# The effects and outcomes of Erasmus+ Youth programme 2021/2022 in Estonia (RAY MON)

2024

The study was commissioned by the Estonian National Agency for Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps at the Education and Youth Board (Harno) in Estonia.

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Authors:

Elisabeth Kendrali

Mikael Raihhelgauz

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Glossary

Erasmus+ is the European Union's (EU) programme for 2021-2027, which funds transnational projects, including in the youth field. In the field of youth, Erasmus+ supports young people's participation and entrepreneurship, strengthens the quality and internationalisation of youth work and promotes the development of youth policy. In the field of youth, funding is provided for youth exchanges, youth participation activities, mobility of youth workers and the development of the youth field through large-scale cooperation partnerships and small-scale partnerships.

The European Solidarity Corps (ESC) is an EU programme which aims to support communities and create a more inclusive society by providing volunteering and local solidarity project opportunities for young people. The programme enables organisations to apply for funding and young people to participate in local solidarity projects and volunteering (until 2018 known as European Voluntary Service - EVS).[1]

RAY Network (Research-based Analysis and Monitoring of European Youth Programmes) is made up of Erasmus+ national agencies and their research partners in more than 30 countries. The RAY Network coordinates the RAY MON survey, which was the basis for this analysis, as well as other monitoring and analysis activities of EU youth programmes.

RAY MON is a research project of the RAY network, which surveys participants and project teams of Erasmus+ Youth projects.

RAY SOC is a research project of the RAY network focusing on the experiences of participants and project teams in European Solidarity Corps programme.

Youth Exchanges are an activity type under the Erasmus+ programme where young people from different countries meet for 5-21 days and carry out activities on a topic of their interest using non-formal learning methods. Youth Exchanges are for young people aged between 13 and 30. Each group is accompanied by a group leader aged at least 18. Youth Exchanges are organised by youth organisations or groups of young people and require participating organisations' joint application for funding.

Youth Participation Activities (KA 154) can take place within a single country or involve an international group of young people. The aim of this type of activity is to develop civic competences and to give young people the opportunity to participate in society and influence decisions. Activities organised under Youth Participation Activities may include, for example, meetings between young people and policy makers, workshops, training or awareness-raising campaigns, both virtual and face-to-face. Youth Participation Activities may be carried

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[1] https://youth.europa.eu/d8/sites/default/files/inline-files/european_solidarity_corps_guide_2023_en.pdf

out by one or more organisations or youth groups and may combine different types of activities as described above.[2]

Accredited organisations' projects (KA 151) are mobility projects for young people and youth workers organised by accredited Erasmus+ organisations. Once accredited, organisations can apply for funding for several activities at once through a simplified application process. The accreditation is intended for organisations with at least two years of experience in youth work and who are able to demonstrate a long-term strategic plan for their work.[3]

Youth Workers Mobility is an activity of the Erasmus+ Youth programme aimed at the professional development of youth workers and the development of the quality of youth work. Youth workers mobility projects may take the form of study visits, training courses, seminars and other activities.

Project team are the young people, youth leaders, youth workers, trainers and other people involved in preparing and leading the project in an organisational role. In the RAY MON survey, group leaders of youth exchanges were also considered part of project teams.

By **programme priorities,** we mean the four horizontal priorities of the Erasmus+ programme: Diversity and Inclusion, Digitalisation, Sustainability and Participation. Erasmus+ projects are expected to deliver outputs in support of these priorities, and at the funding application stage, project teams also need to identify which priorities the planned activities address.

Youthpass is a certificate of participation and competences acquired in Erasmus+ projects. Youthpass can also be used to guide reflection and self-analysis processes.[4]

Eurodesk is an international youth information network. In Estonia, there is a Eurodesk partner in almost every county, whose role is to advise young people and youth workers on international learning opportunities and to participate in events related to education and career planning.[5]

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[2] https://euroopanoored.eu/taotlemine/erasmus/noorteprojektid/osalusprojekt/

[3] https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/et/programme-guide/part-b/key-action-1/accreditation-youth

[4] https://www.youthpass.eu/et/about-youthpass/about/

[5] https://eeagentuur.ee/projektitegijale/rahvusvahelise-noorteinfo-vorgustik-eurodesk/

1. Introduction

Young people and youth workers in Estonia can take part in a variety of international and local non-formal learning projects through the European Union's youth programmes. The EU's Erasmus+ youth projects aim to provide young people, their communities and youth workers with opportunities to develop their competences, support their civic participation and acquire intercultural competences. Erasmus+ Youth is the part of the Erasmus+ programme that focuses on the youth field. Erasmus+ Youth activities include, among others, youth exchanges and mobility projects for youth workers, which make up the largest part of the sample for this study.

The current analysis is based on Estonian data from the RAY MON survey, conducted by the RAY network. That is, we used data from the RAY MON survey for participants who:

1. were from Estonia, regardless of the country in which the project took place or the National Agency that funded it, or
2. took part in projects funded by Erasmus+ ja Euroopa Solidaarsuskorpuse agentuur (Estonian National Agency), regardless of the country in which the project took place.

Therefore, the analysis allows to examine the effects of the Erasmus+ Youth programme in 2021-2022 in the Estonian context and provides feedback to the Estonian National Agency, youth organisations in Estonia and other project organisers. In addition, the analysis of the experiences of participants in mobility projects contributes to evidence-based youth policy making and enables a better understanding of youth mobility and non-formal learning outcomes.

We will explore the effects of youth projects on Estonian participants, organisations, local communities and international youth work. In addition, we will look at how funded projects are organised and managed and examine the accessibility for young people with fewer opportunities.

2. Methodology

For this study, we used data from the RAY MON survey, organised by the RAY network, on Erasmus+ youth mobility projects in 2021-2022. A link to the online questionnaire was sent to participants at least two months after the end of the project, and the questionnaire could be completed in 29 different languages. Only project participants who had given their consent for their contact details to be used for research purposes were contacted.

Sample

The RAY MON survey was targeted at participants and project teams in Erasmus+ Youth projects. Table 1 shows the sample sizes by type of activity. It also shows which questionnaires were sent to participants in which types of activities. As there were a few respondents for several types of activities and the display of some modules in the questionnaires was randomised (see below "Instruments and procedure"), we will further distinguish between youth projects, youth workers' projects and project teams in our analysis and this report. Table 1 shows that in the youth projects group, youth exchange participants make up the overwhelming majority, and in the youth workers projects group, youth workers' mobility projects' participants make up the majority of the sample.

Type of activity	Invitations sent (Estonian NA funded projects)	Total respondents (Estonian NA funded projects)	After data cleaning (Estonian NA funded projects and participants from Estonia)
Youth projects (young people questionnaire)			
Youth Exchanges (KA152)	682	187	239
Youth Participation Activities (KA154)	91	16	23
Accredited Organisations' Youth Mobility Activities (KA151)	76	18	15
Youth workers' mobility projects (youth workers' mobility questionnaire)			
(Accredited) Mobility of Youth Workers (KA153)	602	212	223
Project teams (project teams questionnaire)			
All activities	380	160	152

Table 1. Respondents to the RAY MON survey 2021/2022 (Estonia) by type of activity.

Note: Estonian NA – Erasmus+ ja Euroopa Solidaarsuskorpuse Agentuur. The numbers of invitations sent are for projects funded by the Estonian NA, but the RAY MON Estonian dataset ('After data cleaning' column) also included data from participants from Estonia, regardless of the national agency that funded the project.

In total, there were 110 Erasmus+ Youth projects supported by the Estonian National Agency in 2021 and 2022. Table 2 shows the breakdown of projects by type of activity and the (estimated) number of participants in projects.

Type of activity	Number of projects funded		Estimated number of participants in projects	
	2021	**2022**	**2021**	**2022**
youth exchanges (KA152)	22	29	796	1164
youth participation projects (KA154)	10	5	2142	736
mobility of youth workers (KA153)	12	20	365	605
projects of accredited organisations (KA151)	5	7	277*	439*

Table 2. Projects funded by the Estonian National Agency and participants in those projects 2021/2022 Source: Erasmus+ ja Euroopa Solidaarsuskorpuse Agentuur.

Note: As of March 2024, out of 110 projects, three projects have been cancelled, i.e., the project activities have not been carried out and the projects have not been awarded funding from the Estonian National Agency. *The numbers of participants in the projects of the accredited organisations are final, for the other types of activities the numbers of participants are estimated as the final reporting of all projects is not yet finalised.

Survey instrument and procedure

The surveys were based on the RAY MON surveys of the previous cycles, but for the 2021/2022 cycle, the wording of questions or scales/scale items of several questions were changed. The participants in the mobility projects and the project teams filled in different questionnaires, although several questions overlap. The questionnaires consisted mainly of multiple-choice questions and Likert-type scales, with some open-ended questions. Participants and project team members were contacted by e-mail inviting them to fill in a questionnaire on a specific mobility project. The invitation included the name of the project, the dates and country of the project and a URL with a personal code for the survey. Respondents completed the questionnaire on the Limesurvey[6] platform.

The survey questionnaire for **young people** contained six different modules of questions (41-43 questions in total, see Table 3). In the table above, we have identified the types of activities for which this questionnaire was sent to participants (Table 1). All respondents were shown four identical modules with the same questions, while the display of two modules was randomised. Firstly, the questionnaire contained two different variants of the module on the impact of projects, and their display was randomised, i.e., the participant answered only one variant. There were four variants of the modules related to programme priorities: (1) youth participation, (2) diversity and inclusion, (3) digitalisation and (4) sustainability. The display of these was also randomised, i.e., each participant answered questions related to only one of the priorities.

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[6] https://survey.limesurvey.org/

Opening module - general evaluation of the project experience (4)			
Thematic module: youth participation (7)	Thematic module: diversity and inclusion (7)	Thematic module: digitalisation (6)	Thematic module: sustainability (7)
Project Impact Module 1 (8)		Project Impact Module 2 (8)	
Reflection module (8)			
Youthpass module (2+2)			
Final module - Respondent's background (14+2)			
Total questions: 38(+4)	Total questions: 38(+5)	Total questions: 37(+4)	Total questions: 38(+4)

Table 3. Structure of the questionnaire. Questionnaire for participants in youth projects. Number of questions per module in brackets. Source: Research projects on the research-based analysis and monitoring of the European youth programmes (RAY-MON & RAY-SOC). Erasmus+ youth survey of project participants. Focus on KA1/KA152 YOU/KA154-YOU. Final version after feedback By working group and network partners. VERSION 20230320 (unpublished document).

The structure of the questionnaire for **participants in youth workers' mobilities** and the randomization of the modules was similar to the survey for participants in youth projects, but some modules had more questions. In total, there were 47-49 questions in the questionnaire for youth workers mobilities.

The structure of the questionnaire **for the project teams** and the randomisation of the modules were similar, but their questionnaire also included a project objectives module (2 questions) and a project management module (9 questions). A total of 60-62 questions were displayed to project team members depending on the randomised modules.

Analysis

We used descriptive statistics to analyse the data. In the graphs, we also show the 95% confidence interval, which means that there is a 95% probability that the actual value of the observed parameter falls within the given range.

3. Respondents' background

In this chapter, we will provide an overview of the background of the respondents, which helps to better understand the profile of the participants in the survey sample, but also provides information on the accessibility of the programme's activities for young people from minority groups and youth with fewer opportunities.

3.1. Gender

More female than male participants are involved in both youth and youth workers' projects. Table 4 shows the gender breakdown of respondents.

	Youth projects	Youth workers' projects	Project teams
	%	%	%
Male	33,0	30,6	33,0
Female	60,4	64,9	62,6
Other	6,5	4,5	4,3

Table 4. Gender breakdown of respondents. "Do you identify as…?"

3.2. Area of residence

Across all examined groups, the largest share of participants in was made up of people living in cities or small towns, and the smallest share of participants was made up of people living in villages and rural areas (see Table 5). According to Statistics Estonia 2021 data, in the general population in the age group comparable to youth projects' participants (13-30 years old) 30% were living in rural areas.[7] Thus, the results show that young people in rural areas were under-represented among the youth who responded to the survey.

	Youth projects (%)	Youth workers' projects (%)	Project teams (%)
A town or small city	43,1	46,4	50,3
A big city	30,2	35,6	29,5
The suburbs or outskirts of a big city	11,2	4,1	8,1
A country village	9,1	8,6	7,4

[7] Statistics Estonia. RV0240: POPULATION, 1. JAANUAR | Sugu, Elukoht, Aasta ning Vanus

A farm or home in the countryside	6,5	5,4	4,7

Table 5. Breakdown of respondents by place of residence and type of activities

3.3. Level of education and educational background

In general, participants in both youth projects and youth workers' projects are highly educated (tertiary education). The largest proportion of participants in youth projects is made up of those with a higher education (42.8%), and almost three quarters of participants in youth workers' projects have a higher education (73.4%). The share of tertiary educated participants in youth work projects has not changed much compared to previous survey cycles, but the share of tertiary educated people in youth projects has increased, as the average of previous three survey cycles 2015-2020 was 33.2%.[8] The figures below give an overview of the educational level of participants (Figure 1) and project teams (Figure 2) in both youth and youth workers' projects.
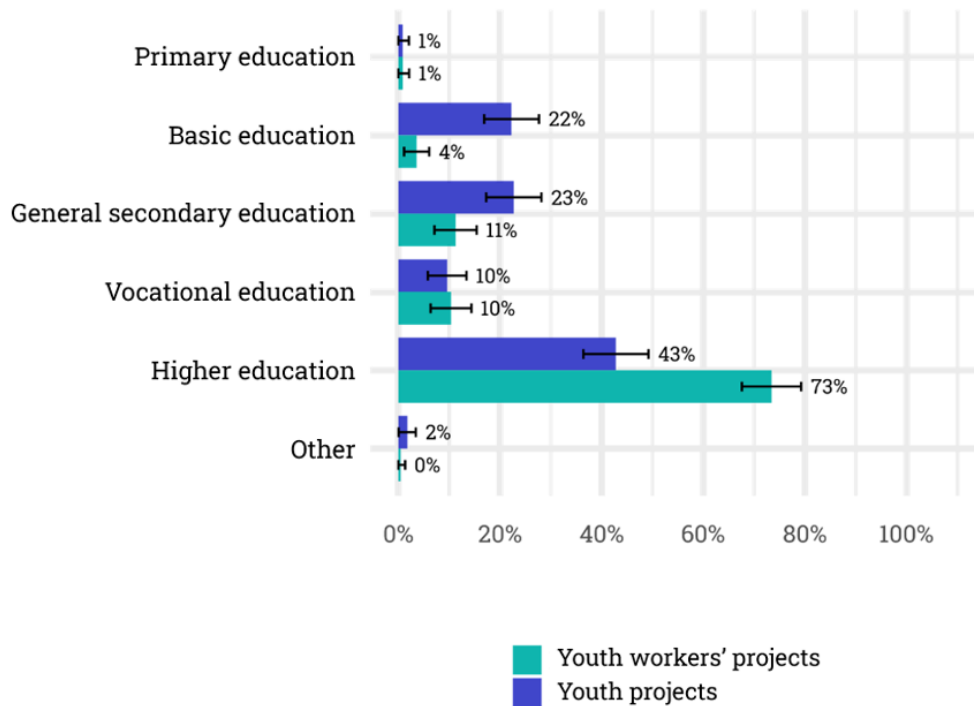

Figure 1. Level of education of respondents (project participants).

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[8] Salu, J., Haljasmets, K., Aps, J., Akkermann, C., Kaldmaa, K., & Pedjasaar, M. (2021). *Erasmus+: Euroopa Noored programmi tulemuste ja mõju-uuring. Analüüs uuringutsüklite 2015/2016, 2017/2018 ja 2019/2020 põhjal.* Stories For Impact OÜ & Haap Consulting OÜ. https://euroopanoored.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/RAY-MON-EE-analuusiraport_Final-19.02.21.pdf
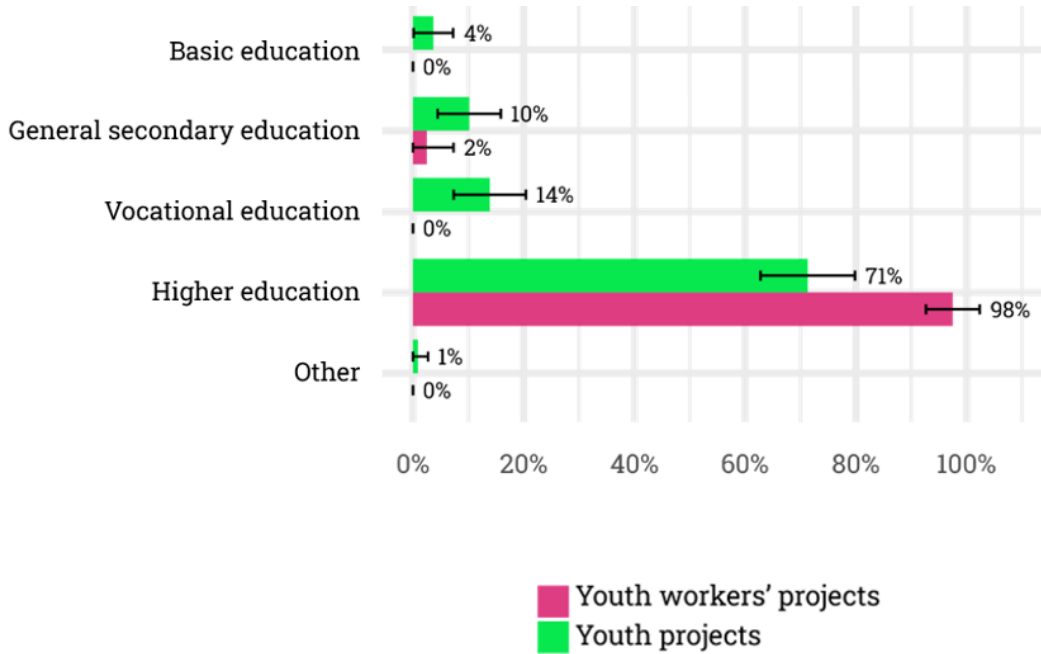
Figure 2. Level of education of respondents (project teams)

More than half of the participants in youth projects come from families where the mother/female carer has a tertiary degree. 55.3% pariticpants in youth projects indicated that their mother/female caregiver has a tertiary degree and 37.5% that their father/male caregiver has a tertriary degree. The educational background of participants in youth workers projects is somewhat higher: 40.9% of participants come from families where the mother/ female carer has a tertiary degree and 50.3% from families where the father/ male carer has a tertiary degree.

