

## **European democratic values and communicative competence on mobility programmes targeting adults**

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## **European democratic values and communicative competence on mobility programmes targeting adults**

EU educational mobility programmes have long been geared towards not only the promotion of intercultural communicative competence, but also the uptake of European civic values. While the linguistic and socio-cultural effects of European training mobilities have been extensively studied, their effectiveness in supporting active citizenship and the emergence of shared community values remains largely unexplored. Similarly, no previous research has attempted to systematise the various conceptualisations of European civic and democratic values invoked in mobility projects addressing the topic. To bridge this lacuna, this paper reviews qualitative data from EU school-based mobility projects whose stated purpose, singularly or in conjunction with other educational goals, is the promotion of European civic awareness and democratic values among adult participants in a Spanish region. The methodological approach for the compilation of the corpus of project records, data extraction and processing follows that of Qualitative Comparative Analyses. The results point to a broad operationalisation of European civic and democratic themes in the examined projects. The coexistence of a limited number of specific proposals for deliberate educational intervention aimed at promoting democracy and European citizenship abroad, alongside the prevailing stance, which posits a spontaneous acquisition of such values through participation in transnational learning activities aimed at developing communicative, intercultural and digital skills, is also reported.

Keywords: democratic values; civic awareness; European values; mobility programmes; adult education; communicative competence

## Introduction

The recent update of the CEFR-CV (Council of Europe 2020) emphasises the role of language learners as active citizens, who need to develop mediation skills as part of their communicative competence. This explicit allusion to civic involvement is a clear indication of the relevance that values education and intercultural awareness are gaining in language learning settings. Language users are expected to engage in the promotion of mutual understanding in modern society, which in turn requires the purposeful inclusion of democratic principles into teaching training schemes. Due to the rising significance of transnational educational mobility opportunities for language teacher education, the conceptualisation of civic values and their coverage in such projects is the main focus of this paper.

The civic, inclusive and participatory approach gained momentum following the turn of the millennium, when a seminal report on young Europeans' attachment to the Union's citizenship principles was released (Ros et al. 2005). Two of the most relevant recommendations of that report concerned the integration into European education systems of 'supported temporary mobility' (p. 56) and the fostering of explicit and comprehensive European citizenship education in all Member States which would 'engage young people, leave them much better informed about the rights of citizens of member states of the European Union and help give them voice' (p. 57). Scholars have since delved into conceptualising what the shared values of European citizens are, pointing to values such as tolerance, open-mindedness and respect for diversity (Fuss and Grosser 2006). Following Coste and Cavalli (2015), a central aspect of this work is the concretisation of these values in their socio-political dimension for their cross-curricular integration into educational practice, encompassing democratic citizenship and human rights (Grundy and Jamieson 2007), the principles of representativity, the rule of law and social justice (Kennedy 2013, Wodak and Boukala 2015), so as to prepare students to coexist in harmony with otherness and to play an active democratic role in society. In this regard, the teaching of European values has been the subject of some research endeavours (Veuglers et al. 2017).

The updated descriptors contained in the CEFR-CV (2020) underline the centrality of communicative competence for the facilitation of pluricultural spaces, in which linguistically and culturally diverse actors are equipped to 'deal with "otherness", to identify similarities and differences, to build on known and unknown cultural features' (p. 114) so as to support meaningful dialogue, participation and cooperation. Similarly, the publication of the *Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture* (RFCDC) (Council of Europe 2018) urges national education systems to commit themselves to the achievement of civic-minded and democratically competent learners, so that they may participate effectively in democratic processes and intercultural dialogue (Coste and Cavalli 2015). In this regard, scholars have noted the interdependence between the communicative competence developed during academic study visits and the ability to interact and engage with members of other cultures, to display behaviour that is considered culturally appropriate, but also to build flexibility in accommodating to different contextual settings (Durán Martínez et al. 2016).

Thus, in its Declaration *Quality language teaching for a democratic, socially cohesive and peaceful Europe* (2020), issued on the occasion of its 25th anniversary, the European Centre for Modern Languages in Graz reaffirms language learning as a means for

achieving democratic citizenship and for situating the promotion of human rights at the centre of learning and teaching. Cogently, the RFCDC links democratic competence to attitudes of openness to cultural otherness and to other beliefs, worldviews and practices, but also to linguistic, communicative and multilingual competences. The RFCDC lays out a fourfold categorisation of competences for democratic culture classified into values, attitudes, skills and knowledge and critical understanding.

Figure 1. RFCDC competence schema (Council of Europe, 2018, p. 38)

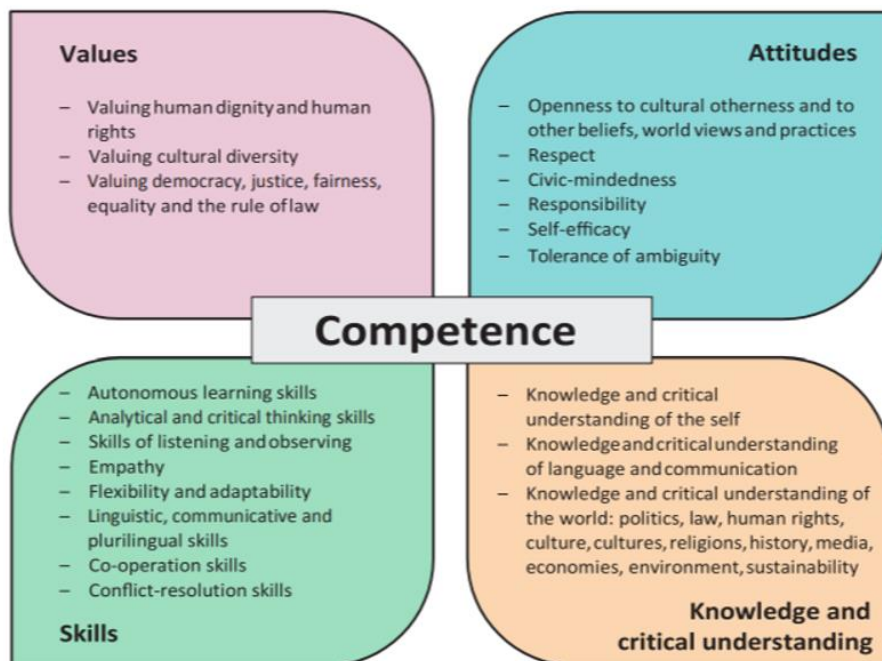


Figure 1 illustrates this current demand for introducing civic content explicitly into educational curricula, but also for methodological approaches that allow for the development of democratic behaviour across the curriculum, emphasising dialogue and cooperation, solving conflicts by peaceful means, and active participation in the public arena.

By the same token, as Barrett et al. (2016) point out, the development of attitudes such as an appreciation of diversity, a willingness to voice one's own opinions as well as to heed those of others, a commitment to majority decision-making and to the protection of minorities and their rights, as well as a desire to engage in dialogue across cultures, is required. In addition, educational institutions should furnish situations and provide the conditions and skills for adult learners' self-reflection, which is essential for them to develop the social and political conditions necessary for fuller participation in a democratic society (Mezirow 2003).

In the specific case of Spanish normative provisions, the development of educational competencies and the alignment with the European area were already advocated by the former Spanish education law (Organic Law 2/2006, of 3 May, on Education), making teacher training and updating to the challenges faced by the national education system a

policy priority. Accordingly, the current Spanish education law (Organic Law 3/2020, of 29 December, which amends the Organic Law 2/2006, of 3 May, on Education) brings in a subtle revision of teachers' functions by stating that educators are expected to instil in learners the principles of democratic citizenship and a culture of peace, as well as an ethos of respect, tolerance and freedom (p. 60).

At a subnational level, the *Strategic Plan for the Development of Languages in Andalusia* (SPDLA) (Consejería de Educación 2016), the most populated region in Spain, offers interesting insights on the promotion of democratic values and intercultural awareness through the development of language competences. Furthermore, within the SPDLA it is asserted that being able to communicate in other languages fosters democratic values, as it requires paying attention to social differences and respecting cultural conventions, in order to avoid conflicts and misunderstandings (p. 5). Drawing on the potential interconnection between democratic and linguistic competence, the SPDLA encourages the involvement of teachers in training or in-service activities within the framework of Erasmus+, whose priority lines encompass the reinforcement of educator's language skills, intercultural awareness and sensitivity to migrant affairs, focusing on a school-wide inclusive approach. Such initiatives are quite necessary in a context where efforts to fight high levels of illiteracy promoted the first adult education programmes in 1982 (Lucio-Villegas, 2017), not so long ago. Nowadays, illiteracy is no longer a problem, however, functional illiteracy, serious school dropout rates -among the highest in the EU, alarming unemployment levels (SGEE, 2021) and the substantial arrival of migrants make adult education more essential than ever.

