**Notes**

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

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

**14 October 2022, 10:00-12:00**

**Online via Teams**

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

The minutes from the last meeting were adopted, the final comments received were to be integrated in parallel.

The agenda was adopted without changes.

**II. Final consultation report**

The researcher Dan Moxon presented the main findings from the consultation report. A total of 27 reports have been received; only the Romanian and Slovenian NWGs did not submit a report. The recording from the INGYO webinar was included, but it did not fully address the consultation themes.

The procedure for preparing the report was based on an analysis of: the Youth Conference outcomes, the mid-term reports, 27 national reports and the INGYO report.

There were a total of 22,710 participants:

* 36% of those were engaged in meaningful way (events, discussions, dialogues)
* 64% of those participated in surveys, social media polls etc.

The graph below shows the age distribution of participants.



The representation of marginalised groups targeted had increased:

· those who had a disability;

· those who belong to a religious or ethnic minority;

· those not in education, employment or training (NEETS).

Around two-thirds of participants are women – this is an aspect that could be discussed further.

In terms of the themes, some of those chosen by the cycle or the presidency were not topics that young people immediately wanted to talk about, e.g. youth washing, the link between climate change and inequality, youth test, vote at 16. It was felt that these may have been too technical.

**Information and education:**

There was a mixed picture about young people’s access to information about climate change and sustainability. Many said they would benefit from more info. There should be an emphasis on youth information rather than education (youth friendly, accessible, relevant to the lives of young people, trustworthy, comprehensive, developed in a participatory manner). Many said they did not know about the link between climate and inequality. It was felt to be important to share information that motivates and empowers young people to take action; it is not enough just to tell people about the situation, we also need to offer solutions in terms of sustainable lifestyle choices and political action. Apocalyptic messaging should be avoided; risks for mental health, as it makes people feel hopeless. In terms of education systems, formal education systems were seen as the main vehicle. Citizenship should be in the curriculum; textbooks should be updated, because teachers were felt to be a trustworthy source. The role of NFE and youth clubs was also evoked. However, there were no strong calls for digital tools or apps. Most people access youth info via social media.

**Action and empowerment**:

There was a strong message that young people do not feel that there are mechanisms that hold politicians to account. Current actors are not creating change around environmental policy. Some people felt dismissive of existing political structures, a sense of resignation. Others were not aware of specific mechanisms. There is not one type of mechanism that is seen as more effective than others. Young people involved in youth councils/formal structured mechanisms were less dismissive, they felt there was more potential for impact. But those not involved in organised youth were not aware of those participation structures. There is a need to make sure that policymakers do something as a result. There is a need for some informal and inclusive spaces for discussion on climate change. e.g. Café with politicians or participation cafés in Estonia. More local youth councils, with a good legislative backing could be a good solution.

**Governance:**

Youthwashing was felt to be a problem: how can policymakers be held to account? Participants could not really think of ways that politicians could be required to do things. However some pointed to voting as the main mechanism for holding politicians to account. Increasing transparency and visibility could help, including telling young people what they can expect to be achieved. Policymakers responses could be publicly recorded and promoted, with deadlines for policymakers to report on changes or lack thereof and why. A problem is that we’re talking only to youth departments and ministries, not to those people responsible for the policies in question.

**Mobility and solidarity:**

The main problem cited was financial barriers – young people cannot pay for the cost of mobility opportunities. There is a basic assumption that there is a cost; some people felt they may be required to leave their job in order to undertake mobility. Information was felt to be too complex and not available in native languages. Projects that were designed to be inclusive do not tend to focus on environmental needs. Inclusive projects always seem to be about disability, not broader topics.

There should be a lower threshold for access, by removing costs and simplifying administrative processes. There should be more shorter-term opportunities and options closer to home, well-connected to people’s communities, to allow for small steps e.g. one-week exchanges. People felt that opportunities were not designed for them or their communities. Participants appreciated information coming from trusted institutions; a key factor was hearing about opportunities from people you already know and trust.

**Access to infrastructure:**

The main topics addressed were transport options, housing, access to sustainable energy, and consumption. Transport was by far the most important. Participants wanted it to be cheaper, more reliable, and run more often. Bicycle use and safety was also key. People were being casted out of sustainable choices, e.g. in housing. They cannot afford a sustainable house, they just need to rent anywhere. The same applies for food (e.g. organic would be nice but too expensive). Priced out of sustainable infrastructure.

