DRAFT MINUTES

**European Steering Group Meeting - 9th cycle of the EU Youth Dialogue.**

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

**2 September 2022, 14:00 – 16:00, Online**

1. **Welcome & Adoption of the agenda and of the minutes from the last meeting**

The agenda was adopted with unanimity.

1. **Deadlines until the end of the year**

The Czech presidency team recalled the main milestones from now until the end of 2022:

* 5 September: Deadline for National Working Groups (NWGs) to submit reports
* 20 September: European Steering Group (ESG) meeting in Prague
* September (tbc): Completion of data collection from national consultation reports, preparation of summary report
* 2 October: Summary of consultation reports to be used for the council conclusions
* 10 October: finalisation of consultations report
* September/October (tbc) presentation of implementation phase to the National Working Groups
* October (tbc): Online ESG meeting
* October (tbc): Webinar of results and outputs from consultation, recommendations
* 28 November: EYCS Council under the Czech presidency with a meeting of ministers. A Youth Breakfast will be held 8.30 am-9.30 am. The Youth section of the meeting will be in the afternoon.
* 5 December: EU Youth Working Party
* 6 December: European Year of Youth Legacy Conference in Brussels
* 7 December: Physical ESG Meeting in Brussels, 9.30 am-12.00 noon at Czech Permanent Representation (also hybrid)

The European Youth Forum enquired whether the implementation phase should be combined with the results webinar or not, and whether the webinar will be open to the general public.

The Czech NYC replied that they were envisaging a presentation of the National Working Groups (NWGs) at the beginning of October. The public webinar will be at the end of October, so they will not have had time to work on the implementation by then. The NWG meeting will be quite short.

The Youth Forum asked whether INGYOs should be invited to the implementation phase evaluation meeting, since they also previously filled out the same evaluation form.

Researcher Dan Moxon replied that the 2 October deadline is important to hit in order to feed into the Council conclusions. As long as the majority of the NWG reports are received by 5 September, the timing will be maintained. Therefore, Dan Moxon suggested that moving back the 10 October deadline by a few days would be very helpful. Holding the webinar at the very end of October would give the researchers time to finalise the report properly.

The Youth Forum mentioned that only 5 reports had been received from the NWGs to date (2 September), and that it was therefore likely that there would be delays on that front. The Youth Forum undertook to send an additional reminder to NWGs.

The Youth Forum asked about the internal timeline of the Czech presidency regarding the Council conclusions. Would the incorporation of the consultations be discussed during the ESG meeting in October?

The Czech government replied that the Council conclusions would already be discussed during the next ESG meeting on 20 September (assuming that enough NWG reports have been received and the researchers have had some time to do an initial analysis). The Czech presidency also intends to include the summary of the final consultation in the Council Conclusions themselves.

The Youth Forum enquired whether there would be time provided to give feedback on the draft version of the Council Conclusions. The Czech presidency confirmed that they would share further details about the internal timeline during the meeting on 20 September, after having had time to discuss the feasibility with the researchers.

The Swedish presidency expressed their desire for a more principled discussion around what will go into the Council Resolution, as that will set a precedent for what should be contained in the Swedish Resolution as well. A two-pager seems to imply the need of an annex for details. For more detailed input from the youth participants/delegates, the use of an annex would be required. The ESG should agree on that; namely what an annex means, and if the resolution can be complete enough without one. The Swedish government kindly asked members of the ESG to think about this point in advance of the next meeting, to be able to discuss it further on 20 September.

The Czech government concurred and explained that they were currently planning to include further details in an annex to the Council Conclusions. Nevertheless, the decision is ultimately taken by the Member States during the Working Party, to be approved by all ministers. A unified trio and ESG position would be stronger to present during the youth working party.

