

Meeting report

Topic: The role of youth in preventing organised crime

Date: 21 May 2026

Time: 15:00-17:00 CET

Overview:

The regional webinar “The role of youth in preventing organised crime” was organized as part of the EU Youth, Peace and Security Network’s regional series. The meeting brought together young peacebuilders and participants from different regions to discuss the relationship between organised crime, youth vulnerability, and the role of young people in advancing prevention and peacebuilding efforts.

The session opened with a presentation by Elena Borgis, university student in Global Law and Transnational Legal Studies, who explored the phenomenon of organised crime and the mechanisms through which criminal organisations recruit and influence young people. Drawing from Roberto Saviano’s books *Gomorra* and *La Paranza dei Bambini*, the presentation highlighted how social exclusion, lack of opportunities, poverty, and weak institutional support create conditions that increase youth vulnerability to criminal networks.

Organized crime recruitment among young people cannot be addressed only through repression. Long-term prevention requires local engagement, education, inclusion, and community support. One of the main objectives after this discussion will be to strengthen connections with communities in Southern Europe particularly affected by organized crime dynamics, especially regions such as Campania and Calabria in Southern Italy. We aim to develop concrete youth-led projects based on peer-to-peer prevention, positive role models, and local community engagement.

Particular attention should be given to empowering young people directly affected by social vulnerability, exclusion, and criminal influence, helping them become actors of prevention inside their own communities. Future initiatives could include:

- youth mentorship programs
- peer education activities
- safe community spaces
- local workshops on prevention and legality (for instance sport or music activities)
- cooperation with schools, associations, and local organizations

Another important objective is creating protection and support mechanisms for young people engaged in prevention work, especially local youth activists and role models working directly on the territory.

The second presentation was delivered by Giampaolo Servida, a young professional with a background in International Relations, Crisis Management, and Intelligence Gathering from Leiden University. His intervention focused on possible responses and prevention strategies aligned with the Youth, Peace and Security agenda, exploring transnational and digital realms. He emphasised the importance of narrative intelligence and the new concept of cyberpeacebuilding. When the international community talks about cybersecurity, the dialogue almost exclusively focuses on technical firewalls, infrastructure defense, and maintaining what is essentially a 'negative peace,' which is just the baseline absence of active cyber warfare. Cyber Peacebuilding, by contrast, explicitly strives for 'positive peace' within the digital realm. It means actively building an online ecosystem rooted in democratic resilience, the absolute protection of digital human rights, social justice, and the systematic reduction of structural inequalities that digital predators exploit.

To bring this vision into reality, Giampaolo has formulated a comprehensive project proposal aimed at building a global Coalition on Cyber Peacebuilding, recognizing that an isolated approach will fail. To shift cyberspace toward positive peace, we must break down individualistic corporate and institutional silos and adopt a holistic, 'whole-of-society' approach. This proposed coalition intends to bridge the gap between civil society organizations, public state institutions, and private technological entities.

The webinar concluded with an interactive Q&A session during which participants reflected on the situation in their own regions and shared experiences related to youth vulnerability, insecurity, and organised crime. The session concluded with a collective reflection on the importance of empowering young people not only as beneficiaries of peace and security policies, but as active actors and partners in prevention, resilience-building, and sustainable peace efforts within their communities and regions.

The Youth, Peace and Security framework can offer an important approach to tackle these problems by promoting participation, trust-building, social inclusion, and community resilience. Finally, tackling organized crime also means addressing its root causes: lack of opportunities, social exclusion, weak institutional trust, and the normalization of violence within some social environments.