

Ministerial Feedback on the Partial Agreement on Youth Mobility through the European Youth Card

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The opinions expressed in this work, commissioned by the European Youth Card Associations (EYCA), are the responsibility of the authors People Dialogue and Change, and do not necessarily reflect the official policy of either the EYCA, Council of Europe or the organisations co-operating with them.

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Executive summary

This report contains the findings of a survey on the Partial Agreement (PA) on Youth Mobility through the Youth Card.

The purpose of the survey was to identify possibilities for improving the support the European Youth Card Association (EYCA) and Council of Europe provide through the Partial Agreement. The survey is not an evaluation and did not consider the practical implementation of the European Youth Card (EYC).

Survey responses were completed by senior civil servants or experts within a Government Ministry with responsibility for Youth, or similar.

Responses were received from more than half of the Council of Europe member states as well as Belarus. This included:

- 12 responses of the 22 countries who are members of the Partial Agreement. (PA member states)
- 14 responses received from countries who are not members of the Partial Agreement. (PA non-member states)

Although the survey has a large response rate, the relatively small number of participants mean it may not fully represent the views of non-participants. There is likely to be a bias towards countries with an interest in the Partial Agreement.

The survey was conducted by the EYCA and independently analysed by People Dialogue and Change.

Findings

Generally, Ministries believe they have a good understanding and awareness of the Partial Agreement and the European Youth Card. It is seen as a tool for implementing youth mobility that enables co-operation between European countries.

Around three-quarters of PA member states 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' that membership helped them:

- Offer young people more opportunities related to mobility.
- Access events on youth mobility.
- Co-operate with EYC organisations.
- Have access to EYC services.

Nearly three-quarters also 'agreed' that it helped them to improve and develop youth policy. Being able to 'reach out' to young people through the EYC also seems to be a benefit for some.

Co-operation between Ministries and EYCA member organisations seems to be good and without problems. Co-operation occurs on a wide range of topics. A small number of countries are not currently able to identify suitable organisations to deliver the Youth Card, but this is not illustrative of a wider trend.

Political support for the Partial Agreement is not strong. Less than 50% of survey respondents in PA member states identified strong support. There was no strong support within PA non-member states.

Feedback from countries who were not members of the Partial Agreement indicated that a significant barrier to joining was lack of support for youth policy at national level. Without this in place, developments around the Youth Card were said to be impossible. These respondents identified that any discussion about the Partial Agreement would be unlikely to have an impact on their lack of national priority on youth.

A major theme within the survey was the need to develop clearer cases for the benefits of joining the Partial Agreement and/or implementing the EYC.

PA non-members seem to be

- Uncertain that joining represents a good financial and resource investment when compared to its benefits for young people and the member state.
- Uncertain that joining represents a good financial and resource investment when compared to other youth mobility schemes and options.

PA members also identified that they would benefit from support to demonstrate the benefits of the Partial Agreement and the EYC. They stated that this could include evaluation or identifying good practices that showcase benefits to young people. Raising the visibility of the benefits amongst national stakeholders was also identified as useful.

EYC may be perceived, by some, as in competition for resources with other youth mobility initiatives. Part of demonstrating the value of the EYC or the Partial Agreement may be about demonstrating their 'unique value added' – What do they offer that other mobility or policy initiatives do not?

It may be beneficial for the EYCA to develop work which helps answer two questions:

- What value does a member state get from joining and 'investing' its resources?
- How is this value as good as, or better than, the other youth mobility schemes within which a member state could 'invest'?

This might include evaluative work such as cost benefit analysis, or a general work to better communicate what is currently known about the benefits.

Overall, technical implementation, the work of the EYCA, or problems in co-operation between Ministries and EYCA members are not something which currently prevents development. Instead, there is a sense that a stronger case needs to be made for any increases in co-operation around the EYC scheme to occur.

Introduction

The European Youth Card Association (EYCA) is a Non-Governmental Youth Organisation bringing together 39 member organisations that issue the European Youth Card to over 5 million young people in 36 countries across Europe.

The EYC may appear with different names in each country. It helps young people to travel across Europe, meet others, make a real change in their community and become a well-informed and active citizen that shapes society. The card enables access to discounts on travel, culture, accommodation, education, services and products in 36 countries, as well as programmes and opportunities for volunteering, learning, employment and entrepreneurship

All EYCA member organisations are committed to promoting youth mobility and participation in order to achieve the Association's vision of a Europe where all young people are mobile and active. The EYCA represents 39 national youth card organisations across Europe with over 5 million cards in use.

Since 1991, the EYCA has been working with the Council of Europe in the framework of the Partial Agreement through the Youth Card. This agreement helps to connect Council of Europe member states with EYCA member organisations and help them work together to develop better mobility solutions for young people.

This report contains the findings of a survey of members of the Partial Agreement as well other Council of Europe member states.

The purpose of the survey was to identify possibilities for improving the support the EYCA and Council of Europe provide through the Partial Agreement. A particular feature was identifying barriers that member states might face in joining or increasing co-operation. The survey is not an evaluation and did not consider the practical implementation of the EYC.

The survey was distributed by the EYCA and the Council of Europe and independently analysed by People Dialogue and Change.

Background: The Partial Agreement on Youth Mobility through the Youth Card¹

The Partial Agreement on Youth Mobility through the Youth Card was set up in 1991 at the initiative of the then Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Catherine Lalumière, following the Council of Europe Conference of Ministers responsible for Youth held in Lisbon (Portugal). At this Conference, the ministers advocated an increase in mobility of young people between the East and the West.

The [Committee of Ministers' Resolution ResAP\(1991\) revised in 2003 \(Resolution ResAP\(2003\)1\)](#) institutes a Partial Agreement on the Youth Card for the purpose of promoting and facilitating youth mobility in Europe. The Partial Agreement is part of the Youth Department of the Council of Europe and thus follows the priorities and objectives of both the youth sector and the Council of Europe as a whole.

A Partial Agreement is a particular form of co-operation within the Council of Europe. It allows member states to join or abstain from a certain activity advocated by other member states. From a statutory point of view, a Partial Agreement remains an activity of the Organisation in the same way as other programme activities. The exception lies in the fact that a Partial Agreement has its own budget and its own working methods which are determined only by the members of the Partial Agreement.

