



SPI

HARVESTING CONFERENCE
June 2018, Portugal

ja | Erasmus+

SPI Harvesting Conference - Report

19-21 June 2018, Carcavelos, Cascais, Portugal

Context | In 2015 a group of Erasmus+ youth National Agencies formed a Strategic Partnership on Inclusion (SPI) within their Training and Cooperation Activities (TCA). The main objective of this partnership is to improve and increase the inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities in the programme, in line with the [Erasmus+ Inclusion and Diversity Strategy](#) in field of youth.

Within the SPI, the NAs focussed on three target groups:

- 1) young people from disadvantaged areas
- 2) young people with health issues and disability
- 3) NEETs

The NAs organised a set of national outreach activities for organisations working with these 3 target groups, leading up to transnational activities with the aim of organising new inclusion projects.

15 NAs & SALTOs are involved:

- Disability and health issues (8): FR, DE, IS, LV, EE, HU, PL, SALTO SEE
- Young people in NEET situation (7): EE, LV, AT, UK, CZ, RO, PT, IT
- Disadvantaged (rural) areas (5): SI, EE, RO, PT, IE

Aim of the Harvesting Conference | The aim of the harvesting conference was to bring together youth workers and young people who were involved in the SPI activities and those who would like to become involved, as well as NA officers and SALTO partners. The aim was also to gather the results, achievements and good practices of the first 2 years of implementation of the SPI on national and transnational level and disseminate them among the participants, National Agencies and other relevant stakeholders. The conference should foster the harvesting of new practices, approaches, projects, networks and create space for reflection, exchange of practice, presentation of results and future strategic planning for inclusion of more young people with fewer opportunities in the Erasmus+ programme.

Objectives of Harvesting Conference

- Show the importance of the themes the SPI works on;
- Learn from each other (NGOs);
- Provide space networking between organisations working on inclusion;
- Show what NAs have to offer for inclusion organisations - show our strategic approach;
- Promoting/mainstreaming the strategic approach to all NAs;
- Create a valuable experience for young people, giving them a voice;

- Recommendations for SPI, for Solidarity Corps, for E+, use experience for future developments.

Trainer team | Dan Moxon, Jo Claeys & Sara Serrão

Hosting & logistics | Angela Santos & Patrícia Amaro

Preparation support | Maja Drobne, Brigitte Daouadi, Andreia Henriques & Tony Geudens

Characteristics of the Participants | 67 people from the 12 different countries took part in this conference. Most countries were represented by a combination of National Agency officer, youth workers and young people,, in order to harvest on different levels. We consider this a rich and important element in this conference, as it allowed participants to mutually understand the challenges faced in the implementation of SPI on the different levels.

Overview of the programme

19th
June

Arrivals and Check in - 17.30

Dinner at the Hotel - 19.00

Opening Celebration - 20.30 - 22.00

A chance to meet, get to know the other participants and find out what is ahead.

20th
June

An Introduction to 'SPI' - 9.30 - 10.00

A look at the results of the SPI, how your project connects to it and reflections on inclusion

What does our harvest look like? - 10.00 - 13.00

Using arts, crafts and other creative methods, share the projects you are involved in or think of developing. Together we create a forest of projects to showcase and learn from each other's' projects.

Lunch - 13.00 - 14.30

What are the fruits of the harvest? - 14.30 - 17.30

Inclusion project organisers and participants explore the forest they created and identify the learning. NA staff shares how SPI was implemented in each country, launch of the cookbook.

Visit Cascais, European Capital of youth 2018: youth work in action - 19.00 - 20.30 | Dinner in Cascais - 20.30

21st
June

What makes things grow? - 9.30 - 13.00

Starting with the fruits that were harvested the previous day, we will identify:
What has helped each of the projects grow?

What new things can help us grow future projects?

Lunch - 13.00 - 14.30

Growing the next crop - 14.30 - 16.00

Inclusion project organisers and participants make action plans for future projects. NA staff will evaluate SPI and plan the next steps.

