ATTITUDES OF YOUTH ORGANISATIONS TOWARDS ANTI-RACISM AND ANTI-DISCRIMINATION

RESEARCH REPORT SUMMARY

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PART ONE – About the research

1. Quick look at the research
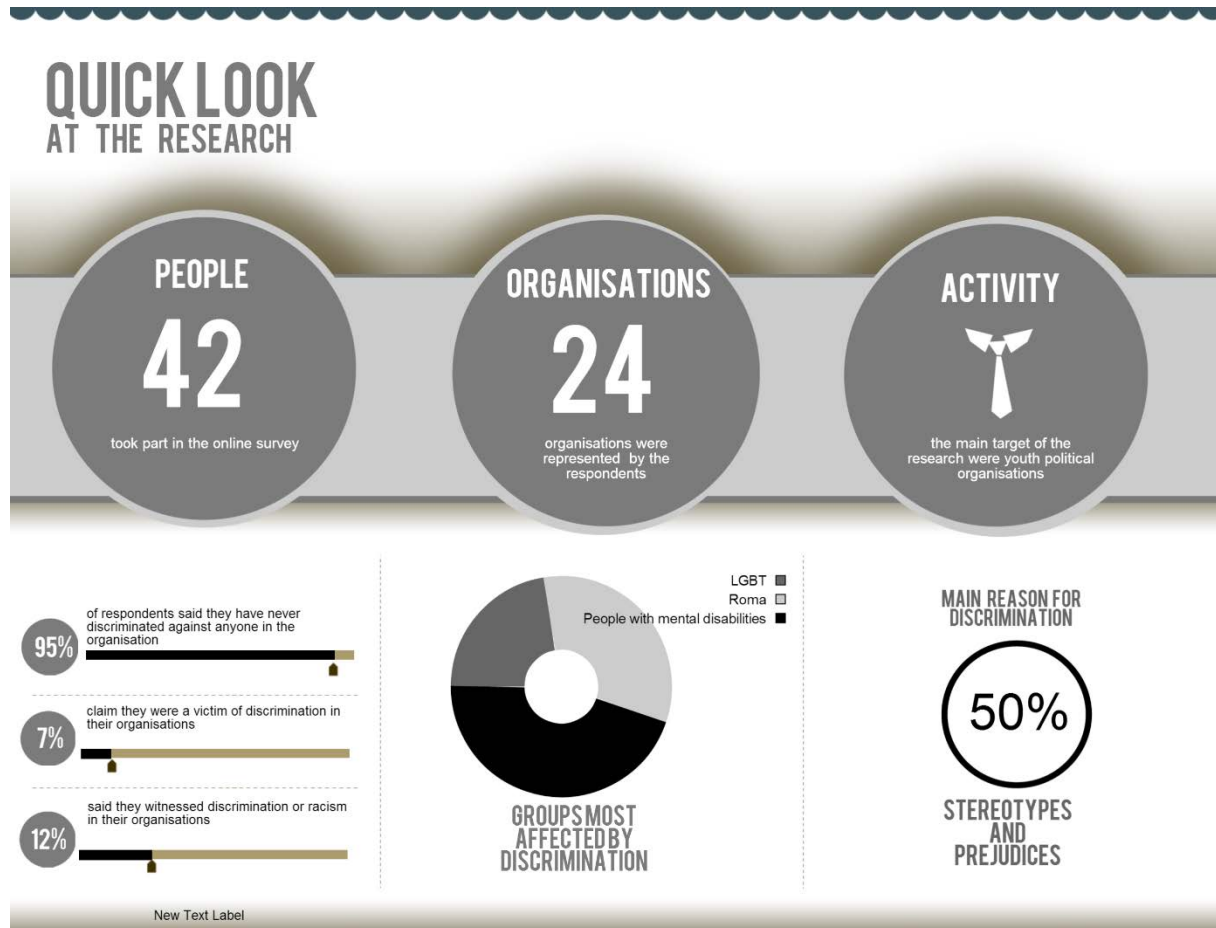
2. Methodology

The research on the attitudes of youth organisations towards anti-racism and anti-discrimination was run by the Association for Children and Young People CHANCE in April – May 2013. The general aims of the research were the following:

