

Erasmus+

**ERASMUS+:
YOUTH IN ACTION
Results of RAY
in Croatia in 2017**

*Research-based
Analysis and
Monitoring of
Erasmus+: Youth
in Action*

INTERNATIONAL
COOPERATION

TEAM
WORK

CULTURALLY
DIFFERENCES

MOBILITY

PROFESSIONAL
DEVELOPMENT

SOLIDARITY

DIALOGUE

TOLERANCE

PERSONAL
DEVELOPMENT



AGENCY FOR
MOBILITY AND
EU PROGRAMMES



Erasmus+



research based analysis of *youth in action*

ERASMUS+: YOUTH IN ACTION
Results of RAY
in Croatia in 2017
Research-based Analysis and Monitoring of
Erasmus+: Youth in Action

Margareta Gregurović

Zagreb, 2019

Impressum

Publisher: Agency for Mobility and EU Programmes

Editor: Aleksandra Živković

Graphic design: KO:KE kreativna farma

Zagreb, 2019

This study was conducted within the 'Research-based Analysis of Erasmus+: Youth in Action' (RAY) by the RAY Network, which includes the National Agencies of Erasmus+: Youth in Action and their research partners in currently 31 countries*.

The data for this study was collected through multilingual online surveys, which were conducted in 26 languages by the RAY Network between October 2017 and April 2018. These surveys addressed participants and project leaders/team members involved in projects funded through the European Union Programme Erasmus+: Youth in Action (2014-2020). This research project was designed by the Institute of Educational Science at University of Innsbruck and the Generation and Educational Science Institute in Austria in cooperation with the RAY Network.

* Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Croatia, Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, the Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Turkey and United Kingdom.

ERASMUS+: Youth in Action – Results of RAY *Research-based Analysis and Monitoring of Erasmus+: Youth in Action* in Croatia in 2017

A new evaluation cycle of the Erasmus+ Programme: Youth in Action (E+/YiA) conducted by the RAY Network within the RAY-MON project (Research-Based Analysis and Monitoring of Erasmus+: Youth in Action) focuses on E+/YiA projects which were completed in 2017. This report presents the results of the research aiming to examine the effects of the Erasmus+ youth projects on the beneficiaries involved, the profile of project participants, the availability of the Programme as well as the contribution of projects to the fulfilment of goals and priorities of the Erasmus+ Programme in order to monitor and further develop the Programme.

Specific questions analysed within this research are primarily focused on the effect of participation in E+/YiA projects, on the competence development of the project participants and leaders, on their professional and educational development and the effects on youth workers or youth leaders. Further on, compatibility and harmonisation between goals of the projects and the Programme was examined, as well as how participation in the E+/YiA projects contributes to youth participation in democratic life, active citizenship, intercultural dialogue, social inclusion, solidarity, participation in the labour market, development of youth work, international cooperation within the youth work, recognition of non-formal and informal learning as well as youth policy development. One of the purposes of the research was to examine the specificities of the effects of participation in the E+/YiA projects depending on the project activity type, experience and project participants or leaders' country of residence. Finally, the characteristics of the project participants and leaders, i.e. their sociodemographic, socioeconomic, educational and professional profiles, minority background and previous mobility experiences were the subjects of the conducted analysis.

This is a second cycle in which Croatia was included through the National Agency for Erasmus+ Programme – Agency for Mobility and EU Programmes. The data presented in this report were collected through multilingual online surveys, which were conducted in 26 languages within the RAY network between October 2017 and April 2018 in 31 countries¹. Surveys were completed by project participants and leaders/team members who were included in the projects financed within E+/YiA Programme (2014–2020). This research project was designed by the Institute of Educational Science at University of Innsbruck and the Generation and Educational Science Institute in Austria in cooperation with the RAY Network.