### **Democratic values and European educational mobility programmes**

Language gains of study-abroad adult participants have been the subject of abundant prior research, especially those concerning the development of conversational linguistic proficiency, such as listening comprehension, oral fluency, and accuracy (Llanes and Muñoz 2009). Beyond linguistic competence development, however, Yang (2016) concludes, after a comprehensive meta-analysis of study-abroad effectiveness on second language learning, that attention to changes in learners' 'motivation, beliefs and intercultural competence is gaining momentum' (p. 67). Attitudinal changes stemming from these transnational experiences have thus been the focus of recent scholarly research, notably those geared towards the enhancement of intercultural competence (Wolff and Borzikowsky 2018).

In this paper, however, and echoing the stance advocated by Burrow (2019), the focus, within the scope of intercultural competence resulting from educational experiences abroad, is on participants' civic responsibilities. Civil society involvement (Hüller and Kohler-Koch 2008), as later laid down by the Organic Law 3/2020 (Spain), as well as good democratic governance, is attributed to a democratically competent civil society, new social movements and voluntary associations (Van den Brande, 2017). In this sense, the very topical nature to European societies of this issue has been evidenced by the provision of a sizeable budget allocation to the Rights and Values programme for the 2021-2027 period (European Commission 2018b), which identifies as policy priorities to be pursued: the promotion of common European values; the promotion of rights and equality; support for

active citizenship, democratic participation in society and the rule of law, as well as the promotion of social inclusion and justice.

Mobility opportunities for learning purposes in Europe are generally regarded as a hallmark of European citizenship-building. Originating in 1987 as an exchange programme for higher education students, known as the *Lifelong Learning Programme* (LLP) between 2007 and 2013 and rebranded as the *Erasmus+ programme* for the 2014-2020 cycle (Regulation (EU) No 1288/2013), one of its general goals has been to ‘contribute to the achievement of [...] (f) the promotion of European values in accordance with Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union’ (p. 57). The European Commission’s *Annual Work Programme*, collected and published yearly in the *Erasmus+ Programme Guide*, identifies the horizontal priority criteria in each call for project applications. Table 1 below presents the horizontal priorities of the Programme as set out by the European Commission in each annual call spanning the 2014–2018 period. All priorities are presented for the 2014 call. However, in order to avoid previously covered topics, only priorities not listed in preceding rounds are shown for subsequent years.

Table 1: Erasmus + horizontal priorities for project proposals

Annual call round	Horizontal priorities
2014	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. ‘[D]eveloping basic and transversal skills, such as [...] digital skills and multilingualism’</li> <li>2. ‘[E]nhancing Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) uptake in teaching and learning’.</li> <li>3. ‘Promoting stronger coherence [...] to ensure that skills and qualifications can be easily recognised across [EU] borders’.</li> <li>4. ‘[S]timulating debates on efficient and sustainable investment in education and training at European and national level involving all the relevant stakeholders’.</li> </ol> <p>(p.27)</p>
2015	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Promoting innovative activities to foster assessment of transversal skills and the use of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL).</li> <li>2. ‘[D]eveloping new approaches to strengthen the education and training paths of prospective and practicing educators’.</li> <li>3. Developing competences and skills needed to [...] ‘address increasingly diverse needs e.g. those posed by multicultural societies’.</li> <li>4. ‘[E]nhancing digital integration in learning, teaching, training’.</li> <li>5. ‘[C]ontributing to the development of a European Area of Skills and Qualifications’.</li> <li>6. Reducing disparities affecting learners from disadvantaged backgrounds or with fewer opportunities.</li> <li>7. Assessing and increasing ‘the efficiency of public expenditure and the investment in education, training and youth’.</li> </ol> <p>(p.106-107)</p>

- 2016
1. 'Improv[ing] achievement in relevant and high-level basic and transversal competences in a lifelong learning perspective'.
  2. Inclusive education: [...]addressing diversity in education, 'developing social, civic, intercultural competences and media literacy, combating discrimination and segregation, tackling bullying, reducing disparities in learning outcomes affecting learners with disadvantaged backgrounds'.
  3. 'Support[ing] projects involving refugees, asylum seekers and migrants'.
  4. Fostering open and innovative education and training, embedded in the digital era.
  5. 'Addressing underachievement in the basic skills [...] through more effective, innovative teaching methods;[...]building on diverse language skills alongside the main language of instruction'.
- (p.107-108)
- 2017
1. Social inclusion: promoting 'inclusion, diversity, equality, gender-balance and non-discrimination in education'.
  2. Strengthening the recruitment of 'the best and most suitable candidates for the teaching profession'.
  3. Supporting the 'transparency and recognition of skills and qualifications'.
  4. 'Sustainable investment, performance and efficiency'.
- (p.120-121)
- 2018
1. Developing high-quality skills and competences: 'to foster employability and socio educational and personal development, as well as participation in civic and social life'.
  2. 'Develop[ing] partnerships between learning institutions [...] with a view to promote lifelong learning and to improve the quality and effectiveness of learning mobility experiences'.
  3. Social inclusion: 'foster[ing] the development of social and civic and intercultural competences'.
  4. 'Sustainable investment, performance and efficiency: [...] supporting the effective implementation of the Investment Plan for Europe'.
  5. 'Social and educational value of European cultural heritage,[...] contributing to raising awareness of the importance of Europe's cultural heritage through education, life-long learning, [...]including actions to support skills development, social inclusion, critical thinking and youth engagement.[...]fostering intercultural dialogue involving teachers and pupils'.
- (p.105)
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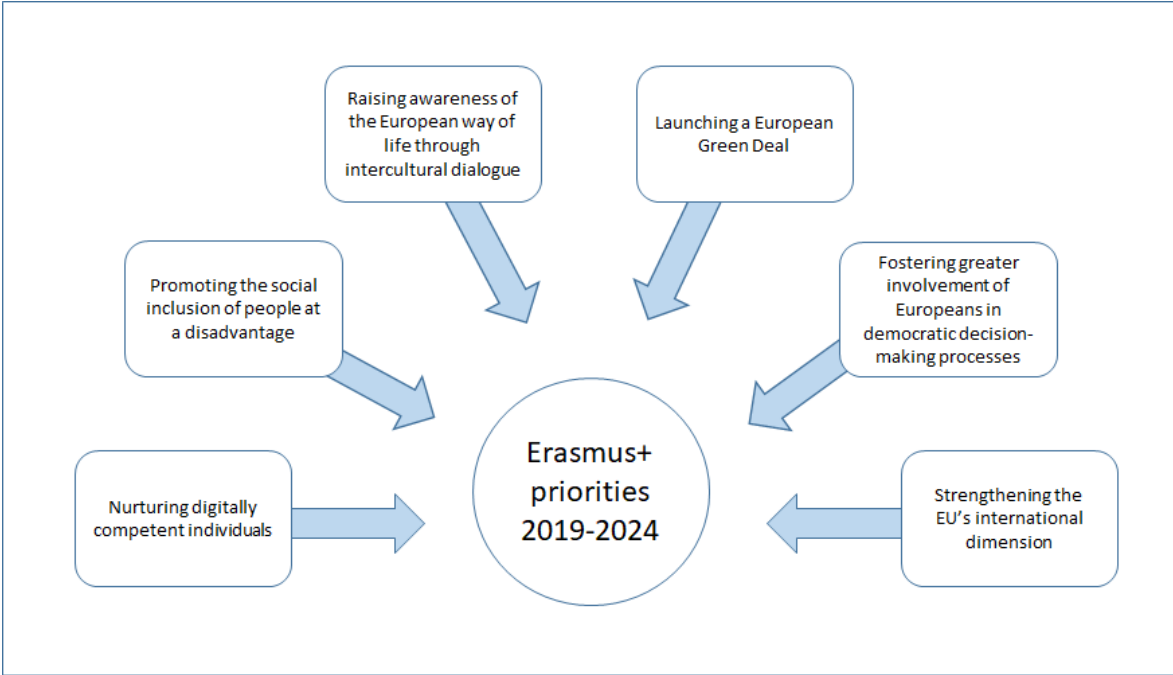
As Table 1 highlights, allusions to the development of participants' civic and democratic competences are diffuse in the 2014-2018 period, and are mainly embedded within the provisions on inclusive education introduced in 2016, when priority is given to actions that develop social and civic competences.

