

2025

Participation of Eastern Partnership Youth Organisations in EU-Funded Programmes



Contents

The EaP National Youth Council Network.....	5
Introduction and research methodology.....	6
List of abbreviations	7
Experience of youth organisations and their representatives in EU-Funded Programmes.....	8
Assessment of engagement in EU-Funded Programmes and level of satisfaction with cooperation.....	13
Barriers and challenges.....	19
Conclusions.....	24

The EaP National Youth Council Network

The EaP National Youth Council Network is a regional platform that unites national youth councils across the Eastern Partnership with a shared mission: to strengthen young people's role in shaping democratic, resilient, and inclusive societies.

Established in 2021 by the Danish Youth Council (DUF) with support from the New Democracy Fund, the network initially included youth councils from Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, and Azerbaijan. Today, its members are the National Youth Councils of Belarus (RADA), Ukraine (NYCU), Moldova (CNTM), and, since 2025, Armenia (YOU).

The network's work is rooted in the belief that youth participation is fundamental to democratic development. It contributes to this by facilitating cross-border cooperation, promoting joint advocacy, and supporting the capacity development of youth councils and their member organisations.

Through coordinated initiatives – from collective letters to EU stakeholders to regional capacity-building seminars – the EaP National Youth Council Network serves as a collaborative space where youth organisations can exchange expertise, amplify their voices, and build sustainable mechanisms for youth leadership across the Eastern Partnership region.

Introduction and research methodology

The study was conducted from July to October 2025 at the request of the Eastern Partnership National Youth Councils Network (EaP NYC Network), involving representatives of youth organisations and youth policy experts from Eastern Partnership countries.

The primary objective of this research was to identify the key forms and characteristics of participation of youth organisations, as well as young people from Eastern Partnership countries (Ukraine, Armenia, Belarus, Moldova), in the programmes funded by the European Union.

The main objectives of the study were as follows:

- To examine the experience of youth organisations and their representatives in participating in European Union programmes;
- To analyse the level of engagement of youth organisations from Eastern Partnership countries in EU programmes;
- To identify the barriers and limiting factors that hinder the participation of young people from Eastern Partnership countries in EU programmes.

Information was collected using three main methods:

- In-depth interviews with representatives of youth organisations and youth policy experts from Belarus, Armenia, Moldova, and Ukraine. A total of five interviews were conducted with eight experts.
- An online survey of youth organisation representatives and youth policy experts from Ukraine, Armenia, Moldova, and Belarus. The questionnaire was disseminated through the Eastern Partnership National Youth Councils Network. A total of 71 responses were received.
- Document analysis, including policy reports on the state of the youth sector in the studied countries and the participation requirements (guidelines) of relevant EU programmes.

The study focused on three key dimensions:

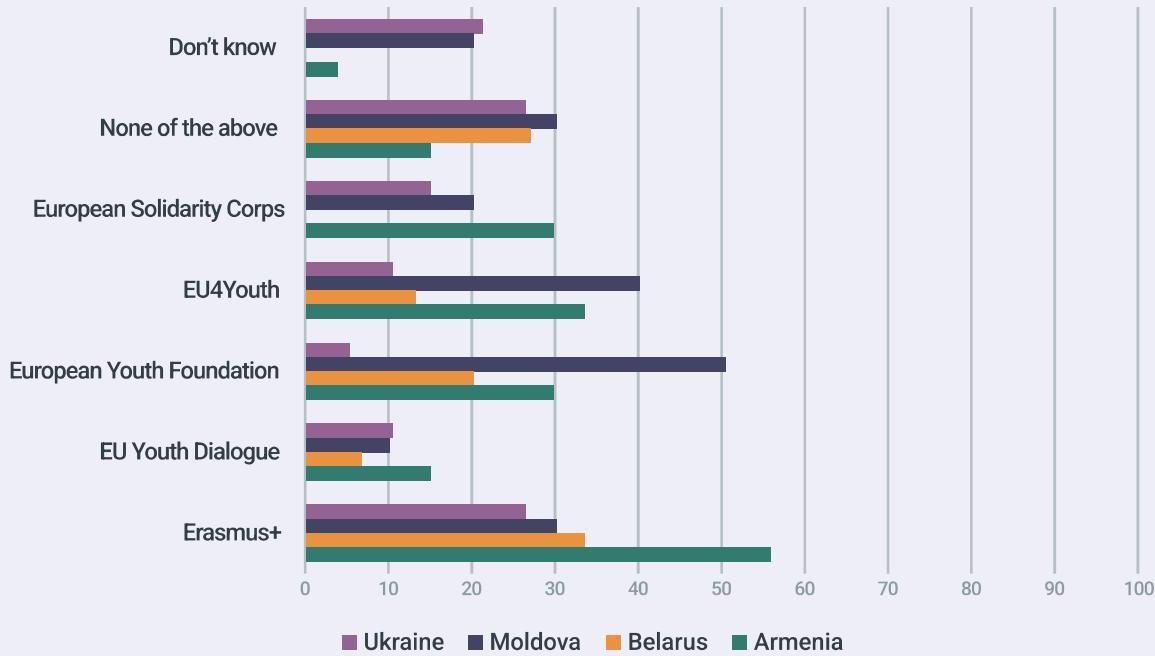
- Personal experience of participation in EU-funded programmes and the organisational experience represented by the informants;
- Assessment of the level of engagement of youth organisations from each country in EU programmes;
- Barriers and challenges hindering participation in EU-funded programmes.

