

# euodesk

## SURVEY 2017

Mobility and the Role of Youth Information





## PREAMBLE

Eurodesk is a strong advocate for making sure all young people are given an equal access to quality mobility opportunities. Specialised information services such as us are particularly valuable in the digital area as young people are confronted with an overload of information. For this, we cannot rely on technology only, we need to provide human resources to accompany young people in their paths. The Eurodesk network is therefore constantly adapting to new technologic trends and the evolving behaviours, expectations and needs of young people.

More and more research shows that learning mobility has positive effects on personal development, on employability, on building a sense of EU citizenship and on being tolerant to diversity. Then why is not every one benefiting from a mobility experience<sup>1</sup>? There are many reasons for not being mobile. A large number of respondents of our survey mentioned that the main obstacle for going abroad was that they were not aware of all the available opportunities. The second one, is that the current level of financial support is not enough. Another striking message is that the level of information currently available to young people is not sufficient in many regions of Europe.

We know that Euroscepticism and populism is growing in Europe and the socio-economic crisis hit particularly hard young people. At the same time, we know the benefits of learning mobility and that over two thirds of young Europeans agree that EU programmes and initiatives such as Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps make them feel more European (67%)<sup>2</sup>. It is time to connect the dots.

This survey aims to provide an insight on young people's needs, behaviours and expectations when it comes to mobility-related information. It will help Eurodesk and other information networks in improving their services while also pointing at policy recommendations to ensure all young people have access to quality youth information. Eurodesk decided to launch this survey in 2017, in the context of the revision of the **EU Youth Strategy**. Indeed, we believe that youth information should be a pillar of the EU Youth Strategy to ensure inclusiveness and a wider outreach. This survey clearly confirms this need.

We hope you will enjoy the reading and, of course, that lessons can be learnt by all of us.

Audrey Frith,  
Director of Eurodesk

<sup>1</sup> An average of 4% of the student population is currently mobile; the proportion is even less for other groups of young people (VET students, secondary pupils, etc.).

<sup>2</sup> European Youth, Flash Eurobarometer, Report, September 2017

## INTRODUCTION

The term *'Learning mobility'* in the field of youth refers to the mobility of young people across countries, inside and outside of Europe, in formal and non-formal learning settings, mostly carried out in the framework of youth exchange programmes. Youth learning mobility is a concept that has become more popular since the implementation of European mobility schemes for studies, traineeships, volunteering, and exchanges. Learning mobility has been promoted by European institutions, foundations and civil society organisations since the end of the second World War. Youth learning mobility was perceived as a great tool for peace-building and intercultural understanding, uniting a continent derived by war and strengthening the future generation.<sup>3</sup> Ever since, European institutions have invested resources to create opportunities within programmes such as Erasmus, Youth in Action and the current Erasmus+, EU Aid Volunteers and European Solidarity Corps. To date, the European Commission has financed the participation of 9 million people in mobility opportunities since 1989<sup>4</sup>.

Learning mobility has shown to be one of the most effective ways to empower young people by providing them an opportunity to learn in different cultural contexts, develop valuable personal competencies and professional skills and enhance their autonomy and responsibility<sup>5</sup>. More and more research on the impact of learning mobility as a way to develop valuable personal, professional and cultural skills and competences is available especially when it comes to university exchanges.

In 2003 the European Council adopted a Resolution on the Common objectives for participation by, and information for, young people<sup>6</sup>. The resolution focuses on empowering the next generation to be informed of its choices at a time when digitalisation was blooming. The Council proposed to promote access for young people to information in order to increase their participation in public life and help them realise their potential as active, responsible citizens.

The forecast for the advancement of digital technology, that grew even more rapidly as years passed, was that it would come to have a significant impact on our everyday interaction and intake of information. An important way of equipping young people with essential skills and ensuring their awareness of opportunities and rights, were to invest in participation and information schemes. Youth information centres have been adapting to technological developments while keeping the essence of their mission.

<sup>3</sup> [Learning mobility in the field of youth](#), E. Briga, Council of Europe

<sup>4</sup> [From Erasmus to Erasmus+ A Story of 30 Years](#), European Commission (2017)

<sup>5</sup> The [Erasmus Impact Study](#), European Commission (2014) shows that "On average, Erasmus students have better employability skills after a stay abroad than 70% of all students. 81% of Erasmus students perceive an improvement in their transversal skills when they come back." The Erasmus Mundus [Graduate Impact Survey](#) (2016) also shows that "When asked for the two areas where Erasmus Mundus had the greatest impact the majority of graduates name their intercultural competencies (58.6%). Another 41.5% of the graduates believe that studying an Erasmus Mundus Master programme has a great effect on their career and 33.8% thought one of the greatest gains was that of subject related expertise."

<sup>6</sup> European Council. [Council Resolution of 25 November 2003 on common objectives for participation by and information for young people \[Official Journal C295 of 05.12.2003\]](#) (2013).

## THE HISTORY AND ESSENCE OF YOUTH INFORMATION

Youth information derived in 1960 as a service that would support and guide young people in making important decisions. It was unique in the way that it addressed young people, in a youth-friendly language, through channels and settings that would speak to them and that would take into account their transitioning in life. Although Youth Information in the mid and late 1990s consisted mainly of physical information centres and activities, the essence of youth information has come to stay the same.

Youth information aims to<sup>7</sup>:

1. provide reliable, accurate and understandable information,
2. **give access to different sources** and channels of information,
3. **give an overview of the options** and possibilities available on all relevant topics,
4. help young people **sift through the information overload** they face today,
5. ensure that young people are **aware of all rights and services** available to them and that they **know how to access** them,
6. provide **support in evaluating** the information obtained and in identifying quality information,
7. guide young people in **reaching their own decision** and in finding the best options open to them,
8. offer **different channels of communication** and dialogue in order to directly support young people in their search for information and knowledge,
9. **contribute to the media and information literacy** of young people, by supporting them in developing critical thinking

In 1985, the first **European Conference of Ministers responsible for Youth** included youth information and counselling among its priorities for future action and cooperation at the European level. It led to the creation of a European Network, **the European Youth Information and Counselling Agency, ERYICA in 1986**. Two other networks emerged, EURODESK in 1990 and EYCA, the European Youth Card Association in 1991.

The first legislative instrument regarding youth information, namely a **recommendation concerning information and counselling** for young people in Europe, was first adopted in **1990** by the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers<sup>8</sup>. It recommends to promote coordination at European level of a policy for information and counselling, to support the creation of appropriate information services, to promote research on the subject and to support the development of a European network of respective services. As the first political document from a European institution emphasising youth information, it led the way for a series of recommendations to be adopted.

