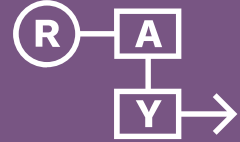


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Research-based
analysis of European
youth programmes

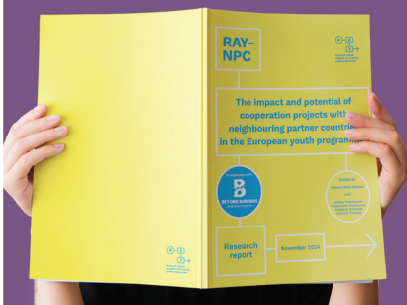
The impact and potential of cooperation projects with neighbouring partner countries in the European youth programmes

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Key findings



November 2024



THE IMPACT AND POTENTIAL OF COOPERATION PROJECTS WITH NEIGHBOURING PARTNER COUNTRIES IN THE EUROPEAN YOUTH PROGRAMMES



RAY NPC: KEY FINDINGS

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FULL RESEARCH REPORT:
researchyouth.net/reports/#npc

RAY NPC KEY FINDINGS

Cooperation projects between programme countries (EU Member States¹ and third countries associated with the programmes²) and neighbouring partner countries (third countries not associated with the Programme that are neighbouring the EU)³ expand the exceptional benefits of the programmes into regions bordering the EU, helping to build a stronger, more cohesive, and more inclusive youth sector that benefits everyone involved.

1. Cooperation projects provide invaluable international non-formal learning experiences for young people, including young people with fewer opportunities. Participants emphasise how meaningful and positive their experiences were, even when asked for critical feedback.

2. Cooperation projects do exceptionally well at making participants feel closer to Europe. They also have a slightly stronger focus on Europe and democracy than other projects within the programmes.

3. Beneficiaries and participants in cooperation projects have a special interest in bringing value to people and communities beyond themselves. Other motivations such as strategic networking (for beneficiaries) or having fun (for participants) often come second.

4. Cooperation projects contribute to the professional development and recognition of the youth field. They support youth strategies by connecting the civil society actors working to develop them and by providing standards, and spreading good practices.

5. The international social connections between individuals and between civil society actors created through cooperation projects extend beyond the projects themselves. For example, beneficiaries in partnerships show solidarity to each other beyond contractual obligations.

6. Beneficiaries from programme and partner countries show a clear motivation to continue partnering with each other in the future. They report that their partnerships are positive, constructive, and mutually beneficial.

¹ Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, France, Finland, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden.

² Liechtenstein, Iceland, North Macedonia, Norway, Serbia, Turkey

³ Third countries not associated with the Programme that are neighbouring the EU have been clustered into several regions, of which this project will cover four: Region 1: Western Balkans (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro); Region 2: Neighbourhood East (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine); Region 3: South-Mediterranean countries (Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestine, Syria, Tunisia); Region 4: Russian Federation (Russia). For other regions, see <https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/programme-guide/part-a/eligible-countries>

RECOMMENDATIONS

To sustain this valuable initiative, it is imperative to address the needs for support expressed by youth workers and beneficiaries and to take into account the feedback shared by young people. Based on the feedback gathered in this report, we present the following recommendations to support cooperation projects in the future:

1. INCREASE FINANCIAL SUPPORT

The current grant amounts do not adequately cover daily expenses, proper accommodation, travel expenses (particularly where budget airlines are not available), and other project components.

2. GIVE PARTNER COUNTRY BENEFICIARIES EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES TO APPLY

It is daunting and frustrating for partner country beneficiaries to have to prove their worth to programme country beneficiaries in order to participate in key action one, key action two and volunteering projects. The situation also discourages newcomers from partner countries from participating and diminishes diversity in cooperation projects.

3. PROVIDE MORE BUDGETING GUIDANCE IN THE EUROPEAN SOLIDARITY CORPS

Beneficiaries report that project contracts within the European Solidarity Corps are not always drafted in a manner that clearly or fairly outlines the duties, obligations, and budgets for each party. This often leaves partner country beneficiaries in particular at a disadvantage, as they are unable to apply directly to the programme and must either accept or reject an unfavourable contract, as opposed to drafting a contract themselves as a coordinating organisation.

4. ENHANCE VETTING AND SUPPORT SYSTEMS IN THE EUROPEAN SOLIDARITY CORPS

Volunteers and hosting beneficiaries express a desire for stronger support mechanisms to address conflicts that may arise over the duration of a project. Volunteers underline the need to ensure that organisations can provide a comfortable and safe living and working environment, as well as the importance of access to an active contact person outside the hosting beneficiary who can ensure their wellbeing. Hosting beneficiaries, on the other hand, highlight the need for support in cases

where volunteer behaviour is destructive to the beneficiary or their interests.

5. PROVIDE SUPPORT WITH APPLICATION WRITING

Beneficiaries express the need for assistance with application writing. This support could be provided by National Agencies, regional SALTOS, or Contact Points/Info Centres through the creation of dedicated application workshops for beneficiaries in project and partner countries, as well as by showcasing exemplary applications for reference.

6. PROVIDE SUPPORT WITH INTERCULTURAL CHALLENGES AND VISA PROCEDURES

Beneficiaries in cooperation projects report struggling with intercultural challenges specific to the region where the project is hosted and with obtaining visas for all participants who require them. This can create discriminatory situations where beneficiaries choose against participants who need a visa in a cooperation project when they are administratively overwhelmed. Participants could benefit from a space within the programmes open for them to network and exchange experiences and know-how with other beneficiaries who have successfully completed a project in the same region or gone through similar visa procedures. This could be a virtual or physical space, or both.

7. IMPROVE ACCESSIBILITY FOR YOUNG PEOPLE IN RURAL AREAS

The percentage of young participants from rural areas in neighbouring partner countries is as low as that of young participants from rural areas in programme countries. This means that the effort to reach rural and remote areas should extend to beneficiaries in partner regions. Part of this effort includes making the projects more enticing for beneficiaries by offering grants well-adapted to the projects and by eliminating the need for partner country beneficiaries to prove their worth to programme country beneficiaries to participate.

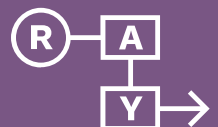
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