



COMMUNICATE - ENGAGE - TRANSFORM

**CET**

# RESEARCH REPORT



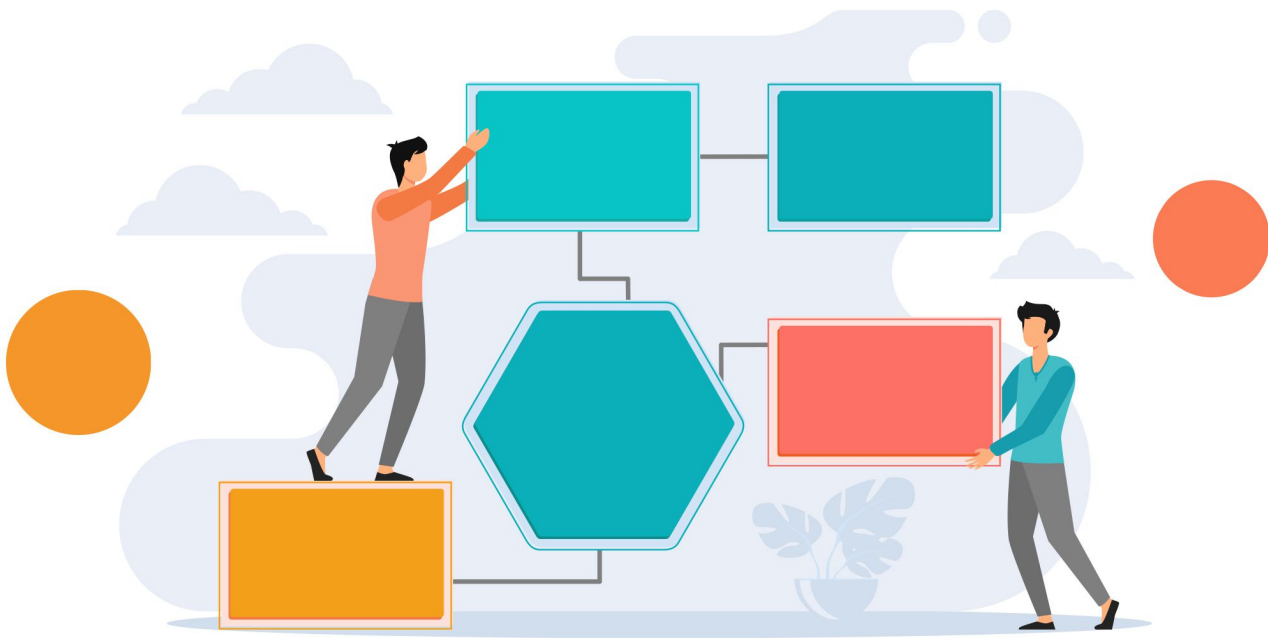
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# Structure and methodology

This research was conducted in the framework of the project CET - Communicate - Engage - Transform implemented by a Consortium of four organizations from 3 countries: Generation Why Not (Belgium - as the leading organization), Movelt (Greece), BUM (Serbia) and CONNECT International (Belgium - as an ENGO).

The research was conducted through an online questionnaire targeting local youth organizations across Europe with the aim to assess the quality of external communication in the work of local youth organizations. In fact, the partners from Belgium, Greece and Serbia mainly targeted local youth organizations in their countries, while CONNECT, as a European network with members' representation in more than 33 countries across Europe, distributed the questionnaire towards its members and therefore offered a transnational European perspective to the research.

The research was web-based in the form of multiple choice questions and also included an open ended question in order for the research expert to have a clear view of what are the specific needs of each organization that took part in the research and collect original and genuine input to be examined, processed and formed into concrete conclusions. The questionnaire was distributed from all 4 partners of the project (Connect International, Movelt, BUM and Generation Why Not) through their social media, web pages and direct mailing to relevant youth organizations in order to have a clear view and variety for the outcome, while CONNECT's members also used their individual communication channels to disseminate the questionnaire even further.



## Main aim of the survey

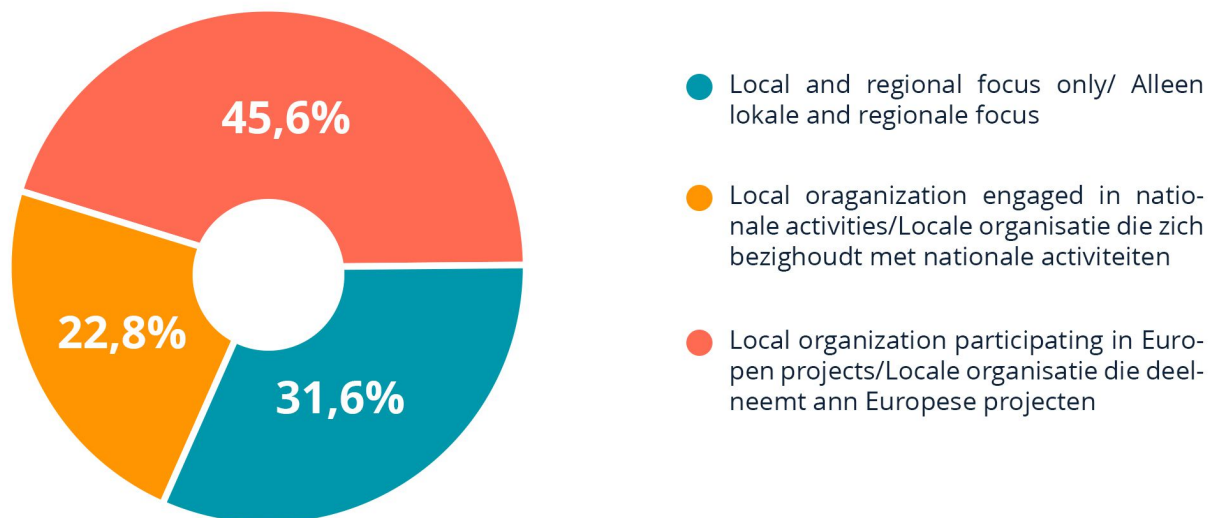
The statistical analysis of the data includes a sample of 57 respondents. The focus of the research revolves around assessing the communication skills of local youth organizations. The research examined a specific segment of the respondents' current communication capacities - external communication. Through this analysis we managed to identify the level of awareness of stakeholders, their needs and preferences, as well as the gaps in external communication skills they may have, the strengths and weaknesses in the effectiveness of their external communication and quality of the message delivery to stakeholders. Finally, we explored the current communication tools and procedures used by youth organizations and we identified learning needs and training opportunities for staff members working in communication.

# The characteristics of the sample

## 1. The structure of the sample – Scope of work of your organization

As shown in Chart 1 below, the majority of the respondents are local organizations participating in European projects 45.6%, covering almost half of the total respondents. There are 31.6% of them with local and regional focus only, and the rest 22.8% are local organizations engaged in National activities.

