research based analysis of youth in action

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

RAY NETWORK
TURKEY NATIONAL REPORT
2014

**31 December 2015
Ankara**

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Turkish National Agency: Center for European Union Education and Youth Programmes

Youth in Action: Youth in Action is the Programme the European Union has set up for young people. It aims to inspire a sense of active European citizenship, solidarity and tolerance among young Europeans and to involve them in shaping the Union's future.

Research Based Analysis of Erasmus+: Youth in Action Programme: Research-based Analysis and Monitoring of Erasmus+: Youth in Action Programme (**RAY Network**) is a European research network, established in 2008 by a group of National Agencies and their research partners on the initiative of the Austrian National Agency of the Erasmus+: Youth in Action, in particular by its consortium partners Interkulturelles Zentrum and the Institute of Educational Science of the University of Innsbruck, in order to develop joint transnational research activities related to the Youth in Action Programme.

Youth Exchanges (Action 1.1): Youth Exchanges offer an opportunity for groups of young people from different countries to meet and learn about each other's cultures. The groups plan together their Youth Exchange around a theme of mutual interest.

Youth Initiatives (Action 1.2): Youth Initiatives support group projects designed at local, regional and national level. They also support the networking of similar projects between different countries, in order to strengthen their European aspect and to enhance cooperation and exchanges of experiences between young people.

European Voluntary Service (Action 2): The aim of the European Voluntary Service is to support young people's participation in various forms of voluntary activities, both within and outside the European Union. Under this Action, young people take part individually or in groups in non-profit, unpaid activities.

Cooperation with the Neighbouring Countries of the European Union (Action 3.1): This sub-Action supports projects with Neighbouring Partner Countries, namely Youth Exchanges and Training and Networking Projects in the youth field.

Training and Networking of Those Active in Youth Work and Youth Organisations (Action 4.3): This sub-Action supports the training of those active in youth work and youth organisations, in particular the exchange of experiences, expertise and good practice as well as activities which may lead to long-lasting quality projects, partnerships and networks.

Meetings of Young People and Those Responsible for Youth Policy (Action 5.1): This sub-Action supports cooperation, seminars and Structured Dialogue between young people, those active in youth work and those responsible for youth policy.

1. Introduction

1.1. What is RAY Network?

Research-based Analysis and Monitoring of Erasmus+: Youth in Action Programme[1] (RAY Network) is a European research network, established in 2008 by a group of National Agencies and their research partners on the initiative of the Austrian National Agency of the Erasmus+: Youth in Action, in particular by its consortium partners Interkulturelles Zentrum and the Institute of Educational Science of the University of Innsbruck, in order to develop joint transnational research activities related to the Youth in Action Programme. Currently the RAY Network involves the National Agencies and their research partners from 29 countries: Austria, Belgium (Flemish-speaking community), Belgium (French-speaking community), Belgium (German-speaking community), Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Croatia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Turkey and the United Kingdom.

RAY Network aims at producing reliable and valid documentation and understanding of processes and outcomes of the *Erasmus+: Youth in Action Programme* and of the activities supported through the Programme. The main objectives of the RAY Network are[2] as below:

- to contribute to quality assurance and quality development in the implementation of the Erasmus+: Youth in Action Programme;
- to contribute to evidence-based and research-informed youth policy development;
- to contribute to the recognition of non-formal education and learning in the youth field, in particular in the context of international youth work and learning mobility;
- to promote dialogue between research, policy and practice in the youth field.

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[1] RAY Network official web site: http://www.researchyouth.net/.
[2] http://www.researchyouth.net/network/

Specific objectives of the RAY Network with respect to research are as follows[3]:

- to study the effects and the impact (short-term and long-term) of Erasmus+: Youth in Action projects on the actors involved – at the individual level (young people, youth workers, project leaders), at the systematic level (youth groups, organizations, bodies, local project environments, communities, youth structures, youth work, youth policy), and at a collective level (larger public);

- to study educational and learning approaches, methods, and processes applied in Erasmus+: Youth in Action projects, in particular with respect to their effectiveness in stimulating and supporting learning processes;

- to study the implementation of Erasmus+: Youth in Action projects, in particular in view of the profile of project participants, project leaders, and organisations involved, as well as with respect to project methodologies and project management;

- to explore the special qualities of Erasmus+: Youth in Action Programme;

- to study other aspects related to youth work in Europe as considered to be relevant by the RAY Network.

The research-based analysis and monitoring of Erasmus+: Youth in Action Programme uses a combination of quantitative and qualitative social research methods and instruments: pre-studies, pre and post surveys with project participants, project leaders and key staff of beneficiary organisations, as well as with applicant organisations that were rejected; case studies of selected projects; interviews and focus groups with different actors involved in the Youth in Action Programme, as well as with youth leaders and youth workers not participating in the programme (control groups).[4]

Based on the experience gained during the previous years the RAY Network has extended its research in the framework of Erasmus+: Youth in Action Programme (2014 – 2020) through three research projects:

- Research-based Analysis and Monitoring of Erasmus+: Youth in Action

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[3] http://www.researchyouth.net/why/
[4] http://www.researchyouth.net/how/

- Research project on competence development and capacity building in Erasmus+: Youth in Action
- Research project on long-term effects of Erasmus+: Youth in Action on participation and active citizenship.

1.2. The background of the RAY Turkey National Report 2014

Turkey became a partner country of the RAY Network in 2012 and since then the National Agency of Turkey, together with its research partners, implements *the research-based analysis and monitoring of Erasmus+: Youth in Action Programme* in Turkey. In 2012, 2013 and 2014 the online RAY questionnaires were sent to all Youth in Action Programme participants including the participants from Turkey. In addition, a series of focus group meetings and interviews were also conducted at the national level in Turkey. The first RAY Turkey National Report was prepared in 2014, based on the quantitative and qualitative data collected in 2012 and 2013.

Similar to the first national report, the second *RAY Turkey National Report (2014)* has aimed to identify the following issues through scientific data collection and research[5]:

- The impact of the Youth in Action Programme on the actors, organisations and institutions who take part in the projects:
  - o Learning processes and competences of the Youth in Action Programme's project participants, youth workers and youth leaders;
  - o Impact of the Youth in Action Programme on the participants' attitudes, skills and behaviours in terms of participation and active/democratic citizenship;
  - o Learning outcomes of the organisations that are financially supported.
- 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 research questions have been used for the 2014 research:

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[5] http://www.researchyouth.net/2011/objectives/#more-7.

- o To what extent the Programme objectives and priorities are followed and realised in the projects that are financially supported;
- o How the Programme objectives are realised in practice;
- o 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;
- o Through which instruments, appreciation and recognition of the skills gained within the context of non-formal learning could be ensured.

In a nutshell, RAY Research 2014 aims to analyse the impact of the European Union's Youth in Action 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 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. Thus, RAY research in 2014 aims to understand "what" and "how" project participants and project leaders learn as the beneficiaries of the Youth in Action Programme; and to contribute to the provision of knowledge and evidence in order to maximise the benefits of the future projects for the young people.

1.3. Basic Information on the RAY Turkey Survey 2014

Within the context of the RAY research 2014, two online questionnaires were implemented in May and November 2014. May 2014 questionnaire was filled in by **283 project participants** who participated in the Youth in Action Programme projects with avtivity end dates 1 September 2013 and 31 January 2014; and November 2014 were filled in by **228 project participants** who participated in Youth in Action Programme projects with the activity end dates 1 February 2014 and 31 August 2014.[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.

Table 1 Percentage Distribution of the RAY Sample according to Activity Types

	May 2014 (%)	November 2014 (%)
Bilateral youth exchange	3.2	5.7
Democracy project	-	2.6
Evaluation meeting	-	-
European Voluntary Service (EVS)	-	21.5
Feasibility visits	-	-
Group EVS	-	0.4
Multilateral youth exchange	29.4	46.5
National youth initiative	5.3	0.4
National youth meeting	37.1	-
Partnership making activity	-	0.4
Seminar	0.4	0.9
Study visit	-	2.6
Training course	7.1	18.4
Transnational youth seminar	-	-
Transnational youth initiative	16.3	-
Tri-lateral youth exchange	1.4	1.3
Networking and contact making seminar and activity	-	-
	100	100
	N=283	N=228

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[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 2 Percentage Distribution of the RAY Sample by Action Types

Action	May 2014 (%)	November 2014 (%)
1.1	27.9	45.2
1.2	42	0.4
1.3	-	2.6
2.1	-	21.9
3.1	9.5	18.4
4.3	3.9	11.4
4.9	-	-
5.1	16.6	-
Total	100	100
N	N=283	N=228

The ratio of the female respondents of the May 2014 questionnaire is 52.4% and that for the November 2014 is 50.7%. For this reason, before the analysis, no weighting was done in the data set regarding gender ratio.

Table 3 Percentage Distribution of the RAY Sample by Participants' Gender

	May 2014 (%)	November 2014 (%)
Female	52.4	50.7
Male	47.6	49.3

Within the context of the RAY research for the preparation of this National Report, a number of qualitative research methods were also used in order to complement and support the findings of the quantitative 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 4.

Table 4 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	5	1
Action 1.2	Youth Initiatives	5	1
Action 2	European Voluntary Service	8*	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	5	1
Action 5.1	Meetings of young people and those responsible for youth policy	6	0
	TOTAL	**29**	**4**

* Two separate focus group meetings were held.

2. Prominent Findings of RAY Turkey Research 2014

In order to assess the overall impact of participating in the youth projects organised and financed within the context of the Youth in Action Programme, responses of the May 2014 and November 2014 surveys can be analysed in three time dimensions: the information levels, profiles and attitudes of the participants *before* they have attended the project; project participants' views on the methods and their own learning *during* the project; and, project participants' self-assessment on competences developed and their level of learning *after* the project. As important aspects in the context of the young people's further benefits from the Youth in Action Programme, indicators on *YouthPass* and findings regarding the *recognition of the participants' learning experiences* are also included in the analysis.

2.1. Before the Project: Information Levels and Planning

An activity of a youth project, with the exception of EVS, takes a few days only, ranging time-wise from two-day meetings to two-week training courses. However, regardless of how short the activity is, the project as a process spans over months. It includes the design and development of the project; preparing the application, which involves communication with partners, both national and European; the application process; planning of the activity (if the project is accepted); realising the activity; closing down and reporting the project. All these steps are time taking and constitute a learning process in their selves. Each step requires a different set of competences, ranging from communication in different languages to making financial plans and budgeting. Different research findings have shown that the more young people participate at different stages of a project, the higher their learning curve is.

Thus, a youth project experience does not start and end with the activity itself. Even if the young person is not involved directly into the project planning and realisation, from the moment they hear about the project and decide on applying for an activity, their learning process starts; it reaches the peak during the activity and continues even after the end of activity. Many young people remain in contact with the other participants and most of them are motivated for repeating this experience in different forms.

Learning about the project: Sources of information

Let's start with the very first step and inquire about *how they have learnt about the project.* This question is asked to all project participants as part of the November 2014 survey. The answers are presented in Graph 1.

Graph 1 Learning about the Project
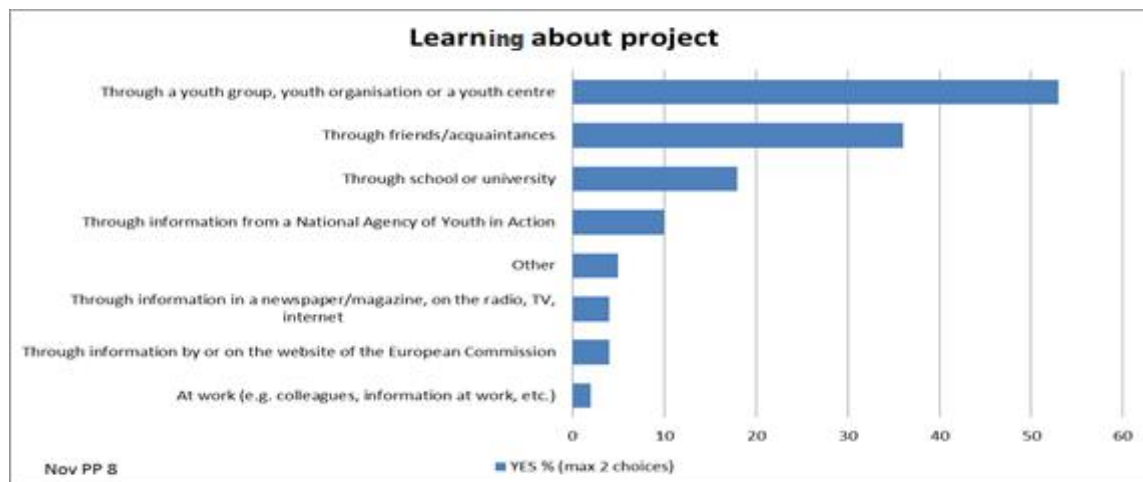
As seen in the Graph 1, the most popular source of information about youth projects is the organised youth structures. More than half of the respondents (53%) stated that *they have learnt about the project through a youth group, youth organization or a youth centre*. Considering that the projects are being realised by these organisations, on one hand it is only normal that they promote and recruit participants for their projects. On the other hand, this also points to the strength of the organised youth in Turkey. Turkey is one of the leading countries in the number of Youth in Action projects and in terms of number of participants in such projects. Considering that these projects are being designed, applied and realised exclusively by youth structures (with the exception of youth initiatives), it points to an active and vibrant youth sector in Turkey. This is a promising finding as it points that information channels are not monopolised by other, for instance state or private, actors. Youth organisations are not only the main agents of projects but they are also the main channels of information.

Word of the mouth is the second most popular source of information. Young people learn about the youth projects from their friends and acquaintances. As demonstrated in

another question, if the participants are satisfied with their project experiences, they are very likely to recommend their friends and acquaintances to participate in similar projects. Thus, the multiplier effects of the projects are very high. Accordingly, 36% of the respondents indicated that they have learnt about the project from a friend or an acquaintance.

The formal structures, namely school or university and the National Agency of Turkey, are also mentioned as information sources for youth projects, but at much lower rates compared with youth organisation and word of the mouth. The percentage of respondents who have indicated that they have learnt about the project through their school/university is 18% and through a National Agency is 10%. Other sources and channels such as newspapers, TV and the European Commission website are mentioned by very few participants, all below 5%.

The youth structures in Turkey are serving as the main information source for the Youth in Action projects. Their efforts should be supported but also the quality and diversity of the information they provide should be ensured. Young people should be able to access the information they need and right action type that would fit to their characteristics and desires. Especially in rural areas, it should be guaranteed that the youth organisations provide all the available information about the Programme, and not limit the young person with the organisation's preferences.

Who participates? A brief look at the participants
In the May 2014 questionnaire, the participants were asked whether they have ever been abroad before the project. 40% of the 196 respondents, who have answered the question, indicated that *the project was their first opportunity to travel abroad*. It is also striking that of those who have been abroad before (28%) did it within a Youth Exchange, still as a part of Youth in Action Programme. The Youth in Action projects remain an important opportunity for the international learning mobility of young people in Turkey. Considering the financial and bureaucratic difficulties and obstacles such as strict visa regulations, young people from Turkey face for international mobility, Youth in Action Programme offers a very rare and valuable opportunity.

The profile of people who participate in the projects of Youth in Action Programme is also an important factor that needs to be analysed. As there are other programmes such as Erasmus student mobility that are available for young people, the Youth in Action Programme prioritises that young people with fewer opportunities should be targeted.

However, when the findings are analysed, it appears that the profile of the participants from Turkey is rather homogenous, and the participants are predominantly *students*. According to the May 2014 survey, almost half of the respondents (47%) were in education or training when they have participated in the project. The second most popular category is *volunteering*, with 26%. However, as the questionnaire allows for multiple choices (student + volunteer), these two categories are not mutually exclusive. In the light of these findings, *it can be argued that a clear majority of the participants in Youth in Action projects from Turkey are students who also tend to volunteer*.

Graph 2 Profile of Project Participants
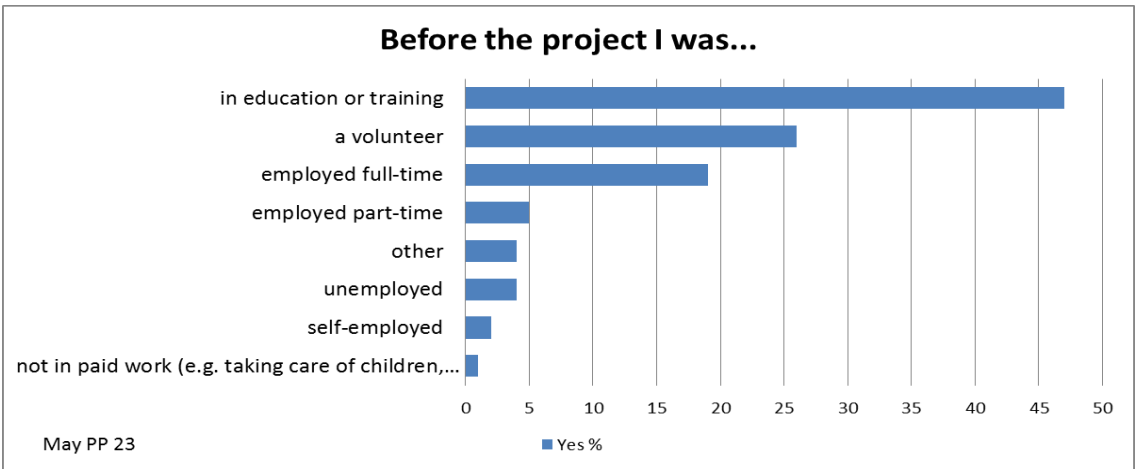
The percentage of unemployed young people for instance is only 4%. Here, there is an important issue that needs to be discussed. It can be hypothesised that the dominance of students in youth projects is a result of the strict visa policies of the EU member states. Student ID is one of the key documents required by the embassies for visa application, and the chances of a young person who is not a student or working full time are much less. Therefore, a disadvantaged young person who is neither in education nor in employment would face strict difficulties getting a visa if the project is taking place in

an EU member state. Although the National Agency of Turkey works hard on overcoming this obstacle, the youth organisations are still consciously or unconsciously prefer to select participants from a student pool.

The awareness of EU funding

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. 96% of the respondent of November 2014 questionnaire answered "yes" to the question of "*The EU funds were supplied by the Youth in Action programme. Did you know this?*" This can be considered as an important indicator reflecting the level of consciousness of the participants. Such a high percentage of the positive answers 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.

2.2. During the Project: Different Forms of Learning

Youth in Action Programme is very peculiar in the sense that it has been designed by the European Commission to support and provide a legal framework for non-formal education/learning activities for young people.[7] The elements of non-formal learning are outlined on the basis of years of experience in this field in the final report of the symposium on non-formal learning/education organised by the Council of Europe in 2001.[8] In this context, depending on the existing definitions, the common components of the non-formal learning a re 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-focussed methods (partnership, teamwork, networking); and, self-directed methods (creativity, discovery, responsibility) Those ideas and concepts

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[7] Youth in Action Programme Guide, valid as of 1 January 2013, page 4.

[8] 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.

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 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. 228 project participants who answered the November questionnaire in 2014 think that the methods used in the projects "addressed important topics", "triggered their interest for the project topics", "helped them learn something more easily" (Graph 3). 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.

Graph 3 Methods used in the Projects
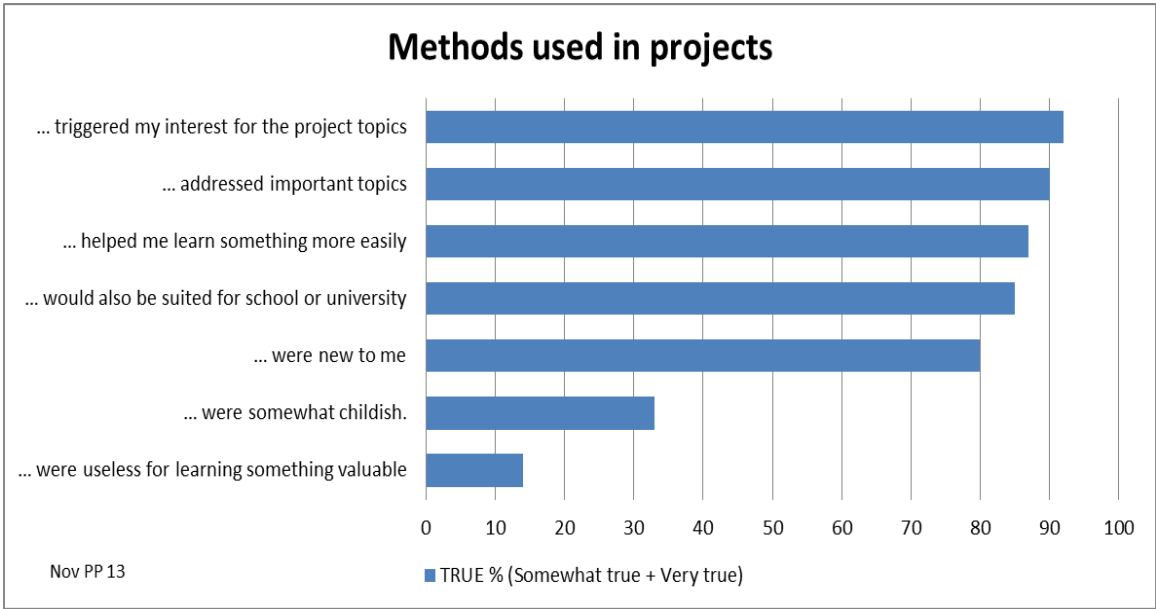
The percentage of those who were introduced to new methods is also significant: 80%. This points to the innovative nature of non-formal learning and the flexibility of adapting new methods. While the positive evaluations of the methods used in the projects are very high (80% and above), they are not free of criticisms. One out of three

participants has stated that some of the methods were somewhat childish. However, only one out of ten rejected the methods, saying that they were *useless.*

The value of the non-formal education and non-formal learning was also appreciated by the project participants in the focus group meetings. 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.

