# What has Youth in Action achieved in Austria?

## Research-based analysis and monitoring of Youth in Action: summary of results 2007 - 2009

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Summary edited: Susanne Gadinger

# What has 'Youth in Action' achieved in Austria?

## Research-based Analysis and Monitoring of Youth in Action:
## Summary of results

of the first survey of project leaders and the first series of case studies
(Synthesis Report 2009), of the first participant survey and the surveys of the 2<sup>nd</sup>
and 3<sup>rd</sup> project leader cohorts (Supplementary Report 2009)

Summary edited:
**Susanne Gadinger**

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*Jugend in Aktion* ›››
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# 1. Introduction

This report summarises the results of the research-based analysis and monitoring of the EU Programme Youth in Action in Austria between 2007 and 2009. Youth in Action[1] is the successor to the YOUTH[2] Programme, and aims to help young people develop the knowledge, skills and competences that are needed to actively participate in public life and in civil society, and to help build a common Europe.

Particularly within the context of a pluralist and complex reality, it is important to provide young people with the means and the opportunity to make an active contribution to society. Social structures such as the family, which used to offer stability and security, are breaking down or no longer offer young women and men the support they need to develop an independent personality. Precarious living conditions and trends towards individualisation are two additional factors (of many) in the modern world that pose a challenge for young people finding their way in life.

At the same time, it has been observed that the acquisition of knowledge and education are still largely understood in terms of formal education, even though it is becoming increasingly apparent that formal school education and apprenticeships do not guarantee young people access to a secure livelihood, and certainly not a meaningful life. Excellent school, apprenticeship or college grades in no way guarantee the holder a well paid and secure job. The above-mentioned social conditions, the currently difficult economic outlook, and greater competitive pressure all serve to highlight the necessity of lifelong learning. The aim of lifelong learning is to sensitise young people to their own potentials, to strengthen their sense of independence and to acquaint them with techniques of creative learning.

In this way non-formal education is gaining in relevance. According to the latest research findings non-formal learning is located within a continuum between informal and formal learning (Chisholm with Hoskins, Søgaard-Sorensen, Moos and Jensen, 2006[3]; Colley, Hodkinson and Malcolm, 2003[4]) and is characterised by factors such as "balanced co-existence and interaction between the cognitive, affective and practical dimensions of learning" (Chisholm, 2001)[5] and "linking individual and social learning, partnership-oriented solidarity and symmetrical teaching/learning relations" (Chisholm et al., 2006). In this way, and through its characteristic features – participatory, learner-centred, holistic and process-oriented – non-formal learning supports the development of the learner's individual personality, and thereby helps learners meet the demand of modern society for self-confident actors. On the other hand, non-formal youth education brings people together, who in turn form social networks and either become active as groups pursuing specific objectives or as individuals who benefit from the knowledge made

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[1] http://ec.europa.eu/youth/youth-in-action-programme/doc74_de.htm (accessed 21 March 2011).

[2] The basis and starting point for these studies are: Chisholm, L. and Fennes, H. (2007). *"Das Internationale wird Standard." Das EU-Aktionsprogramm JUGEND (2000-2006): Evaluierung der Umsetzung in Österreich. Projektbericht für das Bundesministerium für Gesundheit, Familie und Jugend, Juni, Wien.* Available at http://dl.dropbox.com/u/45733110/projects/EVALYOU/EVALYOU_AT_Endbericht_final_20070627.pdf (accessed 17 October 2011).

[3] Chisholm, L. with Hoskins, B., Søgaard-Sorensen, M., Moos, L. and Jensen, I. (2006). *At the end is the beginning: training the trainers in the youth field. Advanced Training for Trainers in Europe.* Volume 2 – External Evaluation. Strasbourg, Council of Europe Publishing. Available at http://youth-partnership-eu.coe.int/youth-partnership/documents/Publications/Training/ATTE_vol2_external_evaluation.pdf (accessed 31 May 2011).

[4] Colley, H., Hodkinson, P. and Malcolm, J. (2003). *Informality and Formality in Learning*. London: Learning and Skills Research Centre. Available at https://crm.lsnlearning.org.uk/user/order.aspx?code=031492&src=xoweb (accessed 31 May 2011).