3.4. Employment status

In order to investigate the employment situation of the programme participants, they were asked to indicate which best describes what they were doing during the project (several options are possible, see Figure 3).
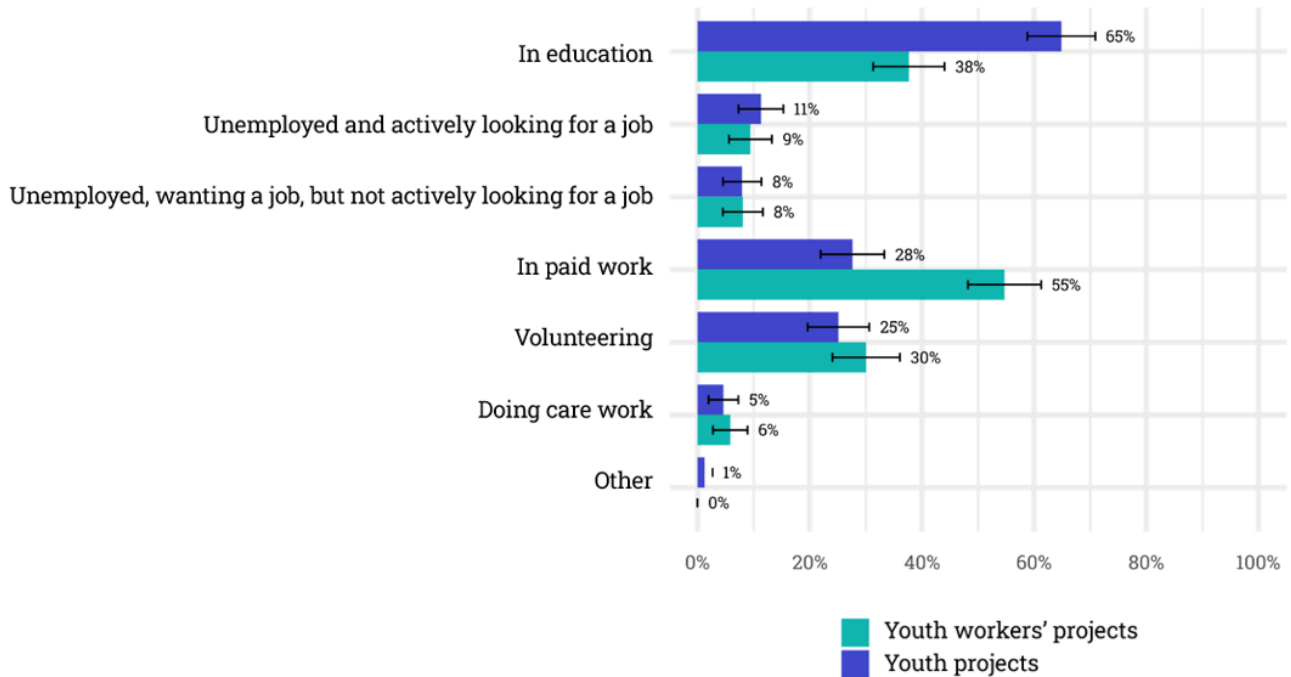
Figure 3. Employment status of participants (youth and youth workers' project participants)

The distribution of participants in youth and youth workers' projects across different employment situations reflects the different target groups of these two types of activities: young people vs. people working with young people. While the majority of participants in youth projects were in education (64.9%), 37.7% of participants in youth workers projects were in education and 54.7% in paid work during the project. Less than a fifth of participants in both youth and youth workers' projects reported being unemployed (19.2% in youth projects and 17.5% in youth workers' projects).

As respondents were free to choose more than one option, it is important to keep in mind that participants of compulsory school age who were not working alongside their studies could also have identified themselves as unemployed. Furthermore, RAY MON data does not allow to distinguish what proportion of participants in youth workers' mobility projects who reported being in paid work are specifically engaged in youth work or other employment in the youth field.

Project teams for both youth and youth workers projects have the highest proportion of respondents in paid work: 65.2% for youth and 75% for youth workers projects.

	Youth projects - project teams (%)	Youth workers' projects - project teams (%)
In paid work	65,2	75

In education	31,2	30
Unemployed and actively looking for a job	0,9	2,5
Unemployed, wanting job, but not actively looking	7,1	-
Volunteering	26,8	22,5
Doing care work	5,4	2,5
Other	0,9	2,5

Table 6. Respondents' occupation by activity (project teams)

3.5. Minority affiliation

Respondents who indicated that they would describe themselves as belonging to a group that is being discriminated against are considered belonging to a minority group. In addition, respondents were asked to indicate the grounds on which their group was discriminated against. 17.9% of youth project and 32.1% of youth workers' project participants can be considered belonging to a minority group. Among project team members, these proportions are very similar: 17% of youth project team members and 32.5% of youth workers' project team members belong to a minority group experiencing discrimination.

Figure 4 shows that ethnic group (39%), gender (39%) and sexuality (36.6%) accounted for the largest share of grounds for discrimination in youth projects. In contrast, ethnic group (38.6%), language (34.3%) and sexuality (34.3%) were the most numeours grounds for discrimination in youth workers' projects. The largest proportion of minority-affiliated

project team members indicated language as the grounds for discrimination of their group (58.1%).
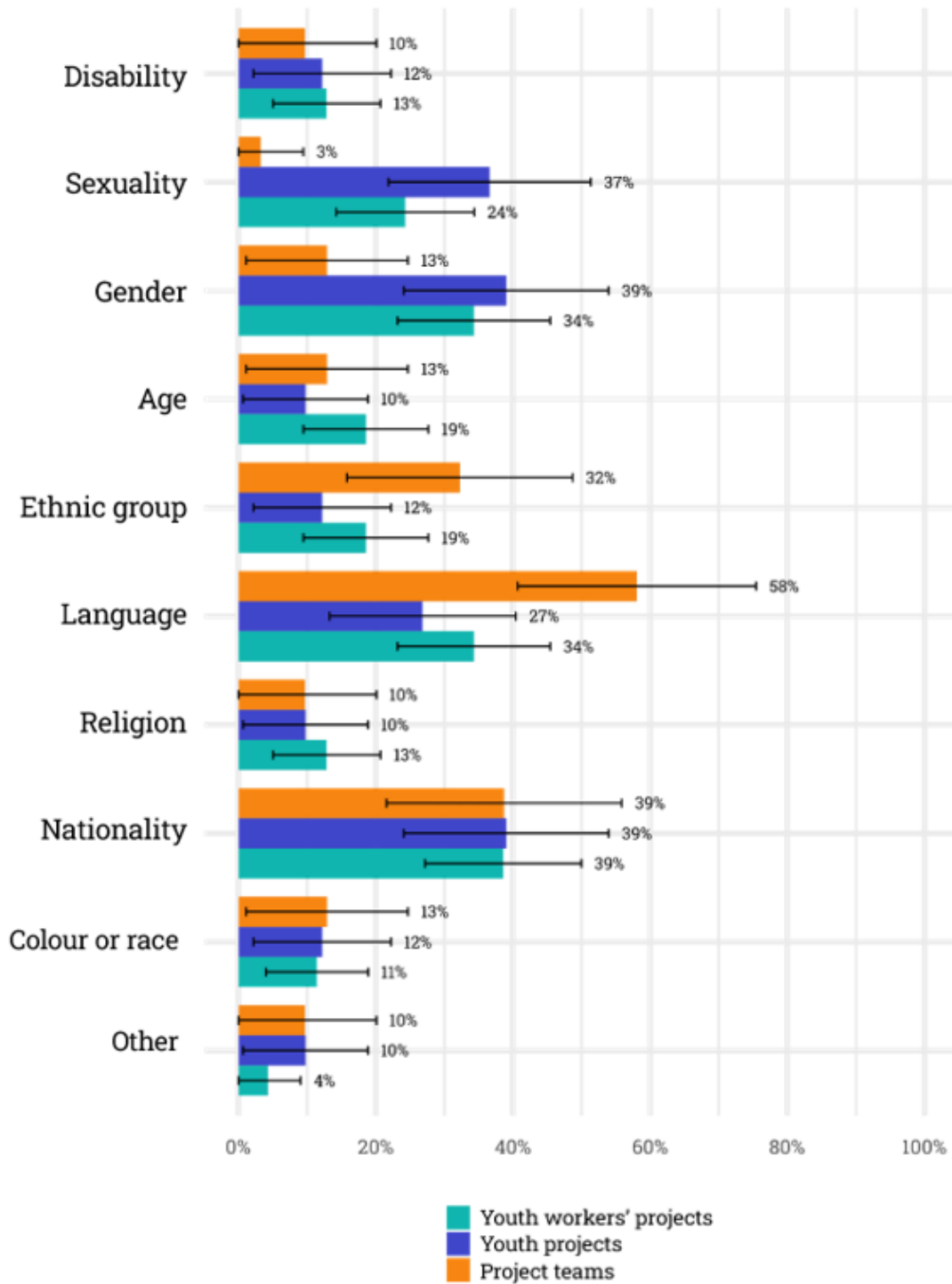

Figure 4. Minority affiliation. " Would you describe yourself as being a member of a group that is discriminated against?"-"yes"/" On what grounds is your group discriminated against?"

3.6. Participants with fewer opportunities

In order to find out to what extent Erasmus+ Youth reaches participants with fewer opportunities, respondents were asked whether and which barriers they felt they had to overcome to reach their full potential in life. Moreover, respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they perceive that they have equal opportunities compared to other people their age in their country. The highest share of participants with fewer opportunities was observed in youth workers' projects (49.1%). 44.3% of youth project participants and 28.3% of all project team members can be considered participants with fewer opportunities.

Regardless of the type of activity, more than half of participants with fewer opportunities perceive not having enough money as a barrier (Figure 5). Compared to youth workers' projects, youth project participants with fewer opportunities were more likely to be hindered by living in a remote area (27.3% vs. 18.9% in youth workers' projects). However, compared to project teams and youth workers' project participants, youth project participants were less likely to mention their social background as a barrier.
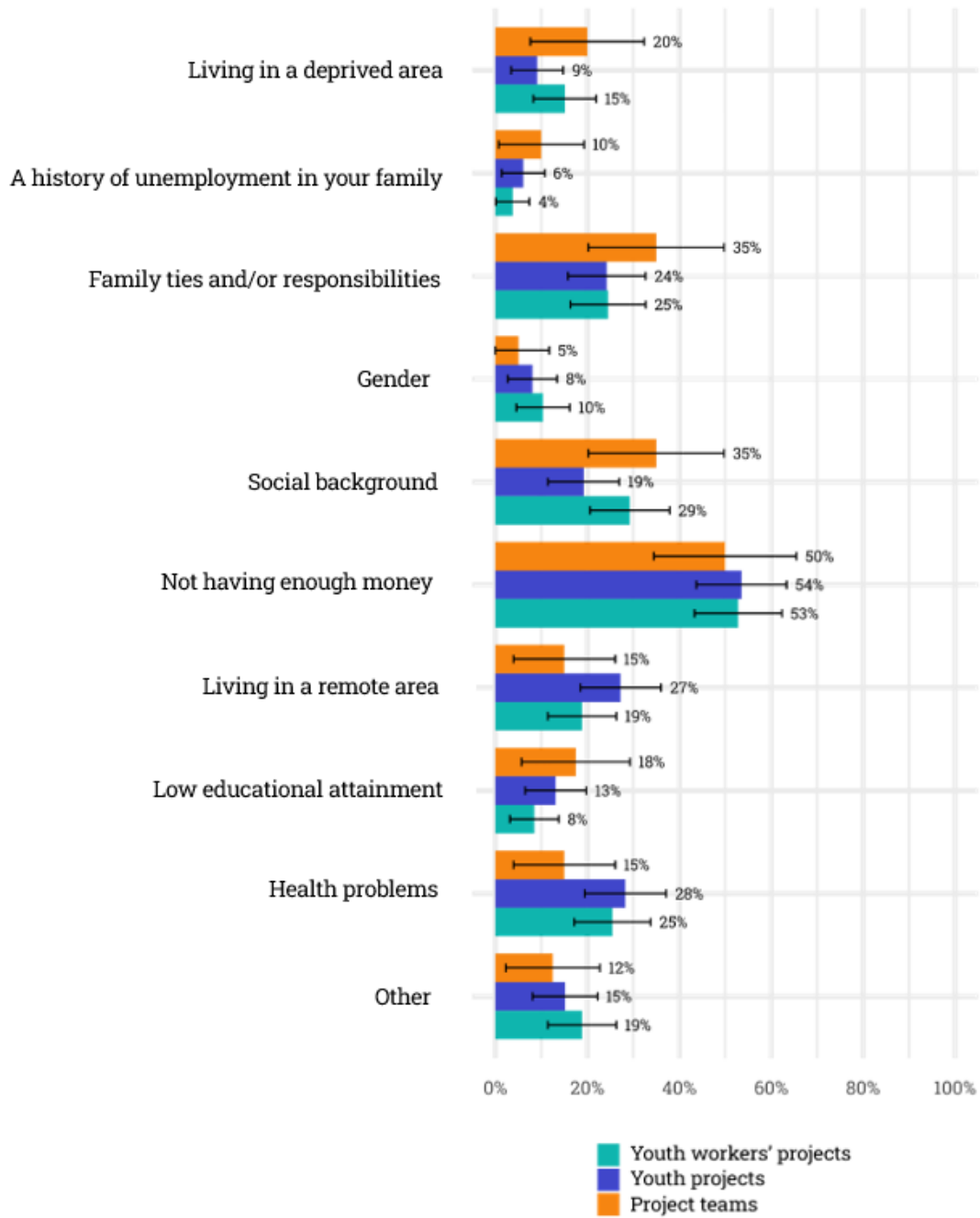
Figure 5. Participants with fewer opportunities. " Would you say that you are faced with barriers to achieve your full potential?" − „yes" / "Are these barriers related to..." (multiple choice). Percentage of participants with fewer opportunities (%).

In addition, respondents were asked to assess their opportunities in life compared to other people of their age in their country. 20.3% of participants in youth projects, 24.2% of participants in youth workers' projects and 17.8% of project team members considered their opportunities to be somewhat or much worse than others'.

3.7. Previous participation in EU youth programmes

Results shows that participation in learning mobility projects encourages young people and youth workers to seek out new project opportunities or to initiate and organise projects. The results on participants' previous project experience in EU youth programmes revealed that the vast majority of project team members have organised similar projects in the past (85.8%, Table 7).[9] This result is noteworthy, as in the previous three RAY MON survey cycles (2015-2020), on average less than half (42.2%) of project team members indicated that they had participated in similar projects as a project team member. [10]

	Youth projects (%)	Youth workers' projects (%)	Project teams (%)
Yes	56,0	74,5	85,8
No	44,0	25,5	14,2

Table 7. Previous participation in similar European projects. "Have you participated in similar European projects?" / " Have you been a part of project teams for similar European projects?" - "yes".

[9] Members of the project teams were asked to indicate whether they had previously been part of teams for similar European projects.

[10] Salu, J., Haljasmets, K., Aps, J., Akkermann, C., Kaldmaa, K., & Pedjasaar, M. (2021). *Erasmus+: Euroopa Noored programmi tulemuste ja mõju-uuring. Analüüs uuringutsüklite 2015/2016, 2017/2018 ja 2019/2020 põhjal.* Stories For Impact OÜ & Haap Consulting OÜ. https://euroopanoored.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/RAY-MON-EE-analuusiraport_Final-19.02.21.pdf

4.   Effects of projects

In this chapter, we will first look at participants' overall satisfaction with the project and the reasons for their participation. We then look at how participation in Erasmus+ Youth projects develops the knowledge, skills and attitudes of young people and youth workers – namely the key competences, which is an important objective of the programme.[11]

4.1. Participants' motivation and satisfaction with the project

Motivation to participate in the project

Most often, participants joined the project to have new experiences or learn something new (Figure 6). The most common reasons given by youth workers' project participants for joining a project are to have new experiences (74%), to learn something new (72%) and to explore the project topic (65%). In the case of youth projects, respondents most often reported having new experiences (84%), learning something new (81%) and getting to know other cultures (71%) as reasons for joining.

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[11] https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/programme-guide/part-b/key-action-1/youth-exchanges
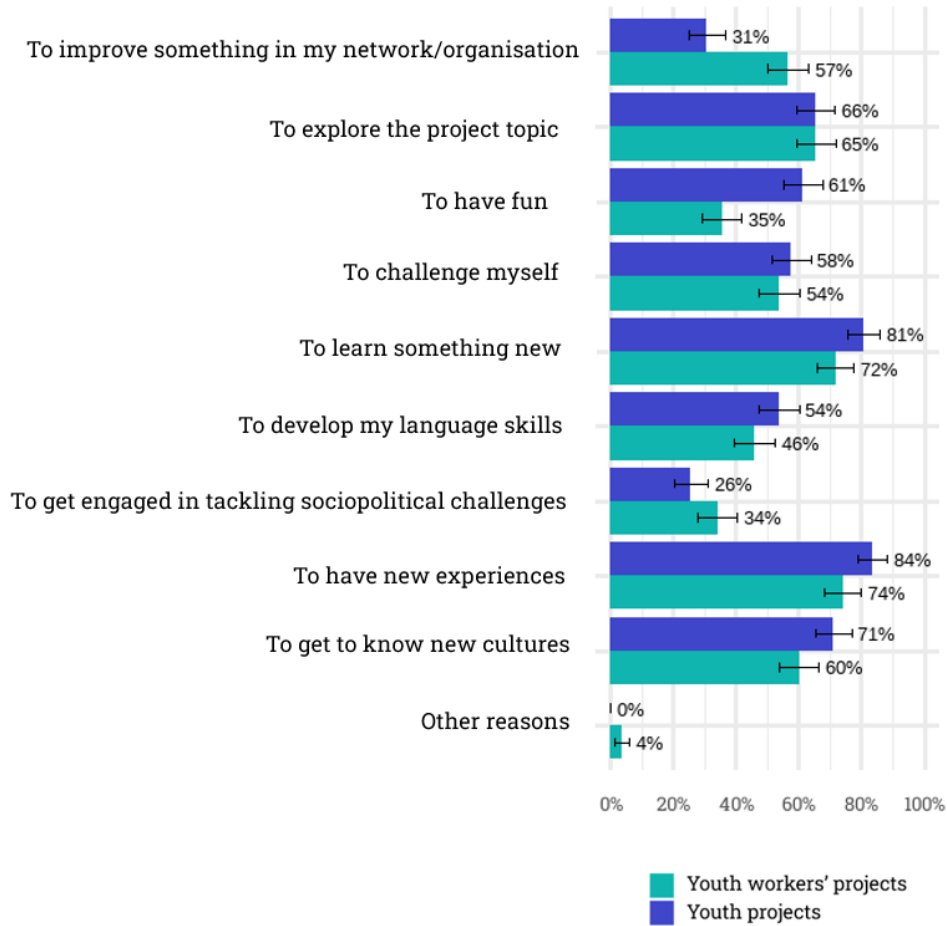
Figure 6. Participants' motivation to join the project (mutiple choice). "My reasons for participating in this project were ...."

