

Youth Partnership

Partnership between the European Commission
and the Council of Europe in the field of Youth



Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) on Youth Research Essentials

Report
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Intro

The course was organised and offered by the EU-Council of Europe Youth Partnership (herein Partnership). It makes extensive use of the Partnership's existing knowledge and publications on the topic, and spotlights examples from around Europe. The course also provides a chance for participants to learn from their own practice and to network with other learners.

Why this course?

The MOOC on Youth Research Essentials completed the e-learning offer of the Youth Partnership, covering all three sides of the youth sector triangle of governance: youth work, youth policy and youth research. All courses are hosted on the Council of Europe's [HELP platform](#). This MOOC aimed to bring youth research closer to learners. With this course they could discover the role of youth research in shaping evidence-based policy and youth work practice and learn about its methods, approaches, and the various research actors and knowledge networks.

The MOOC on Youth Research Essentials was open to everyone and free of charge. Youth policy makers, youth work practitioners, youth leaders, volunteers, members of youth NGOs, and youth researchers were encouraged to join the course, as well as anyone else who was simply interested. The course included basic information, making it especially useful to those just beginning their careers in the youth field.

The course

The facilitated course consisted of six modules and ran from 23 October 2023 to 3 December 2023. During this period there was a chance to meet experts and other learners during two webinars and a Q&A session. Modules opened one by one and remained open until the end of the course.

Course timeline:

- 23 October - Module 1: The role, concepts and history of youth research
- 30 October - Module 2: Youth research, policy and practice
- 2 November (15:00 CET) - Webinar: emerging topics in youth research
- 6 November - Module 3: Youth research actors and networks at national level
- 13 November - Module 4: Youth research methods and approaches
- 14 November (15:00 CET) - Check in: Q&A with the team
- 20 November - Module 5: Communicating youth research
- 23 November (15:00 CET) - Webinar: communicating youth research
- 27 November - Module 6: Evaluation (due to technical reasons: 20 December)

The webinars were recorded and are available in their respective modules, along with the presentations and the graphic recordings. Due to technical reasons, the video recording of the last webinar is not available.

The team

The team working on this course consisted of different experts from the field.

- Youth Partnership team: Lana Pasic and Marietta Balázs
- Youth researchers: Dunja Potočnik and Sandra Roe
- Course facilitators: Nika Bakhsoliani and Nik Paddison
- Graphic recording and illustrations: Paul Dumitru (Picturise)
- Communicating youth research webinar: Maria Paola De Salvo

The MOOC was instigated and coordinated by the Youth Partnership, who provided guidance and support to the rest of the team throughout the whole process. The youth researchers prepared the course material based on their expertise and knowledge as active youth researchers, they also provided their expertise in the two webinars and the Q&A session. The two facilitators supported the learning throughout the course, communicated information and updates directly to the participants, fielded questions and acted as trouble shooters for any problems that arose. They also supported any learners that needed help.

Participants

Who are they?

Over 470 learners enrolled in the MOOC, coming from all parts of the world. The participants brought a diverse array of experiences and roles within the youth field. They ranged from members of national youth councils to youth mentors focusing on health issues. The group included those involved in youth organisations, policy makers, youth workers, trainers, and counsellors, each contributing a unique perspective. Many were engaged in coordinating volunteers or actively volunteering themselves.

A subset of the participants was in the midst of professional training within youth research authorities, or studying youth engagement on a masters' level. Research was a common pursuit among the participants, with topics spanning data governance, migration, youth health, good governance, career guidance, youth unemployment, and youth entrepreneurship. Additionally, several were pursuing doctoral studies in areas directly impacting the youth, such as social work, digital transformation, youth identity representation and more.

The levels of experience varied, with some having a background in youth research and others being newcomers to the subject. Notably, a portion of the learners were stepping into this arena for the first time, with no prior experience in both research and youth-related activities.

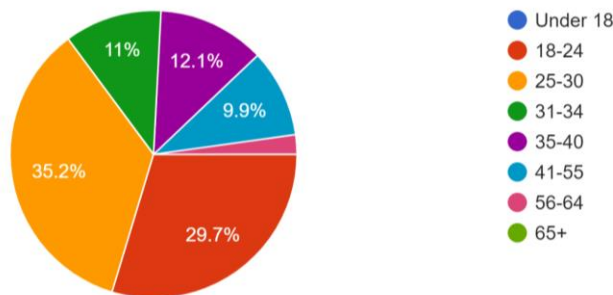
Demographics

The following data is based on the welcome survey, filled out by 91 learners.

The age range of participants:

How old are you?

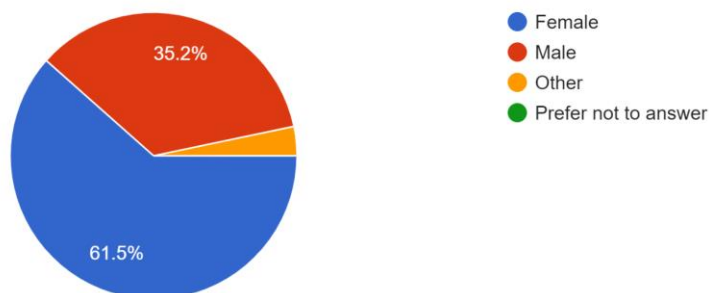
91 responses



Gender:

What is your gender?

