

ERASMUS VOTING ASSESSMENT PROJECT

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FOREWORD – ANDROULLA VASSILIOU, COMMISSIONER



Since its launch in 1987, the Erasmus programme has become the world's largest student exchange programme and the most popular framework for higher education student mobility in the European Union. By providing students the opportunity to study or train abroad and to share their lives with young people of different nationalities, the Erasmus programme serves as an eye-opener, a learning experience, and a bridge between cultures.

During their exchange, Erasmus students not only develop new academic knowledge and skills for their future career, they also learn the meaning of tolerance and democracy, which is the basis for a more active participation in society. Erasmus participants share a sense of community; they develop an enhanced sense of belonging to the wider European continent and so a stronger feeling of their own European identity.

This has been once again confirmed by the results of the Erasmus Voting Assessment (EVA) project. I am very pleased to see that nearly 81% of former Erasmus students voted at the EP elections in May 2014. This is not only a higher rate compared to non-mobile students (74%), but also nearly twice the EU average voter turnout (43%). Former Erasmus students are aware that voting in European elections is crucial for making their voices heard by EU decision-makers.

At a time when Europe is facing important economic and societal challenges, when misunderstandings about the European institutions have grown, leading some young people to turn their backs on Europe, I am equally happy to read that a great majority of former Erasmus student voters (nearly 90%) chose a political party that they consider have a positive approach to the European project. Young people who participated in the Erasmus programme show a more positive attitude towards Europe than the EU average; they believe in its added value and have a higher interest in knowing about European affairs and taking part in European events than other young Europeans. This confirms the point that exposure to Europe and a deeper experience of what it has to offer brings a greater understanding of the benefits of the European Union. And this is exactly what Europe needs, an Erasmus generation actively involved in shared European issues, bringing Europeans together to shape the future based on a common culture and common values.

As Commissioner for Education and Culture, I have sought to ensure the fullest possible participation of young Europeans in education, in employment and in society. I am delighted that our new programme, Erasmus+, will provide opportunities for 2 million higher education students, and 4 million people overall, to develop stronger skills, greater employability, more active citizenship and to build a greater sense of solidarity and rights across Europe.

Commissioner Androulla Vassiliou
Commissioner for Education, Culture, Multilingualism and Youth

FOREWORD – DORIS PACK, FORMER MEP



Dear readers,

The Erasmus programme has led the way for more than 25 years already, as a unique feature and a pioneering initiative, which has marked a starting point of our common engagement in the field of education on the European level. From the early years, thanks to AEGEE's strong advocacy in the Council, the programme was approved in 1987, and I want to take the opportunity to thank you for this support once again as key student stakeholder.

Let me also take this opportunity to thank the Generation Europe Foundation, and the Erasmus Student Network, for working on a daily basis, helping us improve the programmes and the lives and opportunities for students and young people in Europe.

As the European Parliament's rapporteur for the new EU education programme 2014-2020, Erasmus+, I have appreciated the Commission's intention to decrease the fragmentation that existed in the old programmes and to increase synergies in the new ones covering school and higher education, vocational education and training, adult learning, youth and sport.

I think that after tough negotiations, we can say that the result is more than positive, especially the increase in the budget for the Education field.

As co-legislator, the European Parliament will do everything in its power to ensure the continuation of the Erasmus success story. However there is always room for improvement, in particular in student mobility; more flexibility is needed in order to adapt mobility activities to the Bologna reforms and the new degree structures that have been established throughout Europe (BA, MA and PhDs).

But most importantly, we must start going deeper into the impacts of the Erasmus mobility programme. This is why I thank you for your great initiative in the Erasmus Voting Assessment (EVA) which seeks, through research, to obtain evidence about the social impact of the programme.

Until now, we have been focusing on the employability aspect of Erasmus. But with the results of your project, we will be able to clearly identify if Erasmus has a social impact in creating a true European sentiment in students participating in the programme, and if these are more eager to feel responsibility and ownership of the processes of the EU, in particularly the democratic process like the European Parliament elections.

Demonstrating that Erasmus students participate actively in the European Parliament elections because of the intense experience they have had, especially if voting for pro-European parties, has brought another big added value for the programme, ensuring its continuity for many more years.

Thank you once again for the Erasmus Voting Assessment (EVA) project and for bringing the impact of the EU mobility programmes to a whole new level.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Doris Pack". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Doris Pack
Former Chairwoman of the Committee on Culture and Education of the European Parliament

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

OBJECTIVE

The objective of the EVA project is to assess the hypothesis that exchange programmes such as the Erasmus programme may lead to increased youth participation in European elections, as well as to a more positive attitude towards being a European citizen.

METHOD AND SAMPLING

This hypothesis was tested through two surveys of young EU citizens aged 18-30: one conducted before, and the other after, the 2014 European Parliament elections.

The first survey gathered 4,233 valid respondents, the second 3,074 respondents, resulting in a 'merged' data set of 2,598 respondents who participated in both the first and second survey. Respondents ('EVA respondents') were primarily university students who were past, current or potential participants in the Erasmus programme. Responses were analysed both within this group, and in comparison to more general student or young populations as represented in the Eurobarometer surveys ('EB respondents').

The EVA respondents are a self-selecting group, drawn from university students who were contacted through international student organisations and who are more likely to be interested in the topic of the EVA surveys, i.e. the European Union, the Erasmus programme and political participation.

KEY FINDINGS

The nature of the EVA sample might lead one to think that respondents are all convinced Europeans, however our analysis leads us to conclude that Erasmus students tend to have a more balanced view of the European Union (EU) than young people in general: while they are just as likely to identify with its potential drawbacks, they are more likely to identify its potential benefits. They also have higher levels of political participation as expressed by voting behaviour.

A more balanced view: EVA respondents were just as likely as EB respondents to recognise and identify with negative perceptions of the EU, however they were also more likely to recognise and identify with positive perceptions of the EU. Among other aspects, they were more than twice as likely to identify the EU as "a way to create a better future for young people" and almost 50% more likely to see it as "a way to create jobs".

More likely to vote: 81% of EVA respondents who had completed their stay abroad reported that they had voted in the 2014 European Parliament elections. This figure can be compared to a general election turnout of 42.5%, or to a 30% turnout of young people during the 2009 EP elections.

We have analysed the role that feelings about and knowledge of the EU might play in influencing voting behaviour, and have found that these do not play a significant role in the EVA sample: the 'Erasmus experience' seems to be the major factor influencing respondents' voting behaviour, significantly increasing the likelihood of voting.

Approximately 35% of the EVA respondents that have an 'Erasmus experience' (as opposed to respondents who have not studied abroad) believe that participation in the Erasmus programme has made them more interested in and willing to vote in the EP elections.

CONCLUSION

Our findings are broadly in line with other studies conducted on Erasmus participants' views of and feelings towards the European Union: Erasmus students are more positive about the European Union and have a greater sense of European identity.

The contribution of the EVA project has been to explore whether, and the extent to which, this more "pro-EU" feeling is translated in voting behaviour: (former) Erasmus students are much more likely to vote.

European diversity truly has the potential to keep Europe united.

1. INTRODUCTION

In the last two decades, trends of participation in political elections show increased levels of absenteeism. This is particularly true when it comes to the European elections. Can we say that the sense of a shared European identity, which is an element that underpins the European political system, is under threat? What can the European Union and its institutions do to unravel this trend?

When the European Commission launched the Erasmus programme in 1987, its main objective was to facilitate the cultural exchange among young Europeans and to increase their feeling of sharing a true European identity and its fundamental values. Could we now say that, more than 25 years after its launch, the Erasmus programme contributes to increasing the sense of civic participation in the European project among Europe's young? Can we say that the "Erasmus generation" will bring the necessary hope and enthusiasm to neutralise the growing criticisms toward the European Union? This research project tries to answer these questions by examining whether student participation in the Erasmus programme leads to an increased feeling of European identity and citizenship amongst young students across Europe, thereby providing a solid contribution to the construction of the "European project".

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1.1. Participation in the European Parliament elections – a worrying decline

Since 1979, European citizens have elected their Members of the European Parliament every five years. This is a cornerstone of the EU's democratic process, as laid out in the Treaties.¹ Although the powers of the European Parliament (EP) have been steadily increasing, including with the Lisbon Treaty in 2009, electoral participation has declined. Starting from an EU-wide average participation rate of 62% in 1979, the voting figure has fallen during every EP election, with only 42.54% of Europeans voting in the last EP elections in 2014,² a 19.5-point percentage drop since 1979.³

Even more worrying than the decreasing voter turnout is the historically low voter participation among the youngest voters. A report by the League of Young Voters, released in December 2013, showed that during the 2009 EP elections, only 29% of the eligible voters aged 18-24 cast their votes.⁴ This is a cause of concern for several reasons.

The first relates to basic theories of voter behaviour. Certain theories suggest that participation in elections indeed increases as population groups grow older, due to a variety of factors including education, (personal) interest and life events.⁵ Others posit that people who do not get into the habit of voting (from the first time that they can vote) are often less likely to become habitual voters in the future.⁶ It also appears that parents' behaviours influence first-time participation: i.e.

¹ European Commission, 'Towards more democratic European Parliament elections - Report on the implementation of the Commission's recommendations of 12/3/2013 on enhancing the democratic and efficient conduct of the elections to the European Parliament', available from: http://ec.europa.eu/justice/citizen/files/report_ep_elections_2014_en.pdf

² European Parliament, 'Election Results 2014', available from: <http://results-elections2014.eu/en/election-results-2014.html>

³ European Parliament, 'Turnout at the European Parliament elections (1979-2009)', available from: <http://europarl.europa.eu/aboutparliament/en/000cdcd9d4/Turnout-%281979-2009%29.html;jsessionid=3BB5C866938B67BB57C693F69B3DFDD1.node2>

⁴ Garcia, B.L., 'Youth Absenteeism in the European Parliament Elections', report by International Debate Education Association (IDEA), League of Young Voters (LYV), European Youth Forum (EYF), 2013, p. 9.

⁵ Plutzer, E., 'Becoming a Habitual Voter: Inertia, Resources, and Growth in Young Adulthood', in *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 96, No. 1, March 2002, pp.41-56.

⁶ Franklin, M.N. and Hobolt, S.B., 'The Legal Lethargy: How Elections to the European Parliament Depress Turnout', *Elections Public Opinion and Parties Annual Conference*, University of Essex, September 2010.



parents' socioeconomic circumstances and political attitudes largely determine whether their children vote once they become eligible.⁷

More specifically concerning the European elections, the low turnout amongst young people risks becoming a vicious circle whereby young people become more and more underrepresented in European politics and therefore lose interest in participating. This stems from the logic that when fewer young people vote, political parties nominate fewer young candidates who could represent young people's interest in the European institutions and hence, fewer young MEPs get elected.⁸

Additionally, youth absenteeism in European elections has come to challenge traditional neo-functional logic, which says that citizens transfer their loyalties from the national to the European level as the latter gains more power.⁹ One would therefore logically presume that since the current young generation has benefited the most from the freedoms and opportunities made possible by an integrated Europe, they should be (more) likely to actively participate in the EP elections. Especially as in a recent survey,¹⁰ the youngest age group (15-24) scored higher than other age groups in feelings of being European citizens, as well as in expressing a positive opinion on the EU. However as we have stated previously, this wasn't directly visible in terms of voter turnout for the youngest age group in the 2009 election.

In summary, the overall declining participation rates in EP elections suggests that we are experiencing a downward trend that looks likely to continue as the current young voter generation perpetuates the decreasing electoral participation trend from their parents' generation. This will not only lead to increased youth absenteeism in the current and future EP elections, but in the long term will also decrease voter participation in older age groups (and thus the overall average), since the current young generation will grow up without becoming habitual voters.¹¹

⁷ Plutzer, E., 'Becoming a Habitual Voter: Inertia, Resources, and Growth in Young Adulthood', in *The American Political Science Review*, Vol.96, No. 1, March 2002, pp.41-56.

