Gender Perspective in EU Programs

"Gender Perspective in EU Mobility Programs"

SITUATION REPORT

Erasmus+ KA2: Strategic Partnership Project
"Gender Perspective in EU Mobility Programs"
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SITUATION REPORT

Content

FOREWORD

There is no doubt that Erasmus+ mobilize many young people throughout Europe and partner countries and provide them several opportunities and various benefits. I also know personally, how this program changes young people life including their way of thinking and make them gain new abilities. But on the other hand young people might face various problems and challenges during their mobility period. Especially the possibility of young women and LGBTİ to experience gender based discrimination during their mobility period is higher in compare with male peers.

Unfortunately mobility program implementers feel that they are not equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge to tackle any discriminatory situation. As a result, they cannot provide any support to young people, in particular to female and LGBTI+ ones, in cases of sexual harassment or gender based discrimination.

Thus the major aim of this study is to collect data that will allow to develop mechanisms of prevention and response to situations of discrimination, thus striving to increase the quality of the experience that young women and young LGBTI+ within exchange programmes and to bring the gender perspective to the centre while considering and evaluating the mobility programmes.

We hope this research, contributes to the discussion on preventive suggestions against those discriminative practices and on developing reliable solutions and mechanisms for young women and LGBTİ+ and to initiate gender mainstreaming work at the youth organisations.

Nilay Küme
Youth worker
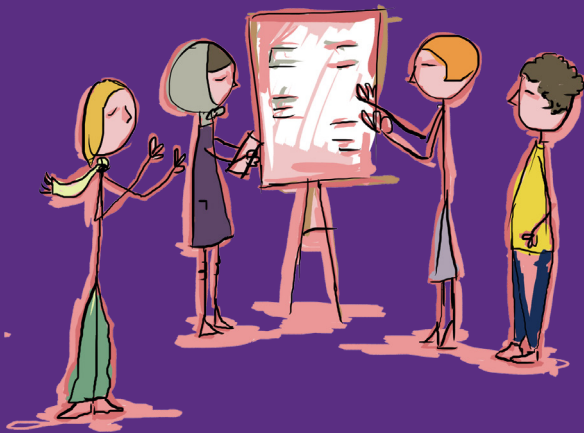
I. INTRODUCTION

Gender Perspective in EU Mobility Programmes (February 2017 to June 2018) is a strategic partnership project to promote innovative solutions on gender related problems for youth organisations by building capacity and strategic partnerships among them. By doing this, the project aims to increase the visibility of gender issues in youth organisations and to mainstream the gender point of view in EU Mobility Programs. Thus youth organisations will increase their knowledge and skills by learning from each other and encourage young people to be more active citizens by offering them new tools in order to have more participatory and gender sensitive perspectives. While the project highlights gender related problems and challenges faced during mobility period, it also aims to empower young women and young LGBTI+ through national and international solidarity mechanisms by taking into account their needs and expectations.

EU Mobility Programmes support education, training, youth and sport in Europe. Erasmus+ which was initiated in January 2014 is the new programme merging all the EU's previous schemes. Erasmus+ provides opportunities not only for students, but also for a wide variety of organisations. It combines all the EU's current schemes for education (Erasmus for students, Erasmus Mundus, Jean Monnet) training (traineeships abroad), youth (European Voluntary Service, youth exchanges) and sport, including staff training, Youth in Action, internships and international co-operation programmes. While EU Mobility Programmes mobilize many young people throughout Europe and provide them several opportunities and various benefits, they also face various problems during their mobility period, including gender-based discrimination.

Gender-based discrimination is a global issue and it affects all young women's and LGBTI+s' lives all around the world including Europe. Especially being a young foreign woman or a LGBTI+ means facing many different challenges which might set them apart from their heterosexual men peers. Even though there are differences depending on travelled countries' social structure, the patriarchal formation of societies generally legitimize the discriminative actions and sexual harassment against young women and LGBTI+. In order to increase the impact of the EU mobility programmes, it's essential to focus on needs and expectations of the target groups and uncover the problems and discriminative practices the target groups are facing in the countries they travel. Therefore, discussing preventive suggestions against those discriminative practices and developing reliable solutions and mechanisms will contribute increasing the quality of travel that young women and LGBTI+ experience within exchange programmes.

The partnership brings together four civil society organisations and a university unit working in the field of youth in four different countries. In order to achieve the aims and outcomes of this project a primary research and a secondary research were conducted by each partner. The present study was written by drawing on the research developed by the key researcher and conducted by researchers from Toplum Gönüllüleri Vakfı (TOG) [Community Volunteers Foundation] (Turkey), the Portuguese Network of Young People for Gender Equality (REDE) (Portugal), United Societies of Balkans (USB) (Greece), EURO-NET (Italy), and Yaşar University (Turkey). This report intents to present the results of the primary research. The main aim of the primary research was to identify gender-based discrimination experienced by young women and young LGBTI+ during their mobility period. The results of this research will contribute to next stages of the project in which mechanisms of prevention, response to situations of discrimination and policies and strategies for gender-mainstreaming will be developed, in order to increase the quality of the experience that young women and young LGBTI+ have within exchange programs.

The report is divided into six parts. Following the introduction, the second part will explain the methodology and research design adopted for this study. Then, in the third part after giving some information on women's condition in the world and the EU, major gender issues such as gender order, forms of sexism and gender-based violence will be discussed. Gender mainstreaming as a strategy for gender equality will be explored in the fourth part. In addition, the relevant legislation and regulations of major international institutions, the UN, the Council of Europe and the EU will be presented. The fifth part will briefly describe the European Mobility Programmes for young people. Finally, in the discussion part, the main findings of the primary research will be presented and examined. Moreover, some recommendations arising from the interviews will be introduced.

II. METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN

Within the framework of the Project, a primary research and a secondary research were conducted to explore experiences of discriminative action against young women and LGBTI+ and challenges they face while travelling abroad with a European mobility program in partner countries (Greece, Italy, Portugal, and Turkey). The primary research and the secondary research were developed by the key researcher and conducted together with 4 other researchers from partner organizations (See Appendix IV for details of research process conducted by each partner organisation).
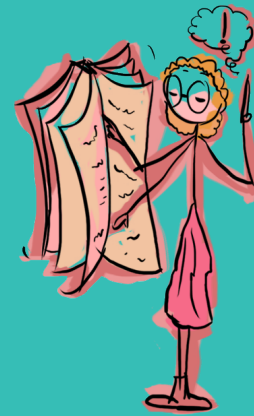
1. Primary Research

In order to achieve the aims and results of this project, a primary research using focus group and in-depth interview methods was conducted by each partner. The focus group method is doing interviews with several people on a specific topic or issue. Focus groups typically emphasize a specific theme or topic that is explored in depth. Participants of a focus group are selected because they are known to have been involved in a particular situation and are asked about that involvement (Bryman, 2012:503; Krueger, 2002). In our case, we were specifically interested in young women and LGBTI+ who have already taken part or are currently in an EU mobility program and other stakeholders such as youth organizations, university EU units and other governmental institutions. When it was not possible to organize

focus groups due to clashes between participants' schedules, researchers employed in-depth interviews.

For this research, the key researcher of the project prepared a focus group interview guide, a data analysis guide, consent forms for participants, socio-demographic information forms and questions. Questions for focus group study were communicated to all researchers at partner institutions for feedback. Following each partner's feedback, two updated lists of questions targeting the EU mobility program participants and stakeholders were created (See Appendix I and II for questions).

Then, the same research guidelines were given to all partner organizations of the project *Gender Perspective in EU Mobility Programmes* and a total of five reports, including this Situation Report, were produced, as a result of secondary research and primary research

through in-depth interviews and focus group interviews with youth organizations, university EU units, institutions and with exchange students and young people who participated the mobility programmes. At least 25 people were reached in each country/study, having the following profile: ages (for young people) between 18 and 35; young women and LGBTI+ who have already taken part previously, preferably not more than five years ago, or are currently in an EU mobility programme and other stakeholders such as youth organizations, university EU units and other governmental institutions; participants (young people) with different social backgrounds, and foreign and local young people who are/were involved in an EU mobility programme (See Appendix III for detailed information about socio-demographic profile of participants).

For selecting participants for focus groups we used "purposive" or "convenience" sampling (Bryman, 2012:418). This sampling method allowed us to use the lists of young people and other stakeholders who are involved in the EU mobility programmes already available to us. For the purpose of this study, the researchers reached possible candidates for focus groups through personal contacts, announcements to student e-mail groups and facebook. Since each partner organisation specializes on youth and mobility issues, they had extensive databases for possible participants and connections with other stakeholders.

Before the interviews, participants were informed about the aims of the project and the study. They were given consent forms, which were prepared by the key researcher of the project. All focus group discussions and in-depth interviews were tape-recorded with the permission of the participants. They were assured of their anonymity during the whole process of this project. The anonymity of

participants in the focus groups is protected in this report. Focus groups ranged in size from three to seven participants and lasted from 60 to 90 minutes.

Qualitative data analysis starts after some of the data have been collected and the implications of that analysis then shape the next steps in the data collection process. It is important to point out that analysis does not take place in a linear form and that one part of the process overlaps another (Rabiee, 2004). Therefore, commencing to analyze the data immediately allows the researchers to detect the possible problems of the interview guide (such as repeating or unclear questions) and to make necessary changes. For the purposes of this research, the aim of the data analysis was identifying a thematic framework which we used while producing the Situation Report. This thematic framework will be discussed later under the title of "Discussion".

Qualitative data analysis consisted of the following of stages:

Familiarisation with the data: This was achieved through listening to the recordings of the interviews, reading the notes taken during or after the interviews. The aim was to get a sense of the interviews as a whole and identify the parts we found important for and relevant to the research objectives. During this process the major themes, concepts and categories began to emerge.

Transcribing the interviews: After listening to the interviews and identifying the relevant parts, researchers transcribed only those portions that assisted them in a better understanding of the research interest. As a result we had an abridged transcript which was much shorter than the full transcript. It is argued that this type of analysis is helpful because the researcher can focus on the research question.

Identifying a thematic framework: While conducting qualitative research, this stage starts with the planning of the research and especially with the collection of the data. After transcribing the relevant parts, we went through transcripts and started a classification system for major topics and issues and identified the material in the transcript related to each topic. So, first we identified keywords/concepts (such as cleaning, cooking) arising from the data/transcript, then we connected these keywords and formulated categories (division of house chores) and last, those categories gave us the larger themes (gendered division of labour).

Interpretation and Writing the Situation Report: The process of qualitative data analysis aims to bring meaning to a situation by the interpretation of the generated data. We did this by generating some general theoretical ideas about our data and by relating our findings to the existing literature.

2. Secondary Research

A secondary research of existing literature and data was also conducted for the aims of this project. The secondary research was an important component both for the preparation of the focus groups and in-depth interviews and for the writing phase of the Good Practices Report. The secondary research contained a literature search on the issues the project is dealing with and a search for the good practice examples for gender equality and gender mainstreaming.

While conducting the secondary research, researchers focused on the following questions:

- Are there any other previous researches on young people's mobility looking at gender related issues in their country?

- How many young people (women/men/LGBTI+) have travelled abroad using the EU mobility programmes in their country?
- Which is the most popular/most used EU mobility program among young people?
- Why? Is there any data on this preference?
- What are the widespread forms of gender-based discrimination?
- How do we identify gender bias?
- How do we identify gender-based violence?
- How do we identify diverse gender-based inequalities?
- What is gender mainstreaming?
- What is intersectionality?
- What are the good practice examples for gender equality/gender mainstreaming in their country and another selected country?

We have also conducted a keyword search using databases available to us:

- **Keyword search:** safe environment (safe city/home/school/workplace) for young women and LBGTI+, violence against women/LGBTI+, gender equality, gender mainstreaming, gender-based discrimination, forms of sexism.

III. UNDERSTANDING GENDER ISSUES

Despite the progress made towards achieving gender equality and girls' and women's empowerment, women's fundamental rights continue to be violated and they face discrimination in access to education, work, social protection, inheritance, economic assets, productive resources and participation in decision-making and society at large. Today, girls' and women's access to education and health has improved and more women are part of the paid workforce which contributes to their economic empowerment. Nevertheless, the level of achievement has been uneven across regions and within countries. Moreover, with the rise in conservatism and nationalism, there has been a backlash against women's rights and status in society such as the introduction of legislations restricting abortion and regulating marriages.   Globally, girls and women continue to be systematically left behind and discriminated against. Persistent, and in some cases unprecedented, violations of women's rights occur on a daily basis. Conflict and economic crisis exacerbate the situation. Rape is used as a weapon of war. Women and girls are being trafficked, enslaved and even sold as merchandise. Social norms and patriarchal relations fasten girls and women into unequal power relations, leaving many girls and women with little control over decisions that affect their lives, be it at household, community or national level. In many countries, discriminatory laws, practices or norms often limit girls' and women's social, economic and political participation. The gender gap is even larger when gender inequality intersects with other forms of exclusion such as disability, age, race, ethnicity, sexual

" ...there is no subject or context which cannot be seen differently when examined through the lens of 'gender thinking" (Davis, Evans and Lorber, 2006)

identity, sexual orientation, geographical remoteness or religion (European Commission, 2015a; European Commission, 2015b) .

