



National report on the
EU Youth in Action programme (YiA)
implementation 2007-2009
in Denmark

INTERIM EVALUATION

May 2010

NIRAS

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Executive summary

This report sums up the conclusions of the interim evaluation of the Youth in Action Programme from 2007 to 2009. It was requested by the National Authority for the Programme, the Danish Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation, which by the European Commission was commissioned to complete an interim evaluation according to the guidelines offered by the Commission. NIRAS has conducted the interim evaluation during the period February to May 2010. The evaluation involves project managers, participants, youth workers and managers from organisations and enterprises as well as coordinating organisations.

The design of the interim evaluation has been focused on the implementation of the programme in the first three years. The scope of the evaluation has been the project management and programme management level, and the evaluation is based on several different data sources. The evaluation furthermore summarises the input and output aspects of the programme. The input covers the use of funds distributed on actions and the number of staff involved in the administration of the programme. Output covers the activities and projects initiated, the number of participants and organisations benefiting from the programme and the types of activities that were launched – for instance in relation to target groups and gender.

The evaluation shows that the activities under YiA to a large extent are complementary to the opportunities for non-formal, international and open exchange and cooperation for young people in Denmark. Also with respect to informal learning¹ the Programme – in accordance with its aims – results in positive effects, especially by maturing the participants and increasing their confidence and self esteem. The survey further illustrates that a majority of the project managers believe that the YiA activities also complement other national Danish youth activities. What is especially striking is that a large majority assess that the YiA provides the participants with possibilities that they would not find within the framework of the formal educational institutions. These added possibilities also have the effect that they increase the desire by participants who are not doing well in the formal educational system to continue or return to the formal educational sector. By participating in YiA activities it therefore seems as if some of the ‘hard-to-reach’ groups might be eased into learning, thereby adding to the national priority of 95 % of a cohort finishing upper secondary education.

The connection between the non-formal activities of the YiA programme and the national policy priorities for young people is underlined by the qualitative data. From the survey it is evident that the YiA programme is seen as highly relevant to the needs of young people, youth workers and youth organisations in Denmark. The wide range of actions and types of activities provide the target groups with different opportunities that are not available in the national system.

The survey documents that the majority of the project managers assess that the Programme in general and their own project activities more specifically are relevant to the objectives and needs of their own organisation or institution. There seems to be no doubt that the YiA programme is seen as highly relevant to all the participating actors.

The activities in the YiA programme are seen to improve the young people’s view of the EU. The activities in the programme have a positive impact on the young people’s pan-European awareness and understanding. The evaluation indicates that the Programme to a great extent improves the participants’ social awareness as well as their sense of responsibility and their maturity. All in all, the results indicate that the project managers assess the Programme to have a positive and beneficiary effect towards the participants’ societal engagement and citizenship especially at a national level.

¹ Throughout the report a distinction is made between non-formal and informal learning. Non-formal learning takes place alongside the mainstream systems of education and training and does not typically lead to formalised certificates whereas informal learning is a natural accompaniment to everyday life and is therefore not as much intentional learning. The YiA Programme aims at supporting both aspects of learning.

The evaluation indicates that the Programme also has longer-lasting effects and as such contributes to the development of youth organisations in Denmark. Almost all the project managers mention that the YiA programme activities have given them and their organisation a more European outlook and made them incorporate Europe and European cooperation more often in their day-to-day work.

Following Danish tradition in the non-formal system there has been much focus on social inclusion. All sub-actions represented in the survey reported to have had participants with special needs. The data shows that physical and health related special needs are the least found in the projects, whereas socio-economic and educational needs are more dominant. In many cases the mobility is what attracts the young people to the programme, as they see the activities as a way of going abroad. However, there seems to be a certain underlying fear that individual mobility projects will overtake all other types of actions, thereby shifting from a group-based approach to a more individual approach. There should also in the future be possibilities for projects that are not solely based on individual mobility.

The types of participants reflect the young people, the organisations and the youth workers, and the main work is to attract new groups to the programme by providing information and by using all available channels. The gender balance in the programme has been rather stable over the three years of this evaluation. Based on this interim evaluation the evaluators conclude that the programme is on the right track regarding reaching the target groups, but more could be done if the resources were available to reach further and broader into the non-formal education scene in Denmark.

According to the project managers the participants have improved their qualifications substantially in all aspects by participating in the Programme, but the recognition of this among future employers could be improved. To further improve the relevance of the programme regarding the recognition of non-formal and informal competencies the evaluators suggest that an effort be made to inform the future employers about the Youthpass, which has been introduced as an instrument of validation and recognition for the YiA Programme to ensure the recognition of non-formal and informal learning.

The Danish Agency for International Education (IU) acts as the National Agency (NA) for the YiA programme. The staff at the agency provides information about the Programme, sub-programmes and specific actions of the decentralised parts of the Programme, gives advice to potential applicants, administers the grants and controls and financially manages the granted projects. The survey shows that most project managers have their knowledge about the programme from previous experience with applications or from the IU. Almost 80 % of the project managers have received personal guidance from the IU regarding the application procedure or during their projects activities. The survey shows a high level of satisfaction with the guidance from the NA. However, the administration procedures, the application form and the requirements of the reporting of contents are the administrative procedures that receive the lowest level of satisfaction in the survey and in the qualitative part of the evaluation. Although it is acknowledged that YiA is perhaps the programme with the least administration, the administrative workload is still mentioned as a problem and seen as an important barrier keeping out young people, and people who are not connected to an association or an organisation.

The survey illustrates that only few projects are not totally dependent on the level of support from the EU, and the results are interesting and sustainable to some extent: Young people are inspired to pursue new international endeavours, and the number of project applicants who have applied before indicates that the programme, its opportunities and personal rewards are addictive. This is also the case for project managers, many of whom constantly renew their appetite for the international experience, apply to the YiA Programme again and again and thereby add to the sustainability of the Programme. The sustainability also depends on the dissemination effort, and this has been a central focus point both for the projects and for the NA. The IU has to some extent been able to support some larger dissemination initiatives, and this is a way of supporting sustainability which should be maintained. For example the IU has supported dissemination in a book presenting ten projects highlighting creativity and innovation. In addition project managers have used new technologies such as YouTube, Facebook and other web 2.0 technologies to disseminate the projects. From pro-

ject managers in the interviews the most important message regarding sustainability is a wish to be able to apply for longer-term funding, thus being able to develop the partnerships further to improve quality.

1. Introduction

This report sums up the conclusions of the interim evaluation of the Youth in Action Programme from 2007 to 2009. It was requested by the National Authority for the Programme, the Danish Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation, which by the European Commission was commissioned to complete an interim evaluation according to the guidelines offered by the Commission.

NIRAS has conducted the interim evaluation during the period February to May 2010. The evaluation involves project managers, participants, youth workers and leaders from organisations and enterprises as well as coordinating organisations as far as we could obtain contact details.

The European Commission has provided a set of guidelines for the report, and in order to make the results comparable across Europe these guidelines have been followed closely. The mandate from the Danish Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation is a report of no more than 25 pages, which means that not all questions have been elaborated on to the same extent. In the Annex Report the reader will find evidence for the many conclusions in this report.

The Danish National Agency for YiA has been very helpful in providing information on the programme and the participants, and the people in the YiA group have also participated in interviews and given their view on the implementation of the programme.

The evaluators would like to express our gratitude towards all participants who at very short notice made themselves available for the evaluation. Without their support it would have been impossible to solve the task.

The report is structured as follows: in Chapter 4 the programme input and output are described. This section is based on statistical and financial information provided by the IU. Chapter 5 gives an assessment of the relevance of the programme in Denmark, and the chapter draws out interesting conclusions from the survey regarding relevance. Chapter 6 assesses the effectiveness and chapter 7 the efficiency. Chapter 8 and 9, respectively, outline the recommendations for the Youth in Action programme and future programmes.

This report has an Annex Report which holds a more in-depth description of methodology and programme input and output as well as all the tables from the survey.

2. Methodology

The evaluation has taken place from March 2010 to May 2010. It was carried out by NIRAS A/S. The design of the interim evaluation has, as requested by the Commission been focused on implementation of the programme in the first three years. The questions or key areas listed in the Commission guidelines were used as the back bone to formulate questionnaire and interview guidelines for focus groups.

The evaluation is based on several different data sources. This way it has been possible to triangulate data so that the relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of the Programme can be evaluated on the best possible basis.

