Youth Engagement in DRR processes and decision-making in Europe and Central Asia

Study report
2024
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Abbreviations

CBSS - the Council of the Baltic Sea States
CESDRR - Center for Emergency Situations and Disaster Risk Reduction in Almaty
DPPI SEE - Disaster Preparedness and Prevention Initiative for South Eastern Europe
DRR - Disaster Risk Reduction
EFDRR - Europe and Central Asia Forum for Disaster Risk Reduction
EUR-OPA - European and Mediterranean Major Hazards Agreement
Sendai Framework - Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction
UNDRR - United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction
UNMGCY - United Nations Major Group for Children and Youth
Key terms

**Governance** - following the general definition, governance encompasses systems of management at the highest level (Cambridge). Relating to the context of this report, disaster risk governance encompasses decision-making pertaining to disaster risk reduction at the local, national and regional level, as well as managing implementation of DRR strategies, plans and policies.

**Children and youth** - for the purpose of this report, children and youth are considered all persons 0-29 years old following the extended and most common definition of youth across the European region (Eurostat). The extended definition is endorsed in the UNDRR’s *Words into Action: Engaging Children and Youth in Disaster Risk Reduction and Resilience Building* (2020). Throughout the report, youth would refer to both - children (up to 18 years of age) and youth (up to 29 years of age).

**Disaster risk reduction** – DRR is aimed at preventing new, reducing existing disaster risk, and managing residual disaster risk, all of which contribute to strengthening resilience and therefore to the achievement of sustainable development (UNDRR).

**Disaster risk reduction strategies and policies** – defined goals and objectives across different timescales and with concrete targets, indicators and time frames. In line with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, these should be aimed at preventing the creation of disaster risk, the reduction of existing risk and the strengthening of economic, social, health and environmental resilience (UNDRR).

**National Platforms for Disaster Risk Reduction** - national mechanisms for coordination and policy guidance on disaster risk reduction that are multisectoral and interdisciplinary in nature, with public, private and civil society participation involving all concerned entities within a country (UNDRR).

**Prevention** - activities and measures to avoid existing and new disaster risks (UNDRR).

**Preparedness** - the knowledge and capacities developed by governments, response and recovery organizations, communities and individuals to effectively anticipate, respond to and recover from the impacts of likely, imminent or current disasters (UNDRR).

**Response** - actions taken directly before, during or immediately after a disaster in order to save lives, reduce health impacts, ensure public safety and meet the basic subsistence needs of the people affected (UNDRR).

**Recovery** - the restoring or improving of livelihoods and health, as well as economic, physical, social, cultural and environmental assets, systems and activities, of a disaster-affected community or society,
aligning with the principles of sustainable development and “build back better”, to avoid or reduce future disaster risk (UNDRR).

**Risk communication** - the main aim of risk communication is to create a shared understanding of risk among all involved stakeholders through coordination, collecting and disseminating information, planning for a crisis and crisis management (UNDRR).
Introduction


The Sendai Framework calls for engagement of stakeholders, including children and youth among others, in the design and implementation of DRR policies, plans and standards as a means to achieve stronger DRR governance.¹ In its guiding principles, the Sendai Framework calls for the integration of gender, age, disability, and cultural perspectives across DRR policies while also promoting the leadership of women and youth.² Additionally, it emphasizes that “children and youth are agents of change and should be given the space and modalities to contribute to disaster risk reduction, in accordance with legislation, national practice and educational curricula”.³ These recommendations set a direction for an “all of society” approach to disaster risk governance that fosters opportunities for children and youth participation in risk governance - from preparedness through communications and capacity building, to response, and recovery.

Concurrently, the EFDRR Roadmap 2021-2030 pays dedicated attention to institutionalizing stakeholder engagement and strengthening risk governance systems. In its annex documents, the roadmap reaffirms the value of youth engagement in strategic planning of DRR actions in order to promote accessibility and inclusion and recommends considering youth-related disaster risk issues in their own regard.

The Words in Action: Engaging Children and Youth in Disaster Risk Reduction and Resilience Building (2020) details how the four Sendai Framework priorities apply to working with children and youth. In regard to Priority 2 on ‘Strengthening disaster risk governance to manage disaster risk’, the report specifically calls for building the capacities of children and youth to engage in the political sphere and decision-making by amplifying their voices in disaster risk conversations.⁴ The theme of strengthening risk governance through pursuit of meaningful and systemic stakeholder engagement remains a pertinent theme at the midway point of implementing the Sendai Framework goals.

The Midterm Review of the Sendai Framework found stakeholder engagement to be among the most prevalent gaps and challenges. The states affirm that “commitment and efforts of traditional disaster risk reduction stakeholders, as well as novel collaborations with other stakeholders, are needed to correct course and ensure that the Sendai Framework is fully realized by 2030.⁵ Additionally calling

² Ibid, para 19.
³ Ibid, para 39.
government to ensure “that multisectoral, multi-scalar and multi-stakeholder mechanisms and strategies for risk management are implemented at the national and subnational levels”\(^6\) and that “structures and processes must be centered around the engagement and needs of marginalized populations, including women, youth and persons with disabilities, ensuring more systematic engagement with existing and emerging networks mobilizing disaster risk reduction stakeholders. National disaster risk reduction platforms are considered key to facilitating broad-based participation”\(^7\).

