

Report Business Meeting Madrid 2023

With the future in mind

Dates: 16-18 October 2023

Location: Madrid, Spain

Participants: List of Participants (Appendix)

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1. Introduction

1.1. Meeting objectives

The following key objectives of the business meeting served as the foundation for our discussions throughout the event. The objectives include:

- To continue joint reflections on the future generation of programmes (2028-2034)
- To share updates and the suggested actions regarding the TCA/NET (including SNACs)
- To agree on the KMST activities and get familiar with the Cooperation Platform
- To provide feedback and exchange about the work of SALTOs
- To share with colleagues about relevant issues and work-related challenges through the Peer learning sessions
- To have dialogue with the COM about the implementation of the current programmes

1.2. Agenda Overview

Time	Monday, 16 October	Tuesday, 17 October	Wednesday, 18 October
10.00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Welcome to the Business meeting in Madrid Update from the Spanish EU Presidency Who is here today? From Malmo to Madrid and Co-group's messages 	Setting the frame for the day: towards the future Programmes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Preparing the future thinking mindset Group work and reflection about Megatrends Harvesting insights in plenary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> View from the Commission Ask the Commission
11.30	COFFEE BREAK		
12.00	TCA/NET and SNACs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overview: What is going on in the SNACs? Action points: How to move forward with SNACs? KMST Updates 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Update from the DG Youth Meeting European youth forum's position on the future programmes Youth perspective on the future programmes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Open agenda: Peer consulting about the programme implementation issues Next steps Evaluation & Closing
13.30	LUNCH at the Hotel		
15.30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SALTOs highlights 2023 & work plans 2024 + feedback from the Network 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Messages from the Volunteering Conference Input: RAY results of the mid-term evaluation of the Programme Future Programme(s): Content discussion about the Sharing of insights and proposals 	<i>Departures</i>
17.30	Wine Tasting	Cultural Activity	
Evening	21.00 Dinner at TORRES BERMEJAS	20.30 Gala Dinner	

2. Detailed Discussions: Day 1: Monday, 16 October

2.1. Welcome and opening Spain EU presidency

David de Lafuente (Spain) extended a warm welcome to all participants in the context of the Swedish EU Presidency.

2.2. Updates from the Spain EU Presidency

Presentation: [Updates from the Spain EU Presidency](#) (Page 5-9)

This chapter presents a succinct overview of key events and discussions held under the Spanish EU Presidency, focusing on youth engagement and policy within the European Union. It covers significant meetings including 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 events, which brought together youth delegates, policymakers, and representatives from EU member states and organizations, centered around enhancing youth inclusion, addressing challenges faced by young Europeans, and shaping the future of youth policies in the EU. The insights and outcomes from these gatherings are critical in guiding the direction of youth engagement and policy-making at both national and European levels.

Informal Meeting of Ministers for Education and Youth

Event Details: Held in Saragossa from 18-19 September.

Primary Focus: Exploring how Europe can commit to its youth, with a particular emphasis on education, rights, and welfare.

Key Discussion Points:

- Examining how structured and accessible participation of European youth enhances the legitimacy and credibility of EU decision-making.
- Investigating the role of youth mainstreaming in public policies for improving young people's well-being and meeting their future expectations.
- Discussing the benefits of enhanced cooperation and coordination between European institutions, Member States, and youth representatives for mutual learning and addressing young people's challenges.

EU Youth Conference

Event Details: Held in Alicante from 1-4 October, as part of the 10th Cycle of Dialogue focusing on "Inclusive Societies."

Participants: 250 individuals, including Youth Delegates, Ministerial Delegates, NGOs, researchers, and facilitators.

Agenda and Outcomes:

- Identifying barriers to the full inclusion of young people, such as intergenerational disconnects, rural-urban divides, and lack of resources (financial, housing, health, skills, information, inclusive youth spaces).
- Discussing necessary actions for youth inclusion, like mainstreaming youth policies and integrating youth perspectives in policy design, implementation, and evaluation.
- Strategies for enhancing youth work and field to enable full inclusion, focusing on intersectional approaches, educating educators, and providing inclusive participation structures for all young people.

Directors General Youth Meeting

Event Details: Held in Alicante from 4-5 October.

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

Session Highlights:

- A joint session with youth delegates for interactive engagement.
- Discussions on embedding the youth perspective in policymaking through mainstreaming, youth impact assessments, and other methods.
- Deliberations on the European Union Youth Strategy and EU Youth Programmes, aiming to foster synergies and support common goals in the context of interim evaluations.

Council of the EU

Event Details: Education, Youth, Culture and Sport Council in Brussels on 23 November.

Proposal:

- Addressing the impact of mental health problems on European youth and the necessity for comprehensive public policies.
- Emphasising the need for inclusive and participatory responses that safeguard the rights and well-being of all young people, with a focus on mainstreaming these approaches.

2.3. From Malmö to Madrid & Co-Group News

2.3.1. Handover by Emma Watson (Sweden)

Presentation: [From Malmö to Madrid](#) (Page 5-9)

This chapter summarises Emma Watson's presentation, which bridges the previous Business Meeting in Malmö with the current one in Madrid. Her presentation focused on evaluating and strategizing for the future of EU Youth programmes. Key topics included the mid-term evaluation of current programmes, dialogue with the Commission, the evolution of TCA/NET, and the importance of peer learning. Over three days, discussions ranged from programme developments and the European Year of Youth's legacy to operational challenges and future planning. This chapter provides a succinct overview of Watson's presentation, capturing the essence of the discussions and the envisioned path forward for EU Youth initiatives.

Main Objectives

- Reflection and Future Planning: The primary objective is to reflect on the mid-term evaluation of current programmes and start considering the next generation of programmes.
- Dialogue with the Commission (COM): Engaging in discussions about the implementation of current programmes and gathering inputs for changes in the next Programme guide.
- TCA/NET Developments: Making agreements about the developments and evolution of TCA/NET (Transnational Cooperation Activities/Network).

- Peer Learning: Sharing relevant issues and work-related challenges through peer learning sessions with colleagues.

First Day - Ask the Commission

- Programme Developments: Discussion on recent developments in the programmes.
- European Year of Youth Legacy: Exploring the legacy and impact of the European Year of Youth.
- NA's Experience: Assessing National Agencies' experiences regarding the volume of applications received.
- IT Systems: Evaluating the effectiveness and challenges of current IT systems used in the programmes.

Peer Learning

- Themes: Covering eight different themes, including artificial intelligence, risk assessment, operational capacity checks, and creative ways of working with current IT tools.

Second Day

- Mid-term Evaluation: Assessing the current Programmes' mid-term performance.
- First Round Discussion: Evaluating how the programmes contribute to the European Youth Strategy and identifying any gaps from the previous strategy.
- Second Round Discussion: Determining key points to highlight in the second half of the current programmes and considerations for future generations of Programmes.
- Continued Discussions: Noting that these discussions will continue at the Business Meeting in Spain and are planned to be finalised at the Business Meeting in Belgium.

Third Day

- Questionnaire Results: Presenting results from a questionnaire on the Planning and Management of TCA/NET.
- Group Discussions: In smaller groups, discussing various aspects of TCA/NET, including aims, objectives, purpose, management and administration vs. content-related work, national/regional/European dimensions, and strategic planning and perspectives of SNAC (Supporting Networks at the Centre).

2.3.2. Co-Group News

This chapter summarises the key messages and strategic discussions from the Co-Group Retreat, focusing on the advancement and future planning of EU Youth programmes. It covers essential topics such as the mid-term evaluation of current programmes, the development of future programme structures, and the review of TCA/NET and SNACs. Additionally, the chapter delves into the planning for the Business Meeting in Madrid and the roles and responsibilities within the Co-Group and its working committees. This summary provides a snapshot of the collaborative efforts and strategic directions undertaken by the Co-Group to enhance and shape the future of EU Youth initiatives.

Key Discussions and Plans

- *Open Topics with the COM:* Addressed issues related to IT Tools and the TCA/NET Budget.

- *Mid-term Evaluation*: Highlighted the urgency of expediting certain steps. Noted that the Parliament is preparing a report to be adopted by year-end, based on a draft paper linking the EU Youth Strategy and EU Youth programmes. The co-group is actively working on this and has developed an Advocacy Plan.
- *Architecture of Future Programmes*: Explored preferred structures and discussed the network's position on future programmes.
- *Planning of the BM Madrid*: Focused on the planning and organization of the upcoming Business Meeting, including discussions on potential external inputs like future trends, RAY, and youth perspectives.

TCA/NET and Network Planning

- *TCA/NET and SNACs*: Reviewed the current status of SNACs, their mission statements, engagement strategies, and decisions on continuing or concluding initiatives. An overview and conclusions by the co-group will be presented at the BM Madrid.
- *Work Plan of the Network*: Reviewed the current status of various actions and the network plan followed by the coordination group. Discussed long-term planning and identified responsibilities for different fields or actions.
- *Organisation of the Coordination Group*: Discussed the profiling of support and the tasks and responsibilities of support persons (Sabrina & Andrei). Restructured working groups to focus on long-term goals and limited resources.

