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Deliverable D4.4

Post-election mapping and interaction activities – Austria

AIT Austrian Institute of Technology

POLITIKOS – Wir müssen reden!

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Table of Contents

Table of Figures

Introduction

The objective of Deliverable 4.4 is to present the implementation process and the preliminary findings of the post-election mapping activities, i.e. activities undertaken after the 2019 European Parliament (EP) elections in Austria. As the project proposal prescribes, parallel and identical activities were implemented in the project use case countries - Estonia and Austria - by consortium partners (see Deliverable 4.5 for overview of Estonian activities).

The post-election mapping and interaction activities included:

- one post-election Online Survey among the principle and extended target group;

- two post-election focus groups with the principle and extended target group in Vienna, Austria;

- three semi-structured open-ended interviews with the Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) from Austria;

- desk analysis of political parties' programmes in Austria;

- four semi-structured interviews with stakeholders.

As Deliverable 2.1 outlines, the project's **principal target group** consists of mobile EU students in Austria and Estonia, i.e. students from other EU countries who are resident in Austria and Estonia to pursue their academic studies.

However, the circumstances of students in higher education are quite specific. This includes their motivation for travelling and staying abroad and the time limitation of their stay. Therefore, the project also seeks to address an **extended target group** of mobile EU citizens who are not university students. The project's extended target group therefore includes students who attend vocational and professional education; employees on temporary workplace postings abroad; and employees who are posted outside of their home country permanently.

The post-election mapping activities were conducted based on the methodology developed in Work Package (WP) 2 that was submitted in Deliverable 2.1.

The objective of the post-election Survey and focus groups was to deepen and complement the findings of the pre-election mapping exercises. More specifically, these activities aimed to:

- learn about the voting experience of the target groups in the past EP elections;

- better understand the target group's interest in continued engagement in the political life in their host country and identify potential obstacles to participation;

- deepen the understanding of the target group's information and communication needs;

- explore suggestions for policy recommendations and specific measures which could be implemented by stakeholders.

The objectives of the interviews with MEPs were threefold:

- To inform MEPs about the project and explain the profile of the target group, its significance and its heterogeneity;

- To find out whether they consider mobile students as their constituency and how important were they to them as a target group in the 2019 European elections;

- To see whether they consider the current systems and procedures to be adequate for the needs of this particular target group and whether they have any suggestions for improvement.

The objectives of the stakeholder interviews were to (re)establish the connection with the stakeholder, to present the project and its findings and to conduct in-depth discussion on technical questions of the project in order to obtain first-hand feedback.

1 Post-Election Mapping and Interaction Activities

1.1 Post-Election Survey (Survey II) (10.02.2020 – 09.04.2020)

In accordance with the guidelines, design and content of the survey provided by WP2, the survey was divided into four sections containing the following topics:

1) Theme 1: EU citizenship rights and engagement of the target group in the 2019 EP elections

2) Theme 2: (Continuous) Participation of the target group in EU and host-country political life

3) Theme 3: Information needs and preferred communication channels of the target group

4) Theme 4: The role of stakeholders

The post-election Survey was conducted online using the Survey Monkey environment during the time period between the 10th of February and the 9th of April 2020. The online survey was responsive and adaptable for completing it on mobile devices. The survey was disseminated through the ongoing key stakeholders list, initially identified in Deliverable 4.1. The invitation to participate in the survey (see Annex 1) was sent to the key stakeholders that have direct access to the contacts of the target group and/or manage their social media accounts. More specifically, the invitation was sent to the Austrian National Union of Students (Österreichische Hochschüler*innenschaft), Erasmus Student Unions (ESU), various divisions of Erasmus Student Network (ESN) in Austria, Services Programme and Mobility Center of University of Vienna, Technical University of Vienna, Vienna University of Economics and Business, Modul University of Vienna. In addition, the survey was also sent to Europe Direct Austria, Young European Federalists Austria (JEF) and the Chamber of Labour (Arbeiterkammer / AK) in order to generate broad coverage and reach working EMYs. The project team continued to place special emphasis on mobilizing and motivating students aged 16-18 years and identified additional schools where the percentage of exchange students is higher. The project team also contacted key stakeholders who have better access to the younger EMYs. The following schools and stakeholders were identified and contacted: Boerhaavegasse BRG Wien III, Secondary School for Slovenes in Austria, Secondary School Theodor Kramer Gasse, Lycee Français de Vienne, BRG Komensky, Austrian Pupils / Student Union (Österreichische Schülerunion) and Vienna Board of Education (Stadtschulrat). In addition, the survey was posted by different ESN partners belonging to different Universities in Facebook groups and in their WhatsApp groups. The Post-election Survey was featured in the Newsletter of The Austrian National Union of Students (Österreichische Hochschüler*innen), who have the biggest direct outreach to the Austrian mobile students (Annex 2). Also, all respondents of the previous pre-election Survey and pre-election focus group participants were invited via the EMY project Newsletter (Annex 3). The survey was embedded into the EMY website to target the public as much as possible.[1]

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[1] The procedure was similar to the dissemination during the pre-election period. See Deliverable 4.2 for more details.

Furthermore, the participation in the survey was regularly promoted on EMY social media in correspondence with the communication strategy (see Deliverable 5.2).

Similar to the pre-election phase, in order to increase the response rate of the survey, all respondents were invited to take part in the lottery by providing their names and e-mail addresses at the end of the survey. The project team offered 5 Austrian Federal Railways gift cards (ÖBB[2]) to the winners of the lottery (each worth 50 EUR).

Overall, as many as 582 participants were interested and took part in the EMY pre-election survey. Due to the preconditions defined in the survey (age, nationality, etc.), 366 participants did not comply with the requirements the EMY project team predefined and described in the description text on the start page of the survey and therefore dropped out after the first questions (Question 1 to Question 3[3]) on the criteria.

In total, 216 mobile European youth (students, pupils, employees, interns etc.) were eligible to participate in the survey, with 181 completing it by answering almost all of the total of 78 questions (see the list of survey questions in Annex 4). The overall response can be considered as a good one confirming the interest on the part of the mobile students in the issues raised by the survey. In the pre-election survey, a total of 191 mobile students responded to the survey, with 191 of them answering most of the 37 questions (see Deliverable 4.2)

The respondents represented 17 EU countries. Top three countries were the following: Germany (53%), Italy (18%), Romania (5%). Mobile youth aged 16 to 17, 18 to 24 and 25 to 29 years old consisting of 72% 18 to 24 year olds, 27% 25 to 29 year olds and 1% 16 to 17 year olds. With regard to the gender of the participants it can be stated that one third of the participants were male (31%) and two thirds female (64%). Overwhelming, the majority of participants study or work in Vienna (44%) and Innsbruck (30%); the city of Graz made it to the third place with 7%. Most of the respondents came for their studies or professional training (88%), 9% for other reasons (such as relationship, family reasons, European Volunteer Service etc.) and 3% indicated professional / former employment as reason for staying in the host country, Austria. 26% of mobile students are enrolled at University of Innsbruck, 12% at University of Vienna and 9% at Technical University of Vienna, 4% at Vienna University of Economics and Business (the rest of the indicated Universities are sharing the participants with similar percentage up to 4%). Students were enrolled in the Secondary Education (3%), Bachelor's (46%), Master's (37%) and Diplomstudium (e.g. Law, Medicine) (10%). A significant proportion of the respondents can be called newcomers, since 33% have been living in Austria since 2019, 19% since 2018, 12% since 2017 and 15% since 2013 or earlier. 20% of respondents indicated their long-term plans for staying in Austria (more than 5 years), while about one third were not sure about their duration of stay and 7% indicated that their stay was short term and said they would stay up to 1 year.

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[2] Österreichische Bundesbahnen (Austrian Federal Railways): https://www.oebb.at/; 26.06.2019

[3] Post-election survey: see the list of survey questions in Annex 4

1.2 Post-Election Focus Groups (Focus Groups II.3. and II.4.)

The implementation of the post-election focus groups followed the methodology provided in WP2 (Deliverable 2.1). The post-election mapping activities in Austria included two focus groups involving both principle and extended target groups (students and working youth). The first focus group was conducted in the premises of Europe Direct Austria on 28.11.2019, while the second one, due to the COVID-19 crisis and the Austrian National Virus Control Measures, was held online via GotoWebinar on 28.04.2020.

The lists of participants of both focus groups are enclosed in Annex 5 and Annex 6, which have restrictive access due to preserving the anonymity of the participants.

1.2.1 First focus group (FG II.3.) (28.11.2019)

The first focus group was conducted with the representatives of the principal and extended target group and the political community of Austria. This focus group was concentrated on stimulating a direct exchange of views between young mobile EU citizens and host-country policymakers. The representatives of youth organisations of all Austrian parties that make up the Parliament were invited to take part in the focus group.

As suggested by WP2, the discussion was structured along four themes (some questions addressed to the target group only, some to politicians only). These are aligned with other mapping and interaction activities in the post-election phase:

- Theme 1: EU citizenship rights and engagement of the target group in 2019 EP elections

- Theme 2: (Continuous) Participation of the target group in EU and host-country political life

- Theme 3: Information needs and preferred communication channels of the target group

- Theme 4: The role of stakeholders

The participants of the first focus group were recruited via key stakeholders' direct mailings and social media channels. More specifically, the invitations were shared with the Austrian National Union of Students (Österreichische Hochschüler*innenschaft), Erasmus Student Network Austria (ESN), International Offices of University of Vienna, Technical University of Vienna, Vienna University of Economics and Business, Austrian Pupils / Student Union (Österreichische Schülerunion), Boerhaavegasse BRG Wien III and BRG Komensky, Europe Direct and JEF Austria (Young European Federalists).

In addition, the invitation was posted on ESN Uni Vienna Social Media channels, and in the WhatsApp and Facebook Groups of the ESN Buddy-network of the Technical University of Vienna. The representatives of party youth organisations were invited directly over e-mail and, if necessary, invitation was confirmed and repeated with phone calls. All 5 parties (coalition and opposition) that make up the Austrian Parliament were invited – Social Democratic Party of Austria (Sozialdemokratische Partei Österreichs), Austrian People's Party (Österreichische Volkspartei), Freedom Party of Austria (Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs), The Greens – The Green Alternative (Die Grünen – Die Grüne Alternative), NEOS – The New Austria and Liberal Forum (NEOS – Das Neue Österreich und Liberales

Forum). Four parties agreed to participate in the focus group; one of them (Austrian People's Party) had to cancel its participation at short notice due to the illness of its representative. Representatives of 3 parties were present during the focus group – Social Democratic Party of Austria, The Green Alternative and NEOS – The New Austria and Liberal Forum.

Figure 1 Focus Group (FG II.3.) (28.11.2019)

In the introductory part of the first focus group, an attendance list was circulated where the participants had to enter their names in a specifically designated spreadsheet. Each row in the spreadsheet was pre-numbered so each participant was identified in the analysis process as follows: Participant 1, Participant 2, and so on.

The fist focus group discussion lasted for approximately 120 minutes and was run by two moderators (one main moderator and one supporting moderator). The composition of the focus groups was intended to be as diverse as possible. The Focus Group (FG II.3.) comprised of 10 degree-seeking and Erasmus students as well as working youth originating from Germany, Slovakia, UK, Ireland and Italy and 3 representatives of Austrian parties (in total 13 participants).

The discussion was recorded; however, the anonymity of the respondents was guaranteed. The introductory part briefly presented the main focus of the EMY project and the topics to be discussed. A PowerPoint presentation (Annex 7) was also prepared with the questions projected to guide the discussion.

1.2.2 Second focus group (FG II.4.) (28.04.2020)

After the outbreak of the COVID-19 crisis and the increasing measures by the European Union and the Austrian government, the Consortium decided to wait with the publication of a date and the invitation to the focus group. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the curfews, as well as measures to limit the outbreak of the virus, the Consortium decided to conduct the second focus group on 28.04.2020 online using the tool GotoWebinar. Recruitment of participants for the second online focus group was done by dissemination on the online social media channels of EMY, by emails to key stakeholders, dissemination by key stakeholders on their own social media channels and mailings.

Eleven participants confirmed their willingness to participate in the online focus group by registering online in the EMY Focus Group Form (Annex 6). After registration, participants were informed individually by e-mail about the further process of participation and the online procedure. Finally, 6 of the registered participants took part in the focus group discussion.

As suggested and jointly discussed with WP2, the focus group discussed following themes:

- Theme 1: Participation of the target group in the host-country's political and social life and the role of stakeholders to support them in their efforts.
- Theme 2: EU citizenship rights and political engagement opportunities for the target group at the EU level.
- Theme 3: Experience of the target group regarding the COVID-19 outbreak and the extraordinary measures in the EU member states.
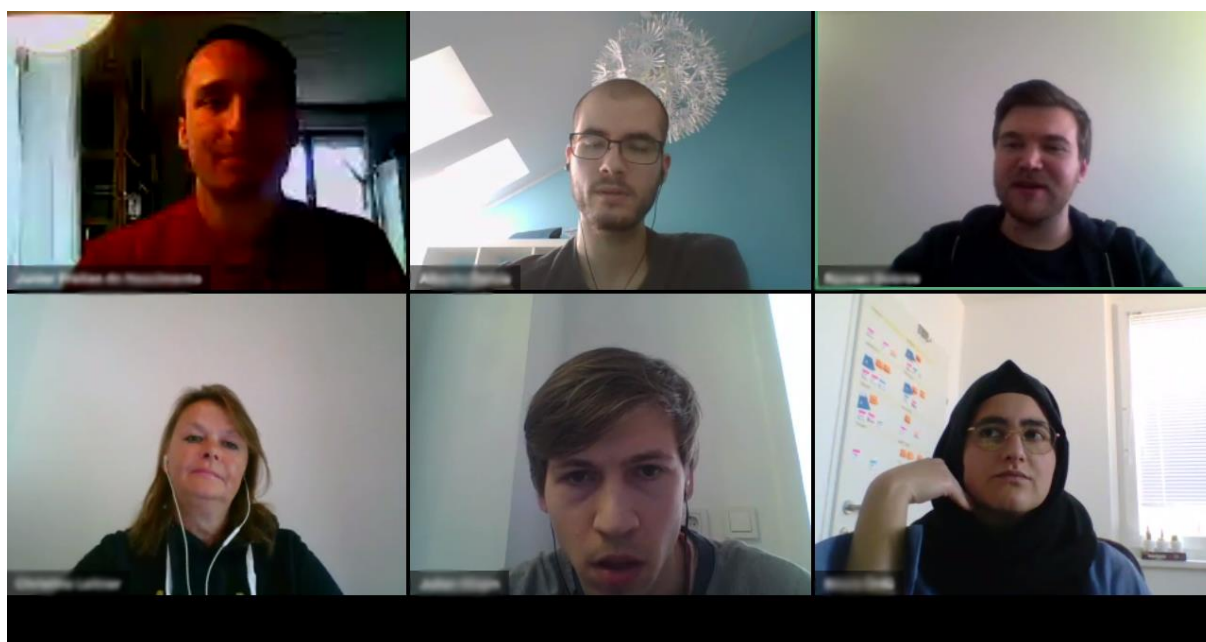

Figure 2 Screenshot capture of the recording of the FG II.4. held virtually (FG II.4.) (28.04.2019)

The focus group discussion lasted for approximately 90 minutes and were run by a lead moderator, an assistant and a technical organizer. The composition of the focus groups was intended to be as diverse as possible. The Focus Group (FG II.4.) comprised of six students

and working youth originating from Romania, Spain, Germany and UK. Due to a camera restriction in the GoToWebinar platform, only 6 participants could have their camera on at the same time. The camera function was switched among the participants several times, so that each participant could be seen while making a statement.

The discussion was recorded; however, the anonymity of the respondents was guaranteed. Also, the introductory part briefly presented the main focus of the EMY project and the topics to be discussed. A PowerPoint presentation (Annex 8) was also prepared with the questions and information to guide the discussion. At the end of the discussion, the moderators asked for feedback on the GoToWebinar platform and advertised the upcoming activities and crowdsourcing events of the EMY project.

1.3 Stakeholder Interviews

During the post-election period, three interviews with the political community and three interviews with key stakeholders were conducted by the project team in Austria. As suggested by the methodology provided in Deliverable 2.1., the focus group with the political community was replaced by semi-structured open-ended interviews, since the non-public and less confrontational format permitted policymakers to respond more openly as well as to provide more technical details, when appropriate.

1.3.1 Interviews with political representatives (MEPs)

As previously mentioned, project partners conducted three interviews with MEPs from Austria. All Austrian parties in the European Parliament were asked for an interview. The project team received commitments for interviews with four out of five parties, all but one of which were conducted by the project team. The commitment of the Austrian People's Party and the MEP Karoline Edtstadler was given to the project team. However, due to the new governmental elections in Austria in September 2019, as a result of the Ibiza crisis[4], the convening of a new federal government on 7th January 2020 and the appointment of Karoline Edtstadler[5] as European Affairs Minister, this interview could not be carried out and had to be postponed.

In accordance with the guidance provided by WP2, the objectives of the interviews were threefold:

1) To inform MEPs about the project and to explain the profile of the target group, its significance and heterogeneity;
2) To find out whether they consider mobile students/mobile youth as their constituency and if now, how important they were to them as a target group in the 2019 European elections;
3) To see whether they consider the current systems and procedures to be adequate for the needs of this particular target group and whether they have any suggestions for improvement.

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[4] Information on the Ibiza crisis in Austria: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ibiza_affair; 13.05.2020

[5] Information about Karoline Edtstadler: https://www.parlament.gv.at/WWER/PAD_02979/index.shtml; 13.05.2020

The following interviews with MEPs[6] from Austria were conducted in autumn 2019 and at the beginning of 2020. MEPs from following parties were interviewed:

- **Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats / Austria - Social Democratic Party of Austria (19.02.2020)**

- **Renew Europe Group / Austria - NEOS – The New Austria and Liberal Forum (10.01.2020)**

- **Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance / Austria - The Greens – The Green Alternative (12.11.2019)**

1.3.2 Interviews with other stakeholders

In addition to the MEP interviews, three additional semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders were conducted. Interviews were conducted with representatives of government, organisation and university body dealing with mobile European youth and the democratic participation of EMYs.

- **Erasmus Student Network (ESN) Austria - (05.02.2020)**

ESN Austria has been part of the ESN Network since the early 1990s. In 1992 the first ESN sections were founded in Graz (University of Graz, Graz University of Technology). Today, ESN Austria consists of 16 sections throughout Austria, from the early Graz sections to the younger ESN Technikum Wien, founded in 2015. ESN Austria is a registered association under the leadership of the National Council, which consists of six members. Four times a year the ESN General Assemblies take place with the 16 Sections, in which they discuss national and international projects and define the upcoming action plans for the association. ESN Austria also participates in international ESN projects such as the ESNcard or Social Erasmus. Erasmus Student Network (ESN) Austria concentrates on supporting exchange students, who are often confronted with problems in their new environment. Therefore, ESN offers help in the academic, social and practical integration process. This is mainly done through activities in the local sections that include cultural and social events. In addition, many sections have introduced mentoring systems to help international students with academic and practical integration. ESN also provides relevant information and encourages future exchange students to gain international experience and relevant insights into different cultures. ESN also helps students with all the necessary documentation for official registration in Austria.

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[6] List of interviewed MEPs see Annex 10

- **Election Office of the City of Vienna - (20.02.2020)**

The Election Office of Vienna is part of the office of the Administrative Group Education, Integration, Youth and Personnel, responsible for elections and specific legal matters (MA 62) – MA 62 is a municipal department of the Administrative Group Education, Youth and Personnel and is responsible for the organisation of all parliamentary elections, local elections and municipal elections in Vienna[7].