Overall evaluation of the project experience

Participants generally rated their project experience very positively (Figure 7), and a comparison of the evaluation of participants and project team members shows that project teams had a slightly higher proportion of respondents who evaluated the project with the most positive emoji rating (see below).
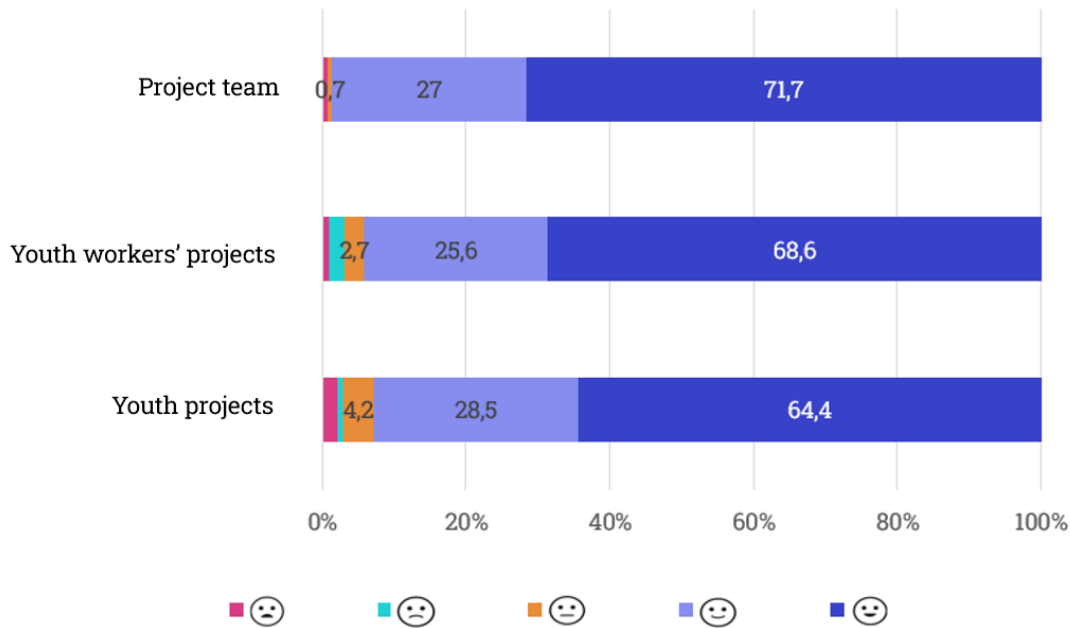
Figure 7. Evaluation of project experience. Respondents were asked to choose the emoji that best describes their experience: „Overall, my project experience has been …" Share of respondents (%).

Respondents were also asked about their overall project experience:

■ how easy it was for them to afford participating in the project,
■ how easy it was for them to express themselves fully in the project,
■ the extent to which they enjoyed participating in the project; and
■ how meaningful the project was for them.

Participants marked their answers on an 11-point scale, where 0 - "not at all easy"/"not at all"/"not at all meaningful" and 10 - "very easy"/"very"/"very meaningful".

Among participants in both youth workers' and youth projects, just over a third of respondents indicated that it was very easy (maximum 10-point rating) for them to afford to participate (Figure 8 and Figure 9). The average rating of youth workers' project participants (M = 8.07, SD = 2.25) was slightly higher than the average rating of youth project participants (M = 7.92, SD = 2.39). In terms of fully expressing themselves in the project, the ratings of youth and youth workers' project participants differed more (Figure 10 and Figure 11). 29.1% of participants in youth workers' projects and 20.1% of participants in youth projects found it very easy

(maximum 10-point rating) to express themselves in the project (youth projects M = 7.58, SD = 2.14; youth workers' projects M = 8.05, SD = 1.96).
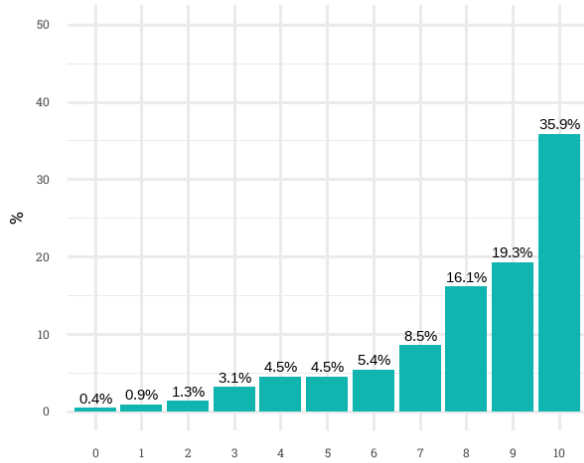

Figure 8. How easy was it for you to afford participating in the activity? (**youth workers' project participants**)
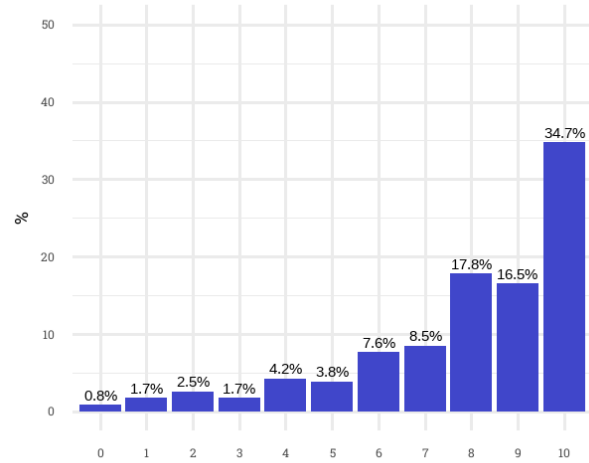
Figure 9. How easy was it for you to afford participating in the project? (**youth project participants**)
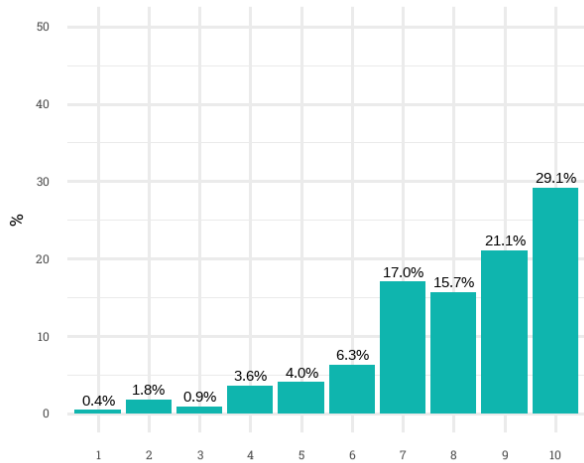

Figure 10. How easy was it for you to fully express yourself in the activity? (**youth workers' projects participants**)
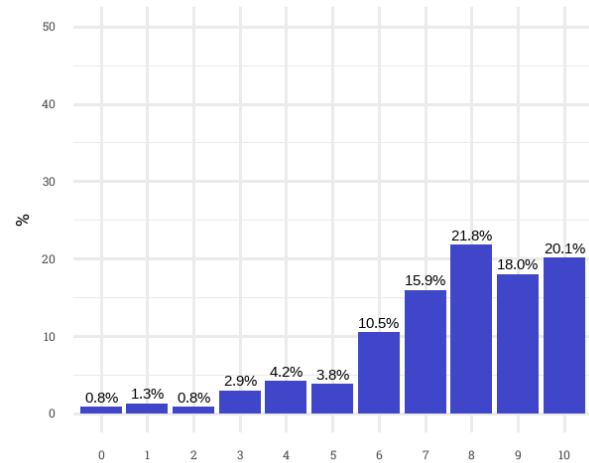
Figure 11. How easy was it for you to fully express yourself in the project? (**youth project participants**)

Figure 12 and Figure 13 show that youth project participants and youth workers' project participants differ the most in terms of enjoyment of project participation (youth projects

M=8.77, SD = 1.94; youth workers projects M=7.69, SD = 2.00). More than half of the participants in youth projects indicated that they enjoyed the project very much (maximum 10-point rating), while in the youth workers' projects, 19% of the participants gave the highest rating for enjoying the project.
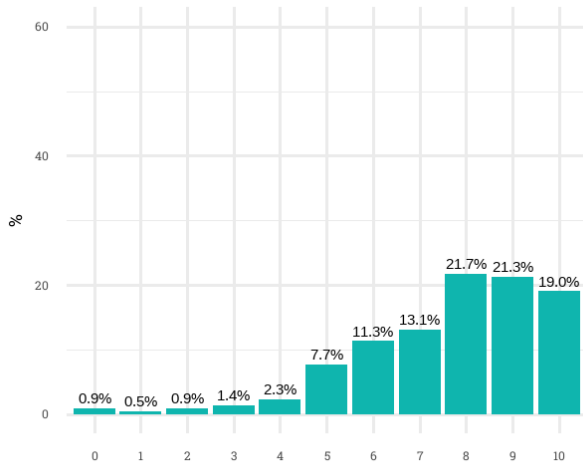

Figure 12. How much did you enjoy participating in the project? (**youth workers' project participants**)
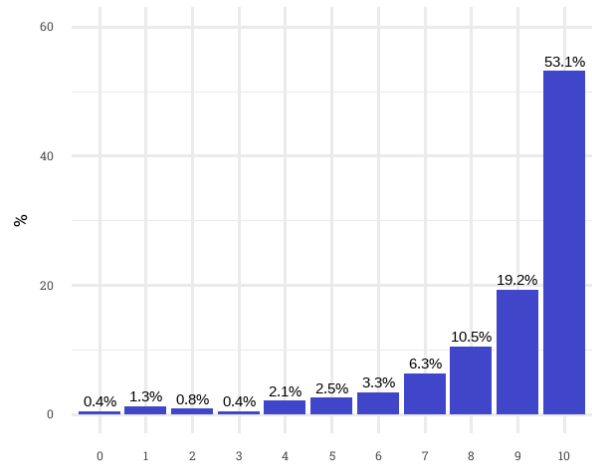
Figure 13. How much did you enjoy participating in the project? (**youth project participants**)
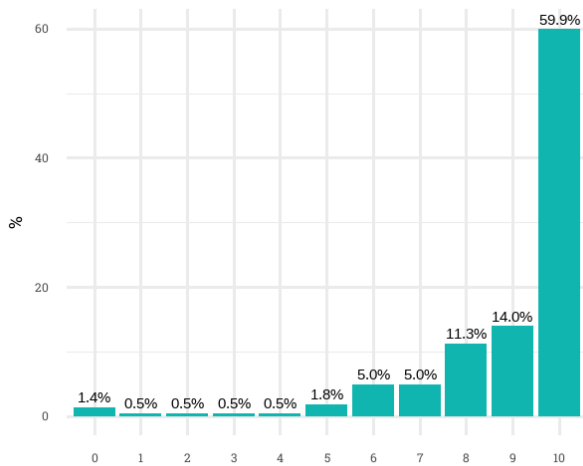

Figure 14. How meaningful was the project for you? (**youth workers' project participants**)
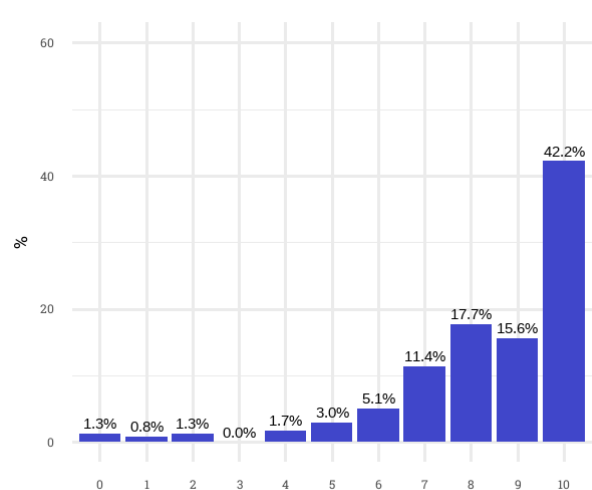
Figure 15. How meaningful was the project for you? (**youth project participants**)

More than half of youth workers' (59.9%) and 42.2% of youth project participants rated their project experience as very meaningful (youth projects M = 8.39, SD = 2.06; youth workers' projects M = 8.93, SD = 1.88). Which particular ideas participants and project teams associate

with their project experience can be found in Figure 16, where the size of the words is related to how many respondents used them to describe their experience.

Figure 16. "Thinking back to the project/activity, which three words describe your experience best?" (all respondents)

4.2. The effects of participation on knowledge, skills and attitudes

In this sub-section, we will examine the effects of project participation on competences – knowledge, skills and attitudes – looking separately at the impact of projects on youth project and youth workers' project participants.

4.2.1. Youth projects

Knowledge

Respondents were asked to indicate all the topics they learned something about in the project. As shown on Figure 17, the number of participants who did not learn anything on any of the topics listed was extremely low, only 2%. More than half of all youth project participants learned something about cooperating with others (85%), expressing ideas creatively (67%), using different languages for communication (64%), expressing themselves with empathy (61%) and acting upon opportunities (51%).
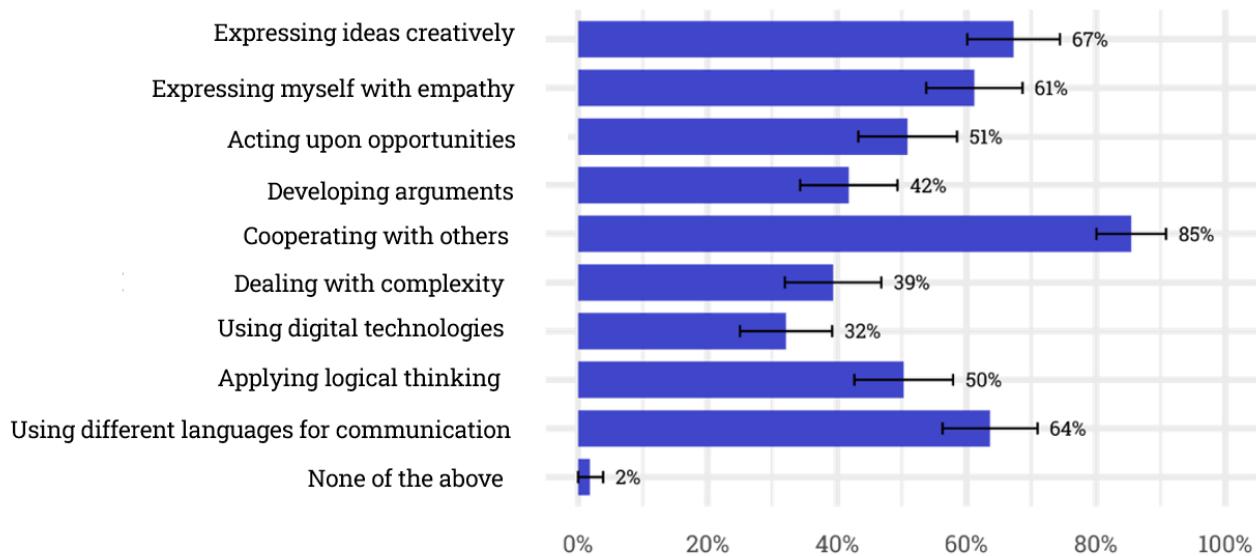

Figure 17. In the project, I learned something about… (**youth project participants**)

Skills and attitudes

In addition to knowledge, respondents were also asked about the skills and attitudes developed in the projects. In general, for each of the skills and attitudes surveyed in RAY MON, at least half of all participants indicated that they improved their abilities in these areas in the project (see Figure 18). However, it is noteworthy that learning about skills related to civic competences were reported somewhat less than other surveyed skills. For example, the ability to engage in tackling sociopolitical challenges and the ability to seriously discuss political topics were reported to have improved by 57% and 50% of participants respectively.

Of the skills listed, the most frequently improved skills in youth projects (over 80% of respondents) were the ability to get along with people from different cultural backgrounds, the ability to reflect and think critically, the ability to communicate with people who speak a different language and the ability to negotiate joint solutions when there are different viewpoints. In terms of the attitudes surveyed, however, the most frequently reported by participants in youth projects was the development of self-confidence (86%).

In addition to the attitudes shown in the figure below, participants were asked whether the project had changed the extent to which they valued cultural diversity, and 75% of youth project participants found that they valued cultural diversity more after the project than before.
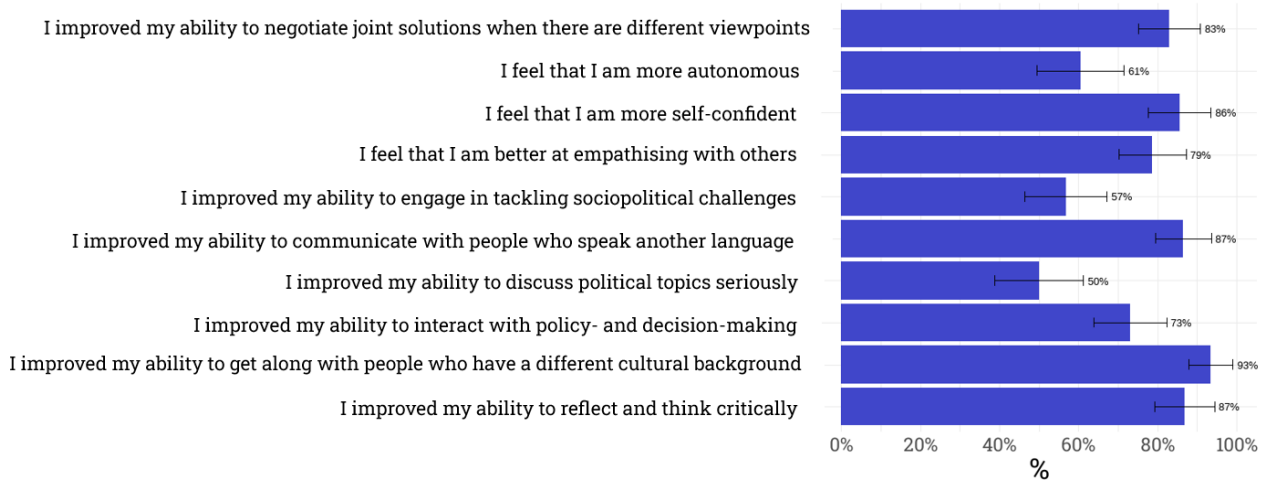

Figure 18. Skills and attitudes developed during the project (**youth project participants**). „Through the project/After the project…" Percentage of respondents who „agree"/"agree strongly" with the statement.

