



A Digital Network to **Boost** Opportunities of
Marginalised Youth by Exploiting EU
Programmes

Digital Handbook

**EU Opportunities for Youth
Organisations**



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A Digital Network to Boost Opportunities of Marginalised Youth by Exploiting EU Programmes

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Introduction

Young people across Europe can benefit from a wide range of European opportunities that support learning, volunteering, mobility, active citizenship, employability, and social inclusion. At the same time, youth organisations play a key role in helping young people access these opportunities and make the most of them.

Despite the variety of programmes and initiatives available, many organisations and young people are not fully aware of the resources, networks, and funding opportunities that the European Union offers.

This guide has been developed within the framework of the Erasmus+ project *CareerBoost – A Digital Network to Boost Opportunities of Marginalised Youth by Exploiting EU Programmes*. Its aim is to provide youth organisations, youth workers, trainers, and other stakeholders with a practical overview of the main European opportunities available for supporting young people.

By presenting key programmes, useful platforms, and practical guidance, this publication seeks to help organisations discover new opportunities, build partnerships, and create meaningful experiences that foster inclusion, participation, and personal development.

We hope this guide will encourage more organisations to engage with European initiatives and contribute to building a more inclusive and opportunity-rich future for young people across Europe.



Disclaimer: This handbook presents selected EU programmes and funding opportunities that may be relevant to young people, youth workers, youth organisations, and other stakeholders supporting youth development. The programmes described relate to the 2021–2027 programming period. Although the underlying concepts and general application processes are likely to remain broadly similar, programme priorities, funding opportunities, eligibility criteria, application procedures, and implementation rules may be updated over time or in future programming periods. Readers should therefore always consult the relevant official EU sources for the most current information.

How to Use This Guide

This guide is designed as a practical resource for youth organisations, youth workers, trainers, and other stakeholders interested in exploring European opportunities for young people.

The publication is organised into three main chapters.



Part I – Overview of EU Opportunities introduces the main European programmes, initiatives, and networks that support youth development, mobility, volunteering, employability, and active participation.



Part II – Why These Opportunities Matter To Youth explores how European opportunities contribute to skills development, employability, inclusion, participation, and international cooperation.



Part III – How to Use These Opportunities provides practical guidance on identifying suitable opportunities, finding information and support, building partnerships, and preparing successful project applications.

Whether you are new to European projects or already have experience in international cooperation, we hope this guide will help you discover new possibilities and make better use of the opportunities available across Europe.

PART I

Overview of EU Opportunities

Discover the programmes, platforms and networks that can help your organisation support young people.



1.1 European Opportunities for Youth Organisations

European opportunities are programmes, initiatives, networks, mobility activities, volunteering schemes, and funding mechanisms supported by the European Union to promote education, youth participation, social inclusion, employability, innovation, and cooperation across Europe.

These opportunities provide youth organisations with valuable resources to support young people, develop innovative projects, strengthen organisational capacity, and build partnerships with organisations from other European countries.

European opportunities can take many different forms, including learning and training activities, international mobility experiences, volunteering projects, project funding, networking initiatives, and employment-related actions. Together, they help organisations create meaningful experiences that contribute to the personal and professional development of young people.

A wide range of actors can benefit from these opportunities, including:

- Youth organisations and NGOs;
- Youth workers and trainers;
- Educational institutions;
- Community organisations;
- Local and regional authorities;
- Young people themselves.

Depending on the specific programme or initiative, organisations may participate as project **coordinators**, **partners**, **hosts**, **sending organisations**, or **supporting organisations**.

Participation in European opportunities can bring many benefits, such as:

- Access to funding and resources;
- Development of new skills and competences;
- International cooperation and networking;
- Exchange of experiences and good practices;
- Increased visibility and recognition;
- Enhanced support for young people, especially those with fewer opportunities.

European programmes have already helped millions of young people and thousands of organisations develop new skills, build international partnerships, and create positive change in their communities. By engaging with these opportunities, youth organisations can strengthen their impact and contribute to a more inclusive, connected, and resilient Europe.

1.2 Types of Opportunities Available

The European Union offers a wide range of opportunities that can benefit youth organisations and the young people they support. These opportunities go beyond funding and include learning experiences, volunteering activities, mobility programmes, networking initiatives, and employment-related actions.

Understanding the different types of opportunities available can help organisations identify the programmes and initiatives that best match their objectives, capacities, and target groups.

Type of Opportunity	Description	Examples
Learning Opportunities	Activities that help young people and youth workers acquire new knowledge, skills, and competences.	Training courses, workshops, online learning activities as for instance in Erasmus+ KA1
Mobility Opportunities	Activities that allow participants to travel, learn, and collaborate in another country.	Youth Exchanges, Study Visits, Job Shadowing, ALMA mobility placements
Volunteering Opportunities	Activities that encourage active participation and community engagement through volunteering.	European Solidarity Corps Volunteering Projects
Employment and Entrepreneurship Opportunities	Initiatives that support career development, employability, and entrepreneurial activities.	ALMA Initiative, Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs, EURES
Cooperation & Funding Opportunities	Financial support for organisations to implement local, national, or international projects and cooperate with partners across Europe.	Erasmus+, CERV, Creative Europe, Interreg, EEA and Norway Grants
Networking Opportunities	Platforms and initiatives that help organisations build partnerships and exchange good practices.	Eurodesk, SALTO Youth, European Youth Portal
Research & Innovation Opportunities	Activities that support research, innovation, scientific excellence, and the development of new solutions to societal challenges.	Horizon Europe, MSCA, EUCYS, ERC Starting Grant

European opportunities often combine several of these categories. For example, a single project may include training activities, international mobility, volunteering, and partnership building. Understanding these different forms of support can help organisations identify the opportunities that are most relevant to their mission and the needs of the young people they serve.

