



YOUTH BOARD OF CYPRUS

Participation in the Erasmus+ youth
programme: Impressions from participants
on the programme's impact

Cyprus 2017-2018



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INTRODUCTION

Research-based Analysis of Erasmus+ Youth in Action (RAY MON) explores the effects of the Erasmus+ Programme on youth, youth workers and youth leaders and through a research-based analysis provides insights regarding the impact of the Programme to youth organizations, institutions and other related bodies. This report summarizes key findings from a survey conducted with project leaders and project participants.

The objectives of this report are to explore:

- The profiles of the responding project leaders and project participants involved in the Erasmus+ projects
- The effects of the projects funded through the Erasmus+ Programme on the actors involved, on project leaders and on project participants, but also on their organisations and local communities.
- The levels of competence development and knowledge acquisition acquired by the project leaders and project participants through the project.

The particular report provides a description of the results of youth leaders and participants. In particular, aspects of competence development are presented, such as knowledge acquisition, skills development, youth work and personal development, as well as opinions about future educational and professional pathways.

Additionally, the report presents aspects of positive impact of participation in the Erasmus+ Programme such as skills development, knowledge and values related to citizenship and participation, as well as citizenship and participation in local communities.



METHODOLOGY

Data collection

Data were collected in an online environment, via surveys sent to 887 participants of the Erasmus+ Programme. Specifically, a total of 151 project leaders and 736 project participants responded to the survey. The data were collected over the period 1/1/2017 – 31/12/2018. At the time of writing this report, the available data were from the particular period.

Data analysis

The two data sets were analysed using descriptive statistics. For each data set, percentages were generated, regarding the youth leaders and youth participants' opinions about the positive effects of their participation in the Erasmus+ Programme.

In relation to the knowledge acquired from participating in Erasmus+ programmes, one of the female project participants stated that:

“

There is no doubt that the experiences and knowledge that a young person can gain from Erasmus + programs are varied and can accompany him for the rest of his life.

”

RESULTS

Respondent Profiles

Youth leaders

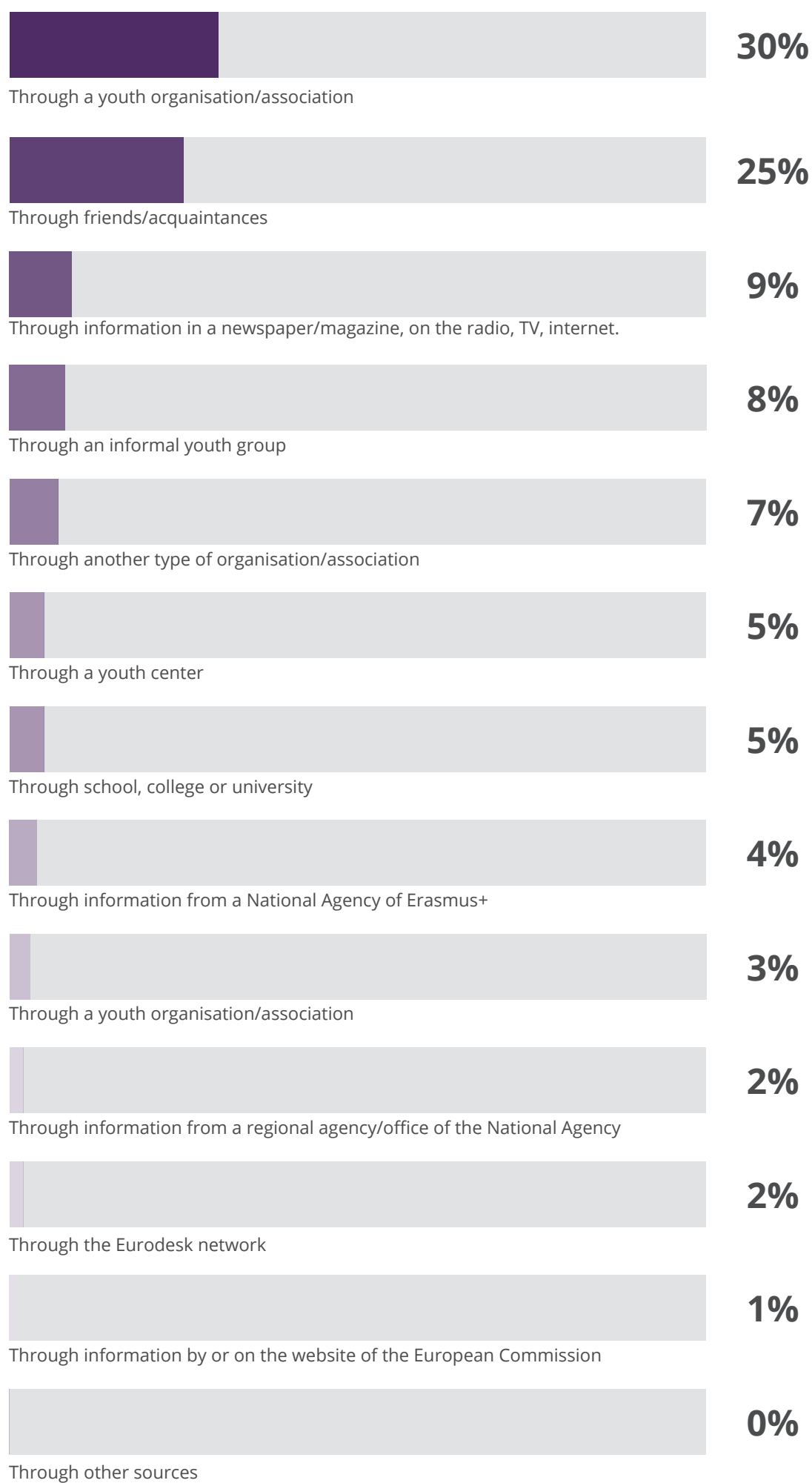
Of the 151 project leaders, 57% (n=87) were female, 41% (n=62) were male and 1% (n=2) identified as other. The leaders were mainly born between mid-80s and mid-90s. The oldest leader was born in 1956 and the youngest in 1998. 70.2% of leaders were required to do a project with young people such as an exchange of groups of young people, 11.92% of leaders were asked to do a project for/with youth workers and/or youth leaders, while 9.93% of leaders were asked to do a European voluntary service project and 7.95% of leaders to do a meeting between young people and those responsible for youth policy.

