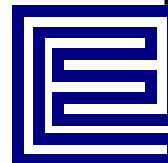


The Evaluation Partnership



FINAL REPORT

For the European Commission Directorate-General for Education and Culture

Final external evaluation of the Community action programme to promote bodies active at European level in the field of youth (2004-2006)

Invitation to tender – EAC/D2/JK D1146 (2006)

**Final external evaluation of the Community action
programme to promote bodies active at European level
in the field of youth (2004-2006)**

FINAL REPORT

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1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The evaluation focuses on the "Community Action Programme to Promote Bodies Active at European Level in the Field of Youth", which has provided funding for the EYF (European Youth Forum) and youth NGOs between 01/01/2004 and 31/12/2006. The purpose of the evaluation was to assess the overall and individual effectiveness of the various actions of the programme in terms of achieving the objectives set out in Article 1 of the Decision establishing the programme.

The main beneficiaries of the programme have been the European Youth Forum (EYF) and a number of youth NGOs and bodies active in the field of youth. The EYF represents almost 100 different youth organizations in Europe, providing a common platform for working closely with the European institutions in organising activities engaging young people and advocating for their interests. In addition to the European Youth Forum, a range of NGOs have received funding through the programme. Although certain sectors are more represented than others, the NGOs funded include associations for students, NGOs active in youth exchange, political and religiously affiliated organisations, associations promoting culture and the arts and bodies promoting cultural exchange and initiatives designed to bolster civil society. Roughly 50% of the programme budget has gone to support the EYF and 50% to selected youth NGOs.

The evaluation was launched with signature of the contract on 7 November 2006 and undertaken via a three-phase work programme – the inception, data collection and final reporting phases. This final report provides an assessment of the programme as a whole and presents an assessment of the impact of the funding on the beneficiaries. Although the programme has since been merged with the "Youth in Action" programme (2007-2013), the evaluation provides recommendations that are relevant to the implementation of the current activities under the framework of the new programme.

1.2 APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

The methodology for the evaluation was designed to gain an insight into the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of the programme using evidence drawn from a wide variety of sources. The first step was to conduct an in-depth review of programme information, allowing the evaluation team to define a set of detailed judgement criteria and indicators in order to respond to the evaluation questions and identify the success of the programme at meeting its objectives. In addition to documentary evidence about the programme (annual reports, statistics on beneficiaries, contractual documentation), the key source of evidence for the evaluation consisted of data on the impacts of the programme gathered from a large number of persons across the different stakeholder groups.

Seven stakeholder groups were identified for this evaluation:

- The European Youth Forum
- Members of the European Youth Forum
- Successful NGO applicants
- Members of NGOs who have received backing from the programme
- Unsuccessful NGO applicants

- DG Education and Culture of the European Commission (DG EAC)
- Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA)

The stakeholder groups were chosen on the basis that they were the groups most directly affected by the programme. It was outside of the scope of this evaluation as agreed with the European Commission to consult young people not affiliated with either the EYF or with youth NGOs.

The following tools were used to capture the views of the principal stakeholders:

- Online questionnaire
- Focus Groups
- Face-to-face interviews
- Telephone interviews
- Brief email questionnaire

All of the stakeholder groups (with the exception of DG EAC and EACEA, who were consulted via face-to-face interviews, and the unsuccessful NGO applicants, who were consulted via a brief email survey) were asked to complete an online survey adapted to their specific position within the programme. This provided data that was treated quantitatively by the evaluation team. In order to gather more qualitative data, two focus groups and a number of telephone interviews were conducted. Due to the relatively small number of persons and NGOs directly involved in the programme, it was considered that a strong focus on qualitative data gathering was important in order to supplement the responses from the online survey. In total, 258 stakeholders were consulted across the different groups. The response rate was 20% out of the 1330 potential respondents identified.¹

1.3 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE EVALUATION

1.3.1 RELEVANCE

In terms of bringing “people closer to the European design and to European institutions”, the programme can be said to have succeeded on several fronts, especially by bringing the organisations directly involved with the programme closer to the European institutions.

The main reason for applying among NGOs is that the aims of the programme reflect the aims and working methods of the applicant organisations. This is strong evidence for the relevance of the programme to the applicant NGOs, but also may reflect the fact that youth organisations with aims that are not ideologically similar to those of the European Commission have not participated in the programme to a great extent.

The evaluation has found that the relevance of the programme to the beneficiaries includes aspects beyond the direct financial support offered to the EYF and the NGOs. The programme has been relevant particularly in boosting the reputation of beneficiaries, and imparting discipline in terms of forward planning and budgeting.

A condition for receiving funding through the programme is that NGOs have a wide European network. The evaluation has found that this stipulation gives a powerful incentive for NGOs to expand beyond their country of origin. Promoting links with organisations in other European

¹ For more information on the methodological approach, please see section 3.1,3.2, and 3.3 of the Final Report.

countries was a top priority for NGOs involved in the programme. The majority of the respondents to the online survey stated that this was the most important objective of their organisation, something that supports the view that the programme has been successful at promoting cross-border cooperation between community actors in the youth sector.

Over 40% of beneficiaries responding to the survey believe that they would not have been able to survive without the EU funds, which suggests that the programme is perceived as a unique funding opportunity by many successful applicants. However, the survey of unsuccessful applicants revealed that the impact of not receiving the funding was in the majority of cases likely to be moderate or very small, with around 75% responding that the impact was moderate or extremely limited. It should be kept in mind that unsuccessful applicants who were impacted severely by being rejected by the programme may have been less likely to respond to the survey than those organisations which had successfully raised funds elsewhere, due to high personnel turnover or lack of resources. Nevertheless, this discrepancy suggests that programme beneficiaries overestimate the potential negative impact of not receiving funding through the programme due to a lack of awareness of other sources of funding, leading to the conclusion that the grant in some, but certainly not all, instances “crowds out” funding that is available from other sources.

A large number of beneficiaries represent the youth wings of adult-led organisations, or are involved in growing and increasingly economically viable sectors such as youth exchange (an industry which has grown significantly in size and professionalism over the last few years). In these two cases there is a risk that the funding provided by the Commission can be displacing funding available from elsewhere, either from the private sector or from parent organisations, potentially reducing the relevance of the programme.

The programme has been successful at attracting, and defining as eligible, smaller NGOs who are in most need of assistance. A cause for concern is that the organizations deemed eligible but who were unable to furnish the required guarantees for prepayment in, for example, 2006 were exclusively drawn from “pure” youth organisations not affiliated with an adult-led parent organisation.

Given the relatively small budgets of many of the granted organisations, it has often been difficult for the beneficiaries to prove their financial capacity. An important number of organisations are each year found to be ineligible for the prepayment, in most cases due to doubts about the financial capacity of the organisation (usually proved by means of a bank guarantee, but many small NGOs have difficulty obtaining such a document). Seven out of 93 eligible organisations (around 8%) had to renounce the prepayment as a result of not being able to furnish strong enough proof of capacity in 2006.

Another risk to the relevance of the programme is that umbrella NGOs are not given incentives for merging with other umbrella NGOs in a similar field because the programme gives them the means to remain independent and reduces the incentive to collaborate. A large number of granted NGOs are active as umbrella organisations in the same field, for example youth exchange.

The programme has had some, but not a great deal of influence on encouraging youth NGOs and the EYF to intensify their efforts to reach out to young people who are not currently engaged in youth organisations. The fact that a majority of respondents to the online survey feel that participation in the programme has not led them to change their structure or aims can be seen as a result of the “hands-off” philosophy of the programme, which does not impose many

conditions on the beneficiaries besides formal conditions related to financial and organizational capacity.

Recommendations

- The Commission needs to ensure that the EYF and the NGOs play an active and assertive role in encouraging their members to also involve young people with no prior political or NGO experience, for example by encouraging the EYF to design best practices for how member organisations consult with young people in the Member States
- It is recommended that DG Education and Culture continue to put an emphasis on cooperation and networking with other organisations in Europe and beyond, as this seems to have an important impact on the added value and sphere of influence of the NGO organisations supported by the programme.

1.3.2 EFFECTIVENESS

The award of a grant has to some extent helped to give NGOs and the EYF credibility and increased their visibility among their members and other potential donors, but it is less clear that it has raised their profile among young people in general.

Commission funding has had an indirect effect on encouraging NGOs to better represent young people in all their diversity, by allowing organisations benefiting from the grant to dedicate more time to increasing networking and knowledge sharing between NGOs and increasing the quality of the activities organised. However, there are no formalised metrics used in for example the reporting template for measuring the degree to which beneficiaries have managed to engage larger numbers of young people than in previous years. For instance, the EYF does not actively monitor the number of young people engaged in its member organisations, beyond verifying that the organisations have the minimum required number of members.

65% percent of respondents to the online survey of NGOs feel that they have not had to change the focus or structure of their organisation in order to participate in the programme. The respondents are of the opinion that the programme has not had a large amount of impact on the total number of youth activities carried out by the NGOs. This supports the view that the programme has not radically altered the structure and frequency of the activities of NGOs, or greatly increased the number of people involved in them. The main impact of the programme has rather been to ensure that the activities of the NGOs are carried out in a more professional way, rather than increase the number of activities.

The support for the EYF does not necessarily have an impact on its members' ability to involve more young people in their activities or increase the ability of members to raise more funds. The greatest area of impact of the programme on the EYF is that it strengthens the EYF as a lobbying body in relation to the European Commission. The support for the EYF cannot be considered to have had a measurable impact upon young people across the EU.

Quality control of activities is largely left to the NGOs themselves and there is no central requirement, for instance, that organisations provide evidence of how satisfied the participants in activities are. This could be a risk for the Commission in the event of NGOs underperforming, as its reputation is tied to the NGOs that it funds.

The EYF gives its members the opportunity to participate and make their voices heard in a forum which has more resources, greater professionalism and more impact than the range of NGOs and National Youth Councils (NYCs) from which participants are drawn. The EYF promotes a form of active citizenship which offers valuable experiences to participants who are already engaged and have a sophisticated understanding of democratic processes. It does not, however, engage a large number of young people significantly below the age of 25 or directly involve youth who are not organised in the NGOs that are members of the EYF.

The type of active citizenship promoted by the EYF has several facets, which are important to understand in order to give a full picture of the value that the organisation adds to its members and to the European institutions. It is a unique institution, and the most powerful organisation coordinating the views and activities of a large number of youth NGOs. The EYF is more than a lobbying organisation: it is also a powerful network, a reservoir of expert knowledge and offers an apprenticeship for young people who are interested in taking up political and administrative positions in the future. The EYF can be seen as combining activities associated with democratic parliaments, political parties, political networks, think tanks and lobbying groups, social movements and trainee and apprenticeship schemes, but is especially focused on advocacy and lobbying. According to a majority of the people interviewed for this evaluation, all of these elements are important to its membership and to the European institutions.

According to members of the EYF, the grant has not necessarily allowed young people to become more personally involved in European issues, although it is encouraging that members of the EYF feel more informed about European issues. It is difficult for the EYF to demonstrate the impact of its lobbying activities; this is currently largely based on trust. This is an area of improvement for the EYF.

Recommendations

- The Commission should focus on quality control of the activities organised by the NGOs and the EYF. NGOs and the EYF should be required to provide evidence that they have processes in place for measuring the satisfaction of participants in activities.
- The EYF needs to do more to prove to its members that it is effective at representing them at the European level by giving a clearer picture of its achievements. This could involve for example publishing a separate annual summary of its lobbying activities, stating the main areas in which the EYF has been active and the frequency of contact with the Commission, for example.
- The EYF should examine whether to conduct a strategic review of its activities and its publicly expressed vision and mission, focusing realistically on the added value that it can give to members and the concrete goals it hopes to achieve. This could for example involve a broadly-based, detailed survey of members in order to identify the services of most value and the definition of what the organisation will strive to excel at in terms of structure, purpose and key policies.
- In order to encourage NGOs and the EYF to work towards the stated goals of the programme, the reporting procedures for both the NGOs and the EYF should emphasize metrics and concrete achievements, such as growth in membership and success at reaching multipliers, and ideally offer proof of how the organization has progressed compared to previous years. The metrics should be defined through consultations with the EYF and other potential beneficiaries.

1.3.3 EFFICIENCY

More than 50% of all respondents to the online survey would describe the grant application process as not easy, but reasonable. The second largest group (25%) of respondents indicate that the process seemed somewhat more complicated than necessary. 15% of respondents see the application process as straightforward and easy, with 10% thinking it is far too complicated and difficult. The fact that the majority feel that it is reasonable suggests that dramatically modifying the administrative procedures should not be a priority at present.

Allowing multi-annual contracts is the key demand made by participants in the programme. The timing between the calls for proposals and the signing of the contracts is also of great importance to the beneficiaries, as is the user-friendliness of the proposals. Increasing the funding cap from its current level is not seen as a priority at the moment. In terms of the specific administrative requirements, no particular area was cited by a large number of respondents as requiring immediate attention. However, the year on year consistency and predictability of the programme requirements were seen as very important by applicants.

In selecting NGOs, certain priority areas have existed formally every year; for example, in 2006, the priority area was politically visible initiatives concerning the participation of young people in the construction of Europe. However, the key aspect for evaluating tenders has been the capability of an organisation to carry out their work plan. The focus on the Commission's side has overwhelmingly been on operational rather than strategic aspects.

Very few proposals are rejected for quality reasons, but many are still being rejected for failing to comply with the administrative requirements (such as not having the required European network, or mistaking the deadline for applications). It is difficult to fault the Commission for this, as the evidence shows that if NGOs act proactively and ask for assistance and advice from the programme administrators, they are given the guidance that they need to fulfil the administrative obligations of the programme. Most NGO applicants (70%) feel that while the administrative burden is significant, it is basically reasonable.

Recommendations

- Easing the requirements for applying to the programme should not be a priority; rather, the focus should be on modifying and tightening the reporting requirements which measure concrete achievements, such as involving a greater number of young people, or participating more in the European debate on youth issues.
- It is recommended that the Commission continue its current approach to processing and handling applications to the programme. The Commission should continue taking a positive approach to applicants and assist them with their applications. This is something that is very visible among the programme beneficiaries and which is much appreciated. The fact that the Commission makes such assistance readily available to applicants could be publicised further, by for example making the contact details of the administrators prominent on the application materials and on the website.

1.3.4 SUSTAINABILITY

The main positive trend that the programme has induced is a strengthening of a number of youth NGOs and the European Youth Forum. This is in line with the established thinking of the Commission, which puts NGOs at the centre of its strategy of involving civil society and giving legitimacy to its decisions. If the programme were terminated, the Commission would weaken significantly the organizations which it has supported over a number of years, and it is difficult to currently see replacement funds coming from other sources for an important number of the NGOs.

While the programme was designed in such a way that funding to organisations would decrease for every year the organisation reapplied, thus in theory pushing NGOs towards self sustainability, it seems clear from the focus groups, the online survey and the telephone interviews with beneficiaries that they see their survival without the programme in stark terms. Although the evidence from the unsuccessful applicants suggests that the effects of a lack of funding were moderate, it would be inadvisable to conclude that the personnel currently engaged within the NGOs would look actively for alternative funding sources if the programme were discontinued, as they have very negative perceptions of the possibility of obtaining funds from elsewhere. It can be expected that a large number of NGOs would cease to exist without the funding.

Recommendations

- The Commission should continue to fund youth NGOs and the EYF under the new Youth in Action Programme, taking into account the recommendations made in this evaluation on improving the relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of the programme.
- The Commission should not consider terminating the programme or putting too much pressure on applicants to look for alternative funding sources, as the beneficiaries currently see the possibility of obtaining similar funding elsewhere as highly unrealistic.

2 INTRODUCTION

The Evaluation Partnership Limited (TEP) is submitting this final report to the European Commission, Directorate-General Education & Culture (DG EAC) on the final external evaluation of the Community Action Programme to Promote Bodies Active at European Level in the Field of Youth ("Youth" Programme) for the period 2004 till 2006.² The report has as its main aim to assess the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, utility and sustainability of the programme. The evaluation is based on an analysis of the views of a wide range of stakeholders in order to measure the impact of the funding that the Commission provides to selected youth NGOs and the European Youth Forum (EYF). The main tools used to gather data for this evaluation include three online surveys tailored at different stakeholder groups, a series of face-to-face and telephone interviews, and focus groups.

The main beneficiaries of the programme have been the European Youth Forum (EYF) and a number of youth NGOs and bodies active in the field of youth. The EYF represents almost one hundred different youth organizations in Europe, providing a common platform for working closely with the European institutions. In addition to the European Youth Forum, a wide range of NGOs have received funding through the programme, ranging from associations for students, political and religiously affiliated organisations, associations promoting culture and the arts and a range of bodies promoting cultural exchange and initiatives designed to bolster civil society. Roughly 50% of the programme budget has gone to support the EYF, 50% to selected youth NGOs.

The evaluation was launched with signature of the contract on 7 November 2006 and undertaken via a three-phase work programme, the inception, data collection and final reporting phases. This final report provides an assessment of the programme as a whole; and presents an assessment of the impact of the funding on the beneficiaries. Although the programme has since been merged with the new Youth in Action Programme, the Commission hopes that this evaluation will provide lessons for the future.

2.1 DESCRIPTION OF THE PROGRAMME

2.1.1 Introduction

This section provides an overview of the activities implemented through the "Community Action Programme to Promote Bodies Active at European Level in the Field of Youth" from 2004 to 2006. The overarching responsibility for the management of this programme is with DG EAC, and resides specifically in Directorate D (Youth, Civil Society, and Communication), and with the newly created Education, Audiovisual and Culture Agency Executive Agency (EACEA). The Programme ran from 1 January 2004 to 31 December 2006 with a budget of 13 Million Euro for three years.

2.1.2 Programme Objectives

² There exists a Youth Programme, the main programme in favour of young people, which has a separate legal basis from the programme under evaluation; in this report "Youth" programme will refer to the Community Action Programme to Promote Bodies Active in the Field of Youth.

The programme was designed to support the activities of bodies whose work plan and activities are targeted at young people. The general objective of the programme is to support the activities and work plan of these bodies by covering the operating costs of the granted organisations. Such operating costs can include personnel costs, overheads, travel costs, publications and costs such as bank charges and insurance fees.

2.1.3 Legal Basis

While the management of budgetary line for the programme has been directly supported by DG Education and Culture (DG EAC) since the mid 1990s, the legal basis for the programme was adopted by the Parliament and Council in April 2004 (Decision No 790/2004/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 21 April 2004). The legal basis for the programme states that the activities conducted by the supported bodies must contribute, or be capable of contributing, to the active participation of young citizens in public life and in society and to the development and implementation of Community cooperation actions in the field of youth in the broad sense. Cooperation with the European Youth Forum (EYF) contributes to this general objective in so far as the European Youth Forum represents and coordinates non-governmental youth organisations and relays information on youth to the European institutions.

2.1.4 Selection of beneficiaries

There are two categories for the award of operating grants. The first is the support of the operating costs of the European Youth Forum and second category includes the grants for the operation of international non-governmental youth organisations. A direct award supports the European Youth Forum, while in the period studied there has an annual call for proposals in order to support non-profit making bodies working in the field of youth. In order to qualify for the grant, the activities of these organisations must contribute to the active participation of young citizens in public life and in society as well as to the development and implementation of Community cooperation actions in the field of youth. The organisations selected are especially encouraged to develop initiatives supporting the recognition of cultural diversity and the inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities.

To be eligible for an operating grant, an NGO must have been legally established for more than one year, be non-governmental and non-profit-making, be a youth organisation or a dedicated youth wing of a larger non-governmental organisation, receive co-financing amounting to at least 50% of its total annual budget from sources other than the European Union budget, and include, among its own staff, at least one member on a permanent contract. The amount of co-financing required by the EYF was set at 20% for the programming period.

Eligible countries were all 25 EU Member States as well as EFTA countries in the EEA (Iceland, Liechtenstein, and Norway). Applicants must have active member organisations in at least eight eligible countries, and the members should be active in the field of youth, legally established for more than one year, registered in one of the eligible countries of the programme and formally affiliated to the applicant organisation.

2.1.5 Financial conditions

During the period under evaluation (2004-2006) applicants received only one operating grant from the budget of the European Communities at a time. If operating grants are renewed for the third subsequent year, they were gradually decreased with a decreasing rate of 2.5 % per year. This is a result of the financial regulation covering Community grant programmes. The

maximum funding ceiling for NGOs was set at €35,000; for the EYF there was set a *minimum* amount of €2,000,000. 80% of the grant is paid as an advance to the beneficiaries; the remaining 20% is paid upon acceptance of the organisation's final report to the European Commission.

In general terms, the programme is open to all NGOs where youth are significantly represented among young people in Europe. There is no limit on the size of the NGO or the type of NGO (environmental, religious, political etc), as long as their activities and work programme broadly conforms to the themes set out in the legal basis. Specifically however, the NGOs that apply for the programme share a number of characteristics, which will be examined in this section.

2.1.6 Profile of Youth NGOs

Eligible youth non-governmental organisations (NGOs) must be incorporated for more than one year as a not-for-profit NGO with a focus on youth and must be able to demonstrate their capability to carry out their work programme. Capability is assessed mainly in terms of human resources (each successful applicant must have at least one full time employee), financial resources (at least 20% of the budget must be co-financed from sources other than the programme according to the legal basis; in the 2004 and 2005 Call for Proposals the co-financing rate was however set at 50% for Youth NGO's while the rate for the EYF was set at 20%) and track record (the applicant must have been established for at least one year).

The requirements for financial capacity have been the most difficult for the programme management to assess. The legal basis allows for contributions in kind as well as cash. However, there was an extended period of disagreement between the programme administration and the EYF about how to value contributions in kind (specifically volunteer time). A formula has since been agreed upon, but it was a question that took significant administrative resources to resolve.