[5] Chisholm, L. (2001). *Towards a revitalisation of non-formal learning for a changing Europe. Report of the Council of Europe Youth Directorate Symposium on Non-Formal Education.* Strasbourg.

available by individual network members for all to use. In this way, even young people with limited opportunities – whatever the particular nature of their disadvantage – have the opportunity to participate in society; even, as intended by European youth work with its focus on 'non-formal education within the European Union' (Fennes and Otten, 2008)[6], in terms of European citizenship.

The aim, then, is to help young people develop the capacity to act, both at an individual and social level; the latter includes the socio-political and economic fields, as well as, of course, the labour market. Young adults should gain the capacity "to correlate knowledge and ability, and to apply both as the situation demands using a reflexive sense of discernment. ... Processes of development/thought and existence/action should interact more intensively, differentiated knowledge should be mixed, and not least traditional qualification-based hierarchies with their ingrained career and life paths should be broken down." (Chisholm, 2007).[7] This concept of competence seeks to overcome the rigid division between general and vocational education; the research team is not just interested in competence development as a process – it should also be results-oriented. These two aspects of the concept should also be considered in light of the European discourse on competence, which has found expression in the eight key competences for lifelong learning defined by the European Union (cf. Official Journal of the European Union 2006/962/EG, L 394/14).[8]

The concept of intercultural competence, which is subsumed under the key competence 'social and civic competence' is worthy of particular emphasis. For that reason it is enormously important, as the number of conflicts between different ethnic and cultural groups within European societies is greater than ever. Numerous publications provide evidence for "the establishment of this topic both at school and in the field of consulting for international operations in politics, economics and cultural management" (Chisholm and Peterlini, 2011).[9] The central question is: "How much cultural difference people can be expected to endure while still being able to deal with such differences in an active and positive way and what they need to learn in order to do so? Part of this is that any exclusive and discriminating behaviour must be considered individually and socially unacceptable while abilities like reflected tolerance of ambiguity become crucial. Intercultural education is thus given an additional and clear political dimension ..." (Fennes and Otten, 2008). In addition to the above-mentioned reflected tolerance

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[6] Fennes, H. and Otten, H. (2008). *Quality in non-formal education and training in the field of European youth work.* Available at http://www.salto-youth.net/download/1615/TrainingQualityandCompetenceStudy.pdf (accessed 31 May 2011).

[7] Chisholm, L. (2007). ‚Das Lernkontinuum und Kompetenzorientierung: neue Schnittmengen zwischen der allgemeinen und der beruflichen Bildung.' In *bwp@ Spezial 3 – Österreich Spezial. Berufs- und Wirtschaftspädagogik in Österreich. Oder: Wer „macht" die berufliche Bildung in AT?* In bwpat-online, October 2007, ISSN 1618-8543. Available at http://www.bwpat.de/ATspezial/chisholm_atspezial.shtml (accessed 31 May 2011).
cf. also: Chisholm, L. and Fennes. H. (2008). Lernen in der zweiten Moderne: Neue Zusammenhänge denken und erkennen. In Resinger, P. and Schratz, M. (eds.). *Schule im Umbruch. 2. Innsbrucker Bildungstage.* University of Innsbruck Press Conference Series, Innsbruck.

[8] European Union (2006/962/EC). Official Journal of the European Union. *Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006 on key competences for lifelong learning.* Available at http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2006:394:0010:0018:EN:PDF (accessed 31 May 2011): Communication in the mother tongue; communication in foreign languages; mathematical competence and basic competences in science and technology; digital competence; learning to learn; social and civic competences; sense of initiative and entrepreneurship; and cultural awareness and expression.

[9] Chisholm, L. and Peterlini, H. (2011). *Jugend und interkulturelle Kompetenz in Südtirol/Alto Adige.* Research report. Innsbruck. – The authors summarise the development of this category of competences.

of ambiguity, role distance and empathy also represent significant competence traits that need to be considered in the planning of relevant training courses and projects.[10]


# 2.  Methods

The research team set out to answer the question, to what extent do Youth in Action projects fulfil the objectives of Youth in Action, using a combination of quantitative and qualitative survey methods. These complementary approaches mutually validate each other, and allow for a multidimensional study of non-formal educational contexts. Moreover, a similar approach was taken to developing hypotheses and refine future research questions.

