



erasmus+ and
european solidarity
corps agency

From challenges to actions to results:

Where can participation fit in?

SALTO Participation & Information Resource Centre

Since 2018 hosted by the Estonian Agency for Erasmus+ and ESC



Who are we?

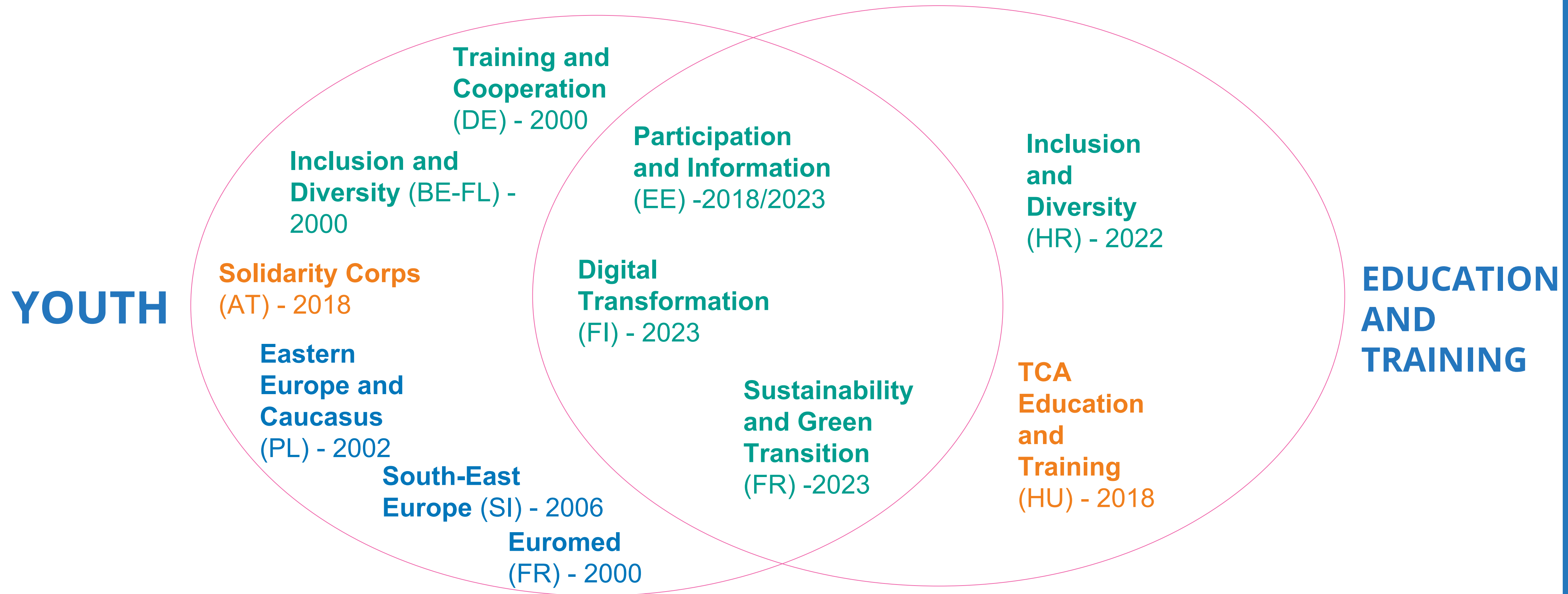
SALTO Participation and Information Resource Centre supports the **Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps programmes** in regards to the **horizontal priority of participation in democratic life, civic engagement and common values**, in non-formal and formal education and youth field in all Programme countries.

We are financed and mandated by the European Commission and hosted by the Estonian Agency for Erasmus+ and ESC and belong to the Education and Youth Board (HARNO, in short).



The SALTO network

We are one of 11 **SALTO Resource Centres** working to improve the quality and impact of the **Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps** programmes at a systemic level



SALTO

**Support
Advanced
Learning
Training
Opportunities**

SALTO





Did I start my presentation in a participatory manner? 