- **Chamber of Labour (Arbeiterkammer Österreich) – (02.03.2020)**

The interview took place jointly with the departments Continuing Education, Labour Market Policy and Education Policy of the Chamber of Labour Austria. The Chamber of Labour (Arbeiterkammer, AK) is an organisation that represents the interests of 3 million Austrian employees and consumers. Membership is compulsory for all workers employed in Austria and should therefore not be confused with the Austrian trade unions, whose membership is voluntary and which are organised in an umbrella organisation, the Austrian Trade Union Federation (Österreichischer Gewerkschaftsbund, ÖGB[8]). Together, the ÖGB and the Chamber of Labour represent the interests of employees in the Austrian system of social partnership, which plays an important role in the regulation of wages and prices. The Austrian Chamber of Labour is based on the nine Chambers of Labour for each federal province in Austria. The President of the Chamber of Labour for Vienna is also President of the Austrian Chamber of Labour[9].

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[7] In Vienna, EU citizens are only entitled to vote in district elections (*Bezirkvertretungswahlen*). The argument is that the City Council is a legislative body and the Austrian constitution reserves the right to elect the members of legislative bodies to Austrian citizens only. In Vienna, the legislative assembly (Gemeinderat) also appoints the mayor. In Munich, by contrast, the mayor is elected directly during municipal elections. EU citizens are entitled to vote in municipal elections in Germany and thus get to vote on the composition of the City Council as well as on the mayor. In Germany, as in Austria, EU citizens are not entitled to vote in Landtagswahlen. Evidently, two similar legal backgrounds yield very different outcomes.

[8] See for more information: Austrian Trade Union Federation (Österreichischer Gewerkschaftsbund) https://www.oegb.at/cms/S06/S06_2/ueber-uns

[9] See for more information: https://www.arbeiterkammer.at/index.html

1.4 Desk Analysis of Party Electoral Programmes

The interest of mobile youth in participating in EP elections seems to depend also on whether political parties address issues that are important to this group of voters. It is therefore of interest to analyse which issues the parties address in their party programmes and which of them are of greater interest to mobile youth. For this purpose, an analysis of the election manifestos of the parties in the project countries was carried out.

As a consequence of Brexit, Austria has 19 seats in the EP. The elections took place on 26 May 2019 on the basis of the Election Act for the European Parliament[10]. The voting age starts at 16 years, the age of candidates should be at least 18 years on Election Day. According to the law, parties and independent candidates are entitled to take part in elections. Political parties shall participate in under their own name.

7 Austrian parties took part in the 2019 European elections and 5 won a seat in the EP (Figure 3).

	Party	Alliance	Share of votes	Seats
1.	ÖVP/Austrian People's Party	EPP	26,98%	7
2.	SPÖ/Social Democratic Party of Austria	S&D	24,09%	5
3.	FPÖ/Freedom Party of Austria	ID	19,72%	3
4.	GRÜNE/The Greens	Greens/EFA	14,52%	2 (3 after Brexit)
5.	NEOS/The New Austria and Liberal Forum	Renew Europe	8,14%	1
6.	KPÖ Plus/Communist Party of Austria+		0,8%	-
7.	1EUROPA/Europe Now		1%	-

Figure 3 Results of the European Parliament elections in Austria

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[10] The European Parliament_ Electoral Procedures:
https://www.europarl.europa.eu/ftu/pdf/en/FTU_1.3.4.pdf

1.4.1   Selection of the policy topics for the analysis

The basis for the elaboration of policy categories for analysis were the following research questions:

1. What EU policy issues are important for the Austrian/Estonian parties? What are the parties' views on these issues?

2. Do the Austrian/Estonian parties pay special attention to mobile EU citizens, especially to the European mobile youth?

The first question served as an input for the post-election Online Survey to find out if the topics that matter to the parties are also relevant to mobile youth. The second question stems directly from the project's primary objective of contributing to the political and social integration of mobile youth in the host country.

As a first step, the electoral platforms of Austrian and Estonian parties were scrutinized in general to identify the policy topics dealt by parties. It turned out that the topics overlap to a large extent. The comparison of the lists of the topics enables to define common policy categories which were used for the content analysis of the party electoral platforms. The categories are ranked, starting with topics that describe general functioning of EU and the rights of the EU citizens and followed by more specific policy areas.

The policy categories are as follows.

1. **Vision of the EU/ MS sovereignty:** General vision of the party about the future of the EU, sovereignty of Member States and proposals for EU reform.

2. **Fundamental rights/rule of law**: General views of the party on protection of fundamental rights and justice for EU citizens, protection of social and civil rights and measures to safeguard rule of law.

3. **Economic policy**: General views of the party on economic policy and socio-economic model of the EU.

4. **Social policy:** General views of the party related to the responsibility of the EU for social affairs, harmonization on minimal social standards of Member States.

5. **Education/youth policy:** General views of the party on education/youth policy, quality of education, especially on student mobility and respective programmes.

6. **Regional policy**: General views on harmonization of regional development of the EU.

7. **Foreign/security policy**: General views of the party on common foreign and security policy of the EU, including neighborhood policies.

8. **Migration policy:** General views of the party on migration policy and proposed measures to cope with the immigration.

9. **EU Budget/taxation:** General views on the formation of the EU budget and taxation policies.

10. **Environmental policy/climate change:** General views of the party on protection of environment, especially related to climate change.

11. Agricultural/food policy: General views of the party on the Common Agricultural policy and food safety.

12. Digital EU: General views of the party on digitalization and innovation policies of the EU, including protection of digital rights of citizens.

In addition, party election slogans are recorded. Those summarize the main message of the party to voters.

For each category, the first question to be looked for was whether the election manifesto addressed the issue. If so, the short description of the party's position was extracted from the text of the respective party programme. Wherever possible, the text of the election programme was used.

The results of the desk analysis are presented in the Excel table (Annex 9). The first column of the table presents the policy categories and the first row the name of the political party. Links to the election platforms are presented in the second row and the following rows display the content of the platform for the respective category. A visualization tool has been used to provide an overview of the topics covered by Austrian political parties. The English overview is accessible here[11].

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[11] Overview of the topics covered by Austrian political parties available here: https://infogram.com/ep-2019-elections-austria-1hdw2j9dqj7j6l0

2 Key Findings

The following chapter will present the findings of the post-election mapping and interaction activities by mirroring the structure of the preceding one. The post-election survey will be presented first, followed by the two focus groups, the multiple interviews and finalizing with the desk research. The information presented in this chapter will be further analysed and commented in the third chapter.

2.1 Post-Election Survey (Survey II) (10.02.2020 – 09.04.2020)

This section presents the results of the post-election survey. The percentages in this document have been rounded to the nearest whole number. 181 EMYs completed the survey, which is the total number of respondents when referred to in the presentation and analysis of the results.

14% of the participants had already taken part in the EMY pre-election survey and 86% of the participants could be newly reached for the EMY post-election survey.

Theme 1: EU citizenship rights and engagement of the target group in 2019 EP elections

When asked whether the participants took part in the European elections in May 2019, 76% voted yes, of which 59% were in Austria, 28% in their home country, 10% in another EU host country and 3% outside the EU.
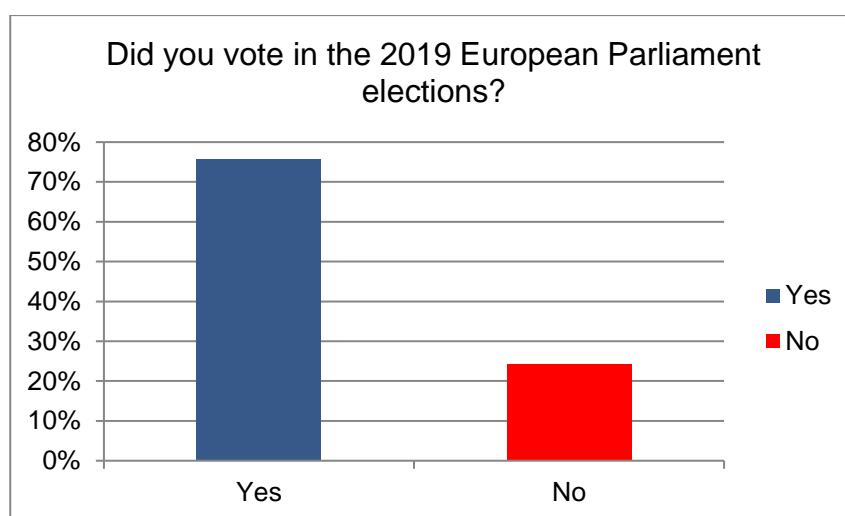
Figure 4 Survey results to the question "Did you vote in the 2019 European Parliament elections? "

As for the rest of respondents (the 24% who did not vote), they answered as follows (Figure 4) when asked about the reasons for not voting:

Why did you not vote?

- ▢ I do not think my vote makes any difference
- ▢ I have no interest in EU politics / I only vote in (national) elections in my home country
- ▢ I have no interest in politics generally
- ▢ I never vote in any elections
- ▢ I wanted to vote but it was too complicated to get registered
- ▢ I wanted to vote for a home-country party / candidate but I missed the deadline for registration
- ▢ I wanted to vote for a home-country party / candidate but it was too complicated to get registered
- ▢ I wanted to vote for a host-country party / candidate but I missed the deadline for registration
- ▢ I wanted to vote for a host-country party / candidate but it was too complicated to get registered
- ▢ I would have voted if I had known about the EP Elections in time

Figure 5 Survey results to the question "Why did you not vote?"

Among the 'Other' reasons presented for not voting, we can reproduce the following individual answers:

"[I] forgot about it"

"I get angry when I think about politics and I cannot choose the right party/candidate"

"I was only 17 years old and [am] not allowed to vote"

"I didn't know how and was too lazy to get informed"

"I wanted to vote for a home-country party but my papers never got to me. The Mail returned it to my hometown in Germany."

"I wanted to vote but I was in Australia"

Participants who indicated that they had not participated in the 2019 EP elections (24%) were asked whether they knew that if they live in another EU country, they have the choice to vote in the EP elections for a party/candidate from their home or host country - 55% of these respondents were not aware of their right.
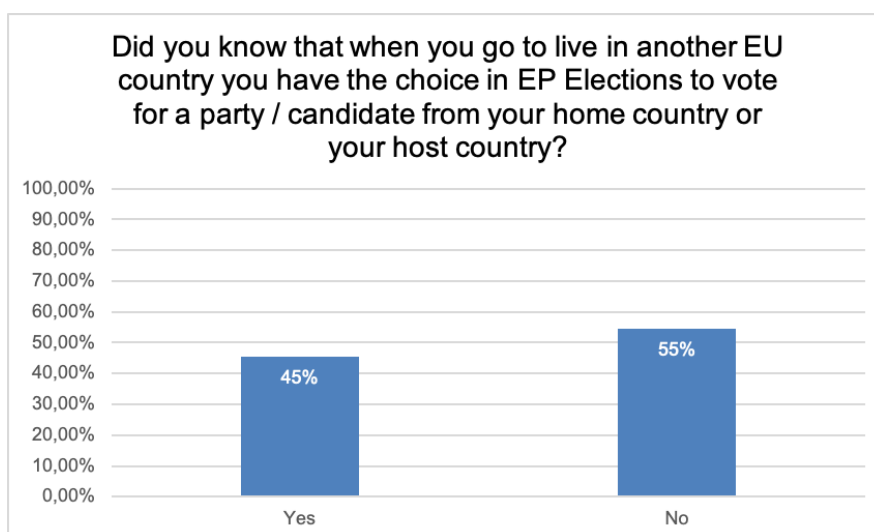
Figure 6 Survey results to the question about voting rights

Of those who said they would not participate in the 2019 EP elections (24%), 91% said they would be more willing to participate in the EP elections if there were the possibility of an electronic voting system.
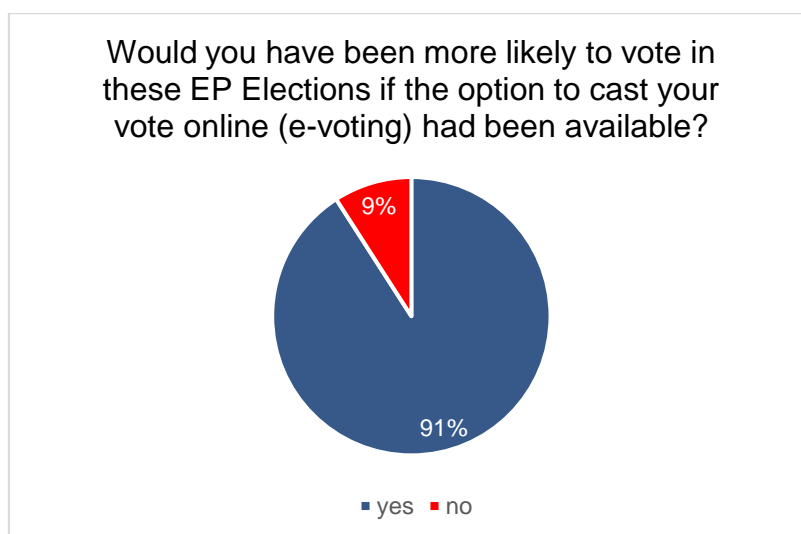
Figure 7 Survey results to the question about e-voting

76% of the total respondents, those who voted in the 2019 EP elections and stayed either in their host country Austria or another EU host country, were further asked to identify their voting choice: 88% voted for a home-country party/candidate, 11% voted for an Austrian party / candidate, 1% voted for a host-country party/candidate (while living in another EU host country than Austria).

In the 2019 European Parliament elections, did you cast your vote ...

11%

1%

88%

- ... for a home-country party / candidate?
- ... for a host-country party / candidate?
- ... for an Austrian party / candidate?

Figure 8 Survey results to the question about whom the participants voted for in the 2019 EP elections

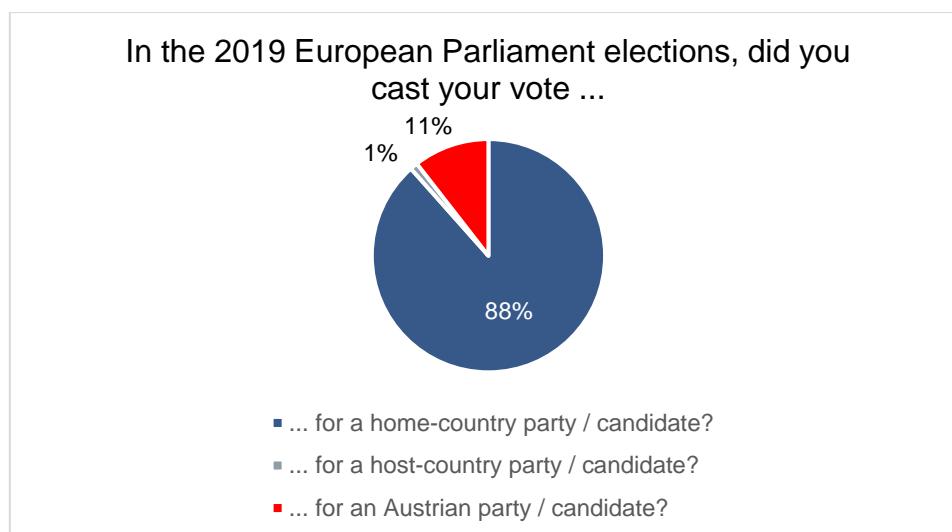### 1.1 Participants lived in Austria during the 2019 EP Elections

With a minority of 12%, the participants stated that they had voted for candidates from their EU host country Austria. The reason for this decision was two-thirds the fundamental interest in Austrian politics and one third equally divided between the following reasons: a "strategic" decision, as the participants had the impression that this approach could have a greater impact on EU politics, unawareness about the possibility of voting in the home country (while living abroad) and other (without any specification). None of the participants who voted for an Austrian candidate had a problem with the voting. In addition, 20% of these participants would not want to use e-voting, due to the risk of abuse of the voting system by manipulation or fraud (100% choose the option *"I am concerned that my vote may be compromised by manipulation or fraud"*).

Participants who voted for a candidate from their home country (88%) had the following four main reasons for their decision in the 2019 EP elections: 1) habitual (41%), 2) unawareness of the possibility of choosing a candidate from the EU host country (18%), 3) the feeling that with this approach they could have a greater impact on EU policies (21%) and 4) the participants intended to vote for an Austrian candidate in the elections, but had too little information and/or found the election process too complicated (7%). Of the participants who stated that they voted for a candidate from their EU home country, 24% had difficulties with voting due to lack of information and difficulty in finding information on voting from the EU host country (47%), 41% found it difficult to follow the political campaigns and programmes of their home candidates while staying in the EU host country Austria and 35% found the registration and voting process of voting in their home country (while living in a host country) complicated. In addition, 15% of these participants would not want to use e-voting, due to the following three reasons: 1) manipulation or fraud, 2) concerns about the technical reliability of the service and 3) concerns about the security of my personal data.

1.1 Participants lived in another EU host country during the 2019 EP Elections

10% of all survey participants, who voted in the EP elections 2019 and who lived in an EU host country other than Austria at the time of the elections, all voted for their home country candidate.

The main three reasons for their decisions were the following: 1) habitual (29%), 2) unawareness of the possibility of choosing a candidate from the EU host country (29%) and 3) the participants intended to vote for a host-country candidate in the elections, but had too little information and/or found the election process too complicated (14%). Of the participants who stated that they voted for a candidate from their EU home country over 90% had no difficulties. In addition, 14% of these participants would not want to use e-voting, due to the following two reasons: 1) manipulation or fraud, 2) concerns about the technical reliability of the service.

A significant majority (84%) of the participants who stated that they were in Austria or another EU country during the EP elections would be more likely to participate in an EP election if there was an online voting system.

If the option to cast your vote online (e-voting) had been available in the 2019 EP Elections, would you have used it?

16%

84%

■ yes ■ no
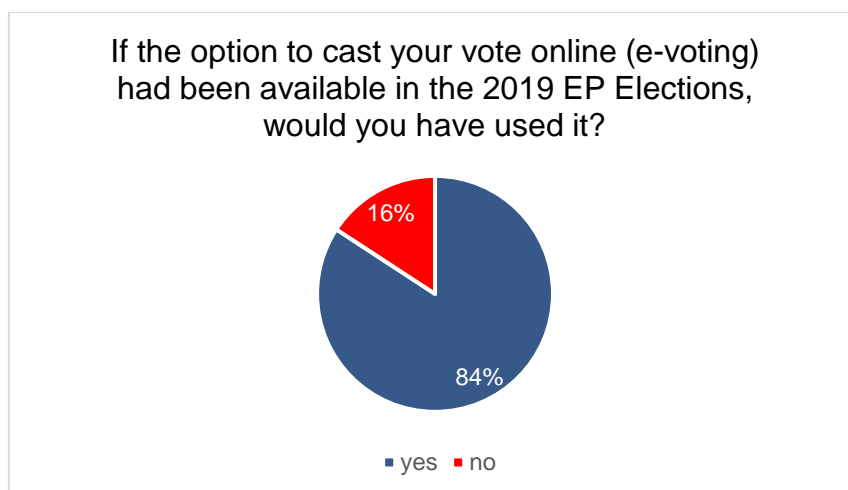
Figure 9 Survey results to the question about e-voting

Theme 2: (Continuous) Participation of the target group in EU and host-country political life

57% of the overall survey participants mainly followed only the EP election party campaigns of their home countries, 19% said they had followed the party campaigns of their host country Austria and 21% did not follow them at all. It is interesting to observe that according to the participants who had followed the party campaigns of their host country Austria during the EP elections, 56% said that the topics raised and communicated by the parties were issues that were of concern to them, but almost half (44%) said that these topics were not sufficiently addressed in a way that directly affected them.

Of the 57% of participants who mainly followed the party campaigns of their home country, 56% indicated that the topics communicated were not sufficiently addressed to them and 42% felt that the topics of the home country parties were topics that mattered to them.