Specifically, the first round of the research-based analysis in 2008 consisted of an anonymous, online survey of project leaders and six case studies.[11] The aim of the latter was to use participatory observation (i.e., direct experience) to make certain aspects of thought and action accessible that could not be achieved in an integrated form by other methods. The evidence gained in the case studies should be seen as working hypotheses. Because only 36 questionnaires were completed, the project leaders' survey has the character of a pre-test. It clearly fulfils the objective of generating information relevant to the programme, and as such this prelude to the academic study may be regarded as successful.

The survey of the 2nd and 3rd project leader cohorts[12] generated considerably more valid evidence, particularly in terms of differentiation between the various Actions of Youth in Action, compared to the first survey because of the higher response rate (response: 55 questionnaires, rate: 43%).
Similar to the first project leaders' survey, the first anonymous and online survey of project participants (2008)[12] had the character of a pre-test. The response rate of 37% (62 questionnaires) was very satisfactory; however, it was apparent from much of the open feedback – among other things – that respondents found the questionnaire too long and complex. The list of questions has been subsequently shortened and simplified.

Two Master theses examined the European Voluntary Service. One of these theses examined the issue of competence acquisition within this particular Action using semi-standardised interviews, observation, an internet forum and diary entries.[13] Another Master thesis focused on non-formal learning structures.[14] A third Master thesis [15] analysed levels of access to Youth in Action projects across all Actions. [16]

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[10] The website managed by Andreas Karsten provides a forum for input and discussion on the issue of 'intercultural learning': www.nonformality.org.

[11] Chisholm, L., Fennes, H., Hagleitner, W. with Csisinko, U. and Rosenthal, A. (2010). *Was bewirkt 'Jugend in Aktion' in Österreich? – Ergebnisse der ersten ProjektleiterInnen-Befragung und Fallstudienreihe. Wissenschaftliche Begleitung: Synthesebericht 2009*. Innsbruck. Available at http://dl.dropbox.com/u/45733110/projects/YiA/JIA_WB_Synthesebericht2009.pdf (accessed 17 October 2011).

[12] Chisholm, L., Fennes, H., Hagleitner, W. and Csisinko, U. with Rosenthal, A. (2010). *Was bewirkt 'Jugend in Aktion' in Österreich? – Ergebnisse der ersten ProjektteilnehmerInnen-Befragung und der Befragung der II. und III. Kohorte der ProjektleiterInnen. Wissenschaftliche Begleitung: Ergänzungsbericht 2009*. Innsbruck. Available at http://dl.dropbox.com/u/45733110/projects/YiA/JiA_WB_Ergaezungsbericht2009.pdf (accessed 17 October 2011).

[13] Ganthaler, P. (2010). *Aufbau und Erweiterung von Kompetenzen durch das EU-Projekt 'Jugend in Aktion' am Beispiel des Europäischen Freiwilligendienstes*. Master thesis. Innsbruck.

[14] Hasforter, J. (2011). *Nichtformale Lernstrukturen durch das EU-Projekt 'Jugend in Aktion' am Beispiel des Europäischen Freiwilligendienstes*. Master thesis. Innsbruck.

# 3. Outcomes

With regard to the importance of non-formal learning, as discussed above, one outcome of the project leaders' survey was especially welcome: participants learn best in educational contexts that correspond to non-formal and informal learning.[17] Reflexive learning contexts were also revealed to be beneficial, though to a lesser extent. Thus, for example, the ability 'to communicate in another language' was best learned in day-to-day interaction with other participants (informal learning). The case studies also showed that most exchanges with young people from other countries and language groups occurred during leisure activities. These situations allowed, in particular, those young people with poorer language skills to integrate with and contribute to the group. The projects that were the subject of case studies also revealed a thematic and didactic diversity and creativity at cognitive, affective, practical and reflexive levels, including a linkage of all these levels.[18] Furthermore, it was very interesting to note that the ability 'to negotiate common solutions uniting a variety of positions' was best developed in group work or discussions (non-formal learning). Capacity for teamwork and social competence were explored over time by the relatively heterogeneous make-up of the groups.

Figure 1 illustrates which skills project participants learned best in various situations (results in percentages).

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[15] Rosenthal, A. (2010). *Empirische Untersuchung über den Zugang zum Programm Jugend in Aktion*. Master thesis. Innsbruck.

