

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

RESEARCH PROJECT ON COMPETENCE DEVELOPMENT AND CAPACITY BUILDING FOR YOUTH WORK AND TRAINING IN THE EUROPEAN YOUTH PROGRAMMES (RAY-COMP)

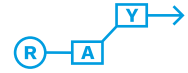
CONCEPT NOTE FOR 2023–2024

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1. CONTEXT AND RATIONALE

Competence development and capacity building of key actors in the youth field is essential for contributing to the quality and effectiveness of youth work at all levels in Europe. This is reflected in the European Training Strategy (ETS) in the youth field and applies, in particular, to youth workers, youth leaders and trainers/non-formal educators involved in the European youth programmes.

The findings of RAY research projects (such as RAY-CAP and RAY-LTE) have revealed that there is a need to further develop of the training offers for actors involved in the European youth programmes in order to better meet their learning and training needs with respect to their engagement in the youth field.

On the one hand, these research findings ask for an analysis of the needs of youth workers and youth leaders for competence development and capacity building, including the matches and mismatches between those needs and existing training offers and educational approaches, which is necessary for the development of adequate learning and training opportunities for youth workers and youth leaders.

On the other hand, it is essential to explore the learning and training needs of non-formal educators and trainers involved in the European youth programmes, which are necessary to provide learning and training measures needed by youth workers and youth leaders in the context of the European youth programmes as indicated above. The latter would then allow to develop the necessary learning and training offers for non-formal educators and trainers in the youth field.

The proposed new research project builds on the perspectives of the users and beneficiaries of training and support activities, which RAY-CAP has focused on, by addressing two levels of training in the context of the European youth programmes:

- training of actors involved in projects funded by the European youth projects;
- training of non-formal educators and trainers in the field of European youth work.

2. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

2.1. OVERALL AIM OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT

The aim of this research project is to explore educational approaches to competence development and capacity building in the context of the European youth programmes and their suitability to strengthen the diversity, quality and impact of youth work across Europe in order to provide for the development of the necessary learning and training opportunities for the actors involved in the European youth programmes.

2.2. KEY OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT

The key objectives this research project related to competence development and capacity building of youth workers and youth leaders are to explore

- the approaches to determining and assessing the needs of youth workers, youth leaders, support persons and their organisations and networks involved in the European youth programmes for training and support activities;
- the conceptional, educational and structural approaches to defining and designing education and training activities that respond to these needs;
- the suitability of these approaches to adequately respond to the needs of learners and their organisations and networks;
- the need for and potential of new educational and structural approaches to competence development and capacity building.

The key objectives this research project related to competence development of non-formal educators and trainers in the youth field are to explore

- the non-formal education competences and learning needs of non-formal educators and trainers involved in the European youth programmes;
- which competences of non-formal educators and trainers involved in the European youth programmes need to be developed in order to meet the learning and training needs of youth workers and youth leaders involved in the European youth programmes;
- effective approaches, concepts and methodologies to develop these competences of non-formal educators and trainers.

3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

3.1. CORE RESEARCH QUESTIONS OF THE PROJECT

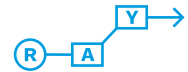
The core research questions of the project are:

- Which conceptional, educational and structural approaches are effective in meeting the needs of youth workers, youth leaders, support persons and their organisations and networks involved in the European youth programmes?
- Which conceptional, educational and structural approaches are effective in developing the competences of non-formal educators and trainers necessary for providing training meeting the needs of youth workers, youth leaders, support persons and their organisations and networks involved in the European youth programmes?

3.2. UNDERPINNING RESEARCH QUESTIONS OF THE PROJECT

The underpinning research questions of the project are:

- What are the needs of youth workers and youth leaders, as well as their organisations and networks, in the area of competence development and capacity building?
- How are these needs typically determined and assessed ahead of developing institutional formats as well as educational approaches for training and support activities?
- How suitable are these formats and approaches to respond to the needs of youth workers and youth leaders, as well as their organisations and networks?



- What are the needs for, if any, and the potential of new institutional and educational approaches to competence development and capacity building?
- What are the non-formal education competences and learning needs of non-formal educators and trainers involved in the European youth programmes?
- Which competences of non-formal educators and trainers involved in the European youth programmes need to be developed in order to meet the learning and training needs of youth workers and youth leaders involved in the European youth programmes?
- What are effective approaches, concepts and methodologies to develop these competences of non-formal educators and trainers?

