NETWORK OF NATIONAL AGENCIES ERASMUS+ YOUTH IN ACTION

YOUTH FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

Mainstreaming Human Rights Education in the field of youth

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

In light of a strategically coordinated populist discourse which makes Human Rights and Human Rights Education a politically contested topic, safeguarding Human Rights and democratic values is gaining importance in European policy agendas[1], and also in view of the relevance of Youth and Children's Rights. Against this background, the project *'Youth for Human Rights'* had been initiated by the National Agencies of the programme Erasmus+ Youth in Action in order to foster social inclusion through making use of the full potential of Human Rights Education in the context of youth work and young people's non-formal learning process[2]. More concretely, the project aimed at promoting and mainstreaming Human Rights and Human Rights Education in the youth field while building on already existing resources[3] and educational concepts and benefitting from the network(s) of Human Rights Education actors across Europe. The project's timeline was December 2016 to December 2019.

Meaningful and efficient educational modules with a social potential for change originating from the field of youth were developed within the project and were thus contributing at all levels to the design and implementation of Human Rights Education strategies in the youth sector. The project included Human Rights Education dimensions to the education and training concepts of youth workers, including through the study *'Human Rights Education and youth work'* [link to study: noored.ee/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/HUMAN-RIGHTS-EDUCATION-YOUTH-WORK_PAPER.pdf]. It also contributed to the current work of the Erasmus+ National Agencies for promoting Human Rights through youth work.

From the perspective of trainers and youth workers who participated in the *'Youth for Human Rights'* project, different training needs at different times for their engagement with Human Rights Education were identified. Thus, the training concept needed a comprehensive approach and new formats beyond the educational dimension, taking into account the multi-faceted character and complexity of the issue, which addresses intellectual, societal, juridical, political, programmatic and digital aspects.

In short, the *'Youth for Human Rights'* project, financed under Erasmus+ Key Action 3, developed, shared and supported the mainstreaming of non-formal education methodologies through youth work and fostered understanding, tolerance and respect among individuals.

[1] Amongst others, in 2012 the European Union designed the strategic framework on Human Rights and democracy to make EU policy more consistent; in 2015, Education Ministers adopted in the Paris *'Declaration on promoting citizenship and the common values of freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination through education'*. In June 2017, the Council of Europe's conference *'Learning to live together'* on the future of Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education in Europe proposed recommendations for future action.

[2] The project partners included the National Agencies of Estonia (leading partner), Germany, France, Austria, Belgium/Flemish Community, Slovakia, Croatia and Latvia.

[3] The Council of Europe 'Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education' might be considered key in this respect, including in clarifying the terms used in this document: https://www.coe.int/en/web/edc/charter-on-education-for-democratic-citizenship-and-human-rights-education

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As a result, several recommendations had been elaborated at the end the project which allowed for a deeper reflection on the final conference, held on October 29–30, 2019, in Tallinn, Estonia. These recommendations were revised following the discussions in the conference and complemented by proposals for concrete measures and actions to be implemented by different actors and stakeholders in the youth field.

The recommendations on Human Rights Education in the youth field are structured in five chapters:

