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SURVEY 2019

Mobility and the Role of Youth Information



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IMPRINT

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We would like to acknowledge all those who supported the dissemination of this survey in ensuring that it reaches a population as diverse as possible. Special acknowledgement goes to the Eurodesk Network and the Western Balkan Alumni Association for translating the survey into 22 languages and making it possible for young people all over Europe to participate in their own language.

PREAMBLE



We all agree that without information there is no participation. Is the current level of information on mobility opportunities in Europe sufficient? Certainly not. The results of the second edition of the Eurodesk Survey on “Learning mobility and the role of youth information outreach” clearly show that more can be done in terms of outreach to connect and engage young people. Today, many do not know about opportunities to go abroad (23,9% of the non-mobile respondents), and have trouble finding the right information when they look for it (56,5% of the respondents).

The EU Youth Strategy calls for “a more systematic approach to quality youth information, outreach and dissemination, building on existing networks.” One of the concrete measures to achieve this goal is to provide quality youth information at local, national and European level: “with the adequate provision of quality youth information services and platforms at all levels, including the European Youth Portal, and with the support of European-wide organisations, young people’s equal access to quality information on their rights, opportunities, youth services and EU programmes for young people can be promoted.” What are the challenges ahead?

First, we have to make sure that all young people know something about what Europe has to offer them. The EU Youth Strategy fosters a “vision of a continent where young people can seize opportunities and relate to European values”. This won’t be achieved if young people do not know about European values and do not know about European opportunities. Having access to free and reliable sources of information, at European, national and local level, is crucial. Information has to be more coherent, youth-friendly and personalised. This requires youth workers to be properly trained and for different services to work hand-in-hand. Unfortunately, today access remains very unequal. More investments are needed in youth information services, making sure they have the human and financial resources to reach out to all young people.

This survey carries interesting indications in the context of the design of the future generation of EU programmes. It shows that many young people feel that the cost of a mobility period abroad is still unaffordable, even with the support of an EU grant (59,8% of the respondents). This means that, in the context of designing new programmes, concrete measures are needed to allow all young people to participate, for instance by explaining to them that the programme is for everyone, and providing additional support for those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Enjoy the reading!

Audrey Frith,
Director of Eurodesk

METHODOLOGY

This publication marks the second edition of the Eurodesk Survey, a European-wide online survey carried out by Eurodesk Brussels Link. The survey was hosted on the European Commission's EU Survey tool and translated by the Eurodesk Network and the Western Balkan Alumni Association into 22 languages. The promotion was carried out all over Europe, in 11 different languages, and was supported by European-wide NGOs and national institutions. The survey reached 3495 respondents residing in 53 different countries, in Europe and beyond. The survey was carried out from October 2018 to January 2019.

The target group of this survey was young people between 15 and 30 years old, with and without a learning mobility experience. The survey collects experiences of young people in searching for information about mobility opportunities.

The main questionnaire was designed to target both mobile and non-mobile young people, with a diverging part that questions them about their mobility experience. Through the demographic components, we identified variables such as age, country of residence, geographic context, and how their socio-economic background and financial conditions relate to their opportunity to participate in mobility opportunities. In addition, we asked about the mobility experience of family members. This statistic allows us to take the context of the respondents into consideration when analysing the data: are they from a small town or a big city, does their surroundings have experience with learning mobility, do they perceive their economic situation to be supportive of a learning mobility experience, and so on.

In comparison to the previous edition of the Eurodesk Survey, this publication goes deeper into the respondents' experience engaging with information. It looks at areas such as information fatigue, trustworthy sources and where they prefer searching and receiving information. It continues by asking the respondents about the characteristics of the information they engage with, whether it is youth-friendly, inspiring and clear.

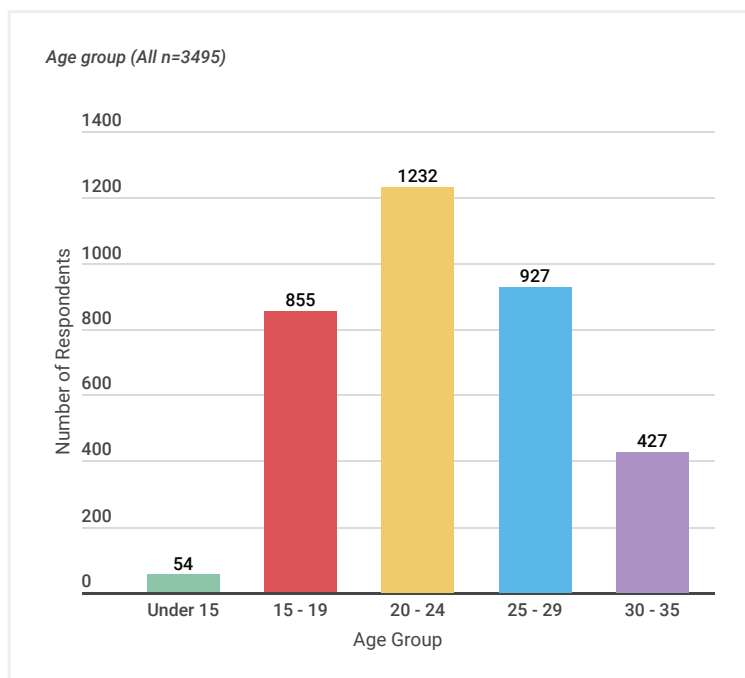
Lastly, the survey looks at the aspects of guidance and how youth information practices can be improved to better support young people with information about learning mobility opportunities. We ask whether they believe youth information services would be valuable in their region, what kind of services they wish to receive and suggestions to improve the field of youth information.

A concluding chapter follows with recommendations that are built upon the outcomes of this research and the experiences of the Eurodesk network.

PROFILES OF THE RESPONDENTS

Demography

The 3495 respondents of this survey come from 46 different nationalities across continental Europe. The majority are between 20-24 years old (35,3%).



One of the main sources of receiving information and inspiration for going abroad is family members and peers.¹ Most of the respondents have family members who have not participated in learning mobility (studying, working, volunteering, training) abroad (57,1%). While a minority of 42.9% have family members who have been on a learning mobility abroad.

