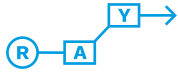


**Research-based
analysis of European
youth programmes**

RESEARCH PROJECT ON THE ROLE OF INNOVATION IN EUROPEAN YOUTH WORK AND EUROPEAN YOUTH POLICY (RAY-INNO)

CONCEPT NOTE FOR 2021

7 JULY 2021



1. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The RAY Network has conducted a research project on the impact of Key Action 2 in Erasmus+ Youth in Action. Key Action 2 (KA2) has supported several formats, key among them strategic partnerships in the field of youth. At the start of the soon expiring Erasmus+ programme cycle, strategic partnerships set out to support the development, transfer and implementation of innovative practices at organisational, local, regional, national or European levels. While thematic priorities meandered, KA2 projects were meant to foster innovation and/or the exchange of good practices across all iterations of the annual programme guides, a distinction that has evolved into two discrete partnership formats with separate funding rules.

The research findings of the work undertaken so far have shown that strategic partnerships have the potential to foster innovative practices, but that the youth sector lacks evidence and knowledge to clearly define what innovation in the context of European youth work is or should be, and crucially lacks the infrastructure to foster innovation strategically and scale innovative practices comprehensively for adoption in youth work, youth policy and youth research. In consequence, the terms *innovation* and *good practice* are oftentimes used as catchphrases.

The RAY Network therefore decided to expand the scope of its previous work on innovation, which looked specifically at strategic partnerships as the main format of Erasmus+ Youth in Action to foster innovation, and to contribute to building an evidence-base on innovation by investigating which types and kinds of innovation are needed for which aspects of European youth work and European youth policy, and which instruments in the context of the European youth programmes would be best suited to support these types and kinds of innovation.

2. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

2.1. OVERALL AIM OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT

This research project aims to explore needs for innovation in European youth work and European youth policy, as well as in youth work and youth policy across Europe (RAY-INNO).

2.2. KEY OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT

The key objectives of this research project are to

- identify aspects and dimensions of European youth work, and youth work across Europe, that would benefit the most from the development and propagation of innovative practices;
- identify aspects and dimensions of European youth policy, and youth policy across Europe, that would benefit the most from the development and propagation of innovative practices;
- develop recommendations on how European youth programmes and European youth policies could better support innovation in the youth field.



3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

3.1. CORE RESEARCH QUESTIONS OF THE PROJECT

The core research question of the project is:

- Which aspects and dimensions of European youth work and European youth policy would benefit most from the development and propagation of innovative practices?

3.2. UNDERPINNING RESEARCH QUESTIONS OF THE PROJECT

The underpinning research questions of the project are:

- Which conditions and circumstances would need to be changed and/or created to systematically foster the development and propagation of innovative practices across Europe?
- Which key characteristics frame the youth policy and youth work environments across Europe, and how do these key characteristics influence innovative processes and approaches to foster innovation?
- Which instruments should be developed in the context of the European youth programmes to support the development and propagation of innovative practices?

4. RESEARCH DESIGN AND INSTRUMENTS

4.1. MODULE 1: INTERVIEWS WITH EUROPEAN STAKEHOLDERS

Interviews with key youth sector stakeholders with a systemic view on the European youth field, to explore needs for innovation in European youth work and European youth policy. Interview guidelines for this module exist from previous work, but the interviews themselves had to be postponed because of the coronavirus pandemic.

4.2. MODULE 2: INTERVIEWS WITH NATIONAL STAKEHOLDERS

Interviews with key youth sector stakeholders with a systemic view on the youth field at national level, to explore needs for innovation in youth work and youth policy. Interview guidelines for this module can be adapted from Module 1.

4.3. MODULE 3: CONTEXTUALISING DATA REVIEW

Data review of available data sources on youth work and youth policy, their quality and reliability, and their relevance for this research project on innovation and RAY research more widely.

4.4. MODULE 4: THEMATIC MODULE FOR MONITORING SURVEYS

Multilingual thematic module for the RAY monitoring surveys exploring the needs for innovation from the perspective of youth workers and youth leaders as well as young people and project participants. This thematic module will allow us to monitor the (changing) needs for innovation over time.

5. RESEARCH SCHEDULE

The following table provides an overview of main activities¹ at transnational and national level for the envisaged duration of the research project:

| Time period | Activities at transnational level | Activities at national level |
|-------------------|---|---|
| 01.2021 – 03.2021 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finalisation of research instruments, in particular adaptation of national interview guidelines | |
| 04.2021 – 08.2021 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interviews at transnational level on the needs for innovation in youth work and youth policy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interviews at national level on the needs for innovation in youth work and youth policy |
| 09.2021 – 12.2021 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transnational analysis of interviews | |
| 09.2021 – 12.2021 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development of thematic module on innovation for monitoring surveys | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Translation of module for monitoring surveys into national languages |

6. RESEARCH OUTLOOK

The research project will conclude in 2021.

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"> Interviews at national level on the need for innovation |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Translation of survey and 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 Estonia, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, North Macedonia and Norway.

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