

THE ATTITUDES OF YOUTH ORGANIZATIONS TOWARDS RACISM AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN LITHUANIA

Executive Summary of the Research Findings in Lithuania

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PART 1: ABOUT THE RESEARCH

1.1. Aims of the Research

Youth Career & Advising Center (YCAC) conducted a research “The Attitudes of Youth Organizations Towards Racism and Human Rights in Lithuania”. The research aimed to explore the attitudes of youth organisations in Kaunas region on respect for human rights and fight against racism. The research was also dedicated to get a better understanding how youth organisations engage members/customers of different race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, social class, disability, etc. and how perceive racism and human rights.

The research results helped YCAC to define the motivation of youth organisations to respect diversity and human rights and will to work with socially disadvantaged groups. The research results also allowed to identify learning needs of youth organisations and thus expand the engagement of socially disadvantaged groups, as well as to apply effective anti-racist measures into their work.

1.2. Methodology

The research in Lithuania focused on 4 approaches of discrimination, which were identified as the most common in Lithuania before the research: gender discrimination, ethnical/racial discrimination, discrimination of disabled, discrimination because of sexual orientation.

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

1. Online survey: a special questionnaire was prepared and digitalized by using an online survey tool. The survey included 18 questions exploring the good practices of anti-racist and anti-discriminatory measures, and, furthermore, identifying the socially disadvantaged groups towards which the strongest stereotypes and prejudices exist.

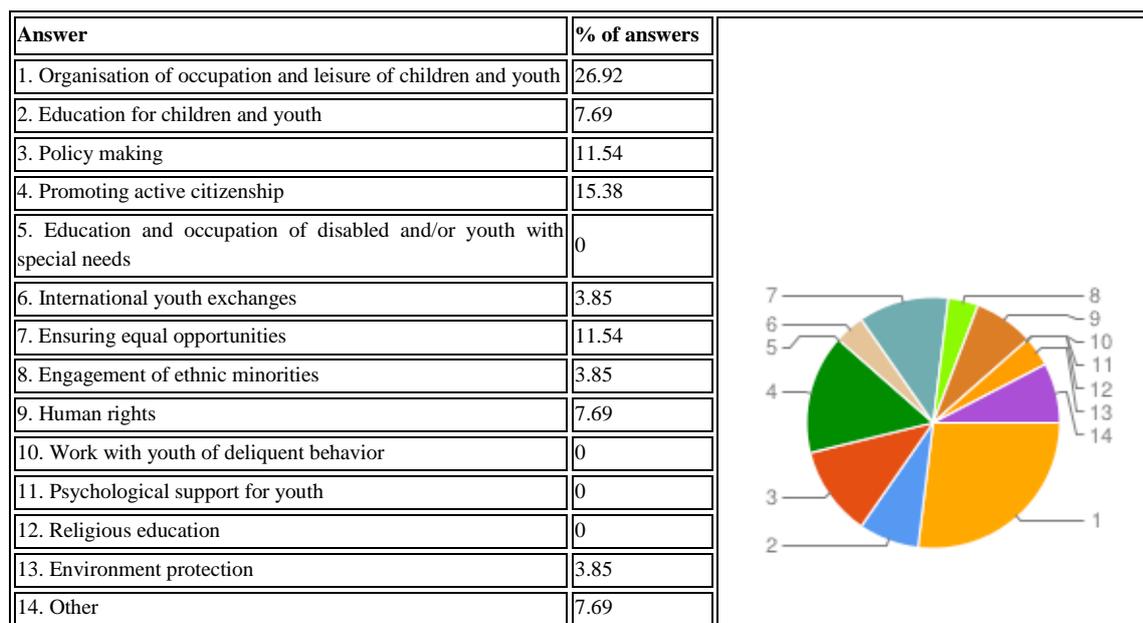
The invitation to participate in the survey was sent to a high number of youth organisations: pupils councils at schools, members of the national students’ parliament, members of the association “Kaunas Round Table” uniting 41 youth organisations.

Overall 42 respondents (69,23% female, 30,77% male) answered the survey. Furthermore, it is important to mention that all of the respondents were Lithuanians in terms of their ethnicity. The majority (61,54%) of the respondents belonged to the age group of 14-19 years, 30,77% were of the age 20-24 years, and only 7,69% of the respondents were of age 25-29 years.

Regarding the positions of the respondents in youth organisations, the majority of respondents were volunteers (38,46%), as well as the leaders/managers and members of the board (23,08% each). The majority (46,15%) of the respondents indicated they they were engaged within the youth organisation for less than 1 year.

