

# Erasmus+: Youth in Action, the European Solidarity Corps and Bel'J (2014–2020)

A look back at boundary-breaking  
projects by and for young people  
and youth work in figures, words  
and images

JINT

# European Youth Programmes & Bel'J

The European Union's two youth programmes and the three Belgian communities' Bel'J Programme aim to strengthen young people, youth work, youth policy and society. They do this by focusing on intercultural encounters, international cooperation and solidarity.

The programmes offer many opportunities to set up projects and collaborations for and by young people, both in Belgium and abroad.

This magazine provides insight into the three Youth Programmes and their impact in figures, words and images.

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“Erasmus+ projects add value by expanding young people’s boundaries, both literally and figuratively: they get to know Europe better and in the process, themselves as well. It gives them a window of opportunity and meanwhile, they also get to know each other much better. Usually a kind of magical atmosphere emerges, in which these young people, especially if they feel safe, go through a spectacular growth process.”

— MOHAMMED BARRIE, youth worker at City Pirates and Kilalo and Youth Worker Mobility participant.

# Introduction

From 2014 to 2020, the European Union supported international meetings and leisure exchanges by and for young people (13–30), youth workers and youth organisations through Erasmus+: Youth in Action. The Erasmus+: Youth in Action programme is part of the broader Erasmus+ programme, which also offers international and intercultural education, training and sports opportunities as well as those specifically focused on youth. In 2021–2027, the programme for young people will continue as Erasmus+ Youth.

In addition, a new, second European Youth programme was launched: the European Solidarity Corps. With this programme, the EU aimed to support volunteering, local solidarity projects, internships and jobs for young people aged 18 to 30. It succeeded EVS (European Voluntary Service), which was part of Erasmus+: Youth in Action until 2017. The European Solidarity Corps will continue to exist through 2021–2027.

Finally, there is Bel'J, the Belgian counterpart of these two European youth programmes. Since 2009, Bel'J has been giving young people (12–25) and youth workers from Belgium's different communities an opportunity to meet through group exchanges, volunteering or cooperative projects in their own country.

“The 2014–2020 European Youth Programmes represented a quantum leap for European youth mobility and European youth work. This applied to both the quality and the quantity: there was a wider range of opportunities, but also an 129% increase in budget compared to 2006–2013.”

— KOEN LAMBERT, director of JINT

## Funds for youth projects

The total budget for the Erasmus+ programme in 2014–2020 was €14.7 billion. This included funds for youth, education, training and sports. Of that amount, 10%, or €1.47 billion, was available to the youth sector through Erasmus+: Youth in Action. For 2021–2027, the total budget is €26.2 billion, of which €2.69 billion is reserved for the youth sector.

In 2018–2020, the European Solidarity Corps had a total budget of €375.6 million. For 2021–2027, its total budget is €1.009 billion.

Between 2014–2020, the Bel'J programme had a total budget of €360,000 for the three Belgian communities. For 2021–2027, the budgets will be determined annually by these communities, with a current commitment by the Flemish community of €25,000/year for 2021–2025.

Go to page 20 to find out how projects and activities meet these goals.

# The objectives of the Youth programmes

The European Youth Programmes are part of the implementation of the EU Youth Strategy. This strategy sets out a framework for European cooperation on issues affecting young people. In 2010–2018, the Commission and Member States took action to promote more and equal opportunities for young people and to encourage their active participation in society. For 2019–2027, priorities are the engagement, connection and empowerment of young people.

## Goals for Erasmus+: Youth in Action 2014–2020



- ✓ Promoting **active participation** of young people in all facets of society, citizenship, intercultural dialogue, social inclusion and solidarity in order to develop their **skills** and **competences**.

### How?

Through increased opportunities for learning mobility for young people and youth workers and by strengthening links between the youth sector and the labour market.



- ✓ **Improving youth policy** at the **local, regional and national levels** and developing **knowledge-based youth policies**. Supporting and recognising non-formal and informal learning.

### How?

Through better cooperation on policy, better use of Youthpass as a recognition instrument and the dissemination of good practices.



- ✓ Promoting **quality youth work**.

### How?

Through better cooperation among youth organisations and with other stakeholders.



- ✓ Promoting the **international dimension** of youth activities and the supporting role of youth workers and organisations for young people, including outside the EU.

### How?

Through greater mobility and cooperation between partners from Erasmus+ programme countries, non-EU partner countries and international organisations and targeted capacity building in partner countries.



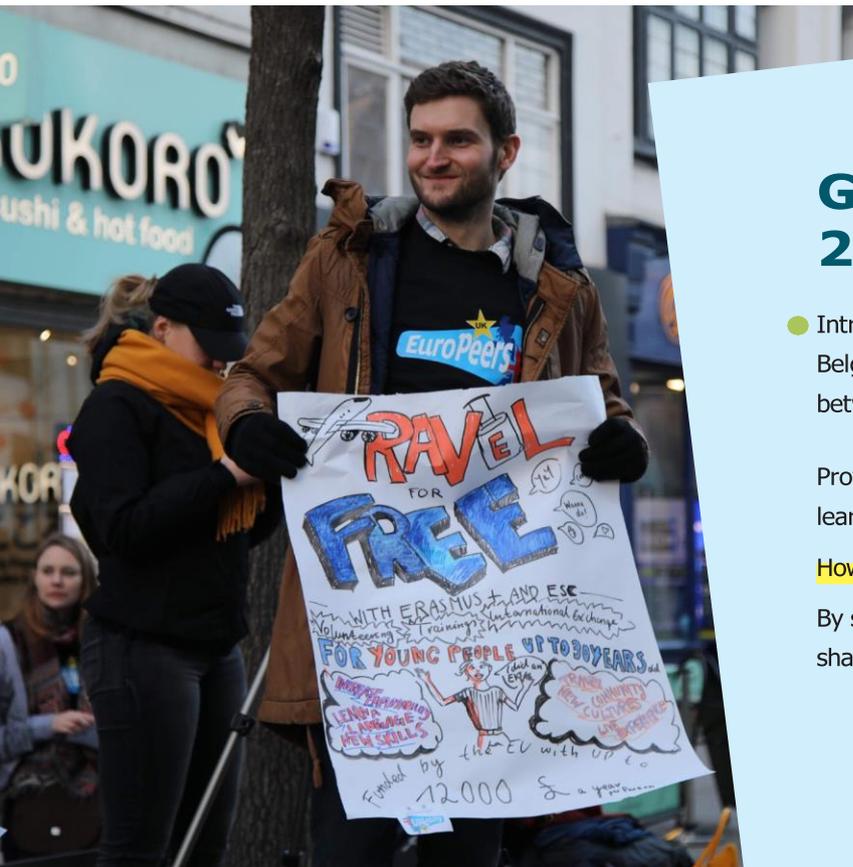
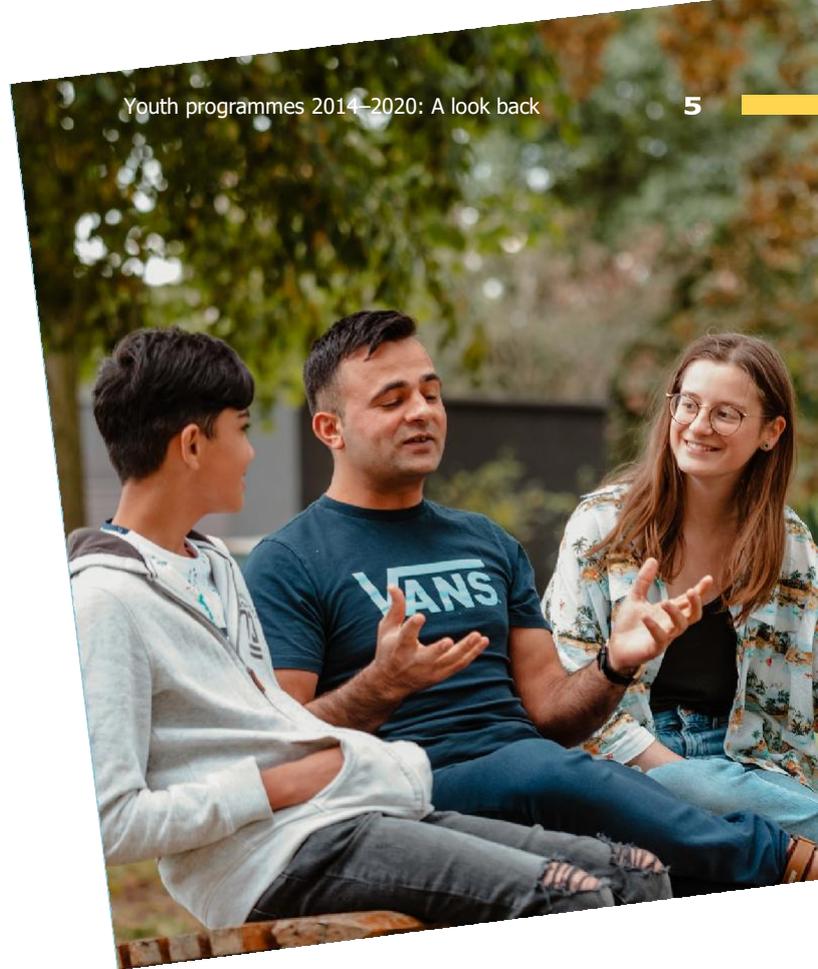
## Goal for the European Solidarity Corps (2018–2020)



- ♥ Promoting solidarity in society and increasing the involvement of young people and organisations in accessible and high-quality solidarity activities.

### How?

By supporting international volunteering, internships and jobs, as well as local solidarity initiatives.



## Goals for Bel'J 2014–2020

- Introducing young people to everyday life and culture in Belgium's other communities as a way to foster lasting links between young people across language borders.

Providing youth workers with opportunities to work together and learn from each other across language borders.

### How?

By supporting volunteering, exchange, collaboration and job shadowing in the youth sector.

# Opportunities

Through the three youth programmes and their different **actions**, young people, youth workers and youth organisations can participate in a variety of projects and activities.

- ▼ ● **Youth exchanges:** Groups of young people (13–30) from different countries meet around a self-chosen theme. They learn from each other and each other's culture in a non-formal way, such as through workshops and games. The common thread is an exchange of experiences and ideas.
- ▼ **Youth dialogue/youth policy meetings:** Young people (13–30) set up national or international gatherings or activities that stimulate debate on youth policy topics. In doing so, they engage in dialogue with policymakers. These projects strengthen young people's democratic citizenship.
- ▼ ● **Mobility of youth workers:** Youth workers, both professionals and volunteers, gain international inspiration to improve the quality of their projects and organisations. This can include study visits, job shadowing, workshops, seminars and training sessions.
- ▼ **National and international training:** Youth workers can participate in a range of training courses and activities set up by JINT, other National Agencies and supporting SALTO centres.
- ▼ **Strategic Partnerships for youth:** Long-term international cooperations between partner organisations with the projects' main impact being in youth work. This can take three forms:
  - **Cooperation for exchange of good practices** focuses on developing and strengthening networks, building partners' capacity and questioning and sharing youth work practice.
  - **Cooperation for Innovation** leads to an innovative product for subsequent dissemination in youth work.
  - In a **Youth Initiative**, a group of young people (13–30), from an organisation or a loose information group, set up an innovative international project together around a common theme and arrange activities at home and abroad.