<sup>7</sup> Council of Europe and ERYICA. *Youth Information, Historical reminders and main achievements, Compendium of Youth Information Texts* (2012).

<sup>8</sup> Council of Europe Committee of Ministers. [Recommendation No. R \(90\) 7 Of The Committee Of Ministers To Member States Concerning Information And Counselling For Young People In Europe](#) (1990).

**Eurodesk** was set up in this context. The first office opened in Scotland in **1990 to gather all information relevant for young people and youth workers in one place**, and to contribute to this information becoming easier to understand and access for them. Moreover, it became evident that the awareness of European issues had to be raised in the area in order to make maximum use of the available European information. A presentation of this model was made for representatives of ministries in charge of youth in 1994 upon a request by the European Commission. The meeting resulted in a decision to launch 14 youth information centres through a EU pilot project. Seven national Eurodesk offices were set up with success by June 1995. The development has continued and, today 36 national partners are involved in Eurodesk.

Today, youth information is a priority stressed under the scope of participation, as it is recognised as an essential tool in ensuring that young people become active citizens and take part in the democratic life of their societies.<sup>9</sup> In addition, youth mobility has shown to be an important tool in supporting this mission. Mobile young people, who through mobility have developed key interpersonal skills and competences such as intercultural awareness, open-mindedness and tolerance are more prone to engage in local, national and European democratic life.<sup>10</sup> The impact of mobility in developing active citizenship can have an essential importance in the development of young people, therefore Eurodesk works to promote free learning mobility opportunities, to ensure that young people are aware of how to access them, to guide them through the process and to advocate for accessible opportunities for all<sup>11</sup>.

The Eurodesk Survey 2017 marks the first edition of the project and addresses the topic of **access to specialised youth information** about learning mobility opportunities. The survey aims to evaluate the current context of youth information about mobility opportunities and its accessibility according to young people in Europe. It explores which channels young people use to gather information and what information they consider important.

<sup>9</sup> European Council. *Council Resolution of 27 November 2009 on a renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field (2010-2018) (2009/C 311/01)*. (2009)

<sup>10</sup> Banner B, Fennes H, Karsten A. Exploring Erasmus+: Youth in Action Effects and outcomes of the ERAS-MUS+: Youth in Action Programme from the perspective of project participants and project leaders. Transnational Analysis 2015/16 Executive Summary. (2017) RAY Network.

<sup>11</sup> Eurodesk has adopted 10 key principles regarding its services: works with qualified and trained staff; is free of charge; takes into account the individual's requirements; provides information and guidance for all young people; provides neutral information; refers to other information services; enables access to local and regional information all over Europe; information is based on testimonials and true stories; refers especially to financial support programmes; works with verified and trusted sources

## METHODOLOGY

The Eurodesk Survey is an online European-wide survey, carried out and published by Eurodesk Brussels Link. The survey was hosted on the European Commission's - EU survey tool, allowing it to be provided in 10 languages<sup>12</sup>, including English. The survey was promoted through the Eurodesk Network with support of European-wide NGOs and national institutions. The survey reached 939 respondents in 34 countries in Europe<sup>13</sup>.

The target group was aimed to be wide in order to make a comparative analysis of generations. The respondents are from under 15 to over 35 years old; it gathers the experiences of mobile as well as non-mobile youth, young adults and adults. The majority of respondents are between 15-30 years old (67%) and have participated in a mobility experience (69%).

The main questionnaire was designed to target both mobile and non-mobile people. The demographic and identification variables used were age group, country of residence, and whether they had participated in a mobility experience or not.

### *Mobile and non-mobile respondents*

In identifying our respondents, the survey asked whether they had participated in a mobility experience (n=656) or not. If they were respondents with a mobility experience, the survey would branch to ask about their experience/s; the timeframe they were abroad; if they participated in any specific mobility programme; how they found out about the opportunity; what was their motivation to go abroad; and which obstacles they faced. If the respondents answered that they had not participated in a mobility experience (n=283), they were asked about their reasons for not participating, in addition to the general survey.

The main questionnaire continued to focus on the aspects of access to youth information about mobility opportunities. Apart from the demographics and identification variables, the following areas were explored by the survey:

1. Availability of youth information regarding mobility
2. Preferred information channels
3. Preferred content of information
4. Experience looking for information regarding mobility
5. Desired profile of mobility advisors.

<sup>12</sup> The Eurodesk Survey was translated from English into Dutch, French, German Hungarian, Italian, Polish, Romanian, Spanish and Turkish.

<sup>13</sup> Respondents from 34 European countries: AT, BE, BG, CH, HR, CY, CZ, DK, EE, FI, FR, DE, EL, HU, IS, IE, IT, LV, LI, LT, LU, FYROM, MT, NL, NO, PL, PT, RO, SK, SI, ES, SE, TR, UK.

**LIMITATIONS**

The data collected is used to analyse the overall experience with specialised youth information services in Europe. It offers policy insights about possible ways to improve youth information services in Europe as well as on its importance for many young people. Although 939 young people have answered our survey, we believe that there is a need for a continuing survey that aims to reach more young people and that asks for further identification variables to support an analysis that can identify experience of access to youth information for young people of different socio-economic backgrounds, geographical placements and cultural and traditional systems. We intend to launch a new edition of the Eurodesk survey in 2018, to research a more indepth aspect of trends of youth information, media literacy and accessibility to mobility opportunities.



## CHAPTER 1 / MOTIVATION AND OBSTACLES

In order to better understand today's motivations and obstacles in regards to mobility experiences, the respondents of our survey were asked to share their experiences. Two sets of questions were asked for those who went on a mobility and those who did not.

### Mobile respondents

The mobile respondents were asked to share their **source of inspiration and motivation** for going abroad by rating a set of indicators and sharing additional reasonings. The main motivations for going abroad has been documented by several studies as both personal and professional factors. Reasons such as having an opportunity to live abroad, meet new people, improve language skills and develop transversal skills are some of the key arguments.<sup>14</sup> When asking our respondents about their main motivation the majority answered that the **top three reasons were to 'Have fun and live a new experience' (86%), 'Do something meaningful and useful' (83%) and to 'Increase my employability' (57%).**

The mobile respondents were also asked about their experience with **obstacles** encountered during their stay abroad. Almost one third of respondents **(27%) mentioned that they have experienced financial issues** during their stay abroad. Financial issues have been documented as a recurrent obstacle within the Erasmus+ programme as very often the grants received are not fully covering the study-related costs, living costs and personal necessities. Other obstacles documented in relation to finances were not receiving the grant in time resulting in having to make down-payments and take on financial risks before the grant arrives.

