

# Executive Summary

## Business Meeting Madrid 2023

**Dates:** 16-18 October 2023

**Location:** Madrid, Spain

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# 1. Introduction

The executive summary provides an overview of the relevant report's discussions and outcomes from the Business Meeting of Heads of National Agencies of the EU Youth Programmes Erasmus+ Youth and European Solidarity Corps held in Madrid, Spain from 16 till 18 October 2023. The meeting aimed to address key objectives, including reflections on the mid-term evaluation of current programs, engaging with the European Commission, proposing changes to the Programme Guide for 2024, and discussing the evolution of TCA/NET, SNACs and KMST.

## 2. Updates from the Spain EU Presidency

The Spanish EU Presidency played a pivotal role in advancing youth engagement and policy within the European Union. Key events under this presidency included the Co-Group Retreat in Madrid, the Informal Meeting of Ministers in Saragossa, the EU Youth Conference in Alicante, and the Council of the EU meeting in Brussels. These gatherings were instrumental in fostering discussions on youth inclusion, addressing challenges faced by young Europeans, and shaping future youth policies.

**Informal Meeting of Ministers for Education and Youth** (Saragossa, 18-19 September): This meeting focused on Europe's commitment to its youth, particularly in education, rights, and welfare. Discussions revolved around enhancing the legitimacy of EU decision-making through structured youth participation, youth mainstreaming in public policies, and the benefits of cooperation between European institutions, Member States, and youth representatives.

**EU Youth Conference** (Alicante, 1-4 October): Attended by 250 participants, including Youth Delegates and Ministerial Delegates, the conference centred on "Inclusive Societies." Key outcomes included identifying barriers to youth inclusion, actions for enhancing youth policies, and strategies for empowering the youth work field through intersectional approaches and inclusive participation structures.

**Directors General Youth Meeting** (Alicante, 4-5 October): This meeting involved EU member states and various organisations, focusing on interactive engagement with youth delegates, embedding youth perspectives in policy making, and deliberations on the European Union Youth Strategy and EU Youth Programmes.

**Council of the EU** (Brussels, 23 November): The Education, Youth, Culture and Sport Council proposed addressing mental health issues among European youth and emphasized the need for inclusive and participatory responses to safeguard young people's rights and well-being.

These events under the Spanish EU Presidency were crucial in guiding the direction of youth engagement and policy-making at both national and European levels, highlighting the importance of youth inclusion and the need for strategic approaches to address the challenges faced by young Europeans.

### 3. Co-Group Messages

The Co-Group Retreat in August 2023 played a crucial role in shaping the strategic direction of initiatives by the Youth NA network as well as in preparing the Business Meeting (BM) Madrid. This chapter encapsulates the key messages and discussions, focusing on the advancement and future planning of these initiatives. Key areas covered include the mid-term evaluation of current programmes, the development of future programme structures, and the review of Transnational Cooperation Activities (TCA)/Networking Activities (NET) and Strategic National Agency Cooperation projects (SNACs).

#### **Key Discussions and Plans:**

- *Open Topics with the COM:* Addressed IT Tools and TCA/NET Budget issues.
- *Mid-term Evaluation:* Emphasised the urgency of certain steps and the Parliament's report linking the EU Youth Strategy with programmes.
- *Architecture of Future Programmes:* Explored preferred structures and network positions on future programmes.
- *Planning of the BM Madrid:* Focused on organising the Business Meeting, including discussions on future trends, RAY, and youth perspectives.

#### **TCA/NET and Network Planning:**

- *TCA/NET and SNACs:* Reviewed SNACs' status, mission statements, engagement strategies, and decisions on their continuation.
- *Work Plan of the Network:* Discussed long-term planning and identified responsibilities for different fields or actions.
- *Organisation of the Coordination Group:* Restructured working groups for long-term goals and limited resources.

#### **The Working Groups:**

1. Communication (internal + external): Luis Alves, David Lafuente Durán.
2. Monitoring + Evaluation of Programmes (including RAY): Reet Kost, Koen Lambert, Uros Skrinar
3. KMST + Competence Framework: Jojanneke de Waal, Margret Zeiner.
4. Linking Programmes to Policy, Priorities, Youth Strategy and EYWAgenda (including SALTOs, Strategies): Manfred von Hebel, Koen Lambert.

5. Monitoring of TCA/NET (including SNACs): Manfred von Hebel, Laurence Hermand, Reet Kost, Uros Skrinar.
6. Strengthening ESC Programme: Gerhard Moßhammer, Mathieu Roumegous.

**The Support Persons:**

- Sabrina Apitz: Manages Secretariat duties.
- Andrei Popescu: Focuses on Communications.

## 4. Commissions View on the Future of the Programmes (Sophia Eriksson)

The presentation by Sophia Eriksson from the European Commission offered an insightful view into the future of EU Youth Programmes. The Commission expressed deep admiration for the dynamic nature of the network's activities, effectively embodying the values it preaches. Special recognition was given to David for his exceptional networking and negotiation skills, likened to a 'Duracell battery' for his enduring energy and commitment.

A significant focus of the Commission's perspective was on the **ongoing midterm evaluations**, which are crucial for aligning with the EU Youth Strategy. These evaluations are expected to be completed by mid-2025, leading to the development of Commission recommendations, followed by impact assessments, proposals, regulations, and negotiations with the Commission and Parliament. This process underscores the strategic importance of these evaluations in shaping the future of youth programmes.

