



Consulenza e Valutazione nel sociale

studio  
CEVAS



# FINAL EVALUATION REPORT OF THE YOUTH COMMUNITY ACTION PROGRAMME 2000-2006



Liliana Leone, Aprile 2008



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## Introduction

The Department of Youth Policies and Sport Activities (POGAS) within the Presidency of the Council of Ministers entrusted the Studio Cevas with the task of preparing the final evaluation of the YOUTH<sup>1</sup> Community Action Programme 2000-2006. Based on the guidelines (CJ/03/2006) issued by the European Commission, the evaluation process consisted of analysing the decentralised strand of the programme actions (cooperation with Programme Countries and cooperation with Third Countries) managed by the Italian National Agency, as well as the aspects related to the management and functioning of the National Agency itself. The evaluation, which was carried out during the period mid January - end of April 2008, focused on the Actions 1.1, 1.2, 2.1, 2.2, 3.1, 3.2, 5.1.1, 5.1.2, 5.1.3.

This study was based on 4 levels of analysis :

- 1) the participants in the projects, the young people directly involved in the actions, and the beneficiaries of training activities under Action 5.1.3;
- 2) the responsible members of youth organisations and informal groups (beneficiaries) involved in the programme;
- 3) the national *stakeholders*, the representatives of public institutions, and the representatives of networks of youth organisations;
- 4) the implementation processes and the programme outputs – particularly through the analysis of the relevant monitoring documents related to the NA role during the period 2000-2006.

### Evaluation design: questions, methodology, instruments

The evaluation questions, which were defined according to the indications provided by the European Commission, and partly by the institutional stakeholders, covered the following research areas:

- ⇒ Effects on the young beneficiaries of the Programme;
- ⇒ impact on youth organisations, informal groups, networks of youth organisations, local communities;
- ⇒ impact on policies and institutions;
- ⇒ sustainability; complementarity and synergies with national and regional policies; accessibility; equity; relevance;
- ⇒ efficient management of the National Agency.

In order to respond to the evaluation questions, the following survey methods and instruments were used:

- **ON-LINE** survey ( web-based survey by questionnaire addressed to a sample of 660 organisations and groups which realised Youth Exchanges, EVS projects, Youth Initiatives and Support Measures (Actions 1, 2, 3, and 5);
- **ON-LINE** survey (web-based survey by questionnaire addressed to 239 youth workers involved in the Support Measures and training activities under action 5.1.3 in the period 2000-2006;

<sup>1</sup> Decision 1031/2000/CE of the European Parliament and the Council, 13 April 2000, [Official Journal L 117 18.05.2000].

- **ON-LINE** survey (by self-administered questionnaire addressed to 509 young people involved in the EVS ( i.e. all Italian EVS volunteers during the years 2005-2006);
- **3 focus groups** in three different territorial areas (Southern Italy – Palermo, Central Italy– Rome, and Northern – Bologna) with young beneficiaries involved in Action 1- Youth Exchanges and Action 3.1-Group Initiatives. Two videos were produced, which illustrate the evaluation experience and collect the comments made by the young beneficiaries on the YOUTH Programme. One of the 2 videos can be downloaded from the POGAS institutional site [www.pogas.it](http://www.pogas.it) [www.cevas.it](http://www.cevas.it), and the second one, which was shot by the young people from the Municipality of Bologna, can be seen on the WEB TV. 18 boys and 20 girls aged between 16 and 31 took part and their discussions were audio and video recorded, and afterwards transcribed. They received a reimbursement for their travel costs.
- **Interviews to ten national**, institutional and non institutional, **expert witnesses** from the field of youth policies;
- Analysis of **planning instruments on youth policies at regional and national level** in order to evaluate the complementarity between national and Communitarian policies (notably, the APQ [Acronym for Accordi di programma quadro (English: Framework Programme Agreements)] – which were signed by the Presidency of the Council of Ministers – POGAS).

**Table 1 Methods, instruments, approached sample and respondents**

<b>Evaluation methods</b>	<b>Instruments</b>	<b>Approached sample</b>	<b>Respondents</b>
<b>A) ON LINE survey with organisations which received grants</b> in the period 2000-2006 within Actions 1, 2, 3 and 5	<i>ONLINE self administered questionnaire</i>	660 Youth organisations and groups	348 organisations ( 52,7%)
<b>B) ON-LINE</b> survey by questionnaire with youth workers beneficiaries of Action 5.1.3	<i>ONLINE self administered questionnaire</i>	239 youth workers	128 youth workers beneficiaries (53,5%)
<b>C) Survey with EVS volunteers</b> (Action 2 – EVS) 100% of EVs volunteers in the years 2005-2006 (only sending projects of Italians abroad. Host projects were excluded )	<i>ONLINE self administered questionnaire</i>	509 young people	305 (59.4%)
<b>D) Focus groups with young people</b> involved in Action 1 and 3.1 (especially informal groups)	<i>Interview grid with open questions</i>	42	38
<b>E) Interviews to witnesses and representatives of local administrations</b> active in the youth policies field. Analysis of the documents related to regional and national planning	<i>Semi-structured interview grid and in depth interview grid</i>	10 telephone interviews or face to face interviews	10
<b>F) Interviews to the National Agency staff and to members of the national selection committee</b>	<i>Open interview grid</i>	7-8 Interviews	7
<b>G) Secondary analysis of the monitoring and management data</b> relating to all granted projects in the period 2000-2006.	<i>Acquisition of the files with the monitoring and management data</i>	NA staff members	

The evaluation approach – which had also been adopted in the mid term evaluation of the Youth Programme (Studio CEVAS<sup>2</sup>) – is based on the contributes and definitions of the so-called “theory-based evaluation”, and the “realist evaluation”.<sup>3</sup> Accordingly, we tried to identify which mechanisms were at work, i.e. we tried to understand why a given perception of the outcomes is connected to specific subjects, contexts, intervention modalities, and management modalities of the programme actions. The analysis of program’s mechanisms should allow us “to open the *black box*” of the programme, i.e. to understand not only if a programme is working in terms of congruency between outputs and intended and foreseen results, but also to understand why, in which contexts and with whom (e.g.: with young people with a high education level, with male volunteers rather than with females, in Central and Southern Italy, in disadvantaged contexts ...), and thanks to which mechanisms (e.g.: development of confidence in one’s own competences and skills, or about the possibility of having a social influence).

### ***Sampling method, survey instruments and on-line survey***

We carried out the survey with 3 different populations (consequently, 3 types of samples): the organisations, the youth workers beneficiaries in Action 5.1.3, and the EVS volunteers.

- ⇒ First Sample: **660 Organisations and informal groups**, corresponding to 75 percent of the “estimated population”<sup>4</sup> of organisations beneficiaries during the period 2000-2006 (the total number in the programme actions amounts to 880) (*Confidence Level 95%, Confidence Interval 2%*);
- ⇒ Second Sample: **239 youth workers** beneficiaries of Action 5.1.3, corresponding to 44 percent of the 543 youth workers involved in this sub-action during the period 2000-2006 (*C.L.95%, C.I 4,7%*);
- ⇒ Third Sample: **509 EVS volunteers**, corresponding to 99,2 percent of the volunteers involved during the period 2005-2006 (*C.L. 95%, C.I 0,4%*).

Out of the available management files relating to the projects implemented during the seven years of the YOUTH programme, we built a database which allowed us to obtain synthetic information on:

- type and characteristics of the organisations beneficiaries; numbers of realised projects under each sub-action; co-funding awarded; any project interruption; characteristics and number of the users in Action 2 and Action 3.

### ***Data processing***

With regards to data processing and the cartographic representation, we used some specific data analysis softwares (SPSS vers. 12), and the Atlante statistico ISTAT. In the annexes we enclose the raw frequencies, the

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<sup>2</sup> Mid term evaluation of the Youth Programme 2000-2002, *Study on the impact of the Programme actions 1.1., 2.1., 3.1. e 3.2.* October 2003, Download [www.gioventu.it](http://www.gioventu.it) and [www.valutazione.cevas.it](http://www.valutazione.cevas.it)

<sup>3</sup> (MEANS Collection EC 2003; R.Pawson, N.Tilley, *Realistic Evaluation*, Sage, London 1997)

<sup>4</sup> See next the way populations and organisations were estimated

percentages of each item, and the dichotomised variables (related to the surveys of the 3 subsamples), the contingency tables with the values of the statistical significance test “Chi Square”.