To better understand the economic backgrounds of the respondents in relation to learning mobility, we asked the respondents about their own/their family's financial situation based on four statements. This information gives us an opportunity to analyse whether there are any differences or similarities between these four group categories.

¹ Eurodesk Survey 2017 - Mobility and the role of youth information. (2017) Eurodesk Brussels Link

Which sentence best reflects your situation when it comes to accessing mobility opportunities abroad? (n=3495)

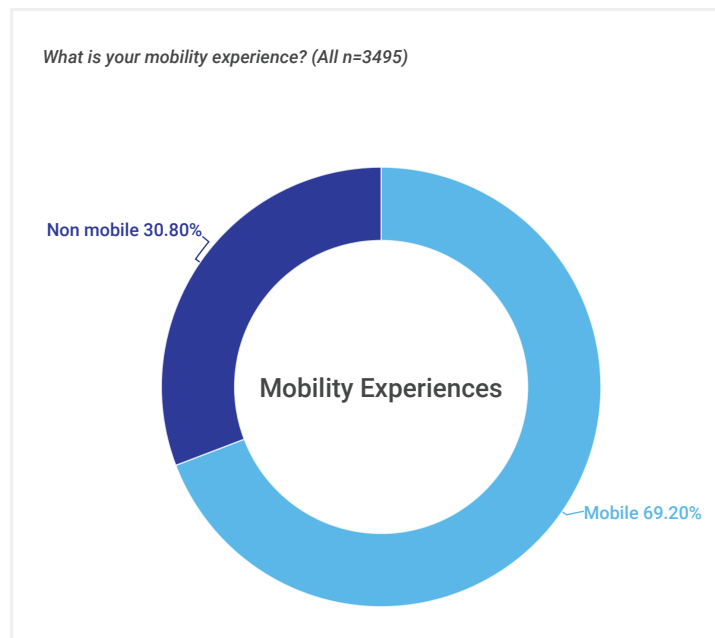
I can afford to go abroad with a little help from Erasmus+ (or other funding programmes). My parents (or myself) can complement the living/learning costs without a big problem.	11,3%
I can afford to go abroad as my parents (or myself) can cover the living/learning costs. Erasmus+ money (or other funding programmes) would be a plus but not an obligation.	28,9%
I could afford to go abroad if the grant covers the full cost of the mobility. My parents (or myself) could complement the living/learning costs to a small extent.	42,4%
I cannot afford to go abroad if the grant does not cover the full learning/living costs. My family (or myself) cannot complement the costs	17,4%

One important aspect of this year's survey was to evaluate whether any links could be drawn between the geographical location and the experience accessing youth information. The EU's Flash Eurobarometer on the views of young people has a segment on youth mobility that shows that there are links between the geographical locality and the likelihood of participating in an experience abroad.² They found that the more urbanised the respondents' environment is, the more likely they are to have gone abroad. Our results confirm this. We asked the respondents to inform us of which geographical location they grew up in and where they live today. The majority of our respondents live in an urban area (31,1%) or city (16,3%), while one in every four grew up in rural areas (25,5%).. This gives us the opportunity to compare the aspects of accessing and engaging with information and comparing the realities of the different demographic groups.

Where did you grow up/live for the majority of your youth? Where do you live today? (n=3495)

	grew up	live now
Urban area (over 100.000 inhabitants)	31,1%	49,7%
City (50.000 - 100.000 inhabitants)	16,3%	17,8%
Town and Suburb (10.000 to 50.000 inhabitants)	26,8%	17,8%
Rural (less than 10.000 inhabitants)	25,5%	14,6%
n/a	0,3%	

²Flash Eurobarometer 478. (2019) European Commission.

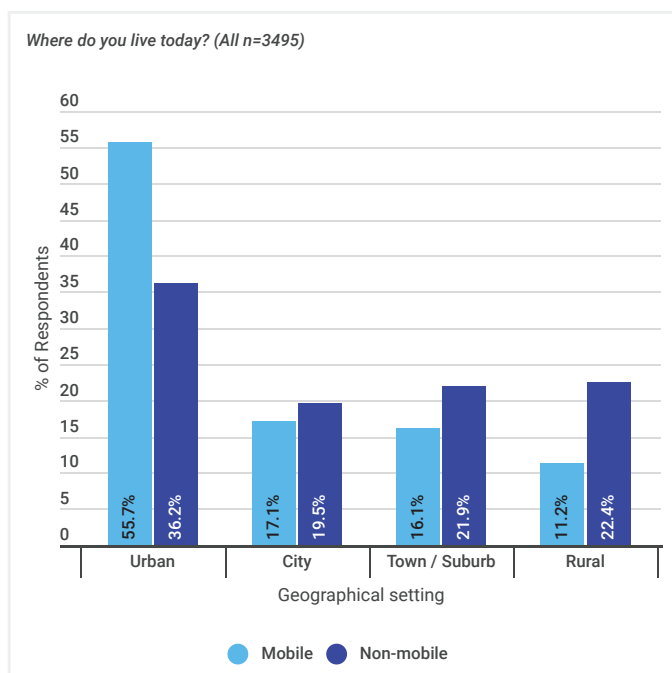


The survey is also centred around the learning mobility experiences of the respondents, and therefore we divided the survey in two, to ask more about their experiences of being mobile (69,2%) and reasons for not having gone abroad (30,8%).

“No, I have not gone abroad”

Accessing learning mobility opportunities is not always easy. Around one-third of the respondents do not have a mobility experience (n=1078). When asked what their main reason was for not partaking in a learning mobility experience, 38,1% mention that it is a matter of finances; something that they cannot afford.

