

University of Tartu

European College

Master's Thesis

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Role of youth information services in supporting youth mobility: Estonian example

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Tartu 2015

I have written the Master's thesis independently. All works and major viewpoints of the other authors, data from other sources of literature and elsewhere used for writing this paper have been referenced.

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The defence will take place on 18 December 2015 / *date* / at 9:30 / *time* /  
Lossi 36, Tartu / *address* / in auditorium number 103 / *number* /

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## **Abstract**

The European Union has grown in size and scope and developed to a stage beyond solely economic cooperation. There are numerous theories that aim to explain why and how this development and integration has happened. Most accepted theories so far have focused on interactions between different system level actors. The Treaty of Maastricht and the following treaties have brought a change where the European Union has entered the social sphere and thus interacts directly with its people and influences their lives. Though the interactions and European Union's influence in citizens daily lives has intensified, research points out a widening gap between European Union and its people. The recent financial crisis and its influence on European economies, related socio-economic issues, migration and current refugee crisis have given rise to the extreme populist rhetoric in the Member States which furthermore widens the gap. A number of scholars have therefore focused on the social dimension of the European Union integration and theorised about the role of individual transactions across national borders in creating common European realm.

For coping with recent global challenges the European Union has drafted various strategies. The Lisbon Strategy process in 2000 started a European Union wide strategy process that is now in its third stage as Europe 2020 Strategy. Transnational mobility has been employed throughout various stages of the strategy process as a tool for achieving its aims. Lisbon strategy tied transnational mobility to education, and called Member States to take steps to enhance academic mobility for skills development and thus help to achieve its strategic aim in becoming "the most competitive and knowledge based economy in the world". In 2005 the European Youth Pact was added to the renewed Lisbon strategy that introduced first time young people and the tools of youth work as politically significant instruments for achieving the strategic aims. Europe2020 Strategy has incorporated both youth mobility and education in it and also employs the tools of youth work as instrument for achieving its aims.

Youth mobility is a sensitive issue as young people are vulnerable and their development needs to be supported. This applies also to all mobility endeavours, as transnationalism is not a logistical exercise but a process of social learning that influences values, attitudes, skills development of young people. For these developments to take place, young people need to be supported by different social networks and services around them (family, school, youth work). European Youth Information and Counselling Agency has piloted a Youth on The Move:

Info-Mobility service in order to provide youth workers with necessary competences and tools for supporting transnational young people in their social learning experience.

The aim of this thesis is to identify pre-conditions necessary for implementing YoMIM model on a national level. In order to achieve the aim of the thesis a qualitative research was conducted. The data was gathered by conducting 13 semi-structured interviews with foreign experts and 10 interviews with Estonian experts. The first part of the research presents a theoretical framework explaining the role of youth mobility in European integration process and the constitutiveness of youth mobility and youth information services. The theoretical overview is informed by transactionalism, transnationalism and social constructivism.

Analysis of the data identified seven preconditions for establishing YoMIM service on a national level: existence of youth information structures and networks; network management; state coordination and support; appropriately trained personnel; funding stability; involvement of young people and quality management. Based on the elaboration of results recommendations were formed to enhance the implementation of the YoMIM model.

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## **List of abbreviations**

ERYICA – European Youth Information and Counselling Agency

EU – European Union

EYCA – European Youth Card Association

EYWC – Estonian Youth Work Centre

RAY – Research Based Analysis of Youth in Action Programme

YIC – Youth Information Centre

YoMIM – Youth on the Move: Info-Mobility

## Introduction

Contrary to the widespread belief that Europe is slowly degrading, one could argue that the construction work in building more solid and sustainable Europe with a „new narrative“ for European people is as live as ever. The 60+ years of European project as we know it has undergone development beyond imagination and initial design. The post II World War economically inclined goals have gradually expanded to virtually all policy domains in the European Union, influencing countries in its neighbourhood and therefore having an impact on the development of the whole continent.

Growth in size and scope has not only enlarged European Union’s influence but also introduced a number of undeniable challenges. The air of peace and welfare have nurtured generations of Europeans and introduced a certain set of ideas of what “normality” consist of. The founding generation of European welfare, fixated on never having to experience starvation and violence again, have raised their offsprings in the spirit of being taken care of and provided for (Fligstein, 2008).

The comfort of being provided for has perhaps been too comforting as the European generations *after* have dramatically decreased, shadowed by the gradual decease of their founders and their European values. The new generation that is mostly characterised by taking care of themselves is facing challenges of demographic aging, economical recess, enlarged immigration and breaking the somewhat stigmatised continuation of “normality” form the past.

Judging by the actions on the EU level, the European Commission has well understood the change in the European paradigm. First, after seeing the first signs of losing its competitive advantages, the Lisbon Strategy process was started in late 1990-s and is now in its third development phase otherwise known as Europe 2020 Strategy. Second, after gaining competence in the social field with the Treaty of Maastricht in 1992, the European Union has slowly but steadily started to work with its people, specifically with next generation of young Europeans.

The launch of European White paper “A New Impetus for European Youth” in 2002 (European Commission, 2002a) started the era of European Union youth policy. The revision of Lisbon Strategy (European Commission, 2005a) in 2005 added the European Youth Pact

(European Commission, 2005b) to the portfolio and 2009 saw the approval of the EU Strategy for Youth – Investing and Empowering (2010-2018) (Council of the European Union, 2009) by Member States. Youth policy has also been interlinked with Europe 2020 Strategy (European Commission, 2010c) through its flagship initiatives. The Youth on the Move flagship initiative is stressing the importance of skills development, better education and enhanced European identity as measures for achieving its strategic aims. The flagship initiative identifies transnational mobility as the main tool in achieving these goals (Council of the European Union, 2011).

Although free movement has been encouraged for decades as one of the fundamental freedoms of a fully functionate internal market, its use as an instrument of Europeanisation has remained modest. The structural developments of the European Union in last decade together with socio-economic developments of the continent today have on the one hand demonstrated the growing significance and impact of EU in the daily lives of its citizens. On the other hand it has also become clearly evident that for further development and integration the EU also needs the support of its citizens. For that it is important to enhance possibilities for citizens identify themselves with Europe. Available research shows that transnational mobility within the EU triggers Europeanisation and skills development (Deutsch, 1966; Fligstein, 2008; Risse, 2005, 2010) but as a process of social learning is most effective when supported and socially situated (Deutsch, 1966; Kuhn, 2012; Lannegrund-Willems & Barbot, 2015) It is especially important to support the transnational mobility of next generation of Europeans – first because they are young and inexperienced in contextualising information around them. Second – from how they contextualise their transnational experiences around them will depend the future of the EU.

The author of this thesis has a professional background in youth and community work with specific focus on youth information and counselling and has worked as an affiliated expert for European Youth Information and Counselling Agency (hereinafter ERYICA) in developing mobility information services for young people in Europe. The research in the framework of this thesis will be therefore limited to the domain of young people, youth mobility and youth information work.

Transnational youth mobility forms a complex multifaceted system, where different micro and macro level parties are in a mutualistic relationship. Youth information work is first and

foremost an environment that helps young people to contextualise and create meaning to information around them and thus also support social learning (Cangelosi, 2010). This becomes especially crucial at times when young people are facing large quantities of new information as they do in the case of transnational mobility. Without the facilitation of the social structures and networks around them (family, friends, social services) young people are alone with their learning. Contextualising new information and experiences in the direction that would enable changes in value and identity structures as well as skills development to take place, that theorists refer to (Deutsch, 1966; Fligstein, 2008; Risse, 2010; Kuhn, 2015) may therefore never happen. For enhanced social learning experience on the micro level it is thus necessary to receive facilitation and support from macro level (Kuhn, 2015).

Structures providing youth information and counselling services are established in all European Union Member States (Rupkus & Ivanovskis, 2014) and majority of the national structures are affiliated to ERYICA. In 2013 ERYICA piloted the Youth on the Move: Info-Mobility (hereinafter YoMIM) service that is designed to respond to the mobility information needs of young people and facilitate the social change that occurs during transnational mobility. YoMIM service is a competence module that can be implemented in any organisation experienced in working with young people in a youth information setting. The service provides access to the international network of YoMIM guides located in other European countries (ERYICA, 2013a). There are however factors that either enhance or obstruct the implementation of the YoMIM model.

This thesis aims to identify the pre-conditions necessary for implementing youth mobility information services on the example of YoMIM model. The thesis will also give an overview of the role of youth mobility in European integration process as well the role of youth information services in supporting transnational youth mobility. The expected result of this research is a set of principles and recommendations necessary for implementing YoMIM mobility service and therefore enhance youth mobility and European integration.

In order to achieve the aim of this thesis a qualitative research was conducted. The first part of the research presents a theoretical framework explaining the role of youth mobility in European integration process and the constitutiveness of youth mobility and youth information services.

The theories chosen to frame this research are based on one of the grand pre-theories of

European integration – transactionalism. Transactionalism was developed by Deutsch and colleagues (Deutsch, Burrell, Kann, & Lee, 1957; Deutsch, 1966) modelling the development of a nation on an international community and suggesting that transnational interactions of its people will result in forming a common identity. These views are much debated also today and developed further by Fliegstein (Fliegstein, 2008) and Kuhn (Kuhn, 2015). Another theoretical approach presented in this thesis is social constructivism (Checkel, 2001; Risse, 2010; Wendt, 1999) that also explains how European integration is enhanced through cross-border interactions and socially constructed collective identities. Both transnationalism and social constructivism agree that transnational mobility is a complex multifaceted system where different micro and macro level stakeholders, agents and structures form mutually constitutive relationships. The changes in one will affect the other and vice versa.

The empirical part relies on the analysis of the qualitative research based on a case study that enables an in-depth look of pre-conditions necessary for implementing a pan-European mobility information model YoMIM. The applicability of these pre-conditions is then assessed in the context of youth information service provision in Estonia. As a result a set of recommendations is formed for implementing YoMIM service on a national level. The data was collected through semi-structured expert interviews with representatives of ERYICA member organisations from 13 countries and 10 youth information experts from Estonia.

The thesis is organised in four chapters. The first chapter gives an overview of theoretical concepts explaining the connections between European integration and cross-border mobility of EU citizens. It will also present a more detailed overview of the research object and the political context around it. The second chapter will elaborate on the role of different counterparts in a mobility system and their mutualistic relationship allowing European integration to happen. The third chapter presents the empirical part of the thesis, which is formed of a qualitative research based on a case study. The chapter gives an overview of research methodology and results. The fourth chapter is informed by analysis of research results and recommendations for implementing YoMIM model.

## 1. Theoretical discussion

The first chapter gives an overview of theoretical concepts explaining the connections between European integration and cross-border mobility of EU citizens. From the overview of both transnationalism and social constructivism throughout the identifying changes in identity structure as a result of social learning process, this chapter gives more detailed overview of the research object and the political context around it.

### 1.1 Overview of transactionalist theory

The end of World War II gave rise to scholarly debates on how to prevent European countries from going to war with each other again. One of the prominent pre-theories of European integration was developed by Karl W. Deutsch and his colleagues (Rosamond, 2000; Eilstrup-Sangiovanni, 2006). Deutsch had thoroughly researched the formation of a nation and based on his findings suggested the transactionalist theory also known as communications theory (Haas, 1970). Based on his research Deutsch argued, that national communities share common traits that they can be characterised by. First, that the community members mutually trust each-other, second, they experience significant feeling of unity and attachment, and third, the economic, political and social transactions on the elite and mass levels have generated a feeling of collective identity (Deutsch, 1966). He defined a nation as a “community of social communication” (Deutsch, 1966: 70), where the members of the community rather communicate with other members of that community, than outsiders.

In the transactionalist theory Deutsch then argues further that the same mechanisms that work *within* nations to tie people together can be applied to unify people also *across* nations and are thus also appropriate on the international level (Deutsch, 1966). Furthermore, Deutsch and his colleagues add that the increased economic, political and social transactions on transnational level would help to create “security communities” that are based on trust and collective identity and therefore eliminating the threat of war between the states (Deutsch, 1966; Rosamond, 2000; Eilstrup-Sangiovanni, 2006). Deutsch adds that in a security community “there is real assurance that the members of that community will not fight each other physically, but will settle their disputes in some other way. If the entire world were integrated as a security community, wars would be automatically eliminated” (Deutsch et al., 1957).