## LEGEND:

- ▼ Erasmus+: Youth in Action
- ♥ European Solidarity Corps
- Bel'J

- ♥ ● **Volunteering:** Young people do full-time, long-term individual volunteer work abroad for a period of two months to a year. Or teams of young people roll up their sleeves to volunteer at home or abroad for two weeks to two months. Organisations wishing to set up a volunteer project must first apply for a quality label. This ensures the quality of volunteer projects, including adequate supervision of volunteers.
- ♥ **Solidarity projects:** A group of at least five young people sets up a local project to improve their neighbourhood, bringing young people together. A coach is available to provide support.



## Everyone on board

A focal point of the 2014–2020 European Youth Programmes is **inclusion**. Young people and youth workers in socially vulnerable situations or with fewer opportunities can count on additional support or more flexible conditions to participate. The barriers they experience to youth work, volunteering, education and training can exist for various reasons:

- Physical or mental disability
- Learning or educational difficulties
- Economic barriers
- Cultural differences
- Health problems
- Social barriers  
(discrimination, addiction problems ...)
- Geographical barriers

JINT also offers additional guidance to organisations that work with these groups, an approach which will continue in 2021–2027. The SALTO-YOUTH Inclusion & Diversity Resource Centre, hosted by JINT, supports the entire Network of National Agencies in making the European Youth Programmes more inclusive.



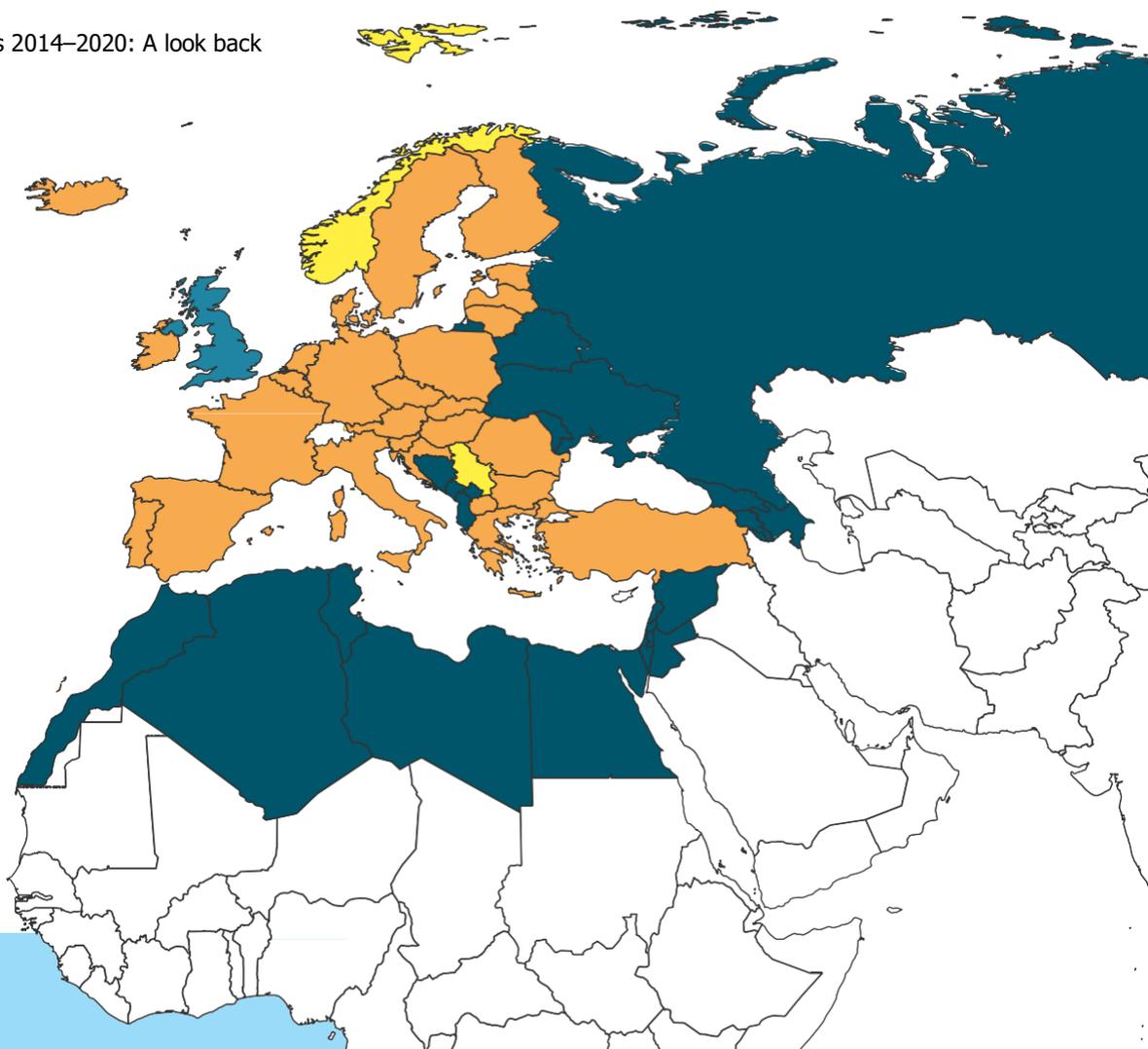
“An experience abroad can be a great boost for young people in vulnerable situations. To break free from a possibly oppressive environment. Many young people get real benefits from expanding their boundaries, from a world that is more open.”

— JAN LANGERAERT, staff member at Groep INTRO

“I think it's a great programme. I don't understand why there aren't more young people doing these exchanges! The fact that Europe is funding this is really a great opportunity. I don't have much money but I can still have this experience. I feel privileged and grateful to have done this.”

— JECSAN JIMENEZ LEON, Youth Exchange participant





## The countries

The European Youth Programmes distinguish between **programme countries**, which can participate fully, and **partner countries**, with which cooperation is possible under certain conditions.

- **Programme countries for Erasmus+ & European Solidarity Corps:** EU member states, Iceland, Turkey and the Republic of North Macedonia
- **Partner countries for Erasmus+ & European Solidarity Corps:**
  - Western Balkans (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro)
  - Eastern Partnership (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine, Belarus)
  - Southern Mediterranean (Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestine, Syria, Tunisia)
  - Russia
- **Programme countries for Erasmus+, but partners in the European Solidarity Corps:** Norway, Serbia, Liechtenstein
- **No participation in either European programme from 2021:** United Kingdom



# The Youth Programmes: always in motion

In the period between 2014 and 2020, the Youth Programmes underwent many changes with temporary and lasting effects. The main differences:

- **From one to two programmes:** From 2014 to 2017, all volunteer projects fell under the banner of EVS (European Voluntary Service), part of Erasmus+. In 2018, the European Solidarity Corps took over, forming a separate youth programme. This evolution brought a number of changes, such as an expanded age limit (from a minimum of 17 to 18) and more possibilities for local activities.

The introduction of this new Youth Programme also boosted the overall budget available for youth projects.

- Within Erasmus+: Youth in Action, there were changes to the programme's **naming and structure**. 'Youth Policy Meetings' became 'Youth Dialogue' and Youth Initiatives were only recognised as separate actions under Youth Partnerships in 2016–2017.



- In response to the **2020-21 COVID-19 pandemic**, approved Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps projects could opt to postpone or partially digitalise their activities. In addition, in 2020 a special call was launched for Youth Partnerships with a focus on creativity (KA227), to support socio-cultural organisations in addressing the impact of COVID-19 on young people.
- In 2016, Bel'J added the **Youth Worker Mobility** action to the opportunities for young people it already offered.



## The role of JINT

The European Youth Programmes' day-to-day management is carried out by the National Agencies. For the Flemish community, this agency is JINT. JINT's duties include the following:

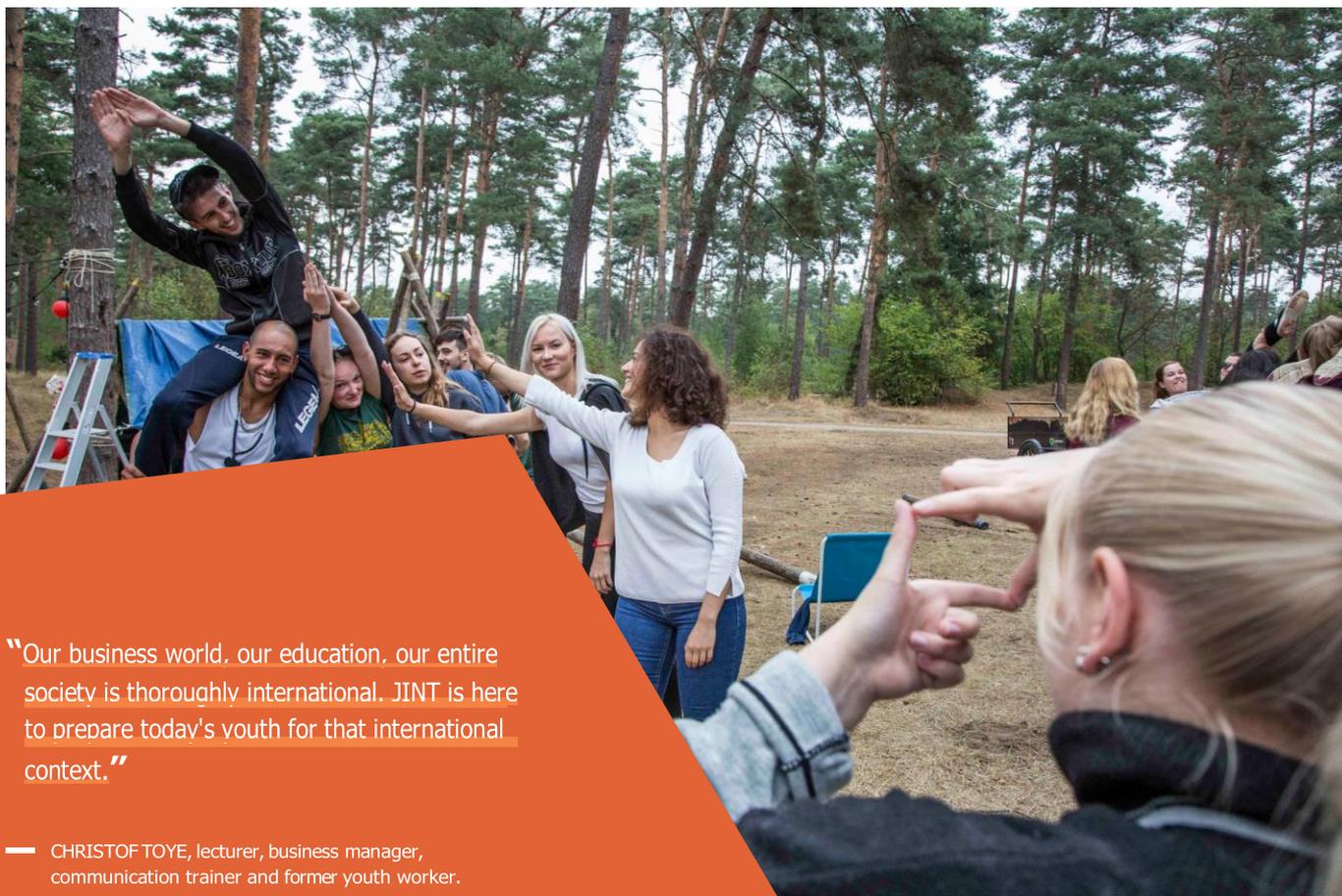
- Providing information to young people, youth workers and staff of youth organisations
- Counselling project applicants
- Awarding grants
- Administrative follow-up of projects
- Recognising volunteer hosting and sending organisations
- Supporting volunteers, young people, youth workers and staff of youth organisations through national and international training and encounters

Besides supporting (candidate) project applicants, youth workers and volunteers, JINT itself is also a partner in numerous international and national collaborations and projects in the youth sector.

