

## Funding Strategy for Strategic Partnerships

### For KA 2 - Strategic Partnerships under ERASMUS+ Youth In Action in Germany<sup>1</sup>

Through the Strategic Partnerships, the EU programme ERASMUS+ Youth In Action will provide a budget for medium- to long-term projects that aim either to build networks and exchange good practices, or to develop innovative approaches in the field of youth. Strategic Partnerships are an opportunity to collaborate with partners in other countries for a number of years on a given topic, undergo peer learning processes, or develop and test innovative practices.

This can help to strengthen and extend existing partnerships and networks, develop approaches for one's own use, make existing programmes more attractive, and gain greater recognition for work already done. As with all funding areas, the Strategic Partnerships are embedded in a clear political context; however, due to their complexity, duration and flexibility they are highly suitable vehicles for taking youth policy issues a step further and achieving a political impact.

To allow Strategic Partnerships to have as strong an impact as possible, JUGEND für Europa has developed this funding strategy<sup>2</sup> for potential applicants. It is based on the priority areas for youth policy cooperation in Europe on the one hand, and on the objectives and priorities of the Erasmus+ programme on the other.

The funding strategy aims to encourage projects in areas that are highly topical and relevant at the European level and which respond at the same time to the specific situation in Germany. It serves to ensure that projects have a strategic focus and are likely to achieve a broad impact. Finally, it is designed to help deliver insights into core concepts, issues and quality aspects.

### Innovation and peer learning

There are two different types of Strategic Partnership:

- Strategic Partnerships supporting innovation, under which projects are expected to develop innovative outputs and/or engage into intensive dissemination and exploitation activities of existing and newly produced products or innovative ideas, and
- Strategic Partnerships supporting exchange of good practices, with the primary goal being to allow organisations to develop and reinforce networks and engage in peer learning.

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<sup>1</sup> Transnational youth initiatives are explicitly excluded from this. Although they formally come under the Strategic Partnerships heading, their target groups, objectives, agendas and formats are quite distinct so they require a separate approach.

<sup>2</sup> This funding strategy is expressly not intended to replace the European Commission's selection procedure associated with the Erasmus+ programme that the National Agencies have to apply when assessing funding applications. The formal requirements and eligibility criteria for Strategic Partnerships are listed in the [Erasmus+ Programme Guide](#).

Applications must be structured such that the applicable type (innovation or peer learning) is recognisable as a core element of the project.

**Innovation** involves more than just new ideas; innovative ideas must offer recognisable potential for broader exploitation in this field of work. This requires a thorough needs assessment in the field of work that must be described in the application. That said, a more in-depth analysis of specific needs can form part of the project proper. Just as important as a needs assessment is a targeted process for disseminating and communicating the resulting outcomes. As a rule, innovations may include any activities, methods and instruments in youth work, such as new approaches, a systematic outreach to new target groups, the development of new forms of organisation, or the introduction of new technical tools.

**Peer learning** denotes a continuous process of mutual learning between experts and/or decision-makers working in the field of youth in regard to professional and political issues. To be recognised as part of a Strategic Partnership, this process must have an impact that both benefits individual participants' professional development and feeds into the work of organisations and institutions. Successful peer learning requires bringing together individuals with comparable profiles and positions who represent comparable organisations. It also requires a sufficient number of commonalities (and differences) in the area in question so that all sides benefit from the mutual learning process. The potential for this among participating countries and organisations must hence be made explicit in the needs assessment.

Unless clearly stated otherwise, the following information relates to both types of Strategic Partnership.

### Clear relevance to the youth field

Under Erasmus+ Youth In Action, priority will be given to projects that are clearly relevant to the youth field. The main criteria are:

- The project relates to the youth field, which comprises youth policy and youth work.<sup>3</sup> In a German context, the term “Jugendarbeit” largely refers to youth work and youth social work as defined in Sections 11 to 13 of the Child and Youth Services Act; however, other kinds of child and youth services are also included.
- The project's agenda has to have a recognisable link to European youth policy, especially the Renewed Framework for European cooperation in the youth

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<sup>3</sup> The term “youth work” as used at the European level does not carry the same meaning as the German term “Jugendarbeit”, although it literally translates to “youth work”. According to the Council conclusions on the contribution of quality youth work to the development, well-being and social inclusion of young people of 16 May 2013, “‘Youth work’ is a broad term covering a broad scope of activities of a social, cultural, educational or political nature by, with and for young people. Increasingly, such activities also include sport and services for young people. (...) Youth work belongs to the area of ‘out-of-school’ education, as well as specific leisure time activities managed by professional or voluntary youth workers and youth leaders. Youth work is organised in different ways (by youth-led organisations, organisations for youth, informal groups or through youth services and public authorities). It is delivered in different forms and settings (e.g. open-access, group-based, programme-based, outreach and detached) and is given shape at local, regional, national and European level.”

field (2010-2018) (EU Youth Strategy).<sup>4</sup> Ideally, there are also references to the respective national youth policies of the countries participating in the project. For more information, see the section headed “Alignment with priorities and thematic priority areas”.

