

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

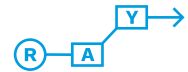
RESEARCH PROJECT ON THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE EUROPEAN YOUTH PROGRAMMES TO PROGRAMME AND SECTOR STRATEGIES (RAY-STRAT)

CONCEPT NOTE FOR 2023–2024

7 OCTOBER 2022

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1. CONTEXT AND RATIONALE

Over the past years, the core documents that frame the European youth programmes, such as the joint decision of the European Parliament and the Council and the annual work plans and programme guides, have been complemented by programme-specific strategies on inclusion, participation, and training. Moreover, the EU Youth Strategy relies on the European youth programmes as a main tool for its implementation, the European Youth Goals cover the European youth programmes, and the upcoming European Youth Work Agenda will refer to the European youth programmes as well.

In addition, strategic cooperation projects by partnerships of National Agencies (SNACs) have become a prominent tool to take core issues further and help develop and advance the European youth programmes. At the moment, the monitoring surveys of the RAY Network typically do not cover strategic cooperation projects, which leaves their contribution to the realisation of the afore-mentioned strategies unconsidered and unvalued.

Against that backdrop, the RAY Network will explore how the European youth programmes, and the strategic cooperation projects within them, contribute to the implementation of programme- and sector-specific strategies of relevance to the European youth programmes.

2. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

2.1. OVERALL AIM OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT

This research project aims to explore how the European youth programmes contribute to programme- and sector-specific strategies that frame and guide the European youth programmes (RAY-STAT), both through activities/projects of programme beneficiaries and through strategic cooperation projects of National Agencies.

2.2. KEY OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT

The key objectives of this research project are to

- capture how the European youth programmes contribute to the implementation of sector-specific strategies of direct relevance, such as the EU Youth Strategy, the European Youth Goals, and the European Youth Work Agenda;
- analyse how the European youth programmes contribute to the implementation of programme-specific strategies of direct relevance, such as the Inclusion Strategy, the Youth Participation Strategy, and the Training Strategy;
- explore the role of programme- and sector-specific strategies for the European youth programmes and their implementation, including any potential for improvement and any strategic gaps.

3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

3.1. CORE RESEARCH QUESTIONS OF THE PROJECT

The core research questions of the project are:

- How do the European youth programmes contribute to the implementation of programme- and sector-specific strategies, and how could these contributions be further strengthened?
- Which role do existing strategies play in the implementation of the European youth programmes and their different activity and project formats, and how could this role be further strengthened?

3.2. UNDERPINNING RESEARCH QUESTIONS OF THE PROJECT

The underpinning research questions of the project are:

- How do different activities and projects of programme beneficiaries contribute to the realisation of programme- and sector-specific strategies of relevance?
- How do different strategic cooperation projects of National Agencies contribute to the realisation of programme- and sector-specific strategies of relevance?
- With respect to their contribution to the realisation of programme- and sector-specific strategies, what are the differences between activities and projects by programme beneficiaries and strategic cooperation projects of National Agencies, if any?
- How could activities and projects by programme beneficiaries be strengthened specifically to reinforce their strategic role and contribution?
- How could strategic cooperation projects of National Agencies be strengthened specifically to reinforce their strategic role and contribution?
- Which role do sector-specific strategies play for the implementation of the European youth programmes, and how could their role be further augmented?
- Which role do programme-specific strategies play for the implementation of the European youth programmes, and how could their role be further augmented?

4. RESEARCH DESIGN AND INSTRUMENTS

4.1. BIENNIAL THINK-TANK MEETING

At the moment, the RAY Network has one scheduled meeting per year, the annual Network Meeting. Given the size of the network, which has grown to more than 30 partners, and the scope of the network's research, this format has become quite limiting. Increasingly, the time for discussions and reflections has been too short. One way of addressing this dilemma would be to convene a biennial think-tank meeting, which would not discuss any business or management issues, but focus solely on strategic discussions and reflections. Ideally, each think-tank meeting would have a dedicated thematic focus, rather than covering all strategies at once.

4.2. EXPERT FOCUS GROUPS

In preparation of a think-tank meeting, thematic focus groups could be convened. These focus groups would explore the thematic priority of the think-tank meeting, and bring together actors from the context of the European youth programmes as well as the strategy being discussed. Importantly, the focus groups would bring together experts from policy, practice *and* research. They would prepare, and provide impetus to, the think-tank meeting.

4.3. SURVEY MODULES FOR MONITORING SURVEYS

Strategy-specific survey modules will be developed to explore how and to which extent activities/projects funded through the European youth programmes 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. SNAC STAND-ALONE SURVEYS

Participants of strategic cooperation projects between National Agencies may not in all cases be part of the contact data used for the monitoring surveys. Where adequate and needed, participants of SNAC activities could be surveyed directly with a modular stand-alone survey that contains the strategic survey modules and would be complemented by SNAC-specific questions.

4.5. SURVEY WITH BENEFICIARIES (OPTIONAL)

A specific survey with beneficiary organisations¹ may be conducted to explore how and to which extent activities/projects funded through the European youth programmes contribute to the realisation of programme- and sector-specific strategies. These surveys will build on the survey modules for monitoring surveys. The frequency and timing of these surveys still need to be decided.

5. RESEARCH SCHEDULE

The following table provides an overview of main activities² at transnational and national level for the upcoming project phase of the research project (2023–2024):

Time period	Activities at transnational level	Activities at national level
01.2024 – 06.2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refinement of survey modules for monitoring surveys 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Translation of survey modules into national languages
07.2024 – 12.2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2nd round of focus groups in preparation of the next think-tank meeting 	

¹ Directed to staff members in a leading function, thus beyond project team members who are not necessarily fully aware of the contribution of projects to the realisation of the strategies at organisational and/or programme levels.

² 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 (2024–2025):

Time period	Activities at transnational level	Activities at national level
01.2025 – 06.2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2nd think-tank meeting 	

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"> Hosting of a think-tank meeting, which would ideally rotate through Europe
<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.