

LEARNING MOBILITY, SOCIAL INCLUSION AND NON-FORMAL EDUCATION

Access, processes and outcomes



Youth Knowledge #22

Youth Partnership

Partnership between the European Commission
and the Council of Europe in the field of youth



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Learning mobility, social inclusion and non-formal education:

Access, processes
and outcomes

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Youth Knowledge # 22

Council of Europe

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Introduction

Maurice Devlin, Søren Kristensen, Ewa Krzaklewska and Magda Nico

Why this book?

This publication, part of the Youth Knowledge series of the partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe in the field of youth, is a follow-up to the first volume on transnational learning mobility published in 2013. With contributions by researchers, practitioners and policy makers from all over Europe, *Learning mobility and non-formal learning in European contexts* was an attempt to present a “state-of-the-art” overview of learning mobility in the very complex and heterogeneous European youth field. It was thought that a lot of effort was being expended, and much useful knowledge generated, in very compartmentalised zones, and that it was necessary to distil and disseminate this knowledge in such a way that it could be presented in concise form to a wider audience.

The decision to produce a new book was prompted by similar considerations, but also by several additional factors. First of all, learning mobility is not static but is constantly evolving, and new knowledge is being produced on an ongoing basis; especially in the research field, where learning mobility is now clearly attracting attention on a larger scale than previously. Secondly, however, the editorial committee (which is different from the 2013 publication) thought that it was necessary to narrow the focus somewhat and sacrifice some breadth in order to achieve more depth. The theme of social inclusion recommended itself because young people have been hit particularly hard by the economic crisis and its aftermath, with large numbers long-term unemployed, facing social exclusion and poverty, or otherwise at risk of socio-economic marginalisation and discrimination. Such a theme also allowed us to build on the focus of the 2015 conference of the European Platform on Learning Mobility. Finally, the increasing recognition of youth work in youth policy development at European level in recent years encouraged us to place a particular emphasis on the non-formal education sector.

The book attempts to address two interrelated issues, specifically in the context of non-formal education. The first is learning mobility in the inclusion agenda: how learning mobility can be used as a tool for inclusion by providing opportunities and assets to the disadvantaged and excluded. Recent evaluative research has clearly demonstrated that learning mobility can be a very powerful tool for inclusion, but if it is not handled with proper consideration of the target group, it may produce the opposite effect to that intended. The second is inclusion in the learning mobility agenda: learning mobility has arguably so far mainly been the preserve of privileged, resourceful young people, and projects have perhaps been designed with such participants in mind. We therefore need to focus on how we involve less advantaged young people in mobility projects, and how we engineer and implement these projects to make participation a realistic option for all.

Challenges

We set out to highlight a number of challenges relating to learning mobility and disadvantaged young people, often referred to in European programmes as “young people with fewer opportunities”.

One is knowledge creation and dissemination. Despite a growing interest in learning mobility as a tool for inclusion, it remains an under-researched subject, and consequently there are still many lacunae in our knowledge. In particular, the long-term effects of participation are still not properly understood, due to a lack of longitudinal research on young people’s learning outcomes. Also, the compartmentalisation of knowledge is still a problem, and many interesting experiences from practitioners all across Europe are kept within a small circle, and are not disseminated to relevant actors and stakeholders to the extent that is desirable.

A special challenge is motivation and recruitment. Even though we know that participating in a learning mobility project is a powerful tool to develop the competences needed for inclusion, it is not easy to convince a 17-year-old early school-leaver with no prior experience of being abroad to leave his or her home environment and spend a significant amount of time in an unfamiliar setting among strangers. Youth work relies on voluntary participation, and applying too much pressure may have an adverse effect. If we hope to increase substantially the number of young people from this target group participating in learning mobility projects, we have to find ways of (a) reaching out to them (they are unlikely to have an existing involvement in structured youth work activities); and (b) encouraging and motivating them. Otherwise there is the risk that projects and programmes remain accessible only to young people who already have advantages and opportunities, for whom the prospect of a transnational experience carries no fears or apprehensions.

A genuine effort to promote inclusion within learning mobility also has consequences for structure, content and pedagogical supports. The important thing is not that we can send 1 000, 10 000 or even 100 000 young people from a given target group abroad and get them back alive, but rather that they return with new knowledge, skills and competences that will enhance their lives and enable them to contribute more actively to society in the future. There should be an alignment between learning objectives and the target group on the one hand, and methodology on the other. We cannot simply cut and paste pedagogical approaches from one target group to another. We must develop nuanced forms of project design and pedagogical support that reflect the diversity of our target groups, including vulnerable and excluded young people.

Contents and structure

Like the first youth knowledge book on learning mobility, it is hoped that this volume will be of interest to a wide readership that includes practitioners, researchers and policy makers. In the present case, however, there is a particular focus on the research angle and on the interface between research and practice; a number of the contributors might be described as “practitioner-researchers”.

After an introductory chapter by the editors addressing the three key concepts that comprise the book's main title – "learning mobility", "social inclusion" and "youth work and non-formal education" – the remainder of the volume is divided into three parts.

Part I, on "Access, reach and target", contains contributions that are for the most part discursive in approach and which explore the background and context of learning mobility and social inclusion, as well as questions regarding how widely, equitably and effectively opportunities are disseminated and distributed.

Part II, entitled "Processes, strategies and practices", provides a series of detailed and concrete accounts of learning mobility projects, giving the rationale for how they were approached and implemented and discussing the challenges, opportunities and issues arising.

Finally, Part III deals with "Effects, outcomes and follow-ups" and includes contributions that are mainly of an evaluative nature, looking at intended and non-intended results of youth mobility schemes at both national and European level.

To assist and guide the reader, the editorial committee has provided a short introductory text for each chapter, summarising the main points and its relation to the overall theme of the volume.

Learning mobility, social inclusion and non-formal education: understanding the concepts

Maurice Devlin, Søren Kristensen, Ewa Krzaklewska and Magda Nico

The title of this volume refers to several major concepts, each of which is open to interpretation and discussion. In this chapter we provide the editors' perspectives on these concepts, and on the current debates and discussions surrounding them, with different editors taking the lead in writing about different concepts.

First there is learning mobility. This is self-evidently a complex or "composite" concept, bringing together the ideas of "learning" and "mobility". Not all learning requires physical mobility, and not all mobility has a learning focus (at least not deliberately). Below we set out the parameters of the concept as it is used here, with a particular focus on the pedagogical approach that underpins it.

Secondly, there is the question of target group. What do we mean when we say that learning mobility should be "socially inclusive"? "Young people with fewer opportunities" are identified as a key concern in the context of major European mobility programmes, but that is an elastic term whose meaning can vary with context; in a sense, all young people could be deemed to have "fewer opportunities" in some way or at some stage. Both the term and the thinking that underlies it are therefore in need of critique.

Finally, there is the context in which learning mobility takes place and the methods used to promote it. In this volume, the emphasis is on the non-formal education sector. When practised with young people, non-formal education is increasingly seen as synonymous with "youth work", which in historical terms is relatively recent as both a concept and a practice. Although youth work has developed in different ways and to different extents in different parts of Europe, a common understanding and shared vocabulary seem to be emerging, centred on the process of non-formal learning, as discussed in the final part of this chapter.

Learning mobility as a pedagogical tool

Søren Kristensen

"Learning mobility" is defined as physical cross-border mobility consciously organised for pedagogical purposes and for a limited period of time (European Platform on Learning Mobility (EPLM)). Because in this publication it is embedded in youth work, a further important point is that it is undertaken in a non-formal context and that participation is voluntary. This means we are not concerned with mobility organised within the formal school system. In addition, migration (forced or voluntary) is outside our scope; despite the fact that it certainly may contain opportunities for learning, it is

not undertaken for pedagogical purposes. The refugee situation in Europe, which is one of the burning issues of the day, is therefore not covered by this definition (although the contribution by Charles Berg explores what learning mobility initiatives today can learn from migratory movements of children and young people in the past).

“Learning mobility” is a phenomenon that is growing in Europe, both in formal and non-formal contexts. The “Study on mobility developments in school education, vocational education and training, adult education and youth” from 2012¹ tried to assess the number of persons participating in learning mobility schemes in the EU (both in formal and non-formal contexts, but excluding university students), and estimated – albeit with a considerable margin of error due to the lack of availability of precise data – that it comprised some 430 000 persons annually. Not least due to the increased budgets for the European programmes (notably, of course, Erasmus+), the number seems to be increasing.

In a sense, there is nothing new under the sun. Students in higher education as well as craftsmen have, since medieval times, travelled abroad in order to acquire knowledge, skills and competences that they could not find at home. In the context of youth work, however, it is a fairly recent development that only gathered momentum after the Second World War, when several youth organisations and structures were set up in order to provide frameworks for youth exchanges across borders. The primary aim was to instil in young people, through stays abroad and encounters with peer groups there, an intercultural awareness that would prevent the rise of prejudices and nationalism, and lead to a more peaceful world.

The reasons for undertaking learning mobility go beyond intercultural awareness, however, and it is also seen as a way in which to develop personal competences, active citizenship and employability of participants. A policy paper from the European Commission outlines the rationale for the phenomenon in the following terms:

Learning mobility, meaning transnational mobility for the purpose of acquiring new knowledge, skills and competences, is one of the fundamental ways in which young people can strengthen their future employability, as well as their intercultural awareness, personal development, creativity and active citizenship. Europeans who are mobile as young learners are more likely to be mobile as workers later in life. (Council of the European Union 2011)

Learning mobility activities for young people under the umbrella of youth work cover diverse activities. Broadly, we can identify three categories:

- ▶ project-based, short-term bi- or multilateral encounters of groups of young people;
- ▶ individual, long-term school stays in a framework of formal upper-secondary education, as organised by exchange organisations such as AFS and Youth for Understanding;
- ▶ individual placements in organisations and institutions under the European Voluntary Service (EVS) or similar schemes.

1. <http://bookshop.europa.eu/en/study-on-mobility-developments-in-school-education-vocational-education-and-training-adult-education-and-youth-exchanges-pbNC3113987/>.

From evaluations and evaluative research – some of which is documented in this publication – we know that good-quality learning mobility can indeed bring about such outcomes. What the research also tells us, however, is that such outcomes do not come about by themselves merely as a function of being abroad. The fact that 100, 1 000 or even 10 000 young people went abroad is in itself of no importance; what is important is what they brought home with them in terms of new knowledge, skills and attitudes, and how this contributes to the development of societies and individuals. Equally important, they cannot all be realised within one and the same project: there are many types of learning mobility, and specific types of mobility are conducive to specific kinds of learning outcomes. Working with learning mobility is therefore a pedagogical activity, and not merely a matter of logistical arrangements and co-ordination.

This requires that practitioners have a thorough understanding of learning processes in learning mobility and can identify the factors – or conditions – that are necessary in order for the full potential to unfold. The key question here is: what is it that makes a stay abroad a particularly valuable pedagogical tool? A partial answer to this can be found in the learning theory developed by Piaget (2001). He operates with two different types of learning: assimilative learning, where we learn by adding new elements to already developed cognitive frameworks, and accommodative learning, where these frameworks are altered or replaced because we encounter new phenomena that do not fit into these already developed frameworks. Through accommodative learning, we “challenge our mindsets”, “revise our attitudes” and “expand our horizon” – learning outcomes that are perceived by many as particularly valuable in a society that is characterised by globalisation and change. This type of learning has also been termed transformative learning (Mezirow et al. 2000). We can identify both assimilative and accommodative/transformative learning processes in transnational mobility projects, but it is particularly suited to the latter. Encountering a different culture represents a powerful platform where this kind of learning may develop, because our usual notions of normality are challenged by new concepts and practices – as has been expressed by another theoretician, we “learn through experiences of disjuncture” (Jarvis 1999). However, this type of learning is no foregone conclusion, because we may also react by rejecting what we see, discarding it as irrelevant to our situation, or simply by misinterpreting it. Therefore certain conditions need to be met and certain support structures and services – pedagogical interventions – must be available to the learner to ensure that such learning takes place. These form the building blocks of a quality management system for mobility.

A general model of learning processes in mobility projects (Kristensen 2004, 2015) posits four interconnected conditions:

- ▶ *Immersion*: that participants must be subjected to a real encounter with the culture and mentality of the host country, and not a superficial, sanitised version;
- ▶ *Responsibilisation*: that participants are actively involved in working out solutions to problems and challenges arising out of experiences of disjuncture encountered in the process, but that these are at a level which is not beyond what the target group can cope with;
- ▶ *Relativisation*: that issues addressed and tasks undertaken are relevant and recognisable to the participants, so that culturally determined differences between ways of organising and doing things become visible and can be compared and discussed;

- ▶ *Perspectivation*: that participants are engaged in a constant process of reflection on experiences and that the necessary support for this process is available before, during and (especially) after the event.

This theoretical understanding of how learning outcomes in mobility projects are produced needs to be translated into an identification of what practical interventions are needed to underpin quality in learning mobility. Certain general principles can be inferred from the model, for example:

- ▶ that learning processes in mobility do not only comprise the time spent abroad, but also phases before and after;
- ▶ that pedagogical support geared to the needs of the target group must be available during all phases of the process;
- ▶ that a certain intensity and duration of the experience is necessary in order to ensure immersion.

These pedagogical reflections are, of course, especially important when we deal with a less resilient target group of young people with fewer opportunities. Inclusion in a context of learning mobility is not just a matter of a declaration of intent, but also of ensuring that the necessary support structures – in terms of preparation, accompaniment during the stay and debriefing – are in place, so that participation becomes a realistic possibility. If this is not considered, programmes and schemes that were originally intended for young people with fewer opportunities may over time become “colonised” by more resourceful groups, thus reinforcing rather than dispelling inequalities – as has arguably happened with the European Voluntary Service (see Chapter 13 in this volume by Şenyuva and Nicodemi).

Disadvantaged compared to whom? Critical notes on “social inclusion”

Magda Nico

One of this book’s objectives is to look at learning mobility experiences as tools for social inclusion of young people. But in fact, defining “social inclusion” and identifying those to whom it should apply² are difficult issues that rely on specific theoretical, ideological and methodological approaches or views. Different approaches are used in the European youth sector in this regard. A common approach is the identification of groups of young people that share a specific vulnerability based on social, economic, educational, cultural, geographical, or health- or disability-related factors (see the Youth in Action Programme Guide, for instance³). The list of obstacles experienced within any one of these spheres is wide, but such an approach is useful in providing a relatively straightforward profile of the young people who should benefit from

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2. It has already been noted that the term “young people with fewer opportunities” is commonly used in mobility programmes, although some authors would choose other descriptions: “disadvantaged youth, youth-at-risk, vulnerable youth, disconnected youth or social excluded youth [sic] are preferred to describe social inequality among young people” (Bendit and Stokes 2003).
 3. Available at www.salto-youth.net/tools/otlas-partner-finding/help/young-people-with-fewer-opportunities/.

given learning mobility experiences; it is an instrumental categorisation that serves a “target-oriented” operationalisation. A different approach has also been used (Markovic et al. 2015). In this approach, the emphasis on separate “groups” gives way to a concern about the interaction and cumulative effect of different factors of disadvantage (Nico 2016). In addition, the responsibility for addressing and resolving social inequalities is seen as lying with the social institutions and environments that cause them. It is this second approach that provides the basis for the discussion and critical notes that follow. This implies a critical questioning of aprioristic definitions of “fewer opportunities” and, to some extent, of “social inclusion” itself.

The continuum of social inclusion/exclusion

In the European youth sector, “social inclusion” is a popular and pervasive concept, presented both as an end (or goal) of youth policy and youth work programmes and as a means towards the “process of individual’s self-realization within a society, acceptance and recognition of one’s potential by social institutions, integration (through study, employment, volunteer work or other forms of participation) in the web of social relations in a community” (Kovacheva n.d.: 2). According to the Social Inclusion Monitor (see official site), social inclusion encompasses six dimensions: poverty prevention, equitable education, labour market access, health, social cohesion and non-discrimination, and intergenerational justice. Although these are collective and societally shared problems, it is clear that they have particular relevance for young people. This is true both because of young people’s own crucial and vulnerable point in the life course (being in school, entering the labour market for the first time, etc.) and because of the positive effect they can have in achieving and advocating the values and practices of social inclusion for all (non-discrimination, intergenerational justice, for instance). In a sense, young people themselves are both a means to and an “end” of social inclusion.

Social inclusion is a youth policy priority of the EU and CoE strategies for sustainable and inclusive growth and the promotion of human rights. Both institutions build their policies on the understanding of the complex and multi-dimensional character of young people’s social integration and the grave risks that the economic crisis is still posing. Breaking down the barriers is made possible through development of evidence-based policy using the capacities of youth research, policy, practice, and young people’s own agency (Kovacheva n.d.: 1).

But the six dimensions of social inclusion listed above⁴ interact with each other, in different ways in different countries and at different times, in producing different levels (in quality and severity) of social exclusion or inclusion. Statistics institutions do not agree on a way to measure or rank this interaction of different factors of disadvantage. But two things are clear: the situation is not dichotomous and it is not fixed in time. At the very least, we are all at the very best borderline included. So it is not a matter simply of being included or excluded, but rather of:

- ▶ the degree to which one faces exclusion (in one or more dimensions);
- ▶ the severity of the dimensions from which one is excluded;

4. Each of which has great inner heterogeneity and defies dichotomised understandings.

- ▶ the cumulative interactions between the dimensions from which one is excluded;
- ▶ the skills and confidence needed to prevent or overcome situations of social exclusions.

It is not about pursuing the “perfect – utopic – and at all times objective and subjective inclusion” but about recognising the domino effect that social exclusion might have (hence prevention and intervention in specific areas). Also, maybe more importantly, the domino effect that social inclusion, the feeling of being part of something, of going somewhere, of boosting skills and/or confidence may produce in one’s life course, whatever the (temporary, apparent, circumstantial or fixed, structural, irreversible) starting point was. The positive effect of learning mobility experiences in social inclusion processes is, for instance, as valid for those from advantaged backgrounds as it is for the more disadvantaged. It is simply more urgent and decisive in the lives of “young people with fewer opportunities”. “For them social inclusion involves breaking various barriers before acquiring their social rights as full members of society” (Kovacheva n.d.: 2). But can we separate the “groups” by urgency of intervention, by level of exclusion or risk of exclusion? Is that what social inclusion is all about?

Social inclusion – longitudinal and reversible

Social inclusion is a fluid and longitudinal process but not a one-way street. This means that, according to any specific definition of social inclusion, the same person can be “socially included” at certain moments of his/her life and be “socially excluded” in others. In this sense there is not a straight borderline or a clear dichotomy between the “before” and “after” of a learning mobility experience. Inclusion and exclusion are also not barricades or tracks that one has to choose at a specific point in one’s life. Learning mobility experiences are thus not epiphanies that show the bright and right side of life to young people once and for all. Learning mobility experiences that have social inclusion in mind are about putting yourself in another person’s shoes, to think outside your (social) box, to reposition yourself in the field of life possibilities. These 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. So again, even if this is more urgent for “young people with fewer opportunities”, may the process itself excuse the participation of young people with a few more opportunities than the ones with the fewest opportunities, the alleged “missing middle” in youth transition studies (Roberts 2011)? Even if we could find a dividing line, would we want to?

Research on the composition of the classes in formal and basic public education, for instance, has shown repeatedly that there are no benefits in putting together classes exclusively made up of with children with learning difficulties or simply with bad grades. This does not help these students to overcome their difficulties but usually contributes to self-labelling, over self-consciousness of the difficulties, stigmatisation and... exclusion. Even if for the students “with fewer difficulties” there is almost no specific benefit (in terms of formal learning processes) to being in a “mixed” class, the objective and subjective benefits for the students with more difficulties are crystal clear. Would it make sense to apply this diversity argument to the composition of

the groups that experience, together, learning mobility processes? Could we argue that some level of match has to exist between the composition of the groups and the type and aim of youth work practice (see Krzaklewska text, below). Some of the chapters of this book seem to advocate this, in the sense that the interaction between people or groups with different characteristics is especially beneficial to young people with fewer opportunities.

And finally, how would we find a dividing line between “most excluded” and “most included”? Although in contemporary society, one’s social fate is not completely determined by social origin, it is well known that some disadvantages, alone or in interaction, contribute to the likelihood of being excluded. In fact, there is “a complex array of factors such as gender, health, ethnicity, religious affiliation, and sexual orientation [that] acts to enable or constrain social integration” (Kovacheva, n.d.: 2). But these “groups” or “labels” are not sufficient in defining this likelihood. They have to be put in their national context, and “comparing the distribution of ... opportunities across countries is a challenging task” (OECD 2010: 30). In fact, not only is the average of the social-economic and cultural status much higher in some countries than others (compare Sweden or Finland to Portugal or Spain) but there are countries where the internal inequalities between the highest and lowest levels of social-economic and cultural status are much greater than others (for example, Portugal, Spain and Luxembourg). The social origin and background of children and young people and the national socio-economic context are the strongest and most holistic determinants of opportunities and access to opportunities in life. Therefore, we have to admit that labels like disabilities, health problems, educational problems, cultural differences, social obstacles (young people facing discrimination because of gender, age, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation; ex-offenders, drug and/or alcohol abusers, single parents, orphans; those with limited social skills, antisocial or high-risk behaviour) and geographical obstacles might sometimes be all it takes to be excluded, might just be the tip of the iceberg of exclusion (in poor and unequal countries, for instance).

So to sum up, we could state that social inclusion is an ongoing process in everyone’s life and thus contributing to it (through learning mobility or other activities) is not a “one-time” thing. It can also be approached differently (for example through awareness, prevention, direct impact, etc.) for different people in the same group. A second conclusion would be that social inclusion and social diversity should be both an end or goal and simultaneously a means to the achievement of that end; that is, social inclusion must be the result of an interaction between diverse people, not a ghettoisation of experiences. “Nothing about us without us” is a common motto in the youth sector. One could also state that “nothing to promote social inclusion should be developed without social inclusion being reflected in its process”. A third conclusion would be that finding the exact lines that separate young people with “fewer opportunities” and young people with “a little more than fewer” opportunities is a rather difficult endeavour. It frequently ends up being either the result of complex comparative statistical exercises or of well-intentioned guesses. Either way, our point is to make this “line” not a fixed one, a wall, a frontier, but rather a fluid one, a bridge, a springboard to a better life.

Youth work and non-formal learning

Ewa Krzaklewska

In the context of this book we concentrate on learning mobility for social inclusion in non-formal contexts – most of all in youth work practice. The chapters in the book embrace such settings as youth exchanges, youth services, youth camps, youth organisations and movements, non-formal educational programmes for young people and voluntary service.

In recent years youth work as a sector has increasingly consolidated, professionalised and invested a lot of energy in reflecting on its aims, scope of work, methods and quality assurance. Until recently “youth work” was a term and concept principally used in European policy documents, and it has been used to describe a range of very diverse practices directed towards young people. Nevertheless, even if the term is still not widely used in some countries, the identity of the sector is strengthening through various initiatives at European and national level. There continue to be diverse forms of youth work, different histories, organisational or funding structures, or different foci. However, what remains at the core of youth work is support for the development of young people, both as individuals and as a social group.

In the Council Resolution on a renewed framework for European co-operation in the youth field (2009), youth work has been defined as follows:

Youth work is a broad term covering a large scope of activities of a social, cultural, educational or political nature both by, with and for young people. Increasingly, such activities also include sport and services for young people. Youth work belongs to the area of “out-of-school” education, as well as specific leisure time activities managed by professional or voluntary youth workers and youth leaders and is based on non-formal learning processes and on voluntary participation. (Council of the European Union 2009)

Similar elements are included in the report on the quality of youth work (European Commission 2015a: 12): youth work should support the personal and social development of young people; young people should take part voluntarily; and youth work is based on non-formal and informal learning processes. This vision for youth work was expressed in the Declaration of the 2nd European Youth Work Convention (2015: 4):

Youth work is about cultivating the imagination, initiative, integration, involvement and aspiration of young people. Its principles are that it is educative, empowering, participative, expressive and inclusive. Through activities, playing and having fun, campaigning, the information exchange, mobility, volunteering, association and conversation, it fosters [young people’s] understanding of their place within, and critical engagement with their communities and societies.

As stated above, in addition to its voluntary nature, non-formal learning processes are at the heart of youth work. We can even notice in the European documents that youth work and non-formal learning are almost used interchangeably (European Commission 2015a) – youth work is non-formal learning and non-formal learning opportunities for young people are (mostly) offered by youth work, in its diverse forms. A commonly used definition of non-formal learning was formulated by Lynne Chisholm (2005: 49):

Non-formal learning is purposive but voluntary learning that takes place in a diverse range of environments and situations for which teaching/training and learning is not necessarily their sole or main activity. These environments and situations may be intermittent or transitory, and the activities or courses that take place may be staffed by professional learning facilitators (such as youth trainers) or by volunteers (such as youth leaders). The activities and courses are planned, but are seldom structured by conventional rhythms or curriculum subjects. They usually address specific target groups, but rarely document or assess learning outcomes or achievements in conventionally visible ways.

A noticeable current trend in the European context is a blurring of the boundaries between formal, non-formal and informal learning, a matter that arises in some of the contributions to this book (for example those by Petersen (Chapter 5) and Wordelmann (Chapter 11)).

Similar to the definition of youth work provided above, the definition of non-formal learning stresses the aspect of voluntary participation, but also – importantly from the point of view of this book – the fact that it is organised by youth workers or youth leaders. As the learning in both settings is guided, it requires a choice of approach and a methodology. This aspect links to the question of pedagogy, which is addressed in many of the chapters in this book: how can youth workers, through appropriate methods, support the development of young people using learning mobility as an additional tool? It also links to the tension between autonomy and dependency. A core principle of youth work (European Commission 2015b: 16) is that it should be based on young people’s voluntary and active participation, engagement and responsibility; it should be designed, delivered and evaluated together with young people; it should enhance young people’s rights, their personal and social development and autonomy, as well as engaging with young people as capable individuals and a resource in their own right. In the context of this book we can ask: to what extent does young people’s participation in prepared mobility schemes actually allow for such autonomy and empowerment?

While we can name several spaces in which youth work takes place, two main types of practice – not mutually exclusive – have been identified within the youth work universe: those which are “forum oriented” and those that take the “transit-zone approach” (Taru et al. 2014: 128). This distinction is interesting as a way of reflecting on the approach that is taken to structuring learning mobility activities. The first approach – forum type – refers to “social educational practices that bring young people together to discuss their needs, reflect on their lives and prepare collective action to change social circumstances” (ibid.). It embraces diverse ways of participating in society, and through participation may lead to change. This perspective, if we take into account the international and intercultural aspect of mobility, could create almost a globalised, international forum concentrating on the young generation across borders. The second approach – transit zone – sees young people as needing to fit into the functioning social system. Through the development of skills and competences the young person should integrate into society. This approach links strongly to the recent emphasis on the role of youth work in integrating young people into the labour market or strengthening their employability, and the growing popularity of intervention-based youth work aimed

at dealing with issues faced by young people and targeting specific groups of young people (European Commission 2014: 6). The chapters in this book demonstrate both the approaches outlined above within mobility projects – for example the mobility programme described in the chapter by Wordelmann clearly fits into transit-zone approach, while those by Petersen or Teuma (Chapter 6) provide examples of the forum approach.

To what extent can youth work serve diverse aims? Filip Cousée (2016: 85) writes: “what makes youth work different from other actors in that social and pedagogical field is that its heart focuses on learning processes rather than on desired outcomes of knowledge and behaviour”. Still, he points out that there exists a tension in youth work concerning product-orientation versus process-orientation and there appears a risk of instrumentalisation. In fact his opinion mirrors the concern by youth workers expressed in the Declaration of the 2nd European Youth Work Convention (2015: 5) that “youth work should continue to focus on the processes and the needs of young people, remaining outcomes informed and not outcomes led”. While these opinions stress that youth work should not concentrate on outcome but rather accompany young people in their lives as they are lived and enable them to reflect on their role and position in society, most youth work activities nowadays are nonetheless focused on outcomes. Furthermore, not only are outcomes expected to be achieved, but they are also supposed to be measured and proved (this trend is shown by the work on indicators in diverse fields, including the youth work field and learning mobility). Many reflections in this book are concerned with demonstrating the actual outcomes (also as far as social inclusiveness is concerned) of the learning mobility experience.

Introducing European opportunities for mobility, first through the Youth for Europe programme from 1992, followed by Youth in Action and more recently Erasmus+, has definitely made a difference in the youth work sector. Some of the projects described in this book have been run thanks to funding from such European programmes; others take place within wider structures of work with young people (for example within youth organisations or established youth services), which use mobility as an “additional” event or opportunity. The internationalisation of youth work takes place on the one hand through the mobility of young people, but it also takes place through cross-border education of youth workers and the exchange of youth work/non-formal learning practices internationally. Interestingly, internationalisation is not listed as one of the significant current trends in youth work in the European Commission’s transnational report (2014), although increasing collaboration is mentioned. Nevertheless, the funds directed to youth programmes have definitely brought new opportunities into the field, as well as promoted new ways of working with young people through non-formal educational programmes.

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Part I

Access, reach and target

Chapter 1

Analytical paper: Learning mobility and social inclusion

David Cairns

The first contribution to this book is an analytical paper by David Cairns that was commissioned by the Youth Partnership of the European Commission and the Council of Europe in 2015. It provides a helpful overview of the key concepts relating to learning mobility and social inclusion and places them in the research and policy contexts. The paper argues that social inclusion is an issue that needs to be recognised as a major risk factor in the lives of many young people across Europe, encompassing not only difficulties resulting from a lack of labour-market integration but also issues relating to personal well-being and lack of integration into European society.

Introduction

The aim of this paper is to explore the relationship between learning mobility and social inclusion within the European context, assessing the present state of the art of research and identifying priorities for future developments. Through this discussion, we can move towards an understanding of how social inclusion can be addressed through learning mobility. The two main terms of reference of this paper, “learning mobility” and “social inclusion”, are long-standing concerns of the European Platform on Learning Mobility (EPLM). Learning mobility is defined as “transnational mobility undertaken for a period of time, consciously organised for educational purposes or to acquire new competences ... and can be implemented in formal or non-formal settings” (EPLM 2013: 1). In the context of this paper, social inclusion refers to “the process of [an] individual’s self-realisation within a society, acceptance and recognition of one’s potential by social institutions, integration (through study, employment, volunteer work or other forms of participation) in the web of social relations in a community (Kovacheva 2014: 2).

Putting these two issues together provides transnational mobility with a purpose, with time spent in another country associated with engaging in activities that foster personal and professional development. Learning mobility in this framework also aims to address key issues such as increasing participation, active citizenship, intercultural learning and dialogue, individual competency development and employability among young people, recognising the role of youth work and the need for effective policies and guidelines for mobility practice. The objective is therefore to make a connection with the need to improve the social situation of young people

across Europe, including the addressing of inequality and exclusion issues (European Youth Work Convention 2015); and through the creation of active and inclusive institutional platforms, mobility has the potential to be an integral part of learning experiences that encourage diversity and identity building.

Social inclusion among young people has been a long-standing concern for both the European Union and the Council of Europe, reflected in the flagship initiative Youth on the Move, Erasmus+ and the Youth Employment Package in respect to the former and the Agenda 2020 and the work of institutions such as the European Youth Centres and the European Youth Foundation in regard to the latter. These initiatives all serve to help realise social inclusion objectives: to make education and mobility more accessible and better suited to young people's needs. Despite these policy developments, "learning mobility" and "social inclusion" still tend to be defined separately, suggesting a lingering disconnection in policy, and research, in this field. This means that there may be untapped potential for using mobility as a means of encouraging social inclusion and fostering solidarity among young people, including those at risk of poverty or exclusion. The suggested course is therefore that further commitment to building mobility capacities can help address social inclusion. This may include greater involvement of young people with fewer opportunities in established mobility platforms or participation in non-formal movement outside institutional structures, typically of a circulatory character between European states.

Evidence and analysis

The youth mobility research field and social inclusion

Research on learning mobility and social inclusion appears somewhat under-developed, at least judging from evidence published in peer-reviewed journals and monographs. This suggests an under-utilisation of knowledge generated outside academia, as well as confirming that youth mobility researchers have tended to focus upon elite groups of student movers and migrants rather than mobility among a more educationally inclusive range of young people. Those with fewer opportunities or from disadvantaged backgrounds are hence under-represented in theoretical accounts of young people's geographical circulation, which tend to illustrate how social inequalities are replicated rather than eliminated through free movement or under-regulated institutional platforms rather than addressing social inclusion (for example Brooks and Waters 2011), and while studies have, often quite astutely, highlighted the significance of European identity creation and the cultural value of international conviviality via programmes such as Erasmus (for example Feyen and Krzaklewska 2013), there is less consideration of these areas in relation to youth outside higher education.

Establishing that a transnational mobility experience can be a space for overcoming disadvantage and an effective pedagogical tool for those with fewer opportunities is a useful reflection (Kristensen 2013). That there is already in existence expertise generated from the construction of the current transnational educational space, encompassing the European continent and many of its neighbours, and comprising various elements of initiatives including Erasmus+, is also significant. In this sense,

we already have in existence a potential institutional habitus for addressing social inclusion via transnational learning initiatives. This includes established programmes such as Youth Exchanges, the European Voluntary Service (EVS) and Transnational Youth Exchanges (European Commission 2014: 9). Furthermore, while social inclusion is multifaceted, there does seem to be general consensus among researchers and policy makers that the socio-economic position of young people has markedly declined since the onset of the economic crisis in 2007/08, particularly in respect to the labour-market position (for example European Commission 2015).

Recent trends in youth unemployment remind us that across Europe young people are facing serious difficulties in completing their studies and finding work, with attendant problems in related areas such as transitions to independent adulthood (Aassve et al. 2013; Dietrich 2013). And for those in work, there is also the problem of coping with precarious employment conditions and loss of family income due to austerity cuts (Cairns et al. 2016). This development, and the prospect that youth disadvantage has become more general, makes meaningful mobility more imperative (Cairns 2014). It may also be the case that subgroups of already socially excluded young people have undergone further disadvantage at this time. Additionally, Europe faces new challenges such as the current refugee crisis, which may introduce new forms of social disadvantage to be addressed; in this case related to the consequences of another form of mobility: involuntary migration. In this sense, the need for a nuanced policy response is growing, leaving us with a much greater challenge than might have been the case in the past in respect to social inclusion among young people.

European policy priorities and learning mobility

European policy discourse makes clear that mobility is to be regarded as an integral part of youth development (for example European Commission 2009, 2011). The report, “Erasmus+ Inclusion and Diversity Strategy – in the field of Youth”, also points towards the need to address inclusion via initiatives such as Erasmus+, taking into account the encouragement of diversity, building on the work of the prior Youth in Action programme. This report suggests focusing on incorporating youth from disadvantaged backgrounds in learning mobility initiatives (European Commission 2014: 7), targeting the following priority groups, specifically those with:

- ▶ disabilities;
- ▶ health problems;
- ▶ educational difficulties;
- ▶ cultural differences;
- ▶ economic obstacles;
- ▶ social obstacles;
- ▶ geographical obstacles.

Policy interventions should therefore be designed with a view to addressing the needs of these specific groups, meaning projects that actively involve young people in one or more of the above categories, a commitment which is also recognised by the Council of Europe; for example, in regard to including young people with disabilities (Council of Europe 2013).

The Green Paper on the Learning Mobility of Young People (European Commission 2010) provides some practical suggestions in regard to activities. This includes promoting the benefits of mobility for young people by providing evidence of added value in terms of future employability and professional and intercultural skills, and language learning, as well as removing practical and bureaucratic obstacles, particularly for disadvantaged young people, with a prominent role for international youth work envisaged (Friesenhahn 2013). Added to this approach is the validation and recognition of both formal and non-formal learning, public/private partnerships and support for trainers, educators and youth workers in the mobility field, thus suggesting a convergence between practice and social inclusion.

A learning mobility and social inclusion case study

As detailed in its position paper, the main aim of the European Platform on Learning Mobility is to bring together researchers, policy makers and practitioners with a view to advancing learning mobility in the youth field (EPLM 2013). This platform provides a structure, and a source of knowledge and expertise, in regard to mobility in formal and non-formal settings, with particular emphasis upon the latter. This experience therefore provides a basis for addressing social inclusion through learning mobility, a link that has been explored in a recent empirical study conducted by Research-based Analysis of Youth in Action (RAY), which explored the impact of participation in international youth projects on competences, behaviour and values (see Geudens 2015).

This analysis emphasises positive outcomes emerging from young people and youth workers engaging in non-formal learning in programmes forming part of the 2007-2013 EU Youth in Action programme, covering research partners and national agencies from 20 different countries. That approximately one in four of participants in these programmes were classified as young people with fewer opportunities, facing one or more of the exclusion factors previously outlined, provides an opportunity to examine differences between those from different social backgrounds. It was found that the most beneficial influence of an international youth project for young people with fewer opportunities was increased support for disadvantaged people and the fight against discrimination, intolerance and racism, due perhaps to the social “outsider” status of those at risk of exclusion. In regard to other significant advantages gained, statistical analysis showed that after participating in a project:

- ▶ 56% of those with fewer opportunities had an interest in European issues compared to 53% of those with more opportunities;
- ▶ 41% of those with fewer opportunities participate in societal and/or political life compared to 36% of those with more opportunities;
- ▶ 47% of those with fewer opportunities are more committed to work against discrimination compared to 36% of those with more opportunities;
- ▶ 47% of those with fewer opportunities support disadvantaged people compared to 36% of those with more opportunities.

Among the other findings of the analysis of data, collected from over 15 000 young people participating in Youth in Action, are that international mobility can:

- ▶ at a general level, contribute to personal and professional development, including key competences relating to labour-market integration, social cohesion and active citizenship, as defined by the European Commission;
- ▶ not only stimulate interest in European issues and participation in political life but also the desire to develop foreign language skills;
- ▶ provide support, respect, tolerance and solidarity with others, as well as a better appreciation of the European project;
- ▶ help participants in exchanges appreciate cultural diversity and boost self-confidence;
- ▶ have a more profound impact among young people with fewer opportunities (three or more exclusion indicators) with respect to higher gains in competences, due perhaps to the lower starting point of the former group;
- ▶ be of equal value to building social capital for those with fewer and more opportunities in regard to making social connections with people living in other countries.

The suggestion is that those who benefit most from international youth projects are those with fewer opportunities, implying a need to ensure that the needs of such young people are addressed in policies and included in programmes. This also implies that there can be a higher return on investing in learning mobility when young people with fewer opportunities are included in programmes.

Looking towards the future, social inclusion is not a static issue. Addressing exclusion through learning mobility already faces challenges relating to issues such as the social and economic instability generated by the financial crisis, particularly in the more geographically peripheral European nations, and the more recent arrival of substantial numbers of involuntary migrants from outside Europe. These groups contain young people who may be experiencing different or more intense forms of social exclusion compared to the current priority areas as identified by European policy, implying a need to be proactive through targeted new, as well as existing, inclusion needs.

Summary of main findings

This paper has argued that social inclusion is an issue that needs to be recognised as a major risk factor in the lives of many young people across Europe, encompassing not only difficulties resulting from a lack of labour-market integration but also issues relating to personal well-being and lack of integration into European society (Markovic et al. 2015). This is a significant challenge, and with a youth unemployment rate currently standing at 20.1% (Eurostat 2015), we cannot afford to be complacent about strengthening young people's social competencies, given the need to connect them with the labour market. Furthermore, that social inclusion may be multiplying and diversifying due to factors such as the ongoing economic crisis and new developments such as the sudden influx of large numbers of involuntary migrants, creates a heightened imperative to help young people become better equipped and more employable citizens.

In looking for a viable means of creating and sustaining youth social inclusion, involvement in transnational mobility initiatives of a non-formal nature provides

a means of enhancing skills and capabilities. The case study cited in this paper demonstrates the value of programmes that constituted part of the Youth in Action initiative, showing that the personal and professional profiles of participants can be enhanced through learning mobility, with the greatest gains in competencies among those with fewer opportunities. These are valuable insights and if we wish to avoid a situation where large numbers of young people are potentially cut off from social integration in society at a considerable cost to themselves and their communities, we should seriously consider the potential of engaging such groups and individuals via non-formal learning platforms with proven impact, thus making use of existing resources and expertise to address new challenges.

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Chapter 2

Historical antecedents to contemporary European youth learning mobility policy

Charles Berg

In the analysis of learning mobility, social inclusion and non-formal education, as of so many other things, there is a danger of ahistoricism, whereby we approach the topic under investigation as if it takes place only in the present, and has been in existence for no longer than we have ourselves. In doing so we can learn nothing from the past. To counter such a tendency, in this chapter Charles Berg casts an imaginative eye backwards to earlier experiences of “mass mobility” among children and young people within and beyond Europe, and also casts an eye “outwards” from social science to the realm of fiction. In doing so he highlights a number of long-standing questions and enduring tensions: between, for example, voluntary and involuntary participation; between mobility as reactive and narrowly instrumental or as proactive and inherently valuable; between a concern with social reproduction and an impulse towards social change. Acknowledging and addressing such tensions will help us to contextualise the more contemporary explorations that follow.

The suitcase had been bought at Woolworths especially for the occasion. (Welshman 2010)

In 2013, the Erasmus programme (European Region Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students; European Commission 2014) was targeted at 3 million students. Since then, the situation has largely changed and the former Erasmus has become part of a larger programme Erasmus+, which now also covers mobility in the youth field. Traditionally, youth projects happen in non-formal contexts, such as youth exchange and youth volunteering schemes, in an attempt to be more inclusive than the former flagship activity was. They have developed in parallel with the evolving European youth sociology, as it started with Alessandro Cavalli’s distinction between youth as a condition or as a process (1980). In the new environment, the debates among practitioners, researchers and policy makers, initiated since 2011 by the European Platform on Learning Mobility (EPLM),¹ have become the more important. The purpose of this chapter is to offer some examples, both historical and fictional, about prior mobility events in an attempt to show how

1. See <http://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/youth-partnership/european-platform-on-learning-mobility>.

they can play a role in the EPLM framework. The material refers to instances of mass mobility where young people left their homes often with cheap suitcases especially acquired for the occasion. These events will be seen in terms of underlying models of learning and participation. Historical and literary research contextualises mobility broadly, and thus helps to establish a set of parameters for our critical reflections on European learning mobility today.