Aims of the Partial Agreement

The overall objective of the Partial Agreement is for member governments and EYCA member organisations to work together to create better mobility solutions for young people. This general objective implies two main aims:

1. Development of the Youth Card scheme
2. Development of better youth policies with and for member governments

The Partial Agreement's work programme is implemented in co-operation with the EYCA.

At the time of writing, the following states are members of the Partial Agreement:

Andorra, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Cyprus, Finland, Hungary, Ireland, Luxembourg, Malta, Moldova, Montenegro, The Netherlands, Portugal, San Marino, Serbia, Slovenia, Slovakia and Switzerland

¹ This section uses text taken from The Council of Europe web page 'Partial agreement on Youth mobility through the Youth Card' accessed at www.coe.int/en/web/youth/youth-mobility on 04/02/2021. Minor edits have been made for clarity.

Survey methodology and participants

Survey methods

The survey was conducted online by the EYCA between Summer 2020 and Winter 2020. It was targeted at all Council of Europe member states, and Belarus (who offer the EYC). It consisted of a mixture of closed, rating questions and open questions. Questions varied based on whether the respondent was from a member of the Partial Agreement on Mobility.

Surveys were mainly completed by senior civil servants or experts within a Government Ministry or Government body with responsibility for Youth. A small number of individuals were based in an organisation acting on behalf of, or in close co-operation with, their country's Ministry around youth (henceforth, 'Ministries' for all scenarios).

One response per country was permitted, EYCA and the Council of Europe worked together to identify appropriate individuals to give a response per country.

Survey questions asked participants to comment on their Ministries' views *in general*, rather than give official statements *on behalf* of their Ministries or other organisations. It was made clear that responses would be anonymised within reporting.

Survey responses

26 responses were received, representing a 54% response rate.

12 responses were received from countries who are members of the Partial Agreement (henceforth 'PA member states'):

- Andorra, Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cyprus, Finland, Malta, Montenegro, Portugal, Republic of Moldova, Republic of Serbia, San Marino, Switzerland
- This represents over half of the 22 current member states of the Partial Agreement.

14 responses were received from countries who are not members of the Partial Agreement (henceforth 'PA non-member states'):

- Belarus, Belgium (Flemish speaking community), Bulgaria, Estonia, France, Latvia, Norway, Poland, Romania, Russian Federation, Spain, The Czech Republic, United Kingdom, Ukraine

High-level institutional surveys can often be challenging to gather. Overall, the turnout rate is good, but the small sample size means moderate cautions should be exercised when interpreting results. There is likely a bias towards countries and individuals who have an interest in the Partial Agreement or the EYC. Findings may not fully reflect the views of member states who did not participate.

Survey respondents' personal understanding of the Partial Agreement and the EYC

During a question at the start of the survey, participants all indicated they had a reasonable understanding of both the Partial Agreement and the EYC. Awareness was higher amongst individuals from PA member states.

- All participants indicated they had an average to 'very high' personal awareness of the Partial Agreement and the EYC. No individual indicated they had 'low' or 'very low' awareness.
- Two-thirds (66%) of participants from PA member states indicated they had a 'high' or 'very high' level of personal understanding of the Partial Agreement and the EYC.
- In PA non-member states, half of participants indicated 'high' or 'very high' personal understanding of the Partial Agreement (50%). Just over half (57%) indicated they had a 'high' or 'very high' understanding of the EYC.

Participants can generally be assumed to have an accurate interpretation and understanding of how the Partial Agreement operates (or could operate) in relation to their country. The need for further understanding at institutional level was a theme in some responses, however. Some participants may be unaware of all possibilities.

Section 1: Perceptions and support for the Partial Agreement and the EYC

Key findings

The Partial Agreement and the EYC as tools are understood as implementing youth mobility that enables co-operation between European countries.

A similar understanding exists across PA member states and non-member states. PA member states tend to emphasise the benefits of the EYC to young people more.

Ministries in both PA member and non-member states believe they have a good understanding and awareness of the Partial Agreement and the EYC.

However, political support for the Partial Agreement is not generally seen as strong. Less than 50% of PA member states identified strong support and there was no strong support amongst non-member states.

Some PA non-member states indicated that the extent their country valued the Partial Agreement and the EYC was strongly determined by how much their country valued youth policy.

General perceptions

The survey contains a number of questions through which participants could give their Ministries' general views of the Partial Agreement and the EYC.

Ministries generally perceive the Partial Agreement and the EYC as tools for implementing youth mobility that enables co-operation between European countries.

Responses were similar between PA member states and non-member states. PA member states tended to emphasise the benefits of the EYC to young people more. This was particularly in relation to 'being part of', and 'experiencing', 'Europe'.

'It values the possibility of giving a European dimension to the national youth policies in regard to youth needs, specially youth mobility.'

PA member state survey respondent

'The possibility to create better mobility solutions for young people and their greater participation by giving them the opportunity to be part of the European community of 7 million EYCA users.'

PA member state survey respondent

'In relation to youth policy and issues, [the Ministry] wants to follow and be part of all relevant European initiatives beneficial to young people. The PA on Youth Mobility through the European Youth Card strongly contributes to this general expectation and more specifically to the mobility of young people.'

PA member state survey respondent

'The information concerning the PA on Youth Mobility and EYC on the Council of Europe PA's website is easily accessible, understandable, well-structured and user friendly. It provides enough details for the opportunities for co-operation between the members of the PA concerning youth mobility and youth policy development. [Our country's] EYC organisation is very pro-active and provides visibility of the benefits for the card holders.'

PA non-member state survey respondent

'In the framework of the Council of Europe, we consider this PA relevant and we have intention to continue our support.'

PA member state survey respondent

Some respondents indicated that the Partial Agreement and the EYC were seen as one of many possible tools a country could use to promote learning mobility. It was suggested that counties may need to choose between these tools.

'[Our Country] was involved in the past. We are not involved anymore because different youth cards supported by local and regional authorities already exist and there is a lack of funds.'