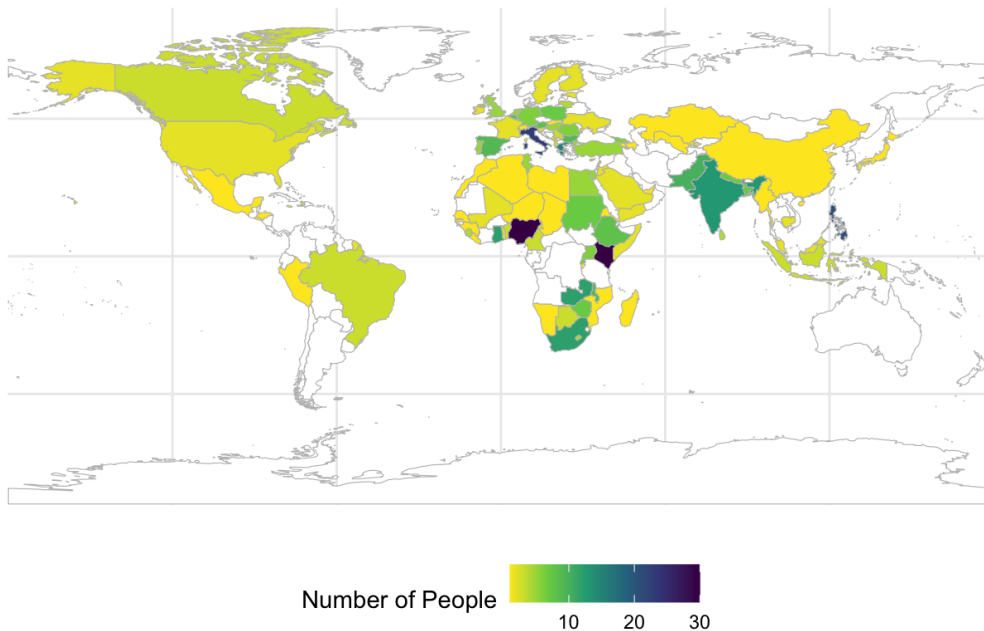
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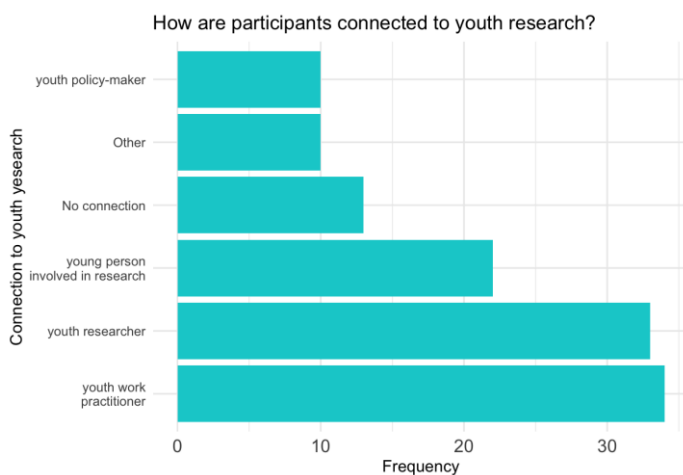
Where are the learners coming from?

Learners connected to the course from different parts of the world, the following heat map shows the geographic distribution of participants. Therefore, the course enjoyed diverse perspectives coming from different cultures and nations which was highly beneficial for the learning process.

World Map Showing Engagement by Country



Connection to youth research:



In the welcome survey, participants were asked to note what's their connection to youth research. They were able to check multiple boxes, and a majority of participants did so. Thus, there were many present who were engaged with the topic through different pathways and intersections.

Reason for participating:

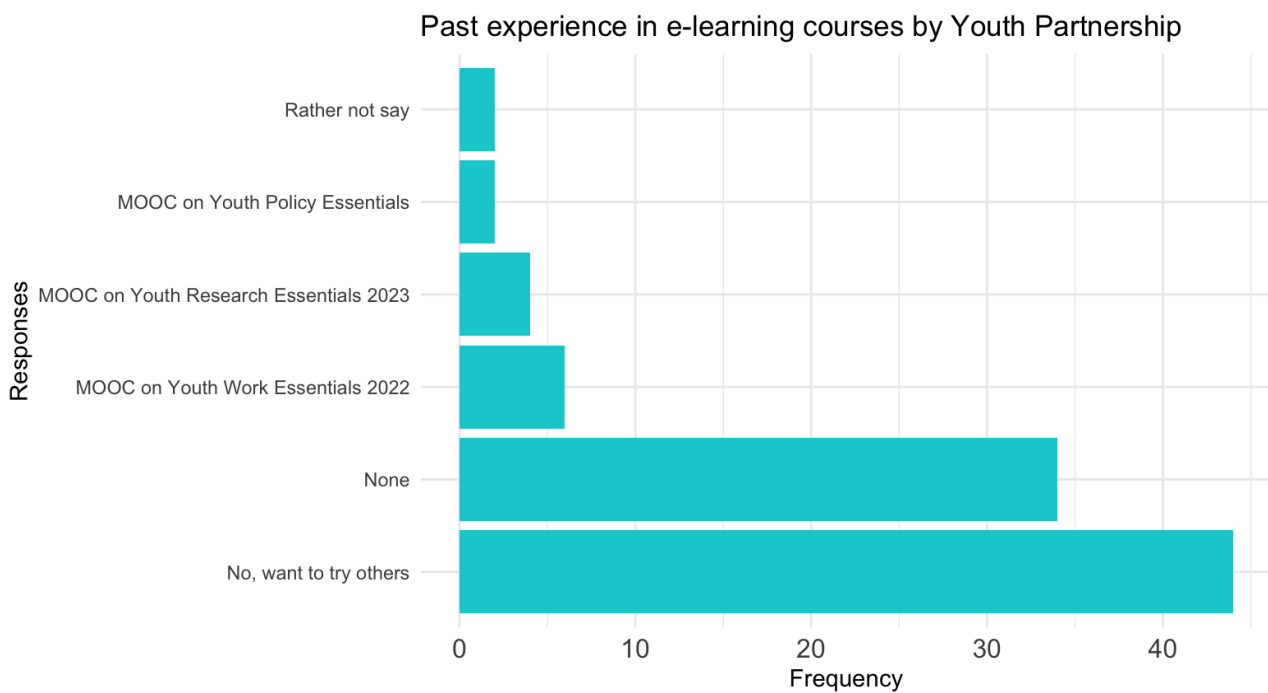
The survey results of the MOOC participants revealed a diverse array of motivations for enrolling in the course, centred primarily on personal and professional development in the field of youth research. Many participants expressed a strong interest in the subject due to its contemporary relevance and the need to stay updated with current trends and practices. A great number of participants expressed their desire to become researchers, with ambitions to contribute to policy development, solving societal issues, and to enhance youth engagement and empowerment. Learning and acquiring new skills in youth research was a common theme, with a specific focus on applying these skills in various settings such as non-governmental organisations, educational institutions, and policy making. Several participants mentioned their current roles in youth-related projects or organisations, highlighting the course's relevance to their professional needs. Finally, there was a notable desire to network with peers and experts in the field, suggesting the importance of community and collaboration in this area of study.

Research already known about:

In the welcome survey, participants were asked to name the topic of the youth research they have encountered. Responses were quite varied, reflecting the diverse interests and professional contexts in which participants work or study. Key themes included mental health issues among youth, the impact of Covid-19 on young people, and comparative analyses of youth participation models in different countries. Some participants were directly involved in specific research projects, such as studies on financial literacy needs among youth, the dynamics of violent extremism, and the innovative potential of the youth. Such a large spectrum of responses showed a strong engagement of participants with a range of youth-related topics, from health and social issues to policy and educational methodologies, highlighting the breadth of youth research across different regions and disciplines.

Previous experience with the Youth Partnership e-learning courses:

Most participants have not completed one of the Youth Partnership’s other two courses: the MOOCs on Youth Policy Essentials and Youth Work Essentials, but they expressed their interest in enrolling.



Course content

Course summary

The course's content was distributed into five modules, which provide a detailed exploration of youth research. The content informed participants of youth research, its significance, history and practical implications. Each module was carefully constructed to achieve specific learning objectives, aiming to equip participants with the understanding of youth research provision.

Course objectives

- Become familiar with the role of youth research and get to know the main contemporary and emerging research themes.
- Have an overview of the various youth research actors and knowledge networks across Europe.
- Understand better the impact of youth research on evidence-based youth policy and youth work practice.
- Gain an understanding of youth research methods and approaches.
- Learn about knowledge translation and how to efficiently communicate youth research to different audiences.

The course contained various resources, including publications, videos, podcasts, and visuals. The participants have the chance to share their opinion and their own story with other learners, and challenge themselves through small assignments.

Module summaries

The following are a short summary of each module, highlighting the main content and the learning objectives for each. Module 6 is not included as it is the evaluation and is covered separately in the next section of this report.

Module 1: The role, concepts and history of youth research

This module covers the basics of youth research. It looks at what youth research is, its concepts and definitions, why it is needed, how it is done, its objectives, the benefits it brings, something of its history, who is involved in it, and the contemporary and emerging topics. It is also an opportunity to better understand its role and importance to youth work and youth work policy and how it has developed across Europe.

Module 2: Youth research, policy and practice

This module offers the opportunity to gain an understanding of the connections between research, policy and practice, it also covers the differences between research and consultations. The module includes information and learning about the youth sector triangle and the Youth Partnership, why youth research is important for policy making and youth work practice, different models of interaction, an exploration of what makes research effective, and public consultations with young people.

Module 3: Youth research actors and networks at national level

This module looks at who does youth research and where to find data and information about young people. It explores the roles of the different actors and introduces the networks that are involved in or contribute to youth research at both national and European levels. It also provides information on the role of youth organisations and public institutions in youth research.

Module 4: Youth research methods and approaches

This module is designed to support the learner in designing effective research projects, it explores the different methods and approaches and how to include young people. It covers qualitative and quantitative

types of research, how researchers decide whether to make a questionnaire or interview people, the rules / research ethics that researchers should respect - especially in relation to young people, research design, and new technologies in research.

Module 5: Communicating youth research

Module 5 looks at the importance of making the results of research accessible and understandable to different audiences and the different ways information can be presented, knowledge translation, and how to better communicate research results.