The results presented in this report refer to the projects in which Croatia was either sending or receiving country or financed the project. The project activities analysed were KA1 projects of Youth Exchange, European Voluntary Service and Mobility of Youth Workers, KA3 Structured Dialogue and Transnational Cooperation Activities. Two conceptually linked

¹ Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Croatia, Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, the Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Turkey and United Kingdom.

surveys were completed by project participants and project leaders. Even though somewhat larger number of surveys were completed, analyses were conducted on 1305 project participants (age 18+) and 285 project leaders, in order to present the results as reliable as possible for each group of respondents.

The main findings of the research are presented by general headings and implications of E+/YiA Programme following the structure of general and specific goals and questions of RAY research.

1) Active citizenship and social participation

One of the primary goals of RAY network refers to the development of evidence-based and research-informed youth policies. Youth policies include the dimensions of active citizenship and social participation, where participation in civil society and democratic life is one of the key features of the E+/YiA Programme. In the survey, both groups of respondents were asked to evaluate the impact of participation in the project on their activation in this area. Among both – the project leaders and participants – it was noted that in most cases the effect of the project was nonsignificant, i.e. their activities related to active citizenship were equal to those before participating in the project. The positive effect of the project has been noted in relation to the appreciation of cultural diversity in both groups of respondents, while engaging in activities that imply combating discrimination, intolerance, xenophobia and racism was more stressed by project leaders. Project participants indicated positive effect on the desire to include in youth policy development which was on the contrary negatively perceived by project leaders. Among the project participants the most negative effect of project refers to their participation in democratic/political life, however, it is important to emphasize that in both subsamples the negative impact assessment was recorded in very low proportions. The feeling of being Europeans for most of the respondents did not change due to participation in the project as well as the perception of EU for most project participants. Nevertheless, the biggest positive shift in the perception of EU is among the participants of the Youth Exchange projects, which in the proportion of 47% believe that their perception of EU is better than before. Leaders' evaluation of the project's impact on active citizenship and social participation is in the first place reflected in that the participants value cultural diversity to a greater extent. Additionally, they also believe that the participants feel more European after participating in the project, which is, in fact, not substantiated according to the answers of project participants.

Among the changes in the importance of general values such as equality, freedom, non-violence etc. the largely observed shift relates to the self-fulfilment and tolerance of the participants, which they consider more important after the project. The other values becoming more important after the participation in the project are individual freedom, equality and solidarity with people facing difficulties which are estimated by more than half of the respondents, suggesting greater awareness of people with fewer opportunities or special needs.

2) Competence development

The next goal of the RAY network and research, and the overall Erasmus+ Programme, is the development of lifelong learning competencies. These competencies in the research are presented through specific competences, skills, results and specific effects of project participation on both groups of respondents.

Self-assessment of the improvement of competences among both groups of respondents and the evaluation of the competences of project participants provided by project leaders are primarily related to getting along with people who have different cultural background and communicating with people speaking in another language. The respondents also perceive the development of their skills in the field of teamwork. Disagreements are more common among all respondents regarding improvement of the competence to independently create media content, while the participants point out to the weaker development of competences associated with learning planning and independent learning as well as creative expression.

The gaining of new knowledge is also the focus of RAY research, so it is important to point out that the subjects of youth and youthwork as well as cultural diversity are distinguished as the subjects about which the respondent have learned the most. The subjects of non-formal and informal education and learning and personal development were also chosen by more than half of the respondents.

The acquisition of new knowledges in the area of youthwork and in the area of non-formal and informal education and learning is also stressed in the evaluation of the effects of participation in the projects among both groups of the respondents. Project leaders accentuate the positive effects on competences such as the better collaboration in the international team, establishing new contacts and acquiring new knowledge that they are planning or are already applying in their work with the youth. Project participants involved in youthwork also stress positive effects of project participation on all competences related to their work with young people. More than one third of project participants stressed that they are already applying new skills and knowledges within their work with the youth. However, both groups indicate insufficient development of skills and knowledges related to acquiring financial support for activities involving young people, insufficient understanding how to contribute to the development of youth policies as well as insufficient knowledge about the content of youth policies at European level.