Among the project leaders, 18% of the leaders are immigrants, 18% belong to a cultural, ethnic, religious or linguistic minority that always lived in the country they are, 18% of them belong to an ethnic or cultural minority, 14% of the leaders belong to a religious minority, 11% of them belong to a linguistic minority, 11% belong to some other minority and 7% of the leaders that answered this question have a migration background (second or third generation - my parents or grandparents were born in another Country).

Participants

Of the 736 participants, 64.95% (n=478) were female, 34.51% (n=254) were male and 0.54% (n=4) identified as others. The participants were mainly born in the 90s, yet there was a wide range of ages with the oldest born in 1950 and the youngest in 2006. Amongst the participants 58% participated in a project with young people such as an exchange of groups of young people, 24% participated in a project for/with youth workers and/or youth leaders, while 6% participated in a European voluntary service project and 5% in a meeting between young people and those responsible for youth policy. A total of 7% reported that they don't know or don't remember. Regarding how participants got to know about the project the most popular response was "Through a youth organization/association" (30%) and the second most popular response was "Through friends/acquaintances" (25) as shown in Figure 1 that follows.

Figure 1: Participants method of knowing about a project

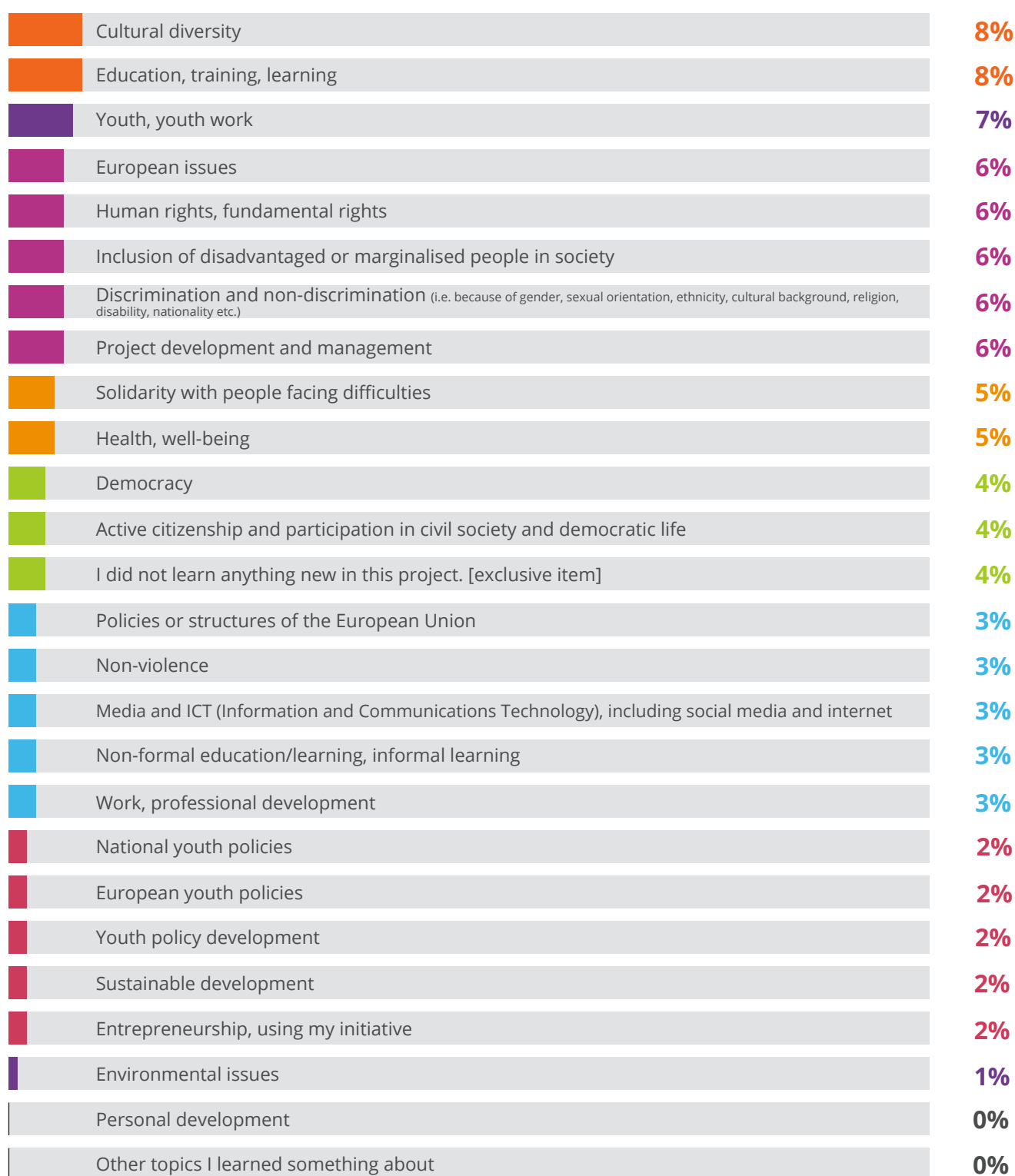


Competence Development

Knowledge Acquisition

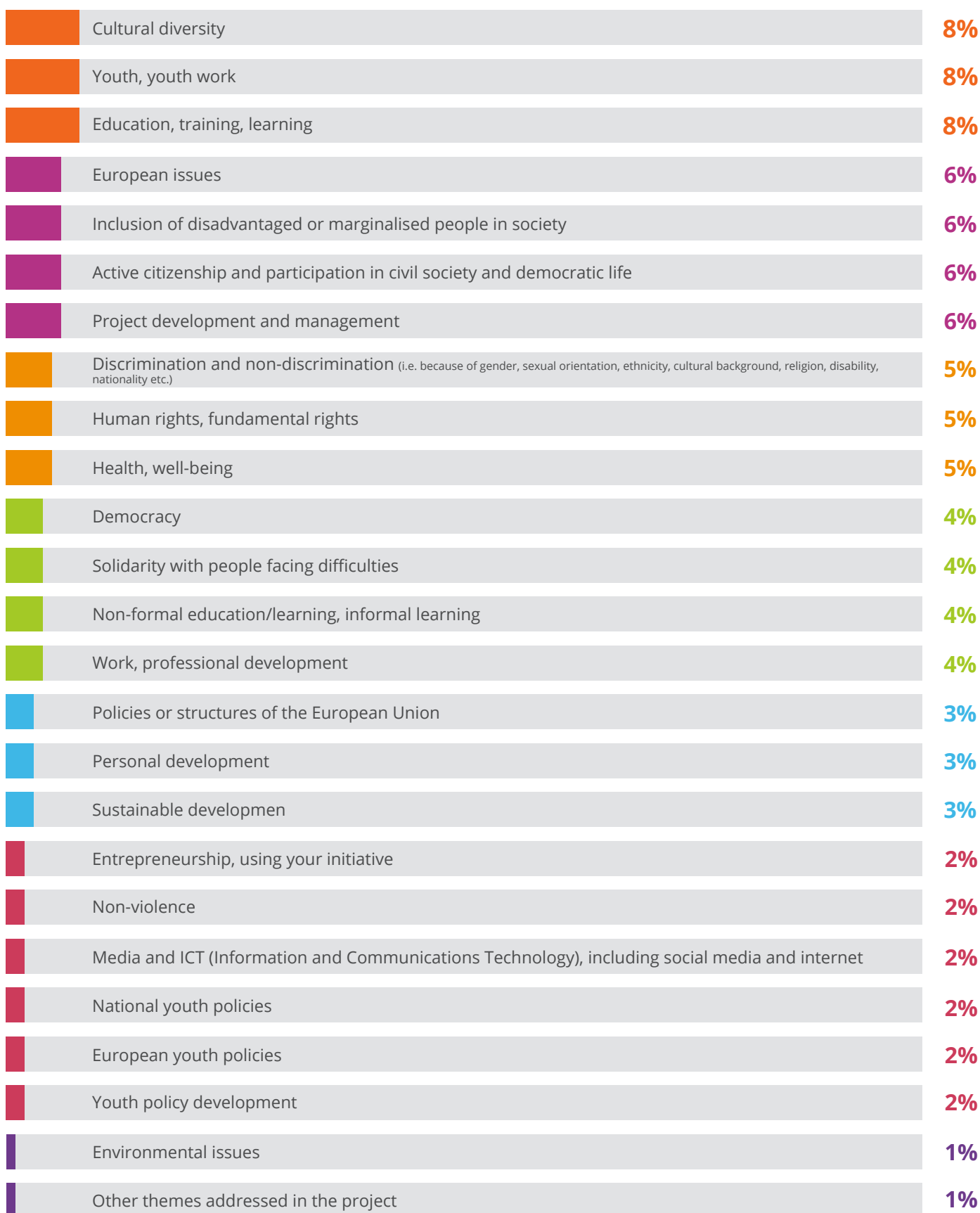
