

CareerBoost Hackathon

Implementation Period: March – April 2026

Partner Country	Date	Format
Poland	29 April 2026	In Person
Malta	11 April 2026	Online
Greece	24 March 2026	In-Person

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1 Introduction

The CareerBoost Hackathon initiative, titled "Breaking Barriers to EU Youth Opportunities", was implemented across the project partnership during March and April 2026. The events brought together young people and youth workers through both online and face-to-face events, aiming to identify barriers that limit access to EU opportunities and collaboratively proposing practical solutions to address them. The hackathon focused on exploring challenges associated with awareness, accessibility, participation, and engagement in EU programmes such as Erasmus+, Horizon Europe, and related initiatives. Through collaborative discussions and group-based activities, participants shared experiences, identified recurring obstacles, and developed recommendations aimed at improving access to EU opportunities for young people.

This report summarises the key findings, thematic patterns, and observations that emerged from the hackathon discussions and participant contributions.

2 Hackathon Overview

The CareerBoost Hackathons were implemented by project partners in Malta, Greece and Poland with the common objective of exploring the barriers that young people encounter when accessing and participating in EU opportunities. The events provided an interactive setting in which young people, youth trainers and other relevant participants could share their experiences, identify recurring challenges and collaboratively propose potential solutions. While all three hackathons addressed this common objective, each partner adapted the format and delivery approach to its national context and target participants. Differences included the mode of delivery, session structure, participant composition and methods used to facilitate and capture contributions. The following sections provide an overview of how each national hackathon was organised and implemented.

2.1 Malta Overview

The Maltese CareerBoost hackathon was held online on the 11th April 2026. It was conducted as a one-hour interactive session involving youths aged 18–30 and youth workers from different backgrounds. Originally planned as a longer event, the session duration was adapted to encourage greater participation and accessibility. The event combined short presentations, collaborative discussions, and live idea generation activities. Rather than separating participants into breakout rooms, all participants remained within the same online session and collaboratively contributed to a shared Google Sheet in real time. Participants were encouraged to:

- Identify barriers preventing young people from effectively accessing EU opportunities;
- Share personal experiences and observations;
- Propose practical and actionable solutions that could improve participation and accessibility.

The live collaborative format enabled participants to directly build upon each other's ideas, creating a dynamic and open discussion environment while simultaneously generating a shared repository of findings and recommendations.

2.2 Greece Overview

The Greek CareerBoost Hackathon was held in person on 24 March 2026, bringing together young people aged 18–30, youth workers, and representatives from the local community to discuss the barriers that young people face when accessing European opportunities.

The event was organised as a face-to-face workshop, encouraging participants to exchange experiences, work collaboratively, and develop practical ideas for improving youth engagement with EU programmes. Participants were invited to:

- Identify the main barriers preventing young people from accessing EU opportunities;
- Share personal experiences and local challenges;
- Develop practical and realistic solutions to improve participation and accessibility.

The in-person format promoted active dialogue, networking, and direct collaboration among participants, allowing ideas to emerge.

2.3 Poland Overview

The Polish CareerBoost Hackathon was implemented in person on 29 April 2026. The event brought together youths between the age of 18-30, and youth workers and teachers to identify barriers limiting youth access to EU opportunities and to co-design practical solutions. There were 29 young people and 5 educators who took part in the hackathon.

The hackathon was delivered as an in-person workshop (face-to-face), featuring short presentations, facilitated group exercises and collaborative idea-generation (consistent with the overall methodology described in section 3). Participants worked in moderated small groups to share personal experiences, map local challenges (awareness, administrative complexity, mentorship, networking, financial constraints) and propose concrete recommendations. The outputs were captured through group reports and consolidated into the project's shared findings repository for thematic analysis. The main objectives of the implemented hackathon are as follows:

- Identify the main barriers preventing Polish youth and organisations from accessing EU programmes.
- Surface local, organisational and individual constraints and good practices.
- Co-create realistic, actionable solutions (e.g. centralised information tools, simplified guidance, mentorship schemes, partner-matching mechanisms) to inform CareerBoost follow-up actions.

The workshop produced a set of practical recommendations and priority actions that have been integrated into the CareerBoost project's potential areas for future action.