In many countries, young women are less likely than young men to be in paid work, education or training and women still do not earn the same wages as men. Thirty years after the United Nations adopted the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), nowhere in the world are women's earned incomes equal to men's. They reach 81 % of men's earned incomes in Sweden; but more typical figures are: 64 % of men's incomes in France, 63 % in the United States, 55 % in Ukraine, 46 % in Indonesia, 39 % in Mexico (European Commission, 2015b). Therefore, most women in the world, especially women with children, are economically dependent on men. Women spend two to ten times more time on unpaid domestic work than men, which is one of the main obstacles to economic and political empowerment. Women typically experience higher levels of poverty than men do; this is also evidenced by Eurostat data available for the EU Member States. Even though during the economic crisis of the last decade, unemployment rates have increased excessively for both men and women in many countries, across the EU, more and more women have become economically active. Women's employment reached the highest level ever recorded (64%) in 2014, while men's employment (75%) has yet to regain its pre-crisis level (European Commission, 2017a). As a result, more and more families depend financially on women's work. Yet, women (particularly migrant women and women heading

single-parent households) still generate a much lower proportion of income on the labour market than men. Women in employment, especially mothers, are much more likely to work part- time and are paid on average 16 % less than men per hour of work. They are mostly concentrated in low-paid service jobs - clerical work, call centres, cleaning, serving food, and professions connected with caring for the young and the sick. As a result, the gender overall earnings gap during active years has reached 41 % and leads to a very wide gender gap in pensions, which today stands at 40 %. Older women are much more at risk of poverty and social exclusion than older men. Without new action, women are likely to continue to be economically disadvantaged by motherhood during their career and in retirement, in particular as a result of an unequal sharing of care and housework responsibilities (working women still devote two and a half hours a day more to parenting and household duties than men) (European Commission, 2017a).

Women are still under-represented in decision-making positions in many spheres of life. This is a particularly important issue in relation to gender mainstreaming and policy making. Even though the gender balance in politics has improved since the beginning of 2000s, it is still quite low: the proportion of women in national parliaments and governments has risen from 22% and 21% respectively at the end of 2004 to 29% and 27% in 2015. Women still represent only 21% of board members of the biggest listed companies (European Commission, 2017a; Connell, 2009). This unequal representation of women in decision-making positions becomes visible every time a group photograph of the leaders of the United Nations or European Union is taken.

Attitudes towards equality are changing, but today's younger generation is not unaffected by gender

stereotypes and disparities. Gender inequalities in education continue – especially in terms of study subject preferences, performance and patterns of participation. Women are more likely to have a higher education degree but remain overrepresented in fields of study that are linked to traditional female roles such as care-related fields and are under-represented in science, mathematics, IT, engineering and related careers. As a result, inequality in occupations is taking new forms rather than diminishing and, despite their investment in education, young women are still twice as likely as young men to be economically inactive.

Gender-based violence is still widespread and can take many forms: one in three women has experienced physical or sexual violence: 30% of women who have been in an intimate relationship experience physical or sexual violence from their intimate partners, 5 % have been raped since the age of 15 and 20 % have experienced online harassment. Such violence happens everywhere – at home, at work, at school, in the street or online – regardless of social background. The harms from violence are unevenly distributed. Women encounter gender-based violence more than men because of the unequal relations caused by partiarchal social structures globally. It harms survivors of violence not only in terms of their health and well-being, but also their working lives, thereby damaging their financial independence and the economy in general. In addition, women and girls make up the majority of human trafficking survivors (68 % women, 17 % men, 12 % girls and 3 % boys). Violence against women is a major cause and consequence of gender inequality. Yet, most official crime statistics do not make it visible (Walby *et al.*, 2017).

The Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women, adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1993, defines violence against women as

"any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life". Violence against women encompasses, but is not limited to: "physical, sexual, and psychological violence occurring in the family, including battering, sexual abuse of female children in the household, dowry-related violence, marital rape, female genital mutilation and other traditional practices harmful to women, non-spousal violence and violence related to exploitation; physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring within the general community, including rape, sexual abuse, sexual harassment and intimidation at work, in educational institutions and elsewhere; trafficking in women and forced prostitution; and physical, sexual and psychological violence perpetrated or condoned by the state, wherever it occurs".

Much of gender-based violence is sexualised. Sexual harassment refers to comments, gestures, or physical contact of sexual nature that are deliberate, repeated and unwelcome. Most victims of sexual harassment are women and LGBTI+. This is because, first, the hegemonic culture encourages men to be sexually assertive and to perceive women in sexual terms; social interaction in the workplace, on campus and elsewhere, then can easily take on sexual overtones. Second, most individuals in positions of power - including managers, doctors, university lecturers, military officers - are men who oversee the work of women.

In EU law, following the adoption of Directive 2002/73/EC amending the Equal Treatment Directive, harassment related to sex and sexual harassment are defined as discrimination and are therefore prohibited in employment, including access to employment, vocational training and promotion. Later, the Recast Directive 2006/54/EC repealed Directive 2002/73/EC, containing the very same definitions of harassment related to sex and sexual harassment. The Directive also bans victimization and encourages Member States to take effective measures to prevent all forms of discrimination on the grounds of sex, in particular harassment and sexual harassment (Numhauser-Henning and Laulom, 2012).

Sexual harassment is sometimes blatant and direct, as when a supervisor solicits sexual favours from a subordinate, coupled with the threat of reprisals if the advances are refused. Behaviour of this kind, which not only undermines the dignity of an individual but prevents her from earning a living, is widely condemned. However, the problem of unwelcome sexual attention often involves subtle behaviour - sexual teasing, pin-ups displayed in the workplace. Both men and women tend to overlook the more subtle daily acts of sexism they encounter.

As Connell (1987) says aforementioned facts form a pattern which she calls the gender order, of contemporary societies. Cultural meaning about what is considered masculine and feminine, and what is not, vary from one society to another and from one historical period to another. This is all part of a gender order, the ways in which societies shape notions of masculinity and femininity into power relationships. When applied to smaller groups such as school classrooms, families or bars, we can talk of the workings of a gender regime, the gender order as it works through in smaller settings. Thus, a gender regime refers to the state of play of gender relations in a given institution. For example, state regulation, and workplace organisation. The gender order is the relationship between different gender regimes or "the current state of play in the macro-politics of gender" (Connell, 1987: 20). Most gender orders,

around the world, privilege men and disadvantage women. Gender orders are institutionalized through education systems, political and economic systems, legislation, and culture and traditions. In utilizing a gender perspective the focus is not on individual women and men, but on the system which determines gender roles, access to and control over resources, and decision-making potentials. According to Walby (2011:7), "the forms of gender relations in the economy, polity, violence and civil society are interconnected in the sense that a change in gender relations in one of these institutional domains is likely to entail a change in other domains. Gender regimes take different forms. The most important distinction is that between domestic and public forms of gender regime."

Connell (1987) argues that as a result of the process called globalisation, new gender orders are being created; through labour migration, in transnational corporations and global markets, in transitional media and international state structures. EU mobility programmes for enabling young people to move to different countries and to interact with people with various social and cultural backgrounds might be considered as one of the mechanisms that contribute to the creation of new gender orders.

Gender is a key dimension of personal life, social relations and culture. The term gender generally refers to the social aspects of differences and hierarchies between male and female. Gender relations are constituted in a social system and gender is evident throughout the social world, shaping how we think about ourselves, guiding our interaction with others and influencing our work and family life. Yet, gender involves much more than difference; it also involves power and hierarchy, because in most societies men enjoy a disproportionate share of most resources. Gender is a matter of the social relations

within which individuals and groups act. Enduring and widespread patterns among social relations are what social theory call "structures". In this sense, gender must be understood as a social structure. It is not an expression of biology, nor a fixed dichotomy in human life or character. It is a pattern in our social arrangements, and in the everyday activities or practices which those arrangements govern (Connell, 1987). Recent discussions within the queer theory develops a critical look at the term gender and heteronormativity. In a nutshell, queer theory challenges the common understanding of what gender difference means and rejects gender binary of male and female. It focuses on mismatches between sex, gender and desire (Jagose, 1996).

Gender is a cross-cutting issue which has direct links to other systems of oppression, domination, or discrimination. The idea that multiple social identities interrelate to create a whole that is different from the component identities is called intersectionality (Collins, 2015). The primary research has shown that being a "young foreign woman" or a "young foreign LGBTI+" means you face different difficulties from each identity; "young", "foreigner" and "woman" or "LGBTI+". Thus, the project explores the forms of discrimination young people might face in relation to their intersecting identities and is one of the crucial in-depth study in its field.

Gender inequality is a form of social inequality that we encounter in every area of social life. Accommodation, socializing, accessing health services, accessing appropriate mechanisms in case of emergency have a critical importance for the survival of young people who are taking part in a mobility programme. Throughout the process of obtaining those services young women and LGBTI+ need to struggle with a series of discriminative action,

moreover, they may be subjected to sexual harassment and assault in some steps. One of the aims of the primary research has been to discover these discriminative actions and challenges they might be facing in their daily life because of their gender identity and/or sexual orientation and to demonstrate their needs and expectations during their visit to the host country.

Underlying this unequal treatment of women or LGBTI+ is sexism, which is prejudice or discrimination based on a person's sex, gender or sexual orientation. Sexism can affect either gender, but it is particularly documented as affecting women and girls. It has been linked to stereotypes and gender roles, and may include the belief that one sex or gender is intrinsically superior to another. Extreme sexism may foster sexual harassment, rape, and other forms of sexual violence. Historically, many societies have rested upon a belief in the innate superiority of male who legitimately dominate females. Institutionalized sexism pervades the operation of the economy, with women highly concentrated in jobs that are less challenging and that offer relatively low pay. Similarly, the legal system has historically turned a blind eye towards violence against women, especially violence committed by boyfriends, husbands and fathers.

Sexism comes in many different forms, including blatant, covert, and subtle sexism (Becker and Swim, 2011). Blatant sexism is defined as obviously unequal and unfair treatment of women relative to men, whereas covert sexism is defined as unequal and unfair treatment of women that is recognized but purposefully hidden from view. Both blatant and covert sexism are intended, but only covert sexism is hidden. In comparison to these two forms, subtle sexism represents unequal and unfair treatment of women that is not recognized by many people

because it is perceived to be normative, and therefore does not appear unusual. Sexist language is an example of subtle sexism in that it consists of speech that reinforces and perpetuates gender stereotypes and status differences between women and men. Subtle sexism might go unnoticed if certain subtle behaviours are not defined as sexist and subtle sexism might not be perceived to be problematic if it is not noticed. A study by Cihangir, Barreto and Ellemers (2010) argues that while blatant sexism is easy to brush off, the subtle forms are the ones that diminish your self-esteem more.

Heterosexism, on the other hand, is a system of attitudes, bias, and discrimination in favour of opposite-sex sexuality and relationships. It can include the presumption that other people are heterosexual or that opposite-sex attractions and relationships are the only norm and therefore superior. Heterosexuality is usually seen as the "natural" foundation of society, but once again sociologists often approach this as a social construction of power in which men are forceful, driven by sex, and active, while women are usually believed to be more passive. Heterosexuality helps structure inequalities between the sexes and undermines a gender hierarchy - of what it is to be a man and a woman - along with a series of assumptions about what it means to "have sex". As an institution, heterosexuality fosters cultural forms such as heterosexual courtship and romance, and generates what is called a binary way of thinking the world gets divided into heterosexual and homosexual. It also frequently embraces what has traditionally been called a "double standard", where boys and men are seen as naturally more sexually active and girls and women less so. Indeed, once girls and women do become more sexually active they are often labelled by the boys and men as "slags" and "tarts".

IV. GENDER MAINSTREAMING: STRATEGY FOR PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY

Gender mainstreaming, as a new concept, appeared for the first time in international texts after the United Nations Third World Conference on Women (Nairobi, 1985), in relation to the debate within the UN Commission on the Status of Women on the role of women in development. It was seen as a means of promoting the role of women in the field of development and of integrating women's values into development work. Mainstreaming is not an end in itself but a strategy, an approach, a means to achieve the goal of gender equality. Mainstreaming involves ensuring that gender perspectives and attention to the goal of gender equality are central to all activities - policy development, research, advocacy, dialogue, legislation, resource allocation, and planning, implementation and monitoring of programmes and projects.

Mainstreaming is not only about adding on a 'women's component', or even a 'gender equality component', to an existing activity. It involves more than increasing women's participation. Mainstreaming situates gender equality issues at the centre of policy decisions, medium-term plans, programme budgets, and institutional structures and processes. Mainstreaming entails bringing the perceptions, experience, knowledge and interests of women as well as men to bear on policy-making,
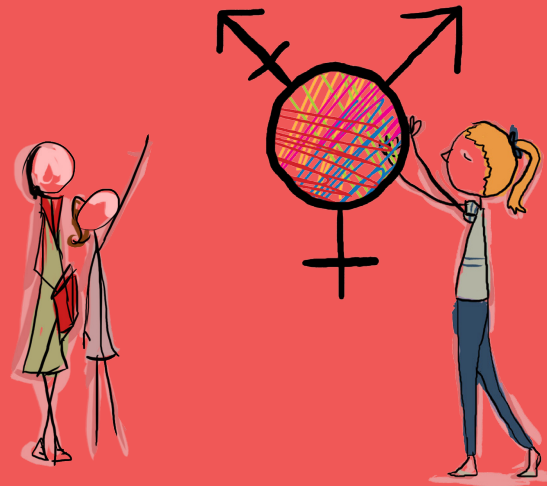
planning and decision-making. Mainstreaming can reveal a need for changes in goals, strategies and actions to ensure that both women and men can influence, participate in and benefit from development processes. It can require changes in organizations – structures, procedures and cultures – to create organizational environments which are conducive to the promotion of gender equality (Walby, 2003; Council of Europe, 1998).