1.3 European Programmes for Youth Organisations

The European Union offers a variety of programmes that support the work of youth organisations and create valuable opportunities for young people. These programmes address a wide range of topics, including education, training, volunteering, active citizenship, social inclusion, culture, innovation, and employment.

While each programme has its own objectives and rules, they all share a common goal: to help organisations and young people develop new skills, build partnerships, exchange experiences, and contribute positively to their communities.

The table below provides an overview of the European programmes that are most relevant for youth organisations as they collectively target youth ranging from 15 to 30 years. Exact age should be checked in the programme URL provided in the subsequent pages. As this intended to only provide an overview, one should check detailed and frequently updated information available on the programme webpage.

Overview of Youth Relevant EU Programmes

Programme	Main Focus	Relevance
Erasmus+	Education, training, youth and sport	An important programme for youth organisations and youth mobility, participation and learning.
European Solidarity Corps (ESC)	Volunteering and solidarity activities	Direct volunteering and solidarity opportunities for young people.
ALMA Initiative	Social inclusion, employability and mobility for disadvantaged youth	Supports vulnerable young people (especially NEETs) through training, mentoring and work-based learning experiences abroad, improving employability and social inclusion.
Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs	Entrepreneurship, business development and international exchange	Provides aspiring new entrepreneurs with opportunities to learn from experienced business owners in another European country and develop entrepreneurial skills.
Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values (CERV)	Civic participation, democracy and fundamental rights	Supports youth engagement, democratic participation, inclusion, equality and active citizenship initiatives led by civil society organisations.
EEA and Norway Grants	Social inclusion, civil society development and international cooperation	Funds projects that promote social inclusion, youth empowerment, active citizenship, democratic participation and capacity building for NGOs.

Programme	Main Focus	Relevance
Creative Europe	Culture and creative sectors	Supports cultural and creative projects that engage young people through arts, creativity, intercultural dialogue and cultural participation.
Interreg	Territorial and cross-border cooperation	Supports cooperation between regions and Youth organisations to address common challenges, including youth participation, social inclusion and regional development.
Horizon Europe	Research and innovation	Funds innovative projects addressing a range of topics including societal challenges, digital transformation, health, bioeconomy, inclusion and social innovation all providing youths research training experiences as 'early-stage researchers'.
Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA)	Research training, mobility and career development	Supports international mobility, training and career development of 'early-stage researchers', offering opportunities for young researchers and academic institutions.
European Union Contest for Young Scientists (EUCYS)	Scientific excellence and innovation among young people	Encourages talented young scientists to develop research skills, showcase innovative projects and engage with the European scientific community.
ERC Starting Grant	Frontier research and scientific excellence	Supports outstanding early-career researchers in developing independent research careers and leading innovative scientific projects.

In principle, for the above funding programmes it is legal entities such as youth organisations that apply directly to EU funding Agencies. On the other hand, youth normally apply for a range of opportunities (as reflected in the column main focus of the above table) through the EU funded projects. This is schematically illustrated below.



The following pages provide a quick overview of the opportunities available through the main European programmes relevant to youth organisations.

1.3.1 Erasmus+

Enriching Lives, Opening Minds.

● Education • Mobility • Participation • Inclusion



Main Objective

To support education, training, youth, and sport activities across Europe by promoting learning mobility, cooperation, inclusion, and innovation.



Who Can Apply?

- Youth organisations and NGOs
- Schools and educational institutions
- Public authorities
- Social enterprises
- Community organisations



What Can You Do?

- Organise Youth Exchanges
- Train youth workers
- Support youth participation in democratic life
- Build international partnerships
- Create innovative educational resources
- Promote inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities



CareerBoost Relevance

The above opportunities can be applied through Erasmus+ funded projects. These projects help organisations engage marginalised youth through international mobility, skills development, inclusion activities, and active participation in community life



More Information

<https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/>



1.3.2 European Solidarity Corps (ESC)

The Power Of Together

● Volunteering • Solidarity • Community Engagement • Inclusion



Main Objective

To promote solidarity, volunteering, and community engagement among young people across Europe by supporting activities that address societal needs and strengthen communities.



Who Can Apply?

- Youth organisations and NGOs
- Public bodies
- Social enterprises
- Community organisations
- Volunteering host organisations



What Can You Do?

- Organise individual volunteering activities
- Host volunteering teams
- Implement solidarity projects
- Support local community initiatives
- Promote social inclusion and active citizenship
- Participate in humanitarian aid volunteering activities



CareerBoost Relevance

The above opportunities can be applied through European Solidarity Corps funded projects. These projects help organisations engage marginalised youth through volunteering, skills development, social inclusion, and active community participation.



More Information

<https://europeansolidaritycorps.gr/en/>



1.3.3. ALMA Initiative

Aim, Learn, Master, Achieve

● Employability • Inclusion • Mobility • Skills Development



Main Objective

To support young people who are not in employment, education, or training (NEETs) by helping them gain skills, confidence, and work experience through personalised training, mentoring, and mobility opportunities abroad.



Who Can Apply?

- Employment services
- Youth organisations and NGOs
- Training providers
- Social inclusion organisations
- Public authorities and labour market actors



What Can You Do?

- Participate in tailored training programmes
- Receive mentoring and career guidance
- Undertake work placements abroad
- Develop professional and social skills
- Improve employability and labour market integration
- Build confidence and independence through international experiences



CareerBoost Relevance

The above opportunities can be applied through ALMA funded projects. These projects target vulnerable and marginalised young people to help them develop skills, gain international work experience, and improve their employment prospects through inclusive mobility opportunities.



More Information

https://employment-social-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies-and-activities/skills-and-qualifications/alma-active-inclusion-initiative-young-people_en



1.3.4. Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs

Learn from Experience. Grow Your Business.

