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Bachelorthesis

# Relation through Co-creation

NETWORK THEORY BASED  
RESEARCH ON CO-CREATION IN  
THE TRANSNATIONAL COTALENT  
PROJECT (2017-2020)

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First and foremost, I personally have had a lot of personal issues during the makings of this paper. Apart from the regular loss of motivation, the anxious feeling of not being good enough and the intruders' syndrome kicking up every now and again I also had big changes in my life that were not planned for. I am glad you as a reader have this in front of you as a finished product and I sincerely hope you will get something out of it. For getting me through these tough times I'd like to thank my mentor, Marca Wolfensberger, for staying positive throughout the process even when at times it was looking dire. I also appreciate the work she put in to get me acquainted with some of the people from CoTalent. I would also like to thank my girlfriend, Amber van der Linden, who supported me all the way through and was understanding when I felt hopeless and stressed out even when she herself had a lot on her plate. Obviously, I want to thank all the interviewees I was able to talk to who were all very willing to help and who all seemed very interesting and kind people. Finally, I'd like to give a shout-out to my parents and my closest friends for always believing in me and being there as a tower of strength.

Whenever I say anything positive about you, you don't believe me, but I'm going to keep saying it!

*Amber*

# Preface

Initially I was fairly sceptical on the subject, feeling ambiguous about the Honours programs as a whole. I figured they were elitist and dangerous in the sense that students seemed to have a much higher chance to burn out and not have a life outside of the academic world. This research has given me plenty of new insights on the matter and has changed my perspective especially after hearing the involved students of the CoTalent project. Their motivation and mindset on putting in extra work were truly inspiring and enlightening. It gave me hope for the future, having these great minds around who want to make a difference in the world. Thank you.

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# 1. Summary

The CoTalent project is a unique collaboration between eight universities (of applied sciences) throughout Europe funded by the Erasmus + foundation as part of the European Commission. The project was initiated in 2017 and was supposed to be finished in the middle of 2020. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic the project has been postponed to 2021. The objective of the CoTalent project was to use co-creation with teachers and students in order to create tools that would support higher education to foster and recognize talented students. These three toolsets were made with a total of around 920 students and teachers via workshop weeks and so-called multiplier event. This current research projects the impact of the student participants through a social network theory perspective to look at what the co-creation of the CoTalent project can do for them in their professional career (including their education). By conducting eight interviews with the student participants, it became clear the CoTalent network was a unique network that shares the characteristics of both strong and weak ties. The members involved were of many cultures and origins but simultaneously of a similar mindset which made for a fertile network in terms of productivity to complete the tasks at hand and in terms of the student participant their experience. The participating students mainly experienced a growth in soft skills and gained new perspectives through the diverse set of actors involved.

## 2. Introduction

CoTalent is a project launched in 2017 that was part of the Erasmus+ (E+) programme. The E+ program was created by the European Commission (EC) to fund projects that contribute to the fields of education, youth and sports in a collaborative fashion with institutions and people throughout the whole of Europe (European Commission [EC], 2020). CoTalent was commissioned by the Hanze University of Applied Sciences under the Key Action 2 section of the E+ programme. This section is meant for projects focused on 'cooperation for innovation and the exchange of good practices' (EC, 2020). CoTalent's proposal managed to convince the EC of their use and they were allowed funding from 2017 until mid-2020. The proposal was congruent with the goals set by the EC for the Key Action 2 part of the program. CoTalent has the motto 'Europe simply cannot afford to lose talent'. The main goal of CoTalent is to foster excellence in education by creating tools that can support teachers in finding talented or gifted students and providing them with ways to reflect on their way of educating, in order to gain a stronger footing in the classroom. These tools can be, amongst other information, found on their site (<https://www.cotalent.eu/>).

The proposal CoTalent sent to the EC puts precedence on the effects the project might have for educational purposes, for example the way it might improve teacher's ability to spot talents within the pool of students. It has only few mentions of the implications the project has on the participants that helped develop the tools (CoTalent, 2017). The EC has contrarily noted a few benefits the participants, directly or indirectly involved with the Key Action 2 projects, might experience on an individual level. This includes for example a growth in understanding in social- & business fields and a more open-minded perspective towards other cultures. Thus, communication and cooperation that play a role in these projects presumably stimulates personal development. These concepts are both used in a plethora of social network literature. For that reason, this thesis researches the social networks formed during the time this project was conducted and the value that stems from these networks.

Nowadays almost all people around the world live in a globalized society (Wahlström, 2016). Collaboration between- and within multinationals have been increasingly border-defying. Some scholars go to extremes by claiming distance has become completely irrelevant (Cairncross, 2002). Networks are becoming more complex through the process of globalization, by virtue of the availability of media and reduced costs of high-speed travel. This, on an individual level, implies more competition than ever before in finding a job and keeping up with the rest of the world. Competitive advantage for a person is achieved more so by being internationally available than looking inwards. Vast networks nowadays are easily spanned cross-countries. This could result in more likely encounters between talented people. Europe has recognized the strength that collaboration in multiple fields between its countries can carry. The E+ programme is an example that shows how highly the EC prioritizes cross-border communication, cooperation, collaboration, co-creation, etc.

Social networks in international projects and its effects have gone underexposed in the most prominent research literature, mainly due to the uniqueness and idiosyncrasy of said projects. These social networks, on the other hand, are clearly an important factor in producing new talent and finding use for talent on the personal level. Combining the concepts co-creation (a concept that is chiefly seen in marketing literature (Dollinger, Lodge & Coates, 2018)) and social networks (mostly seen in sociology research) can contribute to new perspectives on the effects of cooperative projects that are conducted on an international level. There are possible takeaways for future projects to be found in the CoTalent project.

The current research focuses on the relationships formed in the process of co-creation. This is in its definitions new, but when concepts from business are applied to education systems which has been a recent trend; (e.g., relationship marketing theory) it becomes clear the importance of networks are not neglected in research for improving education and with it the career chances for students.

This paper attempts to define the unintended or coincidental impacts the CoTalent project has had on the student participants. Personal improvement is clearly intended in the CoTalent project. Participants know from the get-go they are there to make something in co-creation in which they can grow as a person. The reasons that are given by CoTalent are compliant with the benefits given by the EC (see ch1. introduction). This does not include the networking agency the participants obtain in a network previously non-existent. This leads to the central question; **What is the influence of the social network that formed during the CoTalent projects on the students that participated on their professional life (cycle)?**

In order to answer this question, it will be broken down into sub-questions;

- What kind of network connections have been created and is there a way to distinguish these?
- What kind of 'dynamic' exists in the network?
- Are there short-term benefits or detriments to the network on the talents of the participating student?
- Are there long-lasting benefits or detriments to the network on the talents of the participating student?
- Is there a noticeable growth in social capital for the participants on a professional level?
- Has the project taken time away from the participants insofar that other networks they were part of may have dwindled?

## Reading Guide

This paper is divided into multiple chapters, starting off with a contextual chapter to give further insights on the CoTalent project and the EC. The fourth chapter summarizes social networks literature in a relevant fashion that will give a better understanding of how social networks form and what impacts they might have. Chapter five will give direction on how the research is managed. It will give insights on the reasoning behind the method chosen to answer the central question. Chapter six will combine the most important results that came from the interviews with the literature. The conclusion in chapter seven will answer the sub-questions that will lead to answering the central question. policy implications, future research and restrictions of the current research will be discussed after the conclusion. An appendix can be found where all transcriptions can be found of the conducted interviews as well as the topic list.

### 3. Background for the CoTalent project

As mentioned in the introduction the CoTalent project is a 3-year running project part of the Erasmus+ programme to improve and develop education in Europe. This chapter gives further insight context on the subject matter and attempts to explain the way the CoTalent project is organized to make sense of the social networks present. The dynamics of these social networks are then elaborated upon in the theoretical framework.

#### 3.1 European Higher Area of Education

Europe is working on creating a better education system for all of their members. This is mainly discussed in the Bologna Process. Its goal is to 'ensure comparable, compatible and coherent systems of higher education in its 47 member countries' (Gvaramadze, 2008). The countries involved in the Bologna Process form the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). The EC plays into the aspirations of international unity by incorporating it into the general goals of the projects. Improving the compatibility and coherence of education is one thing. Improving education as a whole is also addressed by the Bologna Process. There are multiple approaches to test and better the pedagogical value of higher education throughout the EHEA, but the goals of these approaches are similar. They are focused on quality created by trust and interactions between the stakeholder (meaning the teachers and the students and other involved partnerships that can lend support to the quality of education).

