Building young people's resilience in hard times across Europe

An evaluation of Telefónica's CSR programmes in Czech Republic, Germany, Ireland, Slovakia and the UK

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think big with O₂

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Executive summary

Telefónica launched the O_2 Think Big programme in 2010 to encourage young people to take an active role in their communities by providing funding, support, training and guidance to establish and manage their own projects. The programme was first piloted in the UK and later rolled out across three other European countries: Germany, Ireland and Slovakia, followed by the Czech Republic in 2011.

The programme has an ambitious strategy to impact positively upon the lives of young people and to engage and inspire young people to make positive choices for themselves and their communities. Moreover, the programme sets out to engage with adults, through campaigns, to think differently about the positive role young people can play in their communities.

We believe in young people. We believe they have the power to make a better Europe. We need to back them, celebrate their talent and release their true potential to fix the things that matter. We'll campaign for them. We'll support their projects and promote their achievements. We'll change attitudes. We'll challenge the stereotypes that stifle them and ensure they are connected to the heart of our communities.

The programme is innovative because its core aim is to target the interests of young people, rather than to impose themes which are considered to be beneficial for them.

This report shows that the Think Big programme across Europe has had a significant impact on young people's wellbeing in difficult times. At present, in most European countries, youth unemployment is rising fast. This means that opportunities for young people to make successful life transitions are significantly reduced. In hard times, young people need a chance to show themselves and show others that they have potential. Not just the potential to build employability skills so that they have a better chance of getting a job, but also the potential to make a difference to their communities. Think Big helps them do this.

Project aims, size and reach

What are the aims of the Think Big programme?

The principal objectives of the programme are defined as follows:

- Impact positively upon the lives of young people in transition to adulthood.

- Engage and inspire them to make positive choices for themselves and their communities.

- Engage with adults, through national campaigns, to think differently about the positive role young people can play in their communities.

The programme has been designed against a backdrop of significant economic challenges in many European nations – many of which have deepened since the programme begun. It is recognised that about one third of under 25s in Europe are not in employment, education and/or training. This means that there may be a generation of young people who are struggling to find the opportunities and to make the choices that will engage them positively in society, and help them move forward successfully to achieve stable and secure adult lives.

The programme recognises that young people need to have:

- Confidence in themselves and their peers.

- A vision of what they can be and what they can accomplish.

- The skills and resources to achieve their ambitions.

The ambition of the programme is to help young people achieve their potential so that:

- More young people are engaged in contributing to society.

- Society is more engaged in supporting young people.

The idea is to develop an open programme for all young people. But in so doing, a central programme objective is to target those young people who are most vulnerable. A key aim, therefore, is that at least half of the young people in

the programme are from less advantaged backgrounds and are more vulnerable to becoming socially marginalised or excluded.

How big is the programme?

The Think Big programme has grown in 2011 and will grow further over the next few years. The Think Big programme has bold ambitions to reach large numbers of young people and produce projects which bring social benefit and genuinely challenge negative stereotypes about young people. By 2011-2015 it is expected that the number of projects delivered will reach over 11,000 by the end of the programme. It is estimated that almost 200,000 young people will actively participate in the programme and that 1.5 million people will benefit from the programme.

For the programme as a whole in 2011, more than 200,000 young people have benefitted from Think Big and about 40,000 have been directly involved as active participants. Investment in young people's personal development has been significant too with nearly 5,000 receiving training, support and mentoring to successfully complete their projects.

The intensity of project activity varies between countries at present. The UK is, by far, the largest programme – producing over 1,300 projects in 2011 and involving over 23,000 active participants. Germany is the second largest programme, undertaking over 500 projects and reaching over 11,000 active participants. In Ireland, Czech Republic and Slovakia, the level of investment in Think Big is lower at present, but the programme continues to play a significant role in each of these smaller countries.

1 Project volumes and numbers of participants in Telefónica Think Big 2011

	Number of projects	Number of young people trained, mentored and supported	Number of active participants	Number of benefitting participants
Czech Republic	100	300	1,750	13,866
Germany	525	2,880	11,287	58,537
Ireland	111	250	1,944	9,990
Slovakia	41	70	898	5,135
UK	1,317	1,369	23,048	118,530
Total:	2,094	4,869	38,926	206,058

Who does the programme reach?

The Think Big programme has been successful in its aim of being an open programme to all young people. Analysis of the biographical characteristics show that:

- Across the whole programme, 48 per cent of programme participants are female and 52 per cent are male.

- The programme as a whole attracts young people from across the age range 13 years to 25 years.

- The programme is socially inclusive, 24 per cent of participants are from ethnic minority or migrant families.

- About 4 per cent of participants in the programme have disabilities or limiting illnesses.

- The programme mainly includes young people who are in education, training and work: 70 per cent are in full or part time education, and 34 per cent are in full or part-time employment.

- Young people from all levels of education are participating in the programme: 20 per cent have no qualification, 26 per cent have lower secondary level qualifications, 33 per cent have higher secondary level qualifications (many of whom are at university), 12 per cent have vocational qualifications, and 10 per cent are graduates.

- For the programme as a whole it is not possible to define how many young people come from deprived areas due to differences in the way deprivation is defined. In the UK, 58 per cent are from deprived areas, in Germany, 25 per cent, and in Ireland 71 per cent.

Impact of the programme on young people's lives

The impact of the programme on young people's confidence, attitudes and beliefs is discussed in this section. Think Big programme participants' self perceptions of their skills after they have completed their projects are very positive. These results are impressive.
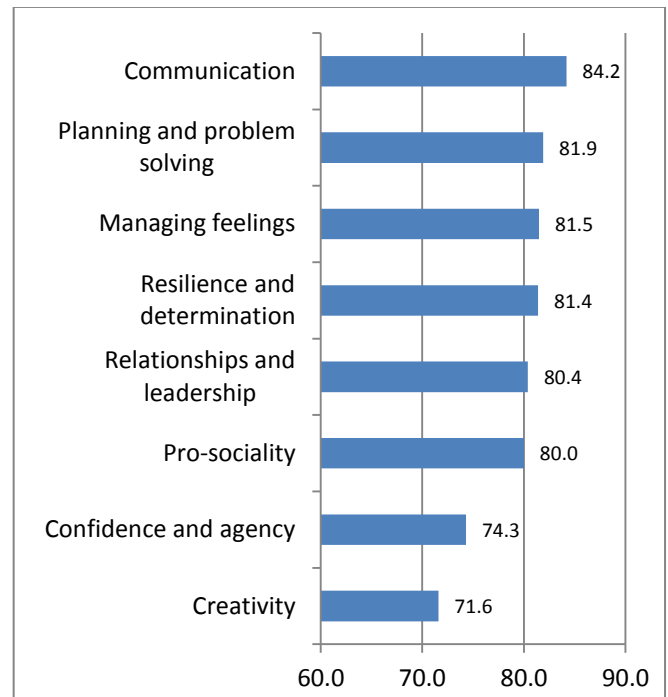
- Over 90 per cent of young people now think that they are good at communicating and can take responsibility for a task and 88 per cent say that they can stick to a task until it is finished.

- Over 80 per cent of young people now think that they are good at working independently, making decisions and doing team work.

- About 75 per cent of young people now think that they are good at organising their time and are good at motivating people.

The direct benefits young people say they gained from their project are very positive and show that this is a successful programme for developing young people's pro-sociality, confidence and resilience.

- Over 80 per cent of young people have met people from different backgrounds or tried things they have not done before – this means that they have widened their social horizons

- Nearly 80 per cent of young people care more about their community – suggesting increased pro-sociality.

- A further 68 per cent of young people now see the world in a different way – suggesting a loss of social insularity and increase in breadth of social vision.

- Even in hard times, after the project, 66 per cent feel more confident about their future and only 43 per cent are worried about their future.

- Nearly 57 per cent of young people now have new interests and hobbies, suggesting higher levels of engagement in personal development.

The programme is effective in helping young people develop confidence and resilience, core skill competences and pro-sociality (mapped against Young Foundation indicators) as is shown in the graph below.

2 Achievement against clusters of capability

In terms of social return on investment, using multipliers produced in the UK, it is estimated that the added value of the programme may be between 217% to 242%. This is likely to be a significant under-estimate, compared with the UK, due to:

- Variations in project size (in terms of numbers of young people involved)

- Investment of time by NPOs and NPO partners

- Differences in estimates of time involvement in projects

- Differences in estimates of national minimum wages for young people and average incomes for other volunteers and ESVs.

Even if these multipliers were correct, however, they would still constitute a significant contribution in terms of social return on investment for a youth programme.

As Figures 3 and 4 show, the programme is having success in achieving its longer-term objectives of helping young people make positive life choices so that they can make successful transitions to adulthood.

3 Indicators of support for successful life transitions

How young people may be positioned <u>before</u> joining the O$_2$ Think Big programme	How young people may feel <u>after</u> finishing an O$_2$ Think Big project	Evidence of changed attitudes and behaviours
Surface confidence or 'attitude' to survive in difficult situations, but lack of underlying confidence and emotional resilience	▷ Stronger sense of personal worth, strengthened emotional resilience and confidence to take positive risks and tackle new challenges	76% of participants in the European programme feel that they are better able to organise their time well. 85% of young people feel that they are better at working independently *'It's not only in running the business [of a Think Big project], but actually face-to-face talking and interacting with people; and you know it's actually good to mix with other people that are outside [your] social group..."* (UK participant).
Socially, emotionally and economically dependent on others to solve problems, producing passivity and undermining confidence to take control	▷ Able to identify what needs to be done, find a way to do it (with support), take charge of the situation and make things happen through leadership	85% of project leaders feel that they are better at making decisions. 92% of project leaders feel that they are better at taking responsibility for completing a task. *'I'm sort of more confident now in terms of being able to plan a project from start to finish and actually deliver it and lead it so that would be the main thing more confidence in terms of speaking with different people as well to promote the project so that has really helped me, sort of people management skills has really improved, networking skills meeting different people and getting contacts as well which has been a big improvement.'* (UK participant).
Socially withdrawn, isolated or excluded, short horizons and limited experience or understanding/tolerance of the 'unknown'.	▷ More socially participant, more knowledgeable about alternative situations, willing to become involved in situations which are different or challenging	73% of participants now feel that they are better at motivating people. 84% of young people are more likely now to try doing new things *'We started O$_2$ Think Big and I got really involved in it. I think that's probably inspired me to do other things as well because I'm now also a deputy member of the youth parliament… so it's really made me kind of get into more helping the community with volunteering about stuff.'* (UK participant).
Perceive that society regards self as a social burden or threat, feel positioned socially as a potential 'problem' even without behaving or wanting to behave in such a way	▷ Higher level of awareness of the potential of young people whose behaviour is read as a sign of being troublesome. Recognition of young people as a 'social asset'	73% of young people have learned new skills that they did not have before. 56% of young people have developed new interests and hobbies. *"Running the project you feel like you get great leadership skills and the amount of opportunities it opened was just great. I am much more aware now of the importance of positive mental health."* (Participant from Ireland).

4 Indicators of successful challenges to negative stereotypes and building pro-sociality

How young people may be positioned <u>before</u> joining the O₂ Think Big programme	How young people may feel after finishing their O₂ Think Big project	Evidence of increased pro-sociality and challenges to negative stereotypes
Fearfulness or suspicion of 'other' young people, producing social isolation or combative behaviour	Recognition that other young people are not so 'different', increasing social cohesion and building social trust	81% of participants have met people from backgrounds different from their own. *"In our opinion teachers don't understand us and we want to demonstrate that we have a different mentality."* (participant from Germany.
Perceptions of position in the world as 'unchangeable'. Dampens expectations and limits scope for thinking about doing things differently	Stronger sense of confidence and hopefulness to effect change. Increasing feelings of personal ability and see the point in enterprising attitudes and behaviours	80% of participants care more about their community. 66% of young people feel more confident about their future (although 43% also say they are 'worried about their future' in these hard times). *"Not only has the whole experience allowed me to develop as a person, but it has also allowed me to help other people going through difficulties. I want to change the way people think about mental health and my involvement in Think Big has allowed me to start doing this.'* (Participant from Ireland).
Older adults perceive young people as an 'other' category to themselves. Beyond their understanding and doubtful of their potential.	Older adults see young people as positive assets to society – repositioning them as 'ours', not 'other'	58% of employee supported volunteers (ESVs) felt that they had a stronger understanding of community issues (UK only) 72% of ESVs felt they were making a stronger contribution to their community through work with young people (UK only) *'It shows the wider community that actually... [young people] do take a responsibility and they are not all standing on street corners and actually a lot of young people have got something very valid to say and its very important that we encourage them to think for themselves and actually understand where they are coming from, so it's definitely changed the perception of how young people are perceived.'* (UK ESV participant)
Prejudicial and stereotypical ideas about young people produce widespread suspicion, calls for 'control' and 'retribution' for young people in general, not just those who behave badly	Increasing awareness of the contribution and worthiness of the vast majority of young people. Increasing trust and respect – producing a virtuous circle (investing produces benefit)	Most young people interviewed on the programme felt that older people now had a better appreciation of their contribution and potential. *I think the community has benefited because they see young people from their community doing something positive... And it has also helped to build communication between young people and the older people, where there can sometimes be quite a bit of a divide. But there seems to be quite a good sort of atmosphere between the two generations which is good.'* (UK participant)

Section 1
Introduction

Telefónica launched the O_2 Think Big programme in 2010 to encourage young people to take an active role in their communities by providing funding, support, training and guidance to establish and manage their own projects. Think Big is Telefónica's main corporate social responsibility (CSR) programme and has the potential to make a major contribution to the well-being of young people across Europe. The programme was first piloted in the UK and later in the year rolled out across three other European countries: Germany, Ireland and Slovakia, followed by the Czech Republic in 2011.

The programme has an ambitious strategy to impact positively upon the lives of young people and to engage and inspire young people to make positive choices for themselves and their communities. Moreover, the programme sets out to engage with adults, through campaigns, to think differently about the positive role young people can play in their communities.

> *We believe in young people. We believe they have the power to make a better Europe. We need to back them, celebrate their talent and release their true potential to fix the things that matter. We'll campaign for them. We'll support their projects and promote their achievements. We'll change attitudes. We'll challenge the stereotypes that stifle them and ensure they are connected to the heart of our communities.*

The programme is innovative because its core aim is to target the interests of young people, rather than to impose themes which are considered to be beneficial for them. It is anticipated that this approach will produce change that may help to challenge negative stereotypes about young people. Think Big provides a unique opportunity to research a very large number of small-scale, young people led projects. This allows for an assessment of how young people prioritise issues and formulate ideas, what kinds of support they value most, and how young people build confidence and social capital, and win the trust of their community.

1.1 Aim of the programme

The principal objectives of the programme are defined as follows:

- Impact positively upon the lives of young people in transition to adulthood.

- Engage and inspire them to make positive choices for themselves and their communities.

- Engage with adults, through national campaigns, to think differently about the positive role young people can play in their communities.

The programme has been designed against a backdrop of significant economic challenges in many European nations – many of which have deepened since the programme begun.

It is recognised that about one third of under 25s in Europe are not in employment, education and/or training. This means that there may be a generation of young people who are struggling to find the opportunities and to make the choices that will engage them positively in society, and help them move forward successfully to achieve stable and secure adult lives.

The programme recognises that young people need to have:

- Confidence in themselves and their peers.
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- The skills and resources to achieve their ambitions.

The ambition of the programme is to help young people achieve their potential so that:

- More young people are engaged in contributing to society.
- Society is more engaged in supporting young people.

The idea is to develop an open programme for all young people. But in so doing, a central programme objective is to target those young people who are most vulnerable. A key aim, therefore, is that at least half of the young people in the programme are from less advantaged backgrounds and are more vulnerable to becoming socially marginalised or excluded.

Section 2
Context and methodology

2.1 Scope of the evaluation

The research seeks to provide a robust analysis of the Fundación Telefónica Think Big Programme by measuring and comparing the impact of the programme on young people's lives and the communities in which they live across the UK and potentially across five European countries in which Telefónica is active (Czech Republic, Germany, Ireland, Slovakia and the UK).

The principal objectives of the evaluation are defined as follows:

- Measure the impact and outcomes for the young people who drive and participate in the projects.

- Measure the impact and outcomes for the wider community who have been involved in and benefitted from the projects.

The European roll-out of the Telefónica Foundation Think Big Programme has, in its second year, involved a number of revisions to its approach to delivery. This has presented some challenges for the evaluation process because each of the national programmes has developed relatively autonomously and deals with different client groups.

However, it is apparent that there are similarities across the range of interventions which allow for some effective evaluative research providing that local evaluation teams subscribe to a core set of principles of data collection and analysis. To achieve this, a common research framework was designed and agreed with research teams in each country that focused on collecting data at individual project level.

Whilst this process of agreeing compatible data is not yet complete, it is expected that in 2012, a much more robust set of data will be collected for comparative analysis.

As each programme has developed, there has been considerable interchange of ideas and learning.

- Think Big Germany is currently the second largest Think Big programme in terms of funding (with the UK currently the largest). The programme is delivered by partner non-profit organisation *Deutsche Kinder – und Jugendstiftung* (DKJS). In 2011 the programme moved away from its strong focus on media training for young people and became a much more clearly youth-led oriented programme. It is an open programme, but targets young people from disadvantaged groups.

- The Think Big programme in Ireland has a shared interest with the UK and German programmes to help young people achieve successful life transitions. With its non-profit partner *Headstrong* it focuses on supporting young people to achieve mental health and well-being. In Ireland, the approach to Think Big closely resembles the

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approach adopted in the UK with a strong emphasis on developing youth led projects on two levels.

- The programme in the Czech Republic was still at the development stage in 2011. Its former CSR programme engaged with schools to tackle issues surrounding bullying. In 2011, the Think Big programme was rolled out in a similar way to the other European national participants but data were not collected on impact in the same way which means that little can be stated about the programme in this year's report.

- In Slovakia the programme is smaller than in other markets. In 2011 this involved the development of Think Big projects, delivered by non-profit partner *Ekopolis.* The *Ekopolis Foundation* has considerable experience in developing projects focusing mainly on political participation and conservation issues. The non-profit partner runs a grant funded project based programme focusing on the provision of places for young people to become involved in positive activities. Training is provided to cover a range of social and employability skills.

- The UK is the largest national programme, the longest established and is the widest ranging. The programme is delivered by a partnership of the *National Youth Agency, UK Youth and Conservation Foundation* together with over 50 partner organisations. It provides opportunities for all young people aged 13-25 across a wide range of project types. The focus on young people from less advantaged communities in the UK connects with the objectives of programmes in other EU countries and is central to Telefónica's CSR objectives.

2.2 Methodology for a European wide evaluation

In 2011, each country moved much more closely towards the production of standardised data on the young people's involvement in the programme:[1]

- Basic quantitative data on deliverables (number of projects, number of participants, involvement of Telefónica employee volunteers, etc.).

- Quantitative demographic and biographical data for the project participants (or at least lead participants as is the case in the UK).

- Indicators of measures of deprivation were produced in three out of four of the participating countries – although methods varied significantly due to differences in national approaches to definition and data collection.

- Collection of quantitative pro-social data and social impact data.

- Preparation of a sample of case studies to illustrate successful approaches to project development.[2]

The limitations on analysis in this paper are as follows:

- Not all participating nations have been able to provide data on young people's involvement before and after participating in projects.

- The project focus of some participating nations has been much clearer than in others – which makes comparability complex.

- The size, intensity and objectives of projects have varied between countries, which means that use of statistical data on social impact is not yet feasible.

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[1] Background working papers on detailed methodology are available on request.
[2] Case studies were self-generated by NPOs in Ireland, Germany and Slovakia. UK case studies were selected and researched independently by Durham University.

- Volumes of project activity in some countries remain relatively low at present – but it is expected that they will grow in 2012. This limits the scope for finely tuned analysis of project experience in comparative terms, and also means that it is too early to make assessments on impact on young people's life transitions, community impact or social impact more broadly defined.

It is anticipated that as the approach to programme delivery becomes more strongly embedded in 2012 and the efforts made to converge practice take hold.

Comparability of data will, however, always be challenging because young people's attitudes and behaviour vary across the participating countries. This means that interpretation of data will have to proceed cautiously to take into account local social, economic, political and cultural conditions.

Section 3
Youth transitions

Measuring the impact of any social programme which is intended to impact on young people's lives is not a straight-forward proposition. In the case of Think Big, which is a multi-dimensional and cross-national programme, levels of complexity are particularly high. The evaluation of the programme has a number of issues to resolve at a conceptual level.

Firstly, to recognise that young people do not all get the same start in life. Consequently, it is necessary to get a clear understanding of the impact of structural, situational, relational and personal factors on young people.

Secondly, because Think Big will operate as a programme in five countries, it is important to achieve an understanding of how different cultural, social and economic factors in each country may affect young people's understanding of the impact of the programme.

The evaluation of the programme must therefore take into account the comparative dimension. A central aim of Think Big is to increase young people's confidence and help them make successful life transitions. If we are to measure how levels of confidence change, it is necessary, thirdly, to understand what we mean by young people's sense of well-being and how this varies across national boundaries.

In this section of the report, it is not possible to resolve all these issues – much work has yet to be done over time to achieve this. But it is necessary to provide a short overview on the key conceptual issues that inform our approach to understanding the potential benefits of the programme to young people in particular and society more generally.

3.1 Opportunities and constraints[3]

Young people's longer-term aspirations, irrespective of their background, tend to be quite uniform. Most young people want to succeed in education or training so that they can get a good job. Most want to have a good long-term relationship with someone they love, they want to live in a secure environment and with sufficient resource to be able to plan ahead; and if they have them now or intend to have them one day, they want the best opportunities for their children. While broad aspirations may be similar – horizons can be shorter or longer depending upon young people's position in relation to opportunities.

Experiences and expectations of young people are affected strongly by the social, political and economic circumstances within which they live. Indeed, even definitions of youth vary significantly between nations. As Williamson has argued:

> *... 'youth' is socially constructed rather than biologically determined. Historically, there may have been a case to be made that socially constructed "youth" coincided largely with biologically and psychologically determined "adolescence". By the latter part of the twentieth century, however, such a*

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[3] The following sections are updated and edited versions of the 2011 report introducing new data and additional theoretical analysis on the importance of assets and resilience in young people's life transitions

> *connection had largely been fractured [...] 'youth' had become a prolonged stage in the life course... characterised by multiple contexts of transition (2002: 31).*

Better off families are able to circumvent many difficulties young people may face by providing young people a relatively affluent lifestyle, safer neighbourhoods where schools are better and where there is peer support and role models available for successful transitions. Such support pays dividends in terms of, for example, educational achievement. The children of highly educated parents are much more likely to study in tertiary education than those whose parents are educated only to secondary level (European Commission, 2009: 23). Affluent parents are also in a position to support young people well into adult life by assisting them financially at university, providing help with entry into the housing market and employment, and also ensuring that the safe haven of the parental home is available to them – come what may.

> *At the EU level, more than 65% of young people with at most lower secondary education are economically inactive; among highly educated young people, the share is only 16% (European Commission, 2009: 27)*

For the least well qualified young people who live in multiply deprived areas, problems are compounded and increase the risk of becoming what Williamson (1997) termed 'Status Zer0'. This is because they have profound and complex problems which raise the likelihood that they will become 'lost in the transition from school to work'. Research shows that these young people can find themselves in situations which are largely 'beyond individual control' (MacDonald and Marsh, 2005: 199). As the European Union Youth Report 2009 states:

> *Unequal access to opportunities tends to deepen the gap between young people's life prospects. The prospects of young people vary widely, according to their socio-economic background and other variables. A number of youth groups are more exposed to social exclusion and poverty than others. Amongst the factors leading to this situation are early school dropouts, low educational achievements, a migrant or Roma background, mental health problems, a low socio-economic background, disability, exposure to violence and substance misuse. The problems experienced by such groups of youth can, amongst others, be translated into decreased access to necessary services, poor health, lack of decent housing or homelessness, financial exclusion, reduced participation in the community and further exclusion from the labour market and, consequently, shorter life expectancy (European Commission, 2009: 37).*

A single indicator of relative deprivation is that of poverty. As Figure 3.1 shows, there are significant variations across EU countries. While it is evident from generalised data that social disadvantage has an impact on young people's life chances, it is not possible to predict individual outcomes. This is because interactions between structural, situational, relational and personal factors can produce unexpected outcomes.

Figure 3.1   **Rate of poverty amongst young people and adults in the EU, 2006**
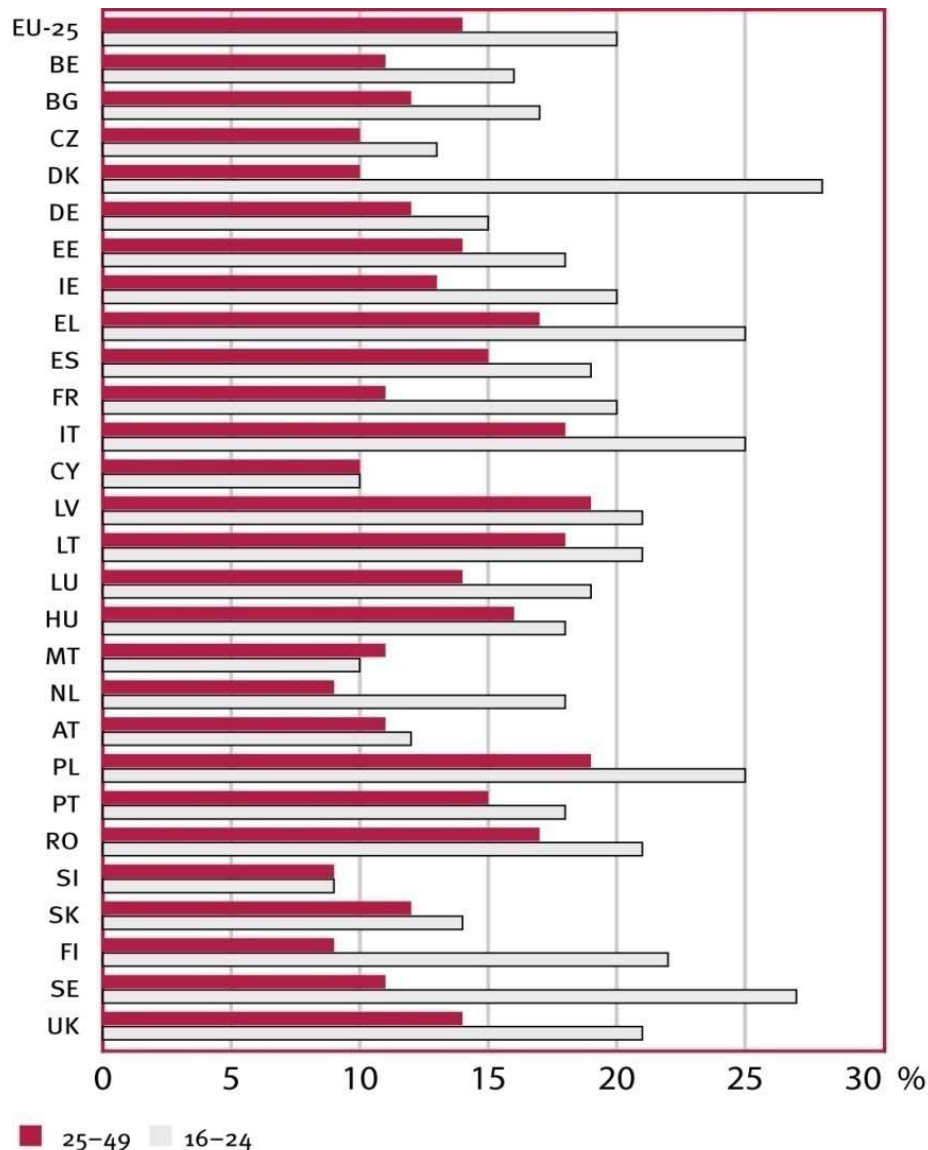
Source: Eurostat – EU SILC
At risk of poverty rate: Share of persons with an income below 60%
national median income. "Income" must be understood as equivalised
disposable income. It is defined as the household's total disposable
income divided by its "equivalent size", to take account of the size and
composition of the household, and is attributed to each household member.

To consolidate our thinking about the impact of different factors on young people's lives it is useful to categorise them systematically, as shown in Figure 3.2.

Taking a holistic point of view might tempt some commentators to assume that if young people work hard and make the right choices – they will all have an equal chance of achieving what they want. But it's not that simple. A range of factors can block their progress and stop them thinking about, or knowing about, some options in the first place.

Figure 3.4 summarises the factors that affect young people's life chances, ranging from structural factors which they can do little or nothing about – such as the state of the labour market to factors surrounding individual differences such as temperament and talents.

