



Open consultation on the European Youth Foundation's reform: summary of responses

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2023, the European Youth Foundation (hereinafter, EYF or the Foundation) initiated a reform process of its grants. Within this process in May – July 2024, the EYF carried out an open consultation seeking stakeholder input on the future grants and other forms of support for young organisations. The consultation aimed to collect ideas about the needed changes regarding the EYF grants currently in place (international activities, annual work plans, structural grants, pilot activities), the related rules and procedures involved in grant-making and the EYF support measures for applicant and grantee organisations. The open consultation was promoted widely towards different stakeholders of the youth field, such as young people, youth organisations, youth researchers, public institutions responsible for youth, youth trainers, etc. Anyone who wished to contribute to shaping the future EYF grants could contribute their ideas through an anonymous online questionnaire. As a result, 105 contributions from organisations, institutions, individuals from 29 member states were collected. The main questions asked in the questionnaire were:

- Added value of having a European Youth Foundation within the Council of Europe
- Specificity and uniqueness of the EYF
- What is important to keep within these grants?
- What should be changed within these grants?
- New types of grants and support measures that the EYF should provide to youth organisations.
- The new “looks” the EYF after the reform.

Besides the information related to demographics, the questionnaire included open questions only. The open and qualitative nature of the consultation led to nuanced responses, including examples of experiences and specific challenges that respondents had. Overall, it provides a wide range of ideas for reforms.

This document aims to summarise the findings of the consultation to support and inform the reflection on the reform. To the extent possible, with all the limitations of data quantification and correlation, this summary document tries to cluster ideas and threads, outlining the most frequently mentioned issues, wherever possible providing both a qualitative synthesis and a quantified picture of the responses.

From the responses received, the main areas proposed for reforms can be summarised as follows:

- Rules and procedures:
 - o Easier and streamlined application and reporting forms and procedures.
 - o Simplified financial rules and flexible budget management for grantee organisations.
 - o Increased support to the administrative costs involved in running projects.

- Revision of co-financing rules and keeping co-financing as a general principle without too many thresholds.
 - Further digitalisation and automatization of the online system used for grant-making and a fully digitalised management of the grant narrative and financial reporting.
 - More frequent deadlines for applications.
 - Enhanced communication and transparency of the grant-making process.
- Grant types:
- Keep existing grants with some adjustments to improve flexibility of purpose, formats, etc.
 - More support to emerging organisations, at all levels.
 - New grant types or adjustments to existing grants to support more innovative projects and very small initiatives through micro-grants.
- Scope of the projects to be supported:
- Wider scope and formats of eligible projects.
 - Longer project implementation duration.
 - Wider outreach to participants from outside Europe.
 - Fewer countries to be involved in international co-operation projects (currently, the EYF requires participants from at least 7 countries)
 - Explicit, clear and reinforced measures for inclusion and accessibility in the supported projects.
- Capacity building and support measures:
- More thematic and project management training.
 - Mentoring support combined with grants.
 - Targeted outreach to build partnership with relevant organisations.

CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND

About the EYF

The EYF is part of the youth sector of the Council of Europe and has existed for over 50 years. It supports international youth co-operation by providing financial support to European activities and projects that promote peace, understanding and co-operation between young people of Europe and the world, in a spirit of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. The EYF is a statutory fund of the Council of Europe whose beneficiaries are exclusively non-governmental youth organisations.

At the moment, the EYF provides four types of grants:

- Grants to international activities (meetings of young people or youth leaders with a clear European dimension).
- Grants to international youth NGOs and networks in support of their annual work plans (sets of successive and interconnected activities) over a period of one year.
- Structural grants to international youth NGOs and networks to cover their general administrative and operational costs;
- Grants to local or national projects (pilot activities) that address the challenges young people face and their needs at local level. These projects need to be based on the connection between a European dimension and local impact.

While these grants have specific deadlines and procedures, the EYF may also set up special calls upon the initiative of the Joint Council on Youth (the main decision-making body of the youth sector of the Council of Europe, made up of member states and youth organisations). These special calls allow to focus resources for a specific campaign or programme of the Youth Department, or to respond to specific critical situations in Europe.

