

Transcript video Angela Medendorp from Erasmus+ Youth

Good morning, good afternoon, or whenever you're viewing this. I'm delighted to be here today to talk about the opportunities to use the Erasmus Plus Youth program to work on digital transformation in youth work. I'll briefly explain a few things, and I've compiled a schedule for you so you won't encounter any surprises.

I'll briefly explain who I am and what I do, how it relates to digital youth work, how you as a youth work organization can benefit from it, and why you should want to. And if you have any questions today, please feel free to ask. My contact information is at the end, so you can always contact me later if you'd like.

Well, I'm here today on behalf of the National Agency for Erasmus+ Youth, Erasmus+ Sport, and the European Solidarity Corps. These are three European programs. Erasmus+ Youth is the European program for youth and youth work. And when I say youth, I actually mean everyone between the ages of 13 and 30.

And when I say youth workers, I'm actually referring to anyone involved in the development of young people in their free time. So, we're talking about all extracurricular activities focused on youth development. Perhaps that gives you a sense of whether you would also be considered a youth worker under this definition.

Erasmus plus Sport is the European programme for sport and people involved in it.

And European Solidarity Corps, that's the European program for youth volunteering. What we actually do at the National Agency is that within the Kingdom of the Netherlands, so for both the European and Caribbean parts of the Netherlands, we are the agency responsible for providing subsidies for these three programs.

This means we organize calls for grants for ten different initiatives across Europe and help organizations submit, evaluate, and follow up on proposals. We also play a role in international knowledge sharing, specifically around themes like digital youth work.

And where the knowledge does not yet exist, we sometimes also have a role to play in developing that knowledge.

My name is Angela Medendorp, and I'm here now as a program advisor. It's a role that encompasses a wide range of tasks. This means I guide organizations from start to finish in their search for how these programs align with what we're doing.

How could we utilize these opportunities? So, both during the entire orientation phase... and during the application phase, but also afterward. That's something people don't always realize. When you say you're providing grants, people often think you're only there once a project has

been awarded. But a very important part of our work is that we also support organizations that are still exploring how we can utilize these grant opportunities.

And what does that have to do with digital youth work? Besides Erasmus Plus being a program for youth work, digitalization is a priority in all European programs during this program period—the period from 2021 to 2027, so we're in the second half of that program.

So it doesn't really matter what the program is about, whether it's trade, the labor market, or nature. Digitalization is always a priority, an important issue. And that's because Brussels has decided that the 2020s are the so-called digital decades. This means that practically everything that happens in Europe during these years will have a digital flavor. And the reason behind this is actually quite simple.

Looking from Europe to the rest of the world, we must work tirelessly these years to ensure that we don't just follow what's happening in the rest of the world in the digital arena, but that we can also participate and continue to develop ourselves. When we see what's happening in China, when we see what's happening in Silicon Valley, everything is moving incredibly fast, incredibly quickly, and has a huge impact on the lives of people in Europe. And that's one of the reasons why Brussels has now said that in these years we will invest extra in everything related to digitalization.

What does this mean for Erasmus Plus Youth, a program for young people and youth work? Which, of course, isn't always entirely high-tech, or even necessary. It's essentially an extra emphasis on skills. And that primarily means, of course, the skills to participate in society. We all know that if you want to bank these days and can't use the app, that's incredibly difficult. Want to borrow a book from the library? And so on, and so on. For so many basic things in life, you simply need digital skills. And for Erasmus+ Youth, there's extra funding during this period to ensure that young people and youth workers can acquire these skills.

But it goes further than that. Because besides the basics, you naturally also want to be able to use all the additional possibilities that digitalization offers. Digitalization allows us to do more, work more efficiently, but perhaps also to innovate. So that's an additional way to use digitalization in these programs.

That's another area we consider when we have specific attractions. And if we look at the downside, we also see that digitalization carries quite a few risks. And for that too, we want to ensure that both young people and youth workers have the skills to handle this effectively.