⁸ Garcia, B.L., 'Youth Absenteeism in the European Parliament Elections', report by International Debate Education Association (IDEA), League of Young Voters (LYV), European Youth Forum (EYF), 2013, p.13.

⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 21.

¹⁰ Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA), 'Political Participation and EU Citizenship: Perceptions and Behaviours of Young People, Evidence from Eurobarometer Surveys', 2013, available from: <http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/youth/tools/documents/perception-behaviours.pdf>

¹¹ Franklin, M.N. and Hobolt, S.B., 'The Legal Lethargy: How Elections to the European Parliament Depress Turnout', Elections Public Opinion and Parties Annual Conference, University of Essex, September 2010.

1.2. Growing mistrust in the EU?

Youth absenteeism in general also represents a potential challenge for the legitimacy of the democratic process linked to the European Union. This is firstly because of a discrepancy between the number of 18-24 year-old citizens voting in European and in national elections (29% for the former, compared with 38% for the latter).¹² As such, the 'Europe-Gap', i.e. 'the difference between the number of people who voted in their national election and the number who voted in the European ballot', is considerable.¹³ The second and interrelated reason is the argument that the European elections 'fail as instruments of democracy as they do not adequately connect people's policy preferences to the decision-making processes in the European Parliament and to the public policy of the European Union'.¹⁴ Of course, the Lisbon treaty and the possibility to (indirectly) choose the President of the Commission, who is then formally appointed by the European Parliament, reduces this "democratic deficit" to a certain extent.

This trend of increasing voter apathy towards the EP elections, and the resultant legitimacy question, is of growing concern to both politicians and scholars. This is particularly the case in light of the vast amount of criticism that has been directed at the EU's handling of the economic crisis and subsequent austerity measures, leading to many Europeans becoming less enthusiastic about, or even losing faith in, the European project. In April 2013, after a continuous decline, the trust of European citizens in the EU institutions dropped to a record low, with less than a third of Europeans trusting them.¹⁵

The European Year of Citizens, with a range of events, conferences and seminars held across Europe in order to generate more direct involvement of citizens in the building of the EU, was seen as a concrete step towards bringing the citizens back to the heart of the European construction. Amongst other things, the European Commission attempted to strengthen the visibility of its problem-solving and information tools, such as Europe Direct and SOLVIT,¹⁶ to allow EU citizens to better make use of and defend their rights.¹⁷ The European Citizens' Initiative, which allows EU citizens to participate directly in the development of EU policies by calling on the European Commission to make a legislative proposal, represents a concrete example of this trend.

All these initiatives have as objective to engage in a more pro-active and open dialogue with citizens, discuss what Europe means for its citizens today and try to communicate the "added value" that the EU can bring to all citizens in a more efficient way.

However, some European initiatives appear to be more successful than others, and the Erasmus programme stands out among the successes. Can such an instrument create a stronger connection with the European Union and thus strengthen the European identity of the next generations? Could it be that participation in the Erasmus programme creates better awareness of and interest in European issues, thereby increasing the sense of European identity, and in the long run contributing to a higher

¹² Eurobarometer 71.3, European Parliament, European Elections 2009, Post-electoral survey, 'First results: focus on the vote by age group', Published December 2009, available from: http://www.europarl.europa.eu/pdf/eurobarometre/post_electoral/EB71.3-FocusonAge-EN.pdf

¹³ Rose, R., 'Elections in the European Union – A Comparative Overview International IDEA', for The UK Electoral Commission, European Parliamentary Elections Seminar, Cardiff, July 2004.

¹⁴ Franklin, M.N. and Hobolt, S.B., 'The Legal Lethargy: How Elections to the European Parliament Depress Turnout', Elections Public Opinion and Parties Annual Conference, University of Essex, September 2010.

¹⁵ Standard Eurobarometer 77, TNS Opinion & Social, Published July 2012, p.13, available from: http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb77/eb77_first_en.pdf

¹⁶ For more information, see: http://europa.eu/eurodirect/index_en.htm ; <http://ec.europa.eu/solvit>

¹⁷ European Commission, Press Release, 'European Commission kick-starts the 2013 European Year of Citizens', 01/01/2013, available from: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-13-2_en.htm

participation rate in the European elections? In order to answer these questions, we first need to understand what the Erasmus programme really is, and the logic behind it.

1.3. The Erasmus programme

For young people in Europe today, the Erasmus programme is probably one of the most well-known EU initiatives and the question “where did you do your Erasmus?” has become a common one among students, young professionals and at job interviews. The programme, which has even been called ‘a trail-blazer in European integration’,¹⁸ was launched in 1987, with the aim of giving university students from all over Europe the opportunity to study in another country,¹⁹ whilst fostering cross-border exchanges and promoting European values. The basic idea is that the programme will contribute to the building of a ‘genuine European citizenship’,²⁰ where its participants, i.e. the students, function as ambassadors of European integration.²¹ During their stay abroad, students make contacts and engage in exchanges with other Europeans. In so doing, they become more interested in, and more aware of, Europe and European issues. The result is a greater identification with the feeling of ‘being European’.²²

Named after the Dutch philosopher, theologian and humanist Desiderius Erasmus of Rotterdam (1465-1536), who himself spent long periods of his life working and living abroad,²³ the name is also an acronym: European Community Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students. University students going on an exchange under the programme do not pay university fees at the university abroad, and also receive a grant to partly cover the costs of the foreign stay. Furthermore, the courses completed abroad are fully recognised by the home university.²⁴

The Erasmus programme has developed over 25 years. Starting in 1987/88 with 3,244 participating students from 11 different Member States (Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Greece, Spain, France, Ireland, Italy, The Netherlands, Portugal and the UK),²⁵ it broke a new record in 2012/13 with 270,000 students benefitting from EU grants to study or train abroad,²⁶ and three million students participating in total.

In January 2014 the Erasmus programme was incorporated into the Erasmus+ programme, thereby becoming the most comprehensive EU educational programme so far, aimed at boosting young people’s skills and employability and modernising European education, training and youth systems.²⁷ The new Erasmus+ programme brings together all of the EU’s current schemes for education, training, youth and sport.²⁸ It combines the Lifelong Learning umbrella programme (running from 2007-2013)²⁹

¹⁸ European Commission, Press Release, ‘Three million Erasmus students in 2010? Viviane Reding’s call to action at the Erasmus Week’, 21/10/2002, available from: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-02-1525_en.htm

¹⁹ Erasmus Student Network, ‘Erasmus Programme’, available from: <http://www.esn.org/content/erasmus-programme>

²⁰ European Commission, Press Release, ‘24 countries, 1,600 universities, and over 200,000 students will take part in the European Union’s Erasmus programme in 1998/99’, 25/05/1998, available from: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-98-451_en.htm

²¹ European Commission, Press Release, ‘Romano Prodi, President of the European Commission, Celebration of the Erasmus Programme, Université Libre de Bruxelles, Brussels’, 29/11/2002, available from: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_SPEECH-02-601_en.htm

²² Mitchell, K., ‘Student mobility and European Identity: Erasmus Study as a civic experience?’, *Journal of Contemporary European Research*. Vol.8(4), 2012, pp. 490-518.

²³ European Commission, ‘Erasmus+ portal’, available from: http://ec.europa.eu/education/erasmus/history_en.htm

²⁴ Erasmus Student Network, ‘Erasmus Programme’, available from: <http://www.esn.org/content/erasmus-programme>

²⁵ European Commission, ‘Lifelong Learning programme’, available from: <http://ec.europa.eu/education/erasmus/doc/stat/table1.pdf>

²⁶ European Commission, Press Release, ‘Another record-breaking year for Erasmus’, 10/07/2014, available from: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-14-821_en.htm

²⁷ European Commission, ‘Discover Erasmus+’, available from: http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/discover/index_en.htm

²⁸ European Commission, ‘Erasmus+ portal’, available from: http://ec.europa.eu/education/erasmus/history_en.htm

²⁹ European Parliament and the Council of the European Union, ‘Decision No 1720/2006/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15/11/2006 establishing an action programme in the field of lifelong learning’, available from: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:32006D1720:EN:NOT>

with the Youth in Action programme (aimed at more active citizenship among young Europeans)³⁰ as well as five programmes for international cooperation (Erasmus Mundus, Tempus, Alfa, Edulink and the programme for cooperation with industrialised countries). Moreover, the Erasmus+ programme includes a student loan guarantee for master's students who wish to pursue an entire degree abroad. The scheme was approved by the European Parliament on 19 November 2013 and it has a budget of 14.7 billion Euros that will cover the period from 2014 to 2020.³¹ In other words, quite an increase in size and scope since the first days of the initiative in the 1980s.

1.4. The “Erasmus generation”: a new hope for European construction?

Since the establishment of the Erasmus programme, over three million young people from all over Europe have had the possibility to study in another country. In practice, this has meant so much more than just the studies – it has resulted in European experiences, new perspectives, language skills and friends.³² But, what has it actually meant for the feeling of European citizenship? Did the programme impact this feeling? If so, how? And how can we measure this?

Some studies have investigated the links between participation in the Erasmus programme and the feeling of European citizenship/identity.³³ However they have not examined the link between participation in the Erasmus programme and a concrete expression of European identity, i.e. participation in the European elections.

The Preliminary report which was carried out as part of the EVA project³⁴ found that more systematic data collection is needed both for pre-election voting intentions and for post-election self-reported participation, specifically on the 18-24 age group and ideally with a break-down by student/non-student status and type of studies. Moreover, the Eurobarometer surveys³⁵ which were used for the Preliminary report do not, due to their sampling methodology, provide a differentiation between Erasmus and non-Erasmus students. Thus, the surveys conducted so far provide no tangible possibility to estimate the concrete impact of mobility programmes, in particular the Erasmus programme, on the feeling of European identity/citizenship.

The Erasmus Voting Assessment project aims to fill this information gap.

³⁰ European Commission, ‘Youth in Action Programme Overview’, available from: http://ec.europa.eu/youth/youth-in-action-programme/overview_en.htm

³¹ European Commission, ‘Discover Erasmus+’, available from: http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/discover/index_en.htm

³² European Commission, Press Release, ‘Three million Erasmus students in 2010? Viviane Reding’s call to action at the Erasmus Week’, 21/10/2002, available from: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-02-1525_en.htm

³³ For more information, see: Erasmus Student Network, ‘ESN Survey 2013: Creating Ideas, Opportunities and Identity’, 2013, available from: <http://www.esn.org/content/esnsurvey-2013-creating-ideas-opportunities-and-identity>; Mitchell, K., ‘Student mobility and European Identity: Erasmus Study as a civic experience?’, *Journal of Contemporary European Research*. Vol.8(4), 2012, pp. 490-518, available from: <http://jcer.net/index.php/jcer/article/viewFile/473/369>; FutureLab Europe, ‘Missing a Generation in European Politics’, April 2014, available from: <http://futurelabeurope.eu/read/items/missing-a-generation-in-eu-politics-how-to-involve-young-europeans-164.html?file=files/futurelabeurope/filepool/media/Missing%20a%20generation%20in%20EU%20politics.pdf>; Sigalas, E., ‘Does ERASMUS Student Mobility promote a European Identity?’, *Webpapers on Constitutionalism & Governance beyond the State*, Vol.2, 2009, available from: https://www.wiso.uni-hamburg.de/fileadmin/sovi/politik/governance/ConWeb_Papers/conweb2-2009.pdf

³⁴ The Preliminary (background) report is an internal output of the EVA project and has not been published. However, it is available upon request from info@generation-europe.eu

³⁵ For more information about the reports used, see section 6: ‘References and works consulted’, p.39.

2. THE ERASMUS VOTING ASSESSMENT PROJECT

The EVA project has been funded by the European Commission under the Lifelong Learning Programme, and was carried out between October 2013 and September 2014 by AEGEE-Europe, the Erasmus Student Network (ESN) and Generation Europe Foundation (GEF).

