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Community-Led Research and Action (CLRA): methodology and application

In modern conditions, the role of the community in organising the lives of its members is constantly growing, which, in turn, requires their active participation in making decisions about the priority needs of their community and the possibilities for meeting them. This process requires appropriate tools, and research using a community-based action research design is one of the most suitable. Its distinctive feature is that such kind of research is conducted on the initiative of the community; the community also determines the topic, develops the research design, conducts the research, and uses its results to make decisions about change. The community initiative may be represented by a public organisation, an initiative group, etc. Such research often involves a researcher, who may be a community social worker, an academic representative, a student, etc., but in any case, they play a supporting role. “The outcomes from the research is an expected legacy benefit for the community, who should experience a skills boost (through the research training), stronger relationships with key stakeholder organisations, and a better understanding of how to address long-standing issues of need” (University of Liverpool, n/d).

Since the community-based action research approach is very flexible and can work in different contexts, it was decided to apply it in the Visionary Roadmaps: Crafting an Inclusive and Participatory European Democracy with Youth and Communities (Youth for Europe / YOUROPE) project, which brings together European universities, and in which the School of Social Work at NaUKMA is one of the participants.

This project aims to empower young people to shape the future of European democracy by creating inclusive spaces and policies that ensure their voices are heard. “Community-Led Research and Action (CLRA) gives young people and their communities the tools and space to identify issues that

matter most to them, come up with solutions, and take meaningful action. It's about making sure their voices are not just heard but lead real change in their universities, neighbourhoods, and even at the policymaking level" (YOUROPE Project, n/d).

Thanks to their participation in the project, students have the opportunity to learn about the specifics of this research design and acquire practical skills in conducting it. It means they master new tools to participate in the decision-making process, which could affect both their lives and the lives of the community. As a result, they get more opportunities to influence the policy, to understand the policy-making process, and to be more active European citizens who can build a more inclusive society.

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