The second most common obstacle mentioned was **housing (15%)**, which relates to problems finding accommodation, being exposed to fraud or difficulties in the housing process, or having to re-allocate to several different living arrangements during the course of the mobility period. The HousErasmus+ Research Report documents that housing is a rising obstacle for mobile young people. It states that very often finding accommodation is difficult because of a multitude of reasons such as the lack of availability of affordable short-term housing options, language barriers and geographical locations.<sup>15</sup>

The third most common obstacle mentioned was **language barriers (13%)**. Although learning a new language is among the list of motivations and improved skills after a mobility experience, it can very well become a difficult barrier. Initiatives such as the Online Linguistic Support of the European Commission and the advancements of free language-learning apps and language cafés organised by local organisations, have been a support structure in integrating international young people into local communities.

<sup>14</sup> European Commission. Erasmus Impact Study. 2014

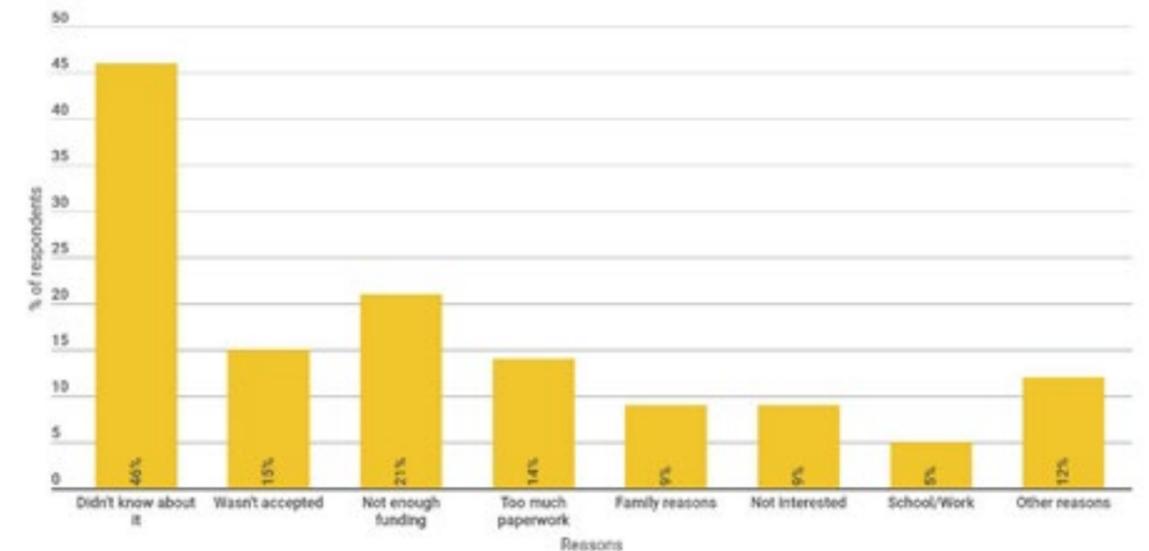
<sup>15</sup> Kuzmane D, Jahnke S, Pérez Encinas A, Alfranseder E, Fellingner J. *HousErasmus+ Research Report* (2017) Erasmus Student Network and European University Foundation.

### Non-mobile respondents

In order to better understand the experience with the topic of mobility amongst our non-mobile respondents we asked what their reasons were for not going abroad. **The wide majority mentioned that they were unaware of such opportunities (46%).** This is by far the strongest obstacle mentioned which brings us back to the need to ensure that all young people are aware of the available grant schemes that can support them in participating in mobility projects. Beyond the Erasmus student mobility programme, many young people do not know about the European Voluntary Service, Youth Exchanges, EU Aid Volunteer, Erasmus Pro and other bilateral and international programmes. The lack of information and awareness about these opportunities is the main factor to why non-mobile participants do not participate. Specific outreach strategies should be planned and implemented, with the support of youth information networks such as Eurodesk, to make sure a wider group of young people knows about such opportunities.

In regards to the obstacles of mobility, the mobile and non-mobile participants shared the same aspect of finances being one of the main obstacles. **20,8% of the non-mobile participants mentioned that the grant provided was not enough** to cover their expenses, which subsequently led to having to cancel their mobility before it even started. 14,8% mentioned that they did apply for a grant but were not accepted, therefore they did not have the financial means to go abroad. These results attune with the recurring challenge of ensuring sufficient individual support to make sure that all young people can participate regardless of their socio-economic background.

GRAPH 1. Why haven't you undertaken a mobility placement abroad?



Categories: (1) I didn't know of such opportunities, (2) I applied for a grant but was not accepted, (3) The grant provided was not enough, (4) There is too much paperwork, (5) My family do not want me to go abroad, (6) I'm not interested in going abroad, (7) School or work doesn't allow me to go abroad.

Other reasons mentioned for not going abroad were relating to either being too young, not being interested in mobility opportunities, insecurity of language level and personal reasons that are not covered in the above-mentioned categories.

## CONCLUSION

Many factors correlate in the aspects of motivation and obstacles of going or not going abroad. The majority of the non-mobile respondents mentioned that the main obstacle for going abroad is that they were not aware of all the facts and the opportunity of participating. If the main motivation for the wide majority of young people is to 'Have fun and live a new experience' or to 'do something meaningful and useful', there have to be ways of better promoting these aspects as an important factor of the mobility experience in addition to the personal and professional skills and competences to be gained. The importance of a youth friendly approach in reaching out is an important key. Specialised youth information services, organisations and institutions focusing on reaching out to young people must take these aspects in mind.

Financial obstacles is still mentioned as a strong contributing factor to discouraging young people to even take the first step to seek further information and participate in mobility opportunities. Their fears are justified by the mere fact that the mobile respondents attune to and experience the same obstacle. Initiatives such as the supplementary grants of the Erasmus student exchanges, is one way in which programmes such as Erasmus+ has improved to accommodate beneficiaries who are in need of financial support. The outreach of this support is however limited and more measures to provide better financial support is needed for all young people to be able to participate.

With the wide target being *young people*, one has to be innovative in finding ways to reach out, motivate and provide support. When looking further into the study we will identify what are the best ways of reaching out, what information is interesting to receive and how youth information providers, civil society organisations and institutions can improve their support to young people in Europe.



## CHAPTER 2/ AVAILABILITY OF INFORMATION REGARDING MOBILITY

**Access to information is recognised as a human right** under the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental freedoms, among other important declarations and recommendations. Access to information is acknowledged as a prerequisite to be able to participate in society to the fullest, to enjoy one’s rights and opportunities and to be able to make conscious decisions.