For the Bel'J programme, JINT is also responsible for this programme's management in the Flemish community.

"The door at JINT is always open. They will not write your application for you (laughs), but with the help of their experience and expertise, you can increase your chances quite a bit."

— WAUT VAN HESPEL, coordinator at JOETZ vzw



"Our business world, our education, our entire society is thoroughly international. JINT is here to prepare today's youth for that international context."

— CHRISTOF TOYE, lecturer, business manager, communication trainer and former youth worker.

# Budgets and projects: key figures

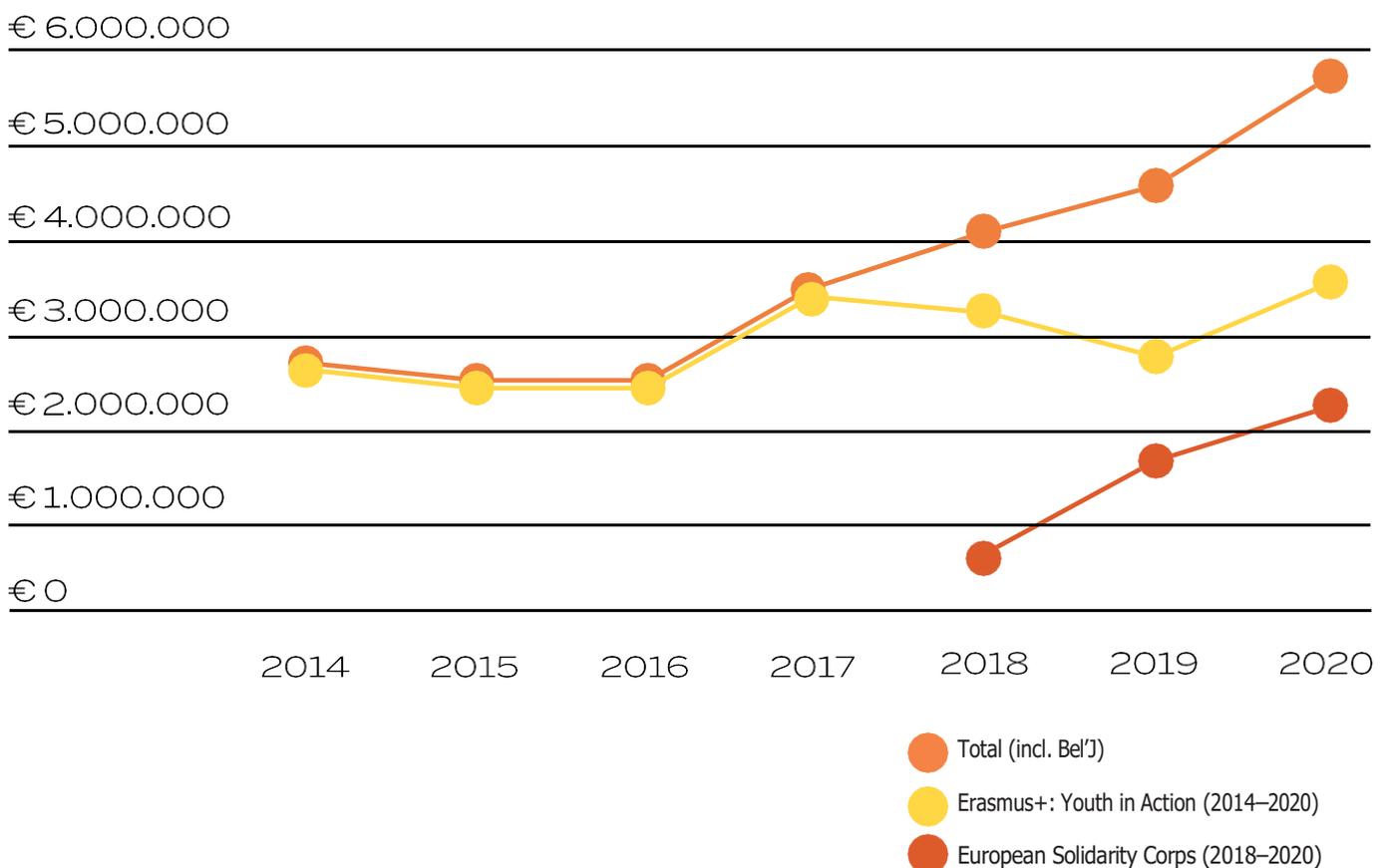
The **total budget available** to JINT in 2014–2020 for the three Youth programmes combined was **€26,139,080.69**.

- In Erasmus+: Youth in Action **€21,157,330.75**
- In the European Solidarity Corps **€4,846,458.02**
- In the Bel'J programme **€135,291.92**

For the European Youth Programmes, this meant an increase of 129% in comparison to the previous programme cycle (2007–2013), when the approved budget was €11,379,133.

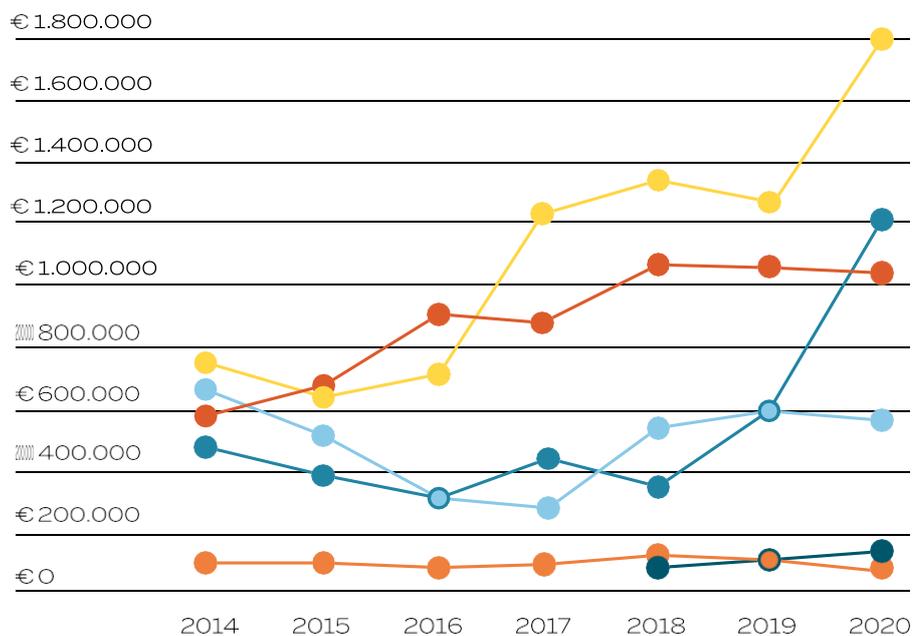
## Budgets available for youth projects (2014–2020)

— SOURCE: European Commission & JINT



## Budgets available for youth projects by activity for Erasmus+: Youth in Action (2014–2020) and European Solidarity Corps (2018–2020).

SOURCE: European Commission & JINT



- Volunteering
- Strategic Partnerships
- Youth Exchanges
- Mobility for Youth Workers
- Solidarity Projects
- Youth Dialogue

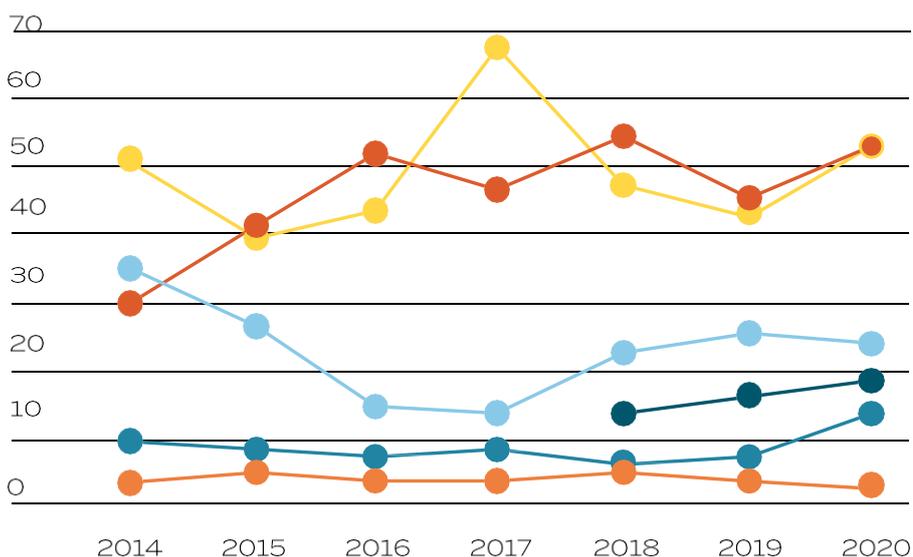
JINT awarded funds for a total of **976 approved projects**

in the European Youth Programmes & Bel'J:

- 765 Erasmus+: Youth in Action projects (2014–2020)
- 161 European Solidarity Corps projects (2018–2020)
- 50 Bel'J projects (2014–2020)

## Number of approved projects for Erasmus+: Youth in Action (2014–2020) and European Solidarity Corps (2018–2020)

SOURCE: European Commission & JINT



- Volunteering
- Youth Exchanges
- Mobility of Youth Workers
- Solidarity Projects
- Strategic Partnerships
- Youth Dialogue

## Trends in 2014–2020

- Over seven years, the annual grants awarded to youth projects **doubled** from €2.74 million to €5.82 million.
- The total annual number of approved projects **climbed** from 122 projects per year (in 2014) to 164 (in 2020). It is notable here that projects also **grew** in size, combining multiple activities and receiving larger budgets.
- The launch of the European Solidarity Corps gave a solid boost to **opportunities for international volunteering**.
- The budgets for Youth Partnerships experienced solid growth in 2019 and 2020.
- From 2018, Solidarity projects offered additional opportunities to set up **local activities** through the European Youth Programmes.

## Odds of success for projects (2014–2020)

The average success rate was highest for Volunteer Projects. In EVS, 93.3% of submitted projects were approved.

- In the European Solidarity Corps, Volunteer projects had a 95% success rate. Solidarity projects had a success rate of 76.2%.
- For Youth Exchanges and Mobility of Youth Workers, this was 70.79%
- Those applying for a Youth Dialogue had a 61.11% chance of approval.
- Strategic Partnerships were the most competitive budget line: the success rate there was 32.14%.

Overall, the chances of success for individual projects increased significantly if proposers sought feedback from JINT prior to application.



## Preparatory visits

For Youth Exchanges and Volunteer Projects, a preparatory visit to the destination was also possible. This option was well-used. Within the Youth Programmes, 184 applications for a preparatory visit were approved and 1126 young people and supervisors took part in such visits.

# Support

Besides the budgets allocated to approved projects, JINT has its own funds to support the implementation of the European Youth Programmes. JINT’s own support budget consists of several components:

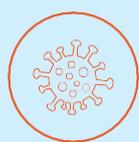
- The **Training and Evaluation Cycle** (TEC, funded by Erasmus+, and STEC, funded by the European Solidarity Corps): JINT uses this budget to develop a **training offer and support materials** for young people and organisations involved in **volunteering and solidarity projects**.
- Through **Transnational Cooperation Activities** (TCA, funded by Erasmus+) and **Networking Activities** (NET, funded by the European Solidarity Corps), JINT strategically and specifically commits to training and networking. Together with the other National Agencies and SALTO Youth Resource Centres, JINT offers a diverse range of **international and national training and networking activities** for the youth sector to support the objectives and quality implementation of both programmes.

