



**EURASIA  
PARTNERSHIP  
FOUNDATION**

**Building a Young Constituency for Peace across the South Caucasus  
and Turkey**

**Youth Perceptions End-line Survey**

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## Executive Summary

A web based youth perception survey was developed by EPF and conducted amongst 100 current and former Youth Bank members in Armenia during August 2012. The purpose of the survey was to measure the level of civic activism of project participants and their readiness and perceptions of work in the cross-cultural environment, especially with young people from conflicting regions. The results of the survey were quite interesting. Respondents demonstrated their will and readiness to continue working on common projects with young people from neighboring countries, but at the same time expressed their concerns about difficulties of working on joint projects particularly with young people coming from Turkey and Azerbaijan. It was clear that still many youngsters are not open to communication and stereotypes still prevail in their perceptions.

Survey demonstrated that there are major improvements between relations of young people from Armenia and Turkey, while there are still many obstacles when it comes to communication between youth from Armenia and Azerbaijan. Political propaganda in both societies largely affects young people and they become victims of hate speech, which is commonly accepted.

Taking this into consideration, many cross-border meetings were organized in frames of Youth Bank project which gathered young people from conflicting areas and gave them chance to directly communicate, speak to one another, break stereotypes and change their perspectives and attitudes. These meetings brought together young grant-makers from Armenia, Azerbaijan, Turkey and other conflicting zones and were aimed at facilitating engagement of young people in peace-building processes and developing friendly relationships and regional networks.

In order to evaluate the effectiveness of these meetings and to find out to which extent the understanding between young people was enhanced after the evaluation of the first survey, another youth perceptions survey was conducted in Armenia, in April 2013. The end-line survey, which involved 100 young respondents, aims at measuring the change in cross-cultural perceptions of participants during the period September 2012 – April 2013.

The second online survey involved 100 young respondents - current and former Youth Bank members aged between 14-32 from 10 Youth Bank Committees based in Yerevan, Gyumri, Vanadzor, Eghegnadzor, Aparan, Armavir, Martuni, Ararat, Kotayq and Dilijan.

Young people were asked to respond to 15 questions in completely anonymous way without mentioning name and other personal details. The main objective of the end-line survey is measuring the change in the level of trust among young people from conflicting sides for designing future cross community collaboration projects. Besides, it is interesting to see to what extent young people changed their perceptions, stereotypes and prejudices about one another.

The emphasis of the survey was on the change of young people's attitudes towards peers from neighboring conflicting countries and their perceptions of the “otherness” after direct communication and meetings with them.

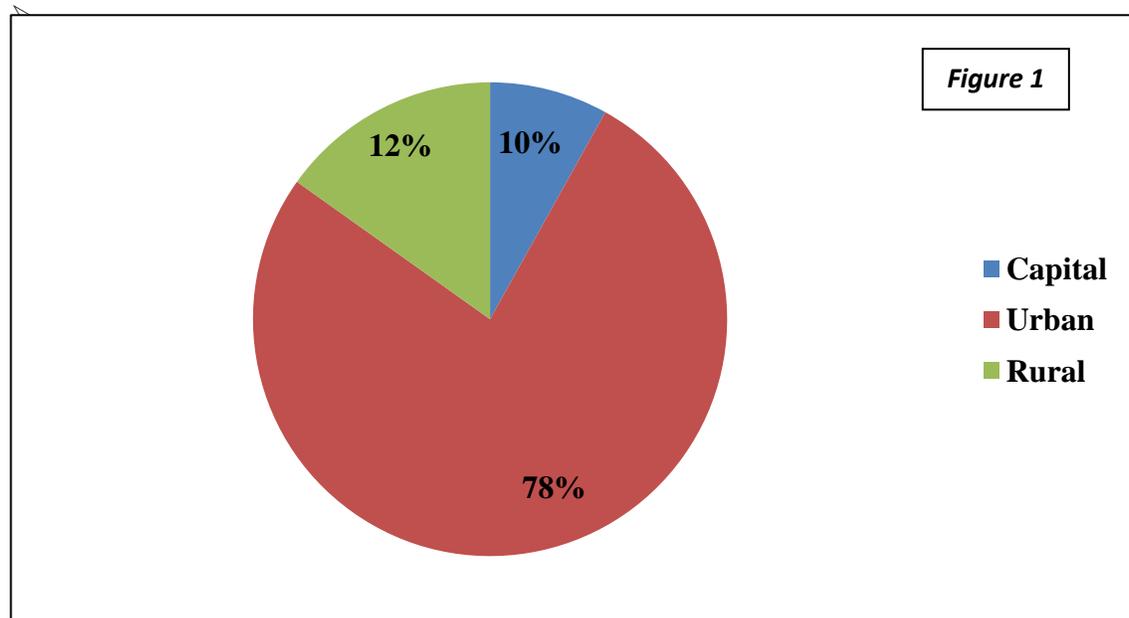
The information generated from this post - survey was compared to the information gained during the first survey, which helped to see the full picture and compare attitudes and experiences of young people before and after their direct communication. This was helpful to see the change in their ideological convictions and general values.