In the promotion of mobility opportunities such as Erasmus+, institutions are often criticised for the impact of their outreach. Today Europe consists of 89 million young people between the age of 15 and 29<sup>16</sup>, and only a small fraction of them are aware and have access to mobility opportunities.

When asking the respondents which are the **two best ways of receiving information** about mobility opportunities abroad, an overwhelming majority supported Online information (web pages) (79.6%) and Face-to-Face encounters (62%). (Graph 2).

An important measure in **information provision** is using the channels where your target group is most present on. The latest Eurostats publication *Being Young in Europe Today - Digital World*, shows that young Europeans spend an increasing amount of their time consuming digital media. With the expansion of the information age and services such as video streaming, blogs, chat rooms and social media platforms, the use of online media has grown rapidly. Our respondents confirmed the use of **online webpages to be one of the channels that is easiest to reach them (79,7%)**.

At the same time, **face-to-face encounters remain very important (62,1%)**. Based on Eurodesk experience of working with young people, we see that guidance or counselling are key when preparing for a mobility experience. The fear of young people concerning the losses they would incur by leaving their familiar surroundings are sometimes greater than their estimate of the personal profit they would gain by going abroad<sup>17</sup>. This is what researchers have called “motility”: it stands for the capacity for active movement and describes the intrinsic motivation of being mobile and agile. The capacity to support young people in their mobility project is highlighted in the following chapter.

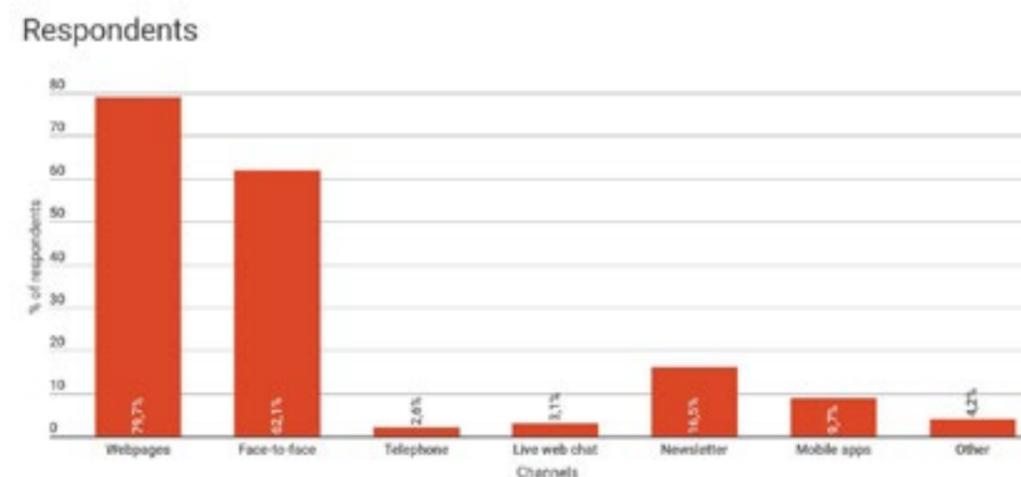
GRAPH 2. Top 2 ways of receiving information- Graphics to be added.



16 Eurostat. *Being Young in Europe Today - Demographic Trends* (2015)

17 Schwalbach R. *Eurodesk Discussion Paper. Developing a Guidance Concept. Aspects of Youth Mobility Information and Counselling* (2014) Eurodesk.

GRAPH 3. Best ways to receive information about mobility opportunities



When analysing if there are any differences between the age groups or mobile and non-mobile respondents, the same answers persist.

The information and preparation for a mobility experience can at times be very extensive. Not only do you have to understand the technical parts of your application but also coordinate your time and availability, research about the countries and cities you are interested in going, find a place to live, ensure that you have a proper health insurance, prepare for your experience, open a bank account, etc.

When asking the respondents what kind of information they would like to receive, that is relevant to prepare a mobility experience, the respondents overwhelmingly listed that all of the following information is important. The **capacity to deliver targeted and individualised information** is therefore crucial for specialised youth information providers in order to answer the needs of a majority of young people.

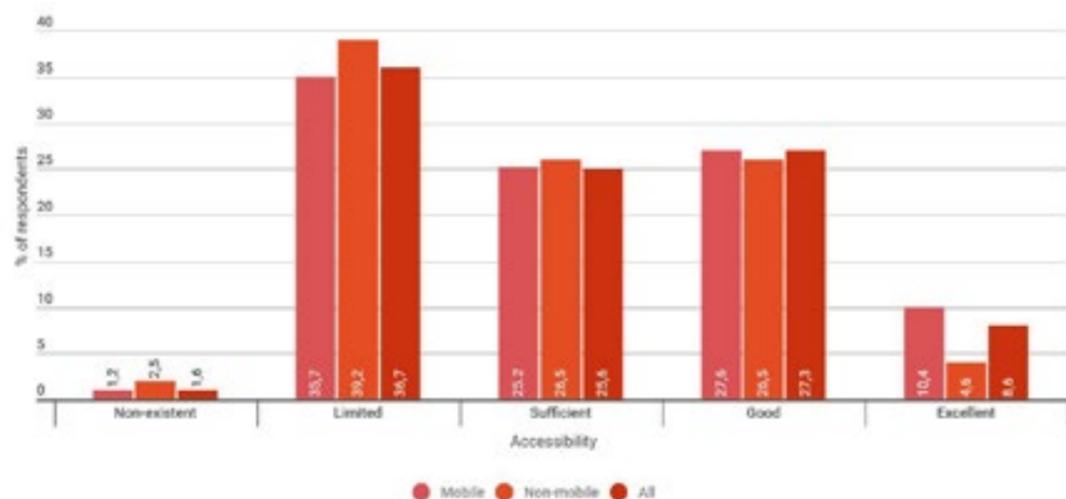
GRAPH 4. Wordcloud of the most important information to receive



The amount of information that exists can be overwhelming and navigating the web to find quality information about mobility opportunities can be challenging. We therefore asked our respondents about their experience in searching for information about mobility, both online and offline, in order to better understand the good practices and difficulties encountered.

When asking our respondents how they **perceive the level of information** available on mobility opportunities for young people in their country, **38.3% answered that it was either limited or nonexistent.** (Graph 5)

GRAPH 5. Level of mobility information available in your country



When comparing the mobile and non-mobile respondents, the difference in answers are minimal, however, mobile respondents believe that the level of information available is excellent to a wider extent than those who have not gone abroad.