- To understand the situation in youth organizations in terms of diversity within the organizations and existing practices of inclusion;
- To explore the understanding of racism and human rights by the youth organizations;
- To identify examples of anti-racist and anti-discriminatory practices;
- To identify the groups towards which the strongest stereotypes and prejudices exist both within the organisation and the target groups the organisation works with;

The research was run using a variety of tools, both online and offline:

- Online survey – consisting of 24 questions addressing the variety of issues related to respondents' experience with racism and discrimination. The survey was run on an interactive survey platform (www.ankietka.pl) which allowed for quick analysis of the collected data. It is also designed to be in line with the existing Polish laws on collecting personal data of the respondents.
- Focus group – run on 16 May, which gathered 10 respondents of the online survey who previously expressed their interest to participate. The group was meant to deepen some of the elements of the survey and explore possible tools to be put in place in youth organisations to support their anti-racist and anti-discrimination practices and policies.
- Interviews with 5 selected respondents of the online survey.

The process of collecting data went without any difficulty.

3. Profile of the respondents

As previously mentioned 42 people (19 female, and 23 male) filled out the online survey. They represented 24 organisations from the region of Lower Silesia. The youth political organisations were the focus of the survey, however many other organisations replied as well. When choosing the target for the survey, we assumed, on the basis of previous experience, that they very often ate the ones who need the most competences related to anti-racism and anti-discrimination. Most of the organisations that replied were the City Youth Councils, which in Polish law are rather informal organisations (not-registered) and supported by the local authorities.

The respondents were asked to clarify which areas they work in. Here are the results:

	%	Number
Civic activities	**78,57%**	33
Racism and discrimination	14,29%	6
Human rights	21,43%	9
Youth issues	76,19%	32
Political activity	21,43%	9
Issues of people with disabilities	14,29%	6
Local community issues	**66,67%**	28
European citizenship	9,52%	4
Intercultural learning	16,67%	7
Culture and arts	54,76%	23
Education	**64,29%**	27
Support for other organisations	42,86%	18
Poverty	19,05%	8
Unemployment	16,67%	7
Other areas	16,67%	7

It is evident that most of the respondents believe that their area of activities is related to a wide category of civic activities that can cover very many initiatives or projects aiming at developing people's competences so they could be active citizens in their

local community. In order to develop these competences the respondent's organisations are running various activities, such as:

