



**Erasmus+ VET Projects: Intercultural Communication and Language
Strategies as a Management Tool**

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Relatório de Estágio

Mestrado em Estudos Interculturais para Negócios

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Porto – Dezembro 2018

**INSTITUTO SUPERIOR DE CONTABILIDADE E ADMINISTRAÇÃO DO PORTO
INSTITUTO POLITÉCNICO DO PORTO**



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**Relatório de Estágio
apresentado ao Instituto de Contabilidade e Administração do Porto para a
obtenção do grau de Mestre em Estudos Interculturais para Negócios, sob
orientação de Doutora Alexandra Albuquerque**

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Resumo:

O objetivo para este relatório de estágio é estudar e explorar o tema da Comunicação Intercultural e da importância da língua, através da minha experiência de estágio na empresa Arts & Skills.

É verdadeiramente importante entender que vivemos num mundo interligado, onde a comunicação intercultural desempenha um papel fundamental. O programa europeu Erasmus+ é conhecido por apoiar a mobilidade de alunos por toda a Europa e por permitir que os seus participantes experienciem ambientes interculturais, e assim, adquirir competências interculturais. No entanto, existem alguns desafios que os participantes Erasmus+ enfrentam durante a experiência de mobilidade. A língua é um deles. Ela está no centro das interações sociais e pode ser um obstáculo para uma comunicação efetiva. Há momentos em que este obstáculo é ultrapassado recorrendo ao uso correto de estratégias linguísticas, e há momentos em que os desafios são um pouco mais difíceis de ultrapassar.

Para que seja possível apresentar o estágio desenvolvido na Arts & Skills e explorar como é que a língua e a cultura afetam a comunicação, este relatório de estágio encontra-se dividido em quatro capítulos. O primeiro capítulo apresenta o programa educacional europeu Erasmus+. O segundo capítulo discute a comunicação em ambientes internacionais. O terceiro capítulo apresenta a entidade acolhedora, Arts & Skills, e também as principais atividades desenvolvidas durante o meu estágio. Finalmente, o quarto capítulo analisa os momentos relevantes do estágio sob uma perspetiva intercultural.

Palavras chave: Comunicação Intercultural, Estratégias Linguísticas, Arts & Skills, Erasmus+ VET

Abstract:

The goal for this internship report is to study and explore the theme of intercultural communication and the importance of language through my internship experience at the company Arts & Skills.

It is truly important to understand that we are living in an interconnected world where intercultural communication plays a fundamental role. The European programme Erasmus+ is known for supporting the exchange of students around Europe and for allowing its participants to experience intercultural environments and, thus, acquiring new intercultural skills. However, there are some challenges that Erasmus+ participants may face during a mobility experience. Language is one of them. It is at the center of social interactions and it can be an obstacle to an effective communication. There are times where this obstacle is overcome through the right use of linguistic strategies, and there are times where the challenges are a bit more difficult to overcome.

In order to present the internship carried out at Arts & Skills and to explore how language and culture affect communication, this internship report is divided into four chapters. The first chapter presents the European educational programme Erasmus+. The second chapter discusses the communication in international environments. The third chapter presents the Hosting Institution, Arts & Skills, and also the main activities carried out during my internship. Finally, the fourth chapter analyses the relevant moments of the internship under an intercultural perspective.

Key words: Intercultural Communication, Language Strategies, Arts & Skills, Erasmus+ VET

Dedicatória

À minha mãe,

Ao meu pai.

Obrigada por me darem o mundo.

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Introduction

Globalization is a term that we have been hearing about for quite some time. It is a phenomenon that has been reshaping the world, economically and socially. For the past 20 years, there have been major technological advances that, in a certain way, helped to create a more interconnected community. In 2018, we have access to digital communication, which allows us to transfer large amounts of information at an astonishing speed across borders, and we also have access to transportation that makes people and goods move easily over great distances (Samovar, Porter, & McDaniel, 2010).

With this phenomenon, there has been an unprecedented growth of the interaction among people from different countries, ethnicities, and religious backgrounds (Samovar, Porter, & McDaniel, 2010). The world that we live in today is demanding the ability to communicate with people from all around the world, and for that purpose, individuals must take into consideration the different cultural values and norms existing in an intercultural environment (Aksoy, Uzunoglu, & Yaman Akyar, 2017).

Companies and other organizations are entering new international markets hoping to grow and to prosper. They move or expand their activities to other countries and are presented with cultural barriers that can result in confusion and misunderstandings. These cultural barriers can also be presented to people that go abroad for vacation or to students that decide to study abroad.

Erasmus+ is a programme for education, training, youth, and sport that aims to promote prosperity, equity, and social inclusion, by supporting young Europeans to go abroad to study, have a training period, to experience different professional endeavours, and even to volunteer (European Commission, 2018). In Europe, this programme is recognized as a great opportunity to develop intercultural communication skills, since it allows its participants to gain intercultural knowledge and develop attitudes by being exposed to intercultural environments (Aksoy, Uzunoglu, & Yaman Akyar, 2017).

Intercultural communication refers to the communication among individuals and groups of distinct cultural identities (Jandt, 2007). In our days, it is easy to encounter people from other countries and cultures, and in certain circumstances, it is normal to inquire ourselves about how to establish or develop relationships with people with different backgrounds from ours. It is necessary to keep in mind that the communication process is different and perhaps challenging since there are many factors with the power to interfere with the communication between people from different cultural backgrounds and, thus, leading to

misunderstandings. Language is one of those factors. Language lies at the heart of social interactions, and in business it is a fundamental component of the day-to-day organizational life (Brannen, Piekkari, & Tietze, 2014).

In order to explore these subjects and to put into practice the academic knowledge acquired throughout my academic years, I decided to carry out an internship of one semester as part of my studies in the Master of Intercultural Studies for Business. This internship was carried out at Arts & Skills, a company that works as an intermediary organization in Erasmus+ projects related to Vocational Education and Training (VET). Even though I had the opportunity of getting to know how the whole company works, my tasks were related to the Department of European Mobility. Among my responsibilities were assisting in the monitoring and orientation of the Erasmus + projects, assisting and accompanying the development of the KA2 project “IntoQuality” and the development of documents and other content in English.

Therefore, the goal for this report is to explore the subject of Intercultural Communication and how it relates to certain activities of the Erasmus+ programme. To accomplish that, I will describe my experience as an intern at Arts & Skills and reflect on the intercultural outcomes, challenges, and strategies involving the activities carried out.

This internship report is organized into four chapters. The first chapter presents the European programme Erasmus+ along with its context and main structure. The second chapter is related to the communication in international environments and it will discuss the subjects of culture, communication, barriers to intercultural communication, risks of miscommunication, cultural models and the importance of language in an intercultural business environment. The third chapter explains why, how, and when the internship happened, presents the Hosting Institution, and describes the internship activities. Finally, in the fourth chapter, we have selected the most relevant intercultural situations and they will be analysed under an intercultural perspective.

It should be noted that names of schools, sending organizations, receiving organizations, accommodation placements, trainees, accompanying teachers, and other entities that were involved in the activities described in this internship report, will not be clearly identified in order to not harm their privacy.

Chapter I – European programme: Erasmus+

The world we live in today is deeply connected with mobility, whether physical or virtual. Our contemporary societies evolved so much in the last decades and now they are marked by great economic, linguistic and cultural diversity.

“Education, training, youth work and sport are key to promote common European values, foster social integration, enhance intercultural understanding and a sense of belonging to a community, and to prevent violent radicalisation” (European Commission, 2017a, p.5). The Erasmus+ programme, besides enhancing the academic and professional course of its participants, also improves the knowledge of new cultures, new languages, intercultural communication and interaction, and the sense of what it is like to be a European citizen.

1.1. Context and structure

Altiero Spinelli, one of the founding fathers of the European Union, had a vision of a democratic and open Europe, based on a strong cultural and educational environment (Jones, 2017). In 1973, even though education was not a priority, the European Commission followed the initiative of Altiero Spinelli and created the first Education and Youth department. It was after the establishment of such department that a project concerning the mobility of students around Europe was created. However, it took 10 years to prove that a project with this purpose could work, because it was necessary to engage universities and to form the entire legal and monetary basis, so that the European Union could have a chance to develop and run a programme of such dimensions. After some enthusiasm and some lobbying from the part of Prime Ministers at the London European Summit, the Erasmus programme was officially approved in 1987 (Jones, 2017).

Since 1987, the students Exchange programme has come a long way. In 1995 it was included in the European educational programme called Socrates. Then, in 2007 the Socrates programme was replaced with the “Lifelong Learning Programme” (Fricova, 2016), where the Erasmus initiative became very successful. Consequently, in 2014, the “Lifelong Learning Programme” became what we know today as Erasmus+ (Schneider, 2017).

Hywel Ceri Jones (2017), who played a very important role in the creation of the Erasmus scheme, says that the main structure of the programme remains the same since its launch,

but now it is more complete. Thus, the most recent version of the Erasmus programme takes into consideration all the work developed throughout more than 25 years.

According to the Erasmus+ Programme Guide, the Erasmus+ is a programme of the European Union for education, training, youth, and sport. It aims to promote prosperity, equity and social inclusion in Europe by investing in the competences, knowledge and skills of individuals. For the period from 2014 and 2020, the Erasmus+ programme had a budget of €16.45 billion in order to provide the opportunity of acquiring and develop competences, knowledge and skills through studies, training, professional experiences or volunteering abroad to more than 4 million people (European Commission, 2018). Thus, Erasmus+ aims at specific objectives such as (European Commission, 2017a, p.5):

- Reduction of unemployment, especially among young people;
- Promotion of adult learning;
- Encouragement of young people to participate in the European democracy;
- Support for innovation, cooperation and reforms in education, training and youth;
- Promotion of cooperation and mobility with the partner countries of the European Union, especially in the fields of higher education and youth.

The most recent version of the Erasmus programme – Erasmus+ - is structured in a way to make it possible to manage all the initiatives created under the brand Erasmus+ and at the same time to reach all the goals set in the beginning of the new programme for the period of 2014-2020. Therefore, Erasmus+ is currently divided into 3 Key Actions and two other separate areas, Jean Monnet and Erasmus+ Sport (Erasmus+: Creating Opportunities for the UK across Europe, n.d.):

- The initiatives developed under Key Action 1 are related to the mobility of individuals who wish to take part in a learning/professional experience in a foreign country. Organizations working with mobility projects can apply for funding, provided that their projects are directed to higher education, VET (Vocational Education and Training), schools and adult education;
- The Key Action 2 aims to facilitate the cooperation among organizations for the improvement of their services for students, including sharing of innovative practices;

- Under Key Action 3, Erasmus + aims to support strategic activities for the reform and modernisation of educational and training policies;
- Jean Monnet activities aims to promote European Union studies in higher education and by supporting academic institutions;
- Finally, the Erasmus+ Sport supports activities directed to the development and implementation of innovative concepts and practices in the field of sports.

According to the European Commission (2017a, p.20), participants can be “students, trainees, apprentices, pupils, adult learners, young people, volunteers, professors, teachers, trainers, youth workers, professionals of organisations active in the fields of education, training and youth”, and also organizations active in the area of intervention of Erasmus+, provided that they are established in a Programme Country¹ or Partner Country².

1.2. Vocational education and training (VET)

Overall, the Erasmus+ programme is well known in the field of education and is highly valued by those who have the opportunity of participating in it, since the satisfaction rate is superior to 90% (European Commission, 2018). Nevertheless, not all of the Erasmus+ initiatives are as famous as those concerning to higher education. It is, for instance, the case of Vocational Education and Training, also known as VET. Thus, and due to the nature of the projects developed during my internship at the organization Arts & Skills, the Erasmus+ action that will be more discussed in this report will be mobility for VET learners.

Vocational education and training (VET) has been an important part of the EU policies, and consequently of the Erasmus+ programme, since it is a form of education and training that provides knowledge, skills and competences for a particular professional occupation or for the labour market in general (Cedefop, 2014, p.292).

In certain countries, for instance Portugal, VET is considered as a second choice or as a choice for those who have not succeeded in the conventional schools. However, this is

¹ Programme Countries can participate in all of the Erasmus+ Actions and initiatives. These countries are the member states of the European Union, plus Iceland, Norway, Turkey, Liechtenstein, former Yugoslav and Republic of Macedonia (European Commission, 2017a, pp. 21-22).

² Partner Countries can be countries from all around the world and only participate, under certain conditions, in some Erasmus+ Actions and initiatives (European Commission, 2017a, pp. 21-22).

not a general thought around Europe since countries such as Germany value VET and have a model framework and system of support (Gregório, 2017).

The studies showing that VET is not equally popular across Europe may explain why VET has low levels of mobility when compared to the levels of higher education (Varchola, 2015). Nowadays, the labour market is increasingly international and global. A student entering it will most certainly enter an intercultural environment, where intercultural communication is fundamental. Thus, mobility can be a great opportunity to develop intercultural skills.

The Council of the European Union considers learning mobility as a factor for personal and professional development that also enhances employability and competitiveness. By the year of 2020, a minimum of 6% of all 18-34 year-olds with vocational education and training should have had studied or trained abroad for a minimum period of 2 weeks (Council of the European Union, 2011).

In this matter, Erasmus+ has mobility actions and activities for VET learners and staff. The European Commission (2017a) states, in the Erasmus+ Programme Guide, that the mobility in VET strengthens the employability of the participants and that it can facilitate the entrance in the labour market. It also encourages long-term placements abroad since it helps to develop specific job skills and it helps in the adaptation to the language and culture of the host country.

Last year, the European Commission (2017b) reported a steady growth in the interest in VET mobility with 7098 applications received in 2016. Around 3235 of those applications were approved and received a funding of €276 million.