Figure 3.2 **Factors affecting young people's life chances**

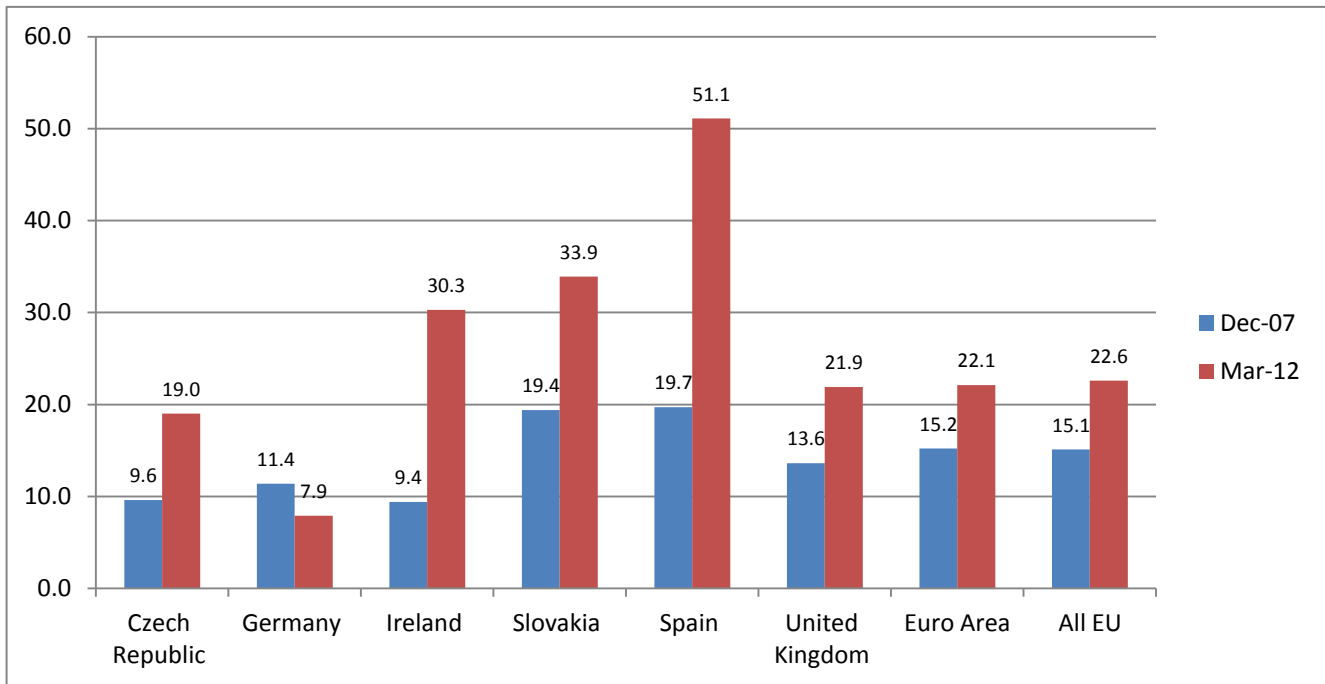| Structural factors	Situational factors	Relational factors	Personal factors
Social, political and economic change **Institutional constraints** (e.g. educational, legal, criminal justice systems) **Labour market opportunities**	**Local political, economic and environmental factors** **Local demography, culture and community cohesion** **Local labour market conditions, infrastructure and facility**	**Family life** (quality of relationships with parents and guardians, siblings, etc.) **Material well-being** **Peer influences and friendship networks** **Intimate relationships**	**Individual attributes** (intelligence, health and well-being) **Skills and aptitudes** (credentials, talents, attractiveness, etc.) **Personality and temperament**

Structural factors are largely out of the control of individuals, such as the legal and bureaucratic frameworks which shape the way the education system works, or the structure of the labour market. Structural factors are not static. Social and economic change can rapidly transform the landscape for young people. As shown in Figure 3.1, dramatic global economic changes are currently having a severe impact on the youth labour market. The most important statistic to demonstrate the impact of structural factors is that of youth unemployment.

Levels of unemployment amongst the under 25s is rising in most European countries due to the economic turbulence and there is no immediate sign of improvement. As Figure 3.5 shows, unemployment has reached an average of 22.6 per cent across all 27 European Union states. In the countries where the O_2 Think Big operates (also including Spain), levels of unemployment vary significantly. In Ireland, Spain and Slovakia, youth unemployment now ranges from 31 – 51 per cent – and unemployment in all three countries has almost doubled in the last three years. In Germany, youth unemployment remains relatively low and has fallen below 8 per cent. In the Czech Republic and the UK, unemployment has now reached about one fifth of young people.

Figure 3.3   **Unemployment of the under 25s: 2007-2012[4]**

Situational factors are influenced by wider structural factors, but the local situation can exaggerate wider influences in significant ways. The economic, cultural and demographic makeup of the local area can affect expectations and experiences of young people. Local labour markets, community cohesion, health and wellbeing, public safety and neighbourliness, and local infrastructure (such as public transport, sport, leisure and youth recreation facilities) all affect opportunities.

Situational factors do not just shape opportunities. They also have a pernicious cultural impact on perceptions of what is possible and desirable. Often it is difficult for 'outsiders' to make sense of the choices people make in different contexts and fail to recognise what they mean or why they are valued. Situational factors affect opportunities, in short, from within the area and from without when outsiders' attitudes and beliefs affects their judgements on people from the area.

Relational factors refer to the relative strength and weakness of inter-personal ties. Young people can experience relationships in positive and negative ways. Some young people may have supportive parental and sibling relationships and yet suffer poor peer group relationships (through, for example, pressure to engage in risky behaviour or to become the object of ridicule, ostracism or physical bullying). Intimate relationships also affect young people's life choices. Relational factors often produce complex and unpredictable outcomes for young people's life transitions.

Such factors impact heavily when families are under serious economic and social pressure. More affluent families tend to be able to cushion themselves from recurrent financial crises produced by ill-health, unemployment and so on. Furthermore, they are better placed to ensure that their children can attend the best schools and have access to constructive after school activities. Understanding about the education system, knowledge about the

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[4] OECD data downloaded on 26th May 2012 at
http://www.oecd.org/statisticsdata/0,3381,en_2649_37457_1_119656_1_1_37457,00.html

opportunities that can be afforded from it, and having the confidence to communicate fully with teachers eases the passage of young people through the system.

In this report, it is not necessary to explore in depth a whole range of indicators of social, economic or cultural change on young people's lives. This is not to say that the exploration of, for example young people's political participation or their involvement in civil society through volunteering, is not important.[5] On the contrary, as this study progresses, we will examine issues such as these in considerable depth. At this stage of the study, however, it is only necessary to use one example to illustrate how change affects young people's opportunities to make successful life transitions.

Possibly the most important structural factor which affects young people's life choices is the experience or perceived risk of unemployment.[6] Other factors which affect self-confidence and life satisfaction associated with employment include 'under-employment' (having a job that does not utilise skills or is out of line with academic/vocational credentials) and temporary work.

Levels of unemployment vary by the educational achievement of young people as is shown in Figure 3.4. These data show considerable variation across European nations, however, there is a consistent relationship between higher levels of achievement with lower rates of unemployment. Figure 3.5 graphs the 2010 data for the six countries involved in Think Big. This simplified graph indicates that across these countries, that lack of secondary or tertiary level qualifications seriously disadvantages young people in terms of job prospects. This strongly suggests, therefore, that involvement in Think Big for less well qualified young people could be advantageous in employability terms by giving them extra experiences to demonstrate their capability – as well as building their confidence and resilience.

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[2] There is a large literature on young people's political participation and volunteering across Europe. For a brief review of key findings which are of particular relevance to this project, see Good Business, 2009. For recent data on political participation and volunteering see European Commission's *EU Youth Report* 2009.
[6] For a useful in-depth review of research on young people and unemployment in Europe, see Hammer (2003).

Figure 3.4   **Unemployment rate of young people by educational achievement**

	Unemployment rate 2000			Unemployment rate 2010			Percentage change		
	Primary or less	Secondary	Tertiary	Primary or less	Secondary	Tertiary	Primary or less	Secondary	Tertiary
Austria	8.1	4.2	2.2	8.5	3.9	2.4	0.4	-0.3	0.2
Belgium	10.3	6.8	2.7	15.3	8.1	4.5	5.0	1.3	1.8
Bulgaria	25.1	15.8	6.7	22.8	9.7	4.5	–2.3	–6.1	–2.2
Cyprus	6.3	5.4	2.9	7.2	6.3	5.6	0.9	0.9	2.7
Czech Republic	**22.6**	**7.8**	**3.0**	**25.0**	**6.9**	**2.8**	**2.4**	**–0.9**	**–0.2**
Denmark	6.2	4.4	2.6	10.7	6.9	4.9	4.5	2.5	2.3
Estonia	25.2	14.7	4.8	31.0	19.3	9.3	5.8	4.6	4.5
Finland	18.7	11.1	5.2	16.1	8.9	4.4	–2.6	–2.2	–0.8
France	15.3	9.1	5.5	15.4	8.7	5.5	0.1	–0.4	0.0
Germany	**12.6**	**7.9**	**4.3**	**14.9**	**6.9**	**3.1**	**2.3**	**–1.0**	**–1.2**
Greece	9.2	15.1	8.1	12.5	14.4	9.8	3.3	–0.7	1.7
Hungary	11.5	6.4	1.4	24.9	10.5	4.7	13.4	4.1	3.3
Ireland	**7.9**	**3.0**	**1.7**	**21.1**	**15.7**	**7.5**	**13.2**	**12.7**	**5.8**
Italy	12.1	10.6	6.1	10.3	7.9	5.7	–1.8	–2.7	–0.4
Latvia	21.3	14.8	7.2	31.5	20.1	10.3	10.2	5.3	3.1
Lithuania	23.6	20.2	9.3	39.2	21.7	7.7	15.6	1.5	–1.6
Netherlands	4.4	2.0	1.7	7.2	3.9	2.8	2.8	1.9	1.1
Norway	6.6	2.9	2.5	7.3	2.9	1.8	0.7	0.0	–0.7
Poland	21.8	17.0	5.5	17.6	10.5	5.0	–4.2	–6.5	–0.5
Portugal	3.9	4.8	2.8	11.8	11.3	7.2	7.9	6.5	4.4
Romania	4.2	9.4	3.6	6.1	8.3	5.4	1.9	–1.1	1.8
Slovakia	**40.4**	**18.4**	**5.3**	**44.2**	**14.1**	**5.8**	**3.8**	**–4.3**	**0.5**
Slovenia	10.8	6.9	2.2	11.7	7.5	4.3	0.9	0.6	2.1
Spain	**15.2**	**13.8**	**10.9**	**27.3**	**19.2**	**11.3**	**12.1**	**5.4**	**0.4**
Sweden	8.1	5.7	3.0	17.6	7.6	4.5	9.5	1.9	1.5
Switzerland	4.7	2.4	1.4	7.4	4.6	3.0	2.7	2.2	1.6
United Kingdom	**8.8**	**5.0**	**2.5**	**13.7**	**8.2**	**4.1**	**4.9**	**3.2**	**1.6**

Source: ILO (2011a), Key Indicators of the Labour Market, 7th edition (Geneva), table 14c.

Figure 3.5 **Unemployment rate by education for under 25s in 2010**
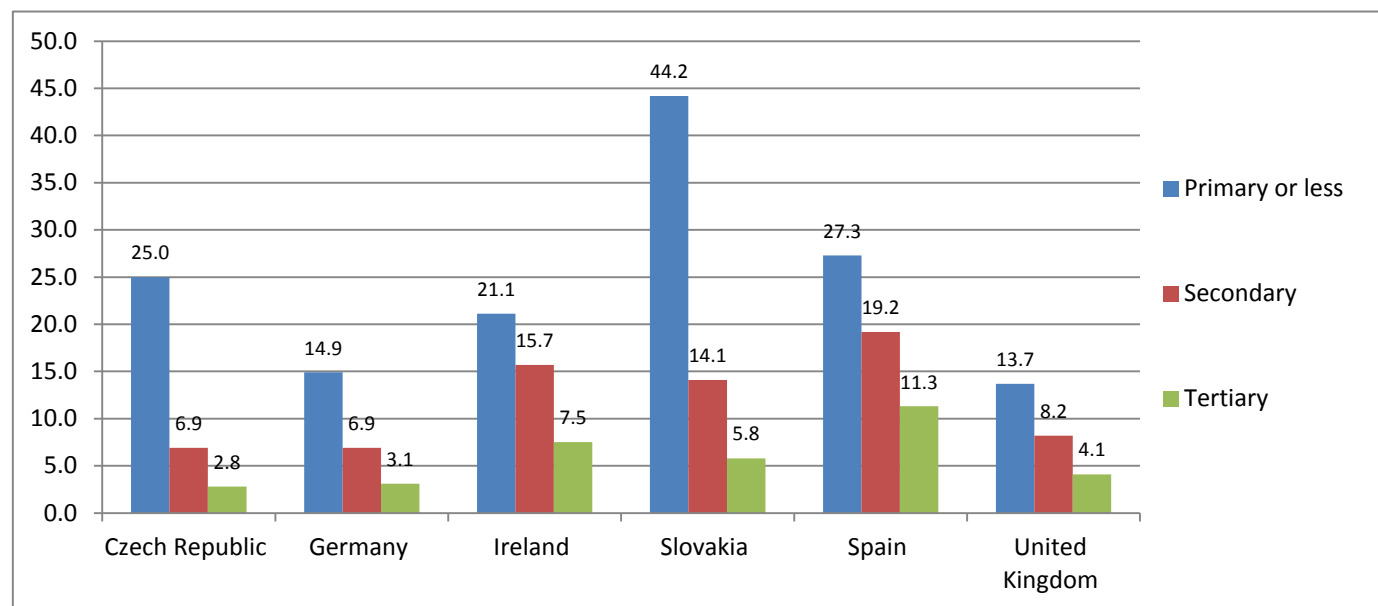
Source: ILO (2011a), Key Indicators of the Labour Market, 7th edition (Geneva), table 14c

The evidence suggests that long-term unemployment amongst young people has a particularly pernicious impact on prospects in later life. For example, in the US, it has been found that young people who have been unemployed for more than six months at age 22 suffer 8% lower wages even when they reach the age of 32-3 (reported in Blanchflower, 2010:4). UK research shows that even when taking into account education, regional and family wealth differences, youth employment can have a significant impact on income – amounting to a wage loss of between 9% for those with one episode of unemployment to 23% for those who had many.

The experience of unemployment clearly does affect young people's attitudes about self and society. But even a 'climate' of unemployment and recession has an impact on attitudes and beliefs – especially amongst those young people aged between 18 and 25. As Giuliano and Spilimbergo (2009) report, young people who grow up in recessions are more likely to believe that luck plays a bigger part in life chances than hard work (they are also less trusting of public institutions).

Young people may respond to the challenges or perceptions of threat of unemployment in different ways. But it is important to recognise that the risk of unemployment is not shared equally.

> *Unemployment rates decrease with the level of education. Among EU Member States, people with lower secondary education are nearly 3 more times at risk of unemployment than people with higher education. The unemployment gap between those with low levels and high levels of education slightly increased from 2000 to 2007. It is probable that people with a low level of education are more subject to labour market adjustment, particularly as economies are impacted by internationalisation and increasing competition with emerging economies (European Commission, 2009: 29).*

Unemployment is but one example but illustrates how one single factor can affect young people's lives very differently and have a profound impact on the transitions that they are able to make in their lives.

3.2 The importance of well-being in young people's life transitions

Successful life transitions to adulthood could at one time have been described as unbroken journeys along established roads. True, young people may not have had much 'choice' about the pathways as these could have been largely decided for them by class position, gender, ethnicity and locality. But as conventional routes from childhood to adulthood were fractured by industrial restructuring and cultural and social change, young people have come to expect longer periods of uncertainty and a higher level of personal responsibility to make decisions about their future.

Evidence on youth transitions to adulthood demonstrates that some young people can get lost in transition – especially those young people from the most deprived backgrounds. Even amongst more affluent young people, however, there is much evidence to show that transitions are not necessarily linear or even one-way. As Williamson shows, in many countries *'progression cannot be taken for granted and "forward transitions" can be reversible'* (2002: 33).

The essential point is that young people have to make many choices and in so doing must take risks. Think Big provides a platform for young people to make choices, take risks and reap the benefits of doing something for themselves by themselves. So the justification for allowing and encouraging young people to define and lead their own projects in Think Big is, therefore, an important element of the programme. Not just because it helps young people achieve what they want – but also actively challenges the stereotypes held by adults who may have different views on what is useful and what should be valued.

In recent years, there has been much debate on the prevalence of happiness and well-being in society. Much of this debate is underpinned by the utilitarian philosophy of the Enlightenment – where the object is to create the highest degree of happiness for the largest number of people in society. By definition, this philosophy focuses on societal benefit, rather than to encourage 'excessive individualism' which many philosophers and sociologists believe is a characteristic of 21st century Western society. Richard Layard is a well known, though controversial exponent of this argument and he believes that challenging widening social inequalities is the key.

> *If we do want a happier society, the first thing we have to do is to reassert the Enlightenment ideal - to agree that happiness is the objective of our society. But that has to translate into individual behaviour, which means that everybody has to make their personal objective in life. In other words if we ask the question "how should we live?" the answer is: we should each aim to produce the most happiness we can in the world around us, and the least misery (2011:1).*

To achieve such an objective requires more people to think and act with the interests of society in mind rather than to succumb always to their personal wants. For Layard, it is a truism that 'you are unlikely to feel compassion for others unless you also have compassion for yourself' (2011:3).

The situation of young people has, in particular, become a focus of governments. The living conditions of children and young people in the European Union has risen on the policy agenda across the EU in recent years. Children in poverty were identified as a priority target group in the Common Outlines and Common Objectives of the National Action Plans and also in the March 2005 EU Presidency Conclusions. At this time, some

Member States were strong on monitoring the well-being of children, but there was no agreed method of monitoring children and young people's well-being at the European level to provide comparable evidence (Bradshaw et al., 2006).

To remedy this, several studies have been conducted at the European level which compare data on well-being using more consistent and rigorous measurement methodologies. These studies provide researchers and policymakers with evidence to monitor progress and assess the impact of policies and interventions to improve young people's well-being at the national and international level. One of the most comprehensive studies was carried out by UNICEF in 2007. This study assessed well-being of children and adolescents in 21 nations of the industrialised world, including those involved in Think Big: Czech Republic, Germany, Ireland, Slovakia and the United Kingdom.

A multi-dimensional model was constructed, adopting available indicators in each country under six headings: material well-being; health and safety; education; peer and family relationships; behaviours and risks; and, young people's own subjective sense of well-being. In total, the study drew upon 40 separate indicators relevant to children's lives and children's rights. The results of this study are summarised in Figure 3.6 below. Countries are listed in order of their average rank for the six dimensions of child well-being that have been assessed. A light blue background indicates a place in the top third of the table; mid-blue denotes the middle third and dark blue the bottom third.

The Netherlands heads the table of overall child well-being, ranking in the top 10 for all six dimensions of child well-being covered by this report. The United Kingdom finds itself in the bottom third of the rankings for five of the six dimensions. Germany and Ireland sit in the middle third of the rankings. Insufficient data is available for Slovakia. It is apparent that no single dimension of well-being stands as a reliable proxy for child well-being. Indeed, several OECD[7] countries find themselves with widely differing rankings for different dimensions of child well-being. For instance, The Netherlands score in the bottom third of the ranking for material well-being in spite of being the best overall performer. And Ireland does well in the indicators for educational well-being, peer and family relationships, behaviours and risks, and subjective well-being; but finds itself at the bottom of the rankings for material well-being, and health and safety.

There is also no obvious relationship between levels of child well-being and GDP per capita. The Czech Republic, for example, achieves a higher overall rank for child well-being than several much wealthier countries including France, Austria, the United States and the United Kingdom.

[7] Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)

Figure 3.6   **Child well-being in using UNICEF's six dimensional model**

Dimensions of child well-being	Average ranking position (for all 6 dimensions)	Dimension 1 Material well-being	Dimension 2 Health and safety	Dimension 3 Educational well-being	Dimension 4 Family and peer relationships	Dimension 5 Behaviours and risks	Dimension 6 Subjective well-being
Netherlands	4.2	10	2	6	3	3	1
Sweden	5.0	1	1	5	15	1	7
Denmark	7.2	4	4	8	9	6	12
Finland	7.5	3	3	4	17	7	11
Spain	8.0	12	6	15	8	5	2
Switzerland	8.3	5	9	14	4	12	6
Norway	8.7	2	8	11	10	13	8
Italy	10.0	14	5	20	1	10	10
Ireland	10.2	19	19	7	7	4	5
Belgium	10.7	7	16	1	5	19	16
Germany	11.2	13	11	10	13	11	9
Canada	11.8	6	13	2	18	17	15
Greece	11.8	15	18	16	11	8	3
Poland	12.3	21	15	3	14	2	19
Czech Republic	12.5	11	10	9	19	9	17
France	13.0	9	7	18	12	14	18
Portugal	13.7	16	14	21	2	15	14
Austria	13.8	8	20	19	16	16	4
Hungary	14.5	20	17	13	6	18	13
United States	18.0	17	21	12	20	20	–
United Kingdom	18.2	18	12	17	21	21	20

The UNICEF study draws upon a number of international surveys (the OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) and the World Health Organization's survey of Health Behaviour in School-age Children (HBSC), to look more closely at young people's own perceptions of their well-being. Figure 3.7 shows that children's subjective well-being is higher in the Netherlands, Spain, and Greece and lower in Poland and the United Kingdom. Germany sits in the middle ground, while Ireland occupies a position in the top third of the ranking.

Analysis of separate dimensions produces a complex picture. For example, 80% of young people across Europe consider their health to be good or excellent in every OECD country except the United Kingdom where 23% of young people rate their health as 'fair' or 'poor'. Germany occupies the middle ground again, with Ireland sitting more closely to the top of the table.

Figure 3.7 **Subjective well-being in rich countries based on UNICEF's sixth dimension**
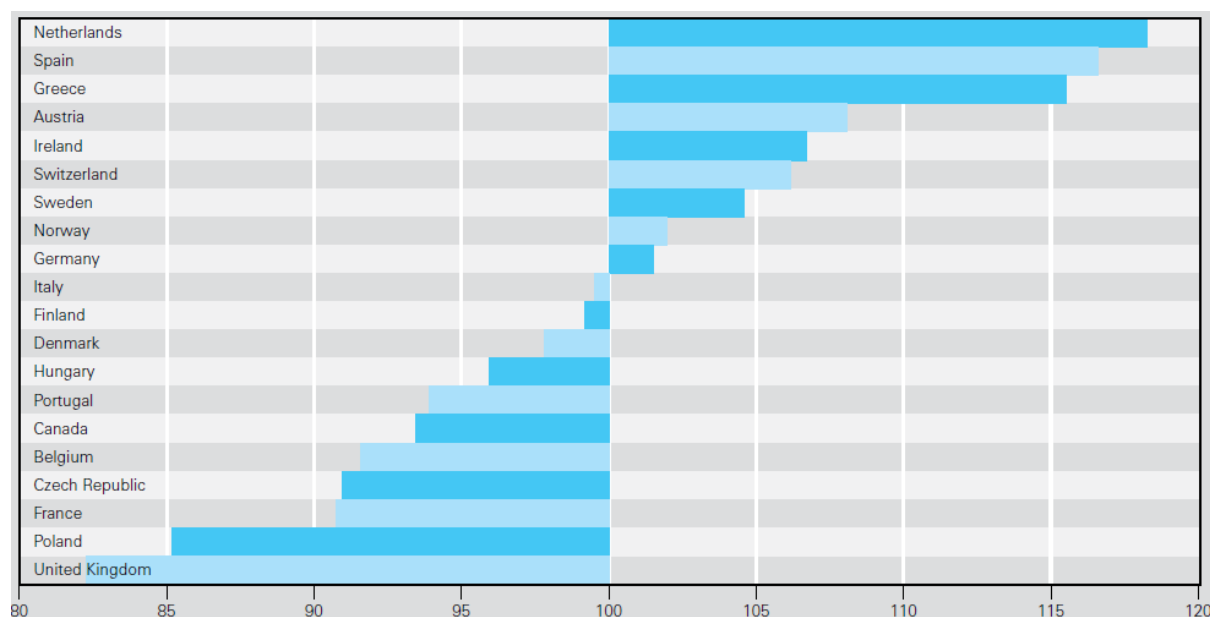
As discussed above, studies which collect attitudinal data across national and regional boundaries confront significant challenges. Existing studies consider a number of dimensions of well-being, but very limited attention has been given to the study of pro-social and personal development. What is lacking is a conceptually rich tool that is able to measure young people's perceptions of their social and personal development in a multi-dimensional way that provides a robust measurement of their pro-social skills and is able to assess how changes in their lives impact on these skills.

Levels of happiness and well-being across national borders tend to vary significantly. The interpretation of these differences is complicated by the different structural, situational, relational and personality factors that we discussed above. Although, unemployment has a strong impact on young people's happiness and well-being, this is not always a straightforward relationship. Figure 3.8, for instance, shows that positive reports on life satisfaction do not necessarily correlate directly with structural factors such as levels of youth unemployment. Youth unemployment has increased significantly in Ireland between 2008 and 2010 but life satisfaction scores rank well above Germany where youth unemployment is considerably lower and decreasing. At the same time, a similar significant increase in youth unemployment in the Czech Republic has apparently no effect on life satisfaction.

Figure 3.8 **Ranking life satisfaction among young people in Europe**

Country	Ranking or life satisfaction		% under 25s unemployed	
	All ages	25 and under	2008	2010
Denmark	*1*	*1*	*7.0*	*12.0*
Ireland	**6**	**9**	**12.3**	**27.5**
UK	**7**	**10**	**14.6**	**19.7**
Germany	**15**	**19**	**9.8**	**9.3**
Czech Republic	**16**	**16**	**9.8**	**19.3**
Slovakia	**26**	**27**	**19.3**	**35.0**
Bulgaria	*32*	*32*	*13.5*	*22.3*

Source: Blanchflower, 2011:11 & 21.

What is clear is that when individuals respond to surveys on levels of happiness or well-being, they tend not to make personal judgements on the basis of wider social or economic criteria.[8] Relative deprivation is something that people in western nations are particularly attuned to – but comparisons are not generally made across nations or even regions. Instead, people compare their situation with their more immediate social counterparts. In other words, levels of happiness are affected by perceptions that proximate individuals are better off or worse off, and on the basis of personal judgements on the fairness of such differences.

3.3 Resilience and assets

Taking risks which may lead to positive outcomes requires young people to have self-belief and confidence. But where does it come from? There is much debate on this issue. From a sociological point of view, the environment within which young people grow up is regarded as being crucially important in shaping self confidence and ambition. Many sociologists argue that life chances are shaped, primarily, by socio-economic status. Affluence, as noted above, produces a higher degree certainty and stability in people's lives – it affords opportunities to plan ahead, build stocks of human and social capital, experiment with alternatives and have a safety net if things do not work out first time around.

Deprivation, by contrast, limits the prospects of planning ahead and increases insecurity, closes down possibilities for building social and human capital, and restricts the range of opportunities available to young people. As shown above in this section, there is a wealth of statistical evidence to show that the more deprived the environment within which young people grow up, the fewer life chances they have and the higher risk that they will not make successful life transitions. Making generalisations about opportunity structures can mask the variety of responses that people might have to adverse circumstances. Research on resilience tends to focus on these responses from a psychological perspective (where environmental factors may not be taken as much into account) or social-psychological perspective (where the interaction of personality and environmental factors are considered).

Resilience researchers often focus on the balance between the 'assets' individuals possess and their chances of taking negative risks. Small and Memmo argue, for example, that:

> *'...the lack of assets is directly related to a person's failure to thrive, but only indirectly related to problem behaviours. As is often the case among children with few assets, a failure to thrive occurs when a child lacks essential growth opportunities needed for normal development. However, these same conditions also may heighten vulnerability, because the positive features that are absent in asset-poor environments tend to be replaced by hazardous or socially toxic conditions that generate risk... We believe that in the presence of risk, rather than a lack of assets, that likely leads to problem behaviours. Therefore, while a youth with many assets may thrive developmentally, he or she may still exhibit problems if risk processes are present'* (2004:4).

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[8] It is well known that people living in poorer countries which have a higher prevalence of absolute deprivation often report higher levels of life satisfaction than in wealthier Western nations (Layard, 2010; Wilkinson and Pickett, 2009).

Resilience, according to Small and Memmo[9], results from a combination of four main processes that helps young people '***retain those assets* necessary for a person to display competence and thrive developmentally, or avoid the development of problem behaviours despite their experience of risk'** (2004:6 my emphasis).

- *Resilience resulting from the operation of protective processes*: this refers to the action of significant others who act to protect or cushion young people from risk factors often in conjunction with efforts to build personal assets.

- *Resilience resulting from exceptional personal characteristics*: this refers to characteristics such as intelligence or sociability which may be innate personality factors or emerge in response to their developmental history.

- *Resilience gained by recovering from adversity*: successful recovery from stressful situations or crises can result from reducing or eliminating the threat of recurrence or drawing upon other resources to aid coping strategies to make the situation manageable.

- *Resilience gained through the process of steeling*: steeling is the process by which individuals overcome challenges and strengthen their resolve in the face of adversity. It is a process of hardening a person against the impact of difficulties and disappointments.

A critical reading of these four interacting factors would indicate how resilience can work for people in positive and negative ways. Having a strong sense of resilience on its own does not necessarily indicate an inherent likelihood that people will behave in a socially constructive way. A more general assumption is, however, that the wider range of 'assets' an individual has at their disposal – the more likely that a strong sense of resilience will benefit them.

Positive youth development programmes, such as Think Big, which tend to focus on asset-building usually incorporate a mixture of 'protective processes' (such as the encouragement to get involved with positive confidence building activities rather than negative risk taking); provide support, where appropriate, to aid recovery from previous adversity; and, channel efforts in positive directions so that young people capitalise upon their innate or socialised assets such as sociability and intelligence.

When discussing the riots in the summer of 2011, above, it was argued that many young people who had previously not been in trouble with the police or courts became involved. The newspapers expressed a great deal of alarm when telling stories about more affluent young people taking part – because it seemed inexplicable that young people with strong personal assets would take such enormous risks. By contrast, the media and many politicians were eager to point the finger at asset-poor young people, in the expectation that they would be first in line to get involved with criminality.

Irrespective of the statistical likelihood of getting involved in the riots, the point being made here is that many young people responded in unpredictable ways. When young people assessed the risks, some made catastrophically bad choices and others made good ones. In short, less affluent young people do not have a monopoly on negative risk taking – because many have no interest in getting involved in criminality for sound moral or ethical reasons or because they recognise the potentially dire consequences of making such a mistake.

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[9] Small, S. and Memmo, M. (2004) 'Contemporary models of youth development and problem prevention: toward an integration of terms, concepts and models', *Family Relations*, 55:1, 3-11.

Being positive about young people, all young people, is the key to challenging society's (and often young people's own expectations) about what they can reasonably be expected to achieve. Building assets to bolster resilience is a central part of this process so that good choices can be made within the range of opportunities that are open to young people. This report provides an evaluation of an 'open programme' for all young people who choose to take part – but in so doing, it recognises that some of these young people may have strong personal assets at the outset, while others have few. But it is not assumed that these differences will translate into particular outcomes for individuals – on the contrary, the point of the research, as it proceeds over the years, is to assess many different and often unpredictable sources of benefit emerging from participation.

3.4 Summary

This discussion has helped to clarify our position on three issues. Firstly, that the study of the impact of social disadvantage on young people's lives is a complex process because structural, situational, relational and personal factors inevitably interact in unpredictable ways. It is not possible, therefore, to make generalised assumptions about the causes and consequences of different responses to involvement in youth programmes.