There were calls for more access to green, open, public spaces. On the rural/urban divide: there was felt to be less infrastructure in rural areas. The idea of *choosing* infrastructure there is almost redundant. Greening the youth sector was not a high priority for many.

**Intergenerational dialogue**:

Intergenerational dialogue was not mentioned very much. Most participants hadn’t had any experience of it. There was however a belief that older people do not care about their opinions; that the political system does not cater to young people. Older people were not felt to care as much about environmental issues, as it is not a pressing concern for them.

The Swedish presidency asked whether the combination of two youth goals was a success? They also noted that young people were far from unified in their views, less than we might usually think. Several young people were outside of the mainstream, e.g. the Swedish youth also voted less for the Green Party in the September 2022 elections in Sweden. The researcher replied that it seemed to be a question of priorities; it was felt that choosing to be green was a luxury. Participants were not against it. On the combination of two themes, it has proven to be useful for hearing the diversity of opinions on climate. But there were no discussions of the youth goals themselves (e.g. they didn’t ask, how can we achieve youth goal number 3?). This shows the importance of cross-sectoral work.

The French NYC indicated that there seemed to be some points missing from the *action and empowerment* and *governance* sections, that had come up strongly during the French consultations, e.g. quotas for young people in some institutions, the need for a link between formal and non-formal spaces as the most marginalised people can be found in schools. They enquired as to how the researchers chose what to include. The researcher replied that quotas were only mentioned in three of the reports, and no other national report had referred to the link between NFE and formal education, so it could not be considered representative. They used *constructed grounded theory*, to categorise topics and include the repeated ones. They only leave out representative topics when they do not match the topic, e.g. they left out discussions about access to employment as it didn’t fit the topic.

The European Youth Forum thanked the researchers for their work, and were glad to see that the sustainability approach went beyond greening the youth sector, but into the whole societal implications.

The Youth Forum sees that participation is failing because as young people we do not see any change. During the EU Regions week, we also heard that there is a trust issue. YFJ also raised the question about INGYOs and their involvement in the process. YFJ is planning a call with them, to understand how they see their contribution to be better.

The French government thanked the researchers, Dan Moxon and Ondrej Barta, for the summary, especially the summary added to the Czech Council conclusions. It was very clear for EU council members. The French ministry wanted to thank the Czech presidency for taking into account the suggestions sent by the French NYC and French ministry during the Youth Working Party on 7 October. The Czech government confirmed that they took all proposals seriously and included all except one that was difficult to include. They also noted the point about the link between non-formal education and formal education, which came from the French NWG.

**III. Webinar on 20 October**

In terms of publicity, the webinar has been shared on the social media channels of the EU Youth Conference, with the European Youth Forum and with other relevant youth networks. The open session would also be recorded and shared on social media pages afterwards.

Regarding the structure, the Czech NYC suggested taking 5-10 minutes at the beginning to introduce the EU Youth Dialogue and which stage of the cycle we are currently in. They checked with researcher Dan Moxon how much time he would need at the beginning of the webinar to present the results.

The researcher felt that an interview style could be helpful, namely if the facilitator asked him questions that he could answer, instead of giving a presentation en bloc. The Youth Forum highlighted the need for a good facilitator. The Czech NYC ensured a facilitator would be found, and asked if anyone from the ESG would like to take up the role. The Czech NYC and the Youth Forum agreed to have a preparatory session to go over the questions and structure.

The French and Swedish NYCs apologised for their inability to attend the webinar due to conflicting obligations.

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

The Czech NYC introduced the concept for the second part of the webinar, the closed meeting of NWGs and INGYOs regarding the next phases of the EUYD cycle.

The structure of the webinar will be as follows:

Timeline; summary of what has already been done in the 9th cycle; outcomes expected; outcomes at political level; role of NWGs; report on the implementation phase (what should they report on at individual, community, organisational and political level?); concrete steps for implementation; dissemination options; Q&A on implementation.

The Youth Forum indicated that the INGYOs should also be invited, and that the Czech presidency could use their own visual identity for any visual materials. The Youth Forum also recalled that a slide with information for the INGYOs should also be added, as well as the date of the Youth Conference and the deadline for the submission of the implementation reports.

On the question of the deadline for submitting the implementation report in 2023, the Swedish NYC felt it would be good to decide that before the webinar. The decision ultimately rests with the researchers plus the Swedish presidency; the Youth Forum proposed trying to agree on a date during the present ESG meeting. The researchers indicated that they would need around 3 weeks before the Youth Conference to be able to draft the report. If time were tight, they could focus on a survey instead of a full report. Working backwards from the Youth Conference dates of 20-22 March, **the deadline was set by the ESG as 13 February 2023**.