With regard to political topics, all survey respondents were allowed to select multiple choices. The three topics which, according to our participants, were particularly relevant to them are: 1)

climate change / environmental policy (79%), 2) education / youth policy (50%) 3) migration policy (48%)
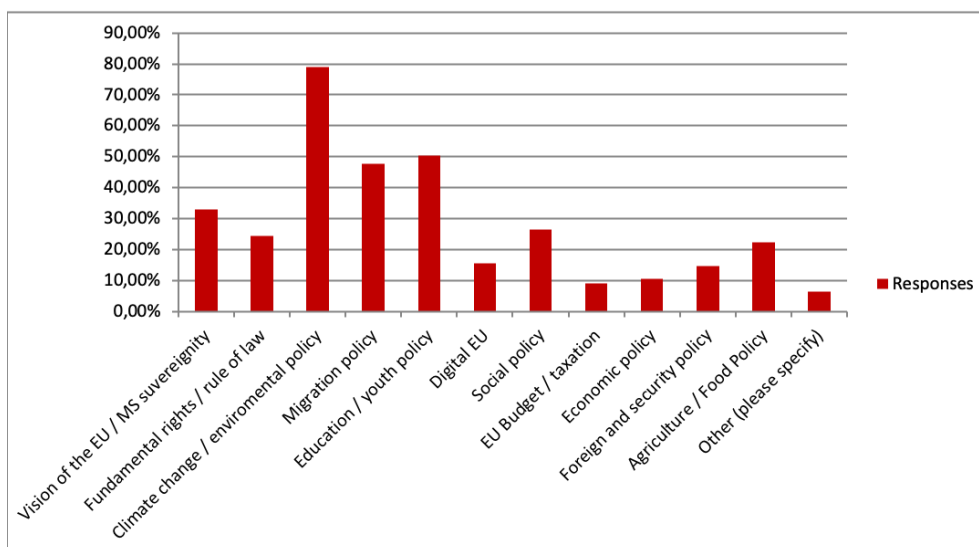
Figure 10 Survey results to the question about relevant topics

With regard to what should be improved in order to motivate young mobile European youth to participate more in the European political discourse (e.g. elections etc.), the following three options were perceived as the most important: 1) Provide better / more relevant information about the EU and why it matters to me in / has an impact on my everyday life (62%) 2) Provide relevant, real-life evidence that my vote can make a difference in EU politics (54%) 3) Provide better / more relevant tools and communication channels for me to participate in EU politics (e.g. with a focus on topics that I really care about) (50%)
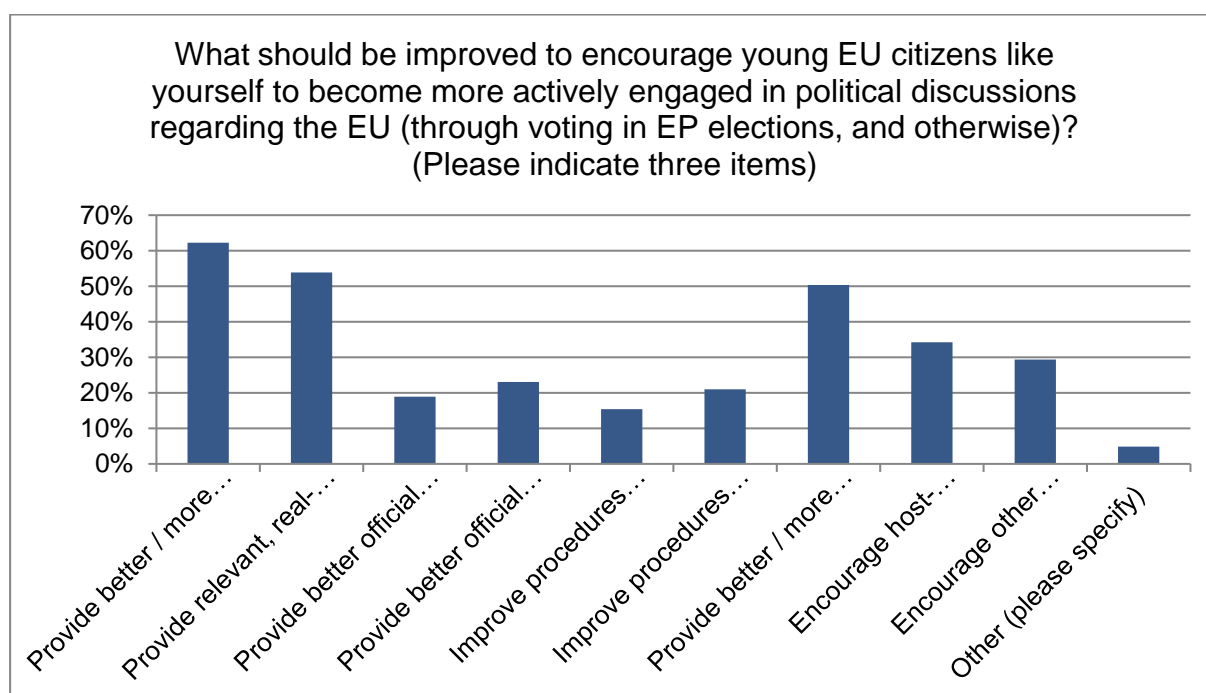
Figure 11 Survey results to the questions about improvement to encourage young EU citizens

All survey participants showed with 91% a great interest in participating in the next EP elections in 2024.

Of the 13 EU platforms / online initiatives listed[12] in the survey, 78% of participants were unaware of them. The three best known platforms according to our survey were: the European Youth Parliament: eyp.org, Openpetition.eu: www.openpetition.eu and the European Parliament Petitions: petiport.secure.europarl.europa.eu/petitions/en/home.
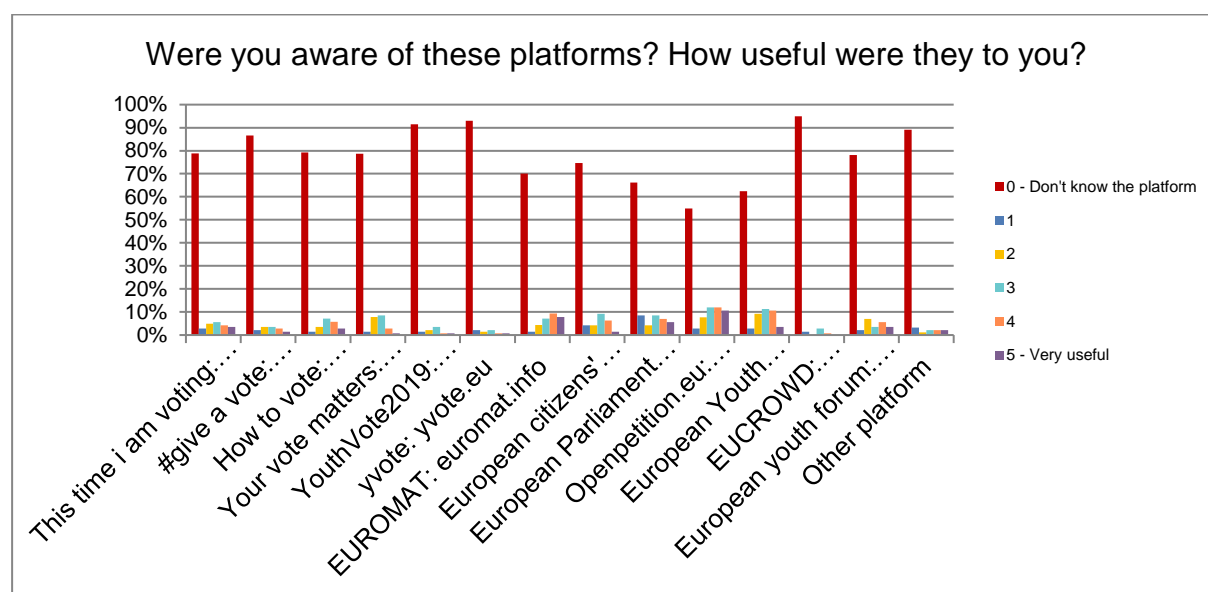
Figure 12 Survey results to the question about EU platforms

It can be seen very clearly that the majority of participants are not aware of European platforms and initiatives that promote the democratic engagement of European mobile youth, including one of the most relevant platforms for the continuous transnational democratic participation, the European Citizens' Initiative (ECI) - 61% of the participants are not aware of this instrument and only 9% of the participants who are aware of the ECI have registered or supported a proposal.

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[12] List of platforms based on analysis in Deliverable 3.1

Are you aware of the European Citizens' Initiative as an instrument for participating in EU policymaking?
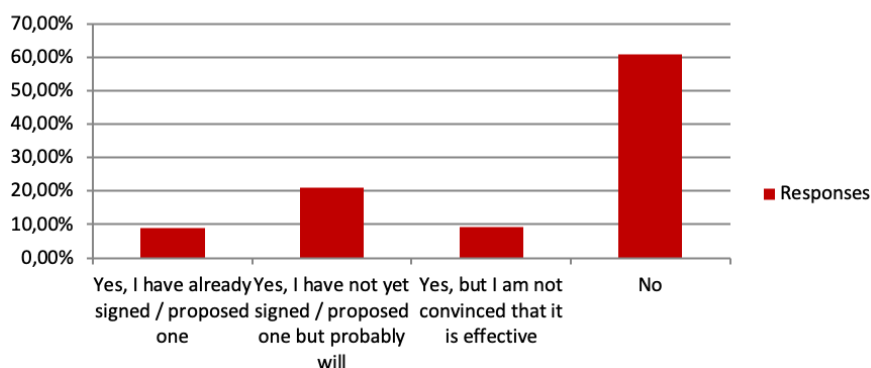
Figure 13 Survey results to the question about the awareness of the European Citizens' Initiative

It is interesting to note that only a very small percentage of participants see themselves either as citizens of their home country (3%) or as citizens of the European Union (4%). It can be seen that both the home country and the EU play an important role in the identification of the participants. Nevertheless, the identification as a citizen of their home country and then as a citizen of the EU is in the lead with 33%, closely followed by the identification of the participants first as EU citizens and then as citizens of their home country (21%). A trend can be observed, as 29% the participants identify themselves as EU citizens as well as citizens of their home country in equal measure.
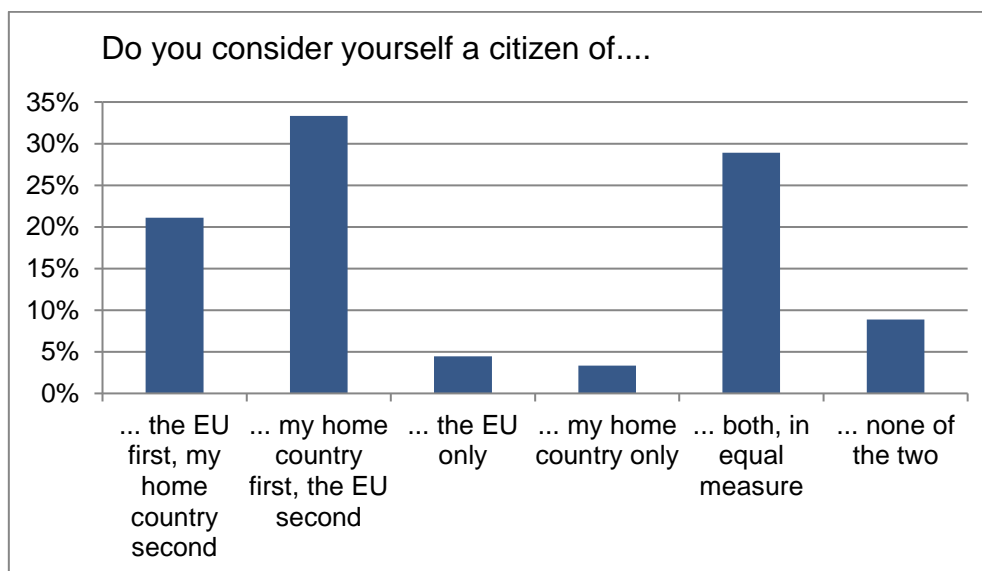
Figure 14 Survey results to the selection statement "In your own view, do you consider yourself a citizen of…"

The participants can be classified as a very mobile group with a long-term interest in participating in the democratic life of their EU host country and in the continuous shaping of the EU, as 98% said they could imagine leaving their home country to live in an EU host country for more than 3 years. Approximately, one third of the participants were involved in political,

social or civil organisations in their EU host country Austria. Among these, the three types of organisations in which the participants are most involved are the following: Local community groups (42%), local / national NGO, public interest groups (23%), local / national professional associations (student union, trade union) (21%).
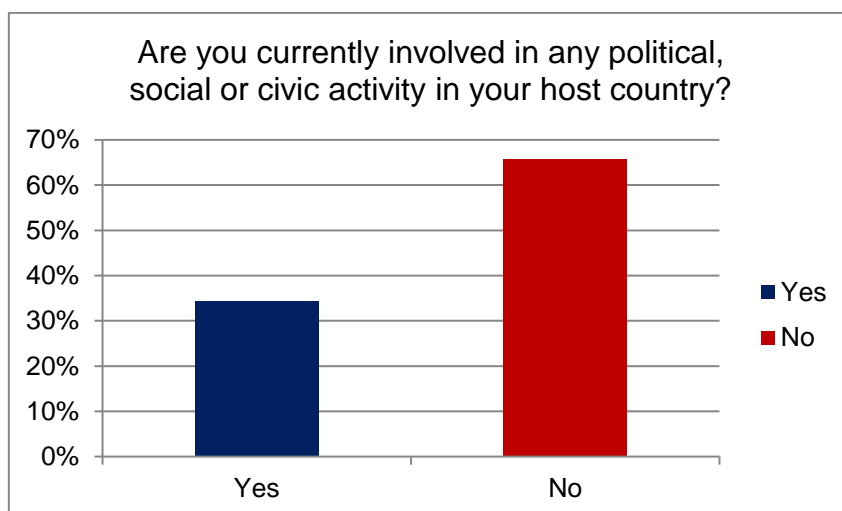
Figure 15 Survey results to the question about the involvement in any political, social or civic activity in Austria

The main reasons for not getting involved in their EU host country Austria, are the lack of time because of study and work (79%), the lack of awareness of the problems in the EU host country (37%), the short-term stay in the EU host country (30%) and the language barrier (16%).
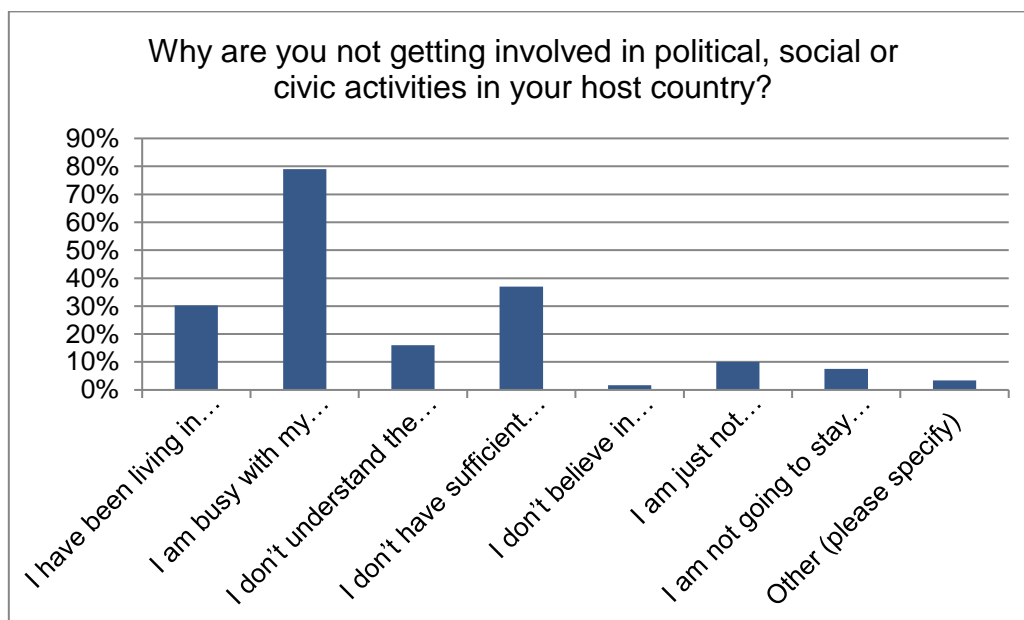
Figure 16 Survey results to the questions about the reasons of non-involvement of the participants in any political social or civic activity in the host country Austria

It is interesting to observe that only half of the participants know that they can participate in elections at the local level in their EU host country.
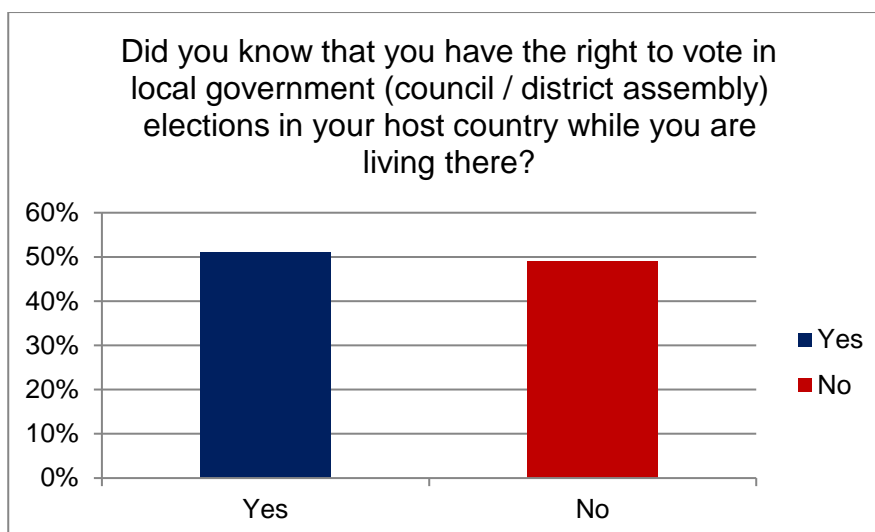
Figure 17 Survey results to the question about the voting rights on local level

It can be noted that the two most relevant reasons for not participating in local elections are *"I do not know how to register to vote and / or it is too complicated / time-consuming for me to find out"* (60%) and *"I have not lived in my host country long enough to understand local politics"(*45%).

