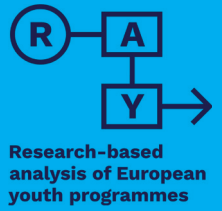




# RAY TRIANGULAR SUMMIT



## KEY MESSAGES

AUGUST 2024

The RAY Triangular Summit took place in Helsinki from 22-24 May 2024 and gathered about 120 participants. It aimed to bring together policy, practice, and research to discuss the evidence-based research from the latest RAY Monitoring surveys<sup>1</sup> and to foster informed discourse on how the findings can contribute to youth work practice, youth policy development, as well as the further development of the European youth programmes. For more information about the Triangular Summit and the RAY Research Network, please refer to the full report and the RAY webpage<sup>2</sup>.

This document compiles the main insights, outputs and key messages of the Triangular Summit.

## MAIN INSIGHTS ON RAY RESEARCH FINDINGS

**Real-life interaction** is essential for developing social competencies and cultural understanding, helping to counter isolation resulting from excessive use of digital and online devices. Human connection is also fundamental for fostering empathy and shared values, which supports, through the European youth programmes, reducing hate speech and fighting radicalisation, thus contributing to creating a more inclusive and understanding society. **Civic engagement** remains a fundamental element of active youth involvement, and ongoing participation ensures that young people are actively involved in their communities.

**Building solidarity** through practical actions in youth work helps to foster intercultural understanding and cooperation among diverse groups. This focus on solidarity and **inclusion** is particularly important for reaching young people with fewer opportunities. Making this a priority and addressing barriers to their participation is a collective responsibility. Effective outreach requires understanding the specific challenges they face and creating long-term strategies for their involvement in the programmes, especially in mobilities, which also involves fostering personal development, awareness of solidarity, and individual opportunities. Engaging families and communities in this process is necessary to build support for young people's participation.

**Media literacy** is another critical area, as it helps young people navigate fake news and misinformation, developing competencies such as critical thinking. Addressing the need for media literacy and developing support tools is essential for informed and engaged youth, which also calls for an earlier engagement of young people (below 18 years) to ensure long-term impact.

**Sustainable funding** is also emphasised, with a need for increased and consistent funding to address larger societal issues. **The professionalisation of youth work** needs to be made visible, acknowledged, and recognised, which calls for investing in youth workers as professionals to support their role in youth work development.

Moreover, adapting the European youth programmes to **local contexts** is fundamental and initiatives should be

<sup>1</sup> The RAY Monitoring surveys are conducted with beneficiaries of the European youth programmes (Erasmus+ Youth and European Solidarity Corps) on a regular basis (current survey round 2023), [www.researchyouth.net/mon](http://www.researchyouth.net/mon), [www.researchyouth.net/soc](http://www.researchyouth.net/soc).  
<sup>2</sup> RAY Network: [www.researchyouth.net](http://www.researchyouth.net); RAY Triangular Summit and report: <https://www.researchyouth.net/events/past-events/ray-triangular-summit-may-2024-2/>

tailored to fit specific cultural and social environments while aligning with broader European goals.

**Research and data** play a key role in shaping the future of European youth programmes and advocating for securing necessary funding. The evaluation of these programmes should combine quantitative and qualitative methods. Quantitative data tracks trends over time, while qualitative data provides deeper insights through diverse perspectives and online focus groups. This mixed-method approach enhances understanding by integrating individual stories into a broader narrative, despite the potential higher costs and challenges of qualitative research.

**Understanding young people's personal stories** and experiences is essential for effective youth work. This awareness helps tailor the programmes to meet the actual needs and situations of young participants. Ensuring that young people are visible and heard in social or community settings and decision-making processes enhances their engagement and participation.

**Active engagement and participation of young people** in the programmes and projects are fundamental. Strategies should be developed to resonate with young people and address barriers to their involvement, ensuring that their voices are central to shaping the future. Clear communication with youth workers and organisations guarantees sustained learning and development, creating the conditions needed for meaningful youth engagement.

## LESSONS FROM RESEARCH – WHAT'S NEXT?

What follows is a compilation of the reflections on the four challenges<sup>3</sup> identified in the RAY research findings. They complement and further elaborate several dimensions already tackled in the insights on the research findings.

<sup>3</sup> The four challenges were described as follows: 1. The European youth programmes are excellent intercultural learning environments. How can these opportunities be made accessible to more and more diverse young people? 2. Young people and youth workers encounter mis- and disinformation daily. How can the European youth programmes strengthen the media literacy of young people and youth workers? 3. Young people increasingly wish to address sociopolitical challenges through their participation in European youth programmes. What changes are needed to better support them? 4. The multiple crises of our time have strong impacts on young people and the youth field. How can the European youth programmes strengthen resilience in our day and time?

