



SPECIFIC ISSUES REVIEW REPORT

COVER PAGE

PROJECT	
Project number:	101161785
Project acronym:	YA 2024
Project name:	Youth Act 2024
Call:	ERASMUS-YOUTH-2024-CSC-OG-SGA
Topic:	ERASMUS-YOUTH-2024-CSC-OG-SGA
Type of action:	OG LS I
Service:	EACEA/A/5
Project starting date:	01/01/2024
Project duration:	12 MONTHS

SPECIFIC ISSUES REVIEW	
Date of meeting with consortium (if any):	Not applicable
Name of project officer:	Elisa MARZANO / Lene MEJER

1. BACKGROUND

Background

Give a short summary of the background needed to understand the context of the review.

This report includes the findings of the project review in accordance with Article 25.1.2. of the Grant Agreement on ID 101161785, under the specific operating grant action ERASMUS-YOUTH-2024-CSC-OG-SGA. This specific grant is covered by the Framework Partnership agreement 2023-2025. The review of this project was done at the same time as reviews of other projects where WYA Europe or WYA Croatia are involved:

Therefore, the technical review covers 3 projects and two organisations:

WYA	101134732	WHGD	ERASMUS-2023-PCOOP-ENGO	COORDINATOR
WYA Croatia	101134732	WHGD	ERASMUS-2023-PCOOP-ENGO	PARTICIPANT
WYA	101161773	WYAE OG 2024	ERASMUS-2024-CSC-OG-SGA	COORDINATOR
WYA Croatia	101161785	YA 2024	ERASMUS-2024-CSC-OG-SGA	COORDINATOR

This report, as well as the other reports, builds on the reports of the two experts contracted to carry out the technical review:

- Prof. Marie-Geneviève PINSART, Université Libre de Bruxelles
- Prof. Emily-Meg JACKSON, London School of Economics

EACEA held three meetings 28/5, 16/7 and 27/7 with the experts during the review period which started at the end of May 2025 and ran until end August.

Project ID 101161785 Youth Act 2024

The project summary reads: *Svjetski savez mladih Jugoistočna Europa (SSM JIE) is an ENGO of young people from 18 - 30 years old, dedicated to raising awareness about the human dignity and human rights and empowering the youth in Europe, with the specific focus on Southeast and Central Europe. For 2024, all our activities are designed and implemented by youth, and youth is the target group of our activities. SSM JIE has 35 members organizations and branches in different European countries, with the specific focus on Southeast and Central Europe, and each of them brings together a certain number of young people who will be responsible for implementing some of 30 activities that are planned for 2024.*

Apart from the implementation itself, young people will design projects on their own, arrange implementation and later evaluate and improve the project if necessary. All of them are also participating in the dissemination activities, especially on their national levels. By organizing more than 30 activities in 2024, we will reach more than 60500 participants and 115 decision makers, including producing 8 policy and position papers, increasing the skills and competences of our participants for 25% comparing them with their status before the participation in our activities.

The 2024 activities also have an aim of mainstreaming the legacy of the European Year of Youth among youth from all parts of Europe by facilitating the topics of digital transition and training youth in digital skills, by encouraging all young people, but especially young people with fewer opportunities, to become active and engaged citizens as well as actors of change, inspired by a European sense of belonging, and finally, by promoting opportunities for young people arising from the public policies at EU, national, regional level and local level in order to support their personal, social and professional development in a greener, more digital and more inclusive Union.

2. ISSUES AND SCOPE OF THE REVIEW

Issues and scope of the review

Issues

Give a short summary of the issues.

Concerns/issues over the content of activities, trainings, deliverables and events organised under this specific grant in relation to

- the grant agreement, including the compliance with the article 14 on ethics and values and the annexes in the grant agreement;;
- the Erasmus+ Regulation and objectives of the call;
- the EU Financial Regulation and the EU Treaties;

Concerns over policy papers, media and communication activities on different fields in relation to EU values, EU policy priorities and established positions.

Concerns over the trainings, workshops, conferences and deliverables under this grant that focus on the aspect of sexual and reproductive health. As an example of this, the following non-exhaustive list include:

E2.3 Summer school of bioethics

E2.4 International summer school of bioethics

E2.10 Fertility education and medical management

D2.13 Training of Youth workers on the topic of women's reproductive and mental health

In this regard, the issues concern potential risk of disinformation targeting participants in the project's activities with biased information and, in particular, vulnerable audiences and minority groups. The report also assesses compliance in the specific fields of reproductive health, contraception, sexual transmission diseases, including EU positions about human dignity, safe sex and how to promote safe sex.

