



RESOLUTION

Resolution - Better access to EU funding for youth organisations

COUNCIL OF MEMBERS/
EXTRAORDINARY GENERAL ASSEMBLY
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The European Youth Forum's role is to advocate for and represent the interests of young people and youth organisations while also working for all young people in Europe. **“More, better and sustainable support to youth organisations and national youth councils is a core policy of the Youth Forum”** (2013-2018 Strategic Priorities). Given the priority of *Stronger Youth Organisations*, the vital importance of funding from the EU, recent negative developments, upcoming policy window opportunities in 2016 and the important objectives already set by the European Youth Forum in its 2015-2016 Work Plan, it is essential to increase the Youth Forum's advocacy work in this area.

The Erasmus+ programme is the major funding mechanism of the European Union supporting youth organisations. Due to the active involvement and the contribution of the European Youth Forum and youth organisations in shaping the programme over the years, the operating grant for INGyOs continues in the current programme. However, while the total budget has also been raised significantly, the maximum operating grant allocation per organisation has remained unchanged for the last five years and into the foreseeable future.

At the same time, the following developments have negatively affected the access to funding for youth organisations:

- **The European dimension of Erasmus+ has been diluted** for European civil society youth organisations by the removal of the budget lines managed at the EU level.
- **The legitimate and representative voice of youth is decreasing** due to the lack of youth participation in National Agencies in certain countries.
- There are different interpretations of the Erasmus+ funding rules leading to inconsistent management between National agencies in distribution of funds.
- **Erasmus+ offers less sustainable funding** to youth organisations than the previous programme (e.g by categorising staff costs as ineligible in project grants or by giving no priority to youth organisations vis-à-vis non-youth-led organisations). Most youth organisations don't have professional staff and are composed of volunteers. These organisations are competing for the same funding as enterprises and public institutions that work for youth but without the same internal conditions and resources. As a result, the impact of the programme is reduced: the existence of youth organisations depending on the grants (especially operational ones) is at risk.
- **The European Youth Forum has lost its consultative role** in the administration of Erasmus+. This has reduced the capacity of the Youth Forum in being aware of developments and in influencing the Commission when shaping the programme's rules.
- **Other EU funding opportunities are currently inaccessible to most youth organisations.** Youth is also the focus of other EU funding programmes, however, they are basically impossible to access for youth organisations due to their high minimum ceilings or criteria that exclude youth organisations. In short, the Erasmus+ programme does not sufficiently support the development of youth organisations' capacity, while other EU programmes require beneficiaries to have a far larger capacity than European youth organisations currently have.

Looking ahead, 2016 presents youth organisations with important opportunities:

- **An interim evaluation of Erasmus+ in 2016 is planned by the European Commission.** Contributing strongly to the process would be an opportunity

for the Youth Forum to continue its ongoing work in helping to shape the Erasmus+ programme. The European Commission and the European Parliament will organise their own qualitative and quantitative mid-term evaluation reports and it will be vital for the European Youth Forum to provide more than anecdotal evidence from Member Organisations to convince decision-makers; it will require reasonable, well-constructed and evidence-based arguments that can be shown to benefit a wide stakeholder base.

- **The 2014-2020 Multiannual Financial Framework will be reviewed in 2016** and is now being prepared in the EU institutions. This is an opportunity to make sensible modifications to the funding rules so that they will better respond to the needs of youth organisations.

The 2015-2016 Work Plan objectives related to *Strong Youth Organisations* and funding programmes were set to:

- achieve **“more investments”** and **“better [funding] programmes”** for youth (2.1)
- achieve an **“active role for youth organisations in shaping, implementing...and monitoring”** relevant policies and programmes for youth (2.1)
- achieve **“stronger support such as increased...structural funding** for youth organisations” (2.2)
- achieve **“fair and consistent distribution of Erasmus+ funds** by National Agencies” (2.8)

These objectives are even more relevant given the developments with Erasmus+. However, **an important investment of resources will be necessary to achieve them and take advantage of the policy windows in 2016. We acknowledge the work done so far by the Youth Forum secretariat, but we believe that only with more time and resources allocated to this advocacy work, the objectives will be achieved.**

Consequently, the Council of Members directs the Board and its Secretariat to prioritise and further invest in the Youth Forum’s advocacy for funding in order take advantage of policy windows in 2016 and achieve the objectives of the 2015-2016 Work Plan, taking into consideration the below elements :