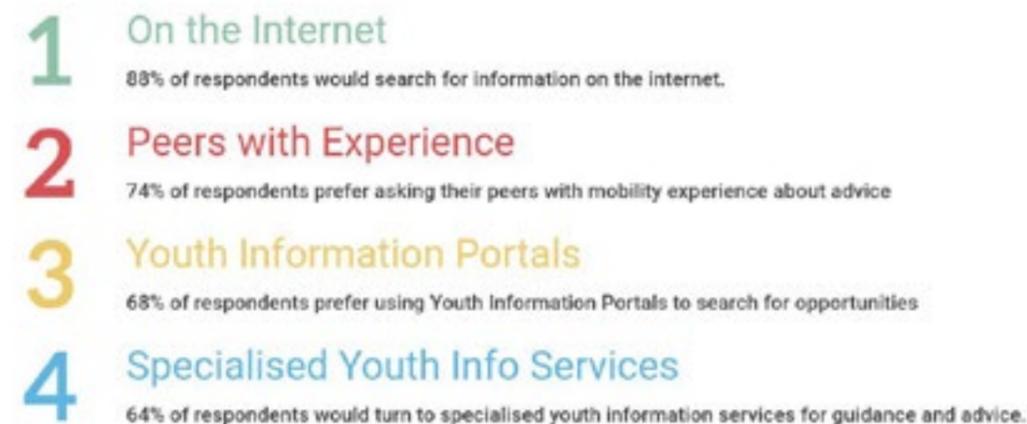
In order to better understand which channels would be used to look for information, we asked the respondents to share where they are more likely to search for opportunities.

**The top sources to search for opportunities:**

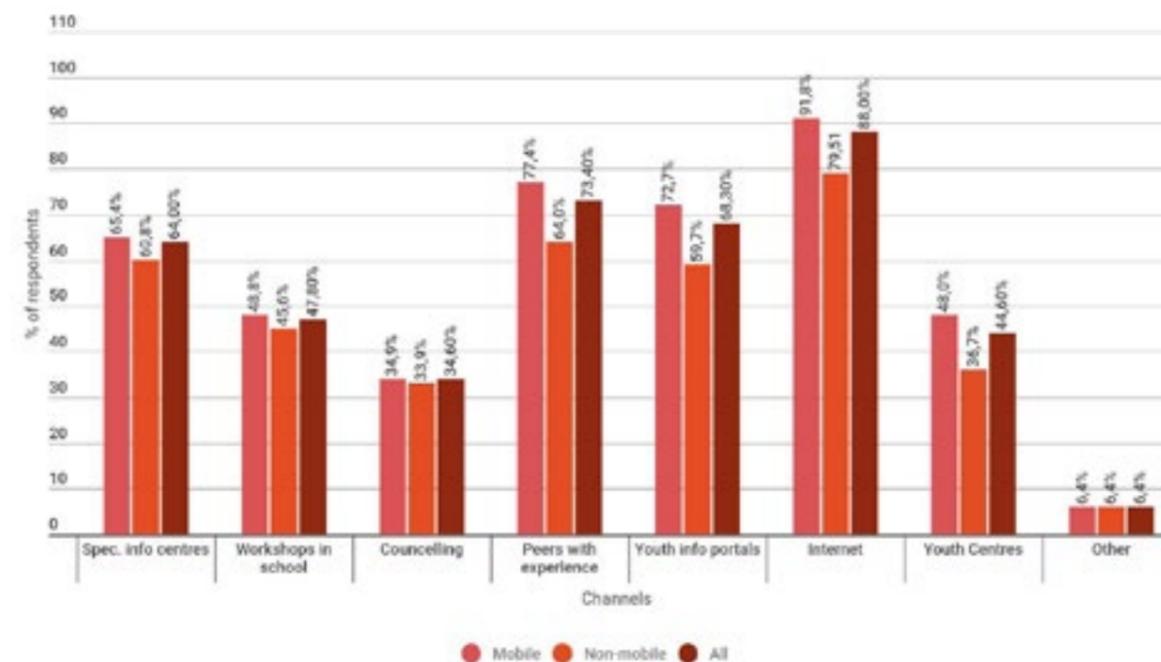
1. on the internet (88%)
2. peers with mobility experience (74%)
3. youth information portals (68%).
4. specialised youth information services (64%)

When assessing the differences between mobile and non-mobile respondents we can see a small tendency among non-mobile respondents towards the support of specialised information centers while mobile respondents support youth information portals.

GRAPH 6. Top 3 ways of searching for information

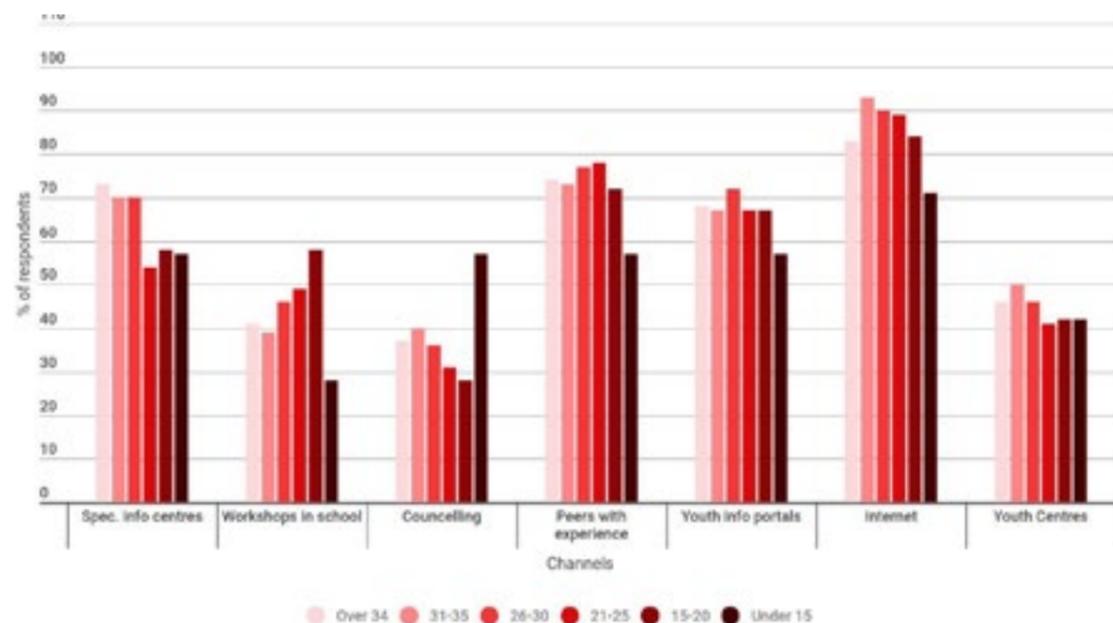


GRAPH 7. Where would you look for advice on mobility opportunities?



