Draft Notes

3rd formal Meeting of the ESG

Cycle IX of the EU Youth Dialogue (January 2022 - June 2023)

Trio Presidencies: France, Czech Republic and Sweden

08/04/22

1. **Welcome**

The Chair of the meeting welcomed the participants to the meeting and invited participants to shortly introduce themselves. See list of participants in annex.

1. **Adoption of the agenda and of the ESG working document**

The Chair proposed to postpone the discussion on the ESG working document until the end of the meeting, and explained that Lene Mejer from EACEA would join for the agenda points under AOB on the grants for 2022-24 and the reporting for 2021. The agenda was adopted with no comments.

1. **The EU Youth Dialogue Communication**

The French National Youth Council (NYC) representative indicated that the French presidency proposed to start the handover to the Czech presidency in mid-May.

Czech NYC enquired whether a “save the date” for their Youth Conference in July could be shared by the general social media accounts.

The European Youth Forum highlighted that the usual practice is for the social media accounts to be passed over on the 1st day of the presidency, and not before.

The French NYC agreed to advertise the Czech conference still during the French presidency via the official accounts.

The Swedish NYC mentioned that they already have the date for the Youth Conference in Sweden, and could start communicating about it early. Czech NYC agreed to post the save the date for Sweden’s upcoming conference once their presidency has started.

The European Commission reminded everyone that they may also upload the events on the European Year of Youth map as well: <https://europa.eu/youth/year-of-youth_en> This would serve as a good opportunity to promote them.

1. **Institutional memory**

The European Commission reminded participants that they were waiting for nominations to join a handover taskforce, following the good practice of the Slovenian presidency for the previous EU-Youth Dialogue cycle.

The proposal of the European Commission to ensure institutional memory was to create an open-access webpage on the European Youth Portal, addressing two types of audience:

* General public, with the aim of increased visibility for the EU Youth Dialogue
* Researchers and policymakers, with the aim of accessing detailed information

The type of documents to be included should show: how the EU Youth Dialogue works, what the outcomes have been, what the follow ups are (council decisions, implementation); outcomes of the Youth Conferences and national level consultations; survey data; EU youth strategy document; Resolutions; explanatory notes; reports/documents on youth participation.

Many of these documents already exist but should be gathered together to create a single entry-point. DG EAC is in the process of designing the architecture of the webpage, and needed input on that.

French, Czech and Swedish presidencies were invited to identify documents, which would be uploaded by the European Commission.

The Youth Forum questioned the necessity of a task force, suggesting that certain members of the present steering group support the process. The Swedish presidency agreed.

Amongst the ESG members, the following will serve as contact persons: Désirée Distorto (FR), Zuzana Wildowa (CZ), Tobias Adolfsson (SE), Kristof Papp (YFJ).

1. **The EU Youth Conference in the Czech Republic**

The Czech NYC presented the current status of the EU Youth Conference, planned for 10-13 July 2022 in Prague. The aim of the conference is to map the step from the consultation phase to the implementation phase of the EU Youth Dialogue, and will therefore include success factors and good practices. Policymakers from ministries will be present the whole time alongside young people.

| 10 July  | Arrival Day, evening activities at the Scouts Institute, formal welcome by the Ministry of Education, catering, music. etc. |
| --- | --- |
| 11 July  | (am) Welcome, opening speeches, youth and decision makers will discuss together, informal networking sessions, roundtables; (pm) presentation of researchers, good practice examples, market place, working groups according to 5 topics started by FR. Creative groups with different forms of expression, drama, videos, photos, dancing etc. |
| 12 July  | (am) Group work, mixed with dialogues with local experts and policymakers; (pm) presentation in plenary session of output of group work. Evening concert by Lake Malawi (CZ Eurovision entry)  |
| 13 July | (am) Interactive summary by facilitator, reports and researchers with moderated discussion; (pm) handover ceremony to the Swedish presidency. |

The French NYC asked if the conference would be accompanied by an informal ministerial meeting to meet young delegates. Czech presidency explained that this would unfortunately not be possible, due to timing and lack of resources.

The Youth Forum suggested organising a preparatory meeting for ministerial representatives so that they know what to expect. The Youth Forum wondered how INGYOs would be included, as the programme currently seems more aimed at national delegations; it could be worth reaching out to the European Facilitator of the EU Youth Conference, who could support with methodology. It will be important to have young people alongside politicians during opening and closing speeches (and gender balance). YFJ also offered to share the call for facilitator and trainers within its network.

The Czech presidency responded that around 20 INGYOs would be invited, and that some representatives from Ukraine would be invited to the opening ceremony. They will share the call for facilitators once it is ready. They are also in touch with the European facilitator.

The European Commission supported the conference planning so far, and the Czech presidency asked if they knew whether Commissioner Mariya Gabriel or DG Themis Christophidou would both be able to attend.

The Swedish presidency asked whether there was going to be a website for the presidency and whether the event would be hybrid (at least to stream the high-level speakers). The Swedish presidency asked how they intended to link the event to the French conference, to avoid a black box between conferences, and encouraged the Czechs to hold a preparatory meeting or a note for civil servants on how they can have dialogue with young people, to contribute constructively.

