EVALUATION OF THE COOPERATION WITH SOUTH EAST

EUROPE WITHIN THE YOUTH IN ACTION PROGRAMME

Evaluation study of the cooperation with South East Europe within Youth in Action, SALTO SEE RC, 2012

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GLOSSARY

YiA	Youth in Action
SALTO SEE	SALTO-YOUTH South East Europe Resource Centre
SEE	South East Europe / South East European
EVS	European Voluntary Service
EU	European Union

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1. INTRODUCTION: YOUTH IN ACTION PROGRAMME IN SOUT EAST EUROPE

The Youth in Action programme (YiA) is a European Union (EU) programme in the field of youth. In 2012 the programme was implemented in 33 "programme countries", 23 "neighbouring partner countries" of the EU and "other partner countries of the world" (Programme Guide, 2012, p. 18).

Among the so-called »neighbouring partner countries of the EU« are also six countries from the South East European (SEE) region: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Kosovo (according to UNSCR 1244/1999), Montenegro and Serbia. Croatia, formerly also one of the neighbouring partner countries, became a programme country in 2012.

The YiA programme consists of five actions:

- Action 1: Youth for Europe (3 sub-actions)
- Action 2: European Voluntary Service (EVS)
- Action 3: Youth in the world (2 sub-actions)
- Action 4: Youth Support Systems (8 sub-actions)
- Action 5: Support for European Cooperation in the Youth Field (3 sub-actions)

Neighbouring partner countries from SEE are eligible to participate in Action 2 (EVS) and in sub-action 3.1 (Cooperation with Neighbouring Partner Countries of the European Union). Projects must be carried out in international cooperation with partner organizations from programme countries. Project applications may be submitted on the decentralized level by partner organizations from programme countries. Under certain conditions applications may also be submitted by organizations from SEE on the centralized level.

Responsibility for implementing the YiA programme lies with the European Commission which does so through a network of National Agencies, Eurodesk Offices and SALTO-YOUTH Resource Centres. The SALTO-YOUTH SEE Resource Centre (SALTO SEE) has been set up in 2003 to promote the participation of young people and other actors in the field of youth and non-formal education from SEE in the Youth in Action programme. Within the framework of European integration of the SEE region, SALTO SEE actively supports the process of accession of all countries of the region to the YiA programme (SALTO SEE website, 2012) through promotion of the programme, training opportunities, accreditation of EVS organizations and support for beneficiaries.

In June 2011 SALTO SEE launched an evaluation of the cooperation with the region in the context of the YiA programme. An overview of the study is presented in this report.

Evaluation of the cooperation with SEE within the YiA programme took place over a period of one year between June 2011 and June 2012. The overall aim of the evaluation was to assess the impact of the YiA programme in the SEE region as well as the specific relevance of the cooperation with partners from SEE for project beneficiaries based in Programme countries, and thereby supplement the existing YiA evaluation studies which focused mainly on the programme's relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability in the programme countries.

2.1 Evaluation Objectives

The objectives of the evaluation as defined by SALTO SEE were to provide an assessment of the impact of the YiA programme with a specific focus on possible effects on the organizational, youth work and youth policy level, to highlight benefits and challenges of cooperation with SEE within the YiA programme and to provide an assessment of sustainability of possible positive effects of the YiA programme, especially as the programme in its current form is slowly coming to an end. The following areas of interest were defined:

- Impact of YiA on the individual level (young people and youth workers),
- Impact of YiA on organizations in the field of youth,
- Impact of YiA on youth work,
- Impact of YiA on local communities,
- Impact of YiA on youth policy,
- Sustainability of desired effects.

2.2 Evaluation Questions

The evaluation study was focused around the hypothesis that there has been a discernable impact of the YiA programme in the SEE region but that this impact varies greatly by country. The hypothesis was examined utilizing the following research questions:

- **Individual level:** how do different stakeholders view the impact of YiA projects on individual participants (young people and youth workers)?
- **Organizations in the field of youth:** how do different stakeholders view the impact of the YiA programme on the work, development and recognition of organizations which were involved in YiA projects either as the beneficiary or as a partner organization?
- **Youth work:** how do different stakeholders view the impact of the YiA programme on the youth work field in general, such as transfer of concepts and practices (beyond specific organizations involved in YiA projects)?
- **Local communities:** how do different stakeholders view the impact of the YiA programme on local communities in terms of recognition of the programme, youth work in general and specific organizations?
- **Youth policy:** how do different stakeholders view the impact of the YiA programme on local- or national-level youth policy? Were any models or concepts from YiA adopted by or supported through local or national policies?
- **Sustainability of changes:** are there support mechanisms similar or complementary to YiA? How do different stakeholders view the consequences of the YiA programme withdrawal, should this happen?

3. EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

The evaluation study focused mainly on opinions and observations of different stakeholders collected and analyzed through a mixed methods approach.

3.1 Approach to Data Collection

The mixed methods evaluation methodology utilized online surveys and interviews.

Online surveys consisted of 14-62 questions depending on respondent's profile. Question types were mostly multiple choice, scales and open free-text questions. Surveys were designed to target:

- Representatives of organizations from SEE that took part in YiA projects and representatives of their partner organizations from programme countries,
- Trainers from SEE and from programme countries that facilitated trainings organized by SALTO SEE,
- Accreditors from SEE and programme countries that evaluated SEE organizations,
- Representatives of contact points for the YiA programme in SEE,
- Staff members of YiA programme National Agencies (Action 2 and Action 3.1 Officers),
- Representatives of National Authorities in SEE countries responsible for cooperation with the YiA programme.

Respondents were asked to provide their name and contact information. A sample of interesting respondents to online surveys was chosen to participate in real-time online guided interviews. Interviews consisted of open-ended questions focusing on personal observations of respondents regarding the impact of the YiA programme. Interviews were recorded and transcribed.

Questionnaires and interview protocols are appendices to this report.

3.2 Approaches to Data Analysis

Following a mixed methods approach a combination of statistical and qualitative analysis was utilized to analyze the surveys and interviews. For quantitative information, descriptive statistics (frequency, percentages, averages, distribution, standard deviation etc.) were used to summarize the nominal and ordinal variables. Relevant information is presented in the results section.

To learn about the population that our sample is meant to represent, inferential statistics such as probability were also calculated to highlight certain questions. The most interesting results are presents in the results section. However, while we believe that responses to our surveys are fairly representative of the situation as a whole, we encourage readers to think about the limitations of our study (outlined below) and think critically before overly generalizing our conclusions.

Free-text responses were analyzed with a qualitative methodology approach. We chose a theory-guided thematic analysis approach, which allowes us to see the data in light of preconceived theory, assumptions and mental models about how the programme is supposed to work.

Original datasets are appendices at the end of this report.

3.3 Validity

The evaluation was designed to target multiple stakeholders highlighted in chapter 3.1. For each target group, e-mail invitations to participate in the survey were sent to all available addresses. The response rate was around 18%. The external validity, as with most online surveys, is marked by the

fact that those most likely to respond were motivated individuals interested in expressing their opinion about the YiA programme which makes it more likely for them to give positive feedback in regard to the program's impact. This does not diminish the validity of expressed opinions and described examples, however readers should mind not to overly generalize results as respondents' opinions might not be representative of the target group as a whole.

Another threat to validity might also be the confirmation bias and social desirability bias, especially in light of the fact that surveys were not anonymous and that many respondents are heavily invested into maintaining a good relationship with SALTO SEE or keeping their status as a beneficiary of the programme which might have influenced the general direction of their answers.

4. RESULTS

An overview of respondents' profiles following an initial analysis of online surveys is presented below. We begin by presenting response rates and a brief description of respondents' profile. Some characteristics of each target group are highlighted. Respondents' opinions about the impact of the YiA programme and cooperation with SEE in the context of the programme follows.

4.1 Response Rates

A number of potential respondents were invited to participate in online surveys: all SEE organizations that participated in YiA projects and all EU organisations involving partners from SEE that implemented projects between 2008 and 2011 were sent e-mail invitations to addresses they provided in project applications. A list of trainers from SEE and programme countries was compiled by SALTO SEE and all were invited to participate in the online survey. A number of YiA trainers recently active in SEE received a personalized invitation. E-mail invitations also went out to all accreditors of potential EVS organizations and contact points for the YiA programme in SEE. Staff members of National Agencies (Action 2 and 3.1 Officers) were also invited to participate, as were the representatives of relevant National Authorities in each SEE partner country.

Potential respondents were contacted via online correspondence. 1483 e-mail invitations were sent out to addresses acquired from the main YiA database called Youthlink and from databases of SALTO SEE. In 252 cases the invitation was not delivered due to no longer valid e-mail addresses etc. Just over 38.0 % (468) of respondents who received the invitation showed interest by clicking on the survey link and 226 (18.3 %) submitted a valid survey. Response rates (for valid surveys only) according to target groups are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Response rates for various target groups.

	E-mail invitations sent	Surveys completed (percent)
SEE organizations	481[1]	71 (14.8%)[1]
SEE trainers	19	10 (52.6%) of invited trainers, 21 other self-identified trainers
SEE accreditors	12	11 (91.7%)
SEE contact points	9	9 (100%)
EU organizations	731	77 (10.5%)
EU trainers	71	17 (10.5%)
EU accreditors	11	7 (63.6%)
NA staff	136	24 (17.6%)
National Authorities	13	2 (15%)
Together[2]	1483	226 (15.24%)

[1] Albania: 5 valid surveys out of 32 invitations sent (15.6%), BIH: 7 out of 86 (8.1%), Montenegro: 8 out of 20 (40%), The Former Yugoslav Repuplic of Macedonia: 17 out of 128 (13.3%), Croatia: 10 out of 50 (20%), Kosovo: 2 out of 14 (14.3%), Serbia: 22 out of 151 (14.6%).
[2] Respondents might belong to more than one target group.

The subgroup with the highest response rate are the contact points for the YiA programme in SEE (100 %) followed by accreditors. The group with the lowest response rates are representatives of National Authorities in SEE countries. Response rates were higher for participants from SEE than for the corresponding subgroup in programme countries (i.e. 91.7 % of SEE accreditors and 63.6 accreditors from programme countries; 52.6% of invited trainers from SEE compared to 10.5 % of invited EU trainers; 14.8% of SEE organizations and 10.5% of organizations from programme countries). Table 2 presents a comparison between numbers of respondents from SEE and programme countries.

Table 2. Numbers of respondents according to target group and country.

	SEE		Programme countries	
Representatives of organizations that participated in YiA projects with SEE	71	As organizers: 51 As partners: 67	77	As organizers: 68 As partners: 53
Trainers with experience with participants from SEE	10 (31)		17	
Accreditors of potential EVS organizations from SEE	11		7	
Representatives in contact points for YiA in SEE countries	9		N/A	
Staff members of YiA National Agencies (A 2 and A 3.1)	N/A		18	
Representatives of National Authorities in SEE countries	2		N/A	

4.2 Profile of Respondents

Respondents were asked to provide identification information (name, country and e-mail address) for verification and follow-up purposes. They also answered some general questions about their familiarity with the YiA programme and their role(s) within it.

4.2.1 Overlap of respondents' roles

Two main target groups of the YiA programme are young people and youth workers. One of the interesting specificities is that individuals involved in the programme may take on a variety of roles over time as well as at the same time. In words of a survey respondent: "We sent one younger, less active member of our NGO to participate in a youth exchange. After that he showed more interest for YiA projects so we also sent him on a training course. Now he is one of most active members in our organization and he initiates and runs new projects." Individuals that were once YiA project participants might today be active as accreditors, trainers, youth workers, members or staff of beneficiary organizations etc.

This is especially true for SEE countries, where a number of trainers and accreditors are also involved in YiA projects as youth workers or representatives of beneficiary organizations. The overlap of roles is also found at the organizational level, such as beneficiary organizations acting as YiA contact points. "My organisation is a specific case, since it is also acting as a contact point for the Youth in Action programme," reports a survey respondent.

To accommodate this specificity and minimize the risk of double entries by same respondents a joint questionnaire was designed for trainers, accreditors and representatives of YiA contact points and organizations from SEE. Some questions were directed at all respondents while others were only visible to members of a specific target group. In programme countries, one questionnaire was designed for trainers and accreditors and another one for representatives of organizations. Respondents' names and e-mails were crosschecked. Representatives of YiA National Agencies as well as National Authorities from SEE countries were also given separate questionnaires.

The overlap of roles is highlighted in Figure 1 and must be taken into account when interpreting evaluation results.

SEE: **PROGRAMME COUNTRIES:**
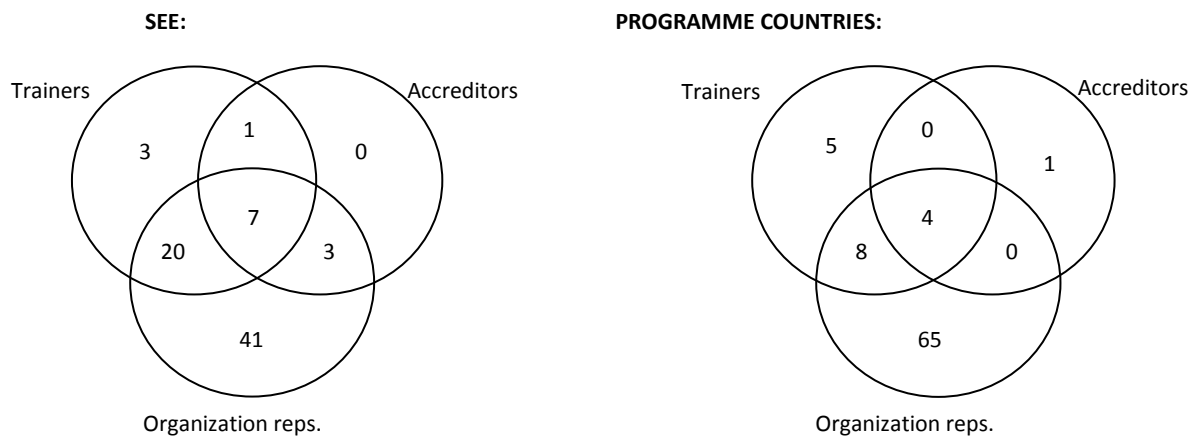
Figure 1. Diagrams showing numbers of respondents in multiple roles. The overlap of respondent's roles is greater in SEE countries (left) than it is in programme countries (right).

4.2.2 Respondents' experience and familiarity with the YiA programme

Representatives of organizations, trainers and accreditors were asked to provide an assessment of their familiarity with the "theory and practice" of the YiA programme. We asked them to use a five point scale to assess how well they know the YiA programme in general (1 = not at all, 5 = very well). Using the same scale they also assessed their familiarity with the Programme Guide for the Youth in Action programme, objectives and priorities of YiA, structure of the programme (actions, sub-actions and types of projects), application procedures, specific projects that took place in local communities and the work of SALTO SEE resource Centre.

The overall self-assessments are high: on average, respondents rate their general knowledge of the YiA programme at 4.5. As expected, trainers and accreditors (average assessment of 4.6 points in SEE and 5.0 in programme countries) rate their overall knowledge of the programme higher than representatives of organizations (average assessment of 4.6 points in SEE and 4.4 in programme countries). Specifically, respondents are most familiar with objectives and priorities of the YiA programme (average assessment 4.5), the Programme Guide (average assessment 4.3) and application procedures (average assessment 4.3). Trainers and accreditors from programme countries in particular choose very high scores (their average assessments for theoretical knowledge of YiA range between 4.8 and 5.0). Respondents are least familiar with projects that took place in their local communities (average assessment 3.8). Trainers and accreditors report a stronger familiarity with the work of SALTO SEE Resource Centre (4.2 points in SEE and 4.0 in programme countries) than representatives of organizations (3.6 points in SEE and 2.8 in programme countries). As expected, the group least familiar with the work of SALTO SEE are representatives of organizations in programme countries. Table 3 and Figure 2 summarize self-assessments of familiarity with the programme.

Table 3. Self-assessments of familiarity with the YiA programme (average and standard deviation). (How well would you say that you know: (1=not at all, 5=very well))

	Organizations from SEE	Organizations from programme countries	Trainers, accreditors from SEE	Trainers, accreditors from progr.countries	**All**
the Youth in Action programme in general?	4.4 (SD=0.71)	4.4 (SD=0.68)	4.6 (SD=0.32)	5.0 (SD=0.00)	**4.5**
objectives and priorities of YiA?	4.4 (SD=0.75)	4.4 (SD=0.57)	4.7 (SD=0.46)	4.9 (SD=0.31)	**4.5**
the YiA Programme Guide?	4.2 (SD=0.91)	4.2 (SD=0.77)	4.6 (SD=0.46)	4.8 (SD=0.44)	**4.3**
application procedures?	4.1 (SD=1.14)	4.4 (SD=0.57)	4.4 (SD=0.68)	4.8 (SD=0.44)	**4.3**
actions, subactions and types of projects?	4.0 (SD=0.98)	4.1 (SD=0.78)	4.1 (SD=0.76)	4.8 (SD=0.44)	**4.2**
projects that took place in your local community?	3.7 (SD=1.12)	3.8 (SD=1.03)	3.8 (SD=1.13)	3.8 (SD=0.97)	**3.8**
the work of SALTO SEE Resource Centre?	3.6 (SD=1.11)	2.8 (SD=1.11)	4.2 (SD=0.56)	4.0 (SD=0.76)	**3.3**

Figure 2. Average self-assessments of familiarity with the YiA programme.

4.2.3 Representatives of organizations

As summarized in Table 2, 71 valid surveys were filled out by representatives of SEE organizations that have participated in YiA projects. 67 organizations have the experience of participating in YiA projects as partners and 51 have acted as organizers. 30 respondents that filled out the survey for their organization also cooperate with SALTO SEE as trainers or accreditors. 77 valid surveys were submitted by representatives of organizations from programme countries that have been involved in YiA projects with partner organizations from SEE (68 organizations have the experience of acting as project organizers and 53 as partners; 12 trainers and accreditors).

Table 4. Number of responses (organizations only) by country.

Programme countries

13	Italy
9	Germany
7	Slovenia
6	France
5	United Kingdom
4	Spain
4	Poland
3	Belgium
2	Austria
2	Slovakia
2	Denmark
2	Iceland
2	Latvia
2	Luxembourg
2	Romania
1	Greece
1	Hungary
1	Ireland
1	Bulgaria
1	Sweden
1	Netherlands
1	Estonia
1	Lithuania

SEE countries

22	Serbia
17	The Former Yugoslav Republic of
10	Croatia
8	Montenegro
7	Bosnia and Herzegovina
5	Albania
2	Kosovo (according to UNSCR 1244/1999)

Table 4 shows that all SEE countries are represented as well as 23 programme countries. Numbers of responses from each country range from 1-13 for programme countries and from 2-22 for countries from SEE. In SEE countries as well as in programme countries most organizations are located in big cities, followed by organizations located in small towns and a few organizations from rural areas (Table 5). Responding organizations vary in size. As shown in Table 6, over half of organizations have less than 50 members and about one out of six organizations have over 100 members.

Table 5. Location of respondents' organizations.
(My organization is located in ...)

	SEE	Programme countries
Big city	43 (63%)	44 (62%)
Small town	23 (34%)	24 (34%)
Village or rural area	2 (3%)	3 (4%)

Table 6. Size of respondents' organizations.
(My organization has about ...)

	SEE	Programme countries
1-20 members	21 (30%)	35 (49%)
20-50 members	20 (29%)	8 (11%)
50-100 members	13 (19%)	11 (15%)
Over 100 members	15 (22%)	17 (24%)

Table 7. Target groups of respondents' organizations.
(My organization mostly works with ...)

	SEE	Programme countries
Children (under 13 years)	2 (3%)	3 (4%)
Adolescents (13-18 years)	20 (29%)	21 (30%)
Adults (over 18 years)	47 (68%)	47 (66%)

Table 8. Inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities.
(My organization works with young people with fewer opportunities ...)

	SEE	Programme countries
In most activities	17 (25%)	21 (30%)
In some activities	36 (52%)	34 (48%)
Rarely	11 (16%)	11 (15%)
No, but would like to	3 (4%)	4 (6%)
No	2 (3%)	1 (1%)

Tables 7 and 8 summarize the profile of organizations' target groups. Organizations tend to focus primarily on the age group that is eligible to participate in the YiA Programme: most work with adults (often this means young adults, for example students) followed by organizations who work primarily with adolescents. About half of the organizations include young people with fewer opportunities in some of their activities and about a fifth of organizations work with them in most activities. In SEE organizations, ''fewer opportunities'' usually stands for economic obstacles (as high as 85% of responding organizations report that they include young people facing poverty, homelessness, long term unemployment etc.), followed by 67% of organizations reporting to include young people facing cultural differences (immigration, national or ethnic minority etc.), 63% of organizations have experience with young people with geographical obstacles (remote areas, urban problem zones, less serviced areas etc.), 57% with social obstacles (discrimination, teen parents, (ex) offenders, (ex) drug users etc.) and 44% include young people facing educational difficulties (learning difficulties, low school performance, early school-leaving etc.). 30% of organizations include young people with disabilities (mental, physical, sensory or other disabilities etc.) and 11% with health problems (chronic health problems, severe illnesses, mental health problems etc.).

A glance at Tables 5-8 demonstrates many similarities between responding organizations in SEE countries and programme countries. This finding supports the idea that organizations tend to form networks with partners that share their characteristics such as size, target group, values and/or methodological approach.

4.2.4 Trainers

Trainers with experience in the SEE region were directly invited to participate in the survey. We received 17 responses from trainers from programme countries and 10 responses from invited trainers from SEE as well as additional 21 responses from individuals from SEE who identified themselves as YiA trainers.

Trainers from SEE report to have worked as trainers in the youth field for a minimum of 2 years and a maximum of 15 years with the average of 7.4 years (SD = 3.77). In the context of the YiA programme most trainers report to have implemented 1-15 training activities (53%), another 25% implemented 16-30 activities and some appear to be extremely experienced, having facilitated over 30 and up to 150 activities (25%).

Trainers from YiA programme countries with experience of working in the region tend to be even more experienced. They report to have been trainers in the youth field for 6-15 years with the average of 10.3 years (SD = 3.16). In the context of the YiA programme, each trainer has implemented at least 4 training activities involving participants from SEE (19% report to have implemented 4-5 activities, 31% implemented 6-10 activities, 25% implemented 16-20 activities and 25% implemented 20-50 activities).

Trainers mostly work with participants from SEE who are youth workers, organization leaders and EVS volunteers. Some also work with other trainers or directly with intercultural project teams. Figure 3 summarizes percentage of trainers with experience with most prevalent target groups. Each trainer also listed a few topics they felt are most important or prevalent in their work with participants from SEE. Most mentioned topics are intercultural learning, non-formal learning, training of volunteers and international youth work. Trainers from SEE also often mention youth worker training. Figure 4 presents important topics in more detail.
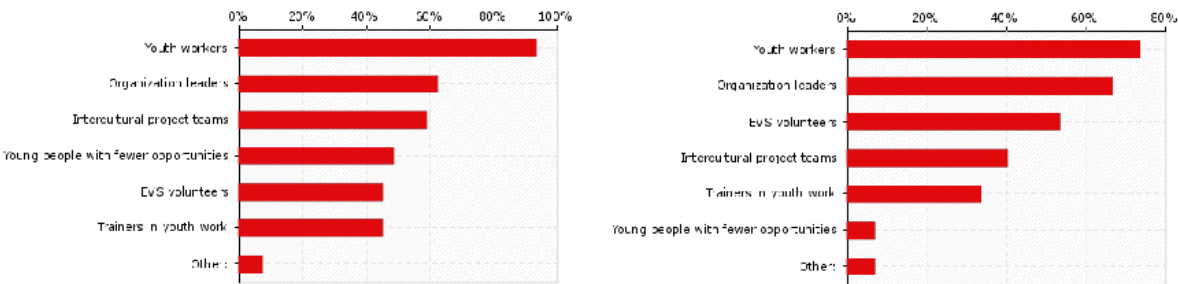

Figure 3. Overview of target groups from SEE trainers have worked with. Percent of trainers who have worked with each target group is depicted (left –trainers from SEE, right – trainers from programme countries).
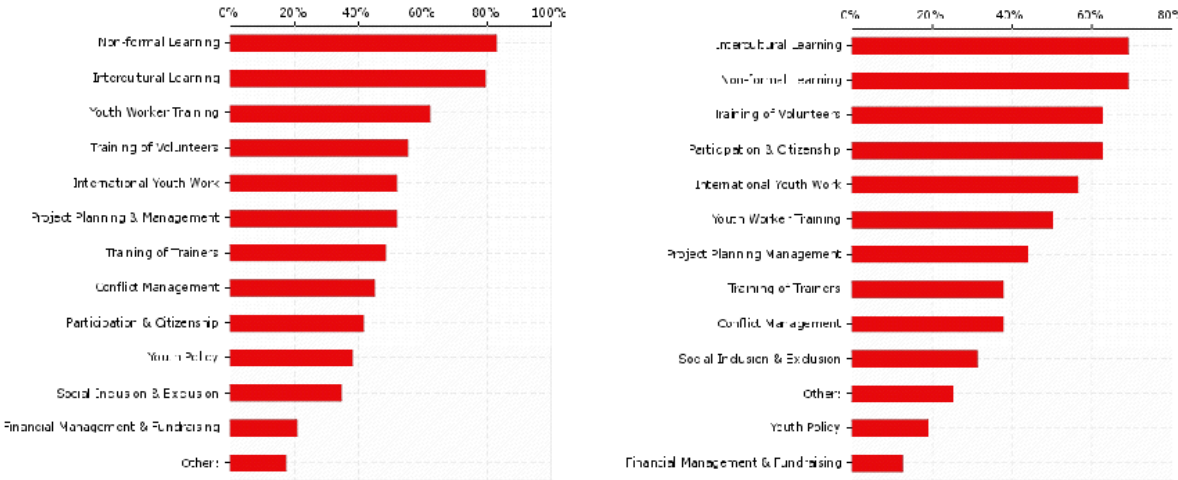
Figure 4. Overview of most important training topics for trainers from SEE countries (left) and programme countries (right).