Module activities

Various learning methods were used in the courses, and each module offered diverse types of activities.

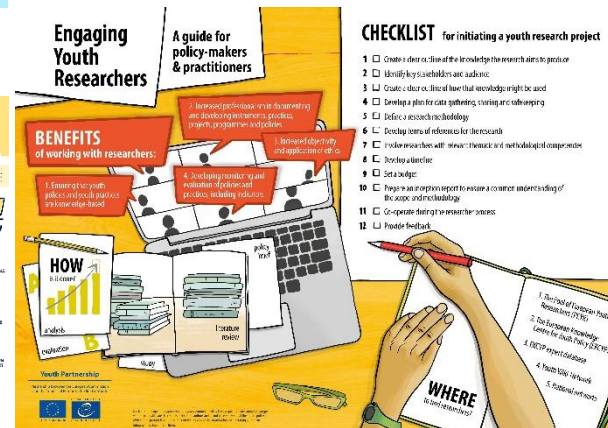
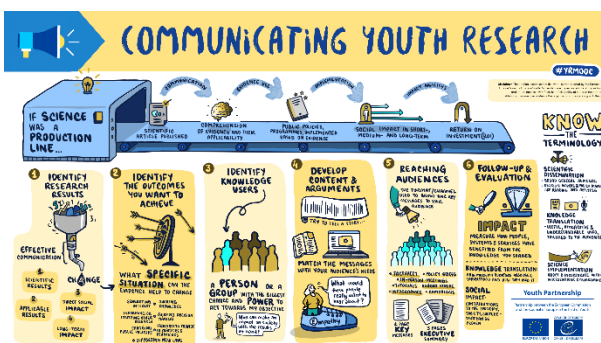
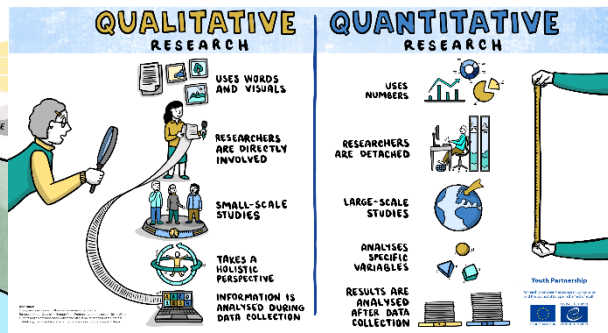
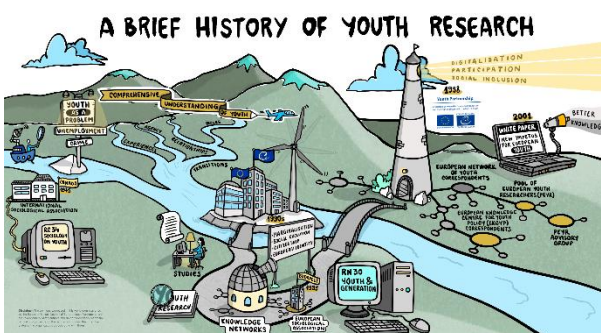
The main learning resource of the MOOC was created by a text, which was supplemented by the b.1 header images and text dividers, b.2 - illustrations, and c. videos - such as c.1 animated videos, c.2 interviews, c.3 videos from the webinars.

Examples:

b.1. header images and text dividers:



b.2 illustrations:



c.1 animated videos:

- [The Youth Partnership](#)
- [Youth Knowledge Break #7 – Youth research and young people](#)

c.2 interviews: [EKCP and PEYR](#) video

c.3 videos from webinars and Youth Knowledge Break series:

- [Youth Knowledge Break #1 - Webinar - The purpose of knowledge within the youth sector triangle](#)
- [Youth research: the essentials \(Youth Knowledge Break #2\)](#)
- [Researching Youth: Digital Ethnography and Other Online Methods - Youth Knowledge Forum](#)
- [Webinar: Emerging topics in youth research](#)

In order to explore participants' perspectives and stimulate critical thinking, as well as, making parallels to the participants' diverse contexts, forums were used. For example, in module 4, participants were asked to list five pros and five cons on using artificial intelligence in youth research. In another example in the fifth module, participants had to find one image that represents knowledge translation after a theoretical input about it. Forums were also used for brainstorming further ideas or practises alongside padlets. In total 13 forums were used and one Padlet link was embedded to the platform.

The team used assignments to engage participants into practical exercises. Namely, in module 4, the task was to create a youth-friendly survey, and in the second instance, in module 5, participants were asked to devise a strategy on outreaching their target audiences.

In order to ensure strong encouragement with the content, each module was accompanied by a quiz. Quizzes were constructed in a way that encouraged learners to get back to the texts and engage critical thinking. In total 7 quiz tasks were distributed across the 5 modules.

During the course two webinars were organised. The first webinar about emerging topics in youth research was facilitated by Nika Bakhsoliani, the inputs were provided by Dunja Potocnik (researcher). The second webinar about communicating youth research was facilitated by Nik Paddison, the presentation was done by Maria Paola De Salvo (knowledge translation expert, one of the authors of the Partnership's [Guide to knowledge translation](#)). Both times graphic recording was provided by Paul Dumitru (Picturise). The speakers' presentations (about 30 mins) were followed by questions and answers. The webinars were conducted on Zoom, but later the recordings were uploaded on the course platform. Due to technical issues with the Zoom platform, the video recording of the second webinar is not available.

