

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

INTERVIEW

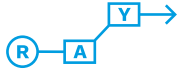
RAY Network Research based Analysis of European Youth Programmes

INTERVIEWEE: Carmen Teubl, Coordinator of the RAY Network (RAY Coordination Office at the Austrian National Agency for Erasmus+ Youth in Action & European Solidarity Corps, which is situated at IZ – Verein zur Förderung von Vielfalt, Dialog und Bildung)

INTERVIEWER: Mojca Mayr, editor of the magazine Mladje

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The interview was conducted 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/>) – this is a slightly shortened version.



1. LET'S START AT THE BEGINNING. WHAT IS RAY, AND WHAT WAS THE MOTIVATION FOR ITS FOUNDATION?

The idea of having joint transnational research activities related to the Erasmus+: Youth in Action Programme, which was considered by a handful of National Agencies and researchers in 2008, grew out and was initiated by the Austrian National Erasmus+: Youth in Action (in particular the association where it is situated, then called 'Interkulturelles Zentrum') and its consortium partner, the 'Institute of Educational Science' of the University of Innsbruck. These two partners started a cooperation for a scientific accompanying research on national level at the start of the programme in 2007.

The RAY Network (then called 'Research-based Analysis of Erasmus+: Youth in Action') was then founded in 2008, starting with one research project, the Monitoring Surveys of Erasmus+: Youth in Action, in 2009. Since then, the network has grown and currently involves 36 RAY partners in 34 countries. In 2019 it has officially changed its name to 'Research-based Analysis of European Youth Programmes', involving now also research related to the European Solidarity Corps.

The motivation behind it was on one hand, to find out what impact and potential the programme really has, as there were only few or no indicators available during this time regarding effects of the programme as well as enhancing the visibility of the programme. On the other hand, the main aim of RAY is to contribute to a better understanding and development of international youth work and youth learning mobility as well as to an evidence-based policy development in the youth field in Europe.

The RAY Network, which is an open and self-governed research network, is coordinated since then by the RAY Coordination Office (at Austrian NA) and the RAY Research Coordination (formerly University of Innsbruck, since 2019 Genesis (Generation and Educational Science Institute)).

2. SO, RAY IS ACTUALLY A NETWORK OF SEVERAL PARTNERS, NATIONAL AGENCIES AND ACCOMPANIED RESEARCH INSTITUTIONS. HOW IS THE COOPERATION AND WORK DONE WITHIN SUCH A NETWORK?

As already mentioned, there are currently 36 National Agencies and their research partners involved. They are conducting national research (e.g. case studies) in their countries and/or providing necessary data which is needed for e.g. the monitoring surveys or other research strands, which are then used for the transnational research and relating reports. Furthermore, it is up to every RAY partner to use the national and transnational research findings for further (research) purposes, for the development of related activities or communication issues on national level.

The RAY Network meet once a year in order to discuss current research findings & develop further ideas and topics and take decision on further RAY activities. The so-called RAY Coordination Group, which consists of two Co-Chairperson, who are appointed by the network and



representing either the National Agencies or the research partners, as well as representatives of the RAY Coordination Office (at AT NA) and the Research Coordination (Genesis), is meeting additionally twice a year.

In between, further events or conferences related to the RAY findings as well as internal working group meetings of the different research strands, are e.g., organised by the RAY Coordination. General information regarding coordination, research and network activities (e.g. newsletters) are shared regularly within the network and with other stakeholders. The RAY Network is committed to have this close cooperation with the whole Network of National Agencies of European Youth Programmes as well as with the European Commission.

Furthermore, (research) communication activities are implemented throughout the year in order to make RAY findings visible. Therefore, results and findings are presented at various events of the European youth field & in the youth policy sector as well as through other communication channels (e.g. social media).

3. HOW AND WHAT KIND OF RESEARCH IS DONE WITHIN THE RAY NETWORK? WHAT IS THE BASIC STRUCTURE OF METHODOLOGICAL APPROACHES AND CONTENT OF RESEARCH?

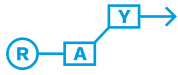
2019 was quite a big year for RAY as for the first time, we had 7 research projects running simultaneously.

The regularly conducted 'RAY Monitoring of Erasmus+: Youth in Action' (RAY-MON) started a new cycle of online surveys with a first round in autumn 2019 (second round will be done in spring 2020). Furthermore, the final research findings of the RAY-MON cycle 2017/2018 were published.