The Commission highlighted the significant challenge of oversubscription in the **Erasmus+ programme**, indicating a need for a much larger budget to adequately cater to potential participants. Satisfaction was expressed with the current structure of Erasmus+, particularly with the focus on exploring areas like micro grants, which shows a commitment to evolving and improving the programme.

The Commission acknowledged the **challenges in simplification**, particularly concerning financial regulations and grant agreements. They urged for collective efforts in proposing concrete ideas for improvement, emphasising the importance of collaboration in enhancing the programme's effectiveness.

**Discussions around integrating the European Solidarity Corps (ESC) into Erasmus+ are ongoing.** The Commission stressed the need for qualified discussions on what this integration would entail and its implications, highlighting the importance of strategic and informed decision-making.

The Commission noted the low external awareness of Strategic Network and Cooperation (SNAC) projects and Knowledge Management and Staff Training (KMST), despite their strategic contributions. They emphasised the need to elevate these initiatives to align with broader agendas, ensuring their visibility and impact are recognized.

The Commission extended an **invitation for ongoing dialogue and exchange to further discuss and shape the future of youth programmes**. This open approach signifies the Commission's commitment to collaborative and inclusive planning for the future of EU Youth Programmes.

During the Q&A session, various participants raised important points. Ernst from Austria emphasised the network's influence within the Commission and Parliament and proposed a joint event next year for open dialogue among key stakeholders. Sophia from the Commission agreed with Ernst on the challenges faced by the Commission and stressed the importance of the network's voice in advocating for youth programmes. She highlighted RAY's numbers in demonstrating the programmes' impact on European belonging and emphasised the need for a narrative around green and digital transitions.

Koen from Belgium noted the separation of youth and education ministries in many countries and raised concerns about who will defend the youth part in programme discussions. Sophia confirmed the strength of the education and youth sectors in the Commission and assured strong representation and stakeholder support of the youth chapter.

Marta from the Commission encouraged thinking about the broader picture and suggested revisiting discussions on Solidarity Projects and Participation Projects. David from Spain emphasised the need for lobbying at the Council level and proposed focusing Spanish council conclusions on youth programmes. He suggested introducing an open debate about the future of the programmes and discussed the importance of communication and the idea of a Permanent Secretariat.

This detailed summary encapsulates the Commission's perspective on the future of EU Youth Programmes, highlighting strategic evaluations, budget considerations, programme structure, and the need for effective communication and advocacy within the network.

## 5. Future Programmes

### 5.1. Common Ground for the Future of the EU Youth Programmes

The network received insights from various speakers to inform its opinions on future EU Youth Programmes:

- **Directors General Youth Meeting:** Focused on aligning EU Youth Programmes with the European Youth Strategy, discussing youth participation, mental health, climate change, housing, and digital challenges.

- **European Youth Forum's Vision:** Advocated for increased accessibility and inclusion in Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps, emphasising the need for expanded reach, budget adjustments, and enhanced youth participation.
- **Spanish Youth Council Perspective**
- **Volunteering Conference Insights:** Proposed improvements to European volunteering, including an EU Volunteer Status and a Quality Charter for Volunteering, and discussed the future of the European Solidarity Corps.
- **RAY Research on EU Youth Programmes:** Presented a draft analysis of the mid-term evaluation, highlighting positive experiences and a shift in youth motivation towards socio-political challenges.

More details are provided about the European Perspectives and Insights in the following sub chapters.

### 5.1.1. Directors General Youth Meeting Oct 2023

**Participants and Involvement:** Involvement of EU member states, OECD, EESC, YFJ, and EU-CoE youth partnership.

The Directors General Meeting for Youth in Alicante, held on October 4-5, was a pivotal event focusing on shaping the future of EU Youth Programmes in alignment with the European Youth Strategy (EYS). The meeting, structured into three sessions, emphasised the integration of youth perspectives in policy making, the importance of mainstreaming these perspectives through various assessment tools, and the evaluation of the EYS in synergy with EU Youth Programmes. Key priorities addressed were youth participation, mental health, climate change, housing, and digital challenges.

Significant contributions from Member States and the European Commission (COM) included the COM's emphasis on the EYS as a vital tool for connecting European youth, despite challenges like COVID-19, the Ukraine conflict, climate crisis, and inflation. Spain lauded Erasmus+ for European integration and the ESC for inclusion. Other Member States like Malta, Sweden, Germany, Lithuania, France, Belgium, Hungary, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Italy, Portugal, Slovenia, Latvia, and Croatia brought forward diverse perspectives, ranging from the need for long-term vision in projects, the importance of youth dialogue visibility, to the necessity of aligning national and European strategies.

The meeting highlighted the critical need for youth programmes to be adaptable, forward-thinking, and responsive, ensuring that they effectively address the evolving needs and challenges of young people in a dynamic global context. The discussions reinforced the importance of youth inclusivity and the alignment of national and European strategies to enhance the efficacy of youth policies and programmes.

### 5.1.2. European Youth Forums Vision

Maria Rodriguez from the European Youth Forum delivered a detailed presentation on their vision for the future of EU programmes and the EU Youth Strategy. Her talk highlighted several critical areas:

**In the Erasmus+ Programme**, she emphasised the need for greater accessibility and inclusion, advocating for explicit definitions of groups with fewer opportunities and inclusivity considerations in project budgets. She proposed expanding Erasmus+ beyond the EU to include non-EU European countries committed to democracy, human rights, and the rule of law, and suggested creating a special visa category for participants. Rodriguez stressed the importance of budget indexation to account for inflation and called for increased overall funding. She also recommended administrative and structural changes to reduce burdens on small and grassroots organisations and to ensure evaluators are well-versed in the sector.