The profile of the working fields of organisations who participated in the survey is shown in the diagram:

Diagram 1. Your organisation works in the following fields



2. Interviews with the leaders of youth organisations, youth experts and representatives of disadvantaged groups. Overall 5 interviews were made during April and May, 2013.
3. Focus groups, which engaged representatives of youth organisations, youth workers, youth experts and representatives of disadvantaged groups;
4. Desk research, which included the analysis of the previously conducted researches as well as the content of media and social media informing about phenomena of human rights and racism in Lithuanian society.

PART 2: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

2.1. Situation with diversity within the organizations.

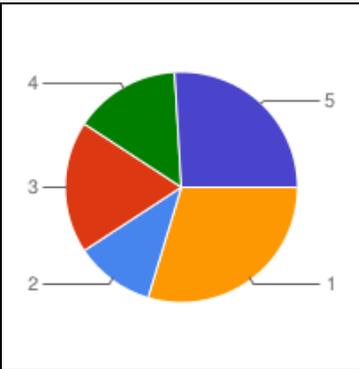
The online survey showed that only 14,81% of the organisations represented in the survey engage people of different nationalities and races or who belong to ethnical minorities. Furthermore, 46,15% of the respondents stated that they have either knew (38,46%) or heard (7,69%) about homosexual participating in their organisations. This can be explained by the fact that the invitation to participate in a survey reached a youth organisation fighting for the rights of homosexuals.

2.2. Racism and Human Rights

In Lithuania the respondents of the online survey were asked to evaluate the attitude of the organization represented by them towards human rights and racism. The overall situation is illustrated in the below give diagram:

Diagram 2. Your organisation's attitudes towards racism and human rights

Answer	%
1. Your organisation is open to ethnic minorities, people of different nationality, race, gender and sexual orientation	29.63
2. Your organisation has a tool/mechanism to identify different nationality, race, ethnicity, disability and other special needs among the members of the organisaiton	11.11
3. The activities and services of your organisation are physically accessible and adapted to the needs of disabled and youth with special needs	18.52
4. Your organisation engages people of different nationalities and races or who belong to ethnical minorities	14.81
5. Bullying is strictly forbidden in your organisation	25.93



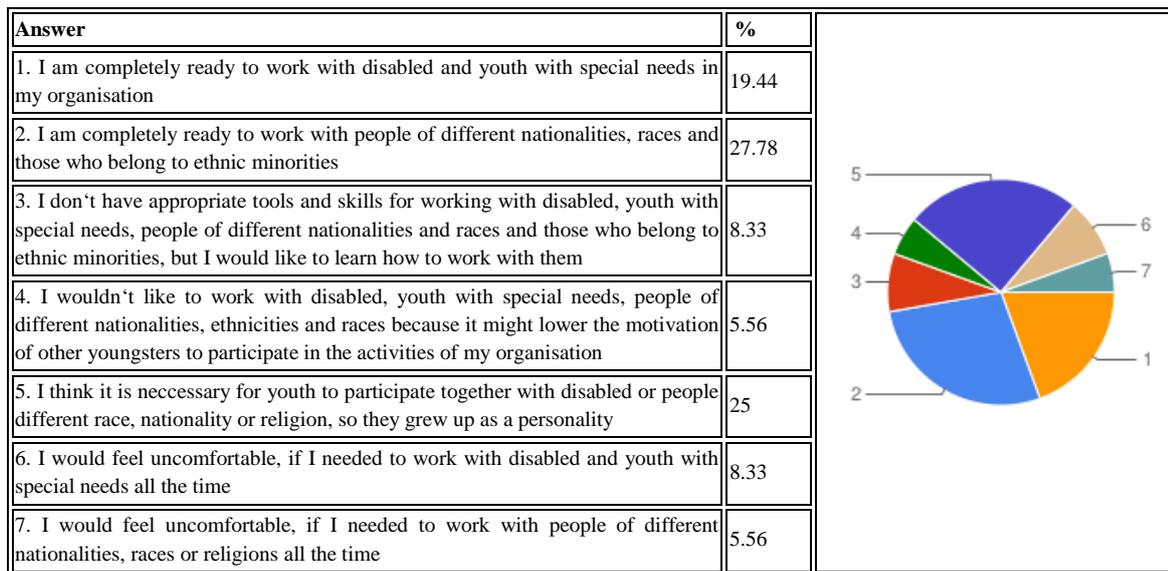
Almost 30% of respondents said they were open to ethnical minorities, races, people of different genders and homosexuals.

Only 11% of organisations represented in the survey have tools helping to recognize different nationalities, races, relation with ethnic minorities, disability and other special needs.

As 25% of the respondents stated that the bullying was strictly forbidden in their organisations, we may conclude that these organizations have a positive attitude towards anti-discriminatory behavior.