The report is based on data from

- Desk research on existing material provided by the national agency for YiA, e.g. data on applications, project managers and financial data (Annex A and Annex B). These data has been categorised, organised and divided into sub-actions in order to answer the questions of the evaluation
- A quantitative surveys among YiA project managers and coordinating institutions
- Qualitative telephone interviews with five project managers (consult the Annex Report for further details)
- One focus group interview with project managers and one focus group interview with programme responsible at IU (consult the Annex Report for further details)

Regarding the quantitative survey, the data was collected between 11 March and 5 April 2010. To avoid the same respondents being asked to answer more than one questionnaire (e.g. if the respondent was project manager in a large institution with many different projects) one project per project manager was randomly selected before sending the questionnaire. The project managers were then asked to answer the questionnaire in the context of the specific randomly selected project. As a result, the questionnaire was sent to 144 different projects. Of these, 70 have answered the questionnaire resulting in a response rate of 48.6.

For all frequencies NIRAS has analysed whether significant differences between sub-programmes exist. Throughout the report any significant differences are explained and commented. If no comments are made, there are no significant differences. All frequencies and relevant cross tabulations are to be found in the Annex Report.

Two major challenges have arisen during the evaluation. Firstly the dialogue meeting which was designed to bring together actors across the programme to discuss recommendations and suggestions for future programmes had to be cancelled due to lack of participants. Secondly, it proved difficult to reach youth workers, or participants in other YiA activities, since they are not registered by the NA, and they are, more often than not, not belonging to an organisation or a network with formal procedures. This has affected the methodology and the evaluation design to some extent, and the results of the evaluation must be read and appreciated in the light of this.

3. Programme inputs and outputs

This chapter contains a description of the input and output of the implementation of the YiA programme in Denmark from 2007 to 2009. *Input* covers the use of the budget in actions and the number of staff involved in the administration of the programme. *Output* covers the activities and projects initiated, the number of participants and organisations benefiting from the programme and the types of activities that were launched – for instance in relation to target groups and gender.

3.1 Input

As can be seen from the table below the total expenditure on YiA in Denmark in the first three years has been EUR 5,396,117. The annual budget has grown over the first three years, and grown substantially when compared with the budget of the previous programme, Youth, which was granted a total of EUR 1,043,922 in 2006.

Table 1 Financial overview of the total grant of the YiA programme 2007-2009

Funding granted in €	2007	2008	2009	Totals
Action 1 - Youth for Europe	617,072	690,373	703,159	2,010,604
% of grant	(35.7)	(38.1)	(37.7)	(37.3)
Action 2 - European Voluntary Service	717,400	741,115	699,695	2,158,210
% of grant	(41.5)	(41.0)	(37.6)	(40.0)

Action 3 - Youth in the World	98,069	108,829	150,631	357,529
% of grant	(5.7)	(6.0)	(8.0)	(6.6)
Action 4 - Youth Support Systems	125,286	133,835	132,183	91,304
4.3 - Training and Network	(7.3)	(7.4)	(7.1)	(7.3)
% of grant				
Other projects	123,524	79,961	127,833	331,318
% of grant	(7.2)	(4.4)	(6.9)	(6.1)
Action 5 - Support for European cooperation	44,989	53,840	48,323	147,152
% of grant	(2.6)	(3.0)	(2.6)	(2.7)
Totals	1,726,340	1,807,953	1,861,824	5,396,117
	(100)	(100)	(100)	(100)

3.1.1 Action 1 Youth for Europe

In Denmark Action 1 Youth for Europe covered a total of 37.3 % of the grant for the three years covered in this report. The action is divided into three main types of activities: Youth Exchanges (1.1), Youth Initiatives (1.2) and Youth Democracy Projects (1.3). In Denmark the main activity in Action 1 has been the mobility activity, Action 1.1., which has covered 72.7% of the budget.

Table 2 Overview of the sum of grants in Action 1, Youth for Europe

Funding granted in €	2007	2008	2009	Totals
Action 1.1 Youth Exchange	464,24	441,948	556,074	1,462,646
% of grant	(75.3)	(64.0)	(79)	(72.7)
Action 1.2 Youth Initiatives	100,633	147,527	91,115	339,275
% of grant	(16.3)	(21.4)	(13.0)	(16.9)
Action 1.3 Youth Democracy Projects	51,815	100,898	55,970	208,683
% of grant	(8.4)	(14.6)	(8.0)	(10.4)
Total	617,072	690,373	703,159	2,010,604
	(100)	(100)	(100)	(100)

3.1.2 Action 2 European Voluntary Service

Action 2 EVS is the largest activity in the YiA programme with a total of 40 % of the total budget for YiA as shown above in Table 1 This action has grown proportionally compared to the Youth Programme, where it consisted of 33 % of the budget. EVS activities can be carried out individually or in groups.

3.1.3 Action 3 Youth in the World

From a slow start this action has covered a growing percentage of the budget over the three years covered by this evaluation, and almost a 50 % growth in real numbers. The idea of the action is to strengthen and facilitate relations between the neighbouring countries in the EU and its neighbours, by providing young people and youth workers from Europe with the opportunity to take part in exchanges and other non-formal education activities with their peers.

3.1.4 Action 4 Youth Support Systems

This sub-Action (4.3) supports the training of those active in youth work and youth organisations, in particular the exchange of experiences, expertise and good practice as well as activities which may lead to long-lasting quality projects, partnerships and networks. The sub-action supports both training and network activities and network activities organised by the youth promoters and by the national agencies (TCPs).

Table 3 Overview of the sum of grants in TCP

TCP	2007	2008	2009
Grant, €	111,892	70,930	127,833

3.1.5 Action 5 Support for European cooperation

Sub-action 5.1 is one of the smallest actions. It covers only approximately 2 % of the total sum of the YiA programme in Denmark in the period.

Table 4. Overview of the sum of grants in sub-action 5.1

Sub-action 5.1:	2007	2008	2009
Grant, €	14,666	50,000	48,322

3.2 Staff handling the implementation of the YiA programme 2007-2009

The YiA group in the NA consists of less than the equivalent of five full-time staff working mainly, but not exclusively, with the implementation of the YiA programme and Eurodesk. The group has been fairly consistent over the three years covered in this evaluation. The table below illustrates the growth in the number of full-time staff involved in the programme over the three years.

Table 5. The number of full-time staff involved in YiA (including Eurodesk)

Staff	2007	2008	2009
Staff	4.3	4.7	4.9

3.3 Output

This section presents the overall number of approved and applied projects and the total number of beneficiaries.

Table 6 Total number of participants across actions 2007-2009

Participants	2007	2008	2009	Total
Action 1 – Youth for Europe	1,026	1,183	1,108	3,318
Action 2 – European Voluntary Service	85	104	81	270
Action 3 – Youth in the World	88	142	174	404
Action 4 – Youth Support System	311	1,190	328	1,829
Action 5 – Support for European co-operation	1,000	94	930	2,024
Total	2,510	2,713	2,621	7,845

The below table shows the total number of granted projects per year in the YiA programme.

Table 7 Number of granted projects 2007-2009

	2007	2008	2009	Total
Action 1 – Youth for Europe	35	34	39	108
Action 2 – European Voluntary Service	25	28	25	78
Action 3 – Youth in the World	3	5	8	16
Action 4 – Youth Support System	32	37	35	104
Action 5 – Support for European cooperation	1	1	1	3
Total	96	105	108	309

Below the breakdown on actions and sub-actions is analysed in more depth.

3.3.1 Action 1 Youth for Europe

The number of applications to Action 1 has been fairly consistent, and the success rate equally so. The percentage of granted projects has been relatively stable from 49.3 % in 2007 to 54.2 % in 2009. When looking at the distribution among sub-actions, Youth Exchange is the largest, representing more than 50 % of the total number of applications for Action 1, and as mentioned also the largest part of the grant. Sub-action 1.3 which was a new activity in the YiA programme has had very few applications, 7 in total, of which 4 have been granted, as indicated in the below table.

Table 8 Number of applications to Action 1 Youth for Europe and percentage of granted applications

	2007	2008	2009	Total
Action 1 – Youth for Europe Applications				
Granted (%)	71 (49.3)	75 (45)	72 (54.2)	218
1.1 Youth Exchange Applications				
Granted (%)	50 (50)	32 (51.4)	41 (61)	123
1.2 Youth Initiatives Applications				
Granted (%)	20 (45)	41 (36.6)	27 (44.)	88
1.3 Youth Democracy Projects Applications				
Granted (%)	1 (100)	2 (50)	4 (50)	7

The number of participants in Action 1 can be seen below.