The quality of the education system isn't an absolute (Gvaramadze, 2008). Quality is based on the local context of the institution and the leading culture that desires a certain outcome. Therefore, internal culture is leading in determining the quality of the education and can enhance the quality on both the individual/staff level and the institutional level. Interaction and communication are key in creating a culture of quality where people can grow to their maximum potential. The desired outcome can change when supply and demand changes. One thing is absolute, the demand must be met. In this case that demand can be generalized to what companies want in their workers or in an even more holistic definition what a society asks of their people in order to develop and remain innovative.

All in all, the diversity of culture within the education systems throughout Europe has to remain to a certain extent in order to satisfy demand in the local context. The argument made for the importance of local culture is partially 'tacit knowledge' of specialised areas where a certain industry has reigned over the past decades are seen as knowledge hubs that cannot easily be produced 'artificially' in another place. Despite this the globalization and 'war on talent' poses the contrary argument that institutions should look further outward and have to go with the more global demands. It is clear a balance between these two has to be made. This can lead back to network theory, where similar claims are made. Weak and strong ties are both important, in this context it is the weak ties that form an outwards oriented network and the strong ties that fulfil the role of inward stability. This will be further explained in the next chapter.

#### 3.2 Erasmus+ programme concept

It is often mentioned there is a shift in contemporary higher education to more personalized and responsive education for students (Mahat & Dollinger, 2018; Gvaramadze, 2008; Bergmark & Westman, 2016). This is especially true for honours programmes that are adjusted to give students a chance to show their full potential. This 'potential' is expressed differently by each student and needs specific guidance (Renzuli, 1997). The E+ programme is tuned to accommodate for these changes in education. The first and second Key Action have objectives like 'improved learning performance', 'enhanced self-esteem' and 'increased sense of entrepreneurship and initiative'. As part of the EHEA aspirations the E+ programme wants to make education in Europe more competitive and coherent. Currently many of the European countries do not have an established honours education or any form of talent fostering (Wolfensberger & Hogenstijn, 2016). E+ is keen on conveying the benefits to the countries that are lacking these opportunities of excellence in their education system. This is also congruent with the more quality-over-content based education that has received more attention in Europe the last few years in which improving 'transferable' skills that can be used for future careers regardless of the type of business, 'soft' skills, have precedence over the business-specific 'hard' skills (Higson & Andrews, 2010).



The E+ programme is also hard at work to create a more inclusive society by promoting border-defying projects. They stress the need to give people the awareness and tools to deal with globalization appropriately (EC, 2020).

### 3.3 CoTalent project objectives

The CoTalent project had the bounded freedom in the sense that they had to comply to the rules and objectives the E+ programme strived to achieve with the KA2 practices (EC, 2020). One of these priorities is the creation of strategic partnerships that can help with innovation for the parties involved in the fields of education. This will be discussed in the following paragraph.

#### 3.3.1 A diverse set of actors and institutional bodies

CoTalent has eight direct partners for the development of the programme (CoTalent, 2020). These partners were: Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences, Utrecht University, University of Antwerp, the Johannes Kepler University of Linz, Alexandru Ioan Cuza University, Copenhagen University, the International Centre for the Study of Giftedness (ICBF) & Hanze University of Applied Sciences Groningen. Until September the first, 2019 ÖZBF was also part in the development of the CoTalent project. This sums up to two universities of applied sciences in the Netherlands, one University in the Netherlands, one university from Denmark, one from Belgium, one from Austria, one Romanian and a University located in Germany. CoTalent made use of multiple educational institutions in order to achieve goals. It is important to note that these institutions are not standardized in their methods of education (Gvaramadze, 2008).

E+ programmes are partially supervised by the EC and have multiple other bodies working alongside them on the implementation of the E+ programme. They are therefore also indirectly connected with the CoTalent project. These complementary bodies form a vast network that are in some way connected and are collaborating to create value for educational purposes. There is a clear implication that collaboration and co-creation are the driving concepts in the way Key Action 2 projects are generally structured (EC, 2020).

On a micro scale the organization of CoTalent was two-layered. The 'core people' of the project, known as the steering groups, remained with some slight deviations mostly the same throughout the three years. Then there is a more fluctuating shell of members that were involved with the project. This shell consists of the teachers and the students involved in making the tools YouTalent Spotter, MeTalent Mirror and the E-Library (see paragraph 3.2.2 and 3.2.3) but also the partners of the institutions. Finally, the outer layer of people involved were the people who joined in on the multiplier events. Multiplier events were the test chambers of the CoTalent project where teachers and students of a broader audience could try out and evaluate the tools created by the CoTalent team. During the workshops there were three actor groups; the students, the teachers and the trainers involved with the CoTalent project (CoTalent Team, n.d.)

#### 3.3.2 Preventing talent loss

As previously mentioned in the introduction, CoTalent is keen on avoiding the loss of talent in Europe as a whole. Talented people in this case are students that have not yet been recognized, either by themselves, or by the educational programme they are taking part in. If no action is undertaken these students might remain unnoticed and their potential will not be fully used despite their capabilities. CoTalent wants to make sure these students get the attention they deserve in order to excel at their field of work. CoTalent provides ways to more easily find these 'diamonds in the rough' with tools that teachers can utilize in the classroom to identify talented students. Spotting extraordinary students and giving them the awareness of their potential can motivate them further to take part in talent development programmes like Honours programmes. One of the two main tools developed by CoTalent is called the 'YouTalent Spotter' and is made to support this. The tool has multiple in-class practices; the 'talent spotting list', the 'entrepreneurial talent toolkit', the 'writing tool' and the 'poster tool'. They also provide guidelines on what to do when then tools have been utilized in their E-library, a multitude of videos on what the best practice of education can be for when facing talented students. (CoTalent, n.d.)

### 3.3.3 Classroom environments

Creating a safe and 'open' classroom environment is important for stimulating students to work at their full capacity (Bowden, 2011). Another tool addresses this problem. The 'MeTalent Mirror' is created to give teachers the opportunity to reflect and evaluate their position and efficacy in the class. They can ask students for feedback on their demeanour during lessons in a constructive manner. This leads to one of eleven 'stereotypes' that fits the teacher the most according to the students. This may give the teacher new insights on what can be improved and what can be done differently to better accommodate for the students' needs. Another tool presented in the 'MeTalent Mirror' is the roadmap tool. A means for the teacher to identify him- or herself visually. It challenges teachers to make clear who they see themselves as and reflect on this. Doing so might prove useful in improving the way they want to convey information to students by reviewing the effectiveness of their teaching. Two other individual tools for teachers to recognize their teaching propensities are the Classroom Situations Simulator and the Characteristics tool. These are complementary with the 'Stereotype tool' in order to compare how the class sees the teacher and how the teacher views himself. (CoTalent, n.d.)

### 3.3.4 Creating Spaces of Co-creation

The development of these tools required skills in a multitude of fields; IT skills, creativity, entrepreneurial skills, planning skills, pedagogical knowledge, the English language, cooperation and other social skills. This calls for a more interdisciplinary environment. The CoTalent project forces the tools to be created with a diverse set of people.

In social network theory this would be called a heterogenous network. Not only students of different disciplines are placed together, but they are also being placed with teachers and educators on a similar level. The goal is to create tools with each other where neither the teacher nor the student has a hierarchical edge above each other. Within the process of creation, they might fulfil different roles in the sense that they apply their niche to the process but the usual student-teacher relationship is changed to being more equal. The student as a consumer of knowledge suddenly becomes a co-producer in the production of said knowledge. This is also known as presumption, where the product is co-produced by the consumer. An example is when a computer game is being produced and sold during the time it is still in development in a so called alpha or beta state so that it can be tested and evaluated by the players. They can give feedback on the gameplay and give ideas on how it could be changed or what could be added to the game (Brindley, Forsyth & Lovasz, 2017). This is the essence of co-creation. In a pedagogical setting it is a little different; the product isn't a tangible thing. The result of knowledge creation is that it is supposed to learn something to the receiver.