List of abbreviations

EaP	Eastern Partnership
EU-funded programmes	Programmes funded by the European Union
ESC	European Solidarity Corps
EYF	European Youth Foundation
CSO	Civil society organisations

Experience of youth organisations and their representatives in EU-Funded Programmes

European Union programs your organization/initiative has participated in over the past five years, %

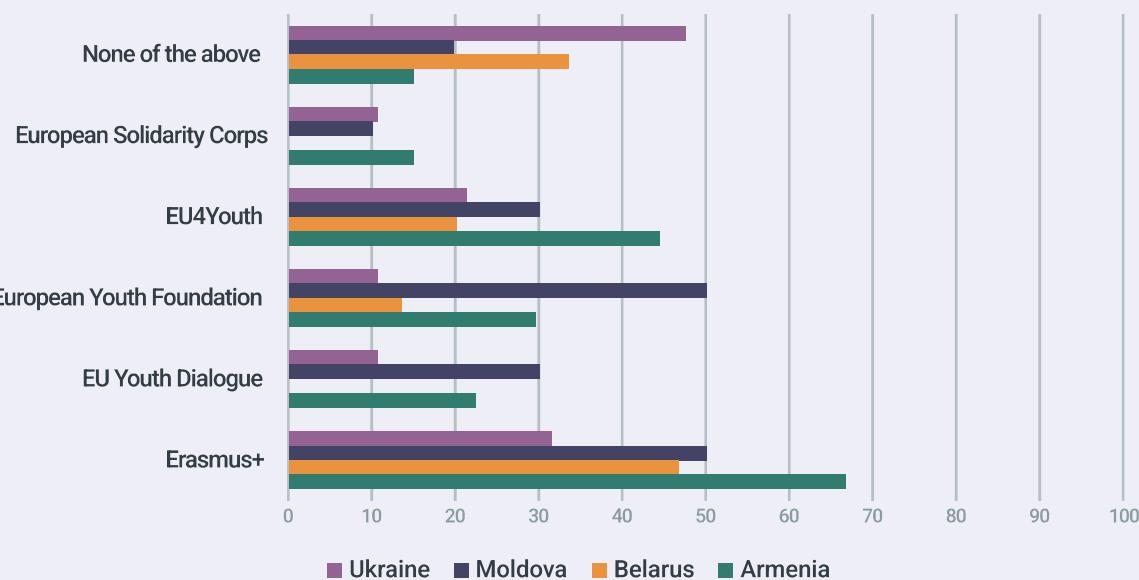


Based on the research findings, respondents demonstrate an exceptionally low rate of participation in major EU-funded programmes-both at the level of the organisations they represent and at the individual level. In most programmes, fewer than one-third of respondents have ever taken part.

Erasmus+ is the most widely accessed EU-funded programme in all surveyed countries, both for organisations and for individual participants. More than 60% of respondents from Armenia, around half from Belarus and Moldova, and about one-third from Ukraine have participated in Erasmus+. In the cases of Erasmus+, EU4Youth, and the EU Youth Dialogue, individual participation exceeds organisational participation, indicating that youth sector representatives explore EU-funded opportunities not only through their own organisations but also through other organisations, networks, or partnerships.

The opposite dynamic-where organisational participation is higher than individual participation-is observed in the European Solidarity Corps (ESC). This is also the least accessed programme according to respondents' experience. This may be linked to the difficulty of obtaining organisational accreditation, the inability of organisations in Belarus and Ukraine to host volunteers, and challenges related to obtaining long-term visas and residence permits for participants from Belarus and Armenia.

European Union programs you have participated in over the past five years, %



However, despite the low level of organisational accreditation in Belarus, respondents emphasised the importance of the ESC programme during interviews. In 2025, six young people from Belarus were nonetheless able to take part in long-term volunteering abroad through the European Solidarity Corps.

Ukraine shows consistently low engagement across all EU-funded programmes, due to the lack of necessary organisational experience and expertise, as well as the ongoing war and unsafe conditions in the country. According to experts, since 2022 most exchange programmes involving visits to Ukraine have been almost entirely halted. International exchanges now occur mostly in a one-way format—when Ukrainian participants travel abroad—or through online participation options. Overall, respondents take part in Erasmus+ more frequently as individuals than through their organisations, which may be explained by the inclusion of Erasmus+ academic mobility programmes, administered by higher education institutions.

"Higher education institutions and universities have extensive experience working with the Erasmus+ programme and maintain direct communication channels with partner universities. For civil society organisations, this process is significantly more difficult."

According to experts from Ukraine, the country is expected to obtain Erasmus+ Programme Country status by 2030. Until then, it remains in a transitional phase during which organisations need to develop the necessary experience and competencies to fully participate in Erasmus+ and other EU-funded programmes.

«At the moment, there are not many organisations in Ukraine that apply independently for Erasmus+ programmes or are capable of administering large projects... Organisations either lack sufficient experience or do not have enough people to manage the programmes.»

In Moldova, the rate of individual participation is significantly lower than the participation of organisations in EU-funded programmes. This gap is particularly visible in the European Solidarity Corps and EU4Youth. It is noteworthy that one-third of respondents have not participated in any of these programmes, while only 10% of organisations reported no involvement at all. One possible explanation is the young age of the Moldovan respondents-80% were between 18 and 24 years old-and their relatively limited experience, as most have been working in the sector for less than five years.

«I can name at most ten organisations that work with Erasmus+ and youth exchanges. If we want to grow and develop, this is not enough.»

