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"Outside the bubble": exploring youth (In)equalities in the context of the Erasmus+ programme

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Dedico esta tese às (felizmente, já muitas) "crianças" que me mostraram o lado de fora da bolha, às "pessoas que fazem coisas" e partilham a sua energia, coragem e experiências, e a quem acredita "na magia da mobilidade" e que vale a pena fazer mais por um amanhã com menos desigualdades.

Acknowledgements

Temos o direito de ser iguais quando a nossa diferença nos inferioriza; e temos o direito de ser diferentes quando a nossa igualdade nos descaracteriza. Daí a necessidade de uma igualdade que reconheça as diferenças e de uma diferença que não produza, alimente ou reproduza as desigualdades.

Boaventura Sousa Santos (2003)

Abstract

Inclusion and the need to address the challenges faced by younger generations are more than ever on the agenda of global political institutions, practitioners, and researchers. 2022 has even been pronounced the European Year of Youth in recognition of the heightened difficulties deriving from the Covid-19 pandemic. In this context, the Erasmus+ Programme adopts the mission of creating a level playing field for the youth of today by reducing inequality and increasing inclusion, with a doubled budget and new strategies, but still presenting rhetoric that is more target than people-oriented. By acknowledging there are 'invisible' inequalities in accessing opportunities, this study aims to help 'pop the bubble' of Erasmus+.

This dissertation critically analyses the Erasmus+ Programme and identifies some of the opportunities and challenges of it as a possible tool for inclusion. Namely, it suggests that the political term 'young people with fewer opportunities' and the idea of comparative disadvantage might pose ethical, conceptual, and methodological challenges to researchers and project actors alike. Thus, the pursuit of Erasmus+ as a Programme that is inclusive and generates inclusion would benefit from further discussion and practical approaches to this concept, to take a less functionalist approach to youth inequalities, as such developed by the Youth sector.

Building on these arguments and a brief presentation of some concepts and assumptions surrounding youth inequalities, the study moves onto an empirical phase that puts the spotlight on those who are targeted but often not consulted: young people facing disadvantaged situations who have never participated in Erasmus+. For that, a non-experimental quantitative survey design in an online questionnaire format was conducted with a purposive sample formed by 40 students of internationalised Vocational Education and Training (VET) institutions from the city of Porto, Portugal. The choice to research Erasmus+ in VET instead of other sectors is cleared through an in-depth characterisation of it at the EU and national level, which shows students in this type of education match the profile of participants targeted. Moreover, the literature review demonstrates that VET, like Erasmus+, shows room for improvement in the way it addresses the goals and needs of young people.

The data analysis reveals that the participants in the study positively evaluate the Erasmus+ inclusive efforts developed in their schools and have a positive outlook towards the programme itself, showing an interest and intent to participate in learning mobility. The

rather uniform distribution of preferences regarding types of support and other measures strengthens the argument that addressing inclusion is an interdisciplinary affair that should be further pursued.

Resumo

A inclusão e a necessidade de abordar os desafios enfrentados pelas gerações mais jovens estão, mais do que nunca, na agenda de instituições políticas globais, profissionais e investigadores. Inclusivamente, o ano de 2022 foi proclamado o Ano Europeu da Juventude, em reconhecimento das dificuldades acrescidas decorrentes da pandemia Covid-19. Neste contexto, o Programa Erasmus+ tem por missão criar condições equitativas para os jovens de hoje, reduzindo as desigualdades e aumentando a inclusão;com um orçamento dobrado e novas estratégias, mas ainda apresentando uma retórica que é mais alvo do que as pessoas orientadas. Ao reconhecer que existem desigualdades 'invisíveis' no acesso a oportunidades, este estudo pretende ajudar a 'rebentar a bolha' do Erasmus+.

Esta dissertação analisa criticamente o Programa Erasmus+ e identifica algumas das oportunidades e desafios deste enquanto potencial ferramenta de inclusão. Nomeadamente, sugere-se que o termo político 'jovens com menos oportunidades' e a ideia de desvantagem comparativa podem representar desafios éticos, conceituais e metodológicos para tanto para investigadores como para atores do projeto. A prossecução do objetivo de fazer do Erasmus+ um programa inclusivo e gerador de inclusão beneficiaria de novas discussões e abordagens práticas a este conceito, a fim de adoptar uma abordagem menos funcionalista às desigualdades entre os jovens, como tal desenvolvida no sector da Juventude.

Com base nestes argumentos e numa breve apresentação de alguns conceitos e pressupostos em torno das desigualdades entre os jovens, o estudo avança para uma fase empírica que coloca o foco sobre aqueles que são visados, mas muitas vezes não consultados: jovens que enfrentam situações de desvantagem e que nunca participaram no Erasmus+. Para tal, foi realizado um inquérito quantitativo não experimental no formato de questionário online com uma amostra intencional formada por 40 alunos de instituições de Ensino e Formação Profissional (EFP) com um foco na internacionalização da cidade do Porto, Portugal. A escolha de investigar o Erasmus+ no setor de EFP em detrimento de outros é explicitada por meio de uma caracterização aprofundada do mesmo ao nível europeu e nacional, que demostra que os estudantes destes programas educativos correspondem ao perfil de participante desejado. Além disto, a revisão de literatura demonstrou que o EFP, similarmente ao Erasmus+, apresenta pontos de melhoria na forma como aborda os objetivos e necessidades dos jovens.

A análise dos dados revelou que os participantes do estudo avaliam positivamente os esforços relacionados com inclusão no Erasmus+ desenvolvidos nas suas escolas e em relação ao próprio programa, mostrando interesse e intenção em participar na mobilidade de aprendizagem. A distribuição quase uniforme de preferências relativamente a tipos de apoio e outras medidas contribui para reforçar a asserção de que abordar a inclusão é um trabalho interdisciplinar que deve continuar a ser desenvolvido.

Palavras-chave: desigualdades dos jovens; Erasmus+; inclusão social; Ensino e Formação Profissional; políticas de juventude

Abstract

L'inclusion et le besoin de répondre aux défis rencontrés par les plus jeunes générations sont plus que jamais à l'ordre du jour des institutions politiques globales, des praticiens et des chercheurs. L'année 2022 a même été déclarée "Année Européenne de la Jeunesse" car il y a eu une prise de conscience des difficultés croissantes dues à la pandémie. Dans ce contexte, le programme Erasmus+ a pour mission de lisser les inégalités tout en mettant l'accent sur l'inclusion; en profitant d'un budget doublé et de nouvelles stratégies, mais en présentant toujours une rhétorique plus orientée vers ses objectifs que les personnes concernées. En considérant qu'il y a des inégalités "invisibles" dans l'accès aux opportunités, le but de cette étude est de contribuer à "éclater la bulle" Erasmus+.

Cette dissertation porte un regard critique sur ce constat à travers son analyse et identifie les opportunités et défis à relever pour Erasmus+ en tant qu'outil d'inclusion. Elle suppose ainsi que le terme politique de "Jeunes avec le moins d'opportunités", ainsi que l'idée de comparer les différences de traitement poserait des défis à la fois éthiques, conceptuels et méthodologiques aux chercheurs et aux acteurs de projet.La poursuite d'Erasmus+ en tant que programme inclusif et générant de l'inclusion bénéficierait de discussions plus approfondies et d'approches pratiques à ce concept, dans l'objectif d'aborder une approche moins fonctionnaliste aux inégalités entre les jeunes, comme celles développées au sein du secteur Jeunesse.La poursuite d'Erasmus+ dans cette idée d'être un programme inclusif considérant l'inclusion mériterait des approches pratiques et des discussions plus approfondies sur ce concept: cela dans le but d'avoir une approche moins "fonctionnaliste" des inégalités entre les jeunes, comme celles développées au sein du secteur Jeunesse.

En s'appuyant sur ces arguments et à travers un débat bref sur quelques concepts et hypothèses autour des inégalités entre les jeunes, cette étude vise une étape plus concrète, qui met en lumière les principaux concernés à savoir les jeunes qu'on ne consulte que rarement : ces jeunes qui font face à des situations qui leur portent préjudice et qui n'ont jamais pu participer au programme Erasmus+.
Ainsi, la conception d'un questionnaire quantitatif et non expérimental a été menée avec un échantillon d'une quarantaine d'étudiants issus d'Institutions d'Enseignements et de Formation Professionnelles (EFP) de la ville de Porto, au Portugal. Ce choix de faire des

recherches sur Eramus+ au seins de l'EFP au lieu d'autres secteurs est motivé par cette caractérisation aux niveaux national et européen ; et chercher à montrer que les étudiants qui poursuivent ce type d'étude correspondent aux profils des participants ciblés. De plus, l'étude de la littérature nous montre que l'EFP, comme Erasmus+, a une véritable marge de progression quant aux réponses qu'elles ont à apporter aux besoins et aux objectifs des jeunes populations.

L'analyse des données montre que les participants de cette étude considèrent positivement les efforts d'inclusion développés par Erasmus+ au sein de leurs écoles ainsi que le programme en lui-même, et démontrent un intérêt et une intention de prendre part à l'apprentissage de la mobilité. La distribution plutôt uniforme de leurs préférences à l'égard des différents types de soutien et autres mesures renforce l'argument selon lequel l'inclusion est une affaire interdisciplinaire qui mériterait d'être plus approfondie, et dont il faudrait plus s'occuper.

Mots-clés: inégalités entre les jeunes; Erasmus+; Ensigmenent et Formation Profissionnelle; politiques de jeunesse

List of abbreviations

Term or acronym	Definition
Cedefop	European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training
DG EAC	European Commission Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture
EACEA	Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency
EC	European Commission
EQF	European Qualifications Framework
EU	European Union
KA	Key Action – a subcategory of Erasmus containing different funding opportunities
IVET	Initial Vocational Education and Training
MFF	Multi-annual Financial Framework
Mobility	A period spent in a foreign country
NA/s	National agency/ies
NGOs	Non-governmental Organisations
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
UN SDGs	United Nations Sustainable Development Goals
VET	Vocational Education and Training

List of figures

List of annexes

Table of contents

Introduction

The changes brought upon by the economic crises, globalisation, digitalisation, have profoundly transformed how Western societies self-regulate, transforming relationships and paths in society, altering the functioning of the economy and, particularly impactful for young people, the job and housing markets. Additional and new factors of inequality and exclusion set a different landscape for youth, who no longer have their social status or professional goals assured by an academic title, transforming their path in a "lottery or fortune wheel, where the safest odds offer nothing but low rewards"[1] (Calvo, 2011:45). Even young people with higher education degrees face difficulties in entering the job market and transitioning to independent adult life, as a result of precarious employment conditions and loss of family income due to austerity measures (Cairns et al., 2017). Additionally, since 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic caused a sudden disruption to young people's formal and non-formal education, affecting young people's income, earning potential and well-being (resolution of the European Parliament of 8 October 2020 on the Youth Guarantee), leading the European Union (EU) to declare 2022 "the European Year of Youth" and define a set of activities to debate youth problems. In such a context, there is a clash between the demand for modernisation to answer to the requirements of a global and digital world and the argument that more developed societies are more equipped to fight exclusion and the criticism to the privatisation of social problems (Alves, 2006). The lack of discussion and ideological meaning on concepts such as inclusion, following a uniformed agenda set and shared by international organisations that Nóvoa (2000, as cited in Alves, 2006) calls a "worldwide bible".

The Erasmus+ Programme – hereinafter also referred to as "Erasmus+" or "the Programme" – is an example of it. It is the European Union's programme for youth, education and sport for the periods of 2014 – 2020 and 2021-2027. The programme sets out to tackle structural problems such as youth unemployment or social exclusion by supporting young people with learning opportunities. These are intended to help them to "acquire relevant knowledge and competences and thus become active and engaged citizens and actors of change" and to develop personal and professional skills that increase

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[1] Free translation

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their employability (European Commission, 2020). Yet, even though providing equal rights to all citizens is one of the several goals of this ambitious and complex programme, the tensions identified in the previous paragraph are also visible in Erasmus+, as the Programme follows what Alves (2006) describes as privatising social problems, under a rhetoric of quality, efficiency, autonomy, flexibility and adaptability. Putting the focus on young people's individual agency, which relies on them having developed such skills during their educational path results in a redefined concept of meritocracy which holds young individuals accountable for overcoming social challenges and avoiding exclusion (Alves, 2006). Moreover, flaws in the governance of projects financed by the Erasmus+ may lead to inequalities in access to opportunities, leading to a heightened level of precariousness and the reproduction of social inequality (Cairns et al., 2017).

An analysis of the state of the art of research on Erasmus+ and inclusion and consulting experts from different fields reinforced the pertinence of studying this issue; especially, studies with an approach that aggregates contributions from the education and the youth sectors, and young people's perspectives. For clarity, in the context of this investigation the definition of "young people" follows the one of the Erasmus+ Programme, from 13 to 30 years old.[2]

Approaching Erasmus+ Programme from a socio-critical perspective, this dissertation is a nonexperimental exploratory and descriptive study that uses the wide lens provided by the different fields of study of the Master in Social Intervention, Innovation and Entrepreneurship – sociology, social work, and psychology. It explores the tensions between how inclusion is framed and supported by the Erasmus+ Programme institutionally alongside concepts and research on youth inequalities, to identify trends and opportunities for improvement and to measure the perceptions of young people on links between these topics. It targets the audience of the inclusion measures of Erasmus+, young people classified as having 'fewer opportunities' (yet not excluding others), specifically those who have not yet participated in its activities, to differentiate itself from most studies about this topic and EU's evaluations, which are based on the opinions of *de facto* participants. Due to the large geographical and thematic scope of Erasmus+, the empirical research was constrained to a specific action of the Programme, KA1 mobility of students

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[2] There is no agreed definition of the youth age group universally, neither at the EU level, as Member States have different age ranges but for statistical purposes, the United Nations defines 'youth' as those persons between the ages of 15 and 24 years (for more info see: https://www.un.org/en/global-issues/youth).

in the sector of Vocational Education and Training (VET), and the Metropolitan Area of Porto.

The identification of the object of this study relates to seven years of Erasmus+ experiences of its author, four of which as a professional, namely as a youth worker in a youth mobility-focused organisation, and a project coordinator in a vocational education high school. The daily contact with young people who fit the category of 'fewer opportunities' has unveiled multiple and diverse reasons why young people, who despite being aware, informed and even encouraged to take part in international mobility, avoid even showing interest in Erasmus+. Those inside the "bubble" can easily be oblivious to these reasons which include discomfort with foreign languages, suspicion instigated by their social context or not perceiving themselves as suitable participants, socio-economic context. Over the years, the multiple exchanges with other professionals involved with Erasmus+ in the youth and education sectors, as well as regular dialogue with representatives from European and national institutions responsible for the Programme led to acknowledging different approaches and obstacles faced by organisations in promoting equal access to participation, sparking the interest for further exploring the topic.

This dissertation is divided into two parts with two chapters each.

Part I sets the theoretical framework of the study, which results from a review of literature, analysis of documents and informal exchanges with practitioners. Chapter I provides an overview of the Erasmus+ Programme – its background, structure, management, objectives, impact and evaluation – and maps how inclusion is addressed, measured and researched in context. It provides a critical view of the term 'young people with fewer opportunities' and the programme itself. Chapter II explores the topic of youth inequalities and policies, namely the tensions between the rhetoric of policymakers and the desired outcomes of such policies. It then proceeds to describe Vocational Education and Training, providing context on Europe and Portugal, depicting a profile of students and concluding with its connection to Erasmus+ and inclusion.

Part II contains the empirical research, resulting from a survey questionnaire for young Vocational Education and Training students from a specific geographical area and similar schools and study fields on how they perceive themselves, the way the Erasmus+ Programme is implemented in their schools and general inclusivity measures the Programme (2014-2020). Chapter III explains the subject and objectives of the study, methodological choices, steps of development of the research tool, as well as ethical concerns had during the study. Chapter IV presents the results of the questionnaire

supported by a descriptive analysis of frequencies and cross-tabulations using SPSS and discusses its findings under the light of the concepts previously developed.

It should be noted that the study was designed in 2020 (under the framework of the first Erasmus+ Programme) and was developed throughout the transition period and the beginning of the second Programme, which has a stronger focus on inclusion. Although it demanded a readaptation of the research design and reviewing additional literature and documents, it was decided to take advantage of this continuity and integrate both programmes in this dissertation. However, it should be noticed the empirical research tools were created during the first Erasmus+ Programme and thus do not address the new inclusion mechanisms.

The choice of the English language (despite the empirical research having been carried out in Portugal and the Portuguese language), was prompted by the fact of the knowledge produced on the topics it covers in English and translating them could lead to inaccuracy as not all the terms have a direct translation in Portuguese. Plus, Erasmus+ is an international programme whose main actors and activities use English as a communication language and producing this investigation in this language allows for its content and results to be accessible to its potential target audience and by a larger amount of people across Europe.

To conclude this introduction, it can be pointed out that this study fosters a socio-critical and integrating approach to Erasmus+, by providing a current and extensive understanding of inclusion within the Programme, including European political and operational fundamentals and practices with concepts and arguments from researchers and practitioners from which the different actors involved in international mobility can draw insights and inspiration. Concurrently, it evidences the importance of using Erasmus+ as a tool to promote less inequality among young people, not simply by opening the participation in activities abroad to those with 'fewer opportunities', but by using Programme funding to develop educational and social interventions based on needs-analysis and tailored to their context and expectations.

Part I – Theoretical framework

Chapter I – Mapping inclusion in the context of Erasmus+

Introduction

Completing 35 years in 2022, Erasmus+ is one of the best-known European Union (EU) flagship programmes. It has become a recognised symbol of youth mobility, especially for higher education students, but, it covers two sectors: Education and Training (all levels of teaching); and the Youth sector, with a wide range of actions. It also has an ambitious set of goals, among which is the social inclusion of young people.

In this chapter, an overview of this complex and diverse programme will be provided in two sections. "Understanding the Erasmus+ Programme" describes the main features of Erasmus+, such as countries involved, structure, budget, management and evaluation, as well as the context that led to its creation and how these structural features can impact its goal of becoming. "Inclusion in the Erasmus+ Programme" explores the background, support mechanisms, types of monitoring and assessment of the inclusion aspect, explores the term 'fewer opportunities' and provides examples of practices to be adopted towards a more inclusive Erasmus+.

The main sources of information for this chapter were EU official documents such as the Erasmus+ Programme Guide (2014, 2020 and 2021 versions), Annual Reports, Mid-term Programme Evaluation among others, and evidence from academic research.

It is important to note that while the word "mobility" is often associated with transportation and the ability to move freely, be easily moved or with the change of social class, in the framework of Erasmus+, and, thus, of this study, it refers to moving physically to a different country, to undertake study, training or non-formal or informal learning activities and may include preparatory activities, such as language preparation, as well as sending, receiving and follow-up activities. (European Commission, 2020)

1. Understanding Erasmus+

Although a popular programme, the specifics of the Erasmus+ programme, such as structural functioning, management, and implementation, as well as the jargon used in it (highly influenced by the European institutions) might be unfamiliar to the reader. Thus, in this section, an overview of the main aspects of Erasmus relevant to this organisation will be provided.

1.1. Main characteristics

The Erasmus+ Programme is a multi-dimensional European Union (EU) programme to support education, training, youth, and sport in Europe, providing funding for learning mobility and cross-border cooperation projects in all these fields.

It is considered "one of the great achievements of the European Union" (European Commission, 2021d) and reached 11,7 million participants supported at the end of 2020 (European Commission, 2021a). The Programme is unique in terms of size, scope and global recognition, covering 33 Programme countries: all EU Member States plus the Republic of North Macedonia, Iceland, Lichtenstein, Norway and Turkey, which can fully take part and obtain funding for projects in all the Actions of the Erasmus+ Programme. It is also accessible to the 145 Partner countries distributed in several worldwide regions, that can take part in certain Actions of the Programme under specific criteria or conditions (European Commission, 2021d).

The EU sets Erasmus+ out to equip participants "with the right set of knowledge, skills and competencies, from a lifelong learning perspective, to make them resilient, to support high rates of employment, and to foster social cohesion" (Cohesion, Resilience and Values, 2021).

Erasmus+ is considered to help the personal and professional development of young people, contributing to their employability, integration, and participation, and thus, to social inclusion (Friesenhahn et al., 2013). Thus, it offers study, training (including formal, informal, and non-formal education) internship and work placement opportunities but also invests in cross-border cooperation projects, policy support, plus sports and others, namely specific research actions on the European Union. The different activities for the two sectors covered by the Programme are structured in three Key Actions (KA), Jean Monnet Activities and Sport, illustrated in Figure 1.

The general objective of Erasmus+ is to contribute to sustainable growth, quality jobs and social cohesion, innovation, a strengthened European identity, and more active citizenship by supporting the educational, professional, and personal development of people and groups involved in the sectors it covers with employability being a key part of this process (European Commission, 2021b). This intent and the expected outcomes, reflected in the term "learning mobility", distinguishes Erasmus from other types of intra-

European circulation, and from what could be seen as an opportunity to do a trip abroad paid by the European taxes (Cairns et al., 2018).

Key Action 1 - Mobility of individuals	• Mobility of individuals to undertake a learning and/or professional experience in another country • Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degrees • Erasmus+ Master Loans
Key Action 2 - Cooperation for innovation and the exchange of good practices	• Strategic partnerships • Knowledge alliances • Sector skills alliances • Capacity-building projects • IT support platforms and Erasmus Virtual Exchange
Key Action 3 - Support for policy development and cooperation	• Knowledge in the fields of education, training and youth for evidence-based policy making and monitoring • Initiatives for policy innovation • Support to European policy tools • Cooperation with international organisations with highly recognised expertise and analytical capacity • Stakeholder dialogue, policy and Programme promotion
Jean Monnet Activities	• Academic Modules, Chairs, Centres of Excellence • Policy debate with academic world • Support to associations, to organise and carry out statutory activities of associations dealing with EU studies and EU issues • Operating grants to designated institutions which pursue an aim of European interest
Sport	• Collaborative Partnerships, aimed at promoting the integrity of Sport • Not-for-profit European sport events • Dialogue with relevant European stakeholders

Figure 1 - Structure of the Erasmus+ programme (according to the Erasmus+ Programme Guide 2021)

Specific objectives are also set for each sector[3], and Key Action, which all have in common using mobility to contribute to quality, inclusion, excellence, creativity, and innovation at the level of organisations and policies.

