



# **Beyond Borders Stakeholder Conference**

**Creating a Positive Impact through Cooperation**

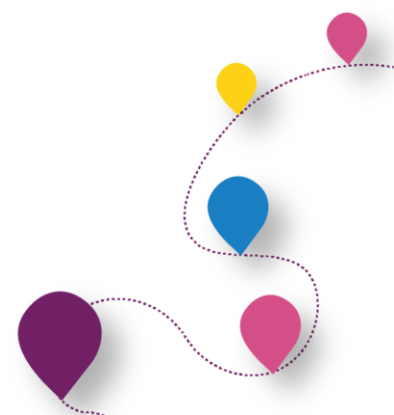
**16-20 September 2024 | Bonn, Germany**

## **Final Report**

by Max Fras

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# Chapter 1 - Introduction

## Beyond Borders Overview

"Beyond Borders - Neighbours Together" is a partnership that promotes strategic cooperation between SALTO Resource Centres and National Agencies for Erasmus+ in the youth field and the European Solidarity Corps. The focus is on enhancing cooperation between Programme countries and neighbouring partner countries (third countries not associated with the Programmes) within the Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps programmes.

During the previous iteration of Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps, regional SALTOs and National Agencies identified a growing need to concentrate and coordinate existing resources more strategically. This approach aims to reinforce partnership opportunities, enhance the impact of projects involving partners from neighbouring regions, and increase the visibility and recognition of this crucial dimension among various stakeholders.

Launched in 2021, Beyond Borders is coordinated by SALTO SEE in collaboration with SALTO EECA and SALTO EUROMED, along with the National Agencies of the Czech Republic, Croatia, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Lithuania, Poland, Slovenia, Switzerland and Turkey.

## Key Objectives

The objectives of "Beyond Borders" are to:

1. Further develop cooperation in the youth field between the Programme and Partner countries within Erasmus+ and the ESC, particularly to:
  - Enhance opportunities for sustainable partnerships and joint projects
  - Develop regular and targeted support for projects and partnerships
2. Strengthen the impact of projects involving partners from neighbouring regions
3. Increase support for the development and recognition of youth work in Partner regions

## Beyond Borders Stakeholder Conference

Against the picturesque backdrop of Bonn, Germany, the Beyond Borders Stakeholder Conference brought together nearly 100 participants and experts from 33 countries and key stakeholders of Erasmus+ Youth cooperation with partner countries: EU youth organisations, partner country youth organisations, SALTO Resource Centres, Erasmus+ National Agencies, Research-based analysis of the European youth programmes (RAY) Network, Regional Youth

Cooperation Office (RYCO), Anna Lindh Foundation, the European Commission, among others. The event took place from 16 – 20 September 2024 and focused on enhancing international youth cooperation between EU programme countries and neighbouring partner countries through the Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps programmes. Participants reflected on past achievements while adopting a forward-thinking approach to building stronger, more inclusive international cooperation.

## Conference Aims

- Highlight the value and relevance of cooperation between neighbouring partner countries and Programme countries
- Raise the visibility of this cooperation and create synergies between different stakeholders
- Explore current geopolitical and social contexts, as well as future perspectives and opportunities for cooperation
- Develop recommendations for future youth cooperation between the Programme and neighbouring partner countries, with special attention to the Erasmus+ and ESC programmes

## Reflections from the Coordinator

Sonja Mitter Škulj, coordinator of Beyond Borders, reflected on the inception of Beyond Borders in 2021. She emphasised the need for collaboration between the three regional SALTO Resource Centres, each working with a specific region: South Mediterranean countries, Eastern European countries, and the Western Balkans.

The initiative aims to unite strengths across these regions and interested national agencies to revitalise the dynamics of international youth cooperation. Beyond Borders has partnered with national agencies from Croatia, the Czech Republic, Germany, France, Finland, Italy, Lithuania, Poland, Slovenia, Switzerland and Turkey. Notably, Switzerland's involvement as a non-programme country demonstrates the initiative's inclusive approach and broad appeal.

## Resources and Further Information

To support youth organisations and young people interested in working with partner regions, Beyond Borders has developed a comprehensive set of resources. These materials are designed to facilitate and enhance international cooperation in the youth sector.





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For more information about Beyond Borders, its initiatives, and access to these valuable resources, including a list of opportunities for cooperation and a calendar of project events, please visit the official Beyond Borders website at [www.beyond.eu](http://www.beyond.eu)



## Chapter 2 - Setting the Scene

The conference opened with two significant speeches from key policy-makers in the field of European youth cooperation programmes: Manfred Von Hebel, Deputy Director of Jugend für Europa (German National Agency of the Erasmus+ Youth Programme), and Pierre Seailles from the European Commission.

Manfred welcomed participants on behalf of the German Federal Ministry of Youth and Family, noting the strong representation from 27 countries, including colleagues from National Agencies and applicant organizations. He emphasized that the event was more than just a conference, highlighting the strong demand for support from partner countries that currently exceeds available capacity.

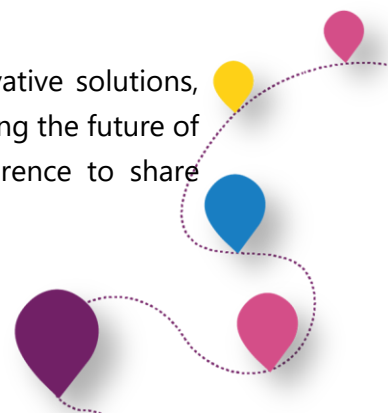
Von Hebel acknowledged the challenging global context, citing multiple crises including war and threats to democracy, both external and internal. He stressed the need to address the changing safety situation while recognizing the strength of programs like Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps as central instruments in fostering cooperation.

Looking towards the future, Von Hebel discussed the ongoing mid-term evaluation of Erasmus+ and the preparation for the new Programme proposal expected by mid-2025. He cautioned about potential challenges, including budget constraints and the possible impact of anti-European and anti-democratic voices on the Programme's future. Von Hebel also noted the potential implications of EU expansion, with 7-9 new countries possibly joining, which could affect funding distribution and programme complexity.

In closing, Von Hebel encouraged participants to think openly, exchange views, and focus on making cooperation with partner countries both resilient and sustainable. He emphasized the importance of networking and learning from the conference experience.

Pierre Seailles from the European Commission echoed Von Hebel's sentiments on the importance of cooperation with partner countries. He emphasized the need for a well-argued proposal for the future of the programme by mid-2025, encouraging participants to think creatively about improving cooperation with partner countries and empowering their participants as equals.

Seailles urged attendees to be bold in their thinking and to propose innovative solutions, stressing that their expertise in international cooperation was crucial for shaping the future of the programme. He announced his intention to return later in the conference to share





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highlights from the mid-term evaluation of Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps, promising a horizontal overview of the Programme's overall assessment.

Both speakers set a tone of urgency and importance for the conference, emphasizing the critical role of the participants in shaping the future of European youth cooperation programmes in the face of global challenges and changing political landscapes.



## Chapter 3 - Why Cooperation Works?

The conference hosted a panel discussion that delved into the critical question: "Why Cooperation Works?" The session brought together four distinguished speakers from the field of youth cooperation, each representing key organisations and institutions in the field of international youth cooperation.