## 4. Theoretical framework

This chapter brings forth social network theories to get a better grasp on the possible impacts of the created networks on the participants' professional lives. This is also key to research what type of networks are created in international projects and their dynamics.

### 4.1 Network formation within the CoTalent project

CoTalent workshops were done by students and teachers alike from a certain university (of applied sciences). At least some teachers and students involved most likely know each other. The students as a group might have connections through mutual friends, worked together on other projects or have at least seen each other in classes. The teachers have a high chance of at the minimum being acquainted through 'water cooler conversations' or other incidental hook-ups that occurred by working in the same place. These connections may be much stronger than indicated here but this is the baseline assumption made. These more or less rudimentary connections existing by this one focus will be strengthened by the CoTalent project. It brings people together on a more intensive basis not focused on individual growth but with a specific goal in mind.

CoTalent as a project was something people truly believed in. The participants complied with and stood for the values that CoTalent presented (Wolfensberger, 2020). This immediately suggests something important with reference to networks and ties. The participants all had a common interest that could be shared and talked about, something they were enthusiastic about that could be used to bond (either consciously or unconsciously). Despite perhaps disputes in perspectives on the subject matter of talent spotting and educational excellence the people involved were all keen on improving education. This common goal infers a sense of homophily (McPhersson, Smith-Loving & Cook, 2001). Homophily is described as the tendency by people to look for and prefer someone who is similar to them. In a space where the main objective is shared amongst the participating members the dissimilarities become less prevalent than when there is no objective shared collectively. In other words, CoTalent is an opportunity for intergroup connections to be made. The mere presence of this will likely result in greater interracial or intercultural cohesion (Carolan & Natriello, 2005). The CoTalent project was predominantly participated by honours students or students who showed that they were willing to put in extra time for their studies. Honours students and normal students can be distinguished in their mindset and willingness to do something extra, on top of what is asked from them. In the culture of honours student's motivation, ambition, future-oriented, (self-)reflection are all more prominent than in a culture of 'normal' students (Wolfensberger, 2012). Being able to participate in the first place is based around the credentials of the students as well as luck (CoTalent, 2017). It is likely the participating students will have similarities because of the way student participants are 'allowed in'. When people of similar characteristics and mindset get together they are, according to the homophily theory, more easily acquainted, which could help build a strong network (McPhersson, Smith-Loving & Cook, 2001).

The co-creation aspect of the CoTalent workshops is at heart of the development of their products. The reasoning behind this is that collaboration will lead to multiple perspectives on a matter that in turn can be combined to reach a solution (Hanze HGS, 2017). Co-creation stands for equality in the roles the individuals fulfil in the process (Ranjan & Read, 2014). There can be delegation of responsibility and individuals may be assigned to complete a specific part of the process, but this is all done in mutual agreement. Value is not only found in the resulting product but also in the process (Dollinger, Lodge & Coates, 2018).

All members in the co-creation process will be on the same level of authority and therefore will have a closer connection with each other. In CoTalent the teachers will be on the same level of authority as the students are. The equality can be seen in the numbers of participants. There are twelve educators and twelve students assigned to the workshop. Naturally, compared to the usual setting of one or perhaps two educators in a classroom with on average 23 students this makes a big difference in the student-teacher dynamic (OECD, 2019; Hanze HGS, 2017). Expectations are that within a co-creation environment people feel safer to share their ideas and views on a certain subject. Reasoning is that there is less pressure, and all thoughts are valued and evaluated equally because there is no longer a hierarchy. A co-creator supposedly feels as welcome as any other person in the group. Enabling and stimulating participants to join into the process of creation more easily is another benefit of coproduction by creating an engaging

workspace where all are incentivised to make themselves visible and actively participate (Berkman & Westman, 2016). As Berkman & Westman (2016) put it;

“Learning is closely connected to the participation, subjectification and negotiation of meanings.”

In conclusion, creating tools via cooperation with students from different disciplines is stimulated because of the varied way of thinking that is implied by their origin (Thompson, 2011). Regardless of their origin, and the lesser-known people they are put with, the goal is clear and gives them a collective activity to work with.

The main takeaway is that there is a higher probability for students in creating actual new networks with new people than the more traditional settings. The relationships made between the teacher and the student are presumably more intense and can help the student to be more motivated by feeling more connected with the school system. In turn this would suggest a bigger focus on career opportunities and engaging in developing one's talents.

## 4.2 Social capital in ties

Burt (2000) defined social capital as the contextual complement to human capital; people tend to 'do better' when they are somehow better connected than others. Assets like trust and support (practical or emotional) can be seen as social capital. Knowing people generally leads to opportunities (Burt, 2000). Having a network with a diverse set of people can create a bigger pool of interactions that can be utilised by a person to gain benefits. Either vocationally, educationally, for personal development, monetarily, etc. It can therefore be an indirect access to resources (Crossley et al., 2015). Social capital can also be described as the resources a person has from a social network (Lin & Dumin, 1986). This is what is called individual social capital, opposite to collective social capital that is measured on a larger scale. Tersely put; the more collective social capital the better a society or group functions (Siisiainen, 2003). Collective social capital is not relevant in the present thesis, hence when social capital is mentioned the individual social capital is assumed.

Lin & Dumin (1986) stress the available amount of resources for a person to be gained from a social network is based on three general aspects. The first is the structural embeddedness of said individual, which brings forward the notion that the more a person is embedded in a social network the more a person can gain from it. Two other aspects of social capital are the 'accessibility of possibilities' gained by social structures and 'action-oriented use' of the social structure by individuals. Accessibility of possibility basically defines the usefulness of the social structure and the 'action-oriented use' is the initiative the person takes to actually make use of these possibilities.

Literature is somewhat ambiguous when it comes to what connections contains the most social capital. In this debate they make a distinction between strong and weak ties (Burt, 2000; Granovetter, 1983; Vriens & van Ingen, 2018). Strong ties are the type of relationships people tend to have with their families; based on a high emotional intensity, a higher level of intimacy and a high number of reciprocal services, often sharing more than one social setting (also known as foci) (Feld, 1981). Weak ties are the relationships people might have with their boss; relatively shallow, only meant for one certain social setting or focus. Or perhaps these people have been once or twice acquainted through a common friend (Granovetter, 1983). These weak ties tend to be more temporary than strong ties, since a key dimension of strong ties are the longer duration (Melamed & Simpson, 2016). Both strong- and weak ties have pros and cons (Kadushin, 2012; Carolan & Natriello, 2005; Mollenhorst, Völker & Flap, 2008; Melamed & Simpson, 2016). Weak ties are most beneficial when they have a brokerage function, which is when the person in question is the one who connects two networks. He or she obtains more information, or more broadly; social capital, that way than people who are in a network with no such outside connection. It does not necessarily mean the others of the group are without the information the 'broker' gained from the other tight network, he might decide to share it with them, but it does mean the broker has full leverage on what to do with this information and in that sense has a leg up on the rest.

Lin stresses that 'bridging structural holes', can provide novel information as its main benefit whereas tight closed off networks provides honesty and togetherness (Lin & Dumin, 1986). Often the weak ties are seen as key assets in providing for job opportunities and career mobility (Granovetter, 1983).

Strong ties are mostly stressed as positive when it comes to cohesion and efficaciousness of a group where people must work together to achieve goals. If no cohesion in a team exists due to lack of ties the individuals are likely to do their own thing without paying attention to what the others are doing. Normative congruencies make for a safe and

trustful workspace. In other words, being one the same page with the others of a group causes the performance of the group to increase (Liou & Chang, 2008). These are 'caring relationships', when people feel secure in the presence of their group. Strong and ties reaffirm what is already known and acquire from others what is not respectively. What this simplified equation makes clear is that both types of ties are important. It is not as black and white as it looks. The ties produced by temporary projects are thought to hold both positive sides in a specific discipline or area of knowledge. Not just people with resources are interesting people to have a connection with, having any connections at all are a form of resource (Liou & Chang, 2008). This is because social interactions can teach important lessons (Carolan & Natriello, 2005).

The CoTalent project itself can be seen as the broker that bridges the structural holes of distance, a lack shared foci of and differences in cultures between the participants.

