**Draft Minutes**

**4th formal Meeting of the ESG**

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

**Trio Presidencies: France, Czech Republic and Sweden**

**10 June 2022, Strasbourg**

Chairs: Severine Origny-Fleishman (French government), Desirée Ristorto (French NYC)

1. **Welcome and adoption of the agenda**

The meeting was opened with an introductory tour de table. The agenda was adopted without discussion.

1. **Information on consultations**

**The French NYC** reported that the consultation process has started and as part of their national plans they are trying to hold as many meetings as possible before the Youth Conference in Prague. 4 physical workshops have already been held, and 3 more will be held shortly, in order to have some qualitative input for the conference. The French NYC have used some of the questions suggested by the researchers, slightly adapted. They note that the period has been rather rushed and intense.

The European Youth Forum (YFJ) indicated that they had been in touch with the National Working Groups (NWG). Due to a lack of financial resources, many have not started carrying out any consultations. This is not only problematic for the NYCs; in those cases where the ministry handles the grants, they are often not able to be flexible in advancing money before receiving the grant. This may cause problems for the consultation outcomes for the 9th cycle.

YFJ also raised the question to the researchers on whether it would be possible to include the outcomes of the polls in the final report for the Youth Conference.

Researcher Dan Moxom replied that outcomes from the survey could be included if NWGs use the survey outline that the researchers prepared. 23 countries have already submitted mid-way reports; these are currently being analysed. A final version is expected by the end of June.

YFJ pointed out that three countries have not submitted the report. Two of those have provided explanations, but Romania has not given an indication of how they are working on the consultations. YFJ has noticed a common misunderstanding whereby people assumed the best practices section was supposed to refer to the last couple of months of the 9th cycle. The correct time frame was communicated clearly in the webinars, but this doesn’t seem to have been understood. Any already implemented or planned initiatives could have been considered in the report.

The Czech government suggested that YFJ contact the Romanian NYC, to which YFJ replied they have already established communication to solve the issue.

**The Czech NYC** explained that they had focused on two elements of the consultation process. This has allowed for the picking up of existing processes and creating new spaces for input. They had an open call for 8 youth ambassadors, who were being mentored to organise their own actions. They are also organising a competition collecting ideas. They will also work with younger children during summer camps (a big tradition in CZ). There have been some difficulties in getting young people to attend big physical meetings since the COVID-19 pandemic. They even had to cancel one planned event. CZ NYC enquired whether others have good practices to share on this. Czech NYC also noted that at the conference, every delegate would be expected to know good examples from their country’s consultations.

YFJ responded that they could reach out to the NWGs and encourage them to come with examples.

French NYC shared the experience that it was difficult to organise a very big meeting, so they opted for smaller 2-hour workshops with 20-30 participants. They also joined existing events organised by the NWGs to make it easier.

The research team warned that conference participants might not have been involved in the drafting of their national reports, and may not know all the details.

Czech NYC replied that they would try to prepare participants for this.

YFJ suggested organising an online webinar one week before the conference, to brief all the participants more generally, including on this point. YFJ could help out with setting up the Zoom call or invitations/technicalities.

**The Swedish NYC** reported that they had two types of activities: focus groups with organised youth from LSU; workshops with municipalities in order to make sure that there was a good geographical spread. They managed to reach more people than last time, and are currently setting up an opinion poll, using the questions provided by the researchers.

YFJ added that INGYOs are also having meetings to prepare their consultative event; since they have one event with decision-makers and young people. It is likely to be online and recorded, so may be submitted to researchers. All INGYOs were also invited to the youth conference and appreciated this.

1. **Review of FR presidency and ESG under FR presidency**

The French government recalled the four main topics addressed as part of the presidency programme: how to engage young people in the promotion of the next EU youth dialogue; mobility of young volunteers; youth participation in EU processes; strengthening European citizenship through volunteering.

