netWorked Youth Research for Empowerment in the Digital society

Year 3 Quality and Evaluation Report

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1.   Introduction

This document collects the findings of the evaluation process carried out between June and late November 2019 for the WYRED project (García-Peñalvo, 2016b, 2017; García-Peñalvo & García-Holgado, 2019; García-Peñalvo & Kearney, 2016). The process involved examination of project documentation and deliverables and extensive group and individual interviews with partners. The document constitutes the final evaluation-related deliverable of the project. It is important to note the formative aspect of the evaluation, which involves the identification of achievements so far, and potential improvements to the project. Indeed, the key function of the evaluation process during the project has been to provoke reflection. Though the funding period is ending this document can inform the future work in the WYRED Association as well as looking back over the funded period. Aspects worth emphasising, and recommendations are presented in a list at the end of the document.

1.1   The WYRED Project

The emergence of the young as a distinct social group, and their slowly increasing empowerment through the availability of digital technology, has brought with it an understanding that they have a key role to play in the digital society, as drivers of new behaviours and understandings. However, their active participation in society is not reflected sufficiently in policy and decision-making, especially in relation to digital issues. Because of this, they are not well represented and unheard, and this makes it hard for research and policy to identify and understand their needs. These issues are further complicated by the fact that the group is a swiftly moving target, it is as heterogeneous as the wider society, and children and young people can be unwilling to be subjects of research.

The WYRED project has aimed to provide a framework for research in which children and young people can express and explore their perspectives and interests in relation to digital society, but also a platform from which they can communicate their perspectives to other stakeholders effectively through innovative engagement processes. It has done this by implementing a generative research cycle involving networking, dialogue, participatory research and interpretation phases centred around and driven by children and young people (WYRED

Consortium, 2017b, 2017c), out of which a diverse range of outputs, critical perspectives and other insights have emerged to inform policy and decision-making in relation to children and young people's needs in the digital society.

The WYRED approach is informed by the recognition that young people of all ages have the right to participation and engagement. It has a strong focus on inclusion, diversity and the empowerment of the marginalised. The aim is to replace the disempowering scrutiny of conventional research processes with the empowerment of self-scrutiny and self-organisation through social dialogue and participatory research.

1.1.1 Objectives of the project

The overall aim of WYRED is the empowerment of children and young people. The WYRED project has several central objectives:

1. To provide a framework for research in which children and young people can express and explore their perspectives and interests in relation to digital society.
2. To provide a platform from which children and young people can communicate their perspectives to other stakeholders effectively through innovative engagement processes.
3. To engage children and young people in a generative research cycle involving networking, dialogue, participatory research and interpretation.
4. To generate a diverse range of outputs, critical perspectives and other insights that can inform policy and decision-making in relation to children and young people's needs in relation to digital society.
5. To make this process continuous and sustainable.

These objectives involve a series of challenges that are a natural corollary of the work we propose, these are as follows.

1. ENGAGEMENT - children and young people are to a large extent immersed in a set of activities that take up most of their time, and their free time is precious. The engagement in WYRED of children and young people can involve competition for attention with existing activities.

2. RESEARCH - research is frequently understood in society as a dry activity divorced from everyday reality. This misconception can affect the way that WYRED is perceived both by the young participants and by third parties. Horizon 2020 is a research programme, but exploration may be a more fruitful word to use in this context.

3. LEGITIMACY - one of the ultimate aims of WYRED is to help children and young people communicate their issues and concerns to those who take decisions about them. There is a sense in which WYRED functions as a bridge. The challenge will be to ensure that the work done by children and young people in WYRED and its outputs are perceived as legitimate by decision-makers

4. TECHNICAL ISSUES - configuring a safe space for the activity in WYRED, that is both sufficiently attractive to children and young people and compliant with the necessary ethical requirements, is a challenge. In particular competing with the digital expectations of the young on a very tight budget will be bracing.

5. DIVERSITY – WYRED is committed to diversity and inclusion (Zauchner-Studnicka, 2017, 2018a, 2018b), however it is frequently the case that the easiest children and young people to access are to be found in middle-class schools with receptive families, the challenge is to move beyond this context.

6. SUSTAINABILITY - the activity in WYRED is initially resource hungry, hence the need for EC funding, making the activity sustainable involves promoting self-management among children and young people and facilitating the transition from funded project to self-funded youth-led activity. This is a considerable challenge.

7. ETHICS OF EMPOWERMENT - the central conundrum in a project like WYRED that focuses on facilitating the empowerment of children and young people and their agency is the question "when is the right moment to let go" (of the balloon). This is an ethical question.

Many of these challenges are identified in the proposal, others have acquired significance as the project has progressed. The degree to which they have been successfully addressed will be discussed later in this document.

1.1.2 Structure of the project

The project work plan as set out in the proposal involves 10 work packages. The first of these focuses on the definition of the different processes involved in the research cycle, the second is dedicated to the preparation and implementation throughout the project of the inclusion strategy, and the third focuses on the development of the WYRED platform (García-Holgado & García-Peñalvo, 2018; García-Peñalvo, 2016a; García-Peñalvo & Durán-Escudero, 2017; García-Peñalvo, García-Holgado, Vázquez-Ingelmo, & Seoane-Pardo, 2018; García-Peñalvo, Vázquez-Ingelmo, & García-Holgado, 2019; García-Peñalvo, Vázquez-Ingelmo, García-Holgado, & Seoane-Pardo, 2019; WYRED Consortium, 2017a, 2018), which has been used throughout the project as the space in which the activities and interaction take place. These first three preparatory work packages are followed by 5 work packages which cover the full cycle of research activity in WYRED. This starts with network building in WP4, in which the children and young people who participate in the research cycle are attracted and engaged, and the principal themes that represent their concerns are identified. The next work package (5) focuses on social dialogue around these themes, which are further explored to identify key research questions relating to the digital society that concern children and young people. In the subsequent work package (6) these children and young people, supported by the partners, focus on designing and implementing research activities to explore these questions and issues in a range of ways. WP7 focuses on the interpretation and evaluation of the process and its results in the production, by the young research participants and the partners, of different formats and artefacts that will be used to present the results, principally insights and recommendations to different target groups at policy level and in the wider society. The final phase of the cycle in WP8 focuses on the dissemination and exploitation of these results, though this work package runs throughout the project engaging in the valorisation of the WYRED activity through workshops, event participation, online activity and the creation of the WYRED Association which will manage WYRED activity after the funding period.

