

The stakeholders of the Youth EcoSystem,
gathered in Bucharest, March 1-3, 2023

Topic: **2028-2035 Multiannual Financial Framework and the Youth EcoSystem**

Resolution on the fYOUture of Youth EcoSystem

The stakeholders of the Youth EcoSystem,

Fully aware we are living now at a difficult time in history - trying to understand what were the real effects of the pandemic while looking at the worrying situation of the wars around the world and now again in Europe and all the humanitarian crisis and trying to understand the impact of the climate change, as the multidimensional crisis is dramatically affecting young people and youth transitions and is endangering young people's future,

Deeply concerned by the fate of Ukrainian people and all other people affected by war around the world, in solidarity with them and acknowledging that the profoundly human condition of dreaming and planning for the future is made extremely difficult by the war, its horrors and unpredictable evolution,

Deeply conscious that the COVID-19 pandemic and of the measures taken to limit its spreading will have long term consequences on the lives of all people, including the youth, because they changed the way we interact and communicate with each other, the way we study and work, the way we live,

Deeply regretting the state of the climate and the environment and the lack of sufficient present action regarding this situation, endangering the future generations,

Disturbed by the obvious vulnerability of the youth, as revealed by this multidimensional crisis,

Firmly expressing joint understanding that young people are the key for the present and future of the EU because we expect them to successfully live, study, work in the communities shaped by the decisions taken today and tomorrow and because they will also be called upon to implement the EU policies,

Aiming to involve young people now in decisions shaping the future of the EU, to systematically engage young people TODAY in shaping decisions that affect their FUTURE,

Emphasizing that young people in Europe and in the world are facing the digital transformation, migration, the changing labour market, the climate crisis, the threats to democracy and human rights, the war, while navigating the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic. They are planning and experiencing their life and transition to adulthood in an ever changing environment and safe and reliable support is needed,

Noting that the EU institutions acknowledge the demographic challenges of the EU, including the fact that in some countries high rates of youth emigration have aggravated the demographic imbalance, and the fact that EU institutions acknowledge in their official documents the value of youth structures, youth workers, youth work and youth activities to meet and adequately address emerging issues,

Reaffirming that a free and powerful civil society and a thriving civic space is essential for young people to realize their political rights and their full potential,

Emphasizing that youth represents a sector where young people and their needs, concerns and aspirations are supported by a variety of stakeholders - institutions, organizations and civil society - a community of practice, activities, services, programmes, dedicated research and by the youth policy (including strategic planning and regulations). The aim of the youth policy and the intention of youth stakeholders is to provide young people with opportunities and experiences that support their successful integration into society and enable them to be active and responsible members of their societies, as well as agents of change ([Council of Europe CM/Rec\(2015\)3](#)),

In this context, placing the young people in the centre of the Youth EcoSystem. The concept of the Youth Ecosystem is inspired by the ecological ecosystem, which is a complete set of organisms, their environment, and their interactions. Like an environmental ecosystem, the youth ecosystem requires a diverse and healthy set of components to function. **For us this includes:**

- **Youth VISION** (legislation, policies, strategies, work plans, programs, coordination),
- **HUMAN RESOURCES** for youth (youth workers, volunteers and paid personnel, managers, facilitators, experts, policy makers),
- **Youth WORK, youth INFORMATION, COUNSELING and OTHER SERVICES AND ACTIVITIES** (including projects and trainings to increase the participation of the young people in community life and to develop youth organizations capacity building),
- **Youth STRUCTURES** (youth NGOs, authorities and public institutions, resource centres, youth councils, consultative and deliberative bodies, clubs, informal groups, National Youth Councils, youth movements),
- **Youth INFRASTRUCTURE** (youth centres, friendly spaces to engage young people in a comfortable manner (urban or rural / physical, mobile or virtual)
- **Youth FUNDING** (public, private, crowdfunding / based on competition, direct funding or participatory budget)

It takes an Ecosystem to harness the present and future of the youth sector — an aspirational term that suggests increased connection across the multiple elements that compose the youth sector.

Thus, this resolution is adopted to ensure all the needed support for the Youth EcoSystem in its entirety. And for that, we believe that **FUNDING** is that element of the Youth EcoSystem which gives the necessary fuel for the development of the other five.