Table 9 Number of participants in Action 1

Sub-action	2007	2008	2009	total
Sub-action 1.1 Youth Exchange				
Participants	733	299	835	1,867
Sub-action 1.2 Youth Initiatives				
Participants	203	210	93	506
Sub-action 1.3 Youth Democracy Projects				
Participants	90	400	180	670
Total	1,026	909	1,108	3,043

3.3.2 Action 2 European Voluntary Service

The EVS has had a fairly stable number of participants over the last three years (between 80 and 100), but the number is substantially lower than it was in the Youth Programme 2000-2006.

Table 10 Number of participants in EVS 2007-2009

Programme	2007	2008	2009
Action 2			
Participants	85	104	81

Most of the project applications have been for individual EVS, whereas the group option, which is new, still has not attracted a larger number of applications, and none in 2009.

Table 11 Number of applications, share of granted, EVS 2007-2009

	2007	2008	2009	Total
Action 2 – European Voluntary Service				
Applications	35	32	26	93
Granted (%)	(71.4)	(87.5)	(96.2)	
2.1 EVS individual (Programme Countries)				
Applications	19	21	20	60
Granted (%)	(84.2)	(85.7)	(95)	
2.1 EVS Group (Programme Countries) Applications				
Granted (%)	2 (0)	1 (100)	0	3
2.1 EVS Individual (with at least one neighbouring country) Applications				
Granted (%)	12 (75)	10 (90)	6 (100)	28
2.1 Group (with at least one neighbouring country) Applications				
Granted (%)	2 (0)	0	0	2

The rate of granted projects is very high in EVS, which is characterised by highly experienced and administratively strong organisations who handle all the paperwork for the organisations that host volunteers, or for the volunteers from Denmark.

The distribution of incoming and outgoing volunteers can be seen below:

Table 12 Distribution on incoming and outgoing volunteers supported by the Danish NA in EVS 2007-2009

Participants	2007	2008	2009	Total
Incoming volunteers (to DK)	72	96	74	242
Outgoing volunteers (from Denmark)	13	8	7	28

3.3.3 Action 3 Youth in the World

Sub-action 3.1 has had a relatively stable number of applications, but the number of granted projects has grown from 23.1 % in 2007 to 72.3 % in 2009.

Table 13 Number of applications, share of granted - Action 3

Action 3 – Youth in the World	2007	2008	2009	Total
3.1 Cooperation with Neighbouring Countries				
Applications	11	10	11	32
Granted (%)	(27.3)	(50)	(72.7)	

The number of participants has been growing over the years from 88 in 2007 to 184 in 2009, as can be seen in Table 6.

3.3.4 Action 4 Youth Support System

Action 4 Youth Support is specifically targeted at building the capacity of youth workers and organisations to develop quality activities. The sub-action 4.3 has two different kinds of activities; training and networking which can be applied by organisation, youth workers and other actors involved in youth work for activities such as job shadowing, feasibility visits, evaluation meetings, study visits and seminars, training courses, as well as partnership building and networking activities

The other types of activities are the TCPs – training and cooperation plans. The TCPs are an instrument of the NA, and the projects are applied for by the NA. The projects are run in cooperation with other NAs across Europe and local, regional or national stakeholders within the youth field in Denmark.

Table 14 Number of applications, share of granted – Action 4

Action 4 – Youth Support System	2007	2008	2009	Total
4.3 Training and Network				
Applications	14	7	14	35
Granted (%)	(57.1)	(57.1)	(64.3)	
NA activities. Training and Cooperation Plans (TCPs)				
Applications	24	33	26	83
Granted (%)	(100)	(100)	(100)	
Total	38	40	40	118
	(84.2)	(92.5)	(87.5)	

Table 15 Number of participants – gender distribution

Action 4	2007	2008	2009
TCP	145	1107	165
Female (%)	(58,6)	(53,7)	(43,6)
Other projects	166	83	163
Female (%)	(48)	(54,2)	(53,4)

3.3.5 Action 5 – Support for European Cooperation

This sub-action has attracted a low number of applications, and only one project per year has been granted. However, these projects have had a large number of participants as indicated in the table below.

Table 16 Number of applications, share of granted –Action 5

Action 5 – Support for European cooperation	2007	2008	2009	Total
5.1 Meetings Applications Granted (%)	3 (33.)	4 (25)	4 (25)	11

3.4 Output related issues

3.4.1 Gender distribution

When examining the output tables (participants overall) it is evident that the programme has a relatively equal distribution of men and women. The distribution is shown below in Table 17. The only exception to this is Action 2 – EVS where there is a large, albeit falling over-representation of women.

Table 17 Participation and gender distribution –all actions 2007-2009

Programme	2007	2008	2009
Action 1.1- Youth Exchange			
Participants	733	299	835
Female (%)	(47.3)	(52.1)	(46.7)
Action 1.2 – Youth Initiatives			
Participants	203	210	93
Female (%)	(55.7)	(49)	(56)
Action 1.3 – Youth Democracy Projects			
Participants	90	400	180
Female (%)	(50)	(51.3)	(50.5)
Action 2 - EVS			
Participants	85	104	81
Female (%)	(97.6)	(79.8)	(77.7)
Action 3 – Youth in the World			
Participants	88	142	174
Female (%)	(51.1)	(50)	(62.6)
Action 4 – Youth Support Systems			
TCP			
Participants	145	1,107	165
Female (%)	(58,6)	(53.,7)	(43.6)
Training and networking			
Participants	166	83	163
Female (%)	(48)	(54.2)	(53.4)
Action 5 – Support for European Cooperation			
Participants	1,000	94	930
Female (%)	(50)	(49)	(50)
Total			
Participants	2,510	2,713	2,621
Female (%)	(51)	(53.3)	(50.7)

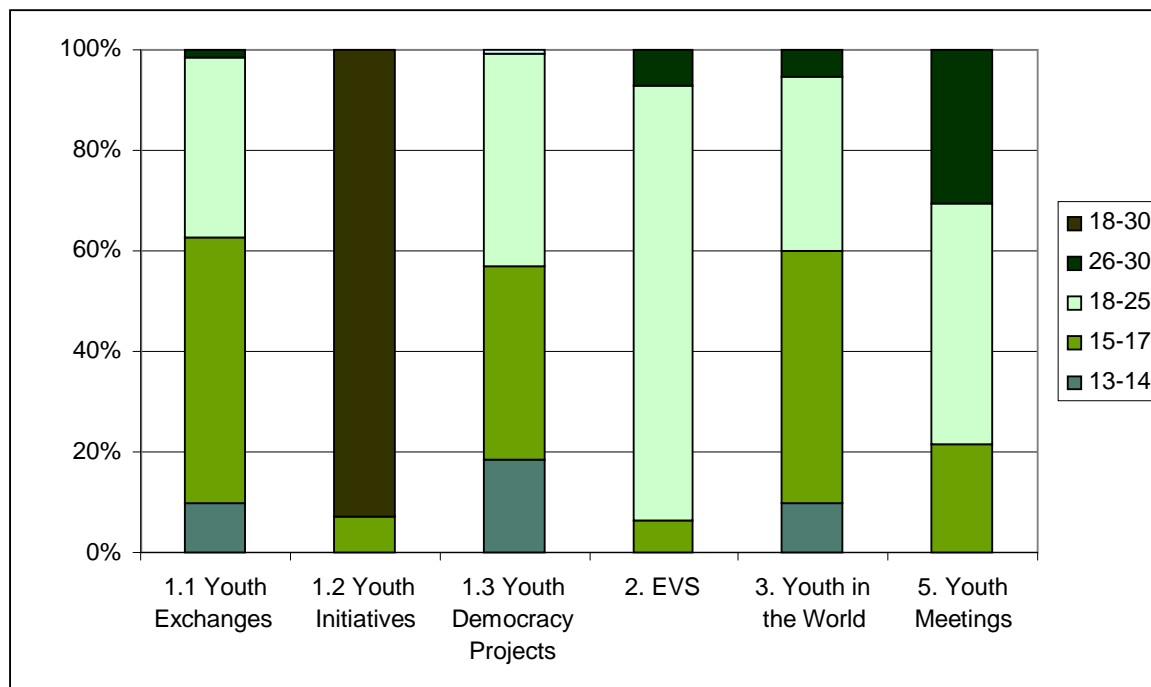
Source: Annex 2

3.4.2 Distribution of age in the YiA programme

The YiA programme attracts young people from 13 to 30 years old. The figure below shows the distribution. In the Annex Report the numbers of participants in each sub-action can be found. There were no data available on Action 4 as the action especially targets youth workers. The figure below shows that the programme and its sub-actions to a large extent attract the participants who it is designed to attract.