Compared to the traditional classes in which the teacher is the one who leads the conversation, co-creational work environments are tuned to give all participants a chance to chime in (Bowden & Allesandro, 2011). The freedom this gives to participants can make for them to feel safer in this working environment than a more hierarchical setting. The relationships that are formed within a co-creation setting are presumably stronger and more apparent than in a normal working environment. the caring relationships in the strong ties make for students to likely feel more willing to engage in learning skills. Liou and Chang (2008) argue that students are better off professionally when their psyche is addressed in the process of learning. Having strong ties with the people you work with has a positive effect on one's psyche generally. Having a friendly and safe environment as previously mentioned can assist not only in the efficaciousness of the collective but can also bring the individual in a better place mentally.

A typology on different networks has been created by Poucke (1979). He finds three distinct networks: sentiment-, power- and interest- networks. This typology is useful to find the most prominent type of social capital that can be gained from a certain network. The sentiment network is a network that contains strong ties over a long span of time, which implies more emotional support type social capital. Entertainment and recreational activities are the way people in these networks most regularly interact. In power networks actors are intentionally brought together in order to attain a long-term goal. Finally, Interest networks are networks with a clear beginning and end that are somewhat arbitrary in members but still similar to the power network in that it is created as a means to an end. The main difference is the time span, interest networks are short-term planned networks that dissolve after the goal has been achieved. The current thesis will be primarily focused on interest network, since the CoTalent project can be defined as such. (Poucke, 1979)

In an interest network people are mostly not interacting for personal gain via the network itself. The targeted goal has the overarching primacy in the network. This does not mean the actors aren't, perhaps subconsciously, also producing beneficial connections for themselves. Some people might be looking to make conversation with people they look up to or would like to get to know better because of their status for example. The expected returns these people could give them can play an incentive for individuals to make connections (Mollenhorst, Völker & Flap, 2008).

### 4.3 Tacit advantages

The tacit advantages gained from knowing a diverse set of people are taken for granted. The main idea here is that an individual can fall back on the newly made acquaintance whenever needed (de Jong, Moolenaar, Osagie, & Phielix, 2016). An easy example: An individual meets a friend of a friend at a party who came to the party with a big bus. They have a short conversation about this and move on. A few weeks later this individual is moving to a new house and in need of a vehicle to transport its belongings to his new home. This individual reaches out to his friend if they are perhaps allowed to make use of the bus the person at the party was driving. This saves money and perhaps time for instead they had to look to hire a bus.

This is a purely practical benefit gained from a social network. In a professional career often comes down to career opportunities that are based on favouritism where weak ties can play an important role (Montgomery, 1992). Banally worded; being a known individual is better than being an unknown entity.

Then there is the 'actor point of view' where the actors of a network can manipulate a network in such a way that it benefits them the most. This view is contentious since it assumes the individual is omniscient in what is happening within the network and how to make perfect use of it. The actor point of view however brings forward the notion of

individual influence. This goes both ways; the individual has influence and is influenced, which is why strong ties eventually won't bring forward any novel value (Poucke, 1979).

Exchange theory by Banck (1973) is based on the actor point of view where bonds are processes of bargaining where manipulation and strategic action can be abused to make the most out of the relationship. The truncated adage 'Practice makes perfect' encapsulates the value of social interaction and how it can compound the value of networks when being actively involved in networks. If this is taken into account it might be that certain individuals, more savvy in social networking and creating connections, could take more away from the CoTalent network than the people who do not have that much experience in getting value from networks. Conversely, the CoTalent network is set up in such a way that all are seen as equal through co-creation and treated as such. Even the people who wouldn't usually speak their minds are exhorted to do so and can give them more confidence in taking the initiative to make new connections.

#### 4.4 Constraints in social networking

Time plays a key role in networking, keeping up a network is an investment of time that could be spent elsewhere (McCowan et al., 2016). How much time a person has defines how many connections a person can keep up at a specific moment in their life. The amount of time necessary to sustain certain networks can differ. Some networks can remain strong despite only sporadic interaction between members, others dissipate when there is little interaction for a longer period (Poucke, 1979). It is then presumed that the amount of social capital one has reaches a cap. The amount of people one has in their network is constrained by time but also by the time the others have and want to invest in said individual. One might desire more time of someone, if this person does not give that wanted attention the other might completely sever all connection and not be interested to speak with that person again. It is then unlikely they can use or even choose each other as tacit resources. The complexity of growing or diminishing social networks for a person cannot simply be measured due to the emotional connections that exist between. Conclusively, social relations inherently come with constraints in the way they are organized. The individuals' behaviour is interconnected with the ties they have formed (Poucke, 1979).

It is important to note the ephemerality of a project like the CoTalent project. Even when strong ties are made, they only exist in the one focus the actors share. The actors might find that they have more foci in common it is unlikely the actors are as inherently close as for example going to the same gym. Unless arrangements are made between the actors of a single focus group the ties are not bound past that particular focus. This implies the temporality of said ties and how easy they can sever. It is therefore likely for the ties to eventually dissolve completely, when people no longer find it sensible to reach out to the people from a group that has been concluded for a longer period of time.

#### 4.5 Status homophily

In literature it is stated that people tend to look for others in networking who are slightly above them in status, this is known as status homophily (Kandel, 1966). Status can be seen as a person's strength in a certain area. Professional status used for the purpose of this thesis. This means an actor will look for someone with a better position in the job market or someone with higher grades; someone they look up to with reference to a certain skill they possess.

The status hypothesis is for example incredibly salient in theories on neighbourhood cohesiveness, where positive effects can be measured for lower-income groups when paired with slightly better off neighbours. Conversely, when paired with neighbours who are from a significantly higher income group there is a higher chance of strife between the two groups (Manley, Van Ham & Doherty, 2011). When an individual becomes acquainted with a person of higher status they tend to grow in status as well. The status hypothesis complements the homophily theory in the sense that people want to be like others, but in status homophily it is the desire of a person to be something they aren't yet.

The CoTalent project attempts to nullify the hierarchies that exist between student and teacher (CoTalent, 2017). This could mean it is easier to get into contact with someone who is usually considered higher up the social ladder, meaning the teachers relative to the students. Students are stimulated to work with and interact with the teachers via co-creation. Following the status homophily theory the students participating might experience a growth in their own status or a growth in skill building because they are interacting with people of higher status.

## 4.6 Heterophily

Heterophily can be defined as the 'acceptance of others'. It goes against the homophily theory in that people will accept and even like people who might not be like them at all. Homophily and heterophily are inherently opposites but a case can be made that they are compatible. A person who seems, on first sight, extremely different from someone else (in terms of personal characteristics, hobby's, job or life experiences) can attempt to find similarities in the other person and enjoy these small congruencies he or she discovers. When an individual realizes that even the seemingly most disparate people have an element of mutuality, they often become more accepting and tolerant towards others. A higher acceptance rate of others can help in the individual's professional life in finding a new job or creating new weak ties that were previously unavailable due to the person's view towards others.

People will be more open to others that are in whatever way different when they are in a forced situation where no other pool of more 'homogenous' people available. People are inherently social beings. When a heterogenous group of people are put together with for a specific goal in mind they will be willing to work together and 'put their differences aside', colloquially speaking. This is concisely put by Mollenhorst, Völker & Flap (2008) as "one will be more inclined to accept a person as a friend or an acquaintance, when met at a certain occasion in a given social context"

This line of reasoning has also been given in 1977 by Blau in his opportunities for contact argument.

Without the more forced environment people will mostly look for interactions with the ones they are used to talk with. Unfamiliarity is the structural hole that Burt (2000) describes. People are unlikely to go and look for new interactions on a whim.

When an individual gains inspiration by knowing people that are quite different from them it may be more useful in their professional lives than having friendships. That being said, friendships are an asset in the sense that relaxation is necessary to combat negative effects from overworking, stress or even burn-out. Having and making friends at work is important to not feel lonely (Grant, 2020). Obviously work and leisure have to be balanced in such a way that the person can be productive without it draining them.

The worlds of the participants of the CoTalent project have an indirect overlap, that distinguishes itself from the usual foci most literature mention. The shared experiences one might have as a student and the same shared experiences teachers have between them can make for ties to immediately grow stronger than when a professional gamer is grouped up with a rural farmer for example. They might not be familiar with each other personally but will more easily understand each other and find similarities that make for easy bonding.

