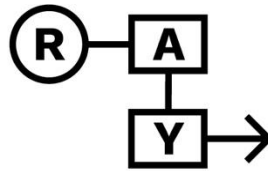




EUROPEAN UNION



Research-based  
analysis of European  
youth programmes

# RAY TRIANGULAR SUMMIT

22-24 MAY 2024, HELSINKI

## MAIN INSIGHTS & OUTCOMES

31 JULY 2024

Rapporteur Gisele Evrard  
*In cooperation with the RAY Network Coordination*

**Erasmus+**  
Enriching lives, opening minds.

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CORPS**  
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european solidarity  
corps agency

**injuve**



**Agencia Italiana  
per la Gioventù**

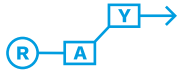
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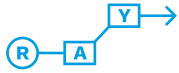
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# INTRODUCTION

## CONTEXT

In 2008, the RAY Network was founded to contribute to quality assurance and quality development in the implementation of the European Union's Youth in Action Programme (2007–2013). To that end, the initial network partners developed a framework for the first and core research project of the network: standard surveys for project participants and project teams. These standard surveys were further developed at the start of the next programme generation, Erasmus+ Youth in Action (2014–2020), resulting in this core research project on the research-based analysis and monitoring of Erasmus+ Youth in Action (RAY MON), and subsequently to the research-based analysis and monitoring of the European Solidarity Corps (RAY SOC). The studies are implemented in cooperation with 34 RAY partner countries.

In the last programme period (2014–2020), 53.144 project participants and 10.789 project team members all over Europe and beyond fully responded to the RAY Monitoring surveys for Erasmus+ Youth.

For the first time since the start of the pandemic, the RAY Network has been surveying project participants and project team members of the Erasmus+ Youth and the European Solidarity Corps programmes. The surveys have been launched in June 2023 and remained open until September 2023. The multilingual online surveys aim to analyse the impact of the European Youth Programmes and their effects on individual, organisational, community and European levels. Project participants and project team members who were part of or implemented an Erasmus+ Youth or European Solidarity Corps project within the current programme period are invited to reflect on the effects of the projects and activities (e.g. on participation and citizenship, digitalisation, sustainability, diversity and inclusion) and their own learning pathway and competence development. Furthermore, the effects on learning organisations and communities, the inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities, the recognition of youth work, the European dimension as well as the implementation of the programmes are thematised.

18.000 project participants and 5.000 project team members fully responded to these current surveys. Initial analyses on a transnational level including the first findings from the surveys have been made available during the autumn of 2023 and in the spring of 2024.<sup>1</sup>

The RAY Triangular Summit with the title 'Empowering tomorrow: the impact of the European youth programmes' was designed as a dissemination and policy conference for stakeholders from policy, practice and research, to foster an informed discourse on how the findings from the RAY Monitoring surveys can contribute to youth work practice, youth policy development as well as the further development of the European youth programmes.

The Summit was co-hosted by the National Agencies of the European youth programmes from Bulgaria, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Italy, Malta, the Netherlands, Portugal, Romania, Spain and Sweden. The RAY Network Coordination (at the Finnish National Agency) led and coordinated the preparation process and the implementation of the Summit in cooperation with the RAY transnational research team.

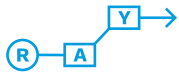
The relation of the European youth programmes and programme-specific as well as sector-specific strategies and core documents (e.g. the strategies on inclusion<sup>2</sup>, participation<sup>3</sup> and

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<sup>1</sup> Related research reports and factsheets will be published by end of August 2024 and made available here: [www.researchyouth.net/reports](http://www.researchyouth.net/reports).

<sup>2</sup> <https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/document/implementation-guidelines-erasmus-and-european-solidarity-corps-inclusion-and-diversity-strategy>

<sup>3</sup> <https://participationpool.eu/resource-category/youth-participation/youth-participation-strategy/>



training<sup>4</sup>; annual work plans<sup>5</sup> and programme guides<sup>6</sup>; as well as the EU Youth Strategy<sup>7</sup> and the European Youth Work Agenda<sup>8</sup>) were at the forefront of discussions at the Triangular Summit. Furthermore, two European focus groups (within the RAY research project on programme- and sector-specific strategies that frame and guide the European youth programmes) have been implemented as pre-activities for the Summit in March 2024. A RAY STRAT Think Tank Meeting ('Empowering tomorrow: the future of the European youth programmes') took place after the Summit in June 2024, building on the work and outcome of the Summit. The Think Tank meeting brought together a small group of experienced, visionary, imaginative, researchers, practitioners and policymakers from across Europe to explore how the European youth programmes should respond strategically to the changing realities of young people and democracies in Europe.<sup>9</sup>

## AIM AND OBJECTIVES

The RAY Triangular Summit aimed to bring together policy, practice and research to discuss the evidence-based research from the latest RAY Monitoring surveys and other RAY thematic research activities and to foster informed discourse on how the findings can contribute to youth work practice, youth policy development as well as the further development of the European youth programmes.

The key objectives of the RAY Triangular Summit were:

- to discuss the most recent findings of the RAY Monitoring surveys for Erasmus+ Youth, conducted with beneficiaries, project participants and project teams
- to discuss the most recent findings of the RAY Monitoring surveys for the European Solidarity Corps, conducted with beneficiaries, project participants and project teams
- to illustrate the impact and showcase the outcomes of the European youth programmes
- to explore how evidence-based research can contribute to the further development of European youth programmes and their mid-term evaluations
- to explore how evidence-based research can contribute to youth work practice in Europe
- to explore how evidence-based research can contribute to youth policy development in Europe
- to explore how the evidence-based research can contribute to relevant strategies, especially the EU Youth Strategy
- to foster an informed discourse between stakeholders from policy, practice and research

## PARTICIPANTS

The RAY Triangular Summit involved around 120 participants, including researchers, practitioners and policymakers from all over Europe from the fields of youth, European youth work and European youth policy, more specifically: National Agencies (NAs), RAY Network researchers, youth work organisations, platforms and institutions, institutional stakeholders at European,

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.salto-youth.net/rc/training-and-cooperation/trainingstrategy/>

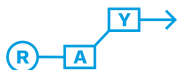
<sup>5</sup> [https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2023-09/eplus-awp-20240-C-2023-6157\\_en.pdf](https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2023-09/eplus-awp-20240-C-2023-6157_en.pdf) & [https://youthnetworks.net/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/2024\\_ESC-annual\\_work\\_programme.pdf](https://youthnetworks.net/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/2024_ESC-annual_work_programme.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> <https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/erasmus-programme-guide> & [https://youth.europa.eu/d8/sites/default/files/inline-files/European\\_solidarity\\_corps\\_guide\\_2024\\_en.pdf](https://youth.europa.eu/d8/sites/default/files/inline-files/European_solidarity_corps_guide_2024_en.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> [https://youth.europa.eu/strategy\\_en](https://youth.europa.eu/strategy_en)

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.bonn-process.net/context/eywa/>

<sup>9</sup> The outcomes and recommendations from the Think Tank Meeting will be published by the end of August 2024 and made available here: [www.researchyouth.net/events](http://www.researchyouth.net/events) & here: [www.researchyouth.net/reports](http://www.researchyouth.net/reports).



national and local level (e.g. European Commission, Council of Europe, National Authorities, National Ministries, Regional bodies, Local authorities), Members of the European Parliament, civil society stakeholders at European and national level (e.g. European Youth Forum, National Youth Councils) as well as research stakeholders from the youth and similar fields.

## PROGRAMME

<b>WEDNESDAY</b>		<b>22 MAY 2024</b>	
During the day		Arrival of participants	
19:00		<b>WELCOME DINNER</b>	
20:30		<b>NETWORKING RECEPTION</b>	
<b>THURSDAY</b>		<b>23 MAY 2024</b>	
09:00		<b>OPENING SESSION</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Official welcome by Ms. Sandra Bergqvist, Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture / Minister of Youth, Sport and Physical Activity</li> <li>▪ Building the framework of the Summit</li> <li>▪ Connecting with other stakeholders</li> <li>▪ Evidence-based input: Key findings and main challenges from the most recent monitoring surveys and across RAY thematic research projects by Andreas Karsten, RAY transnational research coordinator</li> </ul>	
11:00		COFFEE BREAK	
11:30		<b>COMMENTARY PANEL ON RESEARCH FINDINGS (PERSPECTIVES FROM POLICY AND RESEARCH)</b>  WITH: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Sandra Bergqvist, Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture / Minister of Youth, Sport and Physical Activity</li> <li>▪ MEP João Albuquerque, Member of the European Parliament, Portugal</li> <li>▪ Leonardo Dongiovanni, Programme Officer - Youth Policy and Programmes, European Commission, Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Culture and Sport</li> <li>▪ Hilary Tierney, Associate Professor, Co-director Centre for Youth Research and Development, Maynooth University</li> <li>▪ Andreas Karsten, RAY transnational research coordinator</li> </ul>	
12:30		LUNCH	
14:15		GROUP PICTURE	

