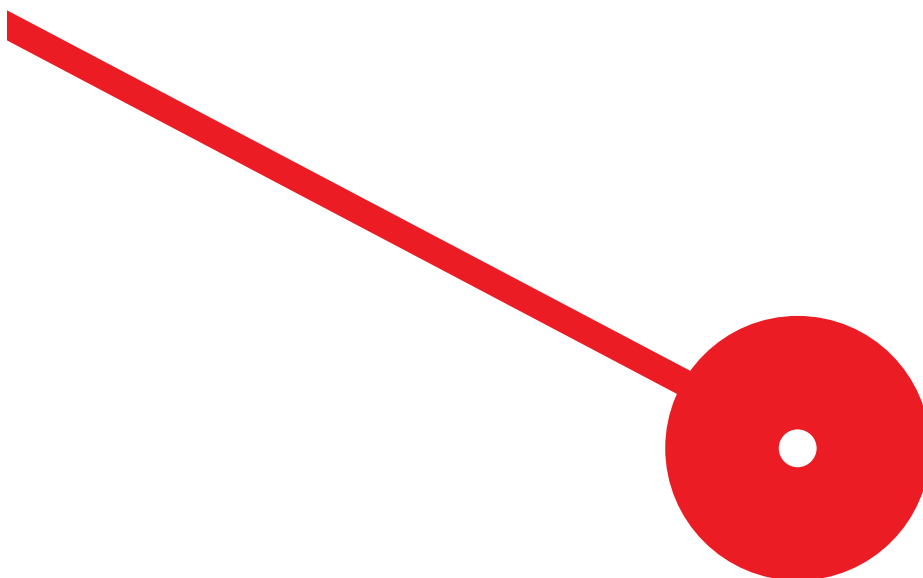




# Bridging the Gap: The Role of Non-Formal Education in Enhancing Youth Employability

Inês Ferreira Rodrigues

10/2024

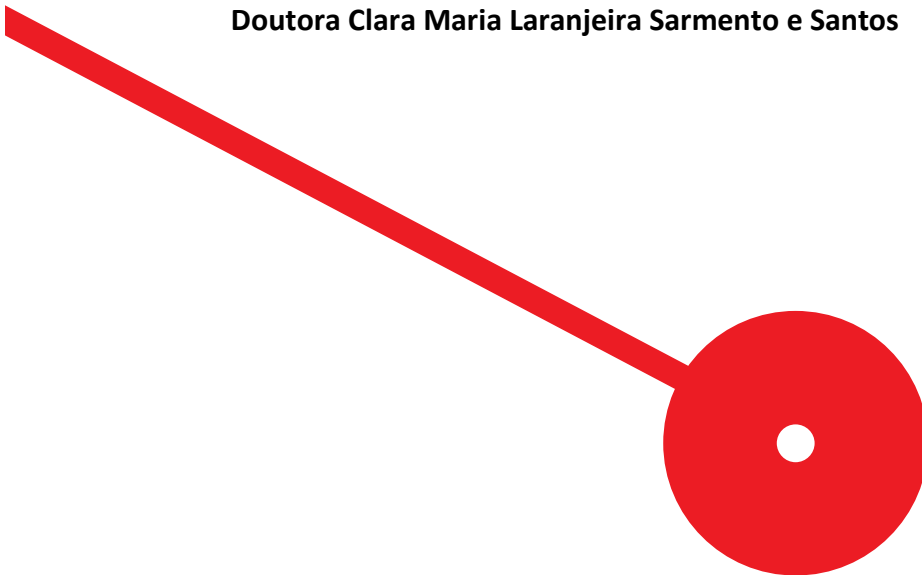




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Inês Ferreira Rodrigues

Dissertação de Mestrado apresentada ao Instituto Superior de  
Contabilidade e Administração do Porto para a obtenção do grau de  
Mestre em Intercultural Studies for Business, sob orientação de  
Doutora Clara Maria Laranjeira Sarmento e Santos



Para o meu avô Carlos, que me ensinou o valor das palavras.  
Até que a poesia nos volte a encontrar um dia.

*“Então, ó ser sublime, o mundo inteiro é teu!  
Já dominaste os reis, os tempos, os espaços!...  
Mas, ainda para além, um novo sol rompeu,  
Abrindo o infinito ao rumo dos teus passos.  
Pairando numa esfera acima deste plano,  
Sem receares jamais que os erros te retomem,  
Quando já nada houver em ti que seja humano,  
Alegra-te, meu filho, então serás um homem!”*

- “Se” de Rudyard Kipling. Tradução de Félix Bermudes

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Ao curso de Estudos Europeus que é casa AdEternum, e à TFFLUP que me relembra que isto só faz sentido se vivermos AdValorum.

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## **Resumo:**

Esta dissertação explora o papel da Educação Não Formal (ENF) na melhoria da empregabilidade jovem, com um foco especial no estudo de caso do Parlamento Europeu de Jovens (PEJ) Portugal. Num mercado de trabalho global em constante evolução, os empregadores exigem cada vez mais não apenas conhecimentos técnicos, mas também competências interpessoais, tais como comunicação, trabalho em equipa, liderança e capacidade de adaptação. No entanto, atualmente os sistemas de educação formal não desenvolvem adequadamente estas competências. A ENF, especialmente através de organizações juvenis como o PEJ, tem-se afirmado como um complemento essencial à educação formal, oferecendo oportunidades de aprendizagem experiencial que promovem tanto a empregabilidade como a competência intercultural.

Utilizando uma abordagem de métodos mistos, este estudo analisou formulários de feedback, inquéritos e entrevistas com empregadores. Os resultados demonstram que a participação no PEJ contribui significativamente para o desenvolvimento de competências de empregabilidade, principalmente em relação a competências interpessoais e à capacidade de trabalhar em ambientes multiculturais. Além disso, as atividades do PEJ promovem a cidadania ativa, incentivando os jovens a envolverem-se mais nas suas comunidades e a assumirem papéis de liderança.

Este estudo contribui para o crescente corpo de literatura sobre ENF, fornecendo novas visões sobre como as organizações juvenis podem colmatar a lacuna entre a educação formal e as competências práticas exigidas pelo mercado de trabalho moderno. Também destaca o potencial de integração da ENF nas estratégias nacionais e europeias de empregabilidade jovem. A investigação conclui com recomendações para o desenvolvimento e reconhecimento da ENF, bem como sugestões para estudos futuros sobre os impactos a longo prazo da ENF na empregabilidade dos jovens.

**Palavras-chave:** Educação Não-Formal, Empregabilidade Jovem, Competências Interpessoais, Cidadania Ativa

**Abstract:**

This thesis explores the role of Non-Formal Education (NFE) in enhancing youth employability, focusing on the case study of the European Youth Parliament (EYP) Portugal. In an evolving global labour market, employers increasingly demand not only technical expertise but also soft skills such as communication, teamwork, leadership, and adaptability. However, traditional education systems often fall short of developing these competences. NFE, particularly through youth organisations like EYP, has emerged as a critical complement to formal education, offering experiential learning opportunities that foster both employability and intercultural competence.

Using a mixed-methods approach, this study analysed feedback forms, surveys, and interviews with employers. The findings demonstrate that participation in EYP significantly contributes to the development of employability skills, with a particular focus on soft skills and the ability to work across cultures. Furthermore, EYP's activities also promote active citizenship, encouraging young people to become more engaged in their communities and take on leadership roles.

The study contributes to the growing body of literature on NFE by providing new empirical insights into how youth organisations can bridge the gap between formal education and the practical skills required by the modern labour market. It also highlights the potential for integrating NFE into national and European youth employment strategies. The research concludes by offering recommendations for further development and recognition of NFE and suggestions for future studies on the long-term impacts of NFE on youth employability.

**Key words:** Non-Formal Education, Youth Employability, Soft Skills, Active Citizenship

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## **Lista de abreviaturas**

EYP – European Youth Parliament

EYP PT – European Youth Parliament Portugal

AC – Active Citizenship

NFE – Non-formal Education

ICC – Intercultural Competence

## **INTRODUCTION**

---

In today's rapidly changing global economy, young people face significant challenges when transitioning from education to the workforce. The traditional pathways to securing stable jobs have been disrupted by rapid technological advancements, economic uncertainty, and the evolving nature of work. As a result, the skills required to secure stable employment have evolved, and employers increasingly seek candidates who possess not only technical expertise but also a diverse range of soft skills, such as communication, teamwork, leadership, and adaptability. While formal education continues to serve as the foundation for acquiring technical knowledge, it often fails to fully equip young people with the competences required for success in a modern, globalised world. In response to this shortfall, Non-Formal Education (NFE) has emerged as a critical complement to formal education, offering experiential learning opportunities that focus on personal development, civic engagement, and intercultural understanding.

This dissertation will explore the role of NFE in enhancing youth employability, with a particular focus on the European Youth Parliament (EYP) Portugal. As one of the largest youth-led platforms in Europe, EYP provides young people opportunities to engage in civic education, intercultural dialogue, and leadership development through structured activities that incorporate the principles of NFE. This research aims to gather a better understanding on how EYP's program may help participants develop essential soft skills and intercultural competence. By fostering these competences, EYP has the potential not only to prepare young people for employment but also to encourage them to engage as active citizens, contributing to their communities and society at large.

The relevance of this research lies in its potential contribution to the broader discussion on how to address the growing skills gap in the youth labour market. Reports from organisations such as the World Economic Forum and the European Union emphasise the importance of developing non-technical skills to improve employability. However, there is limited research specifically examining how youth organisations, through NFE, contribute to this process. This thesis aims to fill that gap by analysing how participation in EYP Portugal leads to the development of critical employability skills and promotes active citizenship. By exploring the intersection between NFE and employability, this study aims to contribute to the broader understanding of how youth organisations can bridge the gap between formal education and labour market demands.

The structure of this thesis is divided into four chapters, each contributing to a comprehensive understanding of the role of NFE in enhancing youth employability and civic engagement.

The first chapter presents the literature review, which outlines the key theoretical concepts central to this study, including Active Citizenship, NFE, Soft Skills, and Intercultural Competence. The chapter begins by defining and understanding Active Citizenship, exploring how it is promoted through NFE, particularly in the context of youth engagement. This leads to an in-depth exploration of NFE, considering its value, recognition, and growing role as an essential complement to formal education. The flexible and experiential nature of NFE allows it to foster critical competencies, especially soft skills. Soft skills are then defined in this research as complementary to formal education, but highly dependent on context. The chapter also examines the concept of Intercultural Competence (ICC), reviewing key theoretical models associated with it and exploring how ICC can be developed and assessed through non-formal learning environments. This structured approach provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the interconnectedness of these concepts and their relevance to the overall research.

The second chapter focuses on the European Youth Parliament (EYP) and is divided into two parts. The first part provides an overview of EYP as an international network, tracing its history, relevance, and evolution since the original idea. This section examines EYP's mission, vision, and values, as well as its organisational structure, events, and core components of its educational model. The second part shifts to a closer examination of the Portuguese branch of EYP, presenting the specific activities, challenges, and opportunities it faces. This section also includes a reflection on my personal experience within EYP Portugal, offering insights into how these experiences inform the later interpretation of results and contribute to a deeper understanding of the organisation's impact on youth development in the Portuguese context.

The third chapter presents the results of the research, offering a detailed analysis of the data collected through feedback forms, surveys, and interviews through a mixed-methods approach. Each research question is addressed individually, allowing for a clear and direct presentation of the findings. This structured approach examines how participation in EYP Portugal has contributed to the development of key employability skills. The chapter also evaluates the extent to which participants have developed intercultural competence and

assesses how EYP's NFE model prepares participants to engage as active citizens, capable of leading initiatives and contributing meaningfully to society. Importantly, this chapter is focused solely on presenting the gathered data without interpretation or analysis, which will follow in the subsequent chapter.

The fourth chapter refers to the discussion, where the results from the previous chapter are now interpreted and analysed in relation to the broader theoretical framework and research objectives. Here, each research question is revisited to ensure a smooth flow of discussion between topics. The chapter reflects on the implications of the findings for youth employability, highlighting how NFE should be recognised as an essential component of youth employment strategies. Additionally, the chapter considers the potential for youth organisations like EYP to further expand their impact by refining and developing their non-formal educational models. The chapter concludes by offering recommendations for future research and practical suggestions to enhance the role of NFE in fostering both employability and active citizenship among young people.

By focusing on the case study of EYP Portugal, this thesis aims to contribute to the growing body of research on the impact of non-formal education on youth development, particularly in relation to employability and active citizenship. It seeks to provide valuable insights into how non-formal learning environments may help bridge the gap between academic qualifications and the practical skills required for success in the modern labour market, while fostering a sense of civic responsibility and engagement among young people. Ultimately, this study intends to highlight the importance of supporting and expanding the role of NFE within educational and employment policies at both national and European levels.

## CHAPTER I – LITERATURE REVIEW

---

The engagement of young people in youth organisations offers profound insights into the skills they cultivate and how these influence their personal and professional lives. This literature review explores four major themes that consistently emerge across scholarly discussions: Active Citizenship, Non-formal Education, Soft Skills and Intercultural Competence. These concepts are interdependent and intricately connected in the context of this investigation, forming the backbone of the research. To clarify their relationship, a clear structured approach is adopted.

At the heart of this literature review is Active Citizenship, highlighting the role of youth involvement in community development. Active Citizenship is not just about participating; it is about having the drive and capability to transform ideas into action and contribute meaningfully to society.

Education plays a crucial part in fostering Active Citizenship, with non-formal education (NFE) emerging as a key enhancer of youth employability. NFE provides flexible, experiential learning opportunities that are instrumental in developing practical skills. A central focus of this review relies on how NFE facilitates the acquisition of Soft Skills, which are indispensable in today's dynamic, interconnected world.

Soft Skills have become essential in a rapidly evolving global landscape. These skills are foundational to professional success and personal growth, enabling individuals to navigate complex and changing environments. From adaptability to communication, from teamwork to leadership, soft skills serve as cornerstones of effective engagement and performance.

Furthermore, this review explores how NFE not only supports the development of soft skills but also fosters Intercultural Competence. In an increasingly globalised society, the ability to understand and engage across cultures is crucial. Intercultural Competence enhances our capacity to connect with others, bridging cultural gaps and enriching our interactions.

The present literature review integrates the topics of Active Citizenship, Non-formal Education, Soft Skills and Intercultural Competence, offering a comprehensive understanding of how youth engagement in organisations shapes their development and future prospects.

## 1.1 Active Citizenship

In ancient Athens, Aristotle walked the streets, observing the daily life of the city-state. He saw citizens debating at the agora, gathering in assemblies, and taking part in public life. For him, this active engagement in civic life was the essence of what it meant to be a citizen.

Aristotle's reflections on citizenship were insightful and far-reaching. He understood that true citizenship went beyond residency or legal status. It was about being actively involved in the improvement of the community. For Aristotle, active participation in public duties was both a privilege and a responsibility that developed personal ethics and contributed to the well-being of society as a whole (Do, 2022: 31-35).

These principles of active citizenship have evolved significantly over time. Indeed, the classical notion of citizenship as being connected with active engagement in political and civic duties was important in laying the foundation for democratic practices. From Enlightenment philosophers such as John Locke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who emphasised the role of individual rights and social action (Do, 2023: 307-311), to the 20th-century Universal Declaration of Human Rights that brought a new dimension to participation and engagement with global issues, the methods and contexts of participation continue to change (Brown, 2016: 2).

Nonetheless, active citizenship (AC) remains as relevant as ever, with contemporary discussions about AC constantly developing throughout the last decades (Enchikova et al., 2021: 10). Notably, the role of youth in active citizenship has gained particular attention, with governments and global institutions recognising the importance of youth engagement in addressing today's challenges and shaping a better future. Research and experience have shown that young people worldwide have taken central roles in social action, leading social movements and claiming their rightful seats at decision-making tables (International Association for Volunteer Effort, 2022: 10). This capacity for meaningful engagement in social, political and moral behaviour, with its rights and responsibilities, suggests an active component of citizenship (Wood, 2009: 27) and introduces new cultural and social dimensions to the concept (European Youth Forum, 2016: 20).

### **1.1.1 Defining Active Citizenship**

Active Citizenship is a complex and contested notion, with its meaning varying according to the context (Menezes, 2003: 431). Hoskins (2006: 10) defines active citizenship as “participation in civil society, community and/or political life, characterised by mutual respect and non-violence and in accordance with human rights and democracy”.

This definition encompasses a broad range of participatory activities in civil society, implying that individuals engage in societal and political processes in ways that uphold the dignity and rights of all members of the community, fostering an environment of collaboration and peace. This concept is “fundamentally about engagement and participation” (Nelson and Kerr, 2006: 4), manifested through volunteering, engagement with public services and democratic participation (Wood, 2009: 27-28).

Participation can take many forms, but it can be identified through two main components: action and knowledge. As Crick (2007: 235–248) asserts, performing charitable work makes one a good citizen, but not necessarily an active one. For citizenship to be truly active, individuals must also understand why these actions are necessary, which involves awareness of societal issues. Focusing on both action and knowledge ensures that citizens are not only participating but also “willing, able and equipped to have an influence in public life and with the critical capacities to weigh evidence before speaking and acting” (DfEE/QCA, 1998: 7).

This multifaceted nature of AC has led to various attempts to organise its conceptual framework. One of these efforts is the Active Citizenship Composite Indicator, proposed by Hoskins and Mascherini (2008: 464-468), which depicts AC into four operational dimensions: Protest and Social Change, Community Life, Representative Democracy and Democratic Values.

The first dimension, Protest and Social Change, refers to action-orientated participation and captures activities advocating societal transformation. These include protests, demonstrations, social movements, petitions, boycotts, and other forms of activism. This dimension also encompasses participation or volunteering in activities of civil society organisations working towards government accountability and positive social change. It highlights the role of citizens in challenging the status quo and pushing for progressive changes.

Community Life introduces the aspect of community as central to the concept of citizenship. It includes active participation that supports a community and contributes to its development. From formal engagements such as volunteering or participating in cultural or religious organisations to more informal activities such as helping neighbours, the focus is on building social capital and fostering a sense of belonging within the community.

Representative Democracy, as the third dimension, relates to participation in political life, specifically through the conventional participation available in representative democracy, which focuses on political processes and institutions. This includes voting in elections, engaging with political parties and their representatives, and getting involved in policy-making processes. This dimension underscores the significance of citizen's roles in shaping and influencing political decisions and policies through democratic means, where formal political engagement in active citizenship is essential.

Finally, Democratic Values pertain to the promotion of fundamental democratic principles and human rights. Recognising that political participation alone is not necessarily beneficial for a democratic society that assures human rights, this dimension measures the values that positively drive societies. This includes fostering tolerance, equity, justice, and respect for diversity, emphasising the moral and ethical aspects of active citizenship.

These four dimensions collectively provide a comprehensive framework for understanding AC. From formal to informal ways of participation, they capture how individuals can contribute to the functioning and improvement of society. However, despite the clear pathways for engagement outlined by these, numerous challenges and barriers can hinder individuals from fully participating as active citizens.

### **1.1.2 Barriers to Active Citizenship**

A study on The Active Citizenship Footprint by Volonteuropa (2018: 19-21) conducted a survey to identify the factors that constitute a significant barrier to active citizenship. The main takeaways from the survey data can be sorted into the following categories:

### **1.1.2.1 Democratic Processes and Transparency**

The most cited barriers were related to democracy, particularly to values such as free elections and freedom of speech, as well as the accessibility of information from public institutions. A lack of these elements can significantly hinder active citizenship, as it reduces trust and engagement in political processes, and transparency and accountability are crucial to fostering this sense of trust and willingness to participate. Norris (2011) discusses the notion of democratic deficit, which “first arose in debates about the legitimacy of the European Union”, as “the core decision-making institutions in the EU have been regarded by some commentators as falling well short of the standards of democratic accountability and transparency that exist at the national level within each of the member states.”

### **1.1.2.2 Access to Information and Free Time**

Another major barrier identified was the availability of information on opportunities for engagement and the availability of free time. Respondents indicated that they often do not know how to get involved or do not have the time to participate due to other commitments. This aligns with the perspective that individuals lack the necessary time to engage in the community, which affects their motivation to participate (Kwek, 2023: 18-19).

### **1.1.2.3 Community and Family Networks**

The level of connectedness to community and family, as well as the presence of role models, are also regarded as key factors. In a world where social connectedness and a sense of belonging are considered basic human needs, participation in meaningful daily life activities becomes an important mechanism for fostering these connections. A lack of social connectedness and support can significantly limit individuals' sense of belonging. This is because individuals' engagements are influenced by community values and may be hindered by the meaning that the community attributes to the occupations and feedback provided by others (Haim-Litevsky et al., 2023: 3-4).

### **1.1.2.4 Individual Attitudes**

The levels of egoism or altruism are crucial factors that affect engagement in active citizenship. Individuals with more altruistic attitudes are generally more likely to engage in civic activities, whereas a high level of egoism may act as a barrier. According to Dang

et al. (2022: 1741), egoism and altruism serve as moderating variables. Egoism negatively influences the effect of civic responsibility and intention, while altruism is viewed in a positive light that relates to appreciation and a sense of connection to others.

#### **1.1.2.5 Socioeconomic Status and Education**

Socioeconomic status and educational attainment, including citizenship education, are also important barriers to active citizenship. Individuals with lower socioeconomic status or educational levels often face significant obstacles to participation, such as limited resources and a lack of civic knowledge and opportunities. The link between socioeconomic inequality and civic engagement is explained through theories of social integration and structure. These theories suggest that resource inequalities increase social distance, social disorganisation and segregation, ultimately undermining the social integration of a community by creating parallel social differences (Schröder & Neumayr, 2021: 680).

Addressing these barriers is of utmost importance, as active citizenship has a profound impact on society. Understanding and mitigating challenges enables individuals to harness the positive effects of active citizenship, empowering them to meaningfully contribute to their communities and society at large.

This is particularly relevant in the European context, where active citizenship has been recognised as a key element in fostering a more united and democratic Europe. The term Active Citizenship was first used during the development of proposals for the European Commission's Lisbon 2010 Strategy (European Council, 2000), where it was described as a way of empowering citizens to be "the architects and actors of their own lives" (European Commission, 1998: 11). Later, Edith Cresson, the then Commissioner on Education, Research and Science, incorporated AC into the European education and training work programme, promoting its integration into educational policies and initiatives.

## **1.2 Non-Formal Education**

The promotion of Active Citizenship within the European programme highlights the critical role of education in fostering civic engagement. Recognising that traditional formal education alone cannot fully develop the competencies required for active

citizenship, it becomes essential to explore the broader educational landscape. This includes Non-formal Education (NFE), which complements formal education by providing practical, experiential learning opportunities that encourage civic participation.

### 1.2.1 Formal, Non-formal and Informal Education

To better understand the full impact of NFE on AC, we will follow the conceptual framework suggested by La-Belle (1981, 1982) which introduces the educational system as tripartite: formal education, non-formal education and informal education. La-Belle builds on previous research from Coombs and Ahmed (1974: 8), who offer the most widely used definitions of these concepts:

Formal education is the “highly institutionalised, chronologically graded and hierarchically structured education system, spanning lower primary school and the upper reaches of the university”

Non-formal education is “any organised, systematic, educational activity carried on outside the framework of the formal system to provide selected types of learning to particular subgroups in the population, adults as well as children”

Informal education is “the lifelong process by which every person acquires and accumulates knowledge, skills, attitudes and insights from daily experiences and exposure to the environment” (Coombs and Ahmed, 1974: 8)

This tripartite scheme outlines a common, linear approach to the educational landscape. As developed by Pinto (2007: 49-50) we can represent these categories as follows:

Formal Education	Non-formal Education	Informal Education
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The author further defines these concepts, with formal education, on the left, representing the most “marked, defined and perhaps rigid expression of the educational process”. Opposite to this, on the right, is informal education, the most “free and spontaneous expression of the educational dynamic, the one that happens through everyday life experiences, in interaction with others”. In the centre lies non-formal education, considered a middle ground term, which practises “while not adhering to the constraints

of the formal education system, are nevertheless structured, organised and guided, thus distinguishing themselves from informal education” Pinto (2007: 49-50).

However, Pinto (2007: 49-50) suggests a new representation of this educational universe:

Formal Education	Informal Education
Non-formal Education	

In this new representation, the left side encompasses “organised and systematic” education, while the right side represents informal learning, which is spontaneous and not necessarily organised. These two axes - vertical and horizontal - illustrate the more debated boundaries between formal, non-formal and informal education, with the discussion centring on the criteria that define these boundaries.

Among these, non-formal education stands out as one of the most extensively discussed concepts within the educational sphere. As Rogers (2004: 3) observes, “It is possible that no other educational programme or ideology had received such intensive discussion and such widespread support”. This focus of NFE arises from the recognition that education “cannot be considered as a product limited in time and space, confined to schools and measured by years of attendance” (Vasquez, 1998: 11). On the contrary, it is this capacity to learn through experience that underscores the importance of NFE as a complement to formal education. In a society where continuous learning and personal development are expected throughout one’s life, NFE plays a crucial role in meeting these expectations (Cavaco, 2002: 27-28).

### **1.2.2 Exploring Non-formal Education**

Having explored the definition of NFE compared to other forms of education, it is relevant to specify the definition that will guide this study. For this purpose, we will adopt the definition provided by the European Youth Forum (2012: 4):

Non-formal education can be understood as an organised educational process that takes place alongside mainstream systems of education and training, and does not

typically lead to certification. Individuals participate on a voluntary basis and the individual is usually aware that (s)he is learning

Therefore, non-formal education bridges the rigid structures of formal education and the unstructured nature of informal learning. In a world of constant change, NFE emerges as a vital component of lifelong learning - “the continuous building of skills and knowledge throughout an individual’s life” (Laal & Salamati, 2012: 399) - empowering young people to acquire and maintain the skills, abilities and attitudes needed to adapt to the ever-evolving landscape (Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, 2000).

As we delve into the significance of NFE, it is essential to consider both the opportunities it presents and its challenges in today’s society. However, it is also needed to highlight that existing studies regarding the concerns, lessons and challenges of those who engage in non-formal education are relatively limited, and those existing often focus on small samples restricted to a specific activity or geographical area (Christidou et al., 2022: 515).

NFE offers a wide range of opportunities that significantly enhance the educational landscape and contribute to the development of individuals and societies. Some of the most notable benefits of NFE include its inherent flexibility and adaptability, allowing it to be tailored to learners' specific needs and contexts. Unlike the rigid and institutionalised structures of formal education, NFE can adapt to diverse learning environments, accommodating the varied schedules and learning paces of individuals. This adaptability is crucial for young people, enabling them to “experiment with their freedom and experience steps towards independence and adulthood without necessarily facing the retributions of the more confining formal education system”. The experiential learning component of NFE thereby encourages young people to construct their own authentic experiences (Romi & Schmida, 2009: 266).

Additionally, NFE serves as a powerful tool for social inclusion. NFE programmes and processes play a key role in providing opportunities for marginalised and disadvantaged groups who may face barriers to accessing formal education. In a context where, according to Eurostat (2019), over one in every four young people in the EU are at risk of poverty and social exclusion, NFE offers alternative educational pathways that raise awareness among young people about their social rights.

Despite its many benefits, NFE faces several challenges that can hinder its effectiveness and wider acceptance. One significant challenge is the variability in the quality and delivery of NFE programs. Due to its decentralised nature, maintaining consistent standards and quality across different projects becomes difficult. This inconsistency can lead to disparities in individual experiences and outcomes, diminishing the overall impact of NFE (European Youth Forum, 2008: 2-12).

The major challenge, however, arises from the lack of recognition and validation of NFE outcomes, which limits opportunities for young people to leverage their NFE experiences in further education or the job market. This lack of recognition stems largely from insufficient confidence in the quality of NFE within society and youth organisations (European Youth Forum, 2008: 2). According to the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop, 2023: 4), despite EU and national efforts, “concrete use and availability of opportunities for validation of non-formal and informal learning are currently still lacking”.

### **1.2.3 International Actors**

Although full recognition has yet to be achieved, various stakeholders and actors are making efforts to address this issue. At the global and European levels, significant initiatives are underway to establish comprehensive guidelines that support the validation of NFE:

- UNESCO’s Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL), responding to the concerns of its Member States, developed guidelines on all learning outcomes from non-formal and informal learning. These guidelines served as the basis that Member States committed to further develop at the national level (UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, 2015: 7);
- The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), representing 37 democracies, published a paper highlighting the outcomes of non-formal and informal learning as a rich source of human capital (Werquin, 2010: 7);
- The European Union’s key policy document promoting the recognition of all types of learning is the 2012 Council recommendation on the validation of non-formal and informal learning, supported by the European guidelines for the

validation of non-formal and informal learning (Council of Europe, 2012). In 2009, 2015, and more recently in 2023, Cedefop updated its guidelines, to address individual needs and provide insights into coordinating and carrying out the validation process;

- The European Commission has developed a common framework that encourages Member States to recognise and validate non-formal education as part of the broader European Qualification Framework (EQF), aiming to improve the transparency and comparability of qualification across Europe (Europass, n.d.).

As can be seen, international actors have demonstrated their commitment to recognising non-formal education. However, this alone is not sufficient without the active and meaningful participation of Member States in adapting these frameworks to their specific contexts. Given that the case study of this thesis focuses on Portugal, it is crucial to understand that, as an EU Member State, Portugal is subject to Article 6 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU). This article stipulates that “the EU can only intervene to support, coordinate or complement the action of its Member States” and that “legally binding EU acts must not require the harmonisation of the laws or regulations of the Member States” in the area of education (EUR-Lex, n.d.).

### **1.3 Soft Skills**

Non-formal education significantly contributes to the development of “knowledge, skills and competences” (KSC), as highlighted by the European Youth Forum (2012: 35-37). This is the division of learning outcomes proposed by the European Qualification Framework (EQF), where these three concepts represent the basis of this framework, and national systems require different approaches, taking into account specific contexts and needs (European Commission, 2008: 3). Central to education and training, this framework distinguishes between three interconnected yet distinct elements: knowledge refers to the theoretical understanding of subjects; skills denote the practical ability to perform tasks; and competence refers to the broader application of knowledge and skills to different contexts (EU Science Hub, n.d.). Non-formal education’s emphasis on experiential learning and practical engagement provides a safe environment for developing and acquiring new skills. Through a hands-on approach and real-world applications, NFE

helps individuals transform theoretical knowledge into practical skills and competences, reinforcing the interconnected nature of these learning outcomes.

Throughout life, the main goal of individuals is to excel in the activities and functions they encounter. To achieve a good performance in the various settings of life, individuals need to enhance their skills. There is a diverse range of skills one needs to develop: from artistic and technical skills to educational and literacy skills, from communication and management skills to sports skills - each of these significantly contributes to an individual's success and overall accomplishments (Kapur, 2018: 1).

### **1.3.1 Hard Skills and Soft Skills**

In today's dynamic work landscape having a diverse set of skills is crucial for personal and professional success, which requires acquiring and maintaining soft and hard skills. Given that every job requires a combination of both, it becomes relevant to understand the interplay between these concepts and their complementarity (Lamri & Lubart, 2023: 1).

Hard skills are:

Technical, tangible, and quantifiable abilities related to the use of equipment for a specific job, such as driving a car, computer programming, or welding. Hard skills are typically acquired through training and education and are a requisite for performing job duties (Lamri & Lubart, 2023: 3).

One of the simplest ways to identify hard skills relates to how they are always measurable and fundamentally about the know-how that allows individuals to “get the job done” (Hebert, 2024). These skills are often acquired through formal education and can be easily validated through assessments and certifications (Chan, 2023).

Soft skills, in contrast, are generally described as a set of personal, interpersonal and transversal competencies applicable across various fields and professional activities (Ribeiro, 2017: 35; Puymbroeck et al., 2022: 96; International Association for Volunteer Effort, 2022: 14). Frequently referred to as “people skills”, soft skills relate to how individuals interact and behave with others, enabling them to work effectively in groups and organisations (Britannica Money, n.d.). Unlike hard skills, soft skills are more

challenging to measure but are equally critical for success. Examples include emotional intelligence, communication, creativity, problem-solving, team building, and stress management (Martins et al., 2020: 281-282).

Some authors contest the term “soft” when referring to skills. Klaus (2007: 2-3) argues that it becomes contradictory, as there is nothing “soft” about these skills. In reality, acquiring soft skills is often more time-consuming and complex than learning technical skills. This complexity arises because soft skills such as effective communication, empathy and teamwork require significant effort and practice to develop and master.

The relationship between hard and soft skills has long been a subject of interest, particularly due to its implications for workplace productivity and their shared components (Pieterse and Van Eekelen 2016; Kuzminov et al. 2019). In a successful working environment, professionals are able to seamlessly develop and integrate both sets of skills: while hard skills provide the expertise for knowledge-based tasks, soft skills offer the necessary flexibility to adapt and thrive in changing environments (Cimatti, 2016: 99).

Education is one strong example of this combination. While teachers must possess specific expertise (hard skills), it is their leadership, critical thinking, teamwork, lifelong learning and communication skills that create an engaging and supportive learning environment (Tang, 2020: 23).

Another example of this complementarity is seen in the Future of Jobs Survey 2023, by the World Economic Forum (WEF), where seven out of the top ten core skills required by workers today are soft skills. These include the cognitive skill of creative thinking; four self-efficacy skills - resilience, flexibility and agility; motivation and self-awareness; curiosity and lifelong learning; and dependability and attention to detail - along with two skills related to working with others: empathy and active listening, and leadership and social influence. These findings underscore the critical role of soft skills in the modern workforce. However, they are not by themselves, being complemented by hard skills (twelve out of twenty-five skills needed for workers today). Moreover, for the 2023-2027 period, the WEF anticipates that cognitive and creative skills will grow in importance most rapidly. This trend reflects the increasing need for complex problem-solving and innovative thinking in the workplace.

### **1.3.2 Defining and Assessing Soft Skills**

However, despite their recognised importance, defining and assessing soft skills present significant challenges. The subjective nature of soft skills, combined with cultural and contextual variations, makes it difficult to establish standardised assessment methods.

One of the main challenges lies in defining soft skills themselves. Their inherent subjectivity and variability, combined with a broad categorisation of soft skills, that encompasses personal attributes, social skills, communication abilities, and emotional intelligence, leads to diverse interpretations and definitions across different contexts. What one organisation might consider a soft skill might not be seen equally by another. This lack of a consistent definition complicates the process of identifying and developing these skills effectively (Succi & Wieandt, 2019: 117).

If defining soft skills is a challenge, the process of assessing soft skills is equally complex. Unlike hard skills, soft skills require more subjective evaluation methods. These methods, ranging from self-assessments and peer reviews to behavioural observations, can introduce the components of bias and variability (LinkedIn, 2019). For instance, measuring emotional intelligence or teamwork capabilities often depends on the evaluator's perception, which can vary significantly (Wei et al., 2015: 2).

Assessing soft skills also proves to be difficult when considering the lack of universally accepted tools and frameworks (Succi & Wieandt, 2019: 117). While several assessment tools exist, their applicability and validity are often debated, and many tools are criticised for their lack of scientific rigour and potential bias (Diorinos, 2024).

Biases and perceptions are at the core of the challenges in measuring soft skills. The subjective nature of soft skills means that assessments can be influenced by the context in which they are conducted, the evaluator's biases, and the individual's self-perception. Self-assessment methods, commonly used for evaluating soft skills, are prone to biases like the Dunning-Kruger effect, where individuals with lower ability at a task overestimate their ability. Conversely, those with higher ability may underestimate their competence. This is only one example where self-perception bias can lead to inaccurate assessments and hinder the development of these skills (Duignan, 2024).

### **1.3.3 Contextual Variability and Cultural Differences**

All the factors mentioned depend on the context to which people are exposed to, and soft skills often manifest differently in various contexts. For example, effective communication in a corporate setting might differ significantly from communication in a non-profit organisation or a culturally diverse environment. This variability makes it challenging to create a one-size-fits-all assessment approach. The effectiveness of soft skills can be highly context-dependent and needs tailored evaluation methods that consider specific situational factors (Diorinos, 2024).

It is also recognised how cultural differences play a crucial role in the manifestation and perception of soft skills. Skills such as communication, leadership, and teamwork can be interpreted differently across cultures. For instance, in high-context cultures like Japan, communication relies heavily on implicit messages and context, whereas in low-context cultures such as the United States, explicit and direct communication is valued. Such differences necessitate culturally sensitive approaches to defining and assessing soft skills (Hall, 1976: 86-92). It is then understood that the challenges in defining and assessing soft skills are intricately linked to their cultural and contextual variability. This inherent variability underscores the need for nuanced approaches that consider the diverse ways in which these skills manifest across different environments. Effective communication, leadership, and teamwork are perceived and valued differently depending on cultural norms and situational contexts. These variations further complicate the creation of standardised definitions and assessment methods, highlighting the need for culturally sensitive and context-specific strategies to accurately evaluate and develop soft skills.

## **1.4 Intercultural Competence**

It is understood that soft skills are crucial to how individuals interact and behave with others, facilitating effective teamwork and collaboration. However, for these interactions to be genuinely meaningful, it is necessary to acknowledge the growing global trends that intensify the need for individuals to be capable of adapting to culturally diverse contexts (Puymbroeck et al., 2022: 95). Thus, this thesis will highlight why intercultural competence stands out as a pivotal soft skill for the 21<sup>st</sup> century - especially in a context of increased global migration, international collaboration, and digital communication -

and how it can be cultivated through non-formal education to meet the demands of an increasingly interconnected world.

