INCLUSION IN EASTERN PARTNERSHIP COUNTRIES AND RUSSIA

"Inclusion in Eastern Partnership countries and Russia"

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The current report is the result of a study of over 230 youth organisations working on inclusion in the Eastern Partnership countries (EaP) and Russia. It is based on seven country reports prepared by two local experts per country between November 2015 and April 2016.

Each country report has been processed and the main results from each study have been inserted in the present report with the following goals:

- to provide an overview of the tendencies in the region to inclusion-related activities
- to identify the main actors and donors working with inclusion-related topics
- to survey the main approaches to social inclusion in the region
- to provide recommendations to improve the impact of Erasmus+ activities in the region

The project, "Inclusion in Eastern Partnership countries and Russia", is a joint initiative by several National Agencies (Austria, Finland, Poland), SALTO EECA and SALTO Inclusion. The goal of the project is to contribute to an evidence-based approach in the identification and development of support measures for youth organisations in the Eastern Partnership Region and Russia that deal with various aspects of social inclusion in the region. The first phase of the project ended in May 2015, when a pilot study was completed and discussed by the agencies. Following an agreement that a further study would produce interesting results, the pilot study was expanded into a larger one.

The methodological approach for the study was discussed in a workshop in November 2015 in which all country experts participated. Following the meeting it was agreed that each country expert would:

- conduct desk research in their own country
- discuss and provide feedback on a common questionnaire
- test the questionnaire and provide feedback to agree on a final version
- translate the questionnaire in their local language and interview 20-30 organisations
- prepare a country report based on the answers collected

The study identified the existence of two distinct tendencies, shaped mostly by government attitudes – liberal or directive – towards the youth sector:

- **Liberal attitudes** either encourage initiatives or, at least, do not hinder activities and are displayed by governments that include Armenia, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine.
- **Directive attitudes** attempt to limit activities, have a tendency to centralise and keep activities, to different degrees, under state control, and are displayed by governments that include Azerbaijan, Belarus and Russia.

Although the baseline definition of inclusion for this study was provided to the participating organisations and was based on activities targeting primarily young people with fewer opportunities, as defined by the European Commission in its "Inclusion and Diversity Strategy"[1], it has been challenging to identify organisations working on inclusion for a number of reasons:

- Not all organisations use the same definition of inclusion or understand inclusion in a broad sense (including all the categories mentioned in the chapter "Aim and scope of the study" in this report).
- Consequently, the definition of a disadvantaged group seems to be very subjective with some groups not being aware of falling into that category.
- Few organisations exclusively target disadvantaged groups whereas most of the organisations surveyed work with both disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged youth groups.

Although some tendencies were likely to be different from country to country, the study has allowed us to cluster organisations and activities depending on their target group. Young people are the common

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1   https://www.salto-youth.net/downloads/4-17-3103/InclusionAndDiversityStrategy.pdf

denominator of all the organisations but they can be distinguished into several categories:

- Young people with physical, sensory and mental disabilities
- Young people facing geographical obstacles
- Young people facing discrimination due to sexual and gender issues
- Young people facing educational difficulties
- Young people disadvantaged due to cultural differences

There are also organisations that provide horizontal activities, targeting several groups at the same time (e.g. humanitarian aid, training, social entrepreneurship).

The study has helped us identify a number of challenges that are, to various degrees, common to the region and to most youth organisations:

- Professionalisation of youth work and activities
- Understanding (of inclusion and youth)
- Finance and (human) resource management
- Visibility potential
- Cooperation in working with similar issues
- Access to opportunities and information
- Identification of and relationship with donors
- Relationships with the authorities and national institutions

The study also revealed differences in tendencies and modes of internationalisation and in engagement with the Erasmus+ funding programme. While Azerbaijan and Russia seem to be benefiting from the programme less and less, preferring local donors for a number of reasons, organisations from the rest of the countries have a reasonably good awareness of international funding opportunities available and engagement with the Erasmus+ Programme. While Armenia makes sporadic use of these funding opportunities, Georgia's awareness of and engagement in the programme seems to be growing, and Moldova is a regular programme participant.

Thanks to the material collected in this study, we have come up with ten recommendations that could help build synergies between Erasmus+-related activities and local organisations to support youth work, and in particular, youth organisations working on inclusion. We need to:

1. Acknowledge the diversity of the region and tailor actions to take local realities and potential into account. There is a great deal to be gained by diverse approaches acknowledging that it is administratively simpler to work with certain actors and countries.
2. Establish a network of contact points (or resource persons), based on the positive experience of the Western Balkans model. This point is concerned with decentralisation of management structures and responsibilisation of local organisations.
3. Establish a common understanding of the concept of inclusion, of youth workers and the general terminology to be used. This approach could lead to the recognition of non-formal education and acknowledgement of the status of youth workers.
4. Foster interaction between the state and youth organisations. Attention should be paid to promoting cooperation between state organisations and NGOs, offering participants from both sectors the chance to take part in the same projects.
5. Foster competences of youth workers in the region through specifically tailored courses, with a particular emphasis on: entrepreneurship and the job market; strategy and management; financial management; monitoring, evaluation and quality; and interpersonal skills.
6. Encourage the creation of a network of Erasmus+ (and Youth in Action) alumni.
7. Create and maintain a coaching scheme allowing younger and less experienced organisations working on inclusion to apply for Erasmus+ grants with the help of more experienced partners.
8. Encourage experienced youth organisations to put their experience at the disposal of younger organisations, thus helping them develop more rapidly.
9. Encourage cross-sectoral cooperation which would allow organisations develop, and step up their

campaigning for the rights of people with fewer opportunities.
10. Strengthen the social status of youth inclusion activities.

PART I: OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Already emphasised during the preparation of the Erasmus+ programme, the need for an evidence-based and needs-oriented analysis has become even more urgent after a preliminary evaluation of the Eastern Partnership Youth Window.[2] Statistical data about the projects supported through the programme has shown that its impact on inclusion has been limited and that its benefits have not reached its full potential in the Eastern Partnership Region.

The project "Inclusion in Eastern Partnership countries and Russia", conceived jointly by several National Agencies (Austria, Finland, Poland), SALTO EECA and SALTO Inclusion, may be seen as a response to this need. The goal of this long-term project is to gather intelligence and evidence in order to design support measures for organisations and actors working on inclusion of young people in the Eastern Partnership Region and Russia. The instrument should support non-formal training activities in the framework of Erasmus+: Youth in Action Programme.

The way these activities are supported and how needs are addressed shall be based on the expertise of relevant stakeholders and the needs analysis of practitioners in the youth field. This should contribute to training of youth workers and further the inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities from the Eastern Partnership countries and Russia in the Erasmus+: Youth in Action Programme.

AIM AND SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This report presents the findings of a study on (youth) organisations working in the field of inclusion in the Eastern Partnership Region and Russia (EaP countries and Russia hereinafter).

By **social inclusion** in this study we refer to activities targeting primarily young people with fewer opportunities, defined by the European Commission in its "Inclusion and Diversity Strategy" as people facing one or more of the following obstacles:

- Disability (i.e. participants with special needs): young people with mental (intellectual, cognitive, learning), physical, sensory or other disabilities etc.
- Health problems: young people with chronic health problems, severe illnesses or psychiatric conditions etc.
- Educational difficulties: young people with learning difficulties, early school leavers, lower qualified persons, young people with poor school performance etc.
- Cultural differences: immigrants, refugees or descendants from immigrant or refugee families, young people belonging to a national or ethnic minority, young people with linguistic adaptation and cultural inclusion difficulties etc.
- Economic obstacles: young people with a low standard of living, low income, dependence on social welfare system, young people in long term unemployment or poverty, young people who are homeless, in debt or with financial problems etc.
- Social obstacles: young people facing discrimination because of gender, age, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, disability, etc., young people with limited social skills or antisocial or high risk behaviours, young people in a precarious situation, ex-offenders, ex drug or alcohol abusers, young and/or single parents, orphans etc.
- Geographical obstacles: young people from remote or rural areas, young people living on small islands or in peripheral regions, young people from urban problem zones, young people from less

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[2] The evaluation report can be found here: https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/pdf/financial_assistance/phare/evaluation/2015/20150202-evaluation-youth-in-action.pdf

> serviced areas (limited public transport, poor facilities) etc.
>
> This approach is part of the SALTO Inclusion and Diversity Strategy aimed at improving the number and quality of inclusion and diversity projects within Erasmus+ in the youth field. For further details please refer to: https://www.salto-youth.net/downloads/4-17-3103/InclusionAndDiversityStrategy.pdf

It must be noted that despite the above specific definition, inclusion is still understood in different ways in different countries and the ways of dealing with inclusion vary. The range of organisations consulted deal with a variety of aspects of inclusion but people with disabilities is possibly the most widely understood one. Other priorities depend on the situation in each country: for instance, in Georgia, and more recently in Ukraine, the issue of Internally Displaced Persons is more urgent than, say, in Belarus. Finally, understanding of inclusion also depends on the political priorities of a country and a society. Inclusion of LGBT may be understood and promoted easily if there are no societal or political pressures against these categories, which is not always the case in the region.

This study is a follow-up of a pilot study conducted in 2014-2015 and based on its preliminary results. Based on the previous experience, more resources were mobilised this time and two experts per country were contracted to conduct fieldwork and to speak one-to-one to nearly 200 youth workers in the region.

There are some limitations in the scope and content of this study that we need to mention. Firstly, we need to acknowledge that it does not cover the entirety of organisations in all the target countries. For budgetary reasons, the geographical scope has been limited to the western parts of Russia, even though some organisations from the far east and north Caucasus regions were also interviewed. In addition, we did not use a representative sample of youth organisations for two reasons: One is that there is no register of youth organisations, and, even when data is available, it is not possible to distinguish organisations that are active from those that only exist on paper. The second is that organisations are unevenly represented on each country's territory. As a result, we relied on a snowball technique, starting from the extensive contacts of our experts. The fact that all the experts have been working in the field for several years and are well established in their countries helped greatly in this.

Our methodological approach combines several methods which allows us to triangulate the data and combine the evidence provided by the experts' interviews, questionnaires, personal observations and networking with a large number of organisations (for a complete overview of the methodology, see the corresponding section).

STRUCTURAL AND REGIONAL CHALLENGES

The EaP countries and Russia are often regarded as homogenous regions which is not true in practice. It is true that both regions share a common past, history and some cultural references, such as the role of the Russian language and culture. However, there is a high degree of diversity in the region; even acknowledging the sub-regions (Caucasus, Eastern Europe, Russia) is still an oversimplification. For one thing, Russia extends through two continents and several time zones. Furthermore, even assuming the existence of a similar starting point at 1991 when the USSR was dissolved, 25 years of political and economic transition has led to different results throughout the region, to which one can add some structural factors that make the countries of the region extremely diverse and difficult to deal with as a whole, as table 1 shows.

Table 1: Diversity of the target region

Country/factor	Population and 15-24 population (%)[3]	Size (in square km)	Social and political freedom[4] (Freedom House)	Business freedom[5]	Urban population[6]
Armenia	3.3M 15.2%	29,743	Partly free	Free	64.1%
Azerbaijan	9.3M 17.5%	86,600	Not free	Mostly free	53.6%
Belarus	9.5M 11.7%	207,560	Not free	Mostly free	75%
Georgia	4.5M 14%	69,700	Partly free	Free	52.8%
Moldova	4.1M 14.2%	33,846	Partly free	Mostly unfree	47.7%
Russia	143M 10.7%	17,098,242	Not free	Mostly free	73.8%
Ukraine	46M 11.5%	603,628	Partly free	Moderately free	68.9%

The points highlighted above are only some of the main ones one can call upon to explain why some instruments and approaches may not work to the same extent when applied to different countries. They also point to the fact that a more in-depth understanding of each country is needed to prepare financial instruments. For one thing, the excessive control of foreign funds in Belarus, and after June 2014 in Azerbaijan, has strangled many organisations, making it almost impossible to fund initiatives through the European Union programmes.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology used is a combination of several methods, the purpose of which was to ensure triangulation of data and cross-checking of results. Its main elements were:

- Face-to-face interviews using a questionnaire
- Informal discussions with experts
- Country information gathered through reports and studies
- Existing studies on inclusion and the region

As mentioned above, we preferred profundity to representativeness. As it was impossible to identify all youth NGOs that work on inclusion in order to then select a representative sample, we have relied on a more qualitative methodology. Starting from the experiences of the previous pilot study, we identified two experts per country. The two experts would usually be based in different regions, have complementary expertise and a wide network of contacts.

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3   http://www.indexmundi.com/factbook/countries
4   https://freedomhouse.org/
5   http://www.heritage.org/index/ranking
6   http://www.indexmundi.com/factbook/countries

All experts were invited to a research workshop held in Kyiv in November 2015 to discuss the research approach, how the evidence will be collected and potential research difficulties. The experts shared their views on possible disruptive factors, discussed the possible content of the questionnaire to be used, how to identify and approach the target group and how to collect information. It was agreed that the target group was to be youth workers, either formally employed by a youth organisation or those working as freelance youth trainers, with more than 3 years of experience in the youth sector and with specific experience in inclusion projects.

A first version of the questionnaire was circulated and was to be used, in its first draft form, for test interviews. This means that each expert conducted 2-5 interviews using the first version of the questionnaire to provide feedback on the clarity of the questions and the way they were understood and interpreted by the target group. The feedback was provided to the study coordinator who designed a second version of the questionnaire to be used in the study. The questionnaire was translated into all the local languages and all interviews were conducted in a local language.

The questionnaire (see Annex II) consisted of a number of key points and was translated into each country's official language. It covered:

- Demography of the respondent and organisation
- Priorities of the organisation
- Perceived needs and obstacles in the region and organisation
- Information on donors and funding
- Self-perception of the respondent about their skills and knowledge

A second set of data was collected through discussions with experts and visits to local and international events for youth workers, such as the Presentation of Youth Indexes in the Eastern Partnership, the public consultations for the elaboration of national strategies, EVS coordinators' meetings, and other national events.

Each team of experts collated the answers into a report, which they then sent to the study coordinator. Overall, 232 interviews were conducted with youth workers working on a variety of aspects relating to inclusion. A list of organisations, respondents and their main areas of focus is in annex I.

PART II: REGIONAL TENDENCIES

OVERVIEW OF STATE AND YOUTH SECTOR RELATIONS

The EaP region and Russia include countries with very diverse settings and attitudes. The study identified the existence of two distinct tendencies in the regions, shaped mostly by the governments' attitudes towards the youth sector: the liberal and the directive. The boundaries between the categories, and even within a category, are not always easy to define, with liberal attitudes easily overlapping with lightly controlling ones and control being enforced in a more or less directive manner:

- The liberal attitudes could be further divided into 1) encouraging initiative and taking the lead in coordination and 2) not hindering (although not strongly encouraging) activities. This includes Armenia, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine.
- The directive attitudes include attempts to limit and centralise activities and to keep them, to various degrees, under state control. This includes Azerbaijan, Belarus and Russia.