In order to encourage and strengthen the commitment of the target group of mobile European youth in the political life of their host country Austria, 76% of the participants indicated that they would like to be made more welcome for participating as guests/foreigners in their host country to participate in political and social life of the community. With a majority of more than one third, the participants supported the following improvements: 1) Provide better official information about voting dates, registration procedures and other formal requirements to participate in local elections (45%) 2) Encourage local politicians and parties to take an active interest in the interests / needs of EU nationals living in their community (46%) 3) Provide better / more relevant tools and communication channels for them to participate in the local political and civic discussion (e.g. with a focus on the community that they are part of) (31%) 4) Improve procedures for registering to vote / casting a vote in local elections (31%).
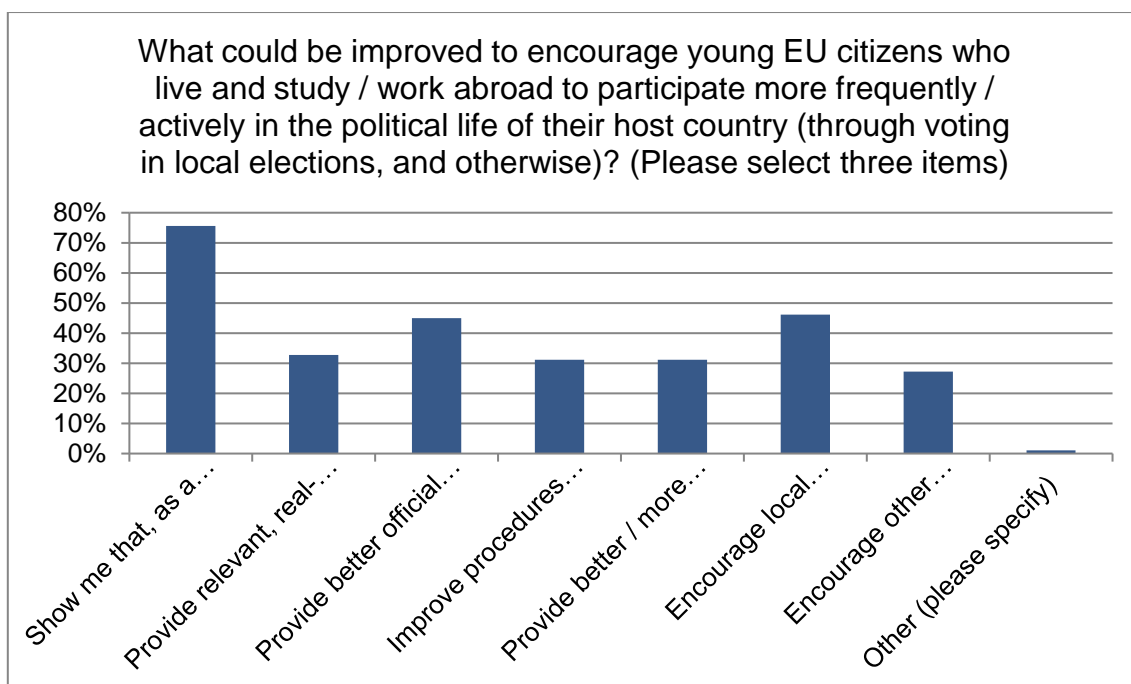
Figure 18 Survey results about improvements to encourage young EU citizens in their EU host-country

Theme 3: Information needs and preferred communication channels of the target group

With a clear majority of 74%, participants follow news from the EU and the EU host country Austria. Only 15% follow neither EU news nor news from their host country. The three main reasons of the participants who only follow EU news (7%) are their short stay in the EU host country, the lack of knowledge of the language of the EU host country Austria to be able to understand the messages and the limited time available due to work / study. Participants who are only interested in news from the EU host country (4%) follow non-EU related news mainly due to a lack of time and their perception that they can have a greater and more tangible impact at local level. The general disinterest of the participants in news from their host country as well as the EU (14%) is due to lack of time (75%), general disinterest in politics (36%) and interest only in news from the home country (18%). More than two thirds indicated newspapers (digital and print), media portals, news websites and social media are their main information channels through which they obtain news.
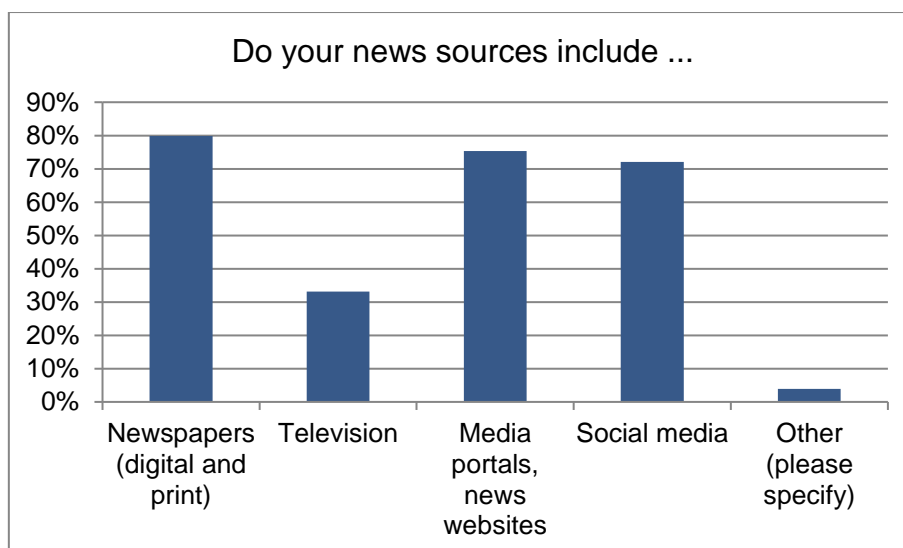
Figure 19 Survey result about the preferred news sources of the survey participants

It can be observed that only 26% use social media to discuss politics online at both local and EU level. Over 90% of participants prefer to do this kind of discussion in informal groups (friends, colleagues). The two channels to have this type of discussion, aside from informal groups, are in local community groups (23%), in national political organisations (17%) or in national local / national NGO, public interest groups (15%).

It can be observed that nearly a two-thirds majority (59%) are not interested in discussing political issues online and much more are willing to have face-to-face discussions (77%). The reasons for this are as one participant noted in the survey:

> *"In online discussions, there is usually no proper fact checking. People pick the points that corroborate their own opinion and ignore contradicting arguments/facts. And no one holds anyone accountable for their online statements, not only in anonymity, but in general." and " I don´t want to get attacked and also don´t want to risk showing radicals my identity".*

When it comes to the preference of the participants about where to find information on how to participate in the political, social and civic life of their host country Austria during their stay, the four main channels, of which two stand out very strongly, are the following: student unions', trade unions', professional organisations' websites / publications (77%), host-country national authorities' websites / publications (56%), dedicated portals or apps (e.g. for recently arrived EU citizens) (46%) and social media groups (41%).

Theme 4: The role of stakeholders

In regard to active information provision on relevant information on local elections and other opportunities of engaging in Austria, the participants prefer the following two information channels / type of organisations: student unions / trade unions (65%), host-country authorities (62%).

For the provision of information on how to get involved at the EU level and to participate in EU elections, the participants prefer the following three information channels / types of

organisations: student unions / trade unions (55%), host-country authorities (53%) and EU institutions / agencies (51%).

2.2 Post-Election Focus Group (FG II.3 and II.4)

2.2.1 First focus group (FG II.3.) (28.11.2019)

Theme 1: EU citizenship rights and engagement of EMYs in 2019 EP Elections

For most participants, European citizenship is linked to the borderless freedom to move, work, study and live across the European Union. For many of the participants, European citizenship is also linked to their identity and the differentiation from their national identity. One participant, who is half German and half Hungarian, but grew up in Romania and now lives in Austria, emphasized:

"I never felt Romanian, so European is a good description for me." (Participant 2, FG II.3.)

A participant from Italy said that it is very important for Italians, especially in the area of Southern Italy, whether one comes from Italy or not, and that the possibility of not limiting oneself to this and emphasising European citizenship is a very good opportunity:

"Being Italian or not is a topic in South Italy where I come from. EU citizenship is a happy way out of the discussion. It's an escape when you say you're European with an EU citizenship. It's a nice concept/possibility of overcoming difficulties in border areas, like an additional identity." (Participant 9, FG II.3.)

Six participants lived in Austria during the EP elections and one of them voted for an Austrian candidate. The others either missed the registration deadline, found the election process complicated due to various barriers or chose a candidate from their home country due to strategic reasons.

"I wanted to register, thought „okay I am super early this time, but missed the deadline." (Participant 10, FG II.3.)

On this topic it was very interesting to observe that participants take their responsibility as EU citizens and are willing to take the extra step, but barriers, unawareness and / or habit hinder them. One participant who voted for a candidate from her home country underlined her decision as follows*:*

"I considered to vote for an Austrian candidate, but then I felt like I know so much more about German politics. [I] didn't feel [able] to vote for Austrian candidates. And it's not like EMYs don't vote, they voted for their home country. You feel it's so much more work than it probably is. It feels easier to vote for your home country [candidates]." (Participant 3, FG II.3.)

The participant, who had chosen an Austrian candidate in the election, took the firm position that EMYs and citizens should be much more committed and more active in gathering information.

"[It is an] unpopular argument but everyone knows elections are coming, it's not rocket science. Even as an EMY you can call the embassy and ask. You tell them your problem and ask them what am I supposed to do - and they advise you." (Participant 9, FG II.3.)

One exchange student who took part in the focus group drew a comparison with her home country in terms of communication of elections and emphasised that there is a clear distinction between people who are interested in politics and those who are not, and between citizens who stay in their host country for a short time and those who live in an EU host country for a longer period.

> "*There are many who think "Oh I am only here for 6 months, it makes no sense [to engage]. It's easier in my home country. In Britain, in election celebrities are promoting deadlines rather than politicians. They encourage you to get out and get registered, [and to] use your voice. It's interesting when you see different spaces [groups] of society targeting younger people.*" (Participant 5, FG II.3.)

Young politicians were asked if they believe that EMYs were interested in their party programmes, with one of them saying that EP elections are generally very poorly perceived by young people, although in the 2019 EP elections, due to Brexit, interest among young people in this election has increased.

> *"In general, it is hard to get people interested in EP elections. For younger people it is much more interesting due to Brexit, where younger people were involved but not heard. I don't really know actually, at SJ [my party] we raised awareness to the deadlines. But I couldn't really tell actually [no exact estimate about the interest of EMYs in their party programme]." (Politician SY, FG II.3.)*

On the question of whether the EMY target group was included and addressed by the parties and young politicians in their party programmes, the politicians replied as follows:

> *"It is hard to be in contact with EMYs. There are only some English magazines in Austria. What we can do: do more work at universities. But it's hard for us to be in contact with them, they don't read newspapers, they don't watch Austrian television. EMYs are not a group we try to attract. EMYs are more in European targeting not in Austrian [the target group of EMYs is addressed more strongly by the Austrian parties at EU level and is perceived as more important in this respect]. Austrian parties are more focused on Austrian citizens. We tried a little bit on Facebook and Instagram… it is creepy to get advertised [to] in English. We try to communicate with EMYs on the European level." (Politician G, FG II.3.)*

> *"We did not do something language-wise. But there are a lot of EMYs who actually speak German. We did not do much, not in a specific way. To communicate deadlines is probably the only way to target EMYs specifically. [Party] Programmes etc. do not differ from Austrians and other EU citizens, but deadlines do. Maybe a particular party programme which might be more interesting to EMYs. But we did not do that." (Politician J, FG II.3.)*

EMY participants in the focus group responded to the politicians' statements as follows:

> *"Politicians think they [EMYs] don't vote anyways so why would we target them? And this goes around and around [if EMYs are not be targeted, they do not engage, if they do not engage politicians do not see the necessity to target them]". (Participant 5, FG II.3.)*

Two participants also highlighted the communication method and language barrier for many EMYs, which should be changed at EU level to better reach and address a European audience:

"There needs to be some new way of communication, [as] traditional [communication] methods don't work. EMYs are not accessing them [referring to the way EMYs and younger generations consume information (e.g. social media channels, targeted content etc.). Politicians should do more on social media or find new ways." (Participant 6, FG II.3.)

"This just shows that this if EU citizenship is [to be] taken seriously, it requires multilingualism." (Participant 9, FG II.3.)

When asked whether participants knew anything about European platforms where they could get involved at EU level, only one participant was aware of the European Citizens' Initiative, the rest of the participants felt that these initiatives and platforms were not getting through to them because they were not attractive to them at first sight. One of the participants expressed this very harshly as follows:

"The marketing of the EU is very weak. If the EU was a company, they would get bankrupt quickly." (Participant 1, FG II.3.)

One of the participants underlined the fact that there are many opponents of the EU and that it is probably very difficult for the EU to take counter measures and position itself better in the media:

"The EU is in competition with people who do not share views of EU, like Pro-Brexit people. Pro-European groups are in some media war against the others. We [European Union] need better advertising techniques." (Participant 6, FG II.3.)

Theme 2: (Continuous) Participation of the target group in EU and host-country's political life

When asked whether the participants are actively involved in social and democratic life in Austria, there were mixed answers from young politicians and EMYs. It should also be noted that the young politicians emphasised that all citizens (Austrians, EU citizens as well as citizens from outside the EU) should generally have the opportunity to be part of Austria and express their views and concerns:

"If I knew I will stay here for 10+ years, then I would be more engaged. For now, I am a student and I want to go back to my home country. That is why I don't want to do that [be more engaged in the democratic life of the host country]." (Participant 1, FG II.3.)

"There is 10th state in Austria, that represents people who cannot vote in Austria, we try to give them more space to be a part of it, to have a seat in all boards, to participate more. It's refugees, all kind of people and we want them to be more engaged in the party." (Politician G, FG II.3.)

"But look at Austrians themselves, from my experience almost nobody knows their [democratic] rights, so why should EMYs engage more than locals?" (Politician J, FG II.3.)

Contrary to the opinion of a young politician, one of the participants, who had been involved in democratic and social activities at local level, thought that the commitment of the population in Austria was indeed great and underlined this as follows:

"Yes, I was active when I was a student, in the ÖH. But always on student level. It is not true that Austrians are not engaged on the local level, in Austria there is a high

number of voluntary groups. There is a lot of cultural and political volunteer engagement …" (Participant 9, FG II.3.)

Theme 3: Information needs and preferred communication channels of the target group

The participants already noted in the previously discussed topics that the European Union's communication methods were often weak in their eyes and that they needed to receive information as brief and simple as possible on the channels they were using. A small number of participants acted as a counterpart in this discussion, arguing that for important issues such as elections, citizenship and political participation, EMYs need to take the time to research.

"If you want to engage with EMYs do it over social media. Social media influencers can influence so many young minds. That's the way you engage with young people." (Participant 4, FG II.3.)

"It's not hard to sit down for half an hour and learn about something." (Participant 5, FG II.3.)

"There needs to be some new way of communication, [as] traditional [communication] methods don't work. EMYs are not accessing them [referring to the way EMYs and younger generations consume information (e.g. social media channels, targeted content etc.). Politicians should do more on social media or find new ways." (Participant 6, FG II.3.)

One of the participants, who also highlighted his professional background as a PR consultant in connection with politicians' communication methods, emphasised that young politicians in particular are best qualified to use new communication methods to reach EMYs and younger generations in a better and more targeted way.

"I am working as a PR consultant: you the young politicians - please start - you can make the best Instagram stories, YouTube videos. It's important to make people understand." (Participant 9, FG II.3.)

Theme 4: The role of stakeholders

In discussing the role of stakeholders and what can be done to increase the possibility and levels of integration, the participants responded as follows.

"Events like this would help but also from student unions, trade unions where they can meet people. Events which EMYs can attend in order to meet young people, kind of a chain [referring to regular series of events] which could be done by student unions." (Politician SY, FG II.3.)

"I think student unions [key stakeholder for EMY related topics]. It would be important to contact ESN and [tell them to] put a main focus on EMYs. The main point of contact is the university." (Participant 5, FG II.3.)

One of the participants, who belongs to the long-term EMYs and works in Austria, argued as follows regarding the role of relevant stakeholders for EMYs and underlined the different needs of the target group which has to be taken into account:

"One of the biggest challenges when it comes to helping EMYs - which is a wide group we are talking about - is that there are so many differences. Some are here for Erasmus, some for longer. They have completely different needs when it comes to

being engaged. For me [as a long-term EMY] the right to vote here is much more important than for Erasmus students. In my experience there are some little things you do not fully understand if you were not raised here. Like sayings, references…" (Participant 9, FG II.3.)

2.2.2 Second focus group (FG II.4.) (28.04.2020)

Theme 1: Participation of EMYs in Austrian political and social life and the role of stakeholders to support them in their efforts to engage.

All participants were very interested in participating in the democratic election process in their host country Austria, especially about the opportunity to vote in the upcoming elections in Vienna (October 2020) but they had either too little or no information about whether and how they could participate. It should also be noted that they were not aware that, as EU citizens, they could only vote at district level and not for the entire Vienna City Council due to constitutional provisions (legal situation described in footnote 7).

"No, I wasn't aware of the [municipal] elections in Vienna but would participate as a voter." (Participant 5, FG II.4.)

"I did not know [that municipal] elections were coming up [in Vienna]. Because of the Corona crisis, it was getting in the back of the news. [I was] not aware that I can vote in a way, [and would be] interested to hear about it. If I could and it's easy, I would probably vote." (Participant 1, FG II.4.)

"I am not really involved and not interested in politics in Austria. There were elections for European Parliament, but I had difficulties [in casting my vote]. I am only involved in politics in Spain, my country. I know I will leave [Austria]; I have been here [in Austria] for 1,5 years – I was planning to stay for 2 years." (Participant 2, FG II.4.)

Only one participant had electoral experience in Austria so far and was able to participate in the last district assembly elections in Vienna in 2015 - he received the information about this possibility by chance and describes it as follows:

"I voted once for local district Elections in the 5th district [of Vienna]. I got a proper letter from officials otherwise I would not have voted. For me it was not difficult because the letter was in German, but if German were not my mother tongue, it could have been more challenging. I will vote in the Vienna elections in October." (Participant 4, FG II.4.)

Participants highlighted three problems they see which need to be taken into account: 1) what the requirements are to participate in an election and what the electoral process is for an EMY 2) how an EMY can best inquire about the possible candidates and parties and 3) the language barrier they face:

"There are two barriers: 1) I don't know when [the elections take place], 2) I don't know whom to vote for … I do not read Austrian news and do not really know what is happening in the country. In local news it is rather difficult to find relevant information for these elections [referring to local elections], also there is a language barrier - no information provided in English." (Participant 2, FG II.4.)

"I would like to vote but I know nothing about the candidates … language is a barrier, German is not easy …" (Participant 3, FG II.4.)

Participants gave the following reasons why they and many others are not aware of their voting rights in their host country:

> *"I do not know why Europeans are not aware of the fact that they can vote in their host country, there is a lack of information and maybe because you don't identify as Europeans as much as you should" (Participant 1, FG II.4.)*

> *"… It's a rare case that someone stands for candidate in the host country. Vienna is open to English speakers and foreign people. Everybody seems to know English, there is also much information [available] in English." (Participant 3, FG II.4.)*

> *"Politics is more like a hobby in which you have to put time in, reading and searching for information. EMYs have other tasks, they study and don't have time. They must be willing to find this kind of information so government can be able to connect and communicate to them." (Participant 2, FG II.4.)*

With two exceptions, almost all participants have not been engaged with a civil society organisation. It is often argued that as they are only here for a short time, they do try to get to know the host country better but do not have the time to be fully involved. Two participants took part in ESN or Buddy programmes at universities, out of interest in belonging to an international community and to be able to get in contact with the people in the host country more easily. Again, one participant stressed the language barrier aspect of participating in civil society organisations and activities in the host country.

> *"In the first months in Austria it was more like visiting the country and learning the history. After some time, things became more routine, so I tried to learn more about the country [and] put more time into this. With time passing, I stopped paying attention because of lack of time, [due to things such as my] master thesis etc." (Participant 2, FG II.4.)*

> *"[I am], active in ESN of Uni Wien. For me it was a good beginning to meet people, especially international people. [it was a] good thing it was in English. It's an organization you can join in Austria without speaking German. There were activities for participation in elections and I could have found information if I had been more interested. One has to have it on their radar, I did not. It had no priority." (Participant 1, FG II.4.)*

> *"Participating in social/political life of the host country also depends on the duration of the stay of the student." (Participant 4, FG II.4.)*

The opinions of the participants regarding electronic voting were mixed, since on the one hand it would certainly help many citizens, especially mobile citizens, to participate more easily in an election. However, the security measures and trust in such a system are not really present on the part of the participants yet:

> *"E-voting can be hacked, the world is not prepared for it, there is a lack of security. Everything which is made by humans can be hacked by humans." (Participant 3, FG II.4.)*

> *"Going back to issues with participating in the EP elections, I couldn't take part in applying to be a voter. Lots of people couldn't cast their vote [referring to mobile EU citizens who faced voting barriers], so many people would be happy if e-voting was possible." (Participant 5, FG II.4.)*

In order to get timely information on democratic participation in the EU host country as well as answers to this type of questions, the Erasmus Student Network was highlighted as the easiest and best contact point for mobile European students.

> *"Once I arrived [in Vienna], I needed a working confirmation and needed to get in touch with the local community. In Vienna I am also part of ESN. An international office helps you with paperwork and gives you advice." (Participant 4, FG II.4.)*

One participant, who previously knew little about her voting rights and participation opportunities in Austria, said that it would be very helpful for her to receive this kind of information regularly via social media, as it is where she spends most of her time when consuming news.

> *"There should be more to come for Vienna elections, ads, online information, voting reminders through Instagram. What I would see is something on the Internet like Instagram. At EP elections it was not clear for me if I had to do something extra, easily accessible info was missing. Also, too much work, it's like a hobby to be politically engaged. You can get information from many sources but sometimes it is more helpful to give direct recommendations what to do." (Participant 1, FG II.4.)*

Another participant suggested that mentoring programmes and a possible buddy network could provide information and assistance on democratic, social and civil opportunities in the EU host country, thus facilitating access.