During the same 2014-2018 time period, the specific priorities for the adult education

sector similarly fail to make specific mention of aspects pertaining to democratic values and European citizenship, opting instead to prioritise the reduction of the number of low skilled adults. To this end, the Erasmus+ Programme Guides gradually incorporate a range of sector-specific priorities geared towards (1) designing and implementing effective strategies for enhancing basic skills (literacy, numeracy and digital skills); (2) providing high quality learning opportunities tailored to individual learners; (3) providing information and incentives for adult training; (4) making effective use of new technologies; and (5) progressively reaching groups that are not well served yet. Besides, the priorities for adult education also focus on validating skills acquired through informal and non-formal learning and evaluating the effectiveness of adult education policies at all levels.

In contrast, the 2021-2027 Erasmus+ initiative which is currently in force aims to both develop intercultural awareness, foster interpersonal communication skills or promote employability, but also strengthen active citizenship and the participation of young people in democratic processes, which is ‘of paramount importance for the European Union’s future’ (European Commission 2021, p. 4). Furthermore, in its present configuration the Erasmus+ programme foresees three separate sets of Key Actions (KA), whose focus concerns initiatives centred on teacher and/or student mobility (KA1), cooperation for innovation and exchange of good practice (KA2) and support for policy reform (KA3). As Figure 2 below illustrates, four out of the six thematic strands prioritised by the Commission for the five-year timeframe between 2019 and 2024 incorporate topics linked to active engagement in a democratic, pluralistic and inclusive European society.

Figure 2. Policy priorities outlined by the European Commission for the current period



In the same vein, some research efforts on the effects of educational mobilities to other EU countries signal participants' assumption of shared European values (Jacobone and Moro 2015, Kitsou 2020) and have ascertained, in quantitative terms, returnees' heightened appreciation of tenets such as freedom, democracy, human rights, equality and tolerance (Golubeva et al. 2018), while pointing to the need for further exploration of this issue in order to 'identify underlying cultural or social phenomena (shared values or beliefs) that mediate the influence of study programmes abroad' (Cores-Bilbao et al. 2020, p. 16). However, the suitability of educational activities under the aegis of Erasmus+ for the development of European values has been contested by other authors (Hoskins et al. 2006).

Drawing on these views, this paper aims to explore the conceptualization of European civic and democratic values and to analyse the coverage of civic issues in European Erasmus+ projects targeting adult participants, applied for and implemented in a selected Spanish region. This perspective concurs with the bottom-up approach needed to support two-way communication between individual actors and supranational institutions, stimulating the exercise of a European participatory democracy and the active engagement of citizens, as advocated by González-Gómez and Gualda (2014).

## **A review of the Erasmus projects addressing democratic competencies of adult education teaching staff and adult learners**

### **Goals and research questions**

This article analyses educational projects developed under the aegis of European educational programmes whose focus areas include, either directly or tangentially, the promotion of democratic values, attitudes and skills relevant to civic participation and European citizenship awareness.

The specific aims of this review are to identify, categorise and summarise the records of previous projects whose focus includes democracy, civic competence or European citizenship.

We expect to be able to answer the following research questions:

1. Through what notions do mobility projects for adult education address democratic values?
2. In what way do the democratic values promoted by the European normative setting permeate mobility projects for adult education?

## Methods

### *Search methods for identification of project records*

#### *Electronic search and data collection*

The electronic search to identify eligible project records was conducted on the *Erasmus+ Project Results Platform*<sup>1</sup> hosted by the European Commission. The platform provides access to the descriptions and results of all projects financed by the Erasmus+ programme and a number of projects financed by its predecessor programmes in the area of education, training, youth and sport. At the time when queries were initiated in February 2021, this database contained a total of 177,839 projects.

The authors' search strategy comprised three stages, the first of which was based on a Boolean query focusing on different combinations of the key parameters, restricted geographically to the pool of projects submitted to the Spanish National Agency, the Servicio para la Internalización de la Educación (SEPIE). The specific parameters used for the search were democracy, democratic, citizenship, civic, values and European Voluntary Service (EVS), in combination with the search term adult. Being a database that exclusively registers educational projects, it was not necessary to enter search terms such as education or student. Subsequently, the search was refined using the map tool available on the platform to manually select the projects conducted in Spain, an example of which is shown in Figure 3. This first stage of the search yielded 1,517 results.

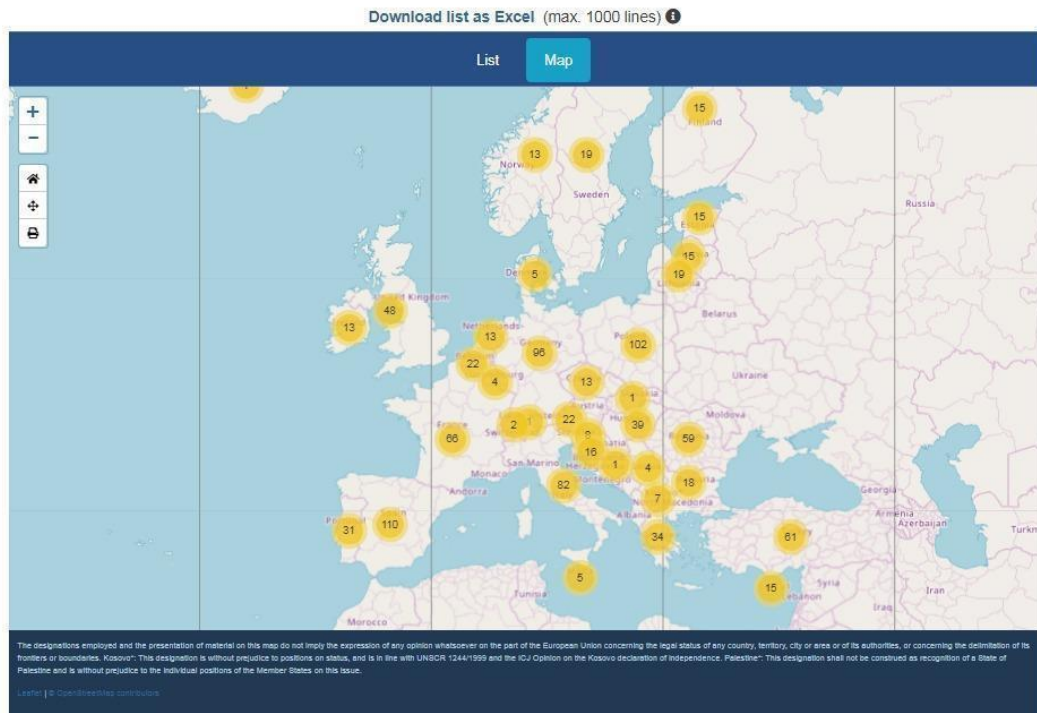
Figure 3. Search tool by national location of the applicant institution

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<sup>1</sup> <https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/projects>