In terms of proposed activities, the applicants must provide a work programme that documents that the organisation is active in at least one of the following seven fields mentioned in the legal basis:

- Representation of the views and interests of young people in all their diversity at Community level
- Youth exchanges and voluntary services
- Informal and non-formal learning and work programmes
- The promotion of intercultural learning and understanding
- Debate on European matters and EU policies or youth policies
- Dissemination of information on Community action
- Actions promoting young citizens' participation and initiative

Not-for-profit NGOs in the field of youth share a number of characteristics. Their key membership base suffers from a much higher turnover than is the case for other NGOs, since membership in a youth NGO is often defined by age. This high turnover can lead to deficiencies in institutional memory and difficulties in implementing long-term strategic plans compared to other types of NGOs. This may limit the effectiveness of youth NGOs in carrying out their operations, raising funds and achieving sustainable growth.

A strength youth NGOs may have compared to other NGOs and compared to privately incorporated organisations is access to unpaid volunteer labour. This is a significant advantage when applying for public grant programmes such as the one under evaluation. The often

burdensome administrative and reporting requirements required by public sector programmes for reasons of transparency and accountability are perhaps less of a deterrent to NGOs where volunteers account for a significant portion of the manpower than for other types of organisations which typically rely on public sector grants, such as SMEs and start-up firms.

2.1.7 Profile of the European Youth Forum

The European Youth Forum (EYF) represents more than 90 National Youth Councils and International Non-Governmental Youth Organisations. The EYF has existed since 1996, as the result of a merger between the Youth Forum, the European Co-ordination Bureau of International Youth Organisations (ECB) and the Council of the National Youth Committees.

The activities of the EYF can be summarised as focusing on three key areas: knowledge transfer, publications and advocacy. In terms of activities that transfer knowledge among young people and between members of the organisation, the EYF organises conferences and disseminates best practices among organisations active in the youth field. The EYF also publishes press releases, studies and reports, electronic newsletters, booklets and campaign brochures. In terms of lobbying and advocacy, the EYF engages in consultations with the European institutions, coordinates the positions of members, and has in the past carried out certain activist projects aimed at young people.

The EYF is structured in line with the idea that, while it cannot function like a parliament for youth in Europe, it should be as democratic and representative as possible. The EYF has the following statutory bodies:

- The General Assembly: The General Assembly is the highest decision making body of the Forum, and meets at least every two years. All members are represented in the General Assembly.
- The Council of Members: This body manages key decisions in the EYF and evaluates the work of other working structures, overseeing the financial situation.
- The Bureau and the Secretary General: The Secretary General is responsible for the day to day operations of the EYF, and overseen by the Bureau, which is elected by the members of the EYF at the General Assembly. To support the Secretary General, the EYF has a full-time staff of around 10 people.
- Financial Control Committee (FCC): Responsible for the internal audit of the finances of the Forum. It acts in advisory capacity to the Bureau, Council of Members and the General Assembly, and submits a written report to the Council of Members and to the General Assembly with regard to the annual budget and to the accounts of the Forum.

The total budget for the EYF in 2005 was around €2.5 million. Half (50%) of the budget went to cover the running costs of the organisation (staff expenses for example). The EYF is funded largely by the European Commission through DG EAC.

2.2 THE CONTEXT OF THE PROGRAMME

2.2.1 European Policy Background

The European Commission has run several programmes over the years to support youth in general, including the “Youth for Europe” programme during the 1990s and the “European Voluntary Services” programmes. These programmes were integrated into the “Youth programme” in 2000. The Commission’s thinking about youth policy was summed up in The White Paper on Youth Policy, published in the second semester of 2001³. The White Paper reveals that the Commission sees the challenge it faces starkly:

“All this (i.e. that established institutions such as school, work and the social environment no longer play the same integrating role they used to) is often reflected in a sense of fragility, a loss of confidence in the existing decision making systems, and a degree of disaffection in terms of the traditional forms of participation in public life and in youth organisations.”

The White Paper goes further, and specifically questions the effectiveness of previous policy in the field of youth:

“The fact is that the resolutions or declarations on specifically youth-related issues have often gone no further than good intentions and the European institutions and the Member States lack an overview of the policies and hence of the various types of action which can be taken to support young people.”

Due to the entry into force in 2003 of the new Financial Regulation, the European Parliament and the Council adopted a formal programme underpinned by a legal basis to support non-governmental international organisations operating in the field of youth.⁴ The general objective of the Community action programme is “to strengthen Community action in the field of youth and increase its effectiveness.” In order to accomplish this objective, the programme supports the activities of bodies working at European level in the field of youth.

The key policy documents and decisions serving as the strategic and policy framework of the programme are:

- The Laeken Declaration
- White Paper “A new impetus for European Youth”
- Decision No. 790/2004/EC of the European Commission and the Council of 21st April 2004 establishing a Community action programme to promote bodies active at European level in the field of Youth
- Proposal for a Decision of the European Parliament and the Council creating the “Youth in action” programme for the period 2007-2013

The Laeken Declaration on the Future of Europe (December 2001) asserts that one of the basic challenges to be resolved by the European Union is how to bring citizens – especially the young – closer to the European institutions. It stresses the fact that the division and definition of competences between the Union and the Member States should be made more transparent and that there should be a simplification of the Union’s instruments. It also calls for the increase of democratic legitimacy and transparency of the present institutions and calls for their possible reorganisation.

As a consequence, the reform of the European institutions, the decision-making processes and allocation of powers were to be prepared by the “Convention on the Future of Europe”. The

³ http://ec.europa.eu/youth/whitepaper/download/whitepaper_en.pdf

⁴ Decision No. 790/2004/EC establishing a “Community action programme to support bodies active at European level in the field of youth”, adopted in April 2004.

Convention started its work in February 2002 for one year. In the beginning of its work, it discussed these issues with citizens and associations of citizens in order to better understand what Europe's citizens expect from the European Union. The Convention's objective was to come up with a proposal either to reform the existing treaties of the EU or to propose a new treaty all together.

The White Paper on Youth (launched in November 2001) suggests giving the European Union a new framework for cooperation in youth policy. The Paper is the result of a wide-ranging consultation at the national as well as the European level, involving young people from all kind of backgrounds, youth organisations, the scientific community, policy-makers and public administrations. It sets out that following enlargement; there will be 75 million young people in Europe between 15 and 25. It examines that European societies are undergoing demographic changes and that the imbalance between young and old people will bring about a qualitative change in the relation between generations. The Commission hopes to meet the expectations of young people by giving them the means to express their ideas and to make a greater contribution to society. Therefore, besides drawing on already existing national and Community activities, the White Paper proposes a new framework for cooperation. This new framework consists of two components which respond to strong demand from all parties concerned with youth policy, including the Member States, and is based on arrangements for applying the open method of coordination in the specific field of youth:

- Increasing cooperation between Member States: This component includes the definition of priority themes, the laying down of common objectives and guidelines as well as the provision for follow-up mechanisms. Moreover, it includes arrangements for consulting young people. The Commission proposes certain actions, such as participation, voluntary service among young people, information and improving the public authorities' awareness of young people's concerns.
- Taking greater account of the youth factor in different policy fields: The European Commission believes that education, lifelong learning, mobility, employment and social integration, and racism and xenophobia are the priority areas in which the youth aspect has to be taken into account. These policy fields will require close coordination with the various authorities, at both national and European level. The European Commission aims to ensure that guidelines concerning young people will be taken more into account of in these policies and forms of action.

The general objective of this programme established by the Decision No. 790/2004/EC of the European Commission and the Council of 21st April 2004 is to support the activities of organisations which contribute to strengthening community action in the field of youth and increasing its effectiveness, e.g. through youth exchanges, non-formal educational and vocational training measures, the promotion of intercultural learning and work programmes, debates on European matters and youth policy, dissemination of information on Community policy and measures promoting young citizens' participation and initiative. The Programme ran from 2004 to 2006 and had a budget of 13 Million Euro.

Since the former "Youth" programmes come to an end in 2006, the Proposal for a Decision of the European Parliament and the Council creating the "Youth in Action" programme for the period 2007-2013 has been elaborated by the Commission. It intends to involve young people in society as active citizens and to strengthen their sense of belonging to Europe. Moreover, it aims to contribute to their education and to develop their sense of solidarity and mutual understanding. The programme is intended for young people, youth workers, youth organisations and other partners working in the field of youth.

The programme distinguishes between five general objectives and a large number of specific objectives, and proposes five types of specific actions to pursue the general and specific objectives:

- 1) Youth for Europe – i.e. the support of exchanges of young people to increase their mobility
- 2) European Voluntary Service – i.e. to support young people's participation in various forms of voluntary activities, both within and outside the EU
- 3) Youth of the World – i.e. to support the exchange of young people and those active in youth work and youth organisation with partner countries
- 4) Youth workers and support systems – i.e. to support bodies active at European level in the field of youth, in particular the operation of youth NGOs
- 5) Support for policy cooperation– i.e. to organise structured dialogue between the various actors in the field of youth, in particular the young people themselves, youth workers and policy makers

The programme has a budget of 885 Million Euro and the Commission intends to implement at least 35.000 youth exchange projects by 2013 and involve 10,000 volunteers per year. The programme, however, will be managed to a large extent by national agencies. Centralised projects will be managed by the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive agency.

2.2.2 Definition of Youth Policy and Current Challenges

Youth is commonly defined in three ways: as an age group, a legal category, and a group with a distinct cultural identity. As an age group, youth is generally defined by the Council of Europe and the European Commission as including persons between the ages of 13 and 30⁵ (this is as from the implementation of the new Youth in Action Programme, running from 2007 to 2013. The previous age limit, under the Youth Programme was from 15 to 30). As a legal category, youth is defined in terms of the period preceding the age of majority, which in most European countries is 18 years. As a group with a distinct cultural identity, youth can be defined in a myriad of ways, derived from consumer patterns, socio-economic aspirations, and general philosophy and approach to life.

For the purposes of this evaluation, the first and the last definition are the most relevant. In terms of eligibility under the programme the definition of youth as an age group needs to be taken into account by beneficiaries and programme administrators, but the definition of youth as a distinct cultural group is also relevant as policies and programmes affecting youth need to recognize the radically changing social context of today's youth. Traditionally, conceptions of the distinct cultural identity and role of youth has underpinned legal reflection and influenced how youth has been defined in terms of age.

Drafting and implementing youth policy today is more challenging than at any time in the past. While important segments of today's youth are optimistic about the future and the possibilities offered to them by a more closely integrated European community, many others feel disillusioned. While young people in post-war Europe benefited from prosperity on a scale unimagined by previous generations, there are signs in many European countries that the current generation in many cases actually enjoy fewer prospects than their parents enjoyed. A

⁵ Definition used by the Partnership Council of Europe & European Commission. www.training-youth.net

key challenge for any youth policy is thus to involve young people who are disadvantaged economically and socially.

The ways in which youth organise themselves is also changing. Many of the NGOs supported by the programme currently under evaluation have a history going back deep into the 20th century, a century characterised by countless mass movements and ideological friction. While there exist mass movements among youth today, they are often more diverse and diffuse than in the past, represented for instance by the anti-globalisation or the recent anti-war movement.⁶ In fact it can be argued that many of the initiatives over the last few years that have shown the greatest capacity to involve and mobilize youth, both in terms of representing their views and engaging them politically, have not come from the NGO sector or have at least not been rooted in a single well-defined “top down” theme of action.

New technologies have also played a role in changing the way young people engage with each other and with the adult world, exemplified by ideologically neutral social networking platforms such as YouTube or Myspace, which have been very successful at creating connections between young people and disseminating information in a way that turns traditional means of youth networking on its head. The political impact and the challenge to the NGO sector represented by these new forms of organising and social networking between young people should not be underestimated.

2.2.3 Youth Politics and Youth Identity

It seems clear that in the past, political issues such as environmental protection, anti-racism, and gender equality have been put on the map by young people challenging views that were held by previous generations. This historical record is in itself a powerful argument for political decision-makers to listen to the concerns of young people, as it shows that political issues initially promoted by young people can shape future public opinion trends. The fact that young people have been prominent in fostering awareness about certain political issues in the past does not however lead to the conclusion that such issues are or indeed were political concerns that engage a majority or even a large number of young people.

Several researchers have over the years attempted to identify political and public opinion trends among youth that distinguish it from other groups in society. For example, Nina Raam, a researcher at the University of Bergen in Norway, recently stated that “the trend in the last few years has been that youth are engaged in single-issue politics and in party-neutral, yet political, organizations such as Attac and Amnesty International”.⁷

While such trends are important, it is necessary to keep in mind that such findings usually concern only a small, politically engaged minority among youth. It also does not take into account the fact that while youth might be moving in a certain political direction, this could also be true of other age groups, making it a general trend rather than a specific trend among youth. Many of the issues which have engaged significant numbers of young people in the past, such as environmentalism or the struggle for equality between the sexes, have since become part of mainstream politics, and it is questionable whether young people are likely to be more engaged in such issues today than are people from other age groups.

⁶ Which brought together private individuals and NGOs from a wide range of backgrounds, ranging from liberal socialists, to nationalists and islamists.

⁷ <http://www.aftenposten.no/nyheter/iriks/politikk/valg2005/article1090825.ece>

A recent Eurobarometer survey published to coincide with the European Commission's "Youth takes the Floor" event showed little difference between young people and respondents from other groups on the question of what the priority among political issues should be for the European Union.⁹ Youth were however slightly more emphatic about the need to prioritize employment issues (52% of young people vs. 47% of other groups responded that employment should be the top priority for the European Union.)

While there were few significant differences between youth and other groups on the policy issues that matter to them, the study found a clear difference of outlook and attitude between young people and other groups. Youth were found to be more positive and optimistic about both the immediate and the distant future, and more positive towards the EU. They were also significantly less likely to be interested in politics (55% vs 67%), and less likely to feel well informed (47% vs. 58%) compared to all other European citizens.

The problematic issue of defining the distinct political identity of youth in relation to other stakeholders still needs to be addressed in more detail. There are great variations across Europe in the types of institutions which make up the youth sector. Some countries have a great number of national institutions professing to be involved in representing the views of young people, in other countries young people rely on exerting influence through community initiatives or within traditional sectors.

It is difficult to say with certainty that one country's model is closer to "best practice" than another. However, if it were possible to identify common characteristics that set youth apart as a distinct group within society, one would come one step closer to defining the political interests of young people and to identifying ways in for political decision makers to take account of this interest.

In relation to other age groups, young people share a number of defining characteristics. Youth can be seen as a relatively new historical phenomenon, a prolonged transitional stage between childhood and adulthood made necessary by the complexity of modern society, where career trajectories and traditional identities are not fixed to the extent they were in the past.

As a group characterized by being in transition, youth is both a problem and an opportunity for society. In contrast to childhood and adulthood, youth is less linear, a stage in life with fewer clearly defined responsibilities and more ambiguous markers of progress. For many people, youth offers the freedom to choose and to experiment, but for others, the flipside of freedom is insecurity and uncertainty.

It can be easy to stereotype young people as being more disposed towards certain types of political action, or as caring more about certain issues based on the views of a vocal minority. An example of this is the assumption that young Americans in the 1960s were more likely to oppose the Vietnam War than older people, a view seemingly supported by the fact that many university students were opposed to the war. In fact, more young people supported the Vietnam War than did any other section of the population.⁸

Being in a transitional phase between childhood and adulthood, youth share several distinguishing characteristics and interests. Economically, youth are generally speaking in a weaker position than adults, due to a lower rate of full-time employment and lack of savings. Youth unemployment in several European countries is above or approaching 20%, a rate higher

⁸ http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/comment/columnists/daniel_finkelstein/article1291155.ece

⁹ http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/notes/back_note_en.pdf

than the respective figures for other age groups. In France for instance, youth unemployment is conservatively estimated at around 22%. As a result, young people delay taking on the full range of responsibilities associated with adulthood, such as investing in property or forming families. For this reason, employment and economic issues clearly have a very strong youth dimension.

Education is an issue in which young people have an important stake. Compared to older generations, young people are more likely to be involved in education. Although new ways of working (the need for even adults to undergo training in new skill sets) and the effect that education has on multiple generations through its impact on families make it an issue which engages all levels of society, it nevertheless remains an issue where young people possess a valuable store of experiences and viewpoints for policy makers to draw on.

In addition to these policy areas which have a relatively clear youth dimension, there are also issues which affect everyone in society equally, but are perhaps felt disproportionately among young people. For example, young people are more likely to travel within Europe in search of work, making visa procedures a more visible problem for young people than for older generations. Human rights issues can also be felt more strongly among youth. Because youth have less political influence than older generations and struggle with problems such as unemployment and lack of access to economic opportunities, their rights can potentially be ignored more easily than those of other stakeholders. While this is largely not the case in Europe, it is a major issue in many developing countries, especially countries with an authoritarian form of government.

The examples above illustrate the youth dimension of a number of political and social issues. The youth dimension in other policy fields is often less clear cut than in the examples above. It can be argued that there is a youth dimension to every issue that affects society and that young people should be represented at different levels of policy-making on the principle of inclusiveness and balance. In many cases, it can be difficult to distinguish the existence of a specific youth interest in opposition to the interests of other stakeholders, something which poses challenges for organisations which seek to represent the opinions of young people.

2.2.4 IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY MAKERS

Youth is often assessed as a problem by policy makers. Viewing youth as a problem is perhaps simpler from the policy maker's perspective than viewing youth as an opportunity. As a solution for youth unemployment, one can propose the creation of subsidized jobs or vocational training schemes. As a solution to youth delinquency, one can propose sterner criminal sentences and tougher policing.

The opportunities that youth offers to society are more difficult to assess, as they are closely linked to the freedom to experiment afforded to young people who are in transition from childhood to adulthood. In matters of culture, youth is recognized as a powerful source of innovation and creativity. Recently, young people have also made their marks in fields like entrepreneurship and business. These are fields in which youth are increasingly relevant, not only as consumers but as sources of new thinking.

Designing public policy to stimulate the potential source of innovation that youth represents is trickier than solving clearly defined problems associated with youth, as there is less control over the outcomes of such policies and less clarity about where to focus such efforts. It seems clear however that a European youth policy should take both dimensions into account, by offering

both targeted solutions to problems and more hands-off support to youth associations based on innovation and creativity.

For policy makers to assess the problems and the opportunities that youth offers to society there is a need for organized interest groups, youth forums and NGOs representing youth at both the national and European level. While it is clear that youth often have a common interest, which can be at odds with the views of other stakeholders, there are also characteristics of youth as a group that form barriers to the formation of strong interest groups representing the views of young people, such as a lack of experience and professionalization, high staff turnover, and the overrepresentation of young people from certain backgrounds. The difficulties in identifying clearly the political interests of young people and the inherent strengths and weaknesses of youth organisations are important to keep in mind in order to contextualise the findings of this evaluation.

3 DESIGN OF THE EVALUATION

3.1 RESEARCH DESIGN

The evaluation was launched with the signature of the contract on 7 November 2006 and was undertaken via a three-phase work programme. The evaluation timetable included the following elements:

- An inception phase
- A data gathering phase
- An analysis and judgement phase

The first (inception) phase included an initial desk research programme and a preliminary review of background information and statistics on the “Youth” programme. The inception phase also involved an analysis of the views and perceptions of key representatives of DG Education and Culture and EACEA based on interviews held in Brussels on 8 and 9 November 2006. The information gathered during the first phase of the evaluation has been used to review and analyse the objectives and appropriateness of the initial evaluation questions presented by DG EAC in the Terms of Reference to this assignment. As a result the evaluation team presented a revised methodological approach as well as a set of criteria and indicators to be used in the assessment, which has informed the data gathering during the second phase.

The second (data gathering) phase consisted of different telephone and face-to-face interview programmes with external stakeholders of the evaluation, as well as three online questionnaire programmes, a brief email questionnaire to unsuccessful applicants and two focus groups. The total number of stakeholders consulted was 258. The table below presents the stakeholders consulted during the first and second phase of the evaluation, and details the response rate and the tools used for data gathering:

Stakeholders	Data Gathering Tool	Dates	Potential Response	Actual Response
Members of the European Youth Forum	Online questionnaire	Jan 10- Feb 24	90	32
	Focus Groups (NYCs)	March 2007	8-10	4
	Focus Groups (NGOs)	April 2007	8-10	7
	Face-to-face and telephone interviews (NYCS and NGOs)	March 2007	10	10
Successful NGO applicants	Online questionnaire	Dec 15- Feb 24	200	59
	Telephone interviews	Jan-Feb 2007	200	8
Members of YNGOs who have received backing from the programme	Online questionnaire	Jan 4- Feb 24	750	120
		Feb 6		

Stakeholders	Data Gathering Tool	Dates	Potential Response	Actual Response
Unsuccessful NGO applicants	Brief email questionnaire		60	12
The European Youth Forum	Face-to-Face interviews	Dec, 2006	1-5	3
DG Education and Culture	Face-to-Face interviews	Dec, 2006	2	2
EACEA	Face-to-Face interviews	Dec, 2006	1	1
TOTAL RESPONSE				<u>258</u>

The third phase of the evaluation concentrated on analysing the data collected from the sources listed above and the assessment of the impact of the programme as a whole. The combination of quantitative and qualitative data, objectively verifiable evidence and subjective opinions of the respondents were treated according to standard evaluation criteria and on this basis conclusions and recommendations were made to serve as an input for the improvement of the implementation of the programme's activities under the framework of the new "Youth in Action" programme (2007-2013). Methods for analysis of empirical data included simple statistics for the survey data and thematic analysis of the qualitative data from the focus groups and telephone interviews. Respondents' subjective opinions were compared with objectively verifiable evidence or interpreted in consideration of the degree of consensus in the sample.