You can look at the school institution as one massive network divided in a plethora of subgroups depending on the taxonomy used to create these groups. For the current research purposes students of distinct disciplines form groups and the teachers of these disciplines form groups. The CoTalent project mixed students and teachers of different disciplines. It is therefore expected the accessibility of possibilities is considerably higher than in a 'normal' setting for relevant novel information.

## 4.7 Key actors in social networks

'It's a small world' is one of the most quoted one-liners in the small world problem literature (Collins & Chow, 1998; Millgram, 1967; Schnettler, 2009). It perfectly encompasses the idea that people can easily find a mutual connection in their social world despite not knowing each other directly. Evidence shows that everybody should in theory be within 6 steps to know anybody else on the planet (Elmacioglu & Lee, 2005). Recent literature suggests it is even less than that (Edunov et al., 2016). The position in a network does tend to matter in how fast you can reach other people in general (Freeman, 1978). Similar to the brokers bridging weak ties there are key actors in networks that have a high amount of so called 'centrality'.

Centrality is a concept that can be divided into multiple types: Betweenness centrality, degree centrality, closeness centrality, eigenvector centrality and cross-clique centrality (Freeman, 1978; Ruhnau, 2000). The first two of these types will be discussed here. Firstly, and most importantly, for the key actors is the betweenness centrality. The higher the betweenness centrality of a node in a network the more influence this node has on the network. This means he or she has more weak ties than others in the network and thus has more leverage on the information that flows in or out of a network. Betweenness centrality is measured by the value of the links a node has. The number of links is expressed through degree centrality. These links are not necessarily important or useful, but it gives an indication of how either popular (indegree degree centrality) or outgoing a person (outdegree centrality) is. In general, a higher degree- and betweenness centrality is seen as a useful asset when it comes to social capital (Diani, 1997). Key actors in a small world network have plenty of both types of centrality relative to other people in the network. In other words, these key actors are characterized by 'knowing a lot of people who know a lot of people'. Being a key actor or knowing a key actor can give tacit advantages to gain access to resources whenever in need. Through meeting people with a lot of contacts themselves the actor can snowball its network. In order to become such a key actor an individual has to balance creating new weak ties and keeping up with the stronger ties of its network (Friedkin, 1982).

Complementary to the status homophily theory, the people with the most degree centrality tend to be the people others look up to and are higher on the social ladder. In the CoTalent project the people who have many more years of networking and experience will be the teachers. They are most likely acquainted with people the student participants will not be acquainted with. It could then be advantageous to put emphasis on making connections with the teachers in order to gain the most social capital from of the CoTalent project.

## 4.8 Skills in social settings

Some key characteristics that define a talented person or student have been made in previous literature that will make up the most important facets of a persons' chances to have a successful professional life. These characteristics are as followed: leadership, 'smartness' (different from intelligence), motivations and perseverance. It is said that these are simultaneously able to be trained and intrinsically present to a certain degree in a person (Wolfensberger, 2011). In an educational environment these traits can be fostered by strong and plentiful interrelationships between the students and the teachers alike (Wolfensberger, Eijl & Pilot, 2012). Talent is closely related to the employability of a person. Employability can be bifurcated into hard and soft skills a person pertains (Higson & Andrews, 2010). The soft skills are a broad range of competencies ie. extroversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, intellect, openness, professionalism, reliability, etc (Higson & Andrews, 2010; Taylor & Ellison, 1983; Miller & Neumeister, 2017). In the 'SEEDS' competence profile, talent (or excellence) can be described by sixteen items that distinguish competences in five domains; strategic, empathic, expressive, decisive and to see patterns and interrelationships (Fuller et al., 2018). This profile illustrates that individual performance is based on more than just normative technical skills or practical communicative knowledge (Fuller et al., 2018).

People need more than just skill in their professional career life to excel. They need to be able to cope with new ways of conducting labour and show the ability to deal with the more complex integrated globalized workforce (Tarique & Schuler, 2010). The networks created by the CoTalent project could foster these more 'soft skills' (Higson & Andrews, 2010). Professional communication is seen as an overarching competency used in all sectors. *Networking is therefore interrelated as a feedback loop* (Fuller et al., 2018).

This construct has also been described by the CoTalent proposal and the EC in their expected results of the KA2 (CoTalent, 2017). Participating in the CoTalent project would improve certain skills of an individual. This part focuses on the expected skills that revolve around social settings. Being inside situations with others is known to improve the



ability to cope or deal with these situations (In the most extreme sense this can be seen exposure therapy) (Bierman & Furman, 1984).

Social skills are multi-faceted (Deming, 2017). As a whole it is known they are generally useful in the professional life of an individual (Deming, 2017). This implies a feedback loop where social settings improve a persons' skills and gives themselves opportunities for more social interaction. This is especially true when producing weak ties, not so much for creating strong ties. When more and more strong ties are created there is a danger of closing a network in the sense that there is little to no new information being fed into the network. Ergo, it can be considered that a social skill is also balancing out the amount of contact one has with others.

Social networks themselves are also a key 'skill' to have in a scholar's professional life. The people who participated in the network of CoTalent will most likely be in a working career that is routed towards research institutes or jobs that demand collaboration (Abbasi, Hossain, Uddin & Rasmussen, 2011).

## 4.9 individual employability in Europe improved by social networks

Employers usually want hard working, independently motivated students to hire into their company. 'Hard working' is a generalized term for doing what you are supposed to do faster than what is expected of you. Communication and interaction between workers are usually key in 'working hard', since it gives people the option to delegate tasks but more importantly ask others for their expertise and learn the best ways to accomplish tasks (Pohlman, Grayeb & Vohra, 2012). Distinguishing oneself in an individualistically minded society can be another competitive advantage in the professional life of an individual for making a successful career. For people to distinguish themselves it is a prerequisite to get hold of multiple viewpoints gained from exposure to a variety of social interactions (Carolan & Natriello, 2005). A person having a vast array of contacts will generally help with having a more unique and 'well-rounded' perspective on the world that will be positive for their professional life.

Deming (2017) also stresses the importance of social skills in the labour market. This is for a huge part because of the theory of mind, the ability to make sense of the demeanour of one another and with it understanding their mental state, is essential in human interaction. The human interaction is necessary in modern work life due to the more flexible, team-based, settings people now work in. It is part of the soft skills previously mentioned, the more generic and interpersonal competencies (Higson & Andrews, 2010).

As mentioned in the introduction, globalization plays a larger role in employment than ever before. Opportunities cross-countries for people to work make the pool of available employers and employees bigger. The competitive edge one has in having a large network is also embedded in the fact that there is more chance to reach these international networks. In order to gain renown that will propel the chances of gaining access to global or international knowledge networks the antecedent is to have a strong base of capabilities to work from as an individual (Wagner & Leydesdorff, 2005). The CoTalent project is internationally oriented and attempts to bring people together from multiple backgrounds and with-it bring people who are seemingly disparate closer to each other. Feeling more socially cohesive with other parts of Europe might put a person in a position where he or she is more likely to make plans to look further than just their surrounding in finding job opportunities.

## 5. Methods & operationalization

This chapter focuses on the procedure used for this thesis in order to answer the central question. It is attempted to give a clear reasoning behind the choices made for the way it will be conducted. Additional info can be found in the the appendix regarding the interview questions (*Interview topic list*).

### 5.1 Grounds behind qualitative research

An action or activity evokes emotion. This effect may only last for the duration of the action or can persist for a longer period after the action has ended. The emotions experienced may change when the action has finished. The emotions of individuals may be different before, during and after the action and continuously influenced by external sources unrelated to the action itself but interrelated in one's mind (Shiota et al., 2017). Emotions and emotional wellbeing are incredibly complex. These concepts will therefore be used only at base-level. The way someone feels about a certain event or interaction is generally muddled and changed through time (Levine, 1997). Asking questions about the way the respondent perceives something is personal and can be very specific. Therefore, the choice has been made to conduct interviews for this subject.