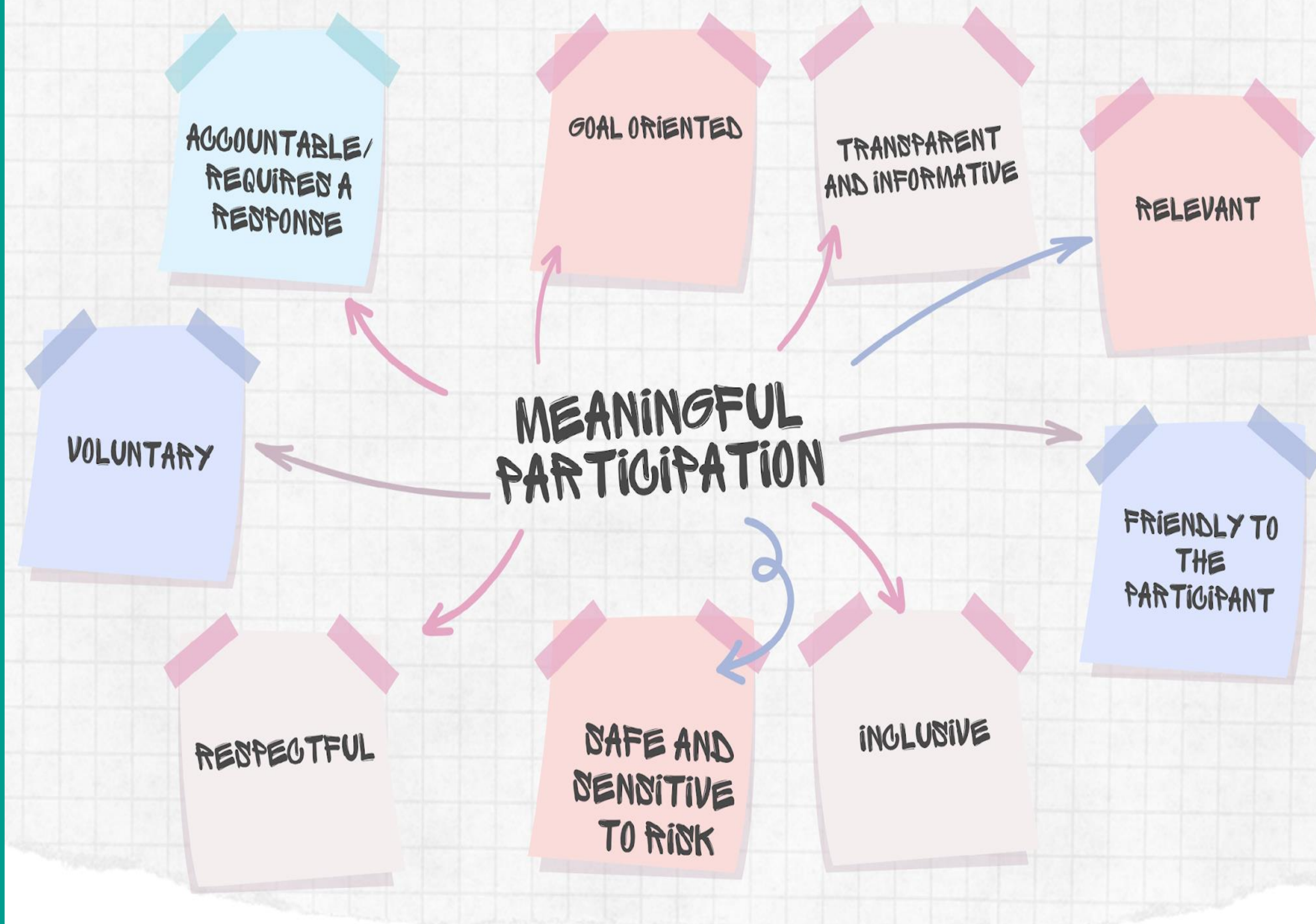
Interactive, engaging, rewarding

Participative



The Council of Europe defines **meaningful participation** as the genuine, active, and impactful involvement of individuals in decision-making processes that affect their lives and communities.

Find out more [here](#)





Read more [Youth Participation Strategy - SALTO](#)



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(democratic or meaningful) participation

is about agency and power sharing

participatory process



Think of a decision you took in the last days that impacted other(s)



1
measuring of
Youth
Participation
in the
programmes

2
involving
young people
in the
management
of the
programmes

3
including
target groups
in decision-
making

4
need for
cooperation &
network



How do we measure meaningful youth participation in the programmes?