Scope of the review

Define the scope of the review. If possible, formulate specific questions.

The report takes into account the overall framework in which the grant is given, as specifically described in:

- 1) the objectives of the calls, - relating to EU values as in the CSC-Youth call: 'Encouraging and equipping young people with the necessary resources to become active citizens, agents of solidarity and positive change inspired by EU values and a European identity'.
- 2) In the signed agreement, in particular to the relevance of the described activities of the CSC-Youth project and in relation to article 14 on ethics and values.
- 3) The stipulations in the EU financial regulation, in particular article 6.3: In the implementation of the budget, Member States and the Commission shall ensure compliance with the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, in accordance with Article 51 of the Charter, and shall respect the Union values enshrined in Article 2 TEU relevant in the implementation of the budget' and,
- 4) Art 2 of TFEU: 'The Union is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities. These values are common to the Member States in a society in which pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between women and men prevail.' Please also see the EU Commission's webpage on justice and fundamental rights: Justice and fundamental rights as well as the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union https://www.europarl.europa.eu/charter/pdf/text_en.pdf.

Please note that the grant is an operating grant which support the functioning of the organisation (see EU Financial Regulation, art. 183 (2b): 'Grants may be awarded in order to finance any of the following: the functioning of a body which has an objective forming part of, and supporting, a Union policy (operating grants). Operating grants shall take the form of a financial contribution to the work programme of the body referred to in the first subparagraph, point (b). Therefore, the scope of this review focuses on the work programme of the organisation as stated in the grant agreement (and in particular in annex 1) and how it supports 'Union policy'.

The documentation used for the review covers several sources directly related to the grant agreement, including the proposal application and its evaluation, and all the reports and deliverables provided as well as any other relevant documentation for assessing the issues detected. This includes WYA accessible public information, including the websites www.wya.net, ssm-jie.com, WYA Facebook www.facebook.com/WYAeurope/ and Instagram www.instagram.com/wyaglobal/?hl=en.

Guidance on the context of sexual and reproductive rights

As regards to the special attention devoted to the aspect of sexual and reproductive health and rights, the work of the experts identified a reference frame of guidance beyond the general framework of the TFEU, the EU Financial Regulation and the grant agreements themselves.

This includes the European Parliament resolution of 24 June 2021 on the situation of sexual and reproductive health and rights in the EU, in the frame of women's health (2020/2215(INI)) (2022/C 81/04)). This includes access to:

- I. scientifically accurate, evidence-based, age-appropriate, non-judgemental and comprehensive sexuality education (Article 26)
- II. universal access to a range of high-quality and accessible modern contraceptive methods and supplies (Article 30)
- III. access to safe and legal abortion, recognising that a total ban on abortion care or denial of abortion care is a form of gender-based violence (Article 35)

On the principle of non-discrimination, the Charter of Fundamental Rights of The European Union (2000/C 364/01) Article 21 states that:

- IV. "Any discrimination based on any ground such as sex, race, colour, ethnic or social origin, genetic features, language, religion or belief, political or any other opinion, membership of a national minority, property, birth, disability, age or sexual orientation shall be prohibited."

Under European Parliament resolution of 24 June 2021 on the situation of sexual and reproductive health and rights in the EU, in the frame of women's health (2020/2215(INI)) (2022/C 81/04)), Member States must also 'combat the spread of discriminatory and unsafe misinformation on SRHR, as it endangers all persons, especially women, LGBTIQ+ persons and young people' (article 29); and 'provide evidence-based, accurate information about contraception and to establish strategies to tackle and dispel barriers, myths, stigma and misconceptions' (Article 32).

On HIV/AIDS, the European Parliament resolution of 20 May 2021 on Accelerating progress and tackling inequalities towards ending AIDS as a public health threat by 2030 (2021/2604(RSP)). This document explicitly mentions combating stigma and discrimination and supporting key populations.