Following the reiterated emphasis and commitment to pursue strengthening of stakeholder engagement in national DRR governance and activities, the study provides a map and a benchmark of a current state of youth participation in DRR processes and decision making across Europe and Central Asia.

The study carries the objectives to analyze and highlight existing local, national and regional mechanisms for youth participation in DRR governance, which directly responds to implementing the second priority of the Sendai Framework “Strengthening disaster risk governance to manage disaster risk”. It presents an overview of C&Y participation in national, regional and local DRR platforms, highlights the best practices of youth engagement in DRR decision making bodies, provides an overview of available platforms and mechanisms in the region to engage children and youth and lists youth-related organizations active in the field of DRR in the region.

\(^6\) Ibid, para 83.
\(^7\) Ibid, para 89.
Methodology

The study was based on a three-tiered survey shared with different partners. This included a national level questionnaire disseminated to Sendai Framework National Focal Points, complemented by interviews. Additionally, five regional bodies: the Council of the Baltic Sea States, the Council of Europe, the Disaster Preparedness and Prevention Initiative for South Eastern Europe, the Center for Emergency Situations and Disaster Risk Reduction, and the European Commission were invited to share their experience on engaging children and youth in disaster risk governance. Finally, a local level survey was disseminated to the cities in Europe that participate in the Making Cities Resilient 2030 (MCR2030) initiative.

Complementary desktop research was conducted to identify active youth-led or youth-focused organizations and platforms working in DRR across the region, as well as to highlight the examples of youth representation on DRR advisory boards and decision-making bodies. The findings were enriched by an interview with the UN MGCY Europe and Central Asia region focal point on DRR.
Survey results on children and youth engagement in DRR governance

31 authorities working on local, national and regional DRR policies and programs provided input to the surveys. The 20 national governments that participated were Armenia, Cyprus, Croatia, Denmark, Finland, Georgia, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Kyrgyzstan, Lithuania, Montenegro, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, the Russian Federation, San Marino, Slovenia, and Türkiye.

Four regional governance platforms on DRR provided input: the Council of Europe Major Hazards Agreement (EUR-OPA), the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS), the Disaster Preparedness and Prevention Initiative for Southern Europe (DPPI SEE), the Center for Emergency Situations and Disaster Risk Reduction (CESDRR).

Seven local authorities from the Making Cities Resilient 2030 (MCR2030) initiative responded to the survey: Amadora and Matosinhos (Portugal), Barcelona (Spain), Bonn (Germany), Greater Manchester (United Kingdom), the Province of Potenza (Italy), and Wrocław (Poland).

Participation of children and youth at the national and local level

National and local authorities received similar survey questionnaires, which were tailored to the context of national or local level governance. At the national level, 16 countries (80% of respondents) confirmed that they have national platforms for DRR. The remaining respondents did not confirm whether they had national platforms or not. Amongst the countries that reported having national platforms, children and youth are included either directly, represented by children and youth focused organizations or considered as a special interest groups in ten countries (62.5%), while in six countries (38.5%) they are not included in any capacity.

Youth-led organizations are members of the national DRR platforms in the Netherlands and the Russian Federation, while in Finland, the Netherlands and Portugal, youth are present on the platform advisory groups or expert boards. Therefore, 31% of the national DRR authorities provide an opportunity for children and youth to have direct influence on DRR decision-making at the national level.

In San Marino, Kyrgyzstan, the Netherlands, Montenegro and Portugal, the national platforms include thematic working groups on children and youth, while in Italy, Romania and Türkiye, children and youth focused organizations participate in the platforms. This means that the interests of children and youth are represented by organizations focused on children and youth, or through dedicated thematic working groups, within 50% of the national platforms of surveyed countries.

By comparison, four of the surveyed cities (57.1%) confirmed having local platforms on DRR. Children and youth organizations are consulted on platform proposals in the Province of Potenza. Students, young researchers and young professionals engage with the network and actively take part in the
working groups in the City of Bonn. In Greater Manchester, the local platform has a thematic group on children and youth. Matosinhos city engages the Municipal Youth Council to get their inputs on relevant platform proposals.

Regarding the **national strategies on DRR**, 13 countries (65%) confirmed that their strategies include a dedicated focus on children and youth. 18 (90%) of the national strategies mention children and youth in varying capacities. In 17 countries (85%), children and youth were either mentioned as at-risk groups, beneficiaries, or special target groups, in the national DRR processes. This framing suggests a more passive, rather than active and engaging, role for children and youth in DRR processes.

