



research based analysis of **youth in action**

**Research Based Analysis of Youth in Action
Programme
RAY Network National Research**

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**NATIONAL REPORT
TURKEY**

**Prepared on behalf of Turkish Social Sciences Association by
Assist. Prof. Asuman Göksel
Assoc. Prof. Özgehan Şenyuva**

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Contents

1. Foreword	5
2. Introduction	7
2.1. What is RAY research?.....	7
2.2. Objectives, stages and methods of the RAY Turkey Survey	11
3. Action-based Findings of the RAY Turkey Research	15
3.1 Action 1.1 – Youth Exchanges and Action 3.1 – Cooperation with the Neighbouring Countries of the European Union	19
3.2 Action 1.2 – Youth Initiatives.....	29
3.3 Action 2 – European Voluntary Service	38
3.4 Action 4.3 – Training and Networking of those active in youth work and youth organisations; Action 3.1 - Cooperation with the Neighbouring Countries of the European Union and TCP – Training and Cooperation Plan	48
3.5 Action 5.1 – Meetings of young people and those responsible for youth policy	60
4. Prominent Findings and General Assessment	69
4.1 Competences and Learning Awareness	69
<i>Social and civic competences (Key Competence 6)</i>	70
<i>Communication in Foreign Languages (Key Competence 2)</i>	76
<i>Learning to Learn (Key Competence 5)</i>	77
<i>Entrepreneurship and Sense of Initiative (Key Competence 7)</i>	79
4.2 Project design.....	82
4.3 Project Activities and Non-formal Education (Learning) Methods	86
4.4 Employment Opportunities	89
4.5 Continuity – sustainability	92
4.6 European Union, Youth in Action Programme and National Agency	94
4.7 Impact on the Organisations and Cooperation between Sectors and Institutions	97
4.8 Recognition ve Appreciation	101
4.9 Inclusion of Young People with Fewer Opportunities.....	105
5. Conclusions	109

1. Foreword

Turkey-European Union relations with a full membership perspective follows a path with ups and downs for more than half a century. Turkey's membership process is closely related to comprehensive improvements at legal, political and economic levels and their success. However, one of the most significant features of this process is the progress in sectoral integration, not necessarily linked to the conditionality of full membership. Education and youth programmes are maybe the most successful and comprehensive examples of such an integration.

For almost ten years, Turkey is a part of the EU education and youth programmes and thousands of young people from Turkey and other programme countries benefit from these opportunities. If we also take the process of Euro-Mediterranean Youth Programme into consideration - which was initiated following the 1995 Barcelona Process- for more than twenty years, young people in Turkey have been developing joint projects with other young people; they travel and experience face-to-face interaction; they exchange ideas on a variety of themes from environment to human rights, from gender to active citizenship and they work together for the construction of a common Europe. Although it has participated in those programmes relatively later, by using the potential of its youth, Turkey has become one of the most successful and active countries in terms of the young people that it sent and hosted and the projects it financed. Parallel to such success, Turkey has a well-deserved respect in the European youth work and plays an important role in the programme.

It has been for a long time an academic and scientific interest and necessity to analyse what youth workers and young people who participate in these projects gain, what kind of an impact the projects that they were involved in have on their personal and professional development, and how the young people and youth workers make use of their experiences for the interest of the society. However, it was also a neglected area due to the lack of systematic data collection and need for enormous work force especially considering the number of projects and young people. If we leave aside some occasional one-off impact analyses and assessments with quite small samples, the non-existence of any comprehensive assessments regarding the quality and impact of the projects, as well as the gains of the young people has been a remarkable deficiency in Turkey as one of the leading countries in terms of project and participant numbers.

Membership of the National Agency of Turkey to the already existing RAY research Network in Europe has been an important turning point to remedy such a deficiency. By means of RAY research, not only the opportunity to assess the youth programme projects through the participants and youth workers, as their most important actors, but also that to enlarge this assessment in terms of time and space, have been taken. Here, *time* means the collection of data over time by running the survey every year; and *space* refers to the comparative analysis of the findings on Turkey with those of the other partner European countries.

This report before you is the country report that includes the analysis of the data collected through four online internet questionnaires, distributed to the project participants in 2012 and 2013, and data from focus group meetings and interviews with selected participants and project leaders, and it is significant by being the first RAY research report of Turkey. Transnational comparative analyses within the context of RAY project were made by the coordination team of RAY Network and they are available to public at the website of the network.

As the research partner of the National Agency of Turkey for the RAY research within the period 2012-2013, we are jubilant that we could complement the experiences we had for years in youth work, in which we started as voluntary participants, with our academic knowledge and expertise. We are glad that we eventually had the chance to systematically and scientifically analyse the impacts, which we both have very positive experiences with, of the youth work that we were engaged in at different levels over the years. Throughout the period we worked as the national research partner, it was also a source of happiness for us to witness the selfless and dedicated contribution of the National Agency of Turkey to youth work. We would like to thank to Mr. Bülent Özcan, Mr. Sefa Yahşi, Mr. Hür Güldü and all other National Agency staff, who constantly provided support, encouragement and help to us. Eventually, they are the people who work for what we have examined and they have contributed considerably to the positive picture that comes out of this report. We hope that this report helps both them and other segments of the society in reminding and explaining the importance of their efforts.

Assoc. Prof. Özgehan Şenyuva

Assist. Prof. Asuman Göksel

2. Introduction

2.1. What is RAY research?

*Research-based Analysis and Monitoring of Youth in Action Programme*¹ (RAY Network) is an international initiative, established by a variety of National Agencies², in order to analyse the non-formal education experiences that the Youth in Action Programme provides for the young people and youth workers in a scientific, evidence-based and research-informed manner. RAY research aims at contributing to the quality development of non-formal learning processes and outcomes, created by the Youth in Action Programme and youth policies in the youth field.

More concretely, RAY Network aims the following³:

- Researching the impact of the Youth in Action Programme on the actors, organisations and institutions who take part in the projects:
 - Learning processes and competences of the Youth in Action Programme's project participants, youth workers and youth leaders;
 - Impact of the Youth in Action Programme on the participants' attitudes, skills and behaviour in terms of participation and active/democratic citizenship;
 - Learning outcomes of the organisations that are financially supported.
- Research how the participants of the Youth in Action Programme learn, how they develop their skills, what kind of pedagogical approaches they adopt, and how they implement them in practice.

More precisely within the context of the Youth in Action Programme, following are researched:

- To what extent the Programme objectives and priorities are followed and realised in the projects that are financially supported;
- How the Programme objectives are realised in practice;

¹ RAY Network official web site: <http://www.researchyouth.net/>.

² The name of the units responsible for the implementation of the European Union Education and Youth Programmes at the national level.

³ <http://www.researchyouth.net/2011/objectives/#more-7>.

- What other kind of measures could be developed in terms of realisation of the Programme and youth policy objectives, especially regarding inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities;
- Through which instruments, appreciation and recognition of the skills gained within the context of non-formal learning could be ensured.

Aims and objectives of the RAY research Network are identified as follows:

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

In its most basic meaning, RAY research aims to understand “what” and “how” project participants and project leaders, as the beneficiaries of the Youth in Action Programme, learn; and thus, to contribute to the provision of necessary knowledge and evidence in order to maximise the benefits of the future projects for the young people. The questions of “what was learned in YiA projects?” and “which competences (knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values) were reported to be developed in the project?” refer to the outcome of the youth projects in terms of their added value for the young people and for their life opportunities. The questions of “how do participants and project leaders learn in YiA projects?” and “what contributes to their learning?” refers to quality related aspects of the projects, namely the design of, as well as the methods used in, the projects in a way to ensure better learning opportunities for the project beneficiaries.

In order to achieve the aims and objectives of the RAY research, utilisation of quantitative and qualitative research methods is foreseen. The first one of these instruments is the “standard survey” designed for general reporting at the national level. The standard survey depends on quantitative research methods and includes yearly-based two standard questionnaires, one of which is designed to collect data regarding the learning processes of the project participants and the other that of the youth workers (project leaders), who actually implement the projects. The standard questionnaires are multilingual, in other words they are translated into the languages spoken in the RAY Network partner countries.

The second instrument is the “special survey”, designed to identify the non-formal learning experiences and benefits created by the Youth in Action Programme projects. The special survey on non-formal learning utilises both qualitative and quantitative methods. Quantitative data is collected through “special questionnaires” distributed separately to project participants and youth workers implementing the projects. Qualitative data is collected through the focus group meetings realised with the young project participants, and through the interviews conducted with the youth workers who implement the projects.

In this context, general research questions are as follows:

- How do key competences develop in the Youth in Action Programme?
- How do the actors participated in the Youth in Action Programme projects develop their key competences?
- How would the research contribute to theory building?
- How would the research contribute to the betterment of the practice?

RAY research aims to analyse the impact of the European Union’s Youth in Action (YiA) Programme on the young people, youth workers and youth leaders, their organisations, groups and various other institutions, who benefited from the programme financially. These impacts are not only examined in terms of the objectives and priorities of the Youth in Action Programme, in other words, in terms of quality assurance in and contribution to development of the implementation of the Youth in Action Programme; and development of youth policy based on evidence and research. RAY research, at the same time, examines the more general impacts of the Youth in Action Programme, in other words, in terms of the efforts for producing new knowledge on the non-formal education processes and outcomes in general, and the non-formal education activities at international level in particular.

RAY research, initiated in 2008, includes Youth in Action Programme National Agencies from 16 countries⁴ and their research partners, under the coordination of Helmut Fennes, faculty at the Institute of Educational Science, University of Innsbruck (Austria).

⁴ Those 16 countries that take part in the RAY Network by July 2014 are Germany, Austria, Belgium (Dutch-speaking part), Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, the Netherlands, Sweden, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia and Turkey.

The first activity realised by the RAY Network was the implementation of the online multilingual questionnaires prepared for the young people, youth workers/leaders who participated in the Youth in Action Programme projects, in order to detect the impact of the Programme, namely the quantitative survey. This questionnaire also aims to analyse the implementation processes of the projects and identify the profiles of the individuals and organisations included in the projects. The “standard questionnaires” implemented twice a year since 2009 is sustained until the end of 2014 in a way to include the latest projects supported within the context of the Youth in Action Programme. The questionnaires, implemented in the own language of and in each of the RAY Network partner countries, were primarily analysed in 2011 and 2012 in the form of transnational reports, and published by the RAY Network⁵. Data collected from these questionnaires also constitutes an important resource for the National Reports. More than 50.000 Youth in Action project participants and project leaders from the RAY research partner countries between October 2009 and November 2011 were invited to fill in the RAY online questionnaires and more than 15.000 participants completed the questionnaires.

In addition to the standard survey, in 2012 RAY Network, as its second activity, developed the “special survey” in order to examine the learning processes of the individuals included in the Youth in Action Programme. This survey searches answers to the questions of in which contexts, in which educational approaches and how the participants and project leaders learn, and what are the methodologies and methods that contribute to learning within the context of the Youth in Action Programme and its projects. For this study, a “Special Questionnaire” that included questions about non-formal learning was designed, translated into the languages of the RAY Network partner countries, and implemented online. In addition, in the first half of 2013, a number of qualitative research methods including focus group meetings with the project participants and interviews with the project leaders were implemented in order to ensure a deeper analysis of the data collected through the questionnaires.

Turkish Social Sciences Association won the bidding process of the National Agency of Turkey in May 2012 and fulfilled the duties of implementation of the quantitative and qualitative research, as the national research partner of the RAY research for the duration

⁵ For the transnational reports, see <http://www.researchyouth.net/publications/>.

of June 2012-June 2014. Turkey became a partner country of the RAY Network in 2012, and in 2012, 2013 and 2014 the Turkish versions of the online questionnaires, prepared by the National Agency of Turkey and its research partner, were sent to all Youth in Action Programme participants as an invitation.

On behalf of the Turkish Social Sciences Association, the research was implemented by Assist. Prof. Dr. Asuman Göksel (Middle East Technical University, Department of Political Science and Public Administration) and Assoc. Prof. Dr. Özgehan Şenyuva (Middle East Technical University, Department of International Relations), and the control and testing of the questionnaires, statistical analysis and assessment of the questionnaires, preparation and implementation of all the focus group meetings and interviews within the context of the qualitative survey and the analysis of the qualitative data were undertaken by this team.

2.2. Objectives, stages and methods of the RAY Turkey Survey

Within the context of the RAY research, a total of four online questionnaires were implemented. In 2012, within the context of the Special Survey, two online questionnaires (May and November 2012) were filled in by **649 project participants** who participated in the Youth in Action Programme projects with project end dates 02.01.2011-30.09.2012; and in 2013 within the context of the Standard Survey, two online questionnaires (May and November 2013) were filled in by **802 project participants** who participated in Youth in Action Programme projects with the project end dates 30.07.2012-31.08.2013.⁶ This sample is composed of the individuals who were residing in Turkey when they participated in the project and it excludes the individuals who participated in the projects hosted in Turkey but were residing in another country at the time of the project application. Thus, as the sample shows, the findings and analysis presented in this National Report examine the impact of the Youth in Action Programme on the young people in Turkey. Percentage distribution of the sample according to activity and action types can be seen in Table 1 and Table 2.

⁶ Those numbers are the numbers gathered and used in the analysis after the missing; erroneous and problematic responses to the questionnaires were cleaned and data was organised.

Table 1 Percentage distribution of the RAY sample according to activity types

	2012 (%)	2013 (%)
Bilateral youth exchange	3.1	3
Democracy project	1.1	0.2
Evaluation meeting	0.3	0.4
European Voluntary Service (EVS)	14.2	24.3
Feasibility visits	0.3	0.4
Group EVS	1.1	0.7
Individual and group EVS	3.5	0.1
Individual EVS	1.7	0.2
Multilateral youth exchange	24.3	19
National youth initiative	12.9	5.6
National youth meeting	6.5	23.2
Partnership making activity	1.9	1.2
Seminar	2.2	0.9
Study visit	0.2	0.9
Training course	12.5	9.1
Transnational youth seminar	0	1.5
Transnational youth initiative	5.7	4.4
Tri-lateral youth exchange	8	4.9
Networking and contact making seminar and activity	0.5	0
	100	100
	N=649	N=802

Table 2 Percentage distribution of the RAY sample by action types

<i>Action</i>	2012 (%)	2013 (%)
1.1	29.7	23.6
1.2	18.6	20.6
1.3	1.1	0.2
2.1	20.5	25.2
3.1	9.2	8.5
4.3	13.1	6.6
4.9	1.2	1.2
5.1	6.5	14.1
Total	99.9	100
N	N=649	N=802

According to the Youthlink programme of the Directorate of the Centre for European Union Education and Youth Programmes, total number of project participants, residing in Turkey and participated in the projects realised in 2012, can be seen in Table 3 according to the activity types.

Table 3 Number of participants according to activity type, National Agency Youthlink 2012

<i>Action</i>	<i>Number of Participants (residing in Turkey)</i>	<i>Number of Female Participants</i>
1.1	1984	962
1.2	1620	789
1.3	1317	692
2.1	618	289
3.1	624	248
4.3 +TCP	1824	687
5.1	1451	688
Total	9438	4355 (%46.1)

Distribution of those individuals, residing in Turkey and participated in the projects realised in 2013, according to action type is given in Table 4, as retrieved from the Youthlink data.

Table 4 Number of participants according to action type, National Agency Youthlink 2012

<i>Action</i>	<i>Number of Participants (residing in Turkey)</i>	<i>Number of Female Participants</i>
1.1	1445	694
1.2	1824	922
1.3	3787	1875
2.1	1102	416
3.1	725	251
4.3+TCP	1467	564
5.1	2147	1034
Total	12497	5756 (%46.1)

The ratio of female respondents of the 2012 and 2013 questionnaires of the RAY survey is consistent with the National Agency data; and the ratio of the female respondents of the 2012 questionnaires is 44.8% and that for the 2013 is 44.6%. For this reason, before the analysis, no weighting was done in the data set regarding gender ratio.

Within the context of the RAY research, a number of qualitative research methods were also used in order to support the Special Survey. In this regard, the number of project participants who took part in focus group meetings, and the number of project leaders who participated in the interviews can be seen in Table 5.

Table 5 Distribution of Focus Group Meetings and Interviews according to Action Types and Number of Participants

Action	Action Type	Focus Group Meetings (Project participants)	Interviews (Project leaders)
Action 1.1 Action 3.1	Youth Exchanges Cooperation with the Neighbouring Countries of the European Union	7*	2
Action 1.2	Youth Initiatives	5	1
Action 1.3	Youth Democracy Projects	-	1
Action 2	European Voluntary Service	16*	1
Action 4.3 Action 3.1	Training and networking of those active in youth work and youth organisations Cooperation with the Neighbouring Countries of the European Union	4	1
Action 5.1	Meetings of young people and those responsible for youth policy	3	1
TCP	Training and Cooperation Plan	10	-
TOTAL		45	7

* Two separate focus group meetings were held.

3. Action-based Findings of the RAY Turkey Research

Before considering the impact and learning outcomes of the projects organised within the context of the Youth in Action Programme on the project participants and project leaders, it is important to understand why young people in general would like to participate in the Youth in Action Programme projects. The responses given by the participants to the open-ended questions of the 2013 Standard questionnaires provide quite illuminating data in this regard.

The answers given to the question of “My main reasons for participating in this project were...” by the respondents of the questionnaire can be summarised under a number of basic categories: personal development and gaining experience; getting to know different cultures; working for the benefit of the society; and, already taking part in the civil society activities.

The category of *personal development and gaining experience* refers to those major reasons for the participants to take part in the projects such as improving themselves, gaining experience, developing their language skills, primarily their English language skills, gaining experience of being abroad, contributing to the development of their social lives, contributing to their professional development and careers, perceived positive impact of the projects on their CVs, and to experience living on their own.

The category of *getting to know different cultures* is primarily related to the enthusiasm of the project participants to acquire knowledge about and to share experiences with the people and youngsters living in different countries. In this sense, project participants do not only participate in the Youth in Action projects in order to get to know people from different countries, but also in order to establish positive communication and dialogue with them, to learn through discussion about the differences (and similarities) between those cultures and their own cultures, to express their own cultures to the people they get acquainted with, and to work together with people from new and different cultures to reach at similar objectives.

Voicing frequently such cultural reasons can be construed as an important step taken even before the projects start in terms of “respect for cultural diversity”, as one of the

permanent priorities of the Youth in Action Programme, and “intercultural learning” and “intercultural dialogue” as an important component of the Programme.

Let's listen to young people: Why did I participate in the Project?

- To know about new people, places and perspectives...
- To know new people from different cultural backgrounds, and to observe their approaches to democracy...
- To learn about foreign cultures that I was not familiar before...
- To observe and absorb/grasp cross-cultural differences...
- To conduct a joint project with participants from various cultures and disciplines...
- To visit foreign countries and gain experiences...
- To develop a universal perspective by engaging in other cultures...
- To share our differences by keeping together with youth of the similar age...
- To improve inter-cultural dialogue...
- To get to know new countries and people, and to introduce Turkey to them
- Because co-operating with others for one goal makes me happy
- Because it is an ideal encounter to meet people with different backgrounds and discover foreign cultures...
- In compliance with the principles of volunteering, to acquaint myself with the cultural, democratic and volunteering practices of the host and my home country...

In addition to cultural interaction, young people would like to participate in the projects in order “to know the concept of European Union closer; to contribute to solving a problem and to get to know a European country better”.

The category of *working for the benefit of the society* shows that project participants would like to participate in the projects in order to realise useful activities both to be able to contribute to the future of their country and their close environments and for the communities that they live in and for the society in general.

Let's listen to young people: Why did I participate in the Project?

- To reach the delighted feeling of accomplishing something...
- To contribute to the future of my country...
- Because I want to do something useful for the people around me... (Just commenting on the problems but not taking into action was pointless. I wanted to help fellows like me, who do not have an easy access to books.)
- To take action for a better future...
- To accomplish something by voluntary action...
- To contribute to society...

Already taking part, or being willing to take part in the future, in a civil society organisation and/or in the youth work/volunteering activities is amongst the reasons for the project participants to take part in the Youth in Action Programme projects. Either organising such activities with their own organisations or the willingness to work in

partnership with civil society organisations functioning in European countries and getting to know them better are other reasons that motivate young people to participate in the projects.

Let's listen to young people: Why did I participate in the Project?

- As an employee in a non-governmental organisation (NGO), to acquire information about the role and impact of civil society in the European countries...
- Because the NGO that I am currently working is running the project...
- Since I work on volunteering, I wanted to be in this project ...
- Because I want to be a youth worker...
- To share my knowledge and experience that can contribute to decision-making processes...
- Because I am familiar with the organisation that implements the project; also my language skills allow me to communicate with the guests in English and assist them...

The responses to the Standard questionnaire show that besides all the reasons categorised and indicated above, another important factor that determines participation in the Youth in Action Programme projects is the *attractiveness of the themes/subjects of the projects*. Many respondents of the questionnaire indicated that the reason why they had participated in the project was due to the fact that those projects were about the fields or themes which they already worked on, they were interested in or were relevant to their professions. In this sense, frequently mentioned themes are disabled people and social health (fight against cancer, drugs and smoking; integration of the disabled people into the society...), environment (environment and protection of animals, renewable energy, waste management, nuclear energy, natural disasters...), employment and youth unemployment, arts (theatre, photography, dancing, cinema), history (cultural heritage...) and social and regional development (activities for village schools, children, disadvantaged young people).

Let's listen to young people: Why did I participate in the Project?

- To raise awareness about cancer, the detrimental disease of our age...
- To raise awareness about the drawbacks of drug use which is the subject-matter of the project I was involved in...
- To get information about youth unemployment...
- Because, I think, I can contribute to the issue...
- Because I find the topic on nuclear plants interesting...
- To take a step for environmental protection...
- To make a change in disabled people's life...
- Because I am good at advocating animal rights...
- Because, in this project, I have the opportunity to compare the past and present...
- Because I can mobilise my sympathy for children into practice and help them...
- To popularise bicycle use...
- Because I have a special interest for gravestones and history...
- To show that I can do something about paper waste...
- To make children in villages happy, and contribute to their education via the project...
- To reach people through the Forum Theatre...
- Because I think preserving our cultural heritage is an important issue...
- Because I want to participate in events that are organised for the benefit of children with autism...
- To contribute to the development of the region, remove the traces of terror and war, ensure a promising environment for students about their future...
- To discuss and share opinions about human rights and equality with people with different world views...
- Because I want to develop innovative social service models for the disadvantaged youth...

Of course, besides the motivations indicated above, young people and youth leaders have personal and humanistic reasons to participate in the projects. Tranquillity and happiness; having fun; to make friends; to take part in pleasant activities and get to know themselves better; going beyond their own limits; making their dreams come true; socialisation; spending enjoyable and informative times with their peers are amongst the reasons often voiced by the project participants. "Not taking part in a youth project before" is also one of the remarkable reasons indicated by the participants.

Well then, can the young people realise their reasons and expectations for taking part in those projects, once the projects are over? What and how do they learn through projects?

3.1 Action 1.1 – Youth Exchanges and Action 3.1 – Cooperation with the Neighbouring Countries of the European Union

Youth Exchanges (Action 1.1)⁷

Youth Exchange projects enable one or more groups of young people to go abroad, to meet peers from different countries with different social and cultural backgrounds and to learn from each other through an active participation in joint activities of common interest. Moreover, Youth Exchanges allow young people to experience Europe and so to feel more European citizens.

Youth Exchange projects aim that young people discover and become aware of different social and cultural realities through active participation. It is targeted that young people in the Youth Exchange projects learn mutually from each other, develop the entrepreneurial spirit and reinforce their feeling of being European citizens. Depending on the transnational partnership of youth groups from two or more countries, Youth Exchange projects provide young people with an opportunity to discuss and confront various themes and learn about each other's countries and cultures. One of the most important characteristics of the Youth Exchange projects is the reflection of non-formal learning principles and practice throughout the project.

It is not possible to label all types of mobility exchange activities of the groups of young people as "Youth Exchanges" within the context of the Youth in Action Programme. In this sense, the activities that are not considered as youth exchanges and thus are not eligible for grant are as follows: academic study trips; exchange activities which aim to make financial profit; exchange activities which can be classed as tourism; festivals; holiday travel; language courses; performance tours; school class exchanges; sports competitions; statutory meetings of organisations; political gatherings; and, work camps.

Youth exchanges provide young people from different cultures and speaking different languages with opportunities to get to know themselves and each other better by conducting joint activities on a particular theme. Since youth exchanges do not have any educational, linguistic or similar prerequisites, they make the participation of all young people including those with fewer opportunities possible and it has been the most popular and most effective activity of the Youth in Action Programme for the learning mobility opportunities it provides.

As a result of the analyses conducted within the RAY research, it becomes evident that youth exchanges constitute the first step for many people into the youth work, and by this means project participants have significant benefits both for their personal development and for their future plans in professional and personal terms. Again as a result of the impact assessment within the context of the RAY research, it becomes crystal clear that Youth in Action projects have quite positive impacts on the participant young people. Likewise, youth exchanges increase the interest of the young people in youth work activities and

⁷ Youth in Action Programme Guide, valid as of 1 January 2013, page 24.

provide them with self-confidence and support in order to organise different projects in different fields.

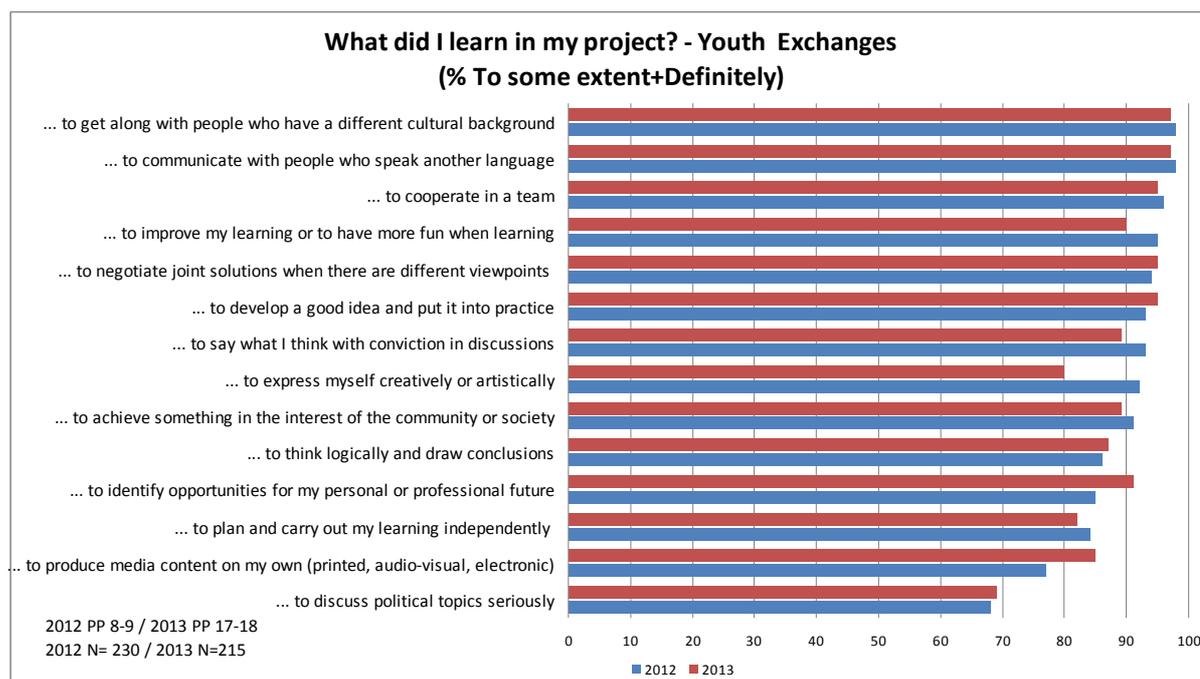
A total number of 445 young people, who took part in the Youth Exchange projects, responded to four questionnaires conducted in 2012 and 2013 within the context of the RAY research (2012: 230; 2013: 215). All the tables and graphs in this section are produced from the responses of those 445 young people. In addition, within the context of the special survey of the RAY research, in-depth interviews with two youth workers who acted as project leaders, and two focus group meetings with a total of seven young people who took part in the Youth Exchange projects (Action 1.1 and Action 3.1) as project participants were conducted. Thus, all the analyses in this section are produced and presented from the data collected by quantitative and qualitative research methods.

Learning in Youth Exchange Projects

Learning in Youth Exchanges is given a special attention in the 2012 Special (on the theme of learning in youth work) questionnaires and 2013 Standard (implemented annually in all RAY Network partner countries for youth work impact measurement and assessment) questionnaires distributed within the context of RAY research. The participants were given a list of different learning themes and asked to assess their learning levels on those themes⁸. Asking the same questions in four questionnaires conducted for two years ensured continuity and enabled an analysis with a larger sample.

⁸ 2012 Special Survey, Project Participant Questions 8 and 9; 2013 Standard Questionnaire, Project Participant Questions 17 and 18.

Graph 1 Learning in Youth Exchanges



Intercultural communication and *intercultural learning* themes, as major objectives of the Youth Exchanges, appear as the themes in which the young people developed the most. **Almost all** of the young people, who participated in the Youth Exchanges and who responded the questionnaire, indicated that through their participation in the projects, they learned better *to get along with people who have a different cultural background*. This figure has been **98%** in 2012 questionnaires and **97%** in 2013. Similarly, the figure of those who stated that they learned *to communicate with people who speak another language* was **98%** (2012) and **97%** (2013).

Team work theme, as one of the basic elements of youth work, takes a significant place within the learning processes of the youth exchange participants. Using non-formal education methods, young people in the youth exchanges practice working together and experience active learning and working methods, instead of a passive learning process. As a result of this, a great deal of young people participated in the survey indicated that they learned better *how to cooperate in a team* (2012: **96%** and 2013: **95%**). Focus group meetings also provide examples of the benefits of an intercultural working environment and team work for the young people.

Let's listen to young people...

“For sure, we experience and perceive intercultural learning all the while, however, apart from that; there are many things, such as quick thinking, acting and generating practical solutions, which I learned from other young friends. At least, I better learned that many things can be solved by establishing dialogue. Throughout individual and group activities, I realised the importance of team work.” (Action 1.1 Focus Group Meeting, Project Participant, Male)

“In a project on village life, during a study visit, when foreign participants saw local women with headscarves, they wanted to do the same. Seeing them taking pictures together was an emotional experience. Moreover, they attended a circumcision feast in which an Italian fellow followed our traditional practices. Experiencing our culture together with them was interesting.” (Action 1.1 Focus Group Meeting, Project Participant, Male)

Regarding learning in youth exchanges, in addition to those themes mentioned above, participants also stated a number of other themes and fields in which they experienced high levels of development and learning. In the analysis, the ratio of those participants who indicated that they learned better *how to achieve something in the interest of the community or society; to express themselves creatively or artistically; to say what they think with conviction in discussions; to develop a good idea and put it into practice; to negotiate joint solutions when there are different viewpoints; and, how they can learn better or have more fun when learning goes above 90%*.

The lowest ratio of learning in youth exchanges appears regarding *to discuss political topics seriously*. In the youth exchanges, although non-partisan discussion of political topics and expression of young people's own thoughts and views in a comfortable way are foreseen, the ratio of those who stated that they learned *to discuss political topics seriously* is **68%** for 2012 and **69%** in 2013. Statement of almost seven out of ten participants that they improved in this field is a considerable high ratio and should be considered as a success.

