events held and the total funding allocated for these initiatives.
- IX. Enhance the Santiago Network to facilitate child- and youth-led loss and damage Initiatives:** By 2026, the Santiago Network should establish mechanisms to provide technical and financial support for child- and youth-led initiatives focused on mitigating loss and damage. These initiatives must prioritize reducing climate impacts on vulnerable communities, ensuring that children and youth have access to resources through simplified application processes. Progress will be measurable through the number of funded child and youth initiatives and their effectiveness in mitigating loss and damage.
- X. Integrate disaster risk reduction and climate resilience education into school curricula:** As soon as the new national education strategy renewals will begin, governments, and educational institutions accordingly, must adopt comprehensive school safety approach and include disaster risk reduction and climate resilience in their curricula. These programmes should focus on practical learning, simulations, and community projects to prepare children and youth for future challenges.

- XI. Develop and adapt national Comprehensive School Safety programmes:** By 2028, all governments must implement national Comprehensive School Safety programmes and strategies to ensure that newly built and renovated school facilities are resilient to disasters and climate change. Special emphasis needs be paid to refurbishing and retrofitting old infrastructure, ensuring accessibility features for all. This initiative will adhere to global educational safety standards, protecting children and ensuring educational continuity during disasters. Yearly trainings, including on first aid, and simulation drills should be conducted for children and youth of all ages in respective educational entities. Annual evaluations of safe school certifications should be conducted, aiming for at least 80 per cent compliance among schools in disaster-prone areas by 2028.
- XII. Establish child- and youth-led climate adaptation hubs within the Santiago Network:** By 2026, the Santiago Network should establish regional hubs led by youth, focusing on adaptation strategies for communities affected by climate change. These hubs will provide technical support and facilitate cross-border information exchange, ensuring that children and youth are at the forefront of implementing innovative adaptation solutions. Success will be measured by the number of youth-managed hubs established and their contributions to local climate adaptation efforts.
- XIII. Establish scholarships for youth focused on DRR and climate resilience:** By 2026, governments and international organizations should introduce scholarship programmes to support youth education in fields related to DRR, climate resilience, and loss and damage. These scholarships should be aimed at students from diverse backgrounds pursuing degrees or technical training in areas such as climate science, urban planning, engineering, community resilience and fields where expertise is lacking. Annual targets should be set for the number of scholarships awarded to ensure ongoing support for youth in these critical fields.
- XIV. Establish a global children and youth disaster risk reduction and Climate Fund by 2026:** By 2026, international organizations should establish a global fund dedicated to supporting child and youth-led disaster risk reduction and climate adaptation initiatives. This fund will specifically target youth from vulnerable groups and disaster-affected areas, empowering them to implement school and community-driven resilience projects aligned with Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) objectives. The effectiveness of the fund will be assessed by the number of youth projects financed and their impact on strengthening resilience within local communities.
- XV. Join and sign the Declaration on Children, Youth and Climate Action:** to advocate for the global recognition of children's right to a healthy environment and ensure their rights are integrated into the implementation of the Paris Agreement at all levels, scaling up investments in child- and youth-responsive adaptation, disaster risk reduction, and mitigation measures, while strengthening their capacity for climate action, enhancing the meaningful participation of children and youth in climate processes and fostering partnership.



## Way forward

Children and youth are set to support the establishment of climate-resilient communities – but this effort hinges on strong partnerships. We need support from governments and international organizations to provide the necessary resources for us to take on leadership roles, drive innovative solutions and foster sustainable practices.

By making strategic investments in child and youth-led disaster risk reduction initiatives, we can pave the way for a safer and more sustainable world for all generations. The time to act is now, and we are ready to contribute to this crucial movement for change.





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Whoever she is.

Wherever he lives.

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A future.

A fair chance.

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For each and every child.

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In more than 190 countries and territories.

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The furthest from help.

The most excluded.

It's why we stay to the end.

And never give up.

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