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[3] The Erasmus+ Programme Guide is the main document for all sectors involved and lays the rules for obtaining funding for projects and = is published annually, It is framed by related relevant EU strategies. It contains a revised set of priorities, funding rules and orientations and specific conditions for accessing all Erasmus+ funding and actions under the different Key Actions described in Figure 1.

The cross-cutting priorities (called "horizontal priorities", applied throughout all years and sectors) of Erasmus+ are inclusion and diversity; digital transformation; environment and fight against climate change; and participation in democratic life (European Commission, 2021b). Thus, Cairns et al. (2018) claim more than symbolising unity and harmony within the EU, Erasmus+ can represent a political reaction to the challenges facing young people at the margins of society.

Erasmus+ also has a set of cornerstone features, resembling a set of values that should be upheld by all projects including protection, health, and safety of participants; multilingualism; international dimension and recognition and validation of skills and qualifications (European Commission, 2021b). These features ensure cohesion and coherence among the diversified activities covered by the Programme, help shape its identity and contribute to further inclusion by establishing quality patterns that might help tackle barriers to participation.

1.2. Sectors

The Erasmus+ Programme mainly targets two fields or sectors which correspond to two concepts of learning and/or education: Education and Training for formal; and Youth for non-formal and informal. A rough distinction[4] between these three concepts can be made as follows:

- Formal education is institutionalized, intentional and implemented by public organizations and recognized private bodies. It follows a programme recognized by national educational authorities or equivalent and leads a certified qualification (e.g. Master's degree).
- Non-formal education is a purposive, but voluntary, learning that takes place in a diverse range of environments and situations taking place outside the formal educational system, that may be intermittent or transitory (such as those in the context of learning mobility). The learning activities and courses are planned and goal-oriented but are seldom structured by conventional rhythms or curriculum subjects (e.g., informal workshops).

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[4] Based on the Youth Glossary of the Council of Europe: https://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/youth-partnership/glossary

- Informal learning is mainly non-purposive learning (exempting self-directed learning) and takes place in all life contexts, including formal and non-formal learning settings (e.g., learning something on a topic through a conversation).

The sector of Education and Training covers all levels of formal education from pre-school to primary and secondary education, vocational education and training, higher education, to adult education. The target audience are the learners, apprentices, teachers and staff of formal education and training institutions, and learning mobility can take the shape of study periods in a different institution, internships/in-work placements during or after the studies, professional development opportunities, training, exchange of good practices, teaching abroad, among others. (European Commission, 2021b)

The Youth sector covers activities for young people (aged 13 to 30) as well as people of any age involved in youth work. The term "youth work" covers a large scope of voluntary participation activities of a social, cultural, educational, or political nature developed by, with and for young people (notoriously sports, leisure time centres and support services) outside the formal education system (i.e., schools) which are conducted by professionals or volunteers (called "youth workers" and "youth leaders")[5]. Non-formal learning/education and informal education are cornerstones to youth work. Learning mobility activities under the umbrella of the Youth sector can be short-term encounters of groups of young people (youth exchanges) and youth professionals (training courses), projects for cooperation and exchange of good practices, projects targeting youth political involvement, among others. They are often implemented by groups of partner organisations which range from youth and civil society organisations to local and regional municipalities, and others (European Commission, 2021b).

According to Norqvist & and Leffler (2017:16) from a learning perspective, "there is no ''either/or'' concerning formal, non-formal and even informal learning (…) as learning comes in various forms and takes place at various times and in various places" and these three concepts form lifelong learning; but from a system perspective, they are not integrated. While in Erasmus+, objectives for both sectors include the enhancement of social competencies; gaining intercultural competencies; improvement of foreign-language skills; personal development and an increased sense of belonging to the EU (Devlin et al., 2017), there are different expected outcomes according to the learning experiences. For

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[5] From Council of the European Union's Resolution on a renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field (2010-2018).

Youth projects, a learning goal may be directed towards a specific topic, as well as soft skills, and have a stronger focus on the intercultural exchange; while Education and Training focuses on professional and academic development, in connection with the field of work/studies of the participant. The learning outcomes are recognised using different tools developed by the EU (e.g., Europass certificates; Youthpass). On an operational level, there is indeed a clear separation between the sectors, with actions, activities, budget and general monitoring and evaluation divided into the two sectors.

It is important to stress this "duality" of Erasmus+ as it reflects the different results obtained by the two sectors regarding inclusion, how they address inequality, and how the differences between sectors pose additional difficulties in research.

Additionally, the idea of framing Erasmus+ learning mobilities under a lifelong learning journey involving different types of education illustrates that the participation in Erasmus+ can be a one-off or sequential trajectory that can last for decades, as it can take place during different periods of life and it does not necessarily have to end when one specific mobility stage is completed (Cairns et al., 2018). For example, under Erasmus+, a young person can participate in a school exchange in high school, do a semester of studies abroad while in university, do an internship as a graduate, and later participate in a youth exchange or training course, among many other possibilities.

1.3. Background

While the history of Erasmus+ is too complex to cover in this research, this point explores the backdrop of its creation to the understanding of its relevance and functioning.

Devlin et al. (2017) argue that "in a sense, there is nothing new under the sun" in Erasmus+ Programme, as since medieval times higher education students and craftsmen have travelled abroad to gain differentiated knowledge, skills and competencies. Equally, programmes and strategies to enhance the mobility of young citizens in Europe have been developed by the Council of Europe since the mid-1960s, and mobility programmes were adopted by the European Commission (see Figure 2), European states and civil society organisations since the late 1980s (Friesenhahn et al., 2013).

However, there is a common recognition that after the Second World War, two factors led learning mobility to evolve from a marginal activity to a political and strategic instrument for the EU, as illustrated in Figure 2, which gradually covered more sectors and types of action.

European mobility programmes					
Sector	**Preceding years**	**1995 to 1999**	**2000 to 2006**	**2007 to 2013**	**2014 to 2020** **2021 to 2027**
Vocational Education and Training	PETRA I (1988-1991) and II (1992-1994)	Leonardo da Vinci Programme I	Leonardo da Vinci Programme II	Leonardo da Vinci, as a subprogramme of the Lifelong Learning Programme	Erasmus+ Programme
Higher Education	Erasmus Programme (from 1987)	Erasmus, as a subprogramme of the Socrates I Programme	Erasmus, as a subprogramme of the Socrates II Programme and others	Erasmus, as a subprogramme of the Lifelong Learning Programme	
School Education	-	Comenius, as a subprogramme of the Socrates I Programme	Comenius, as a subprogramme of the Socrates II Programme	Comenius, as a subprogramme of the Socrates II Programme	
Adult Education	-	-	Grundtvig, as a subprogramme of the Socrates II Programme	Grundtvig, as a subprogramme of the Lifelong Learning Programme	
Youth	Youth for Europe Programme I (1998 to 1991) and II (1992 to 1995)	Youth for Europe Programme III	Youth Programme	Youth in Action Programme	

Figure 2 - Overview of the main programmes for international mobility funded by the European Union in the fields of Education and Youth between 1980 and 2021

On the one hand, promoting the mobility of citizens was then rediscovered as a means of education for ideas such as European citizenship, intercultural understanding, and peace, and, thus, seen as an instrument towards a strong and coherent European identity that became a target of rare political promotion (Papatsiba, 2015, as cited in Cunha & Santos, 2017). Erasmus (the original programme) derived from several debates on a project for cooperation among the then called European Economic Community (currently European Union) during the decade of 1980, in which the priority was "to reconcile Europeans, namely by investing in the principle of free movement of people" (Cunha & Santos,

2017:29). This intended to replace the image of Europe as a set of distant, non-transparent and bureaucratic institutions with "a Europe of Citizens wherein people would get to know each other, appreciate their mutual cultural differences and, at the same time, form a European identity by saying 'yes' to core European values" (Friesenhahn et al., 2013:5). The main feature that sets Erasmus+ apart from predeceasing mobility schemes is its underlying philosophy and having a core set of values that reflect the political motivation behind its creation, including the task of legitimising the European institutions" (Feyen 2013:22, as cited in Cairns et al., 2018:6).

On the other hand, the way mobility was perceived was also influenced by evolution in social thinking, in which travelling gained importance for young people a symbol of freedom and life itself[6], It also became an object of interest for philosophers and social scientists to whom mobility represented a new state of mind in a more open and fragmented world (Devlin et al., 2017).

Whereas the original Erasmus[7] programme, established on the 25th of June 1987, was exclusively dedicated to higher education, due to the success and wide recognition of the "Erasmus" name, the need for stronger branding led to adopting the name "Erasmus+ Programme" for all mobility programmes in 2014 (European Commission, 2014a). The "+" represents the integration of more than 25 years of previous European programmes (some listed in Figure 2) implemented by the European Union (EU). It also illustrates the goal of creating more synergies and complementarity among sectors[8] (European Commission, 2014a). It is worth noting that, unlike previous programmes, Erasmus+ has remained very similar[9] (in terms of scope, architecture, and delivery mechanisms) throughout two consecutive periods, as the programme evaluation indicated bureaucracy and complexity has a focus of improvement (European Commission, 2017).[10]

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[7] The name is a backronym for EuRopean (Community) Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students programme and simultaneously a tribute to the Dutch philosopher Desiderius Erasmus, also known as Erasmus of Rotterdam was born. He was a dominant figure of the early-16th-century humanist movement, famous by its iterations in different countries in search for knowledge.

[8] "Removing artificial boundaries between the various Actions and project formats, fostering new ideas, attracting new actors from the world of work and civil society, and stimulating new forms of cooperation"

[9] Volunteering actions previously covered by Erasmus+ for youth (i.e. European Voluntary Service) were integrated in the European Solidarity Corps Programme in 2018-2019.

[10] This followed an intervention logic that aims to provide stability and continuity to the actors involved under the motto "evolution not revolution".

1.4. Budget

The budget of Erasmus+ is allocated through the long-term spending plan of the European Union (EU) called Multiannual Financial Framework, adopted generally for seven years to ensure stability. [11] This framework lays down the limit amounts to be spent in the different categories of expenditure in the annual budgets (which usually remain below the maximum amount to guarantee flexibility). The amount allocated within the annual budget might be increased with funding from other programmes/packages (and actions for external engagement.

The approval of the annual budget can be summed up as follows: the European Commission proposes a draft annual budget to be amended or approved by the national governments (gathered in the Council of the EU) and by the European Parliament (whose members are elected by European citizens). After an agreement is reached, the Council and the Parliament vote to approve the final version.[12]

The Commission's Communication of 14 February 2018 called for a substantially strengthened, inclusive and extended Erasmus+ programme investment on Erasmus to be a priority post-2020 and for the Covid-19 recovery which is reflected on the budget.
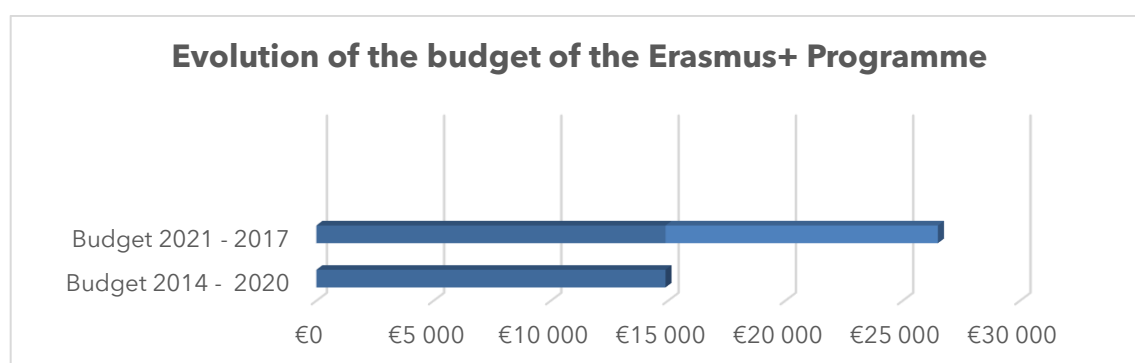
Figure 3 - Evolution of the budget of the Erasmus+ Programme from 2014 to 2027

Under the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) for the period from 2014 to 2020, Erasmus+ was allocated 14 895 million Euros, with the target of supporting 4 million people. The total budget allocated to the Programme taking place from 2021 to 2027, is 26506 million Euros, which will be topped up by at least another 2200 million other financial strands and aims to reach up to 12 million participants. This represents a notorious

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[11] More information in: budget-brochure-a5-17-05_interactive.pdf (europa.eu)
[12] The different steps for the adoption of the EU budget can be followed at: http://ec.europa.eu/budget/documents/budget_current_year_en.htm

budget increase of 56,8% but also a tripled aimed number of participants, from the first to the second edition of the Programme, demonstrating EU's high ambitions for Erasmus+.

Former European Commission President Jean Claude Juncker claimed that "Every euro that we invest in Erasmus+ is an investment in the future of a young person and our European idea. I cannot imagine anything more worthy of our investment than these leaders of tomorrow" (Strasbourg, 13 June 2017)[13]. However, the positive outcomes of supporting an expensive programme like Erasmus+ go beyond individuals and result in a highly visible symbol of a youthful Europe, made of people working, studying, and training, together (Cairns et al., 2018), in turn painting the picture of an intercultural and tolerant European Union, one that is "united in diversity"[14]. Cairns et al (2018), explains that a greater number of participants in Erasmus+ results in favour of European policymakers, who are more likely to be regarded as working effectively and responsibly by the public if a larger amount of people is provided with opportunities. An interesting piece of data that substantiates this argument is the fact the first Programme was financed by the MMF under the category "Competitiveness for growth and jobs" and the second under "Cohesion, Resilience and Values".

1.5. Management, implementation, and main actors

The Programme is implemented through a combination of direct and indirect management (through grants and procurements) and financial instruments involving several actors which are going to be described and are represented in Figure 4.

The European Commission, under the leadership of the Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture (DG EAC), bears the overall responsibility for the supervision and coordination of Erasmus+: it manages the budget and sets priorities, targets and criteria for the Programme on an on-going basis, guides and monitors the general implementation, follow-up and evaluation of the Programme at European level. It supervises and coordinates the structures in charge of implementing the Programme at the national level. As Cunha & Santos (2017) argue, Erasmus reflects the complex and continuous process of construction of the European identity and its extension to different areas, and this applies to its management, as DG EAC works in co-operation with DG Employment Social Affairs and Inclusion (DG EMPL, for parts of the programme

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[13] Retrieved from: EUR-Lex - 52018SC0277 - EN - EUR-Lex (europa.eu).
[14] Motto of the European Union.

concerning skills and qualifications policy, adult learning and vocational education and training) and the Education, Audio-visual, and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA), responsible for centralised actions, tenders, studies and research, programme visibility and others (European Commission, 2021b).

The implementation of the Erasmus+ Programme is mainly done through indirect management, entrusted to the Erasmus+ National Agencies (NA), one or more institutions appointed by each Programme Country (some countries have separate NAs for Youth and Education, as is the case of Portugal, and they can also have different regional scopes within the country, like Belgium). NAs have the important role of bringing the programme closer to its target audience, and adapting it to national systems and priorities, acting as a link between the EU and the local, regional, and national organisations. These NAs promote and implement the Programme by selecting managing, monitoring, and evaluating the projects funded in their country; providing support to project applicants and participating organisations throughout the project life cycle; collaborating with relevant national authorities, the network of all National Agencies and the European Commission; enhance visibility and dissemination of the Programme and its results at the local and national level. NAs are expected to guide participating organisations through all phases, from the first contact with the Programme through the application process to the realisation of the project and final evaluation. Their role includes advising, counselling, monitoring, and coaching systems tailored to their needs to guarantee equal opportunities (European Commission, 2020).

The deadlines, budget, and other specificities for each action are published in specific Calls for proposals by the agency managing them (the EACEA or the National Agencies) and made available on their platforms. An annual Erasmus+ Guide or a Call may announce new types of actions or support which did not exist the year before (e.g., in 2020, a special call was launched for digital education related to Covid-19). This gives the European Commission the possibility to adjust Erasmus+ to contemporary societal challenges and opportunities and to the EU's political context within the scope of action and objectives defined in the multi-annual programme framework (that is if such changes are approved by the EU institutions responsible for amending and approving them (see "Budget" section).

Two types of actors can access projects financed by the Programme: the "participating organisations" (any organisation active in the fields of education, training, youth or sport, players in the labour market who coordinates or is a partner in a funded project) and the "participants" (individuals involved in projects and/or mobility - students, trainees,

apprentices, pupils, adult learners, young people, volunteers, professors, teachers, trainers, youth workers, professionals of organisations active in the fields of education, training and youth).
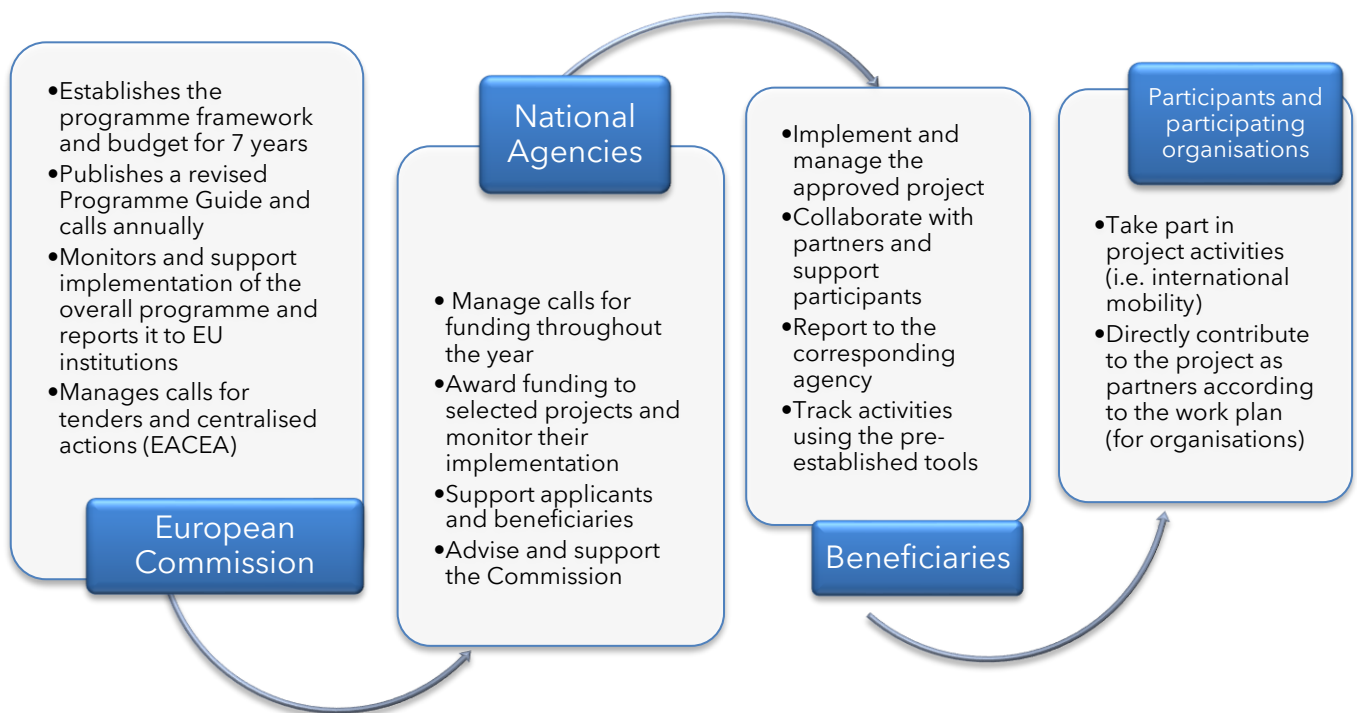
Figure 4 – Main actors in the Erasmus+ Programme and projects and their roles

Erasmus+ projects proposals are submitted and managed by participating organisations in the corresponding call for funding. If the application is approved, the applicant organisation becomes an Erasmus+ "beneficiary" and gets financial support for the realisation of their project. For projects involving several organisations, the applicant takes the role of "coordinator", and the remaining are the "project partners" (which may or not be granted funding, depending on their role in the work plan defined in the application). Participating organisations are responsible for the practical implementation of the project, its activities and outcomes, as well as reporting. They select the participants to be involved in the activities through the process they see more fit within the principles of the programme.

This multi-level management can be seen as beneficial as it allows for tailored projects that can be co-constructed with their targeted participants, fostering inclusion. However, human resources limitations and overload, namely due to the amount of bureaucracy, either at the level of National Agencies or the beneficiaries, hinder this

possibility. The lack of experience and adequate training can also prevent better results; hence qualification of project leaders is a field for improvement (Fabbris & Boetti, 2019) as well as financial support for human resources.

1.6. Monitoring, reporting and evaluation

The reporting on the Programme is done by all the actors in different stages. Participants are asked to fill in a digital questionnaire managed by EU Survey where they evaluate their perceptions about the mobility experience (e.g. if it was contributed to increased skills). The beneficiary organisations have the contractual obligation of registering and reporting each mobility to the National Agency and submitting at least a final report (interim reports depend on the type of project) on a digital platform (Mobility Tool) or report to the EACEA in the case of centralised actions. The NAS then use the data gathered to produce an interim country report, submitted to the European Commission, who, in turn, sends out a set of recommendations to the country (European Commission, 2021b).