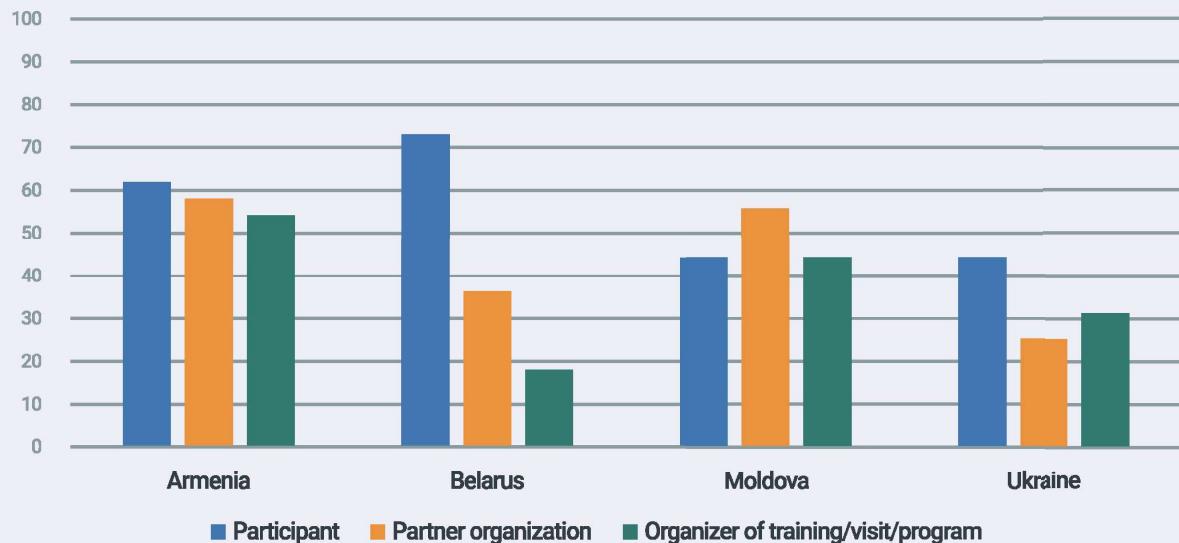
Among the countries that took part in the survey, Armenia demonstrates the highest level of participation in EU-funded programmes, both at the organisational level and at the level of individual respondents. Informants from Armenia more frequently than their counterparts from other countries mentioned additional programmes not included in the main questionnaire list, which may indicate a higher level of awareness and extensive experience with EU-funded opportunities. In Armenia, individual participation is also higher than organisational participation-particularly in Erasmus+ and EU4Youth.

Belarus shows one of the lowest levels of participation in EU-funded programmes, both for organisations and for individuals. This situation is directly linked to the political developments of the past five years, when large-scale repression began in the country. Domestically, this led to the liquidation of most youth organisations and the severing of relations with the European Union; externally, sanctions were imposed on state-run Belarusian organisations and educational institutions. As a result, almost insurmountable barriers emerged for both Belarusian young people and youth organisations seeking to participate in EU-funded programmes.

For example, according to experts from Belarus, only seven Belarusian organisations currently hold accreditation under the European Solidarity Corps, allowing them to send young people abroad for exchanges. However, in practice, only two organisations actively worked with mobility programmes between 2020 and 2025 due to administrative and other challenges. By the second half of 2025, this number had further decreased to just one organisation.

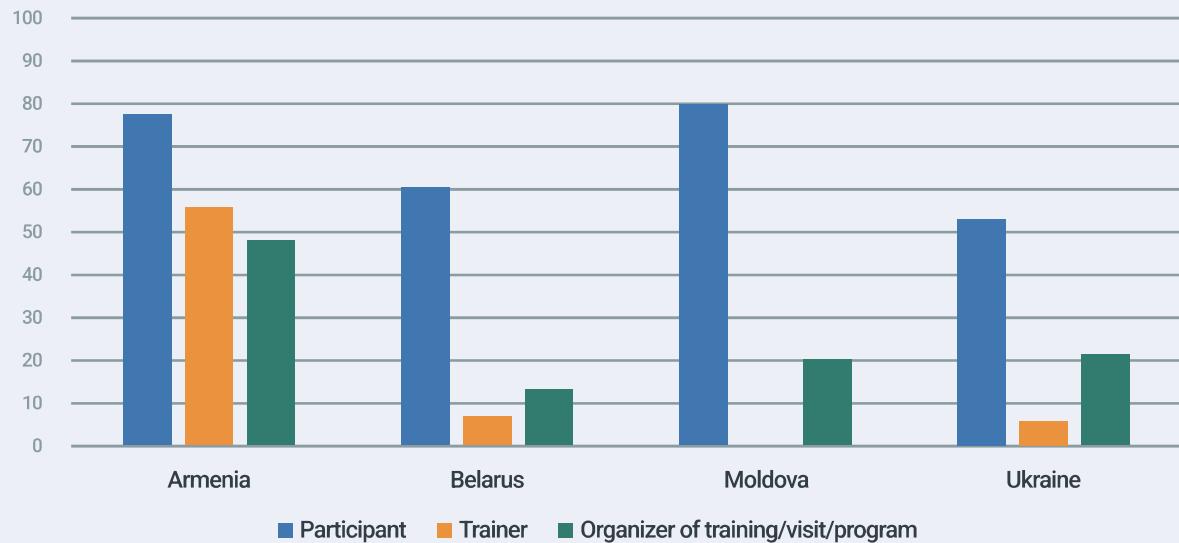
In what capacity (roles) did your organization/initiative participate in the mentioned programs?, %

You may select multiple options



In what capacity (roles) did you participate in the mentioned programs?, %

You may select multiple options



The most common form of participation for both respondents and their organisations was taking part in programmes as participants. However, among respondents from Armenia, the number of individuals who have taken on more active roles—such as programme organisers and trainers—is nearly three times higher than in other countries. Moreover, in Armenia it is common for participation in EU-funded programmes to inspire young people to create their own organisations and projects.