3.2 IMPLEMENTATION OF RESEARCH AND COLLECTION OF DATA

The methodology for the evaluation was designed to gain an insight into the views of a large number of persons across the different stakeholder groups for this evaluation. Seven stakeholder groups were identified:

- The European Youth Forum
- Members of the European Youth Forum
- Successful NGO applicants
- Members of NGOs who have received backing from the programme
- Unsuccessful NGO applicants
- DG Education and Culture
- EACEA

The stakeholder groups were chosen on the basis that they were the groups most directly affected by the programme. It was outside of the scope of this evaluation to consult young people not affiliated with either the EYF or with youth NGOs.

To elicit the opinions of stakeholders, the following tools were used:

- Online questionnaire
- Focus Groups
- Face-to-face interviews
- Telephone interviews
- Brief email questionnaire

All of the stakeholder groups (with the exception of DG EAC and EACEA and the unsuccessful NGO applicants, who were consulted via a brief email survey) were asked to complete an online survey adapted to their specific position within the programme. This provided data that was treated quantitatively by the evaluation team. In order to get more qualitative data, two focus groups, and a number of telephone interviews were conducted. Due to the relatively small number of persons and NGOs with direct involvement in the programme, it was considered that a strong focus on qualitative data gathering was important in order to supplement the responses from the online survey. In total, 258 stakeholders were consulted across the different groups. The response rate was 20% out of the 1330 potential respondents identified.¹⁰

3.3 STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF THE EVALUATION DESIGN

The respective strengths and limitations of the key tools used for this evaluation are detailed in the table below.

Tool	Strengths	Limitations
Online questionnaire	Allows for the consultation of a large number of stakeholders, and provides them with anonymity. Allows data to be quantified.	Allows answers to a defined number of questions, but risks that important questions that need to be asked may not be included. For this reason, this method is best used in combination with more open data collection methods
Focus groups	Allows for in-depth discussions with stakeholders on specific themes. Can be used both to validate findings and as a source of information about the perceptions of stakeholders and the dominant discourse among them.	Carefully selected to represent a wide variety of different NGOs and interests, but can not be used as a source of aggregate data due to the size of the sample (7-10 participants per group) and will not provide responses that are statistically representative of a particular population segment.
In-depth face-to-face interviews	Most useful to gather data from informed individuals; those who have a good knowledge about a topic. Allows for in-depth discussions with stakeholders on specific questions and allows respondents to express their views to the evaluator in confidence. Can be used both to validate findings and as a source of information/and a method of documentary collection from	This method is not used to gather data from large dispersed populations and would not be used for uninformed publics.

¹⁰ The complete survey report for the online survey is included as section 4 of the Appendices.

Tool	Strengths	Limitations
	those directly or indirectly involved in an action.	
Telephone interviews	Similar to in-depth face-to-face interviews. Allows for in-depth discussions with stakeholders on specific themes, and allows respondents to express their views to the evaluator in confidence. Can be used both to validate findings and as a source of information about the perceptions of stakeholders.	Interviewees tend to be less forthcoming over the telephone than in person. As with in-depth face-to-face interviews, telephone interviews are not suited to the uninformed, although telephone polling (asking mainly closed questions) can be used where segment coverage is important.
Brief email questionnaire	Is less time consuming and intrusive for stakeholders than an online questionnaire, resulting in a potentially high response rate.	Email addresses must be available to the evaluators. Provides limited data, as the questions are reduced to three key ones.

4 FINDINGS

4.1 RELEVANCE

Introduction

European bodies in the youth sector, and programmes to support them, have never been more relevant than today. Mobility among young people within Europe is higher than ever before, with many choosing to study, work or volunteer abroad. In many cases, young people travel in search of opportunities which have become scarce in their home countries. The latest Eurobarometer (2007) shows that studying at a university in any European country and travelling within the Union are considered by young people as the two main advantages of belonging to the community.

Assuming that the trend of youth mobility within Europe will become more pronounced in the future, it seems particularly vital to have strong institutions in place to represent young people at the European level. While it can be a source of enrichment, increased mobility also carries with it the risk that national policymakers may be tempted to ignore issues such as youth employment or education because they have the safety valve of letting young people vote with their feet and pursue better opportunities abroad.

This section seeks to answer the question of how the programme has helped bring young people closer to European institutions, encouraged active citizenship and contributed to further cooperation across borders between actors in the youth field, thus laying the groundwork for stronger and more truly European institutions representing the interests of youth.

To what extent has the programme brought young people closer to the European institutions and encouraged active citizenship?

Active citizenship is a term with no strict definition but which in the context of young people often refers to developing the skills and acquiring the knowledge needed to take on roles of responsibility in the wider community. The definition of the skills needed for active citizenship is necessarily broad, as young people live in a world which is changing rapidly. It is important to keep in mind that the skills and knowledge needed for playing an active role as a young citizen may diverge from, rather than mirror, the skills used by adults.

In terms of encouraging active citizenship, most of the NGOs supported focus on traditional skills and knowledge. About half of the funded NGOs in a given year represent traditional, or “establishment” types of youth organisations such as political or religious youth wings, student federations or large and well-established NGOs such as the scout movement or the YMCA.

The focus on traditional forms of active citizenship is in part a result of how the programme is designed. NGOs who receive funding need a track record, an established international network and a relatively strong organisation. This may limit the participation in the programme of organisations promoting innovative or radical skill sets, as such organisations often are newer, less organised and based more around projects, rather than institutions.

While the funded NGOs to a large extent promote traditional and “establishment” types of active citizenship, the programme clearly does not deliberately exclude diverse or non-traditional approaches to active citizenship, for instance in the cultural field. NGOs such as Café Babel, which publishes a multilingual current affairs magazine on the internet, or CREARC, a theatre association which promotes an annual youth theatre festival, could be seen as examples of NGOs which engage young people by using innovative and non-traditional concepts of active citizenship.

The evaluation also found that many large and established organisations which receive or have received grants through the programme, such as the Scout movement or the Duke of Edinburgh’s Award, are well aware of the need to adapt to changing definitions of active citizenship, for example by focusing more on engaging disadvantaged youth.

“We see that there is a demand from young people for a more “activist” approach than in the past, where the youth exchanges we organised were seen as apolitical. We have recently formulated a strategy for getting away from our “middle-class people hiking in the mountains” image, and we are trying to target groups, young offenders for instance, who have not previously been part of our activities”.¹¹

While the Commission funding has probably had an indirect effect on encouraging broader definitions of active citizenship, by increasing networking and knowledge sharing between NGOs for example, this evaluation has not come across any evidence that the funding from the European Commission has had a direct effect in pushing NGOs to broaden the approach they take to active citizenship. A large majority of respondents to the online survey state that participation in the programme has not required them to change the focus and structure of their organisation in any particular direction. This is in line with the “hands-off” philosophy of the programme as it was conceived during the period studied. The awareness of the need to take into account new methods for encouraging active citizenship seems to be primarily market-driven among the NGOs, a function of changing demand from young people and a realization among NGOs that they need to adapt the skills and knowledge they offer to the interests of young people, not driven by their participation in the programme.

In terms of bringing “people closer to the European design and to European institutions”, the programme can be said to have succeeded on several fronts. All of the interviewees stated that participating in the programme brought other benefits in addition to the financial support. The symbolic value of participating in the programme was cited as especially important.

“The financial aspect is important, there is however also a moral aspect to the programme. It is something which gives us a lot of recognition in our country. It is a very important “plus” for us, and for the young people involved, as it has an important symbolic value. It makes the European Union real to young people, it makes it present in their minds”.¹²

The fact that participating in the programme for instance gives NGOs the right to use the Commission logo in their communications material was perceived as very valuable benefit by the NGOs. All of the NGOs interviewed were proud of the fact that they received Commission funding. Not one person surveyed suggested that being perceived as close to the Commission could have a negative effect on attracting young people; on the contrary, it was seen as something attractive to young people.

¹¹ Source: Telephone interview, Youth NGO funded by the programme in 2004

¹² Source: Telephone interview, Youth NGO funded by the programme in 2005, 2006

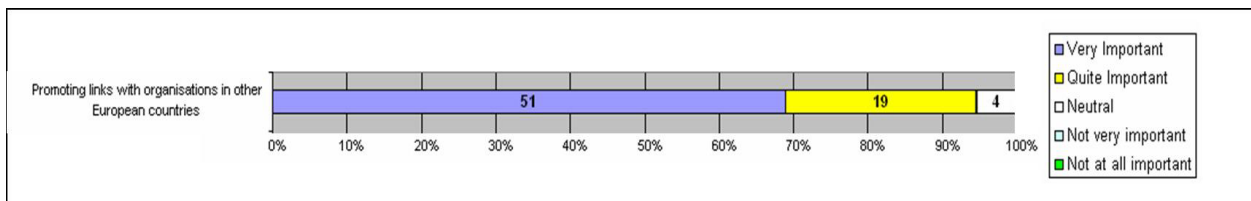
To what extent has the programme contributed to furthering cooperation between community actors in the youth sector?

By setting as a condition that NGOs have a wide European network, the programme gives a powerful incentive for NGOs to expand beyond their country of origin and develop in a European direction by cooperating with community actors in other countries.

“We don’t have support from our government; there is no youth policy in (our country). We need to become a regional organisation so we can receive grants from the European Union. We are working very hard at this at the moment”¹³

The online survey of youth NGOs showed that promoting links with organisations in other European countries was a top priority for NGOs involved in the programme. Almost 70% agreed that it was a “Very important” objective, with a further 25% considering it an “Important” objective.

Figure 1: Most Important Youth NGO Objectives



4.2 EFFECTIVENESS

Introduction

This section answers all of the evaluation questions relating to the effectiveness of the action programme. It is structured in two parts. The first examines the effectiveness of the support offered to the NGOs, and the second examines the effectiveness of the European Youth Forum as a separate case study.

4.2.1 Youth NGOs

To what extent do the granted NGOs represent the views and interests of young people in all their diversity?

Designing an instrument such as the grant programme under evaluation involves a series of trade-offs and compromises, and a clear idea of whom will principally benefit from the programme. A programme whose target groups are too broadly or loosely defined will be difficult to run efficiently compared to a programme with a narrower scope.

The programme does a good job of supporting NGOs which represent the views and interests of a number of young people, but the programmes aim of representing the views and interests of young people in all their diversity is probably a too ambitious and questionable objective for

¹³ Source: Telephone interview, member organisation of a funded youth NGO

the programme, as it would be too much to ask of a programme of its size to reach such an ambitious goal.

There is no evidence that the programme in any way discriminates between applicants or applies any criteria that would prevent the programme from theoretically supporting youth NGOs in all of their diversity, however the applicants are to some extent self-selected from pro-European NGOs, something that is borne out by the finding that two-thirds of the respondents to the online survey state that their organisation chose to apply for a grant through the programme because it was in line with their mission and aims. This is seen as the most important reason for preferring the programme as a source of funding, suggesting that organisations who do not share broadly the same aims and goals as the European Commission do not apply to the programme.

Because of the cofinancing requirements and the need for an established track record, the granted youth NGOs tend to represent the views and interests of many larger and more established youth organisations, such as the youth wings of political parties and the youth wings of other adult-led organisations. It is difficult to criticise the programme administrators for this, as they do not have any control over the types of organisations that apply for funding.

To what extent do the granted NGOs support youth exchanges and voluntary services?

A large majority of granted NGOs are involved in the youth exchange sector. 85% of the NGOs responding to the online survey stated that they were involved in youth exchange activities, while 70% stated that they were involved in voluntary services. Respondents to the telephone interviews suggest that offering youth exchange across borders is a powerful way of motivating young people to join youth NGOs, as it taps into young people's natural curiosity and desire for new experiences.

“(It is) not hard to involve people in (name of country), it's very easy to get volunteers. Many young people have never been abroad. This is the strongest draw for us, the possibility of going abroad.”¹⁴

Youth exchange programmes have never been more popular in Europe. Both NGOs and private operators are increasingly sending youth abroad to study, teach or work. While it is difficult to cite exact European statistics on the growth in youth exchange and international volunteering, as they are not systematically collected or are very recent, there are a number of academic studies which confirm that, generalizing from programme level data for instance, international volunteering and youth exchange is growing scope and importance globally and in Europe.¹⁵ In its annual report on trends in international volunteering for instance, the International FORUM on Development Service for example identifies as one of the most significant trends the growing number of young people seeking short term placements with international volunteer organizations.¹⁶ There is also strong country level data from individual European countries on the increase in youth exchanges abroad among young people.¹⁷

The growth in volunteering and youth exchanges is driven by affordable travel and the increased recognition given by employers to skills acquired in these types of activities. An

¹⁴ Source: Telephone interview, Youth NGO funded in 2005.

¹⁵ See for example McBride, A. Inclusion and Effectiveness in International Volunteering and Service. U.S. Congressional Briefing on Global Service Fellowships. CSD Perspective 07-13. May 24, 2007

¹⁶ International FORUM on Development Service. Trends in International Cooperation and Volunteering. IVCO Conference Papers, Bonn, 2006.

¹⁷ See for example a recent study from the UK: Dr Andrew Jones. Review of Gap Year Provision. Department for Education and Skills, 2004. www.gapyearresearch.org/DfESreport.pdf

indication that youth exchange sector has grown at a very strong pace since the 1990's, is the growth in the travel market targeted at young people, which is expected to double in value in 2010 compared to its size in 2005, a growth rate of around 15% per year.¹⁸ This makes it one of the fastest growing sectors in the industry; ISTC (International Student Travel Confederation) estimates that students and youth represent the fastest growing niche group of travellers.¹⁹

While it is a popular activity, youth exchanges are also among the most complicated types of activities to organise in terms of organisation, logistics, training and follow-up. As demand has grown in recent years, so have the stories of young people who have been disappointed with the service provided by youth exchange networks and organisations.²⁰

While more and more youth are engaged in youth exchanges and volunteering abroad, the profile of participants is similar to what it has been in the past. Volunteering and engaging in youth exchanges abroad is often costly for young participants, something which puts these types of activities out of reach for many disadvantaged youth.

Seeing that the youth exchange industry is economically to some extent self-sustaining due to the demand from young people, the question can be asked whether supporting organisations whose primary focus is on providing such activities is an effective use of Commission funds. The funding from the Commission may be "crowding out" funds from other sources, including the private sector (who value youth exchange and volunteering in potential recruits), or from young people themselves.

The Commission could ask several questions of international NGOs providing youth exchanges in order to ensure that the funding is not merely displacing other available funds. Exchange programmes could for instance be required to have a structure in place for involving disadvantaged young people, for example by offering scholarships to go abroad.

There could also be a focus on quality control. As demand has grown, the capacity of NGOs and other actors in the sector has in many cases been stretched thin. NGOs providing such services perhaps should be required to provide evidence that they have processes in place for measuring the satisfaction of participants, and ensuring that young people's expectations are managed correctly. It could be a significant reputation risk for the Commission if an NGO funded through the programme did not take the proper precautions before involving young people in exchange programmes, something which may warrant an extra degree of scrutiny on the side of the Commission towards NGOs who organise these types of activities.

One possible implication the over representation of youth exchange providers is that the Commission launches a reflection on how to stimulate the NGOs to look for other funds and take advantage of the booming growth in such markets such as youth travel and youth exchange.

To what extent do the granted NGOs support informal and non-formal learning and work programmes?

Like the idea of active citizenship, the term non-formal learning can be defined and applied broadly. A general definition is instruction that is not obligatory or structured and is assimilated outside the context of a formal school. 83% of respondents to the survey of NGOs who have benefited from the programme state that they are active in this field.

¹⁸ MINTEL . Study of the Youth Travel Market, 2005.

¹⁹ ISTC webpage: www.istn.co.uk/html/definitions.html

²⁰ See for example the following article: www.education.independent.co.uk/gap_year/article1795663.ece

Education in Europe has traditionally been very much seen as a competency of the public sector, which has enjoyed a strong definitional authority on educational matters. However, the value of formal school diplomas is under threat. Qualifications such as the “Baccalaureat” in France or “A-levels” in the UK are less valued by employers and institutions of higher learning than in the past, as a result of grade inflation and the decreasing selectiveness. Even advanced university degrees are no longer the guarantee of employment that they were in the past.

In this environment, having engaged in a wide variety of non-formal learning experiences can be a formidable advantage for young people. The granted NGOs offer a variety of approaches to non-formal learning. Based on the evidence gathered by the evaluation team from the telephone interviews with NGOs, the level of reflection around non-formal education within the granted NGOs is quite sophisticated.

“My view is that there is a lot of time and energy invested in formal education, less in non-formal education. Our NGO can offer them (young people) a chance to develop in other ways. Non-formal education is becoming more and more important, it’s important to distinguish yourself.”²¹

As part of Youth in Action, the Commission has proposed a certification system for organisations engaged in non-formal education. Although this has been opposed in some quarters as something which threatens to erase the boundaries between formal and non-formal education, notably by the European Youth Forum, the proposed Youthpass certification system is seen by some NGOs as a good opportunity both to heighten the profile of the European Commission in this area and to set certain standards in a rapidly growing field.

“A certification system is interesting for us, as it is a step towards recognizing and defining what is meant by non-formal learning. This is an area which is becoming more and more important as employers and universities look for more from applicants than diplomas.”²²

To what extent do the granted NGOs promote intercultural learning and understanding?

“Promoting intercultural dialogue and understanding” was quoted by 90% of respondents to the online survey for NGO beneficiaries as a type of activity that they engage in. Again, the definition of intercultural learning and understanding applied by the Commission and the NGOs is broad.

In a European context, intercultural learning and understanding can be used to describe European young people encountering and interacting with young people from other European countries. Language aside, the cultural differences between the young Europeans likely to be active in the granted NGOs should not be exaggerated. It is easy to imagine that there are greater cultural differences between the average youth volunteer or youth exchange participant and groups of disadvantaged young people in their own countries rather than with exchange participants from another European country.

Several of the granted organisations are European umbrella organisations which bring together young people from different countries. While this is bound to involve some measure of intercultural learning, it is often the case that the participants from different countries reflect each others’ social, ethnic and cultural background to a very large degree.

²¹ Source: Telephone interview, Youth NGO funded in 2004.

²² Source: Telephone interview, Youth NGO funded in 2006

Significantly, while 90% of the granted international NGOs profess to be involved in fostering intercultural learning and understanding, only 70% of their members on the national level stated that they were involved in this field. This may point to the conclusion that the NGOs benefiting from the programme are interpreting intercultural learning in a different way from their members, and considering themselves as engaged in intercultural learning as a result of their interaction with their counterparts in other countries, which seems like stretching the definition to its limit. It might be useful for the European Commission to promote a more strict definition of this term to the applicants to the programme, as there seems to be some confusion as to what it really means.

There was agreement among focus group participants that the area where the programme can make a real contribution to intercultural learning and understanding is in the field of inter-religious dialogue.

“The Commission has given grants to a number of religious organisations, mostly Christian and Catholic but also Jewish and Muslim youth groups. Religion is becoming more important than culture in Europe, I think. Promoting stronger networks between participants in the programme could be one way of promoting more dialogue.”²³

To what extent do the granted NGOs support the debate on European matters and EU policies or youth policies?

One striking fact about the public debate on European matters, and youth policy is the absence of voices representing the organised interests of youth. Youth NGOs are by their very nature not well adapted to lobbying or communications tasks. Participating in public debate today involves a high degree of professionalism, and the growth of public relations firms and the consolidation of the media industry mean that it is more difficult for volunteer organisations to access media targeted at the general public. Youth NGOs are hampered by a high turnover of personnel, their reliance on volunteers, a lack of experience to draw on, and a lack of funding for communications activities in the absence of a mobilized political base from which to draw funding.

This is less true of some of the funded NGOs, notably the youth wings of political parties. However, in their case they are representing youth of a certain political persuasion, rather than youth as conceived more broadly. Some large and comparatively well-funded NGOs such as the Scouts or the YMCA also engage in lobbying and advocacy. Their advocacy activities have an idealistic and altruistic bent, however, and do not seem particularly concerned with youth policy or issues that have a particular impact on youth.

“Youth NGOs do not really face economic reality, they are often run by students who have not yet faced the realities of a system where they face a clear distortion in the labour market, where systems are geared towards seniority. Youth NGOs show surprisingly little interest in creating debate about these issues for instance.”²⁴

As mentioned previously, while there are few significant differences between youth and other groups on the policy issues that they publicly state matter to them, there is a clear difference of outlook and attitude between young people and other groups. The youth NGOs studies as part of this evaluation have a tendency to get involved in a large number of issues, reflecting the

²³ Source: Telephone interview, Youth NGO funded in 2005 and 2006

²⁴ Source: Telephone interview, Brussels-based journalist on economic and youth issues.

diversity and passions of their members. This can have the effect that resources are spread thinly across a wide number of issues, making it more difficult to achieve an impact as a lobbyist and advocate. The YMCA's advocacy activities are concentrated in the following fields, for instance:

- HIV and AIDS
- Culture of peace
- Spirituality
- Children
- Gender
- Economic justice
- Disaster (relief)

Another granted youth NGO has as its goal to support campaigns that oppose "environmental degradation, xenophobia, homo- and queerphobia, racism, fascism and sexism, and all forms of exploitation and injustice." The website of another organisation states that its goal is to promote a specific point of view on "alcohol, drugs, peace, development and human rights." While all of these social issues are extremely important, it is likely that a large number of the granted youth organisations could become far more effective advocacy groups by limiting the number of issues that they campaign for.