#### **1.4.1 Defining and Understanding Intercultural Competence**

Intercultural competence (ICC), sometimes referred to as cultural intelligence, relates to the ability to interpret behaviours and situations of diverse cultures and act appropriately (Puymbroeck et al., 2022: 98). Fundamentally, it is about how humans can connect and understand each other better.

While there is a general consensus on the importance of developing ICC at diverse levels, defining the concept is not always clear (Schauer, 2020: 1). This stems from the complexities inherent in defining the concept of culture itself. By the 1950s, there were over 160 definitions of culture, and the number has only grown since, reflecting diverse perspectives and disciplines. This disagreement comes not just from the lack of a universal definition of culture, but also from varying opinions on which cultural differences and aspects should be considered and highlighted when explaining ICC (Lantz-Deaton & Golubeva, 2020: 25).

For Barrett (2013), ICC encompasses “a set of values, attitudes, understanding, skills, and behaviors which involve the acceptance of cultural differences, recognition of the value of diversity, and the ability to recognize and challenge attitudes and behaviors which devalue those from different cultures” (Lantz-Deaton & Golubeva, 2020: 9). This comprehensive definition highlights the multifaceted nature of ICC, which can be broken down into core competencies.

However, as Dervin and Gross (2016: 3) argue:

As paradoxical as it might seem, an approach to intercultural competence that fails to point coherently, cohesively and consistently to the complexity of self and the other fails to accomplish what it should do: Helping people to see beyond appearances and simplifying discourses – and thus lead to ‘realistic’ encounters.

This perspective recognises the importance of truly understanding the self and the other in the development of real intercultural competence. It is not merely about recognising

differences, but about engaging deeply with the complexities and challenges inherent to interactions between cultures.

The Centre for Intercultural Learning of the Canadian Foreign Service Institute explored the dimension of what it means to be interculturally competent, creating a "Profile of the Interculturally Effective Person". This work outlines nine major competencies that describe the essential attributes, skills, and behaviours of an individual capable of thriving in culturally diverse environments, and includes diverse competencies, synthesised below (Vulpe, 2000: 14-19):

1. **Adaptation Skills:** Interculturally Effective Persons (IEPs) manage culture shocks and adjust behaviours to integrate into the local culture while maintaining their core values.
2. **Attitude of Modesty and Respect:** IEPs approach cultures with humility and respect, learning from locals but having the confidence to take initiative.
3. **Understanding of the Concept of Culture:** IEPs understand how culture shapes behaviour and recognise how their cultural background impacts interactions.
4. **Knowledge of the Host Country and Culture:** IEPs are committed to learning about the history, customs, and conditions of the host country, to allow for a better integration.
5. **Relationship Building:** IEPs have the ability to build strong relationships across cultures, fostering collaboration in personal and professional contexts.
6. **Self-Knowledge:** IEPs understand their own cultural identity, with its strengths and weaknesses, managing their reactions to new environments.
7. **Intercultural Communication:** IEPs communicate clearly across cultures, engaging in local languages and customs with empathy and cultural sensitivity.
8. **Organisational Skills:** IEPs enhance organisational structures by balancing adaptation to local norms with maintaining their own identity and values.
9. **Personal and Professional Commitment:** IEPs contribute to the local community, being realistic about their motivations and expectations abroad.

These competencies are supported by specific behavioural indicators that help measure an individual's proficiency in each area. Together, they provide a holistic view of intercultural competence, serving as a valuable framework for both self-assessment and the development of ICC.

### 1.4.2 Theoretical Models

Traditionally, ICC is viewed through its cognitive, affective and behavioural factors, based on the classification put forward by Bloom in 1956. According to Bloom's taxonomy, the cognitive domain represents knowledge, the affective domain encompasses attitudes, emotions and feelings, and the behavioural domain (also referred to as psychomotor) stands for skills (Lantz-Deaton & Golubeva, 2020: 114).

To further explore these components and attempt to simplify their complexity, diverse theoretical models have been proposed. Among the most influential are *Byram's Model of Intercultural Communicative Competence*, and *Deardorff's Process Model of Intercultural Competence*, both providing structured approaches to understanding and enhancing ICC. Moreover, the Integrated Process Model on ICC by Diana Bebenova-Nikolova (2016: 49-59) will also be analysed for the context of this thesis.

Byram's Model of Intercultural Communicative Competence (1997) serves as a foundational framework for understanding and evaluating the awareness and influence of one's own identity within intercultural interactions (Zur, 2019: 9). Byram focuses on five know-how dimensions, based on the French word *savoir*, that capture the qualities of a competent intercultural speaker:

- *Savoir*: Knowledge of self and others, in individual and societal interactions;
- *Savoir être* (knowing how to be and behave): Attitudes;
- *Savoir comprendre* (knowing how to understand and interpret): Skills of interpreting and relating;
- *Savoir apprendre/faire* (knowing how to learn and put into practice): Skills of discovering and interacting;
- *Savoir s'engager* (knowing how to engage and commit): Critical cultural awareness.

Byram's exploration of the *savoir s'engager* dimension has led to advancements in intercultural citizenship education, emphasising the values of democracy, the rule of law, and human rights (Hoff, 2020: 56). This model effectively integrates the cognitive, affective and behavioural aspects of ICC, highlighting the importance of both knowledge and practical skills in intercultural interactions.

Similar to Byram, Deardorff (2006) emphasises the importance of one's ability to reflect on their attitudes, skills, and knowledge. In this model, however, the author follows a non-linear approach to the competence development process, creating a "continuous process of working on attitudes, knowledge, internal outcomes and external outcomes related to intercultural competence" (Kramer Moeller & Nugent, 2014: 4). Considering these four components put forward by Deardorff, this process begins at the individual level with one's attitudes, such as respect, openness and curiosity towards cultural diversity. These attitudes then set the foundation for acquiring knowledge and skills. It is the interaction between attitudes, knowledge and skills that leads to internal outcomes like adaptability, flexibility, and empathy. Once internalised, the internal outcomes manifest as external outcomes, demonstrated through effective and appropriate communication and behaviours in intercultural situations.

Deardorff's model is particularly valuable for its emphasis on the continuous process of reflection and growth. His vision that ICC is not a linear journey, but a cyclical process of learning and adaptation greatly aligns with the Council of Europe (2014), which states that "an individual's intercultural competence is never complete but can always be enriched further from continuing experience of different kinds of intercultural encounter."

Bebenova-Nikolova's Integrated Process Model of Intercultural Competence (2016: 49-59) provides an even more comprehensive approach to previous models, placing a strong emphasis on the dialectical approach to the analysis of ICC. This model views intercultural competence as a continuous process of adaptation and reflection, influenced by both personal and environmental factors. Building upon previous studies on ICC, Bebenova-Nikolova highlights that effective intercultural communication requires not just understanding and empathy but also the ability to adapt behaviours in real-time interactions, underscoring the importance of real-life intercultural encounters as critical to developing and deepening intercultural competence, making it particularly relevant for those focused on experiential learning.

These models offer valuable insights into the complex and evolving nature of ICC, making them essential, recognised references in this field. Byram's and Deardorff's models provide a solid foundation for understanding ICC, while Bebenova-Nikolova's approach adds a new depth by emphasising real-time adaptability and experiential learning. Together, these models underscore the necessity of strategies and methodologies

for developing and assessing intercultural competence, highlighting that ICC is not only about acquiring knowledge but also about fostering continuous growth through practical application in diverse cultural contexts.

### **1.4.3 Developing Intercultural Competence through Education**

The best way to develop ICC is through education. International stakeholders such as UNESCO (2013: 27) have recommended incorporating ICC “in all levels of formal, informal and non-formal education systems to facilitate learning of intercultural competence and gain flexibility in interaction with cultural others”. Moreover, the European Union (2019: 14) has identified cultural awareness and expression as one of the eight key competences for lifelong learning. This highlights the importance of being engaged and understanding others' ideas and roles in different ways and contexts. Such recognition by major international bodies reinforces the significance of ICC as essential to navigating the complexities of our world.

In line with this thesis, NFE plays a crucial role in fostering ICC. It offers a more flexible and experiential approach to learning, which allows for the incorporation of activities such as international mobility programs, cultural exchanges, and hands-on projects, all essential in developing ICC. NFE programs frequently involve immersive experiences where participants can engage directly with distinct cultures, developing cultural awareness and adaptability. International mobility programs, in particular, challenge participants to navigate through cultural differences and enhance their intercultural understanding. In fact, research indicates that even short-term international experiences can significantly develop intercultural competences, as long as participants are guided through the experience (Jones, 2014: 7).

While short-term international mobility programs have shown a significant impact on the development of intercultural competence, recent research suggests a more nuanced understanding when it comes to long-term exchange programs. A study conducted by Kovacevic et al. (2023:55) came to defy the assumption that extended exposure might have a more profound impact on intercultural skills. In fact, the findings revealed no statistically significant difference in intercultural competence between students who participated in long-term mobility programs and those who did not.

The research did however highlight that long-term programs seem to facilitate a more self-oriented development, focusing on personal skills rather than directly enhancing intercultural competence. In contrast, short-term mobility activities, appear to have a more immediate and encompassing effect on intercultural competence, being often intense and immersive, and creating conditions that are more conducive to the development of intercultural skills.

Despite the challenges in measuring the exact impact, the authors reaffirm the importance of intercultural competence as a key goal in contemporary education, and fostering intercultural skills through mobility programs remains crucial.

This is where youth organisations play an increasingly significant role, providing opportunities for activities in intercultural settings. From seminars and exchanges to sessions and conferences, these offer invaluable spaces where young people share their ideas with peers from diverse cultures, fostering a sense of belonging to a global community that extends beyond national borders (European Youth Forum, 2003: 5).

#### **1.4.4 Assessing Intercultural Competence**

While the development of intercultural competence through NFE and youth organisations is well-established, it is equally important to understand how these competences are assessed, to ensure that the desired outcomes are being achieved. Research indicates that ICC can be evaluated, but most tools focus on self-assessment instruments, meaning only “half of the picture is measured”, according to Deardorff (2014: 2). The author understands the remaining half as the other’s perspectives, that go beyond self-report.

One of the most widely recognised tools is the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI). The IDI is a comprehensive 50-item assessment that measures an individual’s intercultural sensitivity and capability, identifying strengths and developmental opportunities when interacting with people from distinct cultural backgrounds. Developed based on extensive research and validation, the IDI categorises respondents into stages of intercultural development, ranging from ethnocentric (where one's own culture is viewed as central) to ethnorelative (where one's culture is seen in the context of other cultures). This tool is mainly used by educational institutions, corporations and

government agencies worldwide to foster intercultural understanding and inclusion initiatives (Intercultural Development Inventory, n.d.).

Another well-regarded assessment tool is the Cultural Intelligence Scale (CQS). This scale measures four dimensions of cultural intelligence: metacognitive, cognitive, motivational, and behavioural. The CQS assesses how individuals acquire and use knowledge about other cultures, their motivation to engage in intercultural interactions, and their ability to adapt behaviourally in diverse cultural contexts (Van Dyne et al., 2008: 16-17).

Adding to the toolkit of ICC assessment tools is the Intercultural Dialogue Index (ICDI), designed to assess the state of intercultural relations and measure the extent to which intercultural dialogue is supported within individual countries. This composite index evaluates the overall conditions necessary for fostering positive intercultural interactions (Mansouri & Elias, 2021: 438).

While tools like the IDI, CQS, and ICDI are valuable, they primarily rely on self-assessment or broad structural analysis, which can be limited by individuals' self-perception biases or the challenges of cross-national comparisons. As Deardorff highlights, self-assessment captures only part of the picture. The remaining aspect involves the perspectives of others who interact with the individual. This calls for the inclusion of multi-source feedback mechanisms where peers, mentors, or intercultural interactions are evaluated to provide a more holistic view of an individual's ICC. Moreover, methodological innovations in assessing ICC, such as longitudinal studies and strategies are necessary to capture the developmental journey over time, providing a complete overview of how ICC evolves.

A practical example of how these tools are to be used in real life can be found in projects such as EILEEN - Enhancing Intercultural Learning in European Enterprises. In a study on interculturality in the workplace throughout Europe, this research provides practical insights into how intercultural competence is perceived and managed across different European regions (EILEEN, 2014: 39-43).

One of the countries analysed is Portugal. As a country with recent and diverse immigration trends, the study reveals that while there is a significant influx of immigrants, particularly from Eastern Europe, Brazil, and former Portuguese colonies, there are still

challenges when it comes to linguistic integration and social cohesion. Despite these challenges, Portugal has numerous organisations working towards promoting intercultural competence, such as the Programa Português para Todos [Portuguese for All] (PPT), Promoção do Empreendedorismo Imigrante [Promoting Immigrant Entrepreneurship] (PEI), or the European Youth Parliament Portugal (EYP). The latter, EYP Portugal, plays a crucial role in fostering intercultural competence among young people through educational programs and debates, which will be explored in greater detail in the next chapters of this thesis.

As the world continues to evolve, fostering and assessing intercultural competence will remain a key factor in promoting effective and meaningful global interactions.

## **CHAPTER II – THE EUROPEAN YOUTH PARLIAMENT: THE NETWORK AND THE PORTUGUESE CONTEXT**

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## **2.1 The European Youth Parliament (EYP)**

The European Youth Parliament is one of the largest and most influential youth-led platforms in Europe dedicated to fostering civic education, intercultural dialogue, and the exchange of ideas among young people. Founded in 1987 in Fontainebleau, France, the EYP has grown to encompass a network of over 40 National Committees across Europe, including countries within the Council of Europe and Belarus. With thousands of active volunteers, the EYP is unique in its approach of being "by young people, for young people." It provides a dynamic space where young Europeans can engage with political, social, and cultural issues that shape Europe and ultimately the world (European Youth Parliament, n.d.-b).

Based on the principles of inclusivity and youth empowerment, the EYP is driven by the belief that young people are not just the leaders of tomorrow, but active leaders of today. The organisation is entirely run by young volunteers who organise events, manage the National Committees, and contribute to the strategic vision of the EYP. Its non-partisan and independent stance allows it to be an open forum for discussing a wide range of contemporary topics. From climate change and digitalisation to human rights and foreign policy, EYP events challenge participants to think critically, debate constructively, and collaborate on solutions in a multicultural setting. Through parliamentary simulations, workshops, and debates, the EYP aims to enhance skills such as critical thinking, public speaking, teamwork, and leadership.

### **2.1.1 Understanding the EYP and its Relevance**

With a network of over three dozen National Committees and thousands of active volunteers, the EYP is a dynamic organisation that fosters cross-border collaboration, youth empowerment and dialogue. To better understand the scope and significance of the EYP, it is essential to explore the three elements that constitute its identity: European, Youth, and Parliament.

“European” goes beyond geographical boundaries - it represents the shared yet diverse identity that encourages individuals to engage with the idea of Europe in its broadest political, cultural and historical sense. EYP operates across the Council of Europe countries and Belarus.

“Youth” highlights the method: run by young people, for young people. The focus of all activities is to facilitate meaningful experiences among youth, promoting leadership, critical thinking, and active citizenship. The goal is not just to prepare them for the “real world” but to provide a platform where they can lead, learn, and grow.

“Parliament” in the EYP context is symbolic rather than legislative. While events often follow a parliamentary format, the focus is on providing a flexible forum for participants to debate, share perspectives and address pressing issues. The essence of EYP lies in fostering a culture of open dialogue and advocacy of personal views, rather than representing any political agenda. (European Youth Parliament, n.d.-i.: 4)

Understanding these core components, as well as motivations that drive them, provides a clearer picture of the EYP’s identity and purpose. They illustrate how it transcends traditional boundaries, empowering young people to engage with Europe’s landscape.

Choosing the EYP as the case study for this thesis was a natural decision, due to its distinct role in shaping youth engagement. The EYP embodies a rare model of youth-led participation that seamlessly integrates educational, cultural and political dimensions, making it an interesting subject for examining. The EYP is not just about preparing young people for future roles - it is about motivating them to take an active part in shaping the present and future of their communities. With this framework in mind, exploring the organisation's history and evolution reveals how it has grown into a powerful platform for youth engagement and intercultural exchange in Europe.

### **2.1.2 Historical Overview and Evolution**

“A gathering of five friends at our home, rue Royale in Fontainebleau, France. We were all looking for a new challenge and agreed that the first person to come up with a really good idea, would be supported by the others. [...] I had seen the benefit of teenagers from all over the world working together and learning about each other’s cultures. It occurred to me that a programme for 16-19-year-olds from each country of the (then) EEC would broaden their horizon and prepare them for working together as adults. With democracy being one of the cornerstones of our civilisation, I chose a ‘youth parliament’ as the best structure to use. There were no other youth parliaments yet, so we were the first and not just any

parliament: The European Youth Parliament!” Bettina Carr-Allinson, Co-Founder of the EYP (Guillot and Pederson, 2022: 8)

In the Spring of 1986, language teacher Bettina Carr-Allinson recognised the need for a platform that would bring young people from across Europe together to collaborate and learn about diverse cultures. Inspired by the values of intercultural dialogue and cooperation, Carr-Allinson, along with colleagues Isabel Borges, Yveline Teboul, Roya Ferdows and the paediatrician Pierre Douillet, conceptualised a ‘youth parliament’ as a way to encourage young Europeans to engage with each other and the broader European project (Guillot and Pederson, 2022: 9-10).

The idea was to create an educational forum that differed from typical youth organisations by focusing on real-life issues rather than role-play. Participants would study topics, form opinions, draft proposals, and defend them in a parliamentary-style debate, reflecting the democratic processes that are the cornerstone of European governance. This vision aligned well with the growing interconnectedness within the European Economic Community (EEC), now the European Union (Guillot and Pederson, 2022: 10).

By 1987, the organisation was registered under French law as “*Association pour le Parlement européen de jeunes*” (Association for the European Youth Parliament), setting the stage for its inaugural session (Guillot and Pederson, 2022: 11). On March 10th, 1988, the first session of the EYP was held in Fontainebleau, France, bringing together 144 young people from twelve different countries. This event not only marked the launch of a new European project but also inspired the creation of national EYP initiatives, initially led by teachers (Guillot and Pederson, 2022: 12-13).

As the project expanded, it became clear that the growing network needed more structured support. In response, the *Fontainebleau Youth Foundation* was established in 1992 in Oxfordshire, United Kingdom, to manage administrative work. A year later, the subsidiary *European Youth Parliament International, Ltd.* was founded to handle finances and daily operations of the organisation (Guillot and Pederson, 2022: 13). This period also saw the creation of the first EYP Charter, which outlined the roles of the different organisational bodies and established the Board of National Committees and the International Council as key governance structures (Guillot and Pederson, 2022: 13).

“By the onset of the 21st century, the EYP was a well-established organisation that regularly brought together a very large number of young people to discuss issues of national and European importance. [...] In the early 2000s, however, the future of the network was for a while on a knife’s edge. The teen years of EYP were also the time when its growing pains started to be felt more deeply. It was clear that everything all the way to the core structures of the network had to be rethought.” (Guillot and Pederson, 2022: 30)

By 2002-2003, *EYP International Ltd.* faced significant debt, which resulted in the cancellation of major International Sessions and growing dissatisfaction among National Committees. The organisation had to undergo a deep restructuring, resulting in the dissolution of *EYP International* in 2004 (Guillot and Pederson, 2022: 29), and the emergence of the Berlin Group, a group of EYPers which sought to redefine EYP’s framework (Guillot and Pederson, 2022: 33).

During this transformative period, the EYP found a new home under the *Schwarzkopf Foundation*, which had been supporting the project since 1990 (Guillot and Pederson, 2022: 34). The foundation, known for promoting active citizenship across Europe, became the EYP’s umbrella organisation and provided it with the stability needed for a fresh start (*Schwarzkopf Foundation*, n.d.). In March 2006, the Board of National Committees officially adopted the renewed EYP structure, which continues to grow and impact Europe (Guillot and Pederson, 2022: 37).

### **2.1.3 Mission, Vision, Values and Strategy**

Like any large and impactful organisation, the EYP has developed a strong sense of purpose reflected in its mission, vision, and values, as outlined in the 2021-2027 strategy. This long-term strategy, crafted with input from the governing bodies and national committees, reflects the organisation’s commitment to empowering young people to engage in society. (European Youth Parliament, n.d.-f).

- **Mission**

The EYPs mission is to inspire and empower young people across Europe to become informed, open-minded, and active citizens. The organisation seeks to equip youth with

the tools and mindset needed to drive meaningful impact, shaping a society that reflects their values and aspirations (European Youth Parliament, n.d.-f: 4).

- **Vision**

Aligned with its mission, the EYP envisions a democratic, peaceful, sustainable and open society where every young person is empowered to shape their life and contribute positively to society (European Youth Parliament, n.d.-f: 4).

- **Values**

EYP's values serve as the foundation of its activities and approach to youth engagement and civic education. The 2021-2027 strategy highlights six core values for the organisation: independence, democracy, non-partisanship, community, intercultural understanding and inclusion (European Youth Parliament, n.d.-f: 5-6).

Independence is central to the EYP, ensuring that its operations and decisions remain free from external influences, including political parties or donors. This commitment to autonomy is complemented by the EYP's dedication to Democracy, where decisions are made through a participatory and consultative process. While the EYP actively engages in political discussions, it maintains Non-Partisanship by not aligning with any political parties or specific views, maintaining neutrality. The so-called "EYP spirit" is rooted in the Community, where the collective efforts of all members foster cooperation, mutual support, and the sharing of diverse perspectives to achieve common goals. Recognising the value of cultural diversity, the EYP promotes Intercultural Understanding, encouraging dialogue and mutual respect among young people from all social contexts. Within the project, participants feel Inclusion is at the heart of everything EYP does, ensuring that everyone has equal opportunities in a safe, non-discriminatory environment

- **Strategy**

The 2021-2027 Strategy 2021-2027 builds upon the mission, vision, and values to guide its evolution and impact. The strategy is built around six key pillars that focus on the network's growth, sustainability, and inclusivity (European Youth Parliament, n.d.-f: 8):

**1. A Network that works as a Catalyst for Active Citizenship**

EYP empowers young people to engage meaningfully in their communities by raising awareness of current issues, facilitating dialogue, and connecting them with broader networks to drive positive change.

**2. A Network that fosters a Peaceful European Society**

EYP promotes peace education and intercultural understanding among young Europeans, emphasising cooperation across cultures and supporting local projects that contribute to a more inclusive society.

**3. A network that operates within a sustainable structure for strategic development**

EYP prioritises qualitative growth by building resilience through collaboration, balancing ownership and accountability, and ensuring sustainable operations and long-term funding.

**4. A network that supports its volunteers and their personal growth**

EYP enhances volunteer's personal and professional development through skill-building opportunities, hands-on experience, and a supportive environment.

**5. A network that pushes for inclusion and accessibility**

EYP creates inclusive and accessible environments, accommodating participants from diverse backgrounds, including those with disabilities, and ensuring that everyone feels welcomed and valued.

**6. A network that offers a rich variety of methods, tools, and formats**

EYP remains at the forefront of active citizenship education by offering a variety of methods and formats, enhancing the learning experience and empowering volunteers to explore and develop their paths.

## **2.1.4 Organisational Structure**

As an independent, non-partisan, peer-to-peer educational programme, the European Youth Parliament (EYP) is much more than just the sum of its events – it's an ecosystem that creates an environment for its volunteers and members to learn, grow and take on responsibility in a multitude of roles. (European Youth Parliament, n.d.-g)

The EYP Network encompasses four main actors: the National Committees, the Governing Body, the International Office, and the Board of National Committees. Each plays a crucial role in the organisation's structure and is outlined in the EYP Charter.

- **National Committees (NCs)**

National Committees are the backbone of the EYP, organising the majority of its events across Europe. Currently, there are 40 NCs, each led by democratically elected boards of young volunteers. These committees are central to the EYP's mission, as they not only organise sessions, forums, and outreach programs but also promote international EYP activities, run training programs for their members and manage the autonomous organisations in their home countries.

- **Board of National Committees (BNC)**

The BNC acts as the general assembly of the National Committees on an international level, representing the voice of NCs. It meets twice a year in Berlin, where it shares decision-making responsibilities with the Governing Body. The BNC reviews and approves policy proposals, initiates proposals and recommendations, and facilitates knowledge-sharing among national organisations. Meetings are chaired by the BNC Board, composed of 2-3 active members elected annually by the NCs.

- **Governing Body (GB)**

The Governing Body represents the interests of the entire EYP network and is tasked with strategic development. It collaborates with the National Committees and members to establish guidelines that ensure the quality and safety of EYP activities. The GB oversees the organisation's three annual International Sessions and is composed of six elected member volunteers.

- **International Office (IO)**

The International Office supports and coordinates the network's activities, ensuring the effective implementation of EYP's strategy and mission. Led by the EYP Executive Director, the IO team includes project managers, long-term volunteers, and assistants who work closely with all bodies to facilitate operations.

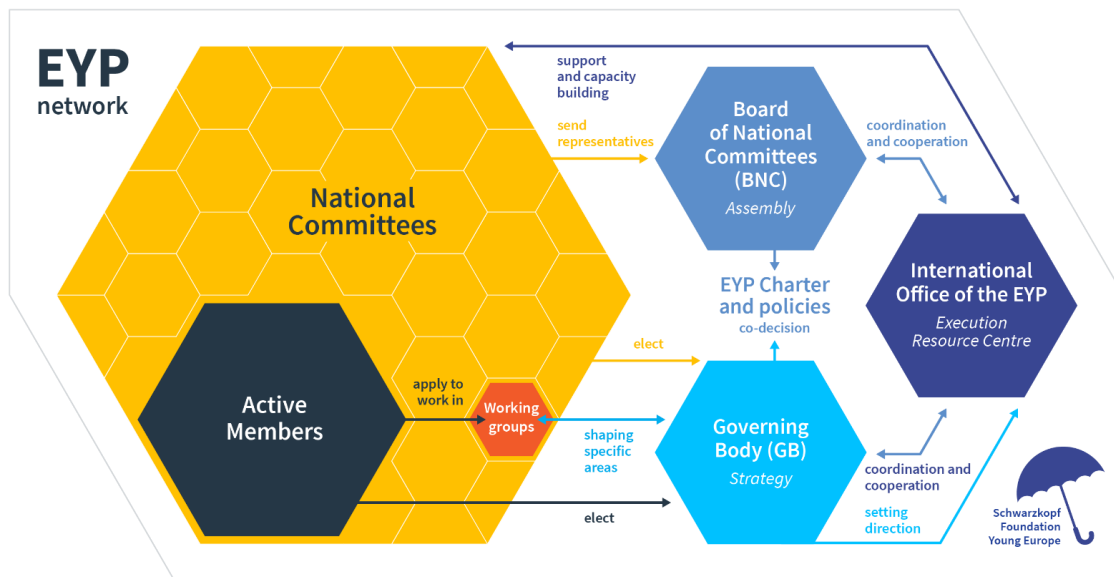


Figure 1 - EYP's Organisational Structure (Guillot and Pederson, 2022: 49)

### 2.1.5 Methodology and Framework of EYP Activities

The EYP has developed a structured methodology rooted in the principles of NFE, characterised by a participatory, learner-centred and experiential approach. This methodology incorporates a diverse mix of methods, rules, and procedures that shape EYP activities to ensure they are inclusive, engaging, and effective in fostering civic education and youth empowerment. Central to EYP's approach is the belief that learning should be holistic, engaging not just the mind but also the emotions of participants. This is achieved through interactive and experiential methods such as simulations, role-plays, and group discussions, which encourage active participation, collaboration, and peer learning.

Aligned with the 2021-2027 strategic framework, each initiative is planned with clear educational objectives that contribute to specific key results and broader organisational goals. EYP sessions are designed to be flexible and responsive to the needs and inputs of participants, enabling young people to learn from one another and connect their

experiences to real-life situations. Emphasis is placed on self-reflection as a key component of the learning process, allowing participants to critically engage with topics and develop essential life skills.

Consistent with NFE principles, the EYP's methodology is based on voluntary participation, ensuring that the learning experience remains optional, inclusive, and accessible for all young Europeans, particularly those at risk of exclusion or marginalisation. This structured yet adaptable framework makes the EYP a platform that is not only open and inclusive but also designed to empower young Europeans to actively shape the democratic and cultural landscape of Europe.

#### **2.1.5.1 Session Types and Core Components**

Since its inception, the format of EYP events has evolved significantly, yet the core methodologies and objectives remain the same. Each year, the EYP organises nearly 500 regional, national and international sessions, involving around 25,000 young people. These sessions cover a wide range of topics, ranging from global politics to human rights, culture, technology and climate change, providing an enriching educational experience.

EYP sessions are designed to be interactive, with young people leading the activities. This peer-led structure ensures that young people are not only participants but also active contributors, placing them at the centre of the learning experience.

Each session is connected to an NC, responsible for independently managing its planning and execution. The number and frequency of sessions vary between countries, reflecting the capacities and resources of each NC. For instance, EYP Spain typically organises around 10 to 13 regional sessions annually, while EYP Portugal holds three regional sessions. This flexibility allows the network to adapt its activities to the specific context of each country,

EYP sessions can be categorised into several types, each structured to fulfil different objectives, and varying in duration and cultural content (European Youth Parliament, n.d.-j):

- **Regional Sessions**

Regional Sessions, or Regional Selection Conferences (RSCs), are three-day sessions (extended to four days for volunteers) where most participants first engage with the organisation. Regional Sessions offer insight into EYP's structure and lead to the selection for national sessions. Typically, they involve 100 to 120 participants, though this can vary.

- **National Sessions**

National Sessions, or National Selection Conferences (NSCs), bring together a larger number of participants, hosting 120 to 170 individuals. They follow a similar format to Regional Sessions but include an extra day for committee work. NSCs serve as key events for each NC and select delegates for International Sessions and other EYP events abroad.

- **International Forums**

International Forums (IFs) are large-scale events designed, drawing about 200 participants. International Forums are not standard sessions and may be themed around specific topics or groups, such as University Forums, or commemorative forums like the Oradour-sur-Glane 2024 IF in France, which marked the 80th anniversary of the Oradour-sur-Glane massacre.

- **International Sessions**

International Sessions (ISs) are the flagship events of the EYP network, organised by an NC in collaboration with the EYP Office. Two to three ISs are held annually and host around 300 participants. These sessions are often held under the patronage of relevant figures such as Ursula von der Leyen and Roberta Metsola. International Sessions represent the pinnacle of the EYP's activities, and a major milestone was achieved in the Summer of 2024: the 100th IS in Thessaloniki, Greece.

Each of these sessions is structured around three main components: Team Building, Committee Work, and General Assembly.

These moments flow into one another, starting with Team Building. This “group cohesion” moment allows participants to get to know each other, making them more inclined to later work and debate in committee. It includes interactive activities and

games, both indoor and outdoor, to establish connections and create a shared sense of belonging and trust.

Following Team Building, participants engage in Committee Work, where they are organised into working groups, called committees, facilitated by experienced peers. During this stage, participants delve into current European and global issues, discussing these topics in depth to understand different perspectives. The goal is to collaboratively develop solutions, which are then compiled into written resolutions. Committee Work fosters critical thinking, communication, and negotiation skills, as participants are encouraged to analyse real problems, join their perspectives and propose actionable solutions.

After the committees are done with their resolution, it is time for the event to culminate in the General Assembly, where all committees come together to debate the proposed resolutions. Following standard parliamentary procedures, delegates present their resolutions, engage in debates, and vote on each proposal. This component allows participants to practice public speaking, defend their ideas, and engage in constructive dialogue, in a real parliamentary experience.

In between these moments, EYP events feature a Cultural Programme that provides participants with opportunities to immerse themselves in the local culture of the host country and enhance their intercultural competence. They can experience activities such as the Euroconcert, where participants showcase their talents, and the Eurovillage, where each delegation presents food and cultural items from their regions. Additional cultural days include exploring the host city. These experiences promote intercultural understanding and appreciation, helping to build a sense of European unity and celebrate diversity.

	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6	Day 7	Day 8	Day 9	Day 10
<b>Regional Session</b>	Officials' Trainings	Teambuilding & Eurovillage	Committee Work & Theme Party	General Assembly						
<b>National Session</b>	Officials' Trainings	Teambuilding & Eurovillage	Committee Work & Euroconcert	Committee Work & Theme Party	General Assembly					
<b>International Forum</b>	Officials' Trainings	Teambuilding & Eurovillage	Teambuilding	Free/Cultural Day	Committee Work & Gala Dinner	Committee Work & Committee Dinners	General Assembly & Farewell Party	Departures		
<b>International Session</b>	Officials' Arrivals	Officials' Trainings	Officials' Trainings	Teambuilding & Eurovillage	Teambuilding	Committee Work	Committee Work & Euroconcert	Free/Cultural Day	General Assembly & Farewell Party	Departures

Table 1 - A typical program outline for the various session types in the EYP (created by the author).

### 2.1.5.2 The Roles Behind the Sessions

EYP sessions bring together a large and diverse group of participants, broadly divided into Delegates and Officials. Each group plays a distinct role and contributes to the overall dynamic and success of the event (European Youth Parliament Portugal, n.d.-b).

- **Delegates**

Delegates are the largest group of participants at EYP sessions and are central to the event's purpose. They are organised into committees of 8-11 members, where they discuss specific current issues to develop common solutions. These solutions are then drafted into resolution documents to debate with other committees. Delegates experience the full range of EYP's methodologies. This role is often the first step in becoming actively involved in the EYP network and serves as a foundational experience for understanding European politics and policy-making processes.

- **Officials**

Officials are volunteers responsible for facilitating, supporting, and overseeing the sessions to ensure a productive and engaging experience for delegates. The Officials Team is divided into four main teams:

- **Academic Team**

The Academic Team consists of a President, Vice Presidents, and Chairpersons. The President and Vice Presidents form the Board of the Session, overseeing the academic content and supporting the Chairpersons. Chairpersons guide their committees, lead discussions and assist in drafting resolutions. They facilitate the understanding of the topics and guide the committee through the various stages of a session.

- **Organising Team**

The Organising Team, led by one or more Head Organisers, is responsible for the logistical and operational aspects of the session. Head Organisers are in charge of planning the event from its inception, including selecting venues, coordinating catering, and arranging technical setups. The team of Organisers ensures that all logistical needs are met throughout the session, from registration to daily operations, creating a seamless and supportive environment for participants.

- **Media Team**

The Media Team documents the session through photography, videography, and written content. Led by an Editor and supported by Editorial Assistants, they create media output such as session magazines, social media content, and videos that highlight videos. Journalists are assigned to specific committees to document progress while also developing their media projects.

- **Jury Team**

The Jury Team, composed of a Head of Jury and Jurors, is responsible for selecting delegates for participation in subsequent sessions, such as International Sessions. This team is only present when there is a selection process involved - in Regional and National Sessions - and they evaluate delegates based on criteria established in collaboration with the National Board. The Jury Team's work is crucial in identifying delegates who demonstrate strong engagement, critical thinking, and the potential to contribute further to the EYP network.

Additionally, each session includes an Event Safe Person (ESP), who ensures the well-being of all participants. The ESP is a contact point for anyone experiencing or witnessing any form of discomfort, harassment, or bullying. Acting as a mediator and support figure,

the ESP is essential in maintaining a safe and inclusive environment and directly reports to the National Safe Person (NSP), who oversees the well-being of all active members at a national level.

Together, these roles form a comprehensive structure that supports the EYP’s educational objectives. Whether as delegates or officials, each participant plays an important part in bringing the EYP experience to life.

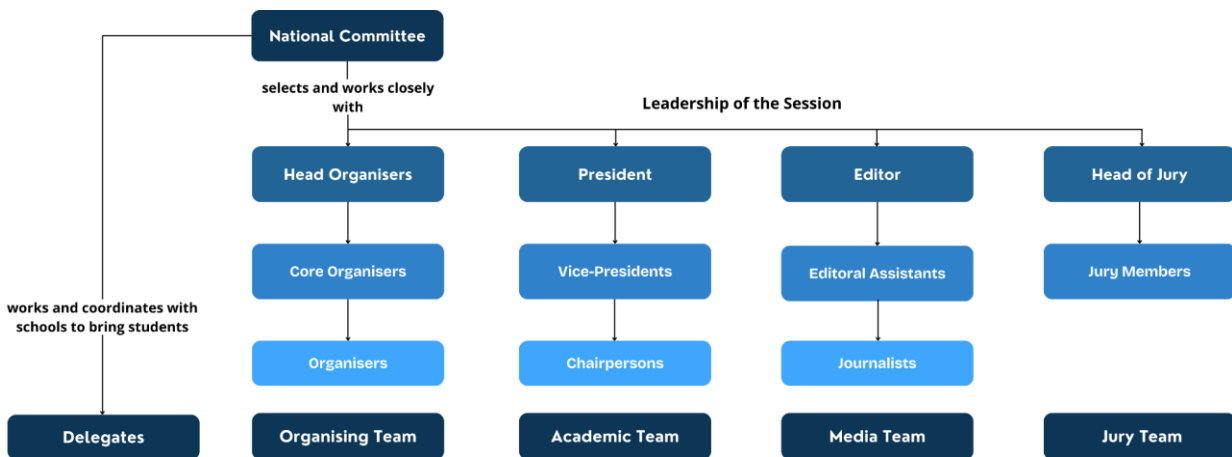


Figure 2 - Hierarchy of an EYP session (created by the author)

### 2.1.5.3 Other Capacity-building Events

While EYP sessions are central to the organisation’s activities, the network also dedicates significant resources to other capacity-building projects. Each NC organises at least one capacity-building event annually, often in the form of a Members Weekend, designed to train and develop their volunteers. These events focus on leadership, team dynamics, and effective communication, which are essential for the growth and sustainability of the EYP network.

