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FINAL REPORT

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

“*Youth Led Local Development*” (YLLD) is a project funded in the framework of Erasmus + program KA220-YOU - Cooperation partnerships in youth 2021.

Project title is "Addressing youth skills and community youth inclusion processes to facilitate the next generation of young community leaders" and the field of interest is youth.

More details about the YLLD project:

Project Start Date (dd/mm/yyyy)	Project total Duration (Months)	Project End Date (dd/mm/yyyy)	National Agency of the Applicant Organisation	Language used to fill in the form
01-11-2021	30	01-05-2024	IE01 - Léargas the Exchange Bureau	English

The project proposal was submitted by Ballyhoura Development (Ireland) and the project partners are *ASCAE - Associazione per il sociale, la cultura e l'ambiente* (Italy), *ASOCIATIA GRUPUL DE ACTIUNE LOCALA NAPOCA POROLISSUM* (Romania), *Rightchallenge – Associação* (Portugal).

The project wants to explore and address challenges for young people living in rural areas when accessing volunteer opportunities within local community groups and community organizations in rural areas that are struggling with succession planning and transitioning of the volunteer base of the group to drive on with the next generation of community led local development.

The project takes place in the *context* of Rural Change, Rural Young People, Community Led Local Development, Covid-19 Impact and The European Union Youth Strategy and the Commission’s Communication on ‘Engaging, Connecting and Empowering young people’.

The most relevant priorities according to the project are: promoting active citizenship, young people’s sense of initiative and youth entrepreneurship including social entrepreneurship.

Over the past few months, the partnership worked very intensively on the delivery of an in-depth desk research that was also supported by a general overview of youth inclusion and community development policies in the four partner countries (Ireland, Italy, Portugal and Romania).

The issues tackled within the desk research are obviously the same areas of interest subsequently investigated in the data collection phase and are as follows:

1. The CLLD Operating environment and Perceptions/Realities of Integrating Rural Communities
2. Perceptions and Realities of Integration and Inclusion of Young People in CLLD activities
3. Existing and future skills needs for (i) young people and (ii) community volunteers to facilitate young people to progress
4. Effective youth engagement methodologies and in person/online/blended learning preferences and methodologies

To identify the current and future skills needs of young people for their engagement and inclusion in community led local development activities, in all partner countries has been crucial to extrapolate common needs across the EU.

The following final report, in fact, will identify what factors could support youth participation in community-led local development and assess what are the benefits of youth participation for the young people and for the wider community.

The data collection involves several stakeholders, including **young people (18- 35 years) or youth workers/those working in youth development (all ages), current members of voluntary community groups (all ages), community leaders, local action groups and youth agencies**. The aim is to develop a greater understanding of requirements and perceptions to guide the design and development of tools to facilitate the integration and inclusion of young people.

The main tool used for data collection was a questionnaire built ad hoc (at least 30 responses per partner country) to understand the perceptions and realities for young people/LAGS/Youth Organizations/Community groups. The questionnaires were distributed via EU Survey to specific target groups. The survey was distributed through email and direct contacts. The consortium collected 130 responses to the questionnaire among the four partners' countries.

The collected results in each partner country of this project as well have contributed to extrapolate common needs across the EU to design a strategy and training for the young generation.

All data gathered formulated in this summary report highlighting the critical trends and needs.

Together with the desk research and the collection of policies by the entire partnership, this final report will constitute the basis on which the training course will be built, which will be the focus of the second step of the YLLD project.

Therefore, we would like to thank all those who worked on this data collection and especially those who participated in the questionnaire that enabled us to obtain these results.