### ***Reached sample***

The use of an ON LINE survey method is very recent. In Italy, this is probably the first time that such a technology is used to carry out a programme evaluation. Concerning the number of persons approached in the on-line survey, we had the following percentage of respondents:

- 348 organisations and youth workers (52,7%) responded to the first questionnaire;
- 128 beneficiaries of sub-action 5.1.3 (53,5%) responded to the first questionnaire;
- 305 EVS volunteers (59.4%) responded the second questionnaire.

A reduction in the percentage of responses from Southern Italy – which is generally expected because of the “digital divide”, i.e. young people’s less access of to information technologies and the Internet – did not occur.

The sample which gave back completely filled out questionnaires (N.B. only 4 questionnaires were rejected because they contained more than 5 unanswered items) includes 50 percent of the organisations which took part in Action 1, 51,2 percent of those which implemented EVS projects, and 63,6 percent of the organisations under Action 3.1.

### **The outputs of the Youth programme 2000-2006: beneficiaries reached, projects and organisations.**

#### ***The organisations involved in the actions and their variation***

The overall number of organisations involved in the Programme remains constant: they were 552 in the first three years (2000-2002), and 558 in the second period (2004-2006). When we compare the first and the second period, we do not take into consideration 2003. The total number of organisations/informal groups involved in the programme in the period 2000-2006 is roughly equal to or slightly more than 800-880 organisations. This is an estimate<sup>5</sup> based on the analysis of the data collected during the survey. From a surveyed sample of 373 organisations, it emerged that 144 organisations (38,6%) had also been active during the years 2001 and 2002.

In order to understand the evolution of the different programme actions we compared the data relating to the organisations which implemented projects during the first three years’ period with the data relating to the organisations which realised projects during the second three years’ period of the programme. Four main interesting elements emerged:

- ⇒ The organisations (beneficiaries) tend to “specialise” and work almost exclusively in one single action;
- ⇒ There is a reduction in the number of organisations working in the EVS, and parallel to this, there is a reduction in the percentage of those which work “only” in the EVS;
- ⇒ There is a significant increase in the number of organisations which implement Action 1-Youth Exchanges;

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<sup>5</sup> In relation to this data, we had to resort to some estimates since no database exists at national level indicating the number of organisations involved in the programme.

⇒ Organisations (especially those which work in EVS) are mainly concentrated in some regions.

The organisations almost always “specialise” in working in one action: 89 percent are active in one single action.  
In the course of the years, the number of organisations working “exclusively” in Action 2 - EVS decreased: in the first phase they were 100, corresponding to 76 percent of the total number of organisations; in the second period this figure decreased to 38, corresponding to 48 percent of the sample of organisations involved in the programme during this phase.

Compared to the first phase of the Programme, the number of organisations implementing Action 2 -EVS and Action 3.1- Group Initiatives, decreased to 40,5 percent and 21,4 percent, respectively, in the second phase. Concerning the number of organisations implementing Action 1-Youth Exchanges, a considerable increase (48% increase) is found during the second phase: from 252 up to 373. The rotation of organisations having access to Action 1 seems to be adequate. Out of 229 organisations, 67 percent implemented only one project, while only a small number (1%) realised up to 7 projects or more . The average number of projects implemented by the organisations is 1,7.

During 2004-2006, 807 projects were realised in Action 2-EVS, with the following distribution:

- 3 organisations are responsible for 29 percent of the sending projects granted in Italy (there is the case of one organisation with 90 EVS projects during the three years' period);
- the remaining 54 percent of the EVS sending projects were implemented by 20 organisations,
- 17 percent of the projects was run by the remaining 54 organisations.

The average age at the time of departure to an EVS project is 23 and a half years; gender distribution is not homogeneous: 67 percent of volunteers are girls. The average duration of an EVS experience is 8 and a half months (around 20% volunteers stay abroad for one year). The rate of project interruption for male and female volunteers is nearly the same (11-12%). 68 percent of volunteers comes from the northern regions; only 8 percent comes from Southern Italy. There is an overrepresentation of the following regions: Lombardy, Piedmont, Emilia Romagna and Lazio.

### ***Approval rate of submitted applications***

The approval rate of project applications (Source: Monitoring data were provided by the National Agency, and they are presented in the Annex) indicates the ratio between submitted and approved projects. The variation of the approval rate over the years - the number of granted projects being the same in each financial year – may indicate the popularity degree of the programme, and in any case it gives information on the workload and the efficiency of the National Agency in the project selection. In the course of the years the approval rate has decreased for all actions, especially within the bigger ones: Action 1.1 – Youth exchanges with Programme Countries; Action 2 –EVS and Action 3.1 – Group Initiatives.

In the second phase, the approval rate of project applications decreased:

- in Action 1.1 – Youth Exchanges, almost 1 project out of 2 is approved ( around 50,0%);
- in Action 3.1 – Group Initiatives, the rate is lower, around one third;
- in Action 2-EVS, the approval rate remains high (70%), even if it has slightly decreased.

### ***Overall Community co-funding allocated and distribution over the actions***

The co-funding which was awarded by the European Union for the seven years' period amounts to 40,924,530.00 Euro, with the following distribution over the actions:

- 37 percent for Action 2 – Programme Countries (Sending and Hosting projects);
- 36 percent for Action 1.1 ( Bilateral Sending and Hosting projects, Trilateral and Multilateral projects);
- 8 percent for Action 3.1 - Group Initiatives
- the remaining amount was allocated to the other actions.

### ***The programme beneficiaries***

The “direct” young beneficiaries (both Italians and foreigners) of the Youth programme, who were involved in the Youth Exchanges (Action 1.1 and 1.2), in the EVS (Action 2.1 and 2.2) and in the Youth Initiatives (Actions 3.1 and 3.2) were around 44,400 between 2000 and 2006. The Italian young people in the approved projects of the different actions were around 19,127.

The above estimate was made on the basis of the monitoring data provided by the National Agency (see enclosed Table), which relate to the “foreseen participants” (we have no updated information on the actual participants for all financial years). Considering that - due to a variety of reasons - around 10% of the foreseen projects have not at all started or have been suspended in the very first phase (this element emerges from the files related to 2006 in Action 1), and also considering that at least 10-15% of young people tend to participate several times over the years (within the same action or in different actions), we must underestimate the actual number of participants.

The Italian beneficiaries who were actually reached by the programme (hence, not the foreseen ones) could be approximately not more than 15,000. We cannot give a more precise data since we were provided only with the files relating to the number of the actually reached participants during the first years of the programme. The foreseen number of Italian and foreign participants in Action 5 (5.1.1.; 5.1.2; and 5.1.3) were 18,000 in all (see in the Annex the enclosed table of the monitoring files provided by the National Agency).

Analysis of Action 2-EVS: from 2000 to 2006, the young people who were involved in EVS sending projects were 1,711. 95,3 percent of the projects took place in the Programme Countries, with only 5,1 percent of these being Short Term projects. It must be noted that the percentage of the Short Term projects involving young people with fewer opportunities has increased over the years (these projects do not necessarily involve young people with disabilities).

The number of volunteers in projects taking place in the Third Countries (Partner Countries) is rather small: 4,5 percent out of the total number of projects from 2002 to 2006. It must be noted that the EVS volunteers with fewer opportunities were around 6,6 percent (36 percent of them were resident in the Region Puglia).

Action 3.1 - Group Initiatives involved directly 6,171 young beneficiaries. With regard to 5.1.1, two events were realised in 2000, which involved 6,728 beneficiaries; the other programme initiatives have involved 4,037 young people in total. As for the youth workers of Action 5.1.3, the beneficiaries were 543 during the period 2000-2006; the number of the training activities and seminars was 353. Amongst 128 beneficiaries of Action 5.1.3: 55 percent of them are female; the average age is 32 years; they come mainly from the northern regions (46,9%), 25,8 percent comes from Central Italy, and 27,3 percent from the South.