The Commission publishes yearly Erasmus+ Annual Reports with the most relevant data from all the Programme Countries. This report is made available to the public on the webpage of the Publications Office of the EU and can be then used by other stakeholders to support position papers or recommendations, for research, and improving practices, among others. However, a look at the publication date of these reports shows they are only published around the year after the year they refer to has finished. For example, the latest report, referring to 2020, was published in December 2021, which decreases their applicability.

The overall Programme is monitored and reported on by the European Commission, which should rely on independent audit bodies to issue an opinion on the yearly implementation and to also share all relevant information with the Commission and its representatives and the European Court of Auditors. An interim evaluation of the current Programme should be implemented by 31 December 2024, along with the final evaluation of the 2014-2020 Programme. The final evaluation is set for 31 December 2031.[15] Once again, there is a long period between the real dates the Programme ends (2024) and the

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[15] Information retrieved from Regulation (EU) 2021/817 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 May 2021 establishing Erasmus+: the Union Programme for education and training, youth and sport and repealing Regulation (EU) No 1288/2013 - PE/32/2021/INIT

reporting (2031), due to the complexity of EU procedures, which limits the usefulness of such reports to other stakeholders.

1.6.1. Pprogress indicators

The Commission is required to present a set of annual financial and accountability reports under the Integrated Financial and Accountability Reporting on the implementation, performance, results, management of the EU budget, including Erasmus+, to the European Parliament and the Council of the EU, which contains both financial and progress indicators. For Erasmus+ for the period of 2021 - 2027, the performance indicators are subdivided into the strands of Education and Training, Youth and Sport and Key Actions, and include the number of participants and organisations taking part in the Programme (according to types of mobility, as well as specific characteristics i.e. being a newcomer organisation or a participant with "fewer opportunities"); the share of participants that consider they have benefited from their participation in learning mobility activities and that have an increased European sense of belonging after participation, and the share of activities addressing climate change.[16] These indicators are used to reflect on successes, limitations and results, which influence decisions on the future of Erasmus+.

According to Cairns et al. (2018), these indicators are insufficient to researchers as they aim to illustrate cross-country trends in participation over time and "denuded of socio-demographic variables is therefore frustrating, and perhaps a bit suspicious, leaving us to speculate about factors such as the impact of social class on Erasmus participation and the gender dimension of educational exchanges". Perhaps, for this reason, the Commission has, in the past, hired external evaluators/researchers to conduct other evaluations using different research tools to gather information (e.g., Erasmus Impact study, conducted via an online survey).

Some stakeholders of the Programme develop their own studies (e.g., the ESN survey developed by Erasmus Student Network) focusing on sectorial trends. All these contributions provide additional data that can contribute to policymaking and Programme implementation, and provide important guidelines for beneficiaries, coordinators, and partners to improve current and future projects, namely by making them more inclusive.

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[16] The detailed Performance Framework can be found in:
https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/about_the_european_commission/eu_budget/programme_and_p
erformance_-_erasmus_0.pdf

2. Inclusion in the context of Erasmus+

2.1. Background

The ideals of inclusion and equality are enshrined in the EU Treaties[17] state that "in all its activities, the Union shall observe the principle of the equality of its citizens, who shall receive equal attention from its institutions, bodies, offices and agencies". They are also the main policy agendas globally, such as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development of the United Nations, which established "Reduced Inequalities" as a global goal (SDG 10)", as well as EU policies and strategies focused on the fields covered by Erasmus+ (including the European Skills Agenda, the European Union Work Plan for Sport, Digital Education Action Plan, European Union Youth Strategy 2019-2027, the goal of reaching a European Education Area by 2025, the European Youth Goals, and others).

As a result and building on several declarations of the EU calling for better and equal opportunities for young people (such as the Bratislava Declaration, signed on 16 September 2016, Rome Declaration, signed on 25 March 2017), inclusion is one of the main values of the Erasmus+ programme and a particular focus is put on it for the funding for the period of 2021-2027, making it an overarching priority for all its sectors and key actions. This increased focus on inclusion builds on the results of previous evaluation[18] which emphasised the need to make the future programme more inclusive and further widen access (European Commission, 2021c).

2.2. Circumscribing inclusion in Erasmus+

According to the Erasmus+ Guide (2021), the Programme seeks to promote equal opportunities and access, inclusion, diversity and fairness and participants with fewer opportunities themselves are at the heart of these objectives and organisations are asked to make their projects accessible to a diverse range of participants, namely those who such face obstacles, considered "young people with fewer opportunities".

Meyers et al. (2020) explain that Erasmus+ policy documents refer to two levels of inclusion, not always differentiating clearly between the: the inclusion of the target groups

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[17] Article 9 of the consolidated version.
[18] Mid-term evaluation of the 2014-2020 Programme; Open public consultation of 2018.

(young people with fewer opportunities), making the Programme more inclusive; and inclusion in society at large, by fostering the participation of everyone in all areas of society, particularly, of those groups (who are excluded to a certain degree from some of these domains). This rationale is in line with the idea that the lack of diversity in the profiles of young people who access Erasmus contributes to reinforcing social disadvantage (Cairns, 2019). When Erasmus+ projects are not managed and implemented to facilitate the access of young people from different backgrounds, there is a risk of further supporting those who are already ahead of their peers at the socio-economic level, falling prey to the 'Matthew Effect' (Cairns et al., 2017). 'Matthew effect' is a psychological framework that aims to explain why people who already accumulate more of a given value are prompt to continue to do so, e.g., the person who gets awarded the first place, eclipses the others and gains recognition that will lead to better resources and advantages for the future, while those in last place are discarded, and more prompt to continue to do so, as they remain unnoticed (Rodríguez, 2009).

In this respect, "exclusion and fewer opportunities can be considered to be interdependent, one resulting in the other and vice-versa." it can be concluded that the inclusiveness of the Erasmus+ Programme is intended to be a step towards or even a model for an inclusive society, fostering inclusion at large (Meyers et al., 2020:16).

The current measures to support inclusion in Erasmus+ at the level of the beneficiary mainly include additional funding for participants with fewer opportunities and projects focused on inclusion and recommendations of digital platforms with resources and tools. At the national and EU level of Erasmus+ management, measures have a more structural component and include the creation of strategies for inclusion and diversity in each country.[19]

2.3. Young people with fewer opportunities

2.3.1. Definition

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[19] The full set of principles, measures and goals is presented in the Commission Implementing Decision (EU) 2021/1877 of 22 October 2021 on the framework of inclusion measures of the Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps Programmes 2021-2027, available for consultation here: Commission Implementing Decision (EU) 2021/1877 of 22 October 2021, on the framework of inclusion measures of the Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps Programmes 2021-2027.

The term 'young people with fewer opportunities', including young people with disabilities' instead of 'disadvantaged' or 'disabled' young people, was first used in 2016. Since then, it is used consistently in policy texts and linked to (social) inclusion. The implementation guidelines for the Inclusion and Diversity Strategy for Erasmus+ 2021 - 2027 define them as:

> (Young) people who, for economic, social, cultural, geographical or health reasons, due to their migrant background, or for reasons such as disability or educational difficulties or for any other reason, including a reason that could give rise to discrimination[20](…) face obstacles that prevent them from having effective access to opportunities under the Programme (European Commission, 2021c:10)

A non-exhaustive list of barriers that can hinder their participation both as a stand-alone factor and in combination among them is provided by the Erasmus+ Guides to help beneficiaries understand which groups are covered by this umbrella term. As explained, the period of this investigation covered both Programmes, and it was considered interesting to compare how the concept and examples of "fewer opportunities" evolved between the two periods of the programme. Thus, the definitions corresponding to the Erasmus+ guide of each period were explored (figure 5).

Young people with fewer opportunities	
Erasmus+ Programme Guide (2014)	Erasmus+ Programme Guide (2021)
"Obstacles"	"Barriers in accessibility and outreach"
Social obstacles	**Social barriers**
- Discrimination (because of gender, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, disability, etc.). - Limited social skills or anti-social or risky sexual behaviours. - Precarious situation. - (Ex-)offenders, (ex-)drug or alcohol abusers. - Being a young and/or single parent.	- Social adjustment difficulties such as limited social competencies, anti-social or high-risk behaviours, (former) offenders, (former) drug or alcohol abusers. - Social marginalisation, and family circumstances (being the first in the family to access higher education; a parent, especially a single parent; a caregiver; a breadwinner; an orphan or having lived or currently living in institutional care).

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[20] Framed under Article 21 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, covers discrimination based on any ground such as sex, race, colour, ethnic or social origin, genetic features, language, religion or belief, political or any other opinion, membership of a national minority, property, birth, disability, age or sexual orientation.

- Being an orphan	
Economic obstacles	**Economic barriers**
- Low standard of living, low income, dependence on the social welfare system. - Long-term unemployment. - Homelessness, debt or with financial problems.	- Economic disadvantage like a low standard of living, low income, learners who need to work to support themselves, dependence on the social welfare system, long-term unemployment, precarious situations or poverty, being homeless, in debt. - Limited transferability of services (in particular support to people with fewer opportunities) that needs to be "mobile" together with the participants when going to a far place or, all the more, abroad.
Disability	**Disabilities**
- Mental (intellectual, cognitive, learning), physical, sensory or other disabilities.	- Physical, mental, intellectual or - sensory impairments which, in interaction with various barriers, may hinder someone's full and effective participation in society on the same footing as others.
Health problems	**Health problems**
- Chronic health problems, severe illnesses or psychiatric conditions.	- Health issues including severe illnesses, chronic diseases, or any other physical or mental health-related situation that prevents participation in the programme.
Educational difficulties	**Barriers linked to education and training systems**
- Learning difficulties. - Early school-leaving and school dropouts. - Low qualifications. - Poor school performance.	- Struggling to perform in education and training systems for various reasons, early school-leavers, NEETs (people not in education, employment or training) and low-skilled adults may face barriers. Although other factors may play a role, these educational difficulties, while they may also be linked to personal circumstances, mostly result from an educational system which creates structural limitations and/or does not fully consider the individual's particular needs. - Structure of curricula makes it difficult to undertake a learning or training mobility abroad as part of their studies.
Cultural differences	**Cultural differences**
- Being immigrants, refugees or descendants from immigrant or refugee families. - Belonging to a national or ethnic minority.	- Cultural differences particularly affecting people with fewer opportunities that may represent significant barriers to learning in general, all the more for people with a migrant or refugee background – especially newly-arrived migrants , people belonging to a national or ethnic minority,

- Linguistic adaptation and cultural inclusion difficulties.	sign language users, people with linguistic adaptation and cultural inclusion difficulties, etc. - Being exposed to foreign languages and cultural differences when taking part in any kind of programme activities may put off individuals and somehow limit the benefits from their participation. And such cultural differences may even prevent potential participants from applying for support through the programme, thereby representing an entry barrier altogether.
Geographical obstacles	**Geographical barriers**
- Living in remote or rural areas; in small islands or peripheral regions; urban problem zones; people from less serviced areas (limited public transport, poor facilities).	- Living in remote or rural areas, on small islands or in peripheral/outermost regions, in urban suburbs, in less serviced areas (limited public transport, poor facilities) or less developed areas in third countries, etc.
Not applicable	**Barriers linked to discrimination**
This category did not exist in this period.	- Discriminations linked to gender, age, ethnicity, religion, beliefs, sexual orientation, disability, or intersectional factors (a combination of two or several of the mentioned discrimination barriers).

Figure 5 - Comparison of the definition of "young people with fewer opportunities" in the two programme periods of Erasmus+

Presenting both definitions allows to provide the adequate context, as the definitions from 2014 were the ones taken into consideration for the empirical research, and the ones from 2021 demonstrate the evolution in how inclusion is framed. Namely, obstacles are now barriers; educational situations are now framed as linked to education and training systems; a specific category was created for discrimination; economic situations take in consideration that some support cannot be transferred among countries, among other changes.

The Youth in Action Strategy for Erasmus+ 2014 – 2020 clears that the definition "focuses on the situation young people are in, to avoid stigmatisation and blame" (European Commission, 2014b) and points out that facing one of the situations referred to above does not always translate into additional obstacles (not all people from minorities are discriminated, a person with a disability is not necessarily disadvantaged if the environment is adapted, etc.) and the risk of exclusion varies according to country and context. It also emphasizes that while some factors are context-dependent, others are "absolute exclusion factors", namely situations when fundamental rights are violated (i.e.,

homelessness, poverty) and urges for special attention to groups for whom absolute exclusion factors apply (European Commission, 2014b).

The Erasmus+ 2021 – 2027 strategy does not mention the previous arguments and leaves it up to staff involved in Erasmus+ projects to analyse the context and the feedback and input from the participant(s), to decide whether a particular project or participant should receive the additional support for inclusion and diversity that is available in the 2021-2027 Programme (European Commission, 2021c). However, it builds on the previous ones in explaining the term "fewer opportunities" derives from the assumption these people are in a disadvantaged situation compared to their peers as to participating in the programme and/or in education and training systems because they face one or more of the exclusion factors listed, which, in face of certain structures and practices of outreach, communication and project design, become barriers (European Commission, 2021c).

2.3.2. Constrains, criticism and controversy

Meyers et al. (2020) argue that while it is an advantage to be able to interpret obstacles depending on the country or region, the lack of measurable indicators and benchmarks for these obstacles, leave too much room for interpretation and subjective and engaging participants with fewer opportunities in a reliable way would require developing indicators and instruments for such analyses, both at European and Member States level. It can also be noted that these tools would be important to ensure the additional funding is not erroneously distributed.

Another point that can be made on the need for clearer frameworks lies within what has been his has been described as 'The Pistachio Effect' – in which the social exclusion of the most marginalised is exacerbated by professionals who involve those who are easier to reach and engage within the marginalised groups[21]. The premise is that when we pass around a bowl of pistachio nuts, the nice ones always get eaten first while the closed/hard nuts are left till the end and this can be a metaphor for young people: the motivated young people are easier to reach and engage, while those with a hard or closed-shell are left until later, or, at worst, simply disregarded because they are deemed too difficult to include (Graeme, 2011). By establishing such loose target groups and situations that are easily applicable to large groups of the population (i.e. discrimination), the concept of "young

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[21] See Tiffany, G. A. (2007) *Reconnecting Detached Youth Work: Guidelines and Standards for Excellence*. Federation for Detached Youth Work, p. 27

people with fewer opportunities" might lead people who implement projects to work with the less 'challenging' young people who present any of the characteristics described and consider it as promoting inclusion. And while, in the end, indicators will show higher levels of involvement and participation of young people with fewer opportunities, as the boxes for "fewer opportunities" will be ticked in the project reports, the real results might, like in other Programmes becomes a "pre-scribed outcomes culture, be profoundly counter-productive". (Graeme, 2011:2).

Nico (2016) points out that increasing the access to and effect of opportunities for those who experience disadvantage makes sense if implemented to level the living standards but use the comparative and relative concepts of "disadvantaged" or "fewer opportunities" implies that young people facing barriers represent a minority within the respective age group. The difficulty in understanding if that is the case lies within the complexity of understanding who might have fewer opportunities over different patterns of inequalities at the national level, that she demonstrates to not to be an exercise compatible with the term of fewer opportunities because the different categories are not comparable (Nico, 2016).

Moreover, most of the 'barriers' described are not visible or easily identifiable and having the personal information about the participants that allows acknowledging they are in such situations requests a level of familiarity and trust that may not exist in formal education, due to the hierarchy-based relations (and might even be hard to reach in non-formal and informal settings due to the sensitive nature of the topics). This raises ethical issues – to which extent can an organisation require 'feedback' from participants about their possible situations of exclusion, without 'crossing the line' of privacy and respect? Thus, finding the exact lines that separate young people with 'fewer opportunities' and young people with a 'little more', "frequently ends up being either the result of complex comparative statistical exercises or of well-intentioned guesses" (Devlin et al., 2017:15).

It can also be noted that categorising young people based on the situations they face and requesting institutions to do the same, might lead to undesirable externalities, such as a negative impact on the self-esteem of the young people being labelled. Snipstad (2020:2) claims that humans "reflect upon how they are understood which in turn may cause them to interact with their classification. In turn, this may affect the very being itself (people) causing them to change and evolve during history".

The idea of separating young people by the level of exclusion or risk of exclusion seems to counteract the goal of social inclusion itself, as one experiences inclusion when having

the possibility to think outside "the (social) box" and find themselves in a different position in the field of life's possibilities (Devlin et al., 2017). Learning mobility experiences "are not supposed to act as "support groups" where everyone shares and reinforces certain conditions, but arenas where the exposure to what and who is different, to diversity, is intended" (Devlin et al., 2017:14) and by targeting only specific groups, the potential of the experience is compromised. Devlin et al. reinforce this argument by stating that research repeatedly showed that there are no benefits in putting together classes exclusively made up of children with learning difficulties or simply with bad grades. Social inclusion must be the result of an interaction between diverse people, not a ghettoization of experiences and "nothing to promote social inclusion should be developed without social inclusion being reflected in its process" (Devlin et al., 2017:14).

A final consideration about this term is that it is based in neoliberal discourse, as although the state, through the EU, is involved, "it is up to the individuals (…) to overcome with the solitary merit of their own agency their lack of equal opportunities and access"(Nico, 2016:16) and the effect of Erasmus+ expected in young people "is quite ambitious, in the sense that it is expected of them too, after being and empowered with knowledge, and still many times not acquiring the resources – educational, cultural, economic - necessary to overcome a specific challenge, indeed overcome it" (Nico, 2016). Nico argues that in the view of structural researchers, policy implementation should be proceeded by structural conditions and policy context, responsibility should not be put directly or predominantly on the shoulders of individuals. In his view, it should also acknowledge the limits of individual action to overcome deep inequalities.

2.4. Learning opportunities from the Youth sector

In the previous programme, only 11.5% of the total number of participants were "people with fewer opportunities", with the Youth sector reporting a much larger number (30%) than other sectors of participants (European Commission, 2021c). Furthermore, while the Youth sector had strategies for both the first Erasmus+ Programme Period and its predecessor Programme, the "Inclusion strategy of the Youth in Action programme (2007-2013)" from 2007, and the "Erasmus+ Inclusion and Diversity Strategy in the field of Youth" from 2014, it was not April 2021 that a strategy also targeting the Education and

Training sector was released by the European Commission. Comparing the three strategies, it is clear to the youth sector set the ground for the current strategy.

The case that the Youth sector is ahead in promoting inclusion can also be made by looking at the structures surrounding it. One of them is the 'Research-based Analysis of European Youth Programmes' Network (RAY), funded in 2008, which studies the effects of the Programme activities on individuals participating in projects and on organisations, structures and communities involved in the programme (Meyers et al., 2020). It provides a distinctive contribution by studying the implementation and management of the Programme on the different levels (National Agencies/EACEA; beneficiaries and participating organisations), in particular for their thematic orientation, the project methodologies, and the educational approaches and methods, including their effectiveness given the objectives of Erasmus+, promoting the visibility of projects who distinguish themselves for achieving them in a significant or innovative way, encouraging peer-learning and exchange of practices. Such data and cross-national and objective-oriented research would be very useful in other sectors.

Another important resource of the Youth sector is SALTO, a European network of Resource Centres dedicated to improving the quality and impact of the EU youth programmes (Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps)[22] at a systemic level through providing expertise, resources, information and activities (courses, seminars workshops, study visits, forums, cooperation and partnership-building), related to different topics, namely inclusion and diversity[23]. Although it currently also covers the field of education and training, it is limited to a platform for European training activities and for actors to share best practices across European countries or find partners; while in the field of youth, the work of the SALTO centres also involves developing and documenting training and youth work methods and tools; issuing practical publications and guidance; and other resources, that contribute to the capacitation of Programme beneficiaries, including those in other sectors.

As explained before, the Youth sector operates in a setting that is more prompt to establishing a connection between coordinators/professionals and young people and creating a project for and with them should be regarded as an opportunity for non-formal

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[22] *C.f.* https://www.salto-youth.net/downloads/4-17-4167/SALTO_Network_leaflet_web.pdf

23 Toolbox with methods and exercises: www.SALTO-YOUTH.net/Toolbox/; Good practice examples: www.SALTO-YOUTH.net/GoodPractices/

learning, but the same can be true for learning institutions. Namely, that is one of the suggestions provided in "Inclusion A to Z", which combines theory and practical methods to integrate inclusion in Erasmus+ projects. It explains that to succeed in doing so, project coordinators should reach out to young people, give them a central place in the discussion and predict a longer-term impact that does not limit to the mobility experience itself (Schroeder, 2014).

A model that professionals in Education and Training can benefit from to rethink how they work with young people was created by Roger Hart, and presented as a metaphorical "ladder," with each ascending rung representing increasing levels of agency, control, or power.
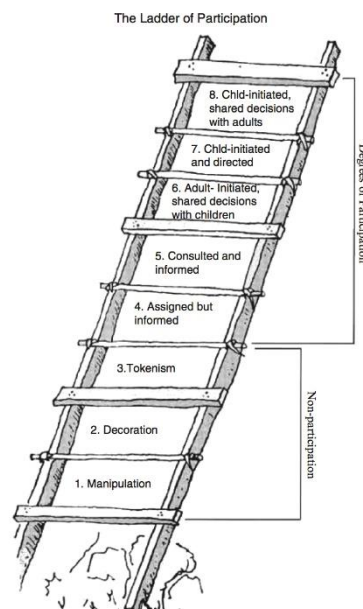
Figure 6 - Roger Hart's original 1992 illustration of the Ladder of Children's Participation from Children's Participation: From Tokenism to Citizenship

Considering that "young people's participation cannot be discussed without considering power relations and the struggle for equal rights" (Hart, 1992:8), this model allows those organizing or holding a project for young people to critically evaluate the process, the level of inclusion of young people in it, and raise personal awareness about the level of someone's participation.