Both quantitative and qualitative methods were used and analyses were based on information from respondents. All data was gathered from respondents.

### Demography of respondents

40 male and 60 female Youth Bank Members participated in the Survey.

➤ **Area of residence**



## 1. Youth Bank Intercultural Impact

One of the expected results of the Youth Bank program is to foster trust among young people from conflicting sides and promote positive perceptions across borders in the South Caucasus and Turkey. Youth Bank Committees in South Caucasus and Turkey try to promote cooperation around common agendas and identify areas for future cross community collaboration.

The YB model is used as a tool for cross-cultural communication between young people from conflict areas and through different cross-community meetings Youth Bank members are able to raise their awareness on the realities of the existing conflicts and number of historical and political issues between Armenia and Azerbaijan on one side, and Armenia and Turkey on another.

One of the main objectives of this youth perception end-line survey is to measure the change in the level of trust among young people from conflicting sides after many cross community projects and meetings as and to see whether personal meetings help young people to change their perceptions, stereotypes and prejudices about one another. Measuring of Intercultural Impact of Youth Bank on young people will help to continue an effective implementation of cross-border initiatives and youth dialogue projects.

Survey shows that more people got the possibility to interact with peers from neighboring countries. According to the end-line survey:

- 73% of YB youngsters have had a chance to meet and interact at least 1 hour with people from Georgia, while till August 2012 only 70% had this chance.
- 73% of YB youngsters have had a chance to meet and interact at least 1 hour with people from Turkey, while till August 2012 only 68% had this chance.
- 54% of YB youngsters have had a chance to meet and interact at least 1 hour with people from Azerbaijan, while till August 2012 only 40% had this chance

According to the end-line survey, 75% believes in the positive influence of direct meetings and no respondent mentioned that these meetings are useless. This picture is slightly different from the previous one, when only 70% of Youth Bank Members found direct communication and interaction with representatives from above mentioned countries as a positive influence on their perceptions.

New survey perfectly shows that less Youth - Bankers have stereotypes about the young people across the other side of the border and direct meetings help young people to overcome their stereotypes and change their negative attitudes.

- In 2012 survey, 40% of young people mentioned that they changed their attitudes toward Turks after meeting them directly, while new survey shows that 54% of young people changed their attitudes.
- Very positive change can be seen in the change of attitudes of Armenian youngsters towards their Azerbaijani peers. Last year only 23% of young people mentioned that they changed their attitudes toward Azerbaijanis after meeting them directly, while this year the percentage is higher – 37%.
- After direct meetings and cross-border projects implemented in the period September 2012 – March 2013, 64% of respondents think that personal, direct meetings help to break stereotypes about each other. 75% think that joint work is the best tool to break stereotypes. 24% believes that communication in social networks is also helpful to break stereotypes. Finally, 34% think that rest and leisure activities with each other are the best tools to overcome obstacles in the communication.
- It is interesting to see that young people mentioned that internet / online communication is not an efficient tool to break stereotypes. Sometimes online hate speech even enforces already existing stereotypes.

Before their direct communication, young people were mostly thinking that they cannot build a friendship, cannot trust each other and work together. At the same time one of the most spread stereotypes is the opinion that people in conflicting countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan and Turkey) are completely different, they have different lifestyles, ways of thinking, customs and traditions. Even though each of these nationalities is unique, after people to people contact most of the young people see also similarities and try to build communication on their similarities.

Usually young people are very closed and sensitive when it comes to the discussion of conflict with Azerbaijan or historical issues with Turkey. Some of them prefer to bypass any discussion on this topic in order to keep friendly and amiable relations. For others, these discussions help to have better understanding of the conflict and be aware of different viewpoints on the same topic.

Collected data shows that instead of 48% of Youth Bank members that have had an opportunity to sincerely open or attend a discussion about the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan with representatives from Azerbaijan, we have 58%.