Coffee Break - 16.00 - 16.30

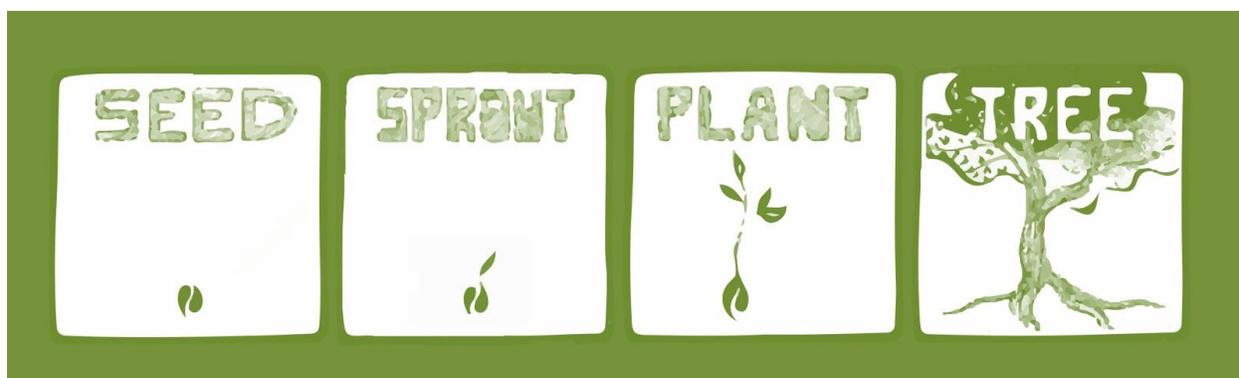
Reflection and Evaluation - 16.30 - 17.30

Dinner at the beachside - 20.30

The SPI Harvesting Conference was developed around the concept of a FOREST, in a direct link between the name of the event “Harvesting Conference” and the natural cycle of seeding, growing plants and then harvesting their outcomes¹. Each tree represented an Inclusion project developing in the framework of SPI, presented by the participants in the Conference.

Forest = Group of projects developed through SPI strategy, represented in the conference
Seed/ plant/ tree = Individual project developed by a participant or tandem of YW + YP
Fruit = Results and learning achievements the participant wishes to share

The concept of the forest of inclusion projects allowed the participants to present and explore their own projects, to get to know the initiatives of other organisations, to share experiences and to learn from each other, as they were creating trees, exploring the forest and collecting the fruits.



Representation of different stages of a project:
SEED A project idea | SPROUT A planned project | PLANT An ongoing project | TREE A finished project

The work around the Forest initiated with a rotational activity. The big group was divided into three parallel activities, consisting in:

- Making a tree representation of the Inclusion project, through drawing, interview or free use of creative material;
- Exploring experiences, memories and feelings related to preparing/ implementing an Inclusion project, using aromatic plants;

¹ Trainers script for Forest Activity in
https://docs.google.com/document/d/1U6mCi8UYiFte70-ad9lJkER8LVnABQB1_uXax8kyYcl/edit?usp=sharing

- Debating about concepts of inclusion, by positioning oneself regarding specific statements.



The flow of the Conference took participants exploring each other's trees, then identifying fruits as project results and learning achievements. The activity concluded with a collection of fruit baskets, as participants gathered to debate and explore themes of common interest. At the end of the Conference, participants received seeds, as an inspirations for future projects.

The methodology thus consisted in a combination of sensorial activities, with visual approaches, spoken presentations and debates, songs, arts and crafts and the exploration of smells and gestures. The program included plenary sessions, small groups exploration and individual reflection. Individual needs were taken into account in the choice of this diverse methodology and different approaches and through the presence of assistants and sign language interpreters.

The program further included parallel sessions, thus including moments for NA officers as Youth workers and young people continued exploring their SPI forest.

In the evening of the 2nd day the program merged with the European Capital of Youth - Cascais 2018 and the youth work developed in the Municipality of Cascais. A visit to the Cultural Centre allowed the participants to get familiar with some newly developed educational tools for young people by the city Cascais. There was a presentation of an App, educational boardgame, Manual and Planner around 'employability for young people', besides the presentation of an educational boardgame to initiate 'participative budget' in secondary schools.