At the broader network level, several ongoing projects strengthen active citizenship and achieve substantial impact. These initiatives go beyond the traditional session format, providing EYP members with diverse opportunities to expand their knowledge, develop new skills, and engage with their communities (European Youth Parliament, n.d.-c). These initiatives are:

- **Summer Academy**

The Summer Academy is EYP's largest international training event, gathering participants from all EYP member organisations for a week of learning, networking and knowledge sharing. Led by experienced EYP members and external experts, the event covers essential topics for the effective functioning of National Committees, including fundraising, event coordination, human resources, and NGO management. It also serves as a platform for board members to exchange best practices, enhancing their leadership and operational skills.

- **Training Academy**

Previously known as *Training for EYP Trainers (T4ET)*, the Training Academy is one of the EYP's longest-standing initiatives. This event facilitates the sharing of best practices and expertise from experienced volunteers to new members who are interested in developing their skills as trainers within the network.

- **Media Academy**

The EYP Media Academy is an annual event that focuses on the fields of public relations, communication and media. By attending workshops and training models, from videography to photography and project creation, participants gain practical skills that they can apply in their NCs and future events of the network.

- **Active and Inclusive Citizenship Lab**

The Active and Inclusive Citizenship Lab comes to bring a new involvement of young EYPers with the concepts of active citizenship and inclusion. With specific topics on the area, this event allows for close cooperation between the EYP and Understanding Europe, another project under the Schwarzkopf Foundation. In 2024, the event happened in collaboration with the Youth Department of the Council of Europe, which fostered a new dimension of work with civil society and organisations.

- **Presidents' Summit**

The Presidents' Summit is an annual gathering of NC Presidents focused on knowledge sharing and networking. This provides Presidents with support from their peers and facilitates communication and collaboration throughout the year.

- **Head Organisers' Summit**

Designed for current and former Head Organisers of the major EYP events, the International Sessions, the Head Organisers Summit allows participants to share experiences, offer consulting, and support each other in the development of the biggest events of the network. It also involves planning the next steps with the EYP Office.

- **Safe Person Training**

The Safe Person Training is tailored for National Safe Persons from the various NCs. In collaboration with the international Safe Core Team, It focuses on deepening their understanding of safety and welfare practices, aiming to strengthen their ability to implement effective measures and ensure that EYP remains a safe and supportive environment.

- **Diversity Lab**

The Diversity Lab provides tools for EYP members to develop and implement projects that promote diversity, inclusion, and accessibility. This training fosters a more inclusive and diverse EYP community.

#### **2.1.5.4 The EYP Alumni Network**

“EYPers don't always understand just how profoundly impactful their work is. The turnover is huge, and network members renew themselves every couple of years”. That's why he [André Schmitz-Schwarzkopf<sup>1</sup>] is also passionate about an EYP Alumni community, a place where EYPers can come together and collectively understand the importance of their

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<sup>1</sup> André Schmitz-Schwarzkopf is the Honorary Chairman of the Board of the Schwarzkopf Foundation. He is also an EYP Alumni, having attended the 7<sup>th</sup> International Session in 1991 in Kronberg, Germany (European Youth Parliament, 2018).

work, the impact they had on Europe, and on each other (Guillot and Pederson, 2022: 78)

The EYP Alumni Network, formally established in 2017, represents a significant initiative that reconnects over 200,000 young people who have participated in the project since its inception. The political developments in Europe and the high track of youth engagement in the EYP set the stage for the creation of the Alumni Network, but it took several attempts to gather the conditions for a successful launch. Marking the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of EYP, a dedicated group of alumni took the first steps towards reconnecting with former participants, and later convened in Berlin to formulate concrete plans to increase alumni engagement. They identified three core objectives for the network: enabling alumni to return to EYP as a space for active citizenship, providing opportunities to give back to the organisation, and reconnecting with friends to relive the EYP spirit. This foundation was further reproduced through the mission statement of the Alumni Network: "Connecting global citizens to enable and empower more democratic, inclusive, and engaged societies."

Since its inception, the Alumni Network has developed several projects and activities to achieve these goals:

- **Mentorship Program**

This program connects young EYPers with experienced alumni who provide guidance and advice on professional development and career transitions. It facilitates cross-generational exchange and helps young members gain valuable insights.

- **Alumni Happy Hours**

These are informal social gatherings that take place in various cities worldwide, allowing alumni to network and reconnect. These events have successfully drawn over 350 participants across 20 cities.

- **Alumni Talks**

This initiative is a series of talks where alumni share insights from their professional, academic, and personal lives. Covering a diverse range of topics such as LGBTQ+ rights, civil society in Eastern Europe, and anti-racism work, these talks have engaged over 400 attendees and provided a platform for deep and meaningful discussions.

- **Alumni Reunions**

These larger-scale reunions bring together alumni from different generations to reconnect, share experiences, and build stronger community ties. The most recent of these meetings happened during Thessaloniki 2024, the 100th International Session of the EYP.

- **Circle of Friends**

Launched in 2021, it is a donation platform that allows alumni to provide long-term financial support to the EYP. The initiative has successfully raised over €10,000, helping to increase the organisation's capacities, including hiring an Alumni Officer to support the alumni community needs and engagement.

The EYP Alumni Network is not just a gathering of former members but a dynamic and evolving community that continues to contribute to the EYP's mission of empowering young people. By providing opportunities for professional development, creating spaces for meaningful dialogue, fostering a sense of belonging, and supporting the organisation financially, the Alumni Network embodies the values of active citizenship and lifelong learning that EYP champions. Through its various initiatives, the network ensures that the spirit of EYP remains well beyond the immediate and active experience of its sessions.

## **2.2 The EYP Portugal**

The European Youth Parliament (EYP) Portugal, known as the *Parlamento Europeu dos Jovens (PEJ)*, was established in 1989. Officially represented by the *Associação Portuguesa do Parlamento Europeu dos Jovens (APPEJ)* since 1999, its headquarters are located in Porto under the *Federação das Associações Juvenis do Distrito do Porto (FAJDP)*. Initially founded and developed by teachers, the project laid the groundwork for what has become a vibrant and youth-led organisation. Over time, and as the project evolved, young people began to take on more leadership roles, driving the initiative forward. Today, the governing bodies of EYP Portugal are composed entirely of young active members, which reflects the shift towards a youth-led model that was seen throughout the network.

Over the past 35 years, EYP Portugal has played a significant role within the EYP network. It has organised forty-two National Sessions, numerous regional and school

sessions, three International Forums, and two International Sessions - the first International Session was held in Lisbon in 1990, followed by another in Porto in 2001.

Although EYP Portugal is a youth-led organisation, teachers remain fundamental to the dynamics of the NC. They engage students and facilitate their participation in EYP Portugal's events as delegates, serving as the link between the organisation and schools. Many of these partnerships have lasted over two decades, demonstrating the long-term collaboration between EYP Portugal and the educational community.

In present times, EYP Portugal maintains a regular calendar of events that includes three regional sessions each year, providing an introduction for new participants to experience EYP's methodologies and values. These regional sessions are followed by a National Session, where young Portuguese delegates come together to debate and take part in a selection for international EYP events. Additionally, EYP Portugal hosts two Members Weekend events annually, focusing on capacity building and strengthening the network among volunteers.

### **2.2.1 Organisational Structure**

EYP Portugal operates within a governance framework that aligns with Portuguese legal requirements and consists of three governing bodies: the Board, the Board of the General Assembly, and the Advisory Board. Each body plays a distinct role in ensuring the effective management, democratic governance, and accountability of the organisation (European Youth Parliament Portugal, n.d.-a):

- **The Board of EYP Portugal**

The Board is the main executive body of EYP Portugal, responsible for the daily management of the National Committee. From its strategic planning to the development of the sessions, it implements strategies that advance EYP's values and objectives across its activities. The Board is elected by the members of EYP Portugal for a one-year term, and its composition ranges from seven to nine members, who are tasked with specific roles and portfolios, including Presidency, Vice Presidency, Treasury, International Relations, Fundraising, Members and Regional Development, Image and Public Relations, and Event Coordination.

- **The Board of the General Assembly**

The Board of the General Assembly oversees the procedures and conduct of General Assemblies. Its key tasks include convening, directing, and guiding the assemblies, as well as resolving any disputes related to the interpretation of the statutes and other legal documents. This body plays a key role in upholding transparency, fairness, and democratic principles within the organisation. The Board of the General Assembly is composed of a President, a Vice President, and a Secretary, who are elected by the members every year.

- **The Advisory Board of EYP Portugal**

The Advisory Board serves as an independent oversight body, focusing on compliance and legal matters. Its responsibilities include issuing a written statement on the Annual Accounts Report presented by the Board and providing assessments on various matters requested by members or other governing bodies. The Advisory Board bases its evaluations solely on legal and accounting criteria and is composed of a President and two other members annually elected by the members of EYP Portugal.

### **2.2.2 Personal Experiences and Reflections**

My journey with the EYP started in February 2018, when I participated as a Delegate in a Regional Session of EYP Portugal in Guimarães. Like many other students, my entry into EYP was facilitated by a teacher with a longstanding history in the organisation. My high school teacher, a former Vice President of the Board of EYP Portugal from 2009 to 2013 and now an Honorary Member, introduced me to the project. Having first experienced the EYP format during a school session, I was encouraged to apply to participate in the northern regional session for the 2017/2018 school year. And though I wasn't selected to continue to the National Session that year, the experience caught my attention and started a passion for the project, which made me join EYP Portugal as a member and understand how I could further get involved.

Over the past six years, EYP has given me a transformative journey, and I have taken part in 40 events across Europe in diverse roles, in all the different teams. These experiences were more than just opportunities to dialogue and debate - they were moments of growth,

which fostered international friendships and gave me new perspectives on diverse cultures:

<b>Event Name</b>	<b>Type of Event</b>	<b>Role/Position</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>Year</b>
Braga 2024	National Members' Weekend	Participant	Portugal	2024
Porto 2024	National Session	NC Board Member	Portugal	2024
Viana do Castelo 2024	Regional Session	NC Board Member	Portugal	2024
Active and Inclusive Citizenship Lab 2024	Training Lab	Trainer	Hungary	2024
Viseu 2023	National Members' Weekend	NC Board Member	Portugal	2023
Coimbra 2023	Regional Session	NC Board Member	Portugal	2023
Bragança 2023	National Session	NC Board Member	Portugal	2023
Summer Academy 2023	Training Academy	Trainee	The Netherlands	2023
Vila Nova de Cerveira 2023	National Members' Weekend	NC Board Member	Portugal	2023
Athens '23	National Session	Chairperson	Greece	2023
BNC Spring Meeting 2023	International Meeting	Participant	Germany	2023
Oeiras 2023	Regional Session	NC Board Member	Portugal	2023
Vila do Conde 2022	National Members' Weekend	Participant	Portugal	2022
Guimarães 2022	Regional Session	NC Board Member	Portugal	2022
Aveiro 2022	Regional Session	NC Board Member	Portugal	2022
Iberian Forum 2022	International Forum	Core-Organiser	Portugal/Spai	2022

			n	
Ofir 2022	National Members' Weekend	Event Safe Person	Portugal	2022
Thessaly '22	Regional Session	Editor	Greece	2022
Lisboa 2022	National Session	Core-Organiser	Portugal	2022
Pardubice 2022	National Session	Chairperson	Czech Republic	2022
Viseu 2022	Regional Session	Jury Member	Portugal	2022
Sevilla 2022	Regional Session	Chairperson	Spain	2022
Viseu 2021	National Training	Participant	Portugal	2021
Bragança 2021	Regional Session	Head-Organiser	Portugal	2021
Thessaloniki 2021	International Forum	Media Team Member	Greece	2021
1st Digital Session of EYP Cyprus	Digital Session	Jury Member	Cyprus	2021
Rediscover 2021	Digital Session	Editorial Assistant	Croatia	2021
2nd Small Scale Event of EYP Portugal	Digital Session	Chairperson	Portugal	2021
GRavity	Digital Session	Editorial Assistant	Greece	2021
Castelo Branco 2021	Regional Session	Chairperson	Portugal	2021
Porto 2021	National Session	Organiser	Portugal	2021
Athens 2020	National Session	Media Team Member	Greece	2020
Portalegre 2020	Regional Session	Organiser	Portugal	2020
Pordenone 2020	Regional Session	Media Team Member	Italy	2020

Évora 2019	National Session	Media Team Member	Portugal	2019
46th National Session of EYP France	National Session	Media Team Member	France	2019
30 Years Celebration of EYP Portugal	Celebratory Event	Participant	Portugal	2019
Leiria 2019	Regional Session	Media Team Member	Portugal	2019
Mechelen 2018	International Forum	Delegate	Belgium	2018
Guimarães 2018	Regional Session	Delegate	Portugal	2018

Table 2 - Events that I have participated since joining EYP Portugal (created by the author).

By the summer of 2022, I felt that I could contribute more significantly to the organisation. Motivated by international experiences and encouraged by friends, I applied for the Board of EYP Portugal as an Event Coordinator. As a board member, I became completely involved in coordinating the logistics of our events - liaising with head organisers, managing venues, accommodation, and meals, and securing sponsorships. It was a demanding year that required a tremendous amount of dedication, but it was equally rewarding, and I felt a profound sense of fulfilment.

Towards the end of my term, I attended a BNC Meeting in Berlin, where network-wide discussions and encouragement from other members inspired me to take on a more significant role. I then applied to preside over EYP Portugal, and in September 2023 I was elected unanimously. Over the next year, I led a team of eight individuals, each with different portfolios, expectations, and working styles. This period challenged me in new ways, especially when it comes to leadership, strategic planning, and problem-solving, but it also offered me a profound sense of pride and gratitude for what we accomplished as a team.

Having finished my term as President in August 2024, I transitioned to a new role as the National Safe Person for the 2024-2025 period. This role focuses on maintaining the welfare of EYP Portugal members and training the Event Safe Persons who will attend

our regional and national events. My experiences within EYP, from organising and coordinating events to leading committees in academic discussions, have allowed me to understand the dynamics of group work and the importance of creating a safe and inclusive environment for all participants.

Among the different roles I had, I have been particularly drawn to the Organising and Academic Teams. Organising comes naturally to me, as I enjoy the procedures involved in planning both small and large-scale events. On the other hand, being part of an academic team and leading a committee of around eight participants, at a national and international level, was equally enriching. It allowed me to dive into the nuances of group dynamics and have a direct impact on their learning process for that session. This might be, for me, one of the most important roles in all of EYP - if we can foster an environment that encourages creativity, debate and critical thinking, we may be paving the way for new EYPers and active citizens.

Moreover, my role as President has given me deep insights into the challenges and opportunities that National Committees face. This experience has greatly developed my skills in leadership and strategy. Additionally, my involvement in international training sessions, such as the Active and Inclusive Citizenship Lab, has enhanced my capacity to design and deliver impactful training programs, conduct needs analyses, and lead engaging discussion-based workshops.

Reflecting on my six and a half years with EYP Portugal, I can confidently say that this experience has profoundly shaped who I am today. EYP has been a catalyst for personal growth, professional development, and deep connections with individuals (who became friends) all across Europe. Each role I have taken - from delegate to President - has pushed me to step out of my comfort zone, face new challenges, and embrace diverse perspectives. I've learned the true value of teamwork, resilience, and leadership in an environment that constantly evolves and adapts to the changing needs of its members. But perhaps most importantly, EYP has inspired me to contribute to a lifelong commitment to active citizenship, inclusivity, and youth empowerment. It has taught me that even small actions, driven by passion and purpose, can have a lasting impact on those around us. As I continue my journey, I carry forward the lessons, friendships, and values that EYP has given me, confident that they will continue to shape my contributions to a better future.

### **2.2.3 Challenges and Opportunities**

As any youth-led organisation, EYP Portugal faces both challenges and opportunities that shape its development and impact. Having been on the Board for the past two mandates, I can identify the main challenges that the national association faces, as well as opportunities for development.

One of the main challenges for EYP PT is ensuring the sustainability of its activities and volunteer engagement. Like many youth-led organisations, EYP PT fully relies on the commitment and passion of its volunteers. However, retaining and motivating volunteers, particularly as they transition from school to university or the job market, can be challenging and is an ongoing priority for the organisation.

Another critical challenge is securing adequate funding to support the events and activities. While there is a dedicated fundraising portfolio within the Board, which then operates and coordinates the Fundraising working group, obtaining financial support from external sponsors and partners remains a continuous struggle. Although some long-term partnerships have been established in recent years - such as the Portuguese Office of the European Parliament - there is always competition with other organisations for limited funding opportunities in the non-profit sector.

A major challenge for EYP Portugal is the regional imbalance in its active membership and engagement. Currently, around 70% of EYP Portugal's active members are concentrated in Porto and the surrounding northern region, where the organisation has the most enduring partnerships with schools. While these strong, long-standing relationships are beneficial, they highlight a need to expand and diversify EYP's regional reach, allowing it to engage more young people from diverse backgrounds and regions and ensuring a more balanced and representative membership.

Despite these challenges, EYP Portugal also has numerous opportunities to strengthen its impact and reach. Expanding the regional reach is a relevant opportunity. At the moment, each session - from Regional to National - is hosted in a different city, with the three regionals deliberately distributed across the North, Centre, and South regions. This strategy helps the organisation to engage a more diverse group of young people, particularly in regions that are currently underserved.

Another key opportunity for EYP Portugal lies in strengthening strategic partnerships with educational institutions, NGOs, government bodies, and private sector stakeholders. In recent years, the organisation has formed several partnerships that have enhanced the quality of its projects - from Agros, which provided milk for coffee breaks, to Ambar, which helped with materials for welcome kits. However, while many provide essential funding, resources, and logistical support, the majority only happen once. Long-term partnerships are an opportunity to obtain sustainable funding streams, reducing the reliance on short-term sponsorships and creating a more stable environment for growth and development.

A large opportunity for EYP Portugal is to continuously engage with the rest of the network to benefit from knowledge exchange and collaborative learning. The extensive network of NCs provides a rich repository of experiences, strategies, and innovative practices that EYP Portugal can draw from. Although this can be challenging, given that all members are volunteers and not full-time staff, by actively participating in cross-network discussions and exchanging best practices with other NCs methodologies can be refined, challenges more effectively addressed, and operations optimised.

Furthermore, the ongoing shift towards digitalisation and hybrid events offers a significant opportunity to innovate its event formats and extend its reach. The use of digital tools and platforms already makes sessions and events more accessible and inclusive, and the pre-session period is now only possible because of digital meetings and organisational tools that allow young EYPers from all over Europe to connect and prepare the different session elements.

At the end of the day, the “European Youth Parliament won’t change the world: But it will change the people who do” (Okay-Somerville, 2021). This statement by Matthew Caine, Communications Trustee of the EYP UK, encapsulates the powerful role of EYP in educating the next generation of active citizens. And as EYP Portugal continues to navigate challenges and embrace new opportunities, the impact on individuals remains at the core of its mission and vision.

## **CHAPTER III – DATA PRESENTATION AND RESULTS**

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Chapter 3 presents the data collected through the various research methodologies used in this study. Rather than interpreting the results, which will be discussed in Chapter 4, the focus is on providing a clear and thorough summary of the raw data obtained, offering a comprehensive view of the evidence upon which the study's findings and analysis are built.

The chapter begins by outlining the research methodology, detailing the study's design, collection tools, and the techniques used for analysis. Ethical considerations, which were central to ensuring the credibility and integrity of the findings, are also discussed to give context to the data collection process.

Following this, the data is presented in alignment with the study's research questions. Quantitative and qualitative insights from surveys, interviews, feedback forms, and document analysis are systematically arranged to reflect the objectives of each question, in order to provide a seamless transition from data collection to the more nuanced interpretation and discussion in the next chapter.

Chapter 3 therefore serves as a bridge between the data collection process and the deeper interpretation that follows, ensuring that the reader is fully prepared to engage with the analysis in the following chapter.

### **3.1 Methodology: Aim and Research Questions**

The study aims to explore whether the skills developed through non-formal education in youth organisations enhance the employability of young people. Focusing on the European Youth Parliament, and specifically EYP Portugal, as a case study, this research assesses how the skills gained through participation in EYP align with the demands of the Portuguese labour market and how they are considered and valued by employers.

This chapter presents and analyses data collected throughout the research process, addressing the research questions defined for the study and providing meaningful insights on the impact of the EYP on skills acquisition and employability. The research questions (RQ) outlined below explore participants' perceptions of the skills gained, their alignment with market requirements, employers' views on them and their overall impact on employability. Each question is interlinked with the data collection tools, forming a logical progression from skills acquisition to employment outcomes.

- **Research Question 1:** *What specific skills are acquired through participation in non-formal education activities within the European Youth Parliament?*

RQ1 identifies the key skills that participants develop through their involvement in EYP. This question establishes the foundation of what is gained from NFE activities, allowing for deeper analysis. The collected data from the feedback forms, complemented by the EYP PT survey and the EYP Impact Assessment provide a better comprehension of the participants' perspectives regarding the skills they perceive to acquire.

- **Research Question 2:** *What are the self-reported impacts of participation in EYP on young people's confidence and readiness for the job market?*

Building on the identification of skills, RQ2 explores how participation in EYP influences participants' self-confidence and readiness for the labour market. The focus is on understanding how the skills identified in RQ1 translate into personal growth and professional preparedness. The Survey to EYP PT members and alumni will provide insights into these self-reported impacts.

- **Research Question 3:** *How do the skills gained through participation in the European Youth Parliament align with the current demands of the job market?*

RQ3 shifts from participants' perspectives to an external evaluation, assessing whether the skills gained through EYP match the current demands of the job market. By analysing how well these competencies align with employers' expectations, RQ3 question bridges the gap between education and employment. Data for this question will come from the employer interviews, and the survey to EYP PT members and alumni.

- **Research Question 4:** *How do employers perceive the skills and experiences gained through participation in non-formal education activities and organisations, and which attributes are particularly valued?*

RQ4 addresses employers' views on the value of the skills and experiences gained through participation in NFE activities, such as EYP. After determining the alignment of skills with market demands, this question assesses employer perceptions of candidates with such experiences. It focuses on the specific attributes that are particularly valued by employers, which will be investigated through the conducted employer interviews.

- **Research Question 5:** *How does participation in youth organisations, and particularly in EYP, influence young people's access to job opportunities?*

The final research question evaluates the broader impact of participation in EYP by examining how the skills translate into actual job opportunities. RQ5 brings the analysis full circle by moving from skills acquisition to employability outcomes. Data from surveys and feedback forms, along with employer interviews, provide evidence of the overall impact of EYP participation on young people's employment prospects.

Research Question		Logic	Data Collection Tools
RQ1	What specific skills are acquired through participation in non-formal education activities within the European Youth Parliament?	Identifying Skills (participants perspective)	Survey to EYP Members and Alumni
			Feedback Forms
			EYP Impact Assessment
RQ2	What are the self-reported impacts of participation in EYP on young people's confidence and readiness for the job market?	Impact on Confidence (participants perspective)	Survey to EYP Members and Alumni
RQ3	How do the skills gained through participation in the European Youth Parliament align with the current demands of the job market?	Alignment with the Job Market (external perspective)	Employer Interviews
			Survey to EYP Members and Alumni
RQ4	How do employers perceive the skills and experiences gained through participation in NFE and Youth organisations, and which attributes are particularly valued?	Employers Perspective's on Skills (external perspective)	Employer Surveys
RQ5	How does participation in youth organisations (and particularly in EYP) influence young people's access to job opportunities?	Overall Influence on Job Opportunities (external perspective)	Survey to EYP Members and Alumni
			Feedback Forms
			Employer Interviews

Table 3: Summary of the Research Questions, their logical flow and the data collection tools.

## **3.2 Research Design**

This study adopts a convergent mixed methods research design, to explore the relationship between NFE activities and the employability of young people, particularly through the case study of EYP Portugal. The convergent design allows for the collection of both qualitative and quantitative data simultaneously, enabling a comprehensive analysis of the research problem. In the words of Morse (1991: 122) the intent of this approach is “to obtain different but complementary data on the same topic”. The quantitative data provides an empirical basis for understanding trends and patterns in skills acquisition, while the qualitative data offers rich, contextual insights into personal experiences and perceptions (Creswell & Clark, 2017: 98). Interestingly, the mixed methods approach is also seen as a broader lens for viewing the social world.. As Greene (2007: 20) defines: “that actively invites [us] to participate in dialogue . . . multiple ways of seeing and hearing, multiple ways of making sense of the social world, and multiple standpoints on what is important and to be valued and cherished.”.

### **Rationale for Convergent Design**

A convergent mixed methods approach is particularly suitable for this study as it allows for parallel data collection from both qualitative and quantitative sources, which are then analysed independently before being compared and synthesised (Creswell, 2014: 94). By using this design, the study effectively captures the quantitative impact of skills acquisition through structured feedback forms and organisational records, while simultaneously gathering qualitative insights from in-depth interviews and open-ended survey responses. This combination allows the research to offer a well-rounded perspective on how participation in NFE impacts employability.

### **Triangulation and Validation**

The triangulation provided by the convergent design enhances the study’s validity and reliability. By collecting data from multiple sources (feedback forms, interviews, and surveys), the study ensures that findings accurately reflect and evaluate the idea in question (Noble & Heale, 2019). This approach allows for the cross-validation of findings, helping to create a more robust understanding of the topic at hand.

### **3.3 Case Study and Data Collection Tools**

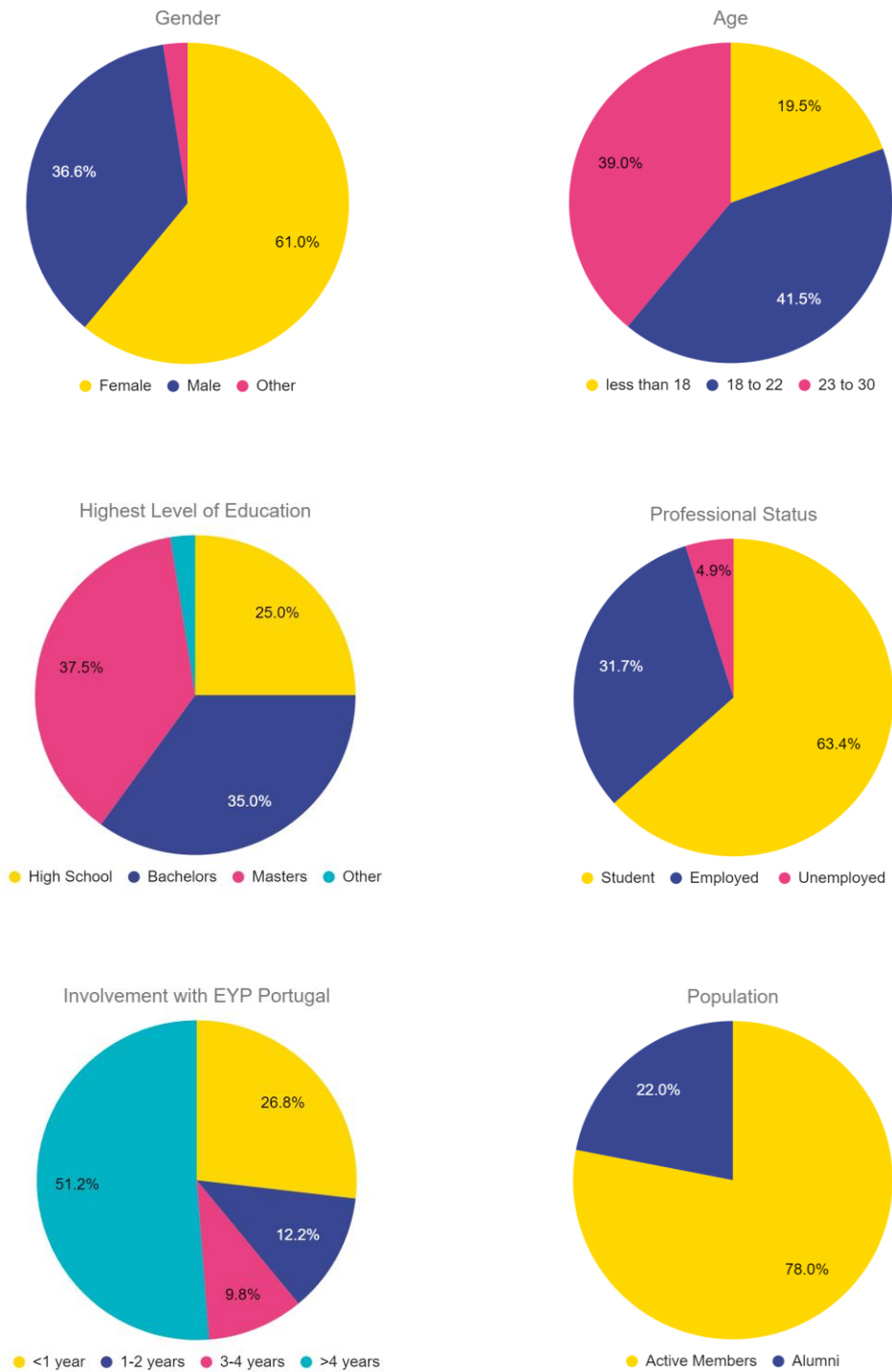
The research is centred on EYP Portugal as a case study, providing a detailed examination of how NFE within this context contributes to skills acquisition and career preparedness. Building on my involvement in EYP Portugal, discussed in Chapter 2, the case study approach enables a deeper and more focused exploration of the organisation's impact on young people's employability within the Portuguese labour market. To capture a wide range of insights, this study relies on specific tools for data collection:

#### **3.3.1 Survey to EYP Portugal Members and Alumni**

**Purpose:** The purpose of the survey is to gather data from current and former members of EYP Portugal to assess how participation in EYP has impacted their skills development, employability, and overall confidence in navigating the job market. The survey uses a combination of quantitative and qualitative questions, allowing participants to provide ratings and more detailed insights into their experiences. Specifically, the survey seeks to measure skills acquisition and development through participation in EYP; alignment of these skills with job market demands; and the impact on participants' confidence and readiness for the professional world. The survey is available in the Appendix section of this thesis.

**Target Population:** Both current members and alumni of EYP Portugal.

**Sample Size and Demographics:** The survey received 41 responses, with participants representing a wide range of demographics and levels of involvement in EYP:



Figures 3 to 8: Demographic Data on the respondents of the Survey based on Gender, Age, Education, Professional Status, Involvement with EYP Portugal and Population.

It is relevant to highlight the involvement in teams, where:

- 2 respondents had been involved in all teams (Academic, Organising, Media, and Jury Teams, NC Board Member);
- 1 respondent had been involved in all teams except as an NC Board Member;
- 7 respondents had experience in all teams except the Jury Team;
- 2 respondents had been involved in all teams except the Media Team.

**Survey Design:** The survey was designed with a mix of quantitative and qualitative questions:

- Quantitative questions used a Likert scale (1 to 5) for participants to rate:
  - The development of specific skills through EYP participation;
  - The alignment of these skills with current job market demands;
  - The impact of EYP on their confidence and readiness for entering the workforce.
  - Scores of 1 and 2 were classified as negative, indicating disagreement or dissatisfaction. A score of 3 was considered neutral, reflecting neither a positive nor negative stance. Scores of 4 and 5 were considered positive, with 5 representing a very positive response or strong agreement.
- Qualitative open-ended questions allowed participants to elaborate on their experiences. They were invited to share stories and provide examples of how their participation in EYP had influenced their skills development and career preparedness.

The survey covered four primary areas: Background information; Skills acquisition and development through EYP activities; Alignment with job market demands; and Impact on confidence and readiness for the job market.

**Method of Distribution:** The survey was conducted online and distributed through EYP Portugal's official communication channels. Active members received the survey via Slack, which is the primary platform for internal communication. The survey was also emailed to members of the Portuguese alumni network, ensuring that both members and alumni had the opportunity to participate.

**Response Rate:** Out of a total of 110 active members in EYP Portugal (as of September 26, 2024), 32 responded to the survey, representing an engagement rate of approximately 29% among current members. Additionally, 9 alumni from the 25 registered members of the Portuguese alumni network participated, a response rate of 36% for the alumni group. While response rates may vary, these figures provide a diverse cross-section of EYP PT members and alumni across distinct levels of engagement with the organisation and professional status.

### 3.3.2 Feedback Forms

**Purpose:** The Feedback forms were collected and compiled as a key tool for gathering insights into participants' experiences during EYP events. Their primary purpose was to assess event-specific outcomes, including skills acquisition, participant satisfaction, and the perceived impact of the activities. By collecting both quantitative feedback, the forms allowed participants to evaluate various aspects of the event, such as the effectiveness of the learning experience, the engagement level of sessions, and whether personal expectations were met.

Beyond serving this research, feedback forms are a major mechanism through which EYP assesses its overall work and the satisfaction of its participants. These forms enable the organisation to reflect on each event, identifying both strengths and areas for improvement, helping refine its approach to event organisation and delivery. The anonymous nature of the forms encourages honest feedback, opening a direct line of communication between EYP and its participants. This feedback not only provides immediate insights but also shapes the future direction of EYP events. In the past, feedback has led to significant changes, such as the incorporation of new cultural activities and adjustments to the traditional structure of sessions, ensuring that EYP events remain dynamic, relevant, and aligned with participant needs. The compilation of the feedback forms, evaluated on its quantitative base, are available in the Appendix section of this thesis.

**Target Population:** The feedback forms were distributed to all participants at EYP Portugal events, including delegates, teachers, and officials.

**Sample Size and Demographics:** 293 responses were collected from various EYP Portugal sessions held between 2021 and 2024. The events that gathered the most responses were Porto 2024 (51 responses) and Lisboa 2022 (44 responses), while the session with the fewest responses was Oeiras 2023 (13 responses). The following table summarises the participant demographics from the feedback forms collected across various EYP Portugal events, including the number of delegates, teachers, officials, total event attendance, and the response rate:

Event	Total Responses	Delegates (%)	Teachers (%)	Officials (%)	Total Attendance	Response Rate (%)	Data Collection Period
Porto 2024	51	39 (76.5%)	7 (13.7%)	5 (9.8%)	123	41.5%	April 21 – May 9, 2024
Viana do Castelo 2024	28	22 (78.6%)	0 (0.0%)	6 (21.4%)	108	25.9%	March 27 – March 30, 2024
Setúbal 2024	37	29 (78.4%)	3 (8.1%)	5 (13.5%)	88	42.0%	February 11 – March 5, 2024
Coimbra 2023	19	14 (73.7%)	0 (0.0%)	5 (26.3%)	94	20.2%	November 21 – December 11, 2023
Bragança 2023	21	13 (61.9%)	0 (0.0%)	8 (38.1%)	134	15.7%	September 28 – October 16, 2023
Oeiras 2023	13	13 (100.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	86	15.1%	March 4 – March 7, 2023
Guimarães 2022	17	9 (52.9%)	0 (0.0%)	8 (47.1%)	88	19.3%	November 24 – November 28, 2022
Aveiro 2022	22	12 (54.5%)	0 (0.0%)	10 (45.5%)	80	27.5%	November 2 – November 15, 2022
Iberian Forum 2022	24	14 (58.3%)	0 (0.0%)	10 (41.7%)	111	21.6%	September 22 – September 28, 2022
Lisboa 2022	44	33 (75.0%)	0 (0.0%)	11 (25.0%)	151	29.1%	May 20 – June 9, 2022
Viseu 2022	41	25 (61.0%)	0 (0.0%)	16 (39.0%)	88	46.6%	March 13 – March 25, 2022
Évora 2022	37	20 (54.1%)	0 (0.0%)	17 (45.9%)	86	43.0%	March 3 – March 13, 2022
Bragança 2021	25	18 (72.0%)	0 (0.0%)	7 (28.0%)	90	27.8%	December 14 – December 27, 2021

Table 4: Breakdown of Participant Responses by Role, Total Attendance, and Response Rate for EYP Portugal Sessions (2021–2024).

In terms of the demographics, some conclusions can be taken:

- Events with more participants or those that distributed feedback forms during the General Assembly (Setúbal, Viana do Castelo e Porto 2024) have more responses;
- Across all events, delegates are the most frequent respondents, as they represent the biggest group in the sessions and are given a central role. Officials also engage regularly, but teacher participation in feedback is generally low.
- There are variations across events in officials' feedback, with some events like Guimarães 2022 and Aveiro 2022 having a higher engagement from officials.

**Design of Feedback Forms:** The feedback forms were designed and considered in terms of their quantitative data, across several key areas, divided into the following sections:

1. Teams Evaluation: Participants evaluated the performance of each officials' team involved in the event;
2. Event Quality: This section covered participants' evaluations of overall event quality, including logistical aspects like food, accommodation, and participants' motivation. It also included evaluations of different programme elements, such as Teambuilding or other cultural activities).
3. Competencies and Learning: Participants assessed the skills and values they developed during the event. This section also considered participants' satisfaction with their learning experience and how well the event facilitated their personal growth.

**Response Timing:** Feedback forms were distributed to participants immediately after the event concluded. In some cases, such as the Setúbal, Viana do Castelo, and Porto sessions, the forms were distributed during the General Assembly on the last day of the event to maximize response rates. Even after the conclusion of the event, the forms remained open to allow additional responses.

### 3.3.3 Employer Interviews

**Purpose:** The primary purpose of the employer interviews was to gather in-depth insights into employers' perceptions of the skills developed through participation in NFE activities and projects. These interviews aimed to explore how employers value these skills in the

recruitment process and which specific competencies are seen as particularly relevant or aligned with the demands of the job market. Additionally, the interviews provided a platform for employers to share their views on how experiences in youth organisations influence professional success.

**Target Population:** The interviews targeted individuals with key roles in recruitment, such as CEOs, CFOs, and Managers. Participants were selected based on their extensive involvement in hiring processes. The employers represented diverse backgrounds and industries, offering a range of perspectives on the value of non-formal education and EYP experiences.