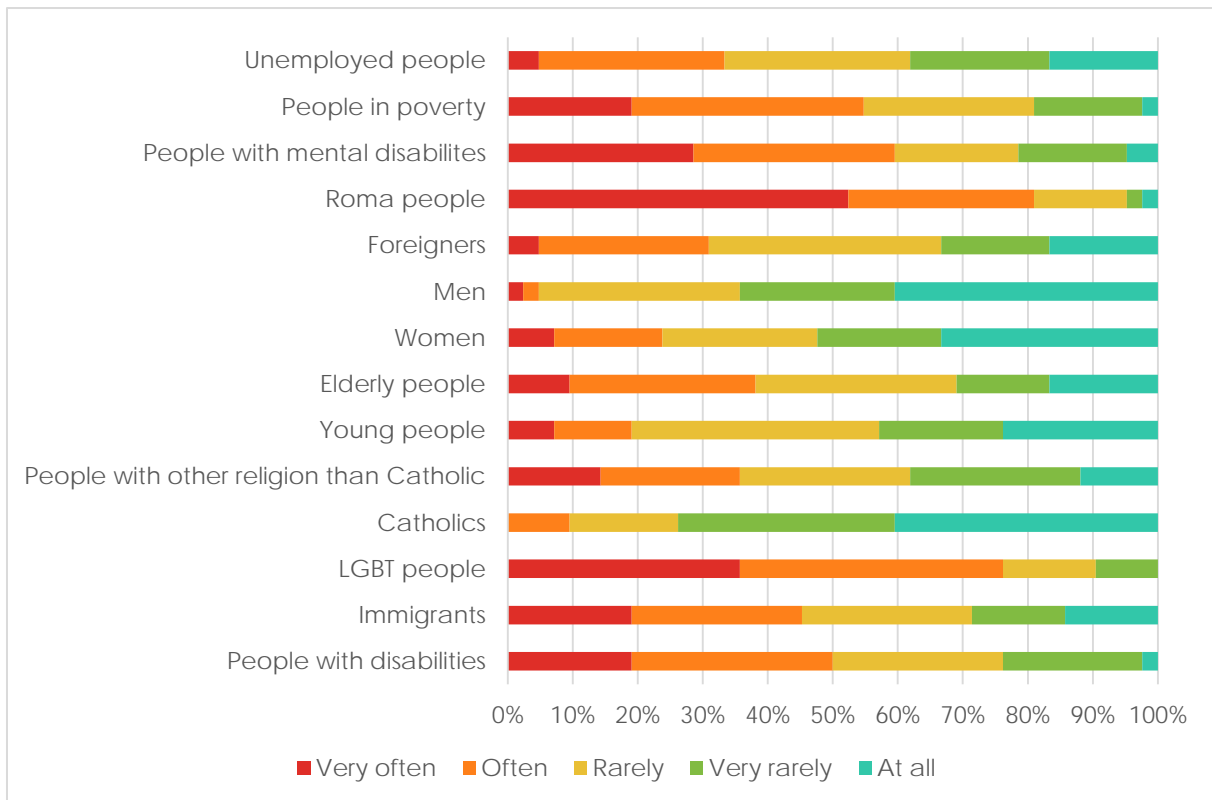|	%	Number
International youth exchanges	9,52%	4
Training courses	**59,52%**	25
Developing publications	19,05%	8
Lectures and seminars	35,71%	15
Demonstrations	4,76%	2
Lobbying	19,05%	8
Local projects	**78,57%**	33
Educational workshops	**66,67%**	28
Counselling	16,67%	7
Advice	23,81%	10
Social campaigns	33,33%	14
Other	23,81%	10

As data show the respondents constitute a very diverse group – both in terms of area of their work and the activities they implement in order to reach the aims of the organisation. Not many of them work or have a direct relation to the topics of racism, discrimination or human rights or at least they claim so, as many areas of their work are directly or indirectly connected with the issues of anti-racism or anti-discrimination.

PART TWO – Findings

1. General understanding of racism and discrimination

In order to be able to implement effective anti-racist and anti-discriminatory practice within the organisation one need to be aware of what these terms actually mean. Moreover, it is essential that people concerned understand the causes, manifestations and the impact of racism and discrimination both on the individual and the organisation itself. The respondents' knowledge on racism and discrimination is rather based on observation, media and sometimes assumptions related to the understanding of both issues.

Therefore, we find it important to see how respondents perceive racism and discrimination and the groups that are affected by both phenomena. The graph below shows responses to the question: Which group, according to you, experience racism and/or discrimination in your local community? The findings are very much in line with what other surveys in Poland show - people the most affected by racism and/or discrimination represent the following groups: LGBT people (app. 76%), Roma people (app. 80%) and people with mental disabilities (59%).

	Very often	Often	Rarely	Very rarely	At all

(Chart: horizontal stacked bar chart showing discrimination frequency for groups — Unemployed people, People in poverty, People with mental disabilites, Roma people, Foreigners, Men, Women, Elderly people, Young people, People with other religion than Catholic, Catholics, LGBT people, Immigrants, People with disabilities; x-axis 0%–100%)

