

**Approaching young people (15-24 y.o.)
in evaluation research**
– conclusions from YOUTH IMPACT project

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A few words about the YOUTH IMPACT project

- The presentation is based on conclusions from YOUTH IMPACT project.
- YOUTH IMPACT is supported by joint grant of Norway, Lichtenstein and Island.
- The **project aims to develop evaluation capacities of in the area of small youth employment projects** in Czech Republic, Slovakia and Poland.
- YOUTH IMPACT products and findings are based on
 - literature review,
 - knowledge of evaluators involved in the project and
 - feedback from implementers of youth employment projects in Poland as well as Czech Republic, Slovakia and Germany.

The questions to be answered

- What are **legal and ethical guidelines** on researching the youth?
- How to **adjust evaluation methods to living conditions** of young people?
- How to **deal with psychological and social needs** of the beneficiaries when evaluating youth employment projects?

Brief and user-oriented presentation - for the sake of discussion.

Principles of protection of the rights of the youth in the ethical codes of professional social researchers (1)

In the case of researching people **under 18 years of age the basic guidelines** contained in the **codes of ethics** are as follows:

- 1) **Obtaining consent** to participate in the study **from the minors and their legal guardian** (legally required)
- 2) Ensuring a **sense of security** to the respondents **on the part of research staff who:**
 - **do not attempt to contact the respondents without the presence of the adult responsible for the child** at the moment (teacher, guardian, parent),
 - **offer to present documents** confirming their status and role in the study,
 - **ask for consent when want to use sound and / or video recording devices** (legally required),
 - the fieldwork is conducted by **trained staff, experienced in research with young people,**
- 3) Ensuring that the **information provided** in connection with the study, **including the questions** asked to the respondents, **is understandable** (it is helpful to consult your tools with specialists and test them prior to the research).

Principles of protection of the youth in the ethical codes of professional social researchers (2)

Other guidelines are even more universal, however not less important when applied to young people:

- 4) Ensuring that the **scope or method** of obtaining information does not cause material or non-material damage, e.g. mental well-being and social relations, especially:
 - sensitive issues that lower the sense of autonomy or self-esteem,
 - relationships with peers and other important people.
- 5) Guaranteeing the **confidentiality of information** obtained at all stages of the study:
- 6) Organizing the **conditions of the study** to ensure undisturbed fieldwork.

Consent to participate in the research of the youth - practical remarks

- It is useful when **consent** on participation in evaluation is **obtained at the beginning of the project meant to be evaluated.**
- It should be remembered that in the EU countries it is also necessary to obtain **consent for the processing and storage of personal data.**
- The consents can be expressed in one document.

Conducting evaluation of youth projects

- circumstances related to group forms of education

Young people aged below 18 y.o. are subject to **compulsory education or vocational training**, but even in the next age group (18-24 y.o.) 9 of 10 young people participate in organized forms of education (schools, training, including YEEAs) [EU-28 average is 90%, and in PL it is 95%].

A TIP:

The **participation of young people in group forms of education is a great opportunity for the researchers to easily access the target group of the evaluated projects and collect data through observation, surveys, group interviews, etc.**

While **gathering data on financial or labour market status** of young people - key features not only for youth employment projects - the **complexities of young people situation must be taken into account:**

- **in the age group 15-24, only 1 of 3 persons works¹**

A TIP:

No questions assuming employment status (e.g. "What kind of work do you do? "How much are your earnings?"). Start with determining, if your young respondent works at all.

- **work of young people, especially minors, occurs in highly differentiated, often atypical forms²**

A TIP:

When asking young people about their job, it is necessary to precisely define what kind of activity you consider work and / or what features are most important.

¹ According to Eurostat data for 2018, in the EU-28 countries only 37% of young people aged 15-24 work for at least 1 hour weekly (even if we include unpaid help to family member's paid work).

² Work of young people may be e.g. free help in paid work of a close family member, as one-time job, occasional work, holiday work, part-time work, replacement, „trial” work, various types of internships, apprenticeships and vocational preparation, in which the proportion of study to work and earnings vary widely and may or may not be considered work, providing work in exchange for accommodation, food and „pocket money” (e.g. *au pair*), promoting products or services in social media in exchange for the goods or services received, voluntary work with various levels of covering own costs, work performed under various contracts, ranging from regular employment contracts, to specific contracts, undeclared work such as tutoring, income for illegal activities.

