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# Report on the Level of Preparedness to Include LGBT+ Youth

Results of the survey distributed to youth  
organisations across the Mediterranean Sea

Project "Youth Workers Across the Mediterranean Sea"

2024-1-IT03-KA220-YOU-000243233

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### Objectives:

YW-MED aims to improve the quality of youth work throughout the Mediterranean, to increase the inclusion of young LGBTQIA+ during Erasmus+ youth exchanges in contexts where the inclusion and defence of LGBTQIA+ rights is still problematic. To do so, it will help a group of 24 youth workers to develop specific working tools and create an international network that encompasses the entire Mediterranean region.

### Implementation:

Two mobility activities will be carried out during which the 24 youth workers will work following the participatory design method. They will conduct research, both on the desktop and in the field, in order to highlight the situation of youth associations in the partner countries regarding the inclusion of young LGBTQIA+. Finally, the Network Youth Workers in the Mediterranean will be launched, a virtual space of connections, ideas and international cooperation.

### Expected Results:

- LGBT+ rights and good practices report in partner countries and in the Mediterranean
- Survey conducted among Mediterranean youth associations
- Guidelines to better prepare inclusive youth exchanges for LGBT youth
- Mediterranean YW Network
- Awareness-raising campaign
- Monitoring and impact assessment



# WP2 – Transnational Survey Report

## Work Package 2 – Data Research & Needs Analysis

### ***1. Research Design and Conceptual Framework***

The survey implemented under Work Package 2 was designed as a **cross-sectional descriptive study**, aiming to generate an evidence-based needs assessment regarding LGBTQIA+ inclusion in youth work across Mediterranean contexts.

A cross-sectional design was selected because the primary objective was not to measure change over time, but rather to capture a “snapshot” of the current situation, identifying structural patterns, training gaps, and contextual barriers at a specific point in time. This approach allows for comparative mapping across different national realities while maintaining methodological coherence.

The survey was grounded in the project’s intervention logic, which assumes that:

- Youth workers play a central role in fostering inclusion;
- Structural barriers vary significantly across Mediterranean countries;
- Practical guidelines must be developed on the basis of real, documented needs.

The questionnaire therefore focused on measuring five core constructs:

1. Self-assessed knowledge
2. Previous training exposure
3. Willingness to engage
4. Perceived barriers
5. Institutional climate and support needs

These constructs align directly with the project’s objectives and with broader theoretical frameworks on inclusive education and non-formal youth work.

### ***2. Sampling Strategy and Participant Profile***

The survey adopted a non-probabilistic voluntary response sampling approach. The questionnaire was disseminated publicly through the social media channels and communication platforms of the project partners, as well as through their professional networks. Participation was therefore open and based on individual willingness to respond.

The survey was publicly addressed to individuals working in the social and youth sector, particularly those involved in youth work, non-formal education, and mobility projects. As a result, responses were provided by participants who voluntarily chose to complete the questionnaire and who identified themselves as professionally active in relevant fields.



This approach allowed for broad outreach across different Mediterranean contexts and facilitated access to practitioners operating in diverse organizational and territorial environments. However, as participation was self-selected, the sample reflects individuals who were both reachable through partner networks and sufficiently motivated to engage with the topic. Consequently, the data represent informed and experience-based perspectives from professionals active in the social sector, while acknowledging the inherent limitations of voluntary, non-random sampling. Such an approach is widely used in exploratory social research, particularly when the population of interest – in this case youth workers engaged in Erasmus+ activities and intercultural youth exchanges – is professionally defined and relatively specific. The objective was not statistical representativeness, but rather the collection of meaningful, experience-based data from practitioners actively operating in the field.

A total of **200 valid responses** were collected from youth workers operating in:

- Spain
- Italy
- Greece
- Jordan
- Turkey
- Malta
- Albania
- Armenia
- Morocco

The sample includes both EU and Southern Mediterranean countries, ensuring representation of highly diverse legal, social, cultural, and political environments. This transnational diversity is particularly relevant given the strong variation in LGBTQIA+ rights frameworks and levels of social acceptance across the Mediterranean region.

### **Gender Identity Distribution**

Regarding gender identity, the distribution of respondents reflects a diverse composition, with the majority identifying as women, followed by men, and a smaller but significant percentage identifying as non-binary or preferring not to disclose.

This distribution is relevant for several reasons. First, the predominance of female respondents aligns with broader trends in the youth work and NGO sectors, where women are often overrepresented in educational and social professions. Second, the presence of non-binary respondents, although quantitatively smaller, indicates that the survey reached individuals directly belonging to gender-diverse communities, potentially enriching the data with lived-experience perspectives.

From an analytical standpoint, gender distribution may also influence responses related to perceived safety, institutional pressure, and willingness to engage in LGBTQIA+ inclusion. Research literature suggests that individuals belonging to marginalized gender identities may report higher sensitivity to



inclusion-related barriers and structural inequalities. Therefore, the diversity of gender identities within the sample contributes positively to the depth and nuance of the dataset.

## Age Distribution

The age distribution of respondents shows a concentration in the **young adult and early-career professional range**, with the majority of participants falling between approximately 25 and 40 years old. Smaller proportions are represented in the under-25 and over-45 categories.

This distribution is consistent with demographic patterns in the youth work sector, where many professionals enter the field in early adulthood and continue through mid-career stages. The predominance of respondents in the 25–40 age range suggests a sample composed largely of active practitioners with operational responsibilities in project management, facilitation, and mobility coordination.

From an analytical perspective, this age structure is particularly relevant for three reasons:

1. **Professional Maturity:** Respondents are likely to have accumulated practical field experience while still being actively engaged in training and professional development opportunities.
2. **Generational Sensitivity to Inclusion Issues:** Younger and mid-career professionals may demonstrate higher awareness of gender and sexual diversity topics compared to older cohorts, reflecting generational shifts in social attitudes.
3. **Capacity for Long-Term Impact:** As many respondents are in early or mid-career stages, strengthening their competences through YW-MED interventions has the potential for sustained, long-term impact within the youth sector.

At the same time, the presence of older respondents contributes intergenerational balance, offering perspectives shaped by longer-term institutional experience and potentially different socio-cultural reference points.

## Area of Origin (Urban, Peripheral, Rural Contexts)

An important structural variable concerns the **geographical area in which respondents operate**, categorized as urban, peripheral/semi-urban, and rural.