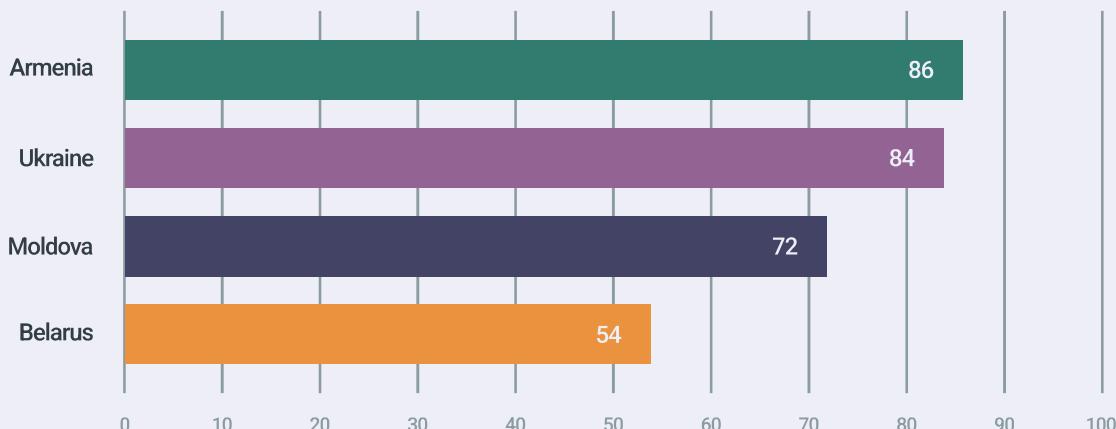
«Over the past 2-3 years, many new youth organisations have appeared in Armenia. Sometimes one of the founders participates in a youth visit, gets inspired, and decides to start implementing Erasmus+ projects. This is a very common story for CSOs.»

Looking at the distribution across youth organisations, significant cross-country differences can be observed. More than half of the Armenian organisations surveyed reported participating in EU-funded programmes as partners (58%) and organisers (54%). Moldova also demonstrates relatively high numbers: 56% of surveyed organisations have acted as partners, and 44% have organised activities.

In contrast, the share of such organisations in Ukraine and Belarus is much lower. Among Ukrainian organisations, only 25% have experience as partner organisations, and 31% have served as organisers. In Belarus, the figures are even lower—36% and 18%, respectively.

Assessment of engagement in EU-Funded Programmes and level of satisfaction with cooperation

How satisfied are you with your organization's engagement in European Union programs?, %



We sought to understand how representatives of youth organisations and youth policy experts assess the level of engagement in EU-funded programmes, both within their own organisations and within the youth sector as a whole. Higher values indicate a greater level of engagement and a higher degree of satisfaction with cooperation with the European Union, as reported by respondents.

As the results show, respondents rate the level of satisfaction with their own organisations' participation in EU-funded programmes on average 20% higher than the level of engagement of the youth sector overall in their respective countries. Furthermore, according to respondents from all surveyed countries, youth organisations do not fully utilise the opportunities offered by EU-funded programmes. The highest level of sector-wide engagement is reported in Ukraine (69%), and the lowest in Belarus (30% out of 100%).

Ukraine presents a unique situation: on the one hand, participation in EU-funded programmes is relatively low-both at the individual level and at the organisational level; on the other hand, the level of satisfaction with cooperation with the European Union is very high. Respondents rate their organisations' satisfaction with participation in EU-funded programmes at 84%, and sector-wide engagement at 69%, which are comparatively high values relative to other countries. One of the reasons for this situation is the growing level of support and the expanding cooperation opportunities available to Ukrainian youth organisations from European institutions and donor organisations.

«Why do so few Ukrainians apply to the European Youth Foundation? There is funding available. The answer was very simple: the application is extremely complicated. Not every organisation is ready to prepare an application of 40-50 pages... Why make it so complex? There are many international organisations where the support is much greater and the application process is much easier. The entry point to receive financial support from the European Youth Foundation is significantly more difficult than in other international organisations.»

To what extent do youth organizations/initiatives in your country use the opportunities provided by EU programs for Eastern Partnership countries?, %



Ukrainian respondents identify several reasons why Ukrainian organisations are weakly involved in European youth programmes: a low level of awareness about EU-funded programmes, communication difficulties, the complexity of completing programme and grant applications, and a general reluctance or fear among young people to participate in such opportunities.

«There is a lack of direct work by the programme offices on the ground; we do not feel their presence or the possibility of turning to programme representatives for support.»

The results for Armenia are similar to those for Ukraine: 86% satisfaction with the level of cooperation within the organisations represented by respondents, and 65% as the assessment of sector-wide engagement in EU-funded programmes. As the main factors hindering participation in EU-funded programmes, respondents point to a lack of knowledge, experience, and accessible information about the programmes, difficulties with English-language proficiency, a lack of transparency in programme selection processes, and barriers preventing smaller organisations and young people from vulnerable groups from participating.

«There may be a lack of awareness, a sense of uncertainty before participating for the first time, and in some cases excessively high participation fees are set. The requirement to purchase a plane ticket in

advance with one's own money is also a barrier, as young people with limited financial means simply cannot afford this, even if the costs are reimbursed later.»

«Intermediary funding: in many cases, small organisations participate in EU-funded programmes only as partners through larger organisations, which limits their direct access to funding.»

The final point refers to the majority of Erasmus+ projects, for which Armenian organisations can apply only as part of a consortium with European organisations. Experts from Armenia believe that youth organisations already possess sufficient experience and expertise to submit applications directly, without relying on intermediary organisations.

Respondents from Moldova rated the level of their own organisation's engagement in EU-funded programmes at 72% out of 100%. The sector-wide assessment was slightly lower: 63% out of 100%. The insufficient level of involvement in EU-funded programmes is attributed to informational and organisational barriers: complex application procedures, a lack of experience with EU-funded programmes, an insufficient number of qualified staff members, and a shortage of young people with foreign-language proficiency. According to Moldovan experts, only a very small number of organisations in the country have the resources and experience to apply for large-scale projects.

«These opportunities (EU-funded programmes) are used only by large organisations that have experts and resources; the others lack the capacity and experience and simply do not know where to begin. They are not suitable for beginners.»

«There are many organisations that take part as participants, but the number of organisations that actually run Erasmus projects can be counted on one hand.»