**Sample Size and Demographics:** A total of six interviews were conducted with professionals from diverse areas and backgrounds, providing a wide range of perspectives on the skills gained through NFE projects like EYP. The table below presents key information about the interviewees, including their roles, the companies they represent, the areas in which their companies operate, their non-formal education backgrounds, and the details of the interviews (time and place):

Name	Company and Role	Area of Operation	NFE Background	Interview Data
Abílio Silva	CFO at TIBA	Freight Forwarding and Logistics	Volunteer in Scouting	August 21, 2024 - online platform (zoom)
Anabela Gomes	Production Manager at Nimco Made4You	Textile and Fashion Manufacturing	Volunteer in Scouting	August 29, 2024 - online platform (zoom)
Carlos Rodrigues	CFO at Ferreira de Sá Rugs	Textile Manufacturing	Former volunteer in Scouting	August 28, 2024 - online platform (zoom)
Ivo Faria	CEO at Dualbanho	Retail and Wholesale (Bathroom Products)	National Chief in CNE - Scouting in Portugal	August 28, 2024 - online platform (zoom)
Manuel Pacheco	Director of Financial Planning & Analysis at Sword Health	Health Technology	Experience with Erasmus+ projects	August 20, 2024 - presential (Porto)
Pedro Almeida	CEO and Co-Founder at Teach For Portugal	Non-Profit Education	Indirect experience with Scouting	September 3, 2024 - online platform (zoom)

Table 5: Summary of the Interviewees profiles', considering their role, area of operation, NFE background and data.

Regarding the interviewees, some conclusions can be considered:

- The interviewees represent a wide range of industries, including Freight Forwarding and Logistics, Textile and Fashion Manufacturing, Retail and Wholesale (Bathroom Products), Health Technology, and Non-Profit Education;
- Several interviewees have a background in Scouting, either as volunteers or in leadership roles, or have experience with Erasmus+ projects and international work;
- The majority of interviews were conducted online, with only one interview conducted in person;
- Most interviewees hold high-level positions, such as CFOs, CEOs, and Directors, having significant influence in recruitment processes and organisational decision-making;
- The interviews were conducted over a short period, mostly between late August and early September 2024;
- There is a lack of gender balance among the interviewees, with only one female participant out of six interviewees.

**Interview Design:** The interviews followed a semi-structured format, combining prepared topics with the flexibility for open-ended discussions. This format allowed employers to provide detailed insights into their hiring practices and how they assess candidates with non-formal education experiences. The semi-structured design allowed for tailored conversations, with each employer providing unique insights based on their company's sector and specific needs in the recruitment process. Key topics covered included:

- Employers' perceptions of the skills gained through non-formal education participation;
- Alignment of these skills with the demands of the job market;
- The specific attributes and competencies that employers value in candidates from youth organisations;
- The role of experiences in non-formal education in shaping professional development and employability.

**Method of Distribution:** The interviews were conducted both in person and online, depending on the availability and location of the interviewees. Five interviews were

conducted through the online platform Zoom, while one interview happened in a presential format.

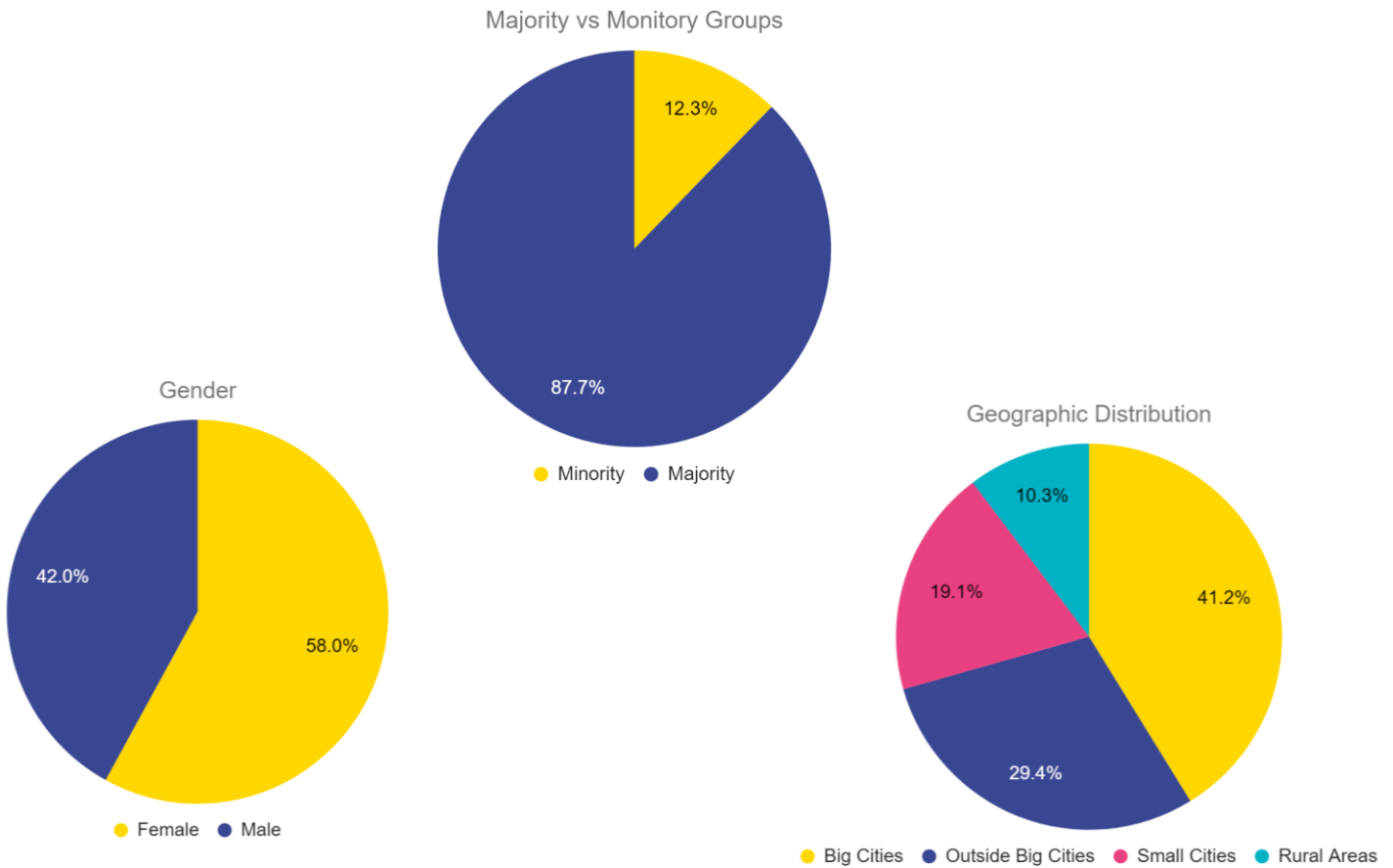
### **3.3.4 EYP Impact Assessment**

**Purpose:** The EYP Impact Assessment was designed to evaluate the overall experience and societal impact of the EYP program. It measured how participation influences young people's awareness of European issues, promotes active citizenship, enhances personal skills development, and facilitates intercultural dialogue. By analysing both quantitative and qualitative data, the assessment provided insights into the value that EYP adds to its participants and the broader community.

**Target Population:** The assessment focused on both officials and delegates of the five International Sessions organised by EYP during 2018 and 2019. These individuals represent diverse socio-economic backgrounds and geographic locations within the EYP network.

**Sample Size and Demographics:** The EYP Impact Assessment draws on data from two large-scale evaluations conducted during the 2018-2019 period:

- **First Evaluation:** Nearly 1,400 responses (99% of participants) were gathered from five International Sessions held in Vilnius (Lithuania), Rotterdam (The Netherlands), Yerevan (Armenia), Valencia (Spain), and Hamburg (Germany).
- **Second Evaluation:** A follow-up survey collected 600 responses.



Figures 9 to 11: Demographics of the EYP Impact Assessment based on Gender, Minority vs Majority Groups, and Geographic Distribution.

**Assessment Design:** The assessment employed a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative surveys with qualitative evaluations. Respondents rated their agreement with various statements using a scale of 1-9 or 1-5: on a scale from 1-9 respondents were coded as identifying with the statement if they gave it a score of 6 or higher; on a scale from 1-5 respondents were coded as identifying with the statement if they gave it a score of 4 or higher; and respondents were coded as strongly in agreement if they rated a statement with a score of 5 out of 5.

### 3.4 Data Analysis

To interpret the data collected, the study used both thematic analysis for the qualitative data and statistical analysis for the quantitative data.

- **Thematic Analysis**

This method was used to analyse the qualitative data from interviews and open-ended survey responses. Thematic analysis involved identifying patterns and themes related to the skills gained through EYP participation, the perceived value of these skills, and how they influence employability.

- **Statistical Analysis**

The quantitative data collected through surveys and feedback forms was analysed using statistical methods. Percentages and other descriptive statistics were used to quantify the extent of skills acquisition and the self-reported impact on employability.

### **3.5 Ethical Considerations**

This research was conducted in accordance with the European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity (ALLEA, 2023), which emphasises the principles of reliability, honesty, respect, and accountability in research. These principles guided the ethical framework for this study, ensuring that participants' rights were protected, and data was handled responsibly and transparently throughout the research process.

#### **Informed Consent**

Informed consent is fundamental to ethical research, ensuring that participants understand the purpose and procedure of their participation, as well as how their data will be used and treated (ALLEA, 2023: 8). In line with this, all participants provided informed consent prior to their involvement in the study. For the interviews, written consent was obtained via signed forms after briefing participants about the study's objectives and methods. In the case of the survey, a consent clause was integrated into the form, requiring participants to confirm their agreement before proceeding. The feedback forms from EYP Portugal already contained a clause stating that the data could be used for research purposes, fulfilling the requirement for consent.

#### **Confidentiality and Anonymity**

According to the European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity (2023: 9), researchers are obliged to handle personal data with the utmost care and sensitivity. In this study, no

personally identifiable information was collected from the surveys or feedback forms, and the identities of interview participants had permission for disclosure.

### **Data Protection and Security**

All collected data was stored securely, with only the researcher and, in some cases, the supervisor having access. In compliance with the GDPR, participants were informed that their data would not be shared with third parties without their explicit consent.

### **Voluntary Participation and Right to Withdraw**

Participation in this research was entirely voluntary, aligning with the principle of respect for individuals' autonomy. Participants were fully informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any point without facing any consequences. This ensured that participants retained control over their involvement, in accordance with ethical research practices.

## **3.6 Limitations**

While this study offers valuable insights into the influence of participation in the EYP and non-formal education on employability, several limitations must be acknowledged. These limitations mainly relate to challenges in data collection, potential biases, and issues regarding the geographic relevance of the findings. It becomes then relevant to address these constraints, as to better understand the scope and validity of the conclusions drawn from the research.

- **Sampling Bias**

An important limitation of this study lies in the sampling bias, particularly regarding participant recruitment for both the survey and the interviews with employers. The EYP PT Survey had a low response rate, limiting the diversity of insights. Similarly, some scheduled employer interviews did not happen due to a lack of response or schedule incompatibilities. Another recurring challenge was that the feedback forms in EYP PT consistently gathered low response rates per session. Additionally, a potential bias was introduced by the fact that the majority of interviewed employers had personal experience with scouting, with four being scouts themselves and another having indirect experience through their children's involvement with scouting. This overlap in experiences could

have contributed to a more favourable view of NFE programs, possibly making it easier to conclude positively about the skills developed in these contexts.

- **Geographic Relevance**

The geographic relevance of focusing solely on EYP Portugal also presents a limitation in the generalisation of the findings. While I believe that comparable results could be expected if other national branches of EYP or other international youth organisations were included, the cultural and organisational nuances of different regions might lead to variations in how skills are perceived and valued by employers. Without data from broader contexts, it is difficult to assert that the findings represent a universal trend across all branches of EYP or youth organisations worldwide.

- **Data Collection Challenges**

The data collection process encountered some limitations, especially regarding incomplete responses. In the EYP PT Survey, respondents were given the option to skip open-ended qualitative questions, resulting in fewer in-depth qualitative insights. A more significant impact could have been observed if all respondents had engaged with the qualitative sections, providing richer contextual information. Although no major gaps were found in the feedback forms, the limited engagement with open-ended questions also restricted the depth of analysis.

- **Balancing Qualitative and Quantitative Data**

There was also a challenge in balancing qualitative and quantitative data, particularly because the number of responses differed significantly across data sources. For example, while the feedback forms had nearly 400 responses, the EYP PT Survey had fewer than 41 qualitative responses. This made it difficult to balance the weight of each source in the analysis. To address this, I relied on the feedback forms as the primary data source and used other sources like the survey to confirm and support the findings, though this approach may have influenced the analysis toward the larger data sets.

- **Subjectivity**

Finally, as someone with personal involvement in EYP Portugal, my close connection to the project may have introduced subjectivity into the analysis, despite efforts to maintain objectivity. My strong recognition of the project's value and ambitions might have led to

a tendency to highlight its positive aspects, potentially downplaying any negative or less favourable feedback. While I strived to remain impartial, my bias in favour of the program could have influenced the interpretation of results.

### **3.7 Data Presentation by Research Question**

#### **3.7.1 Research Question 1**

*What specific skills are acquired through participation in non-formal education activities within the European Youth Parliament?*

The results for Research Question 1 are drawn from three main sources: feedback forms from previous sessions of EYP Portugal, the EYP PT Survey, and the EYP Impact Assessment. The following sections summarise the skills participants reported acquiring and developing through participating in these activities.

##### **3.7.1.1 Skills Development**

Across all sources, the data shows that participants in EYP activities consistently rated the development of various skills highly. The following specific skills emerged as particularly significant, based on the Feedback Forms and the EYP PT Survey:

- **Communication Skills:** This skill was rated highly across all sources, with 87% of Feedback Form respondents giving it a score of 4 or 5. Similarly, it scored an average of 90.2% in the EYP PT Survey, following the same criteria. Participants consistently mentioned becoming more confident in expressing their views in front of others, a sentiment also reinforced by the EYP Impact Assessment.
- **Teamwork:** Another highly rated skill, teamwork received 84.2% positive ratings in the Feedback Forms and the highest positive score in the EYP PT Survey (95.1%). Teamwork was frequently mentioned as being developed during activities such as Committee Work and Teambuilding, where collaboration was essential for problem-solving and decision-making.
- **Problem-Solving:** In the EYP PT Survey, problem-solving received 92.7% of positive scores, highlighting its importance, particularly during Committee Work and Teambuilding. Problem-solving was linked to critical thinking, creativity, and

project management, with participants frequently mentioning these skills as central to their experience.

- **Project Management:** Both the Feedback Forms (76.3% positive ratings) and the EYP PT Survey (80.5%) highlighted the importance of project management. Participants indicated that EYP helped them manage projects in practical, real-life scenarios, in an experience that was versatile and applicable in various contexts.
- **Intercultural Competence:** This skill was positively rated across both the Feedback Forms (76.6%) and the EYP PT Survey (90.2%). Additionally, the EYP Impact Assessment supported these findings, with 93.6% of participants reporting that they learned to recognise and respect different perspectives. The diverse, multinational setting of EYP was mentioned by participants as crucial to help develop this skill.
- **Leadership:** Leadership skills were rated lower when compared to the previous skills, but still received a positive score of 61.6% in the Feedback Forms and 82.9% in the EYP PT Survey. Notably, across the different sessions, members of academic, organising and jury teams rated leadership lower, and delegates sometimes gave it a lower score. Leadership was often connected to activities such as Teambuilding and Committee Work.
- **Public Speaking:** While public speaking received a lower but positive rating in the Feedback Forms (66.1% of 4 and 5 scores), the EYP PT Survey rated it with the same criteria at 85.4%, being overall recognised as a key component of the General Assembly, where participants had to present speeches and address an audience.
- **Negotiation and Dialogue:** These skills, here considered together, were closely related, with dialogue and compromise achieving 81.4% of positive scores in the Feedback Forms and negotiation receiving 73.2% in the EYP PT Survey. The EYP Impact Assessment further highlighted that 64% of participants felt they gained an appreciation for consensus-based decision-making during international sessions.

- **Civic Skills:** Participants frequently cited the development of civic skills, with 79.1% in the Feedback Forms reporting gains in this area. The EYP Impact Assessment reinforced this finding: 90.3% of respondents felt that participation in international sessions increased their willingness to get involved in society and/or politics, and 99.1% were motivated to address societal and environmental issues.

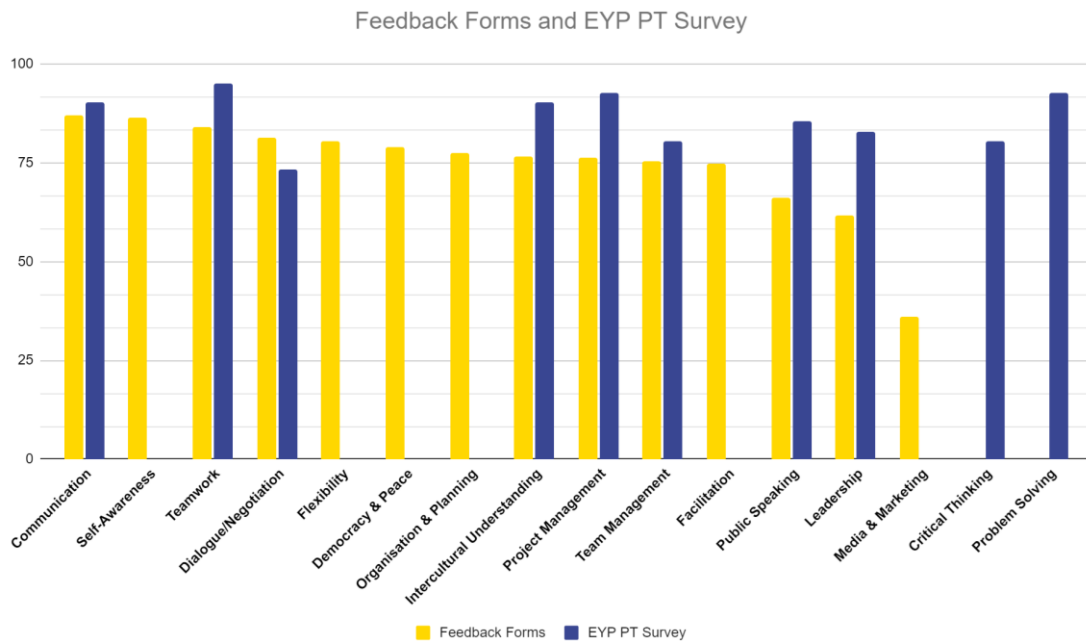


Figure 12: Comparison between Feedback Forms and EYP PT Survey on soft skills (in %)

- **Other Skills:** Other relevant skills noted in the Feedback Forms include flexibility (80.5%), self-awareness (86.4%), and facilitation (74.9%). These were not explicitly rated in the EYP PT Survey but were mentioned in qualitative feedback. Media and marketing skills were the lowest-rated, scoring only 36.2% of positive ratings in the Feedback Forms, where both officials and delegates consistently rated media skills lower than the rest. These skills were not directly evaluated in the EYP PT Survey.

### 3.7.1.2 Session-Specific Skills Development

Different phases of the EYP events helped participants develop specific skills:

**General Assembly:** Public speaking and communication skills were frequently mentioned as being developed during the General Assembly, where participants prepared and delivered speeches and engaged in formal discussions.

**Committee Work:** This phase was highlighted as critical for the development of problem-solving, critical thinking, communication, creativity, project management, and teamwork skills.

**Teambuilding:** Leadership, teamwork, negotiation, and problem-solving were the primary skills developed during Teambuilding activities, as participants navigated group dynamics and challenges.

Participants' views on General Assembly
"I developed my public speaking skills during the discussions of important topics of our society, by making speeches..."
"At my first EYP session I was the most reserved and shy person, I would never speak to anyone, sometimes even when spoken to. Nowadays I find public speaking and communication to be my biggest strengths."
"While speaking to an audience in EYP, in the GA for example, I improved my communication skills"
Participants' views on Committee Work
"In the first hours of committee work we would discuss the problems within our topic, which ones were the more morally relevant to solve or the ones with greater possibility of being solved. We discussed this problems without resorting to votes, and this led to an exponential growth of mine Critical Thinking and the skills in Project Management to stay within the time limit or the skills in Teamwork. Furthermore, this discussion required a majority of opinion or even a global acceptance, so it was required a huge amount of patience and more importantly skills in negotiation and persuasion, having the last one never been tested in school. For example, leading the writing board so ideas wouldn't get lost was a position that I assumed and was a time to improve my skills as moderator."
"Committee work [was] where problem-solving, critical thinking and communication were key to hitting our target."
"...while doing committee work I developed critical thinking and the ability to be more open-minded."
Participants' views on Teambuilding
"Teambuilding exercises during sessions where we had to overcome challenges as a team or get to a consensus over a certain problem, improving leadership, teamwork, negotiation and problem-solving."

Table 4: Participant's views on skills developed on different session moments.

### 3.7.1.3 Demographic Insights

- **Experience Levels:** Members with more experience in EYP reported higher ratings for leadership and management-related skills. Participants with more than 4 years of experience rated leadership and people management at 4.42, compared to a rating of 3.72 by those with less than 1 year of experience. Beyond this, there was little variation in skill ratings based on the length of involvement.
- **Gender Comparisons:** There were no significant differences in skills development ratings when comparing male and female participants

### 3.7.1.4 Learning Experience and Civic Engagement

- **Learning Experience:** Across all sources, the overwhelming majority of participants rated their EYP experience as positive. In the Feedback Forms, 94.7% of respondents rated it a very positive learning experience, which is consistent with the EYP Impact Assessment, where 98% of respondents shared this view.
- **Civic Engagement:** A key outcome of EYP participation is the increased sense of civic engagement. In the Feedback Forms, 88.8% of respondents felt empowered to participate actively in society, a sentiment echoed in the EYP Impact Assessment. Additionally, 97.5% of respondents believe that participating in elections is an important way of contributing to society, highlighting the impact EYP had on civic awareness and motivation.

### 3.7.1.5 RQ1 Key Points

- Communication and Teamwork were the highest-rated skills across all sources, with participants frequently reporting enhanced abilities in these areas.
- Problem-solving and project management were also crucial skills that participants developed, particularly during Committee Work and Teambuilding.
- Leadership and public speaking were rated slightly lower overall, but these skills were still recognised as important, especially during Teambuilding and the General Assembly.
- Intercultural competence was strongly developed through EYP's multinational environment, helping participants navigate cultural differences and broaden their perspectives.

- Civic skills and engagement were critical outcomes of EYP participation, with many participants reporting increased motivation to engage in society and politics.
- Experience in EYP positively impacted leadership and management-related skills, with more experienced members reporting higher ratings.
- No significant gender differences were observed in skills development.

### 3.7.2 Research Question 2

*What are the self-reported impacts of participation in EYP on young people's confidence and readiness for the job market?*

For RQ2, the primary source of data is the Survey to EYP PT members and alumni. This survey is particularly valuable in the context of the research, as it includes a dedicated section titled "Impact on Confidence and Job Market Readiness," designed to evaluate how participants perceive the effects of their EYP involvement on their professional confidence and job market preparedness. The survey results are of great significance due to the high response rate from members and alumni who have been engaged with EYP Portugal for a substantial period of time, many who are now entering the job market. Their insights provide a crucial perspective on the impact EYP has on young people's professional readiness. While additional data from other sources used in RQ1 may support some findings, the focus for this research question is primarily on the EYP PT Survey.

The "Impact on Confidence and Job Market Readiness" section of the EYP PT Survey includes the following questions:

- *To what extent has your participation in EYP Portugal influenced your confidence in professional settings?* - This question was rated on a 1 to 5 Likert scale, where scores of 1 and 2 indicate little to no increase in confidence; a score of 3 represents a neutral stance, meaning participants felt their confidence remained unchanged; scores of 4 and 5 indicate positive outcomes, with 5 reflecting a significant increase in confidence in professional environments.
- *Do you feel more prepared for the job market as a result of your involvement in EYP?* - This was a yes or no question aimed at determining whether participants

believe their experiences in EYP have directly contributed to their preparedness for entering the job market.

- *Feel free to explain your answer to the previous questions.* - This open-ended question invited participants to share personal stories and reflections on how their involvement in EYP has impacted their confidence and readiness for professional life. This qualitative data will provide valuable context and additional insights into the quantitative results.

### **3.7.2.1 To what extent has your participation in EYP Portugal influenced your confidence in professional settings?**

The average score was 4.3, with the majority of participants giving positive ratings. The score distribution was as follows:

- 1: No respondents rated their confidence at this level.
- 2: 1 respondent (2.4%) rated a 2, indicating minimal influence.
- 3: 3 respondents (7.3%) rated a 3, representing a neutral stance.
- 4: 18 respondents (43.9%) rated a 4, showing a significant positive impact.
- 5: 19 respondents (46.3%) rated a 5, indicating a very strong positive impact.

Overall, 90.2% of participants (37 out of 41) rated their confidence as either 4 or 5, indicating that the vast majority of respondents felt their confidence in professional settings had increased due to their participation in EYP.

Qualitative Insights:

- The respondent who rated a 2 mentioned that while EYP was helpful in life, it did not make a difference in their specific area of work;
- One respondent who rated a 3 noted that EYP provided skills and knowledge they may use later in life but did not directly influence their current readiness for professional settings (this respondent was still a high school student).

### **3.7.2.2 Do you feel more prepared for the job market as a result of your involvement in EYP?**

The results show a strong positive response:

- Yes: 35 respondents (85.4%) felt that EYP had prepared them for the job market;
- Maybe: 4 respondents (9.8%) indicated uncertainty, choosing "Maybe";
- No: 2 respondents (4.9%) did not feel prepared for the job market as a result of their involvement in EYP.

### **3.7.2.3 Feel free to explain your answer to the previous questions**

This question showed a low engagement from participants, with 8 people (19.5%) providing qualitative responses, and 33 participants (80.5%) leaving the question unanswered.

Responses from those who answered "No":

- One participant stated that most of the information and skills gained in EYP were not particularly valuable for today's job market. The participant also mentioned that many abilities could be developed in other contexts and that, in some cases, individuals who already possessed these skills gained the most from EYP.

Responses from those who answered "Maybe":

- One respondent explained that while EYP is a valuable addition to a CV, it was not an essential asset in their specific field. However, they did recognise the benefits of certain EYP tasks, such as preparing cover letters and presenting documents, which helped them in job applications.
- Another respondent mentioned that while EYP did not directly influence their job readiness, it provided skills and knowledge that may be useful in the future.

Responses from those who answered "Yes":

- One participant mentioned that they aspire to work in politics or international organisations (EU, UN, NGOs), and EYP gave them language skills and a deeper understanding of global issues, making them feel more prepared for their career path.

- Another respondent stated that EYP improved their confidence in social interactions and made them less shy.
- One participant highlighted that EYP helped them develop teamwork and assertiveness, which they consider essential when looking for a job.
- Another mentioned that EYP filled gaps in their personal development that formal education did not address. They noted that while EYP played a significant role in their early career, its relevance may diminish as they gain professional experience.
- One participant emphasised the practical soft skills training EYP provided, which they considered a solid foundation for their career.

### 3.7.3 Research Question 3

*How do the skills gained through participation in the European Youth Parliament align with the current demands of the job market?*

Across the employer interviews, which were used as the main source for RQ3, a clear set of skills and competencies emerged as being particularly valued in today's job market. Employers emphasised a blend of soft skills (interpersonal and behavioural) and technical skills, with a significant focus on the former. These findings were reinforced by the EYP PT Survey, where respondents overwhelmingly agreed that the skills gained through EYP are relevant to the job market's demands.

#### 3.7.3.1 Soft Skills as a Priority

The interviews showed that employers in different industries prioritise soft skills, often viewing them as more critical than technical expertise, which can be taught on the job. This focus on soft skills aligns with the core competencies developed in EYP activities, such as teamwork, leadership, communication, problem-solving, and flexibility.

- **EYP PT Survey:** When asked how relevant the skills acquired through EYP are to the demands of the job market, 58.5% of respondents gave the highest rating of 5, while 34.1% rated it a 4. This indicates that the vast majority of participants found the skills to be highly relevant, with only 7.3% rating the relevance as moderate (3).

## Teamwork

All employers consistently highlighted the importance of collaboration in the workplace. The ability to work well in groups and coordinate efforts towards a common goal aligns with what employers such as Abílio Silva, Anabela Gomes, Ivo Faria and Carlos Rodrigues stressed as a critical workplace skill.

- **EYP PT Survey:** Teamwork was selected as one of the top 3 most valuable skills by 53.7% of survey respondents, reinforcing the employer feedback. In open-ended responses, participants mentioned that teamwork skills were particularly useful during job interviews and when collaborating in diverse teams.
- **Abílio** highlighted teamwork as one of the most crucial soft skills in the workplace, particularly in environments where tasks are divided among team members. He explained that effective collaboration involves not only organising work with colleagues but also being open to the division of tasks, understanding one's role within the team, and adapting to shared responsibilities. Team members must manage their own tasks while also coordinating efforts with others. In his company, teamwork is supported by a high level of autonomy, where employees organise their work independently while still contributing to the larger team's success;
- **Anabela** described teamwork in a context where it is essential for the smooth functioning of production processes, emphasising that teamwork was not just about completing tasks but about collaboration and sharing knowledge within the team to ensure that the work continues, even if one person is absent. It was also noted that younger employees tended to be more adaptable in terms of teamwork, while older workers sometimes resisted the idea, fearing they would be asked to do more;
- **Ivo** emphasised the importance of teamwork as a key soft skill in his company, particularly with the ability to both coordinate and be coordinated. He noted that teamwork involves not only leadership but also being able to adapt and work effectively within a group. Ivo also mentioned that empathy and the capacity to listen actively are critical components of teamwork, as they help individuals understand and address the needs of both external clients and internal colleagues.

In his organisation, teamwork is central to ensuring smooth operations, especially in a collaborative environment.

- **Carlos** also underscored the value of teamwork, stating that it is fundamental to the success of any organisation. He described teamwork as the ability to bring together a diverse set of skills and competencies to achieve common goals. Carlos highlighted that teamwork is not limited to specific roles, but is essential across all levels of an organisation, including leadership roles. He mentioned that within his experience, teamwork and leadership are closely linked, as leadership often involves coordinating tasks and guiding teams towards shared objectives. For him, individuals who have been part of groups or organisations that foster teamwork often bring valuable experience in collaboration and leadership.

## **Leadership**

Several employers mentioned leadership as a highly valued skill, particularly in roles requiring management or project oversight. Manuel Pacheco, Pedro Almeida, and Ivo Faria highlighted leadership as more than managing, involving empowering others and driving positive change.

- **EYP PT Survey:** Leadership was chosen by 30% of respondents as a valuable key skill for the job market, which they found highly valuable in the job market. Some respondents highlighted how the leadership roles they took on in EYP helped them stand out during job applications and in interviews, where demonstrating leadership capabilities was an advantage.
- **Manuel** mentioned that leadership in his organisation, particularly in a fast-paced, dynamic environment goes beyond technical expertise. He pointed out that a strong leader doesn't necessarily need to be the most technically skilled person in the room, but should excel at managing people and creating an environment where individuals can develop and thrive. Manuel noted that leadership involves the ability to make quick decisions under pressure, adapt to changing circumstances, and, most importantly, inspire confidence in those they lead. He also mentioned that a good leader knows when to delegate and rely on others for technical solutions, which is a skill developed through experience rather than purely technical knowledge;

- **Pedro** explained leadership as a form of empowerment. He highlighted how leadership is about helping others realise their potential, driving systemic change, and making an impact on communities. Pedro described leadership as being deeply intertwined with service and the ability to lead by example, particularly in challenging environments like education in disadvantaged communities. He connected this to the qualities nurtured in youth organisations, where young leaders are often tasked with guiding teams and facilitating group dynamics in ways that directly influence positive outcomes. For Pedro, leadership is very much about instilling confidence in others, not just within hierarchical structures but as agents of change in their environments;
- **Ivo** similarly viewed leadership as a multifaceted skill that combines guidance, coordination, and empathy. In his role overseeing multiple companies, he stressed that effective leadership requires both the ability to take initiative and the willingness to be flexible when working with others. Leadership, for Ivo, is not just about issuing directives but about listening actively and understanding the needs of both colleagues and clients. He emphasised the importance of developing trust within teams, confident that good leaders create environments where individuals feel supported and valued.

## **Communication**

Effective communication, verbal and written, was another skill highly valued by employers. This was particularly emphasised by Abílio, Manuel, Pedro and Ivo, who stressed the need for clear, confident communication in professional settings.

- **EYP PT Survey:** Communication was identified by 53.7% of survey participants as one of the most valuable skills in the job market, closely aligning with employer priorities. Participants highlighted communication as essential in building relationships, and noted that the communication skills developed in EYP were particularly helpful in job interviews, networking, and when delivering presentations in professional contexts.
- **Abílio** mentioned that in his role as CFO, effective communication allows the team to organise tasks, resolve issues, and ensure that everyone is aligned on goals and responsibilities. He pointed out that clear communication is essential for team

cohesion, as it helps prevent misunderstandings and enables a smoother workflow, which is key to achieving success. Strong communicators can articulate their needs and expectations while also being open to receiving feedback, which is relevant for maintaining a collaborative, productive work environment;

- **Manuel** placed particular importance on the ability to communicate clearly and confidently, especially in a company that operates internationally, and where cross-departmental and intercultural communication is frequent. Manuel explained that in his role, his team members must regularly interact with different departments and partners, often requiring them to explain complex financial information in a way that is understandable and actionable. He stressed that this level of communication is essential for creating strong partnerships and driving results, particularly in high-pressure situations. For Manuel, communication is not just about relaying information but about engaging others and fostering collaboration;
- **Pedro** highlighted the transformative power of communication, particularly in the context of education and leadership. He views communication as a way to inspire and empower others, whether it's students, colleagues, or stakeholders. Pedro emphasised that clear, positive communication allows leaders to motivate teams, share a vision, and drive change. He particularly values communication that goes beyond transactional exchanges, focusing instead on building relationships, encouraging reflection, and influencing positive behaviour;
- **Ivo** underscored the importance of communication skills in professional settings, believing that communication is key to building trust within teams and clients. Effective communication involves both active listening and the ability to convey ideas clearly, which ensures that tasks are understood and completed efficiently. For Ivo, communication also plays a critical role in leadership, as it helps leaders connect with their teams, provide guidance, and resolve conflicts, highlighting the need for open and transparent communication to foster a positive work environment, where everyone feels heard and valued.

### **Problem-solving and Critical Thinking**

Employers placed great importance on problem-solving abilities, where teams are required to engage in critical thinking and find solutions to complex societal issues. Carlos, Manuel, Abílio, Ivo and Anabela showed that those who can think critically and adapt to challenges are highly desirable in their organisations.

- **EYP PT Survey:** Problem-solving and critical thinking were among the top three most valuable skills chosen by around 39% of respondents, reinforcing the employers' view that these competencies are crucial for navigating the complexities of the workplace. Participants shared examples where critical thinking and problem-solving helped them overcome professional challenges, such as resolving unforeseen issues at work or managing projects.
- **Carlos** highlighted problem-solving as a critical skill in environments that require continuous adaptation and innovation. Individuals who can think critically and anticipate challenges are highly valued, particularly in leadership roles where quick and effective decision-making is necessary. In a company focused on luxury products and international markets, employees must constantly solve problems related to logistics, client demands, and market trends. He views problem-solving as a skill that transcends technical expertise, requiring an ability to think creatively and approach challenges with a strategic mindset;
- **Manuel** also explained that his team is often faced with complex financial problems that require analytical thinking and the ability to navigate uncertain scenarios. He values candidates who can not only solve problems but also do so under pressure and with limited information. In the rapidly changing environment of a health tech company, employees need to be able to quickly pivot, make informed decisions, and anticipate future issues. His recruitment process includes evaluating how well candidates handle unexpected questions and solve real-world business cases, which directly tests their problem-solving and critical thinking capabilities;
- **Abílio** underscored the significance of problem-solving in the logistics and international transport sectors, where employees often face complex, multi-layered challenges involving time-sensitive shipments, regulatory requirements, and customer needs. The ability to troubleshoot effectively and think critically under time constraints is a crucial asset, and the ideal candidate can analyse a

situation quickly, identify the root cause of a problem, and implement practical solutions that benefit both the company and the client. He stressed that independent problem-solving is highly valued.

- **Ivo** described problem-solving as a fundamental skill for navigating the manufacturing industry. Given the technical nature of the production processes, employees are frequently required to solve operational challenges and optimize workflows. Critical thinking is necessary not only to solve technical issues but also to improve efficiency and product quality. He values employees who can think ahead and proactively address potential problems in production. This involves collaboration, combining technical knowledge and soft skills to resolve issues effectively.
- **Anabela** stressed the importance of problem-solving in ensuring that the company meets production deadlines and maintains high standards of product quality. Employees must be able to solve issues related to the manufacturing process, especially since her company operates with tight deadlines, with products like medical devices and corrective footwear requiring quick delivery times. While technical skills are important, the ability to think critically, adapt to sudden changes, and come up with innovative solutions is what sets top performers apart. Employees who can anticipate production challenges and offer practical solutions are crucial to maintaining the company's efficiency and reputation for quality.

### **Flexibility and Adaptability**

The ability to adapt to changing environments and manage ambiguity was mentioned in all the conducted interviews, emphasising the importance of being flexible and open to new experiences.