The data indicate that the majority of respondents are based in **urban environments**, followed by a smaller but relevant percentage working in **peripheral or semi-urban areas**, and a more limited representation from **rural contexts**.

This distribution is consistent with the organizational landscape of youth work, where NGOs and international mobility projects are often concentrated in metropolitan areas with greater institutional density and access to funding.

However, the presence of respondents from peripheral and rural areas is particularly significant for the interpretation of the results. Youth workers operating outside major urban centers frequently face:

- Stronger cultural conservatism;
- Lower visibility of LGBTQIA+ communities;



- Reduced access to specialized training and support services;
- Increased risk of social backlash when addressing inclusion topics.

From an analytical perspective, this territorial variable is highly relevant because attitudes toward LGBTQIA+ inclusion often correlate with geographical context. Research consistently shows that urban areas tend to provide more supportive environments, while rural contexts may present stronger structural and cultural barriers.

Therefore, the inclusion of respondents from diverse territorial settings strengthens the analytical robustness of the survey. It allows the project to capture not only institutional dynamics but also spatial inequalities in access to inclusive youth work practices.

In practical terms, this finding reinforces the importance of producing guidelines that are adaptable to contexts where institutional backing may be weaker and where youth workers may operate in relative isolation.

### Sector of Professional Background

Another relevant variable concerns the **professional sector in which respondents operate**. The data indicate that the majority of participants work within the **non-governmental and non-profit sector**, particularly in youth organizations, associations, and civil society entities involved in Erasmus+ mobility and educational projects. A smaller proportion of respondents are affiliated with public institutions (such as municipalities, educational institutions, or public youth services), while a limited number operate as independent trainers or consultants.

This distribution reflects the structural configuration of youth work across the Mediterranean region, where civil society organizations play a central role in the implementation of non-formal education initiatives and international mobility projects. NGOs often act as primary intermediaries between young people and European funding schemes, and therefore represent a key operational layer for the promotion of inclusive practices.

From an analytical perspective, the predominance of NGO-based respondents has several implications:

1. **Operational Flexibility:** Civil society organizations generally possess greater flexibility in adopting innovative or inclusion-oriented approaches compared to more bureaucratically structured public institutions. This may positively influence willingness to engage in LGBTQIA+ inclusion initiatives.
2. **Resource Constraints:** At the same time, NGOs frequently operate with limited financial and human resources. This structural fragility may explain the strong demand for clear guidelines, training opportunities, and institutional support identified elsewhere in the survey results.
3. **Institutional Backing Variability:** Respondents working within public institutions may experience different levels of formal policy support compared to those in NGOs. This can affect perceived safety, institutional pressure, and the capacity to implement inclusive measures systematically.

The presence of respondents from multiple professional sectors enhances the analytical richness of the dataset. It allows the survey to capture differences not only between countries, but also between institutional ecosystems. For example, inclusion practices may be more policy-driven in public

institutions, whereas in NGOs they may depend more heavily on individual commitment and organizational culture.

In this sense, sectoral diversity within the sample strengthens the interpretative value of the findings. It confirms that LGBTQIA+ inclusion in youth work is not confined to a single institutional setting, but is instead shaped by a complex interaction between organizational structure, funding mechanisms, policy frameworks, and professional culture.

Overall, the sectoral distribution of respondents supports the project's strategic decision to produce practical and adaptable guidelines that can be implemented both within flexible NGO environments and within more structured public institutional contexts.

It is important to clarify that, due to the voluntary and non-random nature of the sampling process, the results cannot be statistically generalized to the entire Mediterranean youth work sector. Participation was self-selected, meaning that respondents were individuals who chose to engage with the survey and were reachable through the communication channels of the project partners. As a consequence, the dataset may reflect a higher level of interest or sensitivity toward the topic compared to the broader professional population.

Nevertheless, the sample demonstrates significant heterogeneity in terms of geographical distribution, gender identity, age range, sector of employment, and territorial context (urban, peripheral, and rural). This diversity allows for the identification of meaningful trends, recurring structural challenges, and shared training needs across different environments. While not representative in a statistical sense, the dataset provides robust exploratory insights that strengthen the analytical reliability of the WP2 needs assessment and support the evidence-based development of subsequent project outputs.

### ***3. Data Collection Instrument and Variable Structure***

The data collection instrument was designed as a structured online questionnaire combining quantitative and qualitative components. The objective was to ensure methodological balance between measurable indicators and contextualized narrative insights. The questionnaire included four main typologies of variables:

- **Likert-scale questions (ordinal variables)**
- **Dichotomous questions (binary variables)**
- **Multiple-choice frequency-based items**
- **Open-ended qualitative questions**

This mixed-structure design allowed the survey to capture both attitudinal intensity and structural patterns, while also preserving space for experiential input.

#### **Likert-Scale Variables (Ordinal Measurement)**

A significant portion of the questionnaire relied on Likert-scale questions, using a 5-point ordinal scale structured as follows:

- 1 = Very Low



- 2 = Low
- 3 = Moderate
- 4 = High
- 5 = Very High

These questions were primarily used to measure:

- Self-assessed knowledge level
- Perceived confidence
- Willingness to engage
- Perceived safety in workplace contexts

From a measurement perspective, Likert scales are technically **ordinal variables**, meaning that while the order of categories is meaningful (e.g., “High” represents more than “Moderate”), the distance between categories is not guaranteed to be mathematically equal.

However, for descriptive analytical purposes, the scale values were numerically coded (1–5) and used to calculate:

- Mean (M)
- Frequency distribution
- Percentage distribution

This practice is widely accepted in applied social research when the objective is exploratory or descriptive rather than inferential. The use of mean scores does not imply interval-level precision but provides a clear summary indicator of central tendency, facilitating interpretation and cross-variable comparison.

In addition to mean values, distribution patterns were examined to identify:

- Skewness toward higher or lower values
- Concentration around mid-scale categories
- Dispersion of responses

This multi-layered reading reduces the risk of oversimplification when using ordinal data.

### **Dichotomous Variables (Binary Indicators)**

The questionnaire included several binary (Yes/No) variables to measure clear structural conditions, such as:

- Previous formal training on LGBTQIA+ topics
- Experience of institutional or social pressure

Binary variables are particularly useful for identifying prevalence rates and calculating proportional indicators (e.g., percentage of trained respondents).