On the other hand, in the Netherlands, Montenegro and Romania, children and youth are mentioned as partners as well as at risk groups, legislatively elevating their potential agency to take collaborative action to reduce risks.

Aside from the direct involvement in national DRR platform governance, the respondents were asked about the participation of children and youth in national DRR activities. They were provided with the following response options to examine available roles for children and youth in national DRR processes:

- We have children and youth targeted DRR activities
- We have DRR partnerships with youth led organizations
- We regularly consult youth organizations on DRR planning
- Youth organizations help us collect data that influences DRR plans
- Youth organizations help us monitor and evaluate DRR plans
- We work with schools on certain DRR activities
- We do not engage children and/or youth

Even if not directly involved in the DRR decision-making as members of the national platforms, children and youth stakeholders could contribute to the governance process as partners in leading certain DRR programs, monitoring and evaluating, or collecting data to influence DRR programmes and processes.

![Diagram showing participation of children and youth in DRR activities](image)
Table 1: children and youth’s participation in the national DRR effort.

The modes of engaging children and youth in the national DRR effort show that most countries (85%) have children and youth targeted DRR activities, and traditionally collaborate with schools and other formal and non-formal educational institutions. This approach puts children and youth in the role of a beneficiary or the target group.

The Netherlands, the Russian Federation and Hungary partner with youth-led organizations, which grant youth groups collaborative roles. In Greece, youth organizations are regularly consulted on DRR programming, which empowers young people to meaningfully engage in decisions around children and youth-related DRR activities. Portugal’s DRR strategy for 2024-2026 proposes a role for the Youth Council in developing DRR programmes. In Poland, the central government collaborates with an NGO working with high-school students, who are encouraged to propose their DRR projects at the local level. Currently, 60% of Polish high schools participate in the project. This approach elevates students from recipients of support to collaborators in DRR programming.

While children and youth do not contribute to data collection or monitoring and evaluation of DRR policies at the national level, the Matosinhos local government works with youth organizations to determine local DRR programming for children and youth, and engages them in collecting data, and monitoring and evaluating programs. This inclusive approach provides children and youth a voice in DRR decision-making processes, as they have an opportunity to give feedback on DRR programs and provide further recommendations.

### Children and Youth engagement in risk communication

Regarding risk communication, 16 of the surveyed countries (80%) have targeted messaging and communications campaigns for children and youth and two (10%) do not. The majority of these campaigns target student populations through awareness building activities curated by civil protection institutions working with schools and other educational institutions. Mostly, these campaigns are managed centrally and have limited if any input from youth in their design.

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8 2023 CBSS study on existing mechanisms and processes for child and youth participation in DRR in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Sweden confirms that most DRR programs for children and youth are implemented at schools (CBSS, 2023, 10).
A notable exception is Georgia where the “Green Camp” project implemented with the EU is open to 14-29 year-olds. Around 4,000 young people participated in the project in the role of community advocates, disseminating communications on climate risks and actions amongst youth. They act in partnership with the Environmental Information and Education Centre, which is supported by the Georgian government. The “Green Camp” project advocates develop their own communications campaigns that target members of their age group.

At the local level, four of the surveyed cities affirmed having a tailored risk communications approach towards children and youth developed in collaboration with children and youth.

Including children and youth in preparedness, response and recovery

All but two respondents confirmed having programs building the preparedness of children and youth to respond to disasters and emergencies (see Table 3. These include evacuation drills, responding to forest fires, seismic threats, floods, and other hazards relevant to the national and/or local contexts. Children and youth are also trained to provide emergency medical aid. Locally, six of the respondent cities (85.7%) implement programs that build children and youth capacities to respond.

In Montenegro and Hungary, national recovery plans have a targeted approach to engaging children and youth, considering their unique needs and capacities. In the majority of other national recovery plans (62.5%), as well as local recovery (85.7%) plans, children and youth are counted as one of the stakeholder groups, but do not receive special consideration. Four countries surveyed noted not having recovery plans.
Inclusion of children and youth in regional DRR governance

Among the four organizations, the CESDRR noted the engagement of children and youth as highly important, the CBSS and EUR-OPA identified it as rather important, and DPPI SEE as of medium importance.$^9$ This prioritization translates, to some extent, to their programming and activities. The inclusion of children and youth in decision-making processes at the regional level varies to a great extent across the respondents, from none to institutionalized engagement.

Regional mechanisms and activities

While the DPPI SEE noted openness to including children and youth in their training, research and projects - in alignment with their regional strategic plan for 2021-2025 – their current activities do not engage children and youth in particular. However, they plan to design joint campaigns that engage children and youth in partnership with the UNICEF Regional Office.

In comparison, the CESDRR consider the inclusion of children and youth to be of high importance, and provided a list of training and educational activities on DRR targeting higher educational institutions and stakeholders, including youth and children. These activities engage students in achieving strategic DRR programming goals, such as the introduction of GIS and aerial technology for mapping, as well as working to attract young specialists to the DRR field, and providing internship opportunities to young professionals.