Secondly, the brief discussion of the international dimension shows that young people's expectations about well-being vary significantly across national boundaries. It is evident that a single 'objective' measure of well-being cannot be relied upon. Instead, informed interpretation is necessary to make sense of national differences.

Thirdly, we have introduced some new ideas about young people's resilience and their assets which are important for the analysis. Resilience is a complex idea but its usefulness is clear because it helps to explain how positive youth programmes such as Think Big, can make a real contribution to young people's chances of making positive life transitions.

Thirdly, it has become apparent from the analysis that 'change' is an important variable that will affect the way data are interpreted in the analysis of the programme over time. Social, economic and cultural changes are unpredictable, and their impact cannot be anticipated. As indicated in this short review, unemployment has increased significantly in recent years in many European countries – producing significant impact on young people's opportunities and with consequences for their sense of confidence and well-being. This means that standardised measures of well-being, resilience, personal assets and pro-social attitudes will always have to be interpreted carefully and not be regarded as objective indicators which are unaffected by the inevitable turbulence caused by change.

Section 4
Key Findings

In this report, we present data in some depth on the progress of Think Big in each of the countries involved, together with contextual analysis of the local social, economic and political conditions which are affecting young people. We start in this chapter by presenting some basic summary data on the achievements of the programme in 2011.

4.1 Volume of programme achievements

The Think Big programme has bold ambitions to reach large numbers of young people and produce projects which bring social benefit and genuinely challenge negative stereotypes about young people. As Figure 4.1 shows, expectations on the volume of activity in between 2011-2015 is significant. It is expected that the number of projects delivered will reach over 11,000 by the end of the programme. It is estimated that almost 200,000 young people will actively participate in the programme and that 1.5 million people will benefit from the programme.

Figure 4.1   **Programme objectives 2011-2015**

	Number of projects	Number of young people trained, mentored and supported	Number of active participants[10]	Number of benefitting participants[11]
United Kingdom	5,664	11,327	99,115	620,177
Germany	3,540	7,080	61,947	387,611
Czech Republic	1,310	2,619	22,920	143,416
Slovakia	106	212	1,858	11,628
Ireland	566	1,133	9,912	62,018
Total:	11,186	22,372	195,752	1,224,850

[10] Each project has a minimum of two people who are project leaders (in Germany this is higher at 3.8 per project). It is estimated from research on *Think Big* and *It's Your Community* in the UK that on average 17.5 young people are actively engaged in projects in planning and delivery (in Germany this is estimated at 19.7 young people). These estimated multipliers are being revised in 2012 in each country now that Think Big is better established. Information is also being collected from a representative sample of projects in each country on the amount of time young people invest in their projects.

[11] It is estimated from UK experience that on average 90 young people benefit from each project. This is based on analysis of the It's Your Community programme. In 2012 this multiplier is being re-examined in each of the markets to provide a more accurate figure on project impact. The current multiplier, evidence suggests, may represent an under estimate of actual project reach.

Figure 4.2 presents data on project achievements for 2011. It is clear from this figure that the intensity of project activity varies considerably between countries at present. The UK is, by far, the largest programme – producing over 1,300 projects in 2011 and involving over 23,000 active participants. Germany is the second largest programme, undertaking over 500 projects and reaching over 11,000 active participants. In Ireland, Czech Republic and Slovakia, the level of investment in Think Big is lower at present, but the programme continues to play a significant role in each of these smaller countries.

For the programme as a whole, it is evident that more than 200,000 young people have benefitted from Think Big and about 40,000 have been directly involved as active participants. It is also clear that the investment in young people's personal development has been significant with nearly 5,000 project leaders receving training, support and mentoring to successfully complete their projects.

Figure 4.2　**Project volumes and numbers of participants in Telefónica Think Big 2011**

	Number of projects	Number of young people trained, mentored and supported	Number of active participants	Number of benefitting participants
Czech Republic	100	300	1,750	13,866
Germany	525	2,880	11,287	58,537
Ireland	111	250	1,944	9,990
Slovakia	41	70	898	5,135
UK	1,317	1,369	23,048	118,530
Total:	2,094	4,869	38,926	206,058

4.2　Biographical characteristics of participants on Think Big

This section of the report provides some analysis of the range of participants across the whole programme. Key indicators include gender, age, ethnicity/nationality and educational and employment status. It is not the purpose of the analysis to find out if participation levels are equal in every respect because it is recognised that in each country there are different approaches to delivery. Instead, it is to provide an indication of programme reach across all countries and to identify where differences lie so that whole programme data can be interpreted more accurately.

Figure 4.3 shows the distribution of participants in the programme in 2011 by gender. It is clear that in Slovakia and the UK the number of males and females in the programme are broadly similar, as is the case across the programme as a whole. In Germany, females participate at a slightly higher level at 55 per cent of the programme, while in Ireland they comprise nearly 64 per cent of participants.

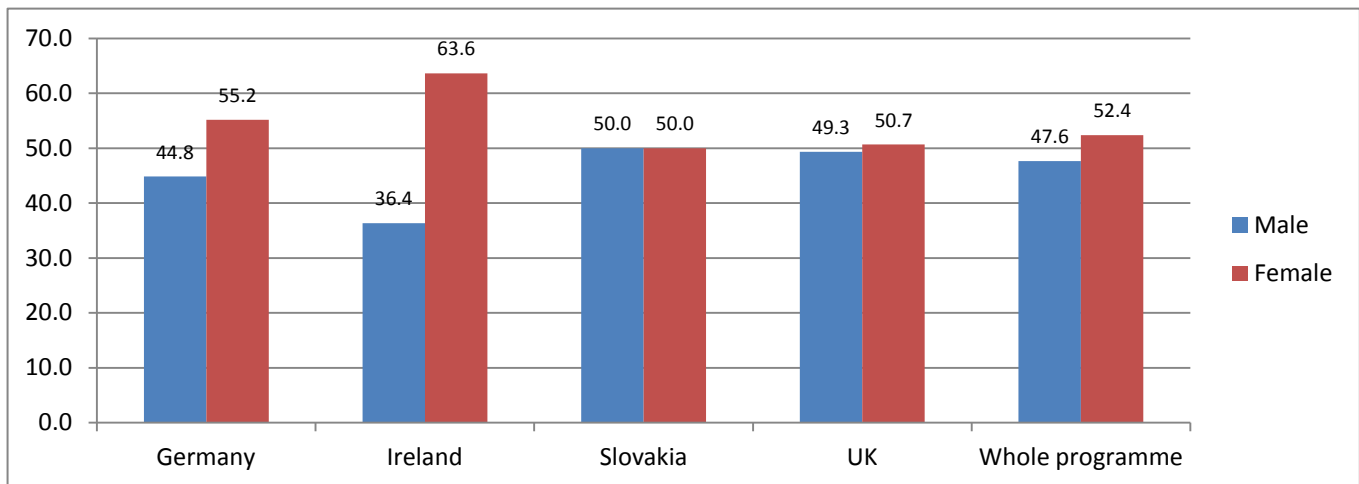Figure 4.3   **Gender distribution of participants in the programme**

Figure 4.4 shows the age distribution of participants across the programme in each country. In the UK the proportion of young people in the programme is relatively even between the ages of 17 and 25 with a slight dip for the 24 to 25 year olds. There is some concentration of participants in the 15 to 17 age group, as would be expected in a programme which relies upon youth partners to encourage many young people to take part. In Slovakia, the Think Big programme attracts older participants, especially between the ages of 23 and 25, comprising more than 60 per cent of all young people in the programme. The number of young people aged between 17 and 22 is broadly similar, with a slight rise in the number of 20 year olds, at 11 per cent. In Ireland the age range of participants is predominantly between 16 and 22, with a peak in the number of participants among 17 and 18 year olds. There are few young people in the programme aged under 16 and over 23. In Germany, there is a broad balance of participants across the whole programme. Young people aged 14 to 25 are fairly equally represented – although there are very few 13 year olds.

Figure 4.4   **Age distribution of participants across the programme**
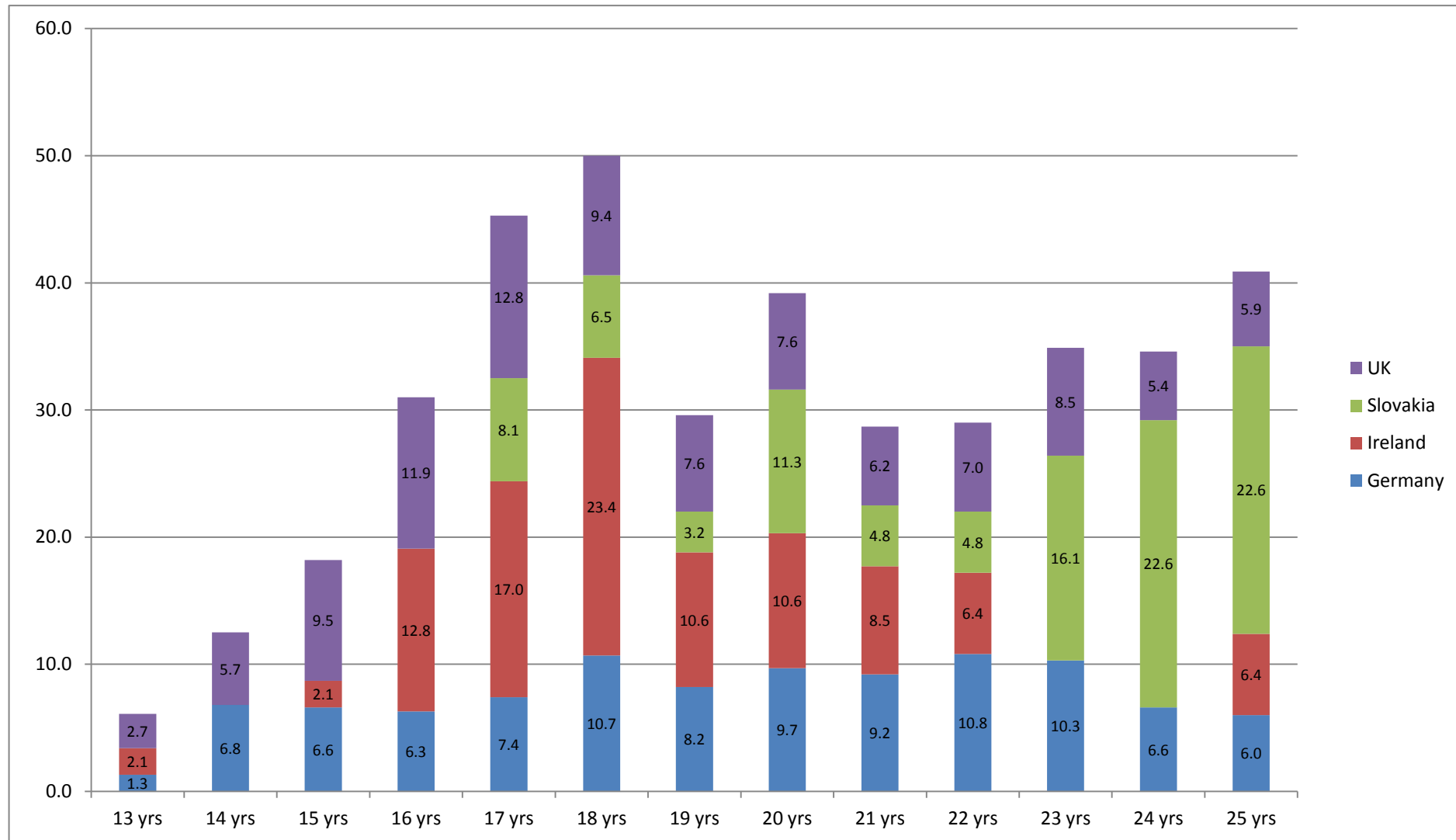
As a central aim of the Think Big programme is to reach young people who are socially marginalised or excluded, an indicator of this is ethnicity and nationality of participants. Data were collected in different ways in each country due to differing cultural mixes and also due to sensitivities surrounding the recording and reporting of ethnicity. However, some comparable data have been produced which gives an indication of the programmes inclusiveness. In Germany, 19 per cent of participants had parents who were not born in the country, which is an indication of the status as migrant families – no distinctions were made by ethnicity however for cultural and political reasons. In Ireland, a small number of young people from ethnic minorities participated in the programme including over 3 per cent of black young people and a little less than 2 per cent of young people from other ethnic or mixed race backgrounds. In Slovakia, participation by minority ethnic groups is currently very low, with below 2 per cent of young people from this category. In the UK, the largest programme in 2011, the ethnic mix is much more pronounced. Five per cent of young people in the programme are from Asian backgrounds, over 10 per cent are black, and nearly 12 per cent from mixed race backgrounds.

Figure 4.5   **Participation in the programme by Ethnicity/nationality**
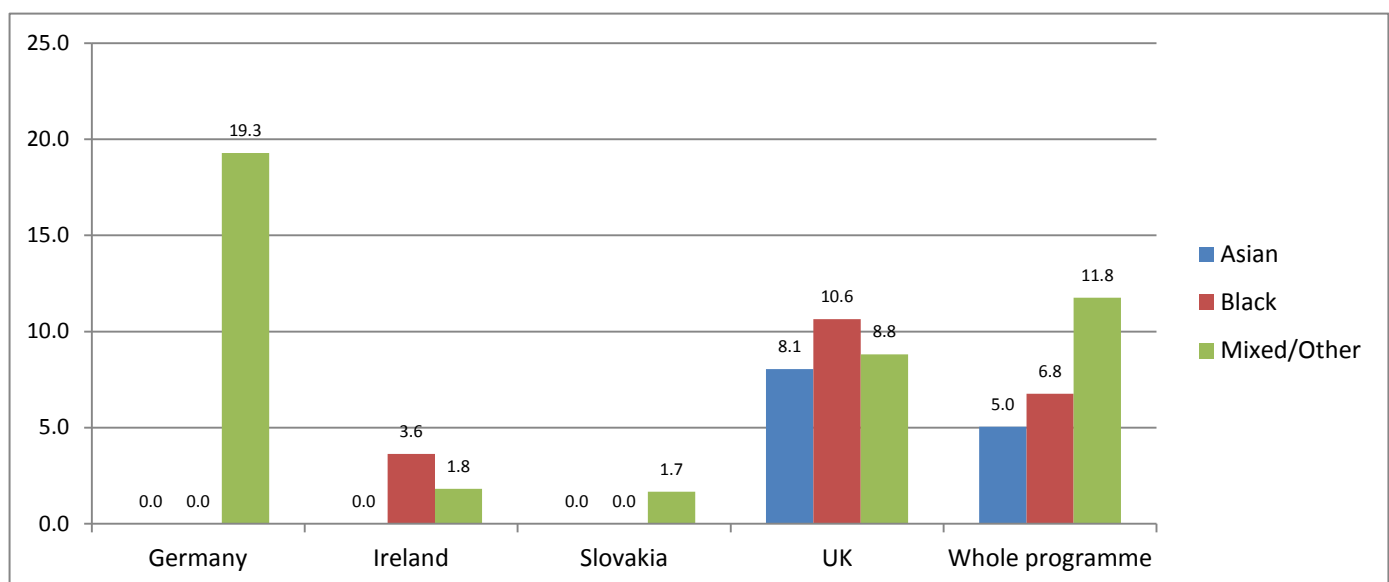

A second indicator of social marginality or exclusion is disability or limiting illnesses. Data are currently only available in three countries. In the UK, 4.1 per cent of participants are disabled, in Ireland 1.8 per cent are disabled and in Slovakia, 4.2 per cent of participants are disabled.

A third indicator of social inclusion and exclusion is to consider the number of young people who are currently not in employment, education and training. This is commonly known as NEET status in many academic studies. At present there are too few data available across the programme to undertake detailed analysis on NEETs – but as the programme progresses it will be possible to disaggregate them from the other participants to see how well they do and what benefits they gain.

The early indications, shown in Figure 4.6, suggests that the number of NEETs may be quite low. This is partly because there are many very young people in the programme who are still in full time education. The bar chart also counts young people who may be in

employment, probably as part-time workers, and in education and training – making analysis difficult currently. What is clear is that over two thirds of participants in the whole programme are still in full or part time education – which may include higher education in many cases. There are differences between countries. Ireland has the highest proportion in full time or part time education, standing at nearly 87 per cent. This is partly accounted for by the age profile of participants where there are very few over the age of 22. In the UK, Germany and Slovakia, the proportion is more similar, hovering around the two thirds mark. The number of young people in full-time or part-time employment varies by country too. In Slovakia, the number of employed young people is much higher, at over 70 per cent. This is due to the age profile of the participants who are predominantly over 22 years old. In the other countries the numbers are lower. In Ireland, only just over 21 per cent are in full or part-time employment, and in Germany and the UK, the percentages are, respectively, 70 and 60 percent.

Figure 4.6   Participants in full or part time education or work
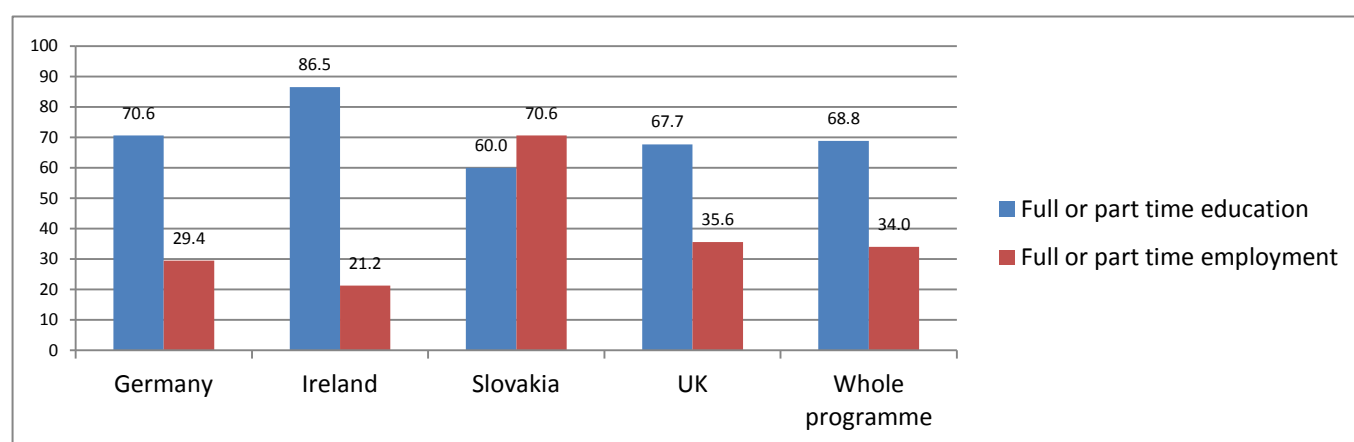
By examining the educational qualifications of participants on the programme, it is possible to get an impression of the general level of capability of the young people involved. Comparing educational qualifications between countries is particularly difficult where no commonly agreed accreditation framework currently exists. In Germany, in particular, it is more difficult to compare educational and vocational qualifications than in other countries due to a long-standing debate on how to agree the components of a national qualification framework.[12] In the German Think Big programme, data were collected on the type of educational institution attended and levels of qualification – this provides a useful indicator of the characteristics of young people involved in the programme. Figure 4.7 provides a simplified categorisation of qualifications ranging from no qualification, intermediate school based qualifications, vocational qualifications and higher academic qualifications (at broadly the equivalent level of A Levels in the UK and undergraduate degrees or higher).

These data show, firstly, that the biggest categories of participants were at University (33%) or at a Gymnasium (32%) or vocational college (18%). In terms of level of qualification, it is apparent that about 43 per cent of participants had higher level academic qualifications or intermediate academic qualifications (25%). A relatively small number of participants had vocational qualifications (12%). Quite a large number of participants had no qualifications

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[12] See: Secretariat of the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder in the Federal Republic of Germany, Documentation and Education Information Service, Graurheindorfer Str. 157, 53117 Bonn, Germany.

(20%) but this is because most of them were still at school and had not yet reached the point of matriculation.

Figure 4.7   **Participants' educational institutions and qualification levels in Germany**

	(Row percentages)				
	No qualifications	Intermediate	Vocational	Higher academic	(Column %)
Hauptschule	59.0	35.9	5.1	0.0	6.4
Realschule	40.9	50.0	7.6	1.5	10.9
Gymnasium	34.7	49.2	7.3	8.8	31.7
Fachhochschule	0.0	11.9	37.6	50.5	17.9
Universität	0.0	0.0	6.0	94.0	33.1
All participants	19.2	25.5	12.2	43.1	100.0
N=	117	155	74	262	608

While taking these differences into account, it is worthwhile to produce a crude indicator of qualification levels across the whole programme (unfortunately no data were available for Ireland of the Czech Republic in 2011, but this will be rectified in 2012). Figure 4.8 presents an overview of qualification levels. These data show that, for the programme as a whole, about a 22 per cent of participants have no qualifications (many of whom will still be at school and have not yet had a chance to take examinations); 35 per cent have lower secondary level qualification (the broad equivalent in the UK of General Certificate of Secondary Education); 22 per cent have Higher secondary education qualifications (such as the Abitur in Germany or A Level in the UK); about 7 per cent have vocational qualifications and nearly 14 per cent are graduates.

As Think Big aims to be an open programme, these data suggest that young people from all levels of education are participating. In Slovakia there are larger numbers of graduates than in other countries, but this may be largely due to the older age profile of participants. Similarly, there are fewer Slovakians with no qualifications or lower secondary level qualifications for the same reason. Education levels in Germany and the UK differ to some extent – but this may be due to the difficulties of comparing educational qualifications as discussed in relation to Figure 4.7.

Figure 4.8   **Qualification levels of Think Big participants**
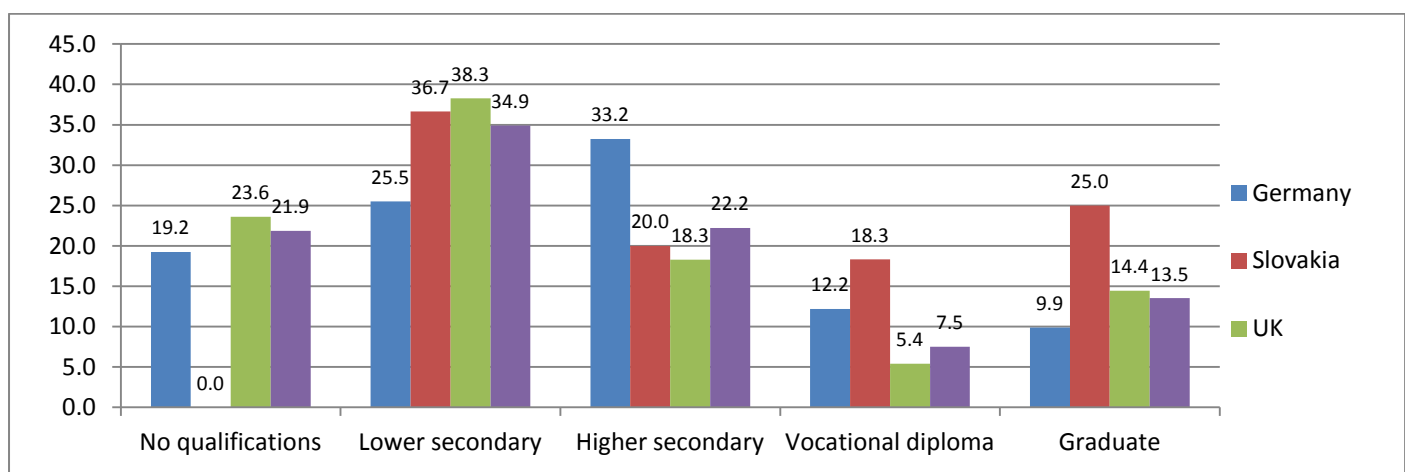
Finally, Figure 4.9(a) shows what proportion of young people in Think Big come from deprived areas. These data, as with the education data discussed above, are not strictly comparable as methods used to determine deprivation differ from country to country. In 2012, methods used to record deprivation will also be adopted in Czech Republic and Slovakia, which should allow for whole programme level evaluation. The reason for using a deprived area as an indicator of social disadvantage is to avoid asking young people questions which may make them feel uncomfortable (such as questions about parents income or employment). This is a tried and tested approach in social science which works well in most circumstances. Some problems can arise, however, where young people live in relatively poor areas because they are undergraduates or recent graduates living away from home but were born to more affluent families in better off areas. In the UK, it was possible to isolate these young people from the analysis to get a clearer picture of deprivation. It is not suggested, however, that area of deprivation is the only way of determining social marginality or isolation – other factors such as ethnicity, age, gender and disability also come into play, all of which can be worked into analysis of social return on investment as more programme data become available.

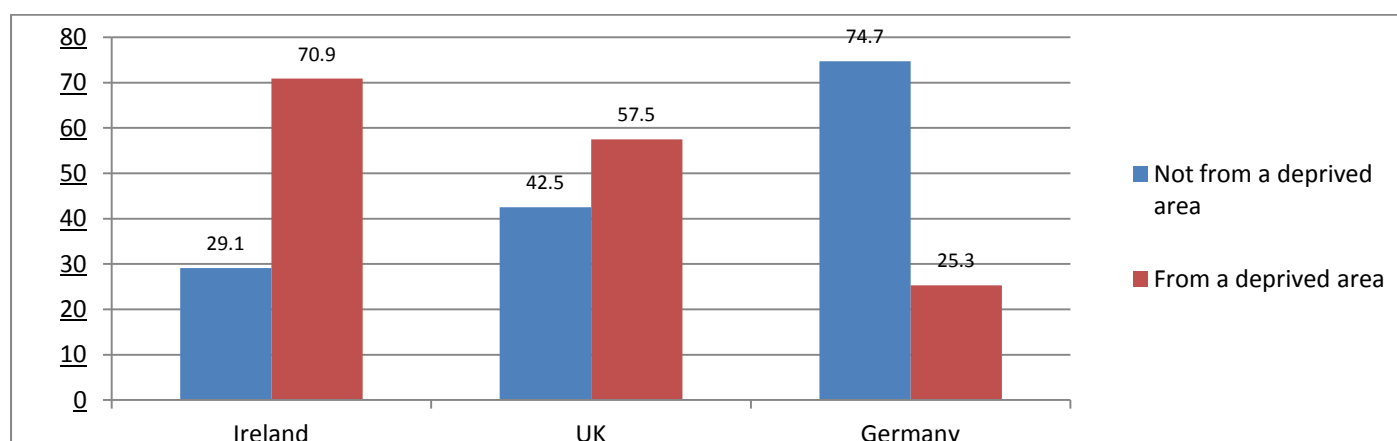Figure 4.9(a) **Project reach to young people in deprived areas**

Figure 4.9(b) shows, for example, that amongst those young people in the programme whose parents were not born in Germany were much more likely to live in deprived areas – 46 per cent, compared with young people whose parents were born in Germany at just 20 per cent.

Figure 4.9(b) **Relationship between deprivation and ethnic status in Germany**

	Not deprived	Deprived	Grand Total	Not Deprived	Deprived
Parents not born in Germany	92	78	170	54.1%	45.9%
Parents born in Germany	556	142	698	79.7%	20.3%
Grand Total	648	220	868	100.0%	100.0%

4.3 Perceptions of pro-sociality, capability and confidence

There are some challenges researchers face when comparing attitudes and beliefs across national borders because cultural factors can affect the way that people respond to questions. This is discussed in more detail in Section 3 where issues surrounding the measurement of well-being are considered. The data analysis that follows indicates some quite clear differences in the way that young people report self perceptions which may not be just to do with their experiences on Think Big, but may also be affected by cultural expectations.

The analysis that is presented below is preliminary because there are still too few data on young people's attitudes once they have finished their projects to do complex analysis. Furthermore, the way that data were collected and recorded means that it is not possible to directly compare the individual's progress from start to end of their projects in large enough numbers to produce reliable statistics. That said, the analysis does provide some talking points on the impact of the project.

Figure 4.10 presents data on young people's self perception of their capabilities. It is evident from a surface evaluation of these data that there are some broad patterns which run across countries. Young people across the whole programme tend to feel most confident about their communication skills, their ability to take responsibility for a task, sticking at a task until it is finished and doing teamwork. There is quite strong similarity between young people from Ireland, UK and Germany on the first four indicators surrounding communication, getting things done, taking responsibility and teamwork. The Slovakian young people are rather less confident, which may be surprising given that they are generally quite a lot older than participants in other countries. As indicated in Section 3, however, there is some evidence that in some countries young people are more reticent in expressing strong confidence about their resilience and well-being. Unfortunately, Slovakia was not included in the UNICEF report which compared well-being indicators so it is not known for sure if there are significant cultural differences.

At the other end of the confidence spectrum, fewer young people feel that they are good at motivating people, organising their time and working independently. That stated, they are still quite confident.   Similarly, UK and Irish young people are more confident about their ability to plan their use of time and work independently compared with German and Slovakian young people in the programme. There are also very marked differences in attitudes about decision making. Young people in the UK and Ireland give very strong responses to this suggesting great confidence in this arena. German young people are more reticent about making quite such strong claims and Slovakian young people less so still. In relation to their self-reported confidence in motivating other people, German young people are by far the least confident according to these data while people in other countries respond more similarly.

Two confidence and resilience indicators are also shown in the graph: asking whether young people easily get bored and whether they are confident about their future. There is considerable variation in response to this question from young people in different countries. Interestingly, Slovakians and Germans are most likely to worry about their future – which may be surprising because the prospects for young people in each country differ very much – as reported in Section 3. Unemployment levels in Germany for young people stand at only 8 per cent compared with Slovakia's 34 per cent. Worrying about the future is not just about employment opportunities, it can relate to education, personal health and well-being, politics and culture and so on. Nevertheless, the result needs to be borne in mind when

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examining other aspects of confidence, resilience and pro-sociality. One of the most uniform responses to all the questions is self-reported beliefs in being able to avoid boredom. UK and German young people are equally likely to report that they get bored quite easily.