Participants were also offered a special Zoom session for questions and answers, to encourage interaction and making links to their realities. The session was attended by the participants, Dunja Potocnik researcher and Tanya Basarab from the Youth Partnership team.

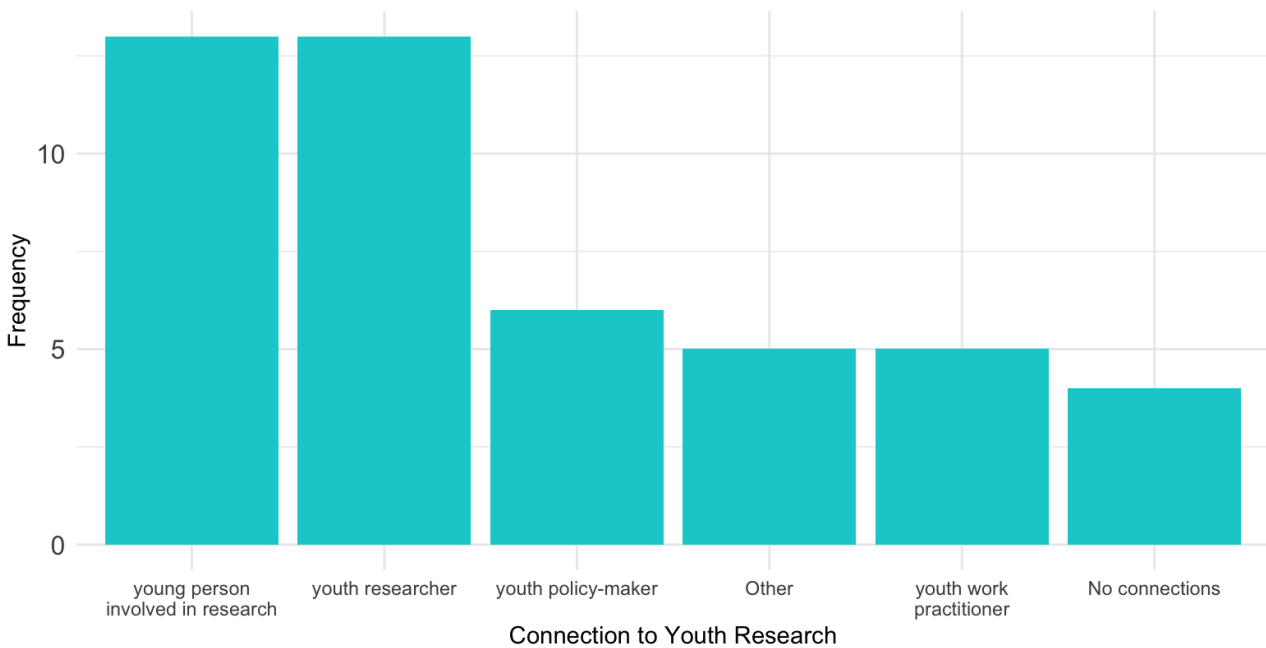
Participants' evaluation

Overall the participants' evaluation was very positive and constructive. Many people expressed their enjoyment at being able to study this topic and even expressing a desire for more information and knowledge. Most also shared that the course exceeded their expectations. The course is very Eurocentric and the participant group is worldwide, as a result there are occasional comments for more information on other world regions.

Connection to youth research

When asked about their connection to youth research the participants answered with the following information (participants could check multiple boxes):

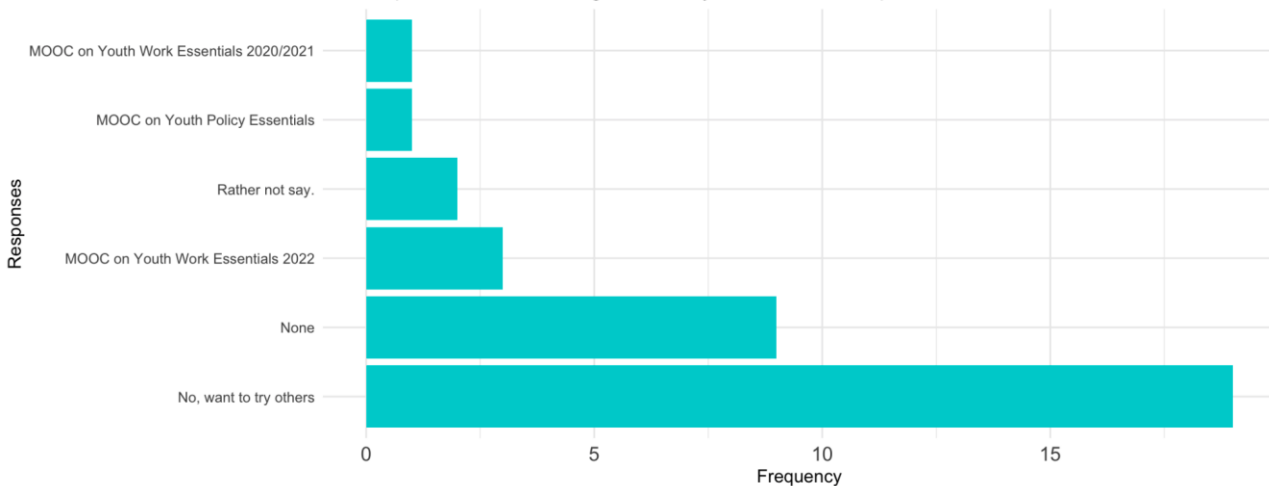
Distribution of Connections to Youth Research