14:30	<b>WORKSHOPS ON FOUR THEMATIC PRIORITIES (THEMATIC SENSE-MAKING)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Exchange on &amp; contextualisation of RAY results for the four thematic priorities (including perspectives on competence development and capacity building for youth work)</li> </ul>
16:30	COFFEE BREAK
17:00	<b>HARVESTING</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reflections from workshops</li> <li>Reporting from the rapporteur by Gisele Evrard</li> </ul>
17:30	<b>NATIONAL DELEGATIONS BUZZ GROUPS</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Time to reflect on sessions and outcomes of day one, to explore first take-aways and to discuss next steps for the national contexts</li> </ul>
18:15	END OF DAY I
19:30	<b>DINNER-OUT &amp; CELEBRATION</b> Restaurant & Venue Sipuli: Kanavaranta 7, 00170 Helsinki <a href="https://www.ravintolasipuli.fi/">https://www.ravintolasipuli.fi/</a>
<b>FRIDAY</b>	<b>24 MAY 2024</b>
09:00	<b>INTRODUCTION TO THE DAY</b>
09:30	<b>PANEL DISCUSSION: 'STORIES BEHIND THE DATA' (PERSPECTIVES FROM YOUNG PEOPLE &amp; PRACTITIONERS)</b>  WITH: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Venla Arosara, Solidarity Projects Lead, Finland</li> <li>Christoph Hertle, Youth Advisory Board DE NA, Germany</li> <li>Iuliana Pavel, youth worker, trainer, president of NGO/beneficiary organisation, Romania</li> <li>Matej Cepin, youth worker, youth trainer, head of beneficiary and youth organisation, Slovenia</li> </ul>
10:30	COFFEE BREAK
11:00	<b>WORKSHOPS: LESSONS FROM RESEARCH - WHAT'S NEXT?</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reflection on main challenges emerging from the RAY research findings</li> <li>Exchange on how policy, practice, research and European youth programmes should respond to these challenges</li> <li>Drafting concrete ideas and recommendations for policy, practice, European youth programmes and strategies</li> </ul>
12:30	<i>LUNCH</i>
14:00	<b>HARVESTING</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reflections from workshops</li> </ol> <b>INSPIRATIONAL KEYNOTE</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>By Lilli Poussa, Foresight Specialist, Sitra Megatrends, young people and youth work</li> </ol>
	<i>COFFEE BREAK in between</i>

15:00	<p><b>NATIONAL DELEGATIONS BUZZ GROUP &amp; CLOSING</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Recap &amp; reporting from the rapporteur <i>by Gisele Evrard</i></li> <li>▪ Time for national delegations: Discussion on takeaways &amp; follow-up for national contexts</li> <li>▪ Evaluation</li> <li>▪ Closing &amp; Next Steps</li> </ul>
16:15	<i>END OF DAY II</i>

## HOW TO APPROACH THIS REPORT?

While the report is not a narrative account but rather a compiled documentation of the RAY Triangular Summit, it does not necessarily follow the order of the programme or cover every single contribution made throughout the event. Instead, it focuses on the findings and outputs that can inform the design and development of future steps and actions. There might be some repetitions throughout the report and even within specific sections, which is due to the interconnectedness of the topics explored.

The report illustrates insights, outputs and opinions from individual participants and working groups and does not necessarily reflect the data of RAY.

## MAIN COMMENTS AND INSIGHTS ON RAY RESEARCH FINDINGS

This section combines the **insights of the commentary panel** discussion with stakeholders from policy and research **and the comments from the group of participants** who worked on the four challenges<sup>10</sup> emerging from the RAY findings.

The panel aimed to explore recent findings from the RAY monitoring surveys<sup>11</sup>, conducted with beneficiaries and participants of the European youth programmes as well as other related research findings in the field of youth and education.

The questions addressed by the panellists were articulated around *what the findings mean from different perspectives, both on the national and European levels. What might be the impact of the findings on national and European youth policies as well as the further implementation of the European youth programmes? How do the findings resonate with other youth research outcomes?*

The panellists<sup>12</sup> were:

- Sandra Bergqvist, Finnish Minister of Youth, Sport and Physical Activity
- MEP João Albuquerque, Member of the European Parliament.
- Leonardo Dongiovanni, Programme Officer - Youth Policy and Programmes, European Commission, Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Culture and Sport.
- Hilary Tierney, Associate Professor, Co-director Centre for Youth Research and Development, Maynooth University.
- Andreas Karsten, RAY transnational research team/coordination.

The **workshops on the challenges** provided a space for reflection on the main challenges arising from the RAY research findings. They also supported having exchanges on how policy, practice, research and European youth programmes should respond to these challenges and drafted ideas and recommendations for policy, practice, European youth programmes and strategies.

### THE DIGITAL ERA

In today's evolving digital landscape, the emphasis on **media literacy and digital competencies** has become predominant. It is therefore essential to support and guide young people – the digital natives, a generation inherently familiar with digital technologies - as they navigate fake news and misinformation and develop their critical thinking competencies.

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<sup>10</sup> The four challenges were: 1. The European youth programmes are excellent intercultural learning environments. How can these opportunities be made accessible to more and more diverse young people? 2. Young people and youth workers encounter mis- and disinformation daily. How can the European youth programmes strengthen the media literacy of young people and youth workers? 3. Young people increasingly wish to address sociopolitical challenges through their participation in European youth programmes. What changes are needed to better support them? 4. The multiple crises of our time have strong impacts on young people and the youth field. How can the European youth programmes strengthen resilience in our day and time?

<sup>11</sup> See Annex 1 for RAY's presentation on recent research findings

<sup>12</sup> See Annex 2 for the biographies



Indeed, in a time where digital transformation is everywhere, equipping young people with the **ability to critically assess information** is necessary for their personal and civic development. Youth advisory boards at NAs are encouraged to discuss media literacy from the young people's perspective, ensuring that the topic remains at the forefront of the European youth programmes and is a national priority. Strategies and training opportunities under TCA<sup>13</sup>, NET<sup>14</sup>, and TEC<sup>15</sup> should integrate media literacy to ensure broader attention. This holistic approach would support providing young people with the competencies necessary to recognise reliable sources and challenge the proliferation of 'alternative truths' on the internet.

Another type of support is the need for more **peer-to-peer digital literacy opportunities**, securing better funding, and fostering connections between youth workers and policymakers. This approach would ensure that the digital natives are not only consumers of digital content but also critical thinkers and active participants in shaping the(ir) digital landscape. In addressing the digital literacy gap, it is important to acknowledge the fragmented European media scene and the differences in media trust across member states. Therefore, there is a **call for more comprehensive research to understand the digital media consumption habits** of young people across different regions.

To support that, the use of **digital tools** and platforms has become integral to youth engagement and education, even though this integration also requires a strong framework to enhance media literacy among young people and youth workers. As a possible tool, the development of a media literacy toolkit for trainers [and youth workers] would be a valued step forward. Similarly, the European Commission is encouraged to prioritise media literacy within the NAs, for instance through detailed reports and funding indicators to support these initiatives, which connect to adding questions about media literacy in application forms. Moreover, the importance of critical thinking is also connected to **YouthPass**<sup>16</sup>, which should incorporate media literacy as a reflective element. The European youth programmes also stress **the importance of using digital tools for educational purposes**. Schools and teachers are key in connecting students with youth work organisations, integrating digital education with practical youth participation and engagement. Simplifying application procedures for digital initiatives and providing micro-grants can ease access for diverse groups, ensuring inclusivity.

Digitalisation also extends to the strategic **use of technology in fostering civic engagement and participation of young people**. Digital tools are essential for enhancing communication and encouraging better dialogue and mutual understanding. This digital interaction is necessary for transforming the idea of individual empowerment into **community empowerment**, ensuring sustained commitment beyond the end of specific projects. The emphasis here is on creating **safe digital spaces** for young people from diverse backgrounds to voice their socio-political concerns and participate actively in democratic processes.

Furthermore, the challenges posed by digitalisation require a balanced approach that **combines technological integration with traditional methods of engagement**. Hence, while promoting digital tools, it is equally important to ensure real-life interaction to develop social competencies and reduce the isolation that excessive digital device use can cause. This twofold approach is essential in fostering young peoples' development, blending digital and interpersonal skills.

<sup>13</sup> Training and Cooperation Activities organised by NAs in the frame of Erasmus+

<sup>14</sup> Networking activities organised by NAs in the frame of the European Solidarity Corps

<sup>15</sup> The Training and Evaluation Cycle supports volunteers and Quality Label organisations in the frame of the European Solidarity Corps.

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.youthpass.eu/en/>

## IN A NUTSHELL

Digitalisation in the European youth programmes means a balanced integration, critical assessment, and inclusive participation. By prioritising media literacy, furthering digital dialogue, and supporting and guiding digital natives, the European youth programmes can support young people to think critically and engage socially. The ongoing adjustments to the digital era, combined with 'traditional methods' of youth work, can ensure that young people are well-equipped to navigate and shape their digital futures while maintaining strong social and civic bases.

## INCLUSION AND DIVERSITY

**Inclusion and diversity remain fundamental dimensions** of the European youth programmes, emphasising the need to reach out to a broader range of young people, especially those with fewer opportunities. The programmes aim to identify and address the barriers that hinder participation, thus fostering a more inclusive environment for all even if there seems to be some confusion or debate about "*who can and should reach out to young people effectively?*"<sup>17</sup> and whether this should be the job of educators, community leaders, or specific youth workers.

The responsibility of **reaching out to young people with fewer opportunities** lies with everyone, but particularly with youth workers. It involves understanding what is meant by 'fewer opportunities' and the implications for young people's information, awareness, and capacity to consider mobilities and being away from familiar surroundings. Youth workers need to plan involvement in Erasmus+ mobilities as a long-term process, creating a supportive environment for meaningful participation. This includes considering personal development, awareness of solidarity, and individual opportunities. This approach also means working **closely with families and communities** to build understanding and support for young people's involvement, thus enhancing the inclusivity of the programmes.

**Diversity within staff** is also crucial to effectively reach out to people from different backgrounds, including various ethnicities, genders, and cultures. A more diverse work environment would help in building trust with the target groups and overcoming stigmatising dilemmas. Schools and teachers are identified as key partners in this effort, with a focus on connecting students with youth work organisations better.