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.youthpass.eu/en/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://europeers.org/>

## CHALLENGE 1 – LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS ACCESSIBLE TO ALL

Making intercultural learning opportunities provided by the European youth programmes accessible to a more diverse range of young people requires an increase in the overall budget, with specific allocations for different target groups to support a broader outreach while avoiding additional bureaucracy. Recognising young people's competencies should be improved by reinforcing the value of YouthPass<sup>4</sup> and highlighting its benefits to boost engagement among target groups.

Involving social workers together with youth workers can reach young people who are not typically engaged, and additional support for organisations is needed to interact with specific groups. Strengthening connections between national organisational levels for youth-related affairs and European youth programmes and supporting schools and teachers in linking students with youth work organisations, are also necessary steps. Practically, diversifying staff to better represent different ethnicities, genders, and cultures is essential. It is also important to engage schools and families to encourage intercultural processes at the local level and to support peer-to-peer outreach effectively, ensuring that young ambassadors genuinely represent their peers. Therefore, building trust with target groups and overcoming stigmatising dilemmas can enhance networks such as EuroPeers<sup>5</sup>. Finally, simplifying forms and procedures to make applications more accessible and restructuring funding mechanisms to reduce bureaucracy while considering the implementation of micro-grants can also support broader participation.

## CHALLENGE 2 – STRENGTHENING MEDIA LITERACY

To strengthen the media literacy of young people and youth workers, a toolkit on media literacy for trainers should be developed and established as a priority for National Agencies, with a detailed report and funding

index. Media literacy and critical thinking should be incorporated into YouthPass, and Youth Advisory Boards should be engaged in discussing media literacy and include related questions in programme-related applications. Enhancing training opportunities under TCA<sup>6</sup>/NET<sup>7</sup> and TEC<sup>8</sup> to ensure broader attention to media literacy is also important.

### CHALLENGE 3 – PARTICIPATION IN THE EUROPEAN YOUTH PROGRAMMES

Supporting young people in addressing sociopolitical challenges through their participation in European youth programmes requires increased funding to address larger societal issues and promote democratic values. Developing long-term strategies to provide ongoing support for young people, enabling them to build confidence and capacities over time, is also essential. Ensuring sustainable funding for the effectiveness of European youth programmes and advocating for increased and consistent funding can help achieve these goals. Practically, encouraging young people's involvement in local activities and decision-making processes, particularly during elections, is fundamental. Promoting civic engagement and building solidarity and intercultural understanding through practical actions can also help young people to address sociopolitical challenges.

### CHALLENGE 4 – STRENGTHENING RESILIENCE

To strengthen resilience in the European youth programmes during multiple crises, it is important to address the impacts of these crises on young people and the youth work field in general. This can be achieved by tailoring the programmes to fit specific cultural and social environments while aligning with broader European goals. Using research and data to advocate for necessary funding and policy support is essential, ensuring that the programmes are evidence-

based and effective. Overcoming political and financial challenges by demonstrating the long-term benefits of European youth programmes can also help strengthen resilience.

## CONCLUSIONS

The RAY Triangular Summit highlighted the crucial role of Erasmus+ Youth and the European Solidarity Corps, in fostering democratic values, social inclusion, and intercultural understanding across Europe. The Summit's discussions also emphasised the success of these programmes in providing safe spaces for participatory democracy and enhancing the international and intercultural competencies of young people. The panels and workshops shed light on key areas for further development, including ensuring real-life interactions to counter digital isolation, fighting radicalisation, promoting civic engagement, and building solidarity through practical actions. The importance of media literacy to navigate misinformation, secure sustainable funding, reach out to more young people - particularly those not engaged in the programmes and those with fewer opportunities - and recognise youth workers as professionals was also underlined. Additionally, the need to tailor the programmes to local contexts while aligning with broader European goals was highlighted to enhance their relevance and impact. The Summit concluded with a call for increased awareness of European opportunities and a collective effort to defend common values, ensuring that youth work remains a priority in policy and funding decisions.<sup>9</sup>

6 Training and Cooperation Activities organised by NAs in the frame of Erasmus+

7 Networking activities organised by NAs in the frame of the European Solidarity Corps

8 The Training and Evaluation Cycle supports volunteers and Quality Label organisations in the frame of the European Solidarity Corps.

9 This document illustrates insights, outputs and opinions from individual participants and working groups and does not necessarily reflect the data of RAY.