4.2.5 Accreditors

Accreditors working with SALTO SEE were directly invited to participate in the survey. 11 accreditors from SEE and 7 accreditors from programme countries responded making this the target group with the highest response rate (together with Contact Points). Most accreditors from SEE have evaluated up to four expressions of interest (range: 1-40, average: 15, SD = 15.12). On average accreditors from programme countries have evaluated 23 expressions of interest (range: 16-40, SD = 9.30), most

individuals evaluated 17-20 documents. Out of the 18 respondents, 9 accreditors have experience with evaluating potential EVS organizations in Albania, 13 in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 8 in Croatia, 10 in The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, 4 in Kosovo (according to UNSCR 1244/1999), 6 in Montenegro and 11 with organizations in Serbia.

4.2.6 Representatives of Youth in Action Contact Points in South East Europe

Contact Points for Youth in Action were directly invited to participate in the survey. All Contact Points completed the survey. The organisations acting as Contact Points have been active in the field of Youth in Action for several years; their experience as Contact Points for the Programme varies from 2 to several years.

4.2.7 Staff members of YiA programme National Agencies

Staff members of National Agencies for the YiA programme from Spain, Norway, Malta, Netherlands, Iceland, Portugal, Finland, Belgium, Poland, Luxemburg, France, Italy, Czech Republic, Germany, Estonia, Slovenia and Austria filled out 24 valid online surveys. 14 respondents were Action 3.1 officers and 8 were Action 2 Officers while one was responsible for both actions. Other roles that are often mentioned are Inclusion Officer and TCP coordinator.

4.2.8 Representatives of National Authorities

In each of the South East European countries participating in the YiA programme, a designated National Authority (e.g. Ministry of Youth, Ministry of Education ...) is cooperating with SALTO SEE in implementation of the programme. Representatives of National Authorities were invited to participate in the online survey. Since only three responded, we contacted some directly through online interviews.

Representatives of National Authorities are perhaps the most diverse group of all respondents. Their age, educational level, type of employment and current position in their country, experience with the youth sector and knowledge of the YiA programme vary greatly. Some are former youth workers now employed as government officials and have a thorough knowledge of the YiA programme and the youth field in general while others might have years of experience in administrative positions in the government sector and are hardly familiar with the programme or youth work. Some might have direct experience with the YiA programme while others have a theoretical overview.

4.3 Results

An overview of results follows. Similar questions (that might have been formulated slightly differently depending on the target group) are presented together.

4.3.1 Effects of the programme on fields of interest

This section presents an overview of results linked to examination of effects of the programme on the level of individual participants (young people and youth workers), organizations which participated in YiA projects involving partners from the region, local communities, youth field and youth policy in SEE countries. Respondents were asked how much they agree or disagree with a series of statements regarding effects of YiA projects with SEE countries. Sub questions were used to clarify the nature of this impact. Statements and results follow.

4.3.1.1 *YiA contributed to positive changes in young people who participated in YiA projects.*
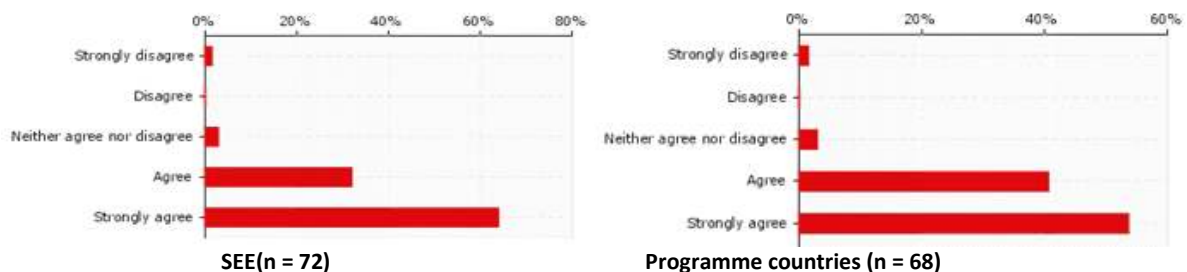
Figure 5. Opinions of trainers, accreditors and representatives of organizations from SEE (left) and programme countries (right) about the impact of the YiA programme: changes in participants.

Respondents were asked to assess how much they agree with the statement on a 5 point scale (strongly disagree – strongly agree) with a »don't know« option. As shown in charts above, the majority of respondents agree with the statement. Respondents from SEE express a stronger level of agreement. Respondents who agreed with the statement were also asked a follow-up question presented on the next page.

Respondents who agreed with the previous statement were also asked a follow-up question:

You indicated that YiA contributed to positive changes in young people who participated in projects. Which competences and attitudes have young project participants improved or developed through YiA projects? (Multiple answers possible)
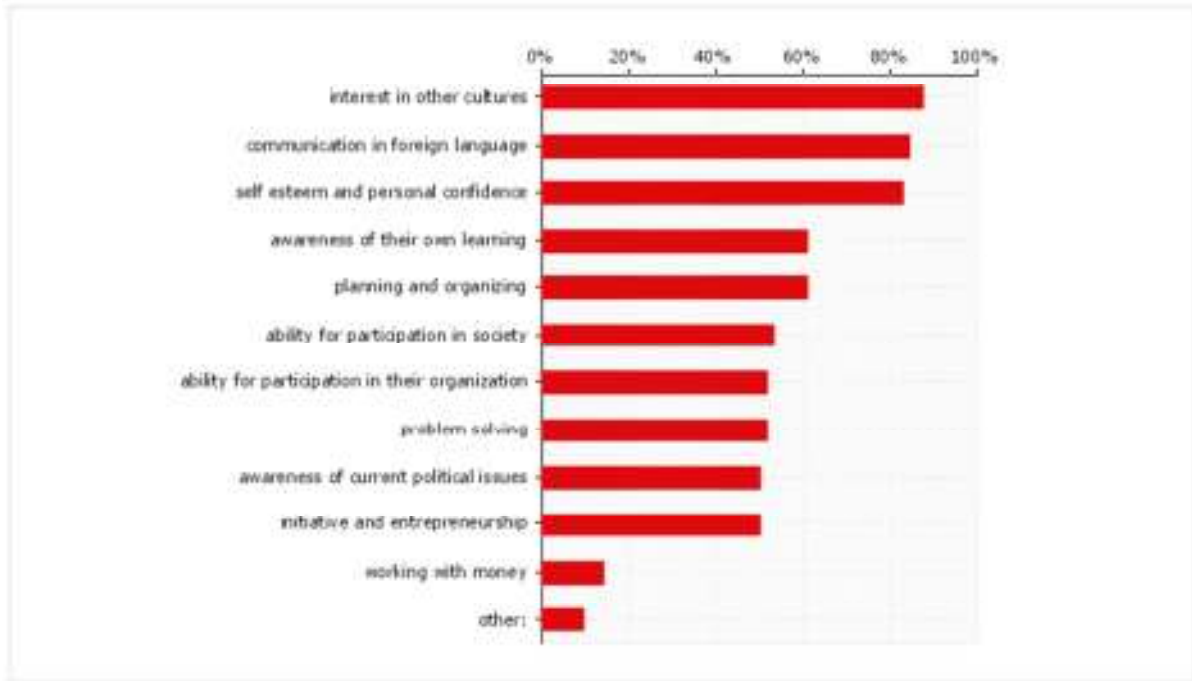
SEE

| | 0% | 20% | 40% | 60% | 80% | 100% |

- interest in other cultures
- self esteem and personal confidence
- communication in foreign language
- planning and organizing
- ability for participation in society
- awareness of their own learning
- ability for participation in their organization
- initiative and entrepreneurship
- problem solving
- awareness of current political issues
- working with money
- other:

Programme countries

| | 0% | 20% | 40% | 60% | 80% | 100% |

- interest in other cultures
- communication in foreign language
- self esteem and personal confidence
- awareness of their own learning
- planning and organizing
- ability for participation in society
- ability for participation in their organization
- problem solving
- awareness of current political issues
- initiative and entrepreneurship
- working with money
- other:

Respondents were also asked if they can think of a specific example of how the YiA programme influenced a young project participant and to briefly describe it. 36 free-text answers were provided by respondents from SEE and additional 40 by respondents from the programme countries. Examples are centred on the topics of personal growth and life experience, dedication to youth work, opportunities and motivation for mobility, intercultural experience, inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities and employability. What follows is a selection of examples.

Respondents from SEE:

Depending on the topic of the project, participants change behaviours, gain team building skills, their organization and presentation skills are enriched, they take active part and developed different creative skills. It makes a change in one's life by pushing the limits of prejudices and self-awareness.

I believe it is very important for a young person to participate in YiA projects. Depending on the duration and type of the project, (a young person) can develop different skills and obtain new knowledge, share their experience with people from different backgrounds, take into consideration other peoples opinion, and feel free to express their own attitude. They communicate in a foreign language which helps them improve the knowledge they already have, they learn about other countries, they can notice similarities and differences between different nations. Projects inspire them to do something similar in their country. They become able to work in an environment different from their own. (Projects) awaken in them a sense of initiative and inspire them to involve themselves directly in the field of youth work after their comeback.

I believe (YiA) opens chances for a young person to travel, meet people and understand that there are possibilities that he or she can actively influence and create her own life.

(Participants) from different parts of Europe have the opportunity to learn something about another culture and tradition, and what is most important learn how to respect it and like it.

Young people from Serbia do not have many opportunities to meet peers from other countries, and YiA projects allowed them that. For young participants, YiA projects were life changing experiences: being able to present their own culture, to learn about other cultures, to be able to speak in a foreign language, to cross the border, to fly with an airplane, to gain experience and become able to participate in the work of the organization.

There were many cases where our participants have been employed by other organizations.

(During the project participants) learn how to be more actively included in the society processes and how to share the experience that was gained here. After each event youngsters go home motivated, enriched with new positive experience, with new good friends from many different countries and ready to share it with the young people in their countries. Seeing how these events affect participants, for each next application we as organizers have more motivation and inspiration to involve as many countries as we can and share this positive spirit among the youngsters all over Europe.

Respondents from Programme countries:

Eldar participated in two YiA projects. He is Bosnian and when finishing his secondary studies, had no future, could not enter any university in BIH. He decided to take care of younger in a Bosnian association and is making a great job. He came from a family with lots of problems and is now working foreign languages, make plans for future.

Last summer, a Serbian girl aged 18 discovered the sea (never been there) and that after exchange her best friend was now a Bosnian girl.

Young participants realised the fact that these countries have a lot of values and a lot of experience to share. Me personally I met really great youth workers.

On intercultural level - young people break the existing stereotypes about young people from SEE and from other side as our projects are connected with young people with disabilities, participants from SEE countries could get to know this group better and see that young people with disabilities have the same dreams, desires, etc. as anybody else....

For some members of the group of young Roma from Kosovo it was the first time to go from their country and work on projects together with their colleagues from different cultures, countries...

We are a Roma rights NGO. We believe that the participation in the job shadowing programme influenced the attitude of our trainee towards the Roma.

Most of the projects realised were on the topic of sustainable development that is a topic not really at the top of the priorities in the Balkans. Participants developed their awareness and knowledge and now more and more are assuming sustainable behaviours in their daily life, they realise and promote activities of education and awareness on those topics and influence local community's decision makers in promoting sustainable policies. These examples are valid especially for Bosnia and Serbia.

Our group from Serbia included 3 participants from the Roma community and they completely changed our young people's preconceptions about their lifestyle. It was a fantastic experience and great learning.

Our project was about awareness of gender violence against young migrant women. It was definitely very encouraging to compare Scandinavian achievements and reality and the incredible work done in this area in SEE countries, so this worked for all participants, but it actually turned out that one of our participants was herself a victim of domestic violence and she described that she benefitted from other participants´ experience and once we knew this, we were able to continue working with her.

I cannot imagine international projects without partners coming from SEE, as I've noticed the organizations coming from those countries have really a powerful impact on the participants.

I know a number of young people from the region who started participating in youth exchanges, then volunteering in their organization, then organizing own youth exchanges and slowly becoming more competent as non-formal educator.

I am aware of a number of SEE EVS volunteers that through their projects they have managed to get a job in the EVS hosting countries.

Young girl who attended a training just by accident developed an NGO with friends after the training and started international cooperation through YiA with compatriots from all over EU on European Citizenship: a huge change in her life and attitude towards it - a great opportunity to feel responsible as a citizen of her country which she initially wanted to leave ASAP!

4.3.1.2 _YiA contributed to positive changes in competences and attitudes of youth workers that participated in YiA activities._
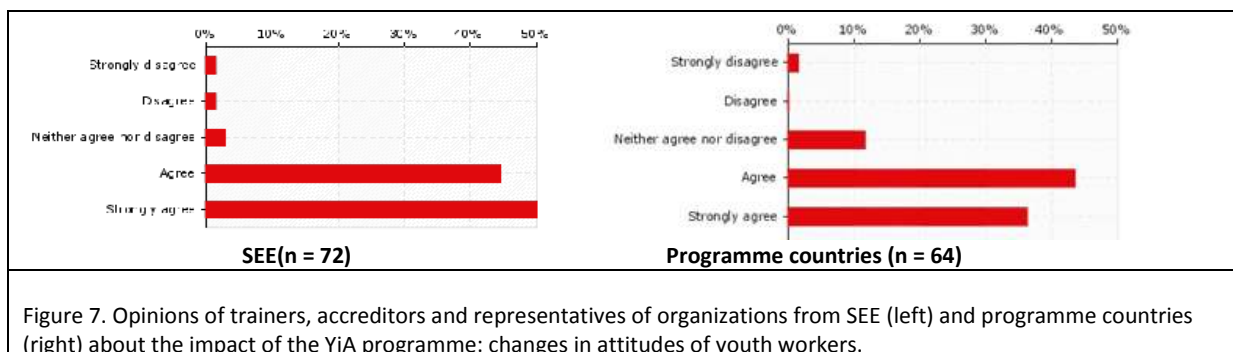

SEE(n = 72)   Programme countries (n = 64)

Figure 7. Opinions of trainers, accreditors and representatives of organizations from SEE (left) and programme countries (right) about the impact of the YiA programme: changes in attitudes of youth workers.

Respondents were asked to assess how much they agree with the statement on a 5 point scale (strongly disagree – strongly agree) with a »don't know« option. As shown in charts above, the majority of respondents agree with the statement. Respondents from SEE countries express a stronger level of agreement. Respondents who agreed with the statement were also asked a follow-up question presented on the next page.

Respondents who agreed with the previous statement were also asked a follow-up question:

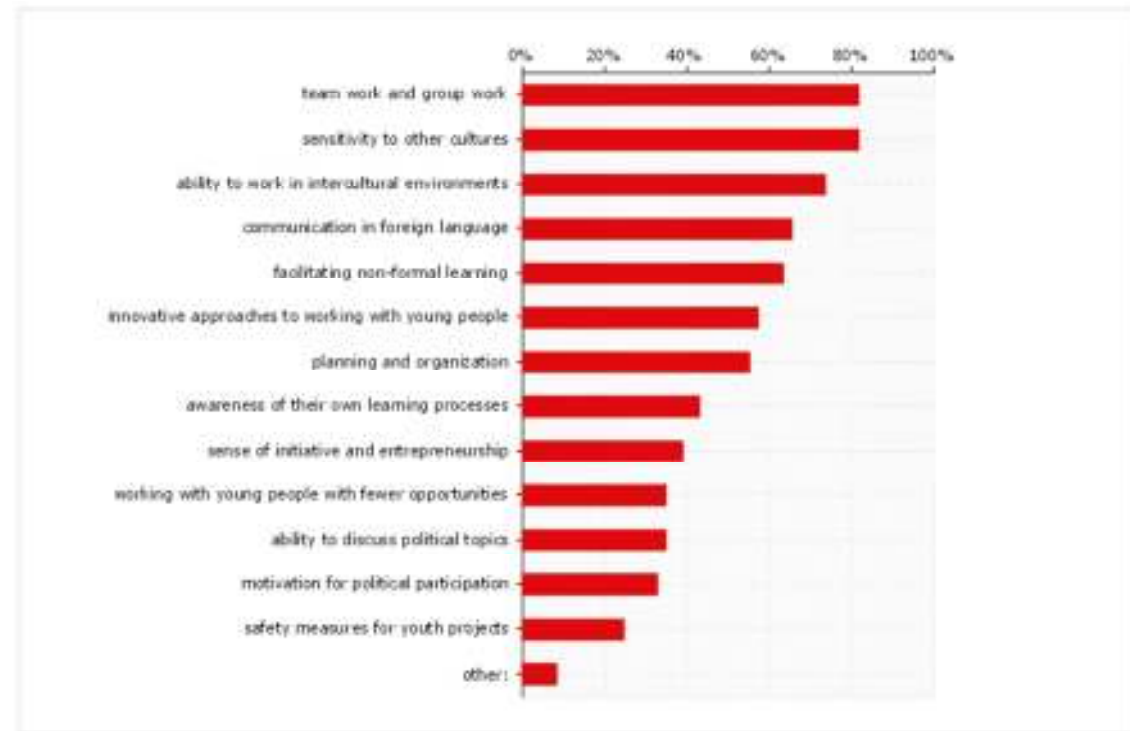*You indicated that YiA contributed to positive changes in youth workers that participated in YiA activities. Which competences and attitudes have they improved or developed? (Multiple answers possible)*
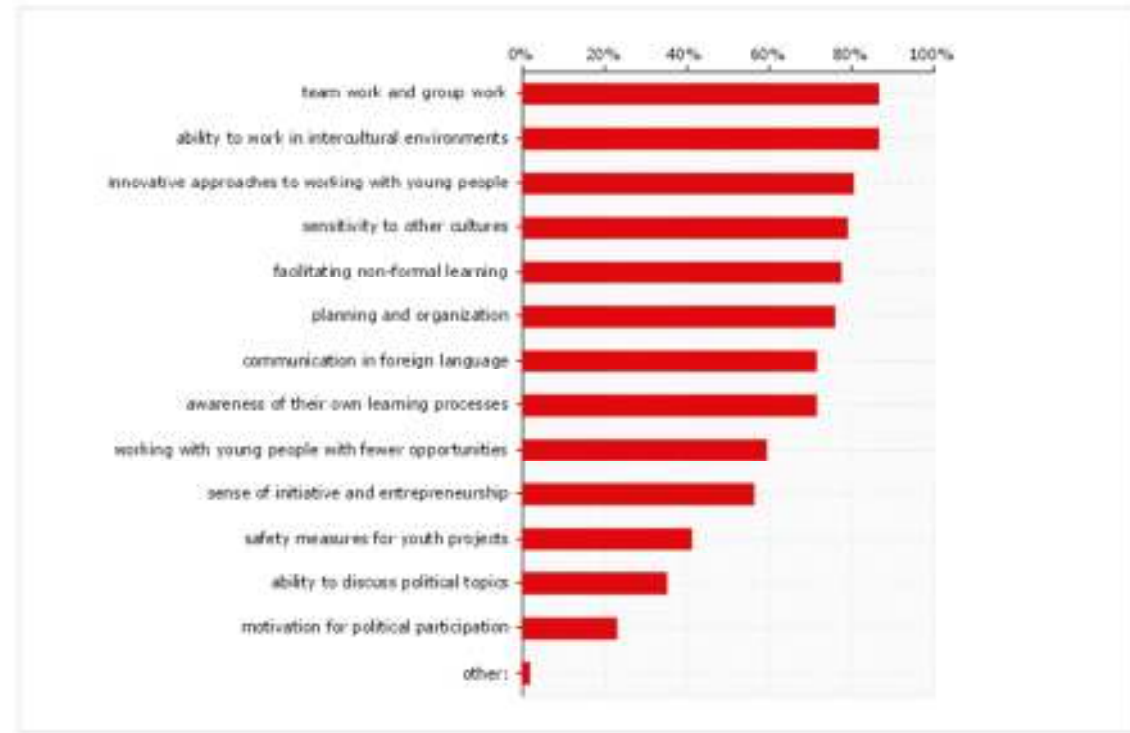
SEE

Programme countries

Evaluation study of the cooperation with South East Europe within Youth in Action, SALTO SEE RC, 2012

Respondents were also asked if they can think of a specific example of how the YiA programme influenced a youth worker and to briefly describe it. 31 free-text answers were provided by respondents from SEE and additional 36 by respondents from the programme countries. Examples focus on increase in competences and skills, ability for intercultural and international cooperation, changing mindsets, citizenship awareness and recognition of youth work. A selection of examples is presented below.

Respondents from SEE:

Our organization now has 15 local youth workers able to run educational activities with youth following non-formal learning principles. YiA has been a great tool to train these youngsters, provide them with attitudes, knowledge and skills to be able to make our work visible.

Being used to doing things the Bosnian way, when working with foreign volunteers and youth workers, one learns to accept the modern ways of talking to youth, gathering information, evaluating projects.

YiA helped me realise that we as a trainers in Serbia are not alone in the process of recognition of non-formal education and youth work. It gave me feeling of belonging to some bigger picture and process.

Meeting young persons from all over Europe is inspirational and motivational - you learn about them, but also learn a lot from them.

Participation in my first YiA training course two and half years ago completely changed my life. I was leading group of youngsters and participated on a training course to learn more about youth work. Last year we organized our first youth exchange in our small city. Now we are preparing new YiA projects and have increased the number of our local projects and their quality. Local government recognized our efforts and now we plan to open the first youth-centre in our region. We involve other local organizations in our projects and we teach them how to write project proposals, also about YiA program. All of this happened because we accidentally found YiA :)

After a training course including people from the Balkans and the Baltic, participants declared that their perception of the other region has become more complex and that they were able to identify and formulate common traits as well as the differences in the needs of the young people in the two regions.

YiA gave us possibility to share approaches in working with young people and a chance to improve our youth work by developing European projects.

Respondents from Programme countries:

Mid-age man (youth worker from a small town in Macedonia), originally working in a teaching and guiding style with youngsters has learned new tools and methods on how to involve youngsters in a local community through non-formal learning and started to successfully use the methods in his daily work.

I know some which completely internationalized their approach to their local youth work.

A youth worker from Germany participated in a training-course with Macedonian youth workers, and realized the diversity of Roma communities, and how a different self-esteem of youngsters was visible there. He realized how the identity self-consciousness was important for young people to become active and engaged.

One Danish participant now plans to set up business in Serbia; he has travelled to the country at least 5 times within the last 2 years.

From my own experience working with participants from a Roma background, I am now more able to address others negativity and provide real life examples to challenge their thinking.
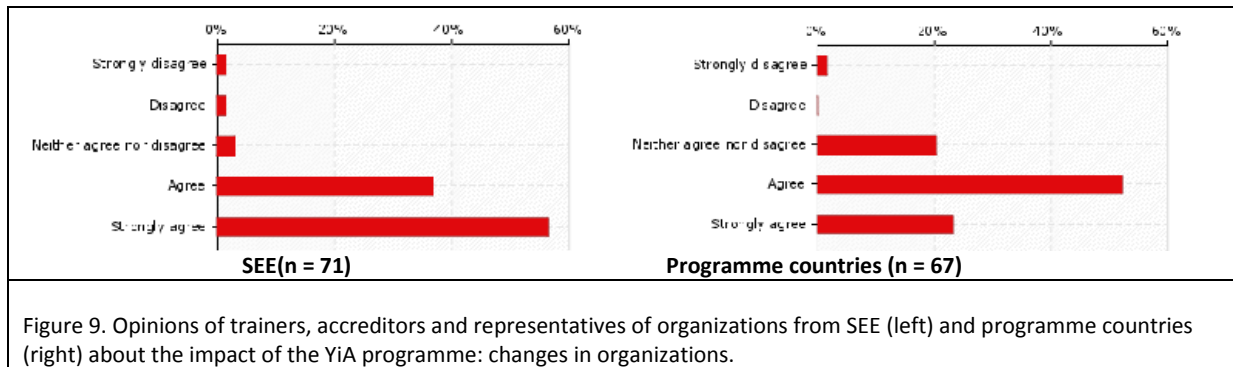
We are far more aware of the problems discussed and could learn from methods other participants have tried to reach out to this target group which we have often found very difficult. This was mainly because the situations described by participants, e.g. working with young Roma girls in SEE countries which are extremely difficult to reach, helped us to focus on this subject.

We picked up a lot of innovative ideas from our Serbian partners.