### 1003 PROJECTS FOR KEYWORD: VALUES AND ADULT



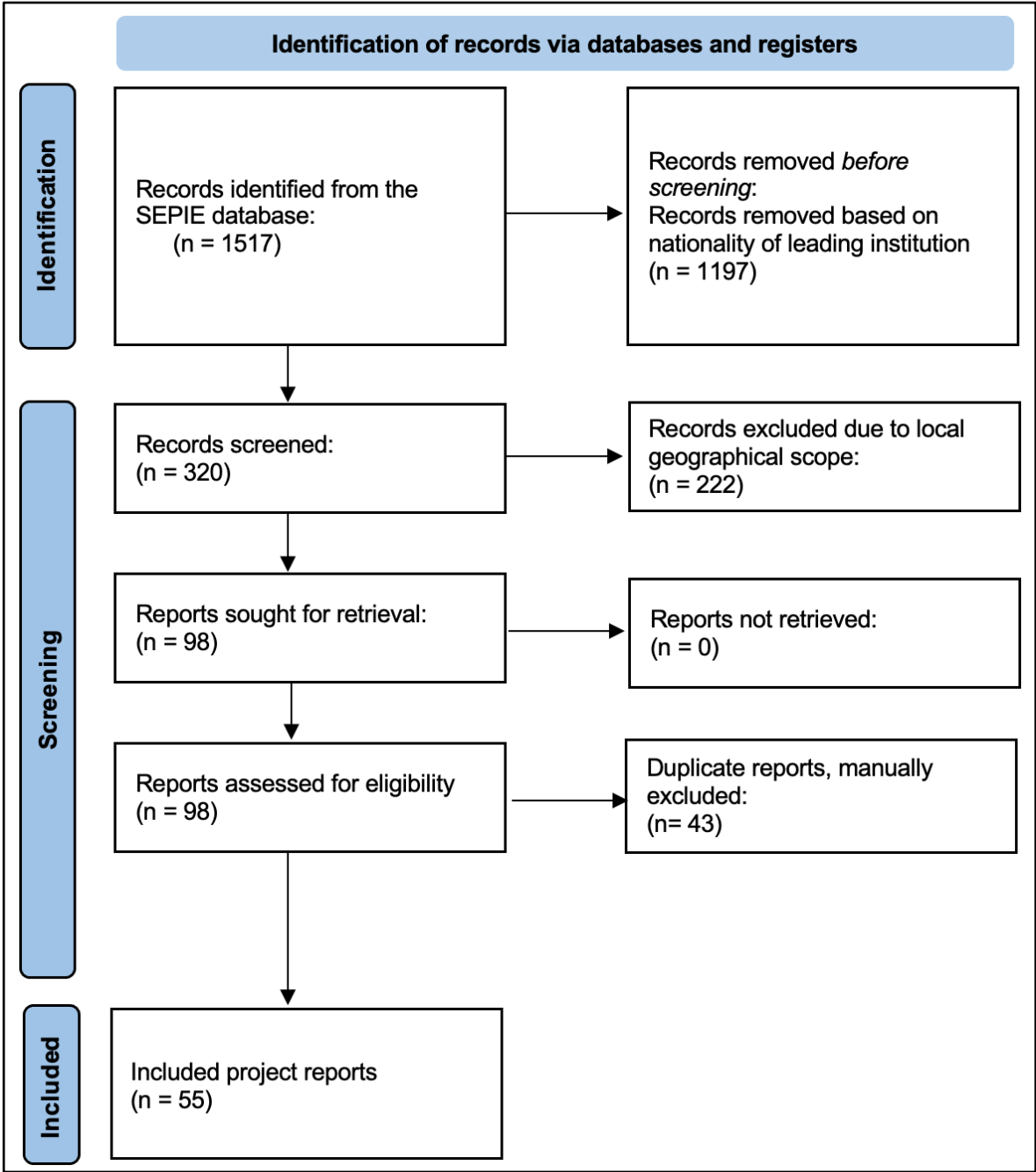
In the second stage of their investigation, with the aim of identifying allusions to interrelations between active citizen participation, local or regional governance and the potential of incorporating local perspectives in transnational undertakings, as expounded by González-Gómez and Gualda (2014), the authors decided to further limit the geographical scope of their search, determining as the inclusion criterion that the projects be led by institutions based in Andalusia. This choice of geographical targeting stems from European Educational Programmes Statistics data reported by the Spanish Ministry of Education, according to which Andalusia ranked as the sending region for the largest amount of mobilities during the three-year period 2015-2017<sup>2</sup>, as well as the region awarded the most Erasmus+ projects in the adult education sector. In particular, during the last year for which there is a breakdown of data by source region (2017), Andalusian educational institutions were awarded over 25% of the projects and accounted for almost 26% of the mobilities granted at the national level, so it was deemed representative of the Spanish panorama.

The described visual and manual map search, aiming to apply the geographic inclusion criterion, was repeated for each combination of keywords as determined by the authors. This second stage of the search yielded 436 results, which were further screened

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.educacionyfp.gob.es/servicios-al-ciudadano/estadisticas/externo/programas/adultos.html>

and included in the corpus adhering to the update proposed by Page et al. (2021) to the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA), as can be seen in Figure 4 below.

Figure 4. PRISMA 2020 diagram for qualitative synthesis of the results retrieved based on semantic and geographical search criteria



The third stage of the search consisted of a manual screening and removal of duplicate records, which reduced the research corpus to 55 valid records.

## *Data analysis and synthesis*

A Qualitative Comparative Analysis was selected as the most suitable framework for the purpose of this research, given that it addresses the role of contextual factors in the effectiveness and social/ecological validity of the Erasmus+ programme and the identification of the core components of projects that are associated with the attainment of the desired outcomes (Leech and Onwuegbuzie 2008).

In order to categorise the data yielded by the search, the coding scheme was pre-defined as follows: (1) topics listed in the keyword section, (2) general aims of the project, (3) expected outcomes of the project, and (4) allusion to training activities which are directly related to the development of civic or democratic competences. Each of these categories contains its own subcategories, which were progressively developed and assigned during the analysis of the data. Annex I presents the categories and subcategories applied in the analysis of the project records.

In addition to their semantic content evinced by text mining analysis, the results were further processed on the basis of their frequency of occurrence (N) in order to gain a more thorough insight into the phenomena of interest (Leech and Onwuegbuzie 2008). Save for instances specified in the relevant sections, the criterion applied by the authors was to record only one mention per theme referred to in each project, avoiding duplication when the same category was referred to on more than one occasion in a given project.

ATLAS.ti™ was used for data management, i.e. the process of handling the set of records obtained from the research corpus, as well as for the analysis of data through the coding of the texts contained in the project records.

## **Results of the search**

### *Corpus of projects*

From the total of 55 valid projects identified, 50 of them are Erasmus+ Key Action projects, and 5 belong to preceding Lifelong Learning Programmes, such as Grundtvig, Comenius and Leonardo da Vinci partnerships. Therefore, the prevalence of the subject matter under study in this paper in the projects undertaken since 2014, compared to the proposals existing in previous years, is noteworthy.

### *Qualitative Comparative Analysis categories*

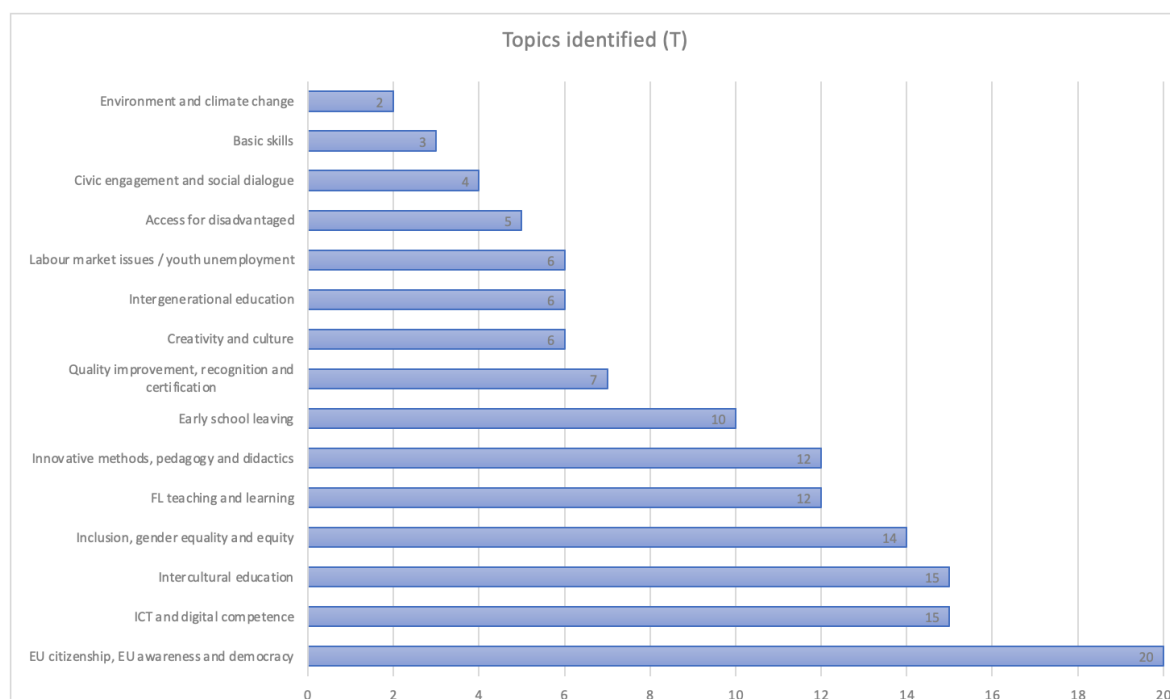
Following Leech and Onwuegbuzie (2008), the authors undertook a systematic analysis of the similarities and differences between the cases that make up the corpus by means of Qualitative Comparative Analysis. In this sense, such an approach has made it possible to establish interconnections between the previously defined categories, but also test and further develop them. In the remainder of this section, the results are reported separately according to the 4 pre-defined data analysis categories as described above.