Focusing on Europe, broadly speaking, we can say that women in Europe formally have the same statutory rights as men, but do not enjoy these rights equally in practice. There are still significant gaps between women and men in many fields of private life and work, power and property, personal safety, influence and respect. Many actors are committed to bridging the gender gap, but there are also forces working against gender equality. Women's movements are lobbying for gender equality. Important international and European organisations have built up institutional mechanisms and other instruments to enhance gender equality (Mazey, 2002).

Among the most important organisations are:
• The United Nations
• The Council of Europe
• The European Union

1. Gender Issues in the United Nations System

Equal rights for women and men have been on the UN agenda since the organisation was founded in 1945. In 1947 the Commission on the Status of Women was established in order to enhance equality between women and men. The Commission is still going strong, organising a two weeks meeting in New York every year.

The Universal Declaration on Human Rights, adopted in 1948, quotes as follows: "Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status." (Article 2). Despite this important Declaration, human rights and equal opportunities for women and men were not fully respected in any part of the world at that time.

In 1967 the UN adopted the Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. The women's movement had risen again in the Western world after decades of invisibility and was becoming more and more powerful. The UN could not ignore its demands for having a voice inside the UN. In 1974 the UN decided to organize a special women's conference to be held in Mexico in 1975. It was also decided that the whole year should be declared "the women's year". The aim was to draw the attention of politicians, media, social partners and people all over the world to discrimination against women. The conference was expected to define the most important issues for improving the situation of women and agree on forward looking strategies. The outcome in 1975 was not unanimous since the cold war was splitting nations between east and

west. Yet the conference in Mexico discussed, among other things,: international cooperation and peace, women in areas of crises, political participation of women, participation in the labour market and the economic role of women, poverty, health, the modern family and the global population increase (issues of reproductive rights and reproductive health).

In 1975 nations were encouraged to build up institutional mechanisms to enhance gender equality. Since then new issues were added to the list: violence against women, gender and the environment, the role of media, the girl child. The decade from 1975-1985 was declared the Women's Decade and UN women's conferences were held in Copenhagen (1980) and Nairobi (1985). In 1979 the UN adopted the CEDAW which is a very important instrument in advancing and securing equal opportunities for women. In 1993 the UN adopted the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, acknowledging the fact of how widespread and dangerous violence against women is. It is worth mentioning that the declaration did not focus only on areas of conflict and crises.

Gender mainstreaming was established as the global strategy for promoting gender equality through the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in 1995, and again in the ECOSOC Agreed Conclusions in 1997. The mandate for gender mainstreaming was considerably strengthened in the outcome of the General Assembly special session to follow-up the Beijing Conference (June 2000). The need to ensure that attention to gender perspectives is an integral part of interventions in all areas of societal development was made clear in that document. For each of the strategic objectives identified in Beijing, specific reference was made to the importance of the mainstreaming strategy. For example, in the chapter on Women in power and decision-making, paragraph

189 specifically addresses mainstreaming: "In addressing the inequality between men and women in the sharing of power and decision-making at all levels, Governments and other actors should promote an active and visible policy of mainstreaming a gender perspective in all policies and programmes so that before decisions are taken, an analysis is made of the effects on women and men, respectively."

The mainstreaming mandate was reinforced within the United Nations system in three important documents:

The strategy of mainstreaming is defined in **the ECOSOC Agreed Conclusions, 1997/2**, as "Mainstreaming a gender perspective is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality (ECOSOC, 1997).

The Agreed Conclusions established some basic overall principles of mainstreaming:

- Issues across all areas of activity should be defined in such a manner that gender differences can be diagnosed - that is, an assumption of gender-neutrality should not be made.

- Responsibility for translating gender mainstreaming into practice is system-wide and rests at the highest levels. Accountability for outcomes needs to be monitored constantly.

- Gender mainstreaming also requires that every effort be made to broaden women's participation at all levels of decision-making.

- Gender mainstreaming must be institutionalized through concrete steps, mechanisms and processes in all parts of the United Nations system.

- Gender mainstreaming does not replace the need for targeted, women specific policies and programmes or positive legislation, nor does it substitute for gender units or focal points.

- Clear political will and the allocation of adequate and, if need be, additional human and financial resources for gender mainstreaming from all available funding sources are important for the successful translation of the concept into practice.

More concrete directives were provided with **the Secretary-General's communication on gender mainstreaming** in October 1997, with the following guidance to heads of departments, programmes, funds and regional commissions:

- Analytical reports and recommendations on policy or operational issues within each area of responsibility should take gender differences and disparities fully into account.

- Specific strategies should be formulated for gender mainstreaming; priorities should be established.

- Systematic use of gender analysis, sex-disaggregation of data, and commissioning of sector-specific gender studies and surveys is required.

- Medium-term plans and budgets should be prepared in such a manner that gender perspectives and gender equality issues are explicit.

The Special Session of the General Assembly in June 2000 to follow-up the first five years of implementation of the Platform for Action specifically requested the United Nations to ensure gender mainstreaming through:

- Allocation of sufficient resources and maintenance of gender units and focal points.

- Provision of training to all personnel at headquarters and in the field as well as appropriate follow-up.
- Promotion of full participation of women at all levels in decision-making in development activities and peace processes.

Gender mainstreaming is not an end in itself, but a means to an end. The calls for increased gender mainstreaming in the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) Agreed Conclusions (1997/2) are not for increased gender balance within the United Nations but for increased attention to gender perspectives and the goal of gender equality in the work of the UN. Gender mainstreaming does not entail developing separate women's projects within work programmes, or even women's components within existing activities in the work programmes. It requires that attention is given to gender perspectives as an integral part of all activities across all programmes. This involves making gender perspectives – what women and men do and the resources and decision-making processes they have access to – more central to all policy development, research, advocacy, development, implementation and monitoring of norms and standards, and planning, implementation and monitoring of projects (UN Women, 2017a).

2. Gender Equality and the Council of Europe

The Council of Europe is a regional intergovernmental organisation, established in 1949 in order to promote and defend human rights as well as the rule of law in Europe. The Council adopted the European Convention on Human Rights, which entered into force in 1953. It also established the European Court of Human Rights. Through the decades the Council has done a lot of work on gender equality. In 2011 most of the member states of the Council signed the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating domestic violence and violence against women (The Istanbul Convention) which is now being implemented in many European countries. The Istanbul Convention is based on the understanding that violence against women is a form of gender-based violence that is committed against women because they are women. It is the obligation of the state to address it fully in all its forms and to take measures to prevent violence against women, protect its victims and prosecute the perpetrators. Failure to do so would make it the responsibility of the state. The convention leaves no doubt that there can be no real equality between women and men if women experience gender-based violence on a large-scale and state agencies and institutions turn a blind eye (Council of Europe, 2017a).

The Council has developed a Gender Equality Strategy, the latest one is for 2014-2017. Recently the Council of Europe published a glossary on gender equality.

The Council of Europe Gender Equality Strategy 2014-2017

The overall goal of the Strategy is to achieve the advancement and empowerment of women and the effective realisation of gender equality in the Council of Europe member states through activities around five strategic objectives:

- Combating gender stereotypes and sexism
- Preventing and combating violence against women
- Guaranteeing equal access of women to justice
- Achieving balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision-making
- Achieving gender mainstreaming in all policies and measures (Council of Europe, 2017b).

3. Mainstreaming Gender Equality Perspective in the European Union

Equality between women and men is one of the European Union's founding principles. It goes back all the way to 1957 when the principle of equal pay for equal work became part of the Treaty of Rome. European states, under pressure from women's movements, have worked on gender equality. Tools used by the EU and governments are: legislations, directives, conventions, institutional mechanisms, negotiations on the labour market, affirmative actions, positive duties (on the labour market), quotas, actions, lobbying and different forms of pressure, international conventions and the Beijing Platform for Actions (Mazey, 2002; Hoskyns, 1996).

The EU Legislation

The equal treatment of men and women has been a fundamental tenet of the European Union since its inception and the principle of gender equality is central to all its activities.

- The Treaty of Rome, signed by the six founding countries of the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1957, committed Member States to the right of equal pay for equal work for men and women.
- The Treaty of Amsterdam (1997) stipulated that the promotion of equality between women and men was one of the EU's fundamental tasks. It also introduced the elimination of inequalities and discrimination and the promotion of equality between women and men in all activities.
- The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (2000) states that equality between men and women must be ensured in all areas, including employment, work and pay (Article 23) and reaffirms the ban on discrimination on a wide number of grounds, including sex (Article 21).
- The Treaty of the European Union (2009) commits Member States to non-discrimination and equality between women and men (Article 2 and 3).
- The Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union provides that the Union will aim to eliminate inequalities and promote equality between men and women (Article 8). It also stipulates that the Union will aim to combat discrimination based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation (Article 10).
- The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union Article 23: Equality between women and men: Equality between women and men must be ensured in all areas, including employment, work and pay.

The principle of equality shall not prevent the maintenance or adoption of measures providing for specific advantages in favour of the underrepresented sex (European Commission, 2017a).

In addition to the rights enshrined by treaties, 15 European Directives have been adopted between 1975 and 2010. Among other things, this wide-ranging body of legislation:

- Ensures the equal treatment of men and women at work.
- Prohibits discrimination in social security schemes.
- Sets out minimum requirements on parental leave.
- Provides protection to pregnant workers and recent mothers.
- Sets out rules on access to employment, working conditions, remuneration and legal rights for the self-employed.

EU Directives are legally binding for Member States and must be incorporated into their national legislation. This allows citizens who feel that they have suffered discrimination to take their cases to

national courts. All Member States have established national equality bodies to monitor the application of gender equality laws. They meet regularly with the European Commission to exchange information, ideas and best practice. National Equality Bodies can help citizens in legal actions and provide advice on the availability of legal remedies.

EU gender equality directives can be seen as a demonstration of the commitment of the EU to gender issues. However, as with any other policy, success is only achieved when both adoption and implementation take place. Women's access to power improves when they, their interests and voices are part of the legislative process as well as the content of the law. Moreover, success is truly achieved when women's status in the society is altered, namely the law is implemented properly to produce the intended/desired change (Mazey, 2002; European Commission, 2017a).

Strategies for gender equality

The European Commission adopted a Women's Charter in 2010, committed to strengthening gender equality in all its policies. The Charter was followed by an action plan – "A strategy for equality between women and men 2010-2015". This is followed by "the Strategic engagement for gender equality 2016-2019". It is based on continuous evaluation of the 2010-2015 strategy, which has concluded that it has added value in a number of areas, especially in relation to agenda-setting and learning, by providing a valuable framework for gender mainstreaming in the Commission and for the implementation of a coherent framework for gender-equality policies in the Member States.

The Commission's strategy prioritised five key areas for action, which are emphasized in The Strategic Engagement for Gender Equality 2016-2019:

1. Increasing female labour market participation and equal economic independence

2. Reducing the gender pay, earnings and pension gaps and thus fighting poverty among women

3. Promoting equality between women and men in decision-making

4. Combating gender-based violence and protecting and supporting victims

5. Promoting gender equality and women's rights across the world

In spite of all this work for decades, a lot remains to be done. The whole of Europe faces gender pay gap, in many countries women's participation on the labour market is much lower than men's, lack of childcare and parental leave makes it difficult for women to reconcile family life and work; also violence against women is a threat to human security and gender equality. Growing migration and refugees coming to Europe are facts that the people of Europe must face and deal with.

The European Parliament's Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality also plays a crucial role in advancing gender equality by legislating and monitoring equality between men and women, mainstreaming gender in the parliamentary work, providing resources for the Gender mainstreaming Network of Members of the European Parliament's Committees and following the implementation of international agreements involving the rights of women.

Promoting gender mainstreaming is a long, slow process, requiring inputs on many fronts over a long period of time, including advocacy, advice and support, competence development, development of methods and tools and vigilance in following up and evaluating progress. Advances made in incorporating gender perspectives in the work of the UN and EU need to be recognized and shared across the system through documentation of good practices. Monitoring and reporting need to be made more systematic and effective.

V. EUROPEAN MOBILITY PROGRAMMES FOR YOUTH

Youth exchange and mobility programmes are models to solve many social and global problems. The European Union's Erasmus+ programme is one of the best established of them. Erasmus+ programme is a funding scheme to support activities in the fields of education, training, youth and sport. The Erasmus programme originally began in 1987 as an exchange programme that gave higher education students an opportunity to know about life and learning abroad. Erasmus+ is the new programme combining all the EU's current schemes for education, training, youth and sport, which was started in January 2014 and will last until 2020. By the end of the programme an estimated 9 million people will have taken part.

 The Programme is made up of three so-called "Key Actions" and two additional actions:

- Key Action 1: Mobility: Learning Mobility of Individuals
- Key Action 2: Cooperation: Cooperation for innovation and good practices
- Key Action 3: Policy: Support to policy reforms
- Supporting studies on European integration: Jean Monnet
- Promoting the development of the European dimension in Sport

Erasmus+ provides grants for a wide range of actions and activities in the fields of education, training, youth and sport. The programme gives opportunities to students, trainees, staff and volunteers to spend a period abroad to increase their skills and employability. It supports organisations to work in transnational partnership and to share innovative practices in the fields of education, training and youth. The new sport action will support grassroots projects and cross-border challenges such as combating match-fixing, doping, violence and racism. Erasmus+ also supports teaching, research, networking and policy debate on EU topics.