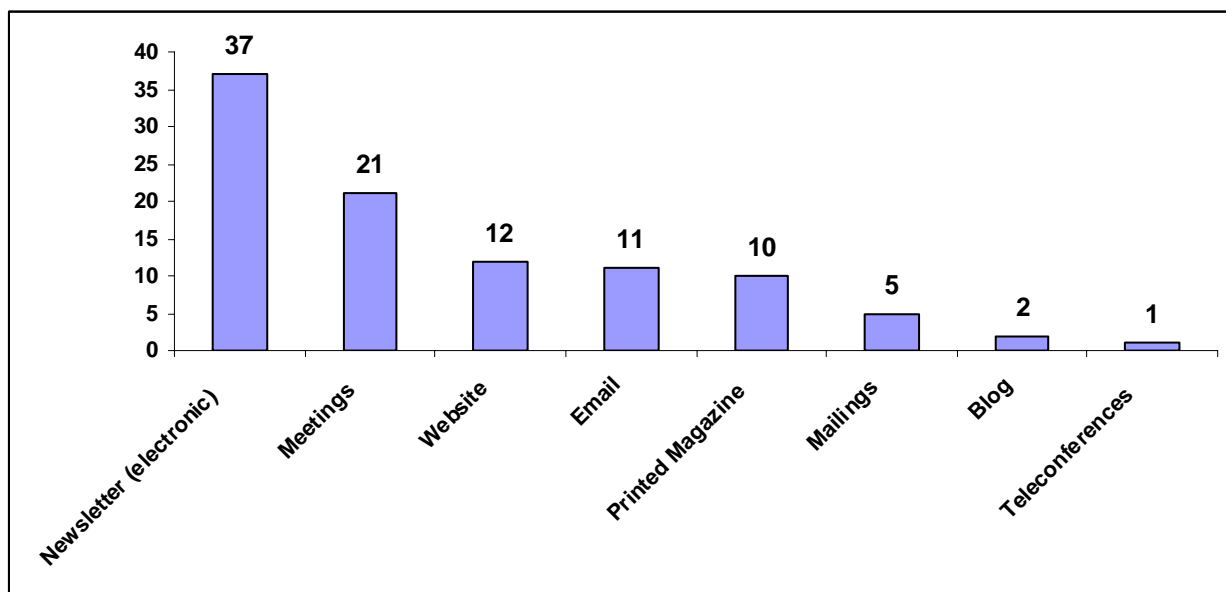
While youth NGOs currently do not have a strong position in the debate on European matters, large number of NGOs are represented in the European debate by the European Youth Forum, whose contributions in this area will be discussed later in this report.

To what extent do the granted NGOs disseminate information on Community action?

The NGOs who have received grants through the programme all have processes in place for communicating with their members, whether organisations or individuals. Respondents to the online survey were asked to describe how they provide information to their members, indicating how often and by which means (newsletters, emails, face-to-face meetings etc.)

The most commonly cited tools used to communicate with members were newsletters and face-to-face meetings. Websites and email were also cited frequently. Perhaps surprisingly given that youth NGOs perceive themselves as suffering from a lack of funding opportunities, printed magazines and mailings (which are costly when compared to their electronic equivalents) were cited by a large number of respondents as frequently used communication tools. This could be a consequence of the fact that the "Youth" programme in many cases covers printing and distribution costs for information materials. Other forms of communications tools, such as blogs or teleconferencing, were mentioned only by a very small number of respondents.

Figure 2: Communication Tools Used by NGOs



The respondents were also asked to comment on the frequency with which they communicate with their members. Email and the web were the tools used for communicating frequently with members. On average the respondents stated that they communicated with their members over email every two weeks, and respondents who mentioned their website were most likely to answer that they updated it every two weeks. Electronic newsletters, the most commonly cited means of communicating with members, were on average sent out every six weeks. The table below shows the frequency with which information is disseminated to members of youth NGOs.

Information Tools, International Youth NGOs	
Type of tool	Average Frequency
Emails	Every two weeks
Website	Updated every two weeks
Teleconferences	Monthly
Newsletter (electronic)	Every six weeks
Meetings	Every four months
Printed Magazine	Every four months
Mass Mailings	Every six months
Blog	Not specified

The extent to which information about community action (information about initiatives supported by European institutions or the work performed by the EU) is disseminated by the NGOs varies from case to case. To gain an understanding of the types of information disseminated by the NGOs, the evaluation team examined 30 newsletters distributed by a random sample of youth NGOs. Newsletters were chosen as they are the most common type of communication tool used by the youth NGOs.

The newsletters typically contain a mix of the following elements

- Updates on the activities of the organization
- Appeals for funding/support and other invitations to get involved in the activities of the organization

- News
- Opinion/editorial articles

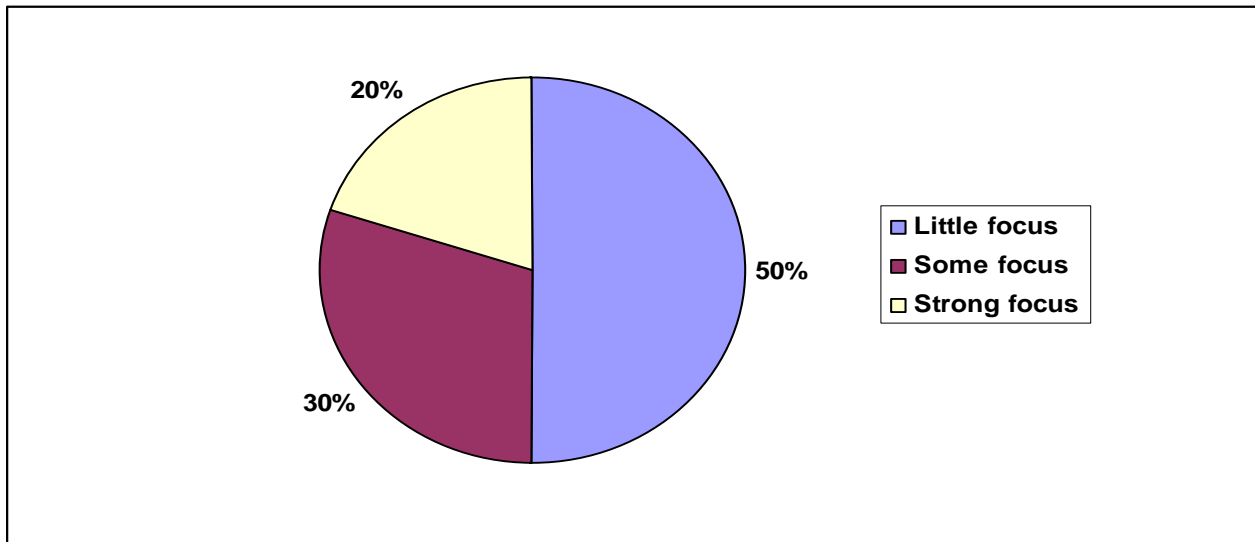
The newsletters published by the NGOs typically reflect the shared views, concerns and interests of a comparatively homogenous readership. The most common type of content consists of updates about the activities of the organisation, and appeals for support from members. News is also common, as are brief opinion pieces on a given theme.

Information about European community actions can be a dominant theme in the newsletters. This is most likely to be the case when lobbying the European institutions is a core activity of the NGO. In cases where the core activity of the NGO is something other than lobbying (youth exchange for instance), it becomes less likely that the information it disseminates will concern European community actions.

News articles and opinion articles may also include information on EC actions. In many cases the news and articles concern the chosen thematic fields the NGOs are active in (human rights, environmentalism etc), so news on community action in these fields are often included.

Of the 30 newsletters produced by different NGOs, half had very little focus on community action. 30% had some focus, while 20% had a strong focus on this type of information. The graph below shows how the 30 newsletters break down in terms of providing information about community action:

Figure 3: Information about Community Action in Youth NGO Communications



To what extent do the granted NGOs support actions promoting young citizens' participation and initiative?

An important aspect of the programme is to foster a sense of democratic citizenship, and to promote young citizen's participation in democratic structures. The legal basis for the programme cites for example the European Parliament's resolution on the Commission's White Paper "A New Impetus for European Youth", which stresses the important role played by

international and European youth organisations in enabling young people to participate on a long-term basis in democratic life in Europe.

The granted NGOs promote democratic participation in two ways: as a function of how they are organized and through their ties to larger social, religious or political groups. None focus directly and exclusively on projects to increase the number of young citizens voting in National and European elections for example, but a large number incorporate formal elements from recognized democratic structures such as parliaments (elections for instance). The granted NGOs often have ties to larger political or religious groups which participate in democratic life on either the National or the European level.

As pointed out by the Platform of European Social NGOs in their paper “Democracy, Governance and European NGOs”, NGOs are not necessarily representative in the way that traditional democratic bodies are.²⁵ Like private companies or member clubs, NGOs have virtually limitless choice in terms of the executive structures or the forms of governance they choose. Many effective and prominent NGOs rely on autocratic and professionalized structures, while others are more loosely organised. As the position paper points out, the key concept favoured by NGOs to evaluate them is their transparency and whether they provide clear enough information about their activities and governance for citizens to be able to make an informed choice about whether, on balance, they truly represent their interests or not.

Youth NGOs have several inbuilt tendencies that keep them from becoming autocratic, but also from being as effective as NGOs in other fields. A degree of change at the top levels of youth NGOs is assured by the fact that membership ceases to be an option after a certain age. Most youth NGOs thus have de facto term limits which prevent leadership from becoming too entrenched. This makes youth NGOs potentially more effective at involving a larger number of people compared to other civil society actors, where the organisations are more professionalized and less subject to personnel turnover.

Given the diversity of opinions that exist among young people, it is important to examine the extent to which organizations traditionally accepted as mouthpieces for young people, such as student councils and youth NGOs, are representative of young people as a whole.

The simple answer is that no existing institution can make a legitimate claim to represent the young population in general. The youth sector is made up of a variety of actors, each representing different types of engaged youth. Roughly speaking, one can identify three main forms of youth engagement in relation to stakeholders other than youth. Youth can be engaged as part of the established political and social order; against the established order; or engaged inwardly, as part of an apolitical youth culture. Each of these types of engagement is based around a set of shared values, objectives and structures.

Youth who are engaged as part of the establishment take on roles in organizations which prepare young people for adulthood, instil and celebrate civic values and train young people in skills that mirror those used by adults. Such organizations can include “youth” versions of adult organizations, or adult-led organizations which organize activities for youth. Examples of structures where youth can engage themselves as part of the establishment includes the youth wings of political parties or religious groups, the scout movement or corporate trainee schemes. Such structures are typically stable, hierarchical and are sustained over a long period of time. Most of the youth NGOs funded through the programme represent this specific type of youth engagement.

²⁵ Democracy, Governance and European NGOs. Platform of European Social NGOs. March 2001.

Youth who are engaged against the established order are in opposition to existing institutions and values. The objective of being engaged is to challenge and question established norms from a position outside of conventional political and social structures. Social movements with the goal of promoting widespread change in society are examples of structures where anti-establishment youth are engaged. Such movements can be distinguished from establishment institutions such as political parties and interest groups by their loose and often spontaneous organization and origins, and are typically instable, informal and not sustained over a long period of time. They are often based around projects and actions, rather than institutions. Examples can include the growing movement against precariousness and youth unemployment, and the anti-globalization movement.

Youth can also be engaged in an inward-looking, apolitical manner, as part of a youth culture or sub-culture. This type of engagement can for example be centred on types of music or fashion with a special appeal to youth, and engagement can be facilitated by new technologies which have young people as their early adopters. Such activities are loosely organized and non-hierarchical, and can be centred on websites such as Myspace or Facebook.

The ideal model of an organization with the power to engage and represent youth will straddle all three of these categories. To represent youth in all of its facets, the model youth organization would have to combine access to establishment institutions, the mobilizing power of a social movement, and the sense of excitement and cohesive identity which is offered by inward-looking youth cultures.

The table below provides a summary of the three trajectories of youth engagement identified for the purposes of this study, and lists the benefits and drawbacks of each category. For example, while engaging in “youth” versions of adult organizations can increase the ability of young people to have an impact on the system by given them direct access to it, this type of engagement is vulnerable to the charge that youth representatives are serving merely out of tokenism, or have been co-opted by the establishment to the extent where they are no longer truly representative of the youth sector. Anti-establishment social movements can be visible and have significant mobilizing power among youth, but demand more than a casual degree of engagement, as they receive little support from established institutions. Inward-looking youth movements can have a great mass appeal, but are diffuse and consist of constantly shifting trends which can be difficult to harness to a wider political or social purpose.

Figure 4: Types of Youth Engagement
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	Values	Objectives	Structures	Examples	Benefits/ Drawbacks
ESTABLISHMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Conventional, "adult" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Preparing youth for adulthood •Celebrating/ instilling civic values 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •"Youth" versions of adult organisations •Adult led organisations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Youth wings of political parties •Student councils •Scouts •Trainee schemes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Knowledge of the system, ability to have an impact ✓ •Perceptions of tokenism/ Co-option ✗
ANTI-ESTABLISHMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Opposition to conventional institutions •Promotion of social change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Questioning/ confronting established norms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Outside of conventional political and social structures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Social movements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Visibility ✓ •Popular appeal •Demands more than casual engagement ✗
INWARD LOOKING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Diffuse •Neither oppositional nor establishment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Networking •Information exchange •Promote a shared youth culture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Loosely organised around an interest or activity •Non-hierarchical 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Social networks promoted using new technologies •Youth driven cultural activities, music, fashion etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Appealing ✓ •Undemanding •Apolitical •Diffuse •Constantly shifting trends ✗

While the granted NGOs promote active citizenship in their way, it should be a concern that the programme supports a selection of NGOs which skews towards the "establishment". There are no easy answers to how European institutions can best to promote active participation among young people, but policy makers should also consider the needs of young people outside of youth NGOs and NYCs, or those engaged in more non-traditional organisations. This underlines the importance that granted NGOs use a wide variety of tools for consulting with young people beyond their membership, and draw up clear plans for doing so, in order not to become too entrenched in their corporate culture.

4.2.2 European Youth Forum

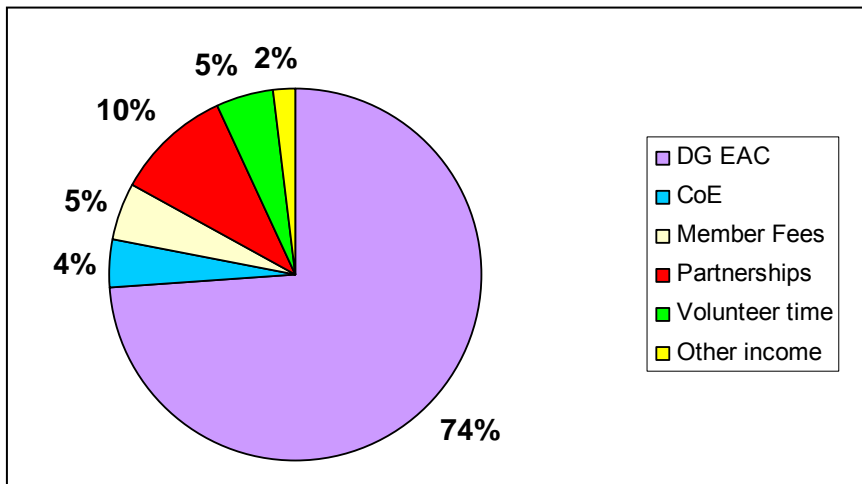
The European Youth Forum (EYF) represents more than 90 National Youth Councils (NYCs) and International Non-Governmental Youth Organisations (NGOs). The EYF has existed since 1996, as the result of a merger between the Youth Forum, the European Co-ordination Bureau of International Youth Organisations (ECB) and the Council of the National Youth Committees. There are three categories of membership (observer, candidate and full) within the European Youth Forum, with different membership criteria for each category.

The EYF has the following statutory bodies:

- The General Assembly: The General Assembly is the highest decision making body of the Forum, and meets at least every two years. All members are represented in the General Assembly.
- The Council of Members: This body manages key decisions in the EYF and evaluates the work of other working structures, overseeing the financial situation
- The Bureau and the Secretary General: The Secretary General is selected for a two years mandate, renewable once, according to the rules of procedure. To support the Secretary General, the EYF has a full-time staff of around 10 people.
- Financial Control Committee (FCC): Responsible for the internal audit of the finances of the Forum. It acts in advisory capacity to the Bureau, Council of Members and the General Assembly, and submits a written report to the Council of Members and to the General Assembly with regard to the annual budget and to the accounts of the Forum.

The total budget for the EYF in 2005 was around €2.5 million. 50% of the budget went to cover the running costs of the organisation (staff expenses for example). The EYF is funded largely by the European Commission through DG EAC. As shown by the chart below, funding from the European Commission represented 74% of the overall EYF budget in 2005:

Figure 5: Budget Composition of the EYF, 2005



How well does the European Youth Forum represent young people vis-à-vis the European Union?

The EYF presents itself as the largest and most representative body for European youth. According to the EYF, the body represents, directly or indirectly, “85 million youth in Europe.”²⁶ The indirect membership of the organisation is indeed diverse, including as it does most European NYCs and many of Europe’s largest youth NGOs.

The representativeness of the European Youth Forum is open to question. The European Youth Forum’s membership criteria exclude a number of actors, notably those NGOs with a small number of members. This is not necessarily undemocratic, as most parliaments in Europe have thresholds which keep out parties which do not have a great enough appeal among voters. The membership criteria also allow for some degree of flexibility in order to increase the representativeness of the forum, as evidenced by the inclusion of an NGO which supports gay and lesbian interests which was granted membership despite not fulfilling all of the formal membership criteria.²⁷

It is clear that the EYF has engaged in a great deal of internal discussion about whether it is as representative of young people as it is possible to be, and that this issue is taken very seriously by the organization. The criteria for membership includes the need to have a democratic organization, and members have been excluded in the past for failing to be organized and administered in a democratic way recognized as such by the other members.²⁸ In terms of representing the interests of its members, it thus seems clear that the EYF is as democratic and representative as it can be expected to be.

²⁶ Face-to-face interview, Members of the European Youth Forum Secretariat. January, 2007.
²⁷ Face-to-face interview, Members of the European Youth Forum Secretariat. January, 2007.
²⁸ Face-to-face interview, Members of the European Youth Forum Secretariat. January, 2007.

A small, but potentially significant number of respondents to the online survey of EYF members disagreed with the statement that the grant has brought the EYF closer to European youth. Respondents were also far less likely to strongly agree with this statement than with the other statements participants were asked to respond to, such as whether the grant has brought the EYF closer to the European institutions. This suggests that it can be considered that the grant has only been partially successful at bringing the EYF closer to young people.

The EYF presents itself as more than just another civil society coordination framework for a select body of NGOs and National Youth Councils. In the most current document setting forth the "Strategic Priorities of the European Youth Forum 2007-2012", the EYF states that it has a vision of "being the voice of young people in Europe, where young people are considered as equal citizens, and are supported and encouraged to achieve their fullest potential as citizens of the World (sic)" and has a mission to "represent(s) and advocate(s) for the needs and interests of all young people in Europe, through their positive and active participation." This is an indication that the EYF sets very ambitious goals for itself. It is difficult to see them achieving these goals within their current structure, which only involves consulting and engaging with young people outside of the member NGOs on an ad hoc basis.

The EYF plays an important role and is efficient as a coordination framework for its members; it is not however an organization whose structure currently allows it to represent the needs of all young people in Europe through their active participation. It is a strong advocacy body for its members, not a forum for engaging a large and diverse number of young people, as shown by the online survey results which show that while the grant has brought the EYF closer to Brussels, there is still doubt as to whether it has brought it closer to young people in general.

How well does the European Youth Forum coordinate the positions of its members vis-à-vis the European Union?

While it is perceived by its members as a strong and competent lobbying body which does an impressive job coordinating the views of a diverse body of members, it is difficult for members to measure the exact nature of the EYF's contribution to different acts of legislation. This is a reflection of the fact that "Brussels is the most complex lobbying arena in the world"²⁹. While it is difficult for the EYF to point directly to clear cut results, it is apparent that the members have a high degree of confidence in the organization and belief in its competence as a lobbying organization.

Respondents to the online survey of EYF members were most likely to perceive the European Youth Forum (EYF) as:

- Highly visible among its members in Europe
- An important source of information on European Community affairs
- A competent lobbying body vis-a-vis the European institutions
- A competent organiser of activities for youth

Very few respondents did not perceive the EYF as successful in these four areas. The findings support the evidence from the interview programme that the EYF is focused on serving its members, coordinating their views points and actions, lobbying on their behalf and organising activities such as conferences and events for members and certain outside stakeholders such as non-member NGOs.

²⁹ Telephone interview, International NGO (Western Europe)

The qualitative data collected for this evaluation suggests that in terms of coordinating the views of members, the EYF takes what can be termed as a "cautious approach". A number of telephone interviewees expressed the view that the EYF could be more forceful in encouraging members, especially National Youth Councils, to engage in broader consultations with young people, and in encouraging them towards greater inclusiveness.