**For the European Solidarity Corps (ESC)**, Rodriguez highlighted its role in developing competencies in youth and suggested making the program more inclusive, such as by lowering the age limit for volunteering. She called for budget adjustments to accommodate inflation and an overall increase to enhance youth volunteering opportunities.

Regarding the EU Youth Strategy, Rodriguez suggested evaluating the implementation of mainstreaming across policy areas and enhancing collaboration between Member States.

She emphasised the importance of meaningful participation in the EU Youth Dialogue and the need for effective support for National Youth Councils. Additionally, she proposed evaluating the role of the EU Youth Coordinator and exploring ways to make the EU Youth Strategy Platform more active and useful.

Overall, Rodriguez's presentation underscored the significance of inclusivity, broadening participation, sustainability, and effective governance in shaping the future of EU youth programmes and strategies.

### 5.1.3. Insights from the Volunteering Conference

Gerhard Mooshammer's presentation at the Volunteering Conference in Podgorica in Oct 2023 focused on enhancing the future of EU youth programmes, particularly in the context of volunteering. Key aspects of his presentation included:

1. **Introduction:** Emphasising the SNAC partnership's goals to increase the visibility of volunteering and improve communication with decision-makers to enhance volunteering conditions in Europe.

2. **Proposals for Improving Volunteering:**
  - a. EU Volunteer Status: Advocated for a status that clarifies volunteers' rights and responsibilities across Europe, including simplified visa procedures and better recognition of volunteering's value.
  - b. Quality Charter for Volunteering: Proposed a blueprint for high-quality standards in transnational volunteering, focusing on health, safety, inclusivity, and skill recognition.
  - c. Fostering Capacity Building: Highlighted the need to use existing funding sources for capacity building in solidarity and volunteering.
3. **Council Recommendation:** Discussed the importance of updating the 2008 Council Recommendation on volunteering to reflect new developments.
4. **Future of the European Solidarity Corps (ESC):** Addressed the need for a program based on solidarity, considering new approaches like digital and hybrid volunteering and stronger partner country involvement.
5. **Specific Proposals:**
  - a. EU Volunteer Status: Suggested legal status for full-time volunteers in the ESC, addressing various administrative and legal aspects.
  - b. Quality Charter for Volunteering: Covered a range of aspects to ensure high-quality volunteering experiences.
  - c. Fostering Capacity Building: Encouraged activities linked to solidarity, online volunteering, and increased networking and training opportunities.
6. **Summary and Round-Up:** Called for spreading these ideas and using them in discussions with ministries and for midterm evaluations to increase their chances of implementation.

#### 5.1.4. RAY Research: Mid-term evaluation of the EU Youth Programmes

Andreas Karsten's presentation from the RAY network provided a detailed analysis of the mid-term evaluation of the EU Youth Programmes, offering insights into the current state and future directions. Key highlights include:

- **Quick Look Back:** Reflection on past challenges and progress, acknowledging ongoing issues in data processing and beneficiary engagement.
- **State of Play:** Current data shows a high level of participation in 2023, with over 20,000 responses from project participants.
- **Survey Changes:** Surveys have become more nuanced and tailored, focusing on specific project types and improving user experience.
- **Overall Project Experience:** Participants report positive experiences, with solidarity projects being particularly impactful.
- **Motivation Shift:** There's a growing focus among youth on addressing socio-political challenges, raising questions about the balance of project types.

- **Entry Points:** The crucial role of friends and ambassadorship programs like EuroPeers in introducing newcomers to the programmes.
- **Programme Objectives:** Policy-related objectives are identified as the weakest, prompting a reevaluation of their alignment and effectiveness.
- **Programme Priorities:** A notable decline in digitalization, raising questions about repositioning it as a key priority.
- **Connecting to Europe:** Increased connection to Europe among participants, indicating a growing engagement with European values.
- **Impact on Society:** Recognition of the programmes' real impact, with concerns about resource sufficiency to reach all interested youth.

The Q&A session further explored these themes, with discussions on strengthening ambassador programmes, the potential for pre-experience surveys, the impact of digitalisation, and the importance of age-clustered data analysis. The session underscored the need for adaptability, inclusivity, and effective communication strategies in EU youth programmes. Upcoming youth research dialogues and studies were also highlighted, focusing on monitoring and comparing experiences of participants with varying levels of opportunity.

## 5.2. Key Conclusions by the Youth NA Network

### 5.2.1. Linking the Youth Programmes to Megatrends

In addressing the future of EU Youth Programmes, key recommendations have been formulated that align with prevailing megatrends, ensuring the programmes remain responsive and relevant to the needs of young Europeans. These recommendations, drawn from various perspectives and discussions, focus on areas crucial for adapting to societal shifts and emerging challenges.

Civic Engagement and Democracy:

- **Understanding and Commitment to European Values:** Address the decline of democracy by equipping young people with tools to promote and spread European values.
- **Rapid and Direct Civic Engagement:** Enhance support for the growing trend of direct civic engagement through financial opportunities and stable IT systems.
- **Addressing Declining Democracy:** Equip young people with tools to promote and uphold European values and democratic principles.
- **Tackling Populism:** Strategically address the rise of populism and its impact on youth engagement and participation.

Wellbeing & Resilience:

- **Broadening Concept of Wellbeing:** Emphasise a holistic approach to wellbeing, encompassing mental health and social aspects, as fundamental in democratic societies.

- Resilience in a Fragile World: Enhance young people's resilience and participation in a world affected by migration, climate change, and technological disruptions.

