

Young Voices of the oiip

The young voices of the oiip are current interns who shared their perspectives on pressing international issues, sources of hope for the future, and recommendations for world leaders.

Question: What are important international issues which seem to be overlooked at the moment?

The European migration discourse continues to be heavily shaped by the image of “Fortress Europe”—a perspective that reduces displacement to a question of arrival, control, and the crossing of nation-state borders. However, by limiting public awareness of all forms of forced mobility the political and policy-focused lens is not only drastically narrowed but the (lived) realities of global mobility are systematically obscured.

Internally displaced persons (IDPs) are one such overlooked dimension. Although internal displacement is the most common form of forced mobility globally, it routinely falls outside the scope of international protection regimes and public attention. Those uprooted within countries such as Sudan, the DRC, or Myanmar are often left without recognition or adequate support. Even within Europe, disasters such as the Turkey earthquakes or Southern European wildfires have triggered large-scale internal displacement – yet remain marginal in migration debates.

At the same time, the assumption that migration always moves northwards persists, distorting the scale and complexity of South–South mobility. Countries like Turkey, Iran, or Uganda host some of the world’s largest refugee populations yet are often reduced to footnotes in Eurocentric perspectives.

When mobility is only recognised at Europe’s borders, we risk misunderstanding not only where people move but what displacement actually entails and who it most deeply affects.

Constanze List, Austria, MSc Migration, Mobility and Development (SOAS) and MA Political Science (University of Vienna)



Young voices



Question: What are important international issues which seem to be overlooked at the moment?

A Russian decree ordering the expulsion of Ukrainian citizens by September 10 adds a new facet to the ongoing Russification of the occupied regions. This comes in addition to Russia ending religious freedom for members of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church and the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, public use of the Ukrainian language, and any possibility of self-identification as Ukrainian. Europe has not witnessed ethnic cleansing on this scale since 1945. Meanwhile, the use of cluster munitions delivered by Iskander-M missiles in Sumy on April 13—a region not under Russian control—indicates that Russia’s neo-imperial ambition to annex all parts of Ukraine remains intact. Although Russia’s war in Ukraine is a military disaster, its underlying goal of weakening Western democracy is continually reinforced through the spread of fear and terror. The implications for other nations should not be underestimated: why should any country surrender its nuclear weapons again, if this is the outcome of Ukraine doing so under the 1994 Budapest Memorandum?

Benjamin Beinlich, Austria, Master's (Mag. iur.) in Law (University of Vienna)

voices

Question: What makes you hopeful in 2025?

In 2025, I find hope in the renewed visibility and resonance of civic engagement in defence of democratic principles. What I find hopeful is not the condition of institutions, but the political will people express where institutions fall short.

The large-scale protests in Serbia illustrate this development. Led by a younger generation and directed against an increasingly illiberal government, the demonstrations articulate more than just discontent. They reveal a societal undercurrent of democratic commitment that has not disappeared but rather persisted beneath the surface. Their clarity and scale bring into focus the civic energy that emerges most vividly when democratic participation via elections is constrained or ineffective.

What gives me hope is the democratic potential these mobilisations reveal. They point to agency and political imagination that continue to exist, even where formal channels seem ineffective. This potential may not guarantee immediate change, but it preserves the very space where democratic renewal remains not only imaginable, but within reach.

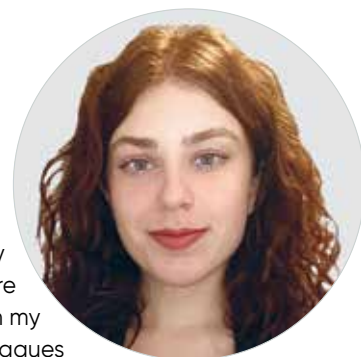
Laura Füsselberger,
Austria, Integrated
Masters's Degree in Law
(University of Vienna)

**Question: What are important international issues which seem to be overlooked at the moment?**

To me, violence prevention education with a gender and sexuality focus is still being neglected by institutions and schools in most countries, undermining its potential to foster equity, non-violence, diversity, and social transformation. My research has focused on understanding the role of education in preventing gender-based violence with a gender justice and sexual diversity approach. Grassroot groups in Colombia, Latin America and the world are currently advocating for pedagogies that seek to reduce violence in communities. However, institutions and schools are not taking this matter seriously, showing a disconnect between what is taught in community-based education and formal schooling sites. I believe that bridging this gap is a matter that requires more close attention.

Question: What makes you hopeful in 2025?