"Well, there is hardly contact between EYF and youth on the street, but it is really up to the members to reach the street, not the EYF. This could be improved a lot. I was critical previously towards the bureau of the EYF, they seemed not to be interested in young people's opinions, but wanted to lobby for their things. They are on balance as open as can be expected though. It gets stuck on the level of the Youth Councils and members, for example some send the same people all the time to EYF events. In some countries youth work is very institutionalised, and the EYF could do more to open up such organisations."³⁰

Specifically, many interviewees and focus group participants commented on the coordination efforts of the EYF in the run up to the 2007 Youth Summit in Rome to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the EU. The general feeling was that the EYF had done a very good job making sure that consultations and nominations processes were implemented by members, given the time and resource constraints faced by the EYF. Several interviewees were of the opinion that the European Commission could have done more to involve the EYF at an earlier stage of the preparations for the summit, as the deadline given to the EYF for coordinating the event left them with little room to maneuver:

"The EYF was given two months to coordinate all the national debates, and put under a lot of pressure by the Commission. In the end, the process was less than perfect and ended up being a bit intransparent, as two months did not give the EYF the time to follow up with the members and make sure that all of their documentation and the processes followed was in order. In the end, the applications prepared by the NYCs for the summit were not published by the EYF, which I think they should have been because of the varying quality of preparations between different countries. The EYF should not be afraid to "name and shame" a member if a member is not fulfilling their obligations."³¹

This example is in no way evidence that the Commission failed to involve the EYF at the earliest possible point in time in the run up to such an important event; it is however evidence of a perception which persists among the members of the EYF. It has been mentioned by large numbers of interviewees that the European Commission can play an important role in empowering the EYF so that it can work more effectively with its members and encourage greater inclusiveness and representation. There seems to be a degree of scepticism among members who are directly involved with the EYF about the intentions of the Commission towards it. There is a feeling that the Commission expects very much from the organisation, yet sometimes does not involve it enough in deliberations and in planning. This can create the impression that the Commission wants to use the EYF as a "youth alibi". However, the Commission has repeatedly stated, during the last months, that it wants the youth organizations to become the owners of the structured dialogue. This empowerment is under way under the new programme.

³⁰ Telephone interview, Secretary General of a NYC (Western Europe)

³¹ Telephone interview, NYC (Western Europe)

The ambitions that the European Commission has had for this funding programme (encouraging active citizenship, promoting and paving the way for young people to participate in democratic life), can be said perhaps to have put unrealistic pressure on the EYF. It is an effective and strong coordination framework for the views of its undoubtedly diverse membership base, and adds additional value in a number of different ways beyond lobbying and advocacy. However, it cannot without considerable hair-splitting and rationalization currently claim to be the “voice of European youth”.

The fact that the Commission seems to expect the EYF to fulfil a very ambitious set of goals has created a situation where the EYF is wary of broaching the subject of its inherent limitations with the Commission, preferring to adopt a defensive position in many instances, for example by refusing to “name and shame” members who are underperforming. The problem was summed up by the focus group participants, who stated that they:

“Find it very difficult to talk about these issues, because we don’t want to endanger the funding of the EYF by being critical of it when in fact I think it does as good a job as it can be expected to do”.³²

It should be recognized that the EYF, while less than an institution representing all young people in Europe, is more than a lobby group for a limited set of youth actors. Part of the difficulty in evaluating the EYF is that the value it adds to its members and to the European institutions is complex and spread over several areas. Members clearly see it as adding important value in other ways beyond traditional advocacy and lobbying. The importance of the EYF as a network, a reservoir of expert knowledge, and as an apprenticeship to political and administrative positions should not be underestimated.

How well does the European Youth Forum relay information on youth to the European institutions?

One aspect that hinders the EYF from being an essential source of information for the European institutions is that it does not currently have the resources to function like a professional “think tank”, producing research on youth for the benefit of European policy makers. The knowledge and experience that it possesses and that is represented in its working groups are translated into position papers and resolutions, rather than independent research. While these position papers can give insights into the views of an important segment of today’s young people, they are the result of negotiations among a large number of interested parties, and express positions that are often general and broad rather than focused and to the point.

An interesting discussion which is taking place among the members of the EYF is whether the EYF should adapt its style of communicating information to the European Commission, or to young people in general. Half of the members surveyed over the telephone and focus group participants felt that resolutions and communications should be written in a formal, “official” style in order to further communication with the European institutions:

“This is the only thing the European Commission understands: we need to communicate with them in very formal Commission- type language and with Commission-type ideas in order to be heard by them”.³³

Roughly half of the respondents had strong opinions the other way, and feel that policy documents should if possible be “translated so that normal young people can read and

³² Focus Group for International NGOs. Thursday, April 19 2007.

³³ Focus Group for International NGOs. Thursday, April 19 2007.

understand them".³⁴ The EYF has for a long time had a privileged position (and a budget line) in relation to many other civil society actors, partly due to the fact that the Commission and European policy makers have a genuine belief in the idea that young people are a source of fresh ideas and can offer a unique and irreducible vision by speaking in their proper voice. In her speech to the Youth Summit in Rome, Commissioner Margot Wallstrom stated that she saw the summit, with its promise of engagement with the voice of youth, as a step towards creating a vision of Europe "you could easily fall in love with":

"Once Jacques Delors said "No-one will ever fall in love with the Single Market". I believe he was right! I want a Europe you could easily fall in love with. But what do you think? What is your vision of Europe's future? I am really looking forward to finding out."

In this perspective, the institutionalisation of highly formalized, technocratic and "responsible" attitudes can be a hindrance rather than a help to the EYF, and not in line with what a large number of its members believe. A large number of participants in the focus groups and telephone interviews felt that there was scope for the EYF to adopt a less formal, bolder style in order to add value as an information source and as a partner to the Commission. This argument was summed up well by one of the telephone interviewees:

"Bring in the normal people, huge scope for this. We need to do this. Some people are too old in terms of how they behave. We wrote something very bureaucratic (for the Youth Summit), they said that politicians speak this language, so we should use politicians language. Fresh ideas, that's the added value that we have! The Commission should say: we don't want waffle. The event structure is often too formal, this encourages very formal behaviour. The Commission should put pressure on EYF to include more young people and their views, but basically they (the Commission) are an ally. Some of the members (of the EYF) are often the enemy towards fresh thinking for instance, not the Commission."³⁵

How well does the European Youth Forum relay information from the European Union to national youth councils and nongovernmental organisations?

The EYF uses a range of tools to communicate with its members. The principal types of communications used include events and conferences, the Youth Opinion paper magazine, the e-Youth Opinion electronic newsletter, the weekly Courier (internal newsletter), the intranet and the EYF website. The following section presents an outline of how each of these tools has evolved in the period 1999- 2007.

Events are an important part of the EYF's communications activities. Events organised by the EYF include one-off summits and forums such as the Youth Summit in Rome and the Youth Convention on the European Constitution, and recurring events such as the funding workshop for NGOs. The online survey found that members of the EYF were on balance satisfied with the events and activities organised by the EYF. In terms of involving young people, the number of attendees at events organised by the EYF has increased significantly since 2005.

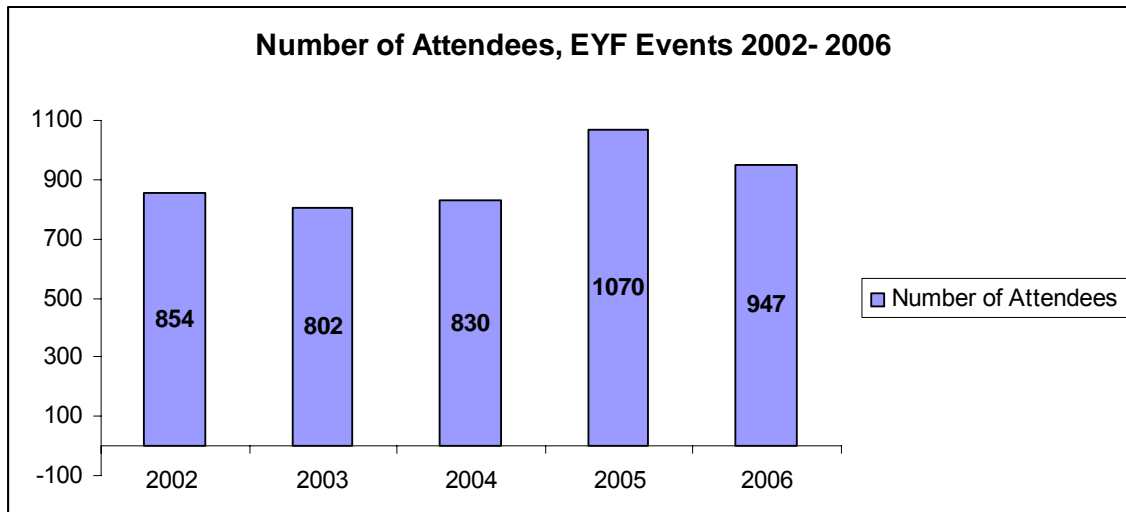
The average attendance for the last five years was around 900 participants per year. The number of participants increased by more than 20% between 2004 and 2005. While the number of attendees was down in 2006, it was still more than 10% higher than in 2004. The chart below shows how attendance across EYF events and conferences has evolved over the last five year.

³⁴ Focus Group for International NGOs. Thursday, April 19 2007.

³⁵ Telephone interview, NYC (Northern Europe)

The events are mostly targeted at members of the EYF, but some events also involve young people from outside the organisation (the funding workshop for NGOs for instance).

Figure 6: Number of Attendees, EYF Events 2002-2006



The main tool the EYF has for reaching out to young people beyond the members of the organisation is the Youth Opinion magazine, which is published two times a year in a paper version, and e-Youth Opinion, which is an electronic newsletter issued every two months. E-Youth Opinion has gradually taken over from the printed publication. In the period from 1999-2003 the Youth Opinion paper consisted of a 16 pages in English and French publication, which was issued six times per year, considering the two double issues of December-January and August-September. The magazine was first launched in November 1999 and it was published in this format until the end of 2002. This format contained EYF news in general, as well as news from its members, and updates on the institutions news. 2000 copies were produced regularly and were distributed to a network of members and stakeholders. During 2001, an active prompt was enclosed asking how many of the usually receivers wished to keep receiving the publication; the final list of confirmed subscribers was of over 400 receivers. While this was a significant let down in terms of interest in the magazine, it is an example of good practice that the EYF should publish such a prompt to its members and stakeholders.

From the end of 2002 to the recent period there are two 'Youth Opinion' issues per year, focusing on a concrete topic and giving the views of youth organisations on a specific topic. In most of the cases it includes an institutional perspective from the EYF. The languages and number of copies of the Youth Opinion depends on the subject and targets, e.g. the Youth Opinion on Global Issues was translated into English, Spanish and French; the Youth Opinion on Youth and the Council of Europe was produced in English and French, and the Youth Opinion on Youth Work Development and Training was produced in English and Russian. The Youth Opinion is sent to a net of around 1000 stakeholders, including members and institutional partners. It is also widely distributed during events, and in its pages it is made clear that anyone can order a copy and its PDF file is uploaded online.

In the period from 1999- 2003, the e-Youth Opinion newsletter was literally the electronic version of the Youth Opinion paper magazine, its texts being based on the paper based magazine. In the early days, it was distributed to a subscription list of 36 people who received it by e-mail.

With the wide use of new technologies and having already a printed publication covering more certain issues in depth, the nature of the e-Youth Opinion changed as well. The e-Youth Opinion is now produced both in English and French every two months and contains updates on the views of the EYF, and updates on what is going on in the youth field in Europe for a two month period. In 2003 it commenced with eight short issues, in 2004 there were six longer issues and five even more comprehensive newsletters were issued both in 2005 and 2006.

A system was created to subscribe to it and subscription rates have been steadily increasing (even if the EYF stopped distributing it for a period during 2005 due to a technical problem with the subscription software). The newsletter counts now over 3000 subscribers and has according to the EYF over 23,000 readers identified through web statistics.

The type of communication tool mentioned most frequently by focus group attendees and telephone interviewees as being particularly useful to them is the weekly Courier, the internal newsletter sent to all members of the EYF. The courier contains more specific news on how EYF goes about its work, specific calls for participants, progress reports on concrete issues, press releases other information. This is gathered in a weekly e-mail to EYF members, sent to them once a week with an encouragement to the members to disseminate the relevant parts within their organisations.

Since 1999 there has been a diversification of the EYF communication tools in response to the need for more targeted information and communications. Accordingly, apart of the publications and newsletters, the EYF website has been further developed and different thematic websites have been created, in parallel with the development of new internal communication tools such as the intranet.

A communication survey to assess the opinion of the Member Organisations of the EYFs communication activities has been carried out annually by the EYF for the past six years. The purpose of this survey is for the EYF to have an overview of the results of the communication efforts made from the EYF towards its members, and to get practical information on their coordinates and whereabouts and of their needs in terms of communication material and information.

The results of the Annual Communication Survey of 2004 and 2005 indicate that EYF members believe that the organisation has significantly improved in terms of communicating with its members. In particular, the survey indicates that satisfaction with EYF communications continues to improve annually: 47% of respondents to the 2005 survey believe the Communication has improved compared to 2004, 33% think it has stayed the same and 20% haven't answered or they don't know.

In addition, 73% of the Member Organisations who responded to the survey in 2005 stated that that they know who to contact in the EYF secretariat for a specific matter, 3% more than the previous year. After receiving these results, the EYF Secretariat identifies which organisations do not know the appropriate person to contact and provides them with the correct information. In 2005, 75% believes that the communication between the EYF Secretariat and their organisation is either excellent/continuous or good/frequent, and only 25% thought it was average.

Below is a summary of the main results of the communications survey carried out by the EYF in 2005 (the last survey for which data is currently available);

- E-Youth Opinion and Youth Opinion: A great majority of EYF members rate it with positive rates (=either Good or Very Good, above Satisfactory) in terms of usefulness, style and article's content, both in 2004 and 2005.
- Press releases: The amount of press releases received was rated with 71% of positive rates and the quality with 73% of positive rates.
- Website: In 2004 along with the personal contacts it was thought to be the most important communication tool. In 2005 the survey was used to ask feedback for its renewal and re-structure, which was carried out during 2006.
- Courier: This weekly internal bulletin, starting to be used in January 2005, was deemed to be the most important communication tool in 2005.
- Intranet: As well, starting its full functioning in 2005, the intranet receives the visit of 87% of our Members. The usefulness, content and periodicity of its update were rated as either 'good' or 'very good', and the navigation, design and user friendliness of it, as 'satisfactory'.
- Press and Communications Meeting with people in charge of the Communications within the MOs has been organised both in 2004 and in 2005 and its relevance and usefulness have been very positively rated.

Based on the focus groups and telephone interviews with members, it was confirmed that the satisfaction with the way the EYF communicates with its members was overall very high. Much emphasis was placed on the value of informal communications, and it is a mark of professionalism that the EYF in its communication survey assesses whether its members feel that they have access to such channels.

The weekly Courier and the intranet were cited as the most important tools used by members. The type of information most frequently cited by members as particularly useful to them was information about institutional affairs in the European Union. One area for improvement that was cited frequently was the intranet. While it is perceived as a potentially important resource, there was a feeling that it should be a priority for the EYF to invest more heavily in the infrastructure for the intranet, particularly the search function, as it does not currently seem to be functioning at the optimal level.

How well does the European Youth Forum promote and pave the way for young people to participate in democratic life?

The EYF is, according to a majority of interviewees and focus group participants, an organisation designed for "advanced practitioners", people who already have experience with representing young people in volunteer organisations and participating in democratic life. While the Commission's definition of youth stretches from 13-30 years of age, the majority of persons directly involved in the activities of the EYF ranges from 20-30 years, something which supports the view that participating fully in the activities of the EYF requires a certain degree of experience. The average age of the bureau members in 2005 was 26 years, something which suggests that there is scope for the organisation to focus specifically on engaging youth also from lower age groups, as they are not currently represented strongly in the organisation.

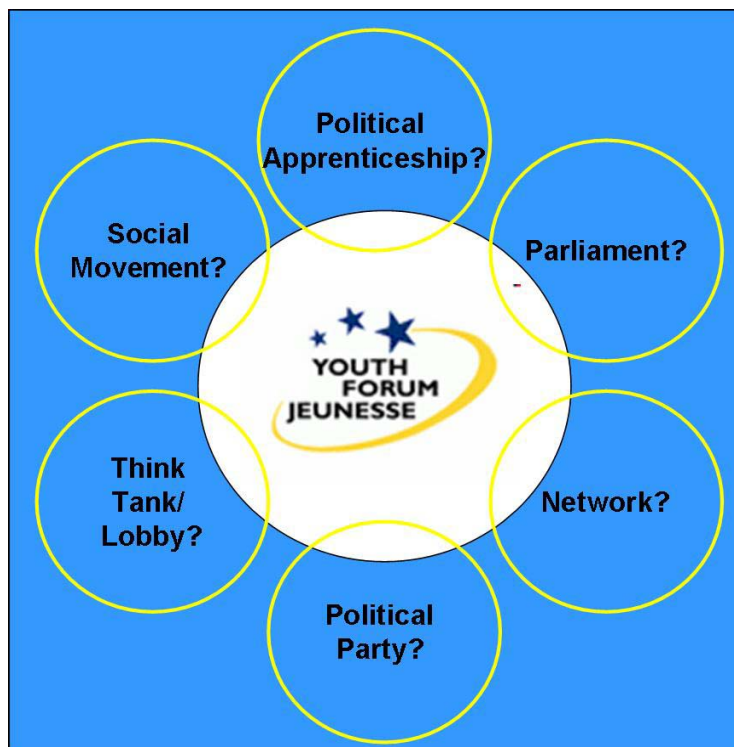
Focus group participants overwhelmingly felt that encouraging active citizenship and participation is the responsibility of the member organisations, rather than the EYF itself. While the EYF is a forum in which participants can deepen their understanding of democratic processes, most of the young people directly involved in its activities are already active citizens and have a track record of being engaged in other democratic organisations before becoming engaged in the EYF.

While a case can be made that the EYF encourages democratic participation indirectly, by lobbying for example for a reduction in the voting age or by mobilizing young people to protest against visa requirements, it is not well adapted to the task of paving the way towards democratic participation for unengaged young people. It does however give its members the opportunity to participate and have their voices heard in a forum which has more resources, greater professionalism and more impact from its activities than the range of NGOs and NYCs from which participants are drawn. The EYF promotes a form of active citizenship which offers valuable experiences to participants who are already engaged and have a sophisticated understanding of democratic processes.

The type of active citizenship promoted by the EYF has several facets, which are important to understand in order to give a full picture of the value that the organisation adds to its members and to the European institutions. As mentioned, the EYF is more than a lobbying organisation: it is also a powerful network, a reservoir of expert knowledge and offers an apprenticeship for young people who are interested in taking up political and administrative positions in the future.

The diagram below shows some of the functions that the EYF fulfils for its participants, as suggested by interviewees and focus group participants. The EYF can be seen as combining activities associated with democratic parliaments, political parties, political networks, think tanks and lobbying groups, social movements and trainee and apprenticeship schemes. According to a majority of the people interviewed for this evaluation, all of these elements are important to its membership and to the European institutions.

Figure 7: Added Value of the EYF



In terms of being a “parliament for young people”³⁶, the EYF incorporates formal elements from recognized democratic structures and is governed by a powerful general assembly. However,

³⁶ Face-to-face interview, European Commission staff. December 2006.

as discussed earlier, it does not have the legitimacy and representativeness of for example national parliaments, as it does not directly involve young people in general, and grants voting rights only to NGOs and NYCs.

In terms of being a network of young activists from across Europe, the EYF offers a great deal of value to its members. To some extent, the network offers the opportunity to members of making connections with people who have opposed views and stem from very different backgrounds and organisational cultures. "As a representative of the (name of political party), there is of course a lot of difference of opinion with factions within the EYF, such as the faith based organisations. The experience of working to achieve compromise with these groups is a valuable part of what the EYF offers to its members".³⁷

The idea that the EYF can to some extent function as a political party on the European level which represents the organised interests of young people was attractive to many of the participants in the telephone interviews and focus groups. However, the membership of the EYF is perhaps too disparate to currently be able to focus on issues that are controversial enough to be deemed truly political. The EYF has in the past explicitly rejected politicizing issues which involve real or perceived conflicts between young people and other generations, such as pension reform.³⁸

While the EYF has a certain mobilizing power through its members organisations and has run campaigns which seek to involve young people outside of the members (the EYF's campaign against visas for instance), and thus has certain elements of a social movement, it is too formally structured and too cautious and apolitical (in the sense that it rejects conflict) to function as a focal point for a broad social movement or social mobilization among youth.

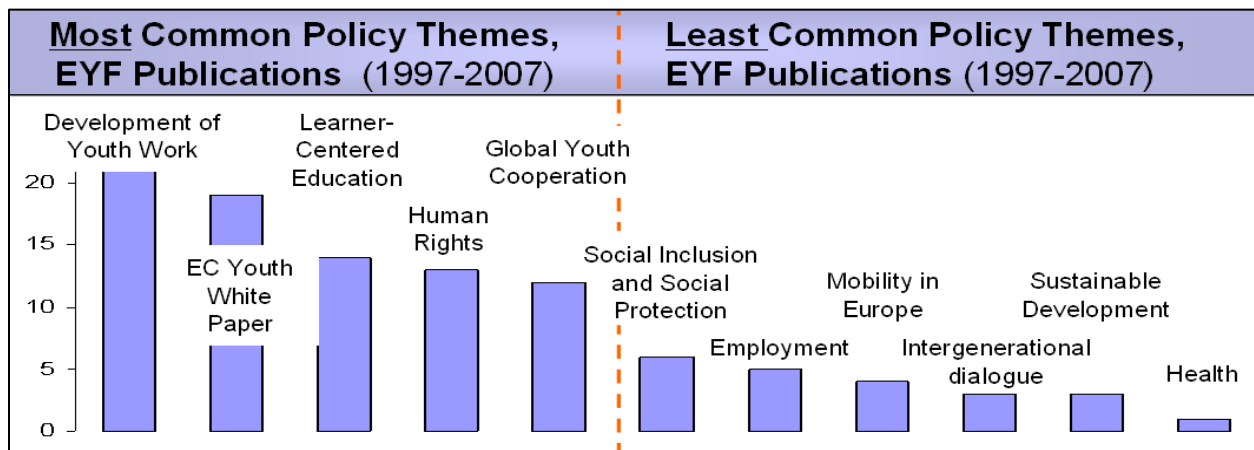
In conclusion, considering the potential impact of the EYF it clearly has an added value by serving as a network of youth organisations lobbying in favour of young people on the European scene and informing them about the EU. It also is a forum for increasing young people's experiences and skills for social citizenship. As mentioned previously, the role of EYF as a think tank is not yet developed enough to produce research based evidence for European youth policy. This is an area where the EYF could build up its influence while keeping its non-political (non-party) and risk-averse character.