However, when asked, respondents are not very clear about the notion of racism and discrimination. They very often perceived jokes or spreading rumours as discrimination. Not only were they able to define discrimination or racism but also they were unclear about existing mechanisms (including legal measures) that could be put in place when it comes to fighting against racism and discrimination. They claim that the main reason for discrimination are existing stereotypes and prejudice (Roma people are not educated, they are dirty, they steal; LGBT people do not fit into the Catholic society, they practice nasty sexual practices, gay men are feminine, they are obsessed with sex, they want more rights than other people). However, when it comes to people living in poverty, unemployed people or people with disabilities the role of stereotypes is quite limited as the reason for discrimination. Respondents seem to see rather their "unusual" condition and lack of structural solutions (such as laws) as the reason for discrimination. Besides stereotypes and prejudice respondents see lack or education or information and the fear of otherness and other two main reasons for discrimination and/or racism.

What is still surprising is the existence of the common (in Poland) stereotype towards the notion of racisms – seen only as the issue related to "race" or skin colours. This is, most probably, one of the most difficult challenge to address.
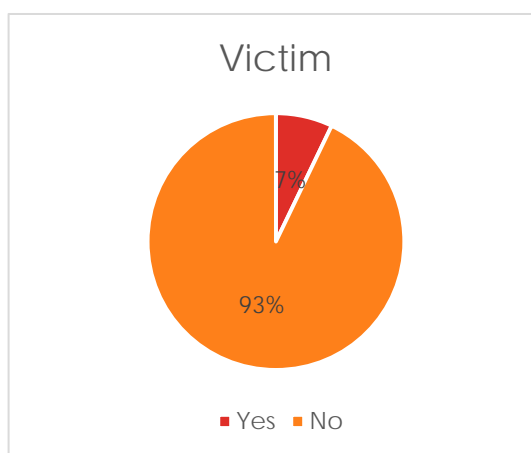
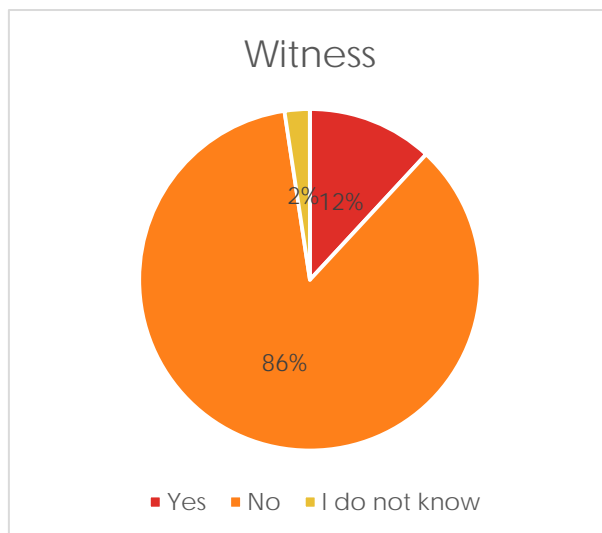## 2. Racism and discrimination in respondents' realities