Experience of other MOOCs

In response to whether they participated in other e-learning courses of the Youth Partnership, the respondents stated:

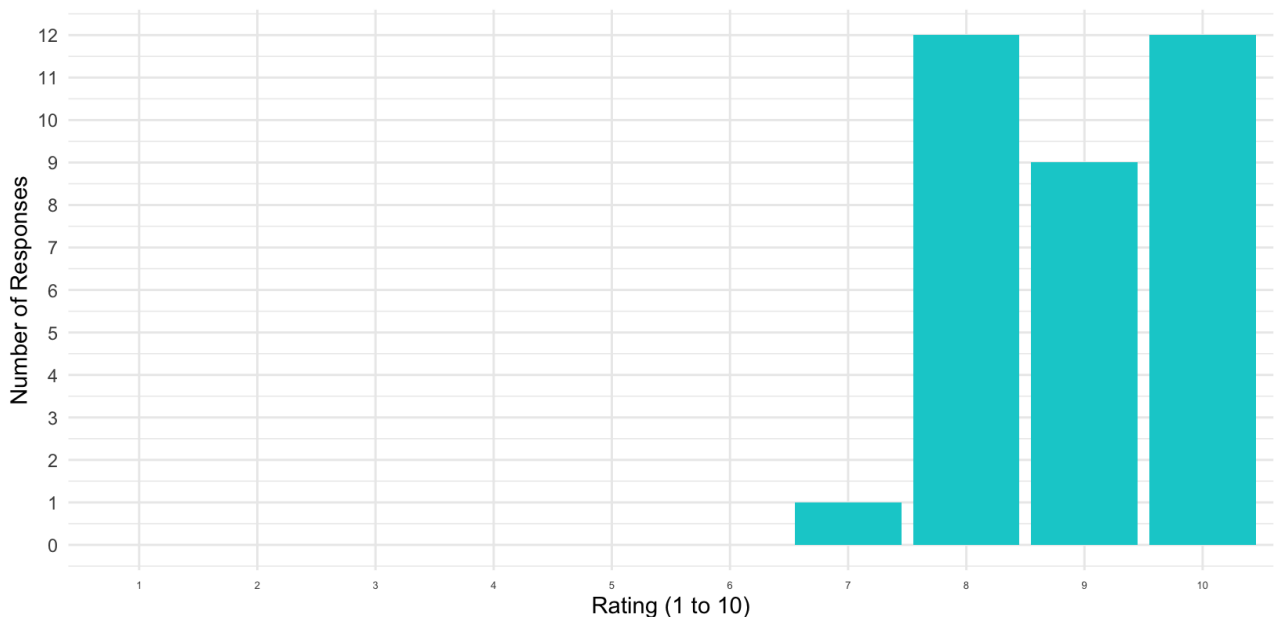
Past experience in e-learning courses by Youth Partnership



Learning expectations

Regarding their learning expectations, the participants said:

Evaluation of Course Meeting Learning Expectations



A number of people simply wrote that the course met or exceeded their expectations and fulfilled its objectives. Others wrote that it was insightful, a great resource and a good introduction to youth research.

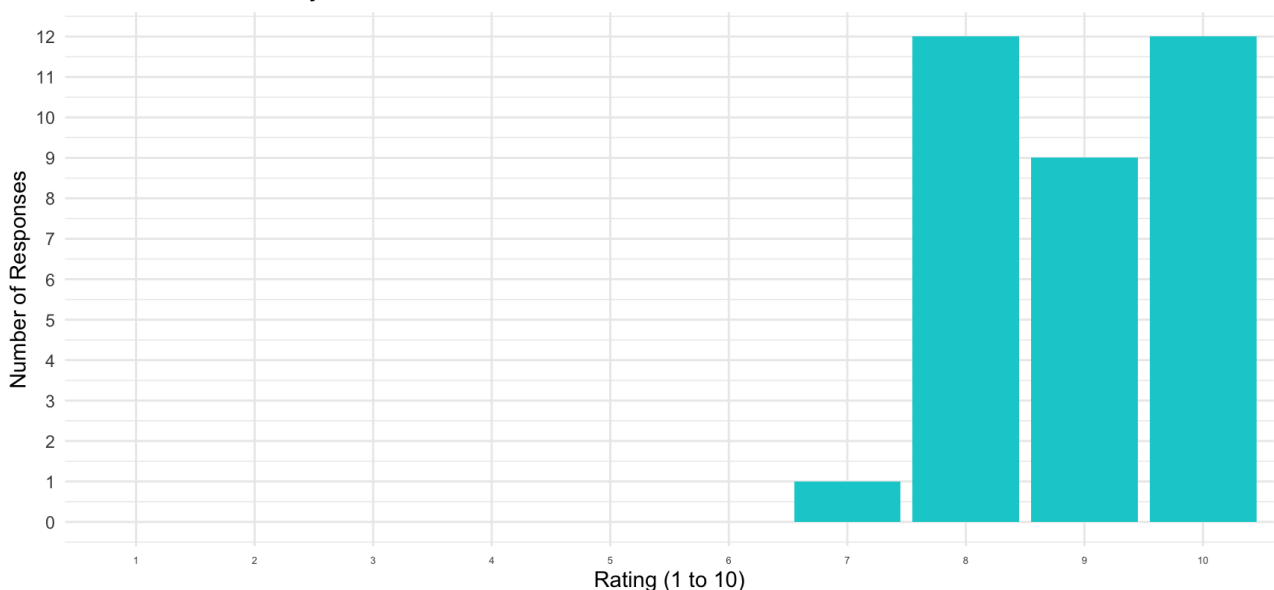
One person wrote that the course was very interactive while another felt that it needed to be more engaging with documentaries and presentations from different projects. The elements that were present were much appreciated especially the webinar presentation slides and graphic reports, and videos from the modules. The work of the facilitators and the webinars were specified as being great.

