

GUIDELINES

for cross-border cooperation among youth
organisations in the SEEP region

*South Eastern European
Platform Training*



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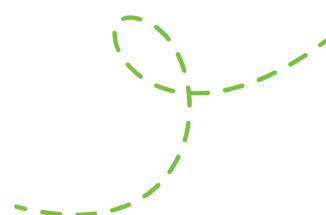
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Foreword from the Vice President for Development

These Guidelines for Cross-Border Cooperation among Youth Organisations in South East Europe are a product of the South Eastern European Platform (SEEP Nicosia 2024). This initiative brought together over 150 young people from diverse backgrounds to share experiences and strengthen regional collaboration.

At Erasmus Student Network, we have long focused on empowering local volunteers to create positive societal change. These guidelines reflect the collective knowledge and experiences of youth workers in the region and provide practical steps for fostering effective partnerships, organising joint activities, and ensuring sustainable cooperation.

I extend my gratitude to all our members and volunteers that contributed, and to the European Youth Foundation of the Council of Europe for their support in making this possible. Together, we are building a stronger, more connected future for youth in South East Europe.



Anja Miljković

Vice President for Development
Erasmus Student Network



List of participating countries

- Armenia
- Belgium
- Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Bulgaria
- Croatia
- Cyprus
- Czechia
- France
- Georgia
- Germany
- Greece
- Hungary
- Italy
- Jordan
- Moldova
- Netherlands
- Poland
- Portugal
- Romania
- Slovenia
- Sweden
- Switzerland



Abstract

These guidelines for cross-border cooperation between youth organisations in South East Europe provide **a framework for better collaboration**. Key elements include establishing a research team to assess needs and identify common goals, formalising partnerships through agreements, and setting up effective communication channels. The guidelines emphasise joint activities like training events, cultural exchanges, and regional forums, alongside strategies for securing funding and shared media campaigns. Regular monitoring, evaluation of progress, and long-term sustainability planning are highlighted to ensure the continued success and impact of regional partnerships.

Introduction

These guidelines for cross-border cooperation among youth organisations in South East Europe emerged as part of the South Eastern European Platform 24 (SEEP Nicosia 2024), an event of ESN International, supported by an International Activity grant of the European Youth Foundation (EYF) of the Council of Europe (CoE). This is part of ESN's long-standing effort to build the capacity of its volunteers by providing regional platforms with training, cooperation, and exchange of best practices.

ESN's regional training events are designed to give volunteers from different parts of Europe the **opportunity to share experiences, address common challenges, and learn about international opportunities**. These events are tailored to the specific needs of each region, ensuring that the training is relevant and impactful. For over 10 years, these platforms have provided young people with the tools to enhance their work in their local communities while connecting them to the broader international network.

The South Eastern European region faces unique challenges. Many member organisations in this region are **relatively new** and **smaller in size**, making it difficult for them to organise large events. Additionally, these organisations **often lack established connections with institutional partners** and **have a lower flow of international students**. The SEEP training aims to address these issues by equipping youth workers with the skills to promote international mobility, build partnerships, and advocate for European values such as human rights, democracy, and the rule of law.

The need for cross-border cooperation is even more important in this region, where young people from diverse cultural backgrounds are coming together to share best practices, support each other, and explore joint initiatives. The SEEP training event occurred in Nicosia, Cyprus, from the 10th to the 13th of October 2024, and provided a platform for these youth organisations to develop concrete guidelines for further cooperation. Participants worked together to create a document that outlines **best practices, formal procedures, and steps for successful cooperation** across borders in their region.

Tightly connected with the European Youth Foundation and the Council of Europe's Youth Sector priorities (2022-2025), the SEEP Nicosia 2024 training not only enhanced the capacity of young people but also promoted peaceful and inclusive societies by fostering intercultural dialogue and cooperation in the region.



The guidelines aim at strengthening the cooperation between ESN Member Organisations, ESN local sections, and other youth organisations in the SEEP region. These include strategies for establishing and formalising cross-border partnerships, fostering communication between youth organisations, organising joint activities and events, sharing best practices, ensuring effective coordination, securing funding, monitoring progress, and sustaining long-term collaboration in the South Eastern Europe region.

The guidelines were compiled and disseminated by ESN International, making them accessible to all volunteers and youth organisations through ESN's International Wiki and social media channels.





Guidelines

for cross-border
cooperation among
youth organisations in
the SEEP region

1. Setting the foundation for cooperation

- **Establish a research team:** Set up a team to gather data on the needs, objectives, and capacities of youth organisations across the region.
- **Assess common goals:** Conduct needs assessments to identify shared challenges and objectives. This will help in aligning efforts toward common goals.
- **Define the purpose and scope of collaboration:** Clarify the goals, expectations, and boundaries of cooperation. Ensure all parties agree on the shared purpose.

2. Formalising cooperation

- **Draft a formal agreement:** Create a protocol or memorandum of understanding (MoU) to officialise the partnership. This document should define roles, responsibilities, and commitments.
- **Set up communication channels:** Identify and establish effective communication tools (email groups, messaging platforms, etc.) to facilitate ongoing dialogue.
- **Appoint key contacts:** Designate representatives or focal points from each organisation to streamline communication and ensure accountability.



3. Planning and coordination

- **Develop a timeline of collaboration:** Create a roadmap that outlines key milestones, activities, and deadlines for cooperation.
- **Schedule regular meetings:** Ensure consistent communication by scheduling regular physical or virtual meetings to discuss progress, challenges, and updates.
- **Make a financial plan:** Ensure clarity on financial contributions, shared resources, and funding opportunities. Apply for external funding where needed.

4. Collaborative activities

- **Organise joint events:** Plan and implement joint activities such as training events, conferences, and workshops that address common needs.
- **Youth exchanges and trips:** Organise bonding trips like youth exchanges, which can build up relationships between youth groups. Partner with National Youth Forums or other National Youth Representative structures and ESN's partner youth organisations where possible.
- **Create regional forums:** Establish youth forums at the regional level to consolidate and showcase collaborative efforts and provide a platform for further engagement.
- **Language and cultural exchanges:** Organise cultural cafes or language exchange events to bridge cultural gaps and build mutual understanding.

5. Strengthening communication and visibility

- **Shared media and communication campaigns:** Work together to create unified communication strategies and campaigns that promote joint activities and shared goals.
- **Create common tools and documents:** Standardise key processes by developing shared tools, templates, and documents to support the partnership.

6. Monitoring and evaluation

- **Monitor progress and evaluate impact:** Track the success of joint activities, regularly assess the collaboration, and measure the impact of your initiatives.
- **Adjust and improve:** Use monitoring data to make informed adjustments, improving the quality and impact of cross-border cooperation.



7. Ensuring sustainability

- **Outreach to partners and funders:** Actively seek partnerships with external organisations, including private sector corporations, governments, and international donors, to sustain the partnership.
- **Sustain the partnership for the long term:** Develop a long-term plan for continued cooperation, including regular reassessment of objectives and resources.
- **Plan for the future:** Ensure that future activities are aligned with both current and evolving needs of youth organisations in the region.

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