Short-term and long-term impacts of youth exchange projects

In the questionnaires and focus group meetings, in addition to what young people participating in a Youth Exchange project learned, how young people have been influenced by that experience and what kind of a personal and professional impact the project has had on their lives are also examined.

When the young people participated in the Youth Exchange projects were asked the question of “*How did the project affect you in the end?*”, the responses appeared as follows.

Table 1 Impact of Youth Exchange Project (General)

	To a Greater Extent %
I participate in societal and/or political life	60
I am interested in European issues	76
I am committed to work against discrimination, intolerance, xenophobia or racism	77
Disadvantaged people have my support	58

2013 PP 19, N=215

As shown in Table 1, **77%** of the Youth Exchange project participants indicated that they are committed to work against discrimination, intolerance, xenophobia or racism. The fact that an activity, which approximately lasts 10 days, leaves such a significant mark on the young people and contributes to the increase in the level of consciousness regarding social and structural discrimination is a remarkable benefit. Likewise, it is evident that these projects increase the interest of young people towards European issues within the context of European citizenship. **Three out of four young people**, who responded the questionnaire, stated that *they are interested in European issues* as an impact of the project.

Project participants in the focus group meetings and project leaders in the interviews also pointed out to similar benefits. The examples given show that participation in the projects brings the values such as *elimination of prejudices, mutual respect and tolerance* to the fore.

Let's listen to young people...

“There were disabled participants from Italy and Spain, mostly suffering from Down syndrome. I am not an extrovert person, and prefer remaining distant from disabled people. But, they were very friendly. They hug me, and invite me to playing or dancing. I can say that I overcame my prejudices towards disabled people.”
(Action 1.1 Focus Group Meeting, Project Participant, Female)

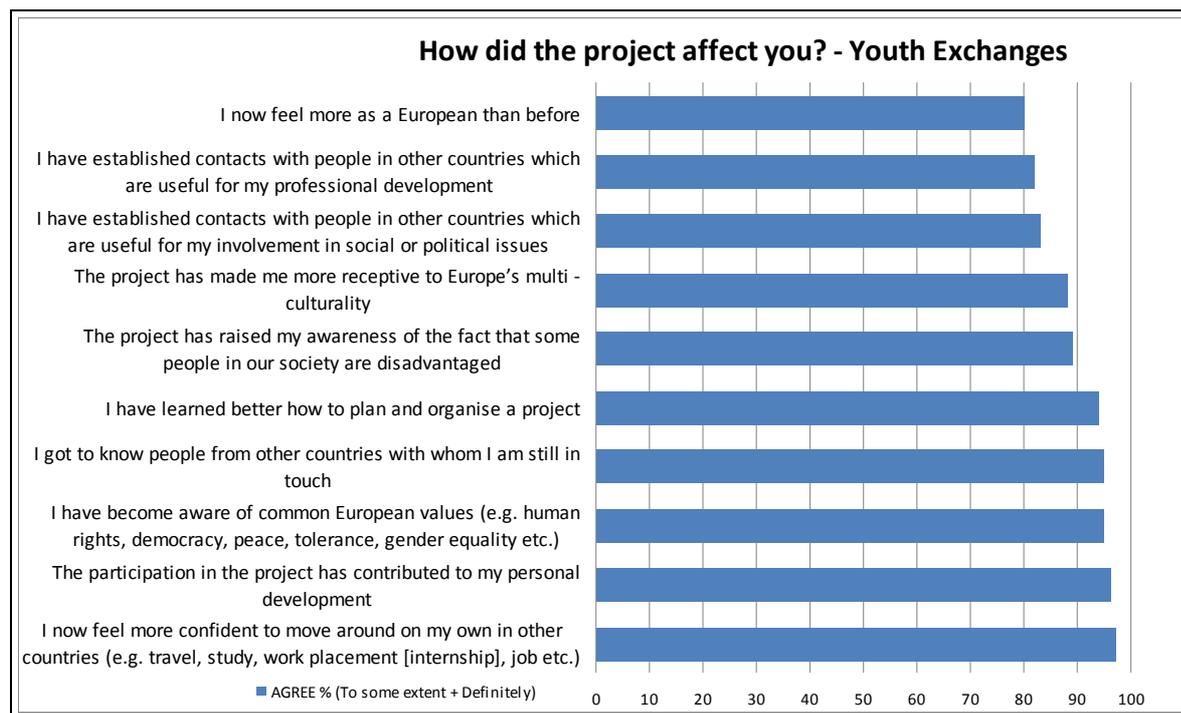
“Countries like Armenia and Azerbaijan are considered enemies, so in the cases of participating in a project in Armenia, my father and other families react to the idea. But I observed that young generation in Armenia is not likeminded with our parents. My opinions towards Armenians also evolved. Neither Turkey nor Armenia is the same anymore; young generation has changed. Therefore, I believe that the old ideas underwent a change. ...To be honest, due to my old fashioned attitude, our conversation remained limited

with greetings and daily conversation. However, one day, they complained about our distance attitude by saying ‘You interact with everyone else, talk to us as well.’ I was surprised but happy at the same time. We said that there is no reason behind our attitude and become friends from then on. We socialised in Turkish group, and they emphasised that, in Armenia, the old hostility is not valid anymore. When they asked us the situation in Turkey, we told that we hear stories from elder people. My standpoint has changed due to their emphasis on the changing attitudes in Armenia. Brilliantly, it seems that the hostility between two countries will evolve with the contribution of youth.” (Action 1.1 Focus Group Meeting, Project Participant, Male)

“I said that ‘These things happen independent from me. They are not my concern. That is their life and I have to respect it.’ I observed that, they pay an absolute respect to my values as well.” (Action 1.1 Interview, Project Leader, Male)

In order to better understand impact of the Youth Exchanges on young people and analyse them in detail, interesting findings can be observed in the responses given to more comprehensive questions. For instance, as shown in Table 1, in parallel to the increase in the interest in European issues, **eight out of ten young people** state that *they feel more European* after the project (Graph 2).

Graph 2 Impact of Youth Exchange - Detail



The assessment shows that the biggest impact on the participants after a Youth Exchange is experienced in terms of personal development. Especially in terms of mobility of young people, it is evident that young people improve themselves in travelling and living abroad and **almost all** of the respondents of the questionnaire (**97%**) started to *feel more confident to move around on their own in other countries for reasons such as travelling, studying,*

internship and job. Compared to other young people in Europe, it is an important benefit that young people with limited international mobility due to obstacles such as difficult visa procedures, economic difficulties could catch up and gain self-confidence through youth projects.

It is quite important for young people, who have the opportunity to travel abroad via Youth Exchange even for a short term, to *increase self-confidence* and make use of different opportunities regarding their future plans and personal development. In a way to prove this statement, again almost all (**96%**) of the respondents of the questionnaires indicated that participation in a Youth Exchange *contributed to their personal development.*

Data collected in the focus group meetings also confirm such findings. Almost all of the focus group participants voiced that the projects that they participated in *increased their self-confidence*; their skills of *punctuality, respect for different cultures, patience, self-control, orientation, obeying rules, communication* improved; and *their way of looking at life* changed.

Let's listen to young people...

"I gained self-confidence. We travel alone, without an adult company to foreign speaking countries where, even finding an English speaker is hardly possible. We manage shopping and cooking on our own. I have learned these." (Action 1.1 Focus Group Meeting, Project Participant, Male)

"They wanted us to perform a drama. I did not know what to say or do, because of my limited English. Then, the encouragement of my friend followed by our successful performance gave me self-confidence. Later on, I worried less about my language, and improved it comfortably." (Action 1.1 Focus Group Meeting, Project Participant, Male)

"Following amateur shootings, we needed to use specific software for editing. I spent hours to learn that software and, at the end, successfully applied it. As an engineering student, I was not familiar with photography and shooting videos. Thus, all the things I practiced during the exhibition process were new experiences for me. All in all, it was a pleasant course." (Action 1.1 Focus Group Meeting, Project Participant, Male)

"In my first project, I received a call a couple of weeks before it begins. Back then, the participants were from Italy and Romania, and I did not have enough language competence. I was anxious and hesitant to join to the project. Last week, I called Vahit said that I was anxious and would not be attending to the project. But Vahit said 'Even, your task is just moving one table, it will be good for you', then I joined. First two weeks was hard. Although I was willing to interact with others, I could not express myself in English, nor were the interpreters precise. Especially, when other friends joked around, I had difficulties understanding them. Later, I got used to the environment, and engaged in other national and international projects." (Action 1.1 Focus Group Meeting, Project Participant, Male)

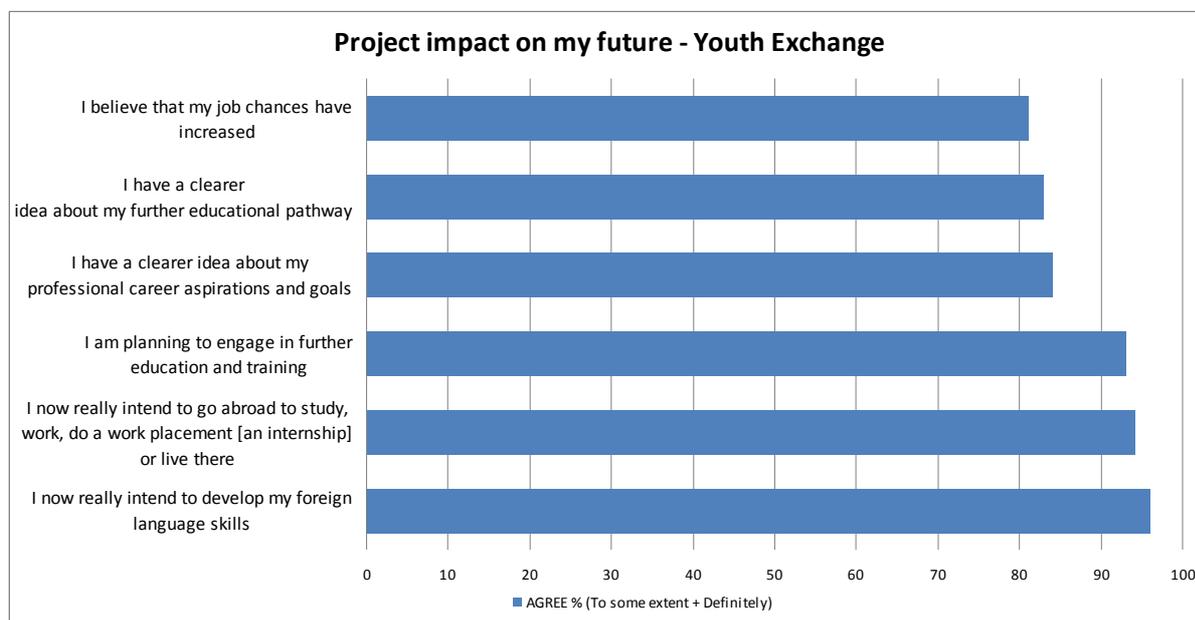
As shown in Graph 2, other questions directed to the participants also bring about strong indicators for the positive impact of Youth Exchanges. The ratio of positive responses

regarding a series of remarkable impacts such as project planning, common European values, awareness about young people with fewer opportunities, contacts established and sustained with people from different countries is **90% and above**.

In general, identification of such strong indicators points out to the strong positive impacts of youth exchanges on young people and becomes the evidence of the fact that Youth Exchange projects go beyond spending time together with a group of youngsters from different countries but have deeper and stronger effects.

As well as improving self-confidence and contributing to the personal development of participant youngsters, Youth Exchanges influence the future plans of the young people. A great deal of young people participated in the Youth Exchanges indicates that the project that they took part in had an impact on their future plans regarding education, employment, career and personal development (Graph 3).

Graph 3 Impact of Youth Exchanges on Future



The most significant impact on future can be observed regarding foreign languages. Young people, who had been to an international environment and had to express themselves in a foreign language at different levels and forms, seem quite determined for improving their foreign language skills after the activity, regardless of the previous level of their foreign language skills. The ratio of young people who indicated that they intended to develop their

foreign language skills in the future was **96%**. Likewise, the increase observed in self-confidence regarding travelling or living abroad also finds its place within the future plans of young people. A great deal of participants, as high as **94%** of the respondents, indicated that they intended to go abroad within their future plans.

Let's listen to young people...

“Improving language skills is an important issue. Before the project, my language level was less than elementary; without any special effort, by just attending projects, I improved my language level to intermediate. The lecturers in the Association also observed this progress.” (Action 1.1 Focus Group Meeting, Project Participant, Male)

“I joined to the Youth in Action for Local Development Project. Hereafter, I would like to participate in another youth project of EU. Therefore, I am trying to improve my language competences.” (Standard questionnaire, 2013, Project Participant)

“As my friends also mentioned, there is a significant improvement in our English. Furthermore, apart from English, we show interest to other foreign languages. The project inclined me to learn Italian.” (Action 1.1 Focus Group Meeting, Project Participant, Female)

“I intend to study abroad or work there afterwards, if I find a chance. Thanks to the project, my standpoint and attitude have changed.” (Standard questionnaire, 2013, Project Participant)

Another factor that has been observed at high levels as travelling abroad and developing foreign language skills is education. Although youth work is based on non-formal education and it is not an alternative to national education and academia, it is known that interest and motivation of the young people taking part in such activities increases towards their formal education. The findings of the RAY research also confirm such a statement. **93%** of the young people who participated in the youth exchanges indicated that after the activity they *planned to engage in further education and/or training* (Graph 3). Similarly, **83%** stated that they *had clearer ideas about their further educational pathways* and **84%** stated that they *had clearer ideas about their career aspirations*.

Another remarkable finding to be emphasised as a last point is that in the light of all personal and professional benefits and future plans of the participants, their hopes of *employability* increase. **Eight out of ten young people** who participated in the Youth Exchanges think that *their employment chances increased* after the project. Focus group meetings and interviews also provide concrete examples regarding employability.

Let's listen to the project leaders...

“For instance, certificates attained via those kinds of activities are genuinely beneficial. To illustrate: during my years in the University of Mersin, one of my neighbours had a daughter who studied English in university, but was not able to speak the language properly. ... I took her with me to Chez Republic. There, we attended a drama therapy course. Later, I sent her to Lithuania to an exchange programme. Afterwards, she participated in two of our projects in Kayseri. Finally, she became a reader in the University of Erciyes by means of those certificates she gained through participating these projects. ...Rather than her diploma from the University of Mersin which for sure is a more general qualification, it was under favour of her two unique experiences abroad and four *YouthPass* certificates that she achieved this position.” (Action 1.1 Interview, Project Leader, Male)

“Since I study in police academy, I will add [my *YouthPass* certificate] to my CV, in order to use it in accessing related occupational positions.” (Action 1.1 Focus Group Meeting, Project Participant, Male)

Focus group meetings and interviews also provide examples, besides employability, regarding the significant increase in entrepreneurial skills of the Youth Exchange project participants. Project participants stated that they started to search for new youth projects in order to benefit once more from the learning mobility; they got mobilised together with their friends and other young people in order to put their ideas into projects; they submitted those projects; they mobilised the organisations in which they worked; they established their own associations/youth organisations. Such instances clearly show that entrepreneurship and sense of initiative competences (Key Competence 7) of young people such as getting into action, taking risks, producing and implementing new projects develop through the projects.

Let's listen to young people...

“My life has changed with one project. After attending that project, I also wanted to design one. I formed a group with other participants from various projects and wrote my first project at the age of 17, and applied it when I was 18 year old. This was a turning point for me.” (Action 1.1 Focus Group Meeting, Project Participant, Male)

“Interacting with more and more young people induced us towards to the idea of bringing those young people together and establishing a new NGO. We followed our plan and established the NGO. Today, our NGO has already been accredited.” (Action 1.1 Focus Group Meeting, Project Participant, Male)

“Afterwards, I conducted many other projects. We design and conduct projects anyway. Most recently, we are running a project on sign language that will end next week. Due to our working groups in [youth] council, we are self-confident about conducting projects. We have at least 500 members in each council. I am Head of the Youth Council now.” (Action 1.1 and Action 3.1 Interview, Project Leader, Female)

3.2 Action 1.2 – Youth Initiatives

Youth Initiatives (Action 1.2)⁹

Youth Initiative projects include projects where young people participate actively and directly in national or transnational activities of their own devising in which they play the key roles, in order to develop their initiative, enterprise and creativity. Youth Initiative projects aims at ensuring a large number of young people to become inventive and creative in their daily life and to speak out on their local needs and interests but also on the main world issues. Through Youth Initiative projects, young people can try out ideas by initiating, setting up and carrying out an own project affecting various areas of life. Youth Initiatives can also lead to the self-employment or setting up of associations, NGOs or other bodies active in the area of social economy, no-profit and youth sectors.

Be it national or translational, a Youth Initiative project is initiated set up and carried by young people. It gives young people the chance to try out ideas through initiatives, which give them an opportunity to be directly and actively involved in planning and carrying out projects. While implementing a youth initiative, young people have the opportunity to discuss and reflect their chosen topic in a European context, to feel that they can contribute to the construction of Europe and therefore to consider themselves as European citizens. Participating in Youth Initiatives provide young people with important non-formal learning experiences.

Youth Initiative projects, by providing the opportunity for young people to develop their own project ideas and to realise them, aim to create a space in which young people improve their sense of responsibility, increase professional competences and gain experiences and knowledge about entrepreneurship. Almost all of the projects of that type are realised at the national level and for this reason Youth Initiative projects have an important difference compared to projects under other action types. For example, the factors such as intercultural interaction and establishing international contacts that are prominent in all other international actions remain less important in Action 1.2 projects. For this reason, the analysis emphasises professional development and personal benefits gained by young people as a result of participation in the projects.

Analysis reveal that young people participating in the Youth Initiative projects gain significant experiences in the fields of *team work, project management, entrepreneurship and creativity, problem solving and sensitivity for societal problems* in line with the objectives and targets of this action. Depending on the fact that the percentage of positive responses given by the participants to different questions of the questionnaires is considerably high, it is possible to confirm that *Action 1.2 Youth Initiative projects within the coverage of the analysis have been successful and they have played a significant role in terms of development of the competences of young people who participated in the projects.*

⁹ Youth in Action Programme Guide, valid as of 1 January 2013, page 34.

As it is the case for other action types within the context of the impact analysis, it is possible to see that future plans of the young people who take part in Youth Initiative projects are influenced by the project experience and motivation and consciousness levels increase, especially in terms of education.

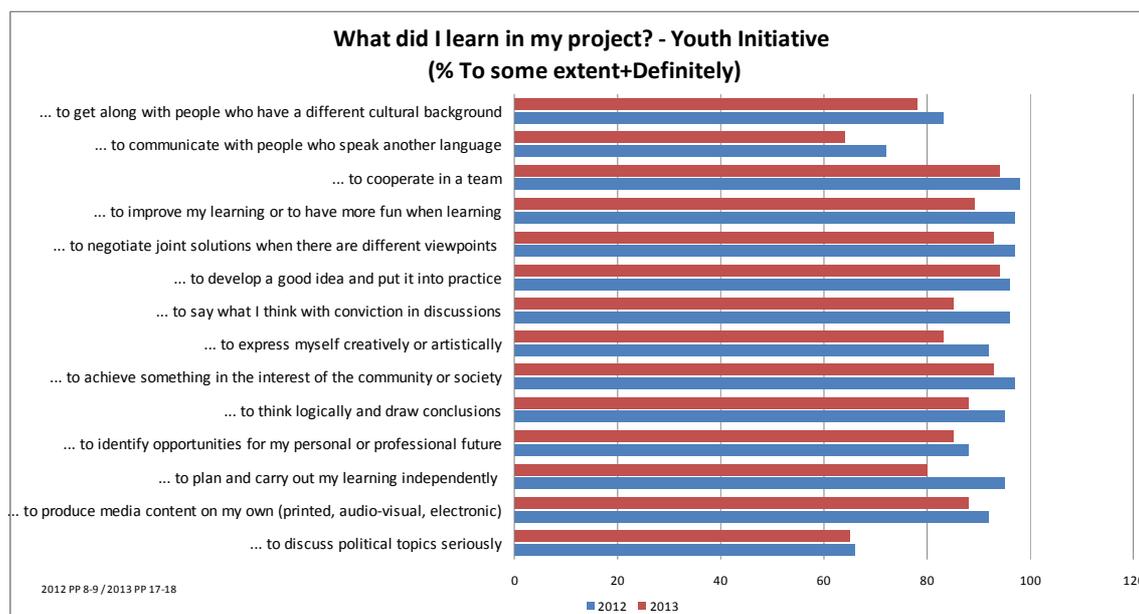
From a comparative perspective, it is observed that the level of learning of and impact on the young people who participated in the 2012 questionnaires is higher than that of those who participated in the 2013 questionnaires. Since the structural and contextual reasons for such a difference could only be identified by a detailed analysis of the realised projects, at this stage one should be confined with the statement of such a periodical difference.

A total of 286 young people who participated in the Youth Initiative projects filled in four questionnaires distributed in 2012 and 2013 by the RAY Network (2012: 121; 2013: 165). In addition, within the context of the Special Survey of RAY research, one project leader of a Youth Initiative project (Action 1.2) was interviewed and one focus group meeting with five Youth Initiatives project participants was conducted. Thus, all the analyses in this section are produced and presented from the data collected by quantitative and qualitative research methods.

Youth Initiative and Professional Development

In 2012 and 2013 questionnaires, the project participants of Youth Initiative projects were given a list of different learning issues and asked to assess their learning levels on those themes (2012 Project Participants Questionnaire, Questions 8 and 9; 2013 Project Participants Questionnaire, Questions 17 and 18). Asking the same questions in four questionnaires conducted for two years ensured continuity and enabled an analysis with a larger sample.

Graph 1 Youth Initiative and Learning



As shown in Graph 1, young people who participated in the Youth Initiative projects indicated that they had remarkable benefits regarding the issues such as *team work, project management, entrepreneurship and creativity, problem solving and contribution to societal development* in line with the objectives and targets of this action. It is very significant that the percentage is **90% and above** for those participants who indicated that they especially learned *how to cooperate in a team; how to achieve something in the interest of the community or society; to negotiate joint solutions when there are different viewpoints; how they can learn better or have more fun when learning; to say what they think with conviction in discussions; to develop a good idea and put it into practice; to plan and carry out their learning independently; to think logically and draw conclusions; to produce media content on their own (printed, audio-visual, electronic); and, to express themselves creatively or artistically* through their participation in the project. **Nine out of ten** Youth Initiative project participants developed themselves and improved their skills in **all** those themes listed above through their participation in the project.

A major feature of Youth Initiative projects is to help young people develop, implement and evaluate their own project ideas. In this sense, it is possible to argue that Youth Initiative projects contribute to the learning processes of young people by taking initiatives, by being supported for their entrepreneurship and by taking the social, financial and legal responsibilities of their projects, as well as ensuring the effective functioning of learning

process as a result of learning by doing. Data collected in the focus group meetings and interviews also support this finding. Not only the project participants, but also the project leaders of the Youth Initiative projects develop self-confidence, and they take more initiatives for new projects to the extent that they feel to achieving success for the benefit of society.

Let's listen to young people...

“Owing to the success of the project, my self-confidence increased and I effectively designed 8 other youth projects for my city. Due to my position as a project expert in the municipality, I contributed to other projects devotedly; because, there was a visible success and a positive change in participants. ...I designed a project, and it was applied. We wrote projects for Development Agencies and they were applied. About 30 projects I designed have been implemented.” (Action 1.2, Interview, Project Leader, Male)

“There are associations in our city which are specifically established for those projects. Those young friends we helped for instance, they founded an association for disabled people. Moreover, a project centre for disabled people was established. These are indicators of the increasing interest to projects.” (Action 1.2, Interview, Project Leader, Male)

Youth Initiative projects do not only encourage taking initiatives, but also giving initiatives. Focus group meeting shows that project participants also experience situations in which they include young people and give them responsibility and initiative within the projects. This can be given as an example of the contribution of those types of projects to the development of new attitudes such as acceptance, tolerance, respect for differences and patience.

Let's listen to young people...

“Since young people are actively involved in process, there is an undesirable age difference between participants- fifteen to twenty years in some cases. ...They designed a T-shirt, actually we asked them to design the T-shirts. Although I did not like the design, we approved it. I mean, we try to understand them; or start to understand.” (Action 2.1 Focus Group Meeting, Project Participant, Male)

It is striking that the most agreed statement in the questionnaire by the young participants is *to cooperate in a team*. In the questionnaires, 98% of the participants in 2012 and 94% of the participants in 2013 indicated that through their Youth Initiative experience, they *improved their team working skills and learned better how to cooperate in a team*. It is possible to find concrete examples regarding the progress that young people experienced in terms of team work from the focus group meeting held with the Youth Initiative project participants. Team work improves creative potentials of the participants, ensures that they produce together, and allow them to be proud of the outputs that they produced in the projects and to feel themselves as useful individuals.

Let's listen to young people...

“We did workshops, in which individual creativity was the key, to design a recycle bin. Those workshops emphasised team work and group dynamic, and aimed to reuse idle items by turning them into decorative objects through some handcraft activities. ...At the end of the project, everyone was surprised by the outcome of their labour. We organised an exhibition and a competition to choose the most liked craft. A university student's design shaped like a robot took the first place. The emotions at that moment... I mean, even though they seem very simple, people display the products of their labour. This sharing was nice, and people were convinced that they managed something good and the outcome is visible.” (Action 1.2 Focus Group Meeting, Project Participant, Female)

Projects that are developed and implemented under Youth Initiative are expected to have societal objectives and to meet some of the needs and contribute to the development, especially of the local communities. Another remarkable finding is that the projects prepared and implemented for this aim significantly contribute to the level of consciousness of the young people regarding social issues and problems, and increase awareness regarding working for the benefit of the society. **97%** of the Youth Initiative participants (2012) stated that they learned *how to achieve something in the interest of the community or society*. Focus group meeting held with the participants of the Youth Initiative projects, which are by nature addressed to the needs of wider target groups in local communities and mostly that of the young people with fewer opportunities, shows that young participants develop significant awareness about the society/community that they live in, they find the opportunity of integrating into the target groups of the projects, they improve empathy skills and they feel the need to support that target group. Such an experience appears as an important factor that increases the motivation of young participants towards working for the interest of the society.

Let's listen to young people...

“Then, we got on to ferry with kids. That was their first time. They did not know anything about ferry or train. Some of them said ‘Let's not get off and live here for about two years’. Many similar situations...Lots of love...It was not about their disability; they were boarding children deprived of loving-kindness. They hug us and show sympathy. They still inquire after us.” (Action 1.2 Focus Group Meeting, Project Participant, Female)

“We write projects, such as saying ‘children will make moppets, or they will do this or that’. After a while, you see it happening; I mean, you see the things you have dreamt come true. By means of your efforts, at that moment those children perform something; or they will protect themselves in the future thanks to the rights they learned there. In other words, I do not know, the idea of dreams coming true is very exciting for me. ...I have a clear conscience now. I used to say that I had to do something. Now, I feel I did.” (Action 1.2 Focus Group Meeting, Project Participant, Female)

“I observe that the self-confidence and commitment [of participants] increase. The participants who participated in the project are still active in our association, and they all tell that ‘It was very nice. We did something different there. Such a project has not been done before!’ They, also, enjoy making a difference.” (Action 1.2 Focus Group Meeting, Project Participant, Female)

It is observed that there is also an important impact of the condition that the implemented projects should contribute to social development, regarding the increase in young people's awareness of social issues. Compared to the participants of other actions, the percentage of the increase in *awareness of the participants of Youth Initiatives regarding the fact that some people in the society are disadvantaged* is higher: according to 2013 questionnaire **90%**.

Let's listen to young people...

"During the empathy workshops, participants had many difficulties; they got upset; I was not expecting that much. There were many hardships: walking with sticks without having side ability, using a wheelchair, etc. on the first day, they were not sure about being able to handle the workshop. Afterwards, we had a picnic with disabled friend from rehabilitation. When participants saw disabled people, they thought that 'We need to do something. We have to. We will attend trainings, do things by our own, and realise this project.' Later in the exhibition, there was a considerable support from media and the municipality. The exhibition appeared on media. Students did something there. There were headlines saying 'College students have the municipality make those activities'. These developments increased their enthusiasm. I can still see the impacts." (Action 1.2 Focus Group Meeting, Project Participant, Female)

"I acquired information about our clients, disabled people. I depicted films for them; or I learned that the films they see are in *mp3* format. I have never thought about this before. When the TRT visited us for an interview, our clients asked if it was for television or radio. There was no difference. I have never realised that there is no difference between radio and television for them." (Action 1.2 Focus Group Meeting, Project Participant, Female)

Consistent with the findings for other action types, the lowest percentage is witnessed on the theme of *discussing political topics seriously*. This percentage, which was **66%** in 2012 and **65%** in 2013 questionnaires, seems rather lower compared to the other themes that scored around 80-90%. However, it should be taken as an important gain considering the fact that almost **seven out of ten** participants expressed improvement on this theme.

Short-term and long-term impacts of the Youth Initiatives

In the questionnaires and focus group meetings, besides what young people participating in a Youth Initiative project learned, how young people have been influenced by that experience and what kind of a personal and professional impact the project has had on their lives are also examined.

It is observed that Youth Initiative projects have the biggest impact on young people in the terms of *personal development* and *project management* (Graph 2). In the analysis of the questionnaires distributed in 2013, **94%** of the respondents indicated that the project that they participated in *contributed to their personal development* and they *learned better how to plan and organise a project*. Information gathered in the focus group meetings and

interviews also show that Youth Initiative projects increase self-confidence of the young people who take part in the projects, make a difference for them in approaching to the problems, increase their enthusiasm for taking initiatives, and motivate them to develop their own project ideas.

Let's listen to young people...