The main documents that encompass the mission and grant-making process of the EYF are its statute and its operational regulations. The statute of the EYF was adopted in 1972, and the EYF operational regulations have been updated regularly (the last reform of the EYF grants took place in 2012). While the statute of the EYF defines the mission of the Foundation, its governance and budget parameters, the operational regulations include the practical definitions of the grants, their criteria, as well as the characteristics of the beneficiary organisations and the process of grant-making.

About the EYF reform and the open consultation

In 2023, the EYF started a review process its grants. This was prompted by the need for the EYF to remain an agile instrument for supporting youth civil society, responding to the current needs and situations of youth organisations and young people, and bringing an added value to the other

instruments of the Council of Europe in the field of youth and civil society. This process will include the development of new operational regulations, but not a revision of the statute.

Overall, the reform of the EYF grants aims to reinforce the EYF as a core, unique and independent donor to youth organisations with a key role within the Council of Europe for revitalising democratic life and promoting human rights.

More specifically, the reform aims to lead to the following outputs:

1. Revised grant types to ensure suitable support to youth organisations, in a modern, relevant, and strategic manner responding to young people's needs and aspirations and Council of Europe priorities in the youth field and civil society domain.
2. Revised EYF regulations reflecting the grant changes and modifications needed to make the Foundation more accessible and youth friendly.
3. Refined and redefined support measures to youth organisations that make the EYF an alert donor, close to young people and the needs of youth organisations.

In this framework, some elements of the reform concern the need for administrative facilitation for youth organisations, a dynamic process of grant-making, a relevant reporting process that could provide insights into young people's contributions to society, and more incentives for quality and sustainability of the work of youth organisations.

An open consultation was organised between May and July 2024 in order to collect inputs from beneficiaries and partners on the future grants and grant-making processes of the EYF. More specifically, the consultation aimed to collect ideas about the changes needed regarding the EYF grants currently in place (international activities, annual work plans, structural grants, pilot activities), the related rules and procedures involved in grant-making and the EYF support measures for applicant and grantee organisations.

The open consultation was promoted widely towards different stakeholders of the youth field, such as young people, youth organisations, youth researchers, public institutions responsible for youth, youth trainers, etc. Anyone who wished to contribute to shaping the future EYF grants could contribute their ideas through an anonymous online questionnaire.

This consultation was promoted on the website and social media of the EYF, to the NGOs registered in the EYF granting system, to the Youth Department statutory bodies, in the Youth Department's newsletter, and to all partners from the youth field.

The questionnaire

The questionnaire included the following questions:

- What is the added value of having a European Youth Foundation within the Council of Europe?

- In comparison to other donors, what should be the specificity and uniqueness of the EYF?
- If you know the current grant types of the EYF, what is important to keep within these grants (international activities, annual work plans, structural grants, pilot activities)?
- If you know the current grant types of the EYF, what changes would you like to suggest within these grants (international activities, annual work plans, structural grants, pilot activities)?
- Could you think of any new types of grants and support measures that the EYF should provide to youth organisations?
- Would you like to share any other ideas or input for the EYF reform?
- If you were to imagine the EYF after this reform, what would be the main and most important characteristics of such a Foundation (types of grants, decision making, time frames, applications and reporting, etc.)?

The questionnaire also included questions related to the profiles of respondents (with 12 options), country of residence and an optional field for the name of the organisation represented.

Besides questions related to demographics, the questionnaire was comprised of open questions only. The open and fully qualitative nature of the consultation led to nuanced responses, including examples of experiences, very specific challenges that respondents faced, leading to a wide range of ideas for reforms.

Response overview

As a result, 105 contributions from organisations, institutions, individuals presenting nine profiles from 29 member states were collected.

Countries of respondents: Albania, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Italy, Luxembourg, Montenegro, the Netherlands, North Macedonia, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Moldova, Serbia, Slovakia, Spain, Switzerland, Türkiye, Ukraine, and United Kingdom.