3 Overall Methodology

The findings presented in this report were derived from qualitative analysis of participant contributions collected during the three national CareerBoost Hackathons implemented in Malta, Greece and Poland. Although the delivery format and data collection approach varied between the national events, each hackathon followed the common objective of identifying barriers affecting youth access to EU opportunities and collaboratively developing potential solutions to address them.

During the Maltese online hackathon, participants contributed barriers, experiences and proposed solutions through open group discussion and a shared Google Sheet, which could be edited collaboratively in real time. The Greek hackathon was conducted as a face-to-face workshop, enabling young people and youth trainers to exchange experiences, discuss local challenges and collaboratively develop practical solutions. In Poland, participants worked in moderated small groups, with young people and youth trainers contributing structured barrier–solution pairs that were subsequently consolidated for analysis.

Following the national hackathons, the collected contributions were reviewed and organised according to recurring themes and common concerns. Similar barriers and proposed solutions were grouped to identify patterns within the individual national findings, while comparison across the three hackathons enabled areas of convergence and country or stakeholder-specific considerations to be identified.

The analysis focused not only on identifying individual barriers, but also on examining the relationships between recurring challenges, the types of solutions proposed by participants, and the broader support needs emerging across the three national contexts. This approach provided the basis for the national findings presented in Section 4, the cross-cutting observations in Section 5, and the potential areas for future action outlined in Section 6.

4 Main Findings

The three national CareerBoost Hackathons generated a range of findings concerning the barriers that young people and youth-supporting organisations encounter when accessing and participating in EU opportunities. While each hackathon reflected its own national context, participant composition and delivery format, several recurring themes emerged alongside more specific local and stakeholder-related concerns.

The following sections present the findings from Malta, Greece and Poland separately, preserving the perspectives and priorities identified within each national hackathon. These findings are subsequently brought together in Section 5 to identify cross-cutting observations, areas of convergence and additional considerations emerging across the three national contexts.

4.1 MCEB Malta

The analysis revealed several recurring themes and systemic concerns that appeared consistently across participant discussions. Figure 1 provides an overview of the frequency with which the identified barrier categories emerged during the hackathon discussions. The results indicate that awareness and information accessibility issues represented the most dominant concern among participants, followed by administrative complexity, mentorship and guidance needs, and networking-related challenges. These themes are discussed in further detail in the following sections

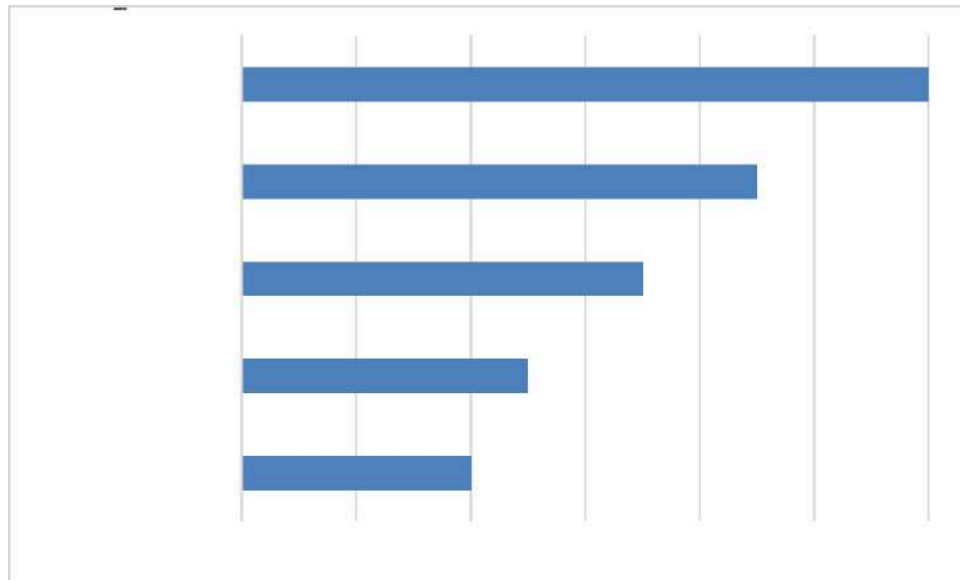


Figure 1: Frequency distribution of recurring barrier themes identified during the Maltese CareerBoost Online Hackathon discussions

4.1.1 Awareness and Information Barriers

The most frequently recurring theme identified during the hackathon related to low awareness and limited accessibility of information regarding EU opportunities. Participants repeatedly highlighted:

- Lack of awareness of available EU programmes;
- Difficulty identifying relevant opportunities;
- Fragmented and dispersed information sources;
- Limited outreach towards young people and marginalised groups.