Erasmus+ offers opportunities for:

- individuals to spend a mobility or volunteering period abroad and to receive linguistic training,
- organisations to collaborate in project partnerships in the fields of academic and vocational training, schools, adult learning and European sport events.

Its budget of €14.7 billion will provide opportunities for over 4 million Europeans to study, train, gain experience, and volunteer abroad. With about 17% of the Erasmus+ budget going towards projects and scholarships with a worldwide focus, the period stretching from 2014-2020 will see this funding translate into 180,000 students and staff moving between Europe and the rest of the world; 1,000 capacity building projects for higher education; and 30,000 scholarships for students worldwide to take part in Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degree programmes.

The aim of Erasmus+ is to contribute to the Europe 2020 strategy for growth, jobs, social equity and inclusion, as well as the aims of ET2020, the EU's strategic framework for education and training. Erasmus+ also aims to promote the sustainable development of its partners in the field of higher education, and contribute to achieving the objectives of the EU Youth Strategy.

Specific issues tackled by the programme include:

- Reducing unemployment, especially among young people
- Promoting adult learning, especially for new skills and skills required by the labour market.
- Encouraging young people to take part in European democracy.
- Supporting innovation, cooperation and reform.
- Reducing early school leaving
- Promoting cooperation and mobility with the EU's partner countries

The Erasmus+ programme is managed by the European Commission (the EU's executive body), the Education, Audiovisual, and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA), a series of National Agencies in Programme countries, and a series of National Offices in some partner countries.

The European Commission handles the overall management of the programme, including:

- Managing the budget
- Setting the priorities
- Identifying the programme's targets and criteria
- Monitoring and guiding the implementation
- Follow-up and evaluation of the programme

The Education, Audiovisual, and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) of the European Commission is in charge of managing the "centralised" elements of the programme, including:

- Promoting the programme and opportunities
- Launching calls for proposals
- Reviewing grant requests
- Contracting and monitoring projects
- Communicating on results

The EACEA and the Commission also carry out studies and research, as well as managing and financing the other bodies and networks supported by Erasmus+.

In the EU countries, the Commission entrusts much of the management of Erasmus+ to National Agencies. Outside the EU, and specifically in the field of higher education, this role is filled by the National Erasmus+ Offices.

The Commission provides funding to the National Agencies, who use these funds to manage the programme's "decentralised" activities. This allows the Agencies to adapt the programme to suit their national education, training, and youth systems.

The National Agencies are responsible for:

- Providing information on the programme
- Reviewing applications submitted in their country
- Monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the programme in their country
- Supporting people and organisations taking part in Erasmus+
- Promoting the programme and its activities at local and national levels

These Agencies also support beneficiaries of the programme from the application stage to the end of a project. They also work with beneficiaries and other organisations to support EU policy in areas supported by the programme.

For 30 years the Erasmus programme – now Erasmus+ – has provided Europe with thousands of bridges of trust to study, train or volunteer abroad. Many young people attend these programs to develop their skills, meet new educational technologies, and have a chance to cooperate with different

people from a variety of cultures and to meet with various networks. By taking part in these mobility programmes young people learn more from each other's views and perspectives; exchange experiences and ideas; share values. Wider horizons, a broader common understanding and a larger toolset define the Erasmus+ generation.

Erasmus+ programs also aim to strengthen the quality of youth work and non-formal learning for young people in Europe. It provides opportunities for young people to experience learning mobility in Europe and beyond and for youth workers to develop their interpersonal skills and improve their employment prospects through training and networking opportunities in Europe and beyond (European Commission, 2017b; EACEA, 2017).

To increase the number of young people who participate in exchange programs, it is essential to consider the living conditions of participants. Young women are more motivated than men to participate in these programs (RAY, 2013; RAY, 2017), yet do we know if they feel free to access rights and opportunities without difficulty in travelled countries during their exchange period? What kind of challenges do they face and how they relate to their gender identity and/or sexual orientation? Also how does being "young foreign women" or "young foreign LGBTI+" affect their life during their stay?

VI. DISCUSSION

The present report draws on the primary research conducted by five researchers in four different countries. In this part of the report findings from the primary research will be presented. The primary research intended to explore gender based discrimination experienced by young women and young LGBTI+ during their mobility period, in order to develop mechanisms of prevention and response to situations of discrimination, thus achieving an increase in the quality of the experience that young women and young LGBTI+ have within exchange programs.

Even though many EU documents claim that gender equality and gender mainstreaming are founding principles of the EU as discussed in the fourth part of this report, when we look through the documents regarding mobility programmes and reports evaluating the impacts of the Erasmus+ programmes for the participants (students, young people, organisations, etc.), it can be seen that the gender dimension is lacking from these documents. The impact reports did not make gender issues their priorities. These documents focused overwhelmingly on economic development, employability and European identity rather than focusing on the experience itself. It indicates that the mobility programmes are considered as means to an end, namely economic development. The impact of these programmes on the participants' wellbeing and the quality of their stay has been overlooked in many of these documents. Thus, this research, by focusing on the experiences of young women and LGBTI+ participants of the Erasmus+ programmes, aims to bring the gender perspective to the centre while considering and evaluating the mobility programmes.

" Are there specific rights, because we are a woman or LGBT? "

The research is mainly focused on the Erasmus study abroad programme and the European Voluntary Service (EVS). 137 people were interviewed in total (See Appendix 3 for socio-demographic profile of the participants). The main findings of the research will be discussed under the following headings: on the rights of the foreigners, gender (un)awareness and relativisation of gender-based discrimination, gender-based discrimination and sexism, intersecting identities and other forms of discrimination, motivations, support and monitoring, young women and public spaces, mobility content and logistic based problems, safety in a foreign country, positive experiences and recommendations for gender mainstreaming strategies.

1. On the Rights of the Foreigners

When asked if as women or LGBTI+ the participants knew their rights in the hosting country, the answers were mainly negative or they had very limited knowledge on these issues. They also did not know about the regulations of the hosting country regarding non-citizens. The participants who had knowledge on their rights mostly learnt these issues in orientation trainings, on arrival-departure trainings or because they were interested in these topics. It was generally EVS participants who would be informed by the coordinating organization about practical issues, such as health insurance, but not about how to use their rights in the hosting country. They also had limited knowledge of how to proceed in case of an emergency.

- *I learned my rights through experience, I just received some basic information in the orientation but nothing detailed.*
- *Two weeks after I arrived, I participated in on-arrival training. In this training they provided us really detailed information about our rights and about the situation in the host country.*
- *The host university gave me a booklet about emergency situations. I didn't know anything about rights in Holland.*
- *I did not know my rights and the legislation of the host country but I think there are not many differences.*

2. Gender (Un)Awareness and Relativisation of Gender-based Discrimination

One of most important findings of this primary research was the overall lack of gender awareness among the participants. This is, "the ability to view society from the perspective of gender roles and understand how this has affected women's needs in comparison to the needs of men" (EIGE, 2017). This was reflected in their limited notion of discrimination against women, for example, in the work place, in the normalisation of violence against women or while reporting certain situations as being related to their nationality, when in fact they were also talking about gender discrimination. Some participants seemed not to understand what sexism is or what would constitute sexist behaviour. They could spot a sexist action like catcalling but they did not seem to be able to recognize subtle sexism like "mansplaining", "positive discrimination" and "slut shaming". If somebody described this

"I feel safer here as a woman, than in my own country"

kind of behaviour to them they often said that they have faced it but they did not consider it as sexism. However, sexism was mentioned by the individuals in every interview, even when the person did not realise that fact. In other words because of the gender unawareness, they did not relate the problems they were facing at the hosting organisation or in their accommodation to gender discrimination or sexism. This was thought to be a result of normalisation of dominant gender roles in these societies. Some of the participants were not sure which behaviours could be specified as gender discrimination. Therefore, even if they were discriminated because of their gender, they were not aware of it.

- *I was in Poland for 2 semesters (…) for Erasmus studies. I cannot recall (any) incident or something that somebody said that was really sexist. I think (…) it is the same old things you hear in Greece. People (…) are the same everywhere.*

Nevertheless, one of the participants stated that at the time she wasn't very much aware of gender discrimination, but currently, because she is more informed about it, she would say that she was discriminated for being a young woman, during her mobility period.

Researcher: *Did you ever feel discriminated in the health system for being a woman?*

> **Interviewee:** *I think that at the time I wasn't very much aware of it, but thinking about it now, maybe… (…) At the time I thought it was just because I was a foreigner.*

> **Researcher:** *Why do you think you are more aware now?*

Interviewee: *Because now I have greater knowledge and I am more adult, right? And for example, when I went*

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for the first time to the hospital, I was taken care of by a condescending male doctor. He would call me 'little girl' and I was a woman, I was 23 years old. (…) Now, if a doctor calls me 'little girl', maybe I will answer back, but at that time I didn't.

A major finding of this study was the relativisation of gender-based discrimination. This was expressed as comparing women's situation in their home country to the host country's and concluding that the situation was better in the host country. Many participants reported that they felt safer, more comfortable and free in the host country. They mentioned that they had more self-confidence and gained independence during their mobility period and according to them, this was due mainly to feeling and experiencing less sexism and gender-based discrimination. In some cases, participants were aware of situations of discrimination or violence against women, but they would describe it as less serious when comparing women's situation in their home countries.

· *I feel safer as a woman, than in my country. Even in the association, when I'm working or in daily life, I don't feel the discrimination. But in my country, it's the opposite. There is a lot of discrimination.*
· *I feel safer here, less discriminated than in Bulgaria. In Bulgaria it's not that bad when it comes to discrimination, but every man would stare at you and they would do more than that. And sometimes here they look as well, but at least it's not every man, so it's better (laughs).*
· *I already had bad experiences in Italy. When I came here, in my work, my apartment, it's really good for women. So I really don't feel anything… Yes, sometimes in the street, but… As you said, in Azerbaijan it's even worse. In Italy it is the same.*
· *I also don't feel discriminated at all, I even feel more*

comfortable as a woman than in my home country, but I was never in this position… You know? I wasn't applying for a job, where I could get this feeling of being discriminated as a woman. I would rather say that I have felt discriminated as a foreigner, but not as a woman.
· *I think you can see the difference (between) the North and the South of Europe (during an exchange). In Germany (I was in a work camp) and everybody was (doing the same) work regardless of their gender. (When I was in Italy) it was more like (…) men do the heavy stuff, women are cooking. Maybe my example (…) is a little bit stretched, but that was (…) the feeling that I had.*

There was also a frequently expressed belief or expectation amongst the participants that "European societies" had overcome the issues of sexism and gender discrimination.

· *We are in the 21st century; (…) we live in Europe. I do not think sexism is a thing (nowadays). People are (…) too sensitive. When I was (an Erasmus student) in Venice everything was OK, I could not (complain) about anything.*

This notion was also common in the EU documents regarding mobility programmes. This approach seems to be conflicting with the EU goals regarding gender mainstreaming in all policy areas.

Generally participants expressed that they did not feel any gender discrimination during their mobility period. Although this could be specified as a positive result, participants' lack of awareness about gender discrimination and sexism could be one reason why they might not have identified some actions as gender discrimination.

3. Gender-Based Discrimination and Sexism

Although there was a widespread gender unawareness and relativisation of gender-based discrimination amongst participants, they identified and reported some situations of discrimination, either from their own experience or the experience of others. In some cases participants mentioned that they did not find any difference between the experience of sexism they encountered daily in their own countries and the experience they had during the EU mobility programmes.

· *I do not think that sexism (…) or whatever women face differs really when they are in their own country (…) or in another. It's the same (everywhere).*

· *Catcalling – sometimes, a person being really touchy on the bus – once, people think that you owe them something because you went out once for a date with them or even been friendly to them – all the time. (However) this is true everywhere, the country doesn't really matter.*

· *One time I felt it with my (female) flatmates that when I didn't do the dishes, they would get upset with me and when a guy didn't do the dishes, they wouldn't say anything. They would yell at me when I left a plate but not at my male flatmate, who is actually also Hungarian.*

· *For being a woman, no. I mean, house cleaning yes. My colleague is not very hygienic and my friend also has a boyfriend who is a bit macho. So, it's like 'I won't clean it now, but she or her friend will clean it'.*

· *Because he was older and the only guy (…) he thought the house was all his and that he ruled there. There was a lot of conflict and some threats and we had to call the landlady. Then, when he was threatened with being expelled, he calmed down a bit. We didn't know*

if we should call the police, because he was threatening us and we were alone and the landlady wasn't available.

· *(During my EVS) I was facing gender discrimination (…) at the workplace- where my coordinator had not given me the opportunities that I deserved (…) based on my skill set and performance and had passed them over to (other male colleagues) with similar or less experience.*

Participants also reported situations of discrimination on the basis of their sexual orientation. One interviewee stated that the Director of the association she was volunteering questioned her about her sexual orientation, after hearing rumours about it, in front of her colleagues.

· *I am not lesbian, I am bisexual. 'Oh no, no, no. Never say you're bisexual in the neighbourhood. Here in the social neighbourhoods you have to be lesbian or gay. You can't like both, because then…'. I was in shock, because I wasn't expecting this question.*

Moreover other LGBTI+'s reported that they did not express their sexual orientation openly until they could trust the people they met during their mobility period and when they did express it, they told only to their close friends. They thought that homophobia was a problem everywhere and there was the possibility of encountering hostile behaviours in the hosting organisation or the universities.

