



research based analysis of **youth in action**

LONG-TERM EFFECTS OF ERASMUS+: YOUTH IN ACTION ON PARTICIPATION AND CITIZENSHIP

DRAFT INTERIM TRANSNATIONAL ANALYSIS 2018

**MAIN FINDINGS FROM INTERVIEWS AND SURVEYS
BETWEEN 2015 AND 2017**

RECOMMENDATIONS

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RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of this research project show that E+/YiA projects contribute to the development of participation and citizenship competence and practice and in which way. The findings

also indicate which factors are likely to be decisive for this competence and practice development, resulting in the following recommendations.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE PROJECT LEVEL

E+/YiA objectives related to active citizenship and participation

The findings of this research project indicate that participants are frequently not aware of the E+/YiA objectives related explicitly or implicitly to active citizenship and participation, even if their project theme is linked to them. Furthermore, especially younger and less educated participants frequently have difficulties understanding the rather abstract notion and concept of 'active citizenship' and translating it into their real lives. In particular, they are hardly aware of the term or concept of 'youth policies' – no matter if at a local, regional, national or European level. The research findings show that the participants do understand the concept better if it is clearly laid out to them. It is also suggested that specifically addressing issues related to these E+/YiA objectives contributes to more conscious and effective learning processes of the participants.

Recommendation 1: Emphasising E+/YiA objectives related to active citizenship and participation in E+/YiA projects

It can be assumed that the project themes of most projects funded through E+/YiA can be linked in some way to the E+/YiA objectives related to active citizenship and participation. These links should be addressed explicitly, wherever possible, in E+/YiA projects. While this might actually be done in the project applications, it is obviously not always transferred into the project implementation.

Recommendation 2: Explicitly communicating the concepts of 'active citizenship' and 'participation in civil society and democratic life' in a language, phrasing and terminology which is comprehensible to participants and project team members

These concepts are quite abstract and complex; therefore, they need to be communicated in a way which takes into account the age, experiences, competences, educational level, socio-political background, etc. of the participants.

Project design and implementation: the project as citizenship practice

The findings of this research project suggest that certain project settings, educational approaches, methodologies and methods contribute effectively to the development of citizenship and participation competence and practice. This leads to the following recommendations:

Recommendation 3: Establishing project settings which provide for encountering differences as a basis for learning through exchange and discourse, e.g. differences between participants with respect to age, experience, education, socio-political and cultural backgrounds, values, being less or more active as citizens, etc., or differences

between countries involved in the project, e.g. non-EU and EU member states, countries with different political systems, etc. These settings provide for effective peer learning, enabling participants to learn from each other and with each other, and to explore democratic values together. In particular, participants can, thus, become aware of their own realities and compare them with those of their peers. Furthermore, more experienced and more active participants can take on the role of multipliers and role models for other participants.

Recommendation 4: Linking learning spaces in the project environment and social and political events and developments at local, regional, national and European levels to the project theme

This enables participants to experience and understand active citizenship and participation in a practical and, therefore, more sustainable way and provides space for meaningful discussions close to real life.

Recommendation 5: Providing for adequate preparation and follow-up as part of the project, in particular with respect to the development of participation and citizenship competence and practice, as well as to the European dimension of the project

A good preparation, involving the participants in the project theme(s) at an early stage of the project and starting well before an eventual international encounter contributes to effective and intensive learning processes in the course of the project. Participants who have already acquired some basic understanding of citizenship and participation can benefit and learn more from a relatively short international experience if they had a proper preparation. Preparatory activities also allow participants to get to know each other: Since they are learning from each other, knowing each other's background can be vital to enhance the learning processes. An adequate follow-up to the project activities is equally important: While participants might be enthusiastic about the project and even highly motivated to transfer their enthusiasm, ideas and what they have learned into practice and their everyday lives, they need guidance and support to do so, e.g. meetings with other project participants to share their experiences in implementing their ideas and what they have learned, and to prepare follow-up activities. They also need support to develop initiatives and projects on their own, engaging in civil society and democratic life, including in relation to issues with a European dimension.