#### Digital Transformation:

- Digitalisation in Future Programmes: Evaluate the role of digitalisation as a priority in the new cycle of Erasmus+ and ESC.

#### Sustainability & Climate Change:

- Understanding the Value of Nature: Foster a deeper understanding of nature's intrinsic value, linking it to climate change education and action.

These recommendations collectively aim to enhance the adaptability, inclusivity, and effectiveness of EU Youth Programmes. They address critical areas such as civic engagement, wellbeing, digital transformation, sustainability, and inclusion, ensuring that the programmes continue to meet the dynamic needs of young people and contribute positively to their development and societal engagement.

## 5.2.2. Strategic Choices for the Youth Programmes

In shaping the strategic direction for the future of EU Youth Programmes, several key recommendations have emerged, reflecting a collective vision to address the evolving needs of young people in Europe. These recommendations span various aspects, from policy alignment to administrative considerations, aiming to enhance the programmes' effectiveness, accessibility, and relevance.

#### Strong Links with Youth Work

- ESC and Youth Work Ethics: Maintain the European Solidarity Corps (ESC) within the youth field, adhering to "youth work ethics."

#### Policy Dimension

- Alignment of European Youth Strategy with the Programmes: Ensure close alignment of the EU Youth Strategy with the programmes.
- Policy Dimension Accessibility: Improve accessibility and understanding of the policy dimensions of the programmes.
- Reaffirming Programme Strategies: Continue and reinforce thematic options like European values and active participation.

#### Funding Philosophy for Youth Programmes:

- Advocacy for Increased Funding: Emphasise the need for more funding for youth as a crucial step towards strengthening European integration.

- Preference for Smaller Projects: Advocate for allocating resources towards a higher number of smaller projects rather than a few large-scale projects, to maximise reach and impact.

#### Administrational Aspects:

- Adjusting Financial Parameters for Equity and Inflation: Address the necessity of revising daily rates within the programmes.
- Alternative Programme Contracts: Propose alternative contract models for formats like Solidarity Projects.
- Visa Considerations for Volunteering: Explore implementing special visa categories for European volunteers.
- Lowering Age in ESC: Consider reducing the age limit to 16 for participation in solidarity projects and team volunteering.

#### Empowering Youth Work & International Mobility

- Support professionals and others working with young people. Empower youth work as agents of change and support organisations to integrate international youth work into their activities.
- Recognize and promote the positive impacts of international mobility.

#### Inclusion Aspects:

- Inclusion & Diversity Strategy: Maintain and enhance strategies for inclusion and diversity.
- Inclusivity in Programmes: Keep programmes open to all types of organisations and groups, avoiding strict definitions and focusing on the impact of projects..

#### Digital Transformation:

- Digitalisation in Future Programmes: Evaluate the role of digitalisation as a priority in the new cycle of Erasmus+ and ESC.

#### Risk Tolerance:

- Adopt a more risk-friendly approach, accepting failures without severe consequences for beneficiaries.

These strategic recommendations collectively aim to ensure that EU Youth Programmes continue to meet the dynamic needs of young people, contributing positively to their development and societal engagement.

### 5.2.3. Actions & Formats

In the context of shaping the future of EU Youth Programmes, a focus on actions and formats is essential to address the evolving needs and dynamics of the youth sector. The recommendations, derived from various perspectives and discussions, aim to enhance the effectiveness, accessibility, and relevance of these programmes.

#### Lower Age Limit in ESC:

- Consider lowering the age limit for participation in the European Solidarity Corps, especially for national activities and team projects.

#### Simplicity in Actions/Formats:

- Ensure actions and formats are simple, as the most straightforward formats tend to be the most successful.

#### Clear Messaging:

- Ensure all formats convey a clear, adaptable message over time (e.g., solidarity projects vs. KA2 projects).

#### Flexible Grant System:

- Develop a grant system based on versatile "building blocks" that can be adapted to various contexts.

#### Community Building:

- Support community building among current and former participants, fostering a sense of belonging to a community.

#### Civic Engagement and Democracy:

- Rapid and Direct Civic Engagement: Support the growing trend of civic engagement with financial opportunities and suitable formats.
- Addressing Declining Democracy and Populism: Equip youth with tools to promote European values and counteract populism.

#### Digital Transformation:

- Clarity in Digital Priorities: Define and clarify digital priorities within the programmes for effective communication and implementation.
- Enhancing Human Skills in the Digital Age: Focus on developing human skills like emotional intelligence to complement advancements in artificial intelligence.

#### Sustainability & Climate Change:

- Understanding the Value of Nature: Integrate nature's intrinsic value into programmes, linking it to climate change education and action.

#### Policy Focus in Programmes:

- Shift emphasis from policy aspects to more accessible and relevant programme activities.

Competence Development:

- Focus on competence development and active participation.

These recommendations collectively aim to ensure that EU Youth Programmes continue to meet the dynamic needs of young people, contributing positively to their development and societal engagement. They address critical areas such as civic engagement, wellbeing, digital transformation, sustainability, and inclusion, ensuring the programmes remain adaptable and forward-thinking.