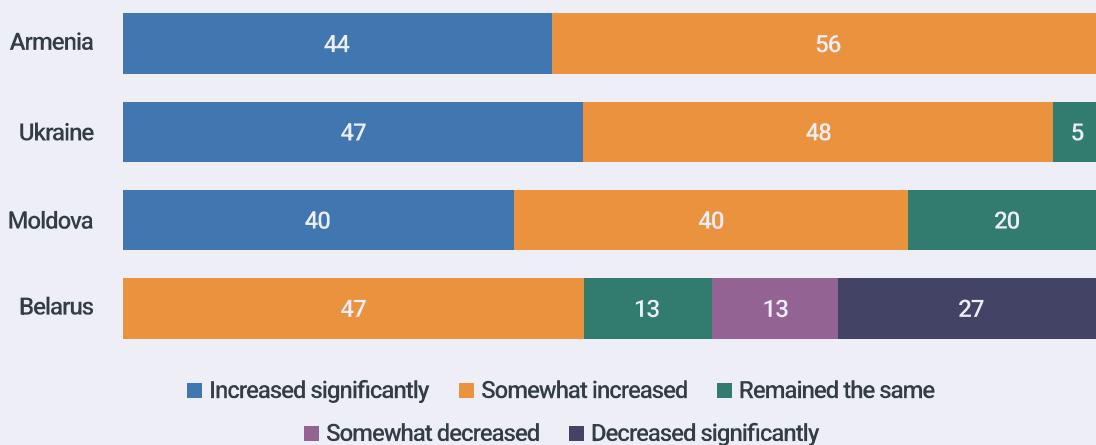
According to the research data, Belarus has the lowest level of youth organisations' engagement in EU-funded programmes-almost 30% lower than in the other surveyed countries. Respondents identify barriers similar to those reported elsewhere: a lack of awareness about EU-funded opportunities, insufficient qualified staff, and limited human resources for preparing applications.

Additionally, a critical barrier for Belarus is the requirement in most European programmes (such as Erasmus+ Youth and the European Solidarity Corps) that the sending organisation must be legally registered in the country from which it sends young people. This lack of flexibility does not take into account the Belarusian context, where most democratic youth organisations have been forced into exile due to political persecution. While these organisations may be registered in EU member states, their activities and their primary target groups remain in Belarus, creating an administrative mismatch that severely limits their access to EU-funded programmes.

"I believe this (the level of engagement) is related to the lack of accessible information about different programmes and opportunities, as well as insufficient understanding of the Belarusian context among local CSO's, which can create security risks for Belarusian participants. If the participants are coming from inside the country, difficulties with obtaining visas can also be a major limitation."

"It is very difficult to take part in calls for proposals and to find partners for them. Most programmes are highly non-transparent, and without prior experience it is hard to understand how things should be done. Local National Agencies do not always seem interested in applications from Belarusians or Belarusian organisations, as they are not considered to be working for the countries of residence. There is a lack of any dedicated focus on Belarus within these programmes."

How has the number of youth organization/initiatives working with EU programs changed over the past five years?, %



As shown in the diagram, respondents across all countries note an overall increase in the number of organisations in the youth sector that work with EU-funded programmes.

In Ukraine, 95% of respondents report an increase in organisations engaged in EU-funded programmes. This is linked, among other factors, to the growing availability of funding opportunities and cooperation offered by European organisations and foundations. Respondents explain this growth with reasons such as: *"a desire to develop cooperation and work with European partners to attract funding and support from colleagues,"* *"the start of the full-scale war,"* and *"an increase in available funding."*

In Armenia, the rise in participation in EU-funded programmes is attributed to several factors:

- an increase in the number of youth organisations;
- an increase in the number of young people and staff members with foreign-

language proficiency;

- the country's political orientation toward cooperation with the EU;
- greater awareness among organisations and young people about EU-funded programmes;
- improved accessibility and transparency of EU programmes and grants in Armenia, as well as the impact of information and mentoring initiatives.

«The increase in the number of youth organisations working with EU-funded programmes over the past five years has mainly been driven by the expansion of international cooperation, the availability of capacity-building and training programmes for organisations, and broader access to information about these programmes. This has encouraged active participation and allowed organisations to gain experience through partner organisations.»

However, respondents also noted negative aspects of such popularity.

«Unfortunately, this growth is not always positive. Many organisations view EU-funded programmes as an easy source of income or, even worse, as a business, especially when they act solely as partner CSOs from Armenia in Erasmus+ projects and charge young people participation fees of up to 120,000 drams, which contradicts the very principles of inclusiveness...»

«Information about some programmes is not accessible. The same young people participate several times, leaving no opportunity for newcomers.»

Experts interviewed in Armenia acknowledge the existence of such problems. The sector lacks unified standards for organisations that send young people to European exchange programmes, training courses, and other activities. Each organisation independently sets its own rules and conditions for participation. For example, some organisations charge an additional organisational fee or require the payment of a membership fee. These fees are usually justified as necessary to cover administrative work related to organising the visit. However, the size of these payments can be significant for young people. At the same time, there are organisations that do not charge any additional fees from participants.

In Armenia, practices for informing young people about programmes and selecting participants also vary widely. Some organisations offer participation exclusively to their own members, while others disseminate information through open channels and select participants on a competitive basis.

There is no single resource, website, or platform in the country where young people can find consolidated information about participation conditions for programmes organised by different organisations. As a result, young people must contact each organisation individually to clarify the details and terms of participation.

In Moldova, 80% of respondents report an increase in the number of organisations working with EU-funded programmes, while for another 20% the situation has remained unchanged over the past five years. Respondents attribute the increase in the number of organisations to the country's political orientation toward cooperation with the EU, as well as the active work of youth activists. According to Moldovan experts, the youth sector

has grown rapidly in recent years: many new organisations have emerged, the number of available programmes has increased, and the amount of financial support allocated to youth organisations has grown. Although more opportunities are now available for Moldovan organisations to engage in European programmes, experts emphasise that awareness-raising efforts are necessary to ensure meaningful participation.