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$^9$ Organizations were requested to assign a value between on the scale 1-5, where 5 was of high importance and 1 of no importance. The CESDRR assigned the value of 5, the CBSS and EUR-OPA assigned the value of 4, the DPPI SEE assigned the value of 3.
The EUR-OPA has a dedicated BeSafeNet online platform and Olympiad for children and youth that serve as tools to inform children and youth on major natural, human-made, technological hazards and their impacts. They host an annual international competition in partnership with the government of Cyprus and schools to test students’ knowledge on disaster risks.

The programs of both the CESDRR and EUR-OPA targeting youth strongly relate to the implementation of Sendai Framework priority 1 on “Understanding Risk”. However, it does not directly implement Priority 2 focused on risk governance as in both cases, children and youth receive information but do not influence the programs or activities. On the other hand, the activities could have indirect or consequential impacts, as having a better understanding of risks can lead to more informed decision-making at the personal and community levels.

The Council of the Baltic Sea States engages children and youth in decision-making processes through an institutionalized participatory structure. The CBSS facilitates a Committee of Youth Representatives (CYR) open to 16–29-year-olds, which mirrors the Committee of Senior Officials (CSO), which makes political decisions. Although the CYR is not as powerful in decision-making, the young people involved are able to advocate for their priorities to be included in the decision-making agenda. Additionally, several Youth Working Groups present their priorities to the CYR. CBSS organizes various youth events in conjunction with the meetings of high-level representatives in the Baltic Sea Region to empower young people and elevate their opinions to be represented in the political agenda. Consequently, the Parliamentary and Ministerial resolutions issued by the CBSS tend to include the majority of the recommendations made by youth stakeholders.

Youth stakeholders are in charge of driving the agenda of the annual Baltic Sea Region Youth Forum (BSRYF), where they invite decision-makers to join conversations on topics that are of importance to children and youth in the region. They also influence programming design and strategies. Participation is institutionalized in the various Baltic Sea Region organizations. The rotating CBSS presidencies inherit the established structure and work with its collaborative model.

The CBSS model for promoting youth engagement in disaster risk governance implements Priority 2 of the Sendai Framework by promoting meaningful participation through creating inclusive spaces, empowering voices of children and youth, facilitating audiences and supporting their political influence.

**Challenges to participation**

Respondents shared the challenges they face in the pursuit of stronger participation of children and youth in DRR governance and other processes. Challenges are presented thematically, indicating whether they are faced at the local (L), national (N), or regional (R) levels. Some of the challenges are common throughout governance levels while some are exclusive. The challenges section is additionally
informed by an interview with the UN Major Group for Children and Youth Europe and Central Asia regional focal point on Disaster Risk Reduction.

Political obstacles

- Limited political representation as “children and youth” is not a homogenous group. While senior officials in decision-making bodies represent a defined national constituency, youth representatives engage on behalf of less defined constituencies of active youth groups or individuals working on DRR, who oftentimes are not well networked (R, L).
- Gaps in monitoring and accountability as youth stakeholders deliver work and recommendations, but they rely on the political will of senior officials to be implemented and followed through (R).
- Lack of a culture of democratic dialogue with children and youth. While awareness about the need to involve children is slowly increasing among state authorities, the interest in general is low. (R, N, L).

Institutional challenges

- Lack of structures for children and youth engagement at the national level, which limits regional level capacity to engage children and youth (R).
- Children and youth stakeholders are not sufficiently engaged in monitoring and evaluation of DRR programs and processes. Therefore, those programs cannot improve their effectiveness and quality (N).
- Not all countries and municipalities have easy access to disaggregated DRR data (L, N)
- Governments do not have clearly set guidelines on how to meaningfully include children and youth in DRR governance (R)

Resource and capacity constraints

- Resource constraints limit authorities’ capacities to engage children and youth stakeholders who need resourcing support to facilitate or implement different activities (R, N, L).
- Insufficient knowledge, awareness, and capacity of adults to engage with children and youth stakeholders is considered a key factor hampering youth participation. This negatively affects youth’s motivation (R, N, L).
- Children and youth are constrained by age, which limits their advocacy capacities as the more experienced members eventually move on with their knowledge and capacities while the younger ones do not feel competent enough to engage at the higher level from the beginning (R).

Other barriers

- Diversity of cultures within the community can pose challenges for productive engagement, for example, diversity of languages can hamper productivity of dialogue or inclusion of all voices (L, R).
• Lacking motivation and incentives for children, youth and families to participate in voluntary civil protection activities that do not seem immediately relevant to them (L, R).
Analysis of the mechanisms and channels through which young people are engaged in DRR activities

It is evident that DRR authorities and decision-making bodies across the region have dedicated programs to build children and youth capacities to participate in the implementation of the Sendai Framework’s Priority 1 ‘Understanding risk’. This is demonstrated by systemic and regular educational campaigns implemented in collaboration with education institutions (primary, elementary, secondary schools or high-schools) as well as non-formal education institutions and youth organizations.