A flavour of the outcomes

Meeting the Forest gardeners

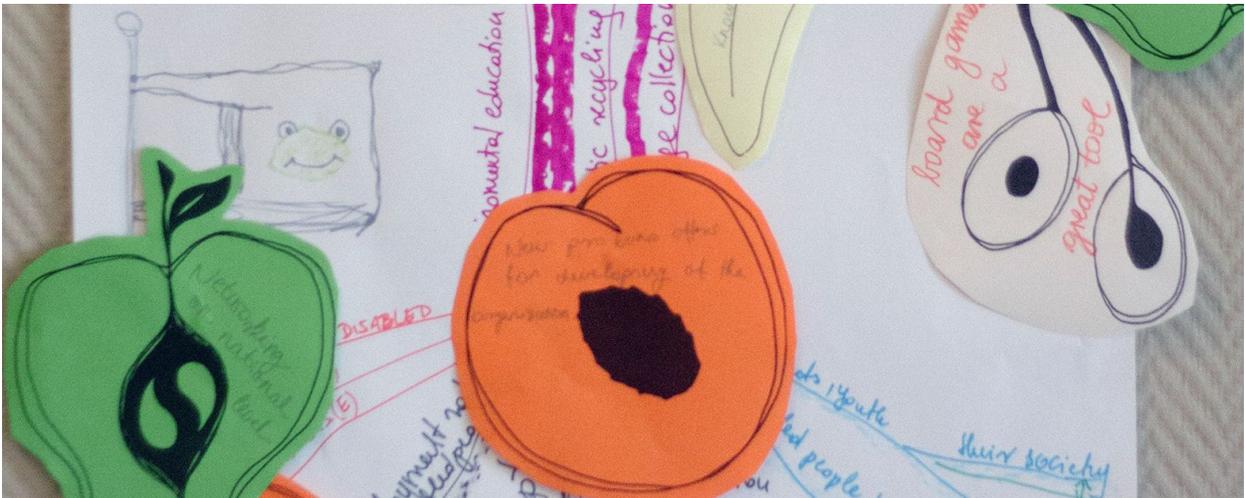


Building the SPI Forest

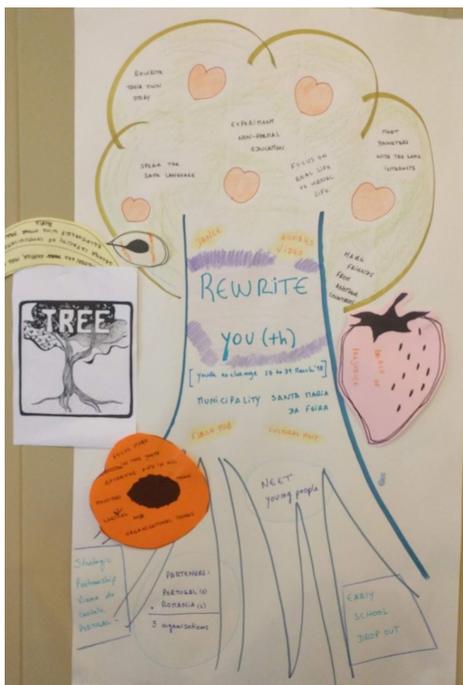




Reflecting and recognising Fruits



Examples of the trees created by participants can be seen in the photographs. A wide variety of different trees emerged with considerable variation between groups who had fully completed projects under the SPI programme (usually shown as trees) and those who were still planning their ideas (usually shown as seeds or sprouts)