Figure 4.10 **Self reported perceptions of personal attributes before starting the project**
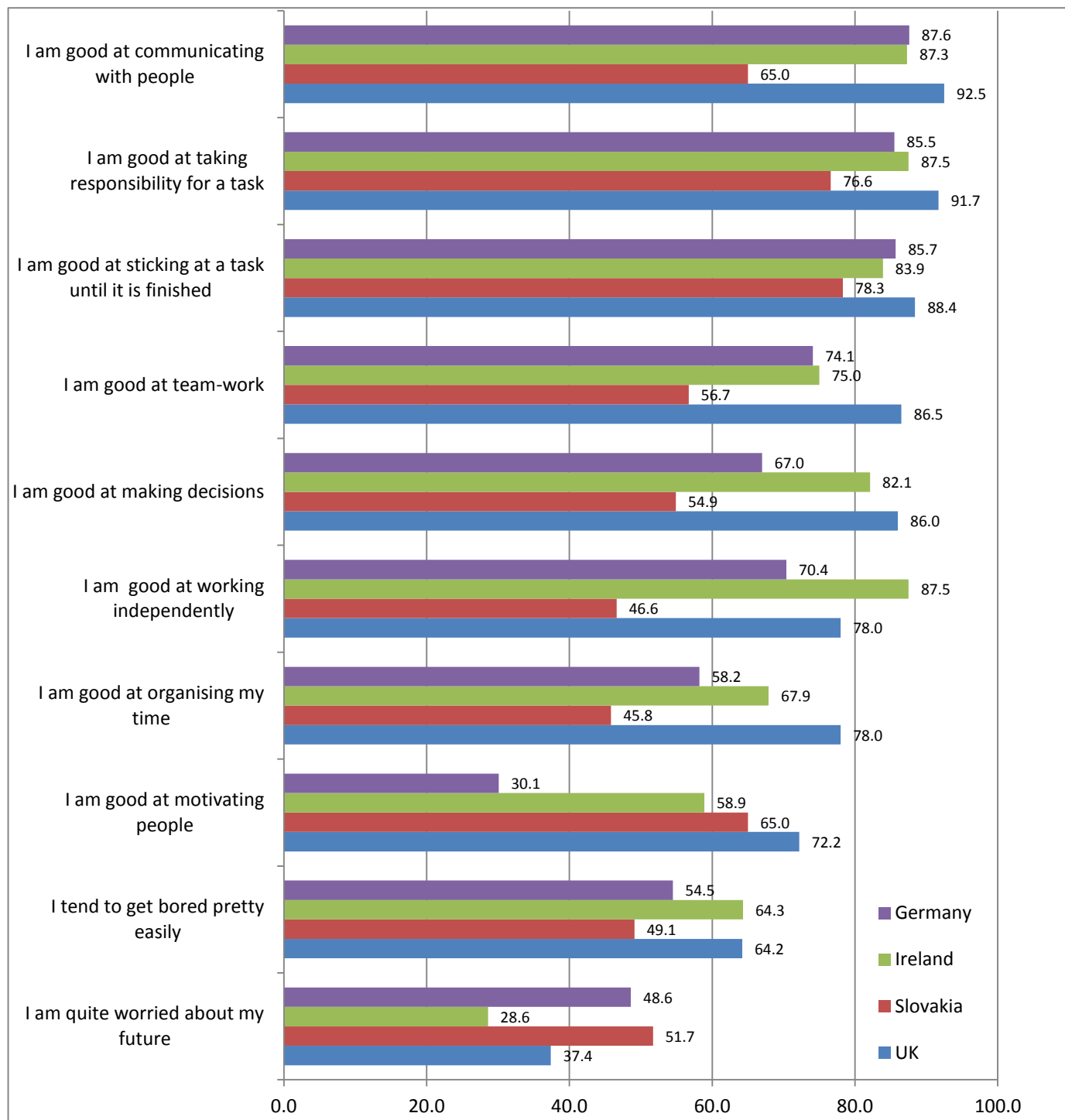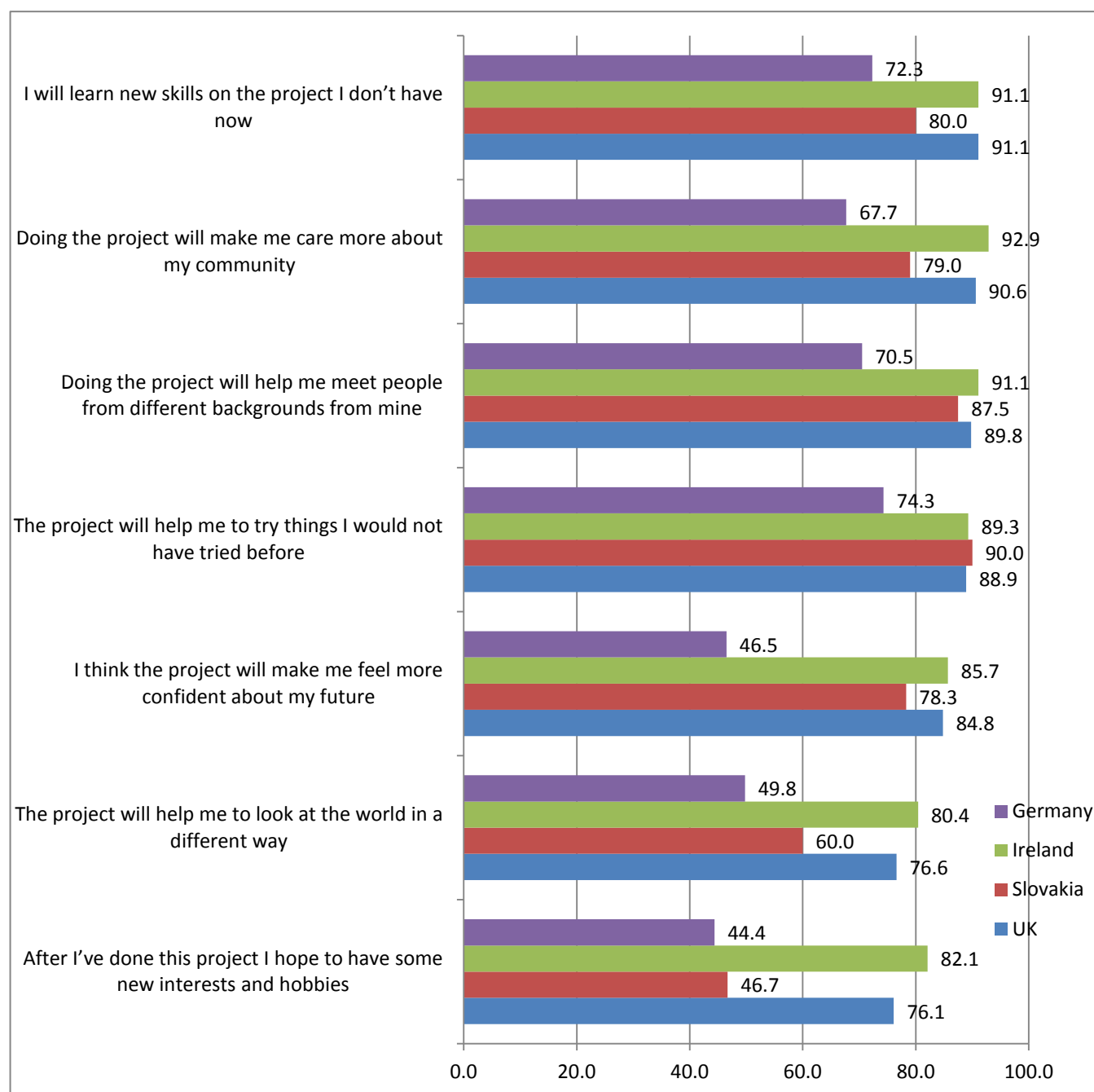

Figure 4.11 presents data on young people's expectations on what they might achieve or gain from being involved with Think Big. The reason for exploring this is to see if there are significant variations in the level of expectation across factors, and to see if there are international variations in response. When compared with data in Figure 4.8, it is clear that

there is much more uniformity across countries in relation to some factors. Responses from UK and Irish young people are particularly closely matched – suggesting either that the projects are more similar or that there are cultural similarities in the way they respond – or most likely a mix of both. This is especially so in response to the question related to trying new things they have not done before. Only German young people are a little more reticent in voicing high expectations in this respect.

Low levels of expectations by German young people in relation to the following factors: confidence in the future, looking at the world in a different way, and finding new interests and hobbies is interesting. This could be interpreted in two ways. First that young people in the German programme were not promised as much by the Think Big organisers and therefore had lower expectations. Conversely, it may be the case that they feel they already have enough interests and hobbies, that they already look at the world in a complex way and that they are already confident about the future. The last variable can probably be struck from the list, as it has already been shown that German young people do worry about the future. But in relation to trying new things and hobbies it is harder to know why they respond this way without supportive qualitative evidence. Few Slovakian young people think the project will introduce them to new interests and hobbies, but of course, the participants in Slovakia are older and may already have clear interests.

Figure 4.11 **Expectations about Think Big before starting a project**

	Germany	Ireland	Slovakia	UK
I will learn new skills on the project I don't have now	72.3	91.1	80.0	91.1
Doing the project will make me care more about my community	67.7	92.9	79.0	90.6
Doing the project will help me meet people from different backgrounds from mine	70.5	91.1	87.5	89.8
The project will help me to try things I would not have tried before	74.3	89.3	90.0	88.9
I think the project will make me feel more confident about my future	46.5	85.7	78.3	84.8
The project will help me to look at the world in a different way	49.8	80.4	60.0	76.6
After I've done this project I hope to have some new interests and hobbies	44.4	82.1	46.7	76.1

4.4 Evaluation of experiences on the programme

The above discussion relates to attitudes and beliefs *before* young people start their projects. It is now useful to look at how they feel once their projects have finished. The analysis will be done in two parts. The first part looks at self-reported attitudes and beliefs from all participants in the programme to give an overall impression of how they evaluate their experiences and how they feel about themselves in comparative terms. The second part of the analysis (found in Section 5 of the report) compares the experiences of young people at the start and at the end of the project to see if attitudes have changed.

It is important to introduce a caveat before proceeding with the discussion. When comparing self-reported data on 'expectations' about a project (as discussed in the above Figure) with 'evaluations' of the project, we are not talking about the same thing. If young people expect that a project will benefit them enormously at the start in one respect or

another and then at the end they report in their evaluation that it did not help them as much as they expected – this does not mean that they did not benefit.

Expectations can be unrealistic for all kinds of reasons. It may be the case that what young people are told about the project raises or lowers their expectations in some way. It could be that young people have a strong sense of optimism or pessimism when they take on new opportunities. It might be the case that young people simply do not know enough about what they are going to do to make a clear judgement on what will happen.

Evaluation by contrast is more of a concrete judgement – it is a self-reported assessment of how they experienced the project and what they feel it did for them in terms of character, skill or pro-social development. These data are therefore more reliable than expectation data. And of course, when the two points of the research are compared – we are not comparing like with like.

This does not mean the process of comparison is not valuable for the research. We need to know if young people from different countries have different expectations to get a better understanding of how the programme is working, and we need to take into account cultural differences on expressions of optimism and pessimism. As the research progresses and more data become available, we will be able to assess expectations by comparing young people with different biographical characteristics such as age, sex, ethnicity/nationality, educational achievement and so on. This will help to understand who wants to achieve what, and how the programme may need to be adapted to meet these needs.

Figure 4.10 presents data on young people's evaluations of what impact the Think Big project had on them. The percentages report the proportions of young people who strongly agreed or agreed with a range of statements on the project. The results are very positive. The first set of bar graphs show that no less than 73 per cent of young people (in Germany) and up to 100 per cent (in Ireland) believed that the project gave them an opportunity to try things they have never tried before. This variable is used to demonstrate if the Think Big programme creates **opportunities for young people to explore new avenues of self development**. The project is doing very well in this respect.

Why there are differences between countries is hard to explain without reference to qualitative data. So it would be useful in future to start collecting material, via the partner organisations, through observation or by talking to young people to get a better understanding of their experiences – as is the case now in the UK. Any conclusions drawn from the quantitative data presented here is purely speculative. It may be the case that because projects in different countries are organised in slightly different ways, young people report different opinions. It is more likely that differences are due to the cultural differences about self-reported judgements – which is an intangible element – where interpretation has to draw upon other data on how culture affects views on well-being (as discussed in Section 3). The fact that the biographical characteristics of young people across the programmes in each country differ markedly (as shown above in this section) will also affect responses. We know, for instance, that the participants in the Slovakia programme are a lot older than in the UK programme – this will have an effect on responses. But there are currently too few data to explore this in detail – that can happen in the 2013 report.

The second factor 'I have met people from different backgrounds from mine' is a more reliable indicator of the impact of the programme in **widening young people's social horizons**. The programme is very successful in this respect with percentages ranging from 65 per cent (in Germany) to 91 per cent (in the UK). Again, the question must be asked –

why are there differences between countries? The answer is complex and it is not possible to know for sure what the causes are. It could be the way the programme is organised (in

Figure 4.12   **Evaluation of value of Think Big after completing a project**
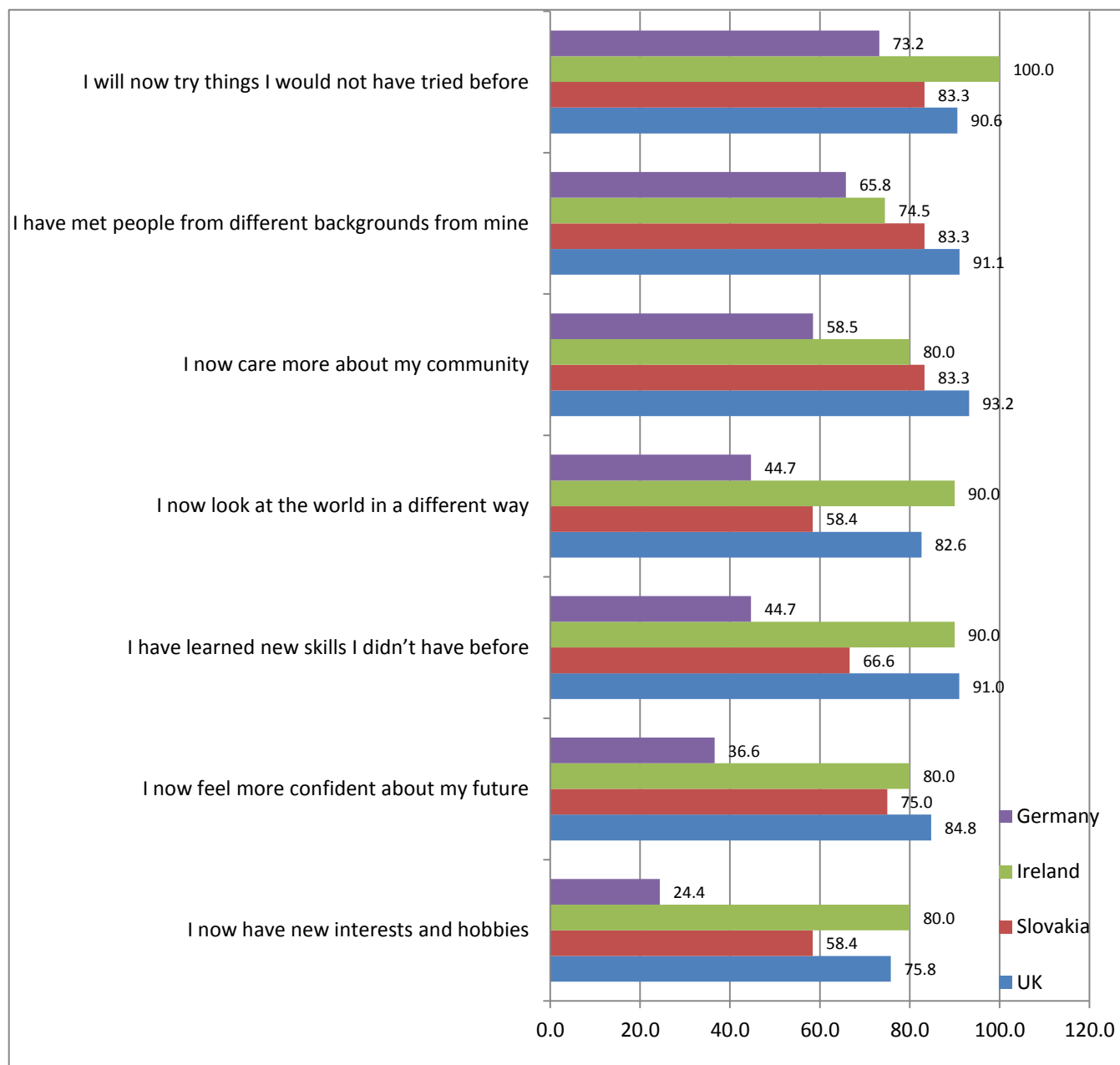
which case, qualitative data is required to explore this) providing opportunities for young people to mix with different groups. It could, at the other end of the spectrum, be an indication of social openness or closure. In the UK, where a very high percentage is reported for example, the score might indicate that young people do not generally move out of their 'comfort zone' socially. They may constrain their experiences of meeting new young people because of the way they perceive the class structure (or may not be able to because of the way the class structure works), similarly, it could be due to issues surrounding ethnicity where young people live in relatively segregated areas ethnically which reduces their exposure to other young people from different ethnic groups. By contrast, the lower figure in Ireland, 75 per cent, may be due to higher levels of homogeneity in the community – especially in more rural areas where there are fewer young people from different background to meet in the first place. What this variable is useful, for however, in impact terms is to demonstrate the extent to which opportunities are

created to challenge stereotypes about 'other' or 'unknown' young people. Although it does not tell us if these stereotypes are changed as such.

The third factor 'I now care more about my community' is used as an **_indicator of pro-sociality_**. The differences between countries is puzzling. In the UK, Ireland and Slovakia – young people report very strong views on changed attitudes ranging from 80 to 93 per cent. This shows that the programme is having a very clear social impact by building social capital. The percentage is lower in Germany, at 58 per cent, but it is still very positive. But why is it lower? It could be that German young people already care very much about their communities and that the project therefore does not have this impact on them. But it could be that the projects are not so community-oriented at the moment and the programme needs to be developed to make sure that young people do get more opportunity to directly connect with their communities to challenge their values and make them feel more strongly about these issues. It is not possible to judge on the basis of these data – more work needs to be done.

When the question is asked 'I now look at the world in a different way', the purpose is to find out whether **_young people have widened their understanding and views on society_** and provide a bedrock upon which to build social capital. The responses of young people are very different in each country. In Ireland and the UK, young people do feel that the programme has made them change the way they see the world. In Ireland, the project focuses very strongly on the issue of wellbeing and mental health. In most countries there are very strong social taboos about mental health issues – because such issues are hidden from view – the programme would be failing if it did not raise awareness in this respect. Clearly, the programme is extremely successful in Ireland in achieving its objective. In the UK, the programme actively seeks to challenge negative stereotypes about young people. It wants to make sure that young people are pushed outside their comfort zone, and challenge themselves by widening their horizons and learning how to empathise with young people from different backgrounds. The programme is very successful indeed in achieving this with a score of nearly 83 per cent.

In Germany and Slovakia, the responses are less positive. In Slovakia the score is still quite high – 58 per cent now see the world in a different way. But as participants in the programme are rather older than in other programmes – it is not that surprising that they are less likely to report high levels of change in this respect. 22 to 25 year olds are much more likely to have more fully developed personalities and have more clearly defined cultural and political views. To find out the extent to which this is true, it would be useful to compare older young people with younger participants from all markets in the 2013 report when enough data are available to do this. It is not immediately obvious why German young people generally do not feel that the project has widened their social understanding. It cannot be that German young people actually have no scope to increase their social understanding – after all – that is a life-long project for every person in society whatever age they may be. So it must be, either, something to do with the way the project is organised (that is, it is not designed to widen social understanding as such, but instead, is organised to teach them specific skills and competences – which may be a very useful objective in itself); or, it reflects cultural differences in the way German young people self-report issues surrounding pro-sociality and social understanding. They may simply feel confident at the start in this respect and remain so by the end.

The next fact explores the **_extent to which the programme has enhanced tangible skills_** by asking 'I have learned new skills I didn't have before'. Responses to this question have to be framed against the objectives of the programme – if no skills are being taught (which

is obviously very unlikely) then a low score would be expected. In the analysis which follows, we can explore the different skills and competences in quite a lot of detail because these provide important indicators of programme successes. This factor merely reports a generalised evaluative judgement. The scores are interesting. In the UK and Ireland, young people clearly do feel that they have learned new skills – about 90 per cent say so in each country. In Germany and Slovakia the responses are different. In Germany fewer than half of young people think that this is the case – does that mean they were fully skilled at the start? Or does it mean that German young people are less willing to admit that they have achieved personal development. This issue needs to be explored in more depth through evaluation of comparative data in the academic literature on young people's cultural attitudes. If it is found that German young people make evaluations from a different starting point – then we may need to weight the data to get a clearer understanding of the comparative value of the programme. In Slovakia, the participants are older, so maybe they do not feel that they have been challenged sufficiently in this respect. Only qualitative data can tell us that.

The next factor explores the impact of the programme in **the development of confidence and resilience** by asking 'I now feel more confident about my future'. Clearly there are many other things going on outside of the programme which affect confidence about the future – that is recognised by a second question discussed in the next chart which asks – 'I am quite worried about my future'. Worrying relates more to factors which are *out of young people's locus of control*. The question about confidence is more about issues which are *within their locus of control*. The programme is very successful in this respect in three out of four of the countries where between 75 and 85 per cent of young people show that they have more confidence and this suggests that they also feel more resilient (especially when compared with their more negative views on worrying about the future). It is harder to understand why so many German young people feel less confident. As the above analysis in relation to other factors indicates – more work needs to be done in exploring the comparative literature to make sense of this.

The final variable explores, in a very broadly-based way, **young people's resilience through their exercise of self-determined personal development** by asking 'I now have new interests and hobbies'. The responses are hugely varied in different countries which makes this variable very hard to interpret. In Germany very few young people respond positively – only 24 per cent. Perhaps they are already very much engaged in their own interests and pursuits – or at least feel that they are. In Ireland, by contrast, 80 per cent feel that they have new interest which they take command of. For all the reasons given in the analysis which precedes this discussion, we cannot properly judge what produces differences. But it is likely that in Slovakia, responses are lower because the participants are older and already have established their interests and hobbies. In the UK and Ireland, it perhaps indicates that young people are happy, culturally, to divulge improvements in their personal resilience while in Germany they are less so. More analysis of the literature needs to be done over the next year to make a clearer judgement on this

The above discussion focused on issues surrounding pro-sociality, widening horizons, building resilience and so on through self-reported evaluation of what the project helped them achieve personally. The next discussion, based on Figure 4.12, concentrates on more tangible aspects of personal development but without reference to the project as such. This is the part of the analysis where we start to explore how young people have changed their views of themselves over time. It is not possible to be absolutely sure that changes are purely due to the project – it could be due to other factors – such as the normal developmental process. But given that the questions are asked in the context of an evaluation of Think Big, it is more likely that respondents answer with this programme in mind – and not the other things that affect their personal development – such as

participation in school or higher education, experiences of employment, or relationships with family and peers.

The more interesting part of the analysis comes later (in Section 5) – when attitudes are compared from the start to end of the project. Although that analysis is necessarily preliminary because too few data are currently available to produce rigorous findings – and it is only possible at the moment to compare the UK and Germany because too few data are available from Ireland and no data are available for comparison in Slovakia due to the way data were recorded. Comments on Figure 4.11 will be restricted to broad analysis as a consequence and a more in depth discussion of their meaning will be presented in the section that follows this one.

Young people's self-evaluations of their skills and competencies are very positive in relation to many variables. And unlike the evaluation of particular aspects of the Think Big programme, as indicated in Figure 4.13, it is evident that international differences are rather less well pronounced in relation to some factors.

The first four set of bars related to communication, taking responsibility for a task, sticking to a task until it is finished and making decisions. All of these factors are assessing young people's personal resilience. In the case of communication – the factor refers to young people's confidence about letting other people know about what their successes have been – this is as much an indicator of confidence and resilience, therefore, as it is about a practical skill. The other three factors also have the capacity to indicate capability and resilience. The variables *taking responsibility for a task* and seeing *a task through to the end* shows that they are confident enough to do it, and that they have the resilience to see it through. A very high percentage of young people from each country feel that they can do these things.

Decision making is also a resilience and confidence indicator. Making a decision requires confidence – obviously. Resilience is indicated because it means that young people are prepared to stand up and say who they are, what they believe should happen, and that they have the inner strength to decide how they intend to do it. Differences between countries are visible, but they are not dramatically different – ranging from 77 to 90 per cent.

The ability to do team work is an interesting variable to introduce because it can indicate many different skills and attributes. In an ideal world, this issue would have been explored further through many other questions – but given the limited space available to interrogate young people on their experiences and beliefs it is used as a 'catch all' factor to indicate issues such as *sociality* (but not pro-sociality) which in turn reflects the extent of their personal flexibility, ability to compromise and willingness to defer their own interests to those of the group. Interestingly, in Ireland and the UK, the responses are very similar – 90 per cent of young people feel that they are good at team work. Why the percentages are so much lower elsewhere is hard to interpret – especially in Slovakia where projects are designed to develop team work. Again, this may be due to cultural differences and this needs to be explored in the comparative social-psychological academic literature.

Further questions examine team work from a different angle – 'I am good at motivating people' – here the focus is more closely related to *leadership* within teams. The indications are that following their involvement in the project, young people in UK and Ireland feel strongly that they are good leaders – about 80 percent in both cases. In Germany and Slovakia positive responses are also given – between 60 and 65 per cent. It remains to be seen, as the analysis progresses, whether they feel 'more' positive about this factor after doing a Think Big project – that is quite an important indicator of project impact.

The remaining variables are indicators, primarily, of confidence and locus of control (a key determinant of resilience) and are concerned with *time management* (the ability to get organised)*, independence* (the confidence to do things for themselves) and *self determination* (the avoidance of boredom). The findings, currently, are very complicated. In Ireland, all of the young people stated, by the end of their project, that they were good at working independently – and yet 50 per cent were prone to boredom and only 60 per cent said they were good at organising their time. In Slovakia, 83 per cent felt they were easily bored, and yet 66 per cent said they were good at working independently. As the programme develops, it will be necessary to isolate different responses against other factors such as age, sex, ethnicity, educational achievement and so on to try to find out what the patterns are beneath these confusing summary statistics. That should be possible for the 2013 report.

Figure 4.13   **Self perceptions of personal attributes after completing a Think Big project**
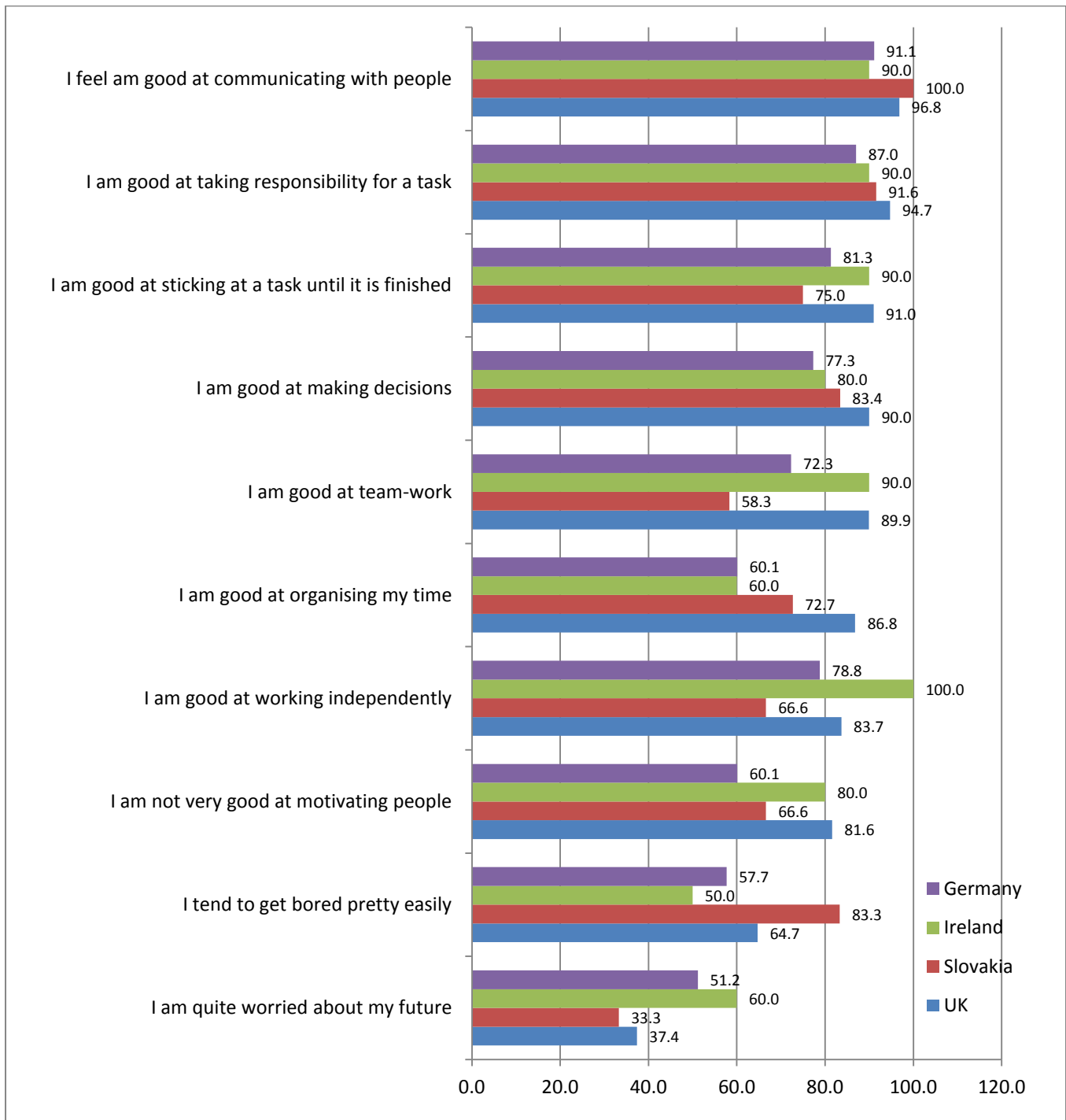
4.5 Summary

How big is the Think Big programme?

The Think Big programme has grown in 2011 and will grow further over the next few years. The Think Big programme has bold ambitions to reach large numbers of young people and produce projects which bring social benefit and genuinely challenge negative stereotypes about young people. By 2011-2015 it is expected that the number of projects delivered will reach over 11,000 by the end of the programme. It is estimated that almost 200,000 young people will actively participate in the programme and that 1.5 million people will benefit from the programme.