Deutsch and his colleagues also differentiate between amalgamated and pluralistic security communities, the former being similar to the governing model of a nation state and the latter to the EU where the government units have maintained their independency (Deutsch et al., 1957).

According to Deutsch, the establishment of security communities needs to be facilitated by the states through institutionalising transactions and creating conditions for increasing transnational mobility, communication and networking among their citizens (Deutsch et al., 1957; Deutsch, 1966). Deutsch interprets transactions very extensively and includes in his list everything from individual mobility and informal communications to redistribution of commodities and transactions in public and private finance (Deutsch, 1966).

Deutsch expected transactions to initiate and catalyse social learning processes that are “active processes of redefinition or reinterpretation of reality – what people consider real, possible, and desirable on the basis of new causal and normative knowledge“ (Adler & Barnett, 1998). This idea builds largely on the social constructivist learning theory developed by Piaget and Vygotsky, according to which learning is socially situated and active construction process where information gains meaning and, thus, becomes knowledge through interaction with the environment (Palincsar, 1998). For Deutsch, the *information* that is gained through transnational transactions is contextualised in further economic, political and social transactions, establishing the *knowledge* of common identity. However, in order to be effective transactions must cover different spheres of life and by enhancing transnational interactions only in one element of life the results remain modest. Deutsch also argued that for long term effect transactions should be institutionalised (Deutsch et al., 1957).

Although transactionalism is undoubtedly one of the grand pre-theories of European integration (Fligstein, 2008; Kuhn, 2015), it has also been widely criticised for “remaining relatively vague with respect to what exactly underlies the relationship between transactions and EU support” (Kuhn, 2015). This question is picked up both by Fligstein (Fligstein, 2008) and Kuhn (Kuhn, 2012, 2015), who have developed Deutsch’s ideas further in the context of EU of 28 Member States.

## **1.2 Contextualising transactionalist theory in the Europeanisation process in the EU today**

Both Fligstein and Kuhn have built on Deutsch transactionalist theory and in a way continued where he left off. Their central argument is that as the EU has developed beyond intergovernmental economic cooperation to directly influencing daily lives of its citizens, further exploration of transactionalist ideas might help to identify how to bring EU closer to its citizens (Fligstein, 2008) Kuhn agrees with Puchala (Kuhn, 2015, p. 12) in his views about transactionalism that the “theory is not inaccurate, it is just incomplete” and suggests several seminal additions that help to explain the mechanics of collective identity formation through transnationalism.

Firstly, both Fligstein and Kuhn have examined Deutsch’s views on collective identity formation that lead to establishment of security communities. Furthermore, they have elaborated those views further and contextualised in the present day EU. Fligstein speaks about European political, economic and social fields that have emerged through extensive economic cooperation and growth (Fligstein, 2008). Fligstein claims that this has also influenced individuals who have become transnationally more active and by starting to identify themselves also as Europeans have contributed the creation of European society (Fligstein, 2008: 244). Fligstein therefore directly connects the developments and influence of the macro level (economic cooperation between the Member States) with the changed attitudes on the micro level (individuals).

This example of Europeanisation from above is widely discussed also by Kuhn (Kuhn, 2015) who bifurcates the transnational mobility system into macro and micro level transactionalism. The former refers to influencing Europeanisation from above and the latter from below. Both levels are mutually intertwined and the changes in one are likely to evoke changes in the other. Kuhn places her main interest in examining micro level transnationalism and how collective European identity is forged through that. Kuhn argues that not all micro level transnational interactions lead to an identity change (Kuhn, 2015: 146), following Citrin’s distinction between three components of collective identity – cognitive, evaluative and affective (Heremann, et al., 2004: 161-185). The changes in these components are induced by social environment around us and, in terms of developing European identity, individuals would need to learn through personal experience, what Europeanness feels like (*ibid*).

Kuhn, therefore, follows the distinction suggested by Roose (Roose, 2010), who divides interactions into sociable and instrumental. Sociable interactions are referred to as “intrinsically motivated and include practices such as socialising with other Europeans” (Kuhn, 2015: 55) and instrumental as “genuinely interest-led and include practices such as cross-border shopping, trade, or business trips” (*ibid*). Similarly, Mau and Büttner (Mau & Büttner, 2010) distinguish between qualitative and quantitative interactions. Both distinctions argue essentially the same that changes in values and beliefs system, and development of collective identity are likely to happen through sociable (qualitative) and not merely instrumental (quantitative) interactions. Kuhn, however, points out that while instrumental interactions do not contribute to the development of collective identity and feeling *as* European, they might increase support *to* the EU (Kuhn, 2015).

Secondly, in terms of transnationalism and collective identity formation, Kuhn finds it important to ask what kind of European identity the EU needs its citizens to have. Majority of EU citizens already identify themselves culturally European and everyone born in the EU can also identify oneself as European (Sigalas, 2010; Kuhn, 2015). For European integration this is, however, not enough as citizens would need to develop a politically relevant European identity, not only identify themselves with Europe culturally (Jacobone & Moro, 2015; Sigalas, 2010). According to Easton, political identity is one of the several social identities that one can hold and is “a collective identity shared by the members of a political collective that provides the polity with the diffuse public support it need to ensure its long-term viability and stability” (Easton, 1965: 54). Furthermore, Tajfel has identified two additional key factors that frame any social identity including political identity: self-identity with the social group and emotional significance (Tajfel, 1978: 63). In Kuhn’s view (and as main addition to Deutsch’ transactionalist theory), the sociable transnational interactions are the key for triggering the development of political European identity as they provide opportunities for individuals to self-identify themselves with other Europeans and also attach emotional significance to that.

Another scholar Allport has formulated a hypothesis explaining the “transformative potential” of personal contact where “direct personal contact between members of different groups may lead to a reduction of prejudice and an improvement of inter-group relations if certain conditions are satisfied” (Allport, 1957: 281). For Allport, the conditions consisted of equal status contact, pursuit of common goals, contact that can lead to a perception of common

interests and common humanity, and institutional support (*ibid*). Pettigrew empirically confirmed the validity of the hypothesis and added the fifth condition in his intergroup contact theory – the opportunity to become friends (Pettigrew, 1998).

Thirdly, Kuhn pays special attention to the mutualistic relationship between micro and macro levels on transnationalism emphasising that although in societies with higher rates of macro-level transnationalisation also the levels of individual transnationalism, and thus support to European integration tends to be higher, the system needs conscious facilitation (Kuhn, 2015). Kuhn argues that as highly transnational countries are also characterised by higher levels of competition and, therefore, also insecurity, individuals who are not transnationally active tend to oppose structural changes and develop eurosceptical views (*ibid*).

Another approach to look at the Europeanisation is through the prism of social constructivism that is a theoretical framework widely used in the research of social sciences and will be discussed in the following subchapter.

### **1.3 Social constructivism and Europeanisation**

Social constructivism, starting from late 1990's, has found its way into explaining the developments in the European Union. That change was welcomed by many (Wendt, 1999; Christiansen, Jorgensen, & Wiener, 1999; Checkel, 2001; Risse, 2004) as the debates until then were greatly led by neo-functionalists and intergovernmentalists. One could even argue that the social constructivist turn got wind under its wings *because* of the status quo of these grand theories: “there is a certain paradox in that what is often referred to as *la construction européenne* has not received any systematic attention from constructivist scholars” (Christiansen et al, 1999). Social constructivism, however, is not a European integration theory on its own but rather “represents the connection of international theory with long-standing sociological concerns with the social construction of reality” (Rosamond, 2000).

It is therefore fair to argue, that social constructivism suggests an *approach* to the study of European integration, focusing on social ontologies and tries to explain the logic of a relationship between individual units in a larger system. Social constructivism takes the discussions about Europe to a deeper level compared to integration theories as it looks into the

meaning, formation and construction of social elements. It then uses them, for instance, in explaining the institutionalisation of the European Union the same way as bricks are used to build a house.

The “units” and “levels” or “agents” and “structures” (Wendt, 1999) are in mutually constitutive relationship and hence a change in one affects also the other. The human agents operating in their daily environment constantly construct their daily structure through interacting with other humans and reflecting upon their behaviours, beliefs and actions. As Risse suggests (Risse, 2004) “constructivism is based on a social ontology which insists that human agents do not exist independently from their social environment and its collectively shared systems of meanings (culture in a broad sense)”.

In social constructivism, agents are not necessarily individuals but can also be institutions, states, etc. “units” that are part of a system or a structural context. The term “imagined community” also belongs to constructivist rhetoric as the structures are constructed and have to be filled with a meaning by the agents (Risse, 2010). On a micro level, individual as an agent belongs to the structure of a family, school, community, etc. On a macro level the same agent could belong to the structure of EU or states could meet for a European Council. What is important again on both levels, is the mutual impact that the agent and structure have on one another and the constitutive effect of norms it creates (Risse, 2004). Ideas, beliefs and accepted behaviours in the society (structure) have an influence on individual behaviour. The analogy of a child, learning from one’s parents how to balance on the axis of good and bad, is also applicable in the *individual agent – society* structure, and the *state agent – European Union* structure. Regardless of the levels, logic of social constructivism remains the same.

However, as the structure is formed by individual agents, it is also in the agent’s power to change the structure. As summarised by Christiansen and Jorgensen (Christiansen et al., 1999), “the structurationist points of departure are the rules, norms and patterns of behaviour that govern social interaction. These are structures, which are on one hand, subject to a change if and when the practice of actors changes, but on the other hand structure political life as actors re-produce them in their everyday actions”.

Risse pointed out that social constructivism distinguishes between two logics of action. The “logic of appropriateness” refers to actors following the rules that are approved by the society they function in and are focused on “trying to do the right thing” (Risse, 2005). The “logic of

consequentialism”, however, is to see agents pursuing their own agenda, maximising and optimising their personal gains. Acting according to the logic of appropriateness can be an unconscious choice while following “logic of consequentialism” is rationally planned.

This approach can help to explain the character and inner logic of systems. In case of integration theories, explanation provided by liberal intergovernmentalism, and its 3-step logic of preference formation, interstate bargaining and institutionalisation operates clearly on a logic of consequences (Risse, 2010). Sociological institutionalism, however, follows the logic of appropriateness as its concerns lie in “the way in which institutions create meaning for individuals, providing important theoretical building blocks for normative institutionalism within political science” (Lowndes, 2010: 65).

The logic and structure of social constructivist approach as such provides a useful toolbox for discovering the questions revolving around identity. First, as the *structure – agent* interaction is not limited to any particular level, it enables us to construct different configurations and analyse the constitutiveness within. More precisely, the constructivist approach explains, how transnational mobility (i.e. changed living environment in another European country, entry to new social groups, value and belief systems, and behaviours) influences one’s identity, whether it also includes identifying oneself more as European, and, therefore, how does it influence European integration (Risse, 2010).

If the theory holds, one should be able to observe an identity change in the target group and conclude that due to prolonged exposure (average mobility experience lasts between 6-12 months) to different cultural norms and transaction with local community, there has been a positive shift on a scale of Europeanness. First, because the target group experiences similarities with the other European culture and, thus, finds an anchor for identification. Second, because the structure will dictate new normality and, therefore, expand the identity.

Risse differentiates between several types of identities (Risse, 2010). According to him, identities can either be completely separate, cross-cutting, nested or blended, the former being the most rigid and the latter most adaptable (Risse, 2010: 36). Thus, the “identity expansion” in constructivist terms could be explained as a transfer from one identity type to another. Last but not the least, we could also observe contextualisation of Europeanness depending on where the identity shift takes place. Identifying ones’ Europeanness with the European Union is more likely to happen in Belgium, than in Great Britain. The Europeannes of Great Britain

is, however, by no means “less European”, it just consists of different ideas, and is more based on common values rather than identification with the European Union (Risse, 2010).