One of the most common forms of gender-based discrimination participants encountered was stereotyping foreign women as "easy". Many participants stated that they faced unwelcome sexual approaches, behaviours, sometimes sexual harassments and assaults from local men under this assumption. They reported that they felt uncomfortable during their mobility because the

local men were classifying and treating them as "easy girls" because they were Erasmus students or volunteers from other countries. It was frequently mentioned that these men were making sexual demands by telling them that "they were alone in that country or city without a father, brother or a boyfriend so they were free to have sexual relations with any men who demanded." This way of thinking shows how hegemonic masculinity influences men's attitudes towards women, especially towards "foreign women". It is also another proof that sexism and sexual violence are not the problem of women but a structural problem which requires a transformation in patriarchal relations of the society.

· *People assume that (when you are) an Erasmus student the only thing you care about is (sex), drinking and smoking weed. Some men (think) that we are going to have sex with them, (only because) we are in a foreign country and (…) you smiled at them once.*

· *I was so surprised when one night we went to a club (here in Greece) and some boys were buying us shots, for whom we weren't interested (…) but we thanked them and drunk it anyway. (We were trying) to be polite. But then they came to our table, (…) and talked to us, and they were being pushy (… and) finally they started to insult us. (They said) that we are typical Eastern European cockteasers and we are not even (…) worth the money they spent for the shots.*

· *In terms of gender, no. But it happenned several times in bars, (…) because we were Argentinian, Spanish and Portuguese, 50 year-old English men seeing us as Latins and getting extremely interested, following us and trying to ask questions.*

· *Personally, no. I can't say I ever felt some sort of discrimination. But by talking to other volunteers they*

"*Because he was older and the only guy (…) he thought the house was all his and that he ruled there.*"

told me that apparently there was a widespread idea in the population of the city in general, mainly male population, that the international volunteers were easy.

· *When some guys realise I am a foreigner (they assume that), I am an easy target. I am away from home so more open about sex. It is strange, (they sometimes say) 'Come on, nobody will know, your boyfriend is so far away.' They can be (…) really pushy sometimes.*

More serious forms of sexism such as sexual assault were not as frequently mentioned during the interviews but still some participants reported cases of sexual assault they experienced during their mobility period.

· *The last night (of a youth exchange programme) in Croatia we were drinking all together. There was this guy, (we were close during the project) and at some point (we were) left alone. He wanted to make out (…) with me. I wasn't in the mood. He tried to kiss me (…) and he was telling me constantly how hot I was and he (…) was rubbing (his body) to mine. (He only stopped) when the others (…) came back. I didn't tell anybody (…) about that.*

· *When I was (in a mobility programme) in Portugal we were sleeping in tents. (I was sleeping) near another girl and during the night (she started) touching me (…) and kissing me on the neck. At first it was OK but after a while I didn't want it anymore. I said no. She didn't stop. I said no again. She didn't. Then I pushed her away. (She didn't apologise) and she just said that she was (…) half asleep and thought (…) that I was her boyfriend.*

In another personal account, the participant also reported a case of sexual assault during a party when she and the perpetrator who was a friend of hers were drinking and at the end of the party she was forced

to have sexual relations with him. Even though she could manage to escape, she injured herself while running from the scene and did not report the incident to anyone. These accounts of sexual assaults indicate an issue about the lifestyle of participants of the Erasmus+ programmes which makes them vulnerable against these sexual assaults. It is observed during the primary research that participants of these mobility programmes commonly thought of their mobility experience as a period during which "they party and travel a lot". Socializing by going to parties and learning by travelling are important aspects of mobility programmes but it is understood that young women and LGBTI+ should be at least informed about the possibilities and risks they might encounter during those parties before or after their arrival.

Another form of sexism encountered by participants was benevolent sexism. It is a particular type of sexism that portrays women as "pure" and the "better" sex and reinforces the idea that women should be protected and financially provided for by men. Although these beliefs can be perceived as being subjectively affectionate, they are condescending because women are perceived as weak and incompetent. Consequently, benevolent sexist ideology reinforces power differences between women and men. Some participants remarked that they experienced this type of everyday sexism in the form of positive discrimination. They reflected this as a pleasant attitude. However, a positive discrimination towards a group in a society might also result in a negative discrimination towards another group in society. In addition, positive discrimination might mean that they were not treated as equals to male participants or in some cases to the local women in the countries where they had their mobility.

· *(The kind of sexism I usually face) is a, let's say, positive kind of sexism. Happens all the time at work that somebody (…) will say 'Hey guys, we have to lift*

these heavy boxes, come here to help. No, girls, not you, relax, they are too heavy for you'. (This is a thing) that never happens in Denmark.

· *I think here we experience positive discrimination. When the local people understand that you are foreigner everyone helps. But during my Erasmus I felt uncomfortable because people think Europeans (women) are easy. Also when I am in here, I am called as "European" but not my own nationality.*

· *I was in training in Romania (…) the project was really interesting and the trainers were good (…) but one of the facilitators was always making comments like 'You are a girl and you study engineering, impressive' (…) or 'You are (…) very logical for a woman.*

Other forms of sexism participants experienced was what we might call as mansplaining and minoritizing women. These are subtle forms of sexism that are not easily recognized by women and men. Participants often mentioned incidents of interruption while speaking or not being treated as an equal individual if she was with a male friend.

· *I am from Denmark doing my EVS in the same organisation with my boyfriend (…) the most surprising thing here in Greece is that people tend (…) when they want to ask us about something, or we are about to make a decision about work (they) always speak to him. (Even) when people speak to both of us they tend to look at him and not me. (They) assume that he is deciding for both of us. (I think that) for them when he is saying something it is more valid than when I say the same thing.*

· *Mansplaining (I think that) is really typical. Even at work, (…) I was surprised about how often. People do not even notice.*

· *'Some male co-workers (other EVS'ers) when you were saying something to them, (they) were like 'Oh, no, let me tell you about that …. Blah, blah, blah' and they are saying exactly the same thing you said!'*

4. Intersecting Identities and Other Forms of Discrimination

During the interviews individuals were mentioning that they have faced discrimination based on stereotypes connected to their identities other than gender such as their nationality, religion, weight, job, etc. Participants, especially the ones from Turkey, specifically mentioned that they were discriminated and offended because of their ethnic identity and religion and sometimes because of their skin colour and their names during their mobility period in Europe. They were frequently asked biased questions about their country and culture. This might be explained by the prejudices and negative public opinion in the related countries.

"I felt discriminated there because of my name and my skin colour."

The stakeholders also mentioned discrimination cases towards some foreign students. Especially some students were facing with bias because of their traditional and religious clothes.

· *I felt discriminated there because of my name and my skin colour. Once a guy called me a terrorist after learning my name and said "all Muslims are terrorists."*

· *I do not think that I was discriminated because of my gender. I feel like local people stare at me differently. They know that I am a foreigner and it is disturbing...*

· *I did not face gender discrimination. I felt they were respecting women rights and felt less discriminated. However, I experienced some bias because of being Turkish.*

· *In my case (…) I think my religion matters too. People*

(tend) to repeat stereotypes (…) like the hijab one (…) or they are really surprised (because) a Muslim woman can do that or she is allowed to do this. I mean, (…) allowed by whom?

5. Motivations

To the question "How have you decided to take part in this program?" the three main answers were to explore and to have an experience in an international environment, to learn the language of the hosting country and for professional reasons. It was also pointed out that they wanted to have the challenge of getting out of the comfort zone of their country and family home and they considered the mobility experience as an alternative to unemployment or precarious work.

· *It was because of the experience, it was a way to get to know the world and meet people from all over. There was also a need for a change in my life and I think going out made me grow up immensely and that was what I was needing at that time.*

"It was a way of getting to know another reality"

· *I decided to do Erasmus in France, because I was studying French.*

· *I had temporary jobs, nothing to do with my academic education, so I saw in it a good opportunity (because being abroad gives you advantage when looking for work).*

· *I wanted to learn more about how an NGO works, to learn more about social topics and programs in the society, so when I saw that there was an opportunity to do an EVS that was in Marketing, but also in an NGO, I didn't think too much before doing it.*

· *To have in your CV that you have an international experience was really important.*

6. Support and Monitoring

Regarding support from the hosting and sending organizations and from the Program and monitoring from the respective National Agency, the interviewees identified several problems, namely, lack of support about bureaucracy and logistics, lack of financial support, problems with accommodation, lack of proper support and problems with the staff/board of the hosting organization, activity agreement related problems, difficulties in accessing a language course and in understanding the health system of the hosting country.

The lack of support about bureaucracy and logistics was mainly identified by Erasmus students as opposed to EVS volunteers. When looking for accommodation, before departing, they would be forwarded to the hosting University that in some cases would also forward them to other sources, such as Facebook groups. One interviewee stated that the sending University told her that she would have to pay one month of accommodation at a time, but when she arrived there the hosting University told her that she would have to pay for the whole semester in advance. While dealing with bureaucracy, the students would be the bridge between the sending and hosting universities, having no proper information and orientation on the process. Another problem was also the equivalence of scientific areas and grades. A few interviewees who had their mobility experience in Italy, reported that the information on the hosting University's website, about the courses, was minimal and all in Italian. This made it difficult to choose the courses that would fit better to their scientific area. When they arrived there, they found out that some of the courses were not available, after all. One participant reported that he did not know that all the courses

available were in Italian before arriving the host University. He was not informed by either his own Erasmus coordinator or the host university about this and because he did not know any Italian, he could not pass any of the courses. Another interviewee stated that it took one year after she was back in Portugal for the sending University to close the grades equivalence process. This was not only because of the different grade system between the sending and hosting University, that led the sending University to wanting to give her lower grades, but mostly because of the lack of support from the International Relation's Office of the sending University, that did not have enough people for the work that needed to be done. One interviewee who had an experience as intern reported that she did not get any support from the sending University either when it came to finding an organisation to do her internship, or when she had to change organisations, due to problems with the first one. This lack of support and information and bureaucratic difficulties were most commonly experienced by Erasmus students. It was observed that EVS volunteers had more support from the host institutions with regard to their travel, arrival, accommodation and daily life during the mobility period.

· *My University told me that they didn't do that (find accommodation) and told me to contact the hosting University. The University there would send us to Facebook groups of Italian students and then it was very difficult to rent a house just for six months. When we go to a foreign country, where the majority of people don't speak English, it's very easy to pay more than what we should, because people take advantage of that situation.*

· *When I was in Croatia the huge problem that I had was the bureaucracy. Erasmus+ for students is totally different from EVS. You have to do all the paper work, all the stuff on your own and nobody cares to help*

you, nobody wants to explain to you, so you have to study papers, you have to fill papers, you have to talk to your professor in your home country and then with professors in your host country. It was really difficult. I felt really affected by this.

· *Not only did the process took too long, because one of the teachers was on sabbatical, another said it wasn't with her and another did not want to know. The International Relation's Office told me that I had to talk to the teachers, not them. The Office of International Relations has three people. One is responsible for all the Erasmus who arrive, another for all who go and another for internships.*

· *It was a great experience to learn how to solve things on your own... When you do internships you go without the system, you do not have a system behind you. You do not have a University, you do not have a coordinator, you have nothing. Not even my Hungarian University knew anything about the internship. I agreed with that company, then I arrived, but they had nothing for me.*

> *"It was a great experience to learn how to solve things on your own…"*

The lack of financial support and the way it is managed was a problem identified both by interviewees who had a mobility experience as students and by former or current EVS volunteers. These constraints led them to seek support from their parents or other people within their social network.

· *I only had €95 pocket money , so I didn't have money for public transports. I always had to walk and we were living in the suburbs, so it was very annoying, 40 minutes to the city centre and it rained all the time.*

· *I went in September (to Erasmus) and received 80% of my scholarship in November. And I came back in February and received the other 20% in June.*

· *The University soon told me, even before I officially applied, that there were many people interested in doing Erasmus and therefore the budget would have to do for everyone. That is, it would be possible that I would have some months there without scholarship. They warned me right away and that was really what happened.*

· *At the financial level my parents always helped. (…) They (the coordinating organization) paid me the EVS only after two months, because there was some problems with the payments and I think I didn't receive anything for two months. My parents paid for the accommodation and then they reimbursed it.*

The interviewees pointed out four main problems, related with the accommodation. Specifically, the difficulty in finding a house, due to the growing competition in the real state industry; the sanitary and overall conditions of the apartment, that in some cases, jeopardized their health; problems with the property-owner; and the number of people with whom they shared the apartment with. One person stated during the interview, while answering to another question, that he had been put together in the same room with a male colleague that wasn't very much tolerant towards LGBTI+ (the coordinating organization knew he was gay, since the beginning of his EVS).

· *I didn't expect the humidity and I didn't know that you don't have central heating system and usually it's more warm outside than inside. (…) I would never say that it would be a big problem for me, but actually it really affected how I felt. I felt sick after one week and I was sick for a month and a half altogether and it had never happened in my life. And I wasn't depressed, but it really influenced the way I felt, I didn't have so much energy... I really wanted to explore, to meet people, but on the other hand, I wanted to stay at home in my bed.*

· *I think he (the landlord) has some problems with girls and he's taking advantage of Erasmus people*

in general, because he's renting houses to Erasmus people and asking for a lot of money. When I arrived, I found the windows broken and nobody cared. From the moment I asked him to fix the window, he started to almost kicking me out everytime, everytime, everytime... It was really bad. He was entering the house whenever he wanted, saying bad words to me, it was not that easy. And it was not that easy to find another house.