As far as VET mobility is concerned, the time abroad can go from 2 weeks to 12 months. The placements in the foreign countries can be VET providers (for instance, schools), a company or any other institution. In a mobility project the organizations involved have specific roles. First, there is the Applicant Organization, which is responsible for the overall mobility project. The Applicant Organization can be a national mobility consortium coordinator, which leads a group of organizations of the same country. If applicable, an Applicant Organization can also act as a Sending Organization. There is also the Sending Organization with the responsibility of selecting the mobility participants. Then, the Receiving Organization is in charge of receiving the mobility

participants. Finally, there is the Intermediary Organization, which has the expertise to assist in the mobility projects, more specifically, in administrative procedures, logistics, matching the profiles of the participants and the companies and in the follow-up of the participants (European Commission, 2017a).

The Erasmus+ programme is a great success. Throughout its existence, it was able to reach millions of people around Europe, and even the world, and it managed to reach an extraordinary level of appreciation among participants. However, the programme cannot be limited to the exchange of people around countries. Having education as a priority, it supports many essential projects for the development and improvement of the quality of the education offered around Europe. Ultimately, the goal is to support individuals in their academic and professional path.

On the other hand, there are many more outcomes from this experience. Even if unconsciously, people will most certainly have a life changing experience of self-discovering, self-awareness and self-reliance. When a person goes abroad on board of such programme, it is more than travelling and seeing a new country. The VET trainees will see a new country and will live in it for a certain period of time. Here, intercultural communication is fundamental. The trainees will not only be tourists around the city/country but they will also work at a local company, with new concepts and techniques, where people will not speak their language, will not have their cultural background and definitely will not have their view of the world and life. Moreover, in chapter IV, it will be presented and analysed examples of those situations, based on the experience at Arts & Skills.

Chapter II – Communication in international environments

There are things that we can experience during our life time with the power of teaching us great things or even change our way of thinking and seeing the world. The programme Erasmus+ is one of those experiences. Those who chose to participate in such programme will certainly be presented with challenges that can play an important role in the overall mobility experience. The challenges, attached to an experience such as Erasmus+, can be transformed in great stories of success or they become real barriers to the success of the experience and change completely the meaning of the overall mobility.

The VET trainees that go abroad under the programme Erasmus+ are faced with many challenges and learning events. For weeks, the trainees live outside their home, some of them for the very first time, within a new culture, which has a different language and costumes, and different ways of working and learning. Consequently, these Erasmus+ participants experience intercultural communication every day, making it a crucial part of their mobility experience.

Intercultural communication refers to the communication among individuals and groups of distinct cultural identities (Jandt, 2007). Here, the word intercultural is essential since it literally means 'between cultures' (Spencer-Oatey & Franklin, 2009). Thus, we cannot begin to understand intercultural communication without taking into consideration what culture is and how it influences communication among people.

As the Erasmus+ participants, many of us only perceive our own culture when travelling abroad or when meeting someone with different cultural characteristics. Our way of thinking, what we believe to be right or wrong or how to behave in certain situations are influenced by the culture in which we are born and raised (Jandt, 2007). When talking or interacting with someone from the same cultural background, communication barriers are usually not expected. However, when there is an encounter with people from different cultures, each one has its own culture, with its own values, beliefs and practices, guiding their thoughts and behaviour (Maude, 2016).

In order to analyse and understand the intercultural side of a VET Erasmus+ experience, it is necessary to discuss important concepts and elements that define intercultural communication. In this chapter, we will discuss culture, communication and its different types, intercultural communication and its challenges, cultural models, and finally the importance of language in an intercultural business environment.

2.1. Brief introduction to culture

The first thing to keep in mind is that culture is a concept without a single definition. For instance, in 1952, 64 definitions of culture were found by Kroeber and Kluckhohn (as cited in Maude, 2016). Most certainly, till 2018, the number of definitions has increased considerably. However, it is not possible to have a universal definition of culture. In fact, people will talk about or define their own culture in the way they would like to be perceived by others (Maude, 2016). For instance, it is common to hear a Portuguese say “We are a very welcoming country”.

Culture is not synonym of nationality, or only influenced by it. Culture does not recognize borders. For example, there are many Portuguese and Spanish cities sharing the border. The cities of Valença and Tui, in the North of Portugal, are only one example. There, it is normal for the Portuguese to cross the border every day to go to work in Spain and for the Spanish to leave their kids at the Portuguese day care. There are conveniences and inconveniences on both sides and the population found a way of living together and share the best they have to offer. Even the local establishments, such as cafés, are well adapted and used to receiving both Portuguese and Spanish people. As a consequence, there is an ‘eurocity’ being created where the population and the local governments hope for more sharing and cooperation (Fernandes, 2018).

It is the people who create and transform culture everyday through their activities and social relations. Above all, culture is dynamic and it is changing constantly. However, people who share the same racial and ethnic background might share the same culture; people from a certain culture often live in the same region; how people communicate is highly influenced by their cultural context (Maude, 2016). Culture is also a social process of transferring values and beliefs from generation to generation, and people identifying themselves with certain groups who share a system of symbols, rules and norms, i.e. sharing cultural identity (Jandt, 2007).

Therefore, it is possible to verify that culture is not an easy concept to define. There are many layers and many concepts associated to it, what makes it impossible to have just one definition. Still, we can look at culture and distinguish two levels of cultural differences – a surface and a deep level. The famous figure of an iceberg is a well-known example of this. What is above the water - the surface level – includes cultural features, such as climate, hobbies, housing and transporting measures, among others. The deep

level of cultural differences- the part of the iceberg that is underwater – includes features which are not immediately visible, like values and beliefs (Hanley, n.d.; Maude, 2016). At the underwater level is where the crucial elements of a culture can be found, such as the concepts of justice, beauty, interpersonal relationship, handling of emotions, time and space. All of these elements give us important rules and definitions that will guide our ways of living in society (Hanley, n.d.).

Hofstede (1994), a Dutch social psychologist and academic, said that culture elements can be divided into four categories: symbols, rituals, heroes, and values:

- Symbols refer to verbal language, objects and gestures. At a national level it includes the language and at an organizational level is the dress code, slang, modes of addressing, and so on;
- Rituals are the collective activities that are essential for a culture. At an organizational level they include celebrations, meetings, who speaks to whom, among others;
- Heroes are the real or imaginary people who act as role model for the members of a culture. In organizations, they can be the “ideal employee” or even the founder of the organizations;
- Values define the deepest level of a culture. They represent the feelings about what is good or bad, normal or abnormal, decent or indecent, beautiful or ugly.

Throughout generations, each culture has built its life based on their own examples of symbols, rituals, heroes, and values. They are so intrinsic to people and their society that it is impossible to just erase one of them. However, these elements are what makes each culture so unique.

The majority of the existing cultures is not homogeneous, they are a combination of many separate cultures. If we look at a culture closely, we will find it divided into many others. These are subcultures. They are “a part of a whole”. Often, they are based on social class, ethnicity, race or region, and can also be subdivided into other groups, such as age, education level, occupation, gender, and so on. In other words, all of these subcultures exist within a predominant culture, yet they have their own set of values and patterns of behaviours. For instance, the subculture of occupation. In an organization, the members share their own vocabulary, values, and behaviours and can even dress alike (Jandt, 2007; Maude, 2016). Nevertheless, subcultures do not have such a large number of members as

a culture and they do not transmit values, rules and norms of behaviour from generation to generation as cultures do (Jandt, 2007).

Ultimately, it is the people and their uniqueness who created culture and keep it dynamic. Today, culture does not have only people as a changing factor, but also economic and technological development, global communication, migration and even tourism.

2.2. Brief introduction to communication

The term “communication” is defined by Law (2009) as the product of any action, be it physical, written, or verbal, that transmits information between individuals. Mehrabian (1972) goes further in his definition and says that “communication may be intentional or unintentional, may involve conventional or unconventional signals, may take linguistic or non-linguistic forms, and may occur through spoken or other modes” (as cited in Velentzas & Broni, 2014, p.117).

Communication is used by humans since the beginning of history. It may have started with some kind of speech, nonverbal behaviours and drawings in the walls of caves. No matter how communication took place, it always played an important role in the relations among people and also in the development of the communities. Today, in order to transmit information, besides interpersonal interaction, we can use technology, i.e. TV, telephones, email, among other channels and media.

However, every form of communication demands a process. Lunenburg (2010) describes the process of communication in a very simple way. First, there is the sender and the receiver. The sender is the one who initiates the process of communication. The receiver is the person who receives the information. The individual acting as the sender encodes the message using words, symbols, or gestures. Then, the message, which takes the form of verbal, nonverbal, or written language, is sent to the receiver by a channel. The channel for the transmission of the message can be a face-to-face conversation, an email, or a report. After receiving the message, the receiver decodes it and transforms it into meaningful information. Finally, the receiver can respond to the message sent by the sender, thus occurring feedback. However, there are factors, such as language barriers or interruptions, which can disturb the transmission of the message, also known as noise.

Transmitting a message can be quite a complex process. If noise is involved, either through the sender, the receiver, the decoding or encoding of the message, there will be

no clear understanding between the individuals. In the end, in order to establish an effective communication, both sender and receiver will need the skills and willingness, since it is a two-way process (Lunenburg, 2010).

Therefore, it is possible to say that there are two main types of communication in human interaction: verbal and nonverbal communication. Both have their benefits and limits, but they are constantly used by people and sometimes simultaneously. In the next few pages, the two types of communication will be explored, as well as their relation to culture.

2.2.1. Verbal communication

Verbal communication is an important part of our lives and it might be the most obvious and recurrent type of communication. In a simple way, verbal communication can be defined as the transmission of messages using verbal, vocal, or written words (Communication Theory, n.d.). The use of words is a fundamental aspect of verbal communication, creating a deep connection to language, both written and spoken (“Introduction to Communication: Defining Verbal Communication”, n.d.). Therefore, in order to understand the concept of verbal communication, it is possible to resort to the definition of language by Edward Sapir (1921), which argues that language is a human and acquired way to conveying ideas, emotions, and desires through a system of symbols.

This type of communication has many functions and the essential is to communicate a message. It forms bonds and helps in the construction of relationships between people. Verbal communication involves everything from one syllable sounds to complex arguments using language and emotion and it can be used to inform, to ask, or to discuss every kind of topic (Hanes, 2015). Sapir (1921, p.2) argues: “Speech is a human activity that varies without assignable limit as we pass from social group to social group, because it is a purely historical heritage of the group, the product of long-continued social usage.”

This brings us to the deep relationship between language and culture. According to Fred Jandt (2007), even if we are not aware of it, when we learn our mother tongue, we automatically learn the culture associated to it. As a consequence, when the people involved in the process of communication have the same cultural background, the transmission of verbal messages are usually well interpreted. It means that people are able to encode and decode messages in similar ways and the noise will be more limited. If people come from distinct cultures, the case can be very different.

The effectiveness of an intercultural communication depends on many factors. One of the most obvious is the language. When those who are interacting do not share the same language or language proficiency, it will be incredibly difficult for them to understand the messages (Spencer-Oatey & Franklin, 2009). Additionally, language only works to a certain extent. Many cues surrounding the messages are left to the participants of the communication to understand. Especially, in this case, the cultural background is crucial since people may pay more attention to the different cultural cues and comprehend the message in a distinct way of the intended (Spencer-Oatey & Franklin, 2009). Consequently, there will be much more noise interfering with the communication, which will increase the risk of misunderstandings.

2.2.2. Nonverbal communication

There is no doubt language plays an important role in interpersonal communication. It is the most instinctive and recurrent way of communicating and it allows us to express ourselves, through words, about what we are seeing, thinking, or feeling. However, there are situations where it is not enough or it is the wrong type of communication mode.

Hans & Hans (2015) define nonverbal communication as the transmission of emotions, feelings, and messages without the use of words. It is a powerful type of communication that is present in our daily lives, even if we do not have the awareness of it. It can express emotions, reinforce ideas, reveal lies, replace verbal messages, promote or make difficult the interaction between people, and all in a genuine and natural way (Schelles, 2008). As in all the other types of communication, nonverbal communication is highly influenced by cultural backgrounds, which will determinate the guidelines for the interpretations of the messages.

There are some nonverbal cues that can be interpreted similarly across cultures. Smiling and crying are easily identified by anyone (Schelles, 2008). However, that does not apply to the main part of nonverbal cues. Even though it is natural and people are not aware of it, the way we communicate nonverbally is shaped by culture. Ekman & Friesen (1969) argue that cultural upbringing determines peoples' display or suppression of emotion, as well as the appropriate situations and the intensity (as cited in Barna, 1997). For instance, Americans can manifest happiness, sadness, and surprise in a more intense way than the Japanese (Pogosyan, 2016).

Consequently, and especially in an intercultural context, the study of the nonverbal aspects of communication reveals to be very important so that messages can be sent and received effectively and misinterpretations can be prevented. One signal can be accepted and considered normal in one culture, yet offensive in others.

There are limitations and disadvantages that can interfere with the success of the interaction, including ambiguity and imprecision of messages due to the lack of words, its inability as a public tool for communication, or even the distortion of information (Hans & Hans, 2015). In fact, this can also be applied to verbal communication. None of these two types of communication is 100% effective and there will always be a risk of interferences with the communication process, resulting in miscommunications.

2.3. About intercultural communication

As it was mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, intercultural communication refers to the communication among individuals and groups of distinct cultural identities (Jandt, 2007). We always lived in an exceptionally complex world, with many different cultures, languages, and beliefs. Nowadays, thanks to the development of new technologies and information systems, as well as to changes in the global economy and people's movement, people move and exchange messages and informations like never before.

In the business world, organizations are entering international markets and changing or expanding their activities to another country. However, when they go abroad, they are presented with cultural barriers that may cause confusion or misunderstandings. As a consequence, it is essential for these organizations to find ways to cope with the challenges and to structure their business in order to better communicate inside the organization, with employees, and also outside, with clients.