The panel featured Andrea Horta from the RAY Network, Albert Hani from the [Regional Youth Cooperation Office \(RYCO\)](#), Behrooz Motamed-Afshari of [EU4Youth](#), and Fotini Zarogianni from the [Anna Lindh Foundation](#). Their diverse backgrounds and experiences provided a comprehensive view of cooperation initiatives across Europe and its neighbouring regions.

Andrea Horta, representing the RAY Network, set the stage with insights from their research on cooperation projects between EU programme countries and neighbouring partner countries. Her findings painted an encouraging picture: stakeholders join these projects with a genuine interest in the topics and a desire to connect with youth. The high satisfaction rate—90% among all involved groups—underscored the projects' effectiveness. Horta emphasised how these initiatives promote European values, foster meaningful social ties, and support youth policy development in partner countries.

However, Horta also highlighted areas for improvement. She stressed the need to increase accessibility, reach more diverse groups, and provide support for project promotion and continuity. Importantly, she advocated for tailoring inclusion efforts to specific regional needs, recognising the diverse challenges faced across different areas.

Albert Hani from RYCO brought in an in-depth perspective on youth cooperation in the post-conflict Western Balkans region. RYCO's focus on peace-building and reconciliation underscored the transformative potential of youth engagement. Hani shared compelling statistics: 76% of youth in the region believe their economic well-being depends on regional cooperation. However, he noted that only 19% are currently engaged in such activities, highlighting a significant opportunity for growth.

Hani's insights revealed the evolving needs of youth in the region. With 85% of young people identifying digital skills development as crucial, he emphasised the importance of aligning cooperation efforts with these emerging priorities. His call for youth-led topic selection in future initiatives reflected a growing recognition of the need to empower young people in shaping their futures.



Behrooz Motamed-Afshari provided an overview of EU4Youth's impact and outreach in Eastern Partnership countries. The programme's focus on education, employment, and participation has yielded far-reaching results: 21 large-scale grant projects supported with €22 million, engagement of 226 Erasmus+ alumni, and reaching 3,000 disadvantaged young people. Perhaps most notably, the initiative has awarded grants to 450 young entrepreneurs, resulting in the creation of 600 jobs.

Motamed-Afshari's presentation highlighted the ripple effects of youth cooperation, extending beyond individual participants to impact communities and economies. He stressed the growing importance of citizenship education and mental health support in future cooperation efforts, reflecting an evolving understanding of youth needs in the region.

Fotini Zarogianni from the Anna Lindh Foundation brought a Euro-Mediterranean perspective to the discussion. Her organisation's focus on intercultural dialogue manifests in the Mediterranean Youth in Action programme, which connects youth directly with policymakers and supports transformative community-level projects. Zarogianni emphasised the need to address and reshape narratives about EU-Mediterranean relations, highlighting the power of youth cooperation in changing perceptions and fostering understanding.

Throughout the discussion, several key themes emerged as evidence of the effectiveness of cooperation with partner countries. These included enhanced intercultural learning and understanding, the promotion of European values, and the creation of connections across and within regions. The panellists consistently highlighted how youth cooperation initiatives are changing narratives about regions, empowering young people to participate in policy dialogues, and influencing both policy and politicians.

Looking to the future, the panellists identified several critical areas for cooperation efforts to address. These included digital skills development, climate change and environmental issues, artificial intelligence and emerging technologies, and mental health support, especially in conflict-affected regions. The importance of citizenship education, critical thinking skills, and continued efforts to reach rural and disadvantaged youth were also emphasised.

The Q&A session following the panel presentations provided further insights into the challenges and opportunities in youth cooperation. When asked about engaging youth from rural areas, the panellists shared various strategies. Andrea highlighted the Programme's efforts to make funding more accessible to rural organisations, while Albert discussed RYCO's targeted approach through project guidelines and rural info sessions. Fotini emphasised the power of peer-to-peer learning in empowering participants from less advantaged areas.

The discussion also touched on obstacles to cooperation, with panellists candidly addressing issues such as political challenges in certain countries, the dangers of ethnocentrism and



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nationalism, and the risk of "dialogue fatigue" when youth feel their participation doesn't lead to concrete outcomes. These insights highlighted the complexity of international cooperation and the need for thoughtful, adaptive approaches.

Coordination among programmes emerged as another crucial topic. Behrooz explained EU4Youth's approach of organising donor meetings and stakeholder gatherings to promote collaboration and avoid duplication. This emphasis on synergy and efficient resource allocation underscored the maturity and strategic thinking within the field of youth cooperation.

As the panel concluded, it was clear that youth cooperation programmes are having a significant positive impact on the European neighbourhood policy. While challenges remain, the speakers' insights revealed a field that is dynamic, reflective, and continuously evolving to meet the needs of young people and their communities. The collective message was one of optimism: with continued investment in youth empowerment, skills development, and cross-regional dialogue, these programmes can foster stability, economic growth, and shared values across Europe and its neighbouring regions.

The panel not only provided a platform for sharing successes and challenges but also set the stage for future cooperation efforts. As young people in Europe and its neighbourhood continue to face complex global issues, the insights and strategies discussed in this panel offer a roadmap for harnessing the power of youth cooperation to build more connections and resilience beyond borders.



## Chapter 4 - Inspiring Stories

The Bonn conference provided an opportunity for a range of stakeholders - individuals, groups and organisations - to share stories of cooperation between partner and programme countries. The stories, coming from EU countries as well as partner countries in the Mediterranean, Western Balkans and Eastern Partnership countries, provide valuable insights into the origins, realities and impact of cooperation with partner countries.

### International Youth Work Trainers Guild (iywt.org)

Shared by: Nik Paddison, Montenegro/Germany

Applicant organisation/partners: [The International Youth Work Trainers Guild \(IYWT\)](http://www.iywt.org)

The International Youth Work Trainers Guild was established in 2016 to connect trainers across Europe, with a focus on Eastern Europe and the Caucasus region. The Guild serves as a platform for collaboration and knowledge sharing among youth work professionals.

Over the past year, the Guild has undertaken several projects aimed at enhancing youth empowerment. One of these projects is APPRaiser, which works with the ETS competence model to develop skills in the field. The ETS competence model provides a framework for identifying and developing key competencies in youth work. APPRaiser uses this model to create assessment tools and training programmes that help youth workers improve their skills and effectiveness.

The Guild has also created YouTRAIN, a digital platform offering YouTube tutorials on facilitation for aspiring youth workers. These tutorials cover a range of topics, from basic facilitation techniques to more advanced concepts in youth work. The platform aims to make expert knowledge more accessible to those entering the field or looking to enhance their skills.

A significant initiative is the Holistic Trainer programme, supported by the German Erasmus+ National Agency. This KA2 project brings together partners from various regions to address five key areas: mental health and well-being, physical health, life on the road, legal matters, and self-management. The programme recognises that being a youth worker involves more than just professional skills; it requires a holistic approach to personal development and well-being.



The mental health and well-being component focuses on strategies for maintaining emotional balance in a demanding profession. The physical health aspect addresses the importance of self-care and healthy habits for trainers who often work long hours and travel frequently. The 'life on the road' segment provides practical advice for managing the challenges of a mobile lifestyle, which is common in international youth work.