When comparing the statistics in **different age groups** we can see more clearly the division amongst the participants. The age group of 'under 15' follows a different trend than the other age groups where, for example, there is a higher tendency of preferring counselling offices than workshops at school.

GRAPH 8. Where would you look for advice on mobility opportunities (age groups)



**Searching for information is not always easy, and finding the right information and reliable information is at times difficult.** We live in an information society where content is both generated by institutions and companies as well by individual users of the internet. Almost every second young person in Europe has at least once created their own user-generated content.<sup>18</sup> The amount of information can be found overwhelming and the importance of media literacy is stressed across sectors of education, commercial industries and public institutions.

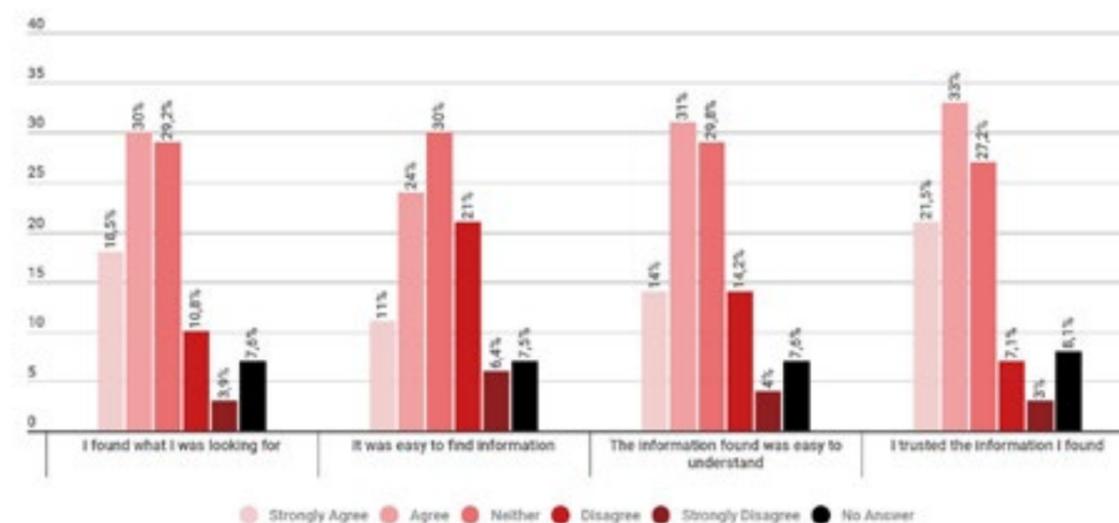
When asking the respondents about their **experience with accessing information** about mobility opportunities:

- 48,5% believed to have found everything that they were looking for;
- 35% thought it was easy to find the information;
- 44,5% believed that the information was easy to understand;
- More than half of the respondents (54,6%) trusted the information they found.

Around a third of the respondents had no strong opinion in any direction (agree or disagree) with the experience of searching for information. Another important factor however, is the experience of those that disagree with the statements. 14% mentioned that they did not find what they were looking for. 27% claims that it was difficult to find the information and 18% that the information was difficult to understand. 10% experienced difficulties with trusting the information that they found.

<sup>18</sup> "47 % of all young people in the EU-28 uploaded self-created content, such as photos, videos or text to the internet." from Eurostats. *Being Young in Europe - Digital World* (2015)

GRAPH 9. My experience searching for information



One aspect of communication is receiving information and the other is **looking for information**. Organisations and institutions working with mobility opportunities, such as Eurodesk, spend a lot of time and resources into ensuring that the information is easily accessible and youth-friendly. With digital marketing, advertisement techniques and search engine optimisation, a lot of effort is also put into ensuring that the potential user can in one way or another be directed to the right place of information if they search for certain keywords or use certain terms. **Our digital spaces are becoming more and more sculptured to reflect our behaviour and interaction** with different content. The risk with more and more personalised digital marketing is that the information will even more "target" young people that are already likely to be interested in a mobility experience. This is why, youth information networks such as Eurodesk have to make sure to reach out to those that are further away from such opportunities, especially NEETs.

## CONCLUSION

**Accessing information about mobility opportunities is still a barrier to participation** as 40% of young people evaluate the information to be nonexistent or limited in their country. Although efforts are put from those generating content to reach young people, **a big minority of young people still believe that the level of information available is limited**. In addition to difficulties in accessing information, **almost 20% of young people believe that the information found is difficult to understand**, and only around half of the respondents can say that they truly trusted the information that they found.

In efforts of information and outreach, the respondents mentioned internet and webpages as their main source of finding information. In today's society, we have and are continuing to foster generations of digital natives. **Media literacy and engaging with digital content** is a skill that has become more and more valued. However, it is important to note that not all young people are connected.

Face-to-face communication was mentioned as the second most favorable measure, and in spite of the digital media consuming a large part of our daily communication, traditional methods such as face-to-face peer exchange are still highly valued. Alongside youth-friendly digital measures, the importance of ensuring **access at local level to information points** is key to being inclusive in outreach measures. The majority of our non-mobile respondents faced the same reasoning for not going abroad: the lack of access to information about opportunities<sup>19</sup>. A **face-to-face outreach** has better potential of reaching a younger target group, give a personal face and contact point and work with well-established structures in local communities. Existing networks such as Eurodesk with its network of local multipliers could play an even more important role in reaching to young people at the grassroots level.

When looking at the type of information the respondents wish to receive it is not only information about mobility opportunities that are targeted to their needs and desires, but they are also interested in receiving information about the surrounding support measures of youth mobility, such as housing prospects and financial support, legislation relating to young people, career counselling and leisure activities. They desire to have information that target the opportunities and logistics related to their whole experience of going abroad and not only the specifics of the mobility programme. This outlines the importance of **implementing comprehensive approaches** to outreach and support structures and fostering **collaboration between several different service providers** (health, education, housing, etc.)

The political will for more inclusive information and outreach efforts can be found in the EU Youth Report of 2015 where the European Commission and Member States have committed to promote:

- *" social inclusion and outreach practices to reach young people of diverse backgrounds, especially those suffering from disadvantages, to ensure their full participation in social and civic activities;*
- *the capacity of youth work, youth organisations and networks to act as forces of inclusion by assisting young people to engage, volunteer and drive positive social change in communities;"*<sup>20</sup>

Although the matter of outreach and dissemination is mentioned in the Report, **there is no comprehensive strategy tackling information provision as a horizontal issue** similar to the political ambitions of the recommendations and council resolutions of 1990<sup>21</sup> and 2003<sup>22</sup>. The full evaluation of the current EU Youth Strategy is still to be made at the end of the Strategy in 2018. We however see a need for a more elaborate horizontal action to ensure that information provision pervade all actions and opportunities related to young people.