2. PARTICIPANTS' STATISTICS

Country	Sample	Gender		Educational level				Employment status			Age Range				not supplied
		Male	Female	High school	Bachelor's degree	Master's degree	PhD	Student	Employed	Unemployed	18-29	30-44	45-64	65+	
Portugal	29	4(14%)	25 (86%)	2 (7%)	17 (59%)	7 (24%)	3(10%)	3 (10%)	26 (90%)	0 (0%)	9 (31%)	8 (28%)	12(41%)	0 (0%)	
Ireland	33	12(36%)	21 (64%)	11 (33%)	7 (21%)	14 (42%)	1(3%)	3 (9%)	27 (81%)	3 (9%)	8 (24%)	6 (18%)	13(39%)	4 (12%)	2 (6%)
Romania	31	8(26%)	23 (74%)	10 (32%)	14 (45%)	7 (23%)	0(0%)	6 (19%)	20 (65%)	5 (16%)	19 (61%)	12(39%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	
Italy	36	13(36%)	23 (64%)	9 (25%)	16 (44%)	11(31%)	0(0%)	15(42%)	16 (44%)	3 (8%)	24 (67%)	7 (19%)	5 (14%)	0 (0%)	

Total Responses 129
Gender 92 F; 37M
Education 32 High School; 54 Bachelors; 39 Masters; 4 PhD
Employment 13 Student; 89 Employed; 11Unemployed

In terms of participants' professional activities, these range from the education area (teacher, trainer), social area (social workers, youth workers, psychologists, project managers in youth and volunteer work, social educators), as well as management, operations directors and communication designers, banking field, administrative field, entrepreneurs, engineer, telecommunications and computer systems.

3. QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS

3.1 The CLLD Operating environment and Animating Rural Communities

From the complete sample, **42.31% are or have been involved in some form of CLLD activities**, participating in: volunteer work; training; paid volunteer work in environmental issues; promoting youth empowerment; community work; sport activities with disadvantaged communities; developing new learning approaches to address the specific needs of EU rural communities regarding employment and social inclusion; activities on heritage valorisation and dissemination through communities' involvement in maintenance and preservation; academic and school success promotion; community development through competence development and media literacy; volunteer work with isolated elderly communities; and youth training for employability and entrepreneurship.

It should be noted, however, that more than **60% of participants aged 18-29** claim never to have been involved in CLLD activities, specifically a large proportion of these are men.

Broadly speaking, currently, **the highest involvement in CLLD activities seems to come from Ireland**, followed by Portugal, Italy and Romania.

However, of the ones that report not having been involved in CLLD activities, report that **they would participate more in local community activities if**: there was more information and dissemination on these activities; they had more time, reporting lack of time and energy outside work hours; other reports that there should be more attractive and engaging activities.

Regarding the question whether their **personal involvement could help the social development of their area**, a vast majority of participants considered their involvement would impact their local area with a **96.92%** yes reply, of which the female cohort holds a large majority.

From the complete sample only 37 participants are a **volunteer trainer/teacher/educator in a volunteering organization** compared to the **71.54 %** that are not.

3.2 Perceptions and Realities of Integration and Inclusion of Young People in CLLD activities

Regarding the perceptions and realities of integration and inclusion of young people in CLLD activities, the mean for the question "Engagement with Community Led Local Development is something that young people are interested in." is **2.98**, which suggests that participants somehow

agree that young people tend to be interested in it; for the question “There are many opportunities for young people to become involved in Community Led Local Development in my community” the mean is **2.42**, which suggests that participants feel opportunities for youth participation in their communities are lacking; the mean for “There is a sufficient variety of community groups and activities for young people to get involved with locally.” is **2.38**, which seems to confirm this perception of a lack of variety of CLLD activities for youth in their communities; and the mean for “It would be positive to have more young people involved in CLLD in my community” is **4.59**, showing participants agree with the importance of involving youth in these activities.