Legal matters are also covered, ensuring that trainers are aware of their rights and responsibilities, as well as the legal frameworks within which they operate across different countries. The self-management portion of the programme helps trainers develop skills in time management, goal setting, and personal organisation.

The Guild has produced a variety of resources to support these initiatives. These include infographics that visually represent key concepts in youth work, videos that demonstrate facilitation techniques, and a comprehensive guide for trainers. This guide serves as a reference manual, covering everything from project planning to evaluation methods.

An upcoming Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) is in development, which will provide a structured learning experience for a large number of participants. The MOOC will cover various aspects of youth work and is designed to be accessible to learners from different backgrounds and experience levels.

The Guild has also implemented a Trainer Support System, which aims to address challenges through collaborative efforts. This system provides a network of support for trainers, allowing them to share experiences, seek advice, and collaborate on solving common problems in the field.

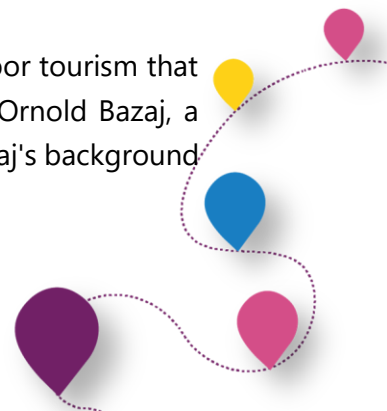
Through these various initiatives, the International Youth Work Trainers Guild continues to play a significant role in shaping the landscape of youth work training in Europe. It provides a structure for ongoing professional development and a community for trainers to connect and grow together.

## Reality Escapers Albania - Sustainable Adventure Tourism

Shared by: Albert Aliu

Applicant/partners: [Reality Escapers](#)

Reality Escapers Albania, founded in 2022 in Vlore, Albania, focused on outdoor tourism that combined adventure with rural development. The company was started by Ornod Bazaj, a certified tourist guide with experience in speleology and mountain rescue. Bazaj's background



in these areas has informed the company's approach to adventure tourism, emphasising safety and environmental awareness, led and organised by youth.

Starting as a social media page for local youth, involving international visitors, Reality Escapers Albania has grown into a fully-fledged tourism operation. The company now offers a range of activities such as hiking, kayaking, and river walking tours. These activities are designed to showcase the natural beauty of Albania while providing exciting experiences for visitors.

One of the key aspects of Reality Escapers Albania's approach is its engagement with local communities, especially young people. The company works with over 10 families in villages around Vlore, contributing to local economies. This collaboration takes various forms, from using local accommodation and food providers to employing residents as guides for certain activities.

The team includes Dorela Serjanaj, who handles language services, ensuring effective communication with international clients. Ksenofon Konomi, a local guide and beekeeper, brings his knowledge of the local area and traditional practices to the tours. This combination of skills allows the company to offer authentic experiences that connect visitors with local culture and nature.

Reality Escapers Albania prioritises safety, authenticity, and environmental preservation in their tours. Safety measures include thorough briefings before activities, use of appropriate equipment, and having trained guides present at all times. The focus on authenticity is reflected in the involvement of local community members and the showcasing of traditional practices and lifestyles.

Environmental preservation is a key concern for the company. They follow Leave No Trace principles during their tours and educate visitors about the importance of protecting the natural environment. This approach not only helps to preserve the areas they visit but also raises awareness among tourists about sustainable travel practices.

In the past year, Reality Escapers Albania served over 950 international clients, indicating a growing interest in the type of sustainable adventure tourism they offer. The company reported an annual income of 35,000 euros, which represents a significant contribution to the local economy, especially in rural areas where traditional employment opportunities may be limited.

Looking to the future, Reality Escapers Albania is exploring the potential for speleological tourism in the caves of Velçë. This area, known for its complex cave systems, offers opportunities for both adventure and scientific exploration. By developing tours in this area,



the company aims to diversify its offerings while continuing to promote sustainable tourism practices.

The growth of Reality Escapers Albania demonstrates the potential for small-scale, locally-run and youth-led tourism initiatives to make a positive impact. By combining adventure tourism with community engagement and environmental awareness, the company is contributing to the development of a sustainable tourism model in Albania.

## Tae'thir - Art Approaches to Human Rights

Shared by: Hend Hassassi

Project organiser: The Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies / 'Instants vidéo numériques et poétiques'

Tae'thir was an international project based in Marseille that used art to advocate for human rights across the Mediterranean region. Led by the Réseau Euromed France (REF), it brought together young artists, digital influencers, and human rights activists in a collaborative effort to address social issues through creative means.

The project involved several organisations, each contributing their expertise to the initiative. The Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies brought its knowledge of human rights issues in the region. 'Instants vidéo numériques et poétiques' contributed its experience in digital and video art. The Ligue de l'enseignement des Bouches du Rhône added its background in civic engagement and education.

Tae'thir aimed to create spaces for reflection, commitment, and solidarity through interdisciplinary collaborations. It did this by organising workshops, exhibitions, and online campaigns that brought together different forms of artistic expression with human rights advocacy.

The project engaged young artists and digital content creators, aged 21-35, to amplify human rights messages. These participants came from various countries around the Mediterranean, bringing diverse perspectives and experiences to the project. They worked together to create artwork, digital content, and campaigns that addressed human rights issues relevant to their communities.

One of the key aspects of Tae'thir was its use of digital platforms to reach wider audiences. The project leveraged social media and other online channels to share the work of its participants and engage with the public on human rights issues. This digital approach allowed

Tae'thir to overcome geographical barriers and connect with young people across the Mediterranean region.

The artworks and digital content produced through Tae'thir covered a range of human rights topics, from freedom of expression to women's rights, from refugee issues to environmental justice. By addressing these topics through art and digital media, Tae'thir aimed to make human rights discussions more accessible and engaging for young audiences.

Tae'thir also organised physical exhibitions and events where the works created through the project were showcased. These events provided opportunities for face-to-face dialogue and community engagement around human rights issues.

Through its activities, Tae'thir sought to build bridges between culture, art, digital innovation, and human rights advocacy across the Mediterranean region. The project demonstrated how creative approaches could be used to address social and political issues, and how art could serve as a powerful tool for promoting human rights and social justice.

## EU4Youth Alumni Network in Eastern Partnership Countries

Shared by: Max Pijevskii

Project organiser: EU4Youth

The EU4Youth Alumni Network connected past participants of EU-funded youth programmes from Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine. The network was created to support these alumni in implementing community initiatives and to maintain the momentum generated by their participation in EU programmes.

The Network brought together alumni from various EU-funded youth programmes, including Erasmus+ Youth in Action, European Solidarity Corps, and Young European Ambassadors. This diverse mix of participants brought a range of experiences and skills to the network, creating a rich environment for peer learning and collaboration.

Over 10 months, alumni worked with mentors to develop and carry out projects that addressed the needs of disadvantaged youth in their regions. The mentorship component was a key feature of the programme, providing alumni with guidance and support as they navigated the challenges of project implementation.



The projects developed through the EU4Youth Alumni Network covered a wide range of topics and approaches, reflecting the diverse needs of youth in the Eastern Partnership countries. Some projects focused on education and skills development, while others on civic engagement or environmental issues. What they had in common was a commitment to creating positive change in local communities.

