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Associação
Sementes de Esperança

Erasmus+ Project
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Youth Exchange
“Activate youth social participation”

E-BOOKLET



Between 21th and 25th August 2026

Alqueva (Portel), Portugal



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Introduction

This e-booklet aims to reflect on what happened during these fantastic days in Alqueva, Portugal (between 21th and 25th August 2026), in the context of youth exchange, an activity that was part of the Erasmus+ project, which also included a training course. (between 28th May and 1st June 2026 (also in Alqueva).

It is also intended to inspire other young people to participate more in the Erasmus+ youth exchanges, weaving memories to remember them for the future. So that they grow as people and learn other cultures and different perspectives of the world.

Adventure, learning and sharing describe our feeling about this exchange of young people and what we want, which we intend to make known.

Thus, the e-booklet will begin with a first part, in which a summary of the youth exchange carried out will be made, addressing the fundamental aspects of this, such as the problem to which it sought to respond, its respective objectives, the relationship with the Erasmus+ Program, the basic guiding principles, the generic aspects of the event held, the activities carried out during it and the results achieved and the expected impacts.

It should be noted that YE results from the aggregation of the two activities of the same, which had been approved to carry out and whose authorization was granted by the National Agency Erasmus +, Youth/Sport and European Solidarity Corps, of Portugal.

Then, in a second part, which was designed and structured exclusively by the participants of YE and taking into account their views, it will be stated what they liked most, as well as the respective participants will be indicated by partner entities, as well as indicated persons residing in Alqueva, who can be found there, such as places in Alqueva and Portel (headquarters of the municipality to which Alqueva belongs), etc.

Part 1

1. Problem to which the youth exchange aimed to respond

The social inclusion of young people and their active participation in society are two major European priorities, so it is urgent to give priority to actions that empower young people and raise awareness about the importance of active participation in society (contributing to a sustainable future). For young people play a vital role in shaping the future of our communities and across Europe, and can make a decisive contribution to change.

The democratic, social and civic participation of young people through non-formal actions and various forms of participation (including also other than conventional ones), ensures that they can share their voice and position and fight for their future and for the sustainability of their communities, is fundamental to contemporary society.

By actively participating in society, young people can support important causes and contribute directly to building more inclusive and sustainable societies.

However, according to the data available in EUROBAROMETER, young people's acceptance of traditional forms of participation such as elections is low (25%), with a high incidence in southern and eastern Europe, thus by the general disinterest increasingly noticeable on the part of young people in solidarity actions or other forms of social and civic participation in society, with a strong incidence in the more conventional ones.

We are thus faced with a problem - the demotivation and low engagement of young people in active participation in society, which are inextricably linked to the widespread exclusion of young people from civic and social participation.

Thus, to promote and strengthen this participation of young people in society, it is essential to break with the traditionalist and conventional approaches of social and democratic participation and bet more on more alternative, diversified, differentiating and flexible opportunities for participation. And at the same time, promote youth inclusion by ensuring that young people from rural and marginalized backgrounds also have access to meaningful opportunities for participation.

Hence this youth exchange took place.

This YE aimed to meet the following needs;

- Development of values and skills essential to young people's social and civic participation, to provide confidence and raise the levels of such participation;
- Use non-formal and more innovative approaches to explore each young person's specific ambitions, combining them with local needs in each territory so that their social and civic participation is beneficial for both sides;
- Explore opportunities for social civic participation of young people in different geographical areas.

2. Objectives

The objectives of this YE were as follows:

* General: empower and motivate young people for social and civic participation in society, at the level of the various forms of its realization, including also non-formal and others beyond the conventional, as engines of inclusion and active and conscious social and civic participation.

*Specific:

- Provide young people with a transnational opportunity for non-formal learning and active participation;
- Promote forms of social and civic participation, focusing more on alternatives, differentiated and adapted to young people and with a vector of social inclusion;
- Develop a cross-cutting and essential set of lifelong competencies for young people, fostering their capacity for active and conscious participation;

- Empowering young people with key competences for democratic life;
- Encourage diverse strategies and priorities in fulfilling European youth goals;
- To reflect on ethical dilemmas related to democracy and social issues;
- Debating ethical dilemmas related to young people's social and civic participation;
- Strengthen intercultural dialogue, cooperation and inclusion among young people from different European countries, and
- Explore opportunities for social and civic participation of young people in different geographical areas;

3. Alignment with the EU Youth Strategy and the Erasmus+ Programme

The project is strongly aligned with the priorities of the EU Youth Strategy and the Erasmus+ Programme, particularly by promoting young people's active participation in democratic life, social inclusion, intercultural dialogue and the development of key competences.