For the programme as a whole in 2011, more than 200,000 young people have benefitted from Think Big and about 40,000 have been directly involved as active participants. Investment in young people's personal development has been significant too with nearly 5,000 receiving training, support and mentoring to successfully complete their projects.

The intensity of project activity varies between countries at present. The UK is, by far, the largest programme – producing over 1,300 projects in 2011 and involving over 23,000 active participants. Germany is the second largest programme, undertaking over 500 projects and reaching over 11,000 active participants. In Ireland, Czech Republic and Slovakia, the level of investment in Think Big is lower at present, but the programme continues to play a significant role in each of these smaller countries.

Who does the programme reach?

The Think Big programme has been successful in its aim of being an open programme to all young people. Analysis of the biographical characteristics show that:

- Across the whole programme, 48 per cent of programme participants are female and 52 per cent are male.

- The programme as a whole attracts young people from across the age range 13 years to 25 years.

- The programme is socially inclusive, 24 per cent of participants are from ethnic minority or migrant families.

- About 4 per cent of participants in the programme have disabilities or limiting illnesses.

- The programme mainly includes young people who are in education, training and work: 70 per cent are in full or part time education, and 34 per cent are in full or part-time employment.

- Young people from all levels of education are participating in the programme: 20 per cent have no qualification, 26 per cent have lower secondary level qualifications, 33 per cent have higher secondary level qualifications (many of whom are at university), 12 per cent have vocational qualifications, and 10 per cent are graduates.

- For the programme as a whole it is not possible to define how many young people come from deprived areas due to differences in the way deprivation is defined. In the UK, 58 per cent are from deprived areas, in Germany, 25 per cent, and in Ireland 71 per cent.

Section 5
Social impact

5.1 Measuring change in attitudes

Before discussing the approach to measuring social impact, it is important to state the limits of what Think Big can be expected to achieve. It is equally important to be realistic, even for a multi-million Euro, long-term programme, about the limits on achievement. These limits are summarised below.

- Think Big cannot be expected to compensate for problems in education systems: instead, the programme offers small scale opportunities for young people to have new positive experiences and develop aspects of skills – but it is not an alternative to structured or unstructured education.

- Think Big cannot tackle macro-economic issues such as structural unemployment: the programme is not in the business of creating jobs, although it may help a small number of young people get some work experience, internships and provide a limited number of job opportunities; it may, however, improve individual's employability and also positively influence the attitudes of employers towards young people.

- Think Big is not a political movement; it is not trying to change the direction of social and public policy – although its ambitions and successes should be of real interest to those who do make policy and could influence them in a positive way.

What Think Big *can* expect to achieve, by contrast, is indicated below:

- Think Big can help to make young people feel more hopeful and confident (which may help them tackle problems/opportunities in a positive way).

- Think Big can help young people to become more resilient (so that they have the emotional strength to get through difficult times and make good choices).

- Think Big can help to challenge negative stereotypes about young people (by showing that they can make a positive difference to community).

- Think Big can help young people in the programme develop employability skills which may help them get a job or spur them on to complete or start education and training.[13]

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[13] Increasing employability does not increase employment – so claims cannot be made that the number of employed young people will increase as a consequence of Think Big.

- As a youth led, project focused programme, Think Big may be particularly well placed to open minds to the development of business planning skills and promote, entrepreneurship amongst young people.

- Think Big can help to challenge negative stereotypes about young people's potential.

What could Think Big achieve in terms of change?

Qualitative analysis has already produced strong indications that Think Big can make a significant difference to young people's lives.

- Trusting and investing in young people pays dividends in terms of their commitment and their productivity and personal benefit.

- Small steps forward for many young people can represent 'giant leaps' in terms of confidence and resilience. Using 'exceptional' stories about change might undermine messages about the benefit gained by young people who only take small steps.

- Think Big provides young people the opportunity to tackle issues that they think are important, and/or tackle projects in ways that interests and energises them. Think Big is avoiding the 'we know what's best for young people' argument.

- Even small projects can provide young people with the resilience and confidence to make good choices in future – the 'ephemeral event' gives them a positive set of emotional reserves which they can draw upon when they face difficult decisions on their future path.

- Young people involved with Think Big are tackling problems in innovative and creative ways with limited resources – many young people have to be socially and financially enterprising to succeed in their projects – which may affect their attitudes and aspirations for the future.

- By witnessing the successes of young people on Think Big, other young people and older adults may challenge taken-for-granted understanding of the limits of what most young people can, will and want to do.

Providing quantitative indicators of the above findings will take time to produce because the volume of data required to undertake analysis is large. At this stage it is useful to consider at a conceptual level what transitions might be explored through quantitative analysis as the programme matures.

Figure 5.1 indicates pathways of change. These are presented as 'binary opposites'. This necessarily polarises the issues in an exaggerated way. But they help to identify in broad terms the issues that Think Big is attempting to tackle.

Figure 5.1 **Measuring pathways of change**

Before joining the programme		After finishing the programme
Surface confidence or 'attitude' to survive in difficult situations, but lack of underlying confidence and emotional resilience	▷	Stronger sense of personal worth, strengthened emotional resilience and confidence to take positive risks and tackle new challenges
Socially, emotionally and economically dependent on others to solve problems, producing passivity and undermining confidence to take control	▷	Able to identify what needs to be done, find a way to do it (with support), take charge of the situation and make things happen through leadership
Socially withdrawn, isolated or excluded, short horizons and limited experience or understanding/tolerance of the 'unknown'.	▷	More socially participant, more knowledgeable about alternative situations, willing to become involved in situations which are different or challenging
Perceive that society regards self as a social burden or threat, feel positioned socially as a potential 'problem' even without behaving or wanting to behave in such a way	▷	Higher level of awareness of the potential of young people whose behaviour is read as a sign of being troublesome. Recognition of young people as a 'social asset'
Fearfulness or suspicion of 'other' young people, producing social isolation or combative behaviour	▷	Recognition that other young people are not so 'different', increasing social cohesion and building social trust
Perceptions of position in the world as 'unchangeable'. Dampens expectations and limits scope for thinking about doing things differently	▷	Stronger sense of confidence and hopefulness to effect change. Increasing feelings of personal ability and see the point in enterprising attitudes and behaviours
Older adults perceive young people as an 'other' category to themselves. Beyond their understanding and doubtful of their potential.	▷	Older adults see young people as positive assets to society – repositioning them as 'ours', not 'other'
Prejudicial and stereotypical ideas about young people produce widespread suspicion, calls for 'control' and 'retribution' for young people in general, not just those who behave badly	▷	Increasing awareness of the contribution and worthiness of the vast majority of young people. Increasing trust and respect – producing a virtuous circle (investing produces benefit)

5.2 Assessment of impact of the whole programme on young people's attitudes and beliefs

The impact of the programme on young people's confidence, attitudes and beliefs is discussed in this section. Figure 5.2 presents data for the whole of the Think Big programme on the self perceptions of young people about their skills after they have completed their projects. These results are impressive.

- Over 90 per cent of young people now think that they are good at communicating and can take responsibility for a task and 88 per cent say that they can stick to a task until it is finished.

- Over 80 per cent of young people now think that they are good at working independently, making decisions and doing team work.

- About 75 per cent of young people now think that they are good at organising their time and are good at motivating people.

Figure 5.2 **Attitudes about skills after completing Think Big** (whole programme)
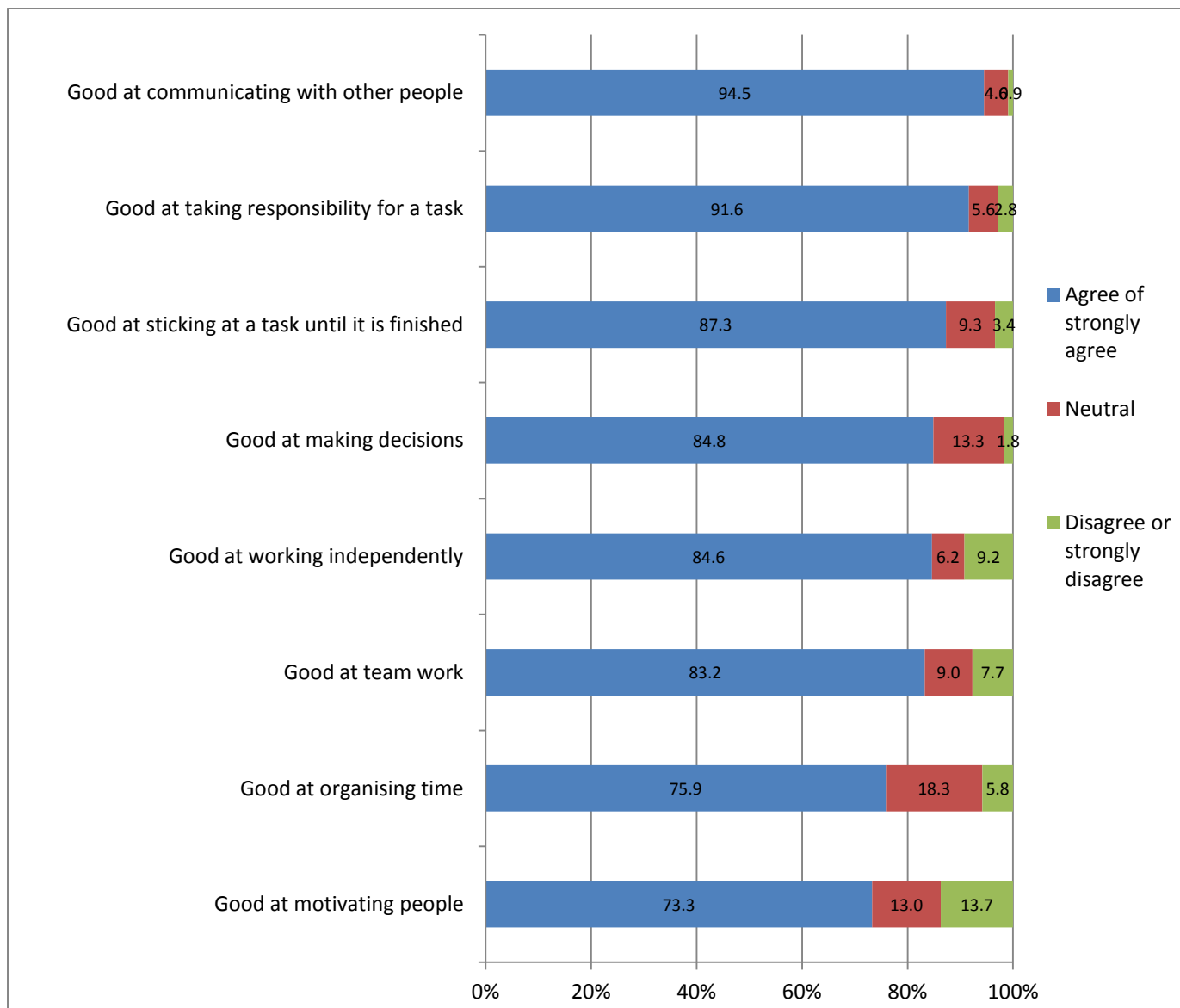

Figure 5.3 presents data from the whole programme on the direct benefits young people say they gained from their project. Again, these data suggest that this is a successful programme for developing young people's pro-sociality, confidence and resilience.

- Over 80 per cent of young people have met people from different backgrounds or tried things they have not done before – this means that they have widened their social horizons

- Nearly 80 per cent of young people care more about their community – suggesting increased pro-sociality.

- A further 68 per cent of young people now see the world in a different way – suggesting a loss of social insularity and increase in breadth of social vision.

- Even in hard times, after the project, 66 per cent feel more confident about their future and only 43 per cent are worried about their future.

- Nearly 57 per cent of young people now have new interests and hobbies, suggesting higher levels of engagement in personal development.

Figure 5.3   **How did Think Big bring participants direct benefits?** (whole programme)
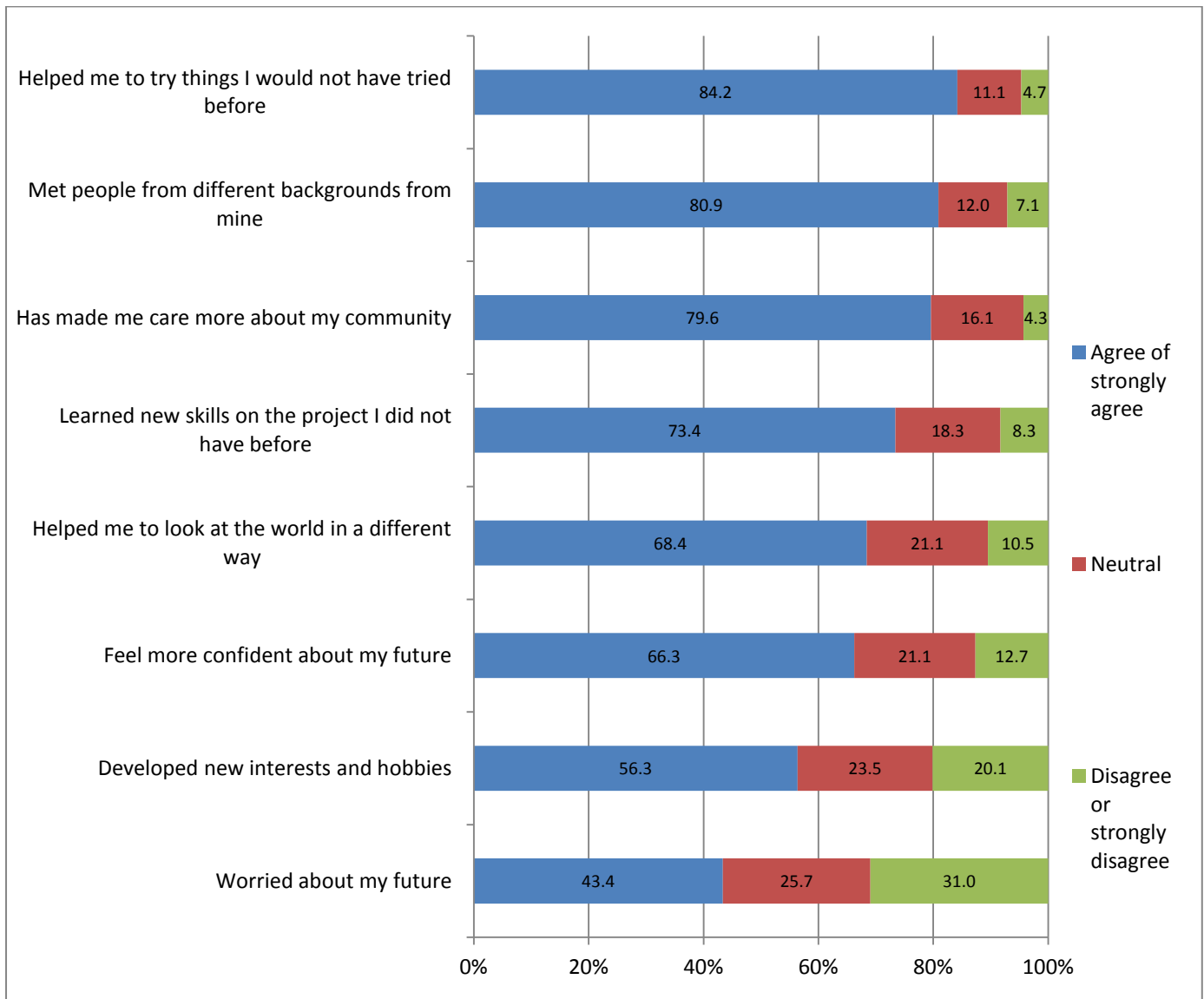
The Young Foundation in the UK has recently produced an approach to evaluating youth programmes. The idea is to produce a common framework of capabilities against which data can be mapped from evaluation work, such as that which has been gathered by Think Big. Figure 5.4 maps Think Big data against these criteria which is illuminating in terms of identifying what the programme is achieving. In the diagram two ticks are placed in a competency column where the data have a more direct bearing, and one tick where the data have a less direct bearing on each factor.

Communication

Think Big participants report high levels of confidence directly through their ability to communicate (95%), and indirectly through motivating people (73%) and decision making (85%). Their reported confidence in team work (83%) and wider range of social contacts (81%) also indicate an impact on communication skills.

Confidence and agency

The key indicators, in order of importance are: decision making (85%), working independently (85%), learning new skills (74%), motivating people (73%), feeling confident about the future (66%) and having new interests and hobbies (56%). Less important indicators included: trying new things, sticking to a task, looking at the world in a different way, worrying about the future and communicating effectively.

Planning and problem solving

Primary indicators, in order of importance include: taking responsibility for a task (92%), sticking to a task (87%), decision making (85%), trying new things (84%), motivating people (73%) and using new skills (73%). Secondary indicators include communication (95%) and team work (83%).

Relationships and leadership

There are several primary indicators of building relationships and exercising leadership, which are in order of priority: taking responsibility (92%), decision making (85%), team work (83%), meeting people from different backgrounds (81%), motivating people (73%) and looking at the world in a different way (68%). Secondary indicators include sticking to a task, organising time and communicating and awareness of raised skill levels.

Creativity

Indicators include, in order of priority: trying new things (84%), being good at team work (83%), using new skills (73%), new interests and hobbies (56%), and resistance to boredom (62%). Supplementary factors include: decision making, organising time and working independently.

Resilience and determination

There are several resilience and determination factors. The primary indicators, in order of priority are: taking responsibility for a task (92%), getting a task finished (87%), working independently (85%), decision making (85%), trying new things (84%), organising time (76%) and resistance to boredom (62%). Secondary indicators include team work, motivating people and using new skills.

Managing feelings

Managing feelings is a complex area to examine, however, there are several possible primary indictors including: including communication (94%), taking responsibility for a task (92%), making decisions (85%), team work (83%) motivating people (73%) The ability to try new things (84%) is likely to be an indicator of managing feelings – as it suggests movement from zones of insularity. Similarly looking at the world in a different way indicates openness to new ideas. Worrying about the future is excluded as this is more closely related to structural factors such as unemployment and economic uncertainty.

Pro-sociality

The Young Foundation categorisation does not include pro-sociality as a separate category. However, this is an important element in the evaluation of Think Big where the building of social capital and challenging social stereotypes are central objectives. Indicators of pro-sociality include; communication (95%), motivating people (84%), team work (83%), caring about the community (80%), meeting people from different backgrounds (81%) and seeing the world in a different way (68%).

Figure 5.4(a) **Mapping Think Big evaluation criteria against clusters of capabilities**

Attitudes and beliefs expressed by participants of O₂ Think Big across Europe	THINK BIG participants who agree or strongly agree with statements	Young Foundation Clusters of Capabilities							O₂ Think Big Pro-sociality questions
		Communication	Confidence and agency	Planning and problem solving	Relationships and leadership	Creativity	Resilience and determination	Managing feelings	
I am pretty good at communicating with people	94.5	✓✓	✓✓	✓	✓			✓✓	✓✓
I am good at team-work	83.2	✓		✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓	✓✓	✓✓
I am pretty good at taking responsibility for a task	91.6			✓✓	✓✓		✓✓	✓✓	
I am good at motivating people	73.3	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓		✓	✓✓	✓✓
I am pretty good at decision-making	84.8	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	
I don't tend to get bored pretty easily	61.6		✓✓			✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓
I am pretty good at organising my time	75.9		✓	✓✓	✓	✓	✓✓		
I good at working independently	84.6		✓✓	✓✓		✓	✓✓		
I am good at sticking at a task until it is finished	87.3		✓	✓✓	✓		✓✓		
I am quite worried about my future	43.4		✓					✓	
The project has helped me to try things I would never have tried	84.2		✓	✓✓	✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓	✓
I've learned to use skills in the project I didn't know I had	73.4	✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓	✓✓	✓		
The project has helped me look at the world in a different way	68.4		✓		✓✓			✓	✓✓
As a result of the project I have some new interests and hobbies	56.3		✓✓			✓✓			✓
I feel more confident about my future since doing the project	66.3		✓✓					✓	
It has helped me meet people from different backgrounds	80.9	✓			✓✓				✓✓
Doing the project has made me care more about my community	79.6								✓✓

Figure 5.4(b) provides a broad indication of achievement of the Think Big programme against each of the Young Foundation clusters of capabilities. This is done crudely by calculating the average percentage score for primary indicators for each category. The

results of this analysis indicate that when young people have completed their Think Big projects they agree or strongly agree that they have improved their confidence and resilience, skills and capabilities and achieved higher levels of pro-sociality across a range of categories.

Figure 5.4(b)   **Average participant scores against Young Foundation clusters of competencies**
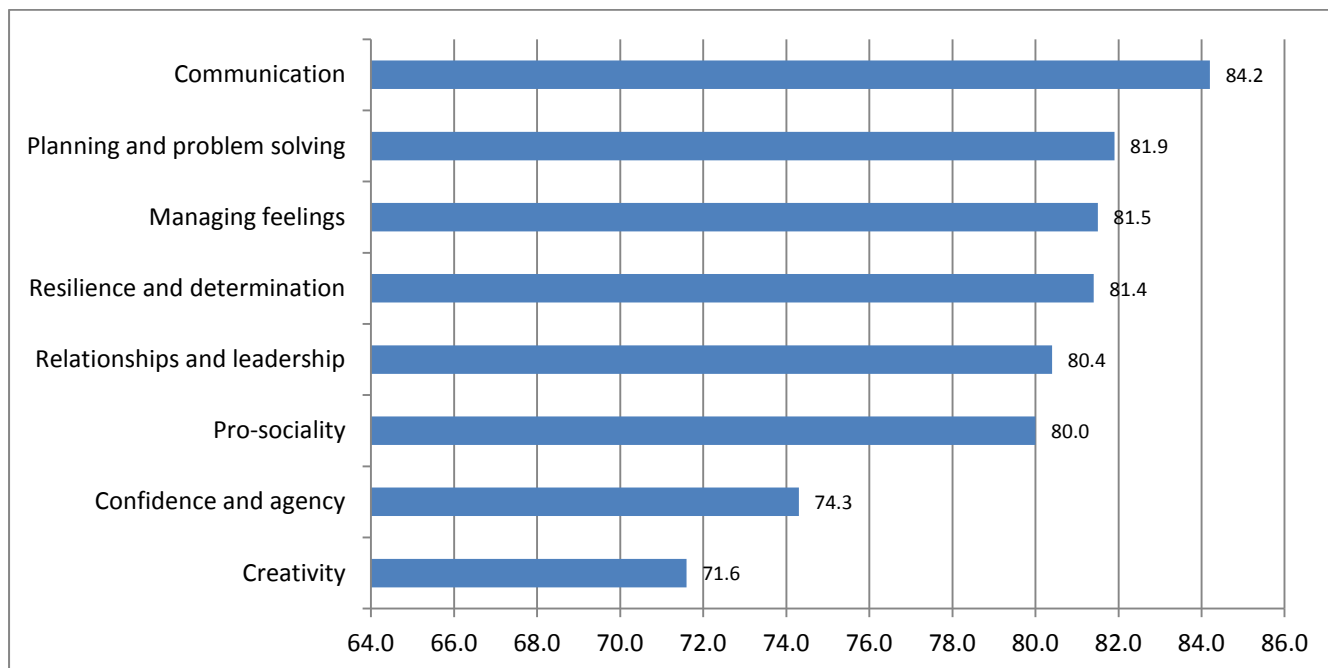
5.3   Measuring change in attitudes in the UK

As discussed in the first annual report of Think Big in 2011, assessing the impact of a programme on issues such as confidence, pro-sociality and employability is a complex process. This is because self-reportage of attitudes on such issues reflect the feelings of individuals at a particular point in time where their notions of capability may not yet have been fully challenged. For example, young people may state at the start of the programme that they care a great deal about their community, but might not have actually done anything practical in its support.

Consequently, after involvement in Think Big, their feelings about community might not have been shown to change all that much – but in reality – their attitudes could have been fundamentally transformed. To overcome this problem, analysis of quantitative data must be strengthened with analysis of qualitative data which demonstrates the degree of transformation. This analysis with follow the discussion of quantitative data in this section.

There are several ways of tackling this problem through the analysis of quantitative data. Figures 5.5 and 5.6 compare the attitudes of young people who 'changed their minds' on a range of factors from the start to end of their involvement in Think Big. This is achieved by cross-tabulating data and removing the cells along the diagonal – that is, the young people who expressed no change of mind. The results show the percentage of young people who changed their mind in a positive or negative way. The factors are placed in order of strength of feeling rather than in thematic terms. The results present a positive picture on the impact of involvement in Think Big.

Nearly 90 per cent of young people stated that they felt more strongly about their community at the end of the project – suggesting a significant gain in terms of pro-sociality. In terms of skills and competencies, it is evident that young people felt much more confident about themselves: almost 80 per cent felt that they were better at taking responsibility and making decisions. Three quarters felt more able to stick at a task until it was completed. More than two thirds felt that they were better at team work, organising their time and working independently. Over 60 per cent felt that they were better at motivating people.

The reliability of these findings is indicated by the 50-50 response to worries about the future – indicating that whatever they may have gained from Think Big, this does not undermine their wider appreciation of the problems young people face just now.

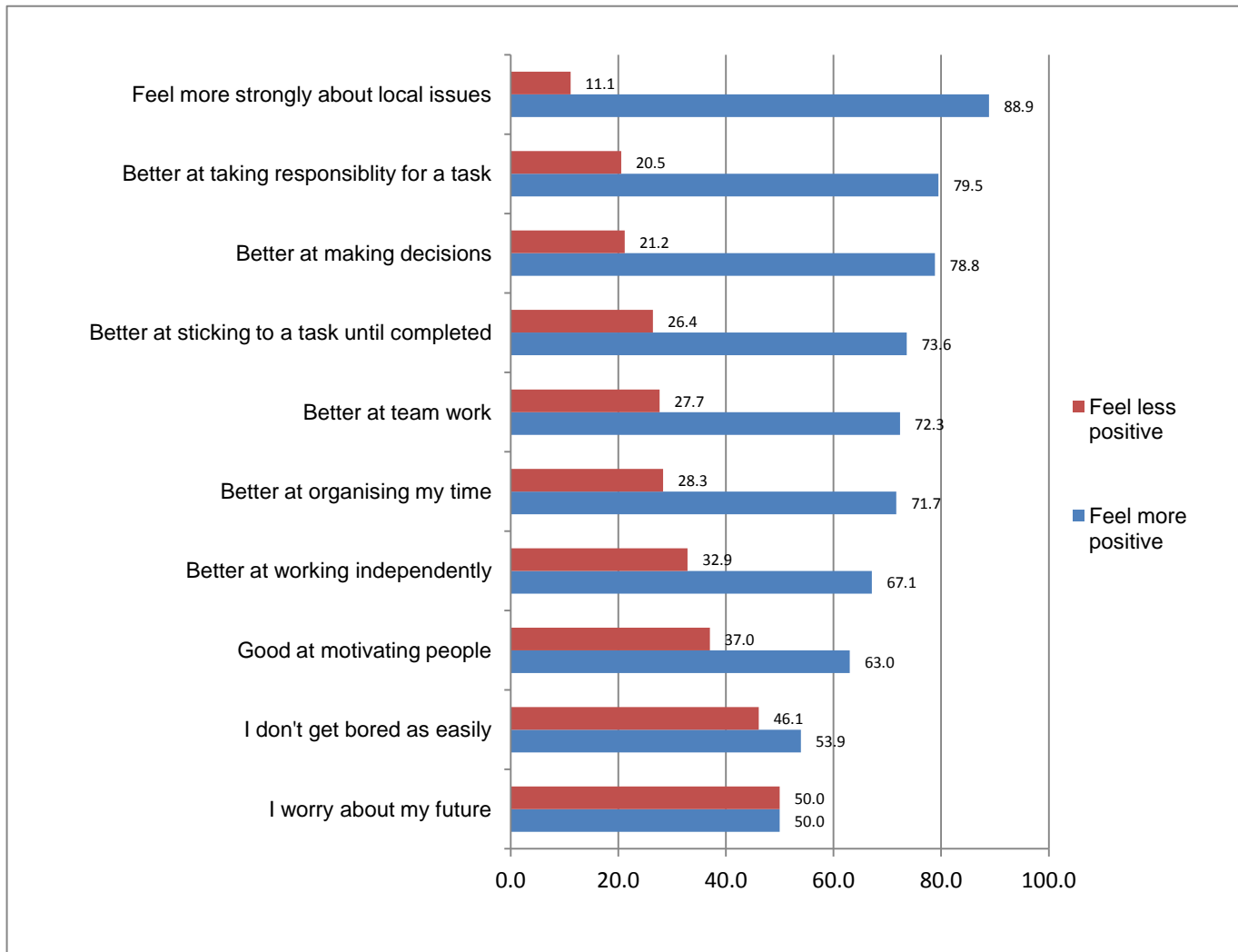Figure 5.5   **Changed attitudes on completion of Think Big in the UK**

Figure 5.6 charts the extent of change in relation to a set of factors surrounding pro-sociality and widening horizons. It is evident from this chart that nearly 85 per cent of young people cared more about their community by the end of the project – approaching the same level as 'feeling strongly' about local issues and indicating continuity and comparability in the data. Nearly 75 per cent have widening horizons – indicated by their willingness to state that they look at the world in a different way. Similarly, well over two thirds state that they are now willing to try to do new things and that they have learned new skills. Just short of two thirds of young people say that they have met other young people from different social

backgrounds – which, in turn, helps to explain why they may now state that they look at the world in a different way.

In Figure 5.5 the extent to which young people get bored was assessed – just over a half felt that they were less likely to become bored than before they did their project. But in this chart, a second indicator on interest and hobbies suggests that about 60 per cent of young people are more engaged in productive activity than before. While young people understandably feel worried about their future, as shown in Figure 5.3, these data show that after taking part in Think Big, they feel more confident about their future – presumably as a consequence of their rising perception of confidence, gaining new skills and widening horizons.