2.1. Aim and objectives

2.1.1. Project aim

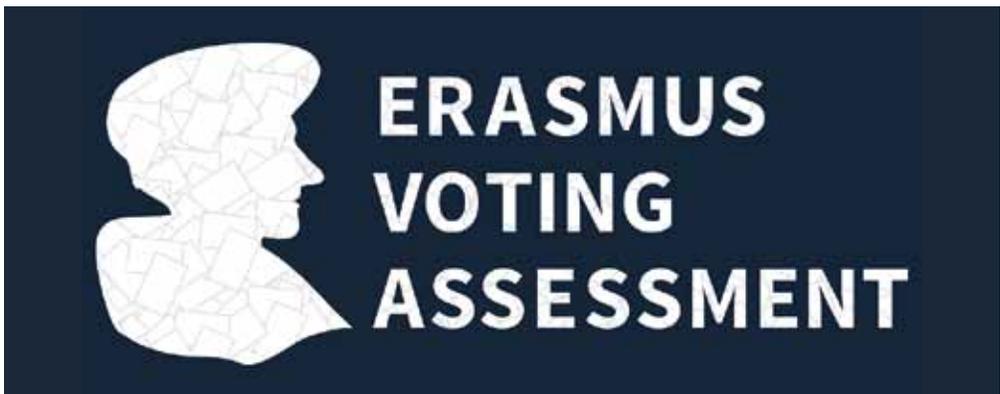
The main aim of the EVA project is to assess, by comparing the voting behaviour and electoral participation of Erasmus students with non-Erasmus students, the hypothesis that exchange programmes such as the Erasmus programme may lead to increased youth participation in European elections, as well as a more positive attitude towards being a European citizen. Our starting hypothesis is that studying abroad should create a wider knowledge of European issues and a greater sense of European citizenship.

The main indicator chosen to measure this feeling of European identity/citizenship is voting in the European elections. This indicator has been chosen as it represents a measurable, concrete participation in European political life, and should represent the expression of a general consciousness of being a participant in a larger European Community. The EP elections are also, as mentioned, a cornerstone of European democracy. Other indicators also aiming to measure the impact of the Erasmus programme are the identification with citizens of other EU countries, understanding of the European institutions, interest in European affairs, mobility and much more.

2.1.2. Project objectives

The project has three main specific objectives:

- To examine whether student participation in the Erasmus programme leads to an increased feeling of European identity/citizenship amongst youth, including non-Erasmus students, across Europe;
- To research whether the percentage of Erasmus university students participating in the 2014 European Parliament elections exceeds the percentage of non-Erasmus university students participating in these same elections;
- To map the impact that the Erasmus programme has on 'European identity', as measured by indicators such as identification with citizens of other EU countries, understanding of the European institutions, interest in European affairs, mobility etc.



2.2. Main outputs

2.2.1. Preliminary report

The Preliminary (background) report was drafted between October and November 2013,³⁶ and provides the basis for the design and implementation of the EVA project. In this report, the following were researched and presented:

- A brief overview of the theoretical aspects behind young voter participation in the EP elections;
- An overview of the Erasmus programme, its history, as well as data on the current situation and participation levels;
- Data which provides an initial understanding of historical attitudes of young people towards the EU and participation in the EP elections. Information on the participation in the 2004 and 2009 elections is also correlated with levels of participation in the Erasmus programme;
- Final conclusions discussing gaps in the current official data, and highlighting issues to be further analysed in the surveys.

2.2.2. Surveys

The surveys consisted of two questionnaires drafted by GEF, based on the findings of the background report. They were conducted among both Erasmus and non-Erasmus university students across Europe and aimed to measure the impact of participation in Erasmus on feelings of 'being European' and active engagement in European civil society and democratic life, in particular with respect to participation in the 2014 EP elections.

In order to ensure that the surveys were relevant and uniformly understood by the target audience, they were tested during a pilot phase amongst three different groups of former and current Erasmus students in Madrid (ES), Toulouse (FR) and Aarhus (DK). Feedback from these pilot studies was incorporated into the final version of the surveys.

The first survey assessed the understanding of European citizenship and measured the feeling of 'Europeanness', as well as the respondents' intention to vote in the (at the time) upcoming EP elections. It was launched on 11 February 2014³⁷ and closed before the start of the elections on 21 May 2014. The second survey was shorter and focussed purely on whether participants actually voted or not, and their reasons for voting or not voting. The second survey was open for a twenty-day period, and was launched the day after the end of the elections, on 26 May 2014.³⁸

Both surveys were available on the EVA project website and open to young people, including Erasmus and non-Erasmus university students across Europe. In addition, the surveys were disseminated via the networks of AEGEE-Europe, ESN and GEF, as well as via their respective social media channels and the EVA project's Facebook page.

The surveys were officially presented to, and discussed with, the European institutions and relevant stakeholders at the EVA project launch event, held on 11 February 2014 in the European

³⁶ The Preliminary (background) report is an internal output of the EVA project and has not been published. However, it is available upon request from info@generation-europe.eu

³⁷ The survey was launched at an official event organised for this purpose at the European Parliament.

³⁸ For more information about the surveys, see 'Methodology', p.18. The full survey questions are presented in 'Annex I: Survey 1' (p. 41) and 'Annex II: Survey 2' (p. 47). The sources of the questions are presented in 'Annex III: Question sources' (p. 49).

Parliament.³⁹ On this occasion, participants were invited to share their comments on the questions of the second survey, some of which were eventually integrated in the final version. For instance, the question related to the “pro-European” standing vote was integrated after requests expressed during an exchange of views between the representative of the European Commission and the representatives of youth organisations.

2.2.3. Website

Among the project tools developed during the project implementation, it was decided to create an independent website for the EVA project in order to disseminate the surveys using a “neutral” channel, instead of a website of one of the project partners. As such, the website mainly served as the hosting platform for the surveys. Additionally, the website satisfied the “communication” needs of all project partners and provided news and information about the project for participants, interested stakeholders from the private and NGOs sectors as well the European institutions. Project updates were posted on the website about the study trips, the launch event and the status of the survey opening and closing dates. The website is accessible at <http://erasmusvoting.eu/>

2.3. Project partners

2.3.1. AEGEE-Europe

The Association des Etats Généraux des Etudiants de l'Europe/European Students' Forum (AEGEE-Europe) is the EVA project coordinator. As such, its role has been the management and coordination of the project in terms of ensuring the smooth implementation of the work packages, financial management, coordinating the launch and closing conferences, and external contacts with the European Commission and the Quality Assurance Board. AEGEE-Europe has involved its local student networks and social media for outreach to survey respondents.

AEGEE-Europe is one of Europe's biggest interdisciplinary student organisations, striving for a democratic, diverse and borderless Europe. As a non-governmental, politically independent, and non-profit organisation, AEGEE-Europe is open to students and young people from all faculties and disciplines. Founded in 1985 in Paris, today AEGEE-Europe has grown to a network of 13,000 friends, present in 200 cities in 40 countries all over Europe. AEGEE-Europe has been a promoter of the Erasmus programme starting with its first implementation. In 1986, AEGEE-Europe played a key role in convincing the French Government of François Mitterrand to invest in the initiative, supporting the European Commission under the lead of Domenico Leonarduzzi (Head of Education of the European Commission) in their attempt to establish the Erasmus programme. Until today, AEGEE-Europe is supporting Erasmus students during the realisation of their stay abroad on the local level and works for the improvement of the programme together with the stakeholders at the European level.⁴⁰

2.3.2. Erasmus Student Network

The Erasmus Student Network (ESN) was in charge of project dissemination and design of the overall communication strategy. As part of this, ESN developed the project's visual identity and website, hosted and implemented the technicalities of the surveys and were in charge of the social media aspects. Together with all project implementing partners, ESN also contributed to spreading the survey via their social media channels and relevant youth associations.

³⁹ For more information, see the press release of the event, available from: <http://www.erasmusvoting.eu/news/press-release-erasmus-will-you-vote>

⁴⁰ For more information about AEGEE-Europe, see: <http://www.aegree.org>

ESN is one of the largest interdisciplinary European student organisations acting in the field of student mobility and internationalization of higher education. ESN is a non-profit umbrella organisation of more than 450 local sections in 37 countries in more than 450 Higher Education Institutions gathering 13,500 volunteers. ESN provides support services to over 160,000 international students and works for their needs by facilitating their mobility period, ensuring social cohesion, reintegration and by enhancing intercultural awareness and active citizenship. ESN was created in 1989 as a strong network to represent and advocate for the interests of the Erasmus students around the continent. Ever since, ESN is the direct link to Erasmus students, ensuring a high quality of their experience, working together and in complementarity with AEGEE-Europe.⁴¹

2.3.3. Generation Europe Foundation

Generation Europe Foundation (GEF) was the scientific partner in the EVA project, in charge of the analytical outputs. This entailed the drafting of the background report, the design, drafting and finalisation of both surveys, the analysis of all survey data, and the production of the project's final outcomes in this final research report. GEF has involved its Youth Ambassador network, which covers more than 24 European countries, and its social media to aid in the dissemination of the surveys.

Generation Europe Foundation is an independent NGO which was founded in 1995 in Brussels. For almost 20 years, GEF has provided a two-way communication platform enabling dialogue and exchanges of views between young people, the private and public sectors. GEF is experienced in providing educational material covering a wide range of issues in all EU languages, through a variety of media, as well as carrying out research and surveys targeting young people. To carry out its research and studies, and localise its educational content, GEF can count on a network of national partners in almost every EU country and beyond (Turkey and Serbia).⁴²

2.3.4. Quality Assurance Board

Guidance and feedback on the development of the surveys and the running of the project was provided by the project's Quality Assurance Board, made up of the European Movement International and the European Sociological Association.

The European Movement International is an international organisation open to all political, economic, social and cultural trends in civil society. Its objective is to "contribute to the establishment of a united, federal Europe founded on the principles of peace, democracy, liberty, solidarity, and respect for basic human rights. It seeks to provide a structure to encourage and facilitate the active participation of citizens and civil society organisations in the development of a united Europe". Its 42 National Councils and 32 associated Member Organisations work towards bringing together representatives from European associations, political parties, enterprises, trade unions and individual lobbyists. The European Movement has a very rich history involving very high level political figures crucial to European integration such as Walter Hallstein and Robert Schuman.⁴³

The European Sociological Association is an academic association of sociologists and a non-profit Europe-wide association made up of over 1,900 members. It was established in 1992, following deliberations and consultations among sociologists from a diverse range of countries. The European Sociological Association (ESA) aims to facilitate sociological research, teaching and communication on European issues, and to give sociology a voice in European affairs.⁴⁴

⁴¹ For more information about ESN, see: <http://www.esn.org>

⁴² For more information about GEF, see: <http://www.generation-europe.eu>

⁴³ For more information about EMI, see: <http://www.europeanmovement.eu>

⁴⁴ For more information about ESA, see: <http://www.europeansociology.org>

3. METHODOLOGY

The study has been carried out through a statistical analysis of the quantitative data collected using two on-line surveys that were accessible via the EVA project website.

The first survey (Survey 1) was disseminated with the aim of collecting basic demographic information and respondents' level of closeness to, and knowledge about, the European Union. Respondents were also asked to provide a rating of their voting intention at the next European Parliament elections. This survey was opened on 11 February 2014 and closed on the day before the elections started (21 May 2014); 5,338 respondents participated. The answers of 4,233 respondents were analysed, corresponding to persons aged between 18 and 30 years old and citizens of one of the 28 EU Member States.⁴⁵

Following this pre-election survey, a second short survey (Survey 2) was disseminated via the EVA project website, starting from the day after the elections (26 May 2014). The main purpose of this second survey was to gauge the actual voting behaviour of respondents. This second survey was closed on 13 June 2014 and completed by 3,074 respondents.