Historical examples of childhood and youth mass mobility

Today, information about orphan trains in America² can be found in academic literature (for example, Jalongo 2010; O'Connor 2004; Riley 2014; Trammell 2009). This was the movement by which almost 250 000 children were relocated from New York and Boston to the western United States between 1854 and 1924. This forgotten chapter of American history is on display in museums and research centres such as the National Orphan Train Complex in Concordia, Kansas.³ Documentary movies are available on the train riders' experiences,⁴ which have also been successfully fictionalised (Kline 2012). This displacement in the United States was not an isolated episode. In the United Kingdom, Margaret Humphreys, a British social worker from Nottingham, acted as a whistle-blower by following requests from two of her clients and discovered that, in response to child "pauperism" in urban environments, 100 000 so-called orphans had been dislocated from the UK to distant Commonwealth countries.⁵ People often draw a parallel between the migration to Australia and the evacuation from cities to safer areas, either within Britain or overseas, during the Second World War. The period covered was shorter (from 1939-1940) but the quantitative impact, and the logistical effort, were enormous. A few million were displaced. In the early morning of 1 September 1939, when Germany invaded Poland, 1 473 291 people, mostly children, are said to have been moved. Unlike the first two examples, the Blitz evacuation was not a secret. It was disclosed from the very beginning with a lot of media coverage. In 1940, 14-year-old Princess Elizabeth, in the earliest BBC recording of the future queen, extends her gratitude to the children and their foster parents.⁶ Owing to parents' persisting resistance to evacuation, the British government took propaganda measures. One of the posters⁷ shows a ghostlike Mephistophelean Hitler who whispers behind a mother's back: "Take them back! Take them back!", urging her to resist Satan, as it were, for her motherhood's sake. The movement is also present in literature: Kitty Barne's youth novel *Visitors from London* (1940) tells

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2. A few years ago Hanjo Schild drew my attention to the orphan trains by showing me a photo on his mobile phone that he had taken during a visit to Ellis Island.
 3. See <http://orphantraindepot.org/>.
 4. See <http://westbyorphantrain.com/>.
 5. Many thanks to Heather Douglas, La Trobe University, Melbourne, who brought the Australian childhood migration to my attention. In 2010, Jim Loach (director) and Rona Munro (writer) retold her discovery in the movie *Oranges and Sunshine* with Emily Watson. The London Museum of Childhood dedicated the exhibition *On Their Own: Britain's Child Migrants* to those involved (which ran from 24 October 2015 to 12 June 2016). I owe my information on the exhibition to Klaudia Meszaros, School of Oriental and African Studies, London.
 6. See www.bbc.co.uk/archive/princesselizabeth/6600.shtml.
 7. Imperial War Museums, Art./IWM PST 3095.

the story of Cockney evacuees coming to Sussex. Basil Seal in Evelyn Waugh's *Put out more flags* (1943) extorts money from unlucky or reluctant hosts for taking away the children billeted with them. Finally, the operation is covered through early surveys (Isaacs 1941; Padley 1940). The final example of youth mobility is quite different from the foregoing. The French promote a scheme for young craftsmen called the *Compagnons du Devoir* (Castéra 2011), perhaps originating in the Middle Ages. It currently reaches around 45 000 young people, mostly men. The organisation's Tour de France is an open educational scheme which lasts five years and is based on vocational training. It is highly successful in terms of employability, offering an alternative transition to careers and emphasising excellence in a manual trade. The *Compagnons'* associations are run as secret societies comparable to Freemasonry, although divergent in structure, aims and rituals (Collectif des cahiers 2012).

These selected examples reveal a thread of the history of childhood and poverty. To understand these movements' rationales, we must examine the people and discourses behind the schemes. The dominant figure behind the orphan trains was Charles Loring Brace (1826-1890). Born in Litchfield, USA, a quiet and prosperous Connecticut village, he was a Calvinist minister, a philanthropist and the founder of the Children's Aid Society.⁸ Key to Brace's experiences was his confrontation with much drunkenness, violence, depravity, debauchery and irreligious behaviour in a rapidly growing New York. The city was "home" to about 30 000 homeless, neglected children, then called "urchins", "gamins" or "street Arabs". A double vision of these children prevailed: they were regarded both as lamb-like beings in an inhospitable and vicious environment and as a nuisance endangering urban security and peace. This strange mix of compassion and fear⁹ meant that they were simultaneously victimised as suffering, helpless creatures and demonised as criminals and outcasts. Brace was inspired by two ambitions: saving the children by any means possible and becoming prominent as a social reformer. His writing on social work with children in New York (Brace 1872) places him at the very beginning of child protection whereby he paved the way for modern social work (O'Connor 2004). Thus, the orphan trains were an early episode in the emergent professional child care, less well known but as important as Toynbee Hall in East London and Hull House in Chicago (Müller 1988).

Brace, who was connected to an international network, had prepared to establish his scheme by collecting information for years. He travelled in many European countries (see for example Brace 1853) where he was in contact with the organisation *Rauhes Haus* in Hamburg (Jalongo 2010) and its founder Johann Heinrich Wichern (1808-1888), who is considered to be at the origins of Protestant social welfare (*Diakonie*) in Germany (Schmuhl 2008). In New York, where there were just four orphan asylums in 1825, Brace developed his scheme as an alternative to homelessness, seeing emigration as a remedy for pauperism (Brace 1872). A shifting religious discourse underpins the initiative as well. Puritanism originally emphasised original sin so

8. Currently a highly regarded child social work organisation in New York (see www.childrensaidsociety.org/about).

9. "Sometimes they seemed to me what the police call them, 'street-rats', who gnawed at the foundations of society, and scampered away when light was brought near them. Their life was, of course, a painfully hard one" (Brace 1872: 111).

that self-will, stubbornness and false pride had to be violently repressed. Therefore, children had to be converted, remade and reborn in order to be saved. Under the influence of the Enlightenment and Romanticism, with thinkers like John Locke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, the Puritan core culture was undermined. A modified educational paradigm emerged: the newborn child was seen as a tabula rasa, and the primordial roles of motherhood and family were recognised. This process in the United States was linked to Lydia Maria Child's *The mother's book* (2010). Child was an abolitionist, a feminist, an opponent of American expansionism and an Indian rights activist.¹⁰ Through her work, decades before Ellen Key and Margaret Mead, Rousseau's educational theory and a romantic veneration of childhood spread in North America. It was in this climate that Brace developed four beliefs (O'Connor 2004).

- ▶ 1. Poverty is not to be identified with crime.
- ▶ 2. The family is highly influential in shaping human natures.
- ▶ 3. Children are to be submitted to the government of a good father.
- ▶ 4. God is beneficent, forgiving sins if one repents.

An idealised view emerges from the frontispiece in the annual reports of the Children's Aid Society from 1873-1890 (O'Connor 2004): street children were purported to be rescued by a good father from the hardships of their existence, whereupon an organisation with helping female hands would put them on the orphan trains. In the west, they would experience a healthy rural work life on the farm of a morally upright family under the eyes of their saviour. A counter discourse comes from the Irish as articulated in a 1874 cartoon in the *Irish World* (O'Connor 2004). In the centre, a charitable helper holds a notice addressing Puritan social workers as brother kidnappers and stating that in the last decade, 50 000 children have been rescued not from poverty, but from popery.¹¹ The text ends as follows: "What England failed to effect with the sword, among Irish through ages, we, through subtler art, are accomplishing, quietly day by day." The pictures tell the story of Tom O'Reilly, a happy Irish newsboy¹² in the streets of New York. He is kidnapped by an ugly Yankee, indoctrinated, and then sold to a farmer. Finally, poor O'Reilly becomes a stiff and virtuous Baptist preacher: no more Catholicism, no more freedom in the streets of the city.

10. For more extended information on Lydia Maria Child, who "ranks among the most influential of nineteenth-century American women writers", see www.poetryfoundation.org/bio/lydia-maria-child.

11. Popery: a derogatory way of referring to Roman Catholicism.

12. Chapter IX (Brace 1872: 111–128) describes a visit to the newsboy's lodging house.



Four children in London on their way to the liner that will take them to Fairbridge Farm, Molong, NSW, Australia bound for Fairbridge Farm School, 1938. Woods Collection, © Molong Historical Society.



Group of children in New York City leaving for their new homes out west with agents Anna Laura Hill and Clara Comstock. Anna Laura Hill Collection. © National Orphan Train Complex, Concordia, KS.

Almost a century later, during the Blitz, child mobility was expressed in a different context. The operation, logistically planned by the British Ministry of Health (Padley

1940), stemmed from neither an educational nor a social ambition; rather, it was a precautionary measure against hostile bombardment. The general population, rather than the disadvantaged, was the target group. Though impressively organised, the scheme was partly a failure: the participation was poor and there were educational and psychological problems. Margaret Cole offers a reason for the problems from a contemporary observer's standpoint: "because it was drawn up by minds that were military, male and middle-class" (Cole 1940: 4). On the transports were fraudulent and deviant young people, like the Connollys imagined by Waugh (1943). Waugh also mentions the complaints of a scoutmaster billeted with a schoolmistress "who refused to help wash up" (1943: 13). He relates the conversation of a host in a reception area with evacuated mothers:

"They got no right to do it," said the first mother. "You can't keep us here compulsory."

"But surely you don't *want* to have your children bombed, do you?"

"We won't stay where we're not wanted."

"That's right," said the yes-woman.

"But of *course* you're wanted."

"Yes, like the stomach-ache."

"That's right." (ibid. 1943: 12)

Going back in time, we detect a transition pattern wherein the emphasis is no longer on poverty and social reform, but on young adults' access to skilled work, as in the Tour de France (Martin Saint-Léon 2015). Our knowledge is also rooted in the French novelist George Sand's relationship with Agricol Perdiguier (1805-1875), a joiner or *compagnon* known as Avignonnais-la-Vertu. Their contacts are documented through a correspondence lasting from 1840 to 1874 (Perdiguier 1966). In 1841, which was a turbulent time as the associations were mired in fratricidal conflicts, Perdiguier (1841) published *Le livre du compagnonnage*. This is a collage of a book containing songs, an overview of the organisational structure, articles on geometry, architecture and living conditions, which stabilised the unity and identity of the movement. Perdiguier entered political life as a socialist. During the Second Empire he lived in exile in Geneva and he wrote his autobiography, *Mémoires d'un compagnon* (Perdiguier 1977, 1855). In the Second Republic he became mayor of a Paris district, where he owned a book and wine shop. After the Paris Commune in 1871, he was forgotten, and died poor and in isolation.

Evolving psychoanalytical responses to the Blitz evacuation

Educational intervention, going beyond military and bureaucratic action, was far more indirect than in the case of the orphan trains. This will be illustrated by considering psychoanalytical reactions to wartime's children. At the beginning of the Second World War, psychoanalysis in London was in a critical situation. In March 1938, Sigmund Freud (Cohen 2009; Edmundson 2007) had escaped from Vienna with his family. The old, seriously ill man was brought to London, where

he finished his last book, *Moses and monotheism*, which dealt with anti-Semitism, anti-intellectualism and the new fundamentalisms. Freud died during the first weeks of the Blitz. The psychoanalyst school in London suffered from a conflict between Anna Freud and Melanie Klein over leadership of the psychoanalytical school. Nevertheless, child analysts in particular were concerned about children in wartime. Anna Freud and Dorothy Burlingham had opened the Children's Rest Centre in London, later called the Hampstead War Nurseries, which cared for single-parent children, evacuated children and orphans (Burlingham and Freud 1942). The psychological work of these two women was based on "the idea that the care and education of young children should not take second place in wartime and should not be reduced to wartime level" (Freud and Burlingham 1943: 12). The child psychiatrists who held a position between Anna Freud and Melanie Klein especially got involved in direct work with children. Thus, as early as December 1939, John Bowlby, Emanuel Miller and Donald Winnicott published an open letter in the *British Medical Journal*. They referred to their professional work with young evacuees as well as to Bowlby's attachment theory (Holmes 1993) and drew attention to the risks of long-term separation of small children from their mothers (Bowlby, Miller and Winnicott 1939).

John Bowlby reported on the psychological aspects of evacuation in contemporary surveys (Bowlby 1940; Isaacs 1941), wherein he analysed separation situations. First, he concluded that psychological failures were not as frequent as might have been expected from his pre-war experiences. Second, Bowlby underlines the different effects on children and adolescents. Whereas separation remains difficult for very small children, mobility becomes an important factor in the construction of youth as a life stage for adolescents, even though it may not be voluntary.

Winnicott's involvement is even more important, both professionally and personally. He had been appointed as governmental consultant with regard to the evacuation of children. He was in charge of the evacuated children in Oxfordshire, particularly with those with more challenging behaviour who could not be left with their foster families and were gathered in hostels. He worked with a social worker, Clare Britton (Kanter 2004, 2013), the two of them combining social work and psychoanalysis, and avoiding adoption of an overly psychiatric approach to the problems of young evacuees. Interventions were conducted by a team where social work predominated. Moreover, they worked not in the closed space of a therapy room, but rather out in the community during these difficult times. Winnicott and Britton had a close relationship which resulted in a love affair, and they shared a flat in Oxfordshire. After the war, Winnicott divorced his first wife and married Clare Britton (Kanter 2004, 2013). The Winnicotts' Oxfordshire work (Winnicott et al. 2012) went beyond personal dimensions, however, as it laid the foundation for psychoanalytically informed social work. They took into consideration the subjective emotional experiences of participants together with the social context of administratively planned mobility schemes. Thus, they became sensitive to the issue that not only the young people but also their parents, and the adults in charge of them, changed through the process of mobility. Generally, the Blitz evacuation represented an important cultural shift, particularly in the links between child and youth care and mobility.

Youth mobility in the mirror of fiction

Different historical sources, fictional pieces and novels on imagined mobility experiences will be considered briefly in this section. The purpose is not to retell the stories, but to use them for enlightening participants in the current debate on mobility schemes.

The first instance refers to the Blitz evacuation. The code name for the evacuation scheme was Operation Pied Piper, a name which reflects the fairy tale in which a piper lures all of the children out of a town to a mountain which swallows them up. In 1942, Nevil Shute published in London a novel entitled *The pied piper*, with a corresponding movie produced shortly thereafter. The protagonist in the novel, John Sidney Howard, is a retired English solicitor, who after his son's death feels useless in England. Therefore, he goes on a fishing holiday to Switzerland in April 1940 after the beginning of the Second World War but before the fall of France. He is less ambitious than the real-world Charles Brace and less dominated by religiously motivated intentions than by contingent situations. His values correspond to a "gentleman's" attitude in his relationship to the children, as he wishes to find suitable solutions. The plot starts in the Hôtel de la Haute Montagne, in Cidoton, with his being entrusted with the care of two British children. Their Scottish parents, the Cavanaghs, who work at the League of Nations in Geneva, do not want to leave their jobs but are afraid of a possible German invasion of Switzerland. Overtaken by events, Howard attempts to return with the children to England. Mobility as a basically modern experience is a hidden theme of the novel. Howard finally gathers a large group of children from different nationalities and leads them into a secure haven. His anticipation of international youth mobility work transforms the children's strange odyssey into a strong metaphor against war and fascism.

A second fictitious image of mobility experiences is given by George Sand's novel *Le compagnon du Tour de France* (1840). The focus is not on children's experiences but on those of young adults. Intergenerational relationships strongly differ in both novels. Whereas Howard takes care of the children in his custody, the *compagnons* confront the older generation and try to find their own way beyond the traditional, generally accepted order. The learning patterns in both cases are linked to a political stake, but nevertheless they follow a different logic. Howard's children learn to survive in a harsh environment through the empathy of the old gentleman in charge of them. The *compagnons*, however, experience an alternative fraternal social and ethical order in a society based on inheritance and class inequalities, by autonomously sticking to the utopian self-governance system set up by their secret community. Neither of the two cases is seen in an entirely optimistic way. Though John Sidney Howard, the English gentleman, and Pierre Huguenin, the French *compagnon*, are presented as exceptionally noble characters, both individuals are marked by their depressive moods.

Developments in mobility and youth life

This summary of real-world and fictional examples shows that from early modernity onwards, mobility has played a role in the history of childhood and youth. Thus, we

must reconsider Alessandro Cavalli's (1980) views. Youth as a developmental stage marked by separation from one's family before attaining the status of adulthood is not only a privilege of the economically advantaged but is also a part of the mobility schemes frequent among lower income groups. Looking into history creates an awareness for the antecedents of current European learning mobility schemes. The paths of transition from childhood to adulthood as well as learning experiences linked to mobility are complex, and all examples contain elements of failure and utopia. Often they are full of suffering. In the beginning mass mobility of young people happens as a reaction to historical disasters. Education and learning occur as a kind of by-product. Nowadays, European programmes explicitly aim at learning mobility and want to make it accessible to all young people. Nevertheless, researchers, practitioners and decision makers should not too easily adopt an instrumental view, where mobility simply is the means and learning the aim. The historical perspective actually invites us to be critically cautious; it points out different aspects underpinning mobility "schemes" and their evolution.

The first aspect that interests us here is the continuous move from compulsory to self-chosen mobility, in which the coercive element is stronger or weaker according to the degree of marginalisation and disadvantage in the target group – with a higher degree of marginalisation resulting in greater coercion.

The worst level here is probably represented by the totally illegitimate and silenced Australian migration, its aim being simply to reduce costs in dealing with poverty. Children and young people, as well as their parents, were forced and betrayed, often experiencing violence and abuse. The UK and Australian governments both apologised when the secret finally became public. On the orphan trains, although the street children were moved like passive objects, Brace at least had pedagogical and social intentions; indeed he contrasts urban hardships with an idealised view of family education. The results were mixed, including both success and failure. During the Blitz evacuation the importance of consent was acknowledged, as the Winnicotts were able to reconstruct the subjective view of the children concerned. They understood that delinquency and crime could not be attributed simply to anxiety and guilt, but that the social environment was influential as well. Consequently, they developed the concept of an administrative educational responsibility, which would be essential for the new educational principles of the future. Nevil Shute's novel portrays extraordinary wartime experiences as leading to the idea of young people from different nationalities united in peace. This later develops into the idea of European citizenship.

The *compagnonnage* narrative, which is rooted in the history of the labour movement, affords readers an unexpected perspective on mobility, particularly with regard to the inclusion of disadvantaged groups. Hidden stakes and processes become visible, such as the conflict between family and peers, formal and non-formal learning as competitive educational models, or the role of inequalities and differences between young people. Moreover, mobility has the potential to create intra-generational diversity by providing one group with experiences not gained by another.

A second aspect refers to the dichotomy between authenticity and consumerism. Mobility linked to a historical catastrophe is comparable to the experiences of today's

refugees. Although it is difficult for educational planning to access, it can be seen as more authentic than a mobility scheme that is well organised by a specialised organisation and delivered as a kind of commodity. Although they are obviously riskier, authentic experiences arouse forms of genuine encounter, differing from tourism, true hospitality and the services provided by a hotel.

A third aspect refers to the complex link between intergenerational tensions and mobility. It reveals that schemes can serve either social reproduction (morphostatic) or change (morphogenic; see Archer 2013). With the emergence of a new youth in recent decades (Leccardi 2006), a morphogenic modality that subscribes less to a colonised than to an autonomous view of the upcoming generation becomes immediately relevant in terms of responsible policy design accepting and aiming at social change.

Finally, the point should be addressed as to how far the historical reflection on youth mobility can be relevant in shaping European learning mobility practices nowadays. In sum, the examples presented and the modest interpretative work done on them provide a few essential guidelines or quality criteria: 1) their voluntary and participatory nature, based on the subjective motivation of participants themselves; 2) the quality of genuine encounter with the receiving environment's hospitality as grounded in educational responsibility; and 3) the political link of personal self-initiated and reflected development towards democratic change, the aim being European citizenship.

In 1966, P. A. Sokorin compared sociology to a man who, after a visit to the zoo, was fascinated by all the insects and confessed that he had not seen the elephants (p. 490). At the EPLM conference in Istanbul in 2015, Yörük Kurtaran analysed problematic and difficult situations for Turkish young people and he also referred to the widespread migration of refugees into Europe by saying, "There is an elephant in the room." Reflecting upon and debating the antecedents to this situation with a wide-angle lens may offer help to researchers, practitioners and decision makers in becoming perceptive enough not to miss the elephants while dealing with today's learning mobility in the European youth field.

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Chapter 3

Ambivalences and ambiguities of learning mobility and social inclusion in non-formal youth work

Beatrix Niemeyer

The contribution by Charles Berg addressed some of the tensions and contradictions that have characterised the history of mobility and explored how these have prefigured the contemporary context. In this chapter, Beatrix Niemeyer pursues a similar line of enquiry, with direct reference to learning mobility, social inclusion and non-formal education today. She highlights a number of “ambivalences and ambiguities”, including the fact that perceptions of mobility and its value for individuals and for society vary according to the social background and status of those who are on the move; and she notes that “social borders” and distinctions can persist even when people cross physical and geographical ones. At the same time, valuable intercultural learning can take place even when young people remain at home and are not mobile at all in the physical sense. She argues for the uniquely transformative potential of informal learning and non-formal education through youth work, and suggests that programmatic regulation and formalisation runs the danger of making such learning opportunities more exclusive than inclusive.

Introduction

It is day one after the Brexit referendum. Overnight the issue of social inclusion has gained new importance. The British vote against the EU has put issues about social exclusion in a new perspective. The map of the distribution of “leave” or “stay” votes shows a clear social division – between young and old, country and city, poor and rich, privileged and disadvantaged groups of the population. Today nobody can be sure about the future of the European project. The whole idea of Europe seems to be in question. Nationalist movements in other countries on the continent raise their EU-critical voices. Interviews with leave-voters demonstrate a strong sense of social inequality and deep fears of foreign influences and foreign people. In their view, the EU is directly linked with their personal feeling of being socially excluded. If there is a lesson to be drawn at this point in time, it would be that successful politics do need socially inclusive societies and that the European

project essentially depends on the capacity to provide a lived experience of belonging, engaging and actively participating in a democratic community. International youth work has never been more important.

Learning mobility and social inclusion in non-formal youth work

During my career as a youth worker I organised a multitude of international activities; almost a generation of young exchange guests were hosted in our family before I put social inequalities as a topic on my academic research agenda. Having experienced countless international youth work activities, I am far from questioning the enriching, inspiring and exciting effects of intercultural meetings of (almost) any kind. However, with this chapter I would like to take a closer look at the concept of learning mobility and point to a couple of disturbing ambivalences and ambiguities extending between policy and practice and executing and experiencing youth mobility programmes.

Learning mobility – What are we talking about?

Learning mobility has many faces. The European Platform for Learning Mobility defines it as “transnational mobility undertaken for a period of time, consciously organized for educational purposes or to acquire new competences or knowledge” which covers “a wide variety of projects and activities and can be implemented in formal or non-formal settings” (EPLM: 1). This is true for an international summer camp of any youth organisation as well as for an Erasmus semester, a private language holiday or a gap year during the transition from secondary school to higher education. Work-and-travelling in New Zealand or au pairing in Paris, hiking in Norway with the scouts group, a seminar at a Kibbutz or an internship in Brussels are as “consciously organized for educational purposes” as are peer-learning programmes for young apprentices or the participation in any of the Erasmus+ activities. The wide variety of differing types of mobility activities seems to have more differences than commonalities. Travel and learning arrangements can be made individually or in a group, organised by a youth organisation, a public school or a commercial agency. They range from a short-term holiday period to work or apprenticeship placements lasting more than one year and may address age groups ranging from 10 to 35 years. Individually organised or school-based pupil exchange activities may provide early mobility experiences during secondary school, while student mobility is highly promoted in higher education by the Erasmus programme among others, as is mobility during vocational and further training. Thus all sectors of the lifelong learning space are covered, including (almost) all levels of education of the participants – at least as a programmatic claim. Further differences refer to the intended qualification or learning outcomes: travelling can be for work, for higher education, for vocational education, for cultural exchange, or for informal and peer learning. Participation can be more or less formalised, with the recruitment of participants following defined selection criteria or not. They may follow defined qualification requirements, depend on financial ability or certain individual features or can be linked with the commitment to a (youth) organisation. Learning outcomes and their formal recognition may be well defined or considered informally. Obviously

programmes also differ in terms of accessibility; this includes social selectivity but also refers to the geographically varying access to such mobility programmes and of course also to physical barriers to movements.

In addition, the experiences gained during a stay abroad are as different as are the individuals undertaking it. Somebody who booked a language school will gain another perspective on a foreign country than a person responsible for an exchange event of a youth organisation. Staying in a dormitory exclusively among international students enables a different set of experiences to living with a local family. An internship at an EU office may lead to a different perspective on Europe than voluntary work at a First World War cemetery.

But not all mobility experiences are voluntary. Social or material needs can force young people to leave home and live, study and/or work elsewhere. This type of “forced mobility” calls for a different set of coping strategies as well as for different support structures. Including involuntary mobility may cast a cloud on the bright picture of learning mobility, yet it allows us to consider the social and emotional costs to be paid individually when leaving friends and family.

The challenge of social inclusiveness

Learning mobility comes as a political programme and a promise to individuals. Learning mobility is highly appreciated and widely promoted within and beyond the European Union. Transnational mobility in formal or non-formal settings aims to foster personal and professional development and “to increase participation, active citizenship, intercultural learning and dialogue, individual competency development and employability among young people” (EPLM: 1). The educational programme of staying abroad for learning purposes is regarded as a core contribution to the broader social development towards smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. Learning mobility is considered an indispensable construction element of the European knowledge society (EU 2020 strategy). As the Erasmus+ guide to European Union opportunities in education, training, youth and sport (EU 2014) suggests, learning mobility is supposed to change lives and open minds. While official documents outline learning mobility as a common European political programme, they envisage individual experiences of learning mobility as a milestone for individual careers and personality building, illustrated with shiny pictures of happily smiling international learners. Studying or training abroad is presented as an impeccable, exciting and efficient opportunity for self-development to all individual mobile learners. It is intended to be an integral part of learning experiences that encourage diversity and identity building (Cairns 2015: 1). Certainly “every young person should have the opportunity to take part in some form of mobility, whether this be during their studies or training, in the form of a work placement, or in the context of voluntary activities” (Council of the European Union 2008; EPLM n.d.: 2). By 2020 every young person in Europe should have the possibility to partly spend his or her educational pathway abroad. Neither social nor economic, legal, personal nor geographical obstacles should prevent young Europeans from cross-country learning or deny them access to these unique opportunities (EPLM n.d.: 2). Yet, the door to learning mobility activities is anything but wide open. Participation rates vary considerably

between countries, ranging from 3% in Turkey and 10% in Bulgaria, the UK and Romania to about 40% in Cyprus and Luxembourg. In most other countries, this proportion is less than 20% (European Commission 2011: 24). Students in higher education are more likely to include studying abroad in their education compared to those in vocational education. Obviously, despite all kinds of supportive strategies there seem to be quite persistent invisible barriers keeping socially disadvantaged young Europeans from engaging in learning mobility activities. Unfortunately, and despite all efforts, youth work is no exception when it comes to social inclusion of international activities. Learning mobility programmes come as a big promise to young people; participants tell fascinating stories about their enriching and exciting experiences. Still the question remains: Why isn't the chorus singing the praise of mobility heard everywhere in the same way? Why are some people listening to it quite intensely while others remain deaf to its melody? Or, in academic words: how is the hegemonic mobility discourse (re)producing social inequality?

The obvious answer is almost too simple: learning mobility requires travelling and travelling costs money. The financial costs build an invisible border around learning mobility activities – those who can afford it will take part, those who cannot will stay at home. This is supported by the fact that only 15% of mobile learners have financed their sojourn through an EU-funding programme like Erasmus; the vast majority of mobility is self-financed (European Commission 2011: 6). However, it is not always and only a lack of funding that causes a social stratification of participants. Most probably, learning mobility programmes are less attractive for some of the potential participants, who may have differing biographical priorities. The majority of young people who said they would stay at home reported that they would do so because of family commitments (ibid.: 25).

As is well known from education research, the idea of equal opportunities is a myth. Unequal conditions, unequal possibilities, unequal modes of recognition and unequal relevance of mobility experiences reproduce and reconstruct social inequalities in the field of learning mobility as well as in any other area of education. The differences which are a necessary precondition for the transformative learning during a mobility activity are usually attributed to cultural differences of other nations, languages, ethnicities. However, they are cross cut by further dimensions of differences like social status, gender and so on. Social and individual constructions of belonging and identity are not left behind when the educational pathway leads into another country. A call for socially inclusive learning mobility, however, will have to take these patterns of social stratification into account and work towards their mobilisation as well. This refers to physical and visible barriers, but emphasis needs to be put on the invisible barriers inhibiting social mobility. As Bourdieu has broadly elaborated, the social space is segregated according to the individual disposition on social, economic and cultural capital with social power regimes and individual habitus tending to reproduce these patterns of segregation rather than working to overcome them (Bourdieu 1983: 207). Social disparities tend to be stable. They tend to travel, too, together with the disadvantaged or privileged target groups, who may pass a geographical distance and cross national borders, but fail to cross the cultural borders of their milieu. A more inclusive approach would need to take the conditions of their life-worlds into account. Is there really

an opportunity for everybody to leave home? Wouldn't social inclusiveness rather imply trying to enable, understand and accept both leaving and staying?

Learning mobility begins and ends at home

Every type of mobility has a point of departure and a point of arrival, getting away and arriving somewhere are two sides of the same coin. The receiving social context – host families, host organisations, schools, universities – and their welcoming practices considerably influence mobility experiences. However, they are often overlooked and underestimated. Hosting international young guests is a huge learning opportunity as well, so there can be good reasons for staying at home. And even those who stay at home may experience learning mobility, albeit from a different perspective. Hosting foreigners and organising international exchange also yields intercultural learning. It requires openness and readiness to engage with unknown and unpredictable encounters, to invite and live with new persons and engage in the challenging business of cross-cultural communication and non-verbal understanding, probably in a more radical way than the decision to live and learn elsewhere for a limited time.¹ Again youth work provides frameworks and opportunities to share this as collective experiences within a group of peers. Hence, learning mobility in the context of youth work can be a valuable contrast to other forms of individualised stays. With smartphones and overall availability, the creating of a common understanding, coping with language barriers and overcoming misunderstandings is no longer exclusively dependent on personal efforts of communication between hosts and guests. When the first thing to be settled in a new surrounding is the Wi-Fi connection and the first thing asked of the host family is the Wi-Fi password, the labour of belonging is not necessarily an intercultural effort but rather a technical problem. The challenging exposure to a new cultural context can almost be totally avoided if free time is spent in the chatroom with the home community or if mothers – or fathers – call twice a day to make sure that their loved one is treated as comfortably as at home.

By definition, learning mobility is a temporally limited experience. After leaving, there will be a returning home sometime. Resettling in the home context is often as disturbing and alienating as arriving somewhere else. What is gained, what is lost after a learning mobility activity? The subjective calculation depends on the structural and social framework of recognition. Recognition is the currency for valuing mobility experiences. Therefore, it plays a crucial role when it comes to social in- or exclusion.

The appreciation of “right” or “wrong” types of mobility is expressed in the way they are recognised. Obviously, different modes of recognition apply to different types of youth mobility. Above all, there is the unconditioned recognition of the other as an

1. It can be assumed that social stratification also applies to the host groups or families of international guests, although I can recall a couple of examples of working-class families who explicitly invited international young learners, as they couldn't afford similar travelling for their kids but wanted to share the intercultural spirit.

individual human being.² Images of international youth camps come to mind with young girls and boys singing together at the campfire in a common feeling of understanding. To be accepted as a member of such a youth community without conditions and with respect for personal differences despite restrictions in verbal communication is an essential experience of recognition and self-recognition enabled by the crossing of national geographical and cultural borders. Two other types of recognition refer to the mode of the social framing of these individual experiences. They are referred to as legal recognition and social recognition (Honneth 2013.) Legal recognition is produced by formal and institutionalised procedures of entitlement while social recognition or solidarity is socially constructed as belonging to a community. In this social dimension recognition becomes part of the instruments to create belonging – as a legal entitlement and/or as a social co-construction. With reference to international youth mobility these two categories of recognition appear underdeveloped and fragmented.

With reference to learning mobility it becomes obvious that different types of recognition are attributed to differing types of mobility in different ways. Programmes like Erasmus seek to formalise learning mobility; individual learning achievements are codified according to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) or the European Credit Transfer System. The accreditation however refers to individual study achievements; there are no additional credit points for the simple activity of moving to another university in another European country. The assumed acquisition of intercultural competences, personal growth, self-esteem and so on is not codified. All this will only show in an appreciating social context. As such it is always dependent on social status and related to belonging to a social community in which mobility will be valued more or less.

With reference to formal learning institutions the transfer of informally acquired intercultural competences into a national education system may even turn into a moment of exclusion. So far schools do not have established practices to value the learning and knowing of languages that are not part of their curriculum; exchange activities are considered as fun rather than learning and there is no agreement as to how they appear on the school certificate. Mobility then appears as an ambiguous concept, with differing modes of recognition contradicting each other.

It becomes apparent that not all kinds of mobility are recognised and addressed by the programmatic promotion of learning mobility – although any type of mobility may include learning. Since the very early beginnings of the welfare state system in Europe the appreciation of mobility has been related to the social status of the individuals moving. While individual mobility of social elites was appreciated, supported and contributed to their personal reputation, uncontrolled crossing of borders by vagabonds, poor, unemployed and criminals has rather been threatening to societies. This ambivalence related to mobility can still be illustrated by the example of the Roma: the most mobile ethnicity in Europe is at the same time the most disadvantaged and problematised one. A parallel ambiguity is expressed with reference to language learning; languages are also classified as more or

2. This unquestioned recognition of the individual other with all his or her differing characteristics Honneth has categorised as love (Honneth 2013).

less relevant. Actual debates about the refugee crisis reflect the same concerns. Although mobility is closely related to learning and any change of cultural and social contexts offers the chance for transformative learning, obviously not every type of mobility is considered as a learning opportunity, no matter whether the mobile individual is learning or not. Hence learning mobility is dependent on social status, and participation in learning mobility activities marks and communicates the belonging to a certain social class. A complex interplay of patterns of social and legal, formal and informal recognition governs the reproduction of social borders which are not so easily overcome. The crossing of geographical and national borders allows for diverse cultural experiences, but it usually does not include a crossing of social borders. Privileges as disadvantages do travel, too.

How is mobility linked with learning?

Despite the diversity of organisational formats, educational settings, qualification targets, participating target groups, duration and degree of formalisation, the outstanding commonality of learning mobility activities is that the participants are in a very basic way exposed to the experience of cultural differences. But what does this have to do with learning?

In the modern history of education travelling and learning always came as relatives. "Travelling introduces into other 'worlds'; it confronts with other contexts and situations; it provokes experiences through a necessary exposure to the unfamiliar" (Schäfer 2011: 22; translation BN). In this respect the learning process is initiated by the exposure to an unfamiliar context, to a social setting and cultural habits, which are experienced as foreign. Travelling and learning are indeed closely connected. The description of the Erasmus programme gives a modern translation of the historically known *Bildungsreise*:

[S]tudents get out of their comfort zone into uncharted territory, often as a life changing event, increase their employability, and boost their personal development. ERASMUS students gain a better understanding of their host country and culture, and this mode of "learning by contrast" holds up a mirror to themselves. They are often confronted with the stereotypes about their own nationality, leading them to think more critically about their own pre-conceived ideas. (Tyson 2011: 20-21)

Learning – in the sense of the German term *Bildung* – starts with differentiation, contrasting the familiar frames of orientation with foreign ones. Changing the context allows for new experiences, not only of the world but also of/with the own person. Obviously, a sojourn abroad – however framed – is experienced as a difference, an interruption, an exception, a contrast in the way of living. Hence the travelling individual inevitably is thrown into a mode of contrasting and comparing. She or he needs to make sense of seemingly alien impressions; needs to position herself in the different context, building new constructions of belonging, negotiating identity. As Schleiermacher has explained (see Marotzki 1991:3), understanding the foreign starts by identifying familiarity. Understanding needs this point of connection of the unknown to the known. However, understanding would not make sense without the unknown, foreign, not-understood phenomenon to challenge it. However, experiences of difference can be processed in two ways. One way is to reduce new

impressions to what is already known, to relate strange things with familiar patterns of understanding and interpreting the world and oneself within it. This means to level out differences and contrasts and to confirm the established view of the world. The alternative would be a “tentative reflection”, which, by accepting differences, accepts that the known and familiar categories of self and world have reached their limit and will undergo a transformation (ibid.: 2). In this respect uncertainty opens the cognitive and emotional space for new, experimenting, testing, innovative, creative, imaginative experiences. “These spaces are the home of subjectivity [Diese Orte sind die Heimat von Subjektivität]” (ibid.: 3).

This theory of learning as digestion of contrasting experiences helps to unlock the black box of learning mobility and to explicate the broadly assumed but little explained connection of learning by being elsewhere. This type of transformative learning is highly individual and subjective. Even though these holistic and unspecified aspects of personality development may be easily realised by the people undergoing them, they are difficult to assess and certify. What may be valid for language learning programmes is hardly possible for personality development (Kristensen 2013).

Framing mobility experiences of young people as learning mobility formalises these subjective individual development processes which are generated by experiencing differences and disturbances of familiar patterns of being and understanding. It opens an access for governing individual mobility. The conceptualisation of crossing national borders “for a period of time, consciously organized for educational purposes or to acquire new competences or knowledge” presumes what should and would be learned by going away and living elsewhere. In this context mobility appears as a learning outcome, often reduced to acquiring language skills, which can be assessed and demonstrated.

The Erasmus programme may be taken as an example of imposing a certain type of mobility regime. It channelled international learning opportunities for defined target groups and framed the relation of travelling and learning in the European space in a specific way. Although calling for mobility, it remained integrated in the institutionalised part of national education systems, thus presenting a controlled space of movements. The comprehensive concept of the Erasmus+ programme in turn allows coverage of all spaces of lifelong and lifewide learning, including informal learning activities of youth organisations and initiatives.

Youth work allows for a less formal and therefore more open and inclusive access to mobility experiences and intercultural learning. Still, even within youth work programmes, calls and reports seem to tell only one part of the story, while experiences and effects could be more complex, including difficulties and disturbances, which often remain in the dark. Disappointed expectations, failed communication, indifferent peers, homesickness and boredom, a general lack of understanding, mobbing, exclusion, prejudices can be part of a mobility experience. To focus on this “dark side of mobility” allows us to imagine the dimension of the challenge of socially inclusive learning mobility and points to the emotional costs, which usually are not calculated.

The potential of youth work for social inclusive learning mobility

Youth and mobility seem to relate almost naturally. Youth as a biographical stage is directed towards living independently. Besides making a living in the economic sense this includes leaving home. Youth mobility dates back to the very beginning of organised youth work in Europe and early logs give evidence of an amazing idealism attributed by the young and enthusiastic writers to the simple fact of being elsewhere, on one's own or as a group activity (Hlavin-Schulze 1998). Since the concept of youth as a biographical stage has been established in modern societies, youth mobility has been a constituting element of youth work, whether publicly or voluntarily organised. Leaving the narrow cities for a weekend hike as a protest against the bourgeois establishment and to romanticise freedom and nature as organised youth groups did in the early 20th century, going away, leaving the familiar context, distancing oneself from established routines and constrictions was considered a normal desire of youth. International journeys have been provided by organised youth work from the very beginning, enabling young people to experience self-efficacy as well as building team spirit.

One of my most impressive memories of inclusive youth mobility is the picture of three or four young people in wheelchairs sitting around the fire at an international scouts camp, virtually in the middle of the woods, at a place that was everything but accessible. They were in their late teens and obviously enjoyed all the usual activities that develop during a night at a campfire at this age. It is the normality of young people having fun together that makes this memory so extraordinary, because their having fun was only possible because they had been carried there by some of their friends without disabilities. That was some 15 years before the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities was adopted, inclusion had not yet entered the social vocabulary, self-determination and independent living were the targets of that time. And this was true as well for those who, due to their physical impairments, had to depend on others to manage their daily needs.

What is the lesson of this story? What does the participation of people in wheelchairs in a camp of walking scouts have to do with the issue of social inclusion? Firstly, physical heterogeneity is probably easier to integrate than social differences. Second, inclusion is a matter of attitude; although an accessible infrastructure may help, it needs people with the motivation and ability to make use of it. And as an attitude it is not easy to be assessed and trained for, but rather to be experienced and enacted. Finally, this story illustrates how youth work is able to ignore and overcome barriers and to provide a community of practice in which the normality of being young together is more important than differing physical needs. Youth work has a multitude of adequate methods and activities at hand to create communities of practice and feelings of belonging. There is a serious risk that once they are formalised, these opportunities could be exclusive rather than inclusive.

Learning mobility and youth work are – at least partly – situated in different social frames, following diverging paradigms. If learning is understood as a targeted purposeful activity which assigns a purpose to individual intercultural experiences which formerly did not need to be argued, then international youth work and youth

mobility will be challenged to balance informal and formal recognition. As mobility activities organised and provided in the context of youth work are considered as informal learning, participation is voluntary by principle and there is at least no explicit selection of participants. However, problems arise when these outcomes of informal learning are transferred into formal recognition. Transformative learning needs exactly this under-regulated space of possibilities, which only youth work can provide. Furthermore, an inclusive approach to learning mobility needs to build on the right to stay at home and to appreciate intercultural experiences acquired within the familiar social context. And it needs to value bonds and constructions of belonging which are necessary for stable social relations in an ever-diversifying society.