What do young people say?

"The reason why we took part in the project is to make figures with plastic bottles. This might seem not important, our reason would seem meaningless, people from different countries spending a lot to come together might look meaningless for an outsider. It is normal to feel that way when you see our subject. I think the activities developed in the background, the development of team spirit, the development of abstract friendship relations are much more important. I believe what we learn lies there." (Youth Exchange Focus Group Meeting, Project Participant, Male)

"I would relate this to non-formal education, the education we have received up till today in Turkey had an authoritarian system, the biggest authority was the teacher in the classroom. In this project everyone was equal, everybody was free to share their ideas openly and a common result was achieved." (Youth Exchange Interview, Project Leader, Male)

"I think this is very important as you can't learn it elsewhere, you learn it only within the project. The method is very different and under normal circumstances, what we learn at school isn't taught that way. Because of this, the quality is very different and the knowledge transfer to is very different." (Action 5.1 Focus Group, Project Participant, Female)

"Not many people knew about non-formal education, I tried to explain it in the places I've been to. There is something called non-formal education, at least people heard about it and what it is." (Action 5.1 Focus Group, Project Participant, Female)

"As we are using the methods of non-formal education, during the project we come across the benefits at a time we don't even expect." (Action 4.3 and 3.1 Focus Group, Project Participant, Male)

 "[Our project leader] was constructive and nurturing, she asked about our opinions, provided information, we had a programme in hand, and of course, she first asked about our ideas and then expressed hers and a common decision was made." (Youth Initiatives Focus Group Meeting, Project Participant, Female)

"This youth project I attended taught me how to use the media more effectively and consciously. Learning by experience was one of the most enjoyable parts." (May 2014 Questionnaire, Project Participant)

2.3. After the Project: Impact on Personal Development and Future

Simply put, the level of satisfaction of the participants in different projects organised under Youth in Action Programme is very high.

Graph 4 Views after the Project
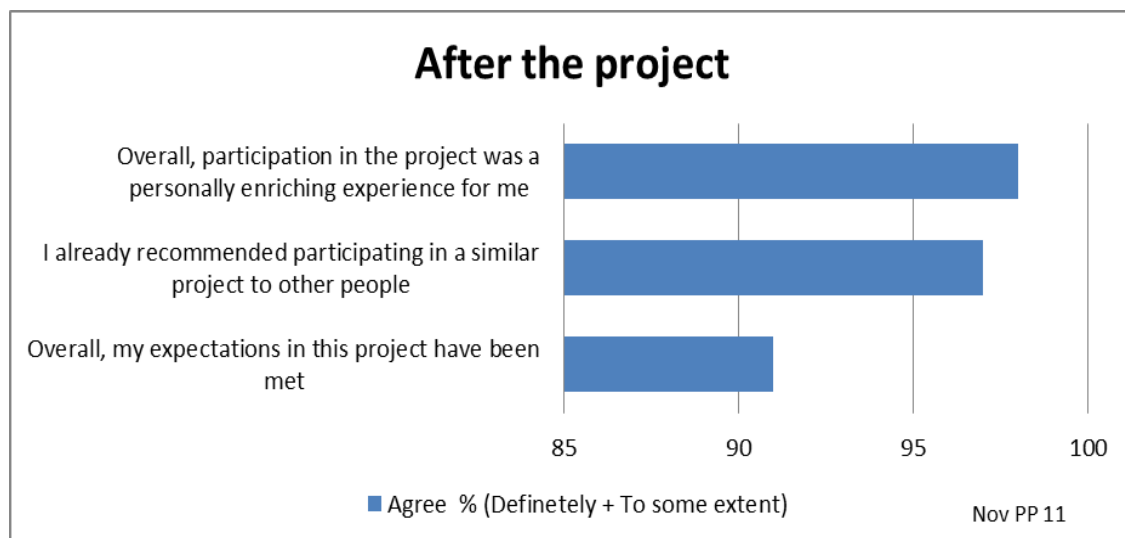
As seen in the Graph 4, the levels of satisfaction and positive evaluations are all above 90%. Almost all of the respondents find the *participation in the project as personally enriching* (98%) and *they have recommended other people to participate in similar projects* (97%). As discussed earlier, the recommendations of former project participants are a very important source of information for recruitment and it is highly correlated with the level of satisfaction with the projects. Finally, as the Graph 4 shows, nine out of ten respondents stated that *their expectations from the project are met.*

Another significant indicator for satisfaction from the project 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 228 young people participated in the November 2014 survey, 98% of the project participants stated that they would *recommend participation in a similar project to other people*, 97% of the project participants indicated that they *already recommended participating in a similar project to other people*, and 90% reported that they *would recommend to other people to start such a project themselves* (Graph 5). Such high rates show that project participants

are quite satisfied with the experiences and gains they had through Youth in Action Programme.

Graph 5 Sharing Project Experience

Multiplier effect

I already recommended participating in a similar project to other people.	
I would recommend to other people to start such a project themselves	
I would recommend participation in a similar project to other people	

85   90   95   100

Nov PP 11   ■ Agree % (Definetely + To some extent)
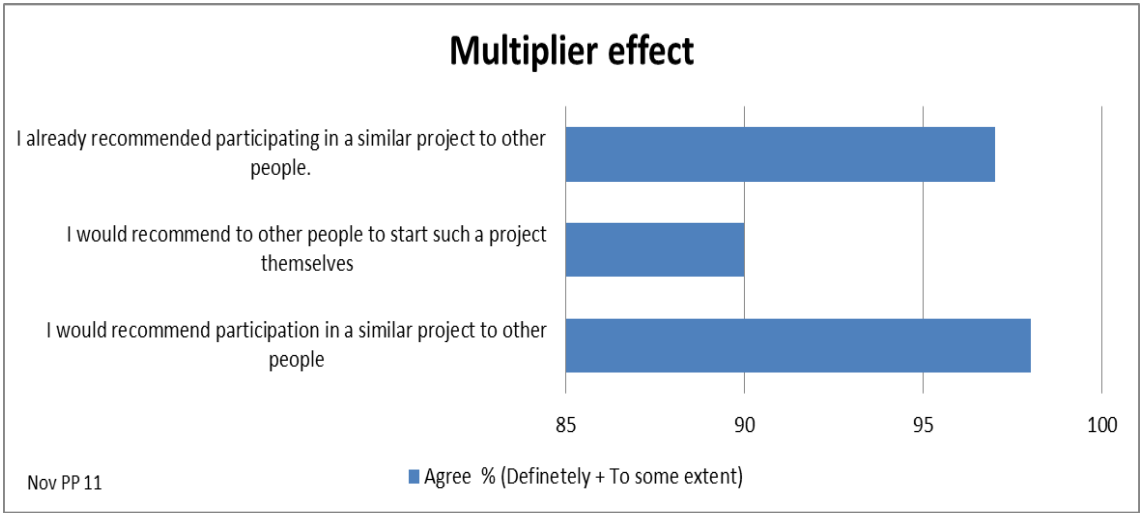
Learning new things

When combined with innovative methods, the strong learning dimension is important in youth projects. Due to the use of non-formal methods, and due to its relaxed and comfortable environment free of the hierarchy of formal learning settings, the youth projects are sometimes underestimated. Some uninformed critics tend to undermine the learning dimension of youth projects, and tend to simplify them as *fun leisure activities*. The respondents of the November 2014 questionnaire also indicated that they have learnt something new about different topics.

Graph 6 Learning in the Project

Learning new things

Europe
Art and culture
Youth and youth policies
Interfaith understanding
Urban/rural development (e.g. social, cultural, educational,...
Integrating disadvantaged or marginalised people into society
Sport and other outdoor activities
Other topics
Gender equality
Environment
Media and communications
People living with a disability
Discrimination
Roma people
Non-discrimination based on sexual orientation
Minorities
Health
Frankly speaking, I did not really learn anything new in this project

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80

■ YES % (choose all apply)

To start with the most negative, only 1% of the respondents of the November 2014 survey criticised the project, saying that *they did not learn anything new.* With this exception, the projects seem to contribute most to the knowledge of the participants on *Europe*. Almost 70% of the respondents indicated that during the project they have learnt something new about Europe. The second most popular topic is *art and culture* and *youth and youth policies.* One out of three respondents stated that they have learnt something new about these topics. The diversity and range of topics, from *health* to *interfaith understanding* also demonstrate the richness of learning in youth projects, which cover different and diverse aspects of everyday life. As a response to the open ended question of "In this project, I learned something new about the following topics:" the project participants mentioned that they learned new things about networking, active citizenship, peace, environmental protection, education, entrepreneurship, leadership, team work and cultural living styles.

Change of perspective: Somethings are more important now

Learning new things about different subjects combined with the whole project experience make an impact on an individual's perspective on life. In order to assess this impact, the RAY questionnaire in November 2014 asked the respondents to think about

how their perspectives have changed. The responses demonstrate that certain issues clearly became more important for the individuals as a result of the project they have participated in. The responses are presented in the Graph 7.

Graph 7 Project Impact
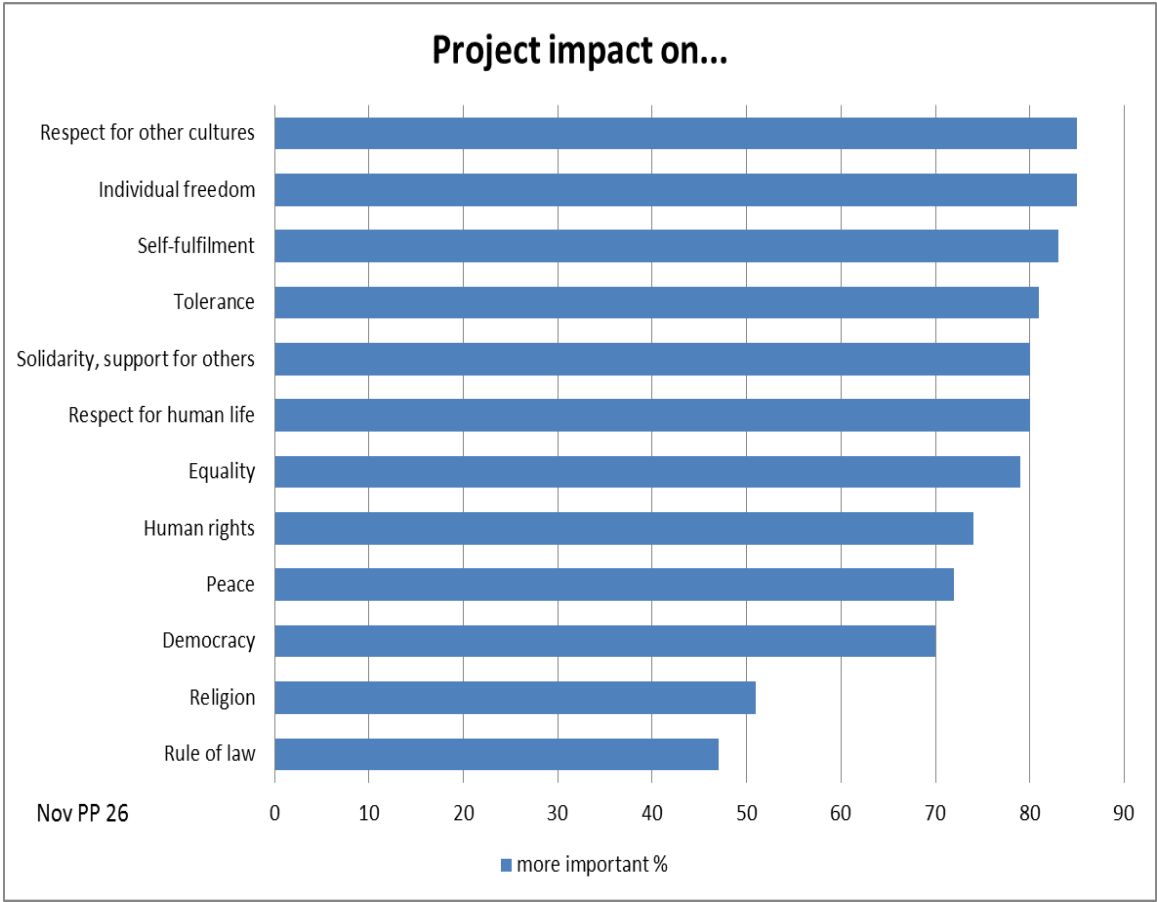
The projects' biggest impact seems to be on the issues of *respect for other cultures; individual freedom; self-fulfilment and tolerance.* More than 80% of the respondents indicated that these issues became more important for them after the project. What is most notable about this finding that it encompasses *two individual items* (self-fulfilment and individual freedom) and *two social items* (respect for other cultures and tolerance). This is striking for the fact that the projects contribute both to personal development and the contribution of the individual to the society they live in.

Youth Projects and Personal development: New updates are available

Individuals participate in youth projects with different motivations: to learn new things, see new places, meet new people, have fun, etc. Having such an experience has different outcomes and some of these expectations are met, some expectations are not. But going through such an experience has one certain outcome: it changes the individual. It affects their opinions and attitudes, it changes their take on future opportunities, what they want to do, what they want to study, etc… Overall, it contributes to the personal development of the participants. The findings of RAY research provide ample evidence for this.

Graph 8 Personal Development

Personal development after the project

Category	Yes % (max. three choices)
… that I am more self-confident	64
… that I am more self-reliant now	40
… that I learned more about myself	31
… that I can better empathise with others	31
… that I can now better express my thoughts and feelings	31
… that I can deal better with new situations	26
… that I can deal better with conflicts	24
… that honestly speaking, participation in the project did not have any particular effect on me	4

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First of all, well over the half of those surveyed agreed that after the project *they are more self-confident* (64%). This is in line with earlier findings presented in this report, and will be further analysed in relation to each different type of action in the next section of this report. Also well over a third of the respondents indicated that they are *more self-reliant now*. A third of the respondents stated that *they have learnt more about themselves; they can express their thoughts and feelings better* and *they can empathize better with others*. One in four of those surveyed argued that the project experience made them more flexible and they can *deal with new situations better* and *they can deal*

with conflicts better. Only 4% of the respondents argued that the project did not affect them.

What do young people say?

"It pushed us being a more open person in communication." (Youth Exchange Focus Group, Project Participant, Male)

"I think that my skills and knowledge on making a project have increased. My English is better because the project language was English. At least I learned that it is hard for 25 people to think, to act, to be ready, to eat at the same time is hard and I have to adjust this accordingly." (Action 3.1 Interview, Project Leader, Male)

"I believe my attitude and behaviours changed, being a coordinator in such projects is a gain." (Action 3.1 Interview, Project Leader, Male)

"We were having a workshop at school after the project. As I am an engineering student, I have a small workshop group. I understood my ability to lead them has developed as I did it with no difficulty." (Youth Exchange Interview, Project Leader, Male)

"My perspective has changed and developed ever since I became a part of these projects. My personality has gained a sense of continuous development. Believe me, it has made me a lot better, the most important thing is that I gained awareness of Europe." (May 2014 Questionnaire, Project Participant)

The impact on the image of the European Union

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 228 project participants who took part in November 2014 questionnaire, 68% of the participants stated that their *image of the European Union became better* (Graph 9). In this sense, the low percentage (3%) of those who indicated that their *image of the EU became worse* is remarkable.

Graph 9 View on EU

View on EU

... has become worse
3%

... has not changed
29%

... has become better
68%
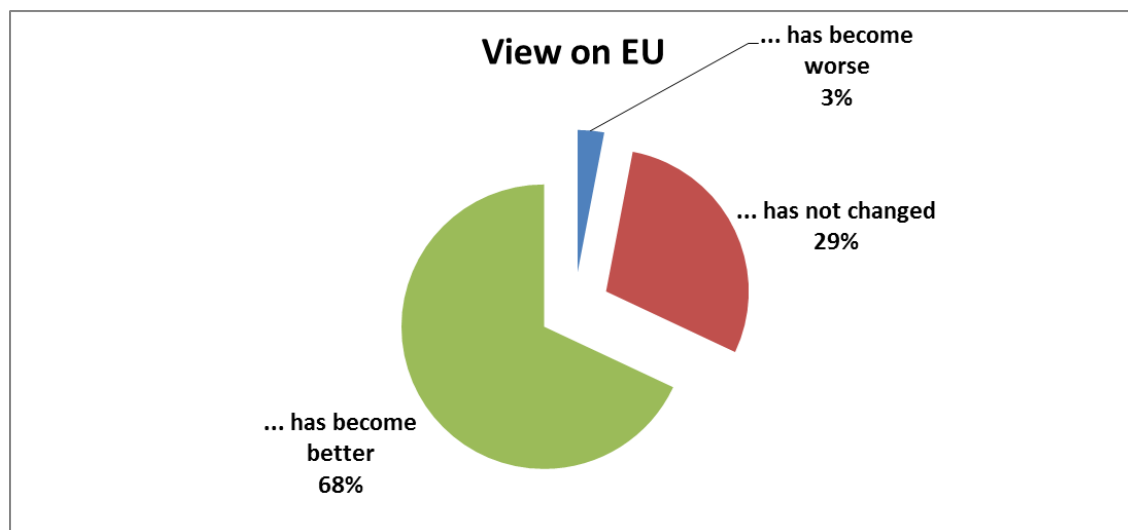
An important tool of recognition: Views on YouthPass certificate

> **What is YouthPass?**[9]
>
> **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.

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

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[9] https://www.youthpass.eu/en/youthpass/about/

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, 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.

According to the data gathered from 228 respondents of the November 2014 questionnaire, only 65% of the project participants indicated that they were *informed about the YouthPass and its benefits* during or after the projects (Graph 10). Likewise, the percentage of *project participants who has a YouthPass* is 71% (Graph 11). Similar findings also appeared in the focus group meetings regarding the use of YouthPass as a learning tool in the projects. The ratio of those who have a Youthpass has also increased by 10% compared with 2012 and 2013 surveys (see the previous report on RAY, available on Turkish National Agency web page). This is a positive indicator about the increased awareness and use of Youthpass.

Graph 10 About YouthPass
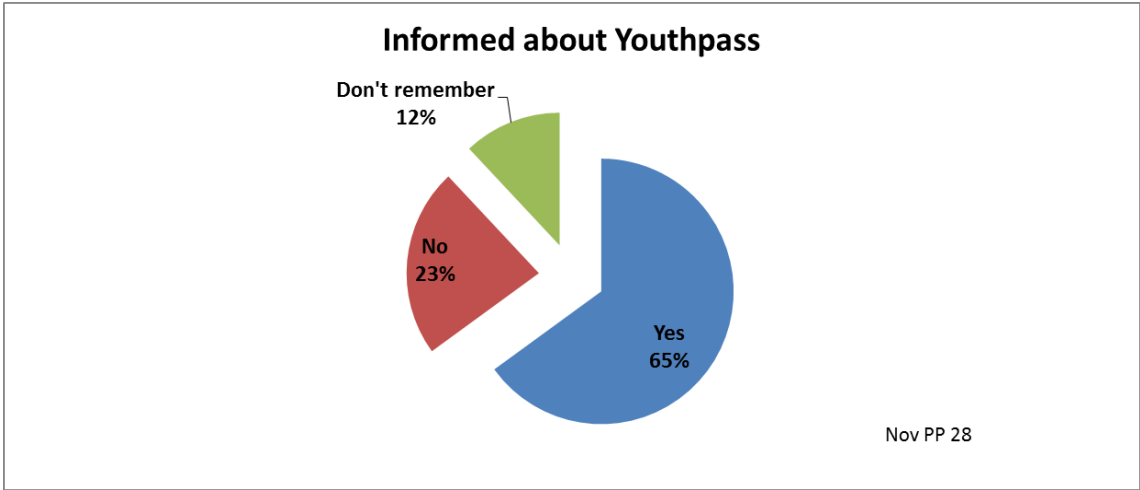
Graph 11 Owning a Youthpass

Do you have a Youthpass?