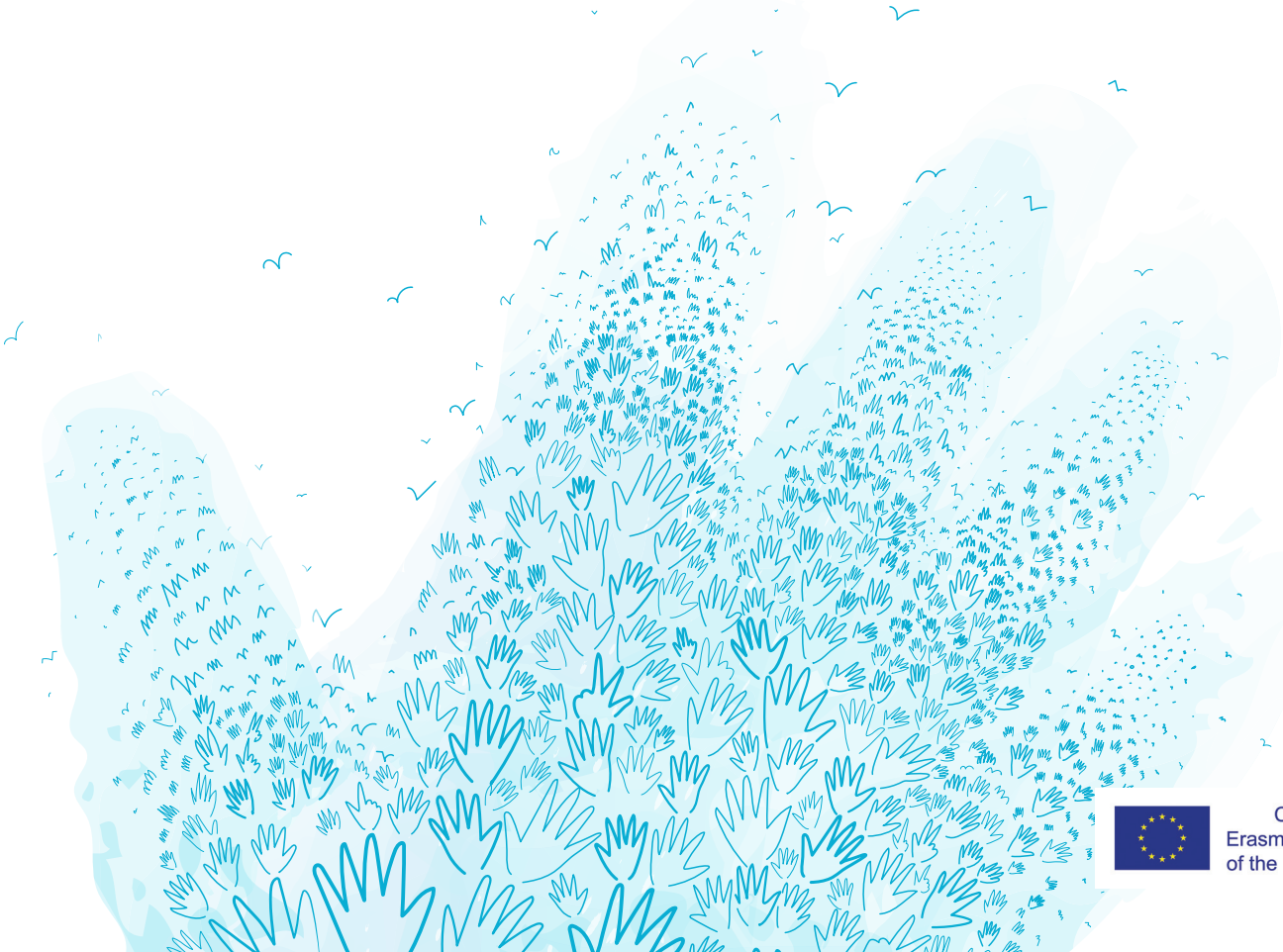
1. Different settings of youth work and their relationship to Human Rights
2. Education and training for competence development
3. Cross-sectoral cooperation for mainstreaming Human Rights
4. Better policy conditions for mainstreaming Human Rights
5. Erasmus+ National Agencies and European Youth programmes mainstreaming Human Rights

Each of the chapters addresses more general recommendations to diverse stakeholders and actors in youth work, youth policy and in different educational fields for young people *and* suggests concrete measures and actions to be taken for the implementation of the recommendations and the follow-up to the project *'Youth for Human Rights'*.