In what concerns the qualitative question on **what a young person might gain from being involved in CLLD**, responses mention:

- Personal and social growth;
- Direct intervention;
- Developing their creative capacity and consequently their positioning towards life;
- Develop personal and social skills by collaborating in something that benefits society;
- Developing soft skills, know-how in practical terms, and network
- Sense of belonging; a sense of self-competence, social and political participation in their context, social and political consciousness, agency, solidarity, community and collective experiences;
- Autonomy, consciousness of what surrounds them, sense of belonging;
- Being part of CLLD activities, young people have the opportunity to develop numerous skills in what concerns social responsibility, civics and citizenship, as well as contributing to change paradigms and mentalities from their own reality, and contributing with different projects or work, involving the community around them;
- A deeper understanding of the community where they live, being able to be useful in many ways, while developing themselves as a person;
- Perception on reality and the possibility of integrated growth, an increase in the sense of belonging and self-confidence;
- Finding an interest;
- Networking, knowing people with whom to share affinities and support, social and cultural skills, sense of belonging and opportunities;
- Develop transversal skills that can benefit them in the personal and professional levels.
- Share experiences, both at a personal and professional level, and develop interpersonal skills;

- Activities more adjusted to their needs, developing local communities with concrete objective that aim to respond to the challenges young people face;
- Important skills considering their participation in the civil society; skills and knowledge that are important to the integration in the labour market; knowledge to become a potential entrepreneur.
- In addition to the experience of working with people, they could gain confidence and empathy for themselves and for what they can offer to those around them;
- They could gain the most precious thing: the happiness of those helped through their own strength;
- Personal and professional development;
- A young person will improve his entrepreneurial qualities and will have a new vision of the local community;
- Experience, know-how on applying activities to solve community problems, connections with people interested in the same issues and priorities as them;
- Experience, a wider social life, self-confidence, satisfaction on the desire to feel useful, ideas for future occupations/jobs;
- Knowledge needed to develop the area;
- Projects and activities;
- Patience;
- Friends;
- A change for the community they belong to;
- More personal development opportunities, information about possible project calls;
- A clearer vision of the positive impact of their involvement in CLLD activities and a stronger determination to get involved.
- Self-confidence, joy, fulfilment;
- Personal development, getting out of the comfort zone, evolution, the opportunity to meet new people, to become a pillar in a community;
- Trust

In what concerns **what might an organisation gain from including young people in their CLLD activities**, participants mention:

- The organization could gain fulfilment by the fact that if more young people get involved then what they do is good and brings happiness around;

- New perspectives;
 - Hope, enthusiasm, development;
 - A new and modern (actual) vision;
 - Visibility, credibility and trust of communities but also of young people;
 - New ideas coming from the new generations, an energetic team, eager to get involved and bring improvements to the organization, the appreciation of young people as they are not set aside and their attention is paid to their opinion;
 - New and adaptable ideas locally or nationally;
 - Inclusion of young people in the activities of the community through involvement and social development;
 - Appreciation from young people;
 - More information for the involvement and implementation of rural and community development projects;
 - New projects;
 - More opportunities;
 - Local/national recognition following the results obtained through the involvement of young people, thus the possibility to be heard regarding the purpose of the organization and the realization of several projects in which young people are involved;
 - Humanitarian goals;
 - Valuable, involved, active young people and future resources for the community;
 - It could attract young people who would then take care of the community;
 - More volunteers;
 - Ideas, solutions and effective development of the communities to which young people belong;
 - Organizations would benefit largely from the contribution of young people to problem solving through a new paradigm;
 - The curiosity and enthusiasm of young people in any organization can be motivating for the rest of the members.

The important fact is that across the four countries surveyed, this response **is fairly consistent with no widely differing responses from one country to another.**

Table 2. Frequency of answers for each possible response for the meaning of volunteering.

What does volunteering mean to you?	Frequency
A leisure activity	29
A social duty	62
A way of expressing myself	37
A way of improving social abilities	85
A way to growth	93
Professional and personal development	90

3.3 Existing and future skills needs for (i) young people and (ii) community volunteers to facilitate young people to progress

The first question of this part of the questionnaire was focused on skills considered to be important in CLLD activities, allowing participants to choose multiple answers. The following table presents these responses:

Table 3. Frequency of answers for each possible response for important skills for CLLD.