The programme helped participants transition from being beneficiaries of EU mobility programmes to active community leaders. This transition was supported through training sessions, networking opportunities, and practical experience in project management. Alumni learned how to identify community needs, design effective interventions, manage resources, and evaluate the impact of their projects.

The network encouraged connections within and across Eastern Partnership countries, fostering collaboration and shared learning experiences. Regular online meetings and occasional in-person gatherings allowed alumni to share their experiences, discuss challenges, and explore opportunities for cooperation.

One of the strengths of the EU4Youth Alumni Network was its ability to leverage the international experience gained by alumni through EU programmes and apply it to local contexts. This created a bridge between European-level initiatives and grassroots action in Eastern Partnership countries.

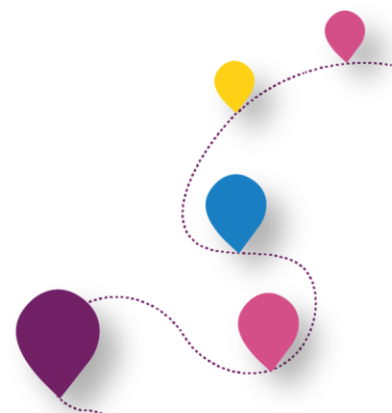
The Network also served as a platform for ongoing engagement with EU institutions and programmes. Alumni were kept informed about new opportunities for funding, training, and collaboration, allowing them to continue their personal and professional development beyond their initial programme participation.

Through its activities, the EU4Youth Alumni Network contributed to building a cadre of young leaders in Eastern Partnership countries who had both international experience and a commitment to local development. This combination of global perspective and local action had the potential to drive long-term positive change in the region.

## Team Volunteering in Georgia

Shared by: Giorgi Kikalishvili

Project organiser: [Youth Association Droni \(YAD\)](#)





The Team Volunteering for Effective Campaigning and Creative Projects initiative in Georgia brought together local and international youth for community engagement activities. Based in Tbilisi, the project involved 30 participants aged 18-30, creating a diverse group of young people from different backgrounds and cultures.

The initiative combined local youth projects with support from the European Solidarity Corps (ESC). This combination allowed for an exchange of ideas and practices between Georgian youth and their European counterparts, fostering intercultural learning and cooperation.

One of the key activities of the project was the creation of a USE-IT map for local discovery. USE IT maps are non-commercial, free maps made by young locals for young travellers. The process of creating these maps involved research into local culture, history, and hidden gems, encouraging young people to explore and appreciate their city.

The project also organised an ESC Caravan, which travels to different regions of Georgia to promote the European Solidarity Corps and other EU youth programmes. This mobile initiative helped to spread information about volunteering opportunities to young people in more remote areas who might not otherwise have had access to such information.

Street festivals were another important component of the Team Volunteering initiative. These festivals featured various creative activities that engage both participants and the local community. Graffiti art was used to transform urban spaces, adding colour and creativity to public areas while often addressing social issues through visual art.

Forum theatre was another technique used during these festivals. This interactive form of theatre allowed for the exploration of social issues and encourages audience participation in finding solutions to community problems. By using this method, the project created a space for dialogue and collective problem-solving.

Sports activities, such as ESC on Bike, combined physical activity with environmental awareness. These events promote healthy lifestyles while also highlighting issues such as sustainable transport and urban ecology.

The project aimed to build capacity in youth organisations by providing practical experience in project management, event organisation, and community engagement. By taking part in planning and implementing these activities, young participants develop valuable skills that can be applied in their future personal and professional lives.

Another goal of the initiative was to promote a positive image of youth work in Georgia. By showcasing the creativity and energy of young volunteers, the project aimed to change perceptions about youth involvement in community development.





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The Team Volunteering Initiative encouraged local and international youth collaboration, fostering mutual learning and community development. This intercultural aspect of the project not only benefitted the participants but also contributed to a more open and connected society in Georgia.

Through its diverse activities and collaborative approach, the Team Volunteering for Effective Campaigning and Creative Projects initiative demonstrated how youth engagement can be a powerful tool for community development and social change. It provided a model for how international volunteering programmes can be effectively integrated with local youth initiatives to create a meaningful impact.



## Chapter 5 - The Future of Youth Work: Anticipating Challenges and Opportunities

"The only constant in life is change." This ancient wisdom from the Greek philosopher Heraclitus sets the stage for an ambitious exploration into the future of youth work. As we look ahead to 2050, youth workers may find themselves navigating a world where "there will be 94% fewer young people" and where the very definition of youth itself is in flux. How can the field adapt to remain relevant and impactful?

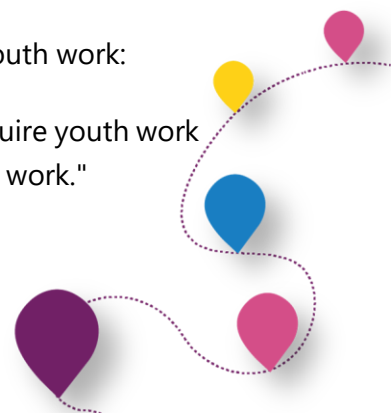
**The "Futures of Youth Work" project**, initiated by the European Academy on Youth Work (EAYW), aims to envision the landscape of youth work in Europe by 2050. Using foresight methodology and horizon scanning, the research seeks to equip youth workers and policymakers with insights and strategies to navigate an uncertain future while maintaining the core mission of empowering young people. The research project was presented by Gisele Evrard.

The study employed several foresight methods:

1. **Horizon Scanning:** From September to October 2023, participants engaged in systematic observation of trends and signals that could impact youth work's future. 39 signal spotters from diverse backgrounds across 25 European countries submitted 159 scans.
2. **Expert Interviews:** Seven interviews with experts from various fields were conducted in November and December 2023 to deepen insights and explore possible scenarios for youth work in 2050.
3. **Scenario Development:** The research team analysed trends and potential impacts, creating mind maps to illuminate connections between diverse signals. This process was enriched by external input through expert interviews and a Resonance Workshop held in February 2024.
4. **Resonance Workshop:** This two-day event gathered signal spotters, advisory board members, and the research team to refine scenarios and debate desirable paths forward.

The research identified several key areas that will likely shape the futures of youth work:

1. **Demographic Changes:** Aging populations and migration flows will require youth work to adapt, potentially evolving into more intergenerational "community work."



2. Technology: While offering new opportunities for engagement and education, technology also poses risks to mental health and digital exclusion.
3. Climate and Sustainability: Environmental challenges will increase, demanding that youth work support climate refugees and eco-conscious initiatives.
4. Mental Health and Well-being: Youth mental health emerges as a prevalent risk area, requiring trauma-informed approaches and innovative support systems.
5. Work and Economy: Unstable job markets may lead to a rise in gig economies and portfolio careers, necessitating continuous adaptation and upskilling.
6. Democracy and Civic Participation: Growing polarization and democratic backsliding highlight the need for youth work to reinvigorate civic engagement.
7. Education: Current schooling systems appear misaligned with rapidly changing competency needs, calling for reimagined educational models.