Cultural youth workers with whom I have worked and co-operated during these projects have benefited immensely, as I have, through creating new cultural bridges and friendships that continue and enable us to develop projects together.

In the projects realised with SEE partners an innovative non-formal learning methodology was created in order to work on sustainable development issues. This methodology has been called O.R.A. as an acronym of observe, rethink, act. This methodology is nowadays applied in all the NGOs involved in this path both from EU and SEE countries.

4.3.1.3 *YiA contributed to positive changes in our organization.*

Figure 9. Opinions of trainers, accreditors and representatives of organizations from SEE (left) and programme countries (right) about the impact of the YiA programme: changes in organizations.

Respondents were asked to assess how much they agree with the statement on a 5 point scale (strongly disagree – strongly agree) with a »don't know« option. As shown in charts above, the overall tendency is to agree with the statement. Respondents from SEE countries express a slightly stronger level of agreement. Respondents who agreed with the statement were also asked a follow-up question presented on the next page.

Respondents who agreed with the previous statement were also asked a follow-up question:

You indicated that YiA contributed to positive changes of your organization. How has the YiA programme influenced your organization? (Multiple answers possible)
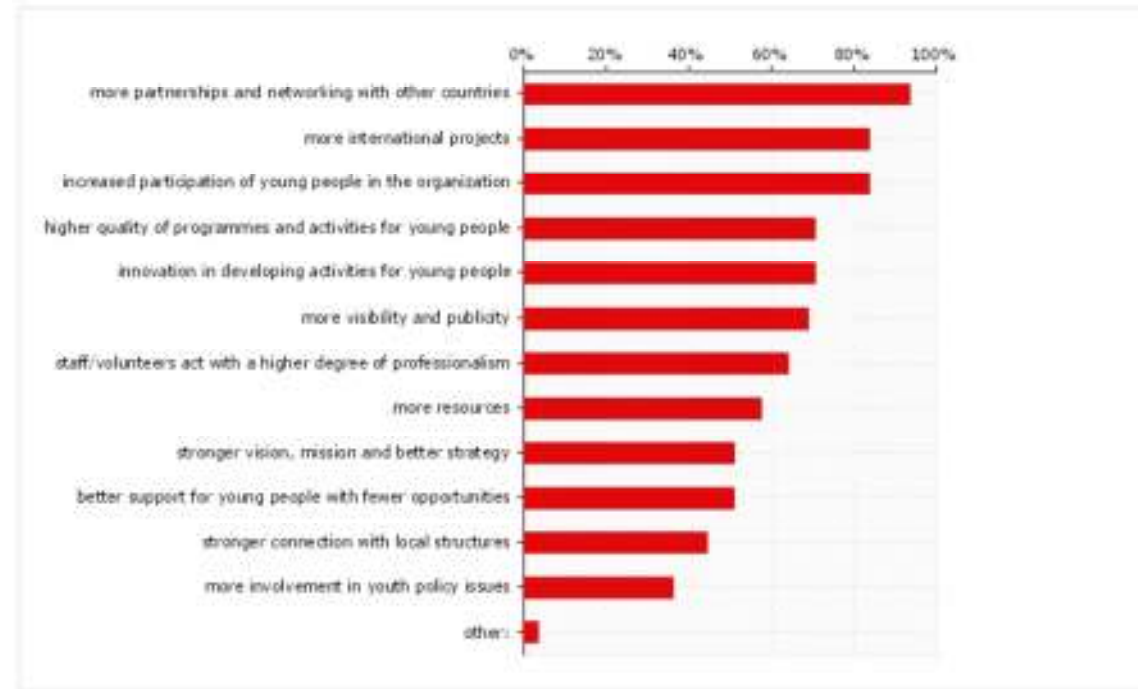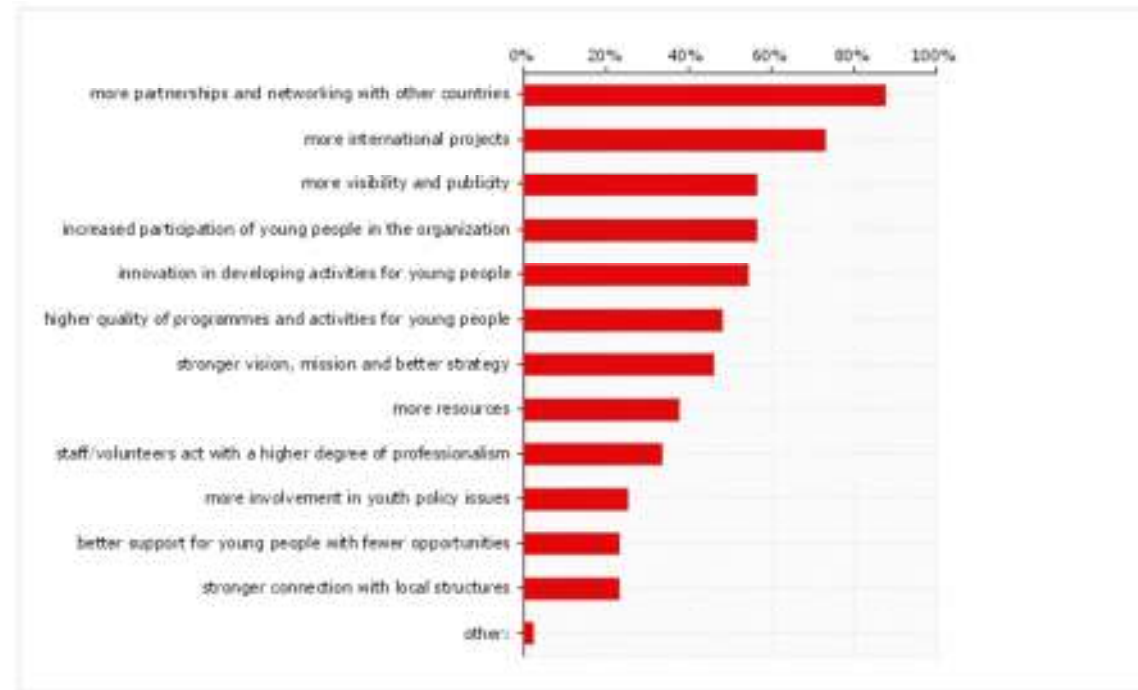
SEE

Programme countries

Respondents were also asked if they can think of a specific example of how the YiA programme influenced their organization and to briefly describe it. 22 free-text answers were provided by respondents from SEE and additional 21 by respondents from the programme countries. Examples are centred on the topics of organizational change both in regard to structure, methodology as well as mission and vision. Increase of international cooperation is often mentioned. A strong underlying theme in examples is capacity building, especially empowering youth workers to take charge of organizational development and even stronger involvement in developing local and national youth policies. A selection of examples is presented below.

Respondents from SEE:

Youth workers were educated and empowered through YiA projects and this influenced positive changes in our organisation and bigger impact of our activities.

Our organization did not have many active members. During the three years when we organized youth exchanges, the number of members active on a daily basis tripled. Lots of young people in our community started to volunteer as well. The organization had activities all year long, with youngsters coming up with new ideas and seeking support and help for realizing them.

After involvement in YiA our staff and members became more professional in their tasks and positions, our volunteers increased in numbers and became more creative on proposing activities.

We became active within YiA in 2009 and ever since then the work of organization is seriously enriched in so many ways. Although we had a few partners from other countries, participation in YiA programme seriously increased our network of partners, we created stable and firm partnerships with organizations from different countries and in time we managed to create a consistency in our joint work. The number of international projects of our organization significantly increased and this gives us more visibility on all levels.

Thanks to the YiA programme (our organization) is now a member organization of two international networks (SCI and YEU). In YEU we are part of the governing board of the network and in SCI we are one of the most active member organizations. The know-how gathered on many training projects has made us one of the most active youth organizations in Macedonia, both in providing youth work to over two thousand youngsters annually and in defending youth rights.

The structure of the YiA programme is very useful for including youngsters with fewer opportunities from all over Europe, which is one of the most important issues, since these young people get opportunity for unique experience, and their voice can be heard.

Last year we organized our first youth exchange in our small city. Now we are preparing new YiA projects. We increase number of our local projects and quality of these projects. Local government recognized our efforts and now we plan to open the first youth-centre in our region. All of this happened because we accidentally found YiA :)

My organisation is a specific case, since it is also acting as a contact point for Youth in Action programme. It has developed strong connections with the local and provincial authorities and is being recognised as one of the key actors in the world of European youth programmes. It has played a very active role in the development of local youth action plan and implementation of local and provincial youth action plan, especially in the areas of education and mobility, which are directly linked to our engagement in the Youth in Action programme.

Respondents from Programme countries:

Through a continuous networking and exchange of experience, we shared different approaches how to empower and mobilize young Roma in our countries. We learned about a national network of young Roma in Albania, and started to implement a similar strategy in our country.

As a result of recent projects we have developed a comprehensive code of conduct for staff. We are now developing a training course for group leaders which will result in the adoption of common standards with partner organisations. We are also creating a standard framework for youth exchanges to make it easier for young people to organise and lead exchanges.

We became more and more open to working with partner countries in SEE.

Through YiA projects our theatre organization developed strong working relationships with two Serbian theatre companies, enabling us to produce a film together - the last class, which is shown in schools in Serbia as part of a campaign against violence in schools.

4.3.1.4 YiA projects contributed to positive changes in development of youth work in my country.
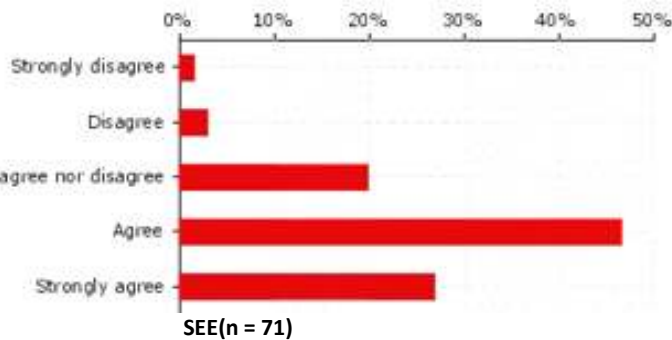

SEE(n = 71)

Respondents were asked to assess how much they agree with the statement on a 5 point scale (strongly disagree – strongly agree) with a »don't know« option. As shown in chart above, the majority of respondents agree with the statement.

Respondents who agreed with the statement were also asked a follow-up question:

You indicated that YiA contributed to positive changes in the youth field in your country. How has the YiA programme influenced the youth field in your country? (Multiple answers possible)

SEE
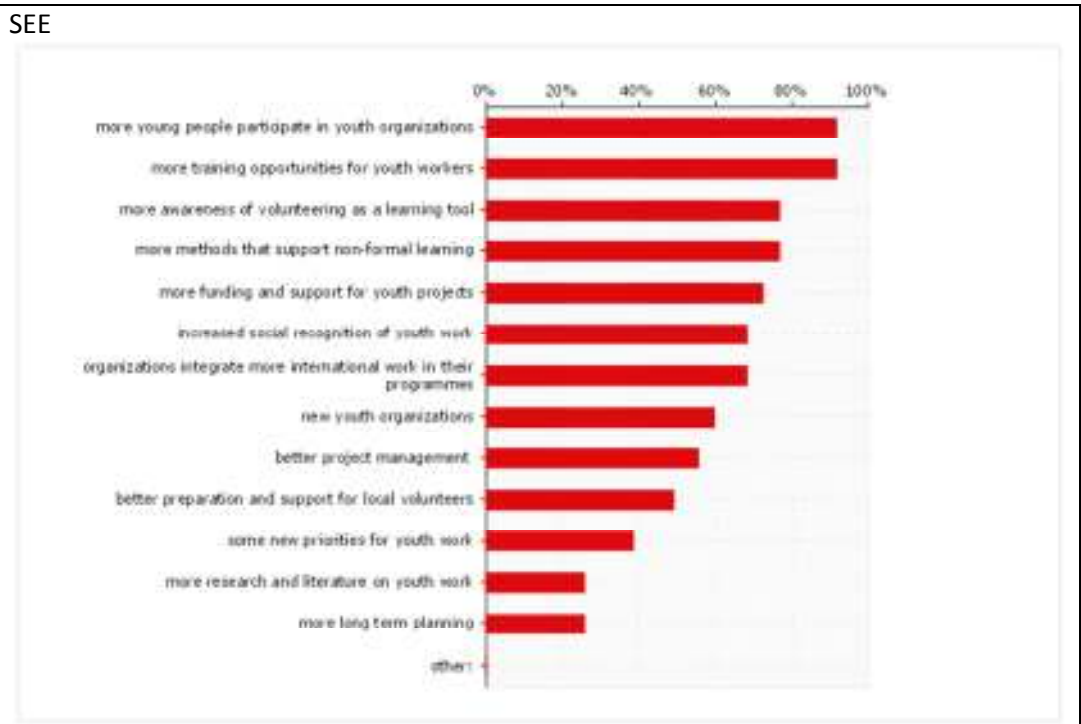
Respondents who agreed with the statement were also asked if they can think of a specific example of how the YiA programme influenced the youth field in their country and to briefly describe it. 12

26

free-text answers were provided. Examples are centred on stronger intercultural dimension, sharing best practices, recognition of youth work, participation of young people, more opportunities for mobility of young people and more support for organizations in the youth field. A selection of examples is presented below.

> YiA programme in my opinion gave visibility to youth needs in our country as well as some of the solutions. It attracted young people to become more involved in the work of local youth organizations, introduced more methods of non-formal learning and pointed out volunteering as an important learning tool.
>
> Examples of good practice from other European countries, especially those which are the most developed, have been transferred to our country, through professional youth workers, thus bringing youth work to a very high level.
>
> The YiA programme gave an additional boost to the new generation of youth NGOs and at the same time gave opportunities to older organizations to integrate more international activities in their work.
>
> The programme was an important tool to support youth mobility after many years of challenges faced by Serbian youth (visa, no funds etc.).
>
> Participation of our NGOs in YiA program and improvement in projects granted on centralised level I think changed the perception of our ministry for youth and sport about youth work in general and its importance in the lives of young people in Serbia.
>
> YiA offered a lot of possibilities for young people from SEE to participate, which they could not have had otherwise. Training and youth exchanges often serve as an initial step in getting young people to join your organization. Sometimes, participants coming from smaller towns would even be encouraged to start their own youth organization locally.
>
> More young people in Serbia now have the opportunity to meet people from different European countries and learn from/with them about active citizenship. By being inspired by this, the level of active citizenship projects and activities in local communities were/are developed.
>
> I believe that this programme introduced a new dimension in the field of youth activism, and by promoting the same we have many more young people involved in youth work nowadays.
>
> There are more youth organisations, more international partnerships which lead to new projects and better understanding of other countries' realities and more youth trainers available for national and local projects.
>
> I believe YiA programme has given more "tools" to youth organisations in the international youth work. Just one example is that there is a much stronger intercultural dimension in the work of many youth organisations and consequently their youth workers.

4.3.1.5 YiA contributed to positive changes in local communities in which projects were carried out.

SEE(n = 72)	Programme countries (n = 65)

Figure 13. Opinions of trainers, accreditors and representatives of organizations from SEE (left) and programme countries (right) about the impact of the YiA programme: changes in local communities.
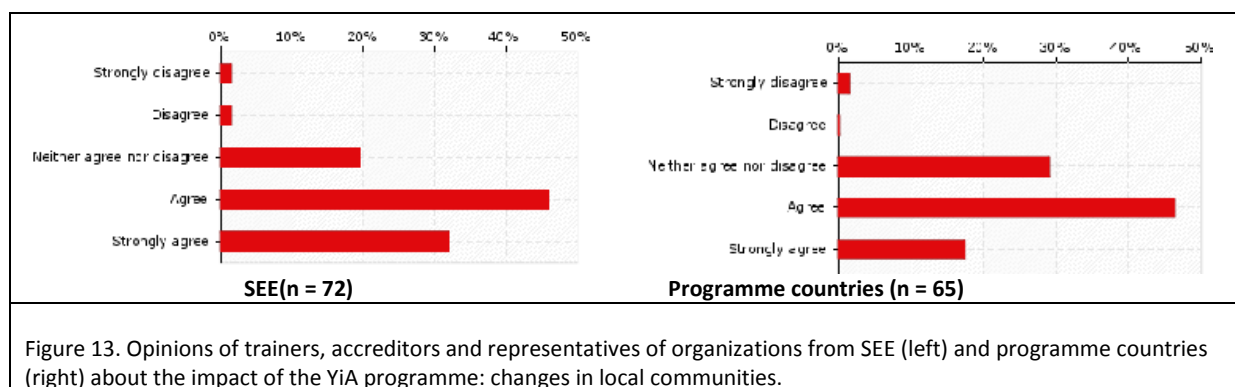
Respondents were asked to assess how much they agree with the statement on a 5 point scale (strongly disagree – strongly agree) with a »don't know« option. As shown in charts above, the majority of respondents agree with the statement with more respondents choosing a neutral answer than in previous statements. Respondents from SEE countries express a slightly stronger level of

agreement. Respondents who agreed with the statement were also asked a follow-up question presented on the next page.

Respondents who agreed with the previous statement were also asked a follow-up question:

You indicated that YiA contributed to positive changes in local communities in which projects were carried out. How did the local communities respond to your YiA projects? (Multiple answers possible)
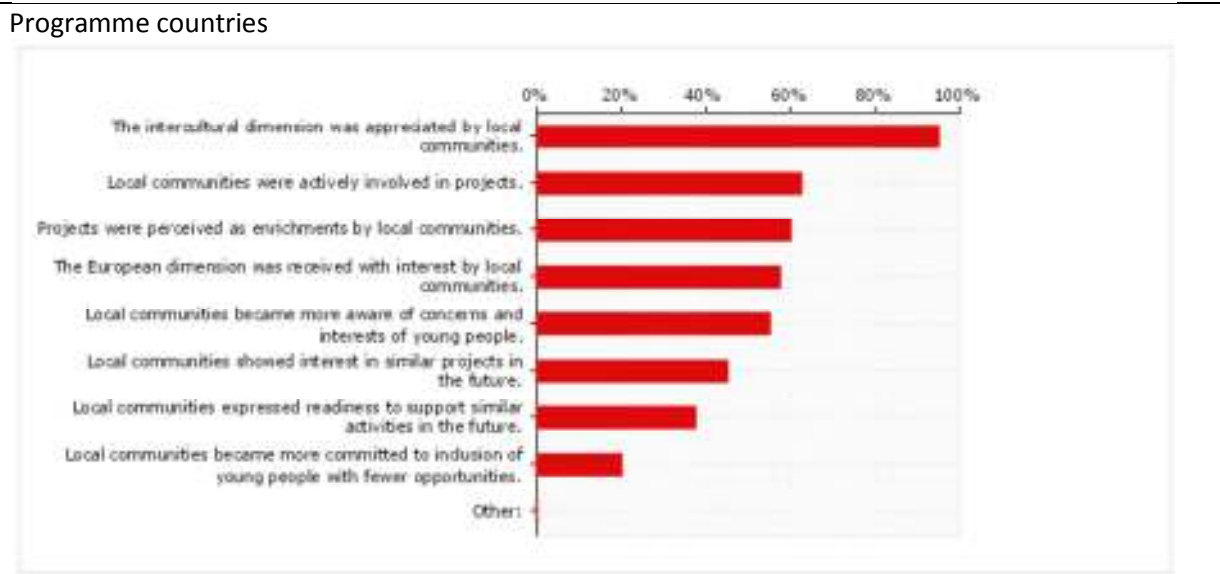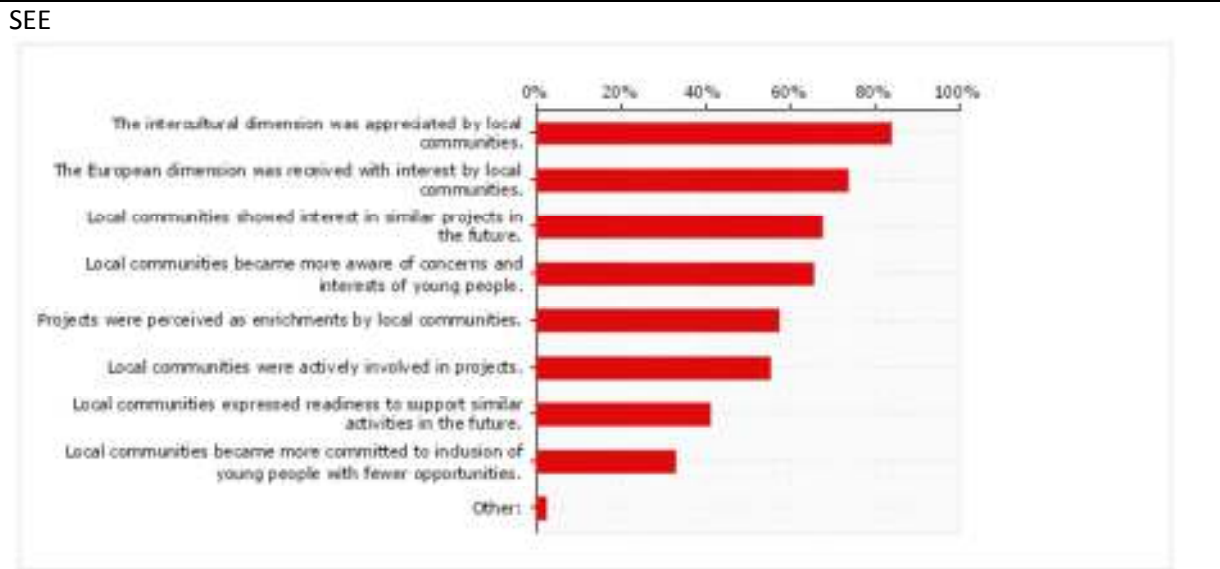
SEE
Programme countries

Respondents were also asked if they can think of a specific example of how the YiA programme impacted a local community and to briefly describe it. 16 free-text answers were provided by respondents from SEE and additional 14 by respondents from the programme countries. Underlying themes of examples are intercultural learning of local communities and challenging stereotypes and prejudices, inspiration for local communities, recognition of youth work and/or organizations on the local level, motivation for international cooperation of the local community, motivation for development of local-level youth policies and several improvement in local communities related to topics of projects that took place there like sustainability and environmental protection, art and culture etc. A selection of examples is presented below.

Respondents from SEE:

Generally, people have not that much info about the YiA programme including the local authorities. Whenever they had info and more details about the YiA programme and its content, they were ready for expanding the cooperation with the partners at regional and European/international dimensions.

Local community usually sees a positive example of international cooperation and more people from different backgrounds working together for one common goal: where there is cooperation and will there is success.

In one of our youth exchange projects on ecology we had a workshop with a theme of trash art. Even years after that youth exchange in our local community there were other NGOs and young people organizing events and workshops with the same theme. Our community became even more aware on environmental issues than we ever have hoped.

The local community for now is only in the stage of participating in the projects. There is still a lot of fear of receiving foreigners in Macedonia and if it is not a bigger town it is creating a lot of interesting intercultural situations.

In some cases, particularly in the smaller towns, the local communities were actively involved in the projects and it was appreciated by them. The YiA projects led to strengthening the sense of European identity and inter-culturally enriching experiences for both the foreign participants and the local people.

Local community in our city showed great interest in YiA projects. An important point is that the YiA programme provides opportunities for local community to be able to talk and interact with foreigners who don't visit the city so often. Projects supported by YiA are unique in this way, and local community is always trying to show hospitality and is eager for new projects.

Respondents from Programme countries:

A youth exchange on ethnic minorities in the Balkans - organising media activities in three different countries and public discussions in each city visited on the tour! Strong involvement of local community and sometimes the first time to share opinions officially. Great impact!

The local government in Serbia gave more local fund to youth organisations after organising international youth training there.

After hosting two Montenegrian volunteers, our local community looks at East Europe with a different perspective and with less prejudice.

We have developed partnerships with local authorities as well as individuals, receiving their appreciation and readiness for support.

For our local Roma it was the first time to meet and work with Roma from other countries. They have shown a lot of interest how they live there, how they cope with everyday life, school and education issues.

An instance, one of many, comes to mind. At the end of training in forum theatre in Ohrid, Macedonia we performed to a public audience. The theatre involved a dynamic dialogue between audience and actors about the problems depicted in the scenes. Many of the problems proved relevant to all the Balkan countries and there was heartfelt sharing that went on deep into the night.

The young people we work with come from polarised parts of Belfast. The learning they gain from our international work ripples through their communities when they return.