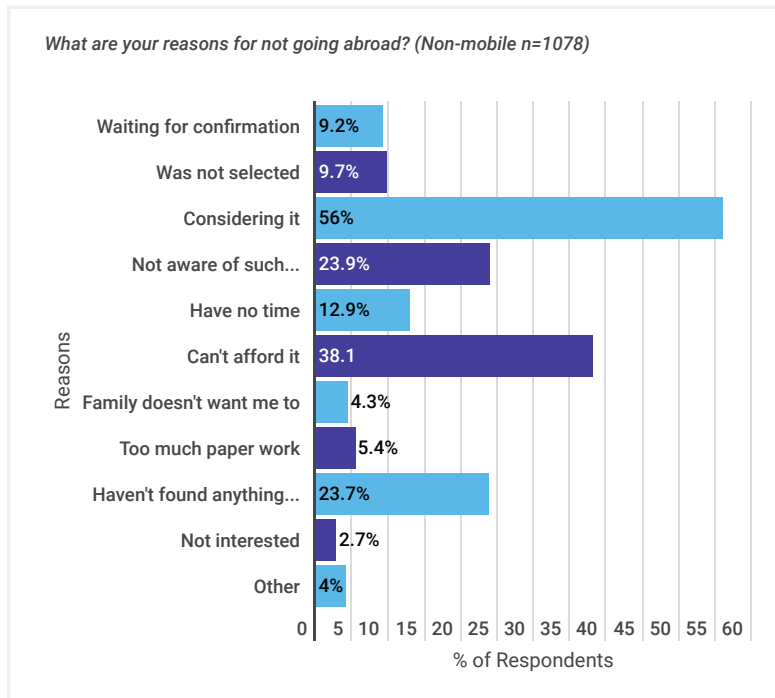
The majority of non-mobile respondents were above 20 years old, however it is important to note that 43,2% were in the age of 15-19 years old.³ The non-mobile respondents have, to a larger extent, no family members that have participated in a learning mobility experience abroad (66.6% in comparison to the mobile participants 52.9%). In addition, over one in every five non-mobile respondents (22,4%) live in a rural area in comparison to their mobile peers, one in every ten (11.2%).



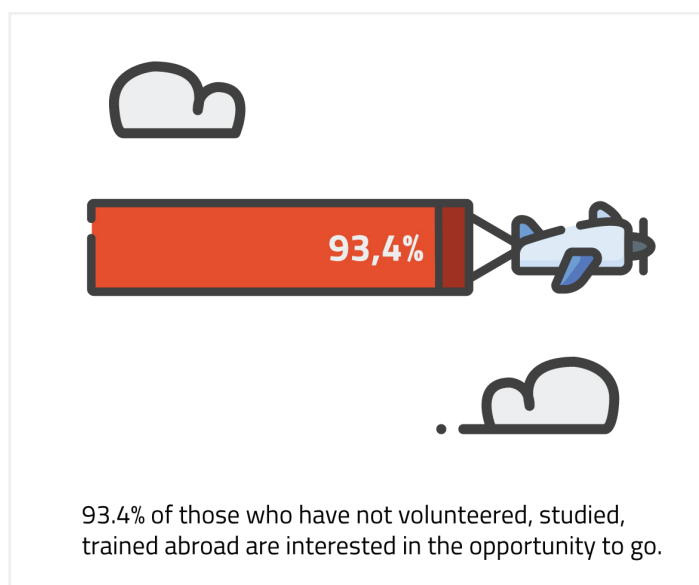
When asking the mobile respondents to reflect on the reasons for not going abroad the spectrum of reasons is wide. We compared these numbers to the EU’s Flash Eurobarometer and found very similar statistics.⁴ Our respondents could tick one or multiple reasons for not going and the trends were very clear. 56% of the respondents mentioned that they were considering it, 38,1% mentioned that they did not have the finances to cover their expenses. Over one in five (23,9%) mentioned that they were not aware of the existence of such opportunities or had not found anything that suited their needs. Only 2,7% mentioned that they were not interested. The lack of access to information and guidance is a conclusion that can be drawn from the outcomes of our and Flash Eurobarometer’s survey. In addition, the strong trend of financial obstacles still prevails.

³ Question: Indicate your age. (non-mobile respondents) Under 15 - 4,3% ; 15-19 years old - 43,2% ; 20-24 years old - 28,7% ; 25 - 29 years old 15,8%; and 30 - 35 years old - 8,1%.

⁴ Flash Eurobarometer 478. How do we build a stronger, more united Europe? The views of young people. (2019) European Commission



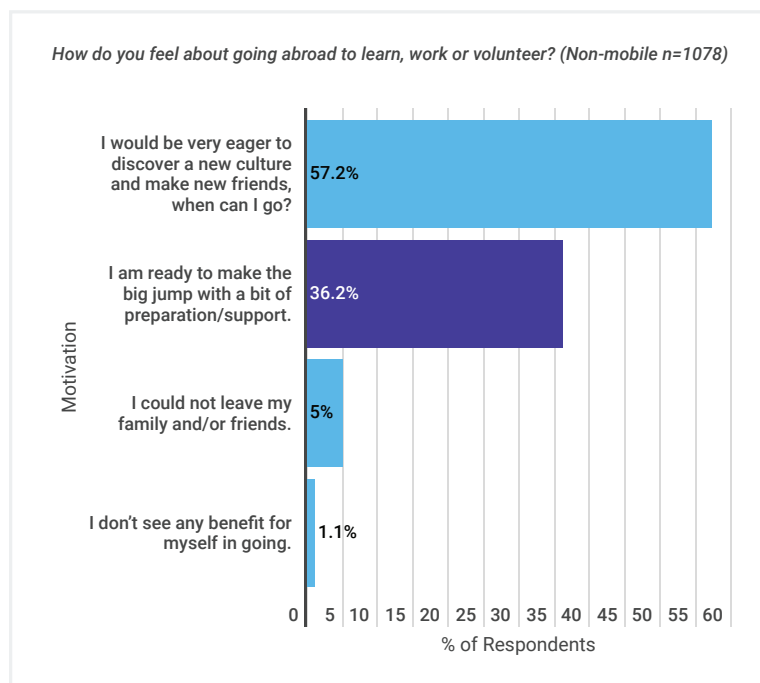
Finances continue to be one of the main obstacles in making learning mobility opportunities inclusive to people from diverse backgrounds. When comparing the socio-economic statements related to learning mobility, between mobile and non-mobile respondents, the difference is clear. Mobile participants rate higher in the categories where little to no grant is needed and non-mobile rate higher in the categories where more financial support is needed. In fact, one fourth (24,4%) of non-mobile participants expressed that they would need a full scholarship to participate in mobility opportunities, while among mobile respondents 14.3% expressed the need for a full scholarship. **Needless to say, regardless of mobility experience or not, the opportunities provided are at times costly or require one to have the financial stability to put money up front**, which is a demand the majority of our respondents find difficult to meet.