The transfer from one identity type to another would mostly be an unconscious choice and, therefore, follow the logic of appropriateness. Within constructivists’ limits one could also theorise, how the identity transfer can be manipulated through the logic of consequentialism. Based on constructivist approach, one could argue that by investing funds through youth mobility programmes (such as Erasmus+) into its agents (i.e. youth), the European Union as a structure is peacefully and very effectively constructing the European demos. Similarly, the official objectives of the first Erasmus programme state its goals as:

*“(i) to achieve a significant increase in the number of students... spending an integrated period of study in another Member State, in order that the Community may draw upon an adequate pool of manpower with first hand experience of economic and social aspects of other Member States...; (iv) to strengthen the interaction between citizens in different Member States with a view to consolidating the concept of a People’s Europe; (v) to ensure the development of a pool of graduates with direct experience of intra-Community cooperation, thereby creating the basis upon which intensified cooperation in the economic and social sectors can develop at the Community level” (Council of Ministers, 1987).*

Thereby, the constructivist approach is taken as the main theoretical framework to study the subject of youth mobility and its role in European integration process. The following subchapter discusses the challenges of youth mobility in achieving EU 2020 Strategy goals and European values.

#### **1.4 The role of youth mobility in the EU political agenda**

The European Union today is facing a number of challenges. Recent years after 2008 financial crisis have pinpointed issues that demand closer attention of all member states. Failure to do so will undermine competitiveness of the whole Union. Next to immediate tasks of restoring economic growth, fighting unemployment (with specially high rates among youth) also longer term processes in changing demographics, greater immigration pressure, sustainable development and continuous advocacy of European values will have to be tackled (Council of the European Union, 2009).

Under Europe 2020 Strategy process, the 28 Member States implement their national development plans for economic prosperity and employability. For more coordinated and tangible approach, the Strategy has set five key targets for the EU to be achieved by 2020. These cover employment, education, research and innovation, social inclusion and poverty reduction, and climate/energy. Striving towards achieving the aims of EU 2020 Strategy has put young people and youth work under spot light as two of its five targets, which are directly connected to the domain of youth work. On the basis of the strategy it is, therefore, fair to argue that the young people of today are the future generation for 2020 and beyond, and have become politically important and acknowledged as a resource for sustainable society (European Commission, 2010c).

During the past decades, youth work has increasingly been recognised as being relevant for policy development at national and European levels. Youth work is at the core of the European Commission White Paper ‘A New Impetus for European Youth’ (European Commission, 2002a) and of the EU Strategy for Youth “Investing and Empowering 2010-2018” (Council of the European Union, 2009). Youth work is also emphasised in the Agenda 2020 (European Commission, 2010c). The main role of youth work is to provide to young people opportunities for participation, personal development and non-formal learning (Council of the European Union, 2009). In such contexts, young people can also develop a range of competences as described below in the framework of key competences for lifelong learning. The latter is considered to be a positive factor in supporting young people’s employability or encouraging them to enrol in continuing or higher education.

The strategy also includes seven „flagship initiatives“ (European Commission, 2010c), and one of them – Youth on the Move initiative – focuses on youth and improving education and employment opportunities through transnational mobility (Council of the European Union, 2011)

The EU Member States have recognised transnational mobility as the core element in acquiring new skills, knowledge and competences and is seen as one of the fundamental ways, in which young people can strengthen their future employability (Council of the European Union, 2011). Skills development forms one of the four main areas of the flagship and is based on European Framework for key competences for lifelong learning that identifies and defines the eight key abilities and knowledge that everyone needs in order to achieve

employment, personal fulfilment, social inclusion and active citizenship in today's rapidly-changing world.

Mobility, therefore, lies in the centre of Youth on the Move initiative and is seen as a tool for raising intercultural awareness, personal development, creativity and active citizenship of young people. Europeans, who have quality mobility experience, are more likely to be mobile as employees later in their lives and exercise their fundamental right of free movement as EU citizens and, therefore, contribute to the development of single market (Sigalas, 2010).

Another flagship initiative directly related to youth and intrinsically to Youth on the Move is the Agenda for New Skills and Jobs (European Commission, 2010a). The Agenda contributes to achieving the EU's targets to get the early school-leaving rate below 10% and more young people in higher education or equivalent vocational education (at least 40%), as well as to have at least less than 20 million people in or at risk of poverty and social exclusion by 2020 (*ibid*).

To conclude, previous chapters have demonstrated that both transnationalism and social constructivism see changes in identity structure as a result of social learning process. Both theories distinguish between different levels in the identity formation system. Transnationalism distinguishes between micro and macro levels, social constructivism between agents and structure. They also omit high significance to the mutually constitutive relationship between those levels and the impact they have on one another. The theories also elaborate on the role of facilitation of the system. Social constructivism goes even deeper by theorising on two directions of the facilitation – the logic of appropriateness and the logic of consequentialism. The EU has recaptured the foundations of these theories to its strategic development process, intertwined them with the strategic aims and assigned roles to different agents and structures in order to achieve those aims. The agents and structures relevant to this thesis will be the focus of the next chapter.

## **2. Young people in transnationalism**

The developments in youth policy over the last decades have introduced major milestones in supporting and structuring youth mobility at the European level. Council of Europe's recommendations on youth mobility (Council of Europe, 1995), the European Commission's action plan for mobility (European Commission, 2002b) and the recommendation on mobility within the Community from the European Parliament and the Council (European Union, 2001) have created a common European framework and principles for supporting young people in mobility. This found its outcome in creation of such organisation as European Youth Information and Counselling Agency (hereinafter, ERYICA) and the European Youth Card Association (hereinafter, EYCA). The framework is further developed in the EU youth policy White Paper (European Commission, 2002a), which recognises specific skills gained through mobility experiences, underlines youth mobility as a transversal policy which has to be taken into consideration in the field of voluntary activities, information, participation, education and training, employment. The European Youth Pact (European Commission, 2005b) goes even further and institutionalises mobility separately as one of the youth policy fields.

The recent developments in removing obstacles and enhancing youth mobility were the administrative simplifications to third country nationals in entering the EU for learning purposes, presented in the following adopted documents: the European Quality Charter for Mobility (European Union, 2006), the Council recommendation on the mobility of young volunteers across the European Union (Council of the European Union, 2008), the Conclusions of the Council on youth mobility, and the Green Paper on the Learning Mobility of Young People (European Commission, 2009), launched in July 2009.

The promotion of youth mobility is included in the EU Youth Strategy for 2010-2018 (Council of the European Union, 2009) as one of the tools in reaching its overall political objectives: to provide more and equal opportunities for young people in education and in the job market; and to encourage young people to actively participate in society. These developments have acknowledged transnational mobility as a tool for competence and skills development.

The mobility of young people is also promoted by Council of Europe as it is included in all of

its main documents on youth policy, particularly in AGENDA2020 (Council of Europe, 2008), that is outlining the future of Council of Europe's youth policy. Council of Europe sees youth mobility as a tool within its own scope of activities, namely for promoting intercultural dialogue and combating racism and intolerance across Europe (Council of Europe, n.d.).

## **2.1 Current challenges of young people in Europe**

Mobility of young people has been incorporated to the European political agendas through Youth in the Move initiative and the new Erasmus+ programme. Evidence shows (European Commission, 2012b) that young people are also increasingly mobile with annual figures of around 430 000 participants through mobility schemes and 500 000 people undergoing independently organised mobility. The visions and political ambition (Barroso, 2013) set the roof considerably higher by stating, that by 2020 mobility should be included in educational pathways of all young people. These estimates set major challenges in ensuring quality experience to young people and in order to understand what affects the micro-level transnationalism and characterises the agents in mobility structures, the next paragraphs will give an overview of the challenges that young Europeans are facing.

The available research suggests (European Parliament, 2014; Fennes, 2013; Jacobone & Moro, 2015) that regardless of different socio-economic realities in the Member States, and how they define "youth" in their national context, the transition to adulthood is a challenging period for all young people.

This period has commonly also become longer and the challenges more complex. The last EU Youth Reports from 2012 and 2015 (European Commission, 2012a, 2015) both confirm that the socio-economic conditions of young people have deteriorated due to difficult labour market (*ibid*). The risk of social exclusion and poverty is especially persistent in Southern Europe with youth unemployment rates up to 50%. This has on the one hand encouraged emigration and on the other hand growing disengagement from civic participation and political life as well as weakened links to non-governmental organisations (European Commission, 2015; European Parliament, 2014).

According to the Eurobarometer survey "Youth in 2014" (European Parliament, 2014) over

50% of young Europeans think that the economic crisis has marginalised them. Although the scores vary from 87% in Greece to 31% in Denmark, the thought was commonly shared by youngsters in all countries interviewed for the report. Furthermore, a majority of young people from 11 EU countries (in particular Greece, Spain, Bulgaria, Slovenia and Romania) find that the education system of their home country does not support acquiring skills required by the labour market (European Parliament, 2014).

While the overall transnational migration of EU citizens within the Union remains at very low levels (3% of adult labour force) (European Parliament, 2014; Kuhn, 2015), the young generation has become transnationally more active. This relates both to extensive use of information technologies that enable transnational interactions as well as physical mobility from one Member State to another for the purposes of study, work, volunteer or leisure activities.

Firstly, statistics shows that in last 5 years transnational mobility to other member states increased the most from Spain and Greece, 52% and 90% respectively and averaged on 45% for other southern EU Member States (European Commission, 2012a). High numbers of transnational youth mobility were also observed in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Ireland and Bulgaria (European Commission, 2015). The actual mobility is further supported by aspired mobility with an average of 43% of young Europeans wishing to move to another EU country for work, study or undergo a training (European Parliament, 2014) and 26% of respondents admitted they would do so because of the crisis.

Secondly, the numbers of young people expressing the wish for mobility was the lowest in Belgium, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and France with less than a third of respondents expressing the desire and less than 5% of respondents from Austria, Germany, Sweden, Denmark and the Netherlands admitted that they felt forced to move due to economic crisis (*ibid*).

Both of these findings illustrate Kuhn's argument about stratification of transnational Europeans (Kuhn, 2015) by age of the individual and size and wealth of the country. As Kuhn pointed out, the most likely segment of population to move and explore new challenges are the young (and educated). Kuhn also argued that tendency for transnational actions is higher in the new Member States, smaller Member States, more liberal Member States and poorer Member States compared to the EU average.

## 2.2 Characteristics of youth mobility

Although the concept of transnational mobility dates back to early 1960 and has undergone major developments in terms of political recognition, there are relatively few in-depth studies on that topic. The quantifiable data is either gathered through EU mobility programmes or statistical pan-European overviews such as Eurobarometer surveys. Some data is available also in the context of labour market. There is however considerably less information available on the nationally funded mobility programmes and even fewer about young people undergoing mobility independently.

The European Quality Charter for Mobility (European Union, 2006) describes youth mobility as a cyclic process and, based on the Charter, the cycle can be divided into different stages: a) from pre-departure motivation, b) departure from home country, c) arrival to new host country, d) stay, and e) return to post-return reintegration. The Charter also identifies different agents in the mobility system, which each have a role in securing a safe and contextualised mobility experience for the young people. The Charter sees young people, youth services, and educational institutions and organisations involved in internship and volunteering schemes as equal partners in ensuring that the socially situated learning of young people would have identifiable learning objectives and outcomes, as well as evaluation procedures, in place. Special emphasis is placed on access to reliable sources of information and guidance (European Union, 2006)

Different mobility schemes are widespread, both on national and European level and according to the study by the European Commission (European Commission, 2012b) , the largest number of all mobility is, in fact, undertaken independently. The impact analyses of transnational mobility are mostly done on the European level, but as the youth policy domain is relatively new, the field is lacking extensive methodological research. The available list of data mainly consists of policy papers, resolutions or decisions by the EU institutions and activity reports of different EU related funding programmes.

However, from the research available, the most useful one is the Research Based Analysis of the Youth in Action Programme (hereinafter, RAY) (Fennes, 2013), specifically studying the impact of transnational mobility. The RAY report suggests that mobility experiences

contribute to the development of citizenship competences in a broad sense and, in particular, to the development of interpersonal, social, intercultural and foreign language competences. This includes the development of respective skills and knowledge, but also of attitudes and values, for example: respect for other cultures and appreciation of cultural diversity; solidarity, tolerance and individual freedom; ‘feeling as a European’ and being interested in European issues; new knowledge about Europe, inclusion, youth and youth policies; awareness of European values and of inequality in society (Fennes, 2013). The responses also indicate that involvement in the mobility experience results in increased participation in public and political life (*ibid*).