The Czech government also shared that they had undertaken an analysis exercise of previous Conclusions and had two important points to share:

* There is a need to ensure that what is included in the Council Conclusions has the real ownership of young people. It should be ensured that young people can submit amendments. That was not the case for the EU Youth Dialogue conference. However, if these points are just the summary from the researchers report, the question begs whether that is real ownership of young people.
* It would be interesting to have the results of the EU Youth Conference included in the conclusions. This however depends on the topic. If the topic corresponds to the topic of the council conclusions, then it would be more logical to include it in the body of the text. However, the topic of the Council Consultations is the “intergenerational dimension”, this is narrower than the topic of the EU Youth Dialogue conference.

It was agreed to dedicate more time to this discussion during the next ESG meeting.

1. **The EU Youth Conference in the Czech Republic – Feedback from the ESG**

The Czech government indicated that they were preparing the feedback received by participants and would present that on 20 September.

The European Youth Forum shared that the overall impression of the conference was positive, that it was great to be back at a physical conference. Participants and ministerial representatives appeared to be very active and engaged. However, in some cases, it was not always clear what the role of the ministerial representatives and politicians was. They only had the chance to participate in one preparatory webinar. The INGYOs did not always feel fully included, as many of the topics focused on best practices from NWGs. This may be something that the ESG did not consider enough when planning the methodology from the whole cycle.

Overall, the organisation was very smooth, the only thing that was difficult to understand for the youth participants was the *best practices* aspect. Young people did not understand how the best practices reported would be used and seemed a bit surprised by the methodology. Participation in the preparatory meeting was quite low. The ESG felt the methodology was clear in the documents sent out but it did not seem to reach the participants clearly. The ESG might need to think about how we can communicate about it.

The DG EAC representative felt that the venue choice was excellent, and the physical space supported a good, interactive, participatory atmosphere. It was good to have the venue a bit further out of the city centre to not lose participants. The accompanying social programme was also highly appreciated.

The Swedish government indicated that the conference was well-planned and enjoyable. It was a shame that the feedback on the mentimeter at the end of the conference reflected those few people who had a negative experience, as it was not really representative. The venue and facilities were felt to be excellent. Those who had been to previous conferences explained that it is a difficult format, since participants always have different levels of knowledge about the Conference and the EU Youth Dialogue. At each conference, we can expect that 20-30% of participants will be new. It is a constant task to improve how the policy dialogue with policy makers is shaped. Some participants expect a kind of direct democracy event where they could share their personal views directly with policy makers. Yet in fact, this conference is one part in a large annual process, a cycle that habitually collects information in a structured way. These false expectations may explain some of the negative comments received.

The Swedish government also raised that not all participants felt comfortable with social aspects of the conference, particularly the alcohol policy. Different cultural backgrounds need to be factored in when planning the social programme.

It was noted that these experiences should also be handed over to the next trio of Spain, Hungary and Belgium.

The Czech government added three points:

* Recommendation to Swedish colleagues: avoid holding the conference at the very beginning of the presidency. It would be better to put it in the second half of the year, when the national consultations have been closed. The CZ presidency had to fix the dates far in advance and resulted in having to use work with best practices, rather than the NWG outcomes.
* The policy debate with policymakers: can be confusing for participants and for the policy makers and ministerial representatives. What do we want from them? Do we want someone who already has some experience with consulting young people? There should be a briefing for the selected policymakers to let them know what the organisers, and the young people, expect from them.
* Do not design the programme so that the participants are always in the same small groups. They should have more opportunities to mix and more interactions between working groups.

Facilitator Clara Drammeh shared some of the feedback from the facilitators of the conference:

* The role of policymakers was not always clear
* A bigger diversity is needed in where policymakers come from, e.g. not just from one country
* Different backgrounds of policy makers need to be factored in (local vs national, more or less familiar with EU Youth Dialogue process)
* An in-person preparation for the facilitators was needed; it could be self-organised the day before the conference
* One contact point in the organisers team for the facilitators would be helpful rather than multiple (for logistics etc)
* The venue was great but more quiet/closed working spaces were needed
* Expectation management for participants: some did not realise they needed to prepare. Another preparatory webinar for participants could help to solve this. Or an Infopack with pre-tasks to get them familiar with the agenda. More information was needed on the website to read into and understand the topics
* Youth delegates to be invited to the planning meetings
* Would have liked more time for workshops and discussions. The timeline was so packed, it was a bit overwhelming for some participants.