● Entrepreneurship • Business Development • Mobility • Mentoring



Main Objective

To support aspiring and newly established entrepreneurs by enabling them to learn from experienced business owners in another European country and acquire the skills needed to start or grow a successful business.



Who Can Apply?

- Business support organisations
- Universities and higher education institutions
- Vocational education and training (VET) providers
- Regional and local development agencies
- Other organisations with experience in supporting SMEs, entrepreneurs, and start-ups



What Can You Do?

- Learn from experienced entrepreneurs abroad
- Develop entrepreneurial skills
- Expand international business networks
- Explore new markets and business opportunities
- Exchange knowledge and ideas
- Strengthen business growth and competitiveness



CareerBoost Relevance

The above opportunities can be applied through Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs funded projects. These projects help organisations support young people through entrepreneurial learning, international mobility, business skills development, and professional networking.



More Information

https://eisma.ec.europa.eu/funding-opportunities/calls-proposals/erasmus-young-entrepreneurs-smp-cosme-2026-eye_en



1.3.5 Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values (CERV)

Promoting Rights, Equality and Participation

© Democracy • Citizenship • Equality • Participation



Main Objective

To protect and promote the rights and values enshrined in the European Union, strengthen democratic participation, and support equality, inclusion, and active citizenship across Europe.



Who Can Apply?

- Civil society organisations and NGOs
- Youth organisations
- Public authorities
- Community organisations
- Equality and human rights organisations
- Educational and research institutions



What Can You Do?

- Promote civic and democratic participation
- Support equality and anti-discrimination initiatives
- Strengthen youth engagement in democratic processes
- Develop projects on fundamental rights and EU values
- Build networks and partnerships across Europe



CareerBoost Relevance

The above opportunities can be applied through CERV-funded projects. These projects help organisations empower young people to become active citizens, promote social inclusion and equal opportunities, and strengthen participation in democratic and community life.



More Information

https://commission.europa.eu/funding-and-tenders/find-funding/eu-funding-programmes/citizens-equality-rights-and-values-programme/citizens-equality-rights-and-values-programme-overview_en



1.3.6 EEA Grants

Working Together for a Green, Competitive and Inclusive Europe

© Inclusion • Civil Society • Cooperation • Capacity Building



Main Objective

To reduce social and economic disparities in Europe and strengthen cooperation between beneficiary countries and the donor states (Iceland, Liechtenstein, and Norway) through funding for social, environmental, educational, and civic initiatives.



Who Can Apply?

- NGOs and civil society organisations
- Youth organisations
- Educational institutions
- Public authorities
- Social enterprises
- Community and non-profit organisations



What Can You Do?

- Implement social inclusion projects
- Promote active citizenship and democratic participation
- Support youth empowerment initiatives
- Strengthen organisational capacity
- Develop international partnerships and exchanges
- Address social, environmental, and community challenges



CareerBoost Relevance

The above opportunities can be applied through EEA Grants-funded projects. These projects help organisations empower disadvantaged young people, strengthen civil society organisations, and promote inclusion, participation, and equal opportunities in local communities.



More Information

<https://eeagrants.org/en/fmo>



1.3.7 Creative Europe

Empowering Europe's Cultural and Creative Sectors

© Culture • Creativity • Arts • Cooperation



Main Objective

To support the cultural, creative, and audiovisual sectors across Europe by promoting cultural diversity, artistic cooperation, innovation, and cross-border collaboration.



Who Can Apply?

- Cultural and creative organisations
- NGOs and youth organisations
- Artists and creative professionals
- Educational institutions
- Community organisations
- Cultural networks and partnerships



What Can You Do?

- Develop cultural and artistic cooperation projects
- Engage young people through creative activities
- Promote intercultural dialogue and cultural diversity
- Build partnerships between cultural and youth organisations
- Organise cultural events, exhibitions, and performances



CareerBoost Relevance

The above opportunities can be applied through Creative Europe-funded projects. These projects help organisations engage young people through cultural and creative activities that promote self-expression, inclusion, intercultural dialogue, and transferable skills.



More Information

<https://culture.ec.europa.eu/creative-europe/about-the-creative-europe-programme>



1.3.8 Interreg

Connecting Regions, Creating Opportunities

© Cooperation • Regional Development • Inclusion • Innovation



Main Objective

To promote cooperation between regions and countries across Europe in order to address shared challenges and support sustainable economic, social, and territorial development.



Who Can Apply?

- Public authorities
- NGOs and civil society organisations
- Youth organisations
- Educational and research institutions
- Regional development agencies
- Community organisations and local stakeholders.



What Can You Do?

- Develop cross-border cooperation projects
- Address common social and environmental challenges
- Promote youth participation and community engagement
- Support innovation and regional development initiatives



CareerBoost Relevance

The above opportunities can be applied through Interreg-funded projects. These projects help organisations engage marginalised youth through cross-border cooperation that promotes skills development, employability, social inclusion, mobility, and active participation in local and regional



More Information

<https://interreg.eu/>



1.3.9 Horizon Europe

Driving Research and Innovation

© Research • Innovation • Digitalisation • Societal Impact



Main Objective

To support research and innovation projects that address major societal challenges, strengthen Europe's competitiveness, and contribute to sustainable, inclusive, and digital development.



Who Can Apply?

- Universities and research institutions
- NGOs and civil society organisations
- Public authorities
- Private sector organisations
- Innovation centres and networks
- Youth organisations with relevant expertise and project ideas



What Can You Do?