- The composition of the group of project executing organisations ensures that the consortium has a thorough knowledge of the youth field in the participating countries and maintains sufficiently strong contacts there to be able to take account of its needs and experiences when developing and implementing the project and hence make a genuine impact. This can be most effectively done by bringing youth organisations and youth services providers on board.
- The projects respond to a genuine need that exists in the youth field.
- The projects have a tangible impact on the youth field.

Youth-specific Strategic Partnerships will be most likely to fulfil these criteria. When certain issues come into play or certain target groups need to be reached - or for other reasons - it may make sense to set up a cross-sectoral project. For instance, a project to shape the transition from school to training and working life may involve a youth services organisation as well as academic and vocational training institutions, job centres, chambers of commerce etc.

In the case of cross-sectoral Strategic Partnerships, the projects must be clearly relevant for the youth field and its impacts must be largely oriented towards the youth field, too.

Although this funding strategy is predominantly aimed at German organisations and therefore reflects the German situation, all projects have to take the situations, needs etc. of all participating countries into equal consideration and respond to them accordingly. Projects under a Strategic Partnership supporting innovation, in particular, ought to reflect a pan-European dimension as well.

### **Alignment with priorities and thematic priority areas**

Erasmus+ is a far more sophisticated tool for implementing European policies in the field of education and youth than its predecessor projects. The foundation on which Erasmus+ Youth In Action is based is the EU Youth Strategy. It has two main objectives, namely:

- To provide more and equal opportunities for young people in education and the job market, and
- to promote the active citizenship, social inclusion and solidarity of all young people.

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<sup>4</sup> For more details, go to [http://ec.europa.eu/youth/policy/youth\\_strategy/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/youth/policy/youth_strategy/index_en.htm).

Both objectives are reflected in the horizontal priorities as well as in the field-specific priorities of Strategic Partnerships.<sup>5</sup> The Programme Guide stipulates that applications must reference at least one of these priorities. These references must clearly represent the core of the planned project and be reflected in its target groups, concerns, objectives, activities, impacts etc.

Both the EU Youth Strategy and the programme centre on the inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities. Across Europe, many young Europeans are facing complex problems, often many at once, for which there are no easy solutions and which therefore pose great challenges for youth work. So there is a considerable need to develop Strategic Partnerships that are partially or wholly oriented towards integrating these target groups in society.

Given this backdrop, priority may also be given to projects that examine the roles and responsibilities of the youth work organisations that work with refugees and assist the organisations in connecting across Europe, exchanging ideas or developing new approaches.

Based on the themes of the EU Youth Strategy and the priorities of the Strategic Partnerships at European level on the one hand and on the implementation of the EU Youth Strategy in Germany on the other, three thematic priorities emerge for Key Action 2:

- \_ Active (European) citizenship for young people
- \_ Further development of youth work
- \_ Transition from school to training and working life

### *Active (European) citizenship for young people*

Strengthening young people's active (European) citizenship and participation in society and political life has always been a core element of European youth programmes. In practice, however, there are still shortcomings in terms of young people's ability to participate. Especially at the European level, there are major obstacles to young people's social and political engagement.

The issue has hence been given priority in the EU Youth Strategy, and forms one of the youth-specific priorities of Strategic Partnerships (cf. "promoting empowerment, (...) a special focus on access to rights, autonomy, participation (...) and the active citizenship of young people").

Current political and social developments in Europe have made it plain that fundamental European values such as democracy, respect for human rights, diversity and non-discrimination need to be strengthened and communicated more effectively. This requires more profound political and civic education, the encouragement of critical thinking and the creation of an environment that is conducive to active (European) citizenship and participation.

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<sup>5</sup> In the Programme Guide ([↘ http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/documents/erasmus-plus-programme-guide\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/documents/erasmus-plus-programme-guide_en.pdf)) cf. the section headed STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS IN THE FIELD OF EDUCATION, TRAINING AND YOUTH.

Against this backdrop, Strategic Partnerships are an ideal opportunity for experts across Europe to learn from each other and/or to develop ways to ensure long-term participation in Europe, improve the quality of participation projects, and ultimately strengthen democracy.

### *Further development of youth work*

The further development of youth work is a cross-cutting issue in the EU Youth Strategy and also features heavily in other youth policy areas and documents<sup>6</sup>; not least, it is one of the youth-specific priorities of Strategic Partnerships. Despite the different structures, systems, priorities etc. of youth work across Europe and the resulting different needs, what they have in common is that they need to become more international.

From the German perspective, there is a clear need for the field to develop a European outlook. JUGEND für Europa understands this as having to mainstream the European dimension across the entire youth work community and have it reflected in its philosophy and activities. This requires, e.g., close coordination and rapport with European partners, the systematic acknowledgement and consideration of European developments in the youth field, and the expansion and inclusion of mobility schemes as a fixed element of its work.