### 5.2 Interviewing methods

The interviews will be quasi-structured or otherwise known as semi-structured in order to gain insights that are necessary to answer the central question of the current paper. Data gathered from semi-structured interviews are regarded as more in-depth than data retrieved through quantitative means. Reasoning is that the interviewee can choose their own words and conversations can delve deeper in certain subjects when it seems relevant. The data will be more personal and will sketch a better understanding of one's opinion on the CoTalent project and their experiences with it (Mason, 2017). The context of an individual will impact the experiences had by this person (Atzema, Hoof, Lambooy & Rietbergen, 2015). During an interview these personal experiences can be expressed on the terms of the interviewee. Accordingly, the perspective will be 'emic', in which the concepts will be defined by the respondent (Kadushin, 2012). This is due to the ambiguity of some of the terms used and the meanings behind them are up for personal opinions. Making sure all respondents have the same meaning behind what a strong tie is for example would take a long time to define and the interview time must be used optimally to not make it longer than necessary. Respondents are, depending on the subject, on average not willing to spend more than 45 minutes to an hour on the interview (Mason, 2017).

The interviewer will attempt to give the participant the room to express their emotions and to go off track, to be supportive and humane, but vigilant when it comes to answers that seem either socially desirable or straight up phoney. The interviewer will be friendly but will try to challenge the participant to delve deeply into the subject at hand in order to gain as much insight as possible.

To make sure the interviewee does not go too far-off track and make for more concrete data the interviewer can give suggestions in certain answers. Key words given as an example in terms of soft skills and hard skills can be found in the appendix (9.4). At the end of the interview the interviewer can summarize all the salient answers the interviewee had given. This also gives additional time for the interviewee to think of any additions to their answers or might alter their opinion on certain subjects.

## 5.3 Finding respondents

A total of approximately 920 direct participants were estimated in the CoTalent project proposal (CoTalent, 2017). The CoTalent team attempted to build the project from an even number of teachers and students. Within the workshop group there were twelve teachers and twelve students, divided across the eight partner institutions, which made for three teachers or students from each institution. These proportions could be extrapolated for the whole of the CoTalent participants barring perhaps that it is easier for students to participate than the teachers and that more students were involved throughout the project because of a more fluctuating lifestyle than established teachers. Only a rough estimated guess then can give an idea of the amount of student participants of the CoTalent project since there is no data available. For the sake of this research the choice has been made to round off the directly involved participants to a total of 500, in which 'directly' regards to attending to any of the workshops or multiplier events and with it meeting other people involved with the CoTalent project.

Eligible respondents are easily delineated. All the people involved with the CoTalent project and were students during their participation of the CoTalent project are qualified as valid respondents for this research. This implies there are around 500 possible student participants who are eligible for this research to be interviewed.

Reaching the participating students of the CoTalent will be done through members of the steering group of CoTalent by asking them for contact information of the students participated or who previously participated. The intention is to interview at least a few students of each participating country. Having a varied group of respondents gives a richer story of the different perspectives and the different experiences or can perhaps accentuate the similarities. CoTalent project, divided per country, Since the current thesis is targeting all the students who participated or were involved with the CoTalent project. Transnational differences must be taken into account during planning and conducting the interviews. Time zones differ between Romania and the other countries involved for example.

## 5.4 Time schedule

Interviews will be conducted through the end of week 23 and week 24 (3<sup>rd</sup> of June / 6<sup>th</sup> of June and onwards). If more time is needed interviews can also be done in week 25. The weekends can also be used to conduct interviews, but it is less likely people would want to make time for it, since it might feel like an intrusion on personal time (Mason, 2017). There are no more meetings or big CoTalent related events during that might impact the experience of the interviewee's responses through for example recency biases, in that sense the timing of these interviews will not matter. The sequence in which the interviews will be held with the interviewees throughout these weeks will not have a severe impact in their answers. Perhaps it can be taken into account that interviewees might contact other potential interviewees, people (previously) involved with CoTalent, to tell them they had an interview about the project. This will not likely have any big impacts on the results though.

These interviews are done in the period the COVID-19 virus is an apparent danger. Due to social distancing and the safety measures that have to be taken to fight the virus the interviews will be done online (RIVM, 2020). This is beneficial for both parties in the sense that no time is spent on travel. It might be easier to plan that way (Mason, 2017).

## 5.5 Online interviews

There are some detriments to online interviews. The microphones on most devices are not of professional quality and therefore it is easy to misunderstand each other, especially when non-native speakers are conversing in English. Another cause for miscommunication is bad internet connection; for quality of sound and video to be good it is necessary to have a good internet connection. The interviews are therefore best taken when no other devices are on the same internet connection and a LAN-cable is advised. Apart from the technical side there is also slight differences in interaction. Face-to-face interviews are still regarded as more valuable in how personal it can get. Talking over an online medium is less personal and 'intimate'. Building trust between the interviewee and interviewer is seen as valuable in interviews to have more candid conversations. This is harder to do in online interviews. The ability to record online interviews directly on the computer is one of the boons of online interviews, since the sound quality is usually better for both parties when compared to recording live face-to-face interview sessions.

## 5.6 Ethical considerations

It is very important that the interviewees know of the recording and consent with their interview being recorded. If they refuse the interview can still be done, with careful notetaking by the interviewer.

An informed consent form can be found in the added files. Here, the respondent is asked if they are informed well enough to conduct an interview on the matter the interviewer wishes to discuss. This raises the importance of informing the interviewer beforehand appropriately and formally on the subject (Donalek, 2005).

If the respondent is not okay with the information they have given after the interview they can omit their data from the research project. It is important to give the respondent the chance at the end to think through what they have said and if they have anything more to say about it (Donalek, 2005). Initial information will be given in the email sent to them to ask if they are willing to participate in a research project such as this. The email can be found in the appendix chapter.

## 5.7 Caveats

In order reach out to more respondents, the interviewees were asked if they knew contact information of the other participants of the CoTalent project. This might skew the target audience slightly since the people they have worked with are not the full research group. It is likely they only have the contact information of the people they closely worked with or might not think of the participants of for example other groups, since it is easy to forget relatively short contact. This is a deficiency in the research, but necessary in order to have enough interviews to make a valuable analysis.

An interesting side-effect of asking for other people they have contact information of on the other hand is that it answers one of the questions that will be asked during the interview, if they have contact information, they can make use of currently and it is then interesting to see how large their network in the CoTalent project is. If they are willing to share contact information of others the amount of contacts they have gathered can be processed into the analysis, giving an indication of how vast their CoTalent network has become. This 'snowballing' method is mainly utilised to save time since the current research had a smaller time window than most research would and finding respondents another way was difficult due to privacy issues.

Often networks are visualised via nodes and edges (also known as lines or links). The actors in the network then are the nodes and the edges indicate the connections they pertain within the network. It can be detailed in that the edges can be given direction and intensity by making the lines thicker. The visualization is often done by choosing a type of perspective from which the network stems. The most commonly used network types are the ego-centric networks, the complete networks and the open-system networks (Chung, Hossain & Davis, 2005). The ego-centric network is based around a so-called focal actor, whom network will be expanded upon. The distance of the connections, the width of the network, is based on the function of the network research. In the current research, where the interviewees are asked about their personal experiences the most sense is to attempt to visualise the network from said ego-centric perspective. Despite the network-oriented interview, the questions are not thoroughly dedicated to finding out what connections the participants have made, for larger scale research it is recommended to make use of so called 'generators'. The current research however focuses less so on the quantity of data that would be needed to create an accurate visualization of the networks of the participants. Therefore, no visualization will be made.

## 5.8 Operationalization

In essence the questions central to this research are two-pronged. The questions truly essential for the research are the ones that answer what kind of network (dynamics) are apparent in the CoTalent network and what kind of impact they have from these ties on a professional career level (or what could still be gained). Down below the relevance of the leading questions will be explained and follow-up questions will be proposed. The order of the questions can be rearranged depending on the answers of the interviewee, but the routing given here is suggested to keep a clear path. A short summary of the intended routing is given below.

