research based analysis of youth in action

Long-term Effects of Erasmus+: Youth in Action on Participation and Citizenship

National Report

Malta

Contents

1.0   Introduction

'Erasmus+: Youth in Action' (E+/YiA) is part of the Erasmus+ education Programme of the European Union. The ERASMUS+ programme recognises the need to promote more cohesive and inclusive societies and the importance to ensure this by having citizens active within a democratic society. The programme thus aims, through its actions, to: promote common European values; foster social integration; enhance intercultural understanding and a sense of belonging to a community; and to prevent violent radicalisation.

The main objective of the Erasmus+ programme in the field of youth is to develop social capital among young people by empowering and encouraging them to participate actively in society. This is considered as a means of promoting active citizenship and participation in democratic life in Europe as indicated in the Lisbon Treaty. Erasmus+ is also an effective instrument to promote and support the inclusion of people from disadvantaged backgrounds, including newly arrived migrants.

This programme supports transnational projects in the youth field in different ways, such as in the case of Youth Exchanges, European voluntary service projects, structured dialogue projects and youth worker mobility projects. Youth Exchanges bring together young people from Europe, and in some cases also neighbouring countries, for up to as many as 21 days to carry out a series of activities focusing on a theme that is relevant to them. The programme also caters for youth workers, who through youth organisations are able to take part in training and other activities to support their professional development and network with other youth workers through seminars, training courses, networking events, study visits, and job shadowing/observation periods abroad.

This report presents the national results for Malta in the research project carried out by the 'Research-based Analysis of Erasmus+: Youth in Action' (RAY) network. The research was conducted by the RAY Network, and included the National Agencies of Erasmus+: Youth in Action and their research partners in 33 countries. The RAY study on Long-term Effects of Erasmus+: Youth in Action on Participation and Citizenship (RAY LTE) represent the results of the transnational study. This document presents the national results (for Malta), from this study, deriving results from the data collected between 2015 and 2018, and which involved surveys and interviews with project participants and project leaders/team members involved in E+/YiA projects in Malta.

The study was designed and implemented by the Institute of Educational Science at the University of Innsbruck and the Generation and Educational Science Institute in Austria in cooperation with the RAY Network partners in Austria**, the Czech Republic**, Estonia**, Finland**, Germany**, Hungary, Italy, Malta**, Slovenia** and Sweden. It was co-funded within the Transnational Cooperation Activities (TCA) of E+/YiA (** Members of the RAY LTE research project working group).

2.0 Aims and Objectives of the study

This study aimed to explore the long-term effects of participation in Erasmus+: Youth in Action (E+/YiA) on participants and project leaders with a focus on active citizenship and participation in society and in public life. The aim of this project was thus to look for evidence for the effects of learning in projects funded through e+/YiA on competence development, in particular with respect to participation and active citizenship. Such evidence could demonstrate to policy makers, employers and the public the value of participating in E+/YiA-projects.

The objectives of the study were:

- to explore competence development through learning in E+/YiA projects, with a focus on participation and active citizenship competences, in particular in the framework of youth exchanges, European voluntary service projects, structured dialogue projects and youth worker mobility projects; and

- to explore long-term effects with respect to participation and active citizenship practice as well as concerning educational and professional pathways.

Research questions

The study explored the long-term effects of participation in E+/YiA on project participants (PP) and project leaders (PL), in particular with a focus on active citizenship and participation in society and in democratic life. The objectives were developed into two specific research questions:

- How does E+/YiA contribute to the development of citizenship competence and the ability to participate as active citizens?

- What are the long-term effects related to participation and active citizenship on participants and project leaders resulting from their involvement in E+/YiA?

These research questions were developed based on a common understanding of key concepts used in the study. These key concepts included: participation, active citizenship, competence and identity. In this study, participation and active citizenship were understood in a broad sense and covered all domains of life, i.e. political, civic, social, cultural, private and working life.

Participation and active citizenship

Citizenship practice, habits and activities connected to being an active citizen were probed, for example voting, participating in a peaceful demonstration, signing a petition etc. These were taken to represent political participation, but also included other individuals' activities such as: keeping oneself informed about social and political affairs; discussing social and political issues; living in an environmentally friendly way; volunteering in the interest of the community; and engaging in civil society organisations. In the case of political participation, conventional and non-conventional political participation were included. Conventional political participation referred mainly to: voting and

running for an office. Non-conventional political participation included activities such as signing a petition, participating in demonstrations, making donations etc.

Competence

In accordance with Hoskins and others (Hoskins & Crick, 2008) competence in this study was defined as a "complex combination of knowledge, skills, understanding, values, attitudes and desire which lead to effective, embodied human action in the world, in a particular domain." In line with the existing body of research: subject knowledge; skills; values; and attitudes; were taken as the four main areas complemented by identity, all of which were operationalised in concrete indicators.

Identity

The identity of the individual was also taken into account, specifically looking into the sense of national identity of the respondents as well as of their allegiance to their community, their country and the European Union.

3.0   Theoretical Background

The concept of a common Europe from a diplomatic and political perspective stems from the end of the second world war, where the general mood in Europe was 'never war again' (Rebel, 2013). In 1950, the Council of Europe's Convention on Human Rights backed up by the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg, gave citizens the right to appeal against rulings made by their own government (Radulescu, 2011). With the establishment of the European Community of Coal and Steel in 1951, and the Treaty of Rome between France, Germany, Italy, Belgium, Luxemburg and the Netherlands in 1957, a European space was created (Rebel, 2013). It was, however, only after 30 years, with the Maastricht Treaty (Council of the European Communities, 1992), that there was an official recognition in Europe of the concept of a 'European Citizen'. Article 8 of the Maastricht Treaty on the European Union (Council of the European Communities, 1992) recognised that all nationals of a Member State are automatically EU citizens who enjoy the rights and duties as indicated by the Treaty (European Commission, 2013). The Amsterdam Treaty in 1997 further supported the concept of European Citizenship. It highlighted how EU citizenship should supplement national citizenship (European Communities, 1997) and that any cooperation that was established should not concern EU citizenship or discriminate between nationals of Member States.

Citizenship

Citizenship is a social activity, involving people living and working together for civic purposes. Kubow, Grossman and Ninomiya (2000) describe eight citizen characteristics of citizenship which include the ability to: look at and approach problems as a member of a global society; work with others in a cooperative way and to take responsibility for one's roles/duties within society; understand, accept, appreciate and tolerate cultural differences; think in a critical and systematic way; resolve conflict in a non-violent manner; change one's lifestyle and consumption habits to protect the environment; be sensitive towards and to defend human rights; and to participate in politics at local, national and international levels. Citizenship thus involves the development of democratic citizens who are critical (Grossmani et al., 2000).

Fennes (2009) identified a number of common elements in citizen competence models that citizens tend to refer to. These include elements of:

- knowledge, skills, attitudes and values, even if referred to under other terms, e.g. awareness, understanding, insight, aptitudes, capacities, abilities, dispositions, virtues;
- knowledge with respect to action and which empowers them to participate actively;
- skills as directly or indirectly necessary for participation, at least in political life; and
- core values, attitudes and principles such freedom, equality, solidarity, democracy and the rule of law as key elements of citizenship.

European citizenship

The concept of European Citizenship has different meanings in different European contexts. Constructions of citizenship are dependent on the specific social, cultural, political and historical contexts (Fennes, 2009). Diversity across Europe makes European citizenship poly-vocal, articulated in different languages and through different cultural models and repertoires of justifications, and occurs in different institutional contexts (Rebel, 2013). 'Citizenship' within a European context refers

to multilevel political rights, and involves European integration in policy fields such as education, civil society participation and political aspects of the European Union (Follesdal, 2008).

'EU citizenship' is different to 'European Citizenship'. While EU citizenship refers to the citizenship as defined in the EU treaties and legal aspects, it also has elements of affective, protective and participatory aspects (European Commission, 2013). EU citizenship is intimately linked to citizens' freedom of mobility, making EU citizenship a common political and social space co-created by institutions at the supranational level, governments as well as by EU citizens themselves (European Commission, 2013). EU citizenship is thus the product of institutional design and co-creation by actors at all levels of governance which involves 'top', 'bottom' and 'sideways' input, as well as from citizens' formal and informal actions (Kostakopoulou, 2013). It refers mainly to: mobility and open-mindedness as basic values; diversity as source of strength; commitment to combat discrimination; promotion of inclusion in terms of gender, race, religion etc.; the fundamental value of quality; the fostering of cross-border connections and cooperation (multinational identity, plurality, unity); dualism between supranational and national; removing restrictions and widening horizons and options; and citizens as partners in policy development at European level.

