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GŁOSY WOLONTARIUSZY: DOŚWIADCZAJĄC SPOŁECZNEJ INTEGRACJI EUROPEJSKIEJ W MIĘDZYNARODOWYCH OBOZACH WOLONTARIACKICH?

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Voices of Volunteers:
Experiencing European Social Integration in Workcamps?

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Declaration

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1. Introduction

This thesis contributes to the need to further explore the micro-level of European integration from a sociological perspective. Thereby, it is focusing on mobility of young people and participation, Europeanization and active citizenship in the case study on international volunteering in Workcamps.

The voluntary sector has been expanding parallel to the growing interest and belief of policy makers in volunteering as a tool to increase ‘healthy’ communities and democratic institutions, and understanding volunteering as closely tied to the concept of active citizenship.1 In contemporary Western societies, it is nearly unavoidable that different cultures – may they be national, ethnic, religious, or other – meet, clash, and mix. Active citizenship and voluntary engagement is connected to the notion of solidarity between different milieus of society and can play an essential role for a well-working civil society.2 Governments and organisations therefore pay growing attention towards volunteering as an essential element for active citizenship. As for the European dimension, there has been the recent announcement to launch the European Solidarity Corps (ESC)3 besides the already established programs like Erasmus + and the European Voluntary Service (EVS). The aspect of non-formal education is a main benefit of volunteering. Its practise however, still depends on national contexts. Reasons for that might also be the immense difficulties to measure impact of the non-profit sector on society,4 and the impact of these experiences on participants.5

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3 At this point no other abbreviation has emerged that could avoid confusion with the other Eurovision Song Contest (ESC).
Decision and policy makers in the EU find themselves confronted with several difficulties when it comes to the complex relation of the EU institutions and policies and its citizen. In times of several crises, institutions and organisations are eager to find ways how to ‘counter the trend’ and encourage engagement with European topics. In the context of cross-border cooperation volunteering is a possible way to foster society in general but also the opportunities for European, transnational experiences and forming social ties. Thus, in the end volunteering could contribute to or at least promote European social integration. The aspect of funding and institutionalised support on EU-level as further Europeanization becomes visible through for example promotion of workcamps through Eurodesk, the national agencies for Erasmus+ (and before that for Youth in Action), and the support for the local organisations. The idea is generally to foster the sense of political participation and strengthen equality in opportunities through civil engagement. Previous research suggests, and policies of nation states and the EU seem to assume that volunteering has several advantages: It might offer an alternative to break up established narratives about the other, bring awareness to biases, and maybe change behaviour, attitudes, and world views. This can of course not be done exclusively through volunteering; however it might offer a first step into the direction of stronger European social integration.6

Following the social theory on European integration as proposed by Favell, Recchi, et. al.,7 this thesis aims to contribute to the broader question of how the European integration of economy, institutions, and policies might affect the everyday life of its citizens and people living here in general, and to deepen our understanding of the conditions and ways how individuals might learn to become active citizens and position themselves towards the EU. The bigger questions behind this thesis are: What Europe do Europeans live through their social practises? How is Europe constructed through

interactions on the micro-level? What makes some people feel more European than others? Inspired by these, this thesis aims to answer the following research question: how and to what extent do volunteers experience and perceive their participation in workcamps in the European context? Thus, this exploratory research on volunteering wants to explore the experiences at workcamps and look into potential practises of transnational socialization and possibly a strengthened sense of belonging.

Workcamps are an independent type of international youth exchange and voluntary service. In Europe, workcamps take place since the 1920s. This thesis analyses six qualitative interviews of participants of workcamps that are offered by the German-based organisation called “Internationale Jugendgemeinschaftsdienste e.V.” (International Youth Services - ijgd) which was founded 1950 in Hannover and since then organises yearly several international workcamps in Germany, enables people to go abroad to participate in workcamps of partner organisations, and furthermore also offers long term programs like EVS.

An in-depth methodology is suitable for the focus on the experiences and practices as it enables the research to understand complexities and interrelations by which people make experiences and which kind of imagines are associated with them. Qualitative methods are typically suited for such a focus. Therefore, I carried out qualitative interviews with six volunteers in May 2017 who have participated in at least one workcamp that took place not longer than one year ago. The conducted interviews focus on the following sub-questions: a) what kind of experiences did the participants make during the workcamps? b) How do the interviewees see Europe? c) Are there indications that show a European “consciousness” and maybe even sense of (European) community? The interviews lasted between 50 and 75 minutes and were done via Skype. The detailed interview guide can be found in Annex One. The answers have been recorded and analysed using qualitative content analysis with open-coding. The coding scheme can be found in Annex Two. Due to the politicised nature of Europe as closely connected to the European Union, special attention will be paid to the dimensions of national categories and the interrelation of Europeanization and
globalization. Especially taking into account that it is possible not only for non-EU citizens to participate, and for people not living on the European continent). 8

Following Ferdinand Tönnies’ influential differentiation of “Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft” (community and society), 9 participation and engagement is an important ground to ensure a thriving civil society. Especially volunteering might offer again a way to strengthen the ‘civic’ ties in modern societies (Gesellschaften), because it strengthens the ties that bind people together, beyond the family ties. In the TFEU Article 165 (2) states “encouraging the development of youth exchanges and of exchanges of socio-educational instructors, and encouraging the participation of young people in democratic life in Europe.” 10 In particular the growing policies on volunteering might be an acknowledgement of the potential of people who get involved as “active citizen” who volunteer have become “the basis for community regeneration.” 11 From a constructivist perspective, European integration is basically “a process of community building”, 12 through processes of social learning. Therefore, to the question of potential processes of Europeanization, the four freedoms remain the most important and extraordinary feature of the European Union. “Free movement is the EU in Europeans’ minds.” 13 Europe, and the European Union, means (for its citizen) still mostly mobility and the freedom of movement. In regard to inter-EU migration – the freedom of mobility of people, the implementation of Schengen and Erasmus have contributed immensely in the Europeanization of travel and cultural experiences. 14 The

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8 I prefer to define generally everyone as European who has his or her (self-described) home in Europe, not only is an EU-citizen.

9 Ferdinand Tönnies, Gemeinschaft Und Gesellschaft, Grundbegriffe Der Reinen Soziologie (Berlin,: K. Curtius, 1926).


13 Favell and Guiraudon, Sociology of the European Union, 73.

EU “has a tremendous impact on the European citizens’ lives.”\textsuperscript{15} However, the EU also struggles with a continuous lack of democratic legitimacy, which might depend on “the development of a more robust common European identity.”\textsuperscript{16} Active participation and an empowerment of its citizen and inhabitants might therefore result in an emergence of a sense of community. Regarding the mobility especially of young people, the Council of Europe took major steps in the 1990s with funding the European Youth Card Association and the Solidarity Fund for Youth Mobility (now Mobility Fund by Rail for the Young and the Disadvantaged). Today, the most important strategy is the AGENDA 2020. The European Union adopted the idea, and treats youth mobility essentially as an asset. In 2001, a white paper “a new impetus for European youth” emphasised the importance of recognition of skills gained in mobility experiences.\textsuperscript{17} Europe of course does not only refer to the European Union. However, due to its dominance in the discourse of defining the meaning and borders of Europe, the European Union seems to be so powerful that these two terms get used synonymously. In this thesis, hence looking at the process of Europeanization this cannot be detached from the European Union, however, Europe is not understood as a synonym of that. The institutional side of Europeanization then again is clearly dominated by the institutions of the EU. When looking at Europeanization essentially as a social practise – the angle this thesis follows, making transnational experiences, getting to know other Europeans, and work together, might be an essential experience for European social integration. Focussing on young people might offer high chances for long-term influence on their socialization in a European dimension as the experience might positively interact in the development process of young people.

Focusing on European youth hence offers insights into new generations that grew up with the fall of the Berlin wall and the building of the EU; although their collective memories might still continue to transfer divisions and they experience crisis after crisis (terrorist, economic, financial, humanistic, democratic etc. crises), and quite obviously young people are the future of this continent. The emphasis on youth empowerment and

\textsuperscript{15} Juan Diez Medrano, “Europeanization and the Emergence of a European Society” (Rochester, NY: Social Science Research Network, January 1, 2008), 4, \url{https://papers.ssrn.com/abstract=1086084}.
\textsuperscript{17} Günter Friesenhahn et al., \textit{Learning Mobility and Non-Formal Learning in European Contexts: Policies, Approaches and Examples} (Brüssels: Council of Europe, 2014).
the development of (soft) skills of young people in international youth exchanges essentially aims to broaden horizons of their participants. Furthermore, the idea that lies behind it is to offer opportunities to encounter with and experience Europe instead of just hearing about it in the news.

Workcamps are a rich example of international volunteering to focus at, because a workcamp is a short-term international volunteering service which focuses explicitly on the intercultural and non-formal learning experience in an international group of young people. Workcamps might offer a lower barrier access to volunteering and make it possible on the one hand to attract also people who might not have prior volunteering experiences and also might not have the time, money, or a lack of other resources to do an average of 6 to 12 months of European Voluntary Service or International Voluntary Service and on the other hand as it is a short but intensive experience therefore the immediate impact might be more feasible to pin-point. Additionally it should be noted that the strength of ties to the locality of workcamps varies among organisations and their conceptualization as well as the internationality, as there also exist bi- and tri-national workcamps. Furthermore, the bare existence of awareness and knowledge about the existence of the concept of workcamps in the general public can be questioned and might also be depended on national context, as for example there is not even an English language article about workcamps on Wikipedia, the number one source of knowledge online that is also very easily to access. However, people who specifically search for it, still find informations as for example the European Youth Portal elaborates about workcamps among other international volunteering opportunities and other non-volunteering related topics.18

The European dimension plays an important role even though workcamps are per definition international, because it offers an institutionalised framework for example through the above mentioned promotion by Eurodesk or the mentioned efforts of the EU to foster youth mobility, exchange, and non-formal learning and even more as the workcamps might also have non-European participants in contrast to these, as ‘the other’. Nonetheless, Archibugi claimed already in 1998 that “the first international

organization which begins to resemble the cosmopolitan model is the European Union,”\textsuperscript{19} so maybe European can be understood as a European cosmopolitanism and does not need to be excluding.