These variables allow for straightforward frequency analysis and provide strong clarity when identifying structural gaps (for example, the training exposure rate).

### Multiple-Choice Frequency-Based Items

Certain questions allowed respondents to select multiple options (e.g., perceived barriers or support needs). These items were treated as nominal categorical variables and analyzed through frequency counts.

The purpose of this format was to:

- Identify dominant barriers
- Map recurring needs
- Detect overlapping structural challenges

Unlike single-choice questions, multiple-response items allow for the complexity of real-world conditions, where several obstacles may coexist simultaneously.

### Open-Ended Qualitative Questions

To complement the quantitative indicators, the survey included open-ended questions inviting respondents to describe:

- Expected challenges
- Professional needs
- Contextual concerns

These responses were analyzed through thematic clustering, identifying recurring semantic patterns and grouping similar answers into conceptual categories.

This qualitative layer served two main methodological purposes:

1. **Contextualization of Quantitative Data**  
It allowed deeper understanding of why certain barriers were frequently selected.
2. **Detection of Emerging Themes**  
It enabled identification of concerns not fully captured by predefined categories.

By integrating qualitative input, the instrument avoided purely numeric abstraction and enhanced interpretative validity.

### Instrument Design Rationale

The overall structure of the questionnaire reflects a **mixed descriptive design**, where quantitative indicators provide measurable trends, while qualitative responses add depth and nuance.

This design ensures:

- Analytical clarity



- Methodological transparency
- Practical usability of findings for project development

The instrument was intentionally constructed to remain accessible to respondents from diverse educational and cultural backgrounds, minimizing technical jargon and reducing response bias.

### **Analytical Implications**

The combination of ordinal, binary, and nominal variables allowed for:

- Cross-variable comparison (e.g., knowledge level vs. training exposure)
- Prevalence estimation (e.g., percentage reporting institutional pressure)
- Pattern identification (e.g., clustering of perceived barriers)

Given the exploratory and non-probabilistic nature of the sampling, no inferential statistical modeling (e.g., regression analysis) was conducted. Instead, emphasis was placed on descriptive robustness and structural pattern recognition.

This approach is consistent with the diagnostic function of WP2, whose purpose was to generate evidence-based guidance for subsequent co-design and capacity-building activities.

## **4. Statistical Indicators and Analytical Procedures**

### **4.1 Knowledge Indicator**

Respondents were asked to self-assess their level of knowledge regarding LGBTQIA+ rights, inclusion policies, and related social and educational issues using a 5-point Likert scale. The purpose of this indicator was to establish a baseline measure of perceived competence within the sample.

The calculated mean score ( $M = 3.1$ ) reflects a moderate central tendency, positioning the overall sample slightly above the midpoint of the scale (3 = Moderate). From a descriptive statistical perspective, this indicates that respondents generally perceive themselves as possessing foundational or intermediate knowledge, rather than advanced expertise.

However, mean values alone do not fully capture the distributional characteristics of the variable. An examination of the frequency distribution reveals a concentration of responses at levels 3 and 4, with relatively fewer responses at level 1 (Very Low) and level 5 (Very High).

This clustering pattern suggests three important analytical implications:

#### **1. Baseline Awareness is Present**

The limited proportion of responses at levels 1 and 2 indicates that outright lack of knowledge is not widespread within the sample. Most respondents demonstrate at least moderate familiarity with LGBTQIA+ topics.

#### **2. Advanced Competence is Limited**

The relatively small percentage selecting level 5 suggests that highly specialized or expert-level knowledge remains rare. This supports the interpretation that knowledge may be general or conceptual rather than deeply operational.



### 3. Uneven Depth of Understanding

The concentration around the mid-to-upper scale implies heterogeneity in perceived expertise. While many respondents feel moderately informed, there is limited evidence of consolidated high-level competence across the sample.

From an analytical standpoint, it is also important to consider that this variable measures **self-perceived knowledge**, not objectively tested knowledge. Self-assessment scales can be influenced by:

- Confidence levels;
- Cultural norms regarding self-evaluation;
- Social desirability bias;
- Variations in interpretation of what constitutes “high knowledge.”

For instance, respondents from contexts where LGBTQIA+ topics are less publicly discussed may rate themselves lower despite possessing relevant experiential knowledge. Conversely, respondents highly engaged in activist or inclusive networks may rate themselves higher based on familiarity with terminology rather than structured policy understanding.

In statistical terms, the distribution does not appear polarized (i.e., it does not show bimodal clustering at both low and high extremes), but rather moderately concentrated around the central categories. This indicates relative internal consistency within the sample.

Importantly, when interpreted alongside the Training Exposure Indicator (only 36% reporting formal training), the knowledge mean of 3.1 suggests that much of the perceived competence may derive from informal learning, professional experience, or personal engagement rather than structured educational pathways.

This gap between moderate knowledge and limited formal training reinforces one of the central findings of WP2:

Youth workers demonstrate baseline awareness but require structured capacity-building interventions to consolidate expertise and operational competence.

Therefore, the Knowledge Indicator serves not only as a descriptive statistic but also as a diagnostic tool, justifying the design of WP3 co-design workshops and the development of practical guidelines tailored to an intermediate competence level.

#### 4.2 Training Exposure Rate

The training exposure variable was operationalized as a binary indicator:

- **Yes** = Received formal LGBTQIA+ training
- **No** = No formal training

Out of the total respondents, only **36% reported having participated in structured or formally organized training activities** specifically addressing LGBTQIA+ issues. Consequently, nearly **two-thirds of the sample (64%) indicated the absence of formal training exposure** in this area.

From a statistical perspective, this proportion highlights a significant structural gap in professional preparation. In fields such as youth work and non-formal education—where inclusion and diversity



management are increasingly central—such a low training rate suggests that LGBTQIA+ inclusion has not yet been systematically embedded in professional development frameworks.

### **Relationship Between Knowledge and Training**

When this indicator is analyzed alongside the Knowledge Indicator ( $M = 3.1$ ), an important pattern emerges. The coexistence of:

- A **moderate average self-assessed knowledge level**, and
- A **low rate of formal training exposure**

indicates that perceived competence is not strongly correlated with structured educational pathways.

