

# The Impact of Erasmus+ Programs on the Careers of Generations Y and Z

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## ***Abstract***

*This paper aims to highlight the impact of Erasmus+ mobility programs on future career prospects among young people aged 13 to 30 from European Union countries. For the research, a questionnaire was created and assigned to young people from generations Y and Z, who participated in at least one Erasmus+ mobility, within the Cloud Five Association, in various short-term youth exchanges. Based on the answers received in the questionnaire, we find out the opinion of 85 young people about the influence that such projects have had on improving the quality of their lives. Finally, we outline an overview of the real impact of these programs on the careers of young people.*

*The results of the research show the high impact of short-term mobilities, such as youth exchanges, on their career prospects.*

**Keywords:** Erasmus+, future career, job, generations Y and Z, youth exchanges

**JEL classification:** M51, M53, O15

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## **1. Introduction**

Due to technological progress and the evolution of the variety of opportunities that young people can benefit from, in addition to the usual methods of finding their way in a career, the popularity of Erasmus+ mobilities has recently grown. Young people choose to participate in projects of this type more and more often. Featuring a variety of themes and a great cultural diversity among participants, Erasmus+ mobilities can have a significant positive impact on the career of a young person at the beginning of their professional life.

Erasmus+ is a program developed in 1987 within the European Union. Currently, the Erasmus+ program offers sports-oriented projects, mobility projects within universities and schools, or even mobility projects developed by NGOs and informal groups. The targeted category for this research is the last mentioned. Thus, organisations need to develop continuity and risk management plans to meet the potential challenges of this dynamic environment (Cristache N. et al, 2024).

Numerous studies have been conducted over time on the factors that can influence young people's career decisions, such as family environment (parents), examples set by teachers, and social differences (Sharif, Ahmad & Sarwar, 2019);

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experiential learning (Pleșoianu, Cârstea, 2013); living environment, personal and professional experiences and skills (Pascariati & Ali, 2022); and even internships (Odio, Sagas & Kerwin, 2014; Papadimitriou, 2014). At the same time, various research efforts have explored the effects of participation in Erasmus+ projects on professional training and personal development programs (Dolga, Filipescu, Popescu-Mitroi & Mazilescu, 2015); on resilience, intercultural interactions, and cultural intelligence (Dolce, Davoine, Wodociag & Ghislieri, 2023); on students' entrepreneurship competences (Grosu, Burlacu, Amicarelli, 2024); on school management (Bolojan, Bogheanu, Nen, 2024); forming an European identity (Țifrea, 2023); on the school-to-work transition (Croce, Ghignoni, 2024); graduation results (Granato, Havari, Mazzarella, Schnepf, 2024); or on the intercultural communication skills of participating students (Baranova, Kobicheva & Tokareva, 2020).

This paper expands the existing literature by identifying the extent of the impact of participation in Erasmus+ mobility programs on future career prospects among young people aged 18 to 30.

Identifying a positive impact of Erasmus+ on young people's careers recommends further promotion of such mobility programs through universities to assist students in finding employment (Năstase, M., et al, 2024).

For this study, a questionnaire was administered to young people aged 18 to 30 from various European Union countries (Czechia, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Spain) who had participated in such a mobility at least once. Responses were collected from 85 participants who met the eligibility criteria for this study.

## **2. Case Study and Results**

The purpose of this paper is to identify the impact that participation in Erasmus+ mobility programs has on the future career prospects of young people.

The research also highlights the benefits of mobility programs for young people who have not yet started their professional lives, emphasizing the extent to which these programs improve academic performance and social life.

### **2.1 Research Methodology**

The data for this study focused on the experience of 85 young people aged between 18 and 30 from several European Union countries: Czechia, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Spain, who have participated in at least one Erasmus+ mobility over time.