On the other hand, progress on the inclusion of children and youth in implementing Priority 2 on ‘Risk governance’ is not moving forward as consistently. Meaningful engagement mechanisms of children and youth in decision-making generally requires four elements to be put in place and well-functioning: space, voice, audience, and influence (Words into Action, 2020). A meaningful participatory space for children and youth is where they can speak freely and safely and are encouraged to participate. Some authorities admitted that there is a lack of feedback and dialogue with children and youth regarding DRR programming at the central level, while acknowledging their value at the local level.

Adult decision-makers can facilitate spaces for collaborative participation as illustrated by a few examples of countries who invited youth-led organizations to their national platforms. This model is also demonstrated by the city of Barcelona, which facilitates intergenerational dialogue spaces with stakeholders on DRR. Children and youth are encouraged to attend and express their views, which are considered on an equal footing. However, other authorities noted that language and different cultural backgrounds could obstruct productive dialogues in such spaces.

The Baltic Sea Region Youth Forum (BSRYF) serves as an example of a youth-led governance space, where youth advocates invite the decision-makers to join the political conversations on DRR topics that are of importance to children and youth. The decision-makers are presented with policy recommendations for further consideration. Other examples are collaborations with national youth councils, which have autonomous self-organized spaces to address policy and programming questions as invited by the decision-makers. Engaging youth or student councils could be an effective way to use an already existing youth-led space to include children and youth voices in decision-making or obtain their feedback on relevant DRR programming.

Inclusion of youth voices relates to capacity building and empowering children and youth to express their views on the topics of DRR. Informing children and youth through targeted risk communication campaigns that are present across many responding authorities is an essential part of the equation. Authorities facilitate capacity building of children and youth and strengthen their knowledge to engage in the DRR processes from preparedness to response and recovery. Once children and youth find their voice on DRR related issues, it is important to complete the equation by creating communication channels that can carry the opinions of children and youth to people in positions of power.
Children and youth are regularly perceived as a targeted audience but rarely have an audience to listen to their messages. Some authorities include youth in advisory bodies or expert groups, or regularly consult youth groups on relevant DRR platform proposals. These mechanisms provide the opportunity to respond to the needs and recommendations of children and youth in a two-way dialogue. In addition to fostering the culture of inclusive dialogues, this can lead to more informed and effective programming. This is exemplified by cases of youth advisory bodies in the Netherlands, Denmark, Portugal, and the Council of the Baltic Sea States.

Lastly, the influence of children and youth on DRR processes might be restricted by gaps in their own advocacy capacities, limited resources available to youth-led DRR initiatives and their participation in DRR activities. Frequently, the monitoring and accountability in terms of implementation of youth recommendation is missing or difficult to follow through. Children and youth participating in monitoring of government DRR policies is extremely rare. Additionally, even when access is provided to a decision-making space, youth stakeholders may require supportive mentorship to know how to effectively influence decisions and policy-making.

**Way forward**

Overall, the responses show dedicated attention on behalf of DRR authorities in the region to include children and youth in DRR governance and processes. The level and progress of engagement tends to vary greatly depending on the available resources, partnerships, culture of inclusion and dialogue, or policy spaces. While the majority of the respondents have programs that build the capacities and knowledge of children and youth in DRR in line with Sendai Framework Priority 1 on ‘Understanding risk’, the following steps are recommended to support better inclusion of children and youth in implementing Priority 2 on ‘Risk governance’:

- **Creating spaces for consultations** with children and youth regarding strategies for DRR. This could be done by inviting children and youth – representation to become platform members, advisors, or experts, or having an open process for consultations with youth organizations. The consultations could inform program design and priorities.
- **Elevating the status of children and youth from beneficiaries to partners**, positioning them as collaborators, and setting up framework and opportunities for youth organizations to propose and implement DRR programs. Youth organizations can also become valuable partners in communication campaigns and data collection processes at the local level.
- **Creating mentorship** opportunities for young advocates and leaders to further build their capacities in DRR governance and to enable their voices to have more influence in the process. Engaging children and youth in feedback and evaluation of DRR programs and activities that are targeted towards them. Thus, children and youth could input towards further strengthening design and effectiveness of activities they are participants in.
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Nordic Welfare Centre (2022). Youth panel made recommendations to the Danish government on the well-being of children and youth. LINK.


Annex A: Examples of youth representation on the DRR advisory boards and decision making bodies across Europe and Central Asia

- **UNDRR’s Europe and Central Asia Youth Network for Disaster Risk Reduction**

  The network was established to provide a platform through which the voices of youth can inform the activities of UN DRR, as well as to provide the opportunity to exchange knowledge amongst its members, which will contribute to making communities more resilient within the region and beyond. It promotes youth participation in disaster risk reduction governance by providing dialogue opportunities on the regional DRR agenda and to include youth voices in the regional policy dialogues, including UN DRR initiatives. Additionally, the youth network seeks to mainstream youth views in regional processes and, provided there is support and capacity, advocate for inclusion of Youth Focal Points in each UN country team and mission. The UN DRR will support member’s advocacy by sharing their messages through Prevention Saves Lives and social media, as well as offer training opportunities to build member’s capacities in advocacy and communications.