Which of the following skills do you think are important in CLLD activities?	Frequency
Active listening	92
Assertiveness	39
Conflict resolution skills	67
Empathy	100
Flexibility	88
Good communication skills	98

Openness	92
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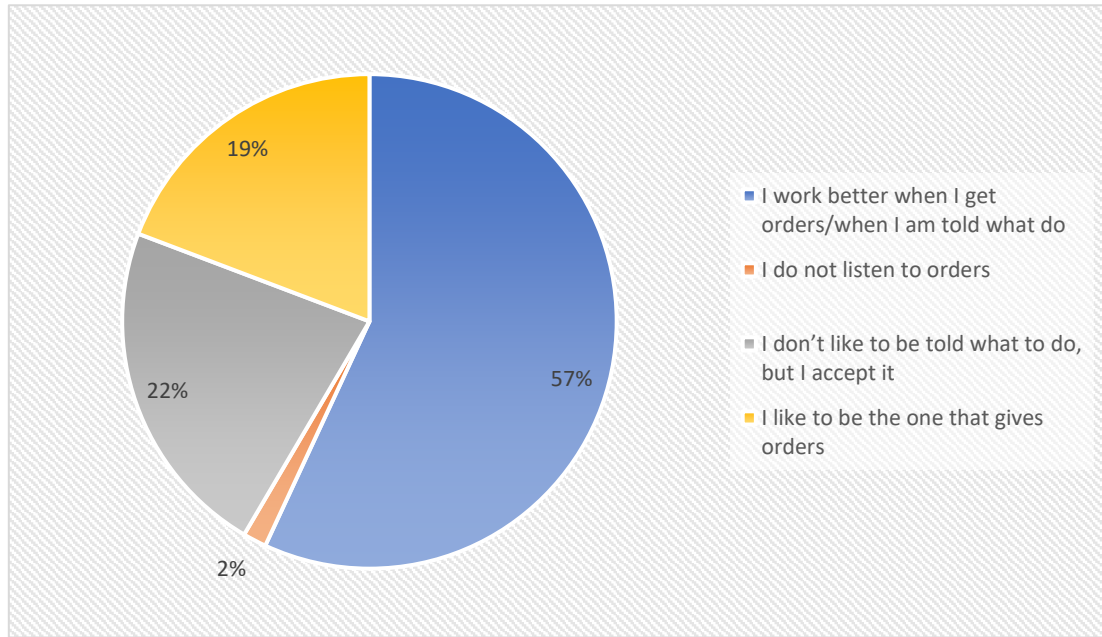
The next questions in this part of the questionnaire focused on **social skills in need of development when volunteering or working in CLLD**, on a scale from 1 to 5 (1 being least important, 5 being highly important). The means for each skill were: Communication Skills (**3.35**); Conflict Resolution (**3.31**); Active Listening Skills (**3.21**); Interpersonal Communication (**3.14**) Flexibility (**3.11**); Empathy (**2.93**). It is notable that respondents across the four regions consider themselves and their groups/organisations quite empathetic: Empathy was seen as the social skill that requires least improvement into the future across all respondents. On the other hand, Conflict Resolution Skills seem to be in need of improvement.

Some participants also listed other important skills, namely: promoting empathy, openness to the other and difference; acceptance; self-confidence; responsibility; leadership.

Next, participants were asked to assess the **working skills that may need improvement for volunteering or working in CLLD**, on a scale from 1 to 5 (1 being least important, 5 being highly important). The mean for each skill presented was Financial Management (**3.32**); Activity Planning Skills (**3.31**); Computer Skills (**3.20**); Time Management (**3.12**); Organisation Skills (**3.02**); The following graph presents the distribution of answers for each skill identified.

Again, there is a certain consistency among the answers, with financial management appearing to be the work skill most in need of improvement.

The last question of this section was focused on participants' relationship and preferences regarding hierarchies and authority in volunteering experiences. The following graph presents the frequencies and percentages of answers.



Graph 4: Preferences regarding hierarchies and authority in volunteering experiences.