It should be underlined that the implementation of the recommendations is quite ambitious and not a subject that can be achieved easily or at once. Some measures might be appropriate for short-term action while others need more time for realisation. Moreover, available resources, both in financial and administrative capacities, including (wo)manpower to implement all tasks that are set in the document might be diverse and challenging. In addition, the question of a driving force behind a future *'Youth for Human Rights'* initiative remains.

However, despite all this, the important factor is:

LET'S GET STARTED AND BUILD ON THE ACHIEVEMENTS MADE SO FAR, WITH EACH INVOLVED AND INVITED PARTY WORKING AT ITS OWN PACE.



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1. DIFFERENT SETTINGS OF YOUTH WORK AND THEIR RELATIONSHIP TO HUMAN RIGHTS

As defined in the European Union's '*Council conclusions on the contribution of quality youth work to the development, well-being and social inclusion of young people*' youth work is a broad term covering a wide range of activities of a social, cultural, educational or political nature by, with and for young people. It belongs to the area of 'out-of-school' education, as well as specific leisure-time activities and is organised in different ways, delivered in different forms and settings, and given shape at a local, regional, national and European level. In line with this definition it is vital to reflect Human Rights in different contexts of youth work as a matter of principle and not only specifically in relation to social inclusion or to mobility programmes. Youth work is applied in different disciplines and areas, as detached youth work, youth social work, open youth work, street work, youth clubs or centres, etc. And it is based on democratic and social values and intercultural understanding, which is why it plays a crucial role in promoting and protecting Human Rights which are inherent to all aspects of life. That is why youth work can be defined as a Human Rights profession.

Therefore:

- The youth field itself must develop more 'emancipatory' educational strategies and positive narratives which make it visible that youth work provides spaces for youth to develop competences for a future world in which we want to live and that the participatory approach of youth work can also be a role model and an example of good practice to be established in other policy sectors.
- Youth work needs to address all young people *and* place a particular focus on the ultimate target groups of young people, such as mixed-abilities groups, young people "without papers", young homeless people, LGBTIQ+ young people, Roma youth, young migrants, refugees and asylum seekers and on relevant and topical themes, e.g. the fight *against* hate speech, discrimination, stigmatisation, group-focused enmity or violence and *for* environmental sustainability, gender equality and other imperative issues.
- All kinds of youth work disciplines, arenas and settings should create an awareness both within and outside the organisational structures concerning the relationship between youth work and Human Rights and deal with Human Rights issues; also youth organisations need to include Human Rights into their practice as a means of dealing with challenges in their daily work such as prejudice and/or discrimination, while not only defending Human Rights for excluded and minority groups.
- Youth work professionals and youth work volunteers have to be supported through budgetary provisions, education and training and by the provision of high-quality material and resources in order to meet quality standards and to mainstream Human Rights in their complex daily work.
- Non-formal education and all kinds of youth work providers are invited to develop adequate educational resources, such as concepts, material, databases, manuals, training curricula for different settings and adapt existing educational resources to the national, regional and local realities as well as to everyday life experiences of young people.
- Institutions working with young people, including schools and youth work providers, are encouraged to foster the exchange and cooperation between all kinds of youth work, whatever the discipline or area, including youth work with specific target groups and beyond the closer youth work field with related areas in which young people are engaged, e.g. sports, environmental or Human Rights organisations, and so on.

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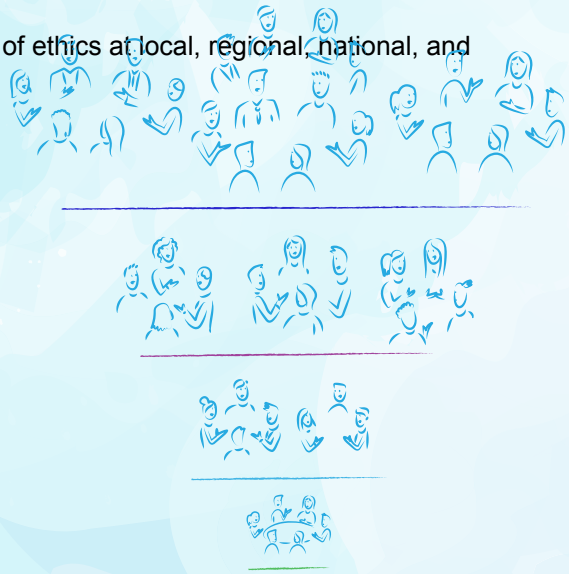
MEASURES AND ACTIONS