Action 1.1 has a majority of participants under 18, action 1.2 attracts the youth workers up to the age of 30 and action 1.3 the up to 25-year-olds. Action 2 has few participants from 15-17 and the majority up to 25, and action 3.1 and 5 a mix of all age groups.

Figure 1: Percentage of participants distributed on age and sub-action



3.4.3 Objectives and priorities covered

As can be seen below all objectives and priorities have been in play. The table below shows how the central objectives are covered in the actions and sub-actions in the period 2007-2009.

Table 18 Number of projects granted with focus on a prioritised subject

	European Citizenship				Participation of Young people				Cultural Diversity				Participation of young people with fewer opportunities				*Other themes			
	07	08	09	Total	07	08	09	Total	07	08	09	Total	07	08	09	Total	07	08	09	Total
Action 1	13	9	19	41	31	30	38	99	26	21	18	65	26	14	15	55	26	17	-	43
Action 2	17	17	15	49	24	28	23	75	21	18	16	55	9	3	3	15	10	15	-	25
Action 3 -	2	1	7	10	2	5	6	13	3	4	6	13	1	1	3	5	1	4	-	5
Action 4	3	3	5	11	7	3	8	18	4	2	2	8	3	1	3	7	5	3	-	8
Action 5	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	3	1	1	1	3	0	0	0	0	0	1	-	1
Total	35	31	46	112	65	67	76	208	55	46	43	144	39	19	24	82	42	40	-	82

The table shows that *participation of young people* has been the focus of the largest number of projects, followed by *cultural diversity*. Projects with the priority “*people with fewer opportunities*” have had the smallest number of projects and none in Action 5.

All of the actions have been in play, also the specific priorities in the European Year of Equal Opportunities (2007), Improving Health of Young People (2007) and the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue (2008). They are covered under *Other Themes*.

4. Assessments of relevance

The YiA programme is designed to encourage and enable young people and youth workers to participate in non-formal and informal learning across borders in order to improve their employability, promote their sense of citizenship, raise awareness of Europe, understand democracy and embrace cultural diversity, among other things. The aim is to get young people involved in shaping the future of the European Union, and the programme focus is on ensuring that young people with fewer opportunities get access to the Youth in Action programme as well as on encouraging projects with a thematic focus on inclusion. In this section it is assessed to what extent the YiA programme is perceived to be on the right track in implementing these objectives. The section sums up on how the programme is interacting with the people, organisations and society in Denmark.

4.1 Programme contribution and complementarity to national priorities

In Denmark there is no national youth policy as such, but a decentralised model, where the development of youth policy is the responsibility of the municipalities. The implementation of the programme YiA in Denmark 2007 coincided with the implementation of a comprehensive municipal reform and changed economic conditions for the municipalities, and this is perceived by both project manager and programme staff to have had a somewhat negative impact on a number of actions, where municipal support or initiative has previously played a large role. This has to some extent made the YiA programme even more relevant. And this evaluation shows very clearly that the activities under YiA to a large extent are complementary to the opportunities for non-formal, international and open exchange and cooperation for young people in Denmark. The survey illustrates that a majority of the project managers believe that the YiA activities complement other national Danish youth activities. This tendency is rather clear: 51 % assess this to a great extent and 41 % to some extent. (Table 8 in the Annex Report)

“We focus on capacity building for young people and youth coordinators by bringing them together to discuss issues such as climate change. With limited resources we achieve a lot due to the international partnerships that we build with the projects” (project manager, action 3.1)

Furthermore, based on the survey we conclude that the activities would – for the most part – not take place if the programme did not exist. The financial situation in the municipalities has accentuated this, as well as the above municipal structural reform, which has meant that the municipal support for, for example youth exchanges, not YiA-related, or projects for disadvantaged groups have been cut. (Table 40 in the Annex Report). What is especially striking is that a large majority assess that the YiA provides the participants with possibilities that they would not find within the framework of the formal educational institutions. 77 % of the project managers assess this to be the case to a great extent. (Table 9 in the Annex Report)

Furthermore, a large majority of the project managers believe that YiA is contributing to strengthening the learning of the participants. 52 % believe this to a great extent and 47 % to some extent. (Table 9 in the Annex Report) Again this suggests that YiA complements national policies – especially regarding ‘hard-to-reach’ youth who might not be doing that well in the formal educational system. This is certainly the way it is perceived by the project managers in the interviews and in the survey.

“In 2007 when we went to Estonia the youth we brought with us were very tired of going to school, they were in serious danger of not continuing in the educational system... Today they have ALL moved on to take their upper secondary level. All of them, - some of them are even planning to go abroad on a six month trip around the world, they would never have thought of – or dared doing this before participating in the programme” (project manager, focus group)

By participating in YiA activities it seems as if some of these groups might be eased into learning, thereby adding to the national priority of 95 % of a cohort finishing upper secondary education.

The connection between the non-formal activities of the YiA programme and the national policy priorities for young people, especially the educational strategies, is underlined by the qualitative data. The examples put forward of how young people with learning disabilities, drop-outs, young people with low self esteem etc. have acquired new competencies and found unknown resources in themselves through the YiA programme – the ability to speak a foreign language, to cooperate, to be creative and to find friendship across borders – are remarkable. The young people come back from their exchange, seminar or volunteer stay with self-confidence, a new identity, a new idea and a new plan for their lives, and for some this marks their entrance into the formal educational system. Therefore the Programme not only shows results with respect to increasing non-formal learning but also by supporting informal learning.

4.2 Programme relevance for young people, youth workers and youth organisations

From the survey it is evident that the YiA programme is seen as highly relevant to the needs of young people, youth workers and youth organisations in Denmark. The wide range of actions and types of activities provide the target groups with different opportunities that are not available in the national system. The survey shows that 62 % of the project managers are “very satisfied” with the activities for which grants can be had in the YiA programme. 36 % are “satisfied” and this overwhelming satisfaction is backed in the interviews. The more experienced project managers explain how they find ways of realising those projects that they find relevant and express their gratitude that this is possible (Table 47 in the Annex Report).

“It is amazing that this programme exists.” (project manager in survey)

“It is not just the best, but often the only way of getting young people together in a healthy and natural way.” (project manager in the survey)

Participants in Action 1.1 or 3 (Table 7 in the Annex Report) often have their first international encounter through these projects, at the age of 13-17, and it gives them an introduction to other cultures through meeting other young people that is often followed by new exchanges, an opening of the world, as the quote below illustrates:

“Their view of the world outside Denmark changes radically, our Danish participants are very nationally oriented, and not very open-minded, but after the project they tell us that they want to travel out in Europe and the world.” (Project manager in interview)

Furthermore, the survey documents that the majority of the project managers assess that the Programme in general and their own project activities more specifically are relevant to the objectives and needs of their own organisation or institution. Table 19 below shows that more than seven out of ten project managers assess that the activities for which support can be applied through Youth in Action are relevant in respect of the requirements and wishes of the project managers’ own organisation/institution. In addition, one out of four assesses that YiA to some extent is relevant in this respect. This result indicates that the Programme is relevant to the needs of the youth organisations in Denmark.

Table 19 To which extent are the activities for which support can be applied through Youth in Action relevant in respect to the requirements and wishes of your organisation/association?

	Percent
To a great extent	72 %
To some extent	25 %
To a low extent	3 %
Not at all	0 %
Do not know / N/A	0 %
Total	100 %

Note: n = 67

There seem to be no doubt that the YiA programme is seen as highly relevant to all the participating actors. In the next section the way in which the objectives are applied in the projects is examined in more detail.

4.3 European Youth Policy objectives in Action

The objectives of the European Youth Policy of stimulating European active citizenship and improving employability are not just words in policy documents. The survey, desk research and the interviews have shown very clearly that the programme is rather successful in stimulating the idea of Europe and making Europe a personal experience for the young people.

The activities in the YiA programme are seen to improve the young people's view of the EU. A majority (83 %) of project managers answer that this is the case to a great extent (25 %) or to some extent (58 %), and even more answer that they see the activities in the programme as having a positive impact on the young people's pan-European awareness and understanding. (Table 13 in the Annex Report)

“Our young participants underwent a remarkable change. They were very introvert and self-absorbed – and nationalistic almost... but now they want to go out and explore the world – due to one week of cooperation with young people from other countries.” project manager, action 1.1).