Don't remember 15%

No 14%

Yes 71%

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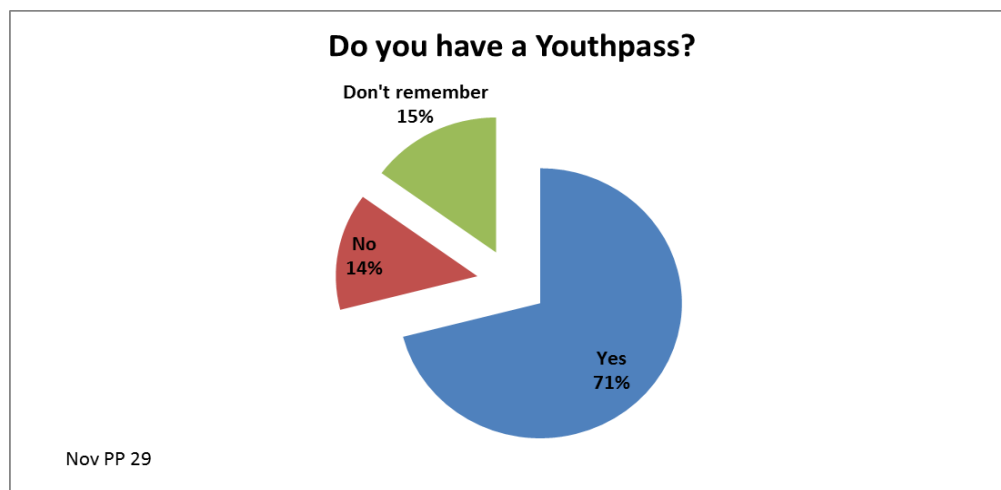
Besides owning a YouthPass, it is also important to see whether or not young people after the projects can actually benefit from the YouthPass in their daily lives. In this regard, the responses of the project participants in the focus group meetings show that even if they have YouthPass, young people do not have the opportunity to actually use it.

What do young people say?

"I have 3 more but I have never used it." (EVS Focus Group Meeting, Former Volunteer, Male)

"I'll apply for a French visa in 10 days, it'll be of use there. The applications of friends who presented their Youthpass certificate were accepted, I think I'll benefit from that." (EVS Focus Group Meeting, Former Volunteer, Male)

"I witnessed no use as it doesn't have any recognition, it doesn't have any enforcement either." (Action 4.3 Focus Group Meeting, Project Participant, Male)

"It is not known what Youthpass is for in Turkey." (Action 4.3 Focus Group Meeting, Project Participant, Male)

"I have one but I never used it." (Youth Exchanges Focus Group Meeting, Project Participant, Male)

Also related to the aims of YouthPass, namely to foster the recognition of non-formal learning, recognition of project participants' learning outcomes and experiences by the society at large becomes an important aspect of the Youth in Action Programme. The findings of the focus group meetings show that young people go through diverse experiences in terms of recognition of their learning mobility activities and outcomes by

their families, friends, peers, employers or the school/university managements. While some of the participants feel the support of their parents; some of them complain about the negative attitudes or misperceptions of their close environments, which do not grasp the major reasons of young people's participation in the projects.

What do young people say? Positive Attitudes

"In my environment, it is seen as a success. There was a change in my family attitude too. As I have (more or less) learned these things my brother went to Romania with his high school project, my family allowed this very quickly." (Youth Initiatives Focus Group Meeting, Project Participant, Male)

"I am pleased, it is a big reference for me. For example my teacher was angry that I wasn't interested as I wasn't attending classes or being late. At the end of the year when we were given the final assignment, my teacher told that I had good knowledge of these and my friends could consult me. I thought this was a good thing for me." (Action 4.3 and 3.1 Focus Group, Project Participant, Male)

"I received a certificate of appreciation from the school, official one, yes, really, I got a success certificate. My family supports me." (Youth Exchange Focus Group, Project Participant, Male)

"For example, in the past the interest in youth of EU projects was less but after we did our project, with out visits, with the increase in participants, the interest and points of view of our colleagues and community were affected positively. We come across them saying "These have benefits, these projects are useful."" (Action 3.1 Interview, Project Leader, Male)

"I am appreciated by the teachers at the faculty, my social environment and family. This has also a bad part: There are people who appreciate you but you also create a community which don't want you to advance, which don't want you to be one step ahead. They follow you, you go to places together, but you can notice it easily." (Action 5.1 Focus Group, Project Participant, Male)

"Surely we were presented gifts by the principal of our school, Administration of National Education, meetings were organized, we were appreciated in those meetings. My family –who were not involved during this project – also appreciated me, they weren't very supportive in the beginning but when we received an award in the end, they realized this was a good thing and were happy." (Youth Initiatives Interview, Project Leader, Female)

What do young people say? Negative Attitudes

"My classmates thought that I was dealing with useless stuff, they developed an attitude towards me." (Youth Initiatives Focus Group Meeting, Project Participant, Male)

"You hear are aware of their ideas but you do your own thing. For example when I told that I went to Affection Houses, my aunt told this as if it was an abnormal thing to my mother. She is doing this and that etc. I was there for a sacred reason. This became something, it was seen unnecessary and weird. I would connect this with the level of education but even well educated people think of it as unnecessary, I find it weird." (Youth Initiatives Focus Group Meeting, Project Participant, Female)

"They say "You are travelling a lot, life is beautiful for you."" (Youth Exchange Focus Group, Project Participant, Male)

"They say "I don't event receive it from my family, you are dealing with useless stuff."" (Action 5.1 Focus Group, Project Participant, Female)

"My family thinks that I am dealing with useless stuff as they don't know much about the subject. It is much different though, to have a respected position in the society you have to be a teacher or a doctor. But what I am doing at the moment is touching people's lives, even if it is by baby steps, trying to increase awareness to be able to change something." (Action 5.1 Focus Group, Project Participant, Female)

I feel limited on the other hand. I am a student at the moment, I have school, courses, I have to graduate. Every school has its own rules. This is the thing I discuss with my teachers most, they say that I am not socialising enough but they fail me because of my attendance. How can I socialise when you tell me that I don't and then fail me?" (Action 4.3 and 3.1 Focus Group, Project Participant, Female)

3. Action-based Findings of the RAY Turkey Research 2014

This section is to provide an action-based analysis of the RAY Turkey research in a way to explore and underline action-specific impact and learning outcomes of the Youth in Action Programme on young people and youth leaders from Turkey. Before getting into such an analysis, 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 May and November 2014 questionnaires provide an idea about the reasons of the participants to get engaged in the projects.

The answers given to the question of "My main reasons for participating in this project were…" by the respondents of the questionnaires can be categorised under a number of clusters.

A great deal of the respondents indicated that they participated in the project because they would like *to know different cultures*. Young people would like to encounter different cultures, to make new friends, to eliminate prejudices, to introduce their own culture to others, to experience intercultural interaction, to get to know a European country better.

Why did I participate in the Project?

- To see the lifestyles of people from different culture and beliefs
- To be able to get the chance to interact with a different culture
- To meet with people from different cultures and work with them with a common goal
- To get to know European Culture in one of the countries working in a project I am interested in
- To get to know a different culture and learn to live and work in that surrounding
- To be able to observe closely the lifestyles of young people in another country
- To get to know different cultures, to present our own culture
- To learn about different cultures in my own country as I don't have the chance to travel abroad
- To get to know different cultures, to share my own culture and skills with others in a non-commercial environment
- To benefit from intercultural interaction
- To interact with people abroad and make new friends

A second widely shared group of reasons refers to the willingness of young people *to gain experiences* and *achieve personal development* goals. In this context, the project participants stated that they would like to experience the personal and professional

benefits from the projects; to develop their language skills mostly in English or German; and to develop their attitudes and gain new knowledge through projects.

Why did I participate in the Project?

For personal development and gaining experience
- Because I believe my personal and vocational development can benefit from the project
- To develop living skills in different conditions
- To discover other worlds, to learn, to progress while improving and to create added value
- To gain experience
- To experience living abroad
- To establish new friendships, to gain responsibility
- To improve my perspective through a different experience
- To improve myself
- To improve myself as a disabled person
- To develop a network

To develop attitudes:
- To gain a different perspective
- To improve myself, my perspective, my human relations
- To show that we are capable of tolerance despite the differences of culture, religion and language, to develop an environment of peace and cooperation by breaking down the prejudices among young people from different countries

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Working for the benefit of the society appears as the most cited third category of reasons by the project participants. Through projects, young people would like to learn more about different issues which are of importance to society such as physical and mental disability; participation into social life; immigration; and, minority issues. Accordingly, the young people would like to transfer their knowledge to be acquired through projects back to the society.

Why did I participate in the Project?

- To learn about the world of physically and mentally disabled
- To undertake social responsibilities
- To take part in the social life in Turkey by gaining a wider and healthier perspective through experience
- To transfer my experience that I gained in other countries to the people around me
- To volunteer in the places I go and to be helpful to others
- To gain more knowledge on the lives of refugees
- To understands the problem of immigration and its extent
- To help the improvement of international cooperation
- To recognise minorities socially and to help people break down the taboos against each other

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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 also among the highly cited reasons for the project participants that took part in the Youth in Action Programme projects. Project participants indicated that they would like to have the experience of implementing a youth project; to transfer what they learn in the project to their own organisations; to conduct activities similar to their civil society activities; to make partnerships and meet new associations for future cooperation opportunities; to become more active members of their own organisations.

Why did I participate in the Project?

- To have the experience of executing and writing a youth project abroad.
- To experience a similar study we do at our association with people from another culture
- To gain experience on EU projects
- To develop a youth project related to our association at my hometown
- To improve myself in the related EU field
- To find others with whom I can do different projects
- To take responsibility in the name of my association
- To establish new partnerships, to meet new institutions
- To improve myself and become more active in the youth association I am a member of

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The responses to the 2014 questionnaires show that another important factor that determines young people's participation in the Youth in Action Programme projects is the *topics/themes of the projects*. Young people cited that they participated in the projects because the topics were attractive to them; they would like to understand EU policies better; to have experiences on the project topics; to hear the experiences of the people in Europe in those topics. Some of the themes frequently mentioned themes were culture; immigration; minorities; photography and journalism; EU policies; environment; and disabilities.

Why did I participate in the Project?

- The subject of the project got my attention and I thought it would be beneficial for my career
- It was related to photography and journalism, both of which are my areas of interest
- The subject of the project was very attractive
- To understand and experience EU policies on education and volunteering
- As I wanted to be among the people who presented dyslexia in my hometown
- To gain experience on the subject
- To learn what people abroad think about environmental matters
- As the project subject is very close to my areas of interest

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Besides the reasons indicated above, young people and youth leaders have personal and humanistic reasons to participate in the projects. In this context, mobility opportunities provided by the Youth in Action projects comes to the fore. In addition, loving to travel, realising the dream of going abroad, low cost travelling, having fun, desire to make new friends, socialisation and not being abroad before appears to be the mostly cited reasons for participating in the projects.

3.1. Youth Exchanges (Action 1.1) and Cooperation with the Neighbouring Countries of the European Union (Action 3.1)

> **Youth Exchanges (Action 1.1)**[10]
>
> 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.

As one of the most popular and effective actions of the Youth in Action Programme, Youth Exchange projects offer learning mobility opportunities to young people from different countries and cultures. Through Youth Exchanges, young people have a change to come together for a short period of time and get to know themselves and each other better by conducting joint activities on a particular theme.

A total number of 211 young people from Turkey as participants of the Youth Exchange projects has participated in the two surveys conducted within the context of the RAY research in 2014 (May: 96; November: 115). All the tables and graphs in this section have been produced by depending on the replies of these 211 young people. In addition, in order to qualitatively support the survey findings, one focus group meeting with five project participants of youth exchange projects (Action 1.1 and Action 3.1) and an in-

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[10] Youth in Action Programme Guide, valid as of 1 January 2013, page 24.

depth interview with one project leader of the same category of projects were realised in August 2015.

Learning in Youth Exchange Projects

Learning in youth exchange projects has been comprehensively evaluated within the context of RAY research project's special survey, which focussed specifically on learning in youth work (May 2014) and standard survey, which were implemented annually in all RAY Network partner countries for youth work impact measurement and assessment (November 2014). In those surveys, participants were provided with a list of variety of learning themes, on which they were asked to assess their learning levels.[11] Continuity was ensured by asking the same questions, which has eventually enabled the analysis with a larger sample.

Graph 12 Learning in Youth Exchanges

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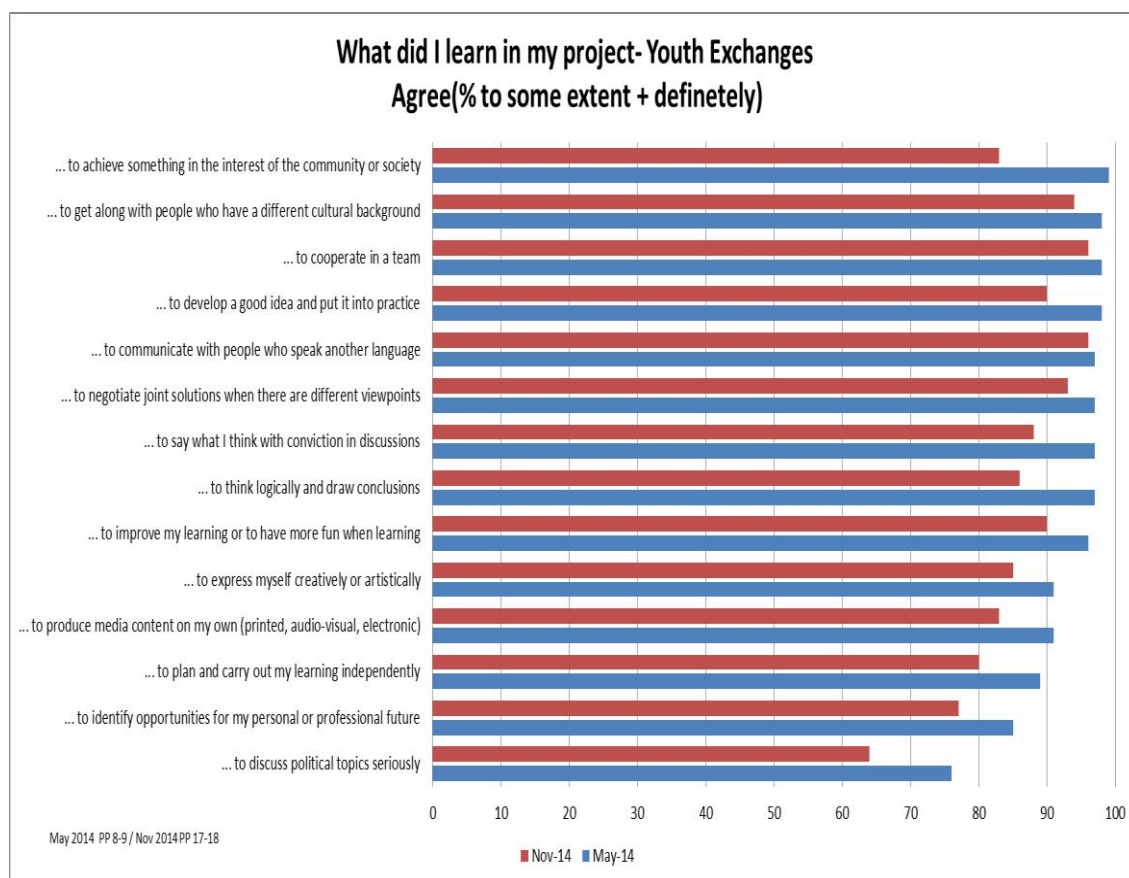
[11] May 2014 Learning Special Survey, Project Participants' Question 8 and 9; November 2014 Standard Survey, Project Participants' Question 17 and 18.

The issues which have developed the most in the Youth Exchanges, as identified by the participants, are intercultural communication and intercultural learning. This shows that Youth Exchanges fulfil to a great extent one of the basic objectives of the action, which is to bring young people from different countries with different social and cultural backgrounds, to ensure that they learn from each other and they discover and become aware of different social and cultural realities, as well as to learn about themselves. Almost all of the young people, who participated in the Youth Exchanges and who filled the questionnaire, indicated that their participation in the projects helped them learn better to get along with people who have different cultural backgrounds. This figure has been 97% in the May 2014 questionnaire and 96% in the November 2014 questionnaire. Similarly, the figure of those who stated that they learned to communicate with people who speak another language was 97% (May) and 96% (November).

The evidence from the focus group meeting also complements this finding. Young people in the Youth Exchanges do not only learn about the other cultures, but they also start to look at their own cultures from outside, and question it in a comparative way and in a constructive manner. This is actually one of the most important aspects of intercultural learning process. In addition, in the Youth Exchanges, young people get acquainted with a lot of elements of different cultures, such as traditions, food, languages, dances etc.

What do young people say?

"You develop awareness both about culture and your personal shortcomings. It causes you to break your shell and get to know about other cultures in a foreign country, and to question your own culture, it creates awareness among two cultures." (Youth Exchange Focus Group, Project Participant, Male)

"I can look at my position through a third person's eye, I experienced such things that improve your perspective, I agree on respecting human beings. Unintentionally we make comparisons but this has not pushed me towards an inferiority complex, the Europeans value human rights very much but I didn't end up not wanting to live in Turkey. But realizing such things are good, I think in time we'll move towards it." (Youth Exchange Focus Group, Project Participant, Male)

"Obviously we've learned, all our projects were cultural, I learned other countries' cultures. We had a programme where each country prepared their traditional food. A part where everyone presented their language, every country taught their language, I had much benefit there. Folk dances, history, we learned much about other countries." (Youth Exchange Focus Group, Project Participant, Male)

Team work is one of the basic elements of youth work that is also aimed to be enhanced through Youth Exchanges. 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. There is high evidence for the youth exchange participants from Turkey that team work has a significant place within the learning processes of the youth exchange participants. A great deal of young people participated in the survey indicated that they learned better how to cooperate in a team (May: 98% and November: 96%).

In the Youth Exchanges, participants also develop learning on other themes. High levels of learning has been indicated in the questionnaires in terms of learning 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.

Learning to discuss political topics seriously through youth has shown the lowest degree of development for the project participants from Turkey. The ratio of those who stated that they learned to discuss political topics seriously is 76% for May 2014 and 64% for November 2014. Actually, almost seven out of ten participants indicating that that they improved in this field can be considered as a high ratio.

Short-term and long-term impacts of youth exchange projects
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 5 Impact of Youth Exchange Project (General)

	To a great extent %
I participate in societal and/or political life	56
I am interested in European issues	70
I am committed to work against discrimination, intolerance, xenophobia or racism	68
Disadvantaged people have my support	52

November 2014, PP 19, N=115

It is evident that Youth Exchanges increase the interest of young people towards European issues within the context of European citizenship. As seen in Table 5, with the highest percentage of 70, that is, three out of four young people who responded the questionnaire stated that they were interested in European issues as an impact of the project. 68% 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.

An important aspect of the impact of youth exchange projects on young people in this context seems to refer to the elimination of prejudices, increasing respect and tolerance. Young participants of the youth exchange projects face their own prejudices against the others on the one hand, and face the prejudices of the others towards themselves. In this sense, young people from Turkey learn the ways in which they can cope with and try to change such prejudices. This impact does not only appear on the participants from Turkey regarding their prejudices against different cultures, or Europe in general. It was also stated by the participants of the focus group that those from other countries in their projects had the chance to question their prejudices by questioning their own perceptions about the culture of the participants coming from Turkey. In this regard, the statement of one of the participants of the focus group shows that young people from

Turkey also assumes a voluntary role for the elimination of prejudices towards their own cultures, countries and identities: "It seems like a simple thing, but in our projects everybody had a representative role, we were like ambassadors" (Youth Exchange Focus Group, Project Participant, Male).

What do young people say?

"We have prejudices against some countries; this is also valid for Turkey. Eastern people are like this, Aegeans are like that, etc. People attending the projects abroad represent their countries; we got to know Georgia through three participants and Armania through two participants. Through this friendship, our view about their countries has changed. We have a more positive perspective of those countries. We have realised that the Mediterranean cultures are much alike, they show their sister's wedding and it is very much like our weddings, our cultural traditions are alike, our food taste very similar, I can say this brought us together, bound us tighter." (Youth Exchange Focus Group, Project Participant, Male)

"Generally the prejudices were about religion, some asked whether polygamy still exists, one has been to Istanbul once, saw an Arab citizen with some ladies, they started to ask whether polygamy still exists, I have come across perspectives from a religious point of view." (Youth Exchange Focus Group, Project Participant, Male)

"Europeans respect humans because they are humans, we are underdeveloped in that respects. This has caused a change in our behaviour. We have put much more attention in not being discriminative, sometimes you don't like the person, but still respect and show interest because he/she is a human being." (Youth Exchange Focus Group, Project Participant, Male)

"We can communicate without taking religion or political views of each other, this creates the idea that you can think differently but still live together." (Youth Exchange Focus Group, Project Participant, Male)

"Tolerance and respect increase dramatically and this is much more valuable for me." (Youth Exchange Focus Group, Project Participant, Male)

"I have had many history related arguments, they were positive, I got the chance of learning their history, it improved me a lot culturally." (Youth Exchange Focus Group, Project Participant, Male)

"They have lots of prejudices about us, Turks are like this, they are like that. When they get to know us, their prejudices break down." (Youth Exchange Focus Group, Project Participant, Male)

"I think the prejudices break down with food and our dances because presenting nice flavours and entertainment make people think and then prejudices break down." (Youth Exchange Focus Group, Project Participant, Male)

"The project really broke down our prejudices. We had a perspective of Serbians, we don't like them, when I met Serbian people I understood it was not them doing that, they were good people, I can say that the group we got along most were the Serbians, we understood that the politicians did that, not the people, when we went to Belgrade, we understood it better." (Youth Exchange, Project Leader, Male)

To better analyse the impact of the Youth Exchange on young people, the questionnaires posed further questions to the youth exchange participants. Most probably related to the increase in the interest in European issues as indicated in Table 5, eight out of ten young people stated that they felt more European after the project (Graph 13).