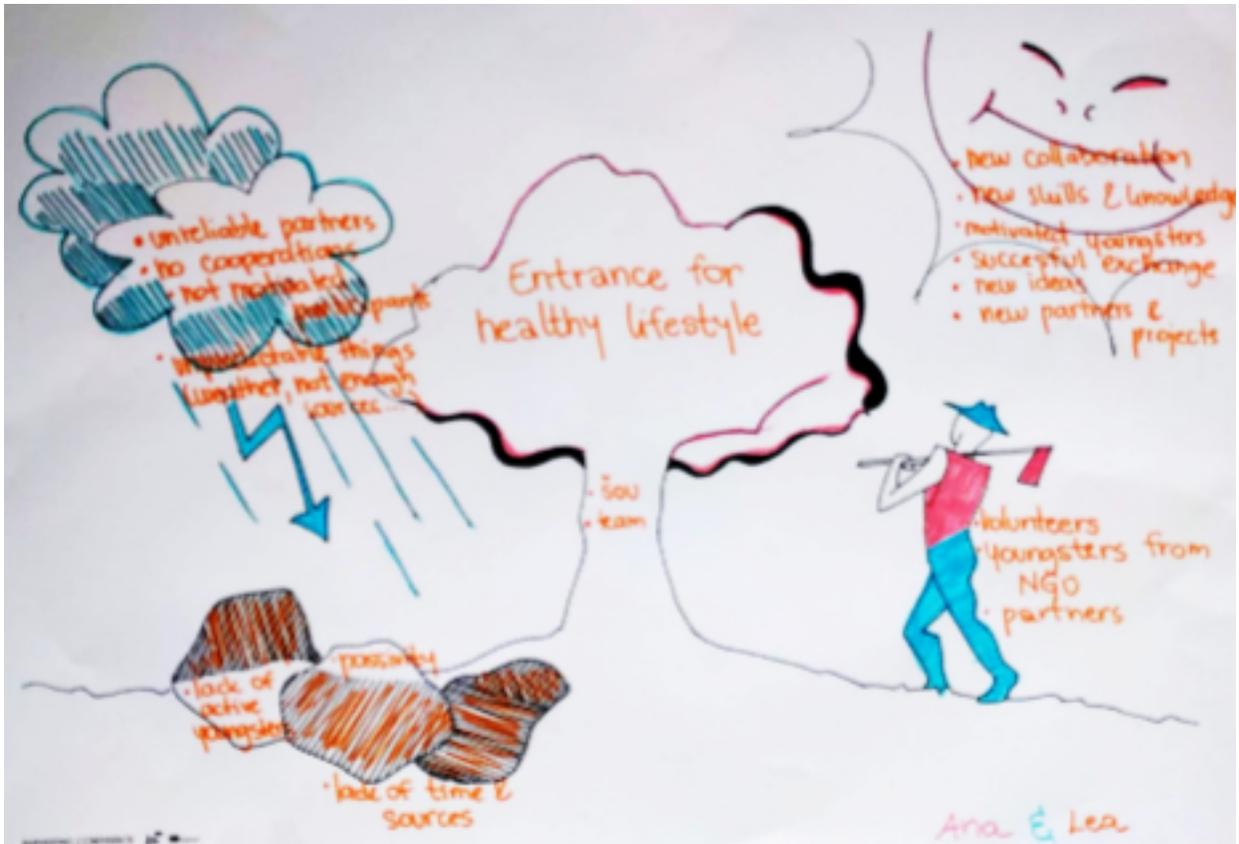


The fruits (project results) that were created as part of the forest were harvested and organised by participants into five major themes of learning. Each theme was discussed by a group of participants and the main points within their presentation to the main group were:

- NON VERBAL COMMUNICATION is powerful, it can bring together different countries.
- Projects addressing NEETS need to include parents, teachers and employees. It takes a lot of support to get NEET on international experiences.
- The EVS and INCLUSION group underlined the distinction between EVS and youth exchanges, EVS requires a support process. It is difficult to find partners able to host young people with disabilities.
- The INCLUSIVE YOUTH EXCHANGES group highlights the importance of communication between people with different language skills, especially in diverse and big group; the need of sharing publications and tools; the hint to apply for extra support funding in the application phase.
- The BUILDING RELATIONS BETWEEN PARTNERS group highlights the importance of face to face meetings; the use of SALTO resources and partner database; the decision to use Facebook to keep the contact between participants, as it includes pictures and it's easier to recall people from photos.

Participants used the learning to develop new project ideas for the future, continuing the concept of a tree as a form of SWOT analysis. Examples of project plans can be seen the photos below.