Further on, participation in E+/YiA projects has had a significant impact on the personal development of participants and they emphasize it. A high level of awareness of the project's effects on raising self-confidence, assessing their strengths and weaknesses, better expressing and understanding people who are different and dealing with new (and conflicting) situations. The project leaders confirmed these results in their evaluations of the positive effects of the project on the participants. On the other hand, as the most relevant results of the projects, the project leaders estimate they improved their mobility skills in other countries and established and maintained new contacts.

3) Educational and professional development pathways

Plans related to professional development and education for E+/YiA project leaders and participants primarily point to further development of foreign language skills. In addition, project participants in greater proportions agree that they intend to take advantage of opportunities for non-formal education and learning. On the other hand, both groups of respondents are equally sceptical of increasing their chances of finding work and they do not plan to study, work, apply for a traineeship or live abroad. Project participants also express their disagreement over a clearer idea of their further education, a better understanding of career opportunities, and they disagree with having a clearer idea of their professional career, ambitions and goals.

In this context, the motivation for inclusion in the E+/YiA projects can also be analysed. This is primarily linked to the gaining of new experiences, personal development, learning something new and establishing contacts with people from other cultures or countries. On the other hand, project participants are not encouraged by the recommendations of other people as they do not believe that their participation in the project increases their probability of finding a job, which is consistent with the perception of project leaders who also do not believe that there is increase in the chances of finding a job for project participants.

4) Learning organisations and capacity building

By participating in E+/YiA projects, project leaders and participants transfer their experiences, competences and knowledges to an organization they represented in the project or in which they work. The most powerful effect of participating in the project on the organization within both groups of respondents is the establishing contacts and partnerships with other countries. A significant effect was noted primarily, but not exclusively, by project leaders regarding the improved acceptance of cultural diversity and improved project management competence, the competence to organize non-formal education, as well as the promotion of knowledge transfer and the application of good practices in the organization. The weakest impact on the organization is related to the assessment of a more intense engagement with European issues and the improvement of procedures for the recognition and validation of competences outside of Youthpass. Participants in E+/YiA projects are further disagreeing with the assessment that the networks with local structures and communities are strengthened.

A local community is another actor who could (and should) be involved in conducting youth projects for both the benefit of the youth and for the benefit of the entire local community. The effect of participating in the project on local communities was assessed by project leaders who were mostly unable to estimate exactly what these effects are. They overall estimate these effects positively and stress positive reaction of the local community to the project in general and the intercultural dimension. The obtained results certainly leave room for strengthening the capacity of the local community and for its stronger involvement in such projects as well as for reviewing feedback on possible effects on the local community.

5) Profiles of projects, participants, project leaders

The projects analysed in this cycle are largely related to project activities of KA1 Youth Exchange among both groups of respondents. Croatia was in high proportion either a sending or receiving country, and it is important to note that in some projects it played both roles. However, the use of the Croatian language is quite different from the 2015 cycle (11% / 3% compared to 7% / 7.5%). The use of the Croatian language is more closely linked to the KA3 Structured Dialogue activities which can be implemented at the national level and do not require the involvement of international partners.

The demographic structure of the E+/YiA project leaders points to greater representation of female respondents, with the overall average age of 31 years. Over three-quarters of the respondents indicate as the highest educational level the level of University, Polytechnic, post-secondary/tertiary level College. Less than 40% of the respondents were employed outside the organization they represented in the project. More than a fifth indicated that they are still in the education or training system while the similar proportion of respondents pointed out

they volunteered. The share of 10% of the respondents is unemployed. Most participants state that they live in a large city (its centre or suburb). In the project they reported in the survey, most of them were involved on a voluntary i.e. unpaid basis, and in most cases, they had a dual role: educational/socio-pedagogical and organizational/administrative. More than half of the project leaders come from Croatia and indicate the Croatian language as maternal. 12% of respondents state that they have minority status. The significant majority of project leaders has previous experience of participating in E+/YiA projects – in equal shares as participants and as project leaders – and they have mostly been involved in two or more projects.

