Evaluation of the EU Youth Strategy and the Council Recommendation on the mobility of young volunteers across the EU

Final Report
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List of Acronyms

ANST- The National Authority for Youth and Sports
BOBF- Better outcomes, Brighter Futures
DG EAC- Directorate-General Education and Culture
EKCYP- European Knowledge Centre on Youth Policy
Eu-CoE- Council of Europe and European Commission
EUMS- EU Member States
EUYS- EU Youth Strategy
EVS- European Voluntary Service
FDSC- Foundation for Civil Society Development
ICY- InterCity Youth
ISZEF- Ifjusagi Szakmani Egyezteto Forum
IVO4al- International Volunteering Opportunities for all
MTS- the Ministry of Youth and Sports
NEETs- Youth not in employment, education, or training
OMC- Open method of coordination
OMC- Open method of coordination
PEYR- Pool of European Youth Researchers
PROM- Polish Federation of Youth Organisations
Provobis- National Resource Centre for Volunteerism
REC- Recommendation
SALTO- Support, Advanced Learning and Training Opportunities within the Erasmus+: Youth in Action programme
SD- Structured Dialogue
VOLUM- Federation for Supporting the Development of Volunteering in Romania
YECF- Youth Expert Coordination Forum
YNGO- Youth Non-Governmental Organization
1 Introduction

The Interim Evaluation of the EU Youth Strategy and the Council Recommendation on the Mobility of Young Volunteers was launched by the Directorate-General Education and Culture (DG EAC) in March 2015. The work was undertaken by ICF International in partnership with Technopolis in the period of March 2015 to February 2016.

The Report presents:

- The method used, its strengths and weaknesses
- The evaluation’s findings on:
  - The relevance of the EU Youth Strategy and the Council Recommendation on the Mobility of Young Volunteers to the needs of policymakers, youth organisations and young people across Europe.
  - Its coherence with other EU initiatives related to the youth field, as well as its internal coherence.
  - Its effectiveness in terms of its influence on EU, national and local developments in the youth field over the period 2010-2018.
  - Its added value in comparison to other EU and national initiatives in the field.
  - Its efficiency.
  - Its sustainability.
- The evaluation’s conclusions and recommendations for the future EU cooperation framework in the youth field.

Annexes include:

- Policy documents adopted in the Open Method of Coordination in the youth field in 2010-2014 (Annex 1)
- Overview of national interviews conducted (Annex 2)
- Breakdown of surveys’ responses and targets (Annex 3)
- Examples of the effects of the structured dialogue (Annex 4)
- List of outputs produced under the Mutual Learning instrument (Annex 5)
- List of interviews conducted (Annex 6)
- Case Studies (Annex 7)
- Survey questionnaires (Annex 8)
- Results of the survey of European youth organisations (Annex 9)
- Results of the survey of Young Europeans (Annex 10)
- Terms of Reference for this evaluation (Annex 11)

1.1 Objectives and scope of the evaluation

The EU Youth Strategy (EUYS), and within it, the Recommendation on the Mobility of Young Volunteers across the EU, set out the youth cooperation framework at EU level. The evaluation period is 2010-2018.

This evaluation assesses the EUYS’s role in shaping EU-level and national measures and policies in the area of youth.

The period to be evaluated is 2010-2014/5 which corresponds to the interim stage of the EUYS and five years after the adoption of the Council Recommendation. Whilst the evaluation period, mentioned in the ToRs, ended in 2014, it was not always easy or logical to exclude the 2015 activities. Given that data collection was conducted in
2015, interviewees and survey respondents were reacting to the most recent developments.

The evaluation has both a summative and formative character:

- Measuring what was achieved in the 2010-2014/5 period, beyond Member States’ Open Method of Coordination (OMC) reporting exercise for the 2015 EU Youth Report and
- Identifying ways of improving the implementation and governance of the EU youth cooperation framework for the period 2015-2018 and also inform the renewal of the EU Youth Strategy in the post 2018 period.

More specifically the evaluation was to assess:

- the past and continued relevance of the EU Youth Strategy and youth cooperation framework to Member States’ needs and interests (policy-makers, youth organisations, young people);
- the effectiveness of the EUYS: i.e. identify the effects on policy and practices in Member States at national level, regional and local levels, which can be attributed to the EU Youth Strategy and youth cooperation framework at EU level;
- the cost-effectiveness of the EU Youth Strategy and youth cooperation framework and level of burden associated to it;
- the EU Added Value of the EU Youth Strategy and its instruments in comparison to what Member States could have achieved alone;
- the sustainability of cooperation structures at EU, national and local levels set up to achieve the EUYS’ objectives.

1.2 Key features of the EU Youth Strategy

In the area of youth, the EU can only carry out actions to support, coordinate and supplement the actions of the Member States\(^1\), in line with the principle of subsidiarity. Decisions taken by the EU Council in the field of youth are non-binding. The EU has no legislative power in the youth field.

A framework for European cooperation in the youth field was first established in 2002 on the basis of the OMC and mainstreaming of youth issues into other policies\(^2\). The EU Youth Strategy, proposed in a 2009 Commission Communication\(^3\), renewed the framework for European cooperation in the youth field for the period 2010-2018. It was formally adopted in the Council resolution of 27 November 2009 on a renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field (2010-2018) (2009/C 311/01).

The intervention logic behind the EU Youth Strategy is presented under Figure 1.

Considering common problems faced by young Europeans in 2009, the EU Youth Strategy set common objectives and approaches for Member States to follow at policy level.

As presented under Figure 1, European cooperation in the youth field (also referred as ‘youth OMC’ in this report) over 2010-2018 was intended to contribute to the two following overarching objectives:

\(^1\) Article 6 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, OJ C 83. The EU’s competence in the area of youth participation is an exception, according to Article 165 of TFEU: ‘Community action aimed at encouraging the participation of young people in democratic life of Europe’.


\(^3\) An EU strategy for youth – Investing and empowering. A renewed open method of coordination to address youth challenges and opportunities, 9008/09.
the creation of more and equal opportunities for all young people in education and in the labour market; and

the promotion of the active citizenship, social inclusion and solidarity of all young people.

To achieve this, the EUYS encouraged Member States to adopt a dual approach based on:

- Addressing core youth issues or topics that youth policy can achieve within its sphere of competence (legacy of first OMC): participation, voluntary activities, youth work;
- Mainstreaming youth issues within eight other fields of action, within the competences of Ministries / DGs other than youth: education and training, employment and entrepreneurship, health and well-being, creativity and culture, social inclusion, youth and the world.

Finally, support to youth work\(^4\) was highlighted as a means to contribute to the implementation of both approaches.

This reflects the choices made at EU level to adopt holistic and transversal policy approaches to youth issues, including support to mainstreaming a youth focus in a number of policy areas and measures.

The youth cooperation framework at EU level aimed to provide EUMS with policy cooperation instruments and implementation instruments (see Inputs in the intervention logic under Figure 1). Those instruments were intended to support Member State reach the strategic objectives included in the EUYS, and implement the approaches and principles promoted in the document. Governance structures were also put in place to guide the process and provide focus to the cooperation framework.

Outcomes expected to be produced under the EU Youth OMC over 2010-4/5 include:

- For policymakers at national, regional and/or local level(s) in all eight fields of action:
  - Improved knowledge of the situation of youth
  - Mutual learning
  - Better, participatory and evidence-based policy-making, incl.:

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\(^{4}\) According to Resolution of the Council and of the representatives of the governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council on youth work, Brussels, 18 and 19 November 2010, "Youth work takes place in the extracurricular area, as well as through specific leisure time activities, and is based on non-formal and informal learning processes and on voluntary participation. These activities and processes are self-managed, co-managed or managed under educational or pedagogical guidance by either professional or voluntary youth workers and youth leaders and can develop and be subject to changes caused by different dynamics". According to Study on the Value of Youth Work in the EU (p. 53, DG EAC, 2013), "Youth work is extremely diversified. It is delivered by clubs and centres, youth movements, social welfare services, street workers, associations with diverse aims, etc. The activities through which youth work is provided can be grouped under the categories of culture, sport, leisure, education, environmental protection, civic engagement, international cooperation and development and so on. The aims of youth work range from personal development, prevention, social cohesion, to inclusion in employment or education, just citing the most common ones. It sometimes targets all young people without distinction and sometimes it is more focused on certain groups. Some organisations perform ‘youth work’ as part of their mission, but they also work with other target groups that can include children or adults", [http://ec.europa.eu/youth/library/study/youth-work-report_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/youth/library/study/youth-work-report_en.pdf)
Specific youth initiatives (policies and actions) targeted at young people developed and implemented, in areas such as non-formal learning, participation, voluntary activities, youth work, mobility and information.

The mainstreaming of youth issues in employment, health, culture, education, etc.

- Value of volunteering and youth work recognised

For youth organisations:

- Opportunities (including cross-border ones) provided and their quality improved
- Young people are better represented and serviced
- Value of volunteering and youth work recognised

Cooperation at EU level in the youth field is governed by the OMC. This means that the implementation of the Strategy relies on Member States’ interest and will to learn from each other, to make use of the instruments available at EU level, and to commit resources at national level to reach common objectives set at EU level. Member States’ commitment is a key input in the EU Youth Strategy as illustrated in the intervention logic as presented in Figure 1 below.
Figure 1. Intervention logic – the EU Youth Strategy (2010-2018) including the Council Recommendation on the Mobility of Young Volunteers

- **Youth unemployment**
- Insufficient participating from young people in E&T
- Poverty among youth
- Low levels of youth participation and representation in democratic processes
- Health problems

**External context**
- Globalisation, youth riots in FR, youth rejection of EU treaty in 2 EUMS and low turnout in 2009 EP elections; 2008 crisis

**Problems addressed**
- Insufficient representation of young people in E&T
- Poverty among youth
- Low levels of youth participation and representation in democratic processes
- Health problems

**EU MS interest + financial support**
- Policy cooperation instruments (1) 3-year work cycles + priorities (2) Governance structures: Council (both at ministerial and Youth Working party level) and EU presidencies; Member States; OMC expert groups; Structured dialogue; Partnership with CoE

**Implementation Instruments**
1. Knowledge building and evidence-based policy-making
2. Mutual Learning
3. Progress-reporting
4. Dissemination of results
5. Monitoring of the process
6. Consultations and Structured Dialogue
7. Mobilisation of EU programmes and Funds (e.g., Youth in Action, Erasmus+)

**Funding**

- **EU level**
  - Specific initiatives (policies and actions) targeted at young people implemented, in areas such as non-formal learning, participation, voluntary activities, youth work, mobility and information
  - Mainstreaming initiatives implemented - youth dimensions included in policies and actions in employment, health, culture, education etc.
  - Information tools created and used: EU Youth Portal, Studies and surveys
  - Progress measurement tools created and used: EU Youth Reports, EU Dashboard of youth indicators;

- **National level**
  - Common policy orientations agreed on: Council policy documents; outputs of OMC expert groups, EU Youth conferences
  - Networks developed: networks of researchers; cross-border networks of volunteering organisations
  - Peer-learning activities implemented: conferences, seminars
  - EU recognition and mobility tools used: Europass, Youthpass, mobility card

- **Regional/local level**
  - Policy dialogue with IOs (CoE, OECD, UN) conducted
  - Opportunities for cross-border mobility increased and simplified
  - Results of cooperation disseminated

**Expected outputs**
- Improved knowledge of the situation of youth
- Mutual learning
- Value of volunteering and youth work recognised
- Better, participatory and evidence-based policies which contribute to objectives of EU Strategy

**Expected outcomes**
- Young people are better represented and serviced
- Increased opportunities for more young people (esp. for those with few opportunities)

**Expected impact**
- Growth and jobs
- More young people empowered as active, economically and socially-integrated citizens

March, 2016
2 Method used

Given the nature of the intervention – a Strategy and cooperation framework governed by OMC, the methodological approach to this evaluation is primarily based on a qualitative enquiry assessing the contribution made by the EUYS to changes at EU, national and local levels in the youth field over the period 2010-4/5. These aspects related to the effectiveness and EU Added Value of the EUYS.

The evaluation also provides an assessment of the EU Youth Strategy (EUYS) ‘s (1) past and continued relevance, (2) cost-effectiveness, and an assessment of (3) the sustainability of cooperation structures at EU, national and local levels set up to achieve the EUYS’ objectives.

In view of this, the evaluation method has been based on a mix of data collection and analysis activities and tools, as outlined in the table below. The mix of methods allowed the evaluation team to collect evidence from various stakeholder groups and sources. It then allowed for the triangulation of data. The purpose of each methodological activity is outlined below.

Table 1. Purpose of each methodological activity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Desk research / Mapping exercise</td>
<td>To map activities and their outputs, conducted at EU and national level in the frame of the EU Strategy, based on the review of all available reporting documents (lessons learnt, meeting minutes, reports, etc).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-depth telephone interviews</td>
<td>To gather information on the EUYS’ influence from national and EU officials on the Strategy, as well as from other national level stakeholders (National Agency for Erasmus + and National Youth Council)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surveys</td>
<td>To collect perceptions on the EUYS’ relevance and influence, from youth organisations and young people themselves to complement information collected in the mapping exercise and in the EU and national level telephone interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case studies</td>
<td>To gather detailed evidence of the contribution of the EUYS, and related factors, in 10 specific cases of ‘change’ in policy or practices in policy-makers or youth organisations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.1 Tasks conducted

2.1.1 EU 28 data collection stage

The objective of the EU 28 data collection task was to collect detailed information from different target groups in all EUMS for each of the evaluation questions.

The collection of data began following the approval of the inception report in June 2015.

The following three data collection activities were conducted:

- Desk research
- Phone interviews
- EU-wide surveys

Desk research and mapping of EU and national level outputs

The objective of this step was to gather preliminary evidence of:

- the activities conducted at national and EU level which can be linked to the Strategy and/or Council Recommendation,
• the outputs and outcomes produced. Only results which have been influenced by the EU Strategy and/or the Council Recommendation, or where additional information on this is needed, were included in the data collection tools.

This mapping was conducted on the basis of a review of:

• the 2015 and 2012 national reports and
• existing documents, sent by DG EAC to the evaluation team, which had been grouped according to the seven implementation instruments\textsuperscript{5}. They are referred from now on as the ‘instrument specific’ documents.

Those documents provided information about changes at national, and sometime local, level over 2010-2014 /2015 that the EUYS was reported to have contributed to, e.g.:

• Adoption of a National youth strategy;
• Policy or legal developments in the field of youth (e.g. youth work, volunteering, non-formal education etc.);
• Changes in national youth policy agenda e.g. youth issues have moved up the national agenda / or new issues have been added to the agenda (e.g. youth work, volunteering);
• New initiatives / tools / activities in the youth field developed;
• Dialogue improved between youth and policy-makers;
• Other types of change.

This information was then used to tailor the following data collection activities.

**Telephone interviews**

In the early stages of the study 10 semi-structured scoping interviews were conducted with DG EAC officials, representatives of EU-level youth civil society (e.g. the European Youth Forum) and key stakeholders from Member States most engaged in EU youth policy (Belgium, the Czech Republic and Germany). The purpose of those interviews was to gain a sound understanding of the intervention evaluated and of the evaluation needs. This information was then used when designing the data collection and analysis tools.

A more in-depth round of EU and country level interviews was conducted in the subsequent stage of the work. Their aim was to:

• verify the validity of the information already collected through the desk research;
• collect new information on the effectiveness and efficiency of actions initiated under the EU Youth Strategy and the Council Recommendation.

The interviewers have also used the interviews, when possible, to collect some additional information on the (1) relevance of the EU Youth Strategy and the cooperation framework, (2) its coherence with other policy aims and actions in the same areas, (3) its added value compared to what would have existed in their absence, (4) the sustainability of the cooperation framework.

In total 151 interviews were conducted, out of which:

• 10 scoping interviews including:
  - Six with current or former staff at DG EAC;

\textsuperscript{5} Knowledge building and evidence-based policy-making; Mutual learning; Dissemination of results; Monitoring of the process, Progress-reporting; Consultations and Structured Dialogue with young people and youth organisations; Mobilisation of EU programmes and funds.
- One with the European Youth Forum;
- Three with EUMS (BE, NL, CZ, DE)

• 18 in-depth interviews were conducted with EU level stakeholders:
  - Five interviews with other Commission DGs (DG EMPL, DG RTD, DG REGIO and DG SANTE);
  - Three were conducted with representatives of the Council of Europe;
  - Seven with EU/European federations of Youth organisations or international youth organisations;
  - Two with members of the EYCA office;
  - One with a Member of the Secretariat of the European Youth Information and Counselling Agency (ERYICA).

• 123 in-depth interviews with national stakeholders in 28 EU countries. On average four interviews were conducted per country. In larger countries or decentralised countries, more were conducted.

In some countries, it proved difficult to schedule interviews with some stakeholders due to departures from organisations, staff turnover, internal changes in the organisations, lack of availability and lack of interest.

Figure 2 provides a complete overview of the interviews conducted in the scoping and in-depth phases of the evaluation. Interviews are presented by category of stakeholder group. A full list of interviewees is provided in annexes 2 and 6.

**Figure 2. Overview of ICF interviews conducted in the scoping and in-depth phases of the evaluation**

![Pie chart showing interviews conducted]

- Youth Ministry / Dpmt
- National Youth Council
- Erasmus + agency
- Volunteering org.
- Other Ministry
- EU/inter. federations / youth organisations
- DG EAC
- Commission DGs
- CoE
- EYCA and ERYICA

*Source: ICF*
Surveys

Two surveys were launched within this evaluation in order to collect perceptions from youth organisations and young people across the EU mainly on the relevance of the EU Youth Strategy to their needs and interests.

The surveys were produced in English and translated in 5 other EU languages (DE, ES, FR, IT, PL). They were launched on the 17th July and closed the 21st September. The box below presents how the surveys were disseminated.

Box 1  Survey dissemination

In order to secure an appropriate response rate and geographical coverage, about 130 multipliers were identified at national and European level. They were asked to disseminate the surveys to their mailing lists and communication platforms (website, social media). Positive feedbacks were received from 33 multipliers but it is likely that many other multipliers disseminated the surveys. The majority of multipliers are youth organisations and national Erasmus+ Agencies which could disseminate the surveys amongst (1) their members or associated organisations and (2) individual and youth organisations as beneficiaries of Erasmus+ grants.

The surveys were also posted on the European Youth Portal and on the EC Youth Facebook page.

The following additional efforts were taken from mid-August for those countries where the response rate was below 75% of the target (see Annex 3):

As social media proved to be a successful dissemination means, national multipliers were encouraged to again share the links to the survey on their social media page.

An advertisement campaign on Facebook was also launched to increase response rates of the survey to young people. The campaign only focused on the 18 countries that were below target according to our weighting system. The survey advertisement was shown 735,000 times and clicked 3,303 times.

Finally, the surveys were posted on LinkedIn thematic groups that focus on young people and/or on national issues (e.g. European Youth Forum, Greek it network, etc.).

The geographical breakdown of responses collected for both surveys is presented in Annex 3. The analysis of responses to both surveys is provided in Annex 9 (survey to youth organisations) and Annex 10 (survey to young Europeans). Information from both surveys has been integrated under section 4 of the report.

Surveys to youth organisations across the EU

In total, 250 youth organisations responded. Respondents’ geographical origin is presented in the figure below.
The graph shows that some countries were more represented than others, e.g. one fifth of respondents were from Portugal and a half of all respondents originated from four countries (PT, DE, HR and the UK). On the other hand France, Hungary and Poland are slightly underrepresented, in terms of total responses against the size of the youth population in country. No responses were received from youth organisations from Estonia, Finland and the Netherlands. This is most likely due to a lack of responsiveness from multipliers. The issue of overrepresentation of certain countries in the sample of respondents is discussed under section 2.2 (Discussion on the method).

Most organisational respondents were active in the field of “Education and training” (72%, N=250). Voluntary activities were conducted by more than half of respondents (53%, N=250).

**Figure 4. Areas of activity of the respondents**

Which of the following are your organisation’s core areas of activity?

- Education and training: 72%
- Voluntary activities: 53%
- Social inclusion: 46%
- Creativity and culture: 40%
- Participation: 36%
- Employment and entrepreneurship: 32%
- Health and well-being: 29%
- Youth and the world: 29%
- Other: 16%

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6 Non EU: two respondent youth organisations Armenia and FYROM. From ICF’s survey results – please see Annexes 3 and 9.
7 N=250. From ICF’s survey results – please see Annex 9.
In total, 74 respondents indicated they were involved in EU cross-border volunteering. This represents more than half of the number of organisations surveyed reporting involvement in voluntary activities (N=129).

Survey to young Europeans aged 15-30

The number of responses from young people was 719. The most represented age group is 18-25 (53%), followed by 25-30 (33%) and 15-18 (14%). About half of the respondents (49%, N=719) were individuals that are members of a youth organisation. According to a 2014 Eurobarometer survey, 49% of young Europeans took part in activities of at least one organisation working with young people (youth club, sport club, cultural organisation, etc.). The questions are somewhat different as the survey carried out for this evaluation asked about membership of youth organisations. Assuming that not all young people who take part in activities of youth organisations are members, this means that the sample of respondents to this survey was somewhat biased towards young people engaged in the youth field.

Countries of origin of the largest groups of respondents are Poland, Italy, Germany, France and Spain, as illustrated in Figure 5 below. These are also countries with largest population. Considering the geographical size of the country, the number of respondents from Croatia was high. At the same time respondents from Sweden, Denmark, Luxembourg, Hungary, Slovenia and Finland are rather under-represented.

Figure 5. Geographical distribution of survey respondents

2.1.2 Data clustering and analysis

The interview write-ups were coded in the software Nvivo and extractions per evaluation criteria were made.

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8 By cross-border volunteering, we mean activities related to volunteering which involve hosting or sending volunteers in a country other than of their residence.
10 There is no indication on the geographical location of the 23 respondents who ticked the option ’Other – non EU countries’. From ICF’s survey results – please see Annexes 3 and 10.
The raw data was used for the analysis and considered in parallel with information collected in the instrument-specific data collection tool.

Information from the interviews was then inputted, in the country-specific data collection tool, to be considered in parallel with information extracted from the national reports.

On the basis of the information collected in the national interviews, in the national reports and from the surveys (to a more limited extent), the core team made an assessment of the level of influence the EU Youth Strategy had on the following types of positive national changes over the period 2010-2014/2015:

- National youth strategy adopted in 2010-2014 /2015
- Policy or legal development in the field of youth (e.g. youth work, volunteering, non-formal education etc.) adopted 2014/2015
- Changes in national youth policy agenda
- New initiatives / tools / activities in the youth field have been developed
- Dialogue improved between youth and policy-makers
- Other types of change.

The sections on effectiveness and EU added value were developed on the basis of this assessment exercise, in addition to other sources reviewed.

2.1.3 Case study phase

The case studies allowed to cover some data gaps and also to provide more detailed information on the level of the EUYS’ influence in case of specific positive national developments in a selection of EUMSover 2010-4/5.

This was achieved by looking in detail into the conditions and the critical factors that led to the positive changes which the EU Youth Strategy influenced (including those influenced by the Council Recommendation on the Mobility of Young Volunteers across the EU).

Ten case studies were developed across the EU between September and November 2015, including two pilot case studies to test and refine the proposed approach.

In some cases, the EUYS’ influence on changes analysed was lower than initially expected. Detailed research conducted for the case study analysis showed that national factors had been important contributing factors. The case studies thus provided evidence of how the EUYS was one amongst other contributing factors.

Selection and status of case studies

The final ten case studies are presented in the table below. The selection captures the diversity of types of changes that the EU Youth Strategy can trigger, influence or inspire:

- Change in national youth strategy adopted in 2010-2014 /2015;
- Policy or legal development in the field of youth (e.g. youth work, volunteering, non-formal education etc.);
- Developments in the national youth policy agenda e.g. youth issues have moved up the national agenda / new issues have been added to the agenda (e.g. youth work, volunteering);
- New initiatives / tools / activities in the youth field have been developed;
- Dialogue improved between youth and policy-makers (structures to do so exist or have been improved, and are used; different stakeholders report this - or changes in approaches: consultation now regular etc).
The selection of the ten case studies also covers the following criteria:

- Different policy fields.
- Different implementation instruments and activities.
- Different types of policy initiatives (e.g. youth specific initiatives and mainstreaming initiatives).

The ‘changes’ selected also cover different levels – from local to national and EU-level effects – and vary in scope.

The case studies also cover countries with different approaches to youth policy and volunteering, ranging from countries where youth policy is relatively newly-established to countries with a strong tradition of youth work and youth policy.
Table 2.  *Selected case studies*\(^\text{11}\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Country, name of initiative</th>
<th>Year, name of initiative</th>
<th>Features of the ‘change’</th>
<th>Brief description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>AT, &quot;Jugendcheck&quot;</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>National level</td>
<td>The ‘Youth Check’, an effect-oriented impact assessment, came into effect in 2013. It introduced a requirement that all new legislative and regulatory proposals are evaluated on the basis of potential consequences they could have on children, young people and young adults. This instrument increases participation from youth organisations, in particular the National Youth Council, in the legislative process.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| 2 | CZ, National Youth Strategy of the Czech Republic for 2014-2020 | 2014 | National level | The Czech Strategy follows a dual approach with a clear focus on cross-sectoral cooperation as well as targeted youth policies in the same ‘fields of action’ and implemented through similar instruments as the EU Youth Strategy. |

| 3 | DE, Service and Transfer Agency for the Implementation of the EU Youth Strategy in Germany | 2013 | Federal and Lander level | The Federal Ministry set up two project agencies – the Service and Transfer Agencies - to Implement the EU Youth Strategy in Germany at the Federal and Länder levels and implement the Ministry’s own projects. |

| 4 | HU, Establishment of a youth work coordination group | 2013 | National level | A youth work coordination group (Ifjusagi Szakmani Egyzteto Forum - ISZEF) was set up for the implementation of the National Youth Strategy. The forum is made of (inter-ministerial) governmental and non-governmental actors, such as representatives of youth organisations and youth experts. The forum advises the Parliament and Government on |

\(^\text{11}\) From National Youth Reports 2012 and 2015 and in-depth interviews conducted by ICF for this evaluation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Country, name of initiative</th>
<th>Year, name of initiative</th>
<th>Features of the ‘change’</th>
<th>Brief description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>IE, 2014</td>
<td>Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures: the National Policy Framework for Children and Young People 2014-2020</td>
<td>National level  Change in national strategy  Core youth initiative  Transversal approach  Evidence-based youth policy-making</td>
<td>This is the first time that a comprehensive strategy for youth has been developed in Ireland as previously youth issues were addressed by different ministries as part of the wider remits. Cross-ministry cooperation was foreseen at implementation stage.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>PT, 2013</td>
<td>The White Book on Youth (Livro Branco)</td>
<td>National level  Change in national strategy  Improve dialogue with youth  Mainstreaming initiative  Youth participation  Structured dialogue</td>
<td>The White Book on Youth is the new youth strategy for Portugal. Young people and representative structures were consulted, in each of the 5 macro-regions, to define this global strategy and an action plan. The Council of Ministries adopted a resolution in 2013, a law guaranteeing that these priority actions developed through consultations with young people and youth organisations would be followed up. 271 measures are now currently followed through a monitoring mechanism in 2013-2015: all youth-relevant Ministries hold a meeting every month to check progress on the 271 measures.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>RO, 2014</td>
<td>New Law on Volunteering</td>
<td>National level  Legal development in the youth field  Core youth initiative  Volunteering  Dissemination activities</td>
<td>Discussions about a national law on volunteering started during the 2011 European Year of Volunteering, when a federation of volunteering organisations was formed in Romania, called VOLUM. After a massive advocacy campaign led by VOLUM, the Law on Volunteering was adopted in 2014 and was seen as a major success and progress. This was the result of intense efforts from many stakeholders.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>SI, 2013</td>
<td>National Youth Programme 2013-2022</td>
<td>National level  First national youth programme / strategy</td>
<td>The National Youth Programme 2013-2022 is the thematic guide to policy and programmes in Slovenia. It focuses on five key areas: Employment &amp; Entrepreneurship; Housing; Health and Wellness; Society and the Youth Sector; Culture, creativity, heritage and the media. According to the Programme for Young People page on the Ministry</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

13 Dynamic strategy, Youth participation, Youth service system, Learning career, creating an independent existence, Healthy lifestyle and prevention, Resource allocation.  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Country, name of initiative</th>
<th>Year, features of the ‘change’</th>
<th>Brief description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>EU, InterCity Youth (ICY)15 - the European Network of Local Departments for Youth Work</td>
<td>2014 Local level</td>
<td>The main objectives of the ICY-network are to: Enhance peer learning between local departments of youth work; providing opportunities for mutual support &amp; stimulation; Promote youth work as an arena for non-formal learning; Transmit knowledge and insight from local government experiments to European policy agendas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>EU, IVO4all (International Volunteering Opportunities for all)</td>
<td>2015 Transnational level</td>
<td>The IVO4ALL project, run by a consortium of 8 high level European partners16, started in February 2015, for a period of thirty months. The overall project budget is 2.8 million €. It aims to (1) compare ways to develop internationalisation of national schemes of young people’s voluntary service; (2) enable peer learning in the field of international volunteering; (3) cross-border sharing of knowledge and experience.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


16 The consortium has been set up under the initiative of the French Ministry for Urban Policies, Youth and Sports. France Volontaires, a network of NGOs and public authorities, is the project coordinator. Partners are the French National Agency for Civic Service, The Department of Youth and National Civic Service from Italy, Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO) from UK is a leading international development charity, The Department of Youth Affairs in Lithuania, the National Youth Service from Luxemburg.
Method of approach to conduct case studies

A total of 34 interviews have been conducted for the ten case studies submitted. The breakdown by type of respondents is provided in Figure 6 below. The full list of case study interviewees is provided in Annex 6 while the case studies are presented in Annex 7.

*Figure 6. Overview of ICF interviews conducted in the case study phase*

2.2 Discussion on the methodology and of the validity of findings

The methodological approach was chosen to capture examples of systemic effects of the EU Youth Strategy, to gather data on the perceived relevance of the Strategy and the opinions about the processes and implementation instruments. It relied on a combination of qualitative and quantitative sets of data. The main system level results of the Strategy were measured in qualitative terms only. The reasons why no quantitative indicators were selected are:

- The Strategy is not expected to have a direct effect on the situation of young people which could be captured through quantitative indicators; and

- There is a broad range of types of effects expected at system level and capturing all influences systematically would not have been feasible in the scope of this assignment;

This is why qualitative indicators on the type of influence based on narratives of stakeholders were gathered. The evaluation team interviewed a combination of interviewees including those who did and those who did not directly take part in the activities of the EU Youth Strategy. The in-depth interviews revealed that some country level interviewees showed poor knowledge of the EU Youth Strategy and their answers were more driven by word-of-mouth than personal and informed opinions. Data provided in these interviews was treated with caution during the interviews analysis. The fact that certain key stakeholders (e.g. Ministry of Education, Ministry of Employment) were not overly knowledgeable about the Strategy, is, per se, an interesting piece of information and was taken into account in the analysis. It shows
that the dissemination of the EU Youth Strategy activities and outputs at national level could be improved.

The evaluation also measured the perceived usefulness of the EUYS activities at organisational level and the relevance of the Strategy. This was done through the survey of youth organisations. The youth organisations that responded to the survey did not cover all EU countries in a balanced manner. The number of respondents from Portugal and Croatia was high compared to the population size. Over-representation of responses from certain countries could have created a bias if the response pattern was different than for other countries. For example if the Portuguese respondents were more positive than the rest of the respondents, the over-representation of Portuguese respondents would have shifted the indicators towards a more positive picture. The evaluation team reviewed the response patterns for the over-represented countries and compared it with the sample of respondents. It found that the responses were not significantly different. It could be assumed that in those countries where organisations provided more responses the Strategy would be seen more positively. However this is not confirmed by the response patterns of organisations from Portugal and Croatia. Inversely certain countries are under-represented in the sample. It could be assumed that these are countries where the Strategy had little or no influence. However a high number of responses were received for example from the UK which was one of the countries less engaged with the Strategy. Consequently the over-representation and under-representation in a few countries did not significantly skew the overall results towards more positive or more negative findings.