Which sentence best reflects your situation when it comes to accessing mobility opportunities abroad? (n=3495)

	all	mobile	non-mobile
I can afford to go abroad with a little help from Erasmus+ (or other funding programmes). My parents (or myself) can complement the living/learning costs without a big problem.	11,3%	12,4%	8,9%
I can afford to go abroad as my parents (or myself) can cover the living/learning costs. Erasmus+ money (or other funding programmes) would be a plus but not an obligation.	28,9%	31,8%	22,4%
I could afford to go abroad if the grant covers the full cost of the mobility. My parents (or myself) could complement the living/learning costs to a small extent.	42,4%	41,6%	44,2%
I cannot afford to go abroad if the grant does not cover the full learning/living costs. My family (or myself) cannot complement the costs.	17,4%	14,3%	24,4%

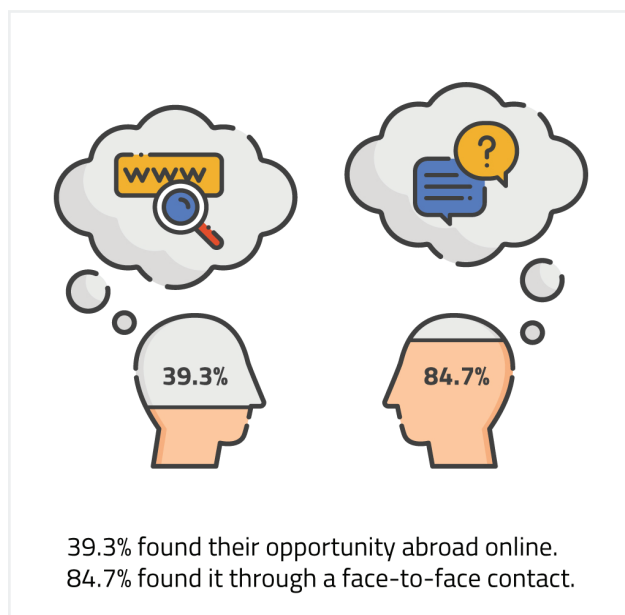
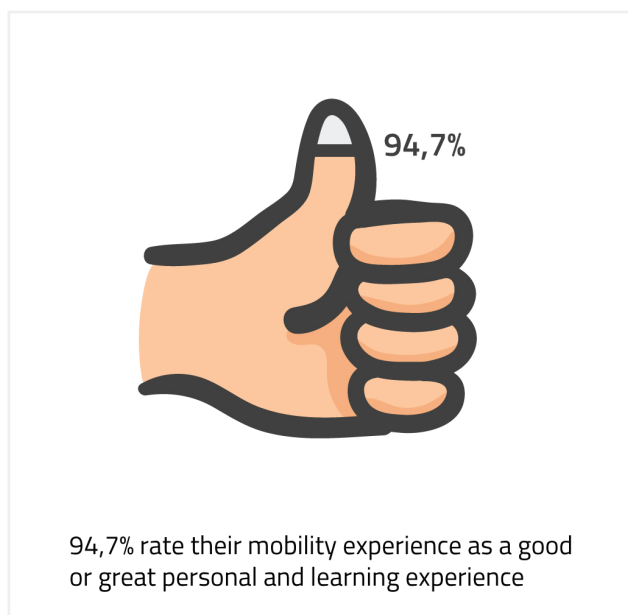
Lastly, when asking the non-mobile respondents how they feel about these type of opportunities, they answered positively. In total **93,4% were eager to experience a mobility opportunity**, some mentioned they were ready to leave already next week, and others with a bit of preparation. Only 5% mentioned that they could not leave their family behind and commit to a period abroad, and 1,1% considered that such opportunities would not bring them any personal benefit.



“Yes, I have a mobility experience!”

Taking the step to go abroad can be one of the most giving experiences. Most of our mobile respondents (n=2417) participated in a mobility experience because they wanted to **have fun and live a new experience (94,5%), to do something meaningful and useful (90,5%),** and they wanted to **gain new skills and improve their employability (66,5%).** The majority of the respondents participated in EU funded exchanges, while regional and international opportunities were also mentioned, such as Au Pair, work & travel and studies outside of Europe.

Finding opportunities for going abroad is not always easy, and we will reflect more on this in the coming chapter. Out of our mobile respondents, 39,3% of our respondents found their first opportunity online through forums, search engines, portals and social media. Most respondents also mention that they found their opportunity to go abroad from a face-to-face contact (84,7%); a teacher, a friend, colleagues and family members, a youth worker, an information point or guidance counsellor who motivated them to take the step.



Most of the mobile respondents are between 20 and 29 years old (69,5%). They live, to a large extent in an urban area (55,7%), and consider to have the financial support to participate in mobility opportunities, through family members that can support with extra costs, or through grants and scholarships that make it possible for them to participate.