Graph 13 Impact of Youth Exchange – Detailed

How did the project affect you?- Youth Exchanges
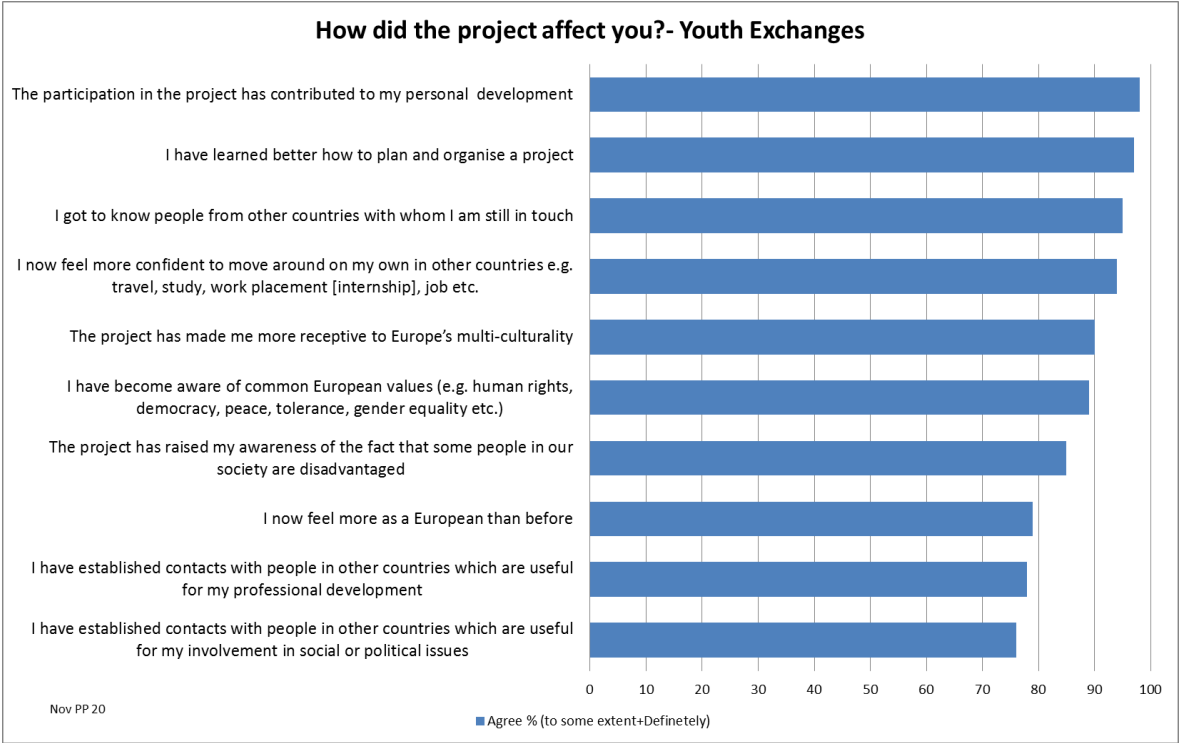
It becomes clear that travelling abroad via Youth Exchange projects, even for a short term, plays an important role for increasing the self-confidence of young people, and gives them opportunities that could be influential on their future plans and personal development. The results of the questionnaires show that the participants experienced the highest degree of impact on their personal development levels: almost all (98%) of the respondents of the questionnaires indicated that participation in a Youth Exchange contributed to their personal development.

In relation to mobility of young people, Youth Exchanges develop opportunities for young people for travelling and living abroad. The questionnaire results show that after

the project, a great deal of the respondents feel more confident to move around on their own in other countries for reasons such as travelling, studying, and for internship and job.

97% of the respondents indicated that they also learned better how to plan and organise a project. Turkey is one of the most active countries within the context of the EU Youth Exchanges and every year the number of the Youth Exchange projects increases considerably. In order to increase the quality as much as the quantity, it is quite important to transfer the project experience into project management and planning. Increasing project management skills of the young people as a result of their participation in the Youth Exchange projects should be considered in this context.

What do young people say?

"I didn't know about these kind of activities, when I went to Ukraine for the first project I learned how to write a new project, I wanted to write one when I returned to Izmir, I tried and realized it was not an easy job, you need to focus on it but I couldn't because of my school, but I'd like to write a project." (Youth Exchange Focus Group, Project Participant, Male)

"I learned how to write a project by taking part in projects. When you come together outside the projects, you share a lot, I learned a lot from the projects I attended in Turkey, when you see an application abroad, it is easier to get pen and paper and write down the structure. It helps you to see the project concretely." (Youth Exchange Focus Group, Project Participant, Male)

Findings of the focus group meeting also complement the picture in terms of Youth Exchange projects' impact on young people's personal development. The participants of the focus group meeting voiced that their participation in the Youth Exchange project increased their self-confidence, foreign language skills, sense of freedom, communication skills, analytical thinking and acting skills, and helped feeling better and relaxed in the society.

What do young people say?

"You learn a language, you learn person to person communication, you learn new dances, new songs. This is because we are open to learning." (Youth Exchange Focus Group, Project Participant, Male)

"Foreign language, it is the biggest effect. Other than that computer programs." (Youth Exchange Focus Group, Project Participant, Male)

"I was limited in English the most, when I attended the meetings. There I realized nobody could

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speak English well, then I started to speak, my English wasn't good, for us grammar is everything, if you can't make a sentence, you shut up. I realized that our friends didn't care about grammar while speaking." (Youth Exchange Focus Group, Project Participant, Female)

"You feel free, in Turkey when we approach something we think about what others would say, what would people say, how would they see this? People live there as they wish. We only live once; we should live the way we want to." (Youth Exchange Focus Group, Project Participant, Male)

"There was a change in me for sure. As I have said, my prejudices broke down, this was the biggest change. My English improved. You speak continuously and this is good practice. In the previous project there were many participants, I learned how to command a group. I learned to be more relaxed and active and to communicate in the society." (Youth Exchange, Project Leader, Male.)

"I was a more withdrawn kid, I broke out of my shell, I stopped worrying about what other would say and I feel more relaxed. As I have told, you get to look at yourself from an outside perspective." (Youth Exchange Focus Group, Project Participant, Male)

"Communication wise it pushed us to become more extrovert." (Youth Exchange Focus Group, Project Participant, Male)

"We are not that relaxed, I became more relaxed. For example I couldn't go to the shop with shorts and slippers in Turkey. This is being relaxed, it made me think if they can go to their jobs like that, I can act much more relaxed in my neighbourhood. In Turkey you are worth as much as your car, in Europe nobody knows what your car is worth. Knowing this contributed much to me, they are interested in who you are, what you read." (Youth Exchange Focus Group, Project Participant, Male)

"Learn about a relation more quickly, you learn how to express yourself in a better way." (Youth Exchange, Project Leader, Male.)
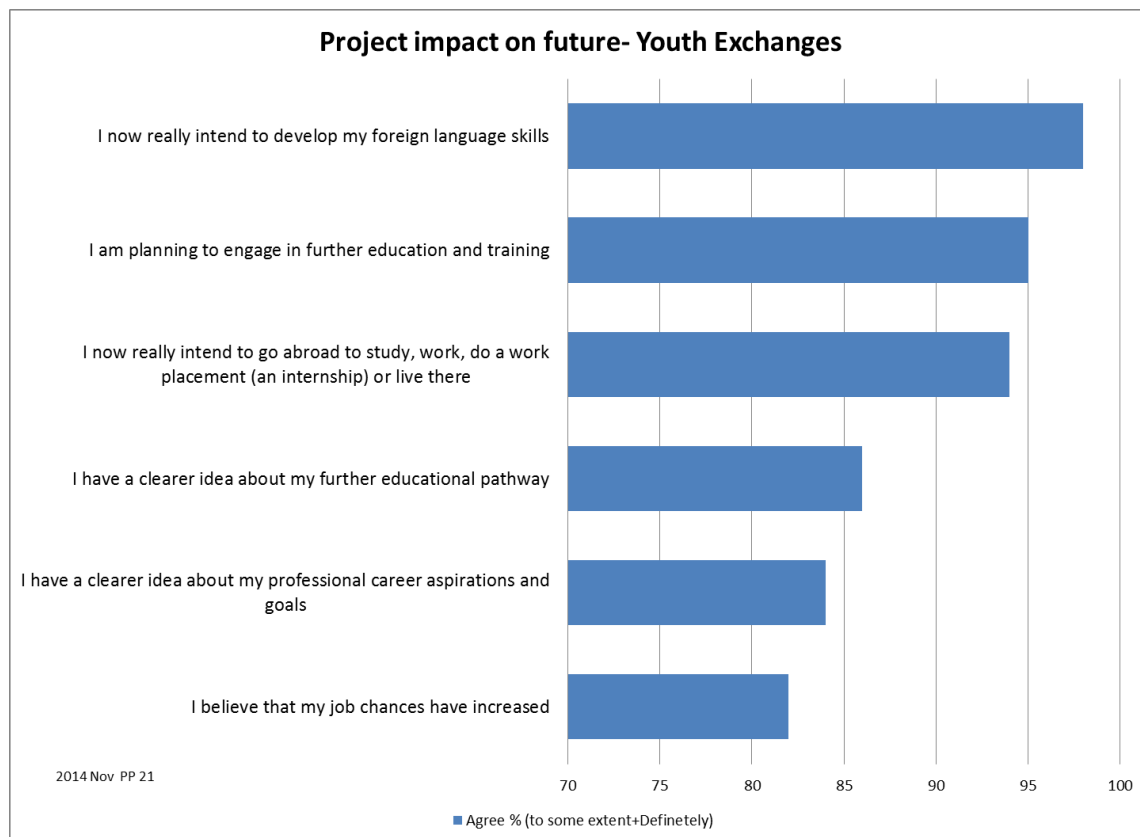
The results of the Graph 13 suggest that there are also other strong indicators for the positive impact of Youth Exchanges on young people. The ratio of positive responses regarding a series of other impacts such as common European values, awareness about young people with fewer opportunities, making contacts and keeping in touch with people from different countries is 80% and above.

The findings of this report support the previous RAY National Report (2014) findings in the sense that Youth Exchanges do not only have a strong impact on young people and those projects go beyond spending time together with a group of youngsters from different countries; but also have deeper and stronger effects.

Youth Exchanges do not only improve self-confidence of the young participants and contribute to their personal developments, but they also have an impact on the future plans of the young people. A great number of Youth Exchange participants from Turkey indicates that their future plans regarding education, choice of profession, career and

personal development have been influenced by the project that they participated in (Graph 14).

Graph 14 Impact of Youth Exchanges on Future

Project impact on future- Youth Exchanges

Statement	Agree % (to some extent+Definetely)
I now really intend to develop my foreign language skills	98
I am planning to engage in further education and training	95
I now really intend to go abroad to study, work, do a work placement (an internship) or live there	94
I have a clearer idea about my further educational pathway	86
I have a clearer idea about my professional career aspirations and goals	84
I believe that my job chances have increased	82

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There is no doubt that the most significant impact of the Youth Exchange projects on the future plans of young people is about the importance of foreign languages. Taking part in an international environment and the necessity to express themselves in another language in this period encourage young people to improve their foreign language skills. The ratio of young people who indicated that they intended to develop their foreign language skills in the future is 98%. 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 number of participants, as high as 94% of the respondents, indicated that they intended to go abroad in the future.

Education appears to be another theme that was positively influenced as a result of participation in the Youth Exchange projects. In addition to the appreciation of non-formal education methods used throughout the projects, increased interest and motivation towards the formal education of the young people taking part in such activities could also be observed. 95% 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 14). Similarly, 86% stated that they had clearer ideas about their further educational pathways and 84% stated that they had clearer ideas about their career expectations.

Lastly, the findings show that participation in international mobility activities such as Youth Exchanges increases possibilities of employability, as perceived by the participants. Eight out of ten young people who participated in the Youth Exchanges think that their employment chances increased after the project. Testimonies of the focus group participants also support such a perception.

3.2. Youth Initiatives (Action 1.2)

> **Youth Initiatives (Action 1.2)**[12]
>
> 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, non-profit organisations and youth sectors.
>
> Be it national or transnational, 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 (Action 1.2) projects, which have a particular emphasis on local communities, provide an opportunity for young people to develop their own project ideas and realise them, in which they improve their sense of responsibility, increase professional competences and gain experiences and knowledge about entrepreneurship. Most of the time, Youth Initiative projects are national projects, where the most significant impact of the projects appears to be on the professional and personal development of the young people, preparing and implementing the projects. There are also instances where Youth Initiative projects have an international dimension. In those cases, the impacts of the projects can be observed in terms of increasing intercultural interaction and establishing international contacts. In any case, the positive impact of the Youth Initiative projects on the local communities and local environment is also an issue to be seriously considered, as the analysis shows.

Analysis shows that participation in the Youth Initiative projects brought significant experiences for the young people in line with the objectives and targets of this action. Judging by the considerably high percentage of positive responses given by the participants to different questions of the questionnaires, it is possible to confirm that

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[12] Youth in Action Programme Guide, valid as of 1 January 2013, page 34.

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.

A total of 61 Youth Initiative project participants filled in May 2014 survey of the RAY Network. Unfortunately, since no Youth Initiative project participants responded to the November 2014 questionnaire, there is no additional quantitative data to the May 2014 results. In order to enrich the analysis, one focus group meeting with five project participants, and one interview with the project leader of Youth Initiative projects were conducted. Thus, all the analyses in this section are carried out and presented from the data collected by quantitative and qualitative research methods.

Youth Initiative and Professional and Personal Development through Learning

In the May 2014 questionnaire, 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.

Graph 15 Youth Initiative and Learning

What did I learn in my project- Youth Initiatives
Agree(% to some extent + definetely)
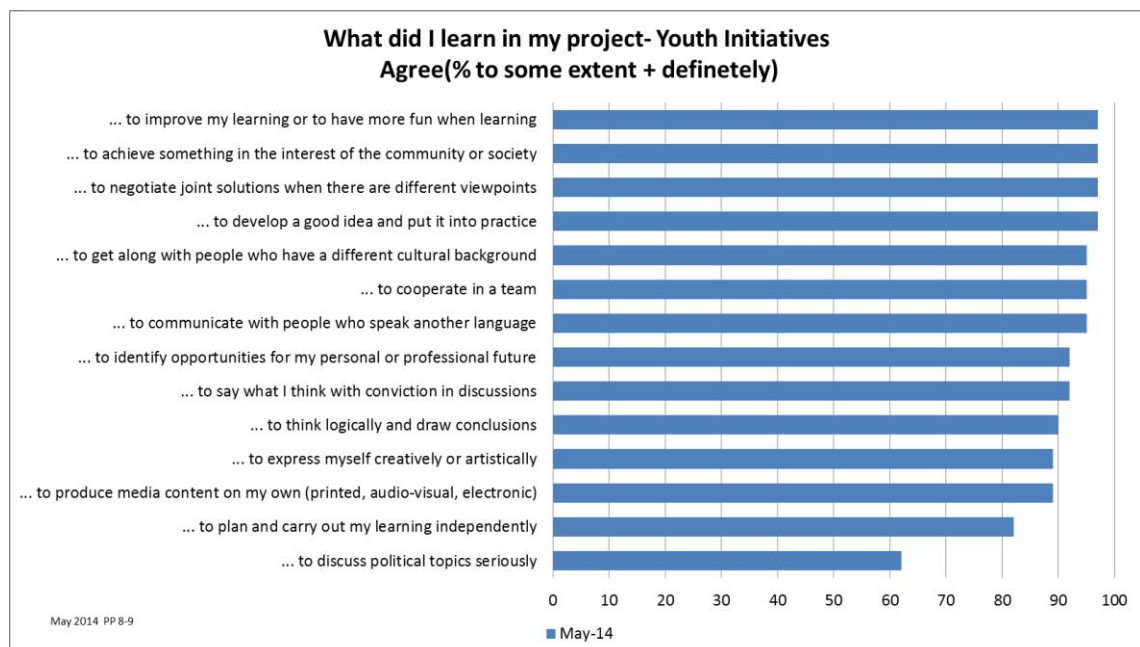
As indicated in Graph 15, young participants of the Youth Initiative projects stated that they had remarkable benefits regarding personal, social and professional developments. Overall, the levels of learning are significantly high, reaching levels of 90% or above.

In terms of the social and professional development, the findings prove that the specific objectives and targets of this action have been accomplished to a great extent. The percentage of Youth Initiatives participants who have stated that through their participation in the project they learned better how to achieve something in the interest of the community or society is 97%, which points to the strong link between the projects and society. This is maybe one of the most peculiar characteristics of the Youth Initiative projects, also in Turkey. The research findings prove that the aim of establishing stronger links between young people and their communities is successfully reached.

The focus group meeting also shows that Youth Initiative projects directly target the local community and local problems, in a way to support different segments of the society, especially those with fewer opportunities.

What do young people say?

"We made a project on the convicts at a penitentiary. As the education levels of convicts are very low we distance and separate them from the society. We tried to introduce them to art to get them in the society; we taught them theatre and made them take part in a play. It was very good for them, when the project was ending they told that they didn't want it to end, they wanted to continue, they had nothing else to do there." (Youth Initiatives Focus Group Meeting, Project Participant, Male)

"Our project was on children's songs from past to future. We planned to make a choir for the young people with limited opportunities at the orphanage, and we did it." (Youth Initiatives Focus Group Meeting, Project Participant, Male)

"Our project was on the future of our water and to prevent wasting water. It was a precaution to prepare for water shortages when there is scarce water." (Youth Initiatives Focus Group Meeting, Project Participant, Female)

The percentage of 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 is 90% and above. 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.

The focus group meeting and the interview finding further support these findings. The participants of the Youth Initiative projects do not only feel themselves productive as a result of the project activities, but they also learn how to produce outputs, which requires new skills.

What do young people say?

"We prepared project outputs, booklets, posters together; I saw that we felt efficient and productive." (Youth Initiatives Focus Group Meeting, Project Participant, Female)

"I designed t-shirts, which presented our project subjects like computers, etc., to wear in shopping malls so that people would understand that we were authorized. I never tried to design before. I had worries about completing my mission but I came over those day by day, my team members supported me. When I was tired of designing, a friend gave me ideas like "it's too colourful" or "it's too plain", I took my team members' ideas into consideration. I helped other team members; we put the pictures of our activities on the web site and made the web design." (Youth Initiatives Focus Group Meeting, Project Participant, Male)

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 observe that Youth Initiative projects contribute to the learning processes of young people by enabling them to take initiatives, by supporting their entrepreneurship and by encouraging them to take the social, financial and legal responsibilities of their projects. In addition those projects seem to ensure the effective functioning of learning process as a result of learning by doing. The learning process also seems to develop through Youth initiatives as well. 97% of the respondents have stated that through their project they have learned better how to improve their learning or how to have more fun when learning. This is another strong evidence for the impact of youth projects in non-formal learning. Learning to learn is an important competence required in the modern society, as individuals are under constant pressure to adapt to ever changing environment. Developing this

competence in non-formal and informal settings is an important contribution to the society at large.

Young people involved in Youth Initiatives also believe that through their projects they learned better how to identify opportunities for their personal or professional future. 92% of the respondents from Youth Initiatives agree with this statement. This goes very much in parallel with the other skills developed and highly correlated to related personal and professional development items, such as to cooperate in a team; to say what one thinks with conviction in discussions; to communicate with people who speak another language and to negotiate joint solutions when there are different viewpoints. The focus group meeting and the interview also show that Youth Initiative project participants become more aware of opportunities for their personal and professional activities and their future plans; and they experience team work. For example, the project participants indicated that they could associate the new skills and experiences with their current professions; they discovered new skills and interests that they had ability for; they identified their future aspirations; and they realised their capacity to work in a team as a result of participating in the projects.

What do young people say?

