

YOUTH IN POWER REPORT



Funded by
the European Union

AUTHORS

Linas Tavaras

Project Manager, Young Wave

Charity Monareng

Executive Director Students for Sensible Drug Policy International

Manuela Memi

Project, Manager YouthRISE

Aravind Kumar

Project Manager, Students for Sensible Drug Policy International

Ruby Lawlor

Executive Director, YouthRISE

This is a project report on the ERASMUS+ Small Scale Partnership Project entitled “Youth in Power: Addressing the Sustainability of Youth-Led Drug Related Organisations” led by Students for Sensible Drug Policy International in partnership with YouthRISE and Young Wave. Project no: 2022-3-AT01-KA210-YOU-000101907

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We are grateful to the youth advocates, civil society members, and stakeholders who have contributed to the development and organisation of this project. We also give our thanks to all who were consulted throughout the project and all who participated in the framework implementation stage for engaging with such commitment and passion in our sessions and for their commitment to advance this work beyond the end of the project as part of a strengthened network of youth-led drug related advocates and organisations. Finally, we would like to express immense gratitude to Erasmus+ for making this project possible.

**WE THANK YOU
FOR YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT OF
OUR MOVEMENT**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1

Project Objectives

2

Learning Methods

3

Project Rationale

4

Measurements of Success

5

Organisation Assessment Tool

6

Project Takeaways & Next Steps

7

Implementation & Follow-Up

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

This project aimed to improve leadership transitions, institutional memory, and long-term strategy in the participating organisations through the development and implementation of a youth-work Sustainability Framework designed with best practices from both the youth-work sector and the drug policy/harm reduction sector. The key results include The Development of the Framework, The Implementation of the Framework, and the increased stability of the participating organisations in the European Union (EU).

“Youth In Power” (YIP) was and is intended to continually improve the overall sustainability and stability of three participating youth-led organisations, SSDP International, Young Wave, and Youth RISE, by addressing three key areas: 1. Leadership transitions, 2. Institutional knowledge/memory, and 3. Long-term strategy. The goal was to incorporate tools and best practices from both the youth work sector and the drug policy/harm reduction sector to develop and implement a Sustainability Framework that addresses these issues. To achieve our goal of improving organisational stability through its implementation, we organised a 3-day strategy meeting. This Framework will also be shared and utilised across the sector to allow for the benefits of this Framework to be applied on a wider scale and ensure a sustained and robust youth drug policy sector.

1

To implement new processes to improve leadership transitions in the participating organisations

2

To implement new processes to improve institutional knowledge and memory in the participating organisations

3

To implement new processes to improve the development and implementation of the long-term strategy

EU KEY PRIORITIES

Throughout its running, YIP aligned with several EU Key Priorities. These included:

- **YOUTH:** Increasing quality, innovation and recognition of youth work. The Framework aims to address issues of stability and sustainability in youth work (thus increasing quality) in an innovative manner that combines youth-work approaches with the approaches employed by the drug policy/harm reduction sector.
- **HORIZONTAL:** Inclusion and diversity in all fields of education, training, youth and sport because the project focuses on youth-led organisations with a significant portion of young people who use or are directly affected by drugs in leadership. This is a population that ERASMUS+ identifies directly under its diversity criteria under the "Social Obstacles" section. Supporting the leadership of this population, particularly their leadership in social and civic engagement organisations will contribute massively to the inclusion priority.
- **YOUTH:** Promoting active citizenship, young people's sense of initiative and youth entrepreneurship including social entrepreneurship priority is addressed by the project because maintaining stability and resilience in youth-led organisations that regularly engage in national and international advocacy efforts contributes massively to the active citizenship of this population.

The YIP project strategically aligns with Erasmus+ Key Actions to enhance youth engagement and organisational capacities within the EU. Specifically, it addresses:

- **Key Action 2:** Cooperation Among Organisations and Institutions by promoting robust collaboration among youth-led organisations and youth advocates within the EU, focusing on drug policy. This effort underscored the project's commitment to strengthening networks and sharing best practices.
- **Key Action 3:** Support for Policy Development and Cooperation through the creation of a novel consortium platform. This platform facilitated meaningful youth dialogue on EU Drug Policy, fostering active citizenship and sustainable youth engagement.