- When addressing all young people and placing a particular focus on ultimate target groups and on relevant and topical themes, youth work providers, the approach should:
  - increase Human Rights practices by using non-formal education methods, outreach and prevention approaches as well as cross-sectorial cooperation
  - react quickly to the current hot topics, interests and needs of young people and their attitudes concerning Human Rights irrespective of the setting or discipline; empower youth and social workers in the field of human rights in order to activate them
  - increase the knowledge and awareness of the unknown for other cultures, traditions, etc.

- When dealing with Human Rights and Human Rights Education in all youth work fields and settings youth work providers, the approach should:
  - provide easy and simple access to Human Rights issues and make documents about Human Rights Education accessible to everyone and train youth workers on how to use them
  - integrate Human Rights issues in application forms of programs.

- When developing a joint code of ethics for youth work based on Human Rights youth work providers, the approach should:
  - define the underlying and related quality standards for Human Rights in youth work and Human Rights Education
  - organise roundtables and public discussions on the code of ethics at local, regional, national, and international levels.



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2. EDUCATION AND TRAINING FOR COMPETENCE DEVELOPMENT

Over the last few years, the education and training of youth workers as well as competence development and quality assurance in youth work have played an ever-increasing role, particularly in light of the intention to build a common ground for youth work and non-formal learning across Europe. For this purpose, the development of competence models which define the competences, skills, attitudes and knowledge that youth workers need today has gained momentum, especially in the framework of the European Training Strategy of Erasmus+ Youth in Action. However, even though youth work can be defined as a Human Rights profession since it is based on Human Rights, these issues and related competences need to be more reflected in existing competence models and the respective education and training strategies.

Therefore:

- Responsible public bodies for education and training of youth workers, 'animateurs' and social pedagogues/ social workers at various levels should establish and support professional profiles and educational paths for youth workers and integrate Human Rights issues in concepts, strategies and programmes while linking to respective competence models and including them into National Qualification Frameworks.
- Education and training providers for youth workers, including universities as well as youth NGOs and further education institutions, should enhance the professional development and capacity building of youth workers in the area of Human Rights and integrate Human Rights issues into the curricula of education and training offers for youth workers while linking activities to European- and national-level competence frameworks and respective quality standards.
- Different education and training providers in both formal and non-formal education, in universities, in youth work institutions and youth NGOs are asked to enhance cooperation as key to achieving well-qualified youth workers, a transfer of knowledge and building common Human Rights Education strategies while overcoming the fragmentation of concepts and practices and following holistic concepts including issues such as participation, empowerment, protection, welfare and inclusion.
- Education and training providers for youth workers have to conceptualise Human Rights Education in youth work as an empowerment strategy while enabling youth workers to raise the awareness of their own rights and their responsibilities towards others.

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MEASURES AND ACTIONS

- When establishing and supporting educational paths for youth workers and integrating Human Rights issues into concepts, strategies and programmes, responsible public bodies for education and training of youth workers, the approach should:
  - analyse and where needed change the curricula of education and training strategies and concepts for youth workers and integrate Human Rights issues into these concepts
  - draft strategic papers on common principles of competence models of youth workers and the integration of Human Rights issues in these models
  - further collect in each country material and good practices of competence models and share this information at national and European level.

- When enhancing the professional development of youth workers education and training providers, the approach should:
  - treat Human Rights and Human Rights Education as an integral part in competence models for youth work
  - make Human Rights principles a part of all youth work training in formal and non-formal education and in all settings.