- **Abílio** highlighted adaptability as crucial, given the complexities of coordinating shipments across various countries and navigating diverse regulations. Employees must be able to respond swiftly to challenges, such as sudden changes in delivery schedules or regulatory updates. There is a need for a workforce that is not only technically proficient but also flexible enough to shift priorities and adapt their approaches - and employees who can remain calm under pressure and pivot

quickly when faced with unexpected issues are invaluable to the success of any organisation;

- **Carlos** described flexibility as vital in an industry that often experiences fluctuations in production demands. As the company navigates the luxury market and its competition, employees who can adjust to changes, be it in production schedules or market preferences, are essential. Employees who demonstrate a willingness to learn and adapt, particularly those who have international exposure or experience in diverse roles, are often better positioned to succeed.
- **Manuel** mentioned the importance of adaptability within the rapid evolution of healthcare technologies, where employees must be open to learning new skills and adjusting to changes in procedures and technologies. Being adaptable enables teams to innovate and respond to the needs of clients effectively. Adaptability is not only about handling changes but also about proactively seeking out ways to improve processes and solutions, essential for driving organisational growth.
- **Ivo** underscored the significance of adaptability as the company evolves and expands, and employees must be willing to embrace new roles and responsibilities. The ability to take on diverse tasks is crucial, and candidates who exhibit a mindset geared towards flexibility thrive in an environment where responsibilities may shift and new challenges arise.
- **Pedro** expressed that adaptability is essential for mentors working in challenging educational environments. Teachers often face unexpected situations in the classroom that require quick thinking and flexibility, so there is this need to adapt to the unique needs of students and the classroom dynamics so that a positive learning environment can be achieved. Young professionals recruited through his organisation are often those who have demonstrated flexibility in past experiences.
- **Anabela** emphasised that adaptability is vital in the context of increasing production demands and tight deadlines. Employees need to be open to new processes, learn quickly, and be willing to collaborate across departments to meet immediate production goals. Fostering a culture of adaptability within her teams

has proven essential for maintaining productivity and ensuring that the organisation can respond to changing market conditions.

### 3.7.3.2 Intercultural Competence and Diversity

Intercultural competence was increasingly recognised as a vital skill in today's global job market, and interview employers emphasised its importance in their organisations.

- **Abílio** noted that in the logistics and transport sector, which involves largely collaboration with international partners, having employees who can navigate cultural differences is important. Understanding and respecting diverse perspectives is essential for building effective working relationships and achieving successful outcomes in a multicultural environment. Employees who have experience in international settings, like those gained through participation in EYP, tend to demonstrate greater adaptability and effectiveness in intercultural interactions.
- **Manuel** echoed this trend, highlighting that his company operates in a global market where intercultural competence is essential for success. The ability to communicate and collaborate with diverse teams enhances innovation and problem-solving, and employees who have engaged with various cultures are often more open-minded and receptive to different viewpoints. The experiences participants gain in multicultural environments like EYP prepare them well for the demands of global organisations.
- **Carlos** also acknowledged the importance of intercultural competence, mentioning that employees who have had exposure to diverse cultures often bring valuable insights into how to tailor products and services to meet varied customer needs. This skill not only enhances customer relations but also fosters a more inclusive workplace culture. Candidates with backgrounds that include international experiences are likely to more easily adapt to diverse teams and contribute positively to the company's growth in international markets.
- **Ivo** highlighted that in an increasingly globalised economy, understanding and appreciating cultural differences is critical for effective leadership. His

organisation values employees who can engage with clients and partners from various cultural backgrounds. Those who have participated in programs that are exposed to intercultural realities are often better equipped to navigate the complexities of working in diverse teams, essential for driving collaboration and fostering innovation within the company.

### 3.7.3.3 Commitment and Responsibility

Commitment and responsibility are attributes that employers highly value, with many expressing that these qualities are critical for organisational success.

- **Abílio** mentioned the necessity of having reliable employees who can take ownership of their roles. In an environment where timelines and responsibilities are crucial, commitment to one's duties can directly impact service delivery and customer satisfaction. Individuals who have participated in structured programs like EYP often demonstrate a strong sense of responsibility, as they have experience managing projects and fulfilling commitments within a team context, which helps cultivate a work ethic that aligns well with the company's expectations;
- **Carlos** reiterated the importance of commitment, stating that employees must be dedicated to their roles and the company's long-term goals. In a production environment, where consistency and reliability are of the utmost importance, finding employees who understand the significance of their contributions to the team's success is crucial. The experience gained through NFE activities like scouting, where participants are held accountable for their roles and responsibilities, fosters a sense of dedication that is highly desirable;
- **Pedro** pointed out that commitment is essential for the success of the mentorship program. Participants need to be genuinely invested in their roles, as their work has a direct impact on students in disadvantaged communities. Individuals who have demonstrated commitment in prior experiences, such as through scouting, are more likely to take their responsibilities seriously and strive for positive outcomes. This kind of dedication is not just about fulfilling duties, but about making a meaningful difference in the lives of others;

- **Ivo** mentioned the importance of commitment, being that employees must be willing to take on challenges and demonstrate reliability in their roles. Those who come from backgrounds like scouting might exhibit a higher level of engagement and responsibility, but just being part of a project does not necessarily mean an approval seal;
- **Anabela** emphasised the need to identify candidates who are not only skilled but also committed to their roles and the company’s values. Responsibility in the workplace is critical, and participants who are previously exposed to those environments possess a strong sense of responsibility, as they are accustomed to working within structured environments where accountability is essential.

Interviewee	Key Points		
Abílio Silva	Teamwork as crucial for collaboration and task coordination	Importance of communication for team success	Need for adaptability in a dynamic work environment
Manuel Pacheco	Clear and confident communication in an international context	Leadership as a skill involving empowerment and trust	Problem-solving skills for navigating complex financial issues
Carlos Rodrigues	Importance of teamwork for achieving common goals	Importance of critical thinking and problem-solving abilities in leadership roles	Need for intercultural competence in diverse environments
Ivo Faria	Leadership as a combination of guidance, empathy, and flexibility	Significance of communication for building trust	Importance of adaptability in a fast-paced industry
Pedro Almeida	Leadership as a means to empower others and create systemic change	The role of communication in inspiring and motivating teams	The necessity of commitment and responsibility in mentorship roles
Anabela Gomes	Importance of responsibility and commitment in the workplace	The need for teamwork in production processes	Significance of adaptability to meet immediate production needs

Table 5: Overview of the Key Points on the conducted interviews

### 3.7.4 Research Question 4

*How do employers perceive the skills and experiences gained through participation in NFE and youth organisations, and which attributes are particularly valued?*

In the interviews conducted, employers expressed positive perceptions of the skills and experiences that participants gain through NFE and youth organisations like EYP. These insights reveal a strong alignment between the competencies developed in these settings and the attributes employers seek in potential hires.

- **Positive Impact of NFE on Skills Development**

Employers emphasised that involvement in NFE programs enhances various competencies essential for the modern workplace. For example, **Ivo** noted that participants often exhibit a unique blend of soft skills, particularly adaptability and teamwork, that can be rare in traditional educational backgrounds. Those who engage in youth organisations are frequently better prepared to navigate complex interpersonal dynamics in professional settings.

- **Transferable Skills and Real-world Application**

**Manuel** highlighted that the practical experiences gained from participating in youth organisations translate effectively into real-world job scenarios. Candidates with backgrounds in international projects and NFE tend to demonstrate a higher level of readiness for problem-solving and critical thinking, crucial for success in fast-paced environments. This capability to apply theoretical knowledge in practical situations is highly regarded in his organisation.

- **Commitment to Social Responsibility**

Employers expressed that engagement in organisations such as scouting often fosters a strong sense of social responsibility. **Carlos** pointed out that candidates who have participated in NFE are more likely to embody the values of commitment and responsibility, attributes that are invaluable for companies aiming to make a positive impact in their communities. This alignment between personal values and organisational goals is seen as a significant advantage for candidates.

- **Intercultural Competence and Global Perspective**

The exposure to diverse cultures and perspectives inherent in NFE programs is a valued asset in today's international job market. **Abílio** and **Pedro** both stressed that the intercultural competence developed through international interactions enables participants to communicate effectively across various cultural contexts. This skill set is increasingly essential for organisations operating on a global scale, enhancing collaboration and innovation.

- **Leadership Qualities and Initiative**

Employers recognised that NFE programs often cultivate leadership abilities, making participants more attractive candidates. **Anabela** remarked on the importance of individuals who demonstrate initiative and the capability to lead projects, and that the experiences gained in youth organisations can equip participants with the confidence to take charge and inspire others, traits that are essential for driving change within any organisation.

### **3.7.5 Research Question 5**

*How does participation in youth organisations (and particularly in EYP) influence young people's access to job opportunities?*

Research Question 5 explores a synthesis of insights gathered from employer interviews and data from feedback forms and the EYP PT Survey to highlight the overall impact of youth engagement on career prospects, and aims to highlight the value of participation in EYP as a means of enhancing employability and creating pathways to meaningful job opportunities.

#### **3.7.5.1 Skills Development and Employability**

Participating in youth organisations equips young people with essential skills that are highly regarded by employers.

- **Employer Interviews:** Employers like Manuel and Ivo emphasised that the practical experiences gained in NFE programs translate effectively into real-world

job scenarios, making candidates more prepared for problem-solving and critical thinking;

- EYP PT Survey and Feedback Forms: Participants reported enhanced skills such as teamwork, leadership, communication, and flexibility.

### **3.7.5.2 Positive Employer Perception**

The skills and experiences gained through participation in youth organisations foster positive perceptions among employers regarding young candidates.

- Employer Interviews: Ivo that candidates who engage in NFE often exhibit a blend of soft skills, particularly adaptability and teamwork, which are valued in the workplace;
- EYP PT Survey: Respondents provided feedback that indicated that employers perceived them as better equipped to handle workplace challenges, especially when entering the job market.

### **3.7.5.3 Networking Opportunities**

Participation in youth organisations often leads to networking opportunities that can significantly impact job access.

- Employer Interviews: Pedro and Manuel highlighted the importance of creating and maintaining networks, and how NFE programs allow young people to connect with industry professionals, expanding their professional networks.

### **3.7.5.4 Commitment to Social Responsibility**

Engagement in youth organisations cultivates a strong sense of social responsibility, which resonates well with employers.

- Employer Interviews: Carlos pointed out that candidates from NFE backgrounds are more likely to embody values of commitment and responsibility, aligning with companies' social impact goals;
- EYP PT Survey and Feedback Forms: Respondents mentioned a heightened awareness and commitment towards key socio-economic, political and cultural

issues, as well as a greater support for an empowered and more active participation in society.

#### **3.7.5.5 Increased Job Readiness and Market Alignment**

Youth organisations prepare participants for the demands of the job market, enhancing their job readiness.

- **Employer Interviews:** Anabela mentioned that candidates with NFE experience are often more adaptable and responsive to workplace needs, making them more attractive to potential employers;
- **EYP PT Survey:** A majority of respondents indicated that their involvement in EYP made them feel more prepared for entering the job market, aligning with market expectations.

## **CHAPTER IV – DISCUSSION OF RESULTS**

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This chapter offers an in-depth analysis of the findings presented in Chapter 3, connecting the data to the central themes of this study: how participation in NFE programs, particularly the European Youth Parliament, equips young people with the skills demanded by the modern job market and how that effectively enhances employability. Through this lens, we explore not just the alignment of these skills with employer's expectations but also how they translate into tangible career opportunities.

Structured around the five research questions that guide the study, this chapter moves beyond presenting the data to provide meaningful interpretations. By examining the insights from interviews with employers, the EYP Portugal (PT) Survey and feedback forms, we uncover the significance of key soft skills - such as teamwork, leadership, communication, and adaptability - that are increasingly recognised as crucial in today's competitive and fast-paced professional landscape. These discussions are framed within broader academic perspectives, aiming to create an understanding of how non-formal educational experiences like EYP foster essential competencies for career success.

Each section of this chapter will follow a structured approach, summarising the findings and offering an interpretation where those findings are critically analysed and explored. Each section includes theoretical links, where connections are drawn between the findings and the literature discussed in Chapter 1, offering a broader academic context and validating the relevance of the results within established theories on NFE, youth development, and employability.

The chapter also considers the broader impact of participation in EYP beyond skill development. Specifically, it explores how involvement in youth organisations can open doors to job opportunities by building social capital – here understood as “the potential of individuals to secure benefits and invent solutions to problems through membership in social networks” (Poteyeva, 2024) - and expanding professional networks, factors that play a pivotal role in accessing and advancing within the global job market.

## **4.1 Research Question 1: Skills Developed through EYP**

### **4.1.1 Key Skills Identified by EYP Portugal (PT) Participants**

The results from the EYP PT Survey and Participant feedback forms consistently demonstrate that EYP PT members report gaining essential soft skills through their participation, reinforcing the idea that NFE fosters soft skills development. The most frequently cited skills include teamwork, communication, flexibility, intercultural competence, and leadership. These skills are integral to both personal and professional development, especially in a globalised and increasingly interconnected world.

Participants emphasised the importance of teamwork and communication as central skills developed during their time in the project. Respondents often mentioned these two skills together, particularly in scenarios where they worked together to reach a common resolution, communicated with people from diverse backgrounds, and assumed accountability for the work developed as a committee. This finding aligns with Romi and Schmida (2009), who note the critical role of NFE in fostering collaborative skills through group dynamics and peer-to-peer interaction, allowing individuals to experiment with different freedoms and responsibilities.

Within the EYP framework, participants indicated that this collaborative experiential learning enhanced their ability to work effectively in team-oriented environments. They reported feeling more confident in articulating their ideas, presenting arguments, and engaging in debates. EYP thus becomes a place where participants are encouraged to take risks, in an environment where they feel safe to experiment, fail, learn, and develop.

Leadership emerged as another frequently mentioned skill, with participants stating that the role of chairing committees or leading groups enabled them to build confidence in managing teams and guiding discussions. This outcome is particularly significant in the context of NFE programs like EYP, where leadership opportunities are abundant and integral to the overall participant experience. Older EYPers, specifically, reported higher levels of leadership development, which aligns with the broader literature on NFE, suggesting that such environments naturally foster leadership by prioritising autonomy and participant-driven initiatives. It is then not surprising that leadership is consistently mentioned by scholars as an important skill. The European Youth Forum (2008, 2012), the biggest platform of youth organisations in Europe, representing over 100 youth

organisations, consistently emphasises how NFE contributes to the personal development of young people and how youth organisations provide opportunities for leadership development through organising events, leading teams, and serving the community. In this regard, EYP places a strong focus on leadership, operating as a project run by young people, for young people, where participants are the decision makers in their realities, be it as delegates, officials, Team Leaders or Board Members.

Moreover, EYP PT participants frequently reported developing flexibility through their involvement with the project. Whether managing unexpected changes during sessions or working with new people, participants mentioned their enhanced ability to adapt to changing circumstances. This aligns with Cimatti's (2016) findings, which highlight the role of NFE in fostering adaptability in today's fast-paced world, where the ability to tailor the experience to the participant's specific needs and contexts is essential. In the EYP context, each session is distinct. While the framework remains the same, creating a sense of unity, the composition of officials' teams, participants, and even the topics and logistics vary from one event to another. This ever-evolving dynamic, where no two sessions are alike, fosters continuous improvement in methods and working styles. Participants often reflect on the uniqueness of each experience, knowing that they will only share that specific moment with those particular individuals once. This contributes to the intensity and significance of each event, making it a profound and memorable experience for those involved.

Intercultural competence was another key skill developed by EYP participants. Engaging with people from diverse cultural backgrounds allowed participants to gain a deeper understanding of different perspectives, values, and communication styles. This is consistent with Deardorff's (2006) model of intercultural competence, which stresses the importance of attitudes like openness, curiosity, and respect, as well as skills such as empathy and cultural self-awareness, in navigating cultural differences. The nature of EYP, where participants work collaboratively in international teams, creates an ideal environment for developing intercultural competence. In EYP, participants must frequently navigate cultural differences to achieve shared goals, which naturally enhances their ability to adapt to varied perspectives. This is particularly evident in their improved ability to practice active listening, adaptability, and emotional intelligence, all of which are critical to effective intercultural interactions.

Byram's (1997) framework further supports this by emphasising that intercultural competence involves not just knowledge of different cultures but also the capacity to interpret and engage appropriately with new cultural contexts. EYP provides participants with the opportunity to bridge cultural gaps in an environment that fosters open dialogue and reflection. The feedback from EYP participants confirms that this learning environment allows them to interact confidently with culturally diverse individuals, both within and beyond the program.

#### **4.1.2 Interconnectedness of Skills**

One of the key findings is the interconnectedness of the skills developed by EYP PT participants. Teamwork and communication serve as the foundation for effective leadership and intercultural competence, creating an environment where participants feel empowered to take risks and learn collaboratively. Strong communication facilitates clearer discussions, enhancing collaboration and fostering a cohesive team dynamic. Moreover, leadership in EYP encompasses elements of all the identified skills. A leader must demonstrate flexibility in adapting their approach based on the team's needs while exhibiting intercultural competence to manage diverse teams effectively. All this highlights EYP's ability to encourage participants to integrate these skills holistically rather than viewing them in isolation.

#### **4.1.3 Limitations and Future Research**

While these findings highlight the positive key identified by EYP PT participation, there are limitations to consider. First, there is a potential self-selection bias, as participants in EYP tend to be highly motivated individuals with a pre-existing interest in debating and intercultural exchange. This could mean that the skill development reported by participants may not be representative of the wider youth population. Additionally, the self-reported nature of the data poses a limitation in terms of objectivity: participants may overestimate their skill growth, influenced by the positive experiences they associate with EYP.

Future research should focus on longitudinal studies to track the long-term impact of skills developed through EYP participation. It would also be valuable to conduct comparative studies that evaluate the skill development process across different NFE programs to understand how transferable these skills are across various contexts. Finally, exploring

the transferability of these skills to academic and professional settings would provide a more comprehensive understanding of the true impact of NFE programs like EYP on youth development.

## **4.2 Research Question 2: How Participation in EYP Influences Confidence and Job Readiness**

Participation in EYP has a strong, positive impact on fostering both confidence and job readiness among young people, in a time where the ability to project confidence and demonstrate readiness for employment is critical. This section explores how EYP facilitates the development of confidence, skill sets, and career preparedness, highlighting the broader implications of NFE in shaping young people's professional futures.

### **4.2.1 Growth in Confidence**

As the European Youth Forum (2008) notes, the lack of formal recognition and validation of NFE outcomes can limit young people's ability to leverage these experiences in the job market. Despite these external challenges, EYP participants overwhelmingly reported feeling more confident in the skills gained through the program, particularly in public speaking, leadership, and teamwork. This suggests that, while formal validation may be limited, the personal empowerment participants derive from their involvement in EYP is significant.

Moreover, this personal empowerment aligns with the European Union's (2019) lifelong learning framework, which emphasises the need for individuals to develop resilience and confidence to succeed in today's competitive world. Participants indicated that the skills developed through EYP translated into better performance during job interviews, where they were able to communicate ideas more effectively and persuasively. This reflects their growth in self-assurance, helping them navigate professional environments with greater ease and determination.

### **4.2.2 Enhanced Readiness for the Job Market**

In addition to boosting confidence, EYP significantly enhanced participants' perceived readiness for the job market. An overwhelmingly 85.4% of survey respondents stated that they felt more prepared for employment as a direct result of their involvement in EYP.

The high percentage reflects the strong sense of job readiness fostered by the skills and experiences gained through the program.

In addition to boosting confidence, EYP participation equips young people with practical, transferable skills that enhance their readiness for the job market. The ability to function effectively in professional environments depends not only on technical competencies but also on soft skills, such as teamwork, communication, time management, and problem-solving, all of which are highly valued by employers.

Key transferable skills highlighted by participants include communication, teamwork, and time management. Communication emerged as a particularly valuable skill, with respondents indicating that they had learned to present ideas clearly and effectively, both verbally and in writing. This aligns with the findings of Cedefop (2023), which show that effective communication is increasingly sought after in professional settings. Furthermore, teamwork skills, developed through EYP's collaborative and multicultural environment, were cited as critical. Participants gained practical experience in managing group dynamics, resolving conflicts, and reaching consensus - competencies highly valued by employers.

EYP's structure also promoted organisational and time management skills, as participants had to balance multiple tasks within a limited timeframe. This experience directly mirrors the demands of today's workplaces, where efficient time management and task prioritisation are essential. The European Union (2019) highlights these skills as vital not only for career success but also for navigating the challenges of an evolving job market.

#### **4.2.3 Mixed Reflections on Job Market Preparation**

Despite the overwhelmingly positive feedback on job readiness, the qualitative responses revealed more nuanced perspectives. Of the 41 survey respondents, only 19.5% provided further explanations, but their responses offer valuable insights into how participants view the specific impact of EYP on their career prospects.

Among those who responded positively, participants noted that EYP helped them develop soft skills, such as communication and leadership, which they saw as crucial for entering the job market. This aligns with the European Youth Forum (2008), which underscores the importance of NFE in developing competencies that formal education may not address. One participant, for example, emphasised that EYP filled gaps in their personal

development, providing practical training in areas that traditional education overlooked. This further supports that NFE can and must complement formal education by providing experiential learning opportunities that enhance employability

On the other hand, some respondents expressed ambivalence or doubt about EYP's relevance to their specific career paths. One participant, for instance, noted that while EYP was useful for preparing cover letters and presentations, they did not perceive it as essential for their professional journey. This perspective reflects the ongoing challenge of NFE recognition and validation, as highlighted by the European Youth Forum (2008) - young people may feel that, despite acquiring valuable skills, the lack of formal recognition for these experiences limits their perceived value in the job market. Another participant suggested that individuals who already possessed certain skills benefited most from EYP, highlighting the importance of tailoring NFE programs to different skill levels and career aspirations.

These reflections highlight the need for NFE programs like EYP to be flexible and responsive to diverse backgrounds and career goals. Moreover, the findings suggest that while EYP can be highly effective in certain contexts, participants' individual experiences and career trajectories influence the perceived value of the program.

#### **4.2.4 Limitations and Future Research**

The findings related to RQ2 are subject to several limitations. First, the small sample size of 41 participants may not fully capture the range of experiences among EYP participants. A larger, more diverse sample in future studies would provide a more comprehensive understanding of how EYP influences confidence and job readiness.

Additionally, the low engagement rate in qualitative responses limits the depth of the insights gathered. Future research could employ more interactive methods, such as interviews or focus groups, to gather richer responses and explore participants' experiences in greater detail.

Finally, the reliance on self-reported data introduces potential biases, as participants may overstate their confidence or job readiness. Longitudinal studies that track participants over time could provide more accurate insights into the long-term impact of EYP on career development.

### **4.3 Research Question 3: Alignment of Soft Skills with Job Market Demands**

The findings for Research Question 3 show that the skills developed through participation in EYP - particularly soft skills, intercultural competence, and leadership - are highly aligned with the evolving demands of the job market. Employers are increasingly prioritizing these skills, which are critical for success across various industries, especially those driven by innovation and global collaboration.

#### **4.3.1 Soft Skills and the Job Market**

Across industries, employers consistently prioritised soft skills over technical expertise. This was a recurring theme in the employer interviews, where soft skills such as teamwork, communication, and problem-solving were regarded as critical for professional success. Abílio Silva, for instance, emphasised that while technical skills are essential, soft skills - particularly teamwork, personal organisation, and flexibility - are indispensable for thriving in a fast-paced work environment. Similarly, Ivo Faria discussed how teamwork and collaboration are fundamental for roles across his companies, with employees expected to be both leaders and team players. This reflects broader job market trends, where employers value not only technical expertise but also candidates who can collaborate effectively in teams, think critically, and manage complex interpersonal dynamics.

Employers also highlighted the challenge of teaching essential soft skills. Anabela Gomes strongly emphasised that while technical skills can be developed through training and experience, soft skills such as commitment, responsibility, and respect are much harder to instil in employees. She prioritises these behavioural competencies during recruitment, noting that, in some cases, having individuals with the right technical skills but lacking the appropriate values and character can be more detrimental than the reverse.

These insights align with the data from the EYP PT Survey, where participants identified teamwork and communication among the most valuable skills they gained through the program. EYP's collaborative environment, where participants engage in group projects and discussions, mirrors the teamwork required in the workplace, making them well-prepared for roles that demand strong interpersonal skills. Furthermore, Manuel Pacheco highlighted that soft skills such as communication, cultural fit, and adaptability are often

more critical than hard skills, particularly in roles where managing people and projects require interpersonal finesse.

The growing importance of soft skills in the job market aligns with Ribeiro's (2017) assertion that organisations are built on the foundations of their workers and human capital, underscoring the value of interpersonal competencies in today's workforce. In the EYP context, soft skills are not just valuable in terms of communication and teamwork but also essential for decision-making and leadership roles. This focus on collaborative problem-solving, structured debate, and consensus-building helps participants develop critical soft skills, with participants emphasising how these NFE learnings help them bridge the gap between traditional education and professional expectations.

#### **4.3.2 Global Perspective and Intercultural Competence**

Intercultural competence is increasingly prized in a globalised job market, and EYP's international focus provides participants with valuable experience in this area. Manuel Pacheco and Carlos Rodrigues stressed the importance of cultural adaptability, particularly for employees working in international markets. Participants in EYP sessions frequently collaborate with peers from diverse cultural backgrounds, an experience that fosters cultural awareness, communication across differences, and an openness to new perspectives.

A key feature of EYP's impact on intercultural competence lies in its inherent structure—every session brings together young people from all over Europe, allowing them to engage deeply with diverse perspectives. This experience goes beyond brief encounters or simple exchanges of information; it is rooted in sustained, immersive collaboration. There's a popular phrase shared at the end of these sessions, "See you somewhere in Europe," which captures the project's deeply international focus. However, the true impact on participants runs deeper than this sentiment.

On a personal level, the EYP experience transcends formal intercultural interactions. While the journey often begins with online meetings and email exchanges in the pre-session period, once the session begins, participants spend at least four intensive days together. During this time, they live, work, and engage with one another in what many describe as the "EYP bubble." This environment fosters not just professional collaboration, but a unique cultural immersion where participants form close relationships

- exchanging ideas, laughing together, navigating challenges, and sharing both light-hearted and intense moments. This level of engagement builds relationships in a profound and natural way, often without participants consciously realising how much they are learning from each other. The experience of working, socialising, and problem-solving alongside peers from different countries makes intercultural competence second nature. It becomes normal to have friends from all over Europe and to learn new ways of thinking and interacting. Through these connections, participants develop the ability to navigate cultural nuances and adapt to different communication styles, a skill that proves invaluable in sectors like international relations, global consulting, and multinational corporations. As Pedro Almeida observed, individuals who have participated in non-formal education settings like EYP often possess enhanced intercultural competence, which is crucial in roles that involve working with diverse groups.

In this sense, EYP offers participants more than a superficial understanding of cultural diversity; it cultivates a deep-seated ability to interact with and understand people from vastly different backgrounds. This competence not only enhances their employability but also prepares them for roles that require global collaboration and problem-solving across linguistic and cultural barriers. As highlighted in the Literature Review of this dissertation, intercultural competence is fundamentally “about how human can connect and understand each other better”.

### **4.3.3 Leadership and Initiative in the Workplace**

Leadership is another key area where EYP participants excel. Through their involvement in the program, participants frequently take on leadership roles, such as chairing committees or leading discussions, which helps them develop critical leadership skills. Employers, including Pedro Almeida and Ivo Faria, emphasised that leadership in today’s job market goes beyond managing tasks - it involves inspiring teams, driving projects forward, and cultivating positive relationships with colleagues and clients.

Leadership in EYP becomes a central theme, naturally fostering the development of critical leadership skills among participants. As an organisation run by young people for young people, EYP creates an environment where leadership roles are not only encouraged but also organically integrated into the experience. Participants initially take on team member roles, learning the value of leadership through observation and

engagement. This dual experience is crucial; as Ivo Faria noted in employer interviews, it is just as vital to learn how to be led as it is to lead. Such exposure enriches participants' understanding of effective leadership dynamics and prepares them for real-world challenges.

As Rogers (2004) observes, NFE programs like EYP are unique in their ability to receive widespread support for how they foster leadership skills through experiential learning. Unlike formal education, which is often time-bound and constrained by structured curricula, NFE encourages continuous learning and personal development beyond traditional settings (Vasquez, 1998). In the context of EYP, participants are immersed in real-life situations where they have to manage teams, make decisions, and influence outcomes. This practical learning process underscores the capacity of NFE to nurture leadership in a way that complements the theoretical knowledge gained through formal education.

As participants progress through the program, many develop a profound desire to give back to the organisation, actively seeking to guide and mentor the next generation of participants. This intrinsic motivation to support peers reflects a significant aspect of the EYP culture, where knowledge-sharing and mentorship are highly valued. The incorporation of Extended Leadership roles within sessions further enhances this experience, providing participants with unique opportunities to bridge the gap between being a team member and a leader. These roles allow individuals to experiment with leadership responsibilities, gaining practical experience while fostering a sense of ownership and accountability that is invaluable in any workplace.

Moreover, as Vasquez (1998) and Cavaco (2002) emphasise, education should not be confined to classrooms or measured by years of attendance. It is the ability to learn through experience that makes NFE, and by extension EYP, crucial in today's society, where lifelong learning and the continuous development of skills like leadership are essential. This view aligns with EYP's philosophy of encouraging participants to take risks and learn through hands-on experiences. Participants begin their leadership journey with smaller events, such as regional conferences, and gradually build their confidence before tackling larger, more complex sessions. This gradual progression not only sharpens their leadership skills but also equips them with the autonomy and decision-making capabilities necessary for success in various professional contexts.

In the workplace, these competencies translate directly to effective team coordination and project management. EYP participants emerge as dynamic individuals capable of influencing and empowering those around them. Their ability to foster collaboration, navigate interpersonal dynamics, and inspire confidence in team members distinguishes them in today's competitive job market. For example, the skills cultivated through EYP experiences, such as strategic thinking, adaptability, and the capacity to motivate others, align closely with the expectations of employers in industries like consulting, technology, and education, where leadership is crucial for driving innovation and achieving results.

By equipping participants with these essential leadership skills, EYP ensures that they are not only prepared to take initiative but are also capable of shaping the culture and success of their future workplaces. In this way, the program creates a pathway for participants to transition from leadership roles within EYP to impactful positions in their careers, where their experiences will continue to resonate in fostering collaborative and high-performing teams.

#### **4.3.4 Problem-Solving and Adaptability as Key Market Demands**

Problem-solving and adaptability are essential competencies in industries undergoing rapid change, and EYP equips participants with the ability to navigate unexpected challenges effectively. Ivo Faria highlighted the critical nature of adaptability and critical thinking in his company, where employees are often faced with operational tasks that require quick, innovative responses. The EYP structure inherently promotes this adaptability, as participants frequently encounter shifting scenarios: from managing projects with limited resources or adjusting plans in the face of unforeseen complications. These real-time adjustments foster resilience and flexibility, preparing them for the complexities of today's fast-paced work environments.

For me, one of the most significant aspects of EYP is how the challenges and opportunities grow as you advance in the organisation. Not in a daunting way, but in a manner that continuously stretches your problem-solving capabilities, allowing you to grow at each stage. When you start as a delegate, the primary challenge is academic - thinking critically and creatively about the committee topic you're assigned. It serves as an introduction to structured problem-solving in a collaborative setting. However, the development of problem-solving and adaptability becomes even more pronounced as you

take on leadership roles. As an Official, particularly in leadership positions, you're no longer just responsible for your own work: your decisions directly impact the experience of the entire session.

The most challenging and rewarding experience for me in terms of problem-solving and adaptability was serving as President of the National Board. In this role, I was responsible for coordinating every department: managing all the members, overseeing finances, handling legal matters, and ensuring the success of all projects under EYP Portugal. The weight of these responsibilities is real - you're managing limited resources while balancing the broader vision of the organisation. I had to coordinate departments dealing with Erasmus+ applications, finances, event logistics, and institutional relations, all while attending university and participating in other projects like scouting. This multifaceted experience pushed my problem-solving and adaptability skills to their limits, but it also provided an invaluable learning curve that prepared me for similar challenges in professional environments.

The World Economic Forum's (WEF) Future of Jobs Survey (2023) underscores this need for adaptability, noting that seven out of the top ten core skills required today are soft skills, including resilience, flexibility, and creative thinking. These skills are increasingly necessary as the workplace evolves, with cognitive and creative skills expected to grow in importance most rapidly by 2027. The EYP's emphasis on adaptability, critical thinking, and leadership directly aligns with this trend, as it prepares participants to manage complex challenges, think innovatively, and solve problems in environments that are constantly changing.

These experiences are particularly beneficial in sectors like consulting, technology, and management, where employees must constantly adapt to evolving market demands and solve problems under pressure. Carlos Rodrigues shared this vision in his interview, stressing that the ability to anticipate challenges and offer creative solutions is highly valued, especially in leadership roles that demand quick decision-making.

Moreover, EYP doesn't only foster these skills in theory but also equips participants to act decisively. As highlighted by DfEE/QCA (1998), it is essential that individuals are not just "willing, able, and equipped to have an influence in public life" but also possess the critical capacities needed to evaluate situations before taking action. This balance

between knowledge and action is central to EYP's structure, which encourages participants to not only think critically but to engage actively in decision-making processes.

The EYP experience offers far more than just theoretical knowledge - it provides participants with a real-world framework for developing adaptability and problem-solving skills that are crucial in professional settings. The progression from being a delegate to holding leadership roles offers a structured yet challenging path, with each new role providing opportunities to develop resilience and quick-thinking abilities. These attributes become indispensable in the workplace, positioning EYP participants to thrive in fast-moving, high-stakes industries where problem-solving and adaptability are not just advantageous but essential.

#### **4.3.5 Limitations and Future Research**

One significant limitation of the current research is the lack of longitudinal data. While the study demonstrates that the soft skills developed through EYP align with present job market demands, it does not track how these skills continue to benefit participants as their careers evolve. To address this gap, future research could involve longitudinal studies that follow EYP participants over time, examining whether the skills they develop through the program remain relevant and supportive of their career progression in the face of shifting job market dynamics.

Another limitation lies in the narrow focus on specific industries such as tech, consulting, and international organisations. While these fields highly prioritise soft skills, the findings may not fully apply to industries where technical expertise or formal qualifications are more highly valued, such as healthcare or public administration. Future research should broaden its scope to explore how soft skills are valued across a wider array of sectors, providing a more comprehensive understanding of their relevance in diverse professional contexts.

Additionally, future research could benefit from analysing social media platforms dedicated to professional networking, such as LinkedIn, to better assess the types of skills that employers actively seek in job postings across different industries. This could offer valuable insights into how companies present their demands for both hard and soft skills and allow for a comparison of the competencies prioritised in job ads with those

developed through non-formal education like EYP. Such analysis would help evaluate the alignment between skills development and real-world market demands, while also helping to identify industry-specific differences.

The study also relies heavily on self-reported data, which may introduce biases in the participants' perceptions of their own skills. To counter this, future research could employ mixed methods, combining self-reports with objective measures of skill application in professional settings, or comparing EYP participants with individuals who have followed more traditional educational paths to evaluate the unique contributions of non-formal education.

#### **4.4 Research Question 4: Employers Perceptions of Soft Skills**

The interviews with employers revealed positive perceptions of the practical and social skills developed through NFE, as well as a strong appreciation for candidates' broader commitment to social responsibility, leadership, and initiative.

##### **4.4.1 Practical Application of Skills**

Employers frequently highlighted the practical, hands-on experience participants gained through NFE programs. Manuel, for example, noted that candidates with NFE backgrounds often demonstrate greater readiness to apply theoretical knowledge in real-world contexts, especially in problem-solving and decision-making scenarios. This distinction suggests that beyond simply possessing "soft skills," these candidates are more adept at applying them effectively under professional pressures, a skill highly valued in modern workplaces.

The distinction between theoretical understanding, practical application, and the ability to adapt to different work environments aligns with the European Qualification Framework (EQF), which divides learning outcomes into three key areas: knowledge, skills, and competences (EU Science Hub, n.d.). In the context of NFE, these three elements are intrinsically connected and fostered through the experiential learning models offered by programs like EYP: participants are constantly and at the same time learning and applying what they learn.

The European Youth Forum (2012) emphasises that NFE significantly contributes to the development of these knowledge, skills, and competences, providing a holistic approach to learning that goes beyond formal education. This aligns with Manuel's observation that candidates with NFE experience are not only more proficient in technical tasks (skills) but are also capable of applying their theoretical knowledge in real-world scenarios (competence), particularly when it comes to problem-solving and decision-making. This real-world readiness, developed through EYP's hands-on approach, contrasts with candidates who have only formal education backgrounds and may not have had the opportunity to test their theoretical knowledge in practical, high-pressure environments.

The EQF framework's emphasis on the integration of knowledge, skills, and competence is also evident in EYP's impact on participants. EYP fosters a deep theoretical understanding of key issues (knowledge) through committee debates, equips participants with the necessary tools for collaboration and decision-making (skills), and prepares them to apply these abilities in dynamic, unpredictable work environments (competence). This framework reflects what employers like Manuel value in candidates - an ability to transition seamlessly from learning to action in the workplace.

#### **4.4.2 Leadership and Initiative as Competitive Advantages**

Another significant point raised by employers, particularly Anabela, is the initiative and leadership demonstrated by those with NFE experiences. Employers perceive that youth organisations like EYP foster a sense of personal responsibility and proactive engagement that makes candidates stand out. Unlike more passive educational experiences, where leadership opportunities may be limited, EYP provides participants with real leadership challenges, where they must take ownership of projects and inspire others.

These traits are particularly valuable in industries that demand a high degree of autonomy, such as startups or consultancy firms, where employees are expected to take initiative and lead without constant oversight. Employers noted that candidates with NFE backgrounds are more likely to display this independence and confidence early in their careers, giving them a competitive edge over other applicants.