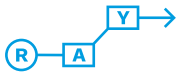
To further promote inclusion, the European youth programmes must opt for **simplifying forms and procedures** to make it easier for target groups to apply. This includes restructuring funding mechanisms to reduce bureaucracy and implementing micro-grants, which can ease the application process for those with fewer opportunities and create accessible and easier pathways for all young people to participate.

The programmes also underline the **importance of intercultural learning environments** and aim to make these opportunities accessible to a more diverse group of young people. This includes not only youth workers but also social workers who can reach out to young people not typically 'on the radar' of the European youth programmes. For instance, strengthening the connection between national organisational levels for youth affairs and the European youth programmes can play a key role in this effort.

Furthermore, the programmes highlight the need for **ongoing support and long-term strategic thinking** to build young people's confidence and capacities over time. This includes

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<sup>17</sup> Quoting Hilary Tierney



advocating for increased and consistent funding to address larger societal issues and promote democratic values. Sustainable funding is necessary for the effectiveness and efficiency of the programmes, ensuring, once more, that they remain inclusive and reach out to diverse groups of young people.

The **challenge of recognising barriers to participation remains**, requiring more research and knowledge to understand and address these obstacles. By focusing on the inclusion of young people from diverse backgrounds, the programmes aim to enhance their relevance and the impact of youth work. This comprehensive approach ensures that young people with fewer opportunities are not only included but also actively engaged and supported in their personal and civic development.

## IN A NUTSHELL

The narrative around inclusion and diversity within the European youth programmes equals commitment and action. By identifying and addressing barriers, simplifying procedures, and fostering a diverse and supportive environment, the programmes strive to create inclusive opportunities for all young people. This holistic approach is fundamental in promoting social cohesion, intercultural understanding, and the active participation of young people.

## PARTICIPATION AND DEMOCRATIC ENGAGEMENT

Promoting civic engagement and encouraging young people's involvement in local activities and decision-making processes are important priorities of the European youth programmes. **Ensuring ongoing civic participation** is essential to keeping young people active in their communities, particularly during times of elections. This also connects to fostering **a generation that can engage meaningfully in civic activities**, advocate for democratic values, and support democratic engagement across all parts of society.

The programmes aim to build solidarity and intercultural understanding, emphasising the necessity of acting upon the sentiments and feelings within the field, to 'strengthen the social fabric' and promote European unity. Emphasis was also put on the importance of **fighting radicalisation** and underlined the crucial role the European youth programmes play in reducing hate speech and radicalisation. Promoting empathy and shared values helps protect our democratic systems, though shrinking, and maintain, at least to a certain extent, social peace.

Sustainable funding is necessary for the effectiveness and efficiency of the European youth programmes. It is necessary to advocate for increased and consistent funding to address larger societal issues and promote democratic values. **Ensuring that youth work remains a priority in policy and funding decisions** and **tailoring the European youth programmes to local contexts** while aligning with broader European goals and priorities will ensure that they effectively promote civic engagement and democratic participation.

The **professionalisation of youth work** is a key dimension of empowering youth workers, who play a fundamental role in making a difference in young people's lives. Investing in and recognising youth workers as professionals is necessary for supporting transformation and change, for their work is central to fostering civic engagement and promoting democratic values among young people.

The **notion of empowerment is multifaceted**, encompassing financial, emotional, and strategic dimensions. The **'hidden costs of empowerment'**, such as higher financial and emotional tolls, need to be taken into consideration. As financial costs have increased due

to inflation and sustainability efforts, there is a pressing need to ensure that these costs do not compromise the quality of activities. Moreover, the impact on young people's mental health and those active in the field of youth work must be addressed to maintain high standards of the programmes' implementation. These 'hidden costs' underline the importance of providing comprehensive support to ensure that empowerment does not come at an unbearable price.

**Strengthening existing mechanisms for [EU] youth dialogue** is needed to overcome barriers in the current systems. Institutionalising dialogue between youth councils and the government at all levels can support fostering better communication and engagement. Moreover, it is important to show policymakers the consequences if activities are not carried out fully and effectively, giving space and voices to those not participating in the programmes. Addressing the crisis of democracy in Europe with young people is a critical issue that needs attention. Funding and training youth workers are essential to ensuring **quality and long-term sustainable practices**, enabling them to support young people's civic engagement and democratic participation.

Connected to participation, the importance of **engaging young people at an earlier age (below 18)** was also underlined, and ongoing reflections and discussions are taking place about lowering the age limit and strengthening cooperation between youth work and organisations to merge educational and policy skills in the field, hence supporting the need for long-term strategic thinking. Projects addressed to those below 18 should have **separate budgets and extra financial support**.

## IN A NUTSHELL

The European youth programmes place a strong emphasis on promoting civic engagement, democratic participation, and values. They aim to create a generation of young people who are active participants (from an early age) in their communities and become actors of change. This comprehensive approach would ensure that all young people have the opportunity to engage meaningfully in civic life and contribute to the strengthening of democratic systems.

## QUALITY, RESEARCH AND DATA

How to evaluate the quality and impact of projects and programmes? Their evaluation should incorporate both **quantitative and qualitative dimensions**. Quantitative data is valuable for tracking information over time and identifying patterns or anomalies. However, adding a qualitative aspect allows for a deeper exploration of these findings. This includes considering who to talk to, accessing diverse backgrounds, and potentially using online focus groups to add depth.

Qualitative information improves the evaluation by following lines of inquiry, drawing examples, and understanding feelings, which can lead to a deeper understanding of learning, change, and sustainability. This approach also adds a narrative dimension, building from individual stories to collective ones about the value and quality of the experience.

While recognising the challenges and potential higher costs of qualitative methods, **the mixed methodological approach**, combining both quantitative and qualitative data, **offers a richer understanding of the nuances of the experiences**. This comprehensive evaluation method could significantly enhance our understanding of the programmes' impacts.

Thus, the **importance of using research and data to shape the future of European youth programmes** is not to be undermined. Research findings are essential for advocating for

necessary funding and policy support, ensuring that the programmes remain evidence-based and effective. Engaging in strategic lobbying, supported by strong research data, can help overcome political and financial challenges, demonstrating the long-term benefits of youth programmes and securing their priority in policy and funding decisions.

Research and data **play a crucial role in tailoring the European youth programmes to fit specific cultural and social environments**, ensuring that the initiatives are not only well-targeted but also capable of promoting civic engagement and democratic values effectively. As already mentioned in the context of media literacy, there is a **need for more consistent and extensive research efforts**, to understand the media consumption habits and trust levels among young people across Europe and to develop effective media literacy initiatives.

## IN A NUTSHELL

Research and data within the European youth programmes shed light on their essential role in shaping, evaluating, and advocating for these initiatives. Grounding the programmes in strong research and data ensures the relevance, effectiveness, quality, and sustainability of European youth mobility initiatives and youth projects, and their contribution to promoting civic engagement, democratic participation, and inclusive opportunities for all young people.

## A FEW CONCLUDING STATEMENTS

In their closing remarks, the panellists shared a few messages and recommendations, which can be summarised as follows and serve as conclusive statements of this section:

- *Life is a competition, especially for resources. Youth work struggles for funding, and it is crucial to have research that shows its importance. This competition is a daily battle, and only with solid facts can we secure the necessary resources. It is also essential to know the counterarguments from other fields and develop effective lobbying strategies.*
- *Adapting to national contexts is also important, as different member states have varying priorities.*
- *Education is highly political and divisive. Discussions on education are polarised and that influences the perception and funding of the European youth programmes. Some view them as ideological or redundant, which impacts the design and the weight of the support for them.*
- *Youth work is important and can change young people's lives. It is therefore essential to communicate the value and impact of this work consistently.*
- *Do not diminish the pressure on policymakers! The findings of the RAY monitoring surveys confirm the importance of youth work. Having data is crucial for policymaking and countering opposition. Investing in democracy, the rule of law, and respect is fundamental, especially as memories of past conflicts tend to fade.*
- *Translate data into actions. To succeed with future budget negotiations, concrete actions and ideas based on research findings are necessary.*
- *Youth work changes lives, and so do youth workers. Investing in and recognising youth workers is as important as acknowledging the value of youth work itself. Strengthening youth workers' efforts and achievements will reinforce the narrative around the importance of youth work.*

# SUMMARY OF THE PANEL DISCUSSION ‘STORIES BEHIND THE DATA’

## AIM OF THE PANEL

The main aim of this panel discussion was to bring personal stories behind the European youth programmes closer to research and policy and to complement the impact of the RAY research. The data shows that both Erasmus+ Youth and the European Solidarity Corps have a great impact on young people, youth workers and other beneficiaries, but what are the stories behind the numbers? How common are these stories?

## PANELLISTS<sup>18</sup>

- Venla Arosara (university student, solidarity project lead), Finland
- Matej Cepin (youth worker, youth trainer, head of beneficiary and youth organisation), Slovenia
- Christoph Hertle (youth advisory board German National Agency), Germany
- Iuliana Pavel (youth worker, trainer, president of NGO/beneficiary organisation), Romania

## GLIMPSES OF BACKGROUNDS AND JOURNEYS

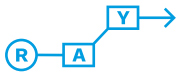
**Venla** always had a great interest in participating in various activities. At 17 or 18, she joined the ‘Young Influencers’ project, where they learned how to participate in democracy, make their voices heard, and understand how organisations and NGOs operate. This involvement led Venla to more opportunities and inspired the creation of the ‘Body Project’, where they exchange and reflect on various topics. This project has grown to include people who had never participated in youth programmes before. Through her involvement in the ‘Young Influencers’ project, Venla also had the opportunity to take part in youth exchanges in Germany and Denmark, which allowed her to meet other socially active young people and have fun abroad.

**Christoph's** interest in Erasmus+ somehow began thanks to a good French teacher and multiple school exchanges. His first Erasmus+ project in Italy focused on democratic leadership, which deeply fascinated him and reinforced his belief in the importance of engaging in democratic processes. This led him to participate in several other exchange programmes, with his most recent one in November.