- Participate in research and innovation projects
- Develop solutions to societal challenges
- Promote digital skills and technological innovation
- Support projects on education, inclusion, and sustainability



CareerBoost Relevance

The above opportunities can be applied through Horizon Europe-funded projects. These projects help organisations engage marginalised youth through innovative solutions that promote inclusion, employability, digital skills, and active participation, while encouraging collaboration across



More Information

https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/funding/funding-opportunities/funding-programmes-and-open-calls/horizon-europe_en



1.3.10 Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA)

Developing Research Talent Across Europe and Beyond

© Research • Mobility • Skills Development • International Cooperation



Main Objective

To support researchers at all stages of their careers through international mobility, advanced training, and cross-sector collaboration, fostering excellence in research and innovation across Europe and beyond.



Who Can Apply?

- Researchers at different career stages (in the case of CareerBoost, early stage researchers)
- Universities and higher education institutions
- Research centres
- NGOs and non-profit organisations
- Public and private sector organisations
- International research networks



What Can You Do?

- Funds doctoral (PhD) research, salaries/allowances, training, supervision and mobility
- Supports secondments to universities, companies or other organisations
- Funds fund postdoctoral researchers, staff exchanges, doctoral/postdoctoral programmes, and research outreach activities



CareerBoost Relevance

The above opportunities can be applied through MSCA-funded projects. These projects support research training, international mobility, and career development for early-stage researchers, helping young people gain valuable experience, build European networks, and strengthen their employability.



More Information

<https://marie-sklodowska-curie-actions.ec.europa.eu/>



1.3.11 European Union Contest for Young Scientists (EUCYS)

Celebrating Europe's Young Scientific Talent

© Science • Innovation • Research • Talent Development



Main Objective

To encourage young people to pursue careers in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) by recognising outstanding research projects and fostering scientific excellence across Europe.



Who Can Apply?

- Public authorities
- Universities and higher education institutions
- Research organisations
- Science museums and science centres
- Foundations and non-profit organisations active in science education



What Can You Do?

- Present innovative scientific research projects
- Receive recognition and awards for scientific achievements
- Exchange ideas with peers and experts
- Develop research and presentation skills
- Build international networks within the scientific community



CareerBoost Relevance

The above opportunities can be applied through EUCYS-related projects and initiatives. These projects help organisations engage talented young people by promoting scientific curiosity, innovation, and talent development, encouraging them to pursue educational and career pathways in research, technology, and innovation.



More Information

https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/funding/funding-opportunities/eucys_en



1.3.12 ERC Starting Grant

Supporting Excellent Researchers at the Beginning of Their Careers

© Research Excellence • Innovation • Scientific Leadership • Frontier Research



Main Objective

To support outstanding early-career researchers in establishing their own independent research teams and conducting ambitious, high-risk, high-gain research projects at the frontiers of knowledge.



Who Can Apply?

- Universities and higher education institutions
- Research organisations
- Public and private research centres
- Host institutions based in EU Member States or Associated Countries



What Can You Do?

- Establish an independent research team
- Lead innovative and frontier research projects
- Build international research collaborations
- Advance scientific knowledge across disciplines
- Strengthen research leadership and career development



CareerBoost Relevance

The above opportunities can be applied through ERC Starting Grant-funded projects. These projects help host institutions support talented early-career researchers, promoting scientific excellence, innovation, advanced skills, and long-term career development.



More Information

<https://erc.europa.eu/apply-grant/starting-grant>



1.4 European Youth Platforms and Networks

In addition to funding programmes, the European Union supports a variety of platforms and networks that help youth organisations and young people access information, discover opportunities, build partnerships, and participate in international activities.

These resources can be particularly useful for organisations that are taking their first steps in European cooperation or looking for new opportunities to engage young people.

Eurodesk

What is it?

Eurodesk is a European youth information network that provides free information about learning mobility opportunities, volunteering, training, and participation programmes available to young people across Europe.

Why is it useful to youth or youth organisations?

- Access to up-to-date information on European opportunities;
- Guidance and support for young people;
- Local information points in many countries;
- Promotion of mobility and participation activities.

Website

<https://eurodesk.eu>



SALTO Youth

What is it?

SALTO Youth is a network of resource centres supporting the quality development of Erasmus+ Youth and European Solidarity Corps projects.

Why is it useful to youth or youth organisations?

- Training opportunities for youth workers;
- Partner-finding tools;
- Educational resources and publications;
- Information on inclusion, participation, digitalisation, and other priority topics.

Website

<https://www.salto-youth.net>



European Youth Portal

What is it?

The European Youth Portal is the main online gateway to European opportunities for young people.

Why is it useful to youth or youth organisations?

- Information about EU programmes;
- Volunteering opportunities;
- Learning and mobility opportunities;
- Youth participation initiatives;
- European Solidarity Corps information.

Website

<https://youth.europa.eu>



DiscoverEU

What is it?

DiscoverEU is an initiative that gives young people the opportunity to travel across Europe and discover its cultural diversity, history, and heritage.

Why is it useful to youth or youth organisations?

- Travel experiences across Europe;
- Intercultural learning;
- Promotion of European identity and citizenship;
- Opportunities to meet young people from other countries.

Website

<https://youth.europa.eu/discovereu>



EURES

What is it?

EURES (European Employment Services) is a European network supporting job mobility and employment opportunities across the European Economic Area.

Why is it useful to youth or youth organisations?

- Information about jobs and traineeships;
- Career guidance;
- Support for cross-border employment;
- Resources for employers and job seekers.

