Strategic implementation of TCA and NET in the network of Erasmus+ Youth and the European Solidarity Corps

Business Meeting, Malmö, April 2023

Background of this presentation

The 'needs' of TCA/NET officers and for the TCA/NET implementation are collected based on developments since November 2021. The rationale of this recent collection is based on the following:

- The impact of COVID (since March 2020)

- The change of practice by adding SNACs and LTAs to work plans, and

- From 2021 onward: macro approach in managing TCA/NET

This collection is based on the regular exchange with TCA/NET officers since 2021 and has been compiled by the TCA/NET WG. It is connected to an earlier proposal to analyse the SNACs' implementation (in 11/2021). This collection also supports a process that started in the meantime with the Co-Group to focus on TCA/NET implementation as a core strategic element.

Recognition of TCA/NET

TCA/NET

- is an integral part of the Programmes,

- are interlinked,

- should be planned and implemented as such, meaning underlining the basis and, at the same time, connection with Key Actions implementation

- and the youth work and youth policy-related strategies of NAs.

TCA/NET is the crucial instrument to support the quality of the Programmes implementation, the development of youth work, and youth policy implementation.

- Outreaching (new) target groups,

- Supporting the quality of projects,

- Developing innovative formats and approaches to tackle the different Key Actions and format of the Programmes, youth work and youth policy developments,

- Using recurring training modules systematically and strategically in developing project quality and increasing the number of applicants,

- Implementing strategic approaches to support quality youth work and implementation of youth policy (SNACs and LTAs), and

- Offering international cooperation experiences for NA staff but, even more important, for (potential) beneficiaries.

TCA/NET is a crucial instrument for the quality of the Programmes implementation and international cooperation.

It is highly organised in terms of project management, support, and financing (detailed in the GfNA's, the Almanac, through the TCA and NET officers' meetings online and offline, planned through the work plans and documented in the annual reports, the development of the TCA/NET Cooperation Platform).

→ the need for more knowledge about and understanding of the purpose of TCA/NET remains to reach its full potential.

Developing, steering, monitoring, and implementing TCA/NET requires enough staff capacity

a) To implement TCA and NET qualitatively, especially considering the budget increase, means having appropriate equipment and staff working on it. About 500 projects are developed yearly, ranging from single 'small' activities to multi-annual large-scale ones (SNACs/LTAs).

b) This concerns the capacity of the staff that steers TCA/NET and the Programmes-related staff cooperating with and in TCA/NET projects.

c) This is also about balancing the amount of work related to SNACs and having time for the other important TCA/NET-related tasks.

Support to the management of TCA/NET with a specific focus on monitoring and project management:

a) Concrete management tools (e.g., financial management),

b) Project management/project life cycle at national and international cooperation levels,

c) Putting emphasis on the importance of proper international cooperation in the frame of SNACs/LTAs and other TCA/NET activities,

d) Explore where the needs of different NAs intersect and create activities together to address those needs,

e) Monitoring the outcomes of TCA/NET projects, and

f) Continue with the ongoing coordination and support by SALTO T&C to the network of TCA/NET officers and specifically to the TCA/NET Working Group.

g) Staff training needs evolve when it comes to using the future TCA/NET Cooperation Platform as a tool for the entire project life cycle of TCA/NET activities and the working culture in NAs and the entire network.

Currently under development, the TCA/NET Cooperation Platform will provide the basis for cooperation in the network. Based on this, the cooperation culture in the TCA/NET network needs to be further developed, especially after the pandemic and the high staff turnover.

Reiterating the fact that SNACs are TCA/NET projects, challenges concerning the TCA/NET implementation are:

- An access/overview is needed about what is happening in the network to avoid overlapping, acknowledge the offers (and promote/make strategic use of them) and learn from each other.

- There is a need to cluster activities, including SNACs, to reinforce cooperation, define synergies, and identify gaps in the offers.

- Synergies and overlaps between projects require specific attention.

- Co-financing, especially of SNACs/LTAs: NAs have diverse funding approaches, including transferring funds from one NA to another. This can create confusion and more complex management by the SNACs coordinators and, therefore, by the TCA/NET officers. Larger and longer-term activities would benefit from more coherence.

What needs to be addressed in TCA and NET?

The current societal and geopolitical crisis and policy challenges require space for attention, discussion and the development of new formats and concepts for the Programmes implementation, as well as youth work and youth policy developments. In addition, NET has not yet completely unfolded its potential. Time and space are needed in the NAs and within the network of TCA/NET officers to deal with this.

Administrative structures

TCA/NET officers need to balance the financial and administrative guidelines from the European Commission (GfNAs) and the national administrative legislation. This is not an easy task to handle. Therefore, avoiding national procedures/requirements affecting the international network is important.

TCA/NET officers and their support structure should be able to explain certain requirements to their international colleagues, especially about e-invoicing or NA agreements.

TCA/NET meetings

The network dimension of TCA/NET has weakened recently. With many new officers being hired during the COVID-19 years and more activities organised within SNACs, we need to (re)discover how we want to and need to cooperate (and re-establish an understanding that we need hosts if we want to send). This means, as reinforced during the TCA/NET meeting in Berlin on 13-16 March 2023, that:

a)   There is a need to explore (rediscover) the purpose of TCA/NET and the role of TCA/NET officers today, and the cooperation mechanisms. This means addressing the need to meet, talk and exchange.

b)   Beyond exploring and exchanging, there is also a need to be able to do/act. As requested to our beneficiaries, we need to strengthen our cooperation (as NAs) in developing and implementing quality TCA and NET activities.

c)   There is a real need for the second residential meeting in Prague in September 2023.

d)   Co-funding is a means to strengthen cooperation.

The TCA/NET Working Group

According to the management of TCA and NET, the TCA/NET Working Group needs time and space to reflect on and support ongoing challenges. Specific attention needs to be put on finding the balance between having enough training and onboarding for newcomers and working on the roles and competences related to a changing landscape (specifically about strategic thinking and development).