The issues that the EYF focuses on most convincingly and places the most emphasis on are those related to education and voluntary work and on improving European funding mechanisms and programmes for youth NGOs by lobbying the European institutions, a finding that is borne out by an analysis of the EYFs position papers over the last ten years. The analysis shows a profile adapted to a lobbying body rather than to a political party, with a large part of position papers and documents devoted to issues such as the EC Youth White Paper and less to issues such as employment, health and social inclusion.

Figure 8: Most and Least Common Policy Themes, EYF Publications 1997-2000

³⁷ Focus Group, NGOs. April 2007.

³⁸ See for example the EYF Bureau Position Paper on Demographic Change.
http://www.youthforum.org/Downloads/policy_docs/social_conditions/0406-05.pdf



This shows that to a large extent the youth forum has engaged in publication activities broadly in line with the areas identified in the White Paper on Youth as having the most significant youth dimensions, which include that education, lifelong learning, mobility, employment and social integration, as the priority areas in which the youth aspect has to be taken into account.

While the impact of the EYFs position papers and resolutions is difficult if not impossible to measure, there can be no doubt that the EYF offers a valuable apprenticeship to young people aspiring to a career in politics or in policy administration. Focus group participants stated unanimously that the access to knowledge and expertise, and to highly organised and formalized working groups in which participants need to compromise and respect opposing views was extremely useful in terms of gaining political experience. In the same way that many large corporations currently offer management trainee schemes, which recognize that there is a learning curve and a need to invest significantly before new employees can contribute fully to an organisation, the EYF can be seen as offering a valuable apprenticeship for a later career in European or national political institutions. While this is not an explicit or stated objective of the EYF, there can be little doubt that it fulfils such an objective in practice.

To what extent has the European Youth Forum contributed to the new cooperation framework in the youth field which it has been decided to establish at the level of the European Union?

As previously stated, it is difficult to measure the impact of the EYFs lobbying activities. The EYF is cautious and rarely disagrees publicly with the European institutions. The ideology of the EYF and the Commission overlap significantly in terms of who they see as the most effective and representative actors in the youth field, namely NGOs and NYCs. There can be little doubt that the EYF is a competent partner for European institutions, and that it has the capacity to contribute to youth policy design.

The EYF is a (comparatively) well-funded, professional and competent coordination framework for the views of a significant number of youth NGOs and NYCs. From the point of view of the European institutions (based on the face-to-face interviews with the programme administrators), it is an important consultation partner in drawing up youth policies and a valuable source of information on youth issues.

In many ways, the European Youth Forum is similar to other coordination frameworks favored by European institutions such as the Commission for involving civil society. Such frameworks include for instance the Platform of European Social NGOs. Much has been written about both

the effectiveness and representativeness of such European coordination frameworks which draw together representatives of different NGOs in a certain field (such as environment, social policy or youth) in order to present coordinated positions for the purpose of consulting with the European institutions.

The consultation process within the Commission has come under scrutiny in recent years, as has the role of civil society within it. European institutions such as the Commission have a unique status. They can be considered less representative and more in need to justify their legitimacy than comparable bodies on the national level (such as government departments or democratic parliaments), yet they have more legitimacy and “teeth” than most international organizations.

Involving civil society has been considered an important means for the European institutions to increase their legitimacy and to assure that policy making is based on representative consultations with stakeholders. For example, a recent study examining the evolution of relations between civil society and the European institutions concludes that:

“In contrast to the development at the treaty level, policy discourses touching on the role of civil society increased dramatically through the 1990s. In the discussions leading to the adoption of the Green Paper COM 93 551 and the White Paper COM 94 333 final on European Social Policy, the concept of “Civil Dialogue” has emerged to become one of the main strategic discourses of the Commission.”³⁹

In order to give as much democratic legitimacy to European Union decision making as possible, participants in the civil dialogue must be representative of broad, rather than narrow interests. Engaging with and welcoming the emergence of European associations which offer a framework for coordinating the views of NGOs and other civil society actors (such as National Youth Councils) has for this reason been a key part of the Commission’s civil society dialogue of recent years, as such an approach in theory combines representative views across a given sector in a single forum, making interactions with civil society more transparent and efficient.

Along with the European Women’s Lobby, the EYF is perhaps the largest and most impressively organized coordination framework for social NGOs. With a large number of full-time professional staff, annual budgets in excess of €2 million and an impressive network of expert advisors, the EYF is capable of performing a variety of lobbying and advocacy activities (providing expert policy advice, composing proposals for the Commission and Parliament, responding to legislative developments and competing for EU project proposals).⁴⁰

It is thus in a relatively strong position to contribute to youth policy in partnership with the European institutions, and is potentially a very useful source of input. One weakness that has been pointed out about the way the Commission has used the EYF as a partner in drawing up youth policy in the period studied is that most of the channels used in the past were informal.

“(The lack of) regular dialogue with the EYF (is a weakness). Today the dialogue is very informal, but we want to change this by meeting every four to six weeks. They often meet us more to discuss contractual issues (related to the funding programme), not policy issues. It is a time question, there

³⁹ Amiya-Nakada, Ryosuke. “Constructing ‘Corporatist’ State-Society Relations?: Current Discourses on the European NGOs and Its Democratic Weakness.” *Kobe University Law Review*, No 38, 2004.

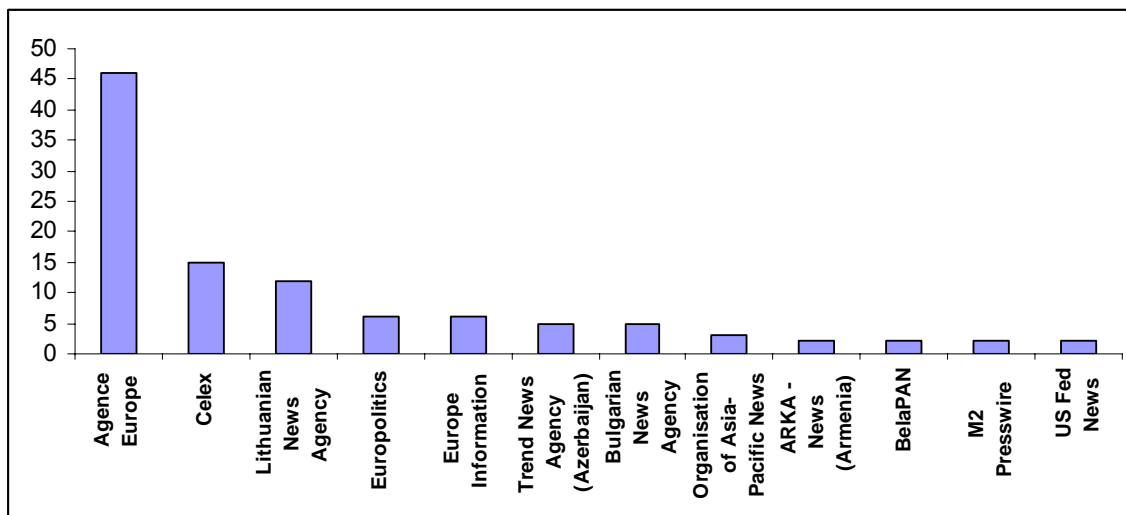
⁴⁰ Geyer, Robert. “Can European Union Social NGOs co-operate to promote EU Social Policy?” Cambridge University Press, *Journal of Social Policy* 30, 3, p. 477-493. 2001

hasn't been resistance to regular meetings within the Commission, it has just not been done because there has not been time on the agenda."⁴¹

To what extent does the European Youth Forum engage in discussion and reflection on youth in Europe and other parts of the world and on the European Union action to assist young people?

While it is visible internally within the European institutions and its views are recognized as an important component of internal Commission discussions about youth in Europe, the EYF is virtually absent from the public debate on youth in Europe as it is played out for example in the national and international media. An analysis of the EYFs press coverage from 2004 to 2006 is presented in the chart below. It shows that while press releases from the EYF are routinely picked up by agencies (whether private or Commission funded) specializing in European institutional affairs (Agence Europe or Celex), it has not had above two mentions in any mainstream media outlet in the period analysed. Interest in the EYF has been comparatively high in Eastern Europe and central Asia, partly reflecting the fact that the EYF has published resolutions on human rights abuses outside of Europe. The Lithuanian News Agency also picked up several EYF press releases, due in large part to a Lithuanian presidency of the EYF.⁴²

Figure 9: EYF Press Coverage, 2004-2006



Large media outlets who have commented on the EYFs activities in passing mentions include De Morgen, Corriere della Sera, the Irish Times and the Nation, who have each run one story mentioning the EYF in the period analysed. The Wall Street Journal published one opinion article during the period, largely critical of the EYF. A joint event and declaration between the EYF and the President of the World Bank received a small number of mentions in the mainstream press.

This is evidence that the EYFs profile in the debate about young people is very low outside of Brussels. While youth issues have created a ferocious debate in many countries (France for instance, where the role of young people in the French social model was widely debated after

⁴¹ Face-to-face interview, EC official.

⁴² The methodology for this analysis was to conduct two searches on the online database of news articles Factiva (www.factiva.com) by entering the term "European Forum" and "Youth Forum Jeunesse" respectively. A weakness of this approach is lingual, as only English and French articles are returned comprehensively, while articles in other languages are only picked up if they mention the formal title of the organisation in English or in French.

the riots of 2005), the EYF has not seized the opportunity to profile itself by for example publishing opinion pieces in large national and international media.

In many ways, the low profile of the EYF is deliberate. It is seen as the prerogative of the members to contact the media and to engage in debates on the national level. According to interviewees, the EYF "should play a role in the debate on the European level, but not on the national level. National Youth Councils are better at reaching the national media, they can tailor their message better than the EYF." Only a minority of the members interviewed are dissatisfied with the lack of press coverage of the EYF.

"I think the EYF are doing the maximum of what they can do to participate in the debate, there is little European discourse on youth and few places that they can participate. National media does not care about the EYF. Media will never get a message that is really interesting from an organisation such as the EYF, with is cautious rather than sensational."⁴³

A significant minority of interviewees felt that the EYF should do more to promote itself in the media, as it is a way to gain legitimacy and come under the radar of young people who are not engaged in youth NGOs. A common suggestion is that the EYF could engage in more research on youth, conducting polls and consultations for instance. Statistics generated through such tools could potentially be of interest to the media, it was felt.

4.3 EFFICIENCY

Introduction

The overall responsibility for managing the programme lies with DG EAC. The strategy behind supporting the EYF and selected youth NGOs did not originate in DG EAC, rather DG EAC and EACEA inherited the funding programme when for reasons of consistency (all other actions in favour of young people were managed by DG EAC) it was removed from the Secretariat General's office. The programme was given a legal basis in 2004. The strategic positioning of the "Youth" programme in respect of the larger programme aimed at young people is consistent with the idea that, beneath a "major" programme supporting grants for activities in a given area, there is a need to also have a smaller programme (such as the "Youth" programme), to cover the operating costs of those active in this field, thus supporting not only projects through the larger programme, but also the functioning of structures active in a given field.

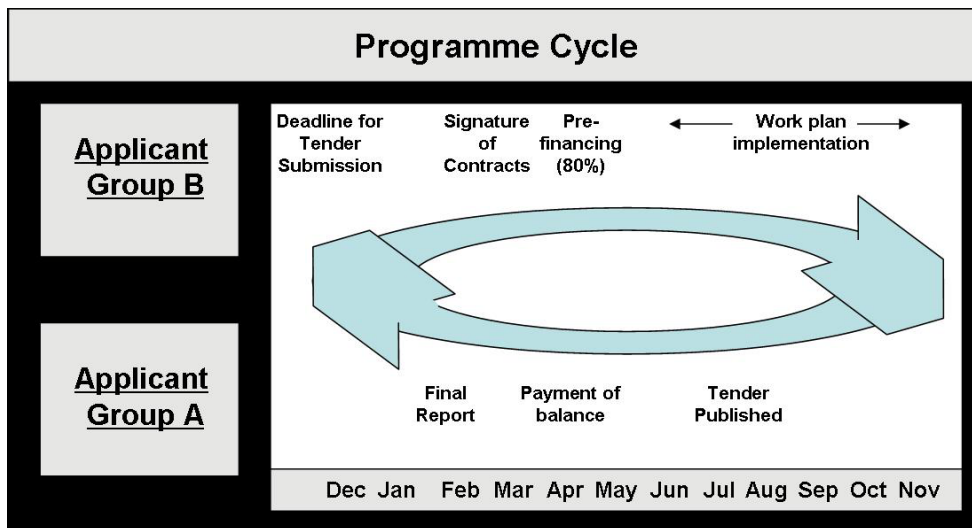
The main project-level tasks associated with the programme (contract management, liaising with potential grant beneficiaries) are carried out by two project officers, one based in Directorate D and one based in EACEA. The reason for this division is unclear, although the perceived political importance of the EYF could be the reason for assigning responsibility for managing the EYF grant to the Policy division of Directorate D.

The length of time from the final deadline for the call for proposals (December) to signature of the contract for the Youth NGOs is about four months, depending on how quickly the contracts are signed and returned. Candidates are then eligible for 80% pre-financing, depending on whether they have the right proof of financial capacity. The candidate will then implement the work plan, before submitting a final report after one year and two months from the start of the contract. Depending on whether the report is accepted, the final 20% of the balance will be paid

⁴³ Focus Group, NYCs. March 2007.

to the beneficiary. The diagram below shows the programme cycle of the programme under evaluation for two hypothetical groups of applicants:

Figure 10: Programme Cycle



Although the administrative requirements of the programme can be perceived as burdensome (which is not unsurprising or remarkable, given the limited resources and professionalism of a large number of the applicants), most beneficiaries describe it as basically reasonable. Very few beneficiaries describe the grant application process as straightforward and easy. More than 50% of all respondents to the online survey would describe the grant application process as not easy, but reasonable. The second largest group (25%) of respondents indicate that the process seemed somewhat more complicated than necessary. However, only 15% respondents see the application process as straightforward and easy, with 10% thinking it is far too complicated and difficult. This finding is of course based on the perceptions of the beneficiaries, most of whom do not have any experience with other Commission funding programmes and limited experience with other types of funding programmes. The findings do not imply that the administrative requirements for the programme were in any way more burdensome for applicants than the requirements of similar programmes.

In terms of the evaluation of the quality of the tenders, this is done by a committee of internal experts drawn from DG EAC and EACEA. The experts are not necessarily specialised in youth policy; experts from other fields are also invited in order to have different disciplines represented as broadly as possible. Certain priority areas exist every year; for example, in 2006, the priority area was politically visible initiatives concerning the participation of young people in the construction of Europe. However, as mentioned, the key aspect for evaluating tenders is the capability of an organisation to carry out their work plan. The focus is on operational rather than strategic aspects in other words. The project evaluators try to keep as open a mind as possible in terms of specific projects or activities suggested by the NGOs and by the EYF.

How successfully have the inputs to the programme (financial and human resources) been converted into outputs (grants to NGYO and to the European Youth Forum) and produced tangible outcomes?

The eligibility of an NGO applicant is assessed in terms of six main categories:

- Type of organisation
- Capability in terms of financial & human resources
- Track record
- Geographic spread
- Proposed activities
- Compliance of the proposal with administrative requirements

In terms of inputs to the management of the programme, the most resources are spent reviewing applications from the youth NGOs and determining their eligibility under the programme. According to interviews with Commission staff, there have been no significant problems attracting qualified applicants to the programme, and there have not been any funds left over after the programming period. The specific actions carried out by NGOs and linked to one of the seven fields specified in the legal basis for the programme are potentially very broad. The seven fields specified in the legal basis for the programme include:

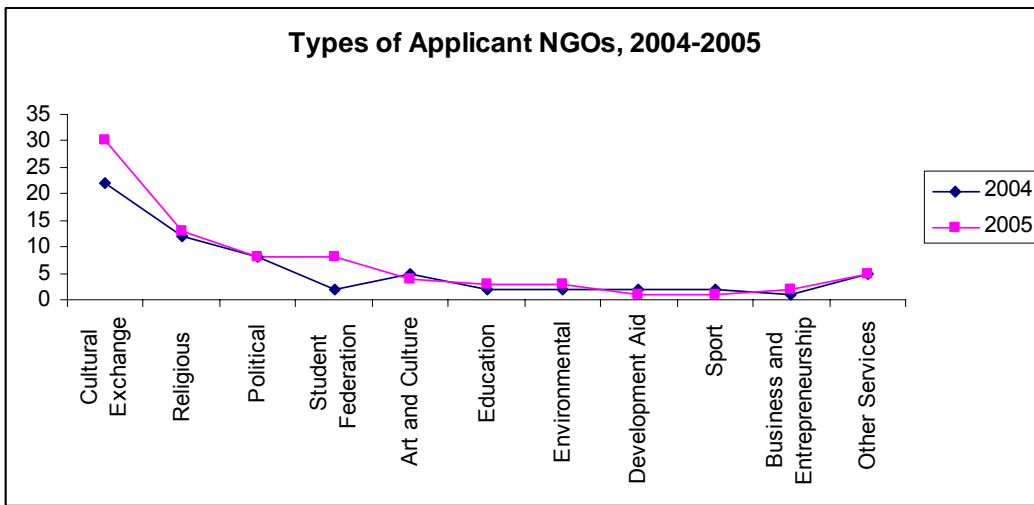
- Representation of the views and interests of young people in all their diversity at Community level
- Youth exchanges and voluntary services
- Informal and non-formal learning and work programmes
- The promotion of intercultural learning and understanding
- Debate on European matters and EU policies or youth policies
- Dissemination of information on Community action
- Actions promoting young citizens' participation and initiative

For 2004 and 2005, a breakdown of beneficiaries by their main area of activity shows that while NGOs specialising in promoting cultural exchanges (in a broad as well as in a specific sense, i.e. organisations that focus broadly on promoting for example understanding between cultures are included as well as organisations that work specifically to organise youth volunteers) and NGOs representing a specific religious or political point of view are by far the most commonly represented organisations, a wide range of NGOs focusing on other fields are also represented in the programme. Although applicants may be members of the EYF, this is not a requirement.

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Figure 11: Types of NGO Applicants, 2004-2005

⁴⁴ NGOs working in the fields of voluntary services, social integration, and active citizenship are included in the "Cultural Exchange" category.

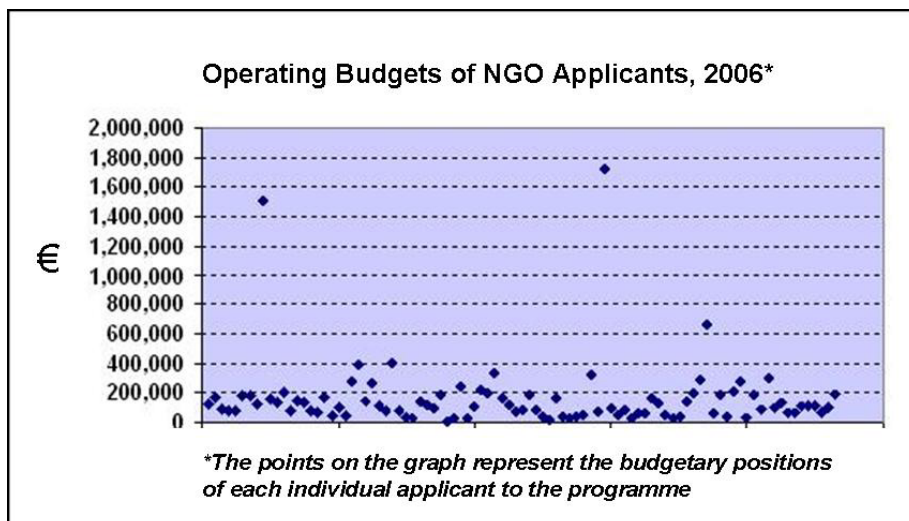


For the applicants to the programme in 2006, the breakdown of activities was even broader. Out of 154 applicants to the programme in 2006, a majority (82- representing 53%) did not apply to the programme in 2005, although some of these NGOs did apply in 2004. This is evidence of a growing recognition of the programme among youth NGOs.

Of the 78 applicants who benefited from the programme in 2005, fewer than ten organisations did not reapply in 2006, which gives the impression that the programme is seen as worth participating in and valuable by the programme beneficiaries.

In terms of financial resources, there are some differences between the applicants. Most of the applicants have a budget between €10,000 (the smallest applicant for the programme) and €200,000. This indicates that the programme has successfully targeted smaller NGOs who are most in need of the funding. Only three beneficiaries have a budget greater than €500,000, though ten applicants are in the range between €200,000 and €500,000. The chart below gives an overview of the budgets of the different applicants to the programme. Each individual applicant is represented by a single point on the graph. The accumulation of points below the line representing €200,000 illustrates how the vast majority of the applicants for the programme are similar in terms of their overall budgets:

Figure 12: Operating Budgets of NGO Applicants, 2006



How appropriate has the frequency and timing of calls for proposals been?

In the online survey for youth NGOs, the following question was posed to respondents: “Based on your experience, please rank the following statements in order of priority (1=most important to you, 5=least important to you).”

The statements that respondents were asked to rank in order of importance to them included two concerning timing and frequency:

- It is important that the timing between the calls for proposals and the signing of the contract is quick
- Multiannual contracts with beneficiaries should be allowed

The average response to the statements is detailed in the table below. 1 is the highest ranking for a given statement; a low numerical score indicates that the respondents give it a high priority.