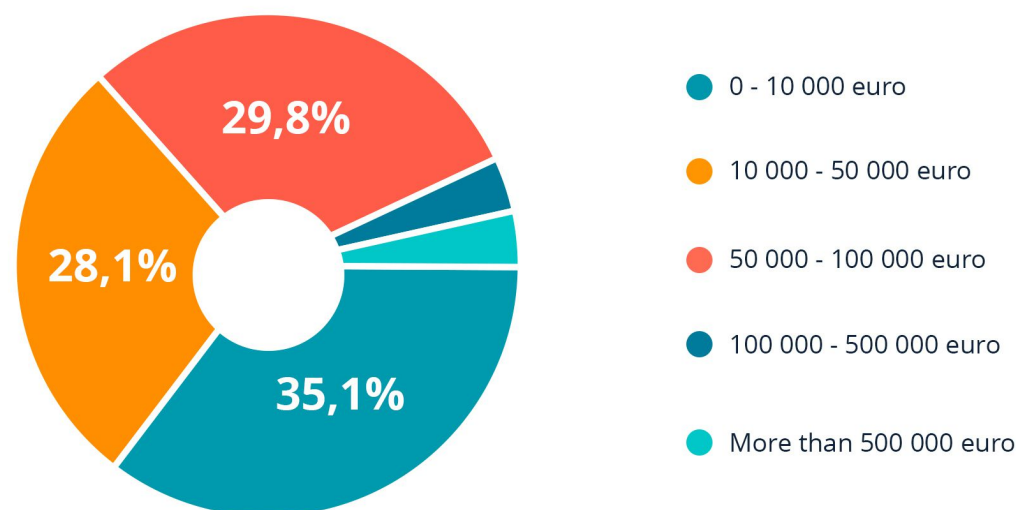
Chart 1.



## 2. The structure of the sample – Annual Budget of organization

The breakdown of the sample here (Chart 2) shows that a significant portion of the questionnaire respondents (35,1%) have 0-10.000 euro annual budgeting. Only a small percentage of 3,5% indicated that it has more than 500.000 euros annual budget, and another 3,5% has a 100.000- 500.000 euros annual budget. Next category is the 29,8% that has a 50.000-100.000 annual budget and the last category with budgeting from 10.000-50.000 is the 28,1% from the sample that answered.

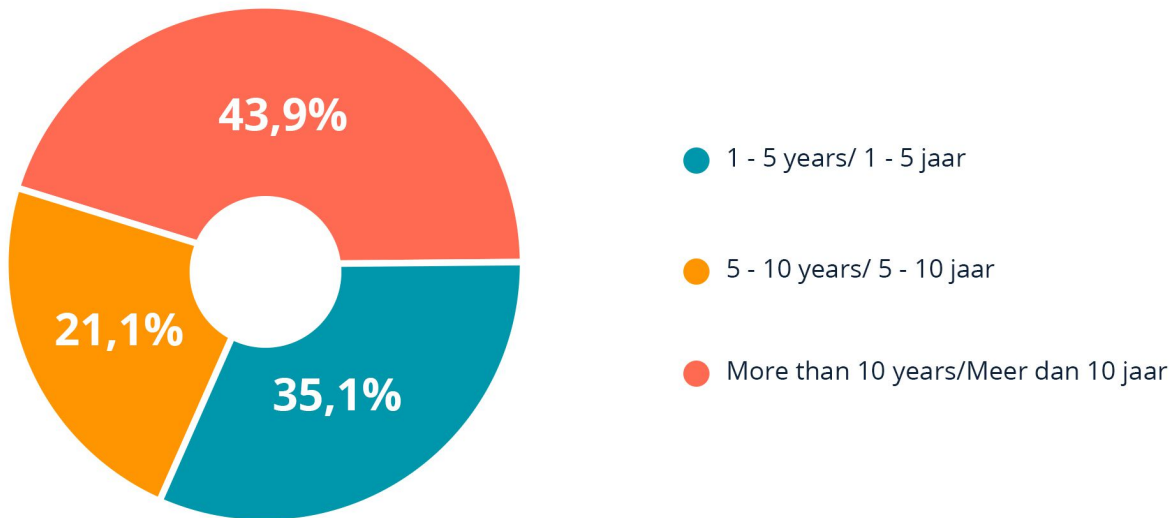
Chart 2.



### 3. The structure of the sample – Organizational years of operating

In Chart (3) we observe three categories representing the operational duration of the organizations that participated in the survey. As presented in the Chart, the respondents are quite equally distributed among more experienced organizations with a working life of more than 10 years (43,9%), others with medium experience of 5-10 years (21, 1%) and the least experienced with a life of 1-5 years (35,1%). This balanced sample safeguards that the results collected will reflect the needs and challenges of all kinds of organizations and ensure that their voices are heard in an inclusive manner.

Chart 3.



This demographic part of the survey implies that a common challenge among organizations, especially those who are new to the field, is that they operate with limited budgets, a fact that may indeed affect their external communication efforts.

With 35.1% of the respondents having budgets of 0-10,000 euros, it is evident that financial limitations might exist - especially if we take into account that exactly the same percentage (35.1 %) declare being relatively new, operating for 1-5 years.

This lack of experience and resources underscores the need for targeted support to enhance their external communication capabilities effectively, an assumption that is yet to be examined in the data analysis upon the rest of the questions.



# Research Results

This part of the Report presents the results of the survey and general trends in order to test the hypothesis that youth organizations, especially those operating mainly at local level, need additional support regarding their overall external communication performance and draw conclusions on the main areas of knowledge and skills that appear to be insufficient so far.

Specifically, the statistical data from the survey will provide valuable information about their external communication processes, which refers to the exchange of information, messages, and interactions between the organizations and individuals or entities outside of the internal structure. In addition, the survey aims to identify the knowledge and skills gaps, and any other obstacles the organizations might have in reaching a higher level of effective communication with their target groups and stakeholders.

Finally, the research will provide us with insights on what kind of support could be provided to local youth organizations that will further serve in designing a learning module based on those findings, for the next steps of the project.

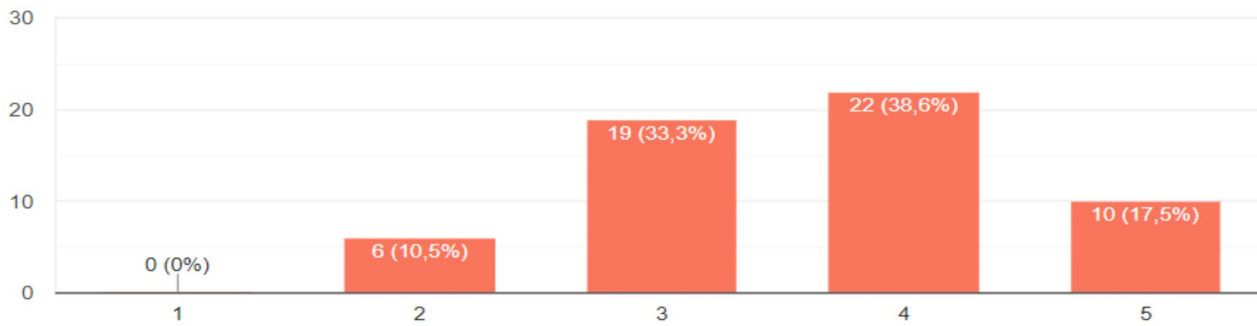


## 4. Specific target groups among young people and identification of their needs, challenges, habits, and behaviors.

Firstly, the respondents were asked to indicate whether their organization has a specific target group among young people and what are their needs, challenges, habits, and behaviors identified through interaction and engagement with these target groups. A simple comparison among the diagrams (chart 4) shows a few differences between the responses of the organizations. 38.6% of them say that they target a specific group among young people whose needs, challenges, habits, and behaviors are well known. 33.3% declares as neutral in this question, and a 10.5% admits not focusing on a specific target group and thus not being able to identify their needs, challenges, habits, and behaviors. Only a small percentage of responses, the 17.5%, strongly agrees with this statement and has a clear view of its target group and the specificities of their profile.