Project participants were asked whether they learned something new through the project ('choose all that apply'). Only 4% of all respondents asserted that they did not learn anything new from this project. The top three choices of participants were 'Education, training, learning' (n=152 responses), 'Cultural diversity' (n=151 responses) and 'Youth, Youth work' (n=135 responses). Table 2 provides an overview of the knowledge acquired by project participants through the project.

Figure 2: Overview of knowledge acquired by project participants through the project



Interestingly the responses by project leaders about the main themes of the project are similar to the responses by project participants about their knowledge acquisition. Project leaders reported that the projects were related to cultural diversity (n=78), the education, training, learning (n=78) and the youth, youth work (n=75).

Figure 3: Overview of knowledge acquired by project leaders through the project



Skills Development

Regarding the skills development both responding project leaders and responding project participants were asked to rate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed to a range of statements regarding their skill development through their participation in the project. The only item that project leaders did not respond was the item 'using smartphones, tablets, notebooks, COMPS, internet, etc.'. Among the responding project participants, 94% ('strongly agree' or 'agree') indicate that they after participating in the project they have improved their skill of cooperating in a team, while equally high values were indicated by the project leaders with 93% strongly agreeing or agreeing on this.

Both groups also similarly reported high values in relation to improvement in their skill of communicating with people who speak another language such that 95% project participants strongly agreed or agreed, and 94% of project leaders strongly agreed or agreed.

Figure 4 demonstrates a full list of the skills developed as rated by project leaders (PL) and project participants (PP).

