



CONTRIBUTION TO THE CONSULTATION ON THE FUTURE EUROPEAN YOUTH PROGRAMME

Background

ENGSO Youth is the youth organization of ENGSO (European Non-Governmental Sport Organisation) with 41 members, which are national umbrella organisations for sport from across Europe. ENGSO Youth focuses on the European Youth Sport for All sector. We promote topics such as sport, health, inclusion, participation, volunteering of young people in European sports, equal opportunities and international cooperation. ENGSO Youth is a non-profit organisation and consists of the ENGSO Youth Assembly (highest decision making body), which elects nine members for the ENGSO Youth Committee every second year. Our mission is to give youth a real say in sports.

Introduction

Young people are an important group taking part in sporting activities as athletes, volunteers, officials, and in many other roles. In Europe, 61 % of 15–24 year-olds practice sports at least once a week¹, while the number of active people decreases with age. Furthermore, 49 % of young people declare that they are members of a sport club².

A broad understanding of youth sport is needed; sport should not only be seen as elite sport, and youth sport should not only be understood as aiming to the top. The European Union has already recognised the importance of sport and its social dimension. The Lisbon Treaty, article 165 (2), specifically states that the European Union shall take account of the social and educational function of sport while contributing to the promotion of European sporting issues. Along with youth specific provisions, the article also mentions the protection of young sportspeople.

The Commission's White Paper on Sport³ already mentions the Youth in Action programme as an important instrument for encouraging young people's volunteering in sport in fields such as youth exchanges and voluntary service for sporting events, for promoting social inclusion through sport, for the prevention of discrimination, violence and racism in sport, and for promoting health-enhancing physical activity.

Sport, notably physical education and cooperation between youth workers and sport organisations, is also mentioned in the EU Youth Strategy. Sport was also among the top concerns mentioned by young people in a related consultation.⁴

Underlining the need to have a European youth programme also in the future, ENGSO Youth would like to highlight some key aspects related to sport and youth as a response to the public consultation on the future European programme in the field of youth.

Objectives of the future European youth programme

The Lisbon Treaty, article 165, specifically mentions encouraging the participation of young people in democratic life in Europe. Democratic sport organisations are an important part of a democratic society, and

¹ Special Eurobarometer 334 Sport and Physical Activity, 2010

² EU Youth Report. SEC(2009) 549 final

³ White Paper on Sport. COM(2007) 391 final

⁴ An EU Strategy for Youth – Investing and Empowering. COM(2009) 200 final

through their involvement in sport organisations, young people can learn about these processes and structures of participation. ENGSO Youth feels that the aspects of participation and active citizenship should be at the core of the new European youth programme.

Youth sport is a powerful tool for non-formal education. Non-formal education, including peer-learning, is an important aspect of learning through sport: it can be used to empower young people to “do it for themselves” and to educate young people about a variety of issues, such as European citizenship, healthy lifestyles, and democratic participation.

Effective youth work can also contribute to the implementation of the Europe 2020 strategy as outlined in the Youth on the Move initiative. However, ENGSO Youth emphasises that the youth programme should not be an employment programme for youth, as there are other tools already in place for promoting employment, nor should non-formal education be seen as something that will fill in the gaps existing due to deficiencies of the formal education system. ENGSO Youth feels that the best European added value in the field of youth can be achieved through a youth programme that recognises the intrinsic value of youth work and youth participation.

Sport is a part of a socially, physically and mentally healthy society, and can therefore make an important contribution towards achieving this. As outlined in the EU Youth Strategy, the future European youth programme should contribute to promoting the health and well being of young people. Sport can also contribute to building socially inclusive and cohesive societies.

To conclude, ENGSO Youth supports the inclusion of the following key themes in the objectives of the future youth programme:

- encouraging the participation of young people in democratic life in Europe
- non-formal education through sport
- promoting active European citizenship
- health and well-being of young people
- cohesion, integration and social inclusion in and through sport

Scope of the future European youth programme

ENGSO Youth underlines the necessity of making the future youth programme more accessible for youth sport organisations and for sports-related actions. This would ensure that the potential of sport in contributing to the EU goals in the youth sector and the implementation of the Europe 2020 strategy are realised through sport-related projects and actions, and reflect the increased importance of sport at Community level after the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty. ENGSO Youth highlights that:

1. Sport should be included as a funding priority in relevant work programmes and calls for proposals. If annual priorities are to continue, sport should also be included as an annual priority in the programme guide.