## Support Budgets of JINT by type and in total

— SOURCE: European Commission & JINT



Between 2014–2020, the total budget spent on support was € 1,146,568. Overall, there was a strong upward trend, resulting in increased supply. In 2020 TCA/NET resources dropped significantly, mainly due to the Covid pandemic. However, €250,000 in delayed TCA/NET activities from 2020 were still pending in 2021.



## 2020: the year of the pandemic

In March 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak paralysed all of society. For most of 2020 and continuing into 2021, international borders were locked. This had **significant and diverse effects** on the implementation of the European Youth Programmes, requiring great adaptability of the young people, youth workers and organisations involved.

- Short mobility projects, such as **Youth Exchanges** and **Mobilities for Youth Workers**, were postponed, often repeatedly: first until later in 2020, then to 2021 or 2022. As of May 2021, 4269 young people and youth workers had not yet realised their planned international mobility. This represented 71% of all participants in Group Exchanges and Mobilities for Youth Workers approved in 2019–2020.
- Some organisations chose to transform overseas youth activities into in-country projects in order to continue working with their young people despite travel restrictions.
- **Strategic Partnerships for Youth** often continued, albeit partly or fully in digital form.
- For long-term mobilities such as **individual volunteering**, the impact of the pandemic was diverse.
  - Sometimes, the authorities involved required volunteers to abort projects early and to return home; sometimes they could not leave due to travel restrictions. In other cases there was a choice: some volunteers chose to abort or postpone their projects, while others decided to stay on site during the pandemic outbreak or during subsequent lockdowns and continued their projects despite the restrictions. In some cases, they could continue work on a project digitally from their home country or, if not yet abroad, launch one.
  - Many young people saw continuing or launching a volunteer project as a welcome relief in times with few other (international) opportunities. However, volunteers also often felt isolated, with negative consequences for their wellbeing.
- In the **training and activity offer** of JINT, the other National Agencies and the SALTO centres, a multi-track policy was in place from March 2020: part of the offer was cancelled, part went fully digital, another part continued in hybrid form and certain activities were postponed until physical meetings were possible again. There was also plenty of experimentation with innovative concepts, such as informative walks and enhanced online community-building.

### Volunteering in times of Covid-19 : the story of Lea and Nele

When the Covid-19 pandemic broke out in 2020, at Centrum Molenmoes of De Wissel, a youth and family care organisation, the key question was: could and would the international volunteers stay?

Nele Steeno, department manager: "In the end, all the volunteers stayed. Actually, they continued the activities of our organisation. Because of the restrictions, we were a small bubble of staff and the international volunteers."

It was not an easy time, but Lea (22), European Solidarity Corps volunteer from Estonia, looks at it in a positive light: "I was lucky I could still work, otherwise I would have gone back to Estonia. I connected more strongly with the young people and my teammates, and I committed more strongly to my role of facilitator. Because of Covid-19, I wasn't able to have other contacts. And my Dutch improved from the start of Covid-19, because I had fewer English-speaking contacts."

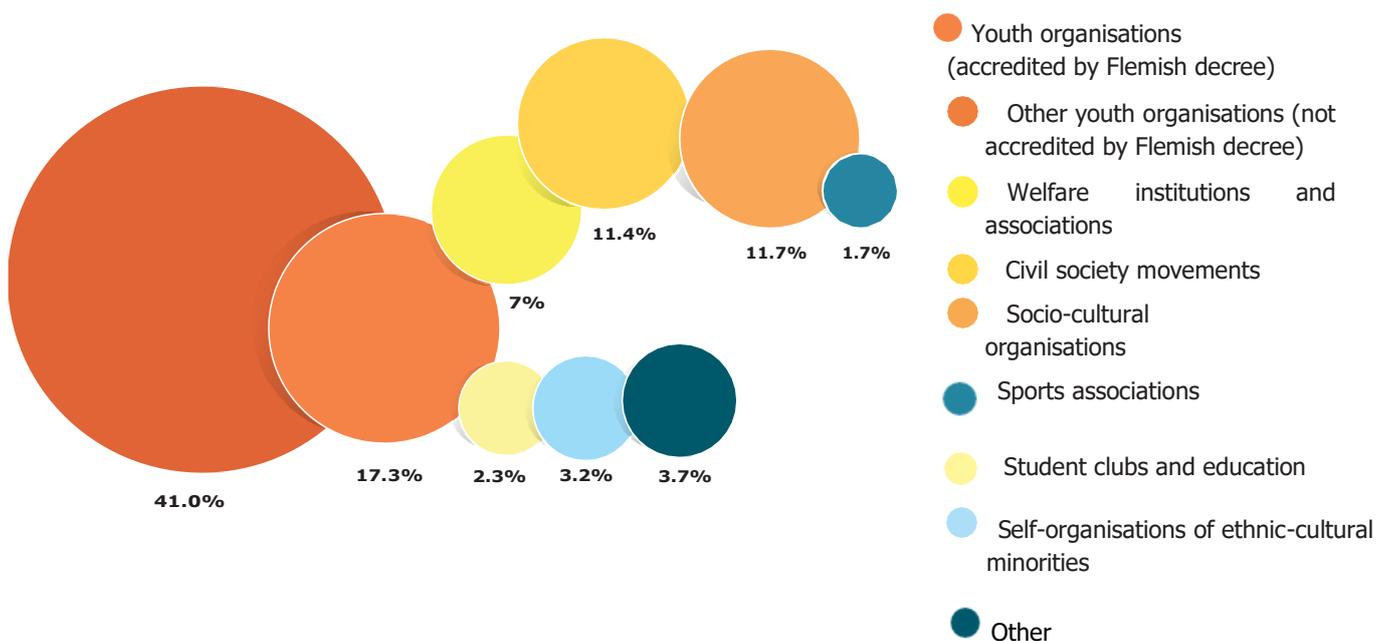
# Project applicants

A wide variety of organisations throughout the youth sector were interested in the possibilities offered by the European Youth Programmes. The most strongly represented group of project applicants for the approved projects (41.0%) were **youth organisations accredited by the Flemish government and their local divisions or branches**. In addition, a range of institutions, organisations and associations from other sectors also found their way to the European Youth Programmes.

## Approved projects for Erasmus+: Youth in Action (2014–2020) and the European Solidarity Corps (2018–2020), by project applicant’s sector

(total number of projects = 926)

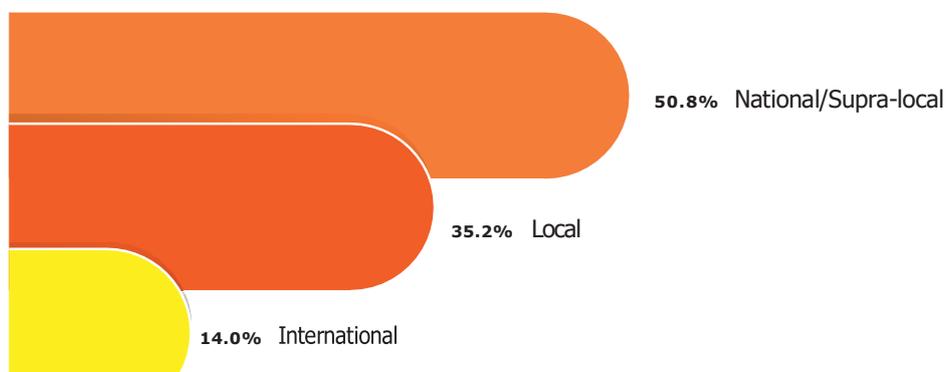
SOURCE: JINT vzw



For just over half of all projects benefiting from European Youth Programme support through JINT, the project applicants operated at a **national or supra-local level**. By contrast, about one in three project applicants were locally based. The remaining project applicants were international organisations, mainly headquartered in Brussels.

## Approved projects for Erasmus+: Youth in Action (2014–2020) and the European Solidarity Corps (2018–2020), by organisational level of project applicant.

SOURCE: JINT vzw



# Project participants

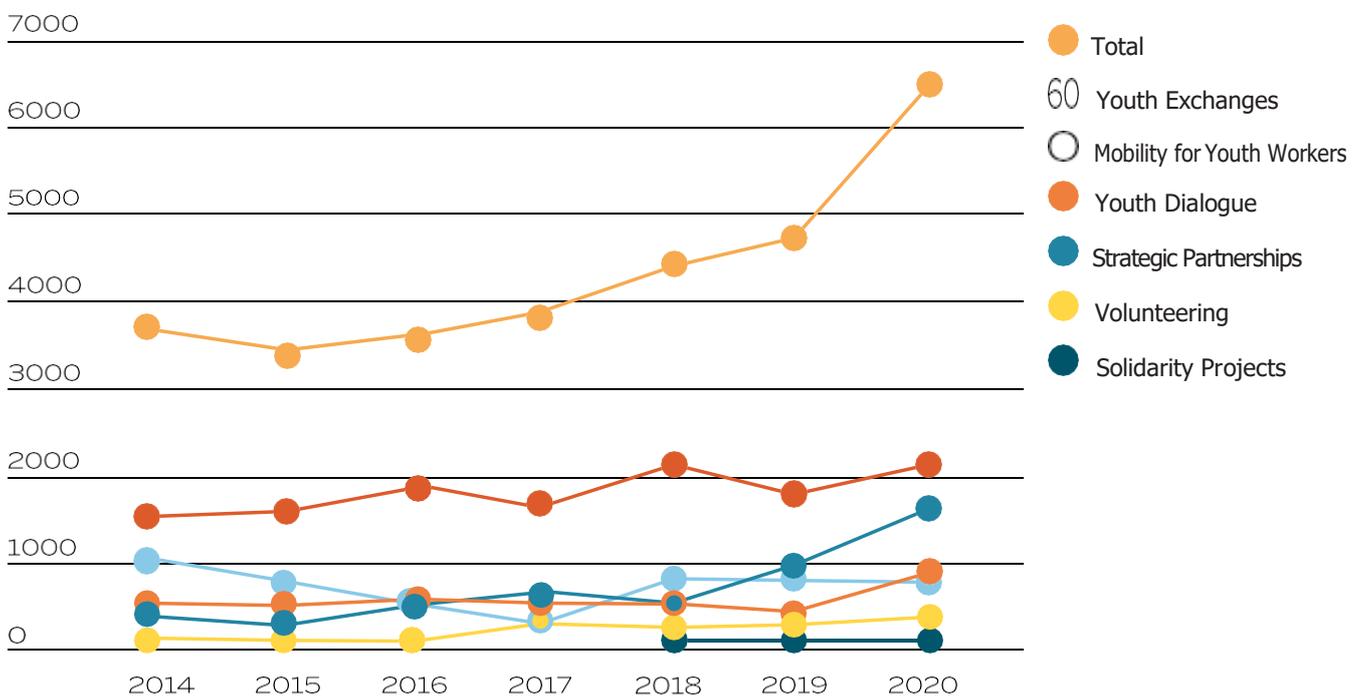
JINT-funded youth projects involved a total of **30,516** recorded participants (participating young people, youth workers and their group leaders/facilitators/accompanying persons) between 2014–2020.

- Erasmus+: Youth in Action had **28,891 participants**.
- In the European Solidarity Corps, there were **898 participants** between 2018 and 2020.
- Bel'J counted **727 participants**.