PA non-member state survey respondent

'[We are] familiar with information on PA on Youth Mobility and EYC. [Our country] already is taking part in different successful youth mobility programmes on National and European level.'

PA non-member survey respondent

Some PA non-member states indicated that the extent their country valued the PA on Youth Mobility and the EYC was strongly determined by how much their country valued youth policy. A lack of support for youth policy meant no support for joining the Partial Agreement.

'If the [Ministry] and the state secretary are of a strong opinion that [our country] does not need the National Youth Strategy ... there is currently no hope of negotiating about the PA / EYC.'

PA non-member state survey respondent

'I want to stress out that the decision of joining the PA on Youth Mobility is a political one. [Soon, our country] will undergo an electoral process and the high decision level will change. A possible discussion on this topic might start [after elections].'

PA non-member state survey respondent

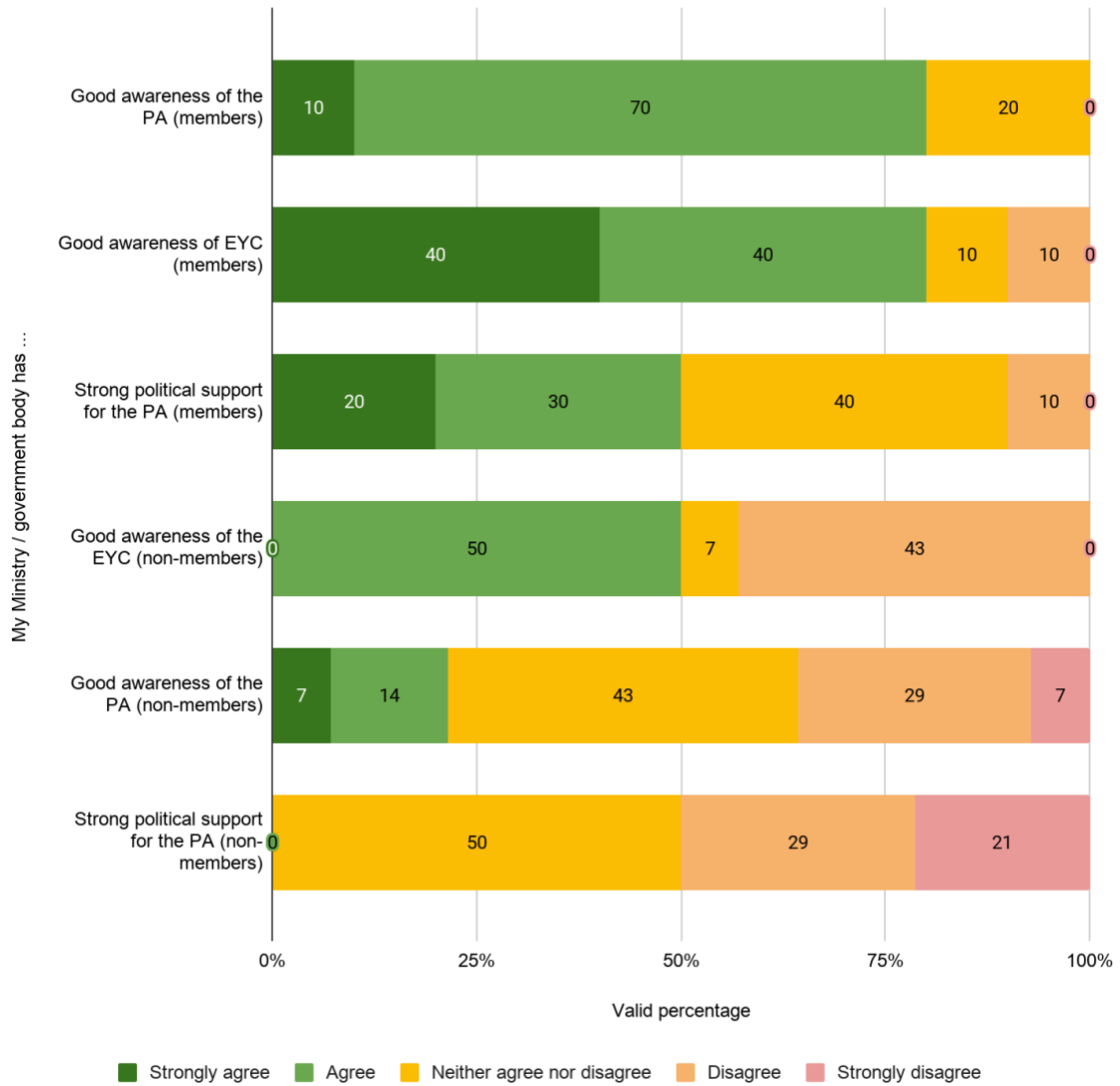
Ministerial and political support

All participants were asked to rate levels of Ministerial support and awareness (see Chart 1). PA member states have high awareness and understanding of the Partial Agreement on and the EYC in their Ministries and Government bodies. Despite this, political support is not strong. Ministerial awareness and political support was considerably lower amongst PA non-member states.

- 80% of PA member states indicated their Ministries had good awareness of both the EYC and Partial Agreement
- Only 50% of PA member states indicated strong political support for the Partial Agreement (see Chart 1).
- 50% of PA non-member states had good awareness of the EYC.
- Only 21% of PA non-member states had good awareness of the Partial Agreement.
- None of the PA non-member states indicated political support for the Partial Agreement, though several did ask for further discussion with the EYCA though the survey.

Chart 1: Ministerial support and awareness of the Partial Agreement and EYC

PA members states (n=10) and PA non-member states (n=14)



Section 2: Feedback from Partial Agreement member states

Key findings

Around three-quarters of PA member states 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' that membership helped them:

- Offer young people more opportunities related to mobility.
- Access events on youth mobility.
- Co-operate with EYC organisations.
- Have access to EYC services.

Nearly three-quarters also 'agreed' that it helped them to improve and develop youth policy. Being able to 'reach out' to young people through the EYC also seems to be a benefit for some.