The Working Groups

Working Group Focus	Members
Communication (internal + external)	Luis Alves David Lafuente Durán
Monitoring + evaluation of programmes (including RAY)	Reet Kost Koen Lambert Uros Skrinar
KMST + Competence Framework	Jojanneke de Waal Margret Zeiner
Linking Programmes to Policy, Priorities, Youth Strategy and EYWAgenda (including SALTOs, Strategies)	Manfred von Hebel Koen Lambert
Monitoring of TCA/NET (including SNACs)	Manfred von Hebel Laurence Hermand Reet Kost Uros Skrinar
Strengthening ESC Programme (if the focus is on "strengthening")	Gerhard Moßhammer Mathieu Roumegous

The Support Persons

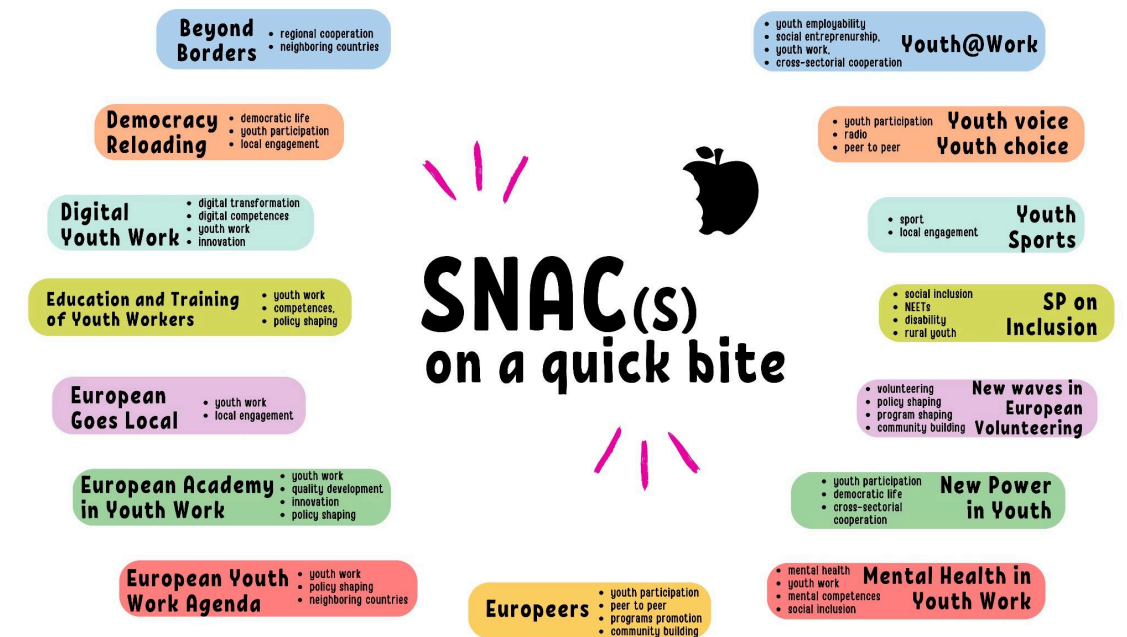
- Sabrina Apitz: Handling Secretariat duties.
- Andrei Popescu: Focused on Communications.

2.4. TCA/NET and SNACs

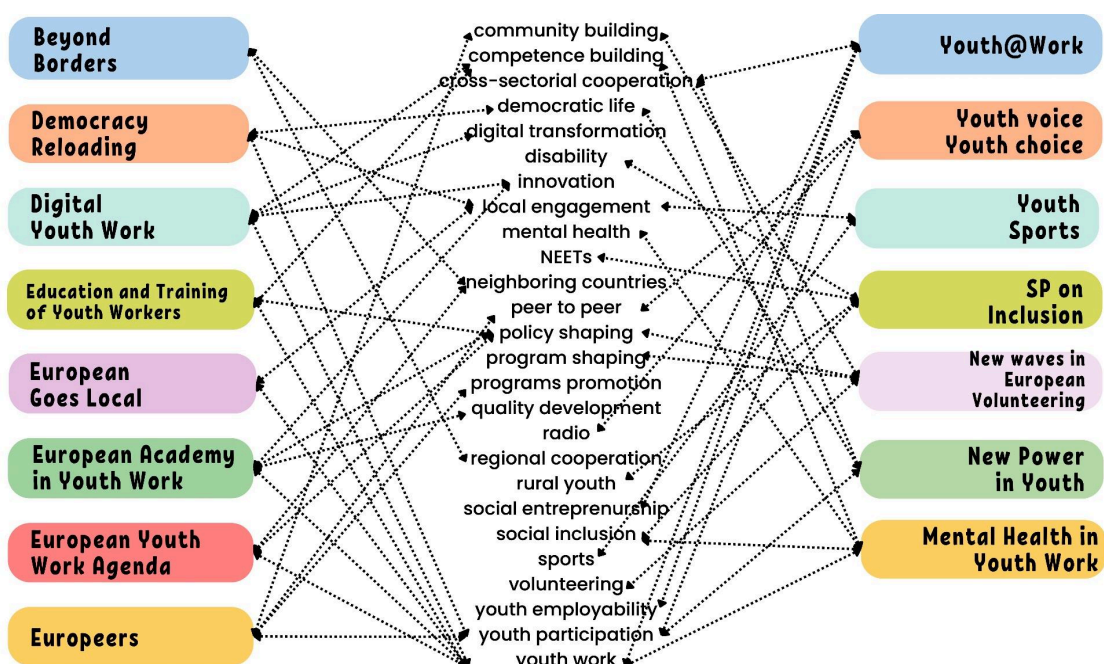
SNACs State of the Play: [Overview Padlet](#)

Presentation: [Overview of SNACs and how to move forward with SNACs](#)

2.4.1. Attempt on SNACs presentation



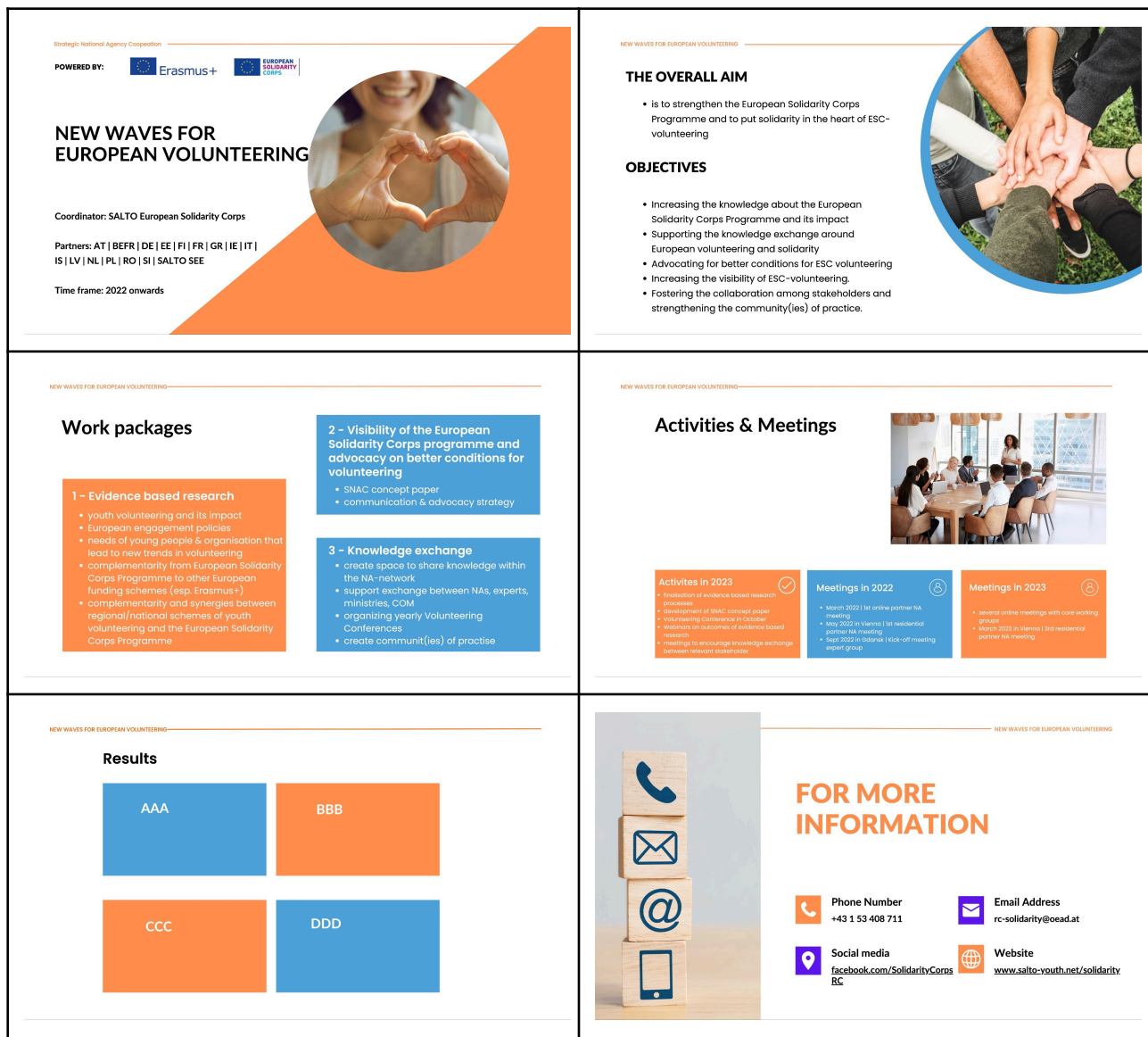
2.4.2. Co-Group conclusion on SNAC perspectives



The Co-Group meeting concluded with several key points regarding the Strategic Network and Cooperation (SNAC) perspectives:

1. **Appreciation of SNACs:** The group expressed satisfaction with the SNACs, acknowledging the effort, expertise, and valuable results achieved.
2. **Integration into Future Platforms:** It was agreed that the SNACs and their project results should be incorporated into the future cooperation platform as soon as possible.
3. **Use of Existing Padlet:** In the interim, the existing padlet will be used for documentation and follow-up of the SNACs.
4. **Synergy Among Similar SNACs:** SNACs working on similar themes are encouraged to connect, find synergies, and plan joint or closely coordinated continuations.
5. **Transparent Presentation of SNACs:** The new network communication officer, in cooperation with SNAC coordinators, is tasked with preparing a complete, transparent, and coherent presentation of the SNACs for both internal and external use.
6. **Meeting for TCA/NET Coordination:** A meeting is scheduled for January 2024 between the TCA/NET working group and select Heads of NAs to discuss better coordination, planning, and implementation of all TCA/NET activities, including SNACs. This meeting will be based on the outcomes of the TCA/NET survey and emerging needs.
7. **Regular Joint Meetings:** This type of joint meeting will be established as a regular occurrence.
8. **Strategic Needs Analysis for Future Projects:** The network must analyse the strategic needs for the next generation of cooperation projects. A distinction should be made between a limited number of genuinely strategic projects and other necessary forms of cooperation.
9. **Updated Description for NA Cooperation Projects:** For the future, there might be a need for an updated description of the objectives of NA cooperation projects. This update should provide more flexibility in terms of needs, methods used, and focus on creativity and innovation. There is also a suggestion to change the term "Strategic National Agency Cooperation projects (SNAC)" to "Long-Term Activities (LTA)."

2.4.3. Template on a SNAC presentation



2.4.4. Discussions on the Input on SNACs and how to move forward

Discussion Padlet: [Feedback on Overview of SNACs and how to move forward with SNACs](#)

Based on the feedback provided by the participating National Agency (NA) directors on the input regarding SNACs (Supporting Networks at the Centre) and how to proceed with them, here's a summary of the responses to:

Question 1: Is this the way to go with SNACs?

