

# PROPOSAL OF THE NETWORK OF NATIONAL AGENCIES : A NEW EU-PROGRAMME YOUTH IN ACTION BEYOND 2013

## **Introduction**

In the framework of the European consultation on the next generation of EU-programmes for young people and the current debate on the architecture of these programmes, the network of National Agencies of the Youth in Action programme met twice (in Bütgenbach, 2010, Belgium and Budapest, 2011, Hungary), in order to discuss future orientations of the Youth in Action programme and to formulate ideas for its aims, objectives, activity formats and management structures. The network has taken account of the policy frameworks that have been established for the coming years : the EU 2020 Strategy and the renewed EU Youth Strategy.

The network of National Agencies generally appreciates the high political value which is given to young people in the EU 2020 Strategy; in its smart and inclusive growth aims; and the proposed targets which are especially related to the living conditions of young people in the field of employment, education and poverty. The network of National Agencies also very much welcomes the special emphasis which is given to young people through the Youth on the Move initiative. We recognise the deep negative impact of the economic and social crisis on the living conditions of young people especially.

As Youth in Action and its predecessor programmes have already contributed a lot, the network of National Agencies agrees that lifelong learning, employment, social integration and transnational learning mobility as the key elements of Youth on the Move are basic ideas for the new Youth in Action programme.

It has been proven that the specificity of the Youth in Action programme and its particular way of implementation is the reason for its success during the last 20 years. Therefore there is an obvious need to preserve its character as a separate programme for non-formal and informal learning, with youth specific aims, objectives, formats and actions and procedures and rules.

The network proposes the following ideas for a new Youth in Action programme :

## **1. FUNDAMENTAL CHARACTERISTICS of the Programme**

The Youth in Action programme, beyond 2013 (YiA), builds on the experiences of previous programmes in the youth field supporting mobility and non-formal learning. It supports the fundamental values and rights of all young people of Europe by promoting mutual understanding and recognizing the need for responsibility of all people in Europe for its future. The programme contributes to the efforts to strengthen the European awareness, especially among young people in Europe. At the same time it provides opportunities for co-operation with other parts of the world in order to strive for global solidarity and an adequate development of youth policies in an interdependent globalised world.

The programme strives for having a hands-on, supportive approach. Therefore a network of National Agencies, close to young people and youth organizations, is essential.

## 2. AIMS of the Programme

The programme aims at

- developing and improving the competences of young people,
- contributing to a specific and transversal youth policy that supports young people in all aspects of their life,
- promoting active citizenship, intercultural dialogue, social inclusion and solidarity of young people, while creating equal opportunities for all of them.

The programme does so

- by supporting and recognizing non formal learning, learning mobility and voluntary activities of young people;
- by supporting and recognizing youth work and the development of its quality;
- by developing European policy cooperation & research in the youth field.

## 3. OBJECTIVES of the Programme

### 3.a. for young people in Europe

- to foster the development of **key competences of young people**, of personal, social and professional skills, of social capital;
- to support the development of **European awareness** and of European identity of young people, their knowledge about Europe, their capacity to act as European citizens and to build up a civil society in Europe;
- to foster **the intercultural learning** of young people, their sense of solidarity, tolerance and understanding for cultural diversity;
- to support the **participation of young people** in politics and society, to allow them to learn to participate and to give them opportunity and space for self organised and self initiated citizenship engagement, also outside youth organisations;
- to foster **social inclusion** of young people with fewer opportunities
- to create an attitude of **active citizenship** for young people, to motivate them to engage themselves in the organisation of civil society and to contribute to society also after participation in a project;
- to develop a sense of **global solidarity** and awareness through projects with partner countries in Europe and beyond;

- to support **employability** of young people, to inspire creativity and innovation of young people, to develop their **spirit of entrepreneurship** and to discover in their own initiatives their skills and competences which might help in entrepreneurial activities;