Number of responses per category

<i>Category</i>	<i>N. of responses</i>
a youth organisation or network at international level	34
a youth organisation at national level	21
a youth organisation at local level	20
a public institution in charge of youth	9
a youth worker	5
a non-governmental structure other than a youth organisation	3
a trainer in the field of youth	3
a young person	2
a representative of a donor organisation	1

youth researchers	0
participants in an EYF supported project	0
Others ¹	7

Methodological approach for this summary document

Open-ended questions in the questionnaire allowed respondents to express complex thoughts freely, without limited options for answers. While quantification of the results of such a questionnaire is challenging, this approach provides more freedom for the respondents' reflections and inputs. The diversity of responses reflects the complexity of themes and organisations the EYF works with, experiences, contexts, backgrounds, critique, etc.

The nature of a consultation based on a set of qualitative questions impacts the type of data that can be consolidated or summarised. This is an important aspect to consider. As the consultation was anonymous, there is no information whether the respondents have applied to the EYF, have been grantee organisations, have had experience with the EYF, so the analysis based on any correlations is not suitable. Nevertheless, wherever possible, an approximate number of mentions is included, but it is important to understand that quantification is only indicative and may be subject to interpretation and approximation.

When reading this summary, one must consider the respondents' particular experience with the EYF. These subjective experiences lead to very different and sometimes contradictory responses. For example, while communication with applicants is seen as a strength of the Foundation in regard to swiftness and accessibility, some respondents mention this same area as needing improvement in relation to transparency of the assessment process (providing sufficiently detailed information on why a project was rejected, for example).

The summary intends to synthesize the ideas expressed by the 105 respondents at length. The summary provides different clusters considering the most frequently mentioned challenges, the suggestions for each grant type, and the responses provided by profiles of respondents.

¹ e.g. international network of public institutions, organisations working on multiple levels, profiles with multiple roles (a youth worker, a trainer in the field of youth, a young person).

SUMMARY OF THE MAIN FINDINGS

This section follows the same order as the questions in the questionnaire and is broken down to subcategories of the issues, and themes most frequently addressed.

1. Reflections about the added value of the EYF

This section presents a summary of the replies to the questions “What is the added value of having a European Youth Foundation within the Council of Europe?” and “In comparison to other donors, what should be the specificity and uniqueness of the EYF?”

The core value of the EYF lies in empowering young people through a comprehensive, youth-centred approach that aligns with the values of the Council of Europe. The Foundation's grants are designed to address the real needs of young people, ensuring relevance and effectiveness in its support to youth organisations across diverse geographical regions. The EYF also acts as a bridge between grassroots organisations and the Council of Europe as an institution. The EYF plays an important role in combating the shrinking civic space for civil society all over Europe and in the member states, advocating for youth participation and engagement.

The EYF, in a nutshell:

- Emphasises active youth participation in democratic processes, providing platforms for young voices in policymaking.
- Fosters international cooperation by connecting youth organisations across Europe. This networking facilitates the exchange of ideas and collaboration on joint projects, enhancing the impact of youth initiatives across the continent.
- Enhances the operational capacity and sustainability of youth organisations. This includes offering grants, capacity-building, and support for organisations to grow and effectively implement projects.
- Encourages innovative approaches in youth work and promotes non-formal education as a valuable tool for youth empowerment.
- Provides a platform for new ideas and creative projects that address the diverse interests of young people.
- Demonstrates responsiveness by adapting to changing priorities and providing rapid support during emergencies.
- Offers more than just financial support; it provides guidance, resources, and networking opportunities to youth organisations.
- Makes the inclusion of marginalised groups a key priority, with specific efforts to reach and empower young people who experience discrimination, exclusion or marginalisation.
- Maintains a balance between local and international projects, recognising the importance of both grassroots initiatives and cross-border collaboration.

2. Reflections on the current grants and practices to be maintained

Most respondents mentioned the importance of maintaining all grant types, with an emphasis on the role that each one plays for young people in Europe.

The following general aspects to maintain were mentioned by respondents:

- Clear communication channels between EYF and youth organisations (mentioned ~15 times).
- Flexibility in budgeting and implementation timelines (mentioned ~12 times).
- Simple application processes with minimal bureaucracy (mentioned ~10 times).
- Support for administrative/staff costs, not just activity costs (mentioned ~8 times).
- Volunteer time recognition as an added value in the context of co-financing (mentioned ~5 times).
- Multiple application deadlines throughout the year (mentioned ~4 times).
- Focus on Council of Europe values and priorities (mentioned ~4 times).