Liberal attitudes

Armenia
While not enforcing strong repression, the general attitude of the government towards NGOs was not necessarily supportive. Organisations were often unable to inform the public about their existence, purposes and activities because they could not afford advertisements or campaigns on radio or in newspapers (Dudwick 1997).

The legislative basis for NGO activities in Armenia is provided by the Armenian Constitution. According to article 28 of the Constitution of the Republic of Armenia, everyone has the right to form associations with other persons (Constitution of the Republic of Armenia 28 1995). The legislative framework regulating the Armenian non-governmental sector is fairly developed.

The legal status of NGOs is already established by law on NGOs of Armenia, adopted in 2001. According to this law, an NGO is a type of non-profit organisation based on public association by which human beings (citizens of the Republic of Armenia, foreign citizens, stateless persons) unite based on their common interests in accordance with law to address their non-religious spiritual or non-material needs, to protect their and others' rights and interests, to provide the society and its certain groups with material and non-material support, for the purposes to carry out other activities of public benefit.

The 2014-2015 draft law on NGOs has been put into circulation but has not yet been approved by the National Assembly. The draft law regulates work with volunteers, business activities of NGOs, their financial accountability and the right to file lawsuits. According to official data from 2015, over 4,000 NGOs are registered in Armenia, the majority of which are located in the capital. Each region comprises 1-5% of NGOs. Most of the NGOs work in the youth sector. Mapping of NGOs, conducted by the Institute for Youth Studies, showed that 78% of NGOs were involved in research work in the youth sector. However, one must take into consideration that the research in question was targeted at youth NGOs.

The CIVICUS Civil Society Index (Hakobyan et al. 2010) has assessed Armenian civil society as "moderately developed", with a relatively strong level of organisation but with weak impact and low civic engagement (public trust in NGOs is limited to 7%, according to Caucasus Research Resource Centre (CRRC) in 2015).

This is directly linked to the participation of the target group in NGO activities. According to the Civil Society Organisation (CSO) market research, the level of engagement of the target groups in the decision-making process of NGOs is rather low. In 38% of the organisations surveyed, target groups never or rarely participated in the decision-making, which implies that there is little consideration for their participation when planning

projects.

Georgia

The working environment for NGOs is stable with few or no restrictions from the government. In Georgia, the number of youth organisations has increased following the opening of the Eastern Partnership Youth Window. Consequently, the number and quality of youth workers have risen, too.

In 2014, the Georgian Government in partnership with UNICEF and UNFPA approved the Georgian National Youth Policy, possibly the first mechanism to coordinate youth policies and initiatives, prioritising: 1) Youth participation in social, economic, cultural and political activities; 2) Promotion of youth education, employment and mobility; 3) Health; 4) Special support and protection. *This would be achieved by: 1)* Creating opportunities for the youth to be involved in social, economic, cultural and political life; 2) Creating opportunities for appropriate and high-quality education, employment and professional growth for the youth; 3) Establishing a healthy lifestyle and improving access to and quality of the medical care services in a youth friendly environment; 4) Increasing awareness among young people on the civil rights and responsibilities, and creating a safe and secure environment for young people, protecting their rights and supporting the young people with special needs.

Besides the ministry, the main actors implementing youth policy, defined in the document, are local governments, the Committee of Sports and Youth Affairs of the Parliament of Georgia, youth organisations, international organisations, media, scholars, young people themselves and other stakeholders. In order to ensure involvement of local authorities in the youth policy, the Interagency Council was established, coordinated by the Ministry. In 2015, the government approved an Action Plan for Development of the State's Youth Policy 2015-2020, which covers all components of youth policy and has to ensure the effective implementation of youth policy with a specific time frame. The ministry also runs a youth website www.youth.gov.ge – Youth Policy Monitor which assesses the progress achieved in the youth sector. However, despite having already been in operation for a year, the Youth Policy Monitor has not conducted any research yet.

Moldova

In 1999, as a result of territorial-administrative reforms (1999 – 2001), the National Youth Council of Moldova (CNTM) was founded as an umbrella organisation to represent the interests of young people. In each village and district (raion), a specialist on youth work and sports was employed. A Directorate for Youth and Sports was created but in 2001 the reform was abolished and the youth workers were fired. Further youth strategies were adopted in 2003, 2009 and in 2014 when the National Strategy for Youth Sector Development (until 2020) was adopted. None of these were fully implemented but since 2006 each local district was allowed to design their own.

The Strategy 2020 has the following four priorities:

- Youth participation (involving young people in the decision-making process, civic activism, local youth councils, youth mobility, youth information)
- Services for youth (Youth Resource Centres, Youth Friendly Health Centres, outreach services, internships, healthy lifestyle promotion, etc.)
- Economic opportunities for youth (economic empowerment of youth, promotion of entrepreneurship, employment opportunities)
- Youth sector consolidation/strengthening institutional capacity (strengthening youth civil society, youth labour and workers, cross-sector cooperation, development of the legal framework in the field, non-formal education)

Inclusion was fostered by the National Youth Strategy and the Action Plan (2014-2020), the Law on Youth, and the Law on Volunteering; the Law on Enforcement of Equality (2012); the Law on Social inclusion of persons with disabilities in Moldova (2012); the law on the special protection of children at risk and of children separated from their parents (2013); the law no. 169 of 09.07.2010 on the approval of the Strategy of Social Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities 2010-2013.

In the Republic of Moldova, there are several defined categories of disadvantaged/vulnerable young people.

The groups that are the most vulnerable to poverty and social exclusion include Moldovan youth and children, households with children headed by persons other than parents, families with multiple children, women, people with a low educational level, farmers, and employees in the agriculture sector, those dependent on social protection, people with disabilities, old people, and the Roma people.

Ukraine
Among the recent legislative changes worth mentioning are the 2016 Law on Amending Some Regulations on Strengthening Social Protection of Children which changed the Family Code of Ukraine (2002), the Law on Local Self-government (1997) and the Law on Protection of Childhood (2001) and some other laws introducing patronage and improving protection of children's rights. The 2014 Law on Inclusive Education also improved laws on the Preschool Education (2001) and on the General Secondary Education (1999) creating more room for inclusive education.

Ukraine's youth policies are outlined in the State Youth Development Strategy till 2020 (2013), the 2014-2017 EU-Ukraine Association Agreement Implementation Action Plan (2014), and the Sustainable Development Strategy "Ukraine-2020" (2015). The Concept of the State Social Programme "Youth of Ukraine" 2016-2020[7] defines youth as aged 14-35 and sets the following priorities:

- Formation of citizenship and national-patriotic education – measures aimed at reviving the national-patriotic education, strengthening civic awareness and active life of young people.
- Healthy lifestyle of young people – promotion of healthy and safe lifestyles and health culture among young people.
- Development of non-formal education – activities aimed at helping young people acquire knowledge, skills and other competences outside of the education system, including through participation in volunteer activities.
- Youth employment – the creation and implementation of measures aimed at youth employment (providing primary and secondary employment and self-employment of young people).
- Housing for young people – creating conditions for youth housing.
- Partner support to young people living in the occupied territories of Ukraine and internally displaced persons (implementation of measures aimed at social development and support of youth among the IDPs).

Ukraine's Law on Public Associations was adopted in 2012 and is in compliance with the Recommendation CM/Rec(2007)14 of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe to member states on the legal status of non-governmental organisations in Europe. The law simplified the registration procedures for public associations and establishes the right of NGOs to pursue any lawful interest or objective – not only the interests of its members; the right of legal entities to establish and to acquire membership in public associations; right of public association to conduct activities throughout the territory of Ukraine, regardless of their place of registration; and the right of NGOs to engage in entrepreneurial activities to support their not-for-profit activities. At the same time, article 36 of Ukraine's Constitution still decrees that only Ukrainian citizens can establish non-governmental organisations and protect the rights of the members of the NGOs only, and not of other people. Although there are plenty of youth NGOs, they are mostly inefficient in involving people as surveys show that only 2% of young Ukrainians are their members and only 6% participate in their activities.

Directive attitudes

Azerbaijan
Throughout 2014 and 2015, a series of new laws officially aimed at tackling corruption and money laundering in relation to foreign funds and in NGOs were adopted in Azerbaijan. These laws were also officially aimed at stopping the financing of illegal anti-governmental activities through international funds. The official reason behind the laws was "to make the non-profit sector's activities more transparent". However, a number of NGO workers have complained that this has had a major negative effect on the NGO and youth sectors. Registration of funding and grants has become more complicated and control measures have included freezing of assets and bank accounts, and repeated tax inspections to the point that Mirvari Gahramanli, the head of an NGO on

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[7] http://eapyouth.eu/sites/default/files/documents/concept_youth_of_ukraine_2016-2020_30.09.2015_eng.pdf

protection of oilmen's rights, stated in her interview to Kavkaz-uzel.ru website that "all opportunities for independent NGOs functioning in Azerbaijan are being eliminated", allegedly de-motivating a number of people active in the youth sector. The main result is that the activities of major NGOs and foundations in the country have been reduced and are being restricted. However, following the "low-profile/high-speed" principle, small NGOs (with little or no staff and small budgets) have succeeded in remaining active.

In spite of attempts to limit foreign funds in the country, state agencies have remained active in funding activities of NGOs:

- National Council for Support of national NGOs;
- State Fund on Mass Media Support;
- Azerbaijan Youth Foundation;
- Ministry of Youth and Sport;
- State Labour and Social Support Fund;
- various state ministries.

Belarus

The Belarusian Committee of Youth Organisations (BCYO) is the National Youth Council recognised by state[8]. The Belarusian National Youth Council (RADA) was the first post-independence national youth council and is a member of the European Youth Forum (no longer registered after 2010 elections), active in more than 20 initiatives and part of the Alternative Youth Policy Platform.

The largest youth organisation is Belarusian Republican Youth Union (BRSM) with around 500,000 members and its goal is to facilitate the development of young people. The BRSM receives the largest amount of financial support from the state budget for youth which obviously makes it one of the key partners in the framework of the implementation of youth policy in Belarus. Youth policy, and youth in general, is defined:

According to the law, on the basis of the State Youth Policy of the Republic of Belarus № 65-3 (2009), a young person is a person between the age of 14 and 31. The definition applies to both national and local authorities and is applied through a range of legislative, executive and judicial measures.

A new state programme "Education and Youth Policy in 2016-2020" was approved on 06.11.2015 (not enforced yet) and is intended to give Belarus a long-term development strategy for lifelong learning, career development and professional orientation, national and demographic security and socio-economic development.

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[8] Its last large-scale activity was undertaken during the presidential elections on 11.10.2015, when it was accredited to undertake exit-polls in cooperation with university students.

Russia

In 2011, a state programme "Accessible environment" was adopted by the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare of the Russian Federation and some steps towards inclusive education for children with disabilities were taken. In 2016, more than 48bn rubles (62m Euros) should be spent for the programme. The programme suggests additional funding until 2020 for institutions dealing with reshaping of the environment to make it more friendly for people with disabilities.

It has also resulted in simplifying the content of the term "inclusion" by limiting it to "making accessible" but this has not always been realised in practice. For instance, "inclusive education" is aimed at integrating physically disabled children in regular school classes; however, there has been opposition from other children's parents, and teachers have been unprepared to deal with children with special needs.

In 2016, a Federal Law 419 was ratified. It obliges all property owners to make arrangements to guarantee accessibility for people with disabilities; this has not been fully enforced so far.

The global economic crisis has resulted in decreasing costs everywhere, including the social services sector. A federal law about social protection of people with disabilities in the Russian Federation was passed in 1995. It widened the list of those who could claim to have a disability and apply for state support. Now, the tendency is to decrease the official numbers of people with disabilities in order to minimise the costs for their support. New forms of definitions of disability are introduced in a new document by the Ministry of Labour (1024) passed in 2015. However, support for disabled people has been gradually reduced.

A number of legislative measures have been introduced from 2012. In 2012, Russian parliament adopted a law that required non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to register as "foreign agents" with the Ministry of Justice if they engage in "political activity" and receive foreign funding. The definition of "political activity" under the law is so broad and vague that it can extend to all aspects of advocacy and human rights work. Some NGOs do not want to claim themselves as foreign agents (rhetoric related to the Soviet Union) and were included in the list by force. They also had to pay huge fines for not obeying the law.

A law on "The Russian undesirable organisations" was adopted in 2015 and gives state institutions the power to declare foreign and international organisations "undesirable" in Russia and shut them down. In general, all NGOs, including youth NGOs, are classified in some way depending on their commitment with state values and priorities. For the majority of organisations that we interviewed it does not really matter because they are not politically oriented (except Youth "Memorial" from Perm which has to close) but in general it affects the civil society climate and creates mechanisms of pressure.

As a result, a number of NGOs try to avoid complications, and not actively seek involvement in international projects and/or receive funding from abroad. The sensitivity of foreign issues has prompted a growing number of NGOs to strive to operate within the "socially and politically accepted", "approved", "clear for everyone" frameworks, avoiding the most sensitive challenges. As a result, a number of activities, such as advocacy work, critical assessment of state policies or activities of state institutions, have become labelled as dangerous, which makes NGOs less effective and less able to influence political decisions.

OVERVIEW OF THE ORGANISATIONS AND YOUTH WORKERS

In all regions surveyed, it was difficult to clearly identify organisations working on inclusion for a number of reasons:

1. Not all organisations use the same definition of inclusion or understand inclusion in a broad sense (including all the categories mentioned at the beginning of this report).
2. Consequently, the definition of a disadvantaged group seems to be very subjective with some groups not being aware of falling into that category.
3. Few organisations target exclusively disadvantaged groups but most of the organisations surveyed work with both disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged youth.

Another point to keep in mind when analysing the region is that social, cultural and political conditions have a strong effect on the work of youth organisations, influencing youth workers' choices. In addition to the capacity of a society to understand and discuss a social issue, the political situation determines which approach will be endorsed through funding, political support or by public opinion. For instance, the Russian experts faced several difficulties when trying to contact organisations in Saint Petersburg for at least two reasons: One was a fear of "dealing" with foreign programmes with no prior approval by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the other was what was declared as a lack of interest in the study, even though the organisation worked with similar issues. By contrast, Georgian organisations showed a positive attitude towards the study and were very open about their activities.

A further difficulty for the research was the lack of an official database of youth organisations in each country, or in the region. It is true that there is a register but it includes all non-governmental organisations (not only youth ones) and the register tells nothing about the level of activity of an organisation, with the result of many ghost organisations (existing only on paper) being recorded in each country.

Structural conditions also affect youth organisations in other ways. For instance, work with LGBT may be hindered by general homophobic attitudes of the population, increasing the risk of working openly with LGBT communities and decreasing the degree of support from state institutions. In general, it is easier to work with disadvantaged groups that are officially recognised and publicly acknowledged as having special needs. A category that is widely accepted in the region are people with physical and mental disabilities; this is possibly because there was already a tradition to take care of these issues during the Soviet times. Internally Displaced People (IDP) is also a widely recognised category in countries where a conflict is acknowledged by the authorities and IDP have an officially recognised status.

