

Position Paper of the Youth Advisory Board of JUGEND für Europa on the New Programme Generation

The Youth Advisory Board of the National Agency JUGEND für Europa in Germany, the only youth advisory board of a European National Agency, hereby presents its position on the forthcoming developments of EU youth programmes.

In times of increasing nationalist tendencies, it is especially important to strengthen the sense of European solidarity among young people. A sustainable and participatory design of the new programme generation, which incorporates the perspectives of young people from the outset, is essential. We also refer to the [position of the German Federal Youth Council \(DBJR\) regarding the multiannual financial framework](#) (in German).

With the following demands, the Youth Advisory Board seeks to highlight the perspectives of young people with diverse Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps (ESC) experiences.

Young people must be able to participate in EU youth programmes equally, regardless of their socioeconomic background. This requires making the programmes more accessible and inclusive. No one should be denied access due to fewer opportunities. Participants must be fully and clearly informed about their rights before engaging in any activities, including emphasising that all activities are free of charge. Application processes must also, as outlined in our initial [position paper](#), be designed to be youth-friendly.

The programmes should further promote and expand awareness of inclusion and diversity among young people. Information and publications about Erasmus+ activities, as well as all training sessions, must be low-barrier and accessible to diverse audiences.

The Youth Advisory Board emphasises the need for a specific focus on mental health in the future programme generation. Many young people are increasingly facing mental health challenges in times of multiple crises. This underscores the importance of equipping EU youth programmes with sufficient financial resources to provide psychological support for participants. Additionally, young people's mental resilience can be strengthened through sensitive and informed inclusion of mental health topics in programme content.

Furthermore, intercultural exchange beyond EU borders should continue to be facilitated. Therefore, we demand that non-EU partner countries remain supported by EU youth funding.

Additionally, “micro-grants,” introduced during the European Year of Youth, should be permanently integrated into the new programme generation. These grants provide a low-threshold entry point to application processes and Erasmus+ programmes.

To enhance the accessibility and recognisability of EU youth programmes, the name and scope of the Erasmus+ programme as a well-known brand should be preserved. Since its inception in 1987, the Erasmus+ programme has supported over 15 million young Europeans¹, fostering a tangible, open, and democratic Europe for future generations.

To achieve this goal, existing weaknesses in youth participation must be addressed, and opportunities for their involvement should be systematically expanded. Currently, there is no structural participation mechanism in the programmes at the European level. As a first step, the Youth Advisory Board advocates for the expansion of existing low-threshold networks of former participants (such as EuroPeers). These networks should be centrally funded and managed to avoid regional disparities. Subsequently, each country should establish an alumni network.

In addition, each National Agency should establish its own youth advisory board, structured according to comparable frameworks as the Youth Advisory Board of JUGEND für Europa. This ensures long-term and sustainable participation based on [quality standards for child and youth participation](#) (in German) at the European level.

To ensure a sustainable ecological component in the programmes, all programme dimensions must be designed with sustainability as a fundamental principle. The design of the new programme generation must incorporate the [United Nations' sustainability goals](#) and [principles of education for sustainable development](#) (in German). Therefore, the Youth Advisory Board calls for adequate financial support for sustainable travel options, exceeding the current insufficient funding rates.

Importantly, DiscoverEU, as one of the most successful projects within Erasmus+, currently suffers from insufficient capacity. This programme offers young people a unique opportunity to travel across Europe and experience cultural diversity. The high demand clearly indicates the need to expand the free offer so that all young people within the Erasmus+ age group can participate once.

The Individual Voluntary Service, as part of the European Solidarity Corps (ESC), has a lasting intercultural impact on young people's lives. Thus, the Youth Advisory Board advocates for the continuation of the current framework and advises against renaming the programme, which would significantly jeopardise its recognition and accessibility.

Moreover, a portal should be introduced, enabling interested individuals to access testimonials from former participants about various host and support organisations. This would create greater transparency, provide a better basis for decision-making for participants, and enhance their well-being during the programmes. Additionally, every ESC participant should always have access to an independent contact person.

We are ready to actively contribute to the implementation of the proposed measures and invite all relevant stakeholders to collaborate with us in developing sustainable solutions.

We are available for dialogue and further discussions.

¹ https://germany.representation.ec.europa.eu/news/erasmus-jahresbericht-2023-zehntausende-projekte-und-13-millionen-menschen-unterstutzt-2024-11-27_de (in German)

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