### Results of the evaluation research

We will investigate the data by using some *dimensions*, which allow us to identify the effects of the programme and to compare the different perceptions by the three groups that we have reached in our evaluation activity: the organisations, the beneficiaries of Action 5.1.3, and the EVS volunteers. To this end, we have dichotomised the options how respondents could express agreement or disagreement according to a scoring scale (1 corresponded to total disagreement, 4 corresponded to total agreement) in the questionnaires; the percentages of agreement values are presented in the table below (i.e. 3 + 4).

### Effects on the young beneficiaries of the programme

The first dimension "*competences*" relates to the development of personal and inter-personal skills which can be useful in terms of professional career and employability in the job market; it covers 5 specific items (Tab.2). The number of respondents who consider (i.e. they fairly or totally agree) the Programme to have helped beneficiaries to develop competences and professional skills ranks between 67 percent and 94 percent of the total (this figure differs in relation to the different items).

**Table 2 Perception of the effects of the Youth Programme by the three samples - % Agreement**

		EVS	Organisations	Action 5.1.3
<b>Competence</b>	The participation to the programme is also positive in terms of development of competences and professional orientations	67,2%	75,0%	81,3%
	Readiness to learn other languages, knowledge of other languages	94,1%	75,3%	86,7%
	The experience contributes to self-orienting and it increases self-awareness, knowledge of one's own interests, motivation and skills	89,8%	92,0%	92,9%
	Increased ability in working in groups	79,7%	94,8%	90,6%
	Improved ability to get information and to deal with local community and institutions	81,6%	79,6%	74,2%
<b>Autonomy</b>	Young people become more independent	93,1%	87,9%	82,0%
	Increased ability in self-organisation	90,5%	87,6%	83,6%
<b>Confidence</b>	Increased confidence in one's own abilities	81,0%	94,8%	91,4%
	Young people become more confident that they can realise	90,2%	91,7%	99,2%

	initiatives with other young people, thus achieving concrete results			
	Increased sense of confidence about the possibility to play an active role in the civil society.	74,1%	81,0%	82,0%
<b>Tolerance</b>	Greater appreciation of cultural differences	90,5%	92,0%	94,5%
	Development of a sense of solidarity among young people coming from different backgrounds	91,1%	88,8%	91,4%
	Young people have developed tolerance and respect toward young people coming from other cultures	89,2%	90,2%	90,6%
	The interaction with other cultures ...has sometimes involuntarily strengthened intolerant attitudes	25,6%	12,1%	12,5%
<b>EU Citizenship</b>	Taking part in a project helps young people increase their feeling of being EU citizens	72,8%	83,6%	88,3%
	Through the Programme young people have increased their knowledge of the European Union and its institutions	71,1%	70,1%	70,3%
	Working actively in the programme helped improve the knowledge of the strategies set up by the European Union in relation to the youth policies (e.g. : The White Paper)	No	60,1%	63%

In general the three samples give similar responses. Among the volunteers, the item “The participation to the programme is positive in terms of development of competences and professional orientations” gives the lowest agreement degree. Organisations express the highest degree of agreement in relation to “Increased ability in working in groups” (94% of agreement). Volunteers express the highest agreement in relation to the item “Improved ability to get information and to deal with local community and institutions” (81,6%).

From the analysis of the comments made by the youngsters involved in the three focus groups (in Rome, Palermo and Bologna), it emerges that they consider the outcomes of their Youth experience to be positive and useful in terms of personal development and sense of independence, increase in confidence in one’s own abilities and confidence in the abilities of other peer groups.

The positive benefits of the experience can be seen in their increased ability to deal with institutional and non institutional bodies at local level for requiring a co-funding or logistical support, or when it came to take responsibility for their project. The little knowledge of a foreign language is seen as an obstacle to realise a successful exchange, but this difficulty is also seen as an incentive to learn foreign languages.

The second dimension “*Autonomy*” includes statements related to personal autonomy and self-organisation abilities: the effects related to this dimension are absolutely relevant and the judgements are unanimous. Almost nine out of ten respondents consider that the projects helped young people to improve their self-organisation abilities.

The dimension “*confidence*” implies two different aspects which are strictly connected:

1) *self-effectiveness* (which is mentioned in the *life skills* promoted by the WHO (World Health Organisation) and constitutes the basis of hundreds of welfare and health programmes;

2) the second aspect is mainly connected with the social dimension and with the sense of hope, as well as the sense of confidence that it is possible to play an active role within society and to realise initiatives with other young

people, thus reaching concrete results. This dimension could be likened to the term *capabilities*, which is used by the development economists to explain *empowerment* dynamics.

Among the most considerable effects of the programme on young people there is an increased sense of confidence in one's own abilities and potential (94,8 percent of the organisations, 81 percent of the volunteers) as well as the hope of achieving concrete results in new initiatives with other young people. 91,7 of the organisations and 80,3 of the beneficiaries of Action 5.1.3 state that “*There has been an increased confidence in undertaking new and successful initiatives with other young people*”.

The youth workers and the volunteers say that the successful implementation of projects brought about a sense of hope and confidence that it is possible to play an active role in the civil society (81 percent of the organisations and 74 percent of the beneficiaries).

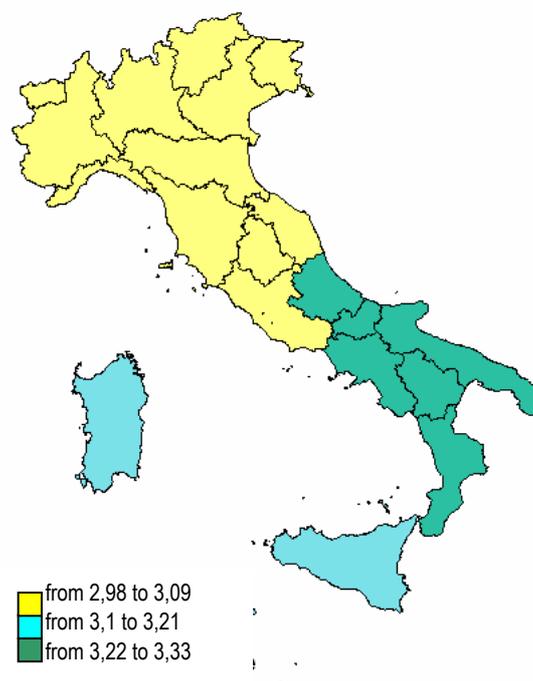
The respondents of the three subsamples tend to react similarly: their agreement on *achievement of an increased confidence in one's own abilities* is higher compared to the item *confidence about the possibility to play an active role in society*.

We have built up a cartographic map with the indication of the values for each territorial area (Ripartizione ISTAT: north-east, north-west, centre, south, islands) related to increase in the sense of confidence in one's own abilities to play an active role in the civil society (Fig.1).

From the map, it emerges that the most significant effects reported by the subsample *organisations* are found mostly in Southern Italy. In the regions such as Puglia, Calabria, Basilicata, Campania, Molise and Abruzzi, the average values on the continuum scale ranking from 1 to 4 are very high and fall within the range 3.2 - 3.3. In the islands we find an in-between/intermediate situation. This result is partly due to the fact that in the places where a gap in confidence and a weaker social capital exist, the benefits of the programme are more appreciated.

The dimension “*tolerance*” intended to survey the change of tolerant attitudes, respect of cultural differences and readiness to accept diversity; the objectives of the programme were aimed at strengthening the sense of solidarity among young people and supporting the fight against racism and xenophobia. The statements relating to this dimension are 4 (3 of them referring to the increase of tolerance, solidarity, and appreciation of diversity). In general, the first three items show few differences in terms of agreement values given: the three subsamples (between 88% and 94%) agree that

**Figure 1 Confidence and active role in civil society**



the programme can foster the appreciation of cultural differences, as well as solidarity among young people coming from different cultural backgrounds, thus increasing tolerant attitudes toward other cultures.

Unexpectedly, one fourth of the volunteers states that sometimes the experience strengthened involuntary forms of intolerance. Fortunately only 12 percent of the respondents in the other 2 subsamples expresses a similar statement.

To explain the emergence of such a data, we formulated a set of assumptions, and we have found out that no significant connection exists between the above statement and the organisation type (for instance, the organisation works in a socially disadvantaged context, it has been active for more than 5 years, or it works with young people coming from the Roma or Sinti populations).