The majority of the organisations surveyed had youth workers with a university degree and/or professional experience. Their degree was not necessarily in the field of education. They could be engineers or biologists, IT professionals or economists who had taken an alternative path or had discovered the world of youth work and preferred it to competing in the more general job market. On the other hand, those working with specific target groups (people with disabilities, young people with fewer opportunities, orphans, victims of human trafficking) tended to have a degree closer to the field they were working with (i.e. psychology, social work, medicine). In many such cases, the people had not initially planned to become "youth workers" and had landed in their field of work after some period of experience in it. A common progression for youth workers is first to develop professional skills through volunteering, then participate in projects (after having been active in an organisation for some time), and after becoming more professional, be able to sell one's services to other sectors (local authorities, political parties or government authorities or international NGOs).

A high number of respondents had developed as youth workers through practice (participation in events, contact with other youth workers, learning-by-doing). In this respect, the emotional component had been crucial since many respondents said that their first group activity had been a "turning point", motivating them to continue in this field, often remaining in the sector for 5-10 years. The lifespan of a volunteer in an organisation is, on average, lower than in many EU countries. Young people may join activities for curiosity or fun and stay active for some time but the capacity of youth organisations to hire promising volunteers is limited, especially in economically disadvantaged areas. People in these areas are under higher pressure to find a job and can easily drop out of youth work. Funding also determines the lifespan of organisations, in addition to their activities. For instance, in Batumi (Georgia) most youth organisations are short-lived and inexperienced. This is possibly due to the non-priority status of the region, compared to, for instance, Kutaisi, where the NGO population (and funding availability) is higher. In Georgia, around the Pankisi Gorge, given the international attention, and subsequent presence of donors, NGO presence is higher.

The youth workers interviewed were selected for their medium or long term commitment to the youth sector, even if it was not always easy to define the youth sector. Some countries (i.e. Moldova) do not specifically distinguish between youth workers and social workers, thus making it difficult to identify people who work predominantly, or only, with young people. Thus, the report does not use a definition of a youth worker as defined in national legislation but rather a pragmatic one, identifying as youth worker a member of an organisation, the main target group of which are young people. The majority of those interviewed had previous experience in the youth sector and had been in the sector for some time before being recruited as staff or working as trainers. They have had previous experience as volunteers either in their current or in another

organisation. Some of them had done an internship (during their studies) and were given the chance to remain or simply were volunteering while at school and remained active. Even though some had joined their organisations after participating in one or two events, the majority seem to have first had some positive experiences through volunteering and endorsed the organisation's values before having been asked to remain.

Formal recognition of qualifications was somewhat rare among youth workers. Even when they showed familiarity of main issues relating to youth work and projects (i.e. project management cycle, quality control, monitoring), they had not acquired the skills through formal or certified training. Learning-by-doing seemed to be the main approach. This is not to say that they had not attended training; there was a tendency to attend local, national and international events. The point is that these did not usually provide them with any kind of recognised qualification. Still, a variety of training opportunities were mentioned and peer-to-peer support also seems to play a key role in developing competences.

There seems to be a grey area between youth workers and other statuses. For example, the boundary between a youth trainer and a business trainer is sometimes blurred. While they work for the business sector or in politics, they also remain active (although with less money) in the youth sector, from which they derive the most enthusiasm and energy. On the other hand, competencies and skills acquired through youth work could also be key assets that enabled them to sell their experience to more lucrative sectors.

Attempts to professionalise the non-profit sector have also had an impact on youth workers. This has been done through targeting youth workers or (more frequently) social workers by either the authorities or, more often by national and international organisations offering professional training as part of their main activity. Topics have included: project planning, management and implementation; exchange of experiences and knowledge; methodologies and approaches; PR and communication skills; fundraising and financial sustainability; crowdfunding; data collection, research, reporting.

All the organisations surveyed were selected because of their engagement with young people. The majority of them targeted exclusively young people. However, some organisations had a more general target group, treating young people as a particular category within their wider target group. Using the definition of inclusion by the European Commission in its "Inclusion and Diversity Strategy", we can group most of the organisations according to target groups they work with:

- **Young people with physical, sensory and mental disabilities**. These can be further divided into: organisations led by a person with a physical disability (or who has, in their family, someone with a disability) and organisations led by a person without a disability. In the first case, the target group is specifically defined, the organisation's activities are clearly targeted and, in several cases, people with disabilities are also hired as staff members or volunteers. In the second case, the organisation tends to differentiate their activities.
- **Young people facing social obstacles**. This category includes organisations working with problematic youth (who run away from home, are from poor families, have violent parents) prisoners and former convicts.
- **Young people facing geographical and economic obstacles**. This group includes organisations with specific target groups, such as young women, including those from rural areas, young people from rural or disadvantaged areas and unemployed young people.
- **Young people with health problems**. Some organisations working with HIV positive people target specifically young people but a large part of them targets anyone with HIV, though in reality, young people make up most of the target group.
- **Young people facing discrimination because of cultural differences.** This category is country-specific. In Georgia, organisations can work with Armenians or Azeri, in places like Moldova they can also include Roma people. Organisations target youth but do not necessarily distinguish young people and others.
- **Young people facing educational difficulties.** In this category, there are also differences between countries, and organisations do not necessarily target exclusively young people: for instance, in the case of refugees and displaced people, who are more numerous in some areas (i.e. South Caucasus, Ukraine) than in others.

Even if they do not formally fit the definition of inclusion by the European Commission , it is worth mentioning the existence of youth organisations **working in the field of culture** (broadly understood as theatre, animation, cultural activities, festivals). They do not necessarily separate disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged young people but may work with both groups.

GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION OF THE ORGANISATIONS, THEIR TARGET GROUPS AND ACTIVITIES

The geographical distribution of the organisations surveyed allows us to identify some patterns. The majority of organisations contacted were based either in the capital or in major cities. These organisations are the ones with the biggest advantages. They often have staff with knowledge of foreign languages, which makes it easier for them to contact foreign stakeholders and donors. They are also the ones who can attend most of the usual meetings (that are, generally, concentrated in the cities). If based in the capital city, these organisations also have more direct access to embassies and EU delegations, with subsequent higher amount of information available.

Organisations based in the capital, or a major city, may sometimes run activities in other cities or in other provinces either through partners or, when they are large enough, through their own offices.

In addition to central organisations, there are also locally active organisations in the provinces. If they have an established partnership with a central organisation, they might benefit from access to information and opportunities. In some cases, some strategic and useful partnerships are created with a central organisation that help local ones to carry out activities. However, in many cases this does not happen and local organisations remain isolated, scarcely visible beyond their area and thus difficult to spot.

With regard to the **variety of activities and target groups,** the EaP region and Russia is a vast area in which, in spite of a common recent history, geographical and social differences, as well as political and economic evolution, have resulted in very different realities. The result is that youth organisations from the region target a wide variety of young people and address very diverse issues, using different approaches. Consequently, organisations share some common priorities in all the countries but due to a variety of factors, they approach them differently. For instance, the more different sexual orientations are stigmatised, the more difficult it becomes to work with them and get support (financial or simply social). Organisations working with minorities also adapt to the local circumstances (the Roma are focused on in Moldova but are perceived as less relevant in, say, Russia or Azerbaijan). Finally, the type of donors and their attitudes also shape the capacity, or the lack of, to work with certain target groups.

Young people are a popular target group, but the understanding of youth may vary and include people below or over a certain age. There is often little awareness among those working with young people whether the target group includes people with fewer opportunities or not. This is partly due to a lack of common understanding, both at the state and organisation level, of what represents fewer opportunities. If some categories (physical and mental disabilities) are widely acknowledged as marginalised, some others are subject to more ambiguous, and subjective, interpretations. For one thing, an organisation working in a poor area of the country would, by default, work with young people with fewer opportunities since the area's revenue that is below the country's average would enable them to classify the target group as such. However, the lack of clarity and dialogue with national and international institutions prompts them to simply declare that they work with young people in general. By the same token "youth work" is often used to refer to work with school pupils and students. Viewing this positively it can potentially include any young people, but there is a tendency to then neglect the difficulties of some young people and not acknowledge the limited access to opportunities of a part of the target group, so applying the same standards to everyone is actually discriminating some young people.

The above-mentioned attitude also has negative implications regarding inclusion. When it is not always possible to identify young people with fewer opportunities, it also makes it more difficult to identify who works on inclusion. Organisations might be working on inclusion without knowing it and the focus on inclusion might become unclear when speaking to the organisations. For instance, in the Republic of Moldova, about 25% of interviewed organisations initially stated that they work directly with inclusion of young people.

However, during the interviews more than 90% of interviewees have admitted that their organisations do activities related to inclusion. The awareness of the concept of inclusion was relatively low across the region: only 10 of 21 organisations in Azerbaijan, and 20 out of 34 in Armenia actually mentioned inclusion, even though it turned out in the end that they did mostly work on inclusion-related topics. Belarusian and Ukrainian organisations seemed more aware of targeting young people with fewer opportunities. Inclusion was mostly associated with disabilities. For instance, in Georgia and in Russia this was the initial understanding when the interviewers talked about inclusion. In all cases, an elaboration of the concept of inclusion made the organisations realise that they were indeed working on inclusion (even if not targeting disabled people directly).

It is interesting to notice that support of **unemployed young people (and young people not in education, employment, or training – NEET)** is not strong, fed by an attitude that sees young people as strong, full of energy and thus able to find employment (not necessarily what they want, but a source of income) whenever needed. Unemployment is seen as a personal choice or laziness of a young person rather than a result of lack of inclusion or a societal problem. This is also not helped by official statistics tending to minimise unemployment figures and by the high level of informal employment present in the region.

Organisations in the region focus on **poor or marginalised** young people. This target group is much more popular to work with than unemployed young people but organisations tend to cluster poverty and marginalisation with other issues and address them as a whole. They usually talk about people who live far from regional centres, alumni of orphanages and boarding schools, youth in difficult life (social) situations, including those who have conflicts with the law, come from vulnerable families or are homeless.

Target group 1: Young people with physical, sensory and mental disabilities. Maybe following from the Soviet-time attitudes towards "invalid" people, services for physically and mentally disabled people benefit from positive attitudes (or declared positive) of the society and the authorities. Because this is one of the longest established sectors in the region, it also displayed a higher level of competences among its workers. In general, organisations working in this field enjoy a high degree of support or, at best, little hindrance from the authorities. In Georgia, for example, thanks to the Welfare and Development Centre, an organisation working in Gori, the Gori City Hall building has been made accessible and has employed disabled people.

The Resource Centre of Rehabilitation and Consulting "OSORC" from Tiraspol, Moldova, has a number of successful projects working with young people and children with physical and mental disabilities in the region.

A challenge in this category is the fact that organisations working with disabled people often do not target young people specifically. They concentrate on people with disabilities in general, be they young or not. However, they can count on more or less direct involvement of relatives of the target group who can help with activities or even project-related matters. These organisations were often created as peer-to-peer support groups and are based on the personal needs of people with disabilities or their relatives ("parental organisations").

The main problem is that inclusiveness and accessibility in common usage and in government policies only relate to people with physical disabilities and, in particular, those using wheelchairs. Any other issues related to inclusiveness, especially those relating to strongly stigmatised groups that challenges attitudes of a society, are not discussed and raised (for example, even equipment for visually impaired people and those hard of hearing tend to be off the agendas).

Many NGOs brought up the 1) importance of the support of and the work with parents of the young people with disabilities, and 2) the need to challenge the attitudes towards mental disability. Many people think that people with mental disabilities cannot be educated. It tends to be more difficult to increase awareness about mental disabilities, not least because of societal attitudes.

Advocacy and human rights protection campaigns are largely carried out by organisations dealing with people with disabilities. These NGOs have made a great contribution to advocating the interests of disabled people. In addition to advocacy, NGOs carry out support programmes for these target groups.

For example, in the Tavush region, an NGO, Bridge of Hope, is working with four centres providing support

to the families of all disabled children and adults up to the age of 30-35, as well as to schools and educational institutions. It has a wide scope of services and it is also subsidised by the RA Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of Armenia. In Georgia, several youth organisations are particularly active in advocacy work with the state both in the capital and beyond, and they have been active preparing a youth policy document, an action plan and a young workers' competence document. In Russia, the NGO "Perspectiva" (Moscow) is expanding its activities related to human rights consultancy of people with different disabilities, recruiting experts who are able to communicate in sign language or with mentally disabled people.

A growing number of activities are directed at raising awareness both in the streets, through distribution of leaflets, and online, through Facebook pages and groups. Awareness is raised, among other things, about environment-friendly lifestyles, urban, outdoor, social and artistic activities. In some cases (i.e. in Moldova), these have also succeeded in pushing forth legislation on youth and inclusion (adoption by the Ministry of Youth and Sport of a law on volunteering, a law on equality of opportunities, and development of the youth research sector).

Campaigns have also attempted, in some cases successfully, at changing the vocabulary and terminology related to inclusion (e.g. to use the term "people with disabilities" instead of "invalids"). Working with people with physical disabilities, the organisation "Motivatie" in Moldova has brought the issues of wheelchair-bound people to the public agenda. They have had an important impact at national level and succeeded in educating young people with disabilities to be active members of society. One of their significant projects is "Eco-Catering" in which people with physical and mental disabilities work as cooks, waiters, and helpers. The project has developed successfully for several years, providing the opportunity for inclusion and financial sustainability for more and more representatives of their target group. In Russia, the Saint Petersburg's Regional Charitable Social Non-Governmental Organisation "Nochlezhka" has accumulated a wealth of experience of campaigns to change attitudes and societal prejudices towards homeless people.

In Azerbaijan, the organisation "Talented Disabled People's Public Union" has organised public handicraft exhibitions or concerts performed by disabled people that has led to employment of many of them, also outside the capital. The Public Union also continues to assist physically disabled people to get jobs in Baku and in the regions, regardless of the economic hardships they have been facing recently. The Office for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Belarus annually holds an advocacy campaign "Accessibility Week". The campaign is devoted mainly to elimination of barriers preventing people with disabilities from living a full life. Events of the Accessibility Week give Belarusians of different ages a chance to think about the issues of accessibility of places and to be acquainted with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its basic principles.

Target group 2: Young people facing geographical obstacles.
Several organisations among our respondents declared to work on inclusion of young people from rural areas (with special focus on young people from small villages who have limited possibilities for participation). An example is the project "activLocal" of the organisation EcoVisio – which is a cycle of seminars based on non-formal education implemented in two villages of Moldova. This programme (which will be replicated in future in other villages throughout Moldova) empowers children from local schools (14-17 years old) to initiate small projects in their local communities. The project "activEco" uses the same approach in a larger scale in the whole territory of Moldova but for 18-27-year-old participants. The organisation "Creatorii" involves young people from rural areas in youth exchanges and training courses in the frame of the Erasmus+ programme. Regional youth centres (e.g. Youth Centre "Dacia" in Soroca) and the pilot project of AIESEC Moldova work with integrative education for disadvantaged children in village schools to develop teachers' competences to work with different children. Some organisations prioritise involvement of people from rural areas with less experience in non-formal education and youth activities. They try to cover the entire territory of Moldova and reach a larger number of community members at local and national levels (e.g. "ADC -Creative Development Association" or "EcoVisio").