Quantitative and qualitative data are presented, as figures show the frequency of mention of the different items under study, while quotations from the project fiches are introduced to illustrate or comment on conceptual issues.

### *Topics identified*

Figure 5 illustrates the frequency with which each category and subcategory are mentioned in the corpus of projects.

Figure 5. Topics identified



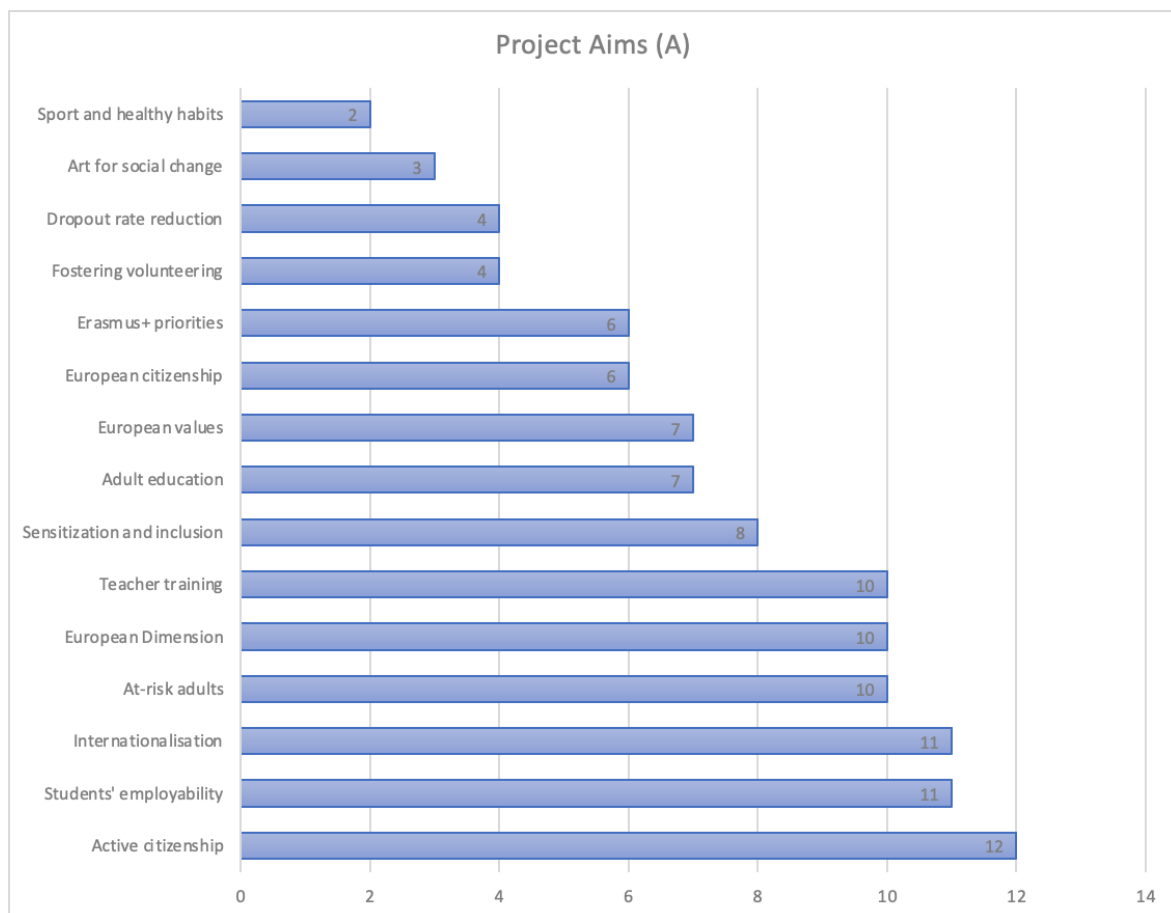
As expected due to the search parameters, topics with the most mentions include European civic issues, citizenship, awareness and democracy. However, these themes do not feature as the sole focus in any of the projects, but rather in conjunction with other relatively

complementary themes. Other topics associated with the former are digital competence, intercultural education, inclusion, equity and FL teaching and pedagogic aspects.

### *Aims of the project*

The aims of the projects analysed are visually presented in ascending order according to the number of mentions in the corpus (Figure 6). These aims were explicitly stated in the introductory narrative part of the project fiches, and they embody the general objectives that the institutions claim to pursue through their participation in the Erasmus programme.

Figure 6. Aims explicitly pursued by the project



The objective with the most mentions is that of active citizenship, followed by that of enhancing students' employment potential and the further internationalisation of the educational institution, having both these goals been listed in ten project fiches respectively. In relation to the former, the project applicants identify active citizenship with increased participation in civic life by students, thus helping them 'strengthen the social fabric of their

cities' (P6) and their communities (P50, P54). Among other aspects, civically engaged citizens should be trained transversally in communicative and cooperation skills (P18, P50), and attitudes that enable the suspension of judgement of those perceived to be different (P44), prompting a process of empowerment that will allow citizens to 'defend their rights and eliminate barriers that avoid their social inclusion' (P46).

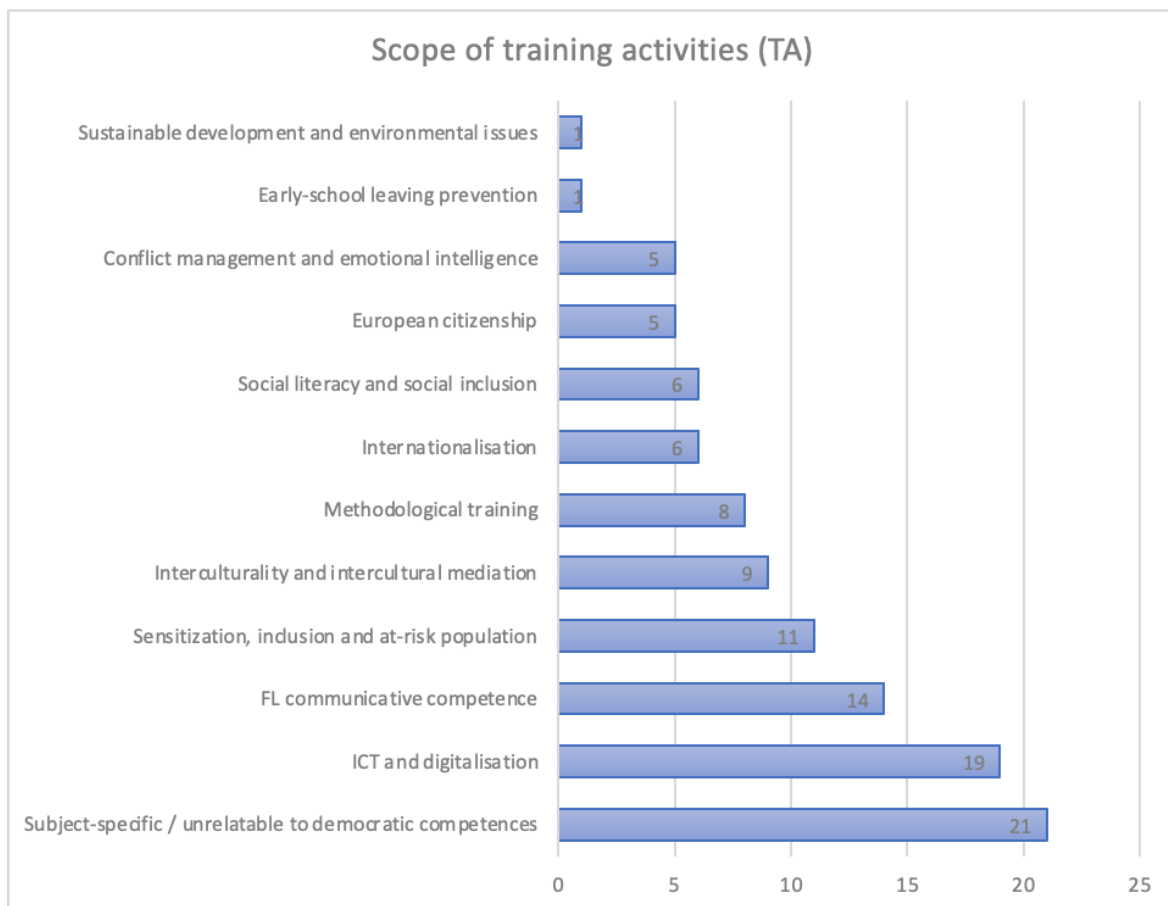
Notably, although in general terms the label 'European Dimension' in education is assigned to organisational goals intended to open up the institution to European counterparts via the exchange of best practices, or to the envisaged extension of the educational portfolio to incorporate multilingual courses, some project fiches stretch the use of this same label to individual aspects like 'generate in participants a sense of belonging to the European Union' (P14) or instil in participants that 'the knowledge of languages can expand their horizons, approaching the European reality and everything that it can offer' (P28).