- **Europe and Central Asia Forum for Disaster Risk Reduction**

  The Europe and Central Asia Forum for Disaster Risk Reduction (EFDRR) forms the regional platform structure of Europe. The triennial EFDRR has established itself as an important vehicle to address the regional disaster risk challenges. It serves as a forum for other stakeholders to take a shared responsibility and make actionable commitments to reduce disaster risk. The conference, true to the multi-stakeholder spirit of the Sendai Framework, enables governments and stakeholders to exchange experiences on successful practices and innovative approaches to prevent, reduce and manage disaster risk. This results in forward looking action plans based on a mutual sharing status of DRR implementation. Children and youth are invited to participate in side events and high level roundtables and provide input to the regional roadmap on building resilience through the Sendai Framework implementation.

- **The Council of the Baltic Sea States Youth Ministerial Forum**

  The CBSS fosters active and meaningful youth participation and representation in institutions and decision-making processes in the Baltic Sea Region through intergenerational dialogue on topics affecting young people. As an intergovernmental structure, the CBSS provides relevant educational resources for young people and decision makers to support the implementation of the Vilnius II Declaration and the CBSS Action Plan. Children and young people are also included in the CBSS work through the CBSS youth platform, a specific subgroup dedicated to security issues and Baltic Sea Youth Dialogues. CBSS is currently implementing a Secure Kids project that aims to contribute to sustainable and inclusive mechanisms for child participation in planning, implementation and follow up of national and local measures for building resilient societies that are equipped to resist, absorb, accommodate, adapt to, transform and recover from the effects of a hazard in a timely and efficient manner.
- **The Council of Baltic Sea States Youth Working Group**

The Baltic Sea Youth Working Group aims to support young talents (aged 16 – 29) to become region builders and give youth the opportunity to share their knowledge and discover ways to apply it in an international environment. The CBSS offers four Baltic Sea Youth Working Groups: Advocacy, Culture, Security and Environmental Sustainability. Additionally, a Focus Group on Child Protection is open for participation.

- **Youth Advisory Council to the Portuguese National Platform on DRR**

For the 2024-2026 plan, the Portuguese government seeks to collaborate with the Youth Council and have a thematic working group on children and youth engagement in DRR in the national platform. The Youth Council would serve as an advisory body, especially pertaining to specific programming to strengthen children and youth engagement in preparedness and prevention areas in the DRR cycle.

- **Danish Youth Advisory Panel on COVID-19 crisis response**

In 2021, in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Danish government initiated a youth advisory panel on the Covid-19 pandemic response and aftermath. 15 youth representatives from civil society organisations, student organisations and youth political associations met for over a month and provided 15 recommendations on catering to the needs of children and youth facing the effects of the pandemic. The recommendations have been delivered to the Danish Prime Minister as well as the Minister for Children and Education. The panel made recommendations under four priorities: "learning and well-being", "education, employment and well-being", "communities and well-being" and "vulnerability and well-being".

- **Youth engagement platform in Potenza Province, Italy**

The city has formalized a platform for children and youth engagement by collaborating with the provincial student council. The platform is coordinated by the Ministry of the Education at the national level and by the Regional Office for Education at the regional level. The coordination process leads to including children and youth proposals into the policy making, planning and implementing actions as coordinated by the Province of Potenza regarding SDGs, DRR and Climate Actions.
Annex B: Youth-led and youth-focused organizations working in disaster risk reduction in Europe and Central Asia

The organizations and platforms introduced below highlight youth participation in disaster risk reduction activities in Europe and Central Asia via local, national or international activism, policy and advocacy. The organizations presented are either youth-led with leadership under 30 years old or have active programming relating to children and youth participation in disaster risk reduction with consistent long term goals to empower youth in disaster risk governance. Organizations listed below work on DRR oftentimes aligned with climate action as well as ecology and nature preservation. Their DRR activities relate to prevention and response, and risk communication.

Regional
United Nations Major Group for Children and Youth
https://www.unmgcy.org/drr

UN MGCY is an official partner of the UN DRR, and the primary global facilitators for the engagement of young people in the work of UN DDR and the implementation of the Sendai Framework. It is also the convener of the UN DRR Youth Engagement Platform (YEP) that coordinates and channels youth engagement in policy design, implementation, monitoring, and follow up & review in the areas of advocacy, capacity building, youth action and knowledge, in the UN as it relates to disaster risk reduction. The MGCY facilitates youth participation in the Global and Regional Disaster Risk Reduction Platforms, including the European Forum on Disaster Risk Reduction and their intersessional preparatory meetings. The Major Group for Children and Youth Working Group on Disaster Risk Reduction has a regional Europe-Central Asia children and youth network curated by the European Focal Point (18-30 years old) appointed for a two year term.