Guided by a youth-led approach in line with Erasmus+ topics, the development of the sustainability protocols under the project directly addresses the topic of community development. The project included marginalised young people who use or are affected by drugs in its design, implementation, and target groups, fitting into the inclusion of marginalised young people topic. Lastly, the project addressed the youth policy development topic by building upon the foundation of ongoing youth dialogue and active engagement within the EU. This endeavour aligned seamlessly with the thematic priority of EU Youth Dialogue, emphasising the creation of inclusive spaces that empower youth participation and reinforce democratic values. Through strengthening organisations that foster active citizenship, the project embodied the spirit of "Europe for YOUTH - YOUTH for Europe" and promoted youth voices in shaping a collective future.

LEARNING METHODS

2

Consultation and Best Practices

Building on the insights from the initial phase, YIP facilitated a series of consultations and workshops aimed at sharing best practices and strategies for leadership transition, institutional memory, and strategic planning. The learning methodology here was participatory, encouraging active engagement, discussion, and the exchange of ideas among participants. Role-playing and scenario analysis were utilised to simulate real-world challenges and solutions, enhancing the practical application of concepts.

1

Needs Assessment and Organisational Analysis

The project was initiated with a comprehensive needs assessment, employing surveys, interviews, and a basic Organisation Assessment Tool (OAT) to gather data on the current state and needs of youth-led organisations in the drug policy sector. This phase emphasised reflective learning, where participants analysed their organisational strengths and weaknesses, fostering a foundational understanding of areas for improvement and growth.

3

Framework Development and Implementation Planning

In the next phase, the project focused on developing a robust Sustainability Framework and Framework Implementation plan. This involved collaborative workshops, drafting sessions, and feedback loops with stakeholders to refine the strategies and tools needed for effective organisational development. The learning approach was hands-on, with participants directly involved in the creation of resources such as the Implementation Handbook, and the refined OAT for youth-led drug related organisations. This phase consolidated the learnings from earlier phases into tangible outputs for immediate application within the organisations.

4

Framework Implementation During Hybrid Segment in Dublin

The event, co-hosted by SSDP International, Youth RISE and Young Wave, was held in Dublin, Ireland, from 26 to 29, 2024. It involved discussing the outcomes of previous project phases as well as facilitating workshops and peer-led discussions on the topic of sustainability in all three organisations, to fine tune a Sustainability Framework.

5

Framework Review & Validation

The final report was written while using the outcomes and feedback gathered from all phase 4 segment participants via real-time feedback and two online feedback forms (Initial Feedback and Follow-Up Feedback sections below, the latter a month later to identify ongoing work in each organisation while adapting lessons learnt from YIP). The managers of the project integrated the newly assessed sustainability actions by each organisation (collected and contrasted through the improved OAT from phase 3) into this Results Report, discussed the highlights of all previous phases, and concluded them all in the document.

6

Report Launch & Findings Dissemination

An online Launch Event recorded in the form of a publicly available webinar accessible through the participating organisations' websites was held among all the participants, youth-led organisations, drug policy/harm reduction organisations and their intersections. This consisted of a presentation of YIP, its developed Sustainability Framework, testimony on its implementation in Dublin from one youth advocate per participating organisation, and the sharing of the Results Report and Framework materials (published in the same spaces). Project managers disseminated the findings of the whole YIP as well as the utility of the Framework materials for their use by any of the target groups invited to the Launch Event, as well as through social media and email channels.

Each phase of YIP utilised a blend of analytical, participatory, and hands-on learning methods, tailored to the evolving needs of the project and its participants. This approach ensured a comprehensive understanding and application of strategies to enhance the sustainability and impact of youth-led organisations in the drug policy sector.

PROJECT RATIONALE

Youth-led organisations in the drug policy and harm reduction sector suffer from a range of capacity issues.

The key issues we had identified were:

1. Poor Leadership Transitions
2. Poor Institutional Knowledge/Memory
3. Lack of Long-Term Strategy.

These issues were a direct result of regular leadership changes, which was a defining characteristic of youth-led organisations. Furthermore, the participating organisations have many young people who use drugs in their membership and leadership. This population faces additional barriers regarding barriers to education and learning due to stigma, discrimination, arrests/prosecutions, and barriers to accessing support and care that enable them to apply themselves in this sector sustainably. Alongside this, youth-led organisations in this sector rarely engage with the broader youth sector and have limited knowledge of youth work as a practice.