These 5 work packages form a cycle that is aimed to generate insights relating to the perspectives and concerns of children and young people in relation to digital society. The cycle was originally intended to repeat twice during the funding period of the project but has in fact been repeated

three times, and it and will continue indefinitely after the funding period under the aegis of the WYRED Association. The WYRED cycle is supported by 2 other work packages focusing on management (WP9) and quality (WP10).

WP no.	WP Title	WP Owner
WP1	WYRED PROCESSES DEFINITION	BOUNDARIES
WP2	INCLUSION	MOVES
WP3	WYRED PLATFORM DEVELOPMENT	USAL
WP4	BUILDING THE WYRED NETWORK	YEU
WP5	SOCIAL DIALOGUE PHASE	EARLY YEARS
WP6	PARTICIPANT RESEARCH PHASE	DOGA SCHOOLS
WP7	EVALUATION AND INTERPRETATION PHASE	PYE GLOBAL
WP8	VALORISATION	OXFAM
WP9	PROJECT MANAGEMENT	USAL
WP10	QUALITY MANAGEMENT	BOUNDARIES

It is worth noting that there are challenges involved in implementing a project that begins with a traditional work package structure, but in which the aim is to move towards a continuous cycle of activity in which the divisions between work packages 4 to 8 will increasingly be elided. This aspect led to a streamlining of the project soon after the halfway point in which the work was reorganised into four working groups as follows:

- **WG1 - the scope of WYRED**, this working group focuses on the approach overall and its ethics, it covers WP1 and WP10 and also includes WP9 (though this is really outside the structure).

- **WG2 – the WYRED space**. This working group is focused on the WYRED platform, and the community of people involved in WYRED. It covers WP2 and WP3.
- **WG3 – WYRED and society**. The focus here is on the reach of WYRED, the creation and then sustaining of our networks and disseminating and valorising the outputs of the WYRED approach. It covers WP4 and WP8, and there is some overlap with WP7.
- **WG4 – WYRED as research**. This focuses on the WYRED process as implemented with children and young people throughout the project. It covers WP5, WP6 and WP7.

This reorganisation has made the work more focused and efficient, and though the work package structure in terms of deliverables has been respected, there has been a streamlining of the workflow due to this change that has focused the project activity and made it easier to achieve the objectives.

1.1.3   Project consortium

The consortium is made up of nine partners, and is very diverse, with partners from academic organisations that focus on research and others whose principal focus is youth work.

1	UNIVERSIDAD DE SALAMANCA (USAL)
2	OXFAM ITALIA ONLUS (OXFAM)
3	PYE GLOBAL (PYE)
4	ASİST ÖĞRETİM KURUMLARI A.S. (DOĞA SCHOOLS)
5	EARLY YEARS – THE ORGANISATION FOR YOUNG CHILDREN LBG (EARLY YEARS)
6	YOUTH FOR EXCHANGE AND UNDERSTANDING INTERNATIONAL AISBL (YEU)
7	MOVES (MOVES)
8	THE BOUNDARIES OBSERVATORY C.I.C. (BOUNDARIES)
9	TEL AVIV UNIVERSITY (TAU)

The diversity involved is of great value but has also constituted a challenge since the organisational cultures and ways of working among the different partners are diverse, as are the cultures in which they work.

1.2 Quality and Evaluation in WYRED

The activity within WYRED, specifically the WYRED research cycle, involves its own specific evaluation and interpretation process in which the outputs of the cycle are subject to scrutiny and assessment. It is there, in WP7, that the participants and consortium evaluate whether the research cycle developed is producing useful and valuable results for society.

The focus in this report, though related in very general terms to that activity, has a different focus insofar as it centres on evaluating the project as an EU financed project which has a set of outputs (deliverables) and processes that have been previously defined in the funding proposal. Though both sets of work share the ultimate objective of evaluating the quality of WYRED the perspectives are different. The work covered in this report focuses on quality management and the evaluation of the overall progress of the project.

1.2.1 Quality

The purpose of the internal quality processes in WYRED is to ensure that the project deliverables are completed with an acceptable level of quality. This involves attention both to the quality of the deliverables themselves and the quality of the processes used to manage and create them. While project outputs, the deliverables, are subject to an internal quality control process using predefined criteria, the processes of the project, including internal aspects such as management, communication and collaboration, participation and reporting as well as the research cycle activities are evaluated independently. The results are incorporated into this Quality and Evaluation report, and the other evaluation reports planned during the project. The ethical perspective has been subject to an independent reporting process,

The focus of quality control is on the deliverables of the project. Quality control monitors project deliverables to establish that the deliverables are of acceptable quality and are complete and correct. The deliverables are assessed for completeness and fitness through a peer quality

content inspection during the development of the deliverables and to mark their completion and approval. As mentioned previously, quality assurance, which focuses on the processes adopted in the project, is carried out through the processes of project evaluation, described in the next section.