In times of hardship and political uncertainty, such as today, people with similar values and aspirations motivate me to carry on working toward a better future and social change. I find hope in my peers at the university and colleagues at the institute who strive to contribute to social justice, freedom, and transparency. Their unwavering passion and optimism are contagious. Amid ongoing armed conflicts and the erosion of democracies around the world, I am surrounded by people who remain committed to fighting for progress and a brighter future. These young, inspiring individuals give me hope that the future may not be so unpromising after all.

**Question: What would you recommend world leaders to do?**

In my view, world leaders need to be more present in the daily lives of citizens and listen to their appeals more carefully. They should pay special attention to minority groups and those affected by policies that may benefit one part of the nation but harm another. In my opinion, the biggest mistake decision-makers make today, is placing their self-interest above social well-being without realizing the adverse consequences of such actions.

Tata Beraia, Georgia, MA Programme in Public
Policy (Central European University)



Given the current political situation in the US (and its global implications), in which diversity, equity, and inclusion programs are being targeted, hate speech and discrimination are promoted, and sexual and gender minorities are losing their rights, paying more attention to the role of education in preventing the continuation of violent beliefs, discourses, practices, and politics seems to be imperative nowadays. Learning from feminist, queer, and decolonial epistemologies advanced in grassroot education would be an opportunity to think about violence prevention education and consider how schools can be partners in challenging normalized violence and transforming violent sociocultural paradigms.

Manuela Novoa Villada, Colombia, graduated from the MA in
Critical Gender Studies (Central European University) in 2024 ➤



Question: What are important international issues which seem to be overlooked at the moment?

In today's world, it seems that even diplomatic communications increasingly mimic the erratic and angry language of sensationalism that dominates social media. Charged terms like "brutal aggression" now shape global discourse and further deepen divisions. Euphemisms like "unavoidable collateral damage" downplay civilian deaths and frame these losses as accidents. We often overlook how diplomatic language itself can fuel conflict or pave the way for peace. In diplomacy, a single, carefully crafted phrase can decide the outcome of negotiations. Precise and empathetic language is a necessity—not a luxury—where every nuance can tip the scale. Take the Colombian peace process (2012–2016) as an example: by replacing divisive, dehumanizing language with terms like "victims of both sides" negotiators transformed a seemingly deadlocked conflict into a breakthrough towards peace.

The solution lies in language that is both emotionally regulated and intentional. Calm, humanizing phrases can reframe crises as shared challenges, rather than battles to be won. Official statements must replace divisive narratives like "us versus them" with hopeful ones like "building a common future." Diplomatic language must prioritize human dignity over political posturing. What once seemed like common sense is now, paradoxically, missing from the very conversations where it matters most: a reflection of the double-edged sword of diplomatic language.

Tara Petkov, Austria, Master's (Mag. iur.) in Law (Johannes Kepler University) and Bachelor's degree in Political Science (University of Vienna)

Question: What are important international issues that currently seem to be overlooked?

Since his return to the White House, U.S. President Donald Trump has repeatedly called for a return to nuclear arms control talks with Russia and China. His administration's push for smaller government and increased government efficiency—most prominently represented by the work of the Department of Government Efficiency—includes a push to reduce the United States colossal defense budget. President Trump has expressed a desire to negotiate reductions not just in the costly nuclear stockpiles, but also the defense budgets of all three countries, although these claims have been undermined by his proposal of the largest defense budget in history.

Despite these assertions of a desire for a renewed movement towards international arms control with Russia and China, President Trump's second term has given rise to increased tensions with China due to the introduction of new, extremely high tariffs. Even prior to the trade war's beginning, Xi Jinping expressed skepticism about Trump's intentions and declared that he would only participate in such arms reductions if the US did so first. The trade war is unlikely to have improved his views on the matter. With regard to Russia, although the Trump administration has drawn itself closer to the Kremlin than any American presidential administration in living history, the results of American-led negotiations to end the Russia-Ukraine War suggest that Russia will be unwilling to pursue arms reduction policies in the short term, based on its lack of willingness to offer meaningful concessions as a part of the peace process.

Altogether, other policy issues such as the administration's tariff policy are overshadowing potential opportunities for improved arms control policy under Trump's presidency. Furthermore, his trade policies with China and his declared intention to stop seeking a negotiated end to the war in Ukraine have created new obstacles to nuclear arms control. Not only is this issue overlooked, but it is currently being obscured by the Trump administration's other policies.

Zoe Edwards, USA, Master of Advanced International Studies (Diplomatic Academy of Vienna)