The French government shared that they found the event to be very well organised. The choice of materials used to exemplify the best practices could have been better. On the basis of the examples provided, it was not always easy to kick-off discussions. To some participants it was not clear how the 3 conferences of the cycle are linked. It ought to be better situated within the EU Youth Dialogue. It was also not always clear what the difference between the policymakers and ministerial representatives was, neither for participants nor for the representatives themselves. The Czech presidency explained that they had also struggled with this aspect of the Youth Conference.

The Swedish government felt that the opening ceremony could have been more dynamic, avoiding too many formal interventions and instead beginning with a more participatory tone.

Researcher Dan Moxon pointed out that the tensions that were present at the conference reflect the tensions in the whole EU Youth Dialogue. We imply that the only policymakers in the room are the ones who contribute to policy. But actually many people in the room contribute to policy. There is a whole dialogue going on between the young people and the presidency staff, which would be further exploited.

He additionally commented that in the theme of this cycle, transport and infrastructure came up a lot. Those are topics that go beyond youth policy, yet a lot of the conclusions related to youth policy anyway (awareness raising etc). Is there scope to go further than that? Some participants wanted to discuss green energy, sustainable infrastructure, and so on. Yet the presidency in the EU Youth Dialogue cannot really take those topics forward. This is a gap that needs to be addressed.

In response to this, the Youth Forum wondered if ministerial representatives could come from beyond the youth field, e.g. from other ministries. The Youth Forum also highlighted that out of the 13 previous Youth Conferences, this was the first one where a European Commissioner was not present. As the biggest youth participation process in the EU, this was very disappointing. The EU Youth Coordinator was also not present. This is a shame for the image it gives and when it comes to following up on the outcomes.

The Czech government and the European Commission acknowledged that this was regrettable, but it was not possible due to agenda clashes. DG EAC felt that the European Commission was nevertheless well represented, with the Deputy Director of EAC, and the manager for the EU Youth Dialogue both being present. Holiday season plus the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic complicated matters, but the Conference was recognised as being a highlight of the EU Youth Dialogue.

The Swedish government acknowledged the advice shared in the upcoming preparation of their own conference. In particular, they noted: expectation management, how to handle topics outside of the typical youth sphere, how to bring in real ongoing case studies, and how to make the discussion with policymakers more rewarding. They also plan to discuss ideas with the ESG for a participants’ starter pack.

1. **Webinar (content, date)**

The French NYC enquired about the target audience of the webinar (NYCs only or public?), and when the consultation report would be publicly available.

The Czech presidency shared that the webinar is planned for late October, and aims to present the results of the consultations. The NYCs agreed that Dan Moxon will present the report. Anyone from the ESG can join to present if they wish.

The ESG discussed: the content and date; the target audience (delegates only/delegates and NWG/general public); and whether to include the webinar on the EYY website.

The Czech government presented the intended structure:

* A short intro
* Presentation of final report
* Information about the next steps, including who will follow up on the outcomes
* Q&A with reactions from participants

They would prefer to make the webinar open to the general public.

The Youth Forum agreed that the webinar should be as open as possible, so that the outcomes reach as far as possible, and to be accessible to those who participated in the consultation. At the beginning, it would be good to have an explanation of what the EU Youth Dialogue is, including what has been done in this cycle and what will come next. Regarding the date, the Youth Forum suggests avoiding 28 and 29 October as that will be the Level Up Democracy Festival organised by YFJ and the European Commission,

The Youth Forum enquired as to whether the event will be the official kick-off of the implementation phase? The Czech NYC indicated that that still needed to be discussed with NWGs, but that it was intended to be the official kick-off of the implementation.