European citizenship is more complex and difficult to analyse (Pukallis, 2016). It is not fixed in any philosophical, historical, geographical, cultural, constitutional or civil way. It is dynamic, changing with time with the political, economic and institutional circumstances of the process of European integration at specific periods the European Union (Pukallus, 2016). European citizenship can be extended to a cosmopolitan view, including legal, constitutional, civil, cultural, and social aspects.

Active citizenship

The concept of active citizenship in Europe was established with the EU Lisbon goals of wealth, competitiveness and social cohesion in Europe (European Council, 2000). Article 11 of the Lisbon Treaty on the European Union identifies participatory democracy as the tool for strengthening the democratic legitimacy of the European Union. Governance of citizenship through a common sense of belonging to Europe is directly related to the citizens' trust in the democratic processes of the European Union. European Union institutions are required to be open, transparent and engaged in regular dialogue with representative associations and civil society (European Commission, 2010). The term 'active' in active citizenship highlights the direct involvement of citizens in society (Hoskins & Mascherini, 2009). Active Citizenship is considered as a way of empowering citizens so that they have their voices heard within their communities, develop a sense of belonging in the society in which they live, and live with the values of democracy, equality, and understanding of different cultures and different opinions (European Commission, 1998)

There is no single agreed definition for active citizenship (Hoskins & Mascherini, 2009). A heuristic understanding refers to psychological citizenship, involving one's cognitive and affective ties to some political community, and to participatory practices in how one can be actively involved within this community (Serek & Pugert, 2017). A theoretical model of active citizenship was developed by Hoskins (2006). The theory is based on the assumption that through educational experiences, like through schooling, young people develop civic competences in the form of knowledge, skills, attitudes and values. Hoskins (2006) defines active citizenship as participation in civil society, community and/or political life, characterised by mutual respect and non-violence and in accordance with human rights and democracy. This definition includes protest actions within civil society such as working in non-

governmental organisations, signing petitions and participating in demonstrations and other forms of protest that hold governments accountable. It also includes participation in formal democratic processes such as voting and being members of political parties. It also includes everyday participation in the community.   All these actions by individuals contribute to the wider society to ensure democracy, good governance and social cohesion (Hoskins & Campbell, 2008).

One needs to have developed specific attitudes and values in order to become an active and democratic citizen. Fennes (2009) identifies specific aspects of knowledge, skills and attitudes required by active citizens. Knowledge aspects refer mainly to knowledge and understanding of: internal and external relations; one's community, social and cultural groups; values and norms; histories and geographies; rights and responsibilities; knowledge of structures and institutions, economy and environment; fundamental human rights; political, legal and social systems, society's values and norms; the economic system; the interrelation between society, politics, economy, labour, technology and the environment at local and international levels; the history of one's community; citizenship; and one's own values; and beliefs and prejudices. Skills required for participation as an active citizen are various and include the ability to: acquire and process information; analyse and engage critically with information; take decisions; be creative; participate through communication, interaction and cooperation; interact with people of different cultures ethnicity, religions; establish relationships; and stand up for one's beliefs. The participatory dimension of citizenship also implies an interest in society and community issues, politics, and respect for multiple perspectives and opinions. Attitudes listed by Fennes (2009) included: having a sense of belonging to one's community and the world; being committed to democracy and that there is rule of law; to be an active citizen within a democracy; have that self-confidence and autonomy to engage in civil society and political life; have a sense of responsibility towards, trust and be loyal to democracy and its institutions; engaging critically with information in the media; respecting evidence while repudiating prejudice; respecting oneself and others; and is open to diversity and plurality.

Hoskins, Saisana and Vaillalba (2015) identified three dominant concepts of citizenship across Europe: liberal; civic republican; and critical/cosmopolitan citizenship. Liberal citizenship is based on Anglo-Saxon European countries, considered 'thin' democracy as citizens' involvement in public life is mainly that of voting. The civic republican approach demands that citizens assure greater freedoms such as laws for social change and instruments against corruption. Citizens engage in a political community, as equal and free citizens (Hoskins, Saisana and Vaillalba, 2015), highlighting the importance of civic virtues, public spiritedness, solidarity and responsibility to act for the common good (Honohan 2002). Cosmopolitanism extends to a global perspective of humanity and is based on human rights and diversity (Hoskins, Saisana and Vaillalba, 2015).

A measure for active citizenship was developed by Hoskins and Mascherini (2009) and based on 61 indicators under four dimensions: protest and social change involving civil society action which aim to hold governments to account; representative democracy; community life; and democratic values (kins *eta., 2006;* HosHoskins & Campbell, 2008). Each of these four dimensions consist of different components from which indicators were then developed. Protest and social change included engagement in: protest activities; human rights organisations; trade unions; and environmental organisations. The community life dimension referred to community organisations involving religious, business, cultural, social, sport and parent-teacher associations, and unorganized help. Representative democracy had three components: engagement in political parties; voter turnout; and participation

of women in political life. Democratic values were taken to consist of: democracy; intercultural understanding; and human rights. The framework developed is represented in the figure below.
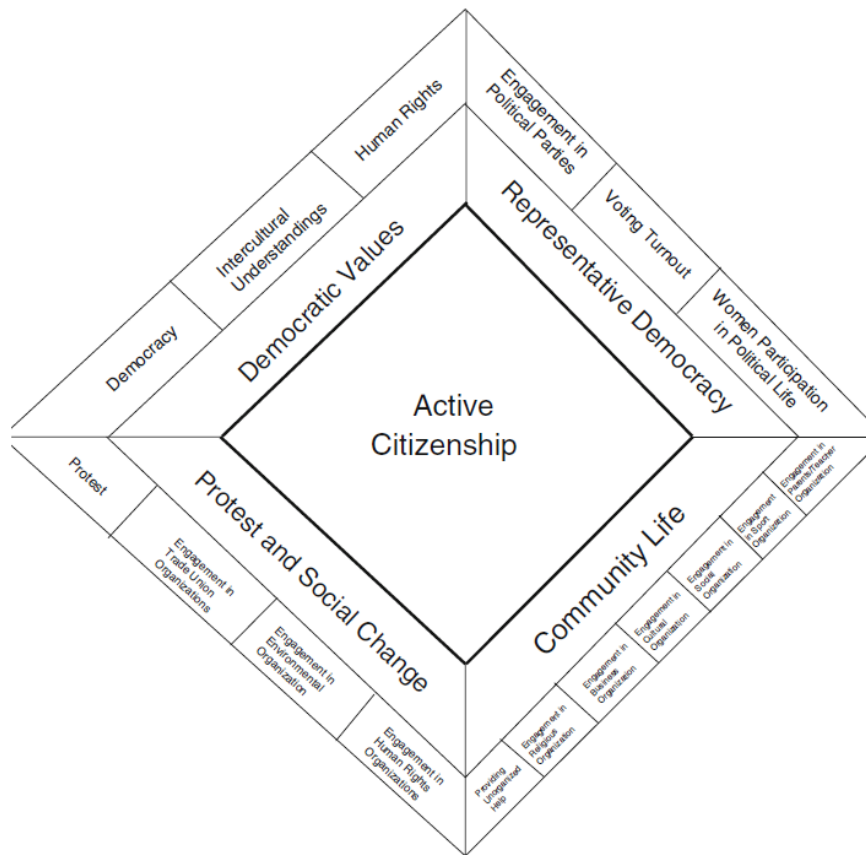
Figure 1: The Active Citizenship Composite Indicator (Hoskins & Mascherini, 2009)

The indicators used were based on data collected in the European Social Survey of 2002 which contained a component based on citizenship.

Civic competence

A competence refers to a complex combination of knowledge, skills, understanding, values, attitudes and desire which lead to effective, embodied human action in the world, in a particular domain (Hoskins & Crick, 2008). Civic competence is defined as: the ability to participate in society and voice concerns; ensure own rights; and the rights of others (Hoskins & Crick, 2008). Hoskins, Saisana and Vaillalba (2015) put forward a model to measure civic competence based on dimensions which incorporate:

- citizenship values dimension of being a good citizen;
- participatory attitudes related to one's disposition to engage;
- social justice dimension which measures cosmopolitan view of human rights and respect for diversity;
- liberal attitudes of respect for the democratic process; and
- knowledge and skills for democracy which combines all models, and captures all the skills needed to be an active citizen.