· *The association that coordinates me tries to save money. I am also sharing a room with a French guy who is cool, but the room is too small for two people, we do not have space. (...) Then came October/November and began the humidities in the room…*

One of the major problems shared by almost all of the interviewees that had done or were doing EVS was the lack of proper support and problems with the staff/board of the hosting organisation, namely, lack of communication; difficulties in feeling integrated in the organisation, leading to self-doubt; lack of knowledge of the staff of the organization on how to deal with certain situations, such as conflict management and absence of a (proper) EVS mentor.

· *She (the Director of the hosting organisation) treats you like you had five years of professional experience, like you lived here for five years, and there is no communication.*

· *When I arrived one of the things I felt was the lack of integration in the hosting organisation. (…) It felt like I had landed there and we hadn't been in contact for six months talking about everything. (…) I felt it was a little bit difficult for them to know what my place would be at the organisation. (…) I felt I wasn't part of the team and that I had to conquer my place there.*

· *I arrived here, there was a project, but no place for an EVS volunteer. I came very motivated, but after two months I hadn't found my place there. I would question myself, my capabilities. (…) It was like 'You*

can do whatever you want here, feel free'. Ok, but I couldn't find my place there. (…) I carried out ideas by my own initiative, but I don't have responsibilities in the organisation.

· *(talking about different expectations from the EVS volunteers and hosting organization) That would make conflicts easy to rise, also because the organization didn't have the best strategies to deal with that.*

One interviewee reported that her relationship with the Director of the hosting organisation was so tense that she had the urge to leave everything and go back home, feeling psychologically drained. She also tried to change her EVS project, however, the coordinating organisation stated that it wasn't a strong enough reason and that the National Agency wouldn't allow it.

· *But psychologically, for me, it was strong. I would go to work and be dependent on the state of mind of the Director. I would go in the bus praying that she would be in a good mood, because if she was in a bad mood, she would 'throw knives'.*

Another person reported that she had been sexually harassed by a Board member of the hosting organisation and then learned that it wasn't the first time he had done that to EVS volunteers. The interviewee didn't talk with anyone from the organisation about it, given his superior position, - not even with her mentor. She didn't feel comfortable talking with a man and he was also from the hosting organisation, being equally dependant on that person. During the arrival training she talked with a female trainer and later to the National Agency about the incident. However, the National Agency disregarded the situation and didn't allow her to change her EVS project. It is worth mentioning that the Board member who sexually harassed her was

also a politician and was well known by the National Agency.

· *At the arrival training I talked with the trainer, that's why I think it's important to always have female trainers in these trainings. She talked with someone from the National Agency, then I went to talk to this person at the National Agency that said 'Maybe you didn't understand well, since you don't speak Portuguese'.*

The majority of the participants also identified problems related to the EVS activity agreement, namely this was when the host organisation's expectations from the volunteer was different from what was previously agreed or didn't exist at all.

· *There was this difficulty of having a work plan, waiting for one thing, getting there and being something completely different.*

· *This was the first problem, the project didn't exist, they didn't have anything for us. We had to be in the office doing nothing, being on Facebook for five months, which is awful. (…) I think that would be enough to change the organisation or do something about the EVS, because if your project does not exist, they have deceived you and you have the right to solve this.*

Another problem shared by the participants was the difficulty to access a language course, that volunteers doing EVS are eligible for at least two months.

· *And there was also the difficulty of the language course that is part of the rules of the EVS and they did not want to offer it to us and we had to pressure them to do it.*

· *I remember that we were promised Italian classes, but we only had two weeks of Italian.*

Finally, the great majority of the participants reported having difficulties in understanding how the health system of the hosting country worked, stating that

they didn't have proper support from the hosting organisation on this matter or that the information they were given beforehand was wrong. In these cases, the participants would look for information or support from their near friends, other volunteers or flatmates. One interviewee reported that she felt discriminated as a foreign person by workers of the health system.

· *(…) That was another problem for me, because I didn't know how the health system works here and I was alone, I didn't know how to deal with the problem. I'm really thankful to my flatmates, they were amazing. They took care of me and cooked for me and everything.*

· *The worst for me was the public health system, having to go to the hospital. It's really complicated for a foreigner if you go to the public hospitals. When I was doing Erasmus I had to go several times and I had a very bad time. I was waiting for too long, then I thought it was very expensive and that people… you're a foreigner, so they treat you a little bit bad. For me it was the worst experience.*

· *Even though I had European insurance, it wasn't working in France. Most of my friends were studying medicine, so they were helping me, telling me exactly what to buy or take. But the first time that I got really sick and I needed a doctor, it was really difficult. Because I was supposed to go to the Erasmus Department to ask them what to do and they told me that inside the University you have a doctor that can help you, but in fact it was so difficult that I just decided to go home and take the normal pills.*

7. Young Women and Public Spaces

The majority of the female participants stated that they didn't feel safe walking in some areas of the city where they were living, leading them to avoid those areas, especially at night or when poorly illuminated. Another issue was sexual harassment on the streets, namely, staring and catcalling, as well as stalking. None of them talked with the coordinating or hosting organization about it, eventually they got used to it or adopted different strategies to avoid it, such as changing their route or looking down or in some cases changing the way they dressed.

· *I knew exactly the places that weren't ok to go and if you're a woman, for example at night, you will avoid going there alone. (...) When you know it's not a safe place, the best thing to do is never to go there.*

· *I feel the same here, but actually there are some areas... It's not that I don't feel safe, but I just don't feel comfortable as a woman. For example, at Martim Moniz I made this experiment. Even during the day, I was walking alone and everyone looked at me, all the men stared at me. I walked with a female friend, everyone stared at us. I walked with a male friend, no one even noticed (laughs). So, it's not that I feel unsafe, but I just don't feel comfortable to have all the men's eyes on me, let's say.*

· *(In the bus) For example, a man that was with is daughter looked obsessively at me and then asked "So, what are you doing? Where are you from?" It ended with me purposely choosing not to get out at my usual stop, because I felt he was being too much invasive. (…) It was a bit suspicious.*

· *(…) there are certain streets I don't walk at night. Here in Portugal there is much more catcalling, people are much more offensive, regarding talking to foreign*

"*(…) there are certain streets I don't walk at night*"

women, expressing interest. In Germany it doesn't happen very often. (…) In the beginning it made me feel very unsafe and uncomfortable, now I got kind of used to it and I know where to go and where not to go at night.

· *I avoid areas where I don't feel safe. For example, I live there and to go to my house I have to pass by that street and they told me not to pass by that street alone at night. So I try to go by the other road, where there are more cars passing by.*

8. Mobility content and logistic based problems

"I didn't know all the courses were in Italian."

One of the major problems that the participants faced during their time abroad was related to the content of their mobility programme and logistic based problems. Some of the participants of European Voluntary Service and Erasmus study abroad mobility programmes were not satisfied with their mobility content. Some of EVS volunteers stated that the daily activities of EVS programme or volunteer's tasks were not clear, that they did not receive sufficient support and guidance from their host organization. These participants tended not to speak about these issues with the host organization out of the fear that their project might be cancelled as a result.

For both incoming and outgoing Erasmus study abroad mobility programme participants, the main problem was that the majority of the courses they originally chose were not carried out in English. Therefore, many Erasmus students opted out from courses because of the language barrier and chose courses mainly attended by Erasmus students.

This, in their opinion, prevented them from fully integrating with local students.

Most of the time logistic based problems were faced by first-timers. Participants with previous mobility experience had fewer problems in adaptation and communication than the participants who had their first mobility experiences. Overall opinion of the participants is that although they faced initial problems related to accommodation, communication, adaptation to the host country, they quickly got used to their new surroundings.

"(…) there are certain streets I don't walk at night"

Both EVS volunteers and Erasmus student mobility program participants think that there should be a support mechanism for young people, especially female participants, regarding issues relating to mobility program. Without a mechanism, participants tend not to address the problems.

· *There wasn't a clear schedule for volunteers. The organization was spontaneous, disorganized and unprofessional. Volunteers were living in the same apartment as the supervisors. We were not able to form a balanced professional relation with them.*

· *My project didn't have a clear schedule. I had to take the initiative and get involved in other activities. I was not given sufficient orientation or training. I thought about contacting my sending organization and Turkish National Agency but I was afraid that my project could be cancelled. This was my only opportunity to benefit from Erasmus+ mobility programmes, and that is why I didn't complain and tried to find a common ground with my hosting organisation during the rest of the project.*

9. Positive Experiences

The mobility period, although not always free from problems and challenges, has also its positive aspects. In general participants said that their experience in the EU mobility programmes was positive and they were willing to participate again in the future.

From the individual interviews and focus groups we identified three main topics: the volunteering experience, socializing and personal growth.

· *I really like the organisation and I like the people in the office and I really feel supported there, even if I have my ideas or if I just want to start something knew, I really like that. And also in general I feel much more at home than in my home country.*

· *I think that I'm living the best moment of community participation. I really understood what I want to do, helping people, but working with them. (...) I'm seeing for the first time how a local authority can work with an association and how the association is happy to work with the local authority.*

· *For me, the academic part went really well. (…) There I really felt that I was learning a lot of things.*

· *To me it's very important to emphasize the fact that when we go abroad, we know that we are leaving our friends and family, but in fact it's an opportunity to find other families that are not our blood family and that can stay in your life for life... To me it was one of the best experiences.*

"If I could, I would do it again"

· *To make friends from all over the world, you gain a completely different perspective.*

· *To be able to travel. (…) Get out a little bit from my corner, it was great to me and that was incredible.*

· *I grew as a person at every level. I gained a lot of political awareness.*

· *Before I came, I just talked French, but now I can talk more in English.*

Another point that worth mentioning is that almost all the LGBTI+ who were interviewed mention positive experiences and stories connected with the EU mobility programmes.

· *Being an Erasmus student and also bisexual wasn't a problem. I could say (…) that my experience was great. However, it depends on the country, I was in Spain.*

· *(I'm a homosexual woman) and I had my EVS (…) some years ago. I was out to almost everybody (…) at work. I wasn't afraid in particular (but always) had in the back of my mind (…) that I do actually look homosexual and I am alone (in a foreign) country. I had listened to some homophobic (…) and mean comments from time to time, even from co-workers, but (never something) really serious happened.*

· *One of my first coming outs (as a lesbian) was during (…) my first Youth Exchange. Nobody knew about me, (there were also) some other gay folks, I was feeling (like I was) in a safe space. It went really well.*

· *I have the feeling that people (in Youth Exchanges and Trainings) tend to be very open minded. I am always out (because) I feel that almost everybody accepts me for who I am, and (even if) somebody does not (…) the environment is always safe and friendly.*

· *I'm homosexual and (never had) a problem during my Erasmus or in projects. Only (…) gossiping behind my back (…) sometimes. But, sadly, (I do not think) a trans individual could (…) have the same opportunities (…) or the same positive experience.*

· *I came out to my parents (as gay) during my Erasmus. (It was) the first time in my life that I was feeling good in my own skin, I had a relationship (with another Erasmus guy), I was feeling (…) empowered. So, I texted them of Facebook and (…) told them (…) that I am gay and finally I can say that to them.*

10. Recommendations for Gender mainstreaming Strategies

The major aim of this study is to collect data and testimonies that will allow to develop mechanisms of prevention and response to situations of discrimination, thus striving to increase the quality of the experience that young women and young LGBTI+ have within exchange programmes. Taking it into consideration, we now turn to the main topics of where there is a need for improvement, which are the following: support from the hosting organisation or University; activity agreement, financial support, monitoring and quality standards, support network, language courses, mentorship and gender issues.

Regarding the support from the hosting organisation or University, the participants identified the need to invest in the skills of the staff of the organisation for the integration and monitoring of volunteers, as well as the need to provide them more time or other necessary means to guide the volunteers during their mobility experience. Furthermore, more investment was suggested in the reception phase, in order to present the social dynamics of the hosting country.

· *I feel that what is lacking, from the part of the organisations, is time to give a continuous and proximity support to the volunteers and I also feel that, many times, there is a lack of strategies and capability to do that, from the point of view of people who work with volunteers, including me. (…) For example, managing situations of lack of motivation, conflicts among volunteers, situations of uncertainty about what the volunteers like, what they want to do, what they know how to do, even situations of disrespect from the part of the volunteers. (youth worker)*

· *Guiding a person is almost a job. When a person is in*

training or volunteering, she/he really needs guidance. The goal of all this is to have an experience that allows you to gain skills and I think there is no control. (…) There are many organisations that aren't ready to receive volunteers.

· *I want to give more time to people in the office to have more time for EVS volunteers. Because sometimes they want something or they want to talk to you to give you a task, but they don't even find the time to give you a task.*

· *I think there are countries where there should be a greater investment in the reception phase. It would be interesting to get to know the social dynamics.*

One of the major problems pointed out by the participants was the discrepancy between the activities they were expecting to do and what they actually ended up doing. In several cases, the participants stated spending too much time in front of the computer, having no task or responsibility assigned to them. One participant also reported having spent more than eight hours per day in the hosting organisation, doing nothing. In this sense, it was suggested by the participants a reduction of the working hours and more flexibility from the part of the hosting and coordinating organisation, regarding their working schedule.

"*I think there could be a greater investment in...*"

· *At the beginning they told me that I was going to this school and I would help the psychologist with speech therapy. My background is speech therapy. (…) I'm just wasting my time and sitting. And at the end of the day, I'm tired of doing nothing. I'm just wasting my energy, my time, my nerves. I'm trying to change the situation, but it's not changing. (…) It's like you're getting married, but you don't love that person. But you should live with that person for one year and you can't understand what you should do for that person.*

· *I'm not ok with sitting eight hours and doing*

anything. For me that's killing me. And I think they could be more flexible, 'Ok, this person his on her Facebook, anyway. She can go and have a coffee in Lisbon'. Because this is enriching in it's own and I don't think EVS should be like a real job.