Statements	Average Rank
It is important that the process by which the selection is made is communicated to the applicants	3.25
The cap on the maximum amount of funding awarded through the programme should be increased beyond €35,000	3.16
It is important that the calls for proposals are user-friendly (i.e. well structured and easy to understand)	2.96
It is important that the timing between the calls for proposals and the signing of the contract is quick	2.90
Multiannual contracts with beneficiaries should be allowed	2.23

Based on their experience, the most important point for the respondents to the online survey is that multi-annual, “framework” contracts with beneficiaries should be allowed. The fact that the timing between the calls for proposals and the signing of the contract is quick is also seen as very significant, closely followed by the need for calls for proposals to be user-friendly (for example well structured and easy to understand). However, the respondents see it as being less important to increase the cap on the maximum amount of funding awarded through the programme beyond €35,000. The statement “It is important that the process by which the selection is made is communicated to the applicants”, was ranked by the respondents as the least important.

This indicates that the frequency of the calls for proposals is of importance to applicants,. The feeling among applicants is that the timing and frequency of the calls for proposals has not been appropriate, as the annual process makes it very difficult to plan ahead. The preferred solution to this problem is instituting multiannual framework contracts with the Commission. This is the key area where improvement to the programme could be made according to the surveyed recipients and programme beneficiaries.

How user-friendly have the calls for proposals been?

The calls for proposals are launched annually for the NGOs. The first call for proposal for youth NGOs was launched in October 2003. The applications were meant to have been examined by January 2004, with the final decision on the eligibility of the applicants made in February and the results communicated to the applicants in March. This places the original timetable for the first selection process prior to the final acceptance of the legal basis for the programme, which was adopted in April 2004.

The philosophy behind the programme as presented in the first call for proposals is thus based on a number of policy decisions and documents developed previous to the legal basis for the programme, such as the Commission's 2001 White Paper on Youth, which is used as the basis for developing for instance the quality criteria used as a basis for assessment. The adoption of the legal basis caused a certain amount of delay in assessing the applications for 2004, however the 2005 and 2006 calls for proposals were processed largely in keeping with the original timetables. It should be kept in mind that this delay in processing the applications in 2004 was down to a circumstance outside of the control of the programme administrators when assessing the experiences of the 2004 beneficiaries.

For the European Youth Forum, the grant request has to be submitted to the Commission on an annual basis. In the view of the programme administrators, the annual timing of the calls for proposals is perhaps not optimal, as the work programme for the EYF is based on a longer term view and requires frequent updates throughout the year for reasons of pragmatism. The need to justify activities annually places a significant administrative burden on both the Commission and on the EYF.

Modifications to the work programme need to be dealt with legally and often require changes to the contract. The EYF and the NGOs have some degree of flexibility; the EYF is allowed to redistribute 10% of the funds originally allocated to an activity to another without modifying their contract with the Commission, while the NGOs are allowed to reallocate 20%, however larger changes mean that the original contract has to be modified. For instance, the Commission has been in negotiations with the EYF about an amendment to the contract for this year which began in July and is still not resolved satisfactorily. It will be useful to explore further the impact that the timing of the call for proposals has had, and the potential usefulness of a different model being used, for instance a multi-annual framework contract agreement.

Based on the feedback from beneficiaries, it seems clear that the programme has combined a rigorous, process-oriented approach with a large degree of flexibility and pragmatism. In the last instance the key to success of the programme is that beneficiaries are satisfied that the benefits of applying for a grant outweigh the incurred administrative costs, something which seems clear that it has from the data gathered.

More than half of all respondents to the online survey (32) would describe the grant application process as not easy, but reasonable. The second largest group of respondents indicate that the process seemed somewhat more complicated than necessary. Only 8 respondents saw the application process as straightforward and easy, with 4 thinking it is far too complicated and difficult.

That two thirds of respondents feel that the process has been relatively uncomplicated should be seen as a positive outcome, especially when bearing in mind that the applicants can be assumed to be relatively inexperienced in applying for funding and that complying with the financial regulations of the European Commission involves a significant amount of work on the part of applicants.

The user friendliness of the calls for proposals is of medium importance to the applicants surveyed. While the process can be perceived as bureaucratic and difficult, most of the applicant surveyed recognize that submitting to a relatively complicated application procedure is the price for Commission funding, and that it is largely out of the hands of the programme administrators.

A number of project beneficiaries had suggestions for improving the application procedures. A large number of respondents touched on the need to keep to a certain format for the application pack each year, and not change the administrative requirements too much from year to year.

“The application form should not change each year and when a new element is introduced into the application form (especially for the calculation of specific costs), it should be indicated as a "new element" in the call (or in the introduction to the application form), and should be repeated on the relevant page of the form.”⁴⁵

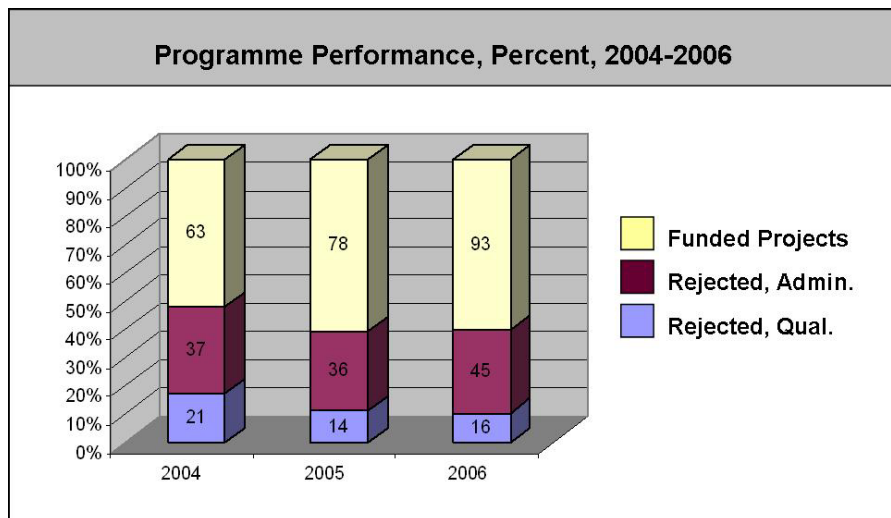
Improving the consistency and predictability of the application process year on year is the key demand made by the programme beneficiaries. There were no suggestions made that any of the specific elements of the application process in themselves should be reconsidered, the most important thing to applicants was consistency.

How efficient has the proposals selection process been?

In terms of applicants rejected by the programme, the percentage of applications rejected was highest in 2004, where around 40% of applicants were rejected for either administrative or qualitative reasons. In 2005 and 2006, only 30% of applicants were rejected. The chart below allows a comparison of the percentage of accepted and rejected projects from 2004-2006. Two possible explanations can account for the dip in rejected applications in 2005 and 2006: the introduction of the legal basis in the middle of the programme cycle in 2004 probably led to many projects being rejected for qualitative criteria than in following years where the legal basis fed directly into the ToR and the tools and techniques used during the application process.

Figure 13: Programme Performance in Percent of Projects Funded 2004-2006

⁴⁵ Comment on the online survey for youth NGOs



The percentage of applicants being rejected for administrative reasons has however remained constant over the past two years. This is most probably due to a lack of engagement with the rules of the programme and with the programme administrators on the side of the applicants themselves, as the evidence shows that a large degree of effort is made by the Commission and EACEA to make the administrative and qualitative criteria clear to the applicants who proactively demand this information. Most of the applications refused for administrative reasons did not comply with the eligibility criteria related to the need, for the applicant structure, to have members in at least 8 Programme Countries.

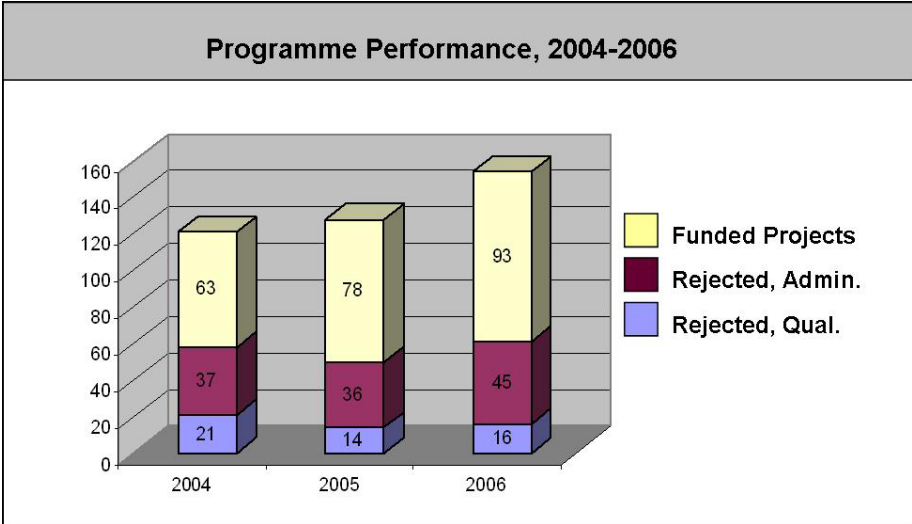
Given the relatively small budgets of the granted organisations, it has often been difficult for the beneficiaries to prove their financial capacity. Several organisations are found to be ineligible for the prepayment, usually due to doubts about the financial capacity of the organisation (this can usually be proved by means of a bank guarantee, however many small NGOs have difficulty obtaining such a document). 7 out of 93 eligible organisations (around 8%) had to renounce the prepayment as a result of not being able to furnish strong enough proof of capacity in 2006.

This could be a cause for concern, especially since a large number of organisations benefiting from the programme are affiliated with larger, adult led entities such as political parties or religious groupings, which are able to furnish guarantees on behalf of their youth wings. The organisations who are deemed eligible but who are unable to furnish the required guarantees for prepayment were in 2006 exclusively drawn from “pure” youth organisations not affiliated with an adult-led parent organisation.

The finding that youth wings of adult-led organisations are more likely to be able to capitalize on the prepayment than smaller and more youth led organisations who are probably more in need of the grant could imply that work needs to be done to ease the requirements for receiving the prepayment. In order to achieve the maximum impact, the target group for the programme should be pure youth organisations if possible, in order to eliminate the risk that funding for the youth wings of adult-led organisations displaces funds which would have been allocated by the parent organisation to the youth organisation if Community funding had not been available.

The chart below shows the growth in applications from 2004 to 2006. The growth has been steady, and the number of funded projects has increased by nearly one third since 2004. This should be considered a success of the programme.

Figure 14: Programme Performance, Absolute Numbers 2004-2006



In terms of benchmarking this aspect of the programmes performance with other Commission grant programmes, the programme under evaluation can be considered broadly successful. In 2000, of the applications submitted by NGOs for funding through budget line A-3029, around 35% were rejected.⁴⁶ Under the Culture 2000 Programme, around 25% of applications were rejected.⁴⁷ Other programmes however have had a much higher rejection rate. DG EAC’s Kaleidoscope, Ariane, and Raphael programme for example have all had rejection rates of over 70% (it must be kept in mind however that these programmes had very different topics, target audiences and selection criteria from the “Youth” programme.

How efficiently have agreements with NNGOs and European Youth Forum been prepared, dispatched, monitored, controlled and liquidated?

Based on the legal basis for the programme and past experience in assessing grant applications for the programme, the Commission has designed several tools and techniques to assess the eligibility of applicants and to monitor the contract. For instance, in order to monitor the NGOs, the progress of the successful applicants is tracked by means of an Excel spreadsheet, which, besides keeping track of administrative details such as the number assigned to the application and relevant dates for when the contract has been sent and received by the Commission, lists the name of each successful applicant, their total annual budget, the country where the applicant is registered, the amount granted to the applicant through the programme, the percentage of their annual budget which is made up of the offered grant. The spreadsheet also keeps a record of applicants who have been found ineligible for the prefinancing payment due to a lack of a financial guarantee.

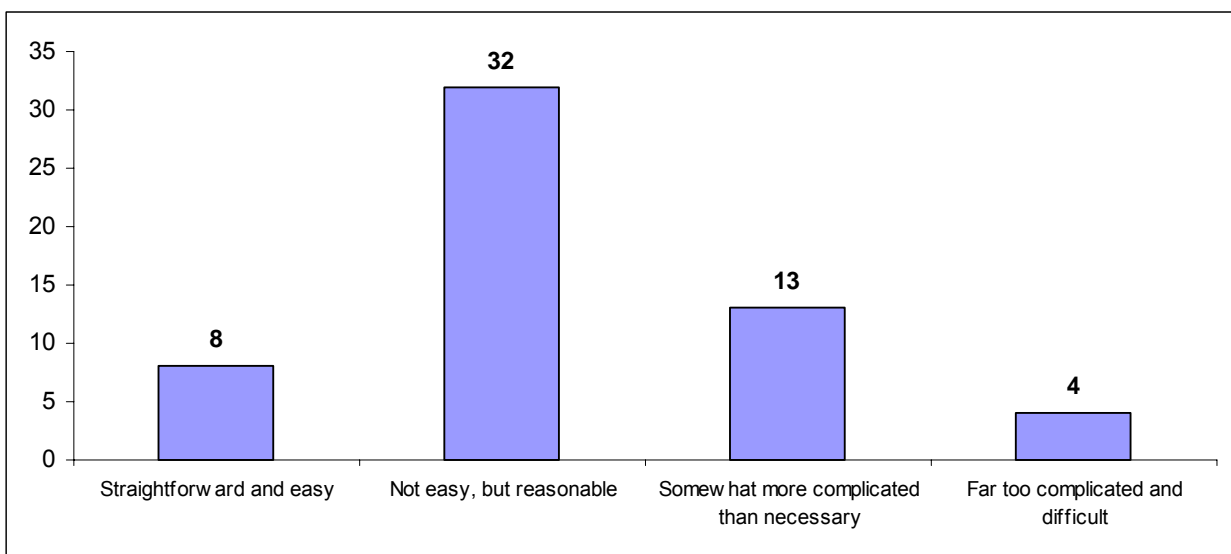
In the view of the evaluation team, this tool used for managing the contract is adequate, as it allows for a considerable level of detail and can be made to generate useful information about the profile of the applicants. The applicants to the programme are also proactively analysed in

⁴⁶ Ex-post evaluation of budget line A-3029 in 1999 and 2000, as assigned by unit D1 of the Commission’s Directorate-General for Education and Culture. http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/evalreports/youth/2002/a3029/A3029xprep_en.pdf
⁴⁷ Second External Interim Evaluation of the Culture 2000 Framework Programme

terms of their thematic area of activity, which is another useful tool for generating management information about the applicants.

The persons interviewed for this evaluation felt overburdened by the administrative requirements, but on balance a large majority felt that the programme was run efficiently and fairly. More than half of all respondents to the online survey for youth NGOs (32) describe the grant application process as not easy, but reasonable. The second largest group of respondents indicate that the process seemed somewhat more complicated than necessary. However, only 8 respondents see the application process as straightforward and easy, with 4 thinking it is far too complicated and difficult.

Figure 15: Perceptions of Programme Efficiency



That two thirds of respondents feel that the process has been relatively uncomplicated should be seen as a positive outcome, especially when bearing in mind that the applicants can be assumed to be relatively inexperienced in applying for funding and that complying with the financial regulations of the European Commission involves a significant amount of work on the part of applicants.

The comments made by respondents to the survey and interviewees indicate that communication with the Commission is seen as very good at present. It seems to be the perception of many NGOs that the programme administrators go out of their way to respond to questions and offer help with the application. The administration is generally seen as fair and flexible.

“It is very useful to have a person we know we can contact in Brussels. And official documents are sometimes difficult to gather, hence the flexibility regarding possible little delay was appreciated.”⁴⁸

“Help from staff at the Youth Unit was outstanding”⁴⁹

How efficiently have activities been implemented by granted organisations?

⁴⁸ Comment to the online survey for Youth NGOs

⁴⁹ Comment to the online survey for Youth NGOs

In the online survey for youth NGOs, the following question was posed to respondents: “What has the effect of the grant been on the activities of your organisation?”

In terms of the effect of the grant on the activities organised by the respective NGOs, respondents to the online survey were asked to state their level of agreement to the following statements:

- The grant has made it possible for my organisation to disseminate more information materials than formerly
- The grant has increased my organisation’s involvement and communication with members in different countries
- The grant has led to an increase in the quality of activities organised
- The grant has made it possible to involve a significant number of young people not previously engaged in the activities of my organisation
- The grant has strengthened the ties between my organisation and the European Institutions
- The number of activities has significantly increased since receiving the grant
- The grant has allowed my organisation to increase the number of fulltime personnel dedicated to leading activities
- The grant has allowed my organisation to have a voice in the EU debate on youth policies

The overall perception is that the grant had very positive effects on the activities organised by the individual NGOs. Almost 90% of the respondents believe that the grant has made it possible for their organisation to disseminate more information material than formerly. There is no disagreement with this statement among the respondents. In addition, there is an overall agreement (82%) of respondents that the grant has increased their organisation’s involvement and communication with members in different countries. 77% percent of respondents indicate their agreement that the grant has led to an increase in the quality of the activities organised, and almost the same number of respondents believe that the grant has enabled them to involve a significant number of young people that were not previously engaged in the activities of their respective organisations.

A majority of respondents is also convinced that the grant has strengthened the ties between their organisation and the European institutions; however 35% are neutral or disagree. Sixty-eight percent of respondents feel that the number of activities has significantly increased since receiving the grant, and 58% of respondents state that the number of fulltime personnel dedicated to leading activities is rising, too. However, there seem to be some mixed perceptions regarding the statement if the grant has allowed the respective NGOs to have a voice in the EU debate on youth policies, with more than 40% agreeing to this statement and 25% disagreeing strongly or disagreeing, while 35% of all respondents remain neutral.

The findings show that the grant is perceived as improving their activities and communication tools as well as the reach of their message. Moreover, the grant is seen as a tool to improve the relationship between organisations and the European Institutions. However, there are mixed feelings if the grant facilitates the influence that organisations can have in the EU debate on youth policies.

The impact of the grant on other activities such as fundraising should not be underestimated. A key benefit of the programme is considered to be its effect on the profile of an organisation and its effect on fund raising. More than half of all respondents to the online survey believe that the involvement in the grant programme has raised the public profile of their NGO significantly among youth, and more than 60% of respondents indicate that the involvement in the grant programme has given their NGO more credibility when raising funds from other sources. Only a very small number of respondents disagree with these two statements.

More than 40% of the respondents to the survey do not believe that without a grant through the programme their organisation would have survived to this stage. It is also significant that more than 80% of the respondents believe that their NGO would not have raised a similar amount of funds from other sources if it had not been supported by the grant programme.

Most respondents disagree with the statement that their NGOs introduced new activities in order to meet the requirements of the programme, while 35% of respondents remain neutral to this statement. 65% indicate that their organisation did not modify the focus or structure to meet the requirements of the programme. This is an indication that the Commission's involvement is not seen as threatening the independence of the NGOs.

These results show that the overall majority of NGOs responding to the online survey clearly profited from the grant and are aware of the benefits. The findings also indicate that the focus and programme of most NGOs matched the requirements set out by the grant, which suggests that the design of the grant itself is meeting its target groups. The fact that almost half of the respondents believe that their organisations would not have been able to raise the same amount of funds from other sources indicates that the programme plays a crucial part for the financing of several NGOs in the field of youth.

4.4 UTILITY AND SUSTAINABILITY

Introduction

The programme was designed in such a way that funding to organisations would decrease for every year the organisation reapplied, and thus pushing NGOs towards self sustainability. The focus groups, the online survey and the telephone interviews with beneficiaries indicate, however, that they see their survival without the programme in stark terms. There is not enough will to explore alternative funding channels. Trying to force youth NGOs to pursue alternative funding may very well backfire, as there is no indication that faced with a difficult choice in terms of funding they would make efforts to be self-sustaining at the same activity level by finding alternative funding rather than reducing the level of activities to a minimum.

To what extent has the programme been of benefit to the European institutions and young people involved?

The amounts of funding offered to the youth NGOs (with the exception of the EYF, which receives a minimum of €2 million annually under the programme) are all under €35,000, an amount that roughly equals the annual salary of one full-time employee. If the amount is to have a significant impact on the NGO, it can be assumed that much of the cost of applying and reporting must be borne by volunteers. However, there is no doubt that this funding is crucial for smaller NGOs, and has great impact on their ability to act professionally and transparently.

While it can be expected that some youth NGOs struggle even though they benefit from the grant due to a lack of funding opportunities from other sources, certain activities targeted at youth are currently experiencing a boom in demand. Volunteer work abroad, for instance, is fuelled by a number of factors including general economic conditions, cheap travel and the favourable attitude taken by future employers to this type of activity. According to the Year Out Group, a trade association for 38 companies that organise British volunteers, up to 200,000 British people now take time out each year to go abroad.⁵⁰

The implications of this could be that Commission funding for example volunteer work abroad (where there is currently a boom) could be crowding out investment that could have been raised from other sources (from volunteers themselves or from the private sector), especially if such programmes do not explicitly target disadvantaged youth. There could perhaps be scope to target NGOs more broadly, instead of funding a large number of NGOs broadly engaged in the same field.

With regards to the EYF, the main benefits to the European institutions and to young people have been outlined in detail above. From the point of view of the Commission, the EYF offers a useful sounding board for matters of youth policy. It also functions as an apprenticeship and training programme for future administrators and politicians. For a select group of young people, the EYF gives the opportunity to engage deeply with youth issues and draw upon a string network and resources.

To what extent could the positive changes or trends induced by the programme be expected to last if it were terminated?

While the programme has been successful at attracting the types of organisations originally envisaged for the grant programme and the programme has been run efficiently, one unfortunate consequence of the way the programme has been designed is that it perhaps perpetuates in many cases a situation that is not sustainable in the long term.

