

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

RESEARCH PROJECT ON ORGANISATIONAL TRAJECTORIES OF LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT IN THE EUROPEAN YOUTH PROGRAMMES (RAY-LEARN)

CONCEPT NOTE FOR 2023–2024

7 OCTOBER 2022

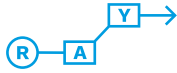


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1. CONTEXT AND RATIONALE

In 2018, the RAY Network started to explore and analyse strategies and practices for organisational learning and development of youth sector organisations and networks in the context of the European youth programmes (RAY-LEARN). While the coronavirus pandemic has interrupted and delayed about half of all national research activities, an interim transnational analysis has been developed on the basis of those national research activities that could be undertaken. This analysis shows that while many youth sector organisations and networks have implicit practices that foster organisational learning, they tend to struggle to systematise their organisational learning and development.

Our prior research project on competence development and capacity building in Erasmus+ Youth in Action (RAY-CAP) had already shown that youth sector organisations and networks struggle to systematically benefit, at organisational level, from training and support activities attended by their team members. Our interim analysis of the first half of national research activities in RAY-LEARN has now shown that these struggles extend to more—and frequently most—aspects of organisational learning and development.

At the same time, long-term accreditation of beneficiaries is given more and more importance in both European youth programmes. In this context, programme applicants and beneficiaries will be invited, and required, to think about learning mobility and solidarity actions in more strategic ways than before and to develop long-term strategies rather than rely on multiple ad-hoc approaches.

Against that backdrop, the RAY Network will continue RAY-LEARN as a longitudinal research project, which will follow the trajectories of some applicants and beneficiaries and how they use the opportunities of the programmes as a way to learn, develop and strengthen their groups/networks/organisations strategically. Ultimately, the project will explore how youth sector organisations and networks could be supported better by the European youth programmes in their efforts to establish ways of systematically learning at organisational level.

2. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

2.1. OVERALL AIM OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT

This research project aims to explore and follow the trajectory of youth organisations/groups/networks involved in the European youth programmes over time, with a focus on approaches and methods to support the organisational learning and development of these organisations/groups/networks (RAY-LEARN).

2.2. KEY OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT

The key objectives of this research project are to

- explore, analyse and compare organisational learning and development phases and trajectories of different types of beneficiaries of the European youth programmes;
- explore, analyse and compare organisational learning and development support needs of different types of beneficiaries of the European youth programmes;
- explore, analyse and compare organisational learning and development support options that are available to beneficiaries of the European youth programmes;

- develop recommendations on strengthening support for organisational learning and development through 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 typical organisational learning and development trajectories of beneficiaries of the European youth programmes, and how do they differ between different groups/networks/organisations?
- How can groups/networks/organisations be better supported, empowered and connected through the European youth programmes for their organisational learning and development?

3.2. UNDERPINNING RESEARCH QUESTIONS OF THE PROJECT

The underpinning research questions of the project are:

- What are the learning and development stages and trajectories of beneficiaries of the European youth programmes, and how do they differ between different kinds of groups/networks/organisations as well as different action/project types?
 - *New beneficiaries that are applying to the European youth programmes for the very first time*
 - *Beneficiaries of the European youth programmes expanding to new action/project types*
 - *Well-established beneficiaries of the European youth programmes using most or all action/project types*
- What role does international youth work play for groups/networks/organisations at different stages of their organisational learning and development? How do their approaches to and engagement with international youth work change over time?
- What are the learning and development needs of groups/networks/organisations at different stages of their engagement with international youth work and the European youth programmes?
- How do other large-scale programmes support organisational learning and development of their beneficiaries, and what can we learn from their experiences for the European youth programmes?
- Which changes are needed to strengthen the relevance and impact of the European youth programmes for the organisational learning and development of the programmes' beneficiaries strategically and systematically?

4. RESEARCH DESIGN AND INSTRUMENTS

4.1. MODULE 1: THEMATIC STAND-ALONE SURVEY

A thematic and multilingual survey¹, developed on the basis of the outcomes of the interviews conducted as part of the first phase of RAY-LEARN (2019/2020), addressed to persons in leadership positions of groups/networks/organisations active in the European youth programmes such as board members, chairpersons, presidents, secretary generals, executive directors, etc., exploring the learning and development needs of groups/networks/organisations at different stages of their engagement with international youth work and the European youth programmes.

4.2. MODULE 2: CASE STUDIES

Case studies of beneficiaries of the European youth programmes to analyse and explore their learning and development stages and trajectories, and in particular their strategies and practices for organisational learning and development through European youth work and the European youth programmes. Case studies will include different types of groups/networks/organisations at different stages of overall organisational development and different levels of engagement with the European youth programmes. Case studies will be conducted at national level by RAY Network partners in line with common guidelines, and will be complemented by a set of case studies at transnational level of European umbrella groups/networks/organisations.

4.3. MODULE 3: MAPPING OF SUPPORT OFFERS

A mapping of support offers and options specifically developed for the organisational learning and development of beneficiaries in the European youth programmes, as well as in relevant and comparable other programmatic contexts. A selection of these support offers and options will be analysed more in-depth, based on criteria to be developed on the basis of the first module. If circumstances allow, a selection of support offers and options may be analysed through participatory observation and/or focus groups with beneficiaries using these support offers and options. A comparative analysis of support offers and options might be conducted, if sufficient information can be obtained.

4.4. MODULE 4: THEMATIC MODULE FOR RAY MONITORING SURVEYS

A thematic and multilingual module for the RAY-MON and RAY-SOC monitoring surveys. Through this final module, key findings of the project will be used to develop a thematic module covering key aspects of organisational learning and development processes and needs from the perspective of youth workers and youth leaders.

¹ This module had been planned for the first phase of RAY-LEARN, and was delayed by the coronavirus pandemic.

5. RESEARCH SCHEDULE

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

Time period	Activities at transnational level	Activities at national level
open timing due to the pandemic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finalisation of thematic survey, based on work of previous project phase 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Translation of thematic survey into national languages
open timing due to the pandemic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> promoting survey transnationally 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> promoting survey nationally
07.2023 – 12.2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Second phase of transnational case studies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Second phase of national case studies
01.2023 – 12.2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In-depth analysis of support offers for organisational development 	
01.2024 – 06.2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transnational analysis of case studies and analysis of support offers Development of module for monitoring surveys Development of research and policy reports as well as fact sheets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Translation of module for monitoring surveys into national languages

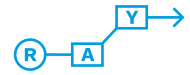
6. RESEARCH OUTLOOK

RAY LEARN 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"> Case studies of beneficiaries of the European youth programmes and their trajectories
<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 Belgium (Flemish Community), France, Germany, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, North Macedonia, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia and Sweden. Further partners are always welcome to join.