Acknowledging the need to preserve and develop the EU by the young people, the EU itself should take a more active role in the youth field, even though the national and local governments should also be accountable for their contribution to the youth field. Therefore, the future and cohesion of Europe should be more decided by the whole European community.

Whereas:

The Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) **provides that Union action is to be aimed at, *inter alia*, encouraging the participation of young people in democratic life in Europe,**

The Rome Declaration of 25 March 2017, where the leaders of the 27 Member States and of the European Council, the European Parliament and the Commission **pledged to work towards 'a Union where young people receive the best education and training and can study and find jobs across the continent',**

The principles of the 2019–2027 European Union Youth Strategy, based on the Council Resolution of 26 November 2018, should be continued in the future: equality and non-discrimination, inclusion, participation, multi-level dimension: global, European, national, regional and local, the dual approach between mainstreaming initiatives across policy areas and specific initiatives in the youth sector,

The European Youth Goals, which are an integral part of the 2019–2027 European Union Youth Strategy and which have been developed by young people for the benefit of young people under the EU Youth Dialogue process, are a testament to the eagerness of many young Europeans to participate in defining the direction in which the development of the Union should go. Emphasizing that EU youth goals should guide all policies and decisions at EU level, but also at national and local level, and trusting that these goals are long-term targets allowing all stakeholders to always strive to reaching their full potential,

Further reaffirming the provisions of the European Youth Work Agenda and the priorities of the Bonn Process, welcoming that the European Youth Work Agenda includes the aim of EU to ensure the presence of sustainable structures and the availability of appropriate resources for quality youth work and noting that these priorities should also guide the development of the youth work in the future and on long-term,

The Conclusions of the Council and of the representatives of the governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on fostering democratic awareness and democratic engagement among young people in Europe **take note of the need for funding** for permanent structures of youth participation and youth spaces,

The Regulation (EU) No 2021/1060 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2021 laying down common provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund Plus, the Cohesion Fund, the Just Transition Fund and the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund and financial rules for those and for the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, the Internal Security Fund and the Instrument for Financial Support for Border Management and Visa Policy lays down, in particular, the thematic objectives, the principles and the rules concerning programming, monitoring and evaluation, management and control. It is therefore necessary to specify the mission and scope of the ESF, together with the related investment priorities addressing the thematic objectives, and to lay down specific provisions concerning the type of activities that may be financed by the ESF,

NextGenerationEU, established by Regulation (EU) 2021/241 of the European Parliament and of the Council, ensures the acceleration of the green and digital transition and provides the possibility to collectively emerge stronger from the COVID-19 pandemic. NextGenerationEU re-opens perspectives full of opportunities for young people, including quality jobs and adapting to social change. The Union aims for young people to be fully on board in the rollout of NextGenerationEU, enhancing their role in the green and digital transition,

The Council Recommendation of 30 October 2020 on a reinforced Youth Guarantee and the new Aim, Learn, Master, Achieve (ALMA) initiative proposed by the Commission to be implemented under the European Social Fund Plus established by Regulation (EU) 2021/1057 of the European Parliament and of the Council,

We fully acknowledge the efforts and achievements reached so far in terms of turning into reality in many of the aforementioned directions. However, it is a work in progress...

We are further expressing the need and the commitment for an increasingly systemic approach to youth sector development based on the following:

- recognition of the existence of the Youth EcoSystem and its complexity;
- recognition of the different components of the Youth EcoSystem, of their specificities in terms of level of development and of the need to invest in each component;
- support for each one by funding based on specific needs.

Aware of the following:

Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corp (ESC) are the main sources of funding for youth policies, youth work, youth volunteering and youth participation in all Erasmus+ and ESC programme countries. However, the Eastern Partnership is not well covered by existing youth funds and some youth needs and organizational priorities are not covered by these funds;

Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs is effective in supporting the mobility of young people with a viable business idea, but it is not implemented in synergy with other youth programmes;

The European Social Fund (2014-2020), the Youth Employment Initiative (2014-2020) and the European Social Fund (2021-2027) have been supporting youth employment, entrepreneurship, social inclusion and, in a minority of countries, youth work and participation;

The European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) has the potential to fund youth infrastructure, but this potential is rarely valorised;