Participation and civic engagement

Ehrlich (2000) defines civic engagement as 'working to make a difference in the civic life of our communities and developing the combination of knowledge, skills, values and motivation to make that difference. It promotes quality of life in a community, through political and non-political processes. This definition, not only includes civic behaviours, but also a commitment to and valuation of social action, social justice orientation, leadership skills, perspective taking, and intercultural knowledge and understanding (Bowman, 2011).

Zaff et al. (2010) put forward an integrated construct of civic engagement within active and engaged citizenship (AEC) which goes beyond civic engagement. They consider initiative as a deep form of participation (Larson 2000), as the result of intrinsic motivation and drive to pursue a challenging goal. An integrated civic construct considers active and engaged citizenship as a person who possesses a sense of civic self-efficacy, responsibility and social connection to the community, as well as has the appropriate skills, and who engages in civic behaviours (Zaff et al.; 2010), reflecting a connection to one's community, and a commitment to improving it. Community attachment is considered a subjective value and includes: like living in; care about others; feel like a member; satisfied with, and wanting to continue living in your city (Boulianne & Brailey, 2014). Helping one's community is consistent with the ideas of connection, duty, and behaviour which will likely support the positive development of a person (Sherrod, 2007). Feeling a connection to one's community appears to be a requisite for engaging in community affairs. Civic participation is demonstrated through: helping to make one's city or town a better place for people to live; helping out at one's church, synagogue or other place of worship; helping a neighbour; volunteering time; mentoring/peer advising; tutoring; helping at school; and acting as a leader in an organisation (Zaff et al., 2010).

This section has provided a review of key concepts on which the study is based. It has provided a historical view of how the concept of EU citizenship has evolved in EU legislation, reviewed literature related to European identity, civic competence, engagement, and how these are related to active citizenship, highlighting the complexity within which the study has been carried out.

4.0   Methodology

The section provides a short background to the transnational research in which Malta participated. It also provides the methodology for the data collection that was carried out in Malta.

4.1   The Transnational Research Methodology

The research questions set for the transnational study were explored through a multi-method approach involving quantitative and qualitative social research methods which included:

- **Standardised multilingual surveys** that were conducted with the same project PP and PLs for a selected number of ERASMUS+/YiA projects included in the study as well as with a control group at different stages of the research. These stages were:
    - before the core activity/the intensive phase of the project;
    - two to three months after the end of the activity;
    - one year after the end of the activity; and
    - again two to three years after the end of the activity.

  At all four stages – called 'survey waves' or 'measurements' – the PP and the PL were asked the same questions (plus other questions related to their profile and previous activities outside the project context) which included the same answer items in order to assess any changes to their participation/citizenship competences and practices between each survey wave and, thus, measure any changes taking place.

- **Complementary and in parallel, qualitative interviews** were also conducted at three different stages:
    - before the core activity/the intensive phase of the project;
    - one year after its end and again; and
    - two to three years after its end.

Data Collection Process

The timetable for the collection of the different research tools between 2015 and 2019 is presented in the table overleaf. Before the 4th survey and the 3rd interview were implemented in autumn and winter 2018, a preliminary report was published in May 2018, presenting the results of the 1st, 2nd and 3rd survey waves as well as of the 1st and 2nd interviews.

Table 2 provides an overview of the data collected from across all Europe in the surveys in the transnational research. As can be noted, a large number of project participants responded to the first round of surveys. The number, however, decreased with every survey wave. There was also a decrease in the number of respondents also in the case of project leaders.

Table 1: Scheme of the LTE long-term study including quantitative and qualitative social research methods

2015			2016	2017/18	2018		2019
Before project		2-3 months after project	1 year after project			2-3 years after project	
	E+/YiA projects			Interim Transnational Report	Strasbourg Conference		Final Transnational Report
Quantitative research strand with test group (E+/YiA PP), control group (young people) and E+/YiA PL →→→→							
1st survey with E+/YiA PP and PL		2nd survey with E+/YiA PP and PL	3rd survey with E+/YiA PP and PL			4th survey with E+/YiA PP and PL	
1st survey with young people		2nd survey with young people	3rd survey with young people			4th survey with young people	
Qualitative research strand with test group (E+/YiA PP) →→→→→→→→→→→→→→→→→→→→→→→→→→→→→→→→→→→→→→							
1st interview with E+/YiA PP			2nd interview with E+/YiA PP			3rd interview with E+/YiA PP	

Table 2: Number on invitees, no. of respondents and response rates of the four test group surveys

	Participants (PP)*	Project Leaders/Members of the project teams (PL)*
Invitees	**2,030**	**373**
Respondents 1st survey***	**1,231**	**60**
% out of invitees	60.6%	69.7%
Respondents 1st and 2nd survey***	**711**	**176**
% out of respondents of 1st survey	57.8%	67.7%
% out of invitees	35.0%	47.2%
Respondents 1st, 2nd and 3rd survey***	**381**	**111**
% out of respondents of 1st survey	31.0%	42.7%
% out of invitees	18.8%	29.8%
Respondents 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th survey***	**217**	**73**
% out of respondents of 1st survey	17.6%	28.1%
% out of invitees	10.7%	19.6%

*PP and PL from 46 countries, involved in projects funded by AT, CZ, DE, EE, FI, HU, IT, MT, NL, SE and SI. The core activity of these projects took place in 2015 and 2016.

**Respondents: all those, who went into to survey by clicking on the respective link in the invitation e-mail, regardless how many pages they completed.

***The surveys took place before (1st) and after (2nd: two to three months; 3rd: one year; 4th: two to three years) the core activity of the projects.

Table 3 below shows the total number of respondents who actually filled in all the four surveys. It shows that the number was very small and analysis could only be carried out for the whole European cohort but not for the individual countries. This was particularly also the case with Malta where only 3 respondents actually filled in all the surveys.

Table 3: Socio-demographic data of those participants, who took part in all four surveys (n=217)

	AT	CZ	DE	EE	FI	HU	IT	MT	NL	SE	SI	oth.	tot.
Total according to countries, which funded the respective activities	17	0	28	29	25	9	27	3	5	38	32	4	217

The table below shows the number of interviews that were carried out across the different countries taking part in the research study. As in the case of the surveys, the number of respondents decreased with every set of interviews. The number of interviews decreased by a lesser amount than the surveys. In the case of Malta there were few drop outs. This made it possible for national analysis of the qualitative data to be carried out.

Table 4: Number of interviews with participants of E+/YiA projects

	AT	CZ	DE	EE	FI	HU	IT	MT	SE*	SI	tot.
1st interview before activity	16	12	20	15	15	14	13	9	10	21	145
2nd interview one year after activity	13	6	14	10	13	11	10	7	9	19	112
3rd interview two to three years after activity	11	5	8	8	13	7	8	7	0	15	82

*SE: Got out of the project after the interim transnational analysis including the 1st and the 2nd interviews (and the 1st, 2nd and 3rd surveys) because of a lack of resources, but still provided translations for the 4th survey.

4.2   National Implementation of RAY-LTE research in Malta

This section provides background to the method of collection of data in the case of Malta. The quantitative aspect of the study involved sending out invitations to project participants and project leaders being implemented during the period of the first wave of surveys. They could opt to respond to the questionnaire in either English or Maltese across all the four flows. The number of respondents from Malta, as just previously highlighted, were few and it was not meaningful to analyse the responses to these questionnaires at national level.

The data collected through the qualitative tools suffered less attrition and this provided rich insights. This qualitative aspect of the research involved carrying out interviews with youths participating in two Youth exchange projects. Two youth exchange projects were selected for inclusion in the study as they were the only projects which were implemented in the period during the first round of data

collection and were also the ones where the coordinators accepted to the National Agency's call to participate in the research.

Projects Involved in the Research Study

The two projects included in the research were two youth exchange projects. In one, the exchange was held in Malta, while in the other, the exchange was in another European Country. The table below provides a summary of the two projects involved in the research study.