When we belong to an intercultural environment, we may begin to question how to establish relationships or how to overcome certain communication barriers. One of those barriers is culture shock. The cultural difference is found in the set of practices, symbols, or beliefs that each group presents (Fernandes, 2014). This culture shock happens because we all learn the practices, symbols and beliefs of our culture when we are still children, and they became something natural and unconscious (Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010).

A person can try to learn the core elements of another culture, however it is highly improbable to fully understand them. Those who go abroad and experience cultural shock go through four stages. The first one is the honeymoon stage, where everything is excitingly new. The second stage is when the individual starts to feel frustrated because he/she becomes conscious of the new reality and the culture shock happens. The third stage is called acculturation and is characterized by the slow adaptation to the new environment. Finally, the last stage is when the individual accepts the new reality and environments and reaches a stable state of mind. However, it is possible that adaptation problem occur during this process which can make the integration of the individual harder (Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010).

2.3.1. Barriers to intercultural communication

People from all around the world are born and raised by a certain culture and subculture, which teaches norms, values, and rules of how to live in a society. When people interact, they do so according to their cultural background. In other words, people send and receive messages guided by communicative norms of their culture.

In an intercultural environment, there is a great risk of miscommunication because of the difference between cultures. The greater the difference, the harder will be a successful intercultural communication (Jayaswal, 2009). Miscommunication can cause conflict or even aggravate one already existing. In fact, it is too easy to fall into the traps caused by the barriers to intercultural communication. They are very hard to perceive and the only way to avoid them is to learn to detect those barriers and avoid making the mistakes related to them (Jandt, 2009; Jayaswal, 2009).

LaRay M. Barna (1997) developed a list of six blocks to intercultural communication: assumption of similarities, language differences, nonverbal misinterpretations, prejudice and stereotypes, tendency to evaluate, and anxiety.

Assumption of similarities refers to the assumption that people are just like us or that they are in a similar situation as our own, when it cannot be the case. People can assume that the basic human needs make everyone alike to some degree. However, they do not consider that cultures around the world found different ways of adaption to those same needs, which resulted in the norms and rules that characterize each culture (Barna, 1997).

By having the assumption that people are all the same, the decoding of certain symbols and signals will be careless or even ignored (Vieira & Sousa, 2015).

Language might be the most obvious barrier to intercultural communication. When there is no common language between people, it can be extremely difficult to communicate verbally. Even if there is a common language, there are aspects that can interfere with communication, as different vocabulary, accents or slang (Vieira & Sousa, 2015).

As discussed previously, nonverbal communication can also represent a barrier to effective intercultural communication. There is ambiguity and imprecision of nonverbal signals, which leads to misinterpretation, the inability for nonverbal communication to work as a public tool for communication, or the distortion of information (Hans & Hans, 2015).

In an intercultural environment, there is a risk for situations involving prejudice and stereotype. They limit the human capacity to interpret things and situations as they really are and make it hard to accept and understand a different reality (Vieira & Sousa, 2015).

Stereotypes are “second hand beliefs that provide conceptual bases from which we “make sense” out of what goes on around us, whether or not they are accurate or fit the circumstance” (Barna, 1997, p. 341). In other words, they consist of established beliefs regarding a certain group. They are often used to validate prejudice and discrimination by arguing about superficial features of the stereotyped group (Jandt, 2007).

Tendency to evaluate or ethnocentrism is defined by LaRay M. Barna (1997, p.342) as “each person’s culture or way of life always seems right, proper, and natural. This bias prevents the open-minded attention needed to look at the attitudes and behaviour patterns from the other’s point of view”. It is a concept close to prejudice and stereotypes as it allows to immediately approve or disapprove something done or said by others without taking into consideration their culture and different perspective of the world (Vieira & Sousa, 2015).

High anxiety, or stress, can be very common in an intercultural encounter since it is created by uncertainties. Possibly, it is the less obvious barrier to intercultural communication, but it has the power to lower the communicational performance and lead people to act defensively (Vieira & Sousa, 2015). It affects the mind and body. In some cases, people might need a relief and resort to defensive mechanisms that can go from

distortion of perceptions to becoming hostile. During an intercultural encounter where people are suffering from high anxiety, the other barriers to communication might arise and make the encounter disastrous and lead to a failed intercultural communication (Barna, 1997).

2.3.2. Risks of miscommunication

People who speak the same language and have the same cultural background can interact with each other without major issues. People tend to think alike and tend to share the same knowledge and speech patterns (Maude, 2016). Consequently, people communicate effectively as they are able to interpret each other's messages. However, that is not the case in an encounter between people from different cultures. They might speak the same language, but if the cultural background differs, then there is a high chance of miscommunication³ (Maude, 2016).

In intercultural interactions, a miscommunication occurs when there is a divergence between what the speaker intends to say and how the hearer understands the message received. Here, the people interacting send and receive messages according to their own culture, which has its own communicative norms (Gibson, 2002). Sometimes, even the accent of the speaker can interfere with the comprehension of the intended message, since it causes the listener to deviate his attention from the message to the 'noise' - cultural noise (Maude, 2016).

Once a miscommunication has been detected, it should be quickly repaired. The speaker has the opportunity to repeat the message, but this time with simpler words and/or with the addition of new information, whether verbal or nonverbal. The speech accommodation is also a helpful tool, since it seems to have an effect of approximating people and establishing equality between people from different cultures (Maude, 2016). Cindy Gallois and her colleagues define this concept as the action of speaking slowly, with vocabulary, tone, intensity and volume adjusted so the other person can comprehend the message (as cited in Maude, 2016).

³ For instance, Australia, USA, or the UK speak English, yet they all have their own specific vocabulary and accents.

2.3.3. Cultural models

Being cultures so unique, complex and so distinct from one another, it is impossible to learn and assimilate all of the existing cultures. However, throughout the years, researchers have studied cultures and, to a certain extent, tried to categorize and measure them. Edward Hall, Geert Hofstede, and Alfons Trompenaars are three of those researchers who dedicated their work to the study of cultures and, ultimately, created cultural models.

Holland and Quinn (as cited in Feurt, 2006) define cultural model as shared perceptions and attitudes on how the world functions. People use it to better understand unfamiliar information and then to guide their behaviour and decision-making process. Quinn (2005) states that cultural models are a set of building blocks called schemas, which may include images or prepositions. It also may include story-like chains of schema to provide an understanding about complex events. For instance, a lower level schema can be starting the car or grabbing a coffee. These are building blocks of the cultural model of going to work in the morning (as cited in Feurt, 2005).

Hofstede cultural model is commonly used today by academics and professionals due to its simplicity and comparability that a quantitative measure admits (Reis, Ferreira, & Santos, 2011). In 1980, Hofstede published a book called “Culture’s Consequence”, where he presented his research on national cultures. The author, who worked at IBM, made a survey and measured the cultural values of IBM employees in 40 countries. As a result, he found four basic cultural dimensions, which are characteristics of a culture that can be measured and then compared to another culture. Later, two other dimensions were added to the Hofstede cultural model (Hofstede, 2011).

Therefore, the cultural model of Hofstede has now six dimensions (Hofstede, 2011): Power Distance that relates to the distinct solutions that people find for their problem of inequality; Uncertainty Avoidance, which concerns the stress level of a society towards an unknown future; Individualism versus Collectivism that relates to the degree of integration of people into primary groups. Masculinity versus Femininity, referring to the distribution of roles between genders; Long Term versus Short Term Orientation, which concerns people focus on the future or the present and past; Indulgence versus Restraint is related to the gratification or control of basic human desires.

Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1997) built their cultural model based on how people find solutions for certain problems that may arise in their daily life, which includes business. “It is convenient to look at these problems under three headings: those which arise from our relationships with other people; those which come from the passage of time; and those which relate to the environment” (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 1997, p.8).

Therefore, this cultural model consists of seven dimensions (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 1997): Universalism versus Particularism relates to the way people judge other people’s behaviour as members of society; Individualism versus Communitarianism defines how people relates to others; Affective versus Neutral concerns the role of reason and emotions in people relationships; Specific versus diffuse relates to how people manage their public and private lives; Achievement versus Ascription defines the way cultures deals with accomplishments; Time dimension is related to people’s perception of the past, present, and future and also how people manage their time; Nature is the dimension that concerns the importance people give to their natural surroundings.

The cultural model of high and low context was created by Edward Hall in 1976 (Hall & Hall, 1990). The anthropologist and cross-cultural researcher and his work “The Silent Language” are considered the founders of Intercultural Communication. In the early 50’s, Hall and other scholars embraced this field and created what is now considered as the original paradigm for Intercultural Communication, while working at the Foreign Service Institute of the U.S. Department of States. Hall’s main influences are cultural anthropology, linguistics, ethnology (the study of animal behaviour), and the Freudian psychoanalytic theory, as he defines in his work “An Anthropology of Everyday Life” (Rogers, Hart, & Miike, 2002). Therefore, I believe that this cultural model is the most suitable for the context of this internship report. It will help to understand the intercultural encounters witnessed during my internship. For this reason, Hall’s cultural model will be discussed in a deeper way, compared to the others.

To Hall, each culture “operates according to its own internal dynamic, its own principles, and its own laws – written and unwritten. Even time and space are unique to each culture. There are, however, some common threads that run through all cultures” (Hall & Hall, 1990, p. 3). Therefore, the author developed the concepts of High and Low context. In his perspective, context is the information surrounding a certain event and that is

inseparable from the meaning of it. As for the High Context, Hall (1976) says that it relates to a message or communication where “most of the information is already in the person, while very little is in the coded, explicit, transmitted part of the message” (as cited in Hall & Hall, 1990, p. 6). For instance, Japanese and Mediterranean people have large networks of friends, family and colleagues, who are involved in the major parts of a person’s life. Consequently, they keep themselves informed and do not need, nor expect, a lot of background information (Hall & Hall, 1990). On the other hand, a Low Context communication is the exact reverse of High Context communication. It means that the information is assigned to the language. Low Context countries are Germany, Switzerland, and Scandinavian countries, where people separate the different areas of their lives. As a result, they need, and expect, detailed background information in their interactions (Hall & Hall, 1990).

How space and time relates to culture were also subjects targeted by the attention of Hall. Even though space and time are used by people in a natural and intuitive way, they are heavily influenced by culture. Through the study of proxemics, which is how space affects communication (Rogers, Hart, & Miike, 2002). Hall was able to show how intercultural interaction can be influenced by space. For instance, people from different cultures have different notions of territoriality. Territoriality refers to the way people use space to establish ownership of areas or possessions. Americans tend to feel very possessive of places – a kitchen or a bedroom -, while Germans tend to extend this feeling to things, such as a car (Hall & Hall, 1990).

Moreover, space also works as power. In German and American cultures is normal for the high-ranking official and executives to have their offices in the top floors. On the contrary, French officials tend to be in the middle, where they stay informed of everything and control the events. Personal space also falls into this category. Hall & Hall (1990) define personal space as a bubble that contracts and expands depending on aspects such as cultural background, the relationship to the person close by, or the emotional state. In Northern Europe, people tend to have bigger bubbles and keep a certain distance. In Italy, Greece, and Spain, the bubbles tend to be smaller and people keep a smaller distance between them.

Time is regarded very differently by people with distinct cultural backgrounds. Hall & Hall (1990, p.13) explain this by saying that “human concepts of time grew out of the

natural rhythms associated with daily, monthly, and annual cycles. From the beginning humans have been tied to growing seasons and were dependent on the forces and rhythms of nature”. Thus, among all the different time systems existing in international business, Hall & Hall (1990) identified two important systems: monochronic and polychronic time. Monochronic time, which can be associated to low context cultures, relates to paying attention to one thing at a time. In monochronic cultures, such as in Switzerland, Germany, and Scandinavia, people tend to experience time linearly and divide it into segments. As a result, schedules can be a priority and be treated as sacred. On the opposite side is the polychronic culture. It is characterized by doing many things at the same time and it also can be related to high context cultures. In countries such as in the Mediterranean, it can be normal for two people to be in a conversation and getting late for other appointments because they do not wish to end the conversation until it ends naturally (Hall & Hall, 1990).

Even though these researchers have created great works in the field of Intercultural Communication and opened doors for it to be broadly studied, we cannot forget that the cultural models here presented cannot function as rules to be blindly followed. In fact, there are too many factors influencing people’s behaviour, and these cultural models focus on a country level, to a more or lesser extent.

In a business context, cultural models are a helpful guide to help people navigate across intercultural encounters and, thus, improve communication between the individuals involved. However, there is another factor to take into serious consideration in an international business context: language. It is the main tool used by people to communicate and it is essential for daily business life. So, when there is linguistic differences, it can be a challenge to manage the different languages and the different cultures. Thus, in the next section, it will be discussed the relation between language and culture, its role in business, and possible solutions that a company can use in case of linguistic challenges.

2.4. Importance of language in an intercultural business environment

Language is defined by Edward Sapir (1921) as a human and acquired way to convey ideas, emotions, and desires through a system of symbols. Language is a system of conventions, in other words, it exists through the common practice by those who use the language. These conventions can be a word, a letter from the alphabet or even a pause.

Alone, they only have the potential to show their instant meaning, but when used together, they transmit greater meanings (Amberg & Vause, 2010).

In fact, language is tangled with something much deeper. At the same time that we use a language, we are also communicating our thoughts and our cultural background, even if unintentionally (Amberg & Vause, 2010). If we take a closer look at a language, we will find words and expressions so unique that could not be translated exactly into other languages. The Portuguese word 'saudade' is a great example. Some define it as a "Portuguese only" word. It refers to a nostalgic or melancholic desire for something or someone that is gone (Observador, 2017). Yet, it does not mean that this feeling does not exist in the other cultures. It might only mean that it was such a frequent feeling throughout the Portuguese history that people felt the necessity to give it a name.