### **4.4.3 Commitment to Social Responsibility**

Carlos pointed out that candidates who have engaged in NFE programs often display a strong commitment to social responsibility, which resonates with employers prioritising corporate social responsibility. This sense of ethical responsibility is cultivated through organisations like scouting or EYP, where participants develop a deeper understanding of the impact they can have in their communities and how to work towards sustainable development.

Aristotle regarded active participation in public duties as both a privilege and a responsibility, fostering personal ethics and contributing to the overall well-being of society (Do, 2022: 31-35). This classical perspective aligns with the essence of NFE programs like EYP, where participants are encouraged not only to develop their leadership and collaborative skills but also to contribute positively to their communities. This ethical framework shapes participants into socially responsible individuals who can integrate into workplaces that prioritise corporate social responsibility.

Employers value candidates who align their values with those of the company. This alignment suggests that these candidates are not only technically competent but also culturally and ethically in sync with the organisation's broader mission. This synergy can enhance both team cohesion and external reputation, as employees who share the company's vision of sustainability and community involvement tend to be more engaged and motivated in their roles. Participants who have had the experience of leading or taking part in socially impactful projects within EYP carry with them a sense of duty that goes beyond personal success, making them valuable assets in industries that emphasise sustainability and ethical practices.

This connection between NFE and ethical responsibility is increasingly relevant in the modern workforce, where social responsibility has become a key factor. By instilling these values early on, programs like EYP prepare participants not just to meet the technical demands of the job market but to thrive in environments where corporate ethics and social contributions are highly valued.

#### **4.4.4 Adaptability and Resilience**

Employers also place high value on the adaptability developed through NFE programs. Ivo emphasised that candidates who have been through youth organisations tend to show greater resilience in the face of uncertainty. This adaptability is especially important in fast-moving industries, such as tech or finance, where employees must pivot quickly between tasks, manage stress, and deal with unexpected challenges.

Romi and Schmida (2009) further highlight that the adaptability inherent in NFE is crucial for young people as it allows them to create their own authentic experiences and experiment with their freedoms. This environment fosters a sense of autonomy and resilience, as participants are encouraged to navigate unpredictable situations and take ownership of their learning journey. In doing so, young people are better prepared to face the complexities of modern workplaces. EYP's emphasis on experiential learning and collaborative problem-solving mirrors this approach, equipping participants with the flexibility and resilience necessary to thrive in rapidly changing professional environments.

#### **4.4.5 Intercultural Competence as a Global Asset**

The growing importance of intercultural competence was a point stressed by Abílio and Pedro, who noted that NFE participants often demonstrate an enhanced ability to work across cultures and communicate effectively in diverse environments. As global collaboration becomes the norm, companies increasingly prioritise employees who can understand and adapt to different cultural contexts. In this respect, employers see NFE as a key indicator that a candidate is ready for international roles or culturally diverse teams.

The Profile of the Interculturally Effective Person (Vulpe, 2000) outlines nine major competencies that describe the essential attributes, skills, and behaviours required for individuals to thrive in culturally diverse environments. These include skills such as adaptation, modesty and respect, teambuilding, organisation, and personal and professional commitment - all competencies that this research revealed to develop through participation in NFE programs like EYP. EYP participants are constantly immersed in a multicultural environment, collaborating with peers from different cultural backgrounds and learning to navigate varying communication styles, social norms, and

problem-solving approaches. We can consider then that those who participate in EYP are more prone to effectively engage in intercultural interactions.

In international sectors, such as tourism, multinational corporations, or NGOs, intercultural competence is no longer just a nice-to-have but an essential skill for building relationships, fostering innovation, and improving collaboration across geographic and cultural lines. Employers viewed candidates with NFE backgrounds as better equipped to handle these challenges, giving them a competitive edge in globally-focused organisations. The experiences gained in EYP, where participants adapt to new cultural dynamics, lead diverse teams, and contribute to shared goals, align directly with the attributes outlined by Vulpe, positioning these individuals as strong candidates for international roles where cultural intelligence is key to success.

#### **4.4.6 Limitations and Future Research**

For this research question, one limitation is that the study assumes that all employers are equally familiar with NFE programs like EYP. However, employers in sectors less exposed to these forms of education might have limited awareness or understanding of the competencies developed through such programs, which could affect their evaluations. Future research could investigate how familiar employers in different fields are with NFE and explore ways to raise awareness about the value these experiences can add to a candidate's skill set.

The research also provides only a short-term snapshot of employer perceptions, focusing on the immediate relevance of skills during recruitment processes. This limitation could be addressed by conducting longitudinal studies that track employer satisfaction with NFE participants over time, examining how these perceptions evolve as employees advance into more senior roles or face new professional challenges.

Furthermore, the current research highlights sectors that are already favourable toward soft skills, such as leadership and intercultural competence. Future studies should focus on exploring how these NFE-developed skills are perceived in more traditionally structured industries, where formal qualifications may carry more weight. This could reveal potential barriers to the broader recognition of NFE and help develop strategies to encourage its adoption across a wider range of professional contexts.

Finally, the lack of research on potential biases or misconceptions surrounding NFE limits the ability to fully understand its reception among employers. Future studies should aim to better understand and address these barriers, exploring whether certain industries undervalue NFE due to a lack of understanding or preconceived notions. This would provide valuable insights into how the recognition of NFE could be enhanced through policy changes or targeted awareness campaigns within the professional sector.

#### **4.5 Research Question 5: The Impact of EYP on Young People's Employability**

Having explored how EYP participation influences skill development, confidence, and job market readiness, this final research question ties everything together by addressing how these experiences translate into job opportunities. Research Question 5 examines the direct impact of participation on access to employment. This analysis brings the thesis full circle by evaluating the ultimate outcome of these formative experiences: whether they enhance employability and lead to better job prospects for participants.

##### **4.5.1 Bridging Skills Development and Job Access**

The skills acquired through EYP, as discussed in previous sections, are essential for navigating the evolving job market. However, the transition from skill acquisition to actual job opportunities is influenced by several factors, including how well these skills are recognised and leveraged by both participants and employers and the ability to meaningfully leverage them. EYP plays a critical role in helping participants develop the previously mentioned highly sought-after skills, which are not only relevant across industries as shown on the employer interviews but are also increasingly prioritised by employers in the modern workforce.

One of the core findings of this study is that participation in EYP significantly enhances young people's perception of their employability. The survey results show that respondents feel more prepared for the job market after participating in EYP, reflecting a sense of confidence in their ability to compete for jobs. This confidence stems from both the direct skill acquisition and the broader personal development experienced through

EYP activities, such as debates, teamwork in diverse environments, and leadership opportunities.

While the majority of participants feel more prepared for the job market, access to job opportunities is often influenced by how well employers value the skills gained through NFE. A key challenge remains the limited formal recognition of these outcomes, which can hinder the translation of these competencies into actual job opportunities. As highlighted by the Council of Europe (2012), validating the skills and knowledge acquired through NFE is crucial for enhancing employability and mobility. Although EYP participants may feel empowered and well-prepared, the difficulty lies in effectively communicating the value of these experiences to potential employers, particularly in competitive job markets.

#### **4.5.2 Industry-Specific Differences in EYP's Impact**

While EYP fosters skills that are universally valuable, such as communication, leadership, and adaptability, the extent to which these skills directly translate into job opportunities varies depending on the industry. For participants pursuing careers in fields like politics, international relations, and NGOs, the alignment between EYP's core competencies and job requirements is clear. These industries prioritise global awareness, intercultural communication, and diplomatic skills: areas in which EYP excels. However, participants aiming for more technical or specialised career paths, such as engineering, IT, or finance, expressed more mixed feelings about EYP's influence on job opportunities. In these fields, the focus is often on hard skills, such as technical expertise, certifications, or specific qualifications that EYP does not directly provide. Although EYP equips participants with critical soft skills that can complement these technical competencies, the more specialised industries continue valuing qualifications such as degrees, certifications, or specific work experience.

For example, a participant in the engineering field noted that while EYP helped them develop essential soft skills like teamwork and leadership, which are critical in collaborative projects, these alone were insufficient in a job market that demands strong technical qualifications. As a result, EYP serves as an important supplement to, rather than a direct substitute for, traditional qualifications in these industries. This distinction underscores the need for participants to be aware of the specific requirements of their

desired career paths and to position their EYP experiences as complementary to, rather than a replacement for, technical expertise.

This industry-specific difference highlights the dual role EYP can play in employability: while it directly enhances job prospects in fields that value soft skills and global perspectives, it also serves as a critical but secondary tool in technical or specialised industries, where formal qualifications hold greater weight.

#### **4.5.3 The Role of EYP in Building Networks and Social Capital**

Beyond skill development, one of the most valuable contributions of youth organisations is the creation of networks and social capital. Participation in organisations like EYP fosters a strong sense of belonging and shared mission, which enables participants to establish meaningful connections with peers, mentors, and professionals. This sense of community, as highlighted by Haim-Litevsky et al. (2023), plays a key role in enhancing both personal and professional well-being. The ability to create and maintain these connections is highly valued in the work world, as networking increases visibility, provides insider knowledge, and can lead to recommendations that significantly boost employability.

EYP's emphasis on teamwork and collaboration across national borders exposes participants to a diverse range of cultures, perspectives, and professional connections. These experiences build valuable social capital that can be leveraged to access job opportunities, particularly in international or multicultural contexts. As one survey participant noted, EYP was especially beneficial for those seeking careers in politics or international organisations, where the global focus of the program aligns with the demands of such roles.

Participants also frequently highlighted the personal connections they made during EYP sessions as being instrumental in opening career-related doors. These connections can serve as mentors, provide professional advice, or even lead to job referrals, underscoring the significant impact that EYP's network-building aspect has on young people's career prospects.

#### **4.5.4 Personal Growth and Professional Success**

Another key insight from this research is the powerful connection between personal growth and professional outcomes. EYP not only fosters skill development but also cultivates essential traits such as confidence, resilience, and adaptability. These personal attributes are not only beneficial for career readiness but also have a long-term impact on career progression. Participants reported that the personal development they experienced through EYP, particularly in terms of self-awareness and the ability to handle high-pressure situations, played a crucial role in preparing them for professional challenges.

In competitive job markets, personal traits such as resilience and adaptability are highly prized by employers, particularly as the industries become more dynamic. Survey respondents indicated that their experiences in EYP's high-stakes environments - whether it was leading a committee, debating complex topics, or working with diverse teams - helped them build the confidence to navigate professional settings.

Employers also value individuals who can demonstrate a commitment to continuous learning and self-improvement, qualities that EYP develops through its focus on experiential learning and reflective practices. By fostering these personal attributes, EYP prepares participants not only for their immediate job searches but also for long-term career success. Personal growth, in this sense, becomes a vital component of employability, as it equips young people with the emotional intelligence and adaptability needed to thrive in rapidly changing job markets.

#### **4.5.5 Leveraging EYP Experiences in Job Applications**

The ability to articulate the skills and experiences gained through EYP is another key factor that influences access to job opportunities. Participants indicated that the practical training in communication, leadership, and teamwork equipped them with a solid foundation for job interviews and applications. EYP experiences provide concrete examples that participants can draw on when responding to common interview questions about problem-solving, working in teams, or leading projects.

Several survey respondents noted that their participation in EYP helped them stand out in job interviews by showcasing their ability to thrive in high-stakes, collaborative environments. This aligns with Lamri and Lubart's (2023) argument that success in

today's dynamic job market requires a combination of both soft and hard skills - and EYP is fostering these soft skills that complement formal education. The competencies that EYP fosters through its hands-on approach can be applied in real-world contexts, enhancing candidate's appeal to potential employers.

Despite these advantages, some concerns can be raised about the lack of formal recognition for EYP experiences. As discussed in previous sections, the challenge of NFE validation remains a significant issue. While participants developed valuable skills, they are sometimes unsure how to convey the relevance of these skills in formal job applications, where traditional qualifications tend to take precedence. This highlights a need for better frameworks that allow participants to effectively translate NFE outcomes, such as those gained through EYP, into credentials that employers can easily recognise.

#### **4.5.6 Actual Job Outcomes and Career Progression**

While many participants reported feeling more confident and better prepared for the job market, the actual translation of these skills and experiences into tangible job outcomes is more complex. The qualitative responses suggest that the impact of EYP on employability is influenced by numerous factors, including career aspirations, geographic location, and the specific industries participants aim to enter.

Participants who aim to pursue careers aligned with international matters reported the most direct benefits from EYP participation. They noted that the skills and networks gained through EYP aligned closely with the demands of these fields. This is particularly relevant in international career paths, where intercultural communication, diplomacy, and global awareness are critical skills.

Conversely, participants aiming for more traditional or technical career paths, such as engineering or finance, expressed more mixed feelings about EYP's direct influence on job opportunities. These individuals acknowledged the value of the soft skills developed but noted that the highly specialised nature of their fields required additional technical qualifications or work experience that EYP alone could not provide.

This variation highlights an important insight: while EYP participation undoubtedly enhances employability, its direct impact on job outcomes can depend on the specific career path and industry. EYP's strengths in fostering communication, leadership, and

teamwork may be more immediately beneficial in fields where these soft skills are paramount, whereas more technical fields may require additional qualifications that EYP cannot fully address.

#### **4.5.7 The Role of Lifelong Learning and Adaptability**

The evolving nature of the job market, particularly in response to technological advances and globalisation, highlights the critical role of NFE as a key component of lifelong learning, empowering young people to constantly develop the skills, abilities, and attitudes to adapt to the ever-changing environment (Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, 2000). EYP plays a crucial role in fostering this adaptability and resilience, qualities that are essential for navigating the rapidly changing workforce.

Participants frequently mentioned that EYP's emphasis on experiential learning, problem-solving, and collaboration prepared them to handle the uncertainties and challenges of modern workplaces. This adaptability is a critical factor in long-term career success, particularly as industries evolve and new job opportunities emerge.

By fostering a sense of confidence, resilience, and a commitment to continuous learning, EYP prepares participants not only for their immediate job searches but also for future career progression. The skills and mindset developed through EYP participation provide a solid foundation for navigating career transitions, pursuing new opportunities, and adapting to the changing demands of the workforce.

#### **4.5.8 Limitations and Future Research**

While this study focused specifically on the impact of EYP on Portuguese participants, it would be valuable to conduct further research on a larger, more diverse sample across all National Committees. Expanding the scope to include participants from various countries would offer deeper insights into how the EYP programme influences employability in diverse cultural and socio-economic contexts. Such research could help to better understand the broader impact of EYP, as well as the extent to which the programme's benefits are shaped by local factors or consistent across regions.

Furthermore, while EYP develops valuable soft skills, the study reveals that the direct impact of these skills on employability can vary across industries. Participants pursuing careers in technical or specialised fields may require additional qualifications that EYP

does not provide. Future research could explore how the soft skills developed through NFE can be complemented with technical training or certifications to enhance employability in more specialised sectors.

Another area for future exploration is the formal recognition and validation of NFE experiences, which remains a barrier to fully translating these competencies into job opportunities. Investigating strategies for improving the recognition of EYP and similar programs by employers could help bridge the gap between formal education, non-formal education, and the labour market.

Lastly, the role of EYP in fostering lifelong learning and adaptability is significant, but further research is needed to explore how these qualities manifest in participants' long-term career trajectories. Understanding how EYP alumni continue to apply the skills of adaptability and continuous learning throughout their careers would provide valuable insights into the lasting impact of EYP participation on professional development.

## **4.6 Key Points: The Overall Impact of EYP on Job Opportunities**

This last section synthesises the findings of this study, summarising the overall impact of EYP on participants' employability. Drawing from surveys, employer interviews, and personal insights, the subsections below wrap up the key themes discussed in this chapter, highlighting how EYP enhances job prospects by equipping young people with valuable skills, fostering confidence, and aligning their experiences with the needs of the job market.

### **4.6.1 Skills Development**

The acquisition of soft skills such as communication, teamwork, leadership, and problem-solving emerged as one of the most significant outcomes of EYP participation. As reflected in both participant feedback and employer interviews, these competencies are increasingly valued in today's workforce, where adaptability and collaboration are essential. EYP fosters these skills through experiential learning, allowing participants to develop them in real-world, high-pressure environments that simulate professional settings.

This emphasis on skill development aligns with the European Qualification Framework's focus on knowledge, skills, and competences. By offering opportunities for both theoretical learning and practical application, EYP participants develop a well-rounded skill set that gives them a competitive edge in the job market. Employers, including those interviewed for this study, consistently noted that candidates with NFE backgrounds demonstrate a higher degree of preparedness when it comes to applying these skills in professional contexts.

#### **4.6.2 Confidence and Job Readiness**

In addition to skill development, EYP significantly enhances participants' confidence in their ability to navigate the job market. Survey results showed that EYP participants feel better prepared to compete for jobs, largely due to their exposure to leadership roles, teamwork, and public speaking opportunities. This boost in confidence is crucial for both job applications and performance in professional environments.

Employers highlighted the importance of this self-assurance, particularly in interview settings where candidates need to articulate their skills and experiences. Participants often pointed to concrete examples from their time in EYP - whether leading a committee or solving a complex problem - which helped them stand out during job interviews. This direct connection between the EYP experience and job readiness illustrates how non-formal education bridges the gap between academic learning and practical workplace expectations.

#### **4.6.3 Alignment with Job Market Demands**

One of the key findings of this study is the strong alignment between the skills fostered by EYP and the current demands of the job market. Employers across industries consistently emphasised the importance of soft skills, such as teamwork, communication, and leadership, all of which are central to the EYP experience. Furthermore, as globalisation accelerates, the demand for intercultural competence has grown, with companies increasingly seeking candidates who can navigate diverse cultural environments.

EYP participants, having worked with peers from across Europe, develop this intercultural competence alongside their soft skills, making them particularly attractive to

employers in sectors like international relations, consulting, and global organisations. The World Economic Forum's Future of Jobs Survey (2023) highlights how cognitive and creative skills, including problem-solving and adaptability, will continue to grow in importance, reinforcing the relevance of the skills that EYP participants acquire.

#### **4.6.4 Employers' Perceptions**

The employer interviews conducted as part of this study provided valuable insights into how NFE programs like EYP are perceived in the job market. Employers expressed a preference for candidates with NFE backgrounds, noting that these individuals demonstrate a higher level of practical readiness and leadership. They appreciated the initiative and independence shown by EYP participants, qualities that are often less evident in candidates who have only pursued formal education.

This perception aligns with the European Youth Forum's (2012) findings on the role of non-formal education in developing not only technical skills but also a broader range of competences, including ethical responsibility and social engagement. Employers also recognised the value of the networks participants build through EYP, highlighting how these connections can open doors to job opportunities and professional growth.

#### **4.6.5 Impact of EYP on Young People's Employability**

Overall, the study demonstrates that EYP has a significant and positive impact on young people's employability. By providing participants with a platform to develop essential skills, build confidence, and gain leadership experience, EYP equips young people with the tools they need to succeed in an increasingly competitive job market. However, the full potential of these experiences is sometimes limited by the lack of formal recognition for non-formal education outcomes, as highlighted by the Council of Europe (2012).

While participants develop valuable skills through EYP, translating these experiences into formal job applications can be challenging, especially in industries where traditional qualifications are prioritised. To overcome this barrier, there is a need for better frameworks that recognise and validate the skills gained through non-formal education. Despite these challenges, the EYP experience offers participants a clear advantage in industries that value leadership, teamwork, and intercultural competence, positioning them well for long-term career success.

## **CONCLUSION**

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This dissertation set out to explore the role of NFE in enhancing youth employability, focusing specifically on the European Youth Parliament (EYP) Portugal as a case study. The research aimed to determine whether the skills developed through NFE in youth organisations contribute to improving the employability of young people, particularly in alignment with the demands of the Portuguese labour market. Through the comprehensive analysis of feedback forms, surveys, and interviews with employers, this study has demonstrated that NFE, as implemented by EYP, plays a pivotal role in equipping young people with the soft skills and intercultural competencies increasingly valued in today's competitive job market.

In light of existing literature on the role of Active Citizenship and NFE, this dissertation provides new empirical evidence that reinforces the argument for integrating non-formal learning experiences into mainstream educational and employment strategies. By aligning the development of soft skills and intercultural competence with the theoretical models presented in previous research, this study deepens our understanding of how non-formal learning fosters not only employability but also broader social engagement.

The findings clearly highlight that participation in EYP Portugal enables young people to develop a wide range of soft skills, such as communication, teamwork, leadership, and adaptability - skills that are in high demand by employers. Additionally, EYP's strong emphasis on intercultural competence prepares participants to navigate multicultural and interconnected professional environments, facilitating effective collaboration across cultural and geographical boundaries. These competences, often overlooked or underdeveloped in formal education settings, are critical in a globalised world, positioning NFE as an essential complement to traditional learning models. Furthermore, the research shows that participation in EYP fosters a deepened sense of active citizenship, encouraging young people to become more engaged in their communities and take leadership roles in initiatives that contribute to society as a whole.

My personal experience within EYP Portugal adds an important dimension to these findings. Having participated in EYP over several years, progressing from participant to leadership roles, I have witnessed firsthand the transformative power of NFE on young people's development. Through this reflection, I can attest to the direct impact that EYP's structure and methodology have on the development of soft skills and intercultural competence. My experience within the organisation allowed me to both develop, apply

and refine these competencies in real-world settings, which provided a unique perspective on how NFE shapes not only employability but also personal growth and civic engagement. This experience-driven insight provides a deeper, self-reflective layer to this dissertation, reinforcing the importance of long-term involvement in NFE programs for youth development. It further underscores the theoretical models discussed in the literature review, which argue that the exposure and deepening of experiences in non-formal learning environments are key for developing soft skills and cultivate active citizens.

The study's findings have important implications for youth employment policies in Portugal. For youth organisations like EYP Portugal, this study underscores the importance of refining their non-formal educational models to further strengthen employability outcomes. Incorporating structured soft skills training and formal assessments of intercultural competence can enhance participants' ability to demonstrate these competencies in the labour market.

Reflecting on the research process, the combination of quantitative and qualitative methods enabled a comprehensive evaluation of the impact of EYP on participants. Quantitative data, such as feedback forms and surveys, provided valuable insights into the specific skills developed through the program, while qualitative data, drawn from in-depth interviews, offered a richer understanding of the participants' personal experiences and perspectives. This mixed-methods approach ensured that the research questions were thoroughly addressed. It also offered a robust evaluation of the role NFE plays in developing employability skills and promoting civic engagement among young people.

In terms of contributing new knowledge to the field, this dissertation advances the understanding of how youth organisations like EYP can serve as catalysts for personal development and active citizenship through NFE. While prior research has recognised the importance of soft skills and intercultural competence in employability, this study identifies the specific mechanisms by which EYP Portugal facilitates the development of these competencies and underscores their practical application in the labour market. Additionally, this research offers valuable insights into the Portuguese context, demonstrating how EYP's educational model can be adapted to address local challenges while maintaining alignment with broader European objectives.

Despite its contributions, this research also highlights areas for further exploration. One limitation of this study is its focus on the short-term outcomes of EYP participation. Future research could address this by conducting longitudinal studies that assess the long-term impact of the skills and competences developed through NFE on participants' career trajectories. Such studies could explore how soft skills and intercultural competencies continue to develop over time and how they influence career progression, job retention, and overall professional success. Additionally, comparative studies across different youth organisations within Europe would provide valuable insights into how cultural and organisational differences impact the effectiveness of NFE. These studies could help identify best practices and offer a more global perspective on the contributions of non-formal learning to employability and active citizenship.

In conclusion, this dissertation has shown that NFE, through the structured activities of EYP Portugal, plays a significant role in developing the skills young people need to succeed in the modern labour market, while also cultivating a strong sense of active citizenship. As the global economy continues to evolve and job market demands shift, the integration of NFE into national and European youth employment strategies must be prioritised. By bridging the gap between the theoretical knowledge gained through formal education and the practical skills required in today's workforce, NFE offers a powerful tool for preparing young people not only to meet the demands of employers but also to contribute meaningfully to society. Through this research, I have contributed to a deeper understanding of how youth organisations can serve as effective platforms for both personal and professional development, underscoring the importance of supporting and expanding the role of NFE in educational and employment policies across Europe.

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## Appendix I – Employer Interviews: Abílio Silva

Interviewer: Inês Rodrigues

Interviewee: Abílio Silva, Chief of Financial Operations (CFO) at TIBA

Date and Place: August 21<sup>st</sup>, online interview

**AS (Abílio Silva):** O meu nome é Abílio Silva, trabalho numa empresa de transportes internacionais e trânsitos - TIBA Portugal - já há 27 anos, sempre na área financeira. Fiz o meu percurso na empresa sempre na área financeira, que é muito ligada a todos os outros departamentos, portanto fui percorrendo um bocadinho de cada um. Atualmente sou o diretor financeiro e também acumulo um pouco a responsabilidade a nível de recursos humanos, qualidade e de apoio ao *Board* no *Head Office*.

**IR (Inês Rodrigues):** E é nesse contexto que acabas também por fazer parte do processo de recrutamento, certo?

**AS:** Sim, já fiz mais do que faço agora, mas ainda acompanho principalmente nas áreas em que tenho essa responsabilidade, e tenho sempre uma palavra e uma avaliação final. Além da contratação temos a avaliação de desempenho que estamos a implementar - ainda é algo relativamente recente, mas também acaba por ser o verificar o nosso estado a nível de colaboradores, e que aborda também as competências, quer as técnicas quer comportamentais.

**IR:** Baseado na tua experiência, quais é que são as competências que consideras mais valiosas para quem está agora a entrar no mercado de trabalho?

**AS:** Em termos das competências técnicas, tem tudo a ver com a função para a qual se está a contratar, se sabe ou tem experiência, depende daquilo que esteja à procura. Por isso são algumas variáveis que são relativamente simples e de alguma forma fáceis de ir completando. Se tem formação académica na área ou não tem, se tem experiência na área ou não. Isso são pontos fáceis de verificar para se ir ao encontro do que é preciso. Em algumas áreas pode-se fazer um pequeno teste de conhecimento para realmente ter alguma noção se o candidato está à vontade com alguma terminologia. Depois tem a questão das competências comportamentais relacionadas com o carácter, as tais *soft skills* que se procuram muito atualmente. A mais básica e mais corrente é o trabalho de equipa:

saber trabalhar em equipa, saber organizar-se com os demais colaboradores para determinadas funções - seja fisicamente, seja na organização do trabalho - e se estão pretensos a essa divisão de tarefas. Saber lidar com esse trabalho de equipa, com essa divisão de tarefas, sempre foi a que a que sempre existiu ao longo do tempo. Na empresa onde trabalho também sempre demos uma grande primazia a uma boa organização pessoal, as pessoas têm a sua autonomia em termos da organização do trabalho - por isso outra das competências que também têm que demonstrar é ter uma boa organização pessoal e uma boa organização do trabalho. Obviamente que isso traz mais ou menos rentabilidade, produtividade, tudo aquilo que os gestores gostam de ouvir. Portanto, é o trabalhar sozinho porque há tarefas que é sozinho, e trabalhar em conjunto para que realmente tudo funcione. Essas sempre foram as mais importantes. Depois foi variando. Antigamente era a questão de viver na área, ou seja em termos de deslocações não ser muito complicado, ser de fácil acesso ou fácil trajeto casa-emprego e vice-versa. Nunca fomos muito pela questão da idade. Historicamente são essas que ainda vão prevalecendo ou não - a questão da distância já não se aplica hoje em dia, também porque há uma melhor rede de transporte. Apesar de poder ajudar, não é essencial nos dias de hoje. Historicamente havia também um chavão de “há horas para entrar e não há horas para sair”, ou seja, assiduidade à entrada e depois o desprendimento, a disponibilidade para ficar até tarde se fosse preciso. Isso transforma-se hoje numa flexibilidade de horários: hoje também quem se adaptar bem a uma flexibilidade de horários é uma mais valia. Também fomos compreendendo que as pessoas também têm os seus ritmos, e podem ser mais produtivos num determinado ritmo ou num determinado horário. No caso da empresa onde estou também temos sempre uma questão de fusos horários: por serem transportes internacionais também facilmente se comunica com outras partes do globo. E com os fusos horários, por exemplo, com a China é importante chegar mais cedo ou então sair mais tarde que é quando eles estão a trabalhar e com os Estados Unidos podia ser um bocadinho o inverso. Isto para relacionar com a flexibilidade, e depois também com os parceiros, com os intervenientes, com quem se pode vir a trabalhar. E por isso já falei do trabalho em equipa, da boa organização pessoal, desta flexibilidade de horários e mental, porque é preciso predisposição para essa flexibilidade. Hoje em dia também se tivermos a ideia de que as pessoas se preocupam com si próprias, é sinal que também se preocupam de uma forma geral com o que estão a fazer. É um bom sinal. Pode não ser assim tão taxativo, mas tem-se em conta se realmente a pessoa dá importância ao seu estilo, o seu aspeto, a parte física, a apresentação, o saber entender em que ambiente é que estão, mais

ou menos formal. É ter a noção do saber estar que também é importante e que dá sinais de que tem a sua vida organizada, que tem skills de organização pessoal que pode transpor para o trabalho.

**IR:** E durante todo esse processo de recrutamento ou de avaliação, a tua empresa tem algum processo ou ferramenta para avaliar essas competências?

**AS:** Sim, obviamente tem que se definir qual é o alvo que se pretende. Mediante a função também podes querer alguém mais extrovertido, bem falante, principalmente para uma área mais comercial de vendas, ou se for para uma área mais relacionada com fiscalidade, tem que ser alguém que goste de estar atualizado. Existe aqui algumas nuance dependendo da função. Na entrevista é abordado o currículo, que vai dando alguma informação e que nos vai dando algumas pistas para também depois fazer outro tipo de perguntas. A partir do momento em que a pessoa possa vir a ser contratada, tudo serve para avaliar. Na fase de recrutamento é através de 1 ou 2 entrevistas.

**IR:** As entrevistas são feitas por pessoas diferentes ou pela mesma pessoa?

**AS:** Pode ser de pessoas diferentes, sim, em termos hierárquicos. Provavelmente um líder de uma determinada equipa pode fazer, juntamente com o colega dos recursos humanos, uma primeira leva de entrevistas - já com 3 ou 4 alvos identificados, não é de todos que concorrem. E depois o diretor desse departamento pode estar se calhar numa segunda entrevista para também dar a sua opinião, a sua percepção. São sempre poucas horas para poder confirmar aquilo que pode vir a dizer. E aí tem que se acreditar um pouco naquilo que as pessoas dizem. Depois temos sempre um período de experiência, mas isso já faz parte da generalidade e está no código do trabalho. Obviamente que é negociada, mas existe esse processo e esse período experimental. No nosso caso, nós temos sempre um 1 ou 2 dias que chamamos de *Welcome*, onde a pessoa vai perceber um pouco onde é que está a entrar - em termos de empresa, os valores, a missão, todo o propósito, além das suas funções - vai conhecer um pouco de tudo da empresa. Digamos portanto que não começa logo a meter a mãos ao trabalho, vai perceber onde é que entrou e o grupo, não só de Portugal mas do grupo a que pertence, e depois o que é que se pretende também. Há também uma espécie de “pequenos cursos” que tem de assistir. Depois também terá de ficar alocado a um tutor, ou seja, dentro da sua área dentro do seu departamento alguém tem de ficar responsável também pela sua admissão e adaptação. Na parte técnica, e mediante algumas coisas que já vêm de trás a adaptação à partida será mais fácil, às

ferramentas que tenhamos que possam ser diferentes de onde estava. Se não tiver experiência ou se for como chamamos um Júnior ou um Aspirante, aí sim já tem de aprender algo mais da parte técnica... e é aí que se vai vendo todas essas competências mais comportamentais: se está concentrado, se não está, se está atento, se é interessado, se tem uma boa adaptação ao resto do departamento e das funções. Se for uma função que possa ir escalando em termos de exigência, também é importante delinear isso de forma a que a pessoa progressivamente vá tendo um pouco mais de exigência. Falando de algo mais formal, antes de finalizar o período da experiência é preciso ter uma avaliação do período e se realmente é aquilo que procuramos. Digamos que é a ferramenta que a lei de trabalho nos permite. E se a pessoa realmente não estiver adaptada, pode ser a própria a dizer, não tem de ser só a empresa. A pessoa também pode tomar essa iniciativa de sair, se vir que não é aquilo que estava à espera. Neste período de experiência estamos à procura se realmente tem um perfil daquilo que pretendemos para a função e para a empresa. Se realmente for uma pessoa que demonstre mais-valias, também queremos fazer de tudo para que ela fique. Não só para as novas contratações, mas também para aqueles que já cá estão, reconhecer o talento para aquela função - que umas vezes pode ser mais comportamental, outras vezes mais técnico, mas que traz sempre mais valia para o departamento e para a empresa. E é nesse período de experiência que se vai vendo estas competências: do interessado, do flexível, do adaptado, do que trabalha em equipa, do organizado, do assíduo e pontual. Vemos também a própria forma de se apresentar e o discurso. Hoje em dia tudo conta. Numa conversa, já conseguimos ter uma pré fotografia da pessoa, e já sabemos com o que é que podemos vir a contar.

**IR:** E no processo de recrutamento, notas alguma competência ou habilidade específica nos jovens que participam em projetos de educação não formal e que estão agora a entrar no mercado de trabalho? Penso que os jovens agora estão a saber melhor ser *marketers* das suas habilidades.

**AS:** Hoje em dia sim. Eu lembro-me de uma altura, pode ter sido por acaso, em que se via muitas coisas nesse sentido - e que também era uma forma de ganhar dinheiro para aqueles que estavam a promover, por exemplo, como te venderes na tua próxima oferta de emprego, como fazer um currículo bom. Houve aí uma fase em que havia uma maior atenção e dedicação para nos sabermos mostrar ou para tentarmos mostrar aquilo que valemos: saber o que dizer ou não dizer. Tudo isso pode valer na tal entrevista, mas depois mais à frente também tem de ser algo substancial e concreto, tem que de alguma forma

comprovar isso. No momento da contratação, nas entrevistas, noto que, seja positivamente, seja negativamente, os candidatos são mais flexíveis ao emprego. Antes notava as pessoas mais preocupadas quando não eram escolhidas, hoje já não vejo tanto esse esse temor de de ser ou não ser contratado. Obviamente que a sociedade também mudou e pode-se ter criado uma ideia de “se eu não arranjar hoje o emprego, amanhã arranjo” ou “se não for aqui, amanhã é acolá”. Fiquei com essa ideia de que estão mais despreocupados. Não invalida que não saibam explicar e demonstrar as suas capacidades, mas vejo mais “à vontade”. Agora, é importante saber, e por acaso é algo que eu também presto atenção, além do percurso académico ou até mesmo profissional, caso já tenha alguma experiência, qualquer atividade que a pessoa faça extra. Era aquilo que dizia há pouco, uma pessoa que cuida de si à partida também sabe cuidar de outras coisas. Seja em voluntariado, seja o hábito de ir ao ginásio, seja o hábito de participar num hobby. Quando alguém só menciona passear ou estar com os amigos é algo muito pouco concreto. Agora, quando dizem que participaram no Banco Alimentar, ou voluntariado, ou acompanham a Associação X, mesmo a questão de de ginásio ou de algum outro desporto - por exemplo, se foram federados de um determinado desporto durante  $x$  anos - isto leva a uma determinada fidelidade ou continuidade, e também demonstra alguma resiliência. O facto de já ser federado já implica que não era só o gosto, já seria algo mais composto, 3 ou 4 treinos, competições, algo organizado que implica compromisso. Isso já começa a fazer sentido naquilo que se procura. Já agora, naqueles que também têm experiência, se eu vejo que num curto espaço de tempo, também andaram em 3 ou 4 empresas... ou têm muito azar ou então se calhar não se adaptam bem a determinadas funções. Eu vou perguntando sempre qual foi o motivo da saída. Mas tudo aquilo que as pessoas possam fazer fora da sua vida académica e até profissional, é importante para dar esses sinais do que a pessoa é - seja para assim cuidar de si, seja a tal continuidade e resiliência. Também pode ser por exemplo o teu caso de dirigismo, e com outras valências organizativas de gestão, de trabalho em equipa, de trabalho em prol de algum fim. Nos escuteiros, ou sendo noutra área que possa estar mais à vontade começo logo a fazer mais algumas perguntas, já mais concretas e direcionadas. No caso do escutismo, se foi ou ainda é, onde, durante quanto tempo, algo que o tenha marcado, o que acha que o escutismo lhe transmitiu... já é mais direcionado à procura de algumas respostas, também para eu me poder enquadrar e de certa forma igualar-me - já tendo experiência no escutismo e sabendo o que é necessário em determinadas funções, já me transmite algumas qualidades.