Conclusion

Several conclusions can be drawn from this chapter. First, it can be acknowledged that as an EU Programme, Erasmus+ faces challenges and limitations such related to bureaucratic procedures EU, such as the adoption of rules and budget for 7 years (which allows for stability but also limits adaptability to the annual calls); a complex structure formed by different objectives and institutions that makes it difficult to provide information in useful time (such as evaluation results); a clear subordination to the objectives of the institutions, namely the priorities set by the European Commission (which are impacted by the changes in the presidency); and an insufficient socio-characterisation of data that allow bettering "paint the picture" of inclusion. However, the increased budget and the creation of a comprehensive plan and strategy for Inclusion and Diversity, which include structural changes in institutions and additional funding for institutions who work with inclusion, are seen as a positive development towards an Erasmus+ that is more effective in involving a more diverse profile of participants.

Secondly, the term "youth with fewer opportunities" has evolved through the years and now provides a cross-sectorial context of the target group of Erasmus+ and flexibility in each country and context that takes into account that different barriers may overlap. Nevertheless, it presents several problems, ranging from possible labelling and segregation of groups of participants to the difficulty in measuring who are such participants without instruments to do so, among other concerns regarding the ethical use of the additional financing.

Finally, the Youth sector of Erasmus+ has valuable insights on the connection of researchers to the field of activity, sharing of good practices and active involvement of participants that can give an important contribution to further advancing the inclusion efforts in all sectors, and thus, should be replicated/explored by them.

Chapter II – Youth inequalities and policies: the case of Vocational Education and Training

Introduction

In this second chapter, a brief context of youth inequalities and policies will be provided as a backdrop for exploring Vocational Education and Training (VET). The context of VET in Europe and Portugal, the country where the empirical research was developed, to allow for a correct interpretation of the research and its results and this choice and explain how VET embodies youth inequalities and contradictions in its policies.

1.   Youth inequalities and policies

The impact of globalisation in facilitating labour market deregulation, increased outsourcing of production, changing employment forms and labour profiles is of continued interest across Europe. The concern revolves around how these issues affect the transition to adulthood, and how an inability to move easily through education to the labour market can result in disadvantage and social exclusion (Roberts, 2011).

Inequality has been conceptualised in many ways. Different meanings attributed to the term have consequences not only for the measures proposed to address it but also for the impact of these measures on the lives of groups and individuals affected, as can be seen from the example of Erasmus+'s approach to inclusion. Several multidimensional frameworks have been devised to shed light on them, which move from focusing solely on income or poverty and highlight ways in which inequalities combine and intersect.

Under the welfare state system, public policies are the gatekeepers of democracy and capitalism, ensuring redistribution of the earnings of the state through taxation by transforming them into goods and services for individuals, especially those in less privileged economic positions, as well as public investment (Santos, 1987). But whereas there is a distribution of benefits in line with redistributive social justice claims, aiming for a more just dispersal of resources and goods, this also "institutionalises cultural norms of entitlement and desert; and they construct various distinct (and often unequally valued) subject positions or identities for their claimants and beneficiaries" (Fraser, 1996:55).

Inequalities have many faces, and many sources, interactive, cumulative, and not mutually excluded ones (Nico, 2016). In this sense, young people can find themselves accumulating inequalities throughout life, as well as surpassing them. Here the concept of intersectionality can provide an interesting framework. Derived from black and critical race and feminist theories, intersectionality explains that individuals are situated on many different axes of inequality, including class, race, age and gender, and that all of these axes intersect. An intersectional approach reveals that those most likely to be left behind are groups whose disadvantage and marginalisation intersect along different dimensions, reinforcing and exacerbating one another, explaining the persistence of marginalisation processes for certain groups.

Youth policies, such as those related to Erasmus+ and Vocational Education and Training, have the ultimate objective of decreasing inequalities among young people. However, there is frequent tension between policymakers and researchers on how to achieve further equality for youth in Europe. The former, albeit intentions and also various documentation at the European level on the need for cross-sectoral policies, tend to look approach youth issues through the lens of employability or labour market; the latter look at the problems of young people as "cross-sectoral", in holistic perspectives, that take and analyse each life as a whole (education, employment, health, culture, etc.) (Nico, 2016). The demands of a global and digital world and rhetoric of innovation, resilience, and growth contribute to the forementioned "worldwide bible" (Nóvoa, 2000, as cited in Alves, 2006) where concepts are applied without ideological meaning. Further criticising this idea of uniformising societal issues, Bourdieu (1998, cited in Alves, 2006) stated that institutions of modernity share in a tendency to present themselves as working for the common good, but in fact reproduce social inequalities.

Cairns (2019) acknowledges that programmes such as Erasmus+ unless they become more representative, risk being themselves a factor of further inequalities, rather than contributing to putting young people in disadvantaged situations at the same level as their peers. Devlin et al., (2017) note that social inclusion is an ongoing process in everyone's life and thus contributing to it (for example, through learning mobility under Erasmus+) is not a "one-time" thing and can have a different impact on different people in the same group.

Thus, ensuring the social inclusion of young people requires political courage and the strategic investment of financial and human resources, based on both a quantitative and qualitative analysis of the causes and consequences of social exclusion (Colley et al., 2007).

Having acknowledged, in the previous chapter, that the Youth sector presents a more advanced development in inclusion, it was decided to further explore, as preparation for the empirical research, the sector of Education and Training. In it, Vocational Education and Training was deemed the most interesting to research, as it shares the political contradictions described above and caters to a less privileged audience (in general). It will be presented in the next point.

2. Vocational Education and Training

2.1. Description and relevance in the EU and for Erasmus+

VET is defined as a type of education provided at different levels to young people - initial VET (IVET), the focus of this research - and adults, that provides learners with the required personal and professional skills to perform a job and/or training and/or create jobs in demand on the labour market (Council of the European Union, 2020). According to Cedefop[24] 2019, IVET students in the EU corresponded to 48.4% of all upper secondary students and 39% in Portugal. The employment rate for recent IVET graduates (who have obtained a vocational qualification between 1-3 years before the survey) between 20 and 34 years old was 76.1% in the EU and 73% in Portugal, higher than for graduates of general education by 7%, in the EU, and 3,9%, in Portugal.

VET takes place either in a school-based environment, a work-based setting, such as training centres and companies, or a combination of both, with a strong focus on creating a setting in which students can apply their learning in practice developed and familiarize themselves with the daily reality of the vocational area. Although it is often associated with trade/craft professions (such as a carpenter, hairdresser, gardener, electrician), VET covers a wide range of skilled professions which are in demand in the labour market, including fields related to services and administration (accounting, marketing, tourism, sales, e-commerce, health services, tourism, and hospitality, among many others).

Due to this needs-oriented approach to education and training and close links with the job market that aims to address the skills-mismatch, the EU argues VET has a fundamental role in equipping young "skills for work, personal development and citizenship, which help them to adapt to and deliver on the twin digital and green IVET

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[24] Data from Cedefop VET Monitor retrieved from https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/key-indicators-on-vet/countries?country=PT&country2=#1\

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Likewise, in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Sustainable Development Goal 4 ("Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all"), UNESCO recognises the potential of VET in promoting inclusive and sustainable economic growth and competitiveness, social equity and environmental sustainability by empowering individuals, organizations,

enterprises and communities and fostering employment, decent work and lifelong learning in the Recommendation and the Strategy[25] for the sector.

VET is also recognised for "fostering inclusiveness and equal opportunities and contributes to achieving resilience, social fairness and prosperity for all" (Council of the European Union, 2020). Some of the typologies of VET are shown as ways of combating school dropout and, consequently, social exclusion due to lack of academic qualifications and professional qualifications (Barbosa et al., 2015). In fact, according to a survey conducted in Cedefop in 2016[26], the two main reasons students choose vocational education are the likelihood of finding a job (46%) and interest in the subjects (41%), in opposition to general education which does not lead to a qualification or provides them with a learning opportunity in their field of interest. In this way, VET can be seen as a facilitator of equity, justice and social inclusion (Barbosa et al., 2015).

According to McGrath (2012 cited in Pantea, 2019), such conceptualisations on 'employability', 'skills mismatch' or on 'labour market inclusion as social inclusion' can send a disempowering message on the perceived value of young people's lives. VET calls for a larger debate on youth exclusion, expanding from the focus on employment to other transitions and aspirations of young people, as giving the labour market priority over individual's growth makes VET 'inconsistent with democratic principles' (Thompson 1973:95, as cited in Pantea, 2019).

And while high expectations, from poverty alleviation to economic growth and attraction of investments are placed in VET, "the argument that stating that VET is invariably good is as partial and hazardous as stating that it is always a bad idea" (Pantea, 2019:12). Wolf (2011: 116, as cited in Pantea, 2019:2) brought upon the risk that some schools, as has happened in the past, effectively write off some of their least academically successful students to vocational courses[27]. Pantea (2019) also explains that having higher education as a standard, makes it difficult for others to see VET as a choice in its own right; and brings up the problems associated with promoting IVET as the default 'offer' for 'less academic' pupils, explaining that VET, over the last two decades has been considered by researchers as 'mother's last hope', 'a place to park' young people believed to be dysfunctional or 'a great idea for other people's children. "At present, in the search for

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[25] Strategy for TVET (2016-2021) - retrieved from
http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0024/002452/245239e.pdf
[26] What are the reasons for choosing VET as an educational path? - retrieved from
https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/da/news/what-are-reasons-choosing-vet-educational-path

increasing the public (…) 'appetite for VET', employers and policymakers look for positive metaphors, yet not always in a context that is fundamentally different from the one that generated the above critiques" (Pantea, 2019:39).

2.2. The Portuguese case

At the level of each country, the challenges and policy responses of VET, as well as its functioning, might differ. In Portugal, goals include further reducing early leaving from education and training, upskilling vulnerable groups and promoting their socio-professional integration (DGERT, 2019). IVET takes place in public or private upper secondary level schools (high school). Private VET schools, "Professional School" were first established in 1989, and resulted in the current development of VET (Barbosa et al., 2015). They are generally open to the public and do not have a fee or tuition and are only private regarding their management (which is often formed by different stakeholders of the region), in opposition to public schools which are, ultimately, managed by the State. Professional programmes ("cursos profissionais") include general education subjects (Portuguese, foreign languages) and subjects connected to the vocational areas and target youth with a more practical and labour market-oriented mindset. They last for three years and foresee work-based learning in an agreement between the school and a professional institution with activity in the field of studies corresponding to the programme (company, organisation, school, etc) (DGERT, 2019).

In addition to providing young people with a double certification that qualifies learners to enter the job market or pursue further studies (including in higher education) upon completion, according to the decree-law (Decreto-lei No 55/2018, June), VET should equip their graduates with technical-scientific and technological knowledge and nine other competencies including critical and creative thinking; reasoning and problem-solving; interpersonal relationship; and personal development and autonomy. These competencies are part of the "Profile of students leaving compulsory education"[28], the Portuguese framework for education decision-makers and actors with a humanistic basis. Schools are entrusted with designing how learners could gain these competencies with the support of documents, training and tools provided by the Ministry of Education[29] and international

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[28] Established in Portugal by Despacho No 6478/2017, June 2017.
[29] Perfil dos Alunos à Saída da Escolaridade Obrigatória – retrieved from https://www.dge.mec.pt/sites/default/files/Curriculo/Projeto_Autonomia_e_Flexibilidade/perfil_dos_alunos.pdf

projects (virtual, via eTwinning; and in-person, with Erasmus+) have been gaining a special relevance as a part of the schools' strategic and educational plans, supported by a strong commitment of the eTwinning National Support Organisation and the Erasmus+ National Agency Education and Training.

Despite these results, the praise of VET by policymakers, and the multiple opportunities offered to students in the country, the recognition and attractiveness of it are limited by the social stigma associated with professional and technological programmes in Portugal. OECD (2018: 146 cited in Barbosa et al., 2015: 45) alerted for a 'historically weak reputation' of VET in Portugal by demonstrating professional programmes are often targeted at students from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds. A study systematising data on IVET from 2015, Barbosa et al., (2015) demonstrated this derogatory social representation, and conclude the prejudice associated with professional programmes and its devaluation as a training path is still associated with the origin socio-economic status of most students, who are mainly coming from families with a low level of education, and professions as workers, farmers and unskilled workers, in opposition as those in general education, whose families are predominantly from management and technical professions and have higher levels of education. For example, while 32% of the students in general education have parents who completed Higher Education degrees, for IVET that percentage is 9%. The data also shows more precarity in the employment for parents of IVET students and a larger number of single-parent families (Barbosa et al., 2015).

3. The 'invisibility' of VET learners

In her longitudinal study of VET, Pantea (2019) draws a general profile of IVET learners[30] as young people trying to make sense of their future lives while enrolled in a shorter educational track that comes as an alternative to high school education and states the type of lives, they value are articulated with the (arguably objective) prospects of precarious work and precarious lives and a strong component related to space (localism). In other words, IVET graduates often do not imagine a future outside their cities or even neighbourhoods, and they tend to relate their jobs deeply and personally — precarious as

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[30] The study focuses on EU and Romania. Although EU presents several systems, those presented in the investigation largely correspond to the Portuguese ones, thus were considered important for this dissertation. However, the profiles of VET learners are multiple, and no generalisation or typification is intended.

they may be — with happiness, as having a satisfactory job sits at the core of their aspirations.

As stated by Phillip Brown (1987), they are "the 'invisible majority of 'ordinary' working-class pupils who neither left their names engraved on the school's honours boards nor gouged them into the top of classroom desks". Although they typically come (as the case of Portugal illustrates) from many times after experiencing long-term experiences of educational failure they are not targeted as a disadvantaged group, as they did not drop out, for instance.

> To a large extent, young people in VET have been a rather invisible social group, close to Roberts' (2011) 'invisible middle': young people who fall in between categories that attract high public attention. In many ways, they are 'ordinary people', at distance from the overqualified graduates or from the exceptional achievements attributed to the emerging young entrepreneurs, and, also, in a different situation than those not in education, employment or training (NEET). (Pantea, 2019:13)

Pantea also explains that while VET policies often try to reconcile interests and competing legitimacies of employers, policymakers, teachers, parents, young people and society by large, young people's perspectives on VET are, at best, assumed and often not sought after when designing solutions.

Pantea (2019:10), through this study, demonstrates that young people in VET "exhibit a (probably) similar tendency to experiment with options, choices and 'dreams' as their peers in high school and have 'reasonable' personal/ professional aspirations, yet they lack the enabling structural circumstances and the conceptual map (i.e. mentorship, guidance, friendly institutions to achieve them". The author argues they aspire to a place 'high', despite a conforming pressure, which would require a need for social mobility against the odds (yet within the constraining limits of class), but despite that, they place the locus of their occupational expectations in precarious jobs as they believe individual agency takes priority. The results of the study demonstrate this, exposing young people's low sense of control over their 'work destiny', on their weakened social awareness, poorly articulated political voice, and a general sense of resentment.

Through this description, is possible to conclude that, in general, IVET students present some of the characteristics, and maybe than one category, of the "youth with fewer opportunities", as they have a history of difficulties in the learning system, are normally middle-class or lower, and might be discriminated due to their learning choices.

4. Erasmus+ for VET: mobility for learners

Considering the focus given by the EU and for the Erasmus+ Programme to VET, and the particularities of Portuguese case - Erasmus+ is seen as a way for schools to help students achieve the required skills, and with a profile of VET students matching some of the disadvantages that Erasmus+ proposes to tackle; VET in Portugal was chosen as the case to be explored in this research. Additionally, studying VET learners offered the advantage of being able to reach them through cooperation with school (who are themselves managing Erasmus+ projects, allowing for multi-level research).

The validity of this choice is confirmed by the recommendations given by the European Commission to Portugal[31] in the most recent evaluation report, stating that "new mechanisms and targets should ensure that young people from low-income families and/or with special needs benefit more from the opportunities provided by the Programme, to ensure real inclusion". The report also noted that "Portugal´s commitment to Vocational Education and Training (VET) requires the increase in the scope of this action". These are two reasons that underlie this study.

The statements above can be reinforced by analysing the most recent[32] data regarding the participation of participants considered as "fewer opportunities" and special needs in VET projects for learners in Portugal (Figure 7).[33] A percentage of the total of participants considered disadvantaged was calculated to simplify the comparison between KA102, the action open to all institutions covered in this sector, and KA116, the action for schools with a specific accreditation. It can be derived that despite having a student population that, in theory, mostly fits the "box" of "young people with fewer opportunities", only 1/4 of the students who can go on Erasmus+ are considered to have disadvantages. The number of such participants is largely surpassed by ErasmusPro (long term) in comparison to short term projects. If we note that while there are over 22000 grants for individual participants in short term mobility, only 1351 for the long term, Portuguese VET institutions need to improve access to Erasmus+.

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[31] Portugal: Programme Erasmus+ National Evaluation Report Executive Summary, retrieved from https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/sites/default/files/el_national_report/PT_National%20Report.pdf

[32] The E+NAEF kindly provided data for the first draft of the research project underlying this dissertation in June 2020 and later in 2021. The data were requested again in January 2022, when the dissertation was concluded, to ensure it included the most recent data available.

[33] The numbers display participants in finalised projects (from 2014 to 2016) and contracted ones (meaning they have not yet been duly finalised or reported, from 2017 to 2020).

Mobility of VET learners under KA102 and KA116 in Portugal from 2014 to 2020					
Action Type	Activity	Contracted Participants	Participants Contracted with Special Needs	Contracted Participants with Fewer Opportunities	Percentage of Participants Contracted with Fewer Opportunities and Special Needs
KA102 - VET learner and staff mobility	ErasmusPro - Mobility of VET learners (3 to 12 months)	809	12	207	27%
	Mobility of VET learners (2 weeks up to 3 months)	19 278	353	3 771	21%
	ErasmusPro - Mobility of VET learners (3 to 12 months)	542	8	161	31%
KA116 - VET learner and staff mobility with VET mobility charter	Mobility of VET learners (2 weeks up to 3 months)	3 138	79	1 117	38%
	ErasmusPro - Mobility of VET learners (3 to 12 months)	1 351	554	215	57%
Combined	Mobility of VET learners (2 weeks up to 3 months)	22 416	452	5 256	25%
Total		23 767	452	5 256	24%

Source: EC E+ Dashboard, 24.01.2022 (DB Run)
PT01 Finalised and Contracted* Projects; 2014-2020; KA1, KA2; VET
Provisional data for 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020 (Contracted Projects)

Figure 7 - Mobility of VET learners under KA102 and KA116 in Portugal from 2014 to 2020

Attending to the complexity of processes under Erasmus+, it was considered that presenting a practical application would be useful, particularly in the action chosen to develop the empirical research. While there are many other opportunities for VET within Erasmus+, Thus, the stages leading to Erasmus+ KA1 mobility for learners in Vocational Education and Training (VET), including implementation and assessing its "inclusivity" are[34]:

1. The European Commission publishes the annual Erasmus+ Programme Guide and overview of calls for a given year.

2. The National Agencies launch the KA102 call for proposals and corresponding support actions (e.g., Info Sessions) in the respective countries.

3. An eligible organisation (i.e. VET school) draws a project based on their needs and goals, and the priorities and objectives set out in the Guide and choose the activities, the learning outcomes to be achieved, the profile of participants (and in case they

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[37] According to the framework of Erasmus+ Programme for the period 2014-2020 (the one under which the survey research was developed) and based on professional experience with this action in Portugal.

include "young people with fewer opportunities", a short description on which obstacles they face and how they will be addressed), as well as the project topics, one of which is inclusion, etc. The activities can be a period of classes or an internship in a VET school or company/organisation (which are the "host organisations"), in any of the 33 Programme Countries. They can last from 2 weeks to less than 3 months and it is up to the school to decide to send students abroad individually or in groups. The school is also asked to explain how the project will be managed, which actions are being done to ensure inclusion in the project, how they will support students, among others. The project budget is calculated automatically.

4. The schools submit the final proposal using the corresponding application eForm.

5. The National Agency (NA) evaluates and series the projects and notifies the school of the result.

6. If the project is scored with enough points to be granted funding, the school and the National Agency make the necessary contractual arrangements to start the project.

7. The school nominates a Project Coordinator (which can be an administrative staff or a teacher) and, in some cases, a team or department to manage and implement the project.

8. Procedures for selecting the participating students are held, which the NA requires to be transparent, public, and fair.

9. Successful student applicants receive a grant or/and other types of practical support from the school to take part in learning mobility abroad. During the preparation phase, a contract is signed and a learning agreement that defines the setting and outcomes of the mobility is created, and it should involve the school, the participant, and the host organisation.

10. The school registers and reports each individual mobility to the NA through a digital tool and marks which students have "fewer opportunities".

11. The student goes in Erasmus+ and upon return is asked to answer a survey to assess the mobility and its impact for the NA/Commission. The recognition of the learning outcomes takes place and the certificates chosen by the school to do so are issued.

12. The school continues the project until all mobilities have been implemented and/or the conclusion date of the project is reached. Then, it submits a final report to the NA in the same tool, which, among other things, calculates the total of students with "fewer opportunities".

13. The database shared by the NAs and monitored by the European Commission calculates the number of "inclusion projects" (those that chose inclusion as one of its main topics),

participants with "special needs" and participants "with fewer opportunities" per country and in all Programme Countries.

14. The EU-wide data is made available to the public in the Erasmus+ Programme evaluation reports published by the European Commission and used to make recommendations for the Programme, namely regarding its inclusiveness, to the NAs, the EACEA and the Commission. Such data can also be used by stakeholders of the VET sector – schools, training institutes, researchers, European networks such as EfVET Forum, and others – to elaborate their own reports and recommendations and/or as evidence and rationale for future project applications.