4.3.1.6 YiA is visible to and known by all potential beneficiaries and stakeholders in my country.
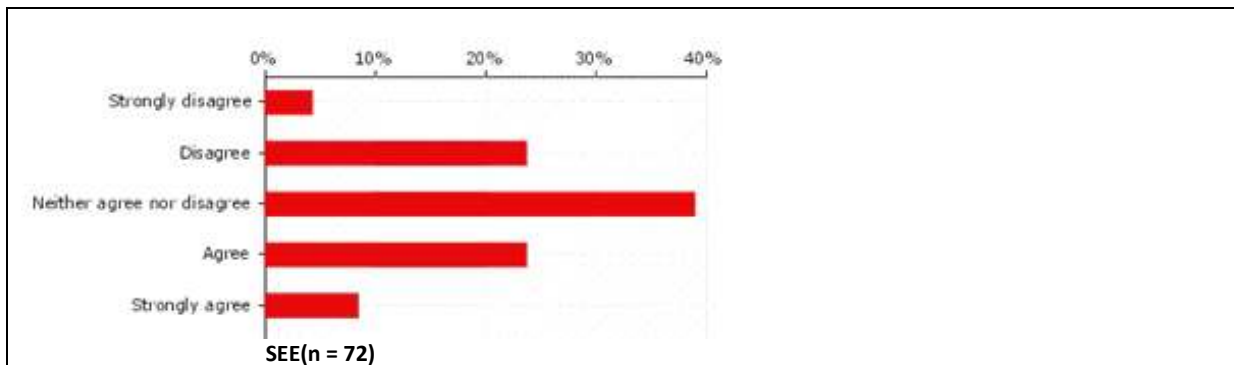

SEE(n = 72)

Respondents were asked to assess how much they agree with the statement on a 5 point scale (strongly disagree – strongly agree) with a »don't know« option. As shown in chart above, the answers are distributed across the scale with the majority of respondents neither agreeing nor disagreeing with the statement. Respondents who disagreed with the statement were also asked a follow-up question about which stakeholders the programme should be more visible to. Over 50% of all respondents from SEE (78 % of respondents who believe that the YiA programme should be more visible to stakeholders) think YiA should raise its visibility in regard to young people and policy makers on the local and national level. An interesting response listed among "others" was that YiA should also be more visible to the business sector. Results are demonstrated in the chart below.

You indicated that YiA might not be visible and known enough in your country. Should YiA raise visibility for certain stakeholders? (Multiple answers possible)

SEE
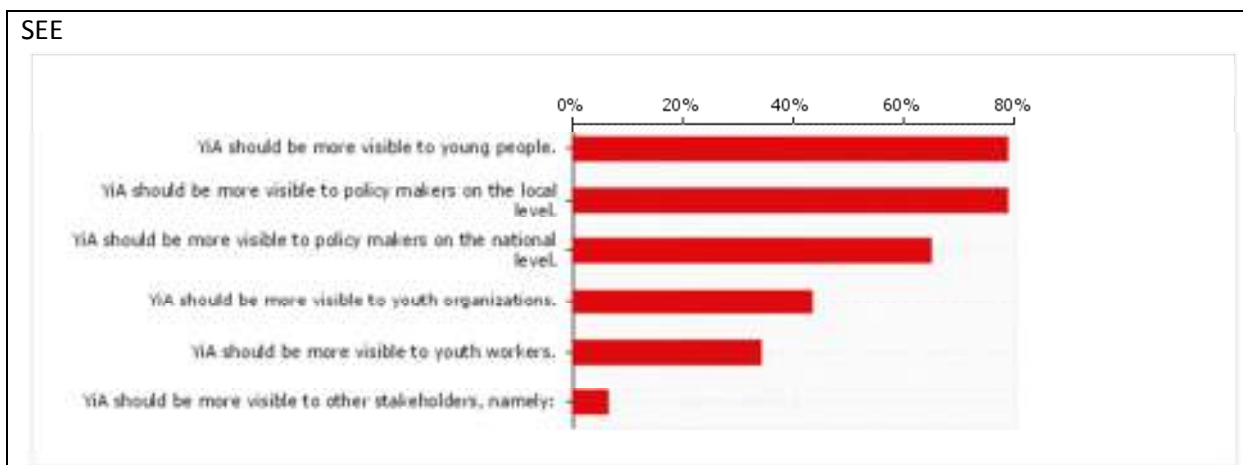
4.3.1.7 Youthpass is a useful tool that helped participants of our activities describe what they did and learnt during the activity.

Figure 6. Opinions of trainers, accreditors and representatives of organizations from SEE (left) and programme countries (right) about the impact of the YiA programme: Youthpass.

Respondents were asked to assess how much they agree with the statement on a 5 point scale (strongly disagree – strongly agree) with a »don't know« option. As shown in charts above, responses for both groups resemble a normal distribution with the majority of responses agreeing with the statement. Respondents from SEE countries express a slightly stronger level of agreement.

In addition, respondents from SEE were given the opportunity to describe Youthpass in their own words. Some interesting thoughts are presented below.

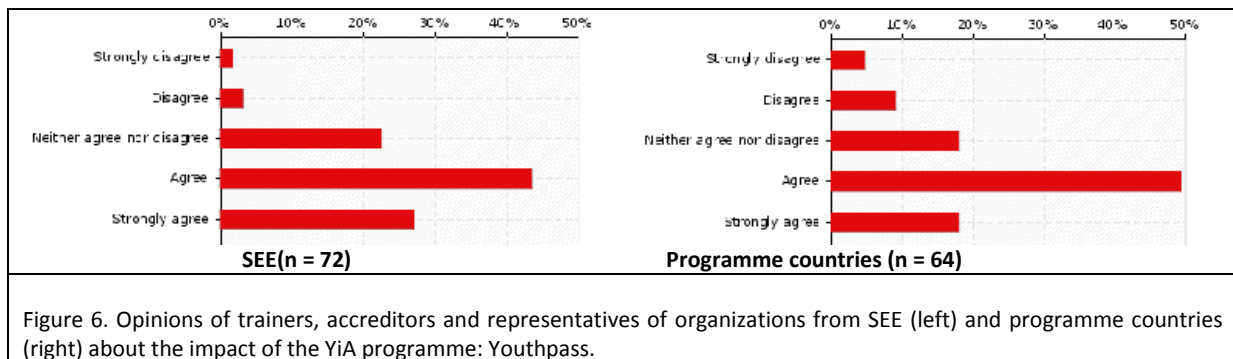> Youthpass is tool for personal reflection of learning outcomes, keeping learning achievements remembered, for putting yourself in front of the others who do not have it in looking for a job...
> Youthpass is an instrument and process of self-assessment and reflection of learning outcomes gained through experience of participating in YiA activities.
> Youthpass is a tool for participants of projects funded by the YiA programme to describe what they have done and to show what they have learnt.
> Youthpass is a validation of the experience of a young person outside the formal educational system.
> Youthpass is half-certificate and half reflection paper (a map of thoughts expressing subjective perception of self-growth which in time develops responsibility for one's own personal development).
> Youthpass is a tool to help you follow and evaluate your own learning in YiA setting.
> Youthpass is a recognition and reflection tool for key competences and non-formal education.
> Youthpass is a unique tool for recognition of participation and learning happening in non-formal educational settings in the frame of the youth in action programme.
> Youthpass is a tool for certification of non formal education. Younger brother of Europass.
> Youthpass is document which needs to be more recognized and increase value of non-formal learning.
> Youthpass is a learning recognition instrument, helping young people and the other stakeholders to understand the outcomes of learning in a certain project.
> Youthpass is both a certificate to recognize learning outcomes and the process of better awareness of own learning.

4.3.1.8 What kind of influence has the YiA programme had on youth policy in your country?

Respondents from SEE were asked a series of questions about youth policies in their country and asked to identify possible influences that the YiA programme had in this field. Firstly, they were asked to identify the main priorities of youth policy in their country. Eleven common youth topics were listed together with options such as "no youth policy", "no clear priorities", "don't know" as well as an opportunity to add other priorities. Multiple answers were possible. Most respondents (as high as 60%) list employability of young people as the number one priority, followed by non-formal

education of young people (43%) and inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities (49%). Budget for youth work and youth projects (24%) and legislation concerning young people (22%) are on the bottom of the list. 11 % of respondents believe that no youth policy currently exists in their country and an additional 24 % think that even though there is an existing youth policy, it does not have clear priorities. 8% also listed other priorities such as sustainable development, active participation of young people, culture, free time and family. An overview of respondents' perception of their respective countries' youth policy priorities is presented in Figure 7.
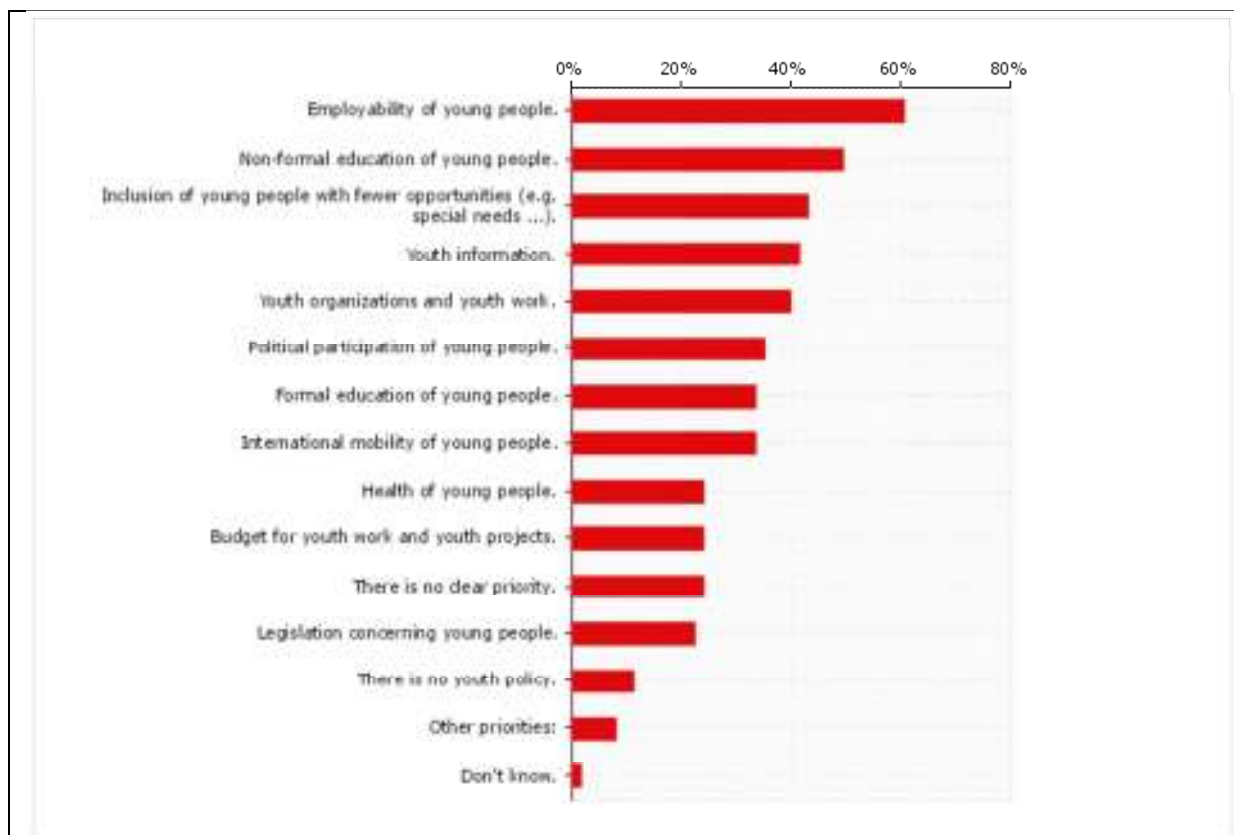
Figure 7. Opinions of trainers, accreditors and representatives of organizations from SEE about priorities of youth policy in their country.

Respondents were also asked to what extent they think the YiA programme is in compliance with their country's national policy. 17% think they are in compliance to a large extent, 50% to some extent, 16% to a small extent, 3% believe they are not in compliance at all and 14% do not know. When asked to identify the types of influence the YiA programme had on their country's youth policy, most believed that the programme had influenced practices in youth work (64%) followed by influence on national youth policies (25%), national financial support for the youth field (24%) and national legislation (22%). Only 20% believe that the YiA programme has not had any influence on national youth policies. Responses are shown in figure 8.
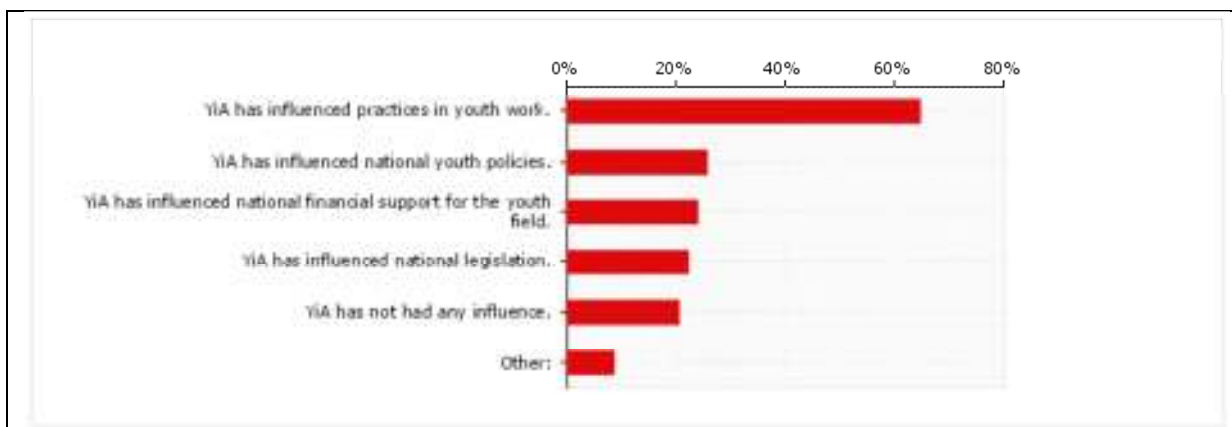
Figure 8. Opinions of trainers, accreditors and representatives of organizations from SEE about the influence of the YiA programme on youth policy in their country.

In addition, respondents from SEE were asked to give specific examples of new legislation, youth policies, practices and/or support that demonstrate the result of the Programme. Some interesting thoughts are presented below. Most examples were contributed by respondents from Serbia and Croatia.

Law on volunteering.

New law for youth, youth policy.

Law on youth, law on volunteerism, national strategy for youth.

There is a law for volunteers in the country. There are simplified procedures for foreign youth coming as volunteers.

The YiA program influenced creation of the National Youth Strategy and resulted in the implementation of the activities suggested in the strategy connected especially to non-formal education of young people, inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities, international mobility of young people, youth information etc.

There were many trainings for trainers and exchanges on specific topics that youth workers participated in. Knowledge and skills gained there were applied in their organizations and in work in local community.

Ministry responsible for youth has opened significant tenders for youth organisations in line with the youth policy.

The YiA has promoted quality in youth work and influenced the national thinking in that direction. It has also promoted non-formal learning and increased awareness that the revised national policy should have a clearer focus on this aspect.

As far as I know, youth policy in Serbia is very unclear (didn't exist at first, now it changed, but I am not sure at all in which direction) and also I am not aware of any interaction of YiA and youth policy. Maybe it exists, but it is then not communicated at all to us, as people who implement the programme or/and work with youth.

The form of training and networking activities from the YiA programme has been successfully transferred to local projects, funded locally or nationally and following the format and the principles of YiA trainings.

Following requirements from the YiA programme, like legal status of EVS volunteers, it speeds up adoption of legal act on volunteers in Croatia.

It is still at the initial stage but YiA has supported organizations to grow and to represent youngsters on national and local level.

There is no legislation which demonstrates the result of the programme, but many NGO respect the practices of the YiA programme and modify their priorities to better conform to the YiA policies.

Making Visa procedures for EVS volunteers simpler.

YiA had some influence on recognition of youth work.

NAPOR (National Association of Youth Workers, responsible for accrediting youth organizations and youth workers, including their non-formal knowledge) worked together with the Ministry of Youth and sports, using the practices of other EU countries, gathered through YiA activities.

4.3.1.9 Benefits and challenges of YiA projects involving partners from SEE countries

Respondents from EU countries were asked to specify what kind of benefits and challenges they encountered in YiA projects that they carried out in cooperation with partners from SEE. 66% of respondents contributed a text answer (47 representatives of organizations and 17 trainers and accreditors). Their answers were grouped into the following overarching topics using a thematic analysis procedure.

BENEFITS		CHALLENGES	
Intercultural learning	29	Visas and access	12
European heritage and future	7	Cultural differences	11
Cooperation	5	No challenges	9
Motivation	5	Cooperation	8
Mutual learning and sharing	4	History of conflict	6
History of conflict	3	Less support for YiA	4
Challenging prejudice	2	Administration	4
No specific benefits	1	Sustainability	3
Mindset	1	Money management	2
		Funding	1
		Concepts	1
		Motivation	1
		Language	1

The number one benefit is a strong intercultural learning dimension (29 replies): respondents report that in projects involving partners from SEE countries there is a »much greater intercultural learning impact than within EU«. Interestingly, cultural differences are also the second most reported challenge of such projects (11 replies), surpassed only by issues surrounding Visa and accessibility (12 replies). Another topic that appears both as a benefit and a challenge is cooperation among partners: whereas 7 respondents list good experiences with cooperation with partners from SEE as a specific benefit of such projects (»Good cooperation, sticking to agreements, appreciating the opportunities. «), 8 respondents had challenging experiences (»In some cases a cultural gap in the way to work (times, respect of deadlines, working rhythm).«). History of conflict in the SEE region is also reported as a benefit and YiA projects are seen as an important tool of peace building (3 replies). However, the history of conflict is also seen as a challenge (6 replies): »In the Balkans, it is very difficult and we have to be very careful not to wound anybody, not to focus on the past and the conflict, avoid any political discussion, anything that can make bad memories come back and at the same time speak and make them have discussions and reflections about religion, communities, change some of their opinions and open their life to something else to be involved.«

Other benefits as reported by respondents from programme countries include strengthening awareness of European heritage and future for participants from programme countries as well as SEE (7 replies), strong motivation of participants from SEE (5 replies), strong mutual learning and sharing (4 replies) and challenging prejudice that citizens of programme countries hold about people from SEE and prejudice that young people from SEE have about EU. Other challenges of YiA projects involving partners from SEE are said to be administrative challenges (4 replies), that organizations from SEE do not benefit from the same support concerning YiA as their partners from programme countries (4 replies), language barriers (1 reply) and different understanding of concepts regarding youth work (1 reply). A specific challenge is also the money issue: 2 respondents report that

management of YiA funds can be a problem as organizations from SEE sometimes use the funding to make a profit and do not spend it all on the project. Another respondent mentions that co financing can be extremely challenging for small, struggling organizations from SEE.

9 respondents believe that there are no challenges specific to projects involving SEE countries ("In our personal experience there are no specific challenges in working with SEE: their history, tradition, culture is deeply European one.") whereas only one respondent stated that they see no specific benefits and that such projects are basically the same as in projects involving only partners from programme countries.

A selection of replies is presented below.

What are some specific benefits of Youth in Action projects with SEE countries?
Increased awareness that western Balkan countries are part of Europe.
Give equal opportunities for non EU member countries.
Europe's ideals were forged in the furnace of two world wars and hold true in all countries which respect human rights and uphold the rule of law. As the theatre of operations of the most recent war in Europe it is essential that the SEE countries are embraced into the aspirations of Europe as a counter-force to the regressive elements in all these countries. These forces are felt most strongly in young people and the decisions that are available to them as they become adults. YiA projects have the effect of increasing people's perceptions of what decisions are available to them by introducing them to other cultures and other ways of relating to cultures different to our own.
More interesting projects for all participants, when the group is well balanced between program countries and partner countries. SEE (and the other regions to) is part of Europe and should play no extra role as partner county, but as program country.
SEE is a region that cannot be taken out from any EU policy. The benefit to work with SEE is mostly related to the perspective of joining the EU as it is happening with Croatia. It is important to follow in working with SEE in order to not create any kind of disadvantaged situation looking to the enlargement of the EU.
Politically this is the main tool for peace building in that area. It prepares the ground for integration with the EU. For young people it is a very important way of learning about European history and the idea behind the integration - most of the young people today have no possibility to remember the war in Yugoslavia, so they grow up used to living in peace - this makes them more vulnerable to extremism.
SEE countries are not more, nor less special than other European countries, as they simply belong to Europe like all others as well. Nevertheless, we consider it to be important to overcome the political barriers and to include them in our work, to exchange experience, especially as many young migrants in Germany come from see countries and participate in our activities.
Getting to know the mentality, culture and political views of these countries. Being aware these are countries and young people who probably experienced war and ethnic problems. More knowledge about these countries, it brings them closer and raises awareness.
Participants have an overview of the recent conflicts in the region and understand the reconciliation processes.
The history and the political past that still has a huge influence on today's process of development in these countries provide a common space for interesting exchange on experiences, views and perceptions.
Opening a wider world to our members and volunteers.
Much greater intercultural learning impact than within EU.
Cultural diversity.
The view beyond one's own nose...
Diversity and multicultural perspective.
To give young people the chance to meet people from a very unknown part of Europe in our country.
For our target group having a volunteer from a country that they (almost) didn't know was very positive because it enlarged their world.
To know our neighbouring countries.
Cultural exchange and exchange of experience.

Similar, but also different culture, similar language and geographical region

Intercultural learning.

I have gained very good friendship and in the same time professional cooperation. A lot of personal benefits, personal growth intercultural awareness.

Increased knowledge and capacity of all participants.   Offering young people opportunities to visit and learn about places they are highly unlikely to ever visit.

To create groups of people with very different backgrounds - to know other cultures - to break down prejudices.

Comprehension of the realities of partner countries' youngsters.

Young people words:l'obstacle relationnel le plus important est certainement la méfiance, la peur de l'autre, inspirée par des discours alimentés d'idées reçues et de clichés gaspard   the biggest barrier is not wanting to meet new people jasna   quand je nous regarde l

To be in contact with young people from a region you have not been in contact to much. They share their ideas, views, experience which are different from the ones others do have.

Peace building. Developing a need for European integration. Self development. Increase of mobility.

Greater understanding of cultural matters shaping both our country as well as those of our partners - positive awareness of politics and current affairs   - possibility for young people and youth workers to broaden their horizons.

Estonians do not know very much about the region, so it is good to put this part of Europe on their mind maps.

The participants from SEE are bringing to the projects a different view of point, because of differences in culture and way of life.

Especially in the countries that require visa to travel to Europe, the young people don't get to travel so easily, which means you do not meet so many of them. We work in an international environment and want to get to know all cultures. Receiving a volunteer from such a country is a good way to do that.

If youth are to take action, connecting youth from western countries and SEE in joint projects would have the highest impact. Connecting the technologically advanced western world and the very rich culture and tradition of the SEE region with the challenge to find common language, the results of the group learning from each other are not only important but also unique.

Getting young people more aware of SEE countries culture and open their mind as they're not thinking to these countries. Projects offer them the possibility to reflect and to meet youngster coming from this area and to visit them.

Intercultural awareness - conflict approach, migration understanding.

Intercultural learning concerning so called Balkan feeling.

Wider intercultural dimension; sense of belonging to our community.

SEE is a bridge to the rest of the world...

A very special European dimension - a region which is in many ways so uniquely European and then again not at all; the diversity within the region but then again some strong common traits. Good sense of humour and passion for the work.

Some Italians have bad stereotypes about SEE countries people so YiA projects can help to cancel prejudice and change this view.

Prejudices are bigger towards SEE people. Having here SEE volunteers let us raise awareness in local community about the not substance of such prejudices and about the common belonging to a European community not composed only by the old members.

More active in preparation and realization of the projects.

Good cooperation, sticking to agreements, appreciating the opportunities.

cultural diversity sincere people hospitability

Partners from see countries are willing to cooperate with partners from other countries so they are making effort to exchange and cooperate.

Relations with people and good atmosphere for cooperation, awareness of self-development and learning process.

What we see a real benefit is that doing a YiA project in SEE countries we really help them to develop. We can teach them a lot about the project method etc. But at the same time, we can learn a lot from them, see their point of view and appreciate it. Our volunteer that had their services in SEE countries are really happy with their choices and their work. They felt needed there and at the same time they could develop their

personalities a lot.

Knowledge of local and national problems of youth in SEE countries and other issues that we work with EU countries in common; exchange of knowledge, experience, methods and new approaches.

Different cultural background - enriching the international youth work, great experts with a lot of knowledge and experience.

Getting to know new approaches from grass root youth work; enthusiasm and professionalism of youth workers.

Participants are not all of them as experienced as the EU young people for obvious reasons but some of them are more experienced and easy and wonderful to work with - a great interest in new ideas and pedagogies.

Young people from SEE countries are usually very motivated to take part in our projects. An advantage is that YiA can be a starter of future cooperation which can be maintained through various funding opportunities.

New ways of working and innovation. A dedication to the work and willingness to and learn and continue even in challenging environments.

Enthusiastic participants.

More enthusiasm of organisations from SEE.

I don't find particular differences. Benefits are basically the same in the terms indicated in the previous questionnaires.

Better understanding of local reality, a good level of planning with remarkable flexibility, a good sense of humour (last one is based on very personal experiences).

Learning dimensions are not the same; although they differ of course each time, the overall practise of a project between partners from Belgium and Holland will not have the same and/or similar learning opportunities like a project between Belgium and Bosnia. But this takes some more time to articulate necessary evidence...

What are some specific challenges of Youth in Action projects with SEE countries?

In the Balkans, it is very difficult and we have to be very careful not to wound anybody, not to focus on the past and the conflict, avoid any political discussion, anything that can make bad memories come back and at the same time speak and make them have discussions and reflections about religion, communities, change some of their opinions and open their life to something else to be involved.