The method used was mostly quantitative, containing a qualitative part as well. Data collection was carried out through a survey based on a questionnaire created with Microsoft Forms. It was distributed through various communication channels, mainly using the WhatsApp platform. The questionnaire was distributed in 3 groups, comprising a total of 120 people. Given that there were 85 respondents, 70% of the targeted people took part in the research.

The questionnaire was divided into 2 sections, comprising 10 questions. Respondents completed questions related to: no. of E+ mobilities they participated

in, the extent to which they consider their participation in such projects to have a positive influence on their career, academic or social life, how they consider participation in E+ projects to have an impact on their lives over a period of 5 years from the current moment. At the same time, they said whether or not they found a job after participating in a project of this type and whether they consider participation in E+ projects to have a fundamental role in finding a job, writing a testimonial related to a personal example regarding the influence of E+ on them. The questions in the questionnaire were built in a mixed way, including questions with a single answer option and multiple answers as well, or questions with text box answers, in which the respondents could write the required information.

## 2.2 Data Analysis and Interpretation of Results

Based on the analysis of the responses received from the questionnaire, a key result emerges from this research: participation in Erasmus+ mobility programs influences young people's future career prospects. This result was obtained through the processing of responses from both a quantitative and qualitative perspective.

### 2.2.1 Quantitative Processing

#### *Questions 1,2,3: Sample definition*

Defining the sample was an essential part of the questionnaire, allowing for a better understanding and analysis of the categories of individuals who provided responses.

A total of 54 female respondents (63.5%) and 30 male respondents (35.3%) participated, with one individual selecting the "Others" option.

The average age of the questionnaire respondents is 23 years old, representing young students and graduates, at the beginning of their professional careers.

The question that concluded the sample identification section was related to the country that the respondents represented in the Erasmus+ mobility projects in which they participated - Figure 1.



**Figure 1. Mapping of Countries Represented by Respondents to this Study**

*Source:* authors, created using mapchart.net

The countries from which responses were provided for the survey are: Czechia, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Spain. The countries with most respondents are Romania, Greece and Portugal.

*Questions 4 and 5: Frequency of participation in Erasmus+ mobilities*

For question 4, in which was checked respondents' eligibility for taking part in the study, a percentage of 100% of all respondents stated that they had participated before in mobilities organized through the Erasmus+ programme.

Question number 5: "In how many Erasmus+ mobilities have you participated so far?" helped to identify the number of projects in which respondents have participated: 55% of all respondents participated in 1,2,3 or 4 E+ mobilities so far. 32% of them participated in 5-10 projects and 13% of the total number of answers is represented by young people with experience in 10 projects and even more than 20 projects.

After analyzing the results using Microsoft Excel, we add the following details: the average number of projects in which the respondents have participated, based on all 85 answers is 6; the maximum number of projects is 52, answer coming from a respondent from Portugal.

*Questions 6 and 7: The extent to which participation in Erasmus+ projects improves future career prospects for young people*

The purpose of these questions was to measure the extent to which participation in Erasmus+ mobility projects enhances young people's future career prospects, targeted in different directions: one focused on the present and the other focused on the future.

*Question 6* was focused on the participants' current situation: "To what extent do you consider that participating in such mobilities has influenced your career perspectives?"

**Extent to which Participation in E+ Mobilities has Impacted  
on Career Prospects at Present**

**Table 1**

To what extent do you consider that participating in such mobilities has influenced your career perspectives?	Number of respondents	Percentage
Due to my E+ participation, I have accumulated skills that I am able use in my professional life	<b>52</b>	<b>61%</b>
Due to my E+ participation, I got an idea of what career I want to follow	<b>14</b>	<b>16%</b>
E+ did not influence my career perspectives, but it improved my social life	<b>17</b>	<b>20%</b>
E+ did not influence my career perspectives, but it improved my academic performance	<b>1</b>	<b>1%</b>
I do not consider that E+ contributed to my personal development in any way	<b>1</b>	<b>1%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>100%</b>

*Source:* authors, created using Microsoft Excel based on the answers received in the questionnaire

In Table 1, there is a percentage of responses that stands out - 61% of the total. This was chosen by 52 of the respondents, referring to the fact that through their participation in Erasmus+ mobilities, they have acquired skills that they can now use in their professional career. Having the skills of the future that are representative and in demand in many of today's multinational companies is essential for all young people seeking a job. Examples of such skills are: communication, teamwork, critical thinking, confidence, self-awareness, adaptability.