"Considering my personality, even meeting a new person and communicating has a big contribution. At least I can understand when I say the same thing, a person from another culture or with a different perspective can have a different reaction. I know different people can have different reactions, means of agreement develop, you start to get to know people, you can establish more effective communication with them. My department is social services, this has contributed much to me." (Youth Initiatives Focus Group Meeting, Project Participant, Male)

"I realised this; I am very coherent in group work, that's why they invite me I think. When we do something as a group, I try to do my part painstakingly and present it the best way, I am very coherent, I don't have strong reactions to people, I was like this in my normal and professional lives. I realised this during these projects, you develop more, you realize being coherent is very positive and it goes on." (Youth Initiatives Focus Group Meeting, Project Participant, Female)

"I acted in a theatre for the first time, I was learning how to move on stage. I was learning for the first time and in the meantime I was teaching the convicts, I was learning and teaching at the same time, I discovered that." (Youth Initiatives Focus Group Meeting, Project Participant, Male)

"As I have told, I study at the social services department. We deal with children, elderly, young, adult, disabled, everyone. When I started to work at youth associations I realized the deficiencies in this field more. There is not much about this in Turkey, I decided to focus and I aim to do research on this. I volunteer on different assignments at the associations. My aim is this." (Youth Initiatives Focus Group Meeting, Project Participant, Male)

"I want to improve myself as a participant on youth studies. I will proceed accordingly. I am a sufferer of the KPSS (Public Personnel Selection Examination) but I will do youth studies now, I will continue to volunteer and take part in the project while I work. I hope that I'll become a ministry employee and continue." (Youth Initiatives Focus Group Meeting, Project Participant, Female)

"After this project - I didn't write this project personally- but I realised that I can write a project and it is not that hard. I was encouraged, and it created the same impact on other friends. Previously I was thinking that it was really hard; this was the biggest effect it had on me." (Youth Initiatives Interview, Project Leader, Female)

"I perform these kinds of activities much more consciously compared to past. What can I do, where can I get help from, how does the procedure work. It made me learn a lot in this means. As it is close to my field of expertise, it improved me as a teacher. The sense of togetherness with the students. Over here, it doesn't work like that, the teacher decides on something, plans it, the students just do it. But we included the students in the planning phase, asked their opinion, exchanged ideas, it contributed me much." (Youth Initiatives Interview, Project Leader, Female)

In addition, the participants of the focus group meeting also indicated that Youth Initiative projects have a potential to increase their employability and job options.

What do young people say?

"I added my projects to my CV. When someone looks at it, they say "she is interested in these, she takes part in international projects", I can make them say that." (Youth Initiatives Focus Group Meeting, Project Participant, Female)

"A week ago we spoke with our project leader; he is still studying at the school. He told he made a job application, despite there were hundreds of applicants, he got the job easily because his CV included some documents related to our project." (Youth Initiatives Focus Group Meeting, Project Participant, Male)

One of the most effective impacts of the Youth Initiative projects on the participants has been on the personal development. It has been observed, in the focus group meeting and interview, that one of the most visible elements of personal development has been the increase in self-confidence of the Youth Initiative project participants. It is clearly observable that achieving something good for the benefit of the society; successfully completing a project and taking responsibility in this regard develop a sense of self-confidence for the young people. This is a finding not only related to the project participants, but also valid for the project leaders.

Another element of personal development, achived through Youth Initiative projects, especially those with an international dimension, as the focus group meeting and the interview show, is that project participants face with their prejudices, question and overcome them and become more tolerant to differences. In addition, they also develop a sense of empathy towards other participants and try to eliminate the prejudices that they might have.

can have a wider perspective of events. When you see that, you need to break your shell." (Youth Initiatives Focus Group Meeting, Project Participant, Female)

"You learn to be tolerant. For example, even if you don't want to have arguments on religion or politics with foreigners, they pull you into it because you are from a different religion. At this instance for example, the girl asked me why my friend had a headscarf and I didn't. Normally we are not asked such questions here. But the foreigners are very curious about it. If someone normal asked the same question I can give a counterblast, but there we can say it's a matter of choice." (Youth Initiatives Focus Group Meeting, Project Participant, Female)

"Maybe a group that you don't know anything about, a group that can have prejudices about you, I saw all pass away and you really get a wider perspective when you meet new people. Your perspective on life changes, you become more flexible, more tolerant, you need to be more active, you need to take part in the projects." (Youth Initiatives Focus Group Meeting, Project Participant, Female)

Findings show that, in addition to increasing self confidence, elimination of prejudices and increasing tolerance, Youth Initiative projects also contribute positively to personal development by changing attitudes and providing new skills. The participants of the focus group meeting and the interview voiced that as a result of the project, they experienced facing their fears and overcoming them; they developed skills for working and living in line with a plan and programme; they learned how to cope with problems and crisis situations; they experienced supporting each other in a team; and, they developed new skills such as persuasion, expressing themselves better and more clearly; being patient and being more active.

What do young people say?

"Our friends have been to the penitentiary a couple of times, only our project leader has been there, then me and a couple of friends joined the project. We were going but we had a doubt: What would happen? After all, there were convicts inside, would they do something to us? How will we persuade them, etc. There was always this fear when we came to the penitentiary's door, it was like a dragon's door, we had many doubts, we needed to face many fears, we said let's go and we went in all together." (Youth Initiatives Focus Group Meeting, Project Participant, Male)

"Planning, programming, are my gains. Doing everything according to a plan. After that we had some problems. A friend was going to have an activity while one of our friends had something else to do etc,. Crisis management took over. With one day left, another friend was joining and trying to do the other friend's duties. These are my gains." (Youth Initiatives Focus Group Meeting, Project Participant, Male)

"The concept of crisis management develops. Do you have a "plan B" in case of an unwanted situation, how will you deal with that? The people develop a skill to cope with problems." (Youth Initiatives Focus Group Meeting, Project Participant, Male)

"You learn about patience. You learn things you normaly would not do. When somebody is angry with you, there is a difference between your reaction to him/her during a project and your reaction

out of a project. How did I absorb this, I wouldn't react like this normally you say, but the project calms you down, lowers your anger." (Youth Initiatives Focus Group Meeting, Project Participant, Female)

"We did theatre too. I was playing the mother of the sick child, normally acting is really hard and you need to have talent, we did it in English. All projects are in English, we did it in English. Moreover, I have a phobia of speaking to an audience, I have a phobia of blackboard, normally I can express myself but in front of a group I become very excited, my adrenaline rises, I get abdominal pain, it is something from my childhood, I try but I can't come over it. I discovered how I calmed down." (Youth Initiatives Focus Group Meeting, Project Participant, Female)

"I noticed how my ability to be patient and to persuade improved, a convict will get on the stage for the first time, then changes his mind, says he won't do it but we persuade him." (Youth Initiatives Focus Group Meeting, Project Participant, Male)

"After the project as an attitude and behaviour[-wise], I realised I can express my ideas in a more plain, more simple and more direct way. Before I took part in a group environment in such project, I didn't think I was this effective, I felt I improved myself." (Youth Initiatives Focus Group Meeting, Project Participant, Male)

"I really learned that you can't fool around with addictions, you think that you can stop something you are doing involuntarily but when you are inside you see that is not the case, that's why I am over cautious to everything that can cause addiction." (Youth Initiatives Focus Group Meeting, Project Participant, Male)

"I discovered that I need to be active, I don't want a routine life, a certain salary and an 8 to 5 job, if there is another project, I'd take part in with pleasure." (Youth Initiatives Focus Group Meeting, Project Participant, Female)

"Students should be more active, more conscious, and so they were, not us. That was the goal in the end." (Youth Initiatives Interview, Project Leader, Female)

Another aspect of the personal development achieved is the development of language skills. The focus group findings show that Youth Initiative projects do not only develop foreign language skills of the participants, but they also help young people to understand and use their own language better.

What do young people say?

"My English is getting better. When you don't speak a language, you forget it. I realised that when I spoke, the words I had forgoten started to come back. It was good English practice." (Youth Initiatives Focus Group Meeting, Project Participant, Female)

"You don't say "I can't speak" when you're there. It's like this: If he can do it, you can do it, if he can join, you can join and tell your idea. You have to express yourself. If you don't speak, nobody asks you why, there were people with broken English, they tolerated us, we tolerated them." (Youth Initiatives Focus Group Meeting, Project Participant, Female)

"When we were doing street interviews, I was stuttering. I was thinking my Turkish wasn't good enough. When we practiced there, I started to speak faster and I learned how to adjust the tone of my

Maybe the most striking outcome of participating in the Youth Initiative projects is to become more aware of social problems at various levels. Especially through the project acitivites realised with the target group of the projects, who are often considered as young people with fewer opportunities, project participants become better aware of the problems that have an impact on the society. In this regard, the focus group meeting and interview participants indicated that through the project activities they realised the severity of the problems and the necessity to fight them; they faced the difficulties of reaching at their target groups and had to adjust their projects accordingly; they realised the necessity to be more inclusive. A consequence of such an increasing interest in social problems, project participants felt more motivated to further develop initiatives and implement new projects.

What do young people say?

"I didn't think that it was this serious. When I saw the young people, I was expecting a sitting disorder. I realised that a serious work force was wasted without even realising time was passing by, this is a worldwide thing. At their most productive years. A serious amount of workforce was being lost. They were at their most productive age. They have to use it [this period of their life] economically. I realised such a fact because of the project." (Youth Initiatives Focus Group Meeting, Project Participant, Male)

"Compared to the past, the interest in such activities has risen, solidarity and tolerance has risen amongst the students. Because they did it all together and their sense of possession improved, environmental consciousness developed, it had such effects on participants. They felt they succeeded in something and there are some still talking about it, it made them feel good." (Youth Initiatives Interview, Project Leader, Female)

"We had some problems, I have already told that we began in affection houses and then went for TEGV (Educational Volunteers Foundation of Turkey). We couldn't establish sufficient communication with the children in the affection houses. As I have said, these children had never been involved in such an activity. As you can guess, they were having problems amongst the children who did not have families: like aggressiveness, not understanding what they were told. At the end we were going to set up a choir there. When such things happen, as the time was limited, we had to replace the establishment. At TEGV, there were children with financial difficulties but they were with their families, we worked with them." (Youth Initiatives Focus Group Meeting, Project Participant, Male)

"Let's say he murdered someone or has done drug trafficking. We ostracise these people, but we have spoken with them. When we spoke to them, I understood that this was wrong. You need to talk to them. They are inclined to crime again because you ostracise them. You understand when you talk to them. Something like this happened; I gained a personal ability to break down prejudices." (Youth

Initiatives Focus Group Meeting, Project Participant, Male)

"The joy you feel at the end of a project pushes you towards other projects. The feeling you get there motivates you, we see the problem, we see them as a disadvantaged group and want to involve them in the society. I believe we have managed this to a certain extent. We realised other problems while trying to change them. The way they treat them inside [jail], the way the guardians think. They think of them as convicts. They push them towards more crime. If they were open minded, the convicts would be different. We said we did wrong, this project should be for them [guardians] as well." (Youth Initiatives Focus Group Meeting, Project Participant, Male)

"New ideas, new projects emerge while we are doing a project." (Youth Initiatives Focus Group Meeting, Project Participant, Female)

Such an increased interest and motivation also increases the positive impacts of the Youth Initiative projects on the local community. The focus group meeting and the interview findings show that the realised projects for the benefit of the local community are disseminated by the project participants and the project participants develop further ideas to put into projects for the benefit of the society.

What do young people say?

"We worked with children. As children are objects of attraction, when you work with children with limited opportunities, children who are not able to do certain things, when they are happy you are affected too. The children experience the same things every day, they stay at a dormitory of the Children Protection Center, they go to school daily, eat there. Here they did something different, they formed a choir, they made a musical. I was happy because I saw them happy. The music teachers came and formed a choir, then instruments joined." (Youth Initiatives Focus Group Meeting, Project Participant, Male)

"These kinds of project are rare in Batman, we wanted to be the frontiers. After us, the number of applications increased. There were even some applications from our school. None were accepted, but people now know that these things are beneficial. Especially the ones at our school, they were influenced by us and submitted an application. Other schools too, they took Batman as an example, many people are still asking how we did it, they ask for help and consult us." (Youth Initiatives Interview, Project Leader, Female)

3.3. European Voluntary Service (Action 2)

European Voluntary Service (Action 2)[13]

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". In addition to providing benefit to 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. It 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 recreational or touristic activity;
- a language course;
- exploitation of a cheap workforce;
- a period of study or vocational training abroad.

European Voluntary Service (EVS) is a short-term (1-3 months) or long-term (3-12 months) voluntary working activity for young people, in a project at a youth organisation in another country for the benefit of the society. EVS considerably differs from the other actions of the Youth in Action Programme, to the extent that it is an individual activity and it foresees the volunteer spending a long time in another country. Accordingly, the impact of the EVS projects on the project participants (i.e. volunteers) is quite remarkable and rather deep. EVS projects do not only provide significant personal and professional skills for the young people during the period he/she lives abroad, but such an experience through EVS projects also makes an impact on the volunteers' future plans. RAY research provides important evidences to support these statements, in a way to show that the objectives of the EVS action have considerably been realised through the projects.

It is not surprising that the most significant benefit for the young people of living and volunteering abroad for a long time is observed in terms of increasing intercultural

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

interaction and communication skills and developing competences in expressing oneself in other languages. As a result of the volunteering experience, EVS volunteers develop themselves personally and professionally; their future plans get clearer; and maybe the most importantly, their self-confidence increases regarding their future.

A significant finding from the analysis of the RAY qualitative and quantitative data shows that EVS experience constitutes a turning point in the lives of EVS volunteers: 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. An issue to be considered here is that EVS former volunteers, especially those who took part in the long-term EVS projects perceive their experience, regardless of the organisational success of their projects, very positively, and they emphasise that such an experience provided them with significant gains and opportunities in a positive way.

A total number of 50 EVS former volunteers responded to November 2014 questionnaire within the context of the RAY research. All the tables, graphs and analysis in this section are produced from the responses of those 50 young people. In addition, in order to enrich the analysis, two focus group meetings with seven participants and an interview with an EVS project leader were conducted. For the EVS action, a slightly different approach was adopted. First of all, all the participants of the focus group meetings participated in the same short-term project, but in different periods and under different participant categories. Secondly, the project was chosen due to its particular focus on disabled young people. Thirdly, the participant composition of the focus groups was different from each other due to the character of the project. In one of the focus groups three EVS former volunteers were included. In the other focus group, two disabled participants and their two companions participated. Such a variety both provides an opportunity to complement the findings of the quantitative survey with qualitative data especially regarding the experiences of the EVS former volunteers on, and it allows for presenting additional findings, especially regarding the experiences of the disabled participants and their companions in and after the projects.

European Voluntary Service: Comprehensive Development and Learning

Regarding learning and personal development, former EVS volunteers are those who most positively evaluate their experiences of personal development and intercultural interaction and communication. Almost all (96%) of the EVS former volunteers who responded the questionnaire expressed that they learned how to get along with people who have a different cultural background through the projects. This high figure points out to the fact that in general EVS projects are the projects that have the biggest influence on young people in terms of intercultural communication and interaction (2014 November Project Participant Questionnaire, Questions 17 and 18).

Graph 16 European Voluntary Service and Learning
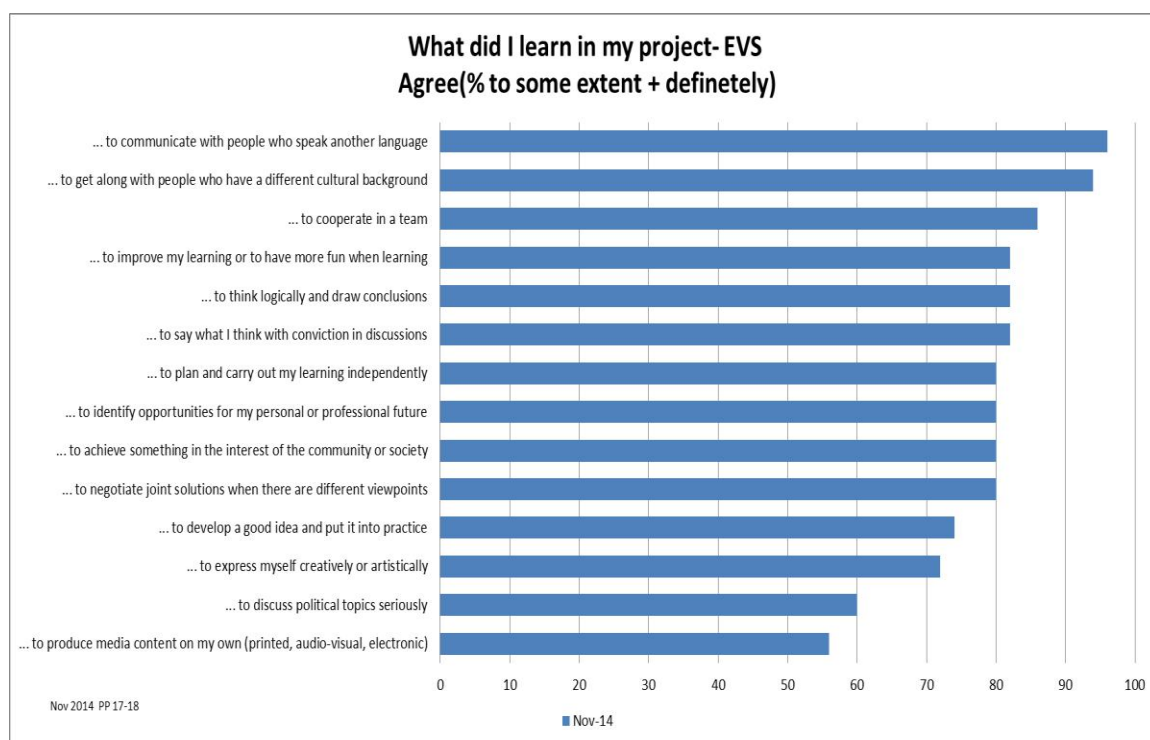
As shown in Graph 16, young people participating in EVS projects improve their skills comprehensively in a variety of fields different from other actions; they develop not only in one particular field but in a variety of competence fields. It is striking that more than 95% of former EVS volunteers who responded the questionnaire indicated that, as a result of their EVS experience, they learned better how 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, 96% of the participants stated that they learned better how to communicate with people who speak another language. 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.

As supported by the findings of the focus group meetings, a significant characteristic of the EVS projects in this regard is that, in order to participate in those projects, there is no requirement of knowledge of the language of the host country. Since Turkey is one of the most active countries regarding volunteer mobility within the context of EVS action, volunteers from Turkey go to a variety of European countries every year. Volunteers, who visit countries in which many different languages are spoken, do not only improve their English language skills, but they also gain some degree of skills to communicate 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 as a whole.

What do young people say?

"I travelled abroad alone for the first time. My English was bad. I was very stressed about what I would do when I went there. When I went there and saw that the majority didn't speak English, I thought that it would be a hard time for me. Then I made use of technology, I communicated with people by translating the texts first to English, then to Turkish, at the end of the first month I saw that my English improved, because I was speaking English with my project coordinator." (EVS Focus Group Meeting, Former Volunteer, Male)

"When I went there, my English was very bad, as we don't get good education, the English we learn at high school is bad. When I was about to returning I saw that I was able to explain everything, seriously, I returned with very good English. I went to an English course here, in the end I learned English. You can divide English into spoken and grammar, I was good at speaking, I had problems with grammar. I came over it, I learned English." (EVS Focus Group Meeting, Former Volunteer, Male)

"I learned some Bulgarian. They always tell us learning a language is not hard when you go to a place where it is spoken, you have to learn English at its place, not at school, we didn't care about this, but when we went there, we learned that it is not valid only for English but for all languages." (EVS Focus Group Meeting, Former Volunteer, Male)

Another major point that EVS former volunteers experienced as important benefits from their projects is team work. 86% of the respondents of the questionnaire indicated that they learned how to cooperate in a team. Although EVS is mainly an individual experience, it requires the volunteer work as part of a team within a structure. This fact, therefore, requires the volunteer to work on, develop and strengthen their intercultural communication and problem solving skills.

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

European Voluntary Service projects offer young people valuable learning opportunities, as well as the chances to develop competences in various fields. Similar to the findings of the learning process, EVS former volunteers cite their gains in a variety of fields and indicate that EVS experience considerably contribute to their lives. May 2014 survey reveals that EVS former volunteers feel the impact of their experience strongest in the fields of personal development and self-confidence. All (100%) of the respondents indicate that their project experience contributed to their personal development and after the project they feel more confident to move around on their own in other countries (e.g. travel, study, work placement [internship], job etc. Evidence of increased self-confidence can also be derived from the focus group findings.

What do young people say?

"I had plans to go abroad for a project and to work but I always said I couldn't. I thought when I exited that door [border], I wouldn't understand anything and I wouldn't manage anything alone. I believe my self confidence, motivation, future plans and perspective improved very well, I didn't regret it, I say it was really good that I took part." (EVS Focus Group Meeting, Former Volunteer, Male)

"It improved my belief that I can do something alone. For example I never lived away from my family, even in the country. I went abroad, this was very different. I observed that I could adapt to life abroad, adapt to other cultures easily, I didn't know that, I experienced it." (EVS Focus Group Meeting, Former Volunteer, Male)

"…For example we went there, to the project [meeting], after that you develop self confidence. You learn to live there under various conditions. It is a foreign country, a foreign language you don't know, food you don't know, living with these gives you self confidence." (EVS Focus Group Meeting, Former Volunteer, Male)

One of the most significant impacts 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 17). Almost all (98%) of the former EVS volunteers who responded the 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.

What do young people say?