The European Parliament resolution of 14 September 2021 on LGBTIQ+ rights in the EU (2021/2679(RSP)), among other things:

- 'Expressed deep concern regarding the discrimination suffered by rainbow families and their children in the EU and the fact that they are deprived of their rights on grounds of sexual orientation or gender identity, or sex characteristics of the parents or partners. The Commission and the Member States are called on to overcome this discrimination and to remove the obstacles they face when exercising the fundamental right to freedom of movement within the EU';
- 'Underlined the need to work towards the full enjoyment of fundamental rights by LGBTIQ+ persons in all EU Member States. Parliament insisted that the EU needs to take a common approach to the recognition of same-sex marriages and partnerships'

REGULATION (EU) 2021/817 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 20 May 2021 establishing Erasmus+: the Union Programme for education and training, youth and sport and repealing Regulation (EU) No 1288/2013

Para 64 states that: 'This Regulation respects the fundamental rights and observes the principles recognised in particular by the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (the 'Charter'). In particular, this Regulation seeks to ensure full respect for the right to equality between women and men and the right to non-discrimination based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation, and to promote the application of Articles 21 and 23 of the Charter.

3. ASSESSMENT

Assessment
Opinion
<u>Purpose of Project:</u> The purpose of this project is to empower young people through a variety of activities, in order to promote human rights and dignity, social inclusion and democratic participation. In addition, the activities are intended to enhance young people's employability, by training them in new skills and competencies. More than 30 activities took place, reaching 60,000 young people. The activities set out in the proposal are in line with the call, and young people were proposed to design and implement the projects themselves – such as producing policy papers and increasing skills and competencies. The project also states that: <i>"We also put a strong emphasis on promoting the common EU values."</i> By connecting youth, the proposal also states that SSM JIE (WYA SEE) is <i>"contributing to the strengthening of the cohesion in the region, as well as spreading the European citizenship and the values on which the EU is founded"</i>. It also states that the work programme will integrate gender and non-discrimination considerations and target a gender balanced representation in project teams and activities. It is noteworthy that the Mission Statement and the Proposal (Grant Agreement – Annex 1) is dedicated to creating an environment that enable the formation of young people and enable them to take responsibility for the common good, and promoting values such as human dignity without further elaboration on key elements such the view that life starts at conception. For example, it states that: <i>'The mission of SSM JIE is to create a stimulating environment for the holistic development of the human person and create programs that will enable the formation of young people in intellectual, psychological, social and spiritual aspects and enable them to take responsibility for the common good and build civilization in accordance with fundamental human values'</i>. <u>Opinion on the outputs:</u> The activities and deliverables set out in the proposal and specified in the Grant Agreement have been carried out. The following deviations from Article 14 of the Grant Agreement with regards to EU values and ethical standards have been identified in the implementation of some of these activities: 1. One-sided and biased material on sexual and reproductive health rights. The activities put a strong focus on abstinence and natural family planning and systematically omit certain topics or present them in a negative way (for example, in relation to comprehensive sexuality education, oral contraception, abortion and surrogacy). The presentation of these topics lack balance and does not reflect the expectation of scientifically accurate, evidence-based, non-judgmental and comprehensive sexuality education. By omitting or downplaying certain aspects (e.g., abortion, contraception), and excluding certain groups such as LGBTIQ+ people and single woman, the material risk creating partial or misleading impressions. 2. Policy papers and positions presenting one-sided views that deviate from the call objectives World Youth Alliance South-East Europe was founded in 2018 and is self-described in their social media as "a sub-regional office of WYA in charge of coordinating Chapters and members in 16 European countries". It is committed to training and empowering young people "to transform politics and culture by promoting the dignity of the person and building solidarity among young people". The promotion and alignment with the World Youth Alliance Charter and policy papers present a one-sided view that contrasts with Erasmus+ objectives of openness, intercultural exchange, and pluralism. Among other things, the Charter states 'that the intrinsic dignity possessed by every human being from conception to natural death is the foundation of everyone's right to life' and 'that the fundamental unit of human society is the family'. The restricting membership to those who share a specific belief may limit inclusivity and discourage or exclude participation from young people with diverse perspectives.

