



Local Workshops on Peace with Youth

FINAL REPORT

Project title: “Building Partnership for Youth, Peace, and Security”

Activity name: 5 Local Workshops on Peace: Co-designing youth-driven concept ideas for the "Peace Week 2022"

Venues and location of the local workshops:

1. Tirana, 30-31 October 2021, [United Nations Association Albania \(UNAA\)](#)
2. Pukë, 6-7 November 2022, [Levizja Rinore Puke](#)
3. Elbasan, 20-21 November 2022, [Women Center for Development & Change](#)
4. Korçë, 5-6 December 2022; [Biblioteka “Thimi Mitko”](#)
5. Kamëz, 26-27 February 2022, [Grupi “Ata”](#);

Period of implementation: October 2021- February 2022

Trainer: Flutura Brakaj

Report submitted on: March 2022

General information on the project:

The project “Building Partnership for Youth, Peace, and Security” aims at developing a structured coalition of local CSOs, academia, regional & international partners, to coordinate the advocacy for the introduction of youth-friendly processes, within the governing structures of the Albanian foreign policy, regional cooperation, and civic education domains - paving the way towards the drafting of a National Strategy on Youth, Peace, and Security.

Such a bottom-up process is planned to be supported by accurate data from a nationwide Survey and local workshops, which in parallel, will feed into the design and content of a "Peace Week 2022", which will be transformed into a yearly high-point of Peace talks and activities. It is set to shape the framework under which an array of initiatives and interventions from stakeholders, will



get the stage and gain momentum. Each approach to peace will strive to empower youth and upscale their role in building sustainable communities, at both local and global levels.

Objectives of the local workshops:

The local workshops will form part of the overall "Peace Week 2022" framework, as their main purpose is on youth co-designing ideas for activities, to be organized throughout "Peace Week 2022". Through the engagement of a Youth Trainer, as the key actor, this activity aims to run a peer-to-peer learning methodology. Through utilizing a set of non-formal education techniques, the Youth Trainer is sought to first contribute to the well-informing of the young participants of the local workshops; enable an open and deliberative environment; as well as, induce a safe space for teamwork in developing and pitching concept ideas for "Peace Week 2022" activities. By the end, a set of innovative and impactful proposals will be selected to be supported and implemented along with the rest of the Peace Week program.

Expected learning outcomes of the workshops for the young participants can be found as in the following:

- 1. To better understand and define the concepts of youth, peace, and security;*
- 2. To express and identify a range of gaps, challenges, and needs of the local youth, as per the Albanian context, in regard to Youth, Peace, and Security Agenda (YPS Agenda) pillars;*
- 3. To become familiar with the 5 key pillars of action of the United Nations Security Council (UNSCR) 2250 Resolution, with the work, vision, and mission of UNAA and other actors engaged in promoting peace and security among the Albanian youth;*
- 4. To share, address and reflect on priorities and recommendations for localizing and operationalizing the Youth Peace and Security Agenda, in the country;*
- 5. To jointly formulate and design impactful concept ideas, to be organized throughout "Peace Week 2022"*

Local workshops program and methodology:

As indicated previously, one of the main objectives and outcomes of the local workshops on Peace is the designing and conceptualization of small-scale ideas, initiatives, and activities, to be



organized throughout "Peace Week 2022". In order to achieve this, together with United Nations Association Albania, we designed an Agenda and methodology that enabled young people to first get informed on the concepts of youth, peace, and youngsters' role based on their local contexts and realities. Through interactive non-formal education tools and techniques, we created an open and friendly space for them so as to share their experiences, information on the challenges and concerns of their peers, as well as, navigate through their thoughts and feelings on the importance of peace and security on the personal, interpersonal, and community at local, regional and international level.

The non-formal learning techniques utilized in the program included the following: bonding and team-building exercises, such as name games, getting to know each other exercises, fears, wishes and expectations, ground rules, etc.; brainstorming and mind mapping tools; energizers; working groups and presentations; individual and team reflections (checking-in and out); group discussions; practical examples, etc.