Clarifying Objectives and Structure:

- Network members suggested first defining what they aim to achieve with SNACs.
- Questions were raised about whether all SNACs are included in the Network work plan.
- There was a proposal to structure SNACs and Long-Term Activities (LTAs) to focus strategically without waiting for a new programme generation. This approach would allow

the Network to concentrate on strategically necessary SNACs, while the rest could be regular LTAs supporting these strategic ones.

Merging and Clustering SNACs:

- A common suggestion was to merge SNACs with similar topics for better resource utilisation.
- Network members proposed identifying common indicators across SNACs for comparable impact assessment.
- The idea of clustering similar SNACs was put forward, either to establish cooperation between them or to merge them for efficiency.

Differentiating SNACs from SALTOs:

- It was emphasised that there needs to be a clear understanding of the roles of SNACs and SALTOs (Support, Advanced Learning and Training Opportunities) and how they relate to each other. Some SNACs are seen as extensions of SALTO work.

Strategic Focus and Limitations:

- Concerns were raised about the large number of SNACs, suggesting a need to filter out strategic aspects and determine whether they are SNACs or LTAs.
- The importance of aligning SNACs with the main objectives of the programmes, such as competence development and youth work strengthening, was highlighted.

Planning for a New Generation of SNACs:

- Network members discussed starting a new cycle of SNACs in 2025, using 2024 to build the process. This includes evaluating the roles of SALTOs, LTAs, and identifying SNACs with strategic value.

Time Limitation and Evaluation:

- A suggestion was made to limit SNACs in time to allow for proper evaluation.
- The need for better external communication to spread the outcomes of SNACs was noted, as well as the lack of analysis on the outcomes of each SNAC.

EU Commission's Perspective and Internal Communication:

- It was mentioned that for the EU Commission, SNACs are viewed similarly to LTAs, which is important for funding considerations.
- The need for simple internal communication was stressed, focusing on an overview of existing SNACs, while external communication should primarily present results.

Decision-making and Future Focus:

- Network members expressed caution about abruptly discontinuing SNACs to avoid giving the impression that projects are being cancelled for clustering.
- The relationship between SNACs and SALTO objectives was discussed, highlighting the need for SNACs to operationalize SALTO objectives.
- Finally, the necessity for a decision-making body to assess the effectiveness of all SNACs, their goals, purposes, and potential overlaps was emphasised.

This summary reflects the diverse perspectives and suggestions from the NA directors on the future approach to SNACs, highlighting a collective desire for strategic focus, efficiency, and clear differentiation of roles within the EU Youth programmes.

Question 2: Is the presented map of SNACs with the key concepts useful for you and your NA staff? If yes, how can it be improved?

Based on the feedback to Question 2 regarding the usefulness of the presented map of SNACs with key concepts for National Agency (NA) staff, here's a summary of the responses:

Clustering Based on Objectives and Youth Goals:

- The idea of clustering SNACs was widely supported, with suggestions to cluster them based on their objectives rather than just keywords.
- Incorporating Youth Goals into the mapping was also proposed to enhance the relevance and alignment of SNACs with broader objectives.

Differentiating Types of SNACs:

- There was a suggestion to categorise SNACs into different types, such as SNACs/LTAs/Recurring events, and colour-code them based on their relation to the main objectives of the programme.
- A distinction between practical and policy-related strategic group activities was also recommended.

Interactive Map for Enhanced Accessibility:

- The concept of transforming the presentation into an interactive map was well-received. This map would allow users to click on a SNAC for more detailed information.
- Regular updates to this interactive map and its integration into every Business Meeting (BM) website were suggested.

Comprehensive Overview and Topic Linkage:

- Enhancing the map to allow clicking not only on individual SNACs but also on topics, thereby displaying all related SNACs, was proposed.
- Linking SNACs with the European Union Youth Strategy (EUYS) goals was also seen as beneficial.

Effective Communication about SNACs:

- The need for accessible information about SNACs, including their objectives, current status, and achieved results, was emphasised.
- This information should be available not only to NAs but also to the public, possibly through a dedicated site or map.

In summary, the feedback indicates a strong preference for a more interactive, objective-focused, and comprehensive approach to presenting SNACs. The suggestions aim to improve the utility of the map for NA staff by enhancing its accessibility, relevance, and alignment with broader youth goals and programme objectives.

Question 3: What should be kept, replaced or added in the SNAC template presentation?

Based on the feedback to Question 3 regarding the SNAC template presentation, here's a summary of the responses on what should be kept, replaced, or added:

Correction of Terminology:

- A specific correction was suggested: changing "European goes local" to "Europe goes local" for accuracy.

Inclusion of SALTOs:

- The participation of SALTOs (Support, Advanced Learning and Training Opportunities) in the SNACs should be included in the template presentation to reflect their involvement and contributions.

Future Plans and Indicators:

- It was recommended to include indicators and plans for the next two years in the presentation. This addition would help other National Agencies (NAs) understand what is planned and how they can participate in the SNACs.

Expectations for Participation:

- Adding information about what is expected from NAs to participate in a SNAC was seen as beneficial. This would provide clarity on the roles and contributions required from the NAs.

Description of Outcomes:

- Including a short description of the outcomes of each SNAC in the template would be useful. This would allow NAs to quickly assess whether the work of their agency aligns with the objectives and outcomes of the respective SNAC.

Criteria for Future SNACs:

- Establishing clear criteria for adding future SNACs was suggested. These criteria should consider aspects like the strategic dimension, critical mass of participating countries, and expected EU-output.

In summary, the feedback emphasises the need for clarity, strategic alignment, and future planning in the SNAC template presentation. The suggestions aim to enhance the utility of the template by making it more informative, accurate, and aligned with the broader goals and strategies of the EU Youth programmes.

2.4.5. KMST – Updates

Presentation: [KMST updates](#)

Based on the content of the presentation about KMST (Knowledge Management and Staff Training) updates, here's a detailed summary:

Agenda Overview

- The agenda includes updates on Job-shadowing, the Competence Framework, KMST Staff Training, and the Calendar for 2024.

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.

Job Shadowing

- The group 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).

Competence Framework

- The Competence Framework, along with support tools, is 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 National Agencies (NAs) on using the framework and a potential needs analysis through an online questionnaire.

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.

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.

Documents and Communication

- Documents related to KMST are available on the SALTO site, including the KMST Calendar: [SALTO-YOUTH - E+:YiA NA's Knowledge Management and Staff Training \(KMST\)](#)
- For new Heads of NA or Youth Coordinators, it's important to inform the Co-group, update the contact list, and provide relevant documentation.

General Note

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

This summary encapsulates the key updates and plans of the KMST Working Group, highlighting their efforts in job shadowing, competence development, staff training, and strategic planning for the upcoming year.

2.5. SALTO's: Cooperation experiences + Work Plans

2.6. Part 1 - Experiences with SALTOs

Padlet: [Sharing experiences with SALTOs](#)

This chapter collates participant feedback on their experiences with Support, Advanced Learning and Training Opportunities (SALTOs). It aims to shed light on the varied nature of these interactions, encompassing both the positive aspects and the challenges faced. The responses reflect a broad spectrum of experiences, from effective collaborations to areas needing clarity and improvement. This section serves as a crucial reflection on the current state of SALTO engagements, offering insights for enhancing future cooperation between National Agencies and SALTOs.

Question 1: What are your experiences with cooperation with SALTOs?

Based on the responses to the first question about experiences with cooperation with SALTOs (Support, Advanced Learning and Training Opportunities), here's a summary of the feedback:

Variability in Forms and Levels of Cooperation:

- Participants noted that cooperation with SALTOs varies significantly in form and level, making it a complex question to address.

Clarity of COM's Position:

- There were concerns about the clarity of the European Commission's (COM) position regarding SALTOs. This was highlighted by shared experiences from a past Business Meeting where SALTOs presented in the presence of the COM.

Question of Official Mandate:

- Queries were raised about whether there is an official mandate from the COM for SALTOs.

Positive Experiences with Regional SALTOs:

- Some participants had good experiences with regional SALTOs, using them as a contact point for specific questions.

Information Flow and Deliverables:

- The flow of information to staff about intervention, materials, etc., was generally good. However, the main deliverables of SALTOs were not always clear at the meta-level for NA directors. A suggestion was made to update information on NA Connect.

Use of Training Programs:

- Training programs, such as those offered by SALTO Inclusion and Diversity (ID), are widely used by both NA staff and the field, as shared by BE Flanders.

Cooperation through SNACs:

- Examples of closer cooperation through SNACs were mentioned, such as between Switzerland and SALTO ID.

Variation in Interaction and Cooperation:

- Experiences varied, with some NAs having rare interaction with SALTOs, while others reported good cooperation, though not with every SALTO.

SALTOs and SNACs Relationship:

- It was noted that not every SALTO is linked to a SNAC. There is an expectation for SALTOs to reach out to NAs, and if needed, the initiation of a SNAC could be considered. However, it was also mentioned that not every SALTO necessarily needs a corresponding SNAC.

Expert and Steering Groups:

- Questions were raised about the activities of the expert group in SALTO Participation and Information (PI).
- SALTO ID has a steering group mostly composed of agencies, with its direction coming from the official strategy. In contrast, SALTO PI organises its steering group independently, leading to different working methods. The coordination by the COM and a call for the steering group were also mentioned.

Role of Regional SALTOs:

- Regional SALTOs were described as having more operational work, differing from other SALTOs.

In summary, the feedback reflects a range of experiences with SALTOs, from positive interactions with regional SALTOs to challenges in understanding the roles and deliverables of SALTOs. The variability in cooperation levels, the need for clearer communication from the COM, and the different operational modes of SALTOs and SNACs were key points of discussion.

Question 2: What did you find useful and supportive?

Based on the responses to the second question about what participants found useful and supportive in their cooperation with SALTOs, here's a summary of the feedback:

Access to Resources and Expertise:

- Participants valued the access to new tools and specific expertise provided by SALTOs, which were effectively disseminated to stakeholders.
- The resources and trainer pool offered by SALTOs were highlighted for their practical utility in everyday work.

Support in Program Implementation:

- SALTOs were commended for their support in organising staff trainings, events, and accreditation processes, particularly in the European Solidarity Corps (ESC).
- Their involvement in working groups and ability to channel feedback to the European Commission (COM) was seen as a significant contribution.