They presented a review of their main achievements relating to the EU-Youth Dialogue process:

* Drafted an EU-Youth Dialogue concept note that was shared with NYCs. This was a good basis for work.
* Held EU-Youth Conference in January. Disappointing that it had to be online, but assured the active engagement of 250 participants, with 50 speakers and 20 side workshops. The evaluation form had some positive feedback, but it was sent out quite late and so only garnered 38 replies. 40% had already been involved in the EU youth conference. All wanted to remain engaged in the next phases of the EU-Youth Dialogue. Interactive formats, rather than plenary sessions, were more appreciated. More interaction with decision makers was wished. The final report will be published soon in French and English.
* Followed up on the conference with French NYC in order to formalise outcomes. Their input was fully included in the text of the Council Conclusions without changes, adopted by the Council in April 2022 without changes.
* Organised a hybrid meeting with ministers of youth and education, with one delegate per member state. The French government hoped that other presidencies would continue this format, as it brought some vibrant discussion alongside the ministerial meeting.
* 8 ESG meetings were held (4 official and 4 informal) with 2 in person
* Youth Dialogue Lunch held on 5 April. Hoped that other Presidencies would follow-up on these good practices.

Other components of the French presidency in the broader field of youth engagement included:

* A recommendation on the mobility of young volunteers, updated from 2008. The text looked at new forms of volunteering, including virtually, and the Erasmus Solidarity Corps.
* The main event on youth participation was held 9-10 June in Strasbourg. The report will soon be released in French and English. The French presidency kindly invited the Steering Group members to disseminate the results.
* The presidency proposed the idea of a European citizenship “service civique européen”, not as a new programme, but rather an umbrella terminology, to see how a pathway could be drawn between local volunteering and the European level. Volunteering is seen as a great way to build a sense of citizenship, and has a broader outreach than just students. This idea builds on the European Solidarity Corps (ESC) and other schemes which have an international component. The ESC is quite small and this programme proposed to extend it, identifying similarities between national and European volunteering. It was discussed at the Youth DGs meeting in May and again at the Youth Working Party. One idea was to showcase the European dimension of volunteering, and to use 5 December, UN day of volunteering, to publicise this.

The French NYC confirmed that the lunch with the Secretary of State during the inter-ministerial meeting was highly appreciated. Young people felt that they were listened to. French NYC encouraged the Swedish presidency to see if a similar set up would be possible for them.

YFJ thanked the presidency team for the good cooperation, praising notably the lunch that was held for young people alongside decision makers.

1. **Update on grants to National Working Groups**

Regarding the process of administering grants to the NWGs for the EU-Youth Dialogue, DG EAC recalled the Info session that was organised on 18 May, where Lene Mejer from EACEA addressed most of the problems. The Commission is aware that the delays have been difficult for the NWGs. On the question raised about whether extra funds could be available for the NYCs who are part of the trio presidency - this will need to be discussed for the next period of grants after 2024 as the current period is set.

NWGs who applied for the grants are in the grant agreement preparation phase from 10 to 31 May. As of 31 May, only 12 NYCs had initiated that process. There is a team of people from EACEA talking with the NWG to see if others need assistance.

The Czech NYC mentioned that the deadline for submission was not clear. The info session indicated that there was no deadline, but the online system showed the deadline of 31 May.

DG EAC replied that if they experience another problem like that, to put it directly in the Basecamp channel so that EACEA can see it and fix it more quickly.

YFJ asked why only 12 NYCs had initiated the process, since that is a small proportion of those who are eligible. It may be because some of them are still handling the funds they currently have available from the late 2021 grants. The call for new 2022 grants came at the same time as the reporting from the previous year, which created a large administrative burden for the NWGs. The top-up for the European Year of Youth (EYY) was explained as the cause of the delay. YFJ wondered if this sum was actually worth it if it created so much delay? Whilst EUR 9000 can be a lot of money for some NYCs, this amount needs to be co-financed and can end up creating even more work. YFJ shared that they had already been in touch with EACEA and EAC, asking to arrange the pre-financing before the top-up. This needs to be done before the end of June.