The respondents in Lithuania were also asked to evaluate their personal attitude towards racism and human rights. The overall situation is illustrated in the below give diagram:

Diagram 3. Your personal attitude towards discrimination and racism



It is significant to mention a contradiction between the attitudes demonstrated by the respondents in the online survey and information gained through the interviews and the focus groups. As more than 47% respondents stated they were completely ready to work with disabled, youth with special needs, people of different nationalities, races and ethnicity, the interviewees and participants of the focus groups were asked to give good practice examples how this is done. The respondents mentioned that is more a personal attitude of people, but not readiness in terms of knowledge and skills, which might enable them to work effectively with these groups. This statement might be illustrated by several cases:

„Organisation X organised a huge festival for students and invited students with disabilities to participate. Unfortunately, they didn't pay attention while selecting the venues for some of the events, as they were not physically accessible for students with disabilities.“

Regarding the personal attitudes demonstrated in the online survey, it is obvious that ¼ of the respondents feel the necessity to participate together with disabled or people different race, nationality or religion, so they grew up as a personality. This fact shows

a positive attitude towards different people among the youngster and a possibilities for them to be more engaged into the activities of youth organisations.

There was a number (8,33%) of respondents saying that they would feel uncomfortable, if they needed to work twith disabled people all the time. It is obvious that this is a common tren among youngsters in the Lithuanian society, as other cazveys say the same.

The research „Multiple Discrimination In Higher education“ highlighted that of all respondents, 41.4% would not like to share a room with a roommate who has special needs, although this condition would encourage communication or would not have a negative impact on communication for 84.9% of the students participating in the survey. (Lietuvos studentų sąjunga & Lygių galimybių plėtros centras, 2011)

The respondents of the online survey were also asked to answer, if they have heard about harassments or bullying cases in their organisations because of different reasons. Overall situation is illustrated in the below give table:

Table 1. Do you know, if anyone in your organisation has experienced harassment or twitting?

	Yes	No	I heard about that
1. because of disability	7.69%	76.92%	15.38%
2. because of gender	15.38%	69.23%	15.38%
3. because of religion	7.69%	76.92%	15.38%
4. because of nationality, ethnicity	15.38%	76.92%	7.69%
Viso	11.54%	75%	13.46%

75% of the respondents stated they haven't heard about such cases, which shows tolerant and non-discriminatory environment existing inside the youth organisations. The most harassment and bullying cases people knew or have heard were because of the gender (30,76% knew or have heard about that). This fact shows that gender discrimination is the most known discriminatory approach among the youth organisations. This trend can be justified by the results of other researches as well.

The results of the research „Multiple Discrimination In Higher Education“ identified that higher education students notice a verbal agression among their peers (humiliating remarks and jokes) towards various social groups. Mostly it is directed towards women (76,8%), homosexual persons (74,7%) and men (66,5%). (Lietuvos studentų sąjunga & Lygių galimybių plėtros centras, 2011)

The respondents were also asked, if they have ever faced harassment and bullying. 83% of the respondents said they have never faced with these problems. The majority of

those who sometimes face harassment or bullying in their organization, face it because of their gender or religious views (7,69% each). 7,69% of the respondents also said they often faced with harassment and bullying because of their race or nationality.

The research in Lithuania discovered that the ways the youth organisations fight against discrimination and racism are different. The most common way of fighting with discrimination (28,5% mentioned it) is applying disciplinary measures. Educational activities (trainings, seminars) and mediation while solving the discriminatory conflicts (23,81% each) were also noticed as popular ways to fight against the discrimination in youth organisations.

Some good practice examples for fighting with discrimination and fostering tolerance for different people exist among the youth organisations in Lithuania:

- AIESEC Kaunas has implemented 2 projects for fostering intercultural dialogue among youngsters: „If I Were You“, „Intercultural Dialogue“.

From the interview: „Of course, AIESEC is an organisation, which is supposed to implement these kind of activities because of its origin and mission. So, this fact shouldn't surprise.“

- Association of Tolerant Youth organises a summer camp „Different but Homey“ every year. Together with other partners this organisation is a founder of the Multicultural Center of Volunteers.

From the interview: as the Union Youth Nationalists is a movement representing radical/extreme left views, the Association of Tolerant Youth represents the opposite extreme position. So, we should be careful while evaluating the activities they are doing.

- Lithuanian Union of School Students also applies tools to fight against the discrimination and respect the human rights. These can be illustrated by a couple of actions:
 - *The Union submitted a position to the national court regarding the decision of the Ministry of Education and science to ease the exam of the Lithuanian language for the ethnic minorities. The Union expressed the position that this decision discriminates the rest of the students' community, and this decision won't ensure equal rights and equal competition while entering higher education. (Lietuvos moksleivių sąjunga, 2013)*
 - *The Union submitted a position to the national parliament in Lithuania towards the suggestion of several members of the parliament to make Religion a compulsory subject at school. The Union thinks that such*

suggestion won't ensure students' right to choose a religion. Furthermore, according to the national constitution, the educational institutions in Lithuania are nondenominational and open to people of different religions as well as non-religious ones. (Lietuvos moksleivių sąjunga, 2013)

- Children's Hotline organises an event "A Week Without Twits" every year. Many other organisations (i.e. Lithuanian Parliament of school Students, etc.) usually join this initiative and arrange events, awareness raising campaigns, various activities at schools in order to call students' attention to the problems of twitting and bullying among youth.