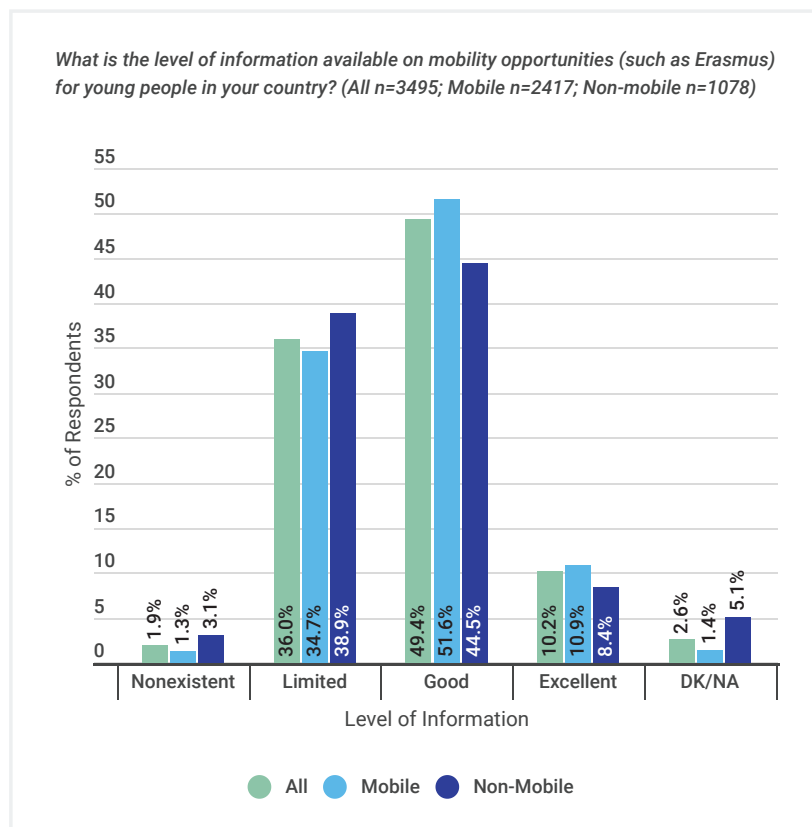
Like the non-mobile participants, finances remain the main obstacle to their experience. Besides their obstacles, the mobile participants **rate their mobility experience to be a good or great personal and learning experience (94,7%).**



STAND BEHIND THE YELLOW

ENGAGING WITH MOBILITY INFORMATION

One of the main aims of this survey is to assess how accessible young people find youth information in their country, and more specifically youth information on mobility opportunities. 59% of the respondents rate the availability of mobility information to be 'Good' or even 'Excellent' in their country. However, 38% express that the information is either 'Limited' or 'Non-existent'. When comparing the mobile and non-mobile respondents, the difference is a matter of percentage, however, the non-mobile believe, to a larger extent, that the availability is poor.



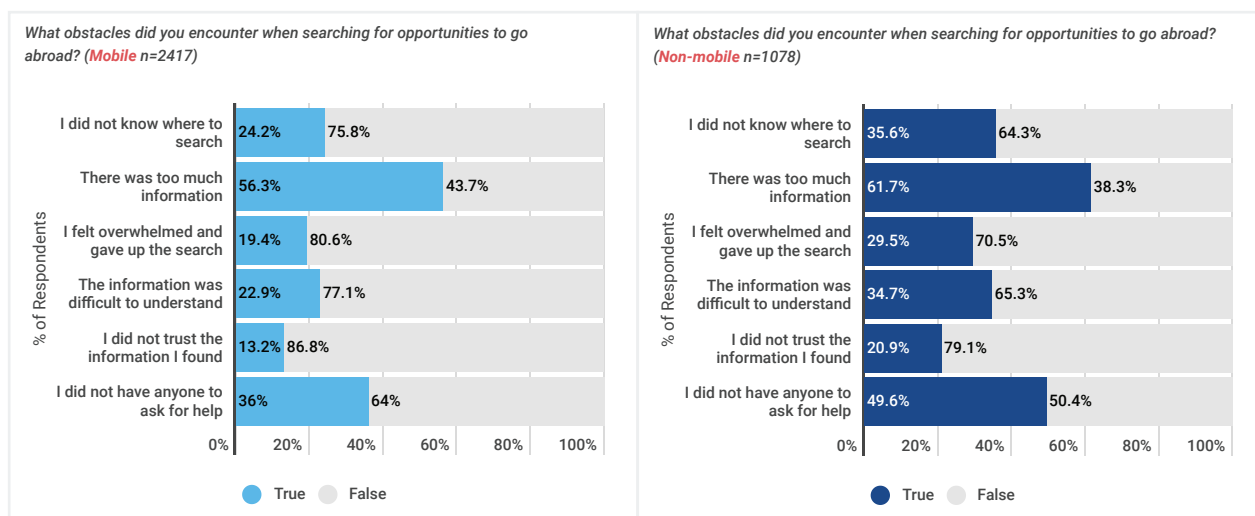
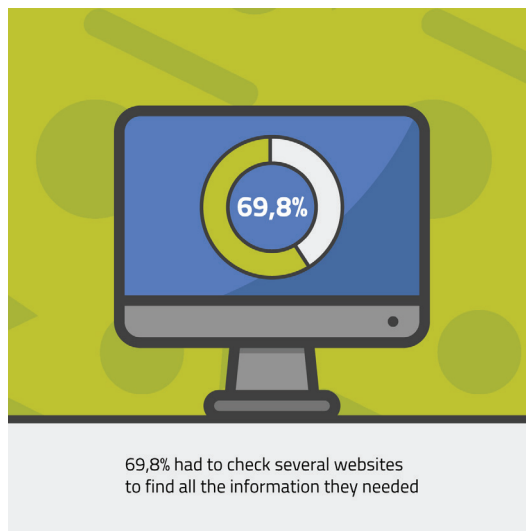
When comparing how those who live in rural areas and towns rate the availability of information in comparison to their peers in cities and urban areas the perception is very similar. Of the respondents from rural areas and town 56,5% believe the information is good or excellent, corresponding to 61,2% in cities and urban areas. Important to note is that the percentage of non-mobile participants is higher in rural areas and towns (44,3%) in comparison to mobile participants in rural areas and towns (27,2%).

Ensuring that young people and young adults have access to the right information is not only about providing information on websites, brochures or having a social media page. It is just as much about **ensuring that the information one provides is youth-friendly, meaning that the information is accurate, trustworthy, easy to find and understand, and free to access for everyone.**⁵

⁵ Council of Europe and ERYICA. Youth Information, Historical reminders and main achievements, Compendium of Youth Information texts (2012). Council of Europe

Obstacles in accessing mobility information

Youth information aims to make sure that young people can engage with the information they receive, and get adequate support and guidance in understanding the information. We asked our respondents to state their agreement or disagreement with statements of how they engage with information about mobility. 69,8% mentioned that they had to check several different websites to find all the information that they were looking for. 56.5% mentioned that they felt lost and struggled to find the information they needed. Besides the overall statistics, there are a few comparable differences between the experiences of mobile and non-mobile participants.