Co-operation between Ministries and EYCA member organisations seem to be good and is generally unproblematic. This co-operation occurs to a 'large' or 'moderate extent' on a wide range of topics. There are a small number of countries who have not currently identified suitable organisations to deliver the Youth Card. This is not a substantial trend across the whole membership. A barrier to further increasing co-operation may be that the benefits of more in depth collaboration are not clear to Ministries.

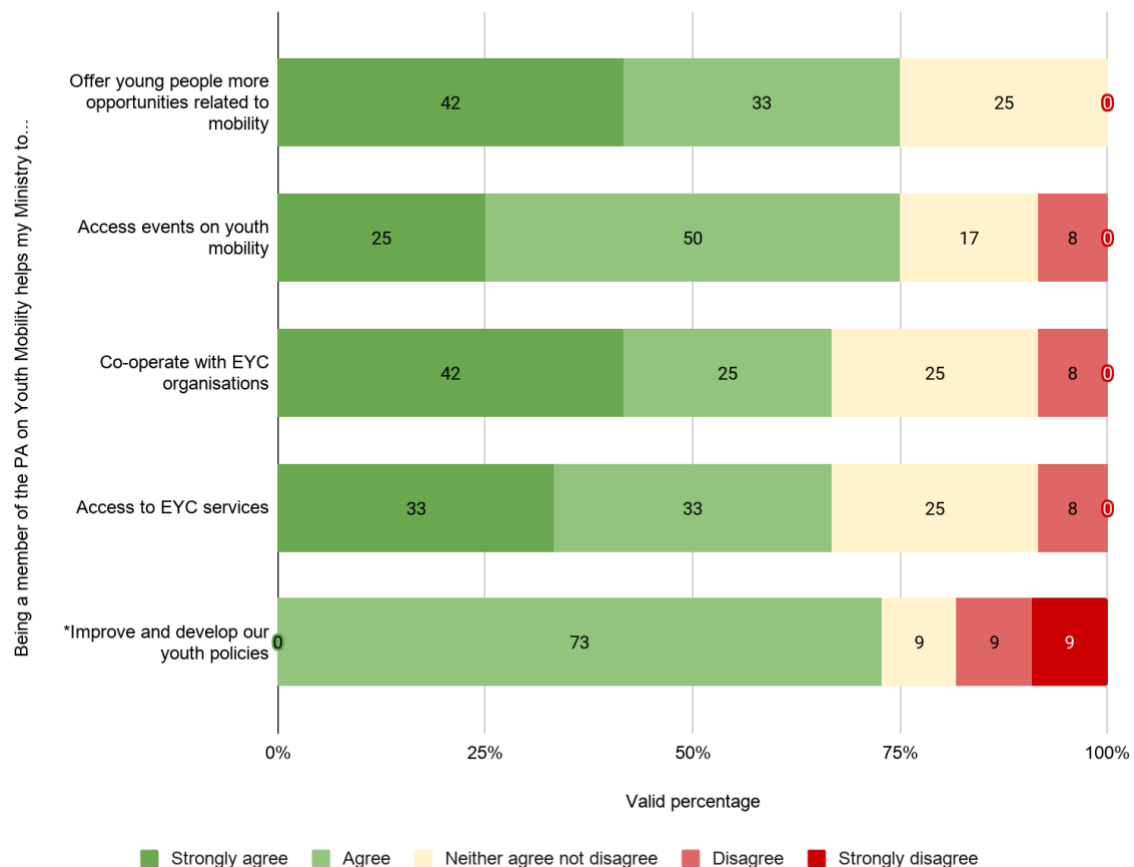
Support to demonstrate the benefits of the Partial Agreement and the EYC may be useful to PA member states. This might include evaluation or identifying good practices that showcase benefits to young people. Raising the visibility of the benefits amongst national stakeholders may also be useful to PA members states.

Benefits to membership of the Partial Agreement

PA member states were asked to rate the benefits of membership of the Partial Agreement. Results are shown in Chart 2.

Chart 2: Benefits to Partial Agreement member states

PA member states (n=12, *n=11)



Responses were broadly compatible for 4 of the 5 categories in the survey. Three-quarters, or close to three-quarters, of PA member states 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' that membership helped them:

- Offer young people more opportunities related to mobility.
- Access events on youth mobility.
- Co-operate with EYC organisations.
- Have access to EYC services.

The extent to which membership helps *improve and develop youth policy* was rated lower than the other 4 categories. Although 73% agreed this was a benefit, no participants 'strongly agreed'.

Responses to a follow-on open question also confirmed that no one benefit stood out more than others, and that improving youth policy may be the least substantial benefit.

'I would say [a major benefit is] networking, promotion and facilitation of youth mobility within Europe.'

PA member state survey respondent

'It keeps us updated from what is happening around Europe in youth mobility.'

PA member state survey respondent

'The PA increased the capacity of those working on the youth card.'

PA member state survey respondent

'[We] obtain real feedback from youngsters across Europe providing the knowledge to develop better measures in implementing youth policies at a practical level.'

PA member state survey respondent

Co-operation between Ministries and EYCA member organisations

PA member states² with European Youth Card Association member organisations in their country were asked a series of questions about the quality of co-operation between the two bodies.

Chart 3 shows the themes and topics of co-operation. Overall it indicates that the majority of Ministries and EYCA members co-operate on all topics to a 'large' or 'moderate' extent. Co-operation on youth participation, youth mobility, anti-discrimination and youth information occurs to a broadly similar extent. Co-operation around youth work may be slightly less extensive. In open questions the desire to focus on youth mobility in the future was emphasised.

Responses to open questions about the benefits of corporations highlighted the value of Ministries being able to reach young people through the EYC.

'EYC organisations are a great channel to reach young people.'