According to the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, language plays an important role in the modelling of our thoughts and perceptions. It means that "every human being views the world by his own native language" (Mahadi & Jafari, 2012, p.232). For instance, the Sami people, living in the northern of Scandinavia and Russia, have 180 words for snow and ice. As Willem de Reuse states "these people need to know whether ice is fit to walk on or whether you will sink through it" (as cited in Robson, 2013).

Therefore, it is possible to see why language has such an important role in human lives, and how it can be critical in an intercultural context. In business, language is a main tool used for decision making processes and the management of resources, internal among employees or external with clients. As companies become more international, the ability to handle different contexts and environments becomes increasingly necessary. That is, organizations operating abroad will certainly be interacting with different government agencies, institutions, and new languages, among other factors (Brannen, Piekkari, & Tietze, 2014).

A report carried out by the Economist Intelligence Unit showed that 49% of 572 senior executives interviewed consider that problems with communication have damaged international deals, which resulted in serious losses for their companies. The report continues to argue that 64% of the executives think that cultural and linguistic obstacles have affected the access to foreign markets. Almost all of them believe that profits, revenue, a market shares would see a significant improvement if their companies invested

in the improvement of cross-border communication (The Boston Language Institute, 2012).

Thus, how should companies manage multilingual environments and avoid major problems? According to Feely & Harzing (2002), the first step is to evaluate the language problem through three dimensions: Language Diversity, which relates to the number of languages used in the organization; Language Penetration, which concerns the number of functions that the company has to manage across the linguistic boundaries; and Language Sophistication, which is related to the knowledge of the language skills needed.

Then, after finding and analysing the language problem, learning about the consequences caused by that problem, and knowing the resources available, the company can study and chose a solution from a range of linguistic strategies. Feely and Harzing (2002) organized a list of 11 common solutions for language problems and below I am referring to the most relevant ones for my analysis in Chapter IV:

- **Lingua Franca** – this linguistic strategy is the simplest and it relies on the idea of “one language fits all”, which in this case is English. However, this idea can be fatally weak. It does not take into consideration the growing trend of Linguistic Nationalism and it does not recognize other languages, such as Spanish, Arabic and Chinese as competition for the place as lingua franca. Additionally, in a negotiation situation, the total reliance on one language can be dangerous. Normally, documentation such as contracts or legislation are written in the local language which represents a great disadvantage for the English speaker.
- **Functional Multilingualism** – in this case, communication is made through a mix of languages, pidgins, gestures and other means available. It may be considered as a support for the bonding process as it include moments of absurdity and laughter. However, it shares the downsides as lingua franca and it can increase the divergence between those involved in the communication process.
- **External Language Resources** – this is considered to be a more rational response because it involves the hiring of translators and interpreters. Still, it does not mean that the language barrier will disappear. These kind of services can be expensive and the professional might require full knowledge of the context, which can be difficult to the confidentiality or complexity of the subject. Additionally, even if the translator or the interpreter is very good, there will be a loss in the rhetorical

power, which is fundamental in situations requiring persuasion, humour, among others.

- Training – the fourth linguistic strategy relates to the investment in the personnel development through courses of languages. It is reliable if the company intends to be committed to support the investment. However, this strategy is highly dependent on the economic cycle. If the company's situation is good, the investment is made, otherwise it will not be made.
- Corporate Language – this option requires the adoption of one single corporate language. It facilitates the elaboration of formal documentation and the access, and update, to technical literature and information systems, it fosters a feeling of belonging in the corporate culture, and it manages the linguistic problems. However, sometimes companies are not able to choose just one language for all situations and it is also likely to exist resistance in adopting one single corporate language by the personnel lacking the linguistic skills.
- Machine Translation – This solution does not rely on the language skills of people but on the ability of technology to solve the existing language problems. Machine translation exists for quite some time – 40 years – and it recognizes the source language and it generates a translation of the intended message in the target language. In fact, it is a mature and widely used tool, but it rises serious concerns about the quality of the translations.

None of this solutions here presented can be considered as 100% effective. Feely & Harzing (2002) argue that all of the linguistic strategies have their advantages and disadvantages and that none of these should be considered as a cure-all. They also suggest to analyse and understand well the existing language problem and to mix and match many of the options of their list in order to create a customized solution that fits the situation.

Communication assumes a crucial part of our lives as it allows us to create relationships with others. We have at our disposal many tools to accomplish that communication, but there are factors that may interfere somehow. Culture is what shapes our way of talking, behaving, and even seeing the world. It is present in our language, in our daily activities and we may not be always aware of it. Some people only learn about how different cultures can be when meeting someone from a distinct cultural background. This happens because when communication is established between people with the same culture, it is not expected to find many barriers, which may arise when those people come from

different cultures. In intercultural business encounters, communication may decide if a project is a success or a complete failure. That is exactly what I was able to experience during my internship at Arts & Skills. From the monitoring and orientation of Erasmus+ groups to a meeting of a transnational project, effective intercultural communication and language management was always essential.

Chapter III – Internship at Arts & Skills

3.1. Brief description of why, how, and when

There are two main reasons why I chose to carry out this experience. First, there is the wish for professional experience. Personally, I believe that an internship adds a great value to the professional life of an individual who wishes to enter the labour market. By having a real work experience in an organization, a student has the chance to combine all the theoretical knowledge acquired during the academic years with the practical challenges presented by a working environment. The second reason why I carried out this work is my curiosity regarding the encounters among people from different cultures. In fact, this curiosity started during my experience as an Erasmus+ participant during the bachelor degree. I went to Poland to complete a semester and many of the challenges presented to me were related to the interaction with people who were not Portuguese.

Therefore, as a final work for the Master Intercultural Studies for Business I wanted to combine the chance of having a real working experience with the intercultural environment that Erasmus+ Programme can provide and, consequently, explore it. With this purpose in mind, I had to look for an organization working with Erasmus+ projects where I could carry out my internship.

The Portuguese city of Guimarães is becoming an increasingly popular city, not only among the Portuguese people who wish to spend the day or even the weekend in the city, but also among tourists from everywhere wanting to spend their vacations exploring the historical Portuguese city. However, the city is not just appealing to the tourists. Guimarães is also a breeding ground for companies and its activities, which is a great added value. For instance, the industrial zone “AvePark” accommodates many technological companies and Research & Innovation centres. Additionally, there is a university close to the historical centre and another in a small city nearby, which certainly brings many interesting projects to the local community.

In order to find an organization involved with Erasmus+ activities, I browsed the internet to list possible suitable hosting institutions. Around the end of September 2017 or the beginning of October 2017, I decided to go to the companies to hand over my curriculum and to discuss the possibility of an internship. Interestingly, Arts & Skills was the first and only company I visited. I went to their office with my CV and presented myself as a master's student in Intercultural Studies for Business in ISCAP looking for a curricular internship in the field of European mobility. The members of the Arts and Skills' team

present at the time took a look at my CV and immediately commented on my experience as an Erasmus+ participant during the bachelor degree. The topic was discussed for a while and it culminated in their activity in the field of international mobility. The company was working with Erasmus+ projects, more specifically, Erasmus+: Vocational Education and Training (VET). In fact, the Arts & Skills team was looking for help due to the great number of incoming Erasmus+ trainees to be hosted by local companies between February and June and revealed interested in having me as an intern.

After this introductory meeting, the Arts & Skills team contacted me by email to say that they approved my internship at their company. Thus, the necessary bureaucratic work was prepared and in mid-February the internship began.

3.2. Presentation of the hosting institution

Arts & Skills is an organization working in the fields of professional training, consultancy, and international mobility. Counting on a team of four people, Arts & Skills develops projects with the main goal of providing the best tools to its clients in order to evolve and persuade their own goals, both professional and personal. Above all, Arts & Skills seeks to create human value as an instrument of personal and professional development. For this purpose, the organization develops its activities based on the values of excellence, loyalty, ethics, quality and sustainability (“Arts & Skills: Apresentação”, n.d.)⁴.

This institution was created in September 2014 by a group of 4 women specialized in the field of professional training and consultancy. The group met while working at another similar institution and has been working together ever since. At a certain point, the group of co-workers and friends decided to come together and create their own business in the field of professional training and consultancy. After a while, thanks to another activity developed by one of the members of Arts & Skills team, they decided to embrace the opportunity of working with European mobility projects, more specifically Erasmus+. Thus, in the beginning of 2016, Arts & Skills created another department for the development of Erasmus+ projects, mainly related to Vocational Education and Training.

Nowadays, the institution Arts & Skills continues to be managed by the founding team of 4 women, as a micro enterprise. It is divided into 3 different departments – professional

⁴ Available in the Arts & Skills’ website: http://www.artsandskills.pt/arts_&_skills.html

training, consultancy, and European mobility - where all team members collaborate with their specific area of expertise.

In the department of professional training, Arts & Skills intends to assist and support organizations and its collaborators, and also individuals by offering high quality professional training. This professional training can be developed according specifically to the needs of the clients, which usually is an organization seeking for professional training in a specific field for its collaborators. Otherwise, the programme for the professional training is created by Arts & Skills according to the requirements of the current labour market. In this case, individuals can take part on the training.

As far as the consultancy department is concerned, Arts & Skills aims to provide a wide set of services and solutions for the clients. The goal is to contribute to the evolution of organizations and to support their continuous progress. Among the services and solutions provided by Arts & Skills in the area of consultancy there are the creation and development of IT platforms, creation and improvement of the corporate image of organizations, or interventions in several management areas such as human resources, logistics, and quality management, among others.

Arts & Skills also provides mobility opportunities in Portugal under the programme Erasmus+ to European students. In order to offer those opportunities, this institution works as an intermediary organization with other European entities. The team believes in the great value the mobility experiences can add to all of those involved. As Arts & Skills state “we believe in the mobility of people as a generator of progress, innovation, creativity and competitiveness” (“Mobilidade na UE”, n.d.)⁵.

As an intermediary organization, Arts & Skills has the skills and the abilities to assist in Erasmus+ mobility projects. The organization takes care of administrative procedures, logistics and the follow-up of the participants during their time in Guimarães. In other words, the intermediary organization establishes and maintains contact with the Sending Organization and the Receiving Organization, is responsible for the project documentation management, and it is also responsible for the booking of the accommodation of the incoming mobility participants and for their evaluation. As an

⁵ Available in the Arts & Skills' website: http://www.artsandskills.pt/mobilidade_na_ue.html

intermediary organization, Arts & Skills also issues the necessary certifications proving the attendance and achievements of the mobility period in Guimarães.

In addition, the department of European Mobility is also collaborating in the KA2⁶ project – IntoQuality – which was created by 6 European organizations related to the VET mobility. It has the goal of developing tools to assist intermediary organizations in the mobility projects and, thus, create a common level of quality in the services provided by these organizations.

Since Arts & Skills started their activity in international mobility, the number of projects related to Erasmus+ VET has been increasing every year. In the first year, the company received 20 VET trainees. The following year the number increased to 57. This year, Arts & Skills helped 94 VET trainees finding receiving organizations for their internships in Guimarães' city and assisted during the entire mobility process. In 2019, the company expects to receive more than 130 VET trainees.

3.3. Main internship activities

The internship carried out at Arts & Skills took place between 21st of February 2018 and the 16th of June 2018. With a workload of around 25 hours per week, I had the opportunity to observe, accompany and assist the Arts & Skills team throughout their activities at the company, more specifically those related to the Department of European Mobility.

Several weeks before the internship at Arts & Skills began, the company designed a Training Plan⁷. The activities carried out during the period of internship can be divided into three main groups.

- The monitoring and orientation of the international mobility projects: assisting and monitoring the students during key moments of their mobility period, that is, the Welcome Day, which is defined later; the integration in the Receiving Company on their first day of internship; follow-up of the mobility participants internship through emails and intermediate visits; evaluation of the internship and

⁶ As it was discussed in Chapter I, the activities developed under Key Action 2 (KA2) aim to facilitate the cooperation among organizations for the improvement of their services for students, including sharing of innovative practices (Erasmus+: Creating Opportunities for the UK across Europe, n.d.).

⁷ Training Plan available in Annex I.

the gathering of the respective documents and the organization of a final meeting with the mobility participants for the delivery of certifications.

- The organization and accompanying of two important events – the disclosure event of the Erasmus+ programme which occurred in March 2018 and the 4th reunion for the IntoQuality project, which occurred in April 2018.
- Administrative tasks at the office such as the creation of documents and other content in English and the accompanying of the preparation for the audit within the framework of the IntoQuality project.

3.3.1. Monitoring and orientation of mobility projects

As mentioned previously in Chapter I, the mobility projects aim to give its participants the opportunity to develop social, professional and intercultural competences and skills. In order for the participants to make the most out of such experience, the mobility projects must be well planned and organized.

Every project I have been involved in was related to VET students coming to carry out their internships in receiving organizations in Guimarães. Every project had the duration of 4/5 weeks. According to the European Commission (2017a) and according to what I could observe and participate in during my internship at Arts & Skills, a mobility project is organized as follows:

- Preparatory Visits – Whenever a Sending Organization is interested in sending participants to that region or city, usually for the first time, the Intermediary Organization, in this case Arts & Skills organizes the visit from the representatives of the Sending Organization to Guimarães. During this visit, all questions and details regarding the whole process involving the mobility should be clarified.
- Preparation stage – The Sending Organization selects the participants for the mobility experience, sets up agreements and contracts with partners, as the Intermediary Organization, and ensures the necessary arrangements, including flights. Additionally, there is a linguistic and intercultural preparation of the participants before the departure. When it comes to the Intermediary Organization, it is essential to have access to the Learning Agreements and/or CV's of the mobility participants in order to be able to match them with the

Receiving Organizations. If the case, the Intermediary Organization must book the accommodation before the arrival of the mobility participants.