[16] A synthesis report of all three Master theses is available at
http://dl.dropboxusercontent.com/u/45733110/projects/YiA/JiA_Diplomarbeiten_2009_2011_Zusammenfassung_en.pdf
(accessed 17 October, 2011)

[17] cf. also: Chisholm L., Larson, A. and Mossoux, A.-F. (2004). Lifelong learning: citizens' views in close-up. Findings from a dedicated Eurobarometer survey. Luxembourg. Available at
http://www2.trainingvillage.gr/etv/publication/download/panorama/4038_en.pdf (accessed 31 May 2011). This result represents the overall evaluation within the European Union. In the Eurobarometer study, most Europeans claimed to have learned in a variety of contexts. Nine out of ten respondents stated that they had learned something in at least one non-formal or informal learning context during the previous twelve months. cf. also: International Civic and Citizenship Education Study – Main findings for Austria (2011,in press). The importance of pluralist education and learning contexts is also emphasised in the Austrian report within this international study on civic and citizenship education. The 13- to 14-year-old students responded that there are many settings in which they simultaneously partook of formal, non-formal and informal learning. The respondents were asked, based on ten different pre-defined skills, to specify in which contexts they learned something relevant to each skill. Almost half of all respondents specified more than one situation as subjectively favourable to learning each specific skill. "This indicates that the particular skill is learned not only in a single, but in multiple different situations or contexts, and that these learning processes can mutually complement each other or reveal synergies." (p. 65).

[18] Following three rounds of surveys we can conclude that the combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods is particularly productive. The complementary approaches of self-assessment and external assessment also proved extremely valuable, as applied in the surveys of project leaders and project participants respectively. Compared to a purely external assessment, the combination of self-assessment and external assessment generated a significantly higher yield of findings (cf. Kanning, U. P. (2003). *Diagnostik sozialer Kompetenzen*. Göttingen): "Dies gilt selbst dann, wenn die Fremdsicht höchsten Anforderungen der Objektivität genügt. Menschen handeln nicht auf der Basis der objektiven Gegebenheiten, sondern vor dem Hintergrund ihrer subjektiven Wahrnehmung und Interpretation derselben. Will man menschliches Verhalten verstehen und nicht nur … bewerten, so ist die Messung des Subjektiven unerlässlich." [In English: This is the case even where the external assessment meets the highest standards of objectivity. People do not act on the basis of objective reality, but rather in terms of the subjective perception and interpretation of that reality. If we wish to understand human behaviour and not merely ... judge it, it is essential that we measure the subjective.] (ibid., p. 104). Indeed, those instances where the results of self-anamnesis and external anamnesis do not correspond are seen as particularly rich in informational content. (cf. Kubinger K. D. (2003). Anamnese. In Kubinger, K. D. and Jäger, R. S. (eds.). *Schlüsselbegriffe der Psychologischen Diagnostik*, pp. 13–19).