4.2.2. Youth workers' projects and project teams

Participants in youth workers' projects and project teams were surveyed on the acquisition of knowledge on the same topics, so it is possible to compare the two groups.

While in general, both project team members and participants in youth workers' projects reported learning about similar topics during the projects, the biggest difference can be observed in acquiring knowledge about youth policy (Figure 19). More than 40% of participants in youth workers' projects but less than one fifth of project team members reported learning something new about youth policy. This could be explained by the different, sometimes rather administrative role of project teams in the project. Considering that the vast majority of project team members have also organised similar international projects in the past (see Respondents' background), it is also possible that project teams were knowledgeable on youth policy already before the project.
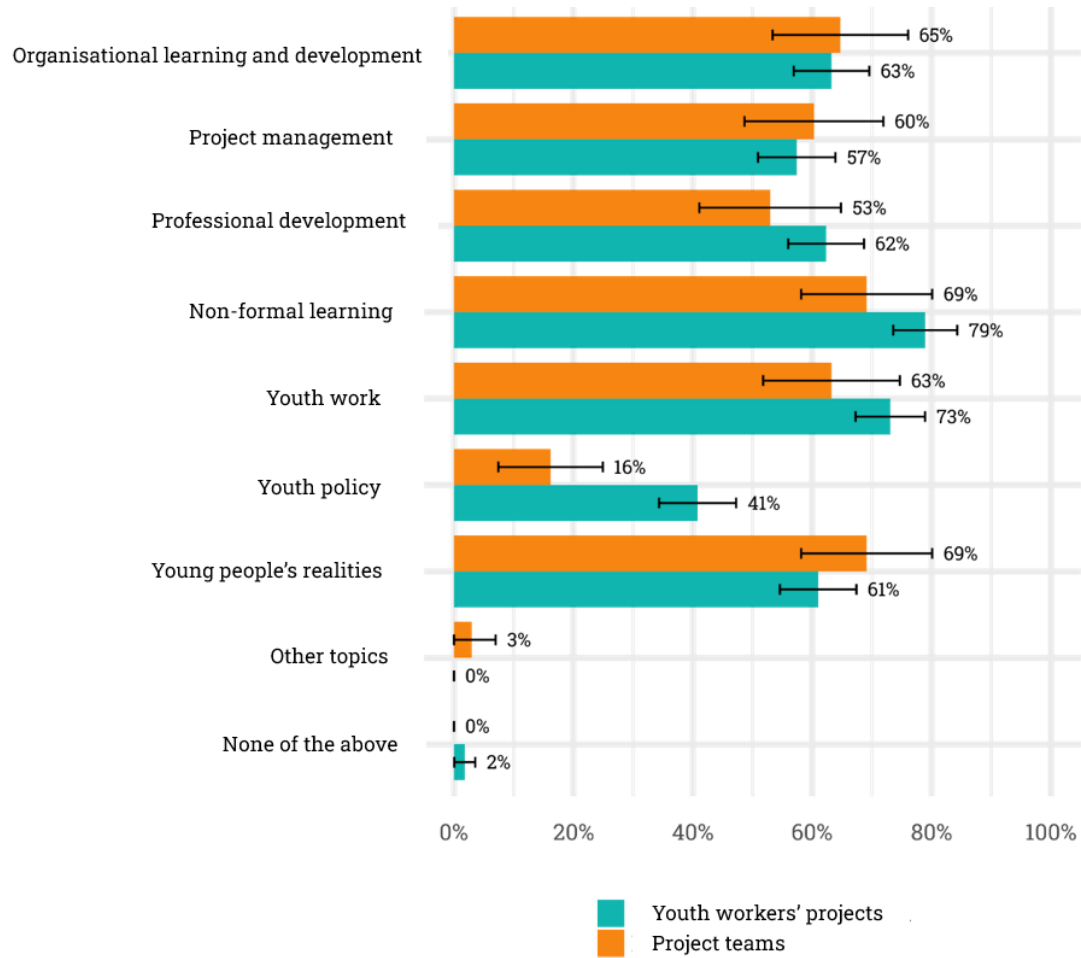
Figure 19. Knowledge developed in the project. "In the project/activity, I learned something about..." (**project teams** and **youth workers' project participants**)

Skills

Participants in youth workers' mobility projects were surveyed about the youth work skills they improved in the project. For each of the skills covered in the survey, well over 80% of participants indicated that it had improved in the project (Figure 20). In particular, participants most often (87%) agreed that they became aware of the competences they wanted to develop further.
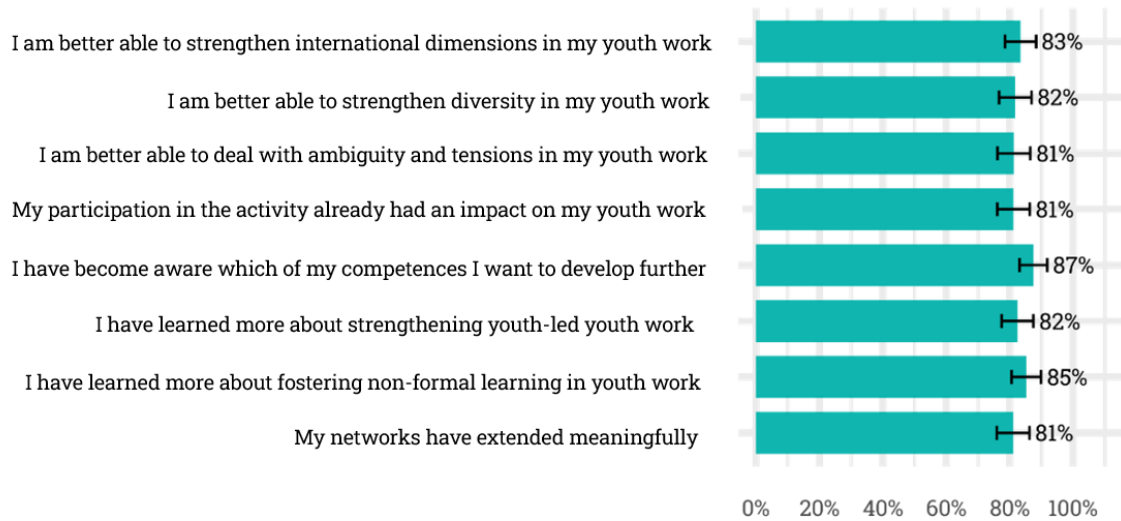
Figure 20. Skills and attitudes developed in the project (**youth workers' project participants**). Share of respondents who 'agree'/'agree strongly' with the statement.

5.   Projects' alignment with programme objectives and priorities

The data collected in the RAY MON survey also provides information on the extent to which youth and youth workers' mobility projects address the strategic objectives of Erasmus+ and the four horizontal priorities of the programme: Diversity and Inclusion, Participation, Sustainability and Digitalisation. These priorities are also factored into the assessment of project funding applications by the Erasmus+ National Agencies. The RAY MON survey examined both the extent to which projects developed competences related to the four programme priorities and the extent to which participants felt that each priority was reflected in how the project was implemented.

5.1. Contribution to programme objectives

Project team members were asked to indicate all the **general objectives of Erasmus+ Youth** to which they felt the project contributed. Figure 21 shows that the most frequently mentioned objectives were the support to the personal (84%) and educational (78%) development of project participants. Advancing youth policy cooperation was less frequently reported (44%).
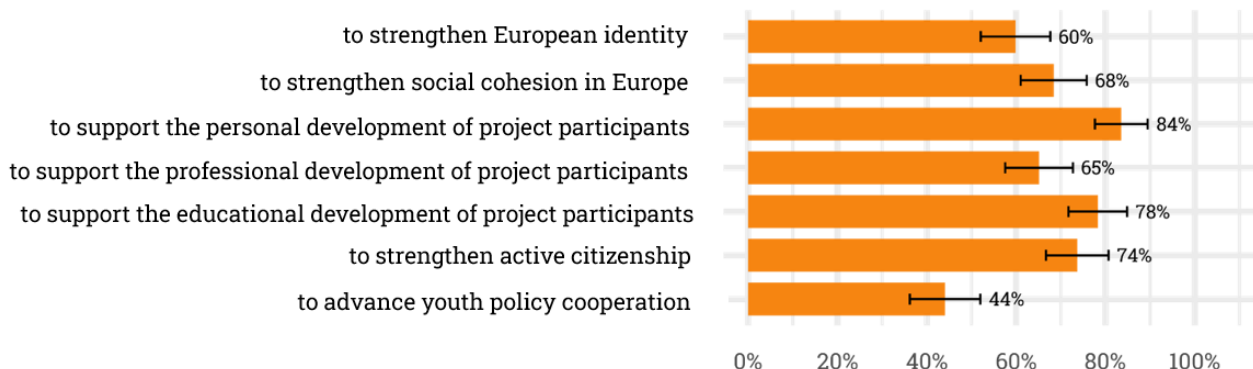
Figure 21. Contribution to Erasmus+ Youth general objectives. Project team members' responses (multiple choice). "In your opinion, to what extent did the project contribute to the general objectives of the Erasmus+ programme?"

Respondents were instructed to choose up to **three Erasmus+ Youth strategic objectives** that they believed the project contributed to the most. Figure 22 shows that policy-level objectives were less frequently mentioned compared to organisational-level objectives. Most frequently, participants reported that the projects contributed to the objectives of promoting non-formal learning mobility (58%) and promoting active participation among young people (55%).
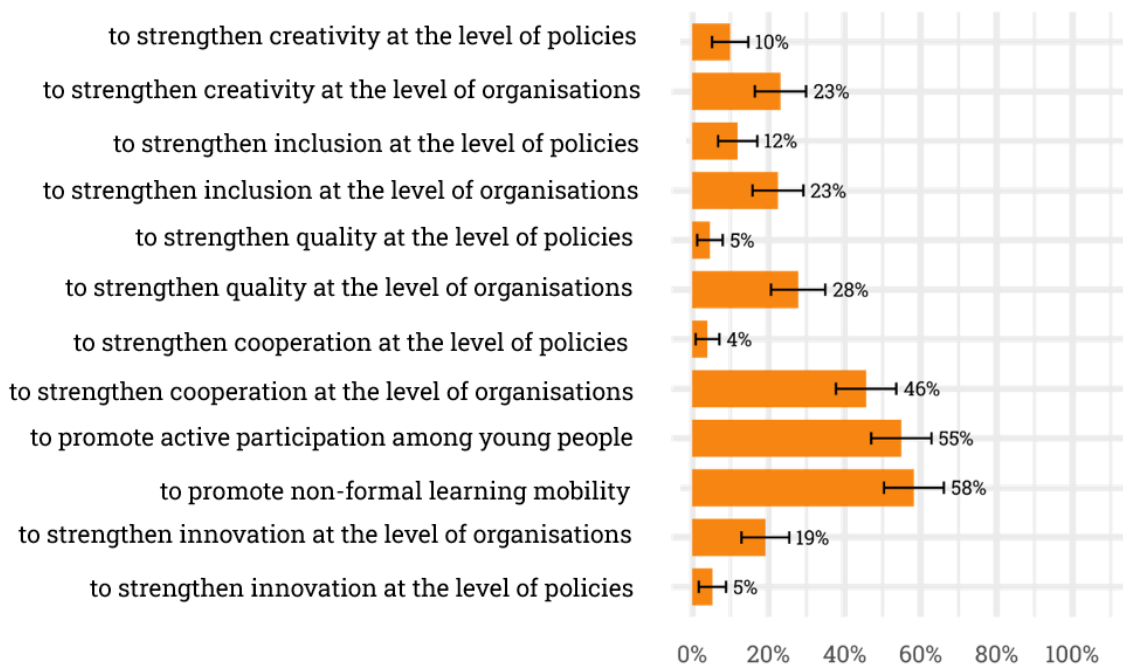
Figure 22. Contribution to Erasmus+ Youth strategic objectives. Project team members' responses (three options available). " In your opinion, to what extent did the project contribute to the strategic objectives of Erasmus+ Youth?"

5.2. Alignment with horizontal priorities of the programme

Participants were asked to rate the extent to which each of the programme's four horizontal priorities was reflected in the project, indicating how digital, inclusive, participatory and sustainable the project was overall. Table 8 shows participants' average ratings. Participants and project team members alike were the most likely to rate projects as participatory and inclusive. Across all groups of respondents, projects were least perceived as digital. In the following subsections, we will explore each of the four priorities and how they were reflected in the projects.

	Youth project participants	Youth workers' project participants	Project teams
Digital	5.14	6.15	6.88
Inclusive	8.26	8.61	8.88
Participatory	8.49	8.89	8.98
Sustainable	7.77	7.91	8.46

Table 8. " The project, overall, was…" (average ratings, scale of 0-10)

5.3. Youth participation

Youth participation in the context of the Erasmus+ Youth programme refers to participation in democracy and civil society at local, national and European levels. It means being an active member of society and expressing your views in order to influence or participate in social processes.[12,13]

5.3.1. Effects related to the priority

Knowledge

First, we will give an overview of the development of knowledge related to youth participation in youth projects. Figure 23 shows that 18% of participants in youth projects did not learn about any of the youth participation-related topics related surveyed in RAY MON. However, 60% of the participants indicated that they learned about participation in civil society.
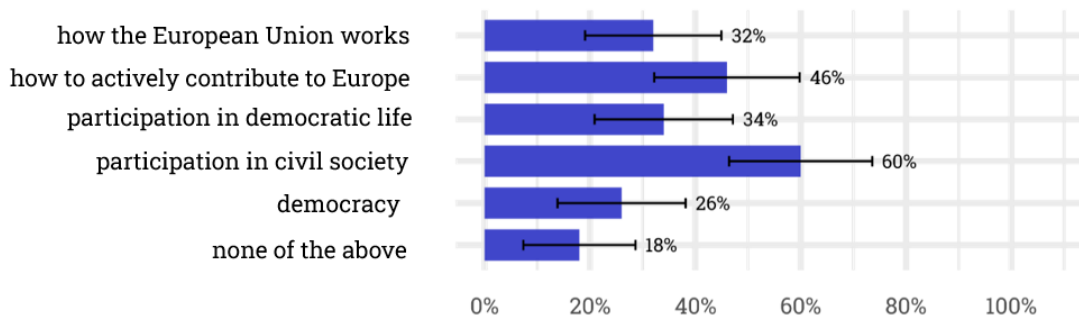
Figure 23. Development of knowledge on youth participation in youth projects. " In the project, I learned something about … " (**youth project participants**)

Participants' responses are to some extent also reflected in the project teams' assessments of the topics covered by the projects, with participation in civil society being the most frequently mentioned topic and the *how the European Union works* the least often reported. However, it is noteworthy that democracy and participation in democratic life were mentioned more often by project team members than learning about these topics was reported by participants.

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[12] https://www.salto-youth.net/downloads/4-17-4089/20200929_ParticipationStrategy_Online_Final_02.pdf

[13] https://euroopanoored.eu/kvaliteet/prioriteedid/noorte-osalus/
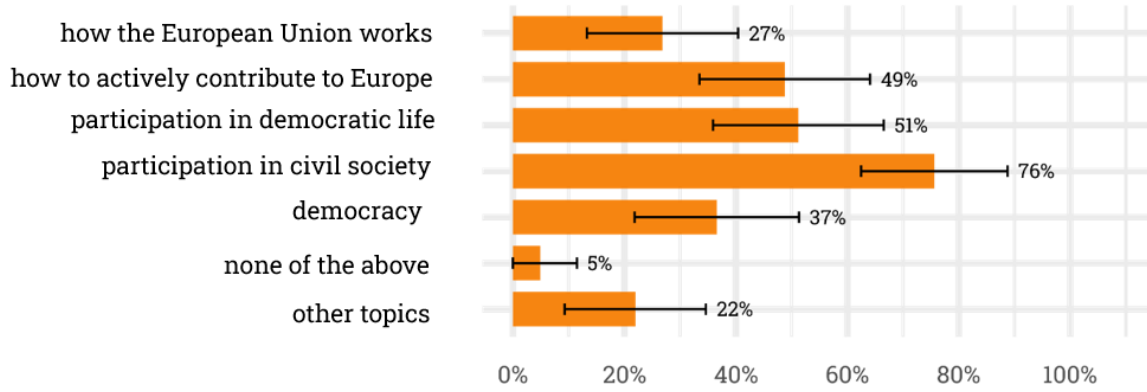
Figure 24. Project teams' views on the participation-related topics addressed in the project. "In the project, we addressed the following topics related to participation..." **(project teams)**

Figure 25 shows the development of knowledge on youth participation among participants in youth workers' mobility projects. The result that participants most often learned about the tools for active participation (72%) and somewhat less often about the role of active participation in democracy (43%) or about models (62%) and strategies (61%) for active participation may indicate a practical (vs. theoretical) orientation of youth workers' mobility projects.
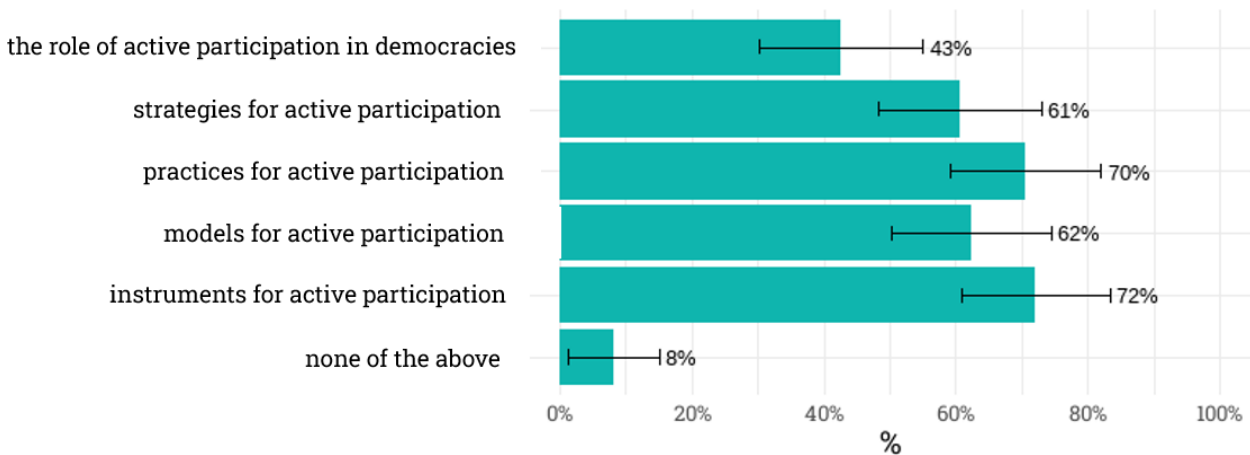
Figure 25. „In the activity, I learned something about..". (**participants in youth workers' projects**)