Another challenge in interpreting the survey findings was that some respondents did not properly distinguish the EUYS / cooperation framework at policy level with the EU funding programmes in the field of youth. Therefore some of youth organisations and young Europeans’ views on the EUYS’ relevance, effectiveness and EU added value etc. have perhaps been tainted by their perceptions and knowledge of the Youth in Action and Erasmus + programmes. To the extent possible, where confusion within respondents’ responses could be spotted, caveats were introduced in the interpretation of responses.

Another source of evidence for the study was desk research. Within the secondary data reviewed, the 2012 and 2015 EU Youth Reports were of a varied level of quality. For example, in several reports, some questions remained unanswered. In others, language issues or gaps in information made data interpretation somewhat challenging. In view of this, the EU Youth Reports were used as baseline information to be complemented and cross-checked with country-specific information collected in the in-depth interviews and data collected during the review of the instrument specific documents and case studies.

Assessing the efficiency of the EUYS has been challenging. It is hard, if not impossible to quantify the outcomes of the EUYS. As explained in section 4 of this report, the EUYS has been one of several factors affecting national developments. To quantify the value of EUYS results one would need: a reliable measurement of the change at national level and in the situation of young people that could be attributed to the EUYS. The Efficiency section of this report (see section 6) has therefore been built on the basis of:

- Information provided by the European Commission on budgets allocated to three (out of seven) EU cooperation instruments and activities, and on costs;
- Stakeholders’ views on level of burden associated with the implementation of inputs, i.e. policy cooperation and implementation instruments, structures, processes and other activities
- Comparative data on funding allocated to instruments used under other OMCs (ET 2020 and Employment under EASI support) and which are somewhat comparable to those used under the Youth OMC.
Finally, it has been challenging to distinguish the influence of activities undertaken on the basis of the Council Recommendation on national developments in the field of cross-border volunteering (e.g. in terms of agenda-setting or on opening up of national volunteering schemes etc.) from the influence of activities in the volunteering field undertaken under the EUYS at large (more so as the Council Recommendation was included in the cooperation framework). Specific findings related to the Council Recommendation proper have been drawn out in the final report. Those are few.
3 Relevance and coherence of the EUYS and Council Recommendation

This section presents the evaluation findings regarding four evaluation questions:

- **EQ1a**: To what extent are the objectives of the EU Youth Strategy/Recommendation on the Mobility of Young Volunteers relevant to the needs and problems of young people today and to activities of youth policy makers?

- **EQ1b**: To what extent are they relevant to and coherent with broader EU policy aims, notably those of the Europe 2020 Strategy, and, in the case of the Recommendation, with the EU Youth Strategy?

- **EQ2**: To what extent are the activities implemented under the eight fields of action of the EU Youth Strategy/action lines of the Council Recommendation on the Mobility of Young Volunteers across the EU relevant and coherent driving forces in support of: a) creating more and equal opportunities for young people in education and the labour market and to promote active citizenship, social inclusion and solidarity? b) in the case of the Recommendation, promoting cross-border volunteering of young people?

- **EQ3**: To what extent are the instruments for the implementation of the EU Youth Strategy/Recommendation across the EU relevant and coherent tools in meeting the general objectives of the EU Youth Strategy?

Over the period 2010-4, the EUYS has overall been relevant to the needs and problems of young Europeans as well as to the activities of youth policy-makers in all EUMS. The EUYS provides a very broad and flexible framework with eight action areas and many initiatives. The vast majority of respondents found at least some of the topics of the EUYS relevant. At the same time, countries focused their efforts on some issues more than others. This means that the relevance of the EUYS stemmed from the fact that countries see it as an ‘à la carte’ framework from which they can pick and choose rather than a common set of objectives towards which all countries and stakeholders would be working. The Trio Presidencies’17 common priorities addressed this issue to a certain extent by focusing on selected aspects of the EUYS for a period of 18 months. This however meant that there was a certain lack of continuity in the EU-level commitment to the EUYS priorities, although this perhaps also reflected Member States’ wishes.

The relevance of the EUYS also varied according to the countries’ starting point. In countries which, in 2010, were further away from being aligned with the principles and topics promoted by the EUYS, the strategy was perceived as being more relevant than in those countries whose approaches and objectives were already close to what the EUYS aimed to achieve. Another determinant of relevance for national policy makers is the interest at strategic level and within the national youth sector in taking advantage of EU-level cooperation instruments.

Among the Strategy’s eight fields of action, education and employment seem to be relevant to most of the surveyed young people. However, at policy level, the relevance of the areas varies across EUMS. Some Member States call for higher focus on urgent issues such as employment, while others see the need to increase attention to the core youth areas of youth work, volunteering and participation.

17 “The presidency of the Council rotates among the EU member states every 6 months. During this 6-month period, the presidency chairs meetings at every level in the Council, helping to ensure the continuity of the EU’s work in the Council. Member states holding the presidency work together closely in groups of three, called ‘trios’. This system was introduced by the Lisbon Treaty in 2009. The trio sets long-term goals and prepares a common agenda determining the topics and major issues that will be addressed by the Council over an 18 month period. On the basis of this programme, each of the three countries prepares its own more detailed 6-month programme”. http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/council-eu/presidency-council-eu/
There are some cases of duplication between EU tools and initiatives and national ones (e.g. information portals), however in most cases, they reinforced the attainment of the objectives set within the EUYS.

The Council Recommendation has also been relevant to the needs of young volunteers and of volunteering organisations, although the latter considered that the Council Recommendation could have been more ambitious and links to funding programmes made more explicit.

3.1 Relevance of the EUYS to the needs and problems of young people today and to activities of youth policy makers

3.1.1 Relevance of the EUYS to the needs and problems of young people

The objectives and areas covered by the EUYS continue to be relevant to young people’s needs. The survey of young people found that most respondents see the priorities of the EUYS as still being relevant to the needs of young people in their countries (see Figure 7).

Figure 7. Respondents’ views on continued relevance of EUYS priorities

Furthermore, young people surveyed were asked to list priorities they wished to see included in a future EU cooperation framework. This was an open question. The top three priorities cited by young people correspond to issues already covered under the Strategy’s current objectives. They were:

- Better access to employment and job stability (mentioned by 169 respondents);
- Better access and opportunities for education and training (mentioned by 172 respondents), and
- More cross-border volunteering opportunities (mentioned by 107 respondents).

18 Open-ended, question 6h-j, N=between 363 and 420 for q 6h, 6i, 6j. Participants offered more than one answer.
The match between the objectives of the EUYS and the current problems of young people was also confirmed by youth stakeholders (in ministries and youth national councils) consulted in the 28 Member States and at EU level. Of 112\textsuperscript{19} interviewees who clearly answered the question whether the EUYS was relevant to the needs of young people, 82\% responded ‘yes’.

The EUYS offers a broad and flexible framework. This characteristic of the Strategy meant that it enabled addressing a wide range of issues, variable needs and interests that young people face across Member States. Currently, the EUYS (Council Resolution) lists 65 initiatives which can be taken by Member States and/or the European Commission in all eight fields of action. Consequently, the EUYS covered so many topics that it would be hard for youth policy makers and stakeholders not to find at least some which would be relevant to their work. The system of priorities for EU cooperation set within the triennial work cycles and, since 2014, the EU Work Plan on Youth, has brought some focus by prioritising youth empowerment, cross-sectorial cooperation and development of youth work to better contribute to addressing the effects of the crisis on young people. Nevertheless, some stakeholders have called for a more focused cooperation framework which would have a clearer emphasis on selected initiatives.

In total, 25 stakeholders interviewed (over 18\% of the 136 interviews) considered that attention given to the needs of specific youth groups at risk (i.e. NEETs, Roma, migrants, disadvantaged etc.) and younger age groups (i.e. children, young people still in school) has been insufficient. This also emerged in 35 responses to the survey of young Europeans\textsuperscript{20}. ‘Young people with fewer opportunities’ and ‘children’ are mentioned only twice in the 2009 Council Resolution on renewing the EU cooperation in the youth field, with no objective set in relation to those at-risk groups. Only one\textsuperscript{21} of the 17 policy documents adopted in the EU youth cooperation framework in 2010-2014 specifically addressed children-related issues. Moreover, several national youth policy-makers interviewed raised concerns that the implementation instruments of the EUYS also do not take due account of specific target groups: i.e. the structured dialogue is perceived to miss the voice of the ‘disadvantaged’ and of the ‘very young’ and that EU funds are hardly available to develop projects for children.

### 3.1.2 EUYS and the activities of youth policy-makers and youth organisations

Over 80\% of the surveyed European youth organisations\textsuperscript{22} considered all EU activities in which they participated within the EU cooperation framework on youth to have been relevant to their work. They also found that the EU activities have been relevant to the agenda in their country. Similarly, two-thirds of the policy-makers interviewed at national level (31 interviewees, representing 65\%)\textsuperscript{23} consider the objectives and areas covered in the EU youth cooperation framework to be sufficiently broad and flexible to fit every Member State’s context, needs and priorities, one referred to it as a ‘universal and usable strategy despite the local conditions’.

EU priorities in the youth field have broadly been consistent with national youth orientations in most Member States. For example, the EU Youth Strategy’s thematic priority of youth participation was coherent with Belgium and Luxembourg’s orientations; Italy and Austria mentioned the same with regards to youth employment and social inclusion. In the UK, a particular alignment was identified between the EU

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\textsuperscript{19} A number of interviewees did not provide a clear answer because they considered that they were not sufficiently familiar with EUYS or the needs of young people.

\textsuperscript{20} Young people surveyed were asked to list priorities they wished to see included in a future EU cooperation framework. Open-ended question 6h-j, N=363 and 420.


\textsuperscript{22} Youth organisations surveyed that participated in specific EUYS activities, N=157.

\textsuperscript{23} Interviewees from Ministry for Youth and from other Ministries, N=48.
Youth Strategy’s health and well-being policy area and the focus on mental health of young people in its national plans. Some interviewees stressed that the Strategy covered the ‘right areas and priorities’ and made those needs at national level more concrete, with a structured approach and helped policy-makers focus on ‘what really matters’. However, despite the fact that the EUYS was broad and covered many themes, some Member States followed other priorities in the period analysed, which were not covered by the EUYS areas of action. For example, promoting a favourable family policy was among the priorities in Poland and housing issues was identified in Croatia and Luxembourg.

The EU Youth Strategy’s activities seem to be more relevant to some countries than others. Based on the interviews with 136 stakeholders, the evaluation identified three determinants of the EU Youth Strategy’s relevance in relation to the national youth policy-makers’ activities:

- The country’s alignment before 2010 with what the EUYS promotes

In countries which, in 2010, were further away from alignment (i.e. where no national youth strategy was yet in place: RO, BG, SK, CZ, LT, LV, HR), the EUYS was comparatively more relevant than in countries whose approaches and objectives were already close or beyond what the framework aimed to achieve (BE (all), DE, NL, SE, FI, DK, LU). For the latter, the EU priorities in the youth field were aligned with national ones but the EUYS was less relevant for advancing the national youth agenda. It did however provide them with new perspectives, inspiration and focus among stakeholders in the youth field. The EU actions were in such cases considered complementary to the work already conducted. Member States’ ‘starting points’ which impact on the relevance of the EUYS to them, also determine its effectiveness and added value, as presented in sections 4 and 5 of this report.

- Extent to which national youth priorities were taken up at EU level

National youth policy stakeholders have an interest to learn from other countries’ approaches about youth issues that are already high on the national agenda (i.e. youth employment or participation). The economic crisis, which characterised the context over the evaluation period, has provided a focus to issues such as youth unemployment and high NEET rates. Those were correctly reflected in the EU agenda as they were presented as common challenges. This, in turn, spurred interest in working jointly for solutions at EU level (i.e. the Youth Guarantee). In countries where young people face comparatively less difficult socio-economic situations (e.g. Nordic states), interest in EU youth cooperation was somewhat lower.

- Interest at strategic level in benefitting from the EU cooperation framework

In countries where stakeholders at strategic level prioritised progress in youth issues and identified how cooperation at EU level could help in this regard, the EUYS was seen as an opportunity to seize. For example, in the Czech Republic the Youth Unit at the Department of Education had a key interest in EU cooperation in the field of youth. Together with the key players of civil society, the Unit drove the adoption of a National Youth Strategy aligned to the EU Youth Strategy.

The EUYS was of comparatively lower relevance in a minority of countries amongst the EU-28, where:

- Youth policy is devolved to local / regional levels – the EU approach to youth policy was considered in some countries as less consistent with the diverse nature of youth policy in decentralised countries. Concerns were raised in countries with a devolved approach to youth policy that the regional and local topics are not sufficiently reflected in the youth cooperation framework and that

24 As reported in the interviews conducted with national youth policy-makers across the EUMS.
25 Mostly Germany, Belgium, Spain, Italy, the Netherlands and the UK.
stronger local engagement in EU cooperation, e.g. via associations of municipalities, was needed.

- Reality is perceived as being different from the EU-28 (EL, ES, UK). For example, the reality in Greece and in Spain has changed strongly since 2010 due to the economic crisis to the extent that it makes some of the EU youth priorities seem distant from these countries’ urgent needs. Interviewees from several countries pointed at the increasing divergence between the priorities of the Southern Member States and the Northern ones and found it important to ensure that the EU Youth Strategy remains flexible to accommodate such differences.

3.1.3 Relevance of the eight fields of action

All eight fields of action as well as their inter-connectedness were found overall relevant to the needs of young people and to the work of youth policy-makers. All groups of stakeholders consulted – policy-makers and youth representatives interviewed at national and EU level, youth organisations surveyed and young European surveyed – confirmed that youth employment, education and training as well as participation are highly relevant areas of action, while culture and creativity and youth and the world less so. Interest in attention to health and well-being, social inclusion and voluntary activities differed across countries.

As illustrated in Figure 8 below, the majority of young people surveyed (77%; N=422) consider education as a very relevant area and attributed a score of ‘1 to 3’ to it, followed by the area of employment (47% of respondents rating it ‘1 to 3’). Other areas appear to be of medium interest to respondents with a majority of participants (above 40%) rating them from ‘4 to 6’. Areas of least interest to participants are youth and the world and voluntary activities with about 35% rating them as ‘7 to 8’. Similar findings emerged from the youth organisations’ survey, illustrated in Figure 9. When asked to rank six policy areas the EU should focus its future efforts on when addressing youth issues, 55% of the responding youth organisations (N=93) pointed at education and training as an important need, followed by employment and entrepreneurship (45% ranked it as an important need). Social inclusion and health and well-being were ranked as medium need. Conversely, over half of the respondents (56%) identified youth and the world as well as culture and creativity as being of low relevance.

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26 39% of 136 interviewees found youth employment as highly relevant, followed by participation (32.5%), education and training (29.3%), social inclusion (16.3%) and voluntary activities (14.6%). Opinions were divided on health and well-being (8.1% found it as highly relevant while 8.1% reported low relevance). Interviewees agreed upon the two fields of action of lowest relevance: culture and creativity (13.8%) and youth and the world (9%).
A tension has been noted between attention at EU level to urgent issues facing young people and the attention devoted to core youth areas. Some Member States (e.g. Italy, Spain, Lithuania and the UK) favour a continued strong focus on the issues that present persisting challenges (high youth unemployment, high NEET rates). Others would like to see more balanced attention towards active citizenship, solidarity and youth work as core areas of the youth field and of the competences of Youth Ministers (e.g. Belgium, Luxembourg, Romania, France). A more balanced approach is also favoured by most of the EU-level stakeholders consulted, who find that the EU has a role to maintain in the context of the crisis, i.e. to advance youth policy in areas that are otherwise ‘forgotten’ (i.e. intercultural dialogue).

Several interviewees have called for continuing the strong attention paid to youth work and some even wish seeing it as a separate field of action. Considered as a cross-cutting issue in the EUYS, 12 representatives from National Youth Councils and EU-level federations of youth organisations (33%, N=36) believe that youth work could be a separate field of action. According to some interviewees, youth work is no longer seen just as an instrument to achieve results in other areas, but also as a priority of the youth field in itself. This was also shown by the two EU conventions on youth work held in the 2010-2014 period (the first one in 2010 and the second in
March, 2016

The findings from the survey of young people and that of youth organisations also show the continued relevance of youth work.

### 3.1.4 New needs or challenges emerging since the adoption of the EUYS

New challenges have emerged since the design of the Strategy in 2009. The mechanisms put in place to ensure periodic updating of the EUYS, such as the system of priorities for EU cooperation set within the triennial work cycles and, since 2014, the EU Work Plan on Youth, could ensure that these priorities are, in the future, integrated within the youth cooperation framework.

Stakeholders at national and EU level identified four emerging areas of action:

- **Combatting radicalisation of young people**, (reported in 20 Member States by 32% of interviewees);
- **Integration of young migrants and refugees** (cited in 17 countries by 18% of interviewees);
- **Digitalisation** (reported in 15 countries by 15% of interviewees);
- **Long-term effects of the crisis** (mentioned in 4% of interviews in six countries).

### Table 3. New challenges as reported by interviewees at national and EU level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>New challenges reported</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Countries in which interviewees reported it</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preventing and combating radicalisation of youth (incl. extremism, violence, conflict-resolution, promoting of peace and tolerance)</td>
<td>32 interviewees (24% of total interviews)</td>
<td>AT, BE-nl, BG, CZ, EE, ES, FI, FR, DE, HU, LT, LV, NL, PL, PT, RO, SE, SI, SK, UK (20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integration of young migrants and refugees</td>
<td>25 (18% of total interviews)</td>
<td>AT, BE-de, EE, ES, FI, DE, HU, IE, IT, LU, MT, NL, PL, PT, SE, SK, UK (17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth in digital era (incl. digital and media literacy and skills, role of social media, online protection and safety)</td>
<td>22 (15% of total interviews)</td>
<td>BE-nl, EE, ES, FI, FR, HU, IE, IT, LT, LV, MT, NL, PL, RO, SI (15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long-term effects of the crisis on young people</td>
<td>6 (4% of total interviews)</td>
<td>CY, EL, ES, FR, PT, SE (6)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: ICF analysis based on 136 interviews at national and EU level*

The vast majority of stakeholders interviewed considered that emerging new needs can be included in the scope of the existing objectives and fields of action. For example, integration of young migrants and refugees can be related to the social inclusion dimension of the strategy while combatting radicalisation of youth can be linked to the objective of fostering active citizenship. For instance, integrating refugees in society has become a priority of the EU Work Plan on Youth 2016-2018.

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27 73% of young people responding to the survey (N=702) consider that supporting and developing youth work is an important need in their country.

28 63% of youth organisations surveyed (N=250) ranked youth work and non-formal learning the highest in the list of initiatives for young people which the EU should promote in the future.

29 Each interviewee reported more than one challenge, while some reported none. This is why the total is not 100%.

Finally, some interviewees mentioned specific topics, which they considered have not been covered sufficiently. Countries from which those interviewees came from and the topics reported as having been insufficiently covered under the EU Youth OMC are presented in Table 4 below. Some of those interviewees were EU level ones.

**Table 4. Specific topics reported as not covered sufficiently in the Strategy**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Field of action and Specific topic</th>
<th>Countries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employment and entrepreneurship - quality of employment</td>
<td>IE, RO, PL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education training and - validation of non-formal learning</td>
<td>CY, EE, EL, FI, FR, DE, NL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- social dimension of education</td>
<td>EU-level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- citizenship education</td>
<td>BE-de, CZ, EU-level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- transversal competences (incl. 'life skills')</td>
<td>BE-nl, NL, EU-level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- synergies between formal and non-formal learning</td>
<td>IT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social inclusion - housing</td>
<td>ES, PT, SI, SK, FR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- youth poverty</td>
<td>AT, Be-nl, NL, RO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- non-discrimination, with particular focus on gender stereotypes, identity and LGBT rights;</td>
<td>IE, PT, EU-level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- equal access of young people to rights</td>
<td>CZ, NL, PT, EU-level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- specific focus on inclusion of: Roma youth, NEETs, those with disabilities, with fewer opportunities / disadvantaged / marginalised</td>
<td>BE-nl, HR, IE, NL, MT, PL, LV, RO, SE, EU-level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- community cohesion</td>
<td>NL, PT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- better education / work and life balance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth participation - active citizenship</td>
<td>AT, BE-de, BE-nl, CZ, FI, FR, IE, LT, NL, PT, SE, SI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- participation in democratic life</td>
<td>CZ, FI, NL, EU-level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- e-participation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voluntary activities - inter-generational solidarity</td>
<td>BE-nl, NL, AT, CZ, EU-level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- increase accessibility of voluntary activities to young people with fewer opportunities</td>
<td>PT, IT, EE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- EU status of volunteers</td>
<td>BE-fr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- recognition of learning outcomes from volunteering</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- promotion and dissemination of</td>
<td>CZ, EE, FR, DE, IE</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Field of action | Specific topic | Countries
---|---|---
volunteering opportunities abroad | - volunteering mobility of NEETs | PT, UK, FR
| | Health and well-being | BE-de, ES, IE, LT, SE
| | - mental health (addictions and substance abuse) | BE-de
| | - education on health | BE-de
| Culture and creativity | - inter-cultural dialogue | IE, LU, SK, EU-level
| | - cultural identity, multiculturalism | CZ, NL, PL
| Youth and the world | - mobility from outside the EU | DE, EU-level
| | - climate change | AT
| | - global solidarity | FI
| | - human rights | FI

**Source:** ICF analysis based on 136 interviews at national and EU level

### 3.1.5 Relevance of the Action lines of the Council Recommendation

The 2008 Council Recommendation on the Mobility of Young Volunteers across the EU put forward the following action lines:

- Increase information on cross-volunteering opportunities, rights and benefits associated;
- Raise capacity for cross-border volunteering;
- Reduce barriers for cross-border volunteering;
- Increase recognition of this experience;
- Facilitate participation from young people with fewer opportunities.

All actions lines of the Council Recommendation are still highly relevant to the current needs and problems of young volunteers and to those of volunteering organisations, although the latter considered that the Council Recommendation could have been more ambitious.

*Information and dissemination about opportunities for volunteering abroad* is seen as essential to enabling young people to volunteer. Interest in volunteering abroad remains low among young people in some countries, as reported by volunteering organisations in Portugal, Estonia, Sweden, Lithuania and Hungary. The problem of finding suitable volunteers to go abroad seems to be prevalent. This is often due to the lack of awareness of volunteering opportunities abroad, which are far less popular among young people than Erasmus university exchanges are. Therefore, awareness raising actions, such as those carried out during the 2011 European Year of Volunteering, remain highly relevant to spread information about opportunities and the rights of young volunteers.

Nevertheless, in some countries (i.e. Italy, Spain), young people see volunteering abroad as an alternative to not finding a job in their home country. In these countries, there are more young people who wish to volunteer abroad than the number of placements available. This is also reflected in the number of applications received for hosting volunteers from abroad in Estonia and Sweden that is higher than the number
of EVS placements they have available\textsuperscript{31}. This shows that there is still a great need for \textit{developing opportunities for cross-border volunteering within and beyond the EVS}.

In most countries the EVS remains the only opportunity for volunteering abroad. The youth organisations’ survey results indicate that 70% of the respondents initiated cross-border activities following EU support funded under the Youth in Action / Erasmus+ programme (including the EVS scheme).

\textit{Simplifying procedures for cross-border volunteering} is still very relevant to the needs and challenges of both volunteers and volunteering organisations. For example, a youth organisation active in volunteering described the process of application for sending / hosting volunteers to and from abroad, mainly through EVS, as highly bureaucratic. It poses challenges in terms of resources and capacity for local, small-sized NGOs. Another organisation described that in their country there is high interest from young people to volunteer outside the EU, but there is little support for the volunteering organisation to build partnerships outside the EU and to deal with the administrative issues when sending a volunteer to non-EU countries. This shows that there is a need to simplify procedures. This was one of the objectives of the IVO4 ALL project (see case study).

\textit{The recognition and validation of the competences gained through volunteering} experiences has been a key action line in the implementation of the Council Recommendation. Youthpass is now a common practice within volunteering organisations: 52% (N=710) of young Europeans surveyed have heard of the Youthpass (out of which 60% were members of a youth organisation) while the rate is 61% for the youth organisations surveyed which have not heard of the EUYS. There is evidence that several Member States have taken steps towards better recognition and validation of competences, as outlined in the next chapter. However, according to those actors interviewed from the volunteering field, the need for better recognition and validation is still valid. In the context of the economic crisis, young people increasingly sought volunteering mobility opportunities as an alternative to not finding a job in their home country. Yet, when returning from abroad, some have seen the value of their volunteering experience and skills acquired under-estimated. Recognition of their Youthpass by employers appears to be low.

Visa issues exist for many young people from Third countries looking to volunteer in an EU Member State. In Italy, Estonia, Sweden and the UK, it seems to be more difficult now to obtain a visa as a volunteer than some years ago. For example, in Estonia, non-EU volunteers need to apply and obtain a work permit, just for it to be replaced with a residence permit upon arrival in the country. This is a costly and lengthy procedure for both the volunteer and the hosting organisation. The experiences reported by volunteering organisations at national and EU level show the persistent need to \textit{reduce barriers to cross-border mobility} for young volunteers from Third countries.

\textit{Giving particular attention to young people with fewer opportunities} is possibly more relevant today than it was in 2008. The numbers of disadvantaged young people taking part in cross-border voluntary activities remains very low. For example, in Estonia 30% of ethnic Estonian young people take part in voluntary activities annually while only 10% of Estonians from the Russian-speaking minority do so\textsuperscript{32} – the numbers are much smaller when only considering those who volunteer abroad. Policy-makers and youth organisations interviewed in Lithuania, Estonia, Portugal and Sweden confirmed that the need to increase accessibility of opportunities for cross-border volunteering to NEETs, young people with disabilities, those from rural areas, youth from migrant and minority groups, etc. is still highly relevant. This has been

\textsuperscript{31} Source: interviews with volunteering organisations from Italy, Estonia and Sweden.

\textsuperscript{32} Figures reported by a large youth organisation in Estonia active in cross-border volunteering.
included among the core objectives of the IVO4ALL project\textsuperscript{33} which aims at increasing inclusivity of the cross-border volunteering towards young people with fewer opportunities. To achieve this objective, IVO4ALL foresees developing and testing new methods and tools of transnational volunteering support, creating opportunities for peer learning and sharing the results with other Member States and at EU level.

Not all the needs and challenges of volunteering organisations were sufficiently addressed by the action lines of the 2008 Council Recommendation. A frequently reported need among actors in the volunteering field is the increase in quality of volunteering projects. For example, insufficient training and capacity coupled with a lack of funding opportunities limits the potential to improve quality systems within volunteering organisations. The quality of the learning experience is nonetheless considered as highly important for the volunteer to acquire transferable skills and competences. Therefore, ‘volunteer management’ is seen by volunteering organisations as a need that is still relevant to be further addressed at policy level and supported in practice.

Other emerging needs cited by the volunteering actors interviewed are:

- A funding line for implementing all actions foreseen in the Council Recommendation – voluntary activities take place at local level, where local authorities are often interested in promoting and facilitating volunteering opportunities, but they lack funding resources; currently, no explicit link is made, in the EUYS or in the Council Recommendation, with the funding available under Youth in Action / Erasmus+ programme.
- Digitalisation of volunteering – volunteering online to support an organisation from abroad (i.e. this is already possible at UN level through the UNV Online Volunteering Service and under the EU Aid volunteer pilot actions);
- EU status for young volunteers – such a status could help identify cross-border volunteers towards visa and tax authorities and speed up the visa application process.

The actions implemented under the Council Recommendation’s actions are generally considered as complementary to other voluntary activities organised or implemented by the youth organisations consulted, such as the short-term volunteering projects in Estonia; the national volunteering programme as well as the local municipalities’ actions in Portugal; and the international citizen service in the UK.

3.2 \textbf{Relevance and external coherence of the EUYS with broader EU policy aims, notably those of the Europe 2020 strategy}

The objectives of the EUYS are overall relevant and coherent to the objectives of the Europe 2020 Strategy. However, this is mainly due to the broad topical coverage of the youth cooperation framework rather than the efforts to align the two strategies. More could be done to strengthen the contribution of EU youth policy to broader EU policy aims and to mainstream a youth focus in other relevant policy fields.

3.2.1 \textbf{Coherence between the EUYS and other youth-related cooperation, activities and initiatives at EU level.}

For the first time at EU level, the EU Youth Strategy brought together different fields of action into relation to young people (i.e. employment, social inclusion, health and well-being, etc.). The rationale was to go beyond the youth-specific initiatives which had already been promoted within the previous youth cooperation framework set by the 2001 EU White Paper on Youth. By building on the European Youth Pact of 2005, the EU Youth Strategy added a mainstreaming dimension in view of linking the EU youth policy to the European strategies for education, employment and social

\textsuperscript{33} See IVO4ALL case study.
inclusion. Most youth policy-makers interviewed at national level appreciated the goal of a holistic approach to youth policy and the focus on mainstreaming as ‘the most important part of the Strategy’.

There is evidence\textsuperscript{34} that the EUYS has complemented EU initiatives in other policy fields over the 2010-2014 period. Youth is an important transversal issue in many EU initiatives. However it is not possible to judge whether the importance of youth issues at EU level was strengthened due to the EUYS or whether the main driver was the negative impact the economic crisis had on young people. The text below shows examples of alignment between the EUYS and other EU initiatives:

- In the employment field: The ideas of a ‘youth guarantee’ and of ‘a quality framework for traineeships’ were put forward as recommendations in the structured dialogue on youth employment in 2011. Both of these topics were strongly promoted through the Commission employment agenda. They were referred to in: 1) ‘Council Conclusions on promoting youth employment to achieve the Europe 2020 objectives\textsuperscript{35}; and 2) the 2014 ‘Quality Framework for Traineeships’. Whilst the structured dialogue was not necessarily at the origin of these proposals, it created a space for dialogue among policy-makers and youth representatives to develop the ideas further\textsuperscript{36}. In the education field: the need for improving the recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning was discussed extensively in the youth cooperation framework, in particular in the structured dialogue in 2012 and peer-learning events. Youth policy-makers contributed to the text of the 2012 Council Recommendation on the validation of non-formal and informal learning and a focus on the role of youth organisations was included.

- In the social inclusion field: At the same time that ‘inclusion of NEETs’ was discussed in the youth cooperation framework, a youth focus was included in the social part of the Commission’s employment agenda in 2013.

- In the research field: A youth focus was included in the 2014 work programme of Horizon 2020. A call for proposals was launched in 2014 for youth research projects on ‘early job insecurity’ and ‘youth mobility’. This was mainly due to the priority given to youth employment at EU level.

- In the health, social and justice / home affairs fields: Health sector indicators designed by DG SANCO (now SANTE) were considered when the EU youth indicators were being developed.

Explicit cross-referencing between the other initiatives concerning youth and the EUYS is relatively rare. Table 5 provides an overview of high-level, youth-related EU initiatives adopted in 2010-2014. As reflected in the Table, few and minor explicit references were made to the EU youth cooperation framework, most of which were in relation to the results of the structured dialogue with young people on the topic of youth employment.