**Figure 1**

| In which of the following situations were you able to learn one or more of the following skills? (N=62; n=56) "In this project I learned most of all ..." | Situation 1/8 Preparing and organising the project NFL/IL* | Situation 2/8 Day-to-day work with other participants IL | Situation 3/8 Contact with people who were not programme participants IL | Situation 4/8 Planned exercises and activities with other participants NFL | Situation 5/8 Musing and thinking things over by myself IL/RL | Situation 6/8 Group work or discussion NFL | Situation 7/8 Lectures given by advisors FL | Situation 8/8 After the project (talking and thinking about it...) IL/RL | TOTAL | Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Respondents may select no more than 2 out of 8 situations per line | | | | | | | | | |
| | Frequency | | | | | | | | | |
| ... to present my opinions convincingly in discussions. | 17 | 23 | 5 | 6 | 4 | 28 | 3 | 8 | 94 | 6.9 |
| ... to communicate with other people, even if they are different from me or speak a different language. | 8 | 36 | 12 | 20 | 3 | 18 | - | 3 | 100 | 7.3 |
| ... how to work in a group in order to achieve something on behalf of a community or for the common good. | 12 | 23 | 6 | 21 | - | 25 | 4 | 3 | 94 | 6.9 |
| ... to develop and carry out a good idea or project. | 26 | 6 | 1 | 12 | 2 | 22 | 3 | 11 | 83 | 6.1 |
| ... to negotiate a common approach in cases where people have different points of view. | 7 | 17 | 6 | 20 | 1 | 30 | - | 4 | 85 | 6.2 |
| ... to think logically and reach logical conclusions. | 9 | 14 | 3 | 7 | 15 | 15 | 4 | 8 | 75 | 5.5 |
| ... to use new media (computer, internet, etc.), e.g. to find information or to design something by oneself. | 22 | 5 | 1 | 7 | 1 | 10 | 2 | 11 | 59 | 4.3 |
| ... to recognise and take advantage of opportunities to develop personally or in my career. | 18 | 21 | 3 | 4 | 10 | 8 | 7 | 10 | 81 | 5.9 |
| ... to learn more effectively or to have more fun learning. | 6 | 14 | 1 | 14 | 5 | 11 | 5 | 8 | 64 | 4.7 |
| ... to understand difficult texts and expressions. | 14 | 14 | 3 | 5 | 4 | 8 | 9 | 9 | 66 | 4.8 |
| ... to discuss political issues in a serious way. | 7 | 14 | 5 | 12 | - | 24 | 6 | 4 | 72 | 5.3 |
| ... to value artistic and cultural forms of expression, both from my own and other cultures. | 5 | 27 | 6 | 13 | 5 | 11 | 6 | 4 | 77 | 5.6 |
| ... to communicate in another language. | 6 | 40 | 7 | 10 | 4 | 19 | 3 | 3 | 92 | 6.7 |
| ... to develop a responsible way of using new information technologies. | 18 | 9 | 2 | 5 | 3 | 7 | 2 | 10 | 56 | 4.1 |
| ... to budget and keep my spending within my means. | 23 | 13 | 1 | 6 | 6 | 3 | - | 5 | 57 | 4.2 |
| ... to plan and carry out my own approach to learning. | 8 | 9 | 3 | 12 | 18 | 6 | 3 | 11 | 70 | 5.1 |
| ... to express myself creatively or artistically. | 8 | 11 | 3 | 23 | 6 | 12 | - | 2 | 65 | 4.7 |
| ... to get along with people in Austria who come from a different background to me. | 7 | 25 | 12 | 8 | 6 | 12 | 3 | 7 | 80 | 5.8 |
| **TOTAL** | 221 | 321 | 80 | 205 | 93 | 269 | 60 | 121 | 1.370 | - |
| **Percent** | 16.1 | 23.4 | 5.8 | 15.0 | 6.8 | 19.6 | 4.4 | 8.8 | - | 100 |

\* Abbreviations: NFL = non-formal learning; IL = informal learning; RL = reflexive learning; FL = formal learning

The above results are revealing not only in relation to educational contexts, but also in terms of the key term 'participation'; they show that, in terms of preparation and organisation, the project (non-formal and informal learning) provided optimal conditions for fostering the ability 'to develop and implement a good idea or project'. Underpinned by the results of the case studies and the project leaders' surveys, this underscores the high importance of planning and preparation meetings. It was at these meetings that the (justified) assumption emerged that willingness to participate correlates with the level of involvement of young people.

Another result of the studies concerns the constituent objectives of the Youth in Action Programme. The projects funded by the programme largely concurred with those objectives. All of the impacts recorded by means of the three methodological approaches testify to this. Indeed, the results of the participants' survey confirm this, adding to the validation provided by the results of the project leaders' surveys and the six case studies. The second project leaders' survey from 2009 showed practically no changes in comparison to the 2008 results. This reflects, on the one hand, the reliability of the survey findings and the suitability of the instruments used therein; and, on the other, the stability and continuity through which project leaders have succeeded in running projects that help young people to feel part of European society.

In both surveys the project leaders believed that their projects corresponded most closely with the programme objectives 'to foster mutual understanding between young people in different countries' and 'to develop solidarity and promote tolerance among young people'. Nearly all of the participants were still in touch with people they had met within the projects, even more than three months after the projects ended. In this way, the programme succeeded not only in breaking down the psychological barriers between people of different origin, language and

culture; aside from the fact that the young people involved now enjoy international contact, and even friendship, they have also become aware of 'common European values', have become 'more receptive to Europe's multiculturalism' and have become 'more aware of the importance of foreign languages'. These observed impacts are major conditions for promoting European citizenship, for developing a social cohesion in the European Union based on solidarity and tolerance, or for facilitating mutual understanding among young people in Europe.