The Czech government proposed to send the final presentation around to the ESG members for a final check before the webinar on 20 October.

**V.** **Exchange of views on the upcoming Council resolution on the 9th cycle under SE Presidency**

The Swedish government thanked all ESG members who sent contributions to the draft council resolution and confirmed that they were trying to integrate them into the text. In particular, there was a good idea from Dan Moxon, to relate to the themes discussed during the first two youth conferences. For the five sub-themes, the presidency would dedicate one paragraph for each subtheme. They would first use placeholders, with messages being fleshed out with input from Youth Conference. Some voting or decision-making procedure will be developed to decide what will be included under each sub-theme. Ideally this input will be included in the resolution itself, rather than in the annexes.

The Swedish government had looked at previously adopted Council documents, notably from the 8th and 7th cycles, to see if a response had already been adopted by the Council on these messages. If there are items that the consultation process pointed to but had not been addressed correctly, the Swedish presidency will try to push the message and invite the Member States or the Commission to do more in these fields. They hope to use the Resolution as a way of giving feedback on the EUYD, increasing transparency, and improving links between the dialogue process and Council work.

Besides formal input, they will also look at previous consultation reports from the 9th and 8th cycles, the report from the seminar on youth participation held in Strasbourg in June under the French presidency. The Resolution should also ask what the real objectives of the dialogue process are, as this has become rather blurred in recent years. However, the objectives are clear as laid out in the Youth Strategy, so they ought to be reiterated.

Lastly, the Resolution will also look ahead to the 10th cycle, and pave the way for messages that could be taken up by the 10th cycle. There would be a need to have a dialogue with the next trio presidencies. ESG members were invited to share any further input.

On the timeline: the ESG would have the possibility to comment on the document until 16 November; with the draft text expected to be sent to ESG members by 7 November.. There should also be space to discuss during an ESG meeting at the end of November.

The French NYC asked to clarify the timing as they would need time to gather substantial input. Sweden confirmed that a substantial draft will already be ready by 7 November. So if any substantial input is to be included, it would need to reach the Swedish government before 7 November. Feedback after that will be more linguistic or final touches, than substantial.

The French NYC also asked if there was a need for an additional ESG meeting at the end of November, since there is already a plan to meet on 7 December in Brussels. The Czech government replied that the physical meeting of 7 December is intended as a handover meeting to the Swedish presidency, but that the Swedish government wished to have an extra working meeting in November.

The Youth Forum enquired whether the Resolution would include references to the evaluation of the youth strategy. As the call for evidence regarding the Youth Strategy has already been opened, it might be interesting for the Swedish Resolution to refer to the Youth Strategy, in those areas where the EU Youth Dialogue is mentioned. The Swedish government replied that they would try to refer to the evaluation of the Youth Strategy, and had already met with the Belgian government, who confirmed that they will focus on it during the next trio, alongside a research study by the CoE-EU Youth Partnership. They are waiting to hear from the Council Secretariat to know which documents they can refer to in a Council Resolution (i.e. should they refer just to the content or to the documents themselves?).

The Czech government shared their experience with the ALMA-Programme and Council texts, highlighting that it is very difficult to refer to something that has not yet been fully approved during a Council meeting. The official consultations on the Youth Strategy Evaluation with ministries will only start in Spring 2023, therefore it would be unrealistic to expect to have it included.

The Youth Forum notes that the call for evidence has already happened, so they could be mentioned as input to be considered in the Youth Strategy evaluation.

**VI. Internal reflection on the communication of the 9th cycle of the EU Youth Dialogue at the national level**

The French government thanked the ESG members for sharing contributions in writing on communication aspects of the EUYD. The Youth Forum also noted that a mapping of communications was carried out by the European Commission and the YFJ on the 8th cycle, including the Eurodesk communications network.

The Swedish government indicated that they, alongside the NYC and the National Agency, had hosted information seminars, meetings, events. The NYC had also arranged podcasts. The idea would be to work with the future trio of the 10th cycle in the framework of the 10th anniversary of the EUYD. This could be useful for reflections at national level, on how to better communicate the EUYD.

The Czech government indicated that they had been very busy preparing for the presidency, and therefore did not have the opportunity to prepare a fully-fledged communication strategy for the national consultations.

