



research based analysis of **youth in action**

Youth in Action  
makes a difference!



Youth in Action (YiA) is a programme of the European Union supporting European youth projects. YiA fosters participation, active citizenship and competence development of young people, youth workers and youth leaders through non-formal education and learning, thus empowering them to meet the challenges of our societies. YiA also contributes to the inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities as well as to the development of youth organisations, centres and groups, and thus to civil society. Overall, YiA contributes to the development of a democratic society with active citizens in Europe.

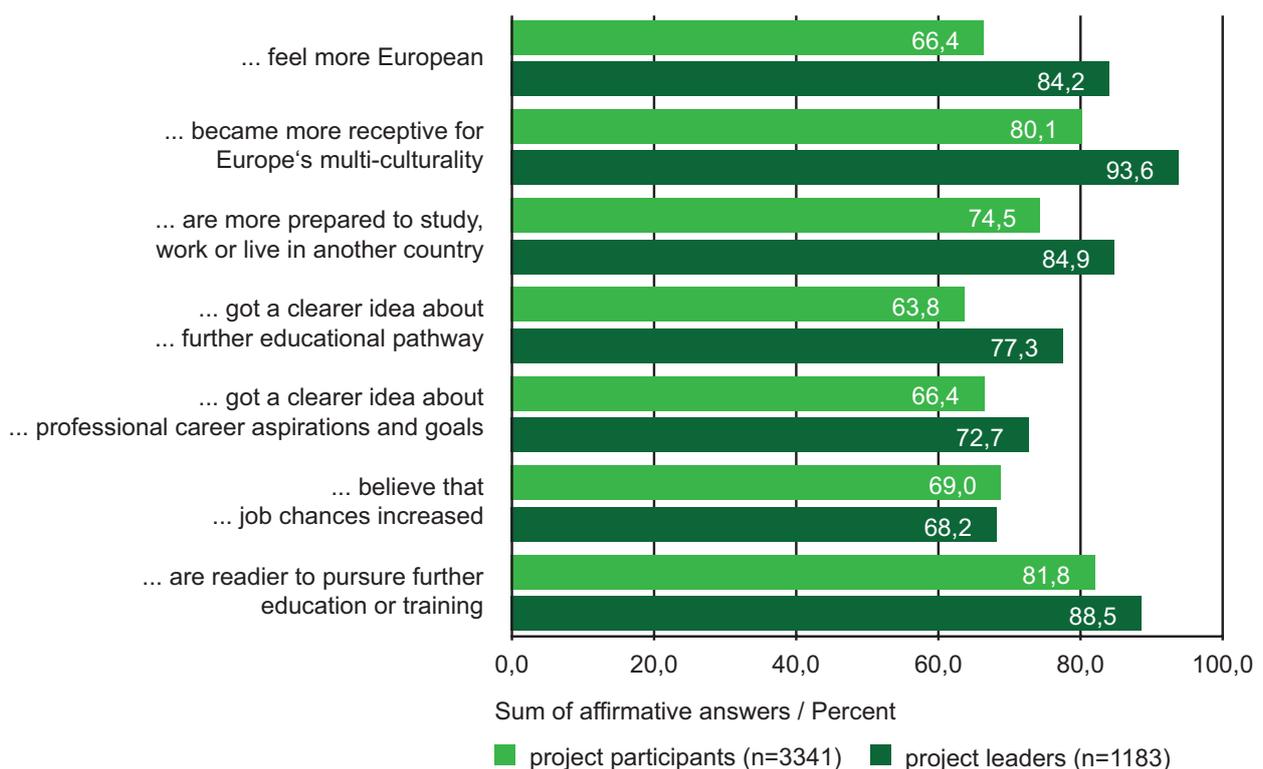
ongoing project

august 2012

## introduction

Latest research results show that the YiA programme contributes to a great extent to the development of competences which are essential for active citizenship and participation in public and political life as well as in civil society. Furthermore, young people as well as youth workers and youth leaders develop competences which are useful for their professional development and gaining new perspectives and motivation for their educational and professional careers. As the programme period of YiA will be coming to an end in 2013, it is of utmost importance to continue supporting young people through funding European youth projects and thereby foster participation, active citizenship, competence development and inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities.

