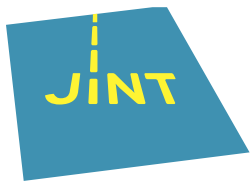


Vision for an environmentally and socially sustainable JINT

July 2022

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1. Context

Over the last few years, environmental topics have become increasingly important. Climate change, environmental degradation and biodiversity loss are existential threats to our planet and society. There is a need to make all aspects of our lives more sustainable in order to overcome this environmental crisis. It is our responsibility as JINT to create a culture of sustainability, both within the organisation and in the projects we support.

“Green” is put forward as one of the priorities in the newest **European Youth Programmes (Erasmus+ Youth and European Solidarity Corps 2021-2027)**. By supporting the [European Green Deal](#), the ‘environment and climate action’ priority intends to decrease the environmental footprint of international youth mobility activities, raise awareness across the youth sector about the importance of sustainable youth mobility, and empower organisations and beneficiaries to become changemakers on the topic of environmental sustainability.

The EU Youth Programmes are also closely linked with the [European Youth Goals](#), formulated by young people from all over Europe. One of these Goals is to create a **“Sustainable Green Europe”**, with the intention to inform and empower young people to “act as agents of change for environmental and sustainable development”. In practice, that means that organisations and participants of both European programmes are encouraged to adopt “green practices” when designing an activity, including to discuss and to learn about environmental issues, to reflect on local actions and impact, and to conceive greener ways of implementing their activities.

From the Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps regulations¹:

[T]he Programme[s are] intended to contribute to mainstreaming climate actions in and to the achievement of an overall target of 30 % of the Union budget expenditure supporting climate objectives. In line with the European Green Deal as a blueprint for sustainable growth, the actions under this Regulation should respect the 'do no harm' principle without changing the fundamental character of the Programme.

For example, in the first year of the new funding programmes, the measures taken by the European Commission to encourage applicants to “go green” in their project proposals include priority for projects tackling green subjects, indicating green objectives or setting up projects in a more sustainable way and a financial incentive to use green methods of travel. In addition to these measures, there are plans to put a new SALTO into place, focusing specifically on sustainability. At the last European Youth Work Convention, there was a consensus to make youth work greener and this was included in the declaration.²

At the Flemish level, sustainability is also on the agenda. The Flemish government has introduced the '**Visie 2050**' which uses The UN Sustainable Development goals as reference. In the '**Jeugd- en kinderrechtenbeleidsplan 2020-2024**' (JKP, Flemish Youth and Children's Rights Policy Plan), one of the 5 priorities refers to one aspect of sustainability: healthy and liveable neighbourhoods for children and young people.

It is clear from all these documents that sustainability has become a shared goal in youth work. **There is, however, a need for a coherent plan to stimulate sustainable approaches in youth work, with young people and the organisations that offer activities for them.**

¹ [Regulation \(EU\) 2021/888 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 May 2021 'Establishing the European Solidarity Corps Programme and repealing Regulations \(EU\) 2018/1475 and \(EU\) No 375/2014'](#) and [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](#)

² '[Signposts for the future: Final declaration of the 3rd European Youth Work Convention](#)', p. 15.

Taking these policy frameworks and plans into account, **this document aims to describe our vision, ideas and goals, , as well as to elaborate on concrete actions that JINT can set in motion to support their target groups and stakeholders towards a more environmentally just society.**

1.1. Sustainability: our definition

Before we go into our vision and plans for a more sustainable JINT and international youth work, we need to define what sustainability means for us. In our understanding of the term, it is **not limited to the environmental aspects and care for nature**, it includes economic factors (saving resources and money, reducing the economic burden, being happy with less, creating economic opportunity while respecting the environmental limits) and healthy living (enjoying healthy food, promoting physical activity, breathing clean air, drinking clean water, caring about mental health) as well.

Sustainability is also about **focusing on what we can do, rather than what we cannot**, and it's about **creating opportunities** to practice, inspire and lead by example. Therefore, our vision on sustainability is in line with Julian Agyeman's definition of 'just sustainability' as it introduces sustainability in a more 'just', holistic and equity-focused manner:

The need to ensure a better quality of life for all, now and into the future, in a just and equitable manner, whilst living within the limits of supporting ecosystems.³

- Improving our quality of life and well-being;
- Meeting the needs of both present and future generations (intra-and inter-generational equity);
- Justice and equity in terms of recognition (Schlosberg, 1999), process, procedure and outcome;
- Living within ecosystem limits (also called "one planet living").