Through the aforementioned methodologies, the young participants were encouraged to create a deliberate, participatory, respectful, and safe environment in which the atmosphere of group work, creativity, learning, and sharing of knowledge in a safe and mutual flow, both from the young people and the coach, prevailed. In order to foster bonding and teamwork in designing impactful initiatives to be selected and implemented throughout "Peace Week 2022," the Agenda was structured into two full days, in a program that lasted from 09:30 to 16:30.

The interactive tools that enabled the young people to (i) talk about the ways in which they promote and practice peace and security in their daily lives, and how to describe inequality in terms of the opportunities offered; (ii) to empathize with those who are disadvantaged in their community (iii) how to work and reflect in groups on the importance of grasping and utilizing the YPS Agenda Pillars, on their efforts to build a culture of peace, tolerance, intercultural and interfaith dialogue, that includes young people; as well as, (iv) how to identify the points that according to their perception bring positive change in society, in promoting peace, conflict transformation, and prevention of violence, were designed referring to the [Manual for trainers in the Western Balkans "Youth Peer education for peacebuilding and conflict transformation"](#), published within the framework of the United Nations (UN), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), and Regional



Youth Cooperation Office (RYCO) joint project “Supporting the Western Balkans collective leadership on reconciliation: building capacity and momentum for the RYCO”.

On the other hand, in the theoretical part of the workshop young people were introduced to the concepts of positive and negative peace, peacekeeping, peacemaking, and peacebuilding, the role of youth as active participants in various initiatives and processes for peacebuilding, UNSCR 2250 and its' five pillars, projects and the vision of UNAA and the mobility programs offered by RYCO, etc.

More details on the methodology used for each consecutive day can be found in part “Annex 2”.

Participants and target group:

For the local workshops, in order to have a diverse pool of participants, together with the Project Team, we created a google form, open to participants aged 16-29 years from Albania where they had the chance to register depending on the location of the workshops that were to be organized close to their community. The call was also shared with our networks and on social media, in order to also reach young people that come from marginalized and underprivileged communities in Albania. Another crucial component for us was the gender representation of the young people, the age balance, as well as, their knowledge, and previous direct and indirect experiences on the topic. Therefore, the total number of young people participating in the 5 Local Workshops on Peace was around 64, taking into consideration the inclusion and representation of age, *gender, religious affiliation, educational background, civic engagement, and also previous participation in similar events on peace and security.* They were selected based on the general data provided and also on their motivation and interest in participating in the local workshops. The participant's pool was mainly high school pupils, students, young activists and leaders, and other interested youth on the topics.

During the workshops, youth proved to be active participants and several dynamics were observed and noted down, as indicated in the following:



- (i) Young people coming from Tirana, Elbasan, Pukë, Korça, Kamëz, and the nearest towns or rural areas, displayed different perceptions of peace (and its dimensions) as well as security, based on their realities and challenges at individual and community levels;
- (ii) As a consequence, when designing local initiatives they took into consideration such realities and reflected on addressing the challenges and changing the situations that hinder the culture of peace, in their own social environments. Having in mind that even in a small community there are similarities and differences, youth were also mindful of the needs, beliefs, values, and attitudes of others;
- (iii) Even when youth stand by their own beliefs, they are still able to grasp another peer's perception and be compassionate towards it. At the same time, when being in the setting of local workshops with different participants' profiles and backgrounds, they developed a set of soft skills highlighting emotional intelligence, trust, empathy, positive attitudes, solidarity among others.
- (iv) By working in a team, young people enhanced their leadership skills and competencies in their role as peacebuilders and contributors in decision-making processes or initiatives at their family, community, local, regional and international levels;

Concept ideas from young people:

Young people worked on the concept ideas on the second day of the program within their working groups and got inspired by other existing local initiatives. The work was organized having in mind the following principles:

- a) The development of the concept-ideas should take into account youth activism and engagement of their peers in peacebuilding initiatives, where the focus is either on a specific target group or more than one;
- b) When designing ideas, young people should be consulted and refer to the challenges, gaps as well as needs at the local level, in order to speak up about, advocate for and bring forward possible solutions;
- c) Young people are encouraged to design innovative initiatives that address and reflect on recommendations and priorities in the field of Youth, Peace, and Security through art and



creativity, information and education, awareness-raising, reflection, advocacy, lobbying, etc.