The need to adapt research methods to the increased mobility of young people

- Young people **frequently change their place of residence** (due to education/job), **often live at unofficial address** (the cheapest accommodations).
- They also exhibit **high daily mobility**.
=> data collecting methods based on the address of residence do not work due to outdated postal addresses or the interviewer comes when no one is there.

A TIP:

It is a great advantage if you can **obtain mobile contact details of interviewees** (telephone numbers or names of profiles in a messaging application, while emails go less useful).

Your data collection strategy can be based on these details and then use on-line data collection tools .

Nowadays young people are characterised by:

- high on-line skills,
- preference for electronic technologies in all matters of everyday life,
- preference for smartphones (less than computers).

A TIP:

In research among young people the most natural become electronic technologies, especially the ones designed for smartphones.

EXAMPLE 1

An application such as “Kahoot!” can be used for a mini-survey among participants of some event or training.

EXAMPLE 2

A youth employment project aimed at young inhabitants of remote areas of Małopolska Region measures their progress in social competences with a special application installed on smartphones of the project beneficiaries.



The need for regular reminders of the commitments made to participate in the evaluation

- A characteristic feature of contemporary youth is their **overstimulation** resulting from:
 - intensive education,
 - rich social life,
 - development of own interests,
 - **constant engagement in messages and content transmitted via smartphones** and other means of ICT communication.
- This often results in **forgetting about unusual or less important obligations such as filling out a questionnaire, participating in an interview**, etc.

A TIP:

Electronic reminders about the dates of the arranged interview, filling in the questionnaire, etc. have become natural way of conducting research with young people.



Young peoples' heavy use of social media

- a source of innovative recruitment and evaluation methods

The young people's **widespread use of social media** by can be used for research purposes:

- It is possible to find **internet groups gathering young people from a given town or school, as well as those with specific interests.**
- After entering the group, there are **opportunities to recruit participants you need for a research** (e.g. to the comparison group; you can also consider individual questioning of the group members).

WARNING:

Undertaking **data collection in the social media group interacting with the whole group** should not be used, because:

- it could be a **threat to well-being of group participants** – after publicly answering the researcher's questions, **they could face some consequences from the other group participants,**
- there could be a **significant bias** of the obtained answers, due to **respondents' considerations of reactions by the important members of the group.**



- **More complicated situation when the evaluated project is addressed to NEETs.**
- They are **detached from educational and job-related institutions** and **often not covered by any institutional support or supervision.**
- **Reaching NEETs can be quite complicated**, especially when you need to find a group to compare with NEETs participating in the evaluated project.

A TIP:

Solutions to this type of problem can be:

- to **compare the results obtained in the group covered by the evaluated project with a group of candidates who, did not participated** in the project,
 - to **compare groups of NEETs participating in different projects** (e.g. comparison of projects within the same program)
- or
- to **use a large internet panel-survey database** (be aware of selection biases resulting due to recruitment bias of such panel (e.g. reach of the recruitment, responding ability and motivation), typical problems of quota sampling).

Applying participatory evaluation methods to support social competences of young people

- **Young people are particularly sensitive to issues related to respect for their freedom.**
- **At the same time they highly value partnership relations and situations when they can try new roles, prove their usefulness etc.**

TIP 1:

It is important to **openly communicate their right to participate as well as not to participate** in the study and explain the consequences of each choice. This is vital to meet the youth's need of being respected.

TIP 2:

Another condition for involvement of young people in evaluation research is **to create situations in which they feel like partners of the evaluation** – taking part in planning, implementation and interpretation of the findings.

Thanks to **using participatory approach you can:**

- **raise their social competences by engaging them in new social roles,**
- **contribute to the increase of self-esteem in young beneficiaries** of the evaluated project,
- **build a positive motivation** among them to participate in something important, useful etc.

FURTHER READING AND EXAMPLES:

[Participatory evaluation with young people](#) by Barry Checkovay et. alies

Consent to participate in the research of the youth - practical remarks

You can get **free access to products of the YOUTH IMPACT** project.

They will be available at www.youth-impact.eu :

- in July → *Your leverage to better youth employment projects. **Evaluation toolkit*** by Jerzy Regulski Foundation in Support of Local Democracy, Warsaw
- In November → *Your leverage to better projects supporting youth entrepreneurship. **Evaluation toolkit*** by PEDAL Consulting s.r.o, Bratislava.

More information on the products and activities of the project?

Send email to slawomir.nalecz@frdl.org.pl

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR ATTENTION !