"We made very close friends. From other countries. We went there again this year to visit, we made such close friends. Now the project is over but we went to Bulgaria for a visit for a month this summer." (EVS Focus Group Meeting, Former Volunteer, Male)

Focus group meetings and interview also show that EVS projects result in positive changes for the volunteers in terms of cultural interaction and communication. As a result of spending some time in another country and encountering young people from other countries, as well as touching the local community in their host country, young volunteers acquire new knowledge about the hosting country and its culture; they have the opportunity of learning by living and experiencing; and they develop further interest and curiosity to learn further about those. All these result in a considerable degree of elimination of prejudices and increasing tolerance towards other cultures. In addition, the volunteers do not only learn the hosting country's traditions and culture but they also find chances to introduce their own culture and help elimination of prejudices towards the volunteers' culture.

"I travelled to a different country; there were others from other countries. I have new habits; I travelled different cities because of this." (EVS Focus Group Meeting, Former Volunteer, Male)

"You see that people are very similar even though their languages, their religions and their races are different. The culture, the taste of the food is all different but when you look at it, good is good for them and bad is bad. You see that no matter how much people change, in the core, they are very similar." (EVS Focus Group Meeting, Former Volunteer, Male)

"You meet some people there in terms of culture. Those people think that everyone in Turkey wears black burqas, like Arabia. When you go there, when people see you, you see them, you break down your prejudices, you say that "they are very similar to us". For example I met a Spaniard, I discovered that they are very similar to Turks, they have dessert similar to baklava. Or their cultural style, their personalities, their reactions. When you are with other cultures –these projects are like this usually- you spend two months with someone else, stay at the same house, you improve and learn a lot." (EVS Focus Group Meeting, Former Volunteer, Male)

"Communicating with people there, learning their language and culture was nice. Thanks to them, I am enthusiastic about researching cultures and civilizations and I am studying that now." (EVS Focus Group Meeting, Former Volunteer, Male)

"We taught things from our culture, music, dances. For example there were culture nights, we were dancing at our house with our music. For example we were there during the month of Ramadan, we cooked different kinds of food for our friends, both they and we were very happy. We invited them for iftar, they invited us. They are not Muslims but we went to their house for iftar." (EVS Focus Group Meeting, Former Volunteer, Male)

The focus group findings also show that the volunteers feel considerable degrees of personal development, which is accompanied by changes in attitudes and self-reflection. The evidence shows that throughout the time spent in another country, the volunteers have the opportunity to self-reflect by considering their previous behaviours and attitudes; to discover their own abilities and develop them further;

"When you go there, I think you are becoming aware of yourself, whether self confidence, get ability to learn, get to share, get friendship." (EVS Focus Group Meeting, Former Volunteer, Male)

"Breaking down prejudices against others, having a more humanitarian perspective. I had an incredible change in self improvement. When I went there I didn't know how to cook, I was a little spoiled, when I came back, I was able to cook. These kinds of things change a person a lot. As I was living with my family I didn't have any problems, I didn't cook, I didn't wash clothes." (EVS Focus Group Meeting, Former Volunteer, Male)

"Children on one hand, disabled people on the other, I learned that I was capable of communicating with both. I expressed this, this was my biggest gain." (EVS Focus Group Meeting, Former Volunteer, Male)

"You discover the values of things related to behaviour and attitude. For example in two months –I

was never away from my family before- I understood the value of my family, the value of my mother more. When you are here everything is ready for you, your food is ready, your clothes are ready. When we came back, we understood some things were hard. When we went there we did these ourselves, we understood they were hard, when I returned I started to help my mother. I should be involved in this so I can get experience." (EVS Focus Group Meeting, Former Volunteer, Male)

"For example, I am a very calm person, but this has nothing to do with self confidence. I was in a different mood there, I wasn't that shy or quiet. I have no difficulties in expressing myself but I used to choose being alone even in a crowded place. But there, this changed. I am very relaxed now, I don't run away from crowds. It wasn't a social phobia but I didn't like it, now I'm over it and this can easily be seen by my community." (EVS Focus Group Meeting, Former Volunteer, Male)

"I cooked by myself. I had problems at the beginning, there were hard times but generally I had a good time during the two months." (EVS Focus Group Meeting, Former Volunteer, Male)

Besides elimination of prejudices towards other cultures, the volunteers also overcome their prejudices towards the people with fewer opportunities or with particular disabilities, whom they meet as the target groups and/or beneficiaries of the projects; they gain self-confidence in working with them; and, they positively change their attitudes towards those segments of the society. The focus group findings show that the former EVS volunteers eliminated their prejudices in this regards and became much more aware of the social problems in their local communities.

What do young people say?

"I had never met a disabled person before, never come close to one. When I went there, being together with them made me grow up, broke down my prejudices against them. For example I fed a disabled person. I thought I couldn't do that, I was afraid. Now I don't feel that way. You see that they need affection too, when you are over it, you are excited, you think you are a better person, you break down your prejudice." (EVS Focus Group Meeting, Former Volunteer, Male)

"Before you mingle with those people you can have some prejudices. For example when I saw a disabled person, I didn't think I could have any interaction. When I went there, for 2-3 days I chose to stay away, I watched. But after a certain time I found myself among them, I didn't expect this to happen." (EVS Focus Group Meeting, Former Volunteer, Male)

"When I used to be together with disabled people in the past I wouldn't communicate with them because I thought something I do or say would hurt them, I was very reluctant. At the end of the project I broke this down, I am in touch with some families, some disabled children from there on the internet." (EVS Focus Group Meeting, Former Volunteer, Male)

When the Graph 17 is analysed as a whole, the responses point out to the finding that in addition to the personal and professional gains, EVS participants show considerable progress in the fields of active citizenship and European issues. A great deal of EVS volunteers (98%) indicated that due to the project experience, they became aware of common European values (e.g. human rights, democracy, peace, tolerance, gender equality etc.) and 96 % stated that the project has made them more receptive to Europe's multi-culturality. Seven out of ten former EVS volunteers emphasised that they now feel more European than before.

Graph 17 EVS Impact - Detailed
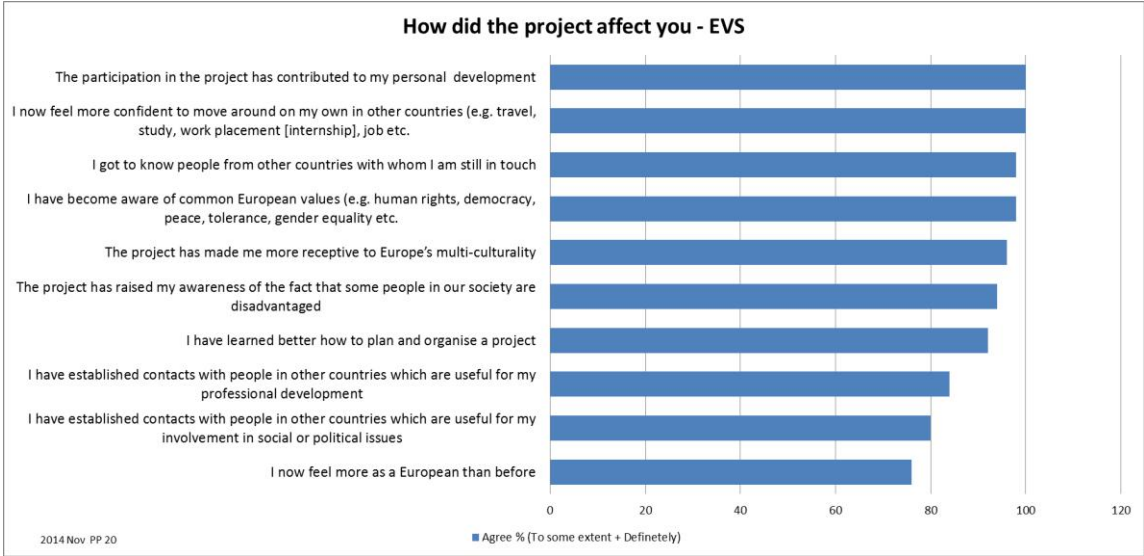
Being part of a social project as an EVS volunteer also apparently increases social understanding and sensitivities towards other individuals in the community. 94% of the respondents indicated that their EVS project raised their awareness of the fact that some people in our society are disadvantaged.

Table 6 Impact of EVS (General)

	To a Greater Extent %
I participate in societal and/or political life	56
I am interested in European issues	70
I am committed to work against discrimination, intolerance, xenophobia or racism	68
Disadvantaged people have my support	52

2014 Nov PP 19, N=50

If the Table 6 is examined, behavioural changes can also be observed. Different from previous questions where respondents' opinions and attitudes are questioned, Table 6 reports the changes in behaviours. In line with earlier findings, the European issues are in the front (70%). The change in social sensitivities can also be observed in behaviour, as 7 out of 10 EVS former volunteers stated that they are committed to work against discrimination, intolerance, xenophobia and racism as a result of their project. Accordingly, half of the respondents claim that after the EVS experience, they participate in societal and political life more and they support disadvantaged people.

Graph 18 European Voluntary Service and Future

Project impact on future- EVS

Statement	Agree % (To some extent + Definetely)
I now really intend to develop my foreign language skills	~96
I now really intend to go abroad to study, work, do a work placement (an internship) or live there	~94
I am planning to engage in further education and training	~94
I have a clearer idea about my professional career aspirations and goals	~82
I have a clearer idea about my further educational pathway	~82
I believe that my job chances have increased	~77

2014 Nov PP 21
■ Agree % (To some extent + Definetely)

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 18, the average of the impact the EVS 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 77% and this percentage is one of the highest among all the actions. The perception of the former EVS volunteers regarding increasing chances for employment as a result of their project experience was also voiced in the focus group meetings.

What do young people say?

"When you are a new graduate, they don't care about you much. You don't have much in your CV. But when you add this [project experience] they immediately ask you "what did you do, how did you go there, how was it" etc. It gets their attention too. As it stands as an experience abroad, you think that you are one step further from others. In their eyes, you are a person who went to Europe. This kid has been to Europe and has done something there, he managed this because he is good at something, he is selected among a few so he has a gift. You become more valuable in their eyes, if there is something related to Europe, they come to you first." (EVS Focus Group Meeting, Former Volunteer, Male)

"It gets the attention of human resources, they ask you a lot. For example when I form a CV online, I

In addition to the employment chances, EVS former volunteers are also positively affected by their experience in terms of their future plans. 82% of the respondents indicated that, as a result of their EVS project, they had a clearer idea about professional career aspirations and goals. It also appears that participating in an EVS project is a very strong motivation for future education and training, as 94% of the respondents are planning to engage in further education and training.

In addition, the focus group findings show that EVS projects also increase the motivation and sense of entrepreneurship of the former volunteers to get engaged in further youth work activities. After the projects, the volunteers become more interested in participating in new projects and social, cultural and academic activities; and even in some cases, they plan and initiate their own projects where they can reflect the experiences that had in their own EVS projects.

What do young people say?

"After we took part in this project, with my friends we decided to write a project at the beginning of this semester. For example, as a result of my taking part in this EVS project, we decided that our project should be about the handicapped too, this project has affected the design of our new project." (EVS Focus Group Meeting, Former Volunteer, Male)

"Before I joined this project I would never take part in socio-cultural events. After this project I started attending all trainings, conferences and such events at school. This marked the start of that." (EVS Focus Group Meeting, Former Volunteer, Male)

"After I took part in this project, I got interested in other types of projects granted by Turkish National Agency. It triggered my research instinct and after this I took part in a youth exchange project in Karaman. There were 40 people from 7 countries. After that project, with my friends from there, we said "everybody else is writing a project, why can't we?" and our project was accepted by the National Agency. We will also travel to Romania for a youth exchange project for 15 days in October with my friends from this project. I think all of these are happening because of this project. I am more interested in projects, it revealed my entrepreneurship." (EVS Focus Group Meeting, Former Volunteer, Male)

All those analyses point out that European Voluntary Service projects create comprehensive learning outcomes and deep impacts on the young participants, which could be considered as turning points in their lives. The qualitative analysis shows that this impact is not only limited to the young people who take part in the projects as

volunteers. The beneficiaries and target groups of the EVS projects and the sending organisations of the volunteers, as well as the local communities in which the EVS projects takes place also benefit to a great extent from these intercultural and learning mobility opportunities.

The focus group meeting with two disabled EVS project participants and their two companions and the interview with the representative of their sending organisation reveals valuable insights regarding the benefits of the EVS projects on those participants. The companions indicated that as a result of the project experience, the disabled participants acquired new attitudes such as becoming more social and disciplined, and new skills such as cooking and handicrafts.

"Even getting on a plane makes a big difference for the disabled person and his family who are lacking finances." (EVS Interview, Sending Organisation Representative, Male)

"I got on a plane for the first time, went there and travelled." (EVS Focus Group Meeting, Project Participant, Female)

"I was very excited too, when I was on the plane I was really excited. I made a model plane from paper but I left it there. We went for sightseeing. We went to a church. I was very excited there too. That's all." (EVS Focus Group Meeting, Project Participant, Female)

"We taught them making a dessert with biscuits. I mixed it myself. I helped my mother. They taught me how to make a plane, how to cook different meals." (EVS Focus Group Meeting, Project Participant, Female)

"Seeing Europe, becoming more social. When we go somewhere for a chat, she says she's been to Europe, she has met Ivo. She has something to tell, she developed socially. She likes to be listened to. Socially she seems to have moved a step forward." (EVS Focus Group Meeting, Companion, Female)

"After Tuğba came back her father and brother asked her what she did there. She says she made a plane, made colouring, she'll go there again. We asked whether she liked it, she says yes. We ask her whom she met, she describes Ivo and Ahmet, we understand. She hears very well but she can't tell. When she saw the friends there she was very happy, she was hugging them all as if they were one of us." (EVS Focus Group Meeting, Companion, Female)

"Yeşim learned how to make a bracelet –they think it's a luck charm in their culture- I hand it over to her, she can do it." (EVS Focus Group Meeting, Companion, Female)

"Yeşim has more principles. Everything was according to schedule there, Yeşim developed a sense of time. I tell her it has an order, it has a time, the time has not come, wait, I think she is more disciplined." (EVS Focus Group Meeting, Companion, Female)

"The behaviour and attitude changes for sure. They make different friends there, maybe they can't

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speak the language but they can touch, they find a basis of agreement, a chance to communicate, they manage this without holding themselves back. One of the mother of a disabled person we sent to Italy, without getting permission from the project coordinator, took her child and one disabled friend he made there, they are both mentally disabled, out for sightseeing all day. The other mother and the coordinator were very worried. They went out, had something to eat, done sightseeing. Now the mother says "I never believed my child could do that, he did it", "we were very worried but he managed to do it, I'd have never believed it if I were told". (EVS Interview, Sending Organisation Representative, Male)

"A disabled person going to Europe with his own financial capability is very hard but with these projects our disabled people can go abroad and this is a very valuable gain for me." (EVS Focus Group Meeting, Companion, Female)

The companions, who are often the major responsible people for the young disabled members of their families or in the schools, also acquire new experiences and knowledge. The focus group findings show that they acquire new information about the education systems in other countries and they have the opportunity to compare those with their own systems; they learn new cultures and have cultural encounters; they develop new cultural skills; and, they experience changes in their attitudes. In addition, having such a mobility opportunity is considered valuable, since they often face difficulties for mobility due to the heavy care responsibilities.

"We saw a different country, met different people, learn about different traditions, customs and culture. We had difficulties with food, we got used to it, we didn't have meals, we had breakfast instead." (EVS Focus Group Meeting, Companion, Female)

"Food culture, social culture, entertainment, music, we took part in these. We went to a concert, a piano concert. I have never been to a piano concert here. That was a plus, if I get the chance, I'll try to go to one here too, that was my gain." (EVS Focus Group Meeting, Companion, Female)

"I'll be sincere, we became a bit know-it-all, because of going to Europe. When we are among others we start telling about other cultures, we tell "We've been here, we've been there". We became a bit know-it-all type, both I am and my daughter is aware of that, but it's a sweet thing. (EVS Focus Group Meeting, Companion, Female)

"I abide by the rules more. The traffic rules there are excellent, I became more normative. We didn't care about whether the traffic light was green or red, we used to pass, now even if there is no car, I wait for my time." (EVS Focus Group Meeting, Companion, Female)

"I think it's a valuable, a different platform, a different learning, different people, their culture. Everything was nice. I was very glad, if you send me again now, I'd go." (EVS Focus Group Meeting, Companion, Female)

"I was excited to meet the disabled people when we went there, being together with them, getting to know them, learn where they are, how they are, what is their education level, all of these excited me

a lot. When they were taking us, I was very curious, how was the education of the disabled in Europe. We went to Bulgaria, we are way ahead of them because all disabled people are together there. There is no classification, no special education for the disabled." (EVS Focus Group Meeting, Companion, Female)

"There is lots of difference between our education and theirs. We have pre-determined hours here, our students come with their parents, over there everyone is put at the same place, there are no groups, everyone is together, heavily and lightly disabled are together." (EVS Focus Group Meeting, Companion, Female)

"As a volunteer disabled parent, I was appreciated by a couple of friends from our society because I took part in such a project and went there. If I went there for only travelling it wouldn't be the case but taking part in such a project, taking your child with you, people appreciated me because they thought not every parent would do this." (EVS Focus Group Meeting, Companion, Female)

"They get excited. Some mothers say "We didn't even go to Kızılay", not because they can't, because they can't leave their disabled children. A disabled family taking the plane, going abroad and coming back has a big contribution to their social lives in terms of social rehabilitation." (EVS Interview, Sending Organisation Representative, Male)

"They see the world and everything from their villages, neighbourhoods, houses. The disabled and their families discover that they are not alone, there are other countries, other people from other beliefs and cultures. They become more tolerant, gain a perspective, learn cultures, and make friends. They keep communication through social media when they come back to Turkey. They gain an incredible vision, and approach life differently." (EVS Interview, Sending Organisation Representative, Male)

"The mother is over protective in the beginning, then she says she trusts her child, she succeeds and develops a trust to her child." (EVS Interview, Sending Organisation Representative, Male)

3.4. Training and Networking of Those Active in Youth Work and Youth Organisations (Action 4.3) and Training and Networking Projects in Cooperation with the Neighbouring Countries of the European Union (Action 3.1)

Training and Networking of those active in youth work and youth organisations (Action 4.3)[14]

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 are considerably different from other actions in the Youth in Action Programme. Those projects aim to support the training of especially project leaders, youth advisors and youth supervisors active in youth work and youth organisations, so they do not directly target young people but those who work with young people. In addition to the activities aiming to establish sustainable, high quality projects, partnerships and networks, Training and Networking projects support job shadowing in youth work and youth organisations, good practices and exchange of experience. For this reason, the analysis of the data gathered from the questionnaires and focus groups focuses primarily on the levels of achievement of the above mentioned objectives and particularly on the newly established professional partnerships, project

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[14] Youth in Action Programme Guide, valid as of 1 January 2013, page 100.

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 personal competences, which developed 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.

A total number of 49 youth workers, who took part in Training and Networking projects, responded to two questionnaires distributed within the RAY research in May and November 2014 (May: 21; November: 28). All the tables, graphs and analyses in this section are produced from the responses of those 49 youth workers. In addition, one focus group meeting was organised with five project participants of the Action 4.3 and 3.1 projects. Thus, all the analyses in this section depend on quantitative and qualitative data collected within the RAY research.

Training and Networking Projects and Learning

Quantitative data show that the learning processes and learning outcomes derived from those type of 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 19). As a result of the international environment and team work occurred in the projects, almost all (97%) of the 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 and to improve learning or to have more fun when learning. All of the respondents (100%) of the May 2014 survey indicated that they have developed themselves on these three issues. This is particularly remarkable for the youth leaders and youth workers implementing international youth projects. When it is considered that intercultural learning and communication are amongst the major priorities of the Youth in Action Programme, such achievements of the youth workers and leaders who plan and implement youth projects have an important positive repercussion on the quality of

the future projects in general. The responses of the participants of Training and Networking activities in November 2014 survey are also remarkably high on the two of these three items: 100% positive for communication in a foreign language and 96% for getting along with people with different cultural backgrounds.

However, different from the May 2014 survey, in the November survey 86% of the respondents chose learning and fun option, which is still very significantly high but lower than the responses of the May 2014 survey. It can be argued that the difference is due to the types of activities that the respondents have participated, as in May 2014 sample there are more participants who have attended a training course, where learning is the focus, while in the November 2014 survey, the sample has more participants of seminars and networking meetings. This difference in profile is also observed in the divergence on to develop a good idea and put it into practice. While in general the responses of the two samples go parallel to one another, on this item, the responses of the November 2014 sample are significantly higher than May 2014 sample: 81% for May vs. 93 % for November. Once again, it can be suggested that this difference stems from the difference in types of projects attended.

What do young people say?

"I find it valuable too, for both parties, as it is a communication environment we see that we are all individuals with our sub-identities, this gives us a chance to evaluate people not with their superordinate identities but as an individual." (Action 4.3 and 3.1 Focus Group, Project Participant, Male)

"I think there was a platform there with different people taking part. Without discriminating according to religion, language, race, we saw what people could do with such difficulties. They told us about their country or came to Sanliurfa to take part in the project, they saw the difficulties, it was a good project." (Action 4.3 and 3.1 Focus Group, Project Participant, Male)

In the Training and Networking activities learning dimension plays an important role in the projects. In this context, non-formal education methods are extensively used in youth training courses. A great deal of the respondents of the questionnaires expressed that one of their basic achievements form those projects is learning to learn better or having more fun when learning. Instances gathered from the focus group meeting 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,

where they learn new skills such as communication skills, organisational skills or mathematical skills, and non-formal education methods.