Project teams' evaluations of the youth participation topics addressed by youth workers' projects reflect fairly well the participants' own evaluations of what they learned about (Figure 26).
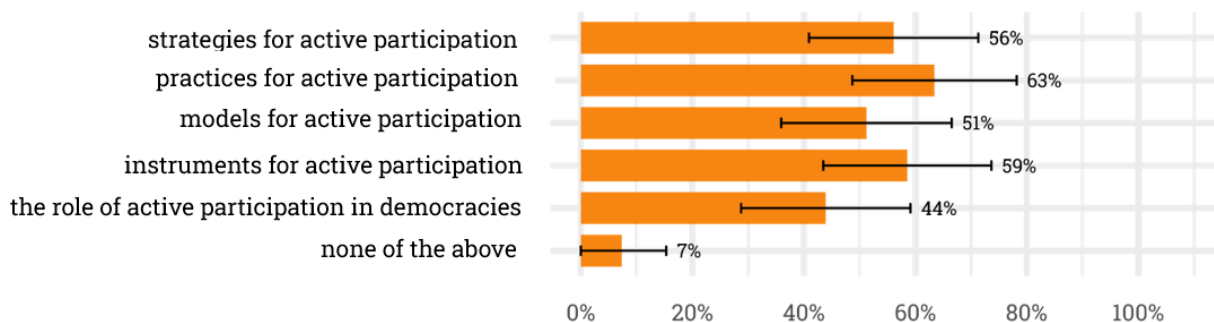
Figure 26. Project teams' views on youth participation-related topics addressed in youth workers' projects. "Throughout the project, we explored ..." (**project teams**)

Behaviour and attitudes

Participants in both youth and youth workers' projects were asked to what extent **they engage in civil society after the project** (Table 9). Compared to youth workers' projects, youth projects seem to have a greater impact on participants' engagement in civil society. Of the participants in youth projects, 60.8% stated that they were more engaged in civil society after the project than before, compared to 45% of participants in youth workers' projects. This difference may be due to the different target groups of the two types of activities – the majority of participants in youth workers' mobility have tertiary degrees and have participated in similar projects before, and may already be actively engaged in civil society. At the same time, the goals of the different mobility types and the topics covered may also be a factor.

In addition, participants indicated the extent to which the project had influenced their **interest in taking part in elections**. Table 9 shows that the majority of participants in both youth and youth workers' projects are interested in participating in elections after the project to the same extent as they were before, while 29.4% of participants in youth and 23.3% of participants in youth workers' projects reported being more interested in participating in elections after the project.

	"After the project/activity, I engage in civil society...."		" After the project/activity, I am interested in participating in elections...."	
	Youth projects (%)	Youth workers' projects (%)	Youth projects (%)	Youth workers' projects (%)
Less than before	2	10	2	5
To the same extent	37,3	45	68,6	71,7
More than before	60,8	45	29,4	23,3

Table 9. Perceived impact of the project on youth participation-related behaviours and attitudes (**youth project and youth workers' project participants**).

Furthermore, the results suggest that project teams tend to overestimate the impact of projects on both the civil society and elections participation of participants. 92.3% of project team members reported ("agree" or "agree strongly") that participants were better able to actively engage in civil society after a project and 68.3% of them believed that participants are more interested in participating in elections after the project.

Young people's participation in projects also has an impact on **their perceived closeness to Europe.** Participants in youth projects rated their closeness to Europe before[14] and after the project on a scale from 0 to 10 (0 - "not at all close", 10 - "very close"). 14.8% of respondents rated their level of closeness before the project (M = 6.48, SD = 2.41) with a maximum score of 10 and 22.3% of respondents reported feeling a maximum level of closeness to Europe after the project (M = 7.82, SD = 1.94) (Figure 27 and Figure 28).
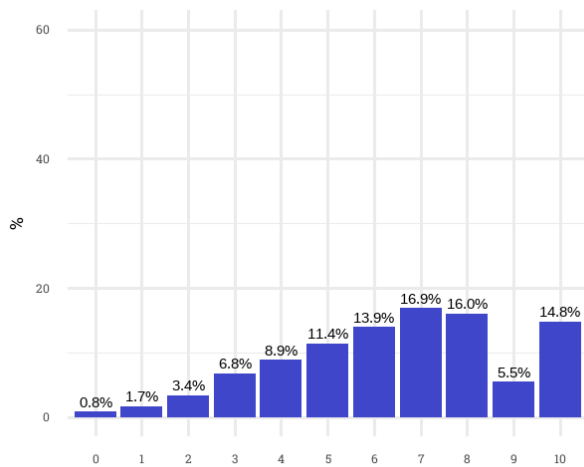
Figure 27. „Thinking back, how close did you feel to Europe before the project?" (**Youth project participants**)
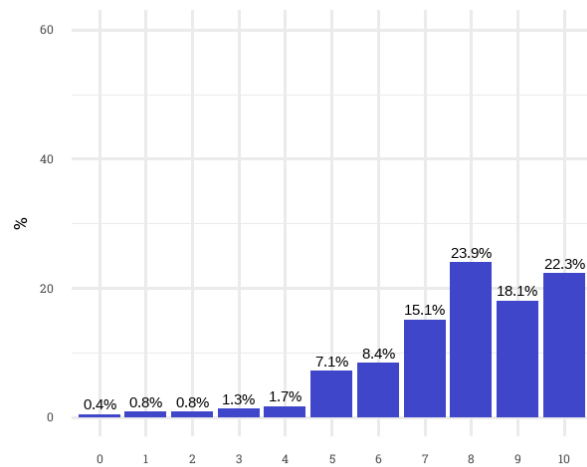
Figure 28. „And how close do you feel to Europe now?"f (**Youth project participants**)

5.3.2. Priority reflected in project implementation

The results of the analysis suggest that the priority of youth participation was well reflected in the organisation and implementation of youth projects. An overwhelming majority of participants in youth projects (84.4% "agree" or "agree strongly") felt that they were able to contribute their views and ideas to the project. Similarly, 86.3% ("agree" or "agree strongly") of

[14] All participants completed the questionnaire after the project, i.e. the "before" assessment was retrospectively given by

participants in youth projects were satisfied with the way their ideas were taken into account in the project.

5.4. Diversity and inclusion

Diversity and inclusion in Erasmus+ Youth and European Solidarity Corps programmes means ensuring equal access to programmes for all. Economic, social, cultural, geographical or health reasons, as well as reasons related to migrant background or special needs, may be barriers to benefiting from the opportunities offered by the programme. Ensuring equal access is about identifying and removing these barriers. This will create positive change for people with fewer opportunities and, by reducing inequalities, for society as a whole.[15]

5.4.1. Effects related to the priority

Knowledge

Figure 29 shows that, of the different themes related to this priority, inclusion and diversity were the ones most often addressed in youth projects, with more than 60% of youth project participants reporting learning about them.
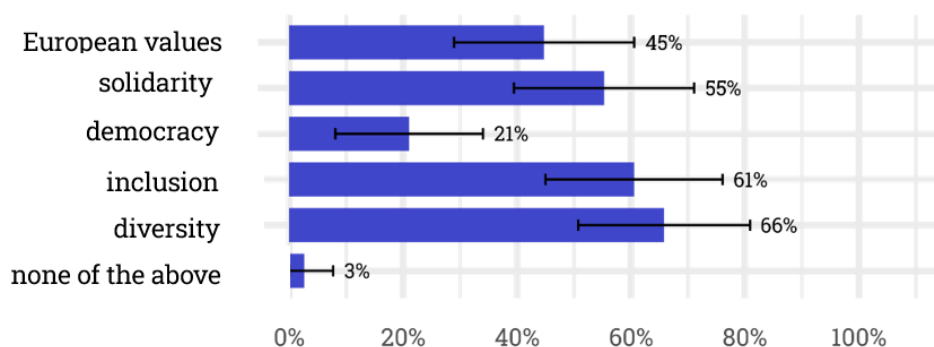
Figure 29. " In the project, I learned something about ....." (**youth project participants**)

The project teams were asked to assess which topics related to diversity and inclusion were addressed in the project. Figure 30 shows that, of the topics listed, democracy was the least often reported to be addressed in the project.

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[15] https://euroopanoored.eu/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Kaasatuse-ja-mitmekesisuse-strateegia-EST-2021.pdf
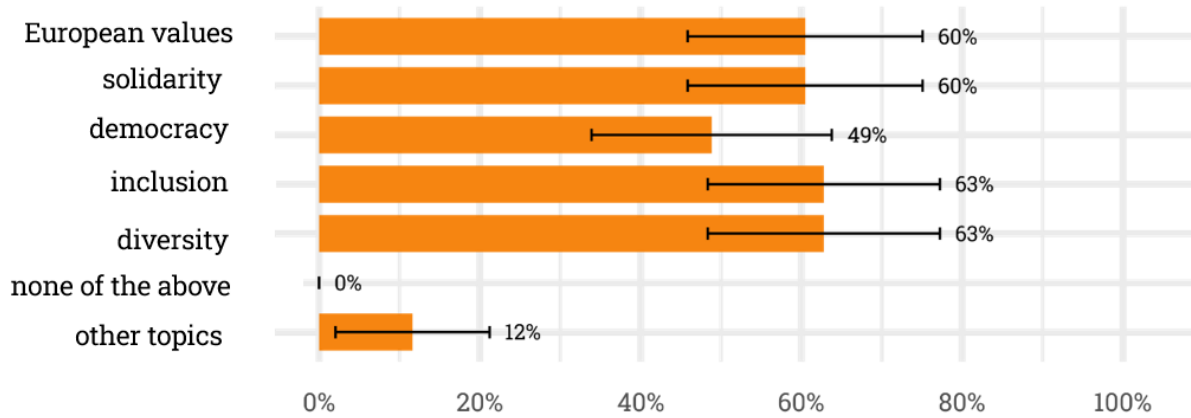
Figure 30. Project teams' percepetion on inclusion-related topics in the projects. "In the project, we addressed the following topics related to inclusion ..." **(project teams)**

Participants in youth workers' projects most often reported learning about practices (65%) and tools (63%) related to diversity and inclusion.
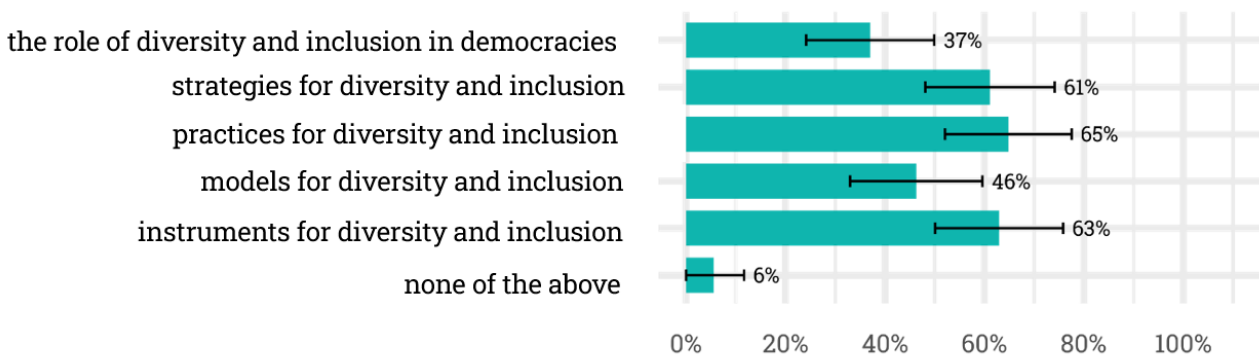
Figure 31. "In the activity, I learned something about ..." **(participants in youth workers' projects)**

However, youth workers' project teams most often reported that projects addressed the role of diversity and inclusion in democracies (51%), which was the the topic youth workers' project participants least frequently reported learning something about (see the figure above).
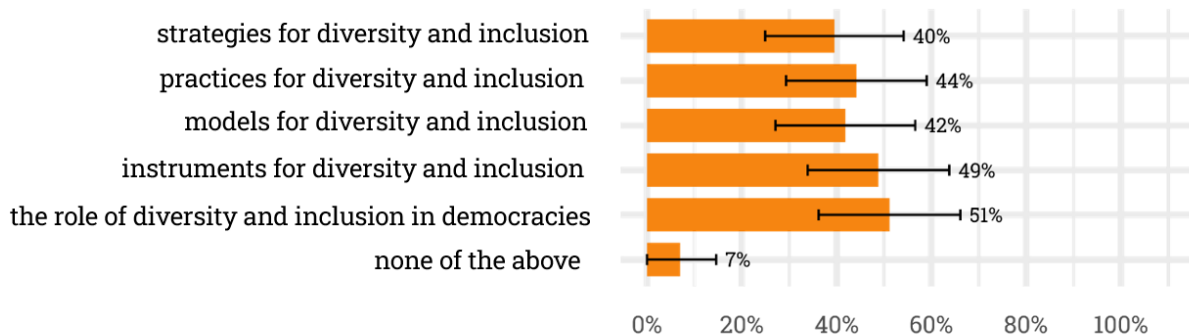
Figure 32. Project teams' percpetion on diversity and inclusion-related topics in youth workers' projects. "Throughout the project, we explored ... " **(project teams)**

Behaviour and attitudes

Nearly 60% of participants in both youth and youth workers' projects feel that after the project, **they support diversity as much as before the project**. Also, more than half of the participants found that the project did not have a particular impact on the **extent to which they stand up against discrimination and intolerance**: 65.8% of youth project participants and 61.1% of youth workers' project participants indicated that they stand up against it after the project to the same extent as before.

Participants were also asked about the extent to which the project influenced **them to actively stand up for their rights**: 57.9% of participants in youth projects and 57.4% in youth workers' projects indicated that after the project they actively stand up for their rights to the same extent as before. 42.1% of participants in youth projects and 40.7% of participants in youth workers' projects reported doing so more than before.

Here too, project teams seem a little more optimistic about the effects of the project than participants' own accounts suggest (Table 10), but when comparing participants' and project teams' perceptions, it is also important to bear in mind the differences in question wording and scales. Namely, the survey asked participants to focus on active behaviours ("I actively support…", "I actively stand up against…"), but project teams were asked to rate whether participants were better *able to* engage in these activities after the project. This may differ from project teams' perception of whether participants actually engage in these activities after the project.

	Youth projects (% „more than before")	Youth workers' projects (% „more than before")	Project teams (% "After the project, participants are better able to..." - "agree"/" agree strongly")
…actively support diversity	39,5	44,4	93
….actively stand up against discrimination and intolerance	34,2	37,0	90,7
…actively stand up for my own rights	42,1	40,7	90,5

Table 10. Impact of projects on participants' attitudes and behaviours related to diversity and inclusion. Comparison of participants' and project team's responses.

5.4.2. Priority reflected in the project implementation

The results show that the **barriers to inclusion in** youth projects **are usually successfully overcome** and **participants feel well integrated into youth projects**. 83.8% of participants in youth projects indicated that they felt well integrated into the project ("agree" or "agree strongly"). In addition, participants in youth projects were asked to rate whether they observed or experienced any barriers to inclusion in the project and if these were overcome. 82.2% of the participants who had experienced or observed barriers in youth projects reported that the barriers were overcome during the project.

5.5. Digitalisation

The third priority of the programme is to support participants in acquiring the digital competences needed to cope with everyday life, work and learning in today's world, as well as to participate actively in civil society.[16]

5.5.1. Effects related to the priority

Knowledge

Of the digitalisation-related topics surveyed in RAY MON[17] , 88% of youth project participants reported learning about communication and collaboration and 75% about problem solving. Fewer participants mentioned learning about more explicitly digitalisation-related topics such as information and data literacy and digital content creation (Figure 33).
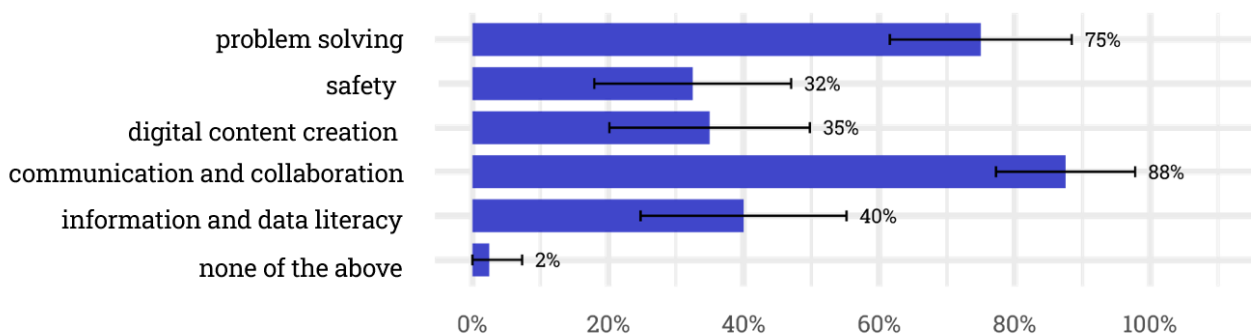
Figure 33. „In the project, I learned something about …" **(youth project participants)**

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[16] https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/programme-guide/part-a/priorities-of-the-erasmus-programme

[17] In the beginning of the module on digitalisation, respondents were informed in the RAY MON questionnaire that the following questions explore digitalisation in connection with the project, so the more general topics listed in the figure (Figure 10) can be interpreted in the context of digitalisation (e.g., digital safety or digital communication and collaboration). At the same time, it is important to keep in mind that respondents may have had a broader understanding of the topics covered in this module of the survey and may have answered accordingly.