Their near history full of conflicts can be sometimes a challenge, however it can be also use as a great example of how new generation is able to tackle it and find common language.

History of conflicts, racial prejudices.

To cope with experiences of war they had, cultural differences.

Conflicting region.

Recent conflict issues also create a challenge as trainer has to deal with some participants that are difficult to deal with.

Way of communication and planning to find the right partners

Nothing major and this may not just be limited to SEE countries, but we found we were more structured as an organisation so we had to wait for receipts, confirmations, details etc.

In some cases a cultural gap in the way to work (times, respect of deadlines, working rhythm).

At times lack of reliability. Sometimes over-confident participants.

Communication and conflict management skills.

In my opinion, the challenges are related to the organisational culture of NGOs in the region. It would be a shame to generalise, but it seems that there is a lack of structural organisation, clear processes and roles.

Project management; timing.

Organisation, time-schedule, long-term planning.

The concept of volunteering is not always the same as in our country.

It is difficult to understand if the participant coming from SEE countries is indeed interested in taking part in EVS, therefore focussing on volunteering, or if the EVS is just a way for the person to enter the EU.

What I see a specific challenge of YiA projects with see countries is the money issue. I think it should be really stressed that the money that is in the project is only for the project and the volunteer and not for any

other spending.

Sometimes the programme is used to make profit by some NGO, the problem is that kind of NGO is depending of the YiA funds that can be sometimes problematic.

The fact that our partners in these countries don't benefit from the same support concerning Youth in Action as we do.

Different application procedure, different and limited budget line in YiA.

YiA does not offer any funding for youth initiatives and youth democracy projects with SEE countries; moreover, there is limited funding for supporting grassroots youth work and the long-term capacity-building of youth organizations in SEE countries.

Salto is not immune to the prejudices and cronyism that inflict SEE. As gatekeepers to the opportunities to participate in YiA programmes it must appear impartial while also having its ear close to the ground. Something I suggest is difficult to do from an ivory tower in Ljubljana.

Financial challenges: small youth organizations with limited resources struggle to manage with administrative requirements, such as paying 30 % of travel costs, while travel costs from see countries remain very high!

There are cultural barriers but they are overcome along the way when people get to know each other - have no bad experiences whatsoever. sense a great interest in leaving the cage

Involvement of such different countries.

Young people do not really know too much of these countries compared to western European countries, the preparation phase (for a youth exchange) has to focus on giving more information on the partners (geography, language, religion, etc. background).

Sometimes it was confronting what the difference was in standards and values but also in the way to act when there were issues.

Different attitudes and values and a different way of thinking that needs to be worked through and discussed.

Communication due to slightly different cultural approaches.

Different mentality.

The huge cultural differences.

Visa procedures, poverty, chances and opportunities young people sometimes lack due to living in rural areas.

Keeping the attitude of willingness to learn from the cultural differences (in general) and the differences in the daily life and the impact of that in the youth work context, which is really different.

Communication is much more implicit than with EU countries, and that can be a challenge.

Language problems, we particularly did not want to exclude participants whose English was poor, so we had to have participants interpret, which is in itself not very good, both because they are not professional interpreters, but also because it impeded their own participation.

To introduce the change in administration and mentality, necessary for further integration with the EU.

Youth organizations are not very familiar with EU bureaucracy. The online application procedures are not easy to master. In fact they are very confusing not only for the partners in SEE, but also for programme countries.

Challenges are with visas and other administrative work.

Administrative procedures. Limited funds and duration, which did not allow us to conduct any meaningful activities within the framework of the programme which also discouraged us from applying anew.

Standards of infrastructure, support and professionalism vary greatly. Travel to and from the UK can be expensive and complex. The biggest issue of all is the UK immigration rules which discriminate against young people and make it very difficult to get visas. This results in a lot of wasted time and money. Something needs to be done about this at the highest political level.

That the projects might get delayed because of slow visa procedures. We normally apply for a project to start 3 months after application time, but this can be too short to get the visa on time, since the contract might only be ready 1 month before the volunteer should arrive.

Visa procedures and bad travel connections which make the project more difficult and expensive.

Visa: visa issues for long term volunteers constitute an incredible amount of work; luckily we don't have to fight for youth exchanges any more ...

It is mostly accessibility of projects, if they are carried out in SEE country, as even the environment needs a lot of adaptations. Getting visa for participants.

Visa, cultural differences...

Visa and administrative aspects regarding visa.

Visa issues before or living permits now.

Visa problems.

Visa procedures and reliability of partners.

Visa issues, mobility and practicalities, fear of corruption.

Except participants in trainings organised by SALTO and the Greek NA, I never had the chance to cooperate with a SEE partner, and therefore I could not be able to have an opinion. However, I need to mention the unfair treatment of SEE mobility of young people due to visa issues and the processes involved that demotivate, at least Greek organisations to develop partnerships, as the result is a great effort of the project to be directed towards facing this bureaucratic challenge.

We have had very good experiences.

I really can't see any specific challenge...

In our personal experience there are no specific challenges in working with SEE: their history, tradition, culture is deeply European one.

We are the same (with small differences).

I don't see huge differences among SEE countries and other countries.

No, I see them as my brothers and sisters - Balkan and Baltic people have something in common.

We believe it is important to keep and also extend cooperation with SEE countries. They are our close neighbours but otherwise we don't see some strong specific challenges beside much more difficulties to get the project approved comparing the projects with programme countries.

Challenges are basically the same than with other countries. Main differences among countries are related to the local contexts and support provided to the YiA programme.

No specific challenges.

Keeping up the good work in non-formal education. The Erasmus for all will most likely turn us back 20 years or more. We cannot allow that.

Extreme misbalance between populist anti EU opinions and neutral information and facts. A challenge that needs specific attention in the region.

To have wider network of cooperating organisations and people, not always the same ones.

Real international impact; transparency.

4.3.1.10 Impact of the YiA Programme in light of sustainability and financial support issues

To learn more about sustainability of the impact of the YiA programme respondents were asked about sources of co-financing for their current YiA projects, if they are aware of other funding sources for similar projects and what they predict would happen to their cooperation between SEE and programme countries in case the YiA funding was no longer available or was substantially decreased.

Respondents report that the majority of funding for their projects comes directly from the YiA grant. 74% of respondents from SEE say that their co financing mostly comes from participants themselves (they cover a part of travel costs) or from resources of their organization. In contrast, while 74% of respondents from programme countries also use their organization's resources, only 50% report that participants personally contribute to the project. Organizations from SEE are slightly more likely to report that their partner organizations co-funded the project. About 20% of respondents' YiA projects were co-funded with the help of local, regional, national or international grants. Other sources (about 10 % of projects) include donations from private sponsors and foundations. A few organizations from programme countries mention fundraising events.

HOW DID YOU CO-FINANCE YOUR YiA PROJECTS?

Respondents from SEE:

Respondents from programme countries:
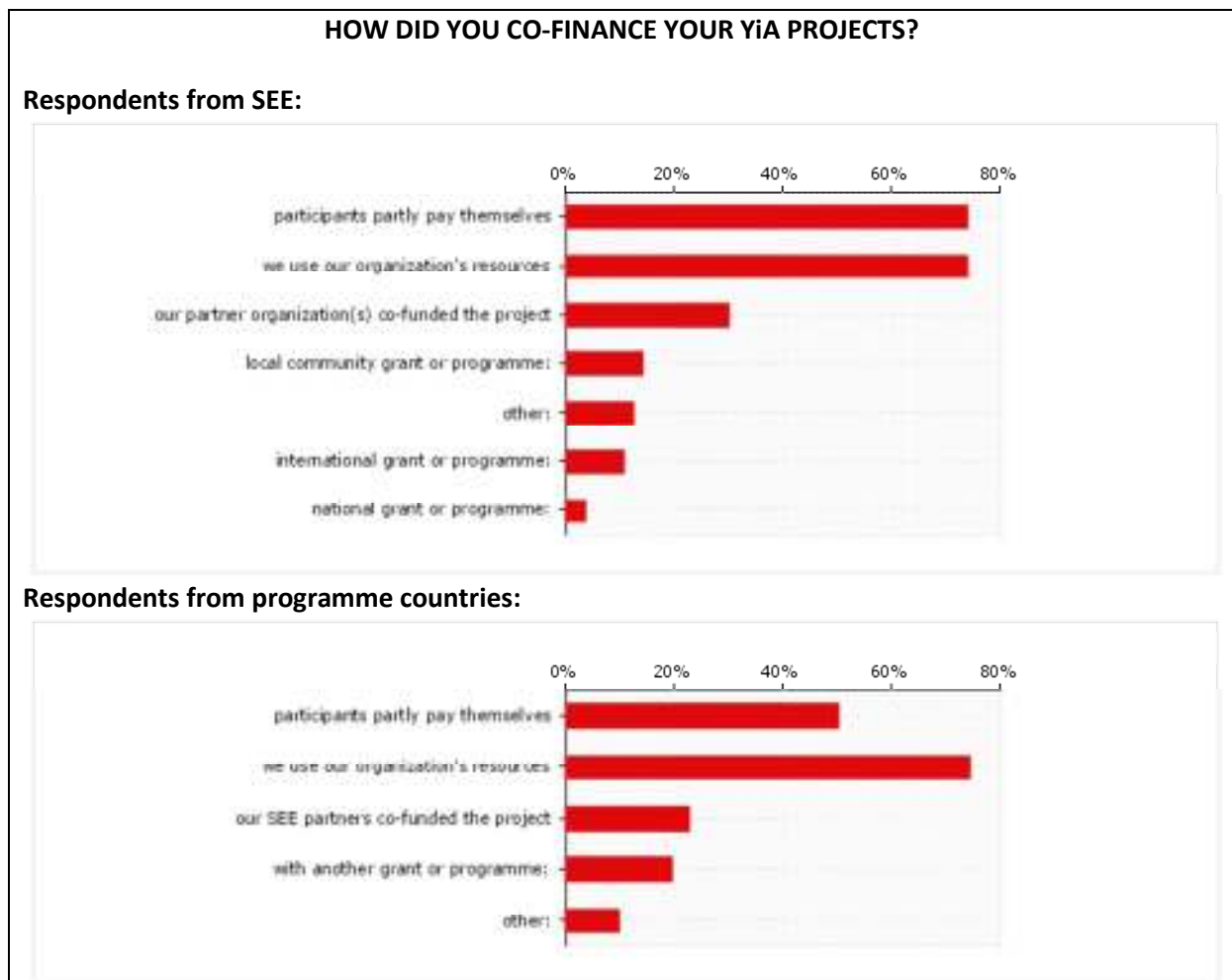
Respondents were asked if they are aware of any granting schemes at local, national or international level that would support activities similar to YiA projects and those from SEE countries report that:

- For projects similar to youth exchanges, there is some funding available from local authorities (municipalities, provinces, and cities), some government grants, and on the international level sources like European Youth Foundation (EYF) and grants by foreign countries (US Embassy grants, Swedish International Development Coordination Agency (SIDA), European Economic Area grants (EEA) and Norway grants ...). It is mentioned that it might be easier to receive funding for school-based exchange projects.
- For international volunteering projects, limited funding might be available through local authorities and government grants. On the international level respondents mention SCI; Peace Corps Volunteers and different associations of ex- EVS volunteers.
- For training of youth leaders sources like support from local authorities and local institutions are mentioned, however they are said to provide material support such as free accommodation and work space, but not necessarily financial means. One respondent is aware of a government grant for similar projects while three others mention Council of Europe (CoE), British Council, SIDA and the EYF.
- Participants state that other kinds of youth mobility projects can also be financially supported with the help of the above mentioned resources.

It is worth mentioning that respondents from Serbia, Croatia and BIH contributed most suggestions for other funding sources. Respondents from Croatia tend to suggest local-level resources, respondents from Serbia often mention national-level financial support and respondents from BIH contributed most of the ideas for international funding. Respondents from Albania, Kosovo and Montenegro provided few if any ideas for funding beyond YiA.

Respondents from programme countries were also asked whether they are aware of any other programmes or grants that their organization could use for projects with SEE countries. 64% stated that they are not aware of any other funding sources and 36% stated that they know other funding possibilities such as Council of Europe - European Youth Foundation, Rita Programme initiated by the Polish – American Freedome Foundation, Stiftung Errinerung – Verantwortung – Zukunft (Foundation EVZ), Weltwärts, Soros Foundation, European Cultural Foundation, Life Long Learning programme, Europe for Citizens programme and grants from foreign embassies.

Respondents from SEE countries and programme countries express a level of concern about continuing their international cooperation in case the YiA programme was terminated or support was substantially decreased. If this happened, more than half of respondents from programme countries say that they would not be able to continue their activities with partners from SEE and about a third would cooperate less extensively as shown in the chart below.

WOULD YOUR ORGANIZATION CONTINUE COOPERATION WITH SEE PARTNERS IF THE YiA PROGRAMME WAS TERMINATED OR SUPOPORT WAS DECREASED?
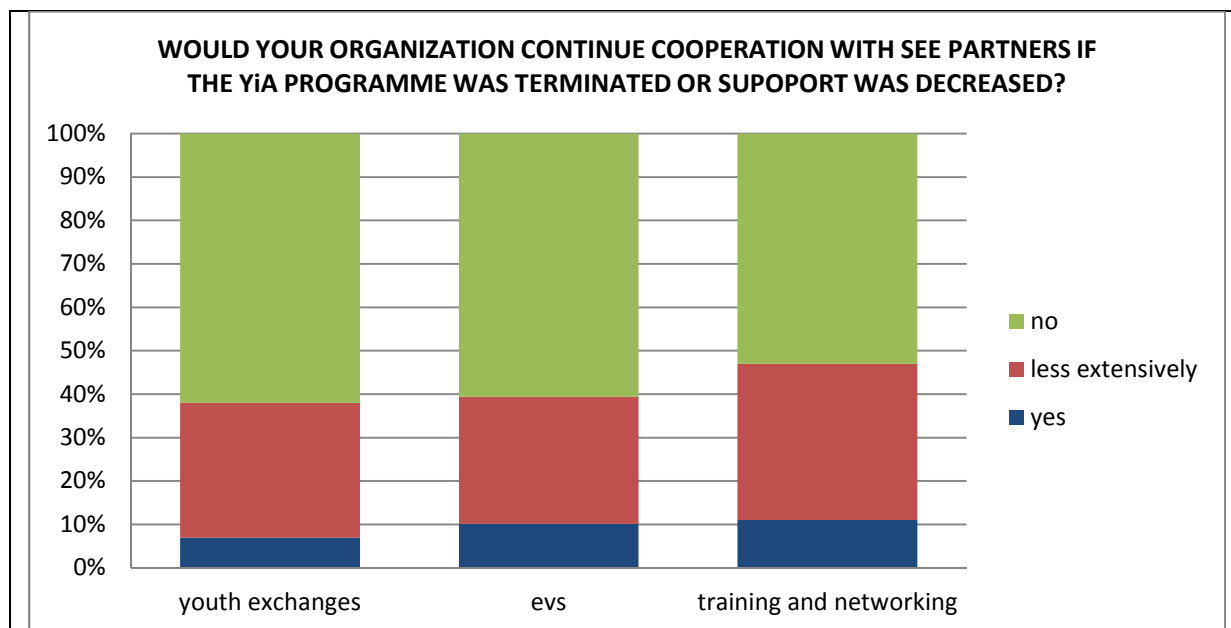
Figure: Likelihood that organizations from programme countries would continue with projects and activities with partners from SEE countries in case the YiA programme was terminated or support was decreased.

When asked what would happen with their cooperation with partners from SEE if the Youth in Action programme was terminated or support was substantially decreased, respondents from programme countries say that (selection):

It would be a disaster! YiA is the only programme helping us to cooperate with SEE and giving them the chance and possibility to join.

We had collaboration with SEE countries as partner in a project that was financed by another programme. The important thing would be to find financial support in other programmes, should the YiA be terminated.

We could not participate in the programme because of our low budget.

We only could run a project every third or fourth year.

For some actions we would stop our partnership. For others, we would try to find other sources of financing, but we would highly reduce our impact.

It would be really difficult to manage mobility with SEE countries without any financial support.

We would not cooperate in the field of EVS anymore.

We would check our priorities and see if YiA projects with SEE are on our priority list.

It would be difficult to keep the cooperation going.

It would decrease possibilities for us to cooperate in the region. Taking into account the success of the YiA, the logical step would be increase of funding!

We would continue to work with them through the Council of Europe, where we also do projects.

Cooperation with SEE countries would not be possible, or just very limited.

No more possibility for our organisation to continue cooperation with partners from SEE

It could be a big risk for the cooperation itself.

I think our cooperation would stop.

Cooperation will be very hard.

Fewer youngsters could have the possibility to discover this reality. Knowing SEE countries and people is a good opportunity to break down barriers and stereotypes.

Cooperation will be strongly decreased: with local funds it is almost impossible to plan quality projects as it is with YiA programme.

It would be much more difficult to go on, of course.

It would be hard for us to have partnerships on the same level with them.

It would become difficult to run projects. Maybe we would have to stop then.

Nothing. We did not apply again as we noticed that the benefit for our organisation was very small. We spent more time with paper work, than we could gain from having a volunteer.

It would be the end of co-operation.

It would be difficult to raise funding.

Cooperation will continue.

It would mean that there would be no cooperation anymore because we are too small to support the same kind of activities.

Most probably we would not have those projects.

The opportunity for young people to participate in projects in programme countries would end and a whole generation of young people from programme countries will miss out on the experience.

It would be greatly limited; we would certainly not be able to carry out another exchange programme without the help of their funding.

We would have more limits for cooperation.

If the YiA programme was terminated or the support was substantially decreased, we wouldn't be able to realize any projects with partners from SEE countries.

We would try to look for other programmes other possibilities to maintain contact and realize activities.

The number of projects would be decreased ...

It would become much more difficult if not impossible.

No cooperation at all.

We would not continue working together.

Bad! We hope to make a network before the end of it. We hope to find other funds. We hope but we know that without money from Europe, if it is our money, countries from the Balkans will not have money to participate. In any case project would decrease!

As of 2012 and new regulations of lump sums, it doesn't really matter, if the project involves partners from SEE or only program countries - the outcome is the same: we can't organise quality accessible projects for everybody anymore.

We would apply for different types of projects through other institutions and seek new possibilities for financing.

We would not be able to continue the cooperation, though the links and friendships will stay.

Respondents from SEE countries were asked for their opinion on how the termination of the YiA programme or decreased support would impact their work in the youth field, their organization, youth work in their countries and youth policies in their countries. They believe that:

- For themselves personally and **their work in the youth field** a decrease in YiA funding would mean fewer opportunities for professional growth and development. They believe there will be less mobility and intercultural learning available to them personally as well as to young people they work with. They also expect it to be more difficult to exchange best practices and innovation with youth workers and trainers from other countries. Some of them are employed by youth organizations or are freelancing in the youth field and they worry about their employment and work opportunities.

- For **organizations active in the youth field** they expect a decrease of activism and active participation of young people, more dependence on local grants, less international cooperation, change of priorities with more focus on local-level activities and change of target group from young people to children or adults. A small number of respondents report that their organization is not dependent on YiA funding and would therefore not be impacted by lack of YiA support.

- For **youth work in their country** they see a severe risk of exclusion of disadvantaged young people, they fear that less international cooperation might lead to less knowledge about youth work in other countries, that project work would significantly decrease and that there would be even less recognition and understanding of youth work by the public.

- For **youth policy in their country** expectations are mixed. Some respondents do not believe there would be much impact while others believe that YiA projects are a strong vehicle for

implementing youth policies and informing young people about developments in this field, and without YiA projects, youth policies might "stay only on paper". They also fear that priorities like participation, inclusion, active citizenship will "go out of focus, because we follow EU behaviour, and if they don`t see youth as an important topic why should our politicians?"

Responses indicate that respondents rely heavily on the funding provided by YiA. Without these resources, a decrease in quantity and quality of their international cooperation in the field of youth can be expected. After an adjustment period the cooperation might be re-established since the motivation for continuing projects and activities tends to be high, but most likely to a lower extent.

4.3.2 Viewpoint of National Agencies

National Agencies are support structures responsible for implementing the YiA programme in programme countries. They evaluate project proposals and manage project grants, including decentralized projects that include partners from SEE and therefore have a unique interest in such projects and a good overview of their quality.

4.3.2.1 *Support for projects that include partners from the SEE region*

The survey for the National Agencies focused on information that was not readily available from other sources such as Youthlink databases, project evaluation reports etc. For example, we asked National Agencies about specific types of support they offer to projects that involve partners from SEE. 27% of responding staff reported that their National Agency had included cooperation with the SEE region in their yearly priorities for cooperation with neighbouring partner countries and 42% reported that their National Agency had organized training activities or other support activities with the objective to specifically support projects with partners from SEE countries. Many training and other support activities that are mentioned were carried out in cooperation with SALTO SEE.

National Agency staff report that the intention behind these decisions was to raise the number and/or quality of projects with the SEE region. National Agencies from Austria, Germany and Slovenia also reported that they wanted to foster existing bonds that their beneficiaries already had with organizations from SEE. One of the staff members also reported that before their organization had taken on the role of the National Agency, they had a history of NGO cooperation in the region, and this experience influenced their work as a National Agency. An interesting motivation that is also mentioned quite often is a conviction that projects with neighbouring partner countries strengthen European awareness for all participants: "We consider it important to include SEE and EECA participants in our activities in order to allow sustainable partnerships beyond the actual EU borders and in order to support the EU integration process. Organisations and participants from SEE bring a strong added value to any activity since they have a very different view on all EU-related topics. Different in a way that they can motivate the people from the so-called old EU countries on the one hand to believe in the EU, and on the other hand to see the actual and the future evolutions with a critical eye. Their view from outside is very helpful and constructive.«

4.3.2.2 *Outcomes of projects that include partners from the SEE region*

National Agencies are perhaps best equipped to evaluate outcomes of decentralized YiA projects that are carried out in cooperation with the SEE region. Their sources of information include intended results described in project applications, actual outcomes outlined in final reports, information from monitoring meetings, desk-checks, on-the-spot visits and ongoing communication with beneficiaries.

One of the challenges is the fact that these resources are often underused since systems of efficient and ongoing analysis is not in place.

Relying on the above mentioned sources of information and anecdotal evidence, staff members believe that the most important outcomes and results of YiA projects that involve organizations from Programme countries and SEE countries are improved intercultural awareness ("reducing fear, ignorance and arrogance on both sides; increasing knowledge and understanding on both sides"), empowerment of youth work and stronger cooperation of the EU with the region. A number of staff members mention that outcomes of projects "involving programme countries and SEE countries are not that different from the projects involving only programme countries". Some respondents also point out that they have never investigated this question before within their National Agency but can see the benefit of doing so in the future.

4.3.2.3 *Specificities of projects that include partners from the SEE region*

Interestingly, about a third of surveyed staff members emphasize that they believe there are no important specificities of projects involving partners from SEE, that they are very similar to projects involving only programme countries or another neighbouring region, while the other two thirds are vocal about different challenges and benefits they see as specific to such projects. Many respondents mention a strong thematic focus of projects as a specific advantage of projects with the SEE region. Another advantage is intercultural learning – it is argued that the cultural differences are bigger and therefore the intercultural learning component is stronger. Another advantage that is mentioned is raising awareness of organizations in programme countries that quality projects can be done with a low budget and resourcefulness. Historical influences and current social trends are also mentioned as reason for a specific interest for cooperation of their beneficiaries with SEE countries. For example, the Slovenian National Agency reports that due to common history and cultural similarities their beneficiaries are highly motivated to cooperate with SEE countries ("we used to share a country and still share a similar language and culture"). On the other hand, staff members of the Austrian, German and Italian National Agency report that YiA projects with SEE can be used to address issues of migration from SEE to their country ("many many migrants from former Yugoslav republics live in Austria"). Furthermore, they think that projects can help raise intercultural awareness of young people and local communities towards young immigrants from SEE, overcome prejudice, facilitate young immigrants' integration in the host countries' culture, and on the other hand give second generation young immigrants the oportunity to learn about their cultural heritage.

Among specific challenges, difficulty in obtaining a Visa is the main concern for many programme countries. Staff members also mention prejudice that young people from SEE face in programme countries. Lack of reliable and skilled partner organization is another commonly reported challenge, as is a different (often described as "laid back") organizational culture.

Staff members do not report specific differences between projects in cooperation with SEE and other regions of neighbouring partner countries (Slovenian NA is an exception due to proximity of the region and historical ties with it).

4.3.3 Conceptual understanding of the YiA programme in SEE

A part of our survey for respondents from SEE was dedicated to their understanding of concepts commonly used in the context of the YiA programme. We asked respondents to provide short free-text explanations of the following concepts: active citizenship, participation of young people, non-formal learning, young people with fewer opportunities, youth worker, youth policy, key competences for lifelong learning and Youthpass. Responses underwent a thematic analysis exploring how respondents think about these concepts. A general observation is that most respondents have a good conceptual understanding of the YiA programme, its objectives, priorities, 'philosophy' and principles. Overall, responses demonstrate a good understanding of concepts as defined in key YiA programme documents. However, only a handful of replies provide comprehensive definitions. Some answers focus on general definitions whereas others emphasize a certain principle or highlight the use of a certain concept in the context of YiA projects. A short overview of results and examples of responses follows (an overview of respondents' definitions of Youthpass is provided under chapter 4.3.1.7).