The WYA White Papers <https://wya.net/white-papers/> contain statements which are one-sided and at odds with established EU positions. For example:

- On Gender, it rejects the claim that gender can contradict biological sex. The EU LGBTIQ+ Equality Strategy 2020-2025 and 2026-2030 separates and protects both sex and gender.
- On HIV/AIDs, it downplays the effectiveness of condom use, argues against the UNAIDS/WHO approach to prevention in favour of behavioural change ('stopping risky behaviors' and 'cultivating a culture of personal responsibility'). There is a potential risk to young people's health as a result of the lack of explanation about the protection condoms provide against HIV transmission. The EU Commission and the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control include condoms as a key component of HIV prevention.
- On sexuality education, claims that there is no right to comprehensive sexuality education. While the EU consistently endorse comprehensive sexuality education (ie. Roadmap for woman's Rights – Commission Communication, March 2025; European parliament Resolution on the situation of sexual and reproductive health and right in the EU in the frame of women's health – June 2021). EU LGBTIQ+ Strategy states that inclusive sexual education should address LGBTIQ+ issues to combat prejudice.

There is a discrepancy between the project, which claims to be in line with EU values, and the wider activities with which this organisation is associated.

According to Article II.1.1 of the Erasmus+ grant agreement, funded activities must uphold ethical principles, promote scientific accuracy, and align with core EU values, including human dignity, inclusion, diversity, equality, and respect for fundamental rights.

Those listed statements restrict scientific accuracy and information and do not foster inclusion and diversity as described in the Erasmus+ Inclusion and Diversity Strategy. In fact, they constitute discriminations linked to gender identity and gender expression.

Expected impacts achieved

Overall, the activities and deliverables set out in the Proposal and specified in the Grant Agreement have been completed or largely completed. However, certain issues have been identified:

- There is a lack of detail on how the activities were carried out, their content, and the selection process and participation of young people, particularly in the design of certain activities.
- The relationship between young people and decision-makers has not been explained.
- The organisers do not take a critical view of the activities, particularly with regard to the difficulties encountered during the discussions, the participants' reception of the presentations on various topics, and the possibility that some people may have asked questions on topics not covered in the activities.
- Deliverable D3 seems out of context for young people aged 18 to 30. No explanation is provided as to why it was chosen for much younger children.

Social media

World Youth Alliance Southeast Europe's social media posts mainly involve links to events, like the recent Summer School in Bioethics and the 'Youth Empowerment Forum', and to their 'Dignity Defenders Campaign', and their internship program.

Information about activities has been posted on various social media platforms. They also publish 'motivational quotes'.

Detailed analysis of deliverables

Deliverable number	Deliverable name	Comments
D1	<i>Policy paper on women's mental and reproductive health</i>	The ethical principles highlighted are human dignity, solidarity and subsidiarity. Several recommendations relate to mental health, informed consent, people who have experienced violence, etc. Most of this is neutral, and unobjectionable – such

		as advocating for comprehensive mental health education and promoting efforts to destigmatise mental health issues. Under the heading, 'Ensure Access to Quality Healthcare', in the context of reproductive health care, there is no reference to access to contraception and abortion. It just mentions 'Ensure availability of quality reproductive health services, including prenatal care, fertility treatments, and support for managing hormonal health conditions.' It would have been desirable for the very brief examples from different European countries presented in the section on 'Best practices in women's mental and reproductive health' to have been explained further. Fuller explanations would have provided a better understanding of the various means of achieving the objectives set by the 'Best Practices'.
D2	<i>Policy paper on the topic of how to ensure youth safe understanding of the digital transformations in today's world</i>	This four-page paper sets out the use of AI among young people, potential threats to young people 'in the digital world', including data privacy, misinformation, mental health, cyberbullying, harassment and inequalities, and makes recommendations to 'ensure youth dignity', and some specific recommendations for the EU, such as establishing an EU Framework for Youth Digital Safety. The recommendations are relevant. However, concrete proposals for implementing them would have been useful.
D3	<i>E-book on the topic of psychological resilience of children and youth in challenging times</i>	This 38 page e-book is aimed at young children, and it addresses feelings and emotions. It teaches children to identify them in themselves and others, explains their possible causes and how to manage and talk about them. The language is clear and accompanied by illustrations and diagrams suitable for young children It advocates practising the 'virtue' of gratitude and developing empathy. D3 is clear and appropriate for young children, but in the Proposal, D3 is presented as an '<i>E-book on the topic of psychological resilience of children and youth in challenging times</i>'. This e-book is not suitable for 'youth'. Resilience is not mentioned, apart from in the title. The names of the individuals or WYA branch responsible for producing this document are not mentioned.
D4	<i>10 web articles</i>	All in Croatian. They were analysed with the use of translation tools. One was about Croatian support for its diaspora in Vojvodina. Another was about a WYA roundtable discussion on 'Modern Trends in family dynamics and their impact on youth' which took place at the Croatian Catholic University on November 12-2024. One speaker attributed the delay in parenthood among youth to 'a reluctance to take responsibility'.
D5	<i>6 newsletters</i>	These newsletters cover activities that took place in year 2024. The November-December 2024 newsletter announces a discussion on palliative care in relation to euthanasia. The presentation of the activity takes a clear stance against euthanasia: 'They discussed how palliative care is a positive alternative to