Youth Participation Strategy, 2020



*Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps programmes



Youth participation strategy steering group (2024-2025)

- ✓ 6 youth representatives (via an open call)
- ✓ 6 stakeholder representatives - ERYICA, RAY, SALTO
- Inclusion & Diversity, National Agencies, European Commission

Monitoring of the progress - assess/grade the outcome indicators within the YPS using a RAG rating (Red, Amber, Green).



Data sources:

- Information on delivery of activities supplied by SALTO PI
- A survey of National Agencies distributed by SALTO PI in spring / summer 2024
- A targeted desktop review of other reports and open sources data

Read more about steering group [here](#) and about monitoring results [here](#)





Aim 1 - Embedding:

Promote the principles of youth participation across all actions and activities of the programmes*.

Aim 2 - Support:

Enable effective support for programme* applicants and beneficiaries to develop and implement youth projects with a quality youth participation dimension.



Aim 3 - Information:

Increase awareness of the impact of the programmes* on youth participation in democratic life.

Aim 4 - Research:

Encourage a knowledge-based approach to youth participation in democratic life within the programmes* by enabling stakeholders to utilise the findings of research on youth participation.



Aim 5 - Involvement:

Encourage National Agencies and other actors to involve young people when making decisions about the management and implementation in the programmes*, and to take a quality approach to youth participation when doing so.

Aim 6 - Inclusion:

Dedicate specific attention to the participation in democratic life of young people with fewer opportunities.



*Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps programmes

Priority



Aim 5 – Involvement

Encourage National Agencies and other actors to involve young people when making decisions about the management and implementation in the programmes*, and to take a quality approach to youth participation when doing so.



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for example, survey (2024) indicated that half of NAs involved had no plans to do this

Mapping exploring various youth involvement mechanisms (2022), inspiration stories

Throughout 2024 participatory research on lessons learned in different cases of involving young people in decision-making in National Agencies and SALTO PI has been researched, including the institutional perspective and the opinion of young people themselves

More about mapping of youth involvement mechanisms [here](#)



Who was involved

3 Co-researchers –

- Received training on how to interview
- Supported in designing interview guidelines
- Conducted interviews
- Contributed to the final paper
- Presented the research

How was this research conducted

- Exploring 5 different cases of youth involvement in decision-making of institutions
- 16 interviews (with direct coordinators and management representatives)
- 6 interviews with young people involved in cases
- workshop to discuss the results



Some of the challenges identified

- **Busyness** of everyone involved
- Expectation for the youth involvement to be **voluntary**
- **Difficulties in implementing changes** across Agency
- **Structural constraints** (in recruitment, remuneration)
- Lack of trust (due to experiences of tokenism)