**To sum up, the majority of the respondents appear to have good or very good understanding of their target groups, though the percentage of 10,5% not belonging to this sum is still a quite large number that should be taken into consideration.**

Chart 4.

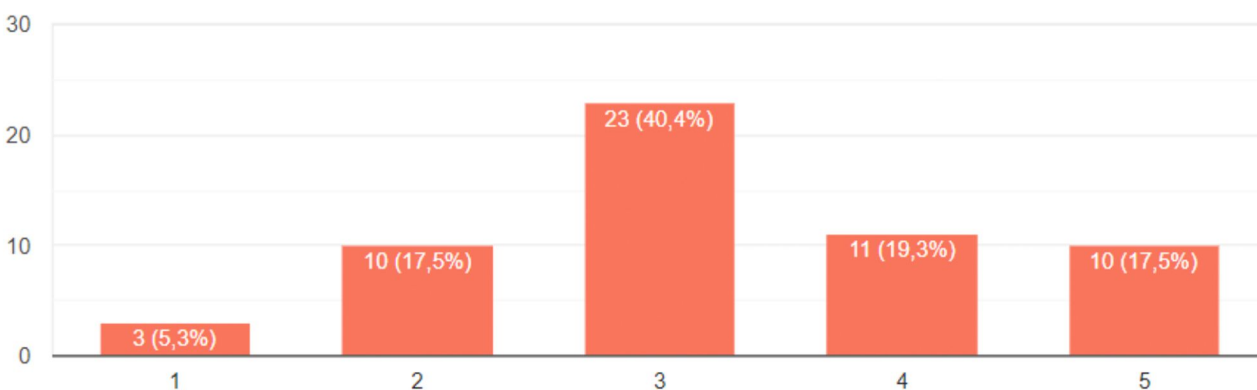


In an effort to define the current situation within youth organizations about external communication processes and patterns we asked them about their current communication plans and if those plans also include a clear definition of their target audiences and the set-up of specific objectives for communication and selection of communication channels.

## 5. Organizations communication plan

In chart 5 we can see a significant number of respondents (40.4%) indicating that their organizations do not necessarily have a concrete communication plan, while 17.5% disagree and 5.3% strongly disagree with the statement. Only 36,8% confirm to have invested efforts in planning their communication strategies (19.3% agree and 17.5% strongly agree), with **the results clearly indicating that there is a significant lack in strategic planning with regard to external communication.** Despite the fact that a large percentage of organizations state in chart 4 that they know their target group very well, including their needs and habits, chart 5 clearly indicates that in reality, local youth organizations apply flat rate planning and approach to young people they communicate with, which immediately makes the previous target group recognition not as valuable.

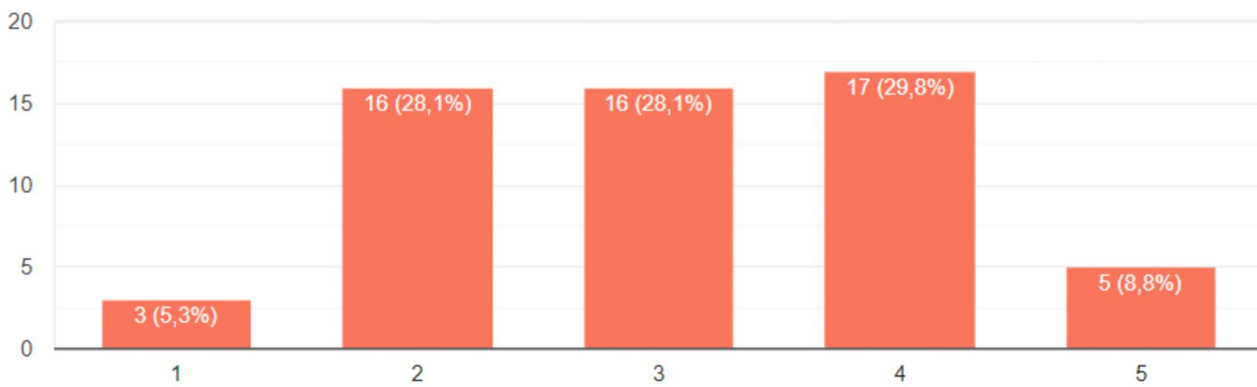
Chart 5.



## 6. Plan that defines target audiences and has objectives of communication and choices of communication channels

Chart 6 reinforces the view of **inadequate definition of target audience and a limited set of communication objectives and channels among youth organizations**. Specifically, a great percentage of 61,5% of the respondents claim that they do not have clearly defined target audiences, along with corresponding communication objectives and selected channels (28.1% express neutrality, an equal 28.1% disagree, and 5.3% strongly disagree). On the other hand only 29.8% agree and 8.8% strongly agree with the statement, summing up to 38,6%, the number still being significantly low.

Chart 6.

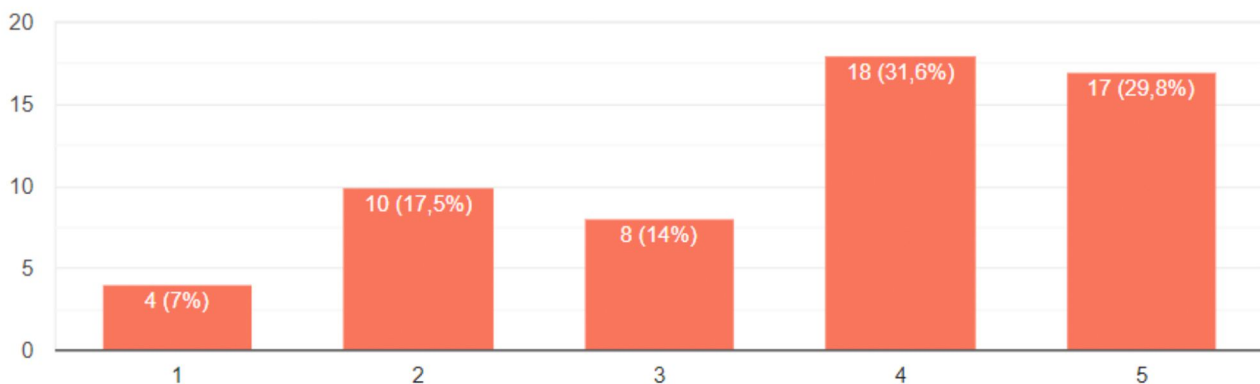


In the next two charts (7-8) we observe that despite the fact that more than half of the organizations claim to have a designated person or team responsible for external communication, more than half of them are either unsure, or (strongly) disagree with the statement regarding any provisions of training to enhance their staff members' communication skills. **This indicates a downgrading of the importance of investing in additional and continuous training for these individuals or teams despite their crucial role in external communication efforts.**

## 7. Designated person/team in charge of external communication

Specifically in chart 7 we can see that 61,4% of the respondents do have a person/team in charge for external communication, in order to better facilitate and coordinate their work.