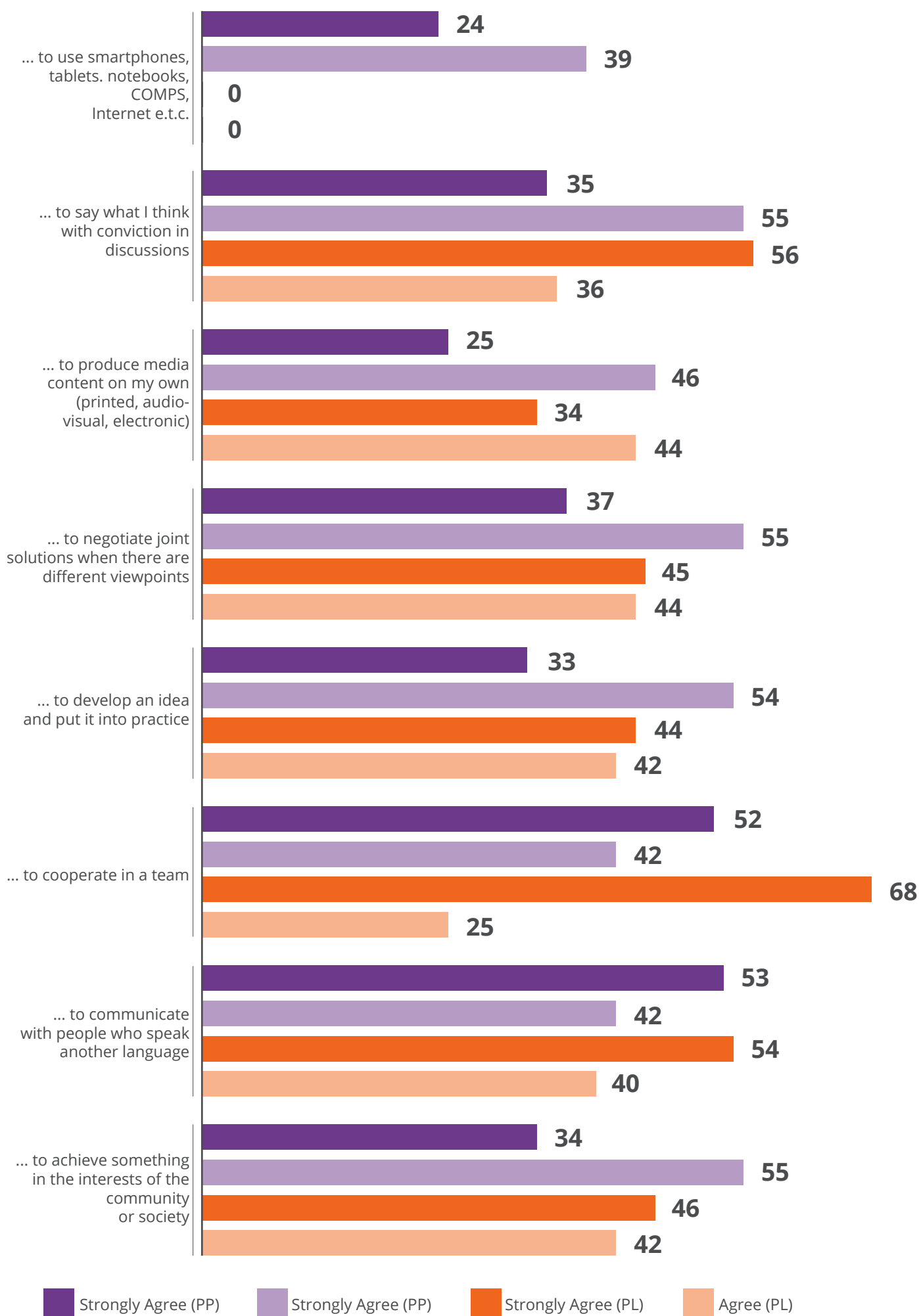
One of the responding project leaders stated that after participation in Erasmus+ programme she has developed skills that she applies in her professional career:

“

I am a more responsible person and I now apply critical thinking in my work. Creativity is an educational and learning method for me now and I can manage my time better.

”

Figure 4: Skill Development of Project Participants (PP) and Project Leaders (PL)



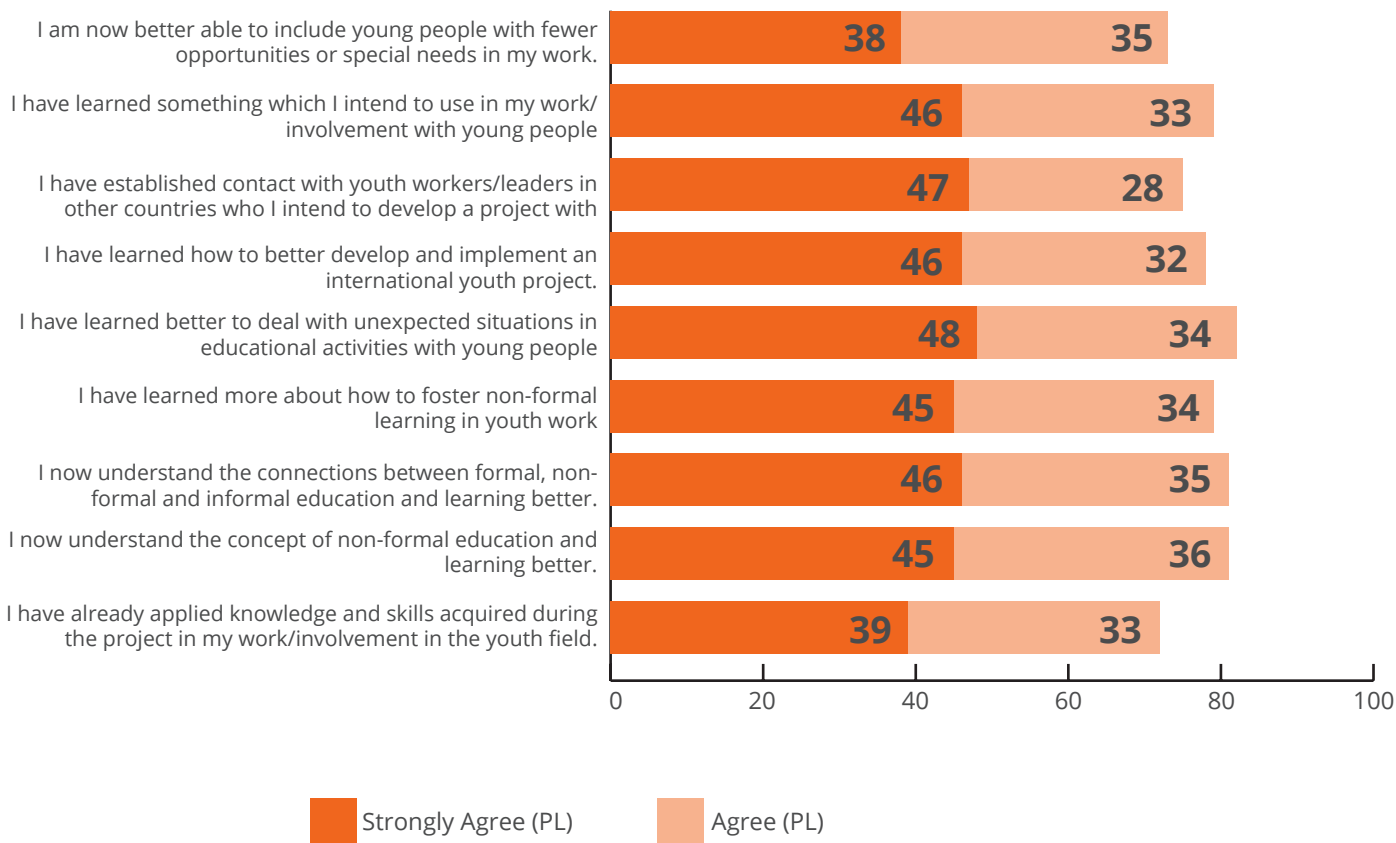
Youth Work Competence

Several questions explored competences of respondents specifically in relation to youth work. Almost all questions were asked to project participants as well as project leaders, allowing for comparisons between the two groups.