French NYC agreed to having an open webinar, and suggested recording it, so that it could be used as a future resource. They would like to have an interactive section with a Q&A, and a good moderator, which would summarise the trends of the results. The French NYC also asked if the ESG could receive a summary of the input before the webinar, so that they can prepare. The Czech NYC confirmed that the summary would be shared with the ESG in advance.

Dan Moxon liked the idea of a public webinar, and encouraged the use of an interactive format, e.g. a livestream instead of webinar/interview style with young people. It should be open and engaging, without a PPT presentation.

All ESG members present agreed on making the webinar open to the general public. As Dan Moxon will present, the Czech presidency will coordinate with him for possible dates (probably after 20 October), and the date of the webinar will be finalised by the meeting on 20 September.

1. **Discussion about dissemination, transfer from the consultation phase to the implementation phase**

The Czech presidency explained that they were following the explanatory note for the implementation phase, and had invited the NWGs to organise their own implementation activities. Following the webinar in October, the end of October would signal the official opening of the implementation phase, through to the end of January. February would be the deadline for the submission of national implementation phase reports. March would then be the Swedish Youth Conference.

Czech recommendations shared for the implementation phase included: NWGs should disseminate the results as widely as possible; they should talk to policymakers at several different levels; they should also apply best practices learned from others, applied to new contexts. This can be done at an individual and local level.

The implementation phase is also about spreading awareness of a topic. The NWGs should therefore support young people to organise events, and support politicians to take interest in these results. This will be done via meeting with NWGs to discuss with them what implementation should look like. The Czech presidency has a proposal for dissemination and will have some examples of how young people can take youth actions on the results. They will use success factors and best practices as examples, encouraging young people to use these mechanisms in their own practices, to increase the input in their youth interactions.

The Czech government opened the following points for discussion with the ESG:

* What is the plan of the Swedish presidency for the EU Youth Conference?
* What more detailed information do we need to deliver to NWGs?
* Do they need to focus on something specific during the implementation phase?

The Youth Forum reminded the ESG that they would disseminate all of the reports. The Youth Forum also undertook to encourage INGYOs and NWGs to distribute the report as widely as possible too. On the other hand, the Youth Forum was slightly reluctant to connect the implementation phase to the best practices. It may cause some misunderstanding in the NWGs. Best practices can be an inspiration, but should not take over the consultation outcomes. The NWG events should be kept as far apart as possible, so as not to confuse participants. The NWG briefing will take place in the last week of September.

The Swedish government indicated that work was still ongoing for the preparation of the Swedish Youth Conference, between the Ministry, Perm Rep in Brussels, the NYC and Swedish National Agency. The ESG should also decide how the implementation phase should be reflected in the conference. SE would like input from the researchers, facilitators and YFJ on that front.

The Swedish NYC suggested reapproaching the question of local politicians’ involvement after the Swedish elections (taking place on 11 September).

On the actual reports to be disseminated, the Youth Forum warned that the best practice report, plus the conference report, plus the consultation report would be hundreds of pages of text and may not be very youth friendly. Ideally participants would refer to just one slim document (based on the consultation report). An alternative could be to share a summary of the other reports that could be used by the NWG, as a basis for implementation. The Czech NYC confirmed that they will put all information into a single report.

The Youth Forum also recalled that the implementation phase is supposed to kick-off and start activities, not necessarily to finish them. INGYOs should also be encouraged to reflect on how they can use the Youth Conference report.

The French NYC queried if the best practices refer to good implementation methods, or the actual topic itself. There needs also to be a political proposition for a resolution at EU level. This needs to be kept in mind for the implementation phase, particularly as this phase is still new in the EU Youth Dialogue structure and therefore for NYCs too.

The Czech NYC thanked everyone for their input. They recognised that this phase is still new to everyone and that people need some more familiarity. It would be important to discuss further what everyone expects from it and what exactly it should look like. The Czech government suggested sharing a written outline of their implementation and dissemination plan, to be discussed ahead of the meeting on 20 September.

The Youth Forum reminded the ESG that if an information session is to be held at the end of September, the presidency should finalise the dates at least two weeks before. The Youth Forum recommended using an online poll to select the date.

