

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

RESEARCH PROJECT

ON THE ROLE OF DIGITALISATION

IN YOUTH WORK AND NON-FORMAL

LEARNING IN THE CONTEXT OF THE

EUROPEAN YOUTH PROGRAMMES

(RAY-DIGI)

CONCEPT NOTE FOR 2021–2022

7 JULY 2021

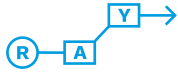


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1. CONTEXT AND RATIONALE

While digital youth work has seen an increase in policy attention and youth work practice, there is still a mismatch between the increased relevance of digitalisation in young people's life and its translation to youth work practice. In February 2020, at the second European conference on youth work and digitalisation, this gap has been the renewed focus of discussions between policy, research and practice – a gap that has come into stark focus during the past months. Many youth work and youth sector organisations struggle at the moment, not only to transfer—at least provisionally—their work into online environments, but more deeply to add meaningful digital dimensions to their work with young people.

Against that backdrop, this project will explore digitalisation systematically and analyse where and how the gap between digitalisation and youth work can be reduced, starting with the context of the European youth programmes. The project will be implemented in close co-operation with the strategic co-operation project (SNAC) on Digital Youth Work of Erasmus+ Youth NAs.

2. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

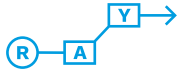
2.1. OVERALL AIM OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT

This research project aims to explore dimensions of digitalisation, document the progress of digitalisation in the European youth programmes, and develop recommendations to strengthen and support digital dimensions in youth work (RAY-DIGI).

2.2. KEY OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT

The key objectives of this research project are to

- explore aspects of digitalisation in young people's life of relevance for youth work, and approaches to integrate such aspects into youth work practice;
- explore national youth policies and strategies, as well as national youth work frameworks, and map their approaches to digitalisation in youth work;
- explore approaches to integrate digital environments into non-formal learning environments and analyse their strengths and weaknesses;
- explore hybrid learning environments and methodologies that mix and remix digital and analogways of learning and analyse their strengths and weaknesses;
- analyse the effects of exclusively digital, hybrid, and exclusively analog learning environments on accessibility for young people with fewer opportunities;
- map the support needs of European youth work bodies, groups, networks and organisations for successfully engaging with digital and online youth work, in particular in the context of the European youth programmes.



3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

3.1. CORE RESEARCH QUESTIONS OF THE PROJECT

The core research questions of the project are:

- What are the key gaps between the relevance of digitalisation in young people's life and its trailing translation into youth work practice, and how can they be reduced?
- What are the competences necessary for youth workers to add meaningful digital dimensions to their work with young people, and how can youth workers be supported to develop these competences?
- What are the competences necessary for youth workers to enable young people to competently deal with the digital dimensions of their lives, and how can youth workers be supported to develop these competences?
- How can youth work be supported to build and discover a unique character for non-formal learning in online environments?

3.2. UNDERPINNING RESEARCH QUESTIONS OF THE PROJECT

The underpinning research questions of the project are:

- Which aspects of digitalisation in young people's life are relevant for youth work, and how can European youth work integrate these aspects into its practice?
- How can digital environments be integrated into non-formal learning environments, and what kind of support would be needed for that?
- How can digital and analog learning in youth work be mixed and remixed, combining their respective advantages and strengths to their mutual advantage?
- Which effects do exclusively digital, hybrid, and exclusively analog learning environments have on accessibility for young people with fewer opportunities, and what are options to make these environments fully inclusive?
- Which kinds of support does European youth work need to better respond to the digitalisation in young people's life and change youth work practice accordingly, in particular in the context of the European youth programmes?
- Which competence frameworks are relevant for youth workers seeking to add meaningful digital dimensions to their work with young people, in particular in the context of the European youth programmes?



4. RESEARCH DESIGN AND INSTRUMENTS

4.1. MODULE 1: MAPPING OF YOUTH (WORK) FRAMEWORKS

Mapping of national youth (work) policies and youth (work) strategies and their approach to digitalisation. This mapping will feed into Work Package 1 of the strategic co-operation project on digital youth work of Erasmus+ Youth NAs.

4.2. MODULE 2: INTERVIEWS ON DIGITAL COMPETENCE FRAMEWORKS

Interviews with the core developers of digital competence frameworks, exploring how these frameworks have been used so far, what their strengths and weaknesses are, and how digital youth work frameworks can be developed or improved. These interviews will feed into Work Package 2 of the strategic co-operation project on digital youth work of Erasmus+ Youth NAs.

4.3. MODULE 3: MAPPING OF (SELF-) ASSESSMENT TOOLS

Mapping of self-assessment tools of relevance for digital youth work, their approaches to self-assessment, the competences they cover, and the competence framework they rely on, if any. This mapping will feed into Work Package 2 of the strategic co-operation project on digital youth work of Erasmus+ Youth NAs.

4.4. MODULE 4: CASE STUDIES ON DIGITAL YOUTH WORK

Case studies of approaches to digital work with young people, including in the context of the European youth programmes but also from outside the youth sector, exploring successful approaches, formats, methodologies and settings to working with young people in digital learning environments. These case studies will feed into Work Packages 3 and 4 of the strategic co-operation project on digital youth work of Erasmus+ Youth NAs.

4.5. MODULE 5: THEMATIC MODULE FOR MONITORING SURVEYS

Multilingual thematic module for the RAY monitoring surveys (RAY-MON & RAY-SOC), exploring digitalisation in youth work. This module will be developed towards the end of the research schedule, and will be informed by this research project as well as the strategic co-operation project on digital youth work of Erasmus+ Youth NAs.

5. RESEARCH SCHEDULE

The following table provides an overview of main activities¹ at transnational and national level for the current project phase of the research project (2021–2022):

Time period	Activities at transnational level	Activities at national level
01.2021 – 09.2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mapping of youth policy and youth work strategies and frameworks and their approach to digitalisation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support of the mapping of youth policies and youth strategies
09.2021 – 02.2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviews with developers of digital competence frameworks • Mapping of self-assessment tools for digital competences 	
03.2022 – 06.2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysis of interviews and mappings 	

6. RESEARCH OUTLOOK

The following table provides an overview of main activities at transnational and national level for the subsequent project phases (2022–2024):

Time period	Activities at transnational level	Activities at national level
01.2022 – 12.2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Case studies on digital youth work from in- & outside youth sector 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Case studies on digital youth work from in- & outside youth sector
01.2023 – 12.2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transnational analysis of case studies • Development of research and policy reports as well as fact sheets 	
01.2024 – 06.2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of module for monitoring surveys on digitalisation in youth work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Translation of module for monitoring surveys into national languages

¹ Due to the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, this research schedule is more tentative than usual.



7. PARTNER CONTRIBUTIONS

The following table provides an overview of basic and optional contributions to the research project by project partners:

Basic contribution of partners	Optional contributions of partners
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financial contribution to the transnational costs of the research project 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Case studies to explore approaches to digital youth work in- & outside the youth sector
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Translation of thematic module questions into national languages 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participation in the working group of the research project
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support in distributing the findings of the research project at national level 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Translation of research reports and/or fact-sheets into national languages

8. RESEARCH PARTNERS

Research partners of this project are the RAY Network partners in Belgium (Flemish Community), Czechia, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Lithuania, Malta, Netherlands, North Macedonia, Poland, Portugal, Romania and Slovenia. Further partners are always welcome to join.