Furthermore, I aim to overcome the “methodological nationalism” that can be seen in other research (at least the German-speaking and many of the English literature) and will not focus on a specific nationality of volunteers or national location of workcamps. Wimmer and Schiller define the idea of methodological nationalism as follows:

“The epistemic structures and programmes of mainstream social sciences have been closely attached to, and shaped by, the experience of modern nation-state formation. (...) The social sciences were captured by the apparent naturalness and givenness of a world divided into societies along the lines of nation-states. (...) Because they were structured according to nation-state principles, these became so routinely assumed and ‘banal’, that they vanished from sight altogether.”\textsuperscript{20}303-304

This thesis will not focus on the strand of thought on identity as it is a “notoriously difficult concept to define, and one heavily polluted by its everyday political uses”\textsuperscript{21} as Favell and Guiraudon call it. Due to the nature of a qualitative methodology and relatively small sample - the scope of this study is rather small and the results should not be interpreted at a larger scale. Nevertheless, the results of this case study might be fruitful to understand more about meanings. Another limitation of this study is the restricted timeframe that only allows a glimpse at what the interviewees think now about their experiences.

Answering the research question ‘how and to what extent do volunteers experience and perceive their participation in workcamps in the European context?’ can give relevant insights for both academics and practitioners. From an academic point of view, such analysis can provide a better understanding of experiences of international, cross-border volunteering, connected to concepts of youth participation, active citizenship and non-formal learning and the context of Europeanization of experiences on the micro-level instead of focussing on institutions. For practitioners it might offer insights in


connections or possible gaps between values and aims of organisations and the actual experience and perceptions on the ground. Furthermore, the phenomenon of Workcamps remains understudied, as the value and contribution of volunteering beyond the purely local or national level only recently got more attention from policy and decision makers. Additionally it should be noted that the strength of ties to the locality of workcamps varies among organisations and their conceptualization as well as the internationality.

In the following chapters, firstly, the theoretical framework gives an overview of the recent discourse on social theory in the context of the European Union to introduce the theoretical scope of this research, to familiarise the reader with the status quo of the current academic literature on European social integration, and link it with academic literature on volunteering. Secondly, the methodology that guides this research is elaborated on. Then, the empirical findings are analysed and the themes that came up in the data discussed. For example, at least for some of the interviewees the cause of volunteering did influence their decision to participate. Unsurprisingly, mobility was the strongest theme throughout the interviews and the social ties between the group members that were formed during the camp might contribute to the bigger picture of European social integration. These main aspects point to the conclusion that workcamps might be an example for a first transnational experience for young people that might also make Europe more perceptible and strengthen social ties beyond national categories, therefore contributing to European social integration.
2. Theoretical Framework

The following chapter introduces the theoretical framework of this study. As this thesis is mainly concerned with experiences and perceptions of Europe and volunteering, certainly; therefore this chapter presents in a first section social theory of Europeanization and the focus of everyday life experiences as a possible source of a European consciousness. Furthermore, a second section then gives overview on the current state of research youth participation and volunteering with focus on the European dimension of this thesis.

Social theory provides the angle of this research and explains the focus on the experience and connected perceptions of the volunteers as a possible source of transnational socialization in a European context. Previous research suggests that transnational practises correlate with at least more awareness to Europe, maybe even an identification with Europe, but usually focuses on some kinds of elites. This research aims to get insights on just some young people that more or less spontaneously decide to participate in a workcamp in Europe and made first transnational experiences there.

In the case of international volunteering the European dimension consist on the one hand of the occasion to directly experience the benefits of Schengen and the freedom of mobility and on the other hand the aims of the European Union to introduce youth policies to promote the values of volunteering to encourage participation and active citizenship. Through volunteering, especially young people are enabled to find ways to participate, be empowered, and develop their strengths, which also means a strengthening of active citizenship and democratic values through civic engagement.22

However, so far efforts to mainstream volunteering in Europe or rather aspects of youth policy are there but might be limited. Local differences therefore remain predominant, even if European Voluntary Service (EVS) and European Solidarity Corps (ESC) might try to aim at changing this, they still rely on for example the state of youth policy in the national countries. Also, EVS and also other funding opportunities in Erasmus + still

miss the accessibility for smaller organisations that might be very local, volunteer-run, and structurally underfunded but would need this support to work even more.

### 2.1 Social Theory on European Integration

Following the social theory on European integration as proposed by Favell, Recchi, et. al., this thesis contributes to the broader question of how the European integration of economy, institutions, and policies affects the everyday life of its citizen and people living here in general, and to deepen our understanding of the conditions and ways how individuals might learn to become citizen and position themselves towards the EU. The understanding of European integration therefore goes beyond the process of policy making and looks at the social aspects of it. Full social integration on a European level could be when Europeans would act as citizen of one nation, which is obviously not the case now and perhaps will never be.\(^{23}\) However, to some extent social integration is happening as for example the EU essentially promotes intra-European migration.

Therefore the EU is seen as a field of social practises which requires specific social, cultural, and symbolic building of capital, like intercultural competences, networks beyond national boundaries, etc. and is essentially formed through what people do. A number of scholars have dealt with the question about the nature and consequences of Europeanization from a theoretical perspective.\(^ {24}\) Others have approached this complex issue from an empirical perspective, with a particular emphasis on intra-EU migration.\(^ {25}\) Looking at practises rather than maybe attitudes emphasises the understanding of Europe as a field that essentially gets constructed through practises, interactions, and contact.


Transnational practises and pro-European identifications seem to correlate with each other. However, other factors like age, education, or milieu affiliation might also be influential. One aspect that is reoccurring in research and will be dealt with in this thesis as well is the obvious connection and interrelation of Europe and migration, in this context framed through the four freedoms of the European Union as ‘mobility’. The practise of migration within Europe seems to correlate with transformative effects on everyday habitus of ‘movers’ as Favell calls them. A reason for it to be some kind of causal connection as people who perform transnational practises profit more directly from inner border removals and might also alter their group boundaries due to frequent contact with others. However, not only the transnational practices show strongest connection than for example the transnational background of parents. Apparently, the migration within Europe emphasises the legal status of citizenship for people who do so, that is to exercise the right of free movement in order to become more ‘European.’ It remains unclear though, to what extent mobility is connected to identification with Europe and active political participation; incorporated class and education stratifications might play a role here.

Mobility, exchange, and engagement are a crucial part of active citizenship and might hold the potential to strengthen European citizenship to move beyond into national dimensions. The Treaty of the EU (in all the versions) refers to the ‘freedom of movement of goods, capital, services and people’ as the ‘engine’ for a united Europe or at least to deepen integration. This promotion of intra-EU movement alters the traditional notion of citizenship in its national form which is both a privilege and constraint. “Free interstate movement is thus a fundamental ingredient – if not indeed

26 Fligstein, Euroclash.
31 Recchi, Mobile Europe, 2.
the lever – for dismantling the nation state and constructing a post-national political order."  

As prior research has found the experience of intra-EU mobility as one of the strongest predictors of attachment to Europe, and connected to Karl Deutsch idea of transactionalism and integration which essentially emphasises the sense of community within a territory, cross-border volunteering seems to lie at this intersection and adding in the aspect of engagement.

Looking at processes of Europeanization also raises the question of how it relates to globalization. The answer depends also on the definition of Europe. However, it might be relevant to understand the process of Europeanization not only as a potentially cosmopolitan process that aims to achieve national openness or even post-national states. Instead, Europeanization can be understood as relative when taking into account external closure in order to differentiate from processes of globalization. This point of view might enable to differentiate more between different networks of interaction. And on a level of experiences, cosmopolitanism and European sense of belonging still don’t need to exclude each other.

The ideas of Bourdieu and Deutsch, but also Gidden’s social action theory and Urry’s influential mobilities have been further developed by scholars that in parts have already been mentioned, like Fligstein, Favell, Mérand, Recchi, Kauppi, Mau, Mewes, Kuhn, Kohli etc. called “Sociology of the European Union.” Some may argue a Europeanized strand of sociology is emerging, also through journals like the “European Journal of Social Theory”. This thesis follows a shift of focus and will deal less with attitudes and focuses instead on experiences and practises, as it is important for the constitution of society not only what people believe but even more what people do and where/how people might get active. Therefore the interview guide focuses on the actual

33 Recchi, Mobile Europe, 3.
34 Ibid., 133.
35 Wolfgang Zank, Clash Or Cooperation of Civilizations?: Overlapping Integration and Identities (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2009).
37 Beck and Grande, Cosmopolitan Europe.
38 Favell and Guiraudon, Sociology of the European Union.
experiences during the workcamp and eventual prior transnational experiences in order to understand better how they see Europe and there are indicators for experiencing a European community.