Effects of projects on project participants and project leaders



## setting the scene

Research-based Analysis and Monitoring of the Youth in Action programme (RAY) is conducted by the 'RAY Network', which was founded in 2008 and currently includes the Youth in Action National Agencies and their research partners in 15 countries. RAY aims to explore the effects of the YiA programme of the European Union, especially the effect on young people, youth workers and youth leaders involved in YiA-funded projects as well as on their organisations, groups and communities where projects take place. The research results indicate that the YiA programme contributes to a large extent to competence development, active citizenship and participation in civil society and political life, but also to employability. Effects are not only explored with respect to the intentions, objectives and priorities of the YiA programme, thus contributing to quality assurance and development in the implementation of the YiA programme as well as to evidence-based and research-informed youth policy development, but also to effects of YiA projects at large, thus seeking to generate new knowledge about the processes and outcomes of non-formal education activities in general and more specifically in non-formal youth education activities with an international dimension.

## objectives of the research

The main objectives are to contribute to quality assurance and development in the implementation of the Youth in Action programme, to contribute to evidence-based and research-informed youth policy development, and to develop a better understanding about processes and outcomes of non-formal education activities, in particular in the youth field.

# research-based evidence and analysis

## research approach

In principle, research-based analysis and monitoring of YiA envisages a combination of quantitative and qualitative social research methods. For the present study, standardised surveys with project participants and project leaders were implemented. Based on concepts and research instruments developed by the Institute of Educational Science at the University of Innsbruck in Austria, two multilingual online questionnaires were established – one for the participants and one for project leaders/members of project teams of YiA funded projects. The questionnaires mainly consisted of closed/multiple-choice questions and some supplementary open questions. Both questionnaires included a number of dependency questions, which only appeared for the respondents in case a previous question was answered in a specific way. The survey was implemented using an online survey platform. A total of 3,470 participants from 49 countries (including all EU member states) were included in the sample, representing 7,2% of all YiA participants during the programme period the survey is covering. They were involved in altogether more than 823 projects.

Additionally a total of 1,215 project leaders from 46 countries (including all EU member states) were included in the sample, representing 12,6% of all project leaders involved in YiA projects during the period the survey is covering. They were involved in altogether more than 765 projects.

## new knowledge

The on-going research illustrates the effects of the YiA programme on those involved in it. The current study, based on considerably sized samples from projects funded through YiA National Agencies in 12 European countries provides for an in-depth analysis of these effects, including comparisons by (sub-) actions and countries.

# main findings

## participation and active citizenship

The outcomes of the surveys suggest that the involvement in YiA projects contributes to the development of the four permanent priorities<sup>1</sup> of the YiA programme, especially citizenship competences in a broad sense and in particular interpersonal, social, intercultural and foreign language competences of both participants and project leaders. This includes the development of respective skills and knowledge, but also of attitudes and values – for example respect for other cultures and appreciation of cultural diversity; solidarity, tolerance and individual freedom; ‘feeling as a European’ and being interested in European topics; new knowledge about Europe, inclusion, youth and youth policies; awareness of European values and of inequality in society.

The responses also indicate that involvement in the projects results in an increased participation in public and political life. Independent from their involvement in a YiA project, participants were asked about their opinions with respect to political participation. YiA participants value political participation very highly, with more than two thirds believing that it is definitely important to discuss political and social issues and to make use of their rights to have a say in political decisions affecting them directly. Around half of the participants believe that it is definitely important to be involved in European politics and to have the opportunity to get in direct contact with political actors – indicating a sense of European citizenship and an interest in interactive political participation.