Website

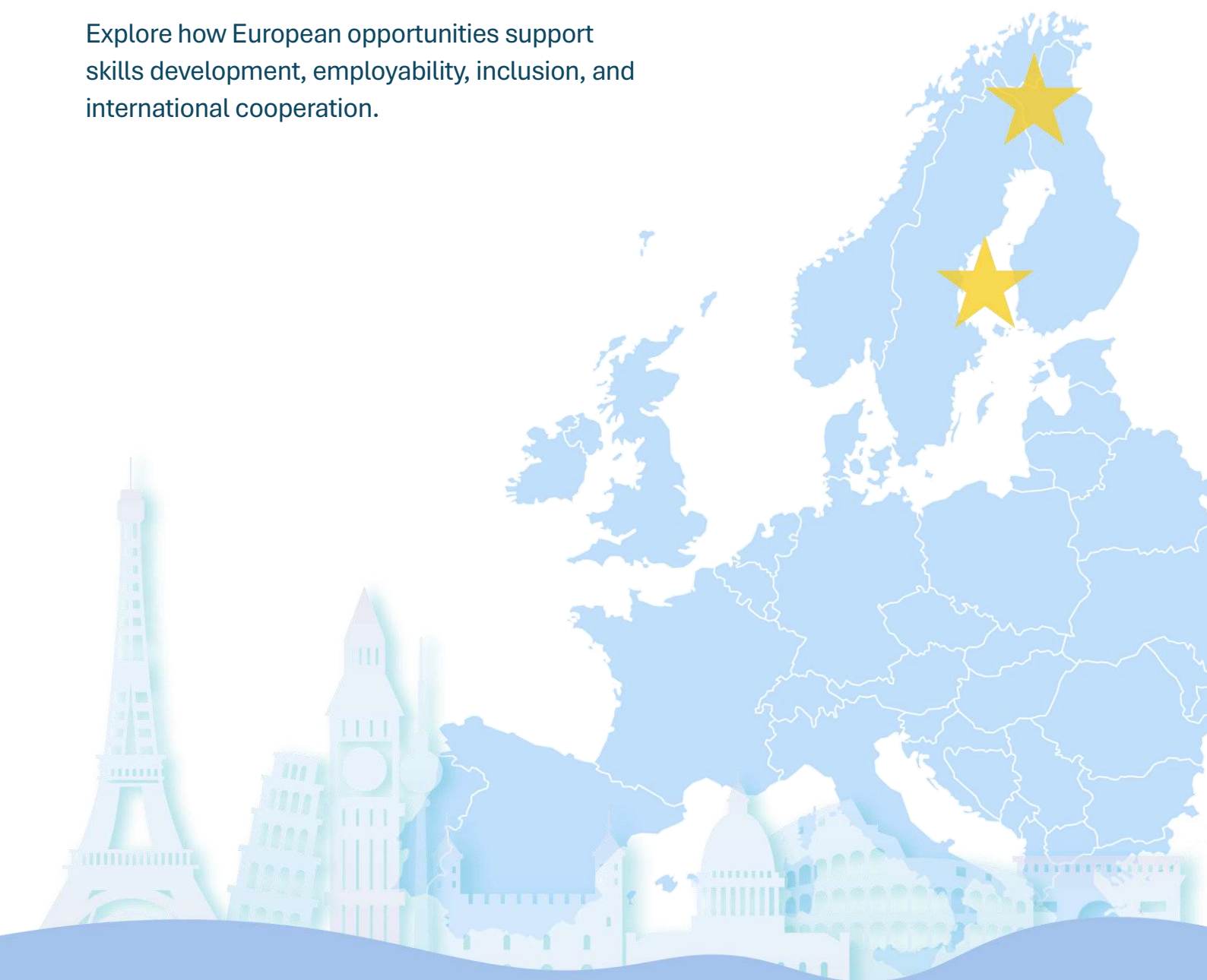
<https://eures.europa.eu>



PART II

Why These Opportunities Matter To Youth

Explore how European opportunities support skills development, employability, inclusion, and international cooperation.



European opportunities offer much more than funding. Through programmes such as Erasmus+, European Solidarity Corps (ESC), ALMA Initiative, Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs, CERV, Creative Europe, Interreg, Horizon Europe, and others, young people and organisations can develop new skills, improve employability, strengthen inclusion, build international partnerships, and contribute to positive change in their communities.

The following sections highlight the main benefits that European opportunities can provide and explain how different programmes can support personal, professional, and organisational development.

2.1 Building Skills and Competences

European opportunities provide valuable learning experiences that help young people, youth workers, and organisations develop a wide range of competences. Through programmes such as **Erasmus+**, the **European Solidarity Corps (ESC)**, and the **ALMA Initiative**, participants can strengthen digital skills, language competences, communication abilities, teamwork, leadership, and problem-solving skills.

Many activities are based on non-formal learning approaches, allowing participants to learn through practical experiences, international cooperation, and real-life challenges. Youth Exchanges, training courses, volunteering projects, and mobility activities encourage participants to step outside their comfort zones, work with people from different backgrounds, and develop skills that are valuable in both personal and professional life.

Key Benefits

- Develop communication and interpersonal skills.
- Strengthen teamwork and collaboration.
- Improve leadership and initiative.
- Enhance digital and media literacy.
- Build foreign language competences.
- Increase creativity and problem-solving abilities.
- Develop intercultural awareness and understanding.

The following programmes place a particularly strong emphasis on helping young people develop the skills and competences needed for personal growth, active participation, and future opportunities.

Programme	Skills Developed
Erasmus+	Communication, teamwork, language skills, intercultural competences
European Solidarity Corps	Leadership, teamwork, active citizenship, project management
ALMA Initiative	Professional skills, confidence, adaptability, workplace competences
Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs	Entrepreneurial thinking, business management, networking

EUCYS	Research, scientific thinking, innovation
MSCA	Research, analytical and international collaboration skills

2.2 Improving Employability and Career Prospects

Many European programmes help young people prepare for the labour market and explore future career opportunities. Through initiatives such as the ALMA Initiative, and Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs, Erasmus+, participants can gain practical experience, develop professional skills, and strengthen their employability.

ALMA supports young people facing barriers to employment by providing training, mentoring, and work-based learning experiences abroad. **Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs** enables aspiring entrepreneurs to learn directly from experienced business owners, while **Erasmus+** activities help participants develop transferable skills that are highly valued by employers.

