

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

**RESEARCH PROJECT
ON THE RESEARCH-BASED
ANALYSIS AND MONITORING OF
ERASMUS+ YOUTH IN ACTION
(RAY-MON)**

CONCEPT NOTE FOR 2021–2022

7 JULY 2021

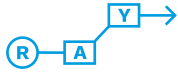


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1. CONTEXT AND RATIONALE

In 2008, the RAY Network was founded with the aim to contribute to quality assurance and quality development in the implementation of the European Union's Youth in Action Programme (2007–2013). To that end, the initial network partners developed a framework for the first and core research project of the network: standard surveys for project participants and project teams. These standard surveys were further developed at the start of the next programme generation, Erasmus+ Youth in Action (2014–2020), resulting in this core research project on the research-based analysis and monitoring of Erasmus+ Youth in Action (RAY-MON), and subsequently to the research-based analysis and monitoring of the European Solidarity Corps (RAY-SOC).

During the 12+ years of monitoring the European youth programmes, a number of key characteristics framing our work have changed considerably. The commendable increase of interest in evidence-based policy making has led to more research in the youth sector, with an impact on research and respondent fatigue. It's not uncommon that project participants are requested to respond to three surveys from different stakeholders about just one project, and these surveys are not always coordinated well enough to avoid duplication.

At the same time, access to the internet has drastically changed since the RAY Network started its work. Eurostat reports that the share of EU-27 households with internet access had risen to 90% in 2019, from 64% in 2009¹. Young people in particular, Eurostat also observes, access the internet much more frequently with their mobile phones rather than a laptop. In 2019, 92% of young people used their mobile phones to access the internet, compared to 52% using a mobile computer, with a clear tendency towards that device gap widening².

Against that backdrop, the RAY Network will continue RAY-MON as one of its core activities, with an emphasis on shortening and modularising the surveys, on developing a mobile-first survey design, on developing an open data approach, and on strengthening the links between thematic research projects and the monitoring surveys of the RAY Network.

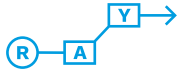
2. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

2.1. OVERALL AIM OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT

This research project aims to contribute to quality assurance and quality development in the implementation of Erasmus+ Youth in Action (2021–2027), to evidence-based and research-informed youth policy development and youth work practice, and to a better understanding of learning mobility in the youth field.

¹ Eurostat (2020). *Digital economy and society statistics – households and individuals*. Based on data extracted in September 2020. Accessible at https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Digital_economy_and_society_statistics_-_households_and_individuals.

² Eurostat (2020). *Being young in Europe today – digital world*. Based on data extracted in July 2020. Accessible at https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Being_young_in_Europe_today_-_digital_world.



2.2. KEY OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT

The key objectives of this research project are to

- explore the effects of projects funded through Erasmus+ Youth in Action on project participants and project teams and their communities, networks and organisations;
- study the profiles of project participants, project partnerships, and project teams, both at individual and organisational level;
- analyse access to Erasmus+ Youth in Action from the perspective of young people as well as youth and youth sector bodies, groups, networks and organisations;
- explore the implementation of Erasmus+ Youth in Action through the lens of key programme stakeholders, both at project and programme level.

3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

3.1. CORE RESEARCH QUESTIONS OF THE PROJECT

The core research questions of the project are:

- What are the effects of Erasmus+ Youth in Action projects on project participants and project teams, on their groups/networks/organisations, and on their communities and contexts?
- What is the environment of Erasmus+ Youth in Action projects, in particular regarding access to and the implementation of the programme, the individual and organisational profiles of actors, and the development, implementation and support of projects?
- How can the findings of this research project strengthen the implementation of Erasmus+ Youth in Action and support evidence-based and research-informed youth policy development and youth work practice?

3.2. UNDERPINNING RESEARCH QUESTIONS OF THE PROJECT

The underpinning research questions of the project are:

- What are the effects of participating in Erasmus+ Youth in Action projects on the development of key competences of project participants and project teams?
- What are the effects of participating in Erasmus+ Youth in Action projects on the educational and professional pathways of project participants and project team members?
- What are the effects of Erasmus+ Youth in Action projects on the youth work competences and practices of youth workers and youth leaders involved in the programme?
- How and to which extent do Erasmus+ Youth in Action projects contribute to the aims, objectives and priorities of the programme?
- How do effects differ between different formats and types of learning mobility, as well as different roles and tasks in learning mobility activities?
- What are the profiles of project participants, project partnerships, and project teams, and what does this say about access to the programme?