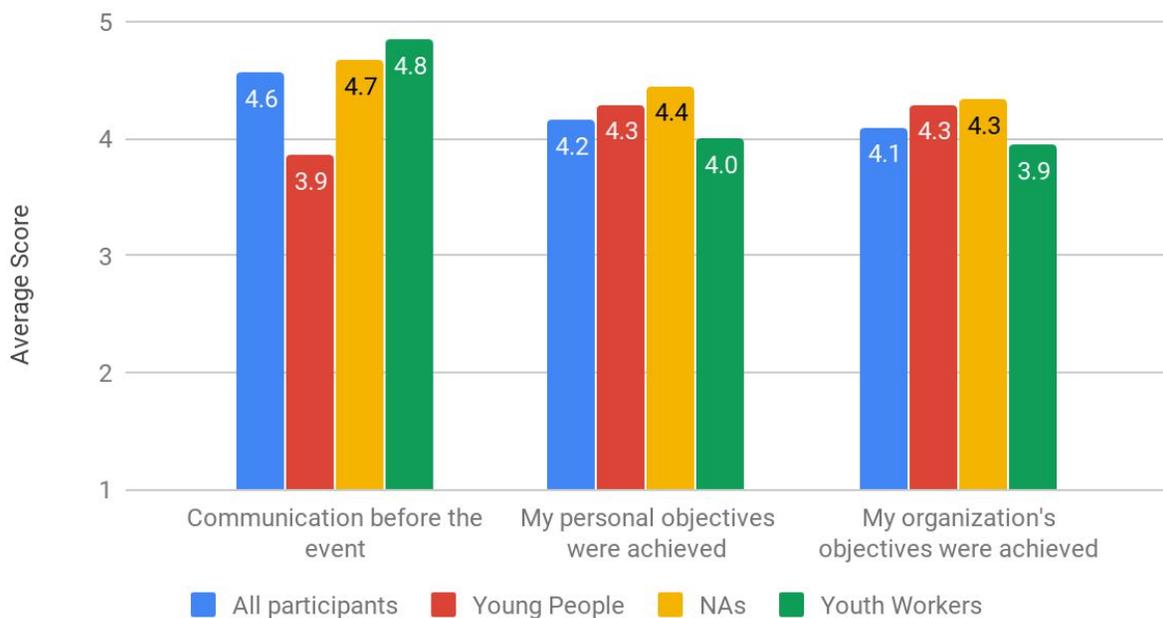


Summary of the evaluation results

36 (50%) of participants replied to the online evaluation so the responses may not be reflective of the whole group.. 7 identified as young people, 9 identified as NA officers and 20 identified as youth workers, or other similar roles.

Participants were asked to rate the general aspects of the conference out of 5. Responses were positive, as shown in the graph below. Young people rated communication before the event notably lower than other participants.