		euthanasia and the connection between philosophical and ethical relativism and radical individualism of (post)modern society with the acceptance of euthanasia.'
D6	2 videos for dissemination	Two young women members of the organisation talking about how much they gained from their involvement in events. There is reference to 'well rounded debates' on, for example, the right to life at the summer school, and the fact that the topics of euthanasia, palliative care and surrogacy were discussed. No information is provided on how the topics were addressed, whether all perspectives were discussed during the debates, or whether young people were able to speak freely.

Recommendations

- The activities/deliverables currently available do not reflect the participatory aspect, i.e. the initiatives of the participants, the selection process of participants, the necessary agreement with the WYA Charter.
- Little information is presented on the difficulties and achievements of the project. There is no mention of any ethical issues, for example by indicating whether and how difficulties raised by vulnerable people were addressed during the project.
- While it may be legitimate for the project promoters to defend a particular conception of health and reproductive rights, this point of view should have been made clear from the outset, in the proposal/application, and in the implementation of the project and its deliverables.
- But more important still, and in line with the objectives of the call and article 14 on ethics and values of the Grant Agreement, it's necessary to introduce a comprehensive approach in the aspect of sexual and reproductive health and rights that includes scientifically accurate, evidence-based, non-judgmental and comprehensive sexuality education.
- A one-sided and biased view poses a problem in terms of intellectual rigor and honesty. The activities should include comprehensive sexual education and the omission of certain topics (ie. abortion) and certain people (ie. single women, LGBTIQ+) are at odds with some of the call objectives in terms of inclusion, diversity and representation.
- Ensure that activities provided comply with EU values, the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union articles 3 and 21, and the rights of LGBTIQ+ individuals and families are present.

Summary issues of compliance

Actions	Issues of compliance	Relevant EU Framework
One-sided and biased material on sexual and reproductive health rights.	The presentation lacks balance and does not reflect an evidence-based, comprehensive, and non-judgmental sexuality education. By omitting or presenting negatively certain aspects (e.g., abortion, contraception) or categories of people (LGBTIQ+ or single women) and emphasising abstinence or natural family planning, the material risk creating partial or misleading impressions.	EU Values (Art. 2 TEU); Charter of Fundamental Rights (Arts.3, 21, 35); Erasmus+ Regulation (EU 2021/817, para 64); Erasmus+ Grant Agreement Art. II.1.1. and art. 14
White Papers containing positions which are one-sided and at odds with established EU positions regarding Inclusion and Diversity, Comprehensive sexuality education, and disease prevention.	Dismissing widely accepted scientific evidence and public health guidance poses a problem. Statements on gender identity, comprehensive sexuality education and HIV prevention risks reinforcing stigma and discriminate people.	EU Values (Art. 2 TEU); Charter of Fundamental Rights (Arts.3, 21, 35); Erasmus+ Regulation (EU 2021/817, para 64); Erasmus+ Grant Agreement Art. II.1.1. and art 14.
Lack of information on how young people are selected and contribute to the design of deliverables.	Diversity is important to provide input for the organisation of activities to meet the Erasmus+ objectives on active participation, co-creation, and democratic engagement. Activities seem to reflect mainly the organisation's position and provide little evidence of youth-led input.	Erasmus+ Regulation (EU 2021/817, para 64); Erasmus+ Grant Agreement Art. II.1.1.
Omission at application stage of key aspects to assess activities on sexual health education	The organisation mentions human dignity and sexual health education without describing its positions such as its opposition to abortion and comprehensive sexuality education, their emphasis on abstinence and natural family planning, and the fundamental idea that life begins at conception.	Erasmus+ Grant Agreement Art. II.1.1. and art 14.
Membership only open to those signing WYA Charter	Restricting membership to those who share a specific belief (ie. life starts at conception) may limit inclusivity and discourage participation from young people with diverse perspectives. This contrasts with Erasmus+ objectives of openness, intercultural exchange, and pluralism.	Erasmus+ Regulation (para 64).