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# ANALYSIS OF ERASMUS+: YOUTH IN ACTION

Results of the 2017 - 2018 questionnaire of participants and project  
leaders

Analysis for Belgium (Flemish Community)

Executive Summary

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This executive summary compiles the main results of the fifth wave of the RAY-monitoring research project in which the Flemish Community has participated. This research is executed by the RAY-research network. This is a network of national agencies involved in the implementation of Erasmus+: Youth in Action at a national level and their research partners. The Flemish partners in this research network are Jint vzw and the University College of West-Flanders, Department of Social Work and Social Care. The aim of this research network is to reinforce Erasmus+: Youth in Action scientifically by studying non-formal and informal learning in a project. The respondents in this research are participants and project leaders in an Erasmus+: Youth in Action project that took place between February 1<sup>st</sup> 2017 and the end of January of 2018. Two invitations were used to reach these respondents. One invitation was sent out in November 2017 and the other in April 2018.

This is the fifth time the Flemish Community of Belgium is participating in the standard surveys of the RAY network. For the second time, all national agencies of Belgium (Jint vzw, BIJ and Jugendbüro) are taking part in the survey. The result is a Belgian sample of 887 participants and 274 project leaders. This dataset has been subdivided to construct a Flemish sample. Similar to the transnational approach, the Flemish sample consists out of all participants who participated in a project financed through Jint vzw. This is supplemented by all people who live in the Dutch region of Belgium and who have participated in a project subsidized by another national agency. Furthermore, people who live in the capital region of Brussels and who have filled in the questionnaire using the Dutch language have also be included in the Flemish sample. The result is a sample of 603 participants and 186 project leaders. Of the 234 participants who belong to the Flemish community in the sample, 172 live in the Flemish region and 55 in the capital region of Brussels. The percentage of participants from the capital region of Brussels (23%) is therefore higher than in previous waves of the RAY research in which the Flemish community participated. In these samples only 10% of the participants lived in the Brussels region. Of the 68 project leaders who live in Belgium, 61 (88%) live in the Flemish region and 7 (11%) live in Brussels.

### 1. THE PROFILE OF THE PARTICIPANTS

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63% of the participants have participated in a youth exchange, 13% in a youth workers mobility project, 10% in structured dialogue, 8% in a TCA and 6% in a EVS-project. This is different from the previous research in 2015-2016 when the largest group of participants (47%) was involved in a project promoting the mobility of youth workers, closely followed by participants of youth exchanges (42%).

The majority of the participants (61%) are women. This doesn't mean necessarily that more women are reached by the programme. It is an indication that female respondents participate more in research than male respondents. This is the probable explanation why women are overrepresented in the sample. The average age of the participants is 22,7 years old, which is younger than two years ago when the average age was 26 years. The largest age category among participants is the age category between 18 and 25 years old (59%), then follows the age group of twenty-six and older (24%). Only 17% of the participants are younger than 18 years. Participants of youth exchanges are on average the youngest age group (average age is 20 years). Participants of EVS projects are on average 24 years old and the participants of structured dialogue are on average 22 years old. The average age of participants of projects of mobility of youth workers is 26 years and the six participants of TCA have an average age of 35 years old.

51% of participants live in an urban or a metropolitan area. One in three live in a rural area or a small town. Therefore, people living in an urban and metropolitan area are overrepresented in the sample. Yet, the percentage of people living in a rural area or a small town is slightly higher to those in the previous waves of the RAY research.