A large number of the granted umbrella organizations are active in the same field, for example youth exchange. While this evaluation does not go into great detail in examining the activities and workings of each and every granted international NGO, there is a risk that the programme is artificially supporting a number of umbrella organizations basically involved in the same work. A risk of the programme is that umbrella NGOs are not given incentives for merging with NGOs in a similar field because the support from the Commission gives them the means to remain independent and reduces the incentive to collaborate with similar organizations.

Most of the programme beneficiaries sincerely believe that they would not survive without the grant from the Commission. The ability of youth NGOs to sustain themselves through contributions from members is less than what is the case for other types of NGOs, as young people are financially weaker on average than representatives of other groups. Operating

⁵⁰ "Gap years: disaster or trip of a lifetime?" Article published in The Independent, 05 October 2006.

grants to NGOs are hard to come by from corporate donors, who prefer to support projects rather than organizations with their own agenda.

The main positive trend that the programme has induced is a strengthening of selected youth NGOs and the European Youth Forum. This is inline with the established thinking of the Commission, which puts NGOs at the centre of its strategy of involving civil society and giving legitimacy to decisions. If the programme were terminated, the Commission would weaken significantly the actors with which it has built up over a number of years, and it is difficult to currently see replacement funds coming from anywhere else.

To what extent could the programme have been carried out as effectively by bilateral or multilateral arrangements between EU member states on the one hand and NGOs on the other?

Across Europe, there are different frameworks for how the youth sector is organized, and for how public bodies engage with youth. The European youth sector consists of a variety of institutions with different roles, responsibilities and labels. There have been attempts to classify different national frameworks for youth policy in Europe, for instance by looking at the actors most involved in formulating youth policy. A useful classification was presented in the “Study on the State of Young People and Youth Policy in Europe”, a report prepared in 2001 for DG EAC.⁵¹

Based on the major policy actors and the way in which youth policies are coordinated, European countries can be divided into three different categories:

- Countries with a major youth sector: Countries in which youth policy is primarily concentrated within a well-defined and dominating youth sector (Austria, Luxembourg, Liechtenstein, Germany, Spain, Greece and Portugal).
- Countries with a minor youth sector: Countries in which youth policy is partly linked to a specialized youth sector and partly “dispersed among a number of traditional sectors” such as education, employment, urban planning, etc. (the Netherlands, France, Belgium, Ireland, Finland, Sweden, and Norway).
- Countries without a special youth sector: Countries in which youth policy is ‘fractured into traditional sectors and without a centre’ (the United Kingdom, in Iceland, in Italy, and in Denmark).

This classification is helpful in that it emphasizes the variety of approaches taken to youth policy within Europe. However, it does not distinguish between how effective the policy framework is at actually addressing the concerns of young people. It does not necessarily follow from the classification that a country with a major youth sector is more favourable to the interests of young people than countries without a special youth sector.

The fact that youth policy is “fractured into traditional sectors and without a centre”, such as in the United Kingdom, or “dispersed among a number of traditional sectors” such as in Sweden is not an indication that the country lacks engaged youth, or that young people lack influence under such a system. Rather, as the previously mentioned DG EAC study points out, it could mean that youth are more likely to be engaged at the community level as opposed to the national level, or that traditional sectors and institutions are inclusive enough to allow youth to have influence within them. The classification above is thus based on the existence of a

⁵¹ http://ec.europa.eu/youth/doc/studies/iard/summaries_en.pdf

nominal youth sector in different European countries, without taking into account the actual political influence and degree of engagement among the youth in that country.

The existence of nominal policy structures for youth, such as Ministries of Youth or National Youth Councils or Forums, can have the effect of raising awareness about youth as a special sector with distinct political, cultural and social concerns. However, the existence of such structures also begs the question of what interests are represented by the youth sector, and what the distinct identity of youth is vis-à-vis other stakeholders.

The programme has correctly identified a gap in funding for NGOs on the European level. The disparities between the funding models for the youth sector employed in each member state would make it difficult to envisage a similar programme being run on a bilateral or multilateral level. As mentioned before, the programme can be seen as a way for the Commission to support NGOs which can act as civil society consultation partners. This model of involving civil society is particular to European institutions and is not as common on the national level, making it doubtful that a programme such as the one supporting the EYF and European Youth NGOs would sustain enough interest from member states to be willing to fund it unilaterally without significant input and coordination from the European Commission.

5 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 RELEVANCE

In terms of bringing “people closer to the European design and to European institutions”, the programme can be said to have succeeded on several fronts. A large majority of respondents to the online survey of EYF members either agree or strongly agree (88%) that the grant has strengthened the ties between the EYF and the European Institutions. In terms of bringing the members of the EYF closer to the European institutions, the main impact of the programme is that the EYF members feel more informed on European issues (88% either agreed or strongly agreed with this statement). The result among NGOs responding to the online survey was similar, with 76% agreeing or strongly agreeing that the grant has strengthened the ties between their organisations and the European institutions. This leads to the conclusion that the programme has succeeded in bringing the organisations directly involved with the programme closer to the European institutions.

However, 60% of EYF members disagreed or were neutral to the statement that the programme has allowed youth in general in their countries to become more involved in European issues. Also, a significant minority of respondents (25%) were either neutral, disagreed or disagreed strongly with the statement that promoting an awareness of the importance of European policy among youth in their country was an important objective for their organisation. A conclusion that can be drawn from this is that while the programme beneficiaries have been brought closer to the European institutions and the European design by the programme, the funded organisations have been less successful at acting as multipliers to bring the general young population in their countries closer to Europe.

The evaluation has found that the relevance of the programme to the beneficiaries includes aspects beyond the direct financial support offered to the EYF and the NGOs. Across all of the stakeholder groups and beneficiaries (EYF and NGOs), a majority stated that participating in the programme brought important benefits in terms of giving them higher visibility and a stronger reputation, and imparting relevant skills to the beneficiary organisations. Around 60% of NGOs stated that involvement in the grant programme has raised the public profile of their NGOs significantly among youth, and given them more credibility when raising funds from other sources. A large number of telephone interviewees also agreed that the programme has developed their financial and planning skills, due to the discipline imposed on participating organisations. This leads to the conclusion that the programme has been relevant particularly in boosting the reputation of beneficiaries, and imparting discipline in terms of forward planning and budgeting imparted by participating in the programme is valuable to the organisations.

The main reason for applying among NGOs is that the aims of the programme reflect the aims and working methods of the applicant organisations. Two-thirds of the respondents to the online survey state that their organisation chose to apply for a grant through the programme because it was in line with the mission and aims. This is seen as the most important reason for preferring the programme as a source of funding. A lesser but significant number of respondents to the survey (20%) state that the programme was the only one for which their NGO was eligible. These findings indicate that “ideological” sympathy between the NGOs and the aims of the programme is the main reason for applying. A smaller, but significant number of respondents cited a lack of eligibility for other programmes as the main reason for applying, which is an indication that the programme is not performing “double work” in relation to other Commission

grant programmes. This is strong evidence for the relevance of the programme to the applicant NGOs, but also may reflect the fact that youth organisations with aims that are not ideologically similar to those of the European Commission have not participated in the programme to a great extent.

A condition for receiving funding through the programme is that NGOs have a wide European network. The evaluation has found that this stipulation gives a powerful incentive for NGOs to expand beyond their country of origin. For example, promoting links with organisations in other European countries was a top priority for NGOs involved in the programme, with almost all respondents (95%) of the opinion that promoting links with organisation in other European countries as very important or quite important. The majority of the respondents to the online survey stated that this was the most important objective of their organisation, something that supports the conclusion that the programme has been successful at promoting cooperation between community actors in the youth sector.

Over 40% of beneficiaries responding to the survey believe that they would not have been able to survive on funds from elsewhere if they had been unsuccessful, which suggests that the programme is perceived as a unique funding opportunity by many successful applicants. However, the survey of unsuccessful applicants revealed that the impact of not receiving the funding was in the majority of cases likely either to be moderate or very small, with around 75% responding that the impact was moderate or extremely limited. It should be kept in mind that unsuccessful applicants who were impacted severely by being rejected by the programme may have been less likely to respond to the survey than those organisations which had successfully raised funds elsewhere, due to high personnel turnover or lack of resources. Nevertheless, this discrepancy suggests that programme beneficiaries overestimate the potential negative impact of not receiving funding through the programme due a lack of awareness of other sources of funding, leading to the conclusion that the grant in some, but certainly not all, instances “crowds out” funding available from other sources.

A large number of beneficiaries represent the youth wings of adult-led organisations, or are involved in popular and economically viable sectors such as youth exchange (an industry which has grown significantly in size and professionalism over the last few years). The youth exchange sector has grown at a very strong pace since the 1990's, as measured for example by the growth in the travel market targeted at young people, which is expected to double in value in 2010 compared to its size in 2005, a growth rate of around 15% per year. This makes it one of the fastest growing sectors in the industry; ISTC (International Student Travel Confederation) estimates that students and youth represents the fastest growing niche group of travellers.

In these two cases the risk is highest that the funding provided by the Commission can in many cases be displacing funding available from elsewhere, either from the private sector or from parent organisations, potentially reducing the relevance of the programme.

The programme has been successful at attracting, and defining as eligible, smaller NGOs who are in most need of assistance. Around 50% of respondents to the online survey employ two or fewer permanent staff. Nearly 28% of all respondents indicate that their organisations employ 2-5 people on a full time basis, while 12.7% cite that the permanent staff in their organisation varies between 5-10 people. 10.9%, state that their organisations employ more than 10 people full time.

However, a large number of participants in the programme still represent the youth wings of adult-led organisations, and a large number are active in the youth exchange industry. A cause for concern is that the organizations deemed eligible but who were unable to furnish the required

guarantees for prepayment in, for example, 2006 were exclusively drawn from “pure” youth organisations not affiliated with an adult-led parent organisation.

Given the relatively small budgets of many of the granted organisations, it has often been difficult for the beneficiaries to prove their financial capacity. An important number of organisations are each year found to be ineligible for the prepayment, in most cases due to doubts about the financial capacity of the organisation (usually proved by means of a bank guarantee, but many small NGOs have difficulty obtaining such a document). 7 out of 93 eligible organisations (around 8%) had to renounce the prepayment as a result of not being able to furnish strong enough proof of capacity in 2006.

The programme has had some, but not a great deal of influence on encouraging youth NGOs and the EYF to broaden their efforts to reach out to young people who are not currently engaged in youth organisations. The fact that a majority of respondents to the online survey feel that participation in the programme has not led them to change their structure or aims can be seen as a result of the “hands-off” philosophy of the programme, which does not impose many conditions on the beneficiaries besides formal conditions related to financial and organizational capacity.

Recommendations

- The Commission needs to ensure that the EYF and the NGOs play an active and assertive role in encouraging their members to also involve young people with no prior political or NGO experience, for example by encouraging the EYF to design best practices for how member organisations consult with young people in the Member States
- It is recommended that DG Education and Culture continue to put an emphasis on cooperation and networking with other organisations in Europe and beyond, as this seems to have an important impact on the added value and sphere of influence of the NGO organisations supported by the programme.

5.2 EFFECTIVENESS

The award of a grant has to some extent helped to give NGOs and the EYF credibility and increased their visibility among their members and other potential donors, but it is less clear that it has raised their profile among young people in general. Respondents to the survey of EYF members were for instance five times more likely to disagree strongly when asked whether the EYF was highly visible among youth in Europe than agree strongly with the statement. In the survey of NGOs, a question that a large number of respondents did not answer was whether youth in their country have become more involved in European issues as a result of the grant programme. Of the people who answered the question, most were neutral (45%). This can be taken to indicate some uncertainty among the members of the broader effects of the funding on young people in their country.

Commission funding has had an indirect effect on encouraging NGOs to better represent young people in all their diversity, by allowing organisations benefiting from the grant to dedicate more time to increasing networking and knowledge sharing between NGOs and increasing the quality of the activities organised. 88% percent of respondents from the NGOs indicate their agreement that the grant has led to an increase in the quality of the activities organised, with very few

respondents disagreeing or neutral. When it comes to involving a significant number of young people not previously engaged, the results are more mixed, with 25% either neutral or disagreeing. The evidence from the telephone interviews and focus groups indicate that there are currently no or very few formalised metrics used in for example the reporting template for measuring the degree to which beneficiaries have managed to engage larger numbers of young people than in previous years. The EYF also does not actively monitor the number of young people engaged in its member organisations, beyond verifying that the organisations have the required for membership in the EYF.

65% percent of respondents to the online survey of NGOs feel that they have not had to change the focus or structure of their organisation in order to participate in the programme, a finding that is inline with the view of the programme administrators that the programme should take a hands off approach to NGOs as long as they meet the basic requirements for participation. The respondents are of the opinion that the programme has had a much smaller impact on the total number of youth activities carried out by the NGOs, with over thirty percent of respondents either disagreeing or neutral. This supports the view that the programme has not radically altered the structure and frequency of the activities of NGOs, or greatly increased the number of people involved in them. This leads to the conclusion that the main impact of the programme has rather been to ensure that the activities of the NGOs are carried out in a more professional way.

The support for the EYF does not necessarily have an impact on its members' ability to involve more young people in their activities or increase the ability of members to raise more funds. When asked to respond on the effects of membership in the EYF on the ability of members to involve more youth in their activities, raise more funds and bring about positive perceptions of Europe among people in the member organisations, the results were largely affirmative, but with a significant degree of respondents disagreeing. Around 25% of respondents from EYF members disagreed with the statement that the funding has made them more able to involve youth in their activities and that it has made their members feel more positive about Europe. While a smaller percentage disagreed with the statement that the funding has made it easier to raise further funds, 10% of respondents strongly disagreed with this statement. These results point to some disagreement among respondents as to the concrete results that EYF membership has had on key performance indicators for the member organisations, such as raising funds and making members feel positive about Europe.

A majority of respondents either agree or strongly agree that the grant has strengthened the ties between the EYF and the European Institutions, and allowed the EYF to have a voice in the EU debate on youth policies. Respondents were slightly more likely to affirm the former statement, with a slightly smaller number of respondents strongly agreeing to whether the grant has given the EYF more of a voice in the EU debate on youth policy and a larger number answering that they did not know. This leads to the conclusion that the greatest area of impact of the programme on the EYF is that it strengthens the EYFs ties with the European Commission, and to a slightly lesser extent increases its influence as a lobbying body in relation to the European Commission.

A potentially significant number of respondents disagreed with the statement that the grant has brought the EYF closer to European youth. 35% of survey respondents were either neutral, disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement. Respondents were also far less likely to strongly agree with this statement than with other statements made. This suggests that it can be considered that the grant has only been partially successful at bringing the EYF closer to young people, and that the support for the EYF cannot be considered to have had a measurable impact upon young people across the EU. It also points to the difficulty the EYF

has in demonstrating the impact of its lobbying activities; this is currently largely based on trust. This is an area of improvement for the EYF.

Quality control of activities is largely left to the NGOs themselves and there is no central requirement, for instance, that organisations provide evidence of how satisfied the participants in activities are, a finding borne out by evidence from the telephone interviews and focus groups. This could be a risk for the Commission in the event of NGOs underperforming, as its reputation is tied to the NGOs that it funds.

The type of active citizenship promoted by the EYF has several facets, which are important to understand in order to give a full picture of the value that the organisation adds to its members and to the European institutions. It is a unique institution, and the most powerful organisation coordinating the views and activities of a large number of youth NGOs. The EYF is more than a lobbying organisation: it is also a powerful network, a reservoir of expert knowledge and offers an apprenticeship for young people who are interested in taking up political and administrative positions in the future. The EYF can be seen as combining activities associated with democratic parliaments, political parties, political networks, think tanks and lobbying groups, social movements and trainee and apprenticeship schemes, but is especially focused on advocacy and lobbying. According to a majority of the people interviewed for this evaluation, all of these elements are important to its membership and to the European institutions. The EYF has scope to focus its vision and mission statement, in order to create transparency around its role.

According to members of the EYF, the grant has not necessarily allowed young people to become more personally involved in European issues. 50% of respondents disagreed or were neutral as to whether the grant has allowed the EYF to involve a significant number of previously unengaged young people. It is encouraging that members of the EYF feel more informed about European issues, with almost 90% of respondents agreeing with this statement.

Recommendations

- The Commission should focus on quality control of the activities organised by the NGOs and the EYF. NGOs and the EYF should be required to provide evidence that they have processes in place for measuring the satisfaction of participants in activities.
- The EYF needs to do more to prove to its members that it is effective at representing them at the European level by giving a clearer picture of its achievements. This could involve for example publishing a separate annual summary of its lobbying activities, stating the main areas in which the EYF has been active and the frequency of contact with the Commission, for example.
- The EYF should conduct a strategic review of its activities and its publicly expressed vision and mission, focusing realistically on the added value that it can give to members and the concrete goals it hopes to achieve. This could involve a broadly-based, detailed survey of members in order to identify the services of most value and the definition of what the organisation will strive to excel at in terms of structure, purpose and key policies.
- In order to encourage NGOs and the EYF to work towards the stated goals of the programme, the reporting procedures for both the NGOs and the EYF should emphasize metrics and concrete achievements, such as growth in membership and success at reaching multipliers, and ideally offer proof of how the organization has progressed compared to previous years. The metrics should be defined through consultations with

the EYF and other potential beneficiaries.

5.3 EFFICIENCY

Although the administrative requirements of the programme can be burdensome, (which is not unsurprising or remarkable, given the limited resources and professionalism of a large number of the applicants), most beneficiaries describe it as basically reasonable. Very few beneficiaries describe the grant application process as straightforward and easy. More than 50% of all respondents to the online survey would describe the grant application process as not easy, but reasonable. The second largest group (25%) of respondents indicate that the process seemed somewhat more complicated than necessary. However, only 15% respondents see the application process as straightforward and easy, with 10% thinking it is far too complicated and difficult. The fact that the majority feel that it is reasonable suggests that dramatically modifying the administrative procedures should not be a priority at present.

Allowing multi-annual contracts is the key demand made by participants in the programme. The timing between the calls for proposals and the signing of the contracts is also of importance to the beneficiaries, as is the user-friendliness of the proposals. Increasing the funding cap from its current level is not seen as a priority at the moment, nor is receiving greater insight into how the selection process is conducted. This indicates that the respondents are more interested in the practical functionalities and procedures of the calls for proposals and the contracts rather than in an increase of the grant itself or to be given more insight into the application process itself. This indicates that the process is seen as reasonably transparent.

In selecting NGOs, certain priority areas have existed formally every year; for example, in 2006, the priority area was politically visible initiatives concerning the participation of young people in the construction of Europe. However, the key aspect for evaluating tenders has been the capability of an organisation to carry out their work plan. The focus on the Commission's side has been on operational rather than strategic aspects.

Very few proposals are rejected for quality reasons, but many are still being rejected for failing to comply with the administrative requirements (such as not having the required European network, or mistaking the deadline for applications). It is difficult to fault the Commission for this, as the evidence shows that if NGOs act proactively and ask for assistance and advice from the programme administrators, they are given the guidance that they need to fulfil the administrative obligations of the programme. Most NGO applicants for instance feel that while the administrative burden is significant, it is basically reasonable.

Recommendations

- Easing the requirements for applying to the programme should not be a priority; rather the focus should be on modifying and tightening the reporting requirements which measure concrete achievements, such as involving a greater number of young people, or participating more in the European debate on youth issues.
- It is recommended that the Commission continue its current approach to processing and handling applications to the programme. The Commission should continue taking a positive approach to applicants and assist them with their applications. This is something that is very visible among the programme beneficiaries and which is much appreciated.

The fact that the Commission makes such assistance readily available to applicants could be publicised further, by for example making the contact details of the administrators prominent on the application materials and on the website.

5.4 SUSTAINABILITY

The main positive trend that the programme has induced is a strengthening of a number of youth NGOs and the European Youth Forum. This is inline with the established thinking of the Commission, which puts NGOs at the centre of its strategy of involving civil society and giving legitimacy to its decisions. If the programme were terminated, the Commission would weaken significantly the organizations which it has supported over a number of years, and it is difficult to currently see replacement funds coming from other sources.

While the programme was designed in such a way that funding to organisations would decrease for every year the organisation reapplied, thus in theory pushing NGOs towards self sustainability, it seems clear from the focus groups, the online survey and the telephone interviews with beneficiaries that they see their survival without the programme in stark terms. Although the evidence from the unsuccessful applicants suggests that the effects of a lack of funding were moderate, it would be inadvisable to conclude that the personnel currently engaged within the NGOs would look actively for alternative funding sources if the programme were discontinued, as they have very negative perceptions of the possibility of obtaining funds from elsewhere. It can be expected that a large number of NGOs would cease to exist without the funding.

40% of NGO beneficiaries cite a lack of other genuine funding opportunities as the main obstacle to securing funds from other sources than the Commission. However, an equal number (40%) cite either a lack of time or lack of information as the main difficulty in securing funding from other sources. While 30% of EYF members cite a lack of genuine funding opportunities as the main barrier to raising funds from other sources, 40% feel that a lack of time or a lack of access to information are important. This shows that while membership in the EYF makes the NGOs more likely to be aware of other genuine funding opportunities than NGOs who are not members of the EYF, they still feel that they lack time and access to information about funding opportunities beyond the commission. This leads to the conclusion that the EYF still has some way to go in informing their members how to raise funds, as a large number still lack time and information.

Recommendations

- The Commission should continue to fund youth NGOs and the EYF under the new Youth in Action Programme, taking into account the recommendations made in this evaluation on improving the relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of the programme.
- The Commission should not consider terminating the programme or putting too much pressure on applicants to look for alternative funding sources, as the beneficiaries currently see the possibility of obtaining similar funding elsewhere as highly unrealistic.