- When fostering competence development of youth workers by enhancing cooperation as key to achieving well-qualified youth workers, education and training providers, the approach should:
  - develop cooperation projects between formal and non-formal education in which both sides can provide their strength, know-how, good practice and competence
  - share competences, join forces and commit to a joint action plan so that no single entity (formal or non-formal) is required to have all competences
  - create an online platform that shows where a youth worker can develop the necessary competences, combining formal and non-formal institutions and training.

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3. CROSS-SECTORAL COOPERATION FOR MAINSTREAMING HUMAN RIGHTS

Young people's lives are impacted by many domains, policies and areas, especially in formal education, employment, social affairs, health, justice, environment, housing, and culture. Thus, youth policy can only be efficient if it cooperates with, and intervenes in, these other sectors, whether in the private, public or third sector. But how can this take place in relation to Human Rights and in Human Rights Education when the different sectors often consider youth work as a playground which lacks seriousness due to its non-formality? The potential for cross-sectoral cooperation for the advocacy of Human Rights and for capacity building through Human Rights Education needs systematic exploration, particularly when it comes to formal and non-formal education of youth workers dealing with Human Rights issues. But cooperation is no one-way street: it also needs to be identified how those other sectors can profit from mainstreaming Human Rights in policy making and practice, by showcasing the many good practices youth work has developed over the years.

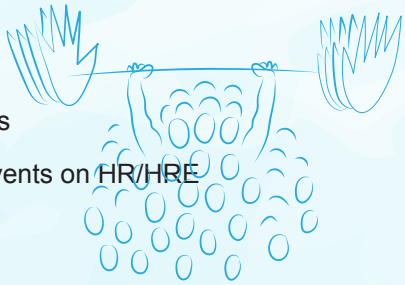
Therefore:

- All stakeholders in society, above all those in the youth field, must contribute to building a Human Rights culture in all spheres of life, particularly those relevant for young people, by applying participatory principles and developing democratic communities and environments and explicitly linking the different fields of work around Human Rights, i.e. participation, asylum, employment, housing, health, education… all while promoting networking, dialogue and cooperation between different actors in the field, both amongst the private and business sector and in the context of community life and sustainability.
- National authorities are asked to create structures and opportunities that allow the promotion of and awareness-raising for Human Rights by enhancing advocacy, e.g. through Ombuds(wo)men or Human Rights Commissioners and providing training offers on Human Rights issues for staff members of national authorities and other parties in order to mainstream it in different policies and practices for which authorities are responsible, especially the ones affecting young people, such as education and youth work.
- Responsible public authorities have to give Human Rights a greater priority in all educational environments, in pre-school, school and higher education, vocational education and training, as well as youth work and non-formal education by mainstreaming Human Rights in these settings, so that young people learn about, for and through Human Rights and by connecting formal and non-formal learning spaces as well as teachers and youth workers in order to learn and discover Human Rights Education together.
- Schools should include the development of knowledge, skills and attitudes around Human Rights issues in curricula for their pupils and students by promoting a 'whole-school approach' to Human Rights, in which all members of the school community (school leaders, middle management, teaching and non-teaching staff, learners, parents and families) feel responsible, play an active role in tackling issues of Human Rights and apply a cross-sectoral approach through a stronger cooperation with the community at large and a wider range of stakeholders, amongst youth work and NGOs that have experience in Human Rights while also encouraging participation in Human Rights initiatives out of the classroom as a complement to the normally knowledge-oriented approach in formal education.

MEASURES AND ACTIONS

- To promote a 'whole-school approach' to Human Rights, Ministries for Education should support National Agencies of Erasmus+, youth work providers, NGOs and associated partners to:
  - be a partner on an equal footing with schools and formal education providers
  - organise information workshops in schools on cooperation with (youth) NGOs and civil society
  - organise, in cooperation with youth and other NGOs, training opportunities for teachers
  - promote peer education approaches in schools (teachers for teachers, students for students)
  - build the capacity of the main actors in Human Rights Education in schools
  - make educational resources on Human Rights and Human Rights Education available.