19 Graph 1 - Why haven't you undertaken a mobility period abroad? - 46% answer that they did not know of such opportunities.

20 European Commission. EU Youth Report 2015 (2016)

21 Council of Europe Committee of Ministers. *Recommendation No. R (90) 7 Of The Committee Of Ministers To Member States Concerning Information And Counselling For Young People In Europe.* (1990) Council of Europe.

22 European Council. *Council Resolution of 25 November 2003 on common objectives for participation by and*



## CHAPTER 3 / THE IMPORTANT ROLE OF MOBILITY ADVISORS

In order to better support young people in finding opportunities that are relevant to them, we asked the respondents to share what kind of support they found important.

**90% of the respondents believed that it would be helpful to receive personal guidance** if they were planning to go abroad to do an internship, a volunteering assignment or for studying. A minority of 7% argued that part of the experience of going abroad is being able to find and navigate through the pile of information that exists. They argue that the search for information creates a sense of responsibility, ownership and independence already before the mobility period starts and that these aspects are just as important as the mobility experience itself. The remaining 3% had no comments.

When asking what the most important competences of a mobility advisor is, we provided a list of competences according to the Eurodesk Mobility Advisor Competence Framework<sup>23</sup>. There are some visible differences between the mobile and the non-mobile respondents.

The non-mobile respondents value the **knowledge about host countries (80,2%)** as the most important competence, followed by **guidance in building your professional and personal project (79,2%)** and **knowledge about technical information of the application process (78,5%)**.

While the mobile respondents value **knowledge about technical information (85,8%)**, **empathy and active listening (77,4%)** and **knowledge about the host country (75%)** as their three top competences.

However, it is important to point out that **none of these competences exclude each other**. Looking at the broader overview of all respondents, all competences had the support of at least 73% of the respondents, making all the competences an important aspect of providing mobility advise.

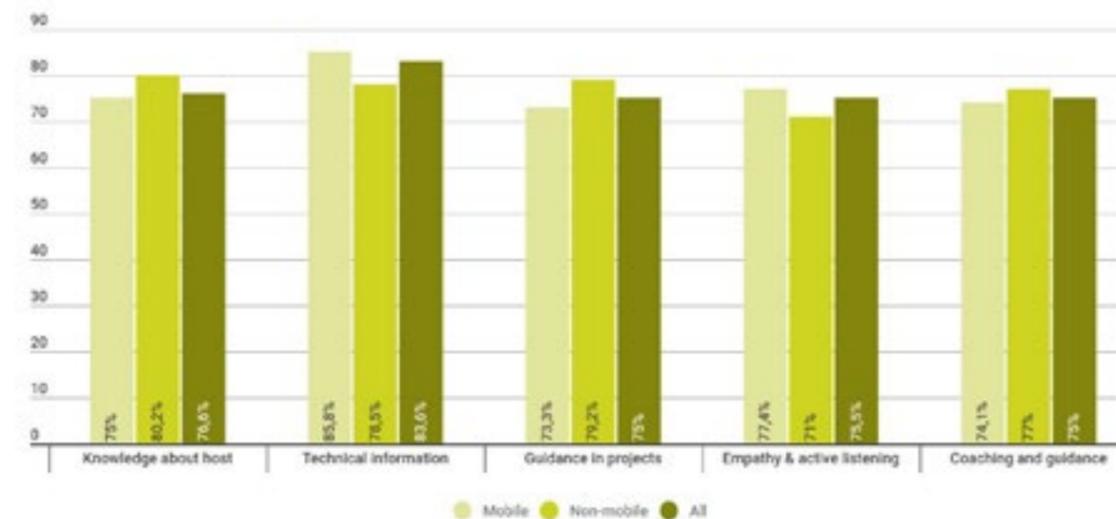
TABLE 1. Index of competences

Knowledge about the host country
Technical information to support you in preparing grant applications
Guidance in building your professional and personal project
Empathy and active listening
Coaching and individual guidance

information for young people [Official Journal C295 of 05.12.2003] (2013) European Union.

23 Developed in 2017, the Eurodesk Mobility Advisor Competence Framework resulted from desk research and a collection of behaviours from multipliers on their daily work with young people through a survey run in July 2017.

GRAPH 10. What are the competences you expect from a mobility advisor (make sure numbers are visible)



### CONCLUSION

Youth mobility opportunities remain an important aspect of providing young people with essential interpersonal skills, to better equip their participation in society and their sense of active citizenship. **The wish to have individualised support and personal guidance** in finding opportunities is ranked as an important factor and face-to-face interaction with a mobility advisor is mentioned as an important feature. In providing support to young people, the respondents wish to have **knowledgeable mobility advisors with a wide range of skills and competences**. Technical knowledge about the application is set as the most important aspect, however, ‘knowledge about the host country’, ‘being able to provide individual coaching and guidance’ and ‘having an empathic and active listener’ are skills and competences that are ranked almost as high.

Those results show the importance of investing in building the capacity of youth information providers, youth workers, trainers and important roles in society that support young people. The work of these actors are complex in the sense that they need to embody a wide set of skills and competences. In addition, the centres, offices, information points where they work, need to have a strong base of human resources in order to target the individual needs of each young person. The work that is carried out, of youth information providers and youth workers, need to be widely recognised, encouraged and promoted to further enhance the quality of the profession. This implies more investments in to youth information, counselling and youth work; to civil society and structures that work with the future generation, in order to ensure quality and easily accessible support and services. The added value of working as a European network of Eurodesk mobility advisors is to make sure the knowledge can be shared across countries, especially when it comes to the “knowledge about the host country” which can be offered by the local multipliers.

## CHAPTER 4 / FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Today's challenge of providing quality information about mobility opportunities to all young people remains. The work of information providers such as specialised information centres, youth organisations and institutions has to quickly adapt to the language of digital natives while at the same time continuing to use face to face methods and street work.

Rightfully so, young people desire the opportunity to receive individualised support. At times that is an essential factor in ensuring that many young people do take action after obtaining information, that they are guided through the process, motivated and supported.