In other words, respondents report feeling moderately informed despite limited access to certified or formalized training programs. This discrepancy suggests that knowledge acquisition is occurring through alternative mechanisms, such as:

- Informal peer exchange;
- Participation in inclusive projects without dedicated training modules;
- Self-directed research;
- Engagement with online materials and advocacy content;
- Personal lived experience or proximity to LGBTQIA+ communities.

While informal and experiential learning are valuable and often powerful in shaping attitudes, they may lack systematic depth. Formal training programs typically provide:

- Legal and policy frameworks;
- Structured facilitation methodologies;
- Risk assessment tools;
- Evidence-based approaches to conflict management;
- Standardized terminology and ethical guidelines.

The absence of these structured components may result in uneven competence levels, particularly when addressing complex or sensitive situations in intercultural youth exchange contexts.

### **Interpretation in Terms of Professionalization**

From a broader professionalization perspective, the data suggest that LGBTQIA+ inclusion in youth work remains partially dependent on individual initiative rather than institutional mandate. The relatively low exposure rate indicates that:

- Inclusion training is not universally integrated into youth worker certification programs;
- Access to specialized courses may be geographically uneven;
- Organizational priorities may vary significantly across countries and sectors.



In more conservative or legally restrictive environments, formal training opportunities may be scarce due to regulatory or political constraints. In such contexts, youth workers may rely even more heavily on informal learning, potentially increasing variability in quality and consistency of inclusive practices.

### **Operational and Risk Implications**

The limited training exposure also has practical implications. Youth workers operating without structured preparation may experience:

- Uncertainty when addressing gender identity or sexual orientation topics;
- Fear of making linguistic or procedural errors;
- Difficulty mediating conflict arising from cultural or ideological polarization;
- Limited familiarity with inclusive logistics (e.g., accommodation arrangements, safe spaces, gender-neutral practices).

This situation does not necessarily imply low motivation or resistance. On the contrary, the high willingness to engage identified in the survey suggests that the sector is receptive but insufficiently supported by institutionalized competence-building mechanisms.

### **Strategic Implications for Project Design**

From a project development standpoint, the Training Exposure Rate provides strong empirical justification for the intervention logic of YW-MED. The data confirm the need to:

- Move from informal awareness to structured competence;
- Provide practical and transferable tools;
- Standardize minimum knowledge frameworks across diverse Mediterranean contexts;
- Create transnational learning spaces to compensate for uneven national training infrastructures.

The 36% training exposure figure thus functions not merely as a descriptive statistic, but as a diagnostic indicator revealing a “capacity-building gap” within the youth sector.

In this sense, WP2 findings substantiate the necessity of WP3 activities and validate the strategic decision to develop structured Guidelines and participatory workshops aimed at consolidating professional expertise in LGBTQIA+ inclusive youth exchanges.

#### **4.3 Willingness to Engage (Motivational Indicator)**

The willingness to engage variable was measured through a Likert-scale item assessing respondents’ declared readiness to actively support and promote LGBTQIA+ inclusion within their professional practice. The distribution of responses shows a **positive skew**, with the majority of participants selecting the upper categories of the scale (e.g., “High” or “Very High”).



From a statistical standpoint, a positively skewed distribution in this context indicates that responses are concentrated toward the higher end of the scale, reflecting strong motivational orientation within the sample. The relatively limited frequency of low or neutral responses suggests that resistance or reluctance is not a dominant feature among respondents.

This finding is particularly significant when interpreted in conjunction with the Knowledge Indicator ( $M = 3.1$ ) and the Training Exposure Rate (36%). While competence levels appear moderate and formal training exposure is limited, motivational readiness is comparatively high. In analytical terms, this indicates the presence of a **motivation–competence gap**, where attitudinal openness exceeds structured preparedness.

### Interpretative Significance

The high willingness to engage can be interpreted as a positive enabling factor within the sector. Motivation plays a critical role in adult learning theory and professional development models. According to established learning frameworks, individuals with high intrinsic motivation are more likely to:

- Participate actively in training initiatives;
- Internalize new knowledge;
- Apply acquired competences in real-world settings;
- Sustain behavioral change over time.

In this sense, motivational readiness acts as a multiplier effect for capacity-building interventions. When willingness is high, even moderate training inputs can generate disproportionately strong impact, as participants are already predisposed to integrate inclusive practices into their work.

### Potential Influence of Self-Selection Bias

It is important, however, to acknowledge that the voluntary nature of the survey may partially influence this indicator. Because participation was self-selected and the questionnaire was disseminated through partner networks, respondents may already have an interest in social inclusion topics. This could result in an overrepresentation of individuals who are more positively oriented toward LGBTQIA+ issues compared to the broader youth work population.

Nevertheless, even accounting for potential self-selection bias, the high motivational scores remain analytically relevant. They demonstrate that within reachable and engaged professional networks, there exists a strong foundation upon which structured interventions can be built.

### Operational Implications

The motivational indicator has direct operational implications for the design and sustainability of YW-MED activities:

#### 1. High Training Uptake Potential

Youth workers demonstrating strong willingness are more likely to participate in workshops and engage meaningfully in co-design processes.



## 2. **Facilitation of Peer-to-Peer Diffusion**

Motivated participants are more inclined to disseminate acquired tools within their organizations, increasing multiplier effects.

## 3. **Reduced Resistance to Change**

When attitudinal resistance is low, implementation barriers tend to shift from ideological opposition to structural constraints (e.g., lack of resources or institutional support).

Thus, the data suggest that the primary challenge is not persuading youth workers of the importance of LGBTQIA+ inclusion, but rather equipping them with adequate competences and institutional backing.

### **Strategic Relevance for WP3 and Beyond**

The Willingness to Engage indicator reinforces the project's strategic logic. The presence of high motivational readiness increases the probability that WP3 training workshops and the development of the YW-MED Guidelines will produce tangible and sustainable outcomes.

In practical terms, motivation represents a foundational asset within the sector. By aligning structured capacity-building activities with this existing openness, the project maximizes its potential for long-term impact across diverse Mediterranean contexts.

In conclusion, the motivational indicator highlights a critical strength within the youth work ecosystem: while structural gaps in training persist, attitudinal readiness provides fertile ground for transformative educational interventions.