PA member state survey respondent

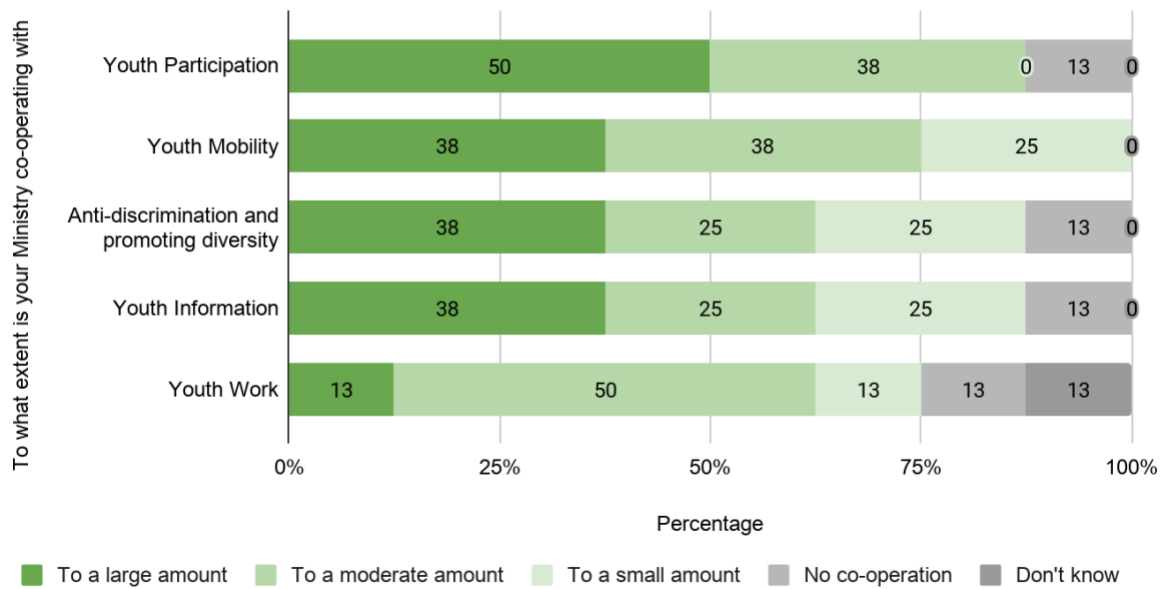
² One respondent was excluded from this analysis as their institutional arrangements did not fit the question format.

'EYC ... is a practical organisation/tool to implement and develop youth policies, due to the proximity to youngsters.'

PA member state survey respondent

Chart 3: Co-operation themes between Ministries and EYCA member organisations

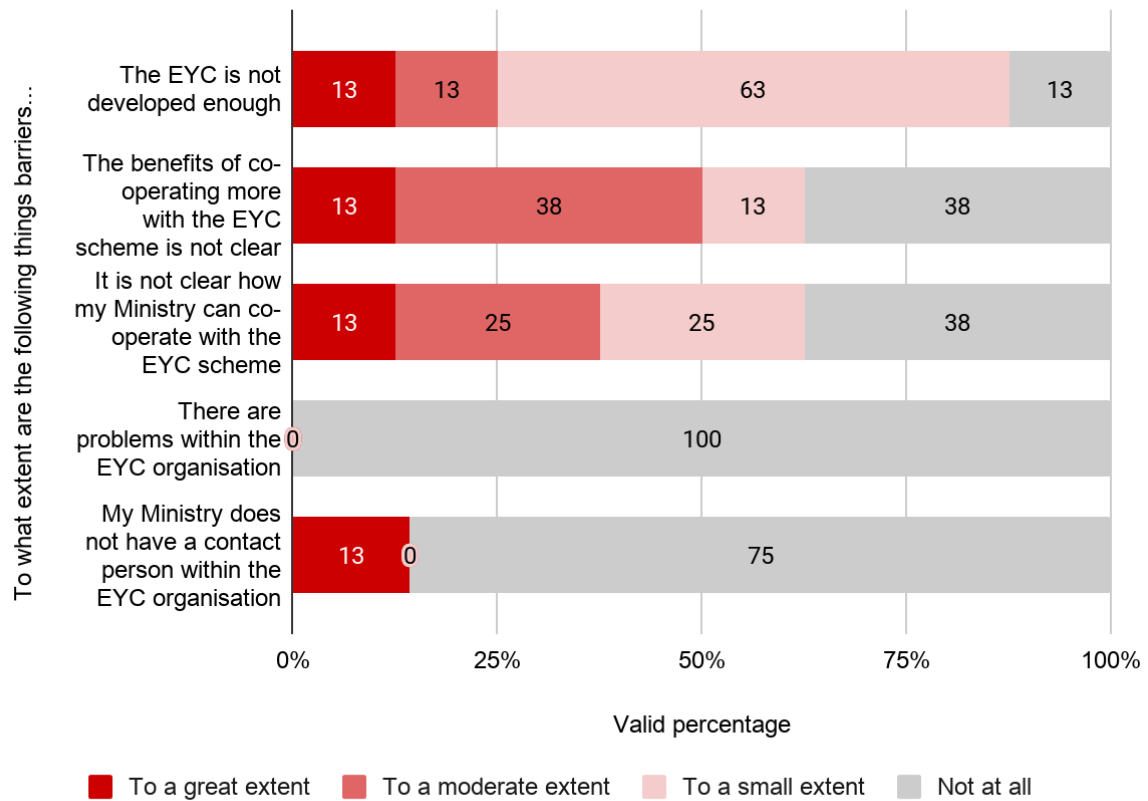
PA member states with EYCA member organisations (n=8)



Participants were asked a question on the barriers to co-operation between Ministries and EYCA member organisations. Results are shown in Chart 4.

Chart 4: Barriers to Ministry and EYCA member co-operation

PA member states with EYCA member organisations (n=8)



Overall, barriers to co-operation seem to be relatively low. No respondents indicated that there were problems with the EYCA member organisation and only one indicated that they did not have the contact details of the EYCA organisation. Although not strongly expressed, a barrier may be that the EYC is not developed enough to provide benefits from greater collaboration. It may be unclear to some what collaboration is possible.

'EYC is not currently a very significant player. Many similar cards offer better benefits and EU programs are much more important and well-known in terms of mobility.'

PA member state survey respondent

There were three PA member states that did not have EYCA member organisations in their country. In a separate set of questions, they indicated being clearer about how co-operation could work and finding a suitable organisation to deliver the EYC was needed to establish it in their country.