As a result of these issues, the three participating organisations struggled to maintain steady and consistent success and growth. For community- and youth-led organisations to develop and be successful, these issues needed to be addressed. Addressing these issues would allow for a stronger network of youth organisations working within the field of policy and institutional engagement, such as within the European Union

To ensure that the work of the three organisations in engaging in policy dialogue and practice at the EU level is recognised, these organisations must be empowered and supported to be sustainable to allow for the next generation of young people to succeed. As a result, the three organisations proposed the development and implementation of a youth-work framework adapted to address the needs of young people who use drugs and the drug policy/harm reduction sector.

TARGET AUDIENCE

The target groups of this project were the internal teams and governance structures of the participating organisations. The participating organisations are all youth-led organisations with people directly affected by drugs in their leadership. Young people who use drugs and young people who are directly affected by drugs face unique challenges both in general (e.g., stigma) and when organising (e.g., lack of senior management experience). The goal of this project was to address these barriers that directly affect the sustainability of the participating organisations, and create new, more sustainable structures and ways of working within these organisations.

PARTICIPANTS PROFILE

Our cohort of participants was representative of a diverse range of geographical, socio-economic and advocacy backgrounds. Our 16 participants came from 11 countries across Europe, Africa and the Americas: Argentina, Austria, Costa Rica, Germany, Ireland, Lithuania, Mexico, Nigeria, South Africa, Peru and the United States of America. The age of the participants ranges from 19-29 years old. 13 participants had been involved in grassroots advocacy efforts in the field of drug policy and harm reduction before starting their training. Two participants had come from the medical field and prevention services with little to no prior experience in advocacy before the commencement of our project. Four participants enrolled in the training based on their previous academic engagement with drug-related issues. Six participants had identified themselves either as people who use drugs, people directly impacted by current punitive drug policies, or as people with friends or family impacted by drug use and drug policy. The diversity of our cohort meant that participants were exposed to a variety of expertise, lived experiences, and opinions, which enriched their learning process.

DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

In line with the EU HORIZONTAL priority on inclusion and diversity in all fields of education, training, youth, and sport, our organisations endeavoured to maximise the participation of young people of various socio-economic backgrounds, abilities, and geographical positioning. The organisations are made up of young people working in harm reduction and drug policy reform who use drugs or are affected by drugs, integrating marginalised populations in every aspect of the project in a peer-to-peer, non-hierarchical manner.

Our project included funding for flights, accommodation, and daily expenses such as food and city transport covered in advance for the components organised in Dublin. All participants had their flights and accommodation fully covered to lower financial barriers. Participants were also supported with visa recommendation letters and processing costs when required.

In addition, accessibility and dietary information were collected beforehand via an online form to ensure inclusion, and the spaces for the in-person components were wheelchair accessible. Catering options also included vegan, vegetarian, and gluten-free options, while also taking into account any other allergies disclosed by the participants. All virtual events were recorded and made available to participants, alongside any other materials used (PowerPoint presentations, policy briefs, tables, etc).

1



Desk Research & Needs Assessment

2



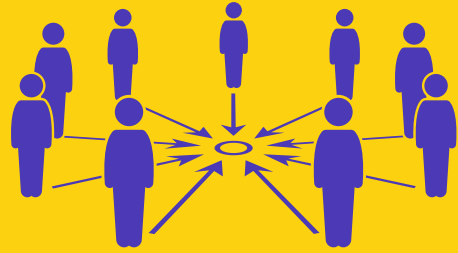
Consultation Process & Collection of Best Practices

3



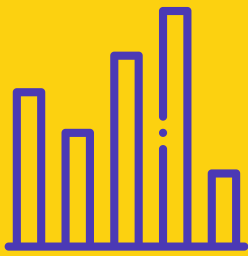
Organisational Assessment Tool (OAT)

4



In-Person Meeting

5



Evaluation Surveys

6



Amended Organisational Assessment Tool (OAT)

7



Framework Development, Implementation, & Dissemination of Results*

*A flexible guide for the implementation of the Sustainability Framework was created as part of the open nature of the project and its expected impact on other organisations that can benefit from cooperatively tackling their key areas of improvements. This Implementation Handbook revolves around the three pillars of the project (1. Leadership Transition, 2. Institutional knowledge/memory, and 3. Long-term strategy). However, by design, it can and should be modified as needed in its specific content as well as the possible duration of the implementation stages.