The report outlines seven key strategies for future readiness in youth work:

1. Adopt a reflected sense of agency: Balance honouring the past with an openness to future possibilities.
2. Cultivate a future-ready mindset: Prepare for uncertainty and shift from a "culture of hope" to one that can navigate anxiety and risk.
3. Provide structured spaces for future discussions: Create opportunities for focused conversations about future challenges at all levels of youth work.
4. Develop future literacy: Understand possible futures and develop the capacity to influence them.
5. Embrace whole-system change: Address future challenges through both individual development and systemic changes in the youth work sector.
6. Rethink youth work's societal role: Regularly reassess the field's purpose while maintaining its core mission of empowering young people.
7. Stay alert for transformation calls: Recognize when innovation is no longer sufficient and fundamental transformation is necessary.

The report concludes that while the core purpose of youth work – empowering and engaging young people – will remain, the field must be prepared to adapt to emerging challenges. By fostering collective care, systemic awareness, and adaptability, youth work can continue to empower young people and contribute positively to society in the decades to come.



## Futures of Youth Work - working groups

After the introduction of the “Futures of Youth Work” study by Gisele Evrard, conference participants engaged in a group discussion on the mindset of youth workers and specific actions and attitudes required to future-proof the profession, both in terms of inner work and external developments. One group looked at individual youth workers, while the other looked at collective youth work as a field.

The first group, working on individual youth workers and their future, first answered the following questions regarding inner work:

- What kind of mindset does a youth worker need to develop to be future-ready?
- How much are youth workers aware of the ‘big picture’ trends and how they impact their role?
- What aspects of a youth worker's identity are more likely to be changed in the future?

The group concluded that youth workers must cultivate a complex set of internal qualities and external competencies to remain effective in their evolving roles. At the core, they need to develop emotional resilience and maintain an open, adaptable mindset that embraces continuous learning and unlearning. This includes being comfortable with making mistakes and maintaining inner motivation while avoiding burnout. The emphasis on soft skills development, particularly empathy and cultural awareness, becomes crucial as youth work increasingly crosses borders and cultures.

In terms of practical competencies, youth workers must stay informed about global trends, from digitalization to political movements, while understanding how intersecting factors like race, gender, sexuality, and disability create barriers for young people. The ability to engage in creative problem-solving and establish innovative learning environments is paramount, as is the capacity to advocate effectively for youth rights, especially in regions where young people face significant restrictions.

Looking at methodologies and future practices, peer-to-peer learning emerged as a particularly relevant approach for our fast-changing world, though it requires sufficient time and flexibility rather than rigid structures. The group emphasized the growing importance of non-formal education in complementing formal education systems, suggesting closer cooperation between these sectors with measurable outcomes. Environmental awareness, critical thinking, and the ability to combat misinformation were identified as crucial skills for future youth work. Additionally, youth workers must be prepared to engage confidently with decision-makers while maintaining their focus on creating safe, educational spaces for discussion and ensuring their outreach campaigns consider regional contexts.



The first group also answered the following questions regarding external developments:

- What youth work practices are future-proof and what practices need to be re-thought in the context of larger societal trends?
- What youth work methodologies and methods will remain relevant in the next 5, 10, or 20 years?
- What are the skills needed for youth workers to become more future literate?
- And what competencies do youth workers need to adopt for the emerging roles of youth work?

In this case, the group concluded that future-proof youth work requires a delicate balance between adaptability and structured development. Youth workers must stay "trendy" and relatable to effectively engage young people while maintaining professional integrity through self-reflection and evaluation. The importance of non-formal education emerged as a central theme, with calls for it to take a more prominent role in youth development, complementing formal education through measurable outcomes and quality assurance.

Critical competencies for future youth workers include green literacy for addressing climate change, fact-checking skills to combat misinformation, and transmitting democratic values while countering hate speech. The group emphasized that youth work remains intrinsically linked to active citizenship and civic participation, requiring workers to confidently engage with decision-makers while considering regional political contexts that may affect their workspace.

Peer-to-peer learning was identified as particularly suitable for our rapidly changing world, though it requires adequate time and flexible structures rather than rigid frameworks. Success stories should be shared widely to multiply impact, while promotion and information about opportunities must effectively reach target groups. Importantly, youth work needs formal recognition in both program and partner countries, with closer cooperation between formal and non-formal education sectors being essential for creating safe, educational spaces that truly serve young people's needs.

The second group, working on collective youth work, first looked at inner work through the following questions:

- What inner resources (values, principles, qualities) should be nurtured for the field to become more agile and future-ready? And what are the ones that stand in the way?
- What are the blocking patterns and narratives in youth work that we need to overcome to become more future-ready? What are the new patterns and narratives that we need to cultivate and support?



- What are the new systemic roles (purpose) that youth work is invited to play by the emerging societal trends and needs of young people?

The group concluded that youth work's future readiness requires a careful balance of innovation and purpose-driven stability. For inner resources, they emphasized the importance of developing digital competencies and flexibility skills while maintaining crisis resilience and proactivity rather than reactivity. The need to bridge EU and non-EU know-how was highlighted, acknowledging current disparities in opportunities.

Several blocking patterns were identified, including the persistent gap between formal and non-formal sectors, and concerns about excessive innovation potentially leading to loss of purpose. The standardisation of AI use across generations was noted as a potential risk, requiring ethical guidelines for its implementation. To overcome these challenges, the group advocated for new patterns centred on mental and emotional health, less Euro-centric regional cooperation, and a co-creation mindset.

The emerging systemic roles for youth work include stronger advocacy and lobbying positions, enhanced civic engagement, and facilitation of peer-to-peer learning. The field must become more vocal about its impact while creating space for innovation within formal education structures. This requires youth workers to step out of their comfort zones, take calculated risks, and continuously identify emerging challenges. The development of youth councils and sustainable initiatives were seen as crucial steps toward ensuring young people's voices are heard and meaningful opportunities are provided.

Finally, the second group looked at the external developments through the following questions:

- What are the formal frameworks that need to be created and adopted to support the change in the field?
- What structures are needed to facilitate the process of change, and where can the necessary co-creation processes happen?
- What are the youth work policies needed and how can European programmes support the evolution of youth work?

The group agreed that formal recognition and standardization of youth work at the European level require significant structural changes. They advocated for the development of European youth legislation and recommendations, alongside the establishment of an Erasmus+ Youth Work Academy to train professionals. A key proposal was the creation of an international curriculum and degree in youth work, supported by common recognition standards and a framework that could be adapted across different countries.



**BEYOND BORDERS**  
Neighbours together

To facilitate these changes, the group emphasized the need for more accessible and inclusive funding structures, particularly for partner countries. This included suggestions for a distinct EU funding instrument for youth work in partner countries and enabling organizations to apply for grants directly through regional SALTOs and National Agencies. They also proposed reshaping SALTO's role to include political advocacy during the preparation of new programs.

Practical barriers to international youth work were addressed through recommendations for special visa arrangements or visa-free travel for Erasmus+ activities, and opening all Erasmus+ youth actions to broader participation. The implementation of cooperation agreements at the national level was seen as crucial for legitimizing youth work, while an Erasmus+ youth programme diploma would provide formal recognition for participants' achievements.





## Chapter 6 - Recommendations to Beyond Borders

The Bonn conference brought together several stakeholders active in the field of youth, some of whom had ample experience of previous cooperation both between themselves and with and within the Beyond Borders project (e.g., by collaborating with SALTO Resource Centres or Erasmus+ National Agencies, or by attending previous Beyond Borders events such as partnership-building activities). At the Conference, they had an opportunity to reflect on the role and the place of Beyond Borders and the activities it engages in, and share some ideas on how they see the community of practice that developed around BB growing further. The focus was on good practice and solutions that worked, on ideas that have exhausted their potential and should not be continued, and on needs and gaps for other activities to be developed.