“First of all, more civil society organisations have emerged, and many programmes have become accessible for Moldova.”

However, the indicators could have been even higher were it not for the language barrier. In addition, large youth organisations and youth centres are concentrated mainly in major cities, which significantly reduces the chances for young people from the regions to take part in such programmes.

«The main organisations and centres are concentrated in two major cities. Outside of them, in the regions, the situation is completely different. There are practically no activists or youth organisations there.»

Belarus stands out sharply from the overall picture. On the one hand, 47% of respondents note an increase in the number of organisations working with EU-funded programmes, while on the other hand, 40% report a decrease in such organisations. This contradiction stems from the different perspectives through which the Belarusian situation can be interpreted.

If we look at the situation inside the country, political barriers and repression, the liquidation of youth organisations, and restrictions imposed by the Ministry of Education on young people's participation in international programmes create a deadlock for engagement in EU-funded opportunities. Young people from Belarus become hostages of eligibility criteria: they cannot be sent to programmes by organisations within Belarus, because such organisations have been dismantled, nor by Belarusian organisations in exile, because these organisations are legally registered in another country¹.

«Support is minimal, and repression in Belarus continues to intensify. Organisations are ceasing their activities.»

«Civic activism in Belarus is possible only in an underground format. The formalism and bureaucracy of EU programmes make it almost impossible to work effectively with audiences inside the country.»

However, over the past five years, youth organisations and activists who were forced to leave the country have formed a stable network of organisations and initiatives in exile. Many of them have established new organisations in EU member states and have built effective cooperation both with local communities in their host countries and with Belarusian young people inside and outside Belarus.

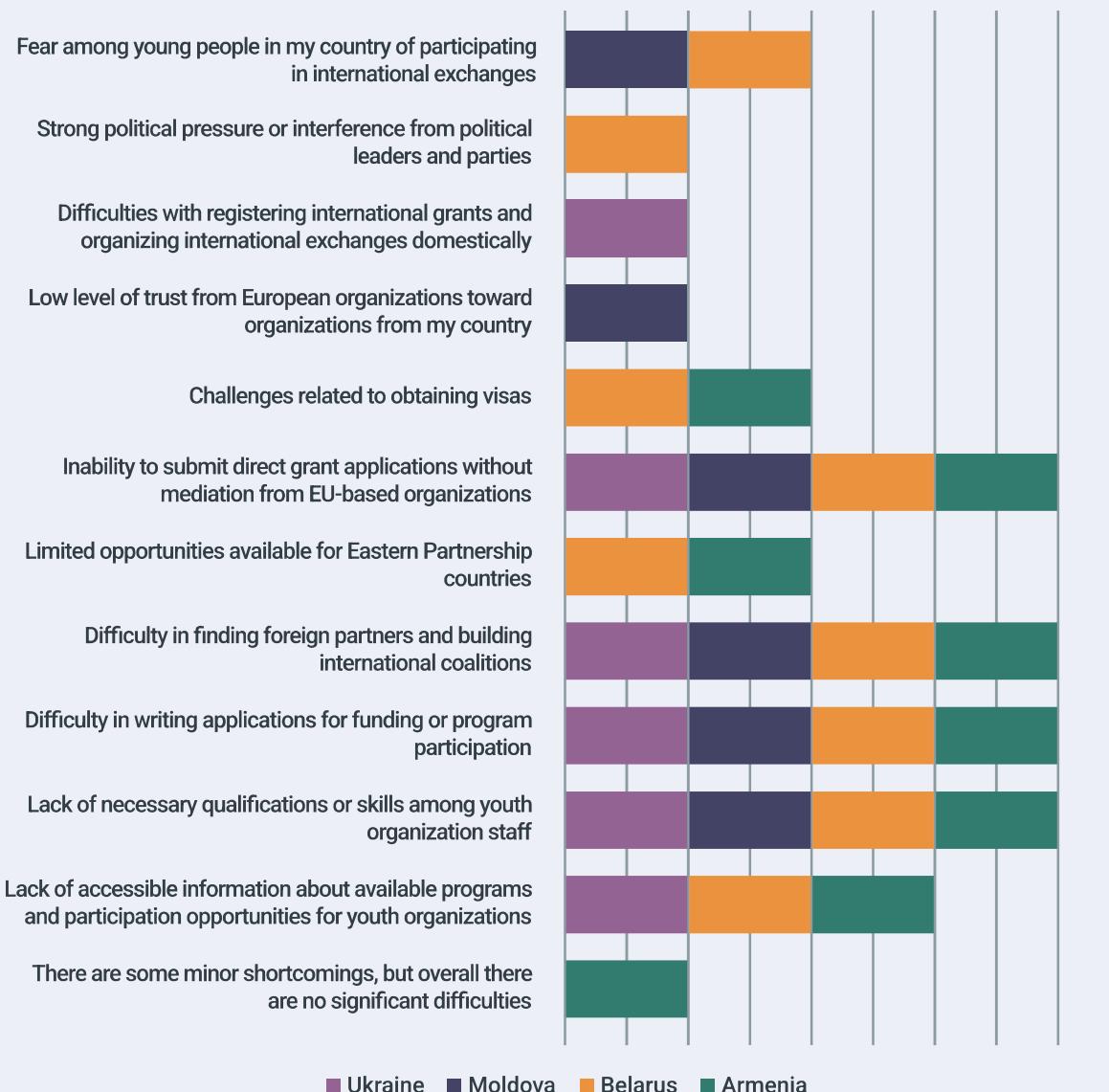
«It seems that at least the number of attempts to engage has increased, due to relocations to EU countries and the reduction of American funding.»