Participants in E+/YiA projects are on average 25 years old and female respondents are more represented in the sample. According to the educational structure, project participants are mostly highly educated, though more than half is still in education or training. There is slightly more than a quarter of full-time employed, 20% of volunteers, and slightly less than 11% of unemployed respondents. They live mostly in urban areas and large cities, and Croatia as the country of origin is indicated by more than half of the respondents. About 10% of respondents state that they are members of some of the minorities. More than 80% of respondents have already participated in some of the projects under E+/YiA Programme or within the framework of previous EU Youth Programs (e.g. Youth in Action 2007–2013). Almost 60% of them participated in some other European projects, while almost half said they participated in other similar projects. Overall, around 80% of respondents participated in two or more projects.

6) Inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities

One of the most important goals of E+/YiA Programme is to involve young people with fewer opportunities or special needs in projects, but also in the wider society, so a special segment of research and surveys focuses on this problem. The E+/YiA project leaders, especially within the Youth Exchange project activities, report that young people with fewer opportunities were involved in a fairly large proportion of projects (about 50% of projects). From their answers it is clear that they were mostly young people with a lower socioeconomic status – those with insufficient financial resources and those who live in distant areas. However, the E+/YiA project participants mostly estimate that they have equal opportunities when comparing their lifestyle to peers (slightly less than half of them). One fifth estimates that they have greater opportunities than their peers, and roughly the same proportion of project participants estimates their opportunities slightly or significantly worse than those of their peers, with more than half of the respondents claiming to face one or more obstacles. Most often, these are obstacles in accessing work and employment (40%), followed by active participation in political life, mobility and education at the end. As the most frequent type of obstacles they stress economic indicators, such as insufficient money and living in less developed (sub)urban areas or living in the remote areas. Here it is important to point out that the indicators of assessment of opportunities and facing obstacles are significant predictors of the evaluation of project's impact on the knowledge, competences, results and future plans, whereby project participants who indicate they have more opportunities than their peers emphasize stronger effect of project participation on their knowledge and competences as well as on results and plans arising from project. Additionally, respondents who report that they faced more obstacles indicated that they learned more during the project, or, in other words, they gained knowledge on multiple topics and subjects.

7) Youth in Action networks development

Former experience of participating in similar projects enables participants to establish new contacts and their potential maintenance through future cooperation and projects. The respondents stress the knowledge and support of people who have been introduced to their further work in the youth field. The basic sources of information about the programmes and projects in which they can participate come primarily from their organizations, i.e. youth organizations or youth associations. The second most common source of information for both groups of respondents are their friends and acquaintances. The National Agencies were pointed out by about 20% of project leaders and 7% of project participants, where project leaders consider the content and information obtained on the National Agency's web site, direct notifications received by regular or electronic mail and personal contact with agency's staff as most important and informative.

Significant share of established contacts and capacity development related to different aspects of project application (such as providing financial resources, monitoring and involving young people with fewer opportunities or special needs) and its implementation in the field of youthwork as well as high levels of desire for maintaining contacts with people who have been met during the project suggests possible sustainability of newly-created networks and continued cooperation within some new projects. This tendency is reflected both at the level of project participants and the level of organizations they represented.

8) Implementation of E+/YiA projects

Implementation of the E+/YiA Programme objectives is also one of the aspects of the assessment of this research. To investigate this, the project leaders were asked to assess the extent to which the general objectives of the E+/YiA Programme were realized within the project they participated in. Project leaders point out that all the goals set in the projects have been achieved, and most agree that the project has promoted young people's respect for cultural diversity, improved intercultural dialogue and developed solidarity with young people. Slightly weaker achieved objectives refer to the promotion of the interest in youth policy development, the promotion of career opportunities and the youth field civil society organizations capacity building.