### **3.b. for youth work in Europe**

- to contribute to the **development of youth work** (including voluntary youth work) on local, regional, national and European level;
- to contribute to the social and political **recognition of youth work** and of non-formal learning;
- to support the **internationalisation of youth organisations** and of youth work organisations and helps to build up or maintain sustainable partnerships and international networks between organisations, young people and youth workers;
- to foster **a better perception of youth work**, the exchange of experience and good practice in youth work, the cooperation between youth workers of different fields, the dissemination and exploitation of results, to learn new methods and tools;
- to support the **professional development of youth workers**, by offering opportunities for capacity and competence building of youth workers through transnational learning mobility experiences and different kinds of training activities, seminars and conferences;
- to build up and contribute to the **development of different kinds of youth structures to support**, carry out or further develop youth work in Europe and in the member states.

### **3.c. for youth policy in Europe**

- to contribute to the implementation of the different **aims and objectives of the EU Strategy on Youth** and give an impetus for a cross-sectorial approach of youth policy at all levels;
- to contribute to active citizenship **and policy initiatives at all levels** through young people's own actions;
- to further **develop the concept of non formal education** in Europe and in the Member States, which puts the young person in the centre of the non-formal learning activity;
- to develop instruments and strategies for the **recognition of learning outcomes** in non-formal learning activities;
- to build a triangle of cooperation between youth work, youth policy and research and contributes to the **construction of evidence-based youth policy**;
- to facilitate a **Structured Dialogue** as model of participation of young people and youth work, in order to build a European youth policy through a bottom-up approach.

## **4. ACTIVITIES supporting the objectives**

### **4.a. for young people**

The development of activities for young people, fulfilling the above mentioned objectives of a new Youth in Action programme, should recognise and integrate best practice from across the current programme (2007-2013). It is also vital, however, to radically simplify the structure, format and rules of existing YiA-actions in order to improve the accessibility and user friendly approach for all beneficiaries involved.

In general all activities should:

- Contribute to the development of young people's key competences and stimulate their employability and entrepreneurship;
- Be designed in order to be accessible and promote the inclusion and participation of all young people in the programme;
- Focus on innovative approaches and methodologies that link to the interests of young people (e.g. the arts, sport, etc.).

3 core activity formats have been defined<sup>1</sup>:

1. An activity that gives young people the possibility to develop their overall competence, skills and creativity through community projects delivered by groups at a local, national or transnational level. This activity should have a specific focus on the inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities and, as such, could be used as a first step into this and other European programmes.
2. An activity that gives all young people the opportunity to build their intercultural learning and overall competence through short-term, group mobility projects (inc. short term, group volunteering) taking place in other European and partner countries. Learning would focus on developing all competences (inc language learning) and would take place continuously during three stages of the activity: preparation, implementation and on return.

---

<sup>1</sup> these types of activity would develop on the success of existing Actions 1.1, 1.2 and 2 of the Youth in Action programme and to absorb additional elements from other Actions (e.g. 1.3 & 5.1). They have purposefully not been referred to here as the network feels some of the current language needs to be revisited and possibly simplified

3. An activity that gives all young people the opportunity to carry out long term volunteering projects in other European and partner countries.

#### **4.b. for youth work**

The development of the activity formats in support of the objectives for youth work, should build on the outcome of the first European Youth Work Convention (2010), as described in the final declaration of this event. It should also build on the results and practices of the (renewed) European Training Strategy of the current programme and its several pillars (Action 4.3, TCP, KMST, Salto, EU-CoE Partnership) as well as on the results of the several actions targeted at youth workers and managed at centralized level (Actions 4.3, 4.5, 4.6).

In general all activities should:

- Be designed and accessible for paid as well as volunteering youth workers;
- Focus on international youth work, by including a transnational dimension, without denying their influence on national youth work practice;
- Contribute to the development of quality in youth work through their standards and criteria;
- Be relatively flexible (without to detailed ruling) and putting more attention to the evaluation and assessment of the learning experience of the youth worker.

4 core activity formats have been defined:

1. An activity format that helps and supports youth workers and youth organizations to start up international activities;
2. An activity format in view of the training of youth workers and aimed at developing generic competences for international youth work;
3. An activity format in view of the exchange of experience and innovation, by preference embedded in a long term timeframe;
4. An open European platform to support knowledge based youth work development, collect and disseminate knowledge and develop strategies. As this platform should build on contributions from several programme structures and partners in the youth field, it should not necessarily take the form of a new programme structure.