Broken down by action:

## Number of participants in approved projects for Erasmus+: Youth in Action (2014–2020) & the European Solidarity Corps (2018–2020)

SOURCE: European Commission and JINT vzw



Note: participant numbers are always based on recorded participants in **JINT-approved projects**. This underestimates the actual reach of the European Youth Programmes in Flanders and Brussels for two reasons:

- In a lot of projects, such as Solidarity Projects and Cooperation Partnerships, **only initiators** are officially recorded, meaning not all the young people, youth workers and other partners involved are represented. In these cases, the true participant numbers are much higher.
- In addition, many young people, youth workers and organisations from Flanders/Brussels also participated in projects submitted to and approved by a **National Agency other than JINT**. They are also not included in the JINT figures.

## Participants from disadvantaged or disabled groups

Of the total group of participants in European Youth programmes between 2014–2020, **20.9%** had fewer opportunities or a disability. More specifically:

- **20.7%** of all participants in Erasmus+: Youth in Action: 5298 belonged to disadvantaged groups and 671 had a disability.
- **29.0%** of participants in the European Solidarity Corps: 253 belonged to disadvantaged groups and 7 had disabilities.

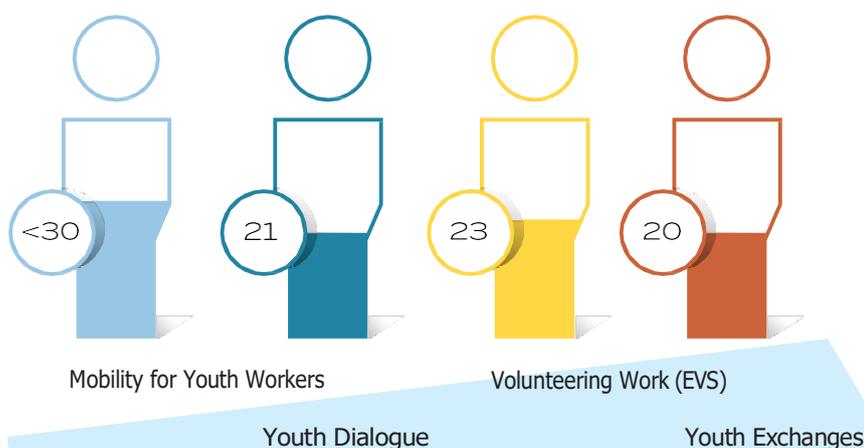
Activities with the highest proportion of participants with fewer opportunities or a disability were Volunteer Projects (41.7%) and Youth Exchanges (32.0%).

For Mobility for Youth Workers, this was 16.7%.



## Age

The RAY survey <sup>1</sup> on Erasmus+: Youth in Action shows that the average age was lowest for Youth Exchanges and Youth Dialogue, at 20 and 21 years respectively. For Mobility for Youth Workers, where participants included adult volunteers and professional youth workers, the average age was just under 30.



Average age of participants in Erasmus+: Youth in Action, per action (Survey data of 1389 participants to activities from 2014 to 2019)

SOURCE: RAY research

<sup>1</sup> Stevens, F. (2020). Effecten en uitkomsten van het Erasmus+: Youth in Action Programma. Het perspectief van projectparticipanten en projectbegeleiders. Nationaal rapport België (Vlaamse gemeenschap 2019/2020). Belangrijkste bevindingen RAY-MON.



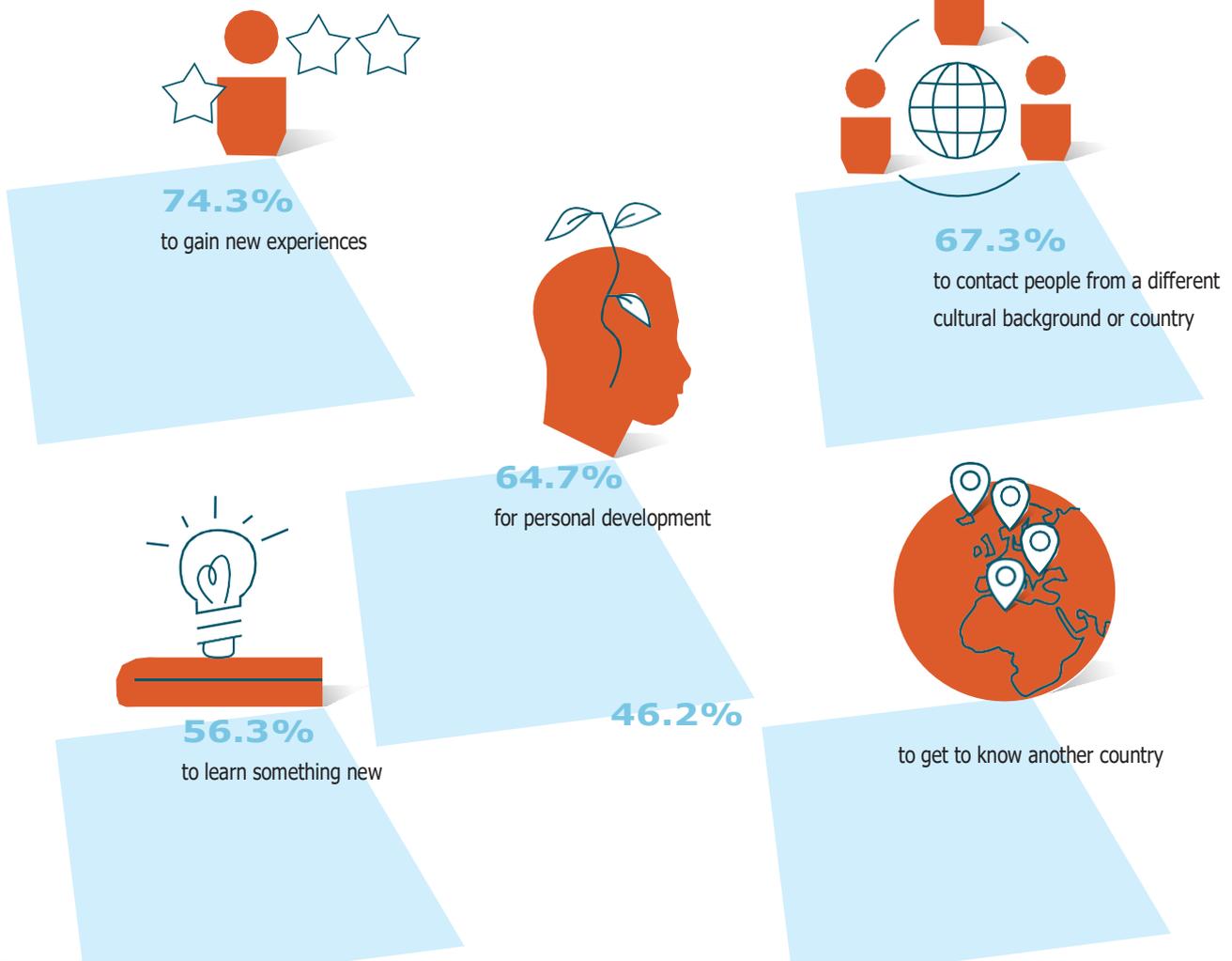
## Motivation to participate

RAY research <sup>2</sup> shows that project participants in Erasmus+: Youth in Action mainly focused on **gaining new experiences** and **intercultural** and **international contacts**.



### The 5 main motivations for participating in an Erasmus+: Youth in Action project

(Survey data of 1389 participants in activities from 2014 to 2019)



<sup>2</sup>Stevens, F. (2020). Effecten en uitkomsten van het Erasmus+: Youth in Action Programma. Het perspectief van projectparticipanten en projectbegeleiders. Nationaal rapport België (Vlaamse gemeenschap 2019/2020). Belangrijkste bevindingen RAY-MON.

## Focus 1: Internationalisation of the youth sector

The European Youth Programmes blew a **strong international, intercultural wind** through the Flemish youth sector in 2014–2020.

Within the framework of youth projects, individual or groups of young people, volunteers and youth workers travelled to all corners of Europe or joined forces with international partners. Conversely, Flanders/Brussels was the host region or partner for young people and organisations from almost all **European member states** and **many neighbouring countries**. The involvement of foreign volunteers also gave domestic youth activities an **international dimension**. This was especially valuable for young people for whom going abroad is more difficult.

The **great variety and distribution** in both countries of origin and destinations of participants is striking; mobility flows of young people and youth workers went in many directions. Nor did internationalisation stop at EU borders: there was also plenty of cooperation and exchange with **partner countries** from neighbouring regions of the European Union. This is reflected, for example, in the profile of participants in Youth Exchanges and Mobilities for Youth Workers funded by JINT: as high as 30.9% of all participants in these two major actions came from a partner country.

Many youth organisations from Flanders and Brussels have also been able to build a **strong international network** through participation in the European Youth Programmes, in which expertise and inspiration are shared and multilingualism becomes common practice.

### Countries of origin of participants\*

Where did the 12,719 participants in JINT-supported **Youth Exchanges** come from? Young people and facilitators came from **51 different countries**, with over a third of participants coming from Belgium.

Among the remaining participants, countries of origin outside the EU, including the Republic of North Macedonia and Morocco, were well represented. The main countries of origin for Youth Exchanges:

|                             |       |
|-----------------------------|-------|
| Belgium                     | 36.5% |
| Spain                       | 5.3%  |
| Republic of North Macedonia | 4.0%  |
| Italy                       | 3.3%  |
| France                      | 3.3%  |
| Germany                     | 3.0%  |
| The United Kingdom          | 2.7%  |
| Romania                     | 2.6%  |
| Morocco                     | 2.5%  |
| Poland                      | 2.4%  |
| The Netherlands             | 2.0%  |
| Turkey                      | 2.0%  |
| Other countries             | 30.3% |

\* Participant numbers show only recorded participants in projects granted by JINT, and are an underestimate of the actual outreach of the European Youth programmes. See page 17 for clarification.



Where did the 5276 participants in JINT-supported **Mobilities for Youth Workers** come from? Just under a quarter were from Belgium, and 51 other countries were also represented. The most common countries of origin:

|                    |       |
|--------------------|-------|
| Belgium            | 23.1% |
| Spain              | 5.6%  |
| Italy              | 5.4%  |
| Germany            | 4.9%  |
| Romania            | 3.4%  |
| The United Kingdom | 3.1%  |
| The Netherlands    | 3.0%  |
| Poland             | 2.9%  |
| Turkey             | 2.9%  |
| Greece             | 2.6%  |
| Denmark            | 2.2%  |
| Other countries    | 40.8% |

Where did the 1095 **volunteers** who started working on an individual Volunteer Project for EVS (until 2017) or the European Solidarity Corps (from 2018) via JINT come from? Nearly three out of ten were young people from Flanders or Brussels who travelled abroad for individual volunteer projects. The remaining seven out of ten were foreign young people working in an organisation in Flanders or Brussels.

|                 |       |
|-----------------|-------|
| Belgium         | 29.4% |
| Germany         | 13.3% |
| Spain           | 12.4% |
| Italy           | 7.3%  |
| Hungary         | 3.4%  |
| Turkey          | 3.2%  |
| Austria         | 2.2%  |
| France          | 1.9%  |
| Portugal        | 1.7%  |
| Finland         | 1.5%  |
| Slovenia        | 1.5%  |
| Other countries | 22.2% |

## Vamos a la playa in Flanders

In the Surf On the Voluntary Waves project by JOETZ vzw and S-Sport/Recreas, about a dozen Spanish European Solidarity Corps volunteers help to run a surf camp for young people with disabilities each year. The presence of Spanish youngsters adds an international vibe to a summer camp held in Flanders.