20% of the respondents confirm that although participation in projects has not influenced their career prospects so far, it has helped them by improving the quality of their social life. This is an important aspect especially in the context of the pronounced anxiety among the new generations and the tendency to stop socializing and spending time in the virtual world as a result of technological development. Thus, through these answers it is recognized the need for a healthy social life, which can be shaped by these projects.

The third answer by choice is: "Due to my participation in E+, I got an idea of what career I want to follow", with a percentage of 16%. From this it is seen the direct influence E+ has on careers, as there are individuals who have shaped their career idea due to their participation in projects.

The fact that simply participating in projects of this kind helps young people to develop the skills needed in a future job or even to figure out what job they want to pursue (these two answers together accounting for 77% of the total responses) is a first argument that there is a positive impact between participation in Erasmus+ and future career prospects among generations Y and Z.

*Question 7:* "Evaluate the options below according to how you think participating in such mobilities will influence your career perspectives in 5 years" aimed participants to indicate their agreement or disagreement with different scenarios given (figure 2).



**Figure 2. Responses to Question 7 - Future Perspective**  
*Source:* Microsoft Forms survey results, generated automatically

The results obtained from the responses are shown in Table 2.

**Centralization of Answers to Question 7 - Future Perspective**

**Table 2**

	No. of respondents	Percentage	No. of respondents	Percentage	No. of respondents	Percentage
	Agree		Neutral		Disagree	
I will find a job due to my E+ participation	41	48%	32	38%	12	14%
I will use the competences gained due to E+ participation in my future job	77	91%	6	7%	2	2%
E+ participation will improve my career perspectives	69	81%	12	14%	4	5%
E+ participation will improve my academic performance	63	74%	14	16%	8	9%
E+ participation will improve my social life	84	99%	1	1%	0	0%

*Source:* authors, created using Microsoft Excel

Responses were centralized into three categories - Agree, Neutral and Disagree:

- "I will find a job due to my E+ participation": 48% of respondents gave a positive answer. The fact that almost half of the participants in this survey are confident that they will be able to find a job directly as a result of Erasmus+ participation in the next 5 years proves the benefits of Erasmus+ and the wealth of information and knowledge that a young person can gain from such youth exchanges.

- "I will use the competences gained due to E+ participation in my future job": 91% of the respondents chose a positive answer for this statement, which once again shows the importance of the skills developed in such projects and their match with the future requirements in most companies today.

- "E+ participation will improve my career prospects": 69 out of 85 respondents (81%) believe that continued participation in Erasmus+ projects in the future will improve their career prospects.

- "E+ participation will improve my academic performance": 74% of the respondents gave a positive answer, 16% - neutral, while 9% - negative. This statement and the analysis of the responses is necessary to understand that although in such projects the topics covered are taught entirely through non-formal methods, much essential information remains embedded in the minds of the participants, using it in their future academic life. They acquire a range of skills that help them in their academic path such as: communication, teamwork, critical thinking, improved memory, etc.