2.2 Youth Participation and Volunteering in Europe

For the field of volunteering, the above mentioned efforts to strengthen European citizenship though promoting active participation and mobility have several consequences. Currently, the European Voluntary Service is not only continuously extended and developed, but also a broader concept of a European Solidarity Corps is being developed. The EU policy framework understands volunteering essentially as non-formal learning.\(^{39}\) Due to the emphasis on non-formal learning by the CoE and the EC in the field of youth and youth related programs, this concept is experiencing a revival which illustrates the on-going process of Europeanization in the field of youth policy.\(^{40}\) From EU’s point of view, one of the main aims of volunteering, especially aimed at with EVS, is to build a sense of European Citizenship among young people in Europe.\(^{41}\)

Generally speaking in the broader scheme of non-formal education, benefits are usually dealt with in policies and macro-sociological literature and address “democratization, minority empowerment and institutionalization of multi-facetted learning.”\(^{42}\) Non-formal education initiatives can be a way to “empower and embolden” rural communities and marginalized groups in society.\(^{43}\)

According to the European Commission, the outcomes for the volunteers could be most likely categorised in work experience and skills, personal development, intercultural

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\(^{39}\) “[…] educational activity carried on outside the formal system to provide selected types of learning to particular subgroups in the population, adults as well as children.” Albert Tuijnman and Ann-Kristin Boström, “Changing Notions of Lifelong Education and Lifelong Learning,” *International Review of Education* 48, no. 1–2 (March 1, 2002): 97, doi:10.1023/A:1015601909731.


\(^{42}\) Willems, “Individual Perceptions on the Participant and Societal Functionality of Non-Formal Education for Youth,” 12.

\(^{43}\) Ibid., 11.
competence and language skills, international knowledge and understanding, and civic and global engagement.\textsuperscript{44} Other research suggests volunteering is building society’s social capital, generalise trust, be beneficial of physical and mental health for the volunteers and be helpful for occupational achievement.\textsuperscript{45} Volunteering furthermore can enable people to bridge differences because of the focus on community strengthening.\textsuperscript{46}

For the dimension of youth policy and youth work in general, and for youth participation and volunteering as well, growing interest can be observed but still it remains a rather underexplored field, which also might be the case because of the non-streamlined nature of youth work among the member states or even municipalities and on top of that very different traditions when it comes to civil society and volunteering. However, decision makers in the EU try to promote the latter more and more, especially connected to exchange and mobility. It has been the goal of the EU from the beginning to foster youth exchanges: In the TFEU Article 165 (2) states “encouraging the development of youth exchanges and of exchanges of socio-educational instructors, and encouraging the participation of young people in democratic life in Europe.”\textsuperscript{47}

Certainly, voluntary service is still connected to elitism. “Studies on volunteerism in different countries show that volunteers in civic service programs tend to be more educated and of higher income than average.”\textsuperscript{48} Most certainly it is not equally spread though society and more accessible for those who are advantaged in some way. On the one hand regarding the accessibility of information and social networks for recruitment, on the other hand the required skills and on top of that the time and money.\textsuperscript{49} Jon Dean
comes to the conclusion that through the inner dynamics of the recruitment system for volunteers – at least in the UK, the differences in class based habitus regarding volunteering behaviour lead to further deepening the gap between ‘civic core’ of middle-class participants who have already incorporated the values and ethics of volunteering and the working-class youth who would need further assistance and guidance to attain such an understanding. However, it has been recognised through initiative pilot-projects like “EVS4All” that those opportunities to volunteer typically reach only high-educated, already politically-aware people. Despite to the fundamental discussion on what is the aim of such volunteering programs and what does the EU as a funding institution expect from it, it also has to be constantly renegotiated what it means to make it more inclusive. EVS4All focussed on socially-economically disadvantaged young people who come from countries with a lower developed civil society sector that Germany.

Engagement is essential to developing one’s sense of political efficacy and competence. However, there is no consensus for example as to whether volunteering actually does increase people's trust in others or in public institutions. Despite lower voter turnouts for young people, Assuming that social change is currently reshaping the forms of participation, especially ‘mainstream’ young people are characterised by being neither deeply apathetic about politics nor unconventionally engaged. Due to not feeling heard by politicians, young people might not participate so much in traditional ways but still show to have social and political concerns. Volunteering is potentially an alternative way to channel these concerns.

Several disciplines have researched the topic of volunteering from different perspectives and focussed on different aspects of it. Economists for example focus on the measurement of the economic value of volunteering for the organisations and for

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50 Dean, “Class Diversity and Youth Volunteering in the United Kingdom.”
52 Wilson and Musick, “The Effects of Volunteering on the Volunteer.”
societies. Psychologists study for example the motives that make people volunteer, linguists might study English as a lingua franca in international voluntary services, and communication studies might focus on intercultural communication, while from the educational perspective for example the aspect of youth development and the gain of skills and non-formal learning. The sociological perspective in contrast focuses on the social context and the interactions that might support or inhibit volunteering, for example the relation to social, cultural, human capital.

Previous studies point to the importance of workcamps as part of a valuable learning experience and a chance for personal development for young people with indeed long term influence on self- and world perception. Previous research indicates that particularly for young people who are volunteering across Europe, instead of being involved at their homes, seem to be less interested into the cause, and more into the


60 Thomas, Chang, and Abt, Erlebnisse, die verändern.
experience of traveling, of cultural diversity and the learning of skills. It would not surprise when also in workcamps volunteers concentrate their motives towards acquiring capital and certain consequences, as recent research suggests a trend of emphasis on reflexive and individualised forms that are closely connected to self-interest and less to ideals of altruism. Volunteers indeed make rational choices, have to see something they get out of it, volunteering is seen as instrumental for learning. Therefore, in the interview guide for this research special attention is given to the motivations behind the decision to participate in workcamps. In particular the German context, youth exchanges were especially encouraged after the war to start international relations again and to enable the post-war generation to contribute to the building of a peaceful (Western) Europe.

To summarize the theoretical perspective of this research, several ideas are relevant to keep in mind. This thesis builds on the fundamental idea that practises and experiences are essentially constructing Europe. This chapter shows that transnational practises are strongly connected to European sense of community as here people directly can experience advantages of Schengen and the freedom of mobility. Furthermore, this chapter addresses the paradigm of Europeanization and globalization being different and similar processes at the same time, especially in the cosmopolitan understanding of Europe. Moreover, the Europeanization of youth policies and frameworks on volunteering show a strong European dimension of volunteering in Europe. It can be assumed that volunteering is in a sense participation in society as an active citizen and therefore might strengthen the notion of European citizenship and democratic values in a transnational setting. Furthermore, volunteering also in short-term workcamps is essentially a learning experience.

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61 Musick and Wilson, *Volunteers*.
64 Pantea, “The Changing Nature of Volunteering and the Cross-Border Mobility,” 49.
3. Methodology

This chapter introduces and explains the methodological reflections that have guided this research. After introducing generally the method of semi-structured interviews, the set-up, and sampling of the interviews carried out in this research, this chapter will present the interviewed volunteers and explain the operationalization and method of analysis.

In order to delineate the process of how social practise might form what is understood as Europe and more specifically how the experience of workcamps might contribute to transnational socialization of young people in Europe, this study builds on the before mentioned social theory on European integration. I have conducted six qualitative interviews in May 2017 via Skype, and uses qualitative content analysis to answer the research question ‘how and to what extent do volunteers experience and perceive their participation in workcamps in the European context?’

Semi-structured interviews are seen as most suitable as it serves the purpose of “obtaining descriptions of the life world of the interviewee in order to interpret the meaning of the described phenomena,”65 in this case to profoundly get insights into what kind of experiences the volunteers make during the workcamps and explore similarities or differences in how they perceive civil engagement and the European community. This method allows some flexibility for follow up questions is allowed to adopt on whatever angles seem important to the interviewee. This openness would be only under great difficulties able to be transformed into a survey. Nevertheless, certain questions are asked to every participant, in order to allow a comparison between the answers.

The interviews are carried out by video-calls via Skype, as the volunteers come from all over Europe. Some researchers argue that online-interviews make it difficult to establish a relationship between the interviewer and respondent. However, other researchers argue for the relative anonymity and the lack of shared social network which might make interviewees respond more open to potentially difficult questions. Furthermore it significantly increases the availability and access to interviewees. The interviews last

around 60 minutes and were guided by open-ended questions, the guide can be found in Annex Two.

The interviewees were selected by purpose sampling and snowball sampling. Obviously the prior participation in at least one workcamp was mandatory. Furthermore, the workcamp had to be less than a year ago to assure the presence of the memory in the mind of the interviewees and to get close to their “life-experience.” The sample includes both first-time volunteers and people with more experience than of only one workcamp. This allows the interviews to explore the more consolidated views on their experiences. The size of the sample is relatively small, but qualitative research with open-ended questions cannot and does not aim to be representative. Therefore it is common to rather focus on a smaller sample.

I chose to focus on workcamps organised by ijgd e.V. as I have a personal connection to this organisation after leading two workcamps myself and their broad offers. Of course, there are also other organisations in Germany and in Europe who offer workcamps. Due to data protection, the volunteers could only be reached via mail. The response rate was among 14 reactions with not everyone fulfilling the minimum requirements, so additionally snowball method was used to reach other participants through the interviewees. Furthermore it was made very clear from the beginning that the participation in the interviews are voluntary, that the research would be used only for academic purposes and the anonymity of the interviewees was kept.

The interviews were conducted in English. That could be generally a limitation as none of the interviewees is a native speaker and might have difficulties to express more complex feelings and opinions. However, the general ability to speak English is a precondition also for participating in workcamps as the working language in international workcamps is English, therefore it should not be too much of a restriction.

At the time of the interview, the volunteers were between 16 and 25 years old, came from different European countries but have all participated in (at least) one workcamp organised by ijgd in the last year, preferably less than a month ago.