### VOLUNTEERING PROJECT

## Sisterhood under the Moroccan sun

Ten Belgian girls, one French one and twelve Moroccans: in 2017 this diverse group began the Youth Exchange set up by Bint, the girls' operation of Chirojeugd Vlaanderen, in picturesque Essaouira in Morocco.

Clara, participant: "For me, the youth exchange was a real enrichment of my Chiro career. Seeing and hearing how children in other countries are entertained was really great for me! And I made friends for life during the trip, both Moroccan and Flemish."

The participants' main conclusion from this exchange? To never judge someone's opinion by their religion or origin. There were also big differences of opinion within the Belgian and Moroccan groups. You cannot generalise to 'Moroccans think this way' or 'Europeans say that'. "Every person is unique, with their own ways of thinking."

### YOUTH EXCHANGE

# Participants' destinations\*

Where do participants in Youth Exchanges and Mobility for Youth Workers, the two Actions with the highest numbers of participants, go? For 4 out of 10 participants in **Youth Exchanges**, their project takes place in Belgium, for the others it is in one of 52 other countries. In **Mobility for Youth Workers**, for 6 in 10 their project continues in Belgium, the others move to 32 other countries. By the way, the participants supported by JINT are not only from Flanders and Brussels; they are a colourful mix from European and neighbouring countries.

\* Participant numbers show only registered participants in projects awarded by JINT, and are an underestimate of the actual reach of the European Youth Programmes. See page 17 for more clarification.

## 10 top destinations of Youth Exchanges and Mobility for Youth Workers



Destinations of Youth Exchange participants. (total number of participants: 12,719)

|    |                                 |       |
|----|---------------------------------|-------|
| 1  | Belgium                         | 40,8% |
| 2  | The Republic of North Macedonia | 6,1%  |
| 3  | Morocco                         | 5,2%  |
| 4  | Spain                           | 3,9%  |
| 5  | Romania                         | 2,8%  |
| 6  | France                          | 2,6%  |
| 7  | Denmark                         | 2,6%  |
| 8  | The Republic of Moldova         | 2,5%  |
| 9  | Georgia                         | 2,5%  |
| 10 | Poland                          | 2,2%  |
|    | Other countries                 | 29,3% |

Destinations of Mobility for Youth Workers participants. (total number of participants: 5,276)

|    |                                 |       |
|----|---------------------------------|-------|
| 1  | Belgium                         | 60,2% |
| 2  | Georgia                         | 5,7%  |
| 3  | Germany                         | 5,1%  |
| 4  | Spain                           | 3,1%  |
| 5  | United Kingdom                  | 2,6%  |
| 6  | Denmark                         | 2,0%  |
| 7  | Sweden                          | 1,7%  |
| 8  | Poland                          | 1,5%  |
| 9  | Portugal                        | 1,4%  |
| 10 | The Republic of North Macedonia | 1,2%  |
|    | Other countries                 | 15,4% |



## Strategic Partnerships

A total of 264 different organisations from 35 different countries participated in 61 Cooperations on innovation and practice sharing. Of these organisations, 75 were Belgium-based. Collaborating countries included:

1. Germany — with 16 partner organisations
2. Italy — with 15 partner organisations
3. Spain — with 14 partner organisations
4. Portugal and Greece — with 12 partner organisations each
5. The Netherlands — with 11 partner organisations
6. France — with 10 partner organisations

### New horizons

According to Matthias Vermael, coordinator of Circus Planet, Erasmus+ has had a solid impact on his organisation's development. Twenty years ago, it was still a small and modest Ghent initiative with a focus on itself and a few other Flemish organisations. Through participation in international training sessions, they have now built up an international network. Multilingualism has come to Circusplanet. They receive and send out European volunteers and have begun organising regular international exchanges and trainings themselves.



### Art as an engine of participation and protest

The Burning Europe project, launched in 2015 by young Antwerp-based art collective Cameltown together with six European partners, brought the photographic artistry of Burning Man festival artists to the streets of Berlin, Reykjavik, Athens, Riga, Amsterdam and Lisbon for free. Thousands of spectators could view the images as they were carried through these cities in grand parades. These pop-up exhibitions acted as a lure to bring creative people together. In workshops, young people learned how to use activism to make others aware of social problems.

YOUTH INITIATIVE



# Focus 2: Empowering young people

The projects in the European Youth Programmes and Bel'J empower young people in many ways. By participating, young people **learn about the world**, and therefore **themselves**. By working together and having fun across country, language and cultural borders, they strengthen their **core competences** and **skills** and become more **active, democratic citizens**. In many actions, such as the Solidarity Projects, Youth Initiatives and Youth Dialogue, young people also lead their own projects, resulting in an unforgettable learning experience.

## Skills

The RAY survey <sup>3</sup> shows that according to the participants (young people and youth workers) in Erasmus+: Youth in Action, participation had a major, **positive impact** on the development of their competences.

*“Thanks to an experience abroad, we can offer our young people learning opportunities that are not possible in any other project.”*

— JONAS VAN LAERE, staf member at Groep INTRO

## Self-reported development of competences among project participants in Erasmus+: Youth in Action, % “(totally) agree”

(2015–2020) (Survey data of 1389 project participants from 2014 to 2019)

— SOURCE: RAY Research



<sup>3</sup> Stevens, F. (2020). Effecten en uitkomsten van het Erasmus+: Youth in Action Programma. Het perspectief van projectparticipanten en projectbegeleiders. Nationaal rapport België (Vlaamse gemeenschap 2019/2020). Belangrijkste bevindingen RAY-MON.

## Learning outcomes for young people in socially vulnerable situations

RAY research <sup>4</sup> found that young people in socially vulnerable situations usually appeared to get the same or slightly greater benefits from participation in Erasmus+: Youth in Action projects compared to young people in a more favourable position. For example, young people who never went abroad before reported higher outcomes for the dimensions “learning to learn” and “personal development” than those with previous experiences abroad. It should be pointed out, however, that other factors, such as project-related characteristics, were more decisive for participants' learning outcomes than their background characteristics.

<sup>4</sup> Meyers, C. et al. (2020). Exploring Inclusion in Erasmus+: Youth in Action. Effects of inequalities on learning outcomes. RAY Research Report. Geudens, T. et al. (2015). The Impact of Mobility On YFPO. SALTO Inclusion Resource Centre.

## Volunteering is ... becoming human

At The Ark, people without and with disabilities share life together. Training and communication officer Anja 't Kint once did European volunteer work in France, and now coaches European volunteers herself.

“Having a foreign volunteer brings the world closer to our organisation. And you really give those young people a chance to become human beings. They grow, they become adults, independent, aware—these are our politicians of the future. These are the people who attend training courses, study and become doctors in hospitals. Or go to work at the European Commission and make a difference there.”

“We shape young people. You learn more in that year than during five years of university.” (Laughs.) “You learn to live.”

### VOLUNTEERING PROJECT

In the summer of 2020, a group of young people quickly constructed campsite De Kemping. Misha (22): “I got different opportunities during this project than I would at home. In a normal workplace you are put in a box, here you can experiment.” This allowed her to indulge in a creative design for the logo of the De Kemping house.

### SOLIDARITY PROJECT

“As an 18-year-old, I had never been directly involved in a professional environment before. During my time as a volunteer, I got to see how a month-long cultural festival is organised. I now know that event management is not just about creativity. You also need to have a lot of practical, technical and communication skills to work in this sector.”

—  
ASTRID SCHMITZ, Bel'J volunteer in Belgium's German speaking community, 2014.



## Peleton Bonvenon: exploring together with Bel'J

In 2018, 75 young newcomers and 30 volunteers set off from JES Ghent for a four-day cycling trip across Flanders and Brussels. They covered some 170 km, with stops in Aalst, Brussels, Mechelen, Bonheiden and Bornem. But Peleton Bonvenon is about more than cycling: Bonvenon is Esperanto for 'welcome', and discovering unknown things together is what this project is all about.

JES staff member Liesbet Van Dycke: "The preparation is really in the hands of the young people themselves. That's a tricky and also comical process. For example, they find the choice of menu very important; they can spend an hour and a half discussing it, as if their lives depend on it."

The result? Young newcomers from different cities, schools and organisations get to know each other across the language border, get a taste of organisations that are tailored to young newcomers, and discover new places across the country.

### YOUTH EXCHANGE

## Youthpass

A total of 9976 participants in European Youth Programmes projects, training or activities received a Youthpass, the recognition certificate for non-formal learning, upon completion of their project. Almost a third of this group (31.8%) used Youthpass as a tool to actively reflect on the key competences acquired.

"Each person here is unique. We can share our experiences as trainers, so we learn from each other. I am learning about my coaching skills and how to set an example."

"Because of this exchange, I also really want to study abroad."

LAYLA (18), soccer coach at City Pirates and Mobility for Youth Workers participant

"After my volunteer experience, I applied for three jobs. I was allowed to choose from two of them. I think my Youthpass helped me because I had no work experience. The problem-solving thinking, the working while under stress and the other practical experiences really made a difference."

TANGUY (22), European Solidarity Corps volunteer



Since 2014, young people who have already had an international experience can engage as EuroPeers. They are supported by JINT as they volunteer to lead other young people towards the opportunities of European youth programmes and stay connected in an international network.

“For a year, I got to spend time with you. I learnt a lot from you. I learnt a new language. I got to know new people. I got to know your culture. And most of all, I got to know myself. Now that I am gone, sometimes I think of you again. I think about all the things we went through. My expectations. Or the expectations you ended up exceeding. And in that moment, I always want to go back to you. Back to that morning, with that view, when I looked out the window and realised everything was going to be okay. When I think back to you, Estonia, the sun shines. Over and over again.”

Excerpt from The Story of Tordis, penned by Evelyn as part of a Storyweaving Trajectory in 2019 for EuroPeers.

“It is the enthusiasm, it is my friends, here and now, even though I have only just met them. It is my awakening curiosity. Who are all these people, what do they care about? It's the friendship, the activities... It's the bond that is created, it's magical ... it's everything at once.”

JASON, youth counsellor at t Leebeekje and Youth Exchange participant.

## The power of learning mobility

What personal and social benefits does international mobility in youth projects and volunteering bring? How can we ensure that all young people experience the learning opportunities of international mobility? These and other questions took central place at the conference Changing Lives, Changing Society, the Power of Learning Mobility, the biennial conference of the European Platform on Learning Mobility. JINT hosted 200 participants in Ostend.



## Focus 3: Powerful, quality youth work

The European Youth Programmes support higher-quality youth work by encouraging **cooperation** among youth organisations or with partners from other fields such as culture, education and sports.

The **Youth Partnership** is the ultimate action to engage in quality development in the youth sector. In addition, **Mobility for Youth Workers** allows youth workers from different countries to learn by getting a glimpse over the wall together with others. The figures (see pages 29 and 30) show the themes these two types of projects address.

**Volunteering projects** also contribute to strong youth work. Foreign volunteers in the Flemish youth sector not only provide extra hands to do the work, but also bring new ideas and insights, which act as a breath of fresh air for the host organisations.

Youth workers from Flanders and Brussels also participate in a wide range of **international training courses and activities** offered by JINT and the European Network of National Agencies. Through JINT, **472** youth workers attended international training courses, seminars or activities. About two thirds of them took part in thematic activities and training courses on diverse themes such as inclusion, innovative youth work, outreach work or quality development. The remainder participated in international training focused on learning about European youth programs, networking and project design and management.

In addition, **1361** participants from home and abroad participate in thematic trainings and events organized by JINT and its partners in Flanders and Brussels.