In relation to European values, the projects analysed underscore the role of schools in the promotion of shared values which permeate the 'social attitudes of a tolerant, democratic, united and culturally diverse' community (P18). Similarly, developing a collaborative approach to problem-solving and conflict management which hinges on 'values of cooperation, solidarity and generosity' (P25) so as to foster peaceful coexistence in multicultural societies seems to be at the forefront of the texts reviewed.

### *Value-laden training activities*

Regarding the training events planned in the projects, Figure 7 provides a mapping, from lowest to highest occurrence, of the topics addressed in the structured training courses undertaken by teachers during their mobilities.

Figure 7. Scope of the mobility activities within the surveyed projects



The selection of training activities to be carried out during stays abroad is heavily weighted towards ICT-related courses, loosely connected at times to ‘cultural awareness, digital culture and cultural policy, social literacy’ (P6), ‘digital storytelling’ (P12) or ‘critical thinking and blended learning’ (P24), but generally linked to subject-specific content. Similarly, as depicted in Figure 8 a large proportion of the proposed activities cover a wide range of topic areas, mainly geared towards refresher training for teachers in the contents of their own subjects. These include a number of mobility activities oriented towards vocational training, thus featuring labour sector-specific skills like those pertaining to ‘Electrical and Automatic Installations’, ‘Auxiliary Care and Nursing’ or ‘Microcomputer Systems and Networks’ (P10).

In line with the general aims discussed in the previous section, an extensive part of the training activities carried out revolves around the development of foreign language competences, mainly English. A share of the language-themed courses have a focus on bilingual teaching and its content-integrated methodology (P1, P4, P43).

Another focal point of attention in the selected courses is awareness-raising and inclusion of the underprivileged population, with particular emphasis on refugees and migrants, and the development of intercultural mediation skills so as to ‘prevent attitudes like xenophobia and racism’ (P8) and ‘incorporate strategies of interest for their integration’ (P23).

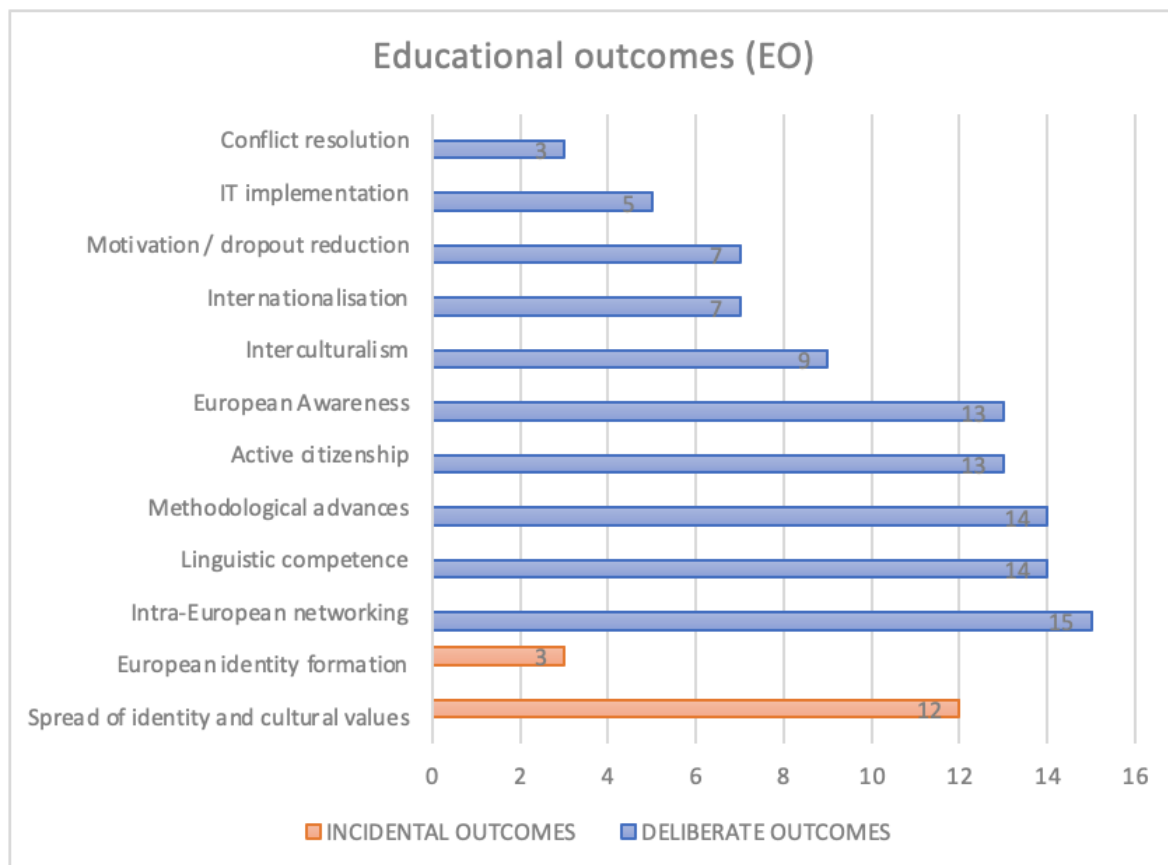
Allusions to specific training in European citizenship are scarce, being expressly mentioned only in connection to vulnerable groups or with the end goal of seeking the inclusion of ‘young adults with disabilities in global citizenship and civic participation’ (P44). However, formative activities featuring methodological practices that facilitate a democratic and participatory classroom climate do emerge in the analysis, such as workshops on ‘literary training for participatory democracy’ (P26), ‘simulation games, theatre and dynamics’ (P14), as well as collaborative learning and team building (P15, P16, P24, P34, P50).

### ***Educational outcomes***

The analysis of the results section has yielded two clearly distinguishable categories. On the one hand, results stemmed from deliberate interventions, which are usually implemented at training courses but also through job-shadowing activities or exchange of good practices. These results mainly include the building of partnerships with European teaching professionals, creating ‘schools that are open to Europe’ (P30); the broadening of the communicative skills of learners and educators, the promotion of collaborative methodologies for democratic participation in the classroom, whereby learners acquire proper ‘behaviour patterns, empathizing with the situations of others and adapting to social norms, recognizing and respecting others’ (P34); the adoption of civic values to ‘strengthen their civic engagement in the European democratic life’ (P44) and the enhancement of their European awareness.

On the other hand, there is also the anticipation of results arising spontaneously after participation in the project. Figure 8 visualises the mentions in both subcategories, with those relating to incidental results being shown in light grey.

Figure 8. Educational outcomes arising from the participation in the Erasmus+ programme



Interestingly, as illustrated in figure 8, 15 of the mentions refer to expected learning or personal development outcomes for which no specific training measures have been articulated. Isolating references to those directly targeting the development of a European civic awareness, or to shared Community values (which are listed in the analysis under the categories ‘European Awareness’, ‘Active citizenship’, ‘European identity formation’ and ‘Spread of identity and cultural values’), the percentage of outcomes which are not associated with specific educational interventions amounts to roughly 37%. This desiderata is expressed as emanating from the project experience itself, which equips learners to ‘resolve conflicts peacefully, defending values of tolerance and justice’ (P25) and become ‘transmitters of cultural values’ (P23), while spawning ‘a feeling of European citizenship and openness to the opinions of others’ (P34) and forging stable partnerships with other European educational institutions, within the framework of a ‘multicultural community which could have a great impact on students’ worldview’ (P29).

### *Notions through which mobility projects address European democratic values*

With regard to the first research question, which seeks to determine the notions of democratic values addressed by adult education mobility projects, a transversal coverage of the theme of European values, in conjunction with others such as FL learning, interculturality or digital competence, is observed.

Communicative competence in additional languages emerges as the overriding motivation for entering the Erasmus call, irrespective of the topical content associated with the keywords listed in the proposals, be it civic, democratic or EU identity-related. In particular, the upgrading of English language skills as being the de facto lingua franca at European level is given priority in most of the projects analysed, with references to other languages being marginal, if barely mentioned at all. Communicative competence, broadly considered, is also the focus of attention in a number of projects. The ability to listen actively, to contribute ideas in a constructive manner, to negotiate and compromise, and to show respect for the opinions expressed by others is strongly associated with democratic competence.

