**RAY INNO
Research project on the impact of Key Action 2:
Cooperation for innovation and the exchange of good practices**

NATIONAL CASE STUDY REPORT: LATVIA

How have transnational strategic partnerships defined innovation and good practice, respectively, in the context of their projects?

Project implementers do not evaluate their project ideas and content in the context of innovation/ good practice directly. The primary substance is the content of the project itself and often the project implementers cannot even distinguish whether it is innovation or good practice, as the content of the projects practically includes both.

Analysing the project implementers' narratives of their projects, it can be concluded that anything that has not been implemented by particular country is considered innovation. Moreover, it may not mean that it is an innovation in other partner countries. Mostly the leading partner cannot even reflect on the innovative nature of the project's idea in other partner countries.

Good practice, on the other hand, is defined as an activity that has proven effectiveness in another country and is being adopted now. Good practice is also considered cases when project ideas are innovation in nature because they are being developed from scratch, but for various reasons the specific projects have not been submitted as innovation projects.

In all 4 analysed cases/ projects in Latvia, the content of projects incorporates elements of innovation and good practice, and it is not possible to clearly distinguish between these different types of projects. The differences are only in the scope and scale of the project activities.

This problem of segregation of the projects is caused by the fact that projects are not initially planned and developed as innovation or good practice – the project's starting point is the idea and content of the project. Project implementers then assess the extent to which they are willing and able to implement the particular idea and then appropriately choose which of the project types to prepare and submit. In the context of projects analysed in Latvia, it is possible to argue that any of the four analysed project ideas could be developed both as an innovation project and as a project of good practice. Substantive differences are not essential to uniquely define them as only innovation or as good practice. Furthermore, in two analysed examples of good practice also materials were developed that were not planned in the project application initially and which could be considered innovative. Consequently, such a breakdown of the types of projects is very conditional, and also to some extent restrictive, as good practice projects prevent the development of materials or activities (intellectual outputs), which would significantly enrich projects.

How do transnational strategic partnerships seek to support the fostering of innovation and the strengthening of good practice?

Out of the 4 analysed examples in Latvia, in 3 cases the implementation of the projects was mostly dependent on the leading partner – the leading partner was the author and developer of the project idea and project promoter, while the other partners successfully connected to the project idea and content. In only one case the partnership has been 'deeper' and all the partners involved are the creators of the idea and content – all partners were involved with the same level of activity and content input. At the same time, this does not necessarily mean that transnational partnerships do not play a crucial role – on the contrary, their role is even decisive, since project ideas have been approbated and refined because each of the partners has contributed (more or less) for building content of the project. Namely, although most often the project idea is created and developed by one of the partners (leading partner), all partners contribute to the project implementation. Particularly successful are the examples where the project partners are very different in their profile and experience (e.g. working with very different target groups of young people, working on very different youth work topics, representing not just the youth field, but other areas too (education, employment, municipalities)), because it is the diversity of experience and competences that allows project ideas to be developed and applied more widely than just within the project. And in this respect, it can be assured that transnational partnerships, where partners are as diverse as possible, are more effective and have more sustainable project results. The analysed examples at the same time also show that such partnerships tend to be challenging in project management, especially when many partners are involved.

How are the results of transnational strategic partnerships – intellectual outputs and/or best practice – typically shared, and how adequate are these sharing approaches?

All 4 analysed projects have published their results on the Erasmus+ Results Platform. However, not always all project materials are available on this platform. For example, materials created in good practice projects that were not initially intended in the projects are not published on this platform. Although project results are published on this platform (as it is a mandatory requirement for project implementers), none of the 4 project implementers consider this platform as a successful example of disseminating project results as they do not use it themselves and consider it too formal.

Some projects (most often innovations) have their own websites or sections on organizations' websites where relevant materials are published, but they cannot be regarded as an effective tool either, as some websites are rarely visited and therefore the results of the project remain unknown to the general public. Some projects have used the possibilities to disseminate information provided by *Facebook*, and in some cases, project materials have been emailed to

youth organizations and institutions. However, most often, project implementers disseminate information about their projects at various seminars, conferences, workshops and discussions. Both as experience stories and as training. At the same time, none of the project implementers have any information on whether the results and materials of a particular project are being used. Several project implementers have indicated that they would like to see more opportunities to disseminate project results particularly at national level, as knowledge of foreign languages is an important barrier to disseminating information. The most effective communication at national level would be particularly in the national language. Consequently, there is a wish for a single platform for project results ensured in Latvian language. The added value of such a single platform is also seen in other respects: it would be possible to look for partners to carry out similar activities; it would be possible to check if any inventive project idea has been implemented elsewhere; it would be possible to find together all the materials created on a particular topic or target group of young people, or on youth work.

In general, projects are predominantly aimed at their direct target groups and stakeholders, with less wider awareness-raising activities planned. In this respect, project implementers also acknowledge as problematic the fact that all project funding must be spent by the end date of the project and it is not possible, for example, to allocate part of the funding to information and promotion activities after the project ends. Consequently, although it is a mandatory rule to keep the project results available after the project is completed, these are usually only files available on the website, without any other activities.

How do innovation and good practice have an impact beyond the partnership carrying a project, on the specific youth work context of the project as well as the wider youth sector?

It is very difficult to analyse the impact of projects on a larger scale, as the project implementers themselves do not usually have any information on whether and how the materials and results they produced are used. In terms of projects, it is only possible to evaluate the 'scope' of the impact of the projects themselves. For example, in one case in Latvia, project results were demanded and used in other areas outside the youth work (business management, human resource management), while in another project the project idea itself involved the integration of youth work methods in formal education. As a result, it is not possible to determine the broader impact of these projects in the youth field or in other areas, but it is possible to conclude that the analysed projects have produced results that are used after the projects have been completed. This is true mainly for innovation projects as the results are more concrete and practical, and adaptable to other sectors and target groups.

Which aspects contribute most to the successful transition of project outcomes into youth work and youth policy discourses beyond a particular project?

The analysis of the Latvian case studies shows that the dissemination and implementation of project results largely depends on the personal interest and willingness of those involved in a particular project to invest work in the development and promotion of specific project materials. In all 4 examples it can be observed that projects were much more time-consuming than initially planned and budgeted too. As a result, it can be affirmed that the budgets given in the projects in none of the cases reflect the true amount of work and time involved. At the same time, the project implementers acknowledge that without this additional work the projects would not be as successful as they have been.

Another important consideration is project partnerships as such – the more valuable they are, the more the individual partners are personally interested in the project idea, the more successful is the project itself and, consequently, the dissemination and transfer of its results. Partnerships that involve as many different partners as possible, each bringing their own different experience and expertise, are potentially more effective. At the same time, the greater number of partners and the differences between partners also create challenges for the project management.

The third crucial consideration for the applicability of project results is their practicality. The analysis of the Latvian examples shows that those projects whose content and results are practically usable in everyday life are more successful and widely known. Those that provide new methods of youth work offer methodological guidelines or manuals.

Finally, the development of evidence-based project ideas can be identified as a fourth success factor. Successful projects in Latvia have been based, directly or indirectly, on youth researches, whose findings have subsequently been integrated into project ideas. For example, the findings of international studies on the effectiveness of the game approach in training provided the basis for one of the analysed projects. In another project, a self-study of effective learning environments and conditions was the basis for further development of the project content, which resulted in an escape room as a method for educational institutions.