



Erasmus+

*Research-based
Analysis and
Monitoring of
Erasmus+: Youth
in Action*

**ERASMUS+:
YOUTH IN ACTION
Results of RAY
in Croatia in 2015**



AGENCY FOR
MOBILITY AND
EU PROGRAMMES



Erasmus+

ENRICHING LIVES, OPENING MINDS FOR 30 YEARS



research based analysis of youth in action

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Research-based Analysis and Monitoring of
Erasmus+: Youth in Action

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This study was conducted within the 'Research-based Analysis of Erasmus+: Youth in Action' (RAY) by the RAY Network, which includes the National Agencies of Erasmus+: Youth in Action and their research partners in currently 29 countries*.

The data for this study was collected through multilingual online surveys, which were conducted in 25 languages by the RAY Network between October 2015 and April 2016. These surveys addressed participants and project leaders/team members involved in projects funded through the European Union Programme Erasmus+: Youth in Action (2014-2020). This research project was designed by the Institute of Educational Science at University of Innsbruck and the Generation and Educational Science Institute in Austria in cooperation with the RAY Network.

* Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Croatia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, the Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Turkey, United Kingdom.

ERASMUS+: Youth in Action – Results of RAY *Research-based Analysis and Monitoring of Erasmus+: Youth in Action in Croatia in 2015*

In 2015 Croatia joined the RAY network and participated for the first time in conducting “RAY Research-based Analysis and Monitoring of Erasmus+: Youth in Action” the primary objective of which was to examine the impact and implications of Erasmus+: Youth in Action Programme (hereinafter: E+/YiA) on various actors involved in the projects carried out within the Programme. The results presented in Croatian national report were based on the data gathered through online surveys in the period from October 2015 to April 2016 and which refer to the E+/YiA projects finished in 2015 where Croatia was either sending, receiving or funding country. The evaluated projects were implemented within KA1 activities: Youth Exchanges, European Voluntary Service and Mobility of Youth Workers; KA3 activity – Meetings between Young People and Policy Makers and Transnational Cooperation Activities. Two conceptually related surveys were administered to E+/YiA project participants and project leaders. Analyses were conducted on convenience samples of 1461 project participants and 252 project leaders even though more questionnaires were gathered, in order to ensure authentic presentation of every group of respondents.

1) Participation and active citizenship

One of the basic characteristics of E+/YiA Programme is to encourage young people to be active citizens and to participate in civil society and democratic life. The results for Croatia demonstrate in this area relatively moderate changes and effects of Programme. Namely, by observing the results obtained on both groups of respondents, one can notice that in average the participants and project managers in E+/YiA projects perceived they were approximately to the same extent actively involved in civil society, keeping up with current events and feeling as Europeans as before participating in the project. The lack of this project-based effect was more visible among project participants in comparison to the project leaders who were more characterised by stronger desire for inclusion in the activities which implied fight against the discrimination, intolerance, xenophobia or racism and stronger support for the inclusion of people with fewer opportunities. The strongest effect of project participation on both groups was related to the greater appreciation of cultural diversity while the weakest effect was related to the participation in the democratic life. It is important to stress that, observed on the level of basic frequencies, the results indicate similar proportions of respondents in categories referring to the non-existent and positive project-based effect in active citizenship which in general indicated relatively strong effect of participation in E+/YiA projects. Interestingly, the project leaders estimated in high proportions a more positive project-based effect on project participants referring to the appreciation of cultural diversity and stronger sense of being Europeans.

An additional aspect of active citizenship and social participation among project participants was related to their perception of importance of political participation among young people in general, not only themselves personally. The results showed that project participants strongly agreed that it was important for young people to be included in all aspects of social

participation, and in particular to discuss political and social issues, to be involved in European politics, to have the opportunity to get in direct contact with political actors, and to make use of their right to have a say in political decision making processes affecting them directly.

2) Competence development

Assessment of key competences within the domain of life-long education showed that both project participants and project leaders stressed significant development of all competences, but especially the ones connected to getting along with people who had different cultural background and communicating with people who spoke another language. Another competence which was more pronounced in term of its development was cooperation within a team. All respondents expressed stronger disagreement relating to the development of ability to produce media content on their own. The self-perception of project participants was confirmed by judgements of project leaders who stressed in larger proportions development of same competences as project participants.

Both groups of respondents also recognised the positive effects of participation in E+/YiA projects on the development of their competences within the work/involvement in the youth field. Among project leaders this especially referred to learning how to better work in an international team and how to foster contacts between other project leaders, along with obtaining new insights and knowledge which they had already had or planned to apply in their work in the youth field. Somewhat weaker, but still very positive effect was recorded among project participants (actively involved in working with young people) in relation to all competences within the work/involvement in the youth field. The weakest effect of participation in project was ascribed by both groups to learning more about the content of youth policies at European level and understanding how to better contribute to the development of these policies.