At the start of the deliverable production process, the proposed structure of the deliverable is approved according to the following indicators:

- The contents are in accordance with the objective stated in the project description.
- The allocation of the tasks is realistic and consistent with the roles of the partners as defined in the proposal, unless modifications have been made.
- The timetable reposed is realistic and matches the deadline set out in the project proposal, unless modifications have been made.

During the production of the deliverables, all partners are responsible for playing their part in checking the quality of the deliverable as it progresses and making appropriate comments and suggestions for modification.

The key quality criteria used for the final review of each deliverable are as follows:

- Compliance with the objectives as stated in the project description in the Grant Agreement.
- The completeness of the documentation describing the work done in the corresponding work package.
- Compliance with templates and editing guidelines as described in the project handbook.
- Clarity and legibility.
- The degree to which the deliverable constitutes a complete response to the task.
- Usefulness to the target reader and audience.
- Complete history of document versions.

For the purposes of this report, the quality management process has been monitored and the degree of fulfilment of these criteria has been examined. Though there has been some

slippage in the upload to SYGMA (EU deliverables portal), the deliverables produced in the project comply with these criteria.

1.2.2 Evaluation

The project evaluation framework in the WYRED project is intended to support the project activities and provide opportunities for continuous improvement both of project processes and the products created, especially the network itself. This has been done by observing and interpreting the different actions carried out by the consortium and providing feedback at appropriate moments within the project cycle and is done principally through the independent internal review process, which is the responsibility of P8 (Boundaries). The overall objective is to support the consortium both in the achievement of the specific project objectives and in its compliance with the funding requirements. This involves attention both to the <u>management</u> perspective - the extent to which the administration, communication, collaboration and other aspects (such as, for example, compliance with deadlines) are appropriate – and to the <u>development</u> perspective – the extent to which the different activities are successful in achieving the objectives, with respect as much to the design and development of the products and services as to their valorisation.

The project evaluation process has contemplated both formative and summative dimensions and has also focused on identifying lessons that can be learned from the project, both in terms of operational and management aspects, and in development terms. The principal evaluation criteria that have been used to define the scope of the monitoring and interaction during the project evaluation process, and to guide feedback and reporting, are similar to what could be termed the 'standard' evaluation criteria used in a wide range of EU project management and evaluation processes. They include:

- Correspondence with the proposal - the match of the activities, products and services developed, and the overall results, to the aims and objectives of the project.
- Appropriate activity - the efficient management of the activities, appropriate communication and collaboration, the completion of work by agreed deadlines and to a sufficient degree of quality, and the fulfilment by all partners of the tasks assigned to them, as well as appropriate use of the outputs.

- Impact in the short, medium and long term, and the sustainability potential of the project outcomes. In this last respect, particular attention has been paid to the appropriateness and success of the dissemination and exploitation activities.

Against this background, the process also has a series of specific project evaluation objectives:

- To carry out ongoing monitoring of the project design and development activities, providing feedback and recommendations for corrective action whenever needed.
- To carry out ongoing monitoring of the project management activities, with special attention to communication and collaboration.
- To facilitate reflection and critical thinking among the partners on different aspects of the project, in order to ensure an integrated approach to the project, in which all are participants.

The methodological approach has used a mixture of quantitative and qualitative methods, though the focus, given the need for flexibility in the project evaluation process, has been on a qualitative approach. The quantitative methods have focused on analysis of project data to derive an overall impression of the degree of activity generated, and the interest in the project, but the emphasis has been on interviews. Throughout the project there has been continuous observation of and reflection on project processes and outputs focussing especially on the impressions derived from the EU and from the Advisory Board. After informal contacts during the project meeting in Brussels (September 19), a round of online interviews took place in late October 2019, at the very end of the funding period, to explore the perceptions different participants had in relation to the project activity. These allowed the interviewees to set the agenda and to discuss the issues that they considered to be important. This ensures that all the perspectives of the different participants are represented and taken into account in the evaluation process. These were combined with a semi-structured interview process, which while it ensured a similarity of approach across the interviews, also let the interviewer delve deeper into the reasons and issues involved in their responses in order to reveal underlying issues and permit confidential discussion of sensitive issues. The results of these were then shared with the consortium and a round of group reflection took place.

Throughout the project, the evaluation has also involved observation of the work, and periodic discussion of the progress of the activities has taken place, including interaction with young participants in order to ensure their perspective is included. This observation forms part of the continuous monitoring of the project. This report is the outcome of all these processes.

2 Situation of WYRED at M36

The previous evaluation report identified a range of aspects for improvement and made a series of recommendations. Some of these involved operational details that required addressing and these have been addressed, but there were also several more strategic issues. First among these was the need for greater integration of the work in the project. It had become fragmented, both into different work packages and different country contexts. The working groups strategy introduced above had an important effect in both of these dimensions as it has helped the consortium to take a more global perspective. This aspect of the project has been much improved, and it can be said that is has been of substantial importance in helping the project to achieve its objectives.

Another recommendation that has been implemented was to introduce online events. The consortium has implemented a program of online conversations and an online festival in the final year and these activities have given the project an international dimension which previously had not had sufficient emphasis. This has contributed both to the impact of the project and to the integration of the work, giving rise to a greater sense of the work as one project. In the same way the recommendation, shared by the EU review, to adopt a narrower thematic focus, has helped to draw the work together. There is now a strong sense of a shared WYRED approach, which is flexible and adaptable to the different contexts across the project.

