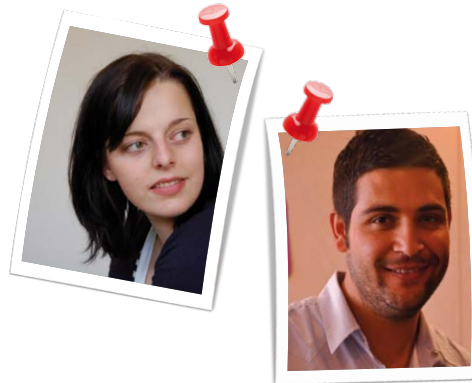




Research is a beginning, not an end

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Have you ever done research? Have you ever read about any research in the youth field? With the youth field facing upcoming changes, the importance of knowledge-based research and studies in this area is becoming more and more relevant. Research helps to establish facts and new conclusions that can be used in different areas. Real numbers, facts and results that can be measured help in practice. Much attention is paid to planning and doing research in order to receive the most informative results. The next step should also be taken into consideration: how to use the research results.

How to use research?

Do you ask yourself this question when planning a research project? To be honest, when we planned research in the past, our plans often ended with the “summary of the results”. But we should not forget that the results are not the end, but the beginning. Naturally, a question arises: “What happens after the research?”

- A.** You can put it in your drawer and forget about it.
- B.** You can be proud of yourself for five minutes because you have found something very interesting, and then forget about it.
- C.** You can use it in many different ways to benefit the work you are doing.

We have chosen answer “C”, however it might sound too abstract. Here are some tested, practical examples.

In the Youth Express Network (Y-E-N) we decided to “measure” the impact that our work has on young people (we organise international training programmes, seminars, etc.). It was important for us to see if we were going in the right direction. So we did research about the impact of international youth gatherings (let’s call them that) on young people.

We got the results: our work is approved. We shared the results with our members. And they started using them when applying for youth exchanges, international training programmes, study sessions, etc.

92% of participants say that taking part in an international project helped them to take personal or professional initiative.



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The applications looked more serious.

Imagine you are an expert evaluating an application for an international youth project. Which sentence would look like stronger evidence for you?

A. "This project will provide a better future for young people because they will learn a lot."

B. "As the research shows, 92% of the interviewed young people say that taking part in an international project helped them to take personal initiatives. It is expected that after this project young people will be empowered to take actions for their own future."

Y-E-N and its members used the results from the research when applying for projects.

The research helped explain why the international youth project for a concrete topic should be organised and what added value the participants will get. Here are a few examples of the projects: a long-term multi-measure project "You(th) are the Champions" applied for by Y-E-N to the executive agency was approved; "Turkish-Armenian Youth Dialogue" was applied for by a member of Y-E-N, many indicators from the research were used and the project was approved.

Motivation has increased.

These results helped us motivate young people to take action at local and international levels. Imagine you are a young person who has never thought of volunteering. You are worried about your future in the labour market because competition is very intense. Then you see research results saying that 90% of young people who attended international youth events found a job easier. Now you are more motivated to take part in national and international youth events and even start volunteering.

When presenting the aims and objectives of an activity in a training course, what words and phrases do you use to engage the participants? Have you ever tried to use research results? If not, try it! Do not forget that putting some numbers "on the

76% stated that being part of an international youth activity has contributed significantly to improving some of their personal skills.

table" can be more realistic and convincing than listening to the stories from your friends' friends. "Not so long ago I was working in a local school in Turkey for a project called 'Youth Civic Engagement'. Volunteering for most of the students seemed useless and boring. They did not see the reason to start any kind of activity, but some quotes from the results of the research project 'Youth Impact' strengthened my arguments. I don't know if that was a turning point, however five of them are now very active volunteers in three different youth associations."

You can contribute to the policy-making process.

Can you imagine how important a person you might become?

In order to meet the needs and expectations of young people and to influence policy makers, our work should be based on strong evidence. What if you have the power to decide on the future of youth programmes and you receive research results showing what contributes to young people's personal development, which competences they gain after international youth projects and even more concrete results such as "one out of two participants stated that participation in international projects increased their sense of European identity". Would it help you to make a decision?

It contributes to the recognition of competences gained through non-formal education.

So far, we (youth workers, volunteers, young people, etc.) have the Youthpass as a tool for the recognition of skills gained in national and international activities. We, as youth workers, are still facing challenges. Instead of shouting and arguing how useful and important youth projects are, let's provide knowledge-based evidence – these could be research results. Let's increase the number of these research projects in order to contribute to the process of recognition of competences gained through non-formal education. It is an important need expressed by thousands of young people during national consultations.

80.9% of the participants said that through the project they have learnt more about European cultural diversity.

Help your family, friends and other people around you understand the importance of, and your interest in, youth work.

You can come from a youth exchange, a seminar or a training course with a big smile, hundreds of pictures in your camera, new friends on Facebook and long, long stories about your experiences. But would that be enough for the people around you who are not in youth work? Try to use a phrase from research stating, for example: "International youth projects increase the interest of young people in different social issues and problems." Would it make your life easier?

These were just a few efficient examples from the Youth Express Network and its members. Try to think who else could benefit from research. Who could be interested? What could be other ways to use research? For sure you will find at least few other answers that you can also share with us.

"It helped me to be more confident to speak in English."

Significant positive impact on the lives of young people in terms of better understanding towards individuals coming from other cultures.

Y-E-N

The Youth Express Network is an international association of youth organisations that has been working since 1993 for the inclusion of young people in Europe. It federates 30 youth organisations from 18 different countries. Y-E-N works with and for different target groups, according to the needs of its members, from homeless young people and African immigrants to young people having problems at school as well as Roma youth. For more information see: www.y-e-n.net.

YOUTH IMPACT

After years of experience, the Youth Express Network decided that research should be conducted in order to look at the different aspects of impact of international activities on young people.

Recently, many youth organisations have witnessed decreases in funding opportunities for their activities and have had to prioritise the use of resources. This has meant that certain activities have become difficult to justify, including working internationally, without evidence of effectiveness.

The Youth Express Network submitted an application to the European Youth Foundation of the Council of Europe for the research project entitled "Youth Impact". Upon the acceptance of our project application, a long and thorough process started.

The research was conducted in two stages: 1. quantitative (200 questionnaires from 38 countries were analysed); 2. qualitative (7 focus groups (52 participants in total) in 7 different countries were organised).