Many participants expressed the view that although numerous opportunities exist, young people are often unaware of them or do not know where to begin searching for information.

Proposed solutions included:

- Awareness campaigns targeting youths;
- Centralised information platforms;
- National contact points;
- Simplified guidance materials;
- Improved dissemination strategies through youth organisations and social media.

A recurring recommendation involved the creation of a more unified and accessible entry point through which young people could explore multiple EU programmes in a simpler and more structured manner.

The participant comments further highlighted the perception that EU opportunities are often difficult to discover or navigate, despite the existence of numerous potentially beneficial programmes.

Quote: *Young people do not know where to begin looking for opportunities.*

Quote: *There are many programmes available, but the information feels scattered and difficult to follow.*

4.1.2 Administrative Complexity and Bureaucracy

Another dominant theme concerned the complexity of administrative and procedural requirements associated with EU programmes. Participants identified:

- Complicated application procedures;
- Bureaucratic processes;
- Extensive reporting requirements;
- Long evaluation timelines;
- Difficulties understanding programme regulations.

Many participants perceived EU opportunities as valuable but administratively intimidating, particularly for first-time applicants and smaller organisations with limited resources. Suggested solutions included:

- Simplified application forms;
- Standardised templates;
- Reduced reporting burdens;
- Faster evaluation procedures;
- More user-friendly application systems.

This theme strongly indicated that administrative simplification may significantly improve participation and accessibility among young people and youth organisations.

Several participant contributions reflected concerns regarding the perceived complexity and administrative burden associated with EU programme participation.

Quote: *The opportunities are attractive, but the process itself feels intimidating.*

Quote: *Application procedures and reporting requirements can discourage first-time participants.*

4.1.3 Mentorship, Guidance and Capacity Building

A strong recurring pattern emerging from the discussions was the need for mentorship and structured guidance. Participants identified challenges such as:

- Lack of proposal-writing skills;
- Limited experience in project development;
- Lack of mentorship opportunities;
- Uncertainty regarding programme navigation and participation.

Many participants emphasised that access to information alone is insufficient without appropriate support structures and guidance mechanisms. Suggested solutions included:

- Mentorship programmes;
- Training workshops;
- Guidance hubs;
- Peer-support systems;
- Access to experienced project participants and facilitators.

This finding highlighted the importance of social and organisational support systems in enabling young people to confidently engage with EU opportunities.

Participant discussions repeatedly emphasised the importance of guidance, mentorship, and practical support structures in enabling successful participation.

Quote: *Information alone is not enough without someone to guide you through the process.*

Quote: *Young people need support from experienced participants who already understand the system.*

4.1.4 Networking and Collaboration Challenges

Several participants highlighted difficulties associated with identifying project partners and establishing collaborative networks. Common concerns included:

- Difficulties finding project partners;
- Weak collaboration structures;
- Limited networking opportunities;
- Challenges establishing trustworthy partnerships.

Participants recognised that many EU programmes rely heavily on collaborative and transnational partnerships, yet many young people and smaller organisations lack access to suitable networks. Proposed solutions included:

- Dedicated networking platforms;
- Matchmaking systems for project partners;
- Stronger collaboration forums;
- Digital communities focused on EU opportunities.

This theme reinforced the importance of building sustainable support ecosystems that facilitate collaboration and knowledge exchange.

Participants also highlighted collaboration and partnership formation as important challenges affecting participation in EU opportunities.

Quote: *Finding trustworthy and active project partners can be difficult.*

Quote: *Smaller organisations often struggle to access established international networks.*

4.1.5 Financial and Resource Constraints

Although less dominant than the previous themes, financial barriers were also identified by participants. Concerns included:

- Lack of upfront funding;
- Co-funding requirements;
- Limited organisational resources;
- Time and workload pressures associated with participation.