General aspects of the conference

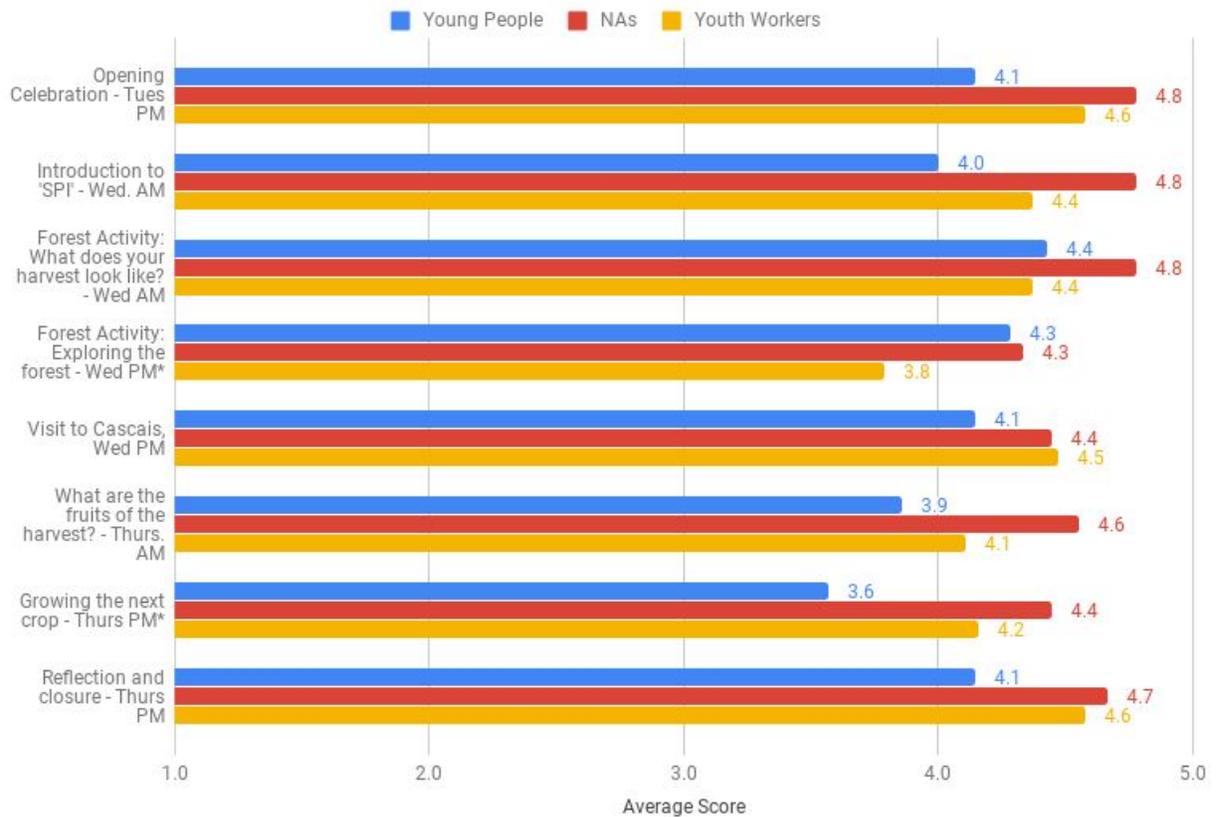


Evaluations were also positive with regards to the logistical aspects of the conference. Out of 5, on average participants rated accommodation as 4.2, Meals 4.4, working spaces 4.3 and hotel staff 4.3. There were no substantial differences between the three groups of participants.

Participants were asked to rate the different programme elements of the conference out of 5. Responses were positive, each element scored at least 4.0 out of 5, when average scores were calculated across all participants. However responses were notably different between the three participants groups. In general young people rated the conference lower than the other groups and NA's rated the conference more highly, as shown in the graph below.

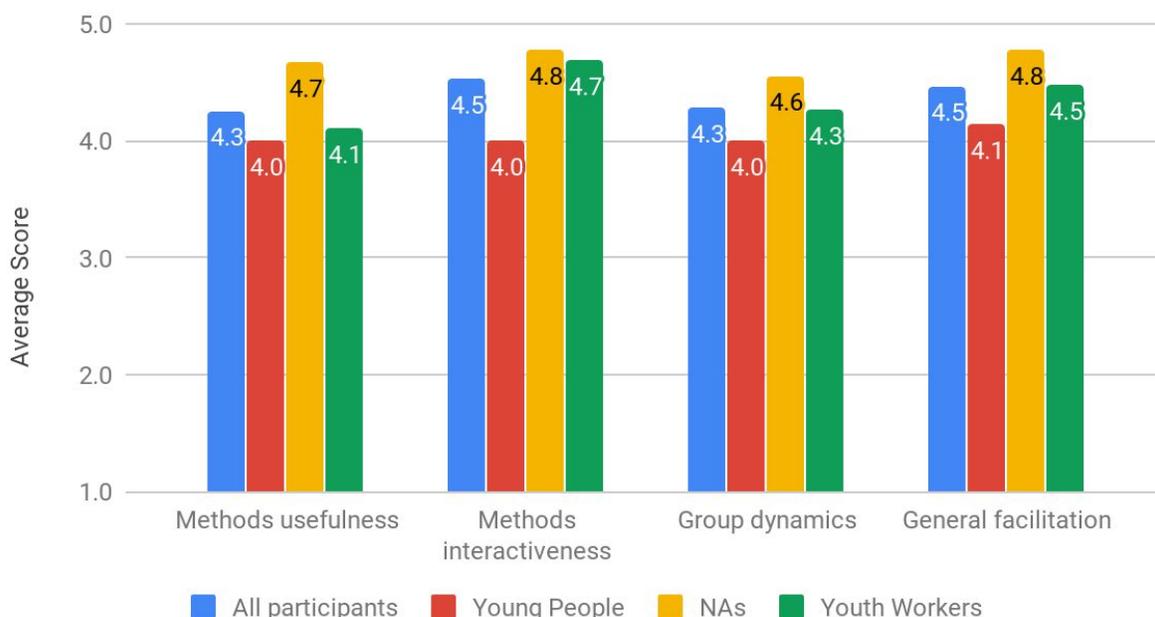
Programme Evaluation

*indicates parallel sessions



Participants were asked to rate the facilitation of the conference from 1 to 5. Responses were positive, each element scored at least 4.0 out of 5, when average scores were calculated across all participants and within individual participant groups. Similar to the programme, ratings were lowest for young people and highest for NA's, as shown in the graph overleaf.