Table 5: Types of Projects included in the Malta Study

Number	Activity type				Hosting/ Sending		Project main themes
	YE	EVS	SD	YWM	host	send	Both projects were environment oriented. The sending project focused on fieldwork on flora and fauna in Romania. In the case of the hosting, this project focused on improving a nature reserve while also observing wildlife.
2	2	0	0	0	1 (3*)	1 (4*)	

* Number of youths interviewed

Project 1 - Protecting the Environment through Conservation Techniques for Future Generations

Organisation – Higher Youths (informal youth group)

This project was a youth exchange for students of age range 17-22 years of age. The aim of the exchange was to increase awareness of environmental issues and provide youths with skills for conservation management as well as help them develop conservation attitudes to ensure that any research programmes and career/personal choices the youths undertake later on in life have minimal impacts on the use of resources. The youth group involved students from a post-compulsory general education institution with youths studying to go to University, and an age range between 17 and 21. The youths in this exchange were to travel to Romania where they were to engage in conservation activities with youths from Romania over a period of two weeks.

Project 2 - Action for Nature

Organisation –Bird Life (Established environmental NGO)

This project was also a youth exchange coordinated by BirdLife which is a local NGO which promotes the protection and preservation of birds. The youth exchange in this project was to take place in Malta. The participating youths came from a Scouts groups as the NGO twinned with Scouts in this case. The youths from Malta were to experience an exchange with students from the Netherlands. The youths were to spend time in a camp site, living in nature and working in a nature reserve. During this period the youths worked in a Nature Reserve (Ghadira Nature Reserve - http://birdlifemalta.org/reserves/ghadira/) and built benches for people to use as they enjoy nature. The project participants were youth, in secondary school with ages ranging between 14-16 years who spent a whole week in August in a campsite eating and cooking with the help of the youth leaders.

Details of youths interviewed

Pre-project interview

In total 9 youths were interviewed in the pre-interviews, 6 boys and 3 girls. 4 youths participated in project 1 (2 boys and 2 girls). Their ages ranged between 19 and 23 and they were students studying science subjects at post-secondary level in preparation to go to University. 5 other youths were interviewed from project 2 (4 boys and 1 girl). Their ages ranged from 14 to 16 years and they were mainly secondary school students. The interviews took place in June 2016, in the case of project 1 two weeks before the exchange, in the case 2, a day before the start of the exchange. None of the youths had participated in an EU funded Youth exchange before although some of them had participated in some form of exchange through other projects.

Interview one year after the project

In May 2017, 7 youths were interviewed in the post-interviews. In one case, a youth from project 2 got sick during the exchange and had to leave on the first day of the exchange. For this reason, he did not actually experience the exchange and thus could not answer questions set in the post- interview. The other youths did not respond to the emails sent and one had exams and for this reason could not dedicate time to be interviewed.

Interview two years after the project

The same 7 youths were interviewed again after another year, in 2018. The youths from project 1 were all still at University, studying different studies, ranging from medicine, nursing and Earth systems to psychology. The youths from project 2 were still in post-secondary education, one year prior to entry to University.

Table 6: Number of youths interviewed at pre- and post- stage

Data Collected	Males	Females	Total
Pre-Interviews	6	3	9
Post-Interviews (after 1 year)	4	3	7
Post-interviews (after 2 years)	4	3	7

All interviews in the pre-project phase were carried out face to face. In the pre-interviews, the coordinators organized a meeting for the youths. The researcher then interviewed the youths one by one. Each interview took about 35-45 minutes to complete. The post-interview was more complicated as the youths had moved schools and had different education commitments. In the case of the youths from project 1, many of them had moved to University studies. In this case, the students were contacted by email and an appointment set on University Campus. Since the researcher works at University, it was easy to carry out the interviews on University Campus. All youths from project 1 participated in face to face post-interviews. In the case of project 2, one youth fell sick and another could not be contacted. In the case of project 2, the interviews were carried out mainly via phone as many were busy with schooling and had limited time. In the 3rd round of interviews, all the 7 youths who were interviewed in the second round were again interviewed. Of the 7 interviews, 5 interviews, were with University students, were carried out face-to-face and 2 from project 2 were done by phone.

Ethical considerations

In line with ethical guidelines for research in Malta, information sheets and consent forms explaining the project and requesting consent for the interviews to be audio-taped were prepared and distributed to the youths and the parents of the youths under the age of 18. Signed consent forms were gathered prior to the pre-interviews. Consent covered participation in the whole study and applied for all the three interviews that are included in the study. Consent forms ensure the anonymity of the participants, and allows participants to stop their participation at any point of the study as they wish.

5.0   Results

This section presents the analysis of the qualitative data collected over the three sets of interviews carried out in Malta as part of the RAY-LTE research study. The first section looks at how the young people interviewed view the project that they participated in over the three years. The sections that follows then analyses the youths' attitudes and values, knowledge, skills, and participation related to being an active citizen. Due to the many additional experiences that these youths might have had between their participation in the Youth Exchange and the interviews one and two years later, they were asked to specify when they felt that their responses were a direct impact of their participation in the project, and when it did not have any relation to Youth Exchange.

5.1   Overall view of the projects

In the second and third interviews, the youths were asked to indicate key memories that they held of their exchange, even if time had elapsed since their experience.

In the interview one year after the project, the youths picked on different aspects of the project. Some of the respondents focused on the environmental aspects of their experience. This is to a degree understandable as the students tended to be science students and it was also their main reason of why they decided to participate in the project. Comments by students referred to the beauty of the environment that they experienced:

‘*The beautiful countryside and the wide range of biodiversity –environment*’ (P1[1])

‘*I remember the birds as I like birds*’ (P2)

‘The scenery that I saw as well as the scientific study carried out were an experience’ (P4)

A number of the youths highlighted moments where they discussed and worked with other youths as a team. They also recalled the value of their interactions with youths from other countries.

‘I remember how my friends used a log to carry heavy bags and how one achieves more when we work together.’ (P3)

*‘It was a very good experience as young people from another country and us work on one project together and we managed.’ (*P7)

When asked the same question after two years, the youths again referred to environmental aspects as well as to working together with other youths. It was in this round that some of the youths stated that they considered the project a key experience in their life, and how it helped and influenced them as they become adults or in choosing their career.

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[1] P refers to 'participant'

'It was what started my decisions and my interest in the environment even in my career.' (P1)

'It was a project that defined me as a person' (P3)

Even if with time the youths may have started to romanticize their memory of the exchange, the contributions made do show the significant impact which the exchanges had on the young people who participated.

The youths were also asked to share whether they had thought about the exchange after its implementation. In the second interview, the youths spoke very positively about the exchange, drawing on their experience of the environment that they came in contact with as well as the exposure to different cultures.

'The project went beyond my expectations as it was more than a classroom learning experience about nature. I became aware of the different cultures.' (P1)

Rated 10/10 as did not only learn about the environment but also about other issues such as different cultures and social problems o2f youths of other countries in Europe. (P3)

'I learnt a lot on conservation, and it also influenced my choice of studies at University.' (P4)

Two years after the project, the youths still spoke very positively about the exchange. However, in this round, the comments referred more to their relationships with the other youths they were with rather than on the theme, the environment.

'I have good memories and I the group still does meet and we do keep in touch regularly, about once every two weeks.' (P1)

'The project has influenced my decision as I am going again and potentially in the future will work with them as a nurse on project as a paramedic.' (P2)

'I think about the project nearly every week as I have a colleague in my class and we refer to it often when we are together.' (P4)

'It was then I engaged closely with young people from another country' (P7)

These contributions show the significant impact which the Youth Exchanges had on the youths. It is to be noted that in most of the cases, it was the first time that such youths had participated in youth exchanges or similar experiences. While they continued to recall the theme of the project, having the opportunity to share experiences and working with other youths was an aspect which the young people valued a lot even after two years had elapsed.

5.2   Results: Attitudes and Values

One aspect of citizenship and participation is based on the attitudes that youths hold. The interviews thus probed the interviewees' attitudes and values which they held before the exchange, one year later, as well as two years after the project. As the young people were asked to reflect on their responses, they were asked to indicate whether the exchange had a direct impact on their responses of not. The answers obtained were then analysed in terms of whether they were the result of a direct impact of the exchange, or else the result of other experiences. It has to be acknowledged that a person goes through many different experiences as a result of growing up. It was thus important to identify what aspects of the exchanges that the youths felt influenced them directly in the long term.

5.2.1   Interest in Social and Political Issues

The youths were asked to express what interests they held with respect to social and political issues. The responses obtained were categorized according to the interview as well as whether they were a direct impact of the youth exchange or not.