Participants suggested that these barriers may disproportionately affect smaller organisations and marginalised groups with limited financial or administrative capacity.

Suggested solutions included:

- Increased pre-financing opportunities;
- Reduced co-funding requirements;
- Financial support mechanisms for smaller organisations;
- Better planning support.

Some participants additionally identified financial and resource-related limitations as barriers that may disproportionately affect smaller organisations and disadvantaged groups.

Quote: *Some organisations simply do not have the resources to participate fully.*

Quote: *Co-funding requirements and upfront costs can discourage participation.*

4.2 E-School Greece

The Greek CareerBoost Hackathon brought together both young people and youth trainers, providing valuable insights into the challenges that affect participation in European opportunities from both the individual and organisational perspectives.

4.2.1 Youth Perspectives

The discussions with young participants revealed that limited awareness and uncertainty remain among the primary barriers preventing engagement with EU opportunities. Many participants perceived European programmes as complicated and difficult to understand, often feeling unsure about where to begin or whether such opportunities were relevant for people with backgrounds similar to their own.

The main barriers identified by young participants included:

- Limited knowledge of available EU programmes beyond student mobility initiatives;
- Perceived complexity of information and application procedures;
- Lack of self-confidence to submit an application;
- Absence of guidance or someone to provide practical support;
- Financial concerns and uncertainty regarding participation costs;
- Difficulty understanding the personal and professional benefits of participation.

Participants proposed several practical solutions to address these barriers, including simplified information materials, step-by-step application guides, and greater use of success stories to demonstrate the value of participation.

Several comments reflected the uncertainty experienced by first-time applicants:

Quote: *"I do not know where to start."*

Quote: *"I am not sure whether these opportunities are for people like me."*

4.2.2 Youth Trainers' Perspectives

The youth trainers and youth workers participating in the hackathon largely confirmed the concerns expressed by young people while also identifying several organisational and systemic challenges that limit their ability to provide effective support.

Participants highlighted that information regarding EU opportunities is often fragmented across multiple sources, making it difficult both for organisations to stay informed and for young people to access clear guidance. In addition, limited staff capacity and time constraints reduce the level of individual support that organisations can offer during application and implementation processes.

The principal organisational barriers identified included:

- Limited time and human resources for supporting applicants;
- Fragmented and overly complex information about EU programmes;
- Lack of ready-to-use educational and guidance materials;
- Low levels of awareness and motivation among some target groups;
- Complex administrative procedures;
- Limited cooperation between organisations and local stakeholders;
- Insufficient dissemination of successful project outcomes.

To overcome these challenges, participants proposed the development of information resources, practical guidance toolkits, simplified procedures, visually engaging communication materials, stronger networking mechanisms between organisations, and increased outreach activities within schools and local communities.

Quote: *"Young people often need information that is simple, visual, and easy to understand."*

Quote: *"Organisations need practical tools that help them guide young people more effectively."*

4.2.3 Shared Priorities and Emerging Recommendations

Despite approaching the issue from different perspectives, both young people and youth trainers identified several common priorities. Participants emphasised the importance of clearer communication, and simplified procedures. A recurring recommendation involved the creation of centralised digital resources that combine information, guidance, practical tools, and networking opportunities within a single user-friendly environment. Participants also stressed the value of showcasing real examples of successful participation in order to increase confidence and encourage wider engagement.

Overall, the Greek hackathon findings suggest that improving access to EU opportunities requires not only increased awareness but also the development of stronger support ecosystems that combine information, collaboration, and practical guidance for both young people and the organisations that work with them.

4.3 CleverMind Poland

CleverMind ran the Polish CareerBoost Hackathon in person on 29 April 2026, engaging young people and educators in facilitated group work. Participants co-produced barrier–solution pairs through moderated small-group exercises and a live shared worksheet. The analysis below synthesises the Youth Group and Youth Trainers Group inputs to identify priority barriers, evidence of convergence between stakeholder perspectives and practical implications for CareerBoost.