Participation in European projects also enables young people to expand their professional networks, explore different career pathways, and gain confidence in their abilities.

Key Benefits

- Improve employability and career readiness.
- Gain international work experience.
- Develop entrepreneurial skills and mindset.
- Explore different career pathways.
- Build professional networks across Europe.
- Increase confidence and independence.
- Strengthen adaptability in a changing labour market.

The following programmes are especially relevant for supporting employability, career development, entrepreneurship, and access to the labour market.

Programme	Career Benefits
ALMA Initiative	Work placements, employability, labour market integration
Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs	Entrepreneurial experience and business mentoring
Erasmus+	Transferable skills valued by employers
European Solidarity Corps	Practical experience and volunteering portfolio
MSCA	Research career development
ERC Starting Grant	Scientific leadership and career progression

2.3 Strengthening Inclusion and Participation

One of the core objectives of many European programmes is to promote inclusion, equality, and active participation in society. Programmes such as the **European Solidarity Corps (ESC)**, **Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values (CERV)**, **Erasmus+**, and **EEA and Norway Grants** encourage young people to engage with their communities, participate in democratic life, and contribute to positive social change.

Through volunteering activities, community projects, awareness-raising initiatives, and participation activities, young people can develop a stronger sense of belonging, responsibility, and active citizenship. These programmes also support diversity and inclusion by ensuring that opportunities are accessible to young people from different backgrounds and circumstances.

Key Benefits

- Promote active citizenship and participation.
- Encourage volunteering and community engagement.
- Foster social inclusion and equal opportunities.
- Strengthen democratic awareness.
- Support diversity and intercultural dialogue.
- Increase social responsibility and civic engagement.

The following programmes provide valuable opportunities to promote social inclusion, active citizenship, community engagement, and equal participation for young people.

Programme	Inclusion & Participation Benefits
ESC	Volunteering and community engagement
CERV	Democratic participation and active citizenship
Erasmus+	Inclusion and youth participation
EEA and Norway Grants	Social inclusion and community empowerment
Interreg	Community cooperation and regional inclusion
ALMA Initiative	Inclusion of vulnerable young people through mentoring, training and mobility

2.4 Building European Networks and Partnerships

European cooperation creates opportunities for organisations and individuals to connect, collaborate, and learn from one another. Programmes such as **Erasmus+**, **Interreg**, **Creative Europe**, **Horizon Europe**, and **EEA and Norway Grants** support international partnerships that bring together organisations from different countries to address common challenges and develop innovative solutions.

Working with international partners enables organisations to exchange good practices, access new ideas and methodologies, and strengthen their capacity to respond to local needs. Partnerships also contribute to the sustainability and long-term impact of projects by creating lasting professional and institutional relationships.

Key Benefits

- Build international partnerships and collaborations.
- Exchange knowledge and good practices.
- Access innovative ideas and approaches.
- Strengthen organisational capacity.
- Increase visibility at European level.
- Create opportunities for future cooperation.
- Enhance the sustainability and impact of projects.

The following programmes offer particularly strong opportunities for international cooperation, partnership building, and the exchange of knowledge and good practices.

Programme	Networking & Partnership Benefits
Erasmus+	International youth partnerships
Interreg	Cross-border cooperation
Creative Europe	Cultural networks and collaborations
Horizon Europe	Research and innovation ecosystems
EEA and Norway Grants	International NGO cooperation

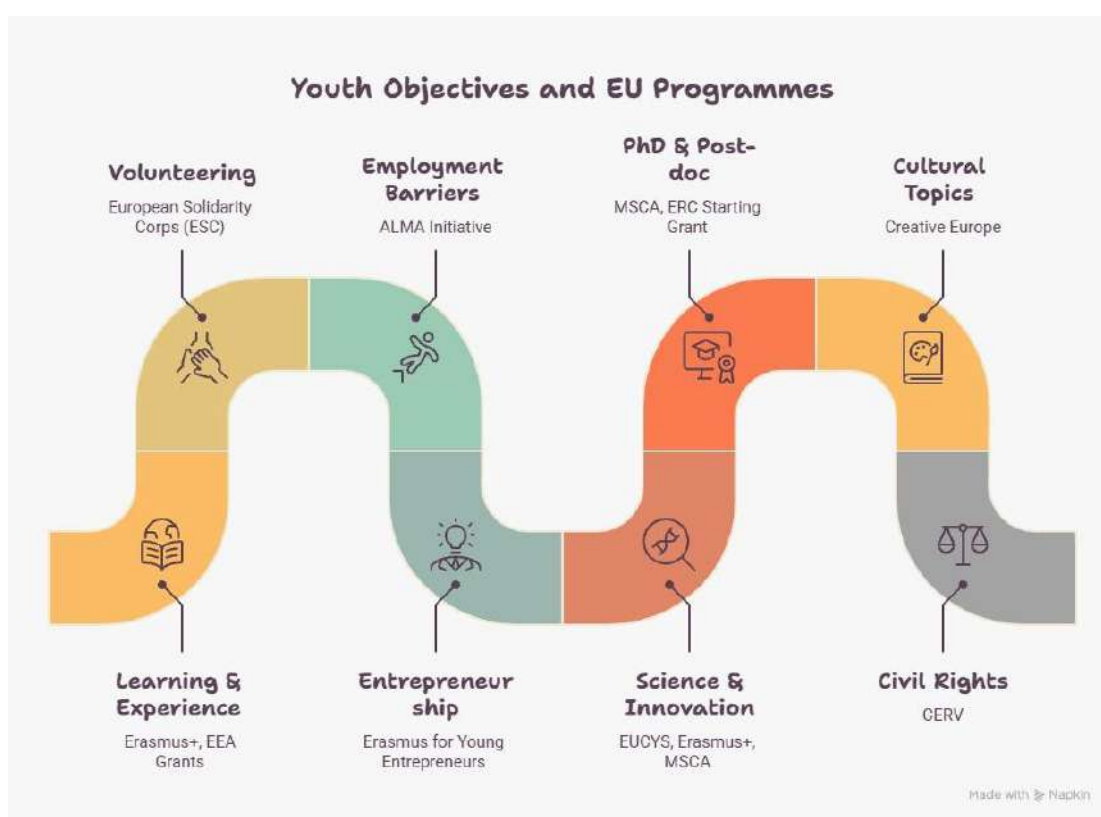
2.5 Choosing the Right European Opportunity for your Needs