Figure 5.6   **Impact on well-being and pro-sociality in the UK**
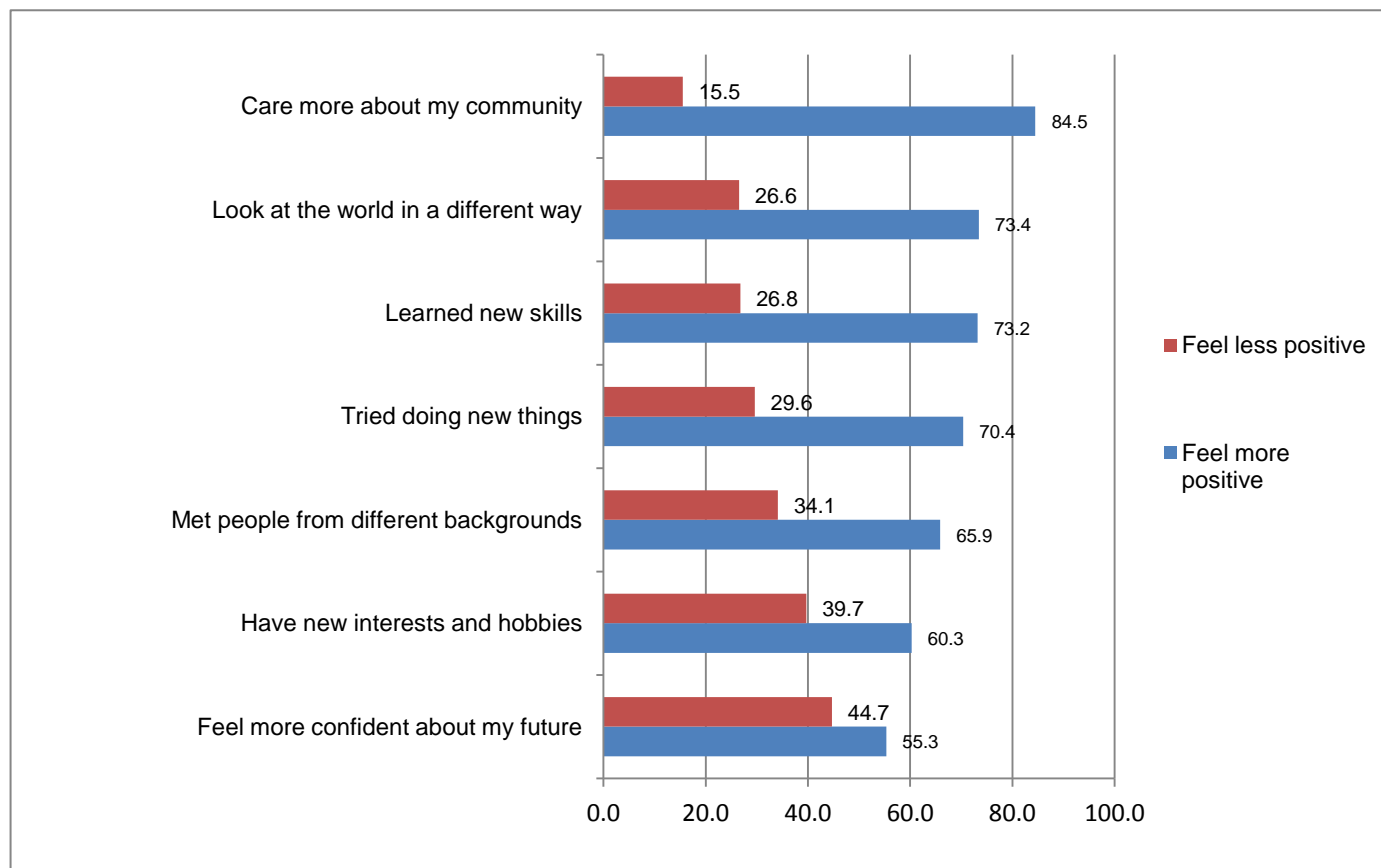

Many of the young people in the programme did not indicate a change in attitudes from start to the end of the programme. This is accounted for by a strong sense of pro-sociality or self-confidence before they started – whether these attitudes had been fully tested or not is not known – although qualitative data suggest strongly that attitudes and beliefs do change.

Figure 5.7 indicates that nearly 94 per cent of young people had consistently strong feelings about their communities – contradicting stereotypical views on how young people think and behave – as indicated in Section 3 of the report. In terms of their personal skill sets, young people often reported consistent views on their confidence to take responsibility for a task (90%), sticking to a task (85%), team work (83%), making decisions (82%), organising their time (78%), working independently (74%).

Figure 5.7 **Consistent attitudes about well being and pro-sociality in the UK**
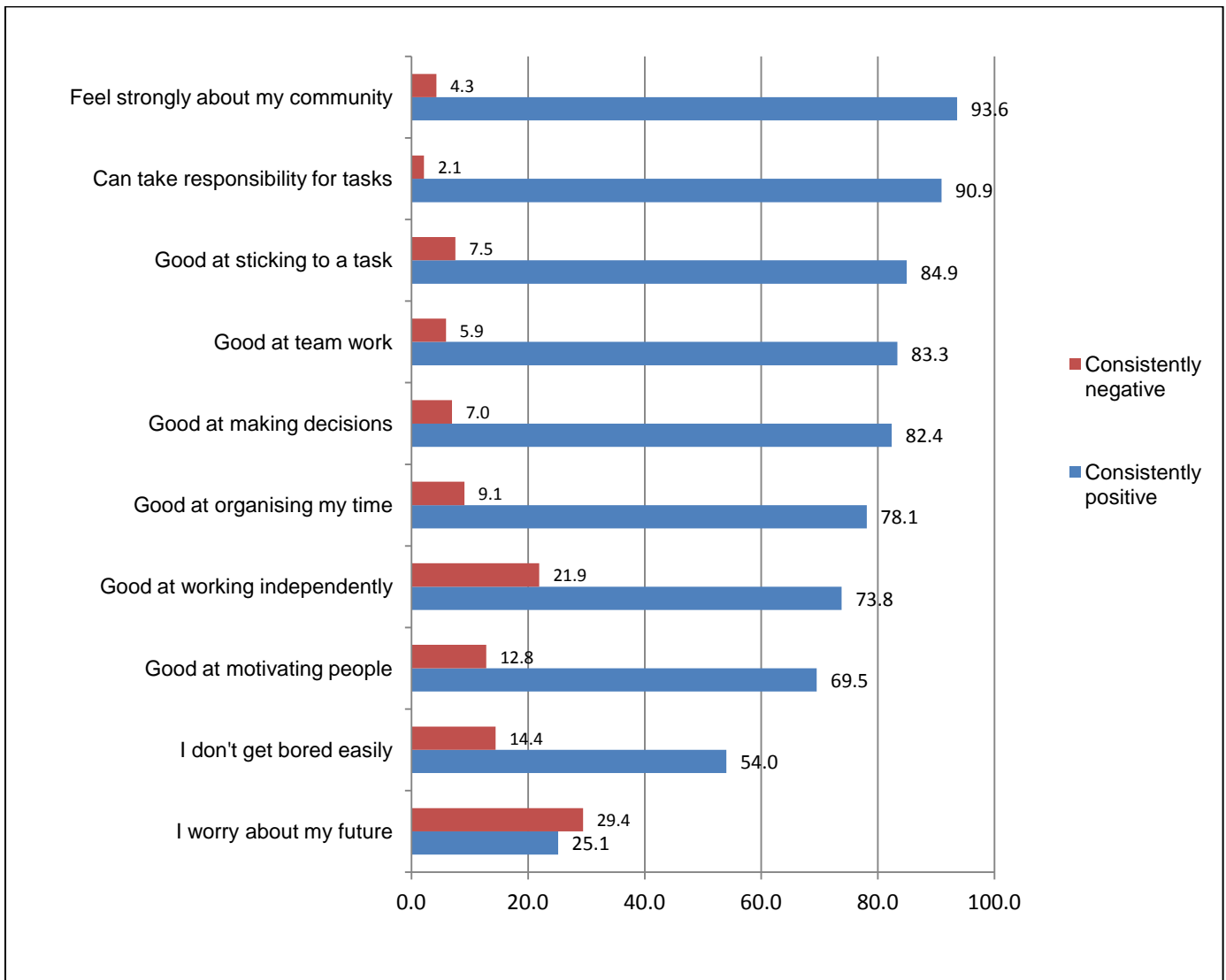
The above analysis shows the extent to which young people benefit from the programme. To ensure the validity of the findings, it is useful to compare attitudes of a wider spectrum of young people. This is done in Figure 5.9 where the initial views of young people who apply to the programme, are accepted and complete are compared. The comparison provides reassurance that the young people who complete are not fundamentally different, in attitudinal terms, from applicants in general.

The data suggest that differences in attitudes at the point of application across all categories of young people are minimal. Those who go on to complete the programme, are awarded a project grant or just apply are all shown to be similar in terms of levels of confidence. The only real difference is that those young people who complete the programme are twice as likely to disagree that they don't want to change things in their life – suggesting that they are, in attitudinal terms, 'movers and shakers' – but the differences are *very* marginal.

Overall, this table shows that young people who have applied to the Think Big programme are a confident group of young people who feel comfortable in social situations, think that

there are many things they can do well and that they can help others do things. As change agents, young people feel confident too – with about two thirds of them being eager to change things in their lives.

Figure 5.9   **Self perceptions at the start of the programme in the UK**

	All applicants to the Think Big programme	Applicants who won a Think Big grant	Applicants who completed their Think Big project
In most social situations I talk and behave in the right way			
Strongly	65.6%	66.8%	64.3%
Agree	22.3%	22.2%	24.8%
Neutral	7.2%	7.2%	4.5%
Disagree	2.6%	2.2%	3.2%
Strongly ¨	2.3%	1.6%	3.2%
There are lots of things I can do well			
Strongly	45.6%	44.5%	46.2%
Agree	38.9%	40.8%	37.8%
Neutral	10.3%	9.8%	7.7%
Disagree	3.2%	3.1%	4.5%
Strongly ¨	2.0%	1.8%	3.8%
In a group I help others to get things done			
Strongly	64.6%	65.4%	66.3%
Agree	25.0%	25.7%	26.1%
Neutral	5.9%	5.5%	1.3%
Disagree	1.8%	1.1%	1.9%
Strongly ¨	2.7%	2.4%	4.5%
I would like to change things in my life			
Strongly	38.9%	36.0%	37.6%
Agree	27.4%	30.1%	29.3%
Neutral	22.7%	25.0%	26.1%
Disagree	7.4%	7.0%	5.1%
Strongly ¨	3.6%	1.8%	1.9%
	3180	1042	157

Figure 5.8   **Tabulation of consistent and changed attitudes in the UK**

	All young people completing Think Big				Young people who did not change their opinions		
	Attitude remained the same	Became more positive	Became less positive	total	Percentage who were consistently positive	Percentage who were consistently negative	total
I feel pretty strongly about issues in my local community	80.7	17.1	2.1	187	93.6	0.0	175
I am not so good at team-work	74.7	18.3	7.0	186	83.3	0.5	156
I am pretty good at taking responsibility for a task	79.1	16.6	4.3	187	90.9	0.5	171
I am not very good at motivating people	61.0	24.6	14.4	187	69.5	1.6	133
I am pretty good at making decisions	72.2	21.9	5.9	187	82.4	0.5	155
I tend to get bored pretty easily	52.4	25.7	21.9	187	54.0	5.9	112
I am pretty good at organising my time	67.9	23.0	9.1	187	78.1	3.7	153
I am not so good at working independently	61.0	26.2	12.8	187	73.8	1.1	140
I am pretty good at sticking at a task until it is finished	71.5	21.0	7.5	186	84.9	0.0	158
Quite often, I worry about my future	41.2	29.4	29.4	187	25.1	21.9	88

5.4 Think Big in Germany

This section repeats the analysis of the UK using data from Germany. Unfortunately, there are very few cases that can be matched for young people at the start and end of their Think Big projects – only 53. However, the analysis is useful because it suggests that some of the earlier analysis in Section 4 may have exaggerated differences between Germany and other countries. Certainly the results presented below are a lot more positive.

Figure 5.10 presents data for those participants in the programme who completed pro-social questionnaires at start and end of Think Big in Germany. This is a direct comparison of a smaller sample of young people whose questionnaires could be matched directly. It is evident that the programme is having a very positive impact on these young people. The red bars in the figure indicate the percentage of young people who became more positive about each attribute by the end of the programme, while the blue bars show the percentage of young people who were always positive about these factors.

It needs to be remembered that these are self-reported views on attributes and is not an objective test by other people. Consequently, it is likely that some young people may over-estimate their skills and attributes at the start of the programme and therefore not feel that it has had that much impact. Similarly, some may feel that they are less skilled simply because they have challenged their expectations through doing the programme. As shown later in this section, young people in Germany from less affluent backgrounds are more likely to report high scores for self-attribution of skills and confidence than more affluent young people. As it is known that the more affluent young people are more successful in education – it can be presumed they have higher skill levels – but this does not mean that they *think they have* because they have been continually challenged.

What figure 5.10 indicates is that those young people who change their opinions about their skills and confidence – become much more positive. Over 80 per cent think that they have become better at communication and taking responsibility for a task, and almost 80 per cent say they are good at working independently. 75 per cent believe they are better at making decisions. Around 60 per cent think they are better at motivating people, and around 55 per cent think that they are better at teamwork and organising their time. As would be expected, quite a high proportion are more worried about their future given the general economic gloom in Europe at present – 62 per cent say they are more worried – although as data presented in Section 3 shows that unemployment for young people in Germany has actually dropped in recent years.

Figure 5.10 **Self perceptions of skills and attributes after completing Think Big in Germany**
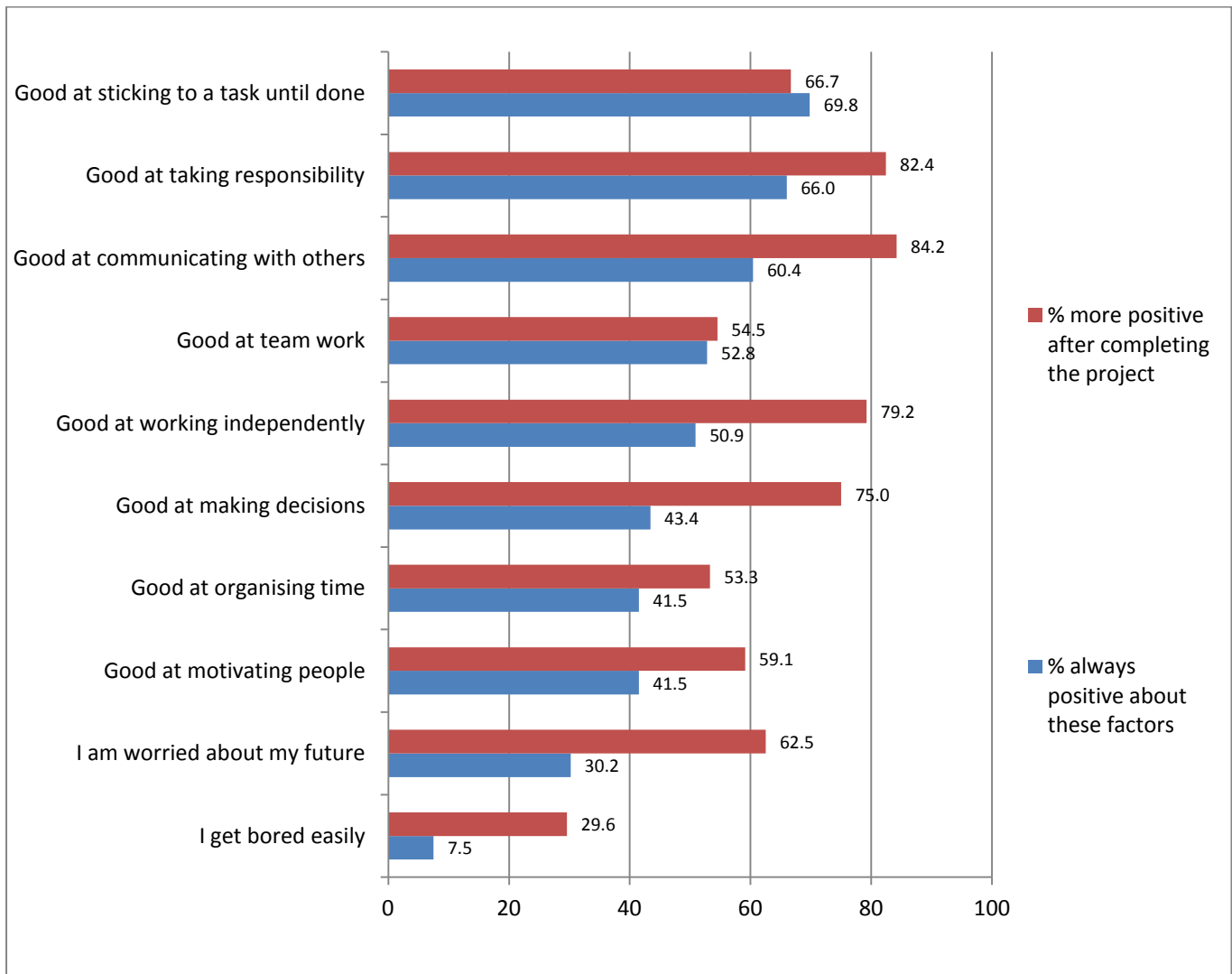
Pro-sociality and resilience indicators provide an important indicator of how young people think that the programme has helped them. Figure 5.11 provides some indications of this factor. What is clear is that, among young people who become more positive, 76 per cent are more willing to try new things – this suggests that they have widened their horizons and may becoming more resilient. Similarly, almost 60 per cent are more likely to see the world in a different way. It is puzzling that young people in the German programme report lower levels of change and interest in their community – this may be due to the aims of the programme being presented differently to young people, or perhaps different cultural attitudes on the value of being engaged in community in Germany. This needs to be explored further as the programme progresses.

For those young people who changed their attitudes, it is clear that they have become much more confident about their future (46%), although levels of confidence in this factor are generally quite low in Germany compared with other countries – even though there are more opportunities available than elsewhere.

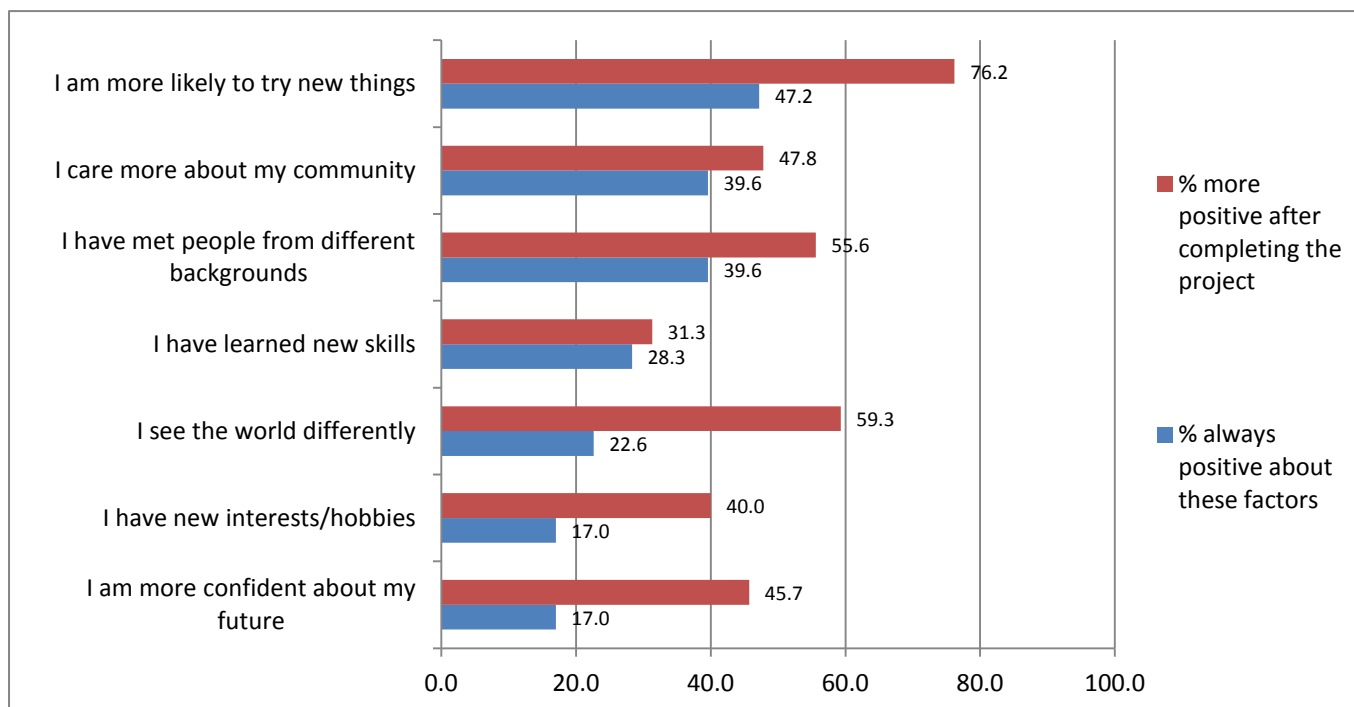Figure 5.11 **Widening horizons, confidence and pro-sociality in Germany**

Figure 5.12 shows what percentage of young people from deprived and non deprived areas say they strongly agree with a number of statements. It is clear from this table that young people from deprived areas are more likely to give higher estimations of their abilities in relation to some factors. For example, they report higher levels of skills in communications, team work, taking responsibility and motivating people. This is an interesting finding because it shows that young people who are likely to have fewer opportunities actually have more confidence compared with their more affluent counterparts who are more likely to have higher levels of educational achievement and better prospects.

Unfortunately, it is not possible to determine the number of deprived/non deprived young people at the end of the project due to the way data were recorded, but there are indications that young people from non-deprived areas may have become more confident by the end of the programme because pre-project attitudes for deprived young people are generally more close to end scores in relation to communication and teamwork. But elsewhere the situation is less clear. In 2012, it will be possible to make direct comparisons as data are being collected and recorded differently.

What does make sense, here, is that young people from deprived areas are much more likely to say they are worried about their future.

Figure 5.12 **Self perceptions of skills and confidence (strongly agree) in Germany by area of deprivation**

	Not from deprived area	From deprived area	All Think Big participants	After project is complete (all participants)
Good at communications	43.5%	**55.0%**	46.4%	54.4%
Good at team work	34.0%	**39.1%**	35.3%	39.7%
Good at taking responsibility	42.1%	**54.1%**	45.2%	49.7%
Good at motivating people	22.2%	**29.1%**	24.0%	23.1%
Good at decision making	23.6%	25.0%	24.0%	29.1%
Don't get bored easily	19.8%	18.2%	19.4%	26.6%
Good at organising time	21.3%	20.9%	21.2%	21.6%
Good at working independently	37.8%	36.4%	37.4%	41.3%
Good at sticking to a task	38.9%	**42.7%**	39.9%	40.6%
Worried about future	9.0%	**15.5%**	10.6%	11.6%

5.5 Approaches to the measurement of economic and social value

The following discussion of how value can be measured provides a critical backdrop against which the approach to impact assessment should be viewed. The arguments presented make the point that quantitative measures, even when associated with money, are always underpinned by value judgements. Rather than assuming that this is an intractable problem that cannot be overcome, however, it is better to accept the limits of quantitative measurement. Once this step is taken, then it is possible to use such methods, whilst taking care to ensure that the judgements made on the formulation of data are plausible and that reasonable interpretations are drawn from statistical findings.

There is significant disagreement amongst academics and social auditors on how best to measure social benefit in quantitative terms. Such disagreements partly derive from the fact that many social science disciplines have become embroiled in the debate, including: anthropologists, demographers, statisticians, philosophers, sociologists, classical and radical economists and political scientists, together with academics who study social and public policy and social science researchers in think tanks, private sector research companies and government.

Why is measurement valued?

Getting down to fundamentals, it is useful to ask why measurement is value in order to get a better understanding of the context within which quantitative and/or monetised impact assessments are desired. This question is rarely asked because 'measurement' is usually regarded as a relatively un-contentious process as it is associated with rigorous scientific practice. In the social sciences, this is rarely the case. The idea of measurement assumes that the objects of measurement are consistent in some way (in science this is often contentious too). Some factors can be measured (or recorded) – such as the age or participants in a project, their sex, ethnicity, educational achievement, and so on. But even in this short list, the units of measurement become more contentious as the list goes on. Educational achievement, for example, may be measured by the propensity of individuals

successfully to pass examinations. But as noted in Section 2 of this report, students do not all have the same start in life – so interpretation of the measurement can be flawed unless used with caution.

In this project, the factor which is to be measured is 'social value', but there is much argument within and across societies about what is socially valuable and what is not. Three types of value, crudely speaking, can be defined:

- **Economic value** – is measured in monetary terms. It is often thought that monetary value is relatively easy to use, but complications can arise when the difference between 'exchange value' and 'use values' are introduced.

- **Social value** – is measured in many ways, but usually is associated with utilitarian philosophical notions of increasing the public good.

- **Environmental value** – is associated with the idea that action is valued because it improves or protects the environment – however that is defined.

There are many approaches to impact assessment which attempt to harness all three aspects. These are sometimes referred to as 'triple bottom line' forms of accounting or sometimes 'blended value accounting'[14]. It is easy to be seduced by the apparent simplicity of this, but all three measures are enormously complex – even the monetary measures.

The different values attached to money

While a dollar is a dollar in anybody's pocket or purse, it does not necessarily have the same value for every person who has a dollar. Its value can depend upon:

- *The local economic circumstances – a dollar in a poor country is worth much more (in terms of exchange value) than it is in a rich one.*

- *In countries with a weak currency, the dollar is valued as a 'safe' currency because it is not as subject to loss of exchange value through local inflation.*

These are the more obvious difficulties of consistent measurement, but there are others too. As anthropologists have explained, the value of money can differ depending upon its 'special purpose'.[15] Here are some examples:

- *Gift money* is valued differently from '*earned money*', because strings can be attached (i.e. the giver may want to know what has been bought and so the recipient has to think about questions which may be asked about the appropriateness of the item). Gifts often come with expectations of approval, so the recipient is not free to do what they want with the money, and if they do, they face potential consequences.

- *Charitable gifts and grants* can be valued greatly, especially in terms of their 'use values' such as a gift of an MRI scanner to a local hospital. But the giving of money by charities can produce feelings of 'shame' for the recipient, or 'resistance' especially so if the recipient is required to make behavioural alterations as part of the deal.

- *State benefits* often carry negative connotations and recipients who are deemed fit to take paid employment are often openly criticised in the media for accepting such 'illegitimate' forms of income. People who receive benefits are aware that the way

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[14] There is a very large literature on social measurement on social impact. In the bibliography see, for example: Alexander (2010), Burns and MacKeith (2006), Cabinet Office (2008), Davies (2004), Holden (2004), Lim (2010), Morris (2003), Nicholls (2009), New Economics Foundation (2009a, 2009b), Sinclair and Taylor (2008).

[15] See Zelitzer (1989) 'The social meaning of money: 'special moneys'', *American Journal of Sociology*, 95:2, 342-77.

they spend this money is scrutinised by tax payers – and openly showing signs of enjoyment of spending, especially on 'luxury' items are socially discouraged .

Money can also have different values due to the power relationships between individuals in families and households.

- *Generational values:* pocket money is of quite limited value to parents in economic terms in relatively affluent households but is of enormous value to young people and children – parents can exploit the power they hold over the inequitable value attached to the money. Children can reverse this power relationship too, by making their parents bear the burden of their disappointment.

- *Gendered values* can be attached to money too, for example, conventional housewives may have access to a 'joint account' but if it is not 'earned' by one of them it restricts attitudes on how that money can be spent and the experience of spending. In about 18-20 per cent of households, women now earn more money than men – this too affects how money can be valued in gender terms. Men who earn less than their wife or partner are less likely to do as many household chores, for example – which tells us something about feelings of emasculation – although such attitudes are changing amongst younger men).

The point of raising these issues is to explain that the person or organisation which wants to measure the economic value of something is usually doing it for an important reason – that is often to do with power relationships. Government wants to ensure, for example, the value of the tax payers' money it spends can be justified by demonstrating that the impact of that spend is for the public good. But government makes politically motivated decisions on which aspects of its spending are monitored closely and which ones are not.

Government agendas have, for the last twenty years or so, become more concerned to demonstrate the social and economic worth of its interventions which has led to a rise in the use of cost-benefit analyses and concomitant preoccupations with evident based practice. It has increasingly been assumed that such an approach to measurement has 'inherent value' which has opened the door to a veritable industry for the development of measurement tools which, in turn, inform approaches to management philosophy and professional practice.[16]

Third sector organisations have become accustomed to the dominant discourse surrounding the marketisation of value and seek to show the 'worth' of their work by measuring their outcomes and impact in similar ways to government. The advantage of this is generally associated with their ability to increase their visibility and influence on funders' decisions about grant giving. While this is laudable, from the perspective of the organisation in terms of their sustainability, it can sometimes produce quite damaging statements on what constitutes valuable work.

Youth organisations which seek to impress government on the value of their work may be tempted to make claims about causality which actually reinforce negative stereotypes about young people. For example, it is not uncommon for organisations to argue that the cost of providing support to young people who are known to be at higher risk of involvement in crime saves the government money down the line in the criminal justice system. The danger is that this makes a false assumption that one set of social circumstances

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[16] In some approaches to cost-benefit analysis, for example, evaluators have made claims that $1 of philanthropic investment produced as much as $400 impact. Indeed, it is possible to produce as much value as is 'required' if appropriate variables are selected and significant monetary value is attached to them. Such approaches have been shown by critical observers to be more or less spurious and have, as a consequence, invalidated the energy invested in the exercise.

necessarily leads to particular life trajectories – i.e. criminality – when this is self evidently not true. The result can be, for example, that *all* cared-for children and care leavers (who do, statistically, have lower levels of educational achievement and are more likely to become involved in criminality) are considered negatively. And further, that those who do become involved in criminality do not receive the same level of understanding and support compared with children from conventional families – as if criminality was a pathological condition for cared for children.[17]

Using one set of measures on social value can, in short, reproduce and reinforce stereotypes and encourage the assimilation of deficit models of certain categories of young people. As soon as a social group is thought of as being inherently prone to risky behaviour, the likelihood is increased that they are viewed as a 'hopeless case' and in turn, it is assumed that they are *unworthy* of positive investment.