Conclusion

From this chapter, it can be noted that youth inequalities are a complex issue and the policies created to answer the challenges of today's youth tend to adopt a rather uniformised agenda that does not put young people in the centre, and this also applies to VET. By analysing the positioning of VET in Europe, it can be noted that it shares a very similar profile with Erasmus+ on the level of strategic positioning, namely contributing to societal goals such as furthering cohesion, inclusion, and employability, and being particularly targeted at young people, but not involving them directly in policymaking. VET has been gaining a prominent role in Erasmus+ and specific targets are even defined for this sector within the Programme.

Policymakers have fully positive rhetoric towards VET and its potential to contribute to the aforementioned goals as well as quality education by filling the needs of the market (skills match) and catering to young learners who are more interested in studies that provide a practical application. However, the public reputation of VET is "tainted" by prejudice and practices that associate it with a learning path for those who are not seen as fit for the general education programmes. Such a situation is visible in Portugal, where VET has been establishing itself as an alternative and gathering an increased number of learners, as well as presenting higher employability rates (as is the case for the EU).

However, OCDE and data alert for a tendency of VET being directed at middle-class students which might affect how it is perceived by outsiders but students themselves. It can be said, from this data analysis, that VET students in Portugal are likely to fit one or more categories of 'fewer opportunities'. The same can be said for the global profile of VET learners, which are characterised as localised, class-bound and work-oriented, but

presenting other expectations than the employability "advertised" by VET policymakers, illustrating once again the complexity of youth policies.

VET in Portugal also shows room for improvement within Erasmus+, where it is far from reaching its potential concerning the inclusion of participants from disadvantaged backgrounds, according to the data examined.

Part II – Empirical research

Chapter III – Planning, organisation and caracterisation of the study

Introduction

In an ever-increasingly globalised and technological society, which has irreversibly changed the functioning of the job market, the skillset required to access different opportunities and the relations among cultures, countries and people, new factors for exclusion arise, leading to further inequality among young people. As shown, at the European level, the Erasmus+ Programme is presented as a tool to counteract these, by providing funding and a framework for the acquisition of new skills, experiences, and opportunities for personal and professional growth open to all that, in turn, should increase employability, engagement, participation and a sense of belonging among young Europeans. However, as demonstrated in the previous chapters, the number of participants (when compared to the overall number of students/graduates) is still relatively low, particularly of participants defined as "young people of fewer opportunities" which are the target of inclusion in Erasmus+.

Having established the backdrop of the relation between Erasmus+, VET and inclusion/youth inequalities and identified VET, which explained why it was considered a suitable sector to conduct research in, and that its students present a high potential of benefitting from Erasmus+ experiences in Part I, this chapter will now describe the methodological choices and procedures of the study carried out, namely the choice of methods, the process of construction of the research tool, selection of participants, and data collection and analysis tools and procedures.

1. Subject, objectives and methodology

The reasoning of this investigation lies in acknowledging intersectionality: factors for exclusion are multiple, cumulative, and often embedded in young people by their context, and the more inequalities one faces, the more is bound to encounter in the future. Acknowledging that Erasmus+ has the potential to interfere in this pattern and that it should involve a more diverse profile of young people, especially those who would not, on their own, have the opportunity, information, or initiative to get involved, the European Union's intent for a more inclusive Programme is welcomed. In this context, it matters to analyse

what is defined as "inclusion" and how it is tackled by Erasmus+ and how these relate to sociological and social/youth work approaches and measures perceived as effective by researchers, practitioners, and the young people they target.

This research is focused on the inclusion of young people in the context of the Erasmus+ Programme. The empirical study focuses on Vocational Education and Training in Portugal to limit the sector of the Programme and geographical scope to be approached. As explained in Part I, VET has a strong relevance of VET in Europe and Portugal (and worldwide) because, in addition to the economic dimension, it is characterised by a strong social dimension and creates benefits in both areas, therefore playing a role in public and educational policies and economic and social development objectives (Barbosa et al., 2015). Pantea (2019) presents solid arguments why VET students should be more "visible" to policymakers and researchers and describe their profile as corresponding to the target group of Erasmus+, as it was mentioned in the theoretical framework.

Considering this, the focus is given to the EU and for the Erasmus+ Programme to VET; and the particularities of Portuguese case - Erasmus+ is seen as a way for schools to help students achieve the required skills; and with a profile of VET students matching some of the disadvantages that Erasmus+ proposes to tackle; VET in Portugal was chosen as the case to be explored in this research. Additionally, studying VET learners offered the advantage of being able to reach them through cooperation with school (who are themselves managing Erasmus+ projects, allowing for multi-level research).

While there is a considerable number of research projects and impact reports on the Erasmus+ Programme, they tend to approach either a macro level, measuring numbers of participants levels, including cross-national trends, aimed at policymakers for evaluation and monitoring purposes, which tend to lack socio-demographic analyses; or a micro-level focused on personal perspectives and specific issues of participants (Cairns & Krzaklewska, 2019). Similarly, there are meso level approaches, which study how mobility is managed. This study aims to contribute to new and more integrating representations of the Erasmus+ Programme by addressing these three levels simultaneously.

At the same time, its innovative potential lies in contradicting a tendency to adopt a rather uniform approach when representing Erasmus participants, emphasising general tendencies and the majority rather than stressing diverse experiences, and what may be marginal but important experiences (Cairns & Krzaklewska, 2019). This is achieved by involving young people who have the opportunity to apply for a learning mobility period

funded by Erasmus+ but have not yet had access to one, rather than those who already took part in the Programme and characterising them according to sociodemographic factors.

Regarding methodology, while the data collection method used, the survey questionnaire is a quantitative research tool, this study is non-experimental and has exploratory and descriptive aims, and, therefore, does not intend to test the hypothesis or generalise conclusions but rather gather and systematize data on the reality that can contribute to future practice and research. In that sense, despite using a structured tool of data collection, the researcher positions herself towards a socio-critical paradigm, as this study has been progressively adapted to the reality of the field and aims to provide a contribution to the reality in the study and highlights the need for bottom-up approaches to policymaking but also project implementation and provide useful evidence for Erasmus+ practitioners to reach the so-called "young people with fewer opportunities".

The questionnaire survey aims to describe how the target audience perceives the inclusive measures designed to help them surpass the obstacles described by the Programme, assess how their situation fits (or not) the criteria established by Erasmus+ to be considered as having "fewer opportunities" (which are so wide that become hard to map and find someone who does not have any of them), and maps how factors/activities weight on their decision to participate on Erasmus+.

Its goals are to gather insight on the students' perspective, and, foremost, demonstrate how the non-participation in Erasmus+ often results from "invisible" internal and structural issues that cannot be solved by increasing funding or setting up inclusion mechanisms that label young people and risk further segregating them, rather than involve them and consult them. Therefore, even though the new Erasmus+ Programme, which began during the elaboration of this dissertation, proposes new measures for inclusion and presents several opportunities, as described in Part I, it was still considered relevant to proceed with the investigation as it focuses mostly on how these affect the participating individuals and organisations, and it does not intend to be an evaluation of the programme.

This investigation shares the argument of (Amado & and Vieira, 2017), that neutrality is difficult due to the emotional, social and cultural closeness of the researcher with the subject of research, but conclusions should be based on the results obtained, not on the pre-judgements and pre-concepts of the researcher. So, to ensure the credibility of the investigation, there was a concern to implement a credible, documented and logical process that allows for confidence (consistency) in the intentions and methodological processes of

the researcher come from its rigour correctness and accuracy of the data and interpretations; transferability (applicability); and confirmability (neutrality) (Amado & Vieira, 2017).

2. Design of the investigation

This investigation is a survey design that presented several phases. First, statistical data on the topic was gathered to assure the validity and relevance of discussing the participation of "young people with fewer opportunities" in Erasmus+. Secondly, a literature review in Portuguese and English on the topics of Erasmus and social inclusion; social inclusion of young people; VET and social inclusion; youth inequalities; and the impact of Erasmus+ was carried out. Alongside, the desk research process led to an analysis of over 50 political/strategical documents on Erasmus+, Inclusion and VET from European Institutions, and further data analysis and collection. These set the foundation for the empirical research, a survey in the format of an online questionnaire.

According to Creswell (2005, as cited in Cook & Cook, 2008) surveys are used to measure the perceptions, attitudes, behaviours, or characteristics of a group towards certain topics. They are considered descriptive research, as they aim to portray a phenomenon but unlike qualitative research, they do not involve a small number of individuals expressing themselves in-depth but instead involve larger numbers of participants, sometimes who provide input by responding to prompts or questions (Cook & Cook, 2008). Surveys involve participants' self-reporting responses, which may not always accurately reflect actual behaviour, but can provide meaningful information related to a myriad of issues that are impossible or difficult to observe directly (such as factors for inclusion/exclusion) (Cook & Cook, 2008).

Whereas a survey does not allow to cannot be used to determine definitively which inclusion practices work for students and what other factors need to be tackled, it allows to gather a larger number of perceptions, thus representing more diversity of perspectives, than individual interviews, for example, which are limited by the resources of the researcher. According to (Albertina L. Oliveira et al.,2021) it is plausible to believe that people participating in an online survey may provide more private information than they would share in a face-to-face situation as well as issue more reprehensible opinions (like negatively evaluating the work of the school, which they would not do in person, for obvious reasons). Thus, in the context of this investigation, with a young population, a survey design in the format of a questionnaire also presents the advantage of not posing

obstacles to their shyness or privacy, highly valued by teenagers, and particularly in a topic of delicate nature. The online environment is more conducive to disinhibition, due to the sense of anonymity and invisibility, the lack of visual contact and the absence of social anxiety caused by direct physical interactions (Lapidot-Lefler & Barak, 2015, as cited in Albertina L. Oliveira et al., 2021).

3. Population and sampling method

Given this research has exploratory and descriptive purposes and does not intend to generalise findings but rather measure the perceptions of individuals who have a common set of characteristics and volunteered and agreed to participate in the research, a nonprobability sampling was considered the most adequate (Creswell, 2012). As it was not feasible to study an adequate sample from the total population of young people of the European Union or even in Portugal, where the research was conducted, the geographical scope was focused on the Metropolitan Area of Porto, which presents a high concentration of VET schools, is an urban and internationalised region and has an airport, which removes some constrains of accessibility (geographical location and availability of services) to Erasmus+.

The participants of the survey were selected through a two-stage purposive sampling, which according to Battaglia (2008) is done by using subjective methods to decide which elements should be included in the sample. This type of sampling is limited because different researchers are likely to not establish the same characteristics and elements to include, which will lead to different sampling units and, thus, is "most appropriate for the selection of small samples often from a limited geographic area or from a restricted population definition, when inference to the population is not the highest priority" (Battaglia, 2018:2) which applies to this investigation. The first stage of purposing sampling involves choosing first-stage units (the schools) selected to be included in the study using "expert subject matter judgment" (Battaglia, 2008) to decide which characteristics needed to be represented in the sample and then identifying schools that met such criteria. To ensure relevant institutions were chosen, forming a population that shared the defining characteristics that this research aims to identify and study (Creswell, 2012), a set of criteria and characteristics was used to select the schools to be invited. Namely:

- agreeing to voluntarily participate in the study;

- having a recognised track record in the field of VET in Portugal and a department/staff dedicated to internationalisation activities (i.e., International Relations Department);

- addressing inclusion in their educational values/mission/plan;

- being located in the centre of urban and highly populated cities the Porto Metropolitan Area with good access via public transportation;

- holding an Erasmus+ Vocational Education and Training Accreditation (VET Charter[35]) from 2021 to 2027, demonstrating solid and recognised participation in the Erasmus+ programme and a successful project track record, to ensure all students that would be questioned had the opportunity to go on Erasmus+ in their school;

- promoting mobility opportunities for students in every school year;

- offering level 4 (according to the European Qualifications Framework) Professional Programmes with in-workplace training periods in the same fields of studies – namely, services (sales, digital support), commerce and/or tourism;

- be a school managed by private groups with open and public access, financed by Portuguese programme POCH (co-funded by the European Social Fund) – meaning that students receive a small grant for attending school;

- having a rather homogeneous student population – namely, with most students having ages between 14 and 20 years old, coming from urban and suburban areas, planning to enter the job market after high school (rather than enrolling in higher education studies), having at least one type of "fewer opportunities" (according to the definition of Erasmus+) and being motivated by hands-on learning.

By consulting the list of schools holding the Erasmus+ VET Charter Accreditation, and then, the websites and strategic documents of schools fitting the profile, and inquiring the schools directly, three institutions were identified to collaborate. They were invited and their directors accepted and volunteered to support the study and request the participation of the target population in the survey (students). The sample, a subgroup of the target population, was then formed by the young people who met all the following characteristics:

- over 18 years old – this criterion was chosen to ensure only involve individuals who are legally considered adults participated, and thus, are students who do not have

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[35] "The Erasmus+ VET Mobility Charter is intended to encourage organisations that have track records of proven quality in organising VET mobility for learners and staff to further develop their European internationalisation strategies" (retrieved from CALL - EAC/A04/2018 - d8f912_2e4e10c6c66d458d95c1ef4123facf72.pdf)

their participation restricted by their age (as some schools only allow participation after majority age) and who were able to take responsibility for their participation;

- enrolled in the 10th, 11th or 12th grade (according to the Portuguese educational system) of a Professional Programme of one of the VET schools selected to participate in the study – to ensure they shared an educational, geographical, social and cultural background;

- have never participated in an Erasmus+ mobility – as the objective defined was to examine the information provided by a group who has not yet been included in Erasmus+.

It was possible to estimate that, combined, the schools offer around 85 spots for participants. But since all schools have other types of study programmes and not all offer mobility under Erasmus+ for all grades it was not possible to calculate neither the total number of students who were eligible for Erasmus+ mobility nor of those who had not participated previously (as this is connected to the specifics of projects and differs in every school). Thus, there was not a reference number to calculate the sample size. However, since this study does not intend to generalise, it was not necessary to have a representative sample and, therefore, the sample was formed by the students who, when asked to answer the questionnaire, voluntarily accepted to participate.

4. Research tool of data collection: rationale for its construction

As previously explained, a survey in the format of an online questionnaire was used to collect data. It was based on the review of literature and analysis of relevant documents, presented throughout chapters I and II, and other data collected from the schools and a benchmarking of research involving characterisation of "young people with fewer opportunities". Barriers to International Student Mobility: Evidence from the Erasmus Program (Souto-Otero, Huisman Beerkens et al., 2013) and "Finding a place in modern Europe" Mapping of Barriers to Social Inclusion of Young People in Vulnerable Situations (Markovic, Angel, Lopez et al., 2015) were particularly important documents to map limitations and expectations from students. Fabbris & Boetti (2019) and Pantea (2019) contributed to a better understanding of the specificities of the VET sector. Finally, the operationalisation of the concept of fewer opportunities was loosely adapted from the proposals for indicators suggested in Meyers et al., 2020.

The collection of data from the schools was very relevant to make this section tailored to the students and was equally done via an online questionnaire (Annex 2), to allow for systematised access to responses and covered questions related to how inclusion is embedded (or not) in their Erasmus+ projects, how and general questions on students' profile and Erasmus+ implementation. The results obtained led to conclude that the schools' student population share the socio-economic characteristics, generally disadvantaged, but only two had selection criteria to promote their access, as well as specific measures to target them, but the three of them set inclusion as a priority in their internationalisation strategy and have included participants with disadvantages in projects. As for the measures developed, they were:

- selection of host institutions and verification of suitability for the needs and profile of the participant;
- language, intercultural, social/relational and/or practical preparation sessions;
- support for the students and guardians in the resolution of possible personal, family, financial, logistical impediments, etc;
- moments of contact with the Erasmus+ programme, the characteristics and functioning of the EU, people from other European cultures and nationalities;
- eTwinning projects and hosting Erasmus+ mobilities;
- informative sessions for dissemination of international projects;
- interactions with teachers and colleagues who have already carried out mobility.

The questionnaire was divided into three sections: "Erasmus and school"; "Erasmus and you" and "About you", which covered different sets of affirmations to be selected or evaluated on a Likert-type scale (e.g., 1 = strongly disagree; 2 = disagree; 3 =neutral; 4 = agree; 5 = strongly agree).

For the introductory questions and sections one and two, the affirmations were divided into large categories which aimed at covering different issues: Awareness and preferences related to Erasmus+; Perceptions on how schools develop Erasmus+; Evaluation of reasons to not apply; Evaluation of reasons that would increase motivation/confidence to go on Erasmus+; Evaluation of reasons that would increase interest in doing Erasmus+.

Section 3 was devoted to the characterisation of participants, as knowing if they "fit" in the Erasmus+ categories of fewer opportunities was an important element of the study. Considering that it would be unethical to ask them to check a box to inform about the disadvantages they face, a less invasive approach, a set of affirmations per each type of

category of obstacles according to the Programme Guide of 2020 (excluding disability) were developed and then framed in four of sets of questions, one about the where they live in, one about their relationship with the school, one about themselves, and a set of options to be selected about personal experiences in the format of "I never" (to not ask directly about exclusion experiences and, accidentally, evocate the "Never have I ever" game). Two other sets: Perceptions about themselves; Perceptions about others were included in the final section.

According to Creswell (2012), ethical issues include providing explicit and clear information to the participants about the purpose of the study, avoiding any deceptive practices, sharing information with participants (including the role as a researcher), being respectful of the research site, reciprocity, maintaining confidentiality, and collaborating with participants. This was done by creating a tailored research instrument. A message was displayed both at the beginning of the questionnaire explaining the purpose of the investigation and in the end to thank participants, reveal the identity of the researcher for transparency and provide contact info should participants wish to provide comments or pose questions. Additionally, the questionnaire was built using inclusive language[36], all questions were created to avoid bias and heuristics and allowed participants to opt for not answering, and they also had the option to express themselves (in an open box at the end of each relevant part and the questionnaire).

The privacy of participants was guaranteed by using the specific option of Limesurvey to anonymize all the personal information. The schools were also informed thoroughly of the research objectives, phases, and purposes, and consented to their information being disclosed. As for the students, even though this prevented a large part of the student population from being involved in the study, to respect the need for consent, it was decided to only inquire students over age (18 and above).

There is no doubt that both the questions of a questionnaire may be influenced by the researcher who creates them, despite the efforts that may be made to achieve the conditions of objectivity and neutrality in its construction. Thus, besides consulting several other questionnaires and studies for benchmarking, the questionnaire was built based on evidence, review of literature and analysis of documents, and also reviewed by a VET

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[36] According to "Guia para uma Linguagem Promotora da Igualdade entre Mulheres e Homens na Administração Pública" (available at https://www.cig.gov.pt/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/Guia_ling_mulhe_homens_Admin_Publica.pdf)

teacher/Erasmus+ coordinator and the supervisor of this thesis, who provided feedback on what should be included/left out. Then, to ensure the questionnaire was adequate to its audience, a cognitive debriefing was carried out with four students with the same profile of the students to be inquired (George et al., 2013). They were asked to fill in the survey and then were asked questions about difficulties in understanding statements/questions; the words used and their meaning; the relevance/adequacy of the statements/questions given the context and experience of/the participants and if any should be added. Minor changes in vocabulary were done based on this feedback. The participants noted the questionnaire was long but considered all questions relevant.

The questionnaire was then sent to the three participating schools for approval of the Directors. Once their feedback was received, the questionnaire was considered approved and distributed to participants.

5. Procedure for data collection

The survey, in the format of an online questionnaire, was hosted in the online platform Limesurvey, provided by the Faculty of Psychology and Education Sciences of the University of Coimbra and thus, identified with its logo. An important feature of this tool is its adaptability to mobile devices, making the survey visually organised both in computers and mobile devices, in which most students answered it.

As explained previously, the study was developed with the support of three schools, through which the online questionnaire reached the students. The link of the questionnaire was sent via email to the Directors and Erasmus+ Coordinators of the schools involved in the study, who notified it was well-received and committed got the link to the students through different methods: email and in the classroom. In both those cases, teachers/technicians were asked to stress that only students who met the criteria defined should answer. A text at the beginning of the survey presented this information and, additionally, at the beginning of the survey, there were three questions corresponding to each of the characteristics used as control answers. In case respondents did not meet the criteria, Limesurvey automatically stopped them from continuing to answer. The questionnaire was applied in schools in June 2021.

The data collected was automatically stored by the platform, which also eliminated invalid answers. Then, the answers were exported in a format compatible with IBM® SPSS® (Statistics Package for the Social Science) and inserted in a database that will be

built for this purpose according to theoretical references and cut-off and categorization procedures. The data were analysed using descriptive and cross-tabulation statistics. Microsoft Excel was also used as a tool for data analysis, namely, to cluster the variables related to identifying categories of fewer opportunities, according to Figure 8 shows. The answers to the variables corresponding to these statements were copied to Excel sheets according to their category, which allowed to count the number of statements that applied to each student.

Social barriers
I've never been the victim of physical or psychological bullying.
I've never felt the need to consume alcohol/drugs to deal with a situation.
I don't feel the need to have a job to help my family
I've never had any trouble with the police or been arrested.
I have never had to take care of a family member/friend who has a health/disability problem.
Barriers related to education and training systems
I have no interest in studying, I'd rather be working.
I've considered dropping out of school.
I often have negative grades.
I'm surprised when I have grades over 14.
I have failed a year in school.
I have difficulties at school.
Geographical barriers ("In the area where I live…)
There are all the necessary services (e.g. supermarket, hospital, pharmacy, school).
There is a metro or train less than 2 km (30 minutes walk) from your home.
There are urban buses of the Andante network (STCP, Espírito Santo, Maia Transportes, Valpi, Gondomarense, etc) less than 2km (30 minutes-walk) from my home.