Not all European opportunities are designed for the same audience. Some programmes directly support young people, while others are aimed at youth organisations, educational institutions, researchers, or public authorities. Understanding which programme best matches a specific youth profile objective, can help youth identify the most suitable projects funded by which programme.

Opportunities for Young People

Youth objective	Projects funded by the following Programmes
A young person seeking learning and international experiences	Erasmus+, EEA Grants
A young person interested in volunteering	European Solidarity Corps (ESC)
A young person facing barriers to employment (NEET)	ALMA Initiative
An aspiring entrepreneur	Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs
A young person interested in science and innovation	European Union Contest for Young Scientists (EUCYS), Erasmus+, MSCA

A youth interested in doing a PhD or post-doctoral studies	Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA), ERC Starting Grant
A youth interested in cultural related topics	Creative Europe
A youth interested in civil rights, democracy, EU values	CERV
A youth interested in cross-border initiatives	Interreg



Many European programmes can support multiple target groups and objectives. Organisations and young people are encouraged to explore the opportunities presented in this handbook to identify the programmes that best match their needs, interests, and goals.

PART III

How to Use These Opportunities

Learn how to identify opportunities, build partnerships and turn ideas into successful projects.



Successfully accessing European opportunities requires more than having a good idea. Organisations need to understand the funding programme, build strong partnerships, prepare a high-quality proposal, and manage the application process carefully.

Although each European programme has its own rules and procedures, most applications follow a similar sequence of steps. The roadmap below provides a practical guide that can help youth organisations navigate the process from the initial idea to project implementation.

3.1 Register Your Organisation

Before applying for most European funding programmes, your organisation must be registered on the relevant European platform. This registration confirms your organisation's legal identity and enables you to submit applications electronically.

Depending on the programme, you may need to obtain a **Participant Identification Code (PIC)** or an **Organisation ID (OID)**. These identifiers are used throughout the application process and remain valid for future applications, so registration is usually required only once. If your organisation has previously participated in European projects, it may already have an active PIC or OID.

Before moving on to the next step, make sure that your organisation's registration details—including legal name, address and authorised representative—are accurate and up to date. Keeping this information current can help avoid delays during the application or grant preparation process.

3.2 Study the Funding Programme

Before developing a project proposal, it is essential to understand the funding programme and the specific call for proposals. Each European programme has its own objectives, priorities, eligibility conditions, funding rules, and evaluation criteria. Investing time in studying these requirements can significantly improve the quality of your application and increase its chances of success.

Start by reading the programme guide and the call documentation carefully. Pay particular attention to the objectives of the programme, the types of organisations that are eligible to apply, the target groups, available budget, funding rules, application deadlines, and the criteria that evaluators will use to assess proposals. A clear understanding of these elements will help you determine whether your project idea is a good fit before investing time and resources in developing a full application.

It is equally important to identify how your proposed project contributes to the programme's priorities and expected outcomes. Successful applications do more than present a good idea—they demonstrate a clear alignment with the objectives and policy priorities of the funding programme.

3.3 Define Your Project Idea

Every successful European project begins with identifying a real need rather than simply responding to a funding opportunity. Before writing an application, organisations should analyse the challenges faced by their target groups and consider how a European project could contribute to addressing them.

At this stage, the focus should be on developing a clear project concept. Ask yourself what problem needs to be solved, who will benefit, why the project matters, and what change you hope to achieve. It is also important to consider whether European cooperation adds value by enabling organisations to exchange expertise, share good practices, or develop innovative solutions together.

A well-defined project idea serves as the foundation for all subsequent stages of project development. Taking time to refine the concept before preparing the proposal makes it easier to build a coherent partnership, design meaningful activities, and demonstrate the project's relevance.

To support this process, the CareerBoost project has developed a series of practical worksheets that guide organisations and young people through the early stages of project planning. These worksheets are designed to encourage reflection, structure ideas, and help transform initial concepts into well-developed project proposals.

Worksheet 1 – Career Planning and SMART Goals: This worksheet helps participants identify their personal or organisational aspirations and translate them into clear SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound) goals. Establishing well-defined objectives provides a strong foundation for selecting suitable European opportunities and developing focused project ideas.

Worksheet 2 – EU Programme Finder and Eligibility: Once goals have been identified, this worksheet supports users in exploring the wide range of European programmes available. It helps participants compare different funding opportunities, assess eligibility requirements, and identify which programmes best align with their objectives and target groups.

Worksheet 3 – Project Idea Brainstorming: This worksheet encourages participants to move from identifying a challenge to developing a structured project concept. It guides users to define the problem, identify beneficiaries, consider expected outcomes, and reflect on the European added value of their proposed project.

Worksheet 4 – Project Planning and Roles: A successful project requires careful planning and clearly defined responsibilities. This worksheet helps participants organise project activities, establish realistic timelines, identify key stakeholders and partners, and allocate roles and responsibilities throughout the project lifecycle.

Worksheet 5 – Application Readiness Checklist: Before beginning the application process, organisations can use this checklist to assess whether they have gathered the necessary information, identified appropriate partners, prepared supporting documentation, and addressed the key requirements of the selected funding programme. It provides a simple way to identify any remaining gaps before proposal development begins.