Regarding the online application form, the French NYC had not understood that deliverables were automatically public, but needed to be sensitive. That was not mentioned during the briefing meeting. “ASAP” cannot be considered a deadline - actual dates need to be communicated. The Czech NYC echoed this.

The YFJ suggested that this cycle is a moment to prepare for the reconsideration of the funding structure. It would be important to know who is receiving the grant, as in several cases, it is not the NYC. Governments generally do not want to pre-finance activities before receiving the grant, because it can create a lot of administrative difficulties. On the other hand, the NYCs have a little more flexibility as there is a smaller administrative machine behind them. Also considering the situation of the Presidency NYCs and the INGYOs.

It is concerning that there are countries where the NWG has not met since the beginning of this cycle. Some NWGs cannot reach out to their ministry for reasons we do not fully understand. For some, organising the working group causes a burden.

The researcher asked if the ESG needed to push back the reporting deadline.

YFJ responded that an extra month would not really be enough to perform a proper consultation. It was questionable how flexible the deadline really is, since the CZ Council Conclusions need to be ready by October.

Czech ministry confirmed that they needed the input in time for the Council Conclusions due on 28 November. The last working party would meet in the last week of October.

1. **Presentation of the future CZ presidency, future ESGs and EYC information update**

The Czech government presented the broad strokes of their planning:

* Topic fixed as “Promoting intergenerational dialogue to foster inclusion”
* The meeting of ministers in the Council is set for 28 November in Brussels
* The outline of the Council Conclusions is already being drafted
* The Youth Working Party will meet on 1 July

1. Calendar of Key Events

* 15 June - Czech prime minister will present priorities of presidency
* 13 July - CULT committee hearing for CZ minister
* 11-13 July - EU Youth Conference, Prague
* 19-20 September - DG Meeting on Youth, which will focus on links between non-formal learning and education in youth work, and responses to the flow of refugees. It will include one interactive session with 10 young people (in person) and 50 young people (online) from the trio. Young people will vote on the same questions as the DGs, to be able to compare the outcomes and if they match. Researcher Ondrej Barta will be present to compare the results. In the conclusion, young people will be panellists and the DGs will be audience members asking questions.
* 28 November - Council meeting, starting with a youth breakfast with the trio ministers, youth delegates (3 spots per delegation) and YFJ.
* 6 December - Legacy conference on EYY in European Parliament in Brussels. Cooganised with COM and EP. Youth task force with FR, SE, they will also prepare part of the conference. Institutions will announce the legacy

1. Updates on the EU Youth Conference

The Czech NYC provided an update on communication around the EU Youth Conference. Head of delegations have already received: Save the date, call for nominations for youth delegates and ministerial delegates, contact points, travel arrangements. Delegates have also been invited to send their requests for travel.

10 July will be the arrival day, with 11, 12 and 13 July as working days. A practical information note will be sent out in the week commencing 13 June. The following week, an information note about the content will be shared as well. The final report should be ready by the end of June. The Czech NYC have taken note of the recommendations by YFJ that there should be an online preparatory seminar, and are discussing the options with the facilitator. The call for facilitators had been sent out recently, and after discussion with the YFJ, it was agreed to extend the deadline by another week.

As part of the European Year of Youth, the presidency was working together with the Commission to organise an informal welcome evening on 10 July (held at the Scout institute). This would continue the flow of sessions on intergenerational solidarity, and inclusion following the EU open days on 7 May.

The closing ceremony was currently in preparation. The Czech NYC explained their idea to have a slightly more intimate/creative closing ceremony, than just political speeches.

The Czech government indicated that they would like to invite FR and SE to the closing ceremony (both ministry + NYC level). Both the French and Swedish government representatives replied that they would likely send directors, as the ministers were unavailable. The French NYC will also nominate a representative.

The ESG members and the facilitator discussed the details of the opening panels (social inclusion and sustainability) including the length and composition of the panels, concluding that 30 minutes may be quite rushed for 4 speakers and a Q&A. The Ukrainian ambassador to Czechia and the Pope had also expressed an interest to speak.

The YFJ reiterated the importance of a preparatory webinar for participants, and suggested that it could make sense to hold a session for the policymakers to know what to expect as well.