I am no more than 1 hour away (by transport) from school.
I have public transport to the nearest city centre more than 3 times a day.
I don't have to use a taxi or private car to get to school.
It is rare to hear about cases of physical violence or armed robbery.
There have never been any robberies to apartments/houses or people.
Barriers linked to discrimination
I have never felt excluded because of my family's culture (nationality, and lifestyle).
My mother tongue is European Portuguese.
I identify with the culture of the people around me.
I feel good and integrated/a in my school.
I've never been discriminated against.
I have never felt inferior to my colleagues for financial reasons.
Economic barriers
The income of those who live with me is higher than our monthly expenses.
My home has good conditions.
I have my own room.
I go to the doctor regularly and whenever necessary.
I can make savings and/or receive pocket money to spend on things I like (e.g. beauty products, clothing, technology, etc).
In my house, no one has serious financial problems.
The person(s) responsible(s) for me have a stable job.

Figure 8 - Affirmations used in the questionnaire clustered under the different categories of "fewer opportunities"

Finally, the sets of questions were organised in corresponding sections and main topics, to facilitate their analysis, using a table created for this purpose, presented in Figure 9.

Section	Question/Affirmation	Topic
Perceptions on how schools develop Erasmus+	My school works so that all students know about Erasmus+.	Information
	My school encourages students like me to participate in Erasmus+.	Support
	I feel comfortable talking about Erasmus+ with coordinators, teachers and/or psychologists.	Support
	My school is available to support me in overcoming the difficulties that prevent me from doing Erasmus+.	Support
	I know how/where to pose questions about Erasmus+ in school.	Information
	Going on Erasmus+ will be good for my grades.	Recognition
	The work done by me during an internship/Erasmus+ studies will be recognized by the school.	Recognition
	The vocabulary and the Erasmus+ are presented in is easy to understand.	Information
	I understand everything when I am given information about Erasmus+ in school.	Information
	My school gives me the opportunity to contact with students who have done Erasmus+.	Information
Evaluation of reasons to not apply	I'm not enough of a good student.	Self-perception
	I don't speak foreign languages well.	Languages
	I lack the courage to go through the application process.	Self-perception
	I'm ashamed to show interest in this sort of thing.	Self-perception
	I do not know the other people who are going to do Erasmus+.	Peers

	I don't feel comfortable asking for help to go on Erasmus+.	Self-perception
	I have behavioural problems at school (suspensions, etc).	School performance
	I am not able to buy the necessary material goods to do Erasmus (e.g., clothing, suitcases, etc).	Socio-economic background
	I have family responsibilities that prevent me from doing Erasmus+ (e.g., work to help my family; caring for someone sick/disabled).	Socio-economic background
	I do not think there are any benefits to doing Erasmus+ other than travelling and improving language skills.	Perception of Erasmus+
	I have other priorities right now.	Self-perception
	I've never had a long conversation in a foreign language	Languages
Evaluation of reasons that would increase student's motivation or confidence for going on Erasmus+	Seeing photos and testimonials of Erasmus+ on the school's social networks and website.	Information
	Talking about Erasmus+ in the classroom with teachers and colleagues.	Information
	Knowing the person responsible for Erasmus+ and being able to ask them questions.	Support
	Receiving support in solving problems (personal level, family level, financial, logistical etc) that can prevent my participation.	Support
	Get to know the European institutions that finance Erasmus+ grants better.	Information
	Find information online about all opportunities, vacancies, costs and how applications work.	Information
	Have the help of someone at school to apply.	Support
	Go Erasmus+ with colleagues I already know.	Personalisation

	Do an online language course before going Erasmus+.	Preparation
	Be able to choose between short Erasmus+ (2 weeks to 2 months) or longer (3 months to 1 year).	Personalisation
	Have photos and information about Erasmus+ on school walls or screens.	Information
	Have the possibility of having someone from my school explain Erasmus+ better to my guardian.	Support
Evaluation of reasons that would increase students' interest in doing Erasmus+	Knowing there are selection criteria that award points to students with family/economic difficulties (even if they do not have very good grades).	Criterion
	Doing remote collaboration projects with students and teachers from other countries.	International experience
	Hosting people from other countries in my school.	International experience
	Participating in activities about travelling or Europe at school.	International experience
	Going to information sessions organised by the people responsible for the school's Erasmus+ and asking questions.	Information
	Listening to presentations by students who have done Erasmus+ and speaking with them.	Information
	Receive practical training in preparation for living abroad.	Preparation
	Having group moments to meet colleagues I will go to Erasmus+ with.	Preparation
	Participating in language preparation sessions.	Preparation
Self-perception in relation to Erasmus+	I have the needed knowledge to go on Erasmus.	Self-esteem
	I think I can be selected if I apply.	Self-esteem

	My financial situation allows me to do Erasmus.	Socio-economic background
	I get good grades in foreign languages subjects.	Languages
	I like to participate in activities with the school.	Identity
	I know my own interests.	Identity
	I have prior travel experience.	International experience
	I'm feel excited about the idea of studying/interning in a different country.	Identity
	I feel safe/safe when I do new things.	Identity
	The idea of spending a month away from home doesn't stress me.	Identity
External support in relation to Erasmus+	I can talk about the possibility of doing Erasmus+ with someone who will understand me.	Support
	I know people who have participated in these kinds of activities.	International experience
	I know people who travel.	International experience
	My family believes that doing Erasmus+ would be good for me.	Guardians/family
	My guardian would allow me to participate in Erasmus+.	Guardians/family
	My guardian thinks doing Erasmus is positive for my educational and professional path.	Guardians/family
	My guardian considers Erasmus+ to be important for my future.	Guardians/family
	Even if travel and fun are part of the experience, my friends and family value Erasmus+.	Recognition

	I have family/friends who are interested in Erasmus+ or similar programmes.	Perception of Erasmus by others
	My friends think I should do Erasmus+.	Perception of Erasmus by others
	The people I know think Erasmus+ is a trustworthy programme.	Perception of Erasmus by others

Figure 9 - Categorisation of affirmations used in the questionnaire according to sections and topics for analysis

Conclusion

The methodological choices, methods and tools have been clarified in this chapter. The usage of an online questionnaire although not allowing for individual representations on the issue will suggest a wider picture of the issue, which can be further investigated or used in the intervention. It also caters to the sensitivity of the topic and of the population.

As previously explained in Part I, the framework, guidelines, and support mechanisms for inclusion in the Programme are defined by the European Commission, with the National Agencies, and operationalised by the beneficiaries (in this case, the schools), in a top-down approach that does not require the involvement of young people. Thus, in this investigation, it was considered relevant to reach the young people who still have not had the chance to join Erasmus+ and gather data that might provide some insights on the reasons why, focusing on their self-perception, context and role of the schools. This innovative approach (considering the review of literature) by having a focus on the characteristics of individuals and their context and being oriented to practical applicability and further development, embodying the interdisciplinarity of the Master in Social Intervention, Innovation and Entrepreneurship.

Chapter IV – Presentation, analysis and discussion of results

1. Descriptive analysis

The database for the questionnaire was formed with the nominal and numerical variables corresponding to the questions in SPSS.

The questionnaire had nominal variables to allow for a sociodemographic characterisation of the participants, which were then chosen to be used or not for crossed analysis depending on their relevance: age, grade, sex, awareness of the possibility of doing Erasmus+ in their school and interest in doing so. Plus, there were questions related to their preferences in Erasmus+: duration, objectives, and countries.

The affirmations that aimed to identify if students matched criteria of fewer opportunities as defined by Erasmus+ were grouped in three sections and then the data collected was analysed individually to create variables corresponding to each category to be explored: Barriers linked to discrimination; Geographical barriers; Cultural differences; Economic barriers; Barriers linked to education and training systems and Social Barriers (as defined by the Erasmus+ Guide for 2021). Barriers related to health and disability were excluded as they relate to the individual rather than its context, which was what we aimed to analyse. The affirmations and corresponding categories can be seen in Figure 8 (previous chapter).

If per category, students had selected or rated 1/3 of the total number of statements in a way that identified them as experiencing the disadvantage/obstacle in question, they were considered as fitting that category. This approach builds on the need for instruments and the criticism of the term 'fewer opportunities' presented in chapter I, acknowledging that even having this information, there is not a way to measure comparative disadvantage. However, this exercise allowed us to explore the operationalisation of this term.

The variables and data created in Microsoft Excel were then entered into the database of SPSS for cross-table analysis. Another variable was created to establish if participants were considered 'fewer opportunities' for cross-table analysis, even though the numbers were not proportional to those who did not fit the category.

2. Presentation and discussion of results

As previously stated, the analysis of the data gathered does not intend to produce generalisations of inferences but to translate reality and concepts in numbers that can be comparable to produce insight on students' perspectives and provide suggestions of the reasoning behind the lack of participation of young people with fewer opportunities in Erasmus+.

2.1. Attrition

A total of 89 students entered the questionnaire, only 58 answers were eligible according to the criteria defined for the sample and only 40 were considered as complete, revealing attrition. Attrition is a term used to "describe the process by which a sample reduces in size throughout a survey data collection process due to nonresponses and/or due to units ceasing to be eligible"(Lynn, 2004:43). Although disappointing, this number of attrition is understandable if we attend to the specific criteria that had to be met to answer the questionnaire (with automated discards by Limesurvey of the answers who did not) and its length. Limesurvey allowed us to understand that the 17 'dropouts' occurred on pages 2 and 3 of the questionnaire, corresponding to the shortest questions. This demonstrates no participants opted out of the questionnaire after beginning the "real" questionnaire.

2.2. Characteristics of the participants

Analysing the 40 participants, regarding age, they are 18 (18 respondents) including 19 (16) 20 (3), 21 (2) 22 (1) year old students. As for sex, 32,50% of them are male while 67,50% are female. These two variables were disregarded for further analysis as they did not present comparable proportions.

The distribution among school years was deemed an interesting variable for cross-analysis because it was more even, with 14 belonging to 10th grade, 15 from the 11th and 11 from 12th grade. While 10th graders would likely have recently entered the school (as the 10th grade corresponds to the first year of a Professional Programme), 11th graders are already familiar with both the institution and 12th grade are soon to be graduates and enter the job market/higher education. Despite these different educational stages, 92% of the

participants agreed or agreed partially that they have well-defined interests (the others remained neutral) and 70% that they know clearly what they want from the future.

Regarding school, albeit 72,5% have already failed a year (or more) in school, only 12,5% consider they have difficulties in school, which might signal that VET education is more suitable to their needs. Additionally, 75% enjoy participating in activities with their school.

Economically, 32,5% of the respondents consider the monthly expenses of their household are inferior to the income.

Considering disadvantages, 82,5% of the participants of this survey were considered, according to an interpretation of the term suggested by the Erasmus+ guide, young people with fewer opportunities. Using the method described previously that consisted of clustering affirmations in categories of 'barriers' (see Figure 10), it was calculated that 17,5% of the participants were not integrated into any of the categories and the same percentage belonged to only one category. 26 students faced more than one type of 'barrier'. 6 students faced four of them and 3 were considered to fit the 5 categories created. These results align with what was described on the profile of VET students as accumulating intersecting inequalities.
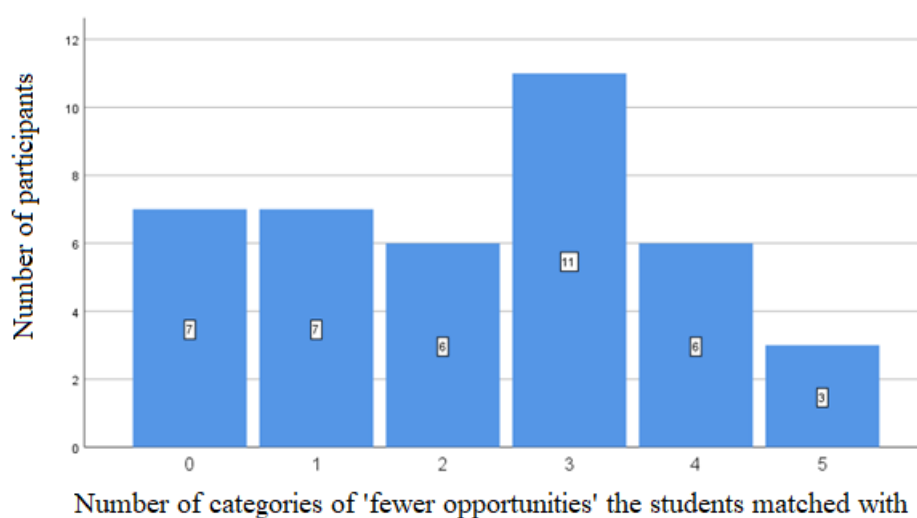
Figure 10 - Participants distributed according to the number of categories of 'fewer opportunities' they were identified with.

To better understand what kind of disadvantages they face, the total number of students were distributed among the different categories of fewer opportunities. From Figure 11, it can be drawn that the most common type of barriers are economic ones; and, often, they intersect with social barriers and barriers linked to education and training

systems. Geographical barriers account for the least common type, preceded by barriers linked to discrimination.

	Number	Percentage
Geographical barriers	15	16,3%
Barriers linked to education and training systems	17	18,5%
Barriers linked to discrimination	16	17,4%
Economic barriers	25	27,2%
Social barriers	19	20,7%

Figure 11 – Number and percentage of participants with 'fewer opportunities' per category.

3. Preferences regarding Erasmus+

In this section, direct questions with multiple choice were asked about Erasmus+ to identify/rule out their importance on the decision to go on Erasmus+.

In response to the question "Do you know how you can benefit from Erasmus+ as a VET?", 80% (32) responded yes. 10% of the students said "no". Interestingly, in response to the following question: "Are you interested in doing Erasmus+ at your current school?" all the students who responded negatively showed interest in Erasmus+. 90% of the students answered affirmatively to the question. Of these, 15% had already applied to go on Erasmus+, while 75% indicated they didn't yet have the chance to do so, 5% of which because they were not given permission, 32,5% for not having yet had the chance to (due to Covid-19 or school regulations) and 37,5% for "other reasons". Only 1 student indicated the reason in the open box to do so, stating "depends on who else is going". While not enough to provide a generalisation, it is argued that this is an indication of the importance of peers in the decision of going on Erasmus+.

The most desirable type of mobility is to conduct an internship in a company abroad (47,5%); the second is participating in a project with students from a different culture (27,5%) and closely after studying in a school abroad (25%), illustrating openness to different kind of activities.

Regarding the preferred duration of mobilities, only 12,5% show an interest in long-term (Erasmus Pro, over three months). Among the short term mobilities, the preferred is

two months (30%), followed closely by one month (27,5%) and two weeks (22,5%). The least favoured duration is three months, chosen by only 7,5%. This reinforces the need to increase the accessibility of short-term mobilities.

Regarding host countries, 67,5% are satisfied with the options offered by the school, 30% do not know what those are and 2,5% do not like the countries available. In the checkbox to write the "ideal" destination, the most chosen were Italy, the United Kingdom, Spain, Germany, and France. Other countries indicated Greece, Czech Republic, Slovenia, Angola, Malta, United States, Argentina, and Mexico. The choice of countries outside the European Union might be an indicator of students not knowing the limitations of Erasmus+ or a free interpretation of the word "ideal". The fact that the most chosen countries correspond to some of the closest countries to Portugal geographically which are simultaneously traditional immigration countries for Portuguese and nationalities that visit Portugal the most (according to "Estatísticas do Turismo – 2020" by Instituto Nacional de Estatística, I. P.), reveals a tendency to choose countries that are more 'familiar'.

The high levels of awareness of the possibilities within Erasmus+ and interest in the programme suggest that the participants neither lack information nor motivation indicated as possible deterrent factors for participation. The diverse answers about preferences – duration, objective, and host country - demonstrates that while students have multiple interests regarding mobility, and, thus, for duly engaging with them, schools should consult them and try to cater to their needs when creating their projects, as suggested by Schroeder (2014).

3.1. Self-perception in relation to Erasmus+

Regarding their self-perceived traits related to Erasmus+, 62,5% believe they could be selected if they applied for Erasmus+, while 35% disagreed to some extent. A larger number, 67,5% consider they have the needed knowledge to go on Erasmus+, 10% disagree and the others stay in a neutral position. But when asked if they considered their financial status allowed them to participate in Erasmus+, a lower percentage, 52,5% agreed or partially agreed, 20% disagreed to some extent and the remaining stayed neutral. This shows there is some lack of knowledge on the Programme for the VET sector since grants cover all the expenses.

Albeit only 50% state to have experience with travelling, a striking 80% agree they feel enthusiastic about the idea of studying/doing an internship abroad, only 65% claim to feel

safe when having new experiences and just 55% feel calm about spending a month away from home. This might be a symptom of the desire to experience adventure despite having contexts and personalities that might not provide the structure for it, supporting the arguments of Pantea presented in chapter II.

While no conclusions could be drawn on the intersection of fewer opportunities with these choices, it was noted, in each of these analyses, that participants not considered as 'fewer opportunities' never positioned themselves negatively, while their peers did so.

3.2. External support in relation to Erasmus+

Families and friends play a crucial role in young people's lives, and, in that sense, it was important to try to map the context and support they have regarding possible participation in Erasmus+. 80% consider they can talk to someone who understands them about Erasmus+ (and none disagree) and 70% that they have family or friends who take an interest in Erasmus+ or similar programmes. An also large number, 77,5% claim to know people who are frequent travellers and 60% know people who participated in similar activities. These numbers demonstrate that they would have support structures in case they wished to go abroad.

Regarding their guardians, 70% of the students indicate they believe doing Erasmus would be good for the pupil's educational and professional path and 65% agree to some extent that they would permit them to go on Erasmus (with 7,5% disagreeing and others remaining neutral).

72,5% agreed that even though travelling and fun are part of Erasmus+, their family and friends see value in it, and the same amount considers that the people they know find Erasmus+ a trustworthy programme (the remaining stayed neutral). A smaller percentage, 62,5% claims their family thinks doing Erasmus+ would be good for them, and that their parents/guardians think that doing Erasmus is a good thing for their future (with 5% completely disagreeing) and even fewer students, only 55% indicated their friends think they should do learning mobility.

These data paint a rather optimistic picture of the external support the students could rely on, but also show there is still quite an uncertainty among friends and family surrounding Erasmus+.

4. Perceptions on how schools develop Erasmus+

The literature review presented in part I allowed us to identify that schools, as project coordinators, play an essential role in creating accessibility to the programme. So, in this category participants were asked to rank a set of affirmations about the way their schools developed Erasmus+.

Participants were informed that the information would not be shared with the school to avoid "politically correct" answers. However, even under anonymity, participants evaluate the work of their schools as very good. Three main topics were identified in this section: information, support and recognition; all part of the school's role.

The statements linked with recognition were positively evaluated, and no participant disagreed that their work would be recognised or that Erasmus+ would have a positive impact on their performance. support and information.

Those related to support gather a less homogeneous response, but the setting is still quite optimistic. 87,5% considers the school encourages them to participate in the Programme (with 2,5% disagreeing partially and 7,5% positioning neutrally). 92,5% of the students feel comfortable with the idea of talking about Erasmus+ with coordinators, teachers and/or psychologists and 85% consider the school is available to help them overcome obstacles hindering their participation (the remaining position neutrally).

Finally, concerning information, 92,5% of the students consider that the vocabulary used to present Erasmus+ is easy to understand (the remaining stayed neutral); 95% claim they understand everything when given information and the same amount say they know how to clarify doubts about the Programme in school (with the remaining 5% divided between 'nor agree, nor disagree' and 'partially disagree'). Finally, when asked if they consider their school works to make sure all students know Erasmus+, the responses are more dispersed, with 80% agreeing, 10% neutral and 2,5% partially disagreeing.

Just like with their social support structures, the students' perspectives reflect an inviting environment to engage on Erasmus+.

5. Evaluation of reasons to not apply (to go on Erasmus)+

Due to being students at VET charter schools, which present regular opportunities for students to apply to go on Erasmus+ mobility. Therefore, it was considered relevant to understand which factors, besides having 'barriers' as described by the Programme, could prevent them from doing so. The results were analysed under cross-tabulation with the variant 'fewer opportunities' to see if it had an impact.

Topics in this section included: self-perception, languages, peers, perception of Erasmus+ and socio-economic background (on a perceived level).

5.1. Self-perception

Analysing the importance attributed to statements clustered under self-perception on "being enough of a good student", responses are dispersed. 37,5% consider it is not relevant or does not apply to them, while the same amount sees it as very important or important and 20% finds it somewhat important. Regarding fewer opportunities, it was observed that equally disperse results were found when analysing only the responses of students who have barriers linked to education, so this does not seem to have an impact.

Considering the process of doing an application on its own can also pose a challenge too, students were asked to rate the statement "I lack the courage to go through the application process". 55% considered it of little importance or not important/not applicable to them, and only 27,5% considered it very important or important, all of which were students with 'fewer opportunities'. The selection criterion also plays a role in the decision to apply and often, like the 'pistachio effect' argues (see chapter I - I 2.3.2), less compliant students are less favoured by them. While 67,50% didn't find it important/applicable, having reports of misbehaviour in school (such as suspensions) was given some degree of importance by 25% of the students.

For some young people, showing an interest in programmes such as Erasmus+ can be a reason for shame/shyness, but in the study, 47,5% considered it was not important or not applicable. Only 15% ranked it above 'somewhat important', and like in the previous question, were students with 'fewer opportunities'. Not feeling comfortable asking for help to go on Erasmus+ was mostly considered not relevant/not applicable (42,5%).

Having other priorities at that moment divided the answers, with 52,50% considering it not very important or not important/not applicable, and the remaining giving it some weight on their decision to apply for Erasmus+.