The studies on the impact of ERASMUS and Leonardo da Vinci programmes as well as Eurobarometer reports (European Commission, 2010b, 2012b; Kuhn, 2012; European Parliament, 2014; Jacobone and Moro, 2015; Mitchell, 2015) confirm those findings, but also address several challenges in making mobility work.

Firstly, the reports state that although the benefits of mobility in unlocking the potential of young people and supporting their competitiveness on the labour market is well documented, mobility opportunities are not well known to vast majority of young people. Therefore, young people, their friends and family are generally unaware of the advantages and impact that mobility experience can have on their future life and career development.

Secondly, the potential of teachers, youth and community workers, trainers, parents is underused in terms of promoting the inclusion of a mobility experience to the life path of young Europeans. With the exception of ERASMUS student exchange, opportunities for organised learning mobility are too few and not well known for the majority of young people (European Commission, 2012b). As participating in ERASMUS already pre-conditions student status, is it arguable whether it supports the transnationalism of elitist youth rather than geographic mobility in general.

Thirdly, regardless of how the transnational mobility is organised, it is first and foremost a learning process. It is, therefore, a pedagogical tool and not a “logistical exercise”. However, learning is not a natural consequence of the mobility as it can also lead to no-learning or negative learning (European Commission, 2012b; Palincsar, 1998).

Finally, research (European Commission, 2010b; Teichler, 2004; Yoon, 2014) shows that one

of the main obstacles to transnational mobility is access to information. In spite of living at the era of internet there is a need for information that is provided in a user friendly and understandable manner. As transnational experiences involve finding one's way through administrative procedures of the new country (insurance, pensions, health and social services, etc.) that are recorded to be intimidating and a major mobility barrier, the importance of support structures and networks at the disposal of young people during their mobility becomes once again evident.

These challenges pose a series of obstacles on different level in exploiting the full potential of transnational mobility. Many of them are connected directly to youth work and hypothetically could be relieved through the initiatives undertaken in youth work. Moreover, the impact studies (European Commission, 2012b; Fennes, 2013; Gil de Gómez Rubio, Diaz Allué, & Mullet, 2002; Jacobone & Moro, 2015; Teichler, 2004), as well as the political documents (Council of Europe, 1990, 2008; Council of the European Union, 2009, 2011; European Commission, 2011, 2015) discussed above, point out the importance, and lack of quality information and counselling services relating mobility issues.

In relation to the current thesis, research (Dunne, Ulicna, & Murphy, 2014) also reveals youth work's direct influence on young people's mobility in Europe and beyond. Thus, through its voluntary nature and various participation opportunities, youth work is seen as a tool to develop of values preconditioning mobility and positive relationship to oneself and others in the society. In addition, it offers space for socialisation, encourages exchange of thoughts and has a positive impact on participation in the society in general.

Setting priorities, however, involves decision making that at the times of transition from childhood to adulthood is often difficult. The decisions that young people have to make can easily influence their well-being in future lives. The choices in lifestyle, education, career, relationships, etc. will lay the foundation to their adult lives and therefore need to be based on objective, accurate, unbiased and complete information (Cangelosi, 2010; Robertson, 2013). Among the many information sources available, the most reliable are youth information and counselling services (Robertson, 2013). The essential aim of youth information and counselling is to help guide young people in all aspects of their lives and in their autonomous decision making (Cangelosi, 2010). It builds on the assumption that it is not possible to make sound decisions without knowing one's options and alternatives (*ibid*).

Providing quality youth information and counselling services as well as improving access to them is strongly emphasised as one of the priorities of EU Youth Strategy 2010-2018 (Council of the European Union, 2009). Youth information and counselling services are seen as a horizontal measure in achieving the objectives in the eight activity fields of the EU Youth Strategy and Youth on the Move flagship initiative.

## **2.3 Information services as a support structure for youth mobility**

Generalist youth information services (Council of Europe, 1990; ERYICA, 2004; Rupkus & Ivanovskis, 2014) aim to provide reliable, accurate and understandable information about all spheres of life to young people in order to support them in making informed decisions. Youth information services are based on a user centred approach that seeks to empower clients towards independency and autonomy, while also developing their skills of information management (Cangelosi, 2010; Robertson, 2013) and guiding them in making their own decisions based on choices available (Rupkus & Ivanovskis, 2014).

Youth information and counselling services are established in all EU member states with varying structures and scope. This subchapter will explore the role of youth information services in supporting youth mobility, present a case study on Youth on the Move – Info Mobility service model developed by ERYICA.

### **2.3.1 YoMIM model in supporting youth mobility**

The quality of mobility depends a lot on the steps taken before, during and after the experience, such as setting learning outcomes and adequate expectations, cultural and economic preparations, social integration, reflection, evaluation and reintegration (European Commission, 2012b; European Union, 2006). Some of the organised mobility schemes have mechanisms for quality assurance in place. The quality of these, however, may vary from country to country. There are also a growing number of young people, who are not affiliated to any organised form of mobility and, therefore, lacking even the hypothetically available support structures (European Commission, 2012b).

This is also evident from the feedback of ERYICA member organisations collected internally in 2013 (Potočnik, 2013). ERYICA, as a non-governmental organisation, uniting national

coordination bodies of youth information and counselling services, in last three decades has been enhancing cooperation in youth information field between European countries, Council of Europe and European Union. The organisation's aim is to promote and support the development of the policy, practice and quality of youth information work at all levels (ERYICA, 2015). ERYICA is represented in 28 countries and connects over 7500 local and regional youth information centres and over 13 000 youth information workers.

According to above mentioned survey in ERYICA network in 2013 and Rupkus and Ivanovskis' report (Rupkus & Ivanovskis, 2014), young people considered employment, housing, relationships in the family and with friends, and international mobility as being areas where information is not easily accessible. While the latter is a general denominator addressing all mobility issues, the first three are typically the most urgent ones occurring while moving to another country – employment is one of the preconditions of successful mobility experience as is satisfactory housing and social networking in the new home country.

In order to correspond to the growing need for support on mobility issues amongst young people, in 2013 ERYICA launched a pilot initiative Youth on the Move - Info Mobility (hereinafter, YoMIM) within its network of 13 countries with the aim to provide youth information workers with necessary skills in their daily work with mobile youth. The initiative forms a unique model that combines generic youth work, youth information work, mobility and pedagogy issues, youth information workers and young people.

ERYICA's YoMIM service puts special emphasis on mobility issues and is targeted to young people who take part in cross-border European mobility. The service particularly addresses prospective and already mobile young people and provides information on opportunities and practical aspects linked to young people's stay abroad. It provides information, guidance and counselling before, during and after young people's permanence in a foreign country. YoMIM works through providing an extra set of skills and competences to professional youth information workers involved in already established youth information centres. The appropriately trained specialist on mobility issues, a YoMIM guide, implements the acquired knowledge through the tools and methods provided through ERYICA network. At the centre of the service are the needs of young people and the service is designed to support them throughout different phases of mobility (ERYICA, 2013b).

Furthermore, the YoMIM service is designed to incorporate the ten principles of the European

Quality Charter for Mobility (European Union, 2006). The YoMIM approach underlines the importance of accessible and personalised information and guidance services, and calls upon reflecting on objectives and learning outcomes of mobility. The YoMIM service provides tools and assistance for thorough general preparation in order to cover the linguistic, pedagogical, legal, cultural, financial and logistical aspects (i.e. assists young people in creating their personal learning plan) (ERYICA, 2013b).

A big part of YoMIM service is based on face to face contact, facilitated by professional youth information workers. Youth Information Workers provide reliable, accurate and understandable information to young people, give them access to different sources and help them sift through the information overload they face today, among many others. Youth information work uses many techniques in delivering the service and YoMIM guides have been specially trained on supporting, advising and helping participants throughout their stay abroad and facilitate the change. It is also worth to mention, that YoMIM services for young people to guide them in all aspects of their lives and in their autonomous decision-making are provided in Youth Information Centres (hereinafter, YICs).

Through the extensive network of ERYICA member organisations, national and community based networking, YoMIM also enhances the recognition of mobility experiences and specially promotes the usage of European mobility tools (e.g. Europass Mobility, Europass CV, Youthpass) for capitalising the experiences gained through non-formal and informal learning.

### 2.3.2 Youth information structures in Estonia

As it has been pointed out, the services to support youth mobility may vary from country to country. Thus, in case of Estonia, the main structures providing generalist youth information and counselling services in Estonia are YICs and open youth centres. The former are established by Youth Work Act (Riigikogu, 2010). The Youth Work Act outlines the obligations of different public structures in developing and implementing national youth work programmes. According to the act, youth policy belongs to the portfolio of the Ministry of Education and Research who develops national youth work plans (Riigikogu, 2010). The obligation to implement those plans lies with Regional Governments. Estonian Youth Work

Centre (hereinafter, EYWC) as the policy implementation body affiliated to the Ministry of Education and Research, coordinates the implementation of national youth work plans including the area of youth information and counselling. Funds are allocated on annual basis to the Regional Governments from the State budget in order to develop the service in their administrative area.

Open youth centres are predominantly funded by Local Governments based on Local Government Organisation Act (Riigikogu, 1993) that statutes the provision of youth work in the municipality as the responsibility of each respective Local Government. According to the Association of Estonian Open Youth Centres there are around 200 youth centres in Estonia (Eesti ANK, n.d.).

Generalist youth information services are also provided by several other types of organisations working with young people such as schools, different youth work organisations, etc. These organisations, however, fall outside the youth information related coordination of EYWC or Association of Estonian Open Youth Centres.

Therefore, in order to answer the research questions the current thesis first gave an overview of main relevant theoretical concepts explaining European integration and collective identity formation through transnational mobility. It then presented a model developed by ERYICA network and piloted by its 13 member organisations. In order to look deeper into how can youth information services and YoMIM model in particular support transnational youth mobility a qualitative research was conducted. The following chapter introduces the research methodology and strategy that enables to understand how youth information services support youth mobility.

### 3. Research methodology

The current research is designed as qualitative research that enables to look deeper into causal factors of the phenomenon and explore complex social issues that more formal approaches fail to interpret (Gillham, 2000). By that it aims to study YoMIM model in particular as an case to look deeper into how can youth information services support transnational youth mobility. According to Gillham, case study enables to study processes in-depth and answer questions about *how* or *why* they have occurred, as well as enables a deeper inspection of the social context, processes and activities revolving around the case (*ibid*).

As this thesis is looking to investigate causal links between existing youth information systems and successful implementation of YoMIM model, using a case study enables us to look precisely at these conditions. As the thesis focuses on in-depth implementation of the YoMIM model and examines the personal and social relations of people involved in the process, the valuable empirical data was collected through the semi-structured expert interviews, which as data collection method enables to collect information in great detail (Gillham, 2000).

As semi-structured interviews leave more room for free associations and allow the interviewer to specify areas that remained unclear as well as ask additional questions, questions were are without predetermined response choices. The interviews were conducted in a conversational form, which allowed spontaneity from both interviewer and interviewee to operate within the research topic.

Expert interviews, as one form of semi-structured interviews, were conducted with individuals, whose experience in the research field are interesting and who enables researcher to collect factual knowledge of the field (Flick, 2006: 165). In preparation for the interviews, an interview plan with questions template was constructed and tested (appendix 1). The questions were drafted based on research problem and used as a tool for the interviewer to conduct the interviews. The questions template included several help questions in order to facilitate the interview or get more information on a certain topic. Most of the questions were formed as open questions in order to leave space for an unrestricted flow of thoughts for the interviewee.

In the framework of this research 23 semi-structured expert interviews were conducted and

divided into two phases and consequently into two groups of respondents: the first phase of questions targeted 13 experts from European countries (excluding Estonia), and the second phase was meant to interview 10 experts from Estonia (appendix 2). The division into phases was required in order to understand the YoMIM service implementation model and its peculiarities in supporting youth mobility, and then applying these into Estonian youth work landscape in order to test the case.

