**WHAT DID WE SAY BEFORE…**

**MID-TERM EVALUATION OF THE PROGRAM 2014-2020 (Amsterdam 2016)**

***Architecture***



***Actions***









***Inclusion***



***National Agencies***



**EXPECTATIONS FOR THE PROGRAMS BEYOND 2020 (Tallinn 2017)**

As Erasmus+: Youth in Action has high ambitions in learning mobility, we are looking forward to the same level of ambition regarding a new program and its new objectives. Both in its objectives and actions **the new program should strive for a recognizable and meaningful contribution to young people’s lives in Europe and its neighboring countries**.

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A clear and **strong link with the renewed EU Youth Strategy is a condition for a successful, relevant and effective program.** Key objectives and priorities of the strategy and of the program should be aligned. The current (and also previous) programs in the field of Youth have been elaborating and deepening several of the specific objectives that will be mentioned below. There is valuable experience being developed in the field, in the structures of the program, at the European Commission. There is however still a lot of unlocked potential and room for further developments.

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Therefore an **inclusive design of the whole programme in all its aspects is necessary, including the specific measures to overcome barriers for participation and learning**. The new programme should continue to have a strong Inclusion and Diversity strategy, put a priority on this and dedicate specific measures and budgetary provisions for its implementation.

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In the same spirit, of reaching out to young people of different backgrounds, the new programme should keep the **same wide geographical scope as the current Erasmus+: Youth in Action programme.** This also includes EEA and pre-accession countries, but also partner countries from neighbouring regions of the EU. The results of the current programme, as well as developments in those neighbouring countries show the relevance of possibilities to cooperate with and support capacity building in those regions.

**COMMENTS ON THE LEGAL PROPOSAL FOR PROGRAMS BEYOND 2020 (Brussels 2018)**

***In General***

* Together, the objectives and actions of the future Erasmus programme, European Solidarity Corps and the EU Youth Strategy, show a **coherent and consistent approach for the future of EU policy in the field of youth**. The strong link between programme and policy, as argued for so many times, is present in this approach, focussing on a more limited range of clear priorities for both the strategy and the programmes.
* The objectives of the Erasmus programme do **respond to the needs and expectations of the youth field**, as not only the development of individual competences and skills is mentioned, but also young people’s participation in European society and the promotion of European values, in search for a new narrative for Europe.
* The programme is **knowledge based as it is building further on the past experience** and lessons learned from previous programmes in the youth field. It takes into account conclusions from the mid-term evaluation of the Erasmus+ programme and from various consultations.
* The programme has a budgetary ambition that shows that **youth policy is high on the political agenda.** Youth is one of just six areas that will see a budget increase under the MFF. Of these six, Youth will see the second largest increase.

The programme has **a separate Youth Chapter. In this respect, expectations are fulfilled. Also the three key actions are kept,** but partly renamed. The names of the Key Actions are clearer and linked to the opportunities provided in these actions. At the same time, they also make a much clearer distinction between the three different levels: young people, organisations, systems. In relation to Key Action 3, the network of NA’s welcomes **the change of name of the “structured dialogue” to “EU Youth Dialogue”.**

***Discover EU***

The main concerns shared by the network of Youth NAs are the lacking learning dimension and inclusion elements of this initiative. Additionally, the geographical scope of the initiative should be aligned to the programme. The NAs believe that the name of initiative should reflect the outlook towards the whole of Europe and, if kept, should be renamed to “Discover Europe”.

Taking into account the need to strengthen the learning dimension of this initiative a wider supportive approach is required in line with a better arrangement to set learning objectives and later reflect them. Either the volunteering training and education cycle or online tools can offer inspiration. Additionally, networks active in youth field could be included in a variety of formats.

Regarding the social inclusion elements, the programme should ensure that young people with fewer opportunities (and with special needs) would be able to benefit from the initiative. Additional support could be offered through other EU funding schemes in co-funding the costs.

Regardless of the valuable debate surrounding the political, factual and educational benefits of Discover EU and its affiliation with the programme, the funding earmarked for the Discover EU initiative may by no means lead to a corresponding reduction in the budget increase for other actions of the Youth Chapter.

***Youth Participation Projects***

The Network of National Agencies in the Youth field welcomes this initiative. It empowers young people and encourages civic and democratic engagement. The network agrees on the objectives that the Commission has set in the staff working document. However, the network would also like to stress the following issues:

* Taking into account that KA3 does not foresee any longer decentralised funds for projects related to the structured dialogue, this new action under KA1 needs a considerable decentralised budget to make a real difference.
* The network urges for a clear difference between the Youth Participation Projects of the Erasmus programme and the Solidarity Projects of the European Solidarity Corps.
* The action needs an open format, taking into consideration young people’s reality and stimulating untraditional ways on how to engage people in participation. (e.g. campaigning, lobby activities or flash mobs).
* The action should have the possibility to include a strong learning component, strengthening active participation. It should be open for organisations that work with young people with fewer opportunities. In addition, the possibility to fund a coach should be included.
* To create an inclusive and accessible action, there is a need for a very simple application form. Creative ways to apply for a grant should be considered, like pitching through a video for small-scale projects. For small-scale national projects there should be a fixed budget compared to the Solidarity Projects of the European Solidarity Corps.

***Inclusion***

However, in the legal basis there is no article anymore about the “access to the programme” as in Erasmus +, nor is inclusion of **young people with fewer opportunities** mentioned under the aims of the Key Actions. The network of Youth NAs argues that the regulation should have **a separate article stating clearly that the programme is open and accessible to every young person and that the Commission and Member States shall ensure efforts in view of social inclusion and outreach.**

There are also no special formats or budgets mentioned in the programme specifically for this target group. The article on rules applicable to management of funds states that the Commission may or may authorize the National Agencie**s to adjust, on the basis of objective criteria, the grants to support mobility actions of the program raises a lot of expectations,** but is not clear at this moment what is meant by this. The same goes for the mentioned intention in the memorandum **to foster accessibility for smaller-sized and unexperienced organizations.**

In addition, in the explanatory memorandum it is mentioned that the **number of participants should be tripled**, while at the same time introducing qualitative measures and incentives to improve outreach to young people with fewer opportunities. This raises the question how this can be realized without jeopardizing any of these 3 aspects.