Similarly, the presence of the digital element is almost unanimous in the projects examined. However, the development of media literacy, which in turn promotes attitudes of critical awareness in students, so as to enable them to assess the content of the information available, is conspicuously seldom mentioned. In most cases, reference to technologies is limited to their role as tools which facilitate learning or professional development. Hence, no traceable link can be established between the development of digital competences thus construed and knowledge or attitudes which promote democratic stances in learners.

Another area of special interest is that of interculturality, alongside the allusion to citizens representing other cultures currently living in the Andalusian region and the growing need for mutual understanding, the suspension of prejudice, as well as mutual adaptability to cultural differences as a warrant for a multicultural society in which harmonious coexistence among diverse cultures is possible. In the same vein, the desire for training to undertake different initiatives on social issues can be observed, which include further integration of underprivileged social groups, such as the elderly, the disabled and migrants, as well as the prevention of school dropout and absenteeism of students, particularly those at risk of marginalisation.

On the other hand, references to the European Dimension of Teaching and cooperation with colleagues, including terms such as sense of belonging, European identity, European citizenship or active citizenship recur in a large proportion of the projects. In particular, explicit mentions to the European Dimension of Teaching are recurrent in the years 2015, 2017 and 2019.

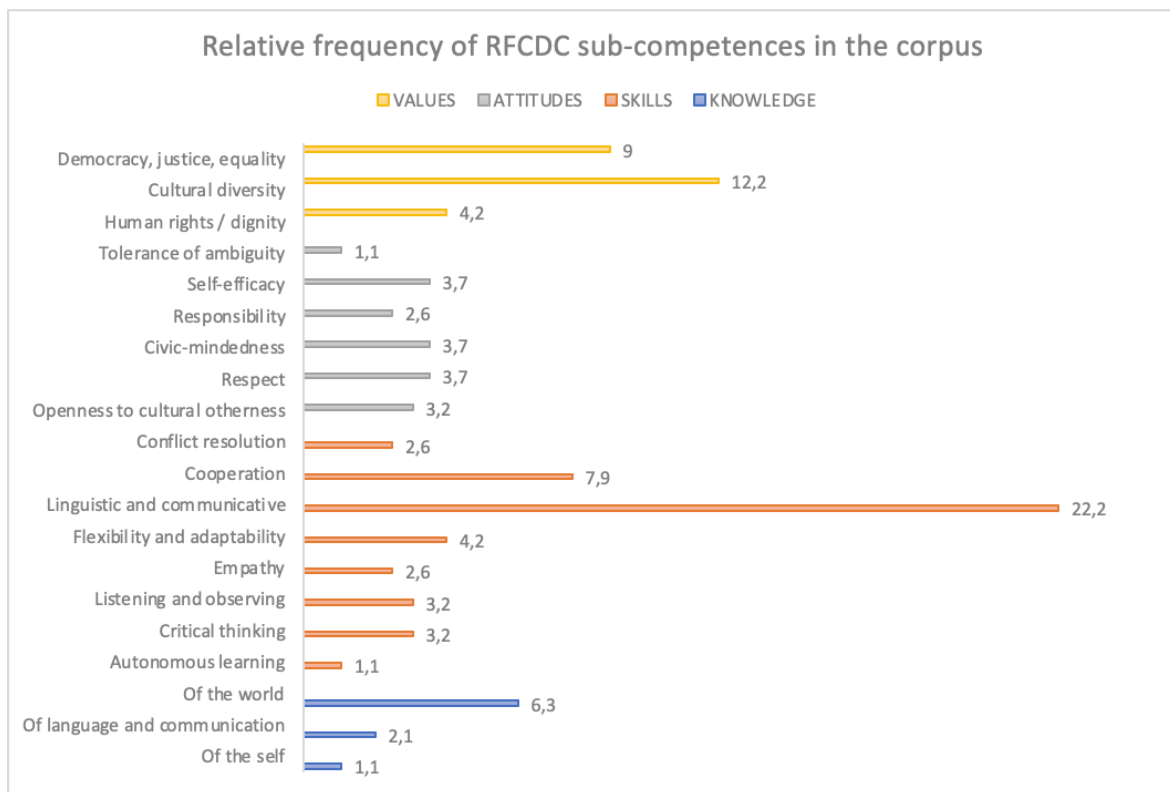
The perception of an interplay between European identity, the collective values shared by EU citizens, and democracy seems to be underpinned by the results. Allusion to best democratic practices in institutions abroad is also frequent, which seems to infer the sense of broader development of such practices abroad than locally, and the possible benefit for Andalusian educational institutions in synergies developed with such European colleagues. An unexpected yet sparse identification of European citizenship and its democratic values with environmental sustainability is also recorded. Similarly, artistic expression across diverse media, such as the performing or visual arts, is tackled as a core thematic area with the potential to support the development of democratic attitudes in adult learners, particularly those with limited prior formal education. Finally, albeit in a less recurrent manner, reference to the desirability of democratic skills in the workforce is observed in some projects. Thus, the ability to teamwork is mentioned as a characteristic that can be conducive to successful integration into the labour market.

### ***Benchmarking the notions of civic values in the projects within the normative setting***

The second research question sets out to ascertain whether the approach to European democratic values in the mobility projects analysed adequately reflects the conceptualisation of those values found in the relevant educational standards. The benchmarking standard selected by the authors for this purpose is the *Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture* (RFCDC) (2018), which comprises 4 competence domains and 20 specific sub-competences.

For the identification and subsequent mapping of the sub-competences present in the research corpus, the project records have been reviewed comprehensively, taking into account the text contained in all of their sections and synthesising the information contained therein. Figure 9 below presents the relative frequency with which the RFCDC sub-competences emerge in the analysis of the corpus.

Figure 9. Relative frequency of RFCDC sub-competences



As shown in Figure 9, of the four competence domains included in the RFCDC, the skills domain is the most frequently addressed, accounting for 47% of the total. Within this category, linguistic, plurilingual and communication skills are the most prevalent, constituting almost a quarter of the relative frequencies measured. In a distant second place in terms of relative frequency is the set of sub-competences belonging to the values domain. Accounting for over 25% percent of the total, they include the values of human rights and human dignity, together with civic values such as democracy, justice and equality, as well as those endorsing cultural diversity.

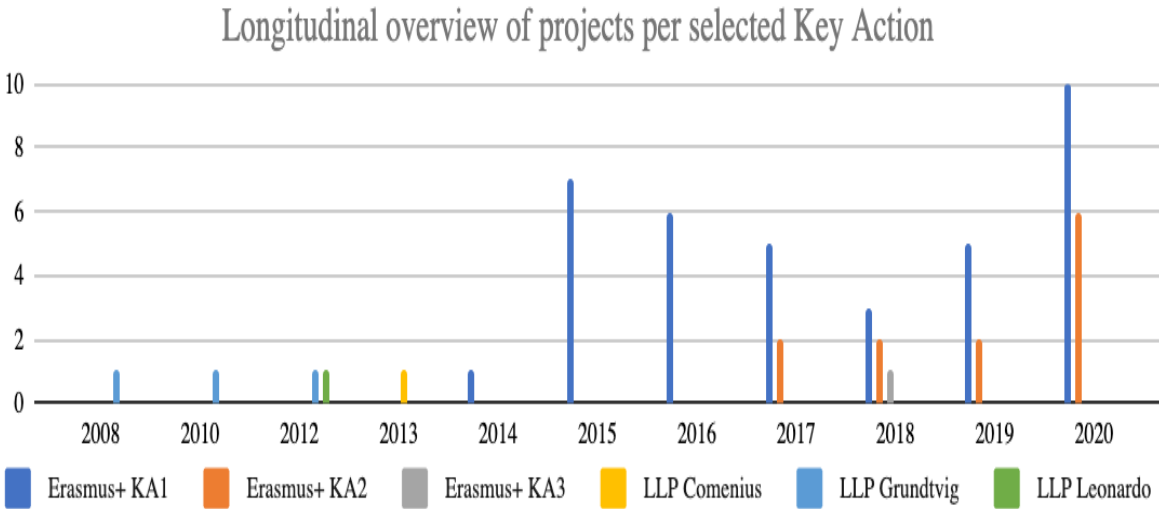
The cognitive and attitudinal domains jointly considered hardly reach one third of the overall relative frequencies, a noteworthy finding considering that intra-personal metacognition, promoted through reasoning in learning situations and providing the conditions and skills for self-reflection, is essential for adult learners to foster the social and political conditions needed for fuller participation in a democratic society, as noted in the introductory section of this work.