The RAY CAP study<sup>5</sup> on capacity development of youth organisations found that this type of international training activity brings three kinds of benefits to participants: (1) new **insights** they can apply to their own work, (2) both international and Flemish **contacts**, which can be quickly rekindled if necessary, (3) increased **knowledge** of Erasmus+: Youth in Action funding opportunities.

### Unlocking knowledge for and by youth workers

StreetSmartPlay was launched in 2019 as an online platform to access and share educational games and methods. It stems from a one-year Youth Partnership between Mobile School from Leuven, Save the Children (Romania) and Ladies Union of Drama (Greece). The platform aims to stimulate creativity, intercultural exchange and a sense of innovation among youth workers. The platform is based on solidarity: youth workers, street workers and teachers from all corners of the world voluntarily share their knowledge and expertise on this platform. The project aims to create a worldwide community of youth workers.

YOUTH PARTNERSHIP

<sup>5</sup> Stevens, F. (2018). Research project on competence development and capacity building in Erasmus+: Youth in Action, Nationaal Rapport.

## Themes\* of Youth Partnerships (Total projects: 61) (2014–2020)

— SOURCE: European Commission & JINT



\*Project applicants can indicate up to three themes for a project. The numbers show the themes indicated for at least 10% of the projects.

### From Norway to Gran Canaria

In 2018, Helena Verset, formation officer at the Brussels Center West D'Broej, participated in the *Eye Opener* formation in Norway together with one of her youngsters. This formation shows the possibilities of a group exchange, and is fully committed to the **active participation of young people** in setting up an international exchange. Helena: "That's why I make sure to brainstorm with everyone first about what we want to achieve. Only then do I start working on the group exchange. This international formation has really set something in motion and I always get excited when I think back on it."

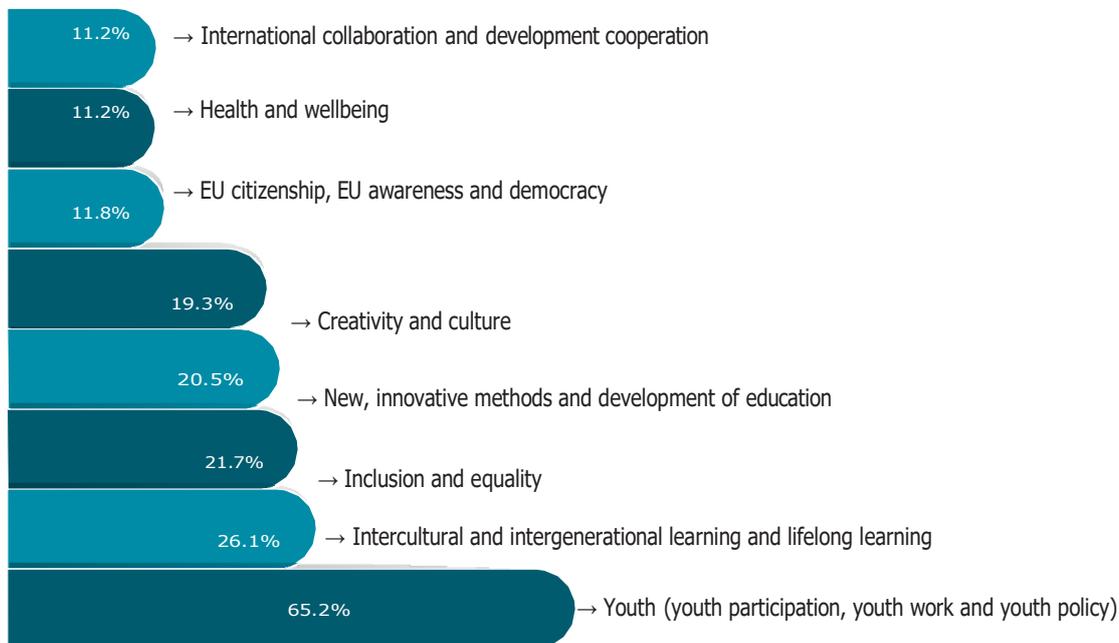
Helena's colleague Cleo also thinks it is very important to enrich yourself as a youth worker with international experiences. She went to Gran Canaria for a week with youth workers from ten different countries to explore how they could use social circus as a methodology in their organisations. "That's how you get **enthused** yourself and can look at your work in a different way. You can compare with other countries and are presented with **refreshing ideas**.

But there is also a lot of time for **self-reflection**, you can think about your work and question things, something that time doesn't always allow for in daily life."

INTERNATIONAL TRAININGS

## Themes\* of Mobility for Youth Workers (2014–2020) (Total projects: 161)

SOURCE: European Commission & JINT



\* Project applicants can indicate up to three themes for a project. The numbers show the themes indicated for at least 10% of the projects.

### A diverse range of tasks

In the youth residence domain of de Hoge Rielen in Lichtaart, a crew of European Solidarity Corps volunteers get to work each year. Project coordinator Gerlinde Meeus: “We started in 2013. In the beginning, there were two European volunteers who came for a few months, but by now we have five people staying with us for approximately 11 months each.”

Their tasks and responsibilities have also grown a lot in those years: “European volunteers coordinate the reception desk, give educational workshops, they run the bar in summer together with local volunteers and student workers and supervise visitors to our climbing park.”

#### VOLUNTEERING

source: Gazet van Antwerpen, 01.08.2019



### Local operations reliant on international volunteering projects

“Our volunteers are of consistent value to our team. Each volunteer is different, but they all enhance our operations in their own way. Without our international projects, we would not be where we are today.”

ators of European Volunteerinprojects.

## Stronger together

A study visit to the Swedish Malmö in 2018, together with 12 other organisations from Flanders and Brussels, was what set the ball rolling for LEJO to increase cooperation in its own country. Gust Vanhecke, youth worker at LEJO: "Sometimes you need to be abroad for a few days with your Flemish youth work colleagues to be able to discover and see opportunities with each other. Before, we would think about how we should work with refugees and we wanted a lot, but we didn't always get around to it.

Now I feel that we are not alone. I feel strengthened by all those organisations from Sweden, Norway and Belgium who have the same goal in mind. Working on that goal together creates a bigger impact and gives us the motivation to make the most of it."

### MOBILITY FOR YOUTH WORKERS

"Something I'm definitely going to remember is working with different partners. We all know it's important to work with different people because we can learn a lot. But it seems I am more convinced now to actually start *doing that*."

— YOUSRA TAHIRI, youth worker at JES Brussel and Chirojeugd Vlaanderen and Mobility for Youth Workers participant.



"The training was very enriching, and executed in a participative manner. It was certainly interesting to get **different perspectives on youth work in Europe.**"

"I learned more about how to **reach young people in an organic, participatory way**, using different methods in authentic response to their interests and identities. I can apply these lessons to the young people with whom we organise sports activities."

— KEN VAN STAEYEN, youth worker at Tofsport vzw/Buurt sport Leuven and thematic international training participant.

## Focus 4: Improving youth policy

The European Youth Programmes also contribute to the **development of youth policy** and other policies of interest to young people at local, regional and national levels.

One way the projects pursue this goal is by **making young people's voices** heard and enabling them to engage directly with policymakers. This is particularly the case for the Youth Dialogue action, where young people engage with a specific policy issue.

Youth Partnerships and Strategic Partnerships between National Agencies also contribute to youth policy development: they bring together international and local expertise and disseminate practice-based knowledge. They do more than producing **policy recommendations**; often youth policymakers and officials are actively involved or play leading roles themselves. The RAY INNO research <sup>6</sup>, which examines Youth Partnerships, shows how projects that respond to pressing policy issues in particular can act as **catalysts for policy development**.

Other actions, such as the Mobility for Youth Workers, also breathe life into youth policy, especially on a local level. Activities such as study visits and feasibility visits strengthen the knowledge, networks and motivation of the youth sector and youth policy in the Flemish community and beyond.

Finally, the resources of the European Youth programmes are also used to involve the Flemish youth sector in the **European Youth Work Policy**, which underwent a strong development in 2014–2020.

<sup>6</sup> Stevens, F. (2020). Research on the impact of Key Action 2: Cooperation for innovation and the exchange of good practices (RAY-INNO). National Report Belgium (Flemish Community).



### Talking about the climate

In 2019, a wave of climate protests led by young people swept through many countries. Climate activist and initiator Marjolein: "When I helped organise the Youth Climate March in 2018, I came into contact with youth movements such as Youth For Climate, Students For Climate and Fridays For Future. Everyone hit the streets, but then nothing happened. How could we move forward? We came to the conclusion that we wanted to create a project for and by European youth around other ways of taking action and influencing politics."

This led to two European projects: a Youth Exchange in the summer of 2019 in Germany and a Youth Dialogue in October 2019 in Belgium. During the Youth Dialogue, participating young people spent an afternoon **sitting down** with various **European climate-oriented NGOs and politicians**.

At the end, the young people wrote an open letter together. Marjolein: "They spent all night writing it, it's truly their own creation." It read, "We challenge you... Find the courage to help us build a new and sustainable world."

Marjolein: "They also went to read that open letter to the European Commission and **talked to a few European Commissioners**. For example, they had a very long conversation with Frans Timmermans, the person behind the European Green Deal."



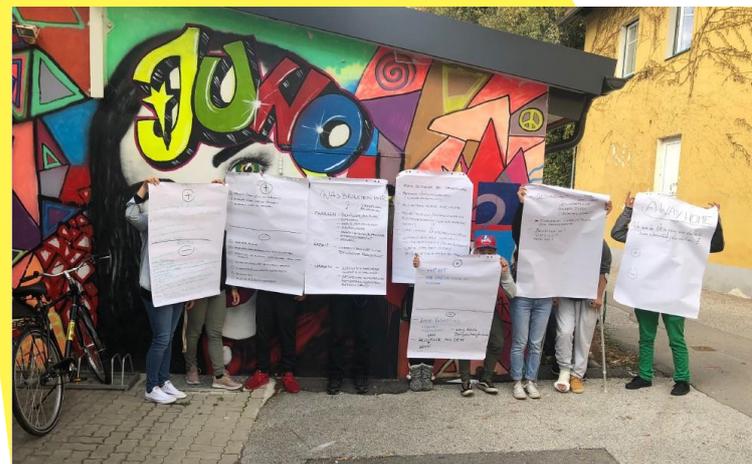
## Bottom-up democracy

In the summer of 2018, a team of 20 young people teamed up with the European Youth Parliament Belgium for the conference “Local Initiatives, Global Impact” in Mechelen. Over 160 young people from more than 25 different countries came together for a week in the city of the ‘Maneblussers’.

For Sam, one of the young people who helped set up the project, the **plenary panel debate** was an event to remember. Besides young people and volunteers, policymakers such as Luc Van Den Brande (former MEP from Mechelen and Special Advisor to President Juncker) and Karel Geys (Mechelen Municipal Councillor) also joined in.

Sam: “Normally, after a long day, it can be difficult to get people to join a panel debate lasting an hour and a half. Not this time. An online tool allowed the audience to participate by sending in words and questions and the great thing was that the panel engaged with participants rather than just each other. I got goosebumps and wished it didn't have to stop, as did the participants. We got a lot of positive feedback afterwards. To me, this was an example of true bottom-up democracy.”

YOUTH DIALOGUE



## After Care Guarantee: from experiment to action plan

The Youth Innovation Partnership “Accelerate to Independence: After Care Guarantee” (2015–2016) addressed the social issues faced by young adult care leavers. The project aimed to increase the knowledge and awareness of authorities and service providers regarding (the need for) aftercare for 18-year-olds leaving residential care. The **Flemish government** (Youth Welfare Agency) took the lead, together with partners in Wallonia, Italy, the Netherlands and Austria.