### Needs of activities for the community of practice

#### 1) What has worked well in the past and could be more of?

- Turn back to how the budget for activities with partner countries was allocated in Germany or remove the divide between the programme and partner countries altogether.
- Support for partnership-building events producing quality partnerships.
- The Beyond Borders initiative allows both partner and programme countries to actively contribute, which should be expanded.
- Youthful Europe concept with training courses in each partner region, facilitating youth worker exchanges and exploring European identity.
- PBA in Ljubljana and Stakeholders conference in Bonn.
- Cross-border cooperation, joint projects, youth exchanges, and capacity-building initiatives.
- Meetings for partnership building and idea exchanges.
- In-person meetings with cross-sectoral and generational mix.

#### 2) What did not work well in the past and has exhausted its potential?

- Some recommendations have stalled due to lack of involvement from policymakers.
- Speeches without visual aids.
- PBAs focused solely on regional cooperation rather than including topic-based aspects.
- The promotion and visibility of the Beyond Borders project needs improvement.





- Online prep meetings need more content information.
- Inconsistent communication and inability to engage in long-term collaboration.
- Need more time for bringing recommendations to the table during conferences.

### 3) What activities are missing and need to be initiated?

- Increase partnership-building activities to ensure the creation of more new partnerships.
- Tool fairs among organizations from all regions.
- Avoid using "European values" in favour of more inclusive terms like "universal" or "human values".
- Meaningful policy-influencing events with experienced decision-makers.
- Establish a Beyond Borders network pool of trainers to strengthen capacity.
- Better engagement of policymakers in activities with youth workers to refine recommendations.
- Organize activities in partner countries as a form of recognition and support for local economies.
- Gather people by specific sectors, e.g., environment, culture, and sports.
- Create a library of stories on the Howspace platform for easier networking.
- More networking sessions with exercises like the "standing up-sitting down" to better understand diversity.
- Beyond Borders pool of trainers – Training of Trainers.
- Study visits to regions.
- Evaluating project proposals.



## Chapter 7 - Recommendations to the EU Programmes, youth field (Erasmus+ / ESC)

These recommendations reflect a wide range of concerns and ideas for improving the Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps programmes, particularly in terms of cooperation with partner countries, accessibility, and quality assurance. They demonstrate a strong desire for more inclusive, flexible, and efficient program structures that can better serve the needs of diverse participants and organisations across Europe and beyond.

There are three clusters of recommendations:

- II. General recommendations to the European Commission, related to various aspects of Erasmus+ and ESC programming
- III. Specific, Partner-country-focused recommendations to the European Commission
- IV. Other recommendations including those to Erasmus+ National Agencies and other programme stakeholders and beneficiaries

### I. Recommendations to the European Commission - general:

#### 1. Rethinking the 80/20 Cost Division

What is the recommendation? The 80%/20% cost division in the capacity-building action line needs to be rethought.

Why is it relevant? It is a major barrier for organisations in partner countries to bring up this money, and participants are suffering from the impossibility of prepaying travel etc. due to this rule.

How to implement it? Check for different ways to assure the commitment of the applying organisations which is not monetary.

#### 2. Create an Alumni Network

What is the recommendation? Create an Alumni network of former Erasmus program participants.



Why is it relevant? It would be beneficial for networking and improved cooperation between countries, leading to new collaborations, expansion of partnerships, better promotion of the program, and support for new, smaller organisations.

How to implement it? Through one of the Erasmus programmes or projects.

### **3. Rethink "Innovation" Demand in Applications**

What is the recommendation? Change the wording around "innovation" in application forms to encourage truly future-oriented content.

Why is it relevant? The current "innovation" demand is causing people to exaggerate or misrepresent their projects. Less buzzwords and more content are needed.

How to implement it? Change the wording in the application forms to make it clear that inventing a new hybrid web platform just to look fancy is not necessary.

### **4. Support Civic Education Youth Workers Worldwide**

What is the recommendation? Erasmus+ youth worker exchanges and youth exchanges resulting from them should target and support civic educating youth workers worldwide working in precarious situations.

Why is it relevant? To bring about a better world. International civic educational exchange with young people offers important additional problem-solving capacities for societies.

How to implement it? Through funding programmes (e.g., Erasmus+ and ESC) that include everybody involved.

Reference: Human Dignity. (The German children and youth plan offers more possibilities in some regards than Erasmus+, though less in others.)

### **5. Mentor Programme for Newcomers**

What is the recommendation? Give national agencies a budget to use highly experienced organisations in their country as mentors for newcomers.

Why is it relevant? It's relevant to make it easier to get new organisations and people involved with the programmes. Without this resource, highly experienced organisations have difficulties taking on such mentoring roles because there's no funding for it.

How to implement it? The national agencies would implement this with the resources given by the EU Commission.



## **6. Simplify Communication Language**

What is the recommendation? Translate the institutional language into a commoner language. Language should be easy to comprehend and propose communication in target countries' languages when possible.

Why is it relevant? Concepts need to be explained to allow further accessibility of participants and partners to avoid a feeling of not fitting in or alienation. This will allow higher participation of groups that are difficult to reach.

How to implement it? The national agencies, program countries, and partner organisations could use AI tools for this translation.

## **7. Objective Institution for Partnership Termination**

What is the recommendation? An objective institution should decide on the termination of partnerships.

Why is it relevant? Currently, the lead applicant has the power to change partners very easily without providing proof. This leads to a utilitarian use of the local partners' network and helps with implementation.

How to implement it? National agency should play the regulating role over this.

# **II. Recommendations to the European Commission - cooperation with Partner countries.**

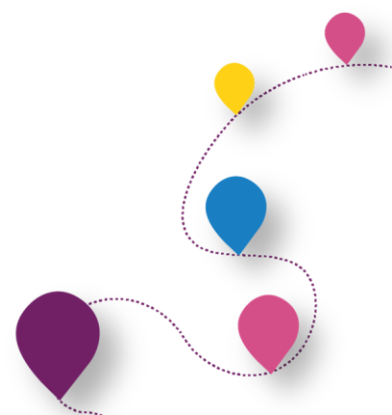
## **8. Support Visa Procedures**

What is the recommendation? Support visa procedures through a recommendation from the EU to adequate responsible persons (at the Consulate) in all the member countries to accept visa applications from project participants plus templates of support letters for the NAs etc.

Why is it relevant? To improve access to the programmes and provide a more coherent approach to applications.

How to implement it? DG EAC should take the lead on this.

Reference: This has been a long-lasting issue.



## **9. Make Erasmus+ and ESC Activities Visa-Free**

What is the recommendation? A statement from the European Commission recommending all participating countries of EU youth programmes to make Erasmus+ and ESC visa-free activities.

Why is it relevant? To make mobilities cheaper, more accessible, equal and inclusive.

How to implement it? The European Commission should recommend/propose this to all participating countries of EU youth programmes.

## **10. Expand Accessibility of EU Programmes**

What is the recommendation? Expand and enhance the accessibility of EU programmes, such as Erasmus+, for young people across all regions of Western Balkans (WB).