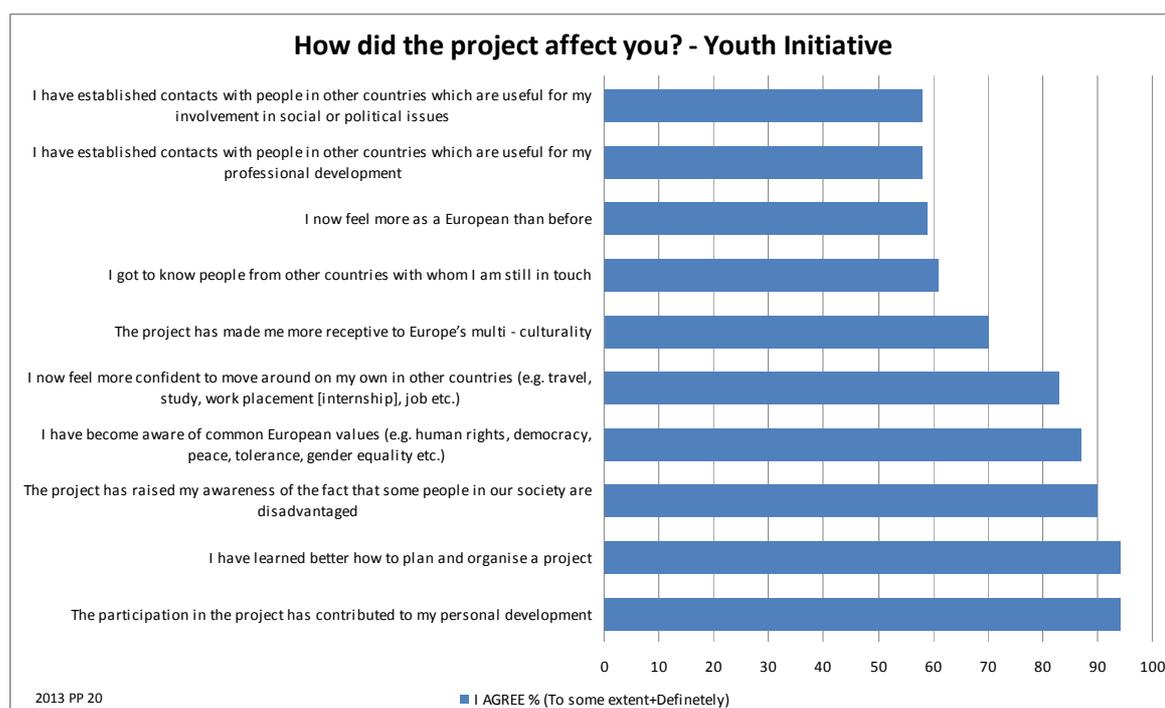
“For us, the best side is that students –or young people let’s say, take responsibilities and initiatives, and address problems by themselves. After all, that was our aim. I think, more or less, we achieved our goal.” (Action 1.2 Focus Group Meeting, Project Participant, Male)

“By studying young people, I learned to think simple. We make it complicated, when we face any problems, or in the problem-solving processes. However, they can suggest more practical, applicable solutions. That is to say, we take into account many things sometimes... for sure, not ideal for all cases. In some projects, I actually, learned how to produce more simple and less costly solutions by cooperating with young people.” (Action 1.2 Focus Group Meeting, Project Participant, Male)

“Because we are in a municipality (because we are in a small region), managing such a project... And, it was published on web pages of sub-governorship, municipality, and provincial Directorate of National Education. There were pictures. These were all good. If you ask what this project has changed in our lives, in my life... Participating in something, taking responsibility, and doing something for others- this was the most important one for me.” (Action 1.2 Focus Group Meeting, Project Participant, Male)

“...for example, when I meet the children a year later, when they are in high school, we worked with secondary school student before; we started to give trainings about projects in high schools for the EU co-ordination centre. The kids were always willing to participate, and now, they are writing a project that is due in May. This is a demonstrator of the outputs of the project. We have asked them to write a project and share it with their friends to mainstream the idea of project design, and they are writing it. Action 1.2... If their project is approved, that means we achieved our target.” (Action 1.2 Interview, Project Leader, Male)

Graph 2 Impact of Youth Initiative - Detail

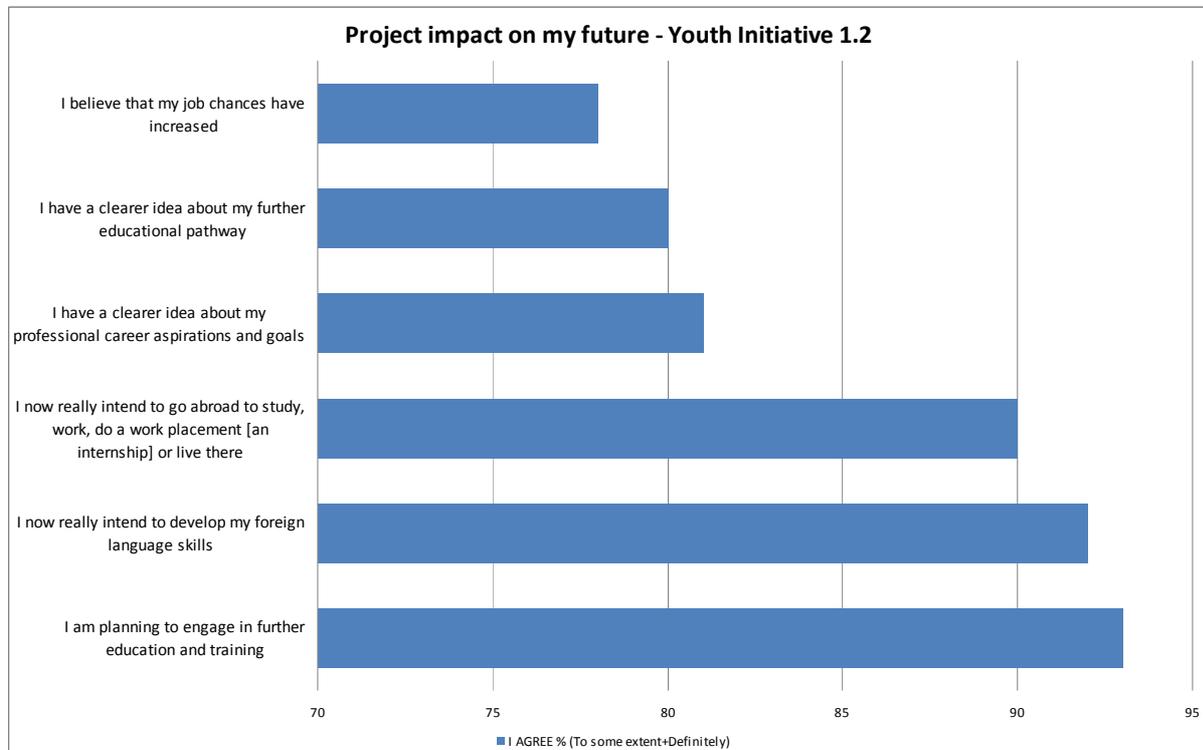


It is seen that Youth Initiative projects have a remarkable impact on the young participants in the field of getting further education in the future. A great deal of respondents stated that they now *plan to engage in further education and training (93%)* (Graph 3). In addition to that, it becomes evident that the projects that they participated in, not only highly motivated young people to engage in further education, but they also made the field of education considerably clearer for the young people. **80%** of the respondents stated that they had *a clearer idea about their professional career aspirations and goals*. Focus group meeting also reveals that Youth Initiative projects change living spaces and perceptions of the project participants and develop their potentials for visualising life differently, and provides concrete instances in this regard.

Let's listen to young people...

“And I am very happy with switching to this field; because, I believe that I formed a new lifestyle, a new route for me. Honestly, I am glad of suggesting the same –opening new routes, to young people. And I observe this. Once that virus of youth project infects, people start to make an effort; they, also, try to do something per se.” (Action 1.2 Focus Group Meeting, Project Participant, Female)

Graph 3 Impact of Youth Initiatives on the Future



The percentage of young people, who think that the competences acquired and improved throughout a Youth Initiative project increase their chances of finding a job, appears considerably high, **78%** of the respondents indicated that *they believe their job chances have increased* through participation in the projects. The interview made with the project leader of a Youth Initiative project and the focus group meeting held with the project participants also reveal that this kind of projects have the potential of developing personal skills of young people, giving them the chance to go through experiences that they did not have before, and provide them with new opportunities for their futures.

Let's listen to young people...

“...Also, we organised some trips. ...there were kids, for example, saying that this was their first visit to outside of their home town. We organised sports events, such as football, Ping-Pong, chess, and athletics, and gave presents to successful participants. There were audience among executives of Kardemir Karabükspor soccer team and some amateur soccer teams. By the way, two participants have been noticed and transferred to professional teams. They play at Fatihspor now. One child is at the youth setup of Kardemir Karabükspor. And one of our kids has joined to youth setup of Directorate of Youth and Sports' team.” (Action 1.2 Interview, Project Leader, Male)

“Due to his active involvement to my project, we employed one of the participants as an intern in our office. He further improved himself there, and was employed in a managerial department of a company. His experiences were useful in the recruitment process; because they had asked him about his previous activities with us. Then, he called me and said ‘It was very good. I talked about my projects. They were, also interested. I communicated, expressed myself better. This was due to the experiences I gained in the last two weeks.’... This was the only example I experienced in person. Again, participants comment that projects are useful, and they ask about adding projects and their certificates to their CVs; or if they can call us for recommendation. I think projects have an impact.” (Action 1.2 Focus Group Meeting, Project Participant, Female)

3.3 Action 2 – European Voluntary Service

European Voluntary Service (Action 2)¹⁰

European Voluntary Service (EVS) aims to develop solidarity and promote active citizenship and mutual understanding among young people through carrying out voluntary service in a country other than their country of residence. European Voluntary Service, that fosters solidarity among young people, is a true “learning service”. Beyond benefiting local communities, volunteers learn new skills and languages, and discover other cultures. An EVS project is a combination of themes such as culture, youth, sports, social care, cultural heritage, arts, civil protection, environment, development cooperation etc. and provides a significant non-formal learning experience for young people.

It is not possible to label any time of volunteering mobility activity as European Voluntary Service within the context of the Youth in Action Programme. In this sense, European Voluntary Service is NOT:

- occasional, unstructured, part-time volunteering;
- an internship in an enterprise;
- a paid job, it must not replace paid jobs;
- a recreation or tourist activity;
- a language course;
- exploitation of a cheap workforce;
- a period of study or vocational training abroad.

European Voluntary Service (EVS) refers to the short-term (1-3 months) or long-term (3-12 months) voluntary work of the young people in a project for the benefit of the society of a youth organisation in another country. Both for being an individual activity, and ensuring the living of a volunteer in another country for a long time, EVS considerably differs from the other actions of the Youth in Action Programme. For the same reasons, it leaves remarkable and rather deeper impacts on young people’s lives. Not only a young people who takes part in a long-term EVS project acquires remarkable personal and professional skills throughout the period he/she volunteers abroad, but also his/her future plans considerable change as a result of such an experience. Analysis also confirms these propositions.

Naturally, the most significant gain from living and volunteering abroad for a long time is observed in terms of *intercultural interaction* and *expressing oneself in other languages*. As a result of this experience, EVS former volunteers stated that they developed themselves personally and professionally, their future plans got clearer, and maybe most importantly, their self-confidence increased for the issues regarding their future.

¹⁰ Youth in Action Programme Guide, valid as of 1 January 2013, page 51-52.

A clear finding from the analysis of the qualitative and quantitative data shows is that EVS experience constitutes a turning point in the lives of EVS volunteers, and the personal and professional gains from the EVS experience positively influence their lives. EVS offers young people a unique experience in terms of development and learning opportunities and the impact it creates and according to the findings of the analysis most EVS projects are implemented successfully.

Similar to Youth Initiative projects, the evaluation averages of the young people who responded 2012 questionnaires is higher and more positive compared to that of the young people participated in the 2013 questionnaires. If it is accepted that each EVS project is a personal experience and that quite changeable but at the same time influential factors ranging from staying period, country visited to working system of the hosting organisation and the content of work should be taken into consideration, it is natural that there are differences. An issue to be considered here is that EVS former volunteers, especially those from long-term projects, who took part in the qualitative and quantitative analyses evaluate their experience as a whole very positively, and they emphasise that such an experience provided them with significant gains and opportunities in a positive way.

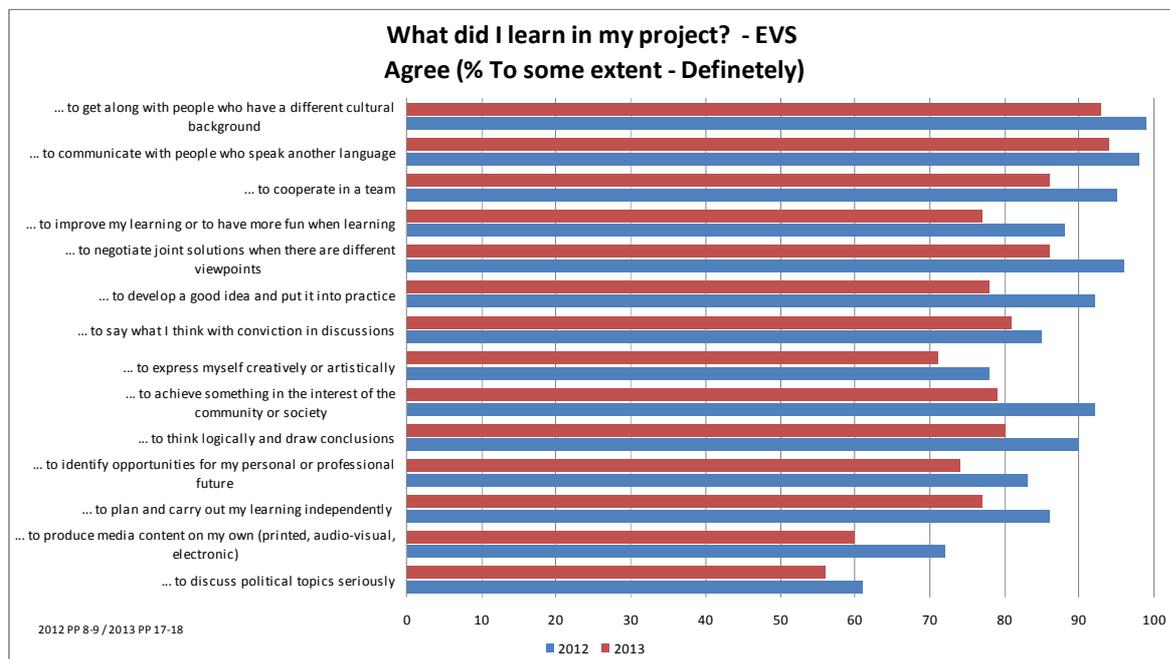
A total number of 235 EVS former volunteers responded to four questionnaires conducted in 2012 and 2013 within the context of the RAY research (2012: 133; 2013: 202). All the tables, graphs and analysis in this section are produced from the responses of those 235 young people. In addition, within the context of the RAY Special Survey, an in-depth interview with the project leader who took part in the European Voluntary Service Project (Action 2) and two focus group meetings with a total number of 16 project participants as EVS former volunteers were conducted. Thus, all the analyses in this section are produced and presented from the data collected by both quantitative and qualitative research methods.

European Voluntary Service: Comprehensive Development and Learning

Regarding learning and personal development, EVS former volunteers who took part in the qualitative survey of the RAY research differ from the participants of all other actions and most positively evaluate their experiences of *personal development* and *intercultural interaction and communication*. All (99%) of the EVS former volunteers who responded the 2012 questionnaire expressed that they learned how *to get along with people who have*

a *different cultural background* (2012 Project Participant Questionnaire, Questions 8 and 9) through the projects. This percentage is also remarkably high (**93%**) in the 2013 questionnaire and it points out to the fact that *in general EVS projects are the projects that have the biggest influence on young people in terms intercultural communication and interaction* (2013 Project Participant Questionnaire, Questions 17 and 18). Asking the same questions in four questionnaires conducted for two years ensured continuity and enabled an analysis with a larger sample.

Graph 1 European Voluntary Service and Learning



As shown in Graph 1, young people participating in EVS projects improve their skills comprehensively in a variety of fields and different than from other actions, they develop not only in one particular area but in a variety of competence areas. The most striking point is that all (**99%**) of the EVS former volunteers who responded the questionnaire indicated that as a result of their EVS experience, they learned *better to come together and communicate with people from other cultures*.

Also as a natural outcome of living and working in another country for a long period, 98% of the participants stated that they learned *better to communicate with people who speak another language*. What is significant in this regard is that to be able to participate in the EVS projects there is no requirement of speaking the language of the host country. Since

Turkey is one of the most active countries regarding volunteer mobility within the context of EVS, volunteers from Turkey go to a variety of European countries every year. Volunteers who visit countries, ranging from Sweden to Malta in which many different languages are spoken, do not only improve their English skills, but also in the native languages of the countries they have been to, and have an important opportunity to improve their competences of communication in foreign languages. In this regard, it is significant that almost all EVS former volunteers who responded the questionnaire indicated that they learned how to communicate in different languages. Having the opportunity to learn more than one language during the projects in which some of the participants take place without having any prior foreign language skills becomes a remarkable personal and professional gain and affects future plans and opportunities in a positive way. Focus group meetings provide concrete examples to complement the finding of improvement of foreign language skills. Young participants of the EVS projects stated that they did not only learn the languages of the host countries and of those in the target group of the projects or of the other volunteers that they worked together, but at the same time they improved the skills to better understand and communicate in their own languages.

Let's listen to young people...

“Since we worked with Caucasian refugees, they taught us Russian. It was a 10 week Project. Although I could not learn Russian fluently, I learned Cyrillic alphabet, and moderate Russian. As a matter of fact, Polish language and Russian are similar. This was interesting. Moreover, since ours was an educational foundation, we benefited from many facilities. For instance, my English was very poor before. They offered me a free course, and I gladly attended.” (Action 2 Focus Group Meeting, EVS ex-volunteer, Male)

“The first time I had been in Romania, I did not know English. It was at basic level which allowed me only to speak about certain topics. At first, they gave intense English lessons for one month, than I began to attend projects. This rendered me more productive for the coming projects.” (Action 2 Focus Group Meeting, EVS ex-volunteer, Male)

“You know, people say body language is universal; I, really, realised that people can communicate through gestures.” (Action 2 Focus Group Meeting, EVS ex-volunteer, Male)

“[I had been teaching Turkish in Bosnia]. There were many things, and it was really hard. For example, I could not figure out how to teach combining words. I was teaching clumsily, such as ‘never mind, it is done like this’. They were also laughing; because, you know, how good my Turkish was to teach them [!]. Explaining the letter ‘y’ was a full-court endeavour. Seriously, it was too hard. I learned, and also taught this.” (Action 2 Focus Group Meeting, EVS ex-volunteer, Female)

“First of all, my English was very poor before going. There is a remarkable improvement in my language abilities. Besides, I had the chance to learn a few words in my foreign friends’ native languages. In terms of language, I significantly improved myself.” (Action 2 Focus Group Meeting, EVS ex-volunteer, Male)

Other two points that EVS former volunteers raised as important benefits from their projects are *joint problem-solving* and *team work*. **96%** of the respondents in the 2012

questionnaire indicated that they learned *how to develop joint solutions*, and **95%** of those stated that they learned *how to cooperate in a team*. However, neither of these topics was considered equally positive by the respondents of the 2013 questionnaires and the percentages of positive responses were **86%** on both topics. Although this is also a very high percentage, a difference of ten points from the 2012 questionnaire is remarkable. The reasons for such a difference can only be explained through a more detailed and comprehensive analysis of those projects in question. Available data can only help to identify the existence of such a difference, but would not be sufficient to explain its reasons.

Data collected from the focus group meetings and interviews reveal that there can also be a variety of problems in an EVS project, especially because it is a long-term activity and it takes place abroad. Those problems can either be related to practical arrangements in the projects such as accommodation or food, or rather serious and comprehensive such as deviation of the project activities from those written in the project application, or troubles experienced with the hosting organisations and other volunteers. However, the important point here is the consideration of those problems and negativities as learning experiences by the participants. In this context, realising the difficulties and problems they experienced throughout the voluntary service activity, young people develop new attitudes, methods etc. to get along with these difficulties; and to the extent that they could overcome such problems together or individually, they think that their self-confidence increases.

Let's listen to young people...

“Actually, team work is also important; you can have problem even with people you went together. For instance, you are two Turkish there, but you can still have disagreements. Even though you do share ideas, you learn to negotiate, conduct teamwork, and actually become team members.” (Action 2 Focus Group Meeting, EVS ex-volunteer, Male)

“There, I felt like I can survive every place in the world. Furthermore, I used to get stressed and become aggressive very easily when my plans did not work. But, there, things did not work as I had planned anyway, so I grew calmer. I became a more easy-going person.” (Action 2 Focus Group Meeting, EVS ex-volunteer, Female)

“There was an Estonian volunteer, for example. She did not leave her room for days, and she did not contribute to any workshops; neither for me nor herself. But, I and my colleagues have learned something: sometimes people do not feel well, and we should give this chance to them. In the times she joined us, we were pleased and content with her work. And, in the times she did not contribute, we did not judge her, but thought this was a development process for her. ...In other words, even the unfavourable sides of EVS contribute learning. In my opinion, there are no pros or cons of EVS.” (Action 2 Interview, Project Leader, Female)

European Voluntary Service: Short-term and Long-term Impact

In addition to the learning opportunities on different themes they provide for the young people, European Voluntary Service projects offer young people the chances to develop competences in various fields. As it was the case for the learning process, EVS former volunteers mentioned gains in and impact on comprehensive and various fields, rather than that in a particular field, and indicated that EVS experience considerably contributed to their lives.

The most significant impact of living in another country and working in a project for the benefit of the society under the umbrella of an organisation/institution appears to be the establishment of constant contacts with people from other countries (Graph 2). **96%** of the EVS former volunteers who responded the 2013 questionnaire stated that through the EVS project they got the chance *to know people from other countries that they were still in contact with*. When it is considered that within the EVS projects more than one volunteer can work in a project or the hosting organisation can host more than one volunteer in its different projects, an EVS volunteer from Turkey does not only meet people from the hosting country, but also has the chance to meet, socialise and work with people from many other countries. For this reason, the contacts established within the context of EVS are multi-cultural and multi-national in real terms.

Focus group meetings and interviews also show that EVS projects result in positive changes for the volunteers in terms of cultural knowledge, attitude and skills. Young volunteers indicated that they learned new information about the country that they lived in; they became aware of different viewpoints and learned how to cope with them; they had the opportunity of learning by living in what they had seen on the television and read in the books before, of questioning that new information and developing new perspectives.

Let's listen to young people...

“We see foreigners, tourist in our city, but when I first got on plane, I thought that this time I am going those places. When we landed to Czech Republic, Prague, I said my friend that this land is not Turkey, but somewhere else. I felt in that way at the beginning. We had adventure; took the wrong train, etc.” (Action 2 Focus Group Meeting, EVS ex-volunteer, Female)

“I have never thought that I can meet up many people from various countries in one place. Being together with people from countries of the East and West was very unusual.” (Action 2 Focus Group Meeting, EVS ex-volunteer, Female)

“The project was about children. It was tiring, but, at the same time, enjoyable. For the first time, I was

abroad, and I had foreign friends. Living in a country on my own, with people from other cultures for 9.5 months, and sharing something are progressive improvements. I would like to go abroad again with another project.” (Standard Questionnaire, 2013, EVS Volunteer)

“I learned many things about Polish and Eastern European history from people there. I had already known that Poland is a Catholic conservative country and was under Soviet control after the WWII. But, there I had the chance to learn by reading and discussing with people in person. I particularly learn about history, politics, geography and culture. I mostly learned about their culture.” (Action 2 Focus Group Meeting, EVS ex-volunteer, Male)

“Besides, you get into making analysis and analytic thinking. More often, we realise that it is not as easy as what we read in books. They, too, do not know us well. They react against Atatürk; because their teacher in high school have imposed them this idea. On the other side, we do not know anything about them. For example, I did not know that they have tripartite governmental system. I was very surprised. In the same school, for instance, Croatians and Serbians are educated in one side, and Muslim and Bosnian on the other side. This was also very surprising. I asked why do they separate students and teach them discrimination and religious hostility in schools by this practice. I was bewildered, shocked.” (Action 2 Focus Group Meeting, EVS ex-volunteer, Female)

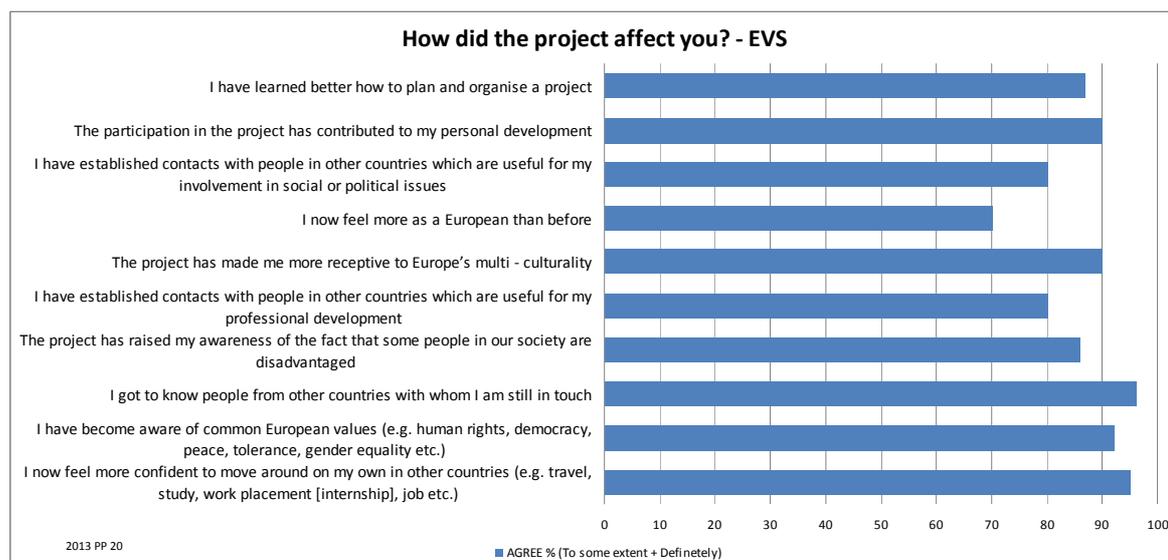
“They make way for pedestrians, do not drive on them. I could not believe when I first arrived there. I saw the car approaching, stepped on the road, and the car put on the brakes sharply I heard the sound of ABS. If it happened here, the driver would yell at me ‘clear the way! Do you want to die!’ there, on the other hand, the driver apologised for being late for braking.” (Action 2 Focus Group Meeting, EVS ex-volunteer, Male)

“The countries you visit have a different climate, cuisine and perspective; you learn to adapt yourself. I went to a shop to buy yoghurt, for example. To my surprise, they sell yoghurt like the fruit yoghurt that we have in here. I saw this for the first time.” (Action 2 Focus Group Meeting, EVS ex-volunteer, Male)

“You wake up and realise that you live in the same house with people from six different nations. This is very exciting. Eating a different cuisine or talking about a different country in every evening. Drinking local alcohol in the culture evenings. I think these are very peculiar.” (Action 2 Focus Group Meeting, EVS ex-volunteer, Male)

A great deal of EVS volunteers (**95%**) indicated that due to the project experience, they started to feel more confident *about traveling to and living in other countries for several reasons*. In addition, 92% of the respondents of the questionnaire stated that they became *aware of common European values (e.g. human rights, democracy, peace, tolerance, gender equality etc.)* and 90% stated that *the project has made them more receptive to Europe’s multi-culturality*. Also in response to other questionnaires of the questionnaires, EVS former volunteers mentioned high levels of significant gains and impact from the EVS project. Compared to the participants of other action types, EVS former volunteers responded more positively on the issue of feeling more European and **seven out of ten** former volunteers emphasised that they *now feel more as a European than before*.

Graph 2 EVS Impact - Detail



When the Graph 2 is analysed as a whole, high responses point out to the finding that in addition to personal and professional gains, EVS participants show considerable progress in the fields of *active citizenship and European citizenship*. Focus group meetings also show that volunteers identify themselves better, they improved their organisational skills and they managed to develop empathy with the groups that they worked with through working for the society/community that they have been into and taking initiatives.

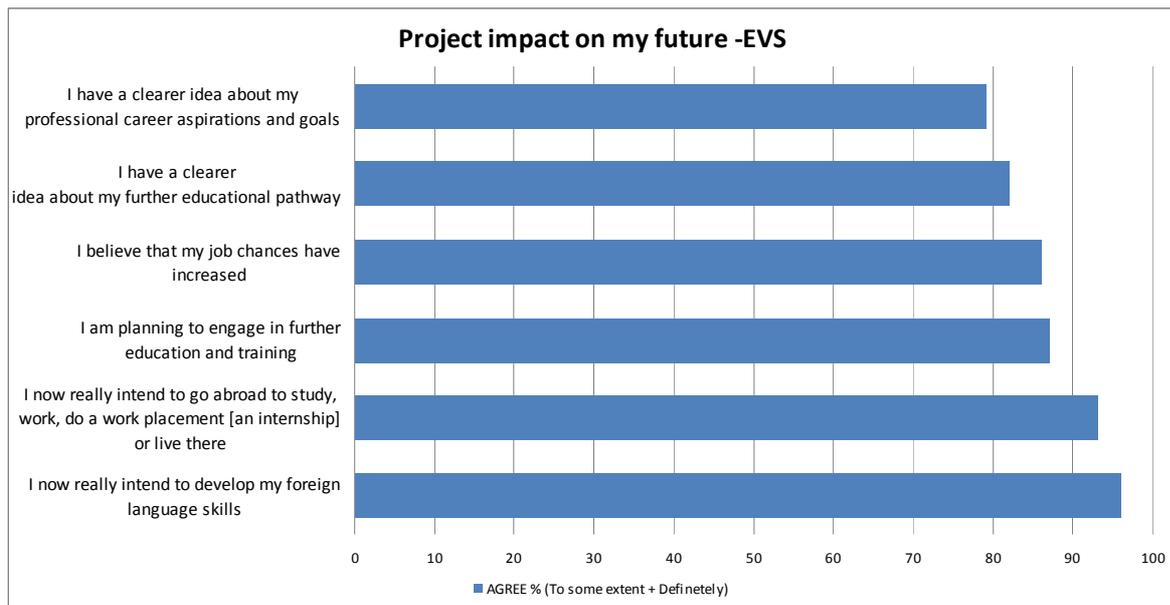
Let's listen to young people...

“This programme was quite useful for me. Now, I can define myself better. I believe that the things I learned will be useful in realising my plans for the society I live in. It enabled me to make wise moves. I established close connections with others and became part of an international network. I introduced my culture, and met new people. I have learned new things. More importantly, I have learned how to learn.” (Standard Questionnaire, 2013, EVS Volunteer)

“It was not included in our project, but, since we were an educational foundation, we organised workshops in secondary and high schools, this was important for me. I organised a workshop; I mean this developed my organisational skills. I had done this before, but I had dealt with only practical stuff. This time it was at the co-ordination and execution level. We organised introduction events about volunteering and European Voluntary Service by our own, outside of the foundation, and gave lectures to three different student groups.” (Action 2 Focus Group Meeting, EVS ex-volunteer, Male)

“...being together with children. I had stressful times, but when I met with kids, when they hugged and kissed me, or their plays, and even fights made me happy. I still remember their names, characters and actions, and I do really miss them.” (Action 2 Focus Group Meeting, EVS ex-volunteer, Female)

Graph 3 European Voluntary Service and Future



For the reasons mentioned before, EVS projects have remarkable impacts on the lives of the participants and influence their future plans considerably. As shown in Graph 3, the average of the impact the Action 2.1 on the participants' project experiences and future plans is quite high. In addition to the foreign language skills and enthusiasm and plans for living abroad as a natural outcome of living and working in another country, those issues that appeared at lower degrees for other actions display higher averages for the EVS. For example, the percentage of EVS former volunteers who believe that *their chances to get employed increased* due to the EVS project they participated in is **80%** and this percentage is one of the highest among all the actions. Employment issue was also brought to the agenda in the focus group meetings, and it was observed that EVS former volunteers is the group that established the strongest link between Youth project and employment and benefited the most from such an experience. As it was the case in terms of project impact, regarding the impact on future plans, EVS projects influence participants not only in one field, but comprehensively in all the fields.

Let's listen to young people...