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Chapter 4

Going abroad in order to cope: a capacity-building experience with little support from institutions

Francine Labadie and Clotilde Talleu

Many – if not the majority – of all mobility programmes and schemes come equipped with clauses stipulating the need for including those with fewer opportunities, but often these ambitions prove hard to realise. In an in-depth qualitative study involving both personnel of sending organisations and young people themselves, the French researchers Francine Labadie and Clotilde Talleu have focused on barriers to participation in order to find out what lies behind this lack of participation. Their findings include several factors, but arguably the most interesting is the observation that the incentives for young disadvantaged people to participate in transnational mobility projects often are at variance with programme and institutional logics, with the consequence that the offer of participation is either not made by staff responsible for recruitment, or not perceived as relevant or rewarding by the young people themselves.

In a context of growing polarisation of the young (Labadie 2012; Markovic et al. 2015), the encouragement of access of vulnerable young people to international mobility programmes within a non-formal framework has become an important political objective, in the name of fairness. This objective is central to European youth and social integration strategies and also to the Youth Priority Plan in France. The aim is to offer to disadvantaged young people learning opportunities and experiences likely to have a positive impact on their social and professional integration. These programmes can therefore be considered as part of an approach to developing “capacities” (Nussbaum 2012; Sen 1999) whose importance for the young as a public action issue is emphasised by a number of researchers.¹

Definition of “young people with fewer opportunities”

We use the term “young people with fewer opportunities” to refer to vulnerable young people who are disadvantaged in comparison with their peers because of

1. See the SociEtY project Improving the Quality of Life of Disadvantaged Young People Towards a Capability Friendly Youth Policy in Europe co-ordinated by Prof. Hans-Uwe of Bielefeld University (www.society-youth.eu/).

being faced with one or several exclusion factors and obstacles (disabilities, health, education, cultural origins, economic, social and geographical obstacles). These factors restrict their access to employment, formal and non-formal education, transnational mobility, the democratic process and integration in society (Youth in Action (YiA) programme guide).²

However, according to the 2012-2015 evaluation by the National Institute of Youth and Community Education (INJEP) – a member of the Research-based Analysis of Youth in Action (RAY)³ network – young people with fewer opportunities make up only 16% of those benefiting from the YiA programme in France (Labadie 2016). Most of the YiA participants are qualified young people well on their way to integration. The goal of equal access is therefore far from being reached. How can we interpret these results?

In view of this social selectivity, the INJEP launched a qualitative study in September 2015 in order to highlight and comprehend the obstacles that restrict the access of young people with fewer opportunities to the YiA programme. More precisely, the main hypothesis is that the restriction on access could result from a combination of barriers rooted in the practices and representations of youth professionals and in the characteristics and life paths of young people (see section on methodology).

This central hypothesis is by no means a matter of chance. We intentionally position our study within the theoretical framework developed by Philippe Warin (2010) on the “non-take-up of rights and services”, taken in the wider sense as concerning “every person not benefitting from a public offer of rights and services which he or she can claim” (Warin 2012). Warin identifies several types of non-take-up: non-take-up through lack of knowledge (the offer is unknown), and non take-up through no reception (the offer is known, requested but not received) and, non-take-up through no proposal (the offer is not proposed and thus cannot be requested). We will look particularly at this last form of non-take-up, analysing the processes leading to non-proposal of a mobility experience and the consequent non-request and non-access.

By doing so we pursue the work of researchers such as Léa Lima and Christophe Trombert (2013) and Benjamin Vial (2016) on the professional and institutional factors that lead to non-use of social and professional integration policies.

In particular, their work proposes an interpretation of non-take-up through an individual prism (regarding the singularity of the life path) and also through an analysis of institutional mechanisms (the role of youth professionals in the construction of social life paths). Life path support is at the core of this interaction between young people’s expectations and the logics of integration policies. In this respect our study shows the central nature of support in enabling the young to benefit from an international mobility experience and overcome the hurdles linked to their life histories and to institutional mechanisms.

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2. In this article we use the notion of “young people with fewer opportunities”, the term used in the field of international mobility. For more details on the approach adopted, see the section on methodology.
 3. For further information on the RAY Network see www.researchyouth.eu.

Methodology

The “young people with fewer opportunities” category of public action that is mainly based on status elements can lead to an approach that is both static (the present situation) and stigmatising. It fails to make possible an in-depth analysis of the obstacles that reduce access to international mobility, some of which may result from previous life experiences. We have therefore opted for a biographical approach that allows us to emphasise the complexity of young people’s life paths.

This qualitative study was carried out in three regions of France (Alsace, Île-de-France and Provence-Alpes-Côte d’Azur) and in two stages.

Firstly, participation was requested from support structures for young persons in difficulty dealing with social and/or professional integration (mainly “local missions”;⁴ but also specialised prevention units, community centres, etc.) and NGOs dedicated to international mobility. Fifteen semi-directed interviews were held with heads of establishments and/or professional youth workers.

Secondly, some 30 young people were interviewed: 18 biographical face-to-face interviews and three focus groups, each comprising five young people, were conducted in the regions. Beyond the usual profile variations relating to social, economic, educational, geographical, age or gender characteristics, the interviewees also presented diversified experiences of mobility: some had been away and had returned from international travel (individual or group), some had given up their plans during preparation, while others were made aware of international mobility but finally failed to take the opportunities offered.

A brief presentation of the French context of these policies is necessary at this stage. Social and professional integration policies were introduced in France mainly in response to the rise in youth unemployment during the economic crisis at the end of the 1970s. Following the report of Bertrand Schwartz (1981) local missions were created to enable young people with integration difficulties “to build and complete a path to social and professional integration”.

With the local missions a new profession appeared in the youth sector, that of integration advisers. These local mission advisers interact at the local level with other youth workers (whether the latter operate in organisations such as community centres or in the street as specialised prevention educators) and receive their “vulnerable” young people. This term refers to a category of young people experiencing “chronic breakdown” (Muniglia and Rothé 2013). Their lives are marked by great instability linked to accumulated breakdowns since childhood, and are strewn with failures (school, job, etc.) which generate mental and social distress. Also, these young people are often far removed from international mobility and its institutional procedures and thus unlikely to make direct contact with organisations specialised in the field. On the other hand, they are all familiar with the local mission, via youth workers or by word of mouth. The advisers and youth organisations have the possibility of recommending an experience abroad as part of the way to social and professional integration, and thus represent an essential upstream link in access to international mobility.

4. Access points for youth employment and social services.

The local missions have become extremely institutionalised since their creation, and the issue of professional integration has largely taken precedence over that of social integration. Tension has appeared in professional logics (Giulani 2009). The reorientation of advisers' activity towards employment impacts their approach to support in many ways (Muniglia and Thalineau 2012). Such tension is also perceptible in our study between two approaches to international mobility, namely "professional integration" mobility and "breakdown and socialisation" mobility.

As a first step, we will question the institutional representations, norms and logics of actions that can act as restrictions on access of the young to international mobility in a non-formal setting. These structural obstacles will then be questioned with regard to the meanings that young people with fewer opportunities confer on their experience abroad. The two sides of mobility that they express reveals a paradox between the selectivity practised by the professionals and the aspirations and learning of the vulnerable young. This meaning, which goes far beyond the purposes usually ascribed to international mobility experience, will enable us to underline the central role of support practices.

1. When institutions limit mobility opportunities for young people with fewer opportunities

In a situation where professionals in local missions (and more generally in social action) are increasingly prone to "rationalising their activity around jobs" (Muniglia and Thalineau 2012), is the meaning given to a mobility experience in an integration process falling within the dominant logic of social effectiveness? In the study it was important to question the professionals' representations in order to identify the presuppositions and self-evidence that define the normative outline of their action in this field. But beyond the normative aspects, professional action is also trapped in a system of institutional constraints and procedures that may also affect the responses given to the young.

International mobility in a non-formal context is underrated by the institutions

Starting with representations of international mobility and professional norms, the study reveals that not all social and professional integration professionals are convinced that an experience abroad is useful for young people with fewer opportunities.

Some think international mobility is not suitable for the young people they deal with and assume that the latter are not interested in this kind of experience. Others consider this tool as superfluous for the social and professional integration of a vulnerable young person. International mobility remains socially and institutionally undervalued – at the different levels of public policies – and many today still see it as a holiday period or a waste of time.

Therefore, a young person will have much more opportunity to become aware of, be steered towards or involved in an international mobility project if the professional concerned believes in this type of practice. The representations transmitted

by professionals can be a source of inequality among the young in their access to international mobility.

A more thorough analysis brings out two main approaches to international mobility: socialisation mobility and professional integration mobility. The difference between them depends mainly on the professional's evaluation of the young person's distance from employment.

Socialisation mobility

Certain professionals regard international mobility as a tool for personal development, in the context of global social support or social-educational activities. It enables the young person to escape from an everyday life that is often difficult, to leave an environment marked by territorial segregation, prejudice and the absence of solutions or opportunities.

By suspending their difficulties (economic, family, education guidance, professional integration, linked to discrimination, etc.) for a specific period, the international mobility experience can allow essential learning or relearning of self-confidence, autonomy, openness to others, awareness of hidden abilities, the development of a more positive self-image and so on. In addition, by paving the way for a form of "identity restructuring" (Le Breton 2005), some professionals expect positive effects in terms of (re)mobilisation and the emergence of new desires, enabling the young person to build himself/herself via a professional or life project. These representations are closely linked to particular action logics; the professionals who think in this way are usually more inclined to use the international mobility programmes of non-formal education. They also defend a "militant" action characterised notably by strong empathy for the people they deal with.

Professional integration mobility

Other professionals more often refer to professional integration or the acquisition of technical knowledge and skills for a vocational project. In this case mobility is a stage in helping a young person to advance in the definition of his/her professional project and to obtain a job more easily.

This representation seems to be determined by the paradigm that considers a member of society to be someone who has a job, the paradigm that has impacted attitudes to social action with so-called "marginal" groups for decades (Thalineau 2012). It also appears to be influenced by the demand for results to which social and professional integration structures are subjected more and more frequently in the field of starting or resuming employment, in the context of crisis and the search for efficiency in public policy.

Consequently, certain professionals convey an implicit hierarchy among international mobility experiences. Those taking place in a formal setting (internships, company visits, training, etc.) have more positive connotations than those in a non-formal context, for which the benefits in terms of employment and professional integration would appear less obvious. When these professionals work out proposals for international mobility experiences, they give priority to formal settings. Youth exchanges,

youth camps and voluntary services are often seen as a preparatory stage leading to more “legitimate” mobility, or else as “second-class” mobility, when for instance the young person’s project is not sufficiently clarified. In other words, mobility in a non-formal context relates to an offer within a social integration process.

Other norms also direct social and professional integration workers’ practices. As shown by Giuliani (2009: 59): “Three presuppositions govern the activity of integration advisors ...: the fiction of different available ‘paths to integration’ ... the ‘project’ ideal ... the consideration of the user as being responsible”. These norms are widespread beyond the local missions towards the field of social integration.

In this context, the ability to participate in a project is often a prerequisite to an experience abroad. Young people who fail to be involved over the long term, who follow a path through several stages and keep themselves mobilised, are usually not oriented towards or assisted in international mobility. Other professionals make any support conditional on drafting a “project” and ask the young people to elucidate their commitment, spell out their motivation, specify the contents of the experience desired, etc., in other words to fit into a “planned project”.⁵ The recourse to mobility is primarily a matter for the individual; it is up to the young person to express a request and take responsibility in this regard, if necessary with support (Vial 2016).

It must be remembered that all young people are not equal regarding the project norm (Boutinet 2012). Individuals in trouble or living precariously have a relation to time characterised by uncertainty and threat, which prevents them from thinking ahead calmly, building a time-based framework of activity, committing themselves over a varied length of time (Castel 1995). Some thus lose the ability to situate themselves in time and suffer from “achronia” (Le Breton 2005). As a result, time-based procedures linked to the project norm can act as a filter among certain young people who might not have the abilities required.

These representations of mobility and the support relationships to the young person in difficulty – often leading to no mobility proposal – are combined with other limiting factors linked to how the structures work.

Institutional configurations and selection processes leading to the non-proposal of international mobility

Although the opportunities to go abroad in the context of non-formal education are theoretically open to the majority without the prior condition of qualifications,⁶ all the young people involved in a social and professional integration structure or in contact with an NGO dealing with international mobility are not automatically informed, oriented or supported in a transnational mobility project. Certain structures apply eligibility criteria – imposed by institutional organisations – or internal selection processes, resulting in cases of “non-take-up” through the absence of a proposal.

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5. The “planned project” proceeds from a mechanical logic, with the prior construction of a framework, precise objectives and a calendar (Ardoino 1999).
 6. The Erasmus+ Youth programme for example concerns young people aged between 13 and 30 (17 to 30 for the European Voluntary Service (EVS)) with no minimum qualifications and gives priority to young people with fewer opportunities.

Thus the economic model of mobility in a non-formal context sometimes leads professionals to request particular subsidies in order to draw up projects aimed at young people with fewer opportunities. Generally combined with its own eligibility criteria – linked to the respective public policies – this funding works as a “sorting machine”, leaving certain categories of young people by the wayside. To give an example: some structures – mobilising programmes such as Erasmus+ Youth – receive subsidies through the urban policy and are compelled to help young people who live in priority urban areas.⁷ Others, financed by local and regional governments from funds reserved for employment, training or educational guidance policies, have to target the young with low levels of qualification.

Consequently, this funding systematically excludes certain profiles of young people who nevertheless fall within the young people with fewer opportunities category of public action, as defined by the European Commission. The criteria governing access to public policies have an adverse side effect by creating inequality within the public itself. In France, the authorities seemingly tend to associate young people with fewer opportunities with young people from so-called deprived areas or those with poor qualifications. A young person will have more chances of benefiting from specific support to access to international mobility if he/she fulfils one of these criteria. Other problems that can mark the situations and careers of the young (disabilities, health problems, discrimination, etc.) are rarely taken into account.

Furthermore, there are other selection processes, often justified by the desire to avoid potential failure or the risks linked to the behaviour of vulnerable young people. From the start, organisations dismiss some of the latter from any action connected with international mobility in whatever context – individual or group experience, short or long term. The fact of being in extreme precariousness or homeless, of having health, psychological or psychiatric problems, being a minor – or of legal age⁸ – or having (had) trouble with the law can be criteria for exclusion from support in a mobility experience, or even from information on the opportunities available. The life paths of the young and the difficulties they encounter, or have previously encountered, can create obstacles to access to international mobility.

In addition to the exclusion of these particular profiles, prerequisites in terms of behaviour or attitudes (respect for authority and rules, ability to fit into a group, aptitude to take part in project dynamics, etc.) or expectations about regular participation in the institution, can condition the involvement of young people in an international mobility experience. In some cases, a stay abroad amounts to a reward.⁹

The results of the study therefore reveal how institutional representations, norms, configurations and logics can limit the access of young people with fewer opportunities

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7. Initiated by the French public authorities, the purpose of the urban policy is to upgrade problems in urban areas and reduce geographical inequalities.
 8. Certain institutions, notably community centres, prefer to assist minors or even adolescents considered as more “manageable”, in international mobility. On the other hand, others – mainly local missions – only send adults, responsible for their actions and not needing such close supervision abroad.
 9. Nevertheless, selection criteria are not used by all the social and professional integration institutions and NGOs dealing with international mobility that were interviewed.

to international mobility. They reduce not only the number of young people likely to go abroad, but also the diversity of their circumstances and life paths. A kind of homogeneity of profiles seems to emerge, leading some professionals to admit that the young who go abroad make up “la crème” of young people with fewer opportunities.¹⁰

As Lima and Vial suggest in their studies on the non-take-up of social and professional integration policies, we must question the institutional mechanisms that prevent young people with fewer opportunities from “meeting up” with non-formal international mobility, in the light of the meanings they ascribe to this type of experience, when they have had the possibility of doing so. On this point, two sides of international mobility seem to emerge, raising issues that go far beyond the institutions’ demand for employability.

2. The two sides of international mobility in a non-formal setting

Young people with fewer opportunities often give two meanings to their international mobility experience in a non-formal setting. The first is represented by the answers they provide to direct questions about their motivations and expectations. The second can be read between the lines of their accounts, in the rhetoric they use to describe their stays abroad. This rhetoric, questioned in the light of their situation and also in view of their life path, discloses “hidden” emotions on their mobility experience.

Travel as a motive for going abroad

The young people interviewed do not often connect their international mobility experience in a non-formal context with employment and professional integration. When this connection makes sense, it often emerges only later in what they say. Some seek to acquire work experience to complete their CV. Others, less frequently, undertake an international mobility experience to move ahead with the definition of their vocational project.

By contrast, the young people interviewed almost unanimously mention the wish to learn a language, explore another culture and meet new people. Therefore, the most common motivation to go abroad is really travel, and through travel the discovery of a country and its people.

In fact, the English language motivated me a lot because I knew we would all speak English. Well, at the beginning, it was very difficult because I understood nothing. But, then, little by little, the words came to my mind. And in fact, it’s the English language that motivates me. It’s also to meet new people from other countries, to discover new cultures, to visit monuments, to visit churches. Frankly, I was very interested in that in fact. That’s what motivated me to go abroad... To see how people in other countries live. (Marianne)

10. That is, the less vulnerable ones.

Therefore, international mobility in a non-formal setting is more often considered from a cultural and human perspective than a utilitarian one.

Going abroad... to escape from one's everyday troubles

The accounts given by young people enable us to go further into the significance ascribed to their international mobility experiences and to reveal a second sense.

The young often use language about air and freedom to describe the voluntary service they did or their youth exchange. For some, international mobility is a "breath of fresh air" that enables them to "breathe", while for others, it is a means to "escape". This rhetoric is not divorced from their situation and the difficult circumstances they face when they choose to undertake international mobility.

It's the daily life which is difficult: you look for employment, you apply, you don't receive any answer. You apply again and still no replies. After a while, you are discouraged, you are tired, you are fed up with the situation. You want to find something, you want to escape, you want to breathe. You say to yourself: "Now, stop!" And, I had the opportunity to do this through my voluntary service. Because otherwise you become crazy. (Paul)

All the young people met during the field study were in a tricky or awkward situation regarding employment, training or educational guidance: school dropouts, disorientation in their professional project, long periods of unemployment, a succession of short-term jobs and phases without work, forced work choices and so on. Many of them were also living in economic precariousness. Some young people were in a serious situation of cumulative disadvantages, with family problems in addition: verbal interaction damaging self-esteem, lack of support for the project, strong pressure in home life and the like.

I had problems with my parents... Well, since I'd been a kid, I've always had problems with them. And I said to myself: "When travelling, I'll meet other people, I'll learn other things..." I said to myself: "Yeah, frankly, I'll escape from my family." And I said to myself: "It will help me a lot psychologically... it will help me." (Natacha)

Consequently, the desire to leave in order to "breathe" or recover a form of "freedom" seems to relate to a feeling of imprisonment or even suffocation in an unfavourable environment offering very few opportunities. Going away to a foreign country is therefore similar to an escape; it allows the young to break away from their everyday problems, whether they concern work, school, the family, geographical or economic difficulties.

...to be active...

The study also shows a core of meaning around the notion of "activity". Going abroad enables the young to "be active", "to do something" with their everyday lives and, in some cases, "to have a reason to get up in the morning". It has to be said that due to the problems identified above, many are inactive at the start of the commitment. International mobility allows them to break out of a state of lethargy in which they have been drifting sometimes for many months, and in some way to recapture time. By undertaking international mobility, young people actually take part in activities

or missions that require the respect of timing and some of them relearn to separate the different time periods in life.¹¹

At the same time, you do something. It offers you something. You don't stay home without doing anything. What my parents blamed me for was that I stayed home without doing anything. But then I was doing something. (Paul)

Linked to this "activity" rhetoric, the young almost systematically resort to the lexical field of work and employment when recounting their stays abroad. Being involved in international mobility in a non-formal context – and even more so in a voluntary service – is a "job" for the majority of those interviewed. They refer to missions to be carried out, timetables and deadlines to be kept, a manager some call their "boss" and in the European Voluntary Service (EVS) an allowance sometimes likened to "pay".

This use of work and employment vocabulary raises problematic issues. Firstly, it destabilises the very meaning of international mobility schemes in the context of non-formal education: youth exchanges and EVS are voluntary commitments based on the general interest. Taking part in a collective project, committing oneself or giving one's own time to defend a cause are aspects largely absent from the observations made by the young people interviewed. Engagement in NGOs is very rarely part of their lifestyle.¹²

Secondly, the use of work and employment rhetoric is highly significant among young people who have stalled on the way to professional integration. In fact, despite the evolution of employment, work continues to play a major role in integration. The lack of employment or the fact of having precarious jobs not only fails to give people the necessary conditions to have a social and economic independence, but above all to be recognised as individuals in their own right. They are like "individuals by default", disqualified or even stigmatised because they fail to enter the networks that produce wealth and social dignity (Castel 2009). Behind this work and employment rhetoric there obviously lies a hidden aspiration to social recognition and self-worth that these young people are deprived of today.

...and recover control over the course of one's life

When they describe their experience of international mobility, young people like to recall that their activity is the result of a free and personal choice: "I was the one who chose", "nobody decided for me", "I found the motivation by myself" are frequently used phrases. They determinedly reject any influence or incentive from their environment (family, friends or institutions).¹³ Becoming a mobile young person is likened to an acquired position that they have really chosen, even conquered. This interpretation of international mobility takes on a fuller significance when we

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11. Prolonged periods of inactivity undo the basic framework of socialisation that the relation to time creates (Le Breton 2005).
 12. This observation contradicts certain studies on EVS showing that young volunteers are familiar with participation in NGOs, voluntary commitment and the gift of self (Robiteau and Silvestre 2012).
 13. The results of the study however reveal the decisive nature of support and relationships – notably with institutions – in switching young people over to international mobility and realising their projects.

examine their life paths, punctuated by numerous assigned positions from which they were unable to escape.

Actually, I motivated myself and I didn't have any particular encouragement. My parents thought: "Well, it won't work out." Because they were used to no answers when I looked for a job ... No, no, I only encouraged myself. (Paul)

Here we go! I've something to do! And I learn a new language, I travel, I see a new country. It's a combination of all of that. On the one hand, it's the fact of working. I needed to work because, at a certain moment, you blow a fuse doing nothing for a long time. I mean, I needed to work ... I started enjoying this project. I already imagined myself in Italy and I already started to pack my bag. I was really happy. I said to myself: "That's it! I finally found something that works, a project that works". (Marc)

On this point the young people interviewed have a life story marked by failures, disillusionment, troubled relations with institutions, and particularly with education.¹⁴ Their experience of school has often been truly traumatic.

School has failed them; it did not support them at the very times they needed it most, especially in the delicate periods of educational guidance. These young people feel they have been forced into sectors that did not interest them or else relegated them to a dead-end occupation, through failure or inadequate schooling, sometimes in collusion with parents.

The absence of free choice also marks the future career paths of the young people interviewed. Without job security and rarely enjoying family solidarity, they often say they have been forced into making the necessary choice, in other words, to put aside their desires and plans in order to find a job as an imperative for survival.

Thus, revealing the existence of these two sides of international mobility with respect to young people with fewer opportunities goes against certain ways of thinking and acting in the institutions mentioned above. In fact, where many structures tend to reduce the opportunities for an international mobility experience in a non-formal context, the young people express a true aspiration, even a thirst, to be free, to breathe, to become active and (re)take control of their lives.

In this mobility experience, highly significant for vulnerable youth, support from institutions represents a decisive lever.¹⁵ A long-term and trusting relationship with an attentive professional is generally the first requirement for enabling participation in international mobility. This climate of trust, built up gradually through temporal proximity and interaction around the project definition, is consolidated by professional aspects – recognition of the expertise of the attendant and support structure – as much as by emotional support: caring social relationships based on listening and consideration. The young people are thus reassured not only about their own

14. With certain young people the same fact can be observed regarding educational guidance centres and professional integration support structures.

15. The young person's family and friends may influence the course and choices in the field of international mobility. Nevertheless, they alone never bring about the choice to undertake an international mobility experience.

abilities and resources to succeed in the project, but also about the capability of the professional to fulfil their expectations, remedy their fears and deal with the obstacles.

Conclusion

In the context of priority for employment, the access of vulnerable young people to international mobility within a non-formal setting is hindered by institutional representations, norms, action logics and configurations at work within the social and professional integration structures and the partners of mobility workers at the local level. These institutional mechanisms can limit the opportunities offered to young people, by reminding them of their individual responsibility – notably under cover of a belief in the freedom and rationality of their choices, and in their ability to express a request, to formulate a project – or else offering a framework unlikely to bring the young into contact with international mobility and its procedures. These external factors are therefore liable to lead to a non-proposal and thereby non-take-up by vulnerable young people of this kind of experience.

And yet, the meanings attributed by the young to their experience abroad reach far beyond the objective of employability, the development of citizenship and the strengthening of intercultural exchange usually attributed to public schemes. In the protected yet emancipating context offered by international mobility programmes, young people with fewer opportunities seek the possibility of building themselves as independent beings, free to make their own choices and decide on the direction of their lives. International mobility thus forms a real part of the transition to adulthood.

Our analysis demonstrates the failings of European public action, in this instance the programme now known as Erasmus+, regarding the environmental factors that condition access to international mobility in a non-formal setting. To place this type of mobility in a true perspective of “capacitating” public policy, which would enable the young to achieve their aspirations and improve their private and professional situations, it is important to “widen access to the existing rights and public proposals” and “to take more account of life paths”; and in regard to the institutions, “to draw on the network of players closest to the young” at all levels, and in particular to “sustain and equip local support networks for vulnerable youth” (Berthet and Simon 2014).¹⁶

Recommendations

- ▶ 1. Transnational mobility must be officially recognised as an important source of learning, making it a legitimate activity that is inscribed in public policies in the field of youth.
- ▶ 2. The crucial importance of support before, during and after the mobility experience for this target group must be appreciated and reflected in funding mechanisms in order to ensure diversity in participation.
- ▶ 3. The expectations, needs and obstacles of young people with fewer

16. See the SociEtY project, Improving the Quality of Life of Disadvantaged Young People Towards a Capability Friendly Youth Policy in Europe, referred to earlier.

opportunities and the appropriate responses to this must be incorporated into policies and practices of organisations working with learning mobility for this target group. This comprises two major fields of action:

- training youth workers to handle learning mobility as a pedagogical tool;
- strengthening partnerships between actors at local level (for example between organisations working with youth and inclusion and operators of mobility schemes) to ensure co-ordination and proper exploitation of resources and expertise.

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Part II

Processes, strategies and practices

Chapter 5

The pedagogical approach of the Anholt projects: an innovative European perspective on learning-to-learn mobility projects? Reflections and discussion

Karen Bjerg Petersen

There is a strong consensus on the need to promote and implement informal and non-formal learning environments that effectively increase the opportunities of those who have less. But is the process through which this is accomplished in each project part of a big and elusive “black box” on learning mobility and social inclusion? On the contrary, Karen Petersen’s chapter, following a qualitative approach with strong theoretical roots, enlightens with great detail the pedagogical intent, innovation, procedures and effect of the intense and intensive Anholt projects. Furthermore, the project is analysed as a long-term process, subject to reflection and critical assessment over a period of some years. This comprehensive assessment led the author both to question the outcomes of this pedagogical approach and to advocate for its embeddedness in formal education, aiming to build a bridge rather than to contribute to a gap between formal, and informal and non-formal learning environments.

There is a strong consensus on the need to promote and implement informal and non-formal learning environments that effectively increase the opportunities of those who have less. But is the process through which this is accomplished in each project part of a big and elusive “black box” on learning mobility and social inclusion? On the contrary, Karen Petersen’s chapter, following a qualitative approach with strong theoretical roots, enlightens with great detail the pedagogical intent, innovation, procedures and effect of the intense and intensive Anholt projects. Furthermore, the project is analysed as a long-term process, subject to reflection and critical assessment over a period of some years. This comprehensive assessment led the author both to question the outcomes of this pedagogical approach and to advocate its embeddedness in formal education, aiming to build a bridge rather than contribute to a gap between formal, and informal and non-formal learning environments.

Introduction

In the past decade, a vast number of learning mobility youth projects have been organised throughout Europe. The aim of many of these projects has been “the inclusion of all young people, regardless of their educational, social and cultural background”¹ (Council of Europe n.d.; European Commission EACEA n.d.; SALTO-YOUTH 2012). Over the years, an increased focus on introducing informal and non-formal learning environments has been evidenced as a means of social inclusion, and of personal, social and educational development (Council of Europe n.d.; SALTO-YOUTH 2012).

One reason for including informal and non-formal learning may be found in a growing political and educational interest in reducing dropout rates in Europe (Eurostat 2014). In recent years, the awareness regarding informal and non-formal learning as a means of re-engaging young people in formal education has also been shared by researchers and politicians (Ainsworth and Eaton 2010; Carlinger 2013; Conlon 2004; European Commission 2013; Livingstone 2001; Wang and Degol 2014). In particular, research identifying factors affecting dropout or re-engagement has been conducted (Doll et al. 2013; Sørensen et al. 2013; Wang and Degol 2014). However, there has been less focus on methodologies and pedagogical approaches for re-engaging young people.

In 2008, a group of European youth workers and researchers set out to develop a pedagogical approach aimed, in particular, at addressing less advantaged young people who, for various reasons, had dropped out of school. The pedagogical approach has been developed and piloted in a series of youth exchange projects, first held in 2010, and later repeated in 2011 and 2013 on the Danish island Anholt: the so-called “Anholt projects”² (Lind 2014).

The aim of this chapter is to introduce and reflect upon the pedagogical approach applied in the Anholt projects. In section one, I will introduce the educational concepts, assumptions and hypothesis of the pedagogical approach and briefly outline how the approach was implemented in the 2013 Anholt project. In section two, I introduce selected results from research carried out in the Anholt projects. In section three, I conclude the chapter by discussing and reflecting upon the pedagogical approach

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1. As highlighted on the European Platform on Learning Mobility, the notion of learning mobility “aims to increase participation, active citizenship, intercultural learning and dialogue, individual competency development and employability of young people” focusing on “non-formal learning with links to informal learning as well as to formal education” (European Council (n.d.) highlights from the website). The EU Youth in Action programme similarly highlighted “mobility within and beyond the EU’s border”, however with a primary focus on “non-formal learning and intercultural dialogue, and [encouraging] the inclusion of all young people, regardless of their educational, social and cultural background” (European Commission EACEA (n.d.)).
 2. The projects in 2011 and 2013 were investigated by researchers, and a documentary was filmed illustrating how the 2013 Anholt project was made (anholt-project.eu n.d.; Höllmüller 2011; Petersen 2014a, 2014b; Stier 2014). The pedagogical approach has been further reflected upon by the European partners involved in the Anholt projects (Petersen 2015a, 2015b).

of the Anholt projects and the opportunities they offer for the re-engagement of less advantaged young people in formal education.

1. Pedagogical approach in the Anholt projects

In 2010, the first step towards the establishment of the Anholt projects was taken in the form of a one-day pilot during a one-week youth exchange project held in Germany. In 2011, the pedagogical approach was further developed during a two-week youth exchange project, “Anholt I”. In 2013, the pedagogical approach was applied once more in another two-week project, “Anholt II”. In 2015, the pedagogical approach in the Anholt projects was further discussed and reflected upon in the course of a five-day seminar. In 2016, the participating European partners further addressed the dissemination of the pedagogical approach (Petersen 2014a; 2014b; 2015a; Lind and Bueter-Menke 2012).

The European partners define the pedagogical approach as “process-orientated, educational, relation-based, individual-oriented development” that is taking place in informal learning environments (Lind 2014: 6). The notion of informal learning is used in continuation by Livingstone (2001) and Robinson (2010) as:

anything we do outside of organized courses to gain significant knowledge, skill, or understanding. It occurs either individually or with other people. An interesting aspect of informal learning is that although it may be intentional, in most cases it is unintentional, incidental, random, or ad hoc. (Lind and Bueter-Menke 2012: 6)

Background for the pedagogical approach

The background for the European youth workers’ development of a new pedagogical approach is an observation, shared by educational researchers, pointing to structural, societal, and educational policy reasons for increased dropout rates (see Ball 2006, 2009; Berliner 2014; Berliner and Nichols 2005; Biesta 2010; Shohamy 2001).

The European youth workers behind the pedagogical approach in the Anholt projects highlight observations from their everyday work:

There are many talented young people in Europe aged 15 to 18 who “don’t fit in”, or who do not know what they want to do with their lives ... Many are simply tired of going to school; tired of being measured against standards they cannot meet, for various personal, social or cultural reasons. These youngsters are often marginalized, as they are removed from the “standard” educational system. (Lind 2014: 6)

Based on their experience, the European youth workers point to the necessity of addressing “the individual situation”, of working “individually with each young person”, and of enabling “young people themselves to regain their inner motivation and self-esteem, [and] to take back control of their life situations” (ibid.: 7). The youth workers and professionals hence set out to develop a pedagogical approach “to help young people to motivate themselves to make changes in their lives and begin to take control”, believing they would be able “to make a significant change” for the young people “within 14 days” (ibid.: 7).

Main concepts, assumptions and hypothesis in the pedagogical approach

Central concepts in the pedagogical approach in the Anholt projects are responsibility for everyday activities, voluntary and elective engagement, and adventure, all provided in protected environments with non-interfering adults.

One main assumption behind the pedagogical approach in the Anholt projects is that

left to individually choose and self-organise, young people are capable of much more formal organisation than adults expect of them. They are able to take responsibility for their own lives, and to choose activities and training, based on their own, and not someone else's choices. (Lind 2012: 10)

Another assumption in the pedagogical approach is that, instead of being faced with constant academic requirements and demands from authorities in a formal school context, as well as with a barrage of media and information processing via social media, the internet and mobile phones, young people, especially those who are less advantaged, need to be placed in a context different from their everyday lives.

The context must be secluded, protected and adventurous, while offering young people opportunities to encounter unfamiliar hands-on challenges and confronting them with a variety of novel situations in which they must care for themselves and organise their lives. According to the pedagogical approach a structural framework must hence be established that requires young people to organise their lives and activities, from cooking, to organising their accommodation and housework, and to consider opportunities for participating in various recreational and work activities on offer (see Lind 2014; Petersen 2014a; Pozo 2014).

One main educational hypothesis is that less advantaged young people will develop social, personal and relational skills enabling them to take responsibility for their own future lives and actions, if confronted with such a pedagogical approach.

A further educational hypothesis is that some of the skills the young people acquire in the course of the project, to some degree, may be transferred to formal educational settings.

In the Anholt projects, the European youth workers thus intended to construct an informal environment around the participants for a period of about two weeks, where, in relatively safe but isolated settings they managed all aspects of their lives without any adult assistance interfering in the participants' ways of life and choice (Lind 2014; Petersen 2014a; Pozo 2014). A closer look at the implementation in one of the Anholt projects may shed further light on the pedagogical approach.

Implementation of the pedagogical approach

The "Anholt II" project in 2013 took place as a 14-day project for 24 young people, aged 13 to 19 years from youth organisations in six European countries: Germany, Austria, Italy, Portugal, Spain, and Denmark. Two thirds of the group of young people consisted of school-leavers, students facing academic or other problems, and some

were considered vulnerable or less advantaged for various individual reasons.³ The participation in the project was voluntary (Petersen 2014a).

After arriving at the Danish island, Anholt, all electronic equipment, mobile phones and so on being handed over to the professionals, the young participants received a bicycle and a map. They were asked to find the local school, where they had to put up tents. Various camping equipment was available for the participants to cook and organise their everyday life. The participants were furthermore provided with a credit card which could be used in the local store. Ten euros was available for each person per day, and the young people had to organise all meals and basic everyday living conditions.

The recreational activities in which the young people could choose to participate during “Anholt II” were: guided tours and hikes on the island, workshops (for example, a gospel workshop and concert arranged in the local church), driving hay for a farmer on the island, spear fishing, dinghy sailing and a barbeque evening for locals.

The young people also had the opportunity to work and acquire work experience/internships. These internship opportunities were made available to the participants in various settings; for example, at the local store, a local inn, the kindergarten, the island’s tourist office, the lifeboat station, the carpenter, the coffee shop, working alongside the school janitor or with a gardener.

Following the educational thinking driving the project, it was up to the young people themselves whether they participated in recreational activities and internships. As mentioned, they were required to cook and take care of basic everyday tasks (see Lind 2014; Pozo 2014).

2. Selected results from the Anholt projects

In 2011 and 2013, research was carried out. In 2014 and 2015 some of the young participants and the European youth workers from both projects were interviewed (Höllmüller 2011; Petersen 2014a; 2015b; Lind and Bueter-Menke 2012). In 2011, research was undertaken to document whether informal learning could be registered (Höllmüller 2011; Lind and Bueter-Menke 2012), while in 2013 investigations were carried out regarding whether and how the pedagogical approach could document learning outcomes and how the approach was perceived by the participants (Christiansen and Hansen 2013; Petersen 2014a, 2015b).

As a result of the research during the first Anholt project,⁴ Höllmüller (2011) came to the conclusion that the Anholt project “showed how informal learning processes within a non-formal frame can be observed and thus made visible” and “that informal learning often happens in less structured, self-organisation-enabling programs with

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3. The participants, who were affiliated with the involved European youth organisations working with less advantaged young people (for a list of European organisations, see Petersen 2014b: 126-8), were offered the chance to take part in the Anholt projects by the European youth workers who were aware of their personal, educational and familial background (Petersen 2014b).
 4. Research based on 225 observation charts, 89 reflection charts and short daily interviews with the participants (Petersen 2014a).

little distraction”, in which the relationships between adults and participants are of particular importance (p. 27).

The research results from 2013⁵ focusing on investigating learning categories⁶ indicate that within all investigated learning categories, learning took place, although the learning was not always consciously registered by the participants (Petersen 2014a).

The participants’ overall impressions of the pedagogical approach and the project can be traced in the in-depth individual interviews, carried out after they returned to their home countries. A young Austrian school-leaver at-risk summarised his impressions as follows:

It was great because we could take responsibility for ourselves and make our own decisions without being criticized by adults. (Petersen 2014a: 48)

Follow-up investigations on two particular Danish participants, who were both early school-leavers, furthermore indicate “that informal learning in the ‘Anholt project’ has influenced [the participants’] motivation for education” (Christiansen and Hansen 2013). In 2014, two Danish participants were interviewed and responded that they had returned to the formal Danish education system⁷ (Tv2oj Tema 2014). In October 2015, Spanish participants from the 2011 and 2013 projects were interviewed. One participant responded to the question about the pedagogical approach that “Anholt 2013 has changed my life”. Another young Spanish participant from 2013 replied, “I learned that I am responsible for my own actions, that nobody was telling me what to do, and that I had to learn it myself. For me it was a “key to life” (Petersen 2015a). However, not all participants were similarly successful in the years to come. In 2016, one of the European youth workers reported about one participant being imprisoned. Two other participants from the same group however were reported to have finished a vocational education as a chef and to have started an education at a local university.⁸

A documentary film, following three of the participants before, during and after Anholt II, illustrates how the pedagogical approach of giving participants possibilities to

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5. Based on theories on mixed-method research and triangulation (Frederiksen 2014), the data collection methods in 2013 were extended. As a result, 711 observation charts; 312 short daily interviews with the 24 participants; three in-depth individual interviews with each participant before, during and after Anholt 2013 (in total 72 interviews); 180 observations from ethnographic fieldwork (see Blommaert and Jie 2010); interviews with participants from the 2010 and 2011 Anholt projects and the European youth workers was carried out (Petersen 2014a; 2015a).
 6. After collection, the data were processed, analysed, coded and recoded as quantitative and qualitative data based on EU Youthpass key competences (EU Youthpass Guide 2008: 20). The skills investigated in Anholt II were a) communication in foreign languages, b) self-knowledge, c) basic skills, d) other skills, e) social and civic skills, f) entrepreneurship and sense of initiative, g) intercultural skills (Petersen 2014a: 48). The quantitative data consist of three SPSS-processed data sets: 1) observation charts; 2) daily interviews; and 3) in-depth individual interviews. The qualitative data consist of field notes, responses, extracts and statements from the various interviews (Petersen 2014a: 14-19).
 7. The participants were interviewed before the release of a documentary film about the Anholt project.
 8. Information based on an interview during a dissemination project in Spain, April 2016, carried out by the author with one of the European youth workers.

choose and be responsible for their own lives without interference apparently had an impact on their personal development and life (anholt-project.eu n.d.; Tv2oj Tema 2014). The film documentary summarises the “adventure” of the three participants in Anholt 2013 as “a journey inwards, to take control of oneself, take risks, expand horizons, love, lose and perhaps realize that their past need not determine what they can do next in the future” (anholt-project.eu n.d.).

Despite the fact that longitudinal impact studies are required to provide full evidence regarding the applicability of this pedagogical approach towards less advantaged students, in continuation of Ainsworth and Eaton’s discussions on informal learning, the research findings from 2011 and 2013 indicate that the “real-world application” of the participants’ skills in the pedagogical approach in the Anholt projects made the participants “more likely to understand why it is important to continue to build their skill and competence level” (Ainsworth and Eaton 2010: 36).

In particular, the qualitative interviews with participants from each of the three projects after their participation reveal that all young participants have given their experiences a great deal of reflection (Höllmüller 2011; Petersen 2014a, 2014b; 2015a, 2015b). The overall findings indicate that the participants have gained a lot in terms of taking “responsibility for their own lives”, while being encouraged to choose activities and training, “based on their own, and not someone else’s choices” (Lind 2012:10).