The NGO "Russian-German exchange" (Russia) implements a number of projects, involving young people from the North Caucasus (specifically from the Chechen Republic).

The European Centre "Pro-Europa" from Comrat, in the Autonomous Territorial Unit of Gagauzia, the Republic of Moldova, contributes to the development of the Gagauz civil society through information and

consulting services; technical and institutional support; developing and strengthening collaboration between public local authorities, non-governmental organisations and mass media institutions in solving issues in local communities; as well as developing volunteering in the region. The centre is currently running the programme "Professional skills and social integration of vulnerable youth from rural regions of Southern part of Moldova".

Target group 3: Young people facing discrimination because of gender or sexual orientation.
LGBT services are not always easy to provide because of lack of awareness and sometimes hostility by the society or, at best, some parts of the society. In Georgia, only four organisations address the needs of the LGBT community and they are all based in Tbilisi (although services are provided in Batumi and Kutaisi as well). Free services of LGBT organisations include the services of a psychologist, a sexologist, an infectiologist, a social worker and a lawyer. As a result of joint advocacy measures by LGBT organisations and other NGOs, an anti-discrimination law was adopted in Georgia in 2014 that, despite opposition from certain officials and the Orthodox Church, included specific types of discrimination, including gender identity and sexual orientation.

In Moldova, the Information Centre Genderdoc-M (founded in 1998) has established itself as a reliable resource centre for capacity building and professional development for other organisations from the whole EaP region. It does not focus its activities only on youth; however, young people constitute a bigger part of the centres' target group.

There have been some attempts to promote gender issues and women's rights. For instance, the non-profit institution "National Women's Studies and Information Centre Partnership for Development" (CPD), in Moldova, has been conducting programmes on social empowerment and education, economic empowerment and professional orientation, legal empowerment and assistance, as well as political empowerment and community participation. In Belarus, the Republican Youth Organisation "Vstrecha" works on HIV/AIDS prevention among vulnerable groups, such as gay and bisexual men and youth. Their projects are aimed at promotion of healthy lifestyles, elimination of discrimination and stereotypes of LGBT and their social inclusion.

The "Centre for temporary placement" (also called "Shelter") provides social protection and assistance for victims of human trafficking and exploitation, to potential victims and migrants in difficult life situations. The centre has been present in Chisinau since 1998 and is financed from the state budget and by the International Organisation of Migration and represents a unique and the most important instrument in Moldova, providing complex (social, medical, juridical and psychological) assistance to the target group across the country. Moldova is the first country in the EaP region where this kind of national system has been established and launched. The lack of finances and infrastructure at the local level in each district ("raion") are the most important challenges to the successful functioning of this system.

Target group 4: Young people with health problems
Health can be considered a sub-category of humanitarian aid targeted at specific groups but also a free-standing category. Organisations, such as the Youth Friendly Health Centre "Neovita", are working in the area of health, and integration of youth with health problems, which among other things also provides capacity building training for regional specialists throughout Moldova.

In Azerbaijan, the NGO Real World, Real People supports people with HIV by providing them with care and professional support, whereas the foundation Vykhod (through its centre "Anton is nearby") in Russia works with young people affected by autism. The Association of UNESCO Clubs in Belarus has completed numerous projects on youth reproductive health and healthy lifestyle, and has been able to develop a network of youth multipliers on the topic of health, based on the "peer-to-peer" principle. The Association "Health XXI" (Georgia) also has different programmes, the aim of which is to create youth-friendly centres to provide an informative, confidential and safe environment for young people in the field of reproductive and sexual health.

HIV Positive young people can be regarded as a sub-category under the heading "health". Young people (men and women) who are HIV positive or at risk of becoming HIV positive are the target group of a number of organisations dealing with AIDS. A number of services are provided, such as advocacy, human rights monitoring, consultancy, education, training, peer-to-peer support etc. As in some previous cases, social work is not so much about social inclusion but rather about protection of rights, social and moral support, and

education of the target group. The organisations rarely work with the society to promote the idea of inclusion when it comes to groups which are strongly stigmatised. Awareness raising campaigns on HIV/AIDS have been increasingly visible in public agendas nationally in recent years, for example, the campaign "Initiativa Pozitiva" in Moldova.

Target group 5: Young people facing (different types of) socio-economic obstacles and/or facing discrimination due to cultural differences.

Displaced people (refugees, internally displaced persons)
This is a category of organisations that emerge "on demand" whenever a crisis forces people to relocate from some areas. The recent conflicts in Georgia and Ukraine generated an unprecedently high number of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) that has not met with an adequate response from the state institutions domestically.

Internally displaced youth is one of the main target groups of NGOs working in Georgia, in regions of Shida Kartli and Samegrelo where IDPs from Tskhinvali Region and Abkhazia live. For instance, an organisation "For Better Future", which was established in Akhalgori (now occupied), now operates in Tserovani – the largest IDP settlement in Georgia and targets specifically internally displaced youth.

Working with refugees in Russia seems a bit less popular (possibly due to the difficulty of registering and obtaining this status). However, a number of organisations work with migrants, or alleged migrants and minorities. Some NGOs occasionally organise charitable events to get resources, such as food and other items, but do not regularly work with refugees.

Ukraine has seen a sharp increase in organisations targeting IDPs. After an initial transitional phase, during which it was religious organisations providing immediate help, food and shelter, the country witnessed a sharp increase in services provided to IDPs from the Eastern region. The network of organisations focusing on IDPs is still developing, given that the conflict is relatively recent, so the presence of these organisations is scattered across the Ukrainian territory. In some cases, IDPs themselves have created an organisation or a movement, once they have successfully settled in another part of the country, to help other people like them.

Young people belonging to national and ethnic minorities
Work with minorities depends on the definition generally accepted at the national level. For instance, since the Russian Federation has 12 national republics with a high number of different national groups, the number of people who think that minorities should be a target group tends to be low. Some specific minorities are addressed in some cases, for instance Azeri or Armenian minorities in Georgia or Roma in Moldova ("Association of girls and women Roma", "Voices of Roma"), where the National Bureau of Interethnic Relations elaborated an "Action Plan on supporting the Roma population in Moldova for the years 2007–2010" (and later 2010-2015 and 2016-2020).

(Young) Ex-offenders
A limited number of organisations are working with formerly convicted people and the majority addresses them as one of their target groups rather than as a specific one. The services provided include assistance with obtaining documents, helping with shelter and food, and assistance with getting a regular income.

Young (ex) victims of trafficking
The centre of temporary placement "Shelter", which has been present in Chisinau for about 20 years, represents a unique and the most important instrument in Moldova, providing complex (social, medical, juridical, psychological) assistance to the victims of human trafficking, and orphans across the country. Moldova is the first country in the region where such a national system has been established and launched. The lack of finances and infrastructure at the local level in each district ("raion") are the most important challenges to the successful functioning of this system.

Orphans and homeless
Many organisations work with children from orphanages (0-18 years) providing leisure time activities or some training. But state orphanages are difficult partners in terms of cooperation with NGOs. So, the NGOs prefer to work with young people who have graduated from the orphanages and either continue their education in colleges or seek job opportunities (18+).

Homeless young people are addressed within the group of homeless people in general; there is no specific focus on being young. Only one organisation of those interviewed works with this group specifically. It has a very well developed system of working at multiple levels.

Horizontal activities (targeting several groups at the same time)

Aid (humanitarian)
Humanitarian aid is provided to socially vulnerable groups, such as people with disabilities and children, or after disasters. The humanitarian aid mainly includes clothing, food, school supplies, medicine and so on. Some NGOs also carry out scientific research and professional services, such as studies, conferences, scientific publications, as well as legal and psychological consultation. For instance, the NGO Real People, Real World focuses on HIV and works with HIV positive people and provides them with a psychologist and a social worker.

These projects are normally funded by regional donors (USAID, Open Society, European Foundation, Black Sea Trust) and tend to have a longer-term approach, and in general more money available for a single project. Services in this group are more diverse, consisting of consultations with the target group, assistance, raising the level of education, changing attitudes and raising self-awareness. These projects are inclusive and nationwide. Several regional organisations have been identified that are implementing multiannual projects on strengthening civic education in schools of various regions.

Training, seminars and cultural activities
This category is especially relevant to this report since it is the closest to the activities that are normally carried out in the programme countries (EU member and associate countries that are participating in Erasmus+ activities). A high number of youth organisations are active in non-formal education through participation in youth exchanges, training courses, seminars, workshops, internships and volunteering. In addition, personal and professional development activities are organised to meet the needs of various target groups (in leadership, negotiation, parliamentary participation, art education, social theatre skills, motoric system education, fundraising skills, advocacy, diplomacy and cross-sectoral cooperation, among other things).

Organisations active in training and seminars have often participated in Erasmus+ training events, exchanges, and seminars on a variety of topics (conflict resolution, leadership skills, human rights and personal development). However, there is also a local supply of activities, and regional organisations often offer local training for young people in project work, implementing business ideas, and CV and motivational letter writing.

Many organisations provide opportunities for international exchanges and voluntary work, work camps, or the European Voluntary Service (EVS) and many respondents said that these experiences had been very important events in their volunteers' lives (life changing experiences).

Many NGOs working with inclusion, and youth NGOs in particular, organise and implement cultural and entertainment events. Such events are often organised mainly during local and religious holidays or in the framework of international days, such as the International Children's Day and the International Day against Violence against Women. In some cases, cultural events are accompanied by exhibitions/sales of items made by young people, women or other target groups.

Social entrepreneurship
Organisations, such as "AIESEC Moldova", "Eco-Razeni", and "EcoVisio", work with integration of youth in the labour market and social entrepreneurship. The "Youth Banks" Project of EEF (Eastern European Foundation) is active in several regions of Moldova. AIESEC Moldova offers opportunities for personal and professional development for young people (mostly students) from all over Moldova through youth exchanges. Annual events like "Social Entrepreneurship Forum" and "IarmarEco – the Fair of Ecological Opportunities and Social Entrepreneurship" contribute to development of the concept of social entrepreneurship in Moldova and cooperation of representatives of different sectors (civil society organisations, business, state, etc.). The training provided in the field has become more practical: in the beginning, it focused on capacity building and

theory, but now at the end of the training, participants are encouraged to implement something practical (e.g. a business plan or a marketing campaign).

The Charitable Foundation "Raul" (Russia, Saint Petersburg) helps graduates from orphanages to find a proper place on the labour market by connecting them to potential employers and suggesting training and mentoring. Within the USAID-funded Programme LIFE (Livelihood Improvement through Fostered Employment 2012-2013) for People with Disabilities, implemented by Save the Children, several social entrepreneurship organisations have been established with people with disabilities (PWD).

In Georgia, social entrepreneurship seems to be prioritised by organisations working on disability issues. The association "Anika" runs a social sewing factory, employing young women with disabilities. Also, the Women's Union RHEA operates a social café, "Rhea's Squirrels", with mentally disabled people working there.

CHALLENGES AND APPROACHES

Youth organisations face different kinds of challenges. In this section, we have grouped them under what we have deemed as the key issues. The first issue is resources in general, which does not mean only financial resources but also human resources, information and opportunities. The second issue is opportunities, in particular access, in which the lack of access in different situations will be explained. Since organisations mostly depend on donors, we have included a separate section about donors. Finally, we address the relationships of organisations with the societies (in which they have to operate) and with the authorities (under which they have to work) along with the main challenges posed by these relationships.

Resources

The majority of respondents talked about the lack of human resources and the main reason for that was the lack of funding to provide salaries for staff. This is an especially serious issue in countries that have seen the NGO sector facing increasing restrictions and that are undergoing progressive levels of control. This adds up to what is perceived as the passivity of many young people who do not join activities, and consequently makes it more difficult for organisations to identify volunteers and motivate them. The limited availability of funding also has an impact on the chances to invite external experts to train staff and become more competitive in fundraising. As one Ukrainian youth worker said during an interview:

"To be successful, our project must be staffed properly; people must be trained; we lack managers for certain projects rather than money, because we can involve famous local people and they will help as they draw attention and fundraise; not only managerial, other knowledge is also needed – I believe people must study, even old people."

Human resources are a challenge to quality, rather than quantity. There seems to be a lack of volunteers for organisations working with specific and more challenging target groups (people with disabilities, HIV positive people). As one respondent reported "We need professional volunteers and staff members – there are enough people, volunteers that are ready to help but not enough professionals among them".

Other organisations said that volunteers are relatively easy to find. The problem is, then, not finding people but finding qualified, motivated and enthusiastic people who can not only participate but who can lead activities.

Once valuable people are identified, organisations face competition from other sectors and organisations. In many cases, good people leave to join other organisations, or move on to another sector, with more competitive salaries. It is not always easy to find professional project/management staff in the NGO sector because positions are often perceived as temporary, and competent, experienced professionals prefer long-term employment in the business sector or international organisations. In other cases, little or no opportunities in rural areas push people to bigger urban centres and make it more difficult to find qualified or any volunteers, in these depopulated areas, which further hampers development of the youth sector in these areas.

Resources (funding but also information) to develop competences of staff are especially scarce in organisations operating in rural areas. Several respondents said that they were unable to reach out to young people in rural areas because they did not know what channels (mailing lists, contacts) to use to liaise with them. Resources also include equipment. For instance, there is virtually no reproductive health facilities (e.g. gynaecological chairs) available for disabled people in Georgia.

Time can also be considered a resource. It is difficult for organisations, given the limited staff and funding to invest time in identification of needs. Organisations with more specific target groups, however, try to rely on more thorough needs analyses. About a half of the organisations interviewed stated that they ran their activities based on strategies spanning over several years, important components of which are challenges and needs, and the identification of these.

Meanwhile, organisations have started to explore new possibilities for fundraising, such as crowdfunding and private donations. "Way out in St Petersburg", "Perspektivy" and "GAORDI" launch projects on crowdfunding platforms on a regular basis.

Access

Access is a major issue in a variety of settings. Language is perhaps the most visible of these obstacles. In areas with ethnic minorities, the lack of knowledge of the national language precludes access to information and exchanges with other parts of the country and with the capital (e.g. ethnic Armenians and Azerbaijani living in Kvemo Kartli and Samtskhe-Javakheti do not always know Georgian to a level that would enable them to participate in government-led initiatives). By the same token, organisations with no English speakers have limited, or no access, to international information and partnerships. Under the Youth in Action programme, a few training events were allowed to be conducted in Russian, to reach out to non-English speakers, including within the EU (for instance in the Narva region, in eastern Estonia) but there is a limited availability of such initiatives.