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66 “Internationale Jugendgemeinschaftsdienste e.V.” (International Youth Services - ijgd) who is one of the biggest organisation doing workcamps in Germany.
Since ijgd is a German organisation, three of the volunteers are German citizen and also live in Germany. The other volunteers live in in Serbia, Finland, and Greece. All of them indicate citizenship of the residing country both for themselves and their parents. It is therefore likely that the volunteers have been socialised in the corresponding national contexts. Furthermore, four of the volunteers live in cities where formalised forms of volunteering tend to be more divers and maybe visible, the two others in rather small towns in rural areas. One of them is male, the others female. Usually workcamps tend to show an imbalance in gender, with a majority of female participants. Three of them go to high school; one of the interviewees has finished her A-levels in high school and waits for her vocational training to start; one of the interviewees has finished her Bachelor studies and is does not have work at the moment; and one of the interviewees works as a primary education teacher. The level of education shows a known tendency of a higher representation of higher educated participants in the voluntary sector in general. However, exact data whether efforts to counter this tendency have been successful is not available.

All of the interviewees searched for information about international volunteering opportunities online. Only one mentioned a brother helping to apply, the other interviewees did not mention anyone helping them, rather the lack of any peer with experience in workcamps who could have given advice. Intriguingly, besides the people they got to know during their volunteering, the interviewees indicate that they are the only ones among their friends who volunteer. This already indicates a significant problem with peer-to-peer learning which has shown to be quite successful, however its reach is rather limited.

The involvement with volunteering in general and with workcamps in particular varies between just having ended the first workcamp and first volunteering experience to having done several workcamps and projects like EVS before.

Prior research indicates that even short-term exchanges and volunteering can leave deep impacts, although it being difficult to confirm this statement due to the recentness of the experiences, however not only that generally workcamps are perceived as a very positive experience, also all of the interviewees indicated a wish to participate in a workcamp again, some of them already know when and where. Furthermore, they indicate several competences they have learned or strengthened during the process. Not only the interviewees express that due to the participation in the workcamp they feel
more secure in their use of English, but also regarding their independence and confidence.

Regarding the operationalization, the interview questions aimed to shed light on three aspects, which were the prior transnational experience, the experience during the workcamp, and the perceptions of the European Union. Based on insights from Tajfel et al.\textsuperscript{67} for youth exchanges that are based on value led and educationally led goals and objectives. Consequently, it should be clear that it is not enough study a certain program instead on background and the experiences of the participants.

The interview guide starts with rather typical basic demographic questions. Following questions deal with prior transnational experience, as such an experience could already indicate an existing familiarity with aspects of transnational practises and references to European mobility programs, as Kuhn found out a higher affinity towards European sense of belonging and pro-European attitudes by people who gained transnational experiences before.\textsuperscript{68} Further questions access prior volunteering experiences, as it might make a difference in perception whether or not this workcamp was a) the first time volunteering ever, or b) the first workcamp ever, or c) one other experience after already lots of different experiences.

The most important part of this research obviously is the case of workcamp experiences. Therefore, a lot of questions were directed to different aspects that might influence the experience of volunteers at workcamps, with special focus on the experiences between the volunteers as a group and their interactions while living and working together. The reasons behind the decision to participate and accordingly expectations about participating are addressed to, since motivation can influence learning experiences significantly. Additionally, a section addressed workcamps as a learning experience, taking into account general insights about skill orientation of volunteers and the promotion of non-formal education of the European Union. The last section of the guide asked more general questions regarding volunteering and the European Union to give the interviewees a chance to evaluate their experiences at the workcamp in the sense of broadening their view on complex issues and getting active to participate more. Furthermore, it gave the opportunity to address the perception of the volunteers about


\textsuperscript{68}Kuhn, \textit{Experiencing European Integration}.  

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the EU as such; so to say to what extent do the interviewees consider the EU as an important part of their everyday lives and/or their experience at the workcamp in order to gain insights into European social integration. The interview guide can be found in Annex Two.

The interviews are recorded and for the analysis coded following the qualitative content analysis approach. The analysis is focussed on identifying pattern, themes, and categories, starting with open, thematically coding and alongside upcoming common themes are submerged into categories. The categories respond to the mentioned sub-questions that guided the interview and focus on reasons for the volunteers to get involved, what kind of experiences they made, and how they perceive Europe. Additionally personal background information for example about the prior transnational experience and prior volunteering is taken into account as well.

To summarize, this thesis builds on six semi-structured interviews with workcamp volunteers via Skype, guided essentially by the operationalized idea of transnational volunteering as a potential socialisation practise that might contribute to a Europeanization of experience and uses qualitative content analysis to find an answer to the question how and to what extent do volunteers experience and perceive their participation in workcamps in the European context?

4. Analysis

After the methodological decisions discussed in the previous chapter, the following chapter presents and analyses the results of the interviews to gain insight into the experience of participating in workcamps and possible connections between participation, mobility and a European social integration. This chapter aims to let the voices of the volunteers be heard. It offers background information about the setting of the experience at a workcamp and summarises once more the European dimension in general. Then it will present the findings from the conducted interviews. The order follows the above mentioned sub-questions by presenting firstly the findings about the reasons to get involved and which expectations the interviewees have. As mentioned before, this is a relevant aspect of their perception of volunteering in general and workcamps in particular as it sets the frame of the experience on-site. Secondly, the experiences during the workcamp are presented aiming to get a close-up picture of the actual experience on-site, and thirdly the experiences and perceptions of Europe, aiming to investigate into possible referrals to processes of Europeanization, understood as European social integration. This analysis presents the answers of the interviewees, the discussion goes further into what this could mean, in order to answer the following research question: how and to what extent do volunteers experience and perceive their participation in workcamps in the European context?

The aspect of youth mobility has a strong a European context as mentioned before. The European dimension of transnational volunteering in particular becomes visible in the already mentioned recent announcement for the European Solidarity Corps and established programs like Erasmus +, the European Voluntary Service (EVS), but also short-term programs like workcamps that get actively promoted and information services like the Eurodesk provide access in all the respective language. The Eurodesk informs about all these options to go abroad - distancing them from ‘voluntourism’, the commercialised version of volunteering abroad that often lacks pedagogical support.\textsuperscript{70} At the point of this thesis it is too early to estimate what the European Solidarity Corps will be really about. The European Voluntary Service however is already an established

\textsuperscript{70} Which can be seen for example on the website of Eurodesk \url{https://eurodesk.eu/} or the German example which has a different url but still is run by Eurodesk \url{https://www.rausvonzuhaus.de} (last accessed 28.05.2017).
working programme for young people focusing on non-formal, intercultural learning, in that account not too different from workcamps but lasting longer. The EVS is based on organisations’ partnership and full-time long-term volunteers that work in a “clearly defined role” and get their learning recognised through the ‘Youthpass.’ Workcamps differ from the concept especially due to different focus and duration, but still follow similar aims.

As mentioned before, the age of participants in workcamps ranges usually between 18 to 25 or 30. At ijdg workcamps also minors can participate, so the age range already starts at 16. Some workcamps are also specifically aimed at teenagers, so there participants aged 14 to 18 can participate. However, the interviewees in this research all participated in ‘regular’ workcamps. Workcamps usually last between 2 to 4 weeks and are mostly organised during the summer, from Easter onwards. Naturally the work is the main part of the daily structure of a workcamp as in the weekdays usually the participants work around 5 hours daily. The local project partner provides accommodation and the group organises food and free-time activities from a varying budget. On the one hand, the everyday experience is structured through the work, but on the other hand, the free time is self-organised, therefore not structured at all. Furthermore, the Teamer, who are usually two people in a similar age, do not have a typical leader position. Instead they are responsible for communication between the project partners and organisational tasks.

Like mentioned before, the research on workcamps from a pedagogical perspective focuses on personal development. In connection to possibilities of transnational socialisation and social practises of Europeanization, the main findings of prior research should be kept in mind: an increase of interpersonal skills, intercultural competences with people from different cultural contexts, openness towards others. In the following, this research indicated similar tendencies. Prior research has shown that these effects on personality tend to be stable over time. The majority of participants tend to show a differentiating view towards other cultures and towards their own culture. A conceptual problematic that should be not forgotten is the still very common reference towards elements of (national) culture, even though generally the basic concept of intercultural exchange is exactly this mentioned openness and tolerance.

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71 Pantea, “The Changing Nature of Volunteering and the Cross-Border Mobility.”
towards others, but it often fails to move beyond treating national cultures as the relevant frame of reference when negotiating differences.\(^73\) This research could not completely avoid referring towards national cultures as these are still naturally perceived as the everyday understanding of ‘culture’ by the participants.

The everyday experiences mentioned by the interviewees during the workcamps draw a relatively similar picture of the general structure in the different workcamps and are sometimes even noticed to be ‘typical’. Generally, the workdays are organised quite similarly: Getting up early, eating breakfast, having more or less struggles to be ready on time for work, working, eating lunch, working again, having some free time, eat dinner, and hang out together, maybe playing some games, going to sleep, repeat.

4.1 Reasons to get involved and expectations

This section presents the frame in which the interviewees experience their participation at the workcamp. It aims to offer an in depth insight into which kind of motivations are important to the interviewees and which kind of expectations they indicate prior their first workcamp-experience.

These might already indicate connections towards broader topics and links that are relevant for them. That being said, it should be taken into account that all the interviewees express generally positively towards their experience and might therefore paint a one-sided picture. The interviewees still express several reasons that motivate them to participate. Most of the reasons why to volunteer at a workcamp are unsurprisingly twofold: there are indicated reasons directed at benefits for themselves and then other reasons directed towards others.