> *"Through programmes that assign you a mentor who you can ask questions, who [act as] guides through the process. Even if I am not involved, I gather some information. There must be a human person who can guide you and help you through paperwork, also someone you can ask for information." (Participant 2, FG II.4.)*

Theme 2: **EU citizenship rights and <u>democratic</u> engagement opportunities for EMY's at the EU level.**

Regarding the participation of participants in the EP elections 2019, only one person voted for an Austrian candidate in the EU host country. The rest gave mainly strategic reasons for their decision to vote for a candidate from their home country, as they felt they could have a greater impact. One candidate was unaware of the possibility of choosing an Austrian candidate in the 2019 EP elections. Participants 1,2 and 3 did not get any information letter on the EP elections from the authorities.

> *"I voted in the EP elections in Austria. I was aware I can decide whether to vote for host/home country. I know one from the Austrian Party, who is a Greek national and he was the first candidate on the list of the communist party in Austria. With her, I learned that European citizens can be candidates for Austrian parties. I had been informed prior to the elections that I need to register to vote in Austria, I got the right to decide whether to vote for Austrian or German candidates and decided to vote for Austrian. I received information first-hand from the party." (Participant 5, FG II.4.)*

> *"I voted in Romania. The country needs it in this moment, they have 5 million people living outside the country. If 5 million would not vote, there would be a high loss of votes. In Romania there is a political crisis, so all votes were needed to stabilize the political situation. All people outside the country need to vote in Romania in order to make the country work again." (Participant 3, FG II.4.)*

"I have a certain picture of Europe, there are two blocks, in one belongs Germany, Austria and in the other Spain. Sometimes Germany decides on things which are not that good for Spain. So, I used my vote in Austria in order to influence what is happening in the second block, Spain." (Participant 2, FG II.4.)

"I did not know whether to vote for Germany or Austria. I feel more connected to Germany, but also care about Austria." (Participant 1, FG II.4.)

The general opinion on transnational parties was very positive among the participants, although one of the participants emphasised that national identity is currently stronger than a European identity.

"It is good to have transnational parties, but I am sceptical …. Hard to reach enough people, they need to enlarge their moves [actions/outreach] to impose their views and attract people. At the moment these organizations cannot do more." (Participant 3, FG II.4.)

"The problem is that national identity is stronger than European. You grow up in one country and are much more related to their issues even if you are abroad. In Turkey I was following the news of Germany, not the local [news]. In the Corona crisis everyone is doing their own stuff, as long as the EU just advises the national governments … It is difficult to get more powerful [as transnational party]. I do not know how to push those transnational parties …." (Participant 4, FG II.4.)

A Romanian participant gave an example from his home country where he noted that it could be difficult for transnational parties:

"Another side of this problem, [for example in] Romania: local citizens [are] against transnational parties. In Romania there is a community of Hungarians who have political organizations – every Romanian is against this [transnational] organization. Even if [the] Hungarian organization would like to do something they could not. Maybe it's the same for all European countries with those organizations." (Participant 3, FG II.4.)

Austria's approach to lower the voting age for all elections to 16 was evaluated positively by the participants and seen as an opportunity to create responsibility and more commitment among young voters at an early stage. However, one participant remarked that a good school and education system are prerequisites for this.

"It is a good thing. People are less interested in politics, young people are more engaged. People who usually don't have a voice [in elections, when] you give them a voice, they use it. They are more motivated. I do not understand the discussion about voting with 16, it rather needs to be discussed whether people [aged] 85+ should vote." (Participant 1, FG II.4.)

"It is a nice thing to put some pressure on a 16-year-old. You can do this in a country with great education, if you do that in Romania where people from the countryside are analphabetic, it would not work. Lots of people who are 16 don't know how to write or read, so that would not work there. But I like the approach." (Participant 3, FG II.4.)

When asked whether the participants knew about their right and possibility to propose legislation to the European Commission through the use of the European Citizens' Initiative,

only one of the participants was aware of this instrument. When asked if they knew of other initiatives and/or platforms for engagement engage at European level, the answer was negative.

"I was aware of the [European Citizens'] initiative but a lot of time less convinced that it is an effective tool. Outcomes are not effective, have to be debated first, so they are not solid. [I] had the feeling it is not effective." (Participant 6, FG II.4.)

"I never heard of it." (Participant 2, FG II.4.)

One of the participants argued that the European Union is, in his eyes as an EU citizen, elusive and like a cold entity and that he would like to see a more tangible and visible EU presence. The participant also added that he sees a major problem and the main reason for this in the communication and marketing of the European Union.

"The European Union has no strategy of marketing and communicating to the public, the EU does not know how to talk to their citizens. It's a rare case that someone stands for candidate in [their own] host country. Vienna is open to English speakers and foreign people. Everybody seems to know English, there is also much information [available] in English." (Participant 3, FG II.4.)

"The EU should make steps forward to [reach out to] people. The EU is like a cold entity, [a] big economical institution but political not very high [profile]. The EU must engage more in political life of citizens, not only economical. They must implement some way of communication and marketing in order to reach more people." (Participant 3, FG II.4.)

With regard to the role of stakeholders at European level, the participants in the focus group had different opinions.

"Local administrations. These are the places which are most frequently visited by citizens, where you can get this kind of information. They should give possibilities to participate. In some countries this is the place where discussions would happen, or people get together to discuss such things. The more local it gets, the closer it is to home; they have the awareness of what is happening. Or [they and meet] politicians from the national level who might show up there." (Participant 5, FG II.4.)

"At university, teaching what it is useful for [the exercise of democratic rights]. Organize events in which you can ask in person, learn how it works in a small group in which you can interact with organizers [with knowledge of EMY-related topics]." (Participant 2, FG II.4.)

"We have to differentiate between the ones who stay [for a] long or short time. One has to get more familiar with official institutions. National officials have different goals, [and] do not want to get overruled by the EU. I stick to EYP [European Youth Parliament][13] *and those organizations for the youth to get information I need. These people have similar backgrounds, perspectives, [and are the] same age. Politicians of different age levels have done their studies, faced different issues. [They are] not that close to*

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[13] European Youth Parliament: https://eyp.org/

problems as we are. It's better to obtain information from somebody your age."
(Participant 4, FG II.4.)

"Local administration are not very interested in promoting European values, they rather promote national values. Why should they vote for another country in the EU Romania is one of youngest members, so lots of Romanians don't know what the EU is. It's about political organizations, administration. I am a fan of the EU: I promote the EU in Romania. Some ask, why should we adapt to the EU? Why should we be more proud of it than Romania?" (Participant 3, FG II.4.)

Theme 3: The COVID-19 crisis and its impact on EMYs and the future of mobility ?

The participants see the COVID 19 crisis as a very important moment for the EU to prove itself and thereby gain more momentum and a more positive perception, not only among pro-Europeans but also among sceptics. One participant would have liked to see more unity on how such a crisis should be tackled and believed the EU should set a standard that all member states must follow to avoid chaos.

"Maybe it will be the same [after the crisis]. The closure of borders will be used again in the future. Like a blocked door. But if anything happens, we will see this closing borders again." (Participant 2, FG II.4.)

"Right now, I am in Germany. As soon as the university opens again, when I return to Austria I need to remain in quarantine for two weeks, which is ridiculous. Forced to be in quarantine, because I come from outside. The whole thing is undermining basic rights as citizens of the EU. There should have been a general approach about it. People should be included in finding solutions for this kind of crisis. Every country has different ways of coping with the situation." (Participant 5, FG II.4.)

"It is a crucial moment for the EU. If the EU manages the situation well, more people will embrace EU citizenship. Again, the biggest problem of the EU is its communication style." (Participant 3, FG II.4.)

One of the participants commented that he does not believe that there will be major changes after the crisis. He believed that everything will calm down with time and people will fall back into their old patterns.

"In one year everything will get back to normal life like it was before. People don't learn lessons from these type of situations, everything will be like before. Mobility in Europe is the nicest thing and that the EU permits transit between countries. Everything will go back to normal, nothing will be different in one year. Maybe some regulations, but no big impact. Personal Romanian example: There are 5 million people living outside Romania, 2.5 million got back [to Romania because of the crisis] and these days the first people are emigrating again although the pandemic is on its highest number. The mobility will not stop." (Participant 3, FG II.4.)

The list of policy issues(for more information see: Selection of the policy topics for the analysis) identified by the project team in the course of the desk analysis, which were communicated to the citizens by parties in Austria in the course of their election campaigns for the EP elections 2019, was shown to the participants in order to compare how relevant these topics are for them in the COVID-19 crisis and which ones they would prioritize or rather add. The participants reacted as follows: The participants are of the opinion that different topics are important for

different people and interests, and it is not possible to say in general terms which topics are particularly important and which are not. In their opinion, all topics should be treated as well as possible and brought to the respective target group.

> *"If we want the EU to be more engaged in our lives, we need to be more engaged in their stuff. Individuals should acknowledge what the EU is doing and offer to help. The EU provided a big budget to combat the crisis, never before [was] so much money was provided. Not many people know that." (Participant 3, FG II.4.)*

> *"A possible approach would be in finding [/identifying] people with the same problems that the EU can solve and share the info with them they require for a certain problem and target information to [respective] people who have that area of interest." (Participant 2, FG II.4.)*

2.3 Stakeholder Interviews

2.3.1 Interviews with political representatives (MEPs)

During the interviews the following topics were discussed: the role of the project target group in the 2019 EP elections, electronic voting, participation barriers, harmonization of national election procedures; transnational parties, social media and communication channels, voting age and youth engagement. Also, not cross-cutting topics were mentioned during the interviews that were nevertheless significant and hence, are briefly outlined in this section.

2.3.1.1 Cross-cutting themes

The project target group's role during the last EP elections

All respondents consider the target group to be a very important, but very specific group. Only one MEP mentioned that they have taken EMYs into account in their campaigns and have worked on strategies to best reach this target group. The rest of the respondents did not actively refer to the EMY target group in their EP election campaigns Another MEP noted that they had run a special campaign for young people and European citizens in general. Almost all respondents had focused their campaigns very much on youth in general, but not specifically on the EMY target group.

E-voting

All three respondents had a fairly similar opinion on e-voting and were very skeptical.

They all voiced concerns about the unresolved security problems and the exploitation and manipulation of data. These questions are essential for the use and implementation of this voting system. As things stand at present, the problems cannot be avoided because the security requirements for holding elections with the electronic voting system are currently not met. The respondents also pointed out that while the use of e-voting is in principle a very significant issue, voting is supposed to be an important, special and particularly well-thought-out decision. But with the possibility of voting with just one click, there is a risk of reducing the importance of an election.

There is a general agreement among respondents that the possibility of participating in an election via an electronic -voting system is good, but it makes no sense to make use of it as

long as the effects of the system on the democratic election process and security problems have not been fully solved.

Two of the respondents said that there are more important issues to be tackled than the implementation of e-voting systems, such as simplified harmonized voting deadlines. One respondent added that a harmonized European health system would be of greater importance at present and noted that a legal basis for the introduction of e-voting is needed in most EU member states, which is currently lacking. For the time being, the problems should be solved at the political level, as the implementation by the administration would then be easy to achieve.

Participation barriers and the lack of harmonization of national election procedures

Respondents have a mixed opinion about the obstacles to voting and the lack of information. However, respondents agree that it is the responsibility of citizens to obtain information on electoral registration, voting and the electoral process in general. Citizens have an obligation to collect information about democratic processes such as elections and politicians have an obligation to provide straightforward information to their citizens. The parties and politicians have the task of providing information in such a way that it is understandable for each target group, but it is not the responsibility of politicians to take citizens by the hand and bring them to the ballot box.

One MEP emphasised that there are definitely issues that need to be implemented by politicians in order to break down barriers, such as a European electoral law with a European electoral roll and also a European social security number, in order to break down exactly such problems and barriers. With this solution, the number could be used as an access point for applying for voting cards, to make life easier for mobile citizens and to check whether someone has voted once or twice. However, citizens must also show interest and obtain information and express their needs to politicians and on the other hand, politicians must provide and deliver information adapted to the needs of the respective target group and communicate it in an comprehensible way.

Another MEP underlined their opinion on reducing barriers by harmonising a Europe-wide deadline for registration in the electoral register and proposing this in the EP.

Transnational parties and candidate lists

The idea of transnational parties was supported by two respondents. They believed that transnational parties need to be further elaborated and supported in order to strengthen the idea of a united Europe as well as a "European identity" and to boost public representation.

One MEP noted that Brexit would also have been a unique opportunity to allocate the vacant seats in the European Parliament, or at least part of them, to transnational lists. It did not work out on this occasion, but there is a huge potential for transnational lists.

Respondents also agreed that with the introduction of the *spitzenkandidaten* in the EP elections, the EU is increasingly taking the right step to lead more and more European debates - the direction is very important and good in their view.

Social media and communication channels

All respondents agree that social media is a very effective channel for reaching both the younger generations as well as the older generations that have become accustomed to the new digital information consumption.

The respondents agree that establishing contact with the target group via social media channels is much easier, more personal and even more tangible. One of the respondents explicitly uses this opportunity to make more complex topics easier as well as more accessible and explain them to the audience. One MEP believes that political communication is often too complex: *"You cannot directly assume that the audience knows what an EP committee is, what topics are discussed there, how legislative procedures are carried out at the EU level, etc."*. Focusing on the essentials makes it easier for the audience to understand.

Another respondent noted that the use of social media channels is very helpful in bringing European issues into the daily lives of the target groups and making the topics more communicable and tangible for the people.

With one exception, all MEPs felt that the effectiveness of the EU's approach to communication should be reviewed and adapted to current circumstances. The content as well as the communication channels should be much more adapted to the needs of the different target groups.

Voting age and youth engagement

The question of harmonizing the voting age to 16 years for all member states for EU elections was discussed in all interviews. One respondent who was in favour of harmonising the voting age to 16 years for EU elections, emphasized *"It is a political issue and at the moment it is important for the member states to evaluate who this target group would vote for. At the moment some member states unfortunately do not want it to happen"*. Another MEP noted that a significant number of 16-year-olds are already standing on their own feet, e.g. they are earning their own money and paying taxes; this target group is directly affected by politics and should therefore also have the opportunity to participate in elections. All respondents felt that this decision should still remain (as is currently the case) in the competence of the member states and that, although harmonization of voting age would bring many benefits, it would not be implemented by the EP so quickly because of other priorities. One MEP remarked: *"If this is such an important issue, it needs to be centered in discussions in wider society to make it happen. I am fully convinced that this is possible and that there is no issue that cannot be changed by society"*.

As mentioned above, one MEP highlighted the problematic that the younger generation in general, and the 16 year-olds in particular, are not sufficiently aware of their democratic rights both at the local and EU level. He notes that, in his opinion, education policy has failed somewhat in this respect and there is a clear need to catch up.

All respondents believe that civic education in relation to the EU and its opportunities, tasks and essential importance should be included in the curriculum. Teachers must be given the necessary training and resources to make this subject accessible to pupils and students.

One MEP added that in Austria, civic education is already anchored in geography or history lessons, but the important question is how these lessons are structured to bring the EU closer to the pupils. The teaching method and the topics are essential for conveying this kind of information. Instead of explaining and teaching the complex system of the EU or the fundamental role of the EU, we should rather focus on European human rights and freedoms and explain which laws are passed at European level and which at national level etc. to make the EU more tangible. Another MEP noted that for sustainable awareness raising about democratic participation, it would be important to use the communication channels of schools - especially for young voters. Schools should be obliged to provide information on voting rights at local and EU level.

2.3.1.2 Other topics

- **On national and EU identities**:
  Identities are often divided into national, regional, local and European identities and were discussed in all three interviews.

  One interviewee mentioned that the discourse on identity needs to be changed. There are national and regional identities, and the European identity - which is about freedom of borderless travel, living, working, studying, etc. The European identity is created where citizens realize that these barriers exist and that these great possibilities are not possible in other countries and continents. The European identity consists of the sum of all civil rights and liberties that one has in the EU. Through civic education, it must be made clear what exists in the EU and what does not exist elsewhere, and this is what creates this identity. One MEP added that freedom of movement and social rights are a big part of European citizenship and it needs to be filled with more life. Another interviewee noted that the target group of EMY is a very important one, especially with regard to the future of the EU, and that there is a need to work on local identity with EMYs to better integrate them into the local democratic life of their host country.

- **On voting rights and the right to stand as candidate:**
  One of the respondents supported the idea of a European right to vote as a further fundamental freedom. The ideal is an European citizenship, which should give every EU citizen the right to be eligible to vote at all levels in the country where he or she resides. The idea is to grant all EU citizens the right to vote in elections at all levels of government in their host country, i.e. where they are long-term residents. One only has to bear in mind that citizens do not have the right to vote in two places at once. A mobile EU citizen can thus link their right to vote to their place of residence and decide for themselves where they want to exercise their right to vote.

  The interview partners stressed that citizens must be interested in elections and political events in general, otherwise they will not be interested in voting in their host country. One respondent mentioned that the harmonisation of deadlines and election procedures would in any case help considerably on this issue and stressed the important role of school education and of educational institutions and universities, they should provide information on EU citizenship rights, in particular the right to vote. One MEP *remarked "We are [my party is] very much in favour of sending out information via all district offices in Vienna and thus in better reaching the EMY target group. There is already a lot of information available, but much more needs to be done, especially for*

this target group … there should be an obligation to provide information about the right to vote in schools and teaching institutions."

- **On mobility programmes:**

Respondents agreed that mobility programmes are a very good opportunity to give students an overview of how different cultures, systems and policies generally work in another EU country. This insight and awareness-raising generates a great added value for the future. Interviewed Members of the European Parliament were aware that the current mobility programmes and the people participating in them are moving in a "bubble" and that in order to fight this it is necessary to develop more towards social inclusion and to expand the mobility programmes for different groups. One MEP said: *"I think that people who do Erasmus or spend a semester abroad should be more interested in getting an insight into their host country and take this information with them from their trip. The focus should be on providing wider access to exchange programmes such as Erasmus+ in order to trigger these effects. One should not just focus on the elite, but to give the broad masses this access to scholarships (apprentices, people seeking general training, etc.)"*. One MEP underlined that mobility programmes are essential to fill European citizenship with life, but much more needs to be done to ensure that not only a certain stratum of society can take advantage of this opportunity. The interviewees agreed that more funds should be allocated to programmes such as Erasmus+. Another respondent noted the importance of mobility programmes for all citizens and underlined the importance of EU youth organisations such as the "European Youth Forum", as transnational networking is essential for a united Europe and for European identity.

- **On practical vs citizenship values:**
One of the MEPs underlined that EU citizenship is much more practical than how it is currently classified, for example as freedom of movement, social rights, etc.

Another MEP added that it is necessary to think much more European in everything we do, and an easy and helpful step would be Europe-wide campaigns to motivate different target groups, especially European citizens, to participate in the democratic discourse and cast their vote in elections on the EU level. Given the uncertainty among EMYs regarding the level of participation they can exercise in their host country of Austria, in particular in the City of Vienna (for more information see 7), respondents replied that this is a very regrettable fact and should be changed. However, such a change is very complicated and difficult to enforce due to the fact that legal measures have to be taken at the federal level. The Green MEP added that the federal government was against making this change for Vienna, although the City of Vienna was in favour.

On EP elections in Austria:

This topic was discussed with all MEPs interviewed, who all agreed that EP elections and EU issues should not only be discussed with citizens in Austria before the EP elections but should be discussed regularly and continuously. All MEPs consider European Union issues to be very relevant for their parties and try to communicate these issues regularly with citizens (e.g. through their social media channels, especially Instagram etc.). For the respective parties of MEPs in the last EP elections in 2019, it was an important concern to reach the younger generation and EU citizens with their issues and to mobilise them for the elections.

On policy topics (based on Desk Analysis in **Error! Reference source not found.**):

One of the interviewees noted that people are no longer interested in political parties but in issues that are increasingly transnational such as climate change. This topic could also be used to better explain the political context and the role and opportunities of the EU. Topics that one respondent felt were important for youth and which her party is promoting were the following: Climate change, European citizenship, and civil liberties. In addition, movements such as 'Fridays for Future' were mentioned by one MEP, which they believed could help create a more European thinking and identity.