Effects of the project with respect to YiA objectives and priorities (participants' responses)

How did the project affect you in the end? (N=3470)		to a smaller extent	to the same extent	to a greater extent	Total
I participate in societal and/or political life ...	Count	304	1836	1128	3268
	%	9,3	56,2	<b>34,5</b>	100,0
I am interested in European issues ...	Count	166	1407	1687	3260
	%	5,1	43,2	<b>51,7</b>	100,0
I am committed to work against discrimination, intolerance, xenophobia or racism ...	Count	279	1880	1103	3262
	%	8,6	57,6	<b>33,8</b>	100,0
Disadvantaged people have my support ...	Count	185	1812	1261	3258
	%	5,7	55,6	<b>38,7</b>	100,0
<b>Total</b>	<b>Count</b>	934	6935	5179	13048
	<b>%</b>	<b>7,2</b>	<b>53,1</b>	<b>39,7</b>	<b>100,0</b>

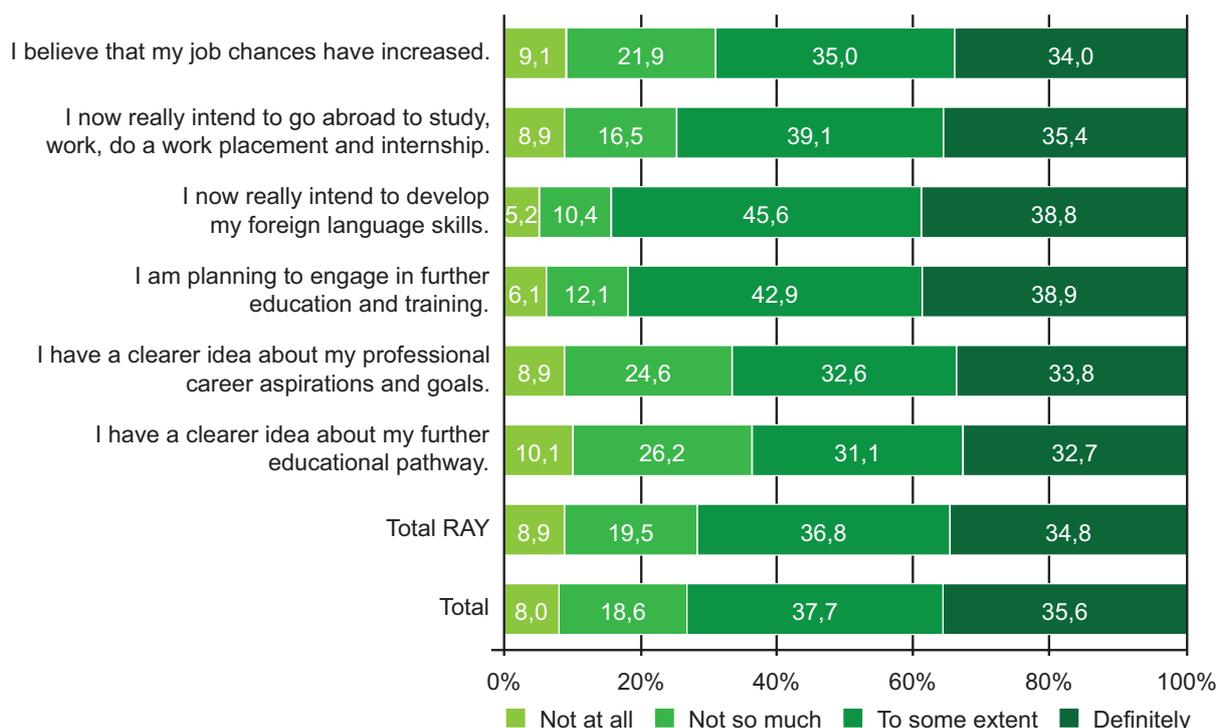
## competence development

The findings indicate that the participation in YiA projects contributes to the development of all key competences for lifelong learning<sup>2</sup>. While the most distinct development is reported for interpersonal, social and intercultural competence as well as communication in a foreign language, a significant development is also reported for sense of entrepreneurship, civic competence, cultural awareness and expression, and learning competence ('learning to learn'). In addition developments can be found for communication in the first language (mother tongue), mathematical competence and sense of initiative. The self-assessment of participants is confirmed by the assessment by the project of the participants' competence development, showing a highly significant correlation between the self-perception and the external perception.

