

# **“The Attitudes of Youth Organizations towards Global Issues and Global Learning in Lithuania”**

*Executive Summary of the Research Findings in Lithuania*

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**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

PART 1: ABOUT THE RESEARCH..... 3

    1.1. Aims of the Research ..... 3

    1.2. Methodology ..... 3

PART 2: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS ..... 5

    2.1. Understanding Globalisation and Global Issues Within Youth Organisations..... 5

    2.2. Linking Local to Global ..... 6

    2.3. Interests of Youth Organisations Towards Global Issues ..... 7

    2.4. Learning Needs of Youth Organisations in Relation With Global Learning ..... 7

    2.5. Motivation of Youth Organisations towards Global Learning..... 8

PART 3. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS ..... 10

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## PART 1: ABOUT THE RESEARCH

### 1.1. Aims of the Research

Youth Career & Advising Center (YCAC) conducted a research “The Attitudes of Youth Organizations towards Global Issues and Global Learning in Lithuania”. The research aimed to explore the attitudes of youth organizations in Lithuania towards the global development issues and the role of youth organizations in coping with them. The research was also dedicated to explore the motivation, willingness and preparation of youth organisations to implement global learning and awareness raising activities for youth.

The research results helped YCAC to get a better understanding on perceptions and attitudes of youth organisations in Lithuania towards the global development issues, globalization and global connections between people, cultures and countries. The results also allowed identifying the learning needs of the youth organisations related with global learning and awareness raising applicable to youth work.

The research “The Attitudes of Youth Organizations towards Global Issues and Global Learning in Lithuania” was conducted in the frame of the project “Youth of the World! Mainstreaming Global Awareness In youth Work”, supported by the European Commission. The project is being implemented in 7 countries: Bulgaria, Lithuania, Estonia, Cyprus, Austria, Scotland and Ghana.

### 1.2. Methodology

To achieve the aims of the research several methods for its conduction were chosen:

1. Online survey: a special questionnaire was prepared, translated, adapted and digitalized by using an online survey tool. The survey questionnaire included 26 questions and was common in all project partner countries.

The invitation to participate in the survey in Lithuania was directly sent to a high number of youth organisations: members of the national parliament of school students, members of the Lithuanian National Union of Students (LSS), members of the Lithuanian School Students’ Union (LMS), members of youth umbrella organisations in several regions in Lithuania (Kaunas, Utena, Jonava, Panevėžys, Raseiniai, Kelmė, Skuodas, etc.). The invitation was also widely disseminated through social media channels.

Overall 49 respondents in Lithuania answered to the survey. The majority of the respondents represented associations<sup>1</sup> (57%) and public establishments<sup>2</sup> (25%). The survey results also represent the views of the representatives of non-formal youth groups (14%), charity foundations (2%) and public institutions whose shareholder is state or local authority (2%).

<sup>1</sup> The following percentage includes respondents representing umbrella organisations (student unions, associations of youth organisations, etc.), community centers and youth clubs, as according to the national law, they are legally established as *associations*.

<sup>2</sup> According to the national law, a *public establishment* is a non-profit public legal person of limited civil liability, which aims to satisfy public interests by carrying out the educational, training and scientific, cultural, health care, environmental protection, sports development, social or legal aid provision as well as other activities useful to the public.



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It is significant to mention that the majority of the respondents of the survey represent youth organisations/structures uniting young people under 29 years (51%) or organisations whose main target audience is young people (32,7%).

The top three main fields of work of organisations represented in the survey are 1) education (23,8%), 2) promoting youth occupation/employment (16,7%) and 3) youth political participation (16,7%). None of the respondents mentioned sports, social services, promoting gender equality and services for children as their main field of activity. But there were representatives of organisations (4,8%), who couldn't choose one main of activity and stated that their work covered multiple fields. We can predict from the responses that these were mainly parliamentary organisations uniting young people and advocating for better conditions for youth in various fields of life.

It is also significant to mention that education and promoting youth occupation are also the most popular fields of work of the youth organisations represented in the survey, even if they are not their main fields of work. They are also followed by promoting voluntarism, leisure activities and culture and art.

The majority of the youth organisations (54,8%) represented in the survey can be stated as small ones in terms of the direct involvement of youngsters in their activities. However, one third of the organisations stated that they have more than 50 youngsters directly involved in their activities. These facts shows that the survey represents the attitudes towards global issues of the variety of the organisations in terms of their size.