Networking and Strategic Collaboration:

- Horizontal theme network gatherings facilitated by SALTOs, especially on green and digital topics, were appreciated for enabling experience sharing and networking.
- The strategic involvement of SALTOs in multi-annual planning and strategy was recognized as beneficial.

Regional SALTOs and Contextual Challenges:

- The importance of regional SALTOs was acknowledged, along with the challenges of applying generic approaches in NA-specific contexts.

- Participants noted the utility of SALTOs at the regional level and their support in content-level aspects.

Documentation and Communication:

- Documentation provided by SALTOs, along with their practical newsletters, were praised for their quality and usefulness.
- The SALTO newsletter was suggested as a tool for sharing ready-made materials more effectively.

Need for Strategic Awareness:

- There was a call for more strategic awareness and conscious planning between NAs and SALTOs.
- Caution was advised against streamlining all SALTOs, recognizing the unique contributions of each.

In summary, the feedback reflects a positive view of the cooperation with SALTOs, emphasising the value of their expertise, resources, and support in various aspects of program implementation and network collaboration. The contributions of SALTOs are seen as instrumental in enhancing the capabilities and reach of National Agencies and their associated networks.

Question 3: What can be improved?

Clarity and Understanding:

- Clearer explanations of SALTOs' mandates, work plans, and their connections to SNACs are needed.
- Improved communication from the European Commission about SALTOs' roles, particularly in new programs.
- Suggestions for sharing SALTOs' work plan milestones and creating manuals on how they can assist NAs.

Support and Resources:

- Establishment of a system to identify relevant contact points within SALTOs for better support.
- Increased sharing of SALTOs' outcomes and deliverables with NA directors for enhanced transparency.
- Addressing budget limitations for NAs hosting SALTOs, exploring solutions like increased EC funding or TCA/NET budget contributions.

Integration and Collaboration:

- Proposal to merge SNACs and SALTOs to maintain their relevance.
- Exploring cooperation with regional SALTOs for support in monitoring visits, considering budget implications.

Communication and Marketing:

- Managing the volume of meetings and information more effectively to streamline communication.

- Improving the marketing and public image of SALTOs, clarifying the benefits of increased investment.

Operational Improvements:

- Creating clear lists of contact persons for each SALTO.
- Including SALTO information in staff trainings and NA meetings for mutual feedback; developing introduction modules for new staff.

Evaluation and Impact Assessment:

- Assessing the impact of SALTOs' work, including the usage and practical application of their publications and activities.

Best Practices and Utilisation:

- Emulating best practices like those of the Inclusion SALTO.
- Providing clear guidelines on how to effectively use SALTOs and whether a specific mandate or explanation is needed.

Additional Points for Integration:

- Communication improvements, integrating material for NAs in newsletters, addressing issues with information on teams, and feedback on survey participation.
- Lack of clarity about the roles of different SALTO centres, desire for advance knowledge of SALTO Green's activities, and need for improved visibility.
- Clear division of work between SALTOs and SNACs.
- Need for strategic information to pass through to the management level and timing for information delivery.
- Communication improvements at the regional level and the need for a roadmap.
- Discussion on budgets for NAs hosting SALTOs.
- Communication at the strategic level.

In summary, the feedback indicates a need for greater clarity, improved communication, better resource allocation, and more strategic integration of SALTOs in the overall framework of EU youth programmes. The suggestions aim to enhance the effectiveness and impact of cooperation with SALTOs.

Question 4: What is the potential that is not used yet?

Based on the responses to the fourth question about the untapped potential in cooperation with SALTOs, here's a clustered summary of the feedback:

Complementarity and Synergy with SNACs:

- Exploring how SNACs can be a tool for SALTOs to build partnerships with NAs and work on relevant topics.
- Investigating the synergies, overlaps, and potentials between SALTOs and SNACs.
- Looking into the complementarity of different horizontal priorities (like green vs. digital) to assess long-term impact.

Development and Streamlining:

- Allowing more time for new SALTOs to develop and find effective approaches.

- Being careful with the aim to streamline all SALTOs, especially considering the specific purposes of regional SALTOs and others with distinct roles.

Communication and Information Sharing:

- Addressing the issue where NAs participate in surveys but do not receive or miss the outcomes.
- Proposing yearly sharing of SALTOs' work plans with the network for better transparency and collaboration.
- Gathering information on SALTOs in one place, including links, tools, and resources, for easier access.

Resource and Training Development:

- Creating manuals on "How can SALTO help you?" for each or some SALTOs.
- Suggesting that SALTOs could offer standard training formats on their topics.

Website and Accessibility:

- Enhancing the SALTO website for easier navigation and clear separation of information for NAs and beneficiaries.

Staff and Contact Point Limitations:

- Addressing the challenge for small NAs where contact with SALTOs often brings a significant workload, which is interesting but requires creating space for engagement.

Additional Points for Integration:

- Improving communication and websites for better clarity and accessibility.
- Potential for NAs to consider SALTOs' plans in their own planning if known in advance.
- Clarity of profiles and benefits from plans, needing them in spring BM for consideration in work plans.
- Information needed by late spring or early summer for NA planning.
- Complementarity of SNACs and potential at different levels of commitment.

In summary, the feedback highlights areas where the potential of SALTOs has not been fully used, focusing on better integration with SNACs, improved communication and resource sharing, development of training and informational materials, website enhancements, and managing the workload associated with SALTO interactions. These suggestions aim to maximise the effectiveness and impact of SALTOs in the broader context of EU youth programs.

2.7. Part 2 - SALTOs Highlights 2023 & Work Plans 2024

2.7.1. 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.

These highlights reflect SALTO Digital's commitment to advancing digital competencies, strategies, and transformations within the youth sector, aligning with broader EU objectives of digital and green transitions.

2.7.2. 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.

2.7.3. 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.

These highlights and plans demonstrate SALTO SEE's commitment to enhancing cooperation with neighbouring countries, supporting youth work and civic participation in the Western Balkans, and developing strategic initiatives for inclusion and democratic citizenship education.

2.7.4. 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.

These highlights and plans demonstrate SALTO European Solidarity Corps' commitment to enhancing the ESC programme through various initiatives, including research, conferences, and digital resources, aimed at supporting staff, promoting solidarity, and understanding the community impact of youth mobility.

2.7.5. 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).

These highlights and plans showcase SALTO Euromed's commitment to fostering cooperation and capacity building in the Mediterranean region, with a focus on inclusion, mental health, and enhancing the quality of educational tools and methodologies. The initiatives for 2024 aim to continue building on these efforts, particularly in promoting cross-sectoral approaches and enhancing visibility and collaboration with Partner Countries.

2.7.6. 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.

These highlights and plans demonstrate SALTO Euromed's commitment to enhancing the competencies of youth workers, improving the validation and recognition tools like Youthpass, and fostering cooperation among National Agencies. The launch of the new website in 2024 is anticipated to further support these initiatives.

2.7.7. 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.

These highlights and plans showcase SALTO Green's commitment to advancing the green transition within the Erasmus+ and ESC programs, emphasising collaboration, knowledge sharing, and the development of practical tools and indicators to support ecological initiatives.

2.7.8. 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.

These highlights and plans demonstrate SALTO Green's commitment to expanding its scope to the Education & Training field, recognizing participation as a key priority, and leveraging digital tools to engage in democratic participation. The work plans for 2024 focus on further research, forums, and resource dissemination to continue these efforts.

2.7.9. 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.

These highlights and plans demonstrate SALTO EECA's commitment to enhancing online and hybrid learning, promoting cooperation with neighbouring countries, and developing innovative educational approaches in the field of youth work. The initiatives for 2024 aim to continue building on these efforts, particularly in promoting adventure education and strengthening the trainers' community.

3. Detailed Discussions: Day 2: Tuesday, 17 October

3.1. Setting the frame: Towards the future Programmes

The BM Madrid commenced with a forward-looking agenda, focusing on the strategic direction for future youth programmes spanning 2028 to 2034. This session built upon the foundational discussions initiated in Malmö, aiming to further refine our approach towards aligning the programmes with the evolving societal trends and the EU Youth Strategy. The deliberations were structured in three progressive steps: firstly, examining societal trends and their implications for youth; secondly, evaluating the impact of these programmes on organisations; and thirdly, ensuring the quality and inclusivity of projects for all stakeholders.

Central to our discussions was the integration of European values within these programmes, addressing the emerging needs of young people, and adapting to structural changes. This included a review of key initiatives such as Strengthening TCA/NET, notably the decision to allocate up to 50% of funds for staff costs, and the effectiveness of participation projects and the Discover EU initiative.

The meeting underscored the importance of aligning our efforts with the 11 youth goals, emphasising the need for programmes that not only support but actively advance the EU Youth Strategy. The insights and perspectives shared during this session are set to play a crucial role in the forthcoming meeting in Brussels with the Directors General. This upcoming engagement is anticipated to be an open forum for exchanging ideas and visions for the future programmes, offering a broader perspective to refine our strategic approach.

The primary objective of the Madrid meeting was to establish a clear and actionable framework for future discussions, particularly in the context of the Brussels meeting. The desired outcome was to achieve a comprehensive understanding and a strategic blueprint that will guide the development of youth programmes in alignment with the evolving needs and aspirations of the EU Youth Strategy.

3.2. Introduction to Futures Thinking and Megatrends

Preparing the Future Thinking Mindset: Introduction to Futures Thinking and Megatrends

The session on 'Preparing the Future Thinking Mindset' served as an essential introduction to the concept of futures thinking, a mindset crucial for anticipating and shaping the trajectory of youth programmes. The discussion was initiated with a thought-provoking question: "When does the future start?" This led to an exploration of different temporal perspectives – the distant future, the near future, and the present – and how each perspective influences our approach to planning and decision-making.

We delved into the concept of 'Three Horizons Thinking,' a framework that assists in understanding and navigating the complexities of future trends and their impact on strategic planning. This framework categorises thinking into three 'horizons': the immediate challenges and realities (the present), the emerging trends and changes (the near future), and the long-term visions and possibilities (the distant future).

The session also introduced an exercise designed to engage participants in applying futures thinking to the context of youth programmes. This exercise aimed to equip the attendees with the tools and mindset necessary to identify and analyse megatrends – significant, transformative changes that have far-reaching impacts across societies and sectors. By understanding these megatrends, the participants could better anticipate future challenges and opportunities, thereby enabling more effective and forward-looking planning for youth programmes.