Austria
Disaster Competence Network

The Disaster Competence Network works to promote youth leadership in disaster risk reduction through their young scientists platform. DCNA’s Young Scientists Program promotes young scientists in the field of disaster prevention and response and offers them access to our network and knowledge. Every three years, doctoral positions are publicly advertised which are funded by the five lead universities of DCNA (Graz University of Technology, University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences Vienna, University of Innsbruck, Montanuniversität Leoben and University of the Bundeswehr Munich) and for which students can apply. The positions are complementary to the academic strengths of the universities so that students from different disciplines are addressed (natural sciences, technical sciences, social sciences).

Estonia
Young Eagles https://nooredkotkad.ee/
Young Eagles (Noored Kotkad) - voluntary youth organization, which includes young men aged 7-18 years. The activities focus mainly on three areas. The most attention is paid to hiking wisdom and national defense, and then to everyday security. The counterpart for girls is Home Daughters (Kodutütred) - a voluntary youth organization, which includes young women aged 7-18 years. The activities focus mainly on hiking wisdom and national defense, and then to everyday security. Youth organizations focusing on disaster prevention are Scouts and Guides, open to children and youth, while the Estonian Rescue Board (rescue@rescue.ee) organizes youth targeted activities regarding youth preparedness for crisis situations.

France
Banlieues Climat
https://banlieues-climat.org/

“Banlieues Climat” a grassroots youth-led organization that works on environmental (climate and disaster) risk education among the residents of the “popular” neighborhoods, who are usually working class members. The organization seeks to raise awareness, provide risk related scientific information and empower neighborhood residents to participate in local governance and decision-making pertaining to their living quarters. “Banlieues climat” work with those most exposed to the increasing risk of natural disasters such as extreme heat waves (residents of buildings without cool down systems, construction workers and others) to increase their preparedness and to elevate their voices in risk local governance.

Georgia
BRIDGE
http://www.bridge.org.ge/en/about

BRIDGE Founded in 2015, is a spin-off organization of Oxfam in Georgia, with a commitment to sustain grassroot connections and partnerships and supporting agriculture and rural development, advancing gender equality and women’s rights, with a focus on rural women and youth and building resilient communities to reduce poverty and stimulate economic growth. “BRIDGE” together with the international organization “Save the Children” implements a DIPECHO funded project – “Supporting Disaster Risk Reduction in South Caucasus”. The programme aims at increasing resilience and reducing the vulnerability of communities and local institutions in areas prone to natural hazards, with a special emphasis on children, women and youth. It hopes to boost the local capacities of communities to better prepare for and respond to disasters. In addition it will further develop disaster management and risk reduction in education and national security planning. The programme is implemented in close coordination with the government of Georgia as well as regional and local authorities to encourage the development of DRR policies and legislation for disaster risk reduction and sustainable programme interventions.

Italy
Legambiente
https://www.legambiente.it/english-page/

Legambiente is an Italian non-profit organization founded in 1980. It’s the most prominent and widespread environmental association in Italy with two headquarters in Rome and Milan, 20 regional coordination offices and more than 600 local groups of volunteers. Lagambiente’s work includes disaster risk communication and awareness building for climate and man-made disasters. Lagambiente promotes youth participation in climate risk preparedness and prevention as well as empowers them to take social and political actions. It organizes annual Youth Climate Meeting together with partners Fridays For Future, Ultima generazione, Per il Clima Fuori dal Fossile, where hundreds of youth activists gather to demand political accountability from the authorities.

Kyrgyzstan
Students of Kyrgyzstan for a Green Economy
https://www.instagram.com/jerdin_baldary/
https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCgY6mJSdBa_Juk1O48BdNvw/videos

The Students of Kyrgyzstan for a Green Economy carries a mission to inspire, educate and unite the youth of Kyrgyzstan to create a sustainable future for Kyrgyzstan and the planet as a whole. Established in 2018, the youth-led organization has grown into a student movement with over 4000 followers. Their projects cover ecology, education and activism, and we continue to fight for sustainable development in Kyrgyzstan and the world. Their activities relate to disaster risk prevention as they strive to educate people on man-made disaster risks and organize large scale tree planting campaigns to preserve the ecosystems. Among various initiatives, the organization led a regional summer school of Central Asia on “Climate change and security in mountainous areas”. The summer school was rich and varied, with interactive lectures, group projects and hands-on activities allowing participants to dive deeper into climate issues and their impact on mountain safety.

Lithuania
“Po bangom” / “Under the waves”
https://www.pobangom.lt/

“Po bangom” is a youth-led Lithuanian NGO working on increasing awareness of the rising Baltic sea level and increasing natural hazards and risks that come from pollution and climate change. The organization strives to empower children and youth to take preventive actions as well as increase their preparedness for the deterioration of the natural blue ecosystems, biodiversity and surrounding environment. The NGO delivers training and educational workshops for the youth, seeking to empower action. “Po bangom” works with strengthening risk communications in the Lithuanian media and popularizing ecological risk reporting.