· *Also, the working hours. It's like I'm not volunteering, I'm working there.*

The need for more financial support was stressed by almost all the participants.

· *The only thing that lacked was really the bureaucratic and financial part. The reception there was great and everything went well.*

· *At the Erasmus level, they should give more support in the internship mobility. It should be an equal opportunity for everyone. (…) Everyone should have an equal support.*

Another topic where there is a need for improvement is monitoring by the national agencies and quality standards. One interviewee also suggested that there should be other channels, in addition to the evaluation report, for the volunteers to report their experience.

· *It's really sad if the National Agency doesn't do anything when your project doesn't exist or when your boss sexually harasses you. (…) I know for a fact that there were more complaints, but nothing happened.*

· *The National Agency should be more careful, especially with those associations that send and receive many volunteers, because there are many people who are going through a bad time. (…) They are dealing with public money (European), and they have to give an answer.*

· *It is necessary to clearly identify the standards the hosting organisation has to comply with when hosting a volunteer. In that sense, the volunteer has to have a single room, there has to be a certain amount of money for the food. As it is now, it's very much left to*

the interpretation of the hosting organisation and some of them abuse the programme. So I think there has to be more standards to ensure that once the volunteers are there, they have proper conditions, which I think at the moment, does not necessarily happen. And also, for volunteers to be more informed. Because very often the volunteers don't understand how the program works or what their rights are or how much money the organization receives. This is not transparent. (youth worker)

- *If people want to share negative experiences, maybe the report is not where they are going to say that they didn't get any support when they needed it. Maybe, there can be other channels, other means of sharing experiences.*

Many participants shared the lack of a support network and spaces of socializing. Sometimes, they would turn to the Erasmus Student Network, in order to feel more integrated. In this sense, the creation of a support network for interns and EVS volunteers could be an answer to this problem.

- *As an intern, you're much more isolated, because you have a sending and a hosting organization and that's it. (...) For many interns, it's quite hard to figure out what their rights are.*

- *(…) apart from a person with whom I was a great friend, I didn't get to establish any other close relationships, because I didn't find people who were like minded or that shared the same worries as I. So, I had to find my network outside of that context, but it was challenging.*

- *We used to get around with the Erasmus, even though we were not Erasmus. The Erasmus Student Network used to organize many things and we would get into them and we were never restricted.*

- *I think organizing more events to meet other volunteers, to build relationships is important. We had just two at the beginning and nothing more. So,*

sometimes, I think we should have more.

A greater investment on the language course and on the mentorship part was also pointed out.

- *I think there could be a greater investment in the linguistic issue, for those who want it. (…) It shouldn't be given in such a simplistic and non-formal way.*

- *I think the mentorship didn't work very well, this is, having a guide, in order to penetrate in the local society. We understood that the information that is available to them is not enough at all, we understood that there was a big gap, regarding the training we receive as volunteers and the training they receive as mentors there.*

- *Also, lack of proper support, having a proper tutor and mentor, as it should be in theory, is important. Knowing who to turn to and so on...*

There were several recommendations regarding gender issues, namely, the introduction of a gender perspective in the trainings before departure and in after arrival trainings; the presence of, at least, one woman among the trainers; positive actions towards breaking gender stereotypes; a stronger commitment of the coordinating and hosting organisations with gender equality and more information to the coordinating and hosting organisations on how to deal with gender discrimination and gender violence and who to turn to in case of emergency.

- *In these trainings (before departure), they focus a lot on interculturality, tolerance, other cultures, but there is no gender perspective. Unless I'll go to a project about gender equality, I never hear anything about it.*

- *There has to be always a woman among the arrival trainers. That's why I started to think in talking about the issue (of sexual harassment).*

- *In certain projects, like a kindergarten, they always look for girls. There's never a guy there. It doesn't make sense.*

· *Maybe organisations could take more time or do more interviews, because sometimes I heard some stories that there were cases when a guy was living with many girls and he was super macho and he really didn't behave nicely, he didn't consider women as equal. (...) Take more time to choose volunteers.*

· *I think I would need information on where to ask for support about how to handle this, like the organisations or institutions who actually deal with these kind of things, so I could talk to them or consult with someone. (...) The hosting organisation might not have the capacity or even awareness of how to deal with this issue, so this could just go on like that. (youth worker)*

Participants would prefer to have a counsellor or a "*safe person*" who would take young people seriously, to share intimate problems relating to gender discrimination or harassment.

Stakeholders also recommended that institutions working with the EU mobility programmes should employ a counsellor who is competent in working with people from different cultural backgrounds. Mobility program implementers feel that they are not equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge to tackle any discriminatory situation. As a result, they cannot provide sound psychological support to students or volunteers, in particular to female students, in cases of sexual harassment or gender discrimination, because there are not institutional approaches to gender issues.

Lack of sufficient trainings or courses on gender equality and sexual harassment was another aspect which needs to be improved according to the participants. One participant stated that a male student harassed her classmate. Male classmates and the host university did not take this incident seriously. It was rather regarded as a *"misunderstanding resulting from cultural differences"* and no action was taken against the harasser.

One stakeholder stated that because of many different cultural codes between countries, they included useful tips in their orientation programmes to prepare mobility programme participants culturally. This was helpful for participants' adaptation to the host country. Overall, participants thought that organisations implementing mobility programmes should develop gender strategies and organize trainings for participants and staff members.

· *Organisations should approach gender issues in a structured way. They should create units for gender discrimination and LGBTI+ rights.*

· *Women already have barriers entering mobility programmes. They should receive counselling for issues relating to gender discrimination. They should have a safe person to confide in who will take them seriously.*

· *Some people still think being a feminist is a bad thing. To change this, gender issues should be a compulsory course not only for mobility programmes but even in high schools.*

CONCLUSION

EU Mobility Programmes support education, training, youth and sport in Europe. While EU Mobility Programmes mobilize many young people throughout Europe and provide them several opportunities and various benefits, the young people, especially young women and LGBTI+ who participate, also face various problems during their mobility period, including gender-based discrimination.

Gender Perspective in EU Mobility Programmes project seeks to highlight gender related problems and challenges faced during the mobility periods, it also aims to empower young women and young LGBTI+ through national and international solidarity mechanisms by taking into account their needs and expectations. The present study, the Situation Report for this project, aims to be a contribution to the continuous improvement of the European mobility programmes, by exploring an understudied aspect of the mobility experience, namely the gender-based discrimination and gender violence experienced by young women and young LGBTI+ in particular. The report has presented the findings of the primary research conducted in five different cities in four countries (Greece, Italy, Portugal and Turkey). It is thought that the testimonies of the participants are of great value, as they are the main beneficiaries of the programmes and they are able to give accounts of the invisible sides of the mobility experience.

Our research revealed some important problems and challenges faced by young women and LGBTI+ during their mobility periods. It is understood that one of the most important issues is the gender unawareness of the participants which prevents them from recognizing gender-based discrimination in many cases. As it was summarised in the previous section, the issue of gender unawareness requires the introduction of a gender perspective in the trainings of the participants. It was also noticed that young women and LGBTI+ do not find it easy to report cases of sexual harassment and assault because of the homogenous sexist attitudes and beliefs within the society. They think that they will not be believed or taken seriously and they feel powerless in cases of sexual violence. Therefore, it was pointed out that it is essential for participants to have someone to whom they can easily approach. This finding demonstrates the importance of gender mainstreaming at all levels of policy making and policy implementation from the EU bodies to the youth organisations.

Other significant issues that have arisen from the primary research are the insufficiency of the support mechanisms, unclear or misleading content of mobility programmes, problems related to language, accommodation and logistics and the financial difficulties caused by insufficient monetary aid. It was suggested by the participants that in order to solve these problems and to improve the experience of mobility period, monitoring mechanisms need to be introduced.

In brief, in order to increase the impact of the EU mobility programmes, the primary research has explored the needs and expectations of the target groups and sought to uncover the problems and discriminative practices the target groups are facing in the countries they travel. The Situation Report, as the major outcome of the primary research, expects to contribute to the discussion on preventive suggestions against those discriminative practices and on developing reliable solutions and mechanisms.

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APPENDIX 1: Focus Group Questions (for young people)

- At the beginning when we ask them to introduce themselves, we can also ask them to mention the mobility program they are/have been involved in (program, country, length of stay).

- What type of activity did you participate in, in the framework of this project? (short term-long term, Erasmus Internship, EVS?)

- Was this the first time you took part as a youth worker in a mobility activity financed by European Programmes (Youth Programme, Youth in Action, Erasmus+)?

- How have you decided to take part in this program?

- Reasons for participating (What were your main motivations for taking part in this mobility programme?)

- Could you describe your arrival in this country? (Did anybody meet you at the airport/train station? How did you arrive at your accommodation?)

- How did you find your accommodation?

- How did you find your way around the city? (Did you have/use a map? Did you use the public transport? Could you get a discount for public transport?)

- What were the problems you experienced? Could you tell us about the problems you experienced during your mobility period?

- Think back to your stay and tell us about your most difficult times/memory.

- Think back over your experience. What went particularly well?

- Think back over your experience. What went particularly bad?

- Did you know where to go/whom to call in case of an emergency?

- As a woman/LGBTI+ did you know your rights as a non-citizen regarding health/education/privacy?

- Did you know about the country's regulations on those issues regarding non-citizens, for example health system, insurance?

- Did you feel safe?

- How did you make friends/socialize?

- Did you think that you were discriminated because of your gender identity?

- What do you think is lacking for supporting young people during their mobility period?

- What needs be improved in terms of gender issues?

- What would improve your life in the country you visited?

- Suppose that you were in charge and could make one change that would make the mobility period better. What would you do?

- If you were inviting a friend to participate in this mobility program, what would you say in the invitation? (Do you recommend it? What would be your suggestions/warnings?)

- If you wish, please give any additional information, observations, comments or recommendations that may be useful for the future.

APPENDIX 2: Focus Group Questions (for stakeholders)

When you invite stakeholders, you can inform them that you will need information about:

- How many women/men participated in these programmes in the last one year?
- What is the percentage of women amongst the volunteers/students being sent and/or hosted by your organization?

During the interview:

- Is there positive discrimination towards women in your organization?
- Could you tell us about your first encounter with young people who come to your organization/ university?
- How do you communicate with them?
- Are there any mechanisms for their adjustment?
- Have you ever received any feedback from your students/volunteers (incoming/outgoing) about gender discrimination (or other type of discrimination) against them?
- If you have, what were your responses to these situations?
- How do you handle difficult situations such as gender discrimination, violence against your students/volunteers (incoming/outgoing)? Do you have any methods/mechanisms for supporting young people in cases of gender discrimination/ violence?
- What would you need if you come across cases of gender discrimination or violence against your students/volunteers (incoming/outgoing)?
- What do you think it is lacking for supporting young people during their mobility period?
- What needs be improved in terms of gender issues?
- What do you recommend for policy development?

APPENDIX 3: Socio-Demographic Information

Socio-Demographic Information- Greece

Between May and July 2017, 31 individuals were participated in focus groups or they had a personal interview. From them, 28 had participated in the last 5 years in some kind of EU mobility program, and the other 3 are stakeholders. Most of them are Greeks and 7 of them other nationalities but all of them are living and working in Greece right now. From the 28 participants, 19 are female and 9 are male. All of them are aged between 18 and 34, with the largest group between 18 and 27. Most of them had some kind of higher education – 22 of have Bachelors and/or Masters degrees. Almost 1/3 of them had participated in two or more different mobility programs – mostly a Youth Exchange/Training and an Erasmus during University. All them are willing to participate again in Erasmus+ programs.

Women are more likely to apply for mobility programs in general and the most popular mobility program in Greece is the Erasmus during studies.

Gender Identity
From the 28 participants, the 19 are female and 9 male.

Age
All of them are aged between 18 and 34, with the largest group between 18 and 27.

Level of Education
Most of them had some kind of higher education – 22 of have Bachelors and/or Masters degrees.

Mobility Experience

Almost 1/3 of them had participated in two or more different mobility programs – mostly a Youth Exchange/Training and an Erasmus during University. All them are willing to participate again in Erasmus+ programs.

Socio-Demographic Information - Italy

During the 4 focus groups, we had the possibility to make group interviews with:

- 6 stakeholders on 22/04/2017
- 5 youngsters on 08/05/2017
- 5 youngsters on 01/06/2017
- 10 youngsters on 08/07/2017

Socio-Demographic Information - Portugal

Some of the data collected using socio-demographic information forms, given to the participants during the interviews and focus groups is presented below:

Gender Identity

· 21 Women
· 2 Men
· 1 Non-binary
· 1 Agender

Age

The average age was 27. The youngest participant was 22 years old and the oldest participant was 35 years old.

Level of Education

The majority of the participants were university graduates (n= 18), while seven participants had Master's degrees.

Place of Birth

From the 25 participants, 12 were born in Portugal, 3 in Spain and 10 were from other countries, namely, Germany, Serbia, Bulgaria, Italy, Slovenia, Azerbaijan, Cape-Verde, France, Hungary and Romania.

Parent's Level of Education

From a total of 23 answers (three were left blank and one parent was deceased).