Why is it relevant? Greater access to EU programmes empowers young people by offering opportunities to develop skills, engage in cultural exchanges, and participate in European cooperation projects. It helps address unemployment, promotes social inclusion, and fosters a stronger European identity.

How to implement it? Collaboration between WB governments, EU institutions, youth organisations, and educational institutions. Ministries of Education, youth-focused NGOs, and EU representatives in WB should work together to ensure that information, resources, and application processes are widely available and simplified.

## **11. Enable National Agencies to Fund Partner Country-Led Projects**

What is the recommendation? Enable national agencies (or groups of them) to give money for projects led by partner countries for a variety of action lines.

Why is it relevant? To give more agency to organisations from partner countries.

How to implement it? For example, South-East European NGOs can apply as applicants to National Agencies, who reserve money for such purposes.

## **12. Enhance Cooperation Between European and Non-European Partner Countries**

What is the recommendation? Enhance cooperation between European and non-European partner countries within youth programmes such as Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps, focusing on intercultural learning, democratic engagement, and promoting inclusion.



Why is it relevant? This is crucial due to the evolving geopolitical landscape and growing challenges faced by youth programmes. It can strengthen intercultural connections, foster mutual understanding, and ensure more young people are included in impactful youth initiatives.

How to implement it? Collaboration among EU Commission, national agencies, regional SALTO Resource Centres, and youth organisations to design initiatives promoting intercultural exchange, inclusion, and democratic engagement.

### **13. Initiate More Multilateral Activities and Strengthen Projects Between Partner Countries**

What is the recommendation? Initiate more multilateral activities (also in KA2) involving multiple regions from partner countries. Initiate and strengthen projects between partner countries.

Why is it relevant? This promotes the exchange of knowledge, experiences, and best practices across regional boundaries and strengthens collaboration on key issues.

How to implement it? Partner countries should have increased opportunities to independently initiate joint projects. Establish additional funding mechanisms for partner countries, possibly with independent budgets for all SALTO offices for each partner region.

### **14. Incorporate Regional Geopolitical Awareness**

What is the recommendation? Incorporate regional geopolitical awareness into Erasmus+ and ESC programmes.

Why is it relevant? Given the evolving geopolitical and social contexts, it's essential to explore geopolitical issues deeper. This can be a beneficial incentive for meaningful engagement of youth in policy awareness and discussion and also boost the interest of youth to engage in policy & politics in the future.

### **15. Promote New Partnerships with Neighbouring Countries**

What is the recommendation? Promote and encourage the formation of new partnerships between EU countries and neighbouring partner countries, ensuring a wider and more diverse range of participants in cooperation projects.

Why is it relevant? Engaging new partners from neighbouring countries enriches projects with diverse perspectives and experiences, fostering a more inclusive and dynamic approach to addressing common challenges.



How to implement it? Introduce an additional scoring system in the application evaluation process for projects that include new partners from neighbouring countries or organisations.

### **16. Establish Regular Events for Stakeholder Networking and Dialogue**

What is the recommendation? Organise regular events, such as conferences or forums, where stakeholders from the EU and neighbouring partner countries can meet, network, and discuss critical issues.

Why is it relevant? Providing a platform for dialogue and networking is essential for building strong partnerships and addressing shared challenges.

How to implement it? Create a dedicated body or structure responsible for organising these events on a regular basis.

### **17. Improve Partner Country Involvement and Project Management**

What is the recommendation? A. Find a system in which partner regions are attributed to different NAs from programme countries, so calls can be opened to them as applicants and managed through the attributed NA. B. Create a better common system or framework in all countries to get visas. C. Create a key action specifically oriented for neighbouring countries. D. Create a digital platform for virtual collaboration between youth workers and young people from Erasmus+ and partner countries.

Why is it relevant? To bridge the gap between partner and programme countries, improve visa processes, empower partner countries, and facilitate continuous interaction and learning, especially when physical exchanges are not possible.

How to implement it? A. Instead of executive agencies, the contracts can be made through agencies. B. Replicate the system from humanitarian aid visas. D. Leverage existing educational platforms and adapt them for youth work needs.

### **18. Create Erasmus+ or Volunteering Visa**

What is the recommendation? The program could present a type of VISA to the European Commission so that countries could adopt a type of application which supports the mobility of youth within the programmes.

Why is it relevant? Current visa types don't match the documents or applications of youth as beneficiaries of these programmes.

How to implement it? Create an ERASMUS+ visa or Volunteering visa where youth could submit the application process more easily with appropriate supporting documents.



## **19. Change Mobility Parameters**

What is the recommendation? For youth exchanges, remove the minimum number of participants per group. For mobilities of youth workers, remove the lower age for cases where young people themselves are working as youth workers/leaders as volunteers.

Why is it relevant? In some countries, there can be problems finding participants, especially for particular topics concerning minority groups. It's better if one young person has the experience than none at all.

How to implement it? DG EAC plus agreement of the NAs.

## **20. Allocate Budget to Partner Countries for Planning Phase**

What is the recommendation? The budget needs to be allocated to partner countries also for the planning and not just the implementation phase.

Why is it relevant? Partners are often used to tick off a box or as a tourist agency. This leads to fake collaboration with low-quality activities.

How to implement it? National Agencies with the EC should play a regulating role to provide strict guidelines on these collaborations. The application form should require evidence-based selection criteria for partners.

## **21. Focus on Cross-Border Networks and Cultural Exchanges**

What is the recommendation? To boost cooperation with neighbouring partner countries, programmes should focus on building cross-border networks, organising joint projects, and promoting cultural exchanges.

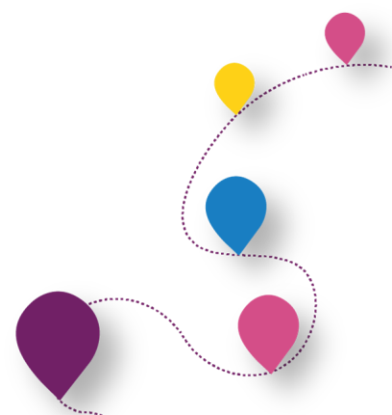
Why is it relevant? These efforts will lead to stronger partnerships and better outcomes for youth development.

How to implement it? Provide capacity-building opportunities, ensure regular communication, encourage youth leadership, and advocate for supportive policies.

## **22. Multiple Recommendations for Budget, Funding, and Programme Structure**

What are the recommendations?

1. Additional payment for invited speakers
2. More flexibility in funding
3. New category for new expenses



4. Automatic category for visa and insurance costs for third countries
5. Open application status to third countries for mobility projects and European Solidarity Corps
6. Create regional, cross-regional, and national-level capacity-building projects
7. Re-launch Erasmus Virtual Exchange
8. Create new small projects for specific needs and short periods
9. Encourage the creation of a youth alumni association/community

Why are they relevant? These changes aim to increase the quality and inclusivity of projects, make processes easier for third countries, address the specific needs of youth workers and NGOs, and create more visibility and networking opportunities for program beneficiaries.

How to implement them? Various methods including changes to application forms, creating new project types, and establishing new communities and structures within the programmes.

### **23. Increase the Role of SALTOs and Revise Terminology**

What are the recommendations?