Concerning the EVS volunteers, the connection between strengthened forms of intolerance and satisfaction degree of the volunteers' accommodation during the EVS project proved to be statistically significant<sup>6</sup> ( $\chi^2$  p < 0.004). We can assume that the sense of dissatisfaction represents an indirect indicator of the general context and kind of reception, which may have caused a negative judgement and may have strengthened intolerance.

Furthermore, the connection between the perception "there has been sometimes an increase in the forms of intolerance" and "to live in a disadvantaged context" proved to be statistically significant. ( $\chi^2$  p < 0.01) We could assume that the young respondent is making a reference to his own personal experience (projective statement). We can state that as to the 25 percent of the young people coming from areas which they consider to be disadvantaged, the likelihood to experience integration difficulties during the EVS project is higher.

There are neither positive nor negative correlations between "increased intolerance" and variables, such as "EVS projects involving young people with fewer opportunities", "Short Term projects", "adequate pre-departure or on-arrival training", or "readiness to live as a student with homosexuals".

Even if not statistically significant, a more negative judgement on this point (unforeseen strengthening of intolerance) seems to arise among those who live in Central and Southern Italy, rather than among those living in the north.

Lastly, the dimension "*Perception of the European Union*" covered the three following items:

- ⇒ The participation to a Youth project helped young people enhance their feeling of being citizens of the European Union.
- ⇒ Thanks to the Youth programme, young people's knowledge of the European Union has increased.
- ⇒ Working in the programme stimulated us to deepen our knowledge of the strategies adopted by the EU in relation to the youth policies (e.g.: the White Paper)

In 8 cases out of ten (83,6 percent of the organisations and 72,8 percent of the EVS volunteers) the respondents report that the Programme contributed to enhance young people's sense of belonging to the EU, so that "*young people feel citizens of the EU to a greater extent*". In 7 cases out of ten, the respondents assert that they agree, to

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<sup>6</sup> The chi square significance coefficient allows to control the independence hypothesis of the connection between two variables, without giving indication of the connection consistency, but only indicates the presence of this connection. The level of significance we always indicate at the foot of the contingency table shows the likelihood (signalled by p) of independence of the variables. By convention, we only record significance values which are at least equal to, or lower than, 0,05.

some or to a great extent, that thanks to the programme young people became more familiar with the European Union and its institutions. The degree of agreement of the volunteers on these first two items is associated to their degree of satisfaction with the training received in the host country, in a statistically significant way ( $\chi^2$   $p < 0.000$  in relation to the item *knowledge of the EU*;  $\chi^2$   $p < 0.024$  in relation to the item *sense of belonging to the EU*).

The volunteers' training proves to be an important variable, in that it can partly explain the subsequent results. Those who state that they received an adequate on arrival training declare that they feel citizens of the European to a greater extent, and that they increased their knowledge of the European Union and its institutions. Finally, if we are to summarize what discussed above, taking into account only the averages values<sup>7</sup> of the responses given by the subsample *organisations*, we observe that the values connected to the intended effects of the Youth Programme are always higher than 3.3 (max. value being 4), and they prove to be very high for each item. The highest level of agreement is given on the items increased confidence in one's own personal skills and stimulation of one's own creativity (average 3.58), enhanced ability to work in groups (4.56), development of tolerant attitudes and greater appreciation of cultural differences (3.53).

#### ***Impacts and outcomes on the organisations, on the local community, on the local administrations, on the networks.***

We made use of two dimensions (Tab.3) in order to point out the programme impacts: one was aimed to highlight the impacts on the local communities (direct and indirect beneficiaries, local communities and administrations), the latter was aimed to stress the impacts on the organisations involved in the actions. With regard to these items, we requested only the organisations' and the youth workers' opinions, since the characteristics and the objectives of the European Voluntary Service are not completely comparable and they cannot be overlapped within the above dimensions.

86 percent of the respondents in the sample *organisations* indicates that there were positive impacts on young people external to the group of the direct beneficiaries. 77 percent thinks that there were positive impacts in the communities involved in the projects. Compared to the youth workers beneficiaries under Action 5.1.3, the organisations tend to attach more importance to the fact that the Programme proved to have a positive outcome on young people outside the group as well, and that there were also unintended positive outcomes. The 2 groups tend to have similar opinions whether the programme might have contributed to draw attention of local administrations to youth issues. In both cases the agreement level is rather low: 53.4 percent of the organisations and 36.7 percent of the youth workers.

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<sup>7</sup> Since these are ordinal variables, the use of the average is forced duly justified by the fact that we made a set of analysis previously which allow us to moderate any distortion and survey the results in the light of the raw frequencies and the percentages discussed above.

**Table 3 Perception of the impacts of the Youth Programme by the three groups of respondents**

		<b>organizations</b>	<b>beneficiaries Act 5.1.3</b>
<b>Impacts on the local communities</b>	The experience is also useful for youngsters outside the group	86,2%	68,8%
	The experience contributed to draw attention of local administrations to the youth policies	53,4%	36,7%
	The project(s) has (have) an outcome on the local communities	77,6%	73,4%
	There are unintended positive outcomes on the young beneficiaries' groups	80,5%	73,4%
<b>Impacts on organizations and networks</b>	Strengthening of one's own organisation/informal group	82,2%	78,1%
	It contributed to develop stable relationships with other organisations/informal groups at local level	74,1%	68,8%
	The local institutions gave their support – both economical and in kind support – to projects and initiatives developed through the Programme	48%	44,5%
	It gave an impulse to shape youth policies in the Regions and Provinces	59,2%	59,4%
	Strengthening of the relationships with the organisations of the Eastern Europe and Caucasus (EEAC)	21,5%	28,2%
	Strengthening of the relationships with organisations from the MEDA area	22,5%	31,2%
	Strengthening of the relationships with the organisations coming from the South East Europe (SEE)	24,7%	36,8%
	Strengthening of the relationships with the organisations from Latin America (LA)	14,6%	14,9%
Strengthening of the relationships with organisations from the European Union and the EFTA	38,2%	37,5%	

Although local institutions are often perceived as less concerned with youth policies in the local territory, in 48 percent of the cases they offered economical and in kind support to the projects. In 6 cases out of ten, it is thought that the programme “gave useful hints to the setting up of youth policies in the Regions and in the Provinces”.

With regard to the effects on the organisations, on the system, and on the networks of youth organisations, we found a high level of agreement on the item *strengthening of one's own organisation* (between 78 percent and 82 percent). The most significant level of strengthening of the organisations is found in the southern regions (the average value is higher to 3.4 in Calabria, Sardinia, Basilicata, Puglia and Abruzzi). This finding in the Southern regions may be seen – as we have previously mentioned – as a consequence of the infrastructural weaknesses in some areas. Apparently, the improvement of the relationships with other organisations from the European Union is not high (around 38%). This is due to the fact that the 189 organisations and informal groups involved in Action 3.1 - Local Initiatives have not many opportunities (since this action has a typical local dimension) to develop contacts with other youth organisations in the European Union.

With reference to the sustainability of the programme and the unintended long term outcomes, we wondered whether the Programme may have contributed to the development and to the strengthening of initiatives in the youth policies field, which are still continuing or gave origin to other initiatives.

The organisations beneficiaries from some Italian regions report<sup>8</sup> that some initiatives have been developed and they are still in place. These regions are mostly located in the South: Calabria, Puglia, and Basilicata. Then come Abruzzo, Liguria and Trentino. As it was expected, the connection between participation in Action 1-Youth Exchanges (56,9 percent of the organisations) and strengthening of relationships with other organisations in the EU proves to be significant: 71,4 percent of the respondents agrees with this point ( $\chi^2$  significant for  $P < 0.001$ ). Concerning Action 2 – EVS, only 21,8 percent of the organisations state that they strengthened their relationships with other organisations in the EU: no significant connections, neither negative nor positive ones, emerge between the two variables.

