

Position paper of the Youth Advisory Board of JUGEND für Europa on the Erasmus+ Youth and European Solidarity Corps application procedures

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

We are the Youth Advisory Board of the German National Agency JUGEND für Europa, which was constituted at the beginning of 2023. Our main objective is to ensure that the suggestions, ideas, and feedback from young people on the implementation and further development of the EU programmes Erasmus+ Youth and European Solidarity Corps (ESC) in Germany are considered.

This statement focusses on the application process within the framework of the Erasmus+ Youth programme and brings together the diverse experiences of the individual Advisory Board members from various contexts of international youth work.

As the Youth Advisory Council of JUGEND für Europa, we see the following main problem areas in the application process:

1. For young volunteers/young people engaging on a voluntary basis in youth work and informal groups of young people with little or no support from full-time organisational structures, the application forms of Erasmus+ Youth represent a major bureaucratic hurdle.
2. The investment needed in terms of effort and time is not clear from the outset. The application forms are very long and the tree structure within opens new questions/fields during the application process that were not expected in advance. Besides that, some of the questions are duplicated in terms of content, so that the workload for both applicants and assessors is significantly enlarged. In addition, the applications are only made available relatively late before the submission deadline, making a realistic time management difficult for young volunteers/young people engaging on a voluntary basis in youth work and informal groups of young people.
3. Another substantial problem, especially for young volunteers and informal groups of young people, is the enormous amount of expert knowledge about youth work and the associated technical jargon that is required but insufficiently explained.

This combination of the volume of applications and the associated demands calls for an immense time commitment that young volunteers and informal groups of young people with little to no full-time structures are hardly able to invest. At the same time, we consider it essential to encourage applications by precisely these groups so that Erasmus+ Youth and ESC projects are geared towards the interests and needs of young people.

From our perspective, the following suggestions represent possibilities to solve the above-mentioned problems as youth orientated as possible:

- We recommend shortening the scope of the application forms by removing repetitive questions from the individual subject areas.
- To do justice to inclusive aspects within the application as well, we call for low-threshold answer options. So far, all applications only include text-based answer options. We recommend low-threshold variants that allow, for example to embed video/audio formats or graphics in the online forms.
- Sensitised contact persons should be provided for our target groups (young volunteers and informal groups of young people) in the National Agencies.
- Additional and longer-term counselling formats that accompany the existing services of the National Agencies and cover the entire application process should be offered.
- The orientation in the application process could be improved from the start by transparently placing and explaining the various Key Actions, e. g. in the form of a decision matrix.
- The increased number of questions addressed at National Agencies at the end of the submission deadlines could be counteracted: We suggest that the document checklist included in the application should be positioned at the beginning of the form. Missing documents thus would become clear from the outset and not just shortly before submission, which currently leads to uncertainty. The necessity of the completeness of the data in the Organisation Registration System (ORS) should also be clearly indicated from an early stage as well.

We are ready to actively participate in the implementation of the proposed measures and invite all relevant stakeholders to work with us to develop sustainable solution strategies.

We, the Youth Advisory Council at JUGEND für Europa, are happy to engage in dialogue and further discussions.

Yours sincerely,

Aachen, 27.11.2023

Dörthe Hofman

Bonn, 27.11.2023

Carina Danisch

[Location, Date]

[Signature of spokespersons]