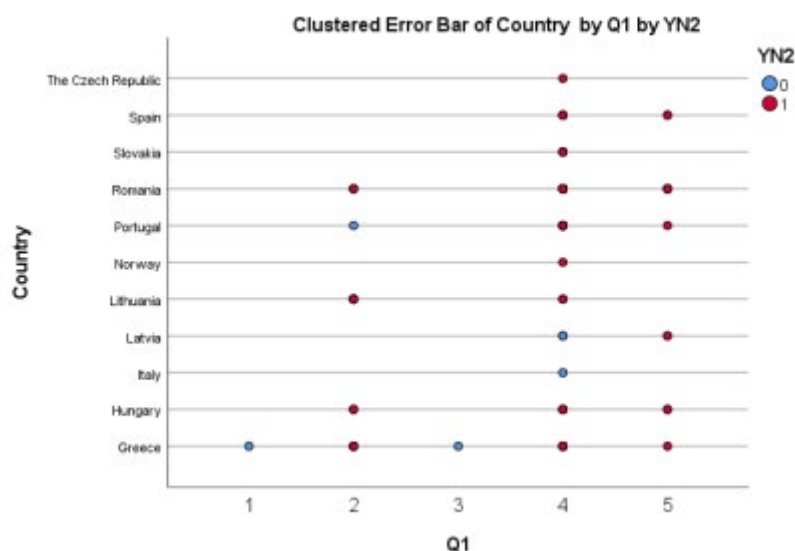
- "E+ participation will improve my social life": there was an almost unanimously positive response for this statement - 99%. The interpretation in this case is a clear one - due to the multitude of people an individual meets as a result of participating in Erasmus+ mobilities, their life can be significantly improved through new connections and friendships.

Based on the answers received to both questions, we see the clear trend of recognizing the positive impact Erasmus+ has on participants in all aspects - improving their professional career, academic path and social life.

To analyze the responses received, they were interpreted using tools such as SPSS and Excel. As a first detailed interpretation, we focused on a Clustered Error

Bar graph created using SPSS to see the distribution of the answers to questions 6 and 8 by country and whether there is a relationship between them - **Figure 3**. The answers to question number 6 (Q1 in this graph) were transformed numerically.

Question number 8 (YN2) refers to the extent to which respondents consider that participating in Erasmus+ mobilities plays a fundamental role in finding a job. The numerical transformations are as follows: No = 0; Yes = 1.



**Figure 3. Visualization of the Distribution of Responses for Questions 6 and 8, by Country**  
*Source:* authors, created using SPSS

This graph provides a detailed view of how different countries responded to Q1, with the responses segmented by the variable YN2 - the reference names being explained above.

For question 8 – detailed above (YN2), a negative answer appears on the graph in blue, while a positive answer appears in red. The negative answers associated with question YN2 are more prominent on the graph for answers 1, 2 and 3 of question Q1 - these answers being related to the fact that participation in E+ did not influence participants' career prospects, but rather their academic, social life or had no impact on them. Therefore, it is to be expected that some of them do not see E+ as having a fundamental role in finding a job. But on the other hand, if we look at the area of questions 4 and 5 (which refer to the influence of E+ on the skills that participants can use in a future job and in actually finding a job), where most answers are distributed, we observe the rarefaction of negative bullets. This means that people who have seen the benefits of participating in such opportunities recognize the important role of Erasmus+ projects. If we strictly refer to question number 5, we have only positive answers on this axis, and it is understandable that those who have

found a job or figured out what career path to follow after such participation consider E+ as a fundamental role in their professional life.

Since we proposed to find associations between variables, we also interpreted the answers using the Pearson correlation coefficient. For such an interpretation, we used Microsoft Excel, where the text response variants in the questionnaire were transformed numerically in order to be interpreted on the basis of the correlation index, the Pearson correlation matrix constructed on their basis being shown in Figure 4.