### 5.8.1 routing

The questions can be found in the appendix. The first questions are primarily focused to gain a little context about the situation of the respondent. The second part gauges what the respondent gained from participating with the CoTalent project and how they contributed to the project. This is partially to bring back memories of the project since the time between the interview and the actual involvement will at least have been about half a year ago (CoTalent, 2017). On the other hand, it is asked to gain insights on their experiences and aspirations that they had during and with the CoTalent project. They also lead nicely into questions targeted towards the social connections that were made during the CoTalent project. The network questions can be combined with the questions about the personal goals and collective goals to see whether the achievement of said goals were related to the networks the participants took part in. Ending the questionnaire with what-if based questions can prove useful in seeing what it would've been like for the respondent in an ideal world regarding the project. Hypothetical networks that could've been created but were not created by the respondent can be interesting because they may have been created by the hypothetical others who did react to the opportunities given to them during the project. The next segment gives a more detailed explanation for each separate question.

### 5.8.2 Question-by-question clarification

#### **Q1. What was the goal for you in participating with the CoTalent project?**

Starting off with a personal question to immediately grasp the personal values of the respondent. Their objectives are questioned to see what their motivations were to participate with the CoTalent project.

In order to learn how important the newly created ties are for the people participating. Did they have in mind that they would meet new people and that they would have a new way of communicating with the teachers? Was co-creation with the teachers a reason to participate? If this is indeed the case it would imply that the enhanced communication with possibility of creating a weak tie could be part of their motivations. What, in turn, could then be a benefit of these nascent ties? This line of questioning will be continued in the 'networks and connections'-section of the interview (see interview topic list).

#### **Q2A. What did you gain from the CoTalent project now that you are no longer participating?**

This is a posteriori evaluation to measure the actual benefits from the CoTalent project. The main goal is to find more long lasting impacts the CoTalent project had on the respondent. Follow-up questions could specify certain expected results that the EC mentioned or the CoTalent proposal addressed. Questions like "Did you gain more confidence in your abilities by working on the same level as teachers?" or "Do you feel more able to cooperate with others in projects?" could give further insight into the impacts oriented towards their professional life. If there seems to be an impact it is then key to continue the questionnaire to find out how these impacts came to be.

#### **Q2B. What did you gain from the CoTalent project so far?**

This question, similar to Q2A, is made to measure perceived benefits the participant has so far experienced. The CoTalent project has not yet finished and they may have ideas on what they can still yet gain from it, this can be asked as follow-up question to gauge if they have certain plans in mind with the CoTalent project that will help them on a personal level

**Q3. What was the collective goal of the part of the CoTalent project you participated in?**

To see if they had a full understanding on what exactly the CoTalent workshop was trying to achieve as a whole, in other words what the end goal was. It shows how involved and interested they really were. The participants with less interest and less time spent within the CoTalent project will likely have a smaller number of noteworthy connections made. It is more of a control question as well to see if the CoTalent project goals here are compliant with the ideas of the participants. The students who played a role in the CoTalent steering group were differently involved and the collective goal was different from the participants who were only present at the multiplier events. This question then answers the personal view on these parts of the CoTalent project.

**Q4&5. Do you feel like you accomplished your goal / Are you happy with the results for the collective goal?**

These questions both add to the previous questions to see what the eventual results are and how happy the participant is with the project's achievements. Similar to Q3 this has been done to gauge in how far the person is engaged and feels like a part of the CoTalent project. Co-creation is particularly keen on making the 'consumer' feel part of the production of a product, meaning the participant in theory should feel engaged with the project. If this is not true, the results might be that there is a disconnect in the theory and reality.

**Q6. What could have been done differently to get a better outcome for yourself (to perhaps accomplish the goals you set at the beginning but didn't turn out the way you wanted them to?)**

A hypothetical question can be asked to give the respondent time to reflect and think about the project from an ideal world standpoint. For example, if they wanted more interaction with teachers and didn't feel like they had a satisfactory amount of it.

**Q7. I assume you have heard of the concept of co-creation; how would you define this in the context of this project?**

It is likely for the participants to know of co-creation, since it was a big part of the project. Despite this it is best to test whether they truly understand the concept and how informed they still are now that the CoTalent project has been rounded off for the most parts. Taking a look at their perspective of co-creation might give some insights into what their experience is of co-creation as a whole, not so much focused on the CoTalent project specifically.

**Q8. How did you experience co-creation?**

The results of the co-creation environment will be tested this way. Here the expected results from literature are weighed against the results from co-creation of the CoTalent project to see if they are commensurable.

It is simultaneously a lead up question to the next section of questions, targeted towards the networks that were allegedly formed during the project. Environment in the definition of this question is the conviviality and in how far it was pleasant to work in the CoTalent team. It could already give an indication if there were stronger ties formed. Follow-up questions could be 'Which people made for the environment to be this way?'

**Q9. Was it significantly different from the way you would usually conduct a project?**

Co-creation as a reasonably recent development within literature is not fully elaborated upon or accepted as a working method. One of the reasons for this is that co-creation, especially in education, is not utilised that often and there are many forms imaginable that could be defined as 'co-creation' (Mahat & Dollinger, 2019). This question is targeted towards finding out the most salient differences from a 'normal' network. It helps with circumscribing a more generalized view on how the participants felt the co-creation was a distinctly different way of working compared to other means.

**Q10. Did you have new relationships built up because of the CoTalent project?**

The networks and connections section type questions are the nitty gritty of the interview. The initial question is key to finding out whether they have any new relationships built up in the first place. The participants for example might see the interactions with others during the CoTalent project as purely functional and wouldn't call any of them a 'relationship' in any shape or form. If they do not feel like having any new relationships created by CoTalent it is then

relevant to ask if they have new contact information of the people they worked with, or if they gathered new information. They might not consider something a weak tie when the social capital theory contrarily would consider it valuable (De Jong, Moolenaar, Osagie, & Phielix, 2016).

**Q11. Do you feel like there are strong ties built up, people you felt particularly close with, had intimate conversations with, less functional conversations, had a more unique connections with or someone you hung around with a lot?**

Together with the follow-up or subsection questions proposed in the interview topic list (added files 1) question eleven attempts to answer one of the bifurcated relationships a person can have. The strong ties have certain implications that go along with it that are described by the theoretical framework. To not take these implications as assumptions further questioning is warranted. Especially when considering that not everybody will have the same view on what a 'strong tie' means. The number of strong ties created gives a better picture of the value of working together more intensely and on the same level, key characteristics of co-creation. Expected outcomes would be that of participants having stronger ties during the project and utilising the trust aspect in social capital. The following questions focus on the relationship the participant has with the teachers in specific, but the present trainers might have proven useful connections as well and might be worth asking about. Another follow-up question could be how these ties came to be, how they were created and what caused them to 'grow strong'.

**Q12. Did you manage to sustain these stronger ties?**

Asking if they remained in frequent contact with the ties they produced during the CoTalent project answers whether they have only made strong or weak ties and in which way they have used these ties altogether. When someone answers with something in the lines of; 'The relationships I had built up are no longer of meaning to me, I have not spoken to them in a while'. It is safe to assume the person might have had a strong tie with someone, but it has dissipated. It is then crucial to continue asking whether they would still be able to fall back on this tie, if it could be useful at a point in time perhaps for job opportunities or help with fostering a certain skill. This way it can be tested if the respondent has no tie at all with the person in question or if the strong tie has only become weaker. Follow-up questions like "Do you still have its contact information?" or "would you be able to reach them if you were in need of something you think they would be able to help you with?" could add to the information of weak and strong ties.

**Q13. In what way were the interactions with teachers different from the more normal curriculum lessons**

Question 13 is once more a question to distinct the working methods of co-creation. Here it is coupled with the creation of unique networks that were previously unavailable. The 'focus' CoTalent project is according to the proposal and the EC a unique collaboration that will give participating students new insights and help with their motivation through the equal-level communication between them and the teachers. The hope is that this question will answer if the students experienced it the way it is presented.

**Q14. Do you think you could fall back on the people you worked with to and in what way could you 'use' them?**

Even when ties have not remained as strong as they once were, they can still be used in specific situations, especially when it comes to weak (professionally oriented) ties. The 'latent' social capital is tested here. In a time of need the participants can fall back on the CoTalent network when they need to achieve something. This question implicitly revolves around the professional career life of the participants because it is expected that the diminished ties from the CoTalent project are not used for emotional support or 'just-for-fun', free-time related, relationships. Question 14 is also important to see how temporary the CoTalent network was. This is interesting in the dynamics of social capital as well as the usefulness of projects that have a clear start- and endpoint.