## Discussion and conclusions

Mobility opportunities across Europe have been promoted since the 1980s to foster European values and citizenship building. However, the conceptualization of European values is still vague and may not have permeated society despite the efforts of the European institutions, which published the RFCDC (2018) with the intention of getting national states committed to their delivery across all educational stages.

Longitudinally, the exploration of the composition of the sample reveals that only a marginal subset of the projects falls within the LLP, which reflects that the upsurge in European education authorities' attention to these values roughly coincided with the culmination of the LLP in 2013. Graphically, the apportionment of the projects in the corpus is lopsided, with a heavy clustering in the five-year period between 2015 and 2020 (Figure 5). In terms of their typology, teaching staff mobility projects (KA1) are predominant, with a growing spike in strategic partnerships (KA2) from 2017 onwards, and a very substantial uplift in 2020. This noticeable shift in the preferred project type might indicate that the applicant adult education institutions are increasingly favouring civic competence training of their teaching staff through the exchange of good practice with European counterparts or via the joint elaboration of intellectual outputs such as methodological guidelines and didactic materials, which are inherent to KA2 projects, as opposed to the individual training courses or more conventional job-shadowing placements which are typical of KA1 projects.

Figure 10. Longitudinal overview of the sample per selected Key Action



Very often, the opportunities for practitioners to be informed or even trained in the latest teaching trends and learning outcomes, such as values education, only occur in formal education settings and training courses. So it makes sense that member states and European institutions rely on mobility projects to promote European values –a fact that to some extent has been supported by research (Jacobone and Moro 2015, Golubeva et al. 2018, Kitsou 2020). Nonetheless, the preceding analysis suggests that the rationale for including the promotion of democratic competence of adult learners as one of the project goals might, at least partially, be hinged on the applicants' intent to comply with the priorities set by the Erasmus+ National Agency, rather than a genuine concern to pursue training in that area.

In this regard, the addition of a specific reference to the development of civic competences in the Erasmus+ Programme Guide for the 2016 Call for Proposals, which applied to drafts drawn up from 2015 onwards, together with the fact that the application form itself required applicants to select at least one priority from a list provided in a drop-down menu, may have contributed to the inclusion of democratic themes in otherwise cross-cutting projects. This effect is particularly manifest in the case of Strategic Partnerships (KA2), for which the 2020 Programme Guide (European Commission 2020) states that in order to be funded proposals must address ‘(a) at least one horizontal priority, or (b) at least one specific priority relevant to the field of education, training and youth on which it has the most impact’ (p. 100). Moreover, National Agencies, in charge of the evaluation of proposals and the award of funds, may give greater consideration to those that are particularly relevant to their national context.

Thus, the mobility projects carried out in Andalusia included in this study seem to count on foreign language skills and interculturality to naturally spark the development of democratic and civic values in teachers and learners. This is in line with the RFCDC sub-competences found in the project corpus. In fact, the conceptualisation of civic and democratic education in the sample relies on a skills-oriented approach, driven by the considerable attention paid to the development of participants’ communicative competence, and neglects the acquisition of attitudinal elements and content-specific knowledge. The implications of these findings merit future research on teachers' democratic literacy and its integration into their continuing professional development plans. Within the sphere of European educational mobility programmes, this would entail paying further attention to the actions planned by applicants to develop active citizenship and democratic values.

Identifying the type of key actions that have a stronger impact on the development of European values would also be helpful to better understand how applicants conceptualise European democratic values and to design actions to promote and develop democratic values more efficiently.

Regarding adult education, trainers should be able to transform abstract concepts into practical classroom activities and techniques to make the concept and implications of democratic values both available and comprehensible to learners who may otherwise not have access to them, especially those with limited formal education. Adults, whether nationals or migrants, need to know and understand how society is evolving and the relevance that civic values are gaining in member states of the European Union. Coexistence with diversity, respect for other cultures or playing a democratic active role in society concerns them, as well.

The limitations of this study lie in the geographical restrictions of the projects analysed, which, although globally representative of the Spanish educational landscape, do not factor in the decentralised nature of the education system or illustrate the socio-political intricacies of a country where peripheral national sensitivities are salient. Accordingly, a comprehensive understanding of the complex Spanish reality would require further studies that would extend the scope of the present work to a broader range of Erasmus+ project source regions.

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The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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## **Annex I. Schema of categories and subcategories applied for project records analysis**

Table 2 displays the data extracted from the systematic analysis of the projects' aims, broken down by the reference number of each project record in which their mention has been identified.

Table 2: Mentions of the theme 'project aims' identified

Aim (A)	Project Reference Numbers
Active citizenship	P6, P14, P18, P26, P38, P44, P45, P46, P48, P50, P54
Adult education	P1, P6, P17, P18, P39, P41, P48
At-risk adults	P1, P2, P6, P19, P20, P21, P30, P32, P41, P47
European citizenship	P7, P14, P18, P36, P42, P55
European Dimension	P1, P2, P3, P10, P14, P15, P28, P41, P43, P49
European values	P7, P8, P18, P24, P25, P50, P52
Fostering volunteering	P6, P7, P8, P21
Students' employability	P10, P14, P19, P23, P24, P29, P33, P34, P38, P40, P41
Internationalisation	P5, P12, P14, P15, P18, P21, P25, P26, P37, P44, P49
Erasmus+ priorities	P1, P3, P27, P46, P47, P53
Art for social change	P33, P42, P54
Sport and healthy habits	P20, P31
Dropout rate reduction	P29, P38, P41, P43

Sensitization and inclusion P21, P23, P24, P38, P39, P44, P46, P54

Teacher training P1, P2, P3, P12, P15, P17, P29, P30, P36

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Table 3 presents the data resulting from the systematic analysis of the description of the scope of the training mobilities in other countries, sorted by reference number of the project records in which they have been identified.

Table 3: Description of training mobilities

Content of Mobilities (CM)	Project Reference Numbers
Conflict management and emotional intelligence	P17, P25, P38
Early school-leaving prevention	P3
European citizenship	P4, P6, P16, P26, P44
FL communicative competence	P1, P2, P3, P4, P12, P16, P23, P24, P28, P37, P38, P39, P41, P43
ICT and digitalisation	P1, P2, P3, P4, P6, P9, P12, P15, P16, P17, P23, P24, P25, P32, P34, P38, P40, P41, P43
Interculturality and intercultural Mediation	P8, P13, P16, P21, P23, P34, P37, P39, P43
Internationalisation	P1, P2, P3, P11, P12, P38
Methodological training	P14, P15, P16, P19, P24, P34, P43, P50
Migration	P8
Sensitization, inclusion and at-risk population	P8, P13, P19, P20, P21, P32, P35, P36, P42, P44
Social literacy and social inclusion	P6, P19, P21, P23, P40, P54
Subject-specific or unrelatable to democratic competences	P1, P2, P3, P5, P9, P10, P11, P12, P16, P17, P22, P27, P33, P37, P41, P42
Sustainable development and environmental issues	P26

Well-being of teaching staff	P17, P38
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Table 4 presents the information derived from the systematic analysis of the expected outcomes of the project, ordered by the reference number of the projects in which they have been identified. The mentions have been clustered into two specific sub-categories: deliberately sought outcomes and spontaneously emerging outcomes (in bold).

Table 4: Description of the deliberate and incidental outcomes attained by the projects

Educational Outcomes (EO)	Project Fiche Numbers
Active citizenship	P6, P13, P16, P17, P19, P30, P34, P35, P38, P42, P44, P47, P48
Conflict resolution	P4, P11, P19
European awareness	P7, P19, P22, P28, P29, P30, P32, P35, P36, P40, P41, P44, P49
<b>European identity formation</b>	P25, P34, P48
Interculturalism	P1, P2, P3, P14, P16, P24, P32, P41, P50
<b>Spread of identity and cultural values</b>	P11, P17, P22, P23, P29, P31, P33, P34, P37, P38, P40, P43
Internationalisation	P3, P4, P22, P35, P36, P37, P49
Intra-European networking	P1, P2, P3, P4, P6, P9, P11, P12, P17, P18, P27, P35, P43, P44, P52
IT implementation	P2, P3, P4, P24, P32
Linguistic competence	P1, P2, P3, P4, P6, P11, P16, P17, P20, P22, P28, P35, P41, P43
Methodological advances	P2, P3, P11, P17, P18, P22, P24, P25, P30, P32, P34, P43, P47, P48
Motivation and reduction of absenteeism and dropout	P11, P17, P20, P28, P30, P34, P38