

Mission Statement 2026–2028

Generation Europe – The Academy is an international network of youth work organisations and a funding programme for European cooperation. Our common goal is social participation for all. Young people raise their voices and get involved: locally in their communities and across all borders.

At a time when democratic values are under pressure, inequality is growing and international cooperation is becoming more difficult, we are sending a clear message: democracy must be lived and learned every day. We are creating spaces where young people can experience self-efficacy, regardless of their background, their parents' income and their previous success in the formal education system. We believe that strong, inclusive European citizenship is the foundation for a just future.

We are building on a strong foundation: our network has been growing and developing since 2009, starting with the ewoca³ programme. In the 2026–2028 phase of Generation Europe – The Academy, we are continuing this 17-year success story with proven partnerships, new allies and an enhanced structure that responds to the current challenges in Europe.

Who we are

Generation Europe – The Academy is more than the sum of its parts. It is a double-layered structure that is the source of our strength. We are:

1. **A European network:** We are a community of youth organisations, youth workers and young people from all over Europe. We support each other, share knowledge and forge alliances. We see youth work as a co-production: young people are not just participants, but equal partners who work together with youth work professionals to shape their projects and organise themselves.
2. **A funding programme:** Coordinated and implemented by the International Association of Education and Exchange (IBB e.V.), the funding programme provides an organisational and financial framework. It provides funding for three-year trilateral partnerships, international youth encounters and networking activities. In addition, it offers comprehensive conceptual support. This includes expert advice, training and skill-sharing opportunities, as well as coordinated advocacy and public relations work.

What does 'The Academy' mean?

Our name is our mission, but not in the traditional sense. Generation Europe – The Academy stands for places of shared learning and organisation. Our collaboration does not require academic degrees, but curiosity and commitment. It is based on the principles of non-formal education. We focus on peer education among young people and professionals, offer diverse training and further education formats, and foster empowerment. We learn from each other in a practical and experience-based way.

At the same time, we base the further development of our methods on academic findings – such as the Access Study on International Youth Exchange – to ensure that we break down barriers and make participation truly possible for everyone. We professionalise youth work by bringing together practical knowledge and research findings.

Locally Anchored, Effective Across Europe

We know that international youth work only achieves its full impact when it is firmly anchored in the everyday lives of young people. Exchange in Europe inspires, but change begins on our own doorstep. Therefore, strengthening local youth work structures remains our central strategic concern.

We recognise that the conditions for this work vary greatly across Europe. In the 2026–2028 phase, we are offering a framework that takes this diversity into account. The network supports partner organisations in implementing local activities flexibly and according to needs, based on the resources and opportunities available. We see it as a joint task to explore creative ways of co-financing and to forge alliances, in order to secure and expand local youth work even under changed financial conditions. Local anchoring is not an optional extra, but a core element that makes European encounters sustainable.

Our Structure: Three Pillars for Participation

In order to meet different needs and levels of experience, the work in the 2026–2028 phase is divided into three interlocking programme pillars:

- 1. GenE Youth Cooperation** is the foundation of our joint work: Here, young people get involved together with the youth work professionals of their partner organisations. At the local level, they develop project ideas to help shape their immediate environment. In trilateral partnerships, three organisations from three European countries work together continuously over a period of three years. They meet for international youth encounters, support each other in their projects and experience European cooperation in a very practical way. This is the entry point into the network and where European community grows.

2. **GenE Next Steps** is aimed at active young adults (aged 18 and over) from the network who have already gained experience in international projects and now want to take the next step. They are not alumni leaving the network, but peers who are taking on more responsibility. By this, participation becomes an experience of lived responsibility and solidarity – on an equal footing and at the heart of the action: They continue to develop their skills through training and peer learning opportunities. As mentors, they support local groups and accompany processes and pass on their knowledge to other participants. GenE Next Steps also prepares them to take an active role in the advocacy efforts of our network.
3. **GenE Advocacy:** Youth work needs good framework conditions. In this programme pillar, we bundle the forces of youth representatives and professionals to campaign together for the needs of young people and to safeguard youth work in Europe. We translate the practical experiences from our projects into demands for policy change. Active members of the network qualify in advocacy training courses, act as delegates at conferences and carry out campaigns. We make the concerns of young people visible – locally, nationally and at European level.

Our Self-Conception: A Strong Alliance

At Generation Europe – The Academy, we all pull together. Our success is based on close cooperation and mutual respect among all those involved, from the young people and the professionals in the partner organisations to the team at the coordination office. We meet as partners who make different but equal contributions to the success of our joint endeavour.

- **The partner organisations** form the heart of the network on the ground. They organise local youth work, carry out trilateral partnerships and youth encounters, and ensure that the programme is firmly anchored in their communities.
- **The coordination office at IBB e.V.** creates the administrative and financial framework, manages network funding, offers professional advice, organises network-wide training opportunities and coordinates overarching public relations.
- **Together**, we continue to develop the network. We share resources, advise each other on acquiring co-financing and ensure that our common voice is heard.

The challenges in Europe are great, but our community is stronger. Together, we are building bridges, breaking down barriers and showing that a society based on solidarity is possible.