There is a significant agreement as for the strengthening of relationships with organisations from the South Eastern Area: one fifth of the organisations and one youth worker out of ten agrees with this point. This reveals that many system initiatives have also had the South Eastern Europe area as one of their priority issues. In their reports about their participation to Group Initiatives and Youth Exchanges projects, young people who took part in the focus groups often stress the project impact on the local community. There were benefits and outcomes both in the local communities and in the circles of friends and family contexts. *“Meeting people from abroad, some foreigners, can help. You realise it how people look at these youngsters ...The community benefits from it, because everybody speaks positively about that”*. (young boy from Palermo). The youth exchanges always activate the neighbourhood, although sometimes people in the small communities are definitely less friendly and welcoming. In the life stories of the participants involved in the focus groups, the topic of keeping contacts after the exchange completion is recurring and transversal to the 3 focus groups, and it is expressed in two ways: they stay in contact for future projects, as it was the case above; they foster the personal relations they created during the projects.

The interaction with other realities enhances one’s own awareness and objectivity toward one’s own community and sense of belonging to it, the interest in deepening the knowledge of one’s own roots becomes greater as well. The exchange allows:

*“..make a good use of your own resources in comparison to what others do. All what we did in Sicily, above all, is not much valorised in comparison to what is made beautiful by those who live out of Sicily in the other countries of the European Union”*. (young boy from Palermo)

The programme impact, especially on the outskirts and the less well-off areas of the metropolis, is seen as very positive. The effects connected to the strengthening of social cohesion between different social groups from the same territory were also highlighted.

### ***The strengthening of the informal groups***

In our study we involved 153 informal groups which were active during the period 2004-2006. 113 of these, corresponding to the 73 percent of the total number, answered to the on-line questionnaire. In February 2008, namely 1 or 3 years after the completion of their projects, 23 percent (26 groups) of the 113 informal groups which gave back

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<sup>8</sup> We have used the average of the responses given by the organisations as an indicator, and we have combined it with the region where the organisation is located.

the questionnaire is no longer active, namely they were winded up; 77 percent (87 groups) are still active: some of them are likely to have taken a new legal status which is unknown to us.

With regard to the effects of the programme, the informal groups which remained active are the ones which declare, to a greater extent, that the programme helped to strengthen their organisation ( $\chi^2$  significant per  $p < 0.000$ ).

Furthermore, the connection between being an active group and stating that there was a direct involvement of young people in the project organisation/management ( $\chi^2 p < 0.014$ ) as well as in fund-raising ( $\chi^2 p < 0.014$ ) is statistically significant. The groups which are currently active expressed themselves more favourably on both statements: this result proves that - as pointed out in the programme guidelines - young people's activation and involvement in the initiatives represents a necessary requirement for their successful achievement and sustainability.

Young people's ability (This data is drawn from the Focus Groups) to activate and bring about friendship networks, with other groups and organisations - thus ensuring the continuation and the strengthening of their groups - proves to be a point of interest. Paradoxically, financial constraints, especially in the case of informal groups, led young people to activate resources through their personal networks. In several projects young people were even able to involve areas outside their local community. They were also able to activate specific professional expertise (for instance: a qualified accountant for the project final report) and qualified people to solve difficulties in various fields which young people are not familiar with. Young people stressed many times that thanks to the projects new organisations networks were created or that the already existing partnerships were strengthened. It was also stated that after the project completion new initiatives were undertaken autonomously. This has been made possible because Youth Initiatives, and Youth Exchanges to a greater extent, offer the opportunity to establish networks, both among organisations and among single beneficiaries, in order to keep on working.

### ***Close examination of the EVS effects***

In the previous heading we discussed the main and transversal programme effects on the 3 samples. In this heading we will closely examine some aspects which were only present in the survey with the EVS (we remind the readers that the questionnaires were only partly similar, since the actions are rather different).

305 are the volunteers who answered to the web-based survey (almost 60 percent of the total EVS population during the period 2005-2006). The respondents' distribution over the regions is uniform, as it was the case for the approached sample; the figures may differ from 1 percent at most. 20 percent (63 people) of the young respondents also carried out the National Civil Service, and the percentage of those who had a previous experience in voluntary activities is higher (61%). Therefore, who starts an EVS project is a young person with a strong motivation for solidarity-based actions, he/she had been already concerned with voluntary activities and wants to continue on this field. One of the outcomes of Action 2-EVS is the strengthening of motivation, since 57,7 percent of the EVS volunteers state that after the EVS experience they have committed themselves more strongly to solidarity-based initiatives.

As it is described more clearly in the heading “equity and accessibility to the programme”, more than half of the volunteers are concentrated in Northern Italy and live in 4 regions. Around 44 percent of the young volunteers states that he/she lives in a big centre (more than 100,000 inhabitants). There is an overrepresentation of females in the EVS: 92 percent of the young people states that EVS fosters the participation of both males and females, but it is well known that girls are 70 percent of the total number of volunteers. The main activities they chose were care for people (44,6%), local community development (11,8%), promotion and environment protection (6,2%) and cultural heritage (4,3%).

They are mainly educated young people, and only 4 percent of them had not been abroad previously for study or tourism. For one third of them, the little knowledge of foreign languages was an obstacle during their EVS project. In order to evaluate the access conditions to the programme, that is to understand whether people belonging to different socio-economical contexts would have the same opportunities for access, the young volunteers were asked whether they lived in socio-economical disadvantaged areas, or in areas with critical delinquency problems. Out of 305 respondents, 17 percent lives in a disadvantaged area, and 11 percent states that they live in areas where delinquency problems exist.

If we consider the education rate at national level in Italy, we find that 72,3 percent of young people in the age range 20-24 possess a high school diploma. We also find that 97 percent of the EVS volunteers possesses this educational level. Therefore it becomes clear that those who are highly educated have more access to Action 2- EVS. This percentage increases in the case of Southern Italy where 100 percent of volunteers, aged between 20 and 24 years, possess a high school diploma, the youth population of the South with a secondary school diploma being only 67,7. Similarly, young people who have good notes at school have an easier access to the Programme; 71 percent of the respondents agrees with the item which highlighted this data.

### ***Expectations and perceived effects***

Six youngsters out of ten (62%) state that thanks to the EVS experience their commitment to solidarity-based actions became stronger: from a statistical point of view, a significant connection exists between asserting this and being a girl ( $\chi^2 < p 0.05$ ), or stating that thanks to EVS you feel more motivated to resume your studies (62 percent of agreement, 38 percent of disagreement  $\chi^2 < p .02$ ).

Half of them states that thanks to the EVS experience the participation to organised bodies increased (51,4%). When young people say that the EVS experience “met their expectations” they are - as expected - more likely to join organised bodies after the project completion. ( $\chi^2 < p 0.05$ ) and their commitment to solidarity actions is likely to be enhanced ( $\chi^2 < p 0.01$ ).

The volunteers strongly agree that the EVS experience can infuse or enhance motivation to resume one's own studies (67 percent agreement); however it must be noted that this is mostly stated by those who had “better marks” at school and not by those who had not so much progress before starting their EVS project.( $\chi^2 p < .015$ ).

The perceived effect for the EVS volunteers on their employability in the labour market seems to be limited. 28 percent of them totally disagrees (value 1) that the EVS experience improved their employability in the labour market; this percentage increases up to 58 percent when we also take into account that there is moderate disagreement. Among those stating that there was an indirect effect on the employability in the labour market, girls slightly outnumber young boys (43,7 percent of female volunteers and 38 percent of male volunteers). There is a tendency for young people to declare that they are satisfied with their EVS experience. In particular, the statement that the activity was interesting and involving (77 percent of the volunteers) is significantly associated to the direct involvement of young people in on the spot activities. ( $\chi^2$  p < 0.000). It is of note that 95 percent of those who were involved directly in the management of the activities on the spot declares that their work was interesting.

One key factor, which had already emerged in the previous mid-term evaluation of the Youth Programme 2000-2006 realised by Cevas in 2003, is the volunteers' accommodation. In the present survey, dissatisfaction on this point emerges as well, since 58 percent of the EVS young people agrees that more guarantees on the accommodation quality would be necessary.

### **Effects of the Future Capital Action**

Within our sample, the percentage of those who undertook Future Capital is very low indeed, (only 5,2 percent of the sample). Those who carry out a Future Capital project are slightly higher educated than other volunteers.