FRAMEWORK OUTLINE

MEASUREMENTS OF SUCCESS

Participant Engagement throughout the Training

The internal teams of SSDP International, Young Wave, and Youth RISE were the target of the hybrid Framework Implementation. Even though we had initially recruited the 13 people needed for the in-person component in Dublin, three of those people attended virtually because of inevitable visa delays, an all too common issue in mobility in this field for an international cohort. As such, the participants who could not attend the sessions physically participated online watched the recording for any missed sessions and contributed to the online surveys for the two sessions that had them in their own time. Some participants faced difficulties due to jet lag while flying to Dublin, and were, therefore, less engaged in the first sessions. Because of the demand of the sessions from the participants, the implementation would have benefited from an extra day of more spaced-out content, were there more resources available. However, given the opportunity to form connections with other young advocates and create a sense of community, sessions immediately saw a marked increase in engagement.

While these in-person numbers are less than anticipated, the people who have engaged throughout the project have consistently displayed immense dedication throughout and beyond its scope and have remained representative of our target populations. The increase in in-person engagement also shows that despite time constraints and initial jet lag difficulties, participant engagement not only remained stable but increased at times during these peer-led sessions.

Participants' Discussion on YIP Phase 2: Analysis

During the YIP project, project managers notably focused on reviewing the outcomes of previous framework phases with other members. Among the primary topics of discussion was the analysis of consultations conducted with stakeholders during phase 2 of the project. This aspect holds considerable importance as it provides valuable insights into the perspectives and concerns of key stakeholders, guiding all three organisation's future direction and strategy.

During the discussions, facilitated through the Implementation Handbook members delved into various key issues including leadership transitions within Young Wave, Youth RISE, and SSDP. The discussions touched upon best practices gleaned from collaborations with other youth-led organisations and key stakeholders, emphasising the importance of clear communication, establishing a board structure, and potentially introducing more paid management positions to ensure organisational sustainability. Additionally, focus was given to exploring the roles and responsibilities of the past, present, and future, making transitional documents, and ensuring smooth Executive Director transitions crucial in shaping the organisation's leadership structure.

Another vital aspect discussed was institutional knowledge and memory, which encompassed the preservation of volunteer profiles. This is essential for maintaining continuity and informing future decision-making processes within the organisation, and multiple archiving measures were discussed, as well as the integration of artificial intelligence software in documentation processes. The long-term strategic planning was also a focal point, addressing fundamental issues such as identity, transparency, and future ambitions of the organisations and their members.

MEASUREMENTS OF SUCCESS

Included in what was addressed were the challenges posed by administrative restrictions, limited collaboration on a national level, and resource constraints for participating in international initiatives, all of which sparked significant deliberation among participants. Long-term strategic planning was briefly discussed, but more time was spent in the individual organisation work sessions, which helped to learn from others and focus on internal organisational matters and the sharing of best practices from the personal to the structural level.

Moreover, evaluating the impact of the three organisations' activities, particularly in the context of changing political climates surrounding harm reduction efforts, has been crucial for assessing the organisations' effectiveness and identifying areas for improvement.

Overall, the ability for members to review the most important insights from previous YIP project phases helped to initiate further group work on the assessment of their own organisations once divided into groups through discussions and the use of the Organisation Assessment Tool, as well as sharing best practices after returning to group sessions. The discussions at the event provided valuable insights and actionable recommendations for steering all three organisations towards their goals in the future, which are expanded on in the Organisation Assessment Tool section.

Initial Feedback from Participants

The feedback part was implemented with an anonymous online survey, which was sent to all YIP participants immediately after the end of the event and their return from Dublin. The survey consisted of 8 questions, 6 of which allowed the respondents to expand their feedback on all the important aspects of the YIP experience. In the remaining questions, respondents could rate their satisfaction with each activity separately on a scale from 1 (worst) to 5 (best). Generally, the feedback received from participants was largely positive. Below is an analysis of all survey responses.

The majority of respondents (72.7%) awarded the event the highest satisfaction rating of 5, indicating a notable level of overall contentment. Attendees were particularly pleased with the collaborative atmosphere, diverse session offerings, and the networking and learning opportunities provided.

Several sessions stood out prominently in attendee feedback. Firstly, 2024 Sustainability strategies and Long-term planning were praised due to their productive and flexible discussions. As one of the participants wrote in the form: "...because it allowed for an opportunity to sit together in person and work through our planned projects for the year and how we will support each other through teamwork on each project. We don't get these opportunities often due to complete remote work, so it was highly valuable." Feedback findings also show that although the event schedule was tight, solutions to concrete practical issues within organisations were discussed among some of the participants but some did not find enough time to go from general discussion to more concrete problem-solving until the separate sessions for this after the event.