What do young people say?

"It's an organisation which helps you improve your organisational skills and competences. Being in an international platform gives you advantages for sure. It's a cultural problem, we are not that international, we are withdrawn, we are very introvert. It contributes us; in this regard it's our difference from the other people." (Action 4.3 and 3.1 Focus Group, Project Participant, Male)

"I started to give lengthy speeches. I was only telling my idea, now I learned to explain them too. That was its biggest contribution to me. When we are asked something we say yes or no, I think so; these societies don't leave it at "I think so". We do though, they don't find it enough. I think so because of this, I think so because of that. As I came over this, I saw that my communication skills were improved dramatically." (Action 4.3 and 3.1 Focus Group, Project Participant, Male)

"I was afraid of shooting a short movie; I thought it was very hard. It's not that hard. We always shoot videos, everyone gives it to others but there is no product. A short movie was made during the project. We met every night, shared the works and we made a short movie with transfer of experience." (Action 4.3 and 3.1 Focus Group, Project Participant, Female)

"We learned some things about sign language. It was a positive thing. There was a hearing impaired participant; we reserved 10 minutes every morning for him. He taught us basic level sign language in this time. At the end, most of our participants could express themselves basically with sign language." (Action 4.3 and 3.1 Focus Group, Project Participant, Male)

"I wasn't able to draw a straight line even with a ruler, but with these projects, my ability to draw improved." (Action 4.3 and 3.1 Focus Group, Project Participant, Female)

"My communication skills and mathematical calculation skills improved. You need to calculate to implement the project budget in a correct way. To reach the project goal, not only calculation, but also documentation, following deadlines, planning skills and other responsibilities develop." (Action 4.3 and 3.1 Focus Group, Project Participant, Male)

"For example in the class we learned how to put the objects and other visual effects, this is a big gain for the participants, we learned how to address other participants, these are the biggest achievements." (Action 4.3 and 3.1 Focus Group, Project Participant, Male)

In a general sense, in the analysis, 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 were the issues that come to the fore regarding personal and professional development. 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 19).

Graph 19 Learning in Training and Networking Projects
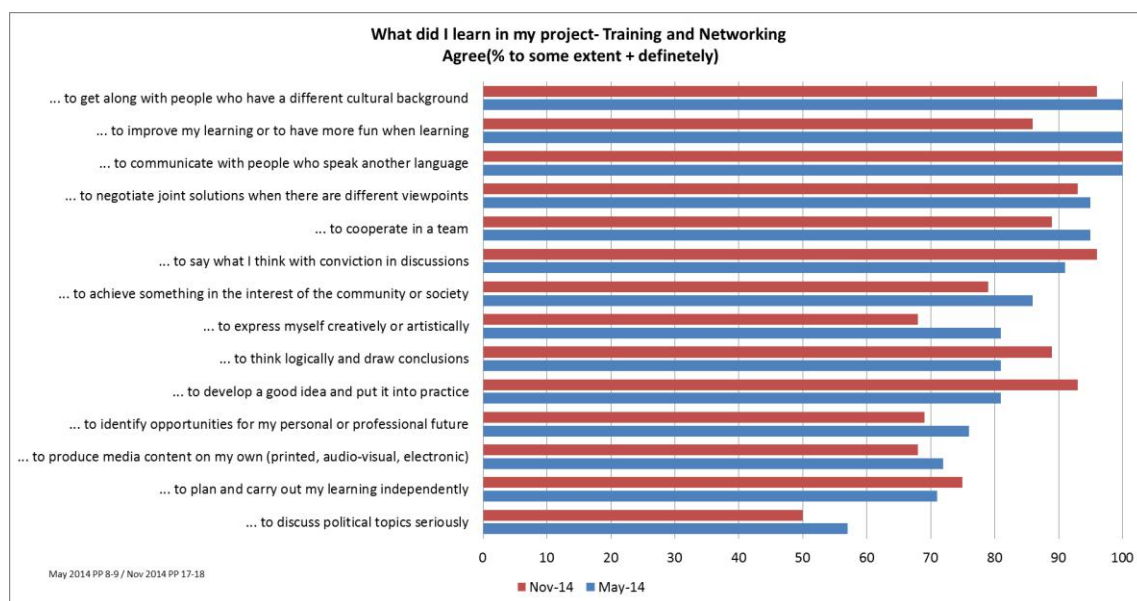
The focus group meeting with the participants of the Training and Networking projects show that Action 4.3 and Action 3.1 projects prove to be helpful in terms of developing an idea, engaging new people to the projects and implement it. According to the participants, such kind of projects, equips the participants with skills such as getting aware of common problems and identifying social problems. In addition, involvement of the local communities into the projects is also considered to be a factor that would increase the impact of the projects.

What do young people say?

"I see that the concept of youth studies almost does not exist in our country. I saw it more clearly. I saw clearly that we need to do something to develop it. It was not obvious for me but I am certain now: I compare other countries with Turkey, it does not exist here." (Action 4.3 and 3.1 Focus Group, Project Participant, Male)

"For me there was a situation like this: We asked them to prepare social media projects. When they were preparing those projects they integrated with the local people, included them in their projects and made presentations together. This was a very nice thing, working together with the local community." (Action 4.3 and 3.1 Focus Group, Project Participant, Male)

"It really makes a difference. At the beginning you are not involved in the project, you are shy. After a certain time you get familiar, then you tell this to other friends and they become excited, you involve them in other projects." (Action 4.3 and 3.1 Focus Group, 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 as it has the lowest evaluation. In both surveys, only half of the participants state that they have developed this competence. Although 50% is still a significant figure, while compared with all other items on the scale, which in general are 70% and up, this is an outlier. 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.

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 meeting. Graph 20 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. The very high positive evaluations indicate that in 2014 the Training and Networking participants were extremely satisfied from their experience and benefited significantly. The average score is 93 % for all items, one of the highest in the overall analysis.

Graph 20 Impact of Training and Networking Projects - Detailed

The assessment shows that the individuals participated in the Training and Networking projects indicated self-development, awareness on European values and confidence in travelling abroad as the fields in which they got the biggest benefit and impact from these projects. A staggering 100% of the respondents of the November 2014 questionnaire expressed that they learned better on these issues 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 and the project has made me more receptive to Europe's multi-culturality is 96%.

It is possible to provide a variety of examples from the focus group meeting that support those findings especially in terms of the increasing self-development. The participants of the focus group meetings indicated that they managed to transfer the knowledge to their daily lives; their awareness about various social issues increases; some of their attitudes change in a positive way as a result of their participation in the Training and Networking projects.

What do young people say?

"For example I am a student, I study sociology. In most of the courses there are subjects about Europe, culture, etc. I explain those, even that is a difference for me. I can talk about many things my friends don't know or haven't seen, it has many positive effects for me." (Action 4.3 and 3.1 Focus Group, Project Participant, Female)

"I usually act with simple logic. I was a bit hyperactive, always busy with something. When I speak, I say some words unintentionally (A girl got upset once even though I didn't mean to, she thought I was yelling, a more experienced friend warned me, he said they can be very sensitive, be careful. I learned not to say words unintentionally; I learned I shouldn't speak about something if I don't know about it." (Action 4.3 and 3.1 Focus Group, Project Participant, Male)

"We develop awareness due to the things we live or observe at the places we have been. When we speak, when we are telling something we give examples, we use our experiences as examples and how people see me changes. It's like having knowledge on international level." (Action 4.3 and 3.1 Focus Group, Project Participant, Male)

"I learned to be brief, not to be too extreme, not to fall short. I learned to be civilised with my behaviours, tell what you want to tell without anything missing or extra, I learned handling things in a brief way is a good thing." (Action 4.3 and 3.1 Focus Group, Project Participant, Male)

The training and networking activities aim at strengthening the quality of the youth projects in Europe, and also contribute to the increased awareness on values that these projects strive to achieve these values. Thus, it is crucial that the youth workers and trainers who realise these projects are well aware of these values and comprehend them. The 2014 surveys reveal that the training and networking activities were very successful on this aspect. The percentages of those who became more aware of European values and Europe's multi-culturality are very high, 100% and 96% respectively. In addition, as Table 7 shows, the respondents started to get interested in European issues (76%) and became committed to work against discrimination, intolerance, xenophobia or racism (69%) as the major European values in the Youth in Action projects.

Table 7 Impact of Training and Networking (General)

	To a Greater Extent %
I participate in societal and/or political life	46
I am interested in European issues	76
I am committed to work against discrimination, intolerance, xenophobia or racism	69
Disadvantaged people have my support	62

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The focus group meeting also show that in addition to all those, in the participants experiences a considerable degree of progress in terms of personal development, increase in self-confidence and societal awareness through taking part in the Training and Networking projects. Improvements in the skills such as eliminating prejudices, improving self-confidence, feeling empathy and increasing ability to look at oneself from outside, were exemplified by the participants of the focus group meeting. Especially in terms of elimination of prejudices, the participants do not only question their own prejudices, but they also feel proud to eliminate those of the other participants coming from different countries towards Turkey.

"No matter you like it or not, t's a different world. First I went to Macedonia, you see different people, both you and those people have prejudices, you are afraid of the other or accuse the other. In my first time abroad, I saw that other people share the same feelings with us, they get excited and cry." (Action 4.3 and 3.1 Focus Group, Project Participant, Male)

"We come together with people from very different backgrounds, cultures, religions. When we talk with them we understand this and get a different perspective. They are different, they live differently, they have different things to live." (Action 4.3 and 3.1 Focus Group, Project Participant, Female)

"We meet different people, we go and come but the project has goals. We can get something from there, empathy, tolerance, breaking down prejudices. For example we experienced this in our project in May. I had prejudices against the Serbians and Greeks. When I met them, when he gave me a Greek fez, when I gave him my rosary made those go away. I definitely find it valuable, the participants of our project were coming to Turkey for the first time, they knew nothing, they heard about Istanbul, they didn't even know Ankara, never been there. Yesterday I received a gift from Romania for example, it's very nice. One of the Romanian participants was a carver, he made a chessboard for me with his own hands. A person you don't know or the Italian sent me a model of Pisa Tower and a postcard. It means a lot for us, we didn't know you were like this etc. The brotherhood of cultures." (Action 4.3 and 3.1 Focus Group, Project Participant, Male)

"At the end of the project we get self confidence. We can even get excited when we speak here but you speak with people from very different cultures in English and you share the same feelings. Being able to do this gave me self confidence." (Action 4.3 and 3.1 Focus Group, Project Participant, Male)
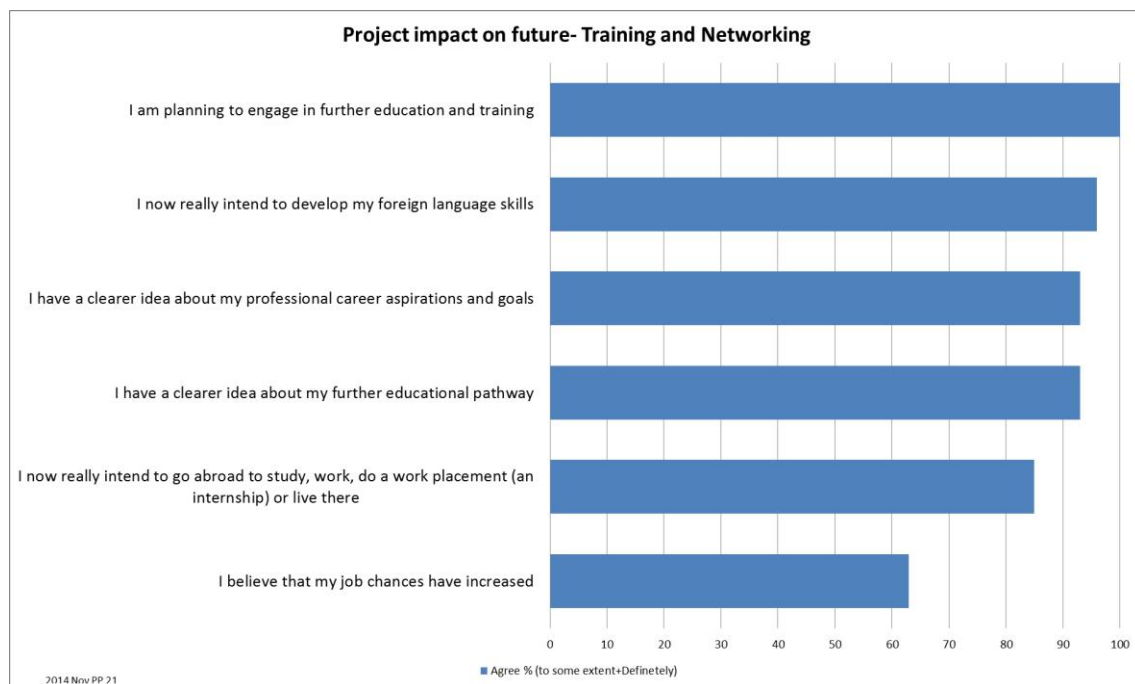
"Self confidence improves a lot. Also I started speaking with references, instead of "I also think like that" I say "I think this way because of that". Short and more effective speeches." (Action 4.3 and 3.1 Focus Group, Project Participant, Female)

"Thinking about other people's thoughts when you speak with them. Thinking like them, yes, this is one of my gains. I definitely had prejudices, it taught me empathy." (Action 4.3 and 3.1 Focus Group, Project Participant, Male)

"It is very important both for personal development and self confidence. There is also the chance to meet the participants, I think it's perfect." (Action 4.3 and 3.1 Focus Group, Project Participant, Male)

As well as developing self-confidence and experiencing high degrees of personal development, the Training and Networking projects also affect the future plans of the participants. 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 21).

Graph 21 Training and Networking Projects and Future

Project impact on future- Training and Networking

Category	Agree % (to some extent+Definetely)
I am planning to engage in further education and training	100
I now really intend to develop my foreign language skills	96
I have a clearer idea about my professional career aspirations and goals	93
I have a clearer idea about my further educational pathway	93
I now really intend to go abroad to study, work, do a work placement (an internship) or live there	85
I believe that my job chances have increased	63

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Training and networking activities clearly affected the future plans of participants in 2014. Similar to earlier analysis in this section, the average scores of the respondents is the highest among all actions. These items are particularly related to personal and professional development. All of the respondents of the November survey stated that as a result of their experience, they are planning to engage in further education and training.

Another significant impact about the future appears to be in the field of foreign languages, as it is the case for many other action types. Regardless of their previous level of language skills, youth workers who have gotten into an international environment and have had 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 improving their foreign languages in their future plans is 96%. The focus group participants also provided some examples of their project experiences through which they realised the importance of developing foreign language skills.

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. 93% of the participants of the Training and Networking projects indicated that after the project they had a clearer idea about their further educational pathway and they had a clearer idea about their professional career aspirations and goals. Moreover, the amount of participants (63%) who stated that participation in the project created a positive difference and advantage in finding employment and job opportunities cannot be underestimated. Supportive evidence was also voiced in the focus group meeting.

3.5. Meetings of Young People and Those Responsible for Youth Policy (Action 5.1)

> **Meetings of young people and those responsible for youth policy (Action 5.1)**[15]
>
> 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
> a) offering space for debate, consultation, active participation and information on issues which are relevant to Structured Dialogue or European Union policies and topics,
> b) preparing the ground of the official youth conference to be organised by the Member State holding the turn of Presidency of the European Union,
> c) organising activities linked to the European Youth Week,
> d) 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.

"Meetings of young people and those responsible for youth policy (Action 5.1)" type of projects bring together young people, youth organisations and youth policy makers/experts at the local, regional or international levels with the objectives of ensuring exchange of ideas and experience between young people and those responsible

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

for youth policy regarding their own fields. Establishment of a structured dialogue is the ultimate aim of Action 5.1 projects.

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 development of their mutual interaction with the policy makers in order to turn them into action. Action 5.1 meetings are different from the training and networking activities in this sense. 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, as it is in the Turkish case.

The learning impact the Action 5.1 project meetings are often related to the participants' personal development, professional life and motivation for further youth work activities. The research findings show that participants of the Action 5.1 projects benefit to a great extent from personal development opportunities and they increase their knowledge and experience especially about the themes of the projects as a result of their participation in the project. In a sense, the meetings that they participate in motivate young participants to deepen in their own fields and develop their competences.

A total number of 105 youth meeting participants responded to the May 2014 questionnaire. The analyses presented in this section are developed from their responses. In addition, one focus group meeting with six project participants, who took part in the meetings of young people and those responsible for youth policy (Action 5.1) was conducted. Thus, all the analyses in this section depend on the data collected through quantitative and qualitative research methods.

Meetings and Learning

The strongest responses of the project participants to the question of what they learned from the national and international meetings organised on different themes are to achieve something in the interest of the community or society and to negotiate joint solutions when there are different viewpoints. 95% of the respondents of the questionnaire chose these two options (Graph 22).

Graph 22 Meetings and Learning
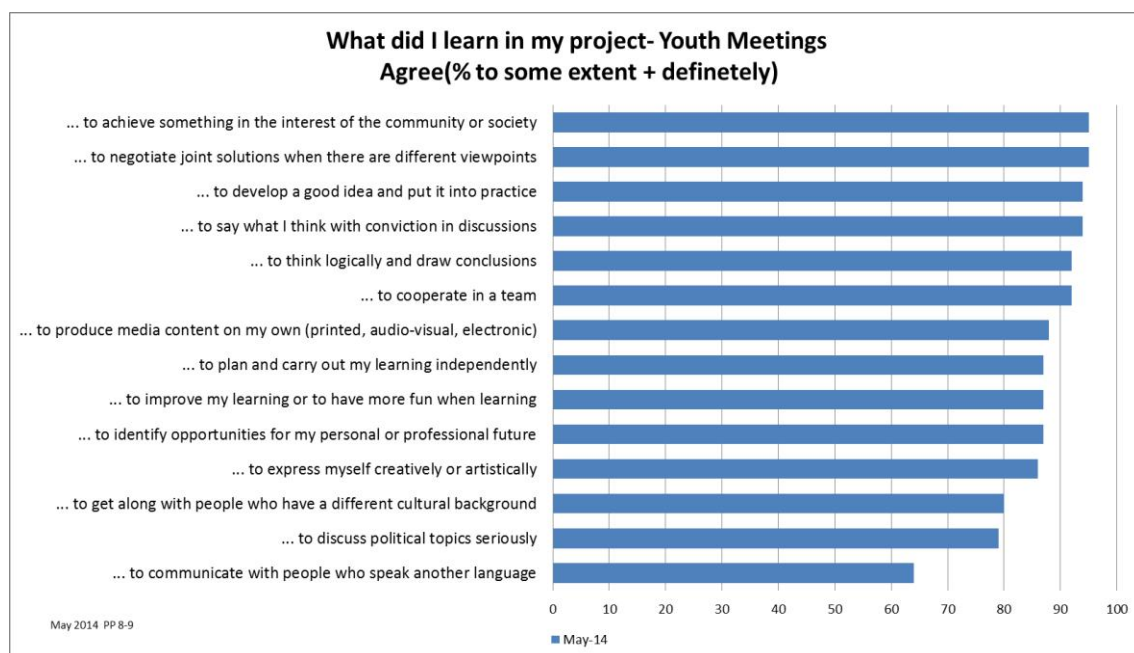
As shown in Graph 22, "to develop a good idea and put it into practice" and "to say what I think with conviction in discussions" are also popular answers (94%). Similarly, as a natural outcome of these meetings in which different viewpoints are discussed and experiences are shared, 92% of the respondents indicated that they learned better how to cooperate in a team and to think logically and draw conclusions.

It is an important finding that in line with the objectives of these meetings, the participants of those meeting projects develop their knowledge and skills in the projects, where different viewpoints come together and are discussed. The focus group meeting shows that young people really appreciate the opportunities provided by the Action 5.1 meetings to come together with other young people or policy makers, with whom they

have no regular contact in their daily lives. Such experiences provide significant opportunities for different actors of youth work in terms of structural dialogue. In some cases, such a dialogue with the other participants and policy-makers turn into new project ideas.

What do young people say?