From the analysis of this small sample we can assume that:

- ⇒ This programme sub-action is absolutely not of much importance and only a very small part of the volunteers intended to benefit from it;
- ⇒ The expected support in terms of employability in the labour market is not very significant;
- ⇒ Since this was an action based on grants, late payment had a considerable negative influence .

It seems there is a difficulty to access to, and a lack of knowledge on, this action, since more than 1 EVS young volunteer out of ten (10,8 percent and 6 percent of missed answers) disagrees with the item that it is easy to access to the Future Capital action. We asked the interviewee their opinion on the usefulness of this sub-action: 25,3 percent of the organisations considers Future Capital not to be useful and a great number of respondents (16,7%) did not express any opinion. In contrast, 29,6 percent thinks that it was useful. A somewhat idealised vision of Future Capital seems to emerge, which is opposite to the negative judgement expressed by those who were beneficiaries of Future Capital.

### **The programme relevance**

In order to understand the programme relevance, that is to understand to which extent a programme is able to address young people's needs and the correspondence between the programme objectives and local needs, the programme beneficiaries were asked to express their opinion on this. The judgements on the "programme relevance"

are very inhomogeneous and they are expressed on a continuum scale ranging from total disagreement to a total agreement (values from 1 to 4).

In all, 43,6 percent of the organisations agrees - to a great extent or to a sufficient extent - that it would be more useful to fund other programmes which address young people's needs to a greater extent. This is an attention-grabbing criticality which we wanted to focus on. The most critical opinions were expressed by organisations and informal groups within Action 1 and Action 3. 52,5 percent of the organisations and informal groups which realised Action 3.1 projects state that, *"It would have been more useful to fund other programmes which address young people's needs to a greater extent"*. Consequently, the organisations which did not realise any EVS project tend, more than those organisations which implemented this action, to state that it would be more useful to fund other programmes which address young people's needs to a greater extent. We have to do with a statistical significant difference ( $P < .009$ ). The regions in Southern Italy – particularly Calabria and Sardinia –express more critical opinions as to the programme's relevance: 53,2 percent of the organisations from the South and the Islands state that, *"If possible, it would be more useful to fund other programmes which address young people's priority needs to a greater extent"*. Even in this case, the difference of answers given in the different territorial areas (North, Centre, South) is statistically significant ( $\chi^2 p < .04$ ).

#### ***Implementation processes of the programme and criticalities***

The organisations and the groups (beneficiaries of the programme) state (Tab.4) that there was an improvement of the quality of the projects realised over the years (69 percent of the organisations expresses average-high agreement values). A strong agreement is found in relation to the adequate involvement of young people in the project organisation and management ( 84 percent of the organisations agrees with this), and only a part of them (47%) agrees on the involvement of young people themselves in the fund-raising activity.

Around 23 percent of Action5.1.3 beneficiaries, and 15.8 percent of the organisations, report that during the projects there is an interruption rate of around 20 percent of the users. When we proposed the same item in a different form *"there are different cases of project interruption ..."* the answers have varied slightly (17.3 percent with answers ranked on the value 3). This may be an underestimated data, since it was provided by the contact persons of the organisations, but is surely quite reliable .

**Table 4 Agreement percentages on the items**

	<b>beneficiaries Action 5.1.3</b>	<b>organizations</b>
There are several cases of project interruption	26,6%	17,3%
In the course of the years the project quality has improved	65,6%	69,0%
Young people have been involved in the fund-raising activity	39,9%	47,4%
During the project at least 20 percent of young people generally withdraws	22,7%	15,8%
Young people have been directly involved in the project organisation and management	71,8%	84,2%

### ***Functioning of the National Agency for youth<sup>9</sup>***

As for the National Agency's functioning, we asked some questions on information adequacy, provided support, management procedures, reporting, payments' timing. Weaknesses and strengths emerged:

- Efficient management of information to youth organisations beneficiaries;
- The operating costs of the National Agency seem to be limited: 10 percent (500/600,000 € per year) out of the programme budget (50 Million Euro) over seven years.
- Management procedures of the information system as well as collection and reporting of the monitoring data are not adequate, unsystematic and fragmented.
- Understaffing and problematic staff management: out of 25 people, all had temporary contracts, except 7; staff payments were scheduled two times a year. Consequently, all this resulted in a high staff turnover and waste of skilled personnel.
- Huge and continued delays in the reporting procedures: the Agency is currently checking final reports from 2003, and all information related to the programme outputs (number of projects, awarded grants) is hardly traceable or not very much reliable.

The main weaknesses concern huge delays in the financial reporting, which has been dragging on since the end of the nineties, and it is currently stuck on 2003. All this has got a negative impact on the projects, and on youth groups, since the latter have not yet received the final payment (25 percent of the grant awarded), even 2 or 3 years after the project completion, and they are required to justify the expenses very late, at the risk of documentation loss and lack of accuracy. These problems are due to *"a weak political will to allocate adequate financial resources to the National Agency (NA), (...) this was not done at that time, so the Agency had to manage both the backlog of work and the everyday ordinary activities. Additionally, new and more efficient reporting procedures and project management procedures were set up."* The economical difficulty tends to decrease and gives small values. Finally, the problems related to staff management and temporary work contracts emerge clearly, although a solution has been found.

70,1 percent of the organisations complains of the late payments by the National Agency, 48 percent fully agrees (value 4) with the following item: "There were delays by the National Agency in making payments, and this hindered the successful project implementation"; this is one of the criticalities which mainly emerged during the whole survey, in the interviews with the witnesses and in the focus groups. In the case of youth workers of Action 5.1.3, the percentage agreeing on the above item increases up to 71.9 percent (giving value 4, representing the highest agreement for 53.9 percent).

In relation to the NA role and to the information channels, we compared the opinions expressed by the three groups on 2 dimensions (Tab.5): as for the statements relating to the efficiency of the NA activity, volunteers are

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<sup>9</sup> ANG Acronym for National Agency for youth Agenzia Nazionale per i Giovani

slightly more dissatisfied with the exhaustiveness of information provided by the NA staff. Two groups (the organisations and the young beneficiaries under action.5.1.3) strongly agree (from 74,7% up to 68,8%) on the two items related to usefulness of the training activities implemented by the National Agency (also NA) with a view of fostering exchanges and improving expertises. The information which the NA staff gave to youth organisations and informal groups, is almost always complete (Agreement is found in 79 percent of the cases).

**Table 5 Percentage of agreement on the items**

		EVS	organizations	beneficiaries 5.1.3
<b>NA effectiveness</b>	The NA training activities contribute to fostering youth exchanges	-	71,8%	68,8%
	The NA training activities contribute to improving expertises	-	74,7%	71,1%
	Information given by the NA staff is exhaustive	60,0%	79,0%	78,1%
<b>Information channels</b>	The local information relays offered a valid information support	-	37,4%	36,7%
	The programme guidelines are clear	75,7%	74,1%	66,4%
	Usefulness of information available on the NA web-site	48,9%	72,1%	64,1%
	Usefulness of information provided by the Eurodesk network	46,6%	50,9%	57,0%

The information provided by the NA staff and available on the web-site (i.e. user's guide etc. ) were generally considered to be user-friendly and understandable, "notwithstanding the procedures", but informal groups and small organisations would need a stronger support in their activity. In relation to accessibility, the only problems highlighted are late payments, especially for the informal groups.