Itemised by project type, Figure 2 shows how the 2nd and 3rd cohorts of project leaders evaluate the 'fostering of mutual understanding between young people in different countries'.

**Figure 2:**
Fostering mutual understanding between young people in different countries
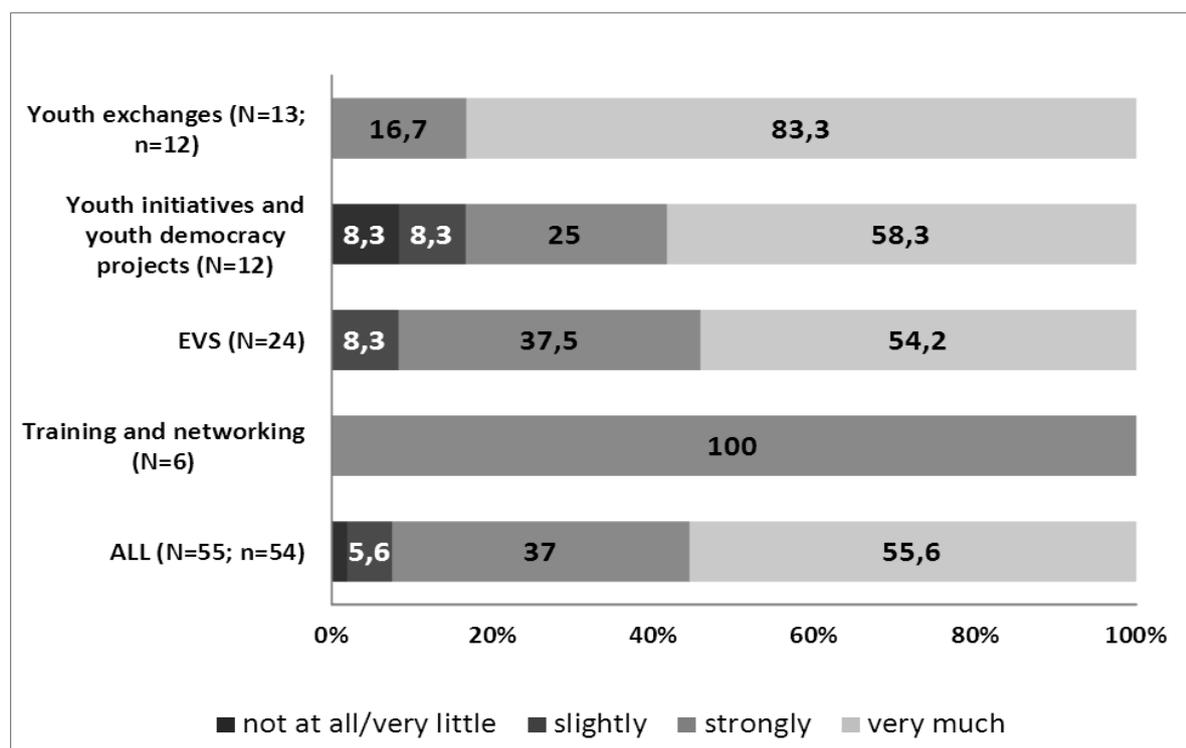


A central objective of Youth in Action is to awaken in young people the awareness that they are citizens of Europe, and that they should ultimately regard themselves more as Europeans as a result of participating in the project. In both surveys the project leaders were considerably more doubtful about the achievement of this objective (see Figure 3 on the following page, which depicts the results of the 2nd and 3rd cohorts of project leaders on the item 'promotion of European citizenship, particularly by fostering awareness among young people that they are citizens of Europe, and motivating them to become involved in European issues'). There was a similar response among project participants: only 44% agreed with this item. At the same time project leaders are convinced that the permanent programme priority to 'foster appreciation among young people for cultural diversity, promote intercultural learning, and combat racism and xenophobia' was particularly well implemented in the projects. In this instance, once again, we see a dissonance, which ought to be investigated: in principle these two programme objectives are closely connected and the realisation of one objective within a project must necessarily imply the fulfilment of the other objective.