3.4 Effective youth engagement methodologies and in person/online/blended learning preferences and methodologies

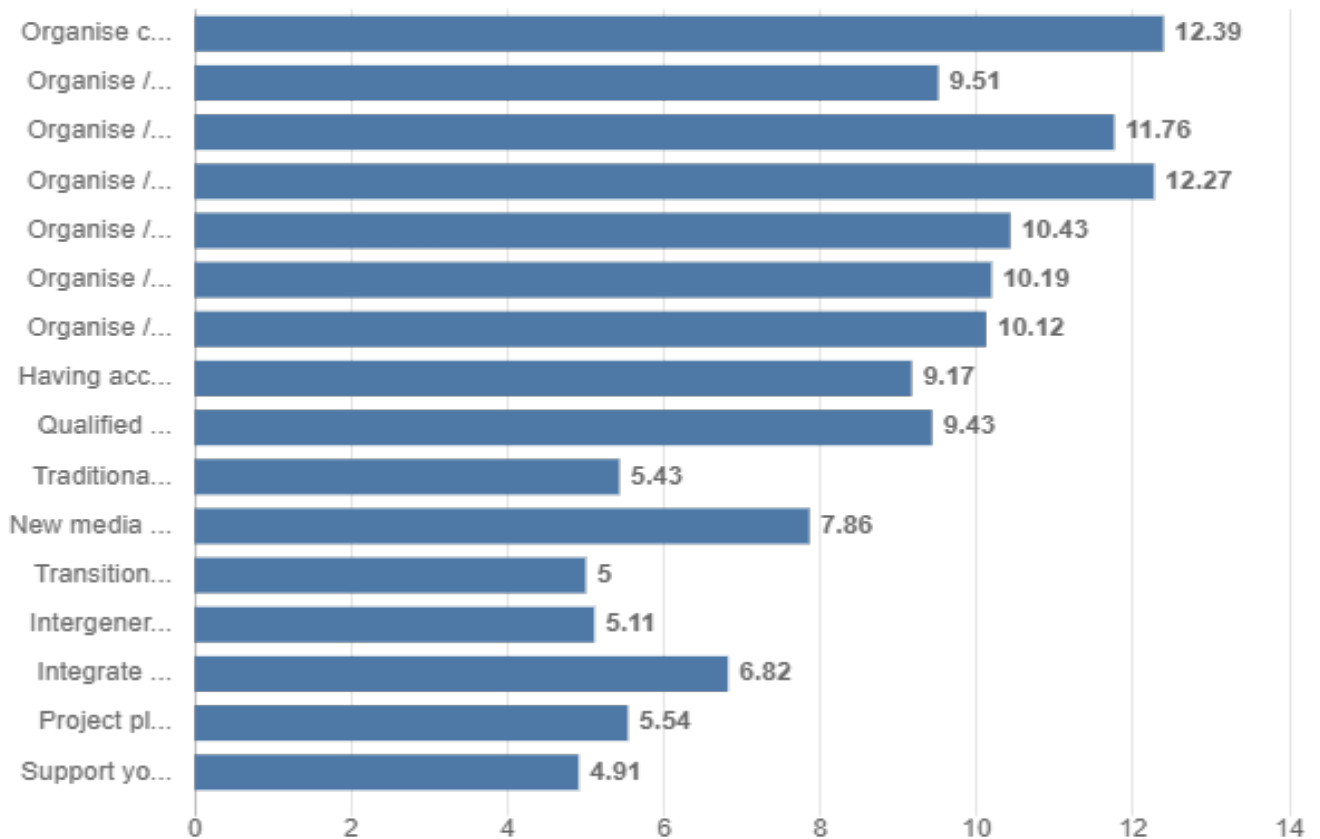
In this part of the questionnaire, participants were asked to assess learning preferences and methodologies regarding effective youth engagement methodologies.