3.3. Group work: Reflection about Megatrends

A key segment of our meeting involved interactive group work focused on understanding and prioritising Megatrends in the context of future youth programmes. Each group was provided with a set of [Sitra megatrends cards](#), a tool designed to facilitate the identification and analysis of significant global trends. The task for each table was to sort these cards based on their relevance to our field: categorising them as having high, moderate, or low relevance to the future of our programmes. This exercise prompted insightful discussions on how these megatrends relate to our work and the potential impact they could have on the programmes we develop and implement.

Participants were also encouraged to critically assess whether there were any emerging trends not represented in the cards but deemed crucial for consideration in future programme planning. This reflection led to a deeper understanding of the dynamic nature of societal and global changes and their implications for youth.

Each group then selected the three most relevant Megatrends and engaged in a reflective discussion about their significance. The central question was how these highly relevant trends would affect the lives of young people and, consequently, how our programmes could or should respond to these changes. This reflection was not limited to our current programmes but extended to the planning and structuring of future programmes. The exercise was instrumental in highlighting the need for our programmes to be adaptable, forward-thinking, and responsive to the evolving needs and challenges faced by young people in a rapidly changing world.

Here's a summary of the reflections by the working groups related to the megatrends:

Broadening Concept of Wellbeing (mentioned 5 times on the padlet):

- Wellbeing is central, not just as a response to mental health but as a need for democratic living.
- Merging with mental health issues to form a broader concept of social wellbeing.
- Importance of working on wellbeing and mental health.

Geopolitics and Democracy (mentioned 4 times on the padlet):

- Decreasing democracy and rising populism.
- Need to give young people tools to spread European values and stand against anti-democratic tendencies.
- Importance of lowering barriers for projects and the crucial role of youth workers.

Rapid and Direct Civic Engagement (mentioned 3 times on the padlet):

- Increasingly common, necessitating new forms of participation in programmes.
- Calls for direct involvement of young people in National Agency work.
- Emphasises the need for more accessible and promotion-focused programs.

Climate Change (mentioned 3 times on the padlet):

- Urgency to address climate heating up and increasing extreme weather events.
- Stronger understanding of the intrinsic value of nature.

Technology and Digitalization (mentioned 3 times on the padlet):

- Changing the way things are done, with a need to address both in topic and form.
- Digitalization as a priority: needs clarity on objectives and support for virtual learning activities.

Circular Economy (mentioned 1 time on the padlet):

- Becoming imperative, requiring programs to adapt with simple formats and stable IT systems.
- Emphasises the need for programs to respond with appropriate financial opportunities.

Labor Skills Changing (mentioned 1 time on the padlet):

- Need to adapt to changing labour skills.

Other Relevant Points (each mentioned 1 time on the padlet):

- Increasing inequality in society.
- Importance of enhancing awareness of existing possibilities at the European and national levels.
- Aligning European Youth Strategy (EYS) and programs.
- Reflections on the process: complexity in fixing priorities and the need for a comprehensive approach.

3.4. Building common ground for the future of the EU Youth Programmes (2028-2034)

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.

3.4.1. Updates from the DG meeting in Spain (David Lafuente, Spanish NA)

Presentation: [Updates from the DG meeting in Spain](#)

The DG Youth Meeting in Alicante, held on October 4-5, was a significant gathering that focused on the future of youth programmes in the context of current global challenges and the European Youth Strategy (EYS). The meeting was structured into three sessions:

- **Joint Session with Youth Delegates:** An interactive session that emphasised the importance of incorporating youth perspectives directly into policymaking.
- **Embedding Youth Perspective in Policy Making:** This session delved into mainstreaming youth perspectives through various approaches like youth impact assessment, youth test, and youth check, exploring ways to integrate these into future strategies.
- **Evaluating the EU Youth Strategy and Programmes:** The session focused on fostering synergies between the EYS and EU Youth Programmes, particularly in the context of interim evaluations,

The priorities of this meeting were youth participation, mental health, climate change, housing, and digital issues.

Key contributions from various Member States and the European Commission (COM) included:

- **COM:** Highlighted the EYS as a crucial measure for connecting young people across Europe, acknowledging its roots in the Youth Dialogue. Despite challenges like COVID-19, the war in Ukraine, the climate crisis, and inflation, the flexibility of tools was noted to adapt to these changes. Inclusion was emphasised as fundamental for social cohesion.
- **Spain:** Praised Erasmus+ as a model of European integration and the ESC as a model of European inclusion.
- **Malta:** Questioned how to use Erasmus+ and ESC to strengthen national structures, advocating for a focus on long-term vision projects rather than sporadic ones.
- **Sweden:** Suggested establishing a fixed evaluation structure to streamline the process.
- **Germany:** Observed a gap with democratic values and noted that reality is changing faster than the evolution of the programs.
- **Lithuania:** Emphasised the importance of impactful EU strategies and the need for joint evaluation between Member States and the COM, linking youth goals with national goals.
- **France:** Pointed out the lack of visibility of the EU Youth Dialogue and called for coordinated cooperation and a toolkit to improve dissemination and exchange of good practices.
- **Belgium:** Thanked the Spanish Presidency for focusing on European values and suggested that the 11 European Youth Goals should be more explicitly reflected in our programs.
- **Hungary:** Noted that while the Strategy and Programmes promote youth participation in public affairs, the Eurobarometer on Youth and Democracy shows a decline in young people's trust in the EU.
- **Cyprus:** Stressed the need for more investment and clarity in youth goals.
- **Czech Republic:** Advocated for sharing good practices and aligning strategies with programs through expert groups and case studies.
- **Italy:** Called for more action beyond discussions, emphasising the importance of young people in civil services.
- **Portugal:** Highlighted the effectiveness of youth dialogue but questioned its impact on legislation.
- **Slovenia and Latvia:** Emphasised the importance of concrete objectives and evaluations in ensuring the impact of set goals.
- **Croatia:** Called for more flexibility in the EU Youth Strategy to adapt to recent events and ensure national plans reflect EYS objectives.

This meeting underscored the need for youth programmes to be adaptable, forward-thinking, and responsive to the evolving needs and challenges faced by young people in a rapidly changing world. The discussions highlighted the importance of integrating youth perspectives, ensuring inclusivity, and aligning national and European strategies for the betterment of youth policies and programmes.

3.4.2. Youth Work Perspective: European Youth Forum (Maria Rodriguez)

Presentation: [European Youth Forum's position on the future of EU programmes and EU Youth Strategy](#)

Maria Rodriguez from the European Youth Forum provided a comprehensive input on the European Youth Forum's position on the future of EU programmes and EU Youth Strategy. Her presentation covered several key areas:

Erasmus+ Programme:

Accessibility and Inclusion:

- Advocated for clear definitions of groups considered as having fewer opportunities.
- Suggested inclusivity considerations in project budgets, like sign language interpretation and support for accessibility needs.
- Called for reinforced financial support for the Erasmus+ programme.

Broadening Beyond the EU:

- Proposed expanding Erasmus+ to include non-EU European countries adhering to democracy, human rights, and rule of law.
- Recommended creating a special visa category for Erasmus+ project participants.
- Suggested increasing funding from DG INTPA & DG NEAR for broader involvement.

Administration, Structure, and Budget:

- Emphasised budget indexation to account for inflation and an increase in the overall budget.
- Proposed ensuring evaluators of Erasmus+ grants are familiar with the sector.
- Called for adaptations in unit costs to reflect actual travel costs in Europe.
- Suggested reducing administrative burdens for small and grassroots youth organisations.

Sustainability:

- Recommended green top-ups and making sustainability an objective of the Erasmus+ Programme.

Governance:

- Urged the institutionalisation of civil society involvement, including the European Youth Forum and National Youth Councils, in technical discussions and programming committee meetings.

European Solidarity Corps (ESC):

ESC as a Youth Programme:

- Highlighted the ESC's role in providing personal, educational, social, civic, and professional competencies for youth.

Inclusivity of the Programme:

- Suggested targeting youth organisations for better engagement in the programme.
- Proposed lowering the age limit to 16 for volunteering solidarity placements and projects.

Participation of Third Country Nationals:

- Recommended financial provisions for legal support involving third country nationals or legal residents in the EU.

Budget and Funding:

- Called for annual budget adjustments for inflation and an overall budget increase.
- Suggested increased contributions to volunteers.

Local and International Impact:

- Emphasised the importance of the programme's local dimension and suggested centralised grants for international youth organisations.

IT and Governance:

- Proposed improvements in the online platform and inclusion of the European Youth Forum in the Programme Committee.

EU Youth Strategy:

Mainstreaming and National Activities:

- Suggested evaluating the implementation of mainstreaming across policy areas.
- Recommended more collaboration between Member States and at the EU level.

EU Youth Dialogue:

- Stressed the need for meaningful participation and support for National Youth Councils.

EU Youth Coordinator:

- Suggested evaluating the role's effectiveness within EC structures.

EU Youth Strategy Platform:

- Proposed exploring ways to make the platform more active and useful.

Evidence-based Policy-making:

- Recommended including the Youth Progress Index as a reference tool.

Funding:

- Emphasised the need for sufficient and sustainable funding for youth organisations.

Maria Rodriguez's presentation underlined the importance of inclusivity, broadening participation, sustainability, and effective governance in shaping the future of EU youth programmes and strategies.

During the **Q&A session** following Maria Rodriguez's presentation, several key questions were raised:

1. Question on Trainings for Youth Workers (Koen):

Maria emphasised the importance of capacity building for individuals running youth organisations, particularly volunteer youth workers. She acknowledged the need for training focused on sustainability, as it is a significant concern for young people.

2. Question on the awareness of other strategies beside the European Youth Strategy (Reet):

The query was about the awareness and involvement with strategies within the programmes. Maria's response to this aspect was not detailed.

3. Question on Decline of Democracy (Switzerland):

Switzerland raised the issue of the decline of democracy, contrasting the positive rise of activism with the negative rise of populism.

Maria expressed that this is a huge concern for the European Youth Forum. She mentioned their strategy plan for the next five years, which focuses on the preservation of civic space.

A significant challenge highlighted was the recognition of youth organisations and the rise of structures parallel to youth councils. These parallel structures often represent themselves and may not necessarily reflect a broader perspective.

3.4.3. Better conditions for Volunteering (Gerhard Mooshammer, Austrian NA)

Presentation: [Volunteering Conference in Podgorica](#)

Gerhard Mooshammer reported on the Volunteering Conference in Podgorica, focusing on the future of EU programmes and the EU Youth Strategy. His presentation covered several key areas:

1. Introduction:

- The SNAC partnership aims to make volunteering more visible and communicate with decision-makers to improve conditions for volunteering in Europe.