Stage	
Pre-interview	Little, if at all, interest in political issues –P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7 Interest in environmental issues – P4 Interest in immigration – P2
After 1 year (due to project)	Greater Interest about the Environment – P2, P4, P7 Awareness of people and youth around me – P5, P6, P7 Importance of helping others – P1, P4
After 2 years (due to project)	Interested in the environment –P3, P4
After 1 year (due to other factors)	Interested in aspects of solidarity issues – P1, P3, P4 Interested in life of other youths from diverse European Countries – P3, P4
After 2 years (due to factors)	Interested in issues in society e.g. environment, science, current affairs – P3, P5, P7 Learned to take informed decisions – P2

Before the exchange, the youths expressed little interest in social and political issues, with only 2 out of the 9 youths interviewed expressing some interest. It can be noticed that the same youths indicated that the exchange influenced them with respect to environmental issues, but admitted that they also became more aware of realities around them and of the importance of helping others. In the third year, again, the youths attributed attitudes towards the environment as being the key interests that they gained directly from the experience. On the other hand, while overall interest in social issues increased, this interest was not attributed as being a direct impact of the project. It could well be the result of the youths growing up and maturing, and that at most, the experience made them aware of the world around them, and thus then continued to follow social and political issues.

Prior to the Exchange

Not that interested as they do not affect me directly, a little politically. I follow issues related to immigration. (P2)

Politics no, social yes, if there is need to help I will get involved. (P7)

Direct impact of the project:

Through the project I learnt more than just about the environment and conservation, but also about the importance of freedom of speech and that your opinion is heard. (P2)

I have become more aware of those around me, also to look deeper into understanding of terms used. (P5)

Impact of other factors:

Honesty is very important for a democracy, that is why I carry out research and then make an informed decision what to vote. (P2)

I am active with respect to science communication. I am still member of a number of NGOs. I keep abreast with what is happening. (P3)

5.2.2   Interest in Europe: European Identity/European Union Citizen

Stage	
Pre-interview	There is a feeling of being European: P1, P2, P3, P5, P6, P7 Sense of countries working together for a common good: P3, P4, P7, P7 Aware of differences – P2, P5
After 1 year (due to project)	Feel more European – P1, P2, P3, P4, P5 Other youth's in other European countries – P2, P3 Realized that Europe affects me directly, opinion, mobility – P2, P6, P7
After 2 years (due to project)	It made me feel European – P1
After 1 year (due to other factors)	Understanding how EU has rules/standards that all Members have to respect – P1
After 2 years (due to other factors)	Interest in European Citizenship – P4 Interested in opportunities –P3, P4, P5

The youth's interest in Europe with respect to their European Identity as well as being European Union citizens was also probed at different points of the research. Prior to participating in the youth exchange, all the youths held positive attitudes and values towards Europe, whether this meant 'feeling European', understanding how different countries in Europe are working together towards a common goal, or the cultural differences that exist.

The responses obtained one year later are quite strong, in that not only did the exchange make youths feel even more European, but they admitted that they became more aware of other youths in the different EU Member States as well as of how Europe can affect them directly.

The youths also attributed a growing interest in Europe due to other factors. They reported following issues at European level of personal interest, as well as looked for opportunities which they can benefit from, referring mainly to mobility, as they grow. This shows how the project has increased this sense of being European, but it is also evident that as these youths grew older, as part of the maturing process, they are becoming more aware of their surroundings as well as are considering career opportunities within a European dimension.

Prior to the Project:

Unified countries that are in a specific location…they try to help each other…it's more like a group not all separated since we're a small area because we are a lot of different countries in a small area so we try help each other. You know how to live in society and how to live with others. (P4)

I do follow – but not that much. I feel European – in Europe countries get together and achieve things which they cannot manage when on their own. (P6)

Direct impact of the Project:

I am aware that it is easier for Europe to work together as a whole rather than just at a national level. I am more interested in Europe since project as I am aware that it affects me directly. I have experienced being European. (P2)

I am more aware of situation of youths in other countries, in education mainly. Experience in the project has consolidated my existing views about Europe. (P3)

Impact of other factors:

I am interested in what happens in Europe as I am a European citizen. (P1)

I am interested in the opportunities for exchanges for when I grow older. (P5)

5.2.3   Interest in National Youth policies /European Youth Strategy

The youths were also asked about their interest in national youth policies as well as the European Youth Strategy. Prior to participation in the youth exchange, practically all the youths interviewed did not have any specific information or interest in National Youth policies or the European Youth Strategy. At most, a few had some information, referring mainly to knowledge of their existence. The youths did state, however, that they did develop some interest in such policies following the youth exchange as it was incorporated in the project. However, this interest decreased significantly in the

following year. It has to be stated that a number of respondents did admit that they were more concerned with their studies rather than other aspects such as youth policies. Studies tended to take precedence on learning about Youth policies, hence the lack of interest to learn more. The majority explained that they have very limited time to dedicate to such things.

Stage	
Pre-interview	Majority are not aware - P2, P3, P4, P5, P6 Those aware have little knowledge – P1, P7 Follows political youth groups nationally – P3 Promotes Cultures among youths through NGO – P4 Not interested – P5, P6
After 1 year (due to project)	Learnt about Youth policy – P2 Learnt about Youths in Europe – P1, P3, P4
After 2 years (due to project)	Interested in European aspects and Opportunities – p2
After 1 year (due to other factors)	Aware of Environmental Issues – P5
After 2 years (due to factors)	Not interested in policies – P1, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7

Prior to the Project:

I have read about it but know very little. (P1)

I do not have any interest, like to promote culture as well like they bring children and they do Maltese stuff and I help out at times. (P4)

Am aware of Youth strategy from school studies. (P5)

Direct impact of the Project:

Yes about youth policy and employment. In the project in Romania I learnt about youth unemployment. (P1)

In Europe we are more connected than I thought. (P4)

Impact of other factors:

I am interested in Europe as I am European. But I do not have any specific interest in Europe, especially political. I am aware that I make up part of social and political issues, some issues are quite important but I am not interested and ready to follow them. In the case of environmental aspects, it depends on what area. (P4)

I am not that interested. (P5)

5.2.4 Interest in environmental protection/sustainable development

The young people interviewed already held strong attitudes and values towards the environment prior to participation in the Youth in Action. This shows how the youths probably chose to participate in their project as a result of this existing interest in the environment. Interest and involvement in promoting environment seems to have been influenced both from the Youth Exchange, as well as by the youths' personal interest. The theme related to the environment was the link between the youths' personal interest and the motivation to participate in the project.

Stage	
Pre-interview	There is interest in environmental issues – P1, P2, P4, P6 Are active in Environment issues – P1, P2, P4, P7 Sense of responsibility –P7
After 1 year (due to project)	Learnt about the importance of conservation and European initiative for the environment – P1, P5
After 2 years (due to project)	Interested in environmental issues and legislation – P1, P3, P4
After 1 year (due to other factors)	Engaged in conserving the environment – P2, P3, P6, P7 Follow EU on environment –P4
After 2 years (due to factors)	Involved in environmental activities – P1, P4 Still interested in the environment – P3, P5, P6

Prior to the Project:

pro-environment and my friend is in the NGO "Move" -Did petitions to safeguard the environment. Active in initiatives related to the environment. (P4)

Was part of ecoskola which is about recycling in schools (P6)

Direct impact of the Project:

I am very much aware of issues related to the environment. The project helped me learn the importance of conserving the environment for future generations. (P1)

The project helped me learn more about the environment. I am more aware through other initiatives with Scouts. The project made me interested in following what is happening and being done with respect to the environment in Europe. (P5)

Impact of other factors:

I continue with my passion about Bird trapping and bird conservation. (P3)

I still go to scouts and we do things to clean the environment. (P6)

5.2.5 Understanding of democracy, human rights; participation; principles for a democratic society

When the youths were asked with respect to attitudes and values related to democracy, it was interesting to see different aspects mentioned. First of all, it has to be highlighted how prior to participation in the project, there was already a strong commitment to typical attitudes related to human rights and democratic values. Many of the youths were committed to taking social action and to find ways to help others. The project appears to have helped some of the interviewees to become more aware of their voice within a democracy, which is a very important aspect of active citizenship. After three years, it was interesting to hear how both the project directly as well as other factors have led to a need to express one's opinion through voting, but also the importance for there to be equity in society.