	Gender	Age	No. Of Projects	E+ influence on career perspectives	will find a job	will use the competences in a future job	improved career perspectives	improved academic performance	improved social life	found a job	fundamental role in finding a job
Gender	1										
Age	-0.03	1									
No. Of Projects	-0.20	0.28	1								
E+ influence on career perspectives	-0.09	0.02	0.25	1							
will find a job	-0.28	0.10	0.28	0.50	1						
will use the competences in a future job	0.01	-0.02	0.10	0.39	0.32	1					
improved career perspectives	-0.08	-0.08	0.22	0.56	0.61	0.32	1				
improved academic performance	-0.05	-0.08	-0.04	0.52	0.43	0.42	0.53	1			
improved social life	-0.03	-0.31	-0.04	0.00	0.11	0.21	0.27	0.27	1		
found a job	-0.16	0.12	0.14	0.26	0.39	0.18	0.20	0.20	0.06	1	
fundamental role in finding a job	-0.21	-0.06	0.12	0.31	0.43	0.21	0.38	0.28	0.15	0.22	1

**Figure 4. Pearson Correlation Matrix**  
*Source:* authors, created using Microsoft Excel

To uncover links between the influence of E+ and the overall sample data, it is necessary to turn to the first part of the matrix, where this information is found.

The first relevant links found in this respect are those referring to the number of projects in which respondents participated and the extent to which E+ influenced their career prospects and their belief that they will find a job in the upcoming years because of E+ projects. The representative indices for the two considerations mentioned are 0.25 and 0.28, showing a positive, moderate correlation. In the first case, the following can be observed: the more Erasmus+ mobilities an individual participates in, the better their career prospects are. This is due to the diversity of Erasmus+ programs - participants learn about different subjects, thus developing their knowledge and skills, and there is a chance that once they have discussed a particular topic, they will be attracted to it and consider a job in that field. In general, the more experiences of participating in E+, the greater the chances of finding the right career path.

We observe even a higher correlation (0.28) in how the number of projects impacts finding a job: the higher the no. of projects, the more likely it is that participants will find a job through E+.

The highest correlation index found in the Pearson matrix is 0.61, linking the two questions in the questionnaire - the one focused on the present and the one focused on the future. According to this index, people who say that their participation in Erasmus+ projects have improved their present career prospects are highly confident that they will find a job through E+ in the next 5 years.

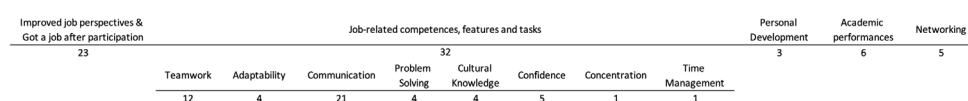


Another interesting aspect that emerges from this matrix is the link between professional and academic life. With a high, positive index of 0.53, people who have improved career prospects thanks to Erasmus+ projects also have an improved academic performance and vice versa, the two influencing each other, thus drawing a line between school and work.

Other correlations with high indices are found in the matrix, in green colored boxes and white colored text to stand out. Many of these are predictable, hence not explained in detail. Their nature is positive. No strong, negative correlations are found.

### 2.2.2 Qualitative Processing

For the qualitative processing part, there was added an open-ended question at the end of the questionnaire, where all respondents could share some aspects about how their own experiences in Erasmus+ mobilities have helped them in their professional or personal life (Figure 5).



**Figure 5. Qualitative Analysis of Responses Received, by Category**

*Source:* authors, created using Microsoft Excel

For an easy interpretation of the answers received, they have been centralized and divided into categories: Improved job prospects or even finding a job after such participation - found in 23 answers; Improved academic performance - 6 answers; Networking development - 5 answers; Personal development - 3 answers; Acquiring skills that can be or have been used in a job - accumulating the most answers and references - 32. The last category was further divided into sub-categories highlighting what kind of competences or skills participants in Erasmus+ projects have developed that can be used in a job: teamwork, adaptability, communication, problem solving skills, cultural knowledge, self-confidence, concentration, time management.

The variety and particular nature of the responses received from the participants in this study show how the benefits of participating in an Erasmus+ mobility vary from person to person and help young people in many ways, depending on their needs, impacting their professional, academic and social life.