4.3.3.1 Active citizenship

One of the general objectives stated in the legal basis of the Youth in Action Programme is to promote young people's active citizenship in general and their European citizenship in particular (YiA Programme Guide, 2012). The programme encourages young people to play active roles in their communities. YiA projects should encourage young people to reflect on societal topics and to involve them in the discussion on the construction and the future of their society.

Respondents describe active citizenship as active engagement in community and emphasize civic rights and responsibilities. A few responses are unclear or incorrect ("Active citizenship is an EU programme supporting citizenship networking and active participation."), but overall understanding of the concept is satisfactory. Some respondents highlight interest in democratic processes, facilitating social change and getting involved in political decision making as key traits of active citizens. There are replies that indicate a more passive stance ("Active citizen is aware about community and supporting the system and law.") and others that emphasize proactive role of citizens ("active citizenship is actively contributing to building the society"). Some respondents also specifically discuss young people as active citizens ("Active citizenship is involvement of youngsters in society, public life and moving structures.") pointing out importance of early experience with critical thinking about society and getting to know democratic decision-making processes.

A selection of replies is given below.

> Active citizenship refers to being actively engaged in a community and being aware of one's rights and obligations.
>
> Active citizenship is active participation in society, taking roles and responsibilities for building the present and the future of one´s society.
>
> Active citizenship is getting actively involved in a certain field.
>
> Active citizenship is taking responsibility and action in all aspects of community life, being aware of local, national and European issues in a certain field.
>
> Active citizenship is –on the basic level – involvement of each individual in local community life. On a global level, it is in strong correlation with a concept of a citizen and rights and responsibilities of a citizen.
>
> Active citizens are people that are active in their own communities.
>
> Active citizenship is responsibility toward community. It's about rights and responsibilities a citizen has toward the area he lives in.

Active citizenship is to be an active citizen.

Active citizenship means informed citizens taking responsibility for community or society development.

Active citizenship is being interested in democratic processes of your country and wider, knowing what the basic values are and knowing how to respect them.

Active citizenship is participation of youth in important issues of our society, through giving their opinions in making the policies.

Active citizen is aware about community and supporting the system and law. Active citizenship is having an influence on building better future.

Active citizenship is an EU programme supporting citizenship networking and active participation.

Active citizenship is capacity to frame your own life in political and social context you live in and to influence and change that context too.

Active citizenship is involvement of youngsters in society, public life and moving structures.

Active citizenship is when citizens are interested in their own community.

Active citizens are responsible citizens who care about their community (relations, power, and future) and take part in it by using measures, channels and/or institutions that are available.

An active citizen is a person who is aware that he or she can influence community processes and is using the possibility to act.

Active citizenship means that citizens are actively involved in the work of the society.

Active citizenship is being aware how you can directly contribute to making decisions for issues that are of your interest and affect your life.

Active citizenship on the legal and social basis is the connection of the citizen with the country.

Active citizenship as in active and passive citizens, the ones who act for a better community and life in it and feel that they have a role in it.

Active citizenship is involvement of as many people, especially young people who are not socially active, in the life of the local community.

Active citizenship is participation in making political decisions.

Active citizenship is being involved in the life of your community.

Active citizenship is active participation in life of society.

Active citizenship is to be active in the civic life, to have an active role - to contribute to the life of community and society in general.

Active citizenship is active participation of the young people and recognition of their citizenship.

Active citizenship means local citizens who take an active role in their community and processes of decision making.

Active citizenship is citizenship which wants to make better society.

Active citizenship is to take an active part in the society you live in through various activities.

Active citizenship can be seen as an articulation of the debate over rights versus responsibilities.

Active citizenship is democratic society.

Active citizenship is actively contributing to building the society by initiating solutions and volunteering, according to the positive values and together with youth workers from other European countries (in line with the European citizenship).

Active citizenship is not setting on your own needs.

Active citizenship is a sense of social responsibility and empowerment to act towards positive social changes.

Active citizenship is a possibility for your voice to be heard.

Active citizens are people motivated to contribute to local community.

4.3.3.2 Participation of young people

Participation of young people is one of the four key priorities of the YiA programme. It is described in the Programme Guide (2012) as active participation of young people in their daily life and encouraging young people to be active citizens by increasing participation by young people in the civic life of their community, increasing participation by young people in the system of representative democracy and providing greater support for various forms of learning to participate. In YiA projects, participation is seen as a process as well as an outcome. It is stated that participation of young people should be seen as a key method which will enable young people to take an active part in any Youth in Action project at all stages of its development and that young people should be consulted and be part of the decision making process that may affect their projects.

Again, respondents demonstrate a good understanding of the concept, but there are only a few comprehensive explanations. Youth participation is described as active involvement of young people in local communities, youth organizations and youth projects. Some responses are more 'poetic' than substantive ("youth participation is the future of youth"). Some respondents think about youth participation in terms of active involvement of young people in YiA projects and similar activities ("youth participation is actively involving young people in our projects, teaching them valuable skills"). Some responses indicate a narrow understanding of the concept by defining youth participation mainly in the contexts of participating in activities designed for young people ("youth participation means active youth that take part in different activities which are important for them"). Some link youth participation with youth information ("youth participation means opportunities and mechanisms for young people to access information and to take part in relevant decision making processes") or with the political dimension ("youth participation is active participation of youth in decision making in society"). Key principles underlying participatory approaches are also mentioned (projects "should not only be for youth but with youth as well") emphasizing that youth participation is not only behaviour but also a state of mind, an attitude.

A selection of replies is given below.

Youth participation is the future of youth.

Youth participation is an active engagement of young people in various activities in their community - like in school sport activities or helping their friends who have trouble with learning, or engagement in the civil society, volunteering at some festivals, etc.

Youth participation is involving young people in the actions.

Youth participation is the active engagement of young people throughout their communities.

Youth participation is involvement of young people in activities and decision-making processes.

Youth participation means opportunities and mechanisms for young people to access information and to take part in relevant decision making processes.

Youth participation is inclusion of young people into decision-making bodies and processes and inclusion of young people in NGO work in all aspects of life.

Youth participation means young people are actively exercising their right to make their own decisions.

Youth participation means to find a way to be involved in some kind of activities for young people which improve life.

Youth participation is to take part in the matters of youth interest and decision making processes.

Youth participation is participation of young people in making political decisions.

Youth participation is active participation of young people in topics that are of their great interest.

Youth participation means that youth take an active role in local community.

Youth participation is participation of young people in all stages of a project, of policy making, of decision

making. They should not only be for youth but with youth as well.

Youth participation is youth involved in democracy and decision making actions (political and beyond) in their communities and countries.

Youth participation is promoting own activities or actively participating in youth activities by own will.

Youth participation is an active involvement of young people in debating about things, procedures and processes of their interest, and decision making (if and when that is possible).

Youth participation is inclusion and active participation in non-formal learning.

Youth participation is actively involving young people in our projects, teaching them valuable skills.

Youth participation is the activeness of youth in the processes.

Youth participation is the awareness of the young people to act.

Youth participation is supporting youth-led decision making, innovation and ideas by providing the space, tools and resources needed for young people to feel free and empowered to shape their lives.

Youth participation means youth as an active part of society.

Youth participation is active participation of youth in decision making in society.

Youth participation is involvement of young people in youth work, in local activities and in policy making structures.

Youth participation is engaging young people in all relevant areas of society and the decision making processes.

Youth participation is being active in programme's development and implementation.

Youth participation is to participate in official political structures or policies on different topics and issues of your country or broader.

Youth participation is participation of young people in their daily life, in their community, in decision-making processes.

Youth participation is participation of young people in decision making processes, in social and in the political life.

Youth participation is to take active part in the decision making process of your community and active part in activities organized in your community.

Youth participation is youth taking initiative.

Youth participation is activism of young people in political and educational life. Active participation in implementation of youth policies...

Youth participation is active involvement of young people in social, political and economical life of a local community and in that way in global movements.

Youth participation is participation of a young person in the spheres that concern him and where he can contribute.

Youth participation means active youth that take part in different activities which are important for them.

Youth participation is to involve the youth in every part of life.

Youth participation is effective use if free time and to be active and productive in local and international projects.

Youth participation is youngsters involved in projects and like volunteer work.

4.3.3.3 Non-formal learning

Non-formal learning is defined in the YiA Programme Guide (2012) as one of the important features of the YiA programme. It is described as learning which takes place outside formal educational curriculum. In contrast to informal learning (learning in daily life activities, in work, family, leisure, etc., mainly learning by doing) non-formal learning activities are carefully planned to foster the participants' personal, social and professional development. Non formal learning principles

emphasize that the learning in non-formal contexts is intended and voluntary, takes place in a diverse range of environments and situations for which training and learning are not necessarily the sole or main activity, may be facilitated by professionals or volunteers, activities are planned but not conventional and usually address specific target groups and document learning in a specific, field oriented way.

Respondents describe non-formal learning very much in accordance with the above definitions. Most begin by contrasting it to formal education; some also make a distinction between non-formal and informal learning. They emphasize features like that it is planned ("non-formal learning occurs in a planned but highly adaptable way"), that it is learner-centred, that it happens through specific activities and that it is a process that requires intrinsic motivation. Sometimes non-formal learning is confused with informal (for example, a few times non-formal learning is described as 'learning by doing' which is actually closer to informal learning according to the Programme Guide). Respondents also mention methods used in non-formal learning ("non-formal learning is a learning methodology that uses the knowledge, skills and experience of the group" or "learning through various workshops, creative exercises, making conclusions after experiencing something"). An interesting point respondents bring up is also recognition of non-formal learning ("takes place in a formal setting such as an educational organisation, but is not formally recognised").

A selection of replies is given below.

Non-formal learning is any type of organized and planned learning, both individual and social, apart from formal learning within the institutions.
Non-formal learning occurs in a planned but highly adaptable way, in institutions, organisations, the workplace and situations outside the spheres of formal or informal education. It shares with formal education the characteristic of being mediated, but the motivation for learning may be wholly intrinsic to the learner.
Non-formal learning is learning in a non-formal setting, focused on the needs of participants, usually using interactive methodology and allowing individual path of every person to gain competences.
Non-formal learning is learning outside of the rules of educational system in the society that gives the opportunity for active participation in the process of learning.
Non-formal learning is a process based on drawing conclusions from experience in order to modify behaviour and attitudes.
Non-formal learning are participatory and learner centred learning programmes that may lead to further individual development, active participation and better employability.
Non-formal learning is learning outside the institutions of the system.
Non-formal learning is learning that complements formal and informal learning that is focused on the learner and group as a source for the learner and provides opportunities for lifelong learning.
Non-formal learning is learning in casual settings.
Non-formal learning is personal growth outside the formal educational system.
Non-formal learning is learning in structured non-formal education activities, learning by doing, experiential learning, and learning adapted to different learning styles of participants.
Non-formal learning is learning by doing, not just sitting and listening to presentation but learning through various workshops, creative exercises, making conclusions after experiencing something.
Non-formal learning is learning by doing, seeing others how to do something, discussing issues and topics, or learning through workshops.
Non-formal learning is educational activities with clear educational aim focused on the learner and usually happening outside of formal educational schemes.
Non-formal learning is complementary system of planned learning where the learner takes the responsibility to receive, evaluate and use the learning outcomes within their own learning context.
Non-formal learning is learning through courses, workshops, seminars that are organized outside of the formal education institutions or programs.

Non-formal learning is learning outside of the formal education concept (like in schools and universities).

Non-formal learning is learning through experiences and exchanges of knowledge.

Non-formal learning is motivation for extra learning - youth ask to learn.

Non-formal learning is working on projects that are in personal interest with love and energy.

Non-formal learning is other ways of learning than the formal ones as schools and universities.

Non-formal learning is a tool for spreading its own gained experience from different fields

Non-formal learning is learning out of school, on workshops, seminars, trainings, etc. about different, important topics

Non-formal learning is learning not being provided by a certified education or training institution. Does not always include a degree award or certificate of any kind. Yet, it is very common and plausible especially for young people.

Non-formal learning is a learning process triggered by organised activities outside of formal education. different from informal, which is not organised and often accidental

Non-formal learning is knowledge you can't learn in the formal learning.

Non-formal learning is a learning methodology that uses the knowledge, skills and experience of the group as equal.

Non-formal learning is the most active part of learning with different possibilities.

Non-formal learning is a great possibility.

Non-formal learning is any kind of education that has not to do with the classic formal education.

Non-formal learning is learning by doing.

Non-formal learning is learning out of school but still in a planned process with and from others.

Non-formal learning is value based, planned a prepared, participant oriented, with shared responsibility for process, result are owned by participants.

Non-formal learning is the learning takes place in a formal setting such as an educational organisation, but is not formally recognised.

Non-formal learning is one of ways for learning. It makes youth to think about something, understand it and make them aware about some topics and sometimes also to do some actions about chosen topics.

Non-formal learning is a learning process that happens outside formal education system, it is voluntary but also planned, and it supports development of personal, professional and social competences.

Non-formal learning involves a professor, a trainer, pupil-participant, question, answer- input-feedback, and validation-evaluation.

Non-formal learning is any kind of structural learning programme that is not part of the official curricula.

4.3.3.4 Young people with fewer opportunities

Inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities is one of the four permanent priorities of the YiA programme. Young people with fewer opportunities are defined in the Programme Guide as young people that are at a disadvantage compared to their peers because they face one or more of the situations and obstacles (social obstacles, economic obstacles, disability, educational difficulties, cultural differences, health problems or geographical obstacles) that prevent them from having effective access to formal and non-formal education, transnational mobility and participation, active citizenship, empowerment and inclusion in society at large. The YiA programme aims to be accessible to all and to be a tool to enhance the social inclusion, active citizenship and employability of young people with fewer opportunities and to contribute to social cohesion at large.

Respondents describe young people with fewer opportunities as those being at a disadvantage compared to their peers, often due to special circumstances. A few answers are unclear or incorrect ("young people with fewer opportunities are youth involved in project implementation"), but majority of respondents exhibit a good understanding of the concept. One critique could be that a number of respondents explain that people with fewer opportunities are people that are poor, face health problems or disabilities, social, economic or geographical obstacles, are from another culture etc. In contrast, the YiA Programme Guide emphasizes the view that focuses less on specific disadvantages or disabilities but rather looks at the big picture of what resources and opportunities young people have or might not have access to, including education, employment and mobility. Respondents bring up the need for special support for young people with fewer opportunities that would allow them easier access to these things. An underlying theme of a number of answers is that 'society' is responsible for 'producing' young people with fewer opportunities and maintaining their status because it does not provide the necessary support for them, ascribing young people with fewer opportunities a rather passive position ("young people with fewer opportunities are people who have problems realizing their rights and satisfying their needs because society is not providing them with appropriate means for that"). Some responses also focus on young people with fewer opportunities in the context of YiA projects ("young people with fewer opportunities are all young people who find difficulties in knowing about, approaching and being involved in projects").

A selection of replies is given below.

Young people with fewer opportunities are young people who have not the same chances and opportunities as the others: lack of money, health, cultural differences...

Young people with fewer opportunities are young people that are at a disadvantage compared to their peers because they face one or more of the situations and obstacle.

Young people with fewer opportunities are young people that do not have chances for using their opportunities - mental, physical, educational, mobility, employment.

Young person with fewer opportunities is a person that does not have equal opportunities as majority of her/his peers due to differences or obstacles that she/he is facing.

Young people with fewer opportunities are young people who have difficulties to achieve common goals.

Young people with fewer opportunities face social or economic difficulties, geographical obstacles, are minority/majority groups, facing some learning or physical disabilities.

Young people with fewer opportunities are different ethnic minorities, poor young people.

Young people with fewer opportunities are people who don't have equal access to the possibilities and resources available in the community.

Young people with fewer opportunities are youth involved in project implementation.

Young people with fewer opportunities are youth who don't have opportunities to make their dreams come true.

Young people with fewer opportunities are young people that are coming from disadvantaged backgrounds and marginalised groups and that need additional support in being fully integrated in society.

Young people with fewer opportunities are youngsters not having equal or expected access to society opportunities in all aspects.

Including young people with fewer opportunities means young people feeling equal, happy.

Young people with fewer opportunities are people who have limited opportunities in some way - physically disabled, rural areas, marginalised urban youth, poor social standard etc.

Young people with fewer opportunities are young people that are in some way disadvantaged compared to the youth in their society.

Young people with fewer opportunities are young people with physical disabilities or with less opportunity due to their economic or social situation.

Young people with fewer opportunities are people with different health problems, disabilities, poor socio-economic status, reduced mobility opportunities, less access to information.

Young people with fewer opportunities are young people who face some kind of obstacles in society compared to their peers (economical, geographical, social, disability etc.).

Young people with fewer opportunities are the ones who have less opportunity to participate in normal life comparing with people his or her age for any kind of reason (social, economical, political, physical etc.).

Young people with fewer opportunities are youth that need special support.

Young people with fewer opportunities are youth that faces obstacles (more than the mainstream) which prevent them to achieve their full potential.

Young people with fewer opportunities are young people who do not have the opportunities to be active and taken seriously in their communities and internationally.

Young people with fewer opportunities are all young people who find difficulties in knowing about, approaching and being involved in projects.

Young people with fewer opportunities are young people with financial difficulties, minorities, and people with disabilities.

Young person with fewer opportunities is anyone who doesn't have equal opportunities like everyone else, who is socially excluded from a certain group or discriminated against based on any physical, social or economical reason.

Young people with fewer opportunities are young people belonging to certain social groups facing additional challenges in society (mobility obstacles, lack of information, discrimination).

Young people with fewer opportunities are those whose opportunities and daily life are strongly (negatively) influenced by factors that are beyond their control e.g. poverty, physical or mental condition, language, nationality, area of living, religion, political affiliation, sexuality.

Young people with fewer opportunities are young people that do not have the same opportunities like other people.

Young people with fewer opportunities are youngsters with some difficulties concerning health, society, economical situation, geographical location...

Young people with fewer opportunities are young people that do not have same opportunities (they have less) as mainstream youth in community or country.

Young people with fewer opportunities are people who have problems realizing their rights and satisfying their needs because society is not providing them with appropriate means for that.

Young people with fewer opportunities are people who don't have the chance to improve their knowledge and who are marginalized.

Opportunities should be given to all youngsters from all around.

Young people with fewer opportunities are the ones who need more attention in different meanings.

The concept of young people with fewer opportunities is about inclusion.

Young people with fewer opportunities are any young people who have less opportunity due to some obstacle, be it social, economical, territorial, medical or other.

Young people with fewer opportunities are people who are in some aspects invalid.

Young people with fewer opportunities are youth facing with more obstacles in life then they should be.

4.3.3.5 Youth policy

The YiA programme (YiA Programme Guide, 2012) supports the new youth policy framework for European Cooperation in the youth field adopted in 2009, which outlines a cross-sectoral approach to youth issues with a view not only to creating more and equal opportunities for all young people in education and in the labour market ("employability dimension") but also to promoting the active engagement, social inclusion and solidarity of all young people ("participation dimension"). It also contributes to putting young people at the centre of the EU's agenda to create an economy based on knowledge, innovation, high levels of education and skills, adaptability and creativity, inclusive labour markets and active involvement in society, and encourages participation of young people in democratic life in Europe.

Respondents describe youth policy as a document, a set of rules in different areas, as a tool to improve lives of youth and a tool to mainstream youth into society ("Youth policy is a set of political, programming and other decisions and documents that aim to improve the lives of young people and minimize obstacles for youth to be active citizens as all others."). Respondents mention local-level and national-level youth policies. A link between youth policy and strategy for youth is pointed out. They are aware of different groups of stakeholders. An emphasis is put on how important it is to involve young people in decision-making processes in topics that concern them ("youth policies help to meet expectations and needs of young people, but they involve young people in their creation").

Explanations of this concept could be divided into two groups according to the underlying understanding. A majority of respondents seem to base their answer on an underlying assumption that youth policy is limited to a specific area such as youth work ("a policy for youth and youth work"). Some responses however transcend this understanding and follow the premise that youth policy are any political decisions, strategies and documents in any policy field that are not designed just for young people but that might be of concern to young people (laws for new drivers, housing strategies etc.).

A selection of replies is given below.

> Youth policy is a policy for youth and youth work in one country or at an international level.
>
> Youth policy is an important mechanism for hearing and responding to young peoples´ needs through institutionalised mechanisms.
>
> Youth policy is a set of measures and means aimed at improving quality of life and enlarging opportunities for youth.
>
> Youth policy is a document which states priorities and sets goals regarding youth.
>
> Youth policy is a governmental policy that helps shape and achieves better results with working and stimulating young population to achieve more and to access resources equally.
>
> Youth policy is support for youth to be more included in the system and have more support for youth issues.
>
> Youth policy are polices, legislations, regulations, laws that aim to improve the position of young people in one country.
>
> Youth policy represents a specific document in a community (e.g. municipality) or the state with the aim to improve the position of young people.
>
> Youth policies are national documents (strategies, plans, action plans) that are focusing on youth status in country.
>
> Youth policy is a policy that supports involvement, engagement and recognition of youth participation.
>
> Youth policy is something what needs constant improvement.
>
> Youth policy is a policy that creates the life of future generations.
>
> Youth policy is legal and officially adopted working system for youth matters respected from all stakeholders.
>
> Youth policy is a system of youth involvement in society.
>
> Youth policy is the relation between the formal political structures towards younger people.
>
> Youth policy is a line of strategies that should be implemented for the purpose of good of young people.
>
> Youth policy is a policy concerning young people that should not be isolated but mainstreamed in other policies and laws of the country.
>
> Youth policy is a strategy of authorities towards youth from different perspectives (education, health, social care, employment, free time, mobility, information etc.).

Youth policies are policies that affect the lives of youth, their protection and their personal and social growth.

Youth policy is a necessary strategic document for everyone.

Youth policy is an umbrella above all our work in the civil sector that should help us connect to other sector and internationally.

Youth policies help to meet expectations and needs of young people, but they involve young people in their creation.

Youth policy is a long-term process of identifying the needs of young people, determining appropriate ways of satisfying them and implementing those decisions.

Youth policy is a policy that should regulate development of young people and approach to young people in order to make their lives as good as possible and allow them to use their full potential.

Youth policy is an integrated system of support for young people, done by governments and other institutions, where they first recognize that a particular need or problem exists and then state their intention to do something about it.

Policy is a plan of action for addressing issues or setting standards.

Youth policy is a policy about young people in my country.

Youth policy is a tool to achieve youth rights.

Youth policy is the official policy concerning youth issues.

Youth policy is the state, country, community statement and effort towards youth activities and youth life.

Youth policy is a set of political, programming and other decisions and documents that aim to improve the lives of young people and minimize obstacles for youth to be active citizens as all others.

Youth policy is to make something good for the future.

Youth policy is a national strategy dedicated to youth, explaining strategy for youth development, opportunities for young people and rights for youth, how young people can be involved in decision making processes.

Youth policy is a comprehensive answer to specific rights and needs of young people in a certain area.

Youth policy is a document for youth.

Youth policy mean measures that are used for making strategy directions for improving life quality of young people in wider sense.

4.3.3.6 Youth workers

Youth workers along with young people constitute the main target population of the YiA programme (YiA Programme Guide, 2012). In this context a youth worker is understood as an adult who is active in the youth field, either professionally or as a volunteer, working with young people in the non-formal learning context. EU countries as well as neighbouring partner countries have very different traditions of youth work and consequently the roles of youth workers can range from a youth adviser to a youth project leader, youth trainer or staff in youth organizations.

Respondents describe a youth worker as "someone that works in the youth field", working "for or with young people". Youth worker can be "a professional or volunteer". Due to a wide definition of the concept no responses can be considered fundamentally incorrect, however respondents emphasize very different aspects of youth work. Some focus on skills ("a person that knows how to approach and develop project proposals", "competent to run learning programmes adjusted to the local reality, the learning needs and objectives as well as the learning styles"), others on attitudes ("works for benefits of and empowerment of young people"), roles ("mentor, friend and consultant"), work tasks ("organising non-formal education activities and projects", "organizing activities for young people, helping them, teaching them, encouraging them to act") or work

environment ("people who work with youth in different centres, organisations or institutions"). Much emphasis is placed on non-formal learning as an approach towards working with youth, commitment of youth workers and the supporting role of youth workers. An interesting comment also points out the need of youth workers for support and recognition of their work.

A selection of replies is given below.

Youth worker is an educated professional developing and delivering educational and developmental activities with young persons.

Youth worker is a young person that acts and influences the processes in the society.

Youth worker is someone that works in the youth field.

Youth worker is a person that knows how to approach and develop project proposals.

Youth workers are people who know how to approach, assist, help young people develop personally, professionally, improve quality of life of young people by organising non-formal education activities and projects.

Youth worker is a person strongly involved in designing and implementing activities/policies for improving quality of life of young people with young people.

Youth worker is a professional or volunteer that works with young people in order to support them in their growth.

Youth workers are people who work with and for young people.

Youth worker is a facilitator of learning processes aimed for young people.