Needless to say, especially considering that generally none of the interviewees reject the idea of participating in a workcamp again, the general ideas associated with reasons to get involved and expectations towards the experience and its possible influence on the participants lives and on others are very positively connotated. Regardless, the decision to participate in a workcamp seems generally to be rather spontaneous and not particularly deliberate. Person A 30.57 “it sounded great to live there and to work there.”

indicates the assumed low-barrier to get involved with workcamps – of course after overcoming the first barrier of learning about the existence of workcamps and having the resources to participate.

One the one hand, every one of the interviewees expresses the importance of workcamps as an opportunity to go abroad and (rather affordable) travel and to meet new people from other countries. Furthermore several aspects of possible personal development are mentioned. It might also be beneficial for the CV, be helpful to improve language skills, and might be a chance to make new friends. Although a visit in the future might be unlikely most of them stay in more or less regular contact through social media. Although the sample size of this research is not representative, these findings indicate similar tendencies like aforementioned prior findings.

On the other hand, the interviewees also express a not further defined motive to do something good for others, too. Some of the interviewees experience their impact for the local community as a very important support for the particular project. Not everyone but some of the interviewees demonstrate also a deeper interest in the specific kind of workcamp, in these cases that refers to the theme of environmental protection: Person C: 11.50 “for me environmental values are really important.” Person A said it even stronger that she thinks: 20.25 “we are responsible for the environment and for the world in which we live and I don’t want that the next generations have to live in a world that is bad because we now don’t treat the environment so good.” Even through the specific theme might not play a role for every participant the same intensity - some of the interviewees see a bigger picture why this volunteering has potential to be something worth to support with time and other resources beyond self-interest. With the perspective of the experience of volunteering at a workcamp to potentially contribute to a Europeanization of their imagined community and building of social ties among people from different backgrounds this category shows significant reference points.

Another reason why Person A thinks workcamps and cultural exchange in general are important is the thought of forming friendships and therefore reducing prejudices by giving nationalities a face.

Person A 21.24: “I think this is important especially in the moment because of the situation in Europe which is a bit difficult and I think if we get to know people from another country then we can reduce prejudices.”
For her therefore, the rather personal motive to meet new people and maybe find friends is connected to a broader context of international understanding and tolerance, which is indeed mentioned as an aim for the organising institutions.

Connected to this, Person A and C mention the personality trait or attitude of open-mindedness which might either be a precondition to apply for participation at a workcamp or even actively search for opportunities to volunteer abroad and a need during the camp for a well-working, harmonious group, but also a possible result of the whole experience of participating in a workcamp. These two interviewees demonstrate awareness that for considering participation in a workcamp potential volunteers need to have some kind of open-minded attitude. Furthermore, both also see workcamps as an opportunity to become even more open-minded and tolerant. Taking into account that the initial idea of organising workcamps is very much originating from similar ideas, it is remarkable that Person C even says: 18.40 “It makes people to accept each other’s values and believes better. Building up the peace – world peace if you can say that [laughs] - just becoming more open-minded.” Now, this view might be overly excited but shows further a idealistic perspective on the possible impact on participants that such an experience might have. Considering the rather low-barrier of access and proportionate diversity of participants, this indicates that – among other motivations – the general idea of workcamps as a place of transnational practises, international understanding, and peaceful togetherness is at least for some of the participants a relevant context of their volunteering.

Another interviewee expresses a different approach to participating in workcamps regarding broader impacts, maybe less idealistic and more pragmatic: Person D: 42.15 “I can’t change anything in my time there.” Without going into the discussion on how difficult it is to evaluate possible impacts of workcamps beyond the actual projects that the volunteers are contributing to, the interviewees show different perceptions on how they evaluate the significance of their work and their experience, which will be seen even more in the following section. Obviously, even in a small sample like the one of this research perspectives are multiple.

Coming back to rather self-concentrated aspects, as mentioned above the theme of travelling is generally important to all of the interviewees as something the interviewees
like to do and something that is an important reason of participation. The desire to travel abroad appears to be in fact one of the strongest reasons mentioned by all the interviewees, even by the one that did not travel herself to another country but participated in a workcamp in her home country. However, at the same time the interviewees distance themselves from ‘ordinary’ tourists.

Person A.: 1.08.35”if i go there for holiday i go there for example with my family, I will do something with them, I will speak German, and I will just go to the country as a tourist. And if I go to another country to do a workcamp, I work there and I get to know inhabitants of that country, I will get to know the culture and I think that’s different than if I would just go there as a tourist.”

Person C: 21.45 “Before I just went travelling with my family like as a tourist and I think that’s a totally different experience because you don’t have a real connection to the people to their culture, you are just using their services. But in workcamps it’s more real contact with the local people and also with the group. That’s what I really like about them.”

Taking into account the problematic of growing ‘voluntourism’ from the perspective of volunteering organisations, this might indicate that workcamps risk to be understood as such, in the sense of “alternative” tourism while diminishing potential impact on the local and global causes for volunteering projects. However, regarding the experience of Europeanization this motive might be less relevant. The social ties that are formed are probably not impacted by what kind of motivation made the volunteers go and participate in a workcamp. Criticism of a disparity between values and aims of organisations to potentially the participants might be more related to issues of identity and cultural values that the practises and experiences that this thesis is looking at.

At the same time, the aspect of travel might still be different to the criticised ‘voluntourism’ as the expressed difference of participating at workcamps to ‘regular’ tourism or travel is for the interviewees essentially on the one hand the experience in the group which will be addressed in greater detail in the next section and on the other hand the idea to help and have contact with the local community.

Person B 19.02 “I also think it is useful for the local community a bit who we are helping.”
Person C: 14.41 “I felt like it was really important, also to give something to the local community.”

So even if the cause of the workcamp is not the only motivation or reason to get involved into workcamps, it still has relevance to their decision and to their experience on-site.

Previous research has shown that compared to local volunteers, young people who get involved in cross-European volunteering seem to be less interested in the cause for volunteering but in the experience of travel, cultural diversity, and learning of skills. This effect has been called ‘learning by leaving.’ In this study these motivations are undeniable there and very strong, but considering the short opportunity to actually get involved with the cause during the workcamp it can be seen as remarkable that some of the interviewees mention the significance of environmental values, tolerance and open-mindedness, aims of transnational understanding and the relation with the local community on-site. One of the interviewees even explicitly wished in retrospect for more contact with the locals during the workcamp.

This section shows the importance of travel and mobility in the motives why the interviewees participated and even actively searched for opportunities. Furthermore, the interviewees expressed both the expectation for personal benefits and considerations that address benefits for others, a diffuse wish to contribute to society or improve the environment and concrete expectations to improve the local community with the project of the workcamp.

4.2 The experience

As elaborated on in chapter 2 on the theoretical framework, this thesis aims to essentially focus on social practises that potentially construct meanings of Europe through interactions between people rather than top-down approaches that look at for

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75 Musick and Wilson, *Volunteers*.
example institutions and laws and their implications on identities or so. Therefore a main part of the interviews are concerned to find out more about the experiences the interviewees made during the workcamps. This section essentially presents the findings and focuses already on implications concerning transnational practises, implications of the aforementioned motivations and notions that are indirectly connected to the third section about implicit and explicit meanings of Europe and Europeanization.

As mentioned before, generally the experience at the workcamps is predominantly seen as very positive, the interviewees indicate that they are likely to do again and recommend the participation in workcamps to friends. However, it should be noted that the interviewees did not express general criticism and showed to be reluctant to speak about conflicts. The picture that is painted through their narratives might therefore be a biased one. A very enthusiastic example to illustrate this is the expressed position to the general experience by Person F: 2.15 “It is a great experience. For me, the workcamp was the best time of my life.” This emphasises the significance of this experience has to the interviewee. She even reports difficulties to ‘reintegrate’ into her everyday life and missing the other participants. This again demonstrates how essential the other participants are in the whole experience of the workcamp. Through the intensity and closeness that emerges during the process of the camp, at least most of the interviewees seem to develop deep bonds within a short amount of time, which might not be an everyday life experience especially not of a teenage girl in high school.

The theme of mobility and travel definitely plays an important role not only for the motivation of the interviewees to participate but also is a significant part of the experience of participating in a workcamp. Given the age of the participants it might not be too surprising, but still remarkable that among four of the interviewees the workcamp is the first time for the interviewees to travel abroad on their own. In their experience the workcamp this acts as a key realisation of it becoming significantly easier to overcome worries about going outside of their comfort zone:

Person B: 15.00 “I had worries about travelling alone, because it was my first time travelling alone.”
Person D: 37.48 “I was very scared because it was my first travel alone and ..yea I don’t was very scared about being in a camp, I was more scared about being alone in a plane or being alone in a other country.”
Person E: 35.40 “…and it was also my first trip abroad, so I haven’t travelled before that a lot, so now I am not scared even to travel alone.”

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Person C 13.35 “Of course, I was also nervous and little bit scared about travelling alone, but as soon as I got in and met there people then I felt like really comfortable and wasn’t nervous about anything anymore.”

Considering this experience in regard to personal growth, this first key experience might empower them essentially to travel and explore more. This experience holds future potential towards growing confidence towards transnational settings and consequently potentially increases their willingness to get engaged in broader context than their local surroundings.

One of the interviewees that also has experience of other long-term (in this case 3 months) volunteering opportunities seems to prefer the experience of workcamps compared to the longer lasting projects:

Person C 5.12 “And also I think workcamps is easier than long-term volunteering because it’s only 2 weeks so we can really enjoy them all the time but when it gets two months or three months you’re at some point it’s already starts to feel like normal life so there all the excitement is gone. In workcamps it’s just two weeks so you keep up the energy.”

