

Influence of the Youth in Action Programme on youth sector in EECA and Programme Countries

Analytical report

Bartłomiej Biskup, Ph.D. – scientific editor

Andriy Pavlovych

Mateusz Jeżowski

Małgorzata Pawłowska

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The goal of the study is to examine the opinion on the Youth in Action Programme (YIA) among its participants and decision makers. Both Programme Countries and Neighbouring Partner Countries from Eastern Europe and Caucasus were taken under the study. The research was divided into two sections: quantitative and qualitative. Here are the main results of the research:

- The most popular type of activities were Youth Exchanges. European Voluntary Service as well as Training and Networking had similar numbers of indications. The majority of respondents admitted, that the staff number of their organisations increased and the image had somehow changed thanks to participation in Youth in Action projects. The main benefit of participation in Youth in Action projects are: establishing new international contacts, use of non-formal education methods and development of the organisation's scope of action.
- The respondents admitted that Youth in Action Programme had positive influence on the target group of their organisation. The main aspects of intercultural learning, developed by participation in Youth in Action projects, are: communication in foreign languages, learning to learn, social and civic competences, sense of initiative and entrepreneurship as well as cultural awareness and expression. The majority of the surveyed claimed that Youth in Action Programme had influence on educational working and tourist mobility. Finally the respondents admitted that participation in Youth in Action projects enhances young people's employability.
- The majority of respondents admitted, that they need to cooperate with other external partners, while implementing the Youth in Action projects. Usually their experience of cooperation with external partners was good or very good. The main challenges in such cooperation, indicated by surveyed were: bureaucratic obstacles, economical obstacles and communication obstacles.
- The main obstacles mentioned by the surveyed were communication problems, such as long waiting period for e-mail answers, language problems - especially in contact by Skype - and sometimes cultural differences.

- Furthermore there were some partnership challenges. On the one hand they were the result of cultural differences, on the other hand some organisations were not experienced enough in international projects.
- Almost all respondents admitted that their organisation had grown. Some of the foundations were able to afford employment of new persons, but some increased only the number of volunteers.
- International cooperation had a big influence on image of the organisation. Thanks to the promotion in the media, the organisations had an increase of new volunteers who would like to get involved in projects. The organisation were also recognized in their country.
- The interviewees presented several very inspiring success stories. Most of them were connected to student's exchanges – new country, learning new language, getting new job or gathering life experience. Some of them were about changes in human character - for instance shy people became more self – confident.
- The Youth Exchanges also changed people's life plan and collected experience was inspiration for beginning new activities in homeland.
- The interviewees' opinion about improvement of Youth in Action Programme can be divided into several groups: the first one is about bureaucracy problems (i.e. communication issues or visa procedures), the second one is connected with financial conditions. The last one is about promotion plan.

Youth in Action is the Programme the European Union has set up for young people. It aims to inspire a sense of active European citizenship, solidarity and tolerance among young Europeans and to involve them in shaping the Union's future. It promotes mobility within and beyond the EU's borders, non-formal learning and intercultural dialogue, and encourages the inclusion of all young people, regardless of their educational, social and cultural background. It also helps people working in the youth sector develop skills and establish contacts necessary to enhance their work.

Its general objectives are the following:

- Promote young people's active citizenship in general and their European citizenship in particular;
- Develop solidarity and promote tolerance among young people, in particular in order to foster social cohesion in the European Union;
- Foster mutual understanding between young people in different countries;
- Contribute to developing the quality of support systems for youth activities and the capabilities of civil society organisations in the youth field;
- Promote European cooperation in the youth field.

Activities supported by the Youth in Action Programme are divided into five Actions:

Action 1 - Youth for Europe (Including Youth Exchanges, Youth Initiatives and Youth Democracy)

Action 2 - European Voluntary Service

Action 3 - Youth in the World (Including Youth Exchanges and Training and Networking)

Action 4 - Youth Support Systems

Action 5 - Support for European cooperation in the youth field

Partners from neighbouring partner countries (South East Europe, Eastern Europe and Caucasus and EuroMed) can participate in and coordinate projects under Actions 2 and 3.1.

SALTO-Youth is a network of 8 Resource Centres working on European priority areas within the youth field. It provides youth work and training resources and organises training and contact-making activities to support organisations and National Agencies of the Youth in Action Programme within the frame of the European Commission's Youth in Action Programme and beyond. SALTO-YOUTH's history started in 2000 and is part of the European Commission's Training Strategy within the Youth in Action Programme and works in synergy and complementarity with other partners in the field.

I. Goals and methodology of the study.

1. Goals

The goal of the study is to examine the opinion on the Youth in Action Programme among its participants and decision makers. The following fields have been put under the study.

- Development and image of the youth organisations following the implementation of the YIA Programme
- Influence of the YIA Programme on the target groups indicated by the organisation participating in the Programme, especially on their mobility and employability
- Cooperation with other organisations and partners, as well as local and state authorities
- Prognosis on the future of the organisations and the development of the YIA Programme

2. Methodology

Both Programme Countries and Neighbouring Partner Countries from Eastern Europe and Caucasus were taken under the study. The research was divided into two sections: quantitative and qualitative.

The quantitative survey consisted of thirty questions divided into five parts: organisation profile, organisation development, influence on the target group of the organisation, organisation recognition, support of country authorities and the future of organisation. There were two types of responses in the survey: closed and open – ended ones. 480 respondents took part in the quantitative research. Participants were allowed not to respond to a question.

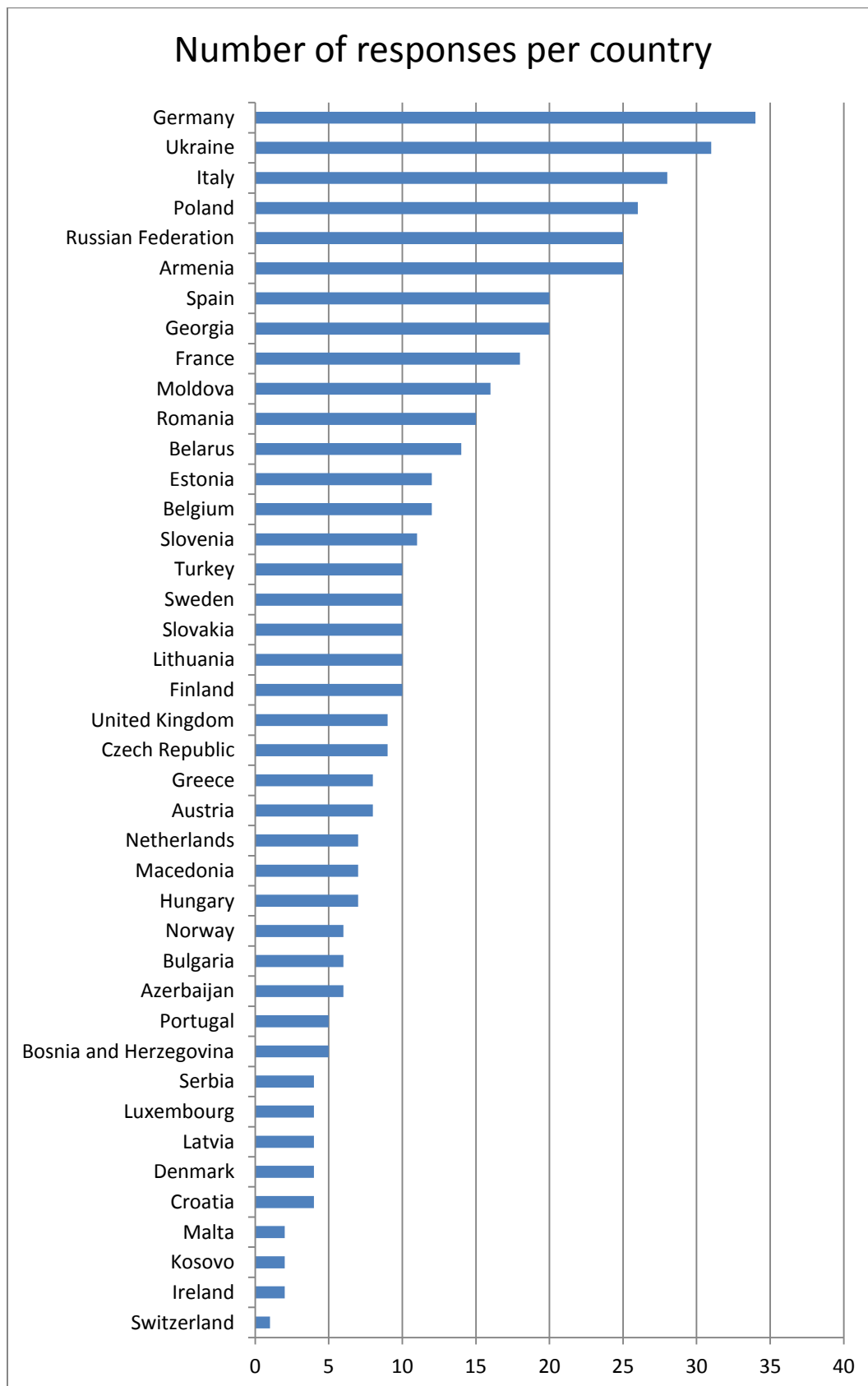
The interviews was realized by the CAWI method (Computer Assisted Web Interview). The questionnaires was sent in May and June 2012 to about 3200 organisations, mostly taken out of Youthlink Database. The research team received 480 responses.

The qualitative research was complementary to the survey. It contained 17 Individual In-Depth Interviews with organisations' participating in the Programme workers and 7 interviews with the decision-makers. All of the interviews were conducted over the Skype communicator.

