

Long-term Effects of Erasmus+ Youth in Action on Participation and Citizenship – Extension (RAY-LTE extended)

Concept Note

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1. Context and rationale

It is now seven years since the RAY research project on Long-term Effects of Erasmus+ Youth in Action on Participation and Citizenship (RAY-LTE) started. It was designed as a longitudinal study with a mixed method approach, using quantitative and qualitative social research methods: standardised multilingual online surveys and guideline-based interviews, which were conducted with participants of Erasmus+ Youth in Action (E+/YiA) projects at various stages before and after the core activity of the project. In these surveys and interviews, a number of questions on indicators for participation and citizenship competence and practice were asked in order to measure how the responses vary.

It was an extensive and labour-intensive project, but it also produced meaningful results. For example, the study revealed that the interest in environmental protection and sustainable development as well as the respective knowledge of most project participants clearly increased. Participants also gained knowledge about Europe and the European Union, their awareness of existing social skills was raised and these skills were deepened. In particular, in the third interview many interview partners confirmed that the learning effects are still of importance for them and partly changed their actions.

The third LTE interview took place two to three years after the project participation of the interviewees. This can be seen as a first approach to exploring long-term effects. In 2023, seven to eight years after the project participation, a fourth interview with the interview partners could reveal new insights into the sustainability of the learning effects over a longer period of time and provide answers to the question, which other developments and events might have had an effect on the interviewees' current perceptions of participation and citizenship as well as on their current practical engagement in civil society and political life. Furthermore, the idea seems to be exciting to get to

know which meaning the interviewees attribute to their project participation in general and with regard to their personal development and professional career from today's perspective.

A fourth interview seven years after the project participation would be a unique opportunity, to explore truly long-term effects of European youth projects – long-term effects of educational and learning activities being of core interest for any educational research. The 246 interviews – 82 young people took part in all three interviews – can definitely be considered to be an extremely valuable database to build on. This extension to RAY LTE would also be in line with the priorities of Erasmus+ (2021-2027) – the priority 'participation in democratic life, common values and civic engagement' as direct link, and 'inclusion and diversity' as well as 'environment and fight against climate change' as related citizenship principles and actions.

2. Aims and objectives

The aim of this project is to explore long-term effects of learning in projects funded through E+/YiA on the development of participation and citizenship competence and practice, and to research possible changes of respective learning effects over time.

In addition, the study aims to explore the meaning the participants now attribute to their participation in an E+/YiA project in general as well as with regard to their personal development as well as educational and professional career and life course.

Participation and active citizenship are understood in a broad sense and covering all domains of life, i.e., political, civil, social, cultural, private and working life. In this sense, participation and active citizenship competences can be understood as competences, which are relevant in order to participate as active citizen and to live together with other citizens in a democratic community.

3. Research questions

General research question:

Looking back after seven to eight years: How does participation in E+/YiA contribute to participation in civil society and in democratic life as well as to active citizenship? What meaning do participants attribute to their project participation in general as well as with regard to their personal development as well as educational and professional career?

Specific research questions:

How does participation in E+/YiA contribute to participation and citizenship competence and practice of participants from the view seven to eight years after their project participation?

How sustainable are the learning effects in respect of participation and citizenship competence and practice the participants reported about one year (second interview) and two to three years (third interview) after their project participation?

Which other experiences and events had an impact on participation and citizenship competence and practice of the participants from the view seven to eight years after their project participation?

What meaning do participants attribute to their project participation in general and with regard to their personal development as well as educational and professional career from the view seven to eight years after their project participation?

4. Research design

Sample

Since this study aims to follow-up on the RAY-LTE interviews, the sample consists of those interview partners who took part in all three interviews conducted between 2015 and 2019 within the RAY-LTE project (see table 1), and who are willing to be interviewed again in 2023.