2. Proposals for Improving Volunteering in Europe:

- EU Volunteer Status: To increase visibility and clarity on the rights and responsibilities of volunteers across Europe. This includes simplified visa procedures, consistent rules for health insurance, taxation, and social benefits, and better recognition of the value and impact of volunteering.
- Quality Charter for Volunteering: A blueprint for high-quality standards in transnational volunteering, complementing the Quality Label for organisations. It would focus on aspects like health, safety, inclusivity, digital forms, environmental aspects, and skill recognition.
- Fostering Capacity Building: Promoting and using existing funding sources like KA2 of the Erasmus+ programme and Networking Activities (NET) for capacity building in solidarity and volunteering.

3. Process and Importance of Council Recommendation:

- A Council Recommendation, while not legally binding, is a strong political document in areas where the EU has close cooperation but no formal competence. The current recommendation on volunteering dates back to 2008 and needs updating to reflect new developments.

4. Future of the European Solidarity Corps (ESC):

- The future of the ESC program is yet to be decided. It's crucial to have a program based on the value of solidarity, which strengthens civil society and impacts both sending and hosting communities. New approaches like digital and hybrid volunteering are being considered, along with stronger involvement of partner countries.

5. Specific Proposals:

- **EU Volunteer Status:** Legal status for full-time volunteers in the ESC, addressing issues like visa solutions, social and legal status, information accessibility, impact visibility, and lowering the age limit to 16.
- **Quality Charter for Volunteering:** Addressing a wide range of aspects to ensure high-quality volunteering experiences.
- **Fostering Capacity Building:** Encouraging more activities linked to solidarity, exploring online volunteering, sharing good practices, and increasing networking and training opportunities.

6. Summary and Round-Up:

- Invitation to colleagues to help spread these ideas and use them in discussions with ministries and for the midterm evaluation. The more these proposals are used, the higher the chances of them becoming reality in the coming years.

This presentation highlighted the need for improved visibility, better conditions, and enhanced quality standards for volunteering in Europe. The proposals aim to address these needs through practical measures and strategic improvements in the European Solidarity Corps and other EU youth programs.

During the **Q&A session** following Gerhard Mooshammer's presentation, Jojan raised a question regarding the use of Key Action 2 (KA2) by youth organisations. The question was why these organisations are not making use of KA2, considering they all fall under the category of youth organisations.

Gerhard responded by emphasising the diversity within the Erasmus+ Youth sector. He pointed out that there are different needs among organisations, and a distinction exists between organisations primarily involved in Erasmus+ Youth and those focused on volunteering. This diversity and difference in focus and requirements mean that organisations have to navigate and find their way within the Erasmus+ framework, which may affect their engagement with specific actions like KA2. Gerhard's answer highlighted the complexity and varied nature of organisations within the Erasmus+ Youth program and the need for tailored approaches to meet their distinct needs.

3.4.4. View to/from the programmes: RAY research (Andreas Karsten)

RAY research and monitoring survey results on the E+ Youth and ESC

Presentation: [RAY input on Monitoring surveys](#)

Based on the analysis of Andreas Karsten's presentation from the RAY network, here's a structured summary along the chapters:

0. Quick Look Back:

- A reflection on past challenges and progress made.
- Reflects on the challenges faced in Prague in 2022, including issues with the beneficiary module, data processing, and contact data. Progress has been made since then, with some barriers still present.

1. State of Play:

- Current status and data from recent surveys.

- In 2023, there were 20.210 responses from project participants and 5.755 from project team members. This compares to 23.385 responses from project participants in 2020.

2. How the Surveys Have Changed:

- The surveys have undergone significant modifications to become more nuanced and tailored. This includes specific focus areas such as solidarity projects, individual volunteering, and volunteering teams.
- The format of the surveys has been updated for better user experience. Matrix questions have been removed, and slider questions, which are more mobile-friendly, have been introduced.
- Additionally, the surveys have been modularized, allowing for a more structured and focused approach to gathering data and insights from participants.

3. Overall Project Experience:

- Despite multiple crises, project participants report positive and empowering experiences. Questions are raised about recognising efforts and minimising burdens.
- Participants report overwhelmingly positive experiences, particularly in solidarity projects.

4. Motivation to Join Programme Activities:

- There has been a noticeable shift in the motivation of young people across all types of projects within the programme. This shift is characterised by an increasing focus on addressing key socio-political challenges of our times.
- This growing importance is evident in each project type, with a particular emphasis on youth participation projects and solidarity projects.
- The change in motivation reflects a broader trend where young people are increasingly driven by the desire to engage with and find solutions to pressing sociopolitical issues.
- This evolving motivation raises important questions about the future balance of project types in the next generation of the programme. It suggests a need to consider how different types of projects can effectively cater to this emerging priority among young participants.

5. Entry Points into the Programme:

- Friends play a crucial role in introducing newcomers to European youth programmes, highlighting the significance of word-of-mouth recommendations.
- Emphasis on the crucial role of friends, especially for newcomers, and the importance of ambassadorship programmes like EuroPeers.
- This raises an important question: Are current efforts sufficient to strengthen various forms of ambassadorship to support and expand newcomer participation in these programmes?

6. Zooming Out: Programme Objectives:

- Policy-related objectives are consistently the weakest compared to others in the European youth programmes.
- This observation prompts critical questions: Are the current policy objectives appropriately aligned? And, do the activities designed within these programmes effectively support these policy objectives?
- Questions raised about the appropriateness of current measurements.

7. Zooming Out: Programme Priorities:

- Digitalization within the programmes has significantly declined, a trend exacerbated by the pandemic.

- This decline raises a crucial question: How can we effectively reposition digitalization as a key priority and encourage serious engagement with this critical aspect of the programmes?

8. Connecting to Europe:

- Across all strands of the programmes, there has been an observed increase in the connection to Europe, as assessed by participants and beneficiaries. This trend indicates a growing awareness and engagement with European values and objectives among those involved in the programmes.

9. Impact on Society:

- Acknowledges the real impact of the programmes, even if only through the eyes of those who have already participated. Questions the sufficiency of resources to make such experiences available to all interested young people.

10. Quick Recap:

- Summarises the need to balance project types to tackle socio-political challenges, strengthen previous participants as ambassadors, address policy objectives through projects, and improve resources to widen the reach of the programmes.

The presentation by Andreas Karsten provides a comprehensive overview of the current state, challenges, and future directions of EU youth programmes, emphasising the need for adaptability, inclusivity, and effective communication strategies to enhance the impact and reach of these initiatives.

The Q&A session following Andreas Karsten's presentation was structured around several key topics, with various participants contributing their perspectives and inquiries:

Strengthening Ambassador Programmes and Youth Involvement (Irmeli, FI):

- Irmeli expressed appreciation for the positive research findings and emphasised the importance of strengthening ambassador programmes like EuroPeers. She also highlighted the need for direct youth involvement, which might require additional resources.

Pre-Experience Surveys and Digitalisation (Frauke, DE):

- Frauke thanked Andreas for his insights and proposed conducting surveys before participants' experiences to understand their motivations better. She also raised concerns about the role and impact of digitalization, suggesting a need for a principle-based discussion.
- Response (Andreas, RAY): Andreas acknowledged the idea of pre-surveys but noted potential productivity issues due to the high volume of existing surveys. He also pointed out a significant perception gap between participants and team members, emphasising the need to address approaches to the hybrid world.

Data Analysis Based on Age Clusters (Eric, NO):

- Eric suggested analysing data based on age clusters to see if different age groups yield different results.

Sharing the Presentation (Mathieu, FR):

- Mathieu requested the presentation be shared with his team, to which Andreas agreed, noting it should be considered an initial analysis with data still in progress.

Upcoming Youth Research Dialogue and Studies (Irmeli, FI):

- Irmeli mentioned the upcoming youth research dialogue on October 31st, focusing on RAY Monitoring and other studies. She highlighted the focus for the next six months on monitoring both programmes, particularly for fewer opportunities and comparing new team members with more experienced ones.

3.4.5. Group Reflections

3.4.5.1. 2024-2027 Programmes Recommendations

In light of the evolving needs and challenges faced by young people across Europe, the following recommendations have been formulated for the 2024-2027 programme period. These recommendations are the result of comprehensive discussions and reflections based on the diverse inputs from different perspectives (DG Meeting, EYF, Spanish Youth Council, Volunteering Conference, RAY Research), aiming to enhance the effectiveness and impact of the programmes.

Civic Engagement and Democracy

Rapid and Direct Civic Engagement:

- Acknowledge the growing trend of direct civic engagement by providing suitable financial opportunities, simple formats of activities Simplex and ensuring stable IT systems.
- Enable new forms of engagement.

Addressing Declining Democracy:

- Provide young people with tools to promote European values and democracy.

Tackling Populism:

- Address the rise of populism and its impact on youth engagement.

Wellbeing

Broadening Concept of Wellbeing:

- Place wellbeing at the core of the programmes, addressing it not just as a response to mental health issues but as a fundamental aspect of living in a democratic society.

Digital Transformation

Clarity in Digital Priorities:

- Focus on defining and clarifying digital priorities within the programmes to ensure they are effectively communicated and implemented.

Enhancing Human Skills in the Digital Age:

- Prioritise the development of human skills, such as emotional intelligence, to complement and balance the ongoing advancements in artificial intelligence.

Sustainability & Climate Change

Understanding the value of nature

- A stronger understanding of the intrinsic value of nature - because this would lead to other issues like climate change and because our programme highlights the educational role.

Recognition & Promotion

Valorizing International Mobility:

- Recognize and promote the positive impacts of international mobility, emphasising its value in the overall experience of participants.

Empowering Youth Work:

- Recognize youth work as a key agent of change and provide necessary empowerment to youth workers.

Multiplier Effect of Ambassadors:

- Leverage the role of ambassadors to enhance the spread of programme benefits, highlighting their impact in expanding reach and influence.
- Engage new ambassadors and emphasise community building to strengthen the programme's outreach.

Expand Volunteering Opportunities:

- Broaden volunteering opportunities to include younger participants and partner countries.

Inclusion Aspects

Inclusion & Diversity Strategy:

- Uphold the existing approach to defining "barriers" within the Inclusion & Diversity strategy, maintaining its effectiveness and relevance.

Inclusivity in Communication:

- Make programmes information more inclusive and accessible, using simpler language and multimedia formats.