Two parallel groups (Youth and Youth Trainers) completed structured two-column tables recording barriers and suggested solutions. Each group contributed 15 barrier–solution pairs (30 data points total). Responses were analysed thematically and clustered into recurrent themes to highlight both individual experience and organisational/systemic perspectives.

4.3.1. Key findings – Youth group

Polish youth participants identified a consistent set of practical, organisational and psychosocial barriers that limit access to EU mobility and project opportunities. These barriers cluster around five interrelated themes:

1. *Information and awareness*: participants repeatedly described EU opportunities as fragmented and difficult to discover. There is a strong demand for a single, plain-language entry point that aggregates relevant funding and mobility options and provides step-by-step guidance. Suggested solutions included centralised portals, targeted awareness campaigns in schools and youth clubs and visual/simplified guidance materials;

2. *Administrative complexity and bureaucracy*: complex application procedures, long forms and unclear eligibility rules discourage applicants. Young people proposed simplified forms, pre-filled templates, and school-based assistance sessions to lower the administrative threshold for first-time applicants;
3. *Financial constraints and barriers*: high living and travel costs make participation unrealistic for many respondents. Participants asked for grant levels that reflect real living costs, travel subsidies and pilot microgrants for short mobilities to test participation without major financial risk;
4. *Language skills and confidence*: language anxiety emerged as both a practical obstacle and a psychological barrier. Youth proposed free pre-departure language support, buddy systems and easily accessible language-learning resources targeted at incoming mobility contexts;
5. *Psychosocial and safety concerns*: homesickness, worries about accommodation safety and social isolation were commonly raised. Proposals included short trial mobilities, stronger pre-departure briefings, peer-mentoring and access to pastoral or psychological support during mobilities.

4.3.2. Key findings – Youth trainers' group

Youth trainers focused on organisational and systemic obstacles that hinder their capacity to support young people effectively. Their contributions also emphasised main identified barriers and proposals for possible barrier solutions:

1. *Organisational capacity and resourcing*: trainers reported limited staff time, inconsistent internal processes and insufficient institutional knowledge to guide applicants through EU procedures. They recommended modular toolkits, ready-made templates and brief training modules to increase throughput and consistency;
2. *Fragmented information and low awareness*: trainers echoed youth concerns about scattered resources and added that national and local contact points are unevenly connected. Proposed solutions included a national signposting resource, regular trainer-focused webinars and shared repository of case studies;
3. *Quality, legal clarity and internship conditions*: concerns about unpaid placements, unclear insurance arrangements and uneven employer expectations emerged. Trainers advocated for minimum quality standards for work placements, clear legal templates, and checklists to ensure basic insurance and labour protections;
4. *Recognition and certification*: trainers highlighted gaps in recognition for non-formal learning and soft skills gained through mobilities. They suggested issuing portable competency certificates or micro-credentials co-designed with employers and higher education institutions to strengthen the *incentive structure*;
5. *Structural exclusion and partnership building*: trainers identified legal cross-border hurdles, weak local networks and difficulties finding partner organisations. They proposed local youth hubs, legal templates and seed microgrants to support partnership development.

4.3.3. Identified convergence, implications and recommendations

Based on the performed analysis of obtained findings the following cross-group convergence and divergence were identified:

1. Convergence

- Centralised, plain-language information resources and outreach (high agreement): both groups prioritised a single access point combining guidance, templates and signposting;
- Financial support calibrated to real living costs and travel (high agreement);
- Administrative simplification through templates and streamlined forms (high agreement);

2. Divergence / nuance

- Psychosocial supports and short pilot mobilities were emphasised more strongly by youth (practical coping mechanisms), while trainers emphasised systemic solutions such as certification and legal clarity;
- Trainers placed greater emphasis on organisational toolkits and capacity building, reflecting their intermediary role.

Poland's contributions suggest the future projects and activities should take an integrated approach that addresses both individual-level barriers (information, finances, language, psychosocial support) and intermediary-level constraints (organisational capacity, quality assurance, recognition). Key implications contain:

- Design information hub that bundles plain-language guidance with application checklists, templates and signposting to grants or microgrants and contact points;
- Revisit grant architecture to ensure living costs and travel are realistically covered and to enable mobility or micro-mobility pilots for first-time participants;
- Embed low-cost pre-departure supports: short language modules, peer mentoring/buddy systems;
- Provide trainer-focused capacity building: modular toolkits, legal templates and a quality checklist for internships;
- Develop a portable recognition mechanism (e.g., micro-credentials) for non-formal learning to increase employability signals.