2. Discussion workshops: 2 discussion workshops engaging total 24 representatives of youth organisations were arranged in Lithuania in order to deepen the knowledge on attitudes of youth organisations towards the global issues and asses their needs and capacities to mainstream global learning among young people. The discussion workshops were arranged on 22.July, 2013 in Kolping Education and Cultural Center (Troskunai, LT) and 6.September, 2013 in Youth Career & Advising center (Kaunas, LT).

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## PART 2: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

### 2.1. *Understanding Globalisation and Global Issues Within Youth Organisations*

The conducted research highlighted the level of understanding and basic meanings of global issues for youth workers and youth leaders in Lithuania. The following findings can be mentioned as the significant ones:

1. 62% of respondents of the online survey stated that the activities of their organisations were to some extent connected to wider issues, not only the ones existing in their local communities. However, it is significant to mention that more than 1/5 of the respondents were not sure about the existence of such connections, and 17% stated that such connections in their work were not existent.
2. The respondents of the online survey stated the following thematic issues they were dealing with in their work and they had some international perspective:
  - Youth unemployment / occupation (mentioned 7 times);
  - Low level of citizenship (mentioned 7 times);
  - Social exclusion (mentioned 4 times);
  - Environmental issues (mentioned 4 times);
  - Right to education (mentioned 3 times);
  - Health protection (mentioned 2 times);
  - Promoting intercultural dialogue (mentioned 2 times);
  - Globalisation (mentioned 1 time);
  - Gender equality (mentioned 1 time);
  - Consumption (mentioned 1 time);
  - Tolerance (mentioned 1 time);
  - Human rights and duties (mentioned 1 time).
3. The participants of the discussion workshops were also able to name a significant number of global issues showed in the photos, which were shown to them during the workshops. The main issues named for several times were the following:
  - Poverty and hunger:

*„There are so many slumtowns in the world, unemployment is high, people don't have appropriate living conditions.“ (participant of the discussion workshop)*

- Child labour:

*„Since the childhood children are entitled to take over the hardest work.“ (participant of the discussion workshop)*

- Literacy and right to education:

*„There is a huge number of children in the world, who don't go to school, but do hard work at home. They don't have a possibility to go to school.“ (participant of the discussion workshop)*

- Gender equality:

*„Gender inequalities are most common to Southeast Asian and Arab countries.“ (participant of the discussion workshop)*

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The participants of the discussion groups also envisaged such global issues as cheap labour force, health, ecology, pollution, climate, floods and water in the given package of photos.

## 2.2. Linking Local to Global

The conducted research also aimed to evaluate the ability of youth workers and youth leaders to make links between global issues, realities of local communities and their work. The following findings were made:

1. The participants of the research were asked to provide the examples of activities related with the global issues that they were implementing. The most often activities mentioned by the research participants were environmental actions as well as the initiatives for promotion healthy lifestyle (i.e. cycling tours, prevention project against the use of alcohol and tobacco, etc.).

*„I have heard about the initiative of one youth organisation, when they were collecting corks and made some arts, collages out of them, implemented educational activities with children.“ (participant of the discussion group)*

2. It is important to highlight the fact that responsible consumption was the most popular field of activities mentioned by the youth organisations. However, only few of the respondents provided some examples of the activities around this field of work that they have implemented. We can predict that the participants of the research interpret the term „responsible consumption“ in a wider way. Besides the social and environmental aspects of this term, they also identify it as an issue of the healthy lifestyle.
3. The activities with international dimension most often mentioned by the youth organisations are participation in youth exchanges, participation in international conferences, celebration and actions around the international co-memorance days (i.e. World AIDS day, Europe Day).

*„I.e. discrimination. We have arranged youth exchanges called „ZIPPER“ among the youngsters from Turkey, Estonia, Great Britain and Lithuania. During the exchanges the participants explored the system of mental health, they visited Rokiškis Psychiatry Hospital, Kaunas Hospital, met people from peer support groups, etc. The youngsters made journalistic research and highlighted the field, in which people with mental disabilities were discriminated the most. Finally, they made a theatre performance and looked for the ways, how to decrease the discrimination approaches in the society.“ (respondent of the online survey)*

4. The activities of youth organisations are to some extent related to the global issues. Many of the mentioned activities include the problems and issues stated in the Millenium Development Goals. However, the content of the activities is only related with the realities of the local communities. Global dimension in the activities of the youth organisations still hardly exists.