Recommendation 6: Providing adequate guidance to participants

The research findings show that participants were confused and shaken by current social and political developments such as the refugee movements in 2015 and beyond, the Brexit, the

growth of extremist parties and movements, etc. This leads to concerns, doubts, uncertainties and anxieties with respect to attitudes, values and beliefs in democracy and human rights. Guidance by project teams is essential for participants to be able to cope with these concerns, especially in projects tackling political and civic participation.

Recommendation 7: Using adequate non-formal education and learning methods

Methods used in the project need to foster learning about participation and citizenship, i.e. through interaction within the project as well as with the project environment. In particular, non-formal education and learning methods provide for practicing participation and citizenship as an integral part of the project. In this respect, peer learning is one effective approach to be fostered, allowing participants to learn from and with each other, including participants with more advanced citizenship and participation competences acting as multipliers and less experienced participants learning from them, thus creating learning communities which can continue to exist after the end of the project (see also recommendation 3 and 5). This can also increase the motivation of participants to pursue further activities related to participation and citizenship. Furthermore, methods used in the project need to be adequate for the content, project settings and participants with respect to their age, prior experience, education, socio-political and cultural backgrounds, etc.

Recommendation 8: Providing time and space for reflection, individually and in groups, of experiences and learning related to participation and active citizenship

In fact, reflection is an indispensable part of any E+/YiA project in order for participants to become aware of what they experienced and learned in the project. This is especially important for learning related to participation and citizenship, which requires reflected thinking and action. For many participants interviewed within this research project, the interview itself initiated reflection processes on project experiences resulting in deeper insights the participants had not had before. This suggests that reflection, as part of the project, needs to go

deeper and enable participants not only to reflect on their learning but also to link their own learning experience with broader concepts of participation and citizenship. This is also related to the activities prior to and following the main project activity, which might be crucial reflection points (see recommendation 5 and 6).

Recommendation 9: Fostering participation and active citizenship by involving the hosting community

RAY research suggests that E+/YiA projects can have an effect on the communities hosting them, also in the areas of participation and citizenship.

PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION LEVEL

The recommendations for the project level outlined above imply the following recommendations for the programme implementation level:

Recommendation 10: 'Explicitly communicating the concepts of 'active citizenship' and 'participation in civil society and democratic life' in a language, phrasing and terminology which is comprehensible to beneficiaries, project organisers and project team members in order to be operationalised in their projects (see recommendation 2).

This can be done, e.g. through respective targeted publications (e.g. on project methodologies, etc.), websites, webinars, etc.

PROGRAMME LEVEL

Some recommendations at the project and implementation level also imply the following recommendation at the level of the E+/YiA Programme and future EU Youth Programme(s):

Recommendation 12: Providing sufficient/ additional funding explicitly for project elements and measures as recommended above or for new activity types, in particular for preparation, guidance, assessment and follow-up in order to strengthen the development of participation and citizenship competence and practice during or after funded projects and to ensure their quality

Through a stronger involvement of the hosting community in the project, these effects can be strengthened, in particular by fostering interaction between the project and the hosting community, e.g. as part of community events or through special project activities. This provides for opportunities through which members of the hosting community and project participants could jointly develop citizenship and participation competence. In particular, within long-term EVS projects such an approach is likely to be effective in terms of multiplying the effects of the project and fostering the sustainability of projects.

Recommendation 11: Providing special training activities for project organisers and project team members increasing competences to organise E+/YiA projects which foster active citizenship and participation.

Such training activities would focus on understanding citizenship and participation concepts (see recommendation 10) and developing competences to design and implement projects in line with the recommendations 1 to 9 at the project level. Good practices, e.g. of the Partnership on Youth between the Council of Europe and the European Union as well as of other actors in the youth field could be adapted and further developed in line with this recommendation.

and sustainability. It is recommended to provide additional funding for preparation and follow-up activities within the project in line with the recommendations above and meeting minimum standards to be defined. Furthermore, it is recommended to develop activity types eligible for funding which allow participants – individually or in groups – to develop further activities, initiatives or projects of flexible formats aimed at fostering participation and citizenship. This could be similar to or a further development of 'future capital' projects funded in a prior EU-Youth Programme.