Even though she is not the only one having long-term volunteering experiences, she is the only interviewee that draws a direct comparison between the different types of voluntary services. Indeed, the mentioned energy level could offer an explanation for the aforementioned enthusiasm of the interviewees concerning their general narrative of workcamps. Otherwise, the intensity of the situation also seems to influence her perception of time:

Person C: 4.28 “I feel like in workcamps you really live like in the moment, you don’t really think about the past or the future. It’s just so intense. You are just so focussed on the everyday live, ‘cause it’s so different from what you are used to. I mean it’s challenging but also really rewarding.”

Therefore, this experience seems to be not only due to its location but also through its intensity clearly distanced from the everyday live. The workcamp experience seems to be having a distinct frame that puts the volunteers outside their ‘normal’ lives– while it still echoes in the lives of the interviewees afterwards.

Topics that are indicated to be important for the interviewees are certainly the group process, the demand of the work, the communication, sometimes the location of the
workcamp. A central characteristic of the experience in a workcamp is essentially the very close and intense group contact. Here, the majority of non-formal learning and competence building is taking place. Additionally, this aspect of the whole experience not only has a major influence on the general impression of the workcamp – the better the group feeling, the better is the workcamp perceived - but also has been indicated to be - next to travel – a major aspect about why the volunteers participate and what they like about workcamps. Only one of the interviewee did not perceive a distinctive closeness with the group in her workcamp, she explains it with the size of her workcamp group. During the camp she was friends with some of the participants, but did not learn all the names and doesn’t think she will visit the only other participant she remained in contact with. However, she still also wants to participate again and indicates to not only liking the experience but also finding relevance in the personal contact she made during the camp with some of the other participants. Nevertheless, the enthusiasm of the others is way stronger when it comes to the experience to get to know and get close to the other participants in the workcamps:

Person B: 15.00 “But it is very nice, you’re bonding together even doing the work I think because we were always together … and we were all sleeping in one room.”

The working and living experience seems to go hand in hand with further intensifying the contact. The interviewees are of course aware that the experience is in no sense ordinary and describe the time before the real bonding as strange and uncomfortable which indicates that they are truly going out of their comfort zone and also the ones with more experience still feel like it’s different every time, but all the more is the moment when the participants realise they have become a group.

Person C 16.35 “it [being in a group] is the most important when going to a workcamp you really get so close with others. Even the first days maybe you feel a bit like uncomfortable maybe like because you’re in a strange place with strange people you have never met before but then it just gets really quickly like really close group and I think it’s the reason that we are living together, eating together, working together, like, every time together. … ja … and it’s really nice.”

Especially the interviewees with prior workcamp experience seem to expect to repeat this closeness and look forward for this process to happen. Nevertheless, it is also evident that the aspect of living in a group in a short but very intense period is not necessarily easy. One of the interviewees indicates possible problems with the lack of privacy and place of retreat.
Person C 5.54 “Well I guess living in the group is a challenge because you have to think about all the others all the time. And you don’t have much privacy, not much time or space just... just for yourself.”

In a predominantly individualised culture like in Europe, this might set the frame to maybe being forced to learn to deal with the differences among the participants as no one can really escape this situation. After overcoming the difficulties of being together with stranger in such small and intense setting, the sense of community resulting might become even closer.

When asked about what kind of role the different origins and nationalities played, two interviewees indicated that in their experience it did not play a role. However, the intercultural contact was mentioned several times and especially in relation to food it seems to be very present and possible also the easiest to pin-point. Another interviewee expresses that the country of origin was just an indirect, but not relevant part of the other participants’ background.

Person C: 29.00 “There [during the camp in GER] we weren’t thinking much about where someone comes from like of course you can tell from how they speak and all that but I guess in there it was more like being there as a person.”

Some of the interviewees more than others seem to distance themselves from rejecting groups of people based on other nationalities or cultures, and emphasise the personal dimension of the contact with the other participants.

Indeed, language is a reoccurring theme in the experience of workcamps, also because especially the speaking of it is both a worry before the participation and a reason to get involved. English as the potential lingua franca in workcamps also is part of the whole experience:

Person D 30.15: “I felt taking English is easier for me because I know someone will understand me. This was one point I was scared before the workcamp and now ...”

Again, for her this experience was a key to feel empowered by stepping outside their comfort zone and actually reducing worries of for example traveling alone or speaking English or being in a different country than the home country which might encourage the
interviewee to seek for further transnational experiences and contacts. Due to the participants mostly being still young and in an important phase of development towards adulthood, the workcamp might be experienced as a meaningful learning experience.77

Person B: 8.36 “It is positive learning to be more independent. To learn to live for yourself a little bit more also it is very nice to meet new people. From other countries. To learn about differences between people. And to learn how to live with other people who are very different from you.”

She demonstrates general openness and curiosity to meet and get to know people who come from different backgrounds, but even more perceives this experience as one of personal growth. Moreover, this seems to be an essential experience that according to prior research has long-term effects.78

Given the closeness and intensity of the experience during the time, it was difficult for the interviewees to recall concrete occasions and themes of discussions and conversations. Future research might consider participants observations or focus groups to investigate further. Nevertheless, generally all the participants express the experience of talking about almost “everything” with the other participants which again relates back to the experienced closeness of the group. Mentioned topics range from practicalities like what they have to do at work to cultural diversity like how and what to cook or what kind of languages they speak to personal topics like relationships at home or future plans. Interestingly one of the interviewee mentioned slight disappointment about a lack of deeper conversations:

Person C 1.52 “I felt like it [conversation topics] was mostly about everyday things. Maybe because we were working most of the day and in the evenings we were just tired. So maybe we didn’t have as much deep conversation then I would have hoped. But - .. yeah, lots of joking, laughing together but also sometimes with some people about serious conversations

At least for her, there was apparently a stronger wish to get to have even deeper conversations and connections with the other participants. Nevertheless, with all the differences, the camp seems to be a place of finding similarities and common identity as

77 Hamilton and Fenzel, “The Impact of Volunteer Experience on Adolescent Social Development”; Thomas, Chang, and Abt, Erlebnisse, die verändern.
78 Chang, Veränderungen von Selbstdentifier im Kontext der Teilnahme an internationalen Workcamps; Thomas, Chang, and Abt, Erlebnisse, die verändern.
workcampers - at least during the camp: Person D: 46.48 “It was one big group. I don’t was part of Europe or Germany. I was part of my group.” She rejects the idea that cultural differences played an essential role during the workcamp. Additionally, here it shows quite obviously that the automatic reference point to where differences lie is framed either as ‘European’ or ‘German’, so national ideas rather than for example gender or age.

The intensive contact in the group sometimes leads to conflicts that are ascribed to the different personalities in the style of “there was this one girl…” and mostly rooted in communication problems for example because of language barriers. The interviewees emphasise their general tolerance and acceptance for people with different believes or personalities.

Person D: 51.24 “anyone has a different view and everyone should have their own view and I don’t have to judge everything I think it’s okay if you can explain why you are .. why this is your view and if this makes sense for you it’s okay.”

Another interviewee expresses similar views - given the precondition that they do not try to convince others too much:

Person B 10.30 “I think – if I don’t believe in something that they believe I don’t care if they don’t annoy me with it.”

These two interviewees demonstrates tolerance but restricts it to the privacy of everyone’s’ thoughts and believes. Everyone should do his or her thing, but don’t try to influence or bother others.

Considering how the interviewees value the experience of participating in a workcamp, it gives insights to look at what kind of impact the interviewees expect it to have on their future lives.

Person A 35.00 “I think it will affect my future, because I will make new experience, I will be more independent, I will get to know new people and maybe find friends from different countries, and I will get to know the work in mountains and how it is like to work there and do this work”
Again, one of the interviewees mentions the aspect of personal growth and development and immediately connects it to meeting new people, potentially forming friendships, and getting to know different kinds of work.

Another aspect is the strengthened capital though the intercultural contact, framed in the context of open-mindedness:

Person B: 31.30 “Well maybe it made me more open for foreign cultures and foreign places and for studying abroad. And it made me maybe open my sights a bit more to other places. And for other places.”
Person C: 14.45 “I’ve changed as a person but also confidence and become more sociable. Now I feel like the world is open for me basically.”
Person F 32.15 “I think now I have more and more the wish to go abroad after my school and to learn something new; and also to see the world and be more independent of my parents.”

Of course, the scope of this research does not allow checking after some time to what extent these intentions are actually adopted in practise, but since prior research is suggesting the likelihood of these intentions to be realised in the future, the workcamp experience indeed works as an encouraging factor to dare and go abroad.

Other research indicates that the experience is likely to show long-term influence on learning processes. Due to transformations in structural meanings, the participants may develop a more differentiated and integrated worldview through their experience in exchanges.\(^{79}\) The repetition of participation in workcamps or even in other, longer volunteering projects and the throughout positive evaluation of their experience shows that workcamps may contribute to personal development that enables to have a differentiating and open view to oneself and the world. One a more pragmatic note, more people should volunteer Person B: 2.57 “Because it is more useful than sitting around.”

To draw it into a nutshell, the experience of participating at a workcamp essentially empowers the interviewees to feel confident about their language and communication skills, their intercultural competences and social capital. Some of the interviewees already assume this to have some kind of impact on their live considering future mobility plans or general personal growth and openness towards others. Surely, for the

\(^{79}\) Thomas, Chang, and Abt, *Erlebnisse, die verändern*, 266.
interviewees this experience is more than just “nice to have,” but they see personal growth, the acquisition of social and cultural capital through finding friends and learning how to live in such a diverse group of strangers. The community building within the group and the experienced closeness, the cross- and transnational contact, and the aspect of first travel alone seem to be the most significant aspects of the experience.