Another recommendation was the need to draw together the outputs of all the WYRED research projects in order to avoid fragmentation and the risk of their being perceived as "anecdotic". The WYRED Insights report (Griffiths et al., 2017) addresses this and gives the project a greater weight than it had before as asset of disparate outputs. This has had important implications for the overall impact of the project and has helped to address the last key recommendation which related to the need to be part of conversations about young people and the digital society. The Insights report is a contribution to these conversations that the WYRED Association intends to carry forward year by year. Though at the time of writing the report is still being written, the central insights, across the consortium coalesce under two headings: "educate" and "legislate".

The partners feel that with these actions particularly the recommendations of the last report have been addressed. At this final stage of the funding period the partners feel satisfied that they have achieved their objectives. It is germane to examine whether this is the case.

2.1.1 The WYRED objectives

- *To provide a framework for research in which children and young people can express and explore their perspectives and interests in relation to digital society*. This framework exists and has been iteratively streamlined to make it accessible and adaptable to a wide range of contexts, as has been the case in the project.

- *To provide a platform from which children and young people can communicate their perspectives to other stakeholders effectively through innovative engagement processes.* This platform exists and though its design has been conditioned by constraints discussed later in this report it has served its purpose during the project, and much has been learned.

- *To engage children and young people in a generative research cycle involving networking, dialogue, participatory research and interpretation.* The cycle has undergone three iterations during the project and during the process has been refined and perfected.

- *To generate a diverse range of outputs, critical perspectives and other insights that can inform policy and decision-making in relation to children and young people's needs in relation to digital society.* These have been generated and are collected in raw form in the artefacts collection, and in curated form in the WYRED Insights report.

- *To make this process continuous and sustainable*. As the project shifts into a new phase, at the end of the funding period, the WYRED Association carries forward the approach. In each of the partner countries the further use of the approach is planned in 2020, and though there is further work to do to fully consolidate the future of WYRED the foundations are present.

2.1.2 Key issues addressed in the final year

The EU interim review, while positive about some aspects of the project, expressed several concerns about the work in WYRED, all of which revolved around the central issue of the impact of the project. The partners in reflections on the project recognised that the local focus in the first

part of the project had been to some extent at the expense of the international dimension in WYRED, and the wider impacts of the project that relate to that. The issues identified there have been addressed, first by narrowing the thematic focus and second by clarifying and simplifying the WYRED approach so that it functions more clearly as a flexible framework.

There is little doubt about the local impacts of WYRED. The process of participation is transformative for many of the participants, at each stage. The dialogues awake enthusiasm and critical thinking, and the sense of a voice, the projects ground opinions, and give a depth and assurance to that voice, and the sharing of the results is a validation of that voice. However, a broader impact was less evident. In the final year the consortium addressed this, through online conversations, and online festival, the WYRED stories and the WYRED Insights report. The WYRED Association, though it has had a delayed start, has the potential to provide the framework to take this dimension of the work forward, supporting and complementing the existing local sustainability actions of the partners.

3 The scope of WYRED - WG1

The focus of working group one was the overall scope of WYRED, and the degree to which it meets the objectives of the project. This working group brought together the two work packages that begin and end the workplan. These are WP1 which focuses on processes and WP10 which focuses on quality control, and in which the creation of this report is located.

3.1 WP1 Processes

This work package was the entry point to the project for the partners, and in a sense is the work package that draws all the strands of the work in the project together. The work of creating and then updating the Process Handbook (WYRED Consortium, 2019) has throughout served as an important mechanism for reflection as it required the consortium to define, explore and explain the project's philosophy, approach and mechanisms. The role of the Process Handbook has been to document and track the evolution of the approach so that it functions as a continuously updated source of guidance. Its existence, and this commitment to continual updates, provides guarantees that the approach can be flexible without losing sight of its objectives.

In the second part of the project, the focus of activity in this work package, has been on updating in the light of the work done in the project, collecting and recording the different changes. Over the course of the project the WYRED research cycle has been streamlined. This has involved various important shifts with respect to the original structure. The first of these is a shift in the role of WP4. At the beginning of the project, networking was a necessary preliminary stage of the WYRED cycle, drawing in participants and doing this by engaging them in reflection, the out puts of which fed the following stages of the cycle. After the first cycle, it was the outputs of the cycle that fed the next cycle and the process of dissemination was bringing in new participants. This meant that networking was no longer necessary as part of the cycle, becoming a support activity. The second key change is that the cycle, previously construed as very separate stages, has been shown to be much more organic as it has been adapted to different contexts with different scheduling. It has been simplified and is much easier to comprehend. The third key change is that the separate reporting processes for each work package were seen to over complicate the process, and these have been brought together into one process. Lastly, it was noticed, partly

due to the observation made at the interim EU review meeting, that though individual outputs may be shared locally by the children and young people in different contexts, there is a need to draw together the insights thrown out by all the WYRED research projects carried out, partly to achieve a greater weight of insight. The need for a more central report was identified, and this Insights report has been implemented and will continue to be the main yearly output of the WYRED Association.

These changes are important, since they depart from the original plan set out in the proposal, but they are derived from the experience of implementing several WYRED cycles and there is consensus among the partners that they constitute a substantial set of improvements. The greater simplicity of the cycle makes it more flexible as well and this will make it much easier for third parties to adopt the approach in their contexts so that children and young people can benefit. This simpler shared framework also helps to improve the value of the work since the more all WYRED projects are able to keep to this approach, the more the results will be perceived as legitimate.

At the end of the project the final updated version of the Process Handbook was created capturing all these changes. It is felt by the partners to be a more accessible document that will facilitate the work of the WYRED Association. The intention of the partners is to produce videos and a shorter document to summarise the WYRED Approach as it now stands. It is observed that this would be of particular importance in helping to maintain commonality of approach across the contexts implementing WYRED in the future.