The Czech NYC explained that they were preparing a background document for policymakers as well, to understand their role, and were not sure if they would have time to organise a separate information session for policymakers.

On the question of who should be invited to the conference, the Czech NYC shared that they based themselves on participants of previous conferences, but had since received communications from people who had expected to be invited, and for whom they do not have budget. They asked if for the future (SE presidency), YFJ or the previous presidency could provide a written list of the VIPs who are expected to attend, and those who are left to the discretion of the presidency.

YFJ replied that the guest list is entirely up to the organising countries. YFJ could offer suggestions, but it is up to the presidency to decide. Some organisations whom it would be good to invite are: INGYOs, Advisory Council on Youth, Eastern Partnership countries youth delegates, etc. These are not obligatory though.

It was agreed that this point would be put on the ESG agenda in the planning phase of the Swedish youth conference, so that everyone is on the same page.

1. European Steering Group Meetings

The Czech government expressed the feeling that online ESG meetings might be easier for everyone.

YFJ pointed out that the working document of the ESG says physical meetings are preferable, but that this is up to the presidencies.

DG EAC added that prior to the COVID pandemic, ESG meetings were often held in the margins of the Youth Working Party, in the DG EAC building. She would check if this is still an option.

The French government shared that they had found a mix of in-person and online meetings to be appreciated.

Regarding the timings, it was agreed that the next meeting would be early September, before the submission of the report, and ahead of the Council Conclusions. YFJ suggested setting the date for the physical meeting, and sending a doodle to find a slot for the online meeting.

DG EAC shared that 4 meetings should be plenty; the previous cycle had 10 meetings across the whole trio of presidencies.

The Swedish government noted that they had not yet finalised their team. Tobias Adolfsson would join the team in Brussels, but the new colleague starting in Stockholm does not have prior knowledge of the EU-Youth Dialogue. Therefore they would like to have a few physical ESG meetings in the autumn, to help initiate the new staff. Sweden would also appreciate some more input on what to do with the outcomes regarding the EU-Youth Dialogue once they have been included in the Council conclusion, to ensure some real impact.

1. **Exchange of views on the upcoming council resolution on the 9th cycle under the SE presidency**

The Swedish government shared that they would be holding a seminar in early autumn with Swedish youth to see what ideas they have. They would also try to use the resolution on the 9th cycle to codify changes and improvements that have been made during the dialogue. They will not limit the reflections to the 9th cycle but will look at other cycles and the answers that they respectively came up with, to make it more of an evaluative instrument.

This was partly already done in the 8th cycle, and would serve as a useful starting point. They would like to discuss the text with the previous cycle trio (8th) and with the upcoming presidency trio (10th) too. They appreciated the tone and structure of the 8th cycle conclusions. Prior to that, there were a lot of cut and paste exercises, which should be avoided.

The Swedish government would ideally like to see the conclusions and messages from the Youth Conference directly in the Council Conclusions document, not just as an annex.

The European Youth Forum congratulated the Swedish presidency team for the strong sounding plan. They shared that there had previously been much debate about where to add the conference outcomes in the council conclusions: any statements in the body of the texts can be amended, whilst annexes cannot be cut. However, including points in an annex sends a less strong message.

YFJ added that ESG should later discuss planning a report on the implementation phase in February. The outcomes of that should also feed into the Council resolution. There is still a final report that will come after the restitution reports of the NWGs.

The SE government commented that they had noticed a shift in tone when it came to including messages from the Youth Conferences in council texts. Some Member States used to be very much against it, but this seemed to have shifted; the French presidency managed to get it included and no-one objected to it. The perception of an annexe can be weaker than when statements are in the main body of the text.

The French government clarified that the Member States only agreed to the inclusion of the text if it was clearly identified which parts of the text were from the voices of young people, rather than the voice of the Member States themselves. FR also noted that the text would need to be shorter if it is to be included in the body of the text.