**Matej** shared his story, reflecting on the significant impacts or ‘diamonds’ in his life. Born in 1976 with only 30% vision, he faced challenges in ordinary schools, which lacked support for children with disabilities. Despite struggling with tasks like navigating the city, he excelled in mathematics, ranking second nationally at age 13. He also earned a computer science degree but chose to dedicate his life to youth work, a field which provided him with lifelong friendships and a family, therefore significantly contributing to his personal and professional development. Matej believes that the youth programme was not only a personal ‘diamond’ but also significantly benefited Slovenia by introducing the concept of youth work to the country.

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<sup>18</sup> See Annex 2 for the biographies



**Iuliana** discovered non-formal education thanks to her first project in 2011, leading her to leave her corporate job in Romania to focus on youth work. She developed an NGO and a youth centre in her village, creating various programmes for local young people. She believes these programmes significantly contribute to personal and community development.

## PERSONAL IMPACT

The biggest benefit for **Venla** from these projects was to gain trust in her own voice and opinion. Working with young people, especially those who are underage, was enlightening as they expressed their views differently. She acquired significant life competencies, improved her communication, and learned project management and budgeting by leading a solidarity project.

**Christoph** mentioned that these experiences helped him develop leadership skills and a deeper understanding of different cultures. He shared how hitchhiking across Europe and staying in hostels allowed him to meet diverse people and step out of his comfort zone. This exposure to differences, to the unknown, was very important for his personal growth and widened his perspective on life.

**Matej** described his journey as a series of small, consistent efforts that led to significant personal growth. He believes that youth work transformed his life, providing him with best friends, a wife, and a fulfilling career. He emphasised the importance of youth work in developing personal competencies and fostering lifelong relationships.

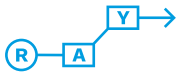
These projects have made **Iuliana** a better person, providing both personal and professional growth. She mentioned how the programmes allowed her to return to her village and create valuable opportunities for young people, fostering a sense of community and personal development.

## COMMUNITY AND SOCIETAL IMPACT

Being involved in initiatives like the 'Body Project' provided **Venla** with a sense of empowerment and belonging. The freedom to manage the project inspired self-confidence and a sense of ownership, helping her and others in the community feel more confident in their competencies. The project also facilitated political engagement by creating a platform where young people could discuss their concerns and feel their voices were heard. Venla highlighted the importance of creating opportunities for young people to participate in decision-making processes and to learn from each other in a supportive environment.

**Christoph** emphasised that understanding different cultures fosters long-term peace and cooperation in Europe. The friendships and empathy developed through exchanges such as the ones he had the opportunity to be involved in, are essential for maintaining a united European community. He also underlined that these projects help participants understand and appreciate the diversity within Europe, which is crucial for long-term stability.

**Matej** highlighted the transformative impact of the youth programmes on Slovenian youth work structure and scene, increasing funding, expertise, and the number of organisations involved. He stressed that small personal changes facilitated by youth programmes can also lead to significant social changes over time. For this reason, it is important to nurture young people's potential and provide them with the tools and opportunities to become changemakers.



The youth programmes have made young people in **Iuliana**'s community more open-minded and willing to stay and contribute locally. She highlighted the importance of developing local initiatives and providing opportunities within small communities, preventing the need for young people to move to bigger cities.

## A FEW RECOMMENDATIONS

- Keep projects accessible and simplify bureaucratic processes to encourage more participation.
- More interaction between decisionmakers and participants and additional funding for unforeseen circumstances.
- Support nurturing changemakers and making youth initiatives more sustainable and impactful.
- More investment in local projects and adjusting budgets to better reflect current realities.

## FUTURE DIRECTIONS

**Venla** believes in the distinct roles of Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps but calls for better awareness and accessibility of these programmes.

**Christoph** supports maintaining separate programmes with improved follow-up activities to sustain participants' engagement and motivation.

**Matej** stresses the importance of addressing contemporary challenges differently given the digital age and changing contexts.

**Iuliana** emphasises the need for the programmes to adapt to the current political realities and continue supporting youth development on both personal and community levels.



## WORKSHOPS ON FOUR THEMATIC PRIORITIES

The workshops consisted of an exchange or ‘sense-making’ and contextualisation of RAY research results for the four thematic priorities<sup>19</sup> (including perspectives on competency development and capacity building for youth work).<sup>20</sup> The four thematic priorities were:

1. Participation and civic engagement
2. Inclusion and diversity
3. Digital transformation
4. Sustainability

The groups’ exchanges on those four priorities are summarised below.

### GROUP 1 - PARTICIPATION AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

There is a need for a holistic pedagogical concept for the European youth programmes. The emphasis must be placed on conducting research that is co-designed by young people to ensure that their perspectives are included. Additionally, it is important to adopt a critical media literacy approach to better guide young people through the digital landscape and help them navigate information effectively.

The skills developed through the programmes have a significant economic value and are essential for society. The programmes are also important for higher-educated people to gain practical experience. There is a need for an increased integration in democratic processes and a raised interest in elections. Spaces for networking and connecting with other youth workers need to be created. Including decision-makers in the programmes enables them to gain direct experience, which leads to better programme-related guidelines. We should strengthen Youth Advisory Boards.

Reaching certain groups, particularly those who are unaware of the programmes, remains a challenge. It is essential to involve young people with fewer opportunities and avoid ‘preaching to the choir.’ It is also important to cooperate and collaborate with NGOs, and to build networks that can help reach out to more diverse groups. The focus on university students very often leads to a preference that leaves vocational school students underrepresented. Moreover, young people with a lower educational background often have different needs, such as the desire to work, which the current programmes do not adequately address.

Language and mindset barriers complicate the participation in the programmes for young people with a lower education background. European projects play a fundamental role in fostering a sense of unity and shared identity among young people.

Word of mouth is crucial for spreading information about the programmes and the main motivation for participation is often not the project topic itself. We can use Erasmus+ to bridge the democracy deficit and also address the male-female difference (ratio of participation)<sup>21</sup>. Introducing reflections about Europe in a non-formal manner or with non-formal methods can engage more young people.

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<sup>19</sup> Cross-sectoral priorities of the Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps programmes: <https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/programme-guide/part-a/priorities-of-the-erasmus-programme>

<sup>20</sup> RAY research findings from the Monitoring surveys as well as other RAY thematic research projects were presented and addressed. RAY research activities can be found here: [www.researchyouth.net/projects](http://www.researchyouth.net/projects)

<sup>21</sup> RAY includes non-binary data

Investing more in the role of participation in democracy supports young people in understanding the bigger picture and the capacity-building of youth organisations.

The best value for money is achieved by including people who are least interested in Europe, as their values are most likely to change. There is a significant lack of connection between policymakers and young people, which makes it difficult for the latter to see the value in their participation. They are reluctant to invest their time in activities they perceive as unimportant. The societal vision of youth participation should focus on making real change rather than 'just' developing competencies. We should start working with young people from an early age, around 13, to ensure the long-term impact of their civic engagement.

Finally, long-term impact research is valuable and needed to understand the specific outcomes of the programmes. Advocacy for more funding is essential and there is a need for a continuous and conscious effort and for both quantitative and qualitative research to evaluate and share results to strengthen the recognition of the programmes.

## GROUP 2 - INCLUSION AND DIVERSITY

Following up with alumni and creating peer-to-peer networks can provide more opportunities for young participants to share their stories. Engaging schools and training institutions can also support creating opportunities for young people to learn about the European youth programmes.

There is a need for a better understanding of the barriers young people face during their participation and how to overcome them. Comparing data not only from RAY research but also from overall participants' reports<sup>22</sup> is necessary to get a comprehensive view. For example, breaking down and comparing the gender of the participants is important.

One can question whether Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps are comparable for research purposes. Moreover, concluding data across many countries with different youth work approaches is challenging and the relatively high variation within groups of young people with fewer opportunities might make it difficult to 'group' them. Additionally, there is interest in receiving impact reports in written form rather than just scales and averages. Concerns are expressed about the validity of self-assessment as a measure to rely on.

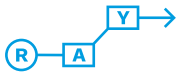
Many young people from lower-education backgrounds, lower income, and younger age groups are missing from the programmes and more efforts need to be put into understanding why certain groups are not participating. Spreading more information and knowledge about the programmes is crucial to reach out to these missing groups.

The surveys should be translated into 'programmes language' and simplified for young people to understand them. It is also important to make it easier for organisations to join the programmes by simplifying the application procedures and forms as sometimes, the effort required to apply is not worth the money received.

It is important to question for whom the research is conducted and what happens with the results, for different research aims can lead to different questions being asked. The questionnaire for the next round of RAY research should consider identified gaps in variables such as gender (identity), age, and refugee experience, and combine these with education. It is also necessary to address the issue of double participation in surveys. Using different

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<sup>22</sup> Reports submitted by beneficiary organisations and individual participants in the context of granted projects under Erasmus+ and/or the European Solidarity Corps programmes.



language to make those surveys more accessible, including age-defined questions, is recommended.

The category of self-described 'fewer opportunities' should be broken down further to identify the specific needs of different groups. The validity and numbers when addressing the needs of young people with fewer opportunities remain a challenge. We should pay attention to the concerns about over-rating addressed topics versus under-rating participants' learning outcomes.

## GROUP 3 - DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

Many young people navigate the digital world 'naively'. Being digital natives, their perception differs from that of older generations and the projects should address this by ensuring that young people are aware of potential dangers, the lack of understanding, and the need for media literacy. While the focus of the programmes and research is often on using digital tools and spaces, there is also a need for activities that emphasise digital aspects without solely relying on digital tools.