³ ['Towards a 'just' sustainability?' Agyeman et al.](#)

We can also find these notions in the **Sustainable Development Goals 'wedding cake' model**, in which the economy serves society, so it evolves without compromising the planet's biodiversity and biosphere.



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1.2. Sustainability in the philosophy and working culture of JINT

What does this mean for JINT specifically? We believe JINT can make a difference by working towards **reducing the negative impact** of activities, practices, purchases or resources, our own as well as beneficiaries'. We consider it our role to provide the necessary **tools and information** for organisations to learn how to set up sustainable international youth work projects and to stimulate ecological travel and low-impact consumption.

More than passing on knowledge and encouraging others to practice sustainability, we mean to be an empowering **role model** as an organisation to **inspire** individuals and organisations.

Sustainable development for JINT, in the broad sense, also emphasizes the importance of knowledge and learning as a driving force, the importance of a

⁴ ['SDG's in onderzoek en onderwijs aan UGent'](#)

stimulating environment at the international level, of encouraging ecological travel and low-impact consumption, of **valuing cultural diversity, participation and global citizenship.**⁵

'Green' and sustainability has been for more than 20 years within the Philosophy of JINT.

1.2.1 JINT and sustainability up until 2021

We are not starting from a blank page. Green and sustainability have been topics in JINT's philosophy for **more than 20 years.**

JINT has been aware of its own ecological footprint and looking into ways to reduce it since before 2000. The colleagues of the facility team initiated a few ecological actions in a bottom-up approach. This led to the start of the Eco team in 2004: staff members formed a working group with a focus on more **"technical" eco actions** such as the water heating system in the building and offsetting our CO2 emissions.

JINT has been compensating all air travel for JINT staff and participants in TCA/NET activities since 2006. It has been advocating for CO2 compensation as an eligible cost for mobility projects for over 15 years, in order to reduce the environmental impact of international youth work. Since the introduction of unit costs in the European programmes, JINT has been promoting **CO2 compensation** and a more sustainable approach in designing mobility projects during meetings at European level as well as towards beneficiaries.

Over the years, the eco team has tackled several aspects related to sustainability at JINT, such as **energy management, mobility** and commuting to work and more **environmentally friendly purchases and events.** In time, the focus has shifted towards a more **behavioural approach, promoting a more sustainable attitude** at JINT in general. These have been collected in several "eco manuals" over the years.

⁵ 'Do not leave traces', JINT vzw: Operational objective 4.2. 'JINT ontwikkelt een heldere duurzaamheidsvisie, verankert deze in haar interne werking en draagt deze uit'

All of these actions have had an effect over the years and have to a certain extent created awareness among staff members about the importance of working towards a more sustainable JINT and more sustainable international youth work.

Not all actions have been documented well enough, however, nor were they structurally embedded in JINT's work, e.g. in a yearly action plan or as part of the introduction for new staff members. In addition, the impact of the actions was not consistently assessed or communicated. As a result, the measures that were taken were often forgotten over time.

1.2.2. Sustainability in JINT's Policy Plan

The title of JINT's Policy plan 2021-2025 "**Do not leave traces**" already carries out a message about sustainability. It is stated that the learning mobility activities that JINT supports should be aware of and reduce their ecological footprint. At the same time, mobility projects can help young people to learn about global challenges and support them in being active citizens on the local as well as on the international level. These are the positive traces that mobility projects can create in young people's minds and behaviours.

Nowadays, thanks to the European Green Deal, our focus is more targeted towards our beneficiaries, providing support to green up the European youth sector. Furthermore, JINT is connected to the sustainable development goals and wants to support the voice of young people who advocate for climate and social justice. Therefore, sustainability was chosen as one of the principles that steer the work of JINT for the coming years.

The following operational goal was added to the policy plan:

"JINT develops a clear vision on sustainability, anchors it in its internal operations and spreads it."