It should be noted that 49,6% of non-mobile participants felt that they did not have anyone to ask for help, almost half of the non-mobile respondents. To a greater extent than their mobile peers, the non-mobile participants also felt that there was too much information to search through to the point that they gave up (29,5% of non-mobile participants and 19,4% of mobile participants).

The non-mobile respondents also struggled to understand the information they found, and to trust the sources they came across, to a greater extent than their mobile peers. Engaging with information can be a source of discouragement to take the step to go abroad and the fact that the information and resources are scattered is an additional demotivation for many young people.

While some of the respondents are not given enough information about different opportunities (e.g. how to receive funding and support while applying), others mention that their schools are doing a good job in promoting these opportunities to students, hence they face no obstacles in finding information. Some mentioned that organisations working for and with young people are not always equipped enough, that they could do better at promoting mobility opportunities. Others mentioned that schools should be better at encouraging a mobility experience and not discourage those who are interested. Essentially, the work of providing mobility information has to be shared amongst a wide variety of partners, schools, youth centres, information points and guidance counsellors, as well as parents, NGOs and community leaders. As the EU Youth Strategy mentions there needs to be a more systematic approach to quality youth information, outreach and dissemination.

“There are a lot of sources, but you have to spend a lot of time to find the ones you are looking for and get sufficient information.”

“If one already knows he wants to go, he’ll find the information. But when I was studying, I didn’t know such possibilities existed. Little is being promoted in schools.”

“There were no obstacles, but there were not many opportunities.”

“Different programs on many different websites, which are sometimes hard to find and not recognisable as official/unofficial website. I’d like to have ONE big visible database.”

“I really want to go abroad, but unfortunately I don’t even know where to start, I don’t know how to get started.”

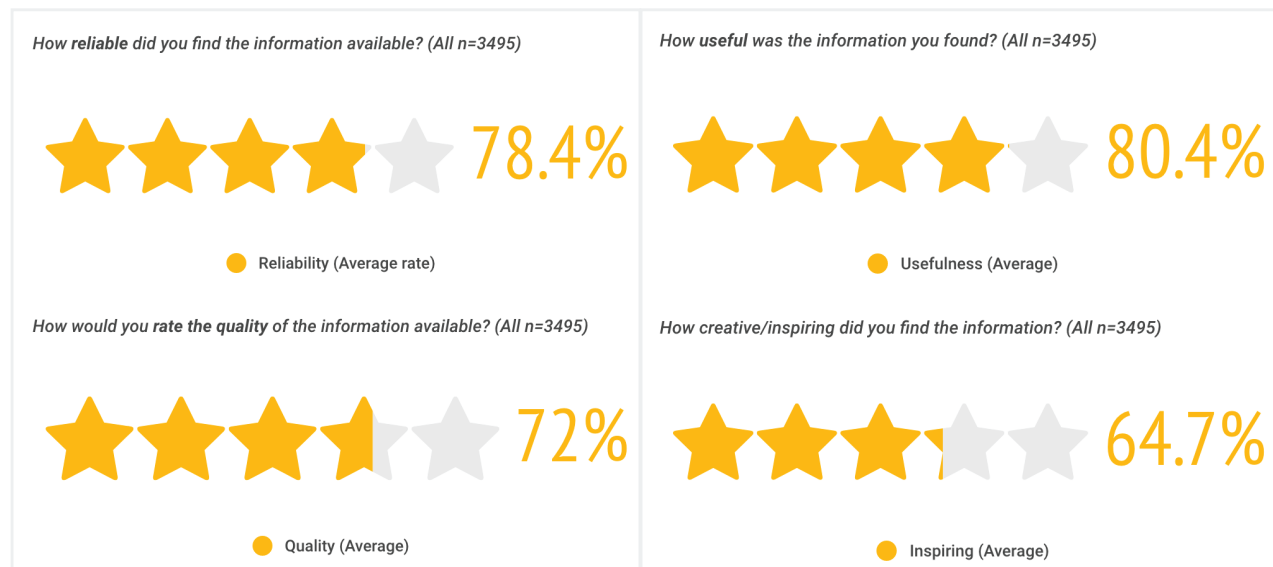
“I did not have any person to ask for more information”

“After my erasmus university exchange I tried to do another exchange with a funded Erasmus and I felt lost, so I never went.”

Source Eurodesk Survey 2019

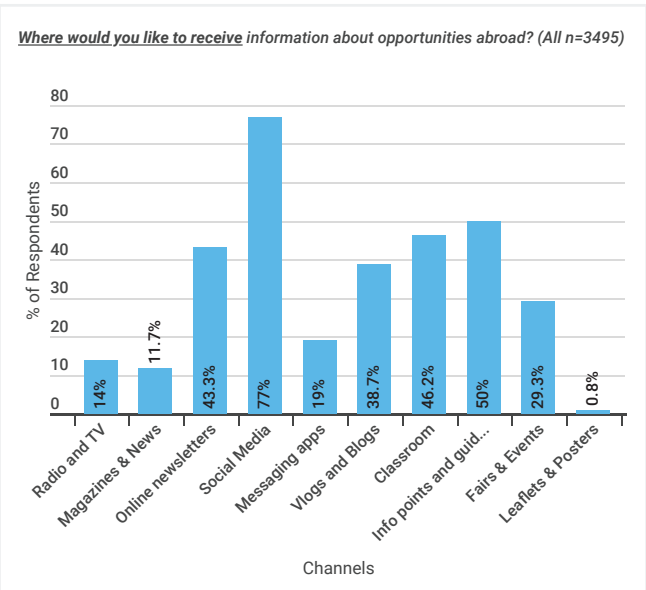
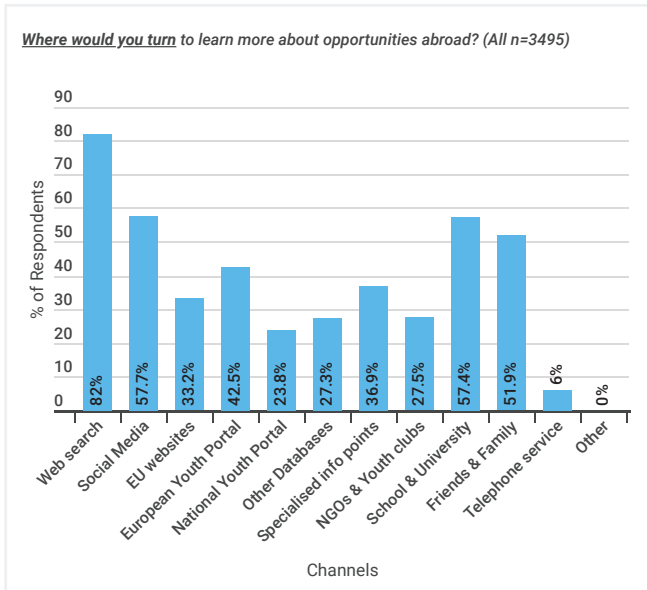
Characteristics of mobility information