The project aims to empower young people with the knowledge, skills and confidence needed to participate actively in democratic life, encouraging them to express their opinions, engage in discussions and take an active role in their communities. Through debates and reflection activities, participants will explore ethical dilemmas related to democracy, social issues and young people's social and civic participation, developing their critical thinking and ability to consider different perspectives.

It also contributes to the European Youth Goals by encouraging participants to reflect on diverse strategies and priorities for addressing common challenges faced by young people across Europe. The international dimension of the project creates opportunities for young people from different countries and backgrounds to exchange experiences, challenge assumptions and develop a deeper understanding of European diversity.

Furthermore, the project supports intercultural dialogue, cooperation and inclusion, bringing together young people from different European countries in a

non-formal learning environment. By working collaboratively and discussing social and democratic issues, participants will strengthen their communication, cooperation and intercultural competences.

Overall, the project contributes to the Erasmus+ objectives of fostering participation, inclusion, diversity, active citizenship and democratic engagement, while providing young people with meaningful opportunities for personal and social development within a European context.

4. Basic guiding principles

- Inclusion and diversity: The organisation must ensure fair and equal treatment for all participants and, wherever possible, actively involve people with fewer opportunities, using the tools and funding the Programme provides for this purpose.
- Environmental sustainability: The organisation should promote environmentally friendly behaviour among participants and make the most of available funding to support sustainable means of transport.
- Digital education: Organisations are expected to use digital tools and methods (virtual cooperation, virtual or blended mobility) to complement physical activities and strengthen collaboration with partner organisations
- Active participation in the Erasmus network: The organisation should engage with the wider Erasmus network - for example, by hosting participants from other countries, sharing good practices, or mentoring less experienced organisations - to help build the European Education Area.

5. Youth exchange for training and skills development (YE)

The youth exchange gave the participants the chance to improve a bunch of skills through the activity sessions and daily interactions, beneficial for both their personal and professional lives. They gained a deeper understanding of the importance of youth participation, while discussions and debates on relevant social and institutional issues made them more tolerant, patient and respectful of different opinions.

Additionally, they became more confident in public speaking, improved their English and strengthened their creativity, problem-solving and critical thinking skills. Working in an international group helped them adapt to different environments, rules and conditions, while also improving their punctuality and sense of responsibility. Overall, we really enjoyed the experience and would gladly take part in a similar Erasmus+ project again.

5.1. Entities/countries involved and participants

- All those that participate in YE: Associação Sementes de Esperança (Portugal), as a promoter entity and the partner entities, EKO - Entrepreneurship and Social Economy Group (Greece), Tavo Europa (Lithuania), Proactive Future (Spain) and ATIC (Romania); It is clarified that the croatian entity, LUMEN, did not participate in YE, as it was unable to constitute its team of participants with the number of them necessary for this;

- Number of participants - total 29, of which:

* 22 young people aged between 18 and 26 (4 from each entity, excluding the Portuguese, who only had 6), 17 of whom with fewer opportunities;

* Five team leaders, one for each entity (the youngest with 18 years), and

* Two facilitators.

5.2. Activities carried out

The activities started at 09:30 am and usually ended around 10:30 am, with breaks for morning and afternoon snacks, lunch and dinner.

All activities were based on the informal work methodology, having been dosed with icebreakers, energizers and other group dynamics.

Young people, in groups, exchanged ideas and carried out work and practical activities related to the subject of YE, having also benefited from training in this field, and thus acquired and strengthened knowledge in these fields, having in particular the activities been:

- Name presentation (icebreaker);
- Rules to be observed in the YE;
- The Erasmus+ and the YE;
- Group work on the objectives of the respective participants about YE, as well as on the theme of this and its presentations and discussions in the large group;
- The methodology of non-formal education, to be used in the YE;
- Presentation about democracy in every country, including the identification of the barriers to that (national groups);
- Approach to EU youth strategies and priorities in the field of youth - Youth objectives, European Agenda for Youth Work, European Youth Work Charter at local level, etc.;
- Approach on the various ways and areas in which young people can develop their social and civic participation in society, highlighting alternatives and/or innovative (including the principles that guide such participation), and preparation and presentation of work in small groups;
- Ethical dilemmas that young people may face in the context of their social and civic participation (game);
- Presentation of group work with proposals and vote on them, to be presented in the debate of the European Parliament (simulation);
- Debate about free-speech and censored speech in the European Parliament (simulation);
- Energizers and dynamics to activate and/or strengthen the group of participants and the energy of all;

- Individual and group reflection on the activities carried out (daily);
- Individual evaluation of the YE;
- Production of the e-booklet about YE (in groups), a summary document of what was done during the Youth Exchange, illustrating good practices in terms of information, and at the same time as guidance and motivation of young people for more incisive civic and democratic participation in society and at the same time, as an inclusion factor for them;
- Intercultural afternoons;
- Alqueva Tour;
- Excursion to Portel;
- Trip to the river beach of Alqueva,

5.3. Expected results and impacts

The results were of two types:

* Intangible - development of learning and skills in: mother-tongue communication, foreign language communication (including English) and basic skills in science and technology, digital competence, learning to learn, social and civic competences, cultural sensitivity and creativity, etc., with a focus on the theme of youth exchange.