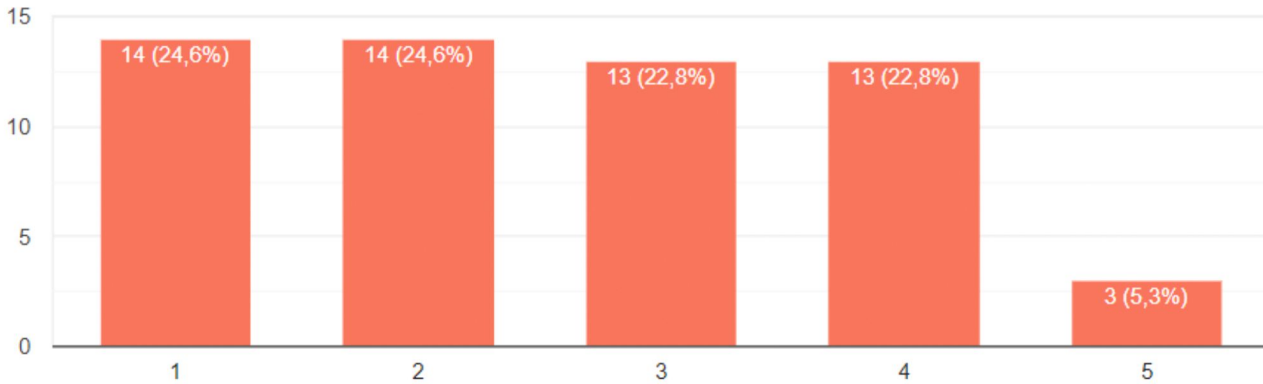
Chart 7.



## 8. Training provided to the designated person/team, if necessary, to enhance their communication skills

However, Chart 8 identifies the problem mentioned above. We can clearly see that despite the fact that organizations claim to have a designated communication person or team, there is a significant lack of training processes to support them in further enhancing their communication skills and advancing their work. Analytically, less than 3 out of 10 organizations (28,1%) do provide additional training and capacity building to their communication team, while more than 70% do not have any similar procedures within their work programs.

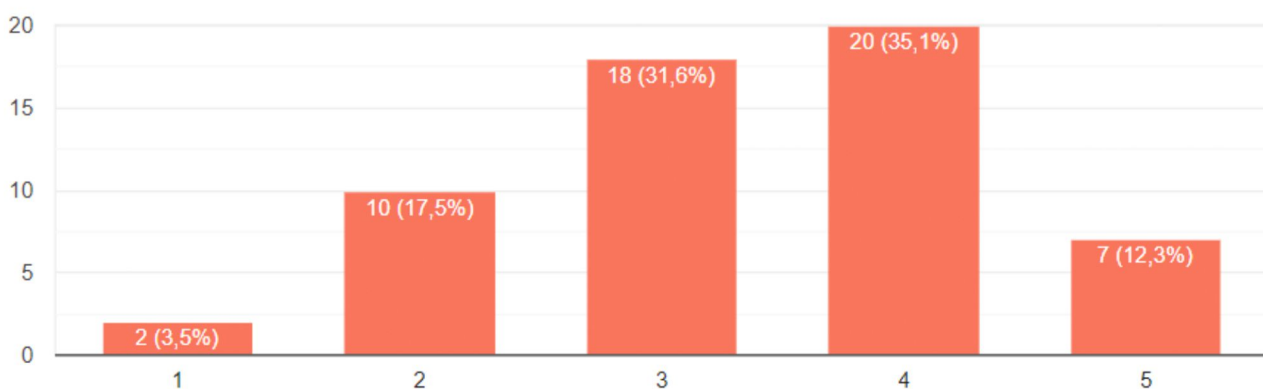
Chart 8.



## 9. Identification of the most effective communication channels for each of the target groups

When it comes to communication channels, a significant proportion of respondents reaching almost 50 % of them (35.1% agree and 12.3% strongly agree) claim that they have selected the appropriate channels to convey their messages and reach out to their target groups, though a large percentage of 31.6% appear “neutral”, meaning that either they are not sure or have not invested enough effort on this matter. As such, the numbers indicate that **there is a lot of room for improvement in the process of selecting the suitable channels of communication as an important element of the organizations’ external presence.**

Chart 9.

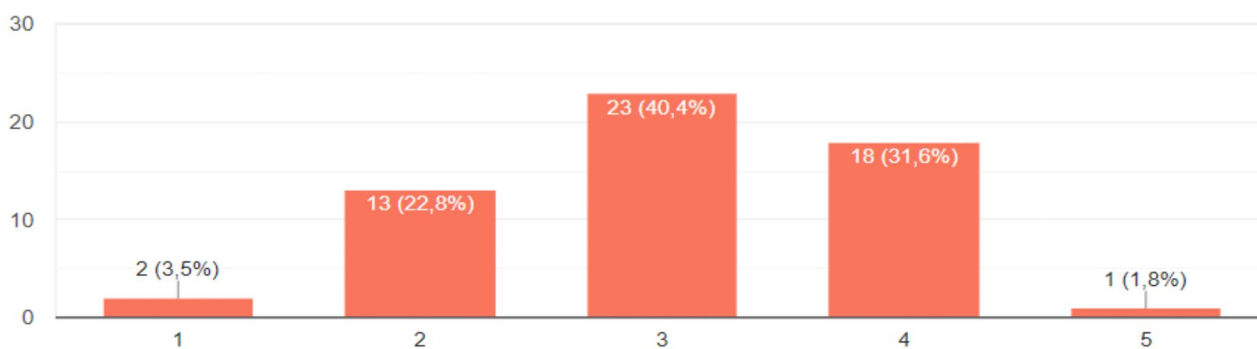




## 10. Key messages that address the interests and needs of each target audience

Talking about targeting the audience we couldn't leave outside the development of key messages that address the interests and needs of each organization's audience. The results presented in Chart 10 show a notable pattern between organizations which cannot be evaluated as very positive. In fact, more than 70% of the respondents admit not to have developed key messages aligned with the interests and needs of their target audiences (40.4% expressed neutrality, 22.8% disagree and 3.5% strongly disagree with the assertion of engaging in such practices). The fact that only 33,4% of them confirm the existence of such an approach within their organizations, indicates that **there is a strong need to support local youth organizations in creating effective key-messages to attract and engage their target groups, to promote their work and increase their overall impact in their local communities.**

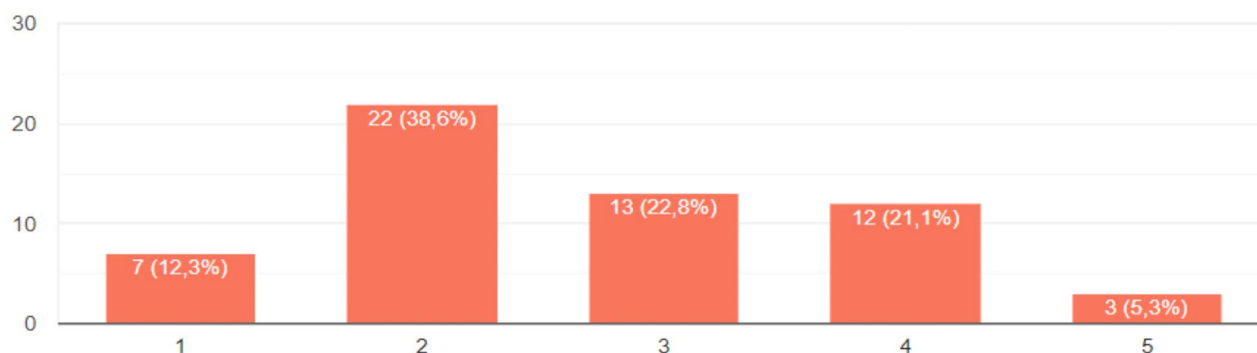
Chart 10.