*„Ensuring children’s rights. We provided a position towards the national program for preventing violence against children.“ (respondent of the online survey)*

*„The project was dedicated to raise awareness of school children about the use of alcohol and tobacco and to promote healthy lifestyle.“ (respondent of the online survey)*



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### 2.3. *Interests of Youth Organisations Towards Global Issues*

The conducted research highlighted the main fields of interest of youth organisations connected having global perspective, as well as motivation of youth organisations to take action around the global issues. The following findings were made from the research data:

1. The thematic fields of activities, which are most of interest among youth organisations in Lithuania, are 1) promoting intercultural dialogue, 2) responsible consumption, 3) promoting healthy lifestyle, 4) human rights, 5) access to education. Fighting with discrimination, environmental protection, migration and sustainable development are also the thematic fields of activities having interest among youth organisations in Lithuania. It is significant to mention that the thematic fields of activities which are most of the interest are the same as the fields of activities run by youth organisations in Lithuania at present.
2. The least interesting fields of activities of youth organisations in Lithuania are 1) work with refugees and asylum seekers, 2) employees' rights, 3) children's rights and 4) access to health service. We can predict that these are the issues, which are not often met in the daily lives of the youth organisations represented in the survey (i.e., low number of refugees and asylum seekers in the country, their concentration in certain geographical areas, which are not represented in the research).
3. Regarding the factors motivating youth organisations the most to take actions connected with global awareness raising, 71% of the respondents of the online survey stated trainings and seminars as the most motivating factor to take action around the issues, which are not interesting to them at present. Getting more information about the issues, which are either not interesting or the respondents didn't have a clear opinion about them, was also mentioned as a significant factor to start the activities.
4. It is also significant to mention that the financial aspect of the activities around the global issues was also highlighted as a significant factor to take action around the issues, which were not interesting to the youth organisations at the time of the research. 58,1% respondents of the online survey stated that getting a financial grant would motivate them to take action in the new thematic field.

### 2.4. *Learning Needs of Youth Organisations in Relation With Global Learning*

The following findings regarding the learning needs of youth organisations in relation to global learning were made at the research:

1. It is important to mention that a significant percentage of respondents of the online survey (58,1%) stated positively about their familiarity with the terms „Global Education“, „Global Learning“, „Development Education“. However, still a significant part of the respondents (41,9%) stated these terms as unknown.
2. The research highlighted positive attitude of youth organisations towards development of competencies connected with global learning. A high number of positive responses about the interest of youth organisations towards development of competencies around global learning allow us to predict that global learning activities in youth work has a huge potential in Lithuania.



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- The research showed that the representatives of youth organisation were willing to implement activities towards increasing knowledge and understanding about diversity (ethnical, racial, cultural, etc.). The research showed that this was the thematic field familiar to most of the youth organisations, thus we can predict that youth organisations already feel comfortable with the issue. Furthermore, some of the respondents mentioned some activities they were already doing around the diversity:

*„Project „Erasmus for Lithuanian Schools“: foreign students visit Lithuanian schools in order to promote tolerance for other nations and ethnicities and emphasise the importance of the intercultural dialogue.“ (respondent of the online survey)*

- The representatives of youth organisations expressed a high interest to work around skills development of young people. The following skills were mentioned as the ones around which youth organisations would like work the most: critical thinking, changing perspectives, recognition of negative stereotypes and prejudices. The following values and attitudes of young people, around which they would like to run their activities, were also highlighted: self-esteem, self-confidence, self-respect and respect for others; proactive and participatory community membership; visionary attitudes.
- Some of the respondents of the online survey also mentioned cooperation and team building (5), creativity (4) and work with media (4) as the skills, on which they already implement some activities. The following activities run by youth organisations were mentioned:

*„Self development programme „International Award of Young People“ (respondent of the online survey)*

*„The organisation arranges national and international conferences, trainings on different topics. The trainings on certain topics are often arranged upon the request of the members of our organisation.“ (respondent of the online survey)*

*„Our organisation contributes to development of these skills of young people through arranging on-site trainings for the members of different departments of the organisation...“ (respondent of the online survey)*

The activities mentioned by the youth organisations creates a great background of further work. However, the analysis of the research results showed, that such activities lacked global dimension.

## 2.5. Motivation of Youth Organisations towards Global Learning

The following findings regarding the motivation of youth organisations in relation to global learning can be highlighted from the research:

- The research proved the fact about training opportunities as the most motivating factor for youth organisations to run new activities. While asking about the willingness to join new training opportunities, 92,9% of the respondents of the online survey expressed positivity towards participating in the trainings on global development and global learning.
- The research highlighted the uncertainty of youth organisations towards providing on-site training opportunities for a bigger number of their members. 10,7% of the



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respondents of the online survey stated they were not sure about the possibilities to arrange such trainings inside their organisations. The following reasons for this were mentioned:

- “We participate only in the trainings outside the organization.” (respondent of the online survey)*
- „I have to ask the members about their willingness to participate in this kind of training.“ (respondent of the online survey)*
- „Wide geography of the target audience of the organisation, so this implies difficulties to gather them for such training; high workload of the members, so they cannot find enough of time for that...” (respondent of the online survey)*
- „Is it really worth and necessary for us?“ (respondent of the online survey)*

The reasons mentioned above show that the members of some youth organisations don't have a vision of introducing global dimension as an aspect of their daily activities and organisational culture. This fact implies the need to emphasise the importance of global learning and everyone's role as a global citizen in today's society.