- d) The cooperation, participation, and support of local structures, institutions, and mechanisms for Peace Week 2022 are encouraged;
- e) The young people were introduced to the work, mission, programs, and initiatives of the UNAA and RYCO as two contributors to peace and security for young people in Albania and the region;

With regard to the concept ideas and initiatives designed by youth, due to their different realities and contexts, below is indicated the specified information to each of the local workshops.

Local Workshop #1:

The first local workshop was organized in Tirana, Albania on October 30-31, 2021 and was attended by 14 participants, mainly students, but also high-school pupils, young professionals, etc. Some participants were motivated by their previous engagement and activism in civil society or their communities, and some of them had an interest in youth empowerment and development and wanted to be more involved in similar activities that are offered in Tirana. Therefore, we noted the several perspectives and constructiveness they brought into the discussions, the interactivity in addressing common challenges and needs of the Tirana context and they also collaborated and produced creative concept ideas that were very inclusive.

Given the dynamics of the group, their high motivation and dedication during the workshop, as well as the fact that Tirana is the capital and is viewed as multicultural, the main topics of the concept ideas designed by the participants were:

- a. *Sustainable peace and advocacy with local actors, stakeholders, and relevant institutions;*
- b. *Inclusion of marginalized groups, and especially of young people without parental care that live in Residential Institutions- understanding of peace in a broader context, where equality and inclusiveness prevail.*
- c. *Conflicts between cultures and their differences, as well as social awareness of differences within and outside the community, our roles, values, and perceptions we have towards diversity;*



- d. *Presentation of “unusual” situations of groups of teenagers, high school students, and teachers in the form of social experiments. How to make society aware of the importance of addressing adolescents' concerns in their daily realities?*

Local Workshop #2:

Following the successful implementation of the first workshop, the second one was organized in Puke during 6-7 November 2021 with the support of the Levizja Rinore Puke that closely worked with the young people there. We welcomed 20 young people from Puka and the rural areas around. The youth of Puka was a more compact group where most of them were familiar and already socialized with each other because Puka is a small town and most of the young people had an active role in the joint activities organized with “Levizja Rinore Puke”. As a result, their definition of peace, security, and community needs was reflected as similar. Their approach was related to the creation of opportunities for young people to express themselves in creative, educational, and youth-related activities.

Given the dynamics of the group and their approach to peace and security the main topics of the concept ideas designed by the participants were:

- a. *Discovering and further developing the talents of young people in the fields of education, creativity, sports, literature, etc. - with a focus on young people located in rural areas who due to impossibility or local mentality have not been given much opportunity;*
- b. *Raising awareness of young people but also relevant actors who work with young people such as teachers, representatives of institutions, youth workers, etc. on the importance of peace culture and the involvement of young people in these processes;*
- c. *A “Peace March” initiative, aiming to bring together over 200 participants that include young people, citizens, important community actors, etc. to highlight the social and solidarity spirit that the city should have, especially young people;*

Local Workshop #3:

In continuation, the third workshop found us in the city of Elbasan, which is as close as Tirana, and at the same time with different dynamics and concerns of the young participants who varied



and had the emphasis elsewhere. A total of 14 young people from Elbasan and the surrounding towns joined the workshop that took place on the premises of the Women Center for Development & Change. Most of their participants were high school students based in Elbasan, but also young activists. Young people were very energetic and passionate about speaking out loud about their individual concerns but also focusing on those challenges and needs that appear in large percentages in their community and that directly targeted young people.

