

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

**ERASMUS+ YOUTH IN ACTION IS INTERCULTURAL LEARNING AT
ITS BEST: A UNIQUE PROGRAMME TO EXPERIENCE
CULTURAL DIVERSITY AND DEVELOP CULTURAL EMPATHY**

**Results and recommendations of the research
work of the RAY Network and its monitoring and
analysis of the European youth programmes**

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AUTHORS

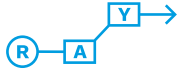
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THE EUROPEAN POWERHOUSE OF INTERNATIONAL YOUTH WORK

The youth chapter of Erasmus+ is an exceptional programme with a long-standing history. For over 30 years, it has promoted intercultural learning across nations and regions, fostered active citizenship and participation of young people, supported youth organisations and networks, and strengthened the quality of youth work across Europe.¹

The sixth generation of the programme, Erasmus+ Youth in Action (E/YiA, 2014–2020), has carried this legacy forward with great success:

- 66% of project participants appreciate cultural diversity more than before their project, and 69% learned something new about cultural diversity in their project;
- 73% of project participants want to develop joint youth work activities with people they got to know through the project, and 57% learned something new about youth work in their project;
- 48% of project participants feel more European than before their project, and 37% learned something new about European issues in their project.

Our research shows conclusively that:

- The programme provides an excellent framework for intercultural dialogue and intercultural learning across formats and beneficiaries.
- The programme offers the most significant and most accessible opportunity for youth workers and youth leaders at local, regional and national level to bring an international dimension to their projects and programmes.
- The programme builds the capacity of youth leaders, youth trainers and youth workers, who become more competent and more confident, widen and strengthen their networks, and get better at running participatory youth projects with an intercultural and international dimension.
- The programme successfully draws on and promotes the principles of non-formal learning, such as participatory learning approaches and peer learning settings.
- The programme provides arenas to practice and experience citizenship, democracy, participation and solidarity; and stimulates communities of practice that often persist beyond projects.
- The programme respects the diversity of youth work across Europe, caters to a wide variety of target groups – from youth trainers and youth workers to youth activists and youth leaders and youth researchers and policymakers – and utilises the richness of the youth sector as a learning tool to build capacity as well as empathy.

¹ The first “Youth for Europe” programme, now widely referred to as *Youth for Europe I*, was adopted in [June 1988](#) and was valid from 1 July 1988 to 31 December 1991. Since then, a total of 6 iterations of the programme have been in place: “Youth for Europe II” (1992–1994), “Youth for Europe III” (1995–1999), “Youth” (2000–2006), “Youth in Action” (2007–2013), and “Erasmus+ Youth in Action” (2014–2020).



A SUCCESSFUL PROGRAMME – WITH ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT

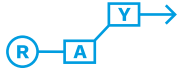
Beyond answering the key question whether or not a programme is successful in achieving its core objectives – and Erasmus+ Youth in Action is! – our research-based monitoring and analysis also seeks to identify areas for improvement. Three of them are:

- **E+/YiA needs to get better at building a recognition that goes beyond mobility.** While most projects strengthen active citizenship and youth participation, many beneficiaries are not aware that the programme seeks to support democratic citizenship and participation in civil society and democratic life – in part because the underlying concepts remain either unexplained or too abstract.
- **E+/YiA needs to get better at training experienced youth professionals.** While the training of new youth leaders, youth trainers and youth workers is a strength of the programme, the training of experienced youth professionals is a profound weakness. There is a lack of advanced training offers for youth work and youth policy experts – on a diversity of knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviours.
- **E+/YiA needs to get better at strengthening, and reproducing, diversity.** While the programme works well for the young people with fewer opportunities that it manages to involve, it remains overproportionately attractive for highly educated young people. Moreover, project leaders tend to overestimate how many young people with fewer opportunities are involved – and tend to underestimate their needs.

A SUCCESSFUL PROGRAMME – WITH ROOM FOR NEW IDEAS

The youth programmes of the European Union have always been open to new ideas, new formats and new approaches. Through our research, we have identified a few areas where trying new things would be beneficial. Here are again three examples:

- **New formats to address current social and political developments.** Our research shows that project participants are shaken by current social and political developments, leading to concerns, doubts, uncertainties and anxieties. The programme needs new formats that explicitly address current social and political developments – and capacity building for the youth sector to implement such formats.
- **New ideas to address the gap between digitalisation and youth work.** Digitalisation plays only a minor role in the current programme generation, whether in mobility or capacity building formats. While the topic has enjoyed increasing political attention, our research shows that youth professionals largely remain distanced to digital practices – with the gap between young people's realities and youth work growing.
- **New approaches to the recognition of youth sector professionals.** Our research shows that experienced youth leaders, youth trainers and youth workers not only seek advanced training offers that further develop their competence and provide them with a space to explore the ambiguity, ethics and values of their work. They also seek recognition – something a *Youth Work Pass* could provide.



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.

The continuous monitoring of the European youth programmes covers all 35 European partner countries through online surveys in 29 languages in a cross-sectional design. Over more than 10 years, the RAY Network has built a database with responses from more than 100.000 project participants and over 30.000 project leaders.

The full research reports for RAY-MON, along with data reports, fact sheets, and additional support material, are available at researchyouth.net/mon.