### **4.4 Frequency Analysis of Perceived Barriers**

Perceived challenges were analyzed using **descriptive frequency distribution analysis**, a method suitable for categorical and multiple-response variables within non-probabilistic samples. Respondents were allowed to select more than one barrier, acknowledging the multifactorial nature of inclusion challenges in youth work settings.

The frequency analysis revealed that **cultural or social resistance** was the most frequently selected barrier across countries. Secondary barriers included:

- Lack of awareness among participants or stakeholders;
- Insufficient professional expertise;
- Regulatory or legal constraints;
- Fear of backlash or reputational risk;
- Limited funding or institutional support.

### **Analytical Interpretation of Dominant Barriers**

The prominence of cultural or social resistance is particularly significant. Unlike barriers such as lack of training or limited resources—which can be addressed through technical interventions—cultural resistance reflects deeper normative and ideological structures within societies.



This suggests that LGBTQIA+ inclusion in youth work is not merely a matter of professional competence, but is embedded within broader socio-political dynamics. Cultural resistance may manifest in various forms:

- Negative societal attitudes toward LGBTQIA+ identities;
- Conservative value systems influencing youth participation;
- Family or community opposition;
- Internalized biases within institutions.

The cross-national recurrence of this barrier indicates that the issue transcends individual countries and reflects structural tensions across the Mediterranean region, where legal frameworks and social acceptance vary significantly.

### **Structural vs. Operational Barriers**

The frequency distribution also allows differentiation between:

1. **Structural barriers**  
(e.g., cultural resistance, regulatory constraints)
2. **Operational barriers**  
(e.g., lack of awareness, insufficient expertise)

Structural barriers are embedded in broader societal or legal systems and are less immediately controllable by individual youth workers. Operational barriers, by contrast, are more directly addressable through training, guidelines, and institutional reform.

The coexistence of both categories confirms that effective intervention requires a multi-layered approach combining:

- Capacity-building;
- Policy awareness;
- Context-sensitive strategies;
- Risk management tools.

### **Geographic and Contextual Implications**

Although the survey did not apply inferential statistical comparisons between countries, descriptive patterns suggest that regulatory constraints and fear of backlash were more frequently reported in contexts with restrictive legal frameworks.

This reinforces the importance of context-adapted guidelines. Youth workers operating in legally or socially restrictive environments may require:

- Enhanced risk assessment strategies;
- Confidentiality protocols;



- Gradual and culturally sensitive approaches to inclusion.

In more supportive contexts, barriers may shift toward technical gaps (e.g., lack of structured training), rather than overt resistance.

### **Methodological Considerations**

From a methodological standpoint, frequency analysis is particularly appropriate for exploratory research using voluntary sampling. Because the dataset is non-probabilistic, inferential statistical techniques (such as hypothesis testing or regression modeling) would not produce generalizable conclusions.

Descriptive frequency distribution, however, allows for:

- Identification of dominant and recurring patterns;
- Prioritization of intervention areas;
- Clear visualization of structural trends;
- Transparent interpretation of categorical data.

By focusing on proportional prevalence rather than causal inference, the analysis remains statistically coherent while still providing robust diagnostic insight.

### **Strategic Implications for Project Design**

The frequency analysis of perceived barriers directly informed the design of WP3 activities. Specifically:

- The prominence of cultural resistance justified the inclusion of sessions on managing polarization and intercultural dialogue.
- The recurring mention of insufficient expertise reinforced the need for practical tools and structured guidelines.
- The identification of regulatory constraints highlighted the importance of contextual adaptability.

Thus, the barrier analysis functioned as a **strategic prioritization mechanism**, ensuring that project outputs responded to the most frequently experienced obstacles.

In conclusion, the frequency analysis of perceived barriers demonstrates that LGBTQIA+ inclusion challenges in youth work operate at both technical and socio-political levels. Addressing them effectively requires not only competence development, but also awareness of structural dynamics shaping professional practice across Mediterranean contexts.

#### **4.5 Institutional Pressure Variable**

The institutional pressure variable was measured through a binary (Yes/No) question asking respondents whether they had ever experienced pressure not to address LGBTQIA+ issues within their professional context.



Approximately **25% of respondents** reported having experienced such pressure.

From a descriptive statistical perspective, a proportion of one in four respondents is highly significant. Even within a voluntary and potentially inclusion-oriented sample, the presence of institutional or social pressure affecting 25% of professionals indicates that resistance to LGBTQIA+ inclusion remains structurally embedded in certain environments.

This proportion cannot be considered marginal. In organizational research, minority prevalence above 15–20% is generally interpreted as indicative of systemic phenomena rather than isolated cases. Therefore, the reported pressure suggests that opposition to inclusion is not episodic but recurrent in specific contexts.

### **Nature and Sources of Pressure**

Although the survey did not apply qualitative deep-dive interviews to identify detailed sources, institutional pressure in similar contexts typically manifests through:

- Implicit discouragement from supervisors or organizational leadership;
- Community-level resistance or reputational concerns;
- Political or regulatory sensitivities;
- Fear of funding loss or stakeholder backlash;
- Informal social stigma within workplace environments.

The pressure may be explicit (direct requests not to address certain topics) or implicit (signals discouraging open discussion). Both forms can significantly affect professional behavior and self-censorship.

### **Analytical Interpretation**

The coexistence of:

- High willingness to engage;
- Moderate knowledge levels;
- Limited formal training;
- Reported institutional pressure (25%);

suggests a complex ecosystem in which motivation is present but structurally constrained.

In analytical terms, institutional pressure represents a **contextual constraint variable**, potentially moderating the relationship between willingness and action. Even highly motivated youth workers may limit inclusive practices if they perceive personal, professional, or organizational risk. This variable therefore functions as a risk indicator within the broader inclusion framework.

### **Implications for Risk Assessment**



From a project management perspective, the Institutional Pressure Variable is particularly relevant for risk analysis and sustainability planning.

In contexts where youth workers experience pressure:

- Implementation of inclusive practices may be inconsistent;
- Dissemination of guidelines may require cautious adaptation;
- Participants may need confidential or protected learning environments;
- Long-term institutionalization of inclusive practices may face resistance.

For this reason, sustainability strategies cannot rely solely on competence-building. They must also include:

- Advocacy components;
- Institutional dialogue;
- Context-sensitive adaptation;
- Support networks among youth workers.