The two data sets obtained through the two surveys were then merged on the basis of a shared variable, the respondent's email address, producing a 'merged' data set of 2,598. Following completion of the merging process, the e-mail addresses were deleted for data protection and anonymity reasons.

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SURVEY 1

Part I: Demographic Information

Part II: Relation to the EU

- Studying abroad experience
- Views on and identification with the EU
- Likelihood of voting

SURVEY 2

Part I: Demographic Information

Part II: Voting behaviour

3.1. Survey questions

The first survey was structured in two parts. The first part collected respondents' demographic information, and contained 10 questions, recording respondents' age, gender, and student and/or employment status.

The second part was divided into three sections, with a total of 23 questions. The first sub-section, with 12 questions, asked respondents about their experience of studying abroad: if they had ever studied abroad and what had been their reasons for wanting to do so. Respondents were also asked to rate their experience of studying abroad. The second sub-section, which included 7 questions, sought respondents' views on the European Union, and their identification as European citizens. The third sub-section, with 4 questions, asked respondents to self-assess their likelihood of taking part in the (at the time) upcoming European Parliament elections.

The second survey was also structured in two parts. As with Survey 1, the first part collected respondents' demographic information. The second part recorded the respondents' voting behaviour, and their thoughts on whether their Erasmus experience had made them more likely to vote. Respondents were also asked whether they felt the party they voted for had a pro-European standing.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Although the minimum voting age in Austria is 16 years old, none of the Austrian respondents were less than 18 years old.

⁴⁶ This question was included at the request of the European Commission, after a debate during the project's launch event at the European Parliament in February 2014.

Many questions were taken from published Eurobarometers, especially from the Flash Eurobarometer 375; others were adapted from the Eurobarometer questions following on the testing of the questionnaire, and the remainder were drafted entirely by GEF.⁴⁷

The surveys were tested in December 2013, prior to their launch. The project partners visited three universities – one each in Spain, France and Denmark – in order to test the surveys on current and former Erasmus students, as well as to promote and discuss the project with students and the directors of the international offices. Students came together in small groups, filled out the draft surveys and gave valuable feedback, discussing the structure, language and possible answers of the surveys, whilst sharing their Erasmus experiences, opinions on the EVA project and views on Europe and European identity.⁴⁸

3.2. Representativeness of the sample and analysis

The two collected samples are voluntary samples, and therefore cannot be considered to be representative of young people as a whole. In particular, the samples are biased towards a population of students that are more likely to have a connection with AEGEE-Europe or with ESN. Indeed, these two projects partners disseminated the information about the EVA surveys among their respective circles, which are mainly university students (AEGEE-Europe) and Erasmus students (ESN).⁴⁹

The samples strongly over-represent the Erasmus student population, and in general a population that has relations with networks of international students, or a generic interest in studying abroad. The largest proportion of the sample is indeed composed of respondents that are currently studying abroad or have done so in the past.

The questionnaires were made available for completion on the EVA website, where AEGEE-Europe and ESN appear as project partners together with GEF. By participating, respondents had the possibility to win a trip to Brussels for the closing conference of the EVA project at the European Parliament (September 2014).

The numerosity and the features of our sample gave us the possibility to compare not only the EVA sample with the Eurobarometers data, but also, within the EVA sample, respondents that have never studied abroad with respondents that have studied abroad in the past or are currently doing so.

Most of the data analysis consists of monivariate and bivariate analysis. A logistic regression analysis was also performed on the voting behaviour variable to test our hypothesised positive relationship between the Erasmus experience and the likelihood to vote during the European Parliament elections.

⁴⁷ For more information about the bibliographical information on the sources used for the drafting of the surveys, including the Eurobarometer reports, see Annex III, p.49.

⁴⁸ For more information about the study trips and testing of questionnaires, see: <http://erasmusvoting.eu/news/madrid-study-trip>; <http://erasmusvoting.eu/news/aarhus-study-trip>; <http://erasmusvoting.eu/news/toulouse-study-trip>

⁴⁹ For more information about the role and tasks of each project partner, see '2.3 Project partners', p.16.

4. DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

4.1. Description of the sample

For the following data analysis, two different data matrices were used: one composed of the data collected during the first survey, which is a larger data set and will be used for the first part of our analysis, and a second data matrix that has been constituted by matching the first and the second surveys on the basis of a shared variable, the respondents' email address. This shared variable was deleted after the merging had been completed, granting anonymity and data protection to the respondents.

For the analysis, only respondents with EU28 citizenship and aged between 18 and 30 were selected,⁵⁰ although in some cases a different age range (18-25) was selected in order to enable comparison with the Eurobarometer data.⁵¹ For each table, information about the numerical basis of the table (N followed by a number) indicates the total number of respondents that answered the question(s) presented in the table.

The selected sample is composed of 4,233 respondents, 67% of whom are females and with a great majority of respondents (85%) currently in the education system. Of those that are still studying, 99% are enrolled in some sort of university studies: as undergraduate students (64%), master's students (33%), and PhD students (2%).⁵² The employment status of the respondents that are no longer in the education system is displayed in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Respondents' employment status⁵³
(N=633)

Employment status	EVA respondents not in education
Working full-time	46%
Working part-time	13%
Doing an internship	12%
Unemployed	18%
Studying ⁵⁴	2%
Volunteering	9%

The EVA sample largely over-represents students that have studied abroad: 49% of the respondents studied abroad in the past, 28% were studying abroad when completing the survey, and the remaining 23% never studied abroad. Of those that did not study abroad, 59% say they are planning to do so in the future, 25% are not sure about studying abroad or not, and just 93 respondents, corresponding to 10% of this subsample, or 2% of the overall sample, are not interested in studying abroad. The remaining 6% of the respondents do not plan to study abroad because they are no longer students. The vast majority of the students, 92% of the respondents that are currently studying abroad or were studying

⁵⁰ The minimum voting age is 18 in all EU28 countries except for Austria, where it is 16. None of our Austrian respondents was aged between 16 and 18, therefore the selected respondents are between 18 and 30 years old.

⁵¹ We compare our data with data from several Eurobarometers: Eurobarometer 55, Published in October 2001, available from: http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb55/eb55_en.pdf; Standard Eurobarometer 66, TNS Opinion & Social, Published September 2007, available from: http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb66/eb66_en.pdf; Eurobarometer 79.5, European Parliament, 'One year to go to the 2014 European Elections', Published December 2013, available from: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/pdf/eurobarometre/2013/election3/SyntheseEB795ParlemetreEN.pdf>; Flash Eurobarometer 375, 'European youth: participation in democratic life', Published May 2013, available from: http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/flash/fl_375_en.pdf

⁵² The remaining 1% of the respondents that are still studying are high school students.

⁵³ Survey 1, respondents' identification.

⁵⁴ 'Studying' here means people who are working but also taking some form of courses which are not in the educational system. They therefore do not consider themselves to be students anymore.

abroad in the past, did so through the Erasmus programme, while 9% of them went or are abroad through a partnership between universities, and 6% as free movers.⁵⁵

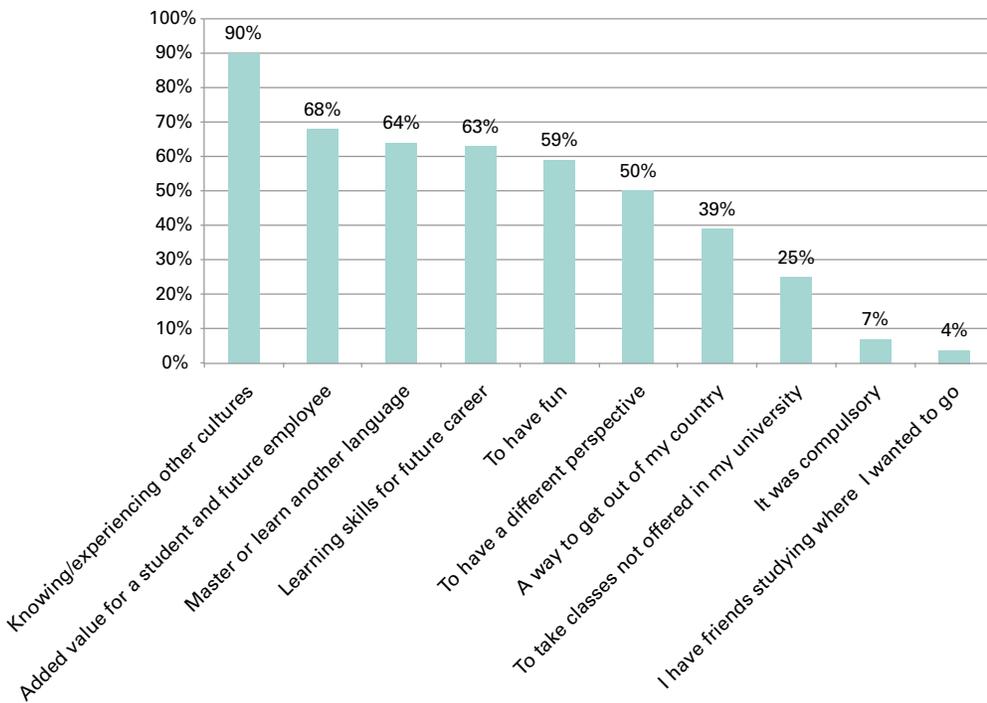
4.2. Study abroad experience

We start this analysis by exploring the reasons for which respondents have chosen to study abroad. Respondents were presented with a list of possible motivations and requested to indicate which ones applied to them. Graph 1 below lists the frequencies for each response.⁵⁶



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Graph 1. Why people decided to study abroad, percentage of cases⁵⁷
(N=3143)



⁵⁵ Survey 1, question 3. N.B. The total sums up to 107% because respondents could select more than one option. Data show that several students went or currently are abroad through more than one programme.

⁵⁶ The total sums up to over 100% because this question allows for multiple answers.

⁵⁷ Survey 1, question 9.

We can observe that the main reasons for studying abroad are both cultural and practical: students want to go abroad because they would like to experience a new culture and learn a new language, but at the same time they are aware of the benefits that such experiences can produce, in terms of career prospects and skills they can acquire. Having fun is also an important reason to study abroad, and it seems that this is associated with the wish to encounter other cultures. It is also interesting to note that 38% of the respondents wanted to go abroad as they see the studying abroad option as an opportunity to “get out of my country”.⁵⁸

Overall, the 3,163 respondents that studied or are studying abroad rate their experience very positively: 62% say the experience was excellent and 32% that it was “very good”, while the remaining 6% rate the experience as “good enough”. Only 9 respondents, 0.3% of this group, considered the experience to be a negative one.

We then asked students to provide an indication of the relative importance they gave to various factors influencing the decision to study abroad, by rating them from 0 (not important) to 10 (very important). Table 2 lists the average scores given to the importance of each factor:

Table 2. Rating of factors influencing studying abroad⁵⁹
(*N*=3163)

Dimensions	Average ratings
Cultural exchange with foreign students	8.53
Cultural exchange with the native population	8.26
Leisure	7.42
Quality of teaching	7.28
Organisation of the university	6.99
Reputation of the university	6.92

Cultural exchange was one of the highest rated reasons for deciding to study abroad (see Graph 1), and the information in Table 2 supports this finding: students who are going to study abroad consider the cultural exchange as the most valuable feature of their future experience in another European country. Leisure and the quality of teaching are also considered important, but not as much as the cultural exchange with other foreigners and with the native population; and a similar rating, just slightly lower, is granted to the university’s organisation and reputation.