As in the case of the knowledge related to the two previous programme priorities, youth workers' project participants most often reported learning about the instruments related to the priority: 44% of youth workers' project participants learned something about instruments for digitalisation during the activity (Figure 34). Moreover, it is noteworthy that more than a 28% did not report learning anything about any of the topics related to digitalisation. This is a higher share of respondents reporting learning nothing than for the priorities of youth participation and diversity and inclusion, where only 8% and 6% respectively did not report learning anything about the topics surveyed in relation to the programme priority. The results may suggest that digitalisation is less reflected in projects or that the methods used to deal with them are less effective than for the other programme priorities.
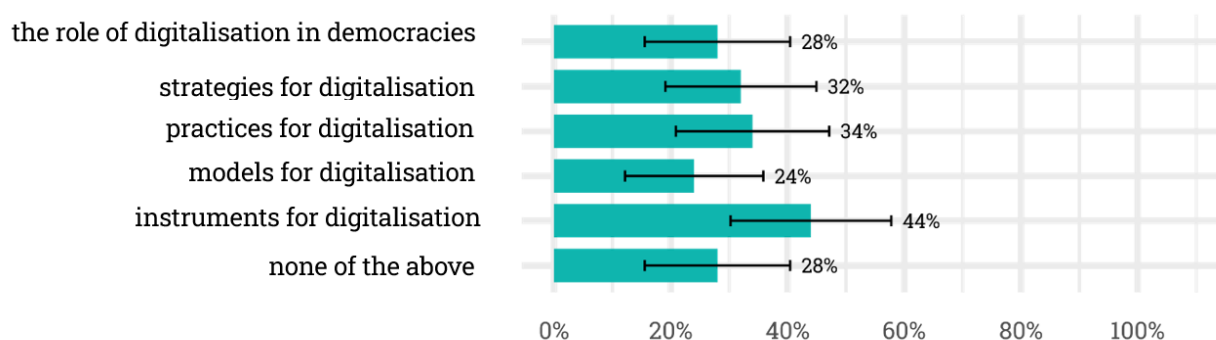
Figure 34. "In the activity, I learned something about …" (**participants in youth workers' projects**).

Behaviour and attitudes

In the context of European youth programmes, digital well-being refers to the ongoing impact of digital technologies and processes on people's mental, physical and emotional health.[18] More than a third of participants in both youth and youth workers' projects **report being able to take better care of their digital well-being after the project** (35.9% and 35.3% respectively). As for the previous priorities, project teams' assessment of the impact of the project is slightly more optimistic, with 62.6% of project team members indicating that participants are better able to take care of their digital well-being after the project.

5.5.2. Priority reflected in the project implementation

The digital priority of the project is reflected in the participants' satisfaction with the use of digital spaces and the way digitality was reflected in the project. Project team members and participants in youth projects are more satisfied with the use of digital spaces in the project

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[18] https://participationpool.eu/resource-category/digital-transformation/digital-well-being/

(Figure 35). There is slightly more variation in satisfaction with the use of digital spaces among participants in youth workers' projects.

Satisfaction with how digitality was reflected in the project is also slightly higher among youth project participants and project team members (both 'agree' or 'agree strongly' 75%) and lower among youth workers' project participants (64% 'agree' or 'agree strongly').
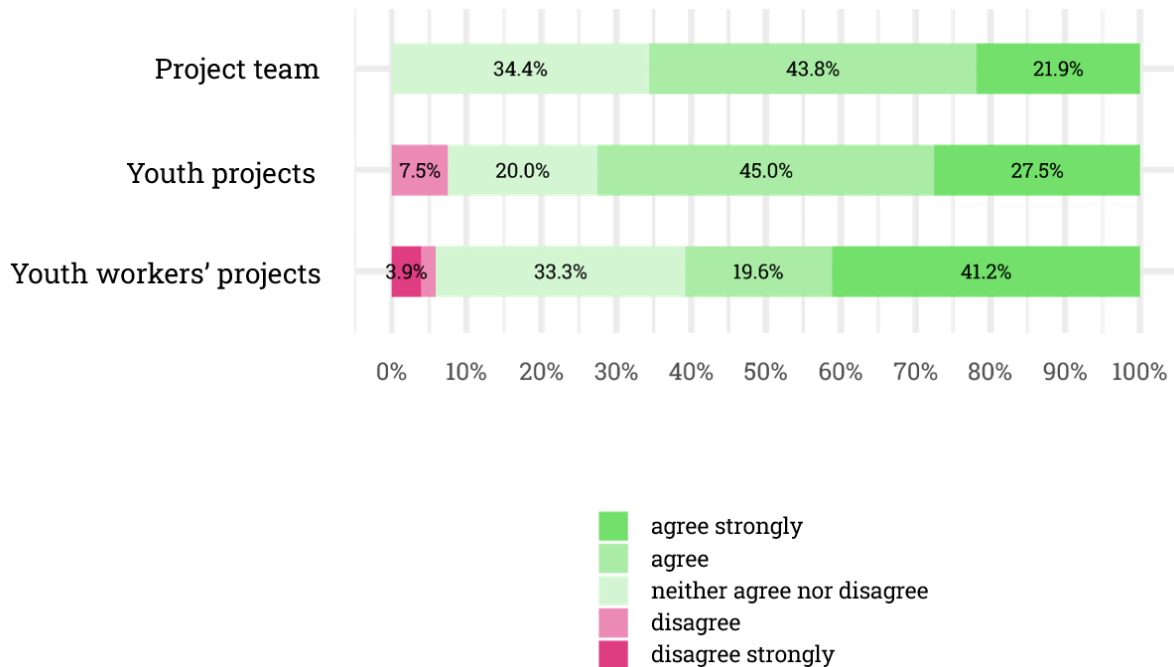
Figure 35. Participants' satisfaction with the use of digital spaces in the project. "I was satisfied with how the project/activity used digital spaces." Share of respondents (%).

5.6. Sustainability

In line with the European Union's environmental priorities, the Erasmus+ Youth programme also expects projects to address the development of knowledge, skills and attitudes related to climate change and sustainable development. In addition to the competences developed in projects, the teams are also expected to pay attention to environmental issues, sustainable consumption and transport choices in the organisation of the project.[19, 20]

[19] https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/programme-guide/part-a/priorities-of-the-erasmus-programme

[20] https://euroopanoored.ee/kvaliteet/prioriteedid/keskkonnahoid/

5.6.1. Effects related to the priority

Knowledge

The responses of participants in youth projects (Figure 36) indicate that participants mostly learned about sustainable development as a social issue (64%). At the same time, almost a quarter (22%) of participants in youth projects indicated that they did not learn anything about sustainable development (Figure 36). This is a higher share of participants than for knowledge on other programme priorities, such as youth participation and diversity and inclusion, where only 6%-8% of participants indicated that they did not learn about any of the topics related to the priority.
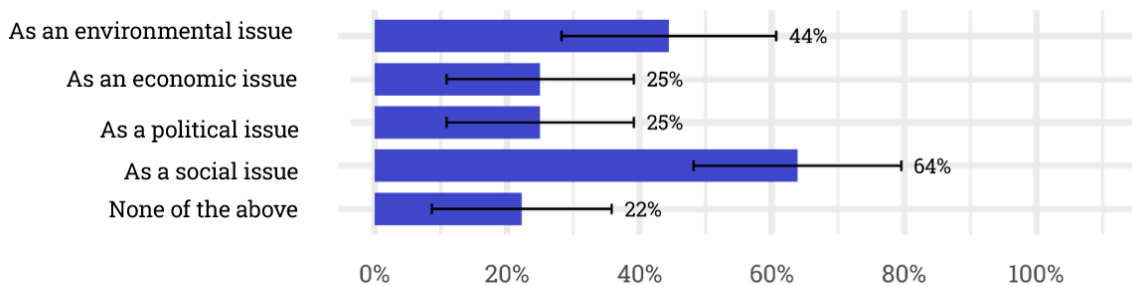
Figure 36. „In the project, I learned something about sustainable development…" **(youth project participants)**.

Figure 37 shows that the project teams' view of the sustainable development issues addressed in the projects reflects the experiences of the participants quite well: most often, projects were reported to have addressed sustainable development as a social or environmental issue, and less often as a political or an economic issue.
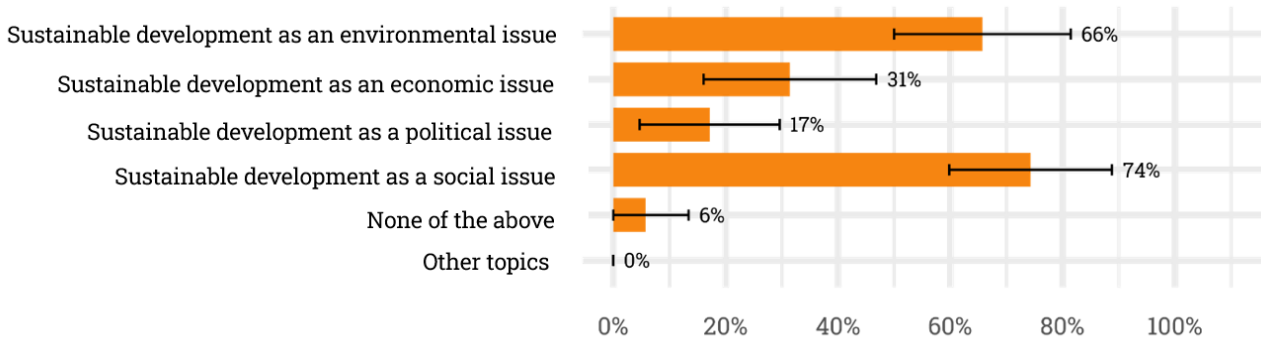
Figure 37. Project teams' views on how sustainability was addressed in youth projects. " In the project, we addressed the following topics related to sustainability …." **(project teams)**

In youth workers' projects, project teams reported to have explored (Figure 39) and youth workers reported to have learned (Figure 38) the most about instruments for sustainable development. At the same time, a significant proportion of participants in youth workers' projects (18%) also indicated that they did not learn about any of the listed sustainable

development topics, and 17% of project team members also indicated that none of the listed sustainable development topics were explored in their project. As the results indicate that the projects had effects on participants' sustainability-related behaviour and attitudes (see below under 'Behaviour and attitudes'), there might be problems with the wording or translation of the question and/or reponse options. Respondents may not have been able to identify the sustainability-related topics addressed in the project among the options offered. At the same time, we discussed earlier that the projects were also generally reported to reflect sustainabilty and digitalisation less than participation and diversity and inclusion.
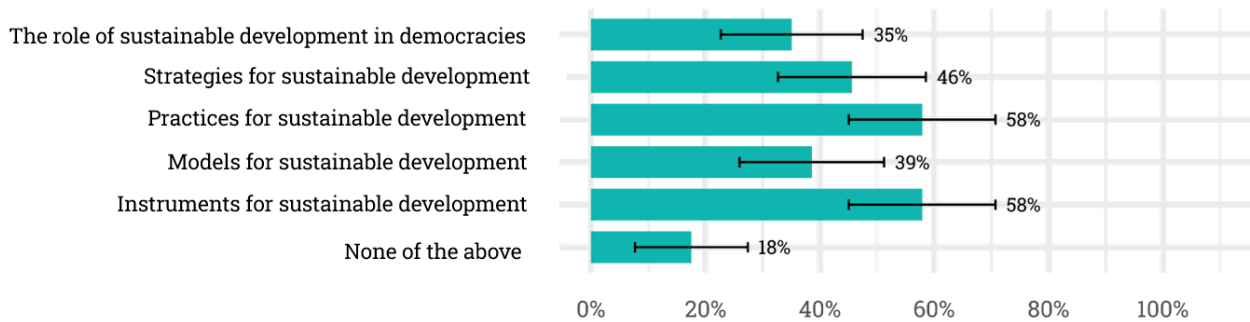
Figure 38. Knowledge related to sustainable development **in youth workers' projects**. " In the activity I learned something about..."
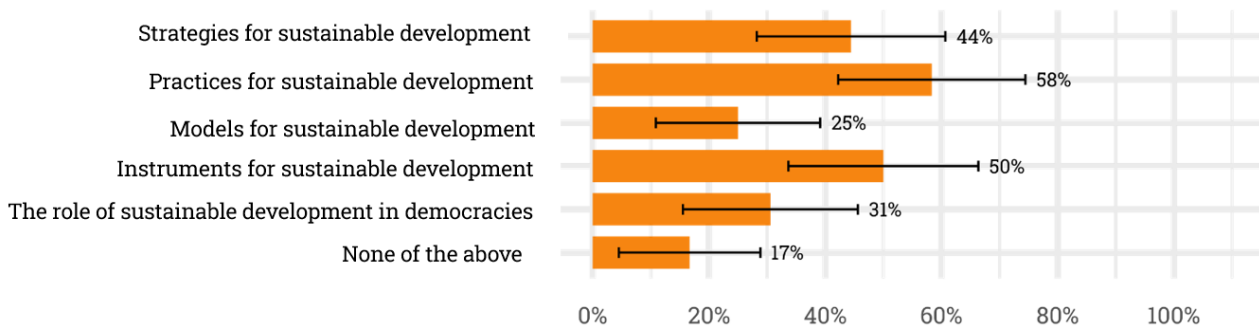
Figure 39. Project teams' views on addressing sustainable development issues in youth work projects. "Throughout the project, we explored..." **(Project teams)**

Behaviour and attitudes

The results on sustainability-related attitudes and behaviour are somewhat contradictory. On one hand, it appears that youth projects may have a somewhat greater impact on participants' attitudes compared to youth workers' projects, as **58.4% of youth project participants and 40.3% of youth workers' project participants found that participating in a project made them more sensitive to environmental issues.** Of the project team members, 69.5% ("agree" or " agree strongly") felt that the project made participants more sensitive towards sustainability and climate issues.

At the same time, the analysis of the self-reported behaviour of the participants reveals that, for all three studied behaviours, it is the participants in youth workers' projects who are more

likely to engage in the activities after the project (Table 11). It is possible that, regardless of the attitudes developed in the project, youth project participants face more challenges in putting their attitudes into practice, i.e., actively contributing to society and politics. This stem from lower educational level, younger age or less experience compared to participants in youth workers' projects.

	Youth projects (% „more than before")	Youth workers' projects (% "more than before")	Project teams (% "After the project, participants are better able to…" - "agree"/"agree strongly").
…actively contribute to environmental sustainability in my everyday life	19.4	35.7	63.9
…. I actively push for environmental sustainability in society	19.4	33.3	66.6
…I actively push for environmental sustainability .in politics	20.0	22.8	58.4

Table 11. Effect of projects on participants' sustainability-related behaviours.

5.6.2. Priority reflected in project implementation

In addition to the development of sustainabilty-related competences, they survey asked youth project participants to rate the environmental sustainability of the project. More than a quarter of respondents (27.8%) felt that the project could have been more environmentally sustainable ("agree" or "agree strongly").

6. Effects on organisations and local communities

While EU youth programmes aim to create positive change beyond the young people and youth workers directly involved in the projects, previous studies have found that the wider impact of projects is difficult to detect by surveying participants, as more systemic changes take time.[21] In this chapter, we examine the effects of projects on the organisations involved and the local communities in which the projects took place.

6.1. Effects on organisations

Figure 40 shows that out of all three analysed groups, it was the project team members who most often reported that the project had an impact on their organisation or network. As many as 90.1% of project team members reported that their participation already had impact on their organisation/network ("agree" or "agree strongly"). 64.9% of youth workers' project participants reported and 58.2% of youth project participants reported an impact on their organisation/network. Considering that participants of youth projects might not be closely or regularly involved in the work of the project partner organisation from their country, these results are not surprising. Youth project participants were also the most likely to indicate that this question was not relevant for them ("not applicable").

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[21] https://researchyouth.net/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/RAY-MON_Research-Report-20192020.pdf
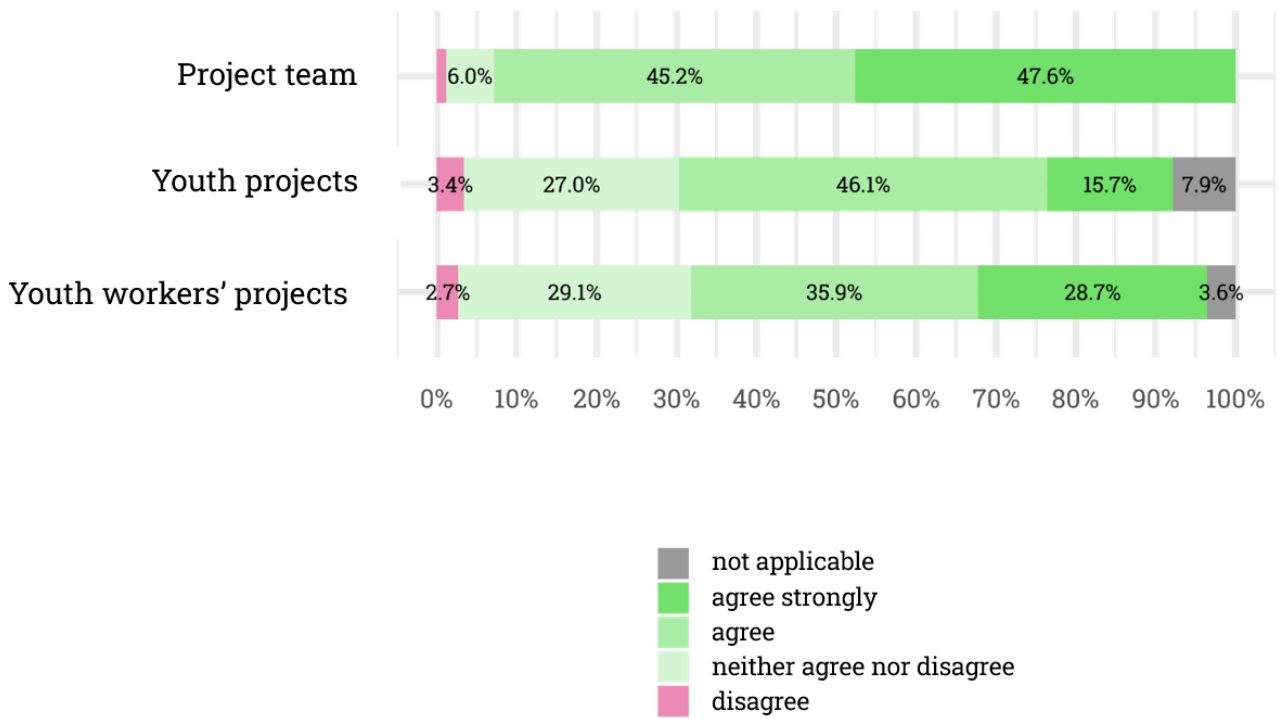
Figure 40. The effects of projects organisations. Comparison of youth and youth workers' project participants and project teams.