*Tangible:

- Infopack of the YE activity;
- E-booklet: this document, which provides an overview of the YE carried out, summarizes and illustrates the activities carried out in it, refers to developed skills and results, what participants liked most during the working week, according to their point of view the people they met in Alqueva, as well as the spaces to visit in Alqueva and Portel
- The creation of an YE group on WhatsApp, for communication between its participants;
- Share the guiding aspects of the project and the YE infopack with the partner entities of the project and with the event participants, by email and through the WhatsApp group created for this purpose, and

- Publications on the YE carried out, in the social networks of the promoter and partners, which include the access, for consultation of this e-booklet.

The expected impacts are, among others, the following, predominantly for young people:

The YE is expected to have a lasting and meaningful impact on young people by strengthening their competences, confidence and motivation to actively participate in democratic and civic life.

Through non-formal learning activities, discussions and the exploration of ethical dilemmas related to democracy and social issues, participants will develop their critical thinking and their ability to express opinions, listen to different perspectives and engage constructively in debates. At the same time, the international dimension of the project will provide young people with opportunities to interact with peers from different European countries, promoting intercultural dialogue, mutual understanding, cooperation and inclusion.

By sharing experiences and exploring different approaches to common challenges, participants will gain a broader understanding of European diversity and the importance of active citizenship.

The project will also encourage young people to reflect on how they can contribute to their communities and become more engaged in social and civic activities.

The competences acquired during the project, including communication, teamwork, problem-solving, decision-making and intercultural skills, are expected to increase their confidence and willingness to take initiative. Furthermore, participants will be encouraged to share their learning and experiences with their peers, youth organisations and local communities, allowing the impact of the project to extend beyond the participants themes.

But also, for organisations: increasing their capacity to support young people, expanding their networks and broadening their reach through greater participation in local and transnational projects, including the European Solidarity Corps.

Ultimately, the YE aims to contribute to a more active, inclusive and democratic youth community, where young people feel empowered to participate, cooperate across cultural differences and contribute positively to society.

Part 2

This part was elaborated by the participants in YE, reflecting their points of view and opinions.

1. Highlights of the week of activities on the activities carried out (photos)



Icebreaker - Present yourself before the group of participants (name and where you live), to promote recognition of the group and the relationship between all



Training on the topic of YE



Realization of group work



Dynamics to strengthen the relationship in the group



Group work



Presentation of another group work



Another group dynamic



Guided tour in Alqueva



Another training on the topic of YE



Cultural afternoon of the greek team



Cultural afternoon of the romanian team



Game of ethical dilemmas that young people may face in the context of their social and civic participation



Presentation of group work with proposals and vote on them, to be presented in the debate of the European Parliament (simulation)



Debate about free-speech and censored speech in the European Parliament (simulation)



The control table of the debate in the European Parliament (simulation)



Outdoor space next to the Interpretation Center of the Castle of Portel



Visit to the Montado Interpretation Center of Portel



Trip to the river beach of Alqueva

2. What did the participants like most?

People liked the friendly atmosphere, the opportunity to meet people from different countries, exchange cultures and ideas, learn through interactive activities, and create new friendships. They also appreciated the teamwork, the informal learning methods, the food, the river beach, the intercultural afternoons, the local people, cookers and animals, the visite to Portel and the chance to improve their communication skills while having fun.

The river beach



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The activities (include cultural afternoons)





Local people, food, cooks and animals







The visit of Portel

We spent a few hours exploring Portel, enjoying a walk around the town, visiting its landmarks and discovering the history and importance of the Montado landscape at the Montado Interactive Centre. It was especially interesting to see such an engaging and well-designed cultural space in a small town, highlighting and bringing greater visibility to the local heritage and identity. Overall, it was a lovely experience that allowed us to learn more about the place, connect with its history and appreciate the beauty and character of this part of Portugal.