1

<https://www.salto-youth.net/rc/eeca/eecapublications/eecamanual/eecamanualbelarus/belarus/>

Barriers and challenges

Which difficulties you indicate in working with European Union programs?



Explanation of the chart

The chart includes only those response options that were relevant for a critically significant number of representatives from each country.

Experts identify a number of barriers and challenges that hinder greater involvement of youth organisations and young people in EU-funded programmes.

Among the common difficulties characteristic of most surveyed countries, the following stand out: a lack of necessary qualifications among youth organisation staff, the complexity of preparing funding and programme applications, difficulties in finding foreign partners and building international coalitions, the inability to submit direct grant applications without the mediation of organisations from EU member states, and insufficient accessible information about different programmes and participation opportunities for youth organisations.

Experts from all four countries agree that the application process for EU-funded programmes and the administration of European projects can be very difficult—especially for small, newly established organisations that lack sufficient administrative capacity and experience.

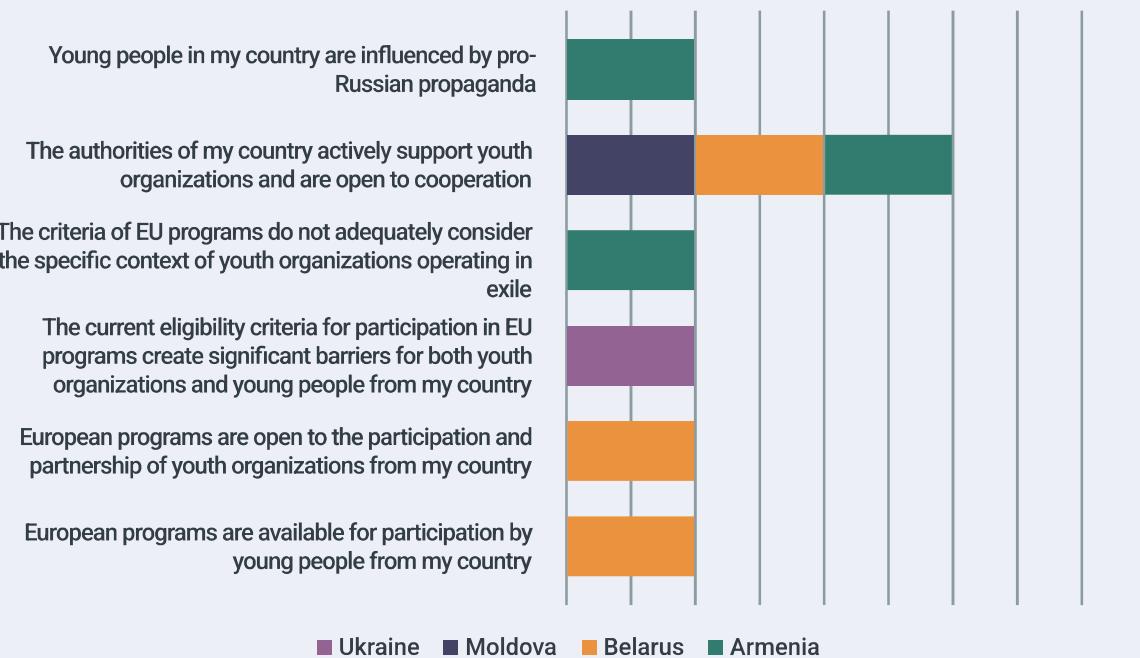
«Information about EU-funded programmes can be found on their websites, but it is written in a very complex language and is difficult to navigate. It is not always clear what organisations are expected to do.»

Belarus and Armenia additionally highlight significant problems related to obtaining visas. The main difficulty for both countries is the long waiting times for visa appointments. Due to high demand and limited capacity of embassies and consulates, the waiting time for an appointment may range from 3-4 months in Armenia to up to one year in Belarus. To this period, one must add the time required for processing and issuing the visa itself. As a result, many programmes remain inaccessible to young people from Armenia and Belarus, as they are simply unable to obtain visas within the required deadlines.

Another major challenge is securing long-term visas and residence permits needed for participation in extended European projects. In both Armenia and Belarus, there are no consular offices of several EU member states, meaning that applicants must travel abroad to submit their documents. For example, to obtain a long-term Spanish visa, applicants must apply at the Spanish consulate in Russia. The travel expenses required to submit visa documents in another country are typically not covered by European programmes.

For Moldova and Belarus, the response option «young people's fear of participating in international programmes» is also relevant. Additionally, Moldovan representatives note a low level of trust from European organisations toward local youth organisations. Ukrainian respondents highlight the difficulties of conducting international exchanges inside the country due to the ongoing war and the inability to guarantee participants' safety. For Belarus, ensuring the safety of programme participants is likewise a critical issue, especially given that any civic activity in the country may result in criminal prosecution.

I disagree with statements



Explanation of the chart

The charts show the most common response options for each country.

The responses presented in the charts help to better understand the specifics of the local context and the conditions in which youth organisations in Ukraine, Moldova, Belarus, and Armenia operate.

Despite all the challenges described earlier, respondents from Armenia, Moldova, and Ukraine agree that European Union programmes remain open for youth organisations and young people to participate and form partnerships. The only group that firmly disagrees with this assessment are the respondents from Belarus.

At the same time, representatives from all four countries agree that most young people lack the financial resources needed to participate in EU-funded youth programmes. Although most programmes cover travel and visa costs, many young people—especially those from vulnerable groups—still lack the resources needed to take part in European opportunities.

In addition, most respondents from Belarus, Ukraine, and Moldova note the strong influence of pro-Russian propaganda on young people. In Armenia, according to experts, this influence is less noticeable, as Russian-funded CSOs do not hold significant sway over society, including the youth sector. Respondents from Belarus emphasise that in the absence of access to European mobility and educational programmes, the space that remains unfilled is quickly occupied by Russian organisations and foundations, including those sponsored by the Russian regime.