**IR:** Costuma aparecer-te efetivamente gente com background de envolvimento?

**AS:** De associações ou organizações maiores, com algum peso, não me recordo. Recordo-me de pessoas colocarem voluntariado numa ou noutra situação. Tem sido mais até relacionado com desporto. Por acaso, os últimos foram mais relacionados com a parte académica até, com coisas que já na minha altura na licenciatura já se estava a pôr em prática e eu volto a perguntar se se ainda está em prática - tem a ver com essencialmente com simulações práticas. No ISCAP, quando eu estava a terminar o bacharelado há 20 e tal anos já tinham introduzido uma disciplina que era a simulação empresarial. Criaram ali uma espécie de uma disciplina onde tu criavas a tua própria empresa de forma a simular tudo, desde movimentos e compras de mercadorias. Depois contabilizava-se isso, para ter mapas financeiros de análise. E na altura, aquilo que era uma brincadeira passou a ser mesmo uma disciplina. Era quase como um estágio, ou seja, em vez de irem para uma empresa fazer um estágio trabalham ali. Na altura estava-se a dar os primeiros passos. E essa simulação empresarial realmente foi uma boa ideia, que ainda fazem. O último colega que contratei teve na faculdade assim algo semelhante a simulação empresarial, onde constituiu uma empresa com todas as formalidades. Depois simularam um ano de operações, contabilidade, mapas, e tinham ali uma vida paralela para realmente verem como é que como é que as coisas funcionam. É verdade que não é algo associativo, mas é alguém que eu me posso sentir à vontade e que me pode trazer alguma informação adicional. E se realmente alguém fica fascinado por ter tido essa experiência, se realmente tiver um determinado interesse nessa área, para mim, tenho um bónus. Se quiseres começar a quantificar aquilo que vamos ouvindo nas entrevistas, como mais ou menos, positivo ou negativo, se houver alguém que demonstre aquele interesse e que adorou aquela disciplina e que até fez isto e aquilo é um mais porque é alguém que na prática gosta e deu valor a esta parte prática, por mais simulação que seja. É verdade que não é numa associação, mas se for um projeto que eu reconheça e que esteja à vontade do que é que se faz, do que é que se passa, o que é que é aquela associação pretende, qual é o objetivo e o fim daquela associação e se a pessoa está lá integrada e durante  $x$  tempo, é algo que que eu vou tentar ir à procura de mais alguma coisa para realmente ver o que é que o que é que ficou, o que é que eles absorveram dessa experiência para depois pôr em prática na sua vida, seja familiar, amigos, empresarial, académica... porque isto depois acaba por se refletir em todas as vertentes.

**IR:** Um ponto que eu que eu gostava de focar, principalmente porque a empresa também trabalha muito nessa vertente internacional, vocês têm essa componente de competências interculturais em mente?

**AS:** Nesse caso também depende um pouco da exposição que essa pessoa também vá ter com o contacto exterior. Lembro-me do próprio facto de no Norte da África, por exemplo na Argélia, os muçulmanos trabalhem ao domingo e nós no domingo descansamos, e depois quando eu à sexta-feira estou a chateá-los, para eles é é fim de semana. Nesse aspecto, eu acho que a própria globalização facilitou tudo, a própria informação que anda.. Mas não vejo isso como um entrave, vejo como isso, como algo que é de fácil aquisição. Neste exemplo que dei, nós também tínhamos colegas do grupo na Argélia, que facilmente entendiam - e se no início estou à espera da resposta urgente à sexta-feira e não me respondem, depois têm resposta estou eu em casa, as pessoas adaptam-se. Há outras coisas assim, muito simples, por exemplo em Angola, quando têm um feriado no domingo, gozam-no na segunda-feira. E para nós parecer assim um bocadinho “estes gajos são uns são uns malandros”, mas aí já é do país. Acho que aceitam bem isso, ou seja, não traz nada de negativo. Não é nada que por acaso pergunte - é verdade que pode ter tido uma ou outra experiência a trabalhar no estrangeiro, e isso pode saltar à vista num currículo, e se for num país assim mais diferenciado, salta mais à vista. Também se vir alguém com gosto ou que saiba falar mandarim ou uma língua do género, que não é totalmente fácil, já demonstra esse interesse numa cultura diferente da nossa. Se não houver estes sinais não é algo que se pergunte, porque eu acho que hoje em dia com a globalização é de fácil adaptação também.

## Appendix II – Employer Interviews: Anabela Gomes

Interviewer: Inês Rodrigues

Interviewee: Anabela Gomes, Production Manager at Nimco Made4You

Date and Place: August 29th, online interview

**AG (Anabela Gomes):** Normalmente eu tenho 3 motivos que me fazem contratar: a dispensa por não renovação de contrato, e então há uma substituição; a necessidade de fazer crescer a equipa porque há um aumento ou pretensão de aumento de produção para o ano seguinte ou para uma perspetiva de 5 anos - e neste caso quando eu digo 5 anos falo num processo que começou em 2020 e terminará em 2025, 2026 com a construção de uma nova fábrica. Sendo que a perspetiva aqui é dotar as equipas de pessoas que consigam substituir ou colmatar aumentos de produção. Por exemplo, eu sei que neste momento a seguir ao período de férias vou ter um mês ou dois com um aumento de produção. E não tendo trabalho suplementar, temos de ter as equipas dotadas de pessoas com capacidades para responder às necessidades de produção de uma entrega imediata. Aqui a necessidade da empresa é uma necessidade imediata, porque nós fazemos uma entrega porta-a-porta, ou seja, desde o momento da encomenda até à data de entrega demora 12 a 15 dias. Este deadline de entrega é a nossa menina dos olhos dos nossos clientes - porque dizer que vai receber um sapato em 15 dias é diferente do que dizer que vai receber daqui a um mês ou dois. Não é bem o conceito de chegar à loja e comprar porque não é, mas tendo em conta o mercado e a parte médica da questão, é bom. E como temos outra parte, o mercado infantil, para correção em crianças, é muito necessário ser imediato. Eu não posso dizer a uma criança que vai receber daqui a um ano porque entretanto já não lhe serve, ou daqui a um mês.

**IR (Inês Rodrigues):** E nesse processo de recrutamento, antes de passar para os recursos humanos, acabas por procurar mais pessoas com capacidades técnicas, não?

**AG:** A parte técnica é importante, mas a parte técnica eu consigo formar, consigo com formação interna e com flexibilidade e com todos os nossos processos e sistemas. Claro que quem tem conhecimento da área e do setor tem preferência, mas nós procuramos essencialmente pessoas comprometidas, responsáveis, e que em termos comportamentais respondam a uma política de respeito pela empresa, pelas pessoas, pelo próprio, pelos outros, pelo ambiente - porque o nosso compromisso da empresa a nível ambiental e de saúde é muito grande, por várias razões: por sermos certificados ambientalmente pela saúde na parte dos dispositivos médicos; e em termos de higiene e segurança, porque existe o cumprimento de requisitos locais. Ou seja, a pessoa quando entra tem de estar ciente de que vai ter primeiro de respeitar-se a si e aos outros. Quando estás a entrevistar uma pessoa tentas perceber o que ela pretende, quer da vida, quer de objetivos profissionais e familiares, porque é uma questão de sustentabilidade - nós não podemos contratar 100 pessoas para despedi-las no mês a seguir, nunca será essa a nossa maneira de trabalhar. Aliás, a nossa política de contratação é que para todas as pessoas contratadas, o primeiro contrato é de um ano, com uma avaliação intercalar ao fim de 6 meses e uma

avaliação ao final de um ano para renovar ou não. O renovar tem vários fatores: a produtividade, a assiduidade, se a pessoa se integrou, se se sente parte da casa.

**IR:** E da massa de trabalhadores que têm, são pessoas mais jovens ou não?

**AG:** Neste momento temos cerca de 220 pessoas, com uma faixa etária entre os 40 e os 60 anos grande. Há 2 ou 3 anos começamos a pensar numa forma de cativar jovens para a produção, o que não é fácil porque não é cativante. Nós cativamos pela parte tecnológica que introduzimos no processo. Portanto temos uma faixa etária que são os mais antigos, e depois muitos até aos 30 ou 35 anos. E muitos curiosamente ali nos 18 e 22, que são pessoas que saem de cursos técnicos, vêm estagiar e acabam por ficar. Nós temos uma tendência grande de pessoas que vêm pela parte do design, de toda a parte de desenho e depois de mecanização em termos de utilização de máquinas 3D - nós estamos neste momento a desenvolver uma área de desenho 3D, e fazer todas estas adaptações em 3D precisa de pessoas que desenhem, que desenvolvam, e portanto o investimento é grande.

**IR:** E quando tu passas a informação para a parte de recursos humanos, quais são as necessidades que tu salientas?

**AG:** Em termos de processo, a primeira necessidade que eu passo é se preciso ou não de pessoas, e depois o tipo de pessoas que preciso. Tendo em conta algum tipo de função posso indicar idade e saúde - isto porque como são trabalhos manuais precisam de força, portanto convém que tenhamos aqui algum cuidado para não criarmos expectativas em quem estamos a contratar, quer depois de contratar, se não sabemos o que é que as pessoas conseguem fazer. E neste processo há sempre um período de experimentação de 2 ou 3 dias, que é para também as pessoas perceberem se se enquadram ou não na dinâmica da empresa, e aí fazem sempre a vivência normal do dia a dia da empresa. Depois sim, tento passar pessoas que sejam responsáveis, que já tenham uma estabilidade ou que pretendam crescer, que tenham alguma ambição no sentido de melhorarem e não fiquem acomodados. Essencialmente pessoas que questionem, mas que questionem com sentido e que me digam “eu não concordo com isto, por isto...”, mas que quando eu digo que é para fazer que façam, mesmo dizendo que não concordam - e se não correr bem, voltamos atrás. Não pessoas respondonas, ou críticas, mas reivindicativas daquilo que faz sentido. Se me disserem que acham que faz sentido mudar algum processo e sugerir outras maneiras, é uma pessoa que para mim faz todo o sentido.

**IR:** E sentes isso nos jovens?

**AG:** Não, se calhar pelas funções para as quais eu contrato. Das últimas experiências que tive correram muito bem, inclusive um deles subiu para técnico de manutenção - entrou como operador de produção, e neste momento evoluiu, porque era pessoa que tinha uma aptência grande para lidar com máquinas, e para pôr as máquinas a funcionar sem alterar a segurança. Se a pessoa é reivindicativa e gosta de reclamar? Não, mas foi uma das pessoas que na avaliação intercalar me apresentou toda uma série de melhorias que podia fazer e que o processo podia ter. Fez questão de dizer onde esteve bem e onde esteve menos bem, e também onde nós estivemos menos bem.

**IR:** E em relação ao sentido de compromisso, sentes que as gerações mais novas o estão a perder?

**AG:** É assim, a empresa aqui sofreu duas grandes revoluções: uma em 2010 com as mudanças estratégicas da empresa por causa da mudança de sócios, que não foi propriamente interna; e uma interna em 2015/2016 que fez com que muita gente da equipa fosse renovada, e as equipas cresceram. E isto porque eram pessoas que estavam aqui há muitos anos, que já vinham algumas desde 2006, e muitas delas operavam no sentido de “fui contratado para esta tarefa, nem pensar em fazer outra”, ou então a pessoa faltava e não passava conhecimento a ninguém, o que fazia com que durante um período de tempo a tarefa não estivesse a ser executada porque mais ninguém sabia fazer. Então aqui teve de se pensar no que fazer para colmatar isto - o que passou por flexibilidade, ensinar as pessoas, ensinar tarefas, e depois pôr as pessoas a trabalhar em equipa no sentido de se uma não estiver, o resto conseguir trabalhar de maneira a que o trabalho dessa pessoa não seja afetado porque vamos trabalhar todos em conjunto - isto é um pensamento que não existia. Muitos ainda têm alguma resistência, e acham que se souberem fazer mais coisas, que a empresa os vai obrigar a fazer mais coisas e abusarem... mas a evolução vem, e o covid para nós trouxe uma coisa muito boa que foi nós conseguirmos suprir as tarefas de uma secção que ficou todo infetada, porque outras pessoas conseguiam fazer tudo. E isso significa que há aqui uma mentalidade a crescer de que todos fazem parte e contribuem para o mesmo. Nas contratações mais recentes e mais jovens, eu acho que eles não têm é compromisso com eles, não é com a empresa - não percebem que o facto de estarem a construir algo estável lhes vai dar algo de volta. E o que se sente é que se as coisas não acontecem no momento, desistem e passam para a próxima. Não é toda a gente, e eu consigo ver que há algumas pessoas e jovens - e também tive essa experiência com o programa de verão que tivemos, com estudantes a trabalhar durante um mês - que sim senhor, muito bom. Ao contrário do que dizem disso do compromisso, eu acho que muitas vezes os mais velhos é que têm essas ideias pré-fixas do “eu fui contratado para isto, não faço mais”.

**IR:** Os mais novos também acabam por valorizar mais a vida além do trabalho, portanto há mais facilidade em ir embora quando acabam as tarefas.

**AG:** Eu acho que há uma mudança de paradigma: antigamente as pessoas trabalhavam aqui, em casa, tinham 2 ou 3 trabalhos no sentido de construir algo. Agora as pessoas trabalham para ter momentos: não ter coisas, ter momentos. E aí sim aparece a outra parte de ter outra vida, estar com amigos, ou ir ao ginásio. Já ninguém sai daqui para ir para outro trabalho, há um ou outro que têm mas é pouco. Se antigamente faziam isso para a família, agora fazem isso para estarem uns com os outros sem o compromisso de adquirir algo. Atenção que isto é uma realidade muito local, não sei se consigo transpor isto para um nível tão alargado, mas é algo que se nota muito aqui - que as prioridades não são as mesmas que existiam há 15 ou 20 anos. Antes a pergunta era “sabes fazer isto? Sabes vens”. Agora não é assim. Há uma estrutura, há um pensamento, há uma linha geral, algo que se pretende - não se contrata porque sim, há um objetivo.

**IR:** E tens pessoas que já chegam com a mentalidade de um trabalho temporário?

**AG:** É assim, a questão da renovação ou não depende sempre da opção da pessoa, ou se não correspondeu aos objetivos a não renovação. Durante o primeiro ano não temos objetivos de produção muito bem definidos para quem está a começar, porque é um ano de formação. A partir disso há objetivos definidos, e já entra muito a assiduidade, a

disponibilidade - não só para vir trabalhar, mas para aprender a fazer coisas. Vai sempre depender da parte comportamental, que aqui acaba por pesar sempre mais, sendo que a produtiva às vezes interfere se percebermos que consegue fazer mais, mas não quer.

**IR:** Então no teu contexto, entre uma pessoa que tenha boas skills comportamentais mas que se calhar não seja tão boa tecnicamente, se calhar consegues mais facilmente ensinar essa pessoa do que ao contrário?

**AG:** Sim. Enquanto empresa, nós tivemos de fazer uma limpeza cirúrgica numa das linhas, porque tínhamos algumas pessoas que incendiaram bastante a questão - eram muito boas tecnicamente, como pessoas eram muito más, o carácter era muito mau. Houve várias situações, repreensões e chamadas de atenção, até que a conversa final foi tentar chegar a um acordo. E neste momento eu tenho menos pessoas que fazem mais do que quando tinha essas outras pessoas cá. Um dos meus colegas tem uma frase que é “Tecnicamente é espetacular, como pessoa nem para tomar café”. E tenho outro que me diz sempre “Os meus amigos são muito bons, mas para ser amigos de café, não para trabalhar aqui”. No recrutamento, o primeiro ano pode ser espetacular ou as pessoas só se revelam depois da efetivação. Há pessoas que conseguem enganar durante muito tempo, há pessoas que mostram desde cedo tudo o que são.

**IR:** Na tua indústria, achas que valorizam mais a parte técnica ou comportamental? Eu esperaria que fosse mais valorizada a parte técnica.

**AG:** A indústria do calçado é muito difícil, e nesta zona o trabalho é muito difícil e temporário, as pessoas não se fixam nos postos de trabalho nem nas empresas. Algumas conhecemos, outras ouvimos falar, em que a valorização da pessoa é zero. Aliás, há pessoas que chegam aqui e contam coisas que se pensa “isto acontecia nos anos 50”. Há um trabalho que começou a ser feito pelo setor do calçado, que é a valorização do trabalho da pessoa e o trabalho digno, mas a imagem que passa é que muitas vezes fazem porque são obrigados pela parte legal, e é o mínimo. Eu já visitei fábricas em que eu não trabalhava lá. E eu não sou da opinião de que nós temos de ser duros e justos, isto não é a santa casa, mas temos de ser justos, equilibrados e sensíveis. Não posso passar o pano a uma pessoa que erra constantemente e não se responsabiliza, é preciso falar. Por exemplo, nunca proibimos ninguém de ir a casa de banho, mas há sítios em que ainda é preciso pedir a chave. A contratação em si é sempre um processo que para mim tem muito a ver com a honestidade das duas partes. E eu contrato muita gente que não sabe fazer, e que eu ensino. Porque lá está, a parte técnica é fácil de ensinar, agora atitudes e comportamentos já não é assim tão fácil. Eu consigo ensinar uma pessoa a fazer um sapato, mas não consigo ensinar a ser correta e a respeitar os outros.

### **Appendix III – Employer Interviews: Carlos Rodrigues**

Interviewer: Inês Rodrigues

Interviewee: Carlos Rodrigues, CFO at Ferreira de Sá Rugs

Date and Place: August 28<sup>th</sup>, online interview

**CR (Carlos Rodrigues):** A empresa com quem eu trabalho é a Tapeçarias Ferreira de Sá, que é uma empresa industrial de tapetes de luxo. É uma empresa já com 80 anos, mas que até 2018 era uma empresa familiar. Depois foi vendida a um grupo espanhol, e mais recentemente, há um ano atrás, foi vendida a um outro fundo espanhol. Este fundo espanhol que atualmente detém a empresa contratou-me como CFO, como administrador financeiro da empresa. Estes fundos espanhóis querem no fundo comprar empresas para as vender passado algum tempo, passado uma meia dúzia de anos, e precisam de uma equipa que os ajude a valorizar a empresa. E foi nesse sentido que eles me contrataram. É uma empresa essencialmente exportadora, que trabalha no mercado de luxo com arquitetos de interiores, designers... está num segmento de luxo. Neste momento está numa fase de crescimento, e portanto a minha função é estar na administração da empresa para apoiar este processo de crescimento.

**IR (Inês Rodrigues):** Baseado na tua experiência, não só nesta empresa mas em toda a tua carreira, quais consideras que são as competências mais valiosas no processo de recrutamento?

**CR:** Eu acho que cada vez mais as empresas precisam de pessoas com valores fortes, com elementos em que possam confiar e que se comprometam com projetos - porque as empresas no fundo são projetos. Que podem ser mais ou menos longo prazo, mas cada vez mais é preciso elementos que se comprometam com o projeto que é uma empresa. E o projeto pode fazer sentido para umas pessoas e outras não, e as empresas também têm de ter essa capacidade de reconhecer aqueles elementos que se podem encaixar no projeto em que estão. Eu acho que há determinadas competências e aspetos que são transversais. A questão da confiança hoje em dia é fundamental: termos pessoas que são confiáveis é talvez a principal característica. Porque as questões mais técnicas depois são mais fáceis de treinar. E as empresas têm cada vez mais programas de desenvolvimento que cobrem essas questões mais técnicas. Agora aquelas questões de valores, de compromisso, isso ou a pessoa tem ou mais dificilmente consegue adquirir. Eu acho que o mais importante é reconhecer as pessoas com os valores certos para o projeto onde estão.

**IR:** E nesses processo, como é feita a avaliação dessas competências transversais, comportamentais?

**CR:** É muito difícil numa entrevista, mesmo em duas ou três, avaliar uma pessoa numa perspectiva mais de futuro. Agora, as empresas valorizam as referências, e hoje o próprio LinkedIn é uma ferramenta muito importante para pesquisar as empresas, os comentários, as referências. Neste projeto que comecei há uns meses, a empresa que me contratou pediu-me duas referências: e foram 2 pessoas que trabalharam comigo, que me

conheciam. Claro que é sempre a minha indicação, mas muitas vezes procuramos pessoas que trabalharam connosco em determinados contextos. Neste caso, como é um fundo de investimento, dei uma referência que vinha de um outro fundo de investimento com quem trabalhei - e essa experiência às vezes é uma ajuda. Mas é sempre uma aposta e nunca uma garantia, e depende muito de cargo. Se for um cargo de direção, os próprios *Head Hunters* que trabalham nestes processos também têm contactos. E por isso é que é importante quando fazemos um percurso, que a imagem que deixamos seja positiva - porque isso depois pode ser e é importante em processos futuros. É muito pela entrevista, mas pelas referências também.

**IR:** Hoje em dia também já não há tanto a ideia de ter um único trabalho para a vida.

**CR:** Claro. Agora, também não é muito normal e isso aparece muitas vezes em currículos, os chamados “currículos saltitões” - pessoas que como não têm capacidade ou vontade de se comprometer, estão sempre a saltar de uma coisa para a outra, nunca estão bem. Ou é porque recebem mais dinheiro noutra sítio, ou é porque o projeto é muito trabalhoso, ou porque não existe *home office*... E principalmente nas gerações mais novas, assiste-se muito a isso, a uma dificuldade muito grande no compromisso. Querem coisas muito imediatas, rápidas: querem promoções rápidas, querem cargos de chefia rápidos... e isso acontece muito nestas gerações mais recentes e eu noto isso. Querem receber primeiro antes de dar. E as empresas muitas vezes não estão preparadas, não têm alternativas e sujeitam-se a isso, mas não são perfis que interessem muito no longo prazo. Acontece muito também a nível de relações, seja relação profissional, afetiva. Ou seja a questão do compromisso tem sempre de ser algo que quem está a enveredar por um projeto tem de ter a capacidade de se comprometer, e depois também deixar que as coisas aconteçam.

**IR:** Foste encontrando pessoas que tinham currículos com atividades que saltem à vista?

**CR:** Sim. Depende também do tipo de empresa que estamos a falar. Se falamos de empresas que tenham um grande foco internacional, ao nível de pessoas que estão a iniciar o seu percursos, as experiências de Erasmus, internacionais, que impliquem também um contacto com outras realidades interessam. Eu acho que cada vez mais o mundo do trabalho é uma experiência em que temos de lidar com realidades e pessoas muito diferentes, é quase um universo próprio. Portanto percursos que tenham tido contacto com experiências diversificadas, internacionais ou a diferentes níveis são valorizadas. Eu tanto na Klöckner como agora mais recentemente valorizo currículos que têm erasmus ou experiências com línguas e culturas - porque às vezes a parte da língua nem é a mais importante, mas sim esse contacto com culturas e essa tolerância com o diferente.

**IR:** E sentes que tu, enquanto ex-escuteiro, se vires alguém que também é escuteiro reconheces logo ali à partida algumas competências, por causa do que já viveste e aprendeste?

**CR:** Sim. Eu acho que o escutismo tem valências que no mundo corporativo são importantes. O conceito de equipa numa empresa é fundamental, e uma equipa no fundo é um conjunto de competências diferentes que conseguem trabalhar em conjunto. E portanto todos esses conceitos são importantes. O conceito de liderança é também fundamental, e nas empresas a liderança não é só quem é diretor, mas pode ser ao nível de um projeto, de uma tarefa, e isso é importante. Quando vejo alguém que passou pelo

escutismo, que é alguém que se consegue comprometer, são coisas que valorizam sem dúvida.

**IR:** E se tivesses 2 candidatos: um com uma forte valência de projetos, mas se calhar mais fraco em capacidades técnicas, e outro que seja o oposto, com qual seguirias?

**CR:** Isso é uma daquelas perguntas que depende. Normalmente no mundo corporativo há dois caminhos: há um caminho de pessoas que seguem um perfil mais generalista, e outros que seguem perfis mais especialistas. Estes perfis especialistas normalmente são mais técnicos. Eu no meu caso comecei a minha carreira num perfil mais especialista, como auditor, como *controler*... mas a certa altura comecei a seguir um perfil mais generalista, mais responsável por equipas, projetos... portanto depende muito da função para que queres contratar. Não há um perfil ideal para todas as situações: há um perfil que encaixa melhor em determinadas funções e fases da própria empresa. Se estás à procura e precisas de alguém mesmo especialista, de uma pessoa muito técnica em que as valências sociais não são as mais importantes, se calhar é com esse perfil que interessa seguir. Agora se queres alguém para desenvolver um projeto ou uma equipa, temos de ir para outro tipo de perfis. Mas há coisas que são fundamentais em qualquer perfil, como a questão dos valores. Pessoas que sejam confiáveis, capazes de assumir o que se comprometem são importantes em qualquer função.

**IR:** E com a evolução dos próprios ambientes de trabalho, vês alguma mudança no tipo de skills que pedes? Skills que sejam diferentes de há 20 anos, ou que valorizes mais ou menos?

**CR:** Sim. Eu hoje procuro pessoas em quem sinto que posso confiar, é o que procuro mais. Em que possa apresentar um projeto ou desafio e que me diga se está disponível ou não. Procuro pessoas que também tenham a humildade de saber o que é que querem, sabem e não sabem, e que se comprometam com isso.

## Appendix IV – Employer Interviews: Ivo Faria

Interviewer: Inês Rodrigues

Interviewee: Ivo Faria, CEO of Dualbanho Group and National Executive Chief of Corpo Nacional de Escutas (CNE)

Date and Place: August 28<sup>th</sup>, online interview

**IF (Ivo Faria):** O meu nome é Ivo Faria, sou o CEO de um grupo que se chama DualBanho que é composto por três empresas: uma que se chama BanhOasis e outra que se chama Torneiras Roriz, e que são detidas por um fundo de capital de risco. Tenho esta função de ser o diretor geral destas duas unidades, e mais uma que faz as três empresas de que falava. Também sou, enquanto voluntário, neste momento o Chefe Nacional do Corpo Nacional de Escutas.

**IR (Inês Rodrigues):** Baseando-te na tua experiência de processos de recrutamento, quais são as competências que consideras mais valiosas para quem está a entrar no mercado de trabalho?

**IF:** Eu diria que, dividindo em componentes, temos: a componente mais técnica, a componente mais “soft” e uma terceira de conhecimentos, que podemos juntar às técnicas também. Nas competências técnicas que incluem a parte do saber e saber fazer as coisas, não é muito concreto. Eu lidero duas empresas que são duas unidades fabris, portanto temos uma parte importante da nossa força de trabalho que são pessoas que trabalham mesmo numa fábrica e que têm um conjunto de saberes das várias fases do processo produtivo e dos produtos que nós fabricamos, e que são componentes técnicas que as pessoas ou já trazem de outro trabalho, ou aprendem cá, em alguns meses de função nalgumas coisas muito concretas e específicas. A parte do conhecimento codificado... eu tenho vários departamentos: comercial, administrativo e recursos humanos, de apoio e assistência pós-venda, e depois toda a parte de marketing, de desenvolvimento de produto, da qualidade, logística e por aí fora - e há um conjunto de conhecimento que é preciso que as pessoas tragam das aprendizagens académicas ou de experiências anteriores e que portanto vão adquirindo. E depois tem a transversalidade das competências mais soft, que eu acho que são muito importantes e que a aquisição normalmente é feita por processos diferentes de trabalho, embora algumas coisas sejam comuns. Essas competências não são todas iguais em diferentes áreas. A capacidade de trabalhar em equipa, a capacidade de persistir e de poder por um lado coordenar, e por outro lado ser coordenado, isto entra também no trabalho em equipa. A liderança é uma competência muito importante. A empatia, a capacidade de ouvir, de ter escuta ativa, de se interessar por aquilo que são os problemas dos nossos clientes e dos nossos colegas, quando às vezes são clientes internos, e portanto estamos disponíveis para ajudar. Portanto eu realçava para já estas competências soft, que eu acho que são muito importantes nos dias de hoje para o sucesso de qualquer organização.

**IR:** Vocês têm algum processo para avaliar estas competências soft?

**IF:** Sim, nós temos processos mais diretos e menos diretos de avaliação: quer de avaliação de desempenho direta, quer de avaliação de desempenho através daquilo que são os surveys que vamos fazendo aos nossos clientes, quer também o feedback que os nossos clientes internos nos dão - nós temos equipas que se dedicam a apoiar os nossos comerciais, os nossos clientes, e de estarem em contacto direto com eles - e todas as semanas vamos recebendo feedback daquilo que é a interação, quer coisas que se resolvem e correm bem, quer coisas que não se resolvem e que não correm bem, e isso são fontes de feedback importantes para podermos também melhorar o nosso trabalho e o das pessoas que cá estão. E depois há obviamente a observação direta - nós trabalhamos num ambiente muito aberto onde as pessoas convivem no dia a dia nos espaços de trabalho, e portanto é relativamente fácil, a equipa não é muito grande, pelo menos algumas destas competências podemos ver e testemunhar se elas estão adquiridas ou se precisam de desenvolvimento e depois atuarmos em função disso mesmo.

**IR:** E durante o próprio processo de recrutamento? Sabemos que uma entrevista não é suficiente para assess estas competências comportamentais.

**IF:** Sim, não é fácil. Nos nossos processos de recrutamento, principalmente o recrutamento que fazemos para funções que não sejam diretamente ligadas à produção - sendo que mais de metade da nossa massa de trabalho é de produção - recorremos a apoio externo. Esse apoio externo faz uma primeira triagem daquilo que são as pessoas que se oferecem e que respondem aos nossos pedidos, fazem uma primeira leva também de entrevistas, com as técnicas deles, e depois nós fazemos mais do que uma ronda de entrevistas, não tanto para conferir se a pessoa sabe ou não sabe as coisas, mas precisamente para termos mais do que uma opinião sobre aquilo que conseguimos não apenas numa hora mas agora já são 2, 3, 4, 5 horas se acumularmos as entrevistas todas, para podermos perceber se a pessoa tem ou não tem as características que nós estamos à procura em termos de postura, de dinâmica, de capacidade de diálogo, de escuta. Claro que não há nada como ter as pessoas cá mesmo a trabalhar, e durante algum tempo, para termos a certeza de que as coisas funcionam e que são viáveis do ponto de vista do desenvolvimento. Mas a estratégia que normalmente seguimos é esta: de fazer mais do que uma interação com os candidatos para podermos ter mais do que uma opinião também sobre aquilo que estamos à procura.

**IR:** E nesses processos, vês pessoas com currículos com experiências de voluntariado? Nesses casos, esses projetos efetivamente valorizam o candidato?

**IF:** Valorizamos bastante o voluntariado, experiências que não necessariamente só na área do voluntariado mas que as pessoas adquiram e que as levem a ter contacto com outras pessoas, com outras realidades. Obviamente que isso é mais importante para algumas áreas do que outras, mas é valorizado porque nos ajuda a perceber até que ponto é que a pessoa esteve ou não disposta noutras experiências que a possam ter levado a desenvolver alguns destes skills que nós procuramos.

**IR:** E no contexto de projetos de educação não-formal, como os escuteiros, se te aparece alguém que não conheces mas que é escuteiro, consegues reconhecer logo algumas capacidades e valores na pessoa, que sabemos que qualquer escuteiro pode desenvolver?

**IF:** Já acontece muitas vezes, sim. O escutismo por si só não é um selo de qualidade automático, obviamente que ajuda sempre a gente perceber que as pessoas estiveram expostas a um determinado conjunto de experiências - que a gente consegue imaginar quais foram - mais ou menos, e que de alguma maneira ajudam a que tu percebas que à partida, algumas das coisas que tu procuras, a pessoa pelo menos esteve exposta a experiências que podem ter contribuído para a pessoa trabalhar isso. Claro que não é certo que o possam ter feito de forma absoluta, mas pelo menos sabemos que no contexto do trabalho em equipa, a vida numa patrulha, de poder ter experimentado coordenação de um projeto ou de uma equipa de pessoas... se isso materializou de certeza absoluta num perfil que é o que nos interessa, aí já não consegues ter a certeza se é mesmo assim ou não. Mas já tens uma primeira perspetiva de a pessoa teve exposta a isto, e já é um ponto de partida.

**IR:** E sentes que com a evolução dos anos e do próprio panorama de trabalho, que as skills que se pedem mudaram muito, por exemplo de há 15 ou 20 anos para cá?

**IF:** Sim, por um lado as skills são diferentes mas o contexto também é diferente. Mesmo que elas fossem as mesmas, a alteração do contexto já daria coisas diferentes, umas com diferenças muito grandes, outras nem tanto. Mas eu acho que sim, a evolução que vamos tendo - por exemplo a abertura que temos tido nas últimas décadas ao mundo, aos horizontes para além daquilo que é a nossa aldeia, a nossa idade, quer através da democratização das viagens de longo curso, a abertura do nosso país a outras realidades, a uma realidade europeia, as próprias redes sociais... tudo fez com que houvesse um desenvolvimento muito grande a que a exposição à multicultural que fez com que este modo de ser, de estar, de curiosidade de querermos desenvolver competências técnicas linguísticas, por exemplo... Muitas destas soft skills fizeram com que tu hoje, quando entrevistas um candidato, normalmente encontras uma muito maior predisposição para a mudança, para o que é diferente, encontras uma menor barreira em termos do desconhecido, isso sem dúvida. O desenvolvimento do mundo, das condições de comodidade e de conforto que foram também evoluindo ao longo destes anos fazem com que as formas como as pessoas encaram o trabalho e a profissão também mudou bastante - se calhar hoje já não é tão possível teres uma pessoa que esteja à procura de trabalho e que vá demonstrar uma disponibilidade tão grande como aquela que existia antes, para estar tantas longas horas para além daquilo que é o compromisso laboral a dedicar-se ao trabalho - facto que também tem o seu quê de interessante como é lógico, porque nós temos de respeitar o tempo das pessoas e o equilíbrio entre a vida profissional e pessoal, e o desenvolvimento da família e de tantas outras coisas que se calhar há uns anos íamos muitas vezes adiando, em detrimento do desenvolvimento da carreira. E eu acho que isso são desenvolvimentos positivos que têm acontecido no mundo de trabalho e que vão continuar a existir. Eu trabalho numa área onde algumas das coisas que se fazem - claro que há mecanização e automatização de processos e de formas de obter os produtos, já trabalhamos por exemplo com produtos que têm componentes que já não são todas trabalhadas cá, há fases do nosso processo produtivo que já são "importadas", vamos dizer assim - e isso faz com que a necessidade que nós temos de conhecer o produto desde que a primeira peça é incorporada, e até ao produto estar acabado vai mudando. E isso encaixa bem com esta nossa capacidade crescente de trabalharmos de forma colaborativa, de nos integrarmos uns com os outros - e com o mundo até - isso é positivo e está alinhado. No entanto, a área onde eu estou é uma área em que tu não sentes tanto

como se calhar noutras aquela pressão de “daqui a 5 anos ou 10, aquela profissão desaparece ou não vai existir”. E portanto não se nota uma revolução tão grandes nas competências, mas nota-se claro a necessidade delas irem evoluindo, porque o contacto que tu tens com o mercado, com os consumidores, com os clientes, os novos hábitos de consumos, ditam também a necessidade de alterares e de te adaptares. E eu acho que isso também é muito interessante, o mundo que vamos vivendo hoje é um mundo de ponto de vista dos desafios que se colocam e da necessidade de nós nos distinguirmos no mercado dos outros, só é feito através das pessoas. A tecnologia só te dá a base, o chão onde tu caminhas em cima, e o que faz a diferença são as pessoas, são as relações, são os contactos que cada um estabelece com os clientes e que faz com que o cliente queira telefonar e falar com aquela pessoa, que ontem lhe resolveu um problema. E isso é muito importante.

**IR:** A minha geração hoje em dia também já arrisca mais, mas também existe um outro lado da moeda que tem a ver com a falta de sentido de compromisso. Sentes isso?

**IF:** Não noto tanto aqui. Nós todos os dias fazemos umas centenas de produtos, que têm de ser começados e concluídos, e as pessoas têm muito esta lógica de “eu vou concluir o que tenho”. Amanhã é um dia novo, mas não sinto essa falta de compromisso, de ligação à responsabilidade de assumir que as coisas têm um início, um desenvolvimento e um fim. Não noto muito isso.

## Appendix V – Employer Interviews: Manuel Pacheco

Interviewer: Inês Rodrigues

Interviewee: Manuel Pacheco, Director of Financial Planning & Analysis at Sword Health

Date and Place: August 20<sup>th</sup>, presential interview, Porto

**MP (Manuel Pacheco):** Sou o Manuel Pacheco, tenho 44 anos e trabalho numa organização que se chama Sword Health, que trabalha essencialmente na área da saúde mais ligada às tecnologias. O nosso produto principal é a fisioterapia digital remota, ou seja, usam uma combinação entre hardware e software para tratar pessoas com problemas musculoesqueléticos remotamente. Muito resumidamente, é isso que a empresa faz depois tem outros produtos também, mais relacionados com a saúde feminina, problemas pélvicos e quase que um app de fitness - não é bem fitness para atletas, é mais para fazer com que as pessoas se movimentem. O meu background é financeiro, eu sou licenciado em contabilidade e neste momento trabalho como diretor de FP&A - Financial Planning & Analysis. Sou responsável por toda a orçamentação da empresa e também todo o planeamento e controlo de gestão, por assim dizer. E tenho uma equipa de de 3 pessoas a trabalhar comigo. Neste momento, por exemplo, estou a fazer recrutamento de uma pessoa e acabei de contratar outra há 2 semanas.

**IR (Inês Rodrigues):** Baseando-te na tua experiência, quais é que são as competências que no processo de recrutamento consideras que são as mais valiosas, sejam *hard* ou *soft skills*?

**MP:** É sempre um bocadinho diferente, e tem muito a ver também com o perfil que tu estás a contratar - se eu estou a contratar uma pessoa mais Júnior, com menos experiência, ou com mais experiência. Eu acredito sempre que há determinadas competências técnicas que as pessoas conseguem aprender sendo mais juniores ou até mais seniores. Depois há outras competências mais em termos de cultura, de qual é o fit cultural para a empresa, mais os soft skills, que são sempre mais difíceis de ensinar e que nós tentamos validar da forma que achamos melhor. Claro que existe sempre, e como eu estou na área financeira, uma componente bastante técnica, ou seja, perceber como é que as coisas funcionam. Mas existe uma cultura, existe um tipo de personalidade ou o tipo de fit cultural que nós

procuramos, e que tem de se enquadrar com a empresa em que estamos. E que pode ser diferente de empresa para empresa. Nós temos essa preocupação e por isso é que muitas vezes até nestes processos de recrutamento não ficamos só limitados à parte financeira e mesmo às entrevistas - principalmente num perfil mais sénior e que poderá ter de assumir uma posição até estratégica - e tentamos trazer pessoas de outros departamentos para validar até alguns tipos dessas competências. Não as técnicas, porque essas ficam do nosso lado, mas perceber como é que a pessoa se relaciona, qual é o tipo de personalidade, se é curioso, se se vai adaptar a este ambiente - porque cada empresa tem particularidades.