- Implementation stage – This is the stage where participants go abroad for their internships at the Receiving Organizations. It begins when the mobility participants arrive to the host country and ends when they return to their home country.
- Follow-up stage – After the return of the mobility participants to their home country, there is an evaluation of the activities carried out at the Receiving Organization, the formal recognition of the learning outcomes (when it is applicable), and also the dissemination of the results of the projects outcomes.

During my internship at Arts & Skills, I was able to assist the different stages of the mobility projects. When it comes to the visits before the mobility, this particular Intermediary Organization organizes the whole visit so the representatives from the Sending Organization can visit the city and the companies that could be the Receiving Organizations. After the visit, Arts & Skills sends a budget, and, upon approval, the mobility project begins.

Therefore, the first stage is the preparation. While the Sending Organization has the task of selecting the participants⁸ and the accompanying teachers, if applicable, the Intermediary Organization has the responsibility of analysing the profiles and/or the CV's of the participants in order to match them with suitable Receiving Organizations. Arts & Skills, then, establishes contact with the chosen companies as Receiving Organizations to create a plan for the internships, including the tasks, working hours, and so on. Finally, the Intermediary Organization gathers all the necessary documentation for the internships, such as the insurance, criminal record and learning agreement, searches for a suitable accommodation for the in-coming group of VET students and makes the reservation.

After all the arrangements of the preparation stage being ready, it is time to begin the mobility stage. As an intermediary organization, this stage might be the most important since it monitors and tutors the groups while they are in Guimarães. Thus, during the first days there are two relevant activities. The first is the Welcome Day, which is a day

⁸ If the Sending Organization also works as an Applicant Organization, it also has the task of establishing the mobility project and it has the responsibility of monitoring throughout the entire process.

organized for the welcoming of the Erasmus+ group where they participate in a language training and in a tour around the city. The second activity is the presentation of the VET trainees at the Receiving Organizations. During this activity, Arts & Skills accompanies each trainee, from their accommodation (or other location indicated previously) to the facilities of the training placement. Upon the arrival, there is a meeting with Arts & Skills team, the accompanying teacher, if the case, the trainee and the person responsible for the Receiving Organization.

Arts & Skills maintains constant contact with all of the parties involved in the mobility project. Additionally, the Intermediary Organization organizes intermediate visits to the participants' placements of internship to check the evolution of each trainee and to clarify any question that may have arisen. When the mobility stage is almost over, there is a final meeting with the team of Arts & Skills, the trainee and the tutor from the Receiving Organization where it is discussed the overall experience and to evaluate the trainee by filling in the evaluation forms. Finally, Arts & Skills ensures that all of the arrangements for the participants' departure are ready and delivers certificates of participation as well as any other relevant documents.

The next few sections will discuss in more detail the tasks carried out during my internship.

3.3.1.1. Preparatory visits

As described previously, the visits before the mobility occur whenever a Sending Organization is interested in creating a mobility project in Guimarães through the intermediary organization, Arts & Skills. The Sending Organization, usually a VET school, sends teachers from a specific area of training as representatives. During this visit, the teachers aim to discuss all of the details and arrangements attached to the several stages of a mobility project and to visit companies of their area of training, suggested by Arts & Skills, and thus decide if those are suitable options for the internships of their students. In case of this Intermediary Organization, it is standard to include visits to accommodation facilities already familiar with groups of Erasmus students⁹.

Subsequently, Arts & Skills will send a budget proposal to the Sending Organization, with a full description of the services provided during the entire mobility project. In case

⁹ The example of one preparatory visit is available in Annex II.

of approval, the necessary documentation to the Sending Organization is sent, thus starting the mobility project. In case of a Sending Organization that has previously worked with Arts & Skills, it will send a request for a budget, usually with no preparatory visits.

During my internship period, I was able to assist and participate in two preparatory visits. Both visits were with groups of teachers from VET schools, one from Italy and the other from Iceland.

The first group of teachers was from an Italian VET school in the area of architecture, graphic design and fashion design. At the time of the visit, Arts & Skills had a lot of work in hands due to the many Erasmus+ groups present in Guimarães. Thus, an element from Arts & Skills team and I went to meet the group of Italian teachers on their first day at the city.

Since I was the one able to speak English, I was responsible for the communication and the simultaneous interpretation during the first meeting. When the group of teachers arrived in Guimarães' city, the first activity was a meeting at Arts & Skills office in order to discuss how a mobility project works and the role of the Intermediary Organization during the entire process.

This visit lasted for 2 days and the group was able to see companies of architecture and graphic design as well as a studio of a fashion designer. During the majority of the visit, the Italian group went to meetings in local companies of their area of interest. For the rest of the time, Arts & Skills planned meetings at accommodation facilities where the teachers could see the facilities and have a meeting with the owners to discuss the possibility of receiving their students. Fortunately, this visit went really well and the group of teachers seemed to have left Guimarães with great interest in a mobility project.

The second group of teachers was from a VET school in Iceland. Their field of training was beauty, hairstylist and fashion. This visit before mobility also took 2 days and had the same goals as the previous one from Italy: to visit companies from their field of training and evaluate if they were suitable to be Receiving Organizations for their trainees and to clarify any doubt about the whole mobility process clarified.

As I described previously, this type of visits usually happens when it is the first time that a certain Sending Organization is interested in sending students to a certain region or city.

This group of teachers is an exception. Earlier this year, this particular VET school had already sent a student to Guimarães for an internship at a studio of a fashion designer.

Similarly to the group from Italy, during the first day, the teachers had the opportunity to visit companies from their field of training as well as accommodation facilities. This visit ended up to be a success because weeks later, the school initiated a mobility project with Arts & Skills.

3.3.1.2. Welcome day

Arts & Skills organizes the welcoming activity “Welcome Day” for the incoming trainees. This is a whole day activity, starting in the morning with the pick up of the trainees at the accommodation placement by members from the Arts & Skills team. They are then accompanied to the venue of the event, which is a location that offers training rooms appropriated to receive training activities. From 9am to 1pm, the group participates in language training. In the case of trainees from the French Community of Belgium, the language activity is carried out in French. In any other case, the language activity is in English. This language training is given by a qualified and experienced teacher who adapts the programme of the training to each group, always keeping in mind the daily needs they may have and the specific expressions and vocabulary for their field of training.

After the language training, the group is taken to lunch at a local restaurant and then the Arts & Skills staff and teacher take the participants to a tour visit around Guimarães to show the most important cultural places and also the key-places such as the hospital, the police station, or the supermarkets.

Throughout the first “Welcome Days” I would only observe and assist whenever was necessary. As time went by, more responsibilities were given to me. As a result, I was able to monitor “Welcome Days” without major difficulties (besides speaking in French).

3.3.1.3. Presentation of the VET trainees at the receiving organizations

The day after the “Welcome Day”, the trainees have their first day at the Receiving Organizations. Beforehand, Arts & Skills negotiates the schedule for the meeting at the facilities of the Receiving Organization. Thus, members from Arts & Skills meet the trainees at their accommodation facility and accompany them, whether by foot, train or

bus. During the meeting, the person responsible for the internship at the Receiving Organization carries out an induction session¹⁰, which includes a tour around the facilities, the presentation of co-workers and the negotiation of working hours and specific working clothes, when applicable.

During the first couple of presentations at the Receiving Organizations, I would only observe and assist the Arts & Skills team. Then, I was able to go alone and meet the trainees at their accommodation location (or any other indicated by the Arts & Skills team) and accompany them to the Receiving Organizations.

Similarly to what happened in the first “Welcome Days”, during the first presentations of the Erasmus+ trainees at the Receiving Organizations I would only observe and assist whenever was necessary. Then, the Arts & Skills team decided to give me more responsibilities.

The first group of trainees that I supervised and accompanied alone to a presentation, was in the beginning of March. My responsibility was to meet two trainees from Belgium at the bus station and take the bus with them to the facilities of their training placements. During the time of the trip, I explained how the public transportation worked in Guimarães, how long the trip would take and what was going to happen in their presentation at the Receiving Organization. At the same time, I had to make sure that the trainees paid enough attention to the route we were doing so they would be able to do it by themselves. When we arrived to the facilities of the Receiving Organization, the teacher who was accompanying the trainees and the second member of Arts & Skills team were already there. We proceeded to the presentation of the trainees and to the induction session.

3.3.1.4. Intermediate visits, final evaluations, and final meetings

For the mobility projects to be successful there is still some important moments during the mobility period. After the Welcome Day and the presentation of the trainees at the Receiving Organizations, Arts & Skills guarantees regular contact with all parties involved, especially the Erasmus+ trainees. The normal duration of an Erasmus+ internship in Guimarães is 4/5 weeks. So in the early days, it is important to know if the

¹⁰ An induction session or training is provided to a new employee in order to assist in the adjustment to the new company, job and even co-workers. Usually, the induction session outlines the main activity and services provided as well as the role of the new employee. (Business Dictionary, n.d.).

student and the chosen Receiving Organization are a good match. If there is any problem and any of the parties wants to change, Arts & Skills must find another suitable option, without compromising the overall internship of the trainee.

During this stage, communication with the students is fundamental. There have been cases in which students expressed, in the very first days, the wish or need to change the internship placement. The most frequent cases were trainees from the area of beauty care, which is a challenging area. First, there is no way of controlling the number of clients in the beauty establishments. There are months with a lot of work and there are months without great workload. Then, there is the trainees' difficulty of practicing the treatments they are learning since customers frequently show apprehension in receiving a treatment by someone who is still learning and do not speak Portuguese.

Another reason for the changes regarding training placements is the adaptation to a specific work environment. The last Erasmus+ group present in Guimarães were 2 beauty care students from Iceland. The Sending Organization decided that for this mobility project, Arts & Skills should select 2 suitable Receiving Organizations, yet with different activities for the mobility period of 4 weeks. Each student would choose a training placement and after two weeks they would change places. In the second day of their stay in Guimarães, one of the students told Arts & Skills that she would like to change the training placement because she felt that she would not adapt to that work environment since there was an enormous linguistic barrier. Only after a personal meeting with both students Arts & Skills realized the students wanted to be together the entire time. For this and many other reasons, it is important to maintain regular contact with all of the parties involved in the project. Thus, weekly, or in the middle of the mobility period, intermediate visits to the Receiving Organizations are made. The goal is to know if the trainee is well adjusted and adapted to the working environment, to check if there are any problems or issues to be resolved and to check the trainees' evolution regarding the learning outcomes established previously in the Learning Agreement.

In the final days of the mobility period in Guimarães, another meeting at the Receiving Organization is scheduled. This time is for the Arts & Skills team to reunite with the trainee and the tutor at the Receiving Organization in order to discuss the whole experience and to evaluate the trainees' achievements.

Usually, during these meetings it is discussed if the trainees' had a good adaptation, not only to the tasks but also to the working environment and if, by any chance, there was a problem.

As a final event of the mobility period in Guimarães, Arts & Skills meets with the Erasmus+ groups to the delivery of participation certificates and any other relevant documents. During this stage, the trainees are usually very happy with the experience and they are very grateful to Arts & Skills for their monitoring and help provided during their period in Guimarães. Usually, they also mention the experience to be rewarding since they had the opportunity of getting to know a different country, culture and new working techniques in their area of training.

3.3.2. Organization and monitoring of Erasmus+ events

The development of mobility projects means that Arts & Skills also participates in other activities related to Erasmus+. In the course of my internship, there were 2 important events organized by the Intermediary Organization. The first happened in March 2018 and was an event concerning the successful collaboration between Arts & Skills and the Centre de Coördination et de Gestion des Programmes Européens – CCGPE, in Belgium. The second event was in April 2018 and was the fourth meeting of the KA2 project – IntoQuality.

3.3.2.1. Erasmus+ dissemination event

Arts & Skills and CCGPE have been working in common mobility projects for quite some time, and this year's event happened to disseminate the results of the many projects developed in Guimarães. The event in late March 2018 intended to make companies and the general public aware of the Erasmus+ programme that works with VET students and the value that such experience can add to all involved. Such events are essential for the Erasmus+ since "they give participating organisations the opportunity to communicate and share outcomes and deliverables, thus extending the impact of their projects, improving their sustainability and justifying the European added value of Erasmus+" (European Commission, 2017a, p.7).

My role during the organization phase of the event was to assist Arts & Skills team from the first meeting to the preparation of the venue and the creation of the guests list. However, the greatest challenge for me was on the day of the event as I was welcoming

the guests and assisting the service of simultaneous interpretation. Once the guest arrived at the venue, I would ask for their names and ask if they needed a simultaneous interpretation device, since it was an event in Portuguese and in French.

At the time of the event, the majority of the Erasmus+ VET trainees of this year were present in Guimarães and all of them were invited. They were asked to arrive a little earlier in order to avoid chaos at the entrance of the venue. Thus, 20 minutes before the start of the event, the Erasmus+ participants started to arrive and the Arts & Skills team and I received them and gave them the simultaneous interpretation devices. This period of time was the most critical since at one point there were many Erasmus+ groups at the entrance and I was the only one who could say a few words in French¹¹ and only a few VET trainees could understand a little bit of English. Even though we all tried to keep things organized with so many young Erasmus+ trainees, there was a great language barrier which caused some chaos for a couple of minutes. In the end, there was not any other difficulty and the event was a success.

3.3.2.2. Fourth project meeting – IntoQuality

This is an event of two days and is the fourth meeting of 6 partners, within the project IntoQuality. Before continuing with the description of this second event, it is important to know and understand some of the context behind this transnational project.

IntoQuality is a KA2 project¹², co-funded by the Erasmus+ programme of the European Union, where six partner organizations from 6 different European countries work together to develop tools for the improvement of VET mobility projects¹³. “The overall aim of the IntoQuality project is to create a more favourable environment for youth exchange and mobility programmes in the field of IVET¹⁴” (IntoQuality, n.d.)¹⁵.