Cultural factors also have an impact on access and participation. For instance, some parents may not want their children (especially girls) to join activities. Another issue is that families with physically or mentally disabled children may not let their children participate for fear of social stigma. This, in turn, contributes to further alienating people with physical or mental disabilities. It is, indeed, quite uncommon to meet people in wheelchairs in most of these regions, and services, where available, are not always functioning.

Lack of attention to and awareness of other cultural issues, such as religion or ethnicity, may cause alienation and distrust in some segments of the population. For example, the Muslim population and the Kist youth living in Pankisi Gorge have a low level of trust in public institutions. In the rest of Georgia, the Pankisi Gorge is perceived as an uncontrolled, dangerous region, and the Kist people are associated with terrorists. Such public attitudes are encouraged by the fact that Tarkhan Batirashvili (aka Abu Omar al-Shishani), one of Daesh's warlords, was from Pankisi.

Internet seems to have made access to information and resources more democratic. Internet coverage is expanding and is available at a reasonably low price. However, internet access is still challenging in rural areas, especially for young people with fewer opportunities.

Adaptation of curricula for people with special needs represents another challenge to access. There is a need to adopt an infrastructure, a curriculum, and an approach that would include people with fewer opportunities or at least acknowledge their need for further support in the learning process.

Finally, given the current travel restrictions affecting most citizens in the region, access to opportunities also depends on the ability to get travel documents in order and to be able to participate in the current knowledge exchanges taking place in Europe and beyond. Here Moldova is an exception: not only has it a visa-free regime with the EU but many Moldovan citizens also hold a Romanian passport, by virtue of which they had direct access to EU funding even before signing agreements with the EU. In addition to visas, to participate, many young people need to pay for tickets and all other costs in advance, not knowing when they will get the money back. This is especially true for NGOs working with youth from remote areas. In order to increase their participation, organisations like "Biliki" and "Kartlosi" in Georgia pay the travel costs of participants themselves.

In Belarus, the "Office for Initiatives Promotion" organises numerous events outside Minsk, the capital, in order to bring information about international opportunities to young people from various backgrounds. Organisations consider young people with fewer opportunities as a priority target group when choosing participants for both national or international activities. The Russian art museum (Saint Petersburg) also offers a number of educational art programmes (both long and short term) to groups of young people with fewer opportunities, enhancing their access to cultural resources. It is not only about making the environment accessible but more about especially adapted programmes run by specialist guides and educators.

Donors

Donors are a key issue not only in the region but for most of the world. The main challenge is the absence, or scarcity, of donors working in particular fields, which compromises the capacity of the youth sector to have a bigger impact in the field in question (for instance, young people with difficult behaviours, young prisoners and ex-convicts). For those who try to get general donors to work with specific target groups, the lack of knowledge about the specific needs for working with these groups poses challenges, for instance, the extra

costs necessary when working with people with physical disabilities.

The grant award conditions of donors are sometimes very inflexible, allowing only certain activities. This in turn makes it difficult for some organisations who apply methods outside the mainstream to find financing. In addition, some organisations also need to compete with other organisations. Financial resources are limited and organisations have to fight for it, so they don't always get help or support from their colleagues.

On the other hand, availability of special funds to work with specific groups may enhance activities in this area. For instance, two Belarusian organisations said they had started to work with people with fewer opportunities because they had received an offer (of funding) to work with a particular target group. They were engaged in awareness-raising activities on the rights of a group with fewer opportunities and had now reached quite a professional level working with them.

This leads to another tendency in the region. Many organisations are donor-driven and do not often specialise in a particular field but work simultaneously in many different areas, tailoring their objectives to those suggested by donors, which has a negative impact on the quality of activities.

The Public Association for Impaired Children Rehabilitation "Mushfiq" has succeeded in 1) finding employment to a high number of disabled young people; 2) sending many disabled young people abroad for further training and education; 3) motivating many young people to establish their own NGOs; and 4) encouraging disabled young people to start families. The Rehabilitation Centre keeps getting funding from a private international company operating in the country as a part of the company's CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) activities each year.

Relationships with authorities and national institutions
There is a fair amount of general disappointment when it comes to the role of the authorities and the dialogue between governmental institutions and (youth) NGOs. It was said that in some cases social projects receive little or no support from local authorities, which limits projects' impact and does not help make their results sustainable. This adds to the understanding that, in some cases, "everything depends on the particular people who work in the local authority office. If a person is good, then we get support, if not, then no support".

For instance, organisations working with formerly convicted young people brought up the degree of indifference from the government towards the issue and the subsequent lack of visibility, attention and support. In general, recognition from a government and/or its institutions is an important step towards addressing an issue. Refugees need apartments and jobs, in addition to integration, and these basic services are an easier target for a government to deal with than for small youth organisations. Putting gender equality on the national agenda can also foster activities at national and local levels, but it does not always happen.

Even the very status of young people is sometimes under debate, with different government institutions sometimes unable to agree on the definition of young people, disadvantaged youth and youth work. Respondents also suggested that sometimes government initiatives only served a "decorative" purpose and the money was spent not for real activities but to "show off". Thus, the problem is not necessarily the lack of money, but the way it is spent. The insufficient professional competences of some government employees is another problem. Even though youth NGOs have increasingly been working on social projects that could benefit the society as a whole, joint initiatives (between authorities and the civil society) are rare which increases the risk of overlap in activities, and, at least, does not take advantage of economies of scale.

Things may go as far as that authorities encourage establishment of parallel governmental organisations that will actually compete with youth NGOs and, to some extent, replicates their work. On the other hand, scepticism towards government structures sometimes lead organisations not to engage in a dialogue with the authorities, fearing that the state will try to control, leading to a substantial loss of independence or autonomy.

The work of the NGO, "Youth for development" is a good example of cooperation between an NGO and government institutions. The NGO's direct target group are prisoners. Youth for Development addresses potential adaptation problems and prepares prisoners to their "new" life in the society, helping them adapt to it faster. This NGO works closely with state prison services.

At the other end of the spectrum, there are examples of how established institutions can have a negative impact on the work of organisations locally. The largest LGBT organisation in Georgia, "Identoba" (Eng. Identity), was trying to open a shelter for homeless people but this was stopped by the negative publicity by the Georgian Orthodox Church.

In Belarus, youth centres that are mainly financed from the state budget have started a close cooperation with youth organisations and initiatives because they don't have methodological knowledge of and experience in implementing intercultural and inclusive projects. At the moment, the cooperation is done on a volunteer basis. In Georgia, dialogue with the authorities is the easiest for NGOs working with disabled people. In Georgia, for example, thanks to the Welfare and Development Centre, an organisation working in Gori, the Gori City Hall building has been made accessible and has employed disabled people.

Another example of a good practice is the establishment of the State Paralympic Committee of Azerbaijan and the State Juvenile Paralympic Committee of Azerbaijan. Both Committees are financially supported by the authorities and also receive some funding from private sources (mostly international). They organise awareness-raising campaigns and activities, portraying people with disabilities leading active lives, sometimes even more active than able-bodied ones.

In Russia, many organisations working with disabled people stress that the situation there has improved significantly since the country adopted the Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities. There is now much more interest in and support to the activities of NGOs operating in this sector by the authorities than there used to be.

In Russia, NGOs can also apply for national or regional grants through state-run competitions. They may get small subsidies or grants for certain projects. The transparency of these calls and competitions for grants needs work but some of the organisations interviewed (for example, the non-profit organisation "GAORDI") apply and get funding from the state on a regular basis.

Society

Recognition from the society is an important issue. Societal pressure is not only an effective tool to prompt a government to think about certain issues, but it can also be a strong deterrent when it stigmatises groups of people and even shows hostility towards those working with them or simply does not support certain activities. As an respondent said: "A part of the society still doesn't know about the problem and doesn't want to know".

Old attitudes stemming from the Soviet period also magnify the issue. For instance, physically disabled people are often represented as "invalid", people that need to be looked after as sick relatives but not necessarily integrated into the society and offered equal opportunities. This makes inclusion more difficult and even programmes aimed at the integration of physically disabled people into the job market meet with hostility from potential employers. The degrees of discrimination vary but the kind of attitude reported in the survey –
"if Allah gave this child to them in this condition, the child should stay in it and parents should accept it" –
is unfortunately widely accepted across communities (not just Muslim as in this example – just using other words). Because of this, parents are shy to come up with ideas and initiatives. However, when invited, many of them are happy to join an initiative.

Working with ethnic or religious minorities also present challenges to youth workers who are met with scepticism. The main challenges they face are intercultural and linguistic misunderstandings (as some groups have limited language skills in the national language), youth migration, early marriage of girls in some areas and negative community attitudes, especially in more religious areas.

The problem is particularly felt by organisations and youth workers working on LGBT issues because people with non-heterosexual orientation are often publicly regarded as deviants, and activities targeted at LGBT people do not get support from the state or the society.

Societal trust in NGOs is generally low. For instance, in Armenia, currently only 7% of the population trust in NGOs (and it is possible that many people do not understand what an NGO is). Some NGO representatives pointed out that a lack of motivation was the reason for a low level of participation in NGO activities. Representatives of youth NGOs were particularly aware of this problem.

National mobility is limited, especially for those living in rural areas. International volunteering is largely acknowledged as something positive but it is not accessible to everyone because of the high costs. However, little attention or efforts are devoted to offering young people the possibility to visit larger or just different organisations within the same country, which would be more cost-effective than travelling internationally, more feasible on a wider scale and likely to bring good benefits.

The "Talented Disabled People's Public Union" in Azerbaijan organises public handicraft exhibitions and concerts of talented disabled people. This project can help many young people get jobs in the region. The Public Union continues to assist physically disabled people to get jobs in Baku and in the regions. The Union continues to work, even when they do not have funding. They promote their activities in the communities and attract community members to volunteer in the Union's events that are being organised to help disabled people feel part of the society. Specialists in psychology who worked with prisoners and ex-convicts in a project by the Centre for Youth Rights Protection in Moldova were hired by the prison services afterwards to continue their work assisting young people to adapt to life outside the prison after their release. The work has reduced the rate of reoffending among young people who were not able to adapt to the society after their release and wanted to get back to prison where they felt more safe.

"Marginalisation of internally displaced persons; youth who have left Luhansk have no jobs, no place to live; there are cases of discrimination, artists cannot express themselves. Founders of the group are making electronic music, reggae music; young artists are putting up concerts etc. Some people who have moved from the occupied territories have joined the army. Rehabilitation of such people will be the most difficult task, because their homes are occupied and the families have separated. Now we work as a network of people doing our own thing and supporting each other. Several such people work at the Hromadske TV and other media places," – says Oleksiy Bida of the Centre for Audio and Visual Arts "Luganda", which is helping internally displaced people and people from conflict zones around Lugansk.

FUNDRAISING AND INTERNATIONALISATION TRENDS

Overview: The countries surveyed showed different tendencies when it comes to internationalisation and engagement with the Erasmus+ funding programme. There is a tendency to opt out of (or not opt in) the programme, especially in Azerbaijan and Russia because of two factors: The first is the attitude towards foreign donors that pushes organisations towards the domestic fundraising market. The other is the lack of access to information which is rarely available beyond the major cities.

The rest of the countries, however, display a reasonable awareness of international funding opportunities available and a relatively high level of engagement in Erasmus+. Armenia makes sporadic use of this funding, awareness and engagement in Georgia seems to be growing, while Moldova is a regular participant.

Armenia
Financial instability is one of the most urgent problems for NGOs in Armenia. The following international organisations are considered to be the main NGO donors and the ones that give the biggest individual grant amounts: UN agencies (UNDP, UNICEF); USAID; World Bank; US Embassy; British Council; World Vision International; Save the Children International; European Union; OSCE; and Counterpart International.

The most common local organisations providing funding, mentioned by the respondents, include the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs, the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, the Ministry of Defence, the Round Table Foundation, the Youth Foundation of Armenia and local authorities. However, local sources of funding in Armenia are extremely limited in the public sector and NGOs have to seek international funding sources, which sometimes forces them to deviate from their mission. As a result, there is little trust in the sector and NGOs are accused of being dependent on foreign agendas.

After having secured funds from a certain donor/donors, most of the NGOs tend to rely on the same donor/donors in their future projects, too, and are no longer interested in looking for new donors, being afraid of wasting time and resources in unsuccessful application procedures.

There is an online system, supported by the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs (*cragrer.am)*, to apply for funding from 1,200 USD to 4,000 USD on a quarterly basis. Project proposals submitted through the online system are evaluated by experts with the help of online tools.

Grant programmes do not allow NGOs flexibility in terms of problem-solving and independent decision-making about expenditures. Nowadays, the vast majority of organisations operate through programme funding and can only incur expenses allowed by the particular programme; any other activities relating to the implementation of its mission can only be done through voluntary efforts and contributions.

Legislation allows NGOs to charge membership fees but this is unpopular among local organisations, not least because it increases the work of accountants and are low in amount.

The budgets of most of the programmes implemented by NGOs are between 15,000-20,000 USD. However, there are NGOs, for instance the Bridge of Hope, that carry out large projects, worth over 1 million USD. Some NGOs had projects with small budgets of only up to 1,000 USD.

Azerbaijan
The most popular donors seem to be: the United States Agency for International Development; Counterpart; EU delegations; OSCE; foreign ministries through locally based embassies (especially Norwegian, British); and the Seni Cup.

Some initiatives have been supported by private companies such as British Petroleum; Garadakh Cement Company; and Simbrella Company. There are also national donors popular among Youth NGOs: the National Council on Support for national NGOs; the Azerbaijan Youth Foundation; the Ministry of Youth and Sport; and the State Labour and Social Protection Fund.

Interestingly, as told by the respondent from the National Paralympic Committee, national companies do not give support to the Committee. The funding that the Committee receives from the national budget through the Social Fund is limited and not enough to cover all the project needs. According to the respondent: "The national entrepreneurs do not understand the prestige that comes from supporting the National Paralympic Committee as companies from developed countries do".

Belarus
Main donors are USAID, various EU programmes, the World Bank, the Matra Fund, and Forum Syd (supporting almost half of the organisations surveyed). Charity support for young people with fewer opportunities or youth initiatives in the field of entrepreneurship accounts for around one third of the funding available. The rest comes from the state budget and is directed mainly to youth centres, which are supported by the government bodies in accordance to the Code of Education (law).

The following trends in fundraising among youth organisations in Belarus were brought up by those interviewed:

- Tightened legal financial regulations: all funding coming to a bank account of a legal entity must be registered and approved by a relevant government body; all funding coming to a bank account of an individual must be taxed and proven to be necessary for this individual, not for a group/initiatives.
- National funds available for youth policy activities only address the needs of a limited number of youth organisations, and are not available for all youth organisations/groups that would be willing to compete for them.

Other challenges include:
- a need to build trusting and equal relationships with partner youth organisations in the EU that could apply for funding to implement ideas proposed by youth organisations in Belarus;
- a need to find financial solutions to administrative costs;
- a need to network in different small circles of youth organisations and initiatives in order to become known as a reliable partner to join larger partnership projects that are usually initiated by experienced and larger organisations.