"I was employed a couple of months later. And they asked astonished 'Aaa! Have you been to Italy? What did you do there?'" (Action 2 Focus Group Meeting, EVS ex-volunteer, Female)

"I came back at the beginning of August. One week later, I had attended interviews and started to work after a week. It was thanks to EVS. They asked how long I had stayed there, and had I been able to improve my English." (Action 2 Focus Group Meeting, EVS ex-volunteer, Female)

"In terms of jobs, yes. I graduated before going, for example. I was unemployed, and there were not many opportunities in the area of French, I would say. Later, I joined, because I wanted to use such an opportunity. When I came back, I received more responses for my applications. Not only in education sector, but also in international trade. Experiences gained abroad are advantageous for employers, as well; because you do not have worries about adjusting yourself when they send you to another branch; you know the language. In that sense, it was very useful." (Action 2 Focus Group Meeting, EVS ex-volunteer, Female)

"[Among the hosts] a volunteer is working for a project of the Health Department. Another volunteer is teaching language in Yalova. There are sharp changes in these people's lives; their viewpoints and ideals have changed." (Action 2 Interview, Project Leader, Female)

All those analyses point out to the finding that European Voluntary Service projects have deep and comprehensive impacts on the young participants that could be considered as turning points in their lives, and EVS is the most effective action in terms of the development of the competences of the participant young people.

3.4 Action 4.3 – Training and Networking of those active in youth work and youth organisations; Action 3.1 - Cooperation with the Neighbouring Countries of the European Union and TCP – Training and Cooperation Plan

Training and Networking of those active in youth work and youth organisations Gençlik (Action 4.3)¹¹

Training and Networking projects aims to support the training of those active in youth work and youth organisations in this field, in particular project leaders, youth advisers and supervisors in these projects. It also supports the exchange of experiences, expertise and good practice between those active in youth work and youth organisations, as well as activities which may lead to the establishment of long-lasting, high quality projects, partnerships and networks.

A Training and Networking project can be of two types:

√ A project promoting exchanges, cooperation and training in the field of youth work. It aims to implement an Activity which supports capacity-building and innovation among promoters, as well as the exchange of experience, expertise and good practice among those who are involved in youth work.

√ A project leading to the development of further projects under the Youth in Action Programme, which aims to implement an Activity which helps all potential promoters to prepare and develop new projects under the Youth in Action Programme, notably by ensuring support and know-how for the development of the projects; support for partner-finding; tools and means to improve the quality of the projects.

Training and Networking projects include Job Shadowing (Practical learning experience), Feasibility Visit, Evaluation Meeting, Study Visit, Partnership-building Activity, Seminar, Training Course, and Networking. Non-formal learning principles and methods are indispensable elements of the Training and Networking projects.

Training and Networking projects differ from other actions in terms of the profile of the participants and content of the activities. Training and Networking projects basically aim to support the training of especially project leaders, youth advisors and youth supervisors active in youth work and youth organisations. In addition to the activities aiming to establish sustainable, high quality projects, partnerships and networks, Partnership and Networking support job shadowing in youth work and youth organisations, good practices and exchange of experience. For this reason, the analysis of the questionnaires and interviews with those who participated in such activities focuses primarily on the levels of achievement of the above mentioned objectives and particularly on the newly established professional partnerships, project management skills and basic skills and competences of the participants as youth workers.

It is observed that, in line with the objectives of that action, those who participated in the Training and Networking projects improved their capacities especially in terms of developing project ideas, establishing partnership and better implementation of the

¹¹ Youth in Action Programme Guide, valid as of 1 January 2013, page 100.

projects. In addition to such professional benefits, personal competences of the participants also develop through the Training and Networking projects. To the extent that such a development would also contribute to the quality of the youth projects that they will actively take part in in the future, it is possible to suggest that Training and Networking projects contribute significantly to the whole youth work.

A total number of 260 youth workers, who took part in Training and Networking projects, responded to four questionnaires distributed within the RAY research in 2012 and 2013 (2012: 95; 2013: 165). All the tables, graphs and analyses in this section are produced from the responses of those 260 youth workers. In addition, within the context of the Special Survey of the RAY research, one in-depth interview with a project leader from Training and Networking project (Action 4.3 and Action 3.1), one focus group with four participants of that action, and one focus group with 10 participants of the Training and Cooperation Plan (TCP) activities were held. Thus, all the analyses in this section are produced from the data collected by quantitative and qualitative research methods.

Training and Networking Projects and Learning

It is observed that learning processes and learning outcomes of the participants of the training courses and networking activities that are organised for the individuals actively working in youth projects in different organisations and institutions in different countries are various and successful (Graph 1). As a result of the international environment and team work occurred in the projects, almost all (**97%**) of the 2013 questionnaire respondents acknowledged that through their participation in the project they learned *to get along with people who have a different cultural background and to communicate with people who speak another language*. The percentage of the positive answers given by the 2012 questionnaire respondents to the same issues is also similarly high (**94%**). This is particularly remarkable for the youth leaders and youth workers implementing international youth projects. When it is considered that intercultural communication and learning is one of the major priorities of the Youth in Action Programme, achievements of those who organise and implement youth projects have an important place for the improvement of the project quality in general.

Let's listen to young people...

“The essentiality of preventing production of de facto prejudices appears there. People whom we get along well individually...or having prejudices directly...French, for instance... Especially in the last project, there were three-four French participants. Apart from one, because he worked with Turks in another project before; the other three...We were a group of five. They immediately draw a line between us and them. However, after the project, I still keep in touch with them. Probably, my other friends, as well. And we are conducting a project together, in these days. We continuously exchange ideas. Stereotyping... We develop prejudices collectively, but it is very easy to demolish them individually. I clearly saw this.” (TCP Focus Group Meeting, Project Participants, Male)

“I was raised in a conservative family. But we are three brothers, and I am one who challenged our conservative family most. I am the first university graduate. Indeed, I am the first university graduate in our village. Yes, maybe I was more liberal than them, but I still had some conservative values deep inside of me. For instance, being in the same room with a people from a different culture of religion, eating together, sitting on same table... these were all impossible for me before attending this exchange programme. In this project, I personally suggested all these. In this sense, this was maybe a challenging project for me, but I am very glad. My horizon about people has expanded very much. In this sense, I am grateful.” (Action 4.3 Interview, Project Leader, Male)

Due to the fact that learning dimension is prioritised in the Training and Networking activities and non-formal education methods are extensively used in such youth training courses, a great deal of the respondents of the questionnaire expressed that one of their basic achievements from those projects is *to learn better or have more fun when learning*. Instances gathered from the focus group meetings and interviews show that youth workers, project leaders and trainers who take part in the Training and Networking projects consider participation in the projects as a learning experience, they adopt themselves easily to different learning methods used in the projects, they can compare these methods with other methods, they can identify their benefits and appreciate them.

Let's listen to young people...

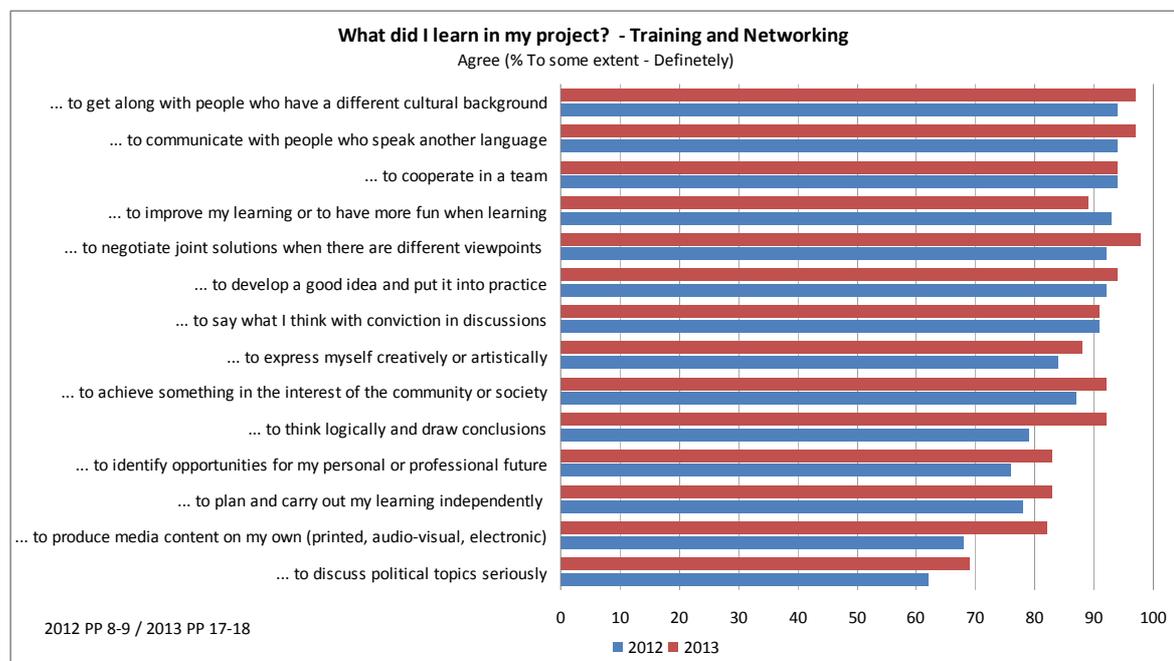
“*Informal learning*...I used to always perceive learning process, this was how we experienced, we were raised in Turkey until a certain age: you go somewhere and sit, someone comes and tells you something. But especially in these kinds of trainings that are ‘facilitators’ rather than teachers... They also approved it. This impressed me a lot. In other words, you learn without noticing the process.” (TCP Focus Group Meeting, Project Participants, Male)

“There was a high demand for simulation; because it was not spoken openly in our meeting. I, personally, witnessed this by visiting tables one by one. People were timid. Also, theory is always more boring, they took the back seats. But, once the simulation had started, something happened. They were attentive in role playing. We managed this with a successful work sharing.” (Action 4.3 Interview. Project leader, Male)

“In my opinion, you certainly learn something even in the lowest quality projects; because you come together with people from various countries. At least you hear another culture, name, or language. Absolutely, that teaches something. However, speaking of learning environments, I believe that project designers have a great impact. In fact, I think the ones who manage project activities have a greater impact. If the acquaintance meetings and socials are managed well, if people become friendly at once, if measures are taken to prevent breakaways and withdrawals; the learning processes have superior results. Otherwise, it remains limited. 3-5 months later, you even do not remember the participants.” (Action 4.3 and Action 3.1 Focus Group Meeting, Project Participant, Male)

In a general sense, the issues that come to the fore in the analysis regarding personal and professional development are *to cooperate in a team; to develop a good idea and put it into practice; to negotiate joint solutions when there are different viewpoints; to say what they think with conviction in discussions; and, to achieve something in the interest of the community or society*. According to the outcomes of the questionnaires, the percentage of those who indicated that they developed themselves through the Training and Networking projects that they took part in is **90% and above** (Graph 1). The questionnaires of 2012 and 2013 do not differ in terms of outcomes, and although there can be differences of a few points; the results seem similar and positive in a general sense.

Graph 1 Learning in Training and Networking Projects



Data collected in the focus group meetings and interviews show that project leaders, youth workers or trainers who participate in the Training and Networking projects considerably value “to cooperate in a team” since they think that it will ensure a more interactive and attractive learning environment for the participants of their future projects and accordingly increase the success of the projects and learning outcomes.

Let's listen to young people...

“Groups are formed during training anyway. Sometimes, competition occurs in those groups. You communicate better with your team mate. Thereby, learning process becomes more active. I mean, you personally participate in it.” (TCP Focus Group Meeting, Project Participants, Female)

“Team work was effective for me; I mean I believe it was. Because, you are given responsibilities. And others... Finally, at the finish point you feel like you need to demonstrate your work to other friends. Thus, you make an effort. That is to say, you work hard; because you demonstrate what you have done. And, you finish the task without even noticing the process. During trainings for instance... this was the most impressive one. We would shoot a film for all day! Think about it...or documentary...We did extraordinary thing in general. Outputs were very creative...” (TCP Focus Group Meeting, Project Participants, Male)

“At first, when people introduce themselves, as participants, they just mention their names. But when we attend a group, we are expected to produce an object, or something else. When we work on our project, there was an aircraft engineer friend, and our designs were more well-turned...Or I... A friend found a guitar, and we involved it to the project. I sang. We noticed that we all have a skill; we included them into the project. You cannot always express yourself with words clearly, but with the outcome of your labour, or your position in a project, you can. This is team work.” (TCP Focus Group Meeting, Project Participants, Male)

“There were many team works. We tried to learn something with the help of team works anyway. Everyone tried this method at least 3 or 4 times. Ours were more diverse; because time was abundant.” (Action 4.3 and Action 3.1 Focus Group Meeting, Project Participant, Female)

“*Ice-breakers* and *energisers* are very effective in altering the atmosphere, during activities; because people with diverse backgrounds can tolerate each other better, and regardless of the topic, they can build their team, and ensure team work to achieve their goal. This is presumably related to the concept of European citizenship.” (TCP Focus Group Meeting, Project Participants, Female)

“There was a good balance in the seminar. That is, lecture part held short, and we learned everything by experiencing. And they divide the seminar like: the first day the practices they had chosen...But one event can teach you many things in one area, and everyone is interdependent. In other words, there is nothing individual. There is neither individual success nor failure. So, everyone had to do their parts to achieve to the outcome. Later we designed some relevant projects by forming particular teams. I think I learned a lot during this process...As a matter of fact, they created such a good synergy, the group did not fall apart; we are still in touch.” (TCP Focus Group Meeting, Project Participants, Female)

Meetings with the participants of the Training and Networking projects demonstrate that Action 4.3, Action 3.1 and TCP projects are also useful in terms of developing an idea and implement it. According to the participants, such kind of projects, equips the participants with skills such as *getting aware of common problems, identifying those problems, discussing common solutions and expressing themselves better in these discussions.*

Let's listen to young people...

“Also, I liked the discussion and criticism parts. And there I noticed that I really like discussion platforms. It is same in school, as well. We are always in a discussion. You know the Faculty of Political Science. And I realised that I like the environment there. In the workshops, also, we divided into groups and made some samples. Then, we switched them between groups and made comments on them, and some alterations. Later, we discussed about the changes we made, as well, such as ‘this can be done, that cannot fit’. I realised that I enjoyed the discussion platform, and learned a lot.” (TCP Focus Group Meeting, Project Participants, Male)

“For instance, some friends among Turks were reluctant about sharing their opinions. In the following days, even though they had completely diverse ideas, they were comfortable about sharing; because they were friends from then on. This is a kind of self-confidence.” (Action 4.3 Interview, Project Leader, Male)

“In general, you can clearly observe the change in students who go abroad for the first time and the relatively young ones, during and after projects. I see this in my students, for instance, they grow a remarkable self-confidence; they realise themselves. At the end of the third or fourth day, they raise their fingers saying ‘I, also, have an idea about this issue’...While they were silent before, or maybe know three or four English words, they shift into ‘No, I want to comment on this’. You can clearly observe the process of self-realisation.” (TCP Focus Group Meeting, Project Participants, Female)

“I, personally, broke down my prejudices. There were stereotypes saying a European is this, a far Eastern is like that. You realise their actual personality once you socialise in their groups. You are all equal in this world. Neither he is superior to you, nor are you. You achieve this conscience. In addition, my communication skills have developed. My civil dialogue and organisational skills have improved.” (Action 4.3 and 3.1 Focus Group Meeting, Project Participant, Male)

In terms of the gains of the individuals participating in Training and Networking projects, the issue of *discussing political topics seriously* attracts attention. Although it has a rather lower percentage compared to other items, it is significant that **70%** of the respondents of the questionnaire (2013) emphasised the effect of the projects on themselves in this regard. This percentage seems higher compared to the other actions, and points out to the fact that when participated in such projects, youth workers and trainers discuss political issues more compared to the other actions. A probable reason for this situation is that youth workers, youth leaders and trainers would like to prevent political conflicts that could appear in the youth activities that they organise and would like to be well prepared to manage such conflicts.

Let's listen to young people...

“There were participants from Azerbaijan and Armenia in our projects. This was our major concern, if there would be any problems; but in no way, there were any problems in both groups.” (Action 4.3 and 3.1 Focus Group Meeting, Project Participant, Female)

“We were talking about politics, but each part was arguing in favour of their opinions. There was not any problem in this sense, but participants from Far East usually socialise in their group and close themselves to outsiders. This might be a problem, but it did not cause a significant case.” (Action 4.3 and 3.1 Focus Group Meeting, Project Participant, Male)

Short-term and Long-term Impacts of the Training and Networking Projects

How Youth workers and youth leaders participating in the Training and Networking projects are affected and in which fields they developed themselves are also examined in a detailed way in the questionnaires and focus group meetings. Graph 2 presents the positive answers given by the respondents of the questionnaire to the question of which impact they experienced amongst the series of statements given to them.

Graph 2 Impact of Training and Networking Projects - Detail



The assessment shows that the individuals participated in the Training and Networking projects indicated *project management* as the field in which they got the biggest benefit and impact from these projects. **97%** of the respondents of the questionnaire expressed that they learned better *how to plan and organise a project* after the project that they participated in. This basic finding reveals that Training and Networking projects are successful and they accomplish their major objectives. Similarly, while the percentage of those who indicated that *they got to know people from other countries with whom they are still in touch* is **94%**, the percentage of those who stated that *they have established contacts with people in other countries which are useful for their professional development* is **85%**. It is possible to provide examples from the focus group meetings and interviews that support those findings.

Let's listen to young people...

“About 50 people all around the world participate in trainings. They are all educated in different specialities, and notions. Also, trainings are interactive. They divide you into groups, and in each group everyone share ideas and comes into conclusions... [diversity, cultural difference]... this was very advantageous for me, and it dragged me into the project.” (Action 4.3 and 3.1 Focus Group Meeting, Project Participant, Male)

“The best contribution is learning different practices in different countries, and meeting the locals of those countries. And carrying out the applicable practices here.” (Action 4.3 and Action 3.1 Focus Group Meeting, Project Participant, Male)

“The most favourable part for me was gaining a corporate partnership.” (Action 4.3 and Action 3.1 Focus Group Meeting, Project Participant, Male)

“Probably because of the atmosphere there; I still keep in contact with people I have met there in these four days. We have built a good friendship and designed a good project. They still come here; we visit each other for holidays.” (TCP Focus Group Meeting, Project Participants, Male)

Another significant outcome of the Training and Networking projects is observed in the field European citizenship and consciousness. While **94%** of the respondents of the questionnaire stated that *the project made them more receptive to Europe's multiculturalism*, **92%** indicated that *they became aware of common European values*.

Let's listen to young people...

“In addition, there we acquired information and discussed about the practices of youth policies in other countries. This can be introduced as an improvement in projects... Especially we get different opinions about the meaning of European citizenship. In other words, they learned what European citizen means; because the participants and pollsters had diverse definitions. Here in Turkey, there was a completely different conception... there was a wrong definition, at least we managed to break it... some said diversity, some unity, some freedom, some customs union, for instance. Some, at best defined, this is in our conclusions as well, as freedom of movement.” (Action 4.3 Interview, Project Leader, Male)

In addition to all those, it is seen that participants have important gains and show progress in terms of personal development, increase in self-confidence and societal awareness through participation in the Training and Networking projects. Improvements in the skills such as looking at oneself from outside, eliminating prejudices, improving self-confidence, practical thinking and feeling empathy were also voiced by the participants of the focus group meetings and interview.

Let's listen to young people...

“We were in a mountainside in Norway mostly occupied with outdoor activities. Above all, activities were very well organised. In the first day, we practiced the activities they had taught or guided. In the second day, we planned activities in groups, and the activities were challenging for us. Besides, they required us to challenge against nature. We practiced many compelling activities. There, I saw that they can teach individual awareness, developing empathy and teamwork. I believe that we can easily popularise this style among young people, especially for the disabled. In that sense both for me and... Later, we developed a project on this, and it was approved. Thereby, I broaden my horizon by taking this development as the basis.” (TCP Focus Group Meeting, Project Participants, Male)

“I have not been abroad before, although I was involved in youth projects. Since I did not have the chance – also my health problems (I am diabetic)... I left my home city and travelled from an international airport to another one on my own. Therefore, I went to the meeting point again all alone... I used to have a travelling phobia related to my diabetes; I thought I would never go to long journeys. But, now, after my experience abroad, when you invited me here, for instance, immediately... Normally, It used to take a few days of consideration: ‘Can I go? Can I wake up in the morning? What if I miss my flight?’ I had anxiety disorder like this. I believe I got over it. Now, I could say to the National Agency authorities. Before I used to send mails saying ‘I might not be joining. Do not consider me an absolute participant. My blood sugar may level up at that morning.’ in order to not to put them in a difficult situation. But now, I can say ‘Yes, I am coming.’ confidently.” (TCP Focus Group Meeting, Project Participants, Female)

“The most impressive part for me is that we were abstracted from our present subject (carrier, parenthood, etc.), and turned into our childhood, the age of five or ten. Everyone talked about bare truth. But related to the subject... Beyond this, empathy... ...Most people learn many things for the first time. We wanted us to wrap ourselves up in different cultures. ...And we maintained that role playing for one day. We have particular limits. Our communication, gestures and facial expressions, conversation... It taught me to judge myself from others’ point of view, to develop empathy. For the first time, there I fully grasped a hundred per cent. Thereafter, to illustrate, a mother’s role, a father’s role, a young person’s role...” (TCP Focus Group Meeting, Project Participants, Female)

“As a university student, before starting I always said that I will be active in any sphere. I have always been keen on internationality. I wanted to realise this personally. And this started with the National Agency. I went abroad for a project. This was my first time abroad, for instance. Then, we developed self-confidence about designing and managing projects. We can count confidence firstly. Secondly, dealing with other people’s problems and supervise them. I mean it is not like a serious supervision, but co-ordination skills were one of the most important achievements for me. Also, practical solution. That is, addressing changes during projects. I needed to suggest solutions simultaneously when it was asked. Thankfully, we handled it. I developed practical thinking abilities.” (Action 4.3 Interview, Project Leader, Male)

How the individuals participating in youth work as project managers, youth workers, trainers or leaders, use their experiences after their participation in the Training and Networking projects and how their future plans are affected are important to consider in terms of sustainability and efficient use of resources. If the individuals participating in the projects under this action cannot use their experiences and established contacts in the youth projects they participate or manage, problems may rise regarding the efficient and productive use of their experiences and sustainability of the youth projects.

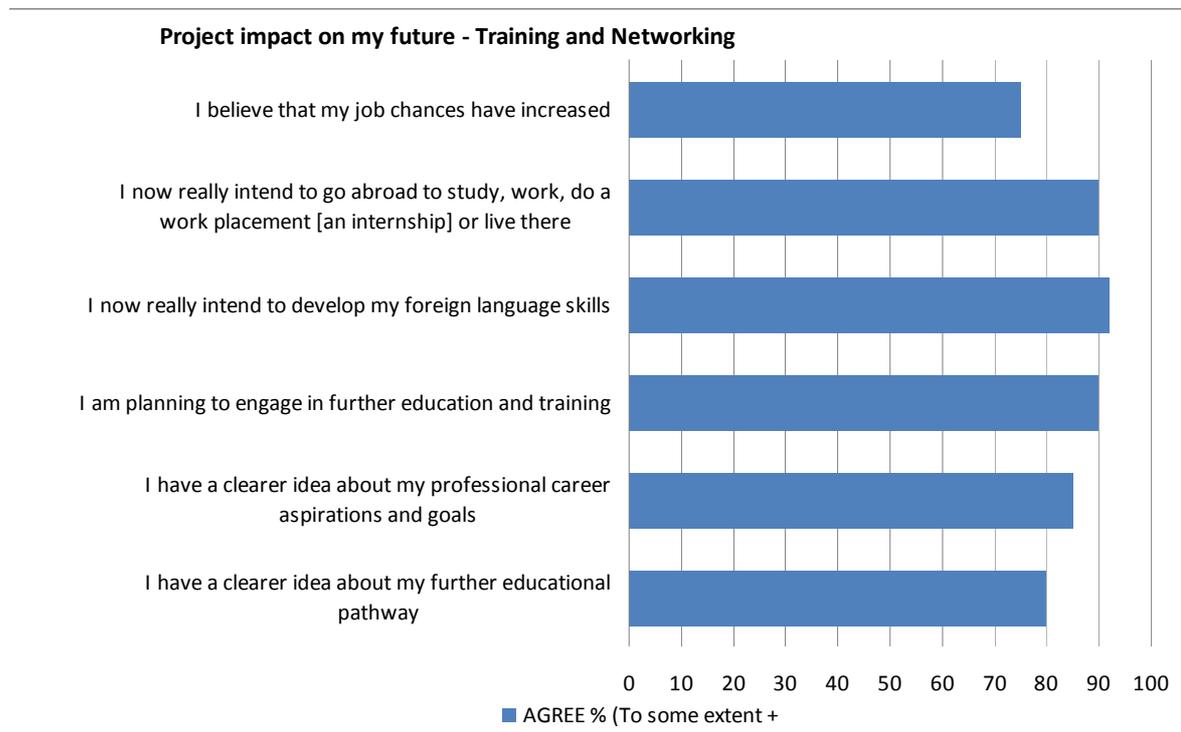
Let's listen to young people...

“The topic of the project was sustainable development, environment. About one month later... in Istanbul we organised a seminar, 4.3 seminar. Again on same topic: sustainable development and environment. Many workshops practiced there gave ideas about the project we will operate in Turkey. On individual basis, again, the project on recycling the objects that we use in our daily life affected my life. In other words, it has an impact both institutionally and sustainably. They were useful works.” (Action 4.3 and Action 3.1 Focus Group Meeting, Project Participant, Male)

“Despite the project have a Facebook page; I am pessimistic about what we are going to find 5 years later. Its subject is sustainability, but one cannot help worrying about the projects maintainability. This is the case for many other projects. After a while, it turns into we came, managed, and it's done... there is a huge project dump; no longer used, finished, a dumpsite where no one interact any longer.” (Action 4.3 and Action 3.1 Focus Group Meeting, Project Participant, Male)

As well as developing self-confidence and contributing to the personal development of the participants, the Training and Networking projects also affect their future plans. A great deal of the youth workers, youth leaders and trainers that take part in such projects point out to the fact that the project that they participated in had an impact on their future education, employment and personal development plans (Graph 3).

Graph 34 Training and Networking Projects and Future



The most significant impact about the future appears to be in the field of foreign languages, as it is the case for other action types. Regardless of their previous level of language skills, youth workers who get into an international environment and have to express themselves in

another language at different levels and in different forms, seem quite determinate to improve their foreign language skills after the activity. The percentage of young people who indicated that they would include *developing foreign languages* in their future plans is **92%**. Similarly, it is also observed that increasing self-confidence regarding *traveling to or living in another country* also plays a role within the future plans of the participants. **90%** of the respondents indicated that they would like to go abroad as a part of their future plans.

It also becomes evident that young people participating in Training and Networking activities are motivated to develop their skills further by participating in trainings and courses. **Nine out of ten** participants of the Training and Networking projects stated that they *planned to engage in further education and training* after the activity (Graph 3). Similarly, **80%** stated that after the project *they had a clearer idea about their further educational pathway* and 80% stated that *they had a clearer idea about their professional career aspirations and goals*. Data gathered in the focus group meetings show that participation in the Training and Networking projects affects and clarifies the formal education plans, provides benefits in their existing working environments and directs participants towards new education opportunities.

Let's listen to young people...

“Apart from this, I want to learn more about the project theme and the applicability of sustainability in daily life, where can I learn; yes this is a considerable deficiency. In Turkey, there are places we can find patterns about the issue, but, it was actually valuable to see these there, in the project.” (Action 4.3 and Action 3.1 Focus Group Meeting, Project Participant, Male)

“I am doing my master's in Istanbul University, at the Department of Social Policy and Social Work. The projects and training were also effective on making this decision. In other words, I can say that the starting point was directly this project... In this project, also, I choose risk groups. ...then, I realised that I like working with risk groups. And, at present, I am working on poverty and female employment at university. Therefore, it had a direct impact on me in determining my areas of interest, and what I want to in my life. I mean, it changed my life.” (TCP Focus Group Meeting, Project Participants, Male)

“It is significantly effective on careers; it has a multiplier effect, especially on students. In that sense, it makes unattainable things possible for students. And for us it is important in that sense: you are a distinguished person, because you travelled abroad, and become a role model for children.” (TCP Focus Group Meeting, Project Participants, Male)

Moreover, the number of youth workers who indicated that participation in the project created a positive difference and advantage in finding employment and job opportunities cannot be underestimated.

Let's listen to young people...

“I work as an engineer in an iron and steel factory. During the recruitment process there was a group interview. Then I had another interview with the CEO of the company. Then I entered an English exam. My success in these processes is mostly thanks to the projects I was involved in. As a matter of fact, my English improved there. Team work dynamics, conducting teamwork were advantageous for me. In the work that I am currently employed, we are 550 colleagues, and you become a sort of chief if you are the engineer. You need to co-ordinate them. You need to get along with them. ... [During the job interview] they did not ask me about my occupational experience. They did not ask me any technical questions.” (Action 4.3 and Action 3.1 Focus Group Meeting, Project Participant, Male)

“For the time being, I am a reader in a private university in Antep. At the first time I had started to work there –even in my interview- I said: ‘I want to work at the Office for International Relations’ which had not been founded yet. It was the second year of the University. The foundation process started immediately and so on. Then... I did internship at the EU office of my university when I was a student. They directly appointed me as Erasmus co-ordinator, since I had experience on the area. I might be the only reader who is an Erasmus co-ordinator at the same time. Usually, they are Assist. Prof.s, etc... In that sense, [participating in projects] served me in finding a job.” (TCP Focus Group Meeting, Project Participants, Male)

“The latest, last week, I applied to a private school here. ...A French school. We started to talk in English. And, I noticed that they did not really pay attention to how I was delivering French. ‘How do you present us?’, ‘What kind of projects can you design’, or ‘How can you guide this young people?’, ‘How can you address their needs?’ ...when they saw it on my CV they asked, such as ‘Did you go there?’, ‘Did you do this?’, ‘When did you go?’...We discussed about that a lot, talked.” (TCP Focus Group Meeting, Project Participants, Female)

3.5 Action 5.1 – Meetings of young people and those responsible for youth policy

Meetings of young people and those responsible for youth policy (Action 5.1)¹²

Those types of projects aim to support the implementation of Structured Dialogue between young people/youth organisations and decision-makers/experts in the youth field at local, regional, national or international level. Structured dialogue is the name used for discussions between youth policy-makers (at all levels) and young people on chosen themes, in order to obtain results which are useful for policy-making. The debate is structured in terms of themes and timing and can include events where young people can discuss the agreed themes amongst themselves and with EU politicians. Structured Dialogue activities can take the form of seminars, conferences, consultations and other events organised at local, regional, national or international level. These events promote the active participation of young people and their interaction with decision-makers, in order to establish a platform for debates between all the interested parties, enabling them to formulate positions or proposals and then translate them into concrete actions. Non-formal learning principles and practice are reflected throughout the project.

A project under Action 5.1 is developed with a view to implementing one or more of the following Activities:

√ **National Youth Meeting**, may consist of a series or combination of the below activities, taking place at local, regional, and national level in the Programme Countries, with a view to

- offering space for debate, consultation, active participation and information on issues which are relevant to Structured Dialogue or European Union policies and topics,
- preparing the ground of the official youth conference to be organised by the Member State holding the turn of Presidency of the European Union,
- organising activities linked to the European Youth Week,
- enhancing cross-sectoral dialogue and cooperation between formal and non-formal education areas.