The evaluation of project application can also be analysed based on the responses of project leaders whose organizations were the project applicants (76 in total). The results show that the strongest agreement was expressed with notions of Youthpass being an easy to use Internet tool, the project submission information being understandable, that it was easy to obtain the information about the project application, that the entire grant scheme for the project was adequate and satisfactory and that, compared to other funding programs, administrative management of this project application was easy. Stronger disagreement was largely related to the meeting of funding criteria and the ease of use of Internet application submission and reporting tools. An estimation that organisations found one or more project partners via the online support service (Otlas) was considered as incorrect.

Other organizational aspects of the application and implementation of E+/YiA projects have also been evaluated based on project leaders' responses, stating that the relationship between project leader and project team members was based on mutual respect and good

cooperation and that the overall project management was both satisfactory and appropriate. Half of the respondents fully agree that the pedagogical implementation of the project was of very high quality.

9) Differentiation of data analysis

As in the previous cycle, all the results were compared by type of project activity to determine the basic differences between the projects. The inclusion of several categories of project activities in the analyses resulted in a greater number of significant differences between them, but the most frequently obtained statistically significant differences point to the stronger differentiation of Structured Dialogue projects within both groups of respondents and the Transnational Cooperation Activities among project participants, which is related to a different structure and implementation of these projects. Additional differentiations can be analysed based on conducted regression analyses which explored the effects of sociodemographic and socioeconomic characteristics of respondents and other selected contextual indicators on different aspects of project participation. The results showed that the respondents' sociodemographic characteristics contribute to the stronger perception of significant project effect on the knowledge, competences and results among project participants in comparison to project leaders, but it is important to point out that the participant questionnaire collected additional information about the participants such as assessing their opportunities and obstacles which was not the case in the questionnaire for the project leaders. These indicators were solely significant predictors of selected dependent constructs within the project participants sample. Selected contextual indicators, such as the indicators of the Croatia as sending/receiving country and the working language of the project, have a significant but rather weak effect on the estimation of participation in the project on the development of different knowledges and competences, suggesting that some other indicators might better explain the effects of participation in E+/YiA projects.

Comparison of 2015 – 2017 results indicated quite consistent effects of participation in E+/YiA projects among both project leaders and participants, with no specific areas where changes were recorded except perhaps in the area of administrative project management from the perspective of project leaders indicating significant improvement in administering the project.

When conducting international research study such as RAY-MON, it is important to stress of some of the limitations. Firstly, it is important to point out that the samples used are not representative of the youth population in general because there are no specific reference frames based on which representativeness can be determined. Furthermore, there is a possibility that samples are more widely represented by female and older respondents who are generally more inclined to participate in such research. Also, there are potential negative implications of an online survey management system that depends on the accuracy of available data. It is also important to note that the differences in the regression models are illustrative because the dependent variables in both samples differ to some extent and some sociodemographic variables were not represented in both questionnaires indicating the need for potential inclusion in next cycles. It should also be noted that in some project activities there is a very small number of respondents, therefore these data should be interpreted with caution.

From the presented RAY-MON results it can be concluded that in evaluating the E+/YiA Programme, all respondents rated the Programme (in general and in some aspects of its implementation and expected effects) as highly positive. The basic objectives of the projects are in line with the general objectives of the E+/YiA Programme, and their realization is recorded at the level of all actors (such as project leaders, participants and organizations) involved in project implementation. The obtained high level of awareness of the intercultural dimension of the relationships within the projects should be maintained in the future, and perhaps more attention should be given to encouraging, informing and raising the awareness that young people should get involved in the development and adoption of youth policies both at national and EU level.



www.mobilnost.hr

The information and views set out in this publication are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the official opinion of the European Union. Neither the European Union institutions and bodies nor any person acting on their behalf may be held responsible for the use which may be made of the information contained therein.

Agency for Mobility and EU Programmes
Frankopanska 26
10000 Zagreb, Croatia
T +385 (0) 1 5005 635
F +385 (0) 1 5005 699
info@mobilnost.hr
www.mobilnost.hr