#### ***Accessibility and information networks***

Concerning the issues related to dissemination of information and involuntary discriminatory forms or little accessibility for some disadvantaged target groups, all the witnesses believe that information is widespread and user-friendly, and that gap in, and limitations to, access might be caused the following factors :

- ⇒ Not much information available for those who do not belong to organisation networks, with the exception of some "lucky" realities and contexts;
  - ⇒ mental disabilities
  - ⇒ technological gap due to indirect limitations suffered by young people who use the internet to a small extent.
- The information channels are still insufficient and some factors affect the accessibility to the programme in many areas of the country. In particular, the statement "*a valid information support to the preparation of the project application was provided by the local information centres*" obtains the highest rating of disagreement by the organisations and the Action 5.1.3 beneficiaries who are active in Central Italy (61,5%), and especially those from Southern Italy and the Islands (81,5%), compared to the 50 percent of disagreement expressed by those working in Northern Italy. In the Region Campania 91 percent of respondents disagree with the above item !! The same figures come out on the following item, "*the information provided by the Eurodesk network, or in its local information relays, proved to be very useful*": also in this case, the disagreement in Central and Southern Italy, included the islands, is

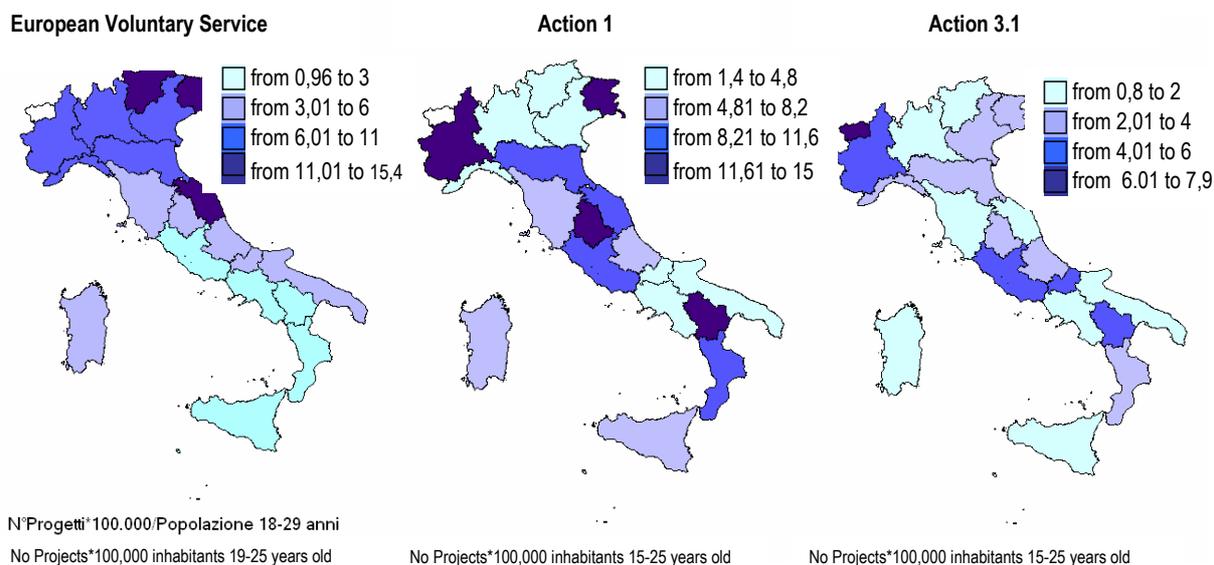
higher than in the North (47,7 percent in Central Italy, 51,6 percent in the South/Islands). Half of the organisations considers the information provided by the Eurodesk network to be useful; this percentage drops to 37 percent when it comes to the support provided in other local information centres. The only remark made to the info points and services was about the risk at dumping, the risk of intercepting the economical resources assigned to the informal groups.

### **Equity and accessibility degree of the programme**

One of the key elements to measure the equity level of a national programme is its capacity to address or attract beneficiaries coming from all the areas of the country, no matter how widespread organised participatory forms and voluntary activities are at local level, and independent of the presence of information networks and the socio-economical development rate.

Concerning the Youth Exchanges and the Group Initiatives ( Action 1 and Action 3.1) we have prepared a table (Tab.6) with the summary of figures related to the numbers of projects<sup>10</sup> by Italian resident population in the age range 15-25 years; the figures are presented in a cartographic map of Italy and the number of projects are calculated per 100,000 youngsters. To create a synthetic table for Action 2-EVS, the same procedure was followed, but we made reference to the region where volunteers are resident and not to the place where organisations are located. Although the distribution of projects over the regions shows a high variability, Southern Italy proves to be still the less effective area in attracting resources and activating policies and interventions for young people.

**Figure 2- Distribution rate of the EVS volunteers and the Action 1 and Action 3.1 projects over the regions**



<sup>10</sup> As to action 1, we have the data indicating the belonging of 423 projects to a certain region. Concerning action 2 the EVS volunteers are 489, as to action 3.1 we have 168 projects. As to the remaining actions the years concerned are 2004-2006.

### *Equity and accessibility*

The respondents' opinions whether a certain equity level was ensured in the programme implementation differ in relation to the specific dimensions: the action, the type of subsample (EVS volunteers, action 5.1.3 beneficiaries, organisations beneficiaries ...). EVS volunteers, who were not required to react to all the items in the questionnaire – as it was the case for the organisations - are slightly more critical. While 57 percent of the EVS volunteers state that *“Even socio-economically disadvantaged young people take part in the programme”*, this percentage increases up to 63,3% and even to 74,7% in the case of action 5.1.3 beneficiaries and the organisations respectively. This difference is due to the fact that they have different perspectives: EVS volunteers focus only on action 2, which proves to attract only specific target groups and to exclude others. However, it must be observed that this is, on average, a highly educated subsample of young people, the majority of which had already been abroad for tourism or studies (64 percent compared to 33 percent for organisations), and that in the most cases they had already been involved in voluntary activities in the framework of national programmes (National Civil Service) or within local organisations. A further evidence of the diversity existing among beneficiaries is their territorial provenance: in 4 cases out of ten, organisations and action 5.1.3 beneficiaries state that the programme is addressed to young people coming from areas with a high delinquency rate, this proportion in the EVS volunteers equals to 12 percent.

As to the access to the advantages offered by the programme, a problem came up about the little rotation degree (repeated participation of the same young people in different projects) within the groups implementing youth exchanges, and about the development of *“specialised youth exchanges participants”*. In the previous mid-term evaluation, the same trend had emerged, and now we surveyed it again with three subsamples and the *focus group*. We see that 69,5 percent of action 5.1.3 beneficiaries reports that young people were used to take part several times to many youth exchanges projects. Obviously, taking part in international youth exchanges projects several times does not necessarily imply that young people joined only exchanges funded by the Youth Programme,

*“I started taking part to exchanges in 1998, joining an exchange in the Basque countries ”* (a young boy from Rome). *“the first cultural exchange to which ...they were a lot”* (a young girl from Rome). *“In the summer I was used to leave to the exchanges”* (a young boy from Palermo)

As young people state, it is the first exchange experience which has more impact in terms of personal and development and emotional impression. Of course, this does not mean that the subsequent exchanges are not significant: *“the first exchange teaches you a lot, the others as well, but less ...”*

Only 40,6 percent of action 5.1.3 beneficiaries considers the programme to give access to informal groups. The item relating to the equal gender opportunities does not give many variations: the three groups highly agree (between 88 percent and 95 percent) that the Programme offers equal access to males and females. As to the target groups at risk of social exclusion, we observe that about 36 percent of the organisations feels that people with disabilities have been sufficiently involved in the programme, and 9 percent (16 percent of the action 5.1.3 beneficiaries) thinks that

also Roma and Sinti young people were involved. This data is not alarming since these two ethnic groups are not present on the national territory to a great extent, nevertheless we could have expected higher figures, even though we did not make any reference to their involvement in terms of numbers.

### ***The complementarity with youth policies at national level***

In order to highlight the complementarity of the programme, its utility in creating synergies with other policies and programmes addressed to young people, directly and indirectly, at European, national and regional level, some items were integrated and presented below (tab.7).

Slightly less than half of the organisations state that there was an adequate support by the local institutions. Specifically, this statement is associated ( $\chi^2$   $p < 0.009$ ) to the territorial area of provenance of the organisations; organisations coming from Northern Italy, more than in the other areas, assert that the local institutions offered some support.

**Table 6 Responses given by the organisations on complementarity**

	<b>organizations</b>
Local institutions' support to the Programme	48,0%
The programme offered useful indications to the shaping of youth policies at regional and local level	59,2%
The interest of the local administrations toward youth policies issues was enhanced	53,4%

In contrast, the interviewees almost always acknowledged that the programme has generated major impacts at local level - where they actually came about -, while at national and regional level the outcomes are less significant, and even where they occurred, they were not connected with the Youth Programme. All witnesses<sup>11</sup> consider that Italy pays for the lack of attention and the considerable delays in terms of development of youth policies at national level, which resulted in a reduced impact of the Youth programme (with the exception of some active regions such as Piedmont, Emilia Romagna) which, in their view, played the role of making up for the lack of instruments in this field rather than just having a complementary role".