## 11. Establishment of a concrete process for measuring the effectiveness of communication

As we can see in chart 11, a minimum percentage of the organizations that answered the questionnaire has established a concrete process for measuring the effectiveness of communication. Specifically only a small percentage of 26.4% report having implemented such processes (21.1% agree and 5.3% strongly agree with the statement). On the contrary, 22.8% remain neutral on this matter, while 38.6% disagree, and 12.3% strongly disagree with the existence of concrete processes for measuring the communication effectiveness of their organizations, which definitely indicates that **they need support in acknowledging and understanding the benefit of such measurements as well as in developing procedures to facilitate the evaluation process.**

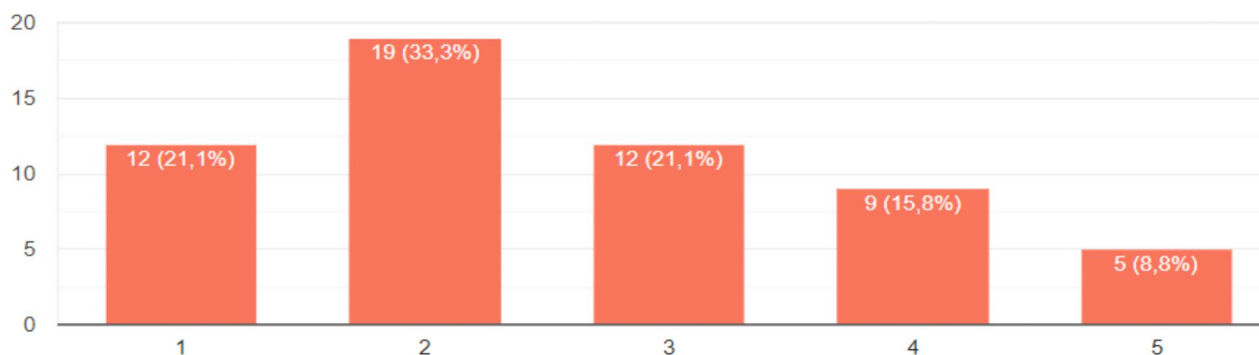
Chart 11.



## 12. Allocated financial resources for external communication

Examining the financial aspect of external communication efforts within organizations, it becomes clear that only a minority from our sample has secured adequate financial resources. Specifically, 15.8% of respondents agree, and an additional 8.8% strongly agree that they have successfully obtained financial resources to be allocated in their external communication initiatives. On the other hand, 21.1% hold a neutral view on this statement and a significant majority, 33.3% and 21.1% express some level of disagreement, indicating **serious challenges in securing the necessary funding for sustainable external communication efforts within their organizations**. At this point it is important to highlight that despite the lack of funding claimed in this question, 60% of the respondents also claimed to have an assigned person for communication activities (chart 7), which allows a lot of space for elaboration and debate.

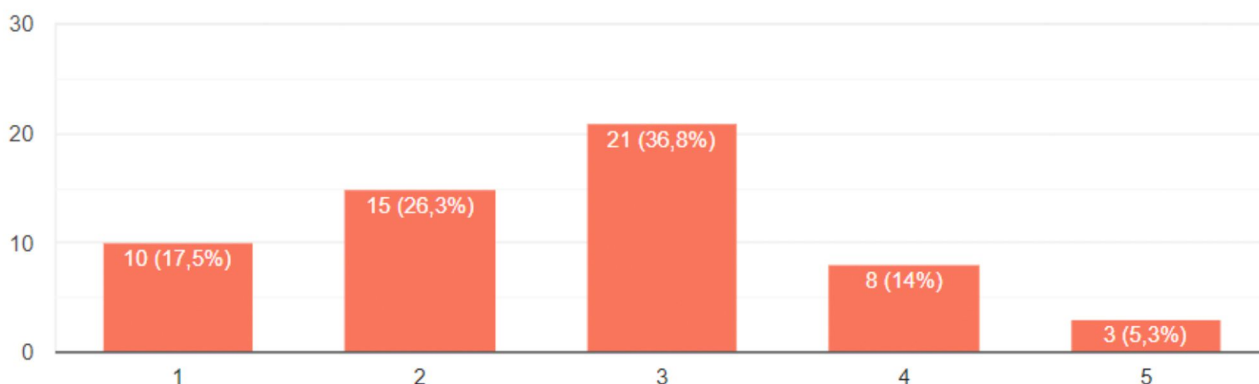
Chart 12.



## 13. Builds partnerships with media representatives, influencers, etc., to improve communication outreach

Another common response from the respondents appears when it comes to partnerships with media representatives, influencers, etc., as a means to improve their overall communication outreach. A significant proportion, comprising 36.8%, maintain neutrality on this statement, while 26.3% express disagreement and 17.5% strongly disagree. Only a small percentage, 14% agree, and an even smaller fraction of 5.3% strongly agree that their organizations have successfully built partnerships with media representatives to improve communication outreach. This drives us to the conclusion that **local youth organizations have not yet managed to exploit all options and resources available to increase their effectiveness with engagement of stakeholders that are relevant to their work and could help promote their initiatives to a broader level**. At this point, it should also be discussed that this lack of innovative approaches towards raising visibility and externally communicating, maybe also rooted at the stigma that comes with the concept of "influencers", although building partnerships with media representatives as advocates for their work is one of the essential pillars of external communication.

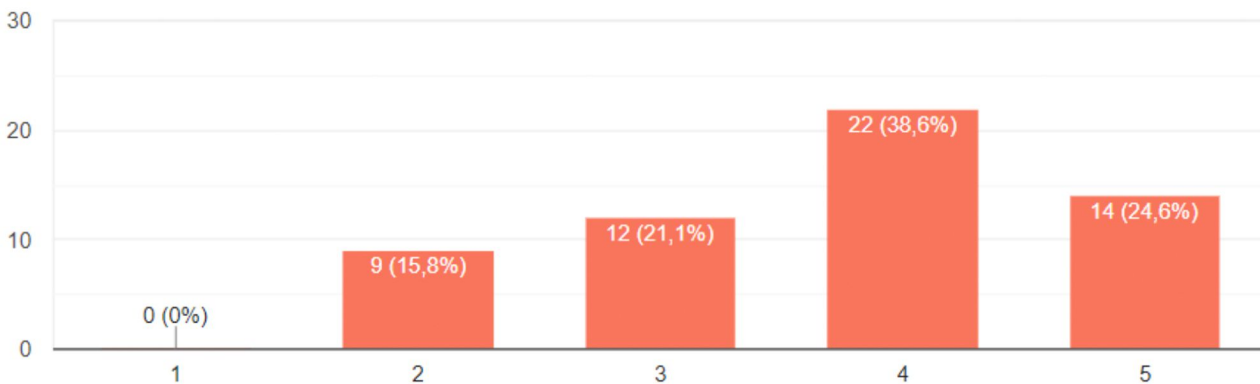
Chart 13.