In order to find out what the situation related to racism and discrimination is in respondents' organisations is we started with asking a question if a respondent's organisation is open for people representing different groups.
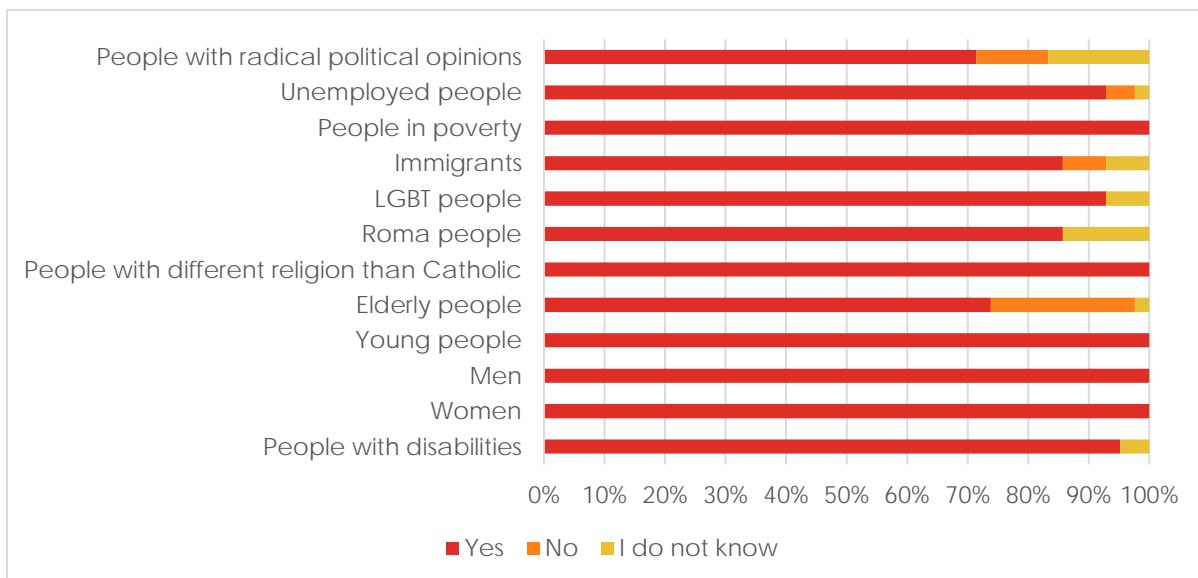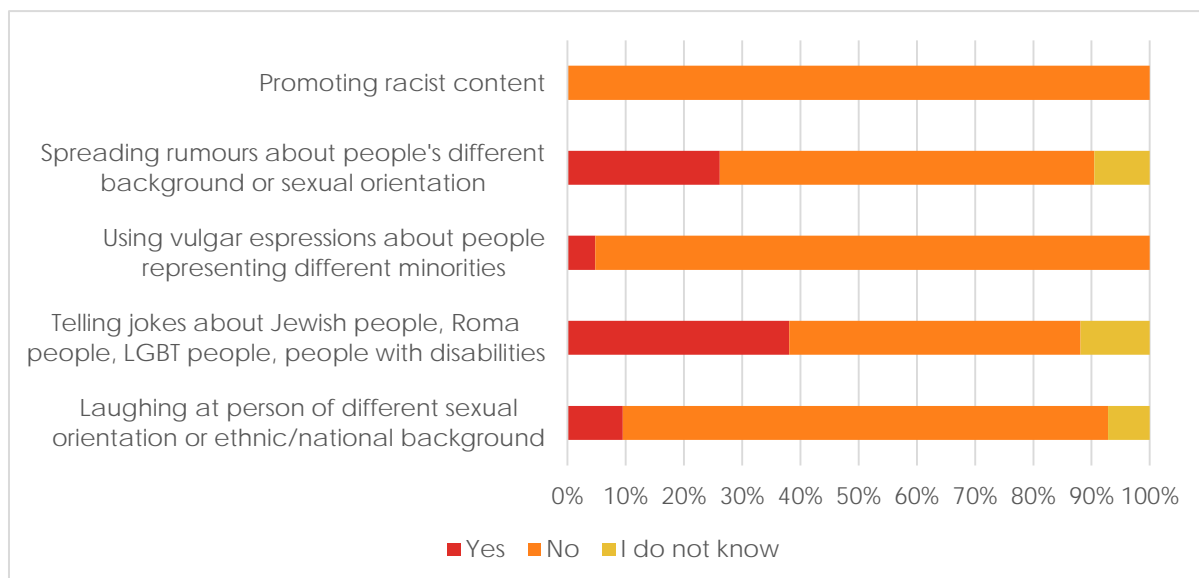
It is not surprising to see that people who are to certain degree definitely not welcome in the organisations are: immigrants, unemployed people, elderly people and people with radical political opinions. The reasons are somehow obvious when it comes to elderly people (majority of our organisations wager youth organisations). It is difficult to say why unemployed people can be found in this group – there is a tendency that young people who are in the educational system do not see themselves as unemployed. The respondents gave a reason for not including immigrants being very often "not-legal" residents, therefore, according to the Polish law, they cannot become members of an NGO. They can, however, take an active part in the work of an organisation. Some other groups, like LGBT people, Roma people or people with disabilities can be found in the groups marked "I do not know" by the respondents, who worried about such people entering an organisation and becoming potential victims of jokes, rumours or even discrimination.