Across all aspects of non-formal and informal learning/education, responding project leaders selected predominantly high values when asked whether their competence has been strengthened: 81% ('strongly agree' or 'agree') indicate that they now understand the concept of non-formal education and learning better as well as have a better understanding of the connections between formal, non-formal and informal education and learning. Additionally, 79% ('strongly agree' or 'agree') of responding project leaders indicate that they learned more about how to foster non-formal learning in youth work. Finally, 77% ('strongly agree' or 'agree') of responding project leaders indicate that they have learned more about how to actively involve young people in the preparation and implementation of projects.

Figure 5 demonstrates the full list of youth work competence acquired by the responding project leaders.

Figure 5: Youth Work Competence by Project Leaders



Among the project participants high values were selected in relation to whether they have established contacts with people in other countries, which are useful for their involvement in social and political issues with 76% agreeing or strongly agreeing to this. An 85% ('strongly agree' or 'agree') of responding project participants indicate that they plan to make use of non-formal' education and learning opportunities.

Personal Development

Looking back at the project, 85% ('strongly agree' or 'agree') of responding project participants report that they improved their ability to identify opportunities for their personal or professional development through their participation in the project. With 77% ('strongly agree' or 'agree') the project leaders who assessed that project participants had improved that ability is slightly lower.

In comparison, 82% ('strongly agree' or 'agree') of the responding project leaders indicate that they improved their ability to identify opportunities for their personal or professional development through their involvement in this project. Furthermore 70% ('strongly agree' or 'agree') the responding project leaders indicate that they participate in democratic/political life more than before the project. In terms of knowing their strengths and weaknesses better, 86% of responding project leaders agreed or strongly agreed.

A female project participant stated that her experience in Erasmus+ programme helped her develop as a person in all aspects:

“
*The best thing
I got through
Erasmus +
Programs was
how much it
helped me
to grow as a
human being.*
”

Another project participant stated how her experience of Youth Exchange programmes have enhanced her overall skills and personal development:

“
*I become more openminded
and more social. I enhanced the
teamwork spirit through building
activities. I made friendships and
got closed to people who share
same thoughts but with different
religion, color and nationality.
Breaking stereotypes was the most
important for my self-development.*
”

Overall, 96% ('strongly agree' or 'agree') of responding project participants report that their participation in the project has contributed to their personal development and of them 81% ('strongly agree' or 'agree') report that the project had an impact on their awareness which of their competences they want to develop further. An 80% ('strongly agree' or 'agree') indicated that they learned more about themselves after participating in the project and 78% ('strongly agree' or 'agree') indicate that they know their strengths and weaknesses better. Also, 79% ('strongly agree' or 'agree') of project participants stated that after participating in the project they are more self-confident while 83% ('strongly agree' or 'agree') stated that they are better at dealing with new situations and 74% that they are more self-reliant.

A female project participant who has had extensive experience with Erasmus+ Programmes stated that:

“

I visited 14 countries around Europe and I saved the best things from each one to remember. I got familiar with their culture and gained something from them to use in my life.

In general, the Erasmus + placement program is a unique opportunity to get to know a European country in terms of life and work, and to learn better about yourself. Staying and working in a foreign country for a long period cultivates the confidence and responsibility of the student and youth. I strongly recommend all students and youth to dare to do so, and I am sure they will experience equally significant benefits. Erasmus+ offers a significant budget to all youths in Europe to travel abroad and I am very happy that I had that opportunity. I am sure that as soon as I have the chance, I will take a flight for my next European adventure.

”

87% ('strongly agree' or 'agree') of responding project leaders also indicated that as a result of the project participants are more self-confident while 83% ('strongly agree' or 'agree') indicate that project participants know their strengths and weaknesses better.

On the other hand, 80% ('strongly agree' or 'agree') of responding project leaders indicate their awareness raising in terms of further competence development as a result of the project, representing a slightly lower value than the responding project participants.

Further Educational and Professional Pathways

We explored through a range of questions which impact a project has had on responding project participants and project leaders in relation to their further educational and professional pathways. Responding project participants and project leaders assess further impact based on their participation in the project in the context of their professional development as indicated below in Figure 3. 74% ('strongly agree' or 'agree') of responding project leaders stated that as a result of project participation participants plan to engage in further education and training and 66% ('strongly agree' or 'agree') believe that project participants have a clearer idea about their professional career aspirations and goals.

One of the most noticeable differences was in relation to the question that asked responding participants about whether their chances of getting a job has increased. Overall, 65% ('strongly agree' or 'agree') of responding project participants reported that their chances of getting a job increased compared to 76% ('strongly agree' or 'agree') of responding project leaders.

A young female participant stated that after participating in Erasmus+ programmes she developed her academic skills in her field of study:

“

I was able to get to know new countries, cultures, people and at the same time train both in my field of study and on various social issues that concern young people in Europe.