## 14. External messages are clear, concise, and easily understood by the target audiences

Chart 14 gives a positive trend regarding the clarity and understandability of external messages among respondents. 38.6% of respondents agree and an additional 24.6% strongly agree that they evaluate external messages as clear and easily understood by their target audience. However, a notable percentage of 21.1% remain neutral on this point and 15.8% express disagreement with this assertion, which allows space for improvement and further elaboration. Nevertheless, the fact that the communication is not planned can make us suspicious regarding this self-evaluation point, since formulating the right message is the top of this process and has its own specific laws.

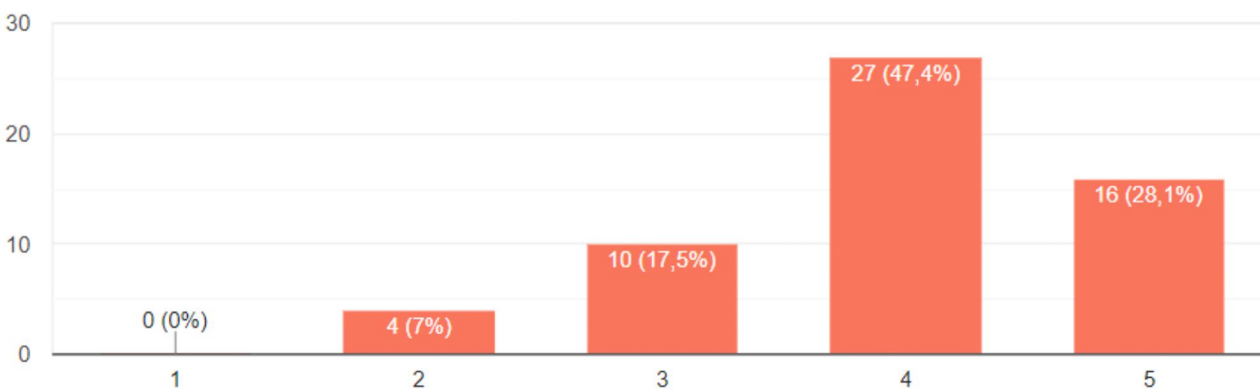
Chart 14.



## 15. How to use a variety of communication channels (website, email, social media, apps, newsletter, podcast, etc.)

Here we can see that most organizations that took part in our research have a common approach. Only a small percentage 7% expresses disagreement regarding their proficiency with a variety of communication channels (website, email, social media, apps, newsletter, podcast, etc.). In contrast, the majority claim to know how to use these channels, with 17.5% of them remaining neutral, 47.7% agreeing, and 28.1% strongly agreeing with the assertion.

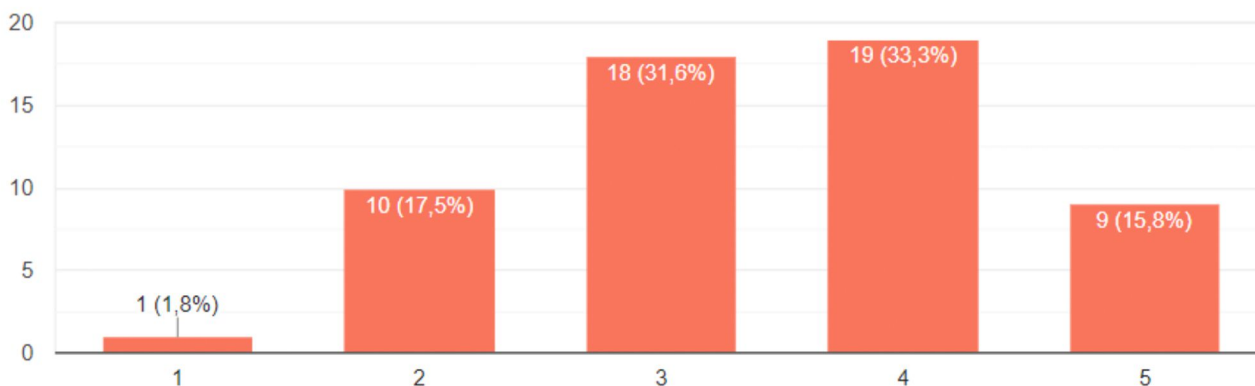
Chart 15.



## 16. How to maintain consistency in messaging across these channels

The responses from the participating organizations indicate a high level of confidence in their ability to maintain consistency regarding messaging across various communication channels. Specifically, 31,6% remains neutral to this statement, while a significant percentage, 33,3%, appears to agree and an additional 15,8% strongly agree with that. On the other hand, only a minority of 17,5% disagree, and an even smaller fraction of 1,5% strongly disagree with the notion of maintaining messaging consistency across channels. However, these results do not seem to align with the previous data regarding the efficiency of the communication channels, the understanding of the target groups' needs and the quality of the key-messages conveyed. As such, the results should be further elaborated.

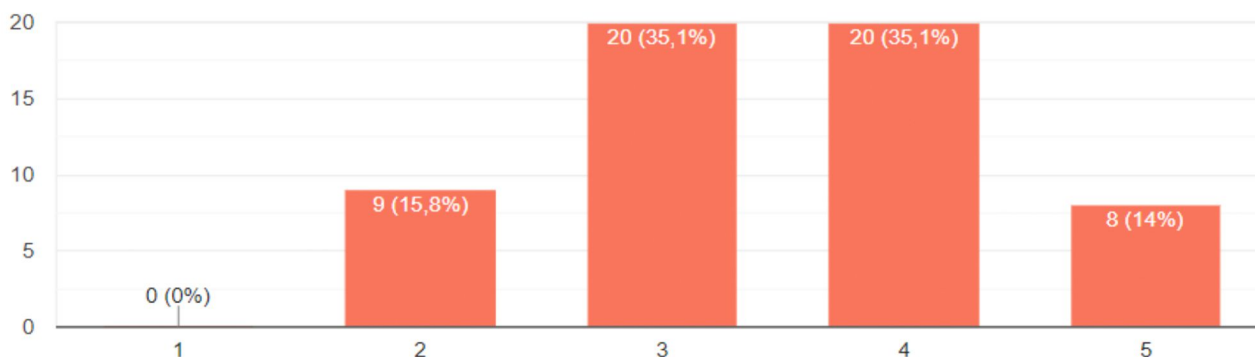
Chart 16.



## 17. Strong and effective presence on relevant social media platforms

The data presented in this chart suggests that organizations vary in their perceptions of the strength and effectiveness of their presence on relevant social media platforms. 35,1% remain neutral on this statement and an equal percentage of 35,1% express their agreement, while a smaller percentage of 14%, strongly agree with the assertion. Conversely, only a small minority of 15,8% disagree with the notion of having a strong and effective presence on relevant social media platforms. This indicates that local youth organizations focus their efforts mainly on social media and similar trends, though they probably overlook other means of communication that could be of significant benefit to their work. In fact, in light of the financial challenges highlighted on budgeting for external communication efforts within organizations in the previous questions, the lack of adequate financial resources may indeed be a contributing factor to the difficulty local organizations face in establishing and maintaining a strong presence on relevant social media platforms.