Table 20 To which extent do you find that the young people, based on their experience with Youth in Action, have become more committed to community life/social debate, e.g. through associations, interest groups and newspapers ...

	To a great extent	To some extent	To a low extent	Not at all	Do not know / N/A	Total
... at national level	27%	63%	6%	1%	3%	100%
... at European level	24%	48%	19%	3%	6%	100%

Whether the activities lead to more active participation can be seen in the above table. The table shows that the majority – 63 % of the project managers – assess that to some extent the participants are now more engaged in society at a national level – e.g. by participation in various communities and by reading newspapers. In addition, 27 % assess this to be the case to a great extent. Only 6 % believe that the Programme only to a low extent has improved the participants' societal engagement and only 1 % do not think that the Programme has done anything positive in this respect.

“The best – but not only example of this – is one of our incoming volunteers who worked at a social project running a café for homeless young people went back to her country and started up the same type of activity there. She had never been interested in social work before coming here. I have a heap of examples of how the young people discover the world while they are away – they can not avoid it!” (co-ordinator EVS).

Again, the societal engagement can be divided into more concrete aspects. This is shown in Table 21. The results indicate that the Programme to a great extent improves the participants' social awareness as well as their sense of responsibility and their maturity. The project managers are slightly less inclined to assess the Programme to have a positive effect regarding the participants' readiness to enter the labour market.

Table 21 To which extent do you find that the activities in connection with Youth in Action have had a beneficiary effect on the social and societal behaviour of the participants with respect to ...

	To a great extent	To some extent	To a low extent	Not at all	Do not know/ N/A	Total
... their social awareness? (n = 64)	56 %	44 %	0 %	0 %	0 %	100 %
... their sense of responsibility? (n = 64)	52 %	42 %	6 %	0 %	0 %	100 %
... their maturity? (n = 62)	55 %	44 %	2 %	0 %	0 %	100 %
... their readiness to enter the labour market? (n = 64)	19 %	47 %	27 %	0 %	8 %	100 %

All in all, the results indicate that the project managers assess the Programme to have a positive end beneficiary effect towards the participants' societal engagement and citizenship at a national level.

48 % of the project managers assess that to some extent the participants are now more engaged in the society at a European level. 24 % assess this to be the case to a great extent. However, a relatively large share – 19 % – believe that the Programme has improved the participants' societal engagement at European level only to a small extent, and in addition 6 % do not think that the Programme has done anything positive in this respect. (Table 16 in the Annex Report)

98 % of the project managers in the survey answer that they find that the programme has “contributed to improving the young people's learning process”. The fact that the young people learn how to cooperate with others, present themselves and their country and in some cases live and work in another country up to a year, as is the case in Action 2 (EVS), adds to their personal development to the extent that more people in the interview expressed it like this (Table 9 in the Annex Report):

“They are completely different people; it is a life-changing experience for them.” (co-ordinating organisation manager)

As to whether the programme affects the employability of the beneficiaries, the case is not so clear as only 19 % assess that the programme to a large extent have been beneficiary to the participants with respect to their readiness to enter the labour market. However there are differences between the sub-actions; the project managers to a large extent assess that the EVS indeed has positive effects for the participant's readiness for entering the labour market (Table 21a in the Annex Report). That the programme in general does not to a large extent has a positive effect on the participant's readiness for entering the labour market is not a fault to the Programme or any aspects of the implementation of it, but is more due to the fact that the knowledge and understanding of non-formal and informal learning is not developed very far in Denmark, where the political and employer focus tend to be more on grades, formal education and exams. For instance, only 13 % of the project managers therefore assess that non-formal learning to a large extent is known and accepted by potential employers in Denmark (Table 20 in the Annex Report).

The Youthpass that has been introduced as an instrument of validation and recognition for the YiA programme to ensure that the learning experience gained through the Youth in Action Programme² is recognised

² It is applicable for European Voluntary Service (Action 2), Youth Exchanges (Sub-action 1.1) and Training Courses (Sub-action 4.3).

as an educational experience, and a period of non-formal learning is one way in which the non-formal learning can be recognised further.

31 % of the project managers mention that they have issued Youthpass to their participants and of those who have not used it, the reasons are mainly that they were not aware of its existence or had not experienced any demand for it (Table 19 in the Annex Report). It should in this respect be mentioned that there only limited difference in the use of Youthpass the sub-actions between with the EVS being the sub-action most frequently issuing Youthpass to the participants. However as one of the managers say:

“There seems to be growing demand for diplomas and references, so perhaps we should re-think our use of Youthpass.” (project manager, Sub-action 1.1)

The results of the survey suggests that if the Youthpass is to have more impact, and gain more widespread use, further information about it is needed although it already is mentioned in the grant notification and in the contract that project managers are obliged to inform the participants of their right to receive a Youthpass. Further, the interviews point to the fact that the procedures might have to be simplified because, by those who actually use or have used Youthpass it is seen as a relatively heavy administrative burden, taking up too much additional time.

4.4 Added value

The added value is the international dimension, the meeting of cultures and people, whether it is at a seminar for youth workers, young entrepreneurs who find out that the main cultural divide between them has to do with their different perception of the gender issue, or a volunteer coming to a small island in a remote Danish region, where they have to live for a year. Each of the sub-actions give an added value in their own way, but there is a keen awareness of the objectives among the project managers, and in the interviews the project managers/beneficiaries were very articulate on the subject, and it seems to be something that is not only a requirement but also perceived as very important in its own right.

The long-term benefits from participating in YiA and the related activities are something that a majority of the project managers assesses positively. 64 % assess that in the long run their organisation will to a great extent benefit from the experience they have gained from YiA, and the remaining 36 % believe this to be the case to some extent. (Table 14 in the Annex Report) This indicates that the Programme also has longer lasting effects and as such contributes to the development of youth organisations in Denmark.

An example of this is the extent to which the Programme has contributed to a more European outlook. Almost all the project managers mention that the YiA programme activities have given them and their organisation a more European outlook and made them incorporate Europe and European cooperation more often in their day-to-day work, which adds value to not only the direct beneficiaries of the YiA grant, but also other young people or youth workers in the organisations. Another aspect of added value very evident in the interviews is the added values to the local communities, by for instance having a volunteer, or to a small town or village when young people from all over Europe meet. When the project include a so called “home stay” where the young participants are staying with a family and not in a hotel or hostel, this in particular enables the European experience to tickle all the way down to the families involved. This is an important aspect of the exchanges, but the work involved is not to be underestimated.

These results indicate that the Programme is on course regarding expanding the youth organisations horizon more and focus more on international and European cooperation.

5. Assessment of effectiveness

5.1 Reaching objectives and reflecting priorities

Youth in Action has a number of central objectives and themes. This section summarises the extent to which the YiA programme is on course to achieving these objectives.

5.1.1 Social inclusion

Following Danish tradition in the non-formal system there has been much focus on social inclusion. 48 % of the projects in the survey answer that they have included participants with special needs, and 77 % have participants with another ethnic background than Danish (Table 23 and Table 30 in the Annex Report).

In the interviews the social inclusion has also proven very important to the informants. They point out how that the YiA activities are vital in giving the more disadvantaged young people opportunities otherwise reserved for the more affluent, and stress the fact that going out in a group makes it possible to be more inclusive. The good examples and stories told by the project managers more or less all have this element of social inclusion at the core.

Regarding ethnicity there is a somewhat polarised distribution as can be seen in Table 22: The projects either have almost no participants with another ethnic background than Danish or almost all of the participants have another ethnic background. All in all the result indicates that the Programme includes both ethnic Danes and people with another ethnic background than Danish; but the survey also indicates that the projects to a lesser degree have mixed participation concerning ethnicity.

Table 22. What is the share of the projects participants with another ethnic background than Danish?

	Percent
0 %	23 %
1-25 %	33 %
26-50 %	2 %
51-75 %	13 %
76-100 %	30 %

5.1.2 Special needs or fewer opportunities

Project managers as well as programme managers at the NA agree on the opinion that YiA gives the opportunity of mobility and a cultural meeting to young people who would not otherwise be included in the internationalisation experience.

The programme furthermore gives room for young people with special needs or fewer opportunities. 48 % of the projects in the survey replied to have had participants with special needs, most with reading and learning disabilities but 19 % with mental disabilities and 6% with physical disabilities.