The researcher shared that it was a question of compromise. The clearer the consultation report is written, the more easily that text can be used. The presidency could specify how they would like it (e.g. in 10 bullet points). The almost final version of the text should then be shared with the ESG, young people, and the other presidencies. The researcher and the ESG team can help in the drafting process.

1. **Handover FR to CZ**

The French and Czech teams were in good contact for the handover.

The Czech government mentioned the bilateral meetings they had been having with attachés from FR and SE. They had also offered to meet with BE, HU and ES.

YFJ shared the good practice of the Slovenian NYC, who drafted a handover plan, and scheduled several interactions for this. This happened in the last 2 months of the presidency. YFJ advised not to start on the handover, because it can be a burden and a distraction for the ministries and the NYC.

1. **AOB**
2. Adoption of minutes

The minutes from the last meeting were adopted without discussion.

1. Attendance of minors

The Czech government raised a question about accreditation and responsibility when you have a minor attending the Youth Conference.

YFJ noted that previously, OBESSU brought high-school students, and that it therefore should not be a problem. YFJ will consult with OBESSU to ask their experience on this.

Czech NYC added that they previously had a 16-year-old delegate who was accompanied for travel, but no-one was legally responsible for her. It wasn’t clear why the 16-year-old would need a chaperone for the duration of the conference.

The French government indicated that their exchanges with the organising team suggested that someone from the French ministry would be responsible for the delegate. This is not legally possible for the ministry. The French NYC added that this would only imply one extra person attending; that person would anyway be travelling to Prague with the participant. The process needs clarifying beyond this individual case.

The Czech NYC clarified that they do not need a legal guardian, just somebody who ensures that the 16-year-old does not consume alcohol, for example, as the conference organisers cannot take on that role.

The researchers add from their experience with children’s rights that the best practice is that there is one person present who deals with the minors. Emergency contact details are provided in case the young people need it (in case of injury, getting lost, illegal consumption, etc). The organisation who sends someone is responsible for well-being, transit etc. Not the conference organisers.

1. Meeting of National Working Groups

The YFJ would like to organise a meeting of NWGs to share best practices, as there has not been one during the last two cycles. YFJ was mapping if anyone wished to host this, and asked CZ or SE to let YFJ know if their governments, NYCs or other national agencies would be interested.

YFJ shared that they were organising a coordination meeting on 27 June 2022 for the NYCs to to understand their involvement in the working groups and to understand the funding problems.

The Czech NYC enquired whether the NWG meeting should be financed by the host. The Czech government replied that they would not be able to finance it, as their budget was set already in 2018 and the request now comes too late.

1. **Closing remarks and thanks**

The French NYC apologised for the lack of activity on the communication channels. They would shortly hand over the access to the accounts, and agreed to communicate about the CZ Youth Conference before that. Together with the French ministry, they wished the Czech presidency the best of luck and offered their support wherever needed.

The Czech NYC also thanked the French for their work and great cooperation. The Czech ministry echoed these thanks and agreed to share the information about the conference in the next few days, in order for the French to post about it.

YFJ added that they would share the communication channels early next week, although the official handover should be on 1 July.

**Annex: List of Participants**

| **French Presidency team** | |
| --- | --- |
| Severine Origny-Fleishman (Co-chair) | Government |
| Christophe Devette | Government |
| Désirée Distorto (Co-Chair) | National Youth Council |
| Tanguy Guibert | National Youth Council |
| **Czech Presidency team** | |
| Martina Kotasova | Government |
| Sarka Dolezalova | Government |
| Michaela Dolezalova | National Youth Council |
| Zuzana Wildova | National Youth Council |
| **Swedish Presidency team** | |
| Anders Lindholm | Government |
| Johan Gebo | National Youth Council |
| **European Commission (EC)** | |
| Jasna Maric Krajacic | DG EAC |
| **European Youth Forum (the Youth Forum)** | |
| Kristof Papp | European Youth Forum |
| Lauren Mason | European Youth Forum |
| **Researchers and facilitators team** | |
| Dan Moxom | Youth Researcher |
| Clara Drammeh | Youth Facilitator |