- To train staff members of national authorities and others in Human Rights Education and training providers and public authorities, the approach should:
  - cooperate with youth- and other NGOs who can provide expertise
  - allocate funds and resources for youth NGOs to develop quality programmes
  - invite representatives of different sectors to training opportunities or other events on HR/HRE
  - facilitate co-operation between various actors.



- To link more explicitly the different fields of work around Human Rights, youth organisations and other NGOs, the approach should:
  - guarantee participation of other actors in the field when working with specific Human Rights; issues, for example, involving social services in activities related to homelessness.

- To promote networking, dialogue and cooperation youth NGOs and youth workers, the approach should:
  - make use of such expertise that exists in the private sector related to visibility and PR
  - make sure Human Rights are better communicated to a wider audience
  - make the private sector aware of the benefits of cooperation with the youth sector
  - highlight the issues relevant for the private sector and providing and 'selling' expertise in Human Rights issues
  - build strong relations with the private sector by providing services to it.

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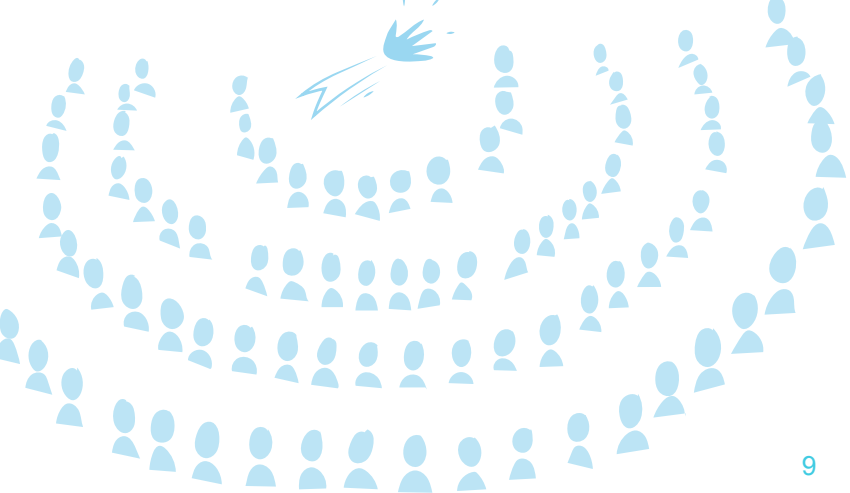
4. BETTER POLICY CONDITIONS FOR MAINSTREAMING HUMAN RIGHTS

In the European Union, economic growth and the ideology of a free market have dominated the political agenda over the past few years while democracy, Human Rights and rule of law have only seemed to be a secondary issue. Looking at the most recent political developments the need and perception to tackle issues such as democratic values and solidarity, dignity and intercultural understanding are steadily growing. This is – amongst others – reflected in the Paris '*Declaration of European Education Ministers'* in which democratic citizenship and common values of freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination through education have been promoted. Many policy fields concern the lives of young people and policy makers in these areas are asked to mainstream Human Rights and Human Rights Education within their own responsibilities, obviously in particular in the fields of education and youth or in the area of Children's Rights and the UN '*Sustainable Development Goals'*. In this respect it is necessary to provide better conditions for the development and provision of integrated (youth) policy planning in diverse fields and at all levels.