In relation to the specific current grant types of the Foundation, the following aspects were raised:

International activities

These grants foster cross-border cooperation and intercultural dialogue among European youth. They are seen by respondents as crucial for networking and building solidarity at European level. The impact on the territories where these activities are implemented is highly appreciated. Their multiplication effect in different parts of Europe and beyond is a strong value. Maintaining the international character of activities and ensuring flexibility in implementation is important. The inclusion of costs related to project management and administrative expenses within project grants is highly valued.

Fosters cross-border cooperation and intercultural dialogue (mentioned ~12 times)
Provides networking opportunities for youth across Europe (mentioned ~10 times)
Important for organizations focused on international work (mentioned ~8 times)

Annual work plans

These grants provide long-term, comprehensive support for sustained impact. They enable organisations to plan and execute year-long programmes, ensuring continuity and stability. Annual work plans are crucial for engaging youth workers and establishing a tradition within

Enables comprehensive, year-long programming (mentioned ~8 times)
Provides sustained support for longer-term impact (mentioned ~6 times)
Allows organizations to plan strategically (mentioned ~5 times)

organisations. The flexibility of the EYF in allowing for organisations to make changes in budgets and have diverse formats for activities within the work plans is a strength.

Structural grants

Structural grants provide core funding for international youth organisations, helping them maintain operational stability and cover essential costs. This support is vital for the sustainability of youth NGOs, especially those struggling with limited budgets. These grants are seen as fundamental for staff support and the overall functioning of organisations.

Crucial for organisational sustainability and capacity building (mentioned ~15 times)
Provides core funding and stability for youth organisations (mentioned ~10 times)
Important for long-term planning and maintaining internal structures (mentioned ~5 times)

Pilot activities

Pilot activities are crucial for grassroots organisations. They provide opportunities to test new ideas, innovate, and reach more young people. These grants are often the only funding source available for small-scale NGOs in many member states. The simplified application process and clear narrative reporting forms are appreciated. The separate budget line for project management costs has been beneficial.

Valuable for local/grassroots organisations and new initiatives (mentioned ~20 times)
Allows experimentation and innovation (mentioned ~10 times)
Often the only funding source for small local youth NGOs in some countries (mentioned ~8 times)
Appreciated for simpler application process and flexibility (mentioned ~7 times)

EYF special calls

It is of great importance to maintain the availability of emergency funds, rapid response grants, and special calls like the recent EYF special call in support of young people from Ukraine.

3. Improvements and changes in the current grants

This section provides a summary of the responses received to the question “If you know the current grant types of the EYF, what changes would you like to suggest within these grants (international activities, annual work plans, structural grants, pilot activities)?”

At a very general level, three key points were made by respondents:

1. The need to have more flexible project formats. This means that not only training activities, but also campaigns, large scale events, audio-visual productions, advocacy efforts, among, should be eligible for grants. Some respondents also mention the need for hybrid or digital encounters, in addition to in-person ones.
2. The need to further support accessibility measures for young people experiencing marginalisation, discrimination or exclusion. This could include a specific fund for accessibility for the inclusion of disabled youth.
3. The need to support emerging organisations and their initiatives. This could include the possibility of submitting proposals on a rolling basis or special calls to respond to an emerging crisis situation and support youth organisations in difficult times (~15 mentions).

Respondents provided input on the following processes: financial management of the grants, application and reporting procedures, communication, and combining capacity building and grants. The following sections summarise the main proposals regarding these processes, as well as the main proposals for changes in relation to each of the current grant types and the main proposals by types of respondents. This will allow for a more nuanced interpretation of the responses.

Financial management

Firstly, respondents mentioned the need to increase grant amounts for all types of grants (~10 mentions).

As a second point, more than half of the respondents identified the reporting procedures as needing improvement. Procedures involved in the management of the grant are seen as complicated and bureaucratic.

The financial reporting is perceived as extremely heavy and outdated in comparison to other donors and in regard to the amount of the grant. This leads to the grants being less youth friendly than intended and intimidating especially for organisations without specialist financial officers. Some respondents propose lump sums and flat rates as an approach that would alleviate the burden and the time that they need to invest in financial reporting. This is also a very strong signal calling for more trust in youth organisations from the EYF, becoming more aligned with its mission in its procedures for the financial management of the grants.