6.2. Effects on local communities

The effects of projects on local communities were assessed by project teams. Project team members were asked to rate how **actively the local community was involved in the project** (on a scale of 0 - "not at all"; 10 - "very much"; Figure 41). 20,5% respondents rated the local community's involvement with a maximum 10-point score (M = 7.38, SD = 2.26).
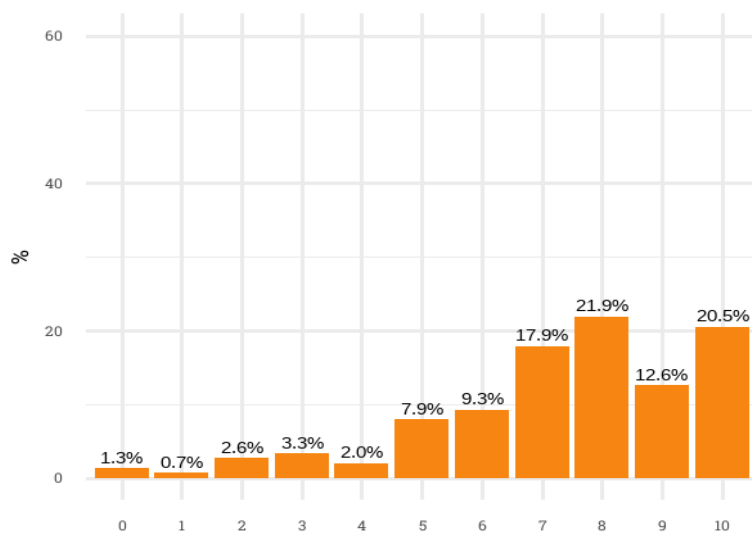
Figure 41. " In your experience, how actively involved was the local community in the project?" (**project team**)

80.6% of project team members indicated that the **local community has shown interest to support similar activities in the future** ("agree" or "agree strongly") and 84.8% agreed that the local **community appreciated the intercultural dimension of the project**.

7. Implementation of projects

7.1. Learning about the project opportunity

There are some differences in the ways youth workers and young people find out about project opportunities (Figure 42). Youth workers most often reported finding out about mobility opportunities through organisations and social media, but also from friends and colleagues. However, most youth project participants found out about the opportunity through friends or organisations. The results suggest that the use of the National Agency's and Eurodesk channels to find out about project opportunities is very low.
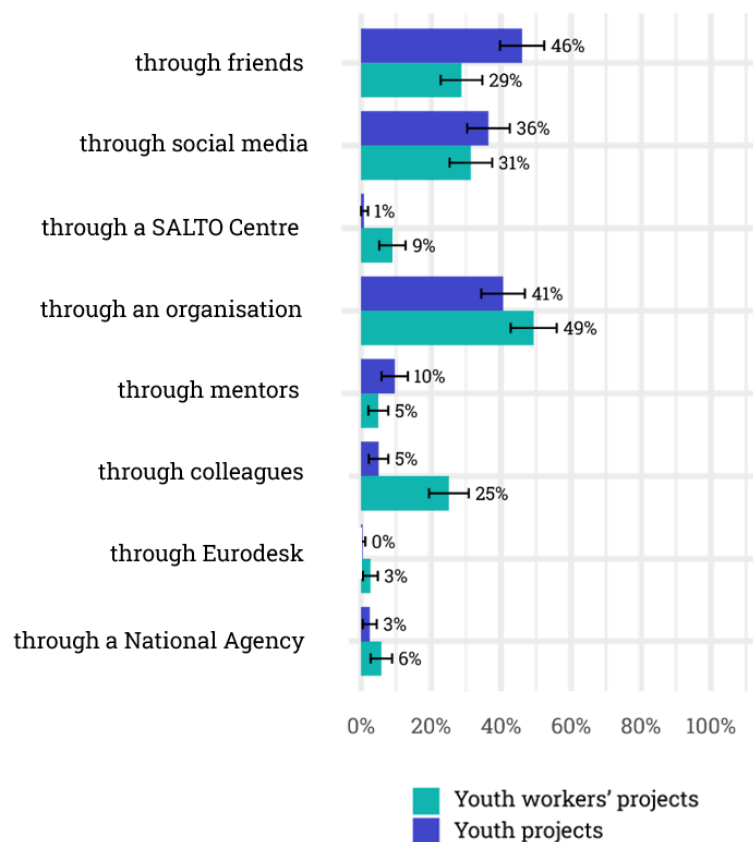
Figure 42. „I got to know about the project…" Share of respondents (%), multiple choice.

7.2. Project teams, project management and the application process

Project team

Erasmus+ Youth project teams are mainly composed of youth workers, youth leaders, managers and trainers (Figure 43). The vast majority of them have up to 10 years of experience in the youth field (Table 12). 21.1% of project team members defined their role in the project as

mainly educational, 30.3% as organisational and 48.7% as equally educational and organisational.

Work experience in years	1 year	2-4 years	5-7 years	8-10 years	over 10 years
%	2,9	22,9	25,0	23,6	25,7

Table 12. Experience of project team members in the youth field. "For how many years have you been involved in the youth field, approximately?"
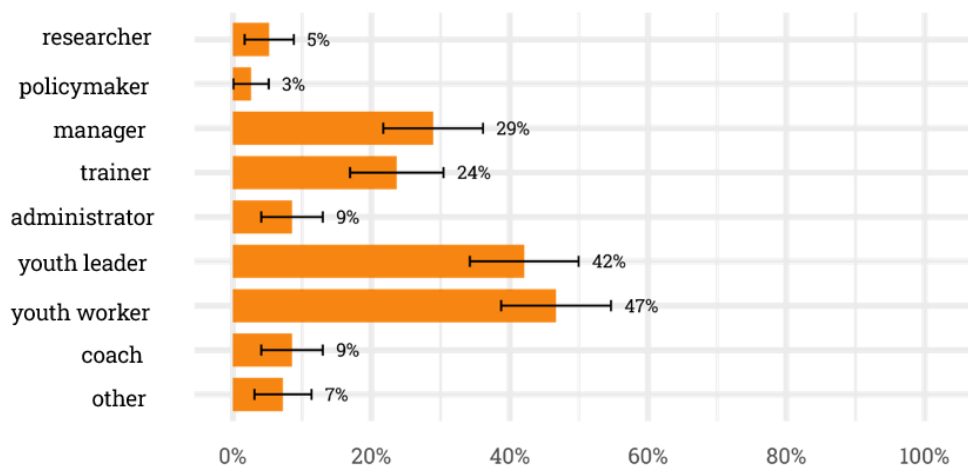
Figure 43. Roles of project team members in the youth field (up to three options could be selected).

Project management and application process

On a scale of 0 to 10 (0 - "not at all", 10 - "very"), project team members rated different aspects of project management (Figure 44 to Figure 47). From all aspects related to the application process and project management, project team members rated cooperation in the project team (M = 8.93, SD = 1.58) and cooperation between all project partners (M = 8.84, SD = 1.50) the most positively. Project administration was perceived slightly more negatively (more difficult) than other aspects (M=7.55, SD = 2.10).
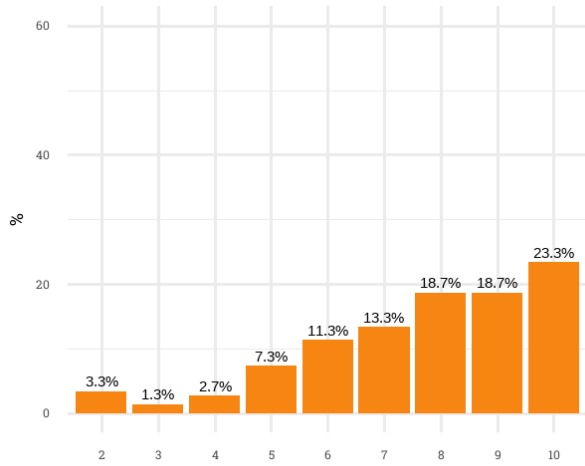
Figure 44. In your assessment, how easy was the overall application process? (**project team**)
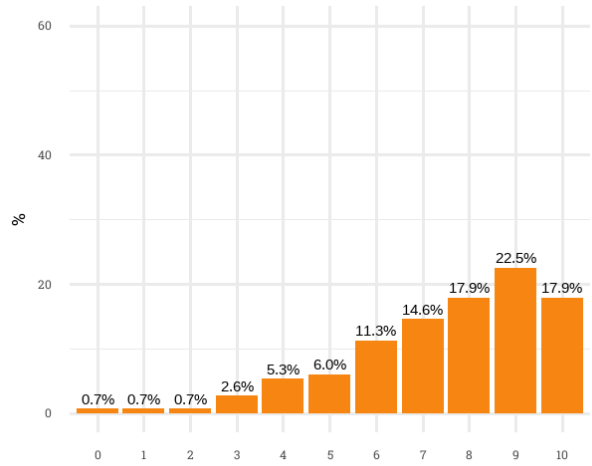
Figure 45. In your assessment, how easy was the project administration? (**project team**)
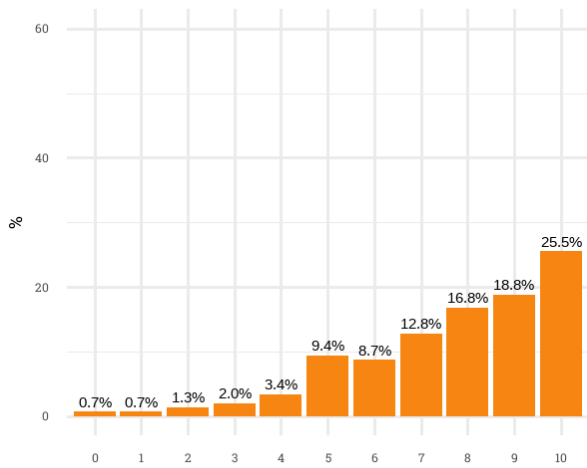
Figure 46. In your assessment, how adequate was the project funding? (**project team**)
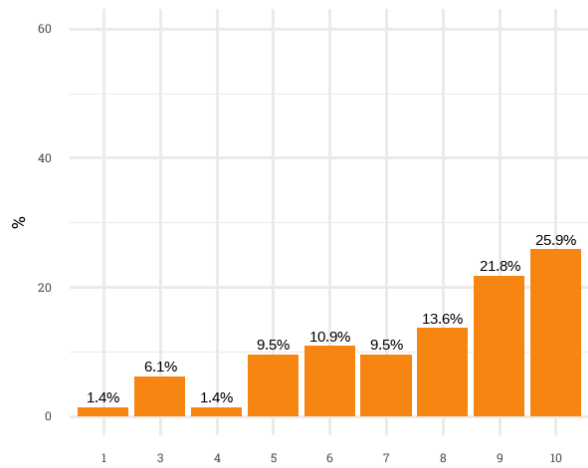
Figure 47. In your assessment, how reliable were the programme's online tools? (**project team**)
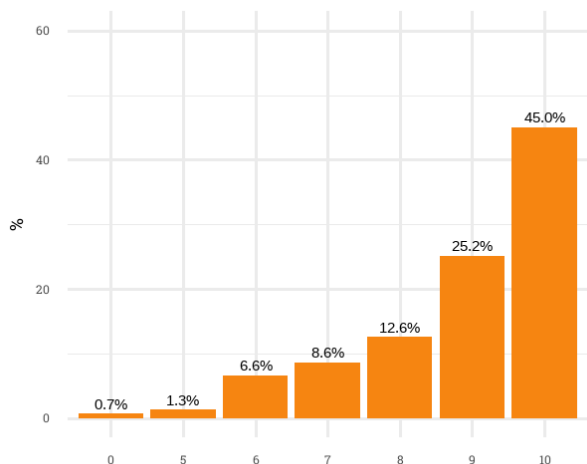
Figure 48. In your experience, how well did the cooperation between all partners work? (**project team**)
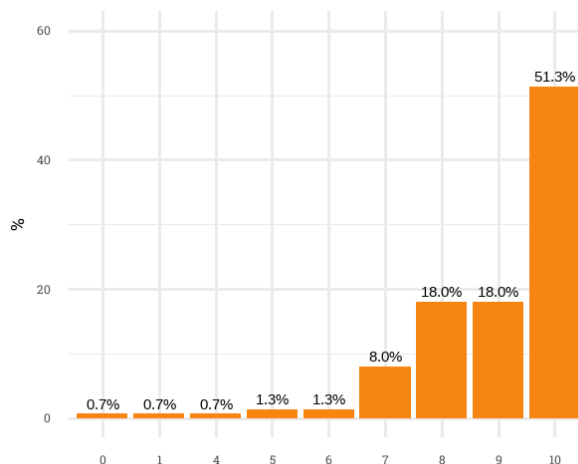
Figure 49. In your experience, how well did the cooperation in the project team work? (**project team**)

7.3. Youthpass

The results show that the Youthpass is well integrated into the projects and that the vast majority of participants receive a Youthpass at the end of their project. However, a large number of participants have not used the Youthpass after the project.

83.1% of participants in youth projects and 77.1% of participants in youth workers' projects received a youthpass in the project (Table 13). In the previous three study cycles (2015-2020), on average 80.9% of participants in youth exchanges and 82.4% of participants in youth workers' mobility projects received a Youthpass,[22] so there has been no major change in the integration of Youthpass.

	Youth projects (%)	Youth workers' projects (%)
Yes	83,1	77,1
Not yet, but I am expecting to receive one	6,4	13,5
No	10,6	9,4

Table 13. Youthpass at the end of the project. Participants in youth and youth workers' projects (%). "Did you receive a Youthpass certificate as part of the project?"

[22] Salu, J., Haljasmets, K., Aps, J., Akkermann, C., Kaldmaa, K., & Pedjasaar, M. (2021). Erasmus+: Euroopa Noored programmi tulemuste ja mõju-uuring. Analüüs uuringutsüklite 2015/2016, 2017/2018 ja 2019/2020 põhjal. Stories For Impact OÜ & Haap Consulting OÜ. https://euroopanoored.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/RAY-MON-EE-analuusiraport_Final-19.02.21.pdf

Project team members were asked to rate how well Youthpass was integrated into the project (0 - "not at all"; 10 - "very well"): 42.7% rated the integration of Youthpass into the project with a maximum score of 10 (M=8.93).

As Youthpass is not only a process of self-analysis, but also a certificate of competences, participants were asked whether they had ever used Youthpass for this purpose. The results suggest that a large proportion of project participants have not used Youthpass, regardless of the type of activity (Table 14). However, almost a quarter of the participants in youth workers' projects have used Youthpass when applying for a job. Although it is not possible to say from the RAY MON data how many of the participants in youth workers' mobility projects actually work in the youth field, awareness of the Youthpass is probably highest in the youth field and this may play a role in its use in the job application process.

	Youth projects (%)	Youth workers' projects (%)
yes, to apply for further education	16,1	17,6
yes, to apply for a traineeship	5,9	15,4
yes, to apply for an internship	6,8	12,2
yes, to apply for a job	13,1	24,4
no	68,6	57,9

Table 14. Use of the Youthpass after the project. Participants in youth and youth workers' projects (%). " Have you ever used a Youthpass certificate?"

8. Summary and conclusions

8.1. Summary of key findings

In this chapter, we present the key findings for each surveyed group: youth project participants, youth workers' project participants and project teams.

Youth project participants

- 60.4% youth project participants identified as female and 33% as male.

- More than half of the participants have participated in similar European projects before, and the most common ways of finding out about project opportunity are through friends (46%), organisations (41%) and social media (36%). Only 0-3% of participants in youth projects found out about the project opportunity through Eurodesk or the National Agency.

- Three out of four respondents live in cities.

- Youth projects are organised by people with a fairly high level of education. 42.8% of youth project participants and 71.3% of project team members in youth projects hold a higher education degree.

- In terms of employment status, the majority (65%) of participants in youth projects were in education, 28% of participants were in paid work and 25% were volunteering. Among project team members, 65.2% were in paid work and 31.2% in education.

- 17.9% of participants and 17% of project team members reported belonging to a minority group.

- The proportion of people with fewer opportunities among participants in youth projects is higher (44.3%) than among project team members (28.3%). Not having enough money was the most frequently reported barrier among participants with fewer opportunities.

- More than 80% of participants joined the project to gain new experiences or learn something new.

- Compared to youth workers' projects, participants in youth projects more frequently rate the extent to which they enjoyed the project with a maximum score.

- More than half of the participants learned something about cooperating with others, acting upon opportunities, expressing themselves with empathy,

expressing ideas creatively, applying logical thinking and using different languages for communication.

- More than 80% of the participants reported improving their ability to get along with people from different cultural backgrounds, to reflect and think critically, to communicate with people speaking another language and to negotiate joint solutions when there are different viewpoints.

- 86% of participants feel more confident after the project and 79% more empathetic.

- Results show that among the four key priorities of the Erasmus+ Youth programme (Digitalisation, Participation, Diversity and Inclusion, Sustainability), youth projects predominantly reflect Participation and Diversity and Inclusion.

- Youth project participants feel that the projects have an effect on their participation and civic competences, e.g., 60.8% of participants report engaging in civil society more after the project.

- The programme priority of Participation is reflected in the way youth projects are organised: over 80% of participants felt they could contribute their ideas and views to the project.

- Project team members are more optimistic about the effects of projects than participants. While over 90% of project team members in youth projects reported that participants are be better able to stand up against discrimination and intolerance after the project, only slightly more than a third of participants indicated that they actively stand up against discrimination and intolerance more after the project.

- The priority of Diversity and Inclusion is reflected in the organisation of youth projects, and the results suggest that barriers to inclusion in projects are being successfully overcome. 82.2% of the participants who had experienced or noticed obstacles to inclusion in youth projects agreed that they were overcome in the project.

- While 58.4% of participants found that the project made them more sensitive to environmental issues, this change in attitude does not necessarily translate to changes in behaviour: after the project, about a fifth of participants reported actively contributing to environmental sustainability in their daily lives more than before the project. Also, about 20% reported actively standing up for environmental sustainability in society more than before the project.

- Although more than 80% of the participants received a Youthpass in the end of the project, 68.6% of these participants have not (yet) used the Youthpass.

Youth workers' project participants

- Most participants in youth workers' mobility projects identify as female (64.9%).

- 82% of participants lived in urban areas and 14% in rural areas.

- Three in four of participants have been involved in similar projects before.

- Participants most often learn about youth workers' projects opportunities through organisations (49%) and social media (31%), but also from friends (29%) and colleagues (25%). Eurodesk or National Agency were mentioned by 3-6% of participants as the source of finding out about the opportunity.