Developing support to PA member states in the future

In several open questions PA member states were asked about future support and developments. Replies were mixed, but two themes did emerge.

The first was the need to demonstrate the benefits of membership and implementing the EYC more clearly. Some respondents made this point directly. Others identified the need to conduct an external evaluation or refresh the concept of the EYC. Several participants were keen to receive good practice examples which showcase benefits.

'[We need] Concrete examples of good practices that make clear how co-operation benefits young people.'

PA member state survey respondent

Linked to this was a second theme on promoting visibility of the scheme amongst Ministries and other stakeholders.

'[We need] help with the EYC scheme visibility in the country by organizing info sessions, seminars etc., and advertise the benefits of the membership to EYCA and Partial Agreement.'

PA member state survey respondent

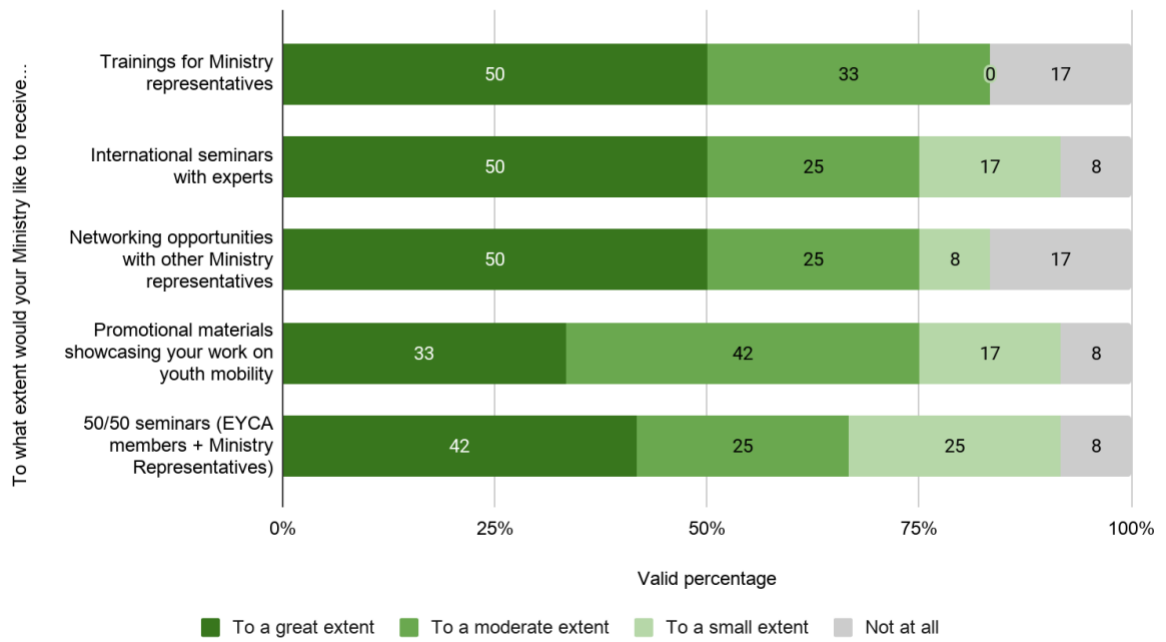
'The PA is not visible enough. It is encouraging that more organisations from more countries have joined recently. The more countries are part of the Network, the more this Network will be noticed in my Ministry.'

PA member state survey respondent

PA member states were also asked about the format of support they would like to receive from either the Council of Europe or the EYCA. Results are shown in Chart 5. They indicate no strong preferences.

Chart 5: Future Needs of Partial Agreement Member States

PA member states (n=12)



Section 3: Enabling non-members to join the Partial Agreement

Key findings

Overall the feedback from PA non-members indicated joining the Partial Agreement may require several things:

- Political support at national level for youth policy and youth on a general basis.
- Political support at national level for youth mobility on a general basis.
- A belief that the Partial Agreement represents good financial and resource investment when compared to its benefits for young people and the member-state.
- A belief that the Partial Agreement represents a good financial and resource investment when compared to other youth mobility schemes and options.

The first two of these are relatively uninfluenced by decisions and discussion about the EYC and or the Partial Agreement. Put simply, if general national political support is not in place for youth policy and youth mobility there are limited possibilities to develop the EYC or the Partial Agreement.

However, in countries where these contexts do exist, developing better cost benefit or value proposals may encourage membership. Lack of clarity on the benefits of joining, linked to the financial and resource cost of doing so, were key barriers.

Potential members would benefit from being able to answer two questions more clearly:

- What value does a member state get from joining and 'investing' its resources?
- How is this value as good as, or better than, the other youth mobility schemes within which a member state could 'invest'?

The EYC may be perceived, by some, as in competition for resources with other youth mobility initiatives. Part of demonstrating the value of the EYC or the Partial Agreement may be about demonstrating it's 'unique value added'. What do they offer that other mobility or policy initiatives do not.