1) *The Erasmus+ Programme*

- Advocacy for reserving European Key Action 2 calls for European and international non-governmental youth organisations. This could be realised through using a certain percentage of existing funding. This percentage would be calculated by Erasmus+ by looking at the requested funds and rejected applications. The long-term goal however should be a significant increase of the overall Key Action 2 funds, therefore avoiding cuts in funds managed by the National Agencies.
- Involve youth organisations systematically in the monitoring of the Youth Programme of the National Agencies through advisory bodies and also improving National Agency transparency. Ensure that national youth policy representation is carried out by the NYCs, not through National Agencies.
- Reinforce the role of the programme in supporting youth organisations to reach out to more young people through non-formal education activities. The programme should finance projects that support the capacity of youth organisations, their development and the multiplier effect. This should be done by modifying Key Action 2 and by increasing its budget. Staff costs for management of projects should be again made an eligible cost.
- Advocate for integration of volunteer time contribution in EU financial regulations, as a follow-up to the Policy Agenda for Volunteering in Europe.
- On the European level, restore the role of the Youth Forum in the management of the Erasmus+ programme.
- Improve the criteria of the operating grants so that the beneficiaries are European structures of non-governmental youth organisations, in line with the membership criteria of the European Youth Forum. With the removal of local actors and non-youth organisations as potential beneficiaries, the number of beneficiaries would be reduced and the maximum ceiling of the grant increased. Youth organisations active in non-formal education should have the same maximum ceiling of the grant as the organisations active in formal education.
- Increase the budget available for operational grants for INGYO. Youth organisations are the most important bridges between young people and policy-makers and are the most important stakeholders in the field of non-formal education. To guarantee that youth organisations can fulfill these essential tasks in a sustainable way, sufficient structural support has to be provided.
- Put young people at the centre to encourage innovative policy developments in the field of youth. Therefore, it must be ensured the structures of eligible organisations and networks themselves are based on quality youth participation. The membership criteria of the European Youth Forum can be used as a benchmark for this. At the same time, the accessibility of operating grants should be improved by decreasing from 12 to 10 the minimum number of required branches in different programme countries for the civil society cooperation in the field of youth programme.

- Create a mechanism for reimbursing youth organisations travel costs when they are invited to consult with policy-makers at the European level.
- Increase visibility of non-formal education programmes : Youth in Action and Grundtvig logos and trademarks must be used more actively in order to increase visibility and recognition. This has to be done by the European Commission as well as national agencies on their websites and in brochures of the European Commission.
- Improve the participation of non-EU countries. Strategic partnerships need at least three partners from EU-Programme countries. The participation of another country outside of the EU is only possible, if there is a reasoned added value for the strategic partnership. But neither in the programme guide nor through the National Agencies is it possible to get useful information on how such an added value is understood and how the funding of a non-EU country is actually possible. The European Commission must to publicise material that raises the understanding of this point and distribute it through the National Agencies.
- Reflecting the essential nature of operating grants in the deadlines and timing. Information about acceptance and signature grant agreements must be notified well in advance of the starting date of the work programme, not after it.

2) *Other EU programmes*

- Strive to decrease the bureaucratic complexity and administrative workload for youth organisations, by working for more inclusive and easier EU funding mechanisms for achieving these grants.
- Map if there are any national youth councils or international youth organisations that have not applied for EU funding due to the bureaucratic complexity. Carry out an interim evaluation of the inclusiveness of the grants. The interim evaluations can thereafter be used as a background document for actions aimed at decreasing administrative workload that comes with applying for EU grants.
- Make other EU funding programmes more accessible to youth organisations, especially the funding lines aiming at young people, by working on their targets, objectives and their minimum ceilings. These programmes could include, among others:
 - Pre-accession funds;
 - Development aid funds, such as the DEAR programme (Development Education and Awareness Raising);
 - DG Justice funds;
 - DG DEVCO;
 - Employment funds;
 - Environment funds.

3) *Involvement of member organisations in the funding advocacy*

- Inform the member organisations regularly through briefing notes on funding advocacy

- Involve the member organisations in the formulation of draft proposals and requests to the institutions. Ensure that relevant data from the Member Organisations illustrates advocacy demands.
- Co-ordinate the funding advocacy actions with the concerned member organisations
- Take a proactive approach towards communication with member organisations as it will need the involvement of wide diversity of MOs, NYC and INGYOs to achieve the objectives.
- The Youth Fourm Board should consult member organisations in advance in order to take a stand in the Erasmus+ Review.