√ **Transnational Youth Seminar** includes gatherings of young people and policy-makers aimed at discussing, exchanging ideas and best practice, and/or adopting recommendations around topics centred on the priorities and objectives of the Structured Dialogue and the renewed political framework in the youth field.

The meetings and activities that are NOT eligible for grants under Action 5.1 are as follows: academic study trips; exchange activities which aim to make financial profit; exchange activities which can be classed as tourism; festivals; holiday travel; language courses; performance tours; school class exchanges; sports competitions; statutory meetings of organisations; political gatherings; and, work camps.

Action 5.1 aims to ensure exchange of ideas and experience between young people and those responsible for youth policy regarding their own fields, to inform them about the developments and to make them a part of structured dialogue. Thus, the profile of the participants of the Action 5.1 projects is constituted accordingly, and these types of projects bring together young people, youth organisations and youth policy makers/experts at the local, regional or international levels. These projects consist of activities in which young people can discuss both among themselves and with the policy makers at different levels, and by providing a convenient basis for discussion between the relevant parties, they aim to develop proposals or attitudes, and to ensure active participation of young people and

¹² Youth in Action Programme Guide, valid as of 1 January 2013, page 106-107.

development of their mutual interaction with the policy makers in order to turn them into action. An important feature of the Action 5.1 projects is that they include a high number of participants (minimum 15, on average 50-100) compared to other action types, and they are often organised at the national level in the Turkish case.

Although the participants of the meetings, as different actors of youth work, are expected to increase their level of information and awareness and develop themselves professionally, it should be underlined that those meetings are not actually training and networking activities, and these objectives are considered under the Training and Networking projects (Action 3.1 and 4.3). For this reason, it is more meaningful to assess the impact analysis of the Action 5.1 participants in terms of personal development and motivation.

Analyses demonstrate that participants of the Action 5.1 projects show progress in terms of personal development, and in relation to their future plans, they increase their knowledge and experience especially about the themes of the projects as a result of their participation in the project and they focus on improving their education and foreign language skills for the future. In a sense, the meetings that they participate in motivate young participants to deepen in their own fields and develop their competences, and considerably contribute to their personal development.

In the standard and special questionnaires distributed for Action 5.1, contrary to other actions, the assessments of the respondents seem higher in 2013 questionnaires, compared to these of 2012 questionnaires. Due to the identification of such a difference, it will be useful to collect additional data and conduct a more detailed analysis for the reasons of such a difference. One of the probable reasons is that the number of participants participated in the 2013 questionnaires is more than two times higher than that in the 2012 questionnaire. To control this, it is necessary to examine the projects of those who responded the 2012 questionnaires. The responses of a group of participants who took part in the same project and were unsatisfied with it can affect the results of the limited sample.

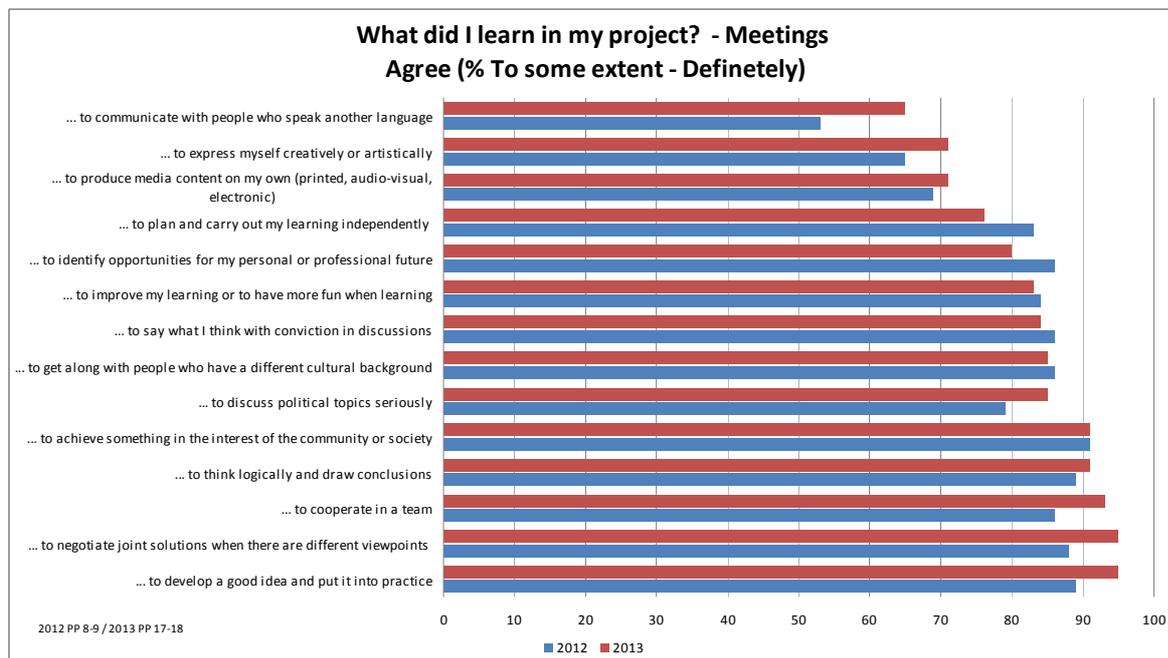
A total number of 155 Action 5.1 project participants responded to four questionnaires distributed in 2012 and 2013 within the context of the RAY survey (2012:42; 2013:113). All the tables, graphs and analyses presented in this section are produced from the responses of these 155 young people. In addition, within the context of the RAY special

survey an in-depth interview with one project leader, who took part in the meetings of young people and those responsible for youth policy (Action 5.1) and one focus group meeting with three project participants were conducted. Thus, all the analyses in this section are produced and presented from the data collected by quantitative and qualitative research methods.

Meetings and Learning

The strongest response of the project participants to the question of what they learned from the national and international meetings organised on different themes under Action 5.1 is *to develop a good idea and put it into practice*. While **95%** of the respondents of the 2013 questionnaire chose this option, the percentage was **89%** for the 2012 questionnaires (Graph 1). Since the meetings can be both national and international, it is observed that project participants improved their *foreign languages* and *communication in another language* skills considerably less compared to other issues (2013: **65%**, 2012: **53%**).

Graph 1 Meetings and Learning



As shown in Graph 1, *to negotiate joint solutions when there are different viewpoints* is another popular answer (2013: **95%**; 2012: **88%**). It is an important finding that in line with the objectives of these meetings, the participants of those projects in which different viewpoints come together and are discussed develop themselves in this field. The focus

group with the participants of the Action 5.1 projects and the interview with the project leader also show that realised projects provide opportunities in this regard. The instances in which project participants meet with people with whom they do not usually have opportunities to come together in their daily routines, such as those with different life experiences and different professions; they gather information regarding the problem areas that they live through or perceive; they discuss on these issues; and they submit the outputs and joint work produced as a result of the discussions to the relevant authorities show that Action 5.1 projects provide significant experiences for primarily young people and different actors of youth work regarding structural dialogue.

Let's listen to young people...

“The interesting side for me was, you know there are some people for whom it is not very common to become friends, for instance a doctor’s friend is usually either a doctor or a nurse. The most favourable part of this programme was bringing together those who do not easily gather in one place. For example, there was a journalist, a very hardworking volunteer, and a senior civil servant. There were important people who worked abroad on the issue, for instance volunteering; there were people from UNESCO or from other well-known organisations. The exciting part, for instance, was that Turkey was there, there was an international event. This is like catching a wild goose. Not like a miracle, but accomplishing a hard target there, because normally you cannot bring together that many people. There were also participants with diverse ideas. As I said, I was there when there was social disturbance in Turkey due to Gezi protests. For example, Gezi protests are also discussed there where various perspectives exist. Although the variety of ideas, people set aside their personal views and co-operated for one goal on behalf of youth. This was very impressive.” (Action 5.1 Focus Group Meeting, Project Participant, Female)

“The document we had prepared was sent to the Ministry of Tourism, and they gave feedback to us. This was a positive thing for us; we saw that our efforts were not in vain. It was very important for us that our project get beyond the planning stage. You pay effort and produce something, and then they did not put it aside. It actually serves the purpose.” (Action 5.1 Focus Group Meeting, Project Participant, Male)

“Authorities from Antalya Metropolitan Municipality visited us, the governor was also there. The credited organisations, such as tourism TUROB, came to visit us. Several general directors from Antalya also came.” (Action 5.1 Focus Group Meeting, Project Participant, Male)

“... volunteering themed two different conferences. There were representatives of UNESCO and so on. There were participants from all around Turkey: teachers, youth workers, also university students.” (Action 5.1 Focus Group Meeting, Project Participant, Male)

Similarly, as a natural outcome of these meetings in which different viewpoints are discussed and experiences are shared, 93% of the respondents indicated that they learned better *to cooperate in a team* (2012: **86%**). The interview with the project leader reveals that experiences of project preparation and implementation are not informative only for the project participants, but also for the project leaders regarding the benefits of the team work.

Let's listen to young people...

“Maybe I could have done: While being prepared... For instance, I could have included five or six people from different cities, and divide project design duties among them. Actually not the hard part (technical part); but, for example, about the regional application part I could have said ‘You also participate in that part.’ Then, maybe he can embrace the project better, and become more actively involved in the application process; because we divide tasks only to the ones who joined the preliminary visit. Let’s say; ‘You set up social media.’, ‘You prepare press release.’, and ‘You search about NGOs.’... Some of them were very enthusiastic, but they paid no notice when they came back. Maybe, if I had included them into designing, they would have been more connected.” (Action 5.1 Interview, Project Leader, Female)

Another field that participation in these meetings has an impact on appears to be *social awareness*. **91%** of the respondents indicated that through their participation in a project organised under Action 5.1, they learned better *to achieve something in the interest of the community or society*. Data collected from the focus group meetings and interviews also support this finding. Through their participation in the projects under this type of action, which focus deeply and in its different dimensions on a single and specific theme such as youth unemployment, tourism, health (cancer) or youth work, project participants increase remarkably their knowledge and awareness about these themes; they develop new skills regarding identification of local problems and needs, developing ideas about those, putting them into action and finding local partners for this aim.

Let's listen to young people...

“One of our trainers’ techniques... one of them projected world map on a big chart. He gave a colour pen to everyone, and asked, such as ‘where are the illnesses and wars in the world?’, ‘where are the underdeveloped regions?’... Everyone painted colourfully. Actually, a colourful world appeared, but, meanwhile, we observed that there were problems in these areas. This was also for learning their opinions; I mean ‘What are their priorities about their region?’...” (Action 5.1 Interview, Project Leader, Female)

“As more subjects covered, for example, they saw that the previous projects overlap with their present targets. What does this mean? They realised that they do something right, indeed internationally advantageous – useful to realise the goals of United Nations. And this made them feel like ‘We do something good then, something for public good’; because, generally we encounter comments, such as ‘There are few participants’, ‘It can remain lame’, ‘Did we do a good thing?’, ‘Was this necessary?’. Also, they came with a Youth Declaration on active citizenship, social inclusion and volunteering. I mean, ‘How these issues should be?’, ‘What issues do young people give importance?... What happened then?’ they transferred their ideas to an output through a representative.” (Action 5.1 Interview, Project Leader, Female)

“We said them [participants]: ‘Following the workshop on May, we will finish on September. Until that time, our request from you is... forming groups and developing a project. But before you need to choose one of those targets [United Nations millennium Development Goals]...’ ...For instance one of them [Bodrum branch] co-operated with the Municipality about collecting environmental waste –particularly domestic oil waste. Elaziğ branch, worked with the health department on raising awareness about breast cancer...through seminars...In the meantime, they have been through ‘What is active citizenship?’, ‘How can I add social inclusion into this project?’, ‘I will chose that topic of United Nations; because this whet we need in my region. In this case, I will work on those stakeholders. I can develop a mini-project, for one month, for instance.’ And later they all said ‘I was very good’. , people were pleased about what they had done, they finished a project; and ‘we made a contribution to goal eight, we feel better...’... they gave us these kinds of feedbacks.” (Action 5.1 Interview, Project Leader, Female)

All these findings and incidences point out to the successful realisation of the Action 5.1 projects, in which the participants and project leaders within the context of research participated, in terms of basic aims and objectives of the projects.

Short-term and Long-term Impact

Almost all (98%) of the participants of the meetings under Action 5.1 who responded the RAY questionnaires indicated that the project that they took part in *contributed to their personal development*.

Let's listen to young people...

"I can say what has changed; first of all attending those activities is very important for self-improvement; because, although they are adults, many people have difficulties in expressing themselves. Even university students do not know how to speak or chose words. Maybe those few activities I have attended is not enough to make a radical change for me, but those kinds of activities definitely support self-expression skills. If we think about what has happened for instance, as far as I follow on social media, and internet, I saw that participants who attended projects on health contacted with the health department, afterwards. They certainly have something to deliver; of what has changed, about poverty for example, I follow news and there are some changes." (Action 5.1 Focus Group Meeting, Project Participant, Male)

"I used to have some prejudices about the youth projects in Turkey. Frankly speaking, I thought that there were not many activities for young people in Turkey. Thus, I was prejudiced against this project, as well. I thought that nothing was done for youth in this country, is there anything done? My prejudices are broken to a degree. My self-awareness increased. There were quite various people, to illustrate. I could tolerate people, I thought, I would not tolerate normally. In other words, I had some strict lines. Those lines are more flexible now, I am more conscious. The most important gain was that I learned there are some moves for young people in Turkey. My hopes have increased for future. I reach the condition of saying something are done for youth in this country." (Action 5.1 Focus Group Meeting, Project Participant, Male)

"I consider intercultural tolerance, individual tolerance important... I think most of the problems occur due to absence of tolerance. Additionally, let me mention my personal values. For example, I work with many people; people sometimes I do not want to work with. About them, now, I learn to say that I do not want to work with this person, but I have to respect and tolerate them. " (Action 5.1 Focus Group Meeting, Project Participant, Male)

Significant feedback was also received in terms of *project management* and 95% of the respondents of the questionnaire stated that they learned better *how to plan and organise a project*. Data collected in the focus group meetings and interviews show that motivation of the project participants increased in terms of participation in the new projects and project planning, and they started to take initiatives in this regard.

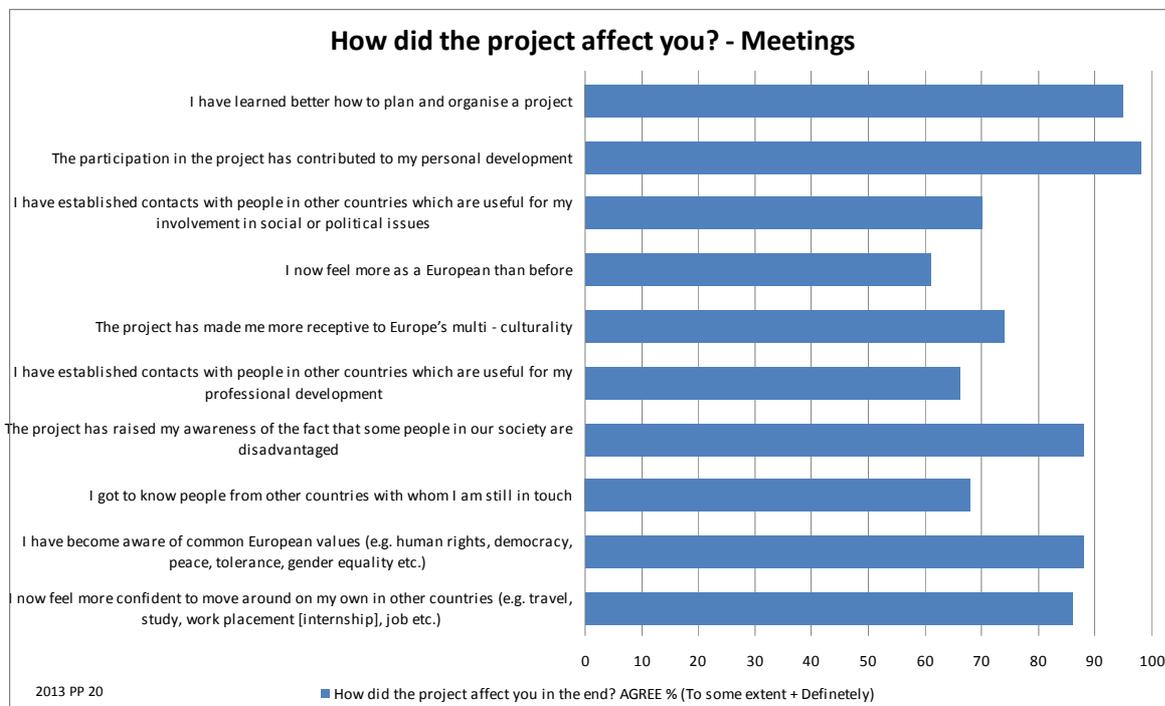
Let's listen to young people...

“But what happened? Thanks to this project now people realised that our other associates in Turkey receive grants... ‘Let’s sit and check web page of the National Agency. Wonder whether we can do it on our own? Let’s try.’ ...Trials had begun. Eskişehir branch joined and designed a project. Diyarbakır branch designed a project. They did not work with me... But, in my opinion, Diyarbakır, Elazığ, Eskişehir writing projects present the change; because I did not help them, they designed on their own.” (Action 5.1 Interview, Project Leader, Female)

“One acquires skills about working within a framework of time, budget and activity schedule. In preliminary activities, you imagine, make plans for one year, maybe for a project that will start three or five months later, and for a project that will finish a year later. This necessarily helps you in developing anticipation. Furthermore, since you experienced your mistakes or shortfalls in the first project, while you are writing the second one you say ‘Yes, this amount is too much for budget; it has been left over before. Instead, I will increase this entry. Instead of thirty, I will extend to thirty five participants. ... After then, you learn to be organised and foresee one or two years later.” (Action 5.1 Interview, Project Leader, Female)

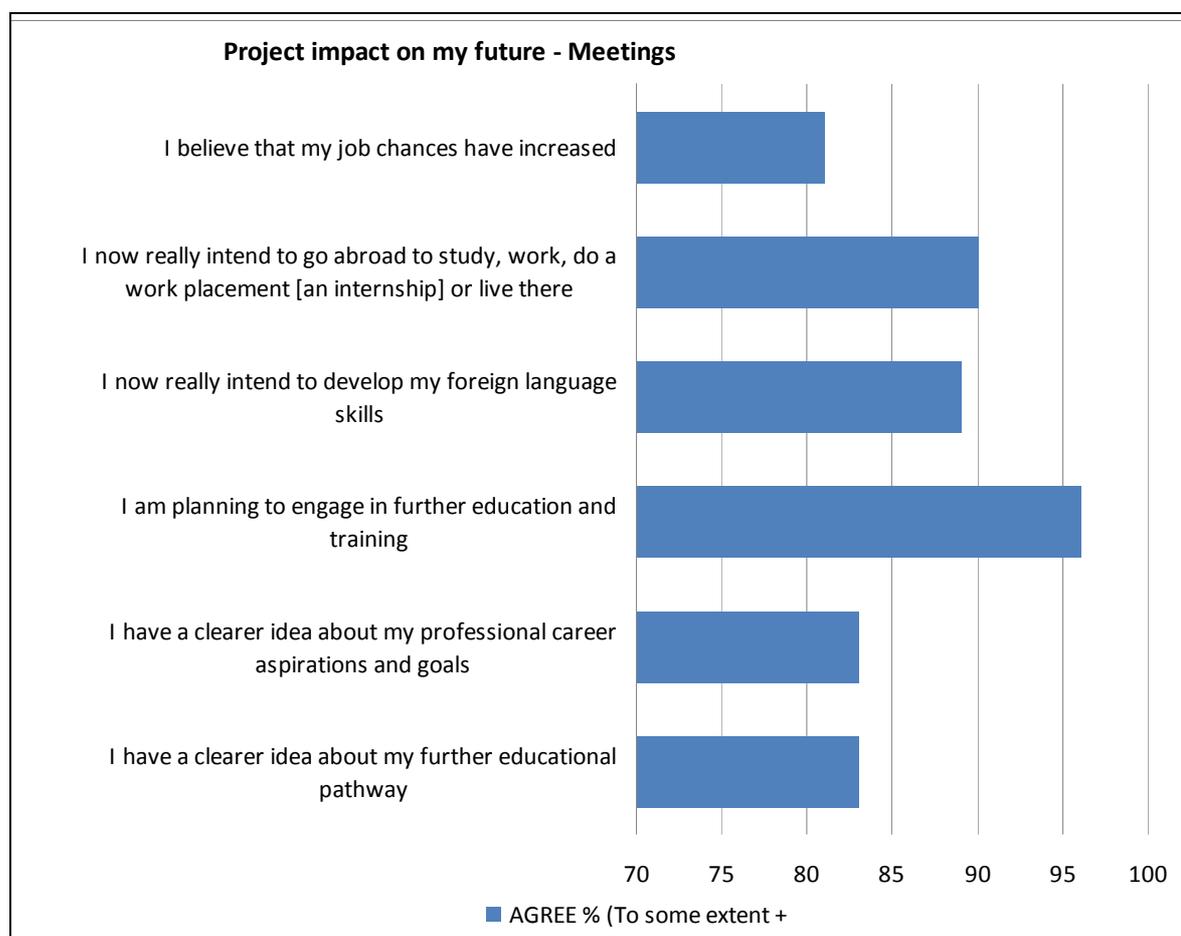
Although those two issues are consistent with the aims and objectives of Action 5.1, it is remarkable that other issues apart from these two stay at the background. Although more positive statements (**88%**, **88%** and **86%**) were made on the issues of *increasing self-confidence*, highly related to *common European values*, *social awareness* and personal development, other issues remained at 70% or below. Among all action types, Action 5.1 projects differ in this regard.

Graph 2 Impact of the Action 5.1 Projects



Albeit to different levels in terms of the impact of the project, it is observed that those who participate in Action 5.1 projects are quite positively influenced from the project regarding their future plans. The most significant decision of the Action 5.1 project participants regarding their future appears as *planning to planning to engage in further education and training (96%)*. It can be considered as a natural outcome that participants, who encounter with different viewpoints and new knowledge in the meetings, would like to participate in similar projects and get engaged in education and training on different themes, to the extent that the projects contribute to the personal development of the participants. However, it should be noted as a remarkable finding that participants get motivated at such high levels. Accordingly, as shown in Graph 3, average motivation regarding future plans is usually at quite high levels. Percentage of positive responses by the respondent to each individual issue in the questionnaire is minimum **81%** and it could go up to **96%**. These indicators reveal that Action 5.1 projects have a remarkable impact on the project participants regarding their future planning.

Graph 3 Action 5.1 and Future



Another striking point is observed on the issue of employment. **81%** of the respondents of the questionnaire believe that *their job changes have increased* after the project, which is one of the highest percentages amongst the other analysed action types. This finding is also emphasized by the project leader in the interview. At the same time, data collected in the focus group meeting demonstrate that not only with regards to their perception on finding new jobs, but also with regards to that about the professions and jobs that they already had, the perceptions of the participants positively developed, and participants had the professional development opportunities. Perception regarding the increase in the chances of employment and job opportunities should be emphasised as a gain not only of the project participants, but also of the project leaders.

Let's listen to young people...

“In the working life, for example, what I have observed is that writing on our CVs that ‘I know English’, ‘I know how to drive’, ‘I was graduated from that university’ is not enough anymore. When you say that I actively participated in projects, I was a project leader, when you briefly tell about it (about summary of your project) with a few sentences... especially in Europass, for instance, it asks about your projects, etc. there. We see that international corporations, foreign and big size (bigger relative to small size ones) corporations pay attention to these, because... in an association, being a member of an NGO is a plus for applicants. In Antalya, in my immediate surroundings, from people at my branch I saw that... They ask ‘What are you doing?’ When we say ‘We received a grant, conducted a projects; or as a branch we did that.’ They ask ‘What was your task?’... I mean, it wanders off. In other words, a person taking part in a project voluntarily makes employer think that ‘he can take responsibility on his own, manage everything, or manage a budget’.” (Action 5.1 Interview, Project Leader, Female)

“Since I am related to the area, we usually work on this. They call this group socialisation meeting, an activity that is used in psychological counselling groups which are usually bigger. But, I was not expecting them to use in a project like this. That was interesting for me. At that moment, I realised that activities that are related to our profession can be applied to daily life. They used it right.” (Action 5.1 Focus Group Meeting, Project Participant, Male)

“Both trainings, and attending such a project was advantageous for us, but some parts were more favourable. Each of us has a certain point of view. We individually detected specific deficiencies in specific areas. We determined those. But, actually, there were some other deficiencies in other places. We figured out them by means of other, maybe we made them to realise those. These were important. We saw that we do not take equal education in all universities. We do not learn the things they do, or vice versa. Whether they learn less or vice versa, some things became public.” (Action 5.1 Focus Group Meeting, Project Participant, Male)

4. Prominent Findings and General Assessment

In this section, prominent findings of the RAY research are discussed in light of the qualitative and quantitative data gathered from the Standard Survey conducted on the general impact of the Youth in Action Programme on young people and the Special Survey on the learning outcomes. Depending on the findings presented for various action types in the previous section, this section provides a general assessment of different aspects of (learning) experiences of the young people who participated in the Youth in Action Programme from Turkey, and offers evidence of and discusses categorically the impact of the Youth in Action Programme on the competences and learning awareness; project design; non-formal education/learning; employment opportunities and entrepreneurship; continuity and sustainability; views on the European Union, Youth in Action Programme and National Agency; partnerships established; and, recognition and inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities.

4.1 Competences and Learning Awareness

Lifelong Learning refers to the assumption that learning has various dimensions and wider environments in which learning takes place should be taken into consideration in addition to formal education. In this context, learning experiences gained in formal, non-formal and informal environment complement each other. The most basic field of non-formal education is defined as the field of youth work, and an important role is attributed to youth work at the international level. Within the context of the European Union education policies and subsequent Lifelong Learning concept, in order to define the learning outcomes of young people acquired within the context of the youth work, a set of Key Competences was developed, as well as a set of tools (YouthPass) in order to increase the recognition of those competences. In the Youth in Action Programme, Key Competences are grouped as *communication in the mother tongue; communication in foreign languages; mathematical competence and basic competences in science and technology; digital competence; learning to learn; social and civic competences; sense of initiative and entrepreneurship; and cultural awareness and expression.*

The findings gathered within the context of RAY research on Turkey show that young people participated in the Youth in Action Programme from Turkey experienced learning in all of those competence fields, albeit to different extents. The data collected in the focus

group meetings and interviews demonstrate that highest degrees of learning have occurred in the fields of social and civic competences, communication in a foreign language, learning to learn and entrepreneurship and sense of initiative.

Social and civic competences (Key Competence 6)

Social and civic competences (Key Competence 6) refers to all forms of awareness and intercultural interaction that we might need for participating effectively in our social and working lives such as being able to participate in social, civic and working life; being able to deal and communicate with people coming from different social and cultural backgrounds; being able to cope in a constructive way with conflicts; have the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to be active as a citizen; and, participating as much as possible in civic life at local, regional, national, European and global level.

Within the context of Key Competences of Lifelong Learning, social and civic competences are exemplified as being active as a citizen at the local level – trying to solve some local problems, answer some needs of people living around; personal and interpersonal development (as working in the team, building trust, respect, tolerance, increasing self-confidence, empathy, coping with uncertainty, decision making, solving conflicts and managing crises, etc.); working with people who are excluded, have fewer opportunities and perspectives; cultural development (coping with diversity, working with different social groups, learning new traditions, values, styles, organising cultural events and activities, etc.); increasing the knowledge about structures, values and rules of civic society; and working on voluntary basis for your local community.¹³

When the national data on Turkey within the context of RAY research on the basis of all actions is considered, one of the most prominent finding is the development of the competence of *dealing with people having different cultural backgrounds*. Particularly valid for the bilateral and multilateral mobility projects, participants of the research indicate that Youth in Action Programme offers opportunities of *intercultural learning*. In the focus group meetings, participants voiced that their participation in the Youth in Action Programme projects helped them decrease and eliminate the prejudices against young people from other cultures; they had started developing empathy towards those who were

¹³ <https://www.youthpass.eu/da/youthpass/for/youth-initiatives/learn/information/kcsocial/>.

different from themselves and they started to better communicate with them; they became more tolerant and/or respectful to different viewpoints and traditions; and, they started to understand themselves and their own limits better. Those findings demonstrate that the participants have not only learnt new things about other cultures and gathered new skills to enable them for dealing with people from other cultures better, but also they have started to know themselves and their own cultures better and developed skills to view themselves from the eyes of the other participants.

When the contribution of the Youth in Action Programme projects on the *personal development* of the young people in Turkey is considered, amongst the participants who filled in the 2013 Standard questionnaire, there are almost no participants, in all action types, who claimed that their participation in the project had no particular effect on themselves. When the most prominent changes on the participants are concerned, it can be stated that project participants perceive some change in themselves and voice it in terms of increasing self-confidence, feeling empathy with others, expressing thoughts and feelings better, feeling more independent, coping with new situations better and knowing themselves. (Table 1)

Table 1 Contribution of the project to personal development



When the young people who participated in the Youth in Action Programme from Turkey, one of the most striking findings of the research can be stated as the *increase in self-*

confidence of the participants, valid for all types of youth projects within the context of the research. This situation is clearly visible with the information gathered both from the 2013 Standard questionnaires, and from the focus group meetings and interviews. As Table 1 shows, the most common answer from respondents to question of “what have you noted about yourself after participating in the project?” is predominantly “I am more self-confident”. Almost all the participants of the focus group meetings without any exception noted that due to their participation in the projects they felt themselves as useful individuals. Such an outcome can easily be considered as an important sign of increasing self-realisation, self-satisfaction and self-confidence for those youngsters.

Let's listen to young people...