Accessibility for youth organisations

- Focus on enhancing the accessibility of projects for youth organisations.

Awareness of Programme Opportunities:

- Increase awareness of existing programme possibilities, particularly regarding inclusion support and green travel options.

Budget-related proposals

Reorientate Budget:

- Shift budget allocation towards a greater number of smaller projects to enhance reach and impact.

Adjusting Financial Parameters for Equity and Inflation:

- Address the necessity of revising daily rates within the programmes to align more closely with sectors like Vocational Education and Training (VET), School Education (SCH), or Adult Education (ADU). This adjustment should reflect the current economic context, particularly the impact of inflation on essential costs such as transport, accommodation, and food.

Policy & Strategy Dimension

Alignment of EYS with 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, ensuring these remain central to the programme's focus.

Enhanced Collaboration with National Youth Boards:

- Encourage and strengthen partnerships between the programmes and national Youth boards to foster more effective collaboration and shared objectives.

3.4.5.2. 2028-2034 Programmes Recommendations

As we look towards the future of European youth programmes, it's crucial to consider the evolving needs and dynamics of the youth sector. The recommendations for the 2028-2034 programme period reflect a comprehensive approach based on the inputs from different perspectives (DG Meeting, EYF, Spanish Youth Council, Volunteering Conference, RAY Research), addressing various aspects from strengthening the connection to youth work, aligning with policy and strategic dimensions, to administrative and financial considerations. These recommendations aim to enhance the effectiveness, accessibility, and relevance of the programmes, ensuring they continue to meet the needs of young Europeans and contribute positively to their development and engagement in society.

Strong Links to Youth Work

ESC and Youth Work Ethics:

- Integrate the European Solidarity Corps (ESC) more deeply into the youth field, linking it with youth work to support active citizenship. Emphasise the importance of "youth work ethics" in the implementation of ESC.
- Ensure that the ESC is effectively integrated into youth work practices.

Integration of ESC into Erasmus+:

- Discuss the potential integration of the European Solidarity Corps into Erasmus+.

Dedicated Budget for Youth Chapter:

- Maintain a specific, ring-fenced budget for the Youth chapter within Erasmus+ to ensure sustained funding and support.

Policy & Strategy Dimension

Alignment of EYS with Programmes:

- Ensure close alignment of the EU Youth Strategy with the programmes.

Volunteering and Rights:

- Highlight the growing importance of volunteering in the future and discuss the rights of volunteers.

Programme Formats

Flexibility in Programme Formats:

- Reduce complexity and number of formats in Erasmus+ to increase flexibility.

Policy Focus in Programmes:

- Advocate for a shift in emphasis, reducing the focus on policy aspects within programme activities to make them more accessible and relevant to participants.

Competence and Community Engagement:

- Increase focus on competence development, active participation, and fostering a sense of community belonging, ensuring these elements are central to programme activities.

Priorities

Inclusion - Sustainability - Digital

- These are 3 underlying principles for the future programme that should be explicit.

Administrational + Financial Aspects

Alternative Programme Contracts:

- Propose alternative contract models for formats like Solidarity Projects to lower the threshold for grassroots organisations.

Visa Considerations for Volunteering:

- Explore the feasibility of implementing special visa categories for European volunteers to facilitate their participation.
- Advocate for clearer visa statuses for European volunteers.

Lowering Age in ESC:

- Consider reducing the age limit to 16 for participation in solidarity projects and in team volunteering within the ESC.

Micro Grants and Administrative Burden:

- Explore the introduction of micro grants and strive for proportionality in administrative burdens across the programmes.

Digital Transformation

Digitalisation in Future Programmes:

- Evaluate the role of digitalisation as a priority in the new cycle of Erasmus+ and ESC.
- Investigate the challenges and opportunities in digitalisation, including the support for virtual learning activities.
- Assess whether digitalisation should remain a key focus and how virtual learning activities can be effectively supported and integrated into the programmes.

4. Detailed Discussions: Day 3: Wednesday, 18 October

4.1. Network News

Presentation: [Network News](#)

Belgium - Local Youth Work and Democracy Conference:

- A European conference under the Belgian Presidency of the Council of the European Union.
- Scheduled for 20-23 February 2024.
- Focus on the role municipalities can play in the development of youth at the local level.
- Aim to create a participatory environment at the local level.
- Joint effort with the presidency and two SNACs coordinated by Belgium: Democracy Reloaded and Europe Goes Local.
- Invitations for delegations from each country, including representatives from local levels, youth workers, municipalities, and young people.
- Location: Brussels, at The Egg.

Norway - Norwegian NA Youth & Ukraine:

- Norway has received 64,301 refugees so far, with an expectation of 10,000 more in 2024.
- 12 applications received, 9 sent for assessment.
- Norway invites others to share experiences and ideas. Contact: camillaringdal.Dukefos@bufdir.no

Malta - 4th European Youth Work Convention:

- Scheduled for 5-8 May 2025.
- A platform for professionals and multipliers in the youth field to share developments in youth work practice and elaborate on the Youth Work Agenda.
- A steering group will be set up soon for preparations.
- Previous NA organisers and other interested NAs may participate, subject to group size.

- Participation requires sending delegations and financial support.

Ireland - Youthlab 2024:

- Scheduled for 25-27 September 2024.
- Seeking dynamic and enthusiastic NA representatives (max 4) for the prep team.
- Involvement includes a residential preparatory meeting in Ireland (24-25 January 2024), online meetings, and participation in Youth LAB.
- Application deadline: 3rd November 2023. Email: youthlab24@leargas.ie

Czech Republic - Staff Meeting in Prague:

- Following the success of the December 2022 meeting, another is planned for March-May 2024 (exact dates to be determined).
- The meeting will be partially individual and partially joint with E&T.
- Interested parties are encouraged to send representatives.

4.2. Summary on Discussions on Future Programmes (First Draft)

Linking Youth Programmes to Megatrends:

- Understanding and Commitment to European Values: Address the decline of democracy by equipping young people with tools to promote and spread European values.
- Resilience in a Fragile World: Enhance young people's resilience and participation in a world affected by migration, climate change, and technological disruptions.
- Wellbeing in a Broad Sense: Focus on the broad concept of wellbeing, encompassing not only mental health but also social wellbeing.

Strategic Choices for Youth Programmes:

- ESC and Youth Work Ethics: Maintain the European Solidarity Corps (ESC) within the youth field, adhering to "youth work ethics."
- Inclusivity in Programmes: Keep programmes open to all types of organisations and groups, avoiding strict definitions and focusing on the impact of projects.
- Empowering Youth Work: 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.
- 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.
- Risk Tolerance: Adopt a more risk-friendly approach, accepting failures without severe consequences for beneficiaries.

Actions and Formats:

- 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.

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

Appreciation of the Network's Impact:

- The Commission expressed admiration for the network's achievements and the dynamic nature of its activities, highlighting the effective practice of its preached values.

Acknowledgement of Leadership:

- Special recognition was given to David for his exceptional networking and negotiation skills, likened to a 'Duracell battery' for his energy and endurance.

Midterm Evaluations and Strategy Links:

- The Commission is currently conducting ongoing midterm evaluations of various formats, emphasising the need to establish connections with the EU Youth Strategy.
- Timeline for Evaluations and Proposals: Midterm evaluations are expected to be completed by mid-2025. This will lead to the tabling of Commission recommendations around 2025, followed by impact assessments, proposals, regulations, and negotiations with the Commission and Parliament.

Budget Considerations:

- A significant challenge highlighted is the oversubscription of the Erasmus+ programme. To adequately cater to potential participants, the budget would need to be five times larger than the current allocation.

Architecture of Erasmus+:

- Satisfaction was expressed with the current three-chapter structure of Erasmus+, with a focus on potential areas like micro grants.

Simplification and Financial Regulations:

- The Commission acknowledged the difficulty in simplification, particularly concerning financial regulations and grant agreements. They urged for collective efforts in proposing concrete ideas for improvement.

Rumours and Speculations:

- 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.

Visibility and Strategic Contribution of SNACs and KMST:

- The Commission noted the low external awareness of SNACs and KMST, despite their strategic contributions. They emphasised the need to elevate these initiatives to align with broader agendas.

Invitation for Continued Dialogue:

- The Commission extended an invitation for ongoing dialogue and exchange to further discuss and shape the future of youth programmes.

Summary of the following Q&A Session:

Elevating Erasmus+ Importance (Ernst, AUT):

- Emphasised the need for the youth network to use its influence within the Commission and Parliament.
- Proposed a joint event next year to facilitate open dialogue among key stakeholders.

Budget Competition and Over-Commitment (Irmeli, FI):

- Discussed the competition for budget within EU grants.
- Noted the over-commitment of solidarity projects in Finland and additional funds for Horizon Europe and Creative Europe.

Commission's Perspective and Advocacy (Sophia, COM):

- Agreed with Ernst on the challenges faced by the Commission.
- Stressed the importance of the network's voice in advocating for youth programmes.
- Highlighted RAY's numbers in demonstrating the programmes' impact on European belonging.
- Emphasised the need for a narrative around green and digital transitions.

Programme Design and Simplification (Frauke, DE):

- Suggested programme design based on evidence.
- Advocated for simplification, visibility, and the use of AI.
- Proposed video applications and reports to tell compelling stories.

Youth and Education Ministry Separation (Koen, BE FI):

- Noted the separation of youth and education ministries in many countries.
- Raised concerns about who will defend the youth part in programme discussions in case it would become all one programme.

Youth Chapter's Position and Stakeholder Support (Sophia, COM):

- Confirmed the strength of the education and youth sectors in the Commission.
- Assured the strong representation and stakeholder support of the youth chapter.

Broader Picture and Technical Details (Marta, COM):

- Encouraged thinking about the broader picture.
- Suggested revisiting discussions on Solidarity Projects and Participation Projects.

Lobbying and Council Discussions (David, ES):

- Emphasised the need for lobbying at the Council level.
- Proposed focusing Spanish council conclusions on youth programmes.

- Suggested introducing an open debate about the future of the programmes.

Communication and Permanent Secretariat (David, ES):

- Reinforced the importance of communication.
- Discussed the idea of a Permanent Secretariat.
- Suggested an open debate to ensure youth programme issues are considered.

4.4. Ask the Commission

Summary of "Ask the Commission" Session:

Pre-Addressed Questions:

- Many questions had already been answered in writing. Remaining unanswered questions will be addressed soon.