The picture that particularly emerges from the research findings is that most participants

- ▶ have gained more confidence, both in themselves and in others;
- ▶ have established trusting relationships with adults and among one another;
- ▶ have increasingly taken responsibility for themselves and others.

The alternative pedagogical approach – according to the analysis of the quantitative and qualitative data collected in the Anholt projects – has contributed to developing in particular the young participants’ personal and social skills (Höllmüller 2011; Petersen 2014a, 2015a).

3. Reflections and discussions about the pedagogical approach in the Anholt projects

The emphasis in the Anholt projects’ pedagogical approach on less advantaged students and early school-leavers may lead to interest from a formal educational system striving to prevent young people from leaving school too early. The pedagogical approach invented in the Anholt projects, enabling teachers and educational professionals to be “at eye level” and work individually with less advantaged young people by, firstly, giving them opportunities to take responsibility for themselves and, secondly, establishing trusting relationships with adults is important to consider within formal education and teaching as a way of addressing increasing dropout rates.

It is worth remembering that a key consideration in the pedagogical approach in the Anholt projects – as formulated by the European youth workers and emphasised by

many educational researchers, educators and practitioners – is that the current formal educational system is not able to adequately handle less advantaged young people.

In the endeavour to discuss and reflect upon the pedagogical approach in the Anholt projects, I will address a number of issues. First, I will address the notion of informal learning used in the projects in a reflection about whether the pedagogical approach should rather be defined as “nudging”. Second, I will address certain dilemmas in the pedagogical approach and reflect upon outcomes of the approach. Finally, I will discuss whether the approach could be applied in formal education.

The pedagogical approach: informal learning or nudging?

If we look at Livingstone’s (2001: 4) definition of informal learning as activities taking place “without the presence of externally imposed curricular criteria”, in the Anholt projects informal learning took place. Curriculum in the classical understanding is absent in the pedagogical approach. Another researcher, Carlinger’s (2013: 5) perspective that informal learning is present even though the participants “may not ... be aware of it” is similarly evident in the pedagogical approach. Likewise, Ainsworth and Eaton’s (2010: 36) claim that one outcome of informal learning is learners being able to see the use of “real-world application of their skills” also supports the view that informal learning was an important part of the pedagogical approach in the Anholt projects.

However, it may be questioned whether the participants in the Anholt projects “determine[d] some or all combinations of the process, location, [and] purpose”, which Carlinger (2013: 5) outlined as a main characteristic in informal learning environments. On the contrary, it may be argued that the European youth workers in the Anholt projects planned and determined the process, purpose and location. It may even be argued that the professionals developed a strong structural framework and planned (all) the settings in terms of the environment, purpose and content in the pedagogical approach; that is, they conducted external control. Within this already established structural framework, the participants were given free “rein” to act, determine and decide whether they would participate in the activities and job opportunities. Hence, the pedagogical approach offers the participants the opportunity to choose freely, voluntarily, electively and independently within a prescribed structural frame.

Following theories of “nudging”⁹ (Thaler and Sunstein 2009), it might further be argued that the professionals in the Anholt projects developed a pedagogical approach aiming, so to speak, at “unconsciously” guiding the participants towards the choices the adults wished them to take: to participate in the recreational activities, to take advantage of the internship opportunities, to take responsibility for themselves, that is, to actively participate in the informal learning processes. Every evening during the Anholt projects, the professionals held meetings for the participants, telling them

9. The theories about “nudging” are based on an idea of a predictably irrational individual who may be guided in choice-making towards ends optimal for society or the economy. Through special designs (for example, in architecture) individuals may, so to speak, be pushed to unknowingly choose the right and appropriate ways to act (Thaler and Sunstein 2009).

about the following day's various (adventurous) activities and job opportunities. These were introduced as options. The fact, however, that the participants were made aware of the activities and the professionals referred to earlier Anholt projects and to the activities as fun and exciting could be interpreted as a way of "nudging" the participants towards wanting to participate and be active.

The European youth workers expected that the pedagogical approach in the Anholt projects would have the effect that less advantaged participants would begin to take responsibility for their own lives and actions, and thus, ideally, would be able to return to formal education. The conscious planning of seclusion and of situations in which informal learning could take place is one intention behind the pedagogical approach in the Anholt projects (Lind 2014). At the centre of this approach is, as such, an expectation that social responsibility through freedom and self-determination will lead to responsibility, accountability and subsequent interest among less advantaged young people to return to formal education.

Following the theories about "nudging", the pedagogical approach in the Anholt projects can thus, on the one hand, be argued to be a sort of externally controlled unconscious regulation or guidance of the wishes and needs of the participants. On the other hand, however, it might be similarly argued that all pedagogical interventions to some extent contain a degree of guiding and that what counts is determining which kinds of pedagogical interventions are most appropriate and suitable at a given time.

Dilemmas in the pedagogical approach

In continuation of the reflections in the previous section some further dilemmas in the pedagogical approach need to be addressed. One of the assumptions in the pedagogical approach is that less advantaged young people need to be placed in secluded contexts without access to social media, the internet and mobile phones. In practice – as reported in section 2 in this chapter – the young people handed over all electronic equipment to the youth workers as soon as they arrived at the island of Anholt. All contact with the participants' parents and family during the project's duration was via the European youth workers. Participants signed a contract with each of the European youth organisations taking part in the projects in which this measure was explicitly underlined (Pozo 2014).

It can be argued that such a measure contradicts another of the main assumptions in the projects regarding voluntary participation and making decisions based on the participants' "own, and not someone else's choices" (Lind 2012: 10). The handing over of electronic equipment is hence, on the one hand, part of the projects' pedagogical approach, and on the other hand, a decision taken by the European youth workers rather than by the young people.

The European youth workers and developers of the pedagogical approach – following studies showing very high consumption of social media, internet and other media among young people¹⁰ – have consciously discussed and agreed upon this

10. See Anderson 2015.

particular measure as they find that the use of electronic equipment disturbs the process of young people establishing real rather than virtual relationships with peers and adults and thereby developing their social and personal competences.

As mentioned in the previous section regarding informal learning, all pedagogical interventions are guiding to a certain degree. The pedagogical approach in the Anholt projects is no exception.

Another concern and reflection regarding the interviews carried out during and after the 2013 Anholt project has to do with the project's popularity due to a film documentary that has been shown on TV in some of the participating countries¹¹ (Tv2oj Tema 2014; UK Community Channel 2016). It can be argued that the popularity of the project in various media has influenced the participants and created a social desirability in the interview process. Such objections cannot be ignored. During the stay on the island of Anholt, ethnographic fieldwork observations were carried out in addition to the interviews as a way of validating the statements made by participants (Petersen 2014a: 47). Furthermore, two of the Danish participants were interviewed before the release of the documentary film (Christiansen and Hansen 2013). The two other Danish participants were interviewed on local Danish television in October 2014 immediately prior to the release of the film (Tv2oj Tema 2014) and another of the five young Danes participating in the Anholt 2013 project was likewise interviewed before the release.

As mentioned in section 2, despite the popularity in the media of the project, and in particular the documentary film, in 2016 not all participants had been reported as leading successful lives. As such, on the one hand, it cannot be ruled out that the popularity of the project in the media has influenced the interview processes; on the other hand, the personal experiences among participants seem to have made a more lasting impression on other young people than the popularity of the film.

Reflections regarding outcomes of the pedagogical approach

Andresen et al. (2000) address central discussions and dilemmas regarding experience-based learning which, to some degree, might also be applicable to the pedagogical approach in the Anholt projects. A core discussion and critique against experience-based learning has been the uncertainty regarding the learning outcome of the approach. They formulate the dilemma as “the essential indeterminacy of what learning outcomes an individual's own private experiences ... will lead to” (ibid.: 8).

In an era when education is considered a means of boosting competitiveness of nation states and in a global context (Ball 2009) in which educational outcome is closely compared and continually tested worldwide by the OECD, for example – in other words “education in an age of measurement” (Biesta 2010) – the future of a pedagogical approach such as that developed in the Anholt projects may be rather uncertain.

11. In October 2014, two Danish participants were interviewed by a local Danish TV station before the release of the film documentary. While the participants were interviewed and asked about what they were doing they had not seen the documentary (Tv2oj Tema 2014).

No obvious measurable learning standards or learning outcomes have been researched or evidenced in terms of better maths, science and language skills among less advantaged school-leavers as a result of the implementation of the pedagogical approach in the Anholt projects. On the contrary, rather than developing academic skills, the aim of the pedagogical approach in the Anholt projects is to develop social and personal responsibility, and “to motivate [the participants] ... to make changes in their lives and begin to take control” (Lind 2014: 5). On the one hand, it can therefore be said that the pedagogical approach in the Anholt projects does not seem compatible with current developments within formal education. On the other hand, a renewed interest in innovative and alternative educational approaches can be observed. One example is the growing political and educational interest in reducing dropout rates, both in Europe and globally, as mentioned at the beginning of this chapter. Another example is an emphasis in the EU, and in learning mobility youth projects, on “social inclusion, and personal, social and educational development” (Council of Europe n.d.) and on “learning to learn” as a future key competence (Hoskins and Deakin 2010). Furthermore, during the last decade, the European Commission has begun to systematically develop “Common European principles for the identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning”, and “European guidelines for validation of non-formal and informal learning” (European Commission 2013: 1); a development signalling attention to alternative understandings of formal and informal education. Furthermore, recent development in global education policy, evidenced by educational researchers (Ball 2006, 2009; Berliner 2014; Biesta 2010) as leading to a growing number of people and students who “don’t fit in” and are “getting marginalized” (Lind 2014: 6), may in the long run create a lack of social cohesion, threatening nation states and the EU. Such societal developments call for alternative pedagogical approaches.

Reflections regarding the implementation of the pedagogical approach within formal education

In the endeavour to further discuss whether the investigated pedagogical approach could be applied in formal education, it is interesting to consult some educational thinkers of the past who have forwarded ideas that can be traced in the pedagogical assumptions in the Anholt projects. In 1897, in his *Pedagogic Creed*, the American educational philosopher John Dewey emphasised the importance of giving learners “command” of themselves so that they “will have the full and ready use of all [their] capacities” (Dewey 1897/1959: 19-20). Dewey furthermore placed the importance of social activities at the foreground of education and stated his opinion about education as follows: “I believe ... that education must be conceived as a continuing reconstruction of experience; that the process and the goal of education are one and the same thing” (ibid.: 27). Similarly, in the Anholt projects, experience- and community-based learning approaches and David Kolb’s ideas about learning can be traced (Andresen et al. 2000; Kolb 1984/2015). Similar to former approaches, the pedagogical approach in the Anholt projects – in which informal learning is combined with elements of adventurous and elective experience and community-based learning – intends to encourage and has apparently enabled many of the participants to take responsibility and command of themselves. The pedagogical approach in the Anholt projects hence addresses important aspects of relevance for formal education.

When it comes to “hands-on” considerations as to whether the pedagogical approach in the Anholt projects can possibly be introduced as, for example, specific extra-curricular activities for re-engaging less advantaged young people in the formal educational system, it should be remembered that the approach requires extensive preparation, reflection and collaboration among teachers and other professionals. The European youth workers have developed “Practical advice” and outlined an “Educational framework” for the pedagogical approach (Lind 2014; Pozo 2014). In order to implement the pedagogical approach in formal education it must be adapted to the specific context. A number of elements in the Anholt projects can rather easily be operationalised and eventually also transferred to formal education in the endeavour to favour less advantaged young people:

- ▶ physical and virtual seclusion combined with the framework of giving young people freedom to make their own choices;
- ▶ providing adventurous recreational possibilities;
- ▶ creating real, elective internship possibilities in local environments;
- ▶ establishing close, equal and voluntary-based relationships with adults;
- ▶ creating real-life situations aimed at developing young people’s sense of responsibility.

The pedagogical approach in the Anholt projects can be considered an innovative European perspective for learning-to-learn mobility projects and an inspiration for future development within formal education. It is thus a reminder – as was John Dewey’s pedagogical creed, experience-based and community-based learning and other pedagogical inventions – to once again consider, discuss and reformulate the aims of education, and even to suggest genuine reforms for formal education.

The results presented and discussed in this chapter suggest that less advantaged learners may take advantage of innovative pedagogical approaches such as the one developed in the Anholt projects.

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Chapter 6

Learning mobility, social inclusion and flexible education pathways in Malta

Miriam Teuma

Miriam Teuma's evaluation of an international mobility project, The Shift, raises important questions concerning processes of social inclusion during the exchange itself. The project engaged young people from different socio-economic backgrounds, which, as described by the author, posed substantial challenges for the youth workers who facilitated the project and created critical questions relating to interaction dynamics during the project. The chapter also stresses some important features that should be considered by those organising mobility projects, such as the importance of adequate preparation and effective follow-up for positive learning outcomes, free time for participants to ensure space for learning and preparedness on the part of youth workers for dealing with perceived disparities in cultural and social capital among young people.

Introduction

While there are many positive aspects to the well-being and quality of life of young people in Malta, for example it has one of the lowest rates of youth unemployment in the European Union, there are other aspects that are a cause of concern. An often-quoted statistic is Malta's rate of early school-leavers, which is among the highest in the European Union (European Commission 2012: 187). These concerns are reflected in the framework for the Education Strategy for Malta, 2014-2024, which has four broad goals, one of which is "to support the educational achievement of children at-risk-of-poverty and from low socio-economic status, and reduce the relatively high incidence of early school-leavers" (Department of Education and Employment 2014a: 3). Under the national youth policy Towards 2020 – A Shared Vision for the Future of Young People, which will be implemented and co-ordinated by Aġenzija Żgħażaġh (Malta's national youth agency) over the period 2015-2020, initiatives will be developed and implemented that utilise "both formal education and non-formal learning, as mutually reinforcing agents", aimed at enhancing, *inter alia*, "the well-being and active participation of young people with fewer opportunities and those from a migrant background" (Department of Education and Employment 2015: 17-19).

A Strategic Plan for the Prevention of Early School Leaving (Department of Education and Employment 2014a) was also initiated in 2014 that focuses on a range of preventative, intervention and compensation measures. These measures include strengthening the transition process and flexible education pathways, supporting networks for students at risk and harnessing the support of youth work.

In this chapter, I want to consider one of these transition processes or flexible education pathways, which combines both formal and non-formal learning approaches, and the role that learning mobility can play in helping young people participating in the programme to develop those competencies and skills that will facilitate their personal development, social inclusion and transition to further education and the world of work. I will also, in this context, consider the strengths and limitations of learning mobility in promoting social inclusion.

The chapter comprises two parts. In the first, I will set out the flexible education context in Malta and how a learning mobility project (The Shift) was employed not only as a means of promoting learning but also as an exercise in social inclusion involving one of Aġenzija Żgħażaġh's flexible education programmes Youth.inc and a voluntary youth organisation, Żgħażaġh Azzjoni Kattolika (ŽAK). In the second part, I will consider the results of a study, comprising surveys and focus groups, and in particular the responses of youth workers and young people who participated in the learning mobility project. In the conclusion, I will attempt to evaluate the outcomes of the study and their possible relevance for learning mobility projects.

The flexible education context

1. Youth.inc

Youth.inc is an inclusive and flexible education programme, based on applied learning, for young people between the ages of 16 and 21. These young people have completed full-time compulsory education, often without qualifications, and were not in education, training or employment before entering the programme. The aim of the programme is to help young people to improve their standard of education and gain more knowledge, values and skills to enable them to enter the labour market or gain qualifications to continue in further education and/or training.

While the programme has operated in Malta since 2011, it came under the remit and management of Aġenzija Żgħażaġh in summer 2014. The purpose in bringing it under Aġenzija Żgħażaġh was to facilitate a more youth-centred approach that seeks to strengthen the complementary roles of formal education and non-formal learning through effective youth work practices and values.

Under Aġenzija Żgħażaġh, the number of course options available to young people on the programme has been considerably widened. While core curriculum subjects such as English, Maltese, Practical Mathematics and Basic IT Skills remain in place along with the development of core competences, the range of optional courses for young people has now been expanded to include animal care, auto electrics, beauty care, cooking, fretwork, electronics, entrepreneurship, hairdressing, social care, home cooking, cake decoration, nutrition and health, building and construction, fashion

design, music production, photography, web design, upholstery, art, customer care and sales techniques.

The programme adopts a hands-on, flexible and project-based approach. It aims to provide young people with as many options and experiences of real working life as possible and the confidence to lead independent lives and participate actively and responsibly in their communities and society.

2. The Shift – Learning mobility project

As part of the process to further develop Youth.inc and enhance and expand the learning experiences of the young people on the programme, Aġenzija Żgħażaġħ opened discussions with Żgħażaġħ Azzjoni Kattolika (Youth Catholic Action) with a view to undertaking a project that would combine both learning mobility and social inclusion. ŻAK has a proven track record in learning mobility exchanges and the effective transmission of life skills. It is also part of Aġenzija Żgħażaġħ's remit to support and co-operate with voluntary youth organisations.

Żgħażaġħ Azzjoni Kattolika (www.zakmalta.org) is part of Malta Catholic Action and it focuses on working with young people through the provision of programmes and activities for their spiritual, social and personal development. These programmes and activities vary widely and include social events, community work, fundraising activities, live-ins, twinings between different ŻAK groups, international exchanges and other educational activities. ŻAK youth leaders/youth workers support young people not only in socialising, but also in developing life skills through structured and unstructured activities that include discussions, role plays, hands-on activities, reflections and games.

Following discussions with Aġenzija Żgħażaġħ, ŻAK successfully submitted a project The Shift for Erasmus+ funding under Key Action 1: Learning Mobility of Individuals, in 2015. The project timetable covered a 15-month period. ŻAK's partner organisation in the project was Limerick Youth Service (LYS, www.limerickyouthservice.com). Founded in 1973, Limerick Youth Service is Ireland's largest local youth service, offering a range of personal and social development and recreational opportunities for young people in the city and county of Limerick. Its mission statement is "to support and encourage young people to be active participants in shaping their futures". LYS is affiliated to Youth Work Ireland.

The project aimed to reach out to vulnerable young people and to provide them with new learning experiences through interaction and peer learning with other young people and enhance their acquisition of soft skills including communication, independent living, teamwork and creativity. In addition to participants from Youth.inc, LYS also identified a group of vulnerable young people and early school-leavers to participate in the project. ŻAK and LYS had worked and co-operated together on a previous Erasmus+ project.

A three-day training course was organised in Malta in September 2015 for the youth workers who were to accompany the young people on the mobility exchanges. Two "get to know you" sessions were also organised for the young participants from ŻAK and Youth.inc. The idea was to prepare for and maximise the possible outcomes

of the mobility exchanges both in Malta and in Ireland. During the training course, youth workers from ŽAK and LYS evaluated and reflected on past international exchange experiences and discussed with youth workers from Youth.inc, who lacked such experience, how the project could be best employed to achieve its goals. Methodologies were also considered on how to work with vulnerable young people and how to identify their individual needs and the necessary employability skills. Non-formal education tools and concepts of peer learning were also explored. The aim was to facilitate and encourage teamwork and collaboration between the youth organisations and youth workers involved.

ŽAK had considerable experience in international exchanges. LYS also had relevant experience but not to the same extent. However, Youth.inc had no such experience in international exchanges. But it was not only in terms of learning mobility experience that there was a gap between ŽAK and Youth.inc, there was also a gap in terms of social inclusion. ŽAK as an organisation has a culture common to such organisations in Europe: at once both idealistic and aspirational and based on established Christian and humanitarian principles that advocate the merits of education in creating a society both progressive and just. From this perspective, ŽAK might be seen as representative of the “socially included”; Youth.inc as representative of the “socially excluded”.

In this context, a particular feature of the project was the role accorded to young participants from ŽAK who were to act as leaders/peer educators to the young participants from Youth.inc on the exchanges. One reason for this was ŽAK’s proven experience of learning mobility exchanges, but it was also to test active social inclusion by bringing together in a learning mobility environment what might be described as the “socially advantaged young” and the “socially disadvantaged young”.

There were in all four exchanges: two in Ireland and two in Malta. Each exchange comprised 11 young people from Ireland and 11 from Malta: some young people participated in more than one exchange. The first of these exchanges took place simultaneously in Malta and Ireland in October 2015, while the second took place, simultaneously, in March 2016. In all, seven youth workers from Malta (four from ŽAK and three from Youth.inc), seven youth workers from LYS, 28 young people from Malta (eight from ŽAK and 20 from Youth.inc) and 26 young people from LYS participated in the exchanges.

The exchanges, each of five days’ duration excluding travel, comprised workshops, games, activities and visits where young people were challenged to work on their intra- and interpersonal skills, learn to live and learn together, and develop the necessary personal skills and competencies for the world of work as well as develop their creative entrepreneurial potential.

The methodologies employed throughout the exchanges were based on non-formal learning and included: employability workshops on budgeting and personal finances; hands-on activities such as preparations for the evening sessions; outdoor education including caving and trekking; group activities including treasure hunts; and multimedia presentations.

These methodologies were informed and underpinned by effective youth work practices promoted under the national youth policy Towards 2020, which describes youth work as “a planned learning programme, project or activity aimed at the personal, social and political development of young people based on their voluntary participation and on mutually respectful and supportive relationships between young people and adults and built on strong working relationship between the individual young person and youth workers” (Department of Education and Employment 2015: 13).

Study methodology

Following the exchanges, a questionnaire survey was conducted with the youth workers and young people from Malta that had participated. A single survey of youth workers from ŽAK, Youth.inc and LYS was conducted and a survey of young people who participated from ŽAK and Youth.inc was also conducted, but separately. The purpose of the questionnaires was to try to evaluate youth workers’ and young people’s responses to the exchanges in terms of what they had experienced and learned. Separate focus groups of youth workers in ŽAK and Youth.inc were also conducted to further develop themes and trends that emerged in the questionnaire results. All the youth workers, all young participants from ŽAK and 18 of the 20 young participants from Youth.inc completed the questionnaire.

Of the young people who participated from Youth.inc, 10 were young women and eight young men between the ages of 16 and 19 – only one was over 20. All participants had completed compulsory education without any formal qualifications. The fathers of slightly more than half of participants were in either skilled or (in most cases) semi-skilled employment, while just under half were unemployed. The mothers of slightly more than half of participants were home-makers, while just under half were in mostly semi-skilled employment. For all participants, except two, this was their first youth exchange abroad.

Of those that participated from ŽAK, there were five young women and three young men between the ages of 16 and 18. All were in upper second-level education and studying for O and A levels. Their fathers were either in skilled, semi-skilled or professional employment while all but one of their mothers were home-makers. For all participants, except two, this was their first youth exchange abroad.

Youth workers’ responses

The results of the questionnaires of the youth workers were generally positive (Table 6.1.). However, some aspects were slightly less positive than others, particularly those relating to adequate preparation and practical arrangements, the non-formal learning methods employed, and awareness of the skills and tools needed to promote social inclusion in learning mobility projects. The most positive responses in the survey questionnaire related to good working relationships with colleagues, positive interaction between the young people participating, positive experience of intercultural learning and understanding, and the professional development of the youth workers participating.

Table 6.1: Questionnaire results of youth workers in ŽAK, Youth.inc and LYS who participated in the youth exchange (n=14)

As a result of my participating in the exchange I feel that...	Strongly agree	Agree
The exchange project was well planned and implemented effectively.	62%	38%
The preparatory training session proved effective and useful.	69%	31%
I was adequately prepared for and supported by my organisation during the exchanges.	46%	54%
I will be better able to develop and implement similar type projects in the future.	77%	23%
I developed a good working relationship with colleagues in ŽAK, Youth.inc and Limerick Youth Service.	85%	15/9%
The organisation and practical arrangements for the exchanges were carried through effectively.	54%	46%
The atmosphere and interaction between the young people participating in the exchanges was positive.	69%	31%
The non-formal learning methods and tools employed during the exchanges were appropriate and effective.	54%	46%
The Shift was a positive experience for all participants in terms of intercultural learning and understanding.	69%	31%
I have a better understanding of how learning mobility projects like The Shift can promote social inclusion.	62%	38%
As a result of participating in the project, I am more aware of the skills and tools needed to promote social inclusion in learning mobility projects.*	46%	46%
The Shift project was a positive experience in terms of my professional development as a youth worker.	77%	23%

* 8% of respondents did not agree with this statement. In other statements the responses “Do not know”, “Disagree” and “Strongly disagree” were not chosen.

In addition, youth workers were also asked to comment on what they most and least enjoyed about the exchanges. The youth workers from Ireland were the most positive and enthusiastic in their responses; the only difficulties cited related to organisational and logistical aspects of the exchange, for example passports, flights and some time management issues relating to scheduled activities and free time. The responses of the youth workers from Malta were also positive, but two issues were highlighted in particular. First, there was a perceived lack of preparedness for the exchanges, despite the fact that youth workers had undergone a three-day training programme before the exchanges and that the young participants had two “get to know you” sessions. Second, there was a perceived disparity between the

young people from ŽAK and Youth.inc in what might be described as expectations regarding participants' attitudes and behaviours on the exchanges.

The focus groups of youth workers from ŽAK and Youth.inc, as well as seeking to further develop themes and trends that emerged in the questionnaire results, also sought to address particular aspects of the project. These included the effectiveness of the learning methodologies employed, the interaction between the participants and the intercultural learning that took place, as well as the meaning of learning mobility itself.

While positive interaction between young people scored high in the questionnaire results, the focus groups provided further qualitative evidence of the nature of such interaction. One view saw the interactive and learning process as strongest between the Irish and Maltese participants – comparing similarities and differences in everything from language, to food and social activities and teaching each other different things about their respective countries and cultures. However, the interaction between the Maltese participants was seen as largely determined, and hindered on occasion, by the fact that participants from ŽAK and Youth.inc came from different socio-economic backgrounds, with different expectations and levels of social capital. The level of interaction also appears to have varied depending on the time of day and the nature of the activity. It was observed that at the beginning of the exchange, the young participants were only interacting within their respective groups, that is LYS, ŽAK and Youth.inc. However, as the exchange progressed the groups began to intermingle and by the end of the exchange there was no distinction between the groups in terms of LYS, ŽAK and Youth.inc. Another observed factor was the roles the young Maltese participants adopted within groups. Some appeared as leaders and other as followers and this tended to impact on the nature of interaction both within and between groups.

Planned activities and events and free time also appear to have influenced levels of interaction. It was observed that the interaction between Maltese and Irish participants during periods of free time appears to have been stronger than that during formal activities and events. There were also indications that participants were using social media to maintain contact with each other.

Intercultural activities and events were also viewed positively. The intercultural evenings which were held early in the exchanges were seen as important in breaking down any perceived barriers and differences. Participants were also eager to welcome, explain and promote their own culture and heritage – on their "turf". The impact of cultural activities and events on the participants was also noted. Music, beat boxing, singing and football, spontaneous as well as planned, appear to have been strong bonding factors among participants. It was also observed that most of the intercultural interchanges took place in the evenings when the participants were spending their free time together.

Feedback to youth workers indicated that for the majority of young participants' mobility was seen as an opportunity to visit another country, take part in activities and events, make friends and socially engage with others. However, the broader aspects and objectives of learning mobility (European Commission 2008), such as studying or working in another country and EVS, appear to have been less clearly

defined and imparted to the young participants. A Maltese youth worker commented: “After the second exchange it became clear that although they are not interested to go and study and work abroad they are interested to go abroad again for a youth exchange, training course or a holiday.”

The focus groups also aired other related issues and concerns. The lack of preparedness and familiarity with one another was further emphasised, as were expressed concerns as regards attitudes and behaviours among some young participants. While these, at least in part, could be accounted for by the fact that it was the first exchange for most of the young participants, it may also point to other issues. The youth workers agreed that a homogeneous group would have been easier to manage, the process more streamlined and the learning possibilities more focused. They also pointed to some differences in attitudes and approaches to youth work between paid youth workers (Youth.inc and LYS) and volunteer youth workers (ŽAK), even though the youth workers from Malta participating in the exchanges all had professional qualifications. The exchanges in Ireland also appear to have proved more demanding and stressful than those on home ground in Malta.

There was also general agreement that the exchanges were too far apart in time to have any noticeable impact particularly with regard to learning opportunities. One youth worker remarked that “it was like starting all over again” in the follow-up exchange. They felt that a single session, longer in duration and adequately prepared for, would have been more conducive to learning. Youth workers also felt that there was no adequate follow-up where learning resulting from the exchanges could be embedded and built on.

Young people’s responses

The results of the survey questionnaires of the young participants were also positive (Table 6.2.). The young participants from both ŽAK and Youth.inc were most positive when responding to questions relating to participation, developing skills, communicating with others, building self-confidence, support and enjoyment. As with the youth workers, they were also asked to comment on what they most and least enjoyed about the exchanges. Their responses further emphasised the importance of being together, building and maintaining friendships and supporting each other. They were also positive in their responses to questions on support received from the youth workers and young participants in the partner organisations.

Table 6.2: Questionnaire results of young people from ŽAK (n=8) and Youth.inc (n=18) who participated in the youth exchange

As a result of my participating in the exchange project...		Strongly agree	Agree	Do not know	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I feel more confident travelling to other countries.	ŽAK	50%	50%			
	Youth Inc.	59%	29%			12%
I got to know young people from Ireland and will keep in contact with them.	ŽAK	100%				
	Youth.inc	44%	39%	11%	6%	
I have a more positive view of other countries and other cultures.	ŽAK	25%	75%			
	Youth.inc	44%	44%	6%	6%	
I would like to go abroad in the future to work/study.	ŽAK	25%		75%		
	Youth.inc	17%	44%	22%	11%	6%
My English language skills have improved.	ŽAK	50%	50%			
	Youth.inc	39%	55%		6%	
My interpersonal skills have improved.	ŽAK		100%			
	Youth.inc	33%	67%			
I am better able to talk to and communicate with others.	ŽAK		100%			
	Youth.inc	61%	39%			
I am more confident in groups and with other people.	ŽAK		100%			
	Youth.inc	44%	44%	6%	6%	
I know what personal skills I need to develop more.	ŽAK	25%	75%			
	Youth.inc	33%	55%	6%	6%	
I am better able to plan and organise things.	ŽAK	25%	75%			
	Youth.inc	6%	77%	6%	11%	
I have a clearer idea about my future educational path.	ŽAK	25%	25%	50%		
	Youth.inc	11%	39%	44%	6%	
I have a clearer idea about my future career path.	ŽAK	25%	25%	25%	25%	
	Youth.inc	22%	39%	33%	6%	

As a result of my participating in the exchange project...		Strongly agree	Agree	Do not know	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I feel my future employment prospects are better.	ŽAK	25%		50%	25%	
	Youth.inc	11%	55%	28%	6%	
I would like to participate in projects in the future.	ŽAK	75%	25%			
	Youth.inc	72%	11%	11%	6%	
The project was well organised and enjoyable.	ŽAK	100%				
	Youth.inc	94%	6%			
I got the support I needed from the youth workers who participated in the project.	ŽAK	100%				
	Youth.inc	83%	17%			
I got the support and co-operation I needed from the young people from ŽAK/Youth.inc who participated in the project.	ŽAK	50%	50%			
	Youth.inc	72%	22%	6%		

The young participants from ŽAK were, in general, somewhat more positive than those from Youth.inc, with only those questions on future education paths, career paths and employment prospects eliciting less positive responses. Participants from both ŽAK and Youth.inc were somewhat hesitant in their responses as to working and studying abroad – something that was reflected in feedback to youth workers. The young participants from Youth.inc were in general somewhat less positive. As with the participants from ŽAK, participants from Youth.inc were less positive in responding to those questions on future education paths, career paths and employment prospects. This may relate back to concerns expressed by the youth workers as to the learning opportunities provided by the exchange. Clearly, the young participants from both ŽAK and Youth.inc were not convinced of the relevance of such exchanges for their future career and employment prospects – something that was also reflected in feedback to youth workers. This in turn points to another issue raised by the youth workers: youth exchanges as an adventure, a holiday, in which possible learning opportunities are not adequately prepared for, grasped and built on. As one youth worker commented, “the best learning often takes place outside the scheduled activities and events, in the quiet moments when young people feel more at ease and open”.

Conclusion

The aim of the The Shift project was to actively engage in and promote learning mobility on the part of the partner organisations and also to see how issues of social inclusion could be addressed through learning mobility. One of the distinctive features

of the project was that the young participants from Malta were from contrasting socio-economic backgrounds.

The response to the project, as evidenced by the questionnaires and focus groups, was very positive. Youth workers and young participants were of the view that the project had been well organised, enjoyable and informative. The level of interaction and intercultural interchange between the young participants was also seen as positive and rewarding. However, the project also highlighted a number of issues of relevance both for learning mobility itself and for learning mobility as a tool for promoting social inclusion.

Despite preparatory training and “get to know you” sessions, lack of adequate preparation and effective follow-up were seen as impacting on learning outcomes.

Social inclusion measures are open to the possible criticism that they seek to turn young people who are “socially excluded” (deprived socio-economic or cultural-ethnic minority background) into the “socially included” (middle-class and dominant culture values and mores). Social inclusion becomes a process of contrived transition, without due regard being had to the cultural and social capital, or perceived lack of it, of the young people concerned.

The perceived lack of preparedness for The Shift project may, in part, reflect a lack of preparedness on the part of youth workers for dealing with perceived disparities in cultural and social capital among young people. While awareness of such perceived disparities is essential in preparing for learning mobility/social inclusion projects such as The Shift, actual experience of working with young people from different socio-economic-cultural backgrounds in advance of embarking on such projects would appear preferable.

The view of youth exchange as an adventure, a holiday, a “break from the norm” may also reflect a concern that learning mobility projects need to be more embedded in the education, training and learning process, both formal and non-formal. It is evident that the young Maltese participants were also unsure as to the future educational and employment benefits of the project.

Another issue that emerged was that of time management. The time gap between exchanges and the time management during exchanges also appear to have impacted on learning outcomes. In focusing too much on the scheduled programme, its activities and events, there was a concern that the opportunities provided in “free time”, particularly in facilitating personal interaction and intercultural interchange, were not adequately availed of.

The experiences of The Shift project point towards the need for learning mobility projects that are effectively, indeed, comprehensively prepared for; supported by youth workers with relevant experience and competencies; fully embedded in the education, training and learning life of the young participants; learning outcomes focused and holistic; balanced between scheduled activities and free time and where young participants can comprehend and understand the opportunities learning mobility offers in terms of their future personal development. These facets take on even greater significance if learning mobility is to be an effective tool in addressing issues of social inclusion.

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Chapter 7

ExchangeAbility: an inclusive practice within the youth field

Agnes Sarolta Fazekas

Opportunities in life are constrained by different types of inequality, and these are not necessarily mutually exclusive. In this chapter Agnes Sarolta Fazekas demonstrates some of the obstacles faced by young people with disabilities. She also shows the heterogeneity of their experiences, which can act as both a challenge and a tool. Aspects of this heterogeneity include the range of types of disability; the social construction of the objective and subjective barriers faced by people with different disabilities; the reflexivity and agency that each young person is able and willing to bring to his or her experience; the degree of access to mobility programmes. In the ExchangeAbility project the inclusion of young people with disabilities in Erasmus Student Network activities was intended both to promote mobility opportunities for the participants and to mainstream disability within youth organisations' structures. The chapter shows that participation is at the heart of the process through which the very concept, value and practice of social inclusion is promoted.

People with disabilities: a diverse group

People with disabilities are not a homogenous group. As with all spheres of society, disabled people form a very diverse group and have their own specific needs and demands. It might happen that two people have the same impairment, but it does not mean that their experiences are the same; every person has a complex identity and an individually lived experience.

Disability does not exist in isolation; it must be considered in conjunction with other issues as well. "If someone does identify as being a disabled person that may not be their dominant identity" (Todd 2014: 1).

Young people must not be viewed as a single, homogeneous subset of society defined exclusively by age, as is often the case. They have diverse identities that can result in multiple forms of discrimination and/or intersecting forms of oppression (European Youth Forum 2015: 8).

Oppression and privilege by race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, class, nationality, and so on, do not act independently of each other in our individual lives or in our social structures; instead, each kind of oppression or privilege is shaped by and works through the others. These compounded, intermeshed systems of oppression and privilege in

our social structures help to produce (a) our social relations (b) our experiences of our own identities and (c) the limitations of shared interest even among members of “the same” oppressed or privileged group. (Garry 2012: 496)

The intersectional approach argues that forms of oppression (for example racism, sexism, disablism) overlap, defining unique social groups, and that they cannot be understood separately. Intersectional analyses hold that oppressions interrelate, work through, over and under each other to result in each individual’s unique lived experience. By helping us articulate the ways in which facets of our lives have gone unnoticed by our different “groups”, intersectional analyses facilitate communication and help make it more respectful and productive on the path to social change. An excellent metaphor commonly used by feminist scholars to explain intersectionality is that of roads and a traffic intersection:

Race, class, gender and other forms of discrimination, such as sexual orientation and ability, are the roads that structure social, economic and political terrain. This metaphor captures the numerous systems of subordination that often overlap and cross and that create complex intersections. It allows us to avoid thinking of these dynamics as disjointed or simply parallel. (Hankivsky 2005: 17)

Unpacking labels and issues of disclosure

The ExchangeAbility project has always addressed young people using an inclusive and cross-disability approach (Malone 2011) and respecting a person’s right to self-determination. Even if someone has an impairment and meets a legal definition of a person with a disability, they may choose not to acknowledge this and that is their choice. The scope and complexity of the concept of “disability/ies” is captured in the following extract from an online guide to the United National Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

The term “persons with disabilities” is used to apply to *all* persons with disabilities including those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which, in interaction with various attitudinal and environmental barriers, hinders their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others. However, this minimum list of persons who may claim protection under the Convention does not exhaust the categories of the disabilities which fall within it nor intend to undermine or stand in the way of wider definition of disabilities under national law (such as persons with short-term disabilities). It is also important to note that a person with disabilities may be regarded as a person with a disability in one society or setting, but not in another, depending on the role that the person is assumed to take in his or her community. The perception and reality of disability also depend on the technologies, assistance and services available, as well as on cultural considerations. In most parts of the world there are deep and persistent negative stereotypes and prejudices against persons with certain conditions and differences. These attitudes themselves also shape who is considered to be a person with a disability in each society as well as have contributed to a negative image of persons with disabilities ... The drafters of this Convention were clear that disability should be seen as the result of the interaction between a person and his or her environment. Disability is not something that resides in the individual as the result of some impairment. UNCRPD recognizes that disability is an evolving concept and that legislation may adapt to reflect positive changes within society. (United Nations Enable 2007: 1)

Attitudes to disability are undergoing a paradigm shift. The medical model has seen the person with a disability as the centre of the problem that needs to be fixed or changed, and services are provided which reinforce that person's dependency. The emphasis is on the person's inability and what he or she cannot do. Unfortunately, this view is still embedded in attitudes to people with disabilities in many parts of the world. Under the social model, disability is seen as a social construction, which makes a clear distinction between impairment (the condition, illness or loss/lack of function) and disability (barriers and discrimination). Disability should be seen as the result of the interaction between the person and their environment; it is not something that resides in the individual as the result of some impairment. The social model enables people with disabilities to express their situation in terms of human rights and as an issue of equality (Paul et al. 2006).

Within ExchangeAbility the focus has been always on accommodating the access needs of persons with disabilities, rather than solely focusing on the impairment itself. The Association for Higher Education Access and Disability's (AHEAD) "Guide to disclosure report" (2013) gives a good insight into the interesting discussion which has been emerging around disability and disclosure. The issues would include presuming "that being made aware of a disability title (label) would provide all the necessary information", yet AHEAD's experience would highlight how little a label can inform: "The relevant information relates to the impact and accommodation of an impairment/condition rather than what it is called ... disclosure is 'to make information known' and it is getting the relevant information that should matter ... In most cases, this didn't require knowing a title or label" (AHEAD 2013).

Since the ExchangeAbility project was established, young people with different disabilities have been involved. It is difficult to provide exact information about the type of disabilities because of data protection and confidentiality considerations. The collaboration with disability organisations and disabled youth platforms, such as the ENIL Youth Network (see official site) has been an efficient tool to reach out to young people with disabilities. It appears that young people with physical impairments, visual impairments and with specific learning disabilities (for example dyslexia) are more likely to have been reached out to through the project. It is crucial to acknowledge that the project is facing quite a challenge to reach out to young deaf people across Europe, as well as young people with Asperger's/autism. There are also good practices within the Erasmus Student Network (ESN) such as including sign languages within mainstream youth events and activities creating bridges with young deaf people (see official site of ESNlove). However, there is still room for improvement in dismantling barriers to communication. To this end, ESN is working through cross-sectoral collaborations with partners including Autism Europe and others (details on its website) and also receives feedback and advice from the European Deaf Student Union (EDSU) and European Union of Deaf Youth (EUDY) to enhance inclusion within its youth activities and projects.

The invisibility of young people with disabilities in youth work

Worldwide youth have been engaged in many ways in youth work and have contributed to youth policy as key players in political movements and social change (Al-Momami 2011; Fisher 2012). The report by UNDESA (United Nations Department

of Economic and Social Affairs) underlines that young disabled people face more barriers in society than their non-disabled peers. Furthermore, the barriers they face because of their disability intersect with others that relate to gender, poverty, ethnicity or sexuality, etc. Most young people with disabilities want to participate in youth activities and to socialise and work together with non-disabled young people, but in many cases youth activities are lacking in how they respond to diverse participants. Another barrier lies in the mindset of peers towards young people with disabilities, which is characterised by fears, prejudices and stereotypes.