Nevertheless, part of our sample did not study abroad or is not currently studying abroad: this group makes up 23% of the respondents, 941 individuals. When we look at the respondents that have never studied abroad, do not plan to or are not sure whether they want to, we can see that the main reason for not studying abroad is an economic one. Of this subgroup, 48% say they have been/are interested but don’t have sufficient financial resources, 28% say that they have been/are interested but their current situation does not allow it, and 12% say the curriculum does not allow it. Finally, 8% could not find a place in a university, and only 4%, which means just 12 respondents, have never been interested in the possibility of studying abroad. Although the sample represents a population of students (and former students) strongly connected with the experience of studying abroad, or at least with its idea,⁶⁰ we can still carry out some interesting comparisons between the group that had the experience of living abroad and the group that did not, in order to understand if there is any difference between the two in terms of participation in and closeness to the European Union.

⁵⁸ Looking at the responses by citizenship, and considering just groups composed of at least 100 respondents, we can see that “a way to get out of my country” sums up to 66% of the responses given by Italians and Luxembourgers, and to 53% of the responses given by Austrians.

⁵⁹ Survey 1, question 11. Respondents could select a “grade” between 0 and 10. The table presents the mean values.

⁶⁰ As noted in the Methodology section, the sample is self-selected, composed of respondents that visited the EVA webpage, and therefore biased towards a population that has some interest in the study abroad experience.

4.3. Feelings towards the European Union

Several questions are used as indicators of respondents' knowledge about, and feelings of closeness to, the European Union. The intention to vote and the reported voting behaviour also indicate an "investment in/commitment towards" the EU and will be analysed in a separate section.

Respondents tend to identify with the European Union: 91% of the respondents say they often or sometimes think about themselves not only as nationals of one European country, but also as European citizens. Table 3 shows the frequency distributions for this variable, and compares our data to the Eurobarometer survey 66 (2007). Note that for this comparison we selected a subsample composed of respondents aged between 18 and 25.

Table 3. Do you ever think of yourself as not only a national of one European country, but also as a European citizen⁶¹
(EVA sample: N=3105)

	EVA sample (18-25)	EB66-2007 (15-24)
Often	45%	16%
Sometimes	46%	38%
Never	5%	43%
Don't know	4%	2%

Comparing our data with the Eurobarometer data, we get a clearer understanding of the features of our sample, which shows a remarkable closeness to a sense of belonging to a European identity. Some differences can also be found between the respondents that have been abroad in the past and those that have never been abroad: members of the latter group identify themselves "less often" as European citizens ("often" 49% vs. 46%).⁶² This evidence supports the findings of a study published in 2012,⁶³ where 44% of the Erasmus students identified themselves "often" as European citizens.

When comparing to the overall young European population, we observed a stronger identification of the EVA sample with Europe. In order to understand on which aspects the EVA respondents feel "more European", we looked at their profiles in detail.

⁶¹ Survey 1, question 13.

⁶² The lowest level of closeness to a European identity is seen in the group of respondents that at the moment of the questionnaire were studying abroad: 40% of them think often of themselves as European citizens, a percent sensibly different compared with respondents that have been abroad in the past ("often": 49%), or have never been abroad ("often": 46%). This finding could be indicative of an additional importance taken on by national identity during encounters with other cultures and nationalities.

⁶³ Mitchell, K., 'Student mobility and European Identity: Erasmus Study as a civic experience?', Journal of Contemporary European Research, Vol.8(4), 2012, pp.490-518.

We asked our respondents to indicate what the European Union means to them: the responses are listed in Table 4 below.

Table 4. What does the European Union mean to you, personally?⁶⁴
(EVA sample: N =3438)

	EVA former/ current Erasmus	EVA never abroad	EB55-2001 (15-25, EU15)
The ability to go wherever I want in Europe	74%	67%	39%
A way to create a better future for young people	59%	58%	28%
A way to protect the rights of its citizens	45%	37%	16%
A means of improving the economic situation in Europe	41%	37%	31%
Guaranteed lasting peace in Europe	40%	29%	23%
A way to create jobs	37%	33%	24%
European government	34%	30%	31%
The risk of losing cultural diversity	11%	13%	11%
A lot of bureaucracy, waste of time and money	10%	11%	12%
Just a political project, an utopian idea	8%	10%	5%

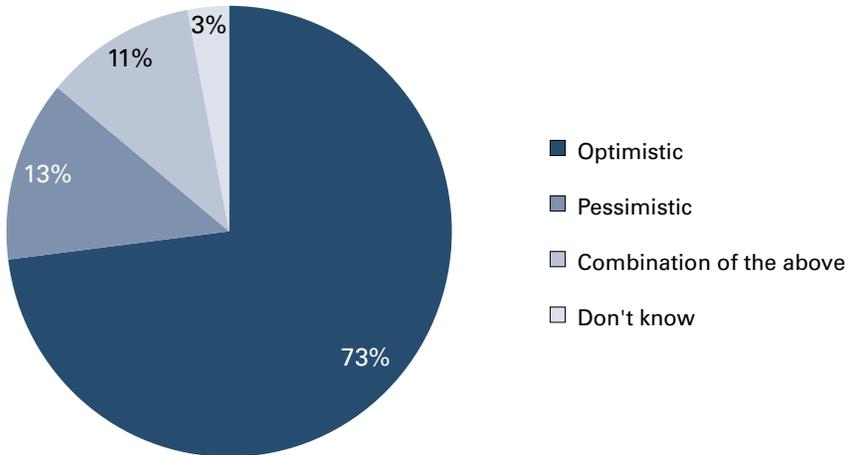
We can observe that compared to non-mobile students, current and former Erasmus students are more likely to associate positive meanings with the European Union. However the difference is greater with respect to the general (EB) population than with respect to EVA non-mobile students who, as we have seen, already have a special connection to the EU.

It is particularly worth noting that the 'negative' EU associations are roughly similar across all three groups, indicating that while the EVA respondents may feel more pro-European, they are not blindly so: they share the same perceptions of the "negative" aspects as the general population, but also have a greater appreciation of the "positive" aspects.

⁶⁴ Survey 1, question 14. The total sums up to over 100% because this question allows for multiple answers.

In order to understand what the respondents' expectations are for the long-term future of the EU, we also asked our sample group to rate their perception of the future of the EU on a scale ranging from very pessimistic to very optimistic. Results are shown in Graph 2 below.

Graph 2. Feelings about the future of the European Union⁶⁵
(N=4233)



The EVA respondents clearly believe in the future of the European Union, with almost three out of four respondents expressing an optimistic view. Differences between former/present Erasmus students and non-mobile respondents are not statistically significant, while the differences from a general European population are striking. According to the Eurobarometer 415 (2014), 53% of the Europeans are optimistic about the future of EU, 40% are pessimistic, and the remaining 7% does not know what to answer.⁶⁶ This data, once again, confirms that our sample is representative of a population strongly connected with the European Union.



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⁶⁵ Survey 1, question 17.

⁶⁶ We did slightly modify the original EB415 questions about the future of the EU by adding "combination of the above" as one of the possible answers. Changes were made on the basis of the pre-test feedbacks.

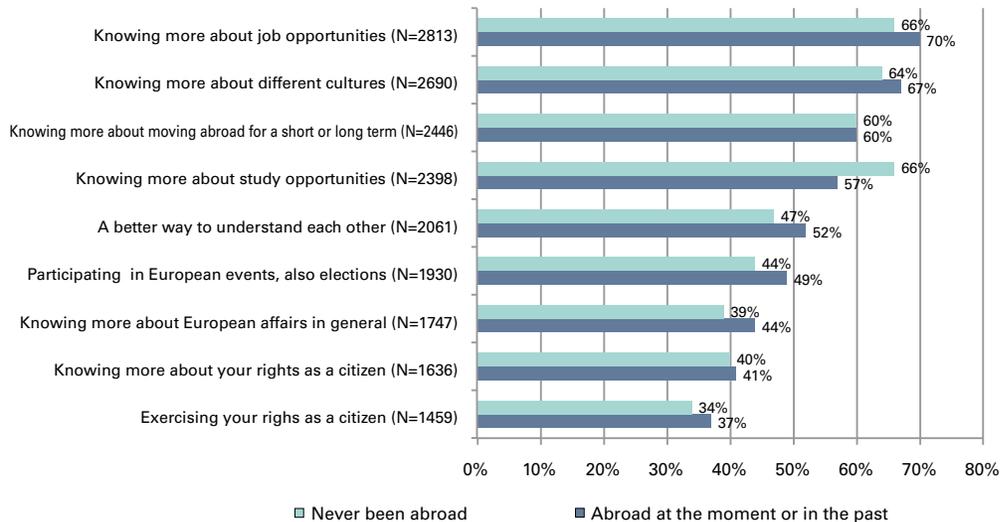
Table 5 below lists the frequencies with which EVA respondents indicated possible future scenarios for the EU, with a break-down between mobile and non-mobile respondents.

Table 5. Future scenarios for Europe⁶⁷
(N=3124)

	EVA former/current Erasmus	EVA never abroad
I have mixed feelings about the future of Europe	22%	20%
EU will be stronger because of the solutions found to overcome the financial crisis	20%	22%
The EU will be what we make of it	20%	16%
The EU will be weaker because of the current financial crisis	12%	13%
The EU will be stronger because of future accessions	9%	12%
The EU will be weaker because of future accessions	7%	7%
The EU will continue as it is	7%	7%
Other	3%	3%

We then asked respondents to tell us what they are interested in when they think about Europe. Graph 3 compares within the EVA sample the respondents that have been, or are currently, studying abroad with the respondents that have not studied abroad.

Graph 3. What are you interested in when thinking about Europe?⁶⁸
(N=2446)



⁶⁷ Survey 1, question number 16.

⁶⁸ Survey 1, question 18. The total sums up to over 100% because this question allows for multiple answers.

The first thing we notice is that the respondents that are currently abroad, or have studied abroad in the past, are more interested in all the available dimensions, compared to those that have never studied abroad. The only exception is the variable concerning “knowing more about study opportunities”. Of the participants who have not studied abroad, 66% indicated that they wanted to know more about studying abroad opportunities. This suggests that the respondents who never studied abroad would probably like to do so.⁶⁹ It is interesting to notice how the curiosity towards Europe is both practical (knowing more about job opportunities) and cultural (knowing more about different cultures).

In Graph 3, another difference between the two EVA groups can be seen when it comes to “knowing more about European affairs in general” (5 percentage points’ difference). This can be explained in two possible ways. One possible explanation, a “selection” hypothesis, would posit that students who decided to study abroad already had a strong interest in European affairs, while an alternative hypothesis would state that the experience of studying abroad increases the interest in knowing more about European affairs.⁷⁰

A direct indicator of interest in EU participation also tells us that almost half of the respondents (49% of the respondents that have been/are abroad) report an interest in taking part in European events (including elections); the percentage value is slightly lower for respondents that have never been abroad (44%).

To measure knowledge of the European institutions, we asked our respondents if they knew how the Members of the European Parliament are elected. Table 6 lists the percentages of correct and incorrect classifications of the statement “the Members of the European Parliament are democratically elected by the citizens”.

Table 6. Knowledge of the mechanism of elections of the European Parliament⁷¹
(EVA sample: N=3463)

	EVA sample (18-30)	EB375-2013 (18-30)	EB79.5- 2013
True	69%	50%	57%
False	15%	44%	31%
Don't know	16%	6%	12%

The EVA sample (young people aged between 18 and 30 with EU citizenship) is better informed about how Members of the European Parliament are elected than the general European population of the same age. However, 30% of respondents not knowing that MEPs are elected by the citizens can be considered quite a high percentage, even if it's significantly lower than what was recorded by the last two Eurobarometers in 2013. We should be aware that, as this question was asked in the run-up to the European Parliament elections, EVA respondents may have been exposed to more information about the election mechanism of the Members of the European Parliament. EVA respondents are also highly educated, which may explain the difference observed in Table 6.

EVA respondents generally believe the European Parliament plays an important role in the construction of the European Union: 20% think its role is very important and 52% think it is important, while 19% believe it is not so important and just 2% of the sample say the European Parliament is not important at all.⁷²

⁶⁹ Here, it is relevant to keep in mind that 76% of the respondents that have never studied abroad say they have been/are interested but for some reason (economic or of a different nature) could not do so.