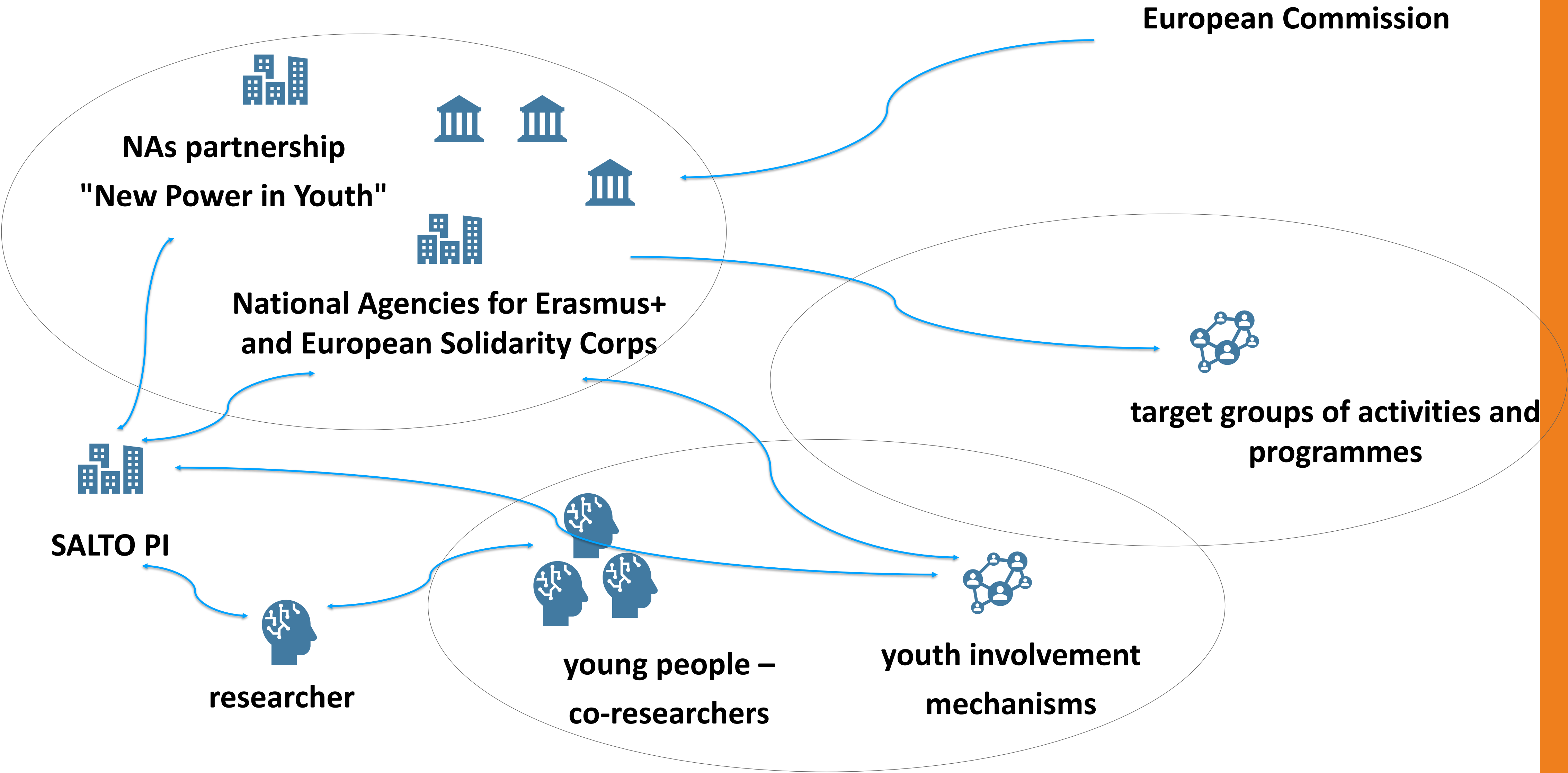
Potential solutions

- Creative a **safe and supportive environment**
- **Caring attitude** from the professionals
- Flexibility and usage of both **physical and virtual spaces**
- Developing **small-scale youth involvement mechanisms**, trying out
- Considering **the diversity of participants** and barriers they face
- Focusing on **implementing young people's ideas** in the Agency and beyond

Find more about the research [here](#)



The real process



How do WE include target groups in our process, meaningfully and not sporadically but in all planning?

SALTO PI Consultative meeting (2025)

Intro online meeting

In-person meeting during 2.5 days

A debrief meeting

Planning of 2026

Presenting results

Continuing planning and digesting



28 representatives of NAs, young people,
European umbrella organisations, who engaged
with 10 areas of our work and produced over 300
recommendations

- Need for more cooperation and network
(participation coalition)
- Need for a more structured information and
better online platforms

See more [here](#)



Need for cooperation, network, communities of practice and more

Mapping and gapping of Participation in Democratic Life, Common Values and Civic Engagement within Education and Training in the Erasmus+ Programme (2023)

The research was based around a survey of Erasmus+ National Agencies for Education and Training (NAs) and three focus groups with NA staff.

- NA Contact Point Network
- Meetups, webinars, in-person meeting

Youth Participation officers network assessment of learning needs and feedback after training

- Regular informal meetings

Focus group with youth NAs management re Youth participation network

- Need for peer learning and practice exchange





Links and Resources

- A knowledge hub for finding research, resources and tools on participation [Participation Pool](#) (soon improved version and more E&T components)
- [Meaningful participation](#) definition
- [Youth Participation Strategy](#)
- [Steering group of the Youth Participation Strategy](#)
- [Mapping of direct youth involvement in the work of National Agencies](#)
- [SALTO PI Consultative meeting for involving target groups in decision-making](#)