2 long-term studies were finished in 2019 and the final reports published and presented – 'Competence Development and Capacity Building in Erasmus+: Youth in Action' (RAY-CAP) as well as 'Long Term Effects of Erasmus+: Youth in Action on Participation and Active Citizenship' (RAY-LTE).

Transnational reports for RAY-Mon 2017/2018, RAY-CAP and RAY-LTE can be found here: www.researchyouth.eu/results-erasmus-youth-in-action.

Furthermore, 4 new research strands were introduced: 'Impact, Role and Potential of the Strategic Partnerships (Key Action 2)' (RAY-INNO), 'Approaches to Participation and Citizenship Education and Learning in EU Youth Programmes' (RAY-PART), 'Strategies and Practices for Organisational Development in the European Youth Sector' (RAY-LEARN) as well as the 'RAY Monitoring for the European Solidarity Corps' (RAY-SOC). For the latter, no surveys were conducted yet – this will start in autumn 2020 – but the preparation for the surveys and related research concept notes etc. for this new research strand were implemented as well as a pre-study (quantitative research methodology) conducted (in course of a broader study on 'Solidarity' on behalf of the Resource Centre for the European Solidarity Corps).



How the research is done depends on the respective research strand, in general a combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods and instruments are used. For e.g., for the RAY Monitoring, multilingual online survey in 29 languages are conducted with project participants and project leaders/team members. For other research project, e.g. RAY-INNO or RAY-PART, qualitative interviews and/or focus groups with different actors involved in the projects and the beneficiary organisations (participants, project leader, board and staff members, trainers, other stakeholder, etc.) as well as other methodological approaches are used.

4. CAN YOU SHARE WITH US SOME OF THE MOST PROMINENT RESEARCH RESULTS THAT HAVE BEEN ACCOMPLISHED THROUGH RAY ACTIVITIES?

Maybe a very generic statements, but the latest research findings show clearly that the programme ‘works’ 😊. RAY research findings¹ show clearly that it is achieving its objectives as e.g. promoting non-formal learning, enhancing intercultural dialogue & inclusion and fostering youth participation in social and democratic life.

For example, 95% of project leaders state, that young people develop key competences through the participation in the programme.

Asking the project participants underlines this as well – multilingual competences as well as personal, social & ‘learning to learn’ competences and intercultural & citizenship competences are among the highest mentioned.

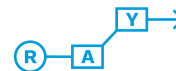
Another crucial findings, which underlines one objective of the programme, is the contribution to the quality development in youth work and its actors involved

Furthermore, the youth sector & youth organisations benefit, e.g. through building and enhancing partnerships & networks or through knowledge transfer & sharing of good practices within the organisation as well as between countries and on the European level.

These² are only some findings and results among a lot of others – my colleagues from the transnational research team will elaborate them further. More information can also be find in our newest factsheets based on the most recent research findings for RAY-MON: <https://www.researchyouth.eu/facts-and-figures>

Of course, we are just at the beginning 😊 The new programme period for the European Youth Programmes starting in 2021 brings also new and interesting challenges & chances for RAY and its research.

¹ For example, RAY MON: *Exploring Erasmus+: Youth in Action. Effects and outcomes of the Erasmus+: Youth in Action Programme from the perspective of project participants and project leaders, Transnational Analysis 2017/2018*, <https://www.researchyouth.eu/results-erasmus-youth-in-action>.



One next step, among others: We were planning an open conference of the network, where latest research findings of RAY as well as from other crucial youth research projects would have been shared and linked together, as well as open gaps and needs for European youth research in the next decade would have been discussed and identified with researchers, National Agencies, youth policy stakeholders and other actors in the youth field. Unfortunately, we cannot hold the conference in May 2020 due to the current situation around COVID-19. We have to see which platform could be used to still address the ideas and aims behind it. I am sure, we will find one way or the other to hold the conference at a later stage or plan some other activities connected to it in the near future.

And of course, I am looking forward to the first research findings regarding the implementation of the European Solidarity Corps.

We will also launch our new RAY website in the new design around the beginning of May³ – where the newest facts & figures and a lot of other interesting information will be presented



FURTHER INFORMATION

www.researchyouth.net/

³ Amendment: the new website will be launched in September.