The participants who filled in the online questionnaire are highly educated. 52% of them have already a tertiary degree and two thirds of them are still students. Almost one in four (23%) are still in secondary education and have not yet begun their higher education. It is safe to conclude that the final educational attainment of the participants will be even higher than the current data suggest. The highest educational attainment can be found among the TCA-participants, participants in youth worker mobility, EVS and structured dialogue where more than 60% of the participants have a tertiary degree. The educational degree of participants of youth exchanges is the lowest. Only 40% of them have a higher degree, but that is because a lot of these participants are still in secondary education. If we compare the 14 till 30 years who live in the Flemish or Brussels region of our sample with a representative research of the Youth Research Platform (JOP), than the participants in an Erasmus+: Youth in Action project have a higher educational attainment than the Flemish youth of 14 till 30 years old. Among the participants of Erasmus+: Youth in Action, there is a larger proportion of students than in the sample of the Youth Research Platform. The participants of Erasmus+: Youth in Action also live more in a higher educated family. More than half of them have a higher educated father and/or mother.

More than two in three of the participants are still in education. Those participants who are already in employment, are mostly full-time employed, although the rate of part time employment (19%) in this sample is the highest of all the waves Flanders had participated in yet. Six percent of the participants (30 in all) are unemployed. A significant deal of them (9 of 26, 34%) are at least twelve months unemployed.

Seventeen percent of the participants consider themselves to be belonging to a cultural, ethnic or religious minority, which is the highest ever recorded in a Flemish sample. The most important minority is an ethnic and cultural minority, followed by minorities issued out of migration. Twelve percent of the participants speak at home a language that is not recognized by the state where they reside. Among the participants living in the Flemish region this group represents 11% of the participants. In the Brussels region 13% do not speak an officially recognized language at home.

Participants in an Erasmus+: Youth in Action have travelled abroad a lot. For only 5% of them, the project is their first international experience. Most participants have been abroad for a holiday, as a school trip or as part of a youth exchange.

Young people with fewer opportunities are involved in an Erasmus+: Youth in Action project. One in five participants, who had to pay a fee to participate in the project, have difficulties to pay for it. 45% did not have to pay a fee. 24% of the participants agree that they get less or even a lot less of their fair share in life compared to their peers. One in six participants report to have obstacles in their access to education, mobility or their social and political participation. 30% of them even report to have difficulties to find a place on the job market. The main reasons why participants meet obstacles in life are lack of money, their social background or low educational attainment. If we use the definition of young people with fewer opportunities from the Erasmus+ programme guide, than 56% of the participants would be eligible as a young person with fewer opportunities. Since 2013 a more strict definition is used in the Flemish studies. Participants who meet at least three obstacles in life or meet two obstacles and have a lower educated mother and/or get less than a fair share out of life are considered to have fewer opportunities. This results in 22% of the participants to be a young person with fewer opportunities. According to 75% of the project leaders there were young people with fewer opportunities involved in the project. The main reasons why these young people are confronted with problems have to do with lack of money, belonging to a disadvantaged group and social background according to the project leaders. In the current research, there are also data available whether the participants are registered in the Mobility tool as a person with fewer

opportunities or with special needs. According to these data, 11% of the Flemish sample belongs to one of these groups. The current data are not intended to have an idea how many young people with fewer opportunities are reached by the project. It wants to examine whether young people with fewer opportunities get something different out of their participation than other participants.

## **2. THE PROFILE OF THE PROJECT LEADERS**

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The gender distribution of project leaders is more balanced. Although there is a slight overrepresentation of women among the project leaders, the distribution approaches 50% women and 50% men. According to sub-action of the programme, the gender distribution is quite even for youth exchanges and youth workers mobility, but there are more female than male project leaders in EVS and the structured dialogue. On average the project leaders are older than the participants. Their average age is 34 and the largest age category is the category older than 36 years old (34%). There is no significant difference in average age according to sub-action of the programme.

One in five project leaders are still in education. 68% of the project leaders have ended their studies. Almost eight out of ten (78%) of the project leaders have a tertiary degree. 45% of the project leaders are full time or half time employed (in another organisation). One in eight is self-employed. Almost half of the project leaders are involved in the project on a voluntarily basis.