"With that participation, without much effort, I broke out of my shell, I learned that I could get to the people I coded as impossible and I met them. There were other names too. I thought we were just overrating them, in reality we could get to many people." (Action 5.1 Focus Group, Project Participant, Male)

"Something changed about me. With those methods you get different project ideas and new project methods." (Action 5.1 Focus Group, Project Participant, Male)

"In the rural development summit, the background was solid, the organisation structure was solid, a declaration was prepared but I believe the declaration went to waste, I don't think the state cared about it, in the end, The important thing was we presented such a thing, even if the other party didn't receive it, we sent it." (Action 5.1 Focus Group, Project Participant, Male)

"In the workshop ISKUR (Employment Agency) organized in Antep, as I knew some faults in ISKUR's policies and practices, I got the chance to tell them and I expressed them openly. Before I can tell it worked, I can say that I also gained extra information. I saw some of my shortcomings." (Action 5.1 Focus Group, Project Participant, Male)

"In those times, the last meeting we attended was about governing models from the youth perspective, they were discussing presidency, semi-presidency and parliamentary system, it was one of the matters in Turkey's agenda. There were discussions, after the meeting you get a better idea. You see that you are familiar with the subject, then you think that you can follow the agenda. Moving from there we can say that it integrated you with the daily matters as you are familiar." (Action 5.1 Focus Group, Project Participant, Male)

"The least I can tell is this: In these projects financed by the national agency or other funds, I saw that extreme people from different cultures can discuss and agree if they don't shut down the dialogue channels, this was a very good thing for my country." (Action 5.1 Focus Group, Project Participant, Male)

In terms of the elements of personal development, the focus group meeting show that the Action 5.1 projects help young people develop new attitudes such as increased awareness and tolerance and elimination of prejudices. Especially when the national meetings are concerned, it is very important to see that Action 5.1 projects are appreciated for bringing large number of young people from all over Turkey together, which helps to establish a mutual understanding among young people from different cultural backgrounds or regions of the same country. Knowing new people and valuing

the differences among people with increasing tolerance, respect and empathy is an important outcome of Action 5.1 projects, as indicated by the participants of the focus group meeting.

What do young people say?

"Apart from that we saw how people could tolerate each other, their ideas, their thoughts; two opposite poles that can never come together can become friends; it is weird, that's it." (Action 5.1 Focus Group, Project Participant, Male)

"The thing excites me most in the projects is new friendships, different people getting together, discovering differences again. Apart from that the improvement you can feel is this: If someone from bureaucracy or politics participates, our friends are more interested." (Action 5.1 Focus Group, Project Participant, Male)

"The thing that excites me most is meeting new people. In this project, the travel and accommodation, what an incentive. In the end nobody can take me from Izmir to Hakkari or as a student I can't travel there. Under the new friendships title, whatever the number of participants is, a lot or a few, when people are from different regions, I think you get a solid output. Having different young people from various age groups from different regions changes the result compared to all participants being from the North Sea or Central Anatolian Region." (Action 5.1 Focus Group, Project Participant, Male)

"It helped me break down my prejudices. I had lots of them, it helped me break them down one by one. It was completely a democracy project, we had participants from other countries. Politically, I talk with my country in perspective; I had prejudices, some preformed ideas. By listening to them and different opinions, I gained a big experience to digest what they say and to understand their perspective." (Action 5.1 Focus Group, Project Participant, Male)

"About self confidence. I think like this: If the things you take part focus on a single region and the subjects are familiar, you can't challenge yourself, you can't take a step forward, you can't progress. But people from other regions have properties they are not aware of and there they get the chance to discover it. I agree about this concerning self confidence for example, if that person has said a word, yes or no, if that person gave an answer, it will be a boost of self confidence for the rest of his life." (Action 5.1 Focus Group, Project Participant, Female)

"I think it definitely improved my ability to feel empathy. Because I had huge prejudices against some people, now I think what I would do if I was in their shoes. For example, when I was watching the news, I had prejudices against some countries, or some sexual orientations, because of religious teachings, I had prejudice. Now I approach them trying to understand more." (Action 5.1 Focus Group, Project Participant, Female)

"I want to be together with people that understand me, but you need the ability and courage to come together with people that don't understand you, because people from different political views or ethnicity, think of them as two gears, when these gears come together, something comes out because of the friction. Even if we like it or not we listen to it, we realise that thought exists, we don't just ignore it." (Action 5.1 Focus Group, Project Participant, Male)

The focus group findings show that young people, through their participation in the Action 5.1 meeting projects, do not only get to know people, that they continue to keep

in contact; but also they know other people and organisations that they can work together in the future civil society and youth work activities.

What do young people say?

"I seriously established very good friendships, after I returned, we continued to be friends." (Action 5.1 Focus Group, Project Participant, Female)

"One of the most important friends in my life is someone I met during this project, ever since that day he is very important for me, we never upset each other." (Action 5.1 Focus Group, Project Participant, Male)

"We didn't get to know only people, but also non-governmental organisations. This way we met new and solid partners for future projects." (Action 5.1 Focus Group, Project Participant, Female)

"NGO's exist in local fields I don't know, but the thing I like is this: they operate in various fields. As I have learned this, I tell it to everyone around me, people think that the events don't happen everywhere, people think nobody speaks there, on the other hand some people do things, in those environments you get the chance to learn." (Action 5.1 Focus Group, Project Participant, Female)

"When I go there the people who learn that I do projects want to establish connection and talk with me, to get me involved in their future projects." (Action 5.1 Focus Group, Project Participant, Female)

Most of the meetings are at national scale, but there are also international meetings of young people and those responsible for youth policy. In this context, it is also possible to observe that project participants have the opportunity to improve their foreign languages and communication skills in another language considerably, but still at a lesser degree compared to other issues and types of projects within the Programme (64 %). In addition to the language skills, the focus group meeting shows that participants gain other skills such as analytical thinking by adopting a multi-dimensional approach to the issues in question.

What do young people say?

"Analysing. I could analyse but you can either look at everything like that, or look at it from the youth perspective. The high number of people here made me able to look from multiple perspectives, I was able to do that but I wasn't aware of it. I was aware I could analyse but professionally, not from a single aspect but evaluating something with multiple aspects [is what I gained from the project]. In the project, during the four days of the national summit, as everyday we evaluated from different perspectives, when I came back I tried to look at things from different perspectives. When I analyse, I learned to use correct logic." (Action 5.1 Focus Group, Project Participant, Female)

The participants think that the skills, competences and experiences gained in the Action 5.1 projects contribute to their employment opportunities. Perception regarding the increase in the chances of employment and job opportunities has been voiced by the participants of the focus group meeting, especially in relation to finding new jobs and professional development opportunities.

What do young people say?

"I can talk for the private sector, in education, when you start you are asked about course preparation, then they ask you whether you can make a project. They ask you to create awareness in the students' lives, they want you to develop something at least, and you can show your CV about that." (Action 5.1 Focus Group, Project Participant, Female)

"It looks like it is only about travelling. But I am an intern at TIKA (Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency) and the person who recommended TIKA to me is a person I met because of the project. If I asked a family member to arrange me an internship, nobody could do it, they are far away from Ankara, they are unaware of what's going on and they have no place they can arrange. I told in the beginning that it opens up different doors for you; I am the best example for that. If I had not gone to the project [meeting], I would have been an intern somewhere else." (Action 5.1 Focus Group, Project Participant, Male)

Lastly, active visibility and participation of young people in the Action 5.1 meetings help young people to feel themselves as the stakeholders of the youth related issues and youth policies. In this regard, the statement of one of the focus group participants is quite explanatory: *"In my opinion, these projects make us notice that youth, especially youth as a concept and youth grassroots are taken seriously. Because, if, even now, somebody is sitting there and listening to us, this shows that we or the project that we participated in or the participants are given importance to; what they think are considered important. I think that this will be taken into consideration somewhere. As I mentioned, if somebody is bringing us in a hotel with 200 people, and trying to make us learn something, this is because of the value given to us"* (Action 5.1, Project Participant, Male).

4. Turkey within Europe: A Comparative Analysis

As a novelty for the 2014 RAY analysis, this National Report provides comparative data in a way to locate the impact of the Youth in Action Programme on the young people from Turkey in a wider European scale. Accordingly, the major aim of this comparison is to understand where the project participants and youth leaders from Turkey stand compared to those in the remaining RAY Network member countries in Europe, in terms of learning outcomes and perceived impact of the Programme. For this purpose, the November 2014 survey responses are compared. A total of 228 responses were received from Turkey, and a total of 3.619 responses were received for total RAY Network countries. Below are some significant findings of such a comparison.

→ *Participants from Turkey believe they face more obstacles.*

Young people with fewer opportunities are a major target group for Youth in Action programme. The fewer opportunities come in different shapes and forms. It may include obstacles to access to *employment, education and mobility, and* obstacles to *participation in society*. In these issues, when asked to self-assess, the average scores for respondents from Turkey are *slightly higher than RAY Network averages*. This points out to the fact that participants from Turkey believe that they face more obstacles than the participants from other RAY Network countries.

Graph 23 Facing Obstacles (November 2014)
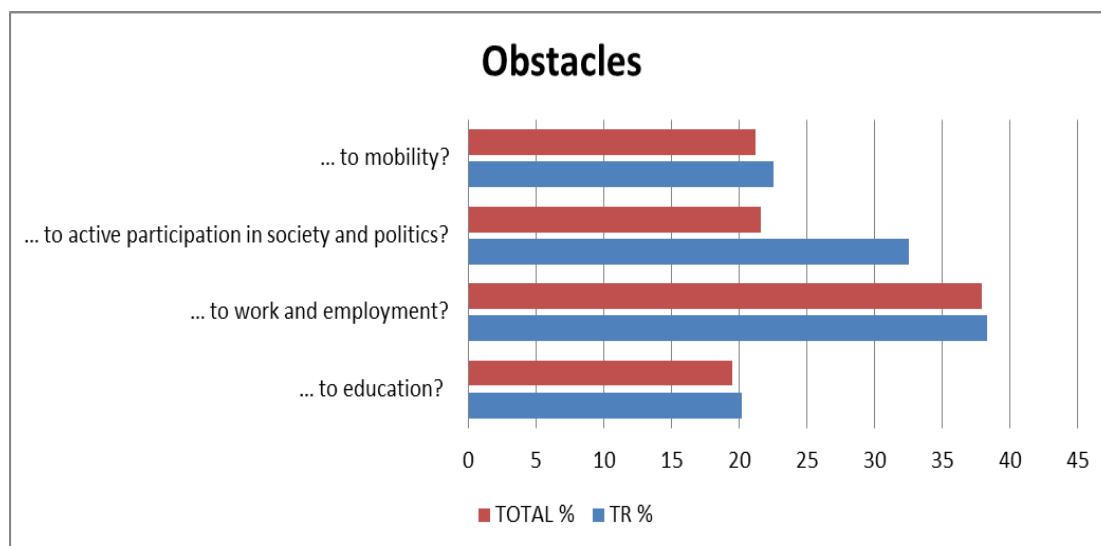
As seen in Graph 23, the biggest difference is in the active participation in society and politics. While 22% of the respondents from RAY Network countries state that they are confronted with obstacles to active participation in society and politics, this percentage is 11% higher among the project participants from Turkey, with 33% of them mentioning such an obstacle. On other issues, Turkey results are consistently higher than RAY Network averages, but the differences are rather smaller.

→ *The image of the European Union*

As it is analysed in this National Report, there is a positive change in the image of the European Union among participants in Youth in Action projects from Turkey. 68% of the respondents from Turkey stated that after the project *the image of the EU changed for the better*. When compared with the responses of participants from other RAY Network countries, the rate of change is significantly higher. According to RAY Network data, 44% of the respondents from other participating countries state that the image of the EU has become better after the project, 24% lower than Turkey. The difference is also present at the percentages of those who indicate that the project did not affect the image of the EU and it stayed the same: 29% for participants from Turkey and 54% for participants from other RAY Network countries. This is rather expected however. Considering that Turkey is one of the very few countries that participate in Youth in Action program as a full program country without being a European Union member state, the data is basically comparing the views of non-EU citizens with those who are actually EU citizens. An individual coming from an EU member state has naturally different levels of knowledge and a set opinion of the EU itself, compared with an individual coming from Turkey, which is a candidate country and general level of knowledge and interest in the EU is much less than those of a member state.

→ *Project participation and finances*

Comparative analysis reveals that, financially, participating in a European youth project under the Youth in Action programme is more difficult for the project participants from Turkey compared to the project participants from other RAY Network countries. While

half of the respondents from other RAY Network countries stated that *it was easy for them to pay the participation fees;* for the project participants from Turkey, this figure is only 39%. However, it seems that project organisers from Turkey are aware of the financial difficulties faced by young people from Turkey and it seems that they have a better system of financial assistance for them. 45% of the respondents stated that *they did not have to pay anything* to participate in the project; while this percentage is significantly lower for participants from other RAY Network countries, with a 36%. It appears that participants from Turkey have an obstacle in terms of finances, and this obstacle is partially removed by the organisers, enabling them to participate in the projects without facing financial difficulties, in line with the priorities of the Youth in Action programme to include young people with fewer opportunities.

→ *Project leaders from Turkey and the rest: where the real difference is.*

In terms of the project participants, Turkey is rather in line with the rest of the RAY Network countries, with few exceptions. However, when the data from the project leaders are examined, it becomes apparent that the project leaders from Turkey are significantly different from other project leaders, particularly in terms of their profiles.

First of all, project leaders from Turkey are much more educated than those from other countries. While 80% of the project leaders from other RAY Network countries are university or similar level graduates, this figure is much higher for Turkey: 95% of the project leaders from Turkey are university or similar level graduates. While 12% of the project leaders have *upper secondary school* as the highest level of educational attainment, this figure is only 2% for the project leaders from Turkey.

Second, a higher percentage of project leaders from other RAY Network countries were employed primarily by the organisation that was involved in the project. While 36% of the project leaders had no professional engagement outside their organisation, this figure is only 30% for the project leaders from Turkey. Related to this, 40% of the project leaders from Turkey were employed full time by another organisation/employer; this percentage is much lower for other RAY Network countries, with a 26%. This
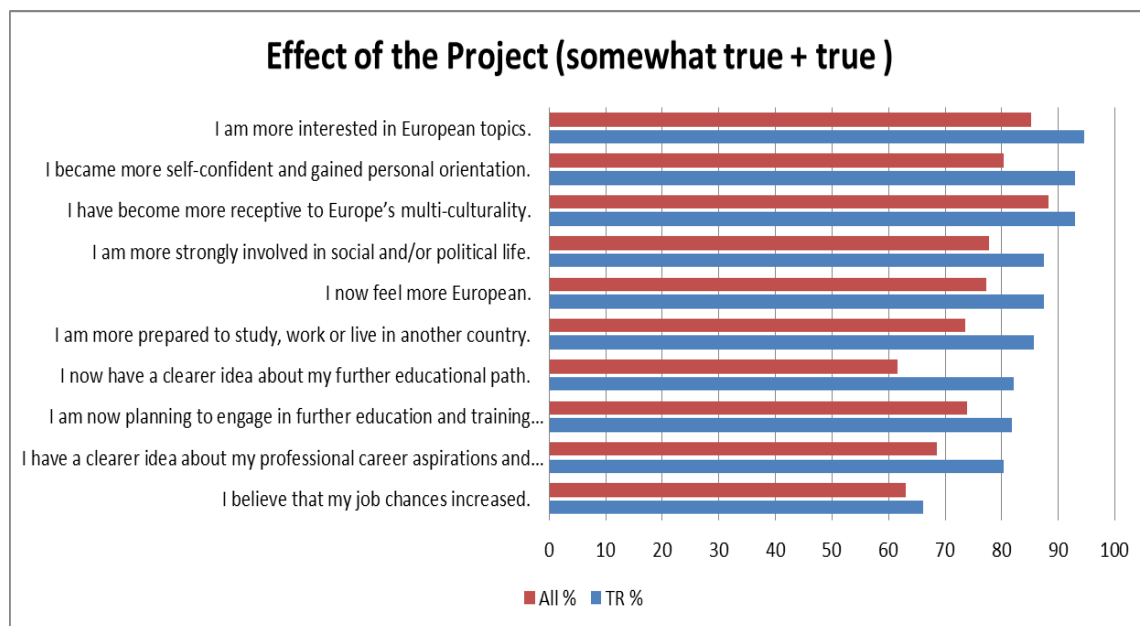
indicates that project leaders from Turkey are mainly involved in the organisations without professional or material expectations, and they act as project leaders while being employed by other organisations, indicating that the level of volunteerism is very high in Turkey. This is also confirmed with the answers to the question: "*I was involved in this project"*. 76% of the project leaders from Turkey have stated that they were involved on a volunteer, unpaid basis; this percentage is 55% among the project leaders from other RAY Network countries.

Third, there is a major difference in terms of identity between project leaders from Turkey and other RAY Network countries. Project leaders from Turkey identify themselves mainly in terms of citizenship and national identity, while the project leaders from other RAY Network countries have more of a European identity primarily. When asked to indicate the category they consider most appropriate for themselves, a staggering majority of project leaders from Turkey, 81%, chose the option of *citizen of my present country of residence.* The percentage of project leaders from other RAY Network countries who have chosen national identity primarily is much lower: 26%. The majority of the project leaders from other RAY Network countries tend to combine European identity with national identity, choosing the category *European citizen and citizen of my present country of residence* with 46%. The percentage of the project leaders from Turkey who choose this category is significantly lower, only 6%. This points out to the fact that the European identity and feeling of Europeanness is not common among project leaders from Turkey, and they rely on Turkish citizenship as their primary identity.

Finally, the comparative research findings demonstrate that *project leaders from Turkey* are affected more, compared to the project leaders from other RAY Network countries, as a result of their project experience (Graph 23). As seen in the graph, there is a very significant difference on European issues. While 95% of the project leaders from Turkey state that they are more interested in European topics, this percentage is less among project leaders from other RAY Network countries, with a 85 %. Similarly, the percentage of project leaders from Turkey who feel more European after the project is 88 %, as opposed to 77 % of those from other RAY Network countries.

Graph 24 Effect of the project on Project Leaders (November 2014)

Effect of the Project (somewhat true + true)

The biggest difference, however, appears to be on the issue of further intention towards education and training. While 82% of the project leaders from Turkey indicate that as a result of their project experience they have a clearer idea about their further educational path, this percentage is 20 points lower for project leaders from other RAY Network countries, with just 62%.

Overall, project leaders from Turkey are significantly different from other project leaders in terms of *their educational backgrounds (better educated), their levels of volunteerism (more volunteer engagement), their European identity (more national identity and less European)*. However, Youth in Action projects *have clearly more effect on project leaders from Turkey*, where they benefit more and become more self-confident.

5. Conclusions

2014 RAY report concludes the Youth in Action phase, since, from 2015 onwards European Union Youth Programmes have entered into a new phase: ERASMUS+. In Turkey, for over ten years, these programmes have provided 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 learning mobility activities.

Research-based Analysis and Monitoring of Youth in Action Programme – RAY Network National Research continues to monitor, assess and analyse the personal and professional impact of these projects on the participants. Through the collection of data over time, with the use of mixed methods, that include surveys, focus group meetings and interviews, RAY Network provides scientific, evidence-based and over time analysis of this important learning mobility opportunity for European young people.

This National Report has been the second of its kind. The last year's report covered the period of 2012 and 2013 and provided important findings regarding the impact of the Youth in Action Programme. Through RAY surveys, analysis and findings, the youth workers, youth researchers and related policy makers have the possibility to have a better understanding of the work they are involved in, and hopefully RAY findings provide the basis for further evidence-based policy making in the future.

The analytical procedures used in this report and the results obtained from them all indicate 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 findings from this study suggest that participation in the Youth in Action Programme actions can have a major effect on the *increase in the self-confidence* of the participants, valid for all types of youth projects within the context of the research.

Generally, the level of satisfaction with the projects participated in also seems to be at high levels. The data reported here appear to support the findings of 2012 and 2013 studies, in which the participants of different projects 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*.

On the question of *learning* in projects, this study revealed that the participants of projects appreciate the diversity of methods used in projects, particularly non-formal education methods. Furthermore, they are well aware of the positive correlation between these methods and their own learning, stating that *use of such different methods made it easier for them to learn different subjects better*. There are also very encouraging findings in the subject of learning. The current study found out that the participants learn *new and diverse subjects* and also *develop their knowledge on issues that they are already familiar with*. It is interesting to note that in all actions analysed as part of this study, *European values, European culture* and *European identity* were frequently emphasised by the respondents. It is striking that the participants of the study strongly emphasised their learning, and personal and professional development on these issues.

As a novelty, this study provides the first comprehensive assessment of the findings in a comparative manner. The analysis of responses of participants and project leaders from Turkey with those from other RAY Network countries undertaken here, has extended the general knowledge of differences and similarities between Turkey and other RAY Network countries. This research has demonstrated, for the first time, that there are significant differences between project leaders from Turkey and other RAY countries, especially in terms of *levels of education and volunteerism* and in terms of *their national and European identifications.*

The participants of this study all have a positive view of the National Agency of Turkey as the main implementing institution of the European Union Youth Programmes. However, according to the participants, there is, a definite need for the National Agency to develop and implement further actions for the recognition of the positive outcomes of

the projects realised. Increased visibility and recognition actions by the National Agency will enhance the social and political recognition of the learning mobility projects and reduce the social misperceptions that these projects are out of the learning field and are simply fun and leisure activities. A key policy priority for the Turkish National Agency and other involved stakeholders should therefore be to plan for the long-term awareness raising and recognition strategy to disseminate the positive impact of these projects. The information provided by the RAY research can be used to develop targeted interventions aimed at further recognition and awareness raising.

The findings also indicate that continued efforts are needed to make these programmes more accessible to young people with fewer opportunities, as currently they rely mainly on students. Ensuring appropriate systems, services and support for young people with fewer opportunities should be a priority for the National Agency of Turkey and the youth organisations involved in these projects.

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 sole object is youth.