1. Organisation profile

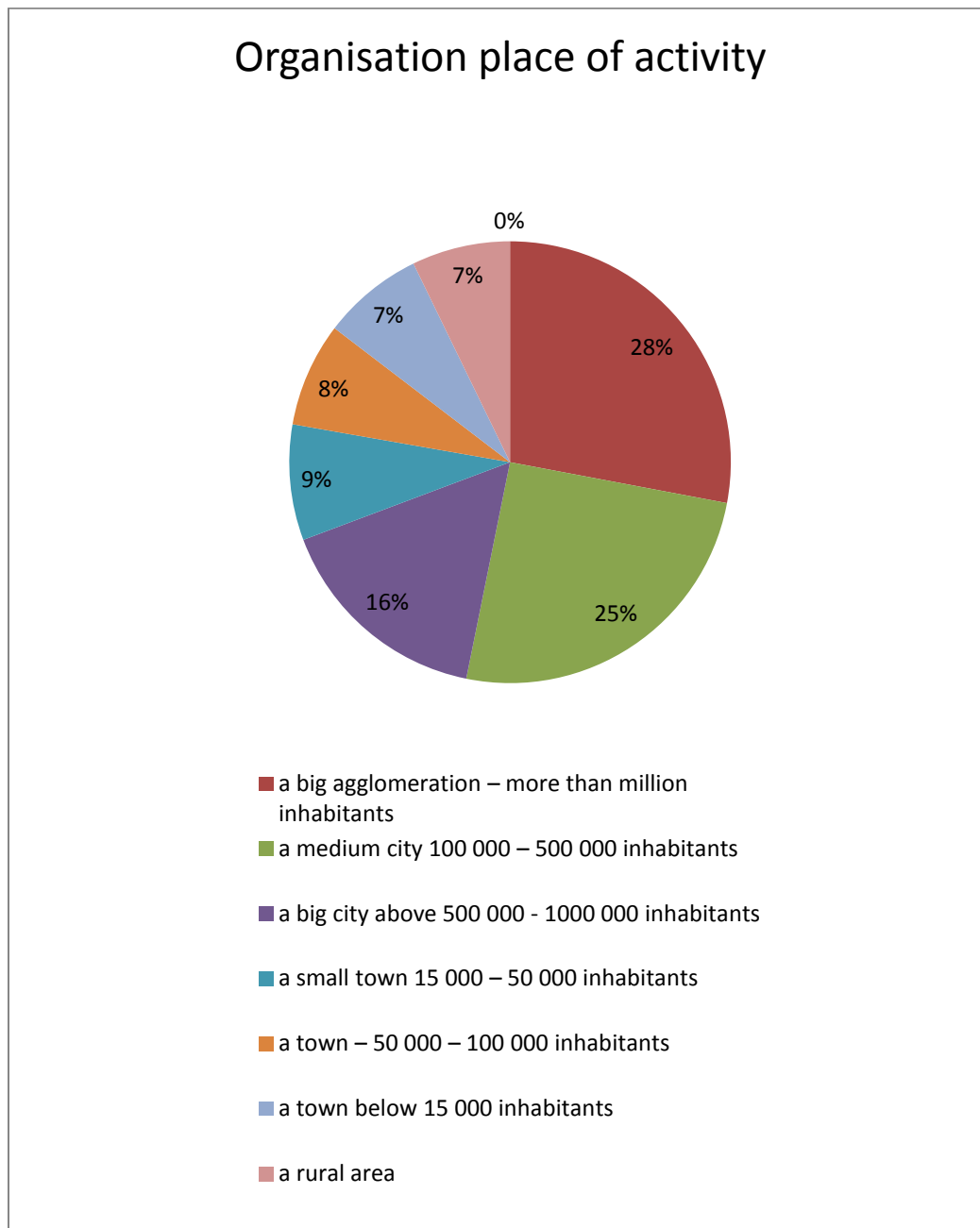
The questions refer to basic information about surveyed organisations: country where the entity is registered, place of activity, priority field of activities, target group of organisation, scope of activity in the country, number of employees, year of implementation of the first international project (and the first Youth in Action project) and finally – cooperation with other countries.

The research results are presented on the charts below.



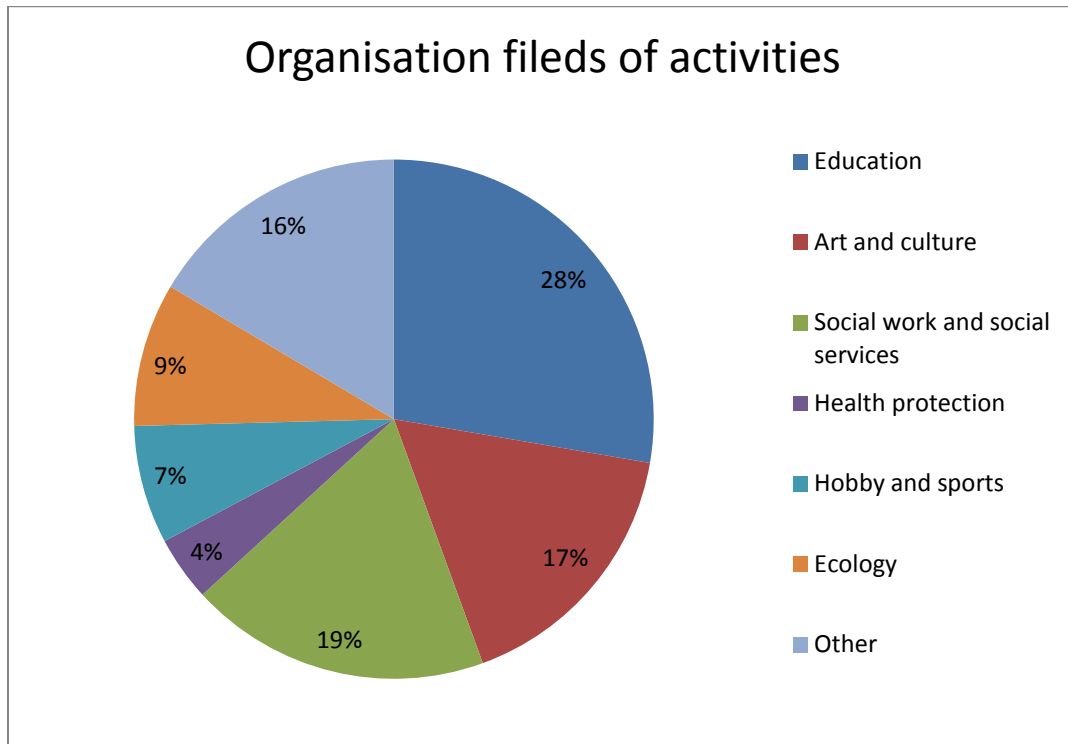
N=480

Among all respondents the largest groups were people from Germany, Ukraine, Italy and Poland, where the least numerous groups came from Switzerland, Palestine, Montenegro and Cyprus.



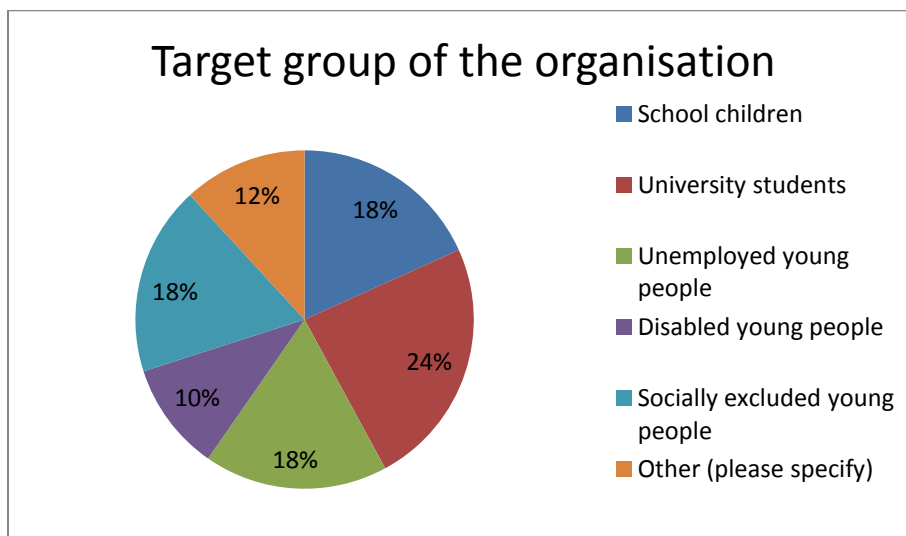
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The surveyed organisations place of activity is rather city than small town or a rural area. About 70 percent of respondents have founded their organisation in an agglomeration, big city or medium city. Only 14 percent of them act in rural or very small town areas.



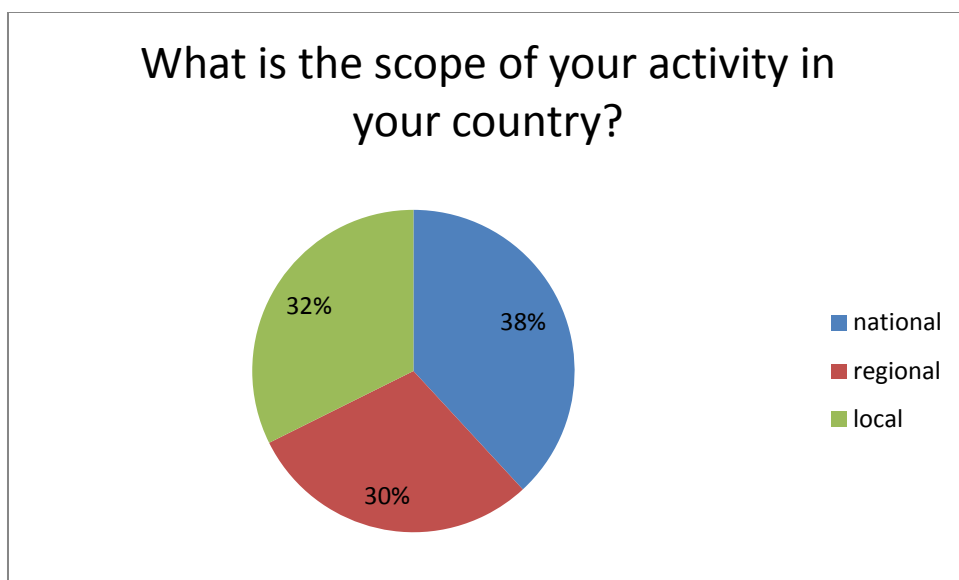
N=480

This question had open – ended response. The respondents had the following choices: education, art and culture, social work and social services, health protection, hobby and sport, ecology and other. They were allowed to choose more the one response. The most popular answer was education (28%), social work and social services (19%), then art and culture (17%). The other responses were chosen rarely.