Eighteen percent of the project leaders consider themselves to be a member of an ethnic, cultural or religious minority group which is higher than in earlier research. There are no differences in minority status of project leaders according to sub-action of the programme. 40% of the project leaders have already been involved in a previous project as project leader. More than a third of the project leaders have been involved as a participant in a similar project. 29% of the project leaders are for the first time involved in a project subsidized by the EU. Almost half of the project leaders take up an organisational and educational role in the project. More than seven out of ten are involved in the project during the whole running period of the project.

## **3. REPORTED EFFECTS OF THE PROJECT**

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According to the largest group of participants and project leaders (more than 90%), there are three skills that they have developed in the project. These are speaking a foreign language, dealing with people with a different cultural background, learn to work in a team and negotiating a solution when there is a disagreement in the group. These skills refer to the key competences of multilingual competence, intercultural competence and social competences. The participants and project leaders agree the least that they have learned to make media content on their own. This is a digital competence. EVS-participants and participants in TCA agree less to competence development than participants in other sub-actions in the programme.

The agreement with the further development of youth work competences among participants and project leaders is massive. More than eight out of ten participants agree that they now understand non-formal learning better, seven out of ten agree that they have learned to develop an international project and will in the future, when relevant, add an international dimension to their work with young people. The only skill that is less developed by participants and project leaders is to find financial resources to set up projects for young people. The large interest in the international dimension of youth work can also be seen in their intention to keep in contact with the people of the project and seven out of ten claim that they are interested in developing a project with the people they have met in the project.

Concerning the development of knowledge and values, seven out of ten participants claim to have learned something new about cultural diversity, more than half of them have discovered something new about themselves and a similar amount have learned something new about young people and youth work. For six out of ten participants and project leaders cultural diversity has become even more important after participating in the project. The same amount of participants is interested in developing youth policies and engaging in the struggle against racism and xenophobia. Four out of ten project leaders have become more interested in European current affairs, are more inclined to support people with fewer opportunities, are more interested in youth policies and want to engage more in the struggle against racism. Compared to two years ago, there is a shift towards more social subjects (like solidarity, human rights and inclusion) and less emphasis on youth work related issues such as youth policy (development), project management and non-formal and informal learning.

Participants and project leaders agree to a large extent that they have learned something about themselves and have developed themselves. Almost nine in ten participants claim that they can better deal with people who are different from them and that they are better prepared to handle unexpected and ambiguous situations when working with young people. Two thirds have a clearer view of their professional career options and which competences they can improve. Six out of ten participants have a clearer view of their future educational plans. Eight out of ten have the intention to improve their foreign language skills. Nine out of ten project leaders have got a better picture of their strengths and weaknesses. Eight out of ten know better which competences can be improved and have a clearer view of their future professional career. The intention to study is lower among project leaders, but a larger proportion of them are already working full-time.

Four in ten participants feel more European and have become more interested in European affairs after their participation. For half of the participants, their image of the EU has not changed and for 45% of them the image of the EU has improved. The image of the EU has the most improved for participants in the structured dialogue and the least among participants in EVS. Seven out of ten participants claim to have learned something new about European youth policy. Over time, there is a significant decrease in participants who feel European, from 63% in 2011 to 43% in 2018. In the same period, the percentage of participants whose image of the EU has improved after their participation has risen from 34% in 2011 to 45% in 2018.

There are also positive consequences of the project for the organisation/group in which participants and project leaders are involved. More than nine out of ten of them agree that there are more international networks and eight out of ten of them agree to a larger use of non-formal learning methods in the daily operation of the organisation. Nine out of ten suggest that there is more attention and respect for cultural diversity in the organisation and a bigger intention to include vulnerable young people. The project also influenced the larger, local community of the organisation. According to more than nine out of ten participants and project leaders, the local community considers the project favourably and is interested in similar projects in the near future. Also the European dimension of the project is highly appreciated. Yet 15 percent of the participants and project leaders claim that the local community was not actively involved in the project. According to only one in five of the participants and project leaders, the local community became more interested to do more efforts to involve young people with fewer opportunities.