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### PART 3. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The research “The Attitudes of Youth Organizations Towards Global Issues and Global Learning in Lithuania” drew a picture and highlighted key trends on attitudes and general understanding of youth organisations in Lithuania towards global issues, global learning and their role as promoters global citizenship. The research can be summarized with the following conclusions:

1. More than 3/5 of youth organisations in Lithuania recognise connections between their daily activities and the issues existing in international context. The most popular fields of activities are fighting with youth unemployment / occupation, increasing the level of active citizenship, dealing with social exclusion, coping with environmental issues, ensuring right to education. We can conclude that global learning content connected with the mentioned fields of activities has a potential to sustain within the youth organisations because of their familiarity to the present youth workers and youth leaders.
2. The research findings showed that youth workers and youth leaders in Lithuania were not able to link local activities with the global dimension in their work. The activities and initiatives they have mentioned are to some extent connected with the issues existing across the globe and problems highlighted in the Millennium Development Agenda. However, the majority of the activities are based on the local realities of the youth organisations, and no global aspect in them is touched.
3. The thematic fields of activities, which are most of interest among youth organisations in Lithuania, are promoting intercultural dialogue, responsible consumption, healthy lifestyle, increasing respect for human rights, ensuring access to education. These thematic fields of activities are the same as the fields of activities run by youth organisations in Lithuania at present. Furthermore, the issues which are not often met in the daily lives of young people (i.e, work with refugees and asylum seekers, fighting for employees’ and children’s rights, ensuring access to health service) are stated as not interesting. Furthermore, the research showed that youth organisations felt comfortable with the thematic fields of activities, on which they had some life or professional experience.
4. The research showed that new learning opportunities on the issues, which were not of their interest at present, could motivate youth organisations to expand their fields of activities and take new initiatives. For this reason it is important to challenge youth organisations and train them to make links between the thematic areas they are already aware of (i.e., diversity) and those which are less known (i.e., interconnectivity that exists among various cultures and races across the globe). Moreover, the research findings implied the need of youth organisations to gain more skills and experience themselves in order to be able to change their own habits and behaviors in the context of global awareness, and then be able to spread an appropriate message around the global development issues to a wider public.
5. The research discovered a number of activities run by youth organisations, which were connected with developing global citizenship competencies. However, the analysis of the research results showed, that such activities had global dimension in a very small extent.

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Nevertheless, the activities mentioned by the youth organisations create a great background for further work. In order to make youth organisations active actors in the field of global learning and development cooperation actions, it is important to provide them with some training opportunities, so they were able to link the activities around the competencies they were already doing with the main global learning aspects and content.

6. The research showed that there are different understandings and perceptions of the meanings of some terms used in global learning. The research results showed that the youth organisations in Lithuania had a wider understanding of the term „responsible consumption“. Furthermore, negativity towards the term „solidarity“ was felt in the research results. These facts show, that it is very important to let youth workers and youth leaders explore and get a better understanding of the meanings of unclear terms, so they were able to make well informed decisions towards their future activities and their connections with global learning.
7. Although there is a high motivation among youth organisations in Lithuania towards introducing global learning activities in their work, the research results showed that the members of some youth organisations don't have a vision, how global dimension can become an aspect of their daily activities and organisational culture. For this reason it is necessary to emphasize the importance of global learning and everyone's role as a global citizen in today's society.

The research „The Attitudes of Youth Organizations towards Global Issues and Global/Development Education in Lithuania“ pointed up key strengths and weaknesses of youth organisations related with global learning in their work. Based on the research findings and main conclusions, it is highly recommended to provide youth organisations with new learning opportunities, which:

- Stress the importance of global learning and the role of youth organisations in this field;
- Increase motivation of youth workers and youth leaders towards implementing global learning initiatives and taking active role as global citizenship promoters;
- Provide the basics of global learning concept, framework and methodology, as well as clarify key terms used;
- Strengthen capacity of youth workers and youth leaders to introduce global dimension and adapt the content of their local activities to global realities;
- Challenge youth organisations to explore new thematic fields of activities and find their connections with their daily routine;
- Attract youth workers and youth leaders with interactive, creative and engaging methods and tools which enrich their own work.

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