Young people are experiencing increased loneliness and anxiety, and the programmes should use digitalisation as a tool to address these issues. Digital tools facilitate progress, but political issues, such as the inability to vote nationally via digital means, highlight the need for further advancement. The overall takeaway from the results is the need for progress, which should prompt action through the programmes.

The lack of participation in digital aspects might be due to the programmes being designed based on organisational needs or leader ideas rather than considering the needs of young people (bottom-up approach).

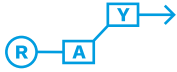
The priority of digital transformation in the programmes is often unclear and whether the focus is on tools for organising projects or the objectives of the activities themselves needs to be clarified. Training youth workers in digital competencies will benefit the transfer of knowledge between youth workers and the participants.

Even though online meetings are useful for project management, participants prefer to communicate, connect, and network in person. Therefore, the primary focus should not be on virtual exchanges. As digital spaces have become too many and too common, participants seek different experiences, hence making face-to-face activities more desirable.

When using online tools, trainers should integrate other collaborative tools (such as Mentimeter) to keep the attention of their participants and reduce digital fatigue. We also need to keep in mind that participants need more time to comprehend the competencies gained after an activity.

It is important to improve the competencies of youth workers and leaders, not only in using tools but also in understanding how they work (e.g. with AI). There is a risk that young people without access to digital tools will be left out of the system.

Last but not least, it is crucial to be more knowledgeable about digital safety and the rights of participants and teams.



## GROUP 4 - SUSTAINABILITY

Young people from disadvantaged backgrounds are less likely to take action for sustainability and those who participate in the programmes do not necessarily represent the broader youth population: they come from 'the bubble'. There is currently no exact way to measure who *actually* has fewer opportunities, how they are represented, or if we can make assumptions about young people with fewer opportunities.

Sustainable development is interconnected with a wide range of issues, such as democracy, human rights, and mental health. These areas can also imply a connection with the sustainable development goals<sup>23</sup>, underlining the broad(er) scope of sustainability.

There is higher engagement for sustainability in everyday life demonstrated in European Solidarity Corps projects. They are closer to people and are carried out by young people who are genuinely interested in the topics and in the related actions. This involvement leads to immediate and faster changes in young people's everyday lives. As one workshop participant highlighted 'The processes are slower than our passions', which indicates a strong commitment of young people to the topic of sustainability and youth projects in general.

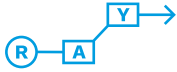
There is no mobility in Solidarity projects, which might contribute to a greater perception of sustainability. However, learning mobility projects cannot happen without actual mobility. The feeling that 'the most sustainable youth exchange is the youth exchange that does not happen' illustrates very well the challenge of balancing mobility with sustainability.

There is also an urgent need to address the issue of equity: how do we reach and support young people with fewer opportunities? We must provide information and resources and share best practices with different actors and stakeholders to ensure that everyone understands the importance of including sustainability aspects in the programmes and the work.

Finally, it is important to also broaden the understanding of environmental issues to support seeing the bigger picture. The implementation of sustainable practices should be supported with adequate financial resources to ensure their effectiveness and outreach.

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<sup>23</sup> <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>



## CONCLUSIONS

The RAY Triangular Summit highlighted the crucial role of Erasmus+ Youth and the European Solidarity Corps, in fostering democratic values, social inclusion, and intercultural understanding across Europe. The Summit's discussions also emphasised the success of these programmes in providing safe spaces for participatory democracy and enhancing the international and intercultural competencies of young people.

The panels and workshops shed light on key areas for further development, including ensuring real-life interactions to counter digital isolation, fighting radicalisation, promoting civic engagement, and building solidarity through practical actions. The importance of media literacy to navigate misinformation, secure sustainable funding, reach out to more young people - particularly those not engaged in the programmes and those with fewer opportunities - and recognise youth workers as professionals was also underlined. Additionally, the need to tailor the programmes to local contexts while aligning with broader European goals was highlighted to enhance their relevance and impact.

The Summit concluded with a call for increased awareness of European opportunities and a collective effort to defend common values, ensuring that youth work remains a priority in policy and funding decisions.

## ANNEX 1 – RAY PRESENTATION ON RESEARCH FINDINGS

23.05.2024 | Triangular Summit

# THE IMPACT AND POTENTIAL OF THE EUROPEAN YOUTH PROGRAMMES

→ Empowering tomorrow

Triangular Summit  
Helsinki | 22-24 May 2024

### IT TAKES A VILLAGE TO RAISE A SURVEY

### IT TAKES A VILLAGE TO RAISE A SURVEY

### IT TAKES A VILLAGE TO RAISE A SURVEY

- Current & previous transnational research team
- The entire team at the currently hosting NA
- The entire team at the previously hosting NA
- Members of working groups for the surveys
- 35 National Agencies and research partners
- The youth units at the European Commission
- RAY Strategy Group & Heads of NA Core Group
- Many thousands of respondents across Europe

## WHAT WILL WE LOOK AT TODAY?

1. Key facts about our data
2. Key facts about our respondents
3. Lived democracy, lived solidarity
4. Empowering young people and youth work
5. The hidden cost of empowerment
6. The media literacy double dilemma
7. The shifting motivations of young people
8. The tensions of being young in Europe today

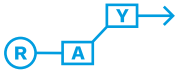
## KEY FACTS ABOUT OUR DATA

## OUR DATA IN A NUTSHELL

- » Biennial monitoring surveys since 2009
- » Covering three programme generations
- » Cross-sectional survey approach
- » Surveying participants and teams

## OUR DATA IN A NUTSHELL

- » Most recently in 2023
  - » 18.000 project participant responses
  - » 5.000 team member responses



## OUR DATA IN A NUTSHELL

- » Most recently in 2023
  - » 18.000 project participant responses
  - » 5.000 team member responses
- » 2014–2020 = previous programme generation
  - » 65.000 project participant responses
  - » 15.000 team member responses

## OUR DATA IN A NUTSHELL

### LARGE LEARNING MOBILITY DATASET

- » Since 2009
  - » 100.000+ project participant responses
  - » 25.000+ team member responses

## OUR DATA IN A NUTSHELL

### LARGE LEARNING MOBILITY DATASET COMPLEMENTED BY THEMATIC RESEARCH

- » 5.000+ thematic survey respondents
- » 1.000+ expert interviews
- » 400+ focus groups
- » 300+ case studies

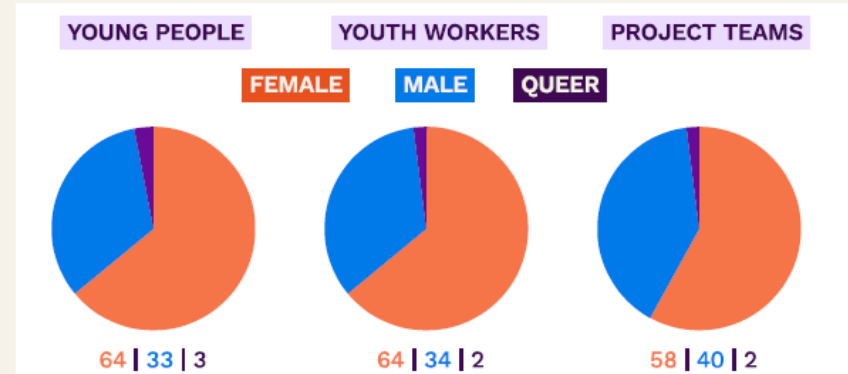
## KEY FACTS ABOUT OUR RESPONDENTS



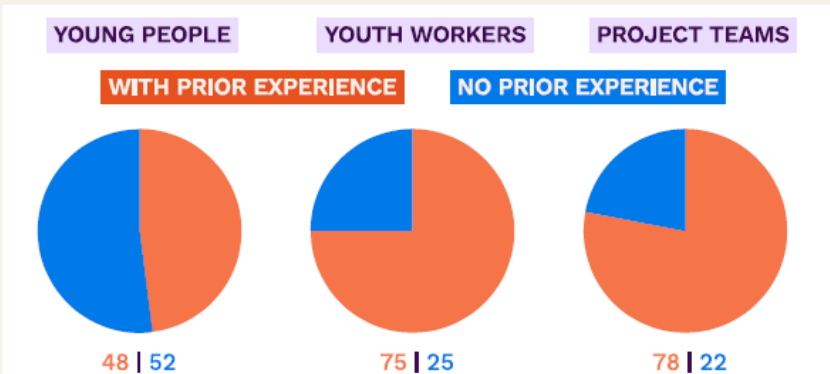
## RESPONDING IS VOLUNTARY

- » Participation in the surveys is voluntary
- » just as participation in the programmes is!
  
