



# Youth in Action 2.0 – Frequently Asked Questions

This document is prepared by the European Youth Forum's Youth in Action (YiA) Expert group. The purpose of the document is to provide answers for FAQ on YiA. The member organisations of the European Youth Forum are welcome to use this document when they plan their advocacy efforts.

## 1. WHY A SEPARATE PROGRAMME FOR YOUTH?

### *a) What is at stake starting from 2014?*

If education/mobility programmes of the European Union are merged, there is a real danger that youth organisations will have to compete for funding with larger formal education institutions. With no tailor-made scheme for young people (simplified procedures, more application deadlines etc.) many youth organisations might turn out to be incapable of obtaining grants. Moreover, despite an expected increase in the overall funding for educational projects, it might be very hard to guarantee that a given percentage of support goes to the youth sector.

### *b) What is at stake starting from 2021?*

In the current discussion about the EU programmes in 2014-2020, the youth sector is well represented and has a separate budget line. But with the merger of programmes, when the EU budget for post-2020 is debated, “young people” might not even be represented, being overshadowed by formal education players. In this situation, the long-term future of youth funding might be even more uncertain.

## 2. WHAT ARE THE ARGUMENTS IN FAVOUR?

### *a) Can a youth-specific programme be efficient?*

**Yes.** First of all, all the key actions of the current 'Youth in Action' Programme are based on volunteer work by young people. In comparison to the vast majority of other EU Programmes, the share of grants allocated to staff and overhead costs is significantly lower. Secondly, the costs-per-participant are definitely lower in comparison to most other programmes. This allows to provide a mobility experience to a large number of young people at a rather low cost. This first experience increases the willingness to move to another country for education and employment purposes and raises awareness about the possibilities.

### *b) Why is it important to invest in capacity building of youth organisations?*

One of the funding lines that is in particular danger is the operating grants for European youth organisations (action 4.1.). These grants are less visible and, as a consequence, might be given up or reduced in the planned new programme. In this scenario, the sustainability of the whole sector at European level is in danger – some organisations could even disappear from the scene. What is worth stressing is that it

is exactly these pan-European networks that contribute the most to European citizenship and identity among young people. Many of them grew with and for Youth in Action projects, nurturing a whole community of European youth workers. The funding for capacity building (both the administrative support and the grants for training/networking) is key to keeping the sector of 30 000 staff and uncountable volunteers alive and effective.

*c) Does it contribute to youth employability?*

**Yes.** An involvement in the management of youth projects and youth organisations is a unique experience for young people to develop practical intercultural management, leadership and entrepreneurship skills, which are complementary to formal education programmes, traineeships and internships. In this respect a youth programme that focuses on youth-led and youth-managed organisations and projects meets all the substantial targets of the 'Youth in the move' flagship initiative of the European Union.

*d) What are the quality advantages of the youth projects?*

The success of a youth organisation in terms of membership depends on the quality of its projects. The involvement of elected volunteers in management and supervisory positions implies that there is a strong internal supervision on the quality of projects.

*e) Can a youth-specific programme be visible and recognised?*

One of the arguments used against the Youth in Action programme is that its name/brand is not as visible as some other EU programmes (e.g. Erasmus). This of course is partly linked to the incomparable size of the different programmes but the fact that Youth in Action changed its name more than once, as well as to the difficulties in translating the name into different languages (a universal international name might help). However, the most important is the danger that the identity and recognition of non-formal education might become further diluted under the bigger education heading. The European Union has contributed a lot to the NFE recognition and this process should be continued in the future, with clear importance and separate identity given to non-formal projects. Future chances for increased visibility lie in innovative channels such as social networking.

### **3. WHO TO LOBBY TO AND HOW?**

*a) How will the decision making process continue in 2011-2013?*

Following the release of the European Commission's Communication on the Multi-annual Financial Framework (MFF) on 29 June 2011, the Council and the European Parliament will start to discuss the proposal and to negotiate an agreement. The process should draw to a close by the end of 2012 for the MFF to be implemented from 1 January 2014. The MFF will be adopted unanimously by the Council after receiving consent by the European Parliament, the Parliament's decision will be taken by plenary vote.

The European Commission will release the communication (proposal) about the future youth programme in November 2011. Programmes are created by decisions of the Council of the EU and the European Parliament, on the proposal of the European Commission, according to the co-decision procedure. Co-decision procedure will

take a year at least (2012). Key actors are the European Parliament and EU Member States.

*b) Who can I approach at national level?*

There are different national stakeholders involved in the discussion on the EU's multi-annual financial framework (MFF).

For the MFF you should approach the financial ministers and prime ministers explaining how important it is to have a fair share of the EU budget for young people. **Heads of state and of government:** They are responsible for adopting the money for the programme. Coordinated and visible advocacy strategies towards heads of state and of government are relevant in member states, with strong lobbies supporting alternative programmes.

**Ministries of finances:** The volume of the total EU budget and the budget for specific programmes is negotiated between ministries of finances. Raising the awareness of these ministries about the importance of a budget for youth programmes is fundamental to make sure that these budgets are not cut.

For the content of the programme you should approach the youth ministers and/or education ministers. They will decide on the content with the European Parliament.

**Ministries of youth:** Ministries in charge of youth affairs are usually strong advocates of extensive support programmes for youth activities. They will be involved in the definition of the contents of a new programme, but their influence on the budget is limited. It is nevertheless vital to raise their awareness about what is at stake at European level, in order that they can defend a youth programme during cabinet meetings and other conferences on the strategy to be pursued by a specific member state on the multiannual financial framework.

**National parliaments:** National parliaments and especially their committees on finances can influence the position of national governments on the multi-annual financial framework. Raising the awareness of MPs and especially those in the committees on finances, youth and education before the discussion of the financial framework can have an impact on the position of governments.

**Members of the European Parliament:** MEPs are elected in national and regional constituencies and usually keep an intensive contact with the population of one region. It is important that the awareness of MEPs does not only come from Brussels-based organisations, but also from organisation representing their constituents.

**Regional governments:** In some countries, education and youth affairs are competences of regional governments and the national position on these issues will depend on the position of regional governments. Moreover, regional governments are represented in the Committee of Regions, which has a consultative competence on the multiannual financial framework.

**Members of the Economic and Social Committee:** The European Economic and Social Committee is the representation of the European civil society. It is mainly composed by representatives of employers and employees of different economic sectors. Youth organisations linked to labour unions or sectorial organisations

represented in the Economic and Social Committee could raise the awareness of their representatives about the importance of supporting youth organisations.

*d) Who are my allies?*

Politicians and civil servants in charge of youth in European, national and regional institutions at legislative, executive and administrative levels have a strong interest in supporting a comprehensive strategy on youth including a European programme exclusively dedicated to youth. A good strategic co-ordination between youth organisations and members of youth committees in parliaments, youth ministers and the directorates of youth in national and regional governments can increase the visibility of the issue during the discussion.