### **Structural Significance**

The presence of institutional pressure also reinforces the earlier finding regarding cultural and social resistance as dominant barriers. These two variables are interrelated: cultural resistance at the societal level often translates into institutional caution or suppression at the organizational level.

Importantly, the voluntary sampling method may actually underestimate the phenomenon. Individuals who experience severe institutional pressure may be less likely to participate in publicly disseminated surveys addressing LGBTQIA+ inclusion. Therefore, the reported 25% could represent a conservative estimate rather than a maximum threshold.

### **Strategic Implications for YW-MED**

For YW-MED, this finding underscores the importance of:

- Providing youth workers with not only tools, but also strategies for navigating sensitive environments;
- Framing inclusion within broader human rights and European values discourse;
- Encouraging peer support networks that reduce professional isolation;
- Designing guidelines adaptable to varying levels of institutional openness.

In conclusion, the Institutional Pressure Variable highlights a critical structural dimension of LGBTQIA+ inclusion in Mediterranean youth work: motivation and competence must be accompanied by contextual awareness and risk-sensitive implementation strategies to ensure sustainable impact.

## **4.6 Perceived Safety Index**



Perceived safety in discussing LGBTQIA+ topics within the workplace was measured through an ordinal Likert-scale variable, capturing respondents' subjective assessment of how safe they feel addressing such issues in their professional environment.

The distribution of responses shows a concentration in the mid-level category ("Somewhat safe"), rather than in the highest category ("Very safe"). This pattern is statistically meaningful and requires careful interpretation.

### **Interpretation of Central Tendency and Distribution**

A concentration around the mid-scale suggests that respondents neither experience widespread hostility nor fully consolidated institutional protection. In statistical terms, the distribution does not indicate polarization (i.e., extreme clustering at both ends of the scale), but rather a moderate central clustering with dispersion toward both higher and lower values.

This implies:

- Inclusion discourse is present and to some extent normalized;
- However, institutional climates are not uniformly supportive;
- Psychological safety remains conditional rather than guaranteed.

The relatively lower proportion of "Very safe" responses is particularly significant. It indicates that while overt opposition may not dominate professional environments, structural reassurance and explicit institutional backing are not yet fully consolidated.

### **Conceptual Clarification: Perceived vs. Objective Safety**

It is important to emphasize that this indicator measures **perceived safety**, not objective institutional policy. Perceived safety reflects psychological climate rather than formal regulation.

Organizational research shows that perceived safety is a strong predictor of behavior. Even when inclusive policies exist on paper, professionals may hesitate to act if they perceive potential social, reputational, or hierarchical consequences.

Thus, the Perceived Safety Index captures a relational and cultural dimension of institutional climate that cannot be fully assessed through policy analysis alone.

### **Contextual Variability**

The dispersion of responses across the scale suggests contextual variability across:

- Countries with differing legal frameworks;
- Urban versus rural environments;
- NGO versus public sector institutions;
- Organizations with explicit diversity policies versus those without formal frameworks.



In contexts with stronger legal protections and institutionalized diversity policies, perceived safety levels are likely higher. Conversely, in socially conservative or legally restrictive contexts, safety perceptions may be more fragile.

The variability observed in the data reinforces the idea that Mediterranean youth work environments are heterogeneous and shaped by multi-layered socio-political factors.

### **Relationship with Institutional Pressure**

The Perceived Safety Index is closely related to the Institutional Pressure Variable. While 25% reported explicit pressure, a larger proportion may experience subtle uncertainty or lack of explicit support, reflected in mid-level safety ratings.

In analytical terms, perceived safety can be seen as a moderating variable affecting the translation of willingness into action. Even highly motivated youth workers may limit proactive engagement if their professional environment is perceived as only “somewhat safe.”

### **Implications for Capacity-Building**

From a strategic perspective, the Perceived Safety Index highlights the need for interventions that go beyond knowledge transfer. Capacity-building efforts should also aim to:

- Strengthen institutional confidence;
- Provide shared language frameworks that reduce ambiguity;
- Promote peer support networks;
- Encourage explicit organizational endorsement of inclusive practices.

Inclusion becomes sustainable not only when individuals are competent, but when they operate within environments perceived as supportive and predictable.

### **Sustainability Considerations**

Within the broader sustainability framework of the project, the Perceived Safety Index functions as an early-warning indicator. Moderate safety perceptions suggest that inclusion efforts may depend heavily on individual champions rather than systemic institutional commitment.

For long-term impact, interventions must aim to shift safety perceptions from conditional (“somewhat safe”) to consolidated (“very safe”), ensuring that inclusive youth work becomes structurally embedded rather than individually driven.

In conclusion, the Perceived Safety Index reveals a transitional stage within Mediterranean youth work contexts: inclusion discourse is present and growing, but full institutional consolidation remains uneven. Addressing this gap is essential for transforming motivation and knowledge into sustained professional practice.



## 5. Qualitative Data Analysis

In addition to structured quantitative variables, the survey included open-ended questions allowing respondents to describe perceived challenges, contextual constraints, and professional needs in their own words. These responses were analyzed using a **thematic clustering approach**, a qualitative analytical method aimed at identifying recurring semantic patterns across narrative data.

### Analytical Procedure

The qualitative analysis followed a multi-step process:

1. **Initial Reading and Familiarization**

All responses were reviewed in their original language to preserve semantic nuance and contextual meaning.

2. **Preliminary Coding**

Key expressions and recurring concepts were identified and assigned descriptive codes (e.g., “polarization,” “fear of backlash,” “cultural difference,” “legal restriction”).

3. **Theme Aggregation**

Related codes were grouped into broader thematic categories, allowing for conceptual clustering.

4. **Cross-Comparison with Quantitative Results**

Themes were then interpreted in light of quantitative findings, ensuring coherence between narrative insights and statistical trends.

This process allowed for both inductive pattern recognition (emerging directly from responses) and deductive alignment with the survey’s structural variables.

### Recurring Thematic Clusters

The analysis identified several recurring thematic categories:

1. **Fear of Polarization in Groups**

Many respondents expressed concern about the risk of ideological polarization within youth exchange groups. This fear often relates to:

- Participants coming from culturally conservative contexts;
- Conflicts between personal beliefs and inclusive principles;
- Risk of group division along political or religious lines.