**Q15. Did you lose time in other networks or was something 'sacrificed' for the CoTalent project? (Was the time you invested into the CoTalent project previously used for something else, did you miss out on other appointments or was planning CoTalent not an issue?)**

Social capital of a person is dynamic. Ties that are formed need to be sustained through an investment of time. Some fade, others grow stronger through seemingly arbitrary life choices and coincidental interactions between people. People often do not know they possess social capital, for it cannot be measured in traditional values. Only guesses as

to how valuable and useful ties are can be made. The person in question is goaded to think about the possible trade-offs made by participating to see if they have relatively grown in social capital.

**Q16. Did you find new opportunities in the CoTalent project because of the people you met for either obtaining information or obtaining possibilities, can you chime in to the CoTalent network for other parts of your life like your (future) job or internships? [latent advantages]**

If the respondent did not mention any real gains or losses from the project that came from the connections made this question directly asks them. Question 16 is therefore more of a control question; it is a different way of asking what was asked at the beginning of the interview with a network perspective.

This question is to test if the person truly gained what they wanted or if they perhaps gained something completely different or unexpected. It is key to give them time to think or give them a line to work with by giving examples.

**Q.17 Did you notice yourself improving socially, working so closely together? [examples personal development]**

To more directly answer a possible side-effect of co-creation; the individual improving at social interaction and collaboration. Future networks are then indirectly influenced by the CoTalent project. The respondent can evaluate if the project had any effect on their social skills. Even if they did not make any interesting ties during the project itself, they might have been more motivated to do so afterwards or improved at taking initiative. These terms can be asked in follow-up questions. The main concepts that are used for analysis in this question and others can be found in the added files chapter under '*Concepts to look for in interviews*'.

**Q18. Would you participate in another project similar to CoTalent?**

An evaluative question to gauge whether the person thinks the CoTalent project was worth the time investment and whether they think it is a valuable use of their time. The question in combination with question 4, 5 and 6 form a concrete opinion on co-creation and the CoTalent project efficacy.

**Q19. When looking back, do you feel like you make full use of the potential opportunities in the CoTalent project that you could've made use of?**

The CoTalent project may not have given the most opportunities to the respondent but they might be able to see the potential of the CoTalent project network. Perhaps they did not make as much use of it as they could've. Other participants may have been able to take more advantage of the CoTalent environment. Follow-up questions could be 'did you notice other participants make use of the CoTalent project in a different way [give example]?'. Question 19 is aimed to seek any insights from the participants how the CoTalent project could have been made use of in a way that they didn't think of beforehand.

### 5.8.3 Emic analysis

The analysis of this research is loosely following the concepts of the constructivist approach used for qualitative research which is a paradigm that maintains that human beings construct their conceptions of the world (Owen, 2014). Hence the choice for emic research, based on the experiences of the participants. Questions to clarify their perceptions are then key to understand their point of view. In a simple questionnaire it cannot be assumed the participants all have the same definitions. In this research this has been recognized, the interviewees will be able to express themselves and, in turn, the interviewer will have to interpret the interviewee as best as possible.



#### 5.8.4 Country by country variance

With analysis the transnational differences will also be of importance. Aforementioned the AHEA aspires to create equal education across Europe. There are currently still differences across Europe in the quality of education. Something the AHEA wants to keep intact however is the cultural diversity present between the European countries. The education system of Europe is pluralistic, their local contexts are to be respected (Gvaramadze, 2008). This, on the other hand does make for possible discrepancies in experiences of the CoTalent project. The way it was conducted across the participating countries may have been dissimilar in such a way that participants from different countries feel different about it (Civitillo, Juang, Badra & Schachner, 2019). In analysing the data, the provenance of the participants will be taken into account. This way there is possibility to make out any locational differences in the impacts of the CoTalent project. It is then clearer where the co-creation of CoTalent was bigger success and where it may have failed. Future research may be able to use this to find the mechanisms behind these mechanisms.

#### 5.8.5 Student groups

The current research researches solely the impacts of the CoTalent project on the students involved. The group of students that participated are diverse in origin, academic discipline but most importantly they joined in at different times and had different roles in the project. The majority of the students participated in the workshops and the multiplier events; a smaller group was more directly involved for a longer period of time as they were part of the task-group. Some students remained throughout the whole of the CoTalent project, some joined in further into the project and others left prematurely. It is important to mention in what way the students participated.

If they left the CoTalent project prematurely it is likely they were unhappy with the way it was going, or they had plans elsewhere. It is interesting to separate the groups when analysing the results.

The context of the participant must be taken into account as it may have an impact on the value of CoTalent. Previous life experiences may be defining in the novelty of the CoTalent's resources. The usage of the CoTalent project and their motivations were most likely based on their previous life experiences.

The interviewees came from multiple countries from an array of disciplines. In the current research the answers of said interviewees were compared and the general consensus was taken away from it. On the other hand, some of the more outlier-type answers were also taken into account and processed where the differences of the cultures and provenance of the participants can play a role. It is therefore important to mention some of the basic information of the interviewees with their answers to be able to compare.

## 6. Results

After interviewing 8 of the CoTalent student participants there were a lot of answers that were congruent throughout most of the interviews and some answers given that seemed out of the ordinary compared to the answers of other interviewees. Firstly, this chapter will attempt to create an overview of the questions with the most commonly shared answers. Secondly an analysis of these answers is made, interpreted with use of the theories and literature from the theoretic framework.

### 6.1 Question-by-question results

#### **Q1. What was the goal for you in participating with the CoTalent project?**

Common consensus of the interviewed participants was that the experience of meeting and cooperating with people from other cultures was a large part of their motivation to participate as well as the most memorable part of the experience. Most of the spoken-to participants had something to do with education either as part of their study or had previously followed courses on (honours) education. This meant that the participants were fascinated with the way education is developed and- or wanted to give their opinion with means to better the education system. Some participants were able to implement ideas of co-creation into their own teaching methods. Another commonly given answer was that being involved with a unique project of this scale was a big motivation to join in.

“(…) For me it was an opportunity to be involved in something bigger than just studying.”

Interviewee 7, International studying in the Netherlands

For some it was hard to say what their goal was, especially in the beginning. They mostly wanted to experience something new. Getting an insiders’ look at a project funded by the EC and how it was all set-up was something the participants were generally keen to find out.

#### **Q2. What did you gain from the CoTalent project now that you are no longer participating?**

The most common answer remained the experience from being with other cultures and having a unique experience, ‘a leg up’ compared to other post-graduates that did not have the opportunity to participate in a project like this. ‘Out-of-the box thinking’ was mentioned multiple times throughout the interviews, by which they meant the stimulation of the CoTalent team to be creative in finding answers to certain problems, but also the products themselves as a creative solution to improving honours programs and education as a whole. In terms of soft skills: giving feedback, dealing with feedback and acting upon that, giving presentations, being social with people from a different ‘hierarchy level’, confidence in speaking up and similar skills, were mentioned. Some students felt they already mastered these skills in previous experiences, as some had worked or studied abroad. They were more interested in the hard skills that could be learned from the project.

“It was like a thirty minute talk with the Danish student, you know, with like where she gave me all the tips, like the list of virtual things. The benefits I gained from that are amazing. And that was just thirty minutes of like getting into contact with a you know, a different side of education from a European country.”

Interviewee 8, from Germany

These hard skills were mostly related to education. Making movies was another hard skill the participants stated to have gained competence with through the CoTalent project, namely video editing and filming with (semi-)professional equipment.

### **Q3. What was the collective goal of the part of the CoTalent project you participated in?**

The participants mainly stated their goal and the group they were a part of. Most interviewees participated in the E-library group and mentioned the way this is supposed to help educators of higher education.

They also stated the focus on improving higher education through honours. Utilising co-creation was also mentioned to be one of the goals of the CoTalent project, which signifies the participants knew the process was also partially the goal of the project.

“that's also why it works. Yeah. Like you know if you don't use the same things then like why put it out.”

Interviewee 7, International studying in the Netherlands

In a sense CoTalent is a testing ground for co-creation. Simultaneously it gives attention to honours education, especially interviewees from countries that did not have honours education were enticed by the idea and were eager to share their perspective on it and help develop it.

### **Q4