In the period of implementation of the EYF supported projects, respondents also proposed that the EYF has more flexibility in relation to budget reallocation, without asking grantee organisation to seek EYF approval for reallocations.

In connection to this, respondents also point out the need for more due diligence for applicant organisations, in other words increasing the threshold for the registration of organisations in the EYF granting system, and then putting in place regular audits.

Application and reporting procedures and forms

Several respondents mention the need for simpler application and reporting forms, that focus on the core information the donor needs to be able to take an informed and qualitative decision on the proposals. In relation to narrative reporting, the EYF should make its forms more focused on the results achieved by grantee organisations, and less focused on descriptions of what happened in the project. The EYF should also have a specific and clear guidance for narrative reporting.

Furthermore, budget forms are not intuitive for applicants and simpler formats are suggested, combined with more guidance for applicants.

The need for more deadlines during the year was also reaffirmed, both in relation to international projects and local ones. Several respondents pointed out to the need for a rolling basis approach to applications and a more rapid decision-making process.

In relation to the granting system, respondents mentioned that the EYF online system for grant management is not suitable anymore. In particular, the EYF should have a granting system which allows for a fully digitalised granting process, zero paper, and that allows youth organisations to submit both the financial and narrative reports fully in the same system.

Communication, transparency and outreach

The EYF should have enhanced and meaningful communication (~10 mentions) with youth organisations in suitable ways depending on their relation to the Foundation.

All applicant organisations, whatever the outcome of their applications, should receive an assessment report, indicating the strengths and weaknesses of their applications.

Grant-making procedures should be clearly communicated, as the website is seen as non-intuitive with a lot of scattered information. A user's guide to the grants was suggested.

Furthermore, it is important that all the staff members of the Foundation have the same understanding of the procedures, criteria for assessment and communication points to avoid any misunderstanding and bias in communication with the applicant organisations.

The EYF could also have more regular meetings with youth organisations to strengthen the partnership and to allow also for networking among organisations.

Combining grants and capacity building

One of the key roles of the EYF is to bridge the priorities of the Council of Europe and the practice of youth organisations. In this respect, the EYF should consider combining thematic capacity building for youth organisations and the grants it provides. Several respondents mention the need

for both thematic capacity building on the priority areas of the youth sector and for capacity building in areas closer to project management or organisational management. The training and education instruments of the Youth Department should be more in relation to the EYF grants, since the EYF grants could reinforce the multiplying effect in the member states, by supporting young people who have attended Council of Europe training courses.

Another idea from the open consultation concerns the possibility for the EYF to have a system of mentoring or coaching for youth organisations during the application and implementation process.

Recommended changes specific to each grant types

International activities	Reduce or remove the 1/3 co-funding requirement (mentioned ~15 times)
	Simplify the application and reporting process (mentioned ~12 times)
	Increase the maximum grant amount (mentioned ~8 times)
	Allow for more digital/hybrid activities (mentioned ~5 times)
	Reduce the number of required nationalities for the organising team and participants (mentioned ~5 times)
	Extend the age limit of participants from 30 to 35 for 80% of participants (mentioned ~3 times)
	Allow organisations to include more participants from outside Council of Europe countries (mentioned ~3 times)
	Open the funding also for bilateral, trilateral, cross-border and regional projects, exchanges, study visits, networking initiatives (mentioned ~6 times)
Annual work plans	Review the granting system, from the application forms to reporting (mentioned ~10 times)
	Simplify the financial reporting process (mentioned ~10 times)
	Consider multi-year work plans (2-3 years) for more sustainability (mentioned ~7 times)
	Increase openness to fund the internal capacity building for youth organisations (mentioned ~5 times)
	Reduce or remove the requirement for co-funding (mentioned ~5 times)
Structural grants	Make them more accessible to local and national organisations, national youth councils, small organisations, also newly established ones, informal groups, networks (mentioned ~12 times)
	Consider multi-year structural grants for greater stability (mentioned ~8 times)
	Loosen the link between structural grants and other EYF funding (mentioned ~5 times)
	Allow applications to be submitted every year instead of every two years (mentioned ~3 times)