## 6. TCA/NET including SNACs

### 6.1. Co-Group Conclusions on SNAC Perspectives

The Co-Group meeting on Strategic Network and Cooperation (SNAC) perspectives concluded with several significant decisions and recommendations, shaping the future direction and integration of SNACs within the EU Youth Programmes:

1. **Appreciation of SNACs:** The Co-Group expressed a strong sense of satisfaction with the work and outcomes of SNACs, recognizing the considerable effort, expertise, and valuable results they have contributed.
2. **Integration into Future Platforms:** There was a consensus on the need to incorporate the results and learnings from SNACs into future cooperation platforms as soon as feasible, to leverage their insights and achievements.
3. **Use of Existing Padlet for Documentation:** Until the integration into future platforms is realised, the existing padlet will serve as a key tool for the documentation and ongoing follow-up of SNAC activities and outcomes.
4. **Synergy Among Similar SNACs:** The Co-Group encouraged SNACs with overlapping or similar thematic areas to seek out and establish synergies. This approach aims to foster joint or closely coordinated continuations of their work, enhancing the overall impact and efficiency.
5. **Transparent Presentation of SNACs:** A new network communication officer, in collaboration with SNAC coordinators, is tasked with creating a comprehensive, transparent, and coherent presentation of the SNACs. This presentation is intended for both internal and external stakeholders, aiming to improve understanding and visibility of SNACs' roles and contributions.
6. **Meeting for TCA/NET Coordination:** A meeting is scheduled for January 2024, bringing together the TCA/NET working group and selecting Heads of National Agencies (NAs). The focus will be on enhancing coordination, planning, and implementation of all

TCA/NET activities, including SNACs, based on the insights from the TCA/NET survey and evolving needs.

7. **Regular Joint Meetings:** The Co-Group agreed to establish these joint meetings as a regular event, ensuring ongoing dialogue and strategic alignment among key stakeholders.
8. **Strategic Needs Analysis for Future Projects:** There is a recognized need for the network to conduct a thorough analysis of strategic needs for future cooperation projects. This analysis should differentiate between a limited number of strategic projects and other necessary forms of cooperation, ensuring a focused and impactful approach.
9. **Updated Description for NA Cooperation Projects:** Looking ahead, there may be a requirement to update the description of objectives for NA cooperation projects. This update should introduce more flexibility regarding needs and methods, with an emphasis on creativity and innovation. Additionally, there's a proposal to change the terminology from "Strategic National Agency Cooperation projects (SNAC)" to "Long-Term Activities (LTA)," reflecting a broader and more dynamic scope of activities.

These conclusions reflect a strategic approach towards enhancing the effectiveness, collaboration, and impact of SNACs within the broader framework of EU Youth Programmes. They underscore the importance of continuous improvement, adaptability, and strategic alignment in fostering successful and sustainable youth initiatives.

## 6.2. Feedback from the NA network

The feedback from National Agency (NA) directors on the future approach to Supporting Networks at the Centre (SNACs) reveals a consensus on the need for strategic focus, efficiency, and clarity in their roles within the EU Youth Programmes. Here's a detailed summary of their responses:

Clarifying Objectives and Structure:

- Network members emphasised the need to clearly define the objectives of SNACs.
- Questions arose about the inclusion of all SNACs in the Network work plan.
- A proposal was made to structure SNACs and Long-Term Activities (LTAs) strategically, focusing on essential SNACs while categorising others as regular LTAs.

Merging and Clustering SNACs:

- Merging SNACs with similar topics was suggested for better resource usage.
- Identifying common indicators across SNACs for comparable impact assessment.
- Clustering similar SNACs for cooperation or merging was considered for efficiency.

Differentiating SNACs from SALTOs:

- Clarification of the roles of SNACs and SALTOs (Support, Advanced Learning and Training Opportunities) was deemed necessary.
- Some SNACs were viewed as extensions of SALTO work.

#### Strategic Focus and Limitations:

- Concerns about the large number of SNACs led to suggestions for filtering out strategic aspects.
- Aligning SNACs with main programme objectives, like competence development and youth work strengthening.

#### Planning for a New Generation of SNACs:

- Starting a new cycle of SNACs in 2025 was discussed, with 2024 as a preparatory year.
- Evaluating the roles of SALTOs, LTAs, and identifying strategically valuable SNACs.

#### Time Limitation and Evaluation:

- Limiting SNACs in time for proper evaluation was proposed.
- Analysis of each SNAC's outcomes was noted as lacking.

#### Communication & Dissemination

- Better external communication to disseminate SNAC outcomes.
- Focusing external communication on results.

#### EU Commission's Perspective and Internal Communication:

- The EU Commission views SNACs similarly to LTAs, impacting funding considerations.
- Simplifying internal communication with an overview of existing SNACs.

#### Decision-making and Future Focus:

- Caution was advised against abruptly discontinuing SNACs to avoid negative perceptions.
- The relationship between SNACs and SALTO objectives was discussed, with SNACs seen as operationalizing SALTO objectives.
- Establishing a decision-making body to assess the effectiveness, goals, purposes, and potential overlaps of all SNACs was emphasised.

Overall, the feedback indicates a collective desire among NA directors for a more streamlined, strategically focused, and clearly defined approach to SNACs, ensuring their alignment with the broader objectives of the EU Youth Programmes.