From the respondents' testimonies, we have created a word cloud highlighting the most frequent words or phrases they wrote as a benefit of participating in Erasmus+ youth exchanges (Figure 6).



*Source:* authors, created using Voyant Tools

But perhaps equally interesting to observe the links between these concepts is the graph of the most common words found in the testimonies, interconnected according to the other concepts that appear in the participants' vocabulary (Figure 7).



Source: authors, created using Voyant Tools

Going even further, we built a dynamic textual arc that reflects in real time the words that are connected between each testimonial. The speed is adjustable - a moderate speed (50) is recommended for the most accurate understanding of the image.

This text arc can be accessed at the following link: Dynamic Text Arc - link (<https://voyant-tools.org/?corpus=6fe323f4a5f3396a47a3df9736628e22&speed=50&view=TextualArc>).

From both quantitative and qualitative analysis, it can be observed that Erasmus+ mobility projects have a positive impact on the future career prospects of young people aged 18-30, positively influencing the academic and social life of participants.

## 2.3 Study Robustness

The robustness of this research was tested from two perspectives.

First, we wanted to find out, from the respondents' perspective, whether participation in such mobilities can be considered as having a fundamental role in finding a job. Out of the total number of respondents, 54% stated that indeed, participation in such Erasmus+ opportunities plays a fundamental role in finding a job.

The second consideration to test the robustness of the survey is based on a tangible outcome, namely the extent to which respondents have obtained an actual job as a result of participating in an Erasmus+ mobility. 51% of respondents chose a positive answer for this question. Some of the jobs they obtained as a result of participating in an Erasmus+ project can be found in their testimonials. These include: freelancer, teacher, photographer, project coordinator, graphic designer, trainer.

In both cases, participation in Erasmus+ mobilities had a positive impact on actually getting a job and also played a fundamental role in finding a job.

In this context, it can be stated that the results of the study are correct, the participation of young people in Erasmus+ projects being beneficial not only for broadening their career prospects, but in some cases even impacting the career itself directly.

## 2.4 Study Heterogeneity

To check the heterogeneity of this study, we compared the results received from respondents categorized by country. Thus, we were able to see whether the positive trend in responses was maintained across countries or whether it was only true for certain countries.

**Percentages of Positive Responses Received, by Country**

**Table 3**

	Due to my E+ participation, I have accumulated skills that I am able use in my professional life OR I got an idea of what career I want to follow	Do you consider participating in E+ mobilities to have a fundamental role in finding a job?	I will use the competences gained due to E+ participation in my future job	E+ participation will improve my career perspectives
Greece	50%	50%	93%	64%
Hungary	78%	78%	78%	89%
Latvia	100%	50%	75%	100%
Lithuania	25%	38%	88%	38%
Portugal	92%	50%	100%	83%
Romania	88%	62%	92%	96%
Slovakia	100%	33%	67%	100%
Spain	100%	83%	100%	83%

*Source:* authors, created using Microsoft Excel

As can be seen in Table 3, the majority of the percentages are above 50%, which means more than half of the respondents who answered “yes” to the questions asked. There are some exceptions, such as Lithuania and Slovakia, which have below average percentages. However, in most cases there is a trend of positive impact brought by Erasmus+ mobilities across several countries.

### 3. Conclusions

The topic of participation in Erasmus+ mobility projects and their influence on the future career prospects of young people of generations Y and Z is topical. We have chosen for the present research participants aged between 18 and 30 years from EU countries, who participated in Erasmus+ mobilities organized by Cloud Five Association, in which Alexandra was a trainer.

The results obtained from this research show the positive impact that participation in Erasmus+ mobilities can have on young people. Consequently, the importance of participating in such projects for developing a successful career path, or for improving academic and social life is proven.

It is recommended to promote such opportunities on a larger scale, as not many young people in Romania are aware of the benefits of such projects. An important role in participating in such opportunities lies with educational institutions and even social media networks to have a real impact.

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