**Figure 3:**

Promotion of European citizenship, particularly by fostering awareness among young people that they are citizens of Europe, and motivating them to become involved in European issues
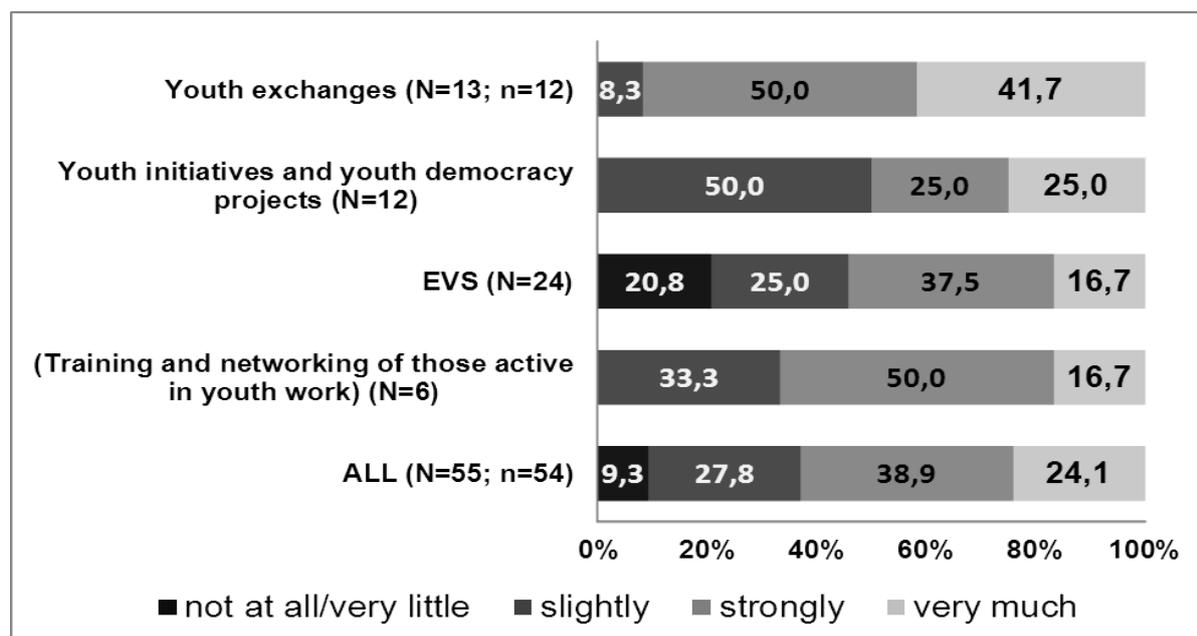


It can be assumed that this sense of European identity already existed in a large number of project participants and was a decisive factor influencing their participation in the project. If this finding should be confirmed by further research, we must ask how it might be possible to interest more young people among whom this sense of a European identity is less pronounced in the Youth in Action projects. After all, it is this group that the programme is primarily addressed towards. Another possible explanation is that even the professional Austrian networks are not sufficiently acquainted with European issues and/or that youth workers themselves insufficiently identify with these values. A country-specific investigation of this context would be revealing.[19] Corresponding to pedagogical-didactic considerations, a cognitive identification – in addition to a rhetorical identification – with European values would exist. However, the didactical transmission does not function as desired in practice due to a didactic-affective dissonance. This raises the following questions: how can values be imparted (to young people)? Can values of this kind be measured and, if so, how?

The surveys also dealt with the development of key competences. In this instance, too, the surveys of project leaders in 2009 did not reveal any changes compared to the first survey. More than half of respondents were of the opinion that the projects promote the development of the eight key competences defined by the European reference framework, and media literacy, which was identified by the European Parliament as being particularly significant. Of these, according to the project leaders, three particular competences were promoted most intensively: 'interpersonal, intercultural, social and civic competence', 'foreign language competence' and 'cultural competence'. Of the project participants, 77% claimed to have learned 'how they can get involved with other people at local, national or European level'. Meanwhile, 40% agreed that they

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[19] In 2011 the first transnational report was published based on the academic study of Youth in Action in eight countries. The report is available at http://homepage.uibk.ac.at/~c603207/projekte.html#p13 (accessed 13 July 2011). Again in November 2010 and May 2011, online surveys on Youth in Action were conducted in Austria and eleven other European countries. It is planned to expand the quantitative research to include additional qualitative designs in autumn 2011, with the aim, among other things, of clarifying the questions raised by the reports.

had 'learned something new' about 'Europe' and 'youth and youth policy', while 34% had 'learned something new' about 'art and culture'. Two points need to be made with regard to the project leaders. Firstly, in both surveys they agreed that they had noticed an improvement in themselves in certain key competences. Secondly, the leading impact originally ascribed to the European Voluntary Service Action no longer applied in the second survey; the Actions were judged to offer the same beneficial terms.