## 6.3. KMST Updates

The presentation on Knowledge Management and Staff Training (KMST) updates provided comprehensive insights into the group's current initiatives and plans for 2024. Here's a detailed summary:

### 1. Agenda Overview:

- The agenda covered updates on Job-shadowing, the Competence Framework, KMST Staff Training, and the Calendar for 2024.
2. KMST Working Group Members:
- The working group comprises the following members: Anna Pavlovych (PL), Simona Musteata (RO), Tinkara Bizjak (SI), Marvic Debono (MT), Joseph Schembri (MT), Jojanneke de Waal (NL), Blanka Thees (SALTO T&C), Małgorzata Kozłowska (European Commission), and Emma Hansson (SE) focusing on Job-shadowing.
3. Job Shadowing:
- Plans to update the job shadowing offer in a shared space and revise offers as needed.
  - Initiatives include starting planning and job shadowing with the European Commission (COM).
4. Competence Framework:
- The Competence Framework and support tools are available on the SALTO site.
  - Feedback and Self-Assessment Forms, along with manuals, are being finalised for presentation at the Business Meeting in Belgium.
  - The framework is being incorporated into staff training, with a draft version already in use for trainers.
  - Plans include training for Heads of NAs on using the framework and a potential needs analysis through an online questionnaire.
5. Calendar for 2024:
- The 2024 training offer is complete, with hosts for all trainings and meetings.
  - Key events include:
    - Accreditation in Finland (January)
    - CIOST in Spain (27-31 May)
    - ESC Staff Training in Croatia (27-31 May),
    - Head of NA Training in Denmark (2-5 September)
    - SP officer Support Meeting in Luxembourg (September)
    - Youth Lab (25-27 September).
  - The current calendar is accessible through the SALTO website.
6. KMST Strategy and Calendar:
- The strategy involves separate staff training for each Key Action (KA)/European Solidarity Corps (ESC).
  - Physical staff training for KA/ESC is planned every 18 months, with yearly staff training for ESC and the second TCA meeting online in September.
7. Documents and Communication:

- Documents related to KMST are available on the SALTO site, including the KMST Calendar.
- For new Heads of NA or Youth Coordinators, it's important to inform the Co-group, update the contact list, and provide relevant documentation.

8. General Note:

- The KMST Working Group encourages enthusiasm but requests that members contact the KMST WG for hosting, coordination, and information.

This summary highlights the KMST Working Group's commitment to enhancing job shadowing opportunities, developing competencies, and strategically planning staff training and events for the upcoming year.

## 7. SALTO's: Cooperation Experiences + Work Plans 2024

### 7.1. Experiences in Cooperating with SALTOs

Based on the feedback from National Agencies (NAs) regarding their experiences with Support, Advanced Learning and Training Opportunities (SALTOs), the following summary categorises the responses into four key areas:

**1. Shared Experiences in cooperating with SALTOs:**

- Experiences varied significantly in form and level, with some NAs having good cooperation and others less interaction.
- Positive experiences were noted with regional SALTOs, used as contact points for specific questions.
- Concerns about the clarity of the European Commission's (COM) position and whether SALTOs have an official mandate.
- Variability in the relationship between SALTOs and Strategic Network and Cooperation (SNACs), with not every SALTO linked to a SNAC.

**2. Useful and Supportive Aspects in the cooperation experience:**

- Access to new tools, specific expertise, and resources like trainer pools provided by SALTOs.
- Support in organising staff trainings, events, and accreditation processes.
- Networking opportunities and strategic collaboration facilitated by SALTOs.
- Regional SALTOs provided context-specific support and content-level assistance.
- Quality documentation and communication, including practical newsletters.

**3. Suggestions for Improvements:**

- Need for clearer explanations of SALTOS' mandates, work plans, and their connections to SNACs.
- Improved communication from the COM about SALTOS' roles.
- Establishment of a system to identify relevant contact points within SALTOS.
- Increased sharing of SALTOS' outcomes and deliverables with NA directors.
- Proposal to merge SNACs and SALTOS for efficiency and relevance.
- Managing the volume of meetings and information more effectively.
- Operational improvements like creating clear lists of contact persons and including SALTO information in staff trainings.

#### **4. Unused Potential related to cooperating with SALTOS:**

- Exploring how SNACs can be a tool for SALTOS to build partnerships with NAs.
- Investigating synergies and potentials between SALTOS and SNACs.
- Allowing more time for new SALTOS to develop effective approaches.
- Enhancing the SALTO website for easier navigation and information access.
- Addressing issues in survey participation and proposing yearly sharing of SALTOS' work plans.
- Addressing the workload challenge for small NAs in engaging with SALTOS.
- Creating manuals and standard training formats on SALTO topics.

## **7.2. Highlights 2023 & Work Plans 2024**

### **7.2.1. SALTO Digital (Youth)**

#### **Highlights of 2023:**

1. Establishment of Digital Contact Point Network: Set up a network for digital contact points, enhancing communication and collaboration in the digital domain.
2. Digital Dialogue Webinar Series: Conducted a series of webinars focused on digital dialogue, providing a platform for discussion and knowledge sharing.
3. Collaboration on Digitalisation Strategy: Worked with the Commission on developing and implementing a digitalisation strategy.

#### **Work Plans for 2024:**

1. Support for NAs' Digitalisation Strategy Process: Provided support to National Agencies in their processes of digitalisation strategy development.
2. Focus on Artificial Intelligence: Emphasised the integration of Artificial Intelligence as a part of digital transformation.
3. Twin Transition (Green + Digital Transition): Addressed the twin transition concept, combining green and digital transitions in strategic planning and implementation.