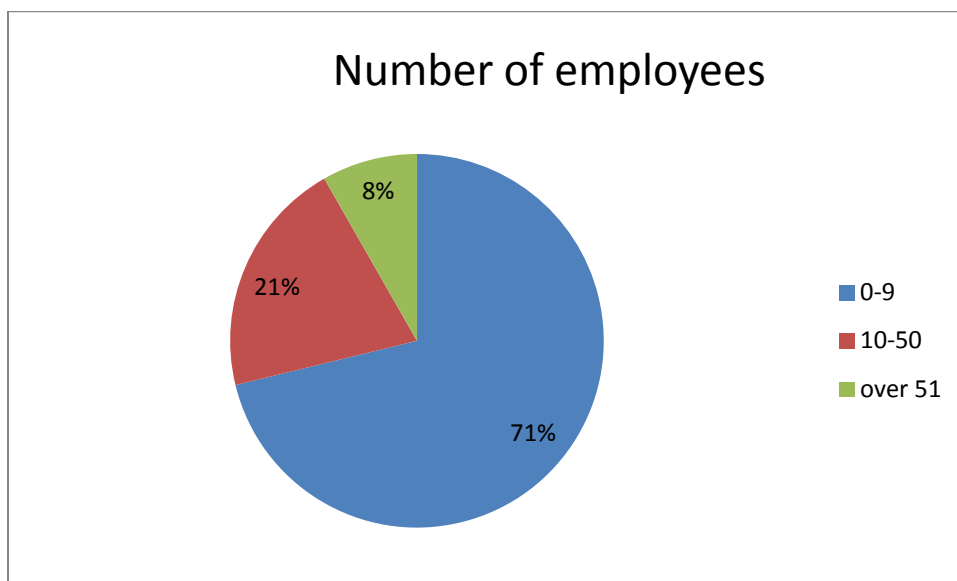
N=480

This question had open – ended response. The respondents had following choices: school children, university students, unemployed young people, disabled young people, socially excluded young people and other. They were allowed to choose more the one response. The average results are similar in each category (nearly 20%) except for “disabled young people”, which was chosen only by 10% respondents.



N=480

This question had open – ended response. The respondents had following choices: national, regional and local. They were allowed to choose more the one response. The average results are similar in each category (over 30%), but the response “national” was chosen a slightly more often than others (38%).



N=480

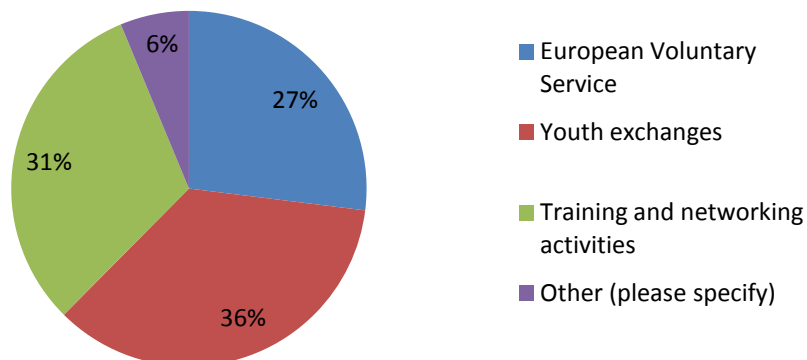
The surveyed organisations are rather small than big entities. 71 percent of respondents indicated that their organisation employs below 9 persons on full- or part time. Only 8 percent of respondents admitted that in their organisation employs over 51 employees.

2. Organisation development

The questions in the second part of survey refer to organisation development: lead projects number, undertaken actions, increased employment/ volunteer number, increased role of the organisation in the country / local community, changed image of organisation and the last one – the main benefit of participation in Youth in Action projects.

The research results are presented on the charts below.

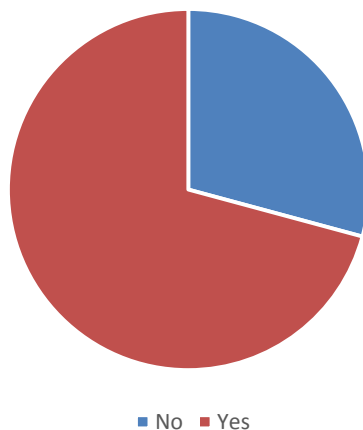
What actions does your organisation undertake within the Youth in Action programme?



N=441

This question had open – end response. The respondents had the following choices: European Voluntary Service, Youth exchanges, Training and Networking activities and the last one – other. They were allowed to choose more than one response. The most popular type of activities were Youth Exchanges (39%). European Voluntary Service as well as Training and Networking had similar numbers of indications.

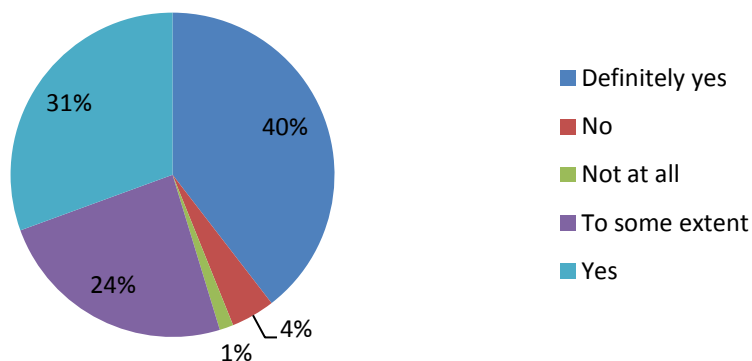
Has the employment/volunteers number in your organisation increased since 2007 because of involvement in Youth in Action projects?



N=441

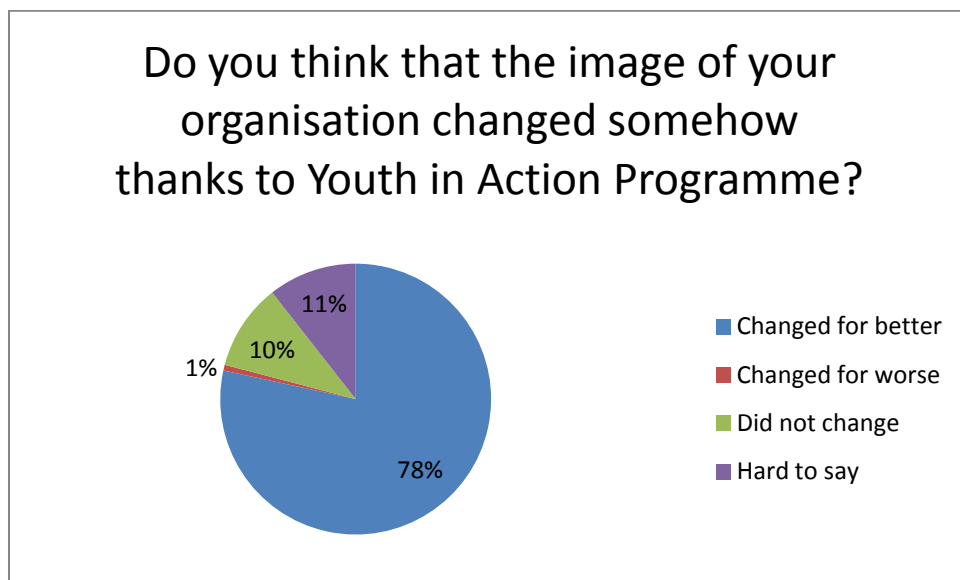
Among all respondents definitely the majority of them (71%) admitted, that involvement in Youth in Action projects was helpful in development staff in their organisations.

Do you think that the role of your organisation in your country or local community increased thanks to Youth in Action Programme?



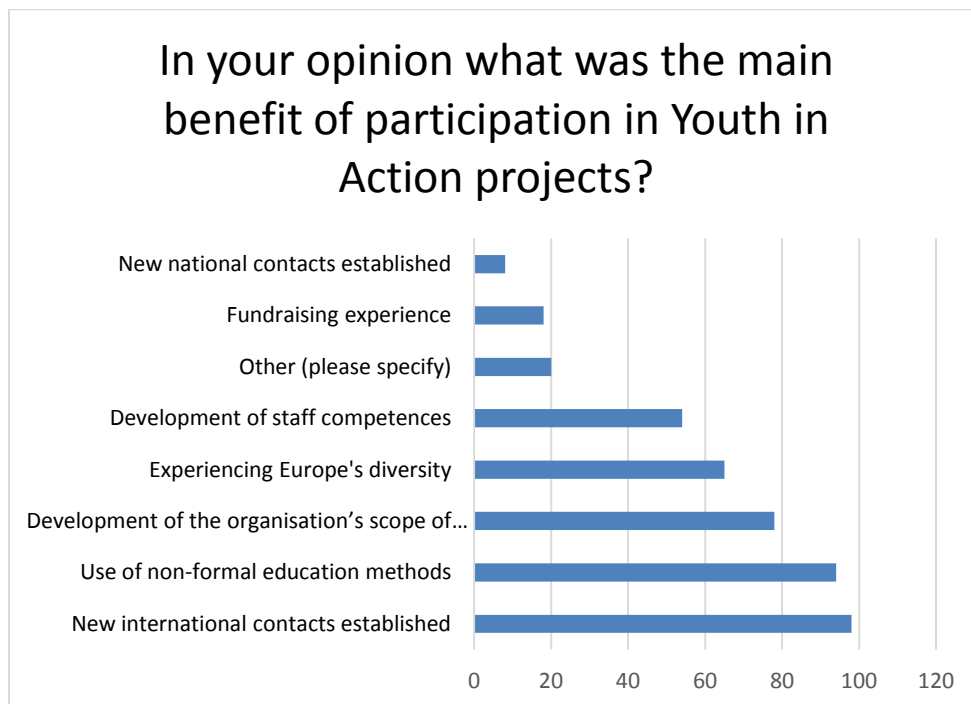
N=441

The majority of respondents claimed that the role of their organisation increased thanks to Youth in Action Programme, while for 24 percent of interviewees role of their organisation in the country / local community increased to some extent. Only 5 percent surveyed indicated negative responses.



N=441

The majority of respondents (78%) claimed, that the image of their organisation changed for better thanks to Youth in Action Programme, while only 10 percent of the surveyed admitted that the image of their organisation did not change at all.



N=441

The surveyed was asked to select the main benefit of participation in Youth in Action projects. They had the following choices (only one response was possible): establishing new international contacts, use of non-formal education methods, development of the organisation's scope of action, experiencing Europe's diversity, development of staff competences, fundraising experience, establishing new national contacts and the last one – other. Benefits selected the most often were: establishing new international contacts, use of non-formal education methods and development of the organisation's scope of action. The following options were chosen less often: experiencing Europe's diversity and development of staff competences. Fundraising experience, establishing new national contacts were among the least chosen.