The means for each of the questions were: “I believe young people prefer to engage in community development activities in person.” (3.45); “I believe young people prefer to engage in community development activities online.” (2.82); “I believe young people prefer to engage in community development activities through blended methodologies (online and in person).” (3.23); “I believe young people don’t participate more because associations/institutions/community councils are organised in such a way that people feel they don’t have a say in what’s decided.” (3.40); “I believe associations/institutions/community councils don’t have enough resources to promote young people’s engagement in their activities.” (3.42).

So, participants seem to show a tendency to prefer in person activities, followed by blended methodologies. Moreover, many seem to agree that young people feel that they do not have a say in what is decided in associations/community councils, which reduces their participation, also agreeing that these institutions do not have enough resources to promote young people’s engagement.

The next question focused on the assessment of important methods to foster youth engagement in community development activities. Participants were asked to identify the 5 most important methods to foster youth engagement in community development activities. Table 4 presents the votes in the 5 top methods elected by participants. As shown in the following table, these are the most elected:

- Organise concerts, sports or other social activities for the community = 24.61%
- Organise / participate in training in important skills for community development = 17.69%
- Organise / participate in peer-support groups = 12.3%
- Organise / participate in Demonstrations = 7.69%
- Organise / participate in volunteer work = 7.69%
- Integrate youth into the decision-making of the association/institution/community council = 6.15%
- Qualified staff (from associations/institutions/community councils) who generates ideas and implements activities that promote youth engagement = 5.38%
- New media (social media, apps, vlogging and content sharing platforms) = 5.38%
- Organise / participate in advocacy groups or in social and political education activities = 3.84%
- Support young people in establishing their own organisation = 3.07%
- Having accessible spaces for private and public meetings and events at the local association/institution = 2.3%
- Project planning, organisation and implementation led by the youth participants = 2.3%
- Organise / participate in student networks and/or students' unions, theatre groups or social clubs = 1.53%



Graph 5: Methods most elected by participants

The final question asked participants to assess the level of importance they ascribe to a set of values when deciding about participating in a community development / volunteering project. The values were considered on a scale from 1 to 5 (1 being least important, 5 being highly important).

The means for each value were: Economic social political Justice (**3.78**); Civil and Human Rights (**4.20**); Democratic Principles and Horizontal Structures of the institution (**3.68**); Diversity (**3.77**); Sustainability (**3.83**); Achievements of the organisation (**3.35**); Includes the voices of marginalised groups (**3.95**); Advocates for discriminated groups (**3.71**); Self-critical and reflexive about practices (**3.58**); Creative and innovative (**4.08**).

4. Summary of key conclusions:

- 42.31% of participants are or have been involved in some form of CLLD activities.
- Respondents say they would participate more in local community activities if there was more information and dissemination on these activities and if they had more time, reporting lack of time and energy outside work hours.

Regarding the perceptions and realities of integration and inclusion of young people in CLLD activities

- participants agree that young people tend to be interested in CLLD;
 - participants feel opportunities for youth participation in their communities are lacking;
 - there is a perception of a lack of variety of CLLD activities for youth in their communities;
 - participants agree with the importance of involving youth in these activities.
- Participants tend to prefer in person activities, followed by blended methodologies.
 - 30.77% agree or strongly agree that young people feel that they do not have a say in what is decided in associations/community councils, which reduces their participation.
 - 33.08% agree or strongly agree that institutions do not have enough resources to promote young people's engagement
 - Participants that consider that youth associations lack resources to promote young people's engagement in their activities, mostly identify these as being financial resources and resources to promote an effective communication/dissemination, undermining the process of reaching target groups.
 - In what concerns the level of importance participants ascribe to a set of values when deciding about participating in a community development / volunteering project, based on the means, participants seem to privilege the following four values in order of preference: Civil and Human Rights; Creative and innovative; Including the voices of marginalised groups; Advocates for discriminated groups.

In conclusion, an interesting point emerging from this final report is that:

Despite the fact that the research was largely designed as transnational in order to be able to investigate the particularities and differences that could cross each of the countries involved, no real and substantial national differences were identified.