5.2. Peers

Resuming the importance of peers, previously brought upon, students were asked to rank how "not knowing the other people who will go on Erasmus+" affected their decision. Responses considering it 'very important', 'important' and 'somewhat important', were

12,5% each, totalling 37,5% of responses. 'Not very important" and 'not important/not applicable' gather 22,5% of students each, totalling 45%. The dispersion of results shows how young people position themselves differently when facing the possibility of living an experience without someone they previously know. The 12,5% who find it very important were all participants with 'fewer opportunities'.

5.3. Socio-economic factors

Although socio-economic factors are already covered by the categories of Erasmus+ 'barriers', it was considered relevant to ask students to rate two affirmations under this category. As explained in part I, Erasmus can be seen as a relatively exclusive activity due to taking the name of a programme for higher education (in which grants are very "generous"). Thus, the statement "I am not able to buy the necessary material goods to do Erasmus (e.g. clothing, suitcases, etc)" was presented and the following results were obtained (see Figure 12). The difference between the responses of participants with 'fewer opportunities' and others is visible. However, none of the students found this to be a 'very important factor in their decision to apply, Interestingly, it was the only question in which no respondent selected that option. One can presume that students are well informed (as the responses in 2.4. suggest) and they are aware Erasmus+ is fully funded and the grants provided to VET students should be managed by the schools in such a way that they cover not only the costs of mobility but any additional expenses with preparation, hence not considering it an obstacle.
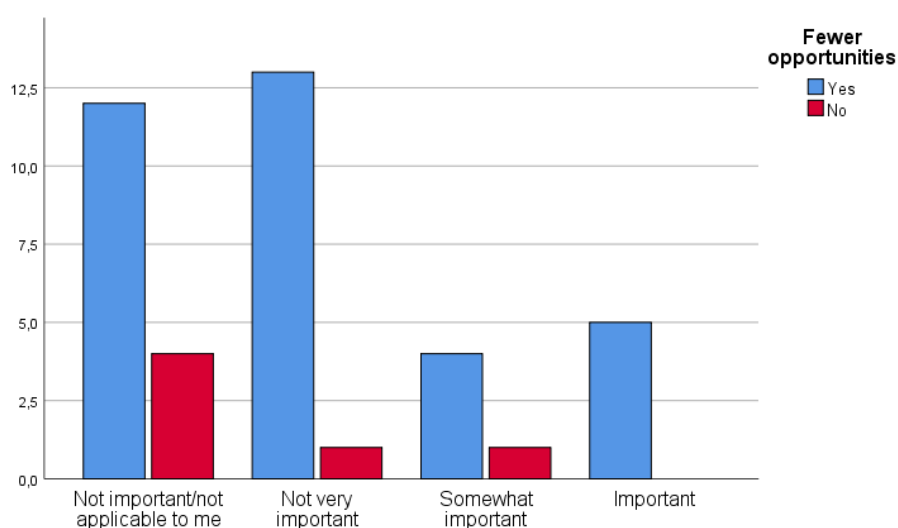
Figure 12 - Rating of the statement "I am not able to buy the necessary material goods to do Erasmus (e.g. clothing, suitcases, etc")

The statement "I have family responsibilities that prevent me from doing Erasmus+ (e.g. work to help at home; caring for someone sick/disabled)" aimed to map what was referred to in chapter I (2.3.) as 'absolute exclusion factors', but only 30% of the students considered it relevant to some extent. The answers were crossed with the question on the interest of the students in doing Erasmus+, and it was possible to conclude that only 1 of the 12 students who chose that option had applied to do Erasmus, which might or not be correlational.

5.4. Perception of Erasmus+'s benefits

The perception of the benefits of an Erasmus+ experience also affects their promptness to apply and for those who cannot see beyond the intercultural dimension of Erasmus+ and are not interested in life beyond their spatial location (the localism mentioned by Pantea, 2019, explored in chapter II, which generally characterises VET students) not think there are any benefits to doing Erasmus+ other than travelling and improving language skills. The responses obtained somewhat contradict this idea, not only because, as we have seen before, almost all participants showed an interest in doing Erasmus+, but also 55% found that not considering there were other benefits to Erasmus+ besides travelling and improve language skills to not be relevant.

5.5. Languages

For languages, which are considered an important part of why students choose not to go abroad, two statements were made. Regarding how impactful not speaking foreign languages well was for the students, the most common response was 'important', chosen by 27,5%, with a total of 65% of the attributing it some degree of importance. 17,50% considered it was not important or applicable to them. For context, these responses were crossed with the responses to "I have good grades in foreign language subjects" and it was noted that only 10% of the participants do not consider to have good grades but there is no cause-effect relationship between the answers to these questions. "I've never tried a long conversation in a foreign language" was found important (in different degrees) by 70% of the inquired students. No causal relations were verified in relation to fewer opportunities.

At the end of the section, an open question inquired about other reasons that might prevent them from applying to go on Erasmus+. No answers were received.

6. Evaluation of measures and actions that would increase motivation and or confidence and interest in going on Erasmus+

This section combines two sets of questions as they are both related to actions to foster participation (of young people as a whole and those with 'fewer opportunities') that are/can be developed by schools. Students were asked to evaluate how the possibility of having the measures and activities in their school would impact their motivation/confidence and interest in participating in the Programme.

Using a multiple answer analysis that combined the evaluations of all the statements proposed, we could have a global idea of how relevant such measures can be to the students. The results show students consider these measures to be very important for their positive positioning towards the possibility of going on mobility, as Figure 13 shows, with 73% considering it very important (32%) and important (41%).

	Percentage
Not important at all	2,1%
Not very important	7,6%
Somewhat important	17,3%
Important	41,0%
Very Important	32,0%
Total	100,0%

Figure 13 - Combined evaluation of all the measures proposed to increase students' confidence/motivation/interest regarding participating in Erasmus+

Like for previous sections, the results will be presented according to the topics defined in categorisation (Annex 3).

6.1. Information

The dissemination of opportunities to participants transparently and fairly is a requirement of the Erasmus+ Programme (European Commission, 2020). Fabbris e Boetti, (2019) claim that "EU VET Mobility still requires promotion, information and training, at many levels, starting from the European one and going down to the single organisations"

(p. 163). Thus, it is fundamental VET schools keep outreaching their students, shrinking the distance between local reality and the international proposal of Erasmus+.

A set of measures were evaluated by the participants on a Likert scale in which 1 stands for 'Not important at all' and 5 for 'Very important'. Taking advantage of this quantification of the perspectives, and to make data easier to grasp, the mean of the evaluation of each of the measures/activities was calculated an ordinal list was created (Figure 14). There is not much of a difference between the most and last scored, but some conclusions can be taken, namely that students prefer in-person information activities rather than online, the 'presence' of Erasmus+ in the halls of the schools is appreciated by them and that they have an interest in understanding more about Erasmus+ in different contexts.

See photos and testimonials of Erasmus+ on the social networks and website of the school.	3,7
Find information online about all opportunities, vacancies, costs and how applications work.	3,8
Talk about Erasmus+ in the classroom with teachers/as and colleagues.	4,0
Get to know the European institutions that fund Erasmus+ grants better.	3,9
Listening to presentations by students who have done Erasmus+ and have the opportunity to speak with them.	4,0
Going to information sessions organised by the people responsible for the school's Erasmus+ and ask questions.	4,0
Have photos and information about Erasmus+ on school walls or screens.	4,1

Figure 14 - Mean of importance (in a scale from 1 to 5 points) attributed by participants to information-related measures, from the least to the most valued

6.2. Support

Another core element of Erasmus+ listed in chapter 1 is the support to participants to ensure their (psychological and physical) safety and well-being. Additionally, the Inclusion strategies and Programme Guide make recommendations on how to support the participation of all individuals in the project. Hence, it is important to understand which type of support is most valued. The exercise described in the previous point was carried out and, again, the margin was short. This shows us that all measures are considered

relevant, demonstrating the need to create structural support for mobility and all its target groups, so the desired outcomes of fewer inequalities are reached.

Have someone at school helping me with my application.	3,8
Knowing the person responsible for Erasmus+ and be able to ask them questions.	3,9
Receive support in solving problems (personal level, family level, financial, logistical etc) that can prevent my participation.	4,0
Have the possibility of having someone from school explain Erasmus+ better to my guardian.	4,1

Figure 15 - Mean of importance (in a scale from 1 to 5 points) attributed by participants to support-related measures, from the least to most valued

6.3. Preparation

The requirements of ensuring a safe and quality learning mobility for all are based on a sound preparation of individuals so they can be better equipped to manage challenges and take full advantage of their intercultural experience abroad. These are also indicated by two of the schools as support mechanisms to promote autonomy, prevent cultural shocks, strengthen group relations, etc, before the mobility to prevent problems. Plus, although it is often not publicised, Erasmus+ offers a free language course online to participants (OLS).

Following, again, a calculation of the mean on how each measure was assessed, and obtaining an even narrower margin, it can be derived (from Figure 16), that, similarly to information, students prefer in-person language preparation and both training and group-building are regarded as important.

Get an online language course before going Erasmus+.	3,6
Receive practical training to prepare for living abroad.	4,0
Have group moments to meet the colleagues I will go on Erasmus+ with before the actual mobility.	4
Participate in language preparation sessions.	4

Figure 16 - Mean of importance (in a scale from 1 to 5 points) attributed by participants to preparation-related measures, from the least to most valued

6.4. International experience

Part of preparing students to live abroad, but as well to motivate them to join international projects comes from bringing internationalisation to the inside of the schools. Three possibilities were presented based on the schools' reported activities, supported by a closer connection between Erasmus+ and eTwinning (online collaboration platform for virtual collaboration between schools, and more), and examined as the previous points.

Doing remote collaboration projects with students/as and teachers/as from other countries.	3,8
Participating in activities about travelling or about Europe at school.	3,9
Hosting people from other countries in my school.	4,0

Figure 17- Mean of importance (in a scale from 1 to 5 points) attributed by participants to international experienced-related measures, from the least to most valued

Students seem to find these types of activities important, recognising the importance of gradually and continuing developing an intercultural-oriented mindset.

6.5. Criterion

Including specific criteria in projects that facilitate the access of people 'with fewer opportunities' is one of the recommendations of Erasmus+ for 2021-2027 to further achieve inclusion. So, students were asked to state if "Knowing there are selection criterion that award points to students with family/economic difficulties (even if they do not have very good grades)" was important to them. Since this has a direct link to it, both the variable for categorical fewer opportunities (yes/no) and those related to the relevant categories (social, economic and educational barriers) were crossed with the answers from students and represented in a graph. While Figure 18 may not provide the best setting for comparison, since the sample of the study with 'fewer opportunities' is much larger than the one that does not fit the category, it demonstrates the former highly would value such criteria. The cross-tabulation with each type of fewer opportunities stated before did not provide any useful data.
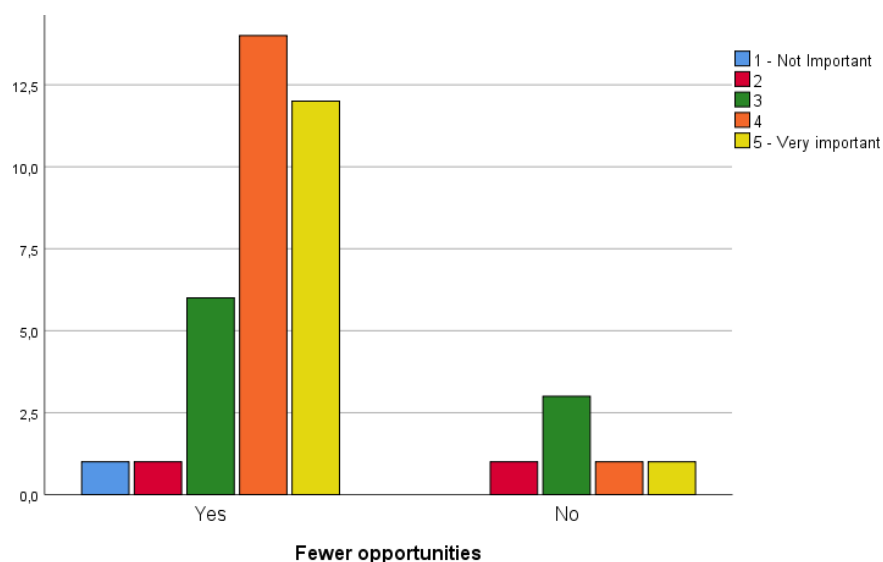
Figure 18 - Rating of the statement "Knowing there are selection criteria that award points to students with family/economic difficulties (even if they do not have very good grades)" according the profile of students

6.6. Personalisation

Two options for a personalised experience were presented based on the assumption that some young people value the company of 'familiar faces' when trying something new, and the argument from one of the schools that participated in the questionnaire that allowing students to choose different durations of mobility, these two measures were put up for evaluation. Both the possibility to "go on Erasmus+ with colleagues I already know" and to "be able to choose between short Erasmus+ (2 weeks to 2 months) or longer (3 months to 1 year)" were highly appreciated, with 75% and 77,5% respectively of the students considering it important or very important, reinforcing the arguments stated here.

At the end of the section, an open question asked, "What other activities, actions, projects or criteria do you think would be important for students at your school to want to participate in Erasmus+?". Once again, no responses were received.

An additional open text box was placed at the end of the questionnaire to allow participants to say anything they wished to but no responses were gathered, perhaps due to the exhaustive scope covered by the questions, or simply fatigue.

Conclusion

76

After concluding the analysis of the data collected, exploring some of the many cross-sections among variants and attempting to draw significance or insights out of them, one can argue that the results of the questionnaire auspice a positive future for the mobility of VET learners. The right structures, support mechanisms and mindsets seem to be in place to further widen the access to these opportunities.

In the cross-analysis on the effect of having 'fewer opportunities' in the responses of students, it was noted there were no significative causal relations, and, at most, it was possible to see students who did not fit this category always tended to place themselves more positively (but this didn't mean the former didn't do the same). This fact calls for the reflection on the difficulty to measure 'fewer opportunities and comparative disadvantage developed in chapter I.

While students mostly refrained themselves from using the open questions to express themselves directly (except for listing countries), they demonstrated trust and commitment by answering all questions, including those related to personal and sensitive issues, by not choosing the "I prefer not to answer" options (except one student who, interestingly, corresponded to a student who met all five categories of 'fewer opportunities' measured).

In conclusion, it can be said that the measures proposed by the schools and the Erasmus+ programme to include 'young people with fewer opportunities' are considered highly relevant (although not with the most possible score).

While the results do not present any significative "revelation" regarding their views of Erasmus+ itself, as the questionnaire only validates affirmations proposed by the researcher, it is surprising in the sense that despite the fact they were largely young people who, according to the Erasmus+ context, face several disadvantages, they show a positive self-perception towards Erasmus+, as well as interest and intent to take part in learning mobility.

Plus, the data gathered on specific preferences and the good practices mentioned in the affirmations may serve as tools for VET stakeholders to continue paving a way for this sector in Erasmus+.

General conclusion

This study set itself to gather data on how measures for inclusion in the Erasmus+ Programme are perceived by the young people it targets (those with 'fewer opportunities') but have not yet taken part in its activities. In a sentence, it can be said this effort is appreciated and welcomed, but there is a clear preference for measures that take place in-person and in proximity. The survey questionnaire results obtained in our study showed that young people experiencing disadvantage show enthusiasm, interest and intent for Erasmus+ and that the Programme beneficiaries who implement and design projects can play a crucial role in 'extending entitlement' and creating accessibility for them.

The argument for expanding social policy programmes like Erasmus+ beyond a functionalist approach that tasks young individuals with the harsh, if not impossible, the mission of overcoming 'barriers' linked to structural programmes with the sole tool of a learning mobility experience, was made. Simultaneously, this investigation made the case for the need to truly involve young people, especially those who tend to be overlooked because neither the problem-solvers nor the troublemakers, professionals must actively listen and engage them, understand their context, needs, and goals, and then design projects for them (and not the other way around). This is true to policymakers and education professionals alike, who can partake of tools, methods and attitudes embodied by non-formal education and the youth sector.

The data collected can directly be applied in an intervention project, even an international partnership, that goes further into the topic of 'popping the bubble' by engaging with 'unusual suspects' in a multilevel bottom-up approach. It can also set the reasoning for new Erasmus+ projects co-constructed with and for specific groups of young people, tailored to their context (may it be one of exclusion or not) which see mobility as means to (part of) an end, and not an end on its own. The interest of young people in gaining further international experience calls for a more structural approach to internationalisation by schools and teachers, which can be done by developing projects on eTwinning. Internationalisation is unavoidable and educational systems should integrate it further. Having established in this thesis that the Youth sector of Erasmus+ has plenty of resources and non-formal education methods to share, social intervention projects that connect it to formal education systems are recommended. Such interventions might include mentorships of teachers/project coordinators by youth workers, training courses for creating projects with young people through non-formal education for schools; services integrated with local

governments on youth engagement and participation, and international projects that actively involve the community and its organisations.

Moreover, the set of inclusive practices presented both in the results section and in chapter one can be adopted not only by other VET institutions but by project beneficiaries across the whole spectrum of Erasmus+, education and youth/work, to ensure more accessibility and a more equalitarian approach to opportunities by all young people. And the indicator-based framework (Figure 8) used in the questionnaire also might provide hints or inspirations for those implementing the Programme to create their own to ensure the same criterion are used to assess applicants as 'fewer opportunities' or not internally.

The methodological limitations of using quantitative research must be addressed. While the survey questionnaire allowed to expand the investigation to different schools and an opportunity to develop a new approach to tackle the lack of indicators for 'fewer opportunities', it does not express the voices and thoughts of young people on the issues. On another hand, using a survey without following quantitative paradigm approaches like validation of hypothesis or a sampling process that allowed for representativity limits the applicability of the data collected. However, this research intended to serve as an example or grounds for other investigations or projects focused on understanding those who are on the "outside of the bubble", using other research tools.

The investigation presented other limitations, such as ethical ones, that led to formulating the statements used to categorise young people according to types of 'fewer opportunities' in a non-directive and not definitive language, which difficult the interpretation of the answers as 'proof' of disadvantage. Likewise, acknowledging situations of inequalities being changeable in space and time, only allows us to qualify the students as a disadvantage at the time they answered the questionnaire (and even so, there are the subjective elements discussed in chapter I which question the possibility of labelling a young person according to a certain situation).

Another conditional factor that should be acknowledged is the fact that students were asked to rate the performance of schools while inside the walls of that same school, which may direct or indirectly condition their answers, despite the study being anonymous. The fact that the questionnaire was distributed in and through schools might also have impacted the profile of students who chose to answer the questionnaire, as students who already feel drawn to Erasmus+ might have interpreted the participation in the study as a way to show their initiative and interest.

This study was initially designed as mixed methods research, in which the two questionnaires (for the schools and the students) would be fed into focus groups with young people that aimed to give them a platform to be heard and for their words to be turned into research. However, the emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic prevented this research plan to move forward. As a suggestion for further investigation on these issues, adopting such a structure that addresses the different levels of Erasmus+ (or other youth/education-focused programme of projects), triangulating information through different methods of research.

The connection between Erasmus+ and inclusion creates a rich and challenging field that calls for interdisciplinary research. One particular issue that could benefit from a further and complementary investigation is the concept of 'fewer opportunities', which was born as an EU bureaucratical term, that could benefit from a revision and, equally, a methodological framework of indicators, towards a concept less open to interpretation, and hopefully, less excluding in its nature. This term also calls for a broader discussion on inclusion, equality and equity within Erasmus+, and how apparent positive discrimination of disadvantaged young people may not result in actual inclusion.

Another one is furthering research and establishing clear concepts and frameworks for terms such as young people 'in the missing middle'/the 'ordinary' youth, that can be applied by policymakers and education and professionals to ensure all young people are visible.

This study also suggests the need for further data collection, on a socio-demographic level, of who are the 'young people with fewer opportunities and how they relate to their 'ecosystems', and how the latter can affect their capacity of agency and gain advantages from Programmes such as Erasmus+. Qualitative studies with young people who do not wish to participate in Erasmus+, to understand the reasons or motivations behind this choice, could also be an interesting contribution from academia to counteract or support the idea of disinterest or lack of engagement of young people.

Multiple other avenues can be explored, and, namely regarding the 'social mission' and 'responsible higher education' of Erasmus+, especially in higher education, where it is more exclusive, and studies that, like this one, map the perspectives of those who are still not reached. A final suggestion concerns assessing how the policy-based conception of promoting social inclusion through Erasmus+ translates into reality by conducting longitudinal studies in different sectors of the programme as a form of impact assessment.

As a personal note, the author would like to thank the schools and the young people who agreed to take part in this study. This research provided an opportunity to further

understand, and from an academic point of view, a Programme that has profoundly changed her life, in hopes to find clues on how to make it 'for everyone'. More than that, through the one and a half years, countless articles, books, websites and, foremost, the rich conversations had in this process, have enriched and widened her perspective on how and why mobility matters, and the importance of not seeing it as a 'one-size-fits all' or 'magic bullet'. While some young people do not show any interest in Erasmus+, and, from an external point of view, it is clear they would truly benefit from it, mobility is only useful if meaningful for an individual, and to achieve that, much more than added funding is needed and structures need to be developed.

In conclusion, this dissertation hopes to live to the ambition of showcasing the need to outreach young people who are not a part of the 'bubble' of opportunities provided by public programmes, often without 'seeing' it. Which can only be done by acknowledging the 'invisible' structural challenges and intersecting inequalities through a bottom-up participatory approach to promoting access to occasions with as much potential for growth as the learning mobilities financed by Erasmus+.

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Annexes

Annexe 1. Questionnaire (in Portuguese, the language it was applied in; version queXML PDF of the digital survey exported from Limesurvey)

Olá! Estou a realizar uma tese de mestrado sobre como tornar o Programa Erasmus+ mais acessível no Ensino Profissional. Para que ela represente a visão dos estudantes, quero recolher opiniões, ideias e experiências de jovens como tu. Posso contar com a tua ajuda?