MEASUREMENTS OF SUCCESS

A strategic discussion on the initiative of Paradigma Coalition 2.0, as well as the upcoming Commission on Narcotic Drugs in Vienna (CND) meeting in March 2023, was included as short- to mid-term planning as they were described as catalyst topics for further collaboration between the three organisations in creating common strategies: "These collaborative efforts are not just about sharing resources but also about aligning our visions to create a unified front in our advocacy and impact strategies. The mentioned sessions also included much of the valuable new information, yet the engagement in discussions varied among participants, with some feeling adequately prepared while others identified gaps in knowledge as barriers to participation. This could be taken in consideration during future pre-event information distribution to ensure better preparation for less experienced participants."

Sessions addressing burnout prevention, collaborative team structures, care protocols, and leadership transitions were particularly valued for their contributions to both organisational sustainability and personal well-being, which were given special priority as additional session topics according to the consultation findings. Further feedback included suggestions for improvement, such as incorporating more breaks and diversifying the session format. In additional comments, a few participants also evaluated the facility as suitable, yet one suggested considering changing locations for different sessions since not everybody adjusted to bright lights in the session room, an accessibility matter that will be noted for following events. Most participants also noted the event's positive impact on motivation and sense of community.

In conclusion, the survey findings indicate a high level of satisfaction with the hybrid Youth in Power Framework Implementation weekend, characterised by commendation for its collaborative atmosphere, diverse sessions, and practical insights into sustainability and organisational wellbeing. Looking ahead, attendees expressed a desire for more time for strategic planning, tangible outcomes, and sustained collaboration to address other sustainability challenges in youth-led organisations. Suggestions from participants on pre-event information distribution and session format diversification will help in future planning.

Follow-Up Feedback From Participants

At the end of the project, a general sense of optimism, excitement, and possibility marked our cohort. To gather digested feedback from participants, all members were asked to fill out a follow-up form a month after the implementation event.

The form, designed to allow for individual evaluation of the material and the organisations' separate and joint initiatives on the ideas and possibilities for collaborations that arose, was intended to evaluate (1) the sustainability aspects the Dublin event was based around, as well as (2) the prolonged benefits of the sessions in each organisations' current work. The form was anonymous and confidential and gathered the answers of 8 participants.

Firstly, survey respondents had to rate their experience from 1 (worst) to 5 (best) in retrospect. 62.5 per cent of the participants gave the highest score of 5 and the rest (37.5 %) rated it 4. In the following comment section, all participants had to comment on their rating choices. "I chose 5 because the meeting allowed us to strategise and come up with action items which we're currently following up on and working on and will continue to guide and influence our work in the coming months". The minority of survey respondents who gave 4 points were generally satisfied with the YIP in-person segment, although, they had hoped that the current work that followed up from it would be easier to do with more tangible planning for a concrete implementation.

MEASUREMENTS OF SUCCESS

The next question was for participants to identify the prolonged benefits of the sessions that stood out. The vast majority of the answers emphasised the follow-up internal discussions on strategy aspects of making the organisation stronger and more comfortable for volunteers. It included the current development of new documents on internal work ethics.

Others highlighted lessons learned from the sessions on burnout and institutional knowledge: “Sustainability discussion and breakaway sessions on institutional strategy allows us to refocus our work and efforts in a manner that will ensure the sustainability of the organisation not only through funding but by ensuring that people are motivated to continue to contribute their efforts to the sustainability of the organisation”.

In a further question survey, respondents had to identify issues/topics related to the Dublin event weekend content that they would have liked to emphasise more. Here, the answers were shaped around the ongoing processes of Paradigma Coalition 2.0 as well as planning/strategising a Common Position for CND.

At the very end of the survey, participants had the option of writing additional comments about the Dublin in-person segment. Mainly, they expressed gratitude for project managers and encouraged further dialogue between the three organisations: “Honestly, I think the weekend was great and this kind of networking and bonding with everyone at least once a year is great, and something that keeps me going. It's also good to dedicate this time to working on strategising and planning in-person, rather than online”.

Alongside a general commitment to continue the work outlined during Strategy Building, here are some key takeaways participants have revealed after completing the training:

1. Prevention of burnout, a clear organisational structure and a friendly environment regulated by work ethics documentation within the organisation are the main aspects that prevent participants from leaving youth organisations
2. The extent of the work put in by grassroots organisations and local groups is more significant than expected when aiming for change at the EU level.
3. The dynamism of young people should be harnessed, despite how slow the policy-making process can be.
4. There are like-minded youth in Europe willing to organise together for change.
5. The Paradigma Coalition is a great vehicle to maximise opportunities for advocacy and strengthening collaboration between the youth harm reduction organisations worldwide that form it.