”

Similarly, another project participant stated that the skills developed during her Erasmus+ internship were job-related skills such as:

“

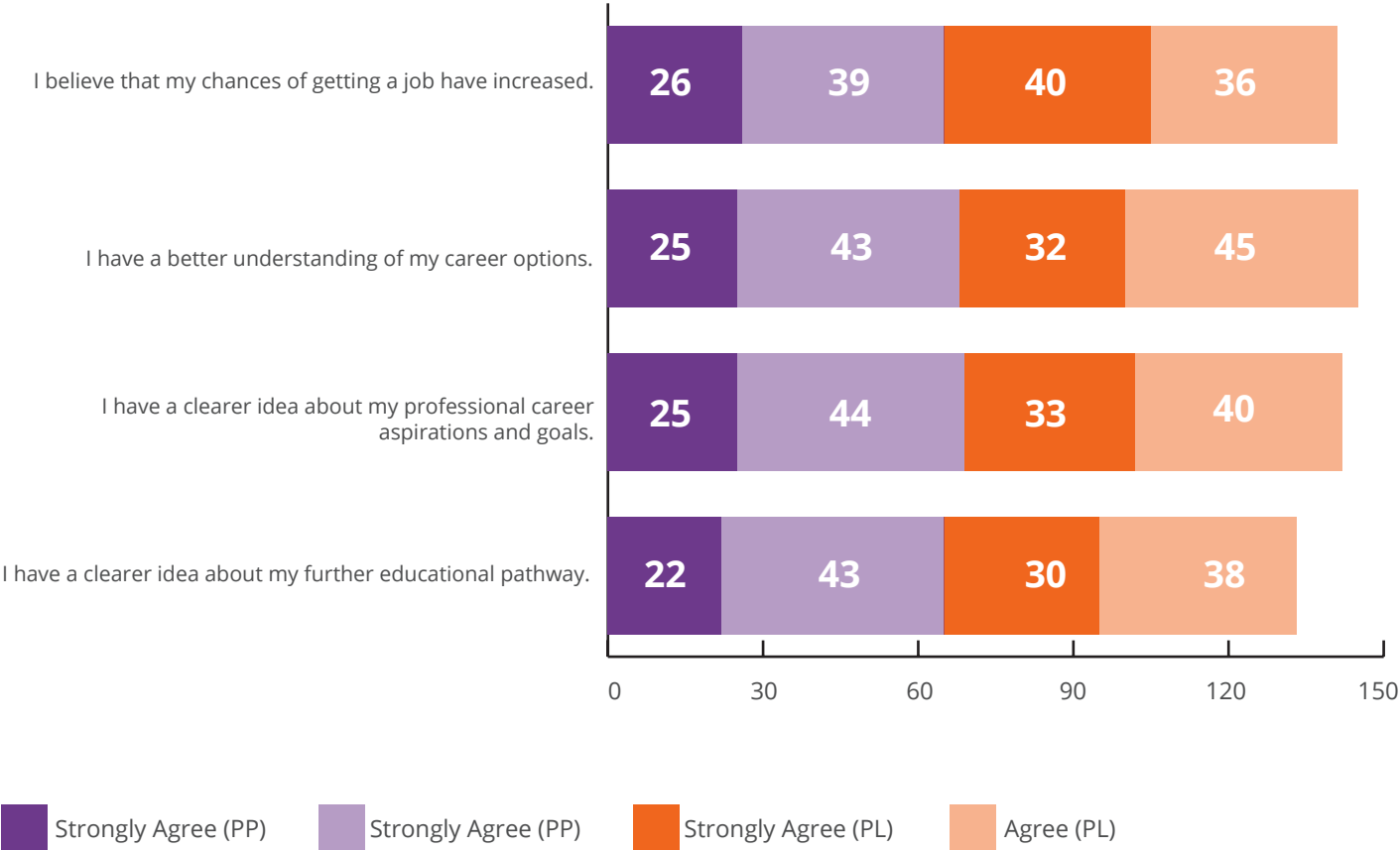
Research skills, technical and analytical skills...I improved my English and now have an EU-wide understanding of the technical jargon of the Civil Engineering Profession.

”

Interestingly while 65% of responding project participants agreed or strongly agreed that their chances of getting a job increased, 68% of the responding project leaders also agreed or strongly agreed that as a result of the project participants believe that their job chances have increased.

Figure 6 shows the effects on pathways of project participants and project leaders.

Figure 6: Effects on pathways of project participants and project leaders



Participation and Active Citizenship

Skills Development on Citizenship & Participation

The questions for project participants regarding the development of key competences for lifelong learning include skills which could be answered from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Three of these skills are directly related to participation and citizenship:

- 94% ('strongly agree' or 'agree') of responding project participants and 90% ('strongly agree' or 'agree') of responding project leaders indicate that after participation in the project they have improved their skill of getting along with people who have a different cultural background.
- 89% ('strongly agree' or 'agree') of responding project participants and 88% ('strongly agree' or 'agree') of responding project leaders indicate that after participation in the project they have improved their skill of achieving something in the interests of the community or society.
- 65% ('strongly agree' or 'agree') of project participants and 68% ('strongly agree' or 'agree') of responding project leaders indicate that after participation in the project they have improved their skill of discussing political topics seriously.

One of the female project participants stated the following:

“

Through the Erasmus + Programs I developed communication skills as I needed to reach out to other people and exchange views on a specific topic that we were invited to discuss in groups and in general in each country. By travelling abroad, I have also learned how to solve problems and this has made me very independent / responsible and more confident in my abilities. In addition, I have developed knowledge on citizenship and participation related to aspects of the European Union that were previously unknown to me.

”

Knowledge Acquisition regarding Citizenship and Participation

The question regarding knowledge acquisition through project participation included items of which some related directly or indirectly to participation and citizenship. 72% ('strongly agree' or 'agree') of responding project leaders indicated that they know more about the content of youth policies at the European level and 80% ('strongly agree' or 'agree') indicated that they now better understand how to contribute to youth policy development. 56% of the project leaders also indicated that after their participation in the project they are interested in contributing to youth policy development more than before the project.

Also, 87% ('strongly agree' or 'agree') of the responding project leaders indicated that the project contributed to the promotion of young people's active citizenship, in particular their participation in civil society and democratic/political life. Similarly, 89% ('strongly agree' or 'agree') of responding project leaders indicated that the project contributed to the promotion of European citizenship, in particular by fostering young people's awareness of European issues and that they are citizens of Europe.

Values regarding Citizenship and Participation

The question regarding values included several citizenship values; the responses indicate whether each citizenship value became more important, less important or remained the same after participation in the project.