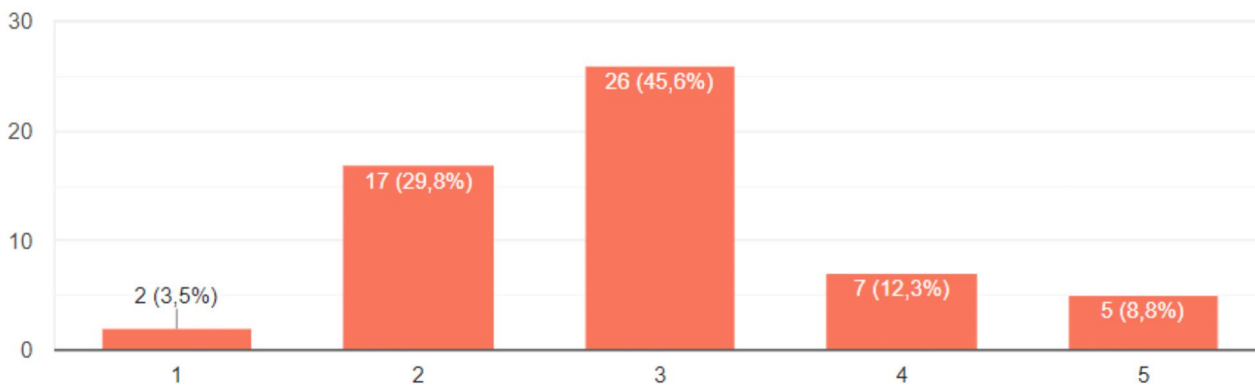
Chart 17.



## 18. Satisfaction with the level of interaction and participation on platforms

The responses once again provide a clear perspective on their level of satisfaction with the interaction and participation on their platforms. A significant majority, 45.6%, remain neutral on this statement, indicating a lack of strong sentiment or an uncertainty on the realistic performance of their organization. 29.8% of the responders disagree and a 3.5% strongly disagree. Only a minority of 12.3% agree, and 8.8% strongly agree with the statement, indicating satisfaction with the level of engagement and interaction. These results lead to the conclusion that **they need additional support not only in evaluating their overall performance in order to have a realistic view of their results, but also in enhancing their efforts and ensuring quality and effectiveness.**

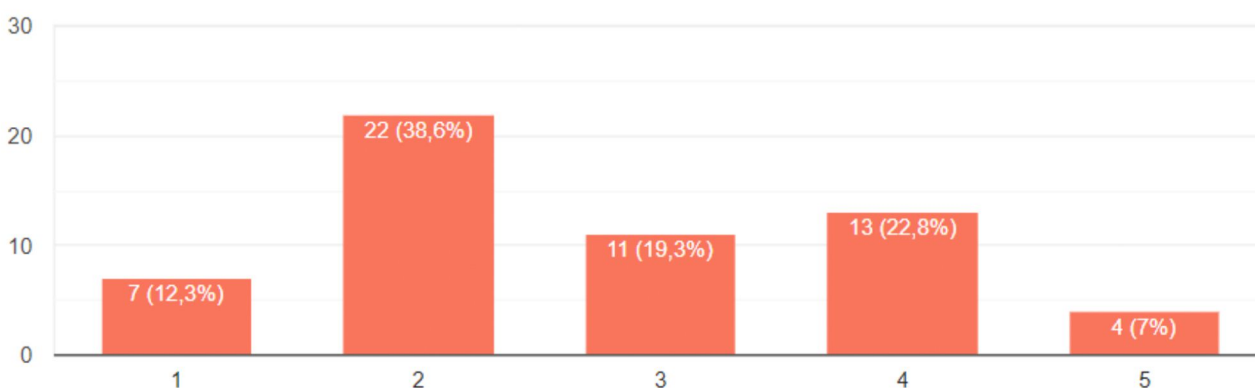
Chart 18.



## 19. Usage of statistics from social media to improve our communication

The analysis of Chart 19 indicates a lack of utilization of statistics from social media to enhance communication at the participating organizations. 38.6% express disagreement, while an additional 12.3% strongly disagree, indicating a significant portion of organizations that do not utilize social media statistics for communication improvement. On the other hand, only 22.8% of respondents agree that they use social media statistics for this purpose, with an even smaller percentage of 7% strongly agreeing. These results come to confirm the indications of the previous question and the need for action.

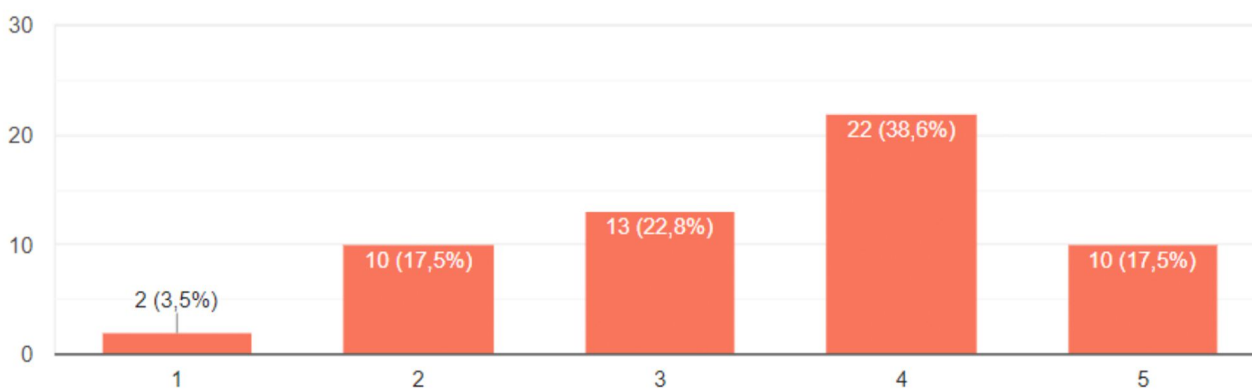
Chart 19.



## 20. Produce multimedia content (images, videos, reels) in social media posts, relevant and valuable for our target audiences

In Chart 20 we can see that participating organizations in the research tend to produce their own multimedia content for social media posts that are relevant to achieve their goal, in order to target their audiences and build a sense of community. We can see that, 38.6% agree and 17.5% strongly agree that they produce multimedia content in social media relevant and valuable to their target group, 22.8% remain neutral, while 17.5% disagree and only 3.5% strongly disagree. However, these results should be combined, compared and examined under the prism of those related to the effectiveness of the key-messages produced as well as the definition of needs and profiles of their target audiences, before making any conclusions. In fact, the contrast between these results **may indicate that local youth organizations may not have a clear or accurate understanding of the quality and effectiveness of their external communication.**

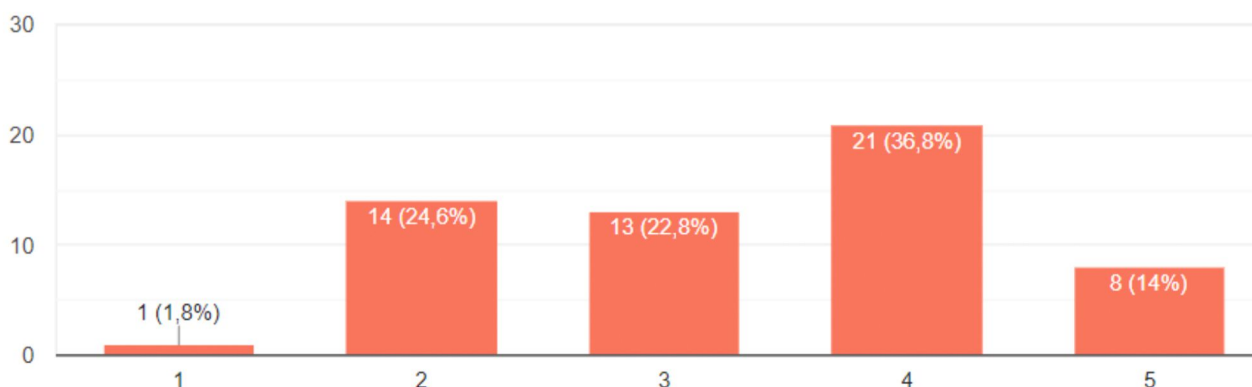
Chart 20.



