

**YES FORUM'S POSITION ON ERASMUS+ KA3, CIVIL SOCIETY COOPERATION IN THE FIELD OF YOUTH****Youth Work under pressure – Funding difficulties for youth work organisations**

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**Introduction**

One in three young persons between the ages of 15 and 24 are at risk of experiencing poverty or social exclusion in the European Union (EU).<sup>1</sup> What is more alarming is that such a large number of the young people in the EU are almost invisible to policy-makers. Research by the European Commission (EC) revealed the underrepresentation of youth with disadvantaged backgrounds in policies. Politicians and decision-makers often lack information about the complexities of the ongoing needs of this group.

As important as statistics and numbers are young people's individual experiences and life stories. Collectively, members of the YES Forum engage with young people who are not always able to participate and feed into the formal Structured Dialogue<sup>2</sup>. By reaching the most influential and relevant decision-makers, the YES Forum ensures that their voices are heard, needs considered, and ideas listened to. The YES Forum has for over ten years been working towards bridging this growing gap as a strong advocate and actor for the inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities. Since 2008 we are one of the formal partners of the Education, Audiovisual & Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) within the framework of action 4.1 (*Support to bodies active at European level in the youth field*). With a special focus on giving vulnerable young people a voice in their own countries and at European level, our network connects youth work organisations directly impacting the lives of about 650 000 young people.

**The structural change of the grant framework brings dangerous consequences!**

The following changes brought to the Civil Society Grant are worrying:

- 1) There has been a **significant decrease in the costs per full time equivalent (FTE)**. Until 2013 FTE was in relation to the salaries paid in the Members States and varied accordingly, e.g. for a network with the head office in Germany the FTE was in the years 2011-2013 **€ 43.242** compared to **€ 9.356** in 2014. The grant does not respect country specific situations with regard to wage costs.
- 2) Taking the current FTE of € 9.356 it would mean a gross salary of € 779,67 per month (€ 38,98 per day) for qualified staff working for a European network. This is in **great contradiction to other programme parts of Erasmus+ and to the aim of professionalising the field of youth work**. In KA2, Strategic Partnerships, the programme is introducing staff categories for the costs occurring to work for the implementation of the so-called Intellectual Outputs. E.g. for Germany the daily staff costs for a youth worker is co-financed with € 214.
- 3) We are also concerned about the **large difference between funding available to networks in the education and training sector in contrast to the youth sector**:
  - Education and Training: FTE €12.925, unit cost /meeting €18.216
  - Youth: FTE €9.356, unit cost/meeting €3.381

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<sup>1</sup> An estimate of 31,4% of young people in the 15-24 age group were at risk of poverty or social exclusion in the EU in 2012, Eurostat: [http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=yth\\_incl\\_010&lang=en](http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=yth_incl_010&lang=en)

<sup>2</sup> "Structured dialogue should also be better organised and facilitate greater outreach to unorganised youth, particularly those with fewer opportunities. [...] This vision is addressed to all, but actions should focus on those with fewer opportunities." EU Youth Strategy, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX:52009DC0200>

This difference in financing sends the message that European networks working in the field of Youth are not valued as much as those active in the field of training and education.

The insecurity brought by the decrease of FTEs in the new Civil Society Grant will lead to more short-sighted ventures. For an organisation constantly preoccupied with its own survival it is impossible to focus on the sustainability and long-term effects of cooperation – ultimately at the loss of young people. A sound Civil Society Grant is a necessary instrument to co-finance organisations at European level. It is about supporting transnational cooperation, exchange, and capacity-building of organisations working with vulnerable young people that would otherwise not be able to take advantage of European opportunities.

### **Why is the structural support in the youth field so important?**

The Civil Society Grant is an essential instrument for European networks active in the youth field **to make long-term plans and dare initiating innovative projects in youth and social work**, which helps to

- stimulate professional development of youth and social work across Europe
- improve future prospects of vulnerable people regarding education, training, and employment
- boost participation of marginalised young people in democratic decision-making processes and thus to promote citizenship and the common values of freedom, tolerance, and non-discrimination

It furthermore allows the YES Forum to be able to contribute to policy initiatives with expertise from the ground, e.g. the YES Forum actively contributed to the meeting organised by the Commissioner Tibor Navracsics for Education, Youth and Sports to discuss how to tackle youth radicalisation on 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2015 in Brussels. Reflective policymaking needs evidence from practice.

Now more than ever it is of utmost importance to achieve significant change for young people in the EU under the ambitious agenda set forth by the Europe 2020 Strategy and the EU Youth Strategy: smart, sustainable, and inclusive economic growth through concrete and effective actions to increase equal opportunities for young people in education and in the job market as well as their active, democratic participation.

Without the protection, support, and motivation that youth work provides, these young people have increased chances of becoming lost, disfranchised, and disenchanted with society, which can in turn lead to greater unemployment, radicalisation, and violence.<sup>3</sup>

We encourage you to consider the three expressed concerns in your future design of the Erasmus+ KA3 Civil Society Grant for Youth and thus contribute to optimising the use of EU Funds to support social integration of young people, as encouraged through the EU Strategy for Youth.

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<sup>3</sup> Paris declaration on Promoting citizenship and the common values of freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination through education, March 2015