Barriers to engagement

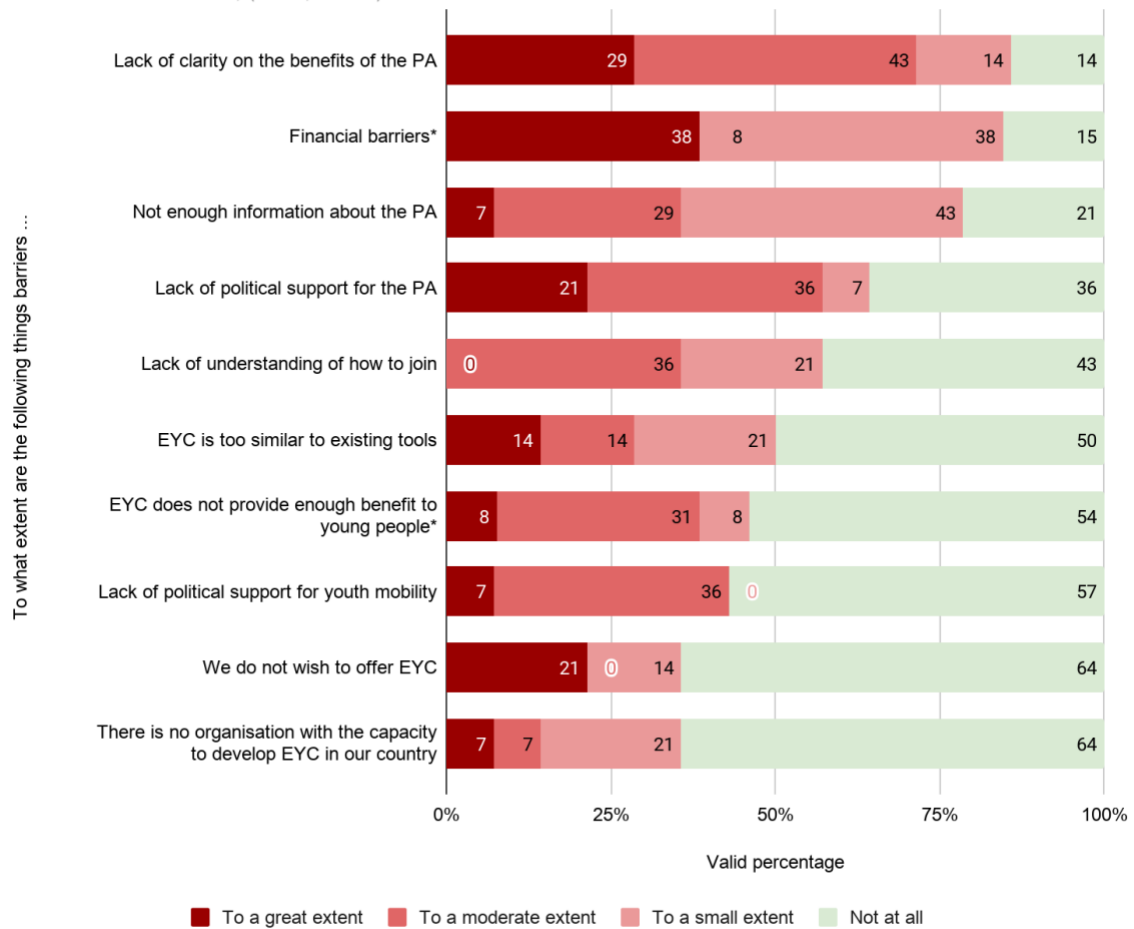
PA non-members were asked to rate a series of questions about the barrier to joining the Partial Agreement (see Chart 6). The major barriers were:

- Lack of clarity on the benefits of the Partial Agreement.
- Financial barriers (such as membership fees).
- Not enough information about the Partial Agreement.
- Lack of political support for the Partial Agreement.

Full results, listed top to bottom, from most substantial to least substantial barriers, are given in Chart 6.

Chart 6: Barriers to joining the Partial Agreement

PA non-member states, (n=14, *n=13)



86% of PA non-members indicated they lacked information on the benefits. 85% indicated that finances were a barrier. The connection between these things was reinforced in the comments from participants. Some said that the Partial Agreement required a resource investment (financial and human resource), but that the benefit of this investment was not clear.

'The main obstacles we face are rather internal ones: limited budget and lack of personnel to implement the PA.'

PA non-member state survey respondent

'The overall workload is a serious obstacle.'

PA non-member state survey respondent

'[To join, we need] to have clear understanding of benefits (practical examples from member countries) to be a member.'

PA non-member state survey respondent

The need to demonstrate more clearly the benefits of the Partial Agreement was reinforced in several further open questions. These questions focused on what would enable or encourage non-members to join.

'More information and engagement, and understanding the full costs and benefits to young people.'

PA non-member state survey respondent

'To have a clear understanding of benefits (practical examples from member countries) to be a member.'

PA non-member state survey respondent

'Better understanding of costs and benefits, and processes to be involved.'

PA non-member state survey respondent

'[We would need to have] benefits that would outweigh the costs of participating in the PA on Youth Mobility.'

PA non-member state survey respondent

Enabling and encouraging factors

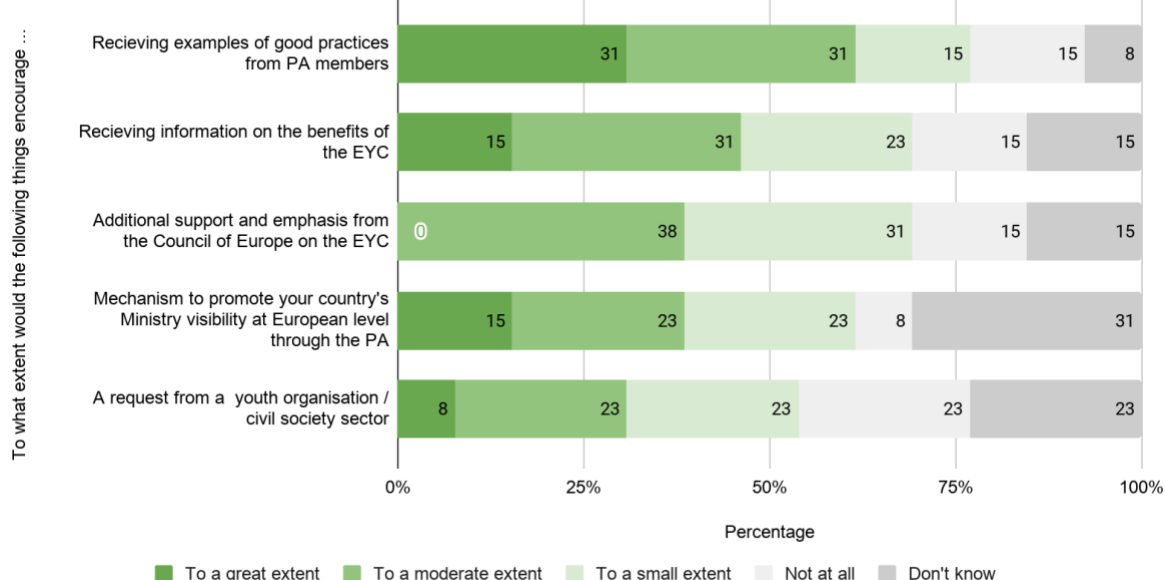
Participants were asked to rate a series of questions about what would encourage them to join the Partial Agreement (see Chart 7).