These factors also influence youth work. It is possible to detect at least three different paths in youth work regarding young people with disabilities. Firstly, compared to their non-disabled peers, young people with disabilities are more likely to have a lack of capacity, self-esteem and positive experiences in community/civic/youth activities because of the inaccessible settings in which they take place. Secondly, they are in a so-called “in-between place”, as they feel they do not fully belong within disabled people’s organisations, especially if there is no specific agenda regarding their interests, while at the same time they do not feel very welcome in so-called “mainstream” youth programmes. “Youth programmes seldom address issues of youth with disabilities; much less include them into activities. Other initiatives directed at youth often overlook those with disabilities” (UNDESA n.d.: 8). Thirdly, there is a strand within youth work that focuses on youth with disabilities, and in a certain sense this can also be isolating because the youth work happens within a “safe circle”, inside a kind of “bubble”. It can be argued that real inclusion happens when those bubbles are opened up and youth with diverse backgrounds interact with each other (Chupina 2014). One way of making this happen is through mixed-ability youth activities. There have been several initiatives taken within the youth sector, such as the youth work materials from SALTO-YOUTH, the Council of Europe Youth Department’s Consultative Meeting on “Inclusion of youth with disabilities in the youth activities of the Council of Europe” (Chupina et al. 2012), and similar initiatives by other youth organisations across the world. However, these are still relatively new to the youth sector and a lot of progress has yet to take place.

In order to design effective and efficient policies, greater knowledge of disability issues by decision makers as well as research on youth with disabilities are crucial; disability issues should be cross-cutting in youth policy and other policy areas; youth with disabilities shall be directly consulted in decision-making processes in the spirit of the disability rights movement – “nothing about us without us”. (Chupina n.d.: 5)

A range of types of action should be taken. Just as work should take place to empower young people with disabilities to build their confidence and encourage them to advocate for themselves, there should be more action to raise the awareness of young people without disabilities about inclusion and disability, breaking down stigma and prejudice and enhancing overall access and inclusion in mainstream youth work.

Challenges and enablers of mobility programmes for people with disabilities

Participating in study abroad programmes offers young people opportunities for self-development and enhances their future employability. This becomes even more

important when we consider groups at risk from social exclusion such as people with disabilities. Exchange programmes are challenging in themselves for all young people, as they are facing an unfamiliar environment, such as a new language and culture. The proportion of persons with disabilities is still very low in tertiary education and in study abroad programmes worldwide (OECD 2011). Steps are being taken to increase access and combat discrimination, but still many barriers persist. There are still obstacles in study abroad programmes such as inaccessible environments or disability-related stereotypes. The European flagship project, the former Erasmus and current Erasmus+ in Higher Education, has been running since 1987. The programme has paid particular attention to ensuring that students or staff with disabilities can take full advantage of the European mobility arrangements, by providing supplementary grants to cover their access needs. However, there has been hardly any research investigating the challenges and enablers of the participation of students with disabilities with a specific focus on the Erasmus Scheme (European Commission 2014).

Among the main challenges of motivating and recruiting participants for mobility programmes are a lack of accessible information about study abroad opportunities and lack of experience among study abroad organisers, higher education professionals and relevant stakeholders in co-operating to accommodate the access needs of people with disabilities. Many further obstacles persist such as lack of awareness about disability, attitudinal barriers and disability-related stereotypes. Furthermore, there are inaccessible built and learning environments and a lack of financial resources to cover access needs during the mobility period. Additional challenges relate to the availability and portability of support services during mobility, such as personal assistance or assistive technologies, and, last but not least, the lack of peer support and role models to stimulate the participation of young people with disability in mobility programmes (De La Rosa and Reina 2011).

According to the European Commission's statistics for the former Erasmus programme, a total of 257 people with disabilities participated and received the supplementary grant to cover their access needs in the 2009-2010 academic year, which represented 0.12% of the total Erasmus student population (European Commission 2010). Despite a modest increase in later academic years (for example in the 2012-2013 academic year 388 students with disabilities received an Erasmus Supplementary Grant), the participation of people with disabilities in mobility is still very low (European Commission 2014).

Emergence of the project ExchangeAbility

Erasmus Student Network (ESN) is the biggest interdisciplinary volunteer student association in international higher education across Europe. It provides opportunities for cultural understanding and self-development under the principle of SHS – Students Helping Students. It was born on 16 October 1989 and legally registered in 1990 for supporting and developing student exchange. ESN represents the needs and rights of international students on local, national and international levels; it provides relevant information about mobility programmes and contributes to the improvement and accessibility of student mobility. ESN motivates students to study abroad and aims to improve the social and practical integration of international students.

It is supported by the European Commission and it is often invited to discussions related to study abroad programmes.

In recognition of the challenges of participation in mobility programmes for persons with disabilities, ESN established the ExchangeAbility project in 2009, with two goals.

The first goal was to foster the participation of people with disabilities in study abroad programmes by raising awareness, promoting the opportunities available and helping to remove obstacles to participation. Young people with disabilities experience challenges with peer support and there is a lack of role models who can stimulate them to take the leap into study abroad. Young disabled people are also more likely to be excluded from mainstream youth activities because their structures are non-inclusive.

The second goal of the project was to tackle these barriers in the mainstream and make youth activities within ESN more inclusive and accessible for people with disabilities while also finding different ways to motivate non-disabled and disabled students to join together in youth activities.

The ExchangeAbility project has strongly influenced the formal education system, but the essence of the project lies in its second goal of making a mainstream youth organisation more inclusive and mainstreaming disability within its structure.

Confronting barriers in mobility programmes for persons with disabilities

Responding to the main barriers, such as lack of information and research into the situation of study abroad opportunities for students with disabilities on a European scale, short study visits were conducted across Europe. These visits brought together young people with disabilities, various higher education professionals, representatives of disabled people's organisations, ESN volunteers and students with disabilities. All participants discussed and shared their experiences about the challenges and enablers of facilitating and participating in study abroad programmes. The main goals of these site visits have been: raising awareness of the need to promote inclusive policies and practices in study abroad; improving the provision of information about mobility programmes for students with disabilities; promoting active citizenship, exchange of good practices and a common dialogue among relevant stakeholders and people with disabilities; and enabling inclusive community participation among young disabled and non-disabled people. The site visits have fulfilled their objective of raising awareness about all the aspects to be considered when motivating, preparing and facilitating people with disabilities in study abroad. The media chosen, such as an accessible website, story competitions, various testimonies of "ExchangeAbility Ambassadors" and social media, have had a great multiplier effect in motivating other students to study abroad.

Involvement of young people with and without disabilities in ExchangeAbility

There are different explanations and definitions for the concept of "multiplier". For ExchangeAbility it means that all the knowledge, skills, tools, methods and attitudes

related to inclusion and diversity which young people acquired during the project will not be wasted, but rather will be shared and the ideas/thoughts planted as seeds in peers' and other people's minds. Since its establishment, ExchangeAbility has been creating multiplier effects both in the structure of the network and in mindset change among volunteers, enabling them to have a better understanding of inclusion, diversity and disability issues and of how to provide better peer support and deliver their events and youth activities in a more inclusive way.

There has been an ongoing discussion within the youth sector about how to measure the impact of certain developmental activities on youth. It is extremely challenging to do so when the change in question is qualitative. Quantitative data has been collected about the number of ExchangeAbility activities at international, national and local level, and also about the number of people who have been reached out to and who have engaged. There is also data on reaching out to young people with disabilities through different communication channels. However, these quantitative types of data do not capture the ways in which people have opened their minds and feelings towards young people with disabilities.

Over the six years of ExchangeAbility, ESN has become more sensitive and aware about inclusion. This is reflected in the following principles. "Done by students for students" means that young people with and without disabilities have been actively involved in the project. "Nothing about us without us" has been associated with the disability rights movement and it means that people with disabilities are the experts regarding their own needs. It has been a crucial principle that they are fully engaged as participants in projects affecting them (Madrid Declaration 2002). The project has encouraged students with disabilities to become ExchangeAbility Ambassadors and motivate their peers to participate in study abroad. ExchangeAbility Ambassadors have engaged more persons both with and without disabilities, and helped to remove social stigmas about disability, thus promoting diversity and enhancing European identity. Students with and without disabilities have been encouraged to participate in various events and youth activities organised by ESN volunteers.

A collaboration of young people with and without disabilities has progressively developed through mixed-ability training and workshops which little by little have removed prejudices, stereotypes and fears of the unknown, and created better understanding of diversity and tolerance towards each other. The potential risks of delivering mixed-ability training were anticipated by putting together a mixed group of trainers, including trainers with and without disabilities, all of whom had expertise in youth participation and non-formal education.

ExchangeAbility training courses and workshops have aimed to increase the understanding of inclusion and disability, promote the social model of disability, facilitate capacity building on inclusive volunteering, develop skills and competences for the delivery of inclusive youth activities and provide cross-sectoral information sources. Throughout, non-formal education-based activities have been adapted to the access and learning needs of the participants. As part of the training, there have been workshops with a strong emphasis on sharing experiences among young disabled and non-disabled participants to dismantle prejudices and stereotypes.

One of the reasons for ExchangeAbility's success is that all participants have experienced what social inclusion really means in practice and what it means to work together regardless of background. The capacity building and empowerment of participants at training events and workshops has resulted in chain (re)actions as participants are more confident to organise various youth activities in their national or local communities, bringing together young people with and without disabilities. Reshaping youth activities to make them more inclusive takes a long time and is very challenging, but it is the way forward and it is highly empowering for, and appreciated by, young people with and without disabilities.

The essence of ExchangeAbility stands in its uniqueness rather than its competitiveness with other existing solutions worldwide, such as the activities of MIUSA – Mobility International USA – which is advancing disability rights and leadership globally.

MapAbility: an offshoot of ExchangeAbility

As a mainstream youth organisation, ESN was a pioneer in improving policy regarding accessibility in mobility programmes and taking steps to become a more accessible youth organisation throughout the inclusive intercultural capacity building of ESN volunteers. It was also at the forefront in the groundbreaking provision of information for people with disabilities about the accessibility of higher education institutions.

MapAbility is a practical online map of European higher education institutions, which provides information about their support services for disabled people and the accessibility features of the built environment of such institutions across Europe. Erasmus Student Network is represented in 39 countries with more than 500 sections across Europe and 15 000 active members. The MapAbility project has been driven by ESN volunteers.

The process of mapping has taken many forms. It has usually included ESN volunteers, students with disabilities and disability co-ordinators from the universities and has been developed through events at which all these groups have met. Sometimes it has been the first experience of interaction between young disabled and non-disabled peers and the co-ordinators from the higher education institution.

In other cases the mapping events have been incorporated into mainstream social activities, which created a space to socialise together and also to work for a cause – in this case to explore the support services and accessibility and to create bridges between each other.

Another variety was when both young non-disabled and disabled domestic and international students gathered for mapping events with local disabled people's organisations, or other non-governmental organisations in the disability field or with municipal authorities, and created joint initiatives. Examples include Map My Day or Accessibility Day led by the organisation Wheelmap in Germany; or the organisation Jaccede in France.

In addition to the results of the mapping, these activities have helped to reduce prejudices and stereotypes about people with disabilities, and created inclusive

spaces to work as a united team to accomplish something together. Last but not least, participants of MapAbility events have learned about acceptance, tolerance, inclusion, diversity of abilities and, hopefully, they can act as multipliers of inclusion in their own smaller or larger communities.

There are many European organisations working to promote the interests of disabled people, and other organisations have mapped public facilities in some countries, but this project is distinctive in that it set out to improve the experience of students with disabilities in study abroad from a mainstream youth organisation's perspective. The project's implementation is based primarily on voluntary effort, supported by grant-aid. The ESN capacity-building strategy for the project is based on values such as volunteerism, autonomy, independence, participation, solidarity and inclusiveness. It aims at ensuring the further development and sustainability of the Erasmus Student Network and providing participants with knowledge, skills, competencies and the space to develop their attitudes while at the same time keeping their motivation alive through providing a rewarding experience.

Forward and onwards: breaking down current barriers

The project has been very successful in meeting its objectives and raising awareness. Furthermore, it has provided an improved and more accessible information flow among young people with disabilities and other stakeholders. ExchangeAbility's partner organisations from the education and disability fields have been a huge asset in supporting the project to reach out to people with disabilities across Europe. However, reaching out to students with disabilities is still a challenge. Fully respecting that the disclosure of a disability is an individual choice, and taking data protection issues into consideration, both higher education professionals and the project itself have found that it is difficult to reach out to young people with disabilities to encourage them to get involved in youth activities or participate in mobility or to provide them with support. Young people with disabilities who did get actively engaged with the project have highlighted that the reasons behind lack of disclosure or lack of involvement include fear of discrimination and stigmatisation, unequal treatment and the non-inclusive settings of the mobility programmes and of society's structures in general (AHEAD 2013). To dismantle such barriers, the work of ESN volunteers, stakeholders and higher education professionals documented in this chapter can serve as a model that can be applied more universally within youth organisations and educational institutions. This will help to bring about an essential shift in attitudes towards inclusion and diversity, focusing on the social dimensions of disability rather than outdated medical approaches.

The projects which have been featured in the article have been co-ordinated by Erasmus Student Network. Between 2013 and 2014 MapAbility was a sub-project of the overall project ExchangeAbility. The follow-up project of MapAbility is called Mapped! (www.mapped.eu).

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Chapter 8

International learning mobility activities for mixed abilities groups: from competencies to inclusiveness

Adina Marina Serban and Elif Serbest

Efforts to reach and recruit groups of young people with fewer opportunities to non-formal learning programmes follow two main approaches. The first one is to create a project tailored to a disadvantaged group, ensuring necessary support and logistics, while the second aims at creating diverse, mixed abilities or mixed competencies groups, including participants who are disadvantaged in some way and others who are not. Adina Marina Serban and Elif Serbest, both active in youth organisations, take a closer look at international learning mobility activities for mixed abilities groups. They describe motivation and barriers to participation as well as the outcomes of projects, arguing that the spirit of togetherness experienced during the training is a basis for the development of personal and professional competencies among the youth workers they interviewed.

Introduction

The European Union, through the European Disability Strategy (2010-2020), promotes the inclusion and full participation of people with disabilities in society, in line with the human rights-based approach which is the core of the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (UNCRPD) to which the EU is a signatory. When it comes to the European framework, as stated in the EU Disability Strategy 2010-2012, disability is a human rights issue and not a matter of discretion. Eighty million people in the European Union (16% of the population) have a disability, and one in four Europeans have a family member with a disability. Nevertheless, the number of young people with disabilities who benefit from European programmes and opportunities is still very low. Europe 2020 targets related to social inclusion and growth will be impossible to achieve without the participation and contribution of European citizens with disabilities.

This chapter looks at international learning mobility activities for mixed abilities groups. A mixed abilities group in youth work is in practice a group of young people with different learning and participation needs and/or abilities and different levels of social skills, mainly because of – but not limited to – physical, mental or

psychological impairments. Activities considered include training courses, seminars and partnership-building activities, organised within Erasmus+, the European Union's programme for education, training, youth and sport. The chapter aims at answering the following questions:

- ▶ What motivates participants with disabilities to be part of international learning mobility activities?
- ▶ What competencies do participants acquire and develop within mixed abilities learning contexts?
- ▶ What is the added value of the activities organised with and for mixed abilities groups?

The chapter is based on the outcomes of semi-structured interviews conducted with youth workers with and without disabilities who took part in the international learning mobility activities organised by the authors. Beyond the aims mentioned above, the study also aims at identifying to what extent, at the end of the international learning mobility activities, the respondents have a better understanding of European citizenship. Finally, in order to showcase good practices, the second part of the chapter presents three projects developed with and for mixed abilities groups, implemented within the Youth in Action and Erasmus+ framework.

The perspective taken reflects the work of the network led by TGBDER – Turkey Youth Union Association (Turkey) and the Centre for Sustainable Community Development (Romania), which has run international youth activities for mixed abilities groups since 2012.

Young people with disabilities – Barriers to participation

According to the available statistical data, youth with disabilities are two to three times more likely to be unemployed than non-disabled youth; and the more severe the degree of disability, the lower is the participation in the labour force (Eurofound 2013). The social and economic disadvantage associated with disability is evident when looking at the employment rates for people with very severe and severe degrees of disability. Regarding the incidence of poverty among people with disabilities, the rate is over 70% higher than the average (ibid.). Regarding access to education, at the EU28 level, nearly two out of five people with a basic activity difficulty attained only “pre-primary, primary and lower secondary education” levels, while less than 30% of those without a basic activity difficulty were in this situation (Eurydice and Eurostat 2014).

The World Health Organization's International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) (2001) defines disability as the dynamic interaction between the person's health problems, the environment (including the family) and personal factors. Biopsychosocial factors – including biological elements related to a person's mental and physical capacity, psychological factors and social factors (including the environment, attitudes and institutional elements in terms of policies, systems and services) – also have an influence on young people's participation in public life. Systemic factors, including policies, legislation and systems of benefits, also have a significant influence on the other actors enabling young people with disabilities (World Health Organization 2001).

The main barriers to participation in education for young people with disabilities are: the legal framework that does not support a smooth educational path for disabled youth; difficulties in progression; the lack of support and interventions provided during compulsory education at higher levels; the absence of a legal requirement for the transition from education to the labour market; low levels of disability awareness among teachers and guidance and counselling staff; the physical inaccessibility of further and higher educational institutions; the poor access to training and qualifications schemes open to non-disabled youth; and the poor co-ordination between actors responsible for education, housing, employment and social services (Eurofound 2013).

Related to the structural barriers to inclusion, young people with disabilities do not always have an option to take part in youth organisations' activities together with their peers without disabilities because of inaccessibility and/or psychosocial barriers (Serbest 2015). Therefore, relatively active youngsters with disabilities tend to be organised in disability networks or youth branches of DPOs (disabled people's organisations) where there is always a considerable risk of being part of a closed, disability-based community. On the other hand, some of the European organisations are running local, national or international "disability projects" where young people with disabilities are excluded from interacting with their non-disabled peers. When involving only young people with disabilities in their projects" the organisers are often failing to ensure the inclusiveness of the international learning mobility activities.

Learning mobility opportunities for young people with disabilities

Learning mobility is defined as the "transnational mobility undertaken for a period of time, consciously organised for educational purposes or to acquire new competences or knowledge. It covers a wide variety of projects and activities and can be implemented in formal or non-formal settings" (European Commission 2009). The Green Paper on "Promoting the learning mobility of young people" (2009) states that learning mobility strengthens the future employability and the personal development of young people.

For young people, in general, some of the factors that are creating obstacles to benefiting from international learning mobility activities are the time pressure to finish their studies or training, working full time and having no flexibility in their working schedule, lack of funding, lack of language skills and intercultural knowledge, as well as a general reluctance to leave "home" (ibid.). When it comes to young people with disabilities, most of the time their participation in transnational mobility projects would be considered as motivated by notions of equity and representation. Moreover, in general, transnational youth projects have clear learning objectives: contributing to developing participants' attitudes, especially the ones related to intercultural learning and intercultural dialogue; developing skills and competencies that would then help the insertion of young people into the labour market; or offering them the opportunity to explore international learning settings (Kristensen 2013).

Youth projects for mixed abilities groups

Inclusion is a term used widely in social and educational policy making to express the idea that all people living in a given society (should) have access and participation rights on equal terms. Consequently, the institutions, structures and measures should be designed positively to accommodate diversity of circumstances, identities and ways of life and also to allocate resources and opportunities to minimise disadvantage and marginalisation. In the sphere of European youth work and non-formal education, inclusion is considered as an all-embracing strategy and practice for ensuring that people with fewer opportunities have access to the structures and programmes offered (European Knowledge Centre for Youth Policy 2014).

In order to ensure the inclusiveness of youth mobility activities, the concept of “mixed abilities groups”, so far not commonly known or used in the youth work “ecosystem”, will be introduced and developed in this chapter. The approach focuses on “abilities” rather than “disabilities”, on “potentials” rather than “limitations” by urging the need to go beyond the narrow and prohibitive concept of disability to harness the true potential of people with disabilities (Tomlinson 2001). Every young person, whether having an impairment or not, has a different way and speed of receiving and processing information and tackling situations. Thus, while some may find the learning task easy to complete, others may find it even difficult to understand (Serbest 2015).

In fact it can be argued that from this perspective every group of young people is a mixed abilities group and methodologies should be adapted according to their heterogeneous individual learning needs and capabilities. However, on the other hand, if the group also consists of young people with disabilities then a higher level of knowledge, empathy, experience, open-mindedness, flexibility, common sense, patience and resistance to generalisations and stigmatisations is required from the youth workers and educators who are structuring the learning environment of the learning mobility activity.

As our study shows, international projects for mixed abilities groups are definitely a life-changing experience both for youth and youth workers with disabilities and also for youth and youth workers without disabilities. These are excellent learning experiences for the participants and in addition to the learning achievements they also offer the mixed abilities group the opportunity to invest a lot in peer-to-peer relationships. More than that, such transnational learning mobility activities have a very positive impact on the participants in terms of competency acquisition and development, but also locally and at the European level, through investment in the development of youth networks and production of methodologies and instruments (Serbest 2015).

Development of competencies

In the current study, the authors conducted 12 semi-structured interviews with youth workers, with and without disabilities, who participated in a series of international learning mobility activities (partnership-building activities and training courses) organised since 2012. The semi-structured interviews used open questions but with a focus on a specific issue, well defined for the purposes of this research. This approach has the advantage of allowing the researcher to adapt the interview according to the

subject and to the specific information required for their research (Bryman 2001). The main study population – the youth workers who took part in the transnational youth mobility activities – had been selected from the database of the two partner organisations referred to earlier, TGBDER and CSCD. The interviews were conducted using real-time threaded communication – Skype interviews. The synchronous environments were chosen as they provided the researchers and respondents with an experience similar to face-to-face interaction insofar as they provided a mechanism for a back-and-forth exchange of questions and answers (Sullivan 2012). To ensure the confidentiality of the data, the respondents' personal details were anonymised, using the initial of the name and surname and the country where they had residence.

The study sample comprised five males and seven female youth workers. Of the 12 participants, seven were youth workers with disabilities and five were youth workers without disabilities. The respondents were participants in the three training courses that are described further in this chapter, namely the international youth activities run by CSCD and TGBDER. In order to ensure a wide geographical coverage, respondents were selected from a range of countries: Romania (three respondents), Turkey (three respondents), Latvia (two respondents), Italy (two respondents), Bulgaria (one respondent), Croatia (one respondent) and Spain (one respondent). All the interviewed youth workers were either volunteers or employed in youth NGOs and the age range of the participants was between 22 and 30 years. Additionally, even if not a precondition for the interviews, all of the participants were university graduates and for all of them the participation in the activities hosted by the partners was the first experience of being part of group that includes youth workers with different types of disabilities or no disabilities.

The first set of questions aimed at identifying what motivates youth workers to be part of the international projects. Most of the respondents stressed the fact that their participation in the international learning mobility activities was mainly determined by a willingness to acquire new knowledge and competencies. For other participants, the sending organisations were mainly the ones that convinced them to be part of the international activities through the dissemination sessions that other participants in other projects organised.

What motivates me to join the international learning mobility activities is the fact that with non-formal education methodologies it is possible to learn a lot of things and to acquire new competences directly by experiencing. Through non-conventional methodologies, people can understand the meaning of social inclusion and equality. Erasmus+ programme is an important tool for inclusion because it allows everyone, even people with fewer opportunities, to participate and to be equal even with her or his own diversity. Diversity is a surplus and not a lack! (BG, Turkey)

The projects gave me the opportunity to make friends, to have fun and to learn! I never thought of learning so much in an international context, with people I have never met before and with methodologies I was not used to. I'm more open and more self-confident now. (ARB, Italy)

The international learning experiences helped me to go back to my visually impaired peers and to tell them that there is a whole world outside our community of visually impaired youth. (EY, Turkey)

I found the activity (the training course) and applied through the website named SALTO-YOUTH approximately two months ago. I was the only blind participant part on the course. That was the first experience both for them and for me to work together in a mixed group. The group did not know anything about disability; by updating their knowledge I discovered that actually I would have lots of things to explain, and it is important to define how to say whatever I want to say, etc. (BG, Turkey)

Consequently, for many of the respondents, the motivation to be part of the transnational youth activities was, initially, determined by personal factors. The professional motivation came as a follow-up to the personal experience.

For most of the youth workers without disabilities, the projects organised within Erasmus+ were the first experience of working with disabled peers and developing common project ideas and initiatives.

The projects offered me the chance to get to know them (youth workers with disabilities) and to understand that we have the same needs and young people we work with are dealing with the same problems. (PH, Croatia)

In terms of competencies development, youth workers had the opportunity to learn specific methodologies and tools as well as to practice new skills. The role-playing games, the simulations, the presentations – all based on non-formal education methodologies and learning-by-doing techniques – offered the participants the opportunity to go through a complete learning cycle. Both for the participants with disabilities and those without disabilities, the experiential learning methodologies had a key impact on their learning. This is especially the case for the learning activities where they were asked to imagine themselves in a different condition (the participants with disabilities imagining that they did not have any impairment, and those without disabilities imagining that they did). The simulations and the role-playing games were also accompanied by moments where the participants could share their personal stories and experiences and understand that they can support each other, personally and professionally.

I'm aware of the fact that people need me, that they appreciate me as a person and everyone can learn something from a blind person. I'm even motivated to spread around visually impaired people the knowledge of Erasmus+ programme, to give other blind and partially sighted young people the same opportunities I am having. (BG, Turkey)

People do not know anything about blindness except for our Braille alphabet and some supportive devices. To introduce myself as an individual just like them was a hard job. And materials, games they chose were a bit inaccessible. But over time, I saw that they started to realise what kind of arrangements they could do to include me. I would definitely recommend these activities to other young people with and without disabilities. Because mutual learning is crucial to know each other and live together. These are the best times for creating such kinds of atmosphere. So as disabled individuals who live in a society we can take active roles to shape youth perspective about disability. (BY, Turkey)

Through the methodology of non-formal education, we learned that as a good trainer it's important to know that you have participants with different learning styles and you have to adapt your activities and methodologies for every kind of need. We also discovered that in non-formal learning it's not necessary that you make everything perfect, it's all about

the learning experience and what you take from it. If you take the feedback as a gift, you are thankful and you learn from it, you can be better and better, so you can improve your skills as a trainer with every experience you gain. In the end, we realised that working with mixed abilities groups is not as easy and simple as it is working with groups without any special needs, but is more meaningful and fulfilling. As a conclusion we are not saying that [it] is going to be easy, but it's going to be worth it! (AI, Romania-ARB, Italy)

The competencies that the respondents developed are related both to knowledge acquisition and to skills and attitudes. Furthermore, these competencies are in line with Recommendation 2006/962/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006 on key competencies for lifelong learning. Through participating in transnational learning mobility activities, the youth workers develop new social and civic competencies, and some of them start their new projects and initiatives with enhanced entrepreneurship competencies. In terms of attitudes, at the end of the learning mobility the respondents were aware of the importance of developing inclusive projects, of the importance of solidarity and mutual support as well as of promoting access to rights among their peers.

Challenges in involving young people with disabilities in international learning activities

The study shows that developing, organising and implementing projects for mixed abilities groups is not an easy task for youth organisations. Most of the time, the challenges start with the sluggish process of trying to involve young people or youth workers with disabilities in the specified learning settings. The main challenges to the involvement of young people with disabilities in international learning mobility activities are related to social, educational, cultural and economic factors. In most cases, the families tend to be reluctant to allow young people to travel abroad and to be part of activities that involve other young people without disabilities. Participation depends indeed not only on the willingness and capacity of individuals to be open to new learning experiences, but also on the openness of the extended safety network. Also, the same attitude, but in a less intense form, could be found among the families of young people without disabilities. Their reaction towards the involvement in the learning experiences with the “others” is also determined by their lack of experience in working with people with disabilities and of the lack of visible presence of disabled youth in the local community.

In fact, very often, disabled people do not have the opportunity to meet a lot of people or to go abroad. Since I'm participating in these activities I've learnt a lot. (ARB, Italy)

Structuring the learning space for mixed abilities groups is always challenged by the presence of the “others”. Consequently, all the learning mobility activities are investing additional effort and resources in stimulating self-confidence and self-perception, clarifying roles, improving communication and working towards awareness of common values. The key challenges that the youth organisations face in organising international mobility activities for mixed abilities groups and in reaching young people with disabilities can be determined by:

- ▶ lack of family and community support as well as lack of visibility of young people with disabilities in the public arena;

- ▶ insufficient promotion of good practices and examples of similar projects;
- ▶ lack of physical accessibility to the mobility activities, as well as the presence of language and communication barriers;
- ▶ lack of understanding of diverse disabilities and their related needs;
- ▶ lack of inclusive methodologies and research on the topic.

Diversity is a plus – Running international learning mobility activities

Running activities for mixed abilities groups is in keeping with the emphasis in European policy and programmes on inclusiveness in international youth projects. During the dissemination phase of such projects, youth workers can promote the value of their outcomes when working with other stakeholders in the community. Below are examples of projects that are of particular relevance for youth NGOs that are planning to organise projects for mixed abilities groups. The project examples, funded by Erasmus+, have been chosen because the participants continued to be involved in local and international youth work activities at the end of the project. They facilitated the networking activities and new project initiatives designed during the follow-up phase and essentially contributed to the level of awareness regarding the importance of international learning mobility activities for mixed abilities groups.

TGBDER started to work with young people with disabilities in 2007, having no previous experience of mixed abilities groups in youth work. A nine-year journey with young people started with a Youth in Action programme that brought together 24 deaf and hearing youngsters aged between 18 and 25 years old to discuss diversity and social inclusion, using art as a tool. This project was selected as one of the European good practice projects of that year focusing on innovation and creativity. TGBDER kept working with the deaf youth and gained special skills to communicate and interact with the deaf community, for example practising sign language in the following years. In 2012 TGBDER started to organise international youth mobility projects with mixed abilities groups in the partnership with CSCD.

1. Elephant in the Room, training course, Action 3.1, Youth in Action programme, 19-26 September 2012, Safranbolu, Turkey

The first training course aimed at building the capacity of 27 youth workers to enable them to overcome challenges in working with young people with disabilities and to reach out and involve young people with disabilities more in youth work, to cope with isolation, social exclusion, prejudice and discrimination based on disability. More than this, the training aimed to support the youth workers to develop competencies to work with mixed abilities groups of young people.

2. Inspectors for Accessibility, training course, Key Action 1 – Erasmus+, 1-8 February 2015, Craiova, Romania

The second training course aimed at equipping 28 youth workers (from Romania, Turkey, Italy, Spain, Bulgaria, Croatia, Latvia and Lithuania) with a set of skills,

methods and activities for working with mixed abilities groups. Having inclusive international youth activities meant that youngsters and youth workers with different abilities could come together and be offered the same opportunities to participate. In order to support other transnational youth activities, the group also produced a checklist that can be used to assess if a venue is physically accessible and if the methodology is fully adapted to working with mixed abilities groups.

3. Transformers: Training of Trainers (ToT) for youth projects with mixed abilities groups, Key Action 1 – Erasmus+, 26 August-2 September 2015, Ankara, Turkey

TGBDER with its partner CSCD developed the ToT in order to increase the quality and capacity of youth workers and trainers in terms of working with mixed abilities groups of young people in inclusive and accessible youth projects.

Conclusions

This chapter set out to explore the main factors that motivate youth workers with and without disabilities to participate in international learning mobility activities. It also identified the competencies and abilities developed by the participants in a number of such activities organised by the Turkey Youth Union Association and its partner the Center for Sustainable Community Development (Romania).

A series of interviews showed that the experience of participation in international activities within a mixed abilities framework made an essential contribution to the personal and professional development of the respondents, who included youth workers both with and without disabilities. All of them believed that these activities enabled them to acquire and develop skills and competencies that could not be developed in a different framework.

Working with mixed abilities groups, even if strongly encouraged by the existent European policy framework, is still a new subject for most youth workers and youth NGOs. Organising international youth activities for such groups requires special skills and competencies, new ways of communication and special technical arrangements in the working space. There is also the need for practitioners to understand the importance of fully inclusive youth projects and to move from working separately with the two groups – youth with disabilities and youth without disabilities. As this study shows, the experience of interacting and working together, both for the youth workers with disabilities and for the youth workers without disabilities, created enormously valuable learning opportunities. The spirit of togetherness that was created through the projects provided a basis for the youth workers to develop their personal and professional competencies. Consequently, we suggest that youth workers and youth NGOs need to move beyond their traditional working methodologies. However, practice should always be supported by the policy framework, and the development of evidence-based youth policies in this area will be enhanced if researchers pay further attention to the benefits of transnational learning mobility activities for mixed abilities groups.

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Chapter 9

Empowering dyslexic students through mobility

Andrei Azzopardi, Sasha Bilocca, Ruth Falzon, Valentina Farrugia, Mary Rose Formosa, Michael Formosa, Leah Gatt, Suzanne Gatt, Shaun McAlister and Kurt Mizzi

As one of the variables in learning mobility, the duration of the stay abroad is often perceived as a crucial factor in determining the quality of the outcomes, along the lines of: the longer the stay, the bigger the impact. This reasoning is problematic in connection with young people with fewer opportunities, many of whom, both for personal and practical reasons, cannot contemplate being away from home for any extended period of time, and therefore are reluctant to take up the offer of participation when it is made. However, as the following chapter written by a group of adults and young people demonstrates, even very short stays can produce valuable learning outcomes if they are properly prepared, executed and followed up.

This chapter describes and analyses the effects experienced by Maltese dyslexic youth participating in a youth exchange with Italian dyslexic youth. The aim was to provide a platform to share school experiences and inform professionals and the public about the frustrations experienced by young people with dyslexia due to a lack of understanding and insensitivity to their needs as learners.

Through 2014 Erasmus+ funding, the Maltese dyslexic young people paired up with the Italian dyslexic students to work together to raise awareness of the challenges and difficulties they experienced. The main activities involved developing a document providing advice on what young dyslexic people prefer when learning. They also engaged in dissemination activities by talking about their project and raising awareness.

From interviews carried out with the project co-ordinator (Formosa), the group leader (Falzon) and the young people, it emerged that the project enabled these young people to realise that they can achieve goals that were previously perceived as unattainable. They learned how to present issues and raise awareness with different audiences – the general public, professionals and politicians. They also developed other skills such as dealing with and using media, fundraising, budgeting, obtaining sponsorships, lobbying and talking to policy makers. This mobility experience helped them to develop skills beneficial for their holistic development, as well as for employability, necessary for achieving social inclusion.

Introduction

The European Commission (EC) is committed to supporting young people with fewer opportunities and promoting their inclusion in society (Kovacheva n.d.). The Europe 2020 Strategy (EC 2010) promotes youth mobility through the Erasmus+ programme as part of the flagship Youth on the Move. Mobility, however, requires support and investment to become a tool for promoting social inclusion (Kosa 2011). Mobility needs to be open to all young people, without barriers (Cairns 2014). The EC's strategy on achieving greater impact on young people with fewer opportunities (EC 2014) highlights how all young people can take part on their own terms, recognising the value of differences in norms, beliefs, attitudes and life experiences. Erasmus+ youth projects are ideal tools for inclusion as they address diversity in a positive and respectful way.

This chapter is a team effort and is written by seven young people and three adults. It presents the Erasmus+ youth project Dyslexic Teens Dialogue, a learning mobility experience involving a group of Maltese young people with dyslexia. It identifies the skills developed by these young people and the impact on them in terms of education, employment and inclusion in society.

Theoretical background

Dyslexia affects both academic learning and emotional well-being (Batshaw 1997). School has clear and demonstrable negative effects on the self-worth, self-concept, self-esteem and self-confidence of students with dyslexia (Chapman 1988; Humphrey 2003; Humphrey and Mullins 2002). Students with dyslexia find school an unhappy experience (Riley and Rustique-Forrester 2002) due to insensitivity to their abilities and needs. Young people need to feel successful, become aware of their unique learning strengths, and consequently learn to apply them effectively while working to overcome challenges in learning (Webb 1992). Dyslexia, or how dyslexic youth are supported, affects learning, performance, self-worth and quality of life (Humphrey and Mullins 2002). Informal and non-formal learning methods such as drama (Eaden 2004) and performance ethnography/auto-ethnography (Brewer 2000; Chang 2008; Pelias 2007) help young people to overcome barriers.

Young people with fewer opportunities experience different obstacles to mobility such as disability, health problems, educational difficulties, economic, social and geographical obstacles. The Youth Exchanges programme offers them an international mobility experience within the safety of a group (EC 2014); however, mobility programmes of a shorter duration make the involvement of young people with fewer opportunities possible and manageable.

International exchange through mobility experiences has developed beyond being merely an instrument for internationalisation, to becoming a policy objective in its own right (Bouras and Chakpitak 2014). Young people are motivated to have mobility experiences for personal and professional reasons. Self-efficacy, improving language (Hackney, Boggs and Borozan 2012) and skills also play a role in their motivation (Dwyer and Peters 2004). Mobility experiences increase employability by promoting the development of communication skills, sensitivity to different cultures, flexibility and resilience, and the ability to adjust to novel situations and to adapt to cultural diversity (Užpalienė and Vaičiūnienė 2012).

Learning a new language is a main impact of mobility experiences through the social relations that young people experience (Dörnyei 2009). Immersion in another culture is one way to learn about society and language in a new setting and young people can become more confident in the new language through their social relations (Meier and Daniels 2013). Mobility places individuals in new social and physical contexts (Loukas 2007), promoting bonds with peers, coaches and other professionals. It provides them with the opportunity to interact in specific social circles with international peers and local groups, as a result of social events and the physical aspects related to living abroad, even if it is for short durations.

The 2007-2008 Youth in Action programme implemented in Malta was found to complement non-formal education. Young people, youth organisations and youth workers benefited at a personal or professional level and youth organisations' capacity was also increased (Gatt and Gatt 2010). It was also particularly relevant for young people's socio-emotional development and employment skills.

An inclusive society is one that rises above differences of race, gender, class, appearance, generation and geography to ensure equity of opportunity regardless of origin (Atkinson and Marlier 2010). Social exclusion encompasses individuals unable to participate in economic, social, political and cultural activities at a normatively acceptable level. Social exclusion is the result of a lack of basic necessities for active participation in society – adequate housing, access to education, health care, freedom from discrimination, opportunities for social participation, and the power or a voice to affect governments' policy choices. Labonté, Hadi and Kauffmann (2011) identify nine domains of social inclusion: employment and work; income and economic resources; material resources; education and skills; health; housing; social resources; community resources; and personal safety.

Growing up as a dyslexic young person in today's society is challenging. The daily challenges experienced at school can impact their future opportunities. Youth mobility can enable these young people to develop skills that will help them with further studies and future employment, supporting their inclusion in society.

Background to the project

The project Dyslexic Teens Dialogue (DTD)¹ involves a group of young people wanting to promote awareness about dyslexia and to empower, support and encourage fellow dyslexic youth. They wanted to start a conversation with students, teachers, policy makers, people in authority and the public. Also, they were interested to learn whether dyslexic youth from other countries experience similar difficulties and barriers.

This Erasmus+ Youth project was unique in that it was part of a four-year process for Maltese dyslexic young people. The project involved 22 young people (11 Maltese, 11 Italian) and 10 youth leaders (four Maltese and six Italian). The project co-ordinator (Formosa) was the mother of one of the youths. The project involved two one-week mobility experiences in July 2016: the Italian youth came to Malta and then the Maltese youth went to Italy. The young people shared

1. See www.dyslexicteensdialogue.com.

their experiences and discussed how dyslexic youth can be supported in education. They also engaged in dissemination activities, ranging from social media² to participating in the Annual European Youth Week held in Malta and in meeting the Maltese Minister for Education and Employment.

Aims and objectives of the study

This study stems from the evaluation of the 2014 Erasmus+ programme at national level in Malta (Gatt 2016). The project was identified as an example of good practice. Gatt wished to pursue further in-depth research to identify skills the young people developed and how these skills promoted their inclusion in society. The research questions were:

- ▶ What skills and learning did the youth develop as a result of their participation in the Erasmus+ Youth project?
- ▶ How, if at all, has the project supported the youth to be better included in society?

Methodology

The research questions and the philosophical and political stance for achieving an inclusive society, where there must be social justice and equity, required a qualitative research design (Goodley 2004; Oliver 1992) in order to present an auto-ethnographic open-ended insight into the young people's voices and experiences (Denshire 2006).

In such a research design the roles of researchers and research participants are blended within a team where respect, participation, trust and reciprocity underpin the research. The research tools involved conversations and narratives to reflect, grasp or seize possible meanings. The team was interested in illustrating and suggesting, rather than explaining and evaluating what the youth were saying, as well as evoking surprise. This chapter allows readers to create their own meanings of the young people's experiences through their own voices.

All but Gatt were insider researchers. Insiders have a wealth of knowledge, and participants may feel more comfortable and freer to talk openly due to familiarity with the researchers (Denzin and Lincoln 2000). Falzon (2012: 129) notes that "in as much as this may be criticized for lack of objectivity insider research also has the potential to increase validity due to the added richness, honesty, fidelity and authenticity of the information acquired". However, one must be aware of biases making their insider position transparent (Hammersley 2000) enabling readers to construct meanings "equally as valid as our own" (Cohen et al. 2000: 106).

All but Gatt were insider researchers in that they were involved in the project prior to the research. The team had a preparation session where we addressed the importance of being true voices of the experience. Our close relationships gave us the freedom to be truthful. Throughout the four years of the project, the young people

2. See www.facebook.com/DTDMalta.

had sessions on the importance of sharing experiences – good or bad – on improving the quality of life for young people with dyslexia. As such, the methodology may also be regarded as action research (Riel 2010; Stringer 2013).

Official ethical clearance was obtained from the University of Malta. Information sheets and consent forms were used to obtain permission from young people, and their parents in the case of minors.

