

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

RESEARCH PROJECT ON THE ROLE OF DIGITALISATION IN YOUTH WORK AND NON-FORMAL LEARNING IN THE CONTEXT OF THE EUROPEAN YOUTH PROGRAMMES (RAY-DIGI)

DRAFT CONCEPT NOTE FOR 2024–2025

28 SEPTEMBER 2023

This concept note is a preview and is subject to change.
The final concept note, as well as any revisions to it, will
be discussed in the working group of the project.

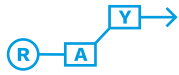


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1. CONTEXT AND RATIONALE

While digital youth work has seen an increase in policy attention and youth work practice, there is still a mismatch between the increased relevance of digitalisation in young people's life and its translation to youth work practice. This gap has been the renewed focus of discussions between policy, research and practice – a gap that has come into stark focus during the pandemic years. Many youth work and youth sector organisations have struggled, not only to transfer—at least provisionally—their work into online environments, but more deeply to add meaningful digital dimensions to their work with young people. The initial findings of RAY MON, the research project for the monitoring of the Erasmus+ Youth programme, confirm a wide gap between project participants, project teams, and project beneficiaries, on many aspects of digital youth work and digital transformation.

Against that backdrop, this project will continue to explore digitalisation systematically, in cooperation with the SALTO Digitalisation Resource Centre and thematically relevant long-term strategic activities (LTSA), and develop recommendations on where and how the gap between digitalisation and youth work can be reduced.

2. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

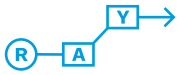
2.1. OVERALL AIM OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT

This research project aims to explore dimensions of digitalisation, document the progress of digitalisation in the European youth programmes, and develop recommendations to strengthen and support digital dimensions in youth work (RAY-DIGI).

2.2. KEY OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT

The key objectives of this research project are to

- explore aspects of digitalisation in young people's life of relevance for youth work, and approaches to integrate such aspects into youth work practice;
- explore national youth policies and strategies, as well as national youth work frameworks, and map their approaches to digitalisation in youth work;
- explore approaches to integrate digital environments into non-formal learning environments and analyse their strengths and weaknesses;
- explore hybrid learning environments and methodologies that mix and remix digital and analogways of learning and analyse their strengths and weaknesses;
- analyse the effects of exclusively digital, hybrid, and exclusively analog learning environments on accessibility for young people with fewer opportunities;
- map the support needs of European youth work bodies, groups, networks and organisations for successfully engaging with digital and online youth work, in particular in the context of 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 the key gaps between the relevance of digitalisation in young people's life and its trailing translation into youth work practice, and how can they be reduced?
- What are the competences necessary for youth workers to add meaningful digital dimensions to their work with young people, and how can youth workers be supported to develop these competences?
- What are the competences necessary for youth workers to enable young people to competently deal with the digital dimensions of their lives, and how can youth workers be supported to develop these competences?
- How can youth work be supported to build and discover a unique character for non-formal learning in online environments?

3.2. UNDERPINNING RESEARCH QUESTIONS OF THE PROJECT

The underpinning research questions of the project are:

- Which aspects of digitalisation in young people's life are relevant for youth work, and how can European youth work integrate these aspects into its practice?
- How can digital environments be integrated into non-formal learning environments, and what kind of support would be needed for that?
- How can digital and analog learning in youth work be mixed and remixed, combining their respective advantages and strengths to their mutual advantage?
- Which effects do exclusively digital, hybrid, and exclusively analog learning environments have on accessibility for young people with fewer opportunities, and what are options to make these environments fully inclusive?
- Which kinds of support does European youth work need to better respond to the digitalisation in young people's life and change youth work practice accordingly, in particular in the context of the European youth programmes?
- Which competence frameworks are relevant for youth workers seeking to add meaningful digital dimensions to their work with young people, in particular in the context of the European youth programmes?



4. RESEARCH DESIGN AND INSTRUMENTS

4.1. MODULE 1: DIGITAL READINESS OF YOUTH WORK ORGANISATIONS

During the first phase of the project, both our research and the research of the Digital Youth Work Strategic National Agencies Cooperation (SNAC DIGI) identified a blind spot around the readiness of youth work organisations to constructively engage with digital transformation. In this module, we will explore this aspect further and develop recommendations on how to support youth work organisations better in this regard.

4.2. MODULE 2: DIGITAL YOUTH WORK IN A POST-PANDEMIC ERA

The initial monitoring data suggests that the pandemic did not have the impact that was commonly assumed, namely giving a boost to digitalisation. On the contrary, a main ripple effect of the pandemic is a widespread negative attitude towards digital youth work, which have also been found in several of our case studies in RAY DIGI. In this module, we will explore how digitalisation, the programme priority least addressed, could be strengthened in post-pandemic times, likely through focus groups.

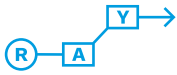
4.3. MODULE 3: DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION WITH OTHER PRIORITIES

Our mapping of currently implemented projects on digitalisation shows a common disconnect between digital transformation and the other three main programme priorities. In this module, we will explore projects that attempt to bridge digital transformation with participation, inclusion and/or environmental sustainability, likely through case studies.

5. RESEARCH SCHEDULE

The following table provides an overview of main activities at transnational and national level for the next project phase (2024–2025):

Time period	Activities at transnational level	Activities at national level
07.2024 – 12.2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research communication on key findings from research and policy reports 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research communication on key findings from research and policy reports
01.2025 – 06.2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exploring digital youth work in a post-pandemic era through focus groups • Case studies on transversal projects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exploring digital youth work in a post-pandemic era through focus groups • Case studies on transversal projects



6. RESEARCH OUTLOOK

The working group of the project and the strategy group of the network will discuss next year whether and how to continue the research project beyond 2025, resulting in a proposal for the 2024 network 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">Focus groups on digital youth work in a post-pandemic era
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Support in distributing the findings of the research project at national level	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Case studies on transversal projects that connect digitalisation with other priorities
<ul style="list-style-type: none">At least one of two modules – either focus groups or case studies (both are possible)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Participation in the working group of the research project

8. RESEARCH PARTNERS

Research partners of this project are the RAY Network partners in Austria, Belgium (Flemish Community), Czechia, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Greece, Italy, Lithuania, Malta, Netherlands, North Macedonia, Poland, Portugal, and Romania. Further partners are always welcome to join.