Pilot activities	Simplify the application and reporting process, introduce shorter application forms (mentioned ~15 times)
	Introduce small grants, for example up to 2500 euro, to support small organisations, grassroots or new ones to carry out low-threshold initiatives which would allow them to structure themselves more in view of higher capacity of absorption of grants (~13 mentions)
	Introduce more grant application deadlines throughout the year (mentioned ~5 times)
	Open eligibility to informal groups and other types of organisations working with youth (mentioned ~4 times)

Main issues raised by different types of respondents

International youth organisations and networks (who can apply for annual work plans, international activities and structural grants), specifically called for:

- simplifying application and reporting procedures,
- improving the online granting system,
- removing the specific threshold for co-financing,
- having more flexibility with budget management,
- allowing for more diverse formats of activities and projects,
- providing more structural support, including for internal staff capacity building and for emerging networks,
- supporting longer term work plans,
- supporting smaller organisations and informal groups,
- increasing the age of participants to 35,
- allowing more participants in projects from countries outside Europe,
- providing training and guidance to increase the overall quality of projects and of the grant management.

National and local youth organisations (who can apply for pilot activities and in the case of national organisations, with partners, also for international activities), mostly focus on:

- opening structural grants for national and local organisations or including operational support in project grants,
- simplifying the application and reporting procedures,
- simplifying financial rules, allowing for flexible budget reallocations,
- reducing the threshold for co-funding,
- increasing financial support for pilot projects,
- having flexible timelines and increased duration of projects,
- introducing micro grants for small organisations,

- introducing grants for regional and networking projects,
- having mentoring and coaching support to organisations in the application, implementation and reporting procedures,
- having improved communication and transparency on grant selection.

Public institutions (who cannot directly benefit from the EYF grants, but can inform youth organisations about the EYF grants, in some cases they may co-fund project or be partners in the projects of youth organisations), called for:

- simplifying the application, reporting and financial procedures (lumpsums, flat rates),
- providing grants to cross border, regional activities, as well as for exchanges and study visits,
- providing grants to informal youth groups, to non-youth-led organisations, such as professional organisations working with youth,
- improve the online granting system,
- simplifying the requirements for international activities,
- introducing structural grants for new organisations.

Youth workers, youth trainers, young people (who can participate in activities financed, also can be applicants to various grant types as parts of organisations), called for:

- supporting marginalised and rural regions,
- supporting less developed organisations (through capacity building and operational funding),
- introducing micro grants,
- having youth-friendly procedures and communication,
- supporting partnership and networking.

4. Proposals for new types of grants

This section summarises the answers to the question “Could you think of any new types of grants and support measures that the EYF should provide to youth organisations?” This question brought a wide array of responses, and some replies are more a reflection of the respondent’s understanding of how youth organisations can use EYF grants at the moment and less about real novelties in the grant types.

The list below presents the main suggestions, without prioritisation or sequence of importance or frequency of mention. This list needs to be corroborated with the current grants characteristics, to identify what could be introduced as novelties in the EYF grant types:

- Grants to support innovation in the youth field.
- Funds for increasing the inclusion, accessibility and diversity of young people attending projects.

- Funds for increasing the environmental sustainability of youth projects (for example, supporting green travel, etc.)
- Either as a new grant or within the current ones, rapid response grants.
- Grants for thematic gatherings such as study visits, networking meetings, cross-border and regional co-operation meetings, internal capacity building of the staff and volunteers of youth organisations, capacity building for civil servants or for the youth centres with the Quality Label for Youth Centres of the Council of Europe, youth research.
- Structural grants to cover infrastructural and equipment purchase.
- Grants for the development of media products, video lessons, and other creative output.
- Grants to travel to international event and for internships/job shadowing.
- Grants support the promotion of a youth perspective in different fora and at national level.
- Grants bridging formal and non-formal educational activities.
- Grants to support European to youth work structures.

5. The EYF after the reform

This section summarises the responses to two questions: “Would you like to share any other ideas or input for the EYF reform?” and “If you were to imagine the EYF after this reform, what would be the main and most important characteristics of such a Foundation (types of grants, decision making, time frames, applications and reporting, etc.)?” As these two questions were the last ones, many of the ideas expressed before are reconfirmed or repeated.