⁷⁰ The available data does not allow for either of these hypotheses to be tested.

⁷¹ Survey 1, question 19.

⁷² The remaining 7% does not know what to answer.



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4.4. Voting intentions

In this section, we compare data from a very recent Eurobarometer (Flash Eurobarometer 375, 2013) with our EVA sample. In order to compare two populations that can be considered similar, we selected data from the EB375 and carried out the analysis only on respondents aged 18 to 30 that were in higher education at the moment of the Eurobarometer interview. We compared this sample to an EVA subsample composed of respondents of the same age range that have been or currently are Erasmus students and that are also in higher education. This comparison serves the purpose of understanding if the Erasmus experience makes any difference in respondents' political behaviour, given a similar educational status.⁷³

During the first wave of data collection, we asked our sample several questions about their demographics, their experience abroad, their feelings of closeness to the European Union, and also a few questions about their basic political participation. A large percentage of the respondents selected for this comparison (85%) did vote at least once in the last three years in a political election at a local, regional, or national level,⁷⁴ a sensibly higher percentage than the 79% derived from the analysis of the selected EB375 data set.

We also asked respondents to rate their intention to vote during the European elections, using a scale ranging from 1 (you would definitely not vote), to 10 (you would definitely vote), and compared our data to the EB375 data.

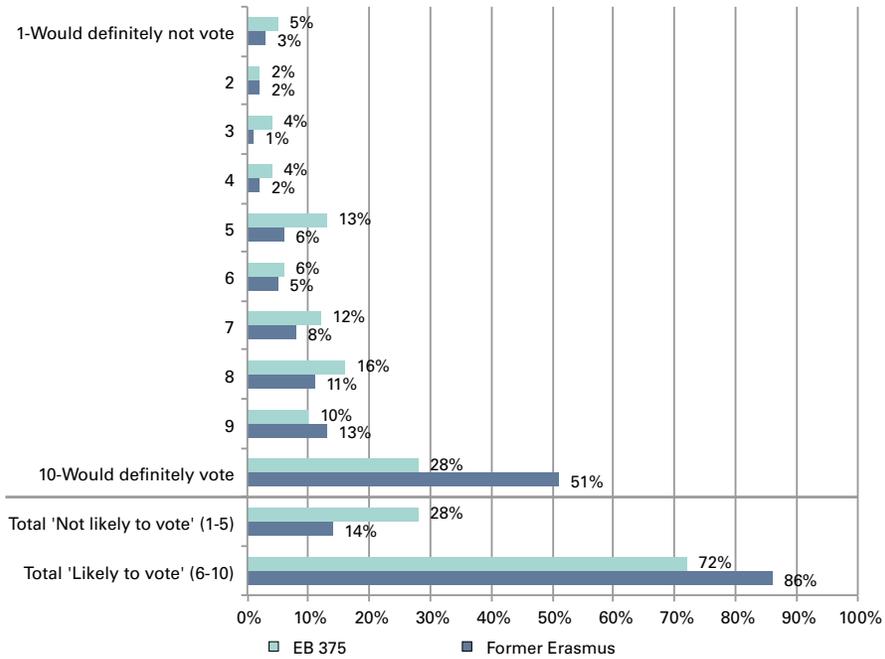
Graph 4 below compares former Erasmus students from the EVA sample with the students in higher education interviewed in the Flash Eurobarometer 375. In this graph, current Erasmus students have been excluded from the analysis because of the practical difficulties they experience in casting their vote (although Directive 93/109/EC recognises the right of citizens to vote in any of the EU Member States, some EU countries do not fully implement this law).⁷⁵

⁷³ The same EVA sub-sample was used to produce the results seen in Table 6.

⁷⁴ Survey 1, question 20.

⁷⁵ For more information, see: <http://www.europeancitizensabroad.eu/vote.html>

Graph 4. Likelihood of voting in the next European elections. EVA data and Flash Eurobarometer 375⁷⁶
 (EVA N= 1283, EB375 N=1825)



During the first survey, the answers from EVA respondents that are former Erasmus students indicated they were much more likely to vote during the next European Parliament elections than a similar population investigated in the Eurobarometer 375 in 2013. This suggests that studying abroad through the Erasmus programme could have had, to some extent, an effect on their political participation in the European Union.

Table 7 compares the EVA respondents that had been abroad in the past with those that were abroad at the moment of the questionnaire, those that have never been abroad, and the EB375 data set, on their likelihood of voting.⁷⁷

Table 7. Total "Likely to vote"/"Not likely to vote" and Erasmus experience abroad⁷⁸
P=0.000

	Abroad in the past through Erasmus	Abroad now through Erasmus	Never abroad	EB 375 (subset)
Total "Likely to vote"	87%	75%	82%	72%
Total "Not likely to vote"	13%	25%	18%	28%
<i>N</i>	1283	957	831	1825

⁷⁶ Survey 1, question 21.

⁷⁷ We restricted this analysis to students that have been, or are currently, studying abroad through the Erasmus programme, because 93% of the respondents that have been abroad in the past, and 91% of those that were abroad when completing the survey, have been or are Erasmus students. (Other students who have studied abroad in the past have done so through a partnership between universities (9%) or as free movers (5%). In a similar way, 9% of the students currently studying abroad do so through a university partnership and 8% as free movers).

⁷⁸ Derived from question 21, Survey 1: scores between 1 and 5 identify respondents that are not likely to vote, scores between 6 and 10 identify respondents that are likely to vote. The column variable is derived from questions 1 and 3 in Survey 1.

The data clearly suggests that while EVA respondents intend to vote in greater numbers than the EB375 respondents, responses vary according to the EVA respondents' experience of studying abroad.

Compared to the population of university students aged 18-30 (EB375):

- 15% more EVA respondents intend to vote if they have studied abroad in the past;
- 10% more EVA respondents intend to vote if they have not studied abroad – however we have seen that these respondents tend to be interested in studying abroad;
- 5% more EVA respondents intend to vote if they are currently studying abroad – however as noted above, many of these students probably anticipated that they would not be able to exercise their vote because of the known logistical and practical difficulties involved.⁷⁹

We can conclude that while Erasmus students have reduced intentions of voting during their time abroad, past Erasmus students and non-mobile students participating in the EVA study intend to vote in greater numbers than the general population of university students.

Replicating another question used in the Flash Eurobarometer 375, we asked our respondents who are likely to vote (scores between 6 and 10), why they think they will vote. Table 8 below compares the EVA former Erasmus respondents to the last Eurobarometer data collected on this issue in 2013, selecting only those respondents in higher education (EB375).

Table 8. Reasons for voting, given by respondents that are likely to vote⁸⁰

	EVA	EB 375
Democracy is important	61%	97%
Right way to influence political decision making	58%	85%
Euro and European elections are important	58%	93%
Voting is a moral obligation	53%	75%
Interested in politics or elections in general	39%	70%
Voting has an impact on problems that concern you	37%	72%
Always vote	26%	71%
N	1108	1291

As we can see, all the reasons given for voting have higher percentage values in the Eurobarometer 375 data, although the ranking of the different reasons is quite similar in the two data sets. While we cannot provide a firm explanation for this disparity, it is possible that the data collection technique used for EB375 (phone interviews) elicited more responses than that used for the EVA survey (on-line questionnaire).

⁷⁹ As highlighted in: Youth of the European People's Party, 'Resolution on Support of the possibility for the Erasmus students to vote National Elections during their period abroad', February 2013, available from: <http://youthpepp.eu/sites/default/files/library/7%20Resolution%20on%20Erasmus%20voting%20rights.pdf>

⁸⁰ Survey 1, question 22. The total sums up to over 100% because this question allows for multiple answers.

4.5. Voting behaviour

For this section of the report, we used the data matrix obtained by merging the survey administered before the elections and the one administered after the European elections.

The intention to vote can be considered to be a good indicator of voting behaviour, as 76% of the respondents that were 'not likely to vote' actually did not vote, and 77% of those that were 'likely to vote' did indeed vote during the elections (the relationship between these two variables is statistically significant, $p=0.000$).

The results presented in the previous section can therefore be considered quite reliable, although the recall question "did you vote at the last election?" should be used as a stronger indicator of respondents' actual behaviour, referring, as it does, to a past action rather than to an intention for future action. In the analysis that follows we therefore focus on actual voting behaviour, as reported by our respondents in Survey 2, completed after the European Parliament elections.

The main focus of this research was to investigate the possible correlation between a study abroad experience through the Erasmus programme, feelings of closeness to the European Union, as well as the likelihood of voting. As was shown in Table 7, respondents that have been abroad through the Erasmus programme were more likely to intend to vote during the European elections than a very similar population that had not studied abroad, partially confirming our hypothesis.

Now, when analysing the restricted data set that combines the first and the second surveys, we can see that the Erasmus experience abroad, or the lack of it, seems to make a significant difference also on actual voting behaviour. In Table 9 below, the percentages of respondents that voted during the 22-25 May 2014 elections are reported.



Table 9. Respondents that voted at the 2014 European elections⁸¹
P=0.000

	Abroad in the past through Erasmus	Abroad now through Erasmus	Never been abroad	N
Voted	81%	41%	74%	1461
Did not vote	19%	59%	26%	660
<i>N</i>	<i>1035</i>	<i>547</i>	<i>539</i>	<i>2121</i>

The data indicate a quite strong correlation between a previous or current study experience abroad and voting behaviour:

- as previously noted, students that were abroad at the time of completing the survey were less likely to vote during the European elections, with a participation rate in line with the general EU population (41% v. 42.54%);⁸²
- respondents who had previously studied abroad were almost twice as likely to vote than the general EU population (81% v. 42.54%).

The 42.54% average turnout rate is for the EU population as a whole, a break-down by age group was not available at the time of writing.

However it may be worth comparing the 68.6% average turnout rate for the 2014 elections (across the three types of EVA respondents) to data obtained in Eurobarometer 320,⁸³ relating to the 2009 elections:

- 29% of respondents aged 18-24 reported having voted in the 2009 EP elections;
- 34% of respondents that were students reported having voted in the 2009 EP elections.

These results confirm the specificity of our sample and show a stronger proximity of EVA respondents to the European Union.

The high participation rate of our sample also qualifies as a “pro-Europe” vote, with a great majority of respondents choosing a political party which they consider to have a strong pro-European standing. Table 10 below summarises this data and shows the differences among our three groups of respondents.

Table 10. Do you think that the party you voted for has a strong pro-European standing?

	Never abroad	Current Erasmus	Former Erasmus	EVA sample (18-30)
Very much	55%	59%	59%	58%
A little	33%	32%	28%	30%
Not at all	9%	8%	8%	8%
I don't know	3%	2%	5%	4%
<i>N</i>	<i>396</i>	<i>224</i>	<i>837</i>	<i>1457</i>

⁸¹ Survey 2, question 5.

⁸² Current Erasmus students did not vote because it was “too complicated to register for voting” (43%), because they “lacked the money to go back” (30%), “did not have enough information for deciding who to vote for” (11%), because they “had other commitments (9%), did not have time (3%), do not believe in political groups and politicians (3%), or “never vote” (1%).

⁸³ Special Eurobarometer 320/Wave 71.3, European Parliament and European Commission, Post-electoral survey 2009, Published November 2009, available from: http://www.europarl.europa.eu/pdf/eurobarometre/28_07/EB71.3_post-electoral_final_report_EN.pdf

Only 118 respondents, a very small number, responded 'not at all' when asked if the party they had voted for had a strong pro-European standing.

Overall, the EVA sample shows a high turnout rate and fairly weak support for anti-European parties. Differences between subgroups are not statistically significant.