In the practical implementation of the programme and its application and reporting procedures, the first 3 activity formats can be approached in the same way.

#### **4.c. for youth policy**

It is acknowledged that the new programme should closely embed its activities into existing youth policy at a regional, national and European level. As well as directly supporting the delivery of national and / or regional youth policies, the programme activities should contribute to the implementation of the EU strategy on youth across all participating countries.

In general all activities should:

- Add value to strategies and policies in the youth field at a regional, national or European level and the systematic development of youth policy and practice across all participating countries;
- Be designed for long-term impact;
- Incorporate programme activities at all levels (see young people and youth work above);
- Explore and enhance European co-operation across various “youth-focused” sectors and policy areas, e.g. develop policy links between formal, non-formal education, social and labour sectors.

3 core activity formats have been defined:

1. An activity that allows decision-makers and experts in youth policy to exchange and share best practice (e.g. through study visits, conferences, etc.) and explore strategies for developing sustainable systems in the youth field;
2. An activity that promotes dialogue between young people, youth workers and youth policy makers (e.g. through national seminars, transnational conferences, etc.) to raise awareness of policy developments and consult on the issues facing young people across Europe and beyond;
3. An activity that promotes partnership development and long-term cooperation at a regional, national and European level for systems and strategy development in the youth field. This activity would sit above all other areas described above and would allow for e.g. local or regional bodies to submit a long-term, multi measure application to deliver activities for young people, youth workers and youth policy makers in their area.

## **5. STRUCTURES AND TOOLS supporting the aims and objectives of the programme**

The value of the existing structures and tools is largely recognized, as they bring the programme close to its users (through decentralized structures) and as they contribute to European developments in the youth field (through knowledge building and networking on European level).

Looking at the nature of some of the possible aims and objectives of the future programme, as mentioned above, it becomes clear that these cannot always and not only be achieved through grant mechanisms in support of the different activity formats. Sometimes the goal can be better achieved by the action of a programme structure or by the introduction of adapted tools. Hence the importance for the new programme to build on the experience of existing Youth in Action structures and tools and to pay significant attention to the nature, role and task of those structures. In fact, these have a role to play not only in the sphere of management and administration, but also in their capacity to develop strategies in the youth field through their implementing or supporting activities.

Based on this, the current structures should be orientated as follows:

- The National Agencies should be reinforced and acknowledged not only in their management capacity, but above all in their capacity to implement strategies in the youth field and to support youth work and youth policy.
- SALTO Resource Centres should support NA action but also support, at a European level, strategic developments of the priorities of the programme and in the youth field;
- The role and mission of Eurodesks on national level should be revised;

The current tools should be strengthened as follows :

- The existing Training and Cooperation Plan of National Agencies should become more flexible, but also more strategically oriented, as a tool to fulfill National Agencies' roles in supporting youth work and youth policy;
- A new and powerful management database "YiA-link should be developed;
- Youthpass should be maintained and become more visible in public organizations and the job market, as the instrument to document learning outcomes of the new programme.

Alongside the management of the programme and the supportive approach that is already well established, these structures and tools should contribute to the following aims and objectives:

- Provide information and communicate on the programme, its possibilities, its strategies and priorities. This should be done using the same name Youth in Action as the main brand and in a sustainable and eco-friendly way. A better strategy should be developed to share good practice, by the existing tools like EVE, Salto toolbox etc.
- Support the professional competence development of youth workers, by making use of a coordinated European Training Strategy of the programme.
- Support youth policy development on European and national level, through their own networks and by supporting those of policy makers, through their knowledge building from practical oriented studies, dissemination of research, management of the programme.
- Support the recognition of learning outcomes of YiA projects, by documenting them using Youthpass and embedding this in an overall learning process.
- Support a quality monitoring and reporting on the programme, providing reliable data and user-friendly online application and reporting procedures.