## 21. Content targets audiences and also being used to build and foster a sense of community

In Chart 21, organizations indicate their efforts in targeting audiences and fostering a sense of community through content creation. Specifically, 22.8% remain neutral. A significant majority, 36.8%, agree, with an additional 14% strongly agreeing that their content creation effectively targets their audience and contributes to building a sense of community. 24.6% disagree and a smaller percentage, 1.8% strongly disagree. Although 26.4% of the negative respondents does not necessarily seem like a concerning number, there can definitely be a lot of improvement to even further limit this amount.

Chart 21.



# Open ended question analysis

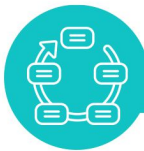
As mentioned in the introductory section of this Report, apart from the multiple choice questions to relevant youth organizations, there is also an open ended question at the end, in order for us to have a clear view of what are the specific needs of each organization that took part in the research. The question was inline with the overall spirit of the multiple choice questions, but it gave the respondents the opportunity to analyze and name specific problems they have regarding the external communication of their organization.

After analyzing the information collected from the open ended question the following facts and trends were acknowledged:



## Audience Engagement and Targeting

- Organizations expressed difficulties in engaging young people in their activities.
- Organizations requested additional advice on addressing a younger target group and developing a broader audience.
- Some organizations faced difficulties in reaching out to audiences not specifically interested in their efforts.
- Organizations need guidance on keeping the audience engagement consistently high over time.



## Communication Planning

- Youth organizations struggle with introducing a concrete communication plan.
- Organizations seek advice on expanding their outreach and increasing visibility through targeted communication strategies.
- There is a need to develop key messages that resonate with their target audience's interests and needs.
- Additional guidance on tailoring messages across different communication channels effectively is necessary.



## Partnerships and Networking

- Local youth organizations struggle with building partnerships with media representatives and influencers.
- They consider identifying partnerships and interaction with the target group as weak points.
- They do not know how to reach out to specific stakeholders relevant to their mission.



## Skills and Tools

- They seek advice on effectively promoting their work value.
- They wish to learn how to process data from previous posts effectively.
- They seek guidance on determining which tools and communication methods to use for different age groups.
- They requested help on how marketing and paid ads work.
- They need help in order to measure the impact of their external communication activities.
- They wish to be able to identify tools for following up on target group messages and make them stand out.



Overall, the analysis highlights the diverse and complex challenges faced by youth organizations in external communication. Addressing these challenges will require tailored strategies and support in areas such as audience engagement, communication planning, partnership building, and utilization of skills and tools.



# Conclusions upon results



Taking into account the closed-ended answers and the one open-ended responses we have collected, we come to the conclusion that currently there is not a satisfactory level of external communication approach in local youth organizations. Although many of them indicated to participate in European projects and have more than 10 years of experience, many difficulties still exist in these organizations.

Some important challenges for local youth organizations as pointed out by the respondents, are:

- A big portion of youth organizations chose not to respond clearly on whether they do have concrete communication plans or not.
- They still haven't managed to define target audiences and haven't set objectives of communication and choices of communication channels.
- Organizations lack the provision of training at the designated person/team in charge of external communication in order to enhance their communication skills.
- There is no identification for the most effective communication channels for each of their target groups.
- Many respondents abstained from expressing their practices on focusing on the development of key messages that address the interests and needs of each target audience.
- A lack of establishing a concrete process for measuring the effectiveness of communication was noticed.
- Not allocated financial resources for external communication, although they assign this task to specific individuals within their organizations.
- Difficulties on building partnerships with media representatives, influencers, etc., to improve communication outreach. Organizations face challenges in building partnerships with media representatives, influencers, etc., to enhance communication outreach, and these difficulties are increased by lack of knowledge or skills in this segment.

- Neutrality from youth organizations when it comes to maintaining consistency in messaging across these channels.
- Diverse perspectives among organizations regarding the efficacy of their social media presence.
- There is no satisfaction with the level of interaction and participation on their platforms.
- Lack of utilization of statistics from social media to enhance communication at the participating organizations.

On the other hand, we managed to identify some strengths and techniques youth organizations use in order to achieve their goals as means to achieve most of their external communications. Some of them are:

- Some organizations claimed to have managed to have a specific target group among young people and identify their needs, challenges, habits, and behaviors.
- The majority of organizations claim to already have a designated person/team in charge of external communication.
- Participated organizations have developed external messages that are clear, concise, and easily understood by the target audiences.
- They claim to know how to use a variety of communication channels.
- Production of multimedia content for social media posts, relevant and valuable for their target audiences.
- Organizations try to target audiences and foster a sense of community through content creation.



Finally, it needs to be highlighted that youth organizations show that they managed to have a specific target group among young people and identify their needs, challenges, habits, and behaviors and they know how to use a variety of communication channels. But there are significant areas for improvement including strategic planning, resource allocation, measurement and community engagement, partnership building, and utilization of skills and tools.

As a result of the data processing and analysis, we have managed to drive the following concrete conclusions:

1. There is a significant lack in strategic planning with regard to external communication, including an inadequate definition of the target audience and a limited set of communication objectives and channels among local youth organizations.
2. There is a lack of understanding on the importance of investing in additional and continuous training for staff members or teams in charge of communication initiatives, despite their crucial role in the overall external communication performance.
3. There is a lot of room for improvement in the process of selecting the suitable channels of communication as an important element of the organizations' external presence, as well as in creating effective key-messages to attract and engage their target groups, to promote their work and increase their overall impact in their local communities.
4. There is great need for support in acknowledging and understanding the benefit of measuring the effectiveness of the communication approaches as well as in developing procedures to facilitate the evaluation process. As such, they need additional support not only in evaluating their overall performance in order to have a realistic view of their results, but also in enhancing their efforts and ensuring quality and effectiveness.
5. There are serious challenges in securing the necessary funding for sustainable external communication efforts, though local youth organizations have not yet managed to exploit all options and resources available to increase their effectiveness with engagement of stakeholders that are relevant to their work and could help promote their initiatives to a broader level.

Following these conclusions, it appears that addressing these challenges that local youth organizations face is rather crucial for enhancing their capacities in external communication. As such, the research results confirm the necessity to achieve the project's main aim and specific objectives, while the introduction of a single digital platform with comprehensive tools and training opportunities to further support youth organizations appears as a suitable multilevel solution for this process.



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