In this final period of the project, there has been little need to adapt the Participant Protection Policy. Though its initial development took time and effort, this paid dividends as the document has served its purpose throughout the project, and there has been no need to make changes. The validity of the document has been corroborated by the External Ethical Reviews, and only minor tweaks were made for the final version.

3.1 WP10 Quality and Evaluation

Quality and evaluation in WYRED, covered by this work package, has comprised the internal processes, which include quality assessment of deliverables and the quality and evaluation process of which this document forms part, and external evaluation.

External evaluation has covered three main areas:

1. The official European review process, in which the reviewers are employed by the Commission to examine the progress and outputs of the project. An interim review took place just prior to the mid-point of the project, and a final review will take place in January 2019.

2. The External Independent Ethics Advisor, in which the review is subcontracted by the consortium to examine the ethical dimension of the project. There was an Interim Independent Ethical Review at the midpoint of the project, carried out by Joseph Roche of Trinity College Dublin. The review was very positive and confirmed that the project was on the right track from an ethical perspective. Unfortunately, Joseph was unable to continue the work for the final review, and so Dr Greg Mannion of the University of Strathclyde carried out this work. The review was again positive, and the work created food for thought about future avenues of work for the WYRED Association and possible collaboration.

3. The last area of external scrutiny is the WYRED Advisory Board. After some complications during the first part of the project the meetings returned to the originally planned schedule and all the meetings have taken place. The members of the Advisory Board have provided valuable insights and throughout the process they have helped the project to improve and suggested solutions where necessary.

The last aspect of this work package is the Internal Ethical Advisory Board. This was an internal group set up to ensure that any ethical issues that arose during the project would be appropriately addressed. The key reference document for the EAB is the Participant Protection Policy document which covers ethical issues and guidelines within WYRED. The key work of the Ethical Advisory Board would be to identify any issues relating to ethics such as informed consent,

data protection, safeguarding not already being dealt with. The Board would only meet should it prove necessary. During the project it has not been considered necessary to convene a meeting. The positive External Ethical Reviews corroborate this.

4 The WYRED Space – WG2

4.1 WP2 Inclusion

A key principle of WYRED was the idea that the community of children and young people involved should be as diverse and inclusive as possible, to ensure that the benefits of the work should be available to all. It is also advantageous to be using the approach with as wide a population as possible to check that is adaptable and flexible. To ensure this a work package was dedicated to inclusion, which aimed to collect data about the profiles of those participating to check that the project population reflected the diversity of the different contexts in which WYRED was being implemented. At the same time the partners made efforts to ensure as far as possible that they were looking to include as diverse a population as possible.

While it is difficult to get the exact population makeup one is looking for, as other drivers affect who joins up, the consortium is content with the reach achieved, and the work done in this area has been of good quality, with a good degree of commitment from the partnership, and the range of profiles (from diverse perspectives) that have been involved has helped to show that the WYRED approach can function in a wide range of contexts with a wide range of different profiles of children and young people.

In the evaluation process, various aspects were commented on in relation to this area. It was remarked that more young women than men had been involved and there was speculation about why this might be, though the remit of the WP had been to collect data rather than find out the reasons for its distribution. Another aspect, which is perhaps perennial in projects relating to education and young people is the tendency towards greater participation of the middle class. Though partners made efforts to involve more marginal communities and were successful this involved a lot of work, and it was observed that middle class contexts often have more (time and money) resources to allow them to experiment in this way. Arguably these contexts may have a greater proportion of more empowered and articulate young people for whom participation in a project like this easy to contemplate, which may not be the same in other contexts of greater disadvantage. However, by the same token there is evidence that in those cases where the consortium did have participants from these backgrounds, the effect on the young participants

was more marked. <u>There is perhaps a strong argument for focusing the work of the WYRED Association on disadvantaged and marginalized children and young people</u>.

Another aspect to comment on could be termed the issue of diversity within diversity. The diversity criteria in the project covered a lot of ground, ranging over gender, race, educational background, religion and sexuality among other elements and the work was predicated on the assumption that all these criteria should be examined. This assumption is unsurprising in most of Western and Northern Europe, but in Turkey, the partners were uncomfortable with the questionnaire as sexuality particularly is a difficult subject to raise in Turkey. This raises questions for the future, as there is interest in WYRED beyond Europe. In some contexts, it may be necessary for the WYRED Association to re-examine the diversity criteria.

4.2   WYRED platform

The nature of the WYRED platform can be understood as a key issue. In a project in which the aim is to empower young people to better participate in the digital society, a key issue is what spaces we can provide to make life better online. From the start it was felt that the privacy and safety issues associated with the large online platforms made them inappropriate to use in a project of this nature. The decision was made to design a space for the project that would address these concerns. This was a challenging undertaking, the constraints included competition with the very large and attractive spaces young people are used to, limited resources, the tension between agility and safety, and understandings of the need for privacy. These and the key requirements of anonymity (without abuse) and safety defined the design process.

The partners vary in their views of the platform. Some are more aware of the constraints than others, and those more involved in the last year in the use of the platform for international conversations are more positive regarding its usefulness. The sense across the partnership is that though not ideal the WYRED platform has been able to serve a very large target group with considerable diversity in terms of ages, languages and communication styles, and it has provided a reasonable safe space for WYRED activity. The platform serves well as a hub and a repository for the work done, and for facilitated and structured conversations it has worked well.

