



CONCEPT NOTE

CICA Essay contest on the topic

"Youth as Catalysts for Peace, Cooperation and Sustainable Development in the CICA Region"

Brief description

The purpose of the essay contest is to engage youth within the region of the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA) in promoting peace and stability through people-to-people contacts, as outlined in the CICA Human Dimension. Additionally, it aims to raise awareness about the achievement of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and encourage critical thinking regarding solutions to global and regional challenges.

In this regard, the Ministry of Youth and Sports of the Republic of Azerbaijan is pleased to announce an international essay writing competition for youth within CICA region. Participants are invited to conduct research, analyse and express their views on the topic: 'Youth as a driving force (catalyst) for peace, cooperation and sustainable development in the CICA region'.

Essays should present innovative ideas and solutions addressing regional challenges such as climate change, energy security, economic development and so on. It should also explore how young people can contribute to strengthening mutual trust among CICA Member States on these issues. Participants are encouraged to incorporate examples of successful youth-led initiatives that have effectively tackled these challenges and promoted regional cooperation.

Relevance:

The theme is based on the UN Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDG 16 (Peace, justice, and strong institutions) and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the goals), the objectives CICA on enhancing cooperation through the development of multilateral approaches to ensure peace, security, and stability in Asia.

Therefore, during Azerbaijan's Chairmanship of the CICA from 2024 to 2026, a primary focus within the CICA Human Dimension will be engaging youth to promote cultural and

people-to-people contacts, aiming to enhance cooperation and mutual trust among people living in the CICA Member States.

Format

- Online competition – written essays will be submitted online and the results will be announced online.
- Physical attendance (awarding ceremony) - the presentation of the winning essays and the awarding ceremony will be held in Baku, Azerbaijan in October 2025.

Requirements for participation

- Young people from CICA Member States aged between 18 and 30 are eligible to participate.
- Each participant must submit one essay, accompanied by a brief biography of the author.
- Participants must not include their names in the essays.

Requirements for the composition of the work

- Language: Essays must be written in English.
- Format: Submit the essay in PDF format.
- Bibliography: Include a bibliography at the end of the essay, listing all sources consulted or cited, following standard citation format.
- Font: Use Arial, size 14.
- Line Spacing: Set line spacing to 1.3 cm.
- Margins: Apply 2 cm margins on all sides.
- Page numbering: Number pages in the lower right corner.
- Word count: Essays must be between 1,500 and 2,000 words, excluding the bibliography.
- Originality: Ensure the essay is free from plagiarism and do not infringe on the rights of third parties.

Contest procedure

- Essays must be sent via email to azeyouth@mys.gov.az and youthcontest@s-cica.org by **15 July 2025** along with the completed registration form.
- The results of the contest will be announced in **September 2025** in the “Events” section of the CICA website (<http://www.s-cica.org/>), “Youth” section of the Ministry website (<http://www.mys.gov.az/>) and on its social media accounts.

Evaluation of works

Stage 1: The submitted essays will be reviewed to ensure they meet all competition requirements. Essays that do not comply with them will be disqualified.

Stage 2: The essays (with assigned numbers, without the author’s name) will be submitted to the jury, consisting of qualified representatives from CICA Member

States, as well as the Secretariat. The jury will evaluate the essays based on the established criteria.

Criteria for evaluating works (25 points for each criterion)

1. Complete coverage of the topic:

- The essay should align with the given theme: "Youth as a Driving Force for Peace, Cooperation and Sustainable Development in the CICA Region".

2. Creativity and originality:

- The essay should present fresh ideas and demonstrate creative thinking in addressing the topic.

3. Logical structure and language style:

- The essay should exhibit a clear and logical structure, well-organized arguments. It should ensure coherence and connectivity between ideas, while maintaining readability and clarity in language.

4. Concept and message:

- The essays should be insightful and informative, offering practical and feasible solutions, along with actionable recommendations for the issues presented.

Note

The CICA Secretariat reserves the right to use the submitted essays to raise CICA's visibility. The Secretariat may feature them on its website and social media platforms.

Awarding

The maximum score is 100 points. Based on the jury members' final assessments, a ranking of the essays will be created. The authors with the top three highest scores will be declared the winners (first, second and third place, respectively) of the competition.

Prize fund

Trip to Azerbaijan for the awarding ceremony, including round-trip (economy-class) airfare to Baku, 3 nights accommodation and airport transfers to / from the hotel.

The winners of the competition will receive a certificate from the Ministry of Youth and Sports of the Republic of Azerbaijan at the awarding ceremony to be held in Baku in October 2025.

Additionally, the winners will be offered a sightseeing tour of Baku.

Further details regarding the prize will be communicated in due course.