The respondents of the online survey were also asked, who were the key actors influencing their attitudes towards various social groups and human rights. The survey showed that the most important actor in this case is family (almost 61,54%). The respondents said educational institutions (53,08%) played a huge role in this case as well. The role of youth organizations is seen as important as well. In terms of ways to reduce the discrimination and fight for human rights, educational activities towards increasing the respect to diversity were mentioned as the most important measure to fight against discrimination and respect human rights. systematic situation analysis was mentioned as the most important or important tool. Public actions and campaigns, as well as social services were also mentioned as an effective way to make people aware and foster them to respect more the human rights.

PART 3: CONCLUSIONS

The research results highlighted several trends around the issues of discrimination and racism in youth organisations:

1. The results showed that youth organisations in Kaunas region are not completely open to people from ethnic minorities, people of different nationalities races, gender as well as homosexuals. We can find these kind of people participating in youth work only in every 7th youth organization.
2. The members of only 1/4 youth organizations are completely ready to work together with people of other nationalities and races, but this should be perceived as having a positive attitudes towards different people, but not appropriate knowledge and skills enabling to work with them effectively.
3. The research also showed that only 1 out of 5 youth organisations provides services which are physically accessible and adapted to the needs of youth with disabilities. Furthermore, around 10% of respondents showed the lack of appropriate tools and skills to work effectively with disabled youth, people of different races, nationalities, and ethnicities. They also expressed the will to learn how to deal and engage those who are different. This fact shows a learning need on basic working principles and understanding of different cultures, communication styles, etc.
4. Although 1 out of 4 youth organisations thinks that the youngsters have to gain experience in dealing with people who are different than them, there is still a small number of organisations showing their intolerance and reluctance to work with those who are in a disadvantaged position.
5. Although the majority of the audience said they haven't heard about the harassment and twitting cases in their organisations, the results of other researches show a different situation. This might be concluded that harassment and twitting are more common in educational institutions rather than youth organisations, as here youngsters feel more comfortable around their peers. Nevertheless, gender discrimination is the most common discriminatory approach in all sectors.
6. The top three measures to fight against discrimination and increase respect for human rights are disciplinary measures, educational/awareness raising activities and peer mediation. This fact shows which ways of work are the most appropriate for the youth. We can already find some good practice examples, what kind of tools and strategies youth organisations implement. However, all these measures are more

superficial and having no continuity. For this reason the youth organisations should be trained so the anti-discrimination measures became their daily routine.

7. The research highlighted that the top actors in developing the attitudes of young people towards various social groups and human rights. These key actors are: (1) family, (2) educational institutions (i.e. schools), (3) youth and other civil society organisations. This fact makes clear that the main actions to form anti-racist and anti-discriminatory attitudes of the young people should be directed to the above mentioned target audiences.
8. The research identified the most appropriate ways to ensure the decrease of twitting and discrimination among the youngsters and to promote respect to human rights. These are the conversations and discussions in families, public campaigns and actions, educational activities for school communities towards respect for diversity.

PART 4: RECOMMENDATIONS

The research “The Attitudes of Youth Organizations Towards Racism and Human Rights in Lithuania” gave the project partner Youth Career & Advising Center some guideline and showed the strategic paths, how to implement the CHARM project in Lithuania and meet the needs of youth organizations related to applying non-discriminatory and anti-racist practices in their activities. The following recommendations could be given for further implementation of the project activities:

1. Promote openness of youth organisations by providing basic tools and principals as well as educational support, which could allow the organisations to engage more youngsters from the excluded groups into their activities.
2. Strengthen the educational activities for youth organisations around the issues of discrimination, racism and human rights, which would be oriented to increase the knowledge and understanding of different people, their cultures and behaviors, develop skills of youth workers, so they were able to engage into their activities those who are different, and strengthen their motivation to fight against racism and discrimination and increase respect for human rights.
3. To promote the engagement of various stakeholders, who are identified as key actors in developing the attitudes of youngsters towards racism, discrimination and human rights; empower youth organisations to work with parents and educators and promote the importance of respect for human rights among them, as well as to work with the members of their organisations in order to make them more tolerant for people from excluded groups.
4. Provide tools, methods and strategies, as well as the educational and counseling support to youth organisations, so they were able to develop new actions and continue the ones around discrimination, racism and human rights, that are already happening; give support to youth organisations towards establishment of long-term strategies for sustainability of already existing actions and activities, so they had a long-term impact in the field of youth work.