The French government hoped that they could create a legacy reflection on communications, and that it would be useful for future presidencies.

The Youth Forum added that the 10th cycle trio are planning to take stock of two aspects:

1. Inclusion in youth dialogue process

2. Policy impact of youth dialogue process

Therefore, they are not really handling communication topics in the 10th cycle, but this could be something to consider for the Swedish presidency.

**This point could be added to the next meeting to receive further input.**

**Grant issues for the upcoming grant period**

The European Youth Forum asked for an update on three aspects from the European Commission representative:

- Funding for INGYOs

- Extra funding for Presidency National Youth Councils

- Difficulties with beneficiaries

The European Commission replied that the current grant agreement is 2022-2024, covering the 9th and 10th cycle. This is now fixed for this period, so there is no possibility to get additional funds. The Commission was open to discussing the continuing problem of INGYOs and more funds of the youth councils of trio presidencies. They have begun looking into it with EACEA, but it will not be possible before the beginning of 2025.

The Youth Forum has stressed before, but stressed again that the INGYOs are part of the EU Youth Dialogue, they are part of the Youth Conference. They are also responsible for monitoring and following up on consultations at EU level. So far they do all this without grants, but we need to make the contributions of these organisations sustainable. The Youth Forum would like to better understand what the current obstacles are.

The European Commission noted that the issue had been raised at a higher level, but could currently only report from the operational level. A solution had not been found yet, but they would follow up on it with the hierarchy. The European Commission is aware of the fact that the INGYOs do contribute to the dialogue process.

**The Czech government suggested including this point on the agenda of the physical meeting on 7 December in Brussels**, as it might be easier for colleagues from DG EAC or EACEA to join. The European Commission agreed.

The Youth Forum also wanted to talk about the funding for National Youth Councils. If we want the EU Youth Dialogue process to be 100% youth-led, then grants should go to the NYCs and be allocated for that purpose. We should not try to force the NYCs to decrease the funding from the national implementation to be able to support the presidency trio. Rather, they should receive extra funds to be able to be fully active in the NWG and communication about their role should be strengthened. They would also encourage NYCs to be beneficiaries of the NWG grants, as they had seen some cases where the NWG was being led by the ministry, where in reality, NYCs were not on board and youth were being sidelined. Poland, Romania and Croatia had been problematic cases in this respect.

The European Commission confirmed that they were aware of the difficulties in those three countries, and were discussing the matter with the National Agencies. They were trying to rectify the problem, asking for explanations and using their networks in the countries. The Youth Strategy also mentions that the EU Youth Dialogue should be a youth-led process. They also notice that the quality of the output is less in those countries where NYCs are not fully involved in the running of the NWGs.

The Swedish government noted that the question had already been raised last autumn. They know that it is difficult for governments to commit to budgetary propositions like this since budgets are tight and budget processes are complex and time consuming. Yet they are aware it is very important to the functioning of the programme. It would be better if grants for NYCs was regulated through the Erasmus + programme where the NWGs get their grants, to have that as part of the grants for the presidency trios. This ought to be discussed with the Erasmus + committee.

The Czech government also indicated that the ministries already do receive grants to prepare the EUYD events, so it would be great if the same could apply to NYCs.

**VII. AOB**

• **DG Youth Meeting in Prague – participation of young people**

The Czech government wished to stress that they had changed the format of the DG Meeting in Prague, in that it included the active participation of young people. This was quite a challenge and they were unsure if it would be acceptable for all Member States, as previous such attempts had been rejected by Member States. In this case, they made sure to inform the Member States in May before the presidency, via the youth attachés, so that they would be prepared for the change. The Czech government thanked the European Commission for being open to supporting the idea and helping to explain the new format. They had an open call for 10 Czech young people to join the DG meeting. For all of them it was a very prestigious opportunity to talk in front of ministerial directors, so this panel was important. However, to some extent the participation of these young people was rather weak. They did not receive exact instructions about what they should discuss/ask. Nevertheless, the organisers helped the young people to be harvesters/reporters and to present in the plenary. There was also interactive voting for participants on the spot, on the topic of cooperation between schools and the youth work sector.

In total, there were 60 ministerial directors and 60 young people from the trio presidency (20 from each). They voted on the same questions two weeks before, and interestingly, the results of the youth cohort and the policymakers’ cohort were almost the same. The Czech presidency would be happy to share experience further if needed.