New friendships







3. List of participants

- Associação Sementes de Esperança: Cristina Guerreiro, Íris Sebastião, Isabel Mochila, Lara Batista, Neele Baronigg e Rita Brancas (young participants); Julio Brancas (team leader); Inês Abelha and Sandra Abelha (facilitators);
- EKO - Entrepreneurship and Social Economy Group: Nefeli Kyriakidou, Niki Marioettaki, Odyssefs-Maximos Papantoinou and Vasileios Kazantzidis (young participants); Eleni Tsouma (team leader);
- Tavo Europa: Austėja Stulgytė, Neda Bernotaviciutė, Rusnė Vinkutė and Una Bartuseviciutė (young participants); Domantas Tilinga (team leader);
- Proactive Future:Álvaro Cantón Perales, Erik Casero Galdón, Lucia Aragón and Marta León Rodríguez; Almudena Espinosa Baeza (team leader);
- ATIC – Adrian Mihut Tanase, Adriana Iliescu, Alexandra-Mihalea Neculai and Mihai-Petronel Moisesescu; Daniela Naparlica (team leader).

4. People to meet in Alqueva

- Restaurant "O Artur" - Here you can meet Dona Rosa, the owner of the establishment, a woman full of life and love. She is an excellent cook and her food is very tasty;
- Pastelaria Farnel de São Lourenço - It is managed by António Jacinto and his wife, a very communicative couple that serves customers very well. It has regional products of excellent quality (cakes, bread, wine, cheeses, sausages, etc.);
- Mercearia "A Dade" - Here you can meet Dade, the owner of the mini-market, very friendly and always very attentive to customers;
- Alqueva Hostel - The staff of the hostel (Deolinda and Lucía) know how to welcome guests and provide important information about what is in Alqueva, and
- Bar of the Fishermen's Club of Alqueva - a very pleasant space, with terrace, in which the gentlemen who are working there always have a smile on their faces and are very communicative.

All these people are important because they energize Alqueva, a small village where everyone knows each other, giving all the attention and affection to all the people who pass by here.

Dona Rosa also provides work for the local inhabitants, such as the confectionery Farnel de São Lourenço).

5. What to see in Alqueva

Alqueva dam and the river beach of Alqueva



It is one of the largest artificial dams in Western Europe, located in the Alentejo region of Portugal. It is an important area for water management, agriculture, tourism and renewable energy, while also offering activities such as boating, kayaking and swimming. The dam is surrounded by beautiful countryside and

historic places such as Monsaraz, making it an important part of the region's natural and cultural heritage.

The river beach of Alqueva is located in the dam (lake) of Alqueva, about 1.5 km from the town.

Church of São Lourenço (free entry with prior appointment)



It's located in the center of the town.

The interior space is composed of a latin cross plant, with deep chancel and nave of collateral chapels and blind arches, with cover in cradle dome in the various bodies.

Chapel of Santo António (free entry with prior appointment)



It is located at the highest point of the village of Alqueva. Climb the staircase and observe from here a unique view of the village of Alqueva and the Alentejo landscape around the village.

The chapel is probably dated to the seventeenth century, having served as an oratory for the religious of the Franciscan Third Order.

6. And to see in Portel (seat of the municipality to which it belongs Alqueva)

It is about 20 kms from Alqueva, and you can see:

Maria Fernanda Toscano Rico Museum (free entry)



It is located on street of Espírito Santo and is installed in the building of the old hospital.

It offers a journey through time to the golden age of the 50s, 60s and 70s of the 20th century, exposing the estate of the painter from Portela, chronologically and according to the various themes addressed in his painting, as if it were a journey through his life and work.

Hours: Tuesday to Sunday (10:00-13:00 and 14:30 -18:00 (closes on Monday)).

Thematic pavilion "A Bolota" (free entry)



Located on the 1st of May Street, it provides the discovery and interpretation of the landscape and local resources, through the five senses.

Integrates 4 thematic spaces and a commercial area - Crafts Room, Cork Room, Heritage Room and Senses Room.

Hours: Tuesday to Sunday (10:00-13:00 and 14:30 -18:00 (closes on Monday).

Montado Interactive Center



It's located on the street of Celeiros (former GNR headquarters) and promotes knowledge about the unique ecosystem of the alentejan montado through recreational-didactic equipment and digital technologies.

Hours: Tuesday to Friday, from 10:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. and from 2:30 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.; on weekends visits are held by appointment; closed on Monday.

7. Important conclusions (important things to remember and take way from this youth exchange)

During this Erasmus Project in Alqueva we have learned and bring home important conclusions about the European Parliament and Democracy.

We also learned how to develop and express ideas about the project topic.

But not only that, because our learning has gone far beyond the main theme: we have learned about other cultures, we have got out of our comfort zone and be flexible.

Values such as inclusion, diversity, respect and leadership can summarise well what we worked on during these days.

In conclusion, we learned to be more inclusive, we have increased our capability of thinking of good ideas quickly and participate actively in society. And all of this was learnt very efficiently during the whole of Erasmus+ programme.