¹¹ Usually, the Erasmus participants from Belgium cannot speak English or they are not comfortable in doing so.

¹² As it was discussed in Chapter I, the activities developed under Key Action 2 (KA2) aim to facilitate the cooperation among organizations for the improvement of their services for students, including sharing of innovative practices (Erasmus+: Creating Opportunities for the UK across Europe, n.d.).

¹³ Consultation of the Annex III for more information.

¹⁴ IVET stands for Initial Vocational Education and Training, which combines the school based education with the company based training (European Commission, 2017a, p.314).

¹⁵ Available in the IntoQuality’s website: <https://intoquality.eu/article/details/3>

At this moment, IntoQuality (n.d.)¹⁶ is working on two intellectual outputs and on the establishment of an association called “European Association of Quality Intermediary Organisations in Mobility”:

- The first intellectual output in progress is the Quality Assurance System (QAS) for VET Mobility Intermediary Organizations, which aims to assist in the assessment and visibility of the quality of services and practices of the Intermediary Organizations related to the mobility of VET students;
- The second intellectual output concerns an Interactive Monitoring Application for those involved in VET mobility projects, which aims to improve the evaluation of the trainees and the overall mobility experience;
- The association will be established to build a definition of quality in this field and to ensure the value of money invested in these mobility projects.

Since the end of 2016, the six partners have been meeting in one of their countries to discuss matters related to the goals of the project, plan the work for the intellectual output and the association and to check the progress made. This year, Guimarães was chosen to host the transnational meeting. Arts & Skills was in charge of the organization of the two day event, including the venue, catering and even to advise on suitable accommodations around the city. As I will discuss further, I was not very involved during the phase of preparation of the event, however, I was being prepared for what would be discussed during the meeting.

At the day of the event, I had the opportunity of meeting the representatives of the six partner organizations on the origin of the IntoQuality project. Among them were other Intermediary Organizations from Germany, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, and Italy.

At the beginning of the first day meeting, the first topics discussed were the progress made since the last meeting and the difficulty of completing some of the tasks proposed. One of those tasks is to complete the QAS (Quality Assurance System for VET Mobility Intermediary Organizations) and to gather all the evidence necessary for an audit. Despite of these six organisations being the founders of the IntoQuality project, they must complete the QAS and test the quality of their own services and practices, in order to establish the example as Intermediary Organizations. All of the partners’ representatives

¹⁶ Available in in the IntoQuality’s website: <https://intoquality.eu/article/details/3>

agreed that QAS is a very time consuming process and they decided to postpone the due date for this particular task. Thus, the QAS and its evidences needed to be ready until the end of June 2018, which allowed me to participate in the project.

As mentioned previously, the IntoQuality project is developing an App for the improvement of the mobility experience, and the group chose this event to test it with mobility participants currently in Guimarães. Thus, the afternoon of the first day, five trainees and two accompanying teachers from Belgium went to the meeting's venue. There, they had access to the app and were able to navigate through it in order to respond to some questions and to give their opinion. The responses from the teachers and the students were very different because of their interests – the teachers wanted the app to have more storage so they could share documentation and tools, and the students wanted the app to be more social where they could contact anyone doing Erasmus+ in the same city. However, not every student was able to express their opinion as they wanted.

During the second day, the meeting was not as intense and full of work as the first day. The goals for this fourth meeting were almost completed and it was necessary to establish the next meeting and its goals.

3.3.3. Office work

Even though the relevant part of the work performed by the European Mobility department of Arts & Skills is performed on the field, nothing can happen without previous preparation and monitoring. The majority of the preparation work of the mobility projects is developed months prior to the arrival of the Erasmus participants. Unfortunately, I could not be involved in this stage because my internship started at the same time as the arrival of the first Erasmus group to Guimarães.

Nonetheless, it is clear that the most important part of the job carried out by the Intermediary Organization is the monitoring and tutoring of the trainees. For that reason, there were days that we would not go to the office, only if it was necessary to prepare documents and such for the Erasmus+ groups. Still, the Arts & Skills team could not neglect the office work. Thus, one member was continuously working in the office, while the other members took care of the Erasmus+ projects. Before the arrival of the Erasmus+ groups in Guimarães, there were many arrangements to be prepared, especially for the Welcome Day and the presentations of the VET students at the Receiving Organizations.

When it comes to the Welcome Day, it was necessary to create, together with the language teacher, the manual for the language training with the specific content for each group; it was also necessary to create a folder for each mobility participant containing a document, which indicated the Receiving Organization and all of Arts & Skills contacts as well as all of the emergency contacts, a city's map and the schedule for the public transportation.

In the case of the presentation of the VET students at the Receiving Organizations, it was necessary to contact every tutor at the training placements to schedule the meeting. After all of the meetings settled, a member of the Arts & Skills has to create a timetable with the time and place where Arts & Skills will meet the trainees in order to accompany them to their respective Receiving Organization, whether by walking, bus or train. As it would be expected, all of the plans and timetables created for this latter event can change at any minute due to the most different reasons, and Arts & Skills must be ready to make any necessary change and communicate them to the Erasmus+ groups.

As the Erasmus+ groups were in Guimarães between February and June, the tasks related to the monitoring and tutoring of the trainees had to be performed at the same time as the preparation and organization of the events – Erasmus+ Dissemination Event and Fourth Meeting of IntoQuality -, the preparation for the IntoQuality audit, and the others activities developed by Arts & Skills.

The organization and preparation of the Erasmus+ Dissemination Event was more intense during March. My role in this activity was to assist the Arts & Skills team in everything necessary for the success of the event. Among the tasks I performed were the assistance in the preparation of meetings, the contact with the University Tuna of Guimarães for the event's entertainment, emailing companies for a service of simultaneous interpretation for more than 200 people, the structuring of the guest list and the creation of ID cards¹⁷ for the Arts & Skills members working at the event.

After this event, it was time to arrange everything for the upcoming Fourth Meeting of IntoQuality in April. In this case, my main challenge was not so much related to the organization of the event but rather to being prepared since this KA2 project – IntoQuality - was new to me. Thus, my preparation started by reading and analysing the already existing material on the project, doing a search on what is a KA2 project and following

¹⁷ My ID card for the Erasmus+ Dissemination Event can be consulted in the Appendix I.

the emails exchange among the many partners before their arrival to Guimarães. This preparation ended up to be very important so I would not be lost during the discussions in the meetings, and to allow me to intervene once or twice in matters where the IntoQuality group requested opinions.

After those two events, the internship at Arts & Skills was more related to the mobility projects and its activities; the assistance at the office with emails and any other content written in English; and also the search for new European Sending Organizations who could be partners with this Intermediary Organization in future mobility projects.

The search for new European partners started with a search for articles and reports on the state of VET around Europe and the mobility in that sector. The goal was to see how many students were enrolled in a VET system and if possible find the countries with the highest number of VET students that have studied/trained abroad. Obviously, I looked for reliable information that could support my final work for this task, thus, I found a document, supported by the European Commission, called “Main Challenges and trends in VET in the EU” (Varchola, 2015). This document indicated the current sector trends, the current and future policies, and it also contained a graphic on the number of students in VET in the 28 countries of European Union.

Therefore, I turned my attention to the countries with good structures for the VET system and with a high number of VET students, which were Germany, Austria, Denmark and Netherlands. These countries were valuable candidates for future mobility projects, however I did not excluded other countries with a good number of VET students, such as Czech Republic, Croatia, Italy, Luxembourg, Slovakia or Finland.

As I was searching for European VET schools in the countries mentioned, the major difficulty was the language in which the websites were written. The majority of the schools do not feature the option of localizing the website in English or in any other language, apart from the national language. Going through websites from Slovakia or Czech Republic was not easy and I had to resort to Google translator, even though it is not the most reliable tool. Somehow, I was able to navigate through those websites and retrieve data for the list I was creating, including areas of education, previous experience in international projects and the available contacts. Additionally, for the creation of the list of schools, it was also taking into account the range of companies able to work as Receiving Organizations in Guimarães and surroundings, as it would be

counterproductive to include schools of areas that would not exist in the region. Therefore, a list of possible future Sending Organizations was created for Arts & Skills. This final list consists of schools of different countries - Germany, Norway, Lithuania, Denmark and Italy – whose training areas include beauty care, restaurants, catering, hairdresser, agriculture, design, and architecture¹⁸.

The final office activity, and also the final activity of my internship at Arts & Skills, is related to the audit for the IntoQuality project. My first task was to read and analyse the document QAS (Quality Assurance System for VET Mobility Intermediary Organizations) and create a list of the necessary documents. As I was unaware of all intern documents, policies and procedures, I worked together with the members of Arts & Skills team for the preparation of the audit. Throughout the gathering of the requested documents, it was necessary to adapt some of the already existing documents, and the translation of others. The main difficulty during this activity concerned the creation of a specific type of text, such as the intern regulation, and the translation from Portuguese to English of very specific content. In fact, I do not have any training in the area of translation and the work performed was not made to my mother tongue, Portuguese, but to English.

Finally, the last task executed under this activity was the assistance in the creation of necessary texts for the “Association Membership Application”. This application is a document where the Intermediary Organization must describe in detail the services provided and its practices for the different stages of a mobility project. As a result, one member of the Arts & Skills team created a draft for the “Association Membership Application”, which I later structured and translated, and then, other member of Arts & Skills team, who has experience in translation, reviewed and finalized it.

Thanks to the many activities developed during this internship that were presented in this chapter, it was possible to experience some types of “business encounters” and to develop other tasks related to them. For the context of this internship report, the most relevant business encounters were those that took place within an intercultural business context. In this chapter, it was only described the setting of those encounters. In the next chapter,

¹⁸ The list of Receiving Organizations created during the internship can be consulted in Appendix II.

the most relevant moments will be selected and analysed under the theoretical framework discussed in the Chapter II.

Chapter IV – Brief intercultural analysis

During the time I was an intern at Arts & Skills' Department of European Mobility, I had the chance to observe and assist in many intercultural situations, which were already described in the previous chapter. The majority of the tasks performed was related to the Erasmus+ projects with VET learners and teachers, and to two events organized by the company. All of them were already described as well as the role I played in each one. However, now I would like to select the most relevant moments of these tasks and address their challenges and the impact they had on the projects, foreign students, teachers and other guests, and, of course, on myself.

In the course of my internship at Arts & Skills, the most common barrier to communication was language. In the cases where there is no common language, it is necessary to find a solution in order to establish communication and, thus, achieve the intended goals for the projects and activities. If the solution selected does not fit a certain situation, there is a high risk for complications and even failure. On the other hand, if the solution suits the situation in question, then there are less obstacles to an effective communication. Therefore, in this chapter, an intercultural analysis will be made to some of the intercultural encounters, which includes visits before the mobility, the mobility groups in Guimarães, and the Erasmus+ events.

4.1. Preparatory visits

As it was explained previously, during the preparatory visits, a group of teachers of a given VET school comes to Guimarães to attend meetings and get to know a little of city by the hands of the Intermediary Organization, Arts & Skills. During my internship, two groups of teachers came for these preparatory visits: one from Italy and the other from Iceland.

4.1.1. Group of teachers from Italy

The first preparatory visit was with the group of teachers from Italy. The entire visit went very well, yet there was a moment where the communication between the groups of teachers and the staff of Arts & Skills suffered a mishap. The Arts & Skills team thought these teachers could speak English because all of the emails were being exchanged in that language. Thus, the Arts & Skills team asked me to accompany and assist them during the arrival of the group of teachers to Guimarães and also during the majority of the scheduled meetings. Therefore, when the teachers arrived at the city, we greeted each

other, I introduced my colleague and myself, and started the conversation by asking them how their trip was, if it was their first time in Portugal and then, I told them what we were going to do during their staying in Guimarães. This whole interaction was made in English, and I could tell that the teachers were not very comfortable speaking this language. A few minutes later, we were at the Arts & Skills office for a meeting and, after a while, one of the teachers asked us to talk a little in Portuguese to see if they could understand us. My colleague started to talk in Portuguese, but in a slow and simple way. The teachers were delighted because they could understand what we were saying and then, they proposed to talk in Italian in the same way. As a result, during the entire visit, the Italian group talked in Italian and the Arts & Skills talked in Portuguese. Even though sometimes we had to resort to English to clarify something, those two languages were the ones selected for this particular visit.

With this interaction, it is possible to conclude that the main challenge was the language. In fact, this is the communication barrier that caused more misunderstandings throughout the many intercultural encounters. When both parties realized that English was not working for the interaction, the suggestion was to each group resort to their own native language, and, if necessary the English would be used to clarify anything. This situation is a linguistic strategy called “Functional Multilingualism”. Feely & Harzing (2002) present this linguistic strategy as the use of a mix of languages, gestures, or any other means to communicate. The authors consider it to be an unreliable option in a business context and that it can cause a divergence between those involved in the communication. However, in this particular case, it seemed to work very well, and actually it brought the groups closer. A possible reason for this is the familiarity that these two languages share – both belong to the romance languages (Marques, 2016). As a result, the meeting’s atmosphere became much lighter, the group seemed to be more relaxed, and the subjects were discussed without many misunderstanding. The meeting was a success, as well as the rest of the visit.

4.1.2. Group of teachers from Iceland

The overall preparatory visit of the group of teachers from Iceland went very well and there were few obstacles to the communication. In the first place, to overcome the barrier of language, both groups decided to choose English as lingua franca, since both groups had a good level of proficiency. Secondly, the success of this preparatory visit also due

to the open mind, patience, and sensibility towards one another. The teachers were very clear about what they wanted to know and see, and the Arts & Skills team was available to answer and clarify any doubt.