Sport is an international activity engaging a great number of young, mobile people, and sporting activities in Europe are not limited to the European Union. ENGSO Youth highlights that:

2. The future European youth programme should be open to the participation of non-EU countries, with support especially to projects promoting youth participation and making use of new technologies to promote the aims of the programme.
3. Special regional projects could be supported where appropriate, e.g. activities bringing together young people from the Balkan region.
4. Access to the services provided usually by national agencies should be ensured also for

organisations coming from outside the European Union.

Actions of the future European youth programme

European youth organisations are in a key position when promoting a true European dimension of youth work and an active European civil society. European non-governmental organisations depend on European funding, since national governments rarely see the importance or have the possibility to support European associations. ENGSO Youth highlights that:

1. Operating grants for European youth organisations are necessary also as part of the future youth programme.
2. Operating grants should be developed further towards multiannual financing, which would enable better long-term planning.
3. Operating grants should be reserved only for European youth organisations; other European organisations have the possibility to apply for operating grants under other community programmes, and national organisations should primarily be funded by their national governments.

ENGSO Youth supports promoting innovative ideas in order to achieve smart, sustainable and inclusive growth in line with the Europe 2020 strategy. However, the current division of actions to sub-actions and labelling of activities as strictly seminars, trainings or other within the Youth in Action Programme seems to discourage innovative proposals. ENGSO Youth highlights that:

4. The future youth programme should have less strictly defined actions and activities. No specific sub-actions are needed. Each action should identify a clear aim, but the methodology of implementing the activities to reach this aim should be left to the applicant, whether it is through trainings, seminars, exchanges or other activities, or a combination of many types of activities. This would enable an innovative and efficient approach to reaching the aims of the programme.
5. Evaluation of project proposals should then be done based on general evaluation criteria, evaluating mainly on a qualitative basis how the proposed activity can reach the aim of the specific action of the programme and what European added value it has.

European Voluntary Service is an important tool for promoting the mobility of young Europeans and offering them opportunities to be active members of the society. However, not enough support is currently available for projects engaging individual volunteers, and the appointment process is not flexible enough, leading at worst to a decline in motivation of the volunteer due to rejected applications. ENGSO Youth highlights that:

6. European Voluntary Service should be included in the future youth programme, with volunteering in sport-related activities as a priority.
7. While supporting group EVS is a good opportunity for larger groups to volunteer, sufficient funding for individual EVS projects must be guaranteed.
8. EVS applications should be standardised in order to make it as easy as possible for both hosting and sending organisations to apply.
9. There should be more flexibility in appointing the EVS volunteer in the application phase.

Implementation and management of the future European youth programme

When it comes to the management of the new youth programme, ENGSO Youth underlines the principle "keeping it simple". Information in one's own language and close to oneself is imperative for both individual

young people looking for opportunities to participate and for youth organisations. ENGSO Youth highlights that:

1. Both national agencies and a European executive agency are needed in managing the programme.
2. The division of tasks of the agencies on national and European level should be better defined in order to avoid double applications on both levels for the same activity and in order to decrease double administrative work.

In the current situation with many one-year operating grants, changing annual priorities and varying contact points, long-term planning is made difficult for youth organisations, which leads to a decreased effectiveness of planned measures. To support the long-term planning of actions and effective information flows, ENGSO Youth suggests that:

3. The new youth programme should either have only long-term priorities, or possible additional annual priorities should be communicated at least two years in advance.
4. Different annual priorities between the EU policy areas (e.g. European years) should be well coordinated with responsible services in order to simplify the array of varying priorities.
5. While trainings about the programme itself can be useful, they should not become the main activity organised by the national agencies.
6. The publication of calls for proposals and the deadlines for different actions should be spread evenly throughout the year.
7. The results of each selection process should be announced with a minimum delay, and notably in the case of operating grants, well before the eligibility period starts.

Conclusions

ENGSO Youth underlines the importance of having a specific European programme for youth also in the future, with a budget at least equivalent to the current financial framework. This programme should make full use of the provisions of the Lisbon Treaty, including those on sport, highlighting the participation of young people and active citizenship.

ENGSO Youth would be willing to actively support the implementation of a new European youth programme and the suggestions included within this paper by taking appropriate measures to inform youth sport organisations about existing opportunities, and to encourage their participation, thus contributing to ensuring a steady flow of good quality project proposals to the programme.

We hope that you take into consideration the above comments and include youth sport permanently in the structures and priorities of the new youth programme to build together a Europe where the participation of young people in sport and their well-being and inclusion are ensured.