Overall the feedback is that the course was educative, fulfilling, provided a lot of learning about youth research and its numerous sub-topics and has proved useful for people in conducting their own research and in connection to youth policy developments.

Level of satisfaction

For the level of satisfaction with the course, the participants said:

To what extent were you satisfied with the course content?



The majority of participants were satisfied with the course with some looking forward to the content developing further. Others mentioned about the knowledge, resources, examples, information, and bibliography it provided were really useful.

There were comments related to the learning environment and how the course was presented (design work), that it had a good structure with the possibility to interact which supported the content.

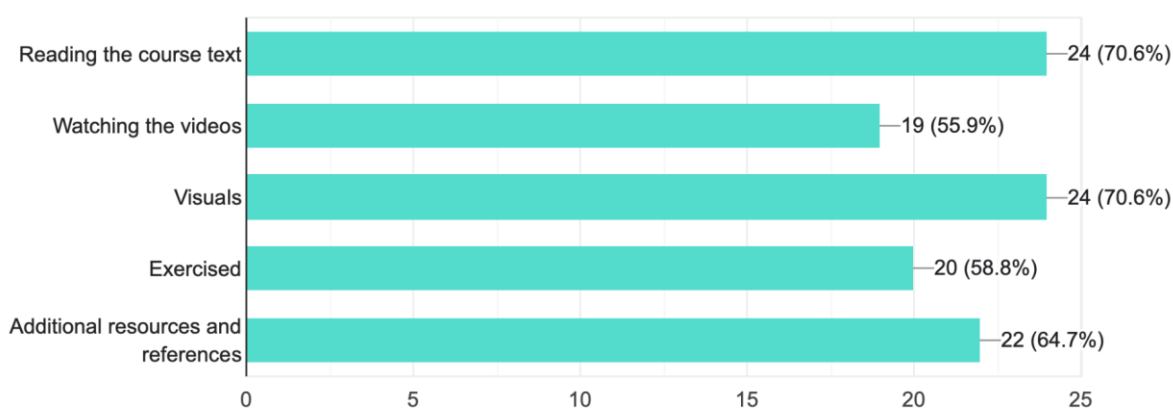
One participant expected more resources and knowledge regarding research strategies.

Most useful learning activities

For the most useful learning activities the participants shared the following:

What learning activities were the most useful?

34 responses



Most valuable content, activities and resources

The survey responses on the most useful learning activities in the MOOC highlight a diverse range of preferences. Visual elements like illustrations, videos, and visual representations were highly regarded for aiding understanding and memorising. Practical applications, including exercises and relating content to personal contexts, were also highly valued. Participants appreciated specific modules, especially those on youth research networks and actors, for their relevance and depth. One person expressed that the knowledge network was the most important for them because they went on to learn about the knowledge network system in their own country, India. For another person the module on youth research networks and actors was the most useful because they were able to observe the diversity of actors in different countries. Some people highlighted specifically the research methodologies, being able to identify similar working research areas in their community and country, and learning about using evidence and communicating research. The provision of comprehensive resources, including linked articles and additional readings, enhanced the learning experience. Interactive components like quizzes, forums, and assignments were effective in reinforcing learning and allowing practical application of knowledge. Content on evidence-based policy, research methodologies, and communication in youth research was particularly noted for its usefulness. The course's focus on knowledge networks and the diversity of actors in youth research across countries provided valuable insights.

Improvements or changes

The evaluation survey responses regarding potential improvements or changes to the MOOC content, activities, and resources reveal a general satisfaction with the course, with many participants stating they would not change anything. However, some participants did offer suggestions for enhancement. These included adding more details on conducting research, exploring collaboration with institutes, policy making,

and funding. A desire for more interactive elements, such as detailed case studies, better explanation of youth research data analysis, and increased participant interaction, was also expressed.