ORGANISATION ASSESSMENT TOOL

UTILITY AND UPDATES OF STANDARDISED EVALUATION

The Organisation Assessment Tool served as a roadmap for improvement, as it provided valuable and measurable insights to the three organisations. It allowed the organisations to compare strengths to share best practices, prioritise their efforts, and set realistic goals. Although it is not a one-time solution, it has been and is a dynamic tool that could support continuous improvement and organisational effectiveness. Below are the key takeaways from the three participating organisations throughout the initial and follow-up evaluation processes with this now-improved and open access resource.

ORGANISATION ASSESSMENT TOOL

STUDENTS FOR SENSIBLE DRUG POLICY INTERNATIONAL

Upon completing the first Organisation Assessment Tool, it became very clear which areas in the organisation needed improving which, to some extent, would impact the sustainability of the organisation. This included the absence of key workplace protocols, policies and strategies (communication, fundraising, theory of change). However, this also allowed us to identify our strengths such as clear vision, mission, and governance in terms of the Board and to some extent our strategic and operational plans. Having reviewed and identified our strengths and areas of improvement, we then began prioritising the areas of improvement that needed our immediate attention such as our policies to ensure compliance and developing and refining our strategies, especially our strategic and operational plan. What was important here was to ensure the involvement of all members in the organisation to get their buy-in. Having addressed these gaps identified in the OAT before the strategic meeting in Dublin, when the updated OAT was completed, We noticed many areas of improvement:

GOVERNANCE

- We have since developed and drafted all our operational policies, procedures and systems. These will be shared with the new Board and awaiting their approval.
- We have appointed a Board that is representative of our network membership
- We have put in place a succession plan for the organisation.

ORGANISATIONAL MANAGEMENT

- We have refined our strategic and operational plan by developing work plans for the organisation and our regional networks aligned to our objectives and key results (OKRs) and the priorities of our members in their respective regions.
- Our newly developed fundraising and communication strategies is allowing our efforts towards fundraising to be more targeted and aligned to our vision and mission and ensuring sustainable funding for all our activities.

ORGANISATION ASSESSMENT TOOL

STUDENTS FOR SENSIBLE DRUG POLICY INTERNATIONAL

- We are now redesigning our website to promote our efforts and provide information.
- We have started mapping our stakeholders, refining our donor tracking tool and exploring M&E systems to ensure that we can share our successes with relevant stakeholders and donors.

HUMAN RESOURCES

- Due to funding, some positions still need to be filled such as a finance manager.

PROJECT MANAGEMENT

- The development of our work plans has been consultative with all relevant individuals to ensure that our efforts not only meet our OKRs but also support our network members in their work.
- Projects will be monitored and evaluated according to either project-specific M&E plans or internally developed M&E plans.

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

- We are looking at exploring accounting systems so that we can transition from tracking our finances via Excel.
- We now have a finance policy.
- Having put all the necessary operational policies, procedures and systems, we are now moving towards focusing our efforts towards implementing our fundraising strategy and making targeted efforts towards specific donors, corporate, private and funding organisations.

ORGANISATION ASSESSMENT TOOL YOUNG WAVE

Following the completion of our initial OAT, it became evident that several areas within Young Wave required improvement, with a focus on sustainability. Key shortcomings included the lack of internal work ethics protocols and strategies, notably in fundraising, and institutional memory. However, this process also allowed us to recognize our strengths, such as a clear vision and mission. Moving forward, we prioritised addressing these gaps, emphasising the involvement of all members to garner their support. Subsequently, significant progress has been made:

ORGANISATIONAL MANAGEMENT

- Strategic and operational plans have been refined, aligned with OKRs, and tailored to the priorities of our regional networks.
- Communication strategies have been revamped to enhance targeted efforts and secure sustainable funding.
- Website redesign is underway to amplify our initiatives and provide comprehensive information.
- Measures for volunteer training improvement were set.

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

- Transition to advanced fundraising systems is being explored. With operational foundations laid and strategies refined, our focus now shifts towards executing our fundraising strategy and fostering targeted relationships with stakeholders as well as funding organisations.
- Efforts are underway to fill essential positions, including a finance manager, to enhance financial management.