### 7.2.2. SALTO Inclusion and Diversity (Youth)

#### Highlights of 2023:

1. ID Forum 2023: A conference in Bucharest that brought together 120 inclusion workers, NA ID officers, policymakers, and researchers to discuss strategies for enhancing inclusion and diversity in EU Youth Programmes. [Details](#)
2. SPI Harvesting Conference: Organised in Budapest, this conference gathered youngsters, youth workers, and NA representatives to share methods, tools, and practices for working on inclusion and diversity.
3. ID Talks Year on Mental Health: A series of 10 online workshops focusing on understanding and discovering mental health practices, contributing to the discussion on youth mental health and wellbeing.
4. Digital Transformers LTA: A comprehensive training program co-organized with SALTO PI, including a residential training in Lithuania, a study visit in Armenia, and online sessions. [Final report](#)

#### Work Plans for 2024:

1. Climate Justice LTA: A long-term activity focusing on supporting vulnerable people affected by climate change, consisting of training courses, study visits, and PBAs over two years.
2. Interfaith Dialogue Series: Starting in 2024, this series will address topics like anti-racism and interfaith dialogue, focusing on creating positive interactions between people of different faiths and beliefs. Activities include ID Talks, a seminar in Austria, a study visit in Malta, and a publication to be finalised in 2025.
3. Training on Inclusive Events: Organised in Luxembourg, this training will enable youth workers and NA staff to share knowledge on organising accessible and inclusive events.
4. Youth Exchanges for ALL Course in EuroMed: Aimed at spreading Inclusion & Diversity beyond programme countries, this course will be offered to participants from both Programme and Partner countries, focusing on inclusion organisations and newcomers to the EU Youth programmes.

### 7.2.3. SALTO South East Europe (SEE)

#### Highlights of 2023:

1. Coordination of Beyond Borders SNAC: Strengthening cooperation with neighbouring partner countries, including supporting two Partnership-Building Activities (PBAs) hosted by Czech and Slovenian National Agencies.
2. Development of Beyondb.eu Website: Enhancing visibility of cooperation opportunities, with further development planned for 2024.

3. RAY-NPC Study: Involving RAY to collect insights from Programme countries about projects with partner countries, aiming to draft recommendations for further support activities and Programme development.
4. Volunteering Conference in Podgorica: Hosting a conference in Montenegro to define recommendations for the European Solidarity Corps (ESC), with synergies from the Beyond Borders SNAC.
5. Europe Goes Local Network Development: Supporting a network of municipalities in the Western Balkans for youth work, participation, and policy development, with plans to expand in 2024.

#### **Work Plans for 2024:**

1. Continuation of Beyond Borders: Hosting a second NA/SALTO staff meeting in Tbilisi, Georgia, and a stakeholder conference in Bonn, Germany, to develop recommendations for cooperation with partner countries. Activities include further development of Beyondb.eu and support for partnership-building through a PBA organised by SALTO EuroMed.
2. ESC Quality Label and TEC Support: Regular work in the ESC framework, including the Quality Label process and TEC for volunteers and organisations in the Western Balkan region. Implementation of a “Buddy support” program to engage organisations in the ESC programme.
3. Citizenship Education Initiatives: Hosting a meeting of experts in spring 2024 to explore “Education for European Democratic Citizenship,” creating synergies between different processes on this topic, and defining further actions in light of current geopolitical developments.

### **7.2.4. SALTO European Solidarity Corps (ESC)**

#### **Highlights of 2023:**

1. Onboarding Package for New ESC Staff: Creation of the ESC Space Navigator, a resource to help new NA colleagues navigate the ESC programme and SALTO offers. [ESC Space Navigator](#)
2. International Solidarity Project Meet-up 2023: An event linking local solidarity projects to the European dimension, resulting in new project approvals and increased participation in the Europeers network.
3. Shaping Solidarity Activities - Europe Talks Solidarity: A series of podcasts, webinars, and articles focusing on the connection of solidarity to various topics, achieving significant follower and viewer engagement.
4. Research and Handbook Publications: Research on mentoring and coaching practices in ESC and a handbook on Volunteering Teams, highlighting the inclusive potential in practice. [Handbook](#)
5. SNAC Volunteering Tangible Results: Publication of three research studies on civic engagement, complementarity and synergies of ESC with other EU Youth Programmes,

and youth volunteering in Europe. An additional research and concept paper are underway.

**Work Plans for 2024:**

1. Coordination of ESC Staff and Solidarity Project Officers Meetings: Continuation of the ESC staff meeting and colleague support meeting, supported by a knowledge management platform for ESC staff.
2. Community Impact Conference: Hosted in Bulgaria, focusing on the community impact of learning mobility, particularly in the context of ESC. The conference aims to provide resources, explore community impact concepts, analyse indicators, and develop plans for youth workers and organisations.
3. Shaping Solidarity Activities for 2024: Planning for the Europe Talks Solidarity Conference, continuation of the podcast series on active citizenship and democratic life, webinars, and articles on solidarity.
4. Continuation of 2023 Activities: Ongoing support for mentoring and coaching practices, research on ESC programme impact, and coordination of SNAC Volunteering.

## 7.2.5. SALTO Euromed

**Highlights of 2023:**

1. SALTO Resource Centres Meeting: Organised the first meeting of the 11 SALTO Resource Centres to discuss potential synergies and restructuring of the network, focusing on aspects like communication, website, and overall coordination.
2. Partnership-Building Activities (PBAs): Conducted PBAs, notably in the framework of the Long-Term Agreement (LTA) "Beyond Borders," to foster and enhance cooperation between Programme and Partner Countries.
3. 17th International Tool Fair on Mental Health: Co-organized with the Irish National Agency, this event involved interlinks with the LTA Mental Health. It was the first edition with an equal number of participants from youth, education, and training fields, emphasising a cross-sectoral approach to improve educational tools and methodologies.
4. Study on Inclusion in South-Med Area: Conducted a study leading to a dedicated offer in 2024, focusing on inclusion in the South-Mediterranean region.