Worksheet 6 – Post-Participation Reflection and Portfolio: Learning continues after a project has been completed. This worksheet encourages participants to reflect on the knowledge, skills, experiences, and achievements gained through their European project. It also supports users in documenting these outcomes for future applications, career development, organisational learning, and dissemination of good practice.

Together, these worksheets provide a structured pathway from identifying aspirations and project ideas to developing well-planned European project concepts. They are intended to complement the guidance provided throughout this handbook and may be used individually or as a complete toolkit to help participants build the knowledge, confidence, and planning skills needed to prepare high-quality project proposals and engage successfully with European funding opportunities.

3.4 Build the Partnership

Many European funding programmes require organisations from different countries to work together. A strong partnership brings together complementary expertise, diverse perspectives, and shared commitment, increasing both the quality of the proposal and the project's long-term impact.

When selecting partners, look for organisations that share your project's vision and can contribute specific knowledge or experience. Depending on the programme, these may include youth organisations, universities, NGOs, SMEs, public authorities, research institutions, or other stakeholders relevant to the project's objectives.

Potential partners can be identified through a variety of channels. European platforms such as **SALTO-YOUTH** and the **European Youth Portal** offer partner-search tools and networking opportunities, while National Agencies regularly organise contact-making seminars and information events. Existing professional networks, previous project partners, conferences, and thematic online communities are also valuable sources for finding reliable collaborators.

Once suitable partners have been identified, involve them from the earliest stages of project development. Discuss the project idea together, gather their input, and ensure that everyone shares the same understanding of the objectives, expected results, and overall vision. Early engagement helps build trust and lays the foundation for effective collaboration throughout the project.

3.5 Develop a Strong Proposal

Once the project idea has been agreed and the partnership established, the next step is to translate the concept into a clear and convincing proposal. A strong application demonstrates not only what the project intends to achieve but also how it will be implemented, managed, monitored, and evaluated.

The proposal should present realistic objectives, a coherent methodology, a well-structured work plan, clearly defined activities, expected outputs, and measurable results. It should also explain how quality will be ensured, how results will be

disseminated, how the project will remain sustainable after funding ends, and how the requested budget supports the planned activities.

Finally, review the proposal carefully to ensure that all sections are consistent and fully aligned with the priorities and evaluation criteria of the funding programme. A well-written proposal is clear, evidence-based, and easy for evaluators to follow.

3.6 Finalise and Submit Your Application

Before submitting your proposal, take time to complete a final review of the entire application. Ensure that all sections are fully completed, the information provided is consistent throughout the proposal, and all required supporting documents have been prepared. Depending on the funding programme, these may include declarations, partner mandates, legal entity information, financial documents, or other annexes requested in the call for proposals.

Once the application has been finalised, submit it through the appropriate European Commission or National Agency online portal before the published deadline. Most submission systems include validation tools that help identify missing information or technical errors. However, these checks do not assess the quality of the proposal, so it is important to carry out your own final review before submitting.

Whenever possible, avoid waiting until the last day to submit your application. Technical issues, internet connectivity problems, or last-minute changes can create unnecessary stress and may even prevent a successful submission. Early submission also provides an opportunity to address any unexpected issues identified by the online system.

3.7 Implement Your Project

Receiving funding marks the beginning of a new phase: turning your project proposal into tangible results. Successful implementation requires effective coordination, clear communication, sound financial management, and continuous monitoring to ensure that activities are delivered on time and in line with the approved work plan.

At the start of the project, partners should confirm their responsibilities, agree on communication and reporting procedures, and establish a realistic timetable for implementation. Throughout the project, it is important to keep accurate financial records, document activities and achievements, and collect evidence of the results and impact. Regular meetings and progress reviews help identify potential challenges early and enable the partnership to take corrective action when necessary.

Disseminating project results and ensuring their long-term sustainability are also key aspects of implementation. Sharing good practices, educational resources, and project outcomes with wider audiences increases the project's visibility and extends its benefits beyond the funded period. At the end of the project, organisations are typically required to submit technical and financial reports demonstrating that the planned objectives have been achieved and that the grant has been managed responsibly.

The Project Journey: 7 Steps from Idea to Impact

Developing and implementing a European project involves a series of key steps. The diagram below provides an overview of the process covered in Part III of this guide.



Tip: Each step builds on the previous one. Take time to plan carefully, involve your partners early, and always refer to the official guidelines of the programme you are applying to.

Conclusion

European opportunities offer young people and youth organisations far more than access to funding. They open the door to new ideas, international cooperation, personal and professional development, and meaningful experiences that can create lasting benefits for individuals, organisations, and communities alike.

Throughout this handbook, we have explored the wide range of European programmes available, the value they can bring to young people and organisations, and the practical steps involved in transforming an idea into a successful project. While every programme has its own requirements, they all share a common purpose: supporting collaboration, innovation, inclusion, and positive change across Europe.

For organisations taking their first steps into European cooperation, the process may seem challenging at first. However, with a clear vision, committed partners, careful preparation, and a willingness to learn, European projects become achievable and rewarding. Every successful project starts with identifying a real need, building strong partnerships, and working together towards a shared goal.

The CareerBoost project was created with the belief that every young person deserves access to opportunities that help them learn, grow, and realise their potential. Youth organisations play a vital role in making these opportunities accessible, particularly for young people with fewer opportunities, by creating environments where they can develop skills, gain confidence, and actively participate in society.

We hope this handbook will serve as a practical companion throughout your European journey—whether you are exploring funding opportunities for the first time or building on previous experience. Use it as a starting point to discover new programmes, connect with like-minded organisations, and develop projects that make a real difference.

We wish you every success in your future European projects.