AI in NA Evaluations (Simon, CZ):

- Questioned why AI is not used in National Agency evaluations to save time and resources.
- The Commission acknowledged the rapid emergence of AI and its potential benefits.

Discussion on AI Usage (Marta, COM):

- The Commission plans to hold a horizontal session in the next NA meeting to discuss AI, including its challenges and positive uses.
- This session aims to kick-start a debate on AI's role in programme evaluations.

Legal Considerations of AI (Ute, COM):

- Highlighted that using AI in evaluations involves legal considerations.
- Suggested that NAs could experiment with AI and compare its assessments with human evaluators.
- Mentioned that AI relies on existing data, implying a need for careful consideration of its application.

Acknowledgment of TEC Ceiling Lift (Gergely, HU):

- Expressed gratitude for lifting the ceilings on Training, Evaluation, and Cooperation (TEC) activities.

4.5. Open agenda: Peer consulting about the programme implementation issues.

During the session, participants engaged in an open agenda discussion, focusing on five key topics that have been collected beforehand. These topics, brought forward by various participants, reflect the current challenges, opportunities, and strategic considerations within the youth sector. The discussion aimed to gather insights, share experiences, and brainstorm potential solutions to these pressing issues. The topics discussed were:

1. **Mapping RAY** (Frauke, DE): An exploration of the RAY Network's research findings and their implications for the youth programmes. This topic aimed to understand how RAY's data can inform and improve youth work practices and policies.
2. **What to do with Empty Organisations?** (Eric, NO): Addressing the challenge of organisations that are registered but not actively participating in youth programmes. This discussion focused on strategies to engage these organisations or reconsider their involvement.
3. **Thoughts, Risks, Primary Checks** (Simon, CZ): A critical examination of the initial steps and considerations in youth programme projects, including risk assessment and primary checks. This topic aimed to enhance the quality and effectiveness of youth projects from the outset.
4. **Decreased Number of Participants with Fewer Opportunities** (Maja): Tackling the issue of reduced participation among young people with fewer opportunities. The discussion sought to identify barriers and develop strategies to increase inclusivity and accessibility in youth programmes.
5. **Finding New Applicants + Promotion** (Paula): This topic delves into strategies for identifying and targeting potential new beneficiaries for youth programmes. It involves exploring where to find these applicants and how to effectively motivate them to participate, with the aim of expanding the reach and inclusivity of youth programmes.

Some of the groups took some notes of their discussions:

4.5.1. Session Summary: Mapping RAY

Overview and Strategic Alignment:

- The session focused on gaining a clearer understanding of the various modules within RAY and aligning them with strategic needs.
- The strategy group, though small, aims to slow down and map RAY's activities to strategic requirements.

How to benefit best from studies:

- Concerns about the abundance of studies and the need for a more focused approach.
- Emphasised the importance of RAY for evidence-based policymaking and the need for executive summaries for better comprehension by the Commission.
- Suggested that each country should have a RAY contact person prepared for network meetings.

Triangular Summit and Communication:

- The Triangular Summit is a significant milestone for RAY, focusing on research, policy dialogue, and communication of results.
- The need for better communication of RAY results within countries and at the European level was highlighted.
- Proposed creating an internal newsletter and a dedicated mailing list for better dissemination of information.

Using RAY Results:

- Discussed the potential for regional data sets to identify patterns and age clusters.
- The importance of involving RAY results in youth working party meetings was noted, to influence the programme's direction.

- Acknowledged the challenge NAs face in strategically using RAY results and the need for a comprehensive communication strategy.

National Agency Perspectives:

- Ireland noted a lack of prioritisation in using RAY results.
- Finland shared an example of promoting RAY findings through LinkedIn articles.
- The upcoming meeting in Belgium, involving DGs and NAs, was mentioned as an opportunity to integrate RAY input.

Future Events and Meetings:

- The RAY event scheduled for 22-24 May 2024 in Finland was highlighted.
- The E&T directors meeting on 22-23 April 2024 was mentioned as a platform to discuss RAY findings and their implications.

Key Takeaways:

- The session underscored the need for a more streamlined and strategic approach to RAY studies.
- Emphasised the importance of effective communication and dissemination of RAY results to inform policy and programme development.
- Highlighted the role of RAY in providing evidence-based insights for the mid-term evaluation of youth programmes.

4.5.2. Session Summary: Thoughts, Risks, Primary Checks

Balancing Vigilance and Support:

- Emphasis on the importance of not alienating good beneficiaries while trying to identify fraudulent ones.

Hungary's Approach:

- Monitoring organisers for potential red flags, especially when multiple applications are linked to the same individuals or family members.
- Implementing a 'red flag' system where organisations meeting more than three criteria are considered high-risk and subject to staggered payments and additional checks. Criteria include being a new organisation, low scores in previous project reports, past complaints, issues found during checks, having multiple projects in different sectors, and being new to the programme.

Cyprus and France's Strategies:

- In some cases, high-risk applicants are required to provide a bank guarantee.

Serbia's Method:

- Verifying activity levels in previously invalidated Organization ID numbers (OIDs).

Operational Capacity Checks:

- Conducted by Cyprus, France, and Serbia, these checks involve reviewing documents, websites, social networks, and sometimes direct communication with applicants.

- France reported conducting operational checks on 90 projects, including document requests, CV analysis, website and social network reviews, and evaluations by an internal committee.

Turkey's System:

- A separate audit and checks unit conducts onsite visits during and after project implementation.

Hungary's Effective Practices:

- Finds monitoring during activities to be the most useful.
- Encourages evaluators to recommend checks if they have concerns.

Technology Integration:

- Implementation of AI detection tools to scrutinise applications for potential issues.

Key Takeaways:

- The session highlighted various national strategies to mitigate risks and ensure the quality of programme participants.
- It underscored the need for a balanced approach that safeguards programme integrity without discouraging legitimate participants.
- The use of technology, such as AI tools, and proactive monitoring measures were discussed as effective ways to enhance oversight and prevent fraud.

4.5.3. Session Summary: Finding New Applicants + Promotion

Engaging Young Teachers and Schools:

- Young teachers, known for their enthusiasm and motivation, can effectively promote youth programmes.
- They can support young people in applying for solidarity projects or Youth Participation Activities (YPA).

Innovative Approaches:

- A pilot initiative involves conducting project management workshops at universities with existing courses in project management. This approach could be a good practice for engaging potential beneficiaries.

Potential Beneficiaries:

- The session identified museums, galleries, cultural institutions, national parks, and municipalities as potential beneficiaries.
- These entities can play a significant role in promoting and participating in youth programmes.

Challenges and Obstacles:

- The session acknowledged that volunteering can be costly for organisations, particularly regarding accommodation expenses.
- The voluntary nature of participation in the programmes and the lengthy application process were highlighted as significant obstacles.

Key Takeaways:

- The session focused on innovative strategies to identify and engage new beneficiaries for youth programmes.
- It emphasised the importance of involving educational institutions and cultural entities in promoting these programmes.
- The discussion also brought to light the challenges faced by organisations in facilitating participation, suggesting the need for more streamlined processes and support mechanisms.

4.6. Closing & Next Steps

Acknowledgments:

- Sofia's first attendance at a Youth Business Meeting was highlighted, with special thanks extended to her and the commitment of the European Commission (COM) team, including Ute, Marta, Sandrine, and Karen.
- Appreciation was expressed for the openness and the idea of dialogue fostered by the COM representatives.
- Special thanks were given to Darko, Domagoj, and Sabrina for their contributions.

Meeting Overview:

- This Business Meeting was noted as the largest so far, with participation from all EU countries and six additional nations.
- The successful gathering was acknowledged, emphasising the importance of such meetings in fostering collaboration and dialogue.

Next Meeting in Brussels:

- The next meeting will be hosted by the Flemish part of Belgium, with the Flemish minister representing Belgium.
- Invitations for the next meeting will be sent from the Flemish side but in collaboration with all three Belgian communities.
- The meeting is set to provide an opportunity to discuss with the Directorate-General for Youth and to convey insights to national authorities.
- The meeting is scheduled to be held at the Palais d'Egmont in Brussels on March 27th, with the date fixed and unchangeable.
- The agenda includes a start with lunch on March 25th, a full working day on March 26th, the DG Meeting on March 27th, and departures on March 28th.
- Each National Agency (NA) is expected to send two representatives to participate in the debate with the DGs.
- The meeting will offer an opportunity to experience a different side of Brussels, with social activities like karaoke planned.

Conclusion:

- The closing remarks emphasised the value of these meetings in strengthening the network, sharing knowledge, and shaping the future of youth programmes. The anticipation for the next meeting in Brussels was evident, with a focus on continuing productive discussions and strategic planning.

4.7. Evaluation and closing

The evaluation of the Business Meeting (BM) in Madrid, as reflected in the responses from the evaluation, indicates a highly positive reception and several key outcomes:

- **Overall Usefulness:** Participants overwhelmingly found the meeting very useful. A significant majority rated it as very useful or mostly useful, indicating strong satisfaction with the event's content and structure.
- **Important Outcomes:** The most important outcomes highlighted by the participants included effective networking, learning from each other, strategic discussions about the future of the programme, insights into SALTOS and SNACs, and understanding the impact of megatrends on programme directions. These elements suggest that the meeting successfully facilitated collaboration, knowledge sharing, and forward-looking discussions.
- **Achievement of Objectives:** The objectives of the meeting, such as continuing joint reflections on future programmes, sharing updates on SNACs, and discussing KMST activities, were mostly or completely achieved. This indicates that the meeting was effective in addressing its set goals.
- **Balance Between Urgent and Strategic Issues:** The respondents felt that the meeting achieved a good balance between discussing urgent and strategic matters, which is crucial for long-term planning and immediate problem-solving.
- **Logistics and Organisation:** The logistics and organisation of the meeting were highly praised, with most participants expressing complete satisfaction. This suggests that the meeting's structure and management significantly contributed to its overall success.
- **Facilitation and Methods:** The facilitation and methods used during the meeting were well-received. Participants appreciated the facilitation team, the choice of methods, and the informal and productive atmosphere.
- **Suggestions for Future Meetings:** Suggestions for future meetings included more focus on concrete proposals, operational details, and better communication with the European Commission. Participants also expressed a desire for more non-formal activities and deeper engagement on strategic topics.
- **Additional Comments:** The additional comments section mostly contained expressions of gratitude towards the organisers and appreciation for the inclusive and informative nature of the event.