1. **Update from the EC on the website and information on the 9th cycle**

The European Commission explained that the website planning phase began a long time ago, in cooperation with the European Youth Forum. The aim was to create a EU Youth Dialogue library, covering the last 11 years, in a prominent place in the Youth portal.

It had taken the European Commission a while to gather together all of the relevant documents (Council conclusions, programmes etc.), but this has now been completed, with the help of the Youth Forum and several presidencies. IT constraints also contributed to the delay, for which the European Commission apologised. There will be a link to the library in the news section of the EU Youth Dialogue website.

The structure and search categories have also been drafted:

Youth policy work, youth dialogue →

1. Outputs from youth conferences, reports
2. European Steering Group docs: toolboxes, explanatory notes,
3. Council documents, resolutions, results

The European Commission undertook to send the ESG the final structure to approve. On timing, the EC will take up the work of the file uploading and hopes to present the maquette by the end of October/early November, with the final website being ready by the end of the European Year of Youth. This will also be a legacy of the EYY, to render the EU Youth Dialogue more visible and recognised.

The French government stressed the importance of updating the portal. During the Seminar on Youth Participation held on 9-10 June under the French presidency, the lack of information about the EU-Youth Dialogue was raised as a point of weakness, limiting its expansion to more young people. Therefore, they would be happy to have more reports there. A minor point was also raised, the exact wording of the current motto is “Engaging together for a sustainable and green Europe.”

**7. AOB**

The Czech government asked for confirmation via email of who would join the next ESG meeting physically in Prague.

The French NYC raised the question - given the current topic of the dialogue - whether it was sustainable to travel to Prague for a 3-hour meeting. The French NYC will therefore join online on 20 September, although they would be happy to come in person if it was a whole day, or attached to another meeting. The Czech government replied that both of the physical ESG meetings planned during their presidency (one in Prague and one in Brussels) are indeed attached to other events. The Youth Forum noted that the ESG Working Document does stipulate that ESG meetings should be in-person wherever possible.

The Youth Forum requested to include an update on the implementation of EACEA grants to the agenda of the next meeting. It is important for the ESG to know if all the instalments are in place, if any NWGs have not been responsive, and if there have been any delays from NYC or national governments. It is important for the ESG to follow the details of the grants.

The European Commission mentioned that all information relating to the grants can be found on the Basecamp channel, and that any problems are being handled bilaterally between the YFJ and EC. Nevertheless, the EC promised to react as quickly as possible.

The Czech government invited other suggestions for agenda points. The Swedish government would like to add a recurring point about the Council resolution for the 9th cycle, since Sweden considers the conclusions to be the product of the entire cycle, not just the Swedish presidency. They would therefore appreciate feedback from the ESG on content and structure.

**8. End of the meeting**

Both the Czech government representative and Czech NYC thank participants for joining the meeting and look forward to welcoming everyone in Prague.

**ANNEX: List of Participants**

| **Czech Presidency Team** |  |
| --- | --- |
| Martina Kosatova (Chair) | Government |
| Sarka Dolezalova  | Government |
| Zdenka Maskova | Government |
| Zuzana Widova (Chair) | National Youth Council |
| Michaela Dolezalova | National Youth Council |
| **Swedish Presidency Team** |  |
| Julia Bergstroem | Government |
| Mattias Ludvigsson | Government |
| Tobias Adolfsson | Government |
| Anders Lindholm | Government |
| Johan Gebo  | National Youth Council |
| **French Presidency Team** |  |
| Christophe Devette | Government |
| Pierre Laporte | Government |
| Alexandra Thieyre | National Youth Council |
| **European Commission (EC)** |  |
| Jasna Maric Krajacic | DG EAC |
| **European Youth Forum (YFJ)** |  |
| Kristof Papp | European Youth Forum |
| Lauren Mason | European Youth Forum |
| **Youth researcher and facilitator** |  |
| Clara Drammeh | Youth facilitator |
| Dan Moxon | Youth researcher |