4. RESEARCH DESIGN AND INSTRUMENTS

4.1. MULTILINGUAL ONLINE SURVEYS

In order to explore the research questions above, the research design is based on multilingual online surveys of project participants and project teams. This approach allows to survey actors involved in learning mobility activities/projects funded through Erasmus+ Youth in Action several weeks after their activity/project ended. The timing facilitates a more deliberate and nuanced reflection on their experience. It also offers the possibility to ask about initial perceptions of the effects of their involvement in a learning mobility activity/project, whether as a project participant or member of a project team. The surveys will be conducted every two years, covering the funding years 2022, 2024 and 2026.

4.2. CORE SURVEY MODULES

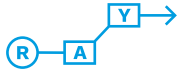
As part of the modularisation of the RAY-MON surveys, we will develop core modules which every respondent will be asked to complete. These core modules will cover all essential aspects of the programme monitoring that we would like to obtain a full response set for. All other aspects will be covered by strategic or thematic survey modules, and data imputation or respondent matching techniques will be applied. This approach will allow us to shorten the average survey length for each respondent, without decreasing the range, width or depth of our datasets. Core modules will be included in each of the biennial survey cycles (2022, 2024, 2026) for all respondents.

4.3. STRATEGIC SURVEY MODULES

Strategic survey modules will explore how and to which extent Erasmus+ Youth in Action activities/projects contribute to (a) the aims, objectives and priorities of the programme itself, (b) programme-specific strategies, such as the inclusion strategy, and (c) youth-sector-specific strategies that the programme is intended to contribute to, such as the EU Youth Strategy. Strategic survey modules will be included in each of the biennial survey cycles (2022, 2024, 2026) for subsets of respondents, covering all activity/project types.

4.4. THEMATIC SURVEY MODULES

Thematic survey modules will explore various subjects of interest to the RAY Network. Commonly, they will be developed as part of thematic research projects. In RAY-INNO, a thematic survey module on the needs for innovation will be developed; in RAY-LEARN, a thematic survey module on organisational learning and development will be developed for activity/project types involving youth workers and youth leaders; and so on. Generally, thematic survey modules will be developed towards the end of thematic research projects to start monitoring key aspects of the theme in question. Exceptionally, they may also be used to help a new thematic research project gather initial data to kickstart the project, in particular when evidence on the theme in question is scarce.



4.5. MOBILE-FIRST ONLINE SURVEY

As part of the modularisation of the RAY-MON surveys, we will focus on developing a mobile-first design for the surveys. To that end, we will contract a company to design and code our own theme for the open-source survey software we are using, [LimeSurvey](#). Within our possibilities, we will also seek to design and code new question types that make better use of mobile phone interactions, notably touch interfaces. As part of our dedication to working with and contributing to open-source software, we will make the code available under an open license, so that our mobile-first theme and mobile-friendly questions can also be used by others.

4.6. STRENGTHENING COMPARABILITY

We will use the modularisation of the RAY-MON surveys to improve and strengthen the comparability of our datasets with related and relevant research. This will happen partly through using questions from surveys such as the [European Social Survey](#) or the [European Values Study](#). We will additionally draw on other surveys and studies and available datasets, including the [European Youth Wiki](#) and the [European Knowledge Centre for Youth Policy](#), to better contextualise and differentiate our own research findings.

4.7. DEVELOPING OPEN DATASETS

In the second half of the RAY Research Programme 2021-2027, we will work on transforming our datasets into open datasets. We already make our data available to interested researchers in and beyond the RAY Network, under the condition that it may only be used for non-commercial purposes. This process is time-consuming for all parties involved, and limits access to the dataset to those researchers aware of its existence. With an open dataset and an online data explorer, we will not only widen access to our data considerably for the youth research community, but importantly also open the dataset up for youth policy and youth work actors.

5. RESEARCH SCHEDULE

The following table provides an overview of main activities³ 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
07.2021 – 12.2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Development of a modularisation strategy• Development of core survey modules	
01.2022 – 08.2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Finalisation of 1st modularised monitoring survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Translation of 1st survey into national languages

³ Due to the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, this research schedule is more tentative than usual.

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
09.2022 – 12.2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1st survey cycle, 1st wave, covering activities/projects ending between 1 January and 30 June 2022 	
01.2023 – 04.2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1st survey cycle, 2nd wave, covering activities/projects ending between 1 July and 31 December 2022 	
05.2023 – 12.2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1st transnational analysis with research report, policy report and fact sheets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National analyses and national reports (optional)
01.2024 – 08.2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finalisation of 2nd modularised monitoring survey with new modules 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Translation of new modules in the 2nd survey into national languages
09.2024 – 12.2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2nd survey cycle, 1st wave, covering activities/projects ending between 1 January and 30 June 2024 	

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"> Analysis of national datasets and national monitoring reports
<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

All RAY Network Partners are partners in this research project. Further partners are always welcome to join.