Facilitation



Participants were given a series of statements and asked to select all the statements that described what they gained from the conference:

- 61% (22) said - "I discovered aspects that I want to improve in current and/or future Inclusion projects."
- 58% (21) said- "I met partner organisations I wish to cooperate with in future projects"
- 55% (20) said - "I collected best practices and new ideas on Inclusion that I can use in and share with my organization"
- 50% (18) said "I renewed my motivation to work with Youth and Inclusion"
- 41% (15) said "I understand better the SPI Inclusion strategy and how it supports/ can support my organization"
- 30% (11) said - "I now have a deeper understanding of my Inclusion project, after presenting it and after sharing my experience"

Written comments from participants on the evaluation were generally positive but pointed to a variety of competing needs and interests. Evaluation respondents value the opportunity to meet directly with other organisations, opportunity exchange experiences of working on inclusion, meet other from different country backgrounds working with the same groups of young people, and the facilitation methods used.

Quote from participants:

The evaluation asked a number of open questions. During these Youth workers often expressed a desire to gain more insight working on inclusion through theoretical methods and more concrete exchange techniques, NA officers expressed a desire to gather more details of project activities and to have more active sessions for young people. Some young people expressed a desire for more breaks and energizers whilst other expressed a desire for more concrete activities around developing projects and more time for discussion and interaction. In many cases activities that were described as needing improvement by one person were the highlighted as the most valuable by another.

"It was nice, that we had a diverse group of people, but I'm not sure, whether all the young people felt comfortable and were really aware what was going on or what their role was. I think for new organisations/new participants the conference was a very exciting and good experience; for experienced organisations it might have not gone into depth. Some more ""theoretical"" sessions or discussions should have been included in the programme." (NA Officer)

"I loved the variety of participants in the conference, it really inspired me and broadened my mind, although I have been involved in Erasmus+ funded Projects for 6 years. Real Connection and lived diversity and inclusion. Definitely impacted my future work in international youth work." (Youth worker)

"I really like facilitators, how they were prepared. I like working space a lot. I like dynamics methods which they use." (Young person)

"This conference was a great opportunity to build networks with others in Europe. The spirit of the conference was warm, the attitude including, I never felt as an outsider. Everything was very well organized." (Youth worker)

"[It could be improved by] more practical examples of inclusion (real projects that were done)" (Youth worker)

"It would better if we get more time to discussion! I need more discussions time with the other people. And the break were too long for me," (Young person)

"The harvesting conference was a great final step of the first SPI cycle. I really enjoyed in reading about the results and all the trees that have grown and I am even happier, that there is a lot of seeds and sprouts. It was once again shown, that the strategic approach is crucial that step by step you come, where you want to come. So thumbs up to Portuguese NA for organisation and facilitators for amazing work they have done." (NA Officer)

Food for thought: a future SPI Harvesting Conference

The below comments and reflections are based upon reflections made between the members of the preparation team (trainers and NA/SALTO officers), at the end of the Harvesting Conference. They are not meant as 'rigid recommendations', but rather as reflections for a next SPI Conference, hereby also harvesting the thoughts of the organisational and logistic side. We believe this is also beneficial for future events organised by involved NAs at national level, for the different strands identified within the SPI project.