With regards to the outcome of this survey, Eurodesk recommends that:

- The European Commission dedicates a horizontal priority to youth information in the next EU Youth Strategy, in order to overcome obstacles related to information, to more actively promote youth rights and opportunities, and to ensure that the coming generations remain media literate, well-informed and engaged in democratic life.
  - The Youth Information Strategy should be comprehensive: combining online and face-to-face services and be developed and implemented in partnership with existing specialised information networks such as Eurodesk.
  - The European Youth Portal should be revamped in order to provide a one-stop-shop to the different opportunities offered by the EU to young people. The information should be easier to navigate and understand (see Eurodesk vision statement of the EYP).
  - At policy level, this work should be supported by the setting up of a thematic working group related to EUYS Information Strategy in partnership with youth information networks such as Eurodesk, ERYICA and EYCA.
- In regards to overcoming obstacles to participation, the European Commission should make sure that the available individual grants for mobility are sufficient to ensure that all young people can participate. In addition, the supplementary grant available to young people with special needs should be better communicated and known.
- The European institutions incorporate comprehensive youth information goals to their strategic frameworks for opportunities directed to young people and in the implementation of activities and programmes aimed at young people. Funding should support the political will of reaching these goals. The Eurodesk network, with over 1000 multipliers in 34 countries, should expand to make sure young people have access to trained mobility advisors at the regional and local level.
- Invest in youth mobility information providers who play an essential role in equipping young people with quality information to participate actively in society. Investments should be done to support well-equipped services, capacity building of youth information professions and recognition of the profession and its essential role. Eurodesk has adopted a Competence Framework of Eurodesk Mobility Advisors in 2017; this specific youth worker profile should be better recognised in Europe.

- By allowing more evidence-based policies that support research on mobility and the role of youth information, Trans-sector cooperation in the field of quality information should be fostered and encouraged through e.g. Horizon2020 and ESF. This would support the provision of quality information to young people in partnerships with educational institutions, libraries and other essential structures.

## REFERENCE MATERIAL

**Banner B, Fennes H, Karsten A.** *Exploring Erasmus+: Youth in Action Effects and outcomes of the ERASMUS+: Youth in Action Programme from the perspective of project participants and project leaders. Transnational Analysis 2015/16 Executive Summary.* (2017) RAY Network.

**Briga E.** *Learning mobility in the field of youth* (2017) Council of Europe. Retrieved 15 December 2017, from: <http://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/youth-partnership/learning-mobility>

**Council of Europe Committee of Ministers.** *Recommendation No. R (90) 7 Of The Committee Of Ministers To Member States Concerning Information And Counselling For Young People In Europe.* (1990) Council of Europe.

**Council of Europe and ERYICA.** *Youth Information, Historical reminders and main achievements, Compendium of Youth Information Texts* (2012) Council of Europe.

**European Commission.** *Erasmus Impact Study* (2014) European Union

**European Commission.** *EU Youth Report 2015* (2016) European Union

**European Commission.** *From Erasmus to Erasmus+ A Story of 30 Years* (2017) European Union. Retrieved 10 October 2017, from: [https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/anniversary/resources\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/anniversary/resources_en)

**European Council.** *Council Resolution of 27 November 2009 on a renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field (2010-2018) (2009/C 311/01)* (2009) European Union.

**European Council.** *Council Resolution of 25 November 2003 on common objectives for participation by and information for young people [Official Journal C295 of 05.12.2003]* (2013) European Union.

**Eurostat.** *Being Young in Europe Today – Demographic Trends* (2015). Retrived 20 November 2017, from: [http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Being\\_young\\_in\\_Europe\\_today\\_-\\_demographic\\_trends](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Being_young_in_Europe_today_-_demographic_trends)

**Eurostat.** *Being Young in Europe Today - Digital World* (2015). Retrieved 20 November 2017, from: [http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Being\\_young\\_in\\_Europe\\_today\\_-\\_digital\\_world](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Being_young_in_Europe_today_-_digital_world)

**Krüget T, Klein K, Riek S, Pinkas S, Höpfner A, Kuske J.** *Erasmus Mundus - Graduate Impact Study* (2016). Icunet

**Kuzmane D, Jahnke S, Pérez Encinas A, Alfranseder E, Fellingner J.** *HousErasmus+ Research Report* (2017) Erasmus Student Network and European University Foundation.

**Schwalbach R.** *Eurodesk Discussion Paper. Developing a Guidance Concept. Aspects of Youth Mobility Information and Counselling* (2014) Eurodesk.

## TABLES & GRAPHS

**Table 1.** List of Competences

**Graph 1.** Why haven't you undertaken a mobility placement (non-mobile respondents) (n=283)

**Graph 2.** Icon showing the top three preference of receiving information.

1. Online information (webpages)-79,6%
2. Face-to-Face encounters-62%

**Graph 3.** Best way to receive information about mobility opportunities

**Graph 4.** Word cloud of the most important information to receive

**Graph 5.** Level of information available. all respondents

**Graph 6.** Top 3 sources to look for information.

1. Internet - 88%
2. Peers with experience 74%
3. Youth information portals - 68%
4. Specialised youth information services 64%

**Graph 7.** Where would you look for advice on mobility opportunities. Division: ALL respondents; MOBILE respondents; and NON-MOBILE respondents.

**Graph 8.** Where would look for mobility opportunities (Age Groups). Division in age groups:

Under 15 (n=6);

15-20 (n=87);

21-25 (n=62);

26-30 (n=48);

31-35 (n=23);

over 35 (n=51);

**Graph 9.** My experience searching for information. categories: I found what I was looking for; it was easy to find information; the information I found was easy to understand; I trusted the information I found.

**Graph 10.** What are the competences you expect from a mobility provider? Division: ALL respondents; MOBILE respondents; and NON-MOBILE respondents.

## ANNEX 1

### Questionnaire structure

Mobile Respondents were asked:

- What type of experience they had
- During which time frame they participated
- How long the experience was
- How they found out about their mobility opportunity
- We continued to ask them to rate to which extent the following statements were a motivation for them to go abroad:
  - Increasing my mobility
  - Have fun, live a new experience
  - Part of my school curricula
  - My parents wanted me to
  - In order to do something meaningful and useful
- They were asked to rate to which extent the following areas were obstacles to their experience:
  - Financial issues
  - Housing issues
  - Lack of support structures upon arrival
  - Lack of understanding of the education system
  - Lack of understanding of how the labour market operates
  - Difficulties in making friends
  - Not being able to speak the local language
- Lastly they were asked about their overall experience abroad.

#### IMPRINT

Publisher: Eurodesk Brussels Link

Editors: Audrey Frith

Author: Safi Sabuni

Designer: Pedro Drumond

©Eurodesk, 2018. All rights reserved

**eurodesk**

Eurodesk Survey 2017



Erasmus+