Stage	
Pre-interview	Voting – P1.P2 Awareness of issues –P3 Taking social action – P2,P3, P6, P7 Taking Political action – P4 Not interested –P5
After 1 year (due to project)	Aware of legislation –P2 Aware of own voice –P4
After 2 years (due to project)	Democracy is about having a voice – P3
After 1 year (due to other factors)	Importance to be educated and vote – P1
After 2 years (due to factors)	Appreciate that Malta is a democracy where vote counts and freedom on information – P1, P2, P4, P7 There should be equity – P3, P5, P6

Prior to the Project:

Democracy is about being interested in what is happening around you regarding to politics; what is being done in your community as well as how you can...increase the quality of life in your community through educating yourself about what is happening and being involved. Obviously a constitution is very important and the fact that constitution is updated regularly to the needs of the public is also very important because again you can't stay with the mentalities of the past. (P3)

Doing voluntary work to get to know others as well to help where possible. We need to learn to obey and follow rules and not everybody does what he wants. We need to tolerate each others' different ideas. (P6)

Direct impact of the Project:

Before the project I was not aware about things, about policies, directives e.g. for education, employment, social. (P2)

Democracy is about giving citizens a voice through a vote but also in voicing their opinion as part of freedom of speech. (P3)

Impact of other factors:

It is important that people continue to vote. t is important to have informed opinion. There is no place for fanaticism but one has to be critical of politicians. There is need to educate from a young age –even primary, start mentioning simple things. (P1)

It is important to have a fair society and that we help those who are in need (P5)

5.2.6   Fairness against other people/the state

The youths were also asked about their opinion related to fairness in society. It has to be noted that the students already held strong values of solidarity prior to the project. They mentioned the importance of respect and tolerance towards others, and the importance to ensure everybody's welfare, and to protect these rights. In a way, these responses highlight how youths already holding positive attitudes tend to be attracted to participate in youth projects such as the youth exchanges in this study. It is interesting to note that both one and two years after the project, the youths did not attribute any influence on their attitudes and values related to fairness to the project, with the exception of one youth. However, many emphasized the need for inclusion in society of all groups when interviewed two years later. This shows that as the youths grew up, they continued to develop stronger positive attitudes, which however, according to them, were not the direct result of their experience in the Youth Exchange.

Stage	
Pre-interview	Respect and tolerance towards others –P1, P2, P5, P6, P7 Need to help those in need to ensure everybody's welfare – P1, P2, P6 Protect fairness –P4, P7
After 1 year (due to project)	
After 2 years (due to project)	I want to learn about human rights – P1
After 1 year (due to other factors)	Obligation to help those who have social problems, social justice – P1, P2, P5 Need for freedom of speech – p3
After 2 years (due to factors)	Follow what students in my course association do in human rights –P1 Important for everyone to do his bit e.g. pay tax –P2 Important to help other for inclusion, equal society – P3, P4, P5, P6, P7

Prior to the Project:

Promote tolerance which I firmly believe in and the fact that people might be unwilling to reach out to different cultures is very unfortunate and very damaging to one's future and also one's...quality of living. (P3)

That everyone is treated the same, without any racism. (P7)

Direct impact of the Project:

I am very interested to learn about human rights.(P1)

Impact of other factors:

I think that it is important for everybody to do his bit, for example it is important for everybody to pay his taxes, whoever he is as it is the only way through which the country is moving forward. (P2)

Fairness means that one supports those who need most help so that they can live better. (P5)

5.3   Results: knowledge

The interviews also probed the youth's level of knowledge with respect to different aspects related to active citizenship and participation, and how their participation in the Youth Exchange influenced, or not, their level of knowledge at different points after the experience.

5.3.1   Knowledge important for engagement in/for society and politics

The first aspect of knowledge that the youths were asked about referred to their knowledge about the importance of citizens to engage in or for society and as well as in politics. The youths already held a degree of knowledge prior to participation in the Youth Exchange. They valued the contribution that volunteering provides to society, the importance for them to express their opinion through voting and participating in civil society organisations. They were also aware that they had both rights and responsibilities.

Stage	
Pre-interview	Value of voluntary work – P1. P2, P6, P7 Importance of voting –P4, P6 Importance of civil society – P4 Rights and responsibilities – p1, p5
After 1 year (due to project)	I learnt about social issues – P2 I know the importance of active citizenship – P3, p4, P5
After 2 years (due to project)	Importance to be an active citizen and take up opportunities – P1
After 1 year (due to other factors)	Awareness of surroundings – P1, P6, P7 Important of helping others – P6, P7
After 2 years (due to factors)	Know what democracy is and the rights, responsibilities, values – P1, P2, P3, P5, P7 Know that everyone is important – P2 Importance to make informed decisions – P2

Prior to Project:

> *As a citizen one has rights as a member of a community. I know that voluntary work has an important role in decision –making in society as we can send out messages.* (p1)

> *How it is important to vote. How to try and help those who are less fortunate than us.* (P6)

Direct impact of the Project:

> *I am interested in People's views of the environment. I learnt the importance of being active with other youths.* (P5)

> *I am interested in People's views of the environment. I learnt the importance of being active with other youths.* (P2)

Impact of other factors:

> *Democracy is a means through which a voice is given to everybody. But then you have to vote for one person who delivers what you want – it is like by the people for the people. For a Democracy to function there should be equal opportunities, that there should be space for everyone to speak and to be heard. You do not need to be on the frontline.* (P3)

> *It is important for people to understand what it means to be in a democratic society. One needs to be aware of one's rights as well as responsibilities. I know what is right and what is wrong as I help people.* (P1)

One key learning aspect which was identified as a direct impact of their participation in the Youth Exchange was the realisation of the importance of social issues and the need to be an active citizen. With respect to other knowledge that they gained from other aspects of life, these related to the importance of being aware of one's surroundings, about what democracy is, and the importance of keeping one abreast with what is happening around one in order to be able to take informed decisions.

5.3.2   Knowledge about national youth policy/EU youth strategy

The interviews also probed the youths' knowledge about national youth policies as well as the EU Youth Strategy. It is not surprising that the youths had minimal, if any knowledge about youth policy prior to participating in the Youth Exchange. There was a slight increase in knowledge one year later in the second interview, and it was recognised that this small additional knowledge was a direct result of participating in the project. It was also noticed that two years after the project, less knowledge was noted. A number of the youths commented that at that point in time their studies and career was taking up a lot of their time and consequently their free time was limited. Thus, although they could be interested to learn about youth policies, it was not a priority. The interest which remained was mainly related to opportunities that they can take advantage of rather than a social or political interest.

Stage	
Pre-interview	No knowledge – P1, P3, P4, P5, P6, Little knowledge – P2 Yes, through school studies – P7
After 1 year (due to project)	Learnt about policies for youth, youth employment – P1, P2 I learnt about importance given to youth – P2 I know that Europe is open and accesible – P3, P4
After 2 years (due to project)	
After 1 year (due to other factors)	
After 2 years (due to factors)	Heard about youth policy but I am not interested/do not have time to learn about what it includes –P1, P2, P3, P5, P6 I participate in EU projects – P2 Know about EU rights and opportunities – P1, P3

Prior to Project:

I read it but know very little about it. (P1)

Yes through school studies did about European youth strategy. (P5)

Direct impact of the Project:

I know that there are more directives with respect to justice. Also initiatives directed towards such as youths, education, environment. I am aware that youths are given a lot of importance. (P2)

I learnt from the project that although I am one person, if I try, I can still have an impact. There are differences across Europe and be more open to differences. (P4)

Impact of other factors:

I follow a little bit about youth policy but it is not something which I follow. But participating in European projects and getting to know people from different European countries, has made me understand what it means to be European. (P2)

I follow a little bit about youth policy but it is not something which I follow. But participating in European projects and getting to know people from different European countries, has made me understand what it means to be European. (P3)

5.3.3   Knowledge about sustainable development / protection of the environment

The environment makes up an important aspect of active citizenship with the challenges of climate change that the world is experiencing. The youths were asked about their knowledge of the environment. Since the projects included in the study both targeted the environment, and as already highlighted, they attracted youths who were interested in the area, it is to be expected that they held some knowledge already prior to the Youth Exchanges. Having said this, it was also evident that there was also an increased level of   knowledge, particularly with respect to issues related to conservation of the environment.

Stage	
Pre-interview	Legal aspect –P1 Safeguarding and Conservation – P2, P3, p7 Employment in sector –P3 No knowledge – P4, P5
After 1 year (due to project)	Learnt about environment conservation and issues – P1, P2, P4, P6 Learnt about environmental NGOs – P2
After 2 years (due to project)	Link theory to practice – P2
After 1 year (due to other factors)	Learn about the environment – P3
After 2 years (due to factors)	Continue learning about environment –P1, P3, P4 Live with environment friendly practices – P3, P7

There were fewer contributions on knowledge about the environment in the interviews two years after the Youth Exchanges. This may be because they became aware that they needed to learn more, especially with respect to what type of environmentally friendly practices they can take up. In fact, a number of interviewees stated that they had involved themselves in other environmental NGOs since the exchange, and had engaged in activities related to the environment.