4.6. Effect of the Erasmus experience abroad on voting behaviour

As we have seen in Table 9, there is a statistically significant relation between the "abroad status through the Erasmus programme" and voting behaviour: respondents that have studied abroad in the past through the Erasmus programme seem more likely to vote.

In the multivariate analysis that follows, we concentrate on former and current Erasmus students, and compare their voting behaviour to those respondents that have never studied abroad, with the intention of ensuring that the bivariate relationship shown in Table 9 is not confounded by other factors.



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4.7. Logistic regression model

Logistic regression analysis is a statistical method which allows us to determine the impact of multiple independent variables on a binary dependent variable. In our case, we wanted to test whether independent variables – such as age, gender, occupation, Erasmus status and various perceptions of the EU as presented throughout Section 4 of this study – had any impact on our binary dependent variable, i.e. voting behaviour (to vote or not to vote).

Our main purpose here is not so much to present a regression model that can be used for predictive purposes, but rather to understand what conditions made the respondents more likely to vote during the 2014 European elections. This model can also help us ensure that the correlation between "Erasmus status" and voting behaviour is not a spurious one: logistic regression will show the effect that our main independent variable, the Erasmus status, has on the binary dependent variable that recorded the voting behaviour, controlling for other relevant factors.

We tested three different logistic regression models, starting with Model 1 where the only predictor of the voting behaviour was the Erasmus status. Each subsequent model introduced a new set of variables, and consequently showed what was left of the predictive power of our main independent variable once the significance of these additional predictors had been tested.

Table 11. Odds ratio values for the models predicting “voting behaviour”
Only statistically significant predictors are reported in the table.

Variable	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Erasmus in the past	1.74***	1.83***	2.02***
Current Erasmus	0.28***	0.28***	0.27***
Age		n.s	n.s
Sex		1.6**	1.55***
Members of the Parliament are elected			1.86***
EU means a way to create jobs			0.77*
EU means a better future			1.57***
Interested in knowing more about your rights as a citizen			1.27*
Interested in knowing more about European affairs			1.44**
Interested in knowing more about job opportunities			0.72**
Interested in participating in European events			1.49***
Interested in knowing more about other cultures			0.72***
R Squared	0.145	0.156	0.249
N	2383	2383	2026

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$

Although the explanatory power of the three models is quite weak, as we can see in the low values the R squared takes in each model, it is particularly interesting to see that the first two predictor variables, having been abroad through Erasmus in the past, and being currently abroad through the Erasmus programme, are statistically significant predictors even when controlling for all other available factors.⁸⁴ The multivariate analysis confirms that the effect of the “Erasmus status” still exists with quite the same strength regardless of respondents’ sex and knowledge and opinions about the European Union. The results of the logistic regression suggest that:

1. Having been an Erasmus student in the past more than doubles the probability of voting during the European elections, while being a current Erasmus student lowers the likelihood of voting;
2. Having knowledge of the EU affects voting behaviour: people that know more about the EU⁸⁵ are more than twice as likely to vote as other respondents;
3. Believing that the EU is a way to create jobs lowers the probability of voting, as do having an interest in job opportunities and having an interest in other cultures;⁸⁶

⁸⁴ These two variables compare the status of being a “current Erasmus student” and of being a “former Erasmus student” against the condition of having never studied abroad.

⁸⁵ As defined by knowing that Members of the European Parliament are elected by the citizens.

⁸⁶ This finding could suggest that interest towards the European Union lies on three dimensions. One dimension can be defined as political and is associated with a higher probability of voting during the European Parliament elections, a second dimension is practical (working and studying abroad), and a third dimension is cultural. The latter two dimensions are associated with a lower probability of voting.

4. Interest in knowing more about European affairs and citizens' rights, as well as an interest in participating in European events predicts a higher likelihood of voting. A positive view of the European Union also relates to higher probabilities of voting.
5. Being male increases the probability of voting by 28 percentage points.

Overall, the binary logistic confirms the existence of a correlation between an Erasmus experience and voting behaviour, and shows that the "Erasmus status" is the strongest predictor of the voting behaviour among those available from the survey.

It is also interesting to note that about 35% of our respondents that have been, or currently are, Erasmus students believe that participation in the Erasmus programme made them more interested and willing to vote during the EP elections, indicating how the Erasmus experience is valued by its beneficiaries. Just a small percentage of respondents say that participating in the Erasmus programme did not make them any more interested in voting (10%), and 46% say they would have voted anyway, regardless of having gone on Erasmus or not.⁸⁷

4.8. Conclusion

The EVA sample studied shows many particularities when compared with the general European population as investigated by the Eurobarometers. In general, EVA respondents report a closer sense of identification with the European Union, have a more positive outlook on its future, are more interested in participating, and indeed are more likely to vote during the European elections.

The EVA sample is not representative of young Europeans, but is representative of a young population that shares an involvement in European issues and has a high educational status. It's not a probability sample but a voluntary sample: respondents self-selected into the survey and therefore tended to have an interest in the main topic of the survey itself, while people that didn't care much about the topic of the survey tended to be under-represented in the sample. Comparisons with the general European population as recorded by the Eurobarometers indeed show up major differences, reporting higher levels of identification with the European Union among the EVA respondents, thereby supporting our initial hypothesis.

A more detailed comparison has been made by selecting a specific subset of respondents from the EB375 data matrix. We compared the former Erasmus students against a sample composed of European potential voters that were in higher education at the time of the Eurobarometer interview. This comparison reveals large differences between the two groups of respondents, suggesting that the Erasmus experience itself, and not the educational status of the respondents, has an impact on the respondents' level of political participation: former Erasmus students say they are more likely to vote when compared with a general European population of students in higher education.

We also wanted to compare former and current Erasmus students with EVA respondents that have never studied abroad. As previously noted, because of the way the sample is self-selected, the EVA respondents that have never been abroad in the past are generally interested in the possibility of doing so in the future. This "internal" comparison produced the most interesting findings of our research, suggesting that the Erasmus experience is relevant in shaping people's European identity and in affecting people's basic participatory behaviour in the political life of the European Union. Given an already high level of identification with the European Union, as is the case of our sample, the 'Erasmus experience' seems to make a difference in the respondents' level of political participation, significantly increasing their likelihood of voting in the European Parliament elections. This is true

⁸⁷ The remaining respondents are divided among a 7% that is "not sure", and a 1% that would have not voted anyway. Survey 2, question 4.



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even when controlling for other variables such as feelings towards the EU and knowledge of the mechanism of election.

The positive effect of the Erasmus experience on the likelihood of voting is not “explained away” by respondents’ feelings or knowledge of the EU, suggesting that there are some other avenues through which the sojourn abroad has an effect on students’ sense of European civic engagement.

Our findings give support to the conclusion of another important study conducted in 2012 by Kristine Mitchell,⁸⁸ to our knowledge the only other study that has investigated a large multinational sample of Erasmus students. While Mitchell’s study has the advantage of recording the level of social interaction between Erasmus students (our questions in this respect were more general in nature), the EVA study adds a focus on participation in European elections, a comparison between current and former Erasmus students, and does it with a multivariate analysis that shows interesting findings that will hopefully be investigated by further research.

⁸⁸ Mitchell, K., ‘Student mobility and European Identity: Erasmus Study as a civic experience?’, *Journal of Contemporary European Research*, Vol.8(4), 2012, pp. 490-518.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. Conclusion

The surveys used for this study assessed two aspects of respondents' relationship to the European Union:

1. their views on and identification with the EU;
2. their intentions to vote and actual voting behaviour in the 2014 European Parliament elections.

Concerning the first aspect, we have found that EVA respondents:

- tend to identify themselves with the European Union: 91% of the sample says they often or sometimes think about themselves not only as nationals of one European country, but also as a European citizen;
- seem to associate positive meanings with the European Union more often than other young people, while being as aware of negative associations as the latter;
- are optimistic about the future of the EU;
- are better informed about how MEPs are elected than the general European population of the same age, although 30% are still unaware that MEPs are directly elected by citizens;
- believe the European Parliament plays an important role in the construction of the European Union.

These findings are broadly in line with other studies conducted on Erasmus participants' views of and feelings towards the European Union, and in particular Mitchell's 2012 study on student mobility and European identity.⁸⁹

With respect to the second aspect – voting intentions and behaviour – we have found that the level of EVA respondents' participation in the 2014 European Parliament elections varied according to their Erasmus experience.

Indeed,

- 81% of EVA respondents who are former Erasmus students,
- 74% of EVA respondents who have never studied abroad (but as we have seen, would like to do so), and
- 41% of EVA respondents who are current Erasmus students

reported that they had voted in the 2014 European Parliament elections.

All of the above analyses contribute to providing an answer to the final, main question of this report: does Erasmus participation have an impact on the European voting behaviour of young people? Yes, it does. Our research shows that, among our EVA sample, which has a high level of closeness to the European Union, those who had an Erasmus experience show an increased level of voting participation in the EP elections. This increased participation remains as such, regardless of their level of knowledge and their feelings towards the European Union.

⁸⁹ Mitchell, K., 'Student mobility and European Identity: Erasmus Study as a civic experience?', *Journal of Contemporary European Research*, Vol.8(4), 2012, pp. 490-518.

5.2. Recommendations

In drawing up this report, we have come across a number of issues based on which we make the following recommendations:

From literature we have seen that people who do not get into the habit of voting (from the first time that they can vote) may be less likely to become habitual voters in the future. This possibility argues in favour of ensuring that all persons who are eligible to vote have the possibility to do so with ease.

We have also seen that students who are studying abroad experience practical and logistical difficulties in casting their votes, in spite of the existence Directive 93/109/EC. Yet many Erasmus students are first-time voters.

We recommend that everything be done to ensure that Erasmus students who are studying abroad are able to vote with the same ease as they would have in their home countries.

In this report, we have seen that the possibility of participating in the Erasmus programme seems to have an influence on students' interest in European affairs and on their willingness to vote in European elections. Further research will be needed in order to establish if the observed correlation has a causal nature and if it is therefore possible to claim that the Erasmus experience stimulates students' political participation to the life of the European Union.

We observed that, given similar conditions in terms of feelings towards the EU and knowledge of it, former Erasmus students show a much greater political participation (in terms of voting at the EP elections). This suggests that in some way the Erasmus programme heightens students' political consciousness and makes them more likely to act on a European level and participate in the political life.

We therefore recommend further research to understand in which ways the Erasmus experience can transform "EU friendly" students (students with a positive attitude towards the European Union) into "EU politically active" students. Meanwhile, we recommend that the Erasmus programme be expanded, so that more often positive attitudes towards the EU can be translated into political behaviours.

5.3. Final remarks

The decreasing turnout in European elections – and the particularly low political participation of young people – is a cause for worry and concern not only for policy-makers and for academics, but for the European civil society as a whole.

We have seen that the problem lies at several levels:

- young people have decreased participation in the 'formal' political discourse;
- young people do not have sufficient experience of the real, tangible benefits of the European Union to their everyday lives;
- young people who do not see the benefits of the EU do not value this entity, and therefore do not invest in its future: they do not participate in European elections.

We have made recommendations according to which all three of these issues can be addressed.

The organisations which have partnered to carry out this research project are well aware of the need to involve young people in the decision-making process especially concerning their own future.

They have established communication channels to reach out to young people and are prepared to help ensure that these recommendations are carried out through concrete actions.