Summary:

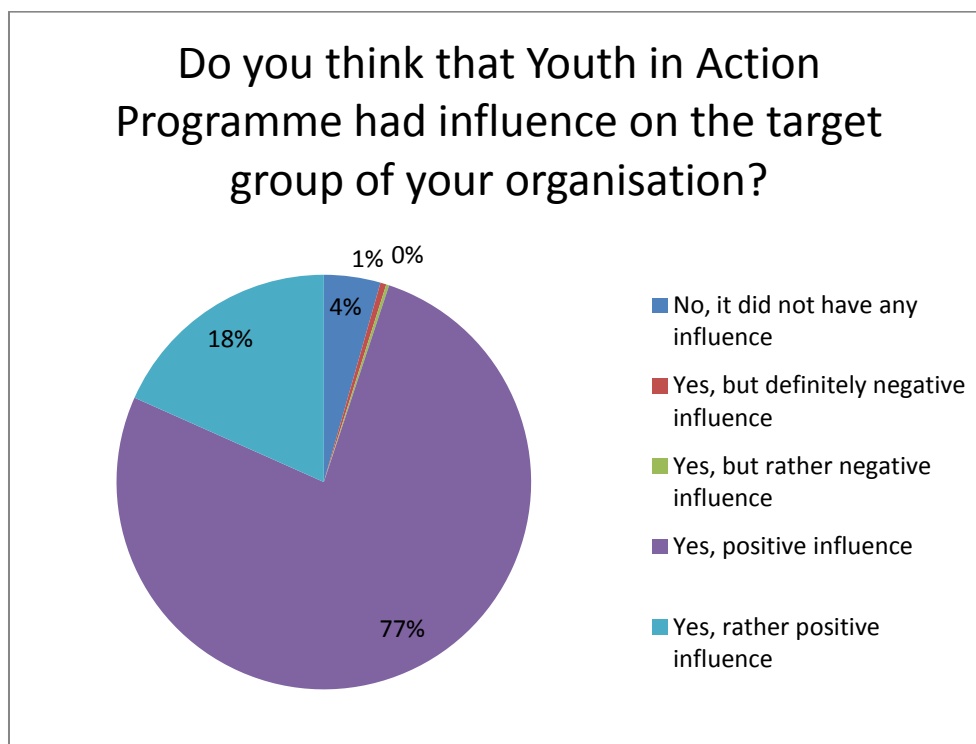
The most popular type of activities was Youth Exchanges. European Voluntary Service as well as Training and Networking had similar numbers of indications. A majority of respondents admitted, that the staff number of their organisations increased and the image had changed thanks to participation in Youth in Action projects. The main benefit of participation in Youth

in Action projects are: establishing new international contacts, use of non-formal education methods and development of the organisation's scope of action.

3. Influence on the target group of the organisation

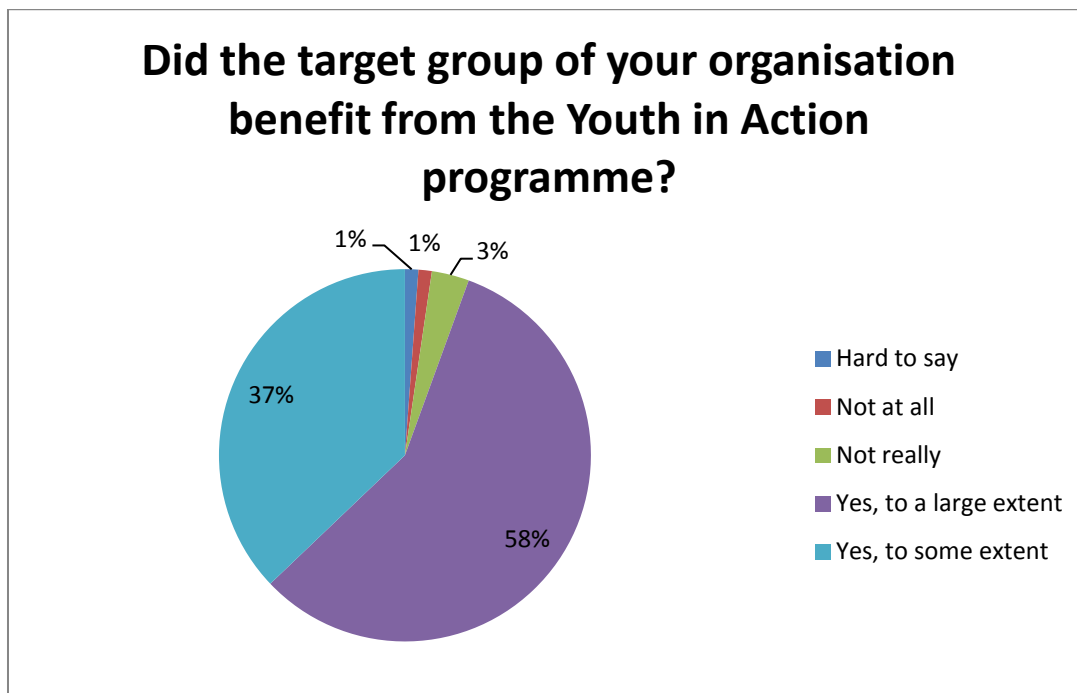
The questions in the third part of survey refer to influence on the target group of the organisation which took part in Youth in Action Programme.

The research results are presented on the charts below.



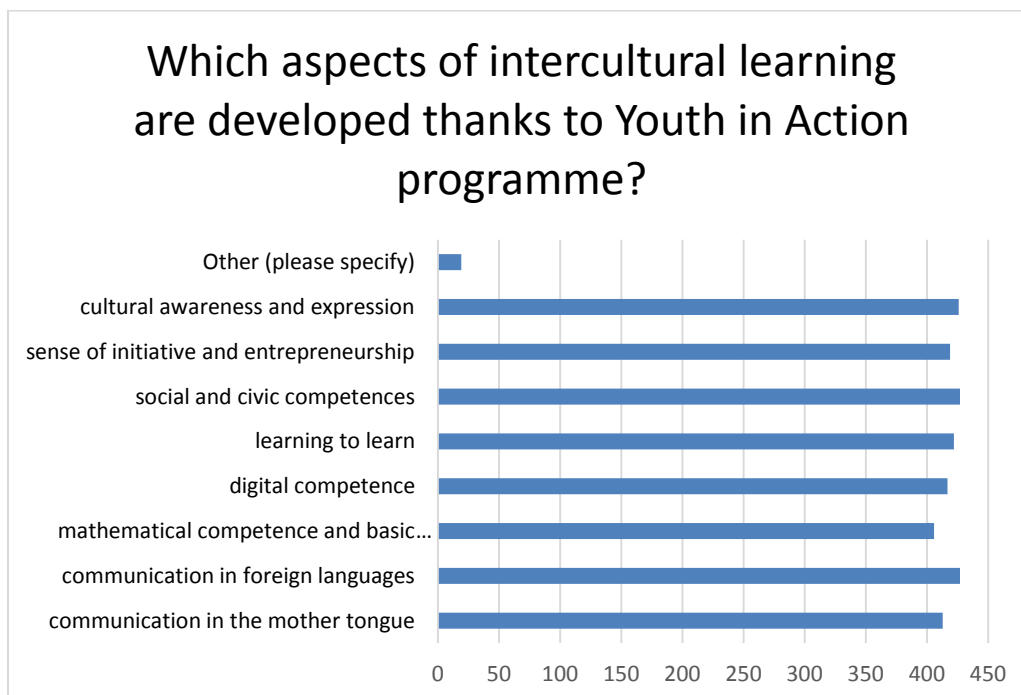
N=437

The majority of surveyed (over 90%) admitted that Youth in Action Programme had positive influence on the target group of their organisation. Only 4 percent of respondents chose the negative answer.



N=437

The majority of surveyed (over 90%) admitted that Youth in Action Programme had a notable impact on target group of organisation. Less than 3 percent of respondents indicated the negative answer.



N=437

This question was divided into 8 areas:

1. communication in the mother tongue
2. communication in foreign languages
3. mathematical competence and basic competences in science and technology
4. digital competence
5. learning to learn
6. social and civic competences
7. sense of initiative and entrepreneurship
8. cultural awareness and expression

The surveyed were asked to choose one response in each area.

Communication in the mother tongue - most of respondents (over 50%) admitted that it had impact, while nearly 35% said it was not really the case and about 15% have chosen the negative answer.

Communication in foreign languages - a majority of the respondents claimed that it had big influence. Only 10 percent of them did not agree with this opinion.

At the third area - mathematical competence and basic competences in science and technology – the respondents can be divided into two groups: the first one mentioned that this area was impacted, whereas the second one admitted that it did not matter to them.

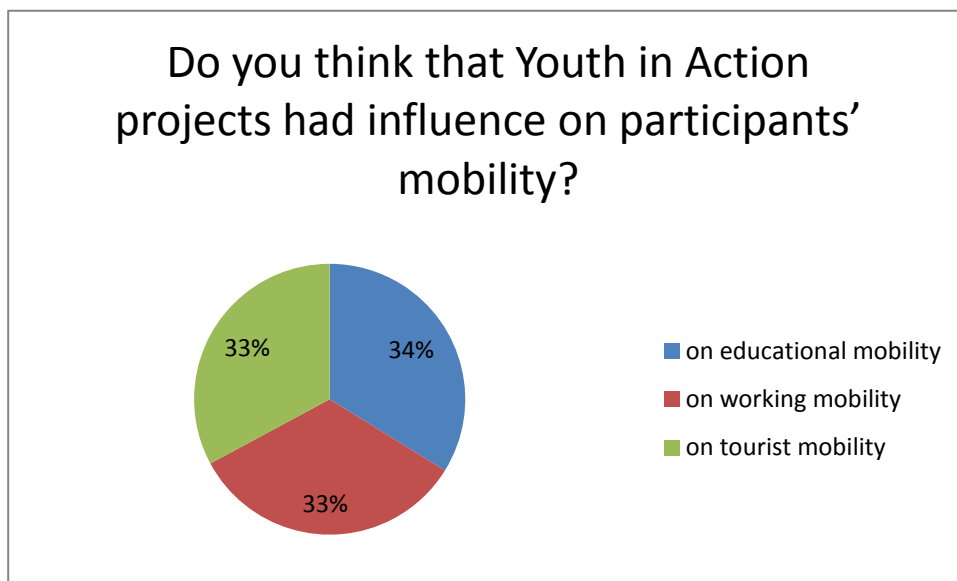
Fourth area, digital competence - most of interviewees (over 50%) admitted that it was important to some extent, while nearly 18% said 'not really' and finally almost 13% chose the negative answer.

