



Resolution on the future of the Youth in Action programme

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Introduction

The European Youth Forum takes account of the process towards the European Union's new Multi-Annual Financial Framework (MFF) and welcomes the statements made by the President of the European Commission, Mr Barroso, on the importance of investing in the mobility of young people. However, we need to make youth policy a financial as well as a political priority. Today in times of crises as well as in the long term, investing in youth will reinforce the core values of European cooperation.

It is fundamental for the Youth Forum to build upon the progress that has already been made. In this regard, we recall the success and impact of the European Union's current Youth in Action (YiA) programme in Europe, which supports youth-led activities with the aim to improve the situation of young people. From 2007-2013, it will have provided around 1,000,000 young Europeans with valuable non-formal education (NFE) experience and mobility possibilities.¹

The European Youth Forum recalls the results of the public consultation on the future European youth programme and the position of the European Parliament and several Member States on the independent Youth in Action programme. This is in line with the results of the public consultation² on the future European youth programme with almost 7,000 contributions of individuals and organisations or public bodies. In total, 65% of responses came from individuals from around Europe and 35% from organisations and public bodies.

These results underline the importance of maintaining Youth in Action as an independent programme focused on the non-formal education of young people, youth work and support to the wide range of youth organisations that represent the diversity of youth in Europe. Youth in Action is a brand that ensures and represents a visible EU youth policy initiative and the continuation of diversity, quality and the unique character of youth work in the long term. Moreover, keeping the name 'Youth in Action' would ensure the visibility of the programme within the overall financial structure and maintain the positive reputation the programme has acquired over the years.

The European Youth Forum stands firmly behind its request of a renewed separate Youth in Action programme. The European Commission's proposal is therefore unsatisfactory, despite the European Commission proposing a few positive measures.

The Youth Forum acknowledges that:

- ✦ There has been a **significant budget increase foreseen for the future programme** and the European Youth Forum asks that the European Parliament and the Council, when taking a decision on financial perspectives, fully support this proposal, ensuring that the independent Youth in Action Programme will have at least the 7% of the total share (15,2 billion€³), as proposed by the European Commission.

1 0567-10 European Youth Forum Position Paper on YiA 2.0

2 Public consultation on the future European youth programme.

3 Proposal for a Decision of the European Parliament and the Council establishing an EU programme in the field of Education, Training, Youth and Sport 'Erasmus for All'.

- ✧ **The three key areas of the proposed programme** follow our recommendations on the three key strands⁴. Learning mobility of individuals, cooperation for innovation and good practices and support for the policy reform. The European Youth Forum welcomes the strong recognition given to the Structured Dialogue in the field of Youth within the pillar 'Support to Policy Reform'.
- ✧ **A pan-European approach** is vital to allow young people from outside the EU to participate in the programme. This is especially important with regards to candidate countries and the participation of partners from other non-EU countries, notably those from neighbourhood countries. The Youth Forum supports cooperation between the programme and international organisations and institutions, in particular with the Council of Europe; However, this interregional and global cooperation needs to be further strengthened.
- ✧ Finally, the programme proposal's aim to be **inclusive** is noteworthy. It is important to encourage and facilitate the participation of all young people, especially those with fewer opportunities, while stressing the role of youth organisations as they are the most effective actors to address the needs of youth.

The European Youth Forum therefore demands that the European Union changes its approach to the new Youth Programme and adopts the idea of a separate programme.

In the current proposal we are concerned about:

- ✧ The lack of a strong link between **the Lisbon Treaty (TFEU) article 165(4)**⁵ and the programme's content. The programme proposal justifies itself with the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) article 165 (1)⁶ but overlooks the new important competence in the youth field, namely the TFEU article 165 (4), which clearly sets the basis for the EU to support youth exchanges and the participation of young people. The European Commission proposal is focused on the needs of the labour market and the aspect of **active European citizenship and participation** is not adequately addressed. The new youth programme must encourage the participation of all young people in democratic life in Europe and ensure that the educational outcomes can be optimally used to reach the objectives of both Youth on the Move and the Framework on European cooperation in the youth field.
- ✧ The lack of key concepts, such as the role of youth organisations and youth work, volunteering and non-formal education, which should be clearly mentioned and defined in the programme. While we welcome the visibility of non-formal learning,

4 0567-10 The European Youth Forum Position Paper on YiA 2.0: 1. 'Youth Moves' on mobility and volunteering (Youth for Europe and European Voluntary Service); 2. 'Youth Works' support to youth work; 3. 'Youth Decides' supporting participative structures.

5 TFEU Article 165 (4): 'Union action shall be aimed at encouraging the development of youth exchanges and of exchanges of socio-educational instructors, and encouraging the participation of young people in democratic life in Europe'.

6 TFEU Article 165 (1): 'The Union shall contribute to the development of quality education by encouraging cooperation between Member States and, if necessary, by supporting and supplementing their action, while fully respecting the responsibility of the Member States for the content of teaching and the organisation of education systems and their cultural and linguistic diversity'.

the absence of **non-formal education (NFE)**⁷ and its providers leads to an imbalance: the focus on the individual (learning) is there, but the focus on youth organisations (education) is not. The Youth in Action programme should be the one supporting both non-formal education and informal learning, and through this, youth organisations.

- ✧ The lack of clarity from the proposal of how this programme will comprehensively support **young people's autonomy**⁸. Youth-led, volunteer-based and democratic organisations in Europe need to be given a specific support as bodies providing European added value when empowering young people. To ensure their sustainable work, it is crucial to not only make project-based funding available but also provide administrative grants.
- ✧ **The actions of the programme should be implemented by youth organisations** that are capable of addressing young people's needs through the provision of long-term learning processes and a supportive structure that ensures the achievement of sustainable results. Furthermore, stronger financial support to youth organisations at all levels and a stronger recognition of volunteering should be ensured through the inclusion of the volunteer time contribution as eligible costs in all actions of the future programme. Thus a consequent and strong follow-up to the European Year of Volunteering will be ensured.
- ✧ The Youth Forum regrets that the principle of structured dialogue is not applied to the management of the programme. Young people are not involved in the management of the programme, although their inclusion would ensure a more youth-friendly management and administration of the programme and a better reflection of young people's needs. **Co-management with young people** and the organisations that represent them has to be introduced and implemented at the European and national levels, even if that means adapting the current financial regulations.
- ✧ The programming committee and the national agencies have to be composed of people who are experts on youth policy and youth work. The **user and youth-friendliness of the management of the programme** are not reflected in the programme proposal.

Conclusion

The current Youth in Action programme and its predecessors supported youth organisations to make a lasting change for young Europeans. The impact of Youth in Action on young people is bigger than in any other EU programme.

The new programme must focus on those elements that make youth and their organisations unique and specific. We demand it to be independent and to give sustainable support to youth organisations in Europe.

⁷ Non-formal education is defined by the European Youth Forum as 'an organised education process which takes place alongside mainstream systems of education and training, and does not typically lead to certification. Individuals participate on a voluntary basis and as a result the individual takes an active role in the learning process. Unlike informal learning where learning happens less consciously, with non-formal education, the individual is usually aware of the fact that s/he is learning.

⁸ 0590-06 'Meeting young people's needs – A European Youth Forum approach to youth policy'.

The European Union and its Member States should rightly be proud of this and be ambitious. The new programme should encourage the participation of all young people in democratic life, it should recognise that youth organisations are an indispensable channel for supporting active citizenship in Europe and for developing young people's skills and competences, both for the needs of the labour market and for an active and inclusive European society. **Young people and youth organisations deserve nothing less!**