\textsuperscript{34} From document analysis and interviews with policy-makers at EU level.
\textsuperscript{35} It called for a youth guarantee for NEETs that was later detailed and adopted in the 2013 Resolution.
\textsuperscript{36} For example, Commissioner Andor on employment joined participants of the Structured Dialogue at the European Youth Week 16-18 May 2011 to receive the joint recommendations.
Table 5. Key EU-level youth-related policy initiatives in 2010-2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Title of policy initiative</th>
<th>Main objective(s)</th>
<th>Reference to EU Youth Strategy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>European Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion</td>
<td>It aims to help EU countries reach the headline target of lifting 20 million people out of poverty and social exclusion, many of whom are young people.</td>
<td>One reference to EU Youth Strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Digital Agenda for Europe</td>
<td>It aims to better exploit the potential of ICTs in order to foster innovation, economic growth and progress. One of its action lines is promoting digital literacy, skills and inclusions, which touches directly on young people.</td>
<td>No reference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>Youth Opportunities Initiative</td>
<td>Aims to mobilise resources – mainly through better use of ESF – and increase efforts to drive down youth unemployment and develop employability of young people. Targets in particular a) early school leavers and b) graduates who have still to get a first work experience.</td>
<td>No reference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>Promoting youth employment to achieve the ‘Europe 2020’ objectives</td>
<td>Council Conclusions adopted on 17 June 2011 on promoting youth employment to achieve the Europe 2020 objective.</td>
<td>Reference to EUYS and to structured dialogue on youth employment in the preamble</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Your First EURES job</td>
<td>Job mobility scheme to help young people find a job, traineeship or apprenticeship in other EU countries. As such, it promotes the mobility of young job-seekers across the EU.</td>
<td>No reference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Recommendation on the recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning</td>
<td>Member States are invited to put validation arrangements in place by 2018 in order to make it visible and value the full range of knowledge and competences held by an individual, irrespective of where or how they have been acquired. This policy adopted in the education sector acknowledges youth organisations as important providers of non-formal learning opportunities among others.</td>
<td>Reference to EUYS in the preamble</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>Youth Employment Initiative</td>
<td>The initiative supports young people in regions with youth unemployment rates above 25% by reinforcing EU financial support for youth employment measures.</td>
<td>No reference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>Council</td>
<td>Aims to get young people under 25 back</td>
<td>No reference</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

37 ‘Worrying trends in the number of young people who are NEET underline the need to step up the broader range of policies supporting young people as agreed in the European Youth Strategy 2010-2018’, COM(2010) 758, p. 8.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Title of policy initiative</th>
<th>Main objective(s)</th>
<th>Reference to EU Youth Strategy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>European Alliance for Apprenticeships</td>
<td>Aims to improve the quality and supply of apprenticeships across the EU and to change mind-sets towards apprenticeship-type learning.</td>
<td>No reference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>Social Investment Package</td>
<td>It aims to integrate packages of benefits and services that help people achieve lasting positive social outcomes. It calls for investing in children and youth to increase their opportunities in life.</td>
<td>No reference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>Rethinking Education</td>
<td>It refers to non-formal and informal learning as a complementary tool, in order to acquire the cross-cutting skills youth need on the labour market.</td>
<td>No reference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>Quality Framework for Traineeships</td>
<td>Aims to enable trainees to acquire high-quality work experience under safe and fair conditions and to increase their chances of finding a good quality job.</td>
<td>Reference to structured dialogue on youth employment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Joint Report on implementation of ET 2020</td>
<td>The report proposes six new priorities, including improving people's skills and employment prospects, and calls for better aligning ET 2020 with the EU's political term and priorities.</td>
<td>Reference to OMC in the youth field in a footnote</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source: ICF**

Regarding the EUYS’ external coherence, the goal of a fully integrated approach in addressing young people’s problems at EU level has not yet been achieved. Twice as many stakeholders knowledgeable about EU-level initiatives considered that the EUYS had not been sufficiently complementary to other EU youth-related policies, than those who did see coherence. While some progress has been made in mainstreaming youth issues at EU level, it has been overall considered as ‘too little and moving too slow’. As shown in Table 5, references made to the EUYS are few and small despite the increasing number of policy documents touching on young people.

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39 When asked about existence of external coherence in youth-related initiatives at EU level (open-ended question in interviews), 16 interviewees (11.8% of interviews) answered 'No', 8 answered 'Yes' (5.9%), while 122 interviewees (89.7%) did not comment, mostly because they were not knowledgeable of the subject.
At EU level, stronger collaboration with actors outside of the youth sector could have improved the mainstreaming of youth issues. Some stakeholders also pointed at the missing links with some of the European Years: while the 2011 European Year on Volunteering was indeed well connected to EU youth policy objectives, similar ties could have been established with the 2012 European Year for Active Ageing, 2013-2014 European Year of Citizens or 2015 European Year for Development, considering their relations to inter-generational solidarity, active citizenship and global solidarity, respectively.

Similarly, some reported that the structured dialogue mechanism could have been used also to support developments in non-youth specific policy fields on social inclusion, health and migration of youth, among others, e.g. by inviting relevant stakeholders at EU Youth Conferences. EU youth indicators as well as the EU Youth Reports could also have been disseminated to policy actors in those sectors.

### 3.2.2 Coherence between the EUYS and the Europe 2020 strategy

The objectives of the EUYS were coherent with the objectives of Europe 2020. Nonetheless, the alignment of both strategies could have been stronger.

The Europe 2020 Strategy has a clear youth component. The two education targets have a clear focus on young people:

- To reduce school drop-out rates below 10%; and
- To increase the share of 30-34 years old with higher education qualifications to 40%.

The targets in the field of employment and fight against poverty and social exclusion also have clear importance for young people:

- To reduce the risk of poverty and social exclusion by at least 20 million people, or 25%,
- To increase the share of the population in employment to 75% of 20-64 year-olds.

One of the flagship initiatives under the Europe 2020 Strategy also had a clear youth focus: the ‘Youth on the Move’ initiative promoted mobility as a means of learning. Youth is also impacted by two other flagship initiatives, ‘An Agenda for New Skills and Jobs’, which aims to improve employability and employment opportunities for young people, and ‘A Platform against poverty and social exclusion’, the aim of which is to combat poverty from an early age.

One of the two general objectives of the EU Youth Strategy, namely to create more and equal opportunities for all young people in education and in the labour market, matches the Europe 2020 goals for education and employment. Several of the EU Youth Strategy’s priority areas fit well into the Europe 2020 Strategy’s targets.

Youth actions under the education and training policy area aim at making it possible for every young person to gain access to high quality education and training through exploring non-formal learning opportunities as a complement to formal education. In recent years, this has been increasingly seen as a way to reduce early school leaving, which is one of the Europe 2020 objectives.

EU youth policies in the area of employment and entrepreneurship aim to make it easier for young people to make the transition from education and training to entering the labour market, such as through access to quality internships and apprenticeships.

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40 Mainly in terms of raising awareness of the value of youth volunteering and promoting better recognition of learning outcomes acquired through voluntary activities.

41 Interviews at EU and national levels.

42 It was brought to an end in 2014.
Having more young people in employment would contribute to increasing the share of the population in employment, which is a key Europe 2020 benchmark.

The objectives pursued by youth policies in the social inclusion field of action – to promote equal opportunities for all young people, combat all forms of discrimination and prevent social exclusion and poverty as well as the transmission of problems between generations – match well the Europe 2020 objective to reduce the risk of poverty and social exclusion.

Several of the EUYS activities relate to the Europe 2020 Strategy:

- **Activities related to the monitoring of the process:**
  - Nearly all policy documents adopted over the past five years under the youth cooperation framework made explicit reference to the Europe 2020 Strategy;
  - Several Council Conclusions can be mapped to the Europe 2020 targets, such as the Conclusions on the active inclusion of young people: combating unemployment and poverty (adopted in June 2010) and the Council Conclusions on enhancing the social inclusion of youth not in employment, education or training (November 2013);
  - The Youth Ministers gathered in the Council of the EU adopted in 2013 Conclusions on maximising the potential of youth policy in addressing the goals of the Europe 2020 Strategy, in an attempt to make the youth cooperation framework more coherent to the Europe 2020 objectives;
  - 15 out of the 41 EU youth indicators are relevant to Europe 2020 benchmarks.

- **Progress reporting activities:**
  - In the 2012 Joint EU Youth Report, Member States called for stronger links and more cohesion between the renewed framework and the Europe 2020 Strategy and that EUYS ‘furthers its contribution to Europe 2020 objectives’. In the 2015 Joint EU Youth Report, the Council called again for a greater contribution from youth policy to the goals of the Europe 2020 Strategy.

- **Mutual learning activities:**
  - Expert Group on the contribution of youth work to address the challenges young people are facing, in particular the transition from education to employment.

- **Dissemination activities:**
  - The volunteering platform of the European Youth Portal promotes mobility opportunities for youth, which was previously done under the Youth on the Move flagship initiative.

The stakeholders consulted who had knowledge on the link between the EUYS and Europe 2020 flagged that both strategic frameworks of action were often considered as separate approaches, each with their own objectives, rather than part of an integrated long-term plan of the European Union. Some interviewees pointed at the missing link between the EUYS and the European Semester, i.e. country-specific recommendations on youth policy and systems could be formulated.

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44 2015 Joint Report of the Council and the Commission on the implementation of the renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field (2010-2018)
45 NB: Not all of the interviewees commented on the link between EU Youth Strategy and Europe 2020 Strategy.
3.2.3 Extent to which there is evidence of duplication in activities at EU and national level

In general, there are more synergies than duplications in activities at EU and national level\(^{46}\). However, the reality reflects a mix of synergies and duplications, depending on the areas, priorities and processes covered at national level. It should be noted that duplications are not always seen as negative, but as a way to bring higher attention to youth-relevant measures.

Some EU-level activities were already conducted in a similar shape or form at national level, e.g. national instruments for youth consultation similar to the Structured Dialogue were already in place in Germany, the UK\(^{47}\) and France for example. Some considered the EU instrument as an additional opportunity to articulate and amplify the message to young people on both EU and national consultations. Other cases of overlaps reported concern:

- **Repetition of topics and thematic priorities** (i.e. focus on youth employment) from one Presidency to another. Given that the same topics tend to be discussed in the structured dialogue, some pointed at the duplication of topics from one round of consultations to another which led to similar recommendations at different EU Youth Conferences.

- **Duplication in some measures**: In Germany, duplication was reported with national initiatives on social integration of young people while in Estonia employment measures similar to the ones promoted by the EUYS existed already.

- **Duplication in the knowledge-building**: the new ‘youth wiki’ initiative of the European Commission is seen by some as a duplication of the EKCYP national reports and expert correspondent network within the EU-Council of Europe youth cooperation.

- **Duplication in the context of the Structured Dialogue**: national-level issues that have already been covered in the structured dialogue were reported to be discussed ‘from scratch’ in the context of other policy initiatives when policy-makers do not appear to be aware of the consultations carried out in the framework of the EUYS.

- Overlap with ESF-funding priorities (employment, social inclusion);

- Overlap with local / regional level initiatives.

### 3.3 Internal coherence of the EUYS and Council Recommendation

#### 3.3.1 The EUYS supported the implementation of the 2008 Recommendation on volunteering

The objectives of the Council Recommendation on the Mobility of Young Volunteers are still relevant to the current needs and problems of young Europeans, even more so since they were integrated in the EUYS. However, some stakeholders see that the importance of volunteering mobility at EU level has actually diminished in the past five years. They see that it needs to regain focus in the youth cooperation framework to enable timely responses to youth challenges.

The EUYS builds on the action lines of the 2008 Council Recommendation and goes beyond. The EUYS included the focus on volunteering at local level as well as volunteering mobility at national level. For example, the Council Recommendation objectives of removing obstacles to voluntary activities, raising awareness of the value

\(^{46}\) 32.4% of stakeholders interviewed (N=136) reported synergies while 20.6 % mentioned duplications. Over 60% of interviewees referred to both synergies and duplications in their answers.

\(^{47}\) UK Youth Parliament ran by the British Council.
of youth volunteering and promoting the recognition of skills acquired, were integrated in the EUYS. New objectives (not part of the Recommendation’s action lines) were also added in the Strategy, such as ‘promoting inter-generational solidarity during voluntary activities’. The volunteering organisations interviewed confirmed that ‘it makes sense’ to have the objectives for voluntary activities within and across borders within the same framework.

3.3.2 Relevance of instruments’ outputs to the needs of EU, national, and regional/local level policymakers and youth stakeholders.

All implementation instruments are generally relevant to the EU Youth Strategy’s objectives, although some are better fit-for-purpose than others. However, their relevance can be improved, in particular that of the dissemination activities. Tailoring the existing instruments or developing new tools appropriate for mainstreaming initiatives is highly necessary to support creating more and equal opportunities for young people in education and the labour market and promoting their active citizenship, social inclusion and solidarity.

All seven implementation instruments of the EUYS are generally considered as relevant to the needs of EU and national policy-makers as well as youth stakeholders. However, the strength of relevance varies by instrument:

- **Structured dialogue and the mobilisation of EU funds and programmes to implement the EUYS** were most frequently reported as highly relevant to both policy-makers and youth stakeholders given their role in facilitating dialogue and building shared understanding and solutions. Some stakeholders reported that structured dialogue could be made even more relevant by involving young people and policy actors at local and regional level in debates closer to their reality. Ideas from local level could be compiled at national and then at EU level.

- **Mutual learning, knowledge-building and progress reporting** were seen as highly relevant to policy-makers, and to a less extent to youth stakeholders. The majority of national youth policy-makers interviewed find mutual learning as highly relevant to their needs in terms of opportunities to share ideas, experiences and good practices and to bring back lessons to consider them for the context of their country and put them to use to further develop their country’s youth policy.

- **Monitoring of the process** was also seen as relevant to national and EU policy-makers, but its relevance could be improved. Some of the stakeholders consulted consider that too many policy documents are adopted in the youth field (at least three Council documents and one Resolution every 18 months) while ‘less, but more relevant work’ could be produced. Youth indicators were overall reported as fit-for-purpose to monitor the situation of young people, analyse trends and adjust policy implementation accordingly.

- **Mobilisation of EU programmes and funds for the purpose of policy reform.** This instrument provides all stakeholders with resources, which are often missing at national or local level, to implement changes in the area of youth. In most countries, Erasmus+ is the only financing source available for youth organisations or for the Structured Dialogue. Some stakeholders reported that the EU Youth Strategy’s areas of action could be further reflected in the annual or national programme priorities of the Erasmus+ and that this would improve relevance and coherence between policy level cooperation and funded activities and initiatives. The mobilisation of EU funds as well as the European Youth Weeks were also found relevant to connect policy-making at EU level and implementation at local level.
3.3.3 Continuity and synergies in EUYS activities and outputs

Views were divided on the internal coherence of the EUYS. Of the 136 stakeholders interviewed, 22.1% see activities of the EUYS as inter-related and building on each other while 20.6% see the need to better connect the different elements of the Strategy, which they currently view as ‘stand-alone’ or ‘fragmented’. While some stakeholders’ views are in-between – referring to some activities as connected while others as fragmented – the majority of those consulted were unable to make a judgement on the internal consistency of the Strategy. This reflects the difficulty to comprehend and communicate the consistency of activities under the EU Youth Strategy.

In some cases, the logic between how different instruments are deployed on certain topics is understood by the European Commission and the Trio Presidency, but not necessarily by the other EUMS. Other stakeholders see the EU Youth Strategy’s activities as ‘heterogeneous elements that have been pulled together to maximise what can done under OMC’, without a due reflection on why certain instruments could better address given thematic priorities. According to some national policy-makers, the Strategy lacks an overall vision, such as a large table of activities, to explain how to best reach the objectives set. This makes it difficult to assess the activities implemented against the EU Youth Strategy’s objectives as it is too long a chain of change to measure. On the other hand, it also makes it difficult to communicate the outputs and outcomes of instruments and activities.

Nevertheless, some examples of internal coherence within the EUYS were identified, such as the Structured Dialogue, and in particular the EU Youth Conferences. They bring together discussions from the Structured Dialogue with young people across the EU and conclude them with a set of recommendations, which are then passed on directly to the Council. Conferences usually build on the results of previous conferences and lead to joint recommendations to feed into a Council Resolution at the end of an 18-month cycle. This shows that there is a logical flow between policy discussions in the Council and the dialogue with youth stakeholders. On the other hand, structured dialogue could be better linked to the European Youth Week activities. Furthermore, Erasmus+ projects could better ensure that the recommendations from the structured dialogue are fed back at local level to young people and grassroots organisations involved in consultations and to general public.

Examples of fragmentation of activities under various instruments often cited in interviews are:

- The EU-funded youth research studies were found to be insufficiently synchronised to the on-going activities in the framework of the EU youth cooperation framework and to the thematic annual priority of the Youth in Action / Erasmus+; although there is a level of connection, the EU-funded studies are not duly planned with the purpose of being used as evidence basis for policy-making (i.e. studies not released in good time before policy discussions are held in the Council but rather afterwards); Mutual learning activities were generally found to be fragmented; i.e. some events were held without sufficient connection to existing work in the cooperation framework or without any concrete follow-up (e.g. events on the recognition of non-formal and informal learning);

- The mobilisation of EU funds and programmes, including Youth in Action / Erasmus+ is seen as highly relevant to put youth policy objectives into practice through youth projects, but at the same time, not sufficiently linked to the

48 At local levels, structured dialogue could benefit from a higher participation rate if synchronised with the timeframe of the Youth Weeks while at EU level, an event was so far dedicated to the structured dialogue with youth during each European Youth Week since 2011, but this was done separately from the other events of the Youth Week.
other activities of the EUYS (i.e. structured dialogue, monitoring of the process etc.);

- Concerning the thematic areas, there is some connection between some of them (areas of participation, social inclusion and volunteering), but they are not seen as sufficiently building on each other. While the aim of the EUYS was to bring all fields of action together, the specific objectives refer to activities still separated per field of action. This could have been done differently in a more integrated manner, for example by adopting a problem-based approach (i.e. tackling the issue of radicalisation of youth from multiple angles of education, volunteering, employment, social inclusion etc.).

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49 There is no specific objective that refers to activities across areas (i.e. involving more than one field of action).
4 Effectiveness

This section presents the findings for the following evaluation questions:

- Extent to which the EU cooperation framework as set under the EU Youth Strategy and Council Recommendation was an effective strategic framework (Q5)
- Extent to which the implementation instruments proven to be effective in implementing the EU Youth Strategy/Council Recommendation on the Mobility of Young Volunteers across the EU? (Q6).

This section presents the extent to which the EU cooperation framework in the youth field, as set under the EU Youth Strategy and Council Recommendation, led to concrete achievements at European and national levels.

It is structured around the following sub-sections:

- Some contextual information on the evolution, over the evaluation period, of the situation of young people across the EU;
- EU youth stakeholders’ level of awareness of the EUYS and Council Recommendation (among young people, youth organisations and policymakers), as one indicator of the effectiveness of the EUYS;
- Main outcomes according to youth organisations and young people surveyed;
- The types of influence the EU Youth Strategy has had at EU and national levels;
- The levels of influence and its determinants;
- The cooperation instruments found to have had more or less visibility and influence on national and organisations’ developments.

The evaluation found that the EU Youth Strategy was successful in triggering concrete changes at national and organisational level and in the adoption of common approaches and principles across the Member States. Youth policies in countries which did not have clear frameworks in this area have been clarified and framed. There was a general movement across EU countries towards the adoption of principles and objectives set in the EU Youth Strategy, such as participation and consultation of young people. The Strategy had some direct influence on the policy agenda in the majority of Member States although the level and strength of influence varied and it was not the only contributing factor but national and contextual factors were also influential. Most changes identified were in areas that are core to youth policy: volunteering, internationalisation and mobility, youth work and cross-sectoral approach to youth policy. Influence was also reported, but less frequently, in the areas of recognition of non-formal and informal learning, youth entrepreneurship and measures to address NEETs. This means that the EU Youth Strategy has been most influential in the core areas of youth policy.

However, the evaluation findings show that the EU Youth Strategy could be more influential if better known and understood by key stakeholders. Not all interviewed policy-makers in the youth field were aware of the objectives and instruments of the Strategy while the awareness was even lower among policy-makers from other policy sectors. Only a small share of youth organisations surveyed reported having a good basic understanding of the Strategy. Similarly, only a small share of young people surveyed were aware of the actions under the framework of the EU Youth Strategy while many more were aware of the EU programme for young people.

Among the youth organisations that were involved in activities under the EU Youth Strategy, the vast majority reported that their participation led to changes in their practices in terms of learning and knowledge-building, creating new partnerships, developing new activities and networking with stakeholders and policy-makers. They also saw broader effects on youth policy, recognition of the value of youth work and of
volunteering, better understanding of youth issues among stakeholders and improved youth participation, among others.

Concerning the instruments of EU youth cooperation, the evaluation found that the most influential tools have been the structured dialogue and the mobilisation of EU funds as well as, to a certain extent, mutual learning and knowledge-building. When different instruments and tools were joined together and built on each other’s results, they were most effective in influencing a context to catalyse efforts and initiate changes. This was not systematically the case, however, as some initiatives were perceived as ‘stand-alone’ or ‘fragmented’.

4.1 Evolution of the situation of young people in the EU

The EU Youth Strategy sets a number of common objectives for Member States to work on in order to improve the situation of young people in Europe. This is to be achieved through policy cooperation among Member States (policy learning, evidence-based policy-making, monitoring, progress-reporting etc.) in view of improving youth policies, which can then lead to positive impact on young people.

Therefore, the EUYS can directly impact upon national youth policies, but only indirectly (mediated by the effects it has on Member States’ youth policies) on young people’s lives. Furthermore, there are a number of other factors that may have had a stronger influence on the change in young people’s life conditions than the EUYS over the evaluation period, such as the economic crisis. The too long chain of effects and the co-existence of many factors makes difficult, if not impossible, to determine the measure by which the EUYS has impacted the evolution in the situation of young people in Europe over 2010-2014 period.

This section summarises the evolution of the situation of young people in Europe based on existing data from the EU Youth Monitor. The trends in how the situation of young people changed in the last five years are compared to young people’s perceptions of the developments over the same period on the basis of opinions collected through ICF’s survey to young Europeans (see Annex 10).

The purpose of this section is to present the contextual situation of young people in order to understand that the EUYS was being implemented in a context in which the situation of young people was overall worsening. The trends presented in this section are to be understood as contextual information, independent of the contribution made by the EUYS to these trends. The aim is to put the evaluation findings about progress made in the EUMS in context with the data on evolution in young people’s situation and thus do a ‘reality check’ of the stakeholders’ perceptions from interviews and surveys presented in the rest of section 4 on effectiveness.

Overall, data from the EU Youth Monitor shows that, over the 2010-2014 period, young people’s situation worsened in terms of access to work, increased risk of poverty or social exclusion, higher shares of NEETs, increased health problems (i.e. use of drugs) and stagnating or even decreasing participation in civil society and youth organisations. Improvements have been made only in young people’s education and training and, to some extent, in the youth influence on democratic decision-making processes. The results of the survey to young Europeans (see Figure 10) indicate that young people’s perceptions on the progress made in the last five years in terms of mainstreaming of youth issues in policy-making tend to be negative; similar perceptions are noticed for the evolution in youth influence in democratic decision-making. The most positive perceptions of young people surveyed were in relation to the developments in young people’s education and training, which are confirmed by the evidence presented in the Youth Monitor.

50 http://ec.europa.eu/youth/dashboard/index_en.htm
51 Not necessarily linked to EUYS, but rather to policy developments under ET2020.
4.1.1 Education

The vast majority of respondents (71%, N=707) ‘agreed’ or ‘strongly agreed’ that, in comparison to 5 years ago, more was being done with regards to young people’s education.

This perception is confirmed by data showing progress on all six indicators related to education and training in the EU Youth Monitor:

- The share of early school leavers decreased by 2.3 percentage points between 2011 and 2014 (from 13.4% in 2011 to 11.1% in 2011);
- The share of low-achievers in reading decreased by 1.9 percentage points between 2009 and 2012 (from 19.7% in 2009 to 17.8% in 2012);
- The share of low-achievers in maths decreased by 0.2 percentage points between 2009 and 2012 (from 22.3% in 2009 to 22.1% in 2012);
- The share of low-achievers in science decreased by 1.2 percentage points between 2009 and 2012 (from 17.8% in 2009 to 16.6% in 2012);
- The share of 30-34 year-olds with tertiary education attainment increased by 3.1 percentage points between 2011 and 2014 (from 34.8% in 2011 to 37.9% in 2014);
- The share of 20-24 year-olds who have completed secondary education increased by 1.8 percentage points between 2011 and 2013 (from 79.6% in 2011 to 81% in 2013).

4.1.2 Involvement in civil society organisations

The majority of young people surveyed (61%, N=707) considered that, in comparison to 5 years ago, more was being done to involve young people in civil society organisations.

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In contrast to this positive perception, data shows that participation in non-governmental organisations as well as in climate change / global warming organisations and in human rights or development organisations stagnated over the evaluation period. While some increase in participation levels was recorded between 2011 and 2013, the rates recorded in 2015 reverted to the 2011 levels (see Table 6 below).

Table 6. Progress on participation indicators under “Youth and the World” over 2011-2015 period

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participation in</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2013</th>
<th>2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Political, community, or environmental NGOs</td>
<td>15.7%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Climate change or global warming organisations</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human rights or development organisations</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: EU Youth Monitor

Over the same period of time, young people’s participation to cultural and artistic activities, to sport clubs as well as to cultural and youth organisations has decreased. After following the same trend as in the case of involvement in civil society organisations, with an increase in 2011-2013 and then a decrease in 2013-2015, the participation rates in 2015 however are lower than those in 2011.

Only in terms of organised voluntary activities, the share of participation of young people registered a slight increase of 0.8 percentage points (from 24.2% in 2011 to 25% in 2015).

4.1.3 Access to work

The surveyed young people expressed mixed views concerning developments in the area of access to work in comparison to 5 years ago: while 46% agreed or strongly agreed that actions were taken to improve young people’s access to employment, 44% disagreed that there was any evolution in this area over the last years (N=704).

Data shows that more young people are unemployed and for longer periods than before. The rate of youth unemployment among 15-29 year-olds increased by 2.1 percentage points between 2010 and 2013, reaching the average of 22.7% in EU-28 in 2013. A similar trend is observed in relation to youth long-term unemployment rates, which increased by 1.9 percentage points between 2010 and 2015, reaching 7.9% as EU-average in 2015. However, the situation varies among Member States, with some countries showing a decrease of youth unemployment (e.g. Finland (-1.3%) and Germany (-1.8%)) and others presenting a slight to considerable increase (e.g.

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53 According to data from the EU Youth Monitor, participation in amateur artistic activities decreased from 33% in 2011 to 30% in 2015; Participation in cultural activities decreased from 93% in 2011 to 89% in 2015; Participation in sports clubs decreased from 34% in 2011 to 29% in 2015; Participation in leisure time or youth organisations dropped from 18% in 2011 to 16% in 2015; Participation in cultural organisations dropped from 14% in 2011 to 11% in 2011.

54 Participation in voluntary activities, EU Youth Monitor: http://ec.europa.eu/youth/dashboard/index_en.htm


France (+1.2%) and Spain (+13.6%). This variation in unemployment rates may explain the mixed perceptions from the survey of young people.

Data from the EU Youth Monitor also indicates a negative trend on motivation for entrepreneurship among young people. The share of young people who wish to set up their own business decreased drastically between 2011 and 2014 (from 43% in 2011 dropping to 17% in 2014\textsuperscript{57}). Moreover, no progress was made in the share of youth self-employment, but the levels remained stable at around 7% over the 2010-2013 period\textsuperscript{58}. Another indicator of the worsening youth employment situation is the share of young employees (aged 20-29) on a temporary contract, which registered an increase between 2010 and 2013 (from 27.8% in 2010 to 28.6% in 2013)\textsuperscript{59}.

### 4.1.4 Access to social services

Views were also mixed on developments over young people’s access to social services. Slightly more respondents agreed than disagreed that more has been done in this area over the last 5 years (46% vs. 36%, N=708).

This positive perception is confirmed by data showing a slight increase in the percentage of young people with no unmet medical examination needs to declare (96% in 2012 against 95.6% in 2010)\textsuperscript{60}. No other indicator from the EU Youth Monitor refers clearly to youth access to social services.

### 4.1.5 Mainstreaming youth issues in policy-making

Most survey respondents disagreed that more was being been done, in comparison to 5 years ago, to take young people’s needs and interests into account in policy: 50% of young people surveyed disagreed while. 35% ‘agreed’ or ‘strongly agreed’. (N=705).

No corresponding indicator was found in the EU Youth Monitor.

### 4.1.6 Youth influence on democratic decision-making processes

Mixed responses emerged from the survey of young people concerning progress on actions taken to improve the influence of young people on democratic decision-making processes. There were slightly more respondents disagreeing than agreeing that more is being done in this area now than compared to 5 years ago (47% vs. 40%, N=705).

In the EU-28, the share of young people (aged 15-30) who declare that they participated in local, regional, national or European parliamentary elections in the last three years increased by 1.2 percentage points since 2011, reaching to 63% in 2015\textsuperscript{61}.

Internet is providing a new way for young people to interact with public authorities. In 2014, 52% of young people used Internet to interact with public authorities (vs. 46% in 2011)\textsuperscript{62}.

On both of the above indicators however, the situation is different among Member States, which may explain the mixed survey responses on this topic.

### 4.1.7 Trends in the risk of poverty and share of NEETs

The survey of young people did not collect perceptions on developments in youth social inclusion and well-being. Nevertheless, evolution on these indicators show notable trends.

\textsuperscript{57} Young people who want to set up their business, EU Youth Monitor.

\textsuperscript{58} Self-employed youth, EU Youth Monitor: http://ec.europa.eu/youth/dashboard/index_en.htm

\textsuperscript{59} Young employees with a temporary contract, EU Youth Monitor

\textsuperscript{60} Young people with no unmet medical examination needs to declare, EU Youth Monitor

\textsuperscript{61} Youth participation in elections, EU Youth Monitor: http://ec.europa.eu/youth/dashboard/index_en.htm

\textsuperscript{62} Use of Internet for interaction with public authorities, EU Youth Monitor.
There is evidence that young people are more at risk of poverty and social exclusion than before. The EU-28 average rate of risk of poverty or social exclusion among young people (aged 15-29) has been constantly rising since 2010 (from 27% up to 29.7% in 2012). In some countries, more than 35% of young people are at risk of poverty or social exclusion (e.g. in DK, HU, BG). Particularly vulnerable to the risk of poverty and social exclusion are young people NEETs. The share of NEETs increased on average in the EU-28 since 2010 (from 15.2% up to 15.9% in 2013). However, while the average increase has been moderate, some countries experienced a considerable increase in the share of NEETs (i.e. Italy (+3.9%), Poland (+1.4%)). The rate of youth severe deprivation has also been increasing from 2010 (9.7%) to 2012 when it reached 11.7%.

4.2 Level of awareness of the EUYS among EU youth stakeholders and participation in the EUYS activities

A precondition for the EUYS to be influential is to ensure that it is known and understood by key categories of stakeholders. The evaluation findings show that the awareness of the Strategy can be improved, as detailed in the sub-sections below.

4.2.1 Level of awareness of the EUYS among Youth policymakers

All interviews (in-depth and for the case studies) show that knowledge of the EUYS amongst key ministry officials (e.g. in ministry in charge of youth) varied across countries, with some knowing the Strategy, its instruments and approaches in detail (e.g. DE, FR, CZ, BE), and others much less so, with some confusion on its objectives and implementation mechanisms. This in itself is an indicator of the country’s level of interest in EU cooperation on youth issues, which is one pre-requisite to its effectiveness.

4.2.2 Level of awareness of the EUYS among Youth organisations

Similarly whilst the majority of the 250 European youth organisations surveyed knew the EU Youth Strategy and the Council Recommendation, they did so at a superficial level. National Youth Councils on the other hand all knew the EU Youth Strategy, at least in relation to the Structured Dialogue and accompanying activities (e.g. Youth conferences) in which they are involved. The Council Recommendation was comparatively less well known.

Considering that organisations knowledgeable about the EUYS were more likely to respond to the survey, it is likely that in reality the share of European youth organisations knowledgeable about the strategy is lower.