Westall (2009) has cast a critical eye on such interpretations of value and has reintroduced two other ways of defining value which are important for this project.

- *Values as belief:* refers to different ways of thinking about the world (in opposition to the idea of a social market) can be inherently valuable. In the case of Third Sector youth organisations, for example, this might be employed as a way of thinking about and understanding what helps to produce professional judgement on what is the best course of action for young people with different situational, relational and personal circumstances. Such values are known to be 'incommensurable' and therefore metrics cannot be generated to compare them. This is a more old-fashioned notion of professional judgement which is not process driven as in the case of evidence based practice.[18]

- *Existence value:* this means the value of a place, space, opportunity or artefact existing. For example, a valued space for young people to hang out can rarely be measured economically, just as it is hard to measure the value of a public sculpture such as the *Angel of the North*, in North East England, but which may raise the public's spirits and pride locally.[19] Again, this is 'incommensurable' value because it is not possible to produce a metric to estimate people's response to such stimulus. For example, in *environmental, cultural* or *emotional* terms the value of a 'beautiful view' cannot easily be measured. In *monetary* terms, by contrast, it can: as a tourist

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[17] For a recent review of this topic, see Blades, R., Hart, Di., Lead, J. And Willmott, N. (2012) *Care - a stepping stone to custody? The views of children in care on the links between care, offending and custody*, London: National Children's Bureau.

[18] Evidence based practice (EBP), which originates from the 1970s primarily in the health professions, is an attractive and popular idea because it carries with it the commonsense assumption that there is a 'best way' of doing something. In medical practice, it would appear to make more sense to use 'expert systems' than using conventional professional judgement because this can alleviate the risk of a doctor making a mistake because they have not heard of the risks associated with particular medicines or are not aware of new procedural innovations. There are two main problems with this. The first is that the 'person' is not considered in a holistic sense, but rather they are defined more narrowly by their 'complaint'. There is an inherent risk, therefore, that the wrong complaint has been identified or that the interaction between different factors is overlooked. Secondly, the drive to adopt EBP is partly driven by economic appraisal of the value of one intervention which is set against another. This can involve decisions being made on which drug is 'worth' using for particular categories of patient, in order to maximise the efficiency of using a finite financial resource – rather than making a professional judgement on an individual patient's need. There is a wide ranging literature on this topic, in the bibliography see, for example: Anderson and Dees (2006), Black (2007), Davies (1999), Grayson, (2002), Laforest and Orsini (2005), Nutley and Davies (2002), Packwood (2002) and Tenbensel (2004).

[19] Arts, heritage, archive and museum organisations find it hard to justify the value of their existence, and as a consequence, they generally try to adopt the language of marketised value by counting the number of people they get through the door rather than focusing on how an arts performance can impact on the life of an individual. See Holden (2004). The same often applies to sports projects, see Davies (2004).

trap where tickets and trinkets can be sold, or as prime real estate for people who want to buy access to that view.[20]

Similarly, companies which want to demonstrate that they are behaving in a responsible way towards the economy, society and the environment want to measure their impact in order to improve their market position in their core business. They do this because they hope that their employees and customers will value their concern and will continue to give their custom, or new customers will come enthusiastically on stream. In reality most companies generally make a much bigger financial investment to the public good through the payment to the state Exchequer through taxation – which ultimately flows back towards the achievement of the public good by government. The problem for companies, though, is that these contributions to the public good are mediated by government and direct credit for its impact can neither be claimed nor identified.

Defining social value

If the 'economic value' of interventions is so difficult to measure, it is obvious that 'social value' will be much more difficult because there are few areas where people in general agree that this or that investment is equally worthwhile for them.

When measuring the social value of an intervention, academics, social auditors and politicians use a number of terms to explain where the value is gained. Often a distinction is drawn between three types of value:

- *The value of outputs* – this is usually a measure of the value of the productivity of the intervention. Often it is possible to enumerate this value, i.e. the number of people who are employed, or were given guidance, or received a particular service. In the Think Big programme there is a raft of 'output' measures which are reasonably easy to enumerate – such as the number of young people involved, the number or projects started, and so on. Such measures indicate the level of *productivity* of a project, but do not necessarily indicate its *social value*.

- *The value of outcomes* – outcomes can be defined as the 'changes in people's lives that have been achieved as a <u>direct</u> result of their participation in an activity associated with the project.' What can be measured numerically in this area are factors such as the young people's participation in activities within which they previously had not been involved, their propensity to become involved in a wider circle of social contacts, their (actual and feelings of) achievement of success in making a project work effectively, and so on. Think Big has an evaluation methodology that can measure these outcomes, but it is more difficult to make sense of these data than output measures because young people join the project with different levels of prior experience, knowledge and expectations.

- *The value of impact* – this is the more difficult area because it is concerned with changes in the achievement, attitudes and behaviour of young people as a direct result of the project *in the context of* many other indirect influences. It is tempting for organisations which are involved with social interventions to exaggerate their impact by cherry picking results which, in reality, are the consequence of a much

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[20] Interestingly, the definition of 'a beautiful view' can change radically in different social, cultural and economic conditions. In 1132, Serlo, one of a band of dissenting monks sent to establish a monastery, described the site of Fountains Abbey in Yorkshire as 'a place remote and uninhabited, set with thorns, amongst the hollows of the mountains and rocks, more fit, it seemed, for the lair of wild beasts than fit for human use' (Drabble 1979:18). This is not how the National Trust describes it in their promotional brochures!

wider range of factors (such as other interventions, changed structural, situational, relational and personal circumstances and so on). It is also about the impact on people not directly involved in the project, such as older adults who witness young people achieving good things.

Attaching monetary values to show the benefit of a programme is possible, providing that due caution is taken in ensuring that this does not involve making exaggerated claims. Such exaggeration can come about by 'leaving out' factors which clearly would have reduced the relative impact of the assessment. An example is the process of 'claiming' credit for the impact from a project as if nothing else was going on in their lives which positively affected the experiences and opportunities of young people.

- SROI researchers sometimes refer to this as '***deadweight***'; that is, counting the impact of factors which would have achieved change if nothing had been done at all. Examples might include ignoring the impact of good parenting, of good schooling, existing support to young people which is effective, and so on.

- Commentators also alert researchers to the importance of recognising the possible negative social impact of ***'displacement'***. Displacement might include, in the context of a project which offers experiential learning for young people, the impact (in terms of opportunities or social confidence) upon those who are not allowed to take part and feel excluded and as a consequence engage in negative actions (see Cabinet Office, 2008:56).

As noted in the introduction to this document, it is necessary to be careful not to produce exaggerated claims about the negative social impact of *not* funding a project on the basis of what young people *might* do otherwise. Such cost-benefit claims usually hinge on the expense to the police, criminal justice system or the health service of rectifying the situation if young people get involved drugs or criminality. This is a common strategy adopted by organisations which want to show their potential benefits – but their claims may be more or less plausible depending on how, precisely, the impact of their work actually makes a difference.

5.6 Social return on investment – UK analysis

To produce financial indicators of the investment value of Think Big it is necessary to work estimates based on more detailed case studies of individual projects. It was not feasible to get young people involved in the programme to record their actual time investment. Researchers made estimates of average time investment based on in-depth interviews and case studies in 2010 and 2011. The averages provide a broad indication of time investment – differences between projects can be substantial. To estimate time invested in voluntary action by young people, the following distinctions are made:

- Time the project leaders spent 'learning their craft' – not counted as voluntary action as such – is estimated as being within the range of 10-20 hours. This is the process of building 'human capital'.

- Time project leaders spent planning and organising – counted as voluntary action – is estimated in the range of 15-30 hours.

- Time they spent impacting on the lives of others – i.e. time in face-to-face or 'visible' activity which brought benefit – is cautiously estimated at between 3-5 hours per project – although some would achieve a great deal more than this
  - The benefit could be by providing a service – such as the homework club (many hours of activity with high impact)

- - By providing an experience which challenged and changed attitudes – i.e. an event (but only involved a few hours of activity with high impact)

- 'Active participants' generally put in between 3-5 hours of time in visible activity but rather less in planning – if any at all.

- The hours of benefit that were 'received' by 'benefitting participants' cannot be counted as voluntary action – but can be counted as a gain in terms of social capital (challenging stereotypes/changing behaviour) or human capital (in the case of, say, a homework club where they get to study and benefit in real terms).

- The investment of time by employee supported volunteers is also added into the equation based on the actual average cost to the company of deploying staff to voluntary work within the working day. Qualitative research suggests that a minority of ESVs invest considerable amounts of their own time to Think Big, an estimate value is factored in at 0.25 added time across the whole programme.[21]

- The 'added value' contributed to the programme by its 51 partner organisations also needs to be factored into the equation. At present, data are too limited on the impact of partner organisations in statistical terms due to limited production of data on pro-sociality. What is known is that partner organisations invest significant time from their own resources in the management and administration of the programme and invest significant time in support, training and mentoring.[22] Some organisations also stage celebration events which cement the importance of young people's contribution in the minds of participants and significant others.

Giving a monetary value to the time invested in voluntary social action is difficult for the reasons noted earlier in this section. Consequently, there is little point in making the process too complex. The view has been taken that the best approach is to use the minimum wage as a consistent benchmark. In research on adult voluntary action, average income is the usual measure – however young people do not generally earn the average income.

At this stage, weights on added value are provided based on the simple premise that the more socially disadvantaged young people are likely to gain greater benefit. A simple judgement is made: that the most socially advantaged young people gain 5% added value, at each decile, this is multiplied by 1.5 to indicate progressive benefit. SROI judgements on added value can be arrived at in many different ways and are always contentious. However, there are some indications from qualitative research on Think Big, shown later in this section, that some of the more socially advantaged young people may well have done their project by other means had Think Big not been available to them – drawing upon resources from different funders. For the least advantaged, by contrast (often brought into the programme by youth partner organisations) the impact could be much greater in terms of added value. The sum of the weighted values in Figure 5.13, divided by ten, equals 56.67%. And for the present, this is the added value score added to the return on investment calculation presented below.

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[21] In 2012, an attempt will be made to quantify the added time invested by participants in Think Big using the annual ESV questionnaire to gather this information.
[22] This time allocation is estimated at 2 hours of time per project by paid employees at youth organisations and 6 hours by volunteers (time taken can be significantly more in the case of organisations which have to invest a lot of time – such as is the case with disabled young people and those who are 'hardest to reach, hear and help').

Figure 5.13 **Progressively weighted added value by index of multiple deprivation**
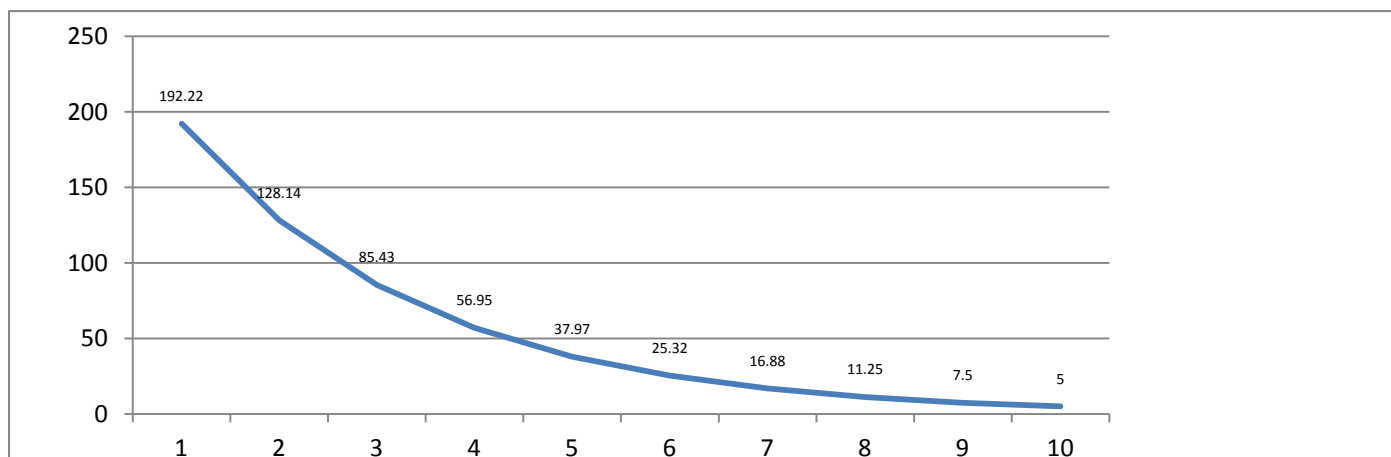
As the research proceeds and more data become available, it will be possible to do more sophisticated analysis, drawing upon variables such as age, deprivation, ethnicity, gender, disability and educational achievement. At that stage, the plausibility of weighting data will be increased.

Figure 5.14 **Estimated economic value of the programme in 2011 in the UK**

Estimates of time invested by young people[23]	Value of time invested by young people[24]	Value of time invested by ESVs[25]	Value of time invested by partner 0rganisations[26]	Total value of investment	Average added value weight of 56.67% for reaching more deprived/marginalised young people[27]	Total value of investment	% added value against initial investment in the programme[28]
Lower	£3,233,411.81	£1,175,360.00	£80,318.88	£4,408,771.81	£2,498,450.98	£6,907,222.79	230.24%
Medium	£4,420,486.80	£1,175,360.00	£80,318.88	£5,595,846.80	£3,171,166.38	£8,767,013.18	292.23%
Higher	£5,522,198.42	£1,175,360.00	£80,318.88	£6,697,558.42	£3,795,506.36	£10,493,064.78	349.77%

[23] Estimated for human capital in range 10-20 hours for project leaders, and 18-35 hours for voluntary action multiplied by 2 leaders; for active participants, estimated at 3 hours per young person for voluntary action;

[24] These estimates are based on minimum wages for young people by age (as defined on October 1st 2011): for participants aged 21 and over = £6.08; for 18-20 year olds = £4.98; for 16-17 year olds = £3.68; for younger participants the apprentice rate is used = £2.60.

[25] Estimated value of ESV engagement by Telefõnica staff is standardised at £20 per hour x 58,768 hours = £1,175,60 using the London Benchmarking Group methodology.

[26] Estimated by average income (plus employers' NI and Pension on-costs) at £31,215 per annum. Assuming 125 working days at 8 hours per day = £17.34 per hour for 2 hours per project (£34.68 per project). Estimates of 2 hours per paid employee and 6 hours of voluntary/employee time in support/training/mentoring for 6 hours per project (£104.40 per project). 579 projects were supported by partner organisations which equals a total monetary value of time invested at £80,318.88.

[27] Producing a multiplier to assess the added benefit gained by reaching young people from less affluent backgrounds cannot be monetised in a formulaic way. Similarly, it is not easy to assess benefit against other forms of social marginalisation or exclusion. A rough estimate it therefore taken which assumes that the average additional value to the programme is enhanced by 56.67 - representing the progressive value of reaching more seriously disadvantaged young people.

[28] These percentages offset the total estimated value of the project against £3,000,000 running costs of the programme in 2011 minus initial set up costs (including development of the Think Big website, initial programme development costs, etc. At the end of the programme, these costs will be reintroduced, divided by the number of years the programme runs).

What results would the same indicators produce for the whole programme?

There is currently insufficient data to repeat this exercise for the whole of the European programme. In 2012, we will undertake the process of collecting discrete data on the contribution of a sample of projects in order to gather evidence on a range of factors. The sample of projects will take into account these factors:

- The sample should be drawn from a range of the NPOs involved in delivery if it is a partnership programme.

- The sample of projects should include Level 1 and Level 2 (so that the value of the impact of additional investment at Level 2 can be quantified).

- The sample of projects should include those in deprived areas and non-deprived areas, and by other dimensions such as rural areas/urban areas, different age groups, different areas of educational achievement and so on.

These data need to be collected by the NPOs using standardised criteria but allow for recognition of variations in approach to project delivery in each country. The essential data to be collected for each sample project includes:

- The actual investment of voluntary time by project leaders for personal development and project delivery and whether or not they are new to voluntary activity.

- The number of active participants, their actual investment of voluntary time in the project and whether or not they are new to voluntary activity.

- The number of ESVs or NPO volunteers involved in the project and their actual investment of time and whether or not they are new to voluntary activity.

- The number of people the project reaches as 'benefitting participants' together with an indication of their biographical characteristics (particularly their age) and the amount of time they are involved.[29]

As shown in Figure 5.15, applying UK data and multipliers on the above factors (apart from data on young people who are new to volunteering which is being collected in 2012) produces lower estimates of social impact for the whole European programme in the range of 217% to 242% than for the UK.

This is likely to be a significant under-estimate however due to:

- Variations in project size (in terms of numbers of young people involved)

- Investment of time by NPOs and NPO partners

- Differences in estimates of time involvement in projects

- Differences in estimates of national minimum wages for young people and average incomes for other volunteers and ESVs.

Even if these multipliers were correct, however, they would still constitute a significant contribution in terms of social return on investment for a youth programme.[30]

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[29] This is probably the most difficult area as some projects will reach 1,000s of people but have only limited impact on their lives, while others will reach few, but have an enormous impact.
[30] For example, NatCen (2012) has recently produced a SROI analysis for the UK National Citizen Service which estimates percentage added value at between 200 – 300%.

Figure 5.15 **Rough estimated economic value of the programme in 2011 in Europe using UK indicators.**

Estimates of time invested by young people[31]	Value of time invested by young people[32]	Value of time invested by ESVs[33]	Value of time invested by partner Organisations[34]	Total value of investment	Average added value weight of 56.67% for reaching more deprived/marginalised young people[35]	Total value of investment	% added value against initial investment in the programme[36]
Lower	€ 4,721,370.09	€ 2,283,930.79	€156,075.85	€7,005,300.88	€3,969,904.01	€10,975,204.89	217.2%
Medium	€ 5,283,352.95	€ 2,283,930.79	€156,075.85	€7,567,283.74	€4,288,379.69	€11,855,663.43	234.7%
Higher	€ 5,719,383.44	€ 2,283,930.79	€156,075.85	€8,003,314.23	€4,535,478.17	€12,538,792.40	248.2%

[31] As in the UK, the estimate for human capital would be in the range of 10-20 hours for project leaders, and 18-35 hours for voluntary action multiplied by 2 leaders; for active participants, estimated at 3 hours per young person for voluntary action. In other countries the investment of time may be greater or smaller which will have a significant impact on the calculation of SROI multipliers.

[32] These estimates are based on UK minimum wages for young people by age (as defined on October 1st 2011): for participants aged 21 and over = £6.08; for 18-20 year olds = £4.98; for 16-17 year olds = £3.68; for younger participants the apprentice rate is used = £2.60. Wage rates would need to be produced for each European Country for complete analysis. These figures are converted to Euros at the exchange rate of 1 GBP to Euro 1.24349 (@ 17th June 2012).

[33] Estimated value of ESV engagement by Telefõnica staff in the UK is standardised at £20 per hour x 58,768 hours = £1,175,60 using the London Benchmarking Group methodology. Standardised staff costs will need to be generated for each European country for future analysis.

[34] Estimated by average UK income (plus employers' NI and Pension on-costs) at £31,215 per annum. Assuming 125 working days at 8 hours per day = £17.34 per hour for 2 hours per project (£34.68 per project). Estimates of 2 hours per paid employee and 6 hours of voluntary/employee time in support/training/mentoring for 6 hours per project (£104.40 per project). 579 projects were supported by partner organisations which equals a total monetary value of time invested at £80,318.88. This number is likely to be much higher in many European markets due to pattern of involvement of NPO staff and volunteers.

[35] Producing a multiplier to assess the added benefit gained by reaching young people from less affluent backgrounds cannot be monetised in a formulaic way. Similarly, it is not easy to assess benefit against other forms of social marginalisation or exclusion. A rough estimate it therefore taken which assumes that the average additional value to the programme is enhanced by 56.67 - representing the progressive value of reaching more seriously disadvantaged young people. This is the current UK estimate, but it will be revised in 2012 and re-applied to 2011 data. In European markets, new estimates will be need to be produced on the basis of project reach to young people who are more deprived or who are socially marginalised (by, for example, ethnicity, gender, disability, etc.).

[36] In the UK, these percentages offset the total estimated value of the project against £3,000,000 running costs of the programme in 2011 minus initial set up costs (including development of the Think Big website, initial programme development costs, etc. At the end of the programme, these costs will be reintroduced, divided by the number of years the programme runs). European estimates are produced on the average cost of delivering a Think Big project in the UK and not the actual investment of funds in each European market, this is calculated at €5,052,285.20 for the whole European programme.

5.6 Summary

The impact of the programme on young people's confidence, attitudes and beliefs is discussed in this section. Think Big programme participants' self perceptions of their skills after they have completed their projects are very positive. These results are impressive.

- Over 90 per cent of young people now think that they are good at communicating and can take responsibility for a task and 88 per cent say that they can stick to a task until it is finished.

- Over 80 per cent of young people now think that they are good at working independently, making decisions and doing team work.

- About 75 per cent of young people now think that they are good at organising their time and are good at motivating people.

The direct benefits young people say they gained from their project are very positive and show that this is a successful programme for developing young people's pro-sociality, confidence and resilience.

- Over 80 per cent of young people have met people from different backgrounds or tried things they have not done before – this means that they have widened their social horizons.

- Nearly 80 per cent of young people care more about their community – suggesting increased pro-sociality.

- A further 68 per cent of young people now see the world in a different way – suggesting a loss of social insularity and increase in breadth of social vision.

- Even in hard times, after the project, 66 per cent feel more confident about their future and only 43 per cent are worried about their future.

- Nearly 57 per cent of young people now have new interests and hobbies, suggesting higher levels of engagement in personal development.

The programme is effective in helping young people develop confidence and resilience, core skill competences and pro-sociality (mapped against Young Foundation indicators) as is shown in Figure 5.16.

Figure 5.16 **Think Big participants' sense of achievement mapped against Young Foundation core clusters of capabilities**
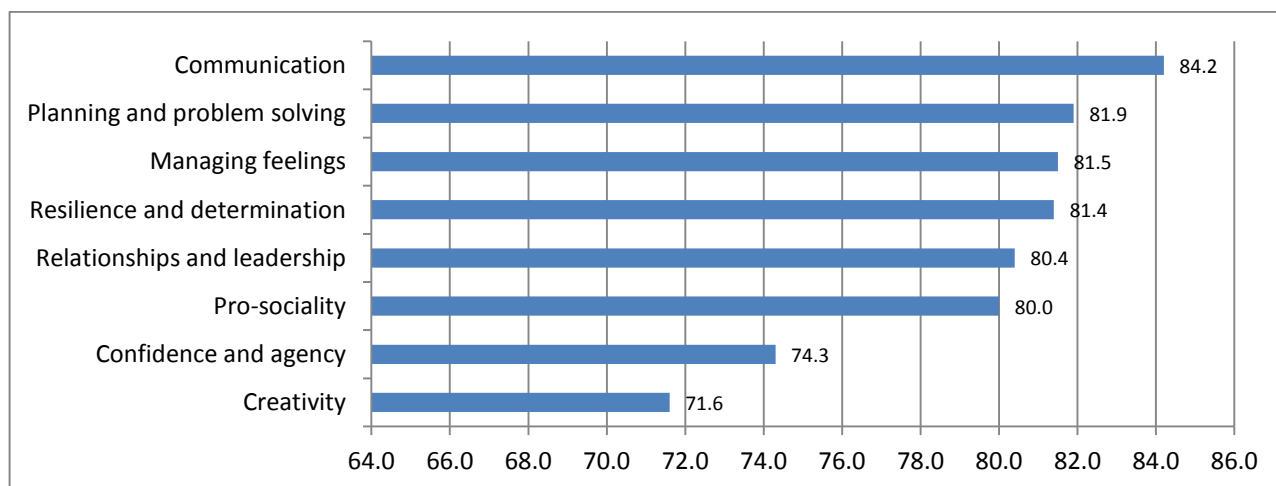
In terms of social return on investment, using figures produced in the UK, it is estimated that the added value of the programme may be between 217% to 242%. This is likely to be a significant under-estimate however due to:

- Variations in project size (in terms of numbers of young people involved).

- Investment of time by NPOs and NPO partners.

- Differences in estimates of time involvement in projects.

- Differences in estimates of national minimum wages for young people and average incomes for other volunteers and ESVs.

Even if these multipliers were correct, however, they would still constitute a significant contribution in terms of social return on investment for a youth programme.

Section 6
Case Studies

6.1 Introduction

Case studies are provided below to give an indication of how individual projects make a contribution to the programme aims. Case studies in the UK were collected by researchers. In other countries, they were self selected by NPOs.

6.2 Think Big in the UK: in their own words

In the UK, researchers undertook detailed qualitative analysis of the programme at Level 1 and Level 2. This included a mix of in-depth interviews, observation at training and residential events, observation of volunteering activity and detailed web site analysis of project content (the full analysis can be found in the UK report for 2012).

The programme helps young people to set themselves challenges:

'Being able to run a project such as I'm doing at the moment, seems to be a lot more possible. Before, these types of things seemed like, oh, it's something that other people would do and I can't manage, or I don't have the support. But things like this I could recommend to anybody. If you wanted to get a project up and running, that it is definitely possible. There is the support out there, financial support as well as just encouraging you to actually get it up and running.'

The aim of the programme is to encourage young people to think up ideas on projects which are important to them – this is appreciated by participants – but they also welcome the support they get as well.

'They're there to support you and [they're] not over-bearing with it. They let you get on with it, which I really need that as an artist and I don't like people clouding my inspirations with too many rules and regulations.'

Think Big helps young people by improving their own skills – but also inspires them to behave altruistically.

'We started O_2 Think Big and I got really involved in it. I think that's probably inspired me to do other things as well because I'm now also a deputy member of the youth parliament… so it's really made me kind of get into more helping the community with volunteering about stuff.'

The ability to empathise with other young people and to bring them together to have new experiences was recognised by many as a significant benefit of the programme.

'It's not only in running the business [of a Think Big project], but actually face-to-face talking and interacting with people; and you know it's actually good to mix with other people that are outside [your] social group... I think the main thing was, yeah, just being part of the community and actually seeing everyone come together and enjoying the day.'

Having a voice and being taken seriously is important for many young people. When young people do get the opportunity to engage with a wider constituency of people, they benefit from this in terms of building their confidence.

'It shows the wider community that actually... [young people] do take a responsibility and they are not all standing on street corners and actually a lot of young people have got something very valid to say and its very important that we encourage them to think for themselves and actually understand where they are coming from, so it's definitely changed the perception of how young people are perceived.'

Many young people involved with Think Big were genuinely surprised that they can make a difference by challenging stereotypes. Challenging negative stereotypes about young people was particularly important, following the riots in several UK cities in July 2011.

'Seeing as my event was a couple of weeks after the riots hit, I think it has challenged the ideas that people have about young people and their lack of ambition, drive and even talent. This event showed that there are young people who are determined to contribute to their community in a positive way and I think we sent out a strong message that not all youth are how they've been depicted in the media.'

Young people wanted it to be recognised that they are socially responsible citizens and that they have the potential to make a positive difference to society.

'I think that it's going to show people that we can be responsible, that we can run and maintain a project and that we can organise ourselves in something worthwhile.'

'I think some people who previously would have just passed us off as teenagers going out and doing horrible things, we've done a positive thing and I think it's just a good example of a group of young people putting on a positive event for a good cause and yeah, I think it has changed people's perceptions.'

'I think it's a good way to get involved in making a difference and showing that we've actually wanted to do something and we're not as the media portrays us to be negative. There's quite a lot of young people that actually want to make a difference and make something with their lives… it's a good way to get a positive look on young people.'

Integral to the process of making an impact for the community is the development of young people's leadership and planning skills.

'I think the best thing about it is that most people who wouldn't even think about doing project management that are only like 13 to 25, they wouldn't think about it. But when they've done their project, it gives them more experience in what to do in the future, if they want to do businesses or something like that.'

Unlocking young people's leadership potential and building their confidence is an important element of the aims of Think Big. Without that confidence, they would not have the authority to motivate others to get involved and stay involved in their projects.

'I'm sort of more confident now in terms of being able to plan a project from start to finish and actually deliver it and lead it so that would be the main thing more confidence in terms of speaking with different people as well to promote the project so that has really helped me, sort of people management skills has really improved,

networking skills meeting different people and getting contacts as well which has been a big improvement.'

Developing soft skills such as the ability to lead and motivate others requires young people to have a stronger sense of self belief and the ability to convince others that they can be trusted to get things done.

'I think, definitely, I think in terms of confidence [I have benefitted]. I mean I have done projects before but this is a little bit out of my comfort zone… I've not run a project before looking at this subject and I think I developed in terms of confidence and leadership skills as well. Because I think they were seeing me as a role model (even though some of them were my parents age), so I think in terms of leadership and confidence that was quite a change but also just generally.'

Participants felt valued and trusted by being involved in Think Big. The investment of trust by giving young people responsibility for managing money, was a highly valued aspect of the programme.

'I think it went really well, I think O_2 was really helpful, if it wasn't for the money we got from O_2 none of this would have been possible, so I think they played a major part and I wouldn't change what they did for us.'

'You know, we weren't able to get to this stage if it wasn't for Think Big and O_2. And you know, people were actually quite surprised that a big organisation such as O_2 would do such a thing for local communities… it was a good experience and everyone recognised that O_2 and Think Big are actually here to do positive things so it really just boosted everyone knowing that.'

As this section suggests, qualitative analysis is particularly valuable for adding depth to understanding of the experience of the programme (see the UK 2012 report for a much fuller discussion). In addition, insights from qualitative analysis help to form judgements which are essential for social return on investment analysis. In 2012 it is anticipated that NPOs in all the European countries involved with Think Big will undertake more detailed qualitative analysis to bolster evidence on project impact.

6.2 Germany

Think Big Germany is currently the second largest Think Big programme in terms of funding (with the UK currently the largest). The programme is delivered by partner non-profit organisation *Deutsche Kinder – und Jugendstiftung* (DKJS). In 2011 the programme moved away from its strong focus on media training for young people and became a much more clearly youth-led oriented programme. It is an open programme, but targets young people from disadvantaged groups.

Lehrer up to date (teachers up to date)

The aim of the project is to find ways of teaching teachers to understand young people. As one of the young people involved in the project, Catharina, said:

"In our opinion teachers don't understand us and we want to demonstrate that we have a different mentality"

Catharina was one of three girls who organised the project. The immediate aim of the project was to show the teachers that young people had a different approach to their lives

from adults. The longer-term objective was to improve communication and the understanding between students and teachers.