According to the cultural model by Hall (Hall & Hall, 1990), Portugal and Iceland do not belong to the same category. Portugal is considered high context and Iceland is low context. In other words, Portuguese people tend to rely on a more implicit type of communication as the information is already in the context. On the contrary, Icelandic people tend to be more direct and explicit in their way of communicating. For instance, one of the Icelandic teachers asked me about lunch time in Portugal. She wanted to know how much time was usually spent, where people would go to eat or what would people eat. If it was a Portuguese in Iceland, it is possible that he/she did not pose this question or it would not be as direct and clear.

Another situation that falls into this cultural model is the agenda created by Arts & Skills even before the group of teachers arrived in Guimarães. In the case of Portugal, as a high context country, time is considered to be polychronic. That is, people tend to do many things at the same time and tend to see schedules in a more flexible way (Hall & Hall, 1990). This was proven to be true since I witnessed several times last minute changes to the agenda, which were made by those who would participate in the meetings with the Icelandic teachers and Arts & Skills. Concerning Iceland, it is considered as a low context country, so time is monochronic. This means that people tend to do one thing at a time and tend to compartmentalize their time, which results in a high respect for schedules (Hall & Hall, 1990). Fortunately, while the group of teachers were in Guimarães, there were no more changes, which resulted in the fulfilment of the scheduled meetings, and, thus, in a successful preparatory visit.

4.2. Erasmus+ VET groups during the mobility period

As it was possible to see in the description of the internship at Arts & Skills, the main focus of the Arts & Skills' Department of European Mobility is directed to the Erasmus+ groups of VET trainees that come to Guimarães. The work carried out during the mobility period of these trainees is related to their internship at the Receiving Organizations, to their staying at accommodation placements, and the whole mobility in general.

Usually, each Erasmus+ group of VET trainees stays in Guimarães for 4/5 weeks. It is not sufficient time to get used to the new environment and to learn and solidify new knowledge, whether in terms of their field of studies or in terms of intercultural interaction. For the intermediary organization it is also challenging because it is only a brief window of time to solve any problem that may arise.

During the mobility period, when the VET trainees are already in Guimarães, the most common barrier to an effective communication and, thus, success of the experience, is language. First, there are groups, which come from the French Community of Belgium, that usually have a very low level of proficiency in English. In these situations, communication is more difficult since there is no common language with the trainees. Usually, the solution found is the functional multilingualism, where there is a mix of Portuguese, French, and English. However, these VET trainees are placed in Receiving Organizations where at least one employee speaks French, which facilitated the communication and integration of the trainee. Then, there were groups that come from countries, such as Iceland or Latvia, who have a very different language from Portuguese. As a result, both Arts & Skills and the trainees chose to adopt English as their lingua franca. In these cases, this linguistic strategy of speaking a common language usually works because both parties can speak English with a good level of proficiency. However, when it comes to the Receiving Organizations, the situation can be very different, as it will be discussed next.

4.2.1. No common language: same linguistic strategies, different outcomes

There were two cases where there was no common language between the VET trainees and the Receiving Organizations, and the solution that seemed appropriate was to use a machine translation service. This solution is included in the set of linguistic strategies presented in the Chapter II of this internship report. This option relies on the ability of technology to recognize the source language and translate the intended message into the target language. It is actually simple and fast, however there are many doubts about the quality of the translations (Feely & Harzing, 2002). However, in one case it was not the best solution for the situation and in the other case it worked perfectly.

The first case relates to one situation already described in the previous chapter. One of the two beauty care trainees from Iceland failed to adapt to the work environment due to a language barrier. The owner of the establishment could only speak Portuguese and the

trainee spoke English and Icelandic. As a result, there was no common language and they decided to use an app of simultaneous translation. Additionally, the owner of the beauty care establishment would go out for some errands when there were no appointments. Through the simultaneous translation app, the owner would tell the trainee that she was going to leave for a while and that she could stay and watch some videos related to her field of training. In addition, the trainee could not perform beauty treatments on the clients because they were reluctant and because the owner was unable to explain clearly the procedures. However, the trainee did not understand the situation and she could not clarify it with the owner. Despite Arts & Skills' attempts to mediate the situation, it lasted for the entire mobility period. In the end, the beauty care trainee confessed to be disappointed with this professional experience, that she found the owner unprofessional and that "this entire situation would never happen in Iceland". In this particular situation, the linguistic strategy was not the most suitable and the language problem ended in an unsuccessful mobility experience.

Concerning the second case, the trainee was from Latvia and went to a designer studio to develop her internship. Similarly to the first case, there was no common language since the fashion designer could only speak Portuguese and the trainee spoke English and Latvian. They also decided to use an app of simultaneous translation, however, in this case, the overall mobility period went very well. At first, the trainee was nervous and concerned about the language barrier. Surprisingly, a few days later we talked with the trainee and the fashion designer and they told us that they were getting along very well and were very excited about the experience. In the end, both were very happy with the experience, despite the expected linguistic difficulties.

This outcome is very different from the first case, even though both share similar circumstances - different cultures and languages. However, in this case, the individuals were able to deal with the situation differently, as they seemed to have an open mind, a good deal of patience, and a great sensibility towards each other. As a result, Arts & Skills never had to intervene and mediate any problem and all of the goals for the mobility period were achieved.

4.2.2. Communication effectiveness and cultural shock

The two cases that will be presented and analysed in this section are not as related to the inexistence of a common language as the previous cases. They are more related to the

efficiency of the communication process and also to the cultural shock experienced by some of the VET trainees. Both of these situations happened with two different groups from the French Community of Belgium.

The first case concerns a group of VET trainees that came to Guimarães with an accompanying teacher. Usually, trainees and teachers stay in the same hotel, however, with this group, the trainees went to one hotel and the accompanying teacher went to another. Unexpectedly, the day after their arrival, the hotel owner, where the trainees were staying, called Arts & Skills to complain about the groups' bad behaviour¹⁹, their lack of respect towards the other guests and describing everything the trainees had done. On the "Welcome Day", which happened the day after the hotel owner's call, the Arts & Skills team started the morning activity by confronting the group of trainees about the events at the hotel. The teacher, who was not aware of the situation, apologized about their behaviour, and then, the trainees also apologized to everyone and declared that that situation would not happen again. Unfortunately, the bad behaviour continued throughout the entire mobility period.

During all of the Welcome Days organized by Arts & Skills, there is a certified language teacher who is responsible for the language training and also acts as a translator during the day. At the moment of the confrontation described above, one member of Arts & Skills team was talking in Portuguese and the teacher was translating everything into French. Even though the translator was attempting to translate not only the message but also its spirit, there is always a risk of loss of rhetorical power. This situation is described by Feely & Harzing (2002) who also believe that this choice of linguistic strategy might not be the best option for this particular situation. Thus, that loss of rhetorical power that got lost along the way might be one of the reasons why the trainees did not fully understand the consequences of their behaviour.

The continuing bad behaviour demonstrated by these group of trainees might be also explained using the cultural model by Hall. According to Hall & Hall (1990), Portugal is a high context country and, as it has been referred in the analysis of other cases, it means that Portuguese people tend to assume that the context of the message is already there. Thus, even though the Arts & Skills team member tried to expose the severity of the

¹⁹ In this case, bad behaviour stands for jumping on sofas, making noise around the hotel during the night, breaking things from the hotel, among others.

situation and show how unacceptable it was, it was never presented explicit rules and the possible consequences in case of breaking them. In Belgium, a low context country, people tend to need more explicit information, which in this case was not presented. Arts & Skills tried for several times to mediate the situation between the trainees and the hotel owner, however, without major success. As a result, the trainees continued with their behaviour until their departure.

The second case to be presented and analysed in this section is related to a group of VET trainees that came to Guimarães, with an accompanying teacher, to carry out internships at local restaurants. For the first two weeks, everything seemed to be well with every trainee and there was no reports of problems with the Receiving Organizations or their accommodation placement. During the second week, Arts & Skills received a complaint stating that two trainees, who were placed in the same training placement, were not happy with their experience because the person responsible for the Receiving Organization would not assign them suitable tasks. In order to resolve the problem quickly, Arts & Skills scheduled a meeting with the accompanying teacher to discuss the situation and to evaluate the possibility of changing the training placements. At that meeting, the accompanying teacher told Arts & Skills that the students thought they were receiving very basic tasks and, consequently, the trainees were not complying with the established work schedule. In order to inform the trainees about the subjects discussed in this meeting, to explain the consequences that would arise in case of their continuing absence and to have all of this information registered, it was agreed that Arts & Skills would send an email to the two trainees. It was also agreed that a meeting would be scheduled between Arts & Skills and the person responsible for the Receiving Organization in order to discuss an agreement concerning the internship tasks. The necessary steps were taken and, in the end, the trainees finished their internships without major problems.

In this particular case, the communication problem was not similar to the previous one. First, the accompanying teacher was aware of the whole situation and its possible consequences. Second, the person responsible for the Receiving Organization spoke French fluently, so the communication was direct and there was no intervention of other people or the use of translation technology. Therefore, what may have contributed to this problem?

As it was stated in the previous case, when using Hall's cultural model, Portugal and Belgium are from different contexts. For that reason, the trainees might have experienced a cultural shock. This process is characterized by four stages. The first stage is where the individuals are fascinated with the new environment. The second phase is when the individual starts to realize reality and the culture shock happens. The third and fourth stages are related to the slow adaptation to the new environment and culminating in the integration of the individual (Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010). For these two trainees, the process of cultural shock might have stopped at the second phase. They might have judged everything to be worse than their own culture and did not have time to realize that the new culture is not better or worse but merely different.

However, there are other factors that, certainly, influenced the trainees to have such behaviour. Usually, the groups of VET trainees that come to Guimarães with Erasmus+ are under aged and, for some, it might be the first time living outside their home by themselves. It is already a challenge if that experience occurs in the home country. Finally, there is, of course, personal goals and ideas that the trainees wished to accomplish during an experience like this.

4.3. Erasmus+ events

4.3.1. Erasmus+ dissemination event

Regarding the events organized by Arts & Skills during my internship, the intercultural interactions happened at the day of the events. During the first one, the Erasmus+ Dissemination Event, my responsibility was to welcome the guests and assist the service of simultaneous interpretation. The challenge, which was already presented in the previous chapter, was when almost 70 trainees from Belgium arrived at the event's venue. My responsibility was to confirm their name and school and, then, give them the device for the simultaneous translation. Working with me was a colleague, who also only spoke English and Portuguese. Therefore, when the VET trainees, who rarely speak English or Portuguese, started to arrive at the same time at the event, it generated a bit of chaos because the language barrier was not allowing us to perform our task quickly and efficiently. As a result, the trainees had their entrance delayed, fortunately, for only a few minutes. Finally, all of the other guests started to arrive and there were no more problems and the event went very well.

In this event, language is the obvious cause for that chaotic moment at the entrance of the venue. Among the many Erasmus+ groups from Belgium, only a few could speak English, which my colleague and I also could. However, to communicate with the rest of the trainees, it had to be in French, which my colleague was unable to do and I have a low level of proficiency of the language. Additionally, during that particular moment, my colleague and I started to feel very anxious which also inhibited the effectiveness of communication between the Belgium trainees and us. The presence of high anxiety during an intercultural encounter is very common. It is the less obvious barrier to an effective communication, yet it is powerful to the point where the individual is more concentrated in those feelings, which will affect the overall communicative performance (Vieira & Sousa, 2015).

4.3.2. Fourth project meeting – IntoQuality

The second event was the Fourth Meeting for the KA2 project IntoQuality. The members from this transnational project came to Guimarães from Germany, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Italy, and Portugal. During the first day, Arts & Skills and I went earlier to the event's venue to arrange the last details and thus receive all of the guests. When they arrived, one Portuguese colleague greeted every guest with the Portuguese 'two kisses'. Even though the members of the group know each other for quite some time, some guests could not help and express surprise and some awkwardness while facing such greeting. When it was my turn to greet the guests, I controlled the instinct of greeting with the 'two kisses' and instead I greet them with a handshake while I was being introduced by a member of Arts & Skills.

As this project includes people from different countries with very different languages, the group decided to adopt English as a corporate language. This means that all the meetings, documentation and the overall communication is made in English. The group seemed to be already very close and professional and if someone misunderstood something it would be immediately clarified, which certainly was an essential factor for the success of the event. Another reason for the success of the event must have been the common goal of the group working in this project. For what I could witness, they already knew the strengths of each member and organized the tasks according to them, so the overall project could benefit of the existing expertise.

However, there was a situation a bit challenging that occurred in the first day. During the afternoon, a group of five trainees and two accompanying teachers from Belgium went to the event's venue for the app testing. Besides their different opinions regarding the functions of the app, the trainees seemed to be having difficulties expressing their opinions in English. Three of those trainees could say a few sentences and to make sure everyone understood their message they resorted to hand gestures and drawing on a paper. In other words, the trainees and the rest of the group resorted to the linguistic strategy Functional Multilingualism, where individuals use a mix of languages, gestures and other means at their disposal in order to transmit a message (Feely & Harzing, 2002). The other two trainees could only speak French and, at first, only said they agreed with their colleagues. Fortunately, there was a member of the project, also from Belgium, that noticed their difficulties and helped them to share their thoughts with the rest of the group. However, these two trainees did not add much to the discussion and they said that whatever their colleagues were saying was good for them. In the end, these two trainees remained quiet for the rest of the activity and seemed to avoid any attempt of communication by the other participants in the discussion.

The language problem affected not only the way the trainees were communicating with the rest of the group, but it also affected the overall goal for that activity, which was to know the opinion of Erasmus+ participants regarding an app project. When the trainees could not communicate with the rest of the group in English, they lost power in the conversation and felt left out. For that reason, their reaction was to only talk to each other and agree with everything the other trainees were saying, even if that was not their opinion. Only when the Belgium member of the group asked them their opinion in French they were able to express more freely and, even then, they did not developed their opinions.