Interviewees were chosen based on two broad criteria. The foreign experts were required to have participated in the pilot phase of YoMIM service implementation and, therefore, have a thorough understanding of the requirements of the module. The Estonian experts were chosen based on their experience in youth information work, occupational profile and geographic position. All experts had to have minimum two years of working experience and hold a coordinating/managerial position to be able to represent the views of a municipality or region. Estonian experts were chosen from as many different counties as available at the timeframe of the interviews. Foreign experts represented organisations that were all ERYICA members and directly working with youth information. They, however, differentiated from one another in the following categories:

- length of being ERYICA member organisation;
- profile of partner: NGO/ public institution;
- experience with mobility information work and migration;
- history of youth (information) work in the country.

The interviewees were contacted by e-mail explaining the scope and purpose of the research. Interview times with Estonian experts were coordinated via phone.

All interviews were held during YoMIM network coordinators meeting in Graz, Austria in March 2014. The interviews with Estonian experts were held in September 2014. All interviews were conducted based on a developed questionnaire (see annex), face to face, recorded, transcribed and categorised. All Estonian interviewees requested anonymity, thus, coded and not referred to directly in the text.

All interviews with foreign experts were conducted in English. All interviews with Estonian experts were conducted in Estonian. As experts were expressing first and foremost their own professional opinion, the potential subjectivity of the results has to be taken into account.

The interviews were conducted based on wishes of experts. As the researcher knew all experts personally, the manner of the interviews was informal and friendly. The interviewer asked permission for recording the interview, to which all experts agreed. As an average, interviews lasted 60 minutes. The recorded interviews were then transcribed and Estonian interviews translated to English. In three cases experts were contacted again and asked for specifications.

The transcribed interviews were then thematically coded and categorised in MS Excel for further analysis.

## 4. Interview results and analysis

This chapter will present the interview results both with foreign and Estonian experts and analyse each category in detail. The interconnectedness of different categories and their significance for implementing the YoMIM model according to the expert opinions will also be analysed.

The interviews with foreign (non-Estonian) experts revealed very distinct categories of preconditions necessary for implementing YoMIM model. All experts tend to consider existing youth information structures and networks, network management and involvement of young people as the most important pre-conditions. Majority of experts also pointed out the importance of recognition of youth information services, state coordination and support, strategic development, appropriately trained personnel, quality management, funding stability. The second phase of the interviews (with Estonian experts) was used to study applicability of the factors within Estonian reality. All these factors discussed in the following sub-chapters in detail accordingly.

### 4.1 Existing youth information structures and networks

According to the foreign experts, one of the most important factors necessary for implementing YoMIM model in a country is the existence of appropriate structures. Experts found that as YoMIM is a *modular* model that consist of know-hows and tools, but not organisational infrastructure, it cannot exist on its own. Therefore, YoMIM needs to be adopted by a structural setup that consists of organisation(s) working with the target group – young people and their information needs. All experts agreed that there is not *a structure*, but *a model* could in fact be hosted in different structural set-up depending on the national systems.

Furthermore, the interviewees shared common opinion that the easiest and most appropriate would be to accommodate YoMIM model in a structure of youth information centres. This may already guarantee that the requests of young people are responded in a professional manner by youth information workers. However, they also admitted that not all countries in EU have an established youth information structure. Although, youth information services are available in countries of all respondents, a network of youth information centres as such exist

in countries of 12 interviewees out of 13. According to one respondent, youth information services are provided, but within general youth work services and in their country youth information services do not exist as a separate structure.

In addition to the presence of structures as such, respondents reflected on the functionality and effectiveness of those structures. Seven respondents found that the structures are well established and can be considered effective – they are recognised in the community, supported by public authorities and other organisations on the field, and most importantly known among young people. Three other respondents found that the structures are somewhat established as youth information structures do exist, but the collaboration could be better, more supported and strategically planned. Remaining three respondents admitted that in their countries youth information structures exist only formally and there is no content behind the formal setup.

Respondents from Croatia, Lithuania, Slovenia and Slovakia indicated that youth information services are quite a recent phenomenon on the landscape of the social services offered by their respective countries. Although the structures themselves are formally established, the structure itself could provide more support to youth information centres. One respondent noted:

*„on paper everything looks great and our country has a network of youth information centres. In reality, the situation is different. Of course, we do work with youth information, but it happens more as a side product than structurally and systematically developed activity”*

All respondents strongly agreed that YoMIM service is a competency module, and needs a strong structural setup to utilise its full potential. It is difficult to do in an environment where general youth information services have not been thoroughly developed. Nevertheless, they pointed out that the structure adopting YoMIM service does not necessarily have to belong to the structure of youth information centres. More important in the formal set-up is awareness of youth information needs and corresponding to them, and this probably can happen in much broader contexts than youth information centres.

In addition, interviewees argued that regardless of the official structure behind, it has to be an accessible, client centred and youth friendly environment. This description fits best youth centres youth information centres, but is not limited strictly to youth field. For instance, one

respondent brought up an example of a tourist information centre or a youth hostel may also fulfil these criteria. The existing example of the Netherlands was given by respondent to illustrate the possible blended structure where youth information service: YoMIM service is offered in a youth hostel in a building in Rotterdam that also hosts several workshops for young people.

Experts also found that in order to establish YoMIM service on a national level, the hosting organisation should have access to information sources and services on the community, regional and national level. Although, hosting the YoMIM service will also open doors to international networking, the hosting structure should preferably have international experience before. Experts found that for instance it cannot function in a setup without comprehension of English language. In majority of respondents' views this implies belonging to an already established national network that has direct contact with young people and prior professional experience in working with young people in youth information context. Some respondents admitted that YoMIM service could be established as a single cell also on a regional or community level, provided there is an experienced organisation present working with youth information needs. That could, however, potentially limit the development of the service on the national level as the expertise could remain condensed within that organisation.

## **4.2 Network management**

While the presence of existing structural set up is a precondition agreed by all respondents, analysis of the interviews also showed that network alone is not enough, but also needs management. Respondents found that in order for the YoMIM module to be employed and service implemented, structures have to be managed on operational levels.

First, as YoMIM service is designed to respond to various issues in the mobility system (i.e. not only to practical enquiries but also support and facilitate the transition of young people throughout their mobility experience), organisation that hosting YoMIM module should have a facilitated access to cooperation partners on the community, regional and national level. One respondent said:

*“if we think that youth work and youth information services in general are social by nature then in order to deal with mobility information needs of young people the organisation needs to exercise its sociability and be able*

*to approach whatever services needed to support mobile youth. And usually access to information is easier through established network”*

Respondents also found that hosting YoMIM in an organisation that is part of a network (preferably on national level) makes it easier to pool resources and know how the organisation itself should face difficulties in coping with any areas. In order for this to happen, majority of respondents argued that the network needs to be managed, providing content and moral support to its members.

Secondly, all experts found that in order to utilise the potential of different YoMIM guides working together in different countries, their activities have to be centrally coordinated. The coordination assures linkages between different stakeholders and cooperation partners on transnational level in order for the YoMIM service to develop. At the same time, the central coordination is seen as a task of ERYICA. Majority of respondent pointed out that as YoMIM service is meant for all young people without exclusion regardless of their socio-economic status, educational or employment background, religion or place of birth and so forth, it can help to maximise the results of other youth services and programmes involving mobility. As an example, Erasmus+ student mobility, volunteering and employment services were mentioned. In order to establish cooperation and partnerships on a programme level, YoMIM network requires facilitation on the European level. Common belief shared by all respondents was also that in order for the YoMIM service to expand and involve new partners, vertical facilitation is necessary. For example, Lithuanian expert suggested:

*“If the service is successfully launched on a national level in Lithuania we could promote it through our network’s own channels also among our partners in Poland and Latvia. Our aim should be to include also bigger EU Member States who did not participate in the pilot phase. But there our hands are short and it would be easier to achieve though coordination of ERYICA”*

Respondents also found that being part of a facilitated networking raises the profile and credibility of the YoMIM host organisation on the community level. As one expert eloquently put it:

*“...they know that our information services are well connected and sometimes other organisations and also the municipality asks for our opinion on certain topics, specially relating to everything European. I could say that our opinions matter...”*

Thirdly, all respondents agreed that there are various examples of what exactly network

management entails. First and foremost it involves regularity in facilitation through different types of activities. Respondents pointed out different directions of facilitation – vertical and horizontal. In case of a vertical, top down facilitation, it would entail general directions and content support for YoMIM development. As an example many respondents referred to common strategy and objectives, working tools such as online communication platform, mobile application, methodological support in handling mobility issues, etc. In case of horizontal facilitation, i.e. among YoMIM service providers, respondents emphasised networking elements facilitating peer learning activities, job-shadowing projects, seminars and training courses that can provide an opportunity for exchange of information and professional skills development. Networking was found to facilitate socialisation of YoMIM guides with their peers and colleagues both on national and European level. Furthermore, respondents found that networking is the main learning platform which enables YoMIM guides to meet and through socialisation establish relationships for closer cooperation. This cooperation is translated to better and more accessible services to young people. A respondent from Croatia, for instance, admitted:

*“Of course I can pick up the phone or send an e-mail to the contact I find in the internet, whether it’s another YoMIM guide or a specialised question about working permit. In both cases it is much easier to do when I actually know the person I am contacting from previous meetings or events. The social element makes it easier for me to function as an intermediary between young people and officials. Sometimes the questions are complex and “translating” that into information young people can actually use requires more than one contact from my behalf with the official or any other organisation. It functions better in a network”*

Similarly, Estonian experts highlighted several areas that were considered important by majority of respondents in analysing the state of youth information and counselling work in Estonia. The liveliest discussion among all respondents caused such factors as cooperation and networking. Several interviewees pointed out that in their opinion youth information and counselling field in Estonia is somewhat fragmented and systematic cooperation and networking related to youth information work is poor, if not to say, does not exist.

Experts pointed out that organisations working with young people cooperate based on personal relations or through other coordinating entities (for example, through the Association of Estonian Open Youth Centres). This cooperation is, however, based on generic youth work and not directed to competence development in youth information work.

Several experts found that networking is a challenge at all levels. First, there are numerous examples from different communities where the community youth centre and the local school do not cooperate. One respondent explained:

*“I find the situation in our community quite ridiculous. The municipal government declares before each election how important young people are for the community but in practical terms does nothing to support the argument. We are quite a small community but we face an absurd situation where the local school and youth centre do not cooperate with each other. The school sees the youth centre as a competitor as both are organising after school activities. The municipality does nothing to support the cooperation. In the end of the day it’s not the school nor the youth centre who suffers, but our young people who actually do not get the service there are entitled to“.*

Majority of interviewees also found that youth workers are very often left alone in carrying out their duties. They argued that the understanding of why are youth workers actually needed has not reached the priority level as the sector is chronically underfunded and understaffed.

Lack of local level cooperation was echoed by all respondents and half of the interviewees also found that it continues also on the regional level. In those respondents opinion they do not feel enough support either from the regional government who actually has the legal duty (Riigiteataja, 2010) to develop youth information and counselling services on its territory. This opinion was, however, not shared by everyone and the general thread of thought can be summarised by the response of one expert:

*“...in my case the cooperation with other organisations on our municipality level could be better. As a youth centre we have always been opened to partnerships but I think the municipality should get more involved in coordinating that. What I am very satisfied however is the support we receive from regional government. One thing is the financial side, which is a separate issue. Much more valuable is actually the opportunity to meet with colleagues from other youth centres in our region, exchange information, best practice, contacts and ideas. Those meetings are very inspiring and encouraging, and there a quite a few good ideas that I have copied from my colleagues and taken to over to my work with our young people.”*

Majority of respondents found that the regional governments themselves are not in an easy situation in what comes to supporting cooperation partners in their administrative area. Although the regional governments have the legal obligation (Riigiteataja, 2010) to coordinate the development of youth information services on their territory, there is a serious

lack of content support and coordination from the national level in doing that. One respondent summarised:

*“...what we are lacking is the integrated approach. Cooperation exists in some form, but the general feeling is that everyone minds their own business which results in wasting resources and doubling activities”.*

Another respondent expressed a similar opinion:

*“there is no state level cooperation as a network. EYWC organises 1-2 meetings a year, which is the only platform for discussion. I understand that everything does not need to be discussed on a national level, but these 1-2 meetings are not enough for coherent functioning and independent work on regional and local level”.*

Respondents also found that lack of cooperation and networking is resulting in duplication of the local level activities. This does not only apply to the regional level but even to the territory of the same municipality or municipalities a short distance away. All respondents agreed that lack of coherent networking is a major obstacle in developing their services content wise and coping with the information needs of young people.