Increases above 50% for the responding project participants were reported for human rights, non-violence, individual freedom, democracy, peace, self-fulfilment, equality, solidarity with people facing difficulties, health and well-being and tolerance. Around 4% of the participants indicate that these values became less important; all others indicate no change.

One of the project participants who took part in eight Erasmus+ project stated that the following values have become more important in his life:

“
*Being open-minded, accepting
and embracing diversity.*
”

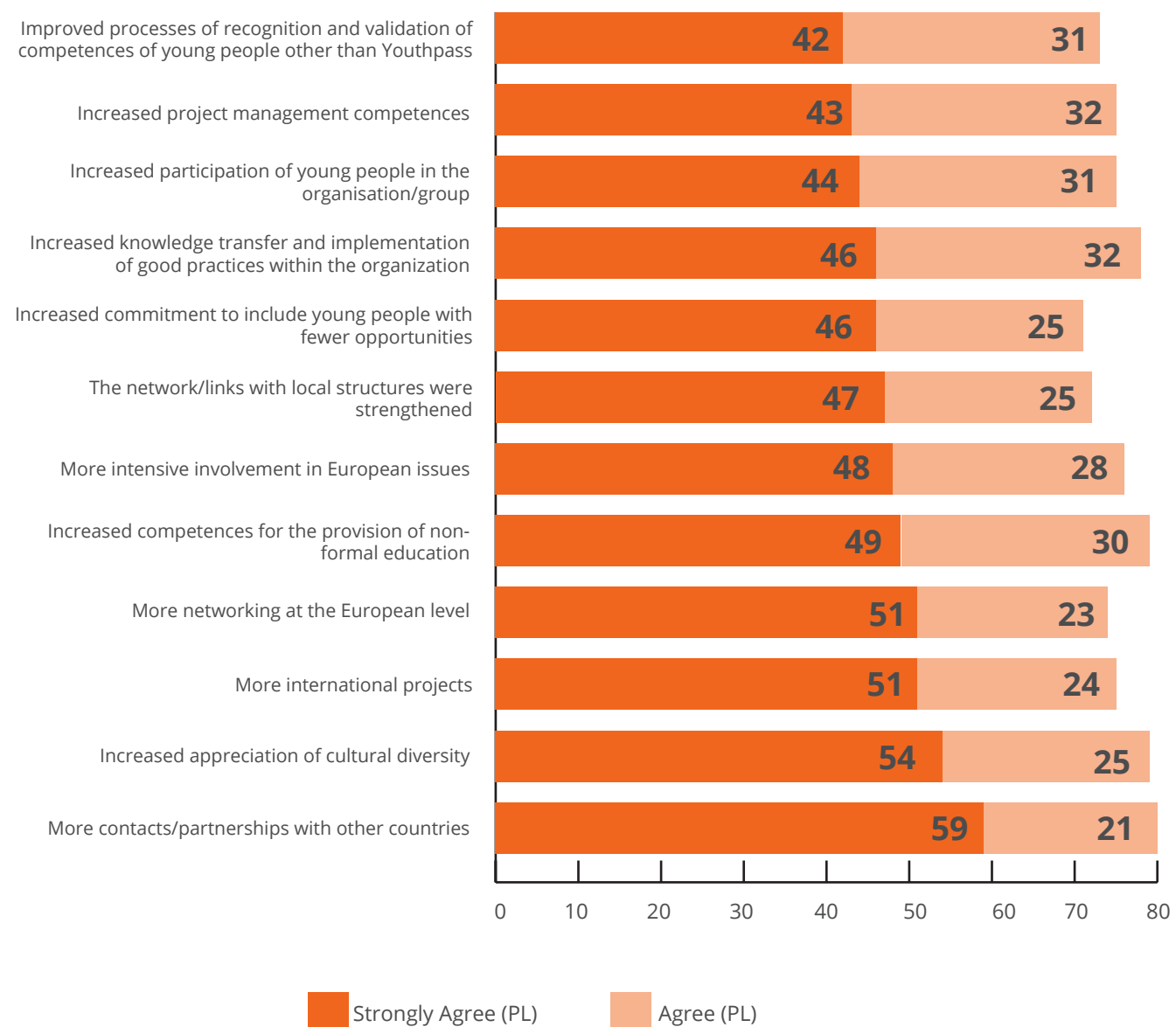
57% of the responding project leaders indicated that they are committed to working against discrimination, intolerance, xenophobia or racism more than before the project and 86% ('strongly agree' or 'agree') indicated that the project contributed to the key objective of the Erasmus+ Programme to work against discrimination, intolerance, racism and xenophobia.

Citizenship and Participation in Organisations

Responding project leaders were asked about the impact of their participation on their organisation. The most highly valued impact was that of having more contacts/partnerships with other countries with 89% of responding project leaders either agreeing or strongly agreeing. It was also indicated that organisations were more keen on increasing participation of young people in the organisation/group (75% 'strongly agree' or 'agree'), including young people with fewer opportunities (71% 'strongly agree' or 'agree'), and having more involvement in European issues (76% 'strongly agree' or 'agree').

Figure 7 indicates the project leaders' responses to the rest of the items.