Different generic actions for 2021-2025 are already formulated:

- The vision should be broadly supported and shared and starts from a sustainability scan.
- Yearly an action plan is formulated encompassing different areas of sustainability.
- The vision and actions should be inspiring to the staff and other stakeholders.
- JINT applies sustainability in its own actions and promotes it with the programme users.
- JINT invests in the sustainable management of the JINT office/building.
- JINT takes ethical aspects into consideration when selecting financial institutions.

2. Aim and scope

In this policy period, our goal is to build on earlier experience with the support of a strategy, composed of **a vision text and yearly action plans**, a **new Eco team**, and with more actions, tools and support for all concerned.

Our sustainability strategy has two main pillars: an internal and an external one, with a focus on the Erasmus+ Youth and European Solidarity Corps programmes and their beneficiaries.

JINT's strategy with regards to the EU programmes focusses on three areas: raising awareness, supporting beneficiaries and capacity building. **The objective is to have at least 30% of all projects have a focus on the topic of sustainability and/or implement projects in a more sustainable way over the 7-year period for the 2 EU Youth Programmes.** In line with our Inclusion & Diversity strategy, JINT will also focus on "just sustainability" in order to avoid that sustainability becomes a new barrier in mobility.

For our internal focus steps are being taking to further **green the 'JINT house'**, in close cooperation with our Board and General Assembly. **International travel by train** will further be encouraged and supported by several internal measures and tools. **The objective is to have 25% of all international travel by train and to continue to invest in CO2 compensation for all travel.** In addition to more sustainable travel and making the building more energy friendly, the plan is to investigate whether other aspects of our work can be made more sustainable as well, including events, e-documentation, purchases, etc.

Bearing in mind the developments in the EU Youth Programmes (2021-2027), as well as those in JINT's policy plan concerning sustainability, there is a need to make our approach to sustainability more strategic and more structurally embedded in its work. By creating a yearly action plan to be set into motion from 2022, we aim to bring more attention to the topic while engaging staff members in sustainable practices. Hence the importance of having a well-substantiated vision document that provides guidance to the Eco team, colleagues, beneficiaries and stakeholders.

2.1 Roles and involvement

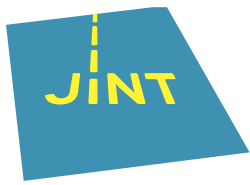
The members of the **Eco team** want to keep the discussion on sustainability alive in the organisation by creating **participatory processes** with all colleagues to ensure that the achievements are the result of a **joint effort** and can be celebrated as a shared success. Working on making JINT more sustainable as a team and being proud of our accomplishments will make our efforts more visible, inspiring internal and external stakeholders.

Tackling sustainability challenges is **a responsibility of the entire organisation**. Our aim that what we do to make JINT more sustainable is perceived as the natural thing to do by all colleagues. **All teams will be represented in the eco team by at least one colleague**. It will be the eco team's role to **collect needs, input and ideas from all teams and to make decisions based on that input**, resulting in a yearly action plan. Putting the actions into practice, however, is a shared responsibility of the entire JINT team.

The sustainability strategy is one of many strategies that are being brought to life by JINT in the course of this policy period. It is important to make sure we are not all working on separate islands when in fact there are quite a few links between our work and some common objectives. **Sustainability can be seen as a common thread through everything JINT does**: in training events, communication events and products, research and our vision of an inclusive and diverse JINT.

For more detailed information about the points of contact with the different strategies, we would like to refer to annex 'Linking vision on sustainability with other JINT strategies'. These links with other strategies will be used actively in the development of our yearly action plans.

In addition to the colleagues working at JINT, there are several other **stakeholders** that will be involved: **JINT's Board and General Assembly, our pool of trainers, the Europepers network, the European Platform for Learning Mobility as well as the future SALTO Resource Centre on sustainability**. Our network of national and international youth workers, National Agencies, beneficiaries and young people can be asked to participate as well, where relevant.



The aim is to create an **open dialogue** with our stakeholders, have them participate in the realisation of actions, help promote the vision and have a sustainable attitude towards all aspects of our work.

Our working language is **English** so that we can reach out and inspire beyond our own organisation and across borders.