“For example, I used to exaggerate processes of taking passport, visa, and buying plain tickets. Passport came via post. We went to the airport and made our check-ins there, and took the plain, and were here. It was not that hard. At least, this gave me courage. Before, I used to be too lazy to do all the paper work, etc. , but it was not as bad as I had exaggerated.” (Action 2 Focus Group Meeting, EVS Volunteer, Male)

“The self-confidence of volunteers I have sent remarkably increases. Their perspectives of life and prejudices change significantly. I feel this intensely.” (Action 2 Interview, Project Leader. Female)

“I learned how to say no. People can actually say no, I learned this; and for Germans it is absolutely either yes or no. like there is no midway. I can say that, in the circumstances, I learned to speak up and set forth my opinions, but at the same time thinking about my attitude before acting without setting fort my opinions.” (Action 2 Focus Group Meeting, EVS Volunteer, Male)

“The project I attended was about children. It was a little tiring but delightful. With this project, I went abroad and had foreign friends for the first time. Living in another country on my own for 9.5 months, and having foreign friends are positive changes for me. I am planning to go abroad again with another project.” (Standard Questionnaire, 2013, EVS Volunteer)

“I believe that with this project I become a freer, self-expressive individual, and I consider myself lucky of participating in the project. Learning about new cultures and spending time with them were entertaining and informative.” (Standard Questionnaire, 2013, Project Participant)

“I learned all the skills about personal development not in schools, but in these projects I took responsibilities. I learned different ideas and perspectives in international projects, after the project I took up new endeavours; my life has started to develop in new path. Cross border culture share should increase, and we should learn to convert reverse opinions to negotiation from divisiveness.” (Standard Questionnaire, 2013, Project Participant)

“This project is very useful especially for young people: it improves moral courage, we meet different cultures and new people, and we improve our foreign language abilities. I like Europe very much, particularly traffic policies...” (Standard Questionnaire, 2013, Project Participant)

“I learned planning my day more efficiently. I learned making long-term plans. For sure, living in another country improves one’s self-confidence. But my mother still could not get used to the idea. She still wants to see the same girl that she sent to university. We argue about this a little.” (Action 2 Focus Group Meeting, EVS Volunteer, Female)

“I think every young people in the world should attend this project. This project not only gives you the chance of going abroad, but also changed and improves your world-view, perspectives, and you targets.” (Standard Questionnaire, 2013, Project Participant)

Quite a number of examples can also be given from the qualitative research findings to explain the increase of self-confidence of young people within the context of the study. Many participants of the research noted that there occurred significant degrees of development in their *coping with the problems and problem solving* capacities. Although such an increase in coping with the problems and problem solving capacities have been voiced for all types of the projects within the context of the research, it most strikingly comes to the fore for the former volunteers of the *European Voluntary Service projects*, most probably due to the long-term nature of the mobility activity. Depending on a variety of problem examples given by the participants, it can be stated that skills to cope with problems have increased at various dimensions of problem solving. Project participants may face problems at almost all stages of a project. Mostly positive, but also sometimes negative, experiences gathered through efforts in finding solutions to the problems such as those faced at the home country before the projects during the preparations for going abroad to participate in the project (visa, travel arrangements, passport procedures etc.); problems related to the project components/activities during the project (discrepancies between the written programme elements and real activities...); problems related to the informal and practical aspects of the projects (accommodation, food, mentors or relations with the hosting organisations...); problems that could occur between the project participants, can be considered as an important factor that increase the self-confidence of the participants.

Let's listen to young people...

"I can very well use the experiences I gained in the EU projects in which I have participated in my personal life; I can think broader and I believe that I can develop better and quicker solutions to the problems."
(Standard Questionnaire, 2013, Project Participant)

As shown in Table 1, the second common answer that the respondents of the questionnaire gave has been "I can better empathise with others". This shows that young people develop skills to better identify the problems and needs regarding the people and/or groups that they encounter within the communities or groups where they live or have been to due to their involvement in the projects; that young people develop awareness towards especially the disadvantaged segments of the societies; and, that they start to put themselves in other people's place. Concrete examples of such a development were voiced many times at the focus group meetings and interviews. Although such a development in skills and attitudes have been noted in almost all types of projects, it is experienced at highest levels in projects

where there is a direct contact to the local communities, such as the Action 1.2 Youth Initiatives and Action 2 European Voluntary Service projects. Concomitantly and in addition to this, it is possible to provide many examples showing that participation in the Youth in Action Programme contributes to the young people's efforts in working for the benefit of the society, hence feeling themselves as useful individuals.

Let's listen to young people...

"Since we worked with hearing-impaired people in the project, I have gained notable and incredible experiences; it was informative and entertaining for me." (Standard Questionnaire, 2013, Project Participant)

"Owing to the project I attended, I have learned empathizing with and expressing myself to socially disabled people." (Standard Questionnaire, 2013, Project Participant)

"Because it was the first project I participated, Disaster Doesn't Forgive is quite special for me. This project has opened up a new horizon for me. I think I become more easy-going and social. More importantly, this project taught me that as an individual I should do useful things for others, and produce good things." (Standard Questionnaire, 2013, Project Participant)

"I cannot ignore the contributions of this project to me. Following the first project, The Park of Frame, I had attended, I joined many other projects, and I think youth projects are the best and most informative means of knowing about new cultures, improving one, increase use of foreign languages, and being in an interactive environment." (Standard Questionnaire, 2013, Project Participant)

Another striking finding is the role that participation in youth projects plays in terms of *empowerment of young people, especially young women*, in Turkey. This is linked primarily to the increase in the self-confidence of the project participants, and secondly to the positively changing perceptions, especially of the families, in other words, the increasing social recognition. Many female participants of the focus group meetings indicated that their participation in the mobility projects positively changed the views of their parents and families; and they shared various anecdotes about this situation. In addition, the participants also stated that they started to be referred as examples in their own social environments, in a way to encourage other young women to participate in the projects and youth work.

Let's listen to young people...

"I hope projects which change a village girl's life like mine, become available for more young people from the villages." (Standard Questionnaire, 2013, Project Participant)

"I was planning to go abroad when I first started to university, but my parents remained distant to the idea. They were concerned about how would I do it, and how would I manage to live there. But when I came back from Bosnia, it has changed to that I just say what I will do and they support it. In other words, I feel that their trust in me increased. I mean, they make me feel in that way. I live alone in Ankara; before, they were more concerned, now it is all support. You do everything right. I apply to jobs and projects abroad, and know that this will be supported. Before I had doubts, now I am sure that my parents' viewpoint has changed." (Action 2

Focus Group Meeting, EVS Volunteer, Female)

“Compared to other families in Diyarbakır, mine is better. But, it is pretty traditional family too... In such a way that going out was a problem. But then They got used to it, when I got an offer for a training in Macedonia, I called my mother and said ‘Mum, by the end of this month I will go Macedonia for a training.’ She said ‘My daughter, may God speed you. When will you come back?’ My father says. For example, when his friends ask ‘Your daughter goes like this. Don’t you ever afraid?’, he says ‘When my daughter goes abroad, I become happy as I am the one who goes’. The last score of my parents was: they get used to very much that... Since they see I do these things for my career, a couple of months ago we had this conversation with my mother on the phone, it was about marriage and my mother who is a primary school graduate said to me: ‘do not care about marriage. Do your master’s as soon as possible’” (TCP Focus Group Meeting, Project Participants, Female)

“Thereafter, my parents also think that I can live alone wherever I go, earn my keep, find a job, do something.” (Action 2 Focus Group Meeting, EVS Volunteer, Female)

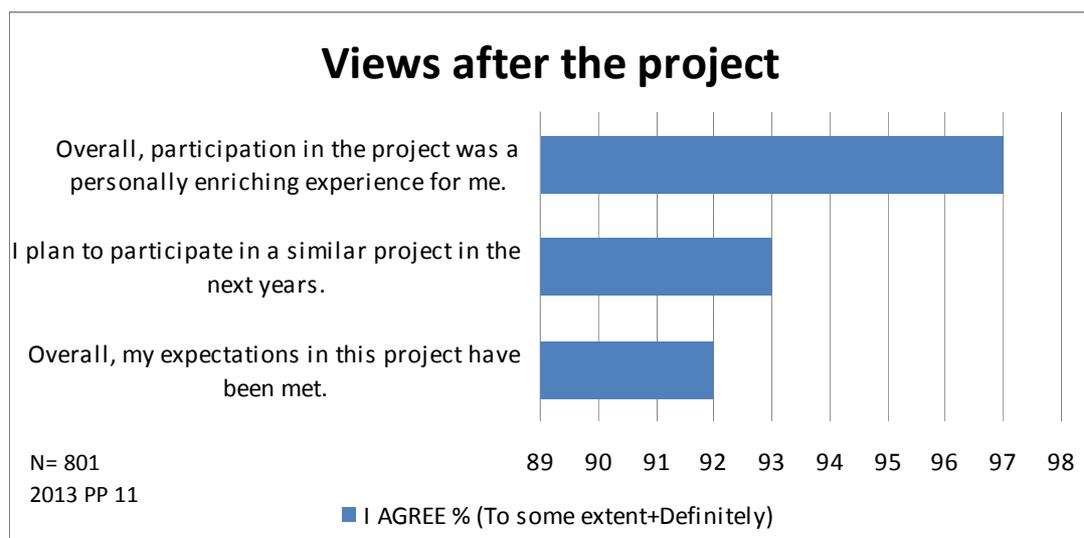
“I lived in orphanage for 13 year, and keeping in mind the needs there I designed ‘You Are My Future’ project. For the time being, like a role model to the children there, I finished university, and now work at Turkish State Railways as an engineer. These will form good role models for them, and they will start planning their future.” (Standard Questionnaire, 2013, Project Participant)

“Participating in an EVS project made me realize that world does not only consist of my country. Thereafter, I believe that I can survive not only in Europe, but also anywhere in the world.” (Standard Questionnaire, 2013, Project Participant)

In a way to complement the findings of the Special Survey questionnaire, through the interviews, not only the project participants, but also the project leaders provided instances of how their personal development skills advanced. Project leaders considerably valued their experiences of taking responsibility and initiative for the projects; indicated that their abilities to communicate with different age groups and with their peers from other countries; voiced that not only their foreign language skills, but also their self-respect and self-confidence increased due to achieving successful results. Such kind of gains as perceived by the project leaders show that participation in the youth projects increases the motivation and inner dignity of the youth leaders.

When the post-project views of young people participated in the Youth in Action Programme from Turkey are considered, it is seen that 97% of the respondents of the 2013 Standard Survey believe that *participation in the project was a personally enriching experience for themselves* (Table 2). Young people indicate *that their expectations in the project were met to a great extent, and they plan to participate in similar projects in the next years.*

Table 2 Views after the project



Communication in Foreign Languages (Key Competence 2)

In the YouthPass Guide, it is stated that *communication in foreign languages*, as one of the Key Competences of Lifelong Learning, is “closely linked to the ability to understand and express thoughts, feelings and facts orally or in writing at work, home, leisure, education and training – according to our wants or needs”. This also brings together the “calls for skills such as mediation and intercultural understanding”.¹⁴ Communication in foreign languages competence refers to the actions such as using different language(s) in different life contexts; expressing ideas, opinions, feelings, needs, facts in foreign language(s) by listening, speaking, writing and reading; and understanding others. Some examples of acquiring and developing this competence can be listed as learning new words and new expressions in foreign languages; learning new concept, approaches, methods coming from different country; learning new things about different cultures; being more confident when speaking foreign language; learning to understanding others; and, being more open toward people coming from different countries and cultures.¹⁵

Improvement of foreign language competences that can also be considered as a complementary factor of the development of cultural awareness and as a signifier of personal development has been voiced both in the questionnaires and by almost all of the participants of the bilateral and multilateral projects at the focus group meetings and

¹⁴ Youthpass Guide (2011: 20).

¹⁵ <https://www.youthpass.eu/da/youthpass/for/youth-initiatives/learn/information/kcforeignlanguages/>.

interviews. The participants indicated that their communication skills in a language other than their mother tongue seriously advanced, and in most of the cases they mentioned the importance attributed to the development of English language skill and to the necessity to know that language. Peculiar to European Voluntary Service projects, there are also instances of, except English, learning the language of the hosting country or that of the other volunteers in the project. Even in cases of lack of foreign language skills that could hinder verbal communication, the participants pointed out to the importance of communication and gave examples of their efforts to communicate through tools such as body language when needed.

Let's listen to young people...

“I am a chatty person but in Turkish, thanks to this project I learned to express myself, easily, in English, as well. In the first project, being unable to share things in English, although you know them in Turkish was a very bad feeling. Later on, my English practices increased five times more. I dwelled upon it in order to contribute to projects more.” (Action 1.1 Focus Group Meeting, Project Participants, Male)

“The first project I attended was abroad, and I was quite scared. I had not practiced English for a long time, and I was not confident. In the beginning, I communicated through body language. Moreover, I explained Turkish customs, such as asking a family for the girl's hand in marriage in a theatrical way.” (Action 1.1 Focus Group Meeting, Project Participants, Male)

Learning to Learn (Key Competence 5)

In the YouthPass Guide, *learning to learn* competence is defined as the ability to organise one's own learning. It does not only include the effective management of time and information, but also includes being aware of one's own learning process and needs, and identifying different opportunities available to learn.¹⁶ Learning to learn competence can be exemplified in the following situations: learning new things about you as a learner (how do you learn best, with whom, in what situations, what stimulates you, what blocks you etc.); learning how to set individual aims and objectives for yourself; learning how can you use in your project the competences and experience you have already and what new things you can learn to develop further; learning how to motivate yourself and what helps you to feel more confident; and using concrete things you learnt in your project in other situations – at school, at work, at home etc.¹⁷

Project participants and project leaders that took part in the focus group meetings and interviews within the context of the Special Survey are aware of the fact that the

¹⁶ Youthpass Guide (2011: 21).

¹⁷ <https://www.youthpass.eu/da/youthpass/for/youth-initiatives/learn/information/kclearning/>

experiences that they gathered in the projects are serious learning experiences. Considering from the lenses of learning to learn key competence, it is possible to state that in almost all types of projects, young people made progress in terms of learning by doing, looking themselves from outside, knowing themselves better, and identifying their own learning needs.

Let's listen to young people...

“We built a model ship, rather the sinking down of Titanic (...?...?) I saw that I learn by doing. Then, I saw that I learn through experiencing. In other words, I have learned my own learning process. It was like learning to learn. There were additional tools, *T-kits*; I went and saw those, then searched about them at home. I ordered from *SALTO*, and they sent some. I experienced such a thing. I realised my learning process, by repeating. Then, I tried to teach this to others. A few... In our association, together with a few young people who were willing to teach English I downloaded and distributed something about 1.3 Democracy project. ‘What is its purpose? Which countries can join?’... I provided simple information. That is how I contributed.” (TCP Focus Group Meeting, Project Participants, Female)

“If you go alone, you feel like a fish out of water, but my advice is going alone; because, you can see your mistakes better, judge yourself from others’ perspective, and realise your mistakes happened under your home county’s circumstances. I, for example, was excluded due to my mistakes at the beginning; this enabled me to correct myself. You know they say change is as good as rest, you see this. And if you are a questioning person, it contributes a lot to your personal development.” (Action 2 Focus Group Meeting, EVS Volunteer, Male)

“I joined in the last year of high school as a science student, and lived there for one year. When I came back, I said that I cannot be an engineer or physicist; this intercultural thing goes on, I better be a diplomat. Did it happen? No. But I realised what I want and do not want to do in my life: keep travelling and engaging in foreign people. This was my personal improvement in youth projects. Establishing relationships with others and travelling become more important for me.” (Action 2 Focus Group Meeting, EVS Volunteer, Male)

“This programme was very advantageous for me. I can, now, define myself better. I think the things I have learned will be useful in carrying out my responsibilities for the society I live in. It enabled me to go through the proper channels. By meeting with other people, I become part of an international network. I presented my culture, and meet new people. I learned new things. Most importantly, I learned how to learn.” (Standard Questionnaire, 2013, EVS Volunteer)

“To illustrate, I accepted many things normally I would not do. There was a breakfast issue; I ate things I would not eat just to adapt their culture. I mean, I did the things I would not do. Actually, I found myself.” (Action 2 Focus Group Meeting, EVS Volunteer, Female)

Another dimension of the learning to learn competence can be identified as the communication skills. In light of the data gathered from the focus group meetings and interviews, it is possible to indicate that participation in the project develops the young people’s skills of communication with different people and with different age groups, and accordingly it helps young people identify their own abilities better.

Let's listen to young people...

“In terms of communication with children. In the past, I did not choose teachers college even I was qualified for; because I thought I was not suitable, I know myself well. However, I experienced communication with children for the first time there, and I saw that I am really good at it. I gained experiences on this topic.” (Action 2 Focus Group Meeting, EVS Volunteer, Female)

“I could not imagine myself teaching, but when I go there they said that I was going to teach. On the way back, I realised that I enjoyed it. This was something I could not think in my life. Teaching is a delightful activity.” (Action 2 Focus Group Meeting, EVS Volunteer, Female)

Entrepreneurship and Sense of Initiative (Key Competence 7)

Within the context of the Lifelong Learning, *entrepreneurship and sense of initiative* competence refers to the situations of turning ideas into actions, being creative and innovative, taking a risk, planning and implementing projects, being aware of different working contexts, being able to optimally use given opportunities for own development, and being aware of ethical values. Amongst the examples for this competence, one can list turning a project idea into action; planning and managing a youth initiative project; organising a support and a cooperation to realise your idea; using in an optimal way human resources and talents in your group; being creative and innovative in realising project's activities; and discovering new talents and future development ideas for yourself.¹⁸

RAY research shows that there is a serious increase in the sense of initiative and entrepreneurship competences of the project participants from Turkey. Depending on the data gathered from the focus group meetings and interviews and complementary to the examples on the basis of actions given in the previous section, it is possible to say that, participation in the projects increases organisational skills of the young people, provides them with experiences for the future projects, especially in terms of budgeting and implementation, and increases leadership skills of the young people.

Let's listen to young people...

“My organisational skills have improved. We organised an international week. I individually organised it, [friends in the organisation] helped. To illustrate, I learned networking and the ways to reach the participants.” (Action 2 Focus Group Meeting, EVS Volunteer, Female)

“Once you gain experience through projects, you become more organized in the following ones. By seeing missing points in reporting and conducting processes, ‘Next time, I will not add this unnecessary entry to budgeting again.’ ... To illustrate, I added insurance expenditures too high, it came to nothing; in other words, the money was sent back to the National Agency; because there was ten per cent exchange, etc. It was not sufficient. We arranged a special pricing for the next project, etc. Still, I learned something about planning, budgeting, making preliminary preparations for meeting with universities.” (Action 1.2 Focus Group Meeting,

¹⁸ <https://www.youthpass.eu/da/youthpass/for/youth-initiatives/learn/information/kcinitiative/>

Project Participant, Female)

“In some cases about budget such as shortage on money, you have to focus on and develop your skills for spending it more carefully, or using as less as possible with maximum efficiency.” (Action 1.2 Focus Group Meeting, Project Participant, Male)

“It was extremely useful for me in terms of organisational skills. To illustrate, I have learned how to be a leader. Organising events, running them.” (Action 2 Focus Group Meeting, EVS Volunteer, Female)

“I, for example, kept away from youth projects due to the Public Personnel Selection Examination (KPSS) processes. I became more engaged, for example I designed projects when I started back. I started to participate in youth projects, and more advanced than before.” (Action 2 Focus Group Meeting, EVS Volunteer, Female)

Youth in Action Programme projects do not only contribute seriously to the entrepreneurship and sense of initiative competences of the project participants, but also to that of the youth workers, project leaders and trainers. The outcomes of the analysis of the answers given to the questionnaires by the youth workers and leaders participated in the projects within the context of Action 5.1, Action 4.3 and Action 4.3 show that those individuals considerably develop in a professional sense by participating in those types of projects.

According to the answers given to the 2013 questionnaires by 200 individuals who participated in those types of projects, the most significant gain of the participants was about the *use of non-formal education in youth work*. 96% of the respondents stated that the most substantial impact of the project that they participated in to their efforts in youth field was to *learn more how to foster non-formal learning in youth work* (Table 3). Similarly, the percentage of those who indicated that they *understand better the concept of non-formal education and learning* through the project they participated in is 93%.

It has also been identified that project participants had significant gains from the projects in terms of *project management and project quality management*. The percentage of those who claimed that they learned better how to develop and implement an international youth project and that they became more equipped to assure the quality of a youth project that they were going to organise is 95%. It is also visible that participants of the projects improve themselves on the issues such as learning more about financial resources and accessing to those resources, as the most important factor for realising projects. 93% of the respondents of the questionnaire, as a rather high percentage, indicated that after the project they were now *better able to acquire financial support for activities involving young people*. The interviews conducted by the project leaders within the context of the Special

Survey has also shown that project leaders gathered significant degrees of management skills. When it is also considered that those project leaders also take part in the writing, preparation, implementation and evaluation stages of the projects, it is not surprising that project leaders start to feel themselves much more competent in terms of project coordination and management, as well as budgeting of the activities. Many project leaders voiced that at various stages of the projects, they developed skills to work in a more planned and organised way and they learned how to prepare more realistic budgets and implement them. The skill of working in a team can also be added to those. Project leaders stated that the experiences that they went through within the projects made them more patient, tolerant, and active and open to different ways of doing things. As a different dimension of working in a team, many project leaders say that they learned how to involve young people more into the projects and activities, especially at the preparation and implementation stages, and how to delegate authority to them.

The interviews show that project leaders acquire a lot of new skills throughout the preparation and implementation of the projects. Those skills can be summarised as getting expertise regarding practical arrangements; being able to cope with the needs, demands and disappointments of the participants; and/or being able to establish communication with local actors. These skills are closely related to the increasing problem solving capacities of the project leaders that advance as a result of their participation in the projects. Project leaders feel themselves competent and successful to the extent that they can cope with the problems occurring especially at the project implementation phase and develop new methods to solve those problems.

Table 3 Professional Development of the Project Participants



As shown in Table 3, it is confirmed that in the projects that they participate, individuals also become successful in terms of networking and establishing partnerships and that they make significant gains from the projects in this regard. While the percentage of those who stated that *they established contacts with youth workers/leaders in other countries who they intended to develop a project with* is 83%; that of those who said that *they got involved in partnerships or networks providing opportunities for future cooperation in the youth field* is 91%.

It is acknowledged that the probability of having problems in the projects that are realised in partnerships established only through internet, without having any face-to-face contact, is higher than that in partnerships established during another project, in a face-to-face setting. If it is considered that Youth in Action Programme primarily supports international projects and that the primary condition of a good quality project is the existence of good quality partnerships, then, the involvement of individuals in the establishment of new partnerships in the projects that they participate and their getting access into the existing networks point out maybe to one of the most beneficial aspects of those actions.

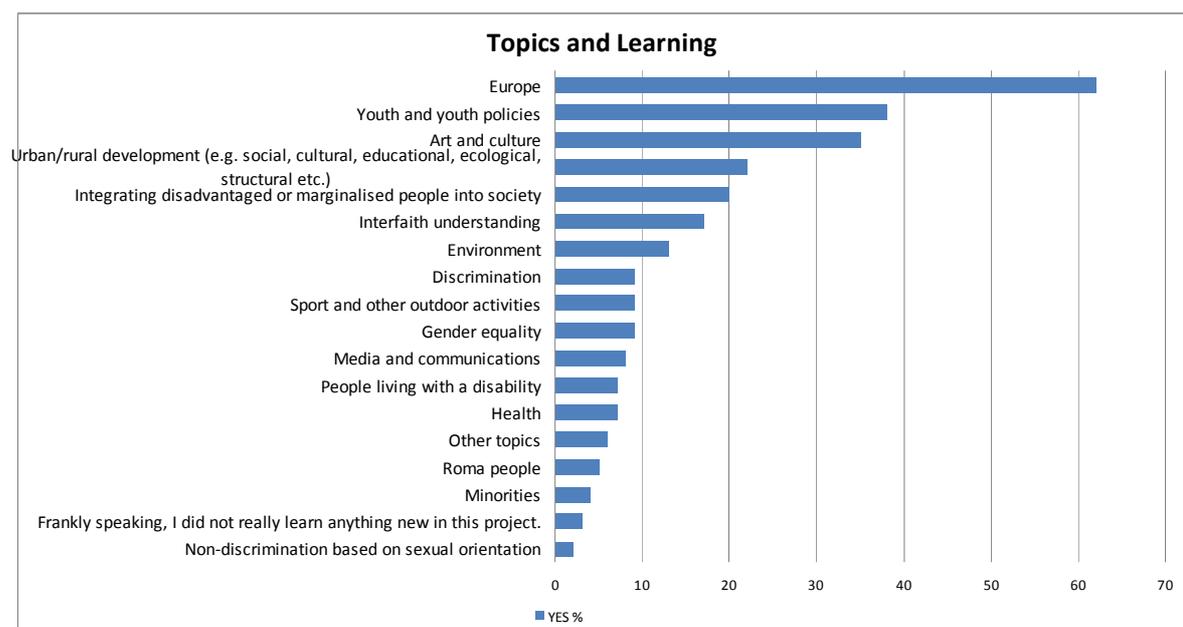
4.2 Project design

The Special Survey that was realised within the context of the RAY research has also targeted to identify the impact of the project design and methods used within the projects on the learning of the project participants and project leaders. It is possible to talk about a number of prominent findings regarding the relationship between the project design and

better learning. Since the non-formal education experiences will be further elaborated in the following section, project themes, composition of the participant groups and informal learning times can be considered as the prominent findings within the context of project design.

On which topic young people participating in the Youth in Action Programme projects from Turkey learn more can be analysed by looking at the responses of the 802 project participants who took part in 2013 Standard Survey (Table 4). When the young people were asked about which topics they learn something new in the project, they indicated that they learned the most about Europe, and following it about youth and youth policies, art and culture, urban/rural development, integrating disadvantaged or marginalised people into society, interfaith understanding, and environment.

Table 4 Topics and Learning



In terms of the general design and components of the projects, when the *groups of participants* are concerned, the participants of the focus group meetings stated that they experienced better learning in two types of participant groups: in the projects, the participants prefer to take part either in the mixed groups in terms of age, region and profession; or, in the more young and homogenous groups.

Former position points out to the situations, as often experienced in Action 5.1 projects, that participants enjoy getting together with a crowded group of participants, to whom their acquaintance in daily life is limited. Those types of projects facilitate participants' integration into various communication networks and ensure their exchange of experiences regarding the specific theme of the project with other project participants. The projects that cover culturally mixed groups are preferred by the participants the extent that those projects ensure acquaintance of the participants to new cultures even if they come from the same country, exchange of ideas and learning from each other. On the other hand, the latter position refers to the situations that project participants' self-confidence and motivation increase in the projects where the project leaders are also young people.

Let's listen to young people...

"Let me put it this way, first of all, the project I attended was very crowded. Since it is a youth association, both participants and the president of the association were young; we were of similar ages. Furthermore, he was a confrere, a biologist as well. There are many young people like him. Speakers, participants, too – normally you cannot accord easily due to adult-young co-existence. We attuned and become a very big group. For example, we attend trainings for half an hour to forty minutes, later on we dance, they provide music; I think this is very important. There are participants, such as personal development specialist. We played very nice games, and I think those games are not only for children. Grown-ups can make it funny, too. I enjoyed this part." (Action 5.1 Focus Group Meeting, Project Participants, Male)

"Ours [project] was a little heterogeneous, both young and old people together. To illustrate, there were a 65 years old participant, and an 18-20 years old one at the same time. Also, people in their late twenties like me. The interesting side for me was you know there are some people for whom it is not very common to come together, for instance a doctor's friend is usually either a doctor or a nurse. The most favourable part of this programme was bringing together those who do not easily gather in one place." (Action 5.1 Focus Group Meeting, Project Participants, Male)

"[Groups] were mixed. Therefore, all our activities were mixed. There should have been participants for each country, but we let them decide on this. In other words, there will be participants from each country, they will give a name to themselves and form a group... because the best way to learn and socialise is getting involved in something. Thence, if they socialise with always same people, they cannot communicate with others. For instance, there were two people from Armenia. They remained together all the time. We tried our best to decouple those two girls. We allocated them into different groups all the time. We paid attention to this." (Action 1.1 and Action 3.1 Interview, project Leader, Female)

"Our project co-ordinators were all young. Following the trainings, we, too played games about communication techniques, performed role playing. How can we present local goods of our region by using the available equipment ... by the way you socialise with others? After all, there were many people coming from various regions. Lots of games were played to be acquainted with them. Training became more entertaining by this way." (Action 5.1 Focus Group Meeting, Project Participants, Male)

Data gathered from the focus group meetings and interviews show that all types of Youth in Action Programme projects create "*informal learning*" environments. An interesting finding of the qualitative research is that serious degrees of learning occur during the informal times within the project. In other words, participants experience significant

learning instances at informal times, such as coffee breaks and dinner times, at which they can establish comfortable relations with the other participants. Both project participants and project leaders give examples of such situations. For instance, especially in the multilateral projects, locating project participants in mixed groupings at lunch provides opportunities for developing closer relations with the participants from different countries and prevents the risk for the participants from the same country to get isolated within their own groups. In another example, although the project was a national project, the project participants appreciated the accommodation arrangement in which the participants from the same city or region were distributed to different floors, by affirming that such a situation creates an environment in which they could learn from and exchange information with participants from different groups.

Let's listen to young people...

“Coffee breaks were really fun for me. You meet people during projects, but small talks in coffee breaks were effective to get to know people better.” (Action 1.1 Focus Group Meeting, Project Participant, Male)

“Mixed seating plan is very effective. We tried this in many projects and observed the positive and negative results. Grouping inevitably happens in the beginning, but the real conversation happens during lunch and dinner times and team works. Someone’s thoughts on religion, for instance. I had a friend called Francesco. We talked about many things. Grouping is not very helpful. In the hotel, they said we would eat meals in groups, but then they saw that there was not any conversation among us and this was not beneficial for the project, then they mixed us.” (Action 1.1 Focus Group Meeting, Project Participant, Male)

“In our project, besides allocating participants from different counties in socials, even roommates were not from same countries. They were all from Romania, Azerbaijan and Moldova. To socialise people from different countries, they mixed two roommates from different countries. It was really beneficial for us.” (Action 4.3 and Action 3.1 Focus Group Meeting, Project Participant, Female)

“We shared a lot with my roommate in Adana. He shared his experiences, projects he had participated; you can go there, you can do this. You live with different people, people you do not know. In addition, as you said, during coffee breaks you can chat with people you do not know...for example, being confreres with the president of that association through our chats about professional and daily issues... there were these kinds of conversations, everyone shared something, learned something from each other.” (Action 5.1 Focus Group Meeting, Project Participants, Male)

“We were from 7 different regions, they arranged it very well. People coming from the same region did not stay on the same floor. Not even in the same room, on the same floor. To make people talk and share their experiences. My roommates, for instance, one was from Malatya, the other was from Istanbul. And I am from Kayseri. When you put three different cultures, three different lifestyles in one room... everyone has some habits, but you can avoid those by talking without causing any pressure on each other. It was very helpful to gain different experiences.” (Action 5.1 Focus Group Meeting, Project Participants, Male)

“In lunch and coffee breaks, there were sometimes, we went and started a conversation with someone we do not know. Meeting someone you do not know, that was the first thing I learned. I met a journalist and a manager from Turkish Foundation for Combating Soil Erosion (TEMA).” (Action 5.1 Focus Group Meeting, Project Participants, Male)

“For sure, in the time period you spend there, you learn thing from everyone. I cannot give a specific setting, you learn everywhere. You work together in a project, and experience you can be transferred somewhere else... you learn something, even in evenings while drinking beer, or chatting; or a joke can teach you many

things.” (Action 4.3 and Action 3.1 Focus Group Meeting, Project Participant, Male)

“Most of the thing I have learned was from interactions during social moments, in other words, the spare times, such as lunch breaks, travels and field visits. For example, we established new project partnerships in lunch breaks. We had the chance to learn about other EU programmes that are run by other partners. Needless to say the presentation and programme were useful, but, as I said before, interactions in free times were more instructive.” (Action 4.3 and Action 3.1 Focus Group Meeting, Project Participant, Male)

“When the first session started, that is the first day of our project, the first morning everyone was sleepy... travel-sore, etc. there were not much meetings. The first coffee break was also silent. But in the evening in dinner, I do not know what happened, everyone made acquaintance. We especially set separately for 6-7 people, rather than a long one. People met there for instance. Later, in coffee breaks we wondered around the groups with my colleagues. There were improvements in terms of projects, how did they know about them, which activities they do. But the most social times were during city tours.” (Action 4.3 Interview, Project Leader, Male)

4.3 Project Activities and Non-formal Education (Learning) Methods

In the final report of the symposium on non-formal learning/education organised by the Council of Europe in 2001, the elements of non-formal learning are outlined on the basis of years of experience in this field.¹⁹ In this context, depending on the existing definitions, the common components of the non-formal learning are listed as follows: purposive learning; diverse contexts; different and lighter organisation of provision and delivery; alternative/complementary teaching and learning styles; and, less developed recognition of outcomes and quality.