Learning to learn - the majority of the respondents claimed that it was influenced greatly. Only less than 8 percent of them did not agree with this opinion.

In the area of social and civic competences the majority of the respondents admitted it was important to a large extent. Only less than 5 percent of them did not agree with this opinion.

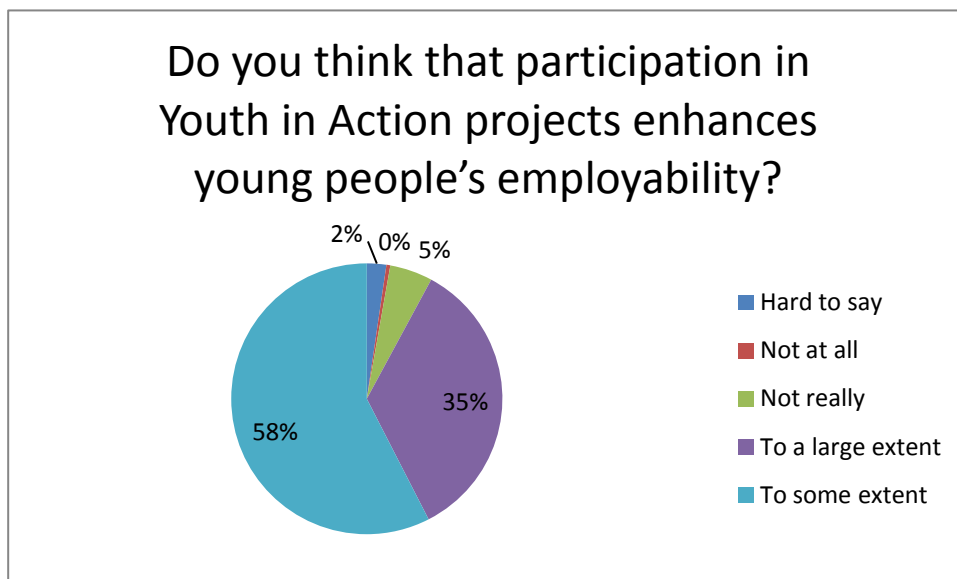
Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship - most of surveyed (over 80%) admitted that it has been influenced greatly, while nearly 8% said that it was not that much and finally less than 4 percent chose the negative answer.

Finally, the majority of the respondents claimed that cultural awareness and expression were of big importance. Only 3 percent of them did not agree with this opinion.



N=437

This question was divided into 3 areas: educational mobility, working mobility and tourist mobility. The surveyed were asked to indicate which area has been developed by participation in Youth in Action projects. Regarding the first area, the majority of them claimed that it was developed to a large extent, while for tourist and working mobility – to some extent. The minority of respondents admitted that Youth in Action Programme did not matter for participants' mobility.



N=437

The majority of the surveyed (over 90%) admitted that participation in Youth in Action projects enhances young people's employability. Only 4 percent of respondents chose the negative answer.

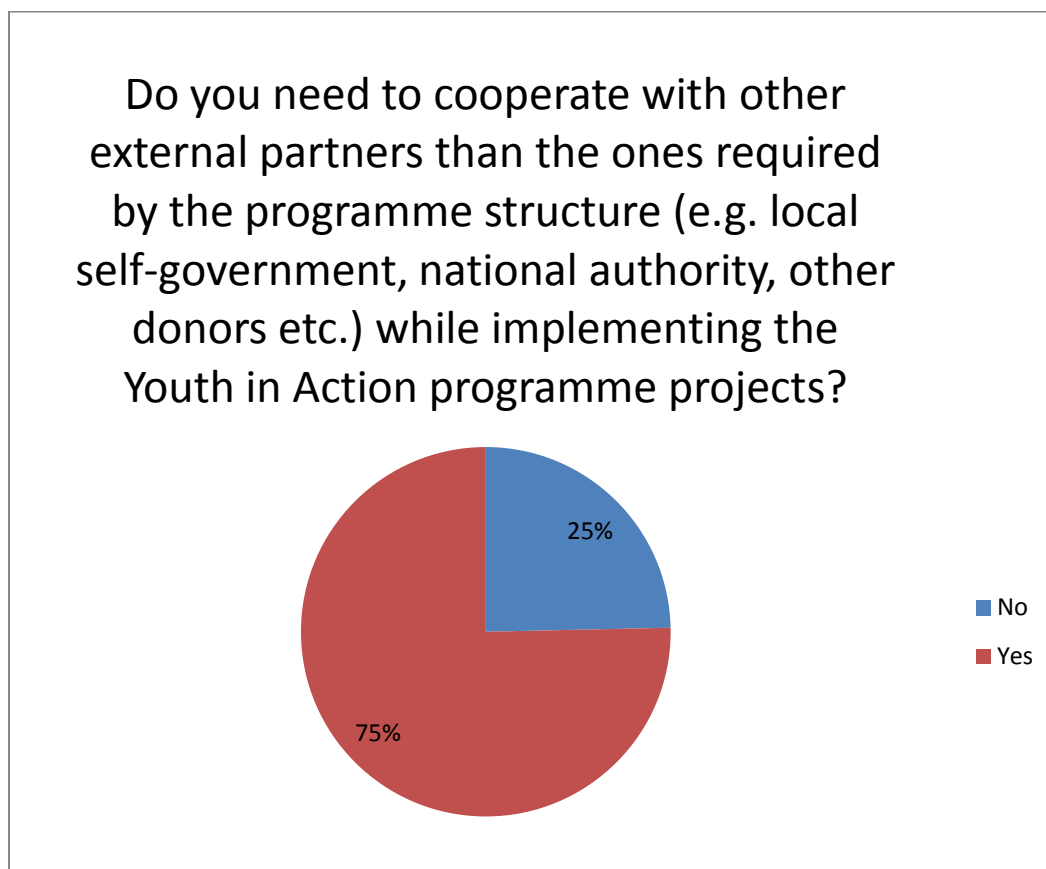
Summary:

The respondents admitted that Youth in Action Programme had a positive influence on the target group of their organisation. The main aspects of intercultural learning, developed by participation in Youth in Action projects, are: communication in foreign languages, learning to learn, social and civic competences, sense of initiative and entrepreneurship and the last one – cultural awareness and expression. The majority of the surveyed claimed that Youth in Action Programme had influence on educational working and tourist mobility. Finally the respondents admitted that participation in Youth in Action projects enhances young people's employability.

4. My organisation, it's recognition and support of my country authorities.

The questions in the fourth part of survey refer to organisations recognition and support of country authorities: cooperation with other external partners, its evaluation and main challenges.

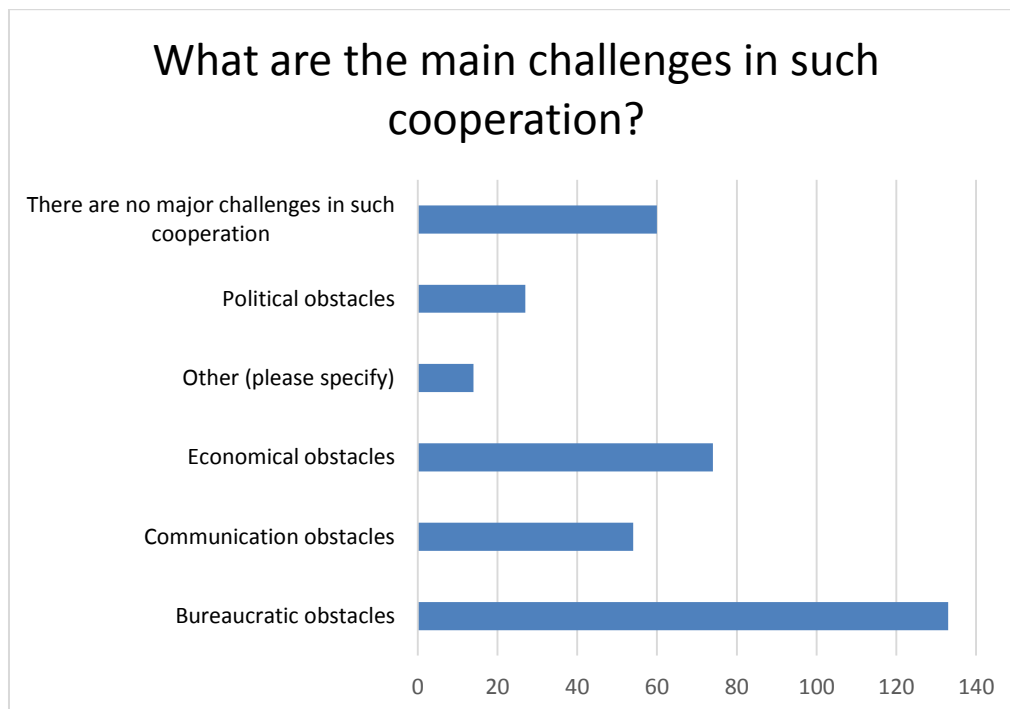
The research results are presented on the charts below.



N=436

Among all surveyed, 75% admitted that they needed to cooperate with other external partners than the ones required by the Programme structure while implementing the Youth in Action projects. The remaining 25 percent of respondents claimed, that they did not need to cooperate with such external partners.

The majority of surveyed (over 80%) admitted that their experience of cooperation with external partners was good or very good, whereas nearly 15 percent defined it as neutral. Less than 3% of responses indicated they had a negative experience.



N=367

Bureaucratic obstacles were indicated as the main challenge in cooperation with external partners by nearly 38% of the surveyed. The second place was taken by economical obstacles (20% responses), the next one were communication obstacles (15%) and the last one were political obstacles. It is worth to mention, that over 16 % of respondents claimed, that “there are no major challenges in such cooperation”.

Summary:

The majority of respondents admitted, that they need to cooperate with other external partners, while implementing the Youth in Action projects. Usually their experience of cooperation with external partners was good or very good. The main challenges in such cooperation, indicated by surveyed were: bureaucratic obstacles, economical obstacles and communication obstacles.

5. What direction will your organisation go in the future?

The questions in the last part of survey refer to the direction the organisation should take in the future, the importance of international cooperation within programmes like Youth in

Action in the coming decade, the cooperation improvements, Youth in Action Programme improvements and finally – the necessary changes on the national and international level in order to improve international cooperation.