This theme aligns closely with the quantitative finding that cultural and social resistance is the most frequently reported barrier. However, qualitative responses provide deeper insight into the relational dimension of this barrier, emphasizing emotional tension, fear of confrontation, and uncertainty in facilitation strategies.

Polarization was not described as hypothetical, but as an anticipated or previously experienced dynamic, indicating that youth workers perceive inclusion as potentially conflict-generating in intercultural settings.

## **2. Risk of Inappropriate Language**

A second dominant theme concerns anxiety around the use of inclusive language. Respondents frequently mentioned:

- Fear of “saying the wrong thing”;
- Uncertainty about terminology;
- Lack of confidence in addressing pronouns or gender identities;
- Concern about unintentionally offending participants.

This theme reinforces the earlier statistical observation regarding moderate knowledge levels combined with low formal training exposure. It highlights that language competence is perceived as a sensitive and high-stakes domain. Importantly, this concern reflects not resistance but vulnerability: respondents demonstrate willingness to engage, but feel insufficiently equipped linguistically.

## **3. Intercultural Misunderstandings**

Another recurring theme concerns the complexity of intercultural dynamics. Respondents emphasized that:

- Cultural norms around gender and sexuality differ significantly across countries;
- Legal frameworks vary, affecting openness and visibility;
- Communication styles and social expectations may conflict.

This theme deepens the understanding of perceived barriers by situating them within intercultural educational settings. Youth exchanges inherently involve participants from diverse socio-political contexts, making inclusion not merely a local issue but a transnational negotiation process.

The qualitative data reveal that youth workers perceive inclusion as context-dependent and requiring adaptive facilitation skills.

## **4. Legal Differences Between Countries**

Respondents also highlighted concerns related to divergent legal frameworks. These included:

- Criminalization or partial legal recognition in certain countries;
- Unequal protection of LGBTQIA+ rights;
- Risk exposure when traveling between contexts.

This theme connects structural barriers (regulatory constraints) with practical implementation challenges. Legal differences may influence participant safety, confidentiality considerations, and program design.

The qualitative responses thus confirm that LGBTQIA+ inclusion cannot be addressed uniformly across the Mediterranean region without contextual adaptation.



## Added Value of Qualitative Analysis

The qualitative component enriches the quantitative data in several important ways:

### 1. Emotional and Relational Insight

While scaled questions quantify prevalence, open-ended responses reveal emotional dimensions such as fear, uncertainty, and relational tension.

### 2. Contextual Depth

Narratives clarify how structural barriers manifest in real-life facilitation scenarios.

### 3. Nuanced Understanding of Motivation

Respondents' language reflects strong commitment, even when describing difficulties, reinforcing the motivational findings identified quantitatively.

### 4. Detection of Subtle Dynamics

Themes such as polarization or linguistic anxiety may not fully emerge from frequency-based questions but become visible through narrative articulation.

## Methodological Considerations

Thematic clustering, while systematic, remains interpretative. Unlike quantitative analysis, qualitative coding involves researcher judgment in categorizing responses. To enhance analytical reliability:

- Recurring codes were validated across multiple responses;
- Themes were only considered dominant when appearing consistently across contexts;
- Interpretations were cross-checked against quantitative trends for coherence.

Given the exploratory nature of WP2, the integration of qualitative insights strengthens interpretative validity without claiming causal generalization.

## Strategic Implications

The qualitative findings provide critical guidance for subsequent project phases:

- The fear of polarization informed the inclusion of conflict management modules in WP3 workshops.
- Linguistic anxiety justified the strong focus on inclusive language within the Guidelines.
- Intercultural and legal variability reinforced the need for adaptable and context-sensitive tools.

In summary, the qualitative analysis complements the statistical indicators by revealing the relational, emotional, and contextual layers of LGBTQIA+ inclusion challenges. It confirms that inclusion in Mediterranean youth work is not merely a technical competence issue, but a complex socio-cultural negotiation process requiring structured, sensitive, and adaptable approaches.



## 6. Reliability and Validity

### Reliability

Reliability refers to the internal consistency and stability of a measurement instrument. In the context of this survey, reliability was supported through several structural and procedural elements.

First, the questionnaire followed a **standardized structure**, ensuring that all respondents were presented with identical questions in the same sequence. This uniformity reduces measurement variability attributable to instrument design rather than to respondent differences.

Second, the consistent use of a **5-point Likert scale** across attitudinal and perceptual variables enhanced comparability between items. Maintaining the same scaling logic (1 = Very Low to 5 = Very High) minimizes cognitive confusion and supports internal coherence of responses.

Third, the survey was administered digitally, which reduced the risk of transcription errors and manual data entry bias. Digital collection ensures that responses are recorded exactly as submitted, strengthening data integrity.

Fourth, particular attention was paid to **clarity and accessibility of wording**. Questions were formulated using non-technical language, minimizing ambiguity and reducing the likelihood of misinterpretation across culturally diverse respondents. Given the transnational nature of the sample, linguistic neutrality was a crucial reliability consideration.

It should be noted that the survey did not include formal psychometric testing (e.g., Cronbach's alpha for internal consistency), as the instrument was not designed as a multi-item scale measuring a single latent construct. Rather, it comprised independent indicators serving diagnostic and descriptive purposes. In this context, reliability was ensured through structural clarity and standardized administration rather than psychometric scale validation.

### Construct Validity

Construct validity concerns the extent to which an instrument accurately measures the theoretical concepts it intends to assess.

The survey demonstrates strong construct validity because the selected variables directly correspond to the conceptual framework underlying the YW-MED project. Specifically, the instrument measured:

- **Knowledge (cognitive dimension)**  
Capturing perceived understanding of LGBTQIA+ rights and inclusion practices.
- **Willingness (attitudinal dimension)**  
Assessing motivational readiness to engage in inclusive practices.
- **Perceived Barriers (structural dimension)**  
Identifying external obstacles such as cultural resistance and regulatory constraints.
- **Institutional Climate (contextual dimension)**  
Measuring perceived safety and institutional pressure within professional environments.
- **Support Needs (operational dimension)**  
Mapping practical requirements for training, guidelines, and partnerships.



These dimensions reflect a multidimensional understanding of inclusion, incorporating cognitive, affective, structural, and contextual components. This alignment ensures that the survey does not measure abstract attitudes in isolation, but rather captures the ecosystem within which youth workers operate.