We also asked respondents if they have ever been a victim, a perpetrator or a witness of racism and/or discrimination in their organisations.

Witness

Legend: ■ Yes ■ No ■ I do not know

Pie chart values: 12% (Yes), 86% (No), 2% (I do not know)

The percentage of people who either experienced discrimination/racism or witnessed it in the organisation is not very high. It is quite difficult to interpret the data here as it is unclear what practice the respondents labelled here as discrimination or racism. However, when asked during the focus groups and the interviews, they mainly meant offensive jokes or making laughs at the person who was perceived as different, not specifically because of their background. In this case it is clear that no discrimination occurred, however we can't be sure if there were any other practices that would fall into this category as respondents are usually not very eager in revealing cases of racism/discrimination as it can harm the reputation of the organisation. We asked, however, what respondents thought about different situations that happen or might happen in their NGO.

Categories (top to bottom):
- Promoting racist content
- Spreading rumours about people's different background or sexual orientation
- Using vulgar espressions about people representing different minorities
- Telling jokes about Jewish people, Roma people, LGBT people, people with disabilities
- Laughing at person of different sexual orientation or ethnic/national background

**Legend:** ■ Yes ■ No ■ I do not know

All in all, people who participate in the research do not mention clear examples of discrimination that might have occurred in their organisations. As already mentioned, these actions are rather limited to offensive jokes or spreading rumours about people. There are no reported cases of serious human rights violations.

3. Anti-racist and anti-discriminatory practices

As participants of the research do not perceive their organisations as the ones using racist or discriminatory practices, they also do not see the need of implementing measures in case these phenomena happen in the organisation. This is a very misleading assumption as in the end if discrimination/racism occur the organisation is "caught by surprise" with no commonly agreed and tested tools to be used.

Do people in your organisation know how to deal with racism or discrimination?

29%

12%

59%

■ Yes ■ No ■ I do not know

It is, however, clear for the respondents that people in the organisation mainly know how to deal with the situations of racism or discrimination if they happen in the organisation (59% or responses). When asked during the focus group or the interview, the participants were not able to say how they know it and what could be done if discrimination/racism happens in the organisation. This shows, that respondents again assume or expect people to be able to deal with difficult situations.

Do you know how to deal with discrimiantion/racism in your organisation

9%

12%

79%

■ Yes ■ No ■ I do not know
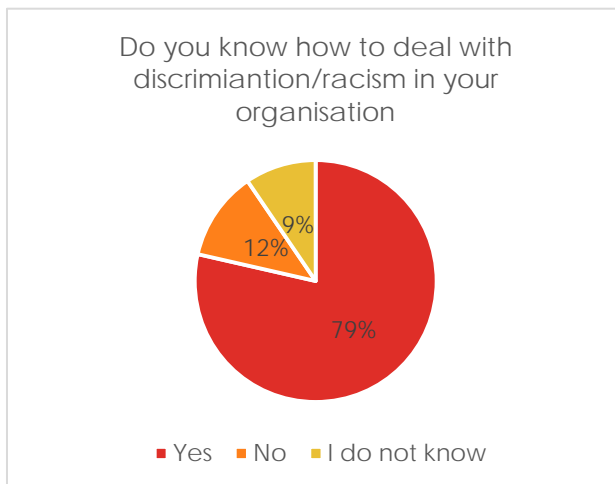
This is even more "optimistic" when it comes to respondents' confidence in their ability to deal with the cases of discrimination/racism in their organisation. This is naturally based on their self-assessment of competences they feel they have in conflict management or in dealing with sensitive and difficult situations. When asked how they would deal with discrimination and racism they pointed a "friendly talk" as a first step to solve a problem.