4.3 European experiences and imaginaries

This section draws the connection between the particular experiences of the workcamp to the context of European experiences and imaginaries. It again presents and comments the different categories emerging from the interviews to give insight into the European context of the experiences of the interviews and possible connections to broader ideas and imaginaries. This is relevant to put the experiences of the workcamp into perspective and further to investigate into the possibility of European social integration. Even if the volunteers made the experience during the workcamp that there are other young people interested in travel, intercultural contact, and volunteering the interviewees do not experience this in their daily life. On the one hand, efforts for example of the European Union to strengthen volunteering do not seem to be perceivable in the surroundings of the interviewees; instead they state that volunteering is seen as either “something strange” or just not very popular. Person D 4.30 stated: “I think it’s [volunteering] not very popular”; Person E 5.50 “They [volunteering projects] are not that popular in Greece.” Despite prior mentioned possibility for volunteering experience to be beneficial for the CV and therefore an awareness for this to be generally possible to get recognition for it. Despite indicating this awareness, some of the interviewees are confronted with the dilemma of not receiving any recognition in their peer group and maybe even society of their home country. Except for the people the interviewees met during volunteering, they indicate to not have any other friends who volunteer. Within the circle of volunteers however, the Europeanization of volunteering opportunities is recognisable, as two of them have experiences with European Voluntary Service and also the others seem to at least have heard of the possibilities – it might just not fit in their lives at the moment which might make it less relevant for them.

Person D 39.55 “Let’s say, I like the idea of the chances that we have as European citizens, to do all this kinds of projects [workcamps, Erasmus+, EVS] so I really
like that the European Union gave me the opportunity to do all these kind of projects like my EVS.”

Probably this is a specific vision of the EU from the volunteering point of view, but here it seems obvious for her that the EU is essentially responsible for enabling her to go and do this volunteering.

As mentioned before, Europe in general is unsurprisingly predominantly understood and experienced in its core as the possibility for mobility through the fundamental freedom of mobility and the consequences of the Schengen agreement on travelling and the absence passport controls or visa.

Person A 1.7.49 “I think it’s good because then I can go to a different country and I can visit for example a neighbouring country without showing my passport. I think it’s easier and I think it can also be quicker if I don’t have to do that.”

Although she is not mentioning it, indirectly she refers here again to the main point of the EU making freedom of mobility possible. It is not entirely clear though how far the reference goes. Anyhow, the interviewee recognises and appreciates this right and is directly experiencing the advantage of having this right.

Besides the rather explicit aspect of travel, the further experiences and perceptions of Europe are more ambiguous. On the one hand Europe is experienced as a continent with cultural differences, but on the other hand a reoccurring theme is “making it easier”.

Person C 26.54 “I mean it is easy to travel and I really like the opportunities that we have like EVS and Erasmus like studying abroad, and… that money, the Euro, anything that just makes it easier to work, study, travel around Europe.”

As demonstrated above, in the sense of Europe as EU, the interviewees indicate Europe therefore as connected to opportunities of travel, exchange, and volunteering like the freedom of movement or more concretely the European Voluntary Service. When asked about the EU more explicitly, the main associations are depicting the EU as something that is having major problems which again speaks for a general awareness of current challenges in the mind of the interviewees and possibly also in their daily life experiences.
Person A.: 1.00.00 “I think the democracy in Europe in general is still there but it has some problems, it has to hold out against pressure - that many people elect parties that are extremely right wing.”

Of the interviewees of this research, only one interviewee brings in the aspect of economy next to cultural diversity into his perception of Europe.

Person B 22.15 “Europe is a cultural divided continent, in my opinion, because it is really heterogeneous. And it is full of a lot of countries a lot of cultures a lot of – more diverse than almost any other continent but it is also strong and economically powerful.”

In his perception and potentially also his experience the cultural diversity in Europe is not necessarily an automatically good or enriching but rather a given that is not questioned and that rather divides Europe. Although, since the interviewees also experience the workcamps as an occasion to learn exactly this, to live with many different cultures, these cultural heterogeneity does not necessarily means there is a problem. Immediately he connects it with the association of economic power. Another interviewee also addresses the issue of power in an indirect way. The interviewees expresses a critical view of parts of the European Union politics in her home country, after emphasising that she appreciates the opportunities the EU gives her through EVS:

Person E 46.22 “I don’t think that every country has the same right of speech in Europe nowadays. So there are some countries that have more powers than others and they decide. It was always like that! It wasn’t just now that we call it European Union.”

Considering the dominance the European Union seems to have nowadays such a dominance about how Europe is defined, it is interesting that generally the political dimension Europe or the European Union is not mentioned a lot. The interviewees rather avoid the topic of politics. One of the interviewees was very reluctant to speak about Europe. It turned out not to be because of maybe a lack of knowledge or fear of wrong answer but rather having nothing original to contribute: Person F 36.20: “I think all the answers we had to that question they were all so obvious. For example the Euro, or to travel through our countries, … ja” She expresses an internalised understanding of Europe that relates to her knowledge about Europe being framed through teaching about the EU in school. By stating the obviousness of possible aspects like mobility or
currency the interviewee seems to have not only a very specific picture of Europe in her mind, but also does not connect it to her experience of volunteering at all.

A typical question that supposed to indicate the Europeanization of identities is the sense of belonging. Five of the interviewees indeed indicate to feel both, their national identity and the European.

Person C: 28.57 “I would say I’m a Fin but also European.”
Person B: 30.25 “Well I like my country and I am a little patriotic in that kind of sense but not nationalistic or a chauvinist. I don’t hate any other person.”
Person E: 47.46 I don’t feel more European, I feel more Greek, I will always feel more Greek – but as I said in the larger scale in Europe I see my country on the map as well in a larger scale.

The interviewees emphasise their national identity but don’t exclude a European one. Considering prior research that has shown the connection of transnational practises and European social integration, this might be a factor here too.

The extent to what the interviewees indicate a sense of belonging to Europe - besides them stating their Europeaness - depends also on the definition of what being European is about. Maybe a bit euphoric, Rumford states “becoming European is also about being open to the world,”80 however, the interviewees seem to agree with this rather cosmopolitan worldview. The latter gets mentioned by some of the interviewees.

Person B 28.40 “In my opinion it isn’t important if you are German if you’re an Englishman if you’re Serbian if you’re Russian if you are Chinese or whatever; it isn’t important. It is important what kind of a person you are.”

Person E: 41.58 “It is true that we [Europeans] have common values but I wouldn’t say that only in Europe. Us as people, as citizen of the world, let’s say we all have common values: about equality, and about something that we should promote, about freedom, quality of … at work, between females and males, freedom of movement, and the right to speak the right to be free.”

Interestingly, prior research found out that volunteers who have cosmopolitan views tend to volunteer more likely internationally that locally. Lough and McBrige explain

that with a “higher sense of efficacy that participation in national spaces may affect global change.”\textsuperscript{81}

Speaking about values which could be seen as common for Europeans and therefore offer more insight on the perceptions on Europe, the interviewees associate broader ideas like freedom, democracy, travel and mobility, division of powers, freedom of speech and equality with Europe. One interviewee also mentioned open borders, another interviewee thought about individualistic values and being work-orientated, aiming to be successful and efficient at work. Again, the interviewees seem to understand this dilemma of calling these values European and therefore raising questions of exclusion that was mentioned in the discussion about globalization and Europeanization.\textsuperscript{82} The interviewees address this by pointing out that these values would be valid worldwide or at least that most of the values would not be only European.

To summarize, Europe definitely plays a role in the life experience of the interviewees. However, even if it is such a politicized topic or maybe because it is heavily politicise, the interviewees don’t talk that much about the political aspect of Europe. What is important for the interviewees, are rather the parts of Europe they actually experience. The workcamp is an indirect part of it, but the emphasis lays on travel in general and the broader scheme of exchange programs. It remains rather unclear how much this particular experience in the end t changes their life towards a European social integration, given their rather low transnational experiences beforehand. However, the personal learning experience in the intercultural setting and social ties formed in the process are tangible.


5. Conclusions

The aim of the analysis conducted in the framework of this thesis was to elucidate the experiences of a sample of six volunteers who have participated in a workcamp. This thesis aims to answer the research question ‘how and to what extent do volunteers experience and perceive their participation in workcamps in the European context?’ Therefore, this research analysed the conducted interviews by exploring the experiences of participating in a workcamp. Thus, valuable insights could be gained about possible connections of volunteering, transnational socialisation though intercultural group building, and practises of European social integration.

Being motivated by bigger questions of where Europe gets tangible for Europeans, this thesis takes a closer look into the experience of a workcamp as a potential way achieve more tangible experiences of Europe for young people, as this generation seems to be growing up generally less convinced about the per se value of Europe due to growing up in crisis.

The theoretical scope of this thesis puts emphasis on the actual experience and practices of Europeanization. Unsurprisingly the experiences of participating in a workcamp are perceived as generally positive and particularly beneficial for the volunteers themselves and eventually others as well. The interviewees show awareness about the general unusualness of their decision to go abroad to volunteer, as volunteering is not particularly popular among their social contacts in their home surroundings like friends and family. Apparently the interviewees’ motivation to nevertheless leave their comfort zone and get involved lays in rather unclear, spontaneous impression that the idea of participating “sounds nice” but as well in their expectation and curiosity to meet new people and travel not as a tourist.