Supporting the need to demonstrate value, over three-quarters (77%) of PA non-members said that receiving examples of good practice from PA member states might encourage them to join. Just over two-thirds (69%) said that receiving information on the benefits of the EYC would also be useful.

However, the extent to which PA non-members can be encouraged may not be substantial. Even in these two most highly rated suggestions only 31% and 15% of PA non-members said it would encourage them to join to 'a great extent'. (This is shown in the darkest green series in Chart 7.)

Chart 7: What would encourage your country to join the Partial Agreement

Non-members (n=13)



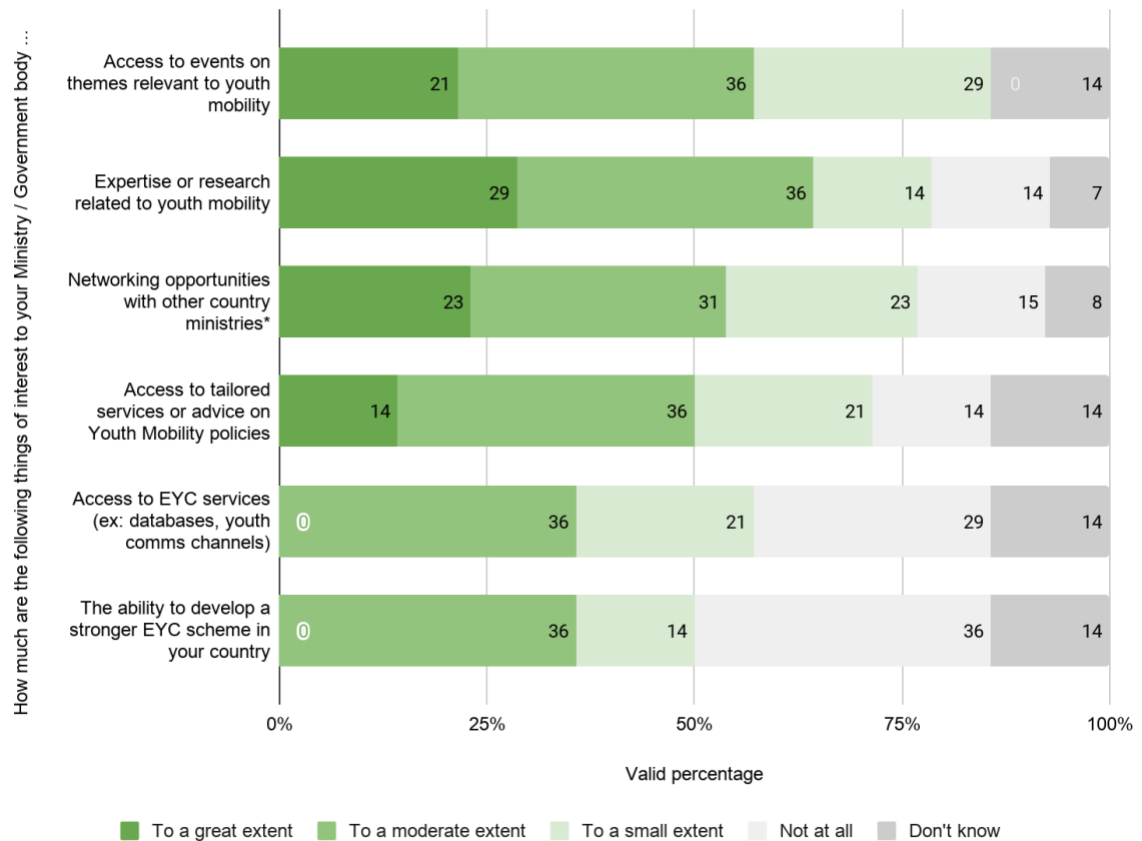
In the open questions some respondents also indicated there was little that the Council of Europe or the EYCA office could, or should, do to influence sign up to the Partial Agreement. For some countries, the decision not to join was based on much wider national political priorities and decisions. Respondents identified that these decisions were very unlikely to be influenced by discussions on the EYC or the Partial Agreement. One response highlighted the importance of respecting national sovereign decisions.

PA non-members were asked a set of general questions about their Ministerial priorities (see Chart 8). Here, the more general aspects such as access to events, expertise and research in relation to youth mobility were most highly rated. Interest in the EYC was lowest rated.

- Only 57% were interested in access to EYC services 'to a moderate extent' or 'to a small extent'. No respondents were interested in this 'to a great extent'.
- Only 50% were interested in the ability to develop a stronger EYC 'to a moderate extent' or 'to a small extent'. No respondents were interested in this 'to a great extent'.

Chart 8: Ministerial interests of PA non-member states

PA non-member states (n=14, *n=13)



For some, the benefits of the EYC did not seem to be considered a benefit of the Partial Agreement. There may be a sense that the Partial Agreement and the EYC were separate.

'The European Youth Card was introduced to [our country in the early 90s] and is still very popular among young people, offering a package of discounts on travel, accommodation, cultural events, etc.'

PA non-member state survey respondent

'[The Partial Agreement] could be a good instrument to promote youth mobility but we need more information about preferences to be a member of the PA and we need to understand what EYC members from our country are doing to encourage young people to be a card holder.'

PA non-member state survey respondent

Conclusions

Overall, the survey indicates that Ministries believe they have a good understanding of the Partial Agreement and the EYC. Co-operation with EYC members is good and occurs on a wide range of issues. There are no substantial technical, operational or implementation issues identified that prevent further co-operation around the EYC. Although some countries are currently trying to identify a suitable EYC member organisation, this is not an overall trend. For some countries, a major barrier to co-operation is the lack of support for national youth policy.

The major barrier to further developing and improving co-operation around the EYC seems to be a lack of a compelling argument about the benefit of doing so. This is not necessarily because benefits do not exist. It may also be the case that they exist but need to be more strongly articulated to both members and non-members of the Partial Agreement.