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63 Youth risk of poverty or exclusion, EU Youth Monitor.
64 Youth not in employment, education, or training (NEETs), EU Youth Monitor.
65 Severe material deprivation rate, EU Youth Monitor.
66 Most youth organisations surveyed knew the EU Youth Strategy, either well (19%) or had a basic understanding of it (36%). A quarter had heard of it but did not know its content (25%). Finally, 19% of youth organisations surveyed were not aware of the existence of the EU Youth Strategy.
67 Most youth organisations knew the Council Recommendation well (14%) or had a basic understanding of it (30%), or had heard of it but did not know its content (29%). 28% were not aware of the existence of the Council Recommendation.
4.2.3 Level of awareness of the EUYS among Young people

The 719 young Europeans surveyed were asked whether they knew EU level activities available under the EUYS (multiple choice question). As illustrated in Figure 13 below, activities mostly heard of by the survey respondents are the Erasmus+ programme (96%, N=700), the Youth in Action programme (61%, N=699) and the EU Youth
Conferences (51%, N=698). Less than half of the survey respondents had heard of the European Youth Weeks (44%, N=701), EU or multilateral seminars or conferences on youth issues (37%, N=713). They were however known better than EU activities outside of the EUYS, e.g. the Youth Guarantee (33%, N=702) and events organised by the Council of Europe in the youth field (29%, N=698).

Activities under the EUYS least known were the ones organised within the ‘EU-China year of Youth 2011’ (94%, N=705), the ‘European Year of Volunteering 2011’ (76%, N=707) and the Structured Dialogue with young people or ‘Ideas Lab’ (73%, N=702).

**Figure 13. Surveyed young Europeans’ knowledge of EU supported activities**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Yes %</th>
<th>No %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Erasmus+ programme (N=700)</td>
<td>96%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth in Action programme (N=699)</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU Youth Conferences (N=698)</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European Youth Weeks (N=701)</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU/multilateral seminars/conferences on youth issues (N=713)</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Youth Guarantee (N=702)</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Events organised by the Council of Europe in the youth field (N=698)</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Structured Dialogue' with young people or 'Ideas Lab' (N=702)</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities of the European Year of Volunteering 2011 (N=707)</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities of the EU-China Year of Youth 2011 (N=705)</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Young Europeans surveyed were then asked whether they had heard of EU supported tools in the field of youth, listed in the questionnaire (multiple choice question). A little over half of survey respondents had heard of the Youthpass (52%, N=710). Among those who know about the Youthpass, 60% (N=371) are members of a Youth organisation. Less than half of survey respondents had heard of the European Youth Portal (47%, N=707), the Eurodesks (43%, N=711), the Facebook page (40%, N=710).

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68 This could be due to the wording of the question which grouped the two activities “the Structured Dialogue with young people” and ‘Ideas Lab’ rather than distinguishing them. The ‘Ideas Lab’ was an initiative from the European Commission to create a space where young people across Europe to generate new ideas and solutions on a wide range of topics. These ideas were then to be rated online by other young people, before sending the ideas to policy and decision-makers for evaluation, feedback, and perhaps take-up: [https://europa.eu/youth/ideas_en](https://europa.eu/youth/ideas_en). Assumingly, the ‘Ideas Lab’ would have been well known than Structured Dialogue-related activities.
4.2.4 Participation in EU activities

Young Europeans surveyed were then asked whether they had taken part in any of the EU level activities listed in the questionnaire (multiple choice, question no4a-j)\(^{69}\). Whilst most had not, 36% (N=677) of respondents reported to have been involved in the Erasmus+ programme; 35% (N=412) in the Youth in Action programme; and 28% were involved in activities related to the Structured Dialogue or 'Ideas Lab' (N=183).

**Table 7. Surveyed young Europeans’ involvement in EU-level activities**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Yes (%)</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Erasmus+ programme</td>
<td>247</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>430</td>
<td>677</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Youth in Action programme</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>268</td>
<td>412</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European Youth Weeks</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>248</td>
<td>303</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Structured Dialogue’ with young people or 'Ideas Lab'</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>183</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Youth Guarantee</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>222</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU Youth Conferences</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>312</td>
<td>344</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU or multilateral seminars or conferences on youth issues</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>222</td>
<td>252</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Events organised by the Council of Europe in the youth field</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>172</td>
<td>196</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities organised during the European Year of Volunteering 2011</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities organised during the EU-China Year of Youth 2011</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Asked about the most interesting aspects for having taken part in those EU level activities, also in comparison to similar activities in their own country / region / locality

\(^{69}\) The total number of respondents (N) is comprised between 41 and 677, depending on the activity (out of a total 719 respondents). Indeed, as this survey question was not compulsory, a large number of respondents did not provide any answers to some of the sub-questions (no4a-j) – many provided a blank answer.
(open-ended, question n°4k N=249), respondents mostly referred to personal benefits in terms of:

- Meeting new people and cultures, opening one’s mind (e.g. getting to know other cultures and languages, learning to live in different conditions);
- Exchanging ideas on similar problems (e.g. youth unemployment, youth disinterest for social issues) with people from different countries and comparing countries’ situations.

In some cases, respondents refer to having developed certain skills such as:

- ‘Learning by doing’, non-formal learning;
- Improving transversal skills (communication and language skills).

### 4.3 Main outcomes of EUYS according to the intervention logic

The intervention logic of the EUYS as presented in section 1.2 defines the following types of expected outcomes:

- For policymakers at national, regional and/or local level(s) in all eight fields of action:
  - Improved knowledge of the situation of youth;
  - Mutual learning;
  - Better, participatory and evidence-based policy-making, incl.:
    - Specific youth initiatives (policies and actions) targeted at young people developed and implemented, in areas such as non-formal learning, participation, voluntary activities, youth work, mobility and information
    - The mainstreaming of youth issues in employment, health, culture, education, etc.
  - Value of volunteering and youth work recognised

- For youth organisations:
  - opportunities (incl. cross-border ones) provided and quality improved
  - Young people are better represented and serviced
  - Value of volunteering and youth work recognised.

Those were to be achieved on the basis of the following outputs produced under the cooperation instruments and governance structures of the EU Youth OMC:

- Information tools created and used, e.g. European Youth Portal, studies and surveys;
- Progress measurement tools created and used, e.g. EU Youth Reports, EU Dashboard of youth indicators;
- Common policy orientations agreed on, e.g. Council policy documents; outputs of OMC Expert Groups, EU Youth Conferences
- Networks developed, e.g. networks of researchers; cross-border networks of volunteering organisations;
- Inputs from youth in policymaking is effective, e.g. consultation and participation mechanisms are used;
- Peer-learning activities implemented, e.g. conferences, seminars;
• EU recognition and mobility tools used and recognized by universities and employers, e.g. Europass, Youthpass, mobility card;

• Results of EU Youth cooperation disseminated e.g. via Expert Group reports, European Youth Portal, publications etc.

• Policy dialogue with IOs (CoE, OECD, UN) conducted;

• Opportunities for cross-border mobility increased and simplified.

The European youth organisations and young people surveyed for this evaluation were asked to assess the EUYS’ contribution to its intended effects (as defined in the intervention logic). Figure 15, Figure 16 and Figure 17 below present this. They show that most respondents consider that the EUYS has some contribution to the expected outcomes although it is hard to establish the extent to which those outcomes would have happened in the absence of the EUYS. Youth organisations surveyed also reported that those effects were useful to their work.

Figure 15 below shows that the majority of the 157 youth organisations that reported to have participated in at least one EU activity agreed that participation to EU activities contributed to all of the effects listed in the survey\(^70\), with the exception of ‘networking with academic researchers’. Respondents considered that effects to which EU activities contributed to mostly were (1) Networking with other youth organisations (94%, n=154); (2) Knowledge-building, learning (90%, n=155); (3) Development of new activities or initiatives (84%, n=152); (4) Creation of new partnerships (84%, n=153). According to the respondents (151<n>155), those activities contributed to effects at all levels – EU/cross-national, national/local.\(^71\)

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\(^70\) Networking with other youth organisations; Networking with policy-makers; Networking with academic researchers; Networking with other categories of stakeholders; Knowledge-building, learning; Development of new activities or initiatives; Creation of new partnerships; Changes in your organisation’s practices; Other type of effect (please specify).

\(^71\) Notice that the total number of respondents varies across the different options available (i.e. effects). However, with the exception of the last option “Other type of effect” that has a lower number of respondents (n=118), the other options remain comparable as the number of respondents presents limited variations (151<n>155).
Respondents were then asked how useful those effect(s) were to the work of their organisation (Q5.v). More than 90% of respondents (n=124) considered these effects ‘useful’ or ‘very useful’ for the work of their organisation.\(^{73}\)

Survey respondents were then asked whether those effects would have been produced in the absence of the EU Youth Strategy or of their participation to the EU activity (ies). As illustrated in Figure 17 below\(^ {74}\), most respondents did not know (51%, n=123)\(^ {75}\). This is significant and is an indicator of the difficulty of attributing the change to the EYS.

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\(^{72}\) 11% (n=13) of the respondents identified “Other type of effect” of EU activities. The analysis of qualitative data (e.g. open questions) will provide more information and will maybe lead to a change in percentages presented (e.g. in case a respondent selected “Other type of effect” for a type of effect that was actually already listed).

\(^{73}\) The percentage is calculated on the total respondent to this question (N=124).

\(^{74}\) The percentage is calculated on the total respondent to this question (n=123).

\(^{75}\) 36% (n=123) considered that those effects would not have occurred without EU Youth Strategy (or their participation to the EU activities) and only a small percentage (13%, n=123)
Youth organisations surveyed were then asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed with a series of statements on the contribution of the EU Youth Strategy to a series of outcomes at EU, national or local level. As illustrated in Figure 18, most respondents agreed that the EUYS contributed at least to some extent to the listed outcomes, with some small variations between the different types of expected outcomes. Some examples of the EUYS’ contribution to those effects were provided by a few survey respondents, e.g. increased awareness on the recognition of the value of youth work and volunteering, youth participation. Here also most respondents were not sure whether these outcomes would have happened in the absence of the EUYS. Of respondents considered that those effects would have occurred without the EU Youth Strategy.

The statements are: The EU Youth Strategy has: (1) contributed to improvements in the youth policy agenda, or policy making, at EU, national or local level(s), (2) improved stakeholders’ knowledge of the situation of youth at EU, national or local level, (3) increased attention to the impact of initiatives in different policy areas (employment, health, etc.) on youth (mainstreamed: this means that when a new policy or dimension is developed, a youth dimension or impact(s) on youth are considered and integrated), (4) encouraged stakeholders to consider youth issues from a cross-sectoral perspective (this means that when a specific youth issue is addressed, it is considered from various angles. E.g. when aiming to improve the social inclusion of NEET youth, health and housing aspects can also be considered), (5) led to an improvement in the recognition of the value of volunteering led to an improvement in the recognition of the value of youth work, (6) improved the participation of youth stakeholders in setting the policy agenda/ in policy-making.
Survey respondents were then asked whether those effects would have been produced in the absence of the EU Youth Strategy or of their participation to the EU activity (ies). Most respondents did not know (64%, N=130). Some youth organisations however highlighted the key role of the EU’s financial support and the existence of a common framework that “gives space to national and local differences and provides long term stability to youth action”. Finally the “EU stamp” was also reported to empower actions launched by youth organisations.

78 Contributed to improvements in the youth policy agenda, or policy making, at EU, national or local level(s) (n=155); Improved stakeholders’ knowledge of the situation of youth at EU, national or local level (n=154); Increased attention to the impact of initiatives in different policy areas on youth (n=155); Encouraged stakeholders to consider youth issues from a cross-sectoral perspective (n=155); Led to an improvement in the recognition of the value of volunteering (n=152); Led to an improvement in the recognition of the value of youth work (n=154); Improved the participation of youth stakeholders in setting the policy agenda/ in policy-making (n=153)

79 28% (N=130) considered that those effects would not have occurred without EU Youth Strategy (or their participation to the EU activities) and only a small percentage (8%, N=130) of respondents considered that those effects would have occurred without the EU Youth Strategy.
The survey participants were then asked whether the EUYS had had any other effects, amongst those presented in the questionnaire. Figure 20 illustrates this.

Young Europeans (719) were asked similar questions. Considering half of the respondents (49%) were active in youth organisations, the surveys’ results are not fully representative of the European youth population. Survey results are also somewhat hard to make sense of considering the absence of a baseline situation as a comparator. Survey results however show overall room for improvement.

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80 N=130
81 Other effects listed in the questionnaire were: (1) The quantity and quality of opportunities (to volunteer, to participate in youth work, to participate in policy-making, or to gain experience in employment, education or training etc.) for young people have improved, (2) The needs and interests of young people in youth organisations’ activities are taken into account in a better manner, (3) The representation and participation of young people in public life has improved.
82 The percentage is calculated on the total respondent to this question (n=143). A small correction was needed as 5 respondents (3%) indicated an effect and then also choose the “I don’t know” option. These answers were disregarded in the “I don’t know” option counting.
83 N=143
Survey participants were asked whether they had heard of EU supported tools in the field of youth, listed in the questionnaire (multiple choice question). As illustrated in Figure 21, slightly over half of survey respondents had heard of the Youthpass (52%, N=710). Less than half of survey respondents had heard of the European Youth Portal (47%, N=707), the Eurodesks (43%, N=711), the Facebook page (40%, N=710).

**Figure 21. Knowledge about EU supported tools**

Survey participants were asked to rate how useful each EU supported tool was. About half of the respondents (N=173) find the tools useful, e.g. they are able to find the information they are looking for and be kept updated of EU news or events in the field of youth. In particular, various respondents mention that the Eurodesk(s) and the European Youth Portal helped them find information about volunteering opportunities abroad. About one quarter of respondents also describe the Youthpass as being a useful tool to add to their CV. The other half of respondents seems very unhappy about the tools. A major concern expressed is the fact that the tools are not well-known by young people – i.e. they are not sufficiently advertised. Those respondents considered that the tools are not user-friendly and that information is not sufficiently up-to-date. These concerns referred mainly to the Eurodesks and the European Youth Portal. About one quarter of respondents mention that the Youthpass could potentially be a useful tool, however, it is not yet well-known by employers or institutions and when it is known, it might not be sufficiently recognised.

Most respondents did not take part in the EU level activities listed in the questionnaire (multiple choice). Those who had were asked about the most interesting aspects for having taken part in those EU level activities, also in comparison to similar activities in their own country / region / locality (open-ended question), respondents mostly referred to personal benefits in terms of:

- Meeting new people and cultures, opening one’s mind (e.g. getting to know other cultures and languages, learning to live in different conditions);
- Exchanging ideas on similar problems (e.g. youth unemployment, youth disinterest for social issues) with people from different countries and comparing countries’ situations.

In some cases, respondents refer to having developed certain skills such as ‘learning by doing’, non-formal learning and improving transversal skills (communication and language skills).

### 4.4 Level and type of influence of the EUYS and the Council Recommendation

This section complements the survey findings by providing evidence of changes at EU and national level that were influenced by the EUYS. In general the EUYS was not the
only factor that affected a given evolution at national level. Therefore this section uses the term influence or contribution.

### 4.4.1 Types of influence

As explained in the section on relevance, the EUYS covered eight areas of actions and covered many initiatives and activities.

Considering the strategic objectives which the EUYS was intended to contribute to, the evaluation has found that the influence of the EUYS across these areas of actions appears to be somewhat uneven. Evidence gathered the EUYS mostly influenced changes in core youth areas (volunteering, participation, youth work) rather than on other areas (employment, education, culture, health) in which youth issues were to be mainstreamed.

The evaluation found that the contribution of parallel EU initiatives (e.g. Youth Guarantee) in those areas affecting young people were more visible. This is presented under section 4.4.4.

Beyond the thematic influence, the evaluation found that, depending on the country, the EUYS had influence at these three levels:

- Influence on the policy agenda;
- Influence at strategic level;
- Influence at operational level.

These types of influence are not mutually exclusive, on the contrary they can be mutually reinforcing. They were identified based on interviews and the review of national reports and other reporting documents and are presented in the sub-sections below.

In the EUMS most active in the EU Youth OMC (e.g BEfr, DE, FR, CZ), cross-fertilisation between their own youth initiatives and policies and EU level ones have occurred. Similar two-way feedback processes were also reported in countries which held Council Presidencies over the evaluation period.

### Influence on the policy agenda

The EUYS had some level of influence on the national or local youth policy agenda in all EUMS. This means that certain youth issues or certain principles or approaches have either been added to the national agenda or have gained more visibility.

This mainly concerns core youth issues or approaches to policy-making:

- Volunteering, this was noted in e.g. AT, BEfr, BG, DK, FR, LT, LV, PL, PT, RO, SI, SK, UK.
- Internationalisation / mobility, this was noted in e.g. AT, BEnl, EE, LV, FI, FR, UK
- Non-formal learning, this was noted in e.g. BEnl, DE, FR, PT.
- Youth work, this was noted in e.g. BG, DE, DK, EE, IE, RO, PT.
- Health and wellbeing, this was noted in e.g. CZ, IE, LT, LV, SE, UK. In some countries, it was reported that health issues would not have been linked to

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84 Addressing core youth issues or topics that youth policy can achieve within its sphere of competence (legacy of first OMC): participation, voluntary activities, youth work; Mainstreaming youth issues within 8 other fields of action, within the competences of Ministries / DGs other than Youth: education and training, employment and entrepreneurship, health and well-being, creativity and culture, social inclusion, youth and the world. Finally, support to youth work was highlighted as a mean to contribute to the implementation of both approaches.

85 Interviews and desk research.
youth issues without the EU level discussions on cross-sectoral and holistic approaches to youth issues. In most countries however whilst the importance of youth health (incl. mental health) is recognised, its level of priority remains low.

- Considering youth issues holistically according to a cross-sectoral approach or mainstreaming rather than in isolation, this was noted in e.g. AT, BEnl, BDe, BG, CZ, FR, HR, IT, IE, HU, LT, LV, LU, NL, PL (at the start of the evaluation period), PT, SE.
- Youth consultation and participation, this was noted in e.g. AT, CY, CZ, DE, EE, DK, HR, LT, PL, PT, RO.

The box below provides examples of how certain issues moved up national agendas on account of the EU Youth OMC.

**Box 2 Examples of the influence of the EUYS on policy agendas**

**Volunteering:** Under the influence of the European Year of Volunteering, a specific legal framework for volunteering was created for the first time in SK, SI and LT during 2011. In BG a law on volunteering was elaborated during 2011 and adopted in 2012. PL adopted a new strategy on volunteering, AT renewed its law on volunteering and PT prepared a new law to be adopted in 2012\(^6\); in BFr, volunteering was included in the nations strategy *Plan Jeunesse*.

**Internationalisation / mobility:** In France, increasing mobility amongst disadvantaged youth has been an objective since 2009/10. EU opportunities and discussions have supported this. Support to European and international mobility was even included as one distinct field of action within the *Plan priorite jeunesse*. This was reported as an achievement by some of the interviewees.

**Youth work:** In IE participation to EU mutual learning activities on youth work under the Belgian Presidency in 2010\(^7\) and activities organised under Ireland’s Presidency in 2013 increased awareness of youth work. During the Irish Presidency the “Council Conclusions on the contribution of quality youth work to the development, well-being and social inclusion of young people” was adopted and the contribution of youth work and non-formal learning to addressing youth unemployment were highlighted. Finally the importance of youth work within the EUYS was reportedly an important stimulus to include it in the national framework of Ireland for 2014-2020.

**Influence at strategic level**

The EUYS had some level of influence at strategic-level, e.g. on a national or local youth strategy and/or on policy or legal developments in the youth field adopted over 2010-4/5. Influence at strategic level has broadly been on:

- the *content* of strategy, policy or legal developments, e.g. objectives and coverage of thematic areas and/or fields of action selected, e.g. volunteering; culture and creativity; internationalisation / mobility; non formal learning; NEets; youth work; entrepreneurship; health and well-being; inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities;
- *processes and approaches* followed, e.g. youth consultation and participation; evidence based policy making; considering youth issues holistically according to a cross-sectoral approach or mainstreaming rather than in isolation; the creation of coordination structures etc.

The box below provides examples of the EUYS’ influence on national or local youth strategies and/or on policy or legal developments in the youth field adopted over 2010-4/5.

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\(^6\) Report on the implementation, results and overall assessment of the 2011 European Year of Volunteering

Box 3 Examples of the influence of the EUYS on national or local youth strategies and on policy or legal developments

Example of EUYS’ influence on national or local youth strategies
In AT, a group was set up in February 2012 to develop the National Youth Strategy - "strengthening youth work". It formulated its framework and objectives on the basis of the eight fields of action of the EUYS and developed the first measures for youth participation. According to the interviewees, the EUYS was an important source of inspiration. It is also referenced in the national Youth Strategy - "strengthening youth work".

The EU Youth Strategy had an influence on the development of the National Programme for Youth in Slovenia 2013-2022, which is the country’s first National Youth Strategy. In particular, the fields covered by the National Programme stemmed from the priorities specified in the EUYS (education; employment and entrepreneurship; health and well-being; youth and society; culture and creativity) with the exception of the field on housing conditions that did not feature in the EUYS. According to the interviewees, ‘the EUYS was used as an inspiration for the National Programme’.

The EUYS provided an impetus for developing a more targeted youth policy in BG. It was considered for the design of National Youth Strategy 2010-2020. It also prompted action at local level: local youth strategies were adopted in a series of municipalities “in compliance with the National Youth Strategy 2010-2020 and EUYS 2010-2018”.

Example of EUYS’ influence on a legal development
The New Law on Volunteering 78/2014 in RO, adopted in 2014, is consistent with what the EU promotes in the area of volunteering and the 2008 Recommendation on the Mobility of Young Volunteers, e.g. recognition of voluntary activity as educational experience, safeguarding the quality of the volunteering experience, (via use of a compulsory written agreement between the volunteer and the host organisation) and promoting the recognition of the learning outcomes of voluntary activities via use of a certificate built on the eight key competences of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF). According to the RO case study, it was the result of multiple enabling factors and intense efforts from many stakeholders. The European Year of Volunteering 2011 had a big influence on driving the change by providing a favourable context to catalyse efforts and actors for initiating a public debate at national level about the need to revise the law on volunteering. On the other hand, the European Year of Volunteering 2011 was an important kick-off for the creation of VOLUM Federation, without whose intense advocacy and lobbying campaign in 2012-2013, the change would probably not have occurred.

The graph below presents the Cause-effect chain.

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88 “The 2012 Youth Strategy includes three framework objectives which link different thematic fields of actions: Employment and Learning (Youth Employment – Education - Start-Ups and Youth Entrepreneurship); Participation and Initiative (Participation in elections - Youth Participation – Volunteering); Quality of Life and a Spirit of Cooperation (Future perspective – Health – Sustainability”, 2015 national report.


90 See case study on Slovenia.

91 2012 national youth report.
Influence at operational level

This concerns countries for which there is evidence that the EUYS had some influence on changes at an operational level, e.g. on:

- The launch of new initiatives / tools / activities in the youth field (or related fields), or the modification of existing ones;
- The attribution of additional resources to address youth issues;
- The creation of coordination or consultation structures which did not exist in the past.

These operational changes are often a result of changes at strategy level (see section above).

The box below provides some examples of the EUYS’ influence on operational level changes.

**Box 4 Examples of the influence of the EUYS on changes at operational level**

The Structured Dialogue instrument led to the creation or ‘upgrading’ of national youth councils, i.e. Federations at national level of youth organisations in all EUMS. The Polish Federation of Youth Organisations (PROM) was founded in 2011 to implement the EU Structured Dialogue, and before Poland took the EU Presidency of the Council. PROM is now a recognised stakeholder to consult (Education Ministry and other Ministries). According to the case study on the InterCity Network, peer learning conferences, organised within the EU Youth OMC, kick-started the reflection on the creation of a network of municipalities active in youth work. The peer learning conferences were funded under the EU funding programmes and promoted under the website of SALTO (Support, Advanced Learning and Training Opportunities within the Erasmus+: Youth in Action programme). The idea of creating the network emerged within a favourable context shaped by other EU and Council of Europe initiatives in the area, e.g. Expert Group on quality of youth work, Youth in Action funded projects, and the Youth work conventions. In the absence of these EU cooperation structures, the network would most probably not have been able to emerge. This being said interest in participating in the network stems from national factors: municipalities convinced of the value of youth work and willing to
4.4.2 Levels of the EUYS’ influence and explanatory factors

When national youth stakeholders were sufficiently interested in making use of the EU Youth OMC, the EUYS has overall provided an effective strategic framework to build from. In such cases it has provided national youth stakeholders with strategic guidance to reach commonly-agreed goals and a means to do so via the cooperation instruments.

The evaluation found that the EUYS broadly had two levels of influence on national or local changes in the youth field over the period 2010–4/5:

- In a first category of countries, the EUYS was one of the key driver of changes, e.g. in the content of strategies, policies or legal developments, at national and local levels, or in processes and approaches which led to them, and on more operational initiatives. Indeed most changes in the youth field over 2010–4/5 are the product of a mix of national drivers and some influence from the EU Youth OMC at EU level. This concerns 23 countries, namely AT, BE, BG, CY, CZ, CY, DE, DK, EE, FI, FR, HR, HU, IE, IT, LT, LV, LU, PL at the start of the evaluation period only, PT, RO, SI, SK.

- It was of limited influence in 5 countries: EL, ES, NL, PL, UK. This led to, for example, (1) one category of stakeholders being more influenced than others, generally the national youth council via the structured dialogue; (2) only certain fields of actions having been influenced, e.g. youth employment or youth participation in democratic or civil life (volunteering; youth consultation), (3) only some principles have been taken up, e.g. cross sectoral approach; evidence-based policy-making (4) only some instruments have been used as per the country’s limited capacity or interest.

**EUYS as one of the key drivers of changes on national or local changes in the youth field over the period 2010–4/5**
Within this category the EUYS was the main driver of change in 5 countries, e.g. BG, CY, LT, PL (at the start of the evaluation period), RO. This concerned countries which, in 2010, were far from what the EUYS promoted but which were keen to progress in this direction. In such countries, the EUYS was a main source of inspiration and knowledge in the absence of foundations (e.g. national strategy or consolidated youth sector) to work from. Here it can also be said that in such countries, the EUYS’ added value was the highest (see section 5).

Within this category, the EUYS was one of several other strong drivers of change in 17 countries: AT, BE, CZ, DE, DK, EE, IE, IT, FI, FR, HR, HU, LV, LU, PT, SI, SK. This concerns countries where national intentions were aligned with what the EUYS promoted (e.g. holistic policy, young participation in its development), where the EUYS reinforced priorities (e.g. in terms of approaches and thematic coverage) over 2010-2015 or was a continuation of earlier policy choices, e.g. AT, BE, DE, DK, EE, LU. This concerns countries with a strong pre-existing youth culture or vibrant youth sector. In these countries, to varying extents, it was established practice to consult youth organisations; financial support to the youth sector was relatively stable and the place of youth in society was recognised and diverse. In other countries, the EUYS was used to provide inspiration (e.g. DK, FR).

Countries in this category of ‘influence’ notably reported the structuring role the EUYS had: the EUYS was used as a framework to reflect on means and topics for public intervention in the field of youth and gave them space to add national specificities to it (in terms of objectives, topics or approaches).

The EUYS as one of the drivers of changes in the content of strategies, policies or legal developments, at national and local levels

The box below provides some examples of the EUYS having been one of the key drivers of changes in the content of strategies, policies or legal developments, at national and local levels, e.g. AT, BE (nl, de, fr), BG, CZ, CY, EE, HR, RO, LT, PL (at the start of the evaluation period), PT, SI.

Box 5 Examples of the EUYS’ influence on the content of strategies

In BEnl, the Flemish Youth Policy Plan 2011-2014 is in line with the EUYS’ eight European fields of action. Those “structured the current challenges for youth policy in Flanders and helped to identify adequate responses”. “The current Flemish Youth Policy Plan 2010-2014 is the result of the interaction between policy making in Flanders (in cooperation with Flemish youth organisations) and the implementation of the EU Youth Strategy”.

In HR, the National Youth Programme 2014-2017, was structured around seven priority areas which correspond to the eight fields of action of the EUYS. It is also a continuation of the former National Youth Programme 2009-2013 and National Programme of Action for Youth 2003-2008. Moreover, the National Youth Programme 2014-2017 was reportedly the first opportunity young people had to participate in the preparation of the national youth programme (through a national Structured Dialogue process) and working groups were

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92 Not only as a repository of educational knowledge or a future employee, but as an active citizen as well
95 2015 national report.
96 2015 national report
established on the eight fields of action of the EUYS to make sure that the new strategy is evidence-based.

The CZ case study shows that the EU Youth Strategy document influenced the structure, rationale and priority areas (e.g. employability and youth participation) set in the National Youth Strategy 2014-2020. The graph below presents the cause-effect chain.

**The EUYS as a driver of changes in policy-making processes and approaches**

A number of policy-making processes and approaches promoted in the EUYS have also been taken-up at national level, partially on account of the EU Youth OMC. This concerns for instance:

Considering youth issues holistically on the basis of a cross-sectoral approach to policy or decision-making, or on mainstreaming. This was noted in AT, BE/nl, BE/de, BG, CZ, FR, HR, IT, IE, HU, LT, LV, LU, PL (at the start of the evaluation period, PT, SE.

Developing distinct youth policies and strategies (rather than part of education or family policy). In EE for example, one interviewee recognized that “knowledge of youth policy, as a separate policy field, has grown in the mind-sets of the politicians as well as of the public opinion.”

Involving youth or their representatives in policy and decision-making via their consultation. This was noted in AT, CY, CZ, DE, EE, DK, HR, LT, PT, RO.

The box below provides some examples of the EUYS having been one of the key drivers of changes in the processes and approaches which led to them.

**Box 6 Examples of the EUYS having influenced policy-making processes and approaches**

**Considering youth issues holistically**

In Italy, the November 2011 package of measures entitled “Diritto al futuro” (Right to the Future), which addresses young people’s difficulties in housing, education and employment according to a cross sectoral approach, was mainly a response to the severe effects of the economic crisis on the Italian youth, rather than to the EUYS. The EUYS was however recognised as a framework to reflect on, and the cross-sectoral approach promoted was also
recognised as an inspiration. Whilst the November 2011 package of measures "Diritto al futuro" (Right to the future) was initially granted 300 million Euro\textsuperscript{98}, they decreased to 4 million Euro\textsuperscript{99}.

The 2012 national youth report for BEde mentions that "[the central role for youth work within the EUYS and] the cross-sector approach are taken on board in the new funding decree for youth work [adopted in 2011]". This decree was reported as "a first step towards an integrated and holistic youth approach as well as a transversal cooperation between the different sectors regarding youth issues"\textsuperscript{100}. This integrated and holistic approach has been followed since: the Youth Strategy plan for 2013-2015 and the Youth Strategy plan for 2016-2020 also follow a holistic approach\textsuperscript{101}.

In the Czech Republic, a Youth Chamber was newly established to act as a cross-sectoral advisory body for drafting, implementing and evaluating current and future youth policies of the Czech Republic (national youth report).

In PL, an \textit{ad hoc} Interdisciplinary team of experts was set up in 2009 to consider youth issues holistically and also to implement the principle of consultation between policymakers and the youth sectors. It was active from 2009- 2011 under the Chancellery of the Prime Minister. The final result of its work was the Report "Youth 2011".

In Sweden, the Bill "Focus on young people - a policy for good living conditions, power and influence" indicates that youth policy is cross-sectoral, covering education, employment, housing, influence, health, culture and leisure.

\textbf{Youth consultation and participation}

In Portugal, following the ‘Livro Branco da Juventude’ (White Book on Youth), developed between 2012 and 2014, consultation principles have been enshrined in a law since 2013 guaranteeing that the priority actions developed through consultations with young people and youth organisations are to be followed up by decision-makers (see PT case study).

In Hungary, one of the thematic working groups of the Youth Expert Coordination Forum founded in 2013 was dedicated to the topic of youth participation. A legal requirement was introduced for regular consultation with young people and their involvement in decision-making, as well as securing financial support for the sustainability of the structured dialogue process and increasing the number of young people participating, which is in line with the principles promoted in the EUYS. Furthermore, Structured Dialogue was one of the separate topics that the working groups of the Youth Expert Coordination Forum have been addressing. The processes and aims of the Structured Dialogue have been evaluated and resulted in 15 recommendations on further evolution of consultations and the structured dialogue in Hungary (see HU case study).