All sub-actions represented in the survey reported to have had participants with special needs. There is however a perception, formulated by some of the managers of coordinating institutions in the interviews that Action 2 seem to be dominated by the middle class young people with high school degrees, and the survey backs this with only one Sub-action 2 project reporting having had participants with “other special needs”. The data available on all projects on the number of projects aimed at young people with fewer opportunities (Table 32a in the Annex Report) support the findings in Table 23 above. From this data it is evident that physical and health related special needs are the least found in the projects, whereas socio-economic and educational needs are more dominant.

Table 23. Which special needs have there been?

	Percent
Other special needs (n = 64)	22%
Learning disabilities (n = 64)	30%
Language difficulties (n = 64)	28%
Reading difficulties (n = 64)	31%
Mental disability (n = 64)	19%
Physical disability (n = 64)	6%
Do not know / there have not been participants with special needs in the project (n = 64)	44%

5.1.3 Mobility

Mobility is a key word also in YiA. In many cases it is the mobility that attracts the young people to the programme, as they see the activities as a way of going abroad. The underlying results and experiences seem to be more apparent after the activity, the exchange visit etc, and then the trip become less important.

The level of satisfaction with action 2 European Voluntary Service is an example of how popular mobility is in the programme. 82 % of the EVS project managers believe that the EVS experience to have had a positive impact on the young people's professional and individual development to a high degree. (Table 15 in the Annex Report). Mobility is seen as a good way to reach the objectives of the programme, but they can also be reached by other means that do not include travelling far, for instance more virtual mobility, using communication technologies and social media, tools that young people are very adept in using. There seems to be a certain underlying fear that mobility will overtake all other types of actions, thereby shifting from a group-based approach to a more individual approach.

5.1.4 Geographical coverage

Denmark is a small country and the coverage of the programme is satisfactory within the country. Organisations from all over Denmark have access to the programme on equal terms. As reflected in the survey (Table 26 in the Annex Report) all regions have been represented in the programme, geographical coverage is not an issue for concern in the implementation of the programme in Denmark.

5.1.5 Target groups and gender balance

All envisaged target groups are covered in the YiA programme from 2007 to 2009. From the NA a special effort has been made to ensure that Sub-action 5 and Sub-action 1.3 came in use in Denmark. The types of participants reflect the young people, the organisations and the youth workers, and the main work is to attract new groups to the programme by informing and using all available channels.

The gender balance in the programme has been rather stable over the three years of this evaluation, and it does not seem to be necessary to do any special effort to influence this.

5.1.6 Recognition of non-formal learning

The recognition of non-formal learning is one of the areas where the YiA faces the same challenges as other non-formal learning initiatives. Non-formal learning is apparently not widely recognised among the employers, (Table 20 in the Annex Report) and although the Youthpass to some extent is seen as a way of formalising the non formal education, this has not yet reached its full potential.

5.1.7 Employability

Whether the programme activities as such improve the employability of the participants is not within the scope of this interim evaluation. However, looking at the following general indicators – professional and personal qualifications – at least the link to employability is visible.

In Table 24 the perceived impact on the participants is divided into more concrete categories. From the table it is clear that – according to the project managers – the participants have improved their qualifications substantially in all aspects. However, the participants have not improved equally in all aspects: “Project management” and “conflict handling” are the aspects the project managers assess to have shown the least degree of improvement, whereas “cooperation”, “intercultural competences” and “personal maturity/development” are the aspects with the greatest improvements.

Table 24 To which extent do you find that the young people have improved their qualifications within the following areas through Youth in Action?

	To a great extent	To some extent	To a low extent	Not at all	Do not know / N/A	Total
Language (n = 67)	43 %	40 %	10 %	3 %	3 %	100 %
Communication (n = 67)	58 %	39 %	1 %	0 %	1 %	100 %
Intercultural competence (n = 67)	61 %	34 %	1 %	0 %	3 %	100 %
Project management (n = 67)	22 %	51 %	16 %	1 %	9 %	100 %
Conflict handling (n = 67)	22 %	48 %	15 %	4 %	10 %	100 %
Cooperation (n = 67)	75 %	24 %	0 %	0 %	1 %	100 %
Network formation (n = 66)	56 %	35 %	6 %	0 %	3 %	100 %
Personal maturity/development (n = 66)	67 %	32 %	0 %	0 %	2 %	100 %

It is common for the aspects where the participants show the greatest improvement that they all concern more personal and intercultural competences. This again indicates that the Programme is on course for contributing to this aspect of the programme objectives.

6. Assessment of efficiency

6.1 Organisational structure for the YiA programme in Denmark 2007-2009

In Denmark, administration and coordination of the decentralised actions and sub-actions of the Youth in Action programme is handled by the Danish Agency for International Education under the authority of the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation, thus acting as National Agency (NA) for YiA. Their job is to inform about the programme and the actions and sub-actions, to give advice to potential applicants, to administer the grants and to control and financially manage the granted projects.

This structure seems logical and clear for the people working in it, and it seems as if it works well to enable a successful implementation of the YiA programme in Denmark. Regarding the division of the programme into decentralised and centralised actions this seems to be working well enough, especially for those among the potential beneficiaries who are well informed and know the difference. There is a widespread understanding that the model delivers good value for money because it enables the NA to give advice to projects in the decentralised sub-actions, and to follow these closely. At the same time pilot actions can be implemented and evaluated at centralised level which ensures a good development of the activities within the YiA Programme.

The workload and the control have increased seen from the IU perspective, both nationally and centrally. But there is a general understanding that control is necessary. Furthermore, Denmark is special in so far as there are two ministries involved in the monitoring and control procedure; the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation. However, the IU staff expresses their general satisfaction with the way that the cooperation and the coordination between the two ministries work.

From the interview with the staff of the Agency the impression is furthermore that the cooperation with the Commission has been good throughout the period, and that the communication and coordination structures set up for the programme works well. Concerning the cooperation with the Executive Agency, the IU staff express that this has improved over the period covered by this evaluation.

6.2 Programme management and design

6.2.1 Information and communication

The survey shows that most project managers have their knowledge about the programme from previous experience with applications (51 %) or from the IU – the Danish Agency for International Education (54 %). Also more informal sources of information are mentioned, e.g. colleagues (30 %) and friends/network (26 %). The least mentioned source of information is the EU Commission and the media, as only few project managers mention these. The majority (93 %) of the respondents in the survey have used the website, www.iu.dk. Most of the users are furthermore satisfied with the usability of the website – 90 % are either very satisfied or satisfied with the website (Table 39 in the Annex Report).

Almost 80 % of the project managers have received personal guidance from the IU regarding the application procedure or during their projects activities. Again, the IU receives almost exclusively positive feedback; 70 % are very satisfied and 28 % are satisfied with the IU guidance. (Table 44 in the Annex Report)

Concerning the application procedure electronic application forms have been introduced during the period for some centralised applications, but not for the decentralised actions. In the questionnaire, just about one third of the project managers answer that they have used the electronic application form while the other two third used a paper-based application form. The NA managers find it very disappointing that not all application forms are electronic, as this would help both applicants and the management and administration of applications.

“*We are not really in line with the information society.*” (NA staff in focus group)

Despite this, the survey shows a high level of satisfaction with the application procedure. 27 % are very satisfied and 70 % are satisfied. Only two project managers are dissatisfied with the procedure. The fact that the NA officers give advice and guidance up until the application date is mentioned in the interviews as a very good idea, and this is valued highly among the applicants. It is not allowed to give advice after the deadline or to ask for more information, and this is not done, but the NA officers can be consulted before deadline, an opportunity that more and more applicants take. The NA believes that the consultation procedure minimises the number of projects rejected on administrative grounds.

However, the picture is not as positive as the abovementioned numbers suggest, because at the same time 54% of the project managers in the survey answer that they see *administrative requirements* as one of the three main factors impeding on the implementation of the project, followed by *lack of resources* (50%) and *lack of support and/or interest from colleagues* with only 22% (Table 49 in the Annex Report).

The application procedure is, however, not the only administrative procedure the project managers encounter during their participation in the Programme. Table 25 provides an overview of the level of satisfaction among the project managers regarding the various administrative procedures. As can be seen, there is in general a high degree of satisfaction with the administrative procedures, with the requirements of financial reporting and with payment of the grant receiving the best evaluation. The application form and the requirements of the reporting of contents are the administrative procedures that receive the lowest level of satisfaction. However, the differences between the assessments of the various procedures are small.

Table 25 How satisfied have you been with the administrative procedure in connection with the following?