Given their backgrounds, as well the perspectives shaped by their local realities, the topics and initiatives tackled include the following:

- a. *"Peace is the way" - Counseling and assistance through online platforms for young people facing emotional distress focused on recognizing and addressing the mental health issues of young people nowadays.*
- b. *"Family relationships" - Raising parents' awareness about the problems encountered in parent-child relationships. The role that parents, school psychologists, social workers, and the wider community have in their well-being.*
- c. *Bloom ISHC (Informative Sexual Harassment Corner- how to train young people to raise awareness for, inform and create a safe online or offline space for reporting sexual violence.*

Local Workshop #4

The fourth workshop was held in the city of Korca on 5-6 December 2021. Most of the young people informed us at the last minute about the impossibility of participating for individual reasons, so the activity took place with the participation of 8 young people. As a result, the workshop was very focused on the participating group, high school, and university students, who were given the space to share their thoughts and contributions on peace. Unlike other cities, young people from Korça point out that in their city there are no similar non-formal education opportunities as the workshops and therefore, they were very genuine in their involvement in addressing common community issues as in the following:

- a. *Awareness and creation of spaces where young people can talk about matters of peace and security, focusing on how the impact on their future and their role within this framework.*



- b. *Facing violence and its impact, first in the family and then in society, school, and beyond - the focus is on familiarizing young people in high schools who are located in rural areas and are prone to experience violence with relevant concepts.*
- c. *To get acquainted more deeply with the topic of discrimination, hate speech, and how we can react to these phenomena encountered by peers - educational and interactive exercises for young people in the city of Korca.*

Local Workshop #5:

The last workshop on peace was organized on 26-27 February 2022, at the premises of “Grupi Ata” in Kamez, with 8 participants. The participants' pools included high school pupils, students, and activists of the “Grupi Ata”. During the workshop, the diversity of young people was noticed, where most of them were engaged and had an active role in various social causes. They were more interested in learning more about the topics of Peace and Security and in particular the interest in getting acquainted with UNSC Resolution 2250, about which none of them had full knowledge or had been introduced earlier. For this workshop we had only two working groups that addresses the below-mentioned needs and topics for the concept ideas:

- a. *Involvement of Kamez High School Student Governments and other youth in a peaceful march with statements of peace, followed by the cleaning of one of the nearby parks.*
- b. *Advocacy activity of students related to the shortcomings of their transportation to access quality education. How can we make the structures of the respective institutions aware of such student challenges?*

In conclusion, the criteria used to evaluate and select the local initiative proposed by youth in all 5 local workshops are as follows:

1. Theme and purpose of the initiative designed;
2. Impact targeted group/s and community engagement;
3. Innovation and the methodology of the initiative;
4. Feasibility of the initiative;
5. Responsibility of the working group;



Participant's evaluation and feedback:

Most of the participants evaluated the local workshops as very useful for them. They were of the opinion that the non-formal education approach should be used more in working with young people in Albania, to allow them to be the main actors in sharing the challenges, recommendations, and priorities in the field of Youth Peace and Security as well as taking actions toward them.

The method used to share the evaluation and feedback on the second day was "Group Reflection". The young people were given the opportunity to share their assessment on the local workshop for the content and the acquired knowledge, logistics, methodology, dynamics, trainer, etc. When doing so, they were also encouraged to make comparisons of the thoughts they wrote during the first day in the "Bag of Expectations and Fears" exercise, to see if their expectations were met.

According to the feedback shared, many participants felt more aware, as well as, empowered to take a leading role in peacebuilding efforts, conflict resolution, and security issues, starting with the small steps that need to be taken starting by themselves, their families, peers, school facilities, work colleagues, mass media, the surrounding community, and beyond. They all expressed inspiration to the 5 Pillars for the action of the 2250 Resolution: participation, protection, prevention, partnerships, and disengagement and reintegration.

In addition, in their innovative and genuine initiatives, young people call on all relevant actors to create mechanisms for promoting a culture of peace in Albanian society. They emphasize the importance of meaningful involvement of young people in peacebuilding processes and the creation of strategies for its sustainment, keeping in mind young people not in employment, education or training NEETS, disadvantaged and marginalized youth groups. More concrete feedback extracted from the reflection and evaluation sessions of the local workshops follows:

Methodology and program:

- a. They perceived the program of the workshop days as well-structured, interactive, and dynamic;