Firstly, it could be shown that the cause of volunteering seems to be less influential to the interviewees’ decision to participate in a workcamp. However, for some of the interviewees aspects like environmental protection, contact to the local community, and generally a diffuse idea of contributing to society are nevertheless relevant.
Secondly, the most dominant theme throughout the interviews is the aspect of mobility. The link between transnational experiences and European sense of community becomes evident when examining the prior research, and also shows to be significant for the interviewees in this research. Here, the interviewees demonstrate an implicitness of the European framework that essentially simplifies the process of travel and volunteering across Europe. Most of the interviewees show that they know that the absence of border controls are due to processes of Europeanization but simply take it as a given. In a way, this indicates an internalisation of this reality that is constructed essentially through agreements like Schengen and the *acquis communautaire*, established by the Treaty of Maastricht in 1992.

Thirdly, indications for European social integration are first and foremost the formed ties among the group of volunteers who are participating in the respective workcamp. Even if the interviewees show different degrees of certainty about possible visits in person, social media offers a chance to at least virtually stay in contact. More importantly, during the camp the interviewees seem to experience first-hand how fast the group of people with different backgrounds can get close to each other and learn that they are able to live with their differences to discover similarities.

The aspect of the EU promoting volunteering is less present than for example the existence of Schengen and Erasmus-programs. Nevertheless, Europe and the European Union are definitely present in the minds of the volunteers. Most of the volunteers are familiar with EVS which might indicate an indirect understanding that volunteering is becoming a Europeanised field as none of them mentioned national volunteering programs. However, the general identification with being European is existent but not particularly strong. The idea of a European community mostly remains in an indirect, ambiguous relation to the experiences at workcamps. Considering the ideals of Europe the volunteers generally tend to follow the idea of a cosmopolitan Europe. There are indicators that depending on their national context the volunteers took different positions towards European politics. The dominance of the EU for the meaning of Europe seems to be incorporated but not absolute.

This brings me to the conclusion that workcamps might be an example for a first transnational experience for young people that might also make Europe more perceptible and strengthen social ties beyond national categories. Furthermore,
workcamps have the potential to be the first step towards further participation in workcamps and other transnational volunteering opportunities. Due to the limited sample size the results can hardly draw generalising conclusions about participants at workcamps. Possibly a larger sample size combined with participant observations or focus groups would have offered even deeper insights. Such a comprehensive study however goes beyond the scope of this thesis project. Hence, more research is needed to draw bigger conclusions. Nevertheless, this research still offers intriguing insights on the reasons why young people value the experience of participating in workcamps, about the ways in which volunteers experience cross-border volunteering, and exploratory insights on how they see Europe. The enthusiasm demonstrated by the participants, the dominance of positive memories, as well as the desire to repeat and participate again in the future. This opposes assumptions European youth would be disengaged or politically inactive. These findings can feed into policy debates and raise further theoretical inquiries in a field that remained less explored.
Bibliography

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### Annex One: Coding Scheme

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Sub-categories</th>
<th>Codes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Reasons     | self       | satisfaction   | - desire to travel  
- fun  
- having a great time |
| Personal development |           | - improve English, languages  
- become more independent  
- become more confident  
- learn to live with others who are different |
| social      |            | - as a way to meet new, interesting people  
- finding friends  
- gaining possibly a second family |
| For the future |            | - looks good on CV  
- making contacts/network  
- maybe change perspective on future career choices |
| others      | Doing good for society in general | - do something good  
(in free time)  
- better than sitting around  
- feel good about what you do |
| Helping the local community |            | - is important  
- happy about getting appreciation  
- want for more contact with local community |
| Protecting environment |            | - promoting “environmental values”  
- show general interest to learn more about it |
| Experiences | During workcamp | Living in group | - really good  
- intense  
- nice to do everything together |
| **Other participants** | - bonding with each other  
- weird because of big age differences |
|-----------------------|---------------------------------|
| **Work**              | - open-minded  
- nice  
- interesting  
- sometimes a bit loud |
| **Food**              | - simple but demanding  
- thought it was harder  
- tiring  
- okay |
| **Conversations**     | - okay; -better than last workcamp  
- challenge to communicate, find compromise |
| **Freetime, evenings**| - talked about ‘everything’  
- ‘even politics’  
- daily life stuff  
- work & food  
- relationships at home  
- plans for future  
- (cultural) differences and similarities |
| **Accommodation**     | - sleeping in one room >closeness  
- wasn’t expecting hotel  
- remote location  
- no wifi, no phone connection |
| **Challenges**        | - difficulties to communicate with people who are not fluent in English |
| **Resources**         | - Have to pay for travel if it's far away  
- need to have time for it |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Travel alone</th>
<th>Broader context</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- can be difficult</td>
<td>- Be away from family</td>
<td>Learning about different cultures</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- no privacy</td>
<td>- need courage to be brave enough to do it</td>
<td>- realisation: doesn’t know many countries</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- not much time alone</td>
<td>- travel can scare people</td>
<td>- want to discover more of Europe</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- if too big, no chance to get deeper connection with everyone</td>
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<td>Reducing prejudices</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- through friendships</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Intercultural competences</td>
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<td>- learn about people who are different than you</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Motivation to go abroad</td>
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<td>- will not stop to do workcamps</td>
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<td>- had the wish before, but it became stronger</td>
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<td>Europe</td>
<td>What kind of understanding of Europe</td>
<td>Easier mobility</td>
<td>- Easier travel</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- No visa</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- No passport control &gt;Schengen</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Cultural diversity</td>
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<td>- so many different cultures and languages in Europe</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Found more similarities than differences</td>
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<td>Values</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>-freedom</td>
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<td>-democracy</td>
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<td>-travel/mobility</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-open borders</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>- division of powers</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>- freedom of speech</td>
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<td>-equality</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- individualistic</td>
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<tr>
<td>Satisfaction with status quo</td>
<td>Democracy</td>
<td>EU</td>
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</table>
| - work-orientated, be successful and efficient at work  
- humanitarian values (worldwide)  
- most values are not only European | - generally okay  
- unsure to what level it is there in Greece  
- difficult to say in Serbia  
- people can be uninformed  
- danger of right wing extremism | - tries to much to harmonize  
- gives chances (like EVS)  
- can be exclusive  
- good infrastructure, European funds  
- is under pressure |
Annex Two: Interview guide

WHO ARE YOU?
The purpose of this section is to get to know the participant a bit and maybe allow building groups in the analysis. Please, introduce yourself (What is your age, What nationality do you & your parents have, What is your place of residence, What is your current occupation, What is your highest educational degree, How much do you travel and where, What languages do you speak)

WHAT IS YOUR PRIOR EXPERIENCE?
The purpose of this section is to discover what prior contact/mental picture they have to volunteering & immediate impacts on opinions/future plans. Do you have any other volunteering experience? Do you currently volunteer somewhere else? (Why/Why not?) Do your friends volunteer? Do you think volunteering is something more ppl should do? Do you plan to volunteer in the future? (at your home-town? Do a workcamp again? Become a campleader? Do other kinds of EVS/IVS?)

Have you worked/studied/lived abroad? Are you in a relationship with someone who is or has been a citizen of a different country? Do parts of your family/friends live abroad? What do you think about living in a different country than you grew up in? (Do you plan to live(move abroad?)

What kind of contact do you have to people who are coming from different countries? (Other cultures? With different World views? Different age or education?) Do you have friends that come from different regions than you? (Speak other mothertongues? Nationalities? Cultures? Religion? Political Views?) Could you please sort out any that you would not like to have as neighbours?

DURING THE WORKCAMP
WHAT EXPERIENCES DID YOU MAKE?
The purpose of this section is to discover what the actual experience looked like. What did a typical day look like? How was the living in a group? (food/freetime/location/work/etc) What do you think about the other participants? What kind of things did you talk about? What do you remember a very happy moment? Do you remember what kind of conflicts you had? What do you think is positive about doing a workcamp? Can you think of negative, challenging or difficult aspects? Was there someone you got closer to? Did you make friends? Do you plan to visit someone? Did you feel like part of the group? What do you think you learned from the experience? Do you think the experience of working and living together helped to get to know the others in the group better? How?

WHY WORKCAMPS?
The purpose of this section is to discover what motivations and expectations they had
How did you find out about workcamps?
Which kind of workcamp did you decide to get involved in and why?
What kind of expectations/wishes/hopes/fears/worries do you recall?
What do you think about your reasons to get involved now?
What do you think now, how it will affect your life/future?

WHY VOLUNTEERING?
The purpose of this section is to understand the aims of volunteers and what they might
want to achieve personally, professionally, and in a broader context (socially, culturally,
and politically) as well as to know how they see their work in relation to the
society/societies they live in (National, European, the world)
Why do you think it’s important to volunteer?
What kind of ambitions did you have considering the workcamp?
Do you see your engagement in a broader context? (socially, culturally, and politically)

WHAT IS EUROPE FOR YOU?
This section follows the purpose to draw a connection to the mentioned framework of
Europeanization/ the micro-level of European integration. However it needs further
development in structure, and in order to have comprehensive and clear questions
without being suggestive. Therefore, suggestions for improvement are more than
welcome.
Do you recall if you had a different view on going abroad before the workcamp?
What does Europe mean to you?

What do you think people could mean if they say we in Europe have common values?
Inclusion? Borders?)

On the whole are you what do you think about/how satisfied are you about the way
democracy is developing in your country? In Europe? Why?

Some say that the European Union enlargement should go further. Others say it has
already gone too far. What is your opinion?

Some people feel European. Others feel German or French or Pole. Others feel close to
their region. What do you think about that?

Anything else you would like to mention?