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ANNEX I: SURVEY 1

RESPONDENT IDENTIFICATION

- a. Sex: F / M
- b. Age:
- c. Country of birth: (list of all countries)
- d. Citizenship: (list of all countries)
- e. In case of more than one citizenship, select the second: (list of all countries)
- f. Country you are currently living in: (list of all countries)
- g. Are you currently in education? YES / NO
 - If YES, please tell us more about your current educational status:
 - I am in high school;
 - I am enrolled in university studies: Yes / No
 - If yes, are you:
 - a) an undergraduate student
 - b) a master's student
 - c) a PhD student
 - d) in post-doc studies
 - If Yes:
 - a) which year of university are you in?
 - b) years left to complete your studies
- h. Let us know more about your employment status:
 - I work full time
 - I work part-time- I am doing an internship
 - I am unemployed
 - I am a fulltime student and I don't work
 - I am doing volunteer work
 - Other: please specify

If you are no longer in education, what is your highest degree: (list of degrees to choose)
- i) Email address*:

ABOUT STUDYING ABROAD

- 1. Did you ever study abroad as part of your university curriculum?**
 - a. Yes, in the past
 - b. I am currently studying abroad
 - c. No
- 2. (If answer c. to question 1) Are you planning to study abroad during your current university studies (post high school education)?**
 - a. Yes
 - b. I'm not sure yet
 - c. No
 - d. Not relevant (I am no longer in education)

* if you give us your email address, you'll be contacted to fill in the second survey (see below) and you may win one of the 5 trips to Brussels, next summer.

3. (If a. or b. to question 1) How did you get the possibility to study abroad? (multiple choices)

- a. Through a partnership between my university and a foreign university, (not the Erasmus programmes)
- b. With the Erasmus programmes
- c. In an independent way: I was/am not supported by any exchange programme – I am a “free mover”
- d. A combination of the above
- e. Other (please specify)

4. (If a. or b. to question 1) In which foreign country did you study or are you currently studying? (multiple choices)

- a. List of EU Member States. Please specify
- b. In a non-EU Member States. Please specify

5. (If answers a. or b. to question 2) In which foreign country are you planning to study abroad?

- a. List of EU Member States. Please specify
- b. In a non-EU Member States. Please specify
- c. I haven't decided yet

6. (If a. or b. to question 1) How many months did you spend studying abroad or are you studying abroad in total?

- a. 1-3
- b. 4-6
- c. 7-12
- d. 13-24
- e. ≥ 25

7. (If b. or c. to question 2) Have you ever been interested in the possibility of studying abroad?

- a. I have never been interested.
- b. I have been/am interested but don't have enough financial resources to afford studying abroad.
- c. I have been/am interested but my current situation (family, health issues, work obligations...NOT economic reasons) does not allow it.
- d. I have been interested but my curriculum doesn't/didn't allow me to go abroad.
- e. I have been interested but I didn't get a place in another university / school /...

8. (If a to question 7) What is the main reason you are not interested in studying abroad? (mark the most important reason)

- a. I don't want to live in another country
- b. I don't want to deal with a different language
- c. I want to graduate as soon as possible
- d. I don't want to spend time on organising my stay abroad
- e. It will not be useful for my future career
- f. I will have difficulties with the recognition of certain courses
- g. Other (please specify)

9. (If a. or b. to question 1) Why did you decide to study abroad? (mark all that apply)

- a. I am/was interested in knowing/experiencing other cultures
- b. I could take classes that are not offered in my university
- c. I wanted to master/learn a foreign language
- d. It was/is a way to get out of my country
- e. I had/have friends studying abroad where I went to study
- f. It was an obligatory part of my studies
- g. For the possibility of looking at my country from a different perspective
- h. For future work possibilities for which I need to learn skills I will use in my career
- i. To get a more exciting life/ to have fun
- j. Erasmus or other programmes give a student and future employee added value
- k. Other (please specify)

10. (If a. or b. to question 1) Overall, would you say that your experience of studying abroad is/has been:

- a. Excellent
- b. Very good
- c. Good enough
- d. Negative
- e. Very negative

11. (If a. or b. to question 1) On a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 means “not important at all” and 10 means “extremely important”, please rate the following factors which influenced your decision to study abroad:

- | | | | |
|--|---|-------|----|
| a. Quality of teaching: | 1 | | 10 |
| b. Organisation of the university: | 1 | | 10 |
| c. Reputation of the university: | 1 | | 10 |
| d. Leisure (international friends, parties, etc...): | 1 | | 10 |
| e. Cultural exchange with foreign students: | 1 | | 10 |
| f. Cultural exchange with the natives: | 1 | | 10 |

12. Did you take any course(s) focusing on the European Union (functioning of the European Union institutions, EU policies, etc)?

- a. Never, I chose not to
- b. Never, it is not part of my curriculum
- c. Yes in my university, in my country, as part of my curriculum
- d. Yes, in my country, as part of the classes/curriculum before leaving on Erasmus
- e. Yes, in a university abroad (during my exchange programme(s))
- f. I am currently taking a class focusing on European Union

ABOUT THE EUROPEAN UNION, FOR ALL RESPONDENTS

13. Do you ever think of yourself as not only national of one European country, but also as a European citizen? How often does this happen?

- a. Often
- b. Sometimes
- c. Never
- d. I don't know

14. Which of the following statements best describe(s) what the European Union means to you personally? (multiple answers):

- a. A way to create a better future for young people
- b. A European government
- c. The ability to go wherever I want in Europe
- d. Guaranteed lasting peace in Europe
- e. A means of improving the economic situation in Europe
- f. A way to create jobs
- g. A way to protect the rights of its citizens
- h. A lot of bureaucracy, a waste of time and money
- i. Just a political project, a utopian idea
- j. The risk of losing our cultural diversity
- k. I don't know
- l. Other (please specify)

15. How important would you say the European Parliament is in the life of the European Union nowadays?

- a. Very important
- b. Important
- c. Not very/so important
- d. Not important at all
- e. I don't know

16. What will the most probable scenario be concerning the future of the EU?

- a. The EU will continue as it is
- b. The EU will be stronger because of future accessions: the more Members States there will be, the stronger the EU will be
- c. The EU will be stronger because of the solutions that will be found at the EU level to overcome the current financial crisis (example: reinforced political union)
- d. The EU will be weaker because of future accessions: it is already difficult to work with 28 countries. If more countries enter the EU, then Europe will be more difficult to govern
- e. The EU will be weaker because of the current financial crisis which will create additional divergences among Member States
- f. I don't know, I have mixed feelings about the future of Europe. The EU will be what we make of it
- h. National governments will get more influence, a true European federalist project will never appear
- i. Other (please specify)

17. How do you feel about the future of the EU?

- a. Totally optimistic
- b. Very optimistic
- c. Fairly optimistic
- d. Fairly pessimistic
- e. Very pessimistic
- f. Totally pessimistic
- g. Combination of all above
- h. Don't know

18. Is the following statement true or false? ‘The members of the European Parliament are democratically elected by the citizens’.

- a. True
- b. False
- c. I don't know

19. When you think about “Europe”, could you please tell us whether you are interested in (multiple answers):

- a. Knowing more about your rights as a citizen
- b. Exercising your rights as a citizen
- c. Knowing more about European affairs in general
- d. Knowing more about job opportunities
- e. Knowing more about study opportunities
- f. Knowing more about moving abroad for a short or long term
- g. Participating in European events (also elections)
- h. Knowing more about different cultures
- i. A better way to understand each other and possibly an example for other countries in other parts of the world
- j. I don't know
- k. Other (explain)

ABOUT POLITICAL PARTICIPATION, FOR ALL RESPONDENTS

20. During the last 3 years, did you vote in any political election at the local, regional or national level?

- a. Yes
- b. No

21. On a scale from 1 to 10 how likely it is that you would vote in the next European elections in 2014? Please place yourself at a point on this scale where ‘1’ indicates that you would “definitely not vote”, ‘10’ indicates that you would “definitely vote”.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

22. (If score of question 19 is between 6 and 10) If you are likely to vote in the European elections in 2014, it will be because...?

- a. You are interested in politics or elections in general
- b. You believe Euro and European elections are important
- c. You believe that voting is a moral obligation
- d. You believe that voting is the right way to influence political decision-making,
- e. You believe that voting at the European elections has an impact on problems that concern you
- f. You believe that democracy is important
- g. You always vote
- h. Other

23. If you are not likely to vote in the European Parliament elections in 2014, it will be because...? (mark all that apply)

- a. You are not interested in politics or elections in general
- b. You are not interested in European politics and European elections
- c. You believe that your vote will not change anything
- d. You are against Europe, the European Union
- e. You believe that the European Parliament does not sufficiently deal with
problems that concern you
- f. You believe that you are not sufficiently informed to vote
- g. You never vote

ANNEX II: SURVEY 2

RESPONDENT IDENTIFICATION

- a. Sex: F / M
 - b. Age:
 - c. Country of birth: (list of all countries)
 - d. Citizenship: (list of all countries)
 - e. In case of more than one citizenship, select the second: (list of all countries)
 - f. Country you are currently living in: (list of all countries)
 - g. Are you currently in education? YES / NO
If YES, please tell us more about your current educational status:
 - I am in high school;
 - I am enrolled in university studies: YES / NO
 If yes, are you:
 - a) an undergraduate student
 - b) a master's student
 - c) a PhD student
 - d) in post-doc studies
 If Yes:
 - a) which year of university are you in?
 - b) years left to complete your studies
 - h. Let us know more about your employment status:
 - I work full time
 - I work part-time
 - I am doing an internship
 - I am unemployed
 - I am a fulltime student and I don't work
 - I am doing volunteer work
 - Other: please specify
- If you are no longer in education, what is your highest degree: (list of degrees to choose?)
- i. Email address*:
 - j. Did you take part in our 1st Survey? Yes / No

VOTING INTENTION, QUESTIONS ONLY FOR THE RESPONDENTS TO SURVEY 1

1. **In the first survey we asked you to rate your intention to vote in the 2014 European elections. Could you tell us what was your rate?**
 - a. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
 - b. I don't remember anymore
 - c. Not relevant (I am not an EU citizen)
2. **(Only for those who answered the first survey) Do you think that your intention to vote has changed between the first survey and the European election?**
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. I don't know / I don't remember

* if you give us your email address you may win one of the 5 trips to Brussels, after summer.

3. (If yes to question 2) Which reasons changed your decision to go to vote?

- a. Political reasons
- b. Economic reasons
- c. Personal reasons
- d. Other reasons. Please specify

4. (Only for Erasmus students) Do you think that your participation in the Erasmus programme made you more interested/willing to vote for the EP elections?

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. Not sure
- d. I would have voted anyway, having done Erasmus or not
- e. I wouldn't have voted anyway, having done Erasmus or not

VOTING BEHAVIOUR, QUESTION TO ALL RESPONDENTS

5. Did you vote in the 2014 elections? YES / NO

6. If NO, why not?

- a. Lack of time
- b. Lack of money to go back home to vote
- c. Lack of information about who to vote for
- d. I had other commitments (exams, etc.)
- e. I don't believe in political groups / politicians
- f. I never vote
- g. Too complicated/not possible to register for the vote (procedural difficulties)
- h. I am not an EU citizen
- i. Other (please specify)

7. Do you think that the party you voted for has a strong pro-EU standing?

- a. Very much
- b. A little
- c. Not at all
- d. I don't know

ANNEX III: QUESTION SOURCES

SURVEY 1

Question	Source
Student identification	GEF
Q1-Q12	GEF
Q13	EB 66 (2007)
Q14	EB 55.1 (2001)
Q15	Special EB 288/Wave 68.1 (2008)
Q16	GEF
Q17	Special EB 415/Wave 81.2 (2014) Modified
Q18	Flash EB 375 (2013)
Q19	GEF
Q20-Q23	Flash EB 375 (2013)

SURVEY 2

Question	Source
Student identification	GEF
Q1-Q7	GEF



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The EVA project has been carried out by:

AEGEE-Europe (coordination and legal responsibility for overall project): Luis Alvarado Martínez, Kathrin Renner, Anna Gots and Madalena Sousa.

ESN (communications): Stefan Jahnke, Brikena Xhomaqi, Petr Kozlík, Monika Rešetar.

GEF (surveys and research): Cristina Fancello, Johanna van Vrede, Stephanie Racette, Renato Carletti, Anna Rydholm, Alina Mattisson Lax.



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