- » We control for voluntary response bias by
  - » paying attention to minority opinions
  - » paying attention to small subsamples
  - » paying attention to small changes

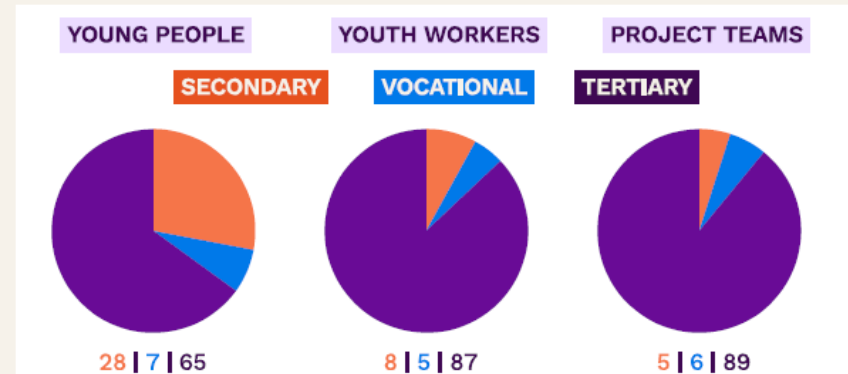
## GENDER DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS



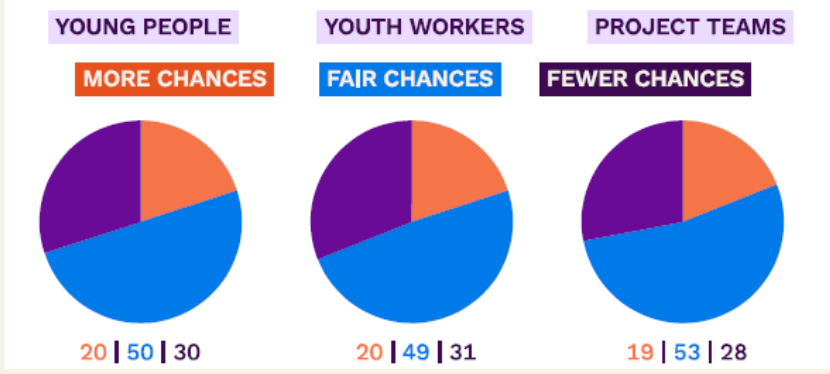
## PRIOR EXPERIENCE OF RESPONDENTS



## EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT OF RESPONDENTS

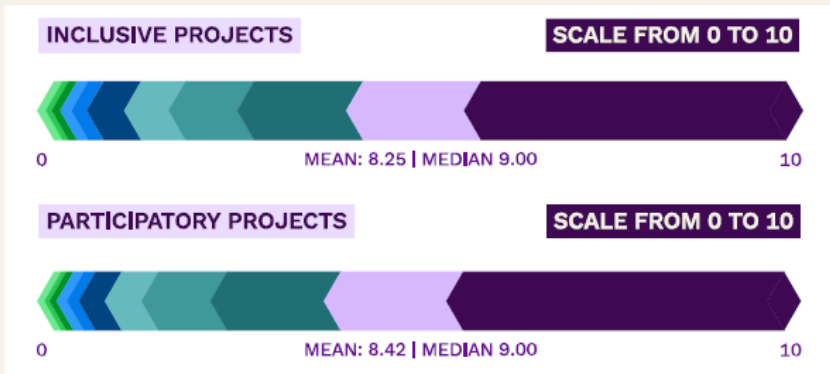


### CHANCES AS PERCEIVED BY RESPONDENTS



**LIVED  
DEMOCRACY,  
LIVED  
SOLIDARITY**

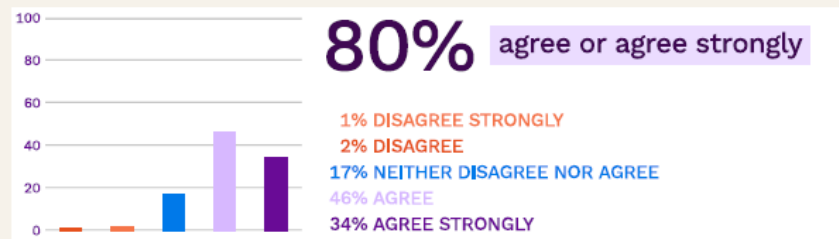
### INCLUSIVE AND PARTICIPATORY PROJECTS



YOUNG PEOPLE

### STRENGTHENING EMPATHY

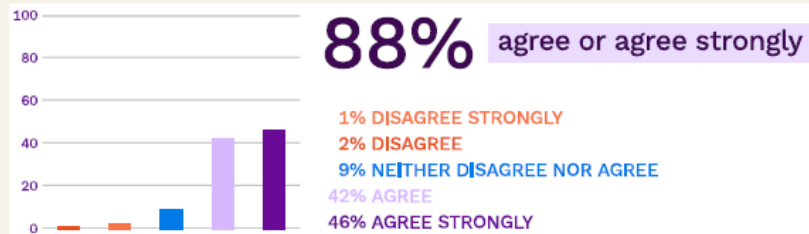
“After the project, I feel that I am better at empathising with others.”



YOUNG PEOPLE

### MAKING THEIR VOICE HEARD

“I was able to contribute my views and ideas to the project.”



YOUNG PEOPLE

### COMING, AND STAYING, FOR SOLIDARITY

57% participated in their project to experience solidarity.

44% participated in their project to build a more inclusive society.

77% learned something new about solidarity during their project.

YOUNG PEOPLE (ESC ONLY)

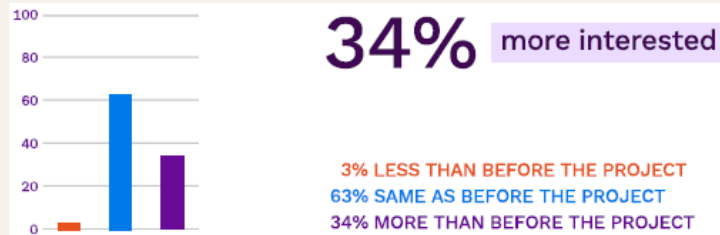
### KEY POINTS TO REMEMBER

» The European youth programmes provide a space to experience and practice democracy, empathy and solidarity – and they motivate young people to actively shape and practice democracy, empathy and solidarity after their participation in the programmes.

**EMPOWERING  
YOUNG PEOPLE,  
CIVIL SOCIETY &  
DEMOCRACY**

### STRENGTHENING INTEREST IN ELECTIONS

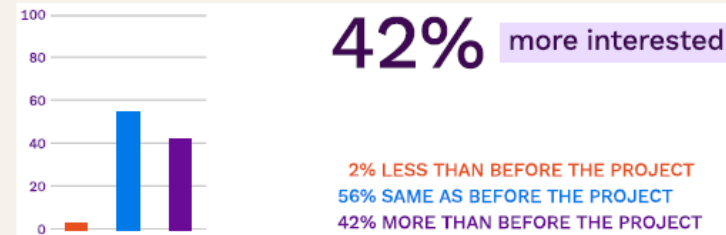
“After the project, I am interested in participating in elections ...”



YOUNG PEOPLE (E+ ONLY)

### STRENGTHENING INTEREST IN DEMOCRACY

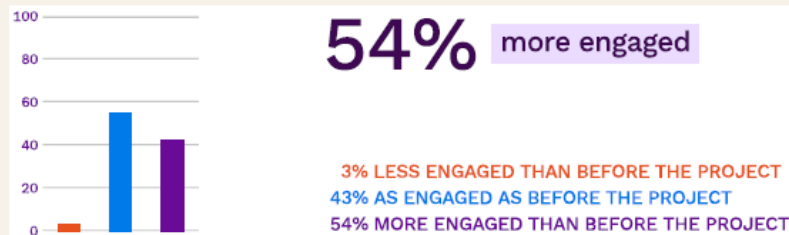
“After the project, I am interested in participating in democratic processes ...”



YOUNG PEOPLE (E+ ONLY)

### STRENGTHENING ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP

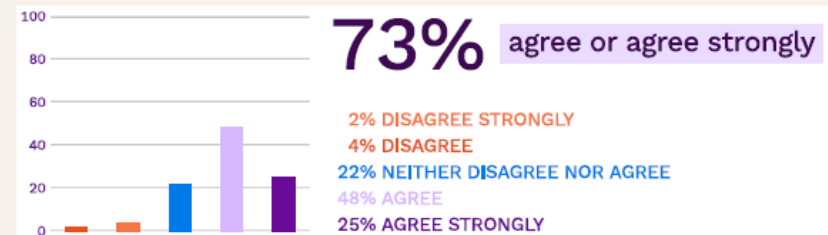
“After the project, I engage in civil society ...”



YOUNG PEOPLE (E+ ONLY)

### STRENGTHENING RELATION TO POLICY

“I improved my ability to interact with policy- and decision-making.”



YOUNG PEOPLE

### KEY POINTS TO REMEMBER

» Beyond their motivational power, the European youth programmes empower young people to shape and enrich democracy and solidarity in all sorts of ways across Europe – from the very local to the very European level. This includes, but is not limited to, participation in elections.

**5**

**THE HIDDEN COST OF EMPOWERMENT**

### THE MULTIPLE CRISES HAVE HAD AN IMPACT

EFFECT ON PERSONAL EXPERIENCE SCALE FROM 0 TO 10



EFFECT ON THE PROJECT OVERALL SCALE FROM 0 TO 10



YOUNG PEOPLE

### PANDEMIC EFFECTS ON YOUTH WORK

Has the corona pandemic affected your youth work?