Q1: Do you think that international cooperation within programmes like Youth in Action is necessary in the coming decade?

Q2: What should be made to improve such international cooperation? (by improvements we mean: thematic improvements, financial improvements, bureaucratic improvements etc.)

The question had open – ended responses. Some of the answers from each category of improvements (bureaucratic, financial, thematic) are shown below.

Thematic improvements:

”I think, it will be good to thematic improvement and add more diversity in this sphere, also financial field. Also should be considerate, because cost increased. My suggestion is to up participation age, for example 14 -35 years old.”

“The thematic improvements should be made according to the needs of particular community, when we are here we should have in mind the bureaucracy and its high impact on motivation.”

Bureaucratic improvements:

“The first condition is to eliminate visas - or to create agreements between the states involved in the Programme in order to facilitate visa procedures for the persons involved in youth projects. To create events / opportunities for the people to meet and to exchange contacts also in/with the countries that are not in the EU and that are not so "traditional" participants in Youth in Action projects”

“Bureaucratic improvements need to be made, especially regarding dealings with the Russian state, regional and municipal authorities. Unfortunately, this is utterly out of our control.”

Financial improvements:

“ Financial improvements. In particular, in some projects the amount given per day per participant is just good enough to reach a standard condition about food and accommodation. Bureaucratic improvements. Still too many difficulties concerning cooperation with countries such as Turkey (visa, permission of staying ect).”

” Financial improvements: partner organisations need financial support to prepare youth exchanges as a sending organisation and more possibilities to fundraise for exchanges in their countries. Budgets should be much more flexible (travel costs etc.). It should be possible to simply propose for the actual costs, instead pressing it into the budget frames. Example: not every partner needs 70% of the travel costs, but others might need 100%. Formats and structures are different in each organisation. A lot more flexibility is necessary. Themes should be much more open to create interesting and diverse projects and approaches. Trying to squeeze all the "priorities" into the programmes does not help to do innovative educational programmes.”

Q3: What improvements does the Youth in Action Programme need in the context of the new financial framework 2013 - 2020? (financial, bureaucratic, thematic)?

The question had open-ended responses. Some answers from each category of improvements (bureaucratic, financial, thematic) are shown below.

Bureaucratic improvements:

“Bureaucracy improvements and better support for organisations that are writing and implementing Youth in Actions project for the first time. More explanation and support after the project is over and in follow-up phase.

I would imagine a more bureaucratic improvement making international exchange and learning more accessible particularly to those from lower incomes households”

“For sure bureaucratic (mentioned above), specially closed categories of financial statements, electronic system of applying for grant.”

“The bureaucracy in Youth Initiatives have to be easier than in other projects. For young people it is difficult to fill in such a number of documents which is necessarily to have. Also to expand priorities. It will give a chance for implementing other good ideas.”

Financial improvements:

“A small amount of money in the budget of each EVS project needs to be applied for as training costs for the sending organisation (for pre-departure and evaluation training of the volunteer). An amount of 100 euro is more than enough. Without any budget for these costs we are barely able to provide volunteers with any training at all.”

“The financial topics must be simplified in order to have few problems with the HO and SO organisations. Ex. it could be better if volunteers receive the allowance costs and other hosting costs from the NA, as depended to the countries there is a high level bureaucracy.”

“It should look closer on the situation in the countries, and not work with general figures. For instance the budget provided for hosting a volunteer is often not enough for capital cities, but for regional ones only. Distinctions should not be made by countries only, and take realities on the ground better into account, otherwise there will be no motivation for host organisations at some point, or the circumstances for volunteers not appropriate.”

Thematic improvements:

“Those who decide which projects will be accepted should spend more time to visit organisations which apply and check their work and capability to organise projects, and to visit them at least once during activities if they make projects. What you do and learn in YiA projects is hard to describe with words, to rate a project is not enough to read final report.”

Q4: What changes are necessary on the national and international level in order to improve such international cooperation?

The question had open – ended responses. Some of the opinion are shown below.

“Now we are facing the problem of making a long-term visa for EVS volunteers which puts at risk implementation of long-term projects. That's why we think that Ukrainian law still needs some changes to allow volunteers (who are neither employees nor students) stay legally in Ukraine to the benefit of Ukrainian community.”

“National institutions and local governments should be more open and supportive. National agencies should work more on promotion YiA on government level, and on improvement of bureaucracy and communication barriers between NGO's and government.”

“On the national level: in each member the local, regional and national authorities should be informed about the Programme and about the involvement of themselves in youth projects.”

“Be more flexible in the request of balance between Programme Countries and partner countries; increasing of funds for hosting and for spreading the outputs of the project; efforts in including persons with less opportunities by providing means of communication to reach them and providing special funds for them.”

6. History of the organisation

A majority of organisations have been active from 3 to 8 years. Before their leaders had created their own organisation, they have acted in several informal structures:

We first started in 2005, but some serious actions begun in 2007. We are a group of students and friends.

(“Unique Steps Youth Organisation”, Turkey)

We started in 2008 as an informal youth group, without office, without experience.

(“Youth Initiative Centre”, Armenia)

We started in 2004 with work camps for locals and for international volunteers.

(“Advit”, Moldova)

Our organisation has background in scouting.

(“Georgian Youth For Europe”, Georgia)

Informal group since 2004. Mostly focused on orphanages, summer camps in English about civic education, democracy and leadership.

(„Iskra”, Ukraine)

The next step was taking part in various international programmes for group of youths.

Thanks to those informal initiatives they became serious organisations:

In 2007 we were officially registered and in the same years we started cooperation with YiA Programme. We became members of ICY International Youth Exchange Federation and now we cooperate with different programmes: YiA, ICYE (International Cultural Youth Exchange), ICYE steps, German exchange programme. We received and send volunteers for work camps and mid-term volunteering projects.

(“Advit”, Moldova)

In 2004 we participated in a seminar “Go East” organised by SALTO, where we meet our future partners. Then we joined the network of multipliers.

(“Academy for Peace and Development”, Georgia)

When we registred in Azerbaijan in May 2008 we began to act in international projects.

(“Modern Youth Public Union”, Azerbaijan)

A first, there was a local organisation with a focus on volunteering. It supported volunteering activities mainly in the region and the city. Afterwards, a new international department was opened and in 2007 it was transformed into a separate organisation, with a focus on international volunteering projects.

(“Sfera Movement”, Russian Federation)

Some of the interlocutors said that they had got experience in sending volunteers (youth exchange), thus they had improved the functioning of their own organisation. For instance, one men from Armenia claimed that he had got an idea of establishing volunteering organisation after he visited Poland within Youth in Action Programme.

In general the target group for organisation are young people (except the “Wiatrak” Foundation from Bydgoszcz in Poland, which claimed that it was “an organisation for youth, adults and elderly”). The organisations focus on various fields connected with young people:

We wanted to support young people and to involve them into our actions.
 (“Unique Steps Youth Organisation”, Turkey)

Main goal of Advit is to support the young people, especially with fever opportunities (first of all educational) and to promote the volunteering on all levels (we have local volunteering projects as well). We organise local charity/community events.
 (“Advit”, Moldova)

Our target group are young people and young adults.
 (“European Intercultural Forum”, Germany)

I’m a dance teacher and I wanted to teach to dance to children. We teach children from a very poor background.
 (“Kazdanz Youth Dance”, United Kingdom)

The members of our organisation are local young people and students of the local primary school.
 (“Kuuste Kool”, Estonia)

Regarding target group of organisations, it is important to write a few words about their fields of activities. They are mostly concentrating on youth exchange programmes (like hosting and sending organisations) and they are also partners in various international youth programmes, for example: “Youth in Action”, “European Youth Foundation” , “Europe for Citizens” and members of ICYE. Some of them focus on vital regions:

We are focused mainly on South Caucasus, but we cooperate also with the SEE region. We work on peace building, conflict management, youth empowerment, European citizenship, active participation.
 (“European Intercultural Forum”, Germany)

a. Type of projects

The second group of questions in the questionnaire concentrates on type of projects, which the members of organisations had implemented in the first place. They accented that the projects were mainly about youth exchange, training and networking. International programmes such as: EVS, “Youth in Action”, “Grundtvig”, “Leonardo” were mentioned. Apart from that projects, they have conducted local specific initiatives:

We are also involved in local actions, such as workshops for young people (lately on how to prepare a good presentation).
 (“STRIM”, Poland)

We only implement youth exchanges with a focus on dancing. We belong to Czech – Slovak friends’ association. We also organise performances on the local and international levels to get children (mainly girls) to see other cultures. Our focus is the Eastern Europe.
 (“Kazdanz Youth Dance”, United Kingdom)

We implement youth exchanges, short term projects, little events for young people. We joined the Estonian Defense League (scouting organisation). We also organise summer camps. We do not do Youth initiatives as the application process seems to be a bit too difficult for the young people.
 (“Kuuste Kool”, Estonia)

The first project is about TRACECA. It was held in 2009 in Kirshehir, Turkey. It was a youth exchange: 4+1 participants, from 7 countries.
 (“Modern Youth Public Union”, Azerbaijan)

The following section of analysis refers to cooperation with partners and development of sustainable partnerships.

b. Partnerships and cooperation with partners

Every organisation which is taking part in this research has formed relations with few to many partner organisations. It can be divided into three groups: NGO’s (international, regional and local), municipality and governmental office (e.g. Ministry of Culture and Sport, European Commission Delegation to Georgia, Ministry of Education) and big national organisations. The present opinions about non-governmental organisations are presented at the beginning:

International and regional:

We have quite a sustainable partnerships with many non-governmental organisations throughout Caucasus countries: Georgia, Azerbaijan, Armenia, also from Russia and from most of the countries of the European Union.

(“STRIM”, Poland)

First of all Schumann Foundation and other NGO across Europe.

(“Youth Initiative Centre”, Armenia)

With foreign NGO: one organisation from France, one from Finland and a few from Poland.

(“Advit”, Moldova)

We have stable partnership with the Georgian organisation that hosted us during our EVS, but also we have partners in Armenia and a very good one in Azerbaijan, whom we met on our first seminar implemented in Georgia.

(“European Intercultural Forum”, Germany)

We have established partnerships mainly with European and Asian organisations with a similar profile to ours. We mainly cooperate with Germany, Poland, France and Italy.