	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied	Do not know / N/A	Total
The application form	13%	72%	13%	1%	0%	100%
The time span between the deadline for applications and approval	16%	67%	13%	3%	0%	100%
Final reporting of exchange/project activities	16%	64%	12%	1%	6%	100%
Requirements to the financial reporting	20%	70%	6%	0%	5%	100%
Requirements to the reporting of contents	9%	70%	14%	0%	8%	100%
Payment of the grant	29%	64%	8%	0%	0%	100%

Note: n = 67

Last, an important indicator of the assessment of the level of administrative burdens is the degree to which the project managers think that the resources invested in the administrative procedures are worth while. As with the other indicators this seems to be the case. 24 % believe to a large extent that there is a reasonable connection between the administrative workload and the EU grant received, and 51 % assess this to some extent. Only 5 % believe that the administrative workload is too much when looking at the level of the grant given. (Table 35 in the Annex Report)

However, if the amount of workload is assessed regarding the outcome of the YiA, the picture is more positive. Only 2 % believe that the workload in this respect is too much, but the workload should on the other hand not be underestimated. In the qualitative interviews the project managers express how the workload is always much larger than what is visible in connection with the projects. All the administration is not doable if you do not have an organisation behind you. And this is counterproductive in relation to wanting to attract the young people into organising their own projects, and not just being passive beneficiaries:

6.2.2 Financial support

As noted above, there is a high degree of satisfaction with the financial procedures; but also regarding the level of financial support there is substantial satisfaction among the project managers.

40 % assess that the level of financial support has to a great extent been adequate for executing the desired activities, and 54 % assess this to some extent. Only 6 % believe that the amount of financial support have been adequate to a low extent. (Table 48 in the Annex Report) The level of financial support thus in general seems to be adequate. This is further emphasised by the fact that according to the project managers, almost two in three projects could not have been executed without EU funding, and only 5 % of the projects would to a great extent be carried out even without financial support from the EU. In other words, only few projects are not totally dependent on the level of support from the EU (Table 36 in the Annex Report).

It is further worth noticing that 73 % to some or to a great extent believe that the financial assurance from the EU has been an advantage when applying for further support from other sources. Gaining financial support from the EU thus signalises seriousness which increases the probabilities for further funding. Hence, the EU support is worth more than just the grant itself (Table 46 in the Annex Report).

The criticism regarding the financial support is for the most detailed and sub-action related. For some actions a 30 % self financing of travel costs prove a large problem, especially when cooperating with countries where there are no other forms of financing from for instance a municipality, or when the partners are not organised at all, for instance homeless young people in Romania.

The administrative procedures are not easy, but the NA provides some support which makes it doable, especially for those who have experience in applying for grants or are used to writing and formulating ideas and concepts, and those who have an organisation behind them. On the other hand the application forms for YiA are designed to make sure that the applicants have thought their project through, and that it is coherent and comprehensible for people outside. It is a control mechanism and that is seen and appreciated by the people involved who might have tried applying under the Youth programme or other programmes and feel that the burden of the application has been lowered, and the forms made less complicated, albeit the control seems to have been worsened.

6.3 Programmes input and tools

On the whole, the grant for YiA is considered reasonable to support the initiatives and implement the programme in Denmark. With the grant the NA has been able to get the programme started and with all, or most, procedures now in place the NA staff has more room for information activities in order to attract more people to the programme. The YiA group at the NA has been fairly stable and this has been an advantage in the first three years of the programme.

The first years (2007 and 2008) saw some difficulties with forms that were not ready on time, were changed repeatedly etc. but this seems to have been remedied now. There is a general recommendation that changes to forms should be kept to a minimum once a programme or an action is launched.

Youth Link has been continuously updated and is now working relatively well, which makes it a serviceable tool for the NA. The fact that most data can be exported to Excel makes it a valuable tool. However, the NA staff hopes that Youthlink will be further developed to ease the work with the quarterly and yearly reporting of the NA.

Youth Net is a communication tool between the Commission, NAs and other bodies working with the administration of the YiA and as long as the NAs make sure that it is updated it is a very good help too. The NA expresses their satisfaction with the fact that training sessions and staff meetings are arranged on a Commission basis; however, as a small NA they cannot participate in activities on all levels.

6.4 Room for new actors?

From the interview in the NA it can be concluded that there is a general satisfaction with the number of projects and beneficiaries reached by the programme in 2007-2009. The fluctuations in some of the sub-actions are mainly due to the abovementioned structural reform of the municipalities in Denmark in 2007, which meant that 2008 was a very tough year for the municipalities including normally very active institutions such as the youth clubs, and projects dependent on municipal co-financing.

To boost the number of participants an information campaign was launched and staff from the NA went around in the country to inform about the programme. This worked, and in 2009 there has been a general over-expenditure on some of the sub-actions. The fact that most municipalities are now more settled in the new structure has also meant that some project promoters have returned to the programme. The entrance barriers to the programme are not as such high, but regardless some might consider the application procedures too problematic, not know about the help available at the IU, and others look at the available resources in the specific actions and consider them too low to make the effort worthwhile.

7. Assessment of sustainability

The overall perspective on sustainability of the YiA programme depends on the perspective which is in focus. For the individual, project managers and programme managers at the NA agree, that the sustainability is high. Young people are inspired to pursue new international endeavours, and the number of project appli-

cants who have applied before indicates that the programme, its opportunities and personal rewards are addictive. There might even be found evidence that young people – youth workers with international experience – go on to request employment in international organisations, and they spread the joys of the intercultural meeting to friends and family, ‘infecting’ others as they go along. This is also the case for project managers, many of whom constantly renew their appetite for the international experience, apply to the YiA programme again and again – or to other programmes – thereby adding to the sustainability of the programme, the networks, the cooperation and the impact of the programme.

As for the projects themselves, some of them are sustainable in so far as the networks they are based on live on, are used for new projects – and some die after the project period is over. But the sustainability to a large extent depends on how these networks are developed and maintained. The sustainability also depends on the dissemination effort, and this has been a central focus point both for the projects and for the NA. The projects are required to work actively with the dissemination, and the interviews indicate that it is a task that is taken very seriously. The project managers see a value in disseminating to attract new participants and raise awareness of their organisations and activities – not only because it is an EU requirement. The interviews give many interesting examples of how new technologies, web pages, Facebook, small movies uploaded to YouTube and other web2.0 technologies have been used both in projects and to spread results. The IU has to some extent been able to support some larger dissemination initiatives, and this is a way of supporting sustainability which should be maintained.

The NA has in the period supported this move towards more sustainability through dissemination by giving advice on dissemination, and some joint efforts have also been made with LLP to disseminate results of projects. A book presenting ten projects with regard to creativity and innovation was produced in 2009, and this is one of many examples of how YiA and LLP work together to reach a larger audience and build bridges between the formal and non-formal education sphere.

From project managers in the interviews the most important message regarding sustainability is a wish to be able to apply for longer-term funding, thus being able to develop the partnerships further.

8. Recommendations - Youth in Action 2010-2012

Based on this interim evaluation the evaluators conclude that the programme is on the right track regarding reaching the target groups, but more could be done if the resources were available to reach further and broader into the non-formal education scene in Denmark. There is a good focus on the objectives of the European Youth Policy, not in a very direct sense, but more because it is in line with the national initiatives and agendas concerning employability, entrepreneurship, inclusion, internationalisation, intercultural understanding and acknowledgement of both informal and non-formal learning,

The YiA programme is not a large programme measured in terms of number of projects or participants, but it has a large impact on those that use it, which is evident in the interviews. However, the evaluators recommend that even more is done, and resources dedicated to this end, to ensure that more potential applicants get to know the programme and the opportunities within it. In one of the interviews from the evaluation of the Youth Programme a project manager pointed to the fact that it was a pity that the programme was “Denmark’s most well kept secret”. Despite the general, and high-quality information effort by the IU including among other things the above-mentioned campaign in 2007 **there still seems to be room for improvement, when it comes to reaching more potential applicants and making Youth in Action known more widely.**

A very important aspect in the Programme as it is today as well as in the work to include more young people lies in the impact on the intercultural skills of the young participants. The survey showed that the greatest improvement seen by the project managers was on the more personal and intercultural competences of the participants. This is at the core of what they learn, and also what potential employers demand later when the

young people enter the labour market. The evaluators suggest that **more emphasis be put on this element of participant impact in the information and 'marketing' of the Programme in the future.**

In the interviews the participants list a number of ways in which more young people could be included in the programme: among the ideas most often mentioned was to more actively use former participants in the information and dissemination process so that new potential users of the programme learned about it from young people. The young-to-young approach was stressed as much more valuable than the traditional approach with brochures, flyers etc. Further, a number of respondents suggested increasing the use of social media, such as Facebook in the promotion, because this is one of the main channels of the young people today. The evaluators support this and recommend that an **effort is made to incorporate the social media to a much larger extent in order to reach potential beneficiaries.**

Regarding getting more potential applicants to actually apply for the Programme, thereby enlarging the circle of applicants, the evaluators would like to point to an idea presented by several of the project managers. This idea was to set up a tutor system, enabling new potential applicants to get advice from an experienced project manager the first time. The NA should have an active role in this, and could combine it with more seminars, meeting across the programme, and perhaps even across LLP and YiA.