Data collection involved audio-recorded interviews and focus groups with the youth, the project co-ordinator (Formosa) and the professional (Falzon), who started their initial workshops. To reduce bias, it was considered appropriate that Gatt lead the actual data collection to avoid interference as a result of any familiarity (Falzon 2012). The young people were encouraged to reflect on how the experience helped them to be better prepared for further studies and employment. Data collection was carried out on three occasions: with Formosa, with Sasha and Andrei and lastly with Kurt, Leah, Mike, Shaun and Valentina. The young people became co-authors but preferred to use their first names, while the adults chose to refer to themselves by their surname. Their voices are presented accordingly.

Research results

This section presents the different skills and competences developed under a number of themes that emerged in the conversations.

Motivation to understand and communicate. The group came up with the project idea during drama workshops with the Malta Dyslexia Association: “After these summer workshops some of us wanted to continue meeting ... we wanted to help others so we came up with idea” (Valentina). Calling themselves Dyslexic Teens Dialogue (DTD), their motto was “We want to start a conversation” (Shaun). “We prepared so much for the application and then we were not sure if it would be accepted” (Andrei). The young people consider this project to be part of this conversation experience and a unique opportunity to internationalise: “if we had to do this with other Maltese youth it would not be the same due to the cultural difference and a different educational system” (Sasha). They wanted to elicit “advantages and disadvantages ... across the two countries and try to address the disadvantages ... the motivation is to help others” (Andrei). According to Kurt, knowing “what is happening abroad”, they could talk with more conviction to people “high up”, realising that “they are not on their own and that there are people in larger countries who are exactly in the same position”. This project encouraged them to reflect “how foreign countries view dyslexia, not just this little island” (Shaun).

The young people realised that although the Maltese and Italian education systems are different, they shared similar difficulties, including teachers’ lack of understanding and knowledge of dyslexia. They came to learn that they go through the same experiences. “Even though they get different help from us, there are a lot of similarities as well” (Leah). Surprisingly, “in Malta and in Italy we are all in the same boat... teachers not knowing what dyslexia is, in Italy they face the same problem” (Andrei).

The aim of the project was to outline, with respect to dyslexia, “the main differences, advantages and disadvantages that the educational system in Malta holds against

the Italian educational system" (Andrei) and to "bring a message on the difficulties we were going through to try to change the system of examinations" (Kurt). The participants wanted to "understand how dyslexia is handled in other countries – to learn how a European country deals with dyslexia" (Shaun). The aim to help others arose before the Erasmus project when they had first started meeting. "I think we boosted the group by this [mobility] experience and perhaps our outcome will make people look at us differently" (Shaun).

The young people explained that this project involved lobbying and awareness raising. According to Formosa: "They wanted the world to hear their voice and ... through their booklet ... fight [for entitled access to examinations]. For once it was their voice coming through a document, not a professional asking the parents ... it was – 'I'm dyslexic, please ask me. I can reply for myself, I know what I need and I know how to communicate my needs'".

Skills learned. The young people noted that most skills learned were part of their four-year experience and not just due to this project. However, they acknowledged that this project helped them become more self-confident due to training in public speaking, entrepreneurial opportunities and socialising with different cultures.

Decision making. "The youth got involved in discussion, group work, group thinking, learning how to listen, learning to communicate ... accepting other ideas ... [and] arrived at the best options through discussion" (Formosa). They developed management skills: "we had to come together and come up with an original timetable, an original product so that we get the funds and to make a good outline" (Andrei). The group had to process ideas and interests, such as photography, and make a coherent programme. They learned what they could do, when they needed to refer and that seeking help was actually a strength. "She [Formosa] was also a big motivator and a good guide but ultimately we decided" (Kurt). Through the different tasks, they learned to decide who could contribute best, becoming autonomous, empowered and more confident. Sasha explained that the challenge of working in an all-boys' preparation team made her autonomous. Andrei explained that it "helped me ... to present myself. We had to present in front of the whole group ... now I am not concerned about saying that I am dyslexic ... constantly throwing jokes to each other about dyslexia as if overpowering dyslexia".

Management skills. The young people "learned how to organise themselves into groups, according to their interests; they set out the activities for each of the project days" (Formosa). Whereas they had previously worked as a whole group, they were now in smaller groups, entailing more organisation, thereby developing their organisation and time-management skills: "I also organised a treasure hunt – my first time. I had to go to Valletta, compose the question ... I learnt putting your mind to something and finishing it ... I had everything ready from October when the event was in July" (Andrei).

Formal and informal communication skills. Not all the young people spoke English or Italian so "in the beginning communication was a challenge but it eventually became easier and we still communicate on Facebook" (Valentina). In a context where young people use technology to communicate, direct personal contact still adds a unique dimension: "Their character really came out when we were in Italy with

them" (Valentina). "She knew no Italian but with my and their English we managed to communicate ... about four of us could speak in Italian but not that fluent, but we could still communicate with using Google on our mobile" (Andrei). The leaders helped in translation as the Italians spoke very basic English. Speaking Italian helped Andrei more than years of schooling "as now I feel more fluent and now when I see TV I understand it much better and it is easier as I had forgotten all my Italian".

Formosa observed that: "They were all over Facebook, Twitter and social media but ultimately once you are looking for a job you are not communicating over Facebook ... Communicating with the public and using different media were valuable communication skills learnt." Andrei learned to write formally, deciding "what to say and how to say it" when seeking sponsorships and information for the treasure hunt. "Because they are dyslexic, they hate anything to do with reading and writing ... quite a challenge ... but they actually sent the e-mails out for the sponsorships ... [They also] got the idea to open a Facebook Page, a private page between the Maltese and the Italian participants. We put in our photos and a profile picture."

The project included workshops on presentation skills, and building self-confidence was a project outcome. "[They] met a lot of people to whom we presented the booklet ... One was the Minister of Education ... All this social interaction, and meeting with other people. I think they had experiences that other youth were not exposed to. I think that helped" (Formosa).

Team and group skills. Sasha valued her experience in organising an outdoor activity: "We had to work in a small group together, do the planning, research the games, creative thinking and imagination." This helped participants to "be responsible and to find the time to complete the task you promised" (Leah). Formosa regarded this as an important skill: "When you work in a group, you are given tasks ... the responsibility of doing it ... it obviously affects others ... There were some ... more dedicated than others but together it was fine ... it came together in the end." Sasha "learnt how to manage a group, to understand what others think, that not everyone gives 100%". As a group leader, she learned "to be sensitive to the outcome and that this outcome may not be what you thought it would be". She also learned to handle her emotions when the group did not like an activity she planned for the programme. The young people learned how to distribute tasks through negotiation rather than simply allocating them.

Finance management skills. Although the young people were aware that Formosa was responsible for financial management, they still felt responsible and "budgeting was a challenging lesson learnt" (Kurt). They "started sending e-mails for sponsorships ... searched and googled who can help ... had a very tight budget ... and had to supplement it ... found a lot of sponsorships ... This was an unplanned activity of the project ... another learning outcome – how to plan, how to budget" (Formosa).

Active citizenship. The DTD had been lobbying for four years and consequently regarded themselves as active citizens. This project took their experience to an international level as they shared their experiences with youth from another country. They completed the booklet "which targeted the students themselves and then we had to go a step further ... Our objectives are positive, guidelines to help dyslexic students that can be applicable to all students" (Andrei).

The young people developed advocacy skills: “[to] know and to fight for my own rights ... not be pitied but to get what I need ... When I have a test at school, I approach my teachers and tell them – I got these arrangements and I need them. I learned to understand that this is my right” (Sasha). Andrei was aware that there is a need for further lobbying. Understanding what access and support Italian youth received gave him the confidence to express his own needs and to continue lobbying. They “ventured out, contributing to the draft for the future national youth policy. [They] went to the consultation meeting ... aware that this event could be an outlet for their voice to be heard ... [to] make a difference” (Formosa).

The young people’s four years of advocacy and self-advocacy was an inspiration to the Italians. They “were exactly in the same position: with low self-esteem; did not believe in themselves; no confidence ... The impact was also on the Italian youth, on the people who accompanied them, half of whom were teachers ... very impressed with the type of work that we are doing in Malta” (Formosa).

Responsibility and commitment. Organising activities for non-Maltese youth brought a degree of responsibility as they planned and executed their activities. This “helped me understand responsibility ... responsibility is in everything that you do and is necessary” (Sasha). The young people faced deadlines and task completion: “Each of us had different days to organise. Everyone did something” (Mike). “The days were planned according to our skills and the activities ... for example Kurt was good in photographs, Sasha was in the Girl Guides” (Leah).

At the beginning, not all embraced the project with the same intensity and this created some friction with respect to commitment and completion of tasks: “planning was quite a challenge due to people’s other commitments and I think we did not really understand the significance of this experience – until you really get into it and become responsible for the task you have been given” (Kurt). “Our main challenges were ... to put everyone focused on what you were doing to work together mainly” (Andrei). Every challenge became an opportunity. “Our day was inside, and I had to do photography with two other members of the group and I had to see how I am going to explain and be clear. Planning has a lot of work but then when you are going to do the session that was the big responsibility and then your success” (Kurt). The self-evaluation exercises helped them grow: “accept and admit that you have done something wrong or could have done something better” (Andrei).

Employability and social inclusion. The project supported social inclusion. The young people developed self-confidence to face job interviews. “In the beginning [in 2011] all of them would not make eye contact. They were so low in self-esteem, thought that they were not worth anything. They thought of themselves in terms of their examination results and not in terms of other skills that employers are looking for now. So I am very hopeful now that when they go for an interview, [while] the CV might not be as brilliant as somebody else’s in terms of academic achievements, they can present themselves better because they have actually met the Minister of Education and ... had meetings with so many important people” (Formosa). “I now feel more prepared to deal with society as first of all I am more confident in myself and in my abilities ... I feel much more included in society now” (Andrei).

The project increased employment prospects and enhanced the participants' CVs. Shaun "could use the website for this project if I go to an interview". Valentina's "future work will involve working with people. It is a good thing to put in my CV that I communicated with foreigners, could tell my weaknesses – dyslexia – during an interview and to the chef [potential employer], who is also dyslexic." Kurt learned to address a large group and, with an aspiration to become an architect, this was "really worthwhile".

Lasting impact. The young people considered the project an unforgettable experience. The greatest impact was the emotional bonding: "The thing I most remember ... is the last time I saw them ... Everyone was crying and that is what I think was the greatest impact of the whole programme" (Andrei). The following statements sum up the impact of the experience.

Leah: *I have changed. I always felt included in society, but this project made it easier for me.*

Valentina: *This experience helped me find ways to feel "more normal".*

Sasha: *The process led me to be more confident as before I was not so comfortable with my profile. This process helped me accept and be more comfortable.*

Andrei: *It was for sure a life-changing memorable experience.*

Mike: *It was good experience. What more can I say?*

Shaun: *In this experience, there is something much bigger than culture.*

The outcomes of this project were, overall, positive. The project had an impact on the young people's personal growth, and on their attitudes towards dyslexia. The two weeks were the climax of a year's work, which also led to a publication which promotes good practice towards dyslexia.

Discussion

This project provides an example of young people's experience of alterity (Cicchelli 2014), as they attempted to understand the educational challenges faced by other dyslexic youth in a different country. They critically analysed learning barriers within a European perspective. The exchange presents an element of cosmopolitanism through which the young people became social actors relating their culture of belonging to that of another European culture (Cicchelli 2013). This exposed them to a sense of otherness, even if for a shorter duration than traditional Erasmus study exchanges (Cicchelli 2016). They gained the liberating awareness that their struggles with misunderstandings of their profile were not unique to their culture. This international perspective promoted a feeling of inclusion within a European perspective.

Mastering soft skills in addition to academic skills is crucial for youth development and eventual career success (Andrews and Higson 2008; Sissons and Jones 2012). The challenges tackled at the planning, implementation and evaluation stage of the project have supported the development of various soft skills considered

important in new recruits by employers (UKCES 2014). Managing time and people, planning and organising activities, working as a team, communicating through different modes and letting team members know what work needs to be done are all essential for daily life as well as successful employment (Ulinski and O'Callaghan 2002). These skills, coupled with the importance of keeping commitments, being responsible and aware that doing one's part affects other group members' work and the project completion, increases readiness for employment (NCWD 2012). The young people also improved their self-confidence, resulting in a better self-concept (Lippman et al. 2015).

The project motivated the young people to continue lobbying. They were motivated to do something about their situation, in order to achieve tangible outcomes as part of the project outputs. They engaged in active citizenship activities such as advocacy, self-advocacy, lobbying, responsibility and commitment. These effective transformations for socially excluded youth can be achieved through promoting the self-organisation of marginalised groups who participate in direct forms of political action to promote positive change (Goldring and Guidoum 2011). This was evident through their ability to reach different political and education stakeholders. The Erasmus+ project thus helped them grow towards becoming better, active European citizens.

It should be acknowledged that while the project contributed to these young people's development, it is not the sole contributor to their social inclusion. The mobility experience helped promote and increase self-worth, helped develop a range of soft skills and provided a sense of success in achieving the project outcomes. However, the road to social inclusion for marginalised youth needs time and continuous support. Youth mobility projects can support young people, but are not in themselves enough to achieve social inclusion. Mobility is but one dimension through which disadvantaged youth can be supported towards social inclusion.

Conclusion

The EC continues to support youth mobility programmes through Erasmus+. This study explored how mobility can be one tool for promoting the social inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities. Youth Exchanges offer young people the opportunities to experience success in achieving targets set, help them to develop crucial skills in the process, as well as celebrate active citizenship. While such initiatives are not the complete solution to the challenge of social exclusion experienced across Europe, they are surely one means through which youth can be supported in their preparation for a prosperous life as European citizens.

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Part III

Effects, outcomes and follow-ups

Chapter 10

Do international inclusion projects work? Yes

Tony Geudens, Wolfgang Hagleitner, Francine Labadie and Frank Stevens¹

The results of RAY (Research-based Analysis of Youth in Action) provide strong evidence for the beneficial effects of international projects for young people with fewer opportunities. Tony Geudens, Wolfgang Hagleitner, Francine Labadie and Frank Stevens present very important results suggesting that international youth projects can support learning of young people with fewer opportunities. Young people with fewer opportunities who participated in mobility projects indicate, for example, greater perceived improvements in diverse competences compared to those with most opportunities, as well as more interest in European issues following their international experience. Moreover, the chapter also shows that it is important to focus directly on inclusion, as projects targeting inclusion themes seem to generate more positive outcomes for the participants and their organisations.

This is the short answer. As always, the real answer contains many more nuances. Nevertheless, our research has found indications that international projects have more effect on young people with fewer opportunities compared to their counterparts with more opportunities. Also, thematic projects addressing inclusion contribute effectively to participants' inclusion-mindedness, more so than international youth projects on other topics. This indicates that it is worth investing in international "inclusion projects".

The context of this piece of research

The European Commission has provided mobility programmes for young people and youth workers since 1988. These programmes fund international non-formal learning projects that should inspire a sense of active European citizenship, solidarity and tolerance, and encourage the inclusion of all young people.

But how can you measure this? The RAY project (Research-based Analysis of Youth in Action) brought together research partners and the Youth in Action national agencies from 20 countries to find out. They asked thousands of former participants and project leaders how international youth projects (funded by the European Commission's Youth programme) have affected them. The RAY data was collected

1. This is an abridged version of the original articles (Geudens et al. 2015a, 2015b). You can find the full articles on the research pages of SALTO Inclusion: www.salto-youth.net/InclusionResearch/.

through an online questionnaire, so we need to consider a possible self-selection bias in the analysis of the results.

RAY shows the effects of international mobility on young people and project leaders. These projects influence participants' personal and professional development, they stimulate interest in European issues, they help participants appreciate cultural diversity and they include young people with fewer opportunities.

The SALTO Inclusion Resource Centre took the initiative to analyse the European-wide RAY data from 2010, 2011 and 2013 (total sample size 15 009) from an inclusion point of view. Together with RAY researchers, we contrasted the effects of an international mobility project on young people with fewer opportunities and those with most opportunities. Similarly, we compared the perceived effects of projects on the topic of inclusion with projects that addressed a completely different subject.

Part 1: Mobility projects benefit most those with fewer opportunities

“Young people with fewer opportunities” are defined in the Erasmus+ programme guide as those young people who are “at a disadvantage compared to their peers” because they face one or more of the seven exclusion factors: disability, health problems, educational difficulties, cultural differences, economic obstacles, social obstacles or geographic obstacles. These factors can pose barriers to young people's inclusion in society (for example, education, labour market, housing, health, community; see Markovic et al. 2015). However, it is clear that the mere fact of coming from a minority or using a wheelchair does not automatically limit your opportunities.

The comparative disadvantage is important and context-dependent

Labelling someone as “having fewer opportunities” is not at all straightforward (nor desirable). However, we needed to find a way to distil a group with fewer opportunities from the RAY respondents. We did so based on a mix of objective and subjective criteria.

- ▶ The educational levels of the respondents (criterion 1) and of their parents (criterion 2) are generally accepted as objective indicators of young people's resources that influence their chances in life.
- ▶ Other questions asked the participants to indicate (subjectively) which obstacles they faced (criterion 3) or whether they find they get a fair share of opportunities in life (criterion 4).

This brought us to a set of four exclusion indicators: two subjective and two objective ones.

The researcher team used a threshold approach to determine subgroups

Disadvantage is not a binary concept, there are levels of gradation. To see the effect of international projects on truly underprivileged participants, we created a “fewer opportunities” sample (YPFO) of respondents who had at least three of the exclusion indicators above (2 823 fit into this group). This also guarantees

that the subgroup of “fewer opportunities” is based on a mix of subjective and objective disadvantages. We created a contrast group of “young people with most opportunities” (YPMO), who did not present any of the four exclusion indicators at all (5 467 in this group).

These were the two groups we contrasted in this inclusion analysis.

A summary of the self-perceived effects on young people

Many differences emerged between the respondents “with fewer opportunities” and those with “most opportunities”. It is remarkable that these differences in self-declared impact are almost always in favour of the participants with fewer opportunities. But even though the discrepancies are statistically significant, the absolute differences are not always that big. This shows that the perceived mobility effect on our two contrasted groups is different, but that the actual differences are not all that extreme.

Lifelong learning starts young

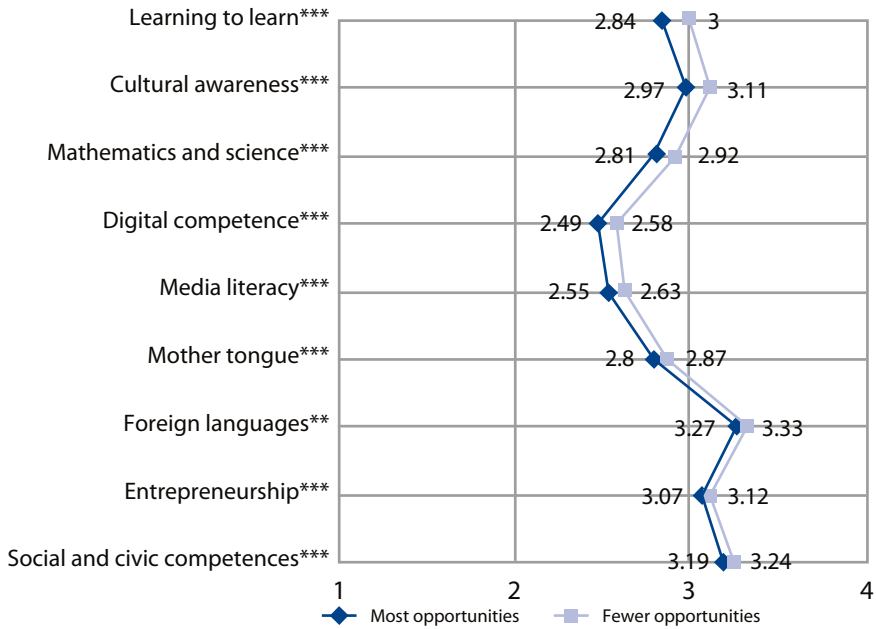
The European Commission developed a framework of “key competences for lifelong learning” that they consider fundamental for each individual in a knowledge-based society. They provide added value for the labour market, social cohesion and active citizenship. The RAY researchers checked whether international youth projects also contributed to these competences and they found that they did. Generally, all surveyed participants indicated that the project contributed to these competences, especially to “Communication in a foreign language”, “Social and civic competences”, “Entrepreneurship” and “Cultural awareness” (with a more mitigated result for “digital competence”).

Young people with fewer opportunities learn to learn more

When comparing our two groups, young people with fewer opportunities consistently indicate a higher gain in competences than the participants with most opportunities² (Figure 10.1). The difference with the most-opportunities group of respondents is highest for “learning to learn” (a mean score on a scale from 1 = absolutely disagree to 4 = absolutely agree). It lies 0.16 higher for YPFO compared to the mean score of YPMO. But the project also strengthened their cultural awareness and expression considerably more compared to the contrast group (+0.13) and their mathematical-scientific competences (+0.11).

2. All differences in this article are highly significant, unless specified otherwise. You can find the statistical details in the full articles (Geudens et al. 2015a, 2015b).

Figure 10.1: Learning rated by participants (aggregated results)
Through my participation I learned



Key: *** highly significant ($p \leq .001$), ** significant ($p \leq .01$)

Mobility projects give young people with fewer opportunities self-confidence

So how do participants see themselves after the project? What change did they notice in themselves? Participating in an international project and meeting people from different cultures is a boost for one's self-confidence, even more so for young people with fewer opportunities, who may not have been abroad before, compared to most-opportunities youth (36% more YPFO than YPMO said they became more self-confident). This is in line with, for example, a higher confidence to travel among YPFO as a result of the project, more so than among the contrast group of YPMO.

An international project is also a discovery of oneself. It can show you how you behave in new situations and with new people. This element of self-discovery is stronger for young people with fewer opportunities than for young people with most opportunities (2.5% more).

International youth projects are a springboard to the future

Many participants come back from an international experience with the solemn intention of dedicating more time and effort to foreign languages; and this intercultural project gave them an appetite for improving communication across borders. But such

projects also help young people to decide what they want to do with their lives. They can serve as a compass to the future.

For young people with fewer opportunities this is even more the case than for young people with most opportunities. A mobility project gives YPFO a clearer idea about further education (a mean of 0.13 higher on a scale from 1 = absolutely disagree to 4 = absolutely agree) and career goals (0.14 higher), compared to the most-opportunities contrast group. YPFO also consider going abroad as one of the options, more so than for privileged young people (0.7 higher).

Youth projects change people's lives

From the RAY results it is clear that international youth projects cultivate an interest in European issues for the majority of young people. But these projects are also beneficial in raising support for disadvantaged people or to combat discrimination. As with the competences above, more young people with fewer opportunities undergo a more positive effect during their mobility project, compared to participants with most opportunities.

Disadvantaged people are more committed to fight against exclusion

Even though all the results are significantly higher for the underprivileged group, the most beneficial influence of an international youth project lies in the support for disadvantaged people and the fight against discrimination, intolerance and racism. It seems that these projects increase their commitment to fight the injustice that they are most likely exposed to themselves, more so than is the case with participants with most opportunities. Could this be due to a greater identification with the victims of disadvantage, discrimination and intolerance?

Young people with fewer opportunities participate... in their own way

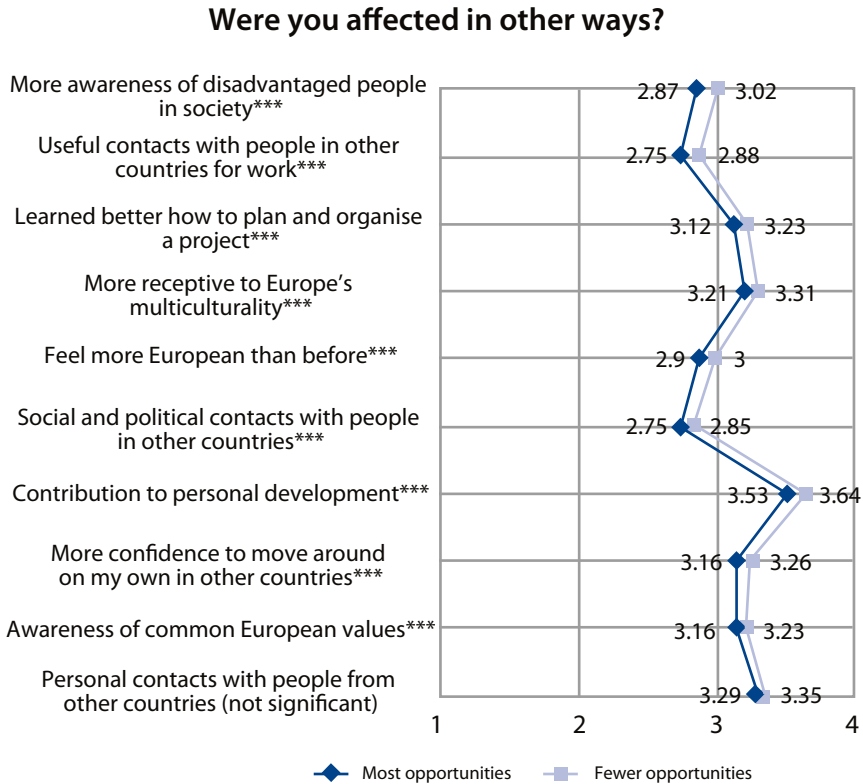
Also, the declared increased participation in political life was a bit stronger for young people with fewer opportunities as compared to the contrast group (5.2% more YPFO said the project influenced them "to a greater extent"). Youth projects did raise disadvantaged young people's interest in European issues more than for young people with most opportunities (even if only 3.7% more). This is an interesting finding to feed the "participation debate", where often policy makers complain about a lack of interest or the under-representation of specific (minority) groups. Could it be that non-formal methods (as used during youth projects) are more favourable for participation, as opposed to the formal political debate-style types of involvement?

Undeniable impact in many spheres of life

When sounding out what other effects young people experienced thanks to their mobility project, it is surprising that young people with fewer opportunities are systematically and significantly more positive than those with most opportunities

(Figure 10.2). They indicated raised awareness about disadvantage in society, better planning and organisational skills, more openness to multiculturalism, more awareness of common European values. YPFO also say the project contributed more to their personal and professional development, as compared to the YPMO.

Figure 10.2: Effects indicated by participants



Key: *** highly significant ($p \leq .001$), ** significant ($p \leq .01$).

The one aspect that YPFO do not differ in compared to YPMO is the social connection to people abroad. Both groups are equally positive about the people they got to know from the other countries (3.3 on a scale from 1 = absolutely disagree to 4 = absolutely agree).

Mobility projects as an incubator of values

RAY asked former participants how their appreciation of a number of values or concepts has changed as a result of participating in an international youth project. In general, a mobility experience reinforces the importance young people give to values such as respect, tolerance, solidarity and many others. However, for a majority of participants, a European project only has a limited impact on their adherence to religion or rule of law.

Different importance given to self-realisation

But here again, we see that international projects have a bigger impact on the values that young people with fewer opportunities cherish (or start cherishing) compared to the contrast group. Self-realisation refers to becoming what one wants to be, within the possibilities of one's character or personality and without external coercion. It is interesting to see that the difference between YPFO and YPMO is greatest for self-realising values such as self-fulfilment (8.2% more YPFO said it became more important) and individual freedom (6.6% more).

Young people with high values of self-realisation are probably more motivated to get active in their lives and to take positive steps to reach their goals. The increase in these values is a boost for the group with fewer opportunities to get their lives back on track, on the track they have chosen.

The difference between the fewer-opportunities and the most-opportunities samples is non-significant regarding how the project increased their respect for other cultures. Mobility projects increase the perceived importance of this intercultural respect in both groups to a similarly high extent (64.8% across both groups said it became more important).

Underprivileged youth become more European-minded

More young people with fewer opportunities (3.7% more) say they became more interested in European issues, compared to their privileged counterparts, as a result of the international youth project. They indicate they feel significantly more European (a mean that is 0.10 higher on a scale from 1 = absolutely disagree to 4 = absolutely agree) and aware of common European values (0.08 higher) compared to young people with most opportunities. So, does such a European mobility project also influence their image of the European Union? Yes, it does. The fewer-opportunity group admits, more than the most-opportunities group, that it views the EU more positively thanks to the project (4% more YPFO say their image of the EU has become better compared to YPMO, Figure 10.2 above). This is definitely an interesting finding in the light of increasing Euro-scepticism and struggles with European integration.

Pondering results and producing conclusions

The RAY analysis of European data indicates that international youth projects have a positive effect on any participants in various fields (see RAY – Research-based Analysis of Youth in Action website). This “inclusion analysis” of the RAY data, however, focuses on the impact of mobility projects on young people with fewer opportunities, compared to those with most opportunities. Some conclusions and reflections follow:

Difference in learning and impact

If there is a difference in learning and impact, the young people with fewer opportunities generally gain more from the mobility project than most-opportunities youth. This suggests that the return on investment in participants with fewer opportunities is higher than for project participants with most opportunities. Thus, increasing

the proportion of fewer-opportunities participants would improve the impact of the European youth programme. At the same time this would be a beneficial investment in the personal and professional development of young people with fewer opportunities at risk of exclusion.

But are the answers the results of a stronger impact? Or do young people with fewer and with most opportunities have a different way of answering questionnaires? Are socially expected responses more frequent among fewer-opportunities respondents or are privileged respondents more critical? The relatively higher impact on disadvantaged youth compared to privileged youth is most likely due to the different starting points. If young people with fewer opportunities enter a mobility project with fewer prior experiences and lower competences than young people with more opportunities who are well-travelled, then it is only logical that the scope for improvement and development is a lot higher in the former.

A clearer aim in life

Young people with fewer opportunities report that projects give them a clearer view of what they want to be doing in their lives, more so than young people with most opportunities. This shows that international mobility projects give young people the opportunity to take some time out, away from daily business, and reflect on the options they see for themselves in life. Maybe these moments of reflection are scarcer for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds compared to most-opportunities youth. An international project is a welcome occasion to question themselves and to project themselves in the future.

Together with an improved “learning-to-learn” competence, youth projects seem to be an efficient way to make young people with fewer opportunities more autonomous and self-assured for the future.

Becoming more “European”

Mobility projects make young people with fewer opportunities more European-minded, compared to privileged youth, even if only marginally. The international projects also raise their commitment to fight discrimination and intolerance more than is the case for the contrast group.

This indicates that young people’s European identity and activism takes shape in different ways from what politicians consider to be participation (for example, voting turnout, interest in politics, debating and so on). The non-formal setting of a youth project seems to be a more suitable environment for active participation (citizenship?), but then in a different format.

Learning to learn

The biggest difference between respondents with fewer and most opportunities is in their self-declared “learning-to-learn” competence. This seems to be an indication that an international youth project is a particularly suitable format for underprivileged youth to stimulate future learning. This shows the strength of non-formal learning

for (certain types of) young people with fewer opportunities. The collaborative and active (and fun) learning environment seems to be more fruitful for them, more than for most-opportunities youth. This appears to refute the “Matthew effect”: that the most advantaged young people do not get the most out of mobility projects.

Different? Or not so much?

The answers to the RAY impact questions differ significantly between those with fewer and those with most opportunities. Likewise, the impact questions for which the results are not different also become interesting. The social connection with new friends abroad is equally important for both groups, as well as the respect for other cultures.

It is reassuring that in certain domains, young people with fewer opportunities respond similarly to mainstream youth. Despite statistically significant differences, the absolute differences are often relatively small. This makes young people in situations of relative disadvantage less of a separate phenomenon. Each and every young person has similar needs and deserves to get a fair share of opportunities in life.

The results show that with appropriate interventions (for example a mobility project, non-formal learning), young people with fewer opportunities cherish similar positive values, boast equivalent competences and can have equally bright future perspectives.

Part 2: International inclusion projects effectively generate more inclusiveness

Part 1 of this chapter shows that participants in international mobility projects clearly report a positive impact on their competences, their behaviour and their values as a result of their participation. But do such projects that specifically address inclusion themes have a beneficial effect on participants’ values as a results of their participation, learning and commitment regarding inclusion? In other words, do they deliver what they promise (more so than non-inclusion projects)? The data of the RAY research project indicates that the Youth in Action programme (now Erasmus+ Youth) is a good tool to reach European “equity and inclusion” aims.

Creating subsets of inclusion projects

We contrasted the effects of “thematic inclusion projects” on participants with the effects generated by “non-inclusion projects”. In the RAY study, project leaders indicated the main themes of their project. A number of these themes were related to inclusion, as defined in the Youth in Action Inclusion Strategy (for example, social inclusion, Roma, health, urban/rural development, interreligious dialogue, anti-discrimination, disability, minorities, sexual identity).

However, we suspect that a proportion of projects were tempted to check only one inclusion theme because of the possible advantages and the social desirability associated with it. Or some projects would only have a secondary focus on inclusion. Therefore, we set a threshold of a minimum of two “inclusion themes” before we would consider the project to be a “thematic inclusion project”. This gives us more certainty that the projects in question truly addressed issues of exclusion and inclusion.

Contrasting effects of inclusion projects with non-inclusion projects

We contrast the self-declared effects on participants from these “inclusion projects” with the effects of projects that did not indicate any of the inclusion themes listed above (let’s call them “non-inclusion projects”). Of our RAY sample, 1 606 project participants (10.2%) participated in an “inclusion project” and 3 994 (25.4%) in a “non-inclusion project”. The other 64.4% of respondents participated in a project that only listed one “inclusion” topic and are not included in this comparative analysis. All results are statistically significant, unless specified otherwise.

A boost for positive values

In general, participating in an international youth project does have a positive influence on young people’s values (Figure 10.3). When they were asked, more than half of respondents indicated that respect for other cultures, tolerance, solidarity, equality, self-fulfilment, etc. has become more important for them as a result of participating in the project.

When we compare the effects of inclusion projects on participants versus the effects of non-inclusion projects, we see that inclusion projects generate significantly more positive effects than non-inclusion projects. Young people who participated in a thematic inclusion project indicate 14.9% more that respect for human life has “become more important”, compared to participants in non-inclusion projects. The results show similar differences for the increased importance, as compared with non-inclusion projects, given to human rights (13.8% more), equality (10% more), solidarity (9.4% more), individual freedom (9% more), peace (8.2% more), tolerance (7.7% more), religion (6.4% more), respect for other cultures (6.4% more) and rule of law (4.2% more). This statistically supports our hypothesis that inclusion projects indeed generate more inclusion-related effects than non-inclusion projects.

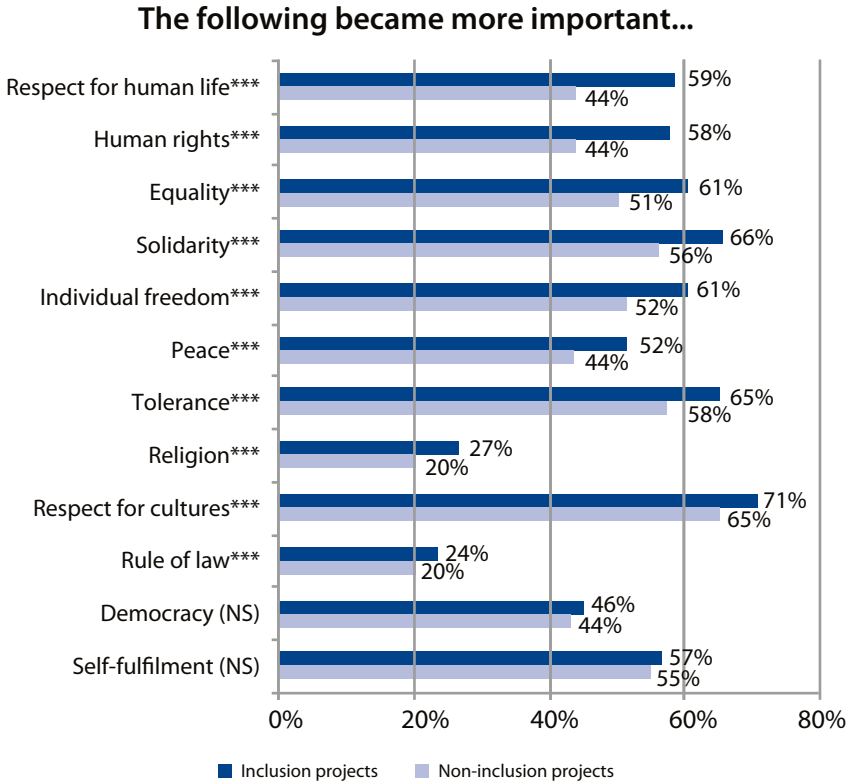
Generating awareness of what goes wrong in society

An international mobility experience has quite a positive impact on young people in general. International youth projects stimulate personal development, bring people from different cultures closer together and make them more receptive to multiculturalism.

But in the frame of this inclusion analysis, we are interested to see if projects dealing with inclusion affect young people differently compared to non-inclusion projects. The biggest difference is that inclusion projects trigger young people’s awareness of disadvantage and injustice in society, a lot more than is the case in non-inclusion projects (the mean score for inclusion projects lies an extraordinary 0.33 higher than for non-inclusion projects on a scale that ranges from 1 = absolutely disagree to 4 = absolutely agree).

At the same time, it is interesting to note that thematic inclusion projects do not generate systematically more receptiveness to multiculturalism compared to non-inclusion projects, even though it is also an important feature of inclusion. Both groups indicate equal effects (around 3.32 on a scale of 1 to 4).

Figure 10.3: Issues that have gained importance in their lives according to participants



Key: *** highly significant ($p \leq .001$), ** significant ($p \leq .01$), NS non-significant.

Increased commitment to combat exclusion

Awareness is one thing, but do international projects also change people’s intentions to take action? RAY data give us a yes. More than a third of participants say that their participation in the youth project made them participate more in societal and political life, combat discrimination and intolerance and support disadvantaged people (approximately half do not change their intentions, and less than 10% reduce their commitment). The projects raised the interest in European issues of half of the respondents.

But what about thematic inclusion projects? Do they generate different effects to non-inclusion projects? Participants in international inclusion projects indicate significantly more that their commitment grew, thanks to the mobility project, to “work against discrimination, intolerance, xenophobia, racism” (11.4% more) and “support disadvantaged people” (12.4% more), compared to non-inclusion projects. Thematic inclusion projects (as surveyed in the RAY study) are thus an effective tool to create actors for change, more so than a non-inclusion project.

Effective learning about inclusion topics

If an international youth project addresses inclusion themes, we would expect that participants' learning will also be linked to those fields – and the other way around. When comparing the top five issues that participants said they learned about in their mobility project, it is remarkable that more general topics such as Europe, art and culture, and youth and youth policy are mentioned most frequently by participants of both types of projects. These three learning subjects appear in the top five of inclusion as well as non-inclusion projects.

However, participants in thematic inclusion projects indicate less often than participants in non-inclusion projects that they learned about the following three general topics (Europe: -5.4%; youth and youth policy: -9%; and art and culture: -8.6%).

When contrasting the learning mentioned by participants in the different types of projects, we further see that inclusion projects – as expected – generate more learning about inclusion-related topics such as inclusion (+18.9%), discrimination (+12.9%), disability (+11.9%) or minorities (+8.9%), compared to non-inclusion projects. Environment is a lot less addressed in inclusion projects (-9%). These effects are worth being tested by more robust research approaches, such as longitudinal studies or methods that do not rely on self-evaluation.

Inclusion projects boost key competences

The RAY research essentially asks participants about the effects of participating in international youth projects. We compared these effects between participants in thematic inclusion projects and non-inclusion projects. For most of the parameters, the generally positive results are not so different between the two subgroups. However, inclusion projects do give young people an added benefit in some domains.

Inclusion projects stimulate learning to learn

The responses to a number of questions were combined into aggregated indicators of the key competences for lifelong learning (European Commission 2006a), an EU reference framework of competences necessary for personal fulfilment, social inclusion, active citizenship and employment. International youth projects do boost foreign language competence, and social and civic competences, but also a sense of initiative and entrepreneurship and cultural awareness and expression – for all participants (regardless of the type of project).

But when comparing the effect of thematic inclusion projects versus non-inclusion projects, projects about inclusion issues generate significantly more “learning-to-learn” competence (the mean score for inclusion projects lies 0.09 higher than for non-inclusion projects on a scale from 1 = absolutely disagree to 4 = absolutely agree). This is also the case, but less markedly so in absolute terms, for “mathematical competence and basic competence in science and technology” (0.07 higher) and “cultural awareness” (0.06 higher).

A boost for personal development and confidence to travel

We have already noted that thematic inclusion projects more effectively raise awareness of disadvantage in society compared to non-inclusion projects. From the RAY data, it

is also very clear that international youth projects are considered a great stimulus for personal development by the participants, and this is significantly more so the case in inclusion projects (a mean of 0.06 higher on a scale from 1 to 4) than for non-inclusion projects. Similarly, inclusion projects stimulate young people's confidence to travel within their country and abroad, more so than non-inclusion projects. The absolute differences are not very high, but still significant.

Additional benefits of inclusion projects on youth work

Some of the respondents were actively involved in the youth field as a youth worker or youth leader, representing an organisation. When this was the case, they answered a few more questions about how the project they participated in affected their youth work or the youth organisation they worked for. They indicate that the international youth project indeed had a beneficial effect on their youth work practice and structure. Full details are available in the RAY research reports.

But what interests us is to see if thematic inclusion projects have a different impact compared to non-inclusion projects. In general this is not the case. Involvement in thematic inclusion projects has similar beneficial effects as involvement in non-inclusion projects, but there are two exceptions.

Youth leaders/workers who participated in a thematic inclusion project said they understand non-formal education and learning (NFL) better, significantly more so than participants in non-inclusion projects (a mean of 0.16 higher on a scale from 1 = absolutely disagree to 4 = absolutely agree).

