

## Research-based Analysis and Monitoring of Youth in Action – RAY

What are the effects of the EU-Programme Youth in Action (YiA) on young people, youth workers and youth leaders involved in the projects funded by this programme? What and how do they learn through their participation in these projects? Which competences do they develop and how? Which specific contexts, settings, conditions, educational approaches, methodologies and methods are successful in fostering the development of key competences for lifelong learning in Youth in Action projects? What are the effects on youth groups, organisations, institutions, structures and communities involved in the programme? And how does the programme contribute to the achievement of the objectives and priorities of the YiA Programme, in particular to the promotion of active/democratic citizenship and participation in civil society, tolerance, solidarity and understanding between young people in different countries, the inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities and the development of quality and networking in youth work?

These and other questions are addressed and studied through Research-based Analysis of Youth in Action (RAY) which is implemented by the RAY network – a network of National Agencies of YiA and their research partners in presently 14 European countries.

The aims and objectives of research-based analysis and monitoring of YiA are:

- to contribute to quality assurance and development in the implementation of YiA;
- to contribute to evidence-based and research-informed youth policy development;
- to develop a better understanding about processes and outcomes of non-formal education activities, in particular in the youth field.

### The RAY network

The RAY network was founded on the initiative of the Austrian National Agency of the YiA Programme in order to develop joint transnational research activities related to YiA in line with the aims and objectives outlined above. A first network meeting took place in Austria in June 2008. Since then, network meetings took place twice a year aimed at developing and coordinating the network's research activities and their implementation. Presently the RAY network involves the National Agencies and their research partners from 16 countries: Austria, Belgium (Flemish Community), Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, the Netherlands (until 2011), Poland, the Slovak Republic, Sweden (until 2012) and Turkey.

### Research approach

In principle, the research on the programme and its activities foresees a combination of quantitative and qualitative social research methods and instruments: surveys with project participants, project leaders/team members, key staff of beneficiary organisations as well as with applicant organisations which were rejected; case studies of selected projects; interviews and focus

groups with different actors involved in YiA as well as with youth leaders and youth workers not participating in YiA.

### **Research activities**

Based on concepts and research instruments developed by the Institute of Educational Science at the University of Innsbruck in Austria (the research partner of the Austrian National Agency of YiA), two multilingual online questionnaires in 14 languages were established – one for participants and one for project leaders/team members of YiA-funded projects. Between October 2009 and November 2012, more than 80,000 participants and project leaders/team members of YiA projects were invited to RAY online surveys and more than 25,000 completed the respective questionnaires.

These “standard surveys” will be continued by the RAY network on a regular basis for the whole duration of the YiA programme. Complementary “special surveys” focus on special issues related to YiA. In particular, a special survey on non-formal education and learning in YiA projects and a special survey on competence development in YiA were developed and implemented in 2012.

Furthermore, a joint approach and methodology for qualitative studies at national level aimed at validating the results of the surveys and further developing the research approach and instruments are being implemented in 2012/13.

### **The added value of the RAY network**

The RAY network allows its partners

- to address and involve YiA actors in projects funded by them in presently 14 different languages<sup>1</sup> (including in English, French, German and Russian for those not being a native speaker of one of the 13 RAY languages);
- to address and involve actors from their country in projects which were funded by National Agencies in presently 14 different countries.

This provides for a truly international research approach and for transnational analyses of the responses.

The RAY network is open for new partners to join. Further information and advice, in particular also with respect to finding and involving research partners, is provided by:

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(Version 20130411)

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<sup>1</sup> Bulgarian, Czech, Dutch, English, Estonian, Finnish, French, German, Hungarian, Polish, Russian, Slovak, Swedish and Turkish.