Master's degree – Mothers (n= 2); Fathers (n= 0)

Bachelor's degree – Mothers (n= 11); Fathers (n= 8)

High School – Mothers (n= 6); Fathers (n= 13)

Middle School – Mothers (n= 1); Fathers (n= 1)

Mobility Experience

Regarding the European Mobility Programmes they had participated or were participating in, all the participants had or were having a mobility experience under the Erasmus+ Programmes. 15 had done or were doing European Voluntary Service, six had or were having an experience as students and four had done or were doing an internship. The year of visit ranged from 2006 to 2017 (three had their experience more than five years ago) and the visited countries were Portugal (n= 12), Italy (n= 4), Spain (n= 3), France (n=3), Moldova (n= 1), Greece (n= 1) and the UK (n= 1). The average duration of the visit was 8 months, the shortest being 3 months and the longest 12 months. From the 25 participants, 7 had already had at least one previous European mobility experience.

Socio-Demographic Information - Turkey (İzmir)

Age

The youngest participant was 19 years old while the oldest was 33 years old. The average age of the participants was 25.

Level of education

· 18 university graduates

· 7 master students

· 7 undergraduate students

Mobility Experience

8 participants participated in mobility programs in Turkey while, 24 participants attended mobility programs in other European Countries such as Portugal, France, Belgium, Germany, Italy, Finland, Sweden, Poland, Lithuania, Malta, Hungary, Serbia, Croatia, Greece, the Netherlands, Czech Republic and Slovenia.

· 8 long term European Voluntary Service Volunteers (2 in Turkey, 6 in European countries),

· 3 short term European Voluntary Service Volunteers (all in European countries),

· 11 Erasmus student mobility programme participants (5 in Turkey, 6 in European countries),

· 2 Erasmus student traineeship programme participants (both in European countries),

· 2 Erasmus Mundus programme participants (one Turkish, one foreign student),

· 4 youth Exchange participants (all in European countries)

· 2 youth training course participants (both in European countries)

A focus group study was conducted with stakeholders. The participants included the Erasmus institutional coordinator, the Erasmus incoming and outgoing student responsible, the Erasmus traineeship responsible, the music department Erasmus coordinator and the former Erasmus institutional coordinator.

Socio-Demographic Information - Turkey (İstanbul)

Some of the data collected using socio-demographic information forms, given to the participants during the interviews and focus groups is presented below:

Age

The average age of the mobility programme participants was 26. The youngest participant was 20 years old and the oldest participant was 29 years old.

Gender Identity

· 16 female

· 4 male

Level of Education

· 7 university students

· 11 university graduates

· 2 master's students

Mobility Experience

The number of participants reached through focus groups or in-depth interviews are 24 in total. 20 of them were mobility programme participants and four of them were other stakeholders from youth organisations and local governments. 15 of the mobility programme participants were from Turkey. and visited the countries of Italy, France, Spain, Portugal, Poland, Germany and Bosnia-Herzegovina. Five of them were visiting Erasmus Students or EVS volunteers from Austria, Germany, France and Azerbaijan. Eight of them were EVS volunteers, seven of them were Erasmus students and five of them participated in short term training programmes. The duration of their mobility period was between one week and one year. Most of them stayed in their host countries around 6 months.

APPENDIX 4: Research Process in Each Partner Organisation

United Societies of Balkans (Greece)

Most of the individuals who participated in the focus groups/interviews are students. That's true because the most popular EU mobility programs in Greece are the ones which are for students and youngsters. However, May and June are the months in which the biggest part of this research took place – as well the months in which the final exams of the second semester are taking place. Having in mind that fact, it is not difficult to guess that the most serious difficulty this research faced was to arrange the focus groups. Many individuals were willing to participate but they did not have the time to do so, also the dates and the times of the focus groups had to change multiple times because of the exams.

During the interviews it was discovered that the groups with the best dynamics were the ones mixed with individuals who had participated in long term projects (like EVS) and the ones who had participated in short term programs (Youth Exchange or/and Training). That way the conversation was deeper and more aspects of the subject were examined . Individuals who had participated only in short term projects tend to say at first that they haven't faced any kind of discrimination connected to their gender and/or sexuality during the EU programs. However, if they mingle with individuals in longer projects they realise that they have faced or have seen somebody else face some kind of discrimination. Some of them said, after the interview, that it is safe to assume that's because most of the individuals believe that the Youth Exchanges have a holiday profile, so during the Exchanges they are relaxed and do not pay attention to behaviours which could be

triggering for them back home.

Lastly, the individuals who had participated in Erasmus exchange during their studies were the ones who reported the least cases of discrimination, unsafe situations and other kind of triggers connected to their gender and/or sexuality. On the other hand, they were the ones who reported the most positive stories such as coming out stories. Some of them said that that's maybe true because they were spending one or more semesters in a foreign country but they lived in a protected environment and hung out, in most cases, only with other Erasmus students.

Toplum Gönüllüleri Vakfı (TOG) (Istanbul, Turkey)

For the Istanbul part of the primary research, four focus groups and five individual in-depth interviews were conducted between April and June 2017, reaching 24 young people in total. The interviews were conducted by the key researcher and contacts with the participants were provided mostly by Nilay Küme. The participants were reached through personal contacts, emailing or calling hosting and sending organizations and International Relations offices of several Universities. Focus group and individual interviews generally took place at cafes. During the interviews and focus groups the participants were given a consent form, explaining the aim of the project and specifying the terms of their participation, including the guarantee of their anonymity in the final report, as well as a socio-demographic information form.

Portuguese Network of Young People for Gender Equality (Portugal)

The study on gender based discrimination experienced by young women and young LGBTI+

during their mobility period was coordinated by the key researcher Funda Karapehlivan and conducted in Portugal by Catarina Correia, from the Portuguese Network of Young People for Gender Equality. In Portugal, ten interviews and three focus groups with five people each were conducted between May and July 2017, reaching a total of 25 young people, two of them also with experience in managing EVS volunteers. The selection of the participants was done using personal contacts, emails to hosting and sending organizations, LGBTI+ organizations and International Relations offices of several Universities, as well as announcements in the organization's Facebook page and Facebook groups, such as Erasmus groups. During the interviews and focus groups the participants were given a consent form, explaining the aim of the project and specifying the terms of their participation, including the guarantee of their anonymity in the final report, as well as a socio-demographic information form.

Yaşar University (Izmir, Turkey)

Yaşar University research team consisted of two European Union experts employed at Yaşar University European Union Research Centre. The Centre is responsible for the development, implementation and reporting of the European mobility, partnership and research projects of the University. Since 2005, the Centre has been involved in 75 EU funded projects as coordinator and partner. Between 2005 and 2015, the Centre was also responsible for implementing the Erasmus student and staff mobility programme. Therefore, the Centre has a broad reach of participants who have taken part in European mobility programmes such as Erasmus student mobility, Erasmus traineeships, Erasmus staff mobility, European Voluntary Service, European Youth Exchanges and Training Courses.

Yaşar University International Programmes Office, which implements Erasmus student and staff mobility, also assisted the researchers in identifying candidates. Institutional project coordinator for "Gender Perspective in EU mobility programs" project, EU Expert Başak Van Hove is also the coordinator for youth projects at Yaşar University. Therefore, she was able to involve former EVS volunteers and training course and/or youth exchange project participants in the study. The Centre also reached out to other local stakeholders who are active in the EVS programme. Former volunteers of Dokuz Eylül University and Association for Supporting Contemporary Life (ÇYDD) were included in focus groups as well. Researchers also contacted the organizers of a SALTO youth training which was organized in Izmir in May, 2017 and three participants of this training course participated in one of the focus groups.

Following the selection of participants, researchers organized the focus groups over the course of one month at Yaşar University Bornova Campus. Participants were informed about the aims of the project and the study. They were given consent forms, which were prepared by the Key researcher of the project. All focus group discussions were tape-recorded with the permission of the participants. The anonymity of participants in the focus groups is protected in this report. Groups ranged in size from three to seven participants each and lasted from 60 to 90 minutes. Başak Van Hove, EU Expert, facilitated the focus groups with the assistance of Burcu Kiper, EU Expert.

Focus group study was conducted between 26 April 2017 and 31 May 2017 by two researchers from Yaşar University European Union Research Centre. The study focused on identifying gender-based problems experienced by young women and LGBTI+

throughout the duration of being part of a mobility program. In total, 32 participants of European mobility programs and 5 stakeholders working with European mobility programs took part in the study in eight separate focus groups.

EURO-NET (Italy)

During the project "GENDER PERSPECTIVE IN EU MOBILITY PROGRAMS", realized in the framework of the European program "ERASMUS PLUS KA2 STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP FOR YOUTH", we have conducted four focus groups in the following dates:

- 22 April 2017
- 08 May 2017
- 01 June 2017
- 08 July 2017.

The indicated focus groups were realized to understand directly from young people and from important stakeholders involved in European mobilities if:

1) gender discrimination also exists in EU programs such as Erasmus+, Erasmus, Leonardo, Jean Monnet, Grundtvig, Comenius, Youth, EVS, etc.. ;

2) it is possible to
- mainstream the gender point of view (that is a contested concept and practice) in the indicated EU Mobility Programs
- increase the visibility of gender issues in youth organizations or associations/NGOs
- develop and promote a new form of gendered political and policy practice and gendered strategy for theory development, understanding also if a form of discrimination still exist in European society and how it is accepted or fought.

So respecting the indication coming from the Turkish coordinator that directs us to make interviews with at least 25 persons involved, at various levels, in European mobilities: in fact we had the opportunity to meet and listen to a total of 26 persons.

The different focus groups were realized, of course, with different participants in 4 months (we did one interview each month) starting from April and ending in July 2017.

It was quite difficult to realize the interviews because, even if the meeting was planned and defined with the "possible" participants, following also their indications for days and hours, many times we had to cancel the possible encounters because the persons did not attend for personal reasons or we had too few numbers of participants to realize the group (1 or 2 persons only). This happened, even if the persons invited for each focus group were more that 15-20 each time.

We do not know why this happened: maybe, in part due to personal tasks and interests, perhaps the persons were not so interested in completely explaining their point of view to other persons and in being recorded during the interviews (but this is just a possible reason for which we do not have any certainty).

In any case, at the end, despite the many difficulties encountered, we had the opportunity to complete the established project task and to make the set up interviews.

Each of our focus groups followed the instructions by the Turkish coordinator for the organization of the event and for the atmosphere to be created.

The participants, during the realized focus groups, have been comfortable in their way to express

themselves freely in front of others and were always aware of the objectives of the research project in which they participated.

Before starting the interview our researcher/trainer explained the aims of the project and the objectives of the research to them, and answered their questions on the initiative and/or the European programs in which it is developed.

Of course we always underlined that this research was realized in the framework of the European program called Erasmus Plus KA2, explaining that it is an action to support strategic partnership directed to support Youth initiatives and to offer new opportunities to young people in the participating countries.

Moreover, it was also underlined that this specific action was launched by the Erasmus National Agency in Turkey that demonstrated a specific interest and attention in the matter of gender discrimination.

Some information, before starting the interviews, was given on the project activities to be developed and on the international partnership (composed by organisations/institutions from various countries) that will realize it, also suggesting to more interested participants to visit the official project web site and/or the Facebook page of the project were it would be possible to find more information and to stay in contact directly with all the partners and/or other persons interested in the project results.

It is important to underline that our focus group had an international point of view because we had the opportunity to involve persons from many countries and not only from our county Italy, thanks to the enormous opportunities of contacts with other nationalities and cultures that our EURO-NET

network has, and from very different backgrounds and/or cultures: so the result of this project task can be considered as a real, even if small, international perspective.

Our intention in making the interviews was also to explore the potential and limitations of gender mainstreaming as a practical and analytic strategy by addressing key underlying theoretical issues as well as comparatively assessing the implications of gender mainstreaming in various and different settings.

Certainly, what we have understood from this initiative is that there are discussions as to the influence of international regimes, the development of human rights discourse, and the development of the European Union on gender mainstreaming in both country specific and international settings which require an analysis of policy processes.

From our personal point of view, it was interesting to have answers to our questions, on one side directly from young people that experienced mobility during their lifetime, and on the other side, from stakeholders that normally organize activities of mobility for young people: in this way there was the opportunity to listen to the sound of two different bells and to determine if they have different perspectives.

It was for us a way to explore the area of the mobilities from another point of view, in which we have never been involved because, as an official centre of information of the European Commission (we are a Europe Direct centre) we have never done discriminations in recruiting participants: so for us it was interesting to see if in other ngos/associations/organisations/institutions/etc. this discrimination is done.

Another thing that can be primarily underlined is that the so-called "Erasmus Generation" believes so much in the force of the European programs in creating connections and an active sense of citizenship in young people that they hope that these kinds of mobility programs would never end: this is an evaluation completely shared also by us!

The European Union, if it wants to survive the crisis of the last years, has the necessity to invest more and more to sustain mobilities because they permit us to feel supranational citizenship on our skin, permitting us to really understand its values.

Now let's go more deeply inside the results of each of the focus groups to understand the different points of view of the persons that participated in our meeting.

Erasmus+ KA2: Strategic Partnership Project
"Gender Perspective in EU Mobility Programs"
2016-2-TR01-KA205-036174

SITUATION REPORT

This research focuses on the experiences of young women and LGBTI+ participants of the Erasmus+ programmes, aims to bring the gender perspective to the centre while considering and evaluating the mobility programmes. We hope this research, contributes to the discussion on preventive suggestions against any discriminative practices and on developing reliable solutions and mechanisms for young women and LGBTİ+ and to initiate gender mainstreaming work at the youth organisations.