Young people with fewer opportunities – financial, social or geographical – are often difficult to recruit for project organisers who wish to involve them in their activities. This is due to the fact that these young people are often not belonging to specific organisations. The evaluators suggest that the NA, in their promotion of the YiA programme, pay even greater attention to those young people who are not belonging to youth organisations or to the traditional potential user groups of the YiA-programme. We suggest **more widely visible campaigns for the YiA programme through municipal youth work and especially through schools, but also in higher education institutions to reach young people with resources to run a YiA project.** Youth organisations could furthermore be supported in their pursuit to encourage youth outside of their member network to participate. As an example, NAs could give priority to projects coordinated by youth organisations that include both their own members and additional members outside of the organisation.

To further improve the relevance of the Programme regarding the recognition of non-formal competencies the evaluators suggest that **an effort be made to inform about the Youthpass**, which has been introduced as an instrument of validation and recognition for the YiA Programme to ensure the recognition of non-formal learning, as this seems to still be lacking behind. Finally, the involvement of the young people, regardless of the activity he or she is involved in, is central. Several project managers point to the fact that the good stories of HOW to do this, not just the good practise history, but the actual WAY of doing it, would be helpful. By developing and spreading a sort of Youth project didactics the IU could help renew the interest in this area and help generate more interest in the programme. This could be an added help to the potential applicants and an indirect way of creating interest in the programme through articles etc.

Regarding the administration procedures the recommendations from this interim evaluation cannot but have fine-tuning as its objective, since most of the criticism regarding administrative issues cannot be solved on a national basis. Regarding the application forms an interesting schism is apparent in the analysis: on the one hand the survey shows that the project managers are satisfied with them, whereas the comments to the survey, interviews and focus group recommendations reflect a widespread feeling that the forms are too complicated and too text-based. The viewpoints are that the forms and the whole EU terminology is not conducive for the engagement of the young people themselves but stimulates a system where coordinating institutions take care of the paper work on behalf of the young people.

There is also a feeling that creating forms that cover many different types of activities makes it difficult to be precise and thus “cloud” the picture. That the administration procedures are seen as bureaucratic and an impediment is clear from the survey, but it is also accepted that some bureaucratic measures are necessary. However, **the actions designed to stimulate young people’s own activities should be simplified if possible.** The young people, who are the main target group of for instance Youth Initiatives seldom have the necessary organisational backing or resources available, and then simply find other ways of realising their pro-

jects or abandon the idea. Connected to this is a recommendation about terminology that was also mentioned in the evaluation of the previous programme: The EU terminology is considered difficult to understand, and to some even empty, which again may raise the barriers when the young people themselves participate in the formulation of projects.

Suggestions as to how to overcome some of the barriers in the administration procedures are ensuring that newcomers to the programme receives the available information and that they are informed about the existing possibilities for additional information (e.g. the FAQ page on the IU web-site and the training sessions on how to apply, how to report and how to disseminate). Some also point to the fact that the high level of service from the NA to the applicants before they submit their application is not known to all – especially not to newcomers. One way to inform about this could be via explicit information in the calls for applications and in general emphasise the support regarding the administrative procedures that is available to the applicants when promoting the Programme. **The evaluators recommend that the guidance available from the IU be advertised more in order to ensure equal opportunities for all – especially to potential newcomers before their application is submitted.**

YiA projects often end up being full time jobs for the project coordinators – both because of the projects in themselves and because of the amount of paperwork required to comply with the YiA rules. If the programme opened up **for the possibility of paying a symbolic salary to one or two project managers** – also in those programmes that are currently relying on young people’s voluntary work – this would work to make these projects more ‘sellable’ to the young people.

Finally, the time issue is important to consider. As one of the respondents in the survey put it:

The young people are “short-termed”, but the programme is not. Sometimes a project has to start a year before (partner search, preparatory visit, application etc.) and you want to involve the young people, but they cannot be bothered when it is so far away in time.” (project manager – survey)

One of the most criticised rules in the interim evaluation is the rule of 30 % co-financing of international travel expenses. The interviews gave several examples of how this rule worked to exclude less privileged youth from participating in YiA activities. Especially those young people who are considered youth-at-risk, and who have less financial, social or geographical means to travel, are in risk of getting excluded from participating in YiA activities, because they cannot themselves finance the last 30 % and do not necessarily belong to an organisation or youth centre who could pay this expense for them. These youth groups are some of the main targets of the YiA programme, and it seems absurd that the programme itself is creating obstacles for their participation. Another of the highly criticised aspects of the financial procedures is the bank guarantee that projects have to put forward to guarantee the solidity of the organisation. This is especially hard on small organisations that have more projects. **The evaluators recommend that more is done to ensure that young people, the core participants of the Programme, are not excluded from participating due to financial regulations and terms,** or that perhaps some funds were made available to that respect – centrally or decentrally – for when all other options had failed..

The survey showed that most of the activities funded in YiA would probably not have taken place if the programme did not exist. The project managers, moreover, expressed that the level of financial support had been adequate for executing the desired activities. The interviews show, however, that although the financial support is deemed adequate it does not at all cover the expenses. However, for some organisations the administrative and other costs relating to the execution of the project is much higher and sometimes too high. **The evaluators suggest that the requirements for the organisations own contribution in time etc. is made more visible so that applicants are prepared when applying for YiA projects.** The final remark concerning the financial aspects is that for small organisations the wait on the final payment may sometimes be very long, and necessitating that project managers use their own funds to bridge the gaps.

9. Suggestions for next generation programmes

In the interim evaluation the respondents have had great difficulties suggesting new things for the next-generation programmes - their strongest wish is that the programme, with the actions and sub-actions that they use today, will still exist in the future. As one of the interviewees put it:

“There is a great need for the Youth programmes – Youth in Action, or whatever it is called -, so that young people from around Europe can meet and gain an insight into each others cultures – keep up the good work.” (project manager, YiA)

This does not mean, however, that they do not have recommendations for future programmes. These recommendations fall into the following categories: Less bureaucracy, Continuity, Flexibility.

The recommendations for less bureaucracy are elaborated above, but when considering the future programmes it is furthermore recommended that objectives, actions and activities, as well as application forms, it tools etc. are in place when the programme is launched and then not changed for the duration of the programme. At the same time it should be given seriously consideration how future programmes ensure that young people are actually able to initiate and administer the projects themselves.

An underlying issue is that the programme, regardless of the fact that it is the least difficult to apply for, still demands quite a lot of writing by the applicant. The young people, especially those with special needs, are not very likely to be able to apply by themselves, but also among youth workers the culture of the written word is not dominant, which creates a constant barrier. **The evaluators recommend that these above issues are considered in the future programmes.** To accommodate this some project managers suggest that the YiA programme use the formal school system more as an information channel, especially the universities or the university colleges, because this is where you find many active young people who can initiate projects, as well as manage the paperwork and administrative requirements.

The evaluators' recommendations on continuity touches upon the problem some project managers see in re-developing a good, well-established project to get renewed funding. They would like to be able to continue doing more or less the same in a network with established partners because they see that it is the network building, the preparations and all the details in that part of the project that keep being demanding, and costly. The continuity is also important seen in relation to the names of the actions and sub-actions. Every time these are changed it takes some time for the beneficiaries to know them, and this is seen as counterproductive to the necessary branding and information effort.

Finally, the evaluators recommend that the future programmes become more flexible in the approach to what you can apply for, and who you can apply to. Some of the project managers mention a dream scenario where they present the idea, and then find the funding for it afterwards, and not, as it is often the case today, look at the funding possibilities and design an idea to fit. In the dream scenario there would also not be a distinction between participants from the EU and outside the EU with two different applications and reporting procedures as a result. The main focus would be on the cultural meeting and the building of a joint understanding.