By establishing the Ministry of Youth Policies and Sport Activities - POGAS in 2006 (see the Decree-Law 18<sup>th</sup> May 2006, n. 181), *"the counsellorships entrusted with youth policies and the specific institutional stakeholders at regional level were consequently enhanced. Of particular importance was the agreement signed in a session of the Joint State-Regions conference on 14/6/2007"*.

In 2006 the National Fund for the Youth Policies for a three-year period was established, and the National Youth Plan was adopted (...). All regional governments signed the Strategic Frameworks (Quadri Strategici) aimed at the development of the Framework Programme Agreements (APQ, accordi di programma quadro) on the youth policies

<sup>11</sup> Iannotta (Region Piedmont), M Mingozzi (Region Emilia Romagna), R Magi (President Eurodesk Network), M Viatore (President AFSAI), D Calzoni (former President Arciragazzi nazionale), C Giannino (Presidency of the Council of Ministers -POGAS), R de Camillis (Former Director youth policies committee, representative of the National authority)

which received 270 Million Euro, mainly through a co-funding by national (L.296/2006 e CIPE<sup>12</sup>), regional, local funds, and to a small extent by Community funds. At the end of 2007 six regions and one Autonomous Province subscribed the APQ, with a total amount of more than 132,6 Mio € (Data processing DPS Ministry for economical development). In 2001 the regions became the relevant institutions for youth policies (see the modification of the Title V of the Constitution art. 117 lett. m), and for this main reason we focussed on the APQ, assessing them in the light of the objectives<sup>13</sup> set by the Youth Programme 2000-2006.

⇒ Slightly more than half of the regions and Autonomous Provinces, in the period between end of 2006 and 2007, have set within the Strategic Frameworks of the Framework Programme Agreements (APQ) or even in APQ themselves, objectives related to exchange of international experiences at European level, with the Mediterranean countries, among young people, in order to foster mobility as an element of development and multicultural interaction;

⇒ Clear objectives with a focus on the promotion of intercultural dialogue and fight against xenophobia are present to some extent: objectives such as “development of a sense of solidarity bringing about social, relations, free from cultural and ethnical prejudices, in order to increase European Citizenship or to develop the process of building up dialogue and tolerance schemes among religions, beliefs and different cultures were set only by 2 regions and 1 Autonomous Province.

⇒ The promotion of easier conditions for practicing European Citizenship is in place in 11 regions.

### Conclusions

Based on the thematic areas covered by the evaluation questions, we summarize the main monitoring data relating to the beneficiaries reached, and we draw our conclusions which are presented below.

The young “direct” Italian and foreign beneficiaries foreseen in the Youth Programme which were involved in the Youth Exchanges (Action 1.1 and 1.2), in the European Voluntary Service (Action 2.1 and 2.2 – Hosting and sending projects), and in the Youth Initiatives (Action 3.1 and 3.2) were about 44,000 in the period 2000- 2006. The number of Italian young people foreseen in the approved projects in the different actions was slightly more than the half: 19,127. Lastly, the Italian beneficiaries which were ‘actually’ reached by the programme could be approximately not more than 15,000. The overall number of the organisations involved in the programme is estimated to be 880.

As to the **Impact on the young beneficiaries of the programme**, we analysed the following dimensions: personal skills, confidence, tolerance, autonomy, EU citizenship. We found there is a general agreement that the

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<sup>12</sup> Delibera CIPE N. 35 del 2005 - Quota D.5 - Regioni Mezzogiorno; Delibera CIPE N. 03 del 2006 - Quota C.3 - Regioni Mezzogiorno

<sup>13</sup> Transnational mobility; promotion of autonomy; Knowledge of action systems; fight against racism; support to the development of local communities and solidarity; promotion of sustainable conditions for active citizenship practice; support to non formal education activities.

programme had positive effects on the young beneficiaries: the agreement rating varies in the three subsamples ( EVS volunteers, youth workers, organisations' responsible members) ranging from 70 percent to 94.8 percent, and it is very high as to the development of young people' confidence in their own abilities, increased abilities in working in groups, greater appreciation of cultural differences. As to the enhanced sense of belonging to the European citizen and a greater knowledge of the institutions and related policies, a average–high agreement rating is reported (around 70 percent).

The dimension "Confidence" was singled out as: *self-effectiveness* (see *life skills* and health promotion WHO), confidence in the peer group's potential and sense of hope that it is possible to play an active role in the civil society. Remarkably, the increase in confidence that it is possible have an active role in the civil society gave higher values in the south, where there is generally a gap in confidence towards the social networks (this is a view shared by some social capital economists ) than in the north.

In three fourths of the cases, the programme had a positive impact on the informal groups, which are still active even 3 years after the project completion; this is the case for those groups which experienced a higher degree of activation and involvement of young people in the running of the initiatives. Concerning the European Voluntary Service, it is extremely positive that 6 out of 10 young people state that as a result the commitment to solidarity-based initiatives becomes stronger, and for the half of them, the participation to organised bodies and the motivation to resume one's own studies increased. In contrast, the data related to one fourth of the volunteers who report the risk about an increase in intolerance is rather critical. This is referred, in a statistically significant way, to people who were used to live in disadvantaged areas and were likely to encounter more integration difficulties. A strong disagreement exists that the experience may have improved the employability in the labour market. On the basis of what discussed above and taking into account only the averages of the responses by the subsample organisations, it can be concluded that the values connected to the different intended effects of the Youth Programme are very high and they are always higher than 3.3 (the highest value being 4).

As to the **impact of the local communities on the policies and the institutions**, we found slightly lower outcomes, even though considerable, on the sensitisation of the policy makers toward the youth policies. The sustainability of the projects in terms of generating new initiatives is more meaningful in the regions which fall into the "Obiettivo 1" where youth policies are weaker. In 6 cases out of ten it is thought that the *programme gave useful hints in shaping youth policies at regional level and in the Provinces*'. Concerning the effects on organisations, the system, youth organisations networks, a high rating is given to the strengthening of one's own organisation. A quite considerable strengthening of the organisations is found mainly in the regions ex Obiettivo 1 in Southern Italy.

With regards to the issue **equity**, it emerged that - in spite of the high differences existing in the projects' distribution over the regions, on the whole, the South proved to be the area with the lowest percentage of Action 1, 2 and 3 projects and the highest level of inefficiency in recruiting resources and activating relevant policies and

interventions for young people. In terms of numbers and efficiency of information points, the accessibility degree is systematically lower in the southern regions.

The European Voluntary Service seems not to attract a wide range of social groups equally: there is more a tendency for young girls, mostly resident in the north, for young people with a high progress at school, with a high education level, and for those who live in areas without any delinquency problems.

As regards the programme **relevance degree**, the most critical opinions were expressed by the organisations and informal groups involved in Action 1 and Action 3. Half of them states that, "it would be more useful to fund other programmes which address young people' needs to a greater extent". Presumably, according to the distribution of responses over the territorial areas, they are referring to the difficulties encountered in the employability in the labour market.

Concerning the efficiency and the management procedure of the National Agency, some strengths were highlighted such as efficient relationships with youth organisations, sound management of project assessment, efficient training and information service (also through a dedicated web-site). The weaknesses stressed were huge and persistent delays in reporting (In January 2008 it was stuck on 2003), and an inadequate monitoring system: the programme outputs (number of projects, beneficiaries, grants awarded) are hardly traceable and systematic. Both these weaknesses were attributed to shortage of human resources, inefficient staff management (e.g.: working conditions), and to the overall lack of investments by the institutions in the field of youth related issues and policies.

Finally, the **complementarity between** the programme and other policies at national and regional level is not seen as particularly relevant (agreement on this item was around 54 percent), nevertheless from an overview of the current (years 2007-2008) planning instruments existing in the field of the youth policies, future synergies are likely to be put in the field. Policy makers at regional and national level - in half of the planning documents issued by the regions, and in the National Youth Plan - have clearly integrated the Youth programme objectives in terms of transnational mobility and active citizenship.