But the most remarkable effect that the youth leaders/workers share is the increased commitment of their organisation to the inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities, thanks to the inclusion project (a mean of 0.25 higher than is the case for non-inclusion projects on the same scale from 1 to 4).

This shows that the effects of thematic inclusion projects go beyond the individual participant. Participating in an inclusion project also strengthens the organisation's commitment to inclusion.

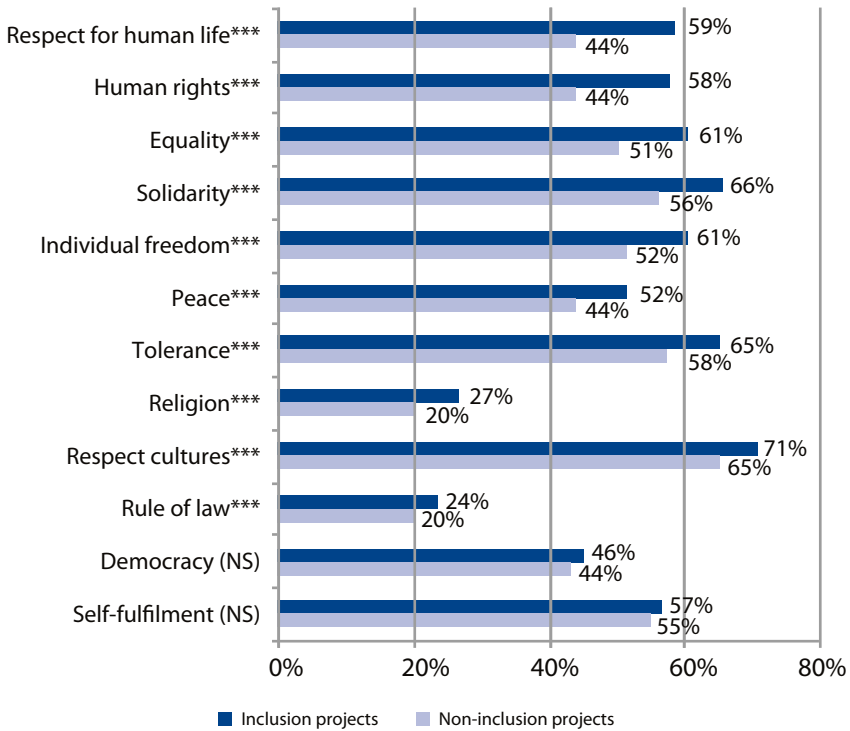
Pondering results and attempting conclusions

There are a number of different effects emanating from inclusion projects, compared to projects that do not specifically tackle the topic of inclusion. Let's explore the reasons, since this could lead to hypothesis for further exploration.

Thematic inclusion projects trigger participants to question situations of disadvantage

International projects that address themes related to exclusion and inclusion do a particularly good job of raising awareness of disadvantage and social injustice. Can we assume that this personal confrontation of participants with situations of disadvantage appeals to their sense of fairness and justice? Especially when inclusion-related topics are discussed in a positive social frame, with trustful interactions with other participants from different backgrounds, who are possibly exposed to the risk of exclusion?

Figure 10.4: Effect on project leaders' youth work as rated by them
The following became more important...



Key: *** highly significant ($p \leq .001$), NS non-significant

This could be a trigger that incites a change of values, but also the commitment to do something about it.

Other international projects about more neutral and less value-laden topics such as art, music and sport do perhaps appeal less to people's personal sense of injustice, causing their values to be less affected by such a project.

It certainly would be an interesting research subject to investigate which elements of a thematic inclusion project trigger this change in values and commitment to act, compared to non-inclusion projects.

Or do inclusion projects only lead to socially desirable answers?

Thematic inclusion projects discuss issues related to social exclusion. Often this generates an atmosphere of "we need to do something about it". Inclusion projects tend to strive for change, to right wrong situations. Does this induce more socially desirable answers to a questionnaire asking about the effects of such a project? Do participants in thematic inclusion projects feel more compelled to indicate that they have become

“a better person” who now wants to tackle the situations of disadvantage that were discussed during the project? Or is there a true change?

Are participants of inclusion projects different?

Do inclusion projects attract a different kind of participant than other international projects? If themes related to social injustice and disadvantage appeal more to people who are inclined to tackle these issues, the positive change in values and commitment could be less a result of an inclusion project than of a pre-existing inclination to become more “inclusive-oriented”.

Inclusion projects generate more “learning to learn”. A comparison between the effects of international youth projects on young people with fewer opportunities and those with most opportunities (Part 1 of this chapter) shows that the fewer-opportunities group strengthens more than the most-opportunities participants their “learning-to-learn” competence. This could indicate that there tends to be more “young people with fewer opportunities” participating in “inclusion projects” than young people with lots of opportunities. Does the fewer-opportunity group identify more with “inclusion topics”?

Are these projects then preaching to the converted?

It would be interesting to see what effect an inclusion project has on participants who may not be interested in inclusion topics.

If there were proportionally more young people with fewer opportunities in inclusion projects, then this could also provide an explanation for their comparatively more increased “personal development” and “confidence to travel”. As discussed in Part 1, we could assume that young people with fewer opportunities have not had many chances to take part in international projects, so that this gives them more scope for personal development and to become more confident when it comes to travelling.

Does increased awareness and commitment translate into real action?

Young people who participated in thematic inclusion projects are more committed to “work against discrimination, intolerance, xenophobia and racism”, and so are their organisations. We could ask ourselves (or ask them) to what extent this also leads to concrete action.

Based on the cognitive dissonance theory, we could assume that people would bring their behaviour in line with their values and commitment. That is well worth an additional research project.

Participants learn about inclusion-related issues – but not so much

One of the research questions asks about the learning outcomes of participants. The percentage of participants in non-inclusion projects who indicate that they learned about Europe was 53.6%. But in a thematic inclusion project, “only” 37% indicate that they learn about inclusion. This discrepancy in scores is high. Does this mean young people learn less in inclusion projects?

The lower scores are most likely due to the aggregated nature of “an inclusion project”. These projects can be about topics as varied as Roma, disability, urban/rural development, sexual identity, interreligious dialogue or minorities. When undertaking a project on Roma minorities, participants may not necessarily classify this as “inclusion” and consequently would not indicate that they had learned about inclusion.

Also, we often note a discrepancy between how a youth leader defines the themes of a project (more in professional terms) and how a participant sees it. A positive project about sexual identity might not be seen by participants to be addressing discrimination or inclusion as it tackles self-acceptance and resilience, even though the project leaders’ approach could be to combat discrimination of sexual minorities and promote their inclusion in society (which would definitely make it a thematic inclusion project).

“Inclusion” being an aggregated concept also leads to a variety of learning outcomes.

What is interesting to see is that participants of inclusion projects tend to indicate 7.2% more learning outcomes than participants of non-inclusion projects.

Do inclusion projects have beneficial effects on youth organisations?

Youth workers indicate a greater increase in commitment to inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities within their organisation as a result of participating in an inclusion project as opposed to a non-inclusion project. We suppose this effect depends on the level of decision-making power of the participants in an inclusion project within their organisation. If an important youth worker from an organisation returns highly motivated from an inclusion project, this commitment to inclusion is likely to rub off more on the organisation.

However, one could ask a critical question. Is the fact of sending (or allowing) one of its youth workers to an international inclusion project already an indication that the youth organisation is open to playing their part and taking action regarding inclusion-related topics? Maybe the participant returning from an international inclusion project is then merely an activator that boosts this development.

It could be interesting to contrast the evolution of the inclusive-mindedness of organisations that did send a youth worker to an international inclusion project with those that wanted to send a youth worker but who were not selected and did not participate in such an inclusion project.

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Chapter 11

The German IdA programme: inclusion through learning mobility

Peter Wordelmann

Boundaries between youth work and more formalised employment or training activities are increasingly becoming blurred, with overlaps in terms of aims, methods, target groups and actors. This represents an opportunity for mutual inspiration between sectors. The German IdA programme (2009-2014) was set up by the Ministry of Labour, and it funded long-term placement projects abroad for young people with few or no qualifications with a view to motivating them for entering formal education and training or increasing their employability. Yet many of the organisations carrying out the projects are rooted in the youth sector or are involved in youth work and employed methods developed there. As the evaluator, Peter Wordelmann, observes, they also pursued learning objectives that were not merely vocational, but also linked to personal and intercultural competence development.

1. Introduction

Integration durch Austausch (Integration through Exchange, or, IdA) is a German national programme which aims at facilitating the inclusion of disadvantaged youth and young adults into formal vocational training programmes or the labour market. As an initiative of the Ministry of Labour, it is not directly situated in a context of youth work, but it shares some important characteristics, since – besides the confluence of target groups – it operates with non-formal, voluntary, long-term stays abroad to achieve its aims. Moreover, many of the project carriers are organisations that are involved in youth work, and make use of methods they have developed and refined in other transnational youth projects. Therefore it is relevant to draw on the experiences from IdA in a publication on learning mobility as a tool for inclusion, as many of these are arguably transferable to other contexts, at least as sources of inspiration.

The IdA programme is the result of a new approach to integrating disadvantaged people. The external evaluation of the programme concludes that

this is the first time that a broad programme has been devised for this target group. It affords new prospects for disadvantaged youth, particularly also for those who otherwise fall through the gaps in the market inclusion net. Selection of the best is precisely what is not needed here. The readiness of society to let this group of young people participate in international qualification sends a clear signal to them and provides many with a

fresh incentive for self-motivation. It also enables them to learn about Europe and open their minds towards new and other cultures and the opportunities these afford. (Wordelmann 2011a: 8)

2. The programme

The intervention theory of the IdA programme is that a long-term placement abroad – preceded by relevant preparation, accompanied by competent mentoring and monitoring, and followed up by careful debriefing – will develop both cognitive competences and personal motivation of the participants and thereby enable them to take a more proactive stance in relation to the world of work. The national programme was initiated in 2008, and went through two successive phases before it ended in December 2014. However, the programme will be continued and further developed at European level as part of a European Social Fund initiative, which besides Germany involves nine other EU member states.

The two phases of the national IdA programme were targeted in particular at the following groups of people, who have difficulties in gaining access to the job and training market.

- ▶ **First call (IdA I):** “Increasing the employment opportunities of disadvantaged young persons and unemployed young adults through promoting transnational exchange and mobility projects” (October 2008, targeting 10 000 participants). These include youth with no formal qualifications (e.g. dropouts from vocational education and training) and young single mothers.
- ▶ **Second call (IdA II):** “Enhancing employment opportunities for people with disabilities by supporting transnational mobility projects and exchanges of experts” (September 2010, targeting 3 000 participants). It focused on people with disabilities but as a new departure also included unemployed adults.

It was a prerequisite that any potential participant was registered as unemployed with the local or regional job centre, and the application had to go through an existing experienced local and regional network. Support was provided only to project networks that collaborated with at least one transnational partner from another EU member state.

The two programme phases were extensively evaluated, and the evaluations revealed a substantial impact on participants, especially in terms of personal development. This impact, however, depended on a number of factors. These success factors were both of an intrinsic and an extrinsic nature.

3. Success factors

The transnationality – or rather the geographical displacement – turned out to be a major contributing factor to the success of the programme. First and foremost, the fact that participants found themselves in a new environment meant that they could tackle challenges largely unencumbered by negative expectations of their surroundings, and were able to reorient themselves towards new and more positive values. Secondly, however, the experience of being able to manage the task of living

and working in a country other than their own for a longer period of time (IdA stays lasted from 1-6 months) gave the participants such a boost in terms of self-confidence that they returned home with new energy and vigour to tackle challenges that they had previously perceived as insurmountable:

The notion of “self-empowerment” ... is particularly important for disadvantaged youth, whose previous life has been marred by various failures. It has to do with the challenges a person encounters, the specific experience (of success) gained and the resultant readiness to face up to future challenges. Experiencing your own effectiveness can build self-confidence in your ability to take life into your own hands. Placements abroad are a major step in this process, which is why they are also seen as a positive employment criterion by recruiting enterprises. (Wordelmann 2011a: 9)

It is clear, however, that it is not the stay abroad on its own that ensures success. A thorough preparation process – linguistic, cultural, practical and psychological – is needed to ensure that participants are equipped to tackle the challenges they are faced with, and during the stay there must be support available to lend a helping hand if and when they encounter problems that they are unable to handle on their own. While they are abroad, it is also important both for reasons of learning and social well-being that they are fully involved in the daily working routines in the enterprise or organisation where they undertake their work placement, and not function as bystanders. Finally, there must be interventions also after homecoming, where the participants are helped to make sense of their experiences and how to use them in their future life trajectory. This “scaffolding” that needs to be erected around the learning experience requires that all actors in the process have shared objectives and co-ordinate their efforts.

For the typical IdA project, the primary network, which is in direct contact with the participants, consists of:

- ▶ 1. the IdA project team (sending organisation);
- ▶ 2. the local job centre;
- ▶ 3. the regional job centre;
- ▶ 4. the transnational partner (hosting organisation);
- ▶ 5. the enterprise abroad, offering a placement.

The job centres are a very important strategic partner in the programme, since participants are registered there and need to be cleared for participation by them. Also, this is where they will return to after homecoming. Obviously, not all job centres were initially convinced of the effectiveness of transnational mobility for this target group. They saw learning mobility as the preserve of more privileged groups and argued that the programme seemed to be unnecessary, not useful and even too expensive for this target group.

These obstacles were discussed in several accompanying workshops organised by the programme management, and subsequently summarised in a handbook that was distributed to all actors. During the process, a change in attitude in most of the involved staff from job centres was discernible, and this was largely achieved by their active involvement in the discussions and workshops. In retrospect, it might have been even more helpful if at least a limited number of them had been able to take part in visits abroad while the projects were running.

Other national partners (who did not have direct contact with the participants) were:

- ▶ the federal IdA programme management;
- ▶ the federal administration.

Last but not least, the transnational network partners are very important. There have been 114 IdA project networks co-operating with more than 290 partners in other European countries. Typical partner organisations would be:

- ▶ the intermediate organisation;
- ▶ local enterprises;
- ▶ the local job centre;
- ▶ the local chambers (of commerce or industry).

This network is important as well because it is part of the inclusion management. In some projects, depending on the problems of the participants, other local institutions like the Youth Welfare Office or the Specialist Integration Service might also be important. Among the intermediate organisations are those involved in professional youth work, especially in the preparation phase and the stay abroad. These organisations are very experienced in using non-formal settings and including disadvantaged and disabled people in the labour market. Some IdA projects are involved in a network of up to 20 partners.

The most important interfaces are of course between the IdA project team, the transnational partner/enterprise and the participant, but even informal groups like the social environment of the participant, the preparation group at home and the IdA participant's group abroad are important factors for a successful inclusion.

4. Who were they?

There was an absolutely equal gender distribution in IdA I, due to the fact that a consideration of gender was central to the conception of the project. The average age of the participants, both male and female, was 24 years. Three out of four participants had experienced spells of unemployment, with a duration of 12 months on average. This is very long bearing in mind the age of the participants and the comparatively good labour-market situation in Germany. Many participants had never worked before they signed up for IdA: this was the case for no fewer than 37% of all male and 46% of all female participants.

Nearly 40% of the participants had lower secondary education qualifications or less. In Germany there is a strong relationship between unemployment and the level of qualifications. Eight per cent do not have any certificate and some 40% do not have any occupational qualification. But still 31% have a training certificate and 9% have a course of study.

Regarding the stays abroad, the duration was about seven weeks on average, but one third stayed for only four weeks. The longest stays were up to 17 weeks. The duration was decided on the basis of an appraisal of the individual situation of the participant. This decision was sometimes difficult and that is possibly why 62% of the IdA I participants preferred to stay longer and only 11% preferred to return earlier.

In general, the duration of a stay abroad is one of the most important factors when organising transnational mobility.

In shorter placements abroad (about 4 to 6 weeks), the personal development of the participants is mostly the primary concern. They foster personal or self-competency, as is associated with such notions as self-reliance, self-confidence, initiative, adaptability, ability for criticism and team ability, particularly in foreign, intercultural groups. Transnational mobility has resulted in considerable advances in personal development not only as experienced by the target group itself. They can be expected to gain a new impetus in learning behaviour and their occupational planning, which can then improve their placement prospects on the labour market. In longer traineeship phases abroad, activities centre on the envisaged increased competency of participants. In technical terms, this takes place in the new learning location, the foreign enterprise, but also through the challenges the participants face in their environment and in coping with everyday problems in their new surroundings. This is particularly the case, if they have little previous experience with mobility. (Wordelmann 2011b: 18)

A good indicator regarding the results of a stay abroad is the question of whether participants will visit the country again for holidays or for work. In this case:

- ▶ 62% preferred to stay longer;
- ▶ 11% preferred to return earlier;
- ▶ 85% would like to visit the country for holidays once more;
- ▶ 50% would like to work in the target country once more.

These very positive results suggest that participating in transnational mobility can really foster a more open-minded attitude.

5. Where did they go?

The list of participating countries shows that 114 project networks have been active in 26 countries. Italy is at the top with 30 partnerships and of course the United Kingdom is another favourite because of the language. For many IdA projects the improvement of foreign language skills is not the main goal, but it is nevertheless an important criterion for many participants in deciding whether to participate.

Austria is a special case because it is a German-speaking country. So for those participants for whom a foreign language was a formidable barrier, Austria was a good alternative. Yet even in Austria some Germans do have communication problems with Austrians. It was an interesting experience for several participants that speaking the same language does not necessarily guarantee good communication.

The broad variety of participating European countries, including Estonia, Lithuania, Slovenia, Portugal, Bulgaria, Croatia, Latvia, Luxembourg and Romania, shows that this target group is able to straddle the whole range of European cultures.

6. What did they learn?

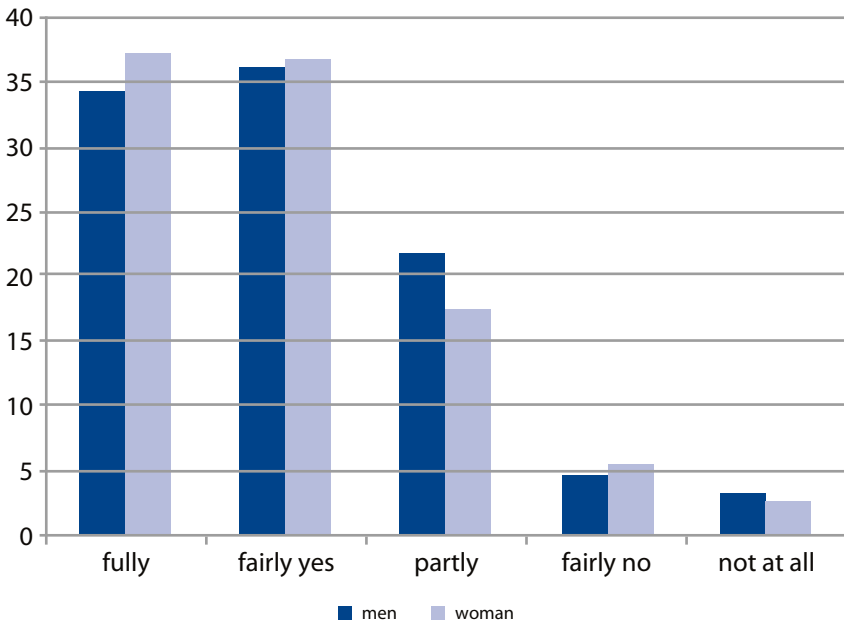
The empirical basis of the evaluation of the IdA programme consists mainly of two sources of data. Firstly, there are questionnaires filled in by the participants. Both

for Ida I and Ida II questionnaires were completed both before and after the stay abroad. The analysis of these was carried out by the external evaluators. Secondly, there were questionnaires filled in by the job centres. This was the first time that job centres assessed the outcome of transnational mobility activities. This survey was carried out under the leadership of the German Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (BMAS 2013).

In addition to these questionnaires, four case studies on Ida II were carried out to allow for a deeper and more qualitative insight into success factors as well as problems.

Regarding the evaluation in general there was very good feedback from the participants, for example when they were asked if they were “feeling more assured and more self-confident” after Ida (Figure 11.1).

Figure 11.1: Percentage of Ida I participants “feeling more assured, more self-confident”

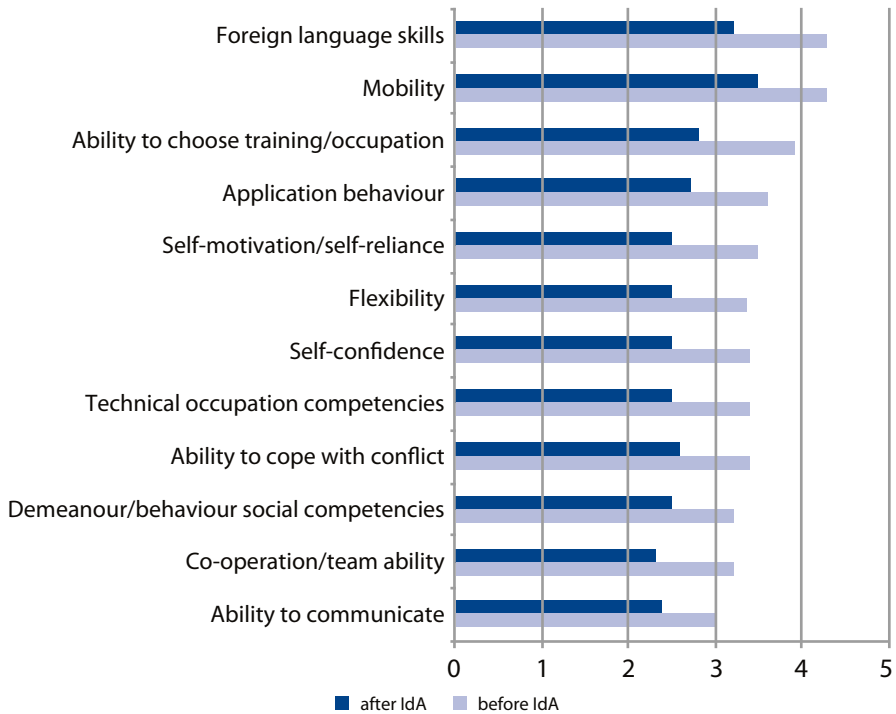


Source: RWI/ISG 2013, men: n=921, women: n=1 070

Most of the participants agreed fully or at least partly with the statement, and there is no significant difference between men and women. This distribution is nearly the same for the results of all other questions, for example the quality of the preparation phase or the care of and the co-operation with colleagues abroad.

These positive developments are mirrored in the assessment by the job centres, who were asked to evaluate the competence levels of participants on a number of parameters before and after participation in Ida. In Figure 11.2 the German school grading scale from 1 to 6 is used, where 1 is the highest and 6 the lowest mark.

Figure 11.2: Competency gains – IdA I: assessment by job centres



Source: BMAS 2013, n=3.066

Altogether, all aspects improved, not only for personal competencies but also for vocational competencies, the ability to choose training or occupation, application/perseverance and the technical occupation competencies. A deeper analysis suggests that participants with the least school education gained particular benefits, especially regarding occupational skills.

7. Longer-term impact

To participate in the IdA programme is one important step in the integration chain, but the main objective is the integration into the labour market for those who already fulfil the necessary conditions. Table 11.1 provides relevant data for IdA I.

Table 11.1: Destination of participants six months after IdA I

Full employment	35%
Training	19%
Integration process	18%
School	8%
Qualification measures	7%
Study	6%
Mini job	4%
Subsidised employment	3%

Source: BMAS 2013

Six months after finishing the IdA project, 35% of the participants were in socially insured employment and more than a quarter were in training or at school. Six per cent were in a course of study. Fifteen per cent were in qualification measures or “opportunity jobs” (sometimes called “mini jobs”) and only 18% were in the integration process once again. Such positive results compare very favourably with other labour-market measures in Germany.

The second call (IdA II) focused on people with disabilities as well as elderly unemployed adults. It was a bigger challenge for participating projects and the programme management than IdA I. Participants had a broad variety of handicaps, including physical disability, learning disability and both. Many participants had multiple problems, some of which were first identified when they were abroad. Conspicuously often, psychological problems were also identified, even among young people.

On average, IdA II participants were older than the participants of IdA I and they had experienced longer spells of unemployment. In IdA II there were closely similar results regarding the outcome of mobility (direct effects on the participants). But the impact in terms of the wider effects on the organisation or the society, especially the transition to the labour market, was not quite as positive as in IdA I (see Table 11.2).

Table 11.2: Destination of participants six months after IdA II

Full employment	18%
New integration measures	42%
In-company training	7%
School-based training	6%
Social enterprises	6%
School/study	4%
Voluntary services	3%
Mini jobs (not assisted)	3%
Further or continuing vocational training	3%
No response	8%

Source: BMAS 2013

The high rate of participants in the process of integration is primarily due to the generally more difficult conditions in the labour market for this special target group.

Analysing transnational mobility by the target group of IdA II is a good opportunity to find out the limits of learning mobility. Most are able to benefit from the experience, but sometimes a long-term placement abroad is not a relevant measure, for instance if the individual is absolutely against the idea (one should not try to convince somebody against his or her wishes); if someone wants to participate merely to get away from home; if no positive development can be predicted (but caution should be exercised – it is very difficult to make such predictions); or if technical equipment is necessary which is not available abroad and which cannot be taken abroad. A further important exception is where participation seems to be driven by a wish to use the stay abroad as some form of therapy, but this is a difficult and “grey” area. Finally, the evaluation confirms that age is no limitation, and neither do bad foreign language skills constitute a barrier to a successful experience.

8. Conclusions

Transnational learning mobility is an effective instrument, not only for an elite like university students or even the best apprentices in a global company, but also for disadvantaged and disabled people, for whom it offers unique learning opportunities. Inclusion in mobility programmes is necessary for social reasons but also for economic reasons. In Germany the costs are high both for financing the transition system at the first threshold (from school to vocational education and training) and at the second threshold (from education and training to the labour market). But evidence shows that this money is well invested.

In a nutshell, the Integration through Exchange programme is a new approach for improving the integration prospects of disadvantaged youth and young adults in the training and labour market in Germany. By preparing, conducting and following up on traineeships abroad, it has added a labour-market policy element to the integration chain not explicitly used until now.

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Chapter 12

European Voluntary Service with the Eastern Europe and Caucasus region as a tool for social inclusion of young people

Marzena Ples

There is a great amount of evidence that the European Voluntary Service may not be equally accessed by all young people. This necessarily leads us to think about young people in each country who have fewer opportunities, both in life generally and in relation to participation in mobility programmes. In this chapter Marzena Ples pursues this line of thought at the international level, comparing the “opportunities” between countries and not necessarily within countries. In fact, not only is it the case that young people from countries in the Eastern Europe and Caucasus region are, in general, less likely to participate in EVS projects than young people in the programme countries (the reasons for which are presented in this chapter), but in addition young people with fewer opportunities within the EECA regions suffer severe obstacles to information, access and resources to participate. This chapter therefore presents a striking example of a familiar paradox in the youth sector: the ones that could benefit most from EVS experience are the ones least likely to actually experience it.

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to illustrate the challenges and advantages of European Voluntary Service (EVS) projects within the Eastern Europe and Caucasus (EECA) countries and to analyse the level of participation of young people in those projects from the view of a project co-ordinator. It presents reflections on the importance of volunteering and its influence on young people. This chapter is an attempt to analyse the extent to which EVS projects within the EECA region are inclusive for young people. The conclusions are presented based on existing data, reports from research previously conducted and interviews conducted with EVS co-ordinators.

The EVS is one of the European Commission's flagship programmes, aimed at improving the non-formal education and mobility of young people. The year 2016 marked the programme's 20th year. It began in 1996 as a pilot project aimed at promoting

volunteering, youth participation, active citizenship, intercultural communication, non-formal education, tolerance and mutual understanding between representatives of EU and other countries. It has run continuously since its initial success. In 1998 it became part of the Youth for Europe programme; later it was brought within the framework of the Youth Programme (2000-2006) and subsequently Youth in Action (2007-2013).

Currently EVS is part of the Erasmus+ Youth programme (2014-2020). The programme provides an opportunity to realise short- and long-term volunteering projects for young people aged from 17 to 30. Projects take place abroad in different social institutions and non-governmental organisations. One of the most important aspects of these projects is to gain exposure to interactions between different cultures and intercultural communication.

The educational aspect of the programme is always emphasised and the project aims to improve learning mobility. Volunteers undertake their service not only to help local communities, but also to develop and better prepare themselves for adulthood and, more specifically, for their start in the labour market.

EVS is open to participants from the programme countries (28 members of the European Union and the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) countries: Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway; and EU candidates: “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia” and Turkey). Young people from neighbouring EU countries, in a programme called Partner Countries, can also take part in the programme with some restrictions. Among them are the countries of the western Balkans, southern Mediterranean countries and countries comprising the Eastern Europe and Caucasus region: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine, currently identified as Eastern Partnership countries, and the Russian Federation. Young people from partner countries can undertake their projects only in the programme countries and organisations in partner countries can only host volunteers from the programme countries.

Most EVS projects are based in programme countries; however, neighbouring countries are becoming more and more popular. The institution that supports the programme implementation within the Eastern Europe and Caucasus region is called SALTO (Support Advanced Learning and Training Opportunities) EECA Resource Centre with its headquarters in Warsaw, Poland.¹ Today, there are almost 5 000 accredited institutions in programme and partner countries, which can receive volunteers or co-ordinate EVS projects.²

Inclusion of young people lacking opportunities has always been one of the main priorities of EVS projects. In 2016, one of the primary stated priorities was to reach out to marginalised young people. From the very beginning of EVS's existence, increasing social inclusion of young people lacking opportunities was a goal. “A key priority for the European Commission is to give young people with fewer opportunities (from a less-privileged cultural, geographical or socio-economic background, or with disabilities) access to the mobility and non-formal education activities developed within the YOUTH programme” (European Commission 2005: 8). Inclusion of young

1. Details about the programme are available on the official website (see References).

2. The EVS organisations database is available at https://europa.eu/youth/volunteering/evs-organisation_en.

people with fewer opportunities was one of the four priorities for the whole of the Youth in Action programme (2007-2013) and this policy is continued in the Erasmus+ programme. The definition of young people with fewer opportunities is set out in a very broad way to include all young people with any kind of obstacle to formal and non-formal education and active participation. "The Erasmus+ Programme aims at promoting equity and inclusion by facilitating the access to participants with disadvantaged backgrounds and fewer opportunities compared to their peers whenever disadvantage limits or prevents participation in transnational activities" (European Commission 2017: 9). Those obstacles are: disability (in this case the programme uses the term "participants with special needs"), educational difficulties, economic obstacles, cultural differences, health problems, social obstacles, geographical obstacles, etc. Moreover, in the Erasmus+ programme, owing to the current situation of young people in Europe, the problem of youth unemployment is especially recognised and projects undertaken within the framework of the youth sector should help young people to enter the labour market.

EVS is presented as a format for everyone, despite their background, which provides for equal opportunities. While the premise of the programme is to be inclusive, there are no data about the exact number of volunteers with fewer opportunities that have participated in EVS. It is therefore difficult to tell to what extent this goal has been realised so far.

Volunteering and young people

The importance of volunteering in contemporary society is rising; it features strongly as a topic in social discourse. There have been many attempts to analyse the influence of volunteering on the volunteers, the receiving institutions, the formation of active citizenship and its causes and effects. Support for volunteering is growing throughout the world and numerous international bodies emphasise its importance and carry out activities aimed at its promotion and support (for example the European Union, the United Nations and the Council of Europe). Since 1985, the United Nations has marked 5 December as International Volunteer Day for Economic and Social Development, for the purpose of furthering recognition of volunteers, facilitating their work, creating a network of communication and promoting the benefits of voluntary service (United Nations website).

In December 1997 the United Nations declared 2001 the International Year of Volunteers and organised events to promote this form of activity and illustrate the process of voluntary work. The main objective of the International Year of Volunteers was to increase recognition of volunteering work around the world through facilitation, networking, promotion of volunteering and encouraging young people to participate in these kinds of activities. It was to emphasise the importance and significance of volunteering in civil society and the role that volunteers play in local communities which has had an impact at the global level. The declaration of the International Year of Volunteers was explained in the following way:

Voluntary service is needed more than ever to tackle problems in areas of social, economic, cultural, humanitarian and peace-building, and that more people are needed

to offer their services as volunteers. For this to happen, there was a need for greater recognition and facilitation of volunteer work, more vigorous promotion of voluntary service, and drawing upon the best initiatives and efforts – the “best practice” – of volunteers, networked to optimise lessons learned. (The World Volunteerism Web, International Year of Volunteers 2011)

The year 2011 was designated by the Council of the European Union as the European Year of Volunteering, the aim of which was to encourage voluntary activity and appropriately promote this activity as a way to build a civil society (European Year of Volunteering 2011 website).

Although in recent years more interest in volunteering has been observed in Europe, international volunteering is not widely disseminated and understood. So what is volunteering? Research underlines three main components of volunteering: gratuity, awareness and self-imposition (Braun 2012: 15-17). The initial definition of volunteering emphasised an altruistic aspect, along with the motivation of volunteers to act and sacrifice their time without an expectation of anything in return. Volunteers do not receive money for their work. Their prosocial activities aim at a positive influence on people, society and the environment and the volunteers are fully aware of these aims.

EVS is designed for young people who have not entered or are just entering the labour market. Defining youth as a period that is determined by culture and environment is common in sociological perspectives. Youth is a specific category of people who are between childhood and adulthood. According to Zygmunt Bauman’s definition (2000), youth are people who, according to social expectations, are facing problems around adaptation and stabilisation but have not yet completed the process of stabilisation (in Siwko 2006: 29). Young people who decide to participate in the programme are very often in this situation. They are over 18 years old but typically have not yet entered into the social roles of adults. In what Bauman calls “liquid modernity” young people in particular are very often overwhelmed by the number of choices that they can make and, at the same time, make them with a high level of uncertainty and ambivalence. They have to be much more reflective and flexible than previous generations and be able to adjust to their situation. Ulrich Beck defines modern societies as risk societies, where on the one hand people follow mainstream rules, but on the other hand an individual is responsible for his or her own fate. Young people especially are torn between these two tendencies. Mass culture through mass media promotes consumerism, tells youth what to do and how to live. On the other hand, young people face high expectations from an individualised world and are held personally responsible for their failures (Beck 1992). There is no longer one prevailing type of lifestyle and therefore young people have to take responsibility for their own life paths and face the consequences of those choices (Bauman 1998; Beck, Giddens and Lash 1994).

EVS is often a young person’s first experience of long-term mobility and independence from their family. It is more difficult as it takes place outside the borders of their own country, where the volunteer is often faced with unexpected situations, intercultural differences and culture shock. Having taken the decision to undertake an EVS project, for several months a young person lives away from his or her previous life in their home country with family, friends, local groups, customs and habits, and from the start faces a completely different environment and culture, with new duties

and responsibilities and new people around them. This period of several months has the potential to influence the young person's whole life; it brings about changes in outlook and attitudes that persist long after the volunteering service has ended.

International volunteering is an attempt to show young people that, despite a focus on individualism in the contemporary world, co-operation at an intercultural level is still possible and valuable. In a wider context, the European Commission programmes for young people were intended to effect a solution to the whole spectrum of problems they faced, namely social exclusion, poverty, unemployment, discrimination, passivity, intolerance, racism and marginalisation. Projects aim to strengthen the self-esteem of young people, increase their sense of creativity and entrepreneurship and teach them how to turn their ideas into action through volunteering. EVS is intended to be an investment in developing human capital. In the last few years, owing to the economic crisis and the deteriorating situation of young people in the labour market, the European Commission further emphasised combating youth unemployment. Consequently, young people are expected to acquire skills that will help them to gain employment upon returning.

EVS in numbers

In April 2013, the Foundation for the Development of the Education System (FRSE), which is the Polish National Agency,³ published a research report on EVS entitled "European Voluntary Service (EVS) and the labour market: about the volunteers in the labour market and competences acquired by them" (Wit-Jeżowski 2013) in which profiles of some volunteers are presented. The research involved 544 former volunteers, made up of 400 women and 144 men. The typical EVS volunteer is a woman (74%) with higher education (77.8% of participants declared holding a higher education diploma), living in a city of more than 100 000 inhabitants (72.3%), having had experience of the labour market before commencing an EVS project (79%). These data raise a question about the level of social inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities. The profile of the average volunteer, as shown by this research, is not disadvantaged.

Generally, EVS is not as widespread in the EECA region as in the programme countries. In the whole region, within a population of almost 220 million people, there are only 208 accredited organisations that can work with EVS projects.⁴ In comparison with Portugal, which has a population of around 10.3 million, there are 203 accredited institutions.

In the programme countries the level of popularity and numbers of EVS projects are also different. The budget for all programme countries is distributed proportionally to their populations and previously used grants. The countries with the largest number of accredited organisations are Germany (517), France (426), Italy (346) and Poland (321). In these countries the financing of EVS is sufficient to provide all necessary support to the volunteer. In the United Kingdom the situation

3. National agencies are organisations in the programme countries responsible for the division of grants.

4. All data concerning numbers of accredited organisations were collected on 21 May 2016.

is quite different. Despite having a slightly higher population than France (almost 65 million), in the UK there are almost half the number of accredited organisations (217). As the idea of volunteering is very much developed in the UK, it is likely that the main reason for the small number of EVS institutions is insufficient financial support for projects. In many cases, the organisations cannot afford to host an EVS volunteer (monthly organisational support per EVS volunteer in the UK is 630 euros, only 90 euros more, for example, than in Poland, where the costs of living are much lower).

Interestingly, EVS is very popular in the Baltic States. In Estonia (with a population of 1.3 million) there are 120 accredited organisations, in Latvia (population almost 2 million) 124 and in Lithuania (almost 3 million) 119. Each of these countries has three times more accredited EVS organisations than the Russian Federation with its population of 146 million. However, due to the historic background and the language needs (Russian-speaking minorities in those countries), the Baltic states host many Russian-speaking volunteers from EECA.

The following table shows the number of accredited organisations in the EECA region.

Table 12.1: The number of accredited EVS organisations in the EECA region

Country	Sending accreditation	Receiving accreditation	Any type of accreditation
Armenia	28	25	35
Azerbaijan	7	6	7
Belarus	11	9	11
Georgia	31	31	39
Moldova	9	35	37
Russian Federation	23	35	41
Ukraine	36	26	38
Total	145	167	208

Source: Based on EVS database

Of course there are plenty of reasons why in EECA there are fewer EVS institutions than in the programme countries. We can distinguish, for example, a lack of information about EVS in the EECA region, a different understanding of volunteering in EECA, a lack of language support (there is no official documents from the European Commission about the programme in any of the EECA official languages), a more complicated procedure for applying for a grant for EECA organisations (the need for an applicant organisation from the programme country), cultural differences, an unfavourable political situation (especially in Azerbaijan, Belarus and the Russian Federation) or a different level of civil society in those countries. However, undoubtedly, the main reason is financial.

Currently in Erasmus+ Youth only 15-25% of the whole annual budget for EVS (depending on the national agency priorities) can be distributed to projects with partner countries (from all regions: western Balkans, southern Mediterranean, Eastern Partnership countries and the Russian Federation). The competition within those projects is therefore very high and the number of projects is limited. In this situation, the more project proposals that are submitted, the more will be rejected.

Secondly, the financial support per volunteer for an organisation implementing a project in one of the partner countries is lower than in the programme countries and is currently fixed at 440 euros per month (in programme countries this amount depends on the receiving country). However, in many cases the cost of living in EECA is lower than in most programme countries: sometimes organisations struggle with this amount, especially in capital cities. From this money the receiving organisation is expected to provide the volunteer with accommodation, food, local transport, mentoring, all materials and cover the administration costs of both the sending and receiving organisations. Also, we need to take into consideration that the great majority of NGOs in EECA do not have external financing, unlike many western European countries.

However, despite these obstacles, projects within the EECA are popular. According to the data published by SALTO EECA, between 2007 and 2011 over 2 880 volunteers participated in over 1 800 projects within the EECA region (they were sent from an EECA country or were hosted in EECA). The number of projects grew continuously from 171 projects in 2007 to 494 in 2011: a three-fold increase. In 2011, a total of 447 volunteers were hosted within EECA and 394 volunteers were sent from an EECA country to the programme countries (Pawłowska 2012).

Supporting projects within this region depends also on the priorities in each country. In Poland, owing to the political situation and historical background, co-operation with the EECA was always a priority. In 2012, one volunteer in every three sent from Poland was fulfilling his or her service in this region (FRSE 2013). Between 2007 and 2011 the Polish National Agency provided grants for the highest number of EVS projects within EECA from all national agencies: almost 350. The number of young Poles that were hosted in EECA was 402 and 277 volunteers from EECA came to Poland. "Second position belongs to the German National Agency with almost 280 granted projects and third to the French National Agency with 185 projects. In general, these three NAs granted together 46% of all the EVS projects with the EECA countries" (Pawłowska 2012: 8). Unfortunately, there are no data available about numbers of EVS volunteers within EECA in more recent years.

EVS in/with EECA from the co-ordinators' point of view

Qualitative research was conducted during the seminar "Discovering EVS world in Eastern Europe and Caucasus Region", implemented jointly by the youth development and integration association STRIM from Kraków and the youth association DRONI from Tbilisi in Rustavi, Georgia from 19-25 February 2016. The seminar gathered together 38 representatives from 22 accredited EVS organisations with experience of implementing international volunteering projects focused on Eastern Europe and the Caucasus region. Co-ordinators came from 15 countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Georgia, Greece, Italy, Moldova, Poland, Portugal, Russian Federation, Slovakia, Spain and Ukraine). The main objectives of the seminar were to share experience and good practice from completed EVS projects within the EECA region and also to discuss difficulties and challenges, and possible improvements. Participants included EVS co-ordinators who work with or in the EECA region.