Therefore:

- European Institutions and member states in the EU and the Council of Europe must ensure a coherent European (youth) policy based on Human Rights which is cross-sectoral and holistic, putting Human Rights issues in the core of priorities while not ignoring Human Rights violations in member states and thus are invited to include Human Rights Education in youth work in the future '*European Youth Work Agenda'* and the respective further strategy for the development of youth work in Europe.
- Policy makers and public authorities at all levels in administrative or ministerial structures and in all countries should develop and provide integrated youth policy planning and ensure the existence of youth work structures and youth work provisions, offered and open to all young people, and provide concrete budget lines for youth issues, in particular related to Human Rights and Human Rights Education and the participation of young people.
- Public authorities should support youth councils, youth NGOs and their networks, youth institutes and regional or local youth initiatives, and acknowledge youth initiatives and youth movements as partners in the public political discourse and promote a culture of Human Rights for everyone while enhancing the emancipatory impact of Human Rights Education and connecting it with the realities and concerns of young people.
- Key players in the youth field, such as promoters and managers of youth programmes, youth workers, public authorities, etc., must facilitate a greater awareness of the relevance of Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education and encourage the mainstreaming of Human Rights Education in the youth field through an educational practice in both formal and non-formal education and promote a better understanding of Human Rights as an issue for all, while avoiding reducing Human Rights to a legal/ juridical dimension.



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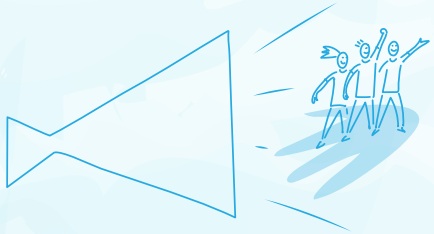
MEASURES AND ACTIONS

To inspire better policy conditions youth policy makers of all kinds and youth work providers, the approach should:

- connect with current challenges and issues by using existing knowledge and experiences and share priorities with policy makers and public authorities
- make visible and insist that policy change and action is possible and realistic and specify what needs to be done in terms of measures and shared responsibilities
- apply a participatory approach in which young people are connected and supported and play a key role while youth policy is strengthened
- advocate and highlight that youth work based on Human Rights matters is of high quality and therefore deserves better recognition
- involve and inform all kinds of stakeholders and recipients on Human Rights-based youth work, propose association of actors and use multiple sources of influence.



National Authorities, funding organisations and youth work stakeholders, including Human Rights Education providers as well as NGOs, should:

- develop and provide their own Human Rights Education activities for youth workers and be co-funded by budget lines provided by Erasmus+ or Council of Europe
- improve coordination of approaches among actors while acknowledging the connection and cooperation between different policy sectors, foremost between youth work and school, between non-formal and formal education
- enhance the relevance of Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education and encourage the mainstreaming of Human Rights Education.

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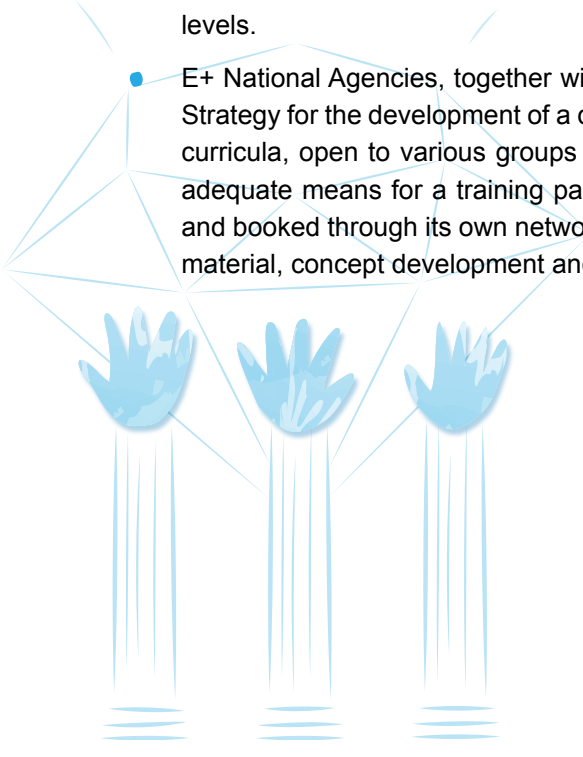
5. ERASMUS+ NATIONAL AGENCIES AND EUROPEAN YOUTH PROGRAMMES MAINSTREAMING HUMAN RIGHTS