We continued by asking the respondents to rate the characteristics of the information they have engaged with and share their overall perception with us. The respondents answered whether the mobility information they came across (online and face-to-face) was reliable and according to them of high quality, useful, and inspiring. The characteristic that lacks the most is the ability of the information to inspire. Another aspect to better understand is how this information can be made more inspiring through different forms of dissemination, different channels and sources.

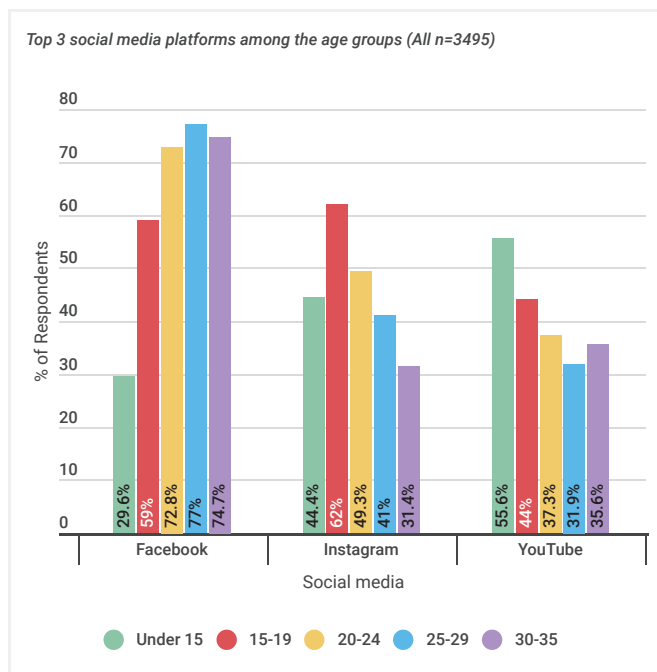


Main sources for mobility information

To better understand the respondents' patterns of searching for information, we asked them what their main source of information is where they would prefer to receive mobility information. The majority of respondents turn to online channels such as general search engines, social media and portals to find information about opportunities. They also turn to family members and peers who they know have experience or more knowledge on the topic. In return, they would like to receive information from the same type of sources. They value the face-to-face approach with school environment as one of the main information providers, along with information points, and fairs and events targeting these kinds of opportunities.



In the previous Eurodesk Survey, the respondents valued social media as an information channel to look for and receive mobility information. We therefore dug deeper to understand what kind of social media platforms young people use to learn about mobility opportunities and in extension where they would like to receive information. Previous social media trends showed that platforms such as Snapchat and Instagram were becoming more popular among younger populations (13-18 year olds) and Facebook was becoming less and less popular. A reflection that continued from last year's results is whether we are looking at providing more mobility information on Snapchat and Instagram. This year's survey helps to clarify young people's thoughts. Snapchat was rated very low (78,9% said 'least likely') as a platform where young people would search for mobility information, while Facebook was rated as the most likely among all respondents over 20 years old (81,2%). When looking at the different age groups of the survey, the results look similar across generations. Facebook, Instagram and Youtube remained the three most used platforms across all ages, the slight differences are that those under 15 rated YouTube and Instagram as their two main sources, while the other target groups rated Facebook and Instagram as their two main sources.



THE IMPORTANT ROLE OF YOUTH INFORMATION WORKERS

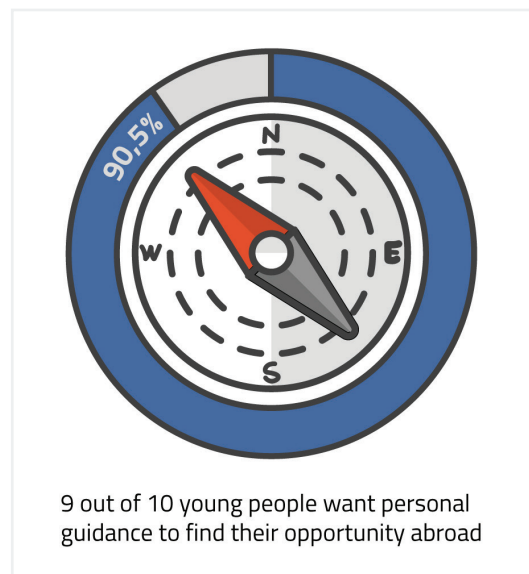
After assessing how the respondents relate to learning mobility, mobility information and which communication channels they prefer, we continue by asking the respondents about the type of support they find useful. An important aspect of the service young people prefer is one that is specific to their needs. **90,5% of the respondents answered that they would like personal guidance**, someone to share recommendations, to give advice and to support them in writing their application. The remaining 9% mentioned that they already knew what they wanted, or that it was a part of the "journey" of going abroad, to figure everything out themselves.