\textbf{The EUYS as a driver of changes at operational level}

In addition to box 4, the box below provides some further examples of the EUYS having been one of the key drivers of changes at operational level.

\begin{boxedtext}

\textbf{Box 7 Examples of the EUYS’ influence on changes in the youth field at operational level}

Germany created a dedicated structure - the Transfer Agency for Youth Policy Cooperation in Europe, hosted by \textit{JUGEND für Europa} - to bridge EU youth policy and initiatives with the most appropriate levels in Germany, ie. \textit{Länder} and municipalities, but also to launch and support a number of European activities (e.g. peer learning on youth work) to create a discussion at EU level\textsuperscript{102}.

In Hungary, a Youth Expert Coordination Forum (YECF) was set up in 2013 to support coordinated policy-making in the field of youth and to monitor the implementation of the National Youth Strategy 2009-2024 (see HU case study). The EUYS implementation instruments, such as the consultation and structured dialogue with young people and youth organisations, contributed to developing internal structures in YECF and collaboration between experts and Expert Groups. The Forum is based on a platform similar to structured dialogue

\textsuperscript{98} National report 2012.
\textsuperscript{99} Interviews.
\textsuperscript{100} 2012 national report.
\textsuperscript{102} Interview 2
\end{boxedtext}
that allows youth experts at all levels and from all youth fields to come together and discuss issues related to youth policy and practice in contact with policy-makers (see HU case study). In Slovenia, the EU youth Indicators on youth were reportedly carefully examined when preparing the National Youth Programme 2013-2022. Now monitoring procedures at national level for the National Youth Programme exist and the Office for Youth reports to the Government and the Parliament on a twice a year basis. An evaluation of the first 3 years of implementation of the National Youth Programme has also been planned (see SI case study).

Limited influence of EUYS on changes on national or local changes in the youth field over the period 2010-4/5

This category concerns countries where the EUYS’ influence was limited by national or external factors. This concerns 5 countries: EL, ES, NL, PL, UK.

The limiting factors have been (1) youth issues have been low on the strategic agenda, (2) few resources have been allocated to it over the evaluation period, e.g. ES, EL, PL, (3) and the economic crisis notably drew attention away from youth issues in certain countries. In Greece for example, interest in youth policies has traditionally been low and more so over the evaluation period as the government’s capacity was severely stretched on account of the country’s economic situation. Evidence shows that opportunities available under the EU Youth OMC could not be seized. A number of initiatives were taken, in line with the momentum instigated at EU level, however based on evidence collected so far, it seems that none have come to fruition: e.g. in 2011, a Working Group for developing inter-ministerial cooperation on youth issues was created, an inter-ministerial working group for the reform of volunteering was established during the "European Year of Volunteering" 2011. The reform was also intended to lead to the recognition of youth work. Finally a Youth Committee was created in 2012 to work with other youth stakeholders in view of drafting a National Youth Policy and Action Plan. In Poland, the change in government in October 2011 led to changes in policy priorities and in interest in youth issues in general103. There has been no follow up to the National Youth Strategy for 2003-2012. The youth department created during Poland’s Presidency of the EU was dismantled. Whilst youth participation and dialogue with decision-makers has been improved following the creation of the Polish Council of Youth Organisations (PROM), consultation is reportedly not systematic and funding and support has been limited.

In other countries, interest at high/strategic level in using opportunities and instruments available under the EU youth cooperation framework in youth, was limited as those were regarded, first and foremost, as national ones, e.g. UK, PL. In the devolved nations of the UK, stakeholders considered public interventions in youth issues were either already aligned (e.g. on youth participation, cross-sectoral cooperation and mainstreaming) or advanced in comparison to what is promoted in the EUYS or at EU level (e.g. on youth work). The EUYS is considered generally as part of the ‘general policy landscape’ or as a background document which can be used as a benchmark to measure progress against. Areas where EU level cooperation was regarded were volunteering and funding provided under Erasmus +.

In other countries, attention was elsewhere, e.g. in the Netherlands youth issues have declined on the political agenda on account of budget cuts and also as attention Has turned to the recent reform in favour of decentralization of social issues at local level.

Non-EUYS initiatives which have had an influence on EU Member States’ youth field

National changes in the field of youth have also been influenced by other EU initiatives, distinct from the EU Youth Strategy. As already mentioned under the section on Relevance and Coherence, several EU developments focusing on youth ran in parallel in the period analysed.

103 National youth reports and national interviews.
The two most cited EU initiatives which contributed to attaining some of the EUYS’s goals and thus strengthened it indirectly have been the 2012 Council Recommendation on the Validation of non-formal and informal learning and the EU Youth Guarantee.

The 2012 Council Recommendation on the Validation of non-formal and informal learning\(^\text{104}\) whilst separate from the EU cooperation framework in youth was often considered as another tool which raises the importance of youth work and volunteering, competences acquired and their role in the social and economic inclusion of youth. In Croatia for example: the 2012 Recommendation led to the development of (1) the 2013 amendment of 2007 Volunteerism Act: a new instrument for the validation of volunteering and the recognitions of competences, skills and experiences acquired and (2) the Draft Ordinance on the Recognition of Non-formal and Informal Learning (planned to be adopted by the end of 2015) which aims to define the procedure for recognition and validation of the previously acquired learning outcomes for qualifications in the Croatian Qualifications Framework.

The EU Youth Guarantee was adopted under employment policy. In a number of countries (HR, LT, LV, PT, RO) it has been an important initiative which focused efforts on youth unemployment and the issue of NEETs alongside other activities of the EU Youth OMC over the evaluation period. The Youth Guarantee has also been based on principles such as cross-sectoral cooperation and youth consultation which are consistent with the EUYS. In Portugal for example the implementation of the Youth Guarantee programme involved several sectors of the Government, especially from the side of education, youth and employment and training. The EU Youth Guarantee initiative acted as an accelerator to address youth employment further, hand in hand with the youth sector. Local authorities were also given a new impetus to fight school dropouts and promoting youth entrepreneurship.

### 4.4.3 Factors explaining EUYS influence

#### Factors having contributed to the EUYS influence

The evaluation has identified a number of factors which have facilitated the EUYS’ influence at national and local levels in EUMS.

The EUYS’ influence was stronger when national and/or local forces were receptive to EU level messages and seized opportunities to cooperate, available under EU UOUTH OMC. This was demonstrated when the EUYS was recognised as a useful guidance document (e.g. HR, PL (at the start of the evaluation period), PT) or when previous EU level cooperation had already informed national choices in the youth field and thus had created favourable conditions for the EUYS’s influence. For example, in Germany, the Transfer Agency for Youth Policy Cooperation was created due to the high interest of the Länder and the other initiatives by the federal government to stimulate the implementation of the EU youth strategy in Germany (see DE case study). In some national reports (e.g. AT\(^\text{105}\), LU, PT) the 2001 White paper on Youth\(^\text{106}\) has been cited as having influenced developments over the evaluation period for instance.

Influence was also larger when few other sources of inspiration in the youth field existed and where there was a relatively strong interest to use the EUYS to “fill in the gaps” (e.g. BG, CY, LT, PL, RO). This concerns countries where a previous national

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\(^{104}\) It calls Member States to put in place, by no later than 2018, arrangements to enable individuals to have their knowledge, skills and competences acquired via non-formal and informal learning validated, or to obtain a full qualification, or, where applicable, part of a qualification.

\(^{105}\) The Austrian youth report 2012 mentions "Already since 2000 (White Paper Process) national youth policy concentrates on youth information work including new media, participation structures, research concerning youth issues, young people’s voluntary work and aims to mainstream youth issues”, 2012 national report.

strategy to build from did not exist, or where policy making had traditionally been top down and consultation with youth organisations was limited.

Due to the economic crisis, the issue of youth unemployment was high on the agenda and, in some countries the EUYS was considered as an opportunity to, for example, raise the profile of youth work or volunteering as a means for youth’s social inclusion. In some countries (e.g. LT), when interventions targeted at youth were presented as a means to tackle unemployment, they attracted attention and this link ‘made the case for’ using the EU level cooperation framework and instruments available under it.

The evaluation also found that hosting a Presidency of the Council of the EU had been an important vector of influence. Evidence of this was found in IE, EL, PL in 2011, IT and CY in 2012. For example, in Cyprus, evidence shows that the Presidency created a momentum to increase the importance of youth in policy priorities and to consult youth organisations. The Ireland case study showed that the Irish Presidency created a space to improve communication, notably via the spotlight on the Structured Dialogue, between young people and the Irish government. Poland’s activities in favour of youth participation (mobility, non-formal education and voluntary activities) under its Presidency of the EU in 2011 culminated in the development of the Long-Term Policy for Volunteering Development in 2011 and the Strategy for Development of Social Capital (mostly volunteering and participation). The Council of the EU Presidency held by Italy from July and December 2014 influenced the Italian agenda: as one of the Presidency’s priorities was on the fight of youth unemployment, this drew attention at national level also on youth employment, social inclusion and empowerment.

Finally, national stakeholders’ efforts to disseminate the EUYS and opportunities available under OMC to the most relevant levels were also an important factor of influence. In countries where dissemination processes existed to ensure that information on the EUYS were shared to local level actors, those were also able to seize opportunities available at EU level. In the Czech Republic, for example, “The ministerial Youth Department organises regular meetings with the heads of regional Youth Units who have been informed about the EUYS and encouraged to prioritise the EUYS’ core themes at regional level. A newly established Youth Chamber, an advisory body for the implementation of the CZ youth policy which is strongly linked with the EUYS in the 2012-2013 Action Plan has representatives of municipalities at local and regional level among its members.” In Germany, the “Transfer Agency for Youth Policy Cooperation in Europe” was created specifically to bring EU youth policy and initiatives at the most appropriate levels, ie. Länder and municipalities, considering the federal structure of the German State and that youth policy is a responsibility for Länder and municipalities. The creation of this agency was the result of the conviction within the European youth policy unit of the Federal Ministry for youth that the EUYS would give an impulse to German youth policy and that this should be supported by a formal structure and that a German national youth policy necessarily included a European dimension. In several countries however this ‘cascading’ process to the local

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107 Interview 1  
109 “From 1 July 2014 to 31 December 2015 the Trio Presidency will be made up of Italy, Latvia and Luxemburg. The fight against unemployment, particularly youth unemployment, will be among the focus areas of the EU. The Trio Presidency will strongly support ongoing initiatives, most particularly via the Youth Guarantee schemes and the Youth Employment Initiative, as well as through ESF funding”. http://italia2014.eu/en/presidency-and-eu/programme-and-priorities/the-trio-programme/  
110 Especially in countries where local authorities are mainly responsible for youth policy, youth work, support to youth organisations etc.  
111 National youth report.
level was found lacking and created obstacles to the EUYS’ influence amongst relevant actors.

The European Union Work Plan for Youth for 2014 – 2015 has been reported by some EU MS (i.e. CZ, EE, HU) as a useful tool to put certain issues on the agenda and also to bring focus and flexibility to the implementation of the EUYS. In the Czech Republic, national priorities were linked to the priorities of the European Union Work Plan for Youth for 2014 – 2015. One interviewee in Estonia mentioned that the annual work plan brought focus to cooperation, by selecting priority issues and linking them to the specific cooperation instruments (i.e. Expert Groups) and this had been needed considering the wide scope of the EUYS.

Factors having limited the EUYS influence

The evaluation has also found common factors which limited the influence of the EUYS.

In some countries, the severe economic crisis over the evaluation period limited attention and resources given to youth issues, which were left on the periphery (e.g. IT, AT “employment was the ’only’ issue on politicians’ agenda” (interviewee)). In several countries, support to youth culture and creativity suffered from budget.

In some countries, the EUYS’ influence was limited due to discrepancy between principles and definitions promoted at EU level and those at national ones. For example, the BEfr’s youth sector and administration reported that the EU’s framing of volunteering and youth work from an employment and lifelong learning angle rather than for their intrinsic values (and in the case of volunteering, as a gratuitous and benevolent act) goes against Belgian approaches. In England and Wales, the current policy focus on devolving youth issues at local level was perceived at odds with what EU level cooperation, seen as a way to ‘standardise’ policy and initiatives in the youth field.

Some developments in the youth field at strategy, policy or legal levels, whilst influenced by the EUYS, have amounted to little due to a lack of funding for implementation or to changes in government. For example the ‘Plan Jeunesse’ in BEfr has been on ‘stand-by’ since the change of government at the end of 2014.

Other limitations include lack of knowledge about, or interest in, cooperation opportunities under the EUYS and the results of cooperation instruments. This is due to limited capacity to promote the EUYS at national level beyond the work of Erasmus + agencies, the European Youth Portal and the Eurodesks as well as national multipliers. The evaluation found that knowledge of the Strategy, its instruments and approaches varied amongst the different stakeholders who constitute a national youth sector (officials, youth organisations, incl. volunteering ones and national youth councils). In some countries knowledge was detailed and shared across stakeholders, in the majority it was fragmented and somewhat superficial. As shown in the figure below, the survey conducted within this evaluation amongst 250 European youth organisations found that most knew the EUYS and the Council Recommendation on the Mobibity of Young Volunteers at a superficial level. The Council Recommendation was comparatively less well known (see section 4.2).

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112 Most youth organisations surveyed knew the EU Youth Strategy, either well (19%) or had a basic understanding of it (36%). A quarter had heard of it but did not know its content (25%). Finally, 19% of youth organisations surveyed were not aware of the existence of the EU Youth Strategy.

113 Most youth organisations knew the Council Recommendation well (14%) or had a basic understanding of it (30%), or had heard of it but did not know its content (29%). 28% were not aware of the existence of the Council Recommendation.
4.4.4 Influence of the EUYS on EU level initiatives

The EUYS’ main influence on EU initiatives has been via the outcomes of the Structured Dialogue on Council Resolutions mainly in the employment and education agendas. Some of the joint recommendations put forward at EU Youth Conferences have been taken on board in youth policies formulated at EU and national levels, namely in Council documents. For example, five of the eight joint outcomes from the Hungarian Presidency’s EU Youth Conference in Budapest were reflected in the Council Resolution on the Structured Dialogue with young people on youth employment. In addition, the joint recommendations were also referred to in the Council Conclusions on promoting youth employment to achieve the Europe 2020 objectives, which set the ground for the 2013 Council Recommendation on establishing a Youth Guarantee. A reference to the outcomes of the 2011 structured dialogue on youth employment was also included in the Council Recommendation of 10 March 2014 on a Quality Framework for Traineeships. Whilst the structured dialogue was not necessarily at the origin of these proposals, it created a space for dialogue among policy-makers and youth representatives to develop the ideas further.

There is evidence that structured dialogue contributed to several policy initiatives at EU level, namely the EU Youth Guarantee and the Quality Framework for Traineeships. The Youth Guarantee was discussed in the structured dialogue under the Belgian Presidency in 2010 and the EU Youth Conference outcomes called for a “social guarantee”. The joint recommendations of the structured dialogue on employment adopted at the EU Youth Conference in March 2011 included proposals for ‘improving flexibility as well as security for young people to combine employment with further education, training, voluntary activities and private life’. The Council of Youth Ministers adopted on 19 May 2011 a Resolution on the Structured Dialogue on Youth Employment in response to the joint recommendations. The Council Conclusions on promoting youth employment to achieve the Europe 2020 objectives make reference to the outcomes of the structured dialogue on youth employment and invites Member States to intervene by offering further education, (re) training or activation measures for NEETs, such as a ‘youth guarantee’. Following up on the above Council Conclusions, Member States adopted a Council Recommendation on establishing a Youth Guarantee in April 2013.

With regards to the Quality Framework for Traineeships, the joint recommendations formulated at the EU Youth Conference in March 2011 call for a ‘quality framework for internships to guarantee their educational value’. Making a direct reference to the outcomes of the structured dialogue on youth employment, the Council Conclusions from 17 June 2011 on promoting youth employment to achieve the Europe 2020 objectives invited the Commission to provide guidance on conditions for high quality traineeships by means of a quality framework for traineeships. In a speech before his debate with young Europeans at the Committee of Regions in Brussels on 18 May during the European Youth Week 2011, the then EU Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, László Andor announced his commitment to presenting a quality framework for traineeships in 2012. A Quality Framework for Traineeships was adopted as Council Recommendation in March 2014, including a reference to the Council Resolution on the structured dialogue and to the Council Conclusions of 17 June 2011.

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115 Council conclusions from 17 June 2011 on promoting youth employment to achieve the Europe 2020 objectives
116 For example, Commissioner Andor on employment joined participants of the Structured Dialogue at the European Youth Week 16-18 May 2011 to receive the joint recommendations.
117 Council Recommendation of 22 April 2013 on establishing a Youth Guarantee, OJ C 120.
Through similar processes (see steps in Annex 4), structured dialogue contributed to:

- Council Recommendation on validation of non-formal and informal learning (December 2012); the need for improving the recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning was discussed extensively in the structured dialogue in 2012 and peer-learning events. Youth policy-makers contributed to the text of the 2012 Council Recommendation and a focus on the role of youth organisations was included.

- Eastern Partnership Youth Window in the Youth in Action programme in 2012-2013;

- Your first EURES Job Portal 2012-2015;

- Re-designing of the European Youth Portal in 2013;


More examples are provided in Annex 4.

4.4.5 Influence of the 2008 Council Recommendations on developments in the field of cross bordering volunteering

As discussed under the methods section above (section 2.2), it is challenging to distinguish the effects in the field of cross-border volunteering influenced by the Council Recommendation from the effects produced in the volunteering field influenced by the EUYS at large, more so as the Council Recommendation was included in the cooperation framework.

As indicated above, volunteering moved up the agenda in a number of countries - e.g. AT, BEfr, BG, DK, FR, LT, LV, PL, PT, RO, SI, SK, UK. Laws and tools to recognise its value was developed in a number of EUMS. Activities and instruments which contributed to this include the Expert Group on the mobility of young volunteers across the EU and the Expert Group on the Implementation of the Council Recommendation on the Mobility of Young Volunteers; studies and data collection activities providing data on cross border volunteering, the EVS and other national activities co-funded by EU programmes.

The majority of stakeholders interviewed from the volunteering field indicated that the 2008 Council Recommendation benefitted from having been integrated in a long-term youth cooperation framework. This allowed for cross-border volunteering to be kept in EU cooperation activities, with the implementation of the Council Recommendation being included as one of the key initiatives for achieving progress in this area. Furthermore, the EUYS built on what was planned under the Council Recommendation by supporting the work of the Expert Group on the mobility of young volunteers. Nearly all Member States were represented in the Expert Group and the group worked on all action lines described in the 2008 Council Recommendation. The Strategy also complemented Member States’ efforts of increasing cross-border volunteering opportunities through enhancing the mobilisation of funds for the EVS (the budget of which increased by 22.3% in the period 2007-2011)\(^{119}\) and the support to the dissemination of information. EVS was reported as being the only funding available to most of the volunteering organisations interviewed. Some young people surveyed indicated that Eurodesk(s) and the European Youth Portal helped them find information about volunteering opportunities abroad.

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\(^{119}\) 22.3% increase in budget allocated to EVS between 2007 and 2011 (from 40,434 EUR in 2007 to 49,441 in 2011)
4.5 Influence of the implementation instruments

The seven implementation instruments available to EUMS, under the EU cooperation framework, all contributed to the implementation of the approaches, principles and objectives set under the EUYS and Council Recommendation on the Mobility of Young Volunteers across the EU.

The evaluation found that some instruments were however more visible and useful than others, as shown in this section.

The evaluation also found that themes or principles were successfully promoted when different cooperation instruments were joined together and could build from each other’s results. For instance the discussion on youth work progressed as it could build on the following EU initiatives:

- Discussion in Expert Groups on youth work which built a shared understanding of what youth work was and the core ideas and principles which constitute it;
- The EVS;
- The conclusions of the first and second youth work convention;
- The “Value of youth work in the EU” study.

4.5.1 Instruments with greater visibility and clearer influence on national and organisations developments

Consultations and Structured Dialogue (SD) with young people and youth organisations

The Structured Dialogue involves consultations with young people and youth organisations at all levels in Member States at EU youth conferences organised by the Presidency countries, and at the European Youth Week. The Structured Dialogue aims to become an integral part of policy-making in the youth field at EU and national levels.

This instrument has been the most visible across the EU28. Amongst the Young Europeans surveyed, 51% (N=698) knew of EU Youth Conferences and 44% (N=701) knew of European Youth Weeks. National Working Groups have been set up in all Member States to run the participatory process.

In terms of effects, depending on countries’ starting points and consultation traditions, some regarded the Structured Dialogue as one of the most useful instruments of cooperation (i.e. CZ, CY, EE, ES, PL, IT, LU, SK). It provided an opportunity for MS to consult their youth sector in an organised process, supported by established institutional structures and working towards clear objectives. It also provided inspiration for the development of similar consultation mechanisms at local level (i.e. CY, DK, FR at the level of the following regions Aquitaine, Champagne-Ardenne, Languedoc-Roussillon, Poitou-Charentes in 2015). In countries with strong consultation traditions this instrument was an opportunity to rethink existing structures and increase policy participation opportunities for young people (i.e. BEnl, BEfr, HR).

Youth organisations surveyed considered activities part of the Structured Dialogue to have been the second type of activity to have contributed the most to the effect “enhancing networking with policymakers”. After “Other activities which supported policy reform in the youth field funded under the ‘Youth in action’ or the ‘Erasmus+’ funding programmes”.

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120 The composition of these groups is a matter for the Member States to determine, but they involve, inter alia, representatives of Ministries for Youth Affairs, National Youth Councils, local and regional youth councils, youth organisations, and those active in youth work, young people and youth researchers.

121 After “Other activities which supported policy reform in the youth field funded under the ‘Youth in action’ or the ‘Erasmus+’ funding programmes”.
considered EU Youth Conferences to have contributed to “networking with academic researchers”, “creation of new partnerships” and “Changes in their organisations”, and also to improvements in the youth policy agenda, or policy making, at EU, national or local level(s).

This prioritisation system\textsuperscript{122} has helped the structuring of discussions at national level and has put certain issues on the agenda in some countries (e.g. AT, IT). For example, in Austria, a process of consultations similar to the EUYS Structured Dialogue took place in 2013 and facilitated dialogue between representatives of the Austrian government and representatives from youth organisations in Austria in view of elaborating the ‘Youth Check’ tool\textsuperscript{123}. The Erasmus + grants, available since 2014 to support the National Working Groups, also contributed to substantially strengthen the Structured Dialogue at national level. Other support structures were developed in some countries, e.g. online portal in Slovakia to facilitate youth participation.

According to the interviewees the translation of issues discussed within the Structured Dialogue, into inputs into decision-making varied. Some indicated that consensus reached within the national Structured Dialogue could sometimes be jeopardised with discussions on the same issue within the EU Structured Dialogue.

Other countries noted needs for the improvement of the Structured Dialogue (e.g. BEFr, DK, FR LU) whilst noting efforts since its reform in 2013. Limitations reported related to the lack of representativeness of the process, some difficulties to reach out to the local level, and issues with turning joint recommendations / conclusions made at EU level into concrete initiatives at EU and national level. Whilst about a third of recommendations made in the process were included in Council documents, there are few examples of initiatives to which Structured Dialogue contributed so far. The 2012 EU Youth Report\textsuperscript{124} highlighted that more than half of EUMS\textsuperscript{125} had not yet taken any initiatives following the structured dialogue on youth employment, and called upon the decision-makers to take recommendations more fully into account.

Some mentioned that other EU cooperation instruments could be used to that effect. Several stakeholders for instance mentioned that the value of the Structured Dialogue lay more in the skills it allowed participants to develop, than in its influence on policymaking at national or EU level.

However in some countries concrete outputs can be identified, e.g. in the Czech Republic, results of the Structured Dialogue, notably on the ‘rights-based approach’ were reportedly taken into account when compiling the 2014 national youth strategy - "National Youth Strategy”, in the Netherlands, the issue of lowering the right to vote to the age of 16 emerged from the Structured Dialogue although little has reportedly moved since.

Other forms of consultation of young people and youth organisations have also been developed and appreciated, e.g. youth organisations were consulted in a number of EUMS (e.g. IT, DK, EE) within the reporting exercise (see progress monitoring

\textsuperscript{122} Discussions are generally centred around thematic priorities decided by the Council of Youth Ministers and by the Trio Presidency.

\textsuperscript{123} YouthCheck is an ex-ante impact assessment tool aimed at facilitating better law-making that takes into consideration, inter alia, the interests of children and young people in policies that are relevant to them. While the EUYS had no evident influence on the creation or development of the Youth Check, it did inspire the National Youth Strategy of Austria (which the Youth Check helps to implement) and strengthened the participatory approach via the structured dialogue EUYS instrument, which contributed to the wide-consultations with youth organisations in the process of elaborating the policy tool. Nevertheless, the Youth Check tool remains mainly a national initiative, stemming from the Austrian Government and having been developed in collaboration with youth organisations in the country.

\textsuperscript{124} Joint EU Youth Report of the Council and the Commission, OJ C 394.

\textsuperscript{125} The current evaluation did not assess the implementation of structured dialogue outcomes at national level.
instrument). For example, in Estonia data was collected by the National Youth Council on a yearly basis through the use of questionnaire sent to its members. This provided statistics and information on youth organisations’ successes and challenges which was used within the National Youth Report 2015.

**Mobilisation of EU programmes and funds (Funding allocated to youth chapter in Erasmus+; Funding mobilised from other - EU programmes and funds)**

The Strategy’s seven implementation instruments have mainly been financed by the former Youth in Action and the current Erasmus+ Programme which includes expenditures planned for support to policy reform in the youth field under Key action 3, which is partly used to support implementation of the EUYS. Under this programme, the expenditure for the implementation tools of the EUYS was around EUR 1,900,000 in 2014\(^\text{126}\).

In order to reach the strategic objectives set in the EUYS, Member States have also been invited to make use of other EU funds, such as the Structural Funds, or programmes such as Lifelong Learning (now replaced by Erasmus+); Culture and Media (now replaced by Creative Europe), Progress, Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs and Competitiveness and Innovation programmes. This being said Member States mainly made use of DG EAC programmes to reach those objectives and mainly to support (1) youth participation through grant to support National Working groups for the Structured Dialogue, (2) evidence based policy making etc. and (3) volunteering and mobility initiatives. Interviewees from a few EUMS stated having used other available EU funds to implement national youth policy or priorities in various areas of action: BEnl reported the use of the ESF to support “youth transition to work” and Youth Guarantee initiatives as well as the use of the European Integration Fund\(^\text{127}\) the Rural Development Fund\(^\text{128}\) and the European Regional Development Fund. Slovenia reported integrating supporting to youth work\(^\text{130}\) in its Operational Programme 2015 and 2020 (structural and cohesion funds).

The evaluation found that funding available to support the implementation of the EUYS was often instrumental in certain youth issues (e.g. transnational exchanges, volunteering ones under the 2011 European Year of Volunteering, youth work), or principles (participation). Indeed they would not have been supported to the same extent otherwise, especially in a context of budget cuts. Youth organisations surveyed considered that “activities funded under the ‘Youth in action’ or the ‘Erasmus+’ funding programmes”\(^\text{131}\) contributed the most to all of the effects listed in Figure 18 and Figure 20 above (without any substantial variations across the effects and outcomes).

**Knowledge building and evidence-based policy-making**

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\(^{126}\) Terms of Reference.

\(^{127}\) A call was launched in 2011 for projects that facilitate the participation of recently immigrated young people in organized leisure-time activities.

\(^{128}\) This programme for instance supports child & youth services and primary schools in rural areas.

\(^{129}\) Young people and youth organisations in Flanders participated in some urban regeneration projects supported by the European Regional Development Fund.

\(^{130}\) The objective is to support the development of quality systems in youth work, to obtain professional qualification of a youth worker and to build on the education and training for youth workers and youth work.

\(^{131}\) The actual phrasing in the survey questionnaire was “activities funded under the ‘Youth in action’ or the ‘Erasmus+’ funding programmes which supported policy reform in the youth field” however it is likely that youth organisations selected this option on account of their participation to any activities funded under the ‘Youth in action’ or the ‘Erasmus+’ funding programmes (rather than those specific to supporting policy reform in the youth field).
The European Commission funded the development of a range of research and statistics on young people so that policymakers and other youth stakeholders could inform decisions based on their sound understanding of "the living conditions, values and attitudes of young women and men."  

A number of studies and other datasets were produced at the initiative of the European Commission, or OMC Expert Groups, or priorities set within the EU – Council of Europe youth partnership. Below is a non-exhaustive list. The table also presents information on the outreach of those outputs. This was done by identifying the number of each output’s citations found in the internet search engines Google and Google scholar.

Table 8. Evidence of results produced under the instrument

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Outputs</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Outreach</th>
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</table>
| Surveys of young people         | European Youth Flash Barometer (408, 2015)                   | Study young EU citizens’ (aged 15 to 30) participation in society, and specifically on their involvement in voluntary activities and participation in political elections and cultural activities. 13,454 respondents from different social and demographic groups were interviewed. | Number of entries in google: Approx. 10500  
Number of entries in google scholar: 0 |
| Eurobarometer survey on ‘European Youth: Participation in Democratic Life’ (No 375, 2013) | Study young EU citizens’ (aged 15 to 30) participation in society, with special reference to participation in **elections and intentions to participate in the European elections in 2014**. The survey also examined young people’s involvement in a range of groups and clubs such as sports clubs, youth organisations and cultural organisations. The findings are compared with those of the Flash Eurobarometer survey “Youth on the Move” (No 319a) conducted in 2011 (see below). | Number of entries in google: Approx. 11000  
<p>| Flash Study of young EU citizens’ | Number of entries in google:                                |                                                                                                                                                                                                           |                                                                           |</p>
<table>
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<th>Activity</th>
<th>Outputs</th>
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<tr>
<td>Eurobarometer survey 'Youth on the move', Flash Barometer (319a, 2011)</td>
<td>(aged 15 and 30) participation in (1) sports clubs, youth organisations, cultural organisations and non-governmental organisations, (2) political elections at the local, regional, national or EU level, (3) voluntary activities, (4) intra EU activities and projects fostering cooperation between young people. 27,029 interviews were conducted amongst nationally representative samples of EU 27 young people.</td>
<td>Approx. 12,000 Number of entries in google scholar: 0</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>DG EAC / EACEA Youth studies Working with young people: the value of youth work in the European Union (2014)</td>
<td>The study highlights the diversity across the EU of youth work practice, actors involved, trends in the sector and features of successful youth work. It concludes that EU and national level policies and funding provisions have the potential to frame and shape the practice of youth work and would then further strengthen the capacity of the sector to provide meaningful activities for young people in their leisure time that lead to identifiable successful outcomes for youth in the EU.</td>
<td>Number of entries in google: Approx. 4000 Approx. 6 academic publications in which the doc has been cited, e.g. Morciano, Daniele, Fausta Scardigno, and Maurizio Merico. &quot;Introduction to the Special Section: Youth Work, Non-Formal Education and Youth Participation.&quot; <em>Education</em> 7.1 (2015): 1-1</td>
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<td>Study on Youth participation in</td>
<td>The report looked at six key themes: (1) the representation of young people, with a particular focus on youth</td>
<td>Number of entries in google: Approx. 300 1 Academic publications in which the doc has been cited,</td>
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<tr>
<td>Activity</td>
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<td>Report ‘Political Participation and EU Citizenship: Perceptions and Behaviour of Young People: Evidence from Eurobarometer surveys’ (2012)</td>
<td>This report examines Eurobarometer surveys conducted in 2012 to establish changes in young people’s modes of participation and perceptions of citizenship, against the backdrop of rising youth unemployment or cuts in education budgets. The analysed surveys are the following: the European Citizenship section of the Standard Eurobarometer 77 and 78; the Flash Eurobarometer 365 on European Union citizenship; the Flash Eurobarometer 373 on Europeans’ engagement in participatory democracy; and the European Parliament Eurobarometer 77.4. The youth cohort defined by Eurobarometer surveys is young people aged 15-24.</td>
<td>Number of entries in google: Approx. 179 Number of entries in google scholar: 0</td>
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<tr>
<td>DG EAC Study “Assessing practices for using indicators in fields related to</td>
<td>This study presents an assessment on how Member States are currently applying indicators at the national level in areas related to youth. The general objective of the study was to provide inputs, based on experiences from and practices in the Member</td>
<td>Number of entries in google: Approx. 180 9 Academic publications in which the doc has been cited, e.g. Planas, Anna, Pere Soler, and Montserrat Vilà. &quot;Assessing youth policies. A system of indicators for local</td>
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<tr>
<td>Activity</td>
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<td>youth” (2011)</td>
<td>States, in the design of a system of using indicators that will support the Commission in developing youth policy guided by knowledge and evidence. The study found for instance that the European Social Fund and the Youth in Action programme had been used in Estonia and Latvia to develop practices for using indicators in the youth field.</td>
<td>Number of entries in google: Approx. 20 Academic publications in which the doc has been cited, Gazibara, Darko, Magdalena Jovanović, and Ana Ćorić Samardžija. &quot;Social Media Role in Communication Exchange of International Volunteer Experience.&quot; 24th Central European Conference on Information and Intelligent Systems. 2013; Morgan, Phillip. &quot;Recasting vicarious liability.&quot; The Cambridge Law Journal 71.03 (2012): 615-650.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DG EAC &quot;Volunteering in the European Union&quot; (2010)</td>
<td>The study found that in 2010 an estimated 100 million Europeans were engaged in voluntary activities, with wide variations in peoples' participation in volunteering across the EU.</td>
<td>Sources: ToRs, interviews (scoping, national and EU level ones), desk research and Internet searches</td>
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</tr>
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Those studies and datasets were known by policymakers but not by youth organisations. 73 % (91) of 125 country and EU level interviewees reported they knew of, or had used an EU-funded piece of research or study. When asked which ones, Eurobarometer surveys were the most cited134. The studies most cited by EU and national interviews were the 2013 Study on "Youth participation in democratic life and the Study on "The value of Youth Work in the EU". Other studies were also mentioned135. On the other hand, amongst youth organisations surveyed and which had participated in at least one EU activity, only about a third (30%, n=45)136 had indicated they had received, or used any EU-funded research/studies or Eurobarometer surveys on youth issues (including Council of Europe research/studies). Most had not (70%, n=157).