Stakeholders:

With regard to the stakeholders relevant to EMYs, all respondents agreed that national student unions, international offices, and educational institutions are very important and that topics, relevant for EMYs, should be better addressed and promoted by these stakeholders, as they are the best contact point for the target group.

2.3.2 Interviews with other stakeholders

Based on the project results and to complete the findings, three interviews were conducted with representatives of government and university bodies dealing with mobile students and voter participation of EU citizens. The interview partners were representatives of the following organisations:

2.3.2.1 *Erasmus Network Austria:*

Exchange programmes

The interviewed board representative of the ESN Austria sees the exchange programmes and especially the Erasmus+ programme as a unique opportunity to gain experience in the EU host country. He is convinced that through the experiences the students gain in different countries and especially in different EU member states, students can really understand what the EU is and what opportunities it offers. The aim of these programmes must be to give students a hand and to show them the host countries better - culturally, but also in terms of the different systems and possibilities that exist in each country. This exchange has a long-term effect on the transnational intercultural relationship between countries, people and different systems.

Engagement of EMYs

The big issue he sees is communication on the part of policy makers - both in terms of the type of communication, the communication channels, the language and the presence of policy makers in reaching the target group of mobile European youth. As an example, he referred to the current COVID 19 crisis and the presence of policy makers reaching the different target groups with targeted information, regular press conferences and press releases - although there were of course misleading announcements, he felt and received feedback from the ESN community that the information was well received. The interviewee underlined the fact and his insight at ESN Austria that the target group of mobile European students needed short, clear information, otherwise it would be too much for them. At ESN events, one of the big goals is to prepare everything so well and with the least barrier that the target group simply has to participate. The ESN representative sees this as a problem, but he also understands that the EMYs, which are in the country for only a limited time, want to make the most efficient use of their time alongside their studies. He himself also distinguishes between short-term exchange

students and long-term students from abroad who want to graduate in Austria. According to the interviewee, EMYs who stay in Austria for longer periods of time often take more time to inform themselves and proactively take the initiative to find answers to their questions.

Voting

According to the respondent, very few, and usually only a specific group of young people who are either studying political science or law, or have a particular interest in the subject, are aware of their democratic rights and opportunities at EU and/or local level. According to the observations of the representative of the ESN Austria, the EMYs will not use the opportunities and rights they are entitled to as long as they are not directly confronted with the information and see an added value in it.

Role of ESN

The ESN representative sees the role of the ESN Austria and the respective departments at the universities merely as social actors. Their main task is to enable Erasmus students to integrate socially and to help them find their way around Austria. This is done mainly through events and meetings on various topics, which are planned and carried out on an ongoing basis. The ESN also helps and supports its members with concrete inquiries on administrative issues and tries to support them in the best possible way but does not see this as expertise. They do not see themselves in the role of proactive communication about political events and opportunities, as they see this as the task of politicians and other organisations. However, they are open to sharing their reach through events to inform about the opportunities and rights of mobile students. He emphasises that he himself is a fan of the idea of doing more in this direction, but the ESN sees itself as an organisation, more as a social actor and a support for mobile students.

2.3.2.2 Election Office of the City of Vienna:

Youth Engagement

One of the activities that the City of Vienna promotes is the initiative *"Werkstadt junges Wien"*[14], in which children between 3 and 19 years living in Vienna are the target group. The initiative is the largest participation project with children and young people in Vienna's history and has involved over 22.000 young residents of the Austrian capital. Topics were developed together with children and young people and are the basis for a Children and Youth Strategy for Vienna. The City of Vienna will implement this plan on behalf of all involved. Workshops were held by educators, youth workers, teachers, social workers and volunteers with their groups/classes. Out of that, a youth strategy is going to be published and implemented.

Regarding the impact of mobile European youth living and studying in Austria on local and European politics, the respondent noted that especially in EU elections EMYs should be more in the focus. Mobilisation strategies and targeted communication and outreach methods are needed to increase the engagement of EMYs. citizens from third countries resident in Vienna should also be given a chance to get involved and / or have a say in the local political life. However, the interviewee believes that the increased involvement of EMYs in local elections is a party-political issue- Although the City of Vienna is trying to make information and content

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[14] https://werkstadt.junges.wien.gv.at/site/en/

as accessible as possible to all, the City of Vienna itself has difficulties in reaching all target groups, especially young and mobile youth.

Voting

Since in Vienna EU citizens are only entitled to vote at district level, the Election Office is increasingly contacted by EU citizens via the service hotline to help EU citizens with questions about democratic participation. According to the interviewee the service hotline is not often used for questions about voting procedures. There are many complaints from EU citizens that they are only entitled to vote at district level. The amendment of the electoral law in Vienna is still a big issue, but the decision for change lies with the Federal Government and the Constitutional Court (for more information see footnote 7).

All residents of Vienna, including of course EU citizens, have the opportunity to bring a petition with 500 supporters to the Committee on Petitions[15] and, if approved, it will be brought to the Council Committee (Gemeinderatsausschuss) - in this way, all citizens with main residence in Vienna are given the opportunity to participate in shaping their city at local level.

Barriers

With regard to barriers to participation in elections, respondent stressed that the challenge that citizens have to go through to vote is often underestimated. In the case of postal voting, there are often countless invalid votes because they have been filled in incorrectly. Language barriers are also an important aspect in facilitating access to elections and democratic participation. The interviewee emphasised that many barriers are very well known by the City of Vienna and all employees of the administration try to reduce such barriers, but behind these barriers are mostly socio-political images which dominate. The Election Officer pointed out that the deadlines for the registration of EU citizens for the EP elections and the admission of Austrian candidates was a major difficulty and caused much confusion among EU citizens. He noted that oftentimes there exists an organisational logic behind the decision not to harmonize electoral procedures throughout all member states and pointed out the organizational challenge in regard of harmonization

Communication

With regard to communication with young people and in particular with European mobile youth, this target group is already being considered by the City of Vienna's communication team, but there is still a lot of potential to reach this target group.

On behalf of the Ministry of Education, the City of Vienna prepares information packages for EU, federal and municipal elections. It is required that the information is distributed to a large and broad audience, but the City of Vienna is skeptical about whether the information is actually used by schools and passed on to pupils. In the case of extracurricular activities (such as youth centers), these calls have been very well received and have proved to be very effective.

With regard to the choice of languages and the provision of information in different languages, the City of Vienna offers information in a very wide range of languages for almost all administrational as well as electoral procedures.

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[15] https://www.wien.gv.at/amtshelfer/dokumente/verwaltung/wahl/petition/einbringen.html

2.3.2.3 Chamber of Labour (Arbeiterkammer Österreich, AK)

Youth Engagement

In general, the Chamber of Labour is aware of the target group of European mobile youth and has shown great interest in reaching this group in the future with more targeted and relevant information. However, the interviewees do not know exact figures about the target group, nor do they know figures about the working European mobile youth. What was definitely observed by interviewees is that the turnout of citizens with Austrian citizenship was much higher than the turnout of EU mobile citizens and EMYs in the last Chamber of Labour elections, which was extremely low. The Chamber of Labour will try to provide the EMY project team with more precise figures on the target group in the course of the project and the mutual cooperation.

According to the Chamber of Labour, mobile European youth receive a "welcome letter" when they are recruited and registered by their employer, but this letter is very general and does not contain specific information (e.g. democratic rights in Austria, relevant institutions and administrative procedure etc.) for the target group. However, respondents noted that they would like to focus more on this specific group and offer them more targeted information and opportunities to make use of their democratic rights in their host country. One of their communication channels, which is very close to employers, is the works councils, which could also provide specific information (e.g. on local elections, electoral procedures, democratic rights in Austria etc.) and proactively address the needs of European mobile youth, but this has not been possible so far due to bureaucratic obstacles and complex procedures within the organization of the AK.

Communication

For communication with young people in general, the AK tries to use different channels. On the one hand, through direct contacts via the works councils, through mailings, which, can be designed more target group oriented, social media channels, blogs and monthly magazines, which are sent to all members of the AK. However, they could observe that most people only recognise the AK when they encounter a problem and want it to be handled by them. Apart from the bureaucratic aspect of the organisation, the problem of sending specific information to each individual target group is that the AK does not want to make any distinctions between its members and considers everyone as equal. In order to keep barriers as low as possible, much effort is put into providing information in several languages for members as well as for companies.

2.4 Desk Analysis of Party Electoral Programmes

In order to answer to the research questions about the policy topics covered by the Austrian parties' electoral platforms, an infographic is presented in Figure 20. In the following, an attempt has been made to summarize the positions of Austrian political parties for the EP elections, starting with the topics that political party platforms have reflected the most. The thoroughness of the electoral programmes varies considerably from one party to another, but even a brief explanation can illustrate the general position of the party. Of all the parties analysed, three of the parties represented in the EP - the Social Democratic Party, the Austrian People's Party and the Greens - have covered all the political categories analysed. We cannot completely rule out the possibility that the gaps shown in Figure 20 may be due, at least in part, to our failure to identify the parties' position from the text of the platform.

2.4.1 Cross-cutting topics

All Austrian parties have expressed their positions on the vision of the EU / member state sovereignty, climate change / environmental policy, migration policy, social policy and EU budget / taxation.

Vision of the EU/member state sovereignty. Almost all parties speak of proposals for improvement to strengthen the European Union in general and to reform the EU Parliament, the European Commission and the European Council in particular.

Climate change/environmental policy. In general, the parties believe that the EU should play an active role in the fight against climate change and for the protection of nature. Various measures are proposed to reduce the EU's ecological footprint: e-mobility, renewable energy sources, waste-free recycling, ecological food production, consumer education, etc. The Social Democratic Party and the Greens are in favour of abolishing nuclear energy and fossil fuels by 2030. The Social Democratic Party calls for the suspension of trade relations with the countries concerned in the event of non-compliance with the Paris Climate Agreement.

Migration policy. Migration and immigration policy have been a hotly debated topic in the EU in recent years, which is also reflected in the parties' election manifestos. Almost all parties are addressing the question of the rule-compliant quota distribution of migrants among the EU member states and are of the opinion that the control of the EU borders should be strengthened. The Greens advocate an alternative solution to the Dublin System.

Social Policy. The Austrian People's Party, the Freedom Party and the Neoliberal Party have taken a clear position on this issue and refer to the principle of subsidiarity, which states that social affairs are a matter for the nation states. In contrast, the Social Democratic Parties, the Greens, Europe 1 and KPOE are in favour of Europe-wide harmonisation, in particular a minimum wage standard is called for. The Social Democratic Party is in favour of a European social security number. The Greens stress that there should be social quality standards for each member state depending on its economic situation.

EU budget/taxation. All parties have expressed their views on important issues concerning budget revenue, in particular the tax regime. The Austrian People's Party advocates sanctions for member states that do not comply with the common financial regulation and opposes digital companies that do not pay taxes in the EU. The issues which in their view should be given priority in the budget are illegal migration, digitisation and climate protection. The Social Democratic Party is in favour of unanimity on tax issues in the EU. The Greens are in favour of transaction taxes, tax cuts in favour of large companies and areas that have further consequences for our lives should be taxed more heavily, such as flights due to climate change. The Liberal Party is in favour of the tax sovereignty of national states and supports the maximum contribution of member states to the budget pot of 1% of GDP. Europe 1 and the NEOS are in favour of a CO_2 tax and at the same time tax relief for the labour force. The NEOS are also in favour of a digital tax. The communist party is in favour of a minimum tax rate for companies and for the implementation of digital and transaction taxes.

Current infographic provides an overview of the general statements of political parties regarding the policy areas under examination.

Topic	Die ÖVP	Die SPÖ	Die Grünen	Die FPÖ	Europe 1	Die NEOS	Die KPÖ
Electoral slogan	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Vision of the EU/ MS suvereignity	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Fundamental rights/rule of law	●	●	●		●		●
Climate change/enviromental policy	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Migration policy	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Education/youth policy	●	●	●		●		
Digital EU	●	●	●				●
Social policy	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
EU Budget/taxation	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Economic policy	●	●	●		●		
Foreign and security policy	●	●	●	●	●	●	
Agriculture / Food Policy	●	●	●	●	●	●	
Link to party programm	●	●	●	●	●	●	●

Figure 20 Infographic of the topics in the electoral platforms of Austrian political parties.

2.4.2 Predominantly presented topics

In terms of popularity (1-2 gaps) the next cluster of policy topics consist of fundamental rights/rule of law, foreign and security policy and agriculture/food policy.

Fundamental rights/rule of law. This topic is very broad and has been approached by the respective parties from different angles. Most parties emphasise and advocate social equality and focus very much on housing. The Austrian People's Party emphasises democracy, the rule of law and human rights as values that are anchored in the DNA of the EU and advocates enforcement by the member states, which should be punished as comprehensively as possible in the event of non-compliance. The Social Democratic Party is very much in favour of social and democratic equality in general and in particular in relation to housing, access to clean water and women's rights. The Green Party is also very much in favour of social and democratic equality for EU citizens at all levels and is in favour of the inclusion of social rights in the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights. The party also stresses the protection of human rights, the renewal and adaptation of data protection for the benefit of citizens and the registration of women's rights to abortion in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union. The Europe 1 Party also strongly supports social rights and advocates their inclusion in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union. The party is strongly committed to poverty between EU countries and discrimination and calls for a European migration strategy that takes human rights into account. The Communist Party of Austria also emphasises social equality and stresses the right to housing as a human right - demands transparency and equal access for all EU citizens.

Agriculture/food policy. Most parties declare that an unfair agricultural support system should be reformed - all farmers should be treated equally. The small farmers should be

supported. The Social Democratic Party is in favour of import regulations as a prerequisite for subsidies to encourage the reduction of pesticides. The Greens support a ban on pesticides and toxic products. The Freedom Party is in favour of supporting organic farms by providing funds.

Foreign and security policy. The majority of parties believe that the importance of the EU should be increased on a global scale. This means a more active role for the EU in peace processes and in development cooperation. With regard to a European army, there is no agreement between the party programmes. The Social Democratic Party is in favour of a jointly controlled system and procedure for securing the external borders.

2.4.3 Partly overlooked topics

The other political issues examined show 3 - 4 gaps in the cluster (shown in Figure 20) in relation to the issues dealt with by the respective parties. These are digital EU, education/youth policy and economic policy.

Economic policy. In its economic policy position, the Austrian People's Party is committed to an eco-social market economy with a future-oriented orientation towards a digital internal market. The Social Democratic Party supports the idea of a binding "sustainable development pact" with social, economic and ecological goals that can be achieved and adhered to. The party is against the unilateral EU competition pact. The Greens support fair trade rules and transparent processes in economic policy. A transparent supply chain with minimum social and ecological standards through appropriate disclosure and due diligence obligations is necessary. What is consumed in the European Union must not contribute to war and exploitation. Party Europe 1 is committed to a socio-economic market with full employment and the protection of services of general public interest enshrined in the EU Treaty and rejects all attempts to create a society based solely on competition.

Digital EU. The Austrian People's Party and the Social Democratic Party are committed to an autonomous digital Europe in which technologies are created at the forefront without being dependent on non-European technologies, as is currently the case. Major investments should be made here in order to create a European Silicon Valley. The Austrian People's Party speaks of "high-tech made in Europe". The Social Democratic Party stresses the protection against fake news, against which Europe must fight. The Greens speak of an "e-privacy", where electronic devices and intelligent systems protect the privacy of citizens at the place of manufacture and call for a binding minimum standard for IT equipment and systems to protect privacy without backdoor options. The KPOE is in favour of net neutrality and public funding for the development of open source software. It also advocates the import of sustainability plans that must be drawn up during the development of products so that products can be used over a longer period of time and, if necessary, repaired at low cost.

Education/youth policy. For the purposes of the EMY project, this is one of the most interesting topics. All the parties (4 out of 7) that raised the issue in their election manifestos support youth mobility in the EU. The Social Democratic Party, the Austrian People's Party and the Greens are in favour of expanding mobility programmes and extending them to different groups of people and social classes. The Social Democratic Party is in favour of

implementing educational programmes and initiatives to secure the democratic and cultural future of the EU. The Greens are in favour of further development of the Erasmus+ programme and increasing the funds so that it is accessible to workers, parents, pupils, students and people from different backgrounds and social classes. The party also wants to support a fair and efficient European School System, which also takes into account the individual talents of pupils. With regard to universities, there should be a European solution. The Greens want every young person to have the opportunity to work in another EU host country every 6-12 months as part of the European Year of Volunteers. Especially interesting for our project, the Greens emphasize that every 16-18-year-old should have the opportunity to travel to Brussels to better understand and feel the European Union.

2.4.4 General Findings

The election campaign was dominated by climate protection, migration policy and the role of the European Union. In the party programmes of all parties there are slight differences depending on the political position.

Most parties advocated a strong EU that can hold its own in global competition and guarantee European security.

In their election manifestos, the political parties did not specifically address the issue of mobile EU citizens. However, this issue is reflected in part in the category of education and youth policy, in which the parties express their positive attitude towards the educational mobility of young people.

3 Conclusion

This chapter will coalesce all the compiled data and attempt to provide summaries and conclusions on common topics. The data used in this chapter is part of Deliverable 4.2. and the different post-election mapping and interaction activities, which have been presented in the previous chapter. The first five subsections will present data under the established working assumptions and sub-assumptions (previously detailed in Deliverable 2.1.). Each sub-assumption will be supported by the assembled information. A sixth section will discuss other topics that have not been directly covered by the working assumptions. A final section will include a brief summary and a description of upcoming activities.

3.1 Political apathy

Deliverable 2.1. specifies that political apathy cannot be solely blamed for the decrease in voting turnout of younger generations. Throughout the undertaken activities, the assumption of a **general lack of interest in politics** has not been significant. Participants in the post-election mapping activities have increasingly shown that the EMYs' fundamental interest in participating in democratic life is present at both EU and local level. This can be observed very well from the turnout of the surveyed target group in the 2019 European elections: 76% of the participants took part in the EP elections. According to the post-election survey, 24% of respondents did not participate in the EP elections (Figure 4), and only 3% of all respondents (11% of those who did not participate in the election) stated that this was due to *"I have no interest in politics in general"* (Figure 5). Among the respondents who did not participate in the EP elections, a greater willingness to participate in the elections can be seen, if the following criteria relevant to them (e.g. e-voting, information provision etc.) are taken into account (Figure 5 & Figure 7). In the following section these issues will be pointed out. In comparison with the pre-election survey, an overwhelming majority of respondents (90%) have been involved in the electoral process at least once in their past (90% participated previously in any election), only 36% of all respondents voted in EP elections in 2014. In addition, of those who in the pre-election survey considered taking part in the 2019 EP elections if they had chosen to vote, 25% would have voted for an Austrian candidate and, accordingly, 75% would have voted for a candidate from their home country.

Throughout all the activities, no participant has ever shown a **general lack of trust in political processes and institutions** or claimed that "my voice doesn't matter". In fact, the existence of various specific political issues mentioned by the different target groups (Deliverable 4.2., FG II.3., post-election survey, FG II.4.) turns the assumption of political apathy into an almost superfluous point. In the post-election survey, the most important topics (from a list of multiple answers) were climate change / environmental policy, education / youth policy, migration policy, which were taken up by 79%, 50% and 48% of all respondents (Figure 10). Participants of the focus group discussions felt that different topics are important for different people and interests, and it is not possible to say in general terms which topics are particularly important and which are not. In their opinion, all topics should be dealt with as well as possible and brought to the respective target group. One participant noted that the citizens have the responsibility to engage more with the EU, so that topics relevant to the citizens can be worked on:

"If we want the EU to be more engaged in our lives, we need to be more engaged in their stuff. Individuals should acknowledge what the EU is doing and offer to help. The EU provided a big budget to combat the crisis, never before [was] so much money was provided. Not many people know that." (Participant 3, FG II.4.)

