

**Research-based
analysis of European
youth programmes**

**TRAINING ACTIVITIES IN ERASMUS+ YOUTH IN ACTION BOOST
THE COMPETENCES OF YOUTH WORKERS AND YOUTH LEADERS –
AND HAVE SOME ADDITIONAL POTENTIAL TO UNFOLD**

**Results and recommendations of the RAY
research project “Competence development and
capacity building of youth workers and youth
leaders in Erasmus+ Youth in Action”**

RAY CAP

AUTHORS

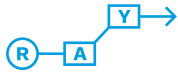
ANDREAS KARSTEN

WITH ASHLEY PITSCHMANN

AND CARA LEE ROTH

April 2020

This article was written and prepared for the magazine Mladje, issued by Movit, Institute for the development of youth mobility, and Slovenian national agency for Erasmus+:Youth in Action and European Solidarity Corps (<http://www.movit.si/movit/publikacije/mladje/>)



A CLOSER LOOK AT TRAINING AND SUPPORT ACTIVITIES

The youth chapter of Erasmus+ puts a strong emphasis on fostering the quality of youth work and enhancing the international dimension of youth activities. To that end, the programme seeks to strengthen the capacity of youth workers, youth leaders and their organisations and networks to introduce, integrate and improve an international dimension into their youth activities and youth work.¹

In light of this objective, Erasmus+ Youth in Action (E+/YiA) funds a wide range of training and support activities, predominantly as learning mobility activities for youth workers and as transnational training and networking activities. These training and support activities were at the core of the RAY-CAP research project (2015–2019), the short name for our “research project on competence development and capacity building of youth workers and youth leaders in Erasmus+ Youth in Action.”

We wanted to know how training and support activities within E+/YiA contribute to the competence development of youth workers and youth leaders; how the learning outcomes of training and support activities are transferred into youth work practice; how training and support activities contribute to the capacity building of organisations involved in E+/YiA; and how the combined findings in response to these research questions can contribute to the development of training/support strategies and activities in E+/YiA.

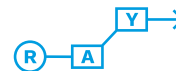
MORE THAN 600 SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS ACROSS EUROPE

We looked at training and support activities with two different groups of people and from four different angles. With individual participants of training and support activities, the first of these two groups, we conducted three semi-structured interviews: one just before the activity to identify needs and expectations, one shortly after the activity to collect first impressions and initial feedback, and a final one almost a year after the activity to look at how youth work has benefited and changed in the meantime. With representatives of organisations, the second group, we conducted one semi-structured group interview to explore the effects of training and support activities at organisational level. All in all, we conducted 606 interviews in 17 European countries.

TRAINING AND SUPPORT ACTIVITIES WORK WELL!

Our research shows that training and support activities work well, in particular for youth workers and youth leaders who are new to international youth work. Participants gain knowledge, skills and methods as well as inspiration, motivation and confidence to introduce and integrate international and intercultural aspects into their youth work practice.

¹ European Parliament and European Council (2013). *Regulation 1288/2013 establishing Erasmus+ (Article 11, p. 59)*. Official Journal of the European Union.



In a nutshell, training and support activities use the pedagogy of non-formal education well, are rooted and anchored in current times, put a strong and appreciated focus on peer learning, strengthen social and personal competences, and encourage and empower their participants.

Looking beyond individual participants, training and support activities in Erasmus+ Youth in Action offer essential qualification options and pathways for youth workers and youth leaders. They contribute to the professionalisation of international youth work, of the youth field more widely, and foster the quality of youth work across Europe.

ADDITIONAL POTENTIAL TO TAP INTO

Our research has also shown a number of areas for improvement for training and support activities.

Increase diversity and specificity of training and support activities

The training and support activities that work best are addressed to youth workers and youth leaders who are new to international youth work. Experienced youth workers, as well as youth workers with a thematic and/or methodical specialisation, are more critical of the training and support activities they attend. There is a need for additional, advanced and specialised training and support activity formats.

Make space for political and societal discourses in youth work

Many youth workers and youth leaders feel that current training and support formats do not provide sufficient space for current political and societal discourses. From climate change to hate speech, from illiberal democracies to generational inequality, topics that shape youth work practice are not reflected enough in training and support activities.

Pay more attention to professional competence development

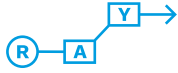
Most youth workers and youth leaders were satisfied with the development of personal and social competences through training and support activities, while for many their activity was less convincing when it comes to professional competence development. This indicates an overall misbalance, which should be recalibrated.

Training and support activities need to go digital

Many training and support activities have remained tenaciously analogue: markers and flip-charts continue to rule the world of non-formal education and training. In times of youth movements taking to the streets to demand climate justice, it is more than time for the youth field to develop convincing, sustainable and powerful digital components that can be integrated into training and support activities.

Training and support activities cannot replace missing infrastructure

In many European countries, youth work remains severely underfunded, and often lacks an adequate infrastructure to support and strengthen youth workers and youth leaders as well as



their organisations and networks. While training and support activities can compensate such deficits to some extent, they cannot replace sufficient investments into youth work. The training and support activities offered through E+/YiA should be a complementary, inspiring and supporting element of a well-functioning youth work infrastructure.

FURTHER INFORMATION

RAY – the Network for the Research-based Analysis of European Youth Programmes – is an open, self-governed network of National Agencies with policy and research partners in 36 European countries. This research project on competence development and capacity building of youth workers and youth leaders in Erasmus+ Youth in Action was implemented in 17 countries by 20+ staff members of National Agencies of E+/YiA and 30+ researchers in those countries.

The full research report for RAY-CAP, along with supporting material, is available at researchyouth.net/cap.