Evidence shows that those studies were often consulted in connection with other related EU activity. For example the 'Value of youth work' study was circulated and used within the Expert Group on Youth Work. Similarly the Study "Assessing practices for using indicators in fields related to youth” (2011) aimed to provide inputs for the

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134 Most cited ones are Eurobarometer surveys on "European Youth Participation on Democratic Life", the 2011 Eurobarometer survey on volunteering of young people, the Eurobarometer survey on Youth Guarantee and the one on the Quality of Traineeships.

135 As well as the Research-based Analysis and Monitoring of Erasmus+: Youth in Action Programme and a 2012 Eurofound's report on NEETs - Young people not in employment, education or training: Characteristics, costs and policy responses in Europe.

136 The percentage is calculated on the total respondent to this question (n=150).
development of the EU dashboard of youth indicators, and the work of the corresponding Expert Group.

Evidence on the actual use of those studies to inform decision and policy-making is scarce. Some interviewees mentioned the hard data provided was useful, e.g. the Study on the ‘Value of youth work’ and Eurobarometer surveys were reported as fundamental sources of information by a German official. Similarly the 2015 national youth report for the German community in Belgium reports that Special Decree of 20 January 2014 on the establishment of the centre for the healthy development of children and young people, drew on data from Eurobarometers and EU funded studies (as well as other reports published by the UNICEF, the WHO or the OECD).

Other officials (e.g. NL) reported their use of the evidence produced for benchmarking purposes or as ‘food for reflection’ (e.g. in case of best practices or on trends across the EU). Some Youth Councils (e.g. EE, HU) reported using the data for advocacy at national level, e.g. in Estonia in the frame of a campaign in favour of voting at the age of 16. In Hungary, findings from the Eurobarometer survey ‘European Youth: Participation (2013)’ were used to define national priorities. It also prompted them to adopt knowledge-based work in the future. In Slovenia, the Office for Youth reported regularly using data from Eurobarometer, Eurofund and Eurostat as well as the European Knowledge Centre on Youth Policy (EKCYP) reports to inform the preparation and implementation of the National Youth Programme for 2013-2022 and enrich the quality of monitoring and evaluation137.

Other interviewees (BEfr, BEde) mentioned that they were mainly interested in national data which EU studies could not provide them with. The French speaking community in Belgium for instance applies a specific definition of volunteering (Loi relative aux droits des volontaires – 3 juillet 2005) which does not allow a scientific comparison of data on volunteering from other countries. Some interviewees mentioned they lacked the time to properly exploit EU studies or prioritised national data.

Finally there is some evidence that, outside the formal cooperation structures, some stakeholders did not know where to find the data and studies.

Other research projects have been supported by the European Commission. They include:

- The CoE-Commission - EKCYP which aims at enhancing knowledge transfers between the fields of research, policy and practice through the collection and dissemination of information about youth policy, research and practice in Europe and beyond. Its main instrument is an on-line database intended to act as a single access point for the youth sector to access reliable knowledge and information about young people's situation across Europe. This database is updated by a network of national correspondents, youth policy specialists, who collected national data in the form of (1) country sheets on national youth policies, (2) thematic information on key youth policy topics, (3) comparative views on situations of young people. Good practices are also included in the database – they centre on successful projects, initiatives, and organisations in the field of youth policy at local, regional, and national level. The good practice database is intended to be used by administrations to learn from successful youth policy and practice by their counterparts. Finally, a glossary has also been produced to provide a shared definition of terms relating to European youth policy and youth work.

- CoE-Commission - Pool of European Youth Researchers (PEYR). It has been set up to promote better knowledge and understanding of young people in Europe; and support a knowledge-based youth policy.

137 Source: case study on Slovenia
• The RAY Network’ - Research-based Analysis and Monitoring of Erasmus+: Youth in Action Programme which aims to produce evidence to better understand processes and outcomes in youth work and non-formal education. It is implemented by a network of Erasmus+/Youth in Action National Agencies and their research partners currently in 29 countries (EU 28 and Turkey). It specifically analyses the effects of participation to projects funded by the Erasmus+ programme on young people, youth workers and youth leaders: development of lifelong competences, effects on youth groups, organisations, institutions, structures and communities involved in the programme etc. It does so notably by running, since 2009, two multilingual online questionnaires in 18 languages – one for project participants and one for project leaders/team members of YiA-funded projects. The network meets twice a year aimed to develop and coordinate research activities and their implementation.

Research produced by those networks were mentioned by some stakeholders consulted within this evaluation but evaluative information is limited overall.

**Mutual learning**

Mutual learning within the EU Youth QMC aimed for Member States to identify and learn from good practices in other countries in order to reach the commonly agreed objectives set within the EUYs. Member States initiated, or took part in, those mutual learning activities as per their interest in issues addressed. For instance the first European Youth Work Convention was initiated by the Belgium EU Presidency in July 2010. It was followed by a second one in April 2015 under Belgium’s Chairmanship of the Council of Europe.

Annex 5 presents a non-exhaustive table of issues discussed and outputs produced under this instrument. One of the main results of those activities have been building shared understandings of concepts and principles and reflect jointly on ways to work to reaching commonly agreed objectives under the EUYs, e.g. difficulties linked to cross-border volunteering. Youth stakeholders from some Member States (e.g. FR) indicated that being confronted to other practices through peer learning provided them with critical distance on their own ‘ways of work’, or provided them with knowledge with they later utilised when developing new youth policies or initiatives (e.g. CZ, FR, SI). For instance, within the IVO4All project (see IVO4All case study), FR, LU and LT were interested in learning about practices in countries (UK, IT) which had already worked on involving disadvantaged youth in cross border volunteering activities. Slovenian debates on youth have reportedly been influenced by the collections of good practices and such inputs have informed the development of Slovenian youth policies, such as the National Programme 2013-2022 (see SI case study).

Networking effects were also mentioned. The partners for the IVO4All projects were notably identified within the Expert Group on the mobility of young volunteers. Those in turn led to new initiatives. For example, the three InterCITY Conferences “European Peer Learning on Local Youth Policy”, from 2012 to 2014 led to the launch of InterCity Youth – a European Network of Local Departments for Youth Work (see InterCity Youth case study).

Youth organisations surveyed considered that “EU level or multilateral peer-learning or ‘good practice exchange’ activities, or seminars or conferences on youth issues” was the second type of activities which contributed the most to all of the effects.

138 “Other EU activities in the field of youth” were the third types of activities considered to have contributed the most to the effects listed in Figure 21 in the Annexes (Q5.a- Q5.j). More details on these activities have been provided in the open question answers Q3.m, answers to this question will be processed at a later stage.

139 After activities which supported policy reform in the youth field funded under the ‘Youth in action’ or the ‘Erasmus+’ funding programmes.”
listed in the survey (see Annex 9) (without any substantial variations across the effects and outcomes).

In some countries the work of EU Expert Groups whilst valuable, was not sufficiently disseminated to relevant stakeholders, notably at local level and could in some instance, rather be “kept within the walls of ministries”.

Time constraints to get the Expert Groups started and lack of clear mandates or working methods limited their effectiveness, according to some (see Efficiency section).

**Progress-reporting**

At the end of each three-year cycle of the EU Youth Strategy, EUMS are required to report on developments affecting their youth. Two such exercises occurred over the evaluation period: one in 2012 and the other in 2015. On the basis of those national reports, the Commission and the Council of the EU produce a joint EU Youth Report to evaluate the progress made towards the overall objectives of the renewed framework and to identify good practices. The 2012 EU Youth Report provided a political evaluation of the first cycle of the implementation of the EU Youth Strategy.\(^{140}\)

Several Member States reported that the exercise was useful to draw a clear picture of the situation of young people and developments in policies which affect young people. It provided a useful opportunity to consult other levels of government concerned with youth policy as well as the youth sector. This was especially useful in countries where the situation can vary from one municipality to another (e.g. DK, SE).

Some interviewees mentioned the national youth report and EU Youth Report allowed them to benchmark the situation in their country to that of other EU Member States.

This was reported as valuable by some countries as it stimulated discussions (e.g. BENL). Time constraints and the extensiveness of the exercise (see Efficiency section) limited its effectiveness however.

Some stakeholders reported that this could be followed up by stimulating mutual learning on Member States’ implementation approaches.\(^{141}\) A conference at mid-term of each three-year cycle could be organised where progress in and processes of the implementation of the EUYS could be presented.

**Dissemination of results**

This instrument aims at enhancing the visibility and impact of activities under the EUYS. The table below provides evidence of the effectiveness of some of the dissemination tools supported.

*Table 9. Evidence of effectiveness of some of the dissemination tools supported*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dissemination tool</th>
<th>Evaluative evidence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EU Youth website</td>
<td>64% (76) out of 118 national and EU level interviewees reported they knew or had used the EU Youth website. In most cases on an occasional basis only. Reported use was for collecting information on developments on EU policy or on funding programmes or particular initiatives, such as the EVS, or conferences, accessing policy documents and publications, etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


\(^{141}\) For example, a conference at mid-term of each three-year cycle where progress in and processes of implementation of the EU Youth Strategy could be presented.
Dissemination tool | Evaluative evidence
---|---

80% of Youth organisations surveyed, which have participated to at least one EU activity (total n=157) reported to use the youth Website occasionally or regularly (n=121).

**European Youth Portal**

Provides access to information on EU developments in the area of youth and also to the Volunteering Platform.

According to data provided by the European Commission, between 1 May 2013 and 31 December 2014, there were 2,496,071 visits, out of which 1,697,542 were unique visitors, and during which 17,099,453 pages were viewed. This amounts to roughly 10 pages viewed per unique visitor. In December 2014\(^{143}\), pages viewed mainly originated from 15 countries\(^{144}\).

66% (81) of 122 national and EU level interviewees reported they knew or had used the European Youth Portal. In most cases on an occasional basis only. Erasmus plus agencies and national youth councils use it comparatively more, and also when they are in touch with Eurodesk colleagues who are in charge of updating national pages. Reported use was for collecting information on Erasmus +, to gather updates on the structured dialogue or Youth Pass, or on mobility opportunities, especially news, also for ministerial briefings, prior to a conference on a youth topic, for EVS opportunities, or to download reports, to check news etc. limited time mentioned as an obstacle to use and EU issues given lower priority. Some stakeholders reported its improvement since its revamp in May 2013 but needs more regular updates.

80% of Youth organisations surveyed, which have participated to at least one EU activity (total n=157) reported to use the European Youth Portal occasionally or regularly (n=129). Less than half of survey respondents had heard of the European Youth Portal (n=707).

**Eurodesk network**

Dissemination of information on opportunities funded by the EU for young people.

The Eurodesk network, which manages the European Youth Portal and also provides information through complementary, offline, activities. It was however seldom used by youth organisations surveyed.

Less than half of survey respondents had heard of the Eurodesks (n=711).

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\(^{142}\) with Database of organisations accredited to run projects under European Voluntary Service (since 2014) and Database of Volunteering Opportunities (including transnational volunteering opportunities across Europe and beyond) (since 2015)

\(^{143}\) No other data is available.

\(^{144}\) Germany 12.8%; France 10.6%; Spain 10.5%; Turkey 8.9%; Italy 8.2%; Unknown 3.9%; Poland 3.7%; United Kingdom 3%; Luxembourg 2.7%; United States of America 2.5%; Hungary 2.4%; Russian Federation 2%; Austria 2%; Ukraine 1.8%; Belgium 1.6%. Based on European Commission statistics.
The European Year of Volunteering in 2011 launched to encourage and support volunteering across the EU, notably via the exchange of experience and good practices had a positive impact on the world of volunteering, both at European and at national level. [...] The European Year created and catalysed changes in the volunteering environment at European and national level and led to the adoption or modification of volunteering strategies and legislation in some Member States. It empowered organisers to improve quality, and to focus attention on areas such as corporate volunteering and volunteering as a non-formal learning experience. It increased the recognition of volunteering through a wide range of initiatives and raised awareness of volunteering and its value to society through the media and the European communication campaign. The national activities had a valuable multiplier effect for these EU-level activities.\(^\text{145}\)

"The target groups of the Year were reached only in part; information about the Year failed to reach many even in the volunteering sector, or reached them late in the Year.\(^\text{146}\). The individual strands of EYV 2011 were effective in raising awareness of volunteering, and of its value, both at European level and national level, among policymakers in many countries and at European level, within the sector, and to some – but significantly lesser - extent within the general public.\(^\text{146}\). The activities undertaken as part of EYV 2011 were overall effective in many respects in fulfilling its objectives, i.e. to: (1) work towards an enabling environment for volunteering in the EU, (2) empower organisers of voluntary activities to improve the quality of this kind of activities, (3) recognise voluntary activities, (4) raise awareness of the value and importance of volunteering.\(^\text{147}\)

Only 24% of young Europeans surveyed knew about activities organised within the 'European Year of Volunteering 2011' (24%, N=707).

Other dissemination tools and channels have been supported by the Commission, they are listed below. Evaluative information is however limited\(^\text{148}\).

- EU-CoE Youth Partnership web-site provides overview of the EU-CoE partnership, activities, knowledge dissemination and youth policies, publications and information on Expert Groups;


\(^{148}\) Only 29% of Young Europeans surveyed knew about events organised by the Council of Europe in the youth field (29%, N=698).
COYOTE magazine published annually within the EU-CoE Youth Partnership provides information on youth work issues for trainers, youth workers, researchers, policy makers;

“T-Kits” within the EU-CoE Youth Partnership;

Training-kits for youth organisations on a series of themes like volunteering, intercultural learning or conflict management;

Four publications showcasing best practice projects in the areas of youth participation, entrepreneurship, employment and volunteering.

4.5.2 Instruments with less visibility and influence

Monitoring of the process

Open Method of Coordination Processes initiated by the EUYS, in terms of progressing on youth policy, have been monitored at EU and national level via a series of activities and tools available.

A dashboard of youth policy indicators was developed by the European Commission, Member States, experts and stakeholders in 2011 in order to monitor changes in the situation of young people in interested Member States. The rationale for developing such a tool at EU level is presented in the 2011 Study “Assessing practices for using indicators in fields related to youth”: “once a common approach has been agreed at the EU level, it is often easier for policy makers at the national level to obtain the attention and resources necessary to implement a similar approach at the national level. [...] The EU could play a key role in improving the use of indicators at the national level, in terms of guiding the choice of indicators and helping to create a common understanding of what data collection is feasible”. The dashboard currently includes 41 indicators and is structured according to the strategy’s fields of action (4-5 indicators per field). It has been further developed in an Expert Group which has since suspended its activities.

In total, 42.6% (49) of 115 interviewees reported they knew or had used the EU dashboard of youth policy indicators. Amongst those who knew it - some were members of the Expert Group on youth indicators. Reported use was: “as a reference tool”, “to use the statistics”, “for reports”, to measure national policy and developments against other EU Member States, “to interpret youth report”, as a source of inspiration to reflect on the type of indicators needed at national level.

In total, 70% of youth organisations surveyed, which have participated in at least one EU activity (total n=157) reported to use the EU dashboard of youth policy indicators occasionally or regularly.

European Commission (2013) ‘Youth in Action: Focus on Young Citizens of Europe: European Good practice projects’ – Beginning with a foreword from the former commissioner for Education, culture, multilingualism and youth Androulla Vassiliou, this publication showcases 36 projects supported by the Youth in Action programme, in the form of Youth Exchanges, European Voluntary Service projects or training and networking projects for youth workers and youth organisations. It also provides information and statistics on the Youth in Action programme; European Commission (2013) ‘Youth in Action: Focus on young people and entrepreneurship: European good practice projects’ – With a foreword from the former commissioner for Education, culture, multilingualism and youth Androulla Vassiliou, this publication presents 36 projects funded by the Youth and Action programme supporting youth entrepreneurship projects; European Commission (2012) ‘Youth in Action: Focus on Youth employment European good practice projects’ – The report provides an overview of 36 European good practice projects and brief information on the Youth in action programme. European Commission (2012) ‘Youth in Action: Mobilising the potential of young Europeans: Youth volunteering’ – The report provides an overview of 7 European good practice projects in the area of youth volunteering and brief information on the Youth in action programme.
The dashboard has inspired the development of similar indicators at national level. For example, in France, the EU dashboard of indicators was a key source of inspiration for the design of a national dashboard for monitoring the situation of youth within the French ‘priorité jeunesse’ action plan\(^{150}\). The dashboard was reportedly adopted in France following participation to the related Expert Group.

Stakeholders in Poland, Slovenia and Hungary also indicated making use of the indicators when reflecting on policy. In Poland a comprehensive study on the situation of young people was conducted in 2011. It drew on close to all EU youth indicators\(^{151}\). In Slovenia, the EU youth indicators on youth were reportedly examined when preparing the National Youth Programme 2013-2022\(^{152}\).

Other activities and tools for monitoring and progress reporting include:

- The 2012 and 2015 EU Youth Reports,
- Discussions held in the Expert Groups
- Discussions held in the Council youth working parties,
- Meetings of the Directors-General for Youth (every six months).


\(^{151}\) Source: Fourth meeting of the Expert Group on EU Youth Indicators.

\(^{152}\) Source: Case study on Slovenia.
5 EU added value

This section presents findings on the extent to which action at EU level added value in addressing the objectives of the EU Youth Strategy and Council Recommendation, beyond what individual Member States could achieve on their own.

The evaluation found that the added value of the EUYS was determined by Member States’ pre-2010 level of alignment with what the EUYS promoted and their interest in the cooperation instruments’ available and in the topics addressed. In countries where alignment was already strong or where interest in cooperation was low, the added value of the EUYS was limited. National or other external factors were the main drivers of changes in the evaluation period and the EUYS was part of the broader policy landscape.

In countries where the EUYS was an important contributor to change, it added value by providing Member States with:

- Inspiration, knowledge and expertise (via exchange of good practices, data produced etc.);
- Leverage and legitimacy to make claims consistent with the EUYS, e.g. promoting youth work, participation, inclusion etc.;
- Opportunities and resources (incl. financial ones) to move towards the commonly-agreed objectives within the EU Youth OMC.

In turn this meant that in several EUMS, the EUYS had a catalyst effect and/or an accelerator effect.

The added value of the EUYS itself should be put in perspective with the result of ten years of cooperation in the field of youth and other influence mechanisms. As stated by one interviewee, the EUYS contributed to foster the development of a “youth policy” culture in the majority of EUMS.

The EU Youth Strategy did spur a number of long lasting effects in several Member States through the adoption of new frameworks and even legislations. It influenced the strengthening and clarifying of the framework for youth policy in those countries where it was further away from the EU Youth Strategy’s principles. Consultation structures were created, strategies adopted and certain laws, mostly in the field of volunteering, were revised.

5.1 EU Added Value in terms of strategic guidance and inspiration

The EUYS has been considered in a majority of EUMS as a reference document which set “minimum standards” or norms, and strategic objectives and approaches to adopt in youth policy and which Member States could adapt from e.g. BG, CY, CZ, NL. This has been more so important in countries which previously lacked those.

Several Member States indicated that it provided strategic guidance or orientation, notably through the fields of action and choice of priorities, e.g. in Cyprus the EU Work Plan for Youth for 2014 – 2015 “helped clarify and reinforce youth policy priorities at national level in Cyprus”. In the Czech Republic for example, during reflections on the Youth Policy in 2011-2, themes were grouped in accordance with the themes of the EUYS.\(^{153}\)

In terms of inspiration, it also provided Member States with the opportunity to compare national approaches and positions to those promoted at EU level and to those of other EUMS. This in turn allowed for the affirmation of national identities and the voicing of pluralism and different ideas, rather than leading to standardization effect. For countries with few other opportunities to learn, the EU Youth OMC filled the gap and provided much needed information on existing practices.

\(^{153}\) National youth report.
It specifically increased the visibility of topics such as participation or volunteering or of principles such as participation and cross-sectoral cooperation, which would not have received the same level attention in certain countries. The Ireland case study illustrates this: “Despite having a strong tradition regarding consultation with young people and children in particular\textsuperscript{154}, these consultations were not conducted on a systematic basis.\textsuperscript{155} Consultation depended on factors such as the willingness of Ministries and funding availability. In addition, consultations run in the past usually involved children up to 18 years, excluding those above this age. Interviewees therefore agreed that participation in the more systematic structured dialogue, as the one developed under the EU Youth Strategy, was a strong factor in enhancing this instrument at national level as well as making a more systematic use of it and extending consultations to youth up to 24 years”.\textsuperscript{156}

At EU level, the EUYS enabled opening the dialogue with other policy sectors at EU level. For example, information-exchange and meetings between Commission officers in charge of youth policy and their counterparts responsible for employment, health and research policies were often cited in interviews as an improvement to the previous period (2001-2009). Moreover, there is evidence that the Commission’s various services (employment, health, etc.) were involved in coordinating inputs for the EU Youth Report 2015\textsuperscript{157}. Nevertheless, more could be done for coordinating the work of different Commission Services (DG EMPL, DG JUST, DG EAC) in targeting young people\textsuperscript{158}.

5.2 EU Added Value in knowledge and expertise

Cooperation instruments also produced knowledge about young people and the youth sector to a different extent to what would have occurred in its absence. The Expert Groups, the studies and the mutual learning activities were mentioned as activities which supported the development of expertise at national level. Stakeholders reported that some studies filled a gap in terms of data or were used to complement data at national level. Others considered that they preferred to rely on national data sources as those suited their own definitions and concepts.

For example, the knowledge building and evidence-based policy-making instrument within the EU Youth OMC had some influence to the extent that in preparation to the National Youth Programme the Office for Youth (the main governmental body for youth in Slovenia), has included the use of Eurobarometer, as well as data from Eurofund and Eurostat. The Office for Youth reported regularly using EU supported tools such as the European Youth Portal, Eurodesks and EKCYP. These support a better understanding and implementation of the National Youth Programme, as well as enriching the quality of monitoring and evaluation. Additionally, when it comes to mutual learning, stakeholders from Slovenia have participated in all Expert Groups and peer learning exercises. Thus, through the processes of gathering knowledge and good practices from other Member States, Slovenian debates on youth have been influenced by the collections of good practice lessons and such inputs have been important for the development of Slovenian youth policies (see SI case study).

5.3 EU Added Value in terms of leverage and legitimacy

As indicated under section 4, the EUYS was used as a process which strengthened existing strategic choices in a number of countries. It thus provided further grounding to national or local intentions and thus further legitimacy, as aspirations at both levels

\textsuperscript{154} Interviewees 2 and 3
\textsuperscript{155} Interviewee 1 and 3
\textsuperscript{156} Interviewee 2.
\textsuperscript{157} Source: interviews with officials from DG EMPL, DG SANTE, DG RTD.
\textsuperscript{158} For example, it was reported that the work done by the Commission in the justice and home affairs sector concerning discrimination of youth and inclusion of young migrants could be better linked to the EU youth policy.
could be reinforced (e.g. FR, BEfr). In several countries, the EUYS was mentioned as a reference point in political declarations or in strategic documents e.g. support to the structured dialogue and also when deciding on actions to be funded under Erasmus +. In countries where alignment did not exist, the EUYS gave certain actors (ministries or youth organisations) ‘political’ backing to push for certain issues or approaches. In some countries, in the absence of the EUYS, national processes to develop or reform national strategies and initiatives would not have started at the time they did.

Lagging behind what the EU promotes has more or less political weight across EUMS (e.g. CZ, EE, RO) but generally has at least some political weight and provides an incentive to move towards commonly-agreed objectives. In this sense the EU Youth OMC also provided ‘peer pressure’, - for example, Romania recognised that many EU countries had a law on volunteering, and that also provided another reason to move ahead. The Portuguese case study showed that the 2015 elections could lead to a move away from transversal youth policies and youth consultations for identifying new priorities and that the EU Youth OMC will be useful to remind all actors of the importance of those principles.

In both categories of countries (those previously more or less aligned with the EUYS and those not as much), the EU Youth OMC, when used, served as a catalyst or as an accelerator. Some Member States (e.g. AT, BG, RO) indicated that reform processes would have occurred but at a much slower pace. This is especially true in a period marked by the economic crisis and political agendas fixated on unemployment and cuts in public finances.

5.4 EU Added Value in terms of opportunities and resources

Opportunities and resources were provided via the cooperation instruments available. They provided more or less added value according to their effectiveness and visibility and also the interest EUMS had in using them. For example, German policy makers at Federal and Länder level identified the potential benefit of the EUYS in terms of improving youth policy and practice and learning from other Member States. As a result, a Transfer Agency was set up to support Länder and the Federal government in their implementation of the EU Youth Strategy so as to best incorporate their own practices and make use of the information shared by other Länder and other Member States – in a nutshell, to facilitate the transfer of youth policy initiatives between Germany and Europe. The representatives of all Ministers of youth and family in Germany, including of the Länder, formalised several practices to make best use of, and contribute to, the implementation of the EU Youth Strategy, including an ‘OMC’ amongst the Länder, peer-learning activities and intensified trans-regional cooperation. The potential benefits to be gained from peer learning – both amongst Länder and with other EUMS - have been identified, in interviews and reports, as the most important benefit of the EU Youth Strategy to Germany and thereby constituted an impetus to the setup of the Agency. Potential benefits of such events that have been mentioned, include learning from examples of new activities or interventions used to support young people, but also to learn from how other organisations organise their processes, especially in regards to reaching a specific target group (such as migrants). Additionally, by taking the time to listen and learn from peers, it provides the opportunity for reflection on how things are done by the participants and the organisations themselves (see DE case study).

Amongst the instruments and resources available:

- The Structured Dialogue had the most added value in countries where youth participation in policy making processes had been weak or lacked structure, e.g.

159 The Agency was intended to act as mediator between multiple levels: federal and state policy-makers, state and regional actors, and both Federal and Länder actors with EU actors. It was tasked to not only “bring in” information and good practices from EU level, but also to transfer good practices within Germany and from Germany to the EU level.
in Central and Eastern European and Southern Countries. For example in Hungary, the practice of Structured Dialogue inspired the creation of the legal background that involves regular consultation with young people and their involvement in decision-making, as well as securing financial support for the sustainability of the structured dialogue process and increasing the number of young people participating\textsuperscript{160}. While consultation mechanisms already existed in Member States in Northern Europe or in UK, Ireland and Germany, the Structured Dialogue under the EUYS reached out to a wider range of stakeholders and was more structured.

- Peer learning seminars were reported as the mutual learning activity with the most added value, allowing participants to share best practices according to a rigorous method. Expert Groups, whilst advancing discussions on certain topics, were seen as sometimes lack efficiency (in terms of length of processes and dissemination of results).

- The added value of the 2012 and 2015 reporting exercise was to foster cooperation between actors at national and local level, between various ministries and agencies involved in youth issues or between umbrella youth organisation and youth representatives for the data collection and report validation process. Some countries reported it had been an opportunity to reflect on their progress and further developments. In the absence of the Strategy, several interviewees indicated that a similar exercise would not have been undertaken at national level or would not have led to the same amount of data collected.

- Amongst “Dissemination of results” activities and tools, the evaluation found that the EU Year of Volunteering in 2011 provided the strongest added value in terms of catalysing changes in the field of volunteering, both at European and national level in a way that would not have occurred, in the absence of the EUYS. National youth information websites were in some countries preferred to the European Youth Portal or EU Youth website, nevertheless recognised as useful sources of information, especially for the EVS and Structured Dialogue. For example, in Slovenia, dissemination processes (of EU level information) have been transposed into the National Youth Programme 2013-2022 (see case study).

The evaluation collected examples of opportunities and resources created by the EU Youth OMC which likely would not have occurred otherwise. The case study on the InterCity network shows for example that whilst the idea of forming the network of municipal actors active in youth work came from the field (one municipality), EU initiatives created an enabling environment for the idea to mature and draw interest from municipalities. Support to cross-border volunteering mobility would also not have been addressed to the same level, in the absence of the EUYS.

Funding via the Youth in Action and Erasmus + funds enabled opportunities which would not have been possible otherwise. Several interviewees indicated that these additional funds made a crucial difference in the way the EU Strategy was implemented at national level, both in terms of quality and quantity.

\textsuperscript{160} See Case Study on Hungary.
6 Efficiency

The evaluation examined the extent to which the instruments, structures, processes and other activities put in place at EU and national level in the context of the EU Youth Strategy/Recommendation proved efficient, non-burdensome and cost-effective for their implementation.

Based on the evidence gathered, the evaluation found that the costs of OMC in the youth field were overall reasonable in relation to results it contributed to: expertise and tools accessed, inspiration provided, effects on policy re-orientations.

Resources allocated to EU cooperation activities in the youth field are generally small. Nonetheless, even with a relatively low budget, the EU youth cooperation was successful in triggering changes at national and organisational level. The budget is however spread across a large number of activities covering many fields of action, which means that is often being spread thinly.

Nevertheless some obstacles to efficiency have also been identified in the course of the evaluation, e.g. limited resources at national level to take full advantage of EU cooperation structures; inefficiencies related to certain specific instruments or activities.

6.1 Budget committed to EU level activities implemented under the EYUS

The table below presents the budget committed to three of the seven cooperation instruments over the period 2010-4. The data presented has been provided by the European Commission. It shows that:

- 3.7 million euros (EUR 3,686,759) were committed to the activities “Support to activities to bring about better knowledge of the youth field” and “Cooperation with the Council of Europe” under the instrument “Knowledge building and evidence-based policy making” over the period 2010-4.

  The majority of this funding was committed to the cooperation with the Council of Europe. The average annual budget committed to this over the period 2010-4 was of EUR 575,000.