Figure 7: Project leaders' response of project impact on organisation



Citizenship and Participation in Local Communities

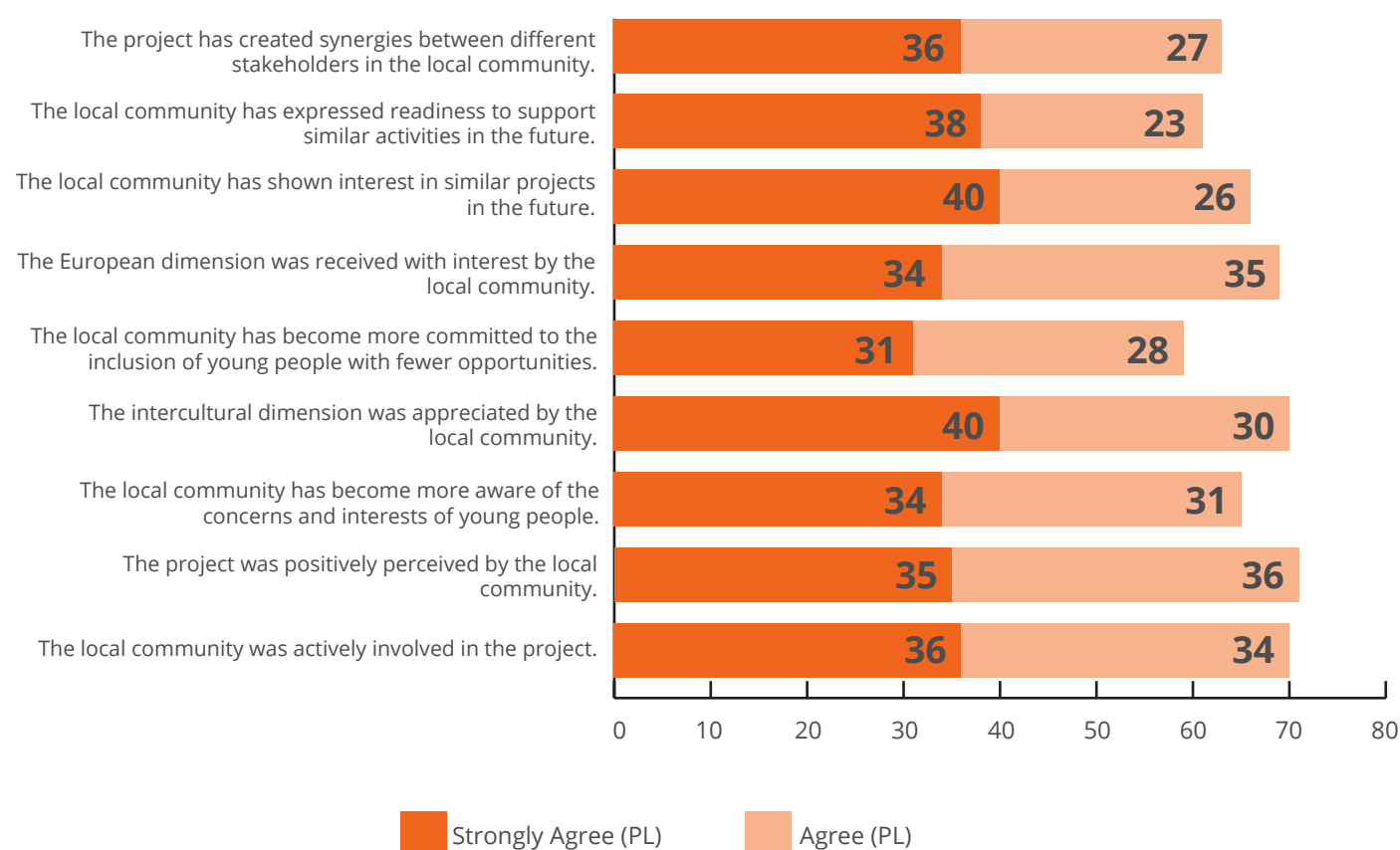
Project leaders were asked about the effects of the project on local communities in which it was carried out. Some of these items are related to participation and citizenship.

For instance:

- 70% of the responding project leaders ('strongly agree' or 'agree') indicated that the local community appreciated the intercultural dimension.
- Similarly, 70% of the responding project leaders ('strongly agree' or 'agree') indicated that the local community was actively involved in the project.
- 61% of the responding project leaders ('strongly agree' or 'agree') also indicated that the local community showed readiness to support similar activities in the future.

Figure 8 shows the full impact on communities according to the responding project leaders.

Figure 8: Impact on communities according to project leaders



CONCLUSIONS

To improve the level of key competences and skills of young people, through learning mobility opportunities is one of the key youth-oriented objectives of the Erasmus+ programme. Our research findings indicate that this is fulfilled as the development of key competences and skills is high both for project leaders and project participants. It was clear that for both groups the improvement in skills was highly agreed upon with 94% ('strongly agree' or 'agree') of project participants and 93% ('strongly agree' or 'agree') of project leaders indicating that after participating in the project they have improved their skill of cooperating in a team. Both groups also similarly reported high values in relation to improvement in their skill of communicating with people who speak another language such that 95% project participants strongly agreed or agreed, and 94% of project leaders strongly agreed or agreed.

Furthermore, project participants were positively impacted in terms of their personal development given that they stated large improvements in self-confidence (79%), self-reliance (74%) and dealing with new situations (83%) after their participation in the project.

To promote active citizenship and participation in democratic life in Europe is another key aim of the Erasmus+ Programme. Our research shows that 94% ('strongly agree' or 'agree') of responding project participants and 90% ('strongly agree' or 'agree') of responding project leaders indicate that after participation in the project they have improved their skill of getting along with people who have a different cultural background. 89% ('strongly agree' or 'agree') of responding project participants and 88% ('strongly agree' or 'agree') of responding project leaders indicate that after participation in the project they have improved their skill of achieving something in the interests of the community or society. 65% ('strongly agree' or 'agree') of project participants and 68% ('strongly agree' or 'agree') of responding project leaders indicate that after participation in the project they have improved their skill of discussing political topics seriously.

Increases above 50% for the responding project participants were reported for human rights, non-violence, individual freedom, democracy, peace, self-fulfilment, equality, solidarity with people facing difficulties, health and well-being and tolerance. Around 4% of the participants indicate that these values became less important; all others indicate no change.

A related outcome is that organisations became more open regarding the participation of young people, the inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities and the involvement in European issues.

To promote young people's active citizenship, specifically their participation in civil society and democratic/political life is yet another key objective of the Erasmus+ Programme and this was supported by the responses from the project leaders. The responding project leaders (87%) indicated that the project contributed to the promotion of young people's active citizenship, specifically their participation in civil society and democratic/political life. Another key objective of the Erasmus+ Programme that was supported by the project leaders (89%) indicated that the project contributed to the promotion of European citizenship, specifically by fostering young people's awareness of European issues and that they are citizens of Europe.