"A possible approach would be in finding [/identifying] people with the same problems that the EU can solve and share the info with them they require for a certain problem and target information to [respective] people who have that area of interest." (Participant 2, FG II.4.)

Participants in the pre-election focus group answered the question of which EU topics and issues should be changed and which topics they were interested in as follows: environment, education - especially EU education, youth policy, processes and decision-making, access to information, harmonisation and facilitating participation in EU political life. How well these issues are implemented by the various local political parties and MEPs is discussed in Section 3.4 Communication deficits. However, the post-election survey showed that 54% (

Figure 11) and 33% (Figure 18) of all respondents would like to see relevant, realistic evidence that their votes can make a difference in EU policies or in the local community. Such evidence would encourage them to become more actively involved in the political aspects of the EU and its host countries.

3.2 Home-country bias

Home-country bias, as defined by Deliverable 2.1., consists of "*any attitudes of perceptions that reflect either a strong preference for the home-country, coupled with a lack of interest – or even distrust – in the cultural and political life of another country, such as the host-country, and/or the EU at large.*" Some categories of this bias have been strongly identified throughout the conducted activities, while others, not so much. A **general lack of interest in the EU** has not been associated to the participants of the mapping and interaction activities. In the post-election survey, 1% of the total respondents (5% of those that did not vote) argued that the reason behind not voting was "*I have no interest in EU politics / I only vote in (national) elections in my home-country*" (Figure 5). Nevertheless, when asked about their identity, they considered themselves citizens of the EU in different degrees (Figure 14). As one participant of the FG II.3, who is half German and half Hungarian, but grew up in Romania and now lives in Austria, stressed: *"I never felt Romanian, so European is a good description for me." (Participant 2, FG II.3.).* This refutes the assumption of a general lack of interest in the EU.

What could be observed and heard from the participants of the focus group discussions was their strategic approach to the elections in order to give their vote more impact:

"I voted in Romania. The country needs it in this moment, they have 5 million people living outside the country. If 5 million would not vote, there would be a high loss of votes. In Romania there is a political crisis, so all votes were needed to stabilize the political situation. All people outside the country need to vote in Romania in order to make the country work again." (Participant 3, FG II.4.)

"I considered to vote for an Austrian candidate, but then I felt like I know so much more about German politics. [I] didn't feel [able] to vote for Austrian candidates. And its not like EMYs don't vote, they voted for their home country. You feel it's so much more

work than it probably is. It feels easier to vote for your home country." (Participant 3, FG II.3.)

"I have a certain picture of Europe, there are two blocks, in one belongs Germany, Austria and in the other Spain. Sometimes Germany decides on things which are not that good for Spain. So, I used my vote in Austria in order to influence what is happening in the second block, Spain." (Participant 2, FG II.4.)

Lack of confidence in the EU institutions has been recorded previously in Deliverable 4.2. It has also been partially identified in the activities of the post-election mapping and interaction activities, but not to the defined extent and context of "*my vote only matters in my home-country*". Some of the comments reference the complicated political nature of the EU.

"The EU should make steps forward to [reach out to] people. The EU is like a cold entity, [a] big economical institution but political not very high [profile]. The EU must engage more in political life of citizens, not only economical. They must implement some way of communication and marketing in order to reach more people." (Participant 3, FG II.4.)

Increasingly, it is not the lack of trust in the EU itself that is being highlighted, but rather the complexity and lack of communication or the fact that its information does not reach citizens through the national levels. Also, in the context of the COVID 19 pandemic, this is considered a great opportunity for the EU to penetrate and make its presence felt through the national levels.

"It is a crucial moment for the EU. If the EU manages the situation well, more people will embrace EU citizenship. Again, the biggest problem of the EU is its communication style." (Participant 3, FG II.4.)

The **lack of confidence in the effectiveness of EU policy-making** has been more prevalently communicated by the participants in the post-election activities, especially in the focus group discussions about the European Citizens' Initiative.

"I was aware of the [European Citizens'] initiative but a lot of time less convinced that it is an effective tool. Outcomes are not effective, have to be debated first, so they are not solid. [I] had the feeling it is not effective." (Participant 6, FG II.4.)

The majority of focus group participants were not aware of the European Citizens' Initiative or other similar EU participatory initiatives and platforms, as the survey results on this topic also show (Figure 13). The feeling of not making a difference was not indicated by focus group participants in Deliverable 4.2, and also the exact statement "*does not make a difference to me*" in regard to home-country bias, has not been recorded throughout this deliverable's activities.

Deliverable 4.2. concluded that participants associated the citizenship of the EU with practical issues, such as EU wide borderless travel, education and work, much more than political engagement. The **lack of interest in host-country engagement**, specifically the absence of a long-term perspective, has been echoed by the interviewed MEPs and stakeholders, the political youth that participated in Focus Group II.3. and EMY's from the post-election focus groups and survey. At the time of the post-election survey, approximately, one third of the respondents had already been involved and/or were active in political, social or civil organisations in their EU host country Austria. With regard to the bias of EMYs towards the

use of their voting rights in the EU host country, a strong distinction needs to be made between short-term EMYs, who may only stay in the EU host country for an Erasmus semester or for a traineeship etc., and long-term EMYs, who may stay in the EU host country for more than one year, as described in D2.1. As almost all interview partners confirmed, the focus of short-term EMYs should not necessarily be to interest them in local democratic participation, but rather to raise awareness of their local voting rights and of the political and democratic system in their EU host country. As the ESN Austria representative pointed out and as he observed during his term of office (elected for 2019 and re-elected for 2020), short-term EMYs are very difficult to motivate for activities that do not directly affect their lives during their stay, due to their limited stay and lack of time. At the time of the post-election survey, 66% of the respondents were not involved in any political, social or civic activity in their host-country (Figure 15). According to the EMY post-election survey, the main reasons for not being engaged in the EU host country are lack of time because of study and work (79%), not sufficient knowledge about local problems in order to feel prepared to help solve them as part of (37%) and the short-term stay in the EU host country (30%). One exchange student explained this issue as follows:

"One of the biggest challenges when it comes to helping EMYs - which is a wide group we are talking about - is that there are so many differences. Some are here for Erasmus, some for longer. They have completely different needs when it comes to being engaged. For me [as a long-term EMY] the right to vote here is much more important than for Erasmus students. In my experience there are some little things you do not fully understand if you were not raised here. Like sayings, references…" (Participant 9, FG II.3.)

"If I knew I will stay here for 10+ years, then I would be more engaged. For now, I am a student and I want to go back to my home country. That is why I don't want to do that [be more engaged in the democratic life of the host country]." (Participant 1, FG II.3.)

The reasons why respondents in the post-election survey who were resident in an EU host country during the 2019 EP elections, did not cast their vote for a host-country candidate included voting habit, lack of knowledge / communication deficits and/or conscious strategic voting decision - which will be further explored in the following sections. There was a consensus among the political youth participants of FG II.3. on the fact that "*people generally are not interested in EU elections.*" And to target the youth as possible voters would translate into great efforts and unknown returns. As one young politician pointed out, it often takes a special event involving a target group to attract their attention to an election - this was the case in the 2019 EP election concerning Brexit and the young generation affected by it:

"In general, it is hard to get people interested in EP elections. For younger people it is much more interesting due to Brexit, where younger people were involved but not heard. I don't really know actually, at SJ [my party] we raised awareness to the deadlines. But I couldn't really tell actually [no exact estimate about the interest of EMYs in their party programme]." (Politician SY, FG II.3.)

In terms of engagement at local level and involvement of EMYs in/through campaigns, young politicians have highlighted the difficulty, which is also a major problem for parties at local level in the EU host country due to the language barrier in providing targeted information

"It is hard to be in contact with EMYs. There are only some English magazines in Austria. What we can do: do more work at universities. But it's hard for us to be in contact with them, they don't read newspapers, they don't watch Austrian television.

EMYs are not a group we try to attract. EMYs are more in European targeting not in Austrian [the target group of EMYs is addressed more strongly by the Austrian parties at EU level and is perceived as more important in this respect]. Austrian parties are more focused on Austrian citizens. We tried a little bit on Facebook and Instagram… it is creepy to get advertised [to] in English. We try to communicate with EMYs on the European level.” (Politician G, FG II.3.)

Finally, the **preference for home-country engagement**, due to either cultural bias or pragmatism, appears to be the most prevalent assumption subcategory among all the participants. In Deliverable 4.2., the majority of the survey respondents would have voted for a home-country candidate, and “*focus group discussions demonstrated similar results*”. In the post-election survey, 76% of the respondents voted in the EP elections (Figure 4), and of those, 88% voted for a home-country candidate, 11% for an Austrian candidate and 1% voted for a host-country party/candidate (while living in another EU host country than Austria). From those that voted for a home-country candidate, 39% declared it was due to habitual reasons or home-country bias, 23% due to lack of awareness of the possibility of voting for a candidate from the EU host country as well as complex registration procedures and 19% due to pragmatism / strategic reasons in regard of having a bigger impact on EU policies. Both focus group discussions supported these results, presenting pragmatic reasons.

“I considered to vote for an Austrian candidate, but then I felt like I know so much more about German politics. [I] didn’t feel [able] to vote for Austrian candidates. And it’s not like EMYs don’t vote, they voted for their home country. You feel it's so much more work than it probably is. It feels easier to vote for your home country [candidates].” (Participant 3, FG II.3.)

“I am not really involved and not interested in politics in Austria. There were elections for European Parliament, but I had difficulties [in casting my vote]. I am only involved in politics in Spain, my country. I know I will leave [Austria]; I have been here [in Austria] for 1,5 years – I was planning to stay for 2 years.” (Participant 2, FG II.4.)

“I have a certain picture of Europe, there are two blocks, in one belongs Germany, Austria and in the other Spain. Sometimes Germany decides on things which are not that good for Spain. So, I used my vote in Austria in order to influence what is happening in the second block, Spain.” (Participant 2, FG II.4.)

3.3 Information deficits

The following working assumption deals with the lack of information, about the EU, its institutions and activities, as per the definition in Deliverable 2.1. A **general lack of knowledge about the EU** was represented in Deliverable 4.2. In Deliverable 4.2. the complexity and lack of information or understanding resulting from a lack of familiarity with the EU system was highlighted by those involved in the pre-election phase mapping and interaction activities. Nevertheless, its findings indicated that a large majority were aware of the upcoming EP elections. On the other hand, the represented cases of not having enough information on where and when to vote, in both home- and host-countries, indicate an acknowledgement of the aforementioned sub-assumption. In the post-election survey, 4% of the total respondents (18% of those that did not vote) argued that the reason behind not voting was “*I would have voted if I had known about the EP Elections in time*” (Figure 5). This indicates that there was

a high level of awareness regarding the EP elections. However, when asked about the European Citizens' Initiative, 61% of all post-election respondents had not heard about this instrument. Only one participant of Focus Group II.3 knew about this platform, the rest of the participants felt that these EU initiatives and platforms (such as European Citizens' Initiative and other see in Figure 12) were not getting through to them because they were not attractive to them at first sight. Compared to the second focus group discussion, the result looked similar, since only one participant in FG II.4. was informed about the platform, but sceptical about the effectiveness of the instrument, as mentioned as follows:

> *"I was aware of the [European Citizens'] initiative but a lot of time less convinced that it is an effective tool. Outcomes are not effective, have to be debated first, so they are not solid. [I] had the feeling it is not effective." (Participant 6, FG II.4.)*

Additionally, the post-election survey results show a high level of lack of knowledge when it refers to EU-related platforms (Figure 11), and a focus group participant declared:

> *"The marketing of the EU is very weak. If the EU was a company, they would get bankrupt quickly." (Participant 1, FG II.3.)*

All this information reveals a latent knowledge deficit about the EU, which can be addressed in the policy recommendations in Deliverable 4.6.

The **lack of knowledge about citizen rights** refers specifically to the right to vote for a home- or host-country's candidates in the EP elections, to vote in local elections, or to stand as a candidate in the host-country. The pre-election survey of Deliverable 4.2 reflected an awareness for the first two mentioned rights of 63% and 24%, respectively. In the post-election survey, 55% of those who did not vote in the 2019 EP elections were aware of their voting rights (Figure 6). The result of the survey on awareness of the right to vote in local elections in the host country showed that only half of the respondents knew that they could participate in elections at local level (municipal elections, district elections) in their EU host country (51%) (Figure 17). FG II.3. and 4. participants reflected the results of the survey on voting rights fairly accurately, although awareness of voting rights in local elections in the EU host country was generally lower than at EU level. Two focus group participants mentioned two possible reasons why EU citizens do not know enough about their electoral rights pointing to the insufficient identification with the EU and the imperceptible communication of the EU institutions:

> *"I do not know why Europeans are not aware of the fact that they can vote in their host country, there is a lack of information and maybe because you don't identify as Europeans as much as you should" (Participant 1, FG II.4.)*

> *"The European Union has no strategy of marketing and communicating to the public, the EU does not know how to talk to their citizens. It's a rare case that someone stands for candidate in [their own] host country. Vienna is open to English speakers and foreign people. Everybody seems to know English, there is also much information [available] in English." (Participant 3, FG II.4.)*

On the other hand, the **lack of knowledge about specific requirements and voting procedures** has been represented in the post-election mapping and interaction activities. Deliverable 4.2. has collected some accounts of insufficient information on voting requirements and procedures being a barrier. In the post-election survey, approximately 12% of the respondents that had participated in the 2019 EP election reported difficulties when casting

votes. Of those, the majority described the problem as follows: "*It was difficult to find adequate information on how to cast a vote.*" and *"the registration process (of my home country) was very burdensome / complicated"*. MEPs also noted that while there is a political responsibility to make information clearer and easier to understand for the target group and to facilitate access for EMYs and younger generations by harmonising electoral processes, citizens also have an active duty to search for electoral information in a proactive way. On the other hand, the election officer of the city of Vienna emphasised that an increasing number of information deficits and voting problems have been reported by mobile EU citizens. Additionally, for the EP elections and the facilitation of participation in other EU-related political discourse, the survey respondents requested an improvement in the provision of the official information about voting dates (19%), registration procedures and other formal requirements in their host- and home-countries (23%), respectively (

Figure 11). When asked about improvements to encourage young EU citizens living abroad to participate more frequently or actively in the political life of their host country, 45% of all respondents selected the option to "*Provide better official information about voting dates, registration procedures and other formal requirements to participate in local elections*" (Figure 18).

Finally, the **lack of knowledge about host-country parties/candidates and politics** has been indicated in the post-election mapping activities. Deliverable 4.2. has illustrated that focus group participants in the pre-election phase had different levels of knowledge about the host-country politics. Focus groups II.3 and II.4 conducted after the EP elections also showed that even if a person has a higher level of knowledge about the host country's policies and/or has actively participated in such activities in the past, some parameters (e.g. pragmatism, the home country bias, strategic choice, simplicity of the electoral process, etc.) can be decisive for the choosing the host country. For those participants who are basically interested in participating in elections at the local level, the length of stay in the host country and the language barrier(note that advertising campaigns, party appearances, election discussions in Austria are mainly held in German), are very relevant decision criteria for their engagement,. The post-election survey also pointed out some latent lack of knowledge about host-country parties/candidates and politics. Of those that voted for a home-country party/candidate during the EP elections, 4% responded that *"I do not know / am not interested in the politics of my host country"*, and 20% cited *"I did not know that I could vote in my host country"* as the reason for not participating in the local elections.

3.4 Communication deficits

Communication deficits were already reported in D 4.2. for the pre-election phase. In the post-election phase, communication deficits were discussed in the two focus groups, the survey, and in interviews with stakeholders and MEPs. Key topics included the communication approach of the EU institutions, the choices and use of communication channels, the direct visibility of the EU with citizens in the member states and the attractiveness for and the targeted provision of information to the project target group. The MEPs interviewed agreed that the EU has difficulty in relating to EU citizens directly as its direct impact is often overshadowed by the much stronger presence of member states. They attributed these issues partly to the choice/use of communication channels and the content/messaging directed mainly at an audience which is already interested in and disposed favourably towards the EU, and also to

a large extent are aware of the difference and potential tensions between the EU and national levels. One focus group participant noted the following in this context:

> *"There needs to be some new way of communication, [as] traditional [communication] methods don't work. EMYs are not accessing them [referring to the way EMYs and younger generations consume information (e.g. social media channels, targeted content etc.). Politicians should do more on social media or find new ways." (Participant 6, FG II.3.)*

One of the young politicians in the focus group discussion also emphasised that political parties tend to focus on communicating national issues in election campaigns and only try to reach out to mobile EU citizens in European elections. The language barrier adds a further complications, which was described by the young politician as rather difficult to handle, as he thinks that campaigning in English could create a strange feeling for the local people.

> *"… Austrian parties are more focused on Austrian citizens. We tried a little bit on Facebook and Instagram… it is creepy to get advertised [to] in English. We try to communicate with EMYs on the European level." (Politician G, FG II.3.)*

One focus group participant stressed that multilingualism is a precondition for the progress of the EU and the creation of a European identity

> *"This just shows that this if EU citizenship is [to be] taken seriously, it requires multilingualism." (Participant 9, FG II.3.)*

Communication deficits are related to the interests of individuals and the environment in which EMYs are located. Key stakeholders such as ESN Austria and international offices of universities, which have direct access to and contacts with the project target group, do not consider it their task to provide general information on democratic participation such as formal elections to EMYs, as this exceeds their mandate. Other key stakeholders such as schools (e.g. Boerhaavegasse BRG Wien III) mentioned that they lacked relevant information, and teachers had little knowledge of how to raise the awareness of their students about EU elections. On the other hand, key stakeholders such as the Chamber of Labour, mentioned that they had encountered difficulties in identifying and reaching out to the project target group.

These findings seem to complement comments in Deliverable 4.2., that allude to the fact that the survey and focus group participants did not know how or where to find relevant information about the EP elections procedures/and candidates in the host country. With this in mind, it is important to investigate other possible factors that might create barriers for the communication between stakeholders and the project target group. The **language barrier** is the first sub-assumption of the project's working assumptions (Deliverable 2.1.) and has been heavily reflected in all project activities. The findings of Deliverable 4.2. illustrated that language "*was stressed as one of the crucial barriers that contributes to the feeling of not being able to make an informed choice.*" The language issue is compounded by the fact that stakeholders find it difficult to capture the target group's attention, which will be further discussed below. The MEPs interviewed in the post-election phase also acknowledged the importance of the language barrier. However, some also stressed the responsibility of individuals to search for relevant information. Focus group participants also commented on the barriers described above and shared experiences with engagement in local politics and elections in Austria:

> *"I voted once for local district Elections in the 5th district [of Vienna]. I got a proper letter from officials otherwise I would not have voted. For me it was not difficult because the letter was in German, but if German were not my mother tongue, it could have been more challenging…" (Participant 4, FG II.4.)*

The language barrier was one of the four most selected reasons why survey respondents did not get involved in political, social or civic activities in their host country. It made up 16% of the reasons, corresponding to 66% of these non-participants (Figure 15 & Figure 16).