### **4.3 State coordination and support**

Although youth information field can be written into official documents, the influence of the established structure does not reach community level without strategic support and coordination of the state, experts said. Interviewees with the experience in YoMIM stressed that the local level can work well and in principle YoMIM could be nested in any organisation working with the target group, while working in isolation, nevertheless, limits the potential impact that YoMIM could have. Therefore, it was suggested that the most optimal working context would still be as part of an existing structure, which priorities have been strategically set by the state and which is also developed.

Another important factor named during the interviews is integrated cooperation. While mobility information and youth information in general is not a specific need of a certain region, experts noted that support from above is crucial and should interlink different policy fields in order to provide best available service to young people and utilise all existing resources. Thus, youth work and mobility does not concern only demographics but is spread

across different policy domains – education, employment, health, social security, entrepreneurship, etc. Apparently, state coordination helps to get access to different developments in different spheres of life and utilise the information for the benefit of young people. State coordination makes it also easier to establish synergies between relevant stakeholders and utilise the already existing resources in the youth information and mobility field also on the European level. Some experts pointed out that implementing YoMIM model in a country does not merely mean adding a module to one's services, but joining an international service network, therefore, state facilitation on the grass-root level is vital for accessing tools of Eurodesk network or European Youth Card Association, for example.

Several opinions were raised about YoMIM service that needs to be recognised also on the local level. For that, content background material is needed that can be used for promotion and convincing purposes. It turned out, that young people, youth workers, officials, teachers are generally not aware of mobility opportunities and benefits. In return, YoMIM centres work closely together with municipalities, youth work organisations, schools, and youth organisations, etc., and are functioning as mobility advocates by educating mobility multipliers.

In comparison with Estonian experts' opinion, the category of state coordination and support again caused lively debating. In many respondents views, lack of strategic support and development is the root cause to explaining: “...*why the youth information services in Estonia are the way they are...*” Thus, respondents pointed out the following issues related to this category.

First, according to eight experts out of 10, youth information work in Estonia lacks state level clarity of what it is and how is it developed. On the level of professional youth workers there is a confusion between youth information and career counselling. Career counselling has established itself as a strong and separate entity under Foundation INNOVE and *Rajaleidja* career counselling centres are established in all regions. They organise information events, have functional communication channels such as web portal, mailing list and newsletter and are thus constantly visible on the regional and community level. In respondents opinion this has led many youth workers to draw an equation mark between career counselling and youth information. Making this equation is however a mistake as career counselling is part of generalist youth information and not the other way around. Career counselling services are

specifically catering career information needs of young people and do not provide generalist youth information as such. On the other hand, experts found that there is growing understanding on the community youth work level that youth information is a powerful tool in youth workers arsenal. As one of the experts illustrated:

*“If I did not hang a poster of a tooth on my youth centre’s wall, maybe we would have 5 dentists less in the future”*

The same expert added:

*“...hypothetically, if a poster on the wall could have that impact...can you imagine how much more we could do for the young people through a strategic approach and development to youth information service provision?..”*

Several other experts expressed their thought in a similar direction by adding that the growing level of consciousness of the importance of youth information field is of course good, but at the same time frustrating. Several experts debated on the role of the youth information worker and their niche on the local level: *“Do we need one similarly to a career counsellor?”* Or *“is what we need a professional youth worker with competence to provide youth information services?”*

Again, the common finding from all interviews was that neither the municipal nor regional government has clear expectations or indications to the service. The only indication according to experts is „to do something“. Therefore, regional government has a crucial role to play as their vision and the following decisions on how the services should be developed in the region also influences municipal governments. Until now, apparently, regional governments decide themselves what vision they have. In case of Estonia, the presence of a clearly defined governmental strategy visioning it would be much easier to have one system instead of 15, one for each region, suggested interviewees.

#### **4.4 Appropriately trained personnel**

Language, cultural competence, appropriate personality traits as YoMIM situations might go further than the frame of daily youth information work. The respondents emphasised also networking skills: a youth worker needs to be prepared and ready to tackle mobility related issues, especially in the case where many mobile young people have not experienced mobility

before and are facing complex cognitive issues in a socially, culturally, linguistically, economically different environment. For example, the YoMIM guide has to have set of skills where generic youth work skills are combined with generic youth information work skills with special emphasis on transnational mobility issues.

Respondents thereby referred to the cyclic nature of mobility where each part of the cycle requires specialised skills. There is a difference whether a YoMIM guide is supporting a young person from the local community who only started thinking about one's mobility options; a young person from a different country that has recently arrived to the community; a local youngster who is experiencing one's first weeks of mobility in another country, or, a local youngster who has returned back to the community after one's mobility experience. Each of these typologies have different information needs and psychological profile to consider which requires professionalism from YoMIM guide in facilitating this relationship. Respondents gave several examples about the direct influence between young people's mobility experience and professionalism of youth information work. A respondent from Croatia mentioned one case from their daily practice where youth workers themselves had very strong negative opinions about migrants and through their attitudes discouraged potential mobility of young people. Another respondent gave an example of the importance linguistic competence as YoMIM guide without command of English could not work with information enquiries of international clients. Thus, it reflects the difference between being a YoMIM guide and a youth information worker.

The Estonian experts, likewise, found that provision of youth information and counselling services requires a certain set of competences: in addition to purely technical skills (i.e. how upload information to a website or create a poster) must also involve the grasp of different tendencies and social trends in the lives of young people. Youth workers should be able to analyse this information, contextualise it according to the realities of the young people they work with. They should also be able to translate this information into units that are understandable for young people and facilitate their choices and decision making processes, by that admitting that the added benefit of youth information work is that it helps young people to understand what information around them means. In order to do that, youth workers either need extensive professional practice where they learn by doing, or need to develop their skills through training. As one respondent mentioned, *“youth information work is not a rocket science, but diving into it opens a whole new world of details and techniques that youth*

*workers in general are not aware of*”, however admitting that no one on the municipal, regional or national level is dealing with that kind of competence development of youth workers:

*“true, there are loads of trainings happening inside the career counselling system but this is a very specific area. It’s good that EYWC is organising ERYICA YIntro trainings. This course makes you realise how vast and specific youth information field really is. And then you are left on your own with this discovery”.*

Another area pointed out by the experts is the availability of support materials that would help to develop youth information services further. Several experts mentioned that they have missed a handbook or “start-up kit” type of material which they could use for developing the services in their communities or regions.

Several experts also pointed out that in practice youth workers are lacking the skills for youth information work – how to create databases, attractive presentations, promote services, analyse web statistics, social platforms for engaging young people.

The experts also transmitted their general feeling from their communities where there is a general lack of content input and methods on how to deliver the service. Much of the information work gets done either in the youth centre or during school visits:

*“Through cooperation with teachers we get to know what type of information workshop is needed and we prepare it. As many topics universally repeat regardless of the physical location we could really use a central communication platform where different centres can upload their workshop materials. Otherwise, it’s reinventing the wheel again, which consumes time and money. If we had access to that kind of modular and prepared content information, it would leave us with more time for focusing on development of regional information”*

Some respondents pointed out that the development of skills and competences needs to be systematic. Knowing how to design an attractive power point presentation does not develop youth information field as such. There is a general gasp and vague understanding of what youth information field consist of. For many youth workers it is unfortunately on the level of poster creating and there is no state level coordinated support in developing these competences further.

Half of the experts also added that due to participating on ERYICA Yintro course for youth

information workers they are aware of the plethora of resources available on ERYICA website. The handbooks of setting up youth information services or compendiums on how youth information services are structured in other countries have been a valuable read to those experts who have gone through them.

All Estonian respondents expressed their disappointment that this information has not reached the target group in Estonia and EYWC, who is an ERYICA member, has done nothing to promote the wealth of this expertise. Many of the support materials need in Estonian youth information work are, in fact, already produced and available in English:

*“On ERYICA training course we got an overview of youth information terminology that is commonly used in Europe and I didn’t even know these nuances existed – for instance the differentiation between informing, counselling, advising, referring, signposting. From a distance they all seem similar to me. It is a simple example, but we need this kind of understanding in your work here. That helps us to deliver better service to young people”*

As it was pointed out, translating the know-how into commonly understandable language has, unfortunately, “got stuck in the state apparatus”. Respondents referred to that as unfortunate as the European experience in youth information and counselling, which is contained within these ERYICA handbooks, because this is something that they could really use in their work.

#### **4.5 Funding stability**

Stability of operational finances came up in all interviews. The respondents argued that in order for the YoMIM model to be viable and become known among young people, its stability has to be granted by stability of funding for the organisations that host YoMIM service. As youth information is provided in different organisational set-ups in different countries, a pre-condition to ensure the health of the service is secure funding. If the organisation is additionally forced to deal with funding issues, the respondents believed it is likely to influence the quality of services provided as the organisation will start to optimise costs and cut back services (open hours, staff employed, information materials available, services offered, etc.).

The Estonian experts considered the allocation of funds and resources that support the development of youth services in general a crucial element. In terms of funding the experts

pointed out several bottle necks that prevent young people from receiving a coherent service.

First, as youth services on the community level are financed from the budget of the municipality, the differences on the level of service provided to young people varies dramatically across Estonia. All respondents could draw examples of cases where provision of youth services is extremely under developed as the municipality categorises youth work as low priority area and allocates minimal funds for its survival. Typically this would entail funding quarter to a half of a near minimum wage youth worker position. A person employed on that position would probably also be responsible for carrying out other duties in the municipal structure in order to afford a full salary. Some of the respondents described the following situation:

*“...youth worker is also the cleaning lady, security guy and a social worker. I understand that multitasking is part of the job. But in these conditions it is very difficult to find someone with professional background and motivated to take up the challenge”*

Respondents also mentioned other kind of examples where allocation of resources is not a problem. One respondent referred to a youth information centre in Tallinn that, while it was still operating, it had 5 youth information workers employed at once, offering services in Estonian, Russian, and rare cases also in English. The respondents commonly agreed that Tallinn and the neighbouring municipalities should be taken out of the equation as judging the development of youth work in general based on Harju County would distort the picture.

Nevertheless, experts pointed out several examples on the same end of the extreme, where working with young people is genuinely valued on a municipality level. Although, this doesn't necessarily always express itself in the abundance of financial resources, the expressed support is motivating both to young people and youth workers. Furthermore, there are plenty of examples similar to endeavour described by one expert:

*“...our municipality is not rich, but the management on the top is very supportive. Mayor has an open mind and you could talk him into anything if you play your arguments well. This is how we got to establish our youth centre and occupy the first floor of the culture house. With the involvement of the community we renovated the premises and because our youngsters painted the walls themselves they also feel the ownership over this place. We have now grown into having two youth workers on full salary and we also recruited an EVS volunteer. Having more personnel capacity also gives us more opportunities for professional development and division of tasks. For instance after participating on an ERYICA youth information*

*training we have now revamped our website and have an organised information outlet in our centre”.*

Second, respondents found that if to talks specifically about financing youth information services, then this is a blurry and confusing area. EYWC allocates annual funds to regional governments who in their turn contract organisations on their administrative territory to deliver the service. Apparently, this system has existed for years and has faced one big mismatch – by the time the contracts with service providers get actually signed its already in May. Organisations, however, are expected to deliver the service from the beginning of the year, thus the services were running on halt and therefore, appeared to be unpopular among service providers.

#### **4.6 Involvement of young people**

All respondents confirmed that as youth work and youth information work is done for young people, it is crucial to do it together with young people. Thus, involving young people in youth information services helps to ensure it corresponds to the need of young people and does not only offer what young people should know in youth information workers opinion. Youth information and counselling work in general is a powerful tool and collaboration with the client from the start helps to contextualise the information and facilitate the process through which an idea formed from a piece of information becomes reality and constructed through cognitive experience.