Finally, the participants in the E+/YiA projects highly stressed the effect on their personal development, especially in the area of self-knowledge and self-perception, raising confidence, understanding people who were different and better dealing with new situations. These results were also confirmed by the insights of the project leaders who in high proportions indicated positive project-based effects on project participants.

3) Educational and professional pathways

Similar results between two groups of respondents were also obtained in regard to their estimation of future educational and professional plans. Both groups agreed to the largest extent that they intended to further develop their foreign language skills, and they were evenly sceptical about increasing their chances of getting a job. Even though they on average agreed that they had clearer idea about their further education and career opportunities, both groups (and especially project participants) were increasingly sceptical about it. Similar results were obtained in the estimation of future plans to go abroad to study, work, do an internship or live there. It was important to stress that project participants planned further engagement in education and training which was also confirmed by project leaders. The development of competences in work/involvement in the youth field can also be analysed in the context of educational and professional pathways, especially in acquiring knowledge on non-formal and informal education and learning which were significantly affected by participation in the project among all respondents.

4) Learning organisations and capacity building

The contribution of participation in E+/YiA projects can also be analysed in the context of creating the “learning organisations” (cf. Fennes et al. 2012) in a sense that all competences acquired within the project, and especially ones acquired by project leaders contributed to strengthening of “educational dimension” in context of strengthening non-formal and informal education and learning in youth field (which were employed by project leaders and others involved in work within this field). Along with the stated, it is important to consider and estimate the project-based effects on organisations included in the projects and local community as another important dimension in creation of learning organisations and capacity building. Both groups of respondents estimated positive project-based effect on their organisation, while project leaders additionally estimated positive effects on the local community. In doing so, the establishment of contacts/partnerships with other countries and increased appreciation of cultural diversity is more pronounced in the context of organisations, along with increased competences for the provision of non-formal education and general competences in project management. Project-based effects in local community, assessed only by project leaders, was reflected in positive reaction on intercultural dimension, on project in general and in expressing interest of the local community in similar projects in the future, which could also contribute to the creation of a more favourable environment for capacity building and creation of learning organisations.

5) Profiles of projects, participants, project leaders

Participants and leaders of E+/YiA projects were mostly included in KA1 Youth Exchanges projects, and participants were also significantly more involved in projects KA1 Mobility of Youth Workers. In analysed projects Croatia was in high proportions either sending country or receiving country and in some 22% of cases in both roles simultaneously using Croatian more frequently as project/working language (this was especially the case of 83% of KA3 Meetings between young people and policy makers on a national level among project participants which did not require international partnerships).

Participants in E+/YiA projects were on average 25 years old and represented significantly more by female respondents. Regarding the highest educational attainment, the participants in highest proportion completed university or postsecondary/tertiary level college even though significant number of respondents was still in education or training. Around quarter of project participants volunteered during the last three months, and about the same amount was full-time employed. They mostly lived in urban and metropolitan areas, while Croatia was listed as the country of residence by around half of respondents. Approximately 10% of the respondents declared as members of certain (ethnic, cultural, religious) minorities. Along with these basic sociodemographic characteristics, around half of project participants stated that they had previously participated in similar projects within E+/YiA Programme, and among them almost 80% participated in two or more projects. Obtaining new experiences, personal development and establishing contacts with people with different cultural background and from other countries were main motives for application and inclusion in the project.

E+/YiA project leaders were also in higher proportion female respondents on average 34 years old. More than three quarters obtained university or college degree as the highest

educational attainment, and around 40% was employed outside the organisations which they represented in the projects. Almost one quarter of project leaders stated that they were still in education or training while some 10% was unemployed. They were mostly included in the project on the voluntary (unpaid) basis, playing mostly dual role: educational/pedagogical and organisational/administrational. Similarly as project participants, almost half of project leaders came from Croatia, spoke Croatian as mother tongue and 10% belonged to some of minorities. Most of the project leaders had previous experience of participation in similar projects, evenly as project participants and as project leaders, wherein they mostly participated in two or more projects as project leaders.

The obtained results also showed a high level of personal motivation for participation in E+/YiA projects as well as additional motivation according to which project leaders did not expect any kind of financial “reward” for their work but were satisfied with the possibilities of competence development in the youth field and active inclusion of young people in (civil) society.

6) Inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities

Having in mind that the inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities is one of the basic goals of the E+/YiA Programme, special attention within the RAY project is directed towards this aspect of evaluated projects. The results obtained on project leaders indicated that young people with fewer opportunities were included in more than half of the projects, whereby they were mostly young people with insufficient financial support, who lived in remote areas and who were marked by their social background. According to the project participants, the results showed that they estimated their opportunities and their way of life as equal as their peers’. Around one fifth of project participants estimated their opportunities a bit or much worse than those of their peers’, in case of which more than the half of the respondents stated that they were facing one or more obstacles. In the obstacles were most often related to accessing work and employment which, bearing in mind the Croatian context, presented a problem and an obstacle for a vast majority of young people, and not only the ones included in E+/YiA projects. Further on, around one fifth of project participants was facing obstacles in accessing education and about the same number stressed they felt faced with obstacles in relation to their active participation in society and politics or to mobility, presented mostly as not having enough money – again, having in mind the situation in Croatia and the effects of the economic crisis this was not a surprising result. It is important also to stress that the perception of facing the obstacles had significant effect on the assessment of active inclusion to civil society whereas those facing more obstacles felt more eager to get actively included.

7) Youth in Action networks

As it was already stated, a significant number of project leaders and project participants had participated earlier in similar projects within the E+/YiA Programme and this result can be discussed in the context of potential establishing of contacts with people from other countries who were engaged in the same subject areas. Even though many project participants had had previous experience of (cross-border) mobility related in high proportions to youth exchanges (40%) they felt that by participating in a project they significantly improved their ability to move around on their own in other countries (same applied to the project leaders). Both, project participants and project leaders listed youth organisations and associations as the most common source of information about the E+/YiA

Programme, probably due to their involvement in this kind of projects. Project leaders were more informed by the National Agency of Erasmus+ (YiA) mostly through the Internet and personal communication. Significant proportion of established contacts and learning about mechanisms of project application and implementation in the youth field, as well as pronounced desire for maintaining contacts established during the project, pointed to possible sustainability of newly created networks and continuation of collaboration in some new projects. On the other side, the results related to previous cooperation of the organisations with same partners and development of project in collaboration of all included partners in this context was also indicative being in favour of maintaining the partner network and continuation of cooperation in application and implementation of new projects in youth field.

8) Implementation of E+/YiA

Organisational aspects of a project application and implementation within E+/YiA Programme were estimated on the basis of the answers of project leaders. Even though only 20% of organisations were applicant organisations, receiving the financial support, general opinion of project leaders was that administrative side of project application and implementation was easy and adequate, in combination with accessible information on all aspects of project implementation. Almost all project leaders stressed that the project was well prepared as a result of organising the preparation meetings (both virtual and in person) of all project partners in which respondents frequently participated by themselves. The project leaders were in general very satisfied with the overall management of the project as well as with relations between members of project partners and within project teams. It is very important to stress that the project leaders considered project results as sustainable and appropriately disseminated among actors involved in the work within the youth field.

9) Differentiation of data analysis

Within the Croatian national report all results were compared in relation to the respective key activity in order to better determine differences between the projects. In the analyses of the data obtained by project leaders comparisons were conducted between activities of Youth Exchanges and Mobility of Youth Workers resulting in a more positive and pronounced project-based effects among leaders of the projects within the key activity of Mobility of Youth Workers. On the other side, activity-based comparisons among project participants included five different activities resulting in many significant differences which were more scattered making it difficult to determine a unique pattern. Additional differentiation in data could be discussed in relation to the results of regression analyses which were used to determine the effects of sociodemographic and socioeconomic characteristics of the respondents and other contextual project-based indicators on the various aspects of participation in the project. These analyses showed that sociodemographic determinants explained to the greater extent knowledge, competences, abilities and other results of project participation among project participants in comparison to project leaders. Similar results were obtained on the contextual indicators which pointed to a significant role of Croatia (sending/receiving country) and project working language in perception of development of attaining knowledge and different competences among project participants. It is important to stress that these differences were only illustrative since the composition of dependent indicators somewhat differed between the two groups, and some sociodemographic variables were not included in the survey for project leaders

which indicated the need for potential inclusion of additional variables in some surveys, or equalization of indicators of sociodemographic characteristics of all potential respondents.

Finally, it can be concluded that in the evaluation of E+/YiA Programme within the RAY research all respondents in general estimated and evaluated the Programme very positively as a whole as well as its specific segments referring to the implementation and its expected effects. Basic goals of the analysed projects were in accordance with general goals of E+/YiA Programme and their fulfilment was recorded on the level of all actors included in its implementation. Even though there are some aspects of project implementation which need to be addressed in the future (i.e. in regard to administrative and financial management which were the target of critique of some respondents) the development of projects like these should be continued, encouraging the active participation of young people not only in the political but in all domains of society.

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