Georgia

Despite their different target groups and geographic locations, organisations share a significant dependence on donors (more international than local ones). The most frequently mentioned donors are: USAID, EU, the Open Society Foundation Georgia, the European Endowment for Democracy, the Embassy of the United States in Georgia, People in Need, Erasmus+, the Black Sea Trust, Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, and the World Bank.

Local donors include: Lions Club, the World Union of Jews, the Embassy of Japan, the Foreign Ministries of the Czech Republic and Poland, RFSU etc. These were mentioned several times in relation to certain target groups.

The majority of organisations had subscribed to information directly through the websites of the donors. They also used social networks to acquire information about grant calls. In Georgia, csogeorgia.org is a popular website in this regard.

The number of organisations that receive grants from the Ministry of Sports and Youth Affairs and/or from local authorities is minimal. There is hardly any funding available from the business sector and big corporations are not active in this field.

The majority of respondents complained that donors did not give reasons for their rejections to fund projects. Only a few respondents admitted that they had written their project proposal just shortly before the deadline and that it had not been well planned and they understood the reason for the rejection. Respondents believed that if donors would explain their reasons for rejection, this would help organisations to develop their project proposal writing skills.

Representatives of relatively small organisations had noted that larger donors tend to fund the same organisations most of the time and not express trust in new organisations. According to these organisations, this curbs development and big organisations often monopolise certain areas.

Membership fees are relatively common but not as a means for fundraising. The main aim of membership fees was, according to the respondents, to increase the sense of responsibility among its young members.

Moldova

The donors that were mentioned the most often were: USAID, the Embassy of the US in Moldova, the East-Europe Foundation (EEF), FHI 360, Soros Foundation, UNDP, UNICEF, SOIR Moldova, UNFPA, the EU Commission (through the instrument for democracy and human rights).

However, very few of these donors have "youth inclusion" as a primary priority. Other donors mentioned by some respondents include the Pestalozzi Children Foundation, HEKS, NED, the Council of Europe (the European Youth Foundation), CRS (Christian Relief Service), DWW International (Popular Universities of Germany), Keystone, UNAIDS, SIDA, Liechtenstein Foundation, the International Organisation of Migration (implementing programmes), the Rule of Law initiative, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, and the Ukrainian Women's Fund.

A common feature among nearly all respondents in Moldova is their dependence on external donors. All the organisations (with the exception of AIESEC Moldova) said that donors are the only or the most important funding source for them.

The grants of external donors account on average for 80-90% of the budgets of the majority of organisations. Local donors (e.g. the Ministry of Youth and Sports is a major donor only for few organisations), businesses and private donors are mentioned rarely and never play an important role in funding projects. Only a minority of organisations seemed to have a strategy or a plan for financial sustainability.

Donors can directly influence trends (at least in business) in the country. After UNDP and other donors declared that starting from a certain date in 2016 they would only hold their events (conferences, meetings, etc.) in venues/conference rooms/hotels that meet minimum standards of accessibility (ramps for wheelchairs, specially equipped toilets), all important stakeholders (hotels) started to adjust their facilities to meet the new

requirements.

The local authorities sometimes support youth projects by providing them with office facilities or utilities (electricity, water, phone, etc.) free of charge (Youth Centre "Dacia") or providing venues for meetings and conferences in short-term projects.

The most popular resources to access information on funding are: civic.md, cntm.md, contact.md, ong.md, finantari.md, and finantare.gov.md.

According to many respondents, financial sustainability is a significant challenge both for organisations and youth workers. First, it is particularly difficult to find financing for administrative support of NGOs to secure their financial independence and stability for at least 2-3 years, for example. Second, the majority of staff of NGOs focusing on project work, only get paid a salary when it is a part of the project budget, which also compromises long-term financial stability.

The vast majority of organisations have membership fees but these always only represent insignificant sums (on average 5 euros per membership per year).

Russia
In contrast to the rest of the region, the largest sources of funding are community resources, voluntary work and national and regional donors that together make up almost 70% of available funds. International donors have lost most of their popularity because of the increased level of control on all projects and activities funded from abroad. Some international donors are still used, however: the European Youth Foundation, the Charities Aid Foundation, and Erasmus+. The degree of flexibility allowed and the fact that money comes in a strong currency still motivates some organisations to deal with the extra bureaucracy associated with international projects.

At the domestic level, funding mostly comes from: the Federal President Grants Programme (many have applied to this programme but were not awarded grants; respondents found this programme very corrupted and not transparent); support from local authorities (this mostly depends on the lobbying capacity of an organisation); the Ministry of Economy's Development Grants; the CAF Foundation; the LUKOIL Foundation; and the NIAEP Foundation.

In addition, some foundations work specifically with certain groups of people with special needs, such as the foundation of Natalia Vodjanova "Obnagennue serdca (Naked hearts)" that targets homelessness and people affected by HIV.

Private donations have become increasingly popular but they can only be used by more experienced organisations. The strongest and the most advanced organisations use crowdfunding platforms to collect resources for their projects.

A growing number of organisations seek support from private businesses. There are also some examples of corporate volunteering programmes and co-branding but also in this case these are easier for more experienced organisations. Some NGOs also work with corporate social responsibility programmes of very big businesses, such as Rusal, Gazprom etc. (for example, the programme "Charity instead of souvenirs" proposes to companies to donate money to an NGO instead of buying corporate presents on the New Year).

Some NGOs earn money through event management (by organising an event and charging participants). In many cases, this funding is not intended to cover all the costs of an organisation but diversification of funding sources makes organisations more independent and sustainable.

Long-term activities and planning are also difficult in Russia because of uncertainty, inability to predict if projects will be awarded funding or not, high investment (in time and human resources) needed to secure funding and difficulties in finding funding for some categories of expenses (salaries) or specific projects (advocacy) or to target some unpopular groups of people (e.g. HIV positive people just out of prison).
In general, even if there seems to be enough money for the day-to-day work, there is little funding available to develop or expand one's activities, or to invest into new projects or to reach a larger target group.

Community resources are also popular and local businesses and public authorities sometimes provide donations in kind (working rooms, offices). Membership fees are not popular and do not really provide financial stability and are often considered a formal requirement rather than a fundraising approach.

Ukraine

Popular donors are: the International Renaissance Foundation, Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, the East Europe Foundation, the Swiss-Ukrainian Decentralisation Support Project, the Democracy Reporting Project, the Global Fund, the Boel Foundation, the Polish Institute, the Goethe Institute, the British Council, USAID, PACT, the European Endowment for Democracy, the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, UNITED for Intercultural Action, the International Development Alliance Network, Erasmus+, the Carpathian Foundation, the International Migration Organisation, UNDP, UNHCR, the East Europe Fund, the National Endowment for Democracy, the Polish-Ukrainian Cooperation Foundation PAUCI, the Canada Fund for Local Initiatives; foreign embassies and governments (the Netherlands, Germany, Poland, Norway, USA, Canada, Switzerland, Japan); the Council of Europe, OSCE, and SALTO EECA. The Ukrainian diaspora and "the people of Ukraine" were also mentioned among donors by several respondents.

The sources of information about funding opportunities mentioned the most were the Gurt portal mailing list, followed by the Civic Space, Google, Facebook groups and personal contacts. Direct messages from donors, international mailing lists, social networks, international conferences, professional community partners, public events, the internet, personal contacts and the word of mouth were also mentioned – "if we don't ask, nobody shares information".

Because of the current situation in Ukraine, a number of donors seemed only interested in giving funding for political, economic or emergency issues (e.g. refugees and IDP), leaving little room for projects with long-term goals for developing youth organisations. In the end, this reflects on the viability of projects and their capacity to plan strategically for more than a few months at a time.

A Ukrainian youth worker said during an interview: "It is not a problem to get funding, but the problem is that there are lots of small projects and every three months our attention is on how to get new funding; to keep a person, I have to find three small projects; donor funding is not properly designed – to get international funding in many cases I need to find foreign partners and most of the money goes to those foreign partners".

This, in turn, affects viability of organisations since, for instance, EU grants require a fair degree of financial capacity, which has been reduced by the recent events in the country.

INTERNATIONALISATION AND ERASMUS+

The knowledge of and engagement in Erasmus+ (and its predecessor) programmes varies substantially across the region. The table below shows the different levels of participation of youth organisations from the region to the Youth in Action programme since 2008. For a number of reasons, these figures are limited to projects funded by the member states' National Agencies only, with no information on projects funded centrally from Brussels (It turned out to be more difficult than expected to obtain centralised statistics from the region from EACEA.). However, as these projects make up a substantial part of the Youth in Action Programme budget and data has been collected over a 7-year period, it presents a good overview of the different levels of involvement by country.

Table 4: Engagement in the target region

Country	Political freedom	Participation in EC funded programmes (Youth Exchanges)	Participation in EC funded programmes (EVS)	Engagement index	Share of inclusion projects (Youth Exchanges and EVS)	Youth (14-24) population[9]
Armenia	Partly free	52	153	0.00040	79 (22)%	501,600
Azerbaijan	Not free	8	37	0.00002	88 (22) %	1,627,500
Belarus	Not free	37	58	0.00008	76 (34)%	1,111,500
Georgia	Partly free	100	213	0.00049	65 (22)%	630,000
Moldova	Partly free	38	232	0.00046	79 (20)%	582,200
Russia	Not free	66	330	0.00002	62 (22)%	15,301,000
Ukraine	Partly free	125	146	0.00005	66 (29)%	5,290,000

The high number of inclusion projects needs some scrutiny before accepting it as such. A project may have a substantial amount of engagement with inclusion issues, but it may as well have had a very minor contribution to it. The understanding of the concept of inclusion by local organisations may not necessarily match that of the European Commission, as defined earlier in this report. The engagement level as shown in the table varies across the countries and could be seen as correlating (at least partially) with the degree of control on civil society in the country, which, in turn, correlates with the degree of freedom in the country. Because the sizes and population numbers of the countries in question are very different, the engagement index is calculated based on the number of projects in relation to the youth population of that same country. We are aware that the generally accepted definition of a young person in the European Union and its programmes extends to people up to 30 years of age, but we've chosen the range from 14 to 24 because of two criteria: firstly, the reliability of statistics on 14-24 population (against other surveys), and secondly, volunteers, and consequently active young people in EaP countries and Russia are generally younger than in the EU.

The engagement index reveals two distinct tendencies. One is that in the less permissive countries the number of projects (related to the youth population) is lower than in the more liberal ones. Ukraine might be seen as an exception in this respect. However, the other tendency is for larger countries to display more diversity; and consequently not all regions have the same level of engagement. This is in contrast with smaller countries, in which the activities of NGOs and associations are less fragmented. For one thing, it is unlikely that the whole of the Russian population would have received the same information and that each large city would have the same capacity. This is valid for the ratio between capital and other cities. In smaller countries, a substantial percentage of the urban population is concentrated in the capital where more information is normally available. Therefore, even assuming that 10% of the youth population engages with Erasmus+ in Moscow and Chisinau, the population of Chisinau accounts for 1/4 of the whole country, whereas that of Moscow is less than 1/8.

Starting from the above data, our experts devoted a part of the interviews to their country's tendencies in the framework of the Erasmus+ Programme. This allowed them to complement quantitative with qualitative data, thus helping them provide some country-specific explanations that are reported below.

Armenia

Of the 34 respondents, 13 youth NGOs working with inclusion had worked at international level so far. EVS seems a popular tool and relatively easy to manage. In addition, international training events had focused on environment, peace-building and youth policy. Main partners in international collaboration were: Caritas International; the Portugal Amanda Centre; UNICEF; UNDP; USAID; Mission East Denmark; Oxfam Britain; Mobility International USA; the European Union; the Global Fund; and the European Youth Forum.

Involvement in Erasmus+ has been limited, with only four organisations having participated in activities funded by this scheme. Respondents thought that interest for the scheme had been low because of the lack of direct access to funding (except for the short Eastern Partnership Youth Window). When invited, they had

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9   http://www.indexmundi.com/factbook/countries

tended to send participants but the scheme has not been a priority for the organisations because they are busy looking for sources of income for their projects. Other issues included lack of information about possible partners, limited understanding of the e-form and the criteria applied, and, to a certain extent, limited competences in writing project proposals in English.

The drawback of the EU programme has been that it has not been able to have a real impact on inclusion beyond declarations. The same applies to the World Bank, and as a result, the success of projects, especially of those relating to inclusion, have been partial and inconsistent.

Azerbaijan

The majority of respondents confirmed that the Azerbaijan youth sector has had limited engagement in international programmes. Only 5 of the 21 respondents, 3 of which were based in Baku, had heard about Erasmus+. Only one of them had participated in Erasmus+ as a partner, but their application had not been approved. One respondent from the region had participated in an event supported by Erasmus+ that had taken place in Istanbul.

The availability of information about the programme is limited in the country and there is little or no cooperation with government institutions, which can be an obstacle. The increasing control by the authorities makes organisations sometimes fear that international programmes will cause them additional problems.

New changes to the State Law on Grants have made the procedure of grant registration and grant issue more complicated for international foundations, NGOs, foreign state representatives, committees, juridical entities (current and previous grant-awarding bodies) etc. whether they are already registered in Azerbaijan or not. According to the changes, all grant-awarding bodies must be registered in Azerbaijan as well as get an official permission to award grants on the territory of the Azerbaijan Republic. This makes it impossible for local organisations to receive grants from abroad, as well as complicates participation of NGOs in international programmes in which the activities take place in the country but are funded from abroad.

Belarus

Many organisations provide opportunities for youth workers in Belarus to benefit from funding and training, including: UNICEF, the Global Fund, Forum Syd funding and training activities, Matra funding activities, the small grants system of the UNDP, the centralised grant programmes of the European Commission, CSSB, the New Eurasia Foundation, the National Endowment for democracy (USA), and USAID.

However, the success rate of organisations seems quite low; only 7 of the interviewees (22.6%) said that their project proposals had been successful. The main difference between the Erasmus+ programme and many of the other funding opportunities is that in the others it is possible to cover administrative costs of the project.

Youth centres were well informed of the funding opportunities but were rarely interested, since local funding was easily accessible. Sometimes they had acted as partners in projects in which other Belarus NGOs were applicants but not all projects had been approved.

19 of the 28 youth workers interviewed said that they had been involved in Youth in Action/Erasmus+ activities as participants of training courses, youth exchanges, seminars, study visits and forums organised by: 1) partner organisations in EU countries; 2) National Agencies (mainly the Polish one); 3) other youth organisations in Belarus that were partners of a programme country organisation.

The most commonly used scheme was EVS, with six youth workers having coordinated EVS activities in Belarus. Two youth workers had acted as trainers in Erasmus+ events in which their organisation had been invited as a partner. Some other respondents had been involved as participants in activities related to intercultural exchanges, professionalisation of youth work (including evaluation skills, youth work principles), and good inclusion practices.