Essential features of non-formal learning are listed as follows:

- Balanced co-existence and interaction between cognitive, affective and practical dimensions of learning,
- Linking individual and social learning, partnership-oriented solidarity and symmetrical teaching/learning relations,
- Participatory and learner-centred,
- Holistic and process-oriented,
- Close to real life concerns, experiential and oriented to learning by doing, using intercultural exchanges and encounters as learning devices,
- Voluntary and (ideally) open-access,
- Aims above all to convey and practice the values and skills of democratic life.

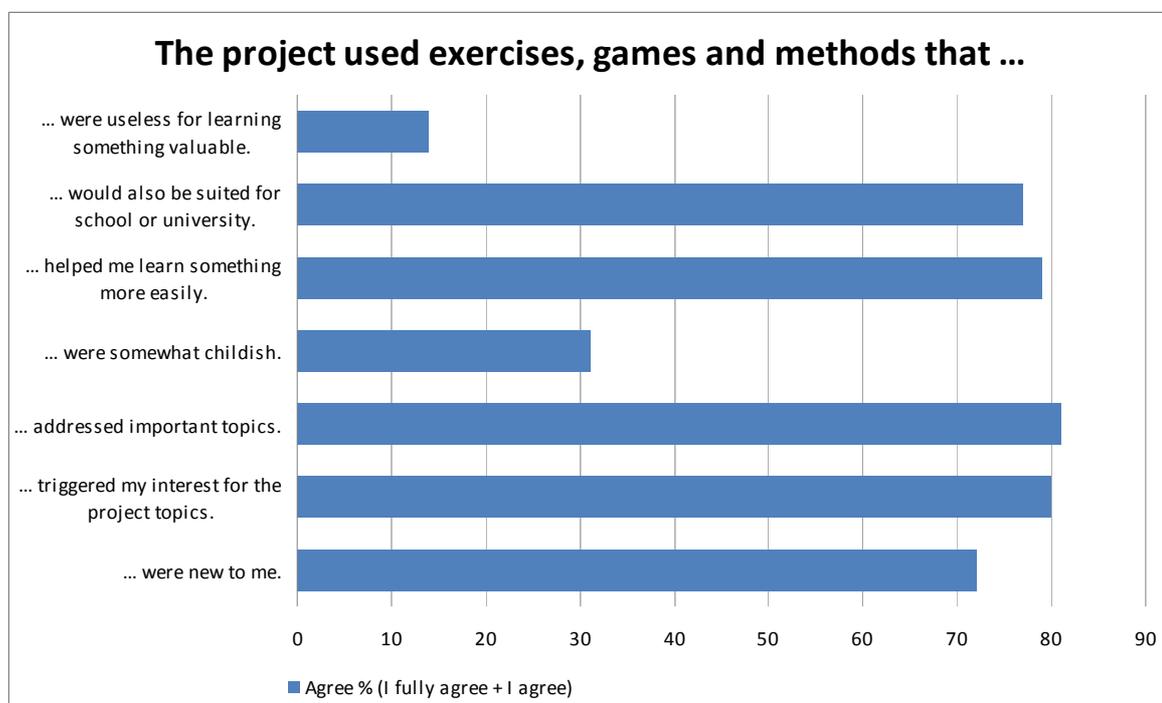
Complementary to formal and informal education fields, non-formal education/learning proposes different learning methods: communication-based methods (interaction, dialogue, mediation); activity-based methods (experience, practice and experimentation); socially-

¹⁹ Fennes, Helmut; Gadinger, Susanne; Hegleitner, Wolfgang; Lunardon, Katharina (2013) Interim Transnational Analysis: Learning in Youth in Action, Results from the surveys with project participants and project leaders in May 2012, Research Based Analysis of Youth in Action (RAY), Innsbruck, page 16.

focussed methods (partnership, teamwork, networking); and, self-directed methods (creativity, discovery, responsibility) Those ideas and concepts prepare a useful background to assess learning and competences in the Youth in Action Programme projects, especially with reference to active citizenship and participation into civil society and public political life.

In light of the data gathered from the standard and special surveys, as well as from the focus group meetings and interviews, it is possible to summarise the thoughts of project participants and project leaders about the methods used in the projects. 649 project participants who answered the Special questionnaire in 2012 think that the methods used in the projects “addressed important topics”, “triggered their interest for the project topics”, “helped them learn something more easily”. (Table 5) The low number of respondents who considered the methods used in the project as “useless for learning something valuable” shows that non-formal learning methods usually used in the projects attract the interest of the participants.

Table 5 Methods used in the Project



Qualitative data from the Special survey show that awareness of the participants and project leaders about the usefulness of the non-formal learning methods used in the projects

increased. Respondents of the survey indicated that non-formal learning methods such as role plays, energisers, simulations, group work and activities realised within the local community where the project took place such as film shooting, treasure hunt, preparing newsletters etc. were new and useful for themselves. Moreover, one of the project leaders reported that project participants had complained about formal education methods such as lecturing used in the projects that they participated in, and had stated that they would have been happier with outdoor activities in which they could have more actively engaged. Similarly, criticising the use of round table discussion as a method, one of the participants stated that such an environment did not ensure speaking of each and every participant. Such kind of examples and findings show that participants learn better when they have the opportunity to speak, discuss and reflect upon what they have learned within the context of the projects. In addition, interviews and focus group meetings suggest that in different projects, informal times spent with the other participants also create an important learning environment. In this sense, the participants stated that they considerably benefited from the informal discussions during occasions such as coffee breaks, lunch and dinner, accommodation together at the hotel etc.

Let's listen to young people...

“Before the project, we distributed name badges to every participant. Designed ones. Several times later, they took them off, they got bored of them. Later, we learned that there were other energisers that aim exchanging names. We learned that those activities should be applied in learning names, and badges should be the last resort.” (Action 1.1 Focus Group Meeting, Project Participant, Male)

“The most efficient parts are energisers, because people can act as they are in those activities. Since they get rid of pressures on them, the highest levels of interaction and sharing happens during these activities. I made good friends there. To illustrate, we met my friends who are going to visit me in Turkey there. Also, culture nights were very effective on sharing.” (Action 1.1 Focus Group Meeting, Project Participant, Female)

“As you said methods that increase learning and participation. They, first, react to the idea of playing games, but when they see the others participating, they also participate and enjoy it. For example, there was a relatively older, 28 years old, Spanish leader in our project. In the beginning, he seemed he did not enjoy his time, but later he enjoyed it as well, he was happy with sharing and spending time with us... Grouping on the one hand increased competition, on the other hand promoted solidarity. It was nice.” (Action 1.1 Focus Group Meeting, Project Participant, Female)

“We made a simulation. Our trainer managed the simulation very successfully. I am very pleased; because I had not seen it before, I attended 1.1, but I liked this one due to the activity. In simulation we discussed [about problems], then we decided to put this into action... How could we do, we established hospitals, for instance, we bought and sold services; role played about stock market, we cut money, etc. Can I receive this service, scholarships for students? There was an education problem, for example, about drug use. [It was related to real life.] We transferred the problems outside into simulation.” (Action 4.3 Interview, Project Leader, Male)

“We organised culture nights. In these events we tried to learn about the related country's culture, but personal conversations were also helpful. I learned, let me put it this way, even about their, Armenian's, tobacco brands. I have learned about their traditions, customs, universities and lifestyles personally from

them.” (Action 4.3 and Action 3.1 Focus Group Meeting, Project Participant, Female)

“There were some games in our group works, such as meeting five people and asking them questions. There were sample questions that we need to collect answers, and their opinions, and also we need to add our opinions about the topic and the person, and what does s/he think about me... I think we benefited a lot from this activity.” (Action 5.1 Focus Group Meeting, Project Participants, Male)

“[EVS participants] mostly like mixed activities. In other words, the activities they do with local volunteers are always more exciting... Apart from this, they like activities they do in big groups. To illustrate, you organise a concert. They deliver water, and in between their shifts they enjoy resting and chatting. They like more the activities depending on motivation and high activity. They like energetic team leaders. They become very happy with these kinds of things.” (Action 2 Interview, Project Leader, Female)

“This can vary among participants, but, in general, they do not like the activities only foreign volunteers involved. Interestingly, Europeans do not like working with each other. There is that strange situation I observed. Additionally, I know that they do not like undertaking professional duties. For example, they do not like using a readymade picture, but prefer to search about and design one, and make the children prepare it. They do not like using instant materials; you know we say the goods of capitalist system. To illustrate, we ordered some games, but they did not use them; instead they prefer making the kids design the games. In other words, they like being prepared, but they do not like being auxiliary tools. They like more being creative.” (Action 2 Interview, Project Leader, Female)

During the interviews, project leaders emphasised that they were aware of the learning opportunities created by the non-formal learning methods for themselves, as much as the project participants. Experiences shared by the project leaders within the project teams show that project leaders had useful learning opportunities. By this means, project leaders reported that they gained significant team work skills by taking part in project teams; and they benefited from learning environments occurred during daily evaluation and reflection activities.

4.4 Employment Opportunities

Another prominent finding of the RAY research in Turkey is the perception that *participation in almost all types of Youth in Action Programme project increases chances of young people in finding jobs*. In addition to the questionnaire data supporting such a finding for all types of actions, young people provided concrete examples of this situation in the focus group meetings and interviews. Youth projects do not only create the perception that job opportunities increase, but also help young people clarify their ideas about their future education and career plans. Through participating in the projects, young people develop positive perceptions regarding the occupations and jobs that they have, and they seize professional development opportunities. The perception that employment and job opportunities increase and opportunities of occupational development should be emphasised as an important gain, not only for the project participants but also for the project leaders.

Let's listen to young people...

“Thanks to the language abilities I improved in Germany as an EVS participant in a sports event, I did not have any difficulties in finding a job when I came back to Turkey. I work full-time at an international corporation for 7 months.” (Standard Questionnaire, 2013, Project Participant)

“I was graduated in 2011. During job seeking, this project was very advantageous for me. It contributed to this process both morally and in terms of intercultural integration.” (Standard Questionnaire, 2013, Project Participant)

“Thanks... Owing to the Youth Programme I work in a university for 6 years, and suggest opportunities to hundreds of young people.” (Standard Questionnaire, 2013, Project Participant)

“After EVS, my life and ego have completely changed. Going to Europe where I could not even imagine being in; being abroad, serving and living there, all these processes paved the way for establishing a different life for me, following the EVS. After coming back, I attended voluntary services more actively. I successfully applied for job and internship vacancies abroad. I received more returns from companies in Turkey, when I add my experiences abroad. As thinking that studying abroad is not hard, I applied for master's and got offers. Realising the cases that I could not even imagine before and the sequel success of these events restored my self-confidence.” (Standard Questionnaire, 2013, EVS Volunteer)

Youth in Action Programme attributes considerable importance to the employability of young people. For this aim, an instrument called YouthPass is designed and foreseen to be presented to all the participants of the projects, in order to foster the recognition, in the eyes of the employers together with other segments of the society, of the experiences that young people gain by participating in the youth projects. Within the context of the RAY research, through the Standard and Special questionnaires and focus group meetings and interviews, it is also researched to what extent project participants and project leaders are familiar with and know YouthPass, to what extent that instrument has been used in the implemented projects and whether or not YouthPass is beneficial for the young people.

What is YouthPass?²⁰

YouthPass is a tool developed to ensure and support the recognition of non-formal and informal learning in youth work.

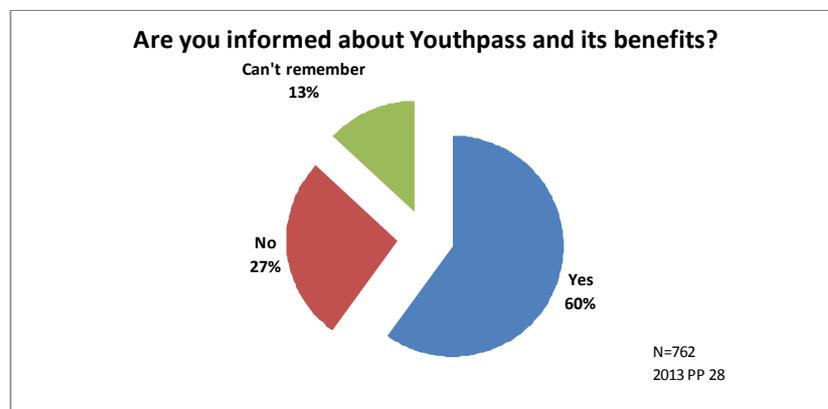
YouthPass is a part of the European Commission's strategy to foster the recognition of non-formal learning. It is defined as a certificate to be presented at the end of the projects supported within the context of the Youth in Action Programme and Erasmus+ Youth Programme (2014-2020).

YouthPass links the practice and policy in youth work as a tool for the visibility and recognition of learning outcomes:

- Creating their YouthPass Certificate together with a support person, the participants of the projects have the possibility to describe what they have done in their project and which competences they have acquired. Thus, YouthPass supports the reflection upon the personal non-formal learning process.
- Documenting the added value of the project, YouthPass visualises and supports active European citizenship of young people and youth workers.
- Being a Europe-wide validation instrument for non-formal learning in the youth field, YouthPass contributes to strengthening the social recognition of youth work.
- Making visible and validating key competences through a certificate, YouthPass finally aims at supporting the employability of young people and youth workers.

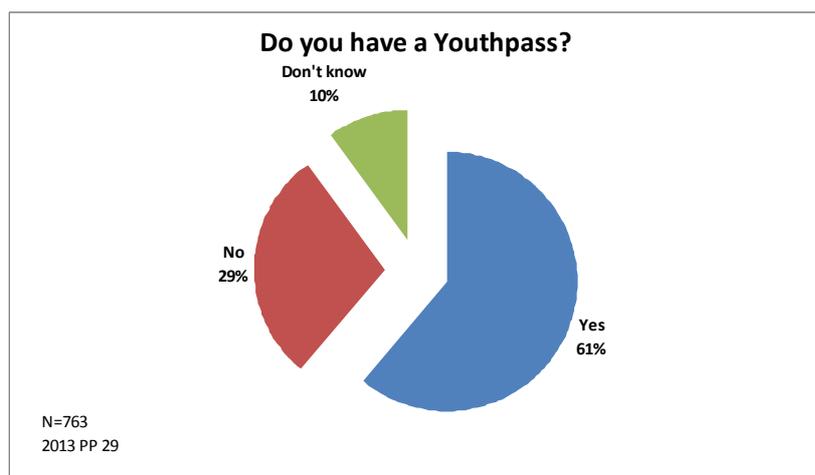
According to the data gathered from 762 respondents of the 2013 Standard questionnaire, only 60% of the project participants indicated that they were *informed about the YouthPass and its benefits* during or after the projects (Graph 1). Likewise, the percentage of *project participants who had a YouthPass* is only 61% (Graph 2). Similar findings also appeared in the focus group meetings regarding the use of YouthPass as a learning tool in the projects: the ratio of being informed about and having YouthPass is half and half. This situation makes it possible to conclude that the organisations submitting Youth in Action Programme projects do not pay sufficient attention to provide YouthPass for the participants.

Graph 1 I was informed about the YouthPass



²⁰ <https://www.youthpass.eu/en/youthpass/about/>

Graph 2 Do you have a YouthPass?



4.5 Continuity – sustainability

One of the prominent findings within the RAY research in Turkey is the participation rates of the young people in the Youth in Action Programme and their enthusiasm for participating in new activities once the projects are over.

Research findings show that almost half of the project participants have not taken part in any youth projects until they benefited from the Youth in Action Programme. The striking point is that a considerable amount of young people who took part in the projects actually continued or would like to continue to participate in the Youth in Action Programme with new projects and new roles. A great deal of the participants of the interviews and focus group meetings indicated that once they participated in the Youth in Action Programme projects, they continued taking part in youth work at national and international levels. A lot of participants, whose motivation increased due to the experiences they went through in the projects, reported that they started preparing their own projects within the context of Youth in Action Programme and they started playing an active role at preparation, planning, submission and implementation stages of those projects. In addition, as well as there are participants who prepared new project within the existing organisations, there are considerable number of participants who established new youth structures in order to continue their efforts in taking part in youth work and civil society. Some of the participants emphasised that they established their own youth organisations such as associations or youth centres, and/or they continued participating in voluntary activities in their localities.

Let's listen to young people...

“The Project I had participated in enabled me to acquire more information about youth projects, I attended another Project afterwards. These activities improved my relationship with others. Now, my purpose is going abroad with EVS to improve my foreign language. I think the funds and aids provided by EU are really useful. After the project, I am more willing to design and attend more projects. I am trying to tell and spread these as much as I can. I think these [projects] have a domino effect. These kinds of programmes are the ones people can improve themselves and learn teamwork. I want everyone hear about these projects as much as possible, and I tell everyone.” (Standard Questionnaire, 2013, Project Participant)

“I think those projects are advantageous for young people, I could not gain the experience and culture even if I spend lots of money, and friendship and networks are into the bargain. I am graduated from class teaching, and I am planning to spend my summer holidays with volunteering when I once appointed.” (Standard Questionnaire, 2013, Project Participant)

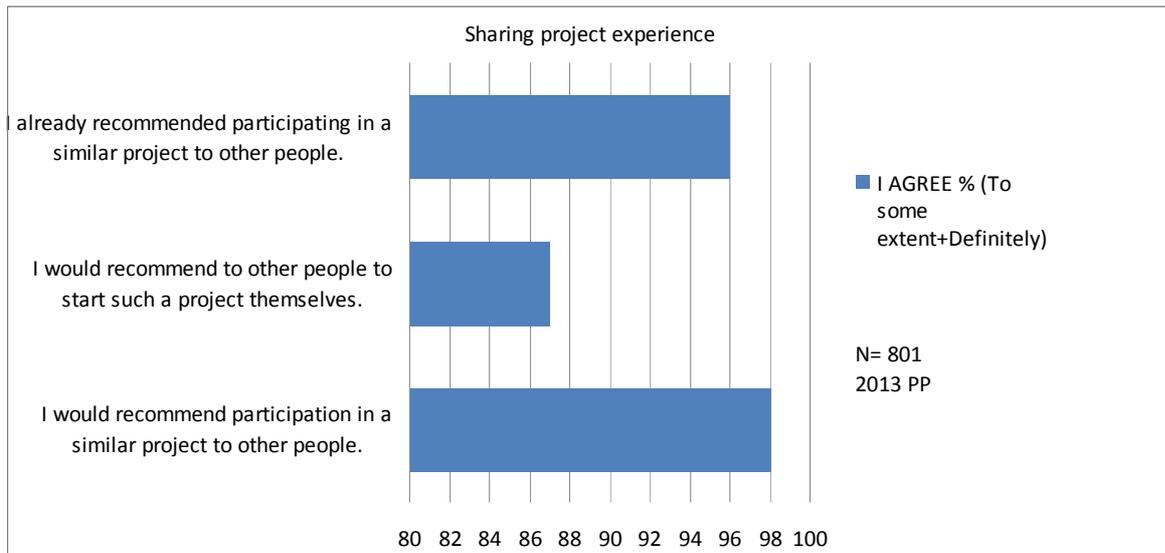
“For instance, I become a more helpful person by increasing my activities in NGOs.” (Standard Questionnaire, 2013, Project Participant)

“[In the project I attended] I sought public based solutions to youth employment. I think the project was definitely effective on generating ideas and addressing the problems. I was excited to see my suggestions in the outputs.” (Standard Questionnaire, 2013, Action 5.1 Participant)

“I see the increase in self-confidence and commitment [of participants]. The participants who participated in the project are still active in our association. And they all tell: ‘It was very nice. We did something different there. Such a project has not been done before!’ They, also, enjoy making a difference.” (Action 1.2 Focus Group Meeting, Project Participant, Female)

Another significant indicator for continuity and sustainability can be identified by looking at the ways in which the project participants share their project experiences with their environments. In this regard, according to the responses of 801 young people participated in the 2013 Standard survey, 98% of the project participants stated that they would *recommend participation in a similar project to other people*, 96% of the participants indicated that they *already recommended participating in a similar project to other people*, and 87% reported that they *would recommend to other people to start such a project themselves* (Table 6). Such high rates show that project participants are quite satisfied with the experiences and gains they had through Youth in Action Programme.

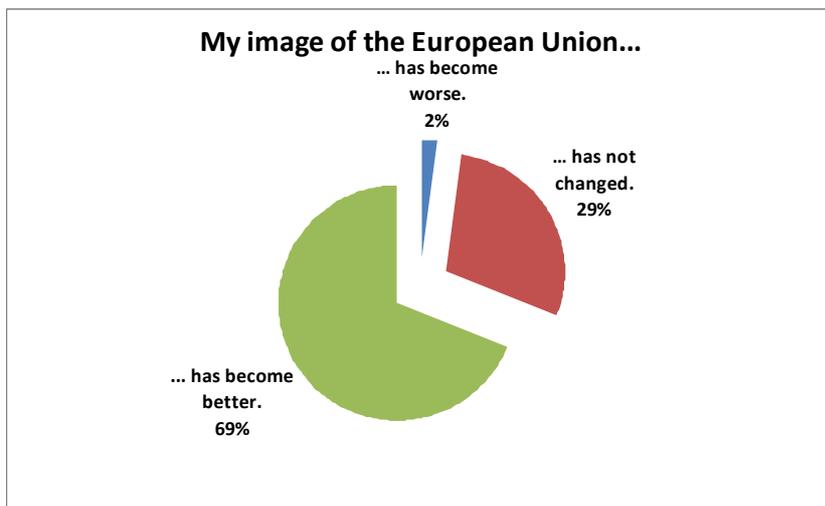
Table 6 Sharing Project Experience



4.6 European Union, Youth in Action Programme and National Agency

One of the subjects on which RAY research via its questionnaires intends to provide evidence is the change that Youth in Action Programme has made at the level of information of the young people on Europe, European Union and Youth in Action Programme. According to the responses given by 802 project participants who took part in 2013 Standard questionnaire, 69% of the participants stated that their *image of the European Union became better* (Graph 3). In this sense, the low percentage (2%) of those who indicated that their *image of the EU became worse* is remarkable.

Graph 3 My image about the EU



In the light of the data obtained from the focus group meetings and interviews, it is seen that within the projects, project participants find the opportunities of discussion and exchange of ideas about Europe in a broad and European Union in a narrow sense; they have the chances of testing, confirming or falsifying their existing views; and they develop new views on those issues.

Let's listen to young people...

“In the trainings I participated in, political concepts (those about Europe and European Union) were largely mentioned, and a very good phrase was used: United in diversity. And actually everyone’s culture... in other words, it was said that ‘That is the basis of European Union and Europe.’ (TCP Focus Group Meeting, Project Participant, Male)

“I had a vision of excellent European model, such as everything functions perfect there... But what I saw there: there were also malfunctions as it is the case in Turkey when it comes to the execution of decisions... That, [Europe] too is not perfect...” (Action 2 Focus Group Meeting, EVS Volunteer, Male)

“My perspective about European Union had changed. Especially when I was there, it changed back when I came back. The economic situation in Hungary is worrying, and the blameworthy for this is European Union. I was more positive about the EU, I still am mostly, but there is a decline. The majority was unemployed. We were there just for a couple of months, but the shops opened this period were closed within one week, or ten days, and new ones were opened. In other words, there was a serious crisis.” (Action 2 Focus Group Meeting, EVS Volunteer, Female)

Results from the questionnaires show that young people are considerably aware of the fact that the projects that they participate in are supported by the European Union and Youth in Action Programme. 97% of the respondent of 2013 Standard questionnaire answered “yes” to the question of “*the project you are being asked about now was financially supported by the EU. Did you know this?*”. This can be considered as an important indicator reflecting the level of consciousness of the participants. For the same questionnaire, the percentage of “yes” answers to the question of “*The EU funds were supplied by the Youth in Action programme. Did you know this?*” goes as high as 95%. Such a high percentage of the positive answers to both questions points out to the fact that the participants taking part in the activities organised under the Youth in Action Programme are aware and conscious about the structure and financial resources of the activity that they participate in. However, it should be noted that these questionnaires were conducted after the projects had ended. Since there is no data regarding the level of consciousness of the participants before they take part in the activity, it is not possible to assess whether they reached at such levels of consciousness during the activity or not.

Young people participating in Youth in Action Programme projects obtain *new information*, not only regarding European Union and Youth in Action Programme, but also *regarding the National Agency*. In the light of the data gathered in focus group meetings and interviews, it is possible to confirm that project participants often develop *positive images about the National Agency*, and have *expectations from the National Agency to increase the quality of the projects*. Project participants seem *satisfied with the support provided by the National Agency* and they appreciate such a support; they would like the National Agency to support them at the implementation stage of their projects and appreciate the successful outcomes of the project (by visiting the projects on site if necessary); they suggest that the National Agency should conduct *more careful examination about the competences of the organisations at the selection level to ensure the success of the projects*; and they demand that the National Agency takes more initiatives and conduct activities to promote the Youth in Action Programme.

Let's listen to young people...

"I think these projects really accomplish their purpose. I am grateful to National Agency for their help and support in technical issues." (Standard Questionnaire, 2013, Project Participant)

"These kinds of programmes are useful in terms of many aspects, above all, in terms of giving one a perspective. Especially, if someone's financial situation is tight... And, in my opinion, National Agency and its employees doing this job right." (Standard Questionnaire, 2013, Project Participant)

"I always tell my family and friends, luckily there is the National Agency (NA), luckily we can participate in such kinds of projects. I was raised in a small village with 15-20 households in Bartın. Thanks to this project I visited many countries, and had many foreign friends; and maybe owing to these experiences I choose the most suitable job for me." (Standard Questionnaire, 2013, Project Participant)

"Youth Projects are successfully run by the Turkish National Agency. By their help, I managed all processes without any difficulties." (Standard Questionnaire, 2013, Project Participant)

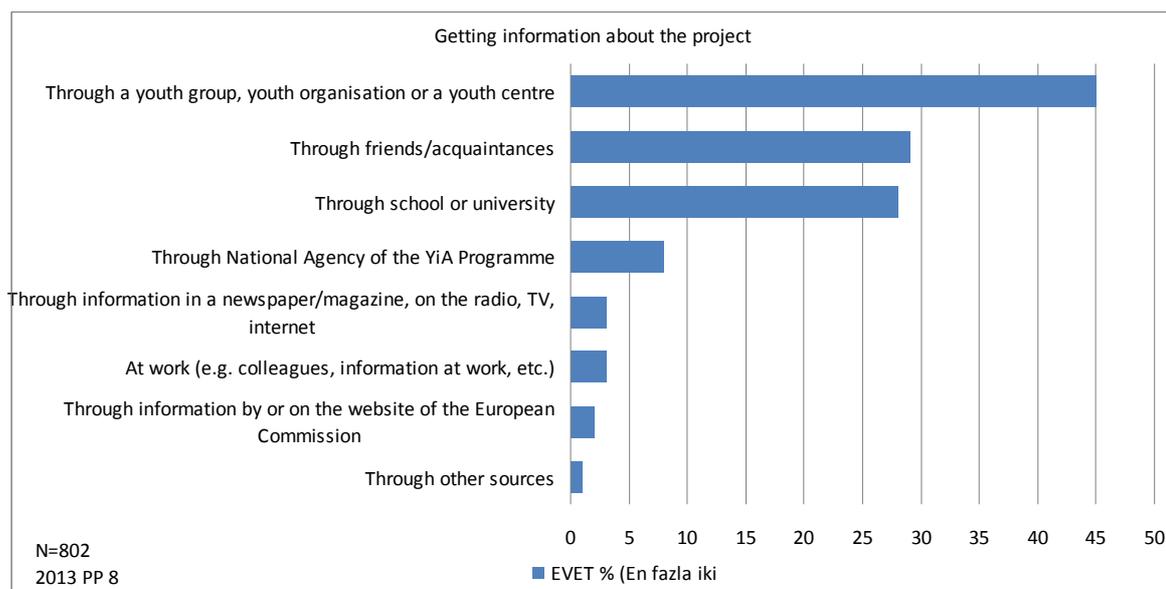
"I absolutely say competence, the most important. I think more attention should be paid to this issue when projects are accepted. Before giving supports to institutions for projects, they should assess more whether they can actually do it, or not." (Action 4.3 and Action 3.1 focus Group Meeting, Project Participant, Male)

"National Agency comes to Antalya and gathers all NGOs to give an informative presentation... I do not think that it is difficult. Both Trade Chamber and Governorate support this project. We wait till someone finds out the National Agency, or stumble upon, or discover, and work on a project. But, this process makes people show the attitude that 'This is a lot of work. A long procedure... Then, there are payments, and etc.' Then, maybe the National Agency can choose some local centres –even city centre, or some municipalities (particularly from Central and Eastern Anatolia)... Some informative activities can be done." (Action 1.2 Focus Group Meeting, Project Participant, Female)

"Additionally... Those entire good jobs should be seen by National Agency personnel. Because, I do not know if all the projects are same, but I wish I could have host the National Agency personnel here for one day. Because, although you tell in projects or in here, it is not the same." (Action 1.1 and Action 3.1 Interview, Project Leader, Female)

The responses given to the question of how the participants get the information regarding the projects can be considered as an indicator of whether or not young people knew about the National Agency even before they participated in the projects. In line with the responses given by 802 project participants for the 2013 Standard questionnaire (Table 7), the information about the projects is obtained mostly through a youth group, youth organisation or a youth centre; secondly through friends and contacts, and thirdly through the schools or universities. Focus group meeting and interviews directly confirm those findings. Different than the questionnaire responses, a more common information source appears to be internet and various websites. The data that the National Agency comes fourth amongst the sources where participants get information about the projects can guide the efforts of the National Agency for the promotion of the Youth in Action Programme in the future.

Table 7 In which way do participants come to participate in the project

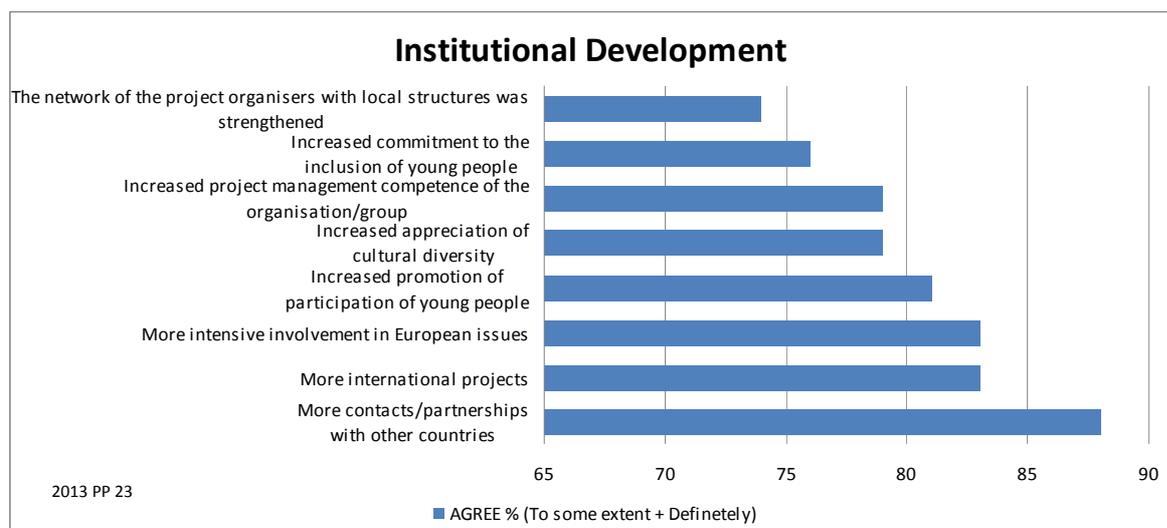


4.7 Impact on the Organisations and Cooperation between Sectors and Institutions

RAY research also aims at identifying the impact of the participation of the young people in the Youth in Action Programme on the organisations of those youngsters. Under this heading, the relationship between the participants and their organisations can also be monitored.