The first step was for the three 14 year old girls – Catharina, Nadine and Elizaveta – to join a workshop which introduced them to Think Big and helped them form their ideas for their project. With support of the regional Think Big project partner, JuzUnited – one of the biggest youth centres in the region – they got started with their project. They got support in developing their project plans planning and using their budget. They also drew on expertise in social media.

The idea of the project was for teachers and young people temporarily to change roles by arranging some lessons for teachers in a comprehensive school in Saarbrücken, the capital of the smallest federal state in Germany, Saarland.

After three months of preparation, on November 17th 2011, the girls slipped into the role of a teacher. The audience consisted of teachers, social workers and the school administration. In a range of tutorials, which discussed example youth culture, social networks, new media and teenage slang, amongst other things – the adults gained insights into the world of young people and got a better understanding of youth trends.

The engagement of the project team was highly praised by all participants and created a great atmosphere in the school. The headmaster of the school is now thinking of adapting the project to suit other years in the school. Finally the project got attention not only at school – local press reported about the day.

http://www.o2thinkbig.de/projekt/138

Klimascouts (climate scouts)

"Be Proud, Be Loud, Be Climate Scout!" was the slogan of the project Klimascouts. The project was founded by a scout group of 18 young people aged between 14 - 16 years and was located in Hannover, capital of Niedersachsen and one of the 15 biggest cities in Germany.

For the scouts of the "Deutsche Pfadfinderschaft Sank Georg" climate change is an issue of high importance. But to stop climate change is not an easy task to solve alone. Having identified the issue to do something to tackle climate change, a project team was founded and began to develop several ideas.

The aim of the project was to raise awareness and inform as many people as possible about climate change and get them to take action. To show how dangerous climate change could be and what could be done about it, a day of action was planned. The team got in touch with other scouts organisations to exchange knowledge on the field of environment protection.

In August 2011 the project team met the Mayor of Hannover to give him a presentation on the project's aims before the event. On August 27th the Think Big event took place in the city centre of Hannover. The project had many strands so young people organised several stations on that day to influence behaviour. The first station was very practical. On an information platform everybody received information around the topic and were offered advice on what they could do to improve climate protection. For example, interested visitors had the chance to test their own energy efficiency by using a generator powered by a bicycle.

To reach as many people as possible and get attention not only of the visitors of the event the team organised a demonstration by bicycle across the inner city. To finish the day and to reach as many young people as possible with their ideas, a gig was organised where a band performed a song which had been specially written for the project.

The project reached a big community through Facebook presentations, Youtube and also won the attention from the local press. A German television camera crew attended the project from beginning to the end. Subsequently, the documentary was shown on one of the biggest TV stations in Germany – widening the reach of the event to young people and adults across Germany.

The young people in the Think Big project team gathered a lot of experience in project planning and in realising such a big event. This has given them skills and knowledge that

they can use for school. The attention they got from local people and through media outputs made them very feel proud. And that's not the end of the story – the idea and the results of the project will be the basis for the following ones.

http://www.o2thinkbig.de/projekt/665

http://www.tivi.de/fernsehen/goldenertabaluga/artikel/35812/index.html

6.3   Ireland

The Think Big programme in Ireland has a shared interest with the UK and German programmes to help young people achieve successful life transitions. With its non-profit partner *Headstrong* it focuses on supporting young people to achieve mental health and well-being. Think Big projects take many forms, including awareness raising events, fundraising projects, environmental improvements and creative events to improve well-being, and so on.

Be Happy

Ferdia, Ciara, Mina and Alex were a group of young friends who had noticed their town being badly affected by the economic downturn in Ireland. Unemployment rates were and remain high, more empty buildings began to pop up around the town and overall Ferdia and his friends felt the town was 'depressed'. Having seen a poster in his school inviting him to 'Think Big' he saw an opportunity to make a difference to his community.

Working with his group he successfully applied for a Level 1 award with a simple idea they called *Be Happy*. The project included several actions to promote a more positive attitude around the town just by putting smile on people faces. This included leaving flowers with motivational quotes attached on people's door steps, handing out gingerbread men with reassuring messages attached to students on their way to sit state exams and painting a derelict building. Ferdia explained his motivation:

> *"Dundalk is a big industrial town, but over the last few years it feels like a dark cloud has hung over the town. We wanted to make a difference, to cheer people up a bit and make them feel better. The building that we have decorated, for example, had been covered in graffiti and looked really ugly – it has been empty for over a year. We decided to decorate it with pictures of butterflies and flowers and now it brings a smile to the faces of the people that pass it."*

To increase the reach of their project and to spark debate in the town, Ferdia, Ciara, Alex and Mina created posters with inspirational quotes which they posted on lampposts. They also created a leaflet explaining the importance of positive mental health and had an information stand in the local shopping centre. The public responded very warmly to them and they got many comments on what a great idea it was and how wonderful it was to see something positive happening in the town.

For Ferdia and Ciara their involvement had very positive outcomes – including one week's work experience with Telefónica Ireland. They both grew in confidence and Ferdia commented that:

> *"Running the project you feel like you get great leadership skills and the amount of opportunities it opened was just great. I am much more aware now of the importance of positive mental health."*

In October 2011 Ferdia and Ciara reapplied to build on their success with a Level 2 award. The focus of their project this year has been to generate a greater awareness among students in their school by creating wrist bands and running a mental health week. Ferdia has continued to train up as a Think Big Representative and will continue promote Think Big in his community and on a national level to support the awareness of Think Big around Ireland.

www.unwindyourmind.ie

Marie Duffy is a freelance journalist, mental health activist and blogger from Co. Donegal. Frustrated by the emphasis on mental illness and not mental wellness, she set up the blog **Unwind Your Mind** as an alternative for people looking for mental health information. The blog promotes the mental health equivalent of your five a day, and encourages people to do something every day which makes them feel good. It also has a database of health services in Donegal.
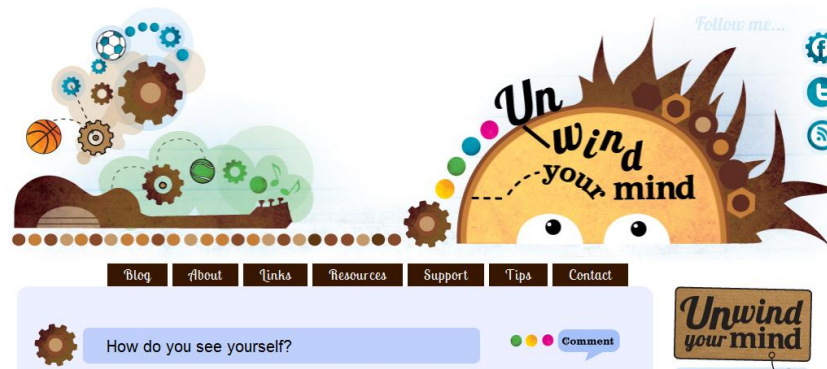
The importance and reach of this blog was highlighted in 2010 when tragically several young people were killed in road traffic accidents in both Donegal and Kerry. During this time many young people turned to Marie's blog for support and guidance to the relevant services, so much so that the HSE's Health Promotion Department in Donegal sponsored Marie to run the blog during this time. The blog proved very effective and sadly when Kerry was also affected by a tragic road traffic accident Marie was approached to provide a similar service for the Kerry community.

Her involvement in Think Big has allowed her to put her idea of a positive mental health website into a reality.

> *"Although I felt very strong about my idea I would have been unable to see it come to fruition without the financial support of Think Big and the valuable support of my mentor. When I was awarded Level 2 funding I was delighted as it gave me the confidence to take my idea further, and to know that other people believed in the idea reassuring. I had tried to apply to other organisations for funding but had been turned down because my project was not for profit and had no way of generating an income."*

Being involved in Think Big has been a huge accomplishment for her

> *"Not only has the whole experience allowed me to develop as a person, but it has also allowed me to help other people going through difficulties. I want to change the way people think about mental health and my involvement in Think Big has allowed me to start doing this. I have been campaigning for better mental health services for a couple of years now, and the backing from O2 has really been a huge benefit and has led to people taking my ideas seriously. My website has had over 50,000 hits from people all over the world and almost 60,000 people have joined my Facebook Cause to improve mental health services for young people. This is a huge accomplishment and without the support from Think Big I would not have had the self-confidence to develop my idea."*

Another huge achievement in 2011 was when Marie was invited to speak at a conference called Possibilities 2011 about her work as a mental health activist. This was definitely a proud moment as she spoke alongside the Dalai Lama, the former President Mary Robinson, and many other activists, in front of an audience of 2,000. The presentation was streamed to thousands more around the world. Summing up her experience of taking part in Think Big Marie said *"Being involved in Think Big has allowed me to become part of an exciting community of young people creating change around Ireland. I feel empowered and know that I can do anything I put my mind to."*

In helping Marie launch her project and raise her profile she was interviewed by several local radio stations in Co. Donegal, there several local newspapers covered her project and nationally *Business and Finance* magazine named her as a leader to watch in a list of their top Irish Business Leaders in 2011. Marie has been a fantastic advocate for Think Big and has driven 10 further applications to Think Big from her county.

6.4 Slovakia

The Ekopolis Foundation is an experienced grant maker active in Slovakia in areas of public participation, environmental projects and building civil society. Think Big has been operated by the Ekopolis Foundation in cooperation with O2 Telefónica Slovakia since 2010. In 2011 new partner *Children of Slovakia* Foundation became involved to provide specialized training module for beneficiaries of the programme.

The programme Think Big in Slovakia promotes positive action for young people; providing opportunities to learn new skills, and build their position in the community. In 2011, 41 Level 1 projects (with grants of 500 €) and 10 Level 2 projects (with grants of 3000 €). The activities of young people were focused on sport and outdoor activities, traditional and modern culture, environment, and social issues.

Each project directly involved active participation of a core group between 4-10 young people, and each project had about 200 benefitting participants including young people in other members of the community.

Theatre Day in Humenné

The objective of the project was to create and strengthen the cooperation among several amateur theatrical groups in the region. Humenné is a small town in the Eastern Slovakian region of Prešov with 34,600 inhabitants. The region is characterised by poverty, has a high

unemployment rate and low wages for those who are employed. As a consequence, the young people often migrate to the western part of Slovakia, or other EU countries to find work.

The groups of young people prepared a Theatre Day in cooperation with students of various schools and members of the public. Due to this collaborative effort valuable cultural activity was produced which enriched the locality. Furthermore, young people became more aware of and interested in theatre and culture. Using many theatrical techniques, the project showed young people that creative theatre can be fun and also build their skills. Techniques used included: animation, language exercise and improvisation – and concluded with a public performance.

The project had impressive outputs. On the Theatre Day, eight artist groups participated involving 58 amateur actors in four performances in front of an audience of 150 people. The young amateur actors committed themselves to continuing with these activities in future.

ART BIN, Bratislava

The objective of the project was to decorate waste bins in the City of Bratislava. A group of five young people approached local authorities and politicians to get the project off the ground and to involve children from local orphanages. New waste bins were bought and distributed and children painted them under leadership of the youth group. The project took place in June, 2011 in the city centre of Bratislava with the participation of local inhabitants.

CementARTňa - Banská Bystrica

The objective of the project was to hold workshops which focused on art, music, theatre, and included discussions about well known individuals of the region. The event was organized by local civic association of young people, who are interested in modern art (for more information: http://artne.sk/?page_id=69). The event was organised in an old cement mill. The building is now very popular amongst young people in the region of Central Slovakia. About 200 young people participated in the workshops.

Kozľa Revival in Máninec

The objective of the project was to organise young conservationists' activities in an area of natural beauty near Považská Bystrica (Trenčín region). Považská Bystrica is a typical industrial town without any historical monuments and with large concrete buildings. Natural recreational areas are therefore important to people. Young students were encouraged to recognise the value of such areas and become involved in their development and maintenance in cooperation with NGOs and other institutions in the municipality, together with other local people. Collaborating with elementary and secondary schools and the Free Time Centre, excursions were organised, focusing environmental protection.

A total of eight excursions were organised, four more than originally planned, involving 190 pupils and students and 17 teachers. Eight brigades of volunteers, each with a minimum of 60 participants, invested more than 1000 hours of activity. The projects included, for

example, the renovation of natural and recreational areas of Máninec – including environmental work on about five hectares of protected area which improved the habitat for flora and fauna – and particularly rare insects.

As a result of the project, the organisers created an exhibition for schools about the natural environment which produced good feedback and compliments from experts of local institutions. The success of the project also resulted in two articles in local newspapers (edition of 20.000) and a prime-time TV news report.

6.4 United Kingdom

The UK is the largest national programme, the longest established and is the widest ranging. The programme is delivered by a partnership of the *National Youth Agency, UK Youth and Conservation Foundation* together with over 50 partner organisations. It provides opportunities for all young people aged 13-25 across a wide range of project types. The focus on young people from less advantaged communities in the UK connects with the objectives of programmes in other EU countries and is central to Telefónica's CSR objectives.

Project Change

Project Change is a charity which encourages young people to make a positive contribution to their community by getting involved with practical activities. For their Think Big project, Daniel asked other young people to get together to talk about the main priorities in the community and to make a team decision about what they could do to help. They decided to offer their services gardening and decorating on their local estate.

The project brought many benefits for the young people and the community. Young people gave their time, learnt practical skills and helped people in their community that they may not have otherwise have come into contact with. Members of the community benefited because practical jobs got done that they may not have been able to do themselves. As importantly, the project increased contact and understanding between older and younger generations on the estate. As Daniel said:

'I think the community has benefited because they see young people from their community doing something positive... And it has also helped to build communication between young people and the older people, where there can sometimes be quite a bit of a divide. But there seems to be quite a good sort of atmosphere between the two generations which is good.'

Working with young people from the estate, Daniel believes, has helped to change negative perceptions of those young people who tend to 'hang out' wearing hooded sweatshirts. It has shown that they can be just as friendly as the young people who were taking part in the project:

'A few young people walking to the shop with a hooded jumper, there's the assumption that they are going to cause havoc, so anything that we can do which is obviously positive helps a lot and especially the estate where we've been [working], where young people look exactly the same, wear the same hoodies and look like any other teenager but doing something like [our project] changes their perception, you know, quite a lot.'

The project not only helped the community by completing practical tasks, it also provided a sense of achievement and fulfilment for the young people involved. The project has also encouraged and enhanced a sense of community cohesion. The visibility of young people out in their community doing something positive has helped challenge and change negative perceptions of young people on the estate. It has also raised awareness of the work that Project Change does and increased opportunities for them to get involved in other projects in the local area.

Disability Awareness Road Shows

The main aim of Josh's Think Bigger project was to raise awareness of one of his passions: wheelchair basketball. He was interested in promoting the sport and raising awareness about the skills needed to play it. To do this, Josh arranged visits to schools with members of his team to make presentations. They also took wheelchairs along, to let young people have a go and see what playing the game entailed. The idea was to challenge ideas about the game by showing how skilful and competitive it is. Josh concluded:

'Not many people knew how to play wheelchair basketball… the amount of people that came up before [the road show] and said - 'oh it's easy we'll be able to score'! Then after[wards], we had people coming up saying 'my hands are killing me', or 'I've got blisters' or 'wow that was hard' - it changed people's views very fast.'

The sessions provided an opportunity to raise awareness about the lives of wheelchair users. As Josh pointed out, it gave able-bodied young people the chance to ask questions – which was important for widening understanding of disabilities.

'…A lot of people now know how to treat [disabled] people and just treating everyone the same. Everyone wants to be treated exactly the same and everyone be equal.'

Josh's Think Bigger project has raised his own confidence and he now feels better able to *communicate with people with whom he is unfamiliar:*

'I got a lot of confidence from it, getting used to talking to people and pitching an idea. Everyone asking me questions was, like, a really good confidence booster. Getting used to it, because I was nervous at the start, with people asking me questions and I was, like, 'what do I say?' I know what I'm saying now.'

Section 7
Summary and conclusions

Telefónica launched the O$_2$ Think Big programme in 2010 to encourage young people to take an active role in their communities by providing funding, support, training and guidance to establish and manage their own projects. The programme was first piloted in the UK and later rolled out across three other European countries: Germany, Ireland and Slovakia, followed by the Czech Republic in 2011.

The programme has an ambitious strategy to impact positively upon the lives of young people and to engage and inspire young people to make positive choices for themselves and their communities. Moreover, the programme sets out to engage with adults, through campaigns, to think differently about the positive role young people can play in their communities.

> *We believe in young people. We believe they have the power to make a better Europe. We need to back them, celebrate their talent and release their true potential to fix the things that matter. We'll campaign for them. We'll support their projects and promote their achievements. We'll change attitudes. We'll challenge the stereotypes that stifle them and ensure they are connected to the heart of our communities.*

The programme is innovative because its core aim is to target the interests of young people, rather than to impose themes which are considered to be beneficial for them.

This report shows that the Think Big programme across Europe has had a significant impact on young people's wellbeing in difficult times. At present, in most European countries, youth unemployment is rising fast. This means that opportunities for young people to make successful life transitions are significantly reduced. In hard times, young people need a chance to show themselves and show others that they have potential. Not just the potential to build employability skills so that they have a better chance of getting a job, but also the potential to make a difference to their communities. Think Big helps them do this.

7.1   Project aims, size and reach

What are the aims of the Think Big programme?

The principal objectives of the programme are defined as follows:

- Impact positively upon the lives of young people in transition to adulthood.
- Engage and inspire them to make positive choices for themselves and their communities.
- Engage with adults, through national campaigns, to think differently about the positive role young people can play in their communities.

The programme has been designed against a backdrop of significant economic challenges in many European nations – many of which have deepened since the programme begun. It is recognised that about one third of under 25s in Europe are not in employment, education and/or training. This means that there may be a generation of young people who are struggling to find the opportunities and to make the choices that will engage them positively in society, and help them move forward successfully to achieve stable and secure adult lives.

The programme recognises that young people need to have:

- Confidence in themselves and their peers.

- A vision of what they can be and what they can accomplish.

- The skills and resources to achieve their ambitions.

The ambition of the programme is to help young people achieve their potential so that:

- More young people are engaged in contributing to society.

- Society is more engaged in supporting young people.

The idea is to develop an open programme for all young people. But in so doing, a central programme objective is to target those young people who are most vulnerable. A key aim, therefore, is that at least half of the young people in the programme are from less advantaged backgrounds and are more vulnerable to becoming socially marginalised or excluded.

How big is the programme?

The Think Big programme has grown in 2011 and will grow further over the next few years. The Think Big programme has bold ambitions to reach large numbers of young people and produce projects which bring social benefit and genuinely challenge negative stereotypes about young people. By 2011-2015 it is expected that the number of projects delivered will reach over 11,000 by the end of the programme. It is estimated that almost 200,000 young people will actively participate in the programme and that 1.5 million people will benefit from the programme.

For the programme as a whole in 2011, more than 200,000 young people have benefitted from Think Big and about 40,000 have been directly involved as active participants. Investment in young people's personal development has been significant too with nearly 5,000 receiving training, support and mentoring to successfully complete their projects.

The intensity of project activity varies between countries at present. The UK is, by far, the largest programme – producing over 1,300 projects in 2011 and involving over 23,000 active participants. Germany is the second largest programme, undertaking over 500 projects and reaching over 11,000 active participants. In Ireland, Czech Republic and

Slovakia, the level of investment in Think Big is lower at present, but the programme continues to play a significant role in each of these smaller countries.

Figure 7.1 **Project volumes and numbers of participants in Telefónica Think Big 2011**

	Number of projects	Number of young people trained, mentored and supported	Number of active participants	Number of benefitting participants
Czech Republic	100	300	1,750	13,866
Germany	525	2,880	11,287	58,537
Ireland	111	250	1,944	9,990
Slovakia	41	70	898	5,135
UK	1,317	1,369	23,048	118,530
Total:	2,094	4,869	38,926	206,058

Who does the programme reach?

The Think Big programme has been successful in its aim of being an open programme to all young people.[37] Analysis of the biographical characteristics show that:

- Across the whole programme, 48 per cent of programme participants are female and 52 per cent are male.

- The programme as a whole attracts young people from across the age range 13 years to 25 years.

- The programme is socially inclusive, 24 per cent of participants are from ethnic minority or migrant families.

- About 4 per cent of participants in the programme have disabilities or limiting illnesses.[38]

- The programme mainly includes young people who are in education, training and work: 70 per cent are in full or part time education, and 34 per cent are in full or part-time employment.[39]

- Young people from all levels of education are participating in the programme: 20 per cent have no qualification, 26 per cent have lower secondary level qualifications, 33 per cent have higher secondary level qualifications (many of whom are at university), 12 per cent have vocational qualifications, and 10 per cent are graduates.

- For the programme as a whole it is not possible to define how many young people come from deprived areas due to differences in the way deprivation is defined. In the UK, 58 per cent are from deprived areas, in Germany, 25 per cent, and in Ireland 71 per cent.[40]

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[37] The percentages in this section refer mainly to active participants in the programme, and particularly project leaders.
[38] These data refer to Ireland, Slovakia and the UK only.
[39] These percentages add up to more than 100% because some young people are both in education and work. It is not possible yet to give a precise percentage of the number of young people who are not in work, education or training (NEET) across the programme – but it is estimated as being between 8 and 15 per cent.
[40] No data on deprivation were produced in Slovakia for 2011. However, case study material suggests that about 40 per cent of young people were from deprived areas.

7.2 Impact of the programme on young people's lives

The impact of the programme on young people's confidence, attitudes and beliefs is discussed in this section. Think Big programme participants' self perceptions of their skills after they have completed their projects are very positive. These results are impressive.
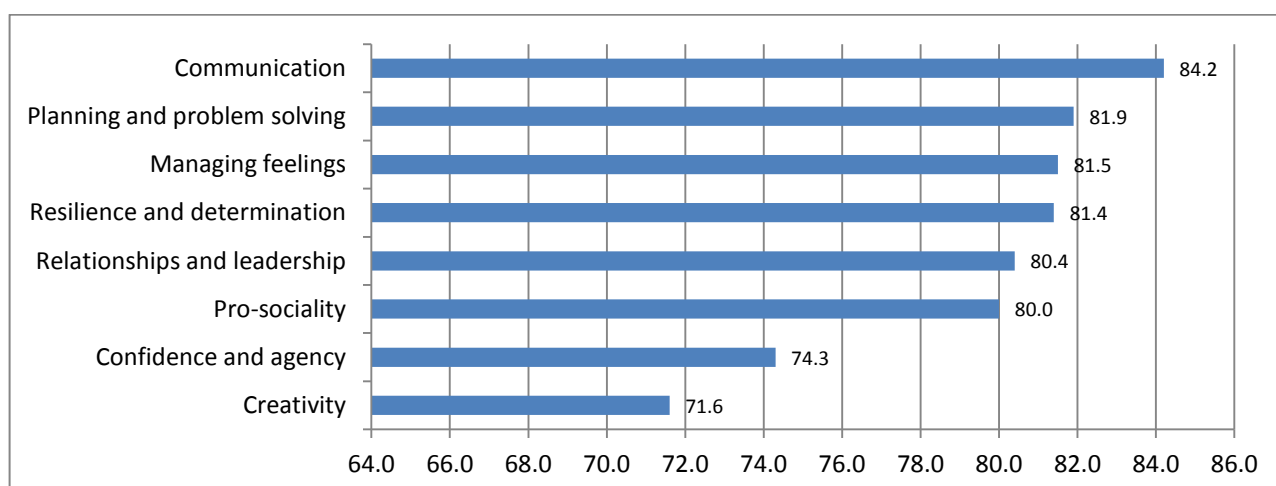
- Over 90 per cent of young people now think that they are good at communicating and can take responsibility for a task and 88 per cent say that they can stick to a task until it is finished.

- Over 80 per cent of young people now think that they are good at working independently, making decisions and doing team work.

- About 75 per cent of young people now think that they are good at organising their time and are good at motivating people.

The direct benefits young people say they gained from their project are very positive and show that this is a successful programme for developing young people's pro-sociality, confidence and resilience.

- Over 80 per cent of young people have met people from different backgrounds of tried things they have not done before – this means that they have widened their social horizons

- Nearly 80 per cent of young people care more about their community – suggesting increased pro-sociality.

- A further 68 per cent of young people now see the world in a different way – suggesting a loss of social insularity and increase in breadth of social vision.

- Even in hard times, after the project, 66 per cent feel more confident about their future and only 43 per cent are worried about their future.

- Nearly 57 per cent of young people now have new interests and hobbies, suggesting higher levels of engagement in personal development.

The programme is effective in helping young people develop confidence and resilience, core skill competences and pro-sociality (mapped against Young Foundation indicators) as is shown in Figure 7.2.

Figure 7.2 **Think Big participants' sense of achievement mapped against Young Foundation core clusters of capabilities**

In terms of social return on investment, using multipliers produced in the UK, it is estimated that the added value of the programme may be between 217% to 242%. This is likely to be a significant under-estimate, compared with the UK, due to:

- Variations in project size (in terms of numbers of young people involved)

- Investment of time by NPOs and NPO partners

- Differences in estimates of time involvement in projects

- Differences in estimates of national minimum wages for young people and average incomes for other volunteers and ESVs.

Even if these multipliers were correct, however, they would still constitute a significant contribution in terms of social return on investment for a youth programme.

As Figures 7.3 and 7.4 show, the programme is having success in achieving its longer-term objectives of helping young people make positive life choices so that they can make successful transitions to adulthood.

Figure 7.3   **Indications of support for successful life transitions**

How young people may be positioned <u>before</u> joining the O$_2$ Think Big programme	▷	How young people may feel <u>after</u> finishing an O$_2$ Think Big project	Evidence of changed attitudes and behaviours[41]
Surface confidence or 'attitude' to survive in difficult situations, but lack of underlying confidence and emotional resilience	▷	Stronger sense of personal worth, strengthened emotional resilience and confidence to take positive risks and tackle new challenges	76% of participants in the European programme feel that they are better able to organise their time well. 85% of young people feel that they are better at working independently *'It's not only in running the business [of a Think Big project], but actually face-to-face talking and interacting with people; and you know it's actually good to mix with other people that are outside [your] social group..."* (UK participant).
Socially, emotionally and economically dependent on others to solve problems, producing passivity and undermining confidence to take control	▷	Able to identify what needs to be done, find a way to do it (with support), take charge of the situation and make things happen through leadership	85% of project leaders feel that they are better at making decisions. 92% of project leaders feel that they are better at taking responsibility for completing a task. *'I'm sort of more confident now in terms of being able to plan a project from start to finish and actually deliver it and lead it so that would be the main thing more confidence in terms of speaking with different people as well to promote the project so that has really helped me, sort of people management skills has really improved, networking skills meeting different people and getting contacts as well which has been a big improvement.'* (UK participant).
Socially withdrawn, isolated or excluded, short horizons and limited experience or understanding/tolerance of the 'unknown'.	▷	More socially participant, more knowledgeable about alternative situations, willing to become involved in situations which are different or challenging	73% of participants now feel that they are better at motivating people. 84% of young people are more likely now to try doing new things *'We started O$_2$ Think Big and I got really involved in it. I think that's probably inspired me to do other things as well because I'm now also a deputy member of the youth parliament… so it's really made me kind of get into more helping the community with volunteering about stuff.'* (UK participant).
Perceive that society regards self as a social burden or threat, feel positioned socially as a potential 'problem' even without behaving or wanting to behave in such a way	▷	Higher level of awareness of the potential of young people whose behaviour is read as a sign of being troublesome. Recognition of young people as a 'social asset'	73% of young people have learned new skills that they did not have before. 56% of young people have developed new interests and hobbies. *"Running the project you feel like you get great leadership skills and the amount of opportunities it opened was just great. I am much more aware now of the importance of positive mental health."* (Participant from Ireland).

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[41] These data are drawn from Figure 5.4.

Figure 7.4 **Indications of successful challenges to negative stereotypes and building pro-sociality**

How young people may be positioned before joining the O₂ Think Big programme		How young people may feel after finishing their O₂ Think Big project	Evidence of increased pro-sociality and challenges to negative stereotypes
Fearfulness or suspicion of 'other' young people, producing social isolation or combative behaviour	▷	Recognition that other young people are not so 'different', increasing social cohesion and building social trust	81% of participants have met people from backgrounds different from their own. *"In our opinion teachers don't understand us and we want to demonstrate that we have a different mentality."* (participant from Germany.
Perceptions of position in the world as 'unchangeable'. Dampens expectations and limits scope for thinking about doing things differently	▷	Stronger sense of confidence and hopefulness to effect change. Increasing feelings of personal ability and see the point in enterprising attitudes and behaviours	80% of participants care more about their community. 66% of young people feel more confident about their future (although 43% also say they are 'worried about their future' in these hard times). *"Not only has the whole experience allowed me to develop as a person, but it has also allowed me to help other people going through difficulties. I want to change the way people think about mental health and my involvement in Think Big has allowed me to start doing this.'* (Participant from Ireland).
Older adults perceive young people as an 'other' category to themselves. Beyond their understanding and doubtful of their potential.	▷	Older adults see young people as positive assets to society – repositioning them as 'ours', not 'other'	58% of employee supported volunteers (ESVs) felt that they had a stronger understanding of community issues (UK only) 72% of ESVs felt they were making a stronger contribution to their community through work with young people (UK only). *'It shows the wider community that actually... [young people] do take a responsibility and they are not all standing on street corners and actually a lot of young people have got something very valid to say and its very important that we encourage them to think for themselves and actually understand where they are coming from, so it's definitely changed the perception of how young people are perceived.'* (UK ESV participant)
Prejudicial and stereotypical ideas about young people produce widespread suspicion, calls for 'control' and 'retribution' for young people in general, not just those who behave badly	▷	Increasing awareness of the contribution and worthiness of the vast majority of young people. Increasing trust and respect – producing a virtuous circle (investing produces benefit)	Most young people interviewed on the programme felt that older people now had a better appreciation of their contribution and potential. *'I think the community has benefited because they see young people from their community doing something positive... And it has also helped to build communication between young people and the older people, where there can sometimes be quite a bit of a divide. But there seems to be quite a good sort of atmosphere between the two generations which is good.'* (UK participant)

Section 8
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