Prior to Project:

Interested in conservation with biology there are lots of jobs in conservation. (P3)

I follow European Directives that concern Health and environmental issues e.g. pesticides, vaccines, environment etc. (P1)

Direct impact of the Project:

I learnt about flora and fauna during the project and chose the area for my studies. (P4)

I learnt that conservation is important for the environment. (P6)

In the project I could see the link between theory and practice. I separate waste and when possible to go to University we carpool. (P2)

Impact of other factors:

I have a lot of knowledge about the environment as I study it at University, but I also get knowledge and information from the internet. (P4)

I still follow things about the environment as I do projects with Scouts. (P5)

5.4   Results: Skills

The youths were also asked about what skills they possessed and those which they developed from one year to another. The youths identified quite a number of skills that they possessed prior to the Youth Exchanges. These referred mainly to soft skills such as decision making, attitudes of tolerance, marketing skills, administrative skills, time management as well as resilience. It can also be noted that these skills were competences at an individual level.

The Youth Exchanges appear to have contributed to the development of a number of skills, mainly soft skills, and which also are a dimension of active citizenship. The participation in the exchanges appear to have helped the youths develop skills related to teamwork, self-expression and self-confidence to speak up and voice their opinion. The youths' however, also acknowledge that they have developed related skills also due to other experiences outside of the project. Here one can see how, potentially, what was started with the project, continued to grow as the youths followed their paths in education as well as participated in other activities that they engaged in.

Stage	
Pre-interview	decision making –P1 Administration – P2 Tolerance – P2 Speak out own opinions – P3 Promoting petitions – P4 Promoting Ticket sales –P5 Makes good use of time – P6 Never gives up – P7
After 1 year (due to project)	Leadership skills – P1, P2, P5 Working with people of different cultures – P2, P7 How not to be afraid and speak up – P3 How to work in a team – P5 How to be aware of what is happening around you – P5
After 2 years (due to project)	How to have initiative and grab opportunities – P1 How to deal with people who are difficulty – P1 How to be aware of what is happening around me – P2, P5 How to stand up for my beliefs and make a valid argument – P3 How to work well in a group –P5
After 1 year (due to other factors)	How to work in a team – P1 How to listen to the opinion of others – P1 How to speak up immediately when there is an issue – P3
After 2 years (due to factors)	Able to take good decisions and stick to them – P1, P2 Know how to find relevant information – P2 Able to stand up for myself – P3, P4 Public speaking – P3 Able to carry out research – P3 Be aware of what is happening around me –P4, P7

Prior to Project:

I need to learn how to do the paperwork. Since I am a leader in scouts makes me a good leader; I am also tolerant. But I am not used to taking and following orders. (P2)

I do not like to waste time and so am on the go all the time. I lack a degree of self confidence. (P6)

Direct impact of the Project:

I learnt how to cook better and how to communicate within a group, how to be a good communicator – public speaker. I also developed leadership skills with respect to how to lead a group, developed teamwork skills as we worked together. I need to become more aware of what is happening around me. (P5)

The project helped me learn how to work with people from different cultures as these aspects were highlighted in the project. I realized that I have good leadership skills. I need to learn how to communicate with people of different cultures. (P2)

I am more able to deal with others who are difficult, especially when we have differences among us in a group. I am continually learning. (P1)

Impact of other factors:

I had a weak backbone but now I am less afraid to stand up. I have developed skills with respect to public speaking, debating. I have taken some additional electives at University also about it. (P3)

If you have an opinion and you know how to get it across, then that is also a skill. I am unsure whether I am able to do that. I know my rights, duties. I try to know what is happening. Even if sometimes I do hold back, especially when it is a small issue and not that important. (P4)

5.5   Results: Practice

Another aspect of citizenship is practice. This refers mainly to activities that the youths engage in as a result of taking action about aspects that they care about. This section thus provides insights into different forms of participation that the youths were engaged in with respect to keeping themselves informed, discussing social and political issues, running for office, participating in political activities, and creating and implementing projects.

5.5.1   Keeping oneself informed about social and political topics

Stage	
Pre-interview	Do not follow the media much due to lack of interest – P1, P4, P6, P7 Values keeping informed to a degree –P2
After 1 year (due to project)	Awareness and sensitive to others – P3, P5 Involved in NGO activities –P4
After 2 years (due to project)	
After 1 year (due to other factors)	Aware of what is happening around me and the environment – P1, P2, P3
After 2 years (due to factors)	Follow issues e.g. current, environment, interests – P1, P2, P3 How to be an active citizen – P2, P3, P4, P5, P7

Prior to the youths' participation in the Youth Exchange, they did not express much interest in keeping abreast with social and political issues. Any interest expressed was limited. After one year three participants stated that they became sensitive and aware of others as well as interested in NGOs. While there was no particular influence by the exchange cited by the youths after two years, they did state that they were none the less interested in current environmental issues as well as in how to be an active citizen. These were not, however, attributed as mainly due to the impact of the youth exchange.

Prior to Project:

I am not good at following what is happening on the media. (P1)

I follow but I am not that interest. (P6)

Direct impact of the Project:

I am more aware of people's backgrounds. (P3)

The project helped me to be more sensitive to those around me. (P5)

Impact of other factors:

One has to do his bit, to keep himself informed about what is being said, see what is happening and then takes informed decisions – if you are not an active citizen, there cannot be an appropriate democracy. (P1)

I still do things like volunteering and activities with Scouts. (P7)

5.5.2 Discussing social and political issues

Stage	
Pre-interview	Discussing political issues is stigmatised – P3 Discusses environmental issues – P4 Not really interested – P6
After 1 year (due to project)	
After 2 years (due to project)	
After 1 year (due to other factors)	Discuss environment with my friends –P4
After 2 years (due to factors)	I am careful with whom I express my political opinions, specific topics – P1, P4, P4 I'm careful about what the source of information, legislation is –P1, P4 I do not discuss social and political issues with others – P2, P6, P7 I talk about all issues that I come across –P3

There was minimum discussion of political and social issues expressed prior to the youth exchanges. One youth went further to say that such discussions tend to be stigmatised and for this reason tend to be avoided. This reluctance to discuss political issues continued to be expressed even after two years. This was not attributed to the influence of the exchange experience. It can be said that it possibly reflects Malta's culture to avoid expressing one's political opinion in a small society where everybody knows everybody and that these may lead to potential prejudice or other problems.

Prior to Project:

Does tend to be very stigmatised when you talk about politics. Political convictions; -people might look down on you but if you do believe in it then I don't think that should stop anyone. (P3)

I am not really interested about social issues, even if I do follow from a distance. (P6)

Direct impact of the Project:

N/A

Impact of other factors:

I do not really discuss political issues, only when there are things related to the environment. (P5)

I do discuss and express my political views freely about anything that is in the news. E.g. the environment, reproductive rights etc. I still feel a little intimidated by people to express my opinion. But since I turned 20 it is less and if I feel strongly about something I will speak up. (P3)

5.5.3 Participation in elections/running for an office

The youths were also asked whether they would consider running for office, be it political, at local level or within an NGO. There was already interest among the youths prior to going on the Youth Exchange. In fact four of the youths stated that they had already held some form of office, even if it was a small organisation when they were still at school. Five out of the nine interviewed also considered participating in elections within an NGO. They also overall intended to vote. When asked about impact of the project, only one of the youths interviewed linked the project to becoming more active within one's own NGO. On the other hand, all the youths did express greater degree of participation due to other factors. Already after one year they highlighted their intention to vote in elections, and to be more active within NGOs. Two youths considered being candidates in local elections. This interest decreased slightly the following year in the third interview.