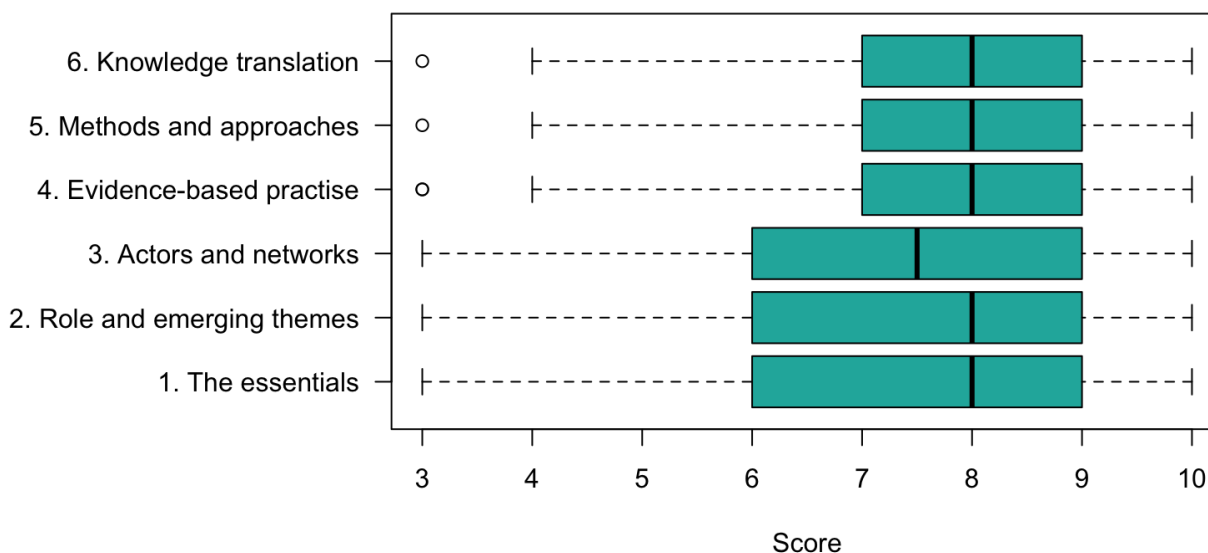
A few responses suggested improvements in specific areas like the assessment module, with requests for a more accurate response registration system. The course layout and questionnaire design were mentioned as areas for potential refinement. Additionally, there was a preference for more video content and visual elements over text-heavy sections, and an interest in making the course content available in different languages to cater to a broader audience. The feedback indicates a balance between satisfaction with the current course structure and opportunities for making it more interactive, diverse in presentation, and accessible to non-English speakers.

Understanding youth research

The following are a series of questions on different aspects of youth research which show the extent of each respondents knowledge or understanding after completing the course:

1. What is your level of understanding of the essentials of youth research (concepts and definitions, methods, history, actors)?
2. To which extent are you aware of the role of youth research and the main contemporary and emerging research themes?
3. To which extent are you familiar with the various youth research actors and knowledge networks across Europe?
4. What is your level of understanding of the impact of youth research on evidence-based youth policy and youth work practice?
5. How much are you aware of youth research methods and approaches?
6. What is your level of understanding of knowledge translation and how to efficiently communicate youth research to different audiences?

Understanding of Youth Research Components



Concluding remarks and recommendations

HELP Platform

Youth research is a difficult topic to present to such a diverse audience, however, the organiser team succeeded in utilising several aspects of the HELP platform so that the course was engageable and it reached its objectives. However, HELP is a large platform with many interesting features, and much more could be done as there is clearly a need for this kind of MOOC. Only five functions of the HELP platform were used: Page, Forum, Quiz, Choice and Assignment. For the future it would be interesting to explore each of these options further and to integrate other features and functions that come with HELP. This would increase the potential for creating diversity of content and furthering the interaction of the participants.

Participant Interaction

As mentioned above, the options for participant interaction are currently limited. The Forum function was predominantly used in every module. Even though it was used exhaustively the Forums were more active than expected, averaging 25 inputs from participants throughout all five modules. However there is room for more interaction with the participants and the participants themselves have highlighted this as something they also want.

Apart from increasing the scope of functions, there is a need to consider interaction between the facilitator team and the participants. During this MOOC the facilitator team sent fairly regular messages to the participant group as a whole. This could be done more regularly and a plan developed to ensure the communication is regular.

There is also a question about responding to participants in their engagement with the different functions. This needs consideration, however, even at an average of 25 responses per function, there are numerous functions in each Module, this would require a huge time commitment that is not going to be realistic for either the Youth Partnership or the facilitators.

Another option could be to have some live interaction with participants at different stages of the course, perhaps one live interaction like the Q&A after each Module. It could also be interesting to see if there is a Questions function in HELP that would allow participants write in with their questions and the facilitator and writers team would respond in writing or even in the Q&A video. It would also be worth investing time into looking at how such interactions could be recorded and shared so that participants could review them later.

Structure

The timeline was too tight with one module per week, this is asking for a lot of engagement from both participants and the team. Interestingly this was not a point brought up in the participants evaluation.

There were two webinars and a Q&A session, all were well promoted to the participants, though the number of attendees was small. This could partly be down to timezone issues since there are so many participants from across the world. However, further thought needs to be put into this aspect to engage a broader base of participants.

The addition of the illustrator worked well and lifted the content of both webinars, each illustration offering a lot of colour and clearly reflecting what had been talked about.

Another aspect that could lift this particular subject could be the introduction of more video material, a series of short lecture inputs for example would help lift the heavy text to make it more user-friendly.

The Youth Partnership will transform the course into a self-directed learning experience in 2024.