  Funding was also committed to studies commissioned by DG EAC, presented under section 4.5. The studies’ budgets are in line with budgets of other parts of the Commission (for example other parts of DG EAC or DG Employment).

- 1.6 million euros (EUR 1,583,807) were committed to running the European Youth Portal over the period 2010-4, as part of the instrument “Dissemination of results”. This amounts to an annual average of EUR 316,761. This task is conducted by Eurodesks161.

- Over the period 2010-4, 4 million euros (EUR 4,131,142) were committed to “Meetings of young people and those responsible for youth policy – Youth conferences”, “European Youth Weeks” (in 2011 and 2013), and to grants to support national working groups (available from 2014, following the reform of the Structured Dialogue), as part of the instrument “Consultation and Structured Dialogue”. The average annual budget committed over the period 2010-4 to “Meetings of young people and those responsible for youth policy” was of EUR 468,846.

- Under the “Mutual learning” instrument, the annual budget committed, over the period 2010-4, to Expert Group meetings varied from EUR 14,350 to EUR

161 Funding committed to Eurodesks’ other policy-related activities could not be established within the total funding committed to it and has therefore not been included in this report. Indeed an important part of the Eurodesks’ role is related to providing information on opportunities under Erasmus+ or other EU programmes, and so outside of the EU Youth OMC.
38,000, depending on the size of the group since budget mostly covered the costs for travel and accommodation of experts\textsuperscript{162}.

Additional information on human resources costs, provided by the European Commission, shows that:

- Under the instrument “Progress-reporting” approx. EUR 60,000\textsuperscript{163} were spent on human resources at EU level – both in the Commission and in the Executive Agency – for the preparation of the EU Youth Report 2012. Data on funds spent at Member State level on the EU Youth Report 2012 was not available.

- Under the “Monitoring of the process” instrument, approx. EUR 70,000\textsuperscript{164} were spent on human resources at EU level – both in the Commission and in the Executive Agency – in 2010 and 2011 around the setting up of the dashboard of EU youth indicators and the production of the related Staff Working Document, as well as the preparation of the annual meetings of the Expert Group.

\textsuperscript{162} Calculated based on the number of meetings and experts per Expert Group in 2010-2014, as per information available.

\textsuperscript{163} Figures reflect EU human resources costs only, based on the following estimates: mobilisation, for 6 months for the 2012 Youth report, of 1 full time European Commission employee (FTE) and 1 FTE at the EACEA, working on an average salary of Eur 5,000.

\textsuperscript{164} Figures reflect human resources costs associated to EU staff’s (only) work conducted in 2010 and 2011 on the setting up of the EU Dashboard of youth indicators and the production of a related Staff working Document, and on the annual Expert group meetings in 2012 and 2013, ie. 3 months FTE for the European Commission and 3 months FTE for EACEA.
Table 10. **Budget (EUR.) committed to three of the seven cooperation instruments under Youth in Action (2010-3) and Erasmus+ (2014)**\(^{165}\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge building and evidence-based policy making</td>
<td>Support to activities to bring about better knowledge of the youth field</td>
<td>543,788</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>155,721</td>
<td>112,250</td>
<td>811,759</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cooperation with the Council of Europe</td>
<td>625,000</td>
<td>600,000</td>
<td>600,000</td>
<td>600,000</td>
<td>450,000</td>
<td>2,875,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Knowledge building and evidence-based policy making</strong></td>
<td>1,168,788</td>
<td>600,000</td>
<td>600,000</td>
<td>755,721</td>
<td>562,250</td>
<td>3,686,759</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dissemination of results</td>
<td>European Youth Portal(^{166})</td>
<td>86,775</td>
<td>150,342</td>
<td>376,784</td>
<td>596,320</td>
<td>373,586</td>
<td>1,583,807</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consultations and Structured Dialogue (SD) with youth</td>
<td>Meetings of young people and those responsible for youth policy – Youth conferences</td>
<td>500,000</td>
<td>477,000</td>
<td>483,000</td>
<td>474,000</td>
<td>410,230</td>
<td>2,344,230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>European Youth Weeks</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>238,527</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>515,385</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>753,912</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Grants to support national working groups(^{167})</td>
<td>na</td>
<td>na</td>
<td>na</td>
<td>na</td>
<td>1,033,000</td>
<td>1,033,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Consultation and Structured Dialogue</strong></td>
<td>500,000</td>
<td>715,527</td>
<td>483,000</td>
<td>989,385</td>
<td>1,443,230</td>
<td>4,131,142</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mutual Learning</td>
<td>Expert Group on mobility of young volunteers</td>
<td>32,500</td>
<td>32,500</td>
<td>27,000</td>
<td>27,000</td>
<td>na</td>
<td>119,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Expert Group on EU youth indicators</td>
<td>38,000</td>
<td>17,100</td>
<td>17,100</td>
<td>14,350</td>
<td>14,350</td>
<td>100,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Expert Group on quality of youth work</td>
<td>na</td>
<td>na</td>
<td>na</td>
<td>na</td>
<td>29,200</td>
<td>29,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Mutual Learning</strong>(^{168})</td>
<td>70,500</td>
<td>49,600</td>
<td>44,100</td>
<td>41,350</td>
<td>43,550</td>
<td>249,100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{165}\) Data provided by the European Commission to ICF in November and December 2015.

\(^{166}\) Figures for the Youth portal include budget committed under the Youth in Action programme as well as budget committed under a separate administrative line which complements it for the technical part mostly.

\(^{167}\) New action from 2014 onwards to support to National working Groups, following the reform of the Structured Dialogue.

\(^{168}\) Calculated based on the number of meetings and experts per Expert Group in 2010-2014, as per information available.
This data provides an indication of funds needed to make the EU Youth OMC run. Funds at national or local level needed to participate in the cooperation framework and to use results (dashboard of indicators, studies, other data produced etc.) also needs adding to provide a full picture. This element has been drawn from stakeholders’ feedback.

The majority of the 250 European youth organisations surveyed agreed that the cost (e.g. in terms of human resources, time spent, other resources needed) of participation in all EU activities was reasonable in relation to results/effects produced\(^\text{169}\), as illustrated in Figure 22 below.

**Figure 22. Youth organisations’ views on the reasonableness of costs of participation to EU activities in relation to results/effects produced**

![Figure 22](image)

Overall and considering the outputs and results identified under the Effectiveness section, the evaluation shows that the EUYS was cost effective overall.

### 6.2 Comparison to other OMCs

Data on funding committed to activities implemented under the ET 2020 and Employment OMCs but which are comparable to those which exist under the Youth OMC, have been collected for comparative purposes. The data is presented in the table below.

\(^{169}\) It is important to acknowledge that as the efficiency of specific activities was tested with Youth organisations that took part to those, the level of participation deeply impact the comparability between activities.
A comparison is limited by the fact that activities used for comparison are not fully comparable in terms of their scope, objectives etc. For example, the activities grouped under “Collection of evidence” under ET2020\textsuperscript{170} and under “Policy evidence\textsuperscript{171}”, under the Employment OMC, are more numerous that those under “knowledge building and evidence-based policy making” under the Youth OMC. This is also reflected in the size of the 2014 commitments. This is also the case for commitments to “Consultations and Structured Dialogue”. The data presented thus reflects the larger size of OMCs in the field of education and of employment and detailed comparisons are not possible.

\textit{Table 11. Comparative data from the ET 2020 and Employment OMC - 2014 planned commitments in EUR\textsuperscript{172}}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instrument (under EUYS)</th>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>EUYS</th>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>ET2020</th>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Employment OMC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge building and evidence-based policy making</td>
<td>Support to activities to bring about better knowledge of the youth field</td>
<td>112,250</td>
<td>Collection of evidence</td>
<td>16,210,000</td>
<td>Policy evidence</td>
<td>16,260,279</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cooperation with the Council of Europe</td>
<td>450,000</td>
<td>Cooperation with international organisations - Council of Europe</td>
<td>1,600,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Knowledge building and evidence-based policy making</td>
<td></td>
<td>562,250</td>
<td>Total ET2020</td>
<td>17,810,000</td>
<td>Total Employment OMC</td>
<td>16,260,279</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consultations and Structured Dialogue (SD) with young people and youth organisation</td>
<td>Meetings of young people and those responsible for youth policy – Youth</td>
<td>410,230</td>
<td>Policy-related and policy dialogue conferences \textsuperscript{173}</td>
<td>2,700,000</td>
<td></td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{170} It includes: Eurydice network (€2,550,000); European Survey on Language Competences (€2,000,000); VET:ReferNet (€1,200,000); Country-specific expertise: network of national experts in Member States (€1,000,000); Commission’s Joint Research Centre (JRC) Administrative arrangements (€1,700,000); Survey - ICCS (€1,060,000); Survey - ICILS (€300,000); Studies (€3,500,000); Expertise on E&T (€2,500,000); Academic networks (EENEE, NESET) (€400,000)

\textsuperscript{171} This includes: Studies and analyses; Periodicals; Other publications; European Employment Policy Observatory (EEPO); Classification of European Skills, Competences, Qualifications and Occupations – ESCO; EU skills Panorama; European Social Policy Network (ESPN); Development of Electronic Exchange of Social Security Information (EESSI); Eurobarometer; Cooperation with the Council of Europe; Mutual Information System on Social Protection (MISSOC), coordinated by ESPN; EUROMOD; Collection of data, development of statistical tools; Eurobarometer; European Labour Law Network; Cooperation with OECD; EU Survey on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC); EURES Job Mobility Portal; Evaluations

\textsuperscript{172} ET2020 data: 2014 annual work programme for the implementation of "Erasmus+", the Union Programme for Education, Training, Youth and Sport C(2013)8193 of 27 November 2013 \url{http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/more_info/awp/docs/c_2013_8193.pdf}


\textsuperscript{173} incl. Erasmus+ annual conference and pilot initiatives
### 6.3 Efficiency issues related to the cooperation instruments

Figure 23 below presents the most commonly reported obstacles to the implementation of the EUYS.

*Figure 23. Frequency of reported obstacles to implementation of EU Youth Strategy*[^175]  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Obstacles</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack of financial resources</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of human (and time) resources</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of political will / support</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus on other priorities (at national level)</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High administrative burden (in relation to the EUYS)</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of collaboration between policy and finance</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of clarity about how participation will take place</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Little focus on involving the local level</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulties to get young people involved</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus on refugee / migrants’ crisis can...</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repetition of topics addressed at EU level</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government change (elections)</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus on other priorities (at national level)</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of human (and time) resources</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of political will / support</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus on other priorities (at national level)</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High administrative burden (in relation to the EUYS)</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of collaboration between policy and finance</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of clarity about how participation will take place</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Little focus on involving the local level</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulties to get young people involved</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus on refugee / migrants’ crisis can...</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repetition of topics addressed at EU level</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government change (elections)</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus on other priorities (at national level)</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of human (and time) resources</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of political will / support</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus on other priorities (at national level)</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High administrative burden (in relation to the EUYS)</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of collaboration between policy and finance</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of clarity about how participation will take place</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Little focus on involving the local level</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulties to get young people involved</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus on refugee / migrants’ crisis can...</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repetition of topics addressed at EU level</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government change (elections)</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: ICF analysis based on the 136 interviews conducted at national and EU levels*

Due to the large scope of the EUYS, key youth stakeholders at national level (ministries, national youth council) could not systematically follow progress in all

[^174]: None in 2014.

[^175]: Other refers to: Soft law not strong enough (DK, NL), Lack of knowledge on the topic (DK), Lack of funding for youth from Eastern neighbouring countries (EE), Prominence of national process over EU process (DE), Not clear at what level initiatives shall be taken (LV), Difficulties in cross-sectoral cooperation (PT), Lack of leadership among young people (SK), Lack of trust in EU institutions among youth (SI), Increased focus and funding in Erasmus+ on formal learning at the expense of non-formal learning (PT), Political constraints on who would be involved the profile of participants will be an obstacle (EU-level), Time pressure to deliver results (FI)
instruments or fields of action, e.g. keep up-to-date about produced documents (studies, reports, Presidency Recommendations and Conclusions, Expert Groups documents, etc.). This is especially true in the case of smaller youth administrations, which tended to focus on their involvement in the EU activities related to youth employment (i.e. peer-learning conferences on the EU Youth Guarantee).

The lack of human resources is closely linked to the limited financial resources available for Member States’ participation in the EU youth cooperation framework. This equally affects youth organisations’ involvement.

The third most often reported obstacle was the lack of political will or support for youth policy. In many countries, youth policy is still considered to rank low on the national agenda. In some cases, political support for developing youth policy in a country depends on the commitment assumed by some individual actors within the Ministry or civil society organisations. High turnover in organisations and political changes (i.e. elections) has also hindered efforts.

Expert Groups whose mandates and objectives were not sufficiently clear from the onset, participants which were not always the most relevant or representative (e.g. researchers, representatives of ministries, youth organisations, youth activists) although others considered that diversity was a source of enrichment; differences in level of commitment; language barriers.

Additional evidence gathered shows that the organisation of the Structured Dialogue or of cross-sectorial cooperation at national level was a challenging and time-consuming process. This was more of a challenge in decentralised countries or where support mechanisms were not already in place (e.g.: PL, RO). Several stakeholders also indicated that the results of Structured Dialogue which were not always reflected in decision-making at national or EU level etc. The progress reporting exercises were also widely considered as complex and time consuming (to pull required data). This exercise, especially the 2015 one, was found to be the most burdensome. In some countries, inputs from the youth sector was considered as insufficient or insufficiently reflected.

Related to this issue or representativeness, financial resources allocated to reach out to an important share of youth at national level, or young people usually outside the youth sector, were broadly considered as insufficient.

Finally, the results of some of the cooperation instruments were not sufficiently disseminated to relevant stakeholders, including at local level, on account of lack of incentives or resources at national level to do so. For example the results of peer learning activities could be made available beyond the immediate participants (e.g. National agencies for Youth in Action / Erasmus+, other youth actors, etc.). Posting on the European Youth Portal is sometimes not sufficient and national multipliers would help.

6.4 Efficiency issues related to the Council Recommendation

A number of obstacles particular to the volunteering field were cited in interviews:

- Application procedures for cross-border volunteering getting more difficult (in Erasmus+ EVS as well as in other programmes)\(^{176}\);
- Visa regulations becoming stricter in the aftermath of the migration and refugee crisis\(^{177}\);
- Negative attitudes emerging in society with regards to people coming from other countries, including volunteers\(^{178}\);

\(^{176}\) Reported in interviews with stakeholders in Estonia, Sweden and Lithuania.
\(^{177}\) Reported in interviews with stakeholders in Estonia, Sweden and Lithuania and the UK.
\(^{178}\) Reported in interviews with stakeholders in Estonia and Sweden.
• Given the migration crisis, the volunteering field is becoming more complex and generates intense debates in some countries\textsuperscript{179};

• Fear of reducing the budget of Erasmus+ programme dedicated to non-formal learning and volunteering projects compared to the formal learning activities\textsuperscript{180}.

Evidence shows also that more could have been done to support the following aspects in particular, some of which were included in the Council Recommendation:

• Quality in ‘volunteer management’, e.g. by ensuring sufficient training, capacity-building and funding for volunteering organisations to improve the quality systems of managing volunteers;

• Information and dissemination activities on cross-border volunteering opportunities as well as the rights and responsibilities of the volunteers disseminated amongst universities as well as those working with youth (i.e. local authorities, youth workers, etc.). The European Volunteering Platform online has since recently been developed\textsuperscript{181};

• Making volunteering mobility more accessible to young people with fewer opportunities (e.g. NEETs, those from rural areas, with disabilities etc.)

• Reducing barriers to volunteering mobility, notably visa applications; linguistic support; insurance and protection for volunteers abroad.

• Simplifying the application process for cross-border volunteering projects.

\textsuperscript{179} Reported in interviews with stakeholders in Italy and Estonia.
\textsuperscript{180} Reported in interviews with stakeholders in Estonia, Italy and Portugal.
\textsuperscript{181} https://europa.eu/youth/volunteering/evs-organisation_en
7   Sustainability

The evaluation examined the extent to which the implementing tools are regarded as sustainable and thus apt to continue facilitating the implementation of the EU Youth Strategy/ Recommendation.

The evaluation found that the EU Youth Strategy’s structures, processes and instruments are overall sustainable both directly and indirectly through the sustainability of the national youth laws, strategies and policies it inspired. However, to continue facilitating in an optimal way the EU cooperation in the youth field, the framework needs to be refreshed by refining some of the implementation instruments. In the long-term, there is wide interest among Member States to continue the EU cooperation in the youth field. This also applied to continuing their involvement in cross-border volunteering opportunities and implementing the action lines described in the Council Recommendation on the Mobility of Young Volunteers.

Countries’ starting point today is different to the period when the strategy was adopted as youth policies have moved forward. As this initial creation of initial conditions for youth policy was achieved, the next stage of the youth cooperation at EU level will need to target other types of developments. It should aim to add value by offering new inspiration also for those countries which were already aligned with the EU Youth Strategy’s principles and objectives in the previous period. This means that some Member States are likely to have more needs and interest in cooperation than others, and cooperation on some issues may also be limited by national particularities in relation to certain youth principles and definitions.

7.1   Interest and resources at national level to continue taking part in activities of the EUYS

The evaluation found that there is strong willingness amongst EUMS in continuing their participation in cooperation activities in the framework of the EUYS over the next cycle in the 2016-2018 period. The sustained high interest in EU youth cooperation is shared among youth policy-makers (i.e. Youth Ministries interviewed), implementing bodies (i.e. National Agencies that implement the Erasmus+ youth chapter) and youth organisations (i.e. National Youth Councils and EU federations of youth organisations interviewed). Out of 136 stakeholders interviewed at Member State level as well as at EU level, a vast majority of 115 (84.6%) expressed strong interest in continuing participation in the EU youth cooperation framework\(^ {182}\). Only 3 interviewees (2.2%) have indicated reluctance to continue their involvement\(^ {183}\) while another 3 (2.2%) have stated that their participation would depend on the focus of the EU cooperation in terms of alignment or not to national priorities.

In addition to the strong interest in place, most interviewees mentioned that they also have the resources necessary to continue their participation in youth cooperation activities. Among those 115 stakeholders who wish to continue being involved in the EU youth cooperation framework, most plan to continue their participation at the same level of commitment as until now (i.e. ‘we will continue doing what we did until this moment’). However, some indicated that they wish to enhance their participation, if their capacity (human and financial resources) allows it. For example, a youth policy-maker from one large EU country shared their intention to engage more intensively so as to create more synergies between the EUYS and their national youth strategy and to better reach out to young people. Some other countries feel better prepared and having more to offer in the EU youth cooperation than compared to the previous

\(^ {182}\) 15 stakeholders (11% of total interviews) have not commented on the subject, mostly because they thought it was not applicable to them, such as in the case of local or cross-border volunteering organisations.

\(^ {183}\) Reasons cited are: the changes in the Erasmus+ programme compared to Youth in Action (lack of youth initiatives action line), limited financial resources or change of institution in charge of Erasmus+ implementation.
period, due to the recent adoption of their own national youth strategies, which motivates them to share their experiences and learn collaboratively to maximise implementation results. Some National Youth Councils also reported plans to build up resources to contribute more to the youth cooperation framework. Some National Agencies have also expressed interest in becoming more involved in the future work under the EU Youth Strategy, such as by transferring policy priorities to local level through Erasmus+ projects and feeding back to policy-makers trends and lessons learnt from projects on the ground.

Table 12 below shows an overview of the areas in which interest in future youth cooperation activities is the highest amongst policy-makers, practitioners and youth stakeholders consulted within this evaluation. Not surprisingly, these findings correspond to the different strengths of continued relevance of the eight fields of action, presented under the relevance and coherence section. These findings also reflect the top three areas in which young Europeans have the highest interest: employment and entrepreneurship, education and training and participation.

Table 12. Areas in which stakeholders interviewed at national level reported highest interest for future cooperation activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Field of action</th>
<th>Countries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employment and entrepreneurship</td>
<td>AT, BG, CY, DK, EL, ES, DE, HU, IE, IT, LT, PL, PT, RO, SE, SI, SK, UK (18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education and training</td>
<td>AT, BE-de, BG, CY, DK, EL, DE, HR, IE, IT, LV, MT, SK (13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social inclusion</td>
<td>EE, FI, DE, HR, HU, IE, LT, LV, MT, NL, PL, PT, SE, UK (15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>BE-de, BE-nl, CY, CZ, DK, EL, FI, FR, DE, HR, HU, IE, LT, LV, NL, RO, SI (17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voluntary activities</td>
<td>BE-fr, CY, CZ, FR, RO, SK (6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health and well-being</td>
<td>BE-de, IT, NL, SE, UK (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth work</td>
<td>EE, LV, MT, SI (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture and creativity</td>
<td>– (0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth and the world</td>
<td>FI (1)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: ICF

Overall, there is a broad consensus among the stakeholders interviewed that there should be a EUYS for the post-2018 period. The reasons mentioned recurrently in national and EU-level interviews as well as in the young Europeans’ survey are the following:

- Youth issues are still high on the EU and national agendas and, in most countries, even increased in the last five years. It is therefore still relevant to continue having a strategy to address young people’s problems at EU level.
- Policies with a specific approach for young people have a long tradition and history. Yet, the EUYS is a relatively new project, which still needs time to develop and mature.

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184 Survey of young Europeans shows that 77% (N=422) of respondents considered ‘education’ as a very relevant areas and attributed a score of ‘1 to 3’ to it, followed by ‘employment’ (47%) and ‘participation’ (40%).

185 Open-ended question in interviews, with more than one possible answer. Stakeholders interviewed were Ministries for Youth, National Agencies, National Youth Councils, cross-border volunteering organisations etc.
• Some of the current problems and challenges faced by young people will most likely continue on a mid- to long-term (i.e. the need for better validation of non-formal learning outcomes, better social inclusion of NEETs, etc.).

• Young people\textsuperscript{186} have been among the hardest hit by the crisis and support to access education and employment opportunities and rights is relevant in this context and also to invest in the future of Europe.

• There are still some existing and emerging challenges that can be better addressed at EU level: i.e. volunteering mobility, learning (incl. non-formal) mobility, participation of youth in democratic life of Europe, combatting the radicalisation of young people, etc.

• Some EUMS claim that without an EU Youth Strategy, youth work initiatives would lose support (political and financial) in some countries; this is because the activities under the EUYS can help Youth Ministries push youth issues forward on the Member State’s agenda.

• Through the youth chapter of the Erasmus+ programme (2014-2020), EU financing for the implementation of the EU cooperation in the youth field has been secured until 2020. The existence of the funding programme is an argument to support continuation of a post-2018 EU Youth Strategy, in order to offer a vision at policy-level to all the youth actions budgeted through the Erasmus+.

There is interest in continuing the OMC in the youth field also because there are sustainable effects to build on, given the results already produced. For example, the EU Youth Strategy's sustainability is reflected in the long-term changes it inspired at EU and national level. As discussed in section 4, in a number of countries, the framework provided by the EUYS has inspired development of national youth strategies, youth laws and youth policies. These types of changes are, in most cases, sustainable (i.e. most countries which previously had a national youth strategy continued with a new strategy for the present and upcoming period). However, a caveat should be added as this is subject to continued political support and allocation of resources / funding to continue the implementation of the Strategy.

Moreover, the EUYS was an impetus for several Member States to set up new governance structures to improve the promotion and/or implementation of youth policy and, in this way, to lead to sustainable change (i.e. National Working Groups for the implementation of the structured dialogue were set up in all 28 EUMS). An example in this regard is the setup of the Service Agency for the Implementation of the EUYS in Germany and Transfer Agency for Youth Policy Cooperation between Germany and the EU. As shown in the German case study, this structure was set up specifically to create bridges between the EU Youth OMC and youth policy at Land and federal levels.

EUYS also supported the institutionalisation of a cross-sectoral approach to youth policy in several Member States (e.g. CZ, HU, LT, PT\textsuperscript{187}). By encouraging a holistic approach to youth policy and the mainstreaming of a youth focus in other policy fields, the EUYS supported Member States efforts to create or improve cross-sectorial cooperation mechanisms at national level. According to the 2015 EU Youth Report 2015, nearly all Member States\textsuperscript{188} now have institutionalised mechanisms to ensure a

\textsuperscript{186} This is a summary of the answers of the young Europeans surveyed when asked why the top 3 future priorities of the EU are important to them. Open-ended question 6k, N between 363 and 420.

\textsuperscript{187} The 2012 EU Youth Report refers to inter-ministerial Conference on Youth in the French community of Belgium, the Youth advisory body in the Czech Republic and the Council of Youth Affairs in Lithuania, among others.

\textsuperscript{188} With the exception of Cyprus and Denmark, all Member States seem to have an institutional mechanism for ensuring a cross-sectoral approach to youth policy.
cross-sectoral approach to youth policy, such as inter-departmental structures and regular inter-ministerial meetings. An example of the sustainability of these structures is the mechanism in Portugal for inter-governmental monitoring, on a monthly basis, on actions relevant to young people.

7.2 Sustainability of implementation instruments

Concerning the implementation instruments, they are generally considered as sustainable and thus apt to continue facilitating the implementation of the EUYS. However, some instruments are likely to be more sustainable than others, reflecting how well established and used they are. For example, Structured Dialogue is largely considered as the most sustainable instrument as it has led to the establishment of more or less permanent structures and processes of youth participation in EUMS. On the other hand, it may make less sense to maintain some of the dissemination activities or tools which have been the least used or had the least impact. Examples of the sustainability of the implementation instruments have been collected from EU and national-level interviews and are presented below.

Knowledge-building and evidence-based youth policy

While EU-funded studies on youth issues seem to be little known among youth organisations unaware of the EUYS (only 18% of those surveyed knew about EU-funded studies\(^\text{189}\)), they are considered to be useful for those who are aware of them\(^\text{190}\). This is also true for policy-makers who reported to make regular use of data from Eurostat, Eurobarometer and EU studies in order to get a better understanding of the situation of young people and thus make their youth policy efforts more evidence-based. For example, in Slovenia\(^\text{191}\), findings from Eurobarometer and EKCYP youth research as well as data from Eurofund and Eurostat was used to draft an evidence-based National Youth Programme. The majority of the stakeholders consulted showed interest in maintaining the knowledge-building instrument.

Mutual learning

Mutual learning is seen as a very useful and relevant instrument for inspiring uptake of good practices amongst Member States. Some peer-learning events led for example to the launch of several EU level networks of youth stakeholders. For example, InterCityYouth\(^\text{192}\), which is a network of municipalities involved in youth work, was launched in November 2014 as a direct result of three InterCITY Conferences held between 2012 and 2014 – European Peer Learning on Local Youth Policy. The network aims to represent municipalities, as key providers of youth work, in the policy discussions in the youth field at EU level. Another example is the initiation of the IVO4ALL project in 2014 following a peer learning event on international volunteering of young people. These examples show how mutual learning can facilitate sharing of ideas among relevant actors that can lead to sustainable initiatives at EU level. Nearly all of the stakeholders consulted showed a strong interest in maintaining mutual learning activities, while revising them to ensure increased focus and efficiency in delivery.

Progress reporting

The EU Youth Report is considered as useful by youth policy-makers. In some countries, it inspired national evaluation procedures (i.e. in Slovenia, an evaluation is foreseen after the first three years of the implementation of the National Youth programme). On the other hand, the reporting exercise involves inter-ministerial cooperation which often leads to lasting connections. For example, in the Czech

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\(^{189}\) Respondents which had never heard of the EUYS or those which have not taken part to any EU activities (N=93).

\(^{190}\) 88% of respondents who knew about the studies found them useful, N=16.

\(^{191}\) See case study on Slovenia.

\(^{192}\) \url{http://intercityyouth.eu/about-icy/}
Republic193, the 2012 EU Youth Reporting exercise allowed the Youth Department drafters of the National Youth Strategy 2014-2020 to come together with their counterparts from different Ministries in view of collecting inputs for the national youth report to be submitted to the European Commission. It was reported that this exercise led to establishing closer connections between different Ministries and thus strengthening the cross-sectoral cooperation concerning youth policy. This was the case in other countries too, reflecting a high interest in maintaining this implementation instrument.

**Monitoring of the process**

In some cases, the model of EU dashboard of youth indicators inspired the development of national youth indicators (i.e. in France, Czech Republic, etc.). This instrument also led to setting up monitoring procedures in some Member States. For example, in Slovenia194, it inspired a new monitoring process under the National Youth Programme which involves reporting twice a year from the Youth Ministry to the Government and the Parliament. Nevertheless, EU youth indicators are less known by actors other than Youth Ministry officials (i.e. youth organisations, National Agencies for Erasmus+, officers from Ministries other than youth etc.) and thus their awareness need to be improved.

**Structured dialogue**

The structured dialogue with young people in particular is considered one of the main pillars of the EU Youth Strategy: 'the principle of dialogue with youth lies at the core of EU youth policy'. Structured dialogue has led to creating permanent structures of collaboration between policy-makers and youth stakeholders in all EUMS (through the National Working Groups) as well as at EU level (through the European Steering Committee). This instrument for the implementation of the EUYS has started to be used for national purposes too: for example, for wide consultations of young people in Portugal for the development of the strategic goals and actions in the youth field within the *White Book on Youth*; and inspired the creation of the Youth Expert Coordination Forum in Hungary195, which informs the Government’s actions in the youth field. Through the structures that it created and the approach of reaching out to as many young people, the structured dialogue is seen as sustainable and potentially leading to increased systematic use of this instrument in the future.

**Mobilisation of EU funds and programmes**

Nearly all of the stakeholders consulted showed a strong interest in maintaining the funding sources used to support the different instruments under the EUYS. According to most interviewees, there is a need for continued funding from the Erasmus+ programme to ensure the sustainability of the EU youth cooperation framework. In some Member States, Erasmus+ is the only source of financing for the implementation of the EUYS.

**Dissemination of results**

There is evidence that dissemination activities can create a favourable context to bring youth topics high on the agenda and lead to sustainable changes. For example, the European Year of Volunteering 2011 led to the establishment of a Federation of volunteering organisations in Romania and create a momentum for revising the law on volunteering, which was adopted in 2014 and is seen as a long-lasting positive change in the volunteering sector in Romania. European Youth Weeks are also an example of

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193 See the case study on the Czech Republic’s National Youth Strategy.
194 See case study on Slovenia.
195 See case study on Hungary.
coupling higher visibility of youth topics with funding for local projects, which can lead to sustainable local-level actions dedicated to young people (i.e. in Finland).

Nevertheless, this is the only instrument that was suggested to be improved by a considerable number of young Europeans that have been surveyed. In particular, the European Youth Portal seems to be little known by young people. Among the 47% of young people who heard about the European Youth Portal (N=332), only 26% considered it as ‘very useful’ and other 31% as ‘somewhat useful’ for them.

7.3 Obstacles for sustainability

Limits to human and financial resources are obstacles to sustainable participation in the EU youth cooperation framework. Those issues have been detailed under the Efficiency section (section 6). As shown in Figure 23 above, lack of financial and human (or time) resources are most commonly mentioned in interviews, each cumulating a third of the answers of stakeholders consulted at EU and national level. The limitations of financial and human resources are widespread across the EU Member States (i.e. lack of financial resources was reported as potential obstacle in 21 countries, while lack of human resources in 22). Limitation of resources (time, human and financial) can also hinder youth organisations’ participation in activities organised under the EU Youth Strategy\(^{196}\).

While human and financial resources are essential to continuing cooperation activities in the future, Youth Ministries in several countries anticipate challenges of under-staffing and reduced budgets for youth policy.

7.4 Sustainability of activities under the Council Recommendation

Most of the actors in the volunteering field interviewed at national and EU level expressed strong interest in continuing their involvement in cross-border volunteering opportunities and implementing the action lines described in the Council Recommendation.

The threats in continuing the stakeholders’ participation are similar to those reported in relation to the EU Youth Strategy, the most widespread being the risk of decrease in funding or in attention on decision makers’ agenda. For volunteering organisations, funding and capacity (human, time) pose challenges to maintain their level of activity in cross-border volunteering given that they usually have small teams of volunteers to implement projects.