The project turned out to have come at just the right time: there was already an awareness that the transition from youth care to independent living deserved more policy attention. The Youth Partnership’s flexible format enabled an exploration of possible policy approaches: concrete tools, such as personal budgets and round tables, were considered together with young people, and success factors for sustainable aftercare were identified by examining international good practices.

The project was a success: **at the Flemish policy level, recognition of the problem grew**, and the principle of an aftercare guarantee was disseminated as good practice in the sector. Moreover, the Flemish government subsequently drew on the project’s policy recommendations as one of its sources for the development of a Flemish Youth Action Plan. Many **recommendations** were thus **incorporated into policy**.

YOUTH PARTNERSHIP

## European lever for strong local youth work and youth policy

The long-term strategic partnership EUROPE GOES LOCAL—Supporting Youth Work at the Municipal Level, supported by JINT (coordination) and 25 other National Agencies, has brought together over 200 partners from across Europe working at the local, national and European level since 2016. One of its achievements is the widely supported **European Charter for Local Youth Work** (2019), a document that lists principles for local youth work, its development, necessary policy frameworks, the roles of youth workers and quality development. The Charter establishes a common platform for dialogue on youth work from local to European levels. The accompanying interactive online Changemakers Kit supports this dialogue.

“Op Policy officer Hans Cools of De Ambrassade explains the **importance of this Charter for Flanders**: “On the Flemish level, I find it particularly important that the Charter provides an answer to the question of what quality youth work actually is. Due to the erosion of the Flemish Decree on Local Youth Policy, it is no longer clear to many local governments precisely what they should be supporting. This document creates a **framework** broad enough to give all worthwhile new initiatives a chance. At the same time, it is also useful to organisations with a longer history.”

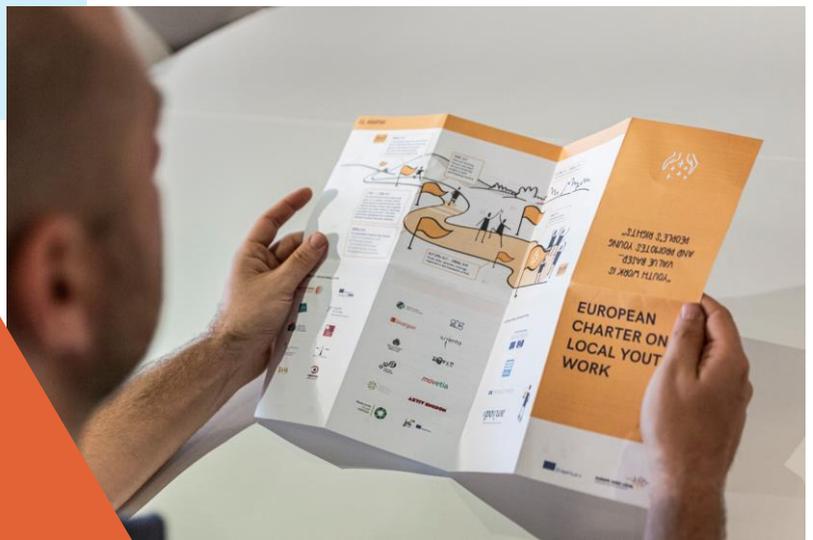
Meanwhile, the Charter has also influenced Flemish youth policy. In the **Youth and Children's Rights Policy Plan** (2020–2024), Benjamin Dalle, Minister of Brussels, Youth and Media, committed to supporting and disseminating the Charter between 2022 and 2024.

### STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

## Youth participation in urban renewal

Through the project 'Youngsters in Urban Planning Participation', the City of Ghent set up a feasibility study in 2014 to explore the possibilities of a future cross-sectoral Youth Partnership in the fields of youth work, employment and education. The partner cities of Ostrava (Czech Republic), Cuenca (Spain), Gothenburg (Sweden) and Ghent all wanted to set up an **urban renewal project in co-creation with young people**. The visit motivated these cities to further increase the involvement of young people and youth workers in urban development, introduced them to new tools to achieve this, and strengthened their belief in the added value of cross-sectoral youth work.

### MOBILITY FOR YOUTH WORKERS



## Inspiration from the Dutch

How are youth work, youth care and youth aid organised on a local level in the Netherlands? How do youth workers work together with other local partners? And how about the right to free time for youth in youth care, how is it organised by our northern neighbours?

In June 2019, a group of 18 passionate Flemish youth (welfare) workers, youth officials and policy makers crossed the border in search of answers to these questions. This included participants from municipal youth services, Kazou, Formaat, LEJO, Konekti Jeugdhulp and Elegast vzw.

The impact of the study visit? "We returned with a strengthened belief in the added value of cooperation between youth work and youth care. It was an opportunity to reflect, but certainly also confirmation of our approach to Flemish youth work!"

**INTERNATIONAL TRAINING**



## The European Youth Work Conventions: building the youth work community and European youth work

After the first European Youth Work Convention in 2010 with 400 participants, in Ghent, a second edition soon followed in Brussels in 2015 with 500 participants. The third European Youth Work Convention (Bonn, 2020), held online due to the COVID-19 pandemic, was a youth work event at an unprecedented scale with 1,000 participants.

A Flemish delegation attended each convention, composed of youth workers, youth policy makers and youth researchers and representing the voice of and insights from Flemish youth work. Together with other representatives from 51 countries, they contributed to the **Final Statements** of the successive Conventions. These vision texts have become references for European youth work policy.

The connection to European youth policy was clearest at the third Youth Work Convention: the youth work community was invited to help shape and guide the implementation of the **European Youth Work Agenda**, a joint political agenda of the European Union and the Council of Europe.



## Focus 5: Solidarity without borders

The key building blocks of solidarity as a value are empathy, attention to human rights, inclusion and active citizenship<sup>7</sup>. Solidarity was already a long-standing volunteering core value under EVS through 2017, but with the establishment of the European Solidarity Corps as a new, separate Youth Program in 2018, it now has its own special focus.

In Volunteering Projects, volunteers work both individually and in groups through recognized volunteer organizations. By the end of 2020, **58 organizations** in Flanders and Brussels had applied for a European Solidarity Corps Quality Label with which to send people abroad or receive volunteers in their own operations.

In addition to international volunteering, from 2018, local Solidarity Projects can also be set up by and for young people. Bel'J offers Belgians an opportunity to volunteer across language borders within their own country.

Other actions for Erasmus+: Youth in Action, such as Youth Exchanges and Youth Partnerships, also feature solidarity with young people and youth workers in other environments or less privileged situations as an important theme or motivation.



### A warm home for and by young people

Five young people, under the guidance of a coach from House of Colours, set up the **Together we Stand** project in 2019 to bring together young people with and without refugee backgrounds through leisure activities and camps. Meditation was a particular focus throughout the project. Kelvin (19) and Sarah (24) were part of the project team. Kelvin: "In 2014, I arrived in Belgium from Kenya. I didn't say much and stayed home by myself a lot. I found it hard to make friends. But by talking to everyone here, I was able to learn Dutch. I am shy, but here I have blossomed."

Sarah: "It's a huge relief for them: someone who listens, understands and doesn't judge."

**SOLIDARITY PROJECT**

<sup>7</sup> Nicodemi, S. & Bačlija Knoch, S. (2020). 4thought for Solidarity. SALTO European Solidarity Corps.



## Let's get to work

At vzw Oranjehuis's Heerlijkheid van Heule, a dozen volunteers from the European Solidarity Corps worked on the farm in 2019 with support by Bouworde vzw.

Cécile (facilitator at Bouworde): "When I'm on holiday, I always look for something that **combines fun with doing good for the world**. This is what solidarity means to me: giving time to people in need without expecting anything in return."

Participant Senne: "Everyone here has the same attitude: they are very open and want to get along. Because we are stimulated to find our own solutions, I have also found the courage to show some leadership; to make decisions and lead people. **There should be a lot more places like this, where everyone can make themselves useful and is able to function.**"

### VOLUNTEERING WORK





## Young artists in the spotlight

Nightwatch was a coaching programme at the Photography Museum Antwerp, during which young artists between the ages of 16 and 26 took over the museum to work toward a nocturnal event in February 2020.

Lori, participant in this artistic Solidarity Project: "The concept of solidarity, that's something we thought very hard about during our assessment afterwards. The fact that young artists from diverse backgrounds were given the opportunity to be in the Museum of Photography is solidarity to us. It is about **giving opportunities to others**, opportunities they might not always get otherwise."

SOLIDARITY PROJECT

## Tout va bien: anyone can swim or do sports

The 2019 Group Exchange of BOAS (Belgium Organisation for Adapted Swimming) brought young French swimmers with disabilities to Belgium. For a whole week, a dozen French youngsters spent a week with their Belgian buddies. There was swim training every morning and evening, tailored to the individual swimmers, and during the day the participants got to know each other's differences and similarities through sports and games.

BOAS: "It was not easy at first with the Dutch and French, but communication was not really an issue. The young people helped each other, both during and outside swimming, and that happened without words. Language does not have to be a barrier in a Youth Exchange!"

### YOUTH EXCHANGE

## Youth work as a lever for social inclusion

Within the **Youth Partnership** Becoming Part of Europe (2016–2019), youth workers from seven partner countries developed policy recommendations based on their experiences working with young newcomers according to four themes: Gender and LGBT+, Advocacy, Cross-sectoral Work and Wellbeing and Empowerment. The policy recommendations addressed various levels, from local to European.

In Flanders and Brussels, JINT further promoted this topic together with youth work partners JES and Tumult vzw during the **study day** "At Home in Youth Work" (2019), where nearly 150 participants from 70 different organisations exchanged views on ways for young newcomers to feel welcome in youth work.

And the ongoing **Navigate You(th) project** by PIN vzw and Tumult vzw, also supported with Erasmus+ funds, is a response to one of the recommendations to lead young newcomers to leisure activities as a lever for wellbeing. A team of experienced facilitators and enthusiastic volunteers work with young newcomers to help them navigate the wide range of available leisure activities.

### YOUTH PARTNERSHIP

### NATIONAL TRAINING

## From statistics to people

In 2016, the Italian Elena (24) joined Vluchtelingenwerk Vlaanderen through EVS (European Voluntary Service): "As a student, I had already learned a lot about the asylum crisis. **I didn't just want to learn the statistics, but to really get to know the refugees and above all, to help them.**"

"At Vluchtelingenwerk Vlaanderen, I coordinate volunteers at the Startpunt, show new volunteers around and also help with cooking afternoons and the conversation tables myself. Besides that, I also provide information to the asylum seekers themselves if they have questions."

### VOLUNTEERING WORK



# JINT is the National Agency for Erasmus+ Youth and the European Solidarity Corps and coordinates the Bel'J programme for the Flemish community.

This publication looks back at the implementation of the Youth Programs from 2014 to 2020. It draws information from several sources:

- Official information about JINT projects and activities
- Studies executed by the Network of National Agencies in the context of RAY (Research Based Analysis of the European Youth Programmes) and more specifically, the results based on Flemish sampling and cases collected in the RAY MON, RAY INNO and RAY CAP projects
- Stories collected by JINT from involved young people, youth workers and other stakeholders

**Want to set up a boundary-breaking project yourself?**

**Find out what's possible at [jint.be](https://www.jint.be).**



## More stories?

[jint.be/verhalen](https://www.jint.be/verhalen) or [SCOOP](#)

## More figures?

[www.researchyouth.net](https://www.researchyouth.net) (RAY) or  
<https://www.jint.be/subsidieresultaten>

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