There has been less spontaneous use of the space by young people, however. This was always to be expected, they already have their spaces and it would be naïve to expect them to abandon them, but there is a sense of the limitations of the design. Reflecting on this in the interviews it was observed that a lesson learned in this project is that the design of the software may not be the best way to address the issues WYRED was addressing. In some cases, partners had made explicit efforts, using the videos and other materials, to manage expectations and educate in the issues driving the design before introducing the platform, and this improved receptivity in comparison to other group. In this sense it is education, and facilitation of the use that may be more effective than trying to design perfect software, especially when the design requirements place such constraints on what they design might achieve. More work on awareness raising, perceptions, and indeed the skills to use the platform effectively might help children and young people to see the reasons why the platform is as it is, and improve the experience when the approach is implemented in the WYRED Association.

5   WYRED and society – WG3

5.1   WP4 Networking and WP8 Valorisation

As has been mentioned earlier in the report, as the project progressed, the activities in WP4 focusing on networking, while necessary to kickstart the WYRED cycle at the start (generating talking points and attracting participants) became necessary as it was the outputs of the previous cycle that would attract new people into the next one. In this sense the work of WP4 and WP8 began to overlap, and it is for this reason that they are taken together here.

An important improvement took place in the work done in this area when the project shifted to the Working Group structure. The partners felt that this improved coordination of the activity, and the work became more integrated, focused around the WYRED stories strategy in which partners share stories about the work they are doing in WYRED has to a large extent functioned well and provided accessible evidence of the work taking place in the project that all could refer to. The consortium has been successful in raising awareness of the WYRED approach and its outputs and has succeeded in attracting a diverse collection of participants to the project in the different countries, though the process has not been without its challenges, as was discussed in the previous report. The dissemination work has also been successful in reaching a good variety of stakeholders such as school governors, local and national authorities, politicians and children's commissioners among others.

An aspect that was commented on by some partners in relation to this was the degree to which dissemination and adoption has worked best at local and regional levels. The WYRED approach is not a quick fix solution, it is quite a radical approach for many since it gives so much autonomy to the young, and it takes time to work through the cycle, which requires a certain degree of commitment on the part of gatekeepers, institutions and of course the young participants. This means that a good degree of trust and confidence needs to be built up or exist already. For this reason, several partners commented that they had had most success in contexts where they had local knowledge and existing relationships. This indicates that it is likely to be word of mouth, from school to school and club to club that may be the most effective way for the WYRED Association to focus its sustainability actions.

The showcases in the project have worked well, helping to bring the approach to the awareness of the policy level in a variety of different contexts with different stakeholders in the different countries. An interesting aspect commented on by the partners is however that the more successful ones involved young people directly. There is a sense in which this involvement is a vital part of the philosophy of WYRED, it is part of the empowerment process, and it may be that it is more important to focus on that perspective when implementing showcases, treating dissemination as a by-product.

Another aspect that was commented on quite frequently in relation to the challenges involved in dissemination was the fact that quite often when dissemination efforts to other stakeholders working in the same field focused on the approach, there was less interest. It was hypothesised that this might be because most organisations working with youth have a methodology of some kind and there is a sense in which WYRED is in competition with that. When the decision was taken to create the yearly Insights report to bring together all the threads of activity and outputs, this provided a useful object of focus for the dissemination efforts. The partners, in the interviews, also frequently mentioned that the focus on the single theme of the digital society, with its six subthemes also helped to focus and simplify the messages. It is likely that WYRED will be most successful if it maintains a close focus, as simpler messages gain more traction, though this focus may shift from year to year.

The shift to the production of the Insights report also addresses an issue that had been alluded to in the review and Advisory Board meetings. The risk of individual projects being perceived as anecdotic. For the valorisation work to be more effective and powerful there is a need to be telling stories about common insights that derive from several projects. This can lead to a more substantial impact.

There was also emphasis on the idea that the Insights report is not just a compendium of final outputs from each set of WYRED research projects. The realignment included a recognition that useful insights can be harvested from all the stages of the WYRED cycle: the dialogues, the projects themselves, and the artefacts they generate, but also from the parallel online conversations, Online Festival and the Delphi process. All of these feed into the report, which is not a deliverable but a new output that emerged during the project. It is felt that this facilitates

the valorisation activity in ways that the originally planned deliverables, which are more fragmented across work packages. The Insights report should, as is planned be a yearly output of the WYRED Association.

The Delphi process works well and has now been implemented as a yearly questionnaire that complements the other information merging from the WYRED cycle. It serves a useful observatory role and its results have been used to feed discussions, dissemination and engagement, as well as articulating initial conversations with other stakeholders. It also plays a useful role in the insights document. It is worth mentioning that though referred to in the project as a Delphi, it is not a conventional Delphi process and as a result it is recommend that in the WYRED Association it is not referred to as such.

The principal valorisation event at the end of the project was the Online Festival. This was a three-day event that took place on Zoom, (it had originally been planned as one) in which each day covered 2 of the six WYRED subthemes. Day 1 was Internet Safety and Information, Day 2 Gender and Self Image and Day 3 Digital Participation and Living on Social Media. The days included keynotes from MEPs and researchers, presentations from young people about their work, and round tables run by the young people. Each day ended by collecting recommendations from the day and discussing them. The format was interesting, and the Festival was successful. It would be valuable for the WYRED Association to make it an annual event.

In the final year much of the valorisation focus turned to sustainability and the WYRED Association, as the main framework for the future sustainability of the approach. The original plan had been to set the association up in Spain. However, it was not possible to do this due to complications with legislation and it was eventually decided that it would be simpler to set it up in Austria. The delay meant that the Association was set up later than expected, and there were also some complications with setting up bank accounts in Austria. All this delayed the process of attracting stakeholders to the Association. That process is now under way and the partners are working to attract members to the organisation. It is recommended that this be a special area of focus in the months after the end of the funding period, since critical mass is an important factor in the consolidation of an organisation of this kind.