## educational and professional development

The results of the surveys indicate that the involvement in YiA projects stimulated both participants and project leaders to consider or actually plan further educational activities and their professional development. Furthermore, a large majority of participants and of project leaders believe that their job opportunities have increased at least to some extent: together with the competence development outlined above, this reflects an effect on the professional development of the actors involved in the YiA programme beyond the youth field and civil society, especially in view of their involvement in the work domain. This points towards a significant effect complementing the social, cultural and political dimensions of the YiA programme. Youth workers and youth leaders also report that their youth work competences were developed, in particular with respect to non-formal education and international youth projects. The involvement in YiA projects also stimulates a process of reflecting on one's educational and/or professional pathway and to plan further educational activities and/or one's professional development.

Effects of the project with respect to educational and professional development [participants' responses]



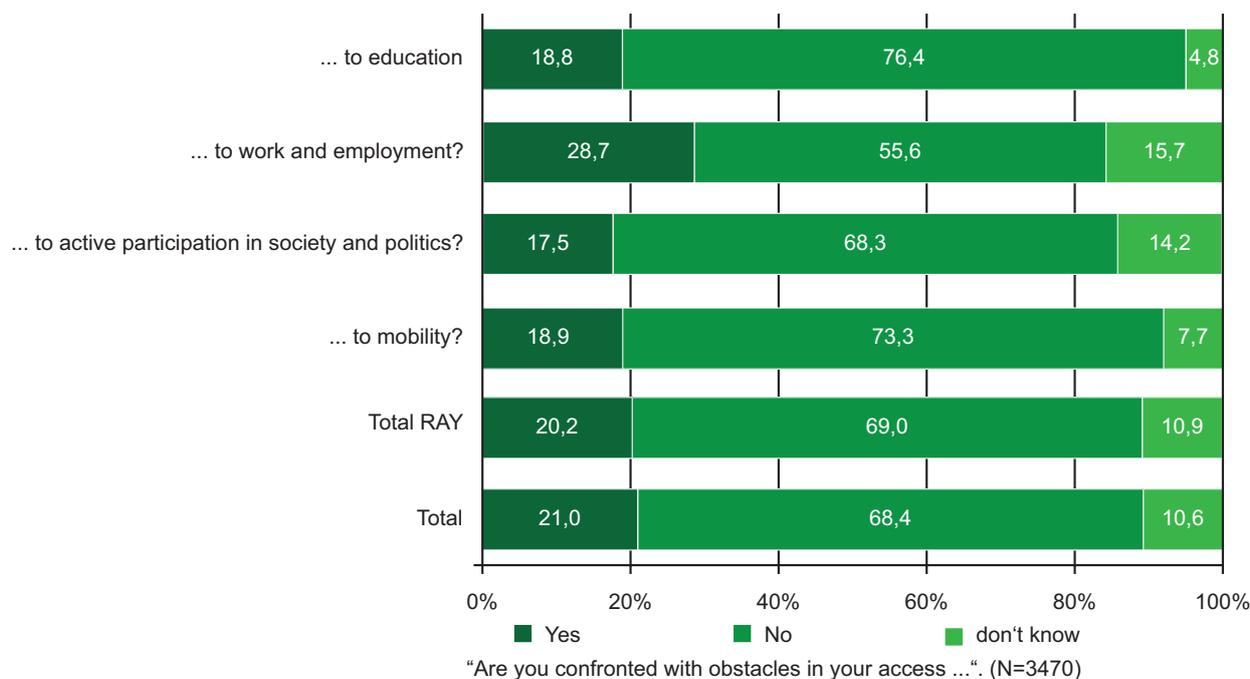
“Did the project experience have further effects on you?”. N=3470

## reaching out to ALL young people

As for the profile of the young people participating in YiA projects, there is a considerable group of participants who clearly belong to the anticipated target group of the YiA programme: young people with fewer opportunities who are confronted with obstacles to their access to education, work, mobility and participation in society. The size of this group is hard to grasp because it is difficult to assess who is actually disadvantaged depending on the specific contexts, but nearly a third of participants indicate that they are confronted with obstacles in their access to work and employment, and around a fifth in their access to education. More than half of the project leaders indicate that their projects involved young people with fewer opportunities.