ORGANISATION ASSESSMENT TOOL YOUTHRISE

The comparison of results from the evaluation of Youth RISE from the original and updated version of the Organisation Assessment Tool a year apart showed key accomplishments in the integration of our sustainability strategy. These touched all three pillars addressed by this project (1. Leadership transitions, 2. Institutional memory, and 3. Long-term plan), as well as Youth RISE-specific areas for improvement.

PROJECT MANAGEMENT

- Restructuring of Youth RISE happened throughout the Framework Implementation, with new programmes and projects that allow us for greater teamwork, easier leadership transitions, and a less hierarchical structure for supervision within Youth RISE. For example, we now have a Youth Engagement Programme Lead to oversee our volunteers (International Working Group).

ORGANISATIONAL MANAGEMENT

- We developed a long-term “Advocacy Strategy” document. This comprehensive guide outlines the overarching goals of our organisation. It is designed to break down the steps required to achieve these goals, complete with a timeline that will help us stay on track and measure our progress. This document will serve as the foundation for all our projects and activities, ensuring that they align with our vision and make the best use of our valuable resources.

GOVERNANCE

- The mission and vision statements have been included in all internal materials and proposals, brochures and reports, guiding the content of these key internal documents.

ORGANISATION ASSESSMENT TOOL

YOUTHRISE

HUMAN RESOURCES

- We developed and further defined two key roles: a Human Resources role with the responsibility of ensuring constant improvement of internal policies on employee wellbeing, and; a Welfare Officer role to assist with these and support Youth RISE employees. Additionally, we developed and trialled an in-person event Welfare Protocol.
- Youth RISE also began drafting wellbeing policies to address employee burnout before it happens, especially important for leadership and other role transitions, and we continue to improve upon our Youth RISE Human Resources Manual, such as with our development of a fair, disability- and neurodiversity-informed hiring process.

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

- We diversified funding streams through the use of digital platforms, hence working towards increasing our social media engagement to continue improving our crowdsourced fundraising through consistent and mobile-friendly videos and images.
- We increased our mapping of our stakeholders and increased our applications for European Union grants based on our past successes with Erasmus+ projects.

PROJECT TAKEAWAYS & NEXT STEPS

TAKEAWAYS FOR PROJECT MANAGERS

Throughout the Framework Implementation, project coordinators gained valuable insights that can aid youth advocacy organising in the future. Some of these insights are:

1

There is an increased need for putting together in-person networking events and facilitating strategic development conversations (**community development**).

2

Young people need to benefit from mechanisms of engagement that go beyond simple training opportunities. They need to be provided with concrete steps to move forward in their advocacy journey and have opportunities to directly contribute to the shaping of these steps as an underrepresented group, especially those affected by drugs (**inclusion of marginalised young people**).

3

There is a demand for more concrete collaboration in developing common positions for both national and international policy-making processes (**youth policy development**).

PROJECT TAKEAWAYS & NEXT STEPS

STUDENTS FOR SENSIBLE DRUG POLICY

Based on the priorities and feedback identified during the strategy meeting, our current work plans are being refined and amended, outlining specific timelines and setting out the specific resources needed to achieve our objectives and key results (OKRs). The meeting also resulted in clearly defining the roles and responsibilities of respective members (staff, volunteers, and board members) for each aspect of the work plans. This will ensure the accountability of individuals to ensure that activities are completed effectively.

We were also able to identify gaps in our governance, which has resulted in the drafting of all missing policies, including human resources policy, onboarding policy, mental health policy and disability policy (to be incorporated into the HR policy, amending our finance and governance policy. In addition, we are also exploring new digital tools for project management (Notion, Asana or Obsidian). We are also reorganising our Google Drive which is where we keep all our organisational documents and records.

Sustainability is a key aspect of SSDP International, as such, we have started doing a stakeholder mapping, including updating our donor tracking list to keep us up to date with relevant donors and stakeholders. This has also resulted in the development of a fundraising strategy as well as a communications strategy and plan, which will help us communicate and showcase our work in a way that will inform and attract stakeholders and funders.

Guided by the draft of our fundraising strategy, the ED has already begun reaching out to potential donors (corporate, private and organisations) to support the work and implementation of our projects

Following the appointment of our new board, these plans will be communicated and shared with the board to get their buy-in and approval of policies, work plans, and strategies. Once approved, these changes will then be communicated to staff and volunteers, and the necessary training will be given to staff and volunteers to begin implementing the changes. To monitor our progress, we will establish formal mechanisms to monitor our progress towards our OKRs. If we fail to meet our milestones or goals, we will make the necessary adjustments. And most importantly, celebrate all successes by acknowledging individuals (staff, network members and volunteers).