\(^{196}\) Three youth organisations responding to the survey (AT, EL, FR) reported that limited resources sometimes hindered their participation to events under the EU Youth Strategy.
8 Verifying assumptions of the Impact Assessment supporting the EUYS

The impact assessment report which supported the elaboration of the Council Recommendation was submitted in 2008. It aimed to support a policy action at EU level to improve the cross-border mobility of volunteering by young people. The impact assessment tested 4 policy options\(^1\). Option number 2, which focuses on the improvement of the interoperability between the existing national youth volunteering schemes, was selected. The aim of this option is for national voluntary schemes to open up "slots" for volunteers from other Member States and to keep the specific needs of such "visiting volunteers" in mind when designing their activities. The proposed legal form and the final one chosen was a Council Recommendation.

Another Impact Assessment was conducted in 2009 to design the second round of the OMC in the youth field. The impact assessment tested four policy options\(^2\). The most wide-ranging policy option, the so-called 'global strategy' one was selected. This policy option sought to reinforce the OMC in the area of youth by introducing new cooperation instruments such as reporting, structured dialogue with young people, knowledge instruments such as peer-learning, and mobilisation capacities, and also, to support the development of a cross-sectoral approach to youth issues. The cross-sectoral approach aimed to integrate youth issues in education, employment, youth work, entrepreneurship, inclusion, health, and participation policy and activities, and to create synergies between those.

It is worth noting that the Impact Assessment (IA) supporting the EUYS indicated that the direct impact of the renewed EU cooperation framework on young people was difficult to anticipate on account of the multitude of factors contributing to improve policy outcomes for young people.

Overall the assumptions made about the positive effects of the Council Recommendation cannot be clearly verified. The expected effects are not directly linked to the results of the Council Recommendation. The positive effects of the Council Recommendation on those aspects identified in the Impact Assessment (young people’s outcomes, solidarity of participants in volunteer mobility schemes) are only indirect. The Council Recommendation aims to directly influence national structures and frameworks for transnational volunteering which in turn can affect the scale and quality of transnational volunteering. The Council Recommendation was linked to the increase of EU resources for the EVS which could have had positive effects on volunteers’ outcomes as stipulated in the IA. There is however for the moment no hard evidence on the impact of transnational volunteering on volunteers and the society. In the period analysed there was some increase in transnational volunteering through national volunteering schemes. National volunteering schemes, such as International Citizen Service in the United Kingdom, National Civic Service in Italy, or the National Civic Service in France (created in 2010), have also become involved in cross-border volunteering activities (see the case study of IVO4All) though this remains a small element of these schemes. It is not clear whether the Council Recommendation influenced this opening up of national schemes but it could have contributed to the national decisions in this area.

One key assumption about the EUYS can be partially verified. The EUYS did indeed contribute to the adoption of youth strategies or even legal frameworks on certain aspects of the youth agenda in some countries. It did therefore support the development of tools and strategies which in turn should have a positive effect on

\(^1\) Option 1: Status quo; Option 2: Improving the interoperability of existing schemes in the Member States; Option 3: Expansion of the European Voluntary Service; Option 4: Harmonisation of national youth volunteering schemes.

\(^2\) Option 1: Status quo (baseline scenario); Option 2: a reinforced Youth open method of coordination; Option 3: a developed cross-sectoral approach; Option 4: a global strategy.
young people. However these developments occurred mostly in areas that are core to youth policy (such as volunteering, participation) and not really in areas of education or employment. In the areas of education or employment other factors (economic crisis) and other EU developments (youth guarantees, ET2020) were influential. Furthermore the EUYS influence did not occur in all countries and was stronger in those countries where the youth agenda was further away from the principles promoted by the EUYS. The expected effects of young people’s employment, education, economic growth or fundamental rights cannot be verified. These effects are too remote from what the EUYS can concretely achieve.

Table 13 below presents the analysis for each of the individual assumptions.

**Table 13. Analysis of the IA assumptions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assumptions made</th>
<th>Extent to which these assumptions have been proven</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A qualitative and quantitative leap forward will be achieved, with numerous positive consequences on the education, employability, competitiveness, and citizenship of young people.</td>
<td>This assumption is not possible to verify because the Council Recommendation only has indirect effect on young people. The Recommendation will affect the national frameworks and structures for mobility of volunteers. What ultimately affects outcomes for young people are the mobility experiences themselves. The national frameworks and structures are only one aspect which influences whether the positive outcomes will materialise – the mobility experience itself is a key determinant (duration, quality, etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It will allow for a further development of solidarity in Europe.</td>
<td>The Recommendation did to a certain extent contribute to increased mobility of volunteers through the EU programmes. There was a small increase in transnational mobility through national schemes but it is not clear whether this was related to the Recommendation. There is for the moment no hard data on the contribution of volunteering mobility on young people’s outcomes in education, employment, etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As above this assumption is not possible to verify as the Recommendation only has very indirect effect on the level of solidarity. The level of solidarity could be influenced by volunteering mobility but there are many stronger determinants of solidarity.

Volunteering mobility could however positively influence the level of mobility of participants in mobility schemes (more narrow formulation of the assumption). There is some link between the Recommendation and the increase of mobile volunteers through the EVS. The interim evaluation of the Youth in Action programme (which funds EVS) did show positive effect of the programme on solidarity of direct participants\(^{199}\).

\(^{199}\) The Youth in Action Interim Evaluation found that that the YiA Programme contributed to the solidarity principle: "In terms of fostering solidarity between citizens of the EU, 95% of respondents participating in youth exchanges or EVS indicated that participation in the project has meant that they now get along with people from a different cultural background. For youth initiatives, the result is less strong, but still good. Participating young people feel to a greater extent more committed to work against discrimination in 46% of the cases. The support for disadvantaged people has only grown in 40% of the cases, while in 55% of the cases this remained the same. The outcomes of the survey are confirmed by the experiences of the youth
Assumptions made | Extent to which these assumptions have been proven
--- | ---
Positive environmental impact due to increase of opportunities for young volunteers in the environmental and civil protection. | The Recommendation itself does not directly affect the fields of activities in which young people volunteer. There is no data on the extent to which there was an increase in volunteers’ participation in missions focusing on environmental and civil protection. This type of result is too remote from the actual effects of the Recommendation.

Limited administrative costs. | Indeed the Recommendation itself implies limited administrative costs. There is no compulsory reporting or participation in any events.

No negative economic/social/environmental effects expected. | This evaluation did not identify any negative effects of the Recommendation. However, a small share of interviewees noted that they saw a decrease rather than an increase in the attention being paid to the topic of transnational mobility of volunteers in the past years. This is not due to the Recommendation as such but rather due to the context which meant that the topic of transnational volunteering was overshadowed by other more topical issues (unemployment, education underachievement).

European Youth Strategy

Social impacts: more tools to develop strategies dedicated to encourage employment, inclusion and general well-being of young people, as well as reinforcing participation and solidarity | This assumption was partly verified. The EUYS did result in some countries in national developments such as national youth strategies, legal acts on aspects of EUYS for example:

- Romania’s law on volunteering (2014),
- Poland’s long term policy for volunteering (2011) and strategy for development of social capital;
- Bulgaria’s national Youth Strategy 2010-2020;
- Czech National Youth Strategy etc.

For more details see Effectiveness section.

Such effects were however not observed in all countries. They were stronger in those countries which were further away from alignment with the topics covered in the EUYS. Furthermore, such effects were mostly identified in areas that are core to youth policy such as volunteering or participation and less so in the areas of education or employment.

Economic impacts: cross-sectoral approach aims at reinforcing youth’ | This assumption is also not possible to verify as the potential contribution of EUYS to youth employment and education levels is likely to be minor. Other factors are likely to have much stronger influence on these developments.

organisations; the majority of the youth organisations state that solidarity and tolerance among young people are promoted by the Programme, mostly because of working with and having contacts with and among a diverse range of youths. This can be seen both in for example young people with disabilities or young people from different nationalities”.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assumptions made</th>
<th>Extent to which these assumptions have been proven</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employment and education levels, beneficial to competitiveness and growth;</td>
<td>During the evaluation period the political attention being paid to youth employment and education attainment has increased. However this only marginally affected by the EUYS and the main factors influencing this growing political attention to youth are the economic crisis and the negative effect it had on young people.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>There were parallel EU initiatives that had strong influence on national developments in areas of youth employment and education – Youth Guarantee, ET 2020.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The EUYS has however contributed to increasing collaboration between ministries or departments in charge of employment, education and youth. A number of countries have also set up cross-sectoral collaboration structures for the purpose of the mainstreaming of youth issues, in line with the EUYS principle of mainstreaming. This has been motivated by concerns over youth unemployment and insufficient education levels, and their impact on competitiveness and growth.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive impact on the administrative burden due to more frequent, triennial reporting obligation</td>
<td>The impact of the triennial reporting obligation on administrative burden has not been positive (see Efficiency section). Data requirements were heavy and required inputs from several ministries and youth stakeholder groups. It was recognised as a useful overview exercise however.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impacts on fundamental rights: positive impacts on the fundamental rights connected with family and professional life as well as rights of children</td>
<td>The EUYS objectives and fields of actions are only very loosely related to fundamental rights. It is not possible to identify a clear and direct positive effect of the EUYS on fundamental rights. The principle of participation of young people which is embedded in the EUYS does support young people’s empowerment in general but it is not specifically related to fundamental rights connected with family and professional life as well as rights of children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No negative effect was identified.</td>
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</table>
9 Conclusions and Recommendations

9.1 Context

During the evaluation period the situation of young people in the EU worsened on a number of key indicators such as: unemployment rates (including long term unemployment), share of NEETs and risk of poverty, among others. It stagnated when it comes to young people’s participation. The only area that has seen some improvement is education. Consequently the EUYS was being implemented in a rather negative context. Youth unemployment in particular was an issue of great urgency over the period covered.

The deteriorating situation of young people meant that initiatives to ease youth unemployment and linked to that to improve education and training moved up the policy agenda. Many national as well as EU initiatives have been developed in this period with the objective to improve the situation of young people and in particular their employment rate and education outcomes. This meant that while the youth agenda gained stronger importance, it also became rather focused on the topics of employability and education and training. The multi-faceted approach promoted by the EUYS through its eight fields of action has somewhat suffered. In particular less attention was being paid to what some youth stakeholders see as the core ‘youth issues’ such as participation or volunteering.

The interviews as well as survey responses collected through this evaluation show a continuing tension between stakeholders. On the one hand some stakeholders agree that the EUYS should keep on focusing on the issues which are of burning importance, namely employment, education and training. This is felt particularly strongly in those countries where the difficulties for young people to find sustainable employment are important. On the other hand others call for a refocusing of the EUYS on those issues that are being overshadowed by these agendas. They feel that these agendas are already being dealt with by the employment and education policy makers and stakeholders and fear a certain instrumentalisation of the youth agenda. They also see a decline in the attention being paid to topics which was more prominent in the first OMC in the field of youth (volunteering and participation) via the 2001 White Paper on Youth.

This division of views on what the EUYS should focus on is not only linked to the levels of youth unemployment but also to an older division of youth policy traditions, frameworks and strategies within the EU. The starting point of youth policy in the EU in the early years of 2000 when the OMC in this area started was fragmented. The conceptions of what should be covered by youth policy and even the extent to which a dedicated youth policy existed varied strongly between the Anglo-Saxon countries, the Nordic, the founding EU-countries and the central and eastern European countries. This fragmentation continues to a certain extent but the EUYS did contribute to the development of the youth agenda in a number of countries which in the past only had a narrow youth agenda.

9.2 Relevance and coherence

Overall the majority of stakeholders interviewed welcomed the existence of EU cooperation in the youth field and considered that having an opportunity to exchange on youth issues at EU level is relevant. Over 80% of the surveyed European youth organisations considered all EU activities in which they participated within the EU cooperation framework on youth to have been relevant to their work. Similarly two-thirds of the policy-makers interviewed at national level consider the objectives and areas covered in the EU youth cooperation framework to their context, needs and priorities.

A key feature of the EUYS is that it provided a broad and flexible framework for cooperation in the youth field. It covered youth specific issues but also promoted mainstreaming of youth in eight fields of action. These eight fields of action do reflect
young people’s needs even though some of the areas (education, employment, social inclusion) are more directly linked to the urgent needs than others (youth and the world or creativity and culture). This breadth and flexibility of the EUYS meant that all stakeholders were able to identify some actions of relevance to their own agenda and needs. However it also meant that the strategy offered a high number of possible actions and seemed to suggest an ‘a la carte’ approach to the OMC rather than a focused set of common objectives that all countries would be working towards. The trio presidency common priorities addressed this issue to a certain extent by focusing on selected aspects of the EUYS for a period of 18 months. This however meant that there was a certain lack of continuation in the EU-level commitment to the EUYS priorities.

However the relevance of the EUYS priorities and activities within the eight fields of action was not at the same level for all countries. Respondents from countries which were further away from alignment with these principles saw the Strategy as more relevant than others. In these countries the EUYS brought something new to the national debates. In other countries this was less the case and some stakeholders felt that the EUYS did not offer new impetus for new developments.

Furthermore, as already noted above some of the eight fields of action were seen as being more relevant to the needs of young people and youth policy makers and stakeholders than others. Education, employment, social inclusion and health and well-being were seen as more relevant than the other areas of action. There is however a certain contradiction with the finding that the EUYS was most influential in those areas that are core to youth policy – volunteering and participation (see effectiveness section below). One explanation could be that while these four areas are indeed the ones that reflect the most salient needs of young people, they also correspond to policy areas where countries have strong established structures, frameworks and policies and these are harder to affect by the youth stakeholders and policy makers.

The respondents also identified emerging needs that they wished to see appear more prominently in the current cooperation framework, namely: radicalisation, integration of migrants and digitalisation. These topics could be covered by the existing fields of action but they could also be self-standing priorities.

At EU level the EUYS covered priorities and fields of action that were aligned with the broad objectives of the ET 2020. The EUYS did work on topics that were relevant to the employment, education, social inclusion, health and research agenda. However stakeholders interviewed were rather critical about the extent to which the EUYS succeeded in creating an integrated approach to young people at EU level. Though a number of EU initiatives that were relevant to the EUYS were taken at EU level, the extent to which these are cross-referenced with the EUYS are rare. Stakeholders who observe the EU activities from the outside have the feeling that the youth sector is not always involved in decisions made or it is involved rather formally.

The Council Recommendation has also been relevant to the needs of young volunteers and of volunteering organisations, although the latter considered that the Recommendation could have been more ambitious and links to funding programmes made more explicit.

The EUYS is implemented through seven instruments. Overall these instruments are viewed as relevant for the OMC. However the coherence through which decisions are made whether to address a given issue through one instrument or another is not apparent from the outside.

9.3 Effectiveness

A key precondition for the EUYS to be influential is to ensure that it is known and understood by the key stakeholders. The evaluation findings show that the awareness of the Strategy can be improved. Even in the field of youth not all policy makers
interviewed were aware of the objectives and fields of action of the Strategy. The share of policy makers interviewed in partner ministries who were aware of the EUYS was even lower. Only a small share of youth organisations surveyed had a good understanding of the EUYS and actually less than half of them said they had a good or basic understanding of the Strategy. The survey did not reach a representative sample of organisations but there was a certain self-selection bias which means that more knowledgeable organisations were more likely to respond. Therefore in reality the share of youth organisations knowledgeable about the Strategy is likely to be even lower. Only a minority of young people interviewed were aware of the actions under the EUYS while they were aware of the EU programmes aimed at young people. Again the self-selection bias to this survey suggests that in reality even less young people are aware of the Strategy and its activities.

The complexity and breadth of the EUYS is possibly one of the reasons why many interviewees only showed narrow understanding of the Strategy.

The youth organisations surveyed which were involved in EUYS activities had overall a positive view of their influence. From the youth organisations surveyed that have taken part in EU activities, the majority saw the following positive effects of their participation:

- Networking with other youth organisations;
- Learning and knowledge building;
- Development of new initiatives or activities;
- Creation of new partnerships;
- Networking with other stakeholders or policy makers;

Furthermore, of the 152 organisations that answered the question, 84% stated that participation in EUYS led to changes in the practices of their organisation.

The youth organisations surveyed which took part in EU activities also thought that the EUYS had, at least to a certain extent, broader effects on:

- Youth policy;
- Stakeholders’ understanding of youth issues;
- Recognition of youth work;
- Participation of youth stakeholders;
- Recognition of the value of volunteering; Impact of initiatives in other policy areas on youth, and
- Seeing youth from a cross-sectoral perspective.

At the same time, many respondents were unable to identify whether the positive effects they observed would have taken place also in the absence of the EUYS. This suggests that they saw a positive evolution in the attention being paid to challenges facing young people and were unable to judge whether this was linked to the EUYS or if it was more influenced by other developments.

One of the issues with the way in which the EUYS is formulated (broad objectives and many actions) is that it does not enable clear monitoring of progress made and contribution of the Strategy. A systematic monitoring of the extent to which the EUYS led to changes in all the fields of actions and actions stated in the Strategy would be too complex. Therefore the evaluation looked more openly at the extent to which the Strategy directly supported any changes at national level.

Nevertheless some influences were identified. There is a general movement across EUMS towards the adoption of principles and objectives set in the EU Youth Strategy,
e.g. participation and consultation of young people. The structured dialogue was instrumental in this respect.

- The national interviews and case studies found that the EUYS had some direct influence on the policy agenda in the majority of EU countries. The majority of concrete changes identified and that were influenced by the EUYS were in the policy areas that can be seen as core to youth policy. Such influences were identified in the following areas:
  - Volunteering;
  - Internationalisation and mobility;
  - Youth consultation and participation;
  - Youth work; or
  - Cross-sectoral approaches.

Influence was also reported, but less frequently, in the following areas:
  - (Recognition of) non-formal learning;
  - Health and well-being;
  - Youth entrepreneurship; and
  - Measures to address NEETs.

Though the interviewees and survey respondents see that the most important needs of young people are in areas of employment, education and training and social inclusion, the EUYS is being most influential in areas of youth volunteering, participation or youth work. Several aspects can explain this:

- These are the policies which are directly the responsibility of youth policy makers and youth organisations who are the primary target group for the EUYS activities;
- These changes and influences were initiated in the previous decade under the 2001 White Paper on Youth which had a more narrow focus;
- Some of these changes are linked to the EU Year on Volunteering; or
- Recall issues among respondents who are less likely to report on influences in areas which are not youth specific.

However the level and strength of influence varied. In some countries the EUYS was more influential than others. This is in particularly the case where:

- The status quo was further away from the EUYS approach in particular when it comes to the existence of clearly formulated youth policy and legal frameworks;
- Political commitment was secured; and
- Level of participation in EU activities.

The most influential instruments were:

- The structured dialogue;
- Mobilisation of EU funds;
- Mutual learning; and to a certain extent;
- Knowledge building.

There are several examples of EU cooperation instruments having worked together and that had an important influence in terms of providing a favourable context to catalyse efforts and actors to initiate change. The EU Year of Volunteering was not an
instrument of the EUYS but it was also relatively influential. Furthermore the mere existence of an EU Youth Strategy was influential and inspiring in some countries which did not have an equivalent strategy earlier.

The 2008 Council Recommendation benefitted from having been integrated in a long-term youth cooperation framework. This allowed for cross-border volunteering to be kept in EU cooperation activities, with the implementation of the Council Recommendation being included as one of the key initiatives for achieving progress in this area, e.g. Expert Groups, peer learning activities, funding allocations etc. This being said it is challenging to distinguish the effects in the field of cross-border volunteering influenced by the Council Recommendation from the effects produced in the volunteering field influenced by the EUYS at large.

9.4 Efficiency

Compared to other OMCs in particular education or employment the resources allocated to EU activities in the field of youth are smaller or even significantly smaller. Despite the relatively low budget, the OMC in youth field did succeed in triggering concrete changes at national and organisational level.

However considering the breadth of the EUYS and the number of issues covered, the resources are spread across activities covering a large number of fields of action, meaning that they are often being spread thinly.

Most stakeholders considered that the costs of the EU cooperation in the youth field were overall reasonable in relation to expertise and tools accessed, or to the inspiration provided and its effects on policy re-orientations.

The main challenges identified were:

- The reporting exercise is seen as rather burdensome. Though it provides benefits (interviewees appreciate the effect of stock-taking and self-evaluation) these could be achieved through a more focused approach to reporting;
- Youth stakeholders often have limited resources to take part in EU activities. The ministry units/departments tend to be relatively small compared to other policy areas and youth organisation also have limited capacity. However there are quite a few activities targeted potentially at the same people.
- The Expert Groups did not always have clear and specific enough mandates. This hindered the work of the groups but it also sometimes meant that the participants delegated were not always the most suitable persons to sit in a given group.

9.5 Added value and sustainability

The EUYS added value to Member States developments in the youth field by providing them with:

- Inspiration, knowledge and expertise (via exchange of good practices, data produced etc.);
- Leverage and legitimacy to make claims consistent with the EUYS, e.g. promoting youth work, participation, inclusion etc.;
- Opportunities and resources (including financial ones) to move towards the commonly-agreed objectives within the EU Youth OMC.

The EUYS did spur a number of long lasting effects in several EUMS through the adoption of new frameworks and even legislations. Overall there is continued interest in having an exchange on youth issues at EU level. Respondents show continued willingness to participate in EU activities.

As stated in the section on effectiveness the EUYS did result in strengthening and clarifying the framework for youth policy in those countries where it was further away
from the EUYS principles. Consultation structures were created, strategies adopted and certain laws, mostly in the field of volunteering, were adopted.

Countries’ starting point today is different to the period when the strategy was adopted as youth policies have moved forward. As the creation of initial conditions for youth policy was achieved, the next stage of the EUYS will need to target other types of developments. These may be more difficult to achieve as all countries now have a certain framework in place.

### 9.6 Recommendations

**Recommendation 1**

Focus on a smaller number of more clearly defined and more specific objectives. These should formulate a clear vision of what the EUYS aims to achieve over the next period.

Having a more focused and clearer set of objectives would mean that:

- The EUYS vision could be more clearly formulated and communicated to ensure better awareness amongst key stakeholders of what the strategy aims to achieve;
- The strategy would more clearly focus on adding value compared to other initiatives;
- The resources which are limited could be used in a more targeted manner and thus hopefully leading to clearer effects;
- The monitoring of progress would become clearer as there would be a specific enough formulation of what the strategy aims to achieve;
- The reporting by Member States would be more restricted and therefore less burdensome.

This could take the following forms:

- A balance between urgent issues (i.e. employment) and the core youth areas (active citizenship, intercultural dialogue, specific priority of youth work and quality systems);
- A focus on specific target groups (i.e. NEETs, young migrants, young refugees) while keeping the overall framework relevant to all young people;
- Clarifying the role of the National Agencies of Erasmus+ in implementing the EUYS and contributing to its objectives (e.g. in priorities in funding choices; in dissemination activities).

**Recommendation 2**

If the double focus of EUYS is maintained (on one hand focus on core youth issues and on the other hand on youth mainstreaming) then the objectives in the field of mainstreaming should be formulated more specifically, rather than a list of possible actions in eight fields. Priorities were set however within (1) the triennial work cycles and, (2) since 2014, the EU Work Plan on Youth, should be more known to all stakeholders. The triennial priorities and those set under the annual youth work plan should be communicated clearly by multipliers (agencies, ministries, etc.) to relevant youth stakeholders at national and local levels.

The decision as to whether the EUYS should focus on core youth issues or remain focused on mainstreaming is a political one. However the evaluation shows that the EUYS leads to more concrete changes in those areas in which youth ministries and
youth organisations have direct influence. The influence of the EUYS on other areas is less clear but this is also due to the fact that it is harder to capture.

If the focus on mainstreaming is maintained it should be formulated in a manner that enables to capture what the EUYS expects to add to the existing policies and initiatives in the different policy areas. One approach could be to formulate the objective of mainstreaming in operational terms rather than in terms of concrete policy changes as it is the case through the 64 actions mentioned in the Strategy.

Such operational objectives could for example clarify what kind of consultation processes with youth stakeholder the EUYS aims to achieve.

**Recommendation 3**

Raise the bar of what the EUYS aims to achieve by formulating more ambitious objectives which would also constitute a new impetus for those countries with strong tradition of youth policy. This also applies to the Council Recommendation, which whilst having been relevant to the needs of young volunteers and of volunteering organisations, could have been more ambitious and links to funding programmes made more explicit.

The EUYS did succeed in creating a certain common ground across the Member States. Youth policies in countries which did not have clear frameworks in this area have been clarified and framed. In the next stage, the EUYS should focus on the next steps. Priorities and instruments to be supported should be based on a previous baseline mapping needs and existing measures at EU and national levels. The national youth reports and EU Youth indicators as well as existing consultation processes would help in this regard. It should aim to add value by offering new inspiration also for those countries which were already aligned with the EUYS principles and objectives in the past period. This being said, some Member States are likely to have more needs and interest in cooperation than others, and cooperation on some issues may also be limited by national particularities in relation to certain youth principles and definitions.

**Recommendation 4**

Improve coordination of the youth agenda at EU level. Ensure clearer link between the consultation through structured dialogue and developments in other policy fields than youth.

EUYS and Europe 2020 flagged that both strategic frameworks of action were often considered as separate approaches, each with their own objectives, rather than part of an integrated long-term plan of the European Union.

The EUYS was not clearly reflected in other policies in the field of youth at EU level. While these policies are complementary, it is not always clear how the EUYS adds value to initiatives in other fields and whether the EUYS is actually making a clear and strong contribution to the agenda in other policy fields.

The structured dialogue is a unique platform for consultation with young people. Naturally this platform discusses all burning issues of young people not just the core youth aspects. The structured dialogue could be used as a broader consultation platform, beyond the EUYS but also to inform other EU policies in the field of youth. It should however also involved actors from the local level.

Involving actors from other relevant policy fields (employment, health) in Expert Groups or peer learning activities, depending on the topic discussed, could also be considered.

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200 E.g. A peer learning event was organised in 2015 on how different EUMS implemented transversal approaches to youth at policy level.

201 NB: Not all of the interviewees commented on the link between EU Youth Strategy and Europe 2020 Strategy.
Links to other EU initiatives could benefit from being made stronger, e.g. to European Years with elements relevant to youth, health indicators published by DG SANTE, research supported by DG RTD, etc.

**Recommendation 5**

Aim to achieve broader participation in EU activities from the side of local and regional youth policy makers. This also depends on Member States’ efforts to disseminate information and opportunities to stakeholders at those levels.

Youth policy is decentralised in many EU countries. The EUYS should therefore set up a mechanism to allow local and regional level policy actors to participate in the youth cooperation framework. This could be achieved by:

- Involving associations of municipalities (via networks of municipalities) in those countries with a devolved approach to youth policy; e.g. in consultations, reporting exercises, Expert Groups, peer learning events, etc.
- Taking into account the needs of policy-makers at local and regional levels when formulating the objectives and instruments of the new EU Strategy for youth, e.g. via consultations (structured dialogue or other) at local level which could then compiled at national level;
- Encouraging Member States authorities to circulate information and opportunities related to cooperation at policy level to those levels, beyond EU supported multipliers (e.g. European Youth Portal, Eurodesks, national Erasmus + agencies)

**Recommendation 6**

Align the use of cooperation instruments and initiatives with the EUYS objectives more clearly and strategically. This applies also to creating explicit links between funding programmes and the objectives set at political level, within the EU cooperation framework (Council Recommendation included).

The evaluation found that the decisions on why some instruments were deployed in relation to some topics rather than others were unclear. The instruments have specific characteristics and limitations as to what they can achieve. The driving force behind the activities via these instruments should be the EUYS objectives.

The evaluation found that the cooperation framework was more effective when different instruments and tools addressed the same topic were joined together and could build from each other’s results, e.g. studies or data produced were timely and planned so as to feed in discussion in Expert Groups or conferences. This was not systematically the case however. In some instances initiatives were perceived as ‘stand-alone’ or ‘fragmented’.

Making different instruments work together for the purpose of one field or objective should be considered when allocating resources and deciding on instruments to deploy to move the EU agenda forward. Such approach would lead to clear mandates. It would also support clearer monitoring and evaluation.

The EU Youth Strategy’s areas of action and the Council Recommendation’s action lines could also be further reflected in the annual or national programme priorities of the Erasmus+ to improve the relevance and coherence of policy level cooperation and funded activities and initiatives. On this particular point, youth organisations, especially small ones, highlighted the complexity of application procedures under Erasmus+.

Finally opportunities and results should be disseminated more broadly to stakeholders at local and regional level, as well as to actors from other policy fields. Beyond existence EU supported tools (e.g. the European Youth Portal), Member States should also be encouraged in their dissemination efforts.
Recommendation 7

Set up a monitoring framework which actually captures the achievements of the EUYS. Consider developing mutual learning on progress achieved.

The EUYS has two monitoring mechanisms but none of them clearly captures the actual contribution of the EUYS to youth policy:

- The dashboard of youth indicators measures evolution of the situation of young people in the EU. The EUYS affects the situation of young people in most fields only indirectly and via a long chain of effects with many other factors having a stronger influence. Therefore these indicators measure the context in which the EUYS is being implemented rather than the contribution of the EUYS.

- The reporting process by Member States. The reporting became an exercise in which countries present long lists of all initiatives taken in all the fields of actions of the strategy. This helps to understand how national policies are evolving in view of the EUYS objectives but it does not capture the relationship between the EUYS and the EU activities and these national developments.

The latter exercise, which was reported as particularly burdensome, could also benefit from improvements, e.g. by reducing the number of questions; enhancing objectivity in reporting by requiring that youth organisations are consulted; and simplifying the submission process (i.e. procedure (software) and timeframe for submission (avoiding end of the year)).

To better capture the outcomes of the EUYS and its added value on youth organisations and national policy makers, a monitoring framework linked to the EUYS intervention logic should be designed and implemented. It could reflect for instance the follow-up of the structured dialogue outcomes, both at EU and national levels, i.e. providing information on where (which policy sector) and how (which initiatives) the structured dialogue recommendations had an effect.

Results should also be disseminated broadly via existing tools and channels.

Support to one extra step could also be considered, e.g. mutual learning on Member States’ implementation approaches and results via the organisation of a conference at mid-term of each three-year cycle. Progress in and processes of implementation of the EU Youth Strategy could be presented at that occasion.

Recommendation 8

Raise the bar of what the EU youth cooperation aims to achieve by formulating more ambitious objectives which would also constitute a new impetus for those countries with a strong tradition of youth policy. This also applies to the Council Recommendation, which whilst having been relevant to the needs of young volunteers and of volunteering organisations, could have been more ambitious and links to funding programmes made more explicit.

Evidence shows also that whilst needs were properly identified and addressed in the Council Recommendation, they remain relevant, especially the following:

- Quality in ‘volunteer management’, e.g. by ensuring sufficient training, capacity-building and funding for volunteering organisations to improve the quality systems of managing volunteers;

- Information and dissemination activities, on cross-border volunteering opportunities as well as the rights and responsibilities of the volunteers, e.g. amongst universities as well as those working with youth (i.e. local authorities, youth workers, etc.).
• Making volunteering mobility more accessible to young people with fewer opportunities (e.g. NEETs, those from rural areas, with disabilities etc.)

• Reducing barriers to volunteering mobility, notably visa applications; linguistic support; insurance and protection for volunteers abroad.

• Simplifying the application process for cross-border volunteering projects.

The Council Recommendation’s integration under the EU Youth Strategy allowed for cross-border volunteering to be kept among the permanent cycle of priorities of the EU youth cooperation. However, this makes it challenging to distinguish the effects in the field of cross-border volunteering influenced by the Council Recommendation from the effects produced in the volunteering field influenced by the EU Youth Strategy at large.

Making links to EU funding opportunities more explicit, to help youth stakeholders reach the objectives set, would be beneficial. So would encouraging Member States and youth organisations on the basis of their own resources (and beyond the EVS), as per the demand, in each country, for cross-border volunteering.
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