Georgia

Most respondents were aware of opportunities available through Erasmus+ and SALTO; virtually all respondents had already heard of these opportunities. Some had no experience of them (but still had a sound knowledge); some were occasionally invited to participate in projects and others were actively involved in

SALTO or Erasmus+ activities. Besides Erasmus+ and SALTO AISEC, the East West Management Institute, CIUDAD, the Council of Europe, UNDP and IGLYO were named as providing good opportunities to get involved in international projects.

Some organisations had tried to participate in the programme without success while others had heard about it but were waiting to learn more before actively engaging. However, a good number of organisations (9 out of 33 in total) have either been a host or a sender of EVS volunteers. Representatives of these organisations stated that they can easily get involved in more international projects and underlined the importance of meetings with the Erasmus+ and SALTO representatives. There are also organisations that actively participate in SALTO and Erasmus+ projects, such as, Academy for Peace and Development, Association ATINATI, Youth Association DRONI and Georgian Youth for Europe.

The organisations regularly working with Erasmus+ gave the programme credit for its stability and the opportunities it offered. It had enabled them to make long-term plans, knowing that the funding was available until, at least, 2020, combined with relatively uncomplicated reporting and management procedures.
In addition, internationalisation of activities (thanks to Erasmus+ as well) had enabled them to motivate volunteers, improve their English skills and become more active in general. Even the very short, two-week projects had been able to radically change rooted stereotypes among young people and to increase sensitivity to human rights.

Moldova
All the organisations interviewed had, to various degrees, some international experience. Less than a third of them regularly worked with international partners. The majority of organisations with international activities are concentrated in the big cities (Chisinau, Balti, Ungenial, Comrat, Tiraspol). Interestingly enough, there seems to be no hostility between Moldovan, Transnistrian and Gagauzian organisations, in spite of the political tensions between the regions.

There are two recurrent challenges for work in these regions. One is the language: in Transnistria, the main language is Russian, whereas Romanian is widely used in the rest of the country. The second is that, given the political situation, it is difficult for international donors to send money to Transnistria. Some organisations (e.g. "Centre OSORC" from Tiraspol) still manage to overcome these barriers and produce quality results.

There are some organisations that are well familiar with Erasmus+ schemes and that regularly participate in the programme, but they are the minority (only 5 organisations). They all praised the Eastern Partnership Youth Window, in the framework of the former Youth in Action programme, as a very good initiative for the region and the sector. A bigger number of organisations are familiar with the programme but have only participated in EVS, youth exchanges or training courses, rarely or never hosting. Many organisations (about 8 of the respondents) have experience or are accredited as hosting organisations (examples: AVI Moldova, Centre Shelter, MilleniuM) and host on average 2-4 volunteers per year. However, there are organisations with no awareness of the programme at all, ones that had never heard of it. In this respect, it is important to address the role of EVS volunteers in spreading information about Erasmus+ opportunities. While this is an excellent approach, given that volunteers can tell about the programme with enthusiasm, it also means that organisations with no exposure to EVS will find it hard to access information.

Russia
The level of internationalisation of organisations working with different aspects of inclusion varies, but for those working with disabilities or social vulnerability issues it is particularly low. On the other hand, organisations focusing on HIV and LGBT issues have a fair amount of international contacts and activities, helped by a decent level of knowledge of foreign languages by volunteers and staff. However, the international activities are still not necessarily very regular, especially in organisations based in rural areas and outside of the big cities. There are international activities but not regular enough to form a pattern. At the same time, only 10% of organisations have a diverse portfolio of international activities and partners; the majority rely on a single or a few international activities and partners.

Involvement in Erasmus+ and its predecessor programmes vary across the country but in general it is not very high among organisations working with inclusion issues. EVS seems to be the most popular action, but Russia is a large country and there is no evidence that its popularity is constant across all the regions. Youth exchanges

or seminars are also known but less than EVS actions.

Given the recent limitations in the use of foreign funds, but also because you cannot apply as the main coordinator in an Erasmus+ activity, joining projects of other (foreign) partners is preferred to initiating one's own projects.

Another important reason for the low participation in Erasmus+ is a lack of mentoring, consultancy and support on a local and regional level for organisations that would like to participate. In addition, financial and management guidelines are not always clear so some organisations (e.g. municipalities or organisations working with governmental structures) prefer not to venture into international funding.

Ukraine

All the organisations interviewed had at least some, although varied, international experiences. There is a strong presence of international organisations in Kyiv and their presence is expanding to the Eastern and Southern regions of the war-torn country, helping it to strengthen and sometimes replace state functions. More and more people and organisations are making contacts with local and international governmental and non-governmental organisations. This gives people in the crisis areas optimism. At the same time, some IDPs from Donetsk, Lugansk and Crimea, moving to the Western Ukraine, say they could do more if the international assistance projects focused not only in the East and South of Ukraine.

More than a third of the organisations surveyed had experiences with Youth in Action projects. When asked about Erasmus+ as a source of funding, most of the people who never had had funding from it, said that they had no details or even any idea about it at all. "Had no information" was the most common answer in this group. In several cases people said: "We heard about it but only as an opportunity for students wanting to go to study in the EU. We never heard of it as a programme for informal youth education." One person said that the head of her organisation did not want to work with Erasmus+, but she found a way to work with it via a different NGO. An experienced organiser of informal programmes on education and youth inclusion said: "I know about these activities and participated in events organised by Ukrainian partners, but I did not see any shared points of cooperation yet."

CONCLUSIONS

In the course of this study, we have identified a number of challenges that are, to various degrees, common to the region and to most youth organisations there.

Professionalisation: Organisations working with youth with fewer opportunities vary a lot in their approaches, professionalism, background, scope of activities, and cooperation with the city authorities. Some are very experienced in fundraising, project management, and needs assessment. These are usually working with their target groups at multiple levels and may act as resource providers for other bodies focusing on the same issues. Others operate at a grassroots level, usually organising low-budget leisure or training activities for young people with fewer opportunities. Organisations' level of professionalism in project management does not really depend on their age but rather on their approaches to management and the backgrounds of their staff.

We noticed that in many cases, there was little or no attention paid to needs assessment, analysis of results and impact, and comprehensive evaluation processes were missing in general. This may be due to lack of money and donors' lack of long-term perspectives. However, it is also the result of youth organisations' weak organisational capacities and the ability to do strategic planning. There are actions and initiatives that would not require much financial resources. Development of appropriate knowledge and skills would help solve problems that do not require a big financial input.

Some organisations expressed awareness of their limitations and suggested that some of them could be addressed through targeted training courses in monitoring and evaluation, strategic planning, communication and fundraising skills. However, there were also many organisations that did not display awareness of their needs and limitations; some go as far as confusing their members and beneficiaries, not paying attention to development of human resources and not addressing issues of continuity within the organisation.

A number of organisations benefit greatly from the charisma and contacts of a single person (most likely the director or one of the founders). This often helps in getting things done. However, it also means that the organisation is unable to function effectively in the absence of that person and is likely to terminate its activity once the person moves elsewhere, which is a threat to the viability and sustainability of youth organisations in the long term.

Although national governments – both in the EU, EaP and Russia – are considered fully independent, there have been attempts to introduce common approaches to recognition of competences and common standards. Some recent initiatives (by the EU through the Erasmus+ and Youth in Action programmes) have attempted to foster competences of youth workers and to seek recognition of non-formal learning. In each of the countries of EaP and in Russia some steps have been taken to identify qualification frameworks for youth workers, including a system of certification. The most advanced countries in this respect are Armenia, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. The approach taken in Belarus has been somewhat different from the one seen in EU countries. Azerbaijan and Russia seem to have a different focus, with little attention to non-formal education.

Understanding (of inclusion): There is little overlap between the definition of inclusion provided at the beginning of this report (which mirrors the official definitions) and the understanding of inclusion by local organisations in the region. There is a tendency not to acknowledge mental or physical disabilities unless they manifest themselves clearly. Youth workers usually mean young people with physical and mental disabilities when they speak about young people with fewer opportunities. However, some attention is also given to young people with learning difficulties, young people with low qualifications, poor or unemployed young people, and young people from rural areas, minorities (sexual, religious), single parents, former offenders and drug addicts.

The lack of statistical evidence sometimes exacerbates these issues. For instance, the unemployment rate of active population is 1% according to official statistics, which can be used as evidence that there is no need for action to support young unemployed people. Instead, attention is focused on groups, such as orphans and HIV positive people, receiving more empathy from the society and the government.

There is no specific focus on excluded youth. They are considered either within the programmes for family and children (0-18 years) or as adults (18+). This bears relevance to how young people are approached, especially when it comes to the level of autonomy expected (for example, no autonomy 0-18 and full autonomy after 18). Many young people, especially those from vulnerable situations, might need transitional periods.

Youth workers working with people with fewer opportunities do not always perceive themselves as working on inclusion. They would need training in identifying where their activities fit in the currently recognised spectrum of inclusion issues. The Erasmus+ Programme could help them in this (e.g. by offering a series of webinars, translated into Russian or directly in Russian or in another local language).

Organisations that work with highly stigmatised groups (such as former criminals, homeless people, ex-drug users, sexual or religious minorities) are less visible to the general public. They often use specific sources of funding and sometimes can end up running large-scale projects.

Finance: Financial challenges is one of the main issues identified by most organisations. Even when the financial situation is stable, financial issues are perceived as a potential threat to long-term activities, development, professionalisation and impact. Sometimes it is difficult to quantify what is missing, as in many organisations it is also often a question of a lack of material and human resources, logistics, technology and knowledge.

Partly due to the socio-political situation in the region, the dependence on grants, and particularly on grants by international organisations, puts many youth NGOs in an awkward situation, because they must adapt their priorities to the requirements of the donors. As a result, the priorities of an organisation may often change during a short period of time, making it more difficult to specialise in a single issue or to gain recognition for work in a particular sector, because their focus is shifting too often.

This is made worse by the absence of a systematic review of fundraising strategies among many small and

medium-sized organisations. Once they identify a donor, they will try to keep receiving funding from it, which exposes them to a risk in case the funding is discontinued. There is also a tendency to apply for many small grants, which spreads organisations' resources too widely and uses too many resources for a minimal output. As a result, organisations' capacity to concentrate on a single large project or give continuity to a single idea is limited.

The fundraising capacity of some organisations in the region has also been limited by the attitude towards international funding (in Russia, international funding is either too difficult to get or it puts organisations at risk of unwanted attention by the authorities). In some cases, however, the situation has prompted organisations to work with a variety of sources: local donors, businesses, private donors, crowdfunding, and social entrepreneurship programmes.

Visibility: There is no standard model for an organisation working on inclusion. However, there are a good number of organisations that operate locally and are strongly committed to working with local target groups. Internationalisation of their activities, or at least getting some international experience, would help these organisations increase the quality and impact of their work, but they often lack initial capital to get involved with international projects.

Cooperation with the authorities is sometimes possible but regional organisations tend to prioritise local authorities. This is a good way to build relationships with the authorities but the lack of interaction with the central authorities prevent them from gaining extra visibility.

There are, however, some organisations active at national level, engaging in advocacy. Sometimes some of the staff members from these organisations may join consultative groups, which helps them gain visibility and have some influence on the political decision-making of local authorities.

Still, a number of youth NGOs do not like to discuss public accountability. They might be afraid of making their budget or turnover public for fear of authorities or local groups but this reluctance undermines the degree of trust they can expect from the society.

Cooperation: There are frequent examples of organisations that target the same group not working together. However, personal relations can foster cooperation between organisations (e.g. two youth workers are good friends but work in separate organisations), but in these cases it is more about interpersonal relationships between the organisation heads. It can still happen, however, that organisations that should be working together because they share common goals and target groups, are actually antagonistic towards each other.

This is even more serious given that joining forces could enable youth NGOs working on inclusion to attract public attention (young journalists, bloggers, writers, analysts). Online activism and initiatives tend to follow cycles, peaking during critical moments. For instance, during 2015 in Azerbaijan, bloggers and groups became more active in supporting poor families and disabled children, living in nursing homes.

Especially in countries in which there are constant changes in the laws relating to youth work, there are big fears about new legislation, but there are also groups that have a good deal of experience in working with international projects, which they do not always share with others. It would be beneficial, especially to younger and smaller organisations, if more experienced organisations would share their knowledge and good practices.

Access: Organisations that are already involved in Erasmus+ either as hosts or sending organisations of EVS volunteers, do not usually organise youth mobility programmes themselves, which can be explained by a lack of competences and a lack of funding for administrative costs. One solution to this could be to organise international partner finding events and study visits in Russia.

The capacity to work with inclusion is sometimes negatively affected by the lack of necessary infrastructure (e.g. few hotels accessible to wheelchairs) and special services for participants with disabilities (e.g. translation to sign language).

Other main issues include: limited coordination and competences in strategic planning, project management and appropriate interpretation of other areas of organisational development and application of statutory

provisions.

There is very little dissemination of information about the Erasmus+ programme in EaP and Russia. More promotion and visibility, including possibilities to "taste" the programme, could increase its popularity and interest towards it. This is especially true given that Erasmus+ funding is generally perceived as more long-term, stable and strategic compared to other international programmes (i.e. there is awareness that there is a budget at least until 2020), that the management of Erasmus+ projects is regarded more systematic and simple than in other international projects, and that many organisations have seen the positive effects on volunteers and communities (and could provide testimonials praising the programme). According to many respondents, even short (1-2 weeks) volunteering periods have increased the participants' motivation to learn English and become more involved. EVS has been particularly beneficial to many organisations since it has enabled interaction with an international volunteer over a long period, providing a sort of "window to the world", motivating local volunteers to engage more with youth and inclusion activities.

One challenge to the Erasmus+ programme is that it tends to be more accessible to the same people, those who have learned to write applications and have become regular beneficiaries of the scheme. Some mechanisms granting access to new or inexperienced organisations might help solve this situation.

Funding remains a problem, especially for marginalised youth and small organisations. Because reimbursement procedures might take a long time, and because not everyone can afford the money to pay for their international tickets in advance, access to international activities is often limited to those who have money. The direct funding to local organisations allowed in the Eastern Partnership Youth Window mitigated this issue. Its termination with no perspectives for a similar, new action is affecting the work of youth organisations.

Project participants can become very enthusiastic and sometimes start to consider themselves trainers or qualified youth workers after having participated maybe just in one project, which can affect the quality of follow-up events. We also need some standards for quality and competences to evaluate competences of potential trainers.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To address the above-mentioned challenges, we propose a set of ten recommendations that, if implemented, are likely to bring about significant changes in the region. We have decided to limit the list to ten items to ensure that each will receive a sufficient degree of attention and will be discussed in detail. We need to:

1. Acknowledge the diversity of the region and tailor actions to match local realities and potential
The region certainly shares many common features, not least because of the long period under the Soviet rule, which has shaped cultural, social and economic structures in each country. However, there is also a high degree of diversity in the region that should be acknowledged. Some countries are politically more stable and less uncertain than others, the support from government institutions vary, and certain actions are easier or harder to implement due to social and religious reasons. Some countries have already signed an association agreement with the EU (Moldova, Ukraine and Georgia) and will enjoy preferential treatment in some schemes. These countries could have a priority status within Erasmus+ and be eligible for more parts of the programme. There is a great deal to be gained by diverse approaches acknowledging that it is administratively simpler to work with certain actors and countries. Moldova seems to be achieving the most for the moment, but Georgia and Ukraine can be grouped together with it, as all of these countries have relatively liberal approaches to youth work. Armenia could also be included in this group as it is sufficiently active. It is worth observing the developments in Belarus closely in the hope that it will shortly be able to join this group. In Azerbaijan and Russia, on the other hand, interventions need to be better targeted and take local constraints properly into account. The aim should not be to discriminate some places against others but to offer services that respond better to given situations in given moments.