NA/SALTO suggestions, reflections and comments:

- Mix of NAs, YWs and YPs was very interesting. It was great to have two sessions between NAs and to be mixed with all participants in the other sessions.
- YP should have also sessions between them, with very dynamic methods from the NFE like in YE for example because it seemed that they didn't mix. They would need a more guided approach in mixing.
- We have to find a way to help some participants to go to the other participants as some national groups seemed too much between themselves. Of course, this is due to the fact that some participants needed their accompanying person. I am thinking for example at the deaf people. I know it is not so easy to communicate but the final presentation showed that some communication is possible.
- Rethink how to involve the young people more in the conference as in regards to some of them it seemed that their "voice was not heard" as we initially intended.
- Should think of way to disseminate the results to organisations not involved in SPI.
- I was thinking that it could be like a day longer maybe, just to go a bit deeper on the topics how we can really work on inclusive projects and exchange some more of the practices.
- The fact of having people with different disabilities and needs present, and catering for that, showed how 'inclusion in practice' looks like. The Estonian partially sighted youth worker told me it was the best conference ever (from the point of view of being inclusive) and that she would take many methods and approaches home for her activities.
- Rethink the local dimension of the conference, maybe it would be relevant to visit some local inclusion projects.
- If relevant, reinforce the networking and partnership building dimension, as it was clear that youth workers had also that expectation.
- Consider the possibility to invite some guests such as European Commission and/or relevant stakeholders for certain moments (could be only for NAs sessions) - objective: to give visibility to SPI, recognition and further support.
- Need to have a communication strategy (including how to report and communicate the SPI/conference results).

Reflections from facilitators' team :

The below reflections are based upon critical thinking and are meant to be ‘food for thought’ for future conference/events within the SPI context. They do not reflect the very positive and satisfactory evaluation perceived by the facilitators’ team of the Harvesting Conference as such.

- Overall although we balanced the needs of the three different groups in the conference well, we were left with the feeling that what we created was a compromise between the groups rather than additional value of bringing them together. It did not quite provide enough of a training opportunity for youth workers, did not capture enough evaluative information for NA’s and was not engaging enough for the young people.
- It was highly challenging to design a programme with so many different needs, firstly in terms of the three participant groups, secondly in terms of the very different project stages, and lastly in terms of the additional needs of participants. It is important to recognise that the support needs of young people meant there was no way that separate sessions for young people would have been possible.
- The support from the Portuguese NA was excellent, and everything that could be needed as a trainer was in place and ready to go. The location and venue was excellent. It is important to double check and verify all the needed requirements in terms of accessibility, and this happened.
- We believe that inviting young people in a conference, is not the same as hearing the voice of young people or full youth participation and agree this did not come fully through. It would be useful to sharpen the thinking on what is meant by “voice of young people “ within the context of SPI as a whole to develop the intentions around this. For example what sort of dialogue does SPI wish to have with young people, the reasons SPI wishes to do this and how will it use the messages that come from young people afterwards? Examples could be dialogue on inclusion and how it can be achieved, dialogue on the direction of SPI, or dialogue on the needs of young people from specific groups. As facilitators, it was challenging to put in place a meaningful process for listening to young people within this conference, particularly when dealing with so many other competing tensions (e.g. different target groups with different aims and needs, short period, etc).
- The participant selection was excellent and really much more diverse than we anticipated, a sign of success within SPI.
- Overly, although we believe the conference was very well implemented and more successful than anticipated. Before repeating this conference we would seek to focus it more tightly and give more thought to what role and contribution it is intended to make to SPI as a whole. A narrower set of aims and objectives or target groups would allow it to be more successful. Rather than trying to be all things to all people it could be a high quality opportunity for smaller range of needs.
- Involving also more ‘regular’ youth work could increase inclusive projects in the future, connecting directly ‘inclusion’ groups with these youth work structures.

HINTS from sign language interpreters:

- When you're working with sign languages interpreters, you need to think ahead and prepare material to be sent beforehand (list below).
- Song lyrics, articles, quotes can be printed and handed out to deaf participants.
- One person should be identified as contact person for interpreters, e.g. person in charge with logistics.
- Clients (deaf participants) decide where the interpreters are working, if they're standing by the speaker or near the clients for example - except in formal conferences, where a specific place is prepared for the interpreters (in this case check lightening of interpreters).

What interpreters need to receive beforehand:

- name of people and organisations which will be presented;
- workshop flow and who is doing what (with names), e.g. team script;
- timings, list of topics, names, list of vocabulary, numbers (ex. SPI results), which are very specific and need to be spelled; the interpreter might choose to write the figures down, for ex.





from seed to seed