5 Cross-Cutting Observations

Analysis of the three national CareerBoost Hackathons revealed a notable degree of convergence across the Maltese, Greek and Polish findings. Despite differences in delivery format, participant composition and national context, several recurring challenges emerged across the three events. These included limited awareness and fragmented access to information, perceived administrative complexity, insufficient guidance and mentorship, financial and resource constraints, and difficulties accessing appropriate networks and support structures. The recurrence of these themes across different participant groups

suggests that many of the barriers identified are not isolated national concerns, but reflect broader challenges affecting youth engagement with EU opportunities.

A particularly strong cross-cutting finding concerned the relationship between information and support. Participants consistently indicated that simply making information available is not sufficient. Young people may still require plain-language explanations, practical guidance, mentoring, peer support and accessible tools that help them understand how an opportunity relates to them and how they can progress from initial interest to actual participation. The Greek findings reinforced this through concerns surrounding confidence and uncertainty among first-time participants, while Polish participants similarly highlighted language confidence and the value of peer and pre-departure support.

The findings also highlighted the important role of intermediary organisations, including youth organisations, trainers, educators and other support actors. Greek and Polish youth trainers identified limited staff capacity, fragmented information, insufficient ready-to-use resources and difficulties supporting applicants through complex processes. This indicates that improving youth access may require strengthening not only the capabilities of young people themselves, but also those of the organisations and practitioners responsible for guiding them.

A further recurring priority was simplification and centralisation. Across the hackathons, participants proposed clearer communication, simplified guidance and application materials, centralised information resources, practical templates and more accessible digital support mechanisms. Networking and partner-matching mechanisms were also repeatedly proposed, particularly for individuals and smaller organisations that may not already have access to established European networks.

At the same time, the national findings revealed several additional dimensions that broaden the understanding of accessibility. The Polish hackathon highlighted language anxiety, psychosocial and safety concerns, quality and legal clarity surrounding mobility experiences, and recognition of non-formal learning. Greek participants additionally emphasised confidence, motivation and the need to better communicate the personal and professional value of participation. These findings suggest that accessibility should not be understood solely in terms of finding and applying for an opportunity, but also in terms of enabling individuals to participate confidently, safely and meaningfully once an opportunity has been identified.

Overall, the combined findings point towards the need for a more integrated support ecosystem. Improving participation in EU opportunities may therefore require a combination of awareness and outreach, simplified information, practical guidance, mentorship, organisational capacity building, networking support, financial accessibility and appropriate support throughout the participation or mobility experience.

6 Potential Areas for Future Action

The findings obtained across three national CareerBoost Hackathon highlighted several recurring barriers affecting youth access to EU opportunities. At the same time, participants proposed a range of practical and constructive recommendations aimed at improving

accessibility, participation, collaboration, and awareness. Building upon these findings, the CareerBoost partners considered how the identified needs could inform both actions that may be pursued within the remaining project period and longer-term initiatives extending beyond the current project.

Tables 1a-c therefore links the principal barriers identified during the hackathon with the solutions proposed by participants and potential strategic responses developed through subsequent partner reflection. The strategic responses are distinguished between actions that may be feasible within the scope and timeframe of CareerBoost and longer-term recommendations that could inform future projects, partnerships, or wider policy and programme development.

Table 1a: Hackathon barrier themes, participant-proposed solutions, and potential short and longer term strategic responses.