Compared to the first survey, the second survey showed a decline both in terms of the target group and with respect to the portion of young project participants with fewer opportunities. The percentage of participants with fewer opportunities was under 50% in the youth exchanges, under 25% in the youth initiatives and democracy projects, and under 10% in the European Voluntary Service (EVS) projects. Four out of five project leaders stated that their training and networking projects included participants (i.e., youth workers, trainers, etc.) who work with disadvantaged youth. This represents a relatively high proportion. At the same time, it has yet to be ensured that project leaders follow a coherent concept of 'disadvantage' or 'disabilities' and are able to recognise and judge different manifestations of disadvantage equally.

# 4. Conclusion

This outline of the most important results of the studies conducted on Youth in Action in Austria between 2007 and 2009 illustrates that those projects funded by the Austrian National Agency[20] largely fulfilled the objectives of the programme. However, as shown above, this was not the case to the desired extent in relation to the central programme objectives (active citizenship; participation in public, political and democratic life; sense of European citizenship). The considerations and assumptions presented above in relation to this issue need to be examined in expanded and deeper studies. Qualitative research designs would be suited to this task.

In the course of interpreting the results available to date, it emerged that several questions/items can be interpreted in different ways. These items need to be clarified in the further course of research-based analysis and monitoring of Youth in Action, for example in relation to young people with fewer opportunities, which is explicitly mentioned as a target group of Youth in Action. The project leaders' survey showed a decline in participation by members of this group. Further surveys will determine whether this decline is a long-term one. It is also worth considering that 'disadvantage' is a rather broad term, and one with which project leaders may not be sufficiently familiar.[21] This could mean that although young people with fewer

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[20] http://www.jugendinaktion.at/default.asp

[21] The Youth in Action Programme Guide (European Commission (2008), p. 8) mentions social obstacles, economic obstacles, disability, educational difficulties, cultural differences, health problems and geographical obstacles. On the subject of disadvantaged youth, the relevant academic literature differentiates between social, market-, or learning-related disadvantages (cf. Bohlinger, S. (2004). Der Benachteiligtenbegriff in der beruflichen Bildung. In *Zeitschrift für Berufs- und Wirtschaftspädagogik*, 2, pp. 230–241; cf. also Spies, A. and Tredop, D. (2006). „Risikobiografien" – Von welchen Jugendlichen sprechen wir? In Spies, A. and Tredop, D. (eds.). *„Risikobiografien". Benachteiligte Jugendliche zwischen Ausgrenzung und Förderprojekten*. Wiesbaden, pp. 9–24.

Other authors differentiate between structural (e.g., economic climate) and individual factors (e.g., schooling, nationality) (cf. Götz, R. and Schlögl, P. (2006). *Schwierige Übergänge von der Schule in die Arbeitswelt*. Study conducted by ÖSB Consulting and the Austrian Institute for Research on Vocational Training, Vienna. cf. also: Walther, A. and Pohl, A. (2006). *Lernen von Europa – Europäische Ansätze zur Benachteiligtenförderung. Eine Expertise für das Good Practice Center zur Förderung von Benachteiligten in der beruflichen Bildung*. BIBB, Bonn.

opportunities are participating, they are not being recognised as such. Another explanation might be that, although young people with fewer opportunities participate, they do not see themselves as such and/or out of shame do not indicate that they have fewer opportunities because 'disadvantage' involves a risk of being stigmatised. Finally, it may simply be the case that these target groups have not been adequately reached by the services on offer. This may also indicate a certain level of inhibition among project leaders and youth workers. It is possible that they feared that the young people concerned would be excessively challenged by participation and/or they felt they themselves would be unable to cope with the additional youth work challenges. The appropriate resources should be made available, adapted to the type of disadvantage, for example in the form of professional support or through the securing of accessible project locations in the event that young people with disabilities or special needs are participating. A field study planned for 2012 will examine these issues in greater detail.

The anonymous online surveys of project leaders and project participants will continue to be conducted. An increased number of cases will allow particular lines of interpretation to be examined, reinforced or rejected.