66% of Youth Bank members have had an opportunity to sincerely open or attend a discussion about historical issues between Armenia and Turkey with representatives from Turkey instead of 46%. For most of participants these discussions helped to realize the variety of viewpoints, but for some caused unnecessary tensions.

First survey showed that even though the majority of Youth Bankers are open and ready for communication and discussions of sensitive topics with their peers from Turkey and Azerbaijan, there is still big tension and obstacles in their communication.

- 42% of respondents wouldn't like to see Azerbaijanis as their neighbors.
- 28% of respondents wouldn't like to see Turks as their neighbors.
- 31% of respondents wouldn't like to see Kurds as their neighbors.

New survey demonstrates new interesting numbers.

- 25% of respondents wouldn't like to see Azerbaijanis as their neighbors.
- 18% of respondents wouldn't like to see Turks as their neighbors.
- 15% of respondents wouldn't like to see Kurds as their neighbors.

Findings of the very first survey confirmed that YB members would not like to see a woman of their ethnicity marry Muslim man.

- 38% of respondents will disapprove a woman of their ethnicity who marries an Azerbaijani man.
- 27% of respondents will disapprove a woman of their ethnicity who marries a man from Turkey.
- 15% of respondents will disapprove a woman of their ethnicity who marries a Kurd.
- 7% of respondents will disapprove a woman of their ethnicity who marries an Iranian man.

Anyway, this situation slightly changes. New numbers show that youngsters are more tolerant towards inter-religious marriages.

- 27% of respondents will disapprove a woman of their ethnicity who marries an Azerbaijani man.
- 24% of respondents will disapprove a woman of their ethnicity who marries a man from Turkey.
- 15% of respondents will disapprove a woman of their ethnicity who marries a Kurd.
- 12% of respondents will disapprove a woman of their ethnicity who marries an Iranian man.

However, YB members are still sensitive when it comes to mixed marriages between Armenian women and Muslim men. There is also growing percentage of young people that don't want to see Armenian women married to Iranian men. Survey shows that unlikely other nationalities, the number of respondents who will disapprove a woman of their ethnicity who marries an Iranian grows.

Participants of both before and after surveys were asked to assess how much cultural proximity they feel towards other nationalities. From the first survey it was obvious that majority of young people feel great cultural proximity towards *Russians* (4%), *Georgians* (44%) and *Greeks* (31%). Meanwhile, they felt very small cultural proximity towards Turks (21%), Iranians (19%) and Jews (15%). More interestingly, Youth Bank members didn't feel any cultural proximity towards *Azerbaijanis*. This was an interesting phenomenon, because even though there are many cultural similarities between these 2 countries and they are in the same region, young people do not want to be similar with the "enemy" or share the same values.

In the after-survey, there is a big change when it comes to conflicting countries in the region. Most of the young people feel cultural proximity with *Georgians* (62%), *Russians* (44%) and *Greeks* (38%). At the same time, they feel quite big cultural proximity towards Turks (40%), Iranians (25%) and Jews (28%). In contrast to the first survey Youth Bank members feel some cultural proximity towards *Azerbaijanis* (20 %).

Before joint projects more than a half of YB members (55%) thought it would be very difficult to work on a joint task with young people from Azerbaijan and about 33% of them think it would be very difficult to work on a joint task with young people from Turkey.

New survey shows another picture. Only 22% of respondents think that there can be difficulties in implementing a joint task with their colleagues from Turkey. 34% thinks it would be very difficult to work on a joint task with young people from Azerbaijan.

- 25% of young people think it would very difficult to work on a joint task with Kurds.
- 26% of young people think it would very difficult to work on a joint task with *Indians* and *Chinese*.
- 16% of young people think it would very difficult to work on a joint task with *Iranians*.

Participants of the survey were asked about their opinion about reasons and causes of conflicts between nations. In the survey from August 2012 most of the participants think that “territory” is the main source of the conflict. The survey from May 2013 shows that young people consider propaganda and intolerance as main causes of the conflict. Additionally, they mentioned also common history and collective memory which hinder conflicting parties to go forward.

The last question of this section tried to find out the opinion of YB members whether by cooperating with young people from neighboring countries they can influence conflict resolution process and normalization of the relations.

In 2012 - 83% of Youth Bank members believe that by cooperating with young people from neighboring countries they can influence conflict resolution process and normalization of the relations.

In 2013 – 90% of Youth Bank members believe that by cooperating with young people from neighboring countries they can influence conflict resolution process and normalization of the relations.