In response to the questions above, the Czech presidency representatives indicated that:

* Official speakers will be in intergenerational pairs/couples with one older and one younger person; gender balance will be respected
* The conference will be hybrid
* They will discuss with the French representatives to ensure fluency
* They will involve Sweden in the planning
* The call for facilitators will be sent out soon
* They will contact Biliana Sirakova, EU Youth Coordinator
1. **The Youth Council of April 5th 2022, Luxembourg**

An informal lunch was held in Luxembourg in the fringes of the Youth Council. It was attended by Youth delegates from each presidency plus the ministry from each presidency. The topic of the lunch was “encouraging national and transnational youth volunteering to strengthen a sense of belonging and European citizenship”, selected by France.

The discussions were fruitful and centred on 3 questions:

1/ What are the obstacles to be removed and the measures to be taken to enable more young people to have access to a transnational volunteering experience, especially those with fewer opportunities, and to enable young transnational volunteers to have a rich and successful experience?

2/ In particular, how can we ensure that national volunteering experiences can lead young volunteers to transnational mobility?

3/ What conditions should be met and what measures should be taken to ensure that the work of young European volunteers better promotes the values of democracy and peace, which are at the heart of the European Union project?

The French presidency team highlighted that volunteering itself can reinforce EU values. Therefore it is important to combine EU funding with measures on national and transnational volunteering. It should be noted that national and transnational volunteering is currently open to a certain limited category of young people. The 9th cycle of youth dialogue should address this, promoting inclusion and diversity of people joining volunteering projects.

The Youth Forum expressed satisfaction with the format, considering it a good practice to hold such a discussion on the same day as the Council.

The French presidency team noted that the format is important and can be challenging to get right; a smaller select group can lead to better outcomes. As many seats as possible should be given to young delegates.

The Czech presidency team explained that unfortunately such a lunch would not be possible for them to organise, as they have one minister for education, youth and sport, but that they intended to organise a breakfast.

The Council itself adopted a recommendation on the mobility of young volunteers. The French presidency will circulate the text once it’s published in the Official Journal. The Ukrainian minister of sport and youth also testified about current challenges, urging Ukrainians to be given a prominent place in Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps programmes. The Council can be watched online : <https://video.consilium.europa.eu/event/fr/25617> (especially from 15 minutes onwards).

1. **AOB**

Lene Mejer, Deputy Head of Unit, EACEA, joined the meeting. Lene Mejer explained that the Commission had recently launched a new, standardised IT system for all funding and grants, including the EU Youth dialogue, which was causing some delays.

1. **The final reports for 2021 ERASMUS grants**

The implementation period for 2021 grants is now coming to an end for most beneficiaries given the extensions given at the end of 2021. For some beneficiaries it has already finished. EACEA will receive and analyse the final reports, but they are currently struggling with the new IT system and ask for patience.

The French NYC asked if the 30 April deadline for reporting still held, even though templates for reporting were not yet available.

EACEA explained that the reporting period is different for different beneficiaries of the 2021 grants given the different extensions given. As the 2021 grant agreements were not signed on time, EACEA offered an extension into early 2022 for beneficiaries to finalise their 2021 programmes, and each will finish at slightly different times.

EACEA will be flexible about the deadlines for reporting, recognising that the system is not yet performing optimally It is important that each beneficiary keep in contact with EACEA once their reporting deadline is approaching (so at the end of the eligibility period of the grant).

1. **The Grants for 2022-2024**

For 2022-2024 agreements, international travel is allowed as per the call. International travel is addressed under point 6 'Eligibility' saying: “Proposals must relate to activities taking place in the country of the National Working Group except for capacity building activities including exchange of good practices across the groups within the eligible countries”.

The funding model for 2022-24is the so-called lump sum II approach, which was also used for the 2021 grants but which is new in the Erasmus+ context for the programme period 2021-2027. The budget is divided into Work Packages; EACEA recommends 3 Work Packages (Management, Activity, Dissemination) and 2 deliverables per WP. By far most of the applications received have followed this approach.

The final grant will be evaluated based on the final report and the outputs and outcomes achieved, not proof of expenditures. There will be no need to deliver invoices, but rather proof of activities that have happened (minutes of meetings, participants lists, etc.). This is a new approach across the whole of the European Commission.

There are 5 categories within the budget:

- personnel;

- sub-contracting;

- travel, accommodation, subsistence, other goods;

- financial support to third parties;

- indirect costs (7% of the above).

Beneficiaries may move costs within each category without notifying the Commission, but not across categories. That would need an amendment with EACEA. EACEA indicated, for example, that putting more budget on the travel line might become relevant, since the price of travel tickets have gone up recently.

The 2022-2024 grant agreements are ready, but need to be amended to absorb the additional EUR 300,000 awarded in the context of the European Year of Youth (EYY). The amendment will happen after the Grant Agreement 2022-2024 has been signed. An information meeting will be organised for beneficiaries in early May. This meeting will cover both the reporting for the 2021 grants and the conclusion of the 2022-2024 grant agreements.