Identified Barrier Theme	Description of Observed Challenge	Commonly Proposed Solutions	Potential Strategic Action (by end of the project)	Longer-term Strategic Recommendations
Awareness and Information Accessibility	Participants repeatedly highlighted low awareness of available EU opportunities and difficulties identifying suitable programmes. Information was perceived as fragmented, dispersed across multiple platforms, and difficult to navigate, particularly for first-time participants.	Awareness campaigns; improved dissemination through youth organisations and social media; centralised information portals; concise guidance materials; national contact points.	Consolidate existing CareerBoost resources into a clearer, centralised and youth-friendly information pathway, supported by targeted dissemination through social media, youth organisations, schools and other relevant networks. Explore how existing project resources could provide concise programme information, FAQs, guidance and signposting.	Develop a CareerBoost Navigator: a mobile-first, plain-language platform aggregating EU programme information, step-by-step application guidance, downloadable templates and searchable FAQs. Future development could incorporate AI-assisted and peer-based chat support for rapid guidance.
Administrative Complexity and Bureaucracy	Participants perceived EU opportunities as administratively demanding, particularly regarding application procedures, reporting requirements, and regulatory compliance. Smaller organisations and inexperienced applicants were seen as disproportionately affected.	Simplified application procedures; standardised templates; reduced reporting burden; clearer procedural guidance; faster evaluation processes.	Use CareerBoost guidance materials and resources to provide simplified explanations of application processes, practical checklists and reusable templates that help first-time applicants navigate administrative requirements.	Develop a more comprehensive Youth Trainer Capacity Pack, co-developed with national partners, containing simplified application templates, example legal/contract and insurance documentation, quality checklists, facilitator guidance and anonymised case studies. Findings could also support wider advocacy for simpler application and reporting processes.
Mentorship, Guidance, and Capacity Building	Participants emphasised the lack of practical guidance and mentorship required to confidently engage with EU opportunities. Limited proposal-writing skills and uncertainty regarding programme participation were recurring concerns.	Mentorship programmes; workshops; proposal-writing training; peer-support systems; access to experienced project participants.	Strengthen the guidance dimension of CareerBoost through practical resources, knowledge sharing, peer support and opportunities for youth organisations and experienced practitioners to exchange experience through the project's network activities.	Develop structured mentoring and capacity-building services, potentially linked to the CareerBoost Navigator, including AI/peer guidance. A future pre-departure and in-mobility support package could also provide language preparation, peer-buddy matching, host checklists and

				access/signposting to appropriate pastoral or psychological support.
<i>Table 1b: Hackathon barrier themes, participant-proposed solutions, and potential short and longer term strategic responses.</i>				
Identified Barrier Theme	Description of Observed Challenge	Commonly Proposed Solutions	Potential Strategic Action (by end of the project)	Longer-term Strategic Recommendations
Networking and Collaboration Challenges	Several participants highlighted difficulties identifying project partners and accessing reliable collaborative networks. Smaller organisations were perceived as having reduced access to established international partnerships.	Networking platforms; collaboration forums; partner-matching systems; digital networking communities; stakeholder engagement activities.	Use the CareerBoost network and related dissemination activities to facilitate connections between youth organisations, share EU opportunities and encourage knowledge exchange and future collaboration.	Develop dedicated digital partner-matching and networking functionality within a future CareerBoost Navigator or successor platform, enabling organisations and young people to identify suitable partners, mentors and collaborative opportunities across Europe.
Financial and Resource Constraints	Participants identified financial limitations, co-funding requirements, and limited organisational resources as barriers that may restrict participation among smaller organisations and disadvantaged groups.	Increased pre-financing opportunities; reduced co-funding requirements; financial support mechanisms; improved planning support.	Improve signposting towards available financial guidance and funding opportunities, while providing practical information that helps participants and organisations anticipate potential costs and resource requirements associated with EU participation.	Undertake a financial realism review comparing available grant support with typical living, travel and accommodation costs in common destination contexts. Findings could inform recommendations concerning enhanced pre-financing, travel/accommodation top-ups for disadvantaged participants and other mechanisms reducing financial barriers.
Time and Workload Pressures	Some participants noted that participation in EU opportunities may require significant time investment and administrative effort, making engagement difficult alongside existing academic, professional, or organisational commitments.	Better planning support; simplified procedures; collaborative teamwork approaches; improved timeline communication.	Provide concise planning tools, checklists and templates through CareerBoost resources to reduce the time required to understand opportunities and prepare for participation.	Explore a flexible mobility pathway offering progressively more demanding forms of participation, such as micro-internships, remote projects, short blended mobilities and full placements. Future initiatives could examine microgrants for short pilot experiences to reduce financial risk and allow participants to test their readiness

				before undertaking longer mobility experiences.
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Table 1c: Hackathon barrier themes, participant-proposed solutions, and potential short and longer term strategic responses.