Strategic Partnerships are a good opportunity to Europeanise one's own field of work, e.g., by building European networks and re-positioning these in one's project partners' structures, or by developing new concepts to encourage greater mobility among certain target groups.

However, projects may also choose to focus on quite different aspects of the further development of youth work that are either practical in nature (e.g., development of new methods for non-formal youth education, outreach to new target groups) or more abstract (e.g., a dialogue on youth work concepts, development of quality assurance instruments).

### *Transition from school to training and working life*

The economic and labour market crisis in Europe has led European policymakers to push the employability of young people up the agenda, including that of the EU Youth Strategy. This is also reflected in the priorities of the Strategic Partnerships. In this context, youth work plays a role in shaping the transition of young people from school to training and working life and within that area, in giving them access to non-formal learning opportunities.

Germany's situation is different from that of other European countries in that youth unemployment is primarily a (potential or existing) threat for disadvantaged young people. The EU Education Ministers' Paris Declaration on promoting citizenship and

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<sup>6</sup> Cf. the Resolution of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council, on youth work of 4 December 2010, the Council conclusions on the contribution of quality youth work to the development, well-being and social inclusion of young people of 23 May 2013 and the [outcomes of the 2nd European Youth Work Convention](#).

the common values of freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination through education<sup>7</sup> also mentions the need to do more to combat inequalities and improve access to education and employment for young people with fewer opportunities.

Strategic Partnerships offer great potential especially for organisations offering vocational assistance for young people and public youth services providers to engage in an exchange with other relevant stakeholders such as labour offices and job centres on existing transition schemes across Europe, to learn from each other, and to develop, test and implement new approaches together.

In these three areas, JUGEND für Europa recognises much potential for project executing organisations to work together at the European level under a Strategic Partnership to make a strong contribution towards quality development and innovation in the youth work community in Germany and Europe.

### Dissemination and impact

The Strategic Partnerships most likely to be selected are those that promise to have as broad an impact as possible in the youth field, given their potential; cross-sectoral projects ought to have a broad impact beyond the youth field, too.

The Programme Guide makes mention of a “systemic impact”, which ranges from a longer-term impact right up to the lasting implementation of project outcomes in an overall system that goes beyond all stakeholders that are directly connected to the project. This system may encompass individual organisations or even larger structures such as local or national youth work.

Projects that achieve a strong link between youth work practitioners and (youth) policymakers and administrations from the local to the European level are particularly relevant, as are projects that deliver input for policymakers/administrations and hence prepare the ground for a potentially broad and sustainable impact.

The anticipated systemic impact differs depending on project type:

- In the case of Strategic Partnerships to exchange good practices that focus mainly on network-building and peer learning among the participating institutions and hence require a relatively small amount of funding, the expected impact ought to be felt at least at the level of the participating organisations themselves or at the local level in each of the participating countries. For instance, this would be the case if, as a result of such a project, all units in an organisation were to henceforth maintain European contacts and monitor European developments on a regular basis.
- Strategic Partnerships supporting innovation and partnerships between organisations with greater potential ought to offer a much broader impact in their respective areas of work, from the local or regional via the national (in the participating countries) right up to the European level. This would be the

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<sup>7</sup> Cf., e.g., [http://ec.europa.eu/education/news/2015/documents/citizenship-education-declaration\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/education/news/2015/documents/citizenship-education-declaration_en.pdf).

case, for instance, if such a project were to lead to changes in the way that youth work experts were trained and qualified in the partner countries in question. To ensure that these broad impacts can be achieved, it is recommended – even before submitting an application – to conduct an analysis of needs and existing resources in the field (of work) in question in all participating countries and to design the project accordingly.

To disseminate the project outcomes, the project consortium organisations should actively engage in PR over the entire duration of the project to ensure that the media are informed of its activities and achievements. Even greater attention should be paid to the targeted dissemination of project outcomes to interested audiences, which would enable them to be shared also with other organisations.

This requires the applicants to start by identifying relevant stakeholders and their interests, discussing precisely what they want the project to achieve, preparing to document the outcomes suitably, and designing a strategy to communicate them to stakeholders and other potential users.

### Further information

For more information on Strategic Partnerships, including the Programme Guide, please go to ↘ [http://ec.europa.eu/youth/programme/partnerships/strat\\_partnerships\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/youth/programme/partnerships/strat_partnerships_en.htm)<sup>8</sup>.

### Contact

JUGEND für Europa advises interested parties, recommends the timely submission of a project outline prior to the actual application and assists project executing organisation in implementing their projects.

Please address any inquiries and requests for further information to JUGEND für Europa's programme representatives; contact details and information about the regional responsibility can be found at ↘ <https://www.jugend-in-aktion.de/kontakt>.

Our postal address is:

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<sup>8</sup> Some National Agencies provide further information on Strategic Partnerships, so please check their websites too; for Germany, further information including details on aspects such as budgeting can be found at ↘ <https://www.jugend-in-aktion.de/foerderung/leitaktion-2/strategische-partnerschaften/>.