1. Increase the role of SALTOs in monitoring project quality
2. Revise the term "Third countries" to a more friendly name like "Partner countries"
3. Allow partner organisations to apply directly for some grants
4. NAs to provide clear information on the remaining budget for cooperation with partner countries
5. Provide SALTO EECA with resources for translating guides into regional languages
6. Increase budget flexibility for projects with partner countries
7. Remove co-financing requirement for projects with partner countries

Why are they relevant? These changes aim to ensure proper implementation, maintain program quality and reputation, make the program more accessible and easier to administer, build capacities of small organisations, and remove barriers to participation for partner countries.

How to implement them? Various methods including changes to DG EAC policies, increased funding from DG NEAR, changes to EACEA administration, and adjustments to NA practices.

### **24. To increase the role (mandate) of SALTOs in the regions, to monitor the quality of the ESC and Erasmus+ projects and activities – monitoring implementation and quality assurance.**



Why is it relevant? (Why does it matter, what is the motivation, and what will be achieved/changed)

- To ensure correct implementation and good experience of participants;
- Maintain quality (educational and intercultural value) of the project in particular and programme in general
- To avoid fraud and misuse of public funds
- To maintain the reputation of the programme

How to go about implementing it? (Who should do it)

DG EAC

**25. To revise the term "Third countries" and return to a more friendly name, for example, "Partner countries." The term "Third countries" has a negative connotation proven and researched by linguists from 16 countries from the regions :-)**

Why is it relevant? (Why does it matter, what is the motivation, and what will be achieved/changed)

- The term 'Third countries' carries a negative connotation and jeopardises the partnership.

How to go about implementing it? (Who should do it)

DG EAC

**26. Give partner organisations the possibility to apply directly for some large and small-scale grants similar to KA1, KA2 and ESC – previously under the Eastern Partnership Window.**

Why is it relevant? (Why does it matter, what is the motivation, and what will be achieved/changed)

- Makes programme accessible easier to small/grass-root organisations, thus ensuring diverse beneficiaries
- Make administration of the programme more straightforward
- Builds capacities of the small/grass-root organisations, thus they grow and have a bigger impact
- If implemented recommendation number 1 is a must, to avoid fraud, and ensure quality and proper implementation support.



How to go about implementing it? (Who should do it)

- Ensure additional funding from DG NEAR
- If administered by the EACEA, it is a must to ensure EACEA has the capacity to timely respond to the implementers; ensure monitoring of implementation; monitor of results;

**27. Provide SALTO EECA with some additional resources for making translations of the GUIDE into regional languages for both ESC and Erasmus+ programmes.**

Why is it relevant? (Why does it matter, what is the motivation, and what will be achieved/changed)

- To reach out and clarify the programme for grassroots organisations, and municipalities in rural and urban areas;

How to go about implementing it? (Who should do it)

SALTO EECA, SALTO SEE, SALTO EuroMed

**28. Flexibility in budget availability**

To change the rule from 25% of the entire budget to 50% to allow more flexibility; And/or increase the budget for the projects implemented in partnership with the partner countries.

Why is it relevant? (Why does it matter, what is the motivation, and what will be achieved/changed)

- There is a big need for youth in partner countries to participate in Erasmus + and ESC, therefore, giving them more opportunities to partner countries, would help their youth benefit more.
- There is sometimes no or very limited support to young people, youth organisations and youth workers in the partner countries. Erasmus+ serves as a programme which helps young people, youth workers and youth organisations to get empowered, become more competent, and grow their impact.
- Organisations active in the Erasmus+ are usually flagship organisations that advocate and steer youth work and youth policy developments in the partner countries
- Youth workers (beneficiaries of E+) are often becoming experts (consultants) supporting the European Commission in the various technical assistance projects implementation.



How to go about implementing it? (Who should do it)

- DG EAC should remove this informal requirement
- DG NEAR can allocate additional funds for cooperation with the neighbouring partner countries

### **29. Remove the requirement (expectation) of having co-financing of the projects implemented in partnership with the partner countries**

Why is it relevant? (Why does it matter, what is the motivation, and what will be achieved/changed)

- Because there are no foundations/sources available in the partner countries to get co-financing, thus it is impossible (in the large majority of cases) to get co-financing
- This will mitigate the 'need' of the organisations to be 'creative' in showcasing the co-financing. They do it since they have no other choice in order to comply with the requirements.

How to go about implementing it? (Who should do it)

DG EAC, DG EAC, DG EAC should change this rule!

## **III. Recommendations to National Agencies / Others**

### **30. Create SNAC for Civic Engagement**

Addressee: Erasmus+ National Agencies

What is the recommendation? Create a specific SNAC (Strategic National Agency Cooperation) that focuses on civic engagement.

Why is it relevant? Democracy is facing challenges in many countries, and youth work needs to recognize its political responsibility. The SNAC will promote critical thinking, civic engagement, civic education, activism, rights, and values.

How to implement it? One NA needs to develop the concept and recruit other NAs and appropriate persons/organisations from the partner countries.

### **31. Improve Quality and Balance in Projects**

Addressee: Erasmus+ grantees / other

What is the recommendation? Pay more attention to the quality of facilitators, provide more practical skills for youngsters after Erasmus+ projects, take more responsibility for logistics for first-time travellers, enhance collaboration between civic and business sectors, implement a checklist of requirements for projects, provide "first aid" for asking recommendations for participants and trainers, and implement a more precise selection process for participants.

Why is it relevant? To have the right expectations about the quality of the project and to prepare ourselves and the participants. The balance should be everywhere.

How to implement it? Ensure good quality stakeholders (first of all, facilitators, also coordinators, participants, etc.).

### **32. Strengthen Cooperation Between National Agencies**

Addressee: Erasmus+ National Agencies

What is the recommendation? Strengthen cooperation between National Agencies to produce more cooperation opportunities, potentially merging some funding and enabling organisations from different countries to submit projects as lead applicants.

Why is it relevant? This would enable organisations to not repeat projects, share practices, and not produce the same results from different NAs. It would further youth work as a field.

How to implement it? Partnership Building Activities could open doors for cooperation.

### **33. NAs to provide clear information on what the amount of budget is remaining for the cooperation with the partner countries.**

Addressee: Erasmus+ National Agencies

Why is it relevant? (Why does it matter, what is the motivation, and what will be achieved/changed)

- It should be clearer for organisations from programme countries to know whether involving organisations from partner countries would decrease the chance of approval of their project proposal or not. Very often this becomes a barrier for organisations from programme countries to cooperate with partner countries.

How to go about implementing it? (Who should do it)

NAs should publish the information publicly on the remaining funds.



### **34. Liveable Wage for Youth Workers**

Addressee: Other

What is the recommendation? A liveable wage for all youth workers involved in civic education programmes.

Why is it relevant? To ensure that youth workers can meet their basic needs and work without fearing for their long-term financial security.

How to implement it? Increase personnel costs allowances in funding programmes to fully represent and respect the work of highly educated and motivated professionals.

### **35. Provide Ethical Guidelines for AI Use**

Addressee: Other

What is the recommendation? Provide ethical guidelines towards the use of AI.

Why is it relevant? To avoid standardised content and analysis that kill creativity and diversity. AI risks smoothing everything and diluting important messages when used for synthesising contributions.

How to implement it? The national agencies or EC can contact involved stakeholders on their use of AI to see how they use AI and then produce a document as a toolkit of good practices around its use.