Chapter V – Conclusion

Based on the literature consulted and my experience as an intern at Arts & Skills, it can be concluded that intercultural communication is much more than knowing how to write and speak languages. Above all, it is about being sensible towards cultural differences and at the same time being able to transmit and receive messages effectively. “An interculturally competent person is the one whose knowledge and positive attitudes are reflected in observable communicative behaviours” (Aksoy, Uzunoglu, & Yaman Akyar, 2017, p.13).

Indeed, the Erasmus+ programme is a great opportunity to be in touch with intercultural environments. It certainly helps the participants to develop the knowledge and attitudes necessary to navigate in an increasingly interconnected world. It is during these experiences that people realize the impact of their culture in the way of speaking, behaving, and thinking. Ultimately, Erasmus+ experiences are made of moments where the participants get to interact with other cultures and perceive their own. It can be compared to a mirror, which helps the Erasmus+ participants to get a new and fresh awareness on how they are perceived by others (Almarza, Martínez, & Llavador, 2017).

However, the communication process in an intercultural context can be more challenging because of many barriers, such as language, nonverbal misinterpretations, prejudice and stereotypes, and even anxiety. Language might be the most obvious barrier, but it has a great importance. It is at the center of social interactions and if there is no common language, then, the interaction will be much more complicated. Even when there is common language, there are accents, different levels of proficiency, and others that can cause miscommunications. The cases presented in this internship report show how language can play such a decisive role. Arts & Skills welcomed groups of trainees, teachers, and other professionals from many European countries and it is essential to communicate effectively with them. Some cases were a success, and some were not. All of those cases were affected by cultural differences and wrong or right choices of linguistic strategies.

The internship at Arts & Skills allowed me not only to observe and experience intercultural environments so I could explore the theme of Intercultural Communication in this report, but it also allowed me to put into practice the theoretical knowledge learned throughout my academic course. In my case, this experience was very important because there is nothing like experiencing a real intercultural business environment to apply that

knowledge and to learn new situations and techniques of management of the intercultural communication. It also taught me that experience and know-how, acquired through professional experiences and day-to-day life, have a great value and the potential to make a difference in any professional situation.

All of the tasks of my internship plan were completed, however some of them with particular difficulties. The tasks related to the translation of documents and other content from Portuguese to English were more challenging due to the lack of technical and linguistic knowledge, which inhibited me of execute the translations in a more professional way. Thus, even though I did my best, the final results of the translations were not perfect.

To conclude, I must say that the internship at Arts & Skills and working with such a professional and dedicated team gave me a new heart and respect for this particular field. It helped me to grow as a person and to be a more sensible human being. Therefore, the hope for the future is to become an excellent professional in the field of intercultural communication, whether with Erasmus+ or any other projects, and to see a world where cultural diversity is respected and valued.

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Annex I – Training Plan

TRAINING PLAN

Internship period: From February to June

Department of European Mobility of Arts & Skills – Erasmus+ projects

Coordination and Monitoring of Erasmus+ projects

- Monitoring and orientation of the Belgium trainees coming to Portugal between February and June 2018:
 - Follow-up of the students on the first day with the Welcome Day – training of portuguese language and tour to the city of Guimarães;
 - Integration and follow-up of the student on the first day of the internship;
 - Follow-up of the students internship during the semester and book meeting marking between the trainer, company and Arts;
 - Suggestion of activities to be carried out;
 - Conclusion of the internships with collection of the trainees' evaluations;
 - Evaluation the internships and the trainees;
 - Organization of the closing session with the delivery of certificates and other documentation;
 - Organization and follow-up of the promotion event that will take place in March with Belgian students to promote the project Erasmus+;

- Monitoring of the project KA2 – IntoQuality, in which Arts & Skills intervenes as a partner of 5 European countries in the development of a quality system for intermediary entities:
 - Booking, organization and accompaniment of the 4th reunion with the partners which will take place in April 2018 in Guimarães;
 - Follow-up of the on-going activities, since the development of quality requirements to be implemented at Arts & Skills for the continuous improvement of the company's international mobility services;
 - Follow-up of the app implementation for the students in mobility – test phase;

International promotion of Arts & Skills:

- International research of partner entities at an European level for the development of projects Erasmus+ KA1 and KA2;
- Development of content in English for international promotion of the institution;
- Promotion of the Arts & Skills services in European entities;
- Elaboration of news about the on-going projects

Annex II – Agenda of a Preparatory Visit



Programme for the Preparatory Visit of the VET School from Iceland

16th and 17th April 2018

Day 16th April

- ✓ 9h00 – Meet the group of teachers at their hotel
- ✓ 9h30 – Meeting at a Beauty & Care company
- ✓ 10h30 – Meeting with the Hair Stylist A
- ✓ 11h30 – Meeting at a Fashion Studio
- ✓ 12h00 – Meeting at the hotel for the VET trainees A

- ✓ 12h30 – Lunch

- ✓ 14h30 – Meeting at the hotel for the VET trainees B
- ✓ 15h00 – Meeting at the hotel for the VET trainees C

Day 17th April

- ✓ 9h00 – Meet the group of teachers at their hotel
- ✓ 9h30 – Meeting at a Fashion Company
- ✓ 10h30 – Meeting with the Hair Stylist B
- ✓ 11h30 – Meeting with at a Beauty & Care and Hair Stylist company



Annex III – IntoQuality Leaflet



IntoQuality Partnership

	European Center for Quality Ltd, Bulgaria E-mail: office@ecq-bg.com Website: www.ecq-bg.com
	Centre de Coordination et de Gestion des Programmes Européens-DGEO, Belgium E-mail: manuel.ribeiro@cfwb.be Website: www.ccgpe-dgeo.cfwb.be
	European Grants International Academy Srls Unipersonale, Italy E-mail: info@egina.eu Website: www.egina.eu
	Multidisziplinäres Institut für Europa-Forschung Graz, Austria E-mail: info@merig.org Website: www.merig.org
	Wisamar Bildungsgesellschaft gemeinnützige GmbH, Germany E-mail: info@wisamar.de Website: www.wisamar.de
	Arts&Skills - Formação, consultoria e inovação, Lda, Portugal E-mail: eugeniamiranda@artsandskills.pt Website: www.artsandskills.pt

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HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT CENTRE

Association of Quality Intermediary Organizations Fostering Mobility in Europe

Project ref. №2016-1-BG01-KA202-023676

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RATIONALE OF PROJECT

Transnational mobility of learners is recognized as an important tool for acquiring new skills and strengthening employability and personal development. It is particularly important for young learners engaged in Vocational Education and Training (VET). International mobility allows these learners to become acquainted with the working environment in another country and thus prepares them for the rapidly changing and globalized labour markets.

The IntoQuality partnership strives to develop a quality assurance system and supporting tools that can promote the credibility of actors involved in EU VET mobilities and increase the value and relevance of mobility activities themselves.

PROJECT TARGET GROUPS

- Intermediary organization managing and implementing mobilities;
- VET schools sending/receiving mobilities;
- Business organizations providing work placements for mobility participants;
- Local/regional/national authorities involved in multi-stakeholder mobility platforms;
- VET students taking part in mobility projects;
- VET professionals taking part in mobility projects.

PROJECT AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The **main objective** of IntoQuality is the establishment of a **European Association of Quality Intermediary Organizations for Mobility** that agree on specific operational rules and standards, also including aspects related to the value for money of the services provided for the implementation of Erasmus+ projects.

The project stipulates several **specific objectives**:

- To establish a “European Association of Quality Intermediary Organizations for Mobility” united around a common definition of quality mobility and value for money;
- To develop an efficient Quality Assurance System which will guarantee wide visibility of reliable and credible intermediary organizations involved in mobility projects;
- To develop an interactive monitoring tool for mobility beneficiaries allowing for continuous evaluation and improvement of the mobility experience;
- To contribute to the increase of EU mobilities through promoting cooperation between quality intermediary organizations.

OUTPUTS

- **Quality Assurance System for VET Mobility Intermediary Organizations**
The Quality Assurance System developed by the project includes quality criteria and indicators for each part of the planning, organization and implementation of a mobility activity. It is available both as a document that could be used by intermediary organizations and as an interactive software (self-evaluation) tool on the project website.
- **Interactive Monitoring Application**
The app facilitates the monitoring of the different steps of the experience abroad, in particular by guiding the user in the process of collecting information and documenting his/her mobility experience.
- **A Europe-wide Association of Quality Intermediary Organizations active in mobility projects**
The Association is open to organizations engaged in mobilities and stakeholders interested in developing and extending quality standards for mobilities. The Association’s Code of Practices addresses various quality and responsibility issues in mobilities, including accuracy and comprehensiveness of information, relevancy of activities, effectiveness of organization, adequacy of services, staffing and professionalism, value for money and participants’ satisfaction.



www.intoquality.eu

Appendix I – ID for the Erasmus+ Dissemination Event

EVENTO DISSEMINAÇÃO ERASMUS+

ORGANIZAÇÃO

SARA BARROS



Appendix II – List of European VET Schools

Nome da Instituição	País	Área	Website	E-mail	Telefone
Adolf-Kolping-Berufskolleg	Alemanha	Engenharia, Assistente de Design, Assistente de Tecnologia de informação	http://www.akbk-horrem.de/	info@akbk-horrem.de	(0049) 02273 - 90910
Alpes - Formation, Conseil	França	Formação	http://www.alpes-formation.fr/index.htm	alpes@alpes-formation.fr	(0033) 04 72 41 64 34
Berufskolleg Bergisch Land, Wermelskirchen	Alemanha	Horticultura, Saúde e Social, Informática, Tecnologia de Metal, Negócios e Administração	http://berufskolleg.schule/home/	sekretariat@bbk.schule / wermelskirchen@bbk.schule	(0049) 02267 88795-0 / (0049) 02196 4080

Berufskolleg Eifel, Kall	Alemanha	Restauração, Saúde e Bem-estar, Cabeleireiro, Economia, Administração, Turismo	http://www.berufskolleg-eifel.de/	info@bkeifel.de	(0049) 02441-7797-0
Centro Italiano Opere Femminili Salesiane - Formazione Professionale	Itália	Administração, Vendas, Línguas, Informática, Estética, Restauração, Design gráfico, Turismo, Animação, Agro-alimentar, Moda, Eletrónica, Mecânica	http://www.ciofs-fp.org/	info@ciofs-fp.org	(0039) 06 5729911
Centro Studi Teorema	Itália	Estética, Cabeleireiro	www.centrostuditeorema.it	info@centrostuditeorema.it	(0039) 0363 913890
CEPS - Projects Socials	Espanha	Educação, Cultura, Promoção de Bem-estar	http://asceps.org/en/int-projects/	info@asceps.org	(00349) 933194750
CHANCENGL EICH in Europa e.V.	Alemanha	Educação	http://www.ch-e.eu/en/about-us.html	info@ch-e.eu	(0049) 0231 28676640
Cyprus International University	Chipre	Estética, Design de Interiores, Arquitetura	http://www.ciu.edu.tr/en/academic/schools/vocational-school	School: secretary-voc@ciu.edu.tr / Diretor: ecelebi@ciu.edu.tr	(0090) 392 671 1111
Designinstituttet	Noruega	Design, Arquitetura	http://designinstituttet.no/	eivind.eide@designinstituttet.no	(0047) 23 23 09 70

EKPAIDFTIRI A KALOSKAMI S.A.	Grécia	Artes performativas, Negócios, Economia	http://www.iek-axia.gr		(0030) 21040099 55
"Elena Doamna" Food Industry College	Roménia	Restauração	www.elenadoamna.ro	elenadoamna_@yahoo.com	(0040) 0236 465 551
ENGIM Piemonte	Itália	Restauração	http://www.engimtorino.net/	info.torino@engim.it	
European Center in Training for Employment	Grécia	Finanças e Administração , Saúde e Bem- Estar, Informação, Mecânica, Turismo, Agricultura, Ambiente, Cultura, Desporto	http://www.ecte.gr/	info@ecte.gr	
Kaunas Vocational School of Household and Business	Lituânia	Animação, Organização de Eventos, Consultoria	http://verslas.kunas.lm.lt/		
KKS - Käthe Kollwitz Schule, Berufskolleg der StädteRegion Aachen	Alemanha	Agricultura, Cabeleireiro, Restauração	https://www.kks-aachen.de/en.html	info.at.kks-aachen.de	
Lieux Fictifs	França	Cinema e Novas Mídias	http://www.lieuxfictifs.org/		(0033) 04 95 04 96 37
Noroff	Noruega	Tecnologia e Mídia Digital	https://www.noroff.no/en/studies	education@noroff.no /	(0047) 38000000

			es/vocational-school	utdanning@no roff.no	
Roc Van Amsterdam	Holanda	Catering, Pastelaria, Tecnologias, Turismo, Cuidado e Bem-estar	https://www.rocv.nl/	informatiecentrum@rocv.nl	(0031) 0900- 9599
Salpaus Further Education	Finlandia	Várias	https://en.salpaus.fi/home/vocational-education-training/	salpaus@salpaus.fi	(00358) 3 828 11
Stockholms Tekniska Institut	Suécia	Engenharia	https://www.sti.se/	info@sti.se	(0046) 08 545 835 80
Tone Lise Akademiet	Noruega	Estética	http://www.tonelseakademiet.no/		(0047) 23 00 29 29
University of Humanities and Economics in Lodz	Polónia	Várias	http://www.ahe.lodz.pl/en	study@ahe.lodz.pl	(0048) 607 379 645
VIA University College	Dinamarca	Design, Educação, Cinema, Tecnologia e Construção	https://en.via.dk/programmes/meet-us	via@via.dk	(0045) 87 55 00 00
Vocational College Bergisch Gladbach	Alemanha	Restauração, Turismo, Cabeleireiro, Moda, Saúde e Social, Tecnologia	http://www.bkg.l.de/	info (at) bkg.l.de	(0049) 02202- 25010