There are no important projects targeting only young people and adapted to their needs funded by the European wide sectoral programmes, such as: Creative Europe, the Citizens, Equality, Right and Values programme (CERV), the Justice Programme, the EU Health programme, the Programme for Environment and Climate Action (LIFE);

The Asylum Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) funds projects dedicated to young migrants in countries most affected by immigration;

The Eastern Partnership has limited access to funding available for the youth sector in the EU Member States,

Emphasizing that, according to the discussions of the stakeholders of the Youth EcoSystem, gathered in Bucharest, **the following existing and emerging needs of the young people will require increased funding due to their present and anticipated importance for young people:**

The needs related to the adaptation and mitigation of climate change and the need to be engage with environmental issues;

The need of young people to better learn what are peace and reconciliation;

The need for jobs, employability (skills and competences, including hard and soft skills adapted to the dynamic of the labour market) and the need for social inclusion, highlighted in 2023 when the risk of a future economic and social crisis is perceived as imminent;

The need for a better recognised and supported quality youth work;

The need to participate, to be recognised and respected by adults and public institutions, including the need to be better heard and taken into account in policy planning and implementation;

The needs related to youth mental health and wellbeing;

The need to learn to work responsibly with AI and to navigate a digitalized world,

Further emphasizing, the following existing and emerging needs of the Youth EcoSystem, in order to address the previously mentioned needs of young people, are not enough covered by EU funds in the current budget (2021-2027):

The need for safe and welcoming spaces for young people and the need to build and renovate existing youth infrastructures;

The need for quality long-term employment of youth workers and the need for long-term budgets to cover their respective salaries, as well as the need for long-term learning programmes for youth workers (university programmes or similar);

The need of youth organizations for operational, long-term funding for services provided to young people in a continuous manner (not with gaps generated by the project-based funding);

The need to support young people entering the labour market, at their first job, to adapt to this transition (from school to work),

Emphasizing moreover, the following improvements are needed to ensure that youth structures (youth NGOs, authorities and public institutions in the youth sector) are able to access EU funds planned for youth and the Youth EcoSystem:

The need of youth structures for clear and more accessible information on EU funding opportunities;

The need of youth structures and funding authorities at EU and national levels for working to better ensure synergies between the large number of available funds;

The need of simplification and capacity support to ensure better access to EU, national and local funding and to provide a level playing field when big and small organizations are competing for the same funding;

The need of more flexibility in funding management in order to ensure that new /changing needs of the young target group can be covered;

The need that EU funding programmes be better adapted to ensure the inclusion of all young people in all programme stages, including planning, project selection and implementation, monitoring and reporting;

The need to better adapt to young people and the Youth EcoSystem needs the implementation of the generous funding dedicated to the reinforced Youth Guarantee,

Youth VISION

We aim to build a cohesive and sustainable youth ecosystem that ensures quality life for ALL young people.

Clause 1. Request to EU institutions to use **co-creation and co-management mechanisms to plan the EU funds** post 2027 and to implement all EU funds that can support youth. In order to meaningfully engage young people in EU funds governance:

- a. EU Institutions and Member States and European youth funding shall reflect diversity of young people and their actualised/updated needs and involve young people from national minorities in the decision making process at local, national and European level,
- b. Available funds should include sufficient allocations for youth civil society to organise **participatory frameworks** that are **inclusive of all young people**, in their diversity,
- c. Authorities planning and managing budgets should ensure the **transparency and the clarity of the participatory processes** for young people to enable all young people and stakeholders in the Youth EcoSystem to see, understand and take part in decision making.
- d. Authorities planning and managing budgets should **trust and involve young people, youth organizations and youth workers** in the participatory processes related to decisions concerning youth policies and youth funds.
- e. Representatives of the beneficiaries, including youth organisations and learners, should be **included in the governance of the EU funds** that can support youth, at all levels, such as in the Programming Committees, the Monitoring Committees etc.
- f. EU should invest more in developing the rural youth sector and fund opportunities in rural areas, for young people, young informal groups and youth organizations from/active in rural areas. A special funding program for the rural youth sector (easy to access also by informal groups of young people) is necessary to ensure a more balanced distribution of funding and resources between rural and urban communities, and to support the rural youth participation.
- g. EU institutions, Member States and stakeholders of the youth system should promote and support by dedicated funding mechanisms within Erasmus+ the collaboration between different national minorities and also the majority through joint points.