The Youth Forum asked about the exact date when the grant agreements for 2022-24 would be sent out. Considering that most NYCs are not in a position to advance funds for activities, most have not started any consultation work yet. The Youth Forum also enquired as to whether the top-up grants are only linked to the EYY, and can only be used to support EYY activities, or if they are a broader support for NYCs.

EACEA noted that the Commission was still ironing out the legal aspects of including the EYY top-up funds, which were confirmed on 7 March in the amended Erasmus+ AWP. Grants are retroactive so can apply to activities held January-April 2022. The top up represents around EUR 9,500 per country. The top-up funds must be used for activities relating to EYY, but this is quite a generous interpretation as it covers many outreach/dissemination activities relating to youth. DG EAC added that the possibilities are very broad, covering debates and discussions with young people, participation, solidarity, activities with Ukrainians etc.

It was agreed that a member of the EACEA staff could follow the basecamp activities In order to have easy access to strategic Youth Dialogue discussions (Genevieve Sauve included 22/4). EACEA's basecamp participation is not to be used for individual communication about grant agreement issues with EACEA. Such communication goes through the eGrant tool or alternatively via the EACEA-Youth functional mailbox.

1. **Adoption of working document**

The ESG was in broad agreement about the working document. One paragraph relating to funding of NYCs was discussed.

Original text:
*“The travel, accommodation and other possible costs of the members of the European Steering group and the tasks to be performed by them will be covered by the organisations or bodies that the European Steering Group members represent. When possible and needed, National Youth Councils could benefit from the support of the national authorities and/or the European Commission to cover those costs.”*

DG EAC proposal:
*“The travel, accommodation and other possible costs of the members of the European Steering group and the tasks to be performed by them will be covered by the organisations or bodies that the European Steering Group members represent. National Youth Councils could benefit from the support of the national authorities and/or the European Commission to cover those costs as far as the availability of finance allows and in compliance with their financial rules and the eligibility criteria..”*

The Swedish presidency team supported the amendment of the Commission. The Czech presidency was neutral. The Youth Forum asked what the reasoning behind the addition was. DG EAC responded that they wanted a clear and consistent wording that was in line with the grant agreements.

The Youth Forum queried that NYCs from countries hosting the presidency do not receive extra funds and need to cover ESG activities from their annual grant that should be devoted to national dialogues, and National Working Groups (NWGs) should not be encouraged, nor expected to use the grants for non-related activities. The Swedish presidency recalled that ESG meetings can now be covered by the grant agreement.

The Czech NYC noted that national governments often cover the extra costs borne by NYCs during the presidency, but we should not assume this will be the case for all member states.

EACEA explained that the 2022-24 grant process has now been concluded. Having extra funds for the trio of NYCs hosting the presidency would entail creating the necessary legal basis. It may be a possibility for the grant agreements for 2025 onwards.

Youth Forum proposal:
*“The travel, accommodation and other possible costs of the members of the European Steering group and the tasks to be performed by them will be covered by the organisations or bodies that the European Steering Group members represent. National Youth Councils ~~could~~ will benefit from the support of the national authorities and/or the European Commission to cover those costs as far as the availability of finance allows and in compliance with their financial rules and the eligibility criteria..”*

After discussion, the group reached consensus on changing the wording to “should”, as governments could not promise budgetary commitments.

Agreed text:
*“The travel, accommodation and other possible costs of the members of the European Steering group and the tasks to be performed by them will be covered by the organisations or bodies that the European Steering Group members represent. National Youth Councils should benefit from the support of the national authorities and/or the European Commission to cover those costs as far as the availability of finance allows and in compliance with their financial rules and the eligibility criteria..”*

**8. End of the meeting**

The next meeting, which will be the last one by France, will be held physically in Strasbourg, on 10 June 2022 (pm). Each delegation may send two people.

It will follow a seminar on youth participation in the European project “bringing Europe to life for and with young people” 9 June (pm) to 10 June (am) at the European Youth Centre in Strasbourg. ESG is invited. Places will be distributed on a first-come, first-served basis.

A call for a facilitator, co-facilitator and a rapporteur will be shared shortly for ESG members to share in their networks.

**Annex: List of Participants**

| **French Presidency team** |
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| Christophe Devette (Chair) | Government |
| Pierre Laporte | Government |
| Désirée Distorto (Co-Chair) | National Youth Council |
| Tanguy Guibert | National Youth Council |
| **Czech Presidency team** |
| Zdenka Maskova | Government |
| Marta Kotasova | Government |
| Michaela Dolezalova | National Youth Council  |
| Zuzana Wildova | National Youth Council |
| **Swedish Presidency team** |
| Anders Lindholm | Government |
| Tobias Adolfsson | Government |
| Hannah Kroksson |  National Youth Council |
| **European Commission (EC)** |
| Marta Touykova | DG EAC |
| Despo Sergiou | DG EAC |
| Lene Mejer | EACEA |
| **European Youth Forum (the Youth Forum)** |
| Kristof Papp | European Youth Forum |
| Lauren Mason | European Youth Forum |