In addition, the experts also found that involving young people is one of the core elements in establishing YoMIM service. As the resources of youth information centres are very often less than limited, the participation of young people in their activities provides, on the one hand, an empowering experience for the youngsters, and on the other hand, helps to deliver the service through peer to peer activities. In the context of YoMIM service, peer to peer activities are seen as a crucial element in facilitating the transition of mobile young people. The experts pointed out that often the main need of young people new to the country is to find friends and socialise. Involving young people in centre’s activities creates an opportunity for peer learning that works both ways – helps to motivate local youth to undertake a mobility experience and provides youth from other countries with social integration. Establishing contacts with transnational youth was considered an important step for local youngsters to

open up to the world.

The next area experts focused while describing their opinions about involvement of young people revolved around service outreach and accessibility. Many experts found that there are several barriers that obstruct youth information services from reaching young people. Experts found that these barriers function on different levels, can exist alone or together and have a combined summative effect.

Experts found that the main challenge is to reach all young people aged 7-26 and make them aware that youth information field and services exist, are provided in a professional manner, are safe, reliable and provide information through different channels (portals, school, youth centre, youth information centre), covering a wide array of topics. Experts found that although there are many examples of connections to young people that carry this message further, much can still be done in winning over the biggest “filters” – teachers and parents. As an average under aged young person spends most of the time either at home or at school, these environments also influence their attitudes the most. One expert added:

*“...the number of young people that find their way to community youth centre is a fraction of the young people attending schools. In a way you could say that their information needs are taken care of. The question is how to reach the rest, especially in those cases where schools do not cooperate with youth centres...”*

The inputs from other experts add that even when the cooperation with teachers and parents does exist, but it is very difficult to create understanding for necessity of systemic cooperation and outreach.

According to several experts, outreach of the services can be limited due to lack of professional competences on the municipal and regional level. Youth centre can exist and organise after school activities, but if the municipality or region does not invest into competence building in youth information services, the after school activities alone are not enough to tackle the information needs of young people.

Likewise, the Estonian experts found that youth information services need to be visible to youth, and this does not refer to advertising only. The respondents pointed out that in order to be visible, the services need to be recognised and known within the community. If a young person experiences support from the community level from young age and gets to know youth

information services as a safe and trustworthy environment, the habit of using social services as part of their constructed social reality will continue also to their adulthood.

However, involvement of young people in youth work in general was also identified by majority of Estonian experts as a challenge. Legal and strategic documents such as Youth Work Act and youth work development plan 2014-2020 both underline one of the core principles in youth work – we work together with young people for young people. In practical terms we have two extremes on how that works in Estonia. On the one hand, there are youth workers and youth centres who, according to one expert:

*“...complain about “passive young people” who are not interested in anything but their tablets and smart phones. They expect everything to be delivered on a plate and if you ask them to organise something themselves they say they do not know what to organise or how to do it”*

On the other hand, there are communities in which youth workers have managed to attract youngsters to consume their services and according to another expert:

*“...are eager to try out new challenges. Just a month ago a group of youngsters came to me and asked if I could help them to organise an international youth exchange. We have supported some of our youth to participate in similar exchanges previously. Apparently they liked the experience so much and feel more confident to take up the challenge and organise one themselves.”*

Several experts found that youth involvement depends a lot on the working methods used and is actually itself the ultimate working method that all youth workers should strive for. One thing is to organise events for young people, invite them as guests to participate and wonder why youngsters are not interested. The other thing is to methodically empower them to take the lead themselves and exercise active citizenship. Youth information work is, perhaps, the easiest area in youth work that enables to do so, admitted one expert and gave an example from a community that they cooperate with:

*“...a good example from local level is the network of youth reporters, who come from different parts of the region and help to update our youth information portal. They know the best, what is happening and what interests them. This also a good peer to peer activity for keeping other young people informed, first that our youth portal exists and second of what is happening in the region. We have kept the circle of youth reporters opened so everyone can join. Some of them have gone even further and taken the lead of covering a topic that they consider important in their school.”*

Involvement of young people as volunteers was brought up by several experts. For example, as other areas in youth work also include elements of voluntary work, it is best to develop it systematically and not declared “*come and volunteer with us*”. The majority of experts gave examples of youth centres that have hosted a foreign volunteer through Youth in Action Programme, which has enforced them to develop a systematic approach to managing a volunteer in their community and, therefore, create a meaning to the volunteering concept. Other experts brought also *contra* arguments that for developing voluntarism there is no need to import someone from abroad. The essential component into attracting young people’s interest are the motivating messages that they sometimes do not receive from school or in their family context.

Experts also found that many youth centres have established links to schools and deliver information sessions on certain topics. This is often the case in municipalities that have funded a work placement specifically for youth information worker. However, as these placements are mostly funded on part time basis, the outreach of these information sessions is limited. One expert added, for example:

*“...as information is highly contextual and in that age in many cases also sensitive, the service works best through personal contact where youngsters can attach a face to the information they hear. We of course have also a website and a Facebook page, but much of the information there is perceived as anonymous data.”*

According to another expert, similar barriers are in place also in their region where the information sessions in schools are also used. The expert explained that due to lack of staff their youth workers cannot reach youth from primary school neither youth aged 18 and older. In expert’s explanation they are trying to reach the audience with more serious information needs like seasonal work, sexual health, international opportunities, etc. Primary school and first years of elementary school are therefore for them a secondary target group.

Experts also mentioned that in addition to outreach related issues rural areas are facing obstacles in an opposite direction – information services can reach out, but they are not accessible from remote communities with poor transport connection. The more remote rural areas also tend to be socioeconomically less advantaged and there are plenty of cases where young people cannot access internet at home.

Some experts pointed out that access can also be limited to young people with special needs:

*“...the term special needs gets often stigmatised to physical or mental handicap. In fact the circle is much broader as special need is also a different language, socio-economic and educational background, risk behaviour, health, sexual orientation, etc. How consciously are we trying to facilitate access to our services for those young people?”*

Most of experts found that the combination of different obstacles has a summative effect and unfortunately they tend to add up in many communities. The outreach is limited either due to lack of finances, cooperation between different entities, limited professional skills or all of them. Experts found that when this coincides with factors limiting access to the services, the young people live in an information vacuum – big paradox of the digital era and information overload.

#### **4.7 Quality management**

The importance of some form of quality assurance process was noted by several respondents who assured that the client usually find and use services and return to them, if it correspond to their needs and they got a satisfactory response and service. The foreign experts pointed out that as the services provided by YoMIM guides are based on societal information either in a host or sending country, procedures must exist to ensure the information is up to date and the service corresponds to network requirements.

The respondents gave different examples of development and quality assurance systems that are used in their work, the most common and best known for all interviewees is the ERYICA youth information charter that lists 16 principles according to which youth generalist youth information services have to be developed. At the time of interviewing, respondents also made reference to quality and competence development framework that back then was in the development phase and has been completed by now. Additionally, the following principles were pointed out:

- Youth information should be accessible to all young people;
- Use effective youth information methodologies and technologies;
- Services are user friendly, transparent and responsive to the needs of young people;
- Services are delivered by suitably skilled personnel;
- Services are planned and designed according to young people’s needs outlining a clear

rationale and objectives;

- Services are outcome focused;
- Services are monitored and evaluated.

Several Estonian experts approached quality management issues through feedback and monitoring. In experts' opinion, feedback is somewhat collected for the internal use, but majority of organisations do not have a system for collecting it. Therefore, the feedback collection is often random and ad hoc, collected in the end of the year for annual reports but is not analysed for service improvement purposes.

The experts pointed out that in youth information work context universal data collection system does not exist. The youth information workers have not received training for feedback collection purposes and that often result in a situation where exchange of staff also results in loss of knowledge. The experts stressed that collecting feedback is essential for monitoring the service provision and improving its quality. However, a framework that would support youth information workers in doing so does not exist. Thus, one expert explained:

*“...from what I know, several youth information centres and youth centres are collect basic information such as age, gender, educational background, mother tongue, type and information are of the request to build up a database of what is actually asked. One can collect this information of course afterwards from e-mails and own memory for reporting purposes but that actually makes it a time consuming duty rather than fulfils its aim for quality development.”*

Another expert confirmed the lack of centrally established system that would specify what kind of data needs to be collected:

*“...Regional Governments have to report on an annual basis to EYWC about how, on what services and for how many young people was youth information service provided. Regional Government gets this information from contracted service providers. There is no centrally established system, however.”*

The experts although noted the existence of quality monitoring measure as in “Estonian Youth Information Service Standard” (Lokk, 2011), however found it rather abstract document which to some extent establishes expected type of services, but does not specify the measure for evaluating the level of quality. Furthermore, awareness that this document even exists has not reached majority of the service providers. Quality monitoring is therefore again down to better judgement of each Regional Government and service provider and this obstructs the

development of coherent service.

To conclude, the majority of responses confirm that the access to youth information services in the general context of youth work has an important value for development of the value system and skills development of the young people involved. Unlike the foreign experts, whose awareness of YoMIM service model and experience in youth information activities was significantly more extensive than of Estonian experts, Estonian experts were rather critical towards implementation of certain factors of YoMIM service model. Its consequences, while being successfully applied, are discussed the final chapter of the research.

## 5. Discussion and conclusions

The research revealed the truly multifaceted nature of youth mobility system. The experts confirmed both transnationalist and social constructivist stances on the constitutive relationship between different micro and macro level actors for the collective European identity and skills development in mobile youth. From social constructivist perspective, the experts identified several stakeholders in the mobility system, that depending on the level of observation function either as agents or structure. The hierarchy of influence sets the stakeholders in a constitutive structure where the functions of each agent with lesser influence are obstructed if the structure they belong to does not follow the preconditions established in this research. In terms of YoMIM model, in Estonian context first and foremost it is referred to the state. The position of the state has been pointed out as a hindrance in all categories of pre-conditions starting from networking and strategic support ending with promotion. The state of affairs on the macro-level obstructs coherent development of generalist youth information and counselling services and, therefore, the YoMIM model to be implemented. As a result the information needs of young people are in many cases catered as a side product of youth work, not as a consciously developed empowering service.

Expert interviews also confirm that the access to youth information services in the general context of youth work, and to mobility information, where that competence exist, have an effect on the value system and skills development of young people involved. Youth work provides a context for sociable interactions described by Kuhn (2012, 2015) and also for the fifth condition in intergroup contact theory to emerge – an opportunity to become friends. I would therefore conclude that implementation of YoMIM model is an optimal functional youth (information) service network with direct influence on transnationalism of young people by providing them a safe environment for social learning with young people in different stages of their mobility cycle.

The results showed that the context of YoMIM service provides young people various opportunities for skills development and gradual change in identity structures through providing space for initial transnational contact. Furthermore, as YoMIM service is not established only in one country, it can follow young people through their transnational mobility experience and provide space and time instrumental interactions to develop into sociable interactions. Over time this will allow shifts in identities to settle and different

identity structures to materialise. The safe environment of youth work facilitates the development of emotional significance towards the transnational experience and thus support the politically relevant European identity to emerge as described by Tajfel (1978).

Moreover, implementing YoMIM model has also an impact on developing skills and positive attitudes towards the European Union on next levels of influence hierarchy. Experts have admitted that international networking has changed their attitudes towards other European countries and the EU largely because they have got to experience Europe either through instrumental or sociable interactions. YoMIM context provides opportunities for both as sending an e-mail to a European colleague is more instrumental in its nature compared to participating in a peer learning project or an international training course. The socialisation that takes place in international competence building projects of YoMIM service providers and youth workers in general fosters cooperation and mutual understanding that helps to create a “we” feeling. The prolonged exposure to European cooperation changes the values and attitudes of youth information workers and also enhances the development of new skills. Participants of these events start to see a larger picture beyond their daily routine and get acquainted with trends and tendencies extending the physical communities where they are situated in.