**IR:** E acredito também que, sendo uma área mais específica, há competências técnicas que são base.

**MP:** Certo. Nós tivemos agora também a experiência de fazer abertura de um programa de trainees na nossa empresa. Contratámos 2 trainees para o Departamento Financeiro. Não foi para FP&A, porque FP&A pressupõe sempre que a pessoa já tem um bocadinho de experiência noutras áreas, mas tentamos um técnico de contabilidade e um de contas a pagar, e basicamente estávamos a pegar em pessoas praticamente saídas da faculdade, recém-licenciados. Nós fazemos normalmente um pequeno teste técnico, em que pedimos para eles nos apresentarem uma situação. Às vezes, nós pressupomos que pela pessoa ser licenciada em determinada área, vai conseguir dominar os aspetos técnicos e às vezes não é bem assim. Embora como eu disse antes, eu acho que se a pessoa tiver uma boa atitude, se tiver uma experiência interessante, se se conseguir relacionar bem, a parte técnica ela vai conseguir aprender. Eu acho que é sempre mais fácil aprender, e falo também um bocadinho por experiência própria: aprendi muito mais a parte técnica a trabalhar do que propriamente as competências pessoais.

**IR:** E podes descrever como é esse processo de recrutamento na tua empresa?

**MP:** Eu posso descrever como é a jornada agora que estou a fazer nas pessoas que estou a recrutar. A empresa como um todo está a recrutar muita gente, então não temos pessoas suficientes de HR, e não conseguimos fazer aquela primeira entrevista, que é quase o screening inicial para fazer a avaliação destas características, quem está a fazer sou eu. E o que eu procuro nessas entrevistas é fazer - e fazemos ali 40, 45 minutos - uma série de perguntas, mas também deixar a conversa fluir. Uma coisa que eu acho super importante é pesquisar sobre a empresa, saber o que é que a empresa faz, e já vir com alguma

informação. Não é chegar lá e dizer “não sei, não faço ideia” - isso mostra logo que a pessoa está *engaged* ou não para aquele processo de recrutamento. Depois é a forma como a conversa vai evoluindo, o tipo de perguntas que a pessoa faz. Eu procuro muito se a pessoa tem curiosidade naquilo que está a fazer e também perceber um bocadinho qual é o percurso dela, não só na parte profissional, mas muitas vezes na parte pessoal - se bem que nós às vezes temos de ter um bocadinho de cuidado na parte pessoal, há certo tipo de perguntas que tu não podes fazer: se tem filhos, se é casado, esse tipo de coisas - porque pode ser visto como critério para eliminar uma pessoa. Evidentemente nunca fazemos, mas tentamos ali naquela conversa que é quase uma conversa informal para nos conhecermos, tentar perceber logo se a pessoa tem aquele fit cultural que nós procuramos. E o que é que nós procuramos? Isto vai ser um bocado generalista, mas uma pessoa que seja esperta, que quando fazes uma pergunta ela consiga e tenha facilidade em comunicar para a minha posição - e para a minha equipa é importante, porque nós depois relacionamos com outros parceiros dentro da própria empresa - nós temos que uns *Business Partners*, que vão ficar responsáveis por determinados departamentos - portanto é importante que sejam pessoas que eles sigam manter uma conversa fluida, e que tenham essas experiências, muitas vezes exposição a contexto internacionais, porque o nosso trabalho maioritariamente é feito em inglês. Nós somos uma empresa com sede nos Estados Unidos, então isso é super importante. Também perceber de que forma é que a pessoa se relaciona e a exposição que teve a outras realidades - às vezes é em contexto profissional, outras vezes não. Portanto, tentamos avaliar um bocadinho essas soft skills por uma conversa informal. E por isso é que depois a segunda fase nós fazemos um teste, um *business case*, porque mais uma vez aí tu também consegues avaliar alguns soft skills. Tu envias um problema à pessoa, ela tem uma semana para trabalhar naquilo à vontade. Normalmente nós pedimos que as pessoas não gastem mais de 4 horas naquilo. Mas depois ela vai apresentar aquilo a mais 3 pessoas - a mim e mais 2 pessoas, por exemplo - e aí vamos também avaliar algumas características, por exemplo como é que ela reage a uma pergunta mais difícil, ao stress... Fazemos muitas vezes uma pergunta que a pessoa não preparou a resposta, e estamos ali *live* a pôr a pessoa *on the spot* e a pessoa tem de tentar resolver aquilo rápido. Ou seja, essa capacidade de rapidamente mudar o chip, de não vir só com aquele guião da apresentação que ele preparou, mas sim de agir e perceber o que é que vai fazer. Na minha função e na minha equipa isso são coisas bastante importantes. E por acaso, aconteceu isso como um candidato agora: ele não estava a conseguir ele e um dos entrevistadores - no caso era o VP de *Finance*, que é a pessoa a

quem eu reporto disse assim “pronto, ok, está tudo bem, nós aqui também às vezes o que fazemos é dizer olha a seguir digo-te a resposta, porque nós não conseguimos saber tudo”. E também há uma coisa muito importante que é a curiosidade que a pessoa tem, e as perguntas que ela vai fazer. Isso é importante para nós. Quando estás num processo de recrutamento, se tu não tens nenhuma pergunta para fazer à pessoa com quem eventualmente vais trabalhar nos próximos 5 anos, alguma coisa além não está certa.

**IR:** A minha geração está a entrar no mercado de trabalho, e eu sinto que, se calhar, nós mais do que gerações anteriores, temos mais um bocado esta questão em mente das soft skills e da importância de ir e aprender. Sentes que as pessoas que estão a entrar agora, mais novas, que conseguem apresentar melhor essas skills?

**MP:** Eu honestamente acho que isso não tem acontecido. Posso estar completamente enganado, mas eu não vejo isso como uma diferença geracional. Acho que tem mesmo muito mais a ver com o tipo de pessoa - eu acho que há pessoas da minha geração que têm essa facilidade e acho que há pessoas das gerações mais novas que, como não tem essa exposição, estão muito formatados na parte só de estudar e de tirar boas notas e fazer as coisas, que depois não conseguem ter essa capacidade. Não é que eu vá valorizar se a pessoa foi escuteira ou teve num projeto X - é evidente que para posições específicas isso vai ser valorizado, mas eu acho que isso é importante para a bagagem que vai dar como tu estavas a dizer. “Ai, eu tenho este a vontade, porque eu estou habituada a apresentar coisas a pessoas. Se eu tiver num processo de recrutamento que apresentar está tudo bem, estou tranquila”. Porque eu acho que o grande valor dessas experiências é na construção da tua personalidade e das tuas skills, não te limitas só ao currículo académico. Também tem a ver com a tua rede de contactos. Mesmo que não seja um conhecimento, tu não deixas de estar numa rede que é social, como os escuteiros, onde as pessoas que estão lá sabem que os outros, os seus pares, têm um determinado tipo de características. E isso pode-te ajudar se o recrutador for escuteiro, mas pode também funcionar ao contrário. O meu background antes de ser contabilista, era professor de educação física, então tenho uma rede de contactos também bastante grande. No primeiro emprego que eu tive na área financeira, uma das pessoas que me entrevistou também estava ligado ao desporto, a um clube de futebol na parte mais diretiva, e por acaso tínhamos conhecimento de pessoas em comum. E isso ajudou no sentido de validar determinadas competências pessoais. Ou seja, existe também isso que é muito das redes de contacto e eu acho que isso é outra coisa que estes projetos não académicos trazem muito valor às pessoas. Não é estares em

1000 estágios não remunerados para ganhar experiência, porque isso também depois vai acabar por te tirar valor, mas sim coisas que realmente vão acrescentar competências e skills que tu muitas vezes nem te apercebes que tens até depois seres confrontado com elas no mercado de trabalho. E outra coisa que eu não disse há bocado que é na minha empresa neste momento, é uma empresa bastante dinâmica, muito acelerada, com pessoal muito novo. Eu sou das pessoas mais velhas lá dentro, aqui em Portugal temos 300 pessoas e nos Estados Unidos outras 300, e eu estou de certeza no top 5% dos mais velhos. Ou seja, é uma organização muito nova que tem muito dinamismo. E isso faz com que os processos de recrutamento sejam diferentes, se calhar de empresas muito estruturadas, muito *corporate*. Nós somos uma *scaleup*, e isso faz com que todas estas competências e todas estas experiências, por vezes sejam bastante valorizadas. E a forma como te relacionas por vezes pode ser mais importante que propriamente um skill técnico muito forte. Eu neste momento, neste processo de recrutamento, tenho uma pessoa que tecnicamente é boa, mas há dúvidas em relação à outra parte. Há mesmo dúvida. Porque ela ali chegou a uma altura que nem perguntas, nada. Ela fez as coisas bem, apresentou tudo bem, estava tudo espetacular. E depois não teve *engagement* com quem a estava a entrevistar e por isso é preciso tu criares essas relações. E aí é que entram os soft skills.

**IR:** E sentes essa dificuldade, de às vezes *assess* as soft skills? Sentes que isso também cria algumas barreiras.

**MP:** No meu caso pode estar um bocadinho agravado porque apesar de fazer recrutamento não é uma coisa que eu faça sempre. Portanto, tu vais entrevistando pessoas e é isso. Tens toda a razão, é bastante difícil apanhar essas soft skills numa só conversa, por isso é que, por exemplo, tentamos validar com outras pessoas, para depois ver a sua opinião, ou seja tirar o bias da minha opinião. Por isso é que nós temos sempre 4 ou 5 pessoas que vão entrar em contacto com um candidato para todos depois decidirmos se faz sentido ou não. E é exatamente por isso que a parte técnica é muito mais clara. A outra parte é sempre mais... eu posso “simpatizar” contigo, e a outra pessoa pode não gostar. E aí vamos ter de perceber porquê e se calhar, às vezes chamamos outra pessoa. O networking é que eu acho que é mesmo importante, cada vez mais acho, criar essas relações. E esse network vem muitas vezes de contexto de trabalho, ou contexto dessas atividades fora. E manter também esse networking, não deixar não deixar cair essas essas relações. Eu tenho um grupo de pessoas que eu não conhecia, que trabalham nesta área aqui no Porto, e temos um grupo e vamos-nos juntando de 2 em 2 meses e falamos, e

levamos um problema e discutimos... e eram pessoas que não conhecia e fomos conhecendo depois. E vamos mantendo ali um contato. Lá está, começa a ter um network profissional.

**IR:** Estávamos a falar de teres um local de trabalho sempre a mudar e a avançar. Notas que as skills que são necessárias no mercado de trabalho, que se calhar há 5 anos eram diferentes das que são agora?

**MP:** Claro que sim, completamente. A fase de maturidade da empresa é mesmo super diferente. Quando eu entrei éramos cerca de 150, mas eu fui a primeira contratação do departamento Financeiro - tinha só um contabilista e eu comecei a montar toda a parte de *report* e orçamentação, para começar a organizar aquilo. Todo esse trabalho que fiz na altura foi *carried over* até agora, obviamente, mas já muita coisa mudou. Já praticamente não usamos nada, mas tu tens de ter a capacidade também de ter adaptando a isso. Mas claro que é diferente. Hoje muitas vezes tu procuras pessoas para alguns perfis que quase que já estão prontas a utilizar, vamos dizer assim: é só chegar e ligar e a pessoa vai dar conta do recado. Há uns anos atrás, por exemplo, quando contratei a primeira pessoa ela precisava de muito mais treino. Mas eu diria que na altura quando era uma empresa mais pequena, as *soft skills* se calhar ainda tinham um papel mais importante. A capacidade de tu te adaptares e relacionares com aquele grupo pequeno, perceber se estavas disposto a abdicar se calhar de algumas coisas da tua vida pessoal em prol daquele projeto, daquele trabalho eram bastante bastante importantes. Agora a estrutura começa a crescer, e já não consegues ter 300 ou 400 pessoas *engaged* da mesma forma que tens 50, claro. Portanto, a cultura vai mudando e as exigências também. Na altura, a empresa tinha determinado perfil de receitas e de gastos, e agora tem outros, e tenho objetivos muito mais ambiciosos agora. Muitas vezes vais ter de ir buscar pessoas já com outras experiências e outra capacidade. Há o exemplo da Netflix, em que as pessoas que fundaram a Netflix, todas elas entretanto foram saindo e foram substituídas por pessoas com muito mais competência técnica. E isso acontece e também acontece na minha. A dada altura que eu quase que estava lá sozinho a gerir a parte financeira, agora tem um *CFO*, uma americana com 20 anos de experiência, que guia todo o barco do departamento financeiro. Porque o crescimento da empresa é mais rápido que o teu próprio desenvolvimento pessoal. Apesar de eu ter evoluído muito lá dentro nestes 5 anos, se calhar muito mais que o que tinha evoluído se tivesse uma empresa mais estável.

**IR:** Ia focar também nesse aspecto, que é vocês trabalham principalmente com a América. Valorizam a importância desta capacidade intercultural?

**MP:** Culturalmente claro que os portugueses são diferentes americanos, tanto em cultura de trabalho - não quer dizer que trabalham menos ou que trabalham mais, eu acho que os portugueses trabalham tanto como os americanos quando é preciso. Mas há determinadas coisas - por exemplo, na hora de almoço os portugueses vão almoçar e se calhar o americano fica a comer na secretária. Mas quando vêm cá, não pode, vem almoçar connosco. E eles percebem isso, e se calhar se tu fores lá adaptas-te ao ritmo deles. E depois tem um bocadinho a ver com a própria diversidade das pessoas. Eu trabalho com os Estados Unidos mas eles são completamente um *melting pot*. Trabalhas com pessoas de diferentes *backgrounds*, desde diferentes religiões, ascendência, nacionalidade.. enquanto que em Portugal, apesar de já ser diferente, continua a ser muito homogéneo em termos de cultura - somos quase todos da mesma religião, quase todos brancos, temos esta educação bastante *strandardised* e nos Estados Unidos é diferente, tens pessoas desde muçulmanos, judeus, cristãos, indianos, chineses, a africanos. E numa empresa deste género tens sempre essa diversidade e essa cultura. Apenas a única coisa que tens de fazer é respeitar bem os teus limites e não ser... já tive casos aqui por acaso em que às vezes a malta portuguesa estica-se um bocado na forma como age... não é por mal, mas são certos comentários que, numa cultura portuguesa passam, numa cultura estrangeira americana se calhar já não passa.

**IR:** Vocês têm algum tipo de *training* nesse sentido?

**MP:** Tens um código de conduta, tens série de valores da empresa não estão que estão definidos, embora muitas vezes não são... a nível de *training* o que temos é em termos de *sexual harrassment* e de *DEI (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion)*, mas é uma coisa assim um bocadinho.... Embora seja obrigatório, e tens de fazer um refresh todos os anos desse tipo de training.

**IR:** Se essas coisas estiveram bem estabelecidas, efetivamente fazem sentido. Mas também já vi muitas que é um bocado estar lá por estar.

**MP:** É um bocado, vamos ser honestos. Depois lá está aí é que as *soft skills* são importantes, vais desenvolvendo o teu respeito pelo outro, e como estás habituada a lidar com diferentes pessoas não vai ser tão estranho lidar com outras culturas. Por exemplo, na empresa que eu trabalhei antes tivemos bastante esse caso que era a Júnia, que estava

muito exposta ao mercado africano e também a dada altura asiático, ao Paquistão. Tivemos cá durante 9 meses alguns paquistaneses a fazer training, a trabalhar e a aprender. E aí havia um choque cultural no escritório - desde as comidas às casas de banho, e teve de se fazer ali até uma adaptação no escritório para acomodar certas necessidades. Lá está, eu também tive essa escola de começar a trabalhar numa empresa muito internacional, ainda era mais diversa que não era só os Estados Unidos - tinhas um escritório em França, tinha escritório na Alemanha e depois tinhas em todos os países africanos.

**IR:** Falamos então que um não é mais importante que o outro (no contexto de *soft vs hard skills*), que é a combinação dos dois.

**MP:** Eu acho que é verdade, cada vez mais. Se for algo mesmo muito técnico, é preciso um especialista em *technical accounting*, uma pessoa que perceba muito de contabilidade técnica - os *soft skills* vão ser importantes, mas os *skills* técnicos é aquilo que tu estás mesmo a procura. Portanto vai dependendo da posição, há posições em que vai ser sim e também com o grau de senioridade. Mas uma pessoa pode ser um bom líder e não ter os *skills* técnicos melhores do que pessoas que trabalham com ele - é preciso saber contratar bem pessoas que saibam fazer novas as coisas e ele ser um bom líder. \_

## **Appendix VI – Employer Interviews: Pedro Almeida**

Interviewer: Inês Rodrigues

Interviewee: Pedro Almeida, CEO and Cofounder of TeachForPortugal

Date and Place: September 3<sup>rd</sup>, online interview

**PA (Pedro Almeida):** O meu nome é Pedro Almeida, e sou CEO e Cofundador da TeachForPortugal. O nosso trabalho resume-se em duas fases: recrutamos este talento jovem para ensinar e dar aulas em escolas de contextos mais desfavorecidos em Portugal, durante dois anos, em que eles dão as aulas com os professores. Inserem-se portanto na comunidade e o nosso objetivo é que, depois desses dois anos, estas pessoas possam ter competências para uma mudança sistémica ao longo do resto das suas vidas. Ou seja, no terreno mudar a vida dos alunos mas também poderem ser agentes de mudança no futuro, poderem levar aquilo que aprenderam na escola - por exemplo como ter uma linguagem positiva - para depois então existir mudança mais tarde. Nós neste momento temos 120 mentores que estão espalhados por todo o país - e vou começar aqui porquê, eu não sei o número certo mas a percentagem é muito alta (se calhar posso-te dizer 1 em 5 ou 1 em 4) que já fez escutismo ou algo parecido. É um rácio que não é o nacional, porque a forma como nós queremos trabalhar e desenvolver as crianças e a educação, e o que é que o sistema pode fazer, é já muito alinhada com o trabalho de um escuteiro envolve - a educação não-formal, o desenvolvimento de competências, o desenvolver da autonomia, o perceber como comunicar e colaborar... portanto são muitas das competências que eu já vi nos Lobitos, naqueles esquemas que eles tinham de preencher, que são formas de reflexão grande e que introduzimos tudo isso na educação formal, com os mentores. Porque eles trazem muitos desses elementos de desenvolver as competências para as escolas. Portanto, já existe uma grande atração das pessoas (que até já fizeram escutismo) para este trabalho nas escolas. E do nosso lado, de facto, são experiências muito ricas que têm muitas semelhanças com dar aulas com impacto, porque envolve gerir grupos de crianças, desenvolver competências, colaborar, influenciar opiniões de uma forma positiva, dar voz, empoderar os outros na sua própria tomada de decisão... há tanta semelhança entre este trabalho que nós fazemos, que é um trabalho de dois anos já para licenciados nas escolas, que então muitos escuteiros são atraídos pelo que fazemos. E ainda bem, fico muito contente por isso, é mesmo bom sinal. E isto traz já uma atenção

natural. E ao mesmo tempo que o escutismo dá competências a quem faz e a quem participa, essas dizem-nos o que é que significa ser um bom ser humano - um ser humano que tem entrega, que tem orientação ao outro, que percebe que quando eu penso no outro primeiro, nas necessidades que ele está a ter e saber que se eu próprio consigo ir mais longe, nós todos vamos mais longe. E portanto nós valorizamos as mesmas competências que o escutismo já está a desenvolver. É verdade que pode haver outras áreas que precisem de outras áreas de conhecimento. O que eu acho é que assim como a TeachForPortugal traz competências, mas já num trabalho intenso de dois anos - e em que tu consegues ensinar as crianças independentemente da área de onde venhas, conseguimos atrair estas pessoas com vontade e dar-lhes estas competências de líderes - é altamente desejável que haja uma experiência prévia deste género. Portanto escuteiros, grupos de voluntariado, de férias de campo com crianças, quem tiver feito essas ações já vai ter uma enorme afinidade com aquilo que nós fazemos. E nós procuramos então experiências de liderança passadas nas pessoas que recrutamos em que o papel tenha sido ativo - esteve a liderar, esteve a organizar, esteve a mudar, esteve a convencer outras pessoas a fazer algo diferente que achamos que é importante. E porque nós acreditamos genuinamente que o desenvolvimento da pessoa é o máximo possível com este tipo de competências - se eles acabarem só com as competências técnicas, como eu tinha quando acabei o curso de Engenharia - acho que é pouco, na realidade, tive de ter experiências mais tarde que me completassem. E o que é que mais interessa, além de ter estas experiências? Por exemplo, se for uma experiência onde eu durante 10 anos estive a servir refeições, pode ser uma oportunidade muito importante mas é mais passivo. Mas se quando eu estava a distribuir refeições há 3 pessoas que me marcaram, que eu estive com elas e tentei fazer mais, tentei encaminhá-los para outros sítios, dei-lhes contactos, fui atrás com eles a construir um plano sobre onde é que ela pode ir e o apoio que pode ter, e afinal até consegui que essa pessoas entrasse no mercado de trabalho e tivesse uma vida mais realizada... então isso já é um acréscimo, é a tal parte da liderança que é importante. Ou seja, não é só o fazer por fazer, mas é como dinamizas e levas grupos de pessoas a fazerem algo melhor por eles, e obviamente que quando é para eles é também para nós sociedade, isto tudo importa. E portanto nós valorizamos imenso, e aliás é parte da avaliação este tipo de competências que uma pessoa traz e que só o ter feito estas experiências é que traz a experiência - não há nenhuma forma que alguém me diga que tem isso, só por saber e não ter pasado pelo experiência. É quase impossível, não consegues transmitir o que está lá dentro se não tiveres...é impossível inventar tanto, não

somos assim tão bons felizmente a inventar tanta coisa e a de facto ser uma mentira real que dizes mas não é mesmo verdade.

**IR:** E na tua organização, vocês contratam e estão sempre a trabalhar com gente mais jovem.

**PA:** Sim, é mais jovens porque o nosso pedido a estes mentores é de disponibilidade geográfica grande, também está no nosso site o vencimento, que são os 1000€ brutos por mês. Quer pelo vencimento quer pela disponibilidade geográfica atrai pessoas mais novas - pessoas com família, mais velhas, não têm a disponibilidade mental para fazer isto. Nós não temos restrição de idade, mas atrai os mais novos, e  $\frac{1}{3}$  das pessoas são recém-licenciados,  $\frac{1}{3}$  tem um ou dois anos de experiências e  $\frac{1}{3}$  tem mais de 5. Portanto acabam por ser pessoas mais novas com disponibilidade.

**IR:** O que demonstra também um grande sentido de compromissos dos mais novos para com este projeto.

**PA:** Para alguns pode parecer assustador, mas o compromisso são os dois anos - em 100% dos casos as pessoas ainda querem ficar mais, porque é um programa formativo e de impacto nas escolas, portanto tu vês os alunos a mudarem, as pessoas a mudarem, a escola... e chegas ao fim dos dois anos e pensas “uau, isto aqui, deixei uma marca”. E mais uma vez, os escuteiros têm a parte de voluntariado e de fim de semana, e percebe-se que naqueles meses se deixa uma marca, que eles são diferentes, que ganham coisas. É óbvio e se eles crescerem com isso tu vês. E portanto tu chegas ao fim e dizes: isto é possível. No que tu consegues fazer outras pessoas fazerem quando acreditam em algo maior do que eles é extraordinário. Portanto esta competência, que é a liderança, que é o desenvolver do acreditar nos outros - autoconfiança, automotivação, o partir um plano em peças, o saber como refletir - essas competências são as que trazem um maior valor acrescentado. Um, a nós, e eu hoje não tenho a mínima dúvida que é também para a sociedade como um todo. Portanto eu só posso defender ao máximo, porque também nós, depois dos dois anos do programa, também fomentamos isto no mercado, e dizemos “estes tipos são absolutas máquinas que passaram 2 anos a sofrer num terreno difícil, com comunidades desfavorecidas, e ganharam estas competências”. Porque é importante que o mercado também veja que o que ganharam nestes dois anos foi completamente diferenciador, que não há ninguém com estas competências que não tenha feito aqueles dois anos. Portanto há um alinhamento grande do escutismo (dependendo do grau onde

estiveste, se vais para dirigente ainda tens mais) e da intenção das competências que se ganham e da diferenciação que faz no mercado de trabalho. Porque leva outros com eles.

**IR:** E vocês têm esta capacidade de levar ferramentas de educação não formal para a sala de aula, que é interessante porque tem de haver esta simbiose entre estes tipos de educação. As escolas recebem bem esta mudança, o querer fazer diferente?

**PA:** No início não. Aliás, no início a resposta é sempre um não. Só que o início não é o fim, e essa é que é a grande lógica. Ou seja sempre que estamos a falar com uma escola nova ou um diretor ou professores novos, a resposta é não, porque eles não estão à espera disto. Não estão ali sentados na mesa a pensar “quem me dera ter uma pessoa que fizesse isto”, não é. Mas eu já sei como é que isto acaba, e como o sei já consigo pintar uma imagem de “esta colaboração é a melhor que tu vais ter na tua vida como professor, porque aquele professor já disse isso, já temos testemunhos, tu consegues desenvolver competências nos teus alunos, eles conseguem ir mais longe academicamente, tens alguém que está sempre com eles nos intervalos e fora dos intervalos...”. E portanto hoje conseguimos dar argumentos que facilitam esta entrada. Portanto a parte da educação não-formal posso dizer que ainda não é uma coisa que é bem recebida, mas que como os que nos recebem já têm alguma motivação adicional para fazer a diferença, então até nos recebem com relativa oportunidade. Dão-nos uma oportunidade de mostrar e depois nós mostramos então qual é esse valor e o potencial da colaboração, que é mesmo altíssimo. Mas o potencial futuro é absolutamente extraordinário, e nós ouvimos tanto dos professores como dos alunos. Que é as pessoas dizerem “eu colaborar com ele foi o melhor prémio que eu tive como professor há 25 anos” ou “foi a única razão pela qual eu não meti baixa, porque eles estão muito motivados, e ele ajudou-me a estar aqui”. E dos alunos academicamente acabam por ir mais às aulas porque têm mais motivação para aprender por causa daquela pessoa, eles aprendem por aquele aluno que lá está. E que lhes diz “eu acredito em ti”. Quando os adultos passam esta mensagem implícita, e esta mensagem que eu sei que os escuteiros passam, é uma mensagem poderosa. Se calhar, eu até diria que eu sei disto, mas não é uma coisa que seja comunidade de forma explícita no escutismo. Eu sei porque conheço o que está por trás, mas na verdade não é comunicado o tão mais destas competências que estamos a falar que o escutismo traz. Porque é absurdo o poder de um adulto que acredita noutro, no potencial de uma equipa, no desenvolver as competência de outro, e por muito que hoje não esteja lá, esta pessoa entra e a coisa começa a mudar à volta dela. E é o que acontece. Porque são pessoas que

viram o poder desta mudança através de mudanças pequenas ao longo do tempo. Portanto está alinhado.

**IR:** E como é que funciona o vosso processo de recrutamento? Sabemos que avaliar as competências comportamentais e sociais é sempre mais desafiante. Como é que vocês conseguem perceber que aquela é a pessoa certa para isto?

**PA:** Nós temos várias fases e etapas com esse objetivo. Tudo é feito desde o ponto um ao ponto de reflexão com um objetivo em mente: eu vou ajudar o candidato a descobrir-se um pouco melhor, e isto é muito importante porque quando ele se descobre melhor, nós vamos descobrir melhor. Portanto é um *win-win* para todos. Depois tens então uma parte escrita, em que pedimos para descrever uma situação em que tenha feito algo que se alinhe com o que queremos fazer. Depois temos um vídeo com o porque é que eu me quero juntar à TeachforPortugal e o que é que eu quero aprender com isso - ou seja, nesta ótica de crescimento e de alavancagem. E depois temos uma fase que são simulações de trabalho de grupo, simulações de aula, e *roleplays*. E quando queres avaliar competências, a melhor forma de o fazer é montar cenários de simulação. Assim como o exemplo da música: como é que testas se uma pessoa sabe na realidade a música? É pô-lo a tocar, é um cenário real. A forma de avaliar é sempre através de um exercício, de uma simulação, algo que se possa ver e sentir - para perceber a competência de acreditar no potencial de um aluno é através de conversas e *roleplays* que nós simulamos, difíceis, para perceber se essa pessoa desiste da outra pessoa, ou se está mesmo comprometida com aquilo. Ou competências de colaboração. Tudo isso importa para perceber onde está a pessoa. Entre as competências técnicas e não-técnicas, ou mais gerais, a forma de avaliar é a mesma. Só que é mais fácil avaliar conhecimento, mas mesmo assim a grande diferença é no fazer. Na maioria das empresas há a possibilidade de passares pela entrevista mas não teres de demonstrar o que sabes. É mesmo através de simular uma situação que consegues ir buscar a competência, seja ela qual for - seja a liderança, a autonomia, a colaboração, o lidar com um grupo de alunos - então tens de situar, de montar um cenário em que seja possível demonstrar. Agora, dá é mais trabalho porque tens mais pessoas a avaliar e tens mais pessoas a avaliar as fases. E depois o retorno é muito maior porque consegues afinar muito melhor para aquilo que queres.

**IR:** E num projeto tão direcionado para as pessoas, conhecer as pessoas é fundamental.

**PA:** É isso. É algo mesmo simples, mas dá trabalho porque é uma coisa diferente. Uma entrevista não serve. Se eu te perguntar sobre o teu currículo, tu podes descrever tudo mas não está a avaliar nenhuma competência. E portanto se eu preciso de uma competência e se eu quero potenciar a minha organização, eu quero pessoas para a potenciar e ponto final. Só que por muito que as competências sejam valorizadas, eu acho é que na maior parte das vezes não são avaliadas sequer. E como não são avaliadas, acabam por ser discarded, mesmo que tu digas que fizeste isto e aquilo. Existe portanto a parte do ter, que é riquíssimo, a parte da comunicação, e a parte da avaliação. Algo que nós tentamos fazer mas que pronto, é uma organização que está mais fechada porque é um trabalho diário: do lado do empregador, eu deveria saber que se eu vejo um currículo que diz x anos de escuteiro à minha frente, sem ele me dizer, eu já sei alguma coisa sobre ele, sobre as competências humanas que se desenvolvem e devia valorizar. E isso poderia ajudar nesse gap de comunicação que é não serem avaliadas e não serem comunicadas. Porque se tu não comunicares, existe ainda um das atividades de voluntariado como fazer coisas giras, mas o que importa é como é que ele cresceu com isso.

## **Appendix VII – Structure of the Survey to EYP Portugal Members and Alumni**

### **Section 1: The Impact of the European Youth Parliament on Skills Acquisition and Employability**

Dear Participant,

Thank you for participating in this study on "The Impact of the European Youth Parliament on Skills Acquisition and Employability". This research is conducted by Inês Rodrigues as part of the Masters Degree in Intercultural Studies for Business at Instituto Superior de Contabilidade e Administração do Porto.

This thesis explores the impact of non-formal education activities within youth organisations, specifically the European Youth Parliament Portugal, on the employability of young people. It examines the skills and competences acquired, including intercultural competence, skills alignment with job market demands, employer perceptions, and the influence on job opportunities. By analysing these factors, the study aims to demonstrate how participation in these activities enhances young people's confidence and readiness for the job market, ultimately contributing to their employability

Your participation is voluntary, and you may withdraw at any time without any consequences. The data collected will be solely used for academic purposes and will be anonymised in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation.

### **Section 2: Background Information**

- Please designate your gender (Male, Female, Other, Prefer not to say);
- Please designate your age (less than 18, 18-22, 23-30, more than 30);
- Please indicate the highest level of education you have completed, or are about to complete (High School, Bachelor's Degree, Master's Degree, Doctorate's Degree, Other);
- Professional Status (Student, Employed, Self-Employed, Unemployed);
- How long have you been involved with EYP Portugal? (less than 1 year, 1-2 years, 3-4 years, more than 4 years);
- Are you still an active member of EYP Portugal (Yes, I am an active member of EYP Portugal; No, I am an alumnus of EYP Portugal);
- If you are an alumnus of EYP Portugal, how long has it been since you were last active in the organisation? (less than a year, 1-2 years, 3-5 years, more than 5 years);
- What roles or positions have you held within EYP? Please selected all that apply (Delegate, Organiser, Core Organiser, Head Organiser, Chairperson, Vice

President, President, Media Team Member, Editorial Assistant, Editor, Jury Member, Head of Jury, Member of the Board of EYP Portugal, Event Safe Person, National Safe Person).

### **Section 3: Skills Acquisition and Development**

- Please rate the extent to which you have developed the following skills through your participation in EYP Portugal. Rating from 1 to 5. (Leadership, Communication, Critical Thinking, Teamwork, Problem-Solving, Project Management, People Management, Public Speaking, Negotiation, Intercultural Competence);
- Please provide examples of situations or activities within EYP where you developed these skills
- How do the skills you developed in EYP compare to those you developed through formal education or other extracurricular activities?

### **Section 4: Alignment with Job Market Demands**

- In your opinion, how relevant are the skills you acquired through EYP to the demands of the current job market? (1 to 5, 1 being not relevant and 5 being highly relevant);
- Which of the following skills gained through EYP do you believe are particularly valuable in the job market? Select up to 3 options (Leadership, Communication, Critical Thinking, Teamwork, Problem-Solving, Project Management, People Management, Public Speaking, Negotiation, Intercultural Competence);
- Have you encountered any situations in your job search or professional life where the skills you gained from EYP were particularly useful?;
- How do you think employers perceive the skills and experiences gained through participation in EYP?.

### **Section 5: Impact on Confidence and Job Market Readiness**

- To what extent has your participation in EYP Portugal influenced your confidence in professional settings? (1 to 5, 1 being not at all and 5 being to a great extent)
- Do you feel more prepared for the job market as a result of your involvement in EYP? (Yes, No, Maybe);
- Feel free to explain your answer to the previous questions.

### **Section 6: Conclusion**

Thank you for completing this survey. Your responses are invaluable to this research and will help better understand the impact of EYP on skills acquisition and employability. If you have any questions or would like to receive the results of this study, please provide your email address below.

- Email Address (not mandatory);
- Is there anything else you would like to say regarding the survey topic? (not mandatory).

## **Appendix VIII – Structure of the information compiled from the Feedback Forms**

### **Section 1: Event Information**

- Event Name
- Number of Responses
- Period of Response Collection
- Demography (Number and % of Answers by Delegates, Teachers, and Officials)
- Total of Participants (Number and %, per event)

### **Section 2: Questions Analysed from the Feedback Forms**

- How motivated do you feel to join EYP Portugal or other EYP sessions? Rating from 1 to 5;
- Please rate the following programme elements, in terms of your satisfaction and enjoyment? Rating from 1 to 5 (Teambuilding, Committee Work, General Assembly);
- Was there a good balance between the formal programme and the cultural/social activities? (Yes, No);
- How would you rate your overall well-being during the session? Rating from 1 to 5;
- To what degree did you have a satisfactory learning experience at this event? Rating from 1 to 5.
- Please evaluate the degree in which your knowledge increased in the following areas as a result of the session. Rating from 1 to 5 (EU Institutions and Processes, Key socio-economic, political and cultural issues);
- Please evaluate the degree in which you gained, practiced, or improved the following skills throughout the session. Rating from 1 to 5 (Public Speaking, Project Management, Team Work, Facilitation, Media and Marketing, Leadership, Organisation and Planning, Communication and Interaction, Team Management, Flexibility, Self Awareness);
- How far were your values and attitudes affected in relation to the following concepts? Rating from 1 to 5 (Support for Intercultural Understanding and Cooperation, Openness to Dialogue and Compromise, Support for Democracy and a Peaceful European Society);
- How far do you feel this EYP event empowered you to participate actively in society? Rating from 1 to 5;
- Would you recommend EYP Portugal sessions to a friend? Rating from 1 to 5.

## **Appendix IX – Structure of the Consent Form for Employer Interviews**

### **Provisional Study Title**

The Role of Non-Formal Education in Enhancing Youth Employability (Please note that the title of this study is not final and is subject to change.)

**Researcher:** Inês Rodrigues, Instituto Superior de Contabilidade e Administração do Porto (ISCAP)

**Purpose of the Study:** You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Inês Rodrigues as part of a thesis dissertation at Instituto Superior de Contabilidade e Administração do Porto. The purpose of this study is to explore how the acquisition of soft skills through non-formal education activities is valued by employers in the labour market. Your insights will help in understanding this topic more deeply.

**Procedures:** If you agree to participate, you will be interviewed about the perspective of employers in the recruitment process. The interview will last approximately 30 minutes and will be recorded for transcription and accuracy purposes. You may refuse to answer any questions or stop the interview at any time.

**Voluntary Participation:** Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You are free to decline to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time, without any penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

**Use of Data:** All information obtained during this study will be used solely for academic purposes. The information you provide during the interview may be quoted or paraphrased in the thesis dissertation and/or any related academic publications. By signing this consent form, you agree to allow the use of the content of the interview for these purposes.

**Consent:** I have read and understood the information provided above. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I can withdraw at any time. I consent to participate in this study and allow the researcher to use the content of my interview in their thesis dissertation and related academic publications.