**74%** with major effects

- 1% NO EFFECT
- 5% SLIGHT EFFECTS
- 20% MODERATE EFFECTS
- 74% MAJOR EFFECTS

RAY COR RESEARCH PROJECT

## YOUTH WORK REMAINS SHAKEN

**“Our budget has been cut in half. New funding is entirely uncertain. The financial impact is hitting us very hard at the moment.”**

Online survey respondent

**“The economic effects of the crisis have undermined our financial stability. We had to cut wages and reduce staff to be able to cope.”**

Online survey respondent

## OPPORTUNITY GAP HAS WIDENED

» Opportunity gaps are well documented

**“There is a significant difference in access to and participation in out-of-school-time activities between young people from high- and low-income households.”**

(Putnam et al., 2010; Sostman et al., 2015)

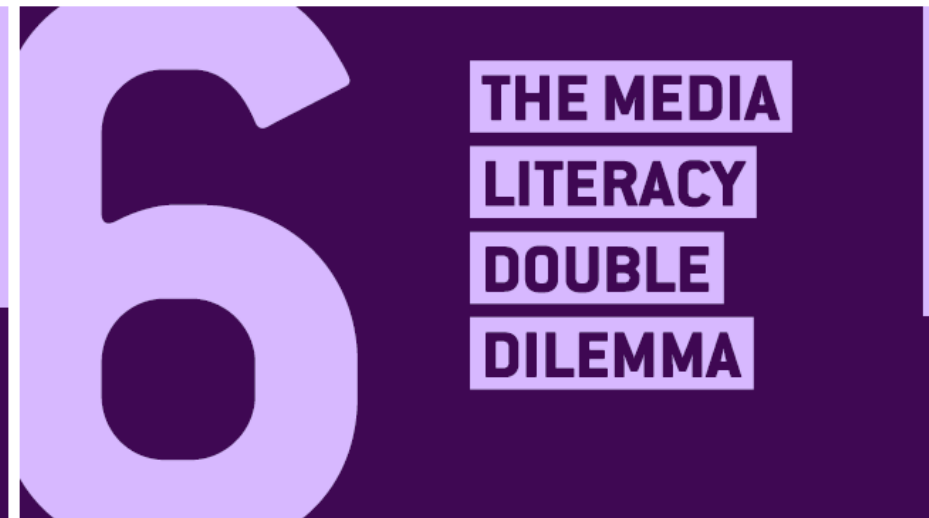
» The pandemic has widened them harshly

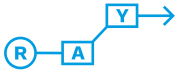
**“The COVID-19 pandemic had a compounding effect on access to developmental summer experiences, disproportionately impacting low-income families.”**

(Denton et al., 2022; Ettekkai & Agans, 2022)

## KEY POINTS TO REMEMBER

» The multiple crises of our time, including the pandemic, have had major impacts on young people, and on youth work and the youth field overall. It is harder for young people to join voluntary extracurricular activities, and it is harder for youth work to provide experiences that are as empowering as before.





### MISINFORMATION: A DAILY ENCOUNTER

» In a 2023 survey of young people conducted by Amnesty International, 93% of respondents said they had encountered mis- or disinformation while being online.

93%

### MISINFORMATION: A DAILY ENCOUNTER

- » Awareness about fake news is high
- » Belief in ability to discover fake news is high
- » Actual capacity to identify fake news is low
- » Capacity to verify identified fake news is low

Medietilsynet, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023

### MEDIA LITERACY PERCEPTION GAP

In 2020, 88% of project team members thought that participants had developed skills to “produce media content on their own”.

88%

### MEDIA LITERACY PERCEPTION GAP

Also in 2020, only 66% of project participants thought they had actually developed skills to “produce media content on their own”.

66%

## MEDIA LITERACY LEARNING GAP

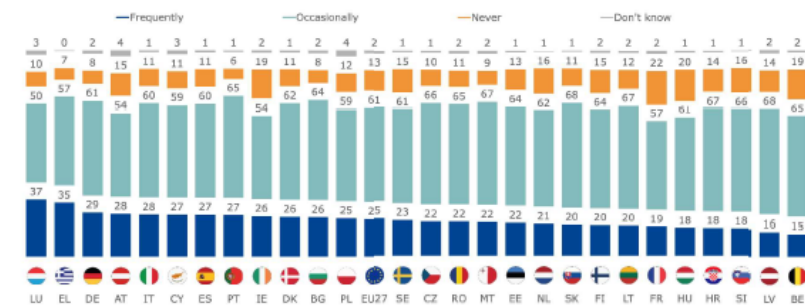
Only 28% of project participants learned something new about mis- & disinformation in their project in the European youth programmes.

28%

## THE SHIFTING MOTIVATIONS OF YOUNG PEOPLE

## YOUNG PEOPLE DISCUSS POLITICAL ISSUES

Q2 When you get together with friends or relatives, how often, if at all do you discuss political and social issues...? (%)



EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT YOUTH SURVEY 2021

## AND BRING THAT INTO THE PROGRAMMES

More and more participants join projects in the European youth programmes *also* to get engaged in tackling sociopolitical challenges.



### LEADING TO SHIFTING MOTIVATIONS

- » 27,3% of Erasmus+ Youth participants in youth exchanges
- » 51,6% of Erasmus+ Youth participants in youth participation projects

### LEADING TO SHIFTING MOTIVATIONS

- » 48,1% of Solidarity Corps participants in volunteering projects
- » 64,5% of Solidarity Corps participants in solidarity projects

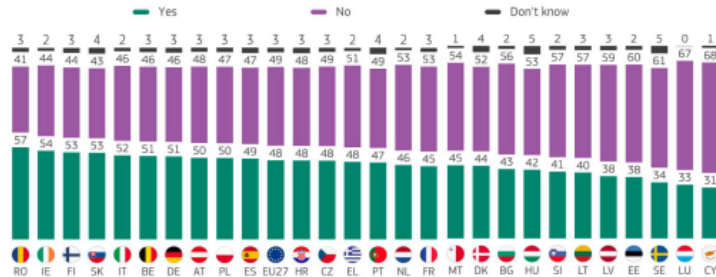
### KEY POINTS TO REMEMBER

- » The motivation of young people to participate in the European youth programmes is clearly shifting – away from individual incentives to learn new things or improve language skills, towards societal aspirations, in particular the desire to address sociopolitical challenges.



## EUROBAROMETER “YOUTH & DEMOCRACY”

**Q4a** In the past year, have you taken any action to change society by, for example, signing a petition, participating in a rally, or sending a letter to a politician?



(%) Base: n=26 189 – All respondents

MAY 2024

## EUROBAROMETER “YOUTH & DEMOCRACY”

**Q4b** In which areas did you try to change society (by, for example, signing a petition, participating in a rally, or sending a letter to a politician)? [MULTIPLE ANSWERS]



(%, EU27) Base: n=12 154 – Respondents who have taken action to change society

MAY 2024

## EUROBAROMETER “YOUTH & DEMOCRACY”

**Q12** What do you expect of the European Union for your generation? [MULTIPLE ANSWERS]

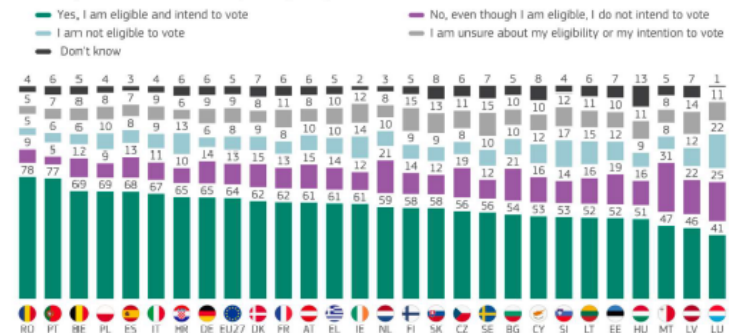


(%, EU27) Base: n=26 189 – All respondents

MAY 2024

## EUROBAROMETER “YOUTH & DEMOCRACY”

**Q13** Do you intend to vote in the upcoming European elections?



(%) Base: n=26 189 – All respondents

MAY 2024

## EUROBAROMETER “YOUTH & DEMOCRACY”

Q14 What are your reasons for not planning to vote or being unsure about voting in the European elections? [MULTIPLE ANSWERS]



(%, EU27) Base: n=6 467 – Respondents who are not planning or are being unsure about voting in the next European elections

MAY 2024

**RECAP**

**FOUR MAIN CHALLENGES**

### CHALLENGE 1/4

» The European youth programmes are truly excellent intercultural learning environments.

How can these opportunities be made accessible to more, and more diverse, young people?

### CHALLENGE 2/4

» Young people and youth workers encounter mis- and disinformation daily. How can the European youth programmes strengthen media literacy of young people and youth workers at the same time?

### CHALLENGE 3/4

» Young people increasingly wish to address sociopolitical challenges through their participation in the European youth programmes. What changes are needed to better support them in these endeavours?

### CHALLENGE 4/4

» The multiple crises of our time have strong impacts on young people and the youth field. How can the European youth programmes strengthen resilience in our day and time?

### FOUR CHALLENGES

- » Make opportunities accessible to more
- » Strengthen media literacy on two levels
- » Make room for sociopolitical challenges
- » Respond to the crises of our time

23.05.2024 | Triangular Summit

# THANK YOU!

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## ANNEX 2 – BIOGRAPHIES OF THE PANELLISTS

(In alphabetical order)

**João Albuquerque** is a Portuguese Member of the European Parliament from the Socialists and Democrats (S&D) group. His current roles include serving as a member of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs (EMPL). He was the President of the Young European Socialists (YES), where he pushed a progressive agenda for work, including the ban of unpaid internships. A strong advocate for human rights and equality, MEP Albuquerque is dedicated to advancing a fairer and more equitable society through his work.

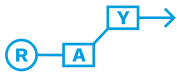
**Venla Arosara** is studying cultural studies and cultural policy at the University of Jyväskylä. She is currently producing a podcast called Porinapodi, which is a podcast made by young people for young people. The podcast is funded by the European Solidarity Corps. She has also taken part in two Erasmus+ youth exchanges and in a youth participation project.

**Sandra Bergqvist**, Ministry of Education and Culture / Minister of Youth, Sport and Physical Activity: Bergqvist is responsible for matters covered by the Department of Youth and Sport Policy, including matters related to student financial aid. Sandra Bergqvist was born in 1980. She holds a Master's degree in Social Sciences. Bergqvist has chaired Pargas City Executive and City Council and served as a member of the board of directors of the Swedish Cultural Foundation in Finland. She has worked at the Association of Finnish Municipalities, the Ministry of Education and Culture, the Swedish Assembly of Finland (Folktinget) and the Åbo Akademi University. Bergqvist is the deputy party leader of the Swedish People's Party of Finland. Bergqvist has three children and lives with her partner on the southwest coast of Finland in Nagu.