Clause 2. Recommend to the European Commission to apply the **Youth Test** for ALL EU funds, through the involvement of youth and youth NGOs. Moreover, the stakeholders of the Youth EcoSystem emphasize that **youth should be a horizontal principle** of the EU and EU funds.

Clause 3. Call upon EU and national governments to allocate enough funds at all EU levels, encouraged to complement each other to reach a sustainable environment of support for youth, youth NGOs and youth policies.

Clause 4. Call upon EU and national governments to fully recognize in their role and allocate enough funds for **youth participation in all policy stages , in order to ensure democracy safeguarding in the context of the society digital transformation**, including for the all recognized National Youth Councils,, a set of special measures should focus on supporting the participation - at all levels- of the young people with fewer opportunities, rural youth, minorities and those from vulnerable groups.

Clause 5. Emphasize that planning all EU funds for youth should be **planned in line with the youth vision** reflected in policy documents, including youth strategies at EU, national level and local level, but also reflected in the recommendations provided by youth councils and youth organizations.

Clause 6. Strongly encourage the EU institutions and national government to **work cross-sectorial and a flexible and adaptable framework depending on the target** when planning all funds with potential impact on youth.

Clause 7. Call upon the EU institutions to ensure **not only enough budgetary allocations, but also enough capacity building** activities for youth structures, including youth NGOs (including National Youth Councils), and informal groups of young people, in the areas (including rural and marginalized communities), the regions or **in the countries more affected by youth poverty and demographic challenges**, as youth emigration and talents drain. These countries should include not only EU Member States, but also the countries for the Eastern Partnership and Western Balkans, other candidates and neighbouring countries as well as other countries beneficiaries of the EU external action funding. All currently recognized candidate countries should have immediate full access to EU Youth Policies, namely being able to directly ask and implement funding, including, but not exclusively from Erasmus+, Solidarity Corps.

Clause 8. Request to EU institutions to ensure **complementarity of all EU funds** so that the development and transitions of young people will have a **well-supported path** and youth structures in the Youth EcoSystem will also be supported in all areas of their work.

HUMAN RESOURCES for youth

Clause 9. Call upon all stakeholders in the Youth EcoSystem and the EU institutions and national government to plan and use funds in order to promote together better social, political and formal **recognition** of youth work as a valuable profession.

Clause 10. Strongly encourage the EU support for **long-term learning opportunities for youth professionals**, including the development of professional schools and university programmes for youth professionals.

Clause 11. Emphasize the need of youth structures to receive sufficient **funding for respective salaries, corresponding with wage standards for qualified professions**, when youth activities are funded,

therefore request changes of rules for EU funds and programmes, especially Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corp in order to allow better funding for human resources involved in projects.

Clause 12. Recommend developing/providing a knowledge sharing resource for youth sector stakeholders.

Clause 13. Recommend to the EU to develop **quality standards** for youth work and youth workers activities, monitoring and evaluation methods, supported by academic research and actualised data, to ensure that funded youth work activities are at a high-quality level.

Youth WORK, youth INFORMATION, COUNSELING and OTHER SERVICES AND ACTIVITIES

Clause 14. Recommend to the EU to ensure funds for **supporting all young people according to their needs at the start of their career**, recognising that the education systems are not able to cover all needs of the dynamic labour market and the need for preventive and early action when tackling youth needs.

Clause 15. Call upon the EU institutions and national governments to ensure a diversity of funds **addressing needs of young people in the digitally transformed society.**

- a. Access of young people to all activities and opportunities open to them should be facilitated by the digital transition. Donors and funding beneficiaries should ensure that digitalisation does not generate barriers. Technology should be also used to overcome language barriers.
- b. More EU funds should be allocated to fostering critical thinking, media literacy and understanding the impact of technology on society, the development of digital skills, including using and controlling A.I.

Clause 16. Call upon the EU institutions and national governments to establish rules for EU funds management to include **more flexibility in using the projects budgets** in order to allow better adaptation of projects activities and expenditures to emerging and ever-changing needs of young people.

Clause 17. Emphasize that **lumpsums and daily rates established** in the funding regulations should be adapted to the economy evolution and inflation yearly and should be equitable for beneficiaries from all countries.