• **Swedish Youth Conference**

The Swedish Youth Conference will take place from the 20-22 March. The DG meeting will take place just after; ideally all participants of the DG meeting will attend the last day of conference to hear the conclusions.

The Swedish government held a meeting in the previous week with the Swedish coordinator of the Conference, and in the following week, they would meet the National Agency and the NYC organisation team. From now on, the planning will intensify. The Swedish presidency will share more substantial information on programme and themes during the next ESG meeting.

The European Youth Forum reminded the Swedish presidency to consider how many of the INGYOs they would like to invite to the Youth Conference, recalling that the French and Czech presidencies invited all 20 of those involved in the 9th cycle. Regarding the location, Växjö, the Youth Forum encouraged the presidency to consider how to facilitate participants’ arrival, as its remote location might make it difficult for participants to reach, e.g. they could consider organising shuttles for nearby international airports. The Swedish government confirmed they were looking into shuttle buses from Copenhagen.

The French NYC added that a group trying to promote the EU Youth Dialogue in France have been following the cities of the Youth Conference to measure the levels of inclusion. They asked if it would be possible for this group to join the Conference (some of the plenaries or the social activities). For the last Youth Conferences, this group was facilitated by the European Commission. The Commission replied that they would look into how to facilitate that. They noted that accessibility was something clearly stressed in the youth strategy, but that such a visit needed to be planned far in advance.

• **ESG Mailing list**

In order to maintain an up-to-date mailing list, the ESG agreed that each institution would be asked to update their contacts via email. The Czech government would send an updated list based on that.

• **Discussion on the events**

The format for the Youth breakfast 8:30-9:30 am ahead of the EYCS Council meeting. 3 delegates would be invited per country, in addition to the European Commission, European Parliament and the European Youth Forum. The Czech presidency was waiting to hear about the room size to know exactly how many participants from the European Commission and European Youth Forum would be invited. The request for interpretation was also pending. The invitation would be sent out by the ministry in the following week, with each ministry being asked to appoint three delegates.

The European Youth Forum noted that YFJ usually attended the breakfast with three delegates as well (to include one spot for an INGYO who otherwise wouldn’t be invited). The Czech government took note and indicated they would let YFJ know once they had more information about the room capacity.

The French government enquired about the topic of the breakfast, whether it would also focus on intergenerational dimensions. The Czech government replied that they were still discussing internally and would confirm the topic via the invitation alongside a background paper with questions. The topic of the policy debate of the ministers in the EYCS Council is the European Year of Youth.

On 6 December, the “Claim the Future conference” would be organised by the Czech presidency, the European Commission and the European Parliament as a closing event for the European Year of Youth. It will be a physical event in the European Parliament with around 700 guests. Save the dates had already been sent out. The deadline for the nomination of delegates by ministries is 19 October. The guest list would likely be two guests from the ministry, two from the National Youth Council plus 3 youth delegates. The Commission launched a call via Erasmus+ for nominations for extra 2 young people, and sent extra invitations for relevant stakeholders.

Lastly, there would also be two events taking place on 5 December at the Czech Perm Rep: Youth talks with the European Commission starting at 5pm, and a seminar with the European Youth Forum starting at 6:30pm.

**VIII. End of Meeting**

The meeting was closed.

**Annex: List of Participants**

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| **Czech Presidency Team** |  |
| Martina Kotasová (Chair) | Government |
| Sarka Dolezalova  | Government |
| Zdenka Maskova | Government |
| Viktoria Maria Svachova | Government |
| Michaela Dolezalova (Chair) | National Youth Council |
| Zuzana Wildova | National Youth Council |
| **Swedish Presidency Team** |  |
| Julia Bergstroem | Government |
| Mattias Ludvigsson | Government |
| Emilia Segerlind | Government |
| Tobias Adolfsson | Government |
| Anders Lindholm | Government |
| Johan Gebo  | National Youth Council |
| **French Presidency Team** |  |
| Christophe Devette | Government |
| Pierre Laporte | Government |
| Désirée Ristorto | National Youth Council |
| **European Commission (EC)** |  |
| Jasna Maric Krajacic | DG EAC |
| **European Youth Forum (YFJ)** |  |
| Christiana Xenofontos | European Youth Forum |
| Kristof Papp | European Youth Forum |
| Lauren Mason | European Youth Forum |
| **Youth researcher and facilitator** |  |
| Clara Drammeh | Youth facilitator |
| Dan Moxon | Youth researcher |