In addition to transnationalist views this resonates with the original transactionalist ideas of Deutsch (1966) and supports his reasoning for emergence of secure communities. As a result, the youth information workers having experienced transnationalism have also their own personal social learning experience and possible changes in their identity structures. This makes them better equipped for coping with mobility related needs of young people and more qualified to support them with relevant information in various stages of their mobility experiences.

The same applies to the organisational structures where youth information workers as agents belong to. Europeanisation takes place through the competence building and identity change of youth information workers who as agents have the power to influence the development of the structure. As social constructivists argue, the constitutive relationship results in creation of new norms which is especially evident in youth information work context through adopting best practices on European level to local context. Through cooperation with other organisations (or agents in social constructivist rhetoric) similar processes as on individual

youth information workers level emerge. As experts established, belonging to a facilitated network enhances the learning of organisations and supports the development of mobility related competence through exchange of best practice, peer learning activities, common content materials etc. These social interactions within the network do not only serve the interests of organisations and personnel involved, but through getting translated to organisational values and beliefs ensures more up to date and inclusive service to young people.

Some organisations have used the opportunity of networking to raise their credibility and have become opinion leaders in the community. Through being pro-European they influence the value systems of the young people and less directly also other agents in the community. Social constructivism (Risse, 2010) refers to that in the context of agent-structure system logic which can follow either the lead of appropriateness or consequentialism. Conscious use of either logic provides organisations working with European mobility information issues with a power to influence the beliefs of young people, other youth workers, teachers, parents, organisations and inform them about European issues. In present day context this is especially relevant in what concerns issues that individuals find difficult to construct the meaning around (for instance refugee crisis).

The social constructivist thought on mutual impact that the agent and structure have on one another and the constitutive effect of norms it creates gets confirmed again on the next level of agent-structure hierarchy formed by pan-European youth information network and the state. Interviews have established that the input from the network level has created a common European understanding of the content of youth information work, common objectives in establishing the service, common competence framework and quality standards as well as common terminology. Even in countries where youth information work strategy is not in place this has had an impact on the principles that youth information services are developed. The working language and common methods of the European network gets transferred to the national level by its members and transmitted further in local cooperation networks. This also resonates with transnationalist views on integration from and integration from above with both directions being present. On the one hand the network is formed by individual transactions where representatives of different countries and organisations impact the agenda setting on the European network level. On the other hand the influences from the European level get translated back to the national level where the context is influenced by common

European decisions.

Research shows that all levels of youth mobility system are inextricably intertwined and best service to young people is provided when the backbone of youth information services is firmly established. In order to facilitate the transnationalism of young people the following recommendations are formed:

1. European identity is forged through emotionally significant sociable interactions. Professional youth information work environment provides a safe environment for those interactions to be tested. It however requires professional capacity building from youth worker's side. YoMIM service is designed to develop those competencies. YoMIM should be introduced to youth information workers at all levels.
2. For more effective use of resources organisations working with youth information should establish systematic links for cooperation and networking. In order to deliver better service to young people, efforts should be made to include schools, other youth work organisations and public institutions to the network. The network should be facilitated and meet regularly in order to share best practice, experiences, tools, methods and establish common needs for further development.
3. Identity development is a socially situated learning process. Young people should be involved and included at all levels of providing the service in order to facilitate the learning process. Especially important are peer learning activities and contacts in a safe environment with transnational young people.
4. In cases where the state coordination is weak, regional cooperation should take a leading role as YoMIM service is still applicable when some form of cooperation structures are in place. Regional Governments should also enforce horizontal cooperation between themselves and apply pressure to service development from below.
5. For the success of the service it is also vital that young people, mobility organisations, parents, teachers, youth workers, social workers would know about YoMIM service. The service needs to be promoted among young people, cooperation partners and public authorities.
6. YoMIM is universally applicable to all young people regardless of their socio-economic, educational, employment or social status and mobility type. Cooperation links should therefore be forged to also cater the needs of other mobility related social

services.

## 6. Kokkuvõte

Euroopa Liit on oma enam kui 60 aastase ajaloo jooksul läbi teinud märkimisväärse arengu. Kuue riigi vahelisest majanduskoostööst rasketööstuse ja aatomienergia vallas on arenenud välja 28-liikmeline Euroopa Liit, mille mõju ulatub kõikidesse poliitikavaldkondadesse.

Globaliseeruva maailma, majandusseisakust toibumise, vananeva rahvastiku, tööpuuduse, Euroopa turvalisuse ja muude väljakutsete najal peab Euroopa Liit toime tulema ka üha suureneva rände- ja migratsioonisurvega. Nendest asjaoludest tingitud euroskeptilisus liikmesriikide kodanike seas on andnud jõudu populistlikele poliitilistele jõududele, kes on rääkima hakanud nii vaba liikumise piiramisest kui ka Euroopa Liidust välja astumisest. Lõhe Euroopa Liidu ja tema kodanike vahel on viimastel aastatel suurenenud ning Euroopa Liit on astunud samme selle pidurdamiseks. Euroopa 2020 strateegias on seatud erinevad arengueesmärgid aastani 2020 ning osade eesmärkide täitmisel nähakse rolli noorte haridus- ja töövõimaluste parandamisel ning noorte mobiilsusel.

Piiriülese liikuvuse rolli on lisaks oskuste arendamisele uuritud ka Euroopa identiteedi kujunemise kontekstis. Deutschi transaktsionalismi teooria põhimõtetele on üles ehitatud transnatsionalism ning sarnast ideestikku edasi arendav sotsiaalne konstruktivism. Kõik nimetatud teooriad väidavad, et piiriülene liikuvus võib teatud tingimustel arendada kollektiivset Euroopa identiteeti ning mõjuda positiivselt ka oskuste arengule.

2013. a algatas Euroopa Noorteinfo ja Nõustamise Agentuur uue noorteinfo teenuse Youth on the Move: Info Mobility (YoMIM). Teenuse eesmärk on toetada mobiilseid noori kogu nende mobiilsusperioodi vältel. Käesoleva töö eesmärgiks oli uurida YoMIM mudeli rakendamise eeltingimusi ning anda nende põhjal soovitusi mudeli rakendamiseks. Uuringueesmärkide täitmiseks viidi läbi kvalitatiivne uurimus juhtumiuuringu põhjal, milleks koguti andmeid 23 poolstruktureeritud ekspertintervjuu kaudu.

Uuringutulemustest selgus, et YoMIM mudeli rakendamise eeltingimusteks on noorteinfo struktuuride ja võrgustike eelnev olemasolu, võrgustiku haldus, riiklik koordinatsioon ja tugi, kompetentsed noorteinfotöötajad, rahastamise stabiilsus, noorte kaasamine ja kvaliteedijuhtimine.

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## Appendix 1 – Semi-structured interview questions

<p>1. Questions about the system and the perceived role of YIW</p>	<p>Does your country have a youth information network? Since when? Is it formally established?</p> <p>How is the youth information (net)work structured? How is it maintained? What do the members get from belonging to the network?</p> <p>How is YIW positioned in general youth work? (Common integrated approach, inseparably part of YW or as specialised service?)</p> <p>How is YIW supported by national coordination bodies?</p> <p>Is there a youth information strategic development plan? How are your activities linked to that? Who coordinates and implements it?</p> <p>How is YIW funded in your country? (Is it regular and secured?)</p> <p>Promoting and awareness raising? How is it done, is it done? Is it coordinated on the network level?</p> <p>How do you involve young people in YIW? Is it planned and systematic or random?</p> <p>How do you enhance the quality of YIW? Do you use any specific tools for that?</p> <p>Which challenges do you face in your daily youth information work?</p> <p>How and by whom is YIW promoted in your country? (Common branding, promotion materials)</p> <p>Which external resources/ networks do you use in your work? Recent tools and specialised services that you have started to use?</p>
<p>2. Questions about the content of YIW</p>	<p>Which services do you provide to young people?</p>

	<p>In your work, how long is the average information contact with the young person? Are there cases when it's longer/shorter? Which cases are these?</p> <p>Which topics are the most popular among youth? Can you compare or point out the difference on the topics? Right now/ 5 years ago</p> <p>Which are the emerging topics/on the rise?</p>
<p>3. Questions about mobility</p>	<p>What role does mobility information have in your overall YI provision? How long have you provided mobility information? How is it integrated to your overall YI service?</p> <p>What role does mobility information it play within your organisation/country/YIW?</p> <p>How would you characterise its role/importance in the lives of young people?</p> <p>What are the biggest challenges in providing information about mobility? What are the conditions for success? What is your experience/ best practice?</p> <p>If and how are young people involved in provision of mobility information?</p>

## Appendix 2 – Table of interviewed experts

Name	Organisation	Country	Time and place of interview
Saija Ukkola	Koordinaatti	Finland	March 2014, Graz
Loren Falzon	Agenzija Zghazagh	Malta	March 2014, Graz
Ulrike Schriefl	LOGO Jugendmanagement	Austria	March 2014, Graz
Gema Villa	CIPAJ	Spain	March 2014, Graz
Darko Čop	Zajednica ICM	Croatia	March 2014, Graz
Claudia Reis	Ponto JA Lisbon	Portugal	March 2014, Graz
Tanja Novaković	MISSS	Slovenia	March 2014, Graz
Pepe Herrera	Solna	Sweden	March 2014, Graz
Willelmijn Van Ingen	JONG Rotterdam	The Netherlands	March 2014, Graz
Kristiina Ling	EYCA	Slovakia	March 2014, Graz
Imre Simon	ERYICA	Luxembourg	March 2014, Graz
Evaldas Rupkus	Foundation for Youth	Lithuania	March 2014, Graz
Görkem Bagci	GSM-Youth	Turkey	March 2014, Graz
Anonymous	Lääne-Viru County Government	Estonia	September 2014
Anonymous	Union for Estonian Youth Centres	Estonia	September 2014
Anonymous	Youth Centre of Central	Estonia	September 2014

	Estonia		
Anonymous	Võru Youth Centre	Estonia	September 2014
Anonymous	Rapla Youth Information Centre	Estonia	September 2014
Anonymous	NGO European Movement Estonia	Estonia	September 2014
Anonymous	East-Harju Information and Counselling Centre	Estonia	September 2014
Anonymous	Illuka Youth Centre	Estonia	September 2014
Anonymous	Põlva Youth Centre	Estonia	September 2014
Anonymous	Anne Youth Centre	Estonia	September 2014

### **Appendix 3 – List of interviews**

Bagci, Görkem 2014: Interview with Researcher, Graz, 04.03.2014

Čop, Darko 2014: Interview with Researcher, Graz, 06.03.2014

Falzon, Loren 2014: Interview with Researcher, Graz, 05.03.2014

Herrera, Pepe 2014: Interview with Researcher, Graz, 06.03.2014

Ling, Kristiina 2014: Interview with Researcher, Graz, 07.03.2014

Novaković, Tanja 2014: Interview with Researcher, Graz, 06.03.2014

Rupkus, Evaldas 2014: Interview with Researcher, Graz, 04.03.2014

Reis, Claudia 2014: Interview with Researcher, Graz, 06.03.2014

Schriefl, Ulrike 2014: Interview with Researcher, Graz, 05.03.2014

Simon, Imre 2014: Interview with Researcher, Graz, 07.03.2014

Ukkola, Saija 2014: Interview with Researcher, Graz, 05.03.2014

Van Ingen, Willelmijn 2014: Interview with Researcher, Graz, 07.03.2014

Villa, Gema 2014: Interview with Researcher, Graz, 05.03.2014

Anonymous 1 2014: Interview with Researcher, Tallinn, 15.09.2014

Anonymous 2 2014: Interview with Researcher, Tartu, 20.09.2014

Anonymous 3 2014: Interview with Researcher, Tallinn 10.09.2014

Anonymous 4 2014: Interview with Researcher, Tartu 10.09.2014

Anonymous 5 2014: Interview with Researcher, Tallinn 16.09.2014

Anonymous 6 2014: Interview with Researcher, Tallinn 16.09.2014

Anonymous 7 2014: Interview with Researcher, Tallinn 10.09.2014

Anonymous 8 2014: Interview with Researcher, Tallinn 25.09.2014

Anonymous 9 2014: Interview with Researcher, Tartu 18.09.2014

Anonymous 10 2014: Interview with Researcher, Tartu 18.09.2014