**Work Plans for 2024:**

1. Community of Practices in ESC: Establish a community targeting South-Med labelled organisations in the European Solidarity Corps (ESC) to support capacity building through peer-to-peer exchanges.
2. Inclusion Strategy in South-Med Region: Planning activities in the South-Mediterranean region to address identified needs and sub-priorities, supporting youth actors and organisations on inclusion.

3. LTA Beyond Borders: Aiming to enhance the visibility of the added value of cooperation with Partner Countries through PBAs, a politically oriented conference in Germany, and the development of the portal dedicated to the LTA Beyond Borders (beyondb.eu).

## 7.2.6. SALTO Training and Cooperation Resource Centre

### Highlights of 2023:

1. Competence Model for Youth Workers: Updated and published a competence model for youth workers working internationally. [Read here](#).
2. Youthpass Certificate for DiscoverEU Inclusion Action: Adapted and made the Youthpass certificate available for the DiscoverEU Inclusion Action.
3. TCA/NET Cooperation Platform: Successfully developing a cooperation platform.
4. Translations of New Youthpass Certificates: Collaborated with many National Agencies (NAs) on translating the new Youthpass certificates.

### Work Plans for 2024:

1. Youthpass Reflection Tool: Developed and implemented a reflection tool for Youthpass.
2. Youthpass Impact Study: Conducted a study to assess the impact of Youthpass.
3. Focus on Validation: Reinforced focus on validation, particularly as part of the EaT SNAC (concerning youth workers) and more generally.
4. Launch of the New SALTO Website: Planning to launch a new website for SALTO, which will likely enhance user experience and provide updated resources and information.

## 7.2.7. SALTO Green

### Highlights of 2023:

1. First Meeting in Bordeaux: Conducted the first meeting with Green Contact Points from National Agencies and European Commission colleagues in Bordeaux, with 43 participants.
2. Survey on Green Transition Implementation: Carried out a survey about the implementation of the Green Transition within the National Agencies, intended for NA staff.
3. Compendium of Green Practices: Prepared a publication of a compendium of Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps (ESC) projects focusing on green practices, set for release in December.
4. Launch of Salto Green: Officially launched Salto Green in March 2023.

### Work Plans for 2024:

1. Lunchtime Sessions for NA Staff: Planning to launch "lunchtime sessions" dedicated to National Agency staff throughout the year.

2. European Collaboration on Green Indicators: Initiating a European collaboration to develop a structured system of indicators for measuring the evolution of the green priority in the Erasmus+ program.
3. Identifying and Sharing Ecological Transition Practices: Aiming to identify practices in Europe related to ecological transition, find reliable tools financed by the program, make them available, and share them with National Agencies and their ecosystems.
4. Support for Climate Fresk and Collaboration with SALTO I&D: Providing support to National Agencies to organise and propose Climate Fresk within their agencies. Also, planning participation and collaboration with SALTO Inclusion & Diversity (I&D) on a long-term activity (LTA) focused on climate justice.

### 7.2.8. SALTO Participation & Information

#### Highlights of 2023:

1. Expansion to Education & Training Field: Included new coordinator onboarding and initiated mapping of Participation as a horizontal priority.
2. SALTO Awards: Coordinated and communicated the SALTO Awards, including the production of videos.
3. Digital Interactive Spaces for Participation: Developed 14 examples of using video games, virtual reality (VR), augmented reality (AR), etc., to discuss participation in democratic life. The first version is available [here](#).

#### Work Plans for 2024:

1. Participation Forum: Planning to host a Participation Forum.
2. Continued Research on Participation Priority: Aiming to continue research on the priority of Participation.
3. Participationpool.eu Updates and Dissemination: Planning updates and dissemination of resources through [participationpool.eu](https://participationpool.eu).

### 7.2.9. SALTO Eastern Europe and Caucasus Resource Centre (SALTO EECA)

#### Highlights of 2023:

1. HOP Crash Course and Online Learning Platform: Organized, in collaboration with the Greek National Agency, the 4th edition of training for youth workers on online and hybrid learning quality, and practical use of the HOP platform. The platform supports beneficiaries and TCA/NET projects in sustaining participant learning. [HOP Platform](#)
2. Beyond Borders Platform: Established a communication platform for the Beyond Borders SNAC to promote cooperation between the programme and neighbouring partner countries, encouraging National Agencies to strengthen this cooperation. [Beyond Borders](#)

3. Lublin Triangle Youth Event: Hosted a forum in Lublin, Poland, for youth leaders and workers active in youth democratic participation, focusing on sharing practices and discussing new challenges.
4. TEC Forum Participation: Co-organized the TEC Forum in Serock, Poland, an event for trainers, NA officers, and individuals engaged in the Training and Evaluation Cycle for ESC Volunteers.

**Work Plans for 2024:**

1. NA Officers Staff Meeting: Planning a staff meeting in Tbilisi, Georgia, for NA officers responsible for cooperation with neighbouring partner countries. The meeting aims to exchange ideas on how the NAs/SALTO network can better support this cooperation and inspire practical support for beneficiaries.
2. Adventure in Education: Following a series of PBAs and seminars, plans include conducting impact research among ex-participants, preparing a booklet with results and inspirations for adventurous aspects in learning, and possibly developing an assessment tool for event teams.
3. Regional ToT for Beginner Trainers: Organising a Regional Training of Trainers for beginner trainers from the region and Programme Countries, focusing on ESC priorities. The training aims to increase the number of trainers in the pool and in ESC organisations, enhance the quality of ESC trainings, and facilitate international exchange of experiences.