**Matej Cepin** (Slovenia) is a youth worker, trainer and author. In his youth, he was influenced by scouting. In 2002 – 2009 he led the Youth Academy - a training programme for youth leaders and workers. In 2004, he was involved in the founding of the Social Academy, which he is still leading today and which is one of the most recognised youth work organisations in Slovenia. His key themes are the personal development of young people, the development of civil society, responsible citizenship and leadership development

**Leonardo Dongiovanni**, Programme Officer - Youth Policy and Programmes, European Commission, Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Culture and Sport. Leonardo Dongiovanni is a programme manager in the European Commission's DG EAC Unit B3 (Youth and Volunteer Solidarity). He is responsible for the European Solidarity Corps interim evaluation and EAC contact point with the RAY Network. Leonardo joined the Commission in 2017 as policy officer in DG MOVE Unit C4 (Rail Safety and Interoperability), working on skills policies for transport workers and young apprentices. His interest for young generations triggered his move to DG EAC in 2022. He has a degree in environmental economics from the University of Pescara (2005). After a traineeship at the United Nations in Vienna (2006), Leonardo took a postgraduate master's degree in environment, marketing and quality at the Strategies Business School in Rome (2007). In 2008 Leonardo moved to Brussels to work as a political advisor at the Association of European Rail Infrastructure Managers (EIM). Before joining the Commission, he was Public Affairs Manager at UNIFE, the Association of the European Rail Industry and Executive Secretary of Rail Forum Europe for six years (2011-2017).

**Christoph Hertle** is 19-year old and grew up in the Bavarian countryside. He first participated in Erasmus+ through a project in Italy, which enabled him to not only find friends across Europe but also to view his life from new perspectives. These new experiences had a major impact on his life. He enjoyed meeting people of different cultures and as a consequence,



he took part in other Erasmus+ projects and dove deeper into youth work. Nowadays, he is a member of the youth advisory board of the German National Agency, and through this work, he is happy to have a truly positive influence on Europe.

**Andreas Karsten** coordinates the transnational research team of the RAY Network for the research-based analysis of European youth programmes. He works for Youth Policy Labs, a small research agency and think tank in the youth sector, where he leads an international team of participatory research, public policy and open data aficionados.

**Iuliana Pavel**, youth worker, and trainer, earned her degree in Management from the Academy of Economic Studies in Bucharest. She is deeply interested in what motivates and helps people grow. She is committed to creating learning opportunities for children, youth, and adults, aiming to help them achieve their full potential. Since 2011, she has served as a trainer and facilitator and has managed various national and international projects focused on leadership, organizational development, project management, as well as personal and professional growth. Since 2020, she has been a member of the National Network of Trainers, participating in the ERASMUS+ programmes and the European Solidarity Corps, overseen by ANPCDEFP.

**Dr. Hilary Tierney** is Associate Professor of Community and Youth Work and co-Director of the Centre for Youth Research and Development (CYRD) in the Department of Applied Social Studies in Maynooth University (MU), Ireland. Within the CYRD, her most recent research projects include Measuring Impact of Youth Organisations (MIYO) and Erasmus+ funded project led by WOSM/YMCA Europe and qualitative research on the experiences of young Black people in Co. Dublin commissioned by the National Youth Council of Ireland.

## **ANNEX 3 – WELCOME SPEECH OF SANDRA BERGQVIST, FINNISH MINISTER OF YOUTH, SPORT AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY**

Dear Participants,

It is a great pleasure for me to open this Summit and welcome you all to Helsinki. The beginning of the Finnish summer tends to be quite changeable, but I hope during this week, you will get to enjoy the best sides of our lovely Capital by the Baltic Sea!

When talking about the European Union – I think that, in addition to peace and stability, free movement is one of the greatest achievements of the union. EU programmes, like Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps, are now more important than ever, when our common European values, democracy and human rights are being attacked.

In the youth sector, our responsibility is to defend these values because they lay the foundation for our work in Europe and in the Member States. It is important to raise awareness of our European values, as well as European history and culture. Young people are a key resource for creating a social and just Europe. It is crucial that they have easy access to high-quality opportunities for mobility and voluntary activities to strengthen cohesion, solidarity and democracy within and outside the Union.

I think that in today's world with all the challenges and insecurities – it is very important for young people to go abroad and to have the possibility to engage with peers from other countries. The European youth programmes are intercultural learning at its best: safe spaces to encounter differences with positive curiosity and explore them through constructive discourse and exchange.

EU Youth programmes are a success story throughout the European Union. Naturally, programmes must also develop and respond to the needs of young people and youth workers. It is therefore important that we regularly review and evaluate how well the programmes work.

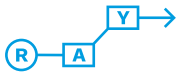
Indeed, the Network for the Research-based Analysis of European youth programmes, RAY, is doing an excellent job in this connection. The latest RAY Monitoring surveys of the European Youth programmes offer Member States an excellent opportunity to assess how effective the programmes are at both national and European levels.

Our task in this Summit is to consider and discuss how the findings can contribute to youth work practice, youth policy development and the further development of the European Youth programmes in the long term.

So, I'm pleased to mention, that I had the opportunity to get to know the key findings of the monitoring survey in advance, and it is clear that EU youth programmes are a success story also when talking about the European democratic values.

The programmes offer safe spaces to practice and live participatory democracy. Themes like appreciation of cultural diversity, promotion of active citizenship, social inclusion and solidarity have all been strengthened within the activities, just to mention a few.

Erasmus+ Youth empowers young people and youth professionals by promoting the principles of non-formal education in the activities carried out in the programme: for example, participatory learning approaches and peer learning settings provide arenas to



practice active citizenship, democracy and participation. In addition, the programme offers a variety of formats to build the capacity of youth professionals to develop projects with an intercultural and international dimension.

According to the Monitoring Survey, the European Solidarity Corps provides a framework to live and experience solidarity in a local community context as well as in volunteering activities. The programme gives young people, including those with fewer opportunities, easy access to opportunities for engagement in solidarity activities. These bring positive changes to young people's lives and to society at large. Local solidarity projects allow young people to share and receive solidarity in their local communities and these actions and initiatives are a valuable asset for the whole society.

Just a few weeks ago we published the national evaluations of the EU Youth programme implementation in Finland. These evaluations are part of the EU-level review covering all Member States and including the final and interim evaluations of the previous programme years.

According to the Finnish national evaluation – for example, participation in the Erasmus+ mobility improved significantly the international competence and intercultural skills of the participants and increased the readiness to cooperate with people from different cultures, not to mention the improvement of language skills.

In the European Solidarity Corps activities, the strongest positive effects were the improvement of the young people's capabilities in general. Also networking with other young, language skills and active participation improved during the activities.

This is all very convincing – and indeed, I would warmly encourage all young people to participate in EU programmes and to make active use of the various opportunities that these programmes offer. And I firmly believe that we can do even better – the programmes might reach out even more young people as well as youth professionals and provide them with valuable experiences of learning mobility and solidarity activities.

We should increase even further young people's awareness of European opportunities and strengthen their trust in shaping their own future. It is only by acting together and defending our common values that the EU can tackle the major challenges of our time.

I wish you all inspiring discussions and a successful conference,  
Thank you!



## ANNEX 4 – DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT “DE EEN IS DE ANDER NIET”

The Triangular Summit included the presentation of a theatre solidarity project from Belgium-Flanders, which can be accessed here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZM6bJPG6zUs>).

The project was realised by MPC Ter Bank (Medical Pedagogical Center for young people with a mental disability). The Core group members (at the start of the project): Thomas, Rhyan, Nathalie, Hilke and Peter. Three coaches: Stien, Annelies and Mart. This was in cooperation with Sojo vzw (Kaat Jans), Idealist CS (Jordi Dobbelaere) and vzw Huispaleis (Ingeborg Vanhelshoecht). And a lot of more young people involved.

"**Van 't een in 't ander**" is a Dutch saying that roughly translates to 'one thing led to another'. This project aims to be the onset for change in the way of thinking and guidance of young adults from youth care by focusing on developing inclusive partnerships with a regular leisure offer from and for young adults. Young adults with a disability, and certainly also young adults who stay in a group home, desire a normal life like all young people and want to belong. Their lives now mostly take place within the perimeters of society where the focus lies on their limitations.

We aspire to bring young adults together based on shared interests and talents. The young adults with and without disabilities are given a leading role with the support and guidance of the coordinators and adjust when necessary. We will work on a joint product within an inclusive leisure initiative. This way we get to know each other, work together, and find out what works and what doesn't as well as develop new approaches. We want to make this vision and methods known to third parties (training, other facilities, youth work...) through workshops, social media, etc.

Within this project, there is no distinction between the supervisor and the young adult. Everyone who is INVOLVED is positioned from his talents. Within each inclusive leisure initiative, we develop collaborations with other domains within youth work in which we will look for and refine the methods. We find it powerful that the initiatives are being developed in collaboration with people and organizations that work professionally. They have expertise in strengthening talents and giving these young adults the ability for personal growth. Here too, we want to learn from each other. The emphasis is not on the result but on the joint process, CONNECTING, meeting each other, and enjoying every step of the process together. We hope that the connections we make, by doing exciting things together, will lead to lasting collaborations between the different types of work and to an enlargement of the network of each individual young adult who participates. By also actively involving the supervisors and youth workers and calling on their talents, we want to excite them to spread the spirit of our project and to continue to shape it in the future when developing new initiatives.

We start with a theatre production as the first inclusive leisure initiative, in collaboration with organisations within youth work and under the professional supervision of the Huispaleis. Together we will work towards a showcase. The choice of theatre is not accidental. Many young people in youth care have suffered traumas. Theatre is a unique way to connect with your emotions and body without naming it, as processing trauma. The aim is to bring art culture closer to young adults with (and without) disabilities. In conclusion, we aim for all young adults who participate to become STRONGER and gain confidence in their abilities.