In the (relatively short) history of EU youth and education programmes, Human Rights and Human Rights Education seem to play only a subordinate role. According to the current Erasmus+ programme guide: "Education, training, youth and sport can make a major contribution to help tackle socio-economic changes, the key challenges that Europe will be facing until the end of the decade and to support the implementation of the European policy agenda for growth, jobs, equity and social inclusion". One of the aims and priorities of the programme under Key Action 1 *'Youth exchanges and youth worker mobilities'* and Key Action 3 *'Strategic partnerships'* is to promote diversity, intercultural and inter-religious dialogue, as well as the common values of freedom, tolerance and respect for *human*, social and economic *rights*. However, the issue of Human Rights has so far been only an also-ran. Consequently, the results of the project '*Youth for Human Rights*' suggest placing more emphasis on Human Rights and Human Rights Education within Erasmus+ and invite the National Agencies to rely on the experiences gained and make Human Rights and Human Rights Education a strong pillar in the future programme activities.

Therefore:

- European Institutions, member states and stakeholders such as E+ National Agencies should, in future EU programmes for education, training and youth, make sure that Human Rights activities receive adequate priority within Erasmus+ and beyond, and make explicit links with Human Rights Education, safeguarding the diversity of issues and target groups and developing a clear strategy for inclusion and clarification on how to include a Human Rights dimension in projects.
- E+ National Agencies have to be catalysts for Human Rights Education and guarantee adequate sustainable support in youth work and in non-formal education through a diversity of projects while opening the programme up to new environmental and social movements and making visible that Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps are more than a mobility scheme since both promote democratic values, fundamental rights, intercultural understanding and active citizenship and thus increase young people's resilience and prevent violent radicalisation.
- E+ National Agencies, together with education and training providers, must make good use of the financial resources available while earmarking budgetary envelopes for Human Rights Education in the youth field and supporting valuable and useful training formats, tools and resources on Human Rights Education from different institutional bases and backgrounds and scale up these resources at national, regional and local levels.
- E+ National Agencies, together with education and training providers, should use the European Training Strategy for the development of a diversified training programme around Human Rights with individualised curricula, open to various groups of participants, youth workers, teachers, evaluators, etc., and provide adequate means for a training package on Human Rights for in-house staff training which can be used and booked through its own network, involving already trained NA staff in a trainer's team, while providing material, concept development and other support.



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MEASURES AND ACTIONS

- National Agencies of E+ and the community of actors in the youth field dealing with Human Rights and Human Rights Education should:

  - create a platform, on- and offline, for communication, cooperation, exchange and outreach between all actors in the field
  - support and promote the development and systematise via databases the provision of existing programmes, good practices, instruments, tools, games, events and information material on Human Rights and Human Rights Education and provide resources for distribution and making these materials accessible for the beneficiaries of the E+ Programme and other actors
  - reflect and specify Human Rights issues in application forms, programme guidelines, impact measurement tools, glossaries, handbooks, etc.

- National Agencies of E+ and responsible bodies for the E+ programme in the youth field should:
  - create a support structure for the further implementation of activities around Human Rights and thus use the SALTO network to integrate the topic into their work
  - include members of new social, environmental and other movements in programme activities
  - specify Human Rights Education issues in strategies for inclusion and take initiatives on how to affect the target group of young people and youth workers
  - publish a National Agency manual for Human Rights Education within Erasmus+ programme to be used by beneficiaries.

- The consortium of National Agencies of the *'Youth for Human Rights'* project should:
  - organise in due time a follow-up meeting to sustain the results of the project and to develop a new strategic partnership, respectively a new project concerning Human Rights Education via TCA & NET
  - disseminate the recommendations and proposed measures.

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