2. Establish a network of contact points (or resource people), based on the positive experience of the Western Balkans model
The decentralisation and devolution of responsibilities during the Eastern Partnership Youth Window has been praised by many organisations. Most of the issues organisations faced during 2012 and 2013 had more to do with the lack of time than with a lack of willingness to be involved.

3. Create a common understanding of the concept of inclusion, of youth workers and the general terminology to be used
As emphasised in this report, there have been attempts to create a framework for quality control and for standardisation of assessment of skills. However, understanding of what inclusion is and what the target groups are vary a lot across the region. We acknowledge that each country should be allowed to choose their own definitions and priorities, but if there was a clear explanation of what is meant by inclusion and youth workers by the Erasmus+ programme and SALTO, it might encourage dialogue with local authorities and prompt them to widen the scope of activities classified under inclusion whilst making young people more aware of what a youth worker is and what kinds of people may be seen as having fewer opportunities.

In the long run, having this common ground should lead to recognition of non-formal education and to recognition of the status of a youth worker as a real job, equal to others, fostering peer-to-peer learning and creation of integrated communities.

4. Foster interaction between the state and youth organisations
Where possible, interaction between governmental and non-governmental youth sectors should be encouraged, promoted and developed. For instance, attention should be paid to promoting cooperation between governmental organisations and NGOs, offering participants from both sectors the chance to take part in the same projects (e.g. training courses and discussions on specific topics). It is ultimately the goal of national governments. One should not be discouraged by the lack of support for certain initiatives but rather see it as an indicator of where a certain government, or its institutions, want to head. If a certain activity is forbidden in a country, by law or in practice, it does not mean that other activities are not allowed. During the Soviet times, youth associations outside state structures were not supported. However, many ecological movements emerged during this time, out of a common goal (a greener world) shared by citizens and the state. In liberal settings, this is a relatively easy process but in less liberal settings this could be possible using channels that the state acknowledges as safe or legal. Improving the competences of young people is not necessarily a political, or politicisable, issue so it should be possible, to a certain extent, not to be affected by a given political

situation.

5. Foster competences of youth workers in the region through specifically tailored courses
Respondents provided a long list of competences that they would like to be trained in. When there is a lack of local opportunities, it should be possible to transfer competences and share experiences from other regions, or to expand some practices established in a country or a city, for the benefit of youth workers. The consultation that took place during this study has enabled us to identify a number of competences that could be developed through a pilot project, directly by the Erasmus+ programme or some partner organisations. The main competences requested are:

- Entrepreneurship, initiative and the job market (career guidance to young people; knowledge about employment market; entrepreneurial skills)
- Strategy and management (change management; strategic management, strategic planning; human resource management)
- Financial management (fundraising; financial analysis and accounting skills; alternative fundraising strategies and better understanding of Erasmus+ rules)
- Monitoring, evaluation and quality (inclusive education; monitoring, evaluation, evidence-based action and strategy; skills development, working with different age groups)
- Interpersonal skills (effective communication; negotiation skills; motivation of volunteers).

6. Encourage the creation of a network of Erasmus+ (and Youth in Action) alumni
This does not necessarily need to fall under the responsibility of the National Agencies or SALTO. However, there is evidence that once a National Agency or SALTO declares an approach a priority, potential grant recipients usually follow. This should not become a direct responsibility for SALTO and the National Agencies but could, nevertheless, be encouraged in many ways. For example, it could be one of the boxes to tick when applying for funding (i.e. does the project contribute to the creation of an alumni network). This could be done in the same fashion as is used for open access resources, that is, considering such activities as non-compulsory but encouraged.

Further steps could include the creation of a (regional or national) mailing list or Facebook group and, at a later stage, maybe a seminar for alumni to share their Erasmus+ experiences, to plan further projects etc. Alternatively, an annual competition could be launched to organise an event in which alumni can meet and discuss their experiences. This would be the first step in the creation of an Erasmus+ community that could be mobilised upon need (see points below).

7. Create and maintain a coaching scheme allowing younger and less experienced organisations working on inclusion to apply for Erasmus+ grants with the help of more experienced partners
It is difficult, time-consuming and a substantial investment for new organisations to learn funding rules and strategies, something not everyone can afford. For this reason, a coaching programme should be established. Experienced organisations could apply for money to coach new organisations working on inclusion on how to apply for grants. There should be a controlling mechanism, or at least some rules, for instance, to prevent the more experienced organisations creating sub-organisations and coaching themselves in applying. The programme should help younger and less experienced organisations gain access to Erasmus+, and at least provide them with the information needed (even if they do not get the grant, they will at least learn about the programme). This could be maintained as a separate web page within the SALTO website, integrating the initiative with tools to share online resources, printed materials and information (about the current trends and approaches addressing the needs of young people with fewer opportunities). The coaching programme could also be developed further, for example, by getting peer organisations in programme countries to come to deliver training, offer guidance and share experiences and to help local organisations in their applications.

8. Encourage experienced youth organisations to put their experience at disposal of younger organisations, thus helping them to develop more rapidly
Experienced organisations should be encouraged to help younger organisations develop and reach a certain level in a "business incubator" fashion. It is unlikely that a whole structure can be created and kept in place, though, but a sub-priority could be included in KA1 and KA2 for "support to newer and younger organisations", encouraging experienced ones to build capacity within their region or country. This could help establish a culture of long-term and strategic planning and encourage organisations at different levels of

experience to work together.

9. Encourage cross-sectoral cooperation which would allow organisations develop and step up their campaigning for the rights of people with fewer opportunities
Interaction with other youth organisations, but even more importantly with other (especially corporate and business) sectors would be beneficial at least for two reasons: firstly, to establish contacts with potential private donors in order to decrease dependence on state and public grants; and secondly, to learn from people who have succeeded in finding resources and securing sustainability for a certain activity. The opportunity to interact with other organisations, not necessarily working on inclusion but with experience on large-scale initiatives and campaigns, could also help youth organisations working with inclusion learn from them, enabling them to borrow tools and approaches and adapt these to their needs.

10. Raise the social status of youth inclusion activities (also in terms of employability)
Promoting the benefits of youth work may contribute to a better image of youth work in the eyes of a society. Firstly, it could make it easier for people to understand the nature of youth work and its uses for a society. Secondly, it could provide evidence of the benefits of youth work (especially on inclusion) beyond the target group itself, which then could, in the medium run, secure more support from the community, the society or even the authorities. Emphasis could be on how participation in youth work and projects increases participants' – youth workers and target groups – competences through non-formal learning, and consequently their employability, increasing the understanding that the benefits of participation in youth work go beyond just helping others.

Annex I: A blueprint for the questionnaire to be used and instructions

A questionnaire to inform a study to be prepared for the National Agencies for Erasmus+ Programme from Austria, Poland and Finland, SALTO EECA & SALTO Inclusion

"Inclusion in Eastern Partnership Countries and Russia"

Youth field is used here to define any activity that targets people between 14 and 30 years of age.

Social inclusion is here understood as any activity dealing with people with lower access to opportunities.

NB: please feel free not to answer any questions you do not feel comfortable with and inform me if you want your answers to remain anonymous (in which case I might quote an answer but not the source).

Part 1: About you (This could be the warm-up part. No need to ask questions as in the interview. You can just start discussing life and other things and insert these questions casually in the conversation – I assume you know the person and the organisation for instance). Try to use these questions, and the other ones, as informally as possible. The real interview starts when you shake hands with the person and ends when you part, not when the official paper is filled).

5 minutes

> **Q1**
> **Ask the respondent to tell you about themselves: how did they get in touch with youth work, decide to stay in this field and how could they develop the skills/expertise that they are currently using in their work?**
>
> During the answer, you might be able to get answers to the questions below

To be filled during or after the interview

Name of the person you are interviewing	
Name of the organisation – if any	**The person might be active with more than one. It might be good to clarify what amount and kind of work is done for each** **(an informal group might have no name, find a replacement in this case – for instance "informal group active in the region of ...working on...")**
Role of the person in the organisation	**Same as above**
How big is the organisation	**Try to understand numbers of** **1) staff** **2) active volunteers** **3) official members**
What percentage of your time is devoted to youth work in this field?	**The question is intended to discover whether the person is experienced enough (if someone works 1 hour per month for 10 years in youth work or works 40 hours per week is different). If you know the person is active you can also minimise or skip this question.**
How long you've been in the youth sector (OPTIONAL)	**Based on self-perception, no need to give a precise answer but you (interviewer) can interpret that, propose a figure (1, 2, 10 years) and see if the person agrees.** **NB another option is not to ask this question. I assume you will select the informants on the basis of their experience.**

10 minutes

> **Q2**
> **Ask the respondent how they chose the target group they are currently working with and if they have changed their target group over the years (i.e. they were working with one kind but added another one or replaced it with another one...and why)**
>
> The discussion should suggest answers to:
>
> How they choose their activities and action and if they are in response to any needs they see (this is the question previously named "how do you learn about the needs of your target group"). Try to grasp what kind of feedback or

needs analysis mechanisms they have. It is possible that they apply needs analysis intuitively but not systematically. I am interested in understanding how they identify needs.

You could also discuss what they see as the most important/urgent needs of their target groups and what kinds of patterns/tendencies they see (and with whom they work together, if relevant).

Their mission (how they target the group they chose and if they have formalised this in a document or at least have a clear vision of what they do and how they do it).

On the basis of the above discussion, identify the kind of target group your respondent works with (you can also ask the question directly) and assess how much they concentrate on them. I am not explaining the concepts because it's up to you to decide what to write.

0 not at all - 5 primary target group							
Young people		Minorities – please specify		Physically or mentally impaired – please specify		Displaced people	
Poor or marginalised people -		Unemployed people or NEET		Formerly convicted people		Other	

15 minutes

Q3
What are the main challenges faced by your respondent (when they have worked in the youth sector)?

You could start from the opportunities available for their projects and their activities, the support they feel/see from institutions and people.

Or

You could start from the worst project ever (ask them to describe what went wrong and why) and then go into opportunities.

Then move to a project that they remember as good and ask them to reflect why it was particularly good and how they assess the success of the project (did they carry out evaluation, monitoring, needs assessment?).

You can then ask them where they locate themselves in the youth panorama (i.e. if they see common mistakes in similar projects; if they've learned from similar projects from other organisations colleagues).

NB: Unless someone works 100% on what can be seen as inclusion projects I think it's not real to claim that the whole set of data is on inclusion. However, I would expect quality and attitude not to change across projects so that the answers that do not involve an inclusion project can be seen as proxy for inclusion projects (i.e. someone who is very professional with most of their projects is likely to be professional with inclusion projects). Besides, I assume you are choosing the respondent for their experience with inclusion so by default they have inclusion projects.

The table below can be filled by you on the basis of the answers you get. It can be a moment of reflection on the respondent's opinion and what you deduce from their answers.

What do you feel are the main needs of your organisation when working on inclusion?							
0 not at all needed – 5 extremely needed							
Funding		Capacity building		Dialogue with authorities		Other (please specify)	
What are the biggest obstacles you have faced while working on inclusion? **0 not at all relevant – 5 extremely relevant**							
Money (lack of)		Support from authorities/government (lack of)		Human resources (volunteers, staff) (lack of)		Society (people's attitude)	
Target group does not want to be helped		Lack of knowledge or skills				Other (specify)	

15 minutes

Q4

You can ask a question on the main challenges you face with regards to money, funding, spending, saving?

You can ask a question about the main sources of funding (private, membership fees, international donors, government donors, other) and how difficult is to secure money.

You could ask what the main donors used are in their country/region and what the respondent's relationship with these donors (national, local, international) is. This would involve talking about Youth in Action or Erasmus+ if they are familiar with the programme (or explain since they'll ask for it) and a feedback on the Eastern Window under the last YiA, if they use it often and what they think of it.

You could also try to discuss if they feel they are using the money in the best way (or the resources they have could be used better).

You could also try to understand the financial break-down of their projects (how many projects they have > 50.000, how many in total, if they work with lots of small projects or one big one per year).

NB I am leaving the questions below for your convenience but I assume you can fill the tables below yourself once you process answers from an interview.

What are the main sources of funding (expressed as estimated percentage of the annual budget)?							
Private donors		Membership fees		International donors		National or regional donors	
Voluntary work		Community resources (also in kind)		Other			

How far financial sources are sufficient to fulfil your needs?
In how many projects (as coordinator or partner) you manage a total budget over 50,000 USD?
The majority of your organisation's project have a budget
What are the main financial obstacles (problems) you have had to face so far?
Most popular donors in your country? (region, if country is not applicable, or both)
How do you get information on funding opportunities and donors?
How often do you run activities funded by Erasmus+ (or Youth in Action previously)? Which ones? (EVS etc., youth exchange etc.)
If no activities: why?
If yes: How many applications with Youth in Action have you participated in and in what capacity (partner, applicant when allowed).
How many applications with Erasmus+ have you participated in as partner?

10 minutes

Q4

Ask about the changes that the respondent feels they have brought (or observed) during their work (that could be related to a single project or a series of activities). What were their limits and why were they limited in their opinion?

You could also ask how they measure change and how they do evaluation, monitoring and planning of next activities, how they assess quality, analyse needs and what indicators they may use to measure impact.

You could inquire about the sustainability of this change or maintaining some activities in the long term.

Ask how they perceive the visibility of their activities at the local, national and international levels (are they visible and able to help beyond their communities somehow? How?)

I am leaving these questions for you. I am confident that you can answer with the results of your discussion.

What are the factors that limit or enhance the impact of your work?							
Government		Availability / lack of human		Attitudes of your		National or regional	

support (or lack thereof)		resources		team (commitment, motivation)		donors	
Cultural factors		Availability or lack of funding		Other			

Visibility at what level? How has it been secured?							
Social media		TV/Radio		Press		Other	
Community level		Regional level		City/Town level		National level	

What are the main stakeholders or actors you rely upon to disseminate your results, good practices and spread new ideas and change?							
Government platforms		Youth networks		International organisations (UNDP, USAID)		International partners	
Local communities		Local institutions		Policy makers		Business sector	

How familiar are you with the following concepts? **0 not at all – 5 know very well**							
Needs assessment		Monitoring		Evaluation		Planning	
Quality indicators		Methodology		Indicators		Quality control mechanisms	