So, basically, skills in three ways: the basics, the extras, and the downsides.

Simply put, this means that during this period, organizations have an increased chance of receiving funding if they submit projects with a clear digital component. This could mean that the project is partially digital. It could also mean that the project has a very clear digital theme, something related to the digital world.

And it could also mean that you're simply making extensive use of a few digital tools in your project, so you're already truly incorporating digital youth work into that project. And if you translate that to the kind of projects we fund with Erasmus+ Youth, you could consider, for example, a youth exchange on, say, online identity. So a youth exchange is an activity where young people from... at least two different countries meet in small groups in one of those countries and exchange ideas about a topic they find truly important and interesting. Now, link that to a digital theme like online identity.

Who am I online? How does that differ from who I am in real life? What does that mean for how I behave? Then you might have a project idea that would be a perfect fit for our program. But that's just one example, and that's also the tricky part: all the examples I've given you are excellent examples, but they're also far from everything that could be included in the program.

That's why I won't give all the examples, because I mainly want to invite you to think about this for yourselves and to look at your own young people, your own colleagues, what's going on here and how that might relate to this theme. Anyway, a youth exchange on online identity would be very appropriate for us these days.

Are you focusing more on your development as a youth worker? There are programs for that, not just for young people, but also for youth workers. For example, you could consider a training program for youth workers on digital youth work. And that could be a huge undertaking. You could bring together youth workers from seven different countries to discuss this.

And to appoint a trainer there and exchange ideas about how to do that and develop relevant competencies. But it could also be as simple as having one or two people abroad visit a more experienced organization to see how you actually do it? What does your work entail? Just a kind of job shadowing, where you get a glimpse behind the scenes at another organization for a few days. These are also things we can and would very much like to fund with Erasmus+ Youth. So those are proposals we're very open to. Expand it a bit and really look at your own organization and see how... how do we actually conduct ourselves when it comes to digital youth work? What policy do we have in place? Have we fully integrated it, etc.? Then you could also consider a collaborative project. And that can also be small-scale, so with one other organization with which you share a challenge and where you think, well, should we develop something together that will benefit us both? Well, that's a project that could be a great fit for us. I also believe in expanding this by involving even more organizations, forming a true consortium, and developing something useful for almost, if not all, youth workers in Europe. In short, these are just a few ways our grants could help you take the next step in thinking about what digital youth work entails for us, how I can get involved, and what it means for the young people I work with. So, just by considering which target group interests you most and where your needs lie most at that moment, you can go in all directions with this program.

It's not the only thing we do, and what I said at the beginning as a grant provider is an important part of what we do, but it's also far from the only thing.

We're also developing and sharing knowledge about digital youth work. This means we've gathered a wealth of best practices internationally on international youth work and digital youth work. So, we've actually built up a whole library of good examples from abroad.

What worked and why? Well, we've gathered them all together, and it's a great place to find inspiration if you're curious about how to structure your next activity, for example, and what to consider. It's also a great place to connect with organizations you might be interested in discussing something happening in yours.

But also the Competence Framework, on which part of this training is based for youth workers and youth work organizations. Our National Agency, along with other European agencies, has played a key role in developing this. We also try to disseminate this knowledge, and we do this, among other things, through training courses within our own network. So, while I mentioned earlier that you can organize your own training courses with Erasmus+ Youth funding, we also offer other training courses that you can simply join as an individual. Coincidentally, three youth workers in Finland are currently developing a complete course on gaming and games within the framework of digital youth work and digital inclusion.

So that's a really relevant example of something happening right now. I know I'm in discussions with German colleagues about various things, about digital literacy. What exactly can you do as a youth worker in this area? For and with the young people you work with. There are regular training sessions that really align perfectly with this, as well as many others.

This includes training sessions to help you develop such a project idea. So, if you already have an idea for something that might be a good fit for your own organization, but don't know any other organizations you'd like to collaborate with, attending such a training session can be a great way to explore it.