Furthermore, the integration of qualitative questions enhances construct validity by allowing respondents to elaborate on contextual factors not fully captured by predefined categories.

### **Internal Coherence**

Although the survey was not designed as a composite psychometric instrument, internal coherence can be observed in the logical relationships between variables. For example:

- Moderate knowledge levels combined with low formal training exposure;
- High willingness coexisting with moderate perceived safety;
- Structural barriers aligning with reported institutional pressure.

These coherent patterns reinforce the interpretative credibility of the dataset.

### **Limitations**

Despite methodological strengths, several limitations must be acknowledged.

#### **Non-probabilistic Sampling:**

The voluntary response design limits statistical generalizability. Results cannot be extrapolated to the entire Mediterranean youth work sector.

#### **Self-Report Bias:**

All variables are based on self-assessment, which may introduce social desirability bias. Respondents may overestimate knowledge or willingness, particularly given the normative sensitivity of LGBTQIA+ inclusion topics.

#### **Uneven Country Distribution:**

Participation levels varied across countries, which may affect comparative interpretation. Contexts with higher response rates may disproportionately influence aggregate findings.

#### **Absence of Inferential Statistical Modeling:**

The study relies exclusively on descriptive statistics. No inferential tests (e.g., regression analysis, correlation coefficients) were conducted due to the exploratory design and non-random sampling.

#### **Cross-Sectional Design:**

As a single-time-point survey, the instrument does not measure change over time or causal relationships.

### **Overall Assessment**



Despite these limitations, the dataset provides robust descriptive evidence suitable for program design and strategic planning. The survey fulfills its diagnostic function within WP2 by identifying recurring patterns, structural gaps, and operational needs.

In exploratory programmatic research, particularly within Erasmus+ contexts, the primary objective is not statistical generalization but evidence-informed intervention design. In this regard, the methodological framework employed is coherent with the project's scope and objectives.

The reliability and validity considerations outlined above support the credibility of the findings and justify their use as a foundation for WP3 co-design activities and guideline development.

## **7. Methodological Contribution to Project Development**

The WP2 survey functioned as a **diagnostic baseline assessment**, providing the empirical foundation upon which subsequent project phases were constructed. Rather than relying on general assumptions about inclusion challenges in the Mediterranean youth sector, the project design was informed by systematically collected data reflecting the lived experiences and professional realities of youth workers.

This diagnostic function is particularly important within Erasmus+ cooperation partnerships, where evidence-based design strengthens both implementation coherence and long-term sustainability.

### **From Diagnosis to Design**

The survey results were not treated as descriptive information alone, but as strategic decision-making inputs. Several key elements of WP3 were directly shaped by WP2 findings.

#### **1. Focus on Practical Tools and Operational Guidance**

The identification of moderate knowledge levels combined with low formal training exposure highlighted a competence gap. Youth workers demonstrated willingness but lacked structured operational frameworks.

As a result, WP3 activities prioritized:

- Development of practical, ready-to-use guidelines;
- Scenario-based facilitation tools;
- Concrete recommendations for youth exchanges;
- Context-sensitive application strategies.

The emphasis shifted from theoretical awareness-raising to actionable implementation support.

#### **2. Emphasis on Inclusive Language and Conflict Management**

Qualitative findings revealed anxiety around inappropriate language and fear of group polarization. These themes indicated that youth workers were particularly concerned about relational dynamics and communicative risks.

Consequently, WP3 workshops incorporated:



- Modules on inclusive language use;
- Practical exercises on managing sensitive discussions;
- Techniques for preventing and addressing polarization;
- Facilitation tools for intercultural dialogue.

The integration of these elements was not incidental but directly grounded in survey data.

### **3. Adoption of Participatory Co-Design Methodology**

The high motivational readiness identified in the Willingness Indicator suggested that youth workers were not passive recipients of training but active agents willing to contribute.

This insight informed the decision to adopt a **participatory co-design approach** in WP3. Instead of delivering top-down training content, the project created collaborative spaces where youth workers could:

- Share contextual experiences;
- Co-create solutions;
- Reflect on cross-country differences;
- Adapt tools to diverse socio-political environments.

The participatory methodology thus reflects an evidence-based response to the sector's readiness for engagement.

### **4. Integration of Core Dimensions: Environment, Group Dynamics, and Language**

The thematic clustering of qualitative responses, combined with frequency analysis of perceived barriers, highlighted three recurring domains of concern:

- Physical and symbolic safety of spaces (environment);
- Management of intercultural and ideological tensions (group dynamics);
- Communication practices and terminology (language).

These domains became the structural pillars of the YW-MED Guidelines. Rather than emerging abstractly, they represent direct translation of empirical patterns into operational design.

### **Strengthening the Project's Intervention Logic**

From a methodological standpoint, WP2 contributed to strengthening the internal coherence of the project's intervention logic. The process followed a clear sequence:

1. Identification of needs and structural gaps (WP2);
2. Design of capacity-building activities addressing those gaps (WP3);
3. Development of tangible outputs aligned with identified barriers and support needs.

This alignment ensures consistency between:

- Diagnosed problems;



- Training content;
- Produced guidelines;
- Sustainability strategies.

Such coherence enhances both implementation quality and external credibility.

### **Risk Mitigation and Sustainability**

The WP2 findings also contributed to risk analysis. For example:

- Institutional pressure indicators informed the need for adaptable and context-sensitive tools;
- Perceived safety data emphasized the importance of supportive peer networks;
- Cultural resistance findings justified inclusion of conflict-sensitive facilitation strategies.

By incorporating these considerations early, the project reduced the likelihood of misalignment between outputs and real-world constraints.

### **Overall Methodological Value**

In conclusion, the WP2 methodology provided more than descriptive statistics; it offered a structured analytical foundation for strategic project development. The survey ensured that capacity-building activities were:

- Needs-driven;
- Context-aware;
- Operationally relevant;
- Responsive to both cognitive and relational dimensions of inclusion.

This evidence-based design approach increases the probability that WP3 outputs will be not only theoretically sound but practically applicable across diverse Mediterranean contexts.

The methodological rigor applied in WP2 thus strengthens the credibility, coherence, and long-term sustainability of the YW-MED project as a whole.