- 77.1% of participants received a Youthpass at the end of the project. 57.9% of these participants have never used their Youthpass and a quarter of them have used their Youthpass when applying for a job.

- Almost three in four of participants have a higher education degree. Almost all of the youth workers' projects team members have tertiary degrees (97.5%).

- 55% of participants were in employment, 38% in education, 30% volunteering and 17% identified as unemployed. The data do not allow to distinguish how many of the employed participants are working in the youth field, i.e., are the actual target group of youth workers' mobility projects.

- Nearly a third of participants belong to a minority group and almost half of participants are participants with fewer opportunities. Most of them perceive their economic situation or social background as a barrier to to equal opportunities in life.

- The most popular reasons for joining the project were to gain new experiences and learn something new. Fewer people joined youth workers' projects in order to have fun or to address sociopolitical challenges.

- Out of all youth work competences, participants reported learning about about non-formal education the most and youth policy the least.

- 87% of participants indicated that through their participation they became more aware of the competences they wanted to develop further and 81% felt that the project had already had an impact on their youth work.

- Projects also have an effect on youth workers' organisations and networks: 64.9% of participants reported that their participation already had an effect on their organisation/network.

- Considering the four horizontal priorities of the programme, youth workers' projects were more often perceived as participatory and inclusive and less as digital or sustainable.

- 28% of participants felt they did not learn about any of the surveyed topics related to digitalisation, and 18% felt they did not learn about any of the surveyed sustainability topics. For topics related to participation and diversity and inclusion, only 6-8% of the participants reported they did not learn about any of the topics related to these priorities.

- The results indicate practical orientation of youth workers' projects. Project participants reported learning the most about instruments related to programme priorities and less, e.g., about the role of project priorities in democracy.

- 40.3% of participants found that their participation in the project made them more sensitive to environmental issues. More than a third of the participants reported actively contributing to environmental sustainability in their daily lives more after the project and also actively standing up for environmental sustainability in society more after the project.

Project team members

- Project team members have a high level of education. 71.3% of youth project and 97.5% of youth workers' project team members have completed tertiary education.

- 85.8% of project team members have organised similar European projects before. This share has almost doubled compared to previous survey cycles.

- The majority of project team members were in employment, nearly a third in education and one in four were volunteering. Most project team members have up to 10 years of experience in the youth field. In terms of occupations, youth workers (47%), youth leaders (42%), managers (29%) and trainers (24%) are the most common roles of project team members.

- Almost half of the project team members contributed equally to the project in both an educational and an organisational role (48.7%), 21.1% defined their role as only educational and 30.3% only organisational.

- 17% of project team members of youth projects and 32.5% project team members of youth workers' projects belong to a minority group. Linguistic or ethnic minorities were most frequently reported minority gorups.

- People with fewer opportunities make up 28.4% of project team members. Half of the project teams members with fewer opportunities perceive obstacles in their lives due to not having enough money, 35% due to their social background and 35% due to their family responsibilities.

- 90.1% of project team members felt that their participation in the project had already had an impact on their network or organisation.

- Project team members learned something new about young people's reality (69%), non-formal learning (69%), organisational learning and development (65%) and youth work (69%). Learning about youth policy was reported less (16%).

- Considering the general objectives of Erasmus+, projects were perceived by project teams as contributing most to supporting participants' personal (84%) and educational development (78%), and strengthening active citizenship (74%). Less frequently, project teams mentioned advancing youth policy cooperation (44%) as an objective that the project contributed to.

- Of the strategic objectives of the Erasmus+ Youth, projects were perceived by project teams as contributing more to organisational-level objectives and less to policy-level objectives. The most commonly reported objectives by project teams

were to promote non-formal learning mobility (58%), to promote active participation of young people (55%) and to strengthen cooperation at organisational level. At the same time, strengthening quality at the level of policies was reported by 5%, strengthening cooperation at the level of policies by 4% and strengthening innovation at the level of policies by 5% of project team members.

- The project teams were slightly more optimistic about the effects of projects related to the four horizontal priorities of the programme (Participation, Diversity and Inclusion, Digitalisation, Sustainability) than the participants' responses suggest. For example, more than 90% of project team members felt that participants would be better able to stand up for their rights or fight discrimination and intolerance after the project, but 34-42% of participants felt that they engage in these activities more than before the project.

- 80.6% of project team members indicated that the local community has shown an interest in supporting similar activities in the future and 84.8% agreed that the local community appreciated the intercultural dimension of the project.

- Regarding project management, project teams perceive cooperation within the project team and cooperation between project partners as the easiest. The administration related to the project is perceived as somewhat more complex than other aspects.

8.2. Conclusions: the effects of the programme on young people and youth work in Estonia

The aim of this study was to explore the effects of Erasmus+ Youth projects on the participants, project teams, the participating organisations and the local communities. Moreover, the study set out to analyse access to the programme's activities and to gain an insight into the profile of participants and the organisational aspects of the projects. For the analysis, we used data from RAY MON (Research-based analysis and monitoring of Erasmus+ Youth in Action) in Estonia, which is a survey carried out by the international RAY network.

The Estonian dataset included responses of participants who were from Estonia or had participated in projects funded by the Estonian National Agency.

Effects on the knowledge, skills and attitudes of young people and youth workers

The four horizontal priorities of the Erasmus+ programme, which are also factored into the evaluation of project funding applications, are (1) Participation, (2) Diversity and Inclusion, (3) Digitalisation and (4) Sustainability. In participants' perceptions, Participation and Diversity and Inclusion were the most reflected in the projects. However, the analysis indicated that the projects still develop knowledge, attitudes and behaviours related to all priorities.

International youth projects play an important role in promoting active citizenship among young people in Estonia, both by activating young people themselves and by developing the civic education competences of Estonian youth workers. 60.8% of youth project participants found that they were more engaged in civil society after the project and 72% of youth workers' project participants learned something new about tools for active participation. Although the analysis also includes the responses of participants from other countries who took part in projects funded by the Estonian National Agency, the impact of the projects on young people's participation and active citizenship is especially significant in the Estonian context, where young people have for many years been characterised by high levels of civic knowledge but low levels of civic participation.[23, 24] Thus, in addition to improving young people's knowledge on society, international youth mobility projects can also activate Estonian young people to apply this knowledge and to contribute more actively to civil society. Developing the knowledge of youth workers on how to support youth participation is also important for the sector, especially given that supporting active citizenship of young people has been identified

[23] Toots, A. (toim.) (2017). Noorte kodanikukultuur muutuvas maailmas. Eesti tulemused IEA Rahvusvahelises Kodanikuhariduse Uuringus (ICCS 2016). Tallinn, Tartu: TLU, HTM. https://www.hm.ee/sites/default/files/documents/2022-10/iccs_2016_eesti_raport_211217_loplik.pdf

[24] Ümarik, M. (toim.) (2023). NOORTE HÄÄL DEMOKRAATIA KRIISIS: KODANIKUHARIDUSE VÄLJAKUTSED. IEA 2022. aasta rahvusvahelise kodanikuhariduse uuringu (ICCS 2022) Eesti tulemused. Tallinn: Tallinna Ülikool. https://www.hm.ee/sites/default/files/documents/2023-11/ICCS%202022%20Eesti%20raport%2028.11.pdf?fbclid=IwAR27LxugTUrvSEz-hUEk0GrPAoQ7LDJ1TYy97SIRDKjkENPUqTaUsxZh9sk

by Estonian youth workers as one of the weakest components of their youth work competences.[25]

While more than a third of all participants felt that they were better able to take care of their digital well-being after the project, there is room for improvement in integrating digital solutions into projects. More than one in four participants in youth workers' mobility projects (28%) reported not learning about any of the surveyed digitalisation-related topics. This is a higher proportion than for the other horizontal priorities (e.g., Participation, Diversity and Inclusion), where only 6-8% of respondents reported not learning about any topics related to the particular priority. The results may suggest that digitalisation is less reflected in projects or that the methods used to address digitalisation are less effective. This also reflects the situation of digitalisation in the youth field in Estonia more broadly. Namely, previous studies have highlighted Estonian youth workers' hesitations regarding the use of digital tools in youth work,[26] low digital competence of youth workers[27] as well as the need for a better understanding of the meaning and concept of digital competence in youth work in Estonia.[28]

Accessibility of the programme

Participants belonging to minority groups and participants with fewer opportunities make up a large share of project participants. For example, almost a third of participants in youth workers' mobility projects belong to a minority group, most of on the basis of their nationality, language or gender. More than 40% of participants in both youth and youth workers' projects identified as participants with fewer opportunities. The largest proportion of them experience barriers in their lives for economic reasons and at least a quarter of participants with fewer opportunities experience barriers due to health problems.

At the same time, however, the level of education of participants in both youth and youth workers' projects remains high, and the number of participants in youth projects with higher education has even increased compared to previous survey cycles. In addition, more than half of the participants in youth projects and three in four participants in youth workers' mobility projects are people who have already participated in similar projects. On the one hand, this

[25] Käger, M., Kivistik, K., & Tatar, M. (2017). Noorsootöötajate koolitusvajaduse uuring. Tartu: Balti Uuringute Instituut. https://www.ibs.ee/wp-content/uploads/Noorsoot%C3%B6%C3%B6tajate-koolitusvajaduse-uuring-2017.pdf

[26] Käger, M., Kaldur, K., Vollmer, M., Krenjova, J., Talur, P., & Hänni, L. (2016). Infotehnoloogiliste võimaluste rakendamine noorsootöös: uuringuaruanne. Tartu: Balti Uuringute Instituut, e-Riigi Akadeemia. https://www.ibs.ee/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Infotehnoloogiliste-voimaluste-rakendamine-noorsootoos-uuringuaruanne.pdf

[27] Käger, M., Kivistik, K., & Tatar, M. (2017). *Noorsootöötajate koolitusvajaduse uuring*. Tartu: Balti Uuringute Instituut. https://www.ibs.ee/wp-content/uploads/Noorsoot%C3%B6%C3%B6tajate-koolitusvajaduse-uuring-2017.pdf

[28] Kerner, K. (2019). Noorsootöötajate digipädevuste arendamine nutikas noorsootöös. Magistritöö. Tallinna Ülikool. https://www.etera.ee/s/CmT2aJHoXh

indicates that participants are satisfied with their previous project experience because they are motivated to participate again, but on the other hand, it might be a warning sign of projects becoming increasingly closed events, involving the same young people and youth workers over and over again. Such results point to the need to pay more attention to the inclusion of participants with lower educational levels. Moreover, at participant selection, organisations should make sure that the (high) educational level of young people and their previous project experience would not become prerequisites for participation.

Project organisation and management

The analysis of the administrative and organisational aspects of the projects revealed that project teams consider the administrative side of project management to be the most difficult. Cooperation within the project team and cooperation with project partners are perceived as the esiest. As many as 85.8% of project team members have organised similar projects before. This may indicate that experience plays an important role in successfully applying for funding and it is therefore important for the National Agencies to continue to support project teams with less experience, and with a particular focus on administrative aspects of the project.

Contribution to international youth policy

As mentioned above, mobility projects contribute to all four horizontal priorities of the programme, but the priorities differ in the extent to which they are reflected in the projects. In addition to the Erasmus+ programme priorities, mobility projects are expected to contribute to the European Youth Goals,[29] which are part of the EU Youth Strategy 2019-2027. The results show that projects in the Estonian context most clearly contribute to the following Youth Goals:

- **Connecting EU with Youth**, which also refers to young people's sense of belonging to the EU and its values. The results indicated that youth project participants feel closer to Europe after participating in the project.
- **Inclusive Societies and Space and Participation for All.** Inclusion and respect for diversity were very clearly reflected in the participants' project experiences. 82.2% of the participants who had experienced or noticed obstacles during their youth projects found that they were overcome during the project. Also, more than 80% of participants felt that they could contribute their ideas and views to the project.
- **Information and Constructive Dialogue,** including digital literacy and the ability to critically evaluate information. 40% of youth project participants gained information and data

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[29] https://youth-goals.eu/

literacy skills from the project and over a third of all participants felt that they could take better care of their digital well-being after the project.

- **Sustainable Green Europe.** 58.4% of youth project and 40.3% of youth workers' project participants reported that their participation made them more sensitive to environmental issues. For around a fifth of youth project participants and a third of youth workers' project participants, this attitude is also reflected in their behaviour, as they indicated that after the project they actively push for environmental sustainability in society or contribute to environmental sustainability in their daily lives.

The results of the survey suggest that there is still room for improvement in youth and youth workers' projects in relation to the next Youth Goals:

- **Equality of All Genders**. The aim of this analysis was not to compare the impact of projects on participants' skills, knowledge and attitudes, nor to assess project experiences by gender, but women make up the majority of participants and project teams. This highlights the need to pay more attention to the obstacles to participation of boys and men.
- **Moving Rural Youth Forward**. According to the results of the study, more than 70% of youth project participants and more than 80% of youth workers' project participants live in urban areas.

The programme's effects on the youth field in Estonia

The results show that Erasmus+ Youth contributes to the strategic objectives of the Estonian Youth Field Development Plan 2021-2035. As outlined above, youth projects activate young people to become more involved in civil society and develop civic education competences of youth workers, both of which have been identified in previous studies as bottlenecks of the youth field in Estonia.[30,31,32] Additionally, supporting young people's active citizenship is one of the policy strands of the Estonian Youth Field Development Plan.[33]

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[30] Toots, A. (toim.) (2017). Noorte kodanikukultuur muutuvas maailmas. Eesti tulemused IEA Rahvusvahelises Kodanikuhariduse Uuringus (ICCS 2016). Tallinn, Tartu: TLU, HTM. https://www.hm.ee/sites/default/files/documents/2022-10/iccs_2016_eesti_raport_211217_loplik.pdf

[31] Ümarik, M. (toim.) (2023). NOORTE HÄÄL DEMOKRAATIA KRIISIS: KODANIKUHARIDUSE VÄLJAKUTSED. IEA 2022. aasta rahvusvahelise kodanikuhariduse uuringu (ICCS 2022) Eesti tulemused. Tallinn: Tallinna Ülikool. https://www.hm.ee/sites/default/files/documents/2023-11/ICCS%202022%20Eesti%20raport%2028.11.pdf?fbclid=IwAR27LxugTUrvSEz-hUEk0GrPAoQ7LDJ1TYy97SIRDKjkENPUqTaUsxZh9sk

[32] Käger, M., Kivistik, K., & Tatar, M. (2017). Noorsootöötajate koolitusvajaduse uuring. Tartu: Balti Uuringute Instituut. https://www.ibs.ee/wp-content/uploads/Noorsoot%C3%B6%C3%B6tajate-koolitusvajaduse-uuring-2017.pdf

[33]Noortevaldkonna arengukava 2021–2035. Haridus- ja Teadusministeerium. https://valitsus.ee/media/4107/download

The results of the study also showed that **projects reflect well the strategic priority of the youth field in Estonia – taking into account young people's solutions and ideas.** The overwhelming majority of young people who participated in the projects felt that they could contribute their views and ideas to the project, and the results also showed a very high level of satisfaction among young people with the way their ideas were taken into account in the projects. Thus, for many young people, youth projects can be an important empowering space where they can practice and experience making their voice heard and having a say in decisions that affect them.

Erasmus+ Youth projects might be able to contribute to reducing exclusion in the broader field of youth work in Estonia. The results showed that participants clearly perceive the positive impact of projects on their ability to cooperate and interact with people from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds. In addition to the cultural diversity brought about by the international dimension of the projects, participants come from a wide range of backgrounds: almost half of the participants in youth workers' projects and over 40% in youth projects are (self-reported) participants with fewer opportunities. Previous research on social inclusion in youth work in Estonia has found that it is young people's inability to interact with youth from different backgrounds that causes exclusion and bullying, and that youth work activities with a diverse range of participants are more inclusive and open.[34] The result that participants also perceive the projects as highly meaningful and enjoyable experiences suggests that Erasmus+ Youth programme offers meaningful opportunities for young people and youth workers to interact with people from different backgrounds, which may also help to reduce exclusion in other youth work settings in Estonia, as young people learn to work with peers from different backgrounds.

The effect of the projects on the competences of youth workers is significant. However, the broader influence of the program on Estonian youth workers may be constrained by serious challenges within the field in Estonia, such as poor working conditions for youth workers and a generally low understanding and appreciation of youth work. Although the vast majority of youth workers' project participants improved their youth work competences and became more aware of their self-development needs, it should be noted that the impact of Erasmus+ Youth on the professional development of Estonian youth workers is limited by the overall situation in the youth field. It is not possible to say from RAY MON data how many of the participants in youth workers' projects are actually involved in the youth field on a daily basis. At the same time, other studies have pointed to limited further education opportunities for

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[34] Käger, M., Kivistik, K., & Avdonina, K. (2021). Avatud noorsootöö, huvihariduse ja huvitegevuste võimalused noorte, eelkõige tõrjutusriskis noorte, sotsiaalse kaasatuse suurendamiseks ning vajadused nende võimaluste arendamiseks. Lõpparuanne. Tartu: MTÜ Balti Uuringute Instituut. https://www.ibs.ee/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Lopparuanne-sotsiaalne-kaasatus.pdf

Estonian youth workers. For example, it has previously been found that only 22% of Estonian youth workers have access to international training opportunities, and youth workers also find it difficult to take part in trainings due to a lack of substitute staff caused by funding issues in the field.[35] This highlights the importance of considering the broader context when assessing the impact of Erasmus+ Youth on the professional development of Estonian youth workers.

The Erasmus+ Youth program could help shape youth policy in Estonia by empowering youth workers. However, to maximize this impact, the projects would need to focus more on policy-related topics among others. The results highlighted the empowering impact of Erasmus+ Youth projects, with examples such as 40.7% of youth workers' project participants reporting standing up for themselves more after the project than before. In Estonia, where not all local youth policy decision-makers grasp the significance of the youth field[36], the ability of youth workers to advocate for their well-being and rights is particularly vital. While systemic and policy-level knowledge of youth issues is valuable in this regard, participants reported less frequent exposure to such topics compared to others covered in the study.

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[35] Kivistik, K., Käger, M., Pesti, M., Juuse, L., Toomik, K., & Aavik, A.-L. (2023). Eesti noortevaldkonna töötajaskonna töötingimused. Uuringuaruanne. Tartu: MTÜ Balti Uuringute Instituut. DOI: 10.23657/wta2-4a85.

[36] *Ibid*.