"The Russian organisation Znanie has entered Belarus and will be working with young people. If EU programmes remain as bureaucratic as they are now, Russia's influence will only grow, because their system is much simpler and easier to understand."

In Moldova, disinformation and propaganda are spread mainly through popular social media platforms. Young people are not the primary target audience of such content, but they are nevertheless affected by these information attacks.

"Young people are highly vulnerable to disinformation. They do not always verify information or ask themselves the question: 'Is this really true?'"

There are also Russian propaganda foundations operating in the country, organising educational trips to Russia for young people. Representatives of youth organisations express concern about the growing influence of Russia.

"At the moment, we have a pro-European government, so we trust the state institutions. But remembering the example of Georgia, we do not know how the situation will unfold after the next elections."

According to respondents from Belarus, an additional barrier to participation in exchange programmes is the lack of flexibility toward organisations working in exile. Half of the respondents from Ukraine and Moldova share this view. In Armenia, however, most respondents note that European Union programmes generally take into account the specific situation of organisations operating in exile. At the same time, at the individual level, there are examples of support and assistance provided to partners from other countries who face emergency evacuation or are forced to flee their home countries.

"After the start of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine, Armenia has seen a large number of Russian organisations and activists in exile. There are also several activists from Belarus who moved here from Georgia after the situation there became unsafe. Activists and organisations from Georgia continue to work in the country for as long as this is still possible. But we provide support to our partners from Georgia when needed, especially to those at high risk of being labelled 'foreign agents'. This includes, for example, assistance with emergency relocation, financial management, and informational support. In a similar way, you helped our partners from Belarus a couple of years ago."

Another divergence in views concerns the question of government support. According to the survey data, the Ukrainian authorities actively support youth organisations and are open to cooperation, which cannot be said about Moldova, Armenia, and Belarus. For example, in Armenia, youth organisations are quite polarised on this issue: 63% believe that the authorities do not support youth organisations, while the remaining 37% say the opposite. By the absence of support, respondents may refer to the lack of grants and programmes aimed at strengthening youth organisations, as the Armenian authorities do not provide substantial financial support to the youth sector.

Moreover, according to experts from Armenia, the current situation in the youth sector reflects the broader polarisation of Armenian society. Although the current government was democratically elected and demonstrates readiness to cooperate with youth organisations, not all organisations are willing or interested in working with state representatives.

Conclusions

The study revealed significant differences in the level of engagement of youth organisations from Eastern Partnership countries in EU-funded programmes. Each country whose representatives took part in the survey has its own unique social and political context, which shapes the specific patterns of participation—or non-participation—in EU-funded programmes.

All surveyed youth organisation representatives and youth policy experts agree that youth organisations are not fully able to utilise the potential of opportunities offered by EU-funded programmes for Eastern Partnership countries. The unrealised potential amounts to 31% for Ukraine, 35% for Armenia, 42% for Moldova, and 70% for Belarus. Belarus demonstrates the weakest results, primarily due to political, institutional, and organisational barriers.

Despite a general trend—visible in most countries—of an increase in the number of organisations participating in EU-funded programmes, this growth is accompanied by a range of systemic challenges.

Overall, the effectiveness of EU-funded programmes in the Eastern Partnership region depends on increased flexibility, targeted support, and sustainable cooperation mechanisms that take into account the political and social realities of each country.

Ensuring genuine accessibility, transparency, and capacity support for youth organisations remains essential for unlocking the full potential of EU-funded opportunities.

The challenges common to all countries include:

- Insufficient information about EU-funded programmes and opportunities for cooperation within these programmes;
- Lack of necessary experience and qualifications among organisational staff;
- Insufficient foreign-language proficiency and the resulting difficulty in preparing grant applications;
- Insufficient flexibility and adaptability of EU-funded programmes to the capacities of small organisations and to the local context—especially in the case of Belarus.

In addition, each country faces its own unique set of challenges:

- **Armenia:** insufficient transparency in participant selection and resource distribution, as well as limited opportunities to apply for grants and projects directly, without the mediation of European organisations.
- **Ukraine:** limited possibilities for conducting exchanges within the country due to the ongoing war.
- **Moldova:** an insufficient number of youth organisations in the regions, along with high migration of young people to major cities, which leads to declining levels of civic engagement at the local level.
- **Belarus:** organisations in exile cannot send young people who remain inside the country to EU-funded programmes due to formal restrictions, and youth initiatives within Belarus are effectively unable to operate.

Thus, improving the effectiveness of participation requires addressing both cross-cutting and country-specific barriers. This calls for greater flexibility, awareness, transparency, and adaptation of EU-funded programmes to the realities of Eastern Partnership countries.

To increase the engagement of youth organisations in European Union programmes, the following actions are recommended:

- Adapt application procedures and eligibility criteria to the capacities of youth organisations in the Eastern Partnership, taking into account the political and social context of each country;
- Ensure wide dissemination of information about EU-funded programmes in an accessible format (especially about the EU Youth Dialogue and the European Youth Foundation), including in national languages;
- Provide consultations and training for organisations wishing to work with EU-funded programmes. For example, online self-learning courses for CSO managers and fundraisers, peer-to-peer experience exchange sessions led by youth organisations from Eastern Partnership countries, and mentoring programmes offered by more experienced organisations;
- Develop inclusive participation mechanisms for vulnerable groups, including scholarships or other forms of financial support where needed;
- Publish information on planned programmes and projects well in advance, and consider the option of issuing multiple-entry visas for applicants participating in several projects at once. This would increase the likelihood of participation for people from countries where visas are required;
- Consider launching a thematic project for Eastern Partnership countries focused on examining the impact of pro-Russian propaganda and disinformation on young people, as well as analysing the consequences of this influence.
- Systematic support and the removal of existing barriers will help ensure equal access for youth organisations and young people to the opportunities provided by EU-funded programmes.