Strengthen our collaborations through the Paradigma Coalition with Young Wave, Youth RISE, and other youth-led and youth-focused organisations to allow for the sharing of information and resources (templates, best practices, etc.).

PROJECT TAKEAWAYS & NEXT STEPS

YOUNG WAVE

The representatives of Young Wave decided on the steps to be taken in the next six months: firstly, to transfer and discuss the news and ideas from YIP on the development possibilities of the youth organisation. To do it, they will organise internal trainings/meetings, involving the newest Young Wave members and present Youth In Power project details and outcomes.

During the upcoming training/meetings, based on good examples from our own and other organisations, members will name the goals and strategies of all existing structured teams of Young Wave for the next 6 months. The in-person segment of Young Wave strategy planning will also include founding members of Young Wave for experience sharing among current members.

Young Wave will then continue to collaborate with other youth harm reduction organisations on the Paradigma Coalition 2.0 platform, ensuring continuous dissemination of key news and collaboration opportunities.

Another important next step is to create internal Young Wave workplace standards and care protocols. Members of the organisation who participated in the YIP were able to perceive and discuss the importance and specifics of the aforementioned regulations, and currently intend to implement them while taking into account the characteristics of the Young Wave

PROJECT TAKEAWAYS & NEXT STEPS

YOUTHRISE

Building and sustaining our movement towards Youth RISE's goals requires a well-informed and long-lasting approach, which this sustainability-focused event contributed to by informing us of the necessary intra-organisation priorities and tools to continue developing our advocacy effectively at the international level. For example, we trialled a Welfare Protocol by our new Welfare Officer at the Commission on Narcotic Drugs and will be expanding the role beyond this event, with the responsibility of facilitating regular check-ins for burnout prevention and providing support for Youth RISE members.

Our mission, vision, and values are being fully integrated into the internal structure of Youth RISE and translated into new employee positions dedicated to ensuring they are adhered to, with the benefit of a more stable project and grant distribution as well as job security for all members. This role structure optimises institutional memory preservation as opposed to project-based temporary roles, and it is being trialled to be evaluated in the future. Concurrently, new policies targeting burnout, disability rights, and general inclusion and welfare are being created and becoming part of the philosophy of our organisation for a more diverse and sustainable team.

Youth RISE greatly benefited from the Implementation event's hybrid discussions collaborating with SSDP International, Young Wave and other youth harm reduction organisations as part of the newly revitalised Paradigma Coalition, with onboarding to the Paradigma Coalition 2.0 platform to continue and expand joint advocacy and sharing of best practices, policies, and mutual support in the youth field.

IMPACT & FOLLOW-UP

BENEFITS BEYOND YOUTH- LED DRUG-RELATED ORGANISATIONS

The main target groups we are supporting with free access to our new Sustainability Framework (including project results, implementation process, and resources) are: 1. Youth-led organisations in the drug policy/harm reduction sector, 2. Youth-led organisations who face similar sustainability issues, and 3. Drug policy/harm reduction organisations that regularly engage with youth-led organisations. The first two target groups benefit directly from the Framework and the successes of its implementation, and the third target group has the opportunity to improve their engagement with youth-led organisations by gaining insights into the challenges they face and the manners in which they are being cooperatively addressed.

During the project, we developed three outcome documents that can be utilised, adapted, and improved upon by 1. Youth-led organisations in the drug policy/harm reduction sector, 2. Youth-led organisations who face similar sustainability issues, and 3. Drug policy/harm reduction organisations that regularly engage with youth-led organisations, to improve cooperation and sustainability across and within organisations across a range of related fields and age groups:

- Youth-focused Organisation Assessment Tool
- Flexible Implementation Handbook
- Sustainability Framework Results Report (this document)

Alongside the launch event, the results report and Framework materials above remain accessible by being published on all the participating organisations' websites and shared through their social media platforms. All youth-led and community-led organisations, which oftentimes struggle with the identified challenges, will be able to benefit from the practices employed in the Framework, and even be able to self-implement the Framework within their contexts using the Organisation Assessment Tool, at any point in the future. Alongside this, organisations that regularly engage with youth-led organisations, particularly drug-related organisations, or who have youth-led committees or working groups will be able to use the Framework as a guiding document for how they engage with these people and organisations.

Lastly, we believe that the results of this project prove that the involvement and continuous co-creation of a flexible and universal Framework for youth organisations with their respective partners have strong potential to create a long-lasting impact in the area of youth advocacy.