#### **4. INVOLVEMENT AND MOTIVATION**

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Participants are involved in an Erasmus+: Youth in Action project through a youth organisation, through friends and acquaintances and through an organisation that is not a youth organisation. Also for project leaders youth organisations are the most important gateway into the project. Other organizations, friends and acquaintances, just like information from the national agency are also important channels for them to get involved.

The motivations to participate in a project of the participants testify of a great appetite for learning. Almost eight out of ten of them participate to have new experiences, more than half of them want to learn something new and

are attracted by the topic of the project. Also the possibility of intercultural experiences is appealing for two thirds of the participants. A little bit less than half of them participate because they want to learn something about a different country. More instrumental reasons are mentioned less. Only one in three participates in a project to advance their professional career or to prepare an activity. The reason that is the least mentioned is an external motivation: they were encouraged by others to do so. Only 1% mentions this motivation. It is therefore safe to conclude that the participants are foremost intrinsically motivated to participate in a project.

It is well known among participants that Erasmus+: Youth in Action is subsidized by the EU. Three in four of them claim to have received a Youth pass for this project. Three quarters of the project leaders claim to have used Youth pass in the project. 60% of the participants say that Youth pass was integrated in the project and was used as a tool for reflection and self-evaluation and for 85% of these participants it was instrumental to become more aware of their learning. Only one in five participants have already used their Youth pass. The ones who have used Youth pass (e.g. for a job interview), have the impression that the mentioning of Youth pass was appreciated by the other party and was helpful.

## **5. DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF A PROJECT**

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Three themes have a prominent place in the projects according to the project leaders: cultural diversity, youth and youth work and formal and informal learning. But also among the project leaders there seems to be a shift towards more social issues and less emphasis on youth work related subjects compared to the findings of the research of 2015-2016. There is a difference in content between sub-actions of the Erasmus+: Youth in Action programme. According to project leaders of structured dialogue European youth policy, structures and policy of the EU, active citizenship and youth policy are more prominent subject matters. A larger proportion of project leaders of youth exchanges claim that solidarity and cultural diversity are a subject matter in their project.

On average, a project has 15,8 project goals. Almost half of the project leaders even claim that all 18 project goals mentioned in the questionnaire are goals as well in their project. Two out of three claim that cultural diversity is a goal of their project. The same amount of project leaders claim that the key competences of participants are improved and the intercultural dialogue is stimulated in the project. More than half of them agree that the project contributes to formal and informal learning and that one of the goals of the projects is to demonstrate how different forms of learning are interconnected. The same amount agrees that solidarity among young people is a goal. The project leaders agree to a lesser extent that the project aims to better the future career options of participants. Project leaders of youth worker mobility agree more that their project encourages solidarity, youth policy development, future educational plans, the quality of youth work and European cooperation. Project leaders of structured dialogue agree more than other project leader that the project stimulated active and European citizenship.

The information to apply for a project is for the majority of the project leaders easy to find and is easy to understand. The financing criteria are clear and transparent and the subsidy is fitting. Although reporting is easy for the majority of the project leaders, still a fourth of the project leaders find reporting not easy. More than half of the project leaders agree that the application and the management of a project is easy, but the biggest group of them has no opinion on this matter. The digital tools are easy to use for the majority of the project leaders, but also on this issue the largest group of project leaders has no opinion

Nine out of ten of the project leaders are satisfied of the preparation and cooperation with the project partners during the project. Most project leaders think that the partners cooperate respectfully with each other. Belgian

project leaders who were involved in a project financed by another national agency than Jint vzw are less satisfied of the cooperation, general approach and sustainability of the project than the other project leaders.

Thirteen percent of the participants meet language obstacles in their participation in a project. This is the highest level ever measured in the Flemish sample. Participants are overcoming language barriers by using digital tools (one in three), but foremost by using the help of other participants and project leaders in the project.

The satisfaction with a project is high among the participants. As good as every participant would encourage others to participate in a similar project. Almost everybody agrees that their participation is a personal enrichment. Participation stimulates participation, because nine out of ten want to take part in a new project.