Luxembourg
Youth4planet
https://youth4planet.com/
Youthplanet is a non-profit organization based in Hamburg and Luxembourg. It empowers youth to tell their stories related to climate change, ecology and natural hazards. Working together with teachers, children and youth, the team of film-makers strive to create innovative solutions to environmental challenges. They facilitate creative and youth-led risk communications and narrative story-telling, capturing disaster risk realities (environmental and health hazards) through the eyes of children and youth.

**The Netherlands**
Water Youth Network
[https://www.wateryouthnetwork.org/](https://www.wateryouthnetwork.org/)

“Water Youth Network” is a Netherlands based youth-led global network that connects youth activists caring for water issues and blue economies. It has a disaster risk reduction working group that has participated in early warning systems workshops, managing flood risks workshops and understanding risk labs. In this regard, the network supports youth empowerment in water risks related decision-making and youth leadership in prevention, preparedness and response.

**Poland**
The Polish Scouting and Guiding Association
[https://zhp.pl/en](https://zhp.pl/en)

The Polish Scouting and Scouting Association is Poland’s largest youth organization. Throughout its history, ZHP has helped children and youth develop proactive attitudes, learn valuable skills, and acquire knowledge and skills that will help them succeed in the future. The Polish scouts are an active youth force in Polish civil preparedness and disaster response effort. They often help in face of natural hazards, such as floods as well as crisis response situations. In 2022, the ZHP was awarded the Civil Society Prize by the European Economic and Social Committee for their work in the Ukrainian refugee crisis response.

**Spain**
Pau Costa Foundation
[https://www.paucostafoundation.org/en/](https://www.paucostafoundation.org/en/)

Pau Costa Foundation is an international platform on forest fire management operating across Spain. They have a dedicated program MeFITu (Mediterranean forests, fire and you) for children and youth. The program focuses on educating, communicating and raising awareness among students, schools and society in general as well as on recovery aspects in wildfire prone regions, fostering a culture of fire ecology. This project works to reorient the social perception of fire, learning to live with it as another ecological factor, from prevention to self-protection, not only understanding it as a factor of destruction for our forests. The program promotes youth participation in wildfire management models, teaching about prevention investments (sustainable forest management), and self-protection. TOG Support
Centers contribute to the social and psychological healing process of children and youth affected by the disaster in the earthquake region.

**Switzerland**  
International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies  
https://www.ifrc.org/  

The IFRC facilitates youth leadership in risk governance and decision making within its European and global network. It hosts a European Youth Network connecting more than 800,000 volunteers across 54 member countries in Europe and Central Asia. It facilitates sharing of good practices, exchange of experiences and advocates on behalf of its members. The network works closely with the IFRC Youth Commission and operates as a coordinator and contact point for the European region. The European Youth Coordination Committee is responsible for managing youth-led initiatives across Europe and Central Asia through several Working Groups. These groups focus on agreed priorities such as mental health and wellbeing, climate change, migration, humanitarian education and inclusion.

**Türkiye**  
Toplum Gönüllüleri  
https://www.tog.org.tr/en  

TOG is a national youth organization working to promote youth participation in many development areas, including ecology, justice, gender equality and disaster risk response among others. They have an active disaster risk response coordination team and are the founders of a Disaster Risk Platform. The community Volunteer youth respond to the needs in disaster areas along with other NGOs. In 2003, after the earthquake in Bingöl, Community Volunteer youth set out with the motto "Bingöllüyüz Bin Gönüllüyüz (We are from Bingöl, we are a thousand volunteers)" and have been working to help respond to many disasters in Türkiye, including 2011 Van earthquake, 2020 Elazığ earthquake, 2020 Izmir earthquake, 2021 Black Sea flood, 2022 Marmaris fire, 2023 Pazarcık earthquake.

**Ukraine**  
Національна Молодіжна Рада України - НМРУ - NYCUkraine  
https://nycukraine.org/  

The youth-led “National Youth Council of Ukraine” is a national network of student organizations that has initiated a pact of saving the Ukrainian environment from ecocide. The pact has around 600 member organizations, institutions and associations. The pact promotes prevention of deterioration of the natural environment by committing its signatories to make ecological choices and reduce environmental damage. It also aims to promote a culture of building back better in the post-war context by restoring the environment and natural habitats following the destructive and pollutive impacts of war actions.

**The United Kingdom**  
Plan International  
https://plan-uk.org/
The United Kingdom based global organization works on disaster risk reduction and emergency response in the UK and globally. Their approach includes response during disasters, long term recovery support to communities, ensuring education continuity and catering to the hygiene needs of women and girls during emergency situations. Plan International also works with at-risk communities before a disaster happens, enabling them to better prepare for and prevent future disasters, and minimize damage and loss of life. The organization has a Youth Advisory Panel, which is the voice of young people at Plan International UK.