Clause 18. Recommend to the EU institutions to ensure that **young people under 18** years old can participate in all projects opened to young people, including participation, volunteering, competences and skill development, employability projects etc.

Clause 19. Welcome the reinforced **Youth Guarantee**, but requests that its implementation and any future initiatives for youth education, employment and integration be **planned in co-management with youth structures. These initiatives should be implemented by youth structures**, including youth organisations that know best the needs and aspirations of young people and that are already best prepared to work with young people.

Clause 20. Call upon the EU institutions and national and local authorities to support the access of the young people to youth work services.

Clause 21. Recommend to EU institutions and national governments to establish more participation opportunities for youth especially regarding to sustainability and to promote inter-generational learning opportunities about sustainability and solidarity.

Youth STRUCTURES

Clause 22. Further call upon the EU institutions and the national government to plan the EU funds in a **multi-level framework**, involving authorities and youth structures at EU, national and local level in planning and managing the funds. This can be organised with funds coming from national agencies to regional level structures, with grants further allocated to local level. Therefore, European funds will be more accessible to all youth structures, from the civil society and public institutions, small and big organisations, and informal youth groups, and this can ensure more inclusive projects.

Clause 23. We call upon the European Commission and Erasmus+ National Agencies to involve representative youth organisations in advisory or observer capacities, to ensure both an efficient usage of resources and that the evolving needs of youth organisations are high up in the agenda.

Clause 24. Request to EU institutions and national governments to **simplify the processes of accessing all EU funds** that can support youth and the Youth EcoSystem, and lower the threshold administration processes to allow all youth organisations and informal groups to access funds, including the small and new organisations.

Clause 25. Further call upon the EU institutions and the national governments to allocate an appropriate **budget for long-term operational and administrative funding** for youth organisations, including youth councils and youth NGOs. This will ensure a sustainable support for organisational capacity development and therefore will lead to more impactful projects, activities and services provided by youth organisations.

Clause 26. Recognise the need of youth structures, including youth organisations, to **diversify their funding sources** and, therefore, their need for more information and capacity to identify the variety of funds that can support youth. In this context the EU institutions and the national governments should plan and implement youth friendly information and awareness raising campaigns, as well as trainings.

Clause 27. Emphasize that funds priorities and budgetary allocations should take into account **the needs of young people in both cities and rural areas**. Considering that youth structures are underserved in rural areas, they are smaller and have, in general, less capacity, special calls, allocations, priorities should be dedicated to youth in rural areas and remote areas and to supporting the development of the Youth EcoSystem in rural areas.

Clause 28. Strongly encourage the EU institutions, national governments and other international organisations and donors to **better support youth structures to cooperate**, to share good practice, to find partners and resources in order to better use available funding and better advocate the youth interests. This can be achieved by supporting and funding an umbrella organisation and by ensuring funding for networking.

Clause 29. Recommend to the EU institutions to cooperate with national governments and other international organisations and donors to develop funding procedures that make all funds for youth more accessible to youth structures, to **ensure that administrative barriers are lowered when the Youth EcoSystem is funded from all sources** (from EU funds, international and national donors and national budgets). And maintain observatories to measure developments at local, national and European levels.

Clause 30. Call upon the European Commission and the national governments to allocate funds to **ensure that all and each young person(s) have free access, both online and offline to safe, secure, friendly, relevant and low carbon spaces.** This should take the form of:

- a. Simplifying access to this funding for constructing and renovating **stationary infrastructure** (buildings), to allow youth structures, including youth NGOs, to use the available budgets for youth centres and other youth friendly spaces,
- b. Allocating funds for constant update, upgrade and maintenance of **equipment and furniture** of youth centres;
- c. Ensuring the existence of youth centres accessible for the majority of young people, therefore ensuring **at least one youth centre in each municipality**;
- d. Allocating funds for safe and **youth friendly mobile spaces** - like mobile youth centres - in order to better address the needs of young people in rural and remote areas;
- e. Allocating funds for **safe digital spaces** for young people;
- f. Ensuring that funding for youth infrastructure: buildings, mobile youth centres and virtual spaces is well **coordinated** with funding for youth workers and other human resources, youth structures, youth work activities and youth services.

A process to create a list of definitions to support the reading of the resolution will be opened after the adoption and supported by the secretariat.