Stage	
Pre-interview	Has held office/run in NGO/school council – P1, P3, P5, P6 Will vote/Voted in next election – P1, P2, p3 Will run in NGO –P2, P3, P4, P5, p7 May not vote as no interested –P6
After 1 year (due to project)	More active within own NGO –P5
After 2 years (due to project)	
After 1 year (due to other factors)	I have voted before –P1, P2, P3, P4, P5 I intend to be more active within NGO –P1, P2, P3, P4, P6, P7 I may consider Local Council in future – P1, P3 I am a follower and do not intend to be candidate –P5
After 2 years (due to factors)	I would like to be candidate for Local Council in the future – P1, P4 I would like to take on more responsibilities in future at work, NGOs– P1, p2, p5 I would like prefer to sign petitions, do good –P1 I voted – P2, P3, P4 I would like to run for office but am scared as I feel accountable, feel too young –P3

Prior to Project:

Had run for primary school president on student council and was elected. (P6)

Participated in school election – EcoSKOLA. In future may consider being active in NGOs and run for a position in NGO. (P7)

Direct impact of the Project:

I have become a more active person within my NGO. (P5)

Impact of other factors:

I am interested in taking a greater role within scouts as I grow, but at the moment I do not really have much time. (p5)

It is important that we vote for people who are going to implement changes for us. We have to vote for people who are in line with our beliefs. I will vote for the MEP elections. I have signed petitions but have not participated in protests. I am not one who insists on getting opinions across, unless I am very passionate about it. (P4)

To take an active role, to candidate yourself e.g. in local Councils to bring about changes, also to possible go higher and to move upwards, take more responsibilities. I have never so far ran for office as I need to finish my studies first. In the future I would be interested to candidate myself for Local Councils to improve aspects of the environment, as I can do something within the Council. I have participated in petitions but never in protests. I prefer to do something which is beneficial. (P1)

5.5.4   Actual participation in (civil) society and political life

It is to be noted that 5 of the 9 youths interviewed stated that they did voluntary work. This shows that the youths who opted to participate in the Youth Exchanges were already active in society prior to the exchange experience. Despite this, they still stated that the project made them more active. They spoke of becoming more active, ready to speak out and to take on a greater role in NGOs. This was stated mainly by the youths in the first project. It could be that since the second project involved Scouts, the organisation itself regularly promotes participation and so it could be the reason why the youths from the second project did not identify the exchange as having a direct impact. In fact, the youths identified themselves with becoming more active for other reasons than the project. This can indicate that the project as well as other experiences that young people experience as part of growing up influence how young people develop as citizens and how much they participate in society.

Stage	
Pre-interview	Does voluntary work regularly – P1, P2, P3, P5, P7 Attend meetings, other initiatives related to issues –P2, P4 Need support to help as am still young – P6
After 1 year (due to project)	I am now a more active person –P1, P2 I am now able to speak out – P3
After 2 years (due to project)	I am more active and take up opportunities – P1,P2 I am an active citizenship who is responsible through volunteering – P1
After 1 year (due to other factors)	I am active in my NGO – P1, P2, P5, P6 I take part in initiatives e.g. course association, environmental initiatives – P3,P4
After 2 years (due to factors)	I do volunteering work with people, for environment –P1 I am active I society e.g. NGO, science café , Fieldtrips –P3, P4 I live by my principles –P4

Prior to Project:

I do voluntary work with the elderly in an old people's home and also with my family (has two elderly grandparents living with him) – to help others, to help when needed. I have to work now so that when I grow up I can work more – e.g. doctors without borders. I used to volunteer at my school Chaplaincy- to send out a message. (P1)

Direct impact of the Project:

I now have more initiative and like to participate more in projects; I have become more active as now I realise through the project that every minority group should be given importance. (P2)

The project helped me learn the importance of speaking out. (P3)

Impact of other factors:

I participate through my input in the Science Café to which I started contributing here since I am at University. (P3)

I have become a leader at Scouts and so have taken up a role of more responsibilities. (P5)

5.5.5 Taking part in further projects / organising own projects

When the youths were interviewed prior to the Youth Exchange, for some it was the first project, while for others it was not. It does not seem that participating in the Youth Exchange actually influenced them to take on other projects. However, they did state that they did participate in other projects, this mainly through NGOs and not through EU funding programmes.

Stage	
Pre-interview	First project –P1, P4 Taken part in other projects –P2, P5 Willing to do more projects –P7
After 1 year (due to project)	I want to do voluntary work –P1
After 2 years (due to project)	
After 1 year (due to other factors)	I have participated in other EU projects –P2 I have participated in projects by NGOs – P2, P4, P5, P5, P7
After 2 years (due to factors)	I have taken a role of responsibility within my student organization – P1 I have not done any projects but would like to participate in projects, mobility –P3, p5 I have participated in other projects –P2, P4

Prior to Project:

I would like to take part in other exchanges in the future, and to go abroad. (P6)

I have already taken part in one other project and hope to take part in more. (P2)

Direct impact of the Project:

I want to go and do voluntary work in Africa with children. The poverty that I saw in Romania inspired me to do something to help in the future. (P1)

Impact of other factors:

I have not participated in other projects but I would not mind participating in another one. I now do projects with NGOs on the environment. (P4)

I hope that when I go to University that I go on a study exchange as I know that there are many opportunities. I am interested in experiencing another country and getting to know young people of different nationality. (P5)

6.0   Overall findings

In order to capture whether there have been long term effects on participation and active citizenship, one needs to look at the main effects that the youths highlighted across the different indicators.

- **Attitudes and values:** The analysis show that after one year the youths felt that the projects made them more aware of people around them and the environment. They still expressed an interest two years later, but did not attribute this as an impact of the exchange experience. They did feel European before going on the exchange, but stated one year later that the youth exchange experience made them feel even more European. Two years on, they expressed interest in regulations and opportunities as European citizenship, but not as a direct impact of the Youth Exchange. They held few values related to National Youth policies and the European Youth strategy prior to the exchange. The project, however, in this case, had little effect on increasing interest. On the other hand, the youths already held attitudes and values towards the environment prior to the youth exchange. This interest continued to increase as a direct impact of the project, especially after one year. While the interest remained and grew further two years on, the youths did not really link it directly to the youth exchange experience. With respect to democratic aspects, the youths felt that through the project they realised that they have a voice. Again, this attitude was raised again in the 3rd interview, but not attribute it directly to the project. The project did not seem to have impact with respect to attitudes and values related to fairness in society.

- **Knowledge:** The youths stated that the experience of going on a youth exchange promoted knowledge about being an active citizen. This was felt especially after one year. The project did promote some learning about youth policies, but this dwindled by the end of the second year. In the second interview the youths also highlighted that in the exchange they learnt about conservation of the environment. Two years later, in the third interview, they still expressed further knowledge related to the environment, but did not attribute this learning directly to the project.

- **Skills:** If one reviews skills that the youths stated that they developed as a direct impact of the project, one finds skills related to social skills such a working in a team, leadership, and working with people of different cultures. One also finds their recognition of having a voice and how to use it to express their opinion. However, some youths also stated learning similar skills which were not the direct impact of the youth exchange experience.

- **Practice:** There was no particular impact of the youth exchange on the youths' practice of keeping themselves informed about social and political issues. The youths only made reference to environmental issues in the third interview, and these were not considered related to the project. A similar pattern was noted with respect to protection of the environment. While the youths expressed an interest to run for office, mainly within NGOs, they did not identify this as an impact of the youth exchange. However, they did state that the exchange experience did make them become more active as citizens. Again, they also stated that they became more active as a result of other factors than the youth exchange.

Overall, it can be concluded that the youths did feel that they increased their participation as active citizens in society and became more active as citizens as a direct impact of the experience of participating in the youth exchange. This was mainly the case up to one year after the experience. However, it is not clear how much their participation in the youth exchanges has continued to impact their growth after two years. This may be explained in that, as young people grow and start becoming adults, they start making decisions about their career paths, and consequently they become more aware of the world around them, society and social issues. This is part of the maturation process that every young person goes through. So, participating in Erasmus+ youth projects such as Youth Exchanges can influence this growing process in different ways. It acts as an eye-opener to Europe and the world with its social, political and environmental issues. It also raises awareness that we live in a bigger world than that which we are familiar with, that there exist inequalities in society, and that there are others who can share some of our views and opinions, and others who do not.

7.0   Conclusion

The study showed strongly how the Youth Exchanges did to a degree, even if not as the only influence, contribute to promote participation and active citizenship among the participating youths. they surely promoted a stronger feeling of being European. The youths started recognising that they have a voice, and that they can use it to express their opinion as citizens. In the case of the youths from the first project, it also, to a degree, influenced their career choices.

Young people today have the opportunity to make many different experiences through travel and participating in different actions. Funds invested in such programmes do not only provide opportunities for youths to travel, but experiences such as Youth Exchanges, also contribute to their formation as active citizens as part of the process of becoming responsible adults.

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