Types of grants and funding:

- Maintain current grant types (mentioned ~15 times).
- Introduce new types of grants (e.g., rapid response, innovation, research) (mentioned ~10 times).
- Provide multi-year funding cycles (2-3 years) for more stability (mentioned ~12 times).
- Increase grant amounts, especially for structural grants (mentioned ~8 times).
- Provide more grants for non-EU countries (mentioned ~5 times).

Application and reporting process:

- Simplify and fully digitalise the application and reporting processes (mentioned ~25 times) and create a more user-friendly online platform (mentioned ~20 times).
- Reduce bureaucracy and paperwork (mentioned ~18 times).
- Implement lump sum funding to simplify financial reporting (mentioned ~15 times).
- Provide more flexibility in budget management (mentioned ~12 times).
- Introduce more application deadlines throughout the year (mentioned ~12 times).
- Implement fast-track options for certain grants (mentioned ~5 times).

Accessibility and inclusivity:

- Make grants more accessible to smaller, grassroots organisations (mentioned ~15 times).
- Increase support for local and national organisations (mentioned ~10 times).
- Expand eligibility criteria (e.g., for informal groups) (mentioned ~8 times).
- Offer micro-grant schemes for smaller projects (mentioned ~5 times).

Decision-making and transparency:

- Increase youth involvement in decision-making processes (mentioned ~12 times).
- Improve the transparency of the application selection process (mentioned ~10 times).
- Provide clearer feedback on rejected applications (mentioned ~7 times).

Support and capacity building:

- Offer more guidance and support for applicants (mentioned ~15 times).
- Improve communication with applicants and grantees (mentioned ~12 times).
- Provide mentoring and training opportunities (mentioned ~10 times).
- Create networking platforms for youth organisations (mentioned ~8 times).
- Increase EYF's presence on social media (mentioned ~7 times).
- Enhance promotion of EYF opportunities (mentioned ~5 times).

Priority areas for funding:

- Support digital innovation and online activities (mentioned ~8 times).
- Increase focus on climate action and sustainability (mentioned ~7 times).
- Promote inclusion and diversity initiatives (mentioned ~6 times).

CONCLUSIONS

The open consultation on the European Youth Foundation (EYF) reform revealed a strong appreciation for the Foundation's role in supporting youth organisations and promoting Council of Europe values. Respondents emphasised the importance of maintaining all current grant types while suggesting improvements to enhance accessibility, flexibility, impact and financial simplification.

Key recommendations include:

- Simplifying the application and reporting processes, with a focus on digitalisation and user-friendly online platforms.
- Increasing flexibility in budget management and implementation timelines.
- Enhancing support for small, grassroots, and newly established organizations through targeted grants, mentoring, and capacity-building initiatives.
- Improving communication and transparency throughout the grant cycle.
- Expanding grant types to include innovative projects, rapid response funding, and support for emerging needs (e.g., digital initiatives, climate action).
- Revising eligibility criteria to be more inclusive, potentially extending to informal groups and organisations outside traditional youth structures.
- Increasing grant amounts and considering multi-year funding options for greater stability.
- Enhancing the EYF's role in fostering networking and partnerships among youth organisations.

The consultation highlighted the EYF's unique position within the Council of Europe to empower youth, bridge grassroots efforts with institutional priorities, and combat shrinking civic spaces. In many ways, the core of the Foundation's mission and grant types is appreciated as it stands. In this respect, the reform should focus on the specific procedures that applicants need to follow (financial simplification, notably), and on how the grants can be used for the diversity of projects that youth organisations carry out in relation to the priorities of the Council of Europe. This also points out to the need for reviewing the working methods of the EYF in view of refocusing on qualitative processes and supporting youth organisations to carry out qualitative projects, without unnecessary bureaucratic burdens. A corollary to the reform is the question of amounts available for funding, with a strong call for more funding. Moving forward, the EYF should strive to balance its core mission with evolving youth needs, ensuring its grants remain relevant, accessible, and impactful in supporting youth-led initiatives across Europe.