- b. The information, knowledge, and motivation received/sparked by the workshop were valuable, and for some even new;
- c. Many evaluated "One step forward" as one of their favorite exercises that included empathy, emotionality, and a sense of reality in Albania. Thus, young attendees enjoyed this aspect of being vulnerable;
- d. The group work, productivity, and focus on each workshop session were evaluated as very good;
- e. The opportunity to discuss and debate constructively with one another on social topics was appreciated;
- f. Young participants enjoyed being a diverse group and the opportunity to socialize with other energetic peers- there was inclusion, acceptance, and respect;
- g. Most of them liked the non-formal education exercises, tools, and methods used, in particular energizers and team-building games;
- h. Many enjoyed the team spirit, positive energy, connection, and bonding with one another, the UNAA Team, and the Peer Trainer;
- i. It was expressed that they felt free, comfortable, and open in regards to sharing their thoughts, feelings as well as ideas;

Logistics:

- a. Young people were thankful and appreciated the logistical aspects, the food quality, etc.
- b. They evaluated the very good communication, coordination, support given by the UNAA team;
- c. Locations/venues where the meetings took place, were youth-friendly and accessible;

Other aspects to be taken into consideration and/or be improved:

- a. Have a higher number of participants for future local workshops- referring to the cities with fewer participants (Kamza and Korca);
- b. Consider a more flexible schedule for youth that have other engagements;



- c. Include more exercises where young people get to know each other on a personal level;
- d. Consider dedicating more space to discussion and debates on the YPS Agenda;

Trainers' conclusions, recommendations, and lessons learned for the local workshops:

1. Most of the youth had different perspectives, perceptions, and understanding of peace, based on their local contexts and realities. However, most of them young people claimed to have a lack of information regarding the pillars of UNSC Resolution 2250 and its 5 pillars and, consequently, their role in peacebuilding processes.

To offer and enable more opportunities and training of youth on informing and raising awareness of the importance of the UNSCR 2250. That way, they will be active contributors and will take leading roles in building and establishing long-lasting peace in their social environments.

2. In their working groups and reflections, many young people and especially high-school pupils addressed several sensible challenges that were related to sexual violence and harassment and other types of violence, marriages at an early age, mental health, gender-based violence, discrimination, hate speech, etc.

To invest in more participatory and inclusive capacity-building initiatives and activities that aim at empowering and building trust for vulnerable groups, such as young girls and women, young people without parental care, young people coming from rural areas, NEETS, and other underprivileged groups.

3. Young participants stated that they appreciated the work, mission, programs, and initiatives of UNAA, and other actors such as RYCO, on the YPS Agenda. However, young people want to expand their contribution to the peacebuilding and social cohesion processes in their communities. Next to this, they also share a vision for peace at the regional level.

Young people should be introduced to many more relevant, diverse, and impactful organizations as well as mechanisms that influence peace processes at the local or regional level. They should be more aware of the meaningful partnerships, networking, and participation in programs, mobility, and projects that recognize the role of young people in conflict prevention and resolution, as fundamental to their success.



4. Young people discussed among themselves about having more space and opportunities for non-formal education activities (Peer-to-Peer approach) on the thematics of peace, tolerance, intercultural and interfaith dialogue involving young people, etc. They emphasized the need for creative and innovative activities initiated and implemented by them.

Young people should take ownership and implement more peer-to-peer education activities and youth-led initiatives pursuant to non-formal education and learning techniques. All the reflected concept ideas in this report, the input, and insights, as well as the impact they will have when being implemented, underline the need to reinforce and amplify these roles and such formats in sustaining peace.

5. Young people want and can have an important role in peacebuilding efforts, and this was discussed during the reflection and working groups. However, they also call upon cooperation with many key stakeholders that work with and for them such as the teachers, parents, civil society, governmental institutions, local structures, decision-makers, etc.

All the aforementioned stakeholders and authorities should closely cooperate with young leaders on the advancement of the Youth, Peace, and Security Agenda in Albania, and ensure young people's meaningful participation in decision-making processes, policies, and strategies related to the topics. Resolution 2250 demands shared responsibility, and as such, all relevant societal actors should stand, work, and act together, hand in hand with young people.

The project is supported by the Public Affairs Office of the US Embassy in Tirana, through its' Democracy Commission Small Grants program. The opinions, findings, conclusions, and recommendations expressed in the report are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of the State Department.