6 The WYRED Research cycle

When asked about the aspects of the WYRED project that they are most content with, most of the partners mentioned the WYRED Approach, the cycle of activity that runs through social dialogues to research projects to outputs to be shown to society. The three work packages involved make up the WYRED cycle. Three iterations of the cycle have been run during the project (two were originally planned) and during these iterations the process has been steadily refined. As the partners have learned more about the way in which the approach works, they have identified ways in which to streamline it and make it more accessible, without losing sight of the basic principles of empowerment and autonomy that inform it.

The cycle is now much simpler and more fluid than it was, and this has given it a flexibility that it did not have originally, it has been used on a weekly basis for a whole school year on the one hand, and as a week long and even a weekend program on the other. It has also been used successfully across a wide variety of group sizes, ages and contexts. This is promising with regard to potential future adoption in other contexts. In reflecting on how the cycle has evolved, several partners pointed out that it was necessary to go through several iterations in order to understand more profoundly how the approach empowers children and young people in others. The project has been a learning process, but this end result, the WYRED approach, is something the partners feel proud of. Given the evolution that has taken place, the original infographics and documentation created at the start of the project no longer reflect the process appropriately, and it is therefore recommended that the WYRED Association create newer versions to reflect the changes.

This simplification, and arguably the move to a working group structure, has also led to a changed relationship between the work packages involved in the cycle, as has been mentioned previously, WP$ no longer plays a role and has become part of the valorisation activity. The other three have worked to streamline reporting and documentation so that instead of three different reporting documents, one at the end of each phase there is just one, which makes it much easier to plot the arc of each project and identify its salient points. This means that in some senses the three work packages are now really one, but there are some specific comments to make about each one.

6.1 WP5 Social Dialogues

The social dialogues have functioned well throughout the project. They constitute a valuable opportunity to engage children and young people in analysing, reflecting and critically thinking about their own generation in terms of what they identify as their principal concerns and problems in relation to the digital society. The result of the process is frequently that the children and young people involved derive a sense of empowerment through sharing their knowledge and perspectives, and furthermore that the issues that concern them are also relevant for their peers and for society.

In the second half of the project two important aspects are worth commenting on. The first of these has already been touched on. This is the realisation that though the dialogues drive the generation of research questions, in part by building the enthusiasm and interest for the subject matter through the experience of self-expression (finding your voice) they also produce insights of their own, which may or may not be taken up in research projects. It is therefore valuable to harvest them, and this is now being done, and they are incorporated into the Insights report.

The second aspect is the international conversations. These were originally intended to function in parallel to face to face conversations and lead to international projects. It became however clear early on that this would not be feasible due to the difficulties with synchronisation across the consortium contexts. Instead these online conversations take place in parallel, often using previous outputs of children and young people's research projects as starting points, which contribute to the process of empowerment. The conversations have taken place throughout the last year, usually lasting two weeks. There have been 8 in all covering subjects such as gender stereotypes, influencers, self-image online, life on social media, digital participation, equality and stereotypes, children's rights in the digital world, and digital footprints. The partners express satisfaction with these conversations which have added a valuable complementary dimension to the WYRED activity and are welcomed by the children and young people who participate. They should continue.

6.2   WP6 Research projects

WYRED has generated a large number of projects, and an impressive collection of artefacts generated by these projects. From the perspective of the children and young people participating these are the key result when they finish the project, and it is clear that the senses of achievement generated is important. As mentioned previously, it is clear that the flexibility and openness of the project to a wide range of different forms of exploratory research and the increased capacity now at the end of the project to adapt to the needs of the participants is extremely valuable. The way the approach works gives them autonomy and allows them to take ownership of the process. The work they produce is generally proficient and of good quality.

In addition to the research project outputs the other central output of this work package is the Research Toolkit, which contains a good range of activities and suggestions for participants, that they can use to guide the design of their projects if necessary. Like the rest of the approach this has undergone a process of streamlining over the course of the project and is now very accessible and easy to use. Though not all projects have used it, its availability has been valuable on many occasions.

6.3   WP7 Evaluation and interpretation

As in the other cases this part of the cycle has also undergone a streamlining. It focuses the evaluation by the children and young people of the project. This takes place on two levels. The first involves the evaluation of their own experience in the project, and forms part of a process of reflection that draws a line under the project and helps them to show its value to them. A set of tools was developed early in the project and since then have been simplified to reach a slim and accessible methodology that does not overload them. This has been mentioned above. The partners are content with this work and see it as an improvement on the earlier iterations.

The second involves the interpretation of the results of their projects in order to decide what can be shared with others (other children and young people in the platform, specific policy makers and organisations and the wider society). This process was originally expected to involve repurposing and or redesign of artefacts to present them to different audiences, As the project

has progressed it has been seen that though this may take place at local level, and does in many cases, for example through the showcases the partners have organised, there are other dynamics for sharing outputs in the WYRED space. These include the online conversations, the online festival and the Insights report. As has been commented the aggregation of insights from different projects can help to increase their perceived validity. The set of options has evolved in this way especially in Cycle 3. The partners have commented that the value of this shift is clear, and that as suggested by external advice it is necessary to do this. There is a recognition in some cases that though the consortium has reached policy especially through the showcases, there is more to be done, especially now that the WYRED Approach is consolidated and so clearly valuable. It is strongly recommended that the Association does all it can to share the Insights as widely as possible among relevant stakeholders to drive future adoption of the approach.

7 Management

7.1 WP9 Project management

The administration of WYRED in the final year of the project has continued to be effective and well-managed. The project handbook (WYRED Consortium, 2019) provides a useful set of templates and materials that standardise documents and processes. The tools that the project uses are generally acceptable, and the organisation of meetings has been efficient.