We continued by asking the respondents what kind of information they would like to receive from a mobility advisor.

On a scale of relevance, the following percentage rated the support area to be 'relevant' or 'very relevant' (All n=3495)

	all	mobile	non-mobile
Information about different grants that would match my individual needs.	91.6%	92.4%	89.7%
Information about the host country (education system, labour market, support structures, housing solutions, etc.) to prepare for my mobility experience.	90%	88.5%	93.4%
Support/coaching in planning my mobility experience.	82.5%	81.2%	85.3%

The graph shows that the mobile participants are more interested about the technical aspects, such as funding and grants in order to find new opportunities that match them. While the non-mobile respondents are more interested in understanding the possible destination they are going to and the logistics of housing, support structures, education system, etc. that might be very different from what they are used to. Needless to say, all three categories of support areas rated over 80% when asked about their relevance, hence this can be interpreted as three crucial areas of support in preparing young people for a mobility experience. It is indeed important to adjust to the individual person's preference for information whether it be technical, cultural or motivational support that is sought.



CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In the next framework of youth mobility programmes such as Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps, the European Union aims to increase the funding and amount of opportunities available for young people. The Eurodesk survey shows results that points to the challenges of reaching out to all young people, and where quality youth information about mobility opportunities has a lot of potential for improvement. This improvement has to be a systematic one, targeting structures all the way from the grassroots level to the European Commission. We would therefore like to emphasise on the following recommendations for more inclusive and widespread youth mobility opportunities.

Recommendations for Future Programmes

More financial support should be provided to ensure inclusion in Erasmus+.

In order to ensure a more inclusive programme, new criteria for financial support should be implemented in Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps. Living costs and travel costs should relate to the situation of which the participant comes from and the country of destination. In cases of participants from disadvantaged backgrounds or with the need of disability support, the possibility to receive a full grant should be considered, a grant covering all living costs and travel costs of the mobility experience.

Portability of national social benefits during a learning mobility abroad.

Finances was rated as one of the most common obstacles while abroad and one of the most common obstacles to even considering a learning mobility experience to those who lack one. We believe that one way of supporting participants with financial constraints can be to allow the participants to travel with their national social benefit grants (e.g. disability allowances, social benefits). Member States should therefore allow young people to have access to these national grants during their learning mobility experience abroad - this could complement the funding received from mobility schemes such as Erasmus+.

Recommendations for Youth Policies

Invest in youth information workers to ensure an inclusive and qualitative way of reaching a wider population of young people.

Youth information workers have the ability to work both online - reaching many people at once, as well as face-to-face to provide a more inclusive and individual approach. Youth information workers are closely connected to local and national realities and have the ability to motivate those further away from mobility opportunities and at the same time educate local actors to be multipliers of the same message.⁶ The survey results are in line with wider research about the rapidly changing habits of young people who more and more expect personalised and instant services. Not all youth workers have access to continuous training and resources to invest in this field (e.g. digital marketing).

Therefore, investing in youth information workers' professional development ensures that they have a central impact in reaching out and engaging young people and other stakeholders working with and for young people.

⁶ Eurodesk Competence Framework. A practical manual and training tool that identifies key skills and competences for Mobility Advisors working with young people and European learning mobility programmes. (2018) Eurodesk Brussels Link

Invest in youth information services.

Investing in youth information services would allow for a more strategic approach to youth information, to create an even bigger outreach and impact - with more staff, more resources and more support. Investment in these services should aim to support rural communities and those further away from opportunities, and thus target the goal of more inclusion in youth mobility. Investing in youth information services allow for quality and efficiency. Youth organisations should not work in isolation; regional, national and European networks can support the exchange of good practices and the learning development of organisations. A network such as Eurodesk provides forums for its member organisations to help each other when e.g. dealing with destination-related enquiries. Youth workers and youth organisations have to be connected between themselves as well as with their key partners.

Invest in mobility portals as an entry point to mobility information.

The outcomes of this Eurodesk survey shows that mobility information is not always easily accessible; and for some young people, the search for information is a demotivating factor. Providing accurate, up-to-date and comprehensive youth information, in a creative and easily-digestible way, can be a great first experience that drives young people to search for more support and eventually participate in a learning mobility experience. Mobility portals, such as the European Youth Portal have the potential of being a single-entry point to find all kinds of information, they should be used to their full potential.

Recommendations for Youth Workers

Strengthen cross-cooperation with other structures.

In order to provide adequate answers to young people, various services shall be better connected. It is essential to strengthen the collaboration with employment services, schools, universities, libraries and other learning institutions and equip them with the information relevant to their target group. Cooperation and interaction between these services and youth information structures at local, national and European level should be better aligned. At the EU level, the European Commission shall ensure that the newly set Stakeholder Platform brings those actors together to, not only share their work, but also discuss and come up with solutions related to thematic areas such as mobility information, digital youth work, face-to-face guidance and counselling.

Design attractive outreach activities.

Providing information and opportunities online is a key outlet for reaching young people. The top two preferences for where young people look for and would like to receive information are online sources (web search 82% and social media 77%). This shows that those working with and for young people have to have a more active digital presence in order to reach a wide target group. We encourage youth information structures to rethink their dissemination and develop a digital youth work strategy that can attract young people where they are active; and to adopt an approach that engages and inspires them.

Co-create and evaluate outreach actions together with young people.

In order to design successful outreach activities that speaks to the wide variety of young people, young people must be an important component in setting strategies and creating and evaluating outreach activities. We encourage those that work with and for young people to consult and co-create with young people in order to design successful outreach activities.



ABOUT EURODESK

Eurodesk is an international nonprofit association created in 1990 with the aim to raise awareness on learning mobility opportunities and encourage young people to become active citizens. As a support organisation to Erasmus+, Eurodesk makes information on learning mobility comprehensive and accessible to young people and those who work with them.

With a network of national coordinators connected to over 1100 local information providers in 36 European countries, Eurodesk is the main source of youth information on European policies, mobility information and opportunities. Together, the network answers enquiries and provides guidance for mobile young people across Europe.

Read more about Eurodesk at www.eurodesk.eu.



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