Furthermore, there is a high interest of beneficiaries, youth workers and youth leaders to include young people with fewer opportunities in YiA projects: a large majority of the participants in training and networking projects are reported to be youth workers/leaders who work with young people with fewer opportunities.

Obstacles to education, work, employment, mobility and participation in society and politics reported by YiA participants



## key messages

### policy implications and recommendations

As evidence shows, the YiA programme is very effective in meeting its objectives and priorities and should be continued to provide for supporting young people in their development.

Results of the study indicate that non-formal education is very effective in supporting young people to define their educational and professional pathway and thereby to improve their employability. Non-formal education and YiA as a programme implementing it can contribute to achieving the goal of less than 10% school dropouts as defined under the Europe 2020 strategy as well as the flagship initiative “Youth on the move”.

The current YiA programme fosters non-formal and informal learning and is an effective instrument to strengthen all of the eight key competences for lifelong learning – therefore, the opportunity for developing key competences through non-formal and informal learning should be ensured through the continuation of the YiA programme and similar initiatives. Findings also show, that YiA contributes to reaching the goals of the EU Strategy 2010-2018 “Youth – Investing and Empowering”, especially regarding the aims concerning non-formal education, participation as well as entrepreneurship and should, therefore, be an essential part of future programmes of the EU.

## for the future it is necessary to:

- Explore the potential of participants’ increased interest in European topics and develop possibilities to transfer this interest into active participation
- Enhance the recognition of non-formal education, especially its contribution to the competence development and increased employability of young people, which is one of the fields of action defined in the EU-Strategy “Youth – Investing and Empowering”
- Implement actions, such as youth initiatives and youth democracy projects, which strengthen the readiness of young people to be active in the interest of their community and support local and regional activities
- Improve existing European mechanisms such as the ‘structured dialogue’ to foster youth participation on local, regional and European level and establish new initiatives for enhancing participation of all young people in public and political life as well as in civil society
- Recognise the potential of YiA to reach young people with fewer opportunities and improve and expand the inclusive approach of YiA in order to find new possibilities to reach more young people with fewer opportunities through the development of specific strategies
- Provide more possibilities for education and training of youth workers and youth leaders as key actors of (international) youth work through further developing the training and cooperation plan (TCP)<sup>3</sup> in order to secure high quality in youth work and the possibility for professional exchange and development
- Create support structures to foster interpersonal, social and intercultural competence gained through YiA projects
- To ensure the supportive approach towards the target groups a network of independent YiA National Agencies is indispensable
- Ensure research-based analysis and monitoring for the future generation of European youth programmes

<sup>1</sup> The four permanent priorities of the YiA programme 2007-2012 are European Citizenship, Participation of young people, Cultural Diversity and Inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities

<sup>2</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/key\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/key_en.htm)

<sup>3</sup> The training and cooperation plan (TCP) is an instrument of National Agencies that supports youth worker mobility to foster quality, the level of participation, contact with new target groups and project development through seminars and trainings.

## project identity

Coordinator	Institute of Educational Science of the University of Innsbruck, Austria
Research Project Direction	Prof. Dr. Lynne Chisholm
Consortium	National Agencies and their research partners from Austria, the Flemish speaking community of Belgium, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Poland, the Slovak Republic, Sweden and Turkey
Contact	 <p>Helmut Fennes Institute of Educational Science University of Innsbruck Liebeneggstraße 8 A-6020 Innsbruck, Austria Tel. +43 512 507 4013 helmut.fennes@uibk.ac.at</p>
Duration	2008 - on-going
Website	<a href="http://www.researchyouth.net">www.researchyouth.net</a>

[http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/key\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/key_en.htm)  
[http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/framework\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/framework_en.htm)  
[http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/pdf/targets\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/pdf/targets_en.pdf)

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