The data were collected through participants' observations of discussions during workshops and three focus group interviews. The first set of interviews was undertaken with EVS co-ordinators from programme countries, the second with EVS co-ordinators from the EECA region and the third with former EVS volunteers who are currently involved in EVS projects with their sending organisations.

Inclusion was understood by the research participants in two ways: firstly, as access to EVS projects and, secondly, as integration with the local community or/and receiving organisation during the project. According to the co-ordinators, the first of these is much more difficult to achieve than the second. Once the volunteer participates in the project, in most cases inclusion takes place. This second type of inclusion is very much connected with the term "diversity" in the sense that inclusion happens when very different people are equally included in one group and they have been actively involved in the group activities and the programme; and most projects are constructed in a way that makes this possible. Inclusiveness is connected with freedom and tolerance.

This is a kind of positive thinking about other people and not having a fear of other people. That's being inclusive. (Female co-ordinator, former EVS volunteer from Poland)

In the focus groups, the general conclusion was that EVS is in many cases inclusive for young people from the EECA region. However, there were voices saying that even though on paper EVS is open to everyone, those who participate in projects are often privileged, in the sense that they have information about the programme which is not widely known. The potential of the programme is not yet fully realised and it could include many more young people, especially those with fewer opportunities. Those who complete an EVS project have a good chance of being included in their local community, of feeling important and developing as a person.

It can be a part of making you feel useful. To do EVS work, by doing that work you can be useful for society. (Male co-ordinator, former EVS volunteer from Georgia)

Social inclusion for all young people in Eastern Partnership countries? No, they are socially not included because [of], for example, visa issues. It is already not inclusion. (Female co-ordinator, former EVS volunteer from Armenia)

The main challenge around inclusiveness in EVS projects for young people from EECA is definitely visa procedures. Participants coming from EECA for an EVS project are required to get a visa for almost all programme countries. There are countries like the United Kingdom or Scandinavian countries with very restricted visa procedures and obtaining a visa for a young person from EECA is very difficult. In other countries, like the Netherlands, permission to host long-term volunteers with a visa is very expensive and time-consuming. Many examples of refused visa applications for potential EVS volunteers from EECA were given. In many consulates workers are not aware of what EVS is. Young people with fewer opportunities struggle to gain permission to stay in EU or EFTA countries due to migration policies. The irony is that for those young people the whole process of applying for EVS and preparing for a project is difficult and, first of all, requires courage. When they do not receive a visa, much of the work done beforehand by youth workers is wasted and very often young people lose

motivation, thereby strengthening the idea that EVS is only for “the chosen ones”. Thus, there are fewer projects for volunteers with fewer opportunities from EECA than there could be, and behaviours that reinforce this might be observed. There are situations where co-ordinators from programme countries are wary of inviting youths from the EECA, especially with fewer opportunities, to avoid hassles with visas and delays at the beginning of the project. Delays make organising accommodation or planning activities problematic and in case of visa refusal, it is necessary to recruit a new volunteer. The fact that competition for places in EECA projects is very high may discourage young people with fewer opportunities from applying. During interviews co-ordinators gave many examples of accredited organisations that they know who do not work with EECA solely because of visa issues. In the context of EVS this attitude causes exclusion.

What is more, co-ordinators from programme countries cited cases where the primary motivation of volunteers from EECA was to obtain a Schengen visa to travel and the project was not important. For this reason, they are very careful when selecting the volunteers from EECA.

The visa problem also exists for young people from the programme countries coming to the EECA. The most onerous procedure is in the Russian Federation where in most cases volunteers have to leave Russia every three months to obtain a new visa. This increases costs and makes the project very complicated. Therefore, according to the co-ordinators from programme countries, there are not many organisations that will send volunteers to Russia (especially in the Netherlands and Portugal). Co-ordinators admitted that they know more organisations co-operating with Caucasus countries and Ukraine.

I would put it in a way that the programme itself is inclusive. And who is making it less inclusive are the actual NGOs who are sometimes not being open to every participant who is applying. (Male co-ordinator, former EVS volunteer from Slovakia)

Financial issues also appeared during focus groups with co-ordinators from the programme countries. They admitted that there are occasions when they prefer not to include a volunteer from EECA in their application due to a limited budget, especially coming up to the second or third deadline in a year, when most of the money is already spent. Furthermore, when they apply for an EVS project that includes more volunteers, they are afraid that a lack of budget for partner countries might effect a situation where the whole project will be rejected, so they prefer to have a project with programme countries only. This situation is very unpleasant for them, as they believe in the effectiveness of EVS projects within EECA. The structure of the programme forces them to calculate the probability of receiving a grant and often the pragmatic decision is not to take the risk.

Another important aspect of EVS is the inclusion of people with special needs. There are not many projects suitable for them, especially in EECA, where there is a lack of facilities adapted for people with wheelchairs. Co-ordinators from EECA wish to host disabled people, however not all of them can ensure their safety and comfortable conditions. However, positive examples of hosting volunteers with different disabilities or medical conditions (blindness and leukaemia) were cited and it was underlined that, although those projects were very challenging, the results were meaningful.

Access to the programme is sometimes limited for young people in general. The interviewees often emphasised difficulties with finding a suitable project and being accepted by a receiving organisation.

I was really looking for a project with the support of my sending organisation, really lots of projects and sending lots of different applications and all the time it seemed like I wasn't good enough for them. (Female co-ordinator, former EVS volunteer from Estonia)

I sent a video of myself so I was really working hard on this application and only when I sent everything and I said: yey, they must choose me, they must choose me! They replied that they [had] already chosen someone ... So I just found any project that was connected to youth, to the outdoor activities, to children, and I sent my applications to over 70 organisations. (Female former volunteer from Poland)

Even though projects should be inclusive, there is intense competition among potential volunteers. To find a project, very often many applications need to be made. This procedure sometimes is very long and tedious for them. Most organisations expect written application forms and interviews. Firstly, young people prepare a CV and motivation letter in a foreign language and then they might be invited for a Skype interview. This remains the job application procedure and for many young people this is their first experience of this kind of thing. Furthermore, conducting it in a foreign language makes the process more stressful. Those with a better grasp of the language can rely on their experience and have a greater chance of getting a place.

The volunteers feel that while applying they have to prove their individuality and they have to impress the receiving organisation with their attitude and skills. That is why there is a tendency to send not only CVs and motivation letters, but also short movies or other creative "advertisements" featuring the potential volunteer. Some organisations even require a presentation. It automatically excludes young people without digital skills or those who are shy and struggle to talk about their strengths.

In many cases, people that go for EVS are people who are active. And why are they active? It's because they can, because they've been educated to be active, to be interested in the world. (Female co-ordinator, former EVS volunteer from Poland)

First of all, the programme reaches young people who are not passive, who seek out new opportunities, are self-confident, brave enough to travel, take risks, put themselves in different contexts and enjoy exploring. In most cases, they are not disadvantaged youngsters. Co-ordinators admitted that most applications to be part of a project come from well-educated young people, who know foreign languages and who have been travelling before.

I'd like to make this programme inclusive, to use this tool to be as inclusive as possible. I'm fed up with the applications of people who [have] done a lot of stuff and EVS just adds another thing to their CV, who don't really respect and appreciate the chance they have. (Female co-ordinator, former EVS volunteer from Poland)

Thus, there is a motivation among co-ordinators to work not only with "privileged" youngsters. Co-ordinators are definitely aiming for inclusion through the programme. Those from the programme countries see co-operation with the EECA region as a way forward for inclusion. To conclude with the voice of a research participant:

In theory the programme is super inclusive and [there is] no need to elaborate on that because there are thousands of words on the internet; but in practice it can be both inclusive or super exclusive and it depends on the certain cases because for me EVS, as any other activity, it's just a tool: it depends what we do with it. I would never agree with saying in general that yes, it is working, it is inclusive. It can be, it doesn't have to be. (Female co-ordinator, former EVS volunteer from Poland)

Despite the fact that access to EVS is not equal for youngsters from programme countries and EECA, it gives a great opportunity for mutual understanding of youth from both regions. All participants during the research underlined the fact that EVS has a great impact not only on the volunteers, who in most cases during the project are developing their competences and themselves in general, but also on the local community.

Our sending projects to Russia were amazing. Amazing, and the people that came back were like they really felt they were contributing, that they were giving a lot and [their] impact was relevant. And sometimes, I feel, we can't offer the same feeling in our western countries. (Female co-ordinator from Portugal)

The projects teach all those involved tolerance, openness and respect towards different cultures. EECA is still perceived as an exotic, not well-known region especially for participants from western Europe. On the other hand, for young people from EECA, projects in programme countries can change their perspective. Co-ordinators from programme countries underlined that, despite all the challenges, they are greatly motivated to co-operate with this region, as projects with EECA very often have a much bigger impact on the volunteers and local community. Their experiences show that young people from EECA in general are good volunteers who diligently fulfil their tasks and do not complain about trivial matters. They emphasised that in a majority of cases volunteers from EECA take their duties more seriously and are more motivated than their peers from the programme countries. On the other hand, they noticed that EECA is interesting for young people from programme countries as it is very much different from western Europe, and also there is a huge need in those countries to develop civil society.

So I think that I grew up as a person during EVS. What is most important, you know? I changed and I start to think differently so... I was not homophobic before I went to EVS, but I would never have thought I would be with a gay person in one room and that would be absolutely OK. So, I became more aware about things, I don't know, I think my mind grew a bit. (Mentor, former EVS volunteer from Georgia)

Co-ordinators from EECA, as well as former EVS volunteers, stressed the importance of breaking negative stereotypes during the projects.

All former EVS volunteers underlined self-development and growing up during the project. Among the competences, characteristics and skills developed are primarily self-confidence, open-mindedness and consciousness about different values. Co-ordinators stated that they often observed that a project would have a huge impact on young people. After coming back from the project, former volunteers become much more active in their local communities, get involved in different

events prepared by NGOs and are more creative and willing to act. Their chances of obtaining a suitable job increase after EVS.

Conclusions

Everything mentioned so far points to the conclusion that it is difficult for young people lacking opportunities, especially from EECA, to participate in EVS projects. However, it is not impossible. Fortunately, there are plenty of institutions specialising in projects working with disadvantaged youth in both programme countries and EECA regions; however they are still in the minority if we consider all the institutions working with EVS. As discussed in this paper, young people from EECA have fewer opportunities to participate in EVS than their peers from programme countries, but it is worth underlining that the European Commission programme is indeed open to countries outside the European Union.

To make the programme more inclusive, especially for young people from EECA, a wider and deeper recognition of EVS is needed. Also, some structural changes should be made within the programme, particularly around financing. The number of EVS volunteers coming to/from EECA will not increase if the programme budget for this region remains at the same level. However, the proportion of EVS volunteers with fewer opportunities among all participants could rise if information about these opportunities reaches those youngsters and sending institutions to allow them to adequately prepare.

To overcome the biggest obstacle, visa-related issues, and make the procedure more accessible to participants of EVS programme, the European Commission should lobby at the governmental level. However, owing to the currently ongoing migration crisis, this recommendation could be extremely difficult to implement. At least consulates must be informed about the programme, its aims and its importance for young people. Maybe if consuls had a better understanding of the programme, visa applications would not be so much of a problem.

As presented above, EVS projects implemented within the EECA region are beneficial for all parties involved. Despite numerous challenges, all participants agreed that co-operation between organisations from the programme countries and EECA should be further developed and widely promoted. The 30th anniversary of the founding of the Erasmus programme provides a good occasion to share best practices and successful stories.

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Chapter 13

“I have a diploma, now I need a Youthpass”: European Voluntary Service as a shortcut to employment?

Özgehan Şenyuva and Susie G Nicodemi¹

The European Voluntary Service was originally created as a parallel to the existing programme for students in higher education (Erasmus) specifically in order to extend the opportunity of participating in long-term learning mobility to young people with fewer opportunities. However, after 20 years of existence, evaluations show that the EVS is mainly being used by resourceful groups of young people (for example students in higher education, for gap years and even graduates seeking to optimise their CVs), whereas underprivileged young people are scarce on the participant lists. Özgehan Şenyuva and Susie Nicodemi reflect on this development and conclude that inclusion is not merely a matter of information and recruitment drives, but also to a very high degree tied up with the very logic of the programme and the way in which activities are structured and implemented.

Introduction

The idea behind European Voluntary Service (EVS) is indeed a noble one: to offer the opportunity of learning mobility to those young people with fewer opportunities (YPWFO). Different mobility programmes have existed for students at secondary and university levels, Erasmus for university students being the most famous and well-known one. EVS was developed originally for those who are not necessarily within the education system, and offered an opportunity for a long-term voluntary placement within a community project, thus enabling young people to benefit from learning mobility as well as gaining valuable work experience within a social-community project.

The added value of youth mobility, in particular the skill-developing benefits of international mobility, is well documented. Rigorous research – as conducted for

1. The authors would like acknowledge the contributions of Bob McDougall, Emirhan H. Aslan, Helmut Fennes, Yunus Duman and Wolfgang Hagleitner (for the analysis of RAY data) in this chapter.

instance by the RAY Network (Research-based Analysis of Youth in Action) – provides sufficient evidence that young people develop various competences through their participation in learning mobility schemes. They gain very valuable skills (especially soft skills); they develop their attitudes and improve their knowledge. They achieve all this in a foreign country, which also gives them extra flexibility and adaptability.

Given these incontestable benefits, there is a major effort among European youth circles towards making mobility schemes more accessible for young people with fewer opportunities.

However, there seems to be a contradictory trend, despite all the policies implemented: in study after study, research reveals that the majority of the participants in learning mobility schemes correspond to a certain profile. They are better educated, already cognitively mobilised and have already adopted an international perspective. In other words, those young people that benefit were already in possession of the competences that the mobility experience is supposed to provide them with.

So, the question this analysis aims to answer is simple: why is EVS being taken over by better educated young people?

European Voluntary Service (EVS): its origins

As described by the European Commission, the European Voluntary Service (EVS) gives young people the opportunity to make a difference and “express their personal commitment through full-time voluntary work in a foreign country within or outside the EU ... EVS aims to develop solidarity, mutual understanding and tolerance among young people, while contributing to strengthening social cohesion and promoting active citizenship.”²

EVS operates within a triangular relationship between the sending organisation, hosting organisation and individual volunteer. Such a structure is intended to provide a trusting, supportive environment for the young person to experience a learning journey as part of their personal development. This is especially important for those with additional needs, for whom Short Term EVS was developed, providing a shorter time frame and a more manageable experience for those young people with fewer opportunities.

A networked training structure has grown at the international level to prepare the individual before they leave, on-arrival in their new environment, mid-term through their volunteering experience, and indeed after their volunteering experience on return to their home environment. An international EVS charter was initiated to provide a quality framework which all stakeholders should respect. These examples of structures that support EVS, among many others that have also been developed at local, regional, national and international level exist to support all young people, regardless of their background, to participate in a learning experience that has the potential to change lives.

2. <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32006D1719>.

The European mobility programmes were originally established over 20 years ago with a directly stated intention to be a counterpart to the Erasmus student exchanges, by enabling access for all young people, regardless of educational attainment level. In terms of the inclusion agenda, the following was mentioned in the decision to establish the previous Youth in Action programme, where European Voluntary Service was one of the Five Actions:

All young people, without discrimination, shall be able to have access to the activities of the Programme ... The Commission and the participating countries shall ensure that particular efforts are made with regard to young people who have particular difficulties taking part in the Programme for educational, social, physical, psychological, economic or cultural reasons or because they live in remote areas.³

The legal basis of the current Erasmus+ programme states that the programme shall pursue the following specific objective through which it is possible to see the growth and change in direction of the aims of the policy makers for this volunteering aspect. From 2014-2020, EVS aims:

to improve the level of key competences and skills of young people, including those with fewer opportunities, as well as to promote participation in democratic life in Europe and the labour market, active citizenship, intercultural dialogue, social inclusion and solidarity, in particular through increased learning mobility opportunities for young people, those active in youth work or youth organisations and youth leaders, and through strengthened links between the youth field and the labour market.⁴

Through the Erasmus+ Inclusion and Diversity Strategy in the field of Youth,⁵ a description is given of the various situations that can “prevent young people from taking part in employment, formal and non-formal education, trans-national mobility, democratic process and society at large”, as well as elaboration on “comparative disadvantage”, which can vary between countries and contexts, and “absolute exclusion factors” that by definition leave the individual disadvantaged. This provides context to the phrase “young person with fewer opportunities” as it is currently understood in the field.

Erasmus+ is a larger, wider programme, compared to its predecessors, with aims to develop key competences and skills of all young people, including (but not only) those with fewer opportunities. This stems from the focus on the employability agenda (see the renewed Framework for European Cooperation in the Youth Field 2010-2018).

Based on our analysis of the official programme documents, we argue that the inclusion approach over the interim seven years between programmes appears to have changed from a position of access for all to including a diversity of attainment levels and opportunities. The choice of policy makers to take this direction has

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3. Official Journal of the European Union, Decision No. 1719/2006/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 November 2006 establishing the Youth in Action programme for the period 2007 to 2013.
 4. Official Journal of the European Union Regulation (EU) No. 1288/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2013 establishing “Erasmus+”: the Union programme for education, training, youth and sport, Chapter III, Article 11.
 5. European Commission Directorate General for Education and Culture (December 2014), Erasmus+ Inclusion and Diversity Strategy in the field of Youth, p. 7.

presumably been influenced by the changing reality and evolving needs of society, with the current strong focus on employability. However, this change of position has an impact on the composition of participant profiles. The direction of the current Erasmus+ programme is to be inclusive for all (that apply?), which widens the focus and encourages those with higher educational attainment to be treated equally, and be given the same opportunity as those with lower educational attainment. Is that equal opportunity or equal access? Is that really an inclusive approach?

Does EVS reach those that are harder to reach?

Despite being a defined objective of the programme and having continued promotion from official documents such as the EVS charter,⁶ it was acknowledged, even in the early stages of EVS, that excluded target groups were not participating at the level hoped for by the programme. It seemed there were a multitude of variables for this, related to accessibility, resources, limited support available for those that have additional needs and, as it is argued in this chapter, the competition for places from others with higher educational attainment.

The SALTO inclusion publication “Get involved!”, which was published to emphasise the benefits of EVS Short Term, underlines succinctly the gap between expectation of take-up for EVS and the reality:⁷

the participation of young people experiencing certain difficulties (for example, the disabled, young people from immigrant backgrounds, early-school leavers, or those from isolated or economically depressed regions) remains very low. Youth workers who work with these youngsters may not be used to participating in international activities themselves. They admit to being confused and “puzzled” by EVS; they think it is “only for students” and do not easily see how it relates to the needs of the young people they work with.

It seems widespread and acknowledged that over the past 10 years we have seen more and more young people from higher educational attainment backgrounds involved in the projects. During the development of the Eastern Partnership Youth Programme, taking on board lessons learned, the European Commission’s own Action Fiche admitted:

At the level of the participation of young people in EU-funded programmes, notwithstanding the clear benefits afforded to certain groups in the youth population through involvement in such programmes as Youth in Action, Erasmus Mundus, these activities tend to benefit the better educated, more privileged young people from higher social backgrounds, and from predominantly major urban centres. There is a need to extend the impact of EU funding to more disadvantaged target groups within the youth population, such as those living in rural areas, young people with disabilities, discriminated young women, youth from ethnic minorities, etc.⁸

6 http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/sites/erasmusplus/files/library//evs-charter_en.pdf.

7. Polish National Agency of the Youth Programme (2003) “Get Involved! Discover the benefits of the EVS Short Term programme”: www.salto-youth.net/downloads/toolbox_tool_download-file-672/GetInvolved.pdf, p. 3.

8. European Commission (2011), Establishment of the Eastern Partnership Youth Programme Action Fiche for ENPI Regional East Action Programme part II, Annex 5, p. 3.

Who are the EVS volunteers?

The anecdotal evidence coming from the practitioners in the youth field pointed to the emergence of a certain profile of an EVS volunteer which is in line with the above definition: individuals who are better educated and come from higher social backgrounds with a certain level of language skill already acquired. Although longitudinal data collection is not to the desired level regarding the EVS, the findings of two major studies, which will be presented below, support the anecdotes.

The first and most comprehensive data are from the ongoing Research-based Analysis and Monitoring of the EU youth programme Erasmus+ Youth in Action (the RAY Network).⁹

According to the RAY Network findings, the majority of EVS volunteers already complete, or are about to complete, high levels of formal education (university level or higher) prior to or right after their EVS experience.

As seen in Table 13.1, in 2012 almost 7 out of 10 ex-EVS volunteers had university or similar level educational attainment, and, in 2013, this percentage is even higher, at 77%.

Table 13.1: Highest educational attainment ex-EVS volunteers (%)

	2012	2013
Primary school	0.4	0.0
Lower secondary school	1.1	1.4
Technical school	2.9	2.5
Upper secondary school	22.4	16.6
Upper vocational school	3.8	2.8
University, polytechnic, post-secondary/tertiary level college	69.4	76.7
Total	100.0	100.0
RAY 2012: n=820; RAY 2013: n=361		

Source: RAY Network 2012 and 2013 waves

The dominance of individuals with higher education levels is not particular to the EVS programme, and seems to be the case for all types of projects as well (Table 13.2). In all types of projects, more than half of the participants have university or higher levels of educational attainment levels.

9. The data for this study were collected through online surveys conducted by the RAY Network between 2009 and 2014. These surveys addressed participants and project leaders/team members involved in projects funded by the European Union programme Youth in Action (2007-2013). For more data see www.researchyouth.eu.

Table 13.2: Highest educational attainment ALL projects (%)

	2012	2013
Primary school	3.6	2.0
Lower secondary school	10.8	7.8
Technical school	2.4	3.6
Upper secondary school	25.4	25.3
Upper vocational school	3.9	4.1
University, polytechnic, post-secondary/tertiary level college	53.9	57.3
Total	100.0	100.1*
RAY 2012: n=5 341; RAY 2013: n=3 558		

Source: RAY Network 2012 and 2013 waves (* 2013 total = 100.1 due to rounding)

In other research conducted by a group of different national agencies in Europe, focusing specifically on the impact of EVS on employment and learning, EVS Competences for Employment – EVS C4E, the percentage of ex-EVS volunteers with university or higher degrees of education was also similar at 71%.¹⁰

There could be (at least) two possible explanations for this situation. An easy (and probably very inaccurate) way to explain the dominance of young people with university level educational attainment in the EVS programme would be the demographics: the number of young people who attend university is constantly increasing and it is reflected in the programme participation rates. However, such an explanation fails in the first simple reality check: according to Eurostat, in 2015 within EU-28, the percentage of those with tertiary education was 19.5% among people aged 15-29 and 32.6% for those aged 25-54. In any way of calculating, the figures among EVS volunteers are radically higher than the population averages.

We offer two sets of reasons to explain the university graduate EVS volunteers phenomenon: one external factor, employability and market pressure, and one internal factor, the design and implementation of the EVS programme.

EVS as a shortcut to employment: employability and the pressure on young graduates

According to the International Labour Organization, there were 73.3 million unemployed youth worldwide in 2014 and although the youth unemployment rate in Europe has decreased to 16.6%, the recovery is not for all countries.¹¹ In countries like Spain and Greece who were hardest hit by the ongoing global financial crisis, these figures are around 50%, and in the Euro Area, one out of every five young people aged

10. While these two studies (RAY and EVS C4E) both rely on voluntary participation and their sampling strategies are not representative, their findings are in line with the reports of the practitioners: EVS is mainly dominated by young people with high levels (university or higher) of educational attainment. A detailed desk study that analyses the educational levels of all EVS volunteers from all programme countries was not possible at the time of writing this paper.

11. *Global employment trends for youth 2015: scaling up investments in decent jobs for youth*, International Labour Organization, Geneva.

below 25 and part of the labour force are unemployed. There is, of course, a positive correlation between levels of educational attainment and unemployment, but in the present times of economic crisis, it is becoming evident that unlike the past, having a high education degree does not guarantee employment. The unemployment rates are quite high among those young people with bachelor degrees. According to the 2014 McKinsey report on education to employment in Europe, 74% of education providers were confident that their graduates were prepared for work, but only 38% of youth and 35% of employers agreed (Mourshed et al. 2014).

Although youth unemployment is not a problem that belongs only to young people, active labour-market policies (ALMPs) are placing the responsibility directly on the young people. With the implementation of ALMPs around the world, the focus has shifted from passive to active measures in dealing with unemployment. The starting point is to work on the supply-side (unemployed) rather than the demand-side (job creation and the markets). With the ongoing crisis the markets have shifted the focus to their advantage by ditching job creation schemes, and changing the interpretation of employability. Such an approach presupposes that “there is something wrong with the unemployed”. From this perspective, unemployment becomes “the inadequate ability of the individual to be employed” (Tidow 2003: 93). In this case, finding a job requires “workers to ‘adjust’ to the ‘new conditions’” imposed by global capital and competitiveness (van Apeldoorn 2003: 114).

In very general terms, ALMPs are shaped by the concepts of “employability; adaptability; entrepreneurship”, reflecting the need for flexibility in the market. As Goksel et al. (2016: 4) explain,

Employability is the catchphrase for all labour market policies around the world as a consequence of this consideration. The term encompasses all measures to increase the skills of the individual, in a way that defines a new role for the state to invest in education and training, especially for young people. The same focus also aims to enhance the adaptability of the unemployed to the changing, flexible and unstable conditions of the market as a result of globalisation and technological developments. The concept of adaptability depends on the idea of shaping human capital according to the changing needs of the employers and enterprises.

With the ALMPs in place, young people are forced to make themselves more employable, and having a university diploma no longer seems to be sufficient alone for employment. Young people are increasingly required to have more competences than those provided by formal education curricula. The experience dilemma is also ever-present: young people are required to have experience to get a job; and to get experience they need to work. In line with neo-liberal policies, such a dilemma is generally solved to the advantage of the employers, rather than to that of the young people. Most young people accept precarious jobs and unpaid internships in order to enrich their CV and increase their employability. They also search for ways to gain new competences that would increase their chances of getting a job. EVS comes into the scene at this level.

After 20 years of existence, studies of EVS have demonstrated that it works. Young volunteers indicate that time spent as a volunteer in another country contributes to their social, personal and professional development, giving them a unique opportunity

to gain and develop competences that formal education does not provide them with. According to the findings of the RAY Network, 97% of EVS participants have learned to communicate better with people who speak a different language; 80% of EVS participants have gained experience in identifying opportunities for their personal or professional future; 93% now feel more confident in moving around on their own in other countries (for example travel, study, work placement, job, etc.); and 85% of EVS participants have learned how to co-operate better in a team.

There are complementary findings indicating that EVS is highly correlated with employment. According to the EVS Competences for Employment project findings (Şenyuva 2014), 7 out of 10 ex-EVS volunteers state that the EVS experience affected their career plans; again almost 7 out of 10 ex-EVS volunteers believe that participating in EVS increased their chances of finding a job. The sending and hosting organisations are much more optimistic on this issue, and 9 out of 10 organisation representatives believe that doing EVS increases one's chance of employment. Among the participating employers, 76% also believe that a young person being a volunteer in another country for a period of time increases his or her chances of finding a job.

In short, EVS provides a very good opportunity: the young person gains and develops valuable competences that are in demand by employers; they gain a very valuable experience of working within a project/organisation/structure, which is often considered as "work" experience by both the employers and the volunteers; EVS provides them with a chance of living and working in another country, which is a competence highly valued by employers in an ever-increasingly globalised economic world, and ex-EVS volunteers gain an important advantage over others who have the same education background but not such an experience. Overall, EVS is all paid for by the European Commission and it promises young people a year of learning and fun in another country, rather than being exploited and struggling to make ends meet as an unpaid intern or a precarious worker. We also have to acknowledge that for certain countries a "working year abroad" is an integral part of the standard life narrative. As an experienced British EVS trainer points out,

I hate to stereotype, but almost all of the German volunteers I worked with are 19 years old, have just finished their *Arbitur*, already have a place at university and EVS (or something similar) is simply the thing that everyone does at that point in their life. In eight years I have never met a German graduate on an EVS.

Access for all? The impact of the design and implementation of EVS on inclusion

There are several logical steps for an EVS volunteer to get involved in EVS. The project leaders from the sending and hosting organisations have varying levels of control over the steps in this process. There are a great number of variables that influence this control, and we would argue that a minimum combination of these have to be in place, and implemented with quality, in order to effectively support the individual volunteer to an appropriate level so that their learning results in a positive outcome for them personally.

Taking the previous subchapter into account, the reality is that the actual participating target group is also the result of recruitment approaches of sending organisations. There are competing demands on both the sending and hosting organisation during their involvement in the process, which has an influence on their reputation as an organisation, and an impact on resources, which could already be overstretched. To support a young person with fewer opportunities to be involved in EVS demands a certain level of resource, expertise and enthusiasm, which the changes in European programmes over the years could recognise more in supportive measures. However, EVS volunteers that can contribute more than the resources they demand, that can communicate well (both in native and in a foreign language), that can express their personal and learning needs directly, might always be an easy option for both the sending organisation and the hosting organisation. Thus, the system, although not intentionally designed as such, tends to produce more university-level volunteers rather than young people with fewer opportunities.

One of the principles of EVS is to ensure universal accessibility. As noted in the EVS charter: “receiving organisations cannot specify that volunteer(s) should be of a specific ethnic group, religion, sexual orientation, political opinion, etc.; neither can they require qualifications or a certain educational level in order to select the volunteer(s)”¹²

If, as argued above, the organisations tend to recruit more educated volunteers rather than those with fewer opportunities, what extra support and motivation is there for sending organisations to find the disadvantaged or harder-to-reach young people? Which aspects bias the delivery of the EVS programme more towards university graduates rather than YPWFO?

Coming from practice experience and a rudimentary system analysis, we argue that there are eight critical junctures in the EVS delivery process that lead to the situation of higher-educated EVS volunteers being more willingly recruited.

The eight steps

First, there are the steps to be taken to become an accredited EVS organisation, which are mandatory before any application for EVS funding can be supported. All organisations have to be registered on the European Commission Authentication Service (ECAS) and have to obtain a Participant Identification Code (PIC). After this they apply to their national agency to go through the process of accreditation. They must show, among other things: that they apply the principles of the EVS charter; that they use and are aware of the EVS Training and Evaluation Cycle; that they have adequate insurance; good partnership working; an appropriate volunteering agreement between volunteer and partner; an awareness of Youthpass as a learning tool and recognition approach; that their organisation and the staff responsible for EVS have the motivation, experience, clarified aims and activities, capacity, have assessed the risk and will support the health/well-being of the individual volunteer.

12. http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/sites/erasmusplus/files/library//evs-charter_en.pdf.

For any newcomer organisation to accomplish this, training is needed. An understanding of systems and structures has to be developed, and support given for where to find out information. For many it is also a question of using support and information networks and sharing practice with those who are more experienced. It can be argued that the focus on the individual youth leader's capacities and competences is already quite intense, just to get them to this very first starting point on the EVS journey. The processes take a certain amount of resources. Organisations, unless they work on a daily basis with YPWFO, often find it hard to spare the extra energy and time to reach, motivate and recruit the harder-to-reach individuals.

Second, there is a sending organisation and the scope of their recruitment for EVS, which can be influenced by many things which can include, among others:

- ▶ the workload and balancing of priorities between “business as usual” and “extracurricular” opportunities such as EVS;
- ▶ the field of work of the organisation, the specialisms it focuses on, and how recognised those are;
- ▶ the catchment area and geographical reach, which can be more difficult in rural areas, for example;
- ▶ the strength of its networks, which also links to social capital and levels of relationship building that it has had time to invest in;
- ▶ the passion and commitment of its staff, their approach and enthusiasm levels;
- ▶ the resources available (financial, human, material, etc.), which in the current economic climate is more stretched for many;
- ▶ the pedagogical approach, the quality of the educational support processes, depending on which field of youth/community work they stem from and whether that is the statutory or voluntary sector;
- ▶ the breadth of support and flexibility from management, which again can often take persuasion and energy to bring on side;
- ▶ the competence and experience level of the specific staff members, together with their knowledge of the procedures and standards of the Erasmus+ programme.

A combination of factors such as those mentioned above means that, candidates with higher degrees of educational attainment have a clear advantage in being recruited and even specially targeted. Once the organisation invests so much time and energy to be accredited, there would be a motivation for the return of such an investment in the form of successful placements. And what would be the profile of a “successful placement”? An individual with higher levels of education could be more independent, and would therefore need less support and so take up fewer resources from the youth leader; they would have a more visible and mobile profile, and could be more likely to be proactively knocking on the door of the sending organisation under their own steam; their involvement could be more flexible around the other opportunities and educational structures in their lives; they could support the sending organisation with some of the capacity/knowledge/competence that is needed and be seen as a resource in themselves.

On the other hand, inclusion of a YPWFO could mean more work and effort for a sending organisation: they could need more support, and therefore more resources from the youth leader; they could be harder to reach (by definition), “Not in education, employment or training”; existing structural and information networks could take more effort to connect to them; it could be that they are not already mobile or active, or are less community conscious; it could take more resources and efforts to get them to the same starting level, compared to those with a higher educational level; maybe they had not had opportunities before and this first-time involvement in something takes confidence, which can be a comparatively big step for them. The pedagogical approach, together with the resource, passion and commitment from the youth worker is very important in any of these situations – which, at least in the UK, seem to be getting more and more stretched in these days of financial instability.

Third, there is the written application process. There are three deadlines per year, at which a long online application form must be completed, with involvement and commitment from the partner hosting organisation. The language of the forms is particular, with specific vocabulary and terminology that needs to be understood and is recognised by the field. An understanding of the selection criteria is crucial, and a strong talent for and knowledge of bid-writing. An awareness of the assessment process, the assessment criteria used, and what will be looked for in the applications is also vital to get an approval for a grant.

The accessibility of the programme could really be called into question here. The language used, the length of the application process, the content of the forms, the level of detail and the amount of project planning and communication needed to complete these processes could all call into question the “inclusivity” of the programme. There is also the reality that many organisations apply, and put together all this thinking, before knowing exactly the potential volunteer who will be involved, and their specific needs. In such cases, a young person with a university degree or a student could be more adaptable and easier to mould to fit a profile, and so be a better/easier fit to the approved application. While in the case of YPWFOs, any special needs and support mechanisms that could not be foreseen would be left out of the application process and would be impossible to justify afterwards. Furthermore, the amount of resources needed to explain systems and structures in order for that young person to have ownership of the process is disproportionate to the funding received.

Fourth, the onus is often on the individual volunteers to find a sending organisation, and often also to research the hosting project by themselves. This demands things such as confidence, commitment, free time, civic-mindedness, relationship building with the youth leader and an ability to communicate that can exclude those who are at risk, or need extra support. A certain level of competence, and independence, is presumed from the beginning, such as the ability to fulfil entry processes. Examples of these include written applications, provision of CVs, team tester days, use of and access to technology, connection with new faces through Skype, or even interviews. As the findings of a series of focus groups and interviews with ex-EVS volunteers within the EVS C4E project revealed:

The project also highlighted that in spite of being a priority of the E+/YiA programme and at policy level (nationally and at European level), EVS didn't, so far, succeed in being

fully inclusive ... the project and the debates during the International symposium clearly questioned the fact that to simply start the process of looking for a project requires already a series of competences per se. (Markovic and Markovic 2014)

Individuals that have higher educational attainment may already possess certain levels of research and information-gathering skills, as well as other competences such as public speaking, using technology, team-working skills and independence, compared with those with little or no education. It demands confidence to ask for help to develop skills that are missing, and low self-esteem could provide a blocking point for that. There could be a lack of experience or knowledge of how to provide information in a correct way, if they have never before been in a situation that requires it.

Fifth, the needs and requirements of the individual participant should be taken into account, a relationship built with the youth leader to develop an understanding of their position, to explore their motivations, and to put support plans in place for before/during/after the EVS experience.

Those with higher levels of education may already have developed the ability to express their own needs and interests; they could have a specific ambition and/or life direction which is clearer and more related to a particular qualification and life path; they could have made a conscious decision to include the EVS experience as a CV booster; they could be in a position to express very clearly the specifics of what they want to do and why.

For YPWFO on the other hand, there could be a direct impact through their involvement in EVS on their personal situation and needs. They might not have had experience in self-evaluating their own needs and might need extra pastoral support and resources for this; they might have extra responsibilities that they presume preclude them from taking part (single parents, carers, etc.). Practice also showed cases where YPWFO face external barriers such as parents and partners that pressure them into not taking part; their income – earned or benefit – might be relied upon by the family as a whole; their unemployment benefits are stopped by taking part and so on.

Sixth, the choices and options for the hosting organisation are a core element in this discussion. The volunteer represents for some a free qualified work force. The hosting organisation has to make a choice of whom to take. They balance resources and income (sometimes even to the point of a rough cost/benefit analysis) with many things: how the organisation will benefit; what the young person will learn; the resources needed to support that; how the young person fits into the environment and the team; the demand on the mentor's time; the maintenance of a good reputation for the organisation on a local/regional level; the importance of social capital and networking and so on.

Although the EVS charter dictates that educational levels or qualifications cannot be stated as a requirement by the hosting organisation, the competence level of the individual will shine through their profile and experience as it is communicated. Especially, considering the standard method of application of a volunteer is with a CV and motivational letter, a CV with a bigger list of qualifications would definitely create higher attraction.

An EVS volunteer coming with a pre-developed set of core skills would automatically be much more attractive for a host organisation. Such volunteers could be easier to process through the administrative systems; they could have higher levels of technical competence assured (use of computer programs, presentational software, etc.); perhaps higher language ability; they could represent less of a drain on resources for the organisation and, overall, they could contribute to the organisation and provide a more reliable outcome in achieving the objective and delivery of the learning plan. Most sending organisations also worry about possible dropout situations.

Seventh, one of the fundamental aims of EVS is to provide the individual with a learning experience, so among other things, the volunteer should: be prepared; be trained; be appropriately mentored; be supported with their learning plan; be involved with activity; have ownership and a say in the activities and learning plan which will help reach learning objectives; live with practical arrangements to an appropriate level; have space for reflection and be supported by tools for recognition of their learning.

Varying levels of education could provide varying levels of each of the following: experience and understanding by the volunteer of the concept of being responsible for their own learning; surety of their own direction and reason for learning; motivation; the ability to express themselves and their own needs clearly; self-esteem and self-confidence which in turn allows them to face challenging circumstances more or less successfully and so on.

Eighth, a certain level of support and adjustment is needed on homecoming for the individual volunteer. In order to maintain their level of accomplishment and/or learning, they will need support to implement change in the home environment (and prevent a slide back into old habits). This requires resourcing from the sending organisation youth worker. As European programmes have developed over the years, the support mechanisms for this phase have been systematically reduced. A structure used to exist in old programmes named "Future Capital" where an EVS volunteer could propose a continuation of their project on an individual basis – to deepen the connection to the topic, learning and/or community that they had been involved in during their volunteering project time. Also, the funding that used to be available in previous programmes for follow-up support by the sending organisations (in the project costs) no longer exists in Erasmus+.

Individuals with higher degrees of education will often have a more structured career path or life plan; they could have open choices to continue in education, employment or training; they could be using EVS as a stepping stone and could be surer of where they will step next.

The adjustment for the return is as big a challenge as the step to leave in the first place for a disadvantaged young person, which takes support and resources from the sending organisation. It could be that the sending organisation doesn't have the networks or resources to support the phased next steps that the volunteer could take.

In short, all the reasons discussed above, with possible explanations of motivations, could be contributing to the reality of the EVS selection and implementation process and could create a certain preference and advantage for better-off young people with higher educational attainments, rather than including and mobilising harder-to-reach young people who have fewer opportunities. EVS itself also has a certain attraction for those with higher education as discussed, by contributing to their competence development and increasing their employability, creating a source of well-educated, better-off young people as candidates for EVS placement.

As stated in the SALTO *Hopscotch* publication for the involved organisations, it comes down to a choice: do you choose a volunteer based on what they can offer you, or what you can offer them?

The dilemma of the next steps for EVS

The dominance of higher-educated young people in EVS presents a difficult dilemma for youth work in general that needs to be addressed by the policy makers, researchers and the practitioners: How can this situation be dealt with?

On the one hand, such dominance is a result of everyday life for young people in their search for overcoming the socio-economic problems of the society they live in. They are making use of an existing mechanism, although not solely intended for this purpose, to increase their employability and develop competences and skills that are not provided by the formal education curricula. In theory, this fits with the philosophy of youth work and non-formal and informal learning, as well as the purpose of learning mobility. This is one option: to recognise this situation, accept it and develop ways to support and facilitate it. For instance, two potential policy options could be: 1) developing further tools for social and political recognition of learning outcomes of EVS; and 2) increasing the recognition and visibility of EVS among employers and informing them of the added value of volunteerism and learning mobility. Recognition of EVS by the formal education system, and encouragement by universities for further students to be involved in learning mobility by giving them credits, is also being discussed and even put into practice by some countries.

On the other hand, one may be wary of creating yet another programme and initiative for young people with higher educational levels and denying chances for those with fewer opportunities, the original target of EVS. It may be argued that EVS should remain loyal to its original purpose and continue to function as a unique opportunity for young people with few or no formal qualifications. For this to happen, there needs to be further analysis of the functioning of the programme, and all possible pitfalls that intentionally or unintentionally favour those with higher education should be addressed. Such an initiative would also require extensive analysis of involved organisations' motivations and capabilities.

In either of the options, there is an undisputed reality: EVS works. Regardless of their educational background, the individuals who participate in EVS do benefit from it, personally and professionally. It is a major contribution to European society, and it should be continued to be studied, analysed, learned from and above all, recognised and supported.

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