Identified Barrier Theme	Description of Observed Challenge	Commonly Proposed Solutions	Potential Strategic Action (by end of the project)	Longer-term Strategic Recommendations
Participation, Readiness, Well-being and Inclusion	Participants highlighted personal and practical factors that may affect confidence and readiness to participate, including language anxiety, uncertainty regarding the relevance of opportunities, psychosocial concerns, safety and accommodation concerns, and limited preparation for mobility experiences.	Plain-language information; success stories; language preparation; peer-buddy systems; pre-departure guidance; short trial opportunities; appropriate pastoral or psychological support.	Strengthen CareerBoost guidance and communication materials to better explain the benefits and expectations associated with participation, while signposting participants towards relevant preparation and support resources.	Develop a structured pre-departure and in-mobility support package incorporating language preparation, peer-buddy mechanisms, host checklists and appropriate well-being support. Explore flexible or short-form mobility pathways that allow first-time participants to build confidence progressively.

The matrix demonstrates that participants did not only identify barriers, but also proposed constructive pathways for improvement. Across multiple themes, recurring priorities included simplification, clearer guidance mechanisms, stronger collaborative support structures, and more accessible participation pathways for young people and smaller organisations. Subsequent reflection by the CareerBoost partners enabled these findings to be translated into potential actions within the current project and more ambitious longer-term recommendations.

In addition to the responses directly associated with the identified barrier themes, partner reflection highlighted the potential value of developing a portable recognition framework for skills acquired through EU mobility and other non-formal learning experiences. Such a framework could use simple micro-credentials or certificates to document acquired competencies and, in the longer term, could be developed collaboratively with employers and higher education institutions to strengthen the recognition and transferability of these skills.

The distinction between current-project actions and longer-term recommendations is important. Some responses can be addressed through CareerBoost's existing resources, dissemination activities and network-building work, whereas others, such as a fully developed digital navigator, tiered mobility pathways, financial support reforms, structured in-mobility support and portable recognition mechanisms, would require further development, additional partnerships, future funding, or engagement with relevant programme and policy stakeholders. The hackathon findings therefore provide both practical direction for the remaining CareerBoost activities and a foundation for potential follow-up initiatives beyond the current project.

7 Conclusion

The CareerBoost Hackathon initiative successfully facilitated collaborative discussions across Malta, Greece and Poland regarding the barriers affecting youth access to EU opportunities. Despite differences in national context, participant composition and delivery format, the three hackathons revealed a notable degree of convergence around several recurring challenges, particularly awareness and information accessibility, administrative complexity, mentorship and guidance needs, networking difficulties, and financial and resource constraints.

The findings demonstrate that while participants generally recognise the educational, professional and personal value of EU opportunities, effective participation can be restricted by barriers encountered at multiple stages of the engagement process. These range from initially discovering and understanding relevant opportunities to navigating application procedures, accessing appropriate guidance and networks, and having the confidence, resources and support required to participate successfully.

The combined findings also demonstrate that improving accessibility requires consideration of both individual and organisational needs. Young people highlighted the importance of clear information, practical guidance, confidence-building and accessible participation pathways, while youth trainers and educators emphasised the need for stronger organisational capacity, practical support resources, collaboration mechanisms and simplified procedures.

Additional considerations surrounding language preparation, well-being, mobility support, legal clarity and recognition of non-formal learning further illustrate the importance of viewing accessibility as a broader support ecosystem rather than solely an information or application challenge.

Importantly, participants did not only identify barriers, but also generated constructive and solution-oriented recommendations. These findings have informed potential actions that may be pursued within the remaining CareerBoost project period, while also identifying longer-term opportunities such as centralised digital guidance, strengthened mentorship and networking mechanisms, flexible participation pathways, improved mobility support and enhanced recognition of skills acquired through EU experiences.

Overall, the CareerBoost Hackathons provide a useful evidence base for guiding future project activities and potential follow-up initiatives. The convergence observed across the three national contexts reinforces the value of developing more integrated, accessible and youth-oriented support mechanisms capable of helping both young people and the organisations that support them to engage more effectively with EU opportunities.