Other cultural or social difficulties to engage or integrate EMYs in the host-county have not been significantly represented by a common topic. Individual statements made in focus groups and interviews and survey results could be further studied to understand the level of impact on the project target group. For example, two young politicians in FG II.3. stated in this context:

> *"… It is hard to be in contact with EMYs… What we can do: do more work at universities. But it's hard for us to be in contact with them, they don't read newspapers, they don't watch Austrian television. EMYs are not a group we try to attract. EMYs are more in European targeting not in Austrian. Austrian parties are more focused on Austrian citizens…" (Politician G, FG II.3.)*

> *"We did not do something language-wise. But there are a lot of EMYs who actually speak German. We did not do much, not in a specific way. To communicate deadlines is probably the only way to target EMYs specifically. Programmes etc. do not differ from Austrians and citizens, but deadlines do. Maybe a particular party programme which might be more interesting to EMYs. But we did not do that." (Politician J, FG II.3.)*

Also, according to the ESN Austria representative, student unions mostly focus on engagement between internationals (i.e. the student unions do not differentiate between EU citizens and those from non-EU/third countries) and do not have a specific focus on integrating them into the host-country's society, especially in terms of formal democratic engagement. Only specific questions mostly concerning administrative issues (e.g. registration in the residents' register, etc.) are being dealt with on an individual basis. Otherwise, the ESN sees itself more as an organiser of events that give students a feeling for their host country and deal with topics that are useful for the duration of the students' stay. The interviewee also distinguished between short-term exchange students and long-term students from abroad who want to graduate in Austria. According to him, EMYs who stay in Austria for longer periods of time often take more time to inform themselves about political, social or civic activities and proactively take the initiative to find answers to their questions.The third most selected reason behind why survey respondents do not get involved in political, social or civic activities in their host country was that "*I have been living in my host country for too short a time to confidently interact and communicate with local activists.*" This answer was selected by 30% of the survey respondents who do not prefer to engage with local/community organisations (Figure 16). When prompted about possible improvements to encourage EMYs to participate more frequently or actively in the political life of their host-country, 46% of all respondents chose the option to "*Encourage local politicians and parties to take an active interest in the interests / needs of foreign EU nationals living in their community*", and an overwhelming 76% requested "*Show me that, as a foreigner, I am welcome to participate in the political and social life of the community*" (these choices were not mutually exclusive) (Figure 18).

Communication channel mismatch has not been highly encountered. In fact, the findings of the post-election phase reflect good choice/usage of the communication channels by the key stakeholders which are relevant for EMYs.

Deliverable 4.2 identified the information channels that were used by the majority of the pre-election survey participants to inform themselves about Austrian candidates in the EP elections 2019: webpages of Austrian political parties (43%), Austrian news media (68%), Facebook (30%), webpages of EP and other EU institutions (17%), and applications dedicated to the European elections (e.g. voting advisors) (17%). In the post-election survey, the respondents indicated three main preferences of channel / organisation types for the provision of information on how to get involved at EU level and how to participate in EU elections (multiple answers were possible): 1) student unions / trade unions (55%), 2) host-country authorities (53%) and 3) EU institutions / agencies (51%). More than two thirds of the respondents indicated newspapers (digital and print), media portals, news websites and social media were the main information channels through which they obtain news (Figure 19).

When it comes to the preferences of the post-election survey respondents, where to find information on how to participate in the political, social and civic life of their host country during their stay, the four main channels (of which two stand out) are the following (selecting multiple answers was possible): student unions', trade unions', professional organisations' websites / publications (77%), host-country national authorities' websites / publications (56%), dedicated portals or apps (e.g. for recently arrived EU citizens) (46%) and social media groups (41%). In regard to active provision of relevant information on local elections and other opportunities of engaging in Austria, participants prefer the following two channels / types of organisations: *"Student unions / trade unions"* (65%) and *"host-country authorities"* (62%).

Similarly, the participants of FG II.3. and FG II.4. mentioned these channels and stakeholders as their most preferred ones.

> *"I am working as a PR consultant: you the young politicians - please start - you can make the best Instagram stories, YouTube videos. It's important to make people understand." (Participant 9, FG II.3.)*

> *"There needs to be some new way of communication, [as] traditional [communication] methods don't work. EMYs are not accessing them [referring to the way EMYs and younger generations consume information (e.g. social media channels, targeted content etc.). Politicians should do more on social media or find new ways." (Participant 6, FG II.3.)*

> *"I think student unions [key stakeholder for EMY related topics]. It would be important to contact ESN and [tell them to] put a main focus on EMYs. The main point of contact is the university." (Participant 5, FG II.3.)*

> *"Local administrations. These are the places which are most frequently visited by citizens, where you can get this kind of information. They should give possibilities to participate. In some countries this is the place where discussions would happen, or people get together to discuss such things. The more local it gets, the closer it is to home; they have the awareness of what is happening. Or [they and meet] politicians from the national level who might show up there." (Participant 5, FG II.4.)*

> *"At university, teaching what it is useful for [the exercise of democratic rights]. Organize events in which you can ask in person, learn how it works in a small group in which you can interact with organizers [with knowledge of EMY-related topics]." (Participant 2, FG II.4.)*

> *"We have to differentiate between the ones who stay [for a] long or short time. One has to get more familiar with official institutions. National officials have different goals, [and] do not want to get overruled by the EU. I stick to EYP [European Youth Parliament][16] and those organizations for the youth to get information I need. These people have similar backgrounds, perspectives, [and are the] same age. Politicians of different age levels have done their studies, faced different issues. [They are] not that close to problems as we are. It's better to obtain information from somebody your age." (Participant 4, FG II.4.)*

All MEPs and stakeholders interviewed agreed that social media is the most effective and tangible channel to reach the younger generations. All stakeholders confirmed that they already use these channels and should use them even more effectively to make complex and "dry" topics more tangible and understandable for the younger generations. Nevertheless, most of the interview partners indicated that there is still a lot of catching up to do on the political side, both at the EU and national level, to reach specific target groups, the younger generations in general and in particular young mobile EU citizens, with messages that appeal to them. MEPs argued that citizens in general, and the younger generation in particular, need to be proactive in finding/identifying relevant information and acquiring knowledge about the democratic life at EU level and/or in the host country in order to make their voice heard/be recognised by policy makers.

One of the focus group participants did not see an effective and targeted communication strategy of the EU to communicate and interact with EU citizens:

> *"The European Union has no strategy of marketing and communicating to the public, the EU does not know how to talk to their citizens. It's a rare case that someone stands for candidate in [their own] host country. Vienna is open to English speakers and foreign people. Everybody seems to know English, there is also much information [available] in English." (Participant 3, FG II.4.)*

When prompted about possible improvements to encourage EMYs to participate more actively in the political life of the EU and/or the host-country, 50% of all post-election survey respondents chose the option to "*Provide better and/or more relevant tools and communication*

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[16] European Youth Parliament: https://eyp.org/

channels to participate in EU politics (e.g. with a focus on topics that I really care about)" (

Figure 11) and 31% chose the option to "*Provide better / more relevant tools and communication channels for me to participate in the local political and civic discussion (e.g. with a focus on the community that I am currently part of)*" (Figure 18). Regarding online political discourse, almost two thirds (59%) of the respondents said they were not interested in discussing political issues online, and much more willing to do so face-to-face (77%). The reason for this is highlighted by one survey participant:

> *"In online discussions, there is usually no proper fact checking. People pick the points that corroborate their own opinion and ignore contradicting arguments/facts. And no one holds anyone accountable for their online statements, not only in anonymity, but in general." and " I don´t want to get attacked and also don´t want to risk showing radicals my identity".*

Finally, the **failure to capture the target group's attention or failure to penetrate "filter bubbles"** was observed by most stakeholders in the post-election phase. In summary, almost all agreed that, according to their observations, both working and student EMYs are finding themselves in a bubble with their international peers. It is therefore more difficult for them to obtain information about local democratic life in their host country, as it is highly dependent on the environment in which one is located. A participant in the focus group also underlined this assumption, pointing out that one reason for their involvement in student services is especially the international community and interaction with them, as they are more likely to have the same problems in the host country as she does. Another participant stressed that she could understand why politicians do not consider EMYs as an election target group because they assume that they will not vote in their host country anyway:

> *"… For me it was a good beginning to meet people, especially international people. [it was a] good thing it was in English. It's an organization you can join in Austria without speaking German …" (Participant 1, FG II.4.)*

> *"Politicians think they [EMYs] don't vote anyways so why would we target them? And this goes around and around [if EMYs are not be targeted, they do not engage, if they do not engage politicians do not see the necessity to target them]". (Participant 5, FG II.3.)*

> *"Local administration are not very interested in promoting European values, they rather promote national values. Why should they vote for another country in the EU Romania is one of youngest members, so lots of Romanians don't know what the EU is. It's about political organizations, administration. I am a fan of the EU: I promote the EU in Romania. Some ask, why should we adapt to the EU? Why should we be more proud of it than Romania?" (Participant 3, FG II.4.)*

In the interviews MEPs confirmed that they supported lowering the voting age to 16 for European elections in all member states. In their view, it is young first-time voters might be motivated by the responsibility they have been given. One of the MEPs stressed that in today's digital age, when many young people are already earning money and paying taxes at this age, they should have the same democratic rights as they already actively contribute to society. However, the MEPs interviewed stressed that this is still a matter of national competences and is determined at this level, making it very difficult to enforce alignment at EU level. The focus

group participants saw the possibility of 16-year-olds taking part in elections in a very positive light. One of the participants also noted that a good school and education system are prerequisites for lowering the voting age:

> *"It is a good thing. People are less interested in politics, young people are more engaged. People who usually don't have a voice [in elections, when] you give them a voice, they use it. They are more motivated. I do not understand the discussion about voting with 16, it rather needs to be discussed whether people [aged] 85+ should vote."* (Participant 1, FG II.4.)

> *"It is a nice thing to put some pressure on a 16-year-old. You can do this in a country with great education, if you do that in Romania where people from the countryside are analphabetic, it would not work. Lots of people who are 16 don't know how to write or read, so that would not work there. But I like the approach."* (Participant 3, FG II.4.)

Some aforementioned results of the post-election survey acknowledge a latent failure to capture the target group's attention. When prompted about possible improvements to encourage EMYs to participate more actively in the political life of their host-country, 46% of all respondents chose the option to "*Encourage local politicians and parties to take an active interest in the interests / needs of foreign EU nationals living in their community*", and an overwhelming 76% requested "*Show me that, as a foreigner, I am welcome to participate in political and social life of the community*" (these choices were not mutually exclusive) (Figure 18). One could argue that stakeholders do not succeed to capture the attention of the project target group or do not really manage to penetrate the filter bubbles to reach out to EMYs.

3.5 Administrative barriers

The final working assumption deals with the administrative rules and procedures related to voter registration and the polling process (Deliverable 2.1.). Firstly, the member-state's conditions for eligibility to vote or stand as a candidate will be discussed. Every EU citizen has the right to vote and to stand as a candidate at elections to the EP in the member state in which he or she resides, under the same conditions as nationals of that state. Additionally, any EU national living in another EU country, has the right to vote and stand as a candidate in municipal elections in that country. As such, there is no mismatch between the conditions for nationals and the ones for citizens from another EU countries. Nevertheless, communication deficits and any of the factors described in previous sections might come into play, and thus have an impact on the political participation of EMYs in their host country. When prompted about possible improvements to EMYs to participate more actively in the political life of the EU, 19% of all the post-election survey respondents chose the option for the provision of "*better official information about voting dates, registration procedures and other formal requirements in their home country*", while 23% chose the provision of "*better official information about voting dates, registration procedures and other formal requirements in my host country*" (

Figure 11, these choices were not mutually exclusive). Similarly, possible improvements to encourage EMYs to participate more actively in the political life of their host country led to a percentage of 45% of all respondents to the post-election survey who were in favour of the provision of "*…better official information about voting dates, registration procedures and other formal requirements to participate in local elections*" (**Error! Reference source not found.**).

Secondly, the **member-state's formal requirements and procedures for voter registration** vary from country to country and have been highly referenced throughout the project. Deliverable 4.2. presented the finding that registration procedures, including deadlines, are among the barriers that prevent or hinder participation of the project target group in EP elections in Austria. If the information deficits are compounded, participants will be affected.

> *"I voted once for local district Elections in the 5th district [of Vienna]. I got a proper letter from officials otherwise I would not have voted. For me it was not difficult because the letter was in German, but if German were not my mother tongue, it could have been more challenging. I will vote in the Vienna elections in October." (Participant 4, FG II.4.)*

> *"I wanted to register, thought „okay I am super early this time, but missed the deadline." (Participant 10, FG II.3.)*

MEPs confirmed in the interviews that they support a harmonization of national election procedures but admit that it is not realistic to achieve this goal since the sovereignty of the member states is important and elections are in the competence of the member states. In the post-election survey, 24% of the respondents did not vote in the EP elections (Figure 4), and the reasons indicated are closely related to the difficulties encountered in dealing with national election procedures (Figure 5):

For the survey respondents who did not vote in the 2019 EP elections the reasons for their choice were the following:1)*"I would have voted if I had known about the EP elections in time"* (18%), 2) "*I wanted to vote for a home-country party / candidate but I missed the deadline for registration.*" (20%), 3) "*I wanted to vote for a home-country party / candidate but it was too complicated to get registered.*" (7%), 4) "*I wanted to vote for a host-country party / candidate but I missed the deadline for registration*" (7%).

When prompted about possible improvements to encourage EMYs to participate more actively in the political life of their host-country, 31% of all the post-election survey respondents chose the option "*Improve*[d] *procedures for registering to vote / casting a vote in local elections*" (

Figure 11). Regarding the EP elections, 21% and 15% of all respondents requested *"Improve*[d] *procedures for registering to vote / casting a vote in my host country"* and *"…home country*", respectively (Figure 18).

Finally, the **implementation of the polling process in member states** may either be a barrier or an enabler. The participants in the focus group discussions and the interview partners did not have a special focus on this topic, probably because they had no specific election experience in the near past. By comparison, in the pre-election phase, as described in D4.2, some focus group participants highlighted the different electoral processes and difficulties they had encountered in their home and host countries.

In the post-election survey, 76% of the respondents indicated that they had participated in the EP elections (Figure 4). Of those who voted, when prompted if they would have used e-voting if it had been available in the 2019 EP Elections, 84% replied affirmatively (Figure 7). In comparison, in the pre-election phase, 68% survey participants indicated that they would prefer to use e-voting instead of other conventional voting methods. In conclusion, EMYs generally appear to view e-voting in a positive light.

Throughout the different project activities, Internet voting (e-voting or online voting) has been discussed. Compared to the positive response of the post-election survey participants, the MEPs were very sceptical in the interviews about the current technological status of e-voting solutions. They were concerned about data security and the potential consequences for democracy. Although the focus group participants were also relatively sceptical about the e-voting system, they were equally aware of the possibilities, as was noted by two participants:

> *"E-voting can be hacked, the world is not prepared for it, there is a lack of security. Everything which is made by humans can be hacked by humans." (Participant 3, FG II.4.)*

> *"Going back to issues with participating in the EP elections, I couldn't take part in applying to be a voter. Lots of people couldn't cast their vote [referring to mobile EU citizens who faced voting barriers], so many people would be happy if e-voting was possible." (Participant 5, FG II.4.)*

3.6 Other topics

3.6.1 The role of stakeholders

The role of stakeholders was discussed in both the pre- and post-election mapping activities. In Deliverable 4.2. the participants of the focus group emphasised that they were unsure from which stakeholder they should receive information about elections and democratic participation on EU and/or local level in the EU host country Austria. The young politicians in FG II.3. commented that *"Events like this [Focus Group Discussion] would help but also [other dedicated events] of student unions, trade unions where they [EMYS] can meet people. Events which EMYs can attend in order to meet young people, kind of a chain which could be done by student unions." (Politician SY, FG II.3.).* Many participants saw the ESN in this important role, especially with regard to mobile students:

> *"I think student unions [key stakeholder for EMY related topics]. It would be important to contact ESN and [tell them to] put a main focus on EMYs. The main point of contact is the university." (Participant 5, FG II.3.)*

Two focus group participants commented that the needs of EMYs are different depending on factors such as the length of their stay in their host-country, the reason for their stay, etc:

> *"One of the biggest challenges when it comes to helping EMYs - which is a wide group we are talking about - is that there are so many differences. Some are here for Erasmus, some for longer. They have completely different needs when it comes to being engaged. For me [as a long-term EMY] the right to vote here is much more important than for Erasmus students. In my experience there are some little things you do not fully understand if you were not raised here. Like sayings, references…" (Participant 9, FG II.3.)*

> *"We have to differentiate between the ones who stay [for a] long or short time. One has to get more familiar with official institutions. National officials have different goals, [and] do not want to get overruled by the EU. I stick to EYP [European Youth Parliament][17]*

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[17] European Youth Parliament: https://eyp.org/

and those organizations for the youth to get information I need. These people have similar backgrounds, perspectives, [and are the] same age. Politicians of different age levels have done their studies, faced different issues. [They are] not that close to problems as we are. It's better to obtain information from somebody your age." (Participant 4, FG II.4.)

All interviewed MEPs agreed that national student unions, international offices, and educational institutions are very important for EMYs, and that topics of interest to this target group should be better communicated and promoted by them, as they are the most important contact point for the target group. On the other hand, ESN Austria does not see itself as a promoter of democratic/political engagement of EMYs in Austria but rather as a social actor.

One participant of FG II.4. noted that local administrations should take a lead role as stakeholder with frequent contacts to their citizens, including mobile EU citizens:

"Local administrations. These are the places which are most frequently visited by citizens, where you can get this kind of information. They should give possibilities to participate. In some countries this is the place where discussions would happen, or people get together to discuss such things. The more local it gets, the closer it is to home; they have the awareness of what is happening. Or [they and meet] politicians from the national level who might show up there." (Participant 5, FG II.4.)

The post-election survey asked respondents who could best provide them with relevant information about EU-level engagement (**Error! Reference source not found.**). The top four selections were the Student unions / trade unions (55%), EU institutions / agencies themselves (51%), and the host- and home-country authorities (53% and 38% respectively). Similarly, they were asked the same question about engagement in their host-country (i.e. Austria) political and social life(**Error! Reference source not found.**). The top three choices were the student unions / trade unions" (65%) local and national authorities themselves (62% and 41% respectively).

3.7 Summary and future activities

Deliverable 4.4 presents the implementation process and the findings of the mapping and interaction activities undertaken after the 2019 EP elections in Austria. It describes the conduct of the post-election survey, two focus groups with the direct beneficiaries of the project and multiple interviews with stakeholders. Also, the report at hand provided insights from the findings from the survey and the focus groups highlighting the important statements and arguments. A comparative analysis of the mapping and interaction activities undertaken in Estonia and Austria will be presented in Deliverable 2.3.

The summary of preliminary findings is structured along the five working assumptions (and their sub-assumptions) described in Deliverable 2.1. and other common topics that were discussed: 1) political; 2) home-country bias; 3) information deficits; 4) communication deficits 5) administrative barriers; and 6) stakeholder roles. The individual in-depth explorations and summaries of these topics can be found in the aforementioned sections, in this third chapter of Deliverable 4.4.

During forthcoming project activities, a comparative analysis of the mapping activities undertaken in Estonia and Austria will be presented in Deliverable 2.3. The same deliverable

will contain the validation of Estonian and Austrian results, which will be held on 10/06/2020 through a crowdsourcing online event. The main objectives of such an event is the validation of results of the pre-and post-election mapping and interaction activities (surveys, focus-groups, interviews) conducted in Austria and Estonia and the collection of input for Policy Recommendations (to be completed as task 4.6 in the project and presented as Deliverable 4.6). To achieve these primary objectives, the findings of analysis will be presented and participants will be asked about their reflections and views on the highlighted topics.

A joint crowdsourcing event serves as a forum for interaction between the mobile youth in Estonia and Austria and supports creativity and the presentation of "out of box" ideas. The format of the event will be a webinar, where the basic findings of the project are presented followed by open moderated online discussion which allows participants to freely exchange views and voice opinions on these topics and questions. The event will be lead by one moderator, two presenters (one from Estonia and one from Austria) and will attempt to engage 5 participants from each country (for a total of 10 EMYs).

Finally, Deliverable 4.6. will capitalise on the results of interaction activities to draft policy and practice recommendations for the improvement of political engagement of mobile students as EU citizens.

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Annexes

Annex 1. Post-Election Survey Announcement to Key Stakeholder

Annex 2. Post-Election Survey Announcement in_Austrian National Student Unions' Newsletter

Annex 3. Post-Election Survey Announcement to Austrian EMYs

Annex 4. Post-Election Survey Austrian Version

Annex 5. Participants FGII.3 (restrictive access)

Annex 6. Participants FGII.4 (restrictive access)

Annex 7. PPT Presentation for FGII.3

Annex 8. PPT Presentation for FGII.4

Annex 9. Desk Analysis Excel Table

Annex 10. Stakeholders Interviewed (restrictive access)