As regards the coordination of the project, in the second half of the project the partners have been content with the management style. It is also commented that the organisation of the work into Working Groups has helped to reduce the sense of fragmentation that existed before and generate a teamwork approach that has functioned well. The advice from the EU review helped to articulate the need for more focus and a more clearly framed approach, and the consortium has taken this advice on board. The project has acquired a sense of focus it did not have back then.

7.2 WP9 Collaboration and communication

Communication and collaboration have worked well within the project. Partners have been enthusiastic, and shown a good degree of commitment, though conscious of the challenges involved. There was a clear learning process as partners got to know both the project and each other. The project has not been without difficulties, especially due to changes of personnel, but the consortium has resolved these appropriately, and is well positioned for the next phase in the WYRED Association.

8 Conclusions and recommendations for the WYRED Association

The WYRED project has been a success. It has developed a valuable approach to the empowerment of young people, that works well in a wide range of contexts, and using this approach has generated a valuable set of insights from European children and young people regarding their needs and views in the digital society. At the start of this report a set of challenges were outlined, and the consortium has learned much about these as the project has progressed:

1. ENGAGEMENT - *children and young people are to a large extent immersed in a set of activities that take up most of their time, and their free time is precious. The engagement in WYRED of children and young people can involve competition for attention with existing activities.* This has been an issue in the project, usually as an obstacle to initial engagement by an organisation with the project as a whole. Once the value is seen and the organisation commits then space for the activity is found. The challenge remains to achieve that first commitment, and it is clear that WYRED is not a clear fit in all contexts, but it is clear from the experience in the project that when brining new participants into WYRED close contact and taking time to build trust pays dividends.

2. RESEARCH - *research is frequently understood in society as a dry activity divorced from everyday reality. This misconception can affect the way that WYRED is perceived both by the young participants and by third parties. Horizon 2020 is a research programme, but exploration may be a more fruitful word to use in this context.* In many contexts this strategy has been useful, especially at the outset, though as the projects progress, the word research is less strange.

3. LEGITIMACY - *one of the ultimate aims of WYRED is to help children and young people communicate their issues and concerns to those who take decisions about them. There is a sense in which WYRED functions as a bridge. The challenge will be to ensure that the work done by children and young people in WYRED and its outputs are perceived as legitimate by decision-makers.* As mentioned in this report, the risk of the work being seen as anecdotic is addressed by the WYRED Insights report, which by bringing all the Insights form a year

together, can achieve a critical mass and a perceived validity that individual projects cannot

4. TECHNICAL ISSUES - *configuring a safe space for the activity in WYRED, that is both sufficiently attractive to children and young people and compliant with the necessary ethical requirements, is a challenge. In particular competing with the digital expectations of the young on a very tight budget will be bracing.* As discussed in this report, this was an issue and the constraints limited the degree to which the safe space could be used independently. However, the platform created worked well as hub, repository and conversation space when those conversations were structured and facilitated.

5. DIVERSITY – *WYRED is committed to diversity and inclusion, however it is frequently the case that the easiest children and young people to access are to be found in middle-class schools with receptive families, the challenge is to move beyond this context.* This was achieved, the project achieved a good degree of diversity. Equally however, the experience of the project showed that this is a real challenge, and that this might be a reason for greater focus on disadvantaged children and young people in the future.

6. SUSTAINABILITY - *the activity in WYRED is initially resource hungry, hence the need for EC funding, making the activity sustainable involves promoting self-management among children and young people and facilitating the transition from funded project to self-funded youth-led activity. This is a considerable challenge.* It remains a challenge. The WYRED Association will be looking for project-based funding and is exploring other models, including the possibility of self-management but there is more to do here as developing this dimension did not fall within the scope of the original project

7. ETHICS OF EMPOWERMENT - *the central conundrum in a project like WYRED that focuses on facilitating the empowerment of children and young people and their agency is the question "when is the right moment to let go" (of the balloon). This is an ethical question.* As an ethical question it remains a question for each individual to answer, especially given the diversity of participants and their heterogeneous needs. However, the experience in WYRED indicates that the right moment may be sooner than you think!

8.1 Summary of recommendations

AREA	RECOMMENDATION
WG1	The intention of the partners is to produce videos and a shorter document to summarise the WYRED Approach as it now stands. It is observed that this would be of particular importance in helping to maintain commonality of approach across the contexts implementing WYRED in the future.
WG2	There is a strong argument for focusing the work of the WYRED Association on disadvantaged and marginalized children and young people.
WG2	More work on awareness raising, perceptions, and indeed the skills to use the platform effectively might help children and young people to see the reasons why the platform is as it is, and improve the experience when the approach is implemented in the WYRED Association.
WG3	It is likely to be word of mouth, from school to school and club to club that may be the most effective way for the WYRED Association to focus its sustainability actions.
WG3	It is likely that WYRED will be most successful if it maintains a close thematic focus, as simpler messages gain more traction, though this focus may shift from year to year.
WG3	The Insights report should, as is planned be a yearly output of the WYRED Association.
WG3	It would be valuable for the WYRED Association to make the Online Festival an annual event.

WG3	It is recommended that increasing membership be a special area of focus in the months after the end of the funding period, since critical mass is an important factor in the consolidation of an organisation of this kind.
WG4	it is recommended that the WYRED Association create newer versions of the WYRED infographics to reflect the changes in the cycle.
WG4	The online conversations should continue.
WG4	It is strongly recommended that the Association does all it can to share the Insights report as widely as possible among relevant stakeholders to drive future adoption of the approach.

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