How exactly can you benefit from this? Well, you can definitely participate in the training. You'll see the latest training offers on our website at the end; they're always listed there. So you can simply check the calendar to see what's currently available. Filter and register for what interests you most. We have a newsletter that will arrive in your inbox once a month with information about our latest registrations.

So that's a very easy way to participate right away. But you can also apply for a grant yourself, through your own organization. It's not something you can do in a single afternoon, but it's easy to do once you've delved into it a bit. And once you have some experience with it, it's a valuable asset to take with you, and every subsequent project becomes much easier. So I can share that with you, and we're here to help, of course. We do this with specific information sessions, for example, about youth exchanges. If you're interested, we have meetings dedicated solely to that. And for every option, there's a program advisor, just like me, who knows everything about it and is happy to guide you through it.

Don't have any immediate ideas about what you'd like to participate in or what you'd like to do? Of course, you can always just keep following us to stay up-to-date on European developments. We always do our best to share the most important developments in digital youth work through our channels for anyone who's interested.

We know that as a youth worker, you often don't have much time within your own organization to delve deeper into the world outside of it. So we're trying to bring you the highlights. The bonuses. Well, the first is that there's a lot of room. And actually, it's even necessary to work based on needs. So we're not necessarily looking for specific projects. We're looking for projects that suit you at that moment. So, perhaps you have an issue within your organization that you want to address. Are you facing challenges in working with your young people? Then we'd love to see those kinds of proposals and projects from you.

So, anything that aligns with your experience as an organization, as a youth worker at that moment, is a good project. And that's a bonus, I'll explain why shortly. All those training projects generally take place internationally. So that means you don't just do it with your own organization, but you always do it with at least one, but often several, partners in Europe.

Why is international work actually a bonus? Well, especially when it comes to digitalization. Because if there's one thing that's international, it's digitalization. It doesn't respect any national borders. The internet is global in every sense. And you'll also find that when you talk to youth workers across the border, many people encounter exactly the same questions, problems, and ideas. So this is a topic that's ideally suited for international engagement, precisely because there are so many similarities, but also very interesting differences. There are countries in Europe where much more is already happening in the field of digital youth work, and from which we can really learn a lot in the Netherlands. There have already been many experiments, many of which have been successful, and many of which have ultimately failed. Well, that's incredibly good to get to know and learn from. But of course, there are also organizations and countries in Europe where youth work isn't organized as naturally as it is here.

Where municipal youth work organizations are completely irrelevant, where youth work is organized quite differently, and where digital youth work therefore looks very different. That's something you can experience very well in such an international collaboration and from which you can also learn a great deal.

Stepping outside your bubble broadens your horizons. It's a bit cliché, but it's also true. Once you form international connections, you'll also notice that you view your own reality differently. Especially when you're still trying to figure out how to relate to this whole digital world? What are we going to do as an organization? It's really helpful to get a fresh perspective every now and then. And if that perspective comes from across the border, it can offer a slightly different kind of stimulation than if you were to ask your youth workers from another municipality or on the other side of the Netherlands.

International doesn't necessarily have to be far away. That might be a good thing to consider. If you're here in the European Netherlands, then Flanders is, of course, already a foreign country. And the Caribbean islands are also European islands that participate just as strongly in the program. And with which you could therefore collaborate very well within the framework of such a project.

I'm slowly coming to the end of the presentation. And that means if you have any questions, I'd be happy to answer them later in the session. If you're watching this and have a question you'd like to ask me, here's my email address. And if you'd like to stay informed about developments at Erasmus+ Youth, it's always a good idea to follow us on LinkedIn.

That's where we share most of the information youth workers might find interesting. And be sure to subscribe to the newsletter, because then you'll receive monthly updates with... and the training courses that are interesting to attend. You'll also receive information about when you can apply for subsidies and when we're organizing information sessions, etc.