Por favor, dedica algum tempo a responder às minhas questões, se: - és aluno/a do 10º, 11º ou 12º ano na Escola de Comércio do Porto, EPROMAT ou Profitecla Porto; - nunca realizaste Erasmus+; - e tens 18 anos de idade ou mais.

Se não reunires estas três condições, por favor não respondas.

As tuas respostas são verdadeiramente importantes para o meu trabalho. Agradeço desde já o teu tempo e peço que respondas com calma e sinceridade a todas as questões.

Este questionário está a ser realizado no âmbito de uma dissertação do Mestrado em Intervenção Social, Inovação e Empreendedorismo, um duplo grau da Faculdade de Economia e da Faculdade de Psicologia e Ciências da Educação da Universidade de Coimbra, com cooperação da Direção da tua escola. As conclusões desta investigação serão partilhadas com escolas e entidades responsáveis pelo Erasmus+ para poderem ser usadas futuramente em ações de melhoria.

Toda a informação será tratada exclusivamente para fins de investigação, sendo garantida a confidencialidade e anonimato.

Secção A: 0. Identificação

A1. Indica a tua idade

Se fores menor de idade, não deves responder a este questionário.

A2.	Sexo		
		Feminino	☐
		Masculino	☐
		Outro	☐
		Prefiro não responder	☐

A3.	Ano de escolaridade		
	Se não fores estudante do ensino secundário, não deves responder a este questionário.		
		10º	☐
		11º	☐
		12º	☐

A4.	Já realizaste alguma viagem Erasmus+ com a tua escola atual?		
	Se a tua resposta for "sim", não deves responder a este questionário. Obrigada.		
		Sim	☐
		Não	☐

A5.	Estudas na Escola de Comércio do Porto, EPROMAT ou Profitecla Porto?		
	Caso não sejas estudante destas escolas, não deves responder. Obrigada.		
		Sim	☐
		Não	☐

Secção B: Parte I - Erasmus+ nas escolas

Nesta primeira parte, quero ouvir as tuas opiniões e ideias sobre o Erasmus+ das escolas profissionais.

Por favor, dá respostas tão sinceras, completas e informativas quanto possível. Relembro que toda a informação é anónima e não será enviada para a tua escola.

B1.	Sabes de que forma podes beneficiar do Erasmus+ enquanto estudante do ensino profissional?		
		Sim	☐
		Não	☐

B2. **Tens interesse em fazer Erasmus+ na tua atual escola?**

Sim, e já me candidatei mais de uma vez ☐

Sim, e já me candidatei uma vez. ☐

Não. ☐

Sim, mas nunca me candidatei porque ainda não tive oportunidade (ex. não cumpria os critérios relativos à idade, ainda não abriram vagas desde que entrei na escola, Covid-19, etc). ☐

Sim, mas não me candidatei porque não me deram permissão para o fazer. ☐

Sim, mas não me candidatei por outra razão. ☐

Outro ▼

Outro

☐

B3. **Ordena estes objetivos de mobilidade Erasmus+ por ordem de interesse para ti. Coloca "1" no o que mais te interessa.**

Estagiar numa empresa de outro país. ☐

Estudar numa escola estrangeira. ☐

Fazer um projeto com alunos de outra cultura. ☐

B4. **Que duração para estudos/estágio Erasmus+ consideras mais adequada para ti?**

Duas semanas ☐

Um mês ☐

Dois meses ☐

Três meses ☐

Mais de três meses ☐

B5. **Indica o teu grau de acordo com as seguintes afirmações em relação ao Erasmus+ na tua escola:**

	Discordo totalmente	Discordo parcialmente	Não concordo, nem discordo	Concordo parcialmente	Concordo totalmente	Não sei/não quero responder
A minha escola trabalha para que todos os alunos conheçam o Erasmus+.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
A minha escola encoraja alunos/as como eu a participar em Erasmus+.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Sinto-me à vontade para falar sobre Erasmus+ com as pessoas responsáveis, professores e/ou psicólogos.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
A minha escola está disponível para me apoiar a superar as dificuldades que me impedem de fazer Erasmus+.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

	Discordo totalmente	Discordo parcialmente	Não concordo, nem discordo	Concordo parcialmente	Concordo totalmente	Não sei/não quero responder
Sei como tirar dúvidas sobre o Erasmus+ na escola.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Ir de Erasmus+ vai ser bom para as minhas notas.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
O trabalho feito por mim durante estágio/estudos Erasmus+ vai ser reconhecido pela escola.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
O vocabulário e a forma como me falam de Erasmus+ é fácil de perceber.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Compreendo tudo quando me dão informações sobre Erasmus+ na escola.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
A minha escola dá-me oportunidade de contactar com alunos que fizeram Erasmus+.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

B6. **Os países em que a tua escola te oferece a possibilidade de fazer Erasmus+ interessam-te? Escreve no comentário qual seria o teu país ideal.**

Sim ☐

Não ☐

Não sei quais são os países onde posso fazer Erasmus com a minha escola. ☐

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Secção C: Parte II - Tu e o Erasmus+

Esta secção tem como objetivo perceber como os jovens do Ensino Profissional se relacionam com o Erasmus+. É extremamente importante pois este é um dos objetivos desta investigação.

É fundamental que respondas com sinceridade ao maior número de questões que te for possível.

C1. **Indica o grau de importância que cada uma das seguintes razões tem para <u>não te candidatares</u> a fazer Erasmus+.**

Lê calmamente as várias frases e escolhe a opção mais adequada.

	Nada importante ou Não se aplica a mim	Pouco importante	Razoavelmente importante	Importante	Muito importante	Prefiro não responder
Não sou suficientemente bom aluno/a.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Não falo bem línguas estrangeiras.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Tenho falta de coragem para passar pelo processo de candidatura.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

	Nada importante ou Não se aplica a mim	Pouco importante	Razoavelmente importante	Importante	Muito importante	Prefiro não responder
Tenho vergonha de mostrar interesse por este tipo de coisas.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Não conheço as outras pessoas que vão fazer Erasmus+ .	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Não me sinto confortável a pedir ajuda para ir de Erasmus+.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Tenho problemas de comportamento na escola (ocorrências, suspensões, etc).	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Não tenho possibilidade de comprar o que é necessário a nível material para fazer Erasmus (ex. vestuário, malas, etc).	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Tenho responsabilidades familiares que me impedem de fazer Erasmus+ (ex. trabalho para ajudar em casa; cuido de alguém doente/com deficiência).	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Não acho que haja nenhuns benefícios em fazer Erasmus+ a não ser viajar e melhorar competências linguísticas.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Tenho outras prioridades neste momento.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Nunca experimentei ter uma conversa longa numa língua estrangeira.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

C2. Existem outras razões que podem levar a não te candidatares para fazer Erasmus+? Se sim, quais?

[ ]

C3. Indica a importância destas possibilidades para aumentar a tua motivação/confiança para fazer Erasmus+:

	Nada importante	Pouco importante	Razoavelmente importante	Importante	Muito importante	Não sei/não quero responder
Ver fotos e testemunhos de Erasmus+ nas redes sociais e site escolar.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Conversar sobre Erasmus+ na sala de aula, com professores/as e colegas.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Conhecer a pessoa responsável pelo Erasmus+ e poder fazer-lhe perguntas.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Receber apoio na resolução de problemas (de nível pessoal, familiar, financeiro, logístico etc) que podem impedir a minha participação.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Poder ter alguém da escola a explicar melhor o Erasmus+ ao/à minha Encarregado/a de Educação.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Conhecer melhor as instituições europeias que financiam as bolsas Erasmus+.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

	Nada importante	Pouco importante	Razoavelmente importante	Importante	Muito importante	Não sei/não quero responder
Ter fotos e informações sobre o Erasmus+ em paredes ou televisões da escola.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Encontrar informação online sobre todas as oportunidades, vagas, custos e como funcionam as candidaturas.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Ter a ajuda de alguém na escola para fazer a candidatura.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Ir de Erasmus+ com colegas que já conheço.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Ter direito a um curso de línguas online antes de ir de Erasmus+.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Poder escolher entre Erasmus+ curtos (2 semanas a 2 meses) ou mais longos (3 meses a 1 ano).	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Existirem critérios de seleção que atribuem pontos a alunos com dificuldades familiares/económicas (mesmo que não tenham muito boas notas).	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

C4. **Indica a importância destas atividades para <u>aumentar o teu interesse em fazer Erasmus+</u>:**

	Nada importante	Pouco importante	Razoavelmente importante	Importante	Muito importante	Não sei/não quero responder
Poder escolher entre Erasmus+ curtos (2 semanas a 2 meses) ou mais longos (3 meses a 1 ano).	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Existirem critérios de seleção que atribuem pontos a alunos com dificuldades familiares/económicas (mesmo que não tenham muito boas notas).	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Fazer projetos à distância com alunos/as e professores/as de outros países.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Receber pessoas de outros países na escola.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Participar em atividades sobre viagens ou sobre a Europa na escola.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Ir a sessões informativas organizadas pelas pessoas responsáveis pelo Erasmus+ da escola e tirar dúvidas.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Ouvir apresentações de alunos/as que tenham feito Erasmus+ e ter a possibilidade de falar com eles.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Receber formação prática de preparação para viver no estrangeiro.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Participar em sessões de preparação linguística.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Ter momentos de grupo para conhecer os colegas com quem vou de Erasmus+ antes da viagem.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

C5. **Para terminar esta parte, <u>que outras atividades, ações, projetos ou critérios achas que seriam importantes para os estudantes da tua escola quererem participar em Erasmus+</u>?**

Deixa todas as tuas sugestões, serão guardadas anonimamente!

Secção D: Parte III - Sobre ti

Nesta última parte, <u>serão pedidas informações sobre ti que são fundamentais para este estudo</u>. Nunca te será pedido o teu nome, para proteger a tua identidade e, mais uma vez, toda a informação é confidencial.

Por favor, responde a todas as perguntas com a maior exatidão e honestidade possível.

Se te sentires desconfortável a responder a alguma a pergunta, escolhe a opção "prefiro não responder".

D1. **Seleciona todas as frases que se aplicam à <u>tua área de residência</u>:**

Tem todos os serviços necessários (ex. supermercado, hospital, farmácia, escola). ☐

Tem metro ou comboio a menos de 2km (30 minutos a pé) da tua casa. ☐

Tem autocarros urbanos da rede Andante (STCP, Espírito Santo, Maia Transportes, Valpi, Gondomarense, etc) a menos de 2km (30 minutos a pé) da tua casa. ☐

Não fica a mais de 1h de distância (em transportes) da tua escola. ☐

Tem transportes públicos para o centro da cidade mais próxima mais do que 3 vezes por dia. ☐

Não é preciso recorrer a táxi ou carro particular para chegar à escola. ☐

É raro ouvir-se falar de casos de violência física ou mão armada. ☐

Nunca houveram de assaltos a apartamentos/casas ou pessoas. ☐

Nenhuma das anteriores se aplica. ☐

Não quero responder. ☐

D2. **Seleciona as afirmações que são verdade sobre <u>os teus estudos</u>:**

Não tenho interesse em estudar, preferia estar já a trabalhar ☐

Já pensei em desistir da escola. ☐

É frequente ter notas negativas. ☐

Fico surpreendido quando tenho notas acima de 14. ☐

Já reprovei. ☐

Tenho dificuldades na escola. ☐

Nenhuma das anteriores. ☐

Prefiro não responder ☐

D3. **Seleciona todas as frases que são verdade sobre ti:**

Sinto-me bem e integrado/a na minha escola. ☐

A minha língua materna é Português de Portugal. ☐

Identifico-me com a cultura das pessoas que me rodeiam. ☐

Os rendimentos de quem vive comigo são superiores às nossas despesas mensais. ☐

A minha forma física e/ou mental não me impede de fazer nada. ☐

Sou uma pessoa saudável. ☐

A minha habitação tem boas condições. ☐

Tenho o meu próprio quarto. ☐

Vou ao médico com regularidade e sempre que necessário. ☐

Posso fazer poupanças e/ou recebo mesada para gastar no que gosto (ex. produtos de beleza, roupas, tecnologia, etc). ☐

Não sinto necessidade de ter um emprego para ajudar a minha família financeiramente. ☐

Na minha casa, ninguém tem problemas financeiros graves. ☐

A(s) pessoa(s) responsável(is) por mim têm um emprego estável. ☐

Nenhuma das anteriores. ☐

Não quero responder. ☐

D4. **Indica o teu grau de acordo com as seguintes afirmações sobre ti:**

	Discordo totalmente	Discordo parcialmente	Nem concordo, nem discordo	Concordo parcialmente	Concordo totalmente	Prefiro não responder
Tenho os conhecimentos necessários para ir de Erasmus.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Acho que posso ser selecionado/a se me candidatar.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
A minha situação financeira permite-me fazer Erasmus.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Tenho boas notas a línguas estrangeiras.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Gosto de participar em atividades com a escola.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Conheço bem os meus interesses.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Tenho experiência com viagens.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

	Discordo totalmente	Discordo parcialmente	Nem concordo, nem discordo	Concordo parcialmente	Concordo totalmente	Prefiro não responder
Entusiasmo-me com a ideia de estudar/estagiar num país diferente.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Sinto-me seguro/a quando faço coisas novas.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
A ideia de passar um mês longe de casa deixa-me tranquilo/a.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Sei o que quero no futuro.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

D5. Seleciona <u>todas as coisas que nunca te aconteceram</u>:

Nunca sofri discriminação. ☐

Nunca fui vítima de bullying físico ou psicológico. ☐

Nunca tive de cuidar de um familiar/amigo que tem um problema de saúde/deficiência. ☐

Nunca tive problemas com a polícia nem fui preso/a. ☐

Nunca me senti excluído/a por causa da cultura (nacionalidade, comportamentos ou religião) da minha família. ☐

Nunca senti necessidade de consumir álcool/drogas para lidar com uma situação. ☐

Nunca me senti inferior aos meus colegas por questões financeiras. ☐

Já me aconteceram todas as anteriores. ☐

Não quero responder. ☐

D6. Indica o teu grau de acordo com as seguintes afirmações sobre <u>outras pessoas</u>:

	Discordo totalmente	Discordo parcialmente	Nem concordo, nem discordo	Concordo parcialmente	Concordo totalmente	Prefiro não responder
Posso conversar sobre a possibilidade de fazer Erasmus+ com alguém que me vai compreender.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Conheço pessoas que participaram neste tipo de atividades.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Conheço pessoas que costumam viajar.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
A minha família considera que fazer Erasmus+ ia ser bom para mim.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
O/a meu/minha Encarregado/a de Educação autorizava-me a participar em Erasmus+.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
O/a meu/minha Encarregado/a de Educação pensa que fazer Erasmus é positivo para o meu percurso escolar e profissional.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
O/a meu/minha Encarregado/a de Educação considera que o Erasmus+ é importante para o meu futuro.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Mesmo que viagens e diversão façam parte da experiência, os meus amigos e família dão valor ao Erasmus+.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Tenho familiares/amigos que se interessam pelo Erasmus+ ou programas semelhantes.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

	Discordo totalmente	Discordo parcialmente	Nem concordo, nem discordo	Concordo parcialmente	Concordo totalmente	Prefiro não responder
Os meus amigos acham que eu devia fazer Erasmus+.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
As pessoas que conheço acham que o Erasmus+ é um programa de confiança.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

D7. **Gostarias de dizer mais alguma coisa?**

Muito obrigada pelo teu tempo e disponibilidade. Podes contactar-me com qualquer dúvida ou sugestão através do email uc2019186559@student.uc.pt.

Boa sorte para o resto do ano letivo!

Joana Freitas

Inclusão social e o Programa Erasmus no Ensino Profissional

Caro/a Coordenador/a Erasmus,

O meu nome é Joana Freitas e no âmbito da minha dissertação do Mestrado em Intervenção Social, Inovação e Empreendedorismo, um duplo grau da Faculdade de Economia e da Faculdade de Psicologia e Ciências da Educação da Universidade de Coimbra, estou a realizar uma investigação sobre a problemática da inclusão social no Erasmus+, nomeadamente o KA1 VET.

Através de um estudo misto exploratório sobre a efetividade atribuída às medidas existentes para garantir a inclusão de jovens com menos oportunidades pelos jovens a quem se destinam, pretendo retirar conclusões sobre como tornar o Programa Erasmus mais acessível a tais públicos.

Para tal, um dos passos é realizar um mapeamento de medidas inclusivas desenvolvidas junto das escolas com projetos ativos, pelo que gostaria de pedir a sua colaboração. O questionário demora entre 10 a 15 minutos a preencher.

Toda a informação será tratada exclusivamente para esse fim, sendo garantida a confidencialidade e anonimato dos coordenadores/instituições, sendo pedido o endereço de email apenas para permitir follow-up se necessário.

Agradeço desde já o seu tempo e atenção. Pode contactar-me com qualquer dúvida ou sugestão.

Melhores cumprimentos,
Joana Freitas (joana.freitas_96@hotmail.com)

Email para contacto futuro *:

1. Tipo de público-alvo (perfil geral do aluno da sua instituição - pode colocar o campo correspondente da Acreditação Erasmus). *

2. Que número aproximado de alunos que envia em mobilidade por ano letivo no total? *

3. Que número aproximado de alunos com dificuldades educativos de acordo com o programa Erasmus* fazem mobilidade na sua instituição por ano letivo? Se possível, especifique qual a situação.

*Dificuldades educativas: jovens com dificuldades de aprendizagem; jovens que abandonam a escola; indivíduos com poucas qualificações; jovens com fraco desempenho escolar.

4. Que número aproximado de alunos enfrentam obstáculos sociais de acordo com o programa Erasmus* fazem mobilidade na sua instituição por ano letivo? Se possível, especifique qual a situação. [Ex. 1 por ano - discriminado por género; 1 em todo o decorrer do programa Erasmus era um ex-recluso, etc; no caso de nenhum, coloque 0] *

*Obstáculos sociais: jovens que são discriminados por causa do género, da etnia, da religião, da orientação sexual, de incapacidade ou deficiência, etc.; jovens com competências sociais limitadas ou com comportamentos sexuais de risco ou anti-sociais; jovens em situação precária; (ex-)reclusos, (ex-)consumidores de drogas ou de álcool; pais jovens e/ou solteiros; órfãos; jovens de famílias disfuncionais.

5. Que número aproximado de alunos com obstáculos económicos de acordo com o programa Erasmus* fazem mobilidade na sua instituição por ano letivo? Se possível, especifique qual a situação. *

*Obstáculos económicos: jovens com um baixo padrão de vida, baixos rendimentos, dependentes do sistema de segurança social; em situação de desemprego de longa duração ou pobreza; jovens sem-abrigo, com dívidas ou problemas financeiros.

6. Que número aproximado de alunos que envia em mobilidade por ano são alunos com diferenças culturais de acordo com o programa Erasmus* fazem mobilidade na sua instituição por ano letivo? Se possível, especifique qual a situação. *

*Diferenças culturais: jovens imigrantes ou refugiados ou descendentes de imigrantes ou de famílias de refugiados; jovens que pertencem a uma minoria nacional ou étnica; jovens com problemas de adaptação linguística e de integração cultural.

7. Que número aproximado de alunos com problemas de saúde de acordo com o programa Erasmus* fazem mobilidade na sua instituição por ano letivo? Se possível, especifique qual a situação. *

*Problemas de saúde: jovens com problemas de saúde crónicos, doenças graves ou condições psiquiátricas; jovens com problemas de saúde mental.

8. Que número aproximado de alunos com obstáculos geográficos de acordo com o programa Erasmus* fazem mobilidade na sua instituição por ano letivo? Se possível especifique qual a situação. *

*Obstáculos geográficos: jovens de áreas remotas ou rurais; jovens que vivem em ilhas pequenas ou regiões periféricas; jovens de zonas urbanas problemáticas; jovens de áreas mais limitadas a nível de serviços (transportes públicos limitados, deficientes condições, aldeias abandonadas).

9. Que número aproximado de alunos com deficiência de acordo com o programa Erasmus* fazem mobilidade na sua instituição por ano letivo? Se possível especifique qual a situação. *

*Deficiência: jovens com deficiências mentais (a nível intelectual, cognitivo, de aprendizagem), físicas, sensoriais ou outras.

10. Qual o grau de importância atribuído à inclusão social no(s) seu(s) projetos Erasmus KA102? [selecione todas as que se aplicam}

   ☐ É um dos tópicos principais (selecionado em candidatura)
   ☐ É um objetivo explícito ou implícito no Plano de Desenvolvimento Europeu
   ☐ Defini um número de participantes com menos oportunidades e o seu perfil no meu projeto
   ☐ Defini procedimentos específicos para a preparação e mobilidade de participantes com menos oportunidades
   ☐ Tenho critérios de seleção que facilitam a participação de jovens com menos oportunidades
   ☐ Tenho vagas específicas para jovens com menos oportunidades
   ☐ Desenvolvo atividades na minha escola para chegar jovens com menos oportunidades

Outra:

11. No caso de indicar um número de participantes com menos oportunidades nos seus projetos, indique qual e descreva o seu perfil.

12. No caso de ter procedimentos específicos para a preparação e mobilidade de participantes com menos oportunidades, por favor explique quais são.

13. Se tiver critérios de seleção que facilitam a participação de jovens com menos oportunidades, indique quais são.

14. Caso tenha vagas específicas para jovens com menos oportunidades, explique de que modo essas vagas se adequam a esses participantes.

15. Se desenvolver atividades na sua escola para fazer chegar o Erasmus a jovens com menos oportunidades, explique quais.

16. Se tiver selecionado a opção "outra" ou se desenvolver outras estratégias de inclusão na sua instituição no âmbito do Erasmus, por favor descreva.

Obrigada pela sua colaboração!