4. RESEARCH DESIGN AND INSTRUMENTS

This research project will refer to existing knowledge related to its topics:

- Literature on training of youth workers and youth leaders as well as training of trainers in the youth field, with a focus on youth work with a European dimension.
- Findings and qualitative data available from the RAY research project on competence development and capacity building in Erasmus+ Youth in Action (RAY-CAP), in particular in view of training needs expressed by youth workers, youth leaders and their organisations
- Data of the RAY monitoring surveys between 2015 and 2020 and of the RAY survey on learning in Youth in Action in 2012, the latter in particular in view of effective educational approaches, settings, methodologies and methods experienced by youth workers and youth leaders.
- Existing competence models such as the ETS Competence Model for Youth Workers and the ETS Competence Model for Trainers.

The following research methods and instruments are envisaged:

4.1. MODULE 1: FOCUS GROUPS AT NATIONAL LEVEL

Optional focus groups at national level with youth workers and youth leaders involved in the European youth programmes (EYP) aimed at complementing the findings of RAY-CAP, with a focus on their learning and training needs and on educational approaches, settings, methodologies and methods experienced by them to be effective; such focus groups could be conducted specifically in countries not involved in RAY-CAP. These focus groups would be conducted by RAY Network partners at national level and analysed in line with common guidelines.

4.2. MODULE 2: INTERVIEWS AT NATIONAL LEVEL

Optional interviews at national level with non-formal educators and trainers involved in EYP, exploring their non-formal education and training competences, their educational approaches, methodologies and methods as well as their own training needs:

- These interviews would be conducted by RAY Network partners to explore competences and learning needs of trainers working at national level or in transnational contexts. The interviews would be conducted and analysed in line with common guidelines.
- Selected interviews will be conducted by the transnational team with trainers working at European level or in transnational contexts.

4.3. SURVEY FOR YOUTH WORKERS AND YOUTH LEADERS

Surveys with youth workers, youth leaders and non-formal educators/trainers in the youth field based on the findings of RAY-CAP and of the qualitative interviews outlined above:

- A survey with youth workers and youth leaders could be conducted as a special module only for participants in YWM and TCA/NET projects in the first RAY-MON and RAY-SOC surveys in the new programmes, exploring their training needs and learning preferences.
- A survey with project leaders, support persons and organisations involved in EYP could be conducted as a special module in the first RAY-MON and RAY-SOC surveys in the new programmes, exploring the training needs and learning preferences of organisations.
- A special survey (only in English) with trainers working at European level or in transnational contexts exploring their non-formal education and training competences, their educational approaches, methodologies and methods as well as their own training needs. This survey would include open questions to be analysed with qualitative research methods.

The research project will be implemented in close consultation with SALTO Training & Cooperation, taking into consideration their interests, in particular with respect to the European Training Strategy in the youth field, and seeking synergies in collecting data as to avoid a duplication of efforts.

The research findings would be published in a transnational research report as well as in summary reports for different stakeholders in practice and policy.

5. RESEARCH SCHEDULE

The following table provides an overview of main activities¹ at transnational and national level for the subsequent project phase of the research project (2023–2024):

Date	Activities at transnational level	Activities at national level
7-12/2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Special survey (in English only) with non-formal educators & trainers working at European level/in transnational contexts 	
1-6/2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Transnational analysis of interviews with non-formal educators & trainers ▪ Analysis of special survey with non-formal educators & trainers 	
7-12/2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Research report, policy brief, fact sheets etc. 	

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

6. RESEARCH OUTLOOK

RAY COMP is one of the research projects of the first phase of the RAY Research Programme 2021–2027. It is currently planned to conclude in 2024. The Network may well decide to continue the research programme after reviewing initial outcomes. Such an extension would be decided at the Network Meeting in 2023.

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"> Focus groups with youth workers and youth leaders at national level
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Translation of thematic module questions into national languages 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interviews with non-formal educators and trainers at national level
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support in distributing the findings of the research project at national level 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participation in the working group of the research project
	<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), Bulgaria, Estonia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania and Portugal. Further partners are always welcome to join.