Within the context of the research, organisational benefits and development, can be identified by analysing the responses to the question of “Which effects did the project have on your organisation/group/body?” directed specifically to the youth workers, youth leaders and representatives of the projects under Action 5.1, Action 4.3, Action 3.1 in the 2013 Standard questionnaire. As shown in Table 8, the most popular response has been the establishment of “more contacts/partnerships with other countries”. While 88% of the respondents of the questionnaire expressed that the contacts and partnerships of their organisations had increased after the project; closely related to those partnerships, 83% indicated that the *number of international projects organised by their organisations had multiplied*. Considering the fact that those mentioned international projects were realised within the context of the European Union Youth in Action Programme, 83% of the participants indicated that their organisations started to *get involved more intensively in European issues*.

Table 8 Institutional Development



According to Table 8, the weakest impact of participation in the projects on the organisation is witnessed in the fields of *networking with local structures* and *inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities*. The percentage of those who responded positively for an impact in those fields is 74% and 76% respectively.

Focus group meeting and interviews also provide examples for the impact of participation of young people and youth workers in the projects on their organisations. Supporting those findings, the most intense impact appears in the fields of getting together and working with

new organisations, as identified in the focus group meetings and interviews. A rather different finding obtained from the focus group meetings and interviews compared to the questionnaires is the organisational development in *learning to establish national and/or local partnerships* and *to receive support from various public/private institutions*. In this regard, project participants indicated that their organisations started to get acquainted and cooperate with new organisations; they started to grasp the importance of partnership and communication with local institutions and organisations; and, they started to get the support of other institutions and organisations for their projects.

Let's listen to young people...

“We, for instance, learned that TEMA has an office in Kastamonu, and had the chance to collaborate with them. Since it was a strong organisation, it was very useful for us.” (Eylem1.2 Focus Group Meeting, Project Participant, Male)

“Institutionally –yes- it made us a very strong organisation. We can work with Bilgi University, for example. We participate in budget monitoring things, we joined to the platform. We send participants to various seminars.” (Eylem1.2 Focus Group Meeting, Project Participant, Male)

“[Participants] realised the importance of taking the attention of public, press and public institutions, because running a project only with members, with ten people, renders the project shallow. But they saw that, since they were also mentioned in the projects and workshops, involvement of a municipality, a local government, or an association (you know one of local initiatives) facilitates the popularisation of project. In the Bodrum project, for example, they talked with people in markets, they went to Municipality’s market, they went to the Municipality particularly, they asked for it. As realising the necessity of networking and experiencing it personally, they came to the conclusion that ‘Yes that was useful for us’.” (Action 5.1 Interview, Project Leader, Female)

“Our project was A Society without Crime. It was a national project prepared by Karabük Provincial Directorate of Security. The executive was employees of Community Policing Branch in Provincial Directorate of Security. We had supporters in this project. Karabük Provincial Directorate of Turkish Red Crescent, the Department of Forestry, Provincial Directorate for National Education, Kardemir Karabükspor football team, and Provincial Directorate Turkish Employment Agency. We collaborated with these institutions.” (Action1.2 Interview, Project Leader, Male)

In addition to newly established partnerships and cooperation, focus group meetings and interviews also provide evidence for the rising awareness and capacity development at different levels in the organisations of the participants as a result of taking part in the projects. Such organisational development especially appears in terms of the *preparation and management of the budget and following and fulfilment of the formal responsibilities regarding the financial issues of the projects*.

Let's listen to young people...

"I acquired budget management skills. The accountant and the president of our association who I work with are also 'We received a grant, we should use it wise. We should prepare our papers carefully. We should render our payments on time. We should follow the schedule. We should submit the declaration.' ...In other words, it disciplines you." (Action 5.1 Interview, Project Leader, Female)

"But what happens? While designing projects, [institutions] develops the ideas that 'I should make a budget.', 'I should set those targets for next year.', 'I need that much amount of money for those projects; I can acquire that much of it from sponsorships, that much from grants, and that much I can pay by my own.'. In my opinion, this is an important achievement, because if a person does not make future plans for himself, his job, or his association, the same things repeat all the time, there will be no success. EU grants are good in this respect." (Action 5.1 Interview, Project Leader, Female)

"For instance, when other associations hear about us in local, they congratulate us by saying 'You have received an EU grant, and conducted a project.', and appreciate us 'We have seen you on newspapers, well done. Actually we want to do the same, but could not manage it yet.'. And this made the management (management of the branch) feels like 'We did something good this year.'." (Action 5.1 Interview, Project Leader, Female)

Moreover, there are also some examples in which the organisations of the participants have started to implement the outputs of the projects in their own organisations; they have realised organisational changes in order to implement new projects; and, they have engaged other members of the organisations into their projects.

Let's listen to young people...

"But I can say that the university supported and appreciated us in this respect. After the project, I offered to the university having separate recycle bins on campus. I received a private thank-you note from presidency. The project is applied." (Action 4.3 and Action 3.1 Focus Group Meeting, Project Participant, Male)

"I am the project co-ordinator of ... sub-governorship. Normally, this is, designing projects, is my job. Actually, there is not a position for project co-ordination in sub-governorships. There are EU contact offices in governorates. Apart from that, there are no such offices in sub-governorships. However, the district governor himself noticed my interest on these issues, and asked for the establishment of the office. Not only for young people, but also we conduct projects for adults. One way or another, everyone in the institution has been in abroad. After their 50s, thanks to these projects, those people had the chance to visit foreign countries. Therefore, their reaction now is like: when are you taking us abroad, where is the next project, where will we go? Everyone support. Despite it is a state institution, we have not faced any hardships, yet." (Action 4.3 and Action 3.1 Focus Group Meeting, Project Participant, Male)

In addition to such organisational development instances, focus group and interview participants voiced a number of examples regarding *the problems and troubles that they have experienced, due to their willingness to participate in the projects, with their own civil society organisations and/or with the institutions in which they work or study*. In this sense, it is possible to find some examples in which young students did not receive any support from their schools and/or professors for their participation in the projects; the contribution of the learning mobility to the participants and/or organisations to be experienced through the project was not sufficiently grasped by the representatives of the

organisations/institutions; and such a mobility was inhibited by the authorised people of the organisations/institutions in some instances. In order to overcome such troubles and ensure that youngsters are better supported by their organisations, it will be useful that the information about the positive impact of the Youth in Action Programme and youth projects on young people and on their organisations is well disseminated, and more initiatives are taken to make the recognition of the Programme's and its learning outcomes more widespread.. Recognition of the impact of the youth work on young people is discussed in more detail in the next section.

Let's listen to young people...

"In this case, faculty of engineering- I mean, since male students are majority, 98%, it is different than how it looks like- I did not receive any support from any of my lecturers until now. They did not even provide any convenience. It was always me who makes sacrifices and even sometimes puts education into second place; in order to participate in these activities. Therefore, my education is protracted; I am not a good student. I study at open university, that is why I take it easy, and focus on other activities. But I have not seen any support from my lecturers or any academic." (Action 1.1 Focus Group Meeting, Project Participant, Male)

"I had first applied to France section of this project, and selected for that part, too. They did not let me. I used to work at governorate, at that time. They did not let me; they said, since I had participated in other projects before: 'You always travel, you travel by yourself. You do not take us anywhere. Do not get involved.' ... The 'Do not get involved' was the reaction I took from a senior manager. Then, Germany came into agenda. I said 'No, I will go'. I... I specifically choose the training. I mean, I really wanted to attend this training. 'What is done to increase quality?' training... because I had done projects for a very long time, and I was a little bored of doing same things. I said 'No', 'I am going', 'Whatever it takes, I am going'. Hardly... By arguing, I managed. And, they did not even put me off." (TCP Focus Group Meeting, Project Participant, Male)

4.8 Recognition and Appreciation

Sharing the experiences and learning outcomes of the young people who participate in Youth in Action Programme projects with different sectors and stakeholders (families, schools, potential employers etc.); "translating" these outcomes to those actors; and making the learning activities conducted in youth work, as well as inside and outside the civil society, valuable in the eyes of different segments of the society can be considered under the heading of "recognition". Diverse social, educational and political factors create national differences in terms of recognition of youth work and non-formal education. While being a youth worker or trainer is a formally recognised profession in some societal environments, youth work may face a lower degree of social recognition. In some other environments, youth work activities might receive significant financial support and social appreciation, but there might be no formal recognition at all.²¹

²¹ Darko Markovic, "Hitchhiker's guide to recognition in the youth field", Youthpass Guide, page 14.

In the “employment opportunities” section, the findings regarding the degree of recognition of the experiences that young people gained via youth work and participation in the projects by the potential employers and regarding the impact of recognition on the job finding opportunities of the young people were discussed. The findings on the dimensions of recognition, remaining outside the employability, can be discussed under the categories such as family, close environment, friends and work environment.

Data obtained from the focus group meetings and interviews within the context of the RAY research Special survey show that young people face different reactions and attitudes in terms of the recognition and appreciation of their experiences by various circles. While a group of participants voiced that their families and close environments supported them for engaging into learning mobility activities, a group of participants indicated that they did not receive sufficient support for such an experience and they got negative reactions.

When the need to get permission and support from their families is concerned, maybe the most important societal category in the young people’s lives is the family. In the light of the data gathered from the focus group meetings and interviews, it is possible to argue that support given by the families of the participants increased to the extent that families had considered the “success” (improving foreign languages, experiences of going/living abroad etc.) of the young people; they started to be proud of their children when they had seen them achieve good things; they changed negative perceptions when they had realised the benefits of the projects on young people; and their feeling of trust in and appreciation of their children increased.

Let's listen to young people...

“As they saw the developments, my family supported me while I was designing the project. They are aware [of the change in me]. I mean, they say that becoming what I am is a big achievement. My friends saw what young people can do not owing to this project, but to the project I had designed. Afterwards, they supported me. We founded a small youth centre in the town, to support more young people as much as I can. We engaged in activities there. I give seminars to young people, in these days.” (Action 1.1 Focus Group Meeting, Project Participant, Male)

“My mother's friends saw me on newspapers and ‘Aaa! What is your daughter doing?’, ‘What is this event?’, ‘Congratulations’, ‘They organised such an event with young people, we saw on newspaper.’... Both participants and friends, especially when their parents appeared on newspapers... Since they do a different thing, they gained respect.” (Action1.2 Focus Group Meeting, Project Participant, Female)

“A mother tells to another during a chit chat: ‘Look, my son is on newspapers. He participated in this kind of a project.’ Maybe, she does not understand the project well, but... The other one says ‘Then, I wish my son had participated, too. Next time, let him know.’ It is a slow-going process, but in general it is successful.” (Action 5.1 Interview, Project Leader, Female)

“In terms of family, it was like: son, sit and study, what you are going to do there. Once I went there, they appreciated and said, son keep going.” (Action 4.3 and Action 3.1 Focus Group Meeting, Project Participant, Male)

“My family did not let me go anywhere. They did not even want me to move to a house from the dorm. They had bad visions and taboos. But, when I went abroad, everything has changed! Such as... Incredible. They do not even ask me anything now: ‘Where are you going? What are you doing?’. I went around. One day, I called my father right in front of Berlin Wall. Sorry! He called me. He asked ‘What are you doing?’. I said ‘Father, I am in front of Berlin Wall.’. He replied ‘Ooo daughter, you travelled the world’. Finally I came back, and moved to Istanbul. No one says anything. Normally, for them, me living in Istanbul, was absolutely impossible. But, he did not even ask me ‘What are you going to do there?’ Can everything change that much? Now, my going abroad is a considerable relief for them. As if I can achieve anything, I can do anything. This developed.” (TCP Focus Group Meeting, Project Participant, Female)

“Not only their trust in me... My sister, too were having arguments with my parents... Her living alone in Istanbul was always a matter of argument at home. These arguments ended suddenly; because their perspectives have changed as ‘So, these girls are able to do something.’” (TCP Focus Group Meeting, Project Participant, Female)

“Turkish parents proudly tell when their children attend to an EU project. They have a high opinion of it.” (Action 2 Interview, Project Leader, Female)

“People start to think like; if she managed to go to Germany, she can go that place, as well. Additionally, my child knows language, issue. Parents do not trust certificates, but once you go there, they think as, she lived there, she maintained her life. ... Confidence and parents' trust in them increases naturally, as well. Their friends appreciate them.” (Action 2 Interview, Project Leader, Female)

Focus group meetings and interviews also show that young participants get often positive reactions from their friends. Those young people, who realise that their friends and peers lived through different experiences, got the opportunities of going abroad, actively participated in the social life and brought out new products, come up with the idea that they can also benefit from similar opportunities and they request support and guidance from their friends. In this sense, positive experiences of the participant young people create an impact that has the potential to increase the possibilities of new young people to benefit from the Youth in Action Programme and to disseminate the Programme to wider masses.

Let's listen to young people...

“There is a little envy especially in my social circle, the same age group. I mean the case of I wish I were you is very common. They ask me to take them some places, as if that is what I do. People perceive it in that way, but that is because they [projects] sound entertaining.” (Action 1.1 Focus Group Meeting, Project Participant, Male)

“I told my friends. They said if there is such a thing, help us to get involved in. then I participated in an activity. One of my friends, for instance, attended to an activity of the National Agency afterwards. I had helped him. He attended to an action abroad, for example. After that, I become more beneficial in guiding my friends. I motivated more friends to join these activities.” (Action 5.1 Focus Group Meeting, Project Participant, Male)

Data from the focus group meetings and interviews point out to the possibility that some of the project participants can also get negative reactions from their families, close environments, friends, schools and work circles. Treating participation in the projects as a waste of time and assuming that participation in the youth work and learning mobility activities could hamper the formal education activities can be mentioned amongst the reasons for such negative reactions.

Let's listen to young people...

“What are you going to do there; you are spending your time with bubbles. They said your friends are earning money, you are still after adventures.” (Action 2 Focus Group Meeting, EVS Volunteer, Male)

“My mother gave support, but my father did not. He said what was I going to do there, but I did not care. I think he did this to annoy me. People around me, generally said that I should have gone when I graduate. And I said how I could go after finishing school. I was worried about military service, etc. whose time period overlap. They found it strange. I said I go there to improve myself, learn about other people's cultures, see new countries, these are values for me. But, in general, I was found strange. There were also supporters. Actually, when I wrote that I was in Spain, there were some comments saying I want to go there, too. I, also sent many participants, but I did not received any support.” (Action 1.1 Focus Group Meeting, Project Participant, Male)

“When someone ask, they say well done, you did many things. The others support, but people in my close circle approach it differently. They cannot understand it.” (Action 1.1 Focus Group Meeting, Project Participant, Male)

“My father would not let me go unless I have a company. There was a project in Azerbaijan; he did not let me; because I was the only girl there. I could have insisted, but I did not want to. My family has that obsession; they absolutely want another Turkish girl present there. Otherwise, they are afraid.” (Action 2 Focus Group Meeting, EVS Volunteer, Female)

Such negative reactions that young project participants are exposed to show that positive effects of the Youth in Action Programme should be better explained to the environments of the young people and learning outcomes and personal gains of the young people should be made more visible in order to ensure further participation of the young people into the learning mobility activities in the future.

4.9 Inclusion of Young People with Fewer Opportunities

Ensuring inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities is an important priority of the Youth in Action Programme. In order not to exclude young people, due to such special situations or obstacles, from the opportunities such as receiving formal and non-formal education, participation in the international mobility activities, participation in general, active citizenship, taking responsibility and involvement into all the layers of the society, Youth in Action Programme is not only open to everybody, but also aims at being an instrument to ensure integration of young people with fewer opportunities into the society, and increase social inclusion, active citizenship and employment.

In the 2013 User's Guide of the Youth in Action Programme, European Commission defines young people with fewer opportunities as young people that are at a disadvantage compared to their peers because they face one or more of the situations and obstacles mentioned in the non-exhaustive list below

- Social obstacles: young people facing discrimination because of gender, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, disability, etc.; young people with limited social skills or anti-social or risky sexual behaviours; young people in a precarious situation; (ex-) offenders, (ex-)drug or alcohol abusers; young and/or single parents; orphans; young people from broken families.
- Economic obstacles: young people with a low standard of living, low income, dependence on social welfare system; in long-term unemployment or poverty; young people who are homeless, young people in debt or with financial problems.
- Disability: young people with mental (intellectual, cognitive, learning), physical, sensory or other disabilities.
- Educational difficulties: young people with learning difficulties; early school-leavers and school dropouts; lower qualified persons; young people with poor school performance.
- Cultural differences: young immigrants or refugees or descendants from immigrant or refugee families; young people belonging to a national or ethnic minority; young people with linguistic adaptation and cultural inclusion problems.
- Health problems: young people with chronic health problems, severe illnesses or psychiatric conditions; young people with mental health problems.
- Geographical obstacles: young people from remote or rural areas; young people living on small islands or peripheral regions; young people from urban problem zones; young people from less serviced areas (limited public transport, poor facilities, abandoned villages).

RAY research has aimed to produce evidence regarding the participation of the young people with fewer opportunities into the Youth in Action Programme. In this context, the collected data focus on the issues of participants' identification of themselves within the category of young people with fewer opportunities; in a general sense the way in which the perception of "fewer opportunities" is shaped in Turkey; and, rising awareness of the participants about the social segments and young people with fewer opportunities.

28% of the respondents from Turkey of the 2013 Standard questionnaire indicated that *they have never been abroad* before the project. Here, a remarkable aspect is that 23% of those who stated that *they have been abroad before* also indicated that *they have participated in a*

youth exchange, reflecting, in other words, gathering the experience of being abroad again within the context of youth mobility. In the focus group meetings and interviews, it was visible that many participants identify themselves within the category of “young people with fewer opportunities”. However, one of the findings of the qualitative survey is that participants use the concept of having fewer opportunities in a vague and changeable way. Although great deal of mental and physical obstacles can be easily identified, the project participants and project leaders from Turkey often intend to use the concept of “fewer opportunities” in a quite inclusionary way.

While for some of the participants, not living in Ankara, İstanbul and İzmir as the three biggest cities of Turkey automatically put them into a disadvantaged situation, for many participants not being abroad before is sufficient to identify themselves within the category of having fewer opportunities. Apart from those, participants define the status of having fewer opportunities with the characteristics of not knowing any other language than one’s own, not having travelled abroad, living in a small town, having physical obstacles, being long-time unemployed, or not being able to foresee a future.

Let's listen to young people...

“Our Turkish participants already had disadvantages due to geography and social life. Some of the participants had not been in abroad before, even out of their home town, I mean they had not travelled around. That was the case.” (Action 1.1 Focus Group Meeting, Project Participant, Male)

“I think many young people in Turkey are disadvantaged. Not knowing a second language... I am 22, and went to and came from Azerbaijan last week. I have not been abroad anyway. I think, not being abroad, not being able to act like European youth is a disadvantage in itself. Apart from this, while we are choosing participants (group members) we try to take into account economic barriers.” (Action 1.2 Focus Group Meeting, Project Participant, Male)

“The place we live in is a small community with 2500 population, and with severely disadvantaged young people. Financial situation of households is not bright. When we select participants, we chose successful students, in order to be rewarding. If we take them abroad, we take not being abroad before as the selection criterion. We pay attention to not send the same person abroad twice. In other words, what we do is: yes we chose disadvantaged youth and motivate them to be successful so that we can send them abroad as a reward. Or, involve them into a project. This is how we do.” (Action 1.2 Focus Group Meeting, Project Participant, Male)

“All participants are disadvantaged due to visa barrier. I think the Turkish youth who have not boarded a plane before, have not been abroad in their lives, or cannot speak English despite learning it since the fourth grade is disadvantaged. They can study at Başkent or Çankaya University, or another private university, but it does not sound advantageous to me unless they can express themselves. That happened with volunteers, too. There was an orphan in one of our projects in Germany, he was very pleased. It was a very productive work. For instance, in my opinion, not being able to give a meaning to your life or drawing a future for yourself is a disadvantage. Not finding your country eligible for your dreams is a disadvantage, I think.” (Action 2 Interview, Project Leader, Female)

“Social disability is the area I personally asked for and interested in; because we cannot perceive a social barrier. We cannot realise from outside whether a person is socially disabled, or not. Therefore, I posed some question to them in *word* format, since it makes the project more focused. We gave importance to this... to illustrate, there were people who had never attended, or known about European Union projects. Economically, there were again people who thought that projects were paid, and were hesitant to attend. I did not know, but, since I believe that they were going to be successful...” (Action 4.1 Interview, Project Leader, Male)

The outcomes of the RAY research show that, due to their participation into the learning mobility activities, project participants and project leaders from Turkey started to become aware of the problems and difficulties that young people with fewer opportunities, either as a part of the target group or as a participant in the project, experience in terms of participation; they developed feeling of empathy; the opportunities to work together with these young people increased; they learned new settings and methods in which they could work with young people with fewer opportunities; and, to the extent that they lived through and realised these they started to feel themselves as useful individuals for the society.

Let's listen to young people...

“Our region that is chosen as a pilot area is composed of households with economic constraints, and is prone to wrongdoing. Those neighbourhoods are, in terms of social opportunities, lack of basketball or football fields where social activities cannot be performed. So to speak, suburbs. In the schools of those areas, children with problems were detected via their teachers, and included in all of our projects. There was a school, Gazi Mustafa Kemal Primary School. After the project, the most problematic student of the school as they say, came and said us that he was influenced by our project, started to study, and decided to continue his education.” (Action 1.2 Interview, Project Leader, Male)

“There was a physically disabled person [in our project]. There were a child who was unemployed for a long time, I met him. There were more, but these are the two that came into my mind when you ask. I mean, they participated in. Normally, their chance to come there and attend was very low. How can a disabled child reach there, participate in? But, this programme gave him this opportunity. They provided him a supporter, a helper. They provided accommodation for both. That child came there, made a speech, and shared his opinions. He was psychically disabled, not able to walk, but came there and talked about his experiences. He told about his activities. I was proud of him, for instance. I thought how he managed those. Similarly, the unemployed child does not have any income. But, they enabled them to come; he worked voluntarily there. They shared his opinions with us, as well. I mean, marginal people can participate in groups, there is that opportunity.” (Action 5.1 Focus Group Meeting, Project Participant, Male)

“As I said, people from different places come to Adana, when we consider economic situation of students. Even though they have economic means, they are students when we think about travelling. State support is also important, but I do not know, that is what I observed. In addition, in the health related part, for example, many people suffering from cancer came there. I was in Ankara branch, there were other branches. People in there were also in bad conditions, there were friends, to illustrate, who could not attend sessions; since they had had therapy the day before. In this regard, there were different friends.” (Action 5.1 Focus Group Meeting, Project Participant, Female)

“I participated voluntarily for 11 months in a project about mentally disabled people. This enabled me to remove the barriers in my head. I believe that I can better know about people different than me.” (Standard Questionnaire, 2013, EVS Volunteer)

“There were two projects that were successful in practice. It was good for seeing practically. One of them was about visually-impaired people. One of them came with his dog. The communication between them... later, they organised a workshop for us. They made us develop empathy with them through following only sounds, this was impressive. For the first time, I role played with a visually-disabled person, and that influenced me.” (TCP Focus Group Meeting, Project Participant, Female)

“They gave us an activity: video activity. Of course, we make groups, they want us to make groups, and talk: getting involved and telling opinions... when our friend Pepe of Italy started to talk, always ‘We do not have time’... because Pepe has language barrier. He had difficulties in expressing himself, and he was slower. But, the important part there was including everyone... that was what they asked from us. But, Bulgarian friend was keen on ‘We should produce and present something, quickly.’ I, on the other hand, realised what was expected there and said ‘Please. Look, you are doing this for the last few times.’ I caused a tension there. ‘We will listen to Pepe till he finishes. His ideas are important to me. We listened to you all the time. Please, allow our friend to speak’. And there I cached Pepe’s expression, he was very happy of talking. But, it was both a positive and negative moment for me.” (TCP Focus Group Meeting, Project Participant, Female)

5. Conclusions

Having been implemented also in Turkey for more than ten years now, European Union Youth programmes provide thousands of young people and individuals, active in youth work at different ages, of different cultural and socio-economic backgrounds and from different locations in Turkey, with the opportunity to come together with their peers and colleagues in different countries and conduct joint activities.

The findings of *Research-based Analysis and Monitoring of Youth in Action Programme – RAY Network National Research* presented in this report, is a unique initiative in terms of being a systematic, scientific and evidence-based analysis of the personal and professional impact of these projects on the participants.

As presented in the report, the analysis of the data collected through qualitative and quantitative research methods is also of vital importance, especially in terms of the verification of some assumptions that until today could not go beyond being personal guesswork without a solid basis of information. Those assumptions that were considered as valid for a long time depending on the small-scale, one-off research initiatives or on the personal observations or experiences of those working in this field are, for the first time, tested in the light of systematic, repeatable and sustainable data in this study.

Common characteristics of a variety of different findings presented in this report is that whoever they are, wherever they come from, whatever the project duration is, *the projects constitute a milestone in the lives of the individuals who participate in a project within the EU Youth in Action Programme.*

The data collected within the context of the RAY Survey Turkey research show that young people who participated in the Youth in Action Programme from Turkey, albeit to different extents, have gone through *learning experiences in all the key competence areas*. Data analysis reveal that the highest levels of learning experiences become prominent in the fields of *social citizenship competences, communication in foreign languages, learning to learn and entrepreneurship and sense of initiative.*

When the young people who participated in the Youth in Action Programme from Turkey are considered, one of the most striking conclusions of the research should be identified as

the *increase in the self-confidence* of the participants, valid for all types of youth projects within the context of the research. Another striking finding is the role played by participation in the youth projects on *the empowerment of young people, especially of young women*, in Turkey. This is primarily related to the increase in the self-confidence of the project participants, and secondly to the positively changing perceptions, especially of the families, in other words, the increased social recognition.

The level of satisfaction with the participated projects also seems generally at high levels. When the views of the young people who participated in the Youth in Action Programme from Turkey after the project are considered, it can be observed that almost all of the respondents of the 2013 Standard questionnaire believe that they had *a very useful experience personally* by participating in the project. Young people indicate that *their expectations regarding the project are fulfilled to a great extent* and they *plan to participate in similar projects in the coming years*.

Another remarkable finding of RAY survey in Turkey is the perception that participation in all types of Youth in Action Programme projects increases the employment chances of the young people. In addition to questionnaire results confirming this situation for all action types, young people give concrete examples of such situations in the focus group meetings and interviews. Youth projects do not only create the perception that employment opportunities increase, but also help young people clarify their minds in terms of their further education and future career plans. Through participation in the projects, young people improve their perceptions of professions and jobs and seek further opportunities for professional development. Perceptions regarding the increase in employment opportunities and professional development opportunities should be emphasised as an important gain, not only for the project participants, but also for the project leaders.

Young people participating in Youth in Action Programme projects acquire new knowledge not only about the European Union and Youth in Action Programme, but also about the National Agency as the implementer of the Programme. In the light of the data collected from the focus group meetings and interviews, it is possible to argue that project participants usually develop positive ideas about the National Agency and they have expectations from the National Agency in terms of increasing the quality of the projects. Project participants seem satisfied with and appreciate the support provided by the National

Agency; but they would also like the National Agency to support them at the implementation stage of the projects and to appreciate the successful outcomes of the projects (if necessary through on-site visits); they suggest that the National Agency should conduct more careful examination about the competences of the organisations at the selection level to ensure the quality of the projects; and they demand that the National Agency takes more initiatives and conduct activities to promote the Youth in Action Programme.

In addition to all these positive findings and outcomes, those who participate in the Youth in Action projects, especially the youth workers in professional training and networking activities, point out to the problems regarding sustainability and sharing of acquired information and experience. Instances in which project participants and project leaders face problems and difficulties within their own civil society organisations and/or with the institutions where they work or study because they would like to take part in the projects were also voiced during the focus group meetings and interviews. In this sense, there are examples of situations in which student youngsters did not get any support from their schools and/or teachers for participation in the projects, or the impact of the learning mobility experienced through the projects on the participants and/or organisations/institutions was not sufficiently grasped by the representatives of the organisation/institution, and such a mobility was blocked by the representatives of the organisation/institution in some circumstances. *In order to overcome such troubles and ensure that youngsters are better supported by their organisations, it will be useful that the information about the positive impact of the Youth in Action Programme and youth projects on young people and on their organisations is well disseminated, and more initiatives are taken to make the recognition of the Programme and its learning outcomes more widespread.*

The findings of the Research-based Analysis and Monitoring of Youth in Action Programme – RAY Network National Research provide an important opportunity for both increasing the quality of youth projects, and for the recognition of the benefits and positive impact of those projects on the society, particularly through young people. Sharing the issues presented and highlighted in this report with all the stakeholders, primarily with those active in the youth and education fields, will play a significant role in changing the misperception that these projects and activities are only a means for traveling, having fun

and meeting foreign people, and showing that they go much beyond this and are quite effective and successful learning processes.

In order to raise such an awareness and ensure recognition, the National Agency should play an effective role by using the findings of this research and should accelerate its efforts, in line with a plan and strategy, for ensuring that youth projects, on which it has focused to successfully implement until today, reach at the well-deserved place in the eyes of the society.

The most important advantage of the Research-based Analysis and Monitoring of Youth in Action Programme – RAY Network National Research is that it is based on continuous and comparative analysis. Continuous and systematic data collection is a must in order to understand correctly the dynamic and changeable structure of the youth work, whose object is youth.

Questionnaires that are distributed twice a year to the project participants and project leaders within the context of RAY survey provide the opportunity to simultaneously monitor and identify the developments in the field. Likewise, increasing number of RAY Network partner countries offers the change for comparative country analysis. When it is considered that Youth in Action Programme is structured on the basis of international partnerships, the importance of international analysis for the quality of the projects and improvement of the participants can be understood.

For all these reasons, the report of the Research-based Analysis and Monitoring of Youth in Action Programme – RAY Network National Research can only constitute the first step of a long-term process. Continuation of systematic data collection in the future and monitoring the variations in time regarding the findings presented in this report are of vital importance.

The National Agency, responsible for the implementation of the European Union Education and Youth Programme in Turkey, has already proven itself in terms of the number of the realised projects and of the project participants and deservedly has become one of the most influential and respected national agencies at the European level. A working environment, in which *project quality* is prioritised instead of *number of projects*,

can only be ensured through a healthy and effective *monitoring and evaluation* strategy. For this reason, time and resources allocated to initiatives such as Research-based Analysis and Monitoring of Youth in Action Programme – RAY Network National Research should be sustained and this research should be considered as a good practice.