Youth worker is someone who is working with young people, organizing activities for young people, helping them, teaching them, encouraging them to act and helping them how to achieve their dreams in the community.

Youth worker is a qualified person who is dedicated to working with young people in a non-formal setting and provides support and focuses on individual and social development of young person.

Youth worker is a person that facilitates young people learning.

Youth worker is a helper for youth.

Youth worker is a person who works with young people, usually through non-formal education methods in order to foster their development.

Youth workers are people who are supporting youth and they are leading in non formal education.

Youth workers are people who work with youth in different centres, organisations or institutions.

Youth worker is a person who facilitates activities with young people, their mentor, friend and consultant. A really awesome person :)

Youth worker is a person that works with young people to engage them in formal, non-formal, informal education.

Youth workers are the people who are dedicated to work on youth field.

Youth worker is a person that works with young people to engage them in informal and non-formal education.

Youth worker is a professional working with and for young people in the frame of non formal education.

Youth worker is a person working on activities targeting the youth.

Youth worker is a person that works with and for young people and that is facilitating their learning and personal development.

Youth worker is a person working on social and personal development of young people, basing her or his work on the principles of non-formal education.

Youth worker is a person working with young people in the field of non-formal education and organising projects for young people.

Youth worker is a person who needs recognition and support.
Youth worker is a person involved in activities and issues connected with youth.
Youth worker is an educated and committed person ready to work with youth.
Youth worker is a person whose target group is youth and development of youth, organizer of different activities for youth, a person who is involved in the youth field.
Youth worker is a person who is dealing with young people and their issues.
Youth worker is a volunteer or professional actor working on developmental programmes for young people, using the means like non-formal learning, campaigning etc.
Youth worker is a person, usually an adult, who helps younger to get actively involved in society such as with educational, social and personal plan.
Youth worker is a person that works for benefits of and empowerment of young people.
Youth workers are people trained and skilled to work with young people through non-formal activities.
Youth worker works with young people under age of 27.
Youth worker is a trained educator who is competent to run learning programmes adjusted to the local reality, the learning needs and objectives as well as the learning styles.
Youth worker is someone who works with young people.

4.3.3.7 Key competences for lifelong learning

Key competences for lifelong learning are a European framework that identifies and defines the key competences that all individuals require for their personal fulfilment and development, social inclusion, active citizenship and employability in our knowledge-based society (Key Competences for Lifelong Learning, 2007). In this context, competences are defined as a combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes appropriate to the context. The Reference Framework sets out eight key competences: communication in the mother tongue; communication in foreign languages; mathematical competence and basic competences in science and technology; digital competence; learning to learn; social and civic competences; sense of initiative and entrepreneurship and cultural awareness and expression.

Key competences for lifelong learning seem to be the least clear concept of all. About half of respondents' comments demonstrate awareness of the framework and at least a basic knowledge of it. Some responses use wording that is very close to the original definition ("topical sets of knowledge, skills and attitudes needed for lifelong learning and adjusting to life in an ever-changing society") while others use their own words ("a wide range of competencies that a person should possess in order to face the complex challenges of today's world"). A number of respondents explain the concept by listing some of the eight key competences defined in the framework ("key competences are communication in mother tongue and foreign language, math, digital, social competence, learning to learn, cultural awareness"). Other replies define competences in terms of "knowledge, skills and attitudes" or emphasize the lifelong learning aspect, which is also aligned with the key competences framework. Meaning of key competences for personal happiness, for participation in the labour market and in society in general is emphasized. Some respondents also express a critical stance towards the framework of key competences, which was not found in definitions of other concepts. For example, one comment is that the key competence framework is "a good try, but cannot completely follow the learning process."

On the other hand, some responses indicate that while respondents are somewhat familiar with the concept of key competences and its connection to the EU programmes ("key competences are

knowledge, skills or attitudes that you gained or improved during participation in the Youth in Action programme (also in Lifelong Learning programme)"), they do not fully understand its background. Some replies indicate possible misunderstandings about the concept. For example, some respondents believe that key competences are what is needed to organize YiA projects ("key competences are the main and most important competences needed to participate or organise a project") or define them in terms of personal attitudes ("to be open minded, willing to make changes").

A selection of replies is given below.

Key competences are a wide range of competencies that a person should possess in order to face the complex challenges of today's world.

Key competences are learning achievements within YiA projects.

Key competences are 8 competences that can show how we see our learning achievements in these 8 fields in terms of attitudes, skills and knowledge.

Key competences are techniques, skills, knowledge and characteristics that make a certain worker stand out over a regular worker with the same function or work category because of his performance.

Key competences are competences that encompass knowledge, skills and attitudes that are essential and generic to each individual and their active participation in the society.

Key competences in the shape of knowledge, skills and attitudes, appropriate to each context, are fundamental for each individual in a knowledge-based society.

Key competences are a set or framework of knowledge, skills and attitudes that should be possessed by people in order to support their personal and professional growth.

Key competences are main competences: knowledge, attitudes and skills that a person of 21st century should develop in order to live a happy, active and fulfilled life and be able to create that life for other people.

Key competences are communication (mother tongue and foreign language), math, digital, social competence, learning to learn, cultural awareness.

Key competences are topical sets of knowledge, skills and attitudes needed for lifelong learning and adjusting to life in an ever-changing society.

Key competences are eight competence areas to be acquired and developed in lifelong learning process.

Key competences are the main and most important competences needed to participate or organise a project.

Key competences are at once best skills and knowledge areas; it may be an institution's key competence as well.

Key competences are the skills and knowledge about an issue or topic.

Key competences are needed for quality life and growth.

Key competences are what we need to know.

Key competences are necessary competences.

Key competences are key skills that enable person to run different activities.

Key competences are lifelong learning.

Key competences are competences that young people acquire through YiA projects such as social and civic competence, learning to learn, digital competence, sense of initiative and entrepreneurship, cultural awareness etc.

Key competences are to be open minded, willing to make changes.

Key competences are important values for building a strong society.

Key competences are a set of skills, knowledge and values necessary for fulfilling life.

Key competences are particular skills that show a person's competency for a particular job or a project.

Key competencies are the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values needed by everyone across a variety of life contexts.

Key competences are learning outcomes possibilities young people could gain by participating in some of the Youth in Action projects.

Key competences are a set of skills for achieving a certain goal.

Key competences are most important skills.

Key competences are an ability of youth to work in systems.

Key competences are relevant competences for concrete programme or issues.

There are 8 key competences for lifelong learning.

Key competences are the learning areas you can develop.

Key competences are knowledge, skills and competences that provide added value for the labour market, social cohesion and active citizenship by offering flexibility and adaptability, satisfaction and motivation.

Key competences are personal development.

Key competences are a good try - but cannot completely follow the learning process.

Key competences are knowledge, skills or attitudes that you gained or improved during participation in the Youth in Action programme (also in Lifelong Learning programme).

Key competences are something you learn and you gain through participating in one project - skills you develop.

4.3.4. Interviews

A set of one-on-one online interviews was conducted with five respondents from SEE and three respondents programme countries. Ten interviews were planned but one respondent declined cooperation and one could not be reached.

	Country of origin	Sex	Profile
Interviewee 1	The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	Male	Trainer, youth worker
Interviewee 2	Albania	Female	Youth worker
Interviewee 3	Kosovo	Male	Youth worker
Interviewee 4	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Male	Youthworker
Interviewee 5	Croatia	Male	Youth worker
Interviewee 6	Italy	Male	Trainer, youth worker
Interviewee 7	France	Female	Youth worker
Interviewee 8	Iceland	Female	Youth worker

Respondents were selected based on their online questionnaires. The purpose of the interviews was to understand how the YiA programme contributed to developments in different areas, therefore the main criteria for selecting potential interviewees were rich text answers and many examples embedded in their survey replies.

Interviews were conducted via Skype and recorded with permission of interviewees. They lasted 20 minutes each and followed a semi-structured approach. Each interview was tailored to the specific interviewee based on their responses on the online survey.

A general observation is that the interviews did not really contribute any new information compared to online surveys, but they offered deeper insight into how interviewees understand and explain the impact of the YiA programme on young people, youth workers, the youth field in general, local communities and on the youth policy field. The most interesting observations are:

- All interviewees believe that the impact of the YiA programme is notable, observable and can be demonstrated. They offer personal examples or stories from their immediate environment. The typical attitude they exhibit is that the YiA programme could be improved, especially in the sense of lessening the administrative burden, but that their projects generally had good results:"There are so many things about the YiA programme that just do not work, but I still have to admit that it changed me and my work," a female participant from a programme country said.

- Six interviewees believe that the impact of the YiA programme is the biggest on the level of individual participants and youth workers, and that later some of the individually obtained competences are transferred to the organizational and policy level. In contrast, two interviewees (both from SEE) think that the YiA programme has the greatest impact on the youth policy field which has a trickle-down effect to organizations active in the youth field, then organizations, through organizations youth workers are influenced and through them young people. Both groups believe that some of the impact is lost during transfer.

- When asked how they can tell that a certain kind of impact can be attributed to YiA and not to other sources, interviewees acknowledged that they had difficulty separating influences by the YiA programme, other funding programmes and other training opportunities. Interviewees report that they are noticing similar trends in ideas, priorities, methodological approaches and philosophy that different funding programmes are promoting.

- As high as seven interviewees believe that their organizations were shaped by the concepts and philosophy behind the YiA programme. They mention that prior to involvement in YiA, their organizations had little or no knowledge of concepts such as non-formal learning, participation of young people, active citizenship and key competences for lifelong learning, but that after a few years of involvement on YiA these concepts became key to their approach to youth work.

- Four interviewees (all from SEE) said that prior to getting involved in the YiA they personally as well as their organizations had no experience with inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities, whereas now they include young people with fewer opportunities in most of their activities.

- Interviewees from SEE are all aware of SALTO SEE and its work, but most of them do not have a close connection to SALTO or its activities beyond participating in training courses. They would be interested in attending and facilitating SALTOs training activities in the future.

- Three interviewees from SEE believe that SALTO SEE should put even more effort into cooperating with National Authorities in their countries. They believe that the National Authorities in their countries are more responsive to suggestions and initiatives coming from SALTO SEE than the ones coming from the youth field, and would like to see this influence used to encourage developments in the youth policy field on the national level. They are aware, however, that this is not the primary task of SALTO SEE. As one interviewee summarized his thoughts on this matter: "they (SALTO SEE) can help, but they can't do what should be done through dialogue and cooperation between government and citizens, so even if they would have meetings with our ministry every month it wouldn't let us young people and youth leaders off the hook."

- All interviewees are worried about sustainability of their networks and international partnerships should the YiA programme be terminated or if the support was decreased. At the same time, all interviewees except the two trainers speculate (and hope) that the YiA programme will not undergo major changes.

- Interviewees from programme countries say that a different mindset and organizational culture can be found in their partner organizations from SEE, but that there are no specific benefits or challenges to working with SEE countries when compared to projects involving only partner countries (not all of them said the same thing in their online surveys).

- Interviewees from programme countries say that in their experience,the impact of the YiA programme on local communities was much greater in SEE countries than it was in programme countries. They also say that the impact was limited to local communities where it took place whereas communities of partner organizations were – at best – informed that the project took place.

In short, interviews paint a very similar picture as the online surveys but offer a better understanding of personal reflections behind the online statements.

5. DISCUSSION

In this chapter a brief discussion of results focuses on how different stakeholders see the impact of the YiA programme on individual participants, on organizations, local communities, but also a more general impact on youth work and youth policies. A general observation is that stakeholders tend to give encouraging feedback about the impact of the programme. They pick fairly high values on scales reflecting different aspects of positive changes and offer descriptions of many examples.

Respondents also show a critical stance towards some aspects of the program's influence, namely a limited long term impact on youth policies and local communities, but the overall impression is that for SEE countries the YiA programme was a welcome and well received intervention in the youth field.

5.1 Impact on individual level

Within the YiA programme, impact on an individual project participant is the foundation of the programme's "theory of change": it is presented as the necessary step to bringing about long-term goals of inclusion of all young people, promoting young people's active citizenship, developing solidarity and tolerance, fostering mutual understanding between young people in different countries and promoting European cooperation in the youth field. The two actions available to participants from SEE (Action 2 and 3.1) both have a strong individual impact expectation. An interim evaluation of the YiA programme in programme countries, released in 2011, depicted important outcomes of the programme on the individual level, especially in connection to competences in foreign languages, intercultural learning, social and civic competences and attitudes of young people. In our evaluation study, we wished to focus more on other aspects of the programme's impact, such as organizational development, influence on the youth field and youth policy. Therefore we will only briefly touch upon findings about the individual impact of the programme.

As pointed out in previous chapters, the YiA projects that include partners from SEE can be carried out in form of EVS projects (Action 2) as well as youth exchanges for young people and training and networking activities for youth workers (Action 3.1). Therefore 'individual participants' can be either young people aged 13-30 years or youth workers regardless of age. A look at the individual level gains for these two groups follows.

5.1.1 Individual level impact on young people who participated in projects

As presented in the Results section of this report, 85% of respondents from SEE countries and 84% of respondents from programme countries believe that the YiA programme contributed to positive changes in young people who participated in projects. They say that the projects were "a fantastic experience and great learning" which "completely changed our young people's preconceptions about their lifestyle", that they noticed "a huge change in participant's life and attitude towards it", that young participants from programme countries "realised the fact that SEE countries have a lot of values and a lot of experience to share" and that projects that involve SEE countries "have a really powerful impact on participants".

Respondents were asked to specify which competences and attitudes young project participants have improved or developed through YiA projects. Regardless of their background (respondents from programme countries or from SEE countries) they all picked interest in other cultures, self-esteem and personal confidence and communication in foreign language as areas of greatest individual impact. This result are similar to results of the Interim Evaluation of the YiA programme, which also

found that YiA projects can be linked to improvement of foreign language skills, intercultural competence and self confidence.

5.1.1.1 Intercultural learning and the European perspective

Intercultural learning might seem an obvious benefit of international youth projects and it is not at all surprising that we can find it among highest ranked gains mentioned in all evaluation studies of the YiA programme available to this date. Nevertheless, there is specificity in how respondents discuss the intercultural learning aspect of YiA projects that are carried out in cooperation between partners from programme countries and SEE.

Most express an opinion that because cultural differences are greater in projects between SEE and EU partners than in projects only involving programme countries, there is a "much greater intercultural learning impact than within EU". They believe that due to bigger cultural differences more stereotypes and prejudice exist among people from SEE countries and programme countries, and that YiA projects effectively challenge these stereotypes and help overcome prejudice ("It makes a change in one's life by pushing the limits of prejudices and self-awareness.").

For participants from programme countries, the intercultural learning dimension is portrayed primarily in the sense of overcoming prejudice towards people from SEE countries and learning to value their culture. For participants from SEE, the intercultural learning dimension is described in two ways: firstly, young people from SEE are perceived as also having some preconceived notions about the EU and its citizens (ranging from idealistic to highly critical) and it is said that YiA projects help them challenge these stereotypes. Respondents from programme countries see this as an important issue in view of EU enlargement since some of the neighbouring partner countries may be joining the EU in the future. Secondly, in the political context of history of conflict in the Balkan area, it is indicated that "their near history full of conflicts can be sometimes a challenge; however it can be also used as a great example of how the new generation is able to tackle it and find a common language". YiA projects involving more than one SEE country are described as a tool for young people from conflict areas to get to know members of other national or ethnic groups and form meaningful interpersonal relationships with one another (»a Serbian girl aged 18 discovered the sea and after that exchange her best friend was now a Bosnian girl«). This is said to be a unique experience in peace building and intercultural dialogue.

Somewhat surpassing the impact on the individual level, respondents from programme countries also tend to mention that experience with SEE partners helps them work more efficiently with young immigrants from SEE background ("We consider it to be important to overcome the political barriers and to include SEE countries in our work, to exchange experience, especially as many young migrants in Germany come from SEE countries and participate in our activities."). In connection, staff members of the YiA National Agencies take it a step further and argue that "reducing fear, ignorance and arrogance on both sides; increasing knowledge and understanding on both sides," in people from SEE countries and the programme countries, is especially important in light of social trends. Due to economic migration many programme countries host immigrants that originate from SEE countries and they reportedly face prejudice and cultural misunderstandings.

5.1.1.2 Mobility

A specific point that appears to be more prevalent in our study than in the Interim Evaluation study are experiences of international mobility of young people and the impact they have on the development of their self-perception and worldview. Respondents believe that YiA offers opportunities to travel and cross borders, which is a not as attainable for young people from SEE as it is for young people from the EU ("Young people from Serbia do not have many opportunities to meet peers from other countries, and YiA projects allowed them that. For young participants, YiA projects

were life changing experiences: being able to present their own culture, to learn about other cultures, to be able to speak in a foreign language, to cross the border, to fly with an airplane, to gain experience and become able to participate in the work of the organization"). On the other hand, they believe that although young project participants from programme countries have much opportunity for international mobility, many would not choose SEE countries as their destinations if it were not for YiA projects. Respondents believe that experience with YiA projects encourages openness for international mobility. They describe examples of YiA projects (especially in long-term projects such as EVS, but some examples are also given for youth exchanges) that resulted in young participants returning to the host country after the project for medium length or long term mobility to study, work, volunteer or to start a family.

5.1.1.3 Employability

In connection to increased awareness of opportunities for international mobility and increased motivation for such experiences, respondents describe how after the YiA experience some participants have found employement abroad. Most such examples describe EVS volunteers that found employement in the country of their service after their project.

Openness to working abroad is not the only way YiA projects are said to help raise employability of young people. Entrepreneurial competences such as project management, organizing, problem solving and initiative taking are also reported by over half of respondents. Youth exchanges are the most mentioned type of project in connection to developing these competences. The number of projects an individual has been exposed to as well as how active was his or her role within these projects plays an important role in developing competences useful for the workplace. The underlying message seems to be that the more projects young people are closely involved in, the more transferable competences they will acquire.

When talking about the impact of YiA projects on development of competences that help young people find employment, respondents from SEE countries are more likely to report evidence of increased employability in their home countries due to competences acquired through YiA projects: "There were many cases where our participants have been employed by other organizations". In contrast, respondents from programme countries are more likely to contribute stories how participants seized entrepreneurial opportunities abroad: »One Danish participant now plans to set up a business in Serbia, he has travelled to the country at least 5 times within the last 2 years«.

Lastly, over 60% of respondents believe that participants in YiA programmes became more aware of their own learning processes and are now better able to present their learning outcomes. Youthpass should be mentioned as an interesting element in the context of thinking about the role of the YiA programme in employability of young people. As highlighted in chapter 4.3.1.7 almost 70% of respondents from SEE and programme countries alike believe that it is a useful tool that helped project participants describe what they did and learnt during the activity. Respondents from SEE were also asked to explain the concept of Youthpass in their own words to explore the level of understanding of the instrument. On the one hand, Youthpass is described by respondents as a tool for reflection that seems to raise awareness of non formal learning that might otherwise go unnoticed ("personal reflection of learning outcomes, keeping learning achievements remembered"). On the other hand, respondents from SEE (but not from programme countries) often mention that the Youthpass certificate can be directly useful in a job search ("putting yourself in front of the others who do not have it in looking for a job").

5.1.1.4 Youth participation

Respondents from SEE and programme countries all tend to mention improved self-esteem and personal confidence as one of the key individual-level impacts of the YiA programme. Interestingly,

respondents from SEE often link improved personal confidence to increased ability and motivation to participate in society. A reoccurring theme is that being sure of oneself leads to being more active in youth organizations, speaking up for social justice, getting involved in the youth policy field, taking initiative for changes in local-level decision making.

5.1.2 Individual level impact on youth workers

Participants of training and networking activities carried out under Action 3.1 are youth workers and youth leaders. Our survey revealed that 84% of respondents from SEE and 86% of respondents from programme countries find the YiA programme useful for facilitating positive changes in youth workers. They report this is done through experience in YiA projects as participants and project leaders as well as through participation in training opportunities offered within the programme.

A number of youth workers indicate that ongoing exposure to YiA activities throughout a longer time period had a lasting influence on them as individuals and their organizations. To illustrate with one of their stories: "Participation in my first YiA training course two and half years ago completely changed my life. I was leading group of youngsters and participated on a training course to learn more about youth work. Last year we organized our first youth exchange in our small city. Now we are preparing new YiA projects and have increased the number of our local projects and their quality. Local government recognized our efforts and now we plan to open the first youth-centre in our region. We involve other local organizations in our projects and we teach them how to write project proposals, also about YiA program. All of this happened because we accidentally found YiA. ☺"

5.1.2.1 Development of competences

The main impact of involvement in the YiA programme for youth workers (reported by respondents from SEE and programme countries alike) is development of competences of youth workers. Overall, the types of competences that SEE youth workers report to have developed are similar to those developed by youth workers in programme countries: improved competences for team work and group work are on top of the list for both groups. Intercultural competence (sensitivity to other cultures, ability to work in intercultural environments) also ranks high in both groups.

Nevertheless there are some subtle differences between the two groups: firstly, respondents from SEE tend to pick notably more items from lists of specific positive changes influenced by the YiA programme. On average, respondents from SEE picked 7 items from the list whereas respondents from programme countries picked 4 items on average, indicating that respondents from SEE might value the contribution of the YiA programme for their organization to a higher degree. For example, team work and group work competences, ability to work in intercultural environments and innovative approaches to working with young people are picked by at least 80% of respondents and over 70% picked sensitivity to other cultures, facilitation of non-formal learning, planning and organization, communication in foreign language and awareness of their own learning processes. For respondents from programme countries the most popular items were team work and group work, sensitivity to other cultures (picked by over 80% of respondents) followed by ability to work in intercultural environments (over 70%), communication in a foreign language and facilitating non-formal learning (over 60%).

Text answers also indicate that social competences such as intercultural competence and ability for teamwork seem to be key for youth workers from programme countries. Contrastingly, improvement of leadership and organizational skills is emphasized among respondents from SEE with positive changes such as innovative approaches to working with young people, planning and organization, facilitating non-formal learning etc.

5.1.2.2 Changes in attitudes

When respondents were asked to describe specific examples of how the YiA programme influenced a youth worker, many contributed stories about how getting involved in the programme profoundly changed an attitude of a youth worker. These changes are often connected to attitudes towards youth work ("mid-age youth worker from a small town in Macedonia, originally working in a teaching and guiding style with youngsters, has learned new tools and methods on how to involve youngsters in a local community through non-formal learning and started to successfully use the methods in his daily work") or intercultural awareness (youth workers in a training course "declared that their perception of the other region has become more complex and that they were able to identify and formulate common traits as well as the differences in the needs of the young people in the two regions") and overcoming prejudice. Change of attitude about the role of citizens and young people's involvement in society which leads to behavioural changes of more active participation in youth organizations, local communities and in shaping national-level youth policies are also highlighted.

5.1.2.3 Networking

Establishing networks with other youth workers is depicted as a specific benefit for youth workers. Youth workers from programme countries in particular report that they personally gained valuable connections ("I met really great youth workers") and established friendships with youth workers from other cultures. Youth workers from SEE tend to talk about the value of networking especially in the sense of sharing ideas and practices and learning from each other. Both groups report increase in motivation for youth work and connect it to enthusiasm of youth workers from partner organizations.

5.1.2.4 Sharing ideas

New methodologies, innovative approaches, feeling inspired by seeing how enthusiastic partner youth workers are and sharing interesting ideas are often mentioned as outcomes of YiA projects that involve partners from SEE. The topic of exchanging best practices is brought up by respondents from programme countries and respondents from SEE alike: ("we picked up a lot of innovative ideas from our Serbian partners" and on the other hand "being used to doing things the Bosnian way, when working with foreign volunteers and youth workers, one learns to accept the modern ways of talking to youth, gathering information, evaluating projects"). Respondents report that projects helped them develop new methodologies of working with young people on specific topics such as family violence, working with minorities and sustainable development. They also describe how youth workers from partner countries shared with them useful ideas on how to reach marginalized target groups ("we are far more aware of the problems discussed and could learn from methods partners have tried to reach out to our target group which we have often found very difficult"). In some cases, new methodologies were developed in cooperation, but in most cases, best practices of one organization were adopted by another organization.

5.1.2.5 Motivation for participation in decision-making processes

When respondents describe how the cooperation influenced youth workers in general, they tend to focus on new knowledge, skills and attitudes developed during projects. But when they write or talk about themselves, there is a prevalent theme of being inspired and motivated by other youth workers' commitment. Cooperation is described as "inspirational and motivational - you learn about them (youth workers from other countries), but also learn a lot from them." Youth workers describe the influence of the YiA projects in terms of motivation for future work with youth, for future

international cooperation and motivation for investing energy into participation in shaping youth policy.

5.1.3 Considerations and sustainability

Findings in our survey are similar to results of the Interim Evaluation of the YiA Programme carried out in programme countries. The programme seems to have a notable impact on the individual level and competences are strongly linked to programme's goals and priorities. While it is impossible to separate the impact of YiA projects in general and YiA projects with partners from SEE countries, reciprocity of benefits that survey respondents have reported should be recognized. YiA projects with neighbouring partner countries are more than 'charity' for those not 'lucky enough' to be part of the European Union: they seem to be strong, meaningful learning experiences for all parties involved and can directly and indirectly benefit young people of the EU and beyond.