(“Sfera Movement”, Russian Federation)

Local:

We cooperate on a regular basis with other non-governmental organisations of a similar profile from our region.

(“Euro House”, Romania)

We have a really good cooperation with other Georgian NGOs and a lot of international partners. We are also members of international networks.

(“Georgian Youth For Europe”, Georgia)

Youth groups like ours need to be affiliated in a bigger organisations or to at least a school. We have good contacts with other dancing groups and many schools.

(“Kazdanz Youth Dance”, United Kingdom)

We have many personal contacts, not really organisational ones.

(“Kuuste Kool”, Estonia)

Significant part of the leaders of foundations claims that they are still developing their contact networks.

Regarding to cooperation with institutional partners the opinions are quite divided. Most of the speakers are pleased with support from various institutions – mainly because of financial support, co-fund or promotion:

*National Youth Council of Moldova (through them we have some contact with Moldavian government), support from EU delegation from Moldova (they support some initiatives), National Network of Multipliers.
("Advit", Moldova)*

*With our partner from Azerbaijan we developed a cooperation with the Department of Youth and Sport of Azerbaijan of the municipality where our partner is based. They will co-fund some our projects.
("European Intercultural Forum", Germany)*

*We also cooperate with local authorities and we are one of the few organisations in the region to have developed such partnership. Moreover, we receive support from the city council.
("Euro House", Romania)*

*We cooperate with the local government. We receive co-financing from them. This cooperation is good for the promotion of our actions and helps to attract more people to our events.
("Sfera Movement", Russian Federation)*

Still, there is an important group who admits that they cannot count on financial support for their activities from the authorities:

*We don't have any support from government, but we started cooperate with municipality in Gyumri, that changed its approach towards NGOs.
("Youth Initiative Centre", Armenia)*

*None. Local government does not want to help, no support.
("Iskra", Ukraine)*

*No cooperation with local/national authorities. Sometimes, but very rarely, we receive small grants from local authorities.
("Kazdanz Youth Dance", United Kingdom)*

One of the speakers said, that his organisation cooperate with local government, but without financial support:

*We (...) cooperate with the local government, but they do not finance our actions. On the national level, we cooperate with the Ministry of Education.
("European Youth 4 Media", Germany)*

However, a leader of one organisation pays attention to political aspects of cooperation with institutional organisations:

Ministry of Youth and Sport in Georgia (in the case of international projects) and self-government (but not too much for political reasons – self government are political and we want to stay neutral).

(“Georgian Youth For Europe”, Georgia)

The first part of questionnaire is linked with history of the organisation. The leaders of these organisations have vast experience in international and regional cooperation in partnership with non-governmental and institutional organisations. They have been taking part in lots of international programmes like Youth in Action and other (like youth exchange projects). They are also developing their contacts networks in various foreign regions.

7. Challenges in cooperation with partners

The second matter in questionnaire is linked with challenges in cooperation with partners.

The main obstacles mentioned by the speakers were communication problems, such as long waiting period for e-mail answers, language problems - especially in contact by Skype - and sometimes cultural differences.

Apart from the communication issues the next group of challenges refers to problem with bureaucracy:

On local level: lack of time; bureaucratic challenges, lack of the dialogue with Ministry of Youth and Sport – they work on theoretical level and are not interested in practical experience we can offer.

(“Advit”, Moldova)

At the international level – the visa issues for young people. At the national level – the pocket money for our volunteers is subject to taxation, so it'd be better if there was no tax imposed by our government on the volunteers pocket money.

(“Georgian Youth For Europe”, Georgia)

When the Russians come to the UK they need to fill in complicated visa forms in English. This is very challenging. We have volunteers who do this paper work for them. Also when we go to Russia for example, we need to apply for a visa and this is quite expensive.

(“Kazdanz Youth Dance”, United Kingdom)

Serious visa obstacles: we have not experienced visa refusals so far, however the visa process takes very long. On top of that, according to the Russian law, EVS volunteers cannot be considered neither as students nor as workers. This results in the fact, that they have the right to be in Russia only for 90 days and then they need to leave to their home countries to obtain a new visa. Sometimes volunteers loose motivation because of this.

(“Sfera Movement”, Russian Federation)

In addition to that, the speakers noticed that they could not lead projects by themselves - they had to have a partner:

When we couldn't apply by ourselves, that was very difficult to organise the whole cooperation with our partners from Programme Countries – especially financial issues, keeping deadlines etc.

(“Youth Initiative Centre”, Armenia)

That till 2011 we couldn't apply by ourselves; to build the trust and make the organisations to apply on our behalf. Also to find partners, but it is better now.

(“Academy for Peace and Development”, Georgia)

Furthermore there were some partnership challenges. On the one hand they were the result of cultural differences, on the other hand some foundation were not experienced enough in international projects:

On international level: cultural differences, lack of knowledge (and understanding) of reality in Moldova.

(“Advit”, Moldova)

It's intercultural challenge: problem with financial reporting, timing (eastern organisations do everything on last minute).

Logistical challenges - when we organise events for young people from Western Countries in EECA, we need to take care of them all the time, because they wouldn't manage by themselves.

(“European Intercultural Forum”, Germany)

New and weak youth NGOs do not have enough professional staff. They often operate with volunteers and they change a lot. So there are often communication problems. Also volunteers have different levels of engagement in the actions – sometimes you find really motivated people, sometimes not. So the main problem is the lack of permanent employees in the organisations we cooperate with.

(European Youth 4 Media, Germany)

We write a YIA project with Turkish partner. This project was approved by Turkish NA. Venue was Baku. The project was held in Baku. We organised everything. But our Turkish partner didn't want to organise this project. And they didn't come to Baku. They can't explain its reason to Turkish NA. So we want to apply for every kind of projects directly.

(“Modern Youth Public Union”, Azerbaijan)

To summarise: there are several main problems in cooperation with partners:

- Communication problems
- Bureaucracy problems
- Logistic problems

The next part of the report is about organisation development.

8. Organisation development

Third part of this analysis is concentrated on organisation development. The speakers were asked for their experience about increase in the number of employees and if this increase was influenced by the development of the organisation. The last case was connected with employment conditions.

Almost all speakers admitted that their organisation had grown. Some of them were able to afford employment of new persons, but some increased only the number of volunteers:

We have increased the number of employees throughout the years. We moved out to a bigger office and we now hire 4 permanent employees, 1 accountant, 1 director and 1 volunteer). They all implement the current actions of the organisation.
(“STRIM”, Poland)

Our organisation has grown considerably. In the beginning one person engaged in international programs, now there are four. Moreover, four EVS volunteers stayed with us after finishing their projects during seven years.
(“Wiatrak”, Poland)

Yes, there is an increase in the number of employees – at the beginning we had 3 people working for us, now we have 9 plus some volunteers. The employees work on Youth in action projects but also on some extra-curricular activities.
(“Euro House”, Romania)

We have 2 contracted employees and 8 volunteers. We also have an office in Lublin.
(“European Youth 4 Media”, Germany)

We started with 3 people and now we have 5 people of permanent staff. We also cooperate with volunteers, so in total it's 10-12 people.
(“Georgian Youth For Europe”, Georgia)

Part of the speakers mentioned, that in their organisation only few persons were working as employees:

Our organisation is very small and I'm the only one who is a full time employee here. Other people work from time to time, working as volunteers and on freelancing contract. However thanks to at YiA at least I'm employed.

("European Intercultural Forum", Germany)

There are 4 employees now – two of them work part-time and two of them work full time. There is hosting administrator, mentoring programme coordinator, the hosting and the sending coordinator.

("Advit", Moldova)

Staff of at few organisations consisted only of volunteers:

We are all volunteers in our organisation and the permanent volunteer staff has not changed since the beginning. However, we have a lot of external volunteers who join the team during particular projects, I estimate 50 people per year. (We are all unpaid volunteers.)

("Unique Steps Youth Organisation", Turkey)

There was a significant increase in number of people working for our organisation. All staff members work voluntarily, they receive fee only when they work on project, which budget includes operational costs.

("Youth Initiative Centre", Armenia)

No, it has not changed, we're 8 people, unpaid and volunteers.

("Kazdanz Youth Dance", United Kingdom)

It is a volunteer-based organisation, we do not have any permanent employees. We do however have volunteers. I am the central person who initiates all the actions.

("Kuuste Kool", Estonia)

In general, speakers agreed with opinion that increase of employees and volunteers had an influence on the development of their organisation. First of all, they all said, that their organisation was able to conduct more projects and their quality increased vastly. The increase in staff number had also results in promotion:

The increase in the number of employees helped us a lot. We are now able to implement more projects, and hence the organisation is developing. Our office can also be open longer.

("STRIM", Poland)

The fact that we have a lot of volunteers influences the organisation in a very positive way. We become better known and as a consequence, people are more interested in what we do.
(“Unique Steps Youth Organisation”, Turkey)

The increase in the number of employees is of course very positive, however, if we had even more people working for us, our work would be much easier.
(“Euro House”, Romania)

It helped a lot, we obtained an operational grant to finance the daily expenses of our offices.
(“European Youth 4 Media”, Germany)

We are able to do more.
(“Georgian Youth For Europe”, Georgia)

It had a very positive outcome. Now he have a very clear division of tasks and this results in a better quality of our work and projects. Everyone has their own field of responsibility. Before, everyone was doing everything.
(“Sfera Movement”, Russia)

Conditions of employment refer to working hours and type of work in these foundations. As written above, only volunteers were working in part of organisations. In some of them volunteers had employment contracts:

Usually, the volunteers have employments contracts, but some of them (if they take part in short, single projects) are employed by commission contracts.
(“Wiatrak”, Poland)

Usually staff in the organisation was divided into two groups: employees with contracts and unpaid volunteers:

The 9 people we have are permanent staff. What is interesting is that some of them first participated in a youth project and then came working for us.
(„Euro House”, Romania)

2 people with a permanent contract and 8 unpaid volunteers.
(“European Youth 4 Media”, Germany)

5 people employed permanently and around 5-7 volunteers.
(“Georgian Youth For Europe”, Georgia)

To sum up, increase of employment in the organisations had influence on their development. The foundations had become well known in their communities and they had

much more volunteers. Certain numbers of them could afford to hire new employees for full-time contracts. Some were even able to open second office in other city or country.

The next part of the report is about image of the organisation.