One of the practice participants see as very effective in preventing racist or discriminatory practices is the existence of commonly agreed "code of conduct" that is negotiated among all members of the organisation. Such a code should include clear guidance on how to react and deal with phenomena of racism or

discrimination in the organisation when they occur. Otherwise, participants were not able to identify any other examples of tools to be used.

The participants generally had a very good opinion about the ability of their organisations to deal with racism and discrimination:

- They are sure that a person who commits racism or discrimination would be normally punished
- They consider their organisations as open and tolerant
- They do not see a problem of people who represent different minorities to be members of their organisations and to be elected to the statutory bodies
- They are confident about their awareness about human rights

But 50% of respondents claim that it is necessary for the members of their organisations to undergo training on how to deal with racism and discrimination in their organisations.

PART THREE - Conclusions

The finding of the survey do not bring revolutionary data and the outcomes of the focus group and the interviews only provide limited answers to the questions of ineptest for this research. However, they do draw a picture that can be further explored and serve a basis for coming activities of the project.

The following conclusions can be drawn:

- There is a little understanding among members of youth organisations when it comes to the definitions, reasons for, impact and manifestations of discrimination and racism. While the first one is clear in terms of legal definition (participants were not aware of it), the latter is more difficult to define. It is also bearing a heavy luggage of stereotypes related it its understanding as being only about the skin colour.
- There is lack of practices or tools present in the youth organisations that could be used in case discrimination or racism occur in the organisation. What is more, there is little reflection on the necessity of such tools.
- Participants clearly see the groups the most affected by racism and discrimination, notably LGBT people, Roma people or people with disabilities being in the forefront of racist and discriminatory attacks.
- Participants are very confident about their competences in human rights or dealing with racism and discrimination. This confidence is rather based on the "feeling" then very practical knowledge or skills. They rather refer to attitudes – participants consider themselves and their organisations very tolerant and open toward others.
- Organisations represented by the respondents do not take any steps to include people of different backgrounds – in general they do not see the pint in doing it as they consider their organisations open and tolerant. There is little reflection that certain measures should be put in place in order to foster

inclusion of people representing different minorities, especially the one who might have special needs.

- Participants see a need of getting training in this respect. They do express the following needs: understanding how discrimination/racism happens (the context, the manifestations and the impact); how to work with the victim of racism and discrimination (what is the role of the youth organisation herein); legal aspects of dealing with discrimination/racism (what is their effectiveness/); how to involve other stakeholders in the process of dealing with discrimination and racism; how to elaborate/develop practical tools to be used to prevent and deal with discrimination and racism (how to measure their effectiveness); how to raise awareness among the members of the organisation on racism/anti-racism and discrimination/anti-discrimination; how to make other members of the organisation interested in these issues as there is quite a big resistance within the organisation); what can be done to make the organisation more attractive for people representing different minorities.

PART FOUR – Recommendations

It is clear that the training component of the project will have an important role to play when it comes to addressing the challenges identified in the research.

The international training of trainers, besides some generic skills should include country-specific issues to be dealt by the trainers during the national courses.

The trainers who will be sent to the course may have very little understanding of the competences they would need in order to run national courses – a special stress should be put in the course on self-assessment of their trainer's competences and then addressing the gaps during the training course.

Other activities of the project should seek to include people representing different minorities or groups that are affected by racism and discrimination. A strategy on how to do that should be developed – maybe on the country to country basis first and then generalised to the European level.

Special stress should be put on the framework of human rights, which makes it easier to debate the issues of racism and discrimination allowing for negotiating different standards in a respectful way – learning IN human rights.

If the research is to be run again, more comprehensive approach should be used in terms of methodology in order to make the data comparable (in an easier way). We should aim at creating a common survey (as a backbone) allowing adding a few questions that might be country-specific.

All possible channels of communication should be used in order to reach people in different organisations who are a target for the project: we should thing about more extensive and strategic way of using social media on the Internet and approach

existing coalitions of organisations. This would be specifically relevant for the process of recruiting participants for the national training workshops.