Table 1: Number of participants of E+/YiA projects who took part in interviews within RAY-LTE in the project partner countries Austria, Czechia, Germany, Finland, Italy and Malta

Funding country	AT	CZ	DE	FI	IT	MT	tot.
1 st interview*	16	12	20	15	13	9	85
1 st & 2 nd interview	13	6	14	13	10	7	63
1 st , 2 nd & 3 rd interview	11	5	8	13	8	7	52

* 1st interview: shortly before the beginning of the core activity of the project; 2nd interview: approx. 1 year after project participation; 3rd interview: 2-3 years after project participation

The chance that these 52 LTE interviewees are willing to be interviewed again in 2023 is considered to be good, although the last interview is four years ago and the living conditions of the interviewees (also their places of residence, their occupations etc.) might have changed. The interview partners had been asked in the third interview if they would attend a possible fourth interview and all 82 (including the interview partners of the LTE project partner countries Estonia, Hungary, Slovenia and Sweden) except one or two expressed their willingness. They also had been asked, how it had been for them to be interviewed and again almost all answered that they had appreciated it: they highlighted the reflective function of the interviews and that they became aware of their learning. Secondly, many interviewees were interested in the research and were proud to contribute to a research project.

One of the Austrian researchers tested the willingness to take part in a fourth interview by sending short messages to the eleven Austrian interviewees in September 2022 and the result was impressive: Within three days seven interview partners sent a positive answer.

Against this background, it is recommended to contact all interviewees who had taken part in all three LTE interviews in order to convince them to be interviewed again.

Ideally, the interview partners are contacted by e-mail by the National Agency and the researcher. The researcher then tries to reach the partners by phone or social media.

Method of data collection

Semi-structured qualitative interviews are conducted seven to eight years after the first interview and the project participation.

The interviews should be face-to-face interviews (if possible), meeting common social research standards. If a face-to-face interview is not possible due to geographic reasons or restrictions related to the pandemic, alternatively an interview can be done online, preferably with video, thus ensuring a setting as close as possible to 'face-to-face'.

The interview should cover all topics addressed in the guidelines; this could take up to 75 minutes but should not be longer.

If possible, the interviews are conducted by the researcher who also did the previous interviews. Through meeting three times for the interviews over a period of three years and in many cases also at the Research Conference in Strasbourg a trusting relationship developed between the researcher and the interview partners. If necessary, the interviews can be conducted by another researcher who would have to prepare her/himself by reading the previous interviews of each participant taking part in a fourth interview as well as the analysis of them. – Basically, all researchers need to be prepared in the described way.

Ideally, interviews should be recorded electronically (permission of the person being interviewed needs to be obtained) and transcribed.

Interviews should be analysed according to analysis guidelines still to be provided.

5. Research schedule

Date	Activity
06.10.2022	Final decision to take part in the project and informing the RAY Network Coordination in Helsinki about it; provision of national research budgets in the TCA of each "LTE extended" partner
12/2022 or 01/2023	Online working group meeting to discuss the interview guidelines
01 to 06/2023	Implementation of fourth interviews; analysis of interviews by national researchers in line with guidelines to be developed
10/2023	Draft of Transnational Analysis Report
11/2023	Open working group meeting to discuss the transnational analysis report
12/2023	Final Transnational Report

6. Transnational research team

The research coordination and the project management are in the hands of the research partners of the Austrian National Agency, supported by one of their successors.

Fred Berger, Professor of Educational Sciences with a focus on generation, youth and educational research at the University of Innsbruck. Fred Berger is head of the Institute for Educational Sciences and spokesman for the university research centre "Education - Generation – Course of Life". He is a member of the child and youth welfare advisory board of the Tyrolean state government, co-leader of one of the largest longitudinal studies on development from adolescence to adulthood and, since 2021, Austrian research partner for the monitoring of the programmes Erasmus+ Youth and European Solidarity Corps.

Susanne Gadinger is an educational scientist. From 2010 to 2021 she was a research associate in the transnational team of the RAY research network and involved in the network coordination. Within this network she is an Austrian RAY research partner since 2010. From 2011 to 2019, she was employed by the University of Innsbruck and was a lecturer in educational science focussing on the subjects of life course, social change and non-formal learning. She is also an apprenticed journalist and has worked in press and public relations for several years. Today, Susanne Gadinger evaluates programmes in the field of youth and education as a freelancer.

Helmut Fennes is a researcher with special focus on non-formal education/learning, intercultural education, citizenship education/learning, adult education and youth research. His experience includes the development and implementation of numerous national and international research projects, including as a co-founder and research co-coordinator of the RAY Network. He is a co-founder and board member of the Austrian Youth Research Network. In the past, he worked for the Generation and Educational Science Institute in Vienna, the Institute of Educational Science at the University of Innsbruck, the Council of Europe's Directorate of Youth and Sports and the Intercultural Centre in Vienna (former National Agency of European youth programmes).