Lastly, there is the question of sustainability of impact in case the YiA programme was terminated or support was substantially decreased. Respondents indicate that without financial support from YiA, fewer young people would have the opportunity to travel, meet peers from other countries and have meaningful intercultural experiences. Our survey also indicates that continued exposure to such experiences shapes the attitudes and competences of a young person more effectively than one-time experience. On the other hand, respondents report that the best projects can be aha-moments for participants and in such cases even taking part in one project can have long-lasting effects.

5.2 Impact on organizational development

Since 2002, SALTO SEE has been an active observer and supporter of developments in the youth field in the region. Over time, indicators of growth and strengthening of organizations that were involved in the YiA programme appeared, and questions regarding the role of the programme in their development were raised. It is difficult to separate simultaneous influences such as availability of funds and support from the YiA programme and other sources, changes in social climate, development of knowledge base on youth work etc. Nevertheless, representatives of organizations involved in YiA shared their view about whether (and if so, how) the YiA programme impacted their organizations.

Findings point towards three specific contributions of YiA reported by our respondents: firstly, through the YiA programme many individual youth workers gained new knowledge and skills which were brought back to their organizations, shared and multiplied with colleagues. Secondly, organizations were influenced by the "philosophy" behind the programme, especially through concepts such as non-formal learning, participation of young people, active citizenship and key competences for life-long learning. Thirdly, financial support enabled certain organizations to tackle larger-scale projects than they would without the YiA funding. Organizations that did this on continual bases often experienced organizational growth and subsequently underwent structural changes.

5.2.1 Transfer of individually gained competences

Benefits for individual youth workers, outlined in chapters 4.3.1.2 and 5.1, were predominantly gained in two ways: through direct involvement in YiA projects and through participation in training activities organized in the context of the YiA programme. Representatives of organizations and trainers report that the newly acquired competences did not only benefit individual youth workers, but also that they were transferred on other youth workers in their organizations.

In about 15% of cases this was done systematically: such organizations tend to report that they carefully chose trainings that were of interest to their organization, therefore they encouraged more than one person to attend and they had an idea about where and how to use the new knowledge. Common organizational changes that had this course of action were:

- organizations began to work with a new target group (often mentioned are young people with fewer opportunities, e.g. Roma youth, disabled youth, young people from rural areas),
- organizations began using a pedagogical approach that they heard about before (e.g. adventure learning),
- organizations developed or expanded the international dimension of their work (i.e. an organization that was previously active only on the local level and was interested in doing international projects),
- Organizations changed the way they finance their activities (i.e. organizations that got most of their financial support from local donors but wished to learn how to write grant proposals to gain more funding for their activities from other sources).

In most organizations (85% of responses), however, the transfer of competences was not as thought out. It was more or less accidental. Youth workers mostly chose a training that was of personal interest to them. If the idea was inspiring enough and if the new knowledge was practical and immediately useful in practice, enthusiasm of youth workers would sometimes 'rub off' on their colleagues and they began to experiment with new approaches. If enough people got interested, changes made their way to organizational culture. Organizational changes that happened this way were mostly:

- new approach or methodology (i.e. interactive games, didactical materials, specific methodologies such as street work, experiential learning, art or circus pedagogy),
- changes in priorities of organizations' work programme (i.e. because of involvement in YiA projects organization started focusing on active citizenship and youth information in all its activities; after a successful media project the organization began using film as their main medium for reaching young people).

The idea of empowering youth organizations through strengthening competences of youth workers also connects well with what the National Agencies report as the main reason why they decided to organize training activities with objectives to specifically support projects with partners from SEE countries. Since one of the main challenges of cooperation with SEE listed by the National Agencies is a lack of reliable organizations from SEE countries, they report an invested interest in enabling youth workers from SEE to get trained in specific areas. The underlying assumption is that they will transfer the knowledge to other members of their organizations which will contribute to the overall quality of YiA projects carried out in cooperation between partners from SEE and programme countries.

5.2.2 Transfer of concepts and the "philosophy behind the programme"

Some respondents report that through their involvement in YiA the way they approach their work in the youth field changed. Again, organizations from SEE report more changes than their counterparts from programme countries. Some reasons for this changed approach are explained with improved competence of youth workers to tackle project work, to cooperate internationally, to work in teams and to implement non-formal learning – competences developed in projects or through training courses. But respondents also offer an alternative explanation of why their approach to youth work had changed. They report that not only their competences developed but also that their attitudes and beliefs about youth work were transformed. For example, one respondent tells a story of a middle aged professional youth worker from SEE that changed his way of work with young people from directive teaching to participative approach – not only because he became familiar with methods that support non-formal learning but also because the philosophy of participation and

including young people in planning and implementation of projects resonated with him on a personal level.

The viewpoint that getting involved in the YiA programme had a strong influence on shaping youth workers' professional philosophy was brought up in online surveys, but even more strongly emphasized in one-on-one online interviews. In fact, all interviewees except for one bring up this issue. Either they report that their own perceptions and underlying assumptions about youth work were challenged or they tell a story of a youth worker they know who adopted concepts from YiA. Interviewees talk about two predominant ways of accepting conceptual understanding of youth work enforced by the YiA programme: in most cases they report this was done through continued exposure to projects and activities, where youth workers slowly started talking and thinking more and more about participation, active roles of young people in projects, needs of local communities etc. Slowly, this started to influence the way they approach projects and young people in general. On the other hand, interviewees also list a few stories where the change in philosophy was instantaneous, an aha-moment. This usually happened during training courses. One interviewee says she felt like "a light bulb switched on" when the trainer was explaining the concept of recognition of non-formal learning. She understood the concept immediately, found that it resonated with her beliefs and experience, and adopted it to her work. She is currently active in an initiative that strives to raise awareness about Youthpass among potential employers in one of the SEE countries. Most often mentioned trainings that facilitated fact adaptation of new concepts are the Training Course on European Citizenship and the SOHO training for EVS organizations.

In one-on-one online interviews, respondents say that while youth workers were influenced by various concepts, the ones that were most likely to be transfered on the organizational level were non-formal learning, participation of young people, active citizenship and key competences for lifelong learning. This differs slightly from results of online surveys. In the survey, the most often mentioned concepts that were transferred to organizations are youth participation and non-formal learning. Key competences for lifelong learning are not mentioned in this context.

In the online survey, participants from SEE were also asked to explain how they understand a few concepts commonly used in YiA: active citizenship, participation of young people, non-formal learning,young people with fewer opportunities,youth policy, youth workers, key competences for lifelong learning and Youthpass (see chapter 4.3.3). Overall, the level of understanding is close to how the concepts are defined in key YiA documents. Respondents offer general explanations as well as links to the YiA programme. Key competences for lifelong learning is the most misunderstood concept and respondents find it the least useful for their work while concepts such as non-formal learning, active citizenship, Youthpass and participation were described as the ones that had an impact on real YiA projects.

Organizations from SEE report that in connection to different understanding of youth work described above, participation of young people in their organizations has increased, quality of their activities is higher, that they feel more competent to assess non-formal learning outcomes and that they are now better equipped to support for young people with fewer opportunities.

5.2.3 Structural changes due to increased financial support

Among the structural changes experienced by SEE organizations are stronger and bigger networks of international partners, more international work, more inclusive and participatory decision-making processes, better strategic planning, more professionalism and different approach to youth work. Organizations that reported stronger levels of involvement in the programme (higher numbers of projects etc.) also tended to list more and deeper organizational changes.

5.2.4 Other influences on organizations

Finally, it should be noted that 68% of respondents from programme countries also reported benefits of projects with SEE for their organizations. Besides a wider network of partners and more international projects, they indicate that projects with SEE have raised visibility of their organizations, increased participation of young people in their organization and provided youth workers with innovative ideas for activities with young people. Only two respondents stated that the disadvantages of collaboration with partners from SEE (high travel costs and Visa complications in one case and differences in organizational culture and work ethics in another case) outweighed the benefits of projects and therefore they stopped cooperating with partners from SEE. Overall, the feedback is positive. However, while respondents point out a number of benefits of involvement in YiA, these benefits are not necessarily connected exclusively to projects that involve partners from SEE.

5.2.5   Sustainability of impact on organizations

Respondents indicate that in case the YiA programme was terminated or support was decreased, this would "be a big blow" to organizations working in the youth field in SEE and their partners from programme countries. Under 10% of respondents from programme countries report that their organization would be able to continue their cooperation with SEE countries in the same capacity even without the support of YiA and over 40% report that cooperation would be likely stop entirely. SEE organizations would be at risk of being more dependent on local grants and that would impact the way they define priorities for their work. Respondents expect a decrease of activism and active participation of young people if the YiA support would no longer be available and some are likely to change target groups from young people to children or adults. Nevertheless, a small number of respondents report that their organization is not dependent on YiA funding and would therefore not be impacted by lack of YiA support, and many express motivation to look for other funding sources to continue existing cooperation because they see international projects as an important contribution to quality of their work with young people.

5.3 Impact on youth work

One of the desired side effects of the YiA programme is strengthening the youth work field in programme and neighbouring partner countries. This is thought to be done through training activities and involvement in projects. In SEE, 76% of respondents believe that the YiA programme contributed to positive changes in development of youth work in their countries.

5.3.1 Influence of the YiA programme

Respondents that believed the YiA programme contributed positive changes to the youth field in their country were asked to specify these changes. There is a high agreement among respondents on how the YiA programme influenced the youth field. 91% of respondents that tried to specify the changes believe that the programme provides more training opportunities for youth workers which lead to higher quality of youth work. 91% also state that due to the YiA programme more young people now participate in youth organizations and 60% point out that new organizations were developed under the influence of the programme. 77% believe that the YiA programme introduced more methods that support non-formal learning. Over 50% also report that due to the programme there is increased social recognition of youth work.

The programme seems to have influenced the youth field in the following ways: besides making more funding available for youth projects, it had the strongest influence on staff quality and participation of young people, followed by facilitating new methods of working with young people. On the other hand, influences such as development of research and literature on youth work, more long term planning and new priorities for youth work are rarely mentioned. It would seem that the YiA programme mainly influenced the youth field indirectly through capacity building of young people, youth workers and organizations, and these improvements had a trickling effect on other organizations and subsequently the youth field in general. Pathways such as direct cooperation with local authorities, research and literature development seem to have been less successful in shaping the youth field.

5.3.2 Country specific influences

Some interesting differences in how respondents see the contribution of the YiA programme to the youth field emerge among countries. While respondents from all SEE countries agree that the YiA programme helped raise the overall quality of youth work by offering training opportunities for youth workers and by introducing new methods of working with youth, other aspects of youth field development differ according to country.

Respondents from BIH are more likely to mention the role of funding: they report that the YiA programme contributed to positive changes by offering direct funding and support for youth projects, that youth workers were able to transfer grant writing skills and financial management skills gained through YiA and use them to secure other sources of funding, and that exposure to the programme also influenced some local authorities to provide more funding for similar activities.

Respondents from Serbia tend to mention other types of development in the youth field: increase of meaningful participation, more dialogue between young people and youth workers with policy makers on decisions regarding the youth field, better understanding of concepts underlying youth work. They also mention that the programme contributed to development of new methods and pedagogical approaches. Respondents from Serbia were also the only ones that mention more research and literature on youth work among the developments in the field.

Respondents from Croatia tend to report new methodologies of working with youth and development of project management capacities as the primary contribution of the YiA programme, while Montenegro, Albania and The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia emphasize that due to YiA organizations integrate more international work in their programmes.

5.3.3 Sustainability of impact

Respondents tend to enforce a view that the YiA programme is currently a strong influence on existing or emerging youth work (especially respondents from Serbia and Croatia). They mentioned that in case the YiA programme was terminated or support was substantially decreased, less international cooperation is to be expected, and they express fear that this might lead to less sharing of best practices and less knowledge about the latest developments of youth work in other countries. Decrease of project-based youth work is to be expected. Respondents fear that there would be even less recognition and understanding of youth work by the public. They also see a severe risk of exclusion of disadvantaged young people since not many other available grants focus on non-formal learning opportunities for this target group. To sum up, while the termination of decrease of support from YiA would impact individuals and organizations, potential disadvantages for the youth field in general would seem to have the most serious consequences.

5.4 Impact on local communities

YiA projects carried out under actions 3.1 and 2 are encouraged to involve the local community in which they take place as well as local communities of all partners participating in the project. The idea is to bring the intercultural learning dimension not only to participants, but to also allow their communities at least a short exposure to young people from abroad.

Respondents of our online surveys report that YiA projects contributed to positive changes in local environments, especially in regard to intercultural learning; that local communities followed YiA projects with interest and some even provided support for similar projects in the future; and that although the YiA programme does not anticipate a strong European dimension of projects with neighbouring partner countries of the EU, YiA projects sparked community-wide discussion of topic such as European citizenship, European identity and the European Union.

5.4.1 Impact in local communities is found in SEE and in programme countries

In our surveys, we asked representatives of organizations, trainers, accreditors and contact points from SEE and from programme countries if YiA projects contributed to positive changes in local communities. Over 70% believe that their projects left a discernable impact. The level of agreement is slightly stronger in SEE countries than in programme countries.

It is reported that projects were received as enrichments and that some of the initiatives that started as one-time projects have left a long lasting impression. For example: "In one of our youth exchange projects on ecology we had a theme of trash art. Even years after that youth exchange, in our local community there were other NGOs and young people organizing events with the same theme. Our community became even more aware of environmental issues than we have ever hoped." According to reports, there seem to be some topics that are successful in reaching local communities: sustainability, environmental protection, conflict resolution and ethnic minorities.

5.4.2 Intercultural learning and overcoming prejudice

The intercultural learning in local communities was the most often reported positive consequence of projects, especially in the programme countries. Respondents often mention that their local communities do not know much about SEE countries but prejudices towards them might be present. They report YiA projects have challenged these perceptions and sometimes facilitated small changes in attitudes and opinions: "After hosting two Montenegrian volunteers, our local community looks at South East Europe with a different perspective and with less prejudice." On the other hand, respondents point out that for local communities in SEE countries (especially those in rural areas) rarely have the chance to "talk and interact with foreigners who don't visit the city so often." They report that there is still some reservation and even fear present among the public, but direct experience with young people from other countries is helping local communities open up.

5.4.3 European dimension

Respondents make an interesting point that YiA projects can be a tool to encourage conversations about the European dimension and European identity for local communities in SEE countries. Although SEE countries are not a part of the European Union, local communities in SEE were interested to discuss the role EU and advantages and disadvantages of joining.

5.4.4 Community support for further projects

Over 40% of respondents in programme countries and over 60% of respondents from SEE countries report that their local communities showed interest in similar projects in the future. Over 40% also state that local communities expressed willingness to support similar activities in the future. Although only a handful of local communities expressed ability to offer direct financial support ("The local government in Serbia gave more funds to a youth organization after organizing an international youth training there."), many are willing to contribute materials, accommodation, logistical support, help with administration etc. In YiA projects, such resources are often underused.

Nevertheless, over 50% of respondents from SEE countries believe that the YiA programme should be more visible to policy makers on local level. When asked about this in one-on-one online interviews, they explained that while local communities are often excited about international projects and express willingness to support them in the future, in reality the support usually comes from local businesses and private institutions. Public bodies, on the other hand, often face administrative challenges and therefore offer only limited support – unless local decision-makers include possibilities of financial or other support in local-level policies and bugets.

5.4.5 Recognition of youth work on local level

Free text responses provided by respondents from SEE also highlight that involving local communities in YiA projects helps to raise visibility of youth organizations and brings the importance of youth work to attention of the public and local policy makers. A number of respondents report that their organization was taken more seriously after showing that they can carry out successful international cooperation.

5.4.6. Critical stance of respondents

It is interesting that while respondents report the YiA programme contributed to positive changes in local communities, respondents use free-text replies to express a concern about sustainability of these changes. There are a number of text replies saying that the impact on local communities (open mind for intercultural experience, motivation for mobility, interest for international cooperation, valuing youth work and willingness to financially support youth projects) is not likely to be sustainable if local communities would not be exposed to similar projects in the future.

5.5 Impact on youth policies

Within the YiA programme, two sub actions are closely linked to including young people into a dialogue about existing youth policies and formation of new ones: Action 1.3 and Action 5.1. Both are available only to promoters from programme countries. Actions 3.1 and 2, which can include partners from SEE, are expected to contribute mainly to individual development, organizational development and to an extent also to influence local communities. Capacity for political participation or policy making efforts are not among expected results of Action 2 and 3.1 projects, but rather possible side effects of the programme's presence in the region.

Although available actions are not expected to bring policy-level contributions, prior to our evaluation study SALTO SEE-RC came across anecdotal evidence that the YiA programme had become a strong influence in the youth policy field and had influenced decision making on local and national level. In these success stories, Serbia was mentioned multiple times as an example. We decided to explore this topic further in our surveys and in interviews.

5.5.1 Priorities of national youth policies

Survey respondents' perceptions of priorities of their national youth policies reveal some commonalities as well as differences between SEE countries. In all countries, "employability of young people" was the most picked priority (60% of all respondents). In light of current global economy trends, this is not surprising. On the other hand, respondents from Serbia and Croatia tended to pick more priorities that resemble concepts present in the YiA programme: non-formal education, inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities, youth information and international mobility of young people. It is very interesting that non-formal education of young people was picked more often as a priority (49%) than formal education (33%). An interesting topic is also political participation of young people – an item picked almost exclusively by respondents from Serbia. Respondents from Albania and Kosovo were likely to state that their country has no existing youth policy that they are aware of or no clear priorities. Respondents from BIH, FYROM and Montenegro typically picked a range of responses, but they were more likely than others to pick formal education and health of young people. Respondents from BIH were also more likely to choose budget for youth work and youth projects as one of the priorities of their national youth policy. Correspondingly, when asked if they could list granting schemes for funding youth projects similar to YiA at local, national level or international level, respondents from BIH were most likely to list international granting schemes such as European Youth Foundation, SCI, British Council, Erste Foundation, Peace Corps, Balkan Trust for Democracy and Embassies of different countries.

5.5.2 The YiA programme's impact on national youth policies

In light of these results, it is not surprising that respondents from Serbia, BIH and Croatia tended to report that they believe the YiA programme was in compliance to their national policy. It is difficult to say whether this is due to direct impact of the YiA programme. Examples provided by respondents point to a conclusion that in Serbia, the YiA programme had a strong influence on not only the content of youth policy documents that emerged in the last few years, but also on the process of how they were formulated. Key beneficiaries of the YiA programme have also been acknowledged as important partners from the youth field and invited into dialogue with decision-makers. This seems to have resulted in a youth policy heavily influenced by the concepts and procedures adopted from YiA. Croatia, however, might be another story. Evidence suggests that the direction of emerging youth policies was fairly close (although developed rather independently from) the YiA programme and this might have been why the programme became more promoted and supported on the national level, which was followed by an increased number of projects.

Overall, the YiA programme seems to have influenced national policies in a very specific way especially through Action 2 – EVS: several respondents mention the development of laws on volunteering and simplified Visa procedures for foreign volunteers. These laws and Visa procedures apply to volunteers from different backgrounds and who are funded through various programmes and schemes, but respondents' opinion seems to be that the YiA, specifically experiences with EVS volunteers, provided an impetuous for governments to speed up the adoption of these decisions. Of course it is difficult to separate the role of the YiA programme from the influence of other international volunteering opportunities; however, this is an important development and a signal that good initiatives and high quality programmes can make a difference even when it comes to legislature and bureaucracy.

5.5.3 Challenges of current youth policies

Respondents show a critical stance towards the state of affairs regarding youth policies in their countries. Some participants point out that while there might be youth policies in place, young people are not sufficiently informed about them. For example, while most respondents from Serbia are aware of their country's youth policy and have insight into its interplay with the programme, one

participant from Serbia decisively states: "As far as I know, youth policy in Serbia is very unclear (didn't exist at first, now it changed, but I am not sure at all in which direction) and also I am not aware of any interaction of YiA and youth policy. Maybe it exists, but it is then not communicated at all to us, as people who implement the programme or/and work with youth."

Lastly, there is a vast divide among SEE countries concerning the state of policy-making in the field of youth and awareness about its importance. While some countries such as Serbia and Croatia seem to be developing documents and practices in the youth field, other countries have not really begun to tackle the problem – at least from respondents' point of view. A number of respondents are critical of the lack of key decisions and documents outlining the direction of political decisions concerning youth in their country. As one participant from Albania pointed out, "the priority of youth policy in my country is to make a youth policy." Organizations in particular report that they are interested in participating in the process of formulating clearer youth policies but feel that awareness and motivation of other stakeholders, particularly the general public and decision-makers, are not strong enough yet.

Interestingly, respondents' examples suggest a specific understanding of what is youth policy. Many seem to envision youth policy as a separate document, strategy or set of laws connected to youth work, they do not necessarily see youth policy in the context of a myriad of political decisions connected to young people in different fields (education, health, traffic, housing etc.).

5.5.4 Key topics for further development of youth policies

To conclude, we are left with an impression that respondents are very much aware of the importance of the dialogue between decision makers and young people when it comes to political decisions and guidelines concerning young people. Not surprisingly, one of the key topics of youth policy for this target group is recognition of and support for youth work, particularly in connection to volunteering, non-formal learning, inclusion and capacity building for youth organizations. In this context, over half of respondents from SEE countries wish that the YiA programme raised its visibility for national-level decision makers. An encouraging fact is that they exhibit motivation to participate in decision-making processes and are prepared to work towards implementation of policies they see as their own and beneficial to youth.

5.5.5. Sustainability of the YiA programme impact on existing youth policies

Respondents express different opinions about what is likely to happen in the youth policy field in case the YiA programme was terminated or substantially decreased. Many do not believe that the YiA programme is a strong influence on current developments on youth policies and therefore there would not be much change without the YiA programme. Others believe that the programme influenced the spirit and the form of youth policies adopted in their countries and that the YiA projects are tools for informing about youth policies as well as direct support for their implementation, which would mean that without YiA the youth policy development would experience a setback. A concern is also that participation, inclusion, intercultural dialogue and active citizenship will not be prioritized which could lead to fewer young people being exposed to experience that introduce these concepts.

6. CONCLUSIONS

The impact evaluation of the cooperation with SEE within the YiA programme used a mixed methods approach to assess the impact of cooperation on individual level, organization level as well as on the youth work and youth policy field.

The general conclusion is that the YiA programme was successful in reaching the purpose for cooperation with neighbouring partner countries which was to "develop mutual understanding between peoples in a spirit of openness, while also contributing to the development of quality systems that support the activities of young people in the countries concerned", to support "activities designed to network and enhance the capacity of NGOs in the youth field, recognizing the important role they can play in the development of civil society in the neighbouring partner countries" with the intention of facilitating "the establishment of long lasting, high quality projects and partnerships" (Youth in Action Programme Guide, p. 75).

Participants in our surveys and interviews report to have observed benefits of participation in YiA for individual young people such as intercultural competence, social competence, improved communication in foreign languages and other benefits. For youth workers, the main benefits are increased motivation for their work, intercultural competence and professional development of knowledge of their target group, different methodologies and approaches to non-formal learning, stronger capabilities to participate in political discussion about decisions concerning youth and often a shift in perspectives about youth work. Main benefits for organizations are establishment of international networks and capacity building through sharing of best practices. Influences in the youth policy field greatly vary from country to country, but can be seen in the level of recognition of youth work and in transfer of concepts from the YiA programme to national-level youth policy documents.

Benefits for individuals and organizations from programme countries are similar: exposure to intercultural experiences and challenging prejudice is the most mentioned positive development for young people and youth workers, and organizations from programme countries reported that they gained both inspiration and ideas for activities and approaches for their work with young people from youth workers from SEE. Among the specific challenges of cooperation with partners from SEE there are logistical issues, challenges due to cultural differences and securing funding for projects.

With the end of the current financial perspective and therefore the end of the YiA programme looming on the horizon, the main concern for the SEE region remains the sustainability issue. Respondents from SEE as well as their partners from programme countries express concern that in case the YiA programme was terminated or support was substantially decreased, they will not be able to continue their cooperation or it would continue in a much smaller capacity. However, the motivation exists due to predominantly positive experience and there is a willingness to invest effort in finding other potential sources of funding if needed.

Overall, cooperation with SEE in the contexts of the YiA programme was effective in reaching its objectives but the systems for networking, sharing information and cooperation among stakeholders from SEE and programme countries would still need support and reinforcement if the impact is to be long-term. Without the financial support and direct training opportunities, existing practices might not survive and new ones are not likely to emerge. While support can be found for certain types of international cooperation, it does not have the same focus in regard to content, focus and priorities.

7. SOURCES

- Interim Evaluation of the Youth in Action programme
  http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/evalreports/index_en.htm#youthHeader

- Key Competences for Lifelong Learning: European Reference Framework
  http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/key_en.htm

- Youth in Action Programme Guide 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012
  http://ec.europa.eu/youth/youth-in-action-programme/programme-guide_en.htm

- Research-based analysis of Youth in Action project teams

- SALTO SEE website www.salto-youth.net/rc/see

- Information available in Youthlink (general project database of Youth in Action), lists of project grants of the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/youth/results_compendia/results_en.php , and SALTO SEE statistical compilations