9. Image of organisation

The fourth part of the analysis consists of the questions concerning the image of organisation. Interviewees were asked to describe the influence of international project on the image of organisation and if it was helpful in the everyday functioning of the organisation. The last question focused on implementation of international projects and its impact on attracting organisation's target group.

The majority of interviewees admitted that participation in international projects and programmes had very positive influence on their organisations. First of all it was very good promotion for the projects conducted by the organisation. Thanks to that young people were able to hear something about the organisation.

Yes, it has a very positive influence on our organisation. Thanks to the implementation of international projects, our visibility increased, we are known at the national but also at the international level.

("STRIM", Poland)

Yes, definitely, it has a very positive influence. We are able to facilitate the contact between local people and foreigners.

("Unique Steps Youth Organisation", Turkey)

The presence of foreign volunteers attracts the media and the youth, some projects are publicized, which in other case would have been unnoticed

("Wiatrak", Poland)

It has change totally. A lot of people are applying, organisation became popular.

(„Iskra”, Ukraine)

Absolutely. We appear in the local newspapers each time we implement a project. And when we go to Russia or to Latvia, we appear even on TV.

("Kazdanz Youth Dance", United Kingdom)

Some of the surveyed mentioned that their organisation is the only one in the country that had any international contacts. Consequently, they were well – known and many young people wanted to cooperate with them:

We were the first organisation in Georgia implementing international projects, so of course we were recognized; we were organisation promoting international cooperation, so we had more authority among local NGOs. We have bigger credibility.
(“Academy for Peace and Development”, Georgia)

Of course. In our city there is not many foreigners, people in Armenia in general don’t believe NGOs, but volunteers from abroad attract young people from Gyumri, they inspire them to do the same, to change something.
Also, we as an organisation, can learn a lot through such cooperation; can meet different approaches, different points of view, way of work.
(“Youth Initiative Centre”, Armenia)

Yes, of course. More people contact us, because they hear that we work on international level. Even Moldovan organisations contact us because they heard about us from some foreign institutions.
(“Advit”, Moldova)

We were the first organisation in Georgia implementing international projects, so of course we were recognized; we were organisation promoting international cooperation, so we had more authority among local NGOs. We have bigger credibility.
(“Academy for Peace and Development”, Georgia)

Yes, definitely. Other NGOs from the rural areas do not implement international projects and their image is much worse than ours. Our image is really good, among ordinary people and the local community. They feel that we offer them something new, we bring a new value to their lives. At the beginning the community was skeptical towards our actions, but as the time went by, they appreciated our work.
(“Euro House”, Romania)

In fact, the implementation of international projects shapes the image of our organisation. Young Russians when they want to take part in an volunteering project abroad, they come to us. We are a brand name clearly associated with such actions.
(“Sfera Movement”, Russian Federation)

Another discussed issue is if improved image of organisation was helpful in the everyday functioning. The interviewees can be divided into two groups: one of them admitted that it helped their organisation a lot, and the second one disagreed with that opinion:

Yes, it helps us a lot, especially in cooperation with partners and authorities.

("Euro House", Romania)

Yes. In our network everybody is EU-centred and the fact that we're seen as a European association is helpful. If for example someone does not like German politics we do not suffer from it, as we're not perceived as a German organisation, even though we're registered in Germany and under a German law.

("European Youth 4 Media", Germany)

Not really, we function more or less the same as when we were implementing less projects.
("STRIM", Poland)

It's hard to say, really.

("Unique Steps Youth Organisation", Turkey)

The last question was about the target group of the organisation: if it was more attracted to the organisation thanks to implementation of international projects. All of interviewees said, that they had got an increased number of volunteers because of international exchange.

Definitely yes, more people come to us. They're interested in taking part in an EVS project. Sometimes it happens that young people come and want to leave abroad as an EVS participant, but they get involved in EVS activities here, in Poland, they for example take care of EVS foreign volunteers in Poland – they help them with their bank account, telephone or post office.

("STRIM", Poland)

Yes, the participants of our projects are more interested and more willing to get involved
("Unique Steps Youth Organisation", Turkey)

Yes, foreign volunteers attract young people from my city.
("Youth Initiative Centre", Armenia)

Of course. They want to be involved in our actions, they want to do something that will influence their future professional career.
("Euro House", Romania)

Yes, many people are happy about this. They like mobility and exchanges, so we're more attractive to them as we provide such opportunities.
("European Youth 4 Media", Germany)

Yes, definitely. Young people come to us because they want to go abroad. It is only later that they appreciate all the positive results such experience brings.

("Sfera Movement", Russian Federation)

In conclusion, international cooperation had big influence on image of the organisation. Thanks to the promotion in the media, the organisations had an increase of new volunteers who would like to get involved in projects. The organisation were also recognized in their country.

The next part of the report present success stories of international projects participants.

10. Examples of projects participants with a success story

The fifth part of the analysis is about success stories of project participants. The interviewees presented several very positive stories. Most of them were connected to student's exchange – new country, learning new language, getting new job or gathering life experience. Some of them were about changes in human character - for instance shy people became more self – confident.

The youth exchanges also had changed people's life plan and collected experience was inspiration for beginning new activities in homeland.

Sometimes Polish EVS participants stay in the hosting countries. I remember 1 case in Argentina and 1 in Bulgaria. In fact, my fiance also came to Poland as a EVS volunteer and stayed. I estimate, that each year 3 EVS volunteers stay in Poland and do not return to their home countries. They often say that they have better job opportunities here than in their countries of origin.

("STRIM", Poland)

One participant of a youth initiative was very shy and not interested in continuing with his studies after high school. He came to our organisation and got involved in a project as a volunteer, as he wanted to become more open. During the project he started to learn English and afterwards, decided to to to university. He said that the project changed his life.

("Unique Steps Youth Organisation", Turkey)

The majority of participants are pleased after the project. They say that they have got to know themselves and they know better, what they want to do in their lives. Volunteer from Georgia, who came to Poland during the war in 2008, also stayed in Bydgoszcz. Affairs in her homeland frightened her very much. Thanks to EVS she had an opportunity to look at situation in Georgia from a different perspective. She organises youth exchange and she is sending volunteers in "Wiatrak" foundation.

("Wiatrak", Poland)

I could tell you about my story. I went to my EVS to Finland after I graduated from university. I worked with children there – for the first time in my life. I learned a lot, that was great

experience. After my return I started working in Advit, and now I am a coordinator for EVS volunteers. So the EVS influenced my future professional career.

(“Advit”, Moldova)

Those young people who participated in eastern youth exchanges were more motivated to learn English, they got a lot of inspirations as for their future career.

(“Academy for Peace and Development”, Georgia)

Another personal story: after youth exchange in Armenia its German participants decided to change her future plans; she took course in photography because after the workshops she had in Caucasus she fell in love in it.

(“European Intercultural Forum”, Germany)

A lot of them! Young people get very good media qualification and experience thanks to our projects. They end up working in the media or at least get an internship. We did a study 2 years ago and it turned out that 50% of the people who really wanted to work in the media, managed to do it.

(“European Youth 4 Media”, Germany)

We had one young man, aged 27, who came one day to our organisation because he saw a street action organised within the Youth in Action Programme and he wanted to learn more about it. He has never worked before and did not know any foreign languages. He got involved as a volunteer in the activities of our organisation and then wanted to leave on an EVS project. So he went to Latvia and worked with the disabled children. When he came back, he found a job with the disabled here, in Georgia. So EVS showed him his hidden skills he probably wouldn't have discovered otherwise.

(“Georgian Youth For Europe”, Georgia)

The last part of report is about future of organisation.

11. Future of the organisation

The interviewees' opinion about improvement of Youth in Action Programme can be divided into several groups: the first one is about bureaucracy problems (i.e. communication issues or visa procedures), the second one is connected with financial conditions. The last one is about promotion plan.

The Exectutive Agency is ometimes hard to cooperate with. There is only one person there responsible for EVS and it sometimes takes 3-4 weeks to get an answer.

(“STRIM”, Poland)

The Youth in Action Programme should still be separate, however with simplified visa procedures. Also the application process should not be as complicated as it is now: many young people from rural areas in Turkey cannot apply, because the on-line application system is too complicated. They already need a high level of digital competence to be able to apply.

(“Unique Steps Youth Organisation”, Turkey)

Regarding Youth in Action Programme: it needs greater promotion in order to let the youth know what is the goal of the Programme and how it can help in personal development. Currently we have a problem with volunteers for whom EVS is only the way to spent holiday or just wait out the unemployment time. The young people have no more reflection.

(“Wiatrak”, Poland)

First of all, we hope that the next year won't be the end of YiA Programme. It would be great if Shengen visa processing was easier for participants of YiA from Caucasus.

(“Youth Initiative Centre”, Armenia)

Increase the amount of money allocated for hosting volunteers (costs are getting higher and higher) and more support in visa processing for EVS volunteers going to EU.

(“Advit”, Moldova)

My biggest concern is about financial conditions, because without sufficient funding we are not able to provide sufficient accommodation, professional trainers. We are seeking for co-financing; sometimes we arrange it, sometimes we don't.

(“Academy for Peace and Development”, Georgia)

Recommendations: lack of money for pre-departure training, seminars after return of volunteers; it takes a lot of money

Increase visibility of YiA, people don't know anything about it – it would make cooperation with eg. embassies (easier visa processing).

(„Iskra”, Ukraine)

In additional question, the interviewees were asked about Eastern Partnership Youth Window. Almost everyone heard about this opportunity and some of them would like to apply for financial support.

Yes, we have taken the opportunity already (a group evs project in Georgia). We have many people willing to go within the youth in action youth window and we have good partners to do so.

(“STRIM”, Poland)

Yes, we know this opportunity and yes, we applied and once again yes – we received financing!

(“Unique Steps Youth Organisation”, Turkey)

Yes, I heard, and from what I know one of our partners from Georgia wants to apply for Executive Agency in this year.

(“Wiatrak”, Poland)

Yes, we know and yes, we applied and got grants (EVS and Training & Networking)

(“Youth Initiative Centre”, Armenia)

Yes, I heard about it and yes, we applied.

(“Advit”, Moldova)

Yes, our partners from Caucasus applied for some grants this year.

(“European Intercultural Forum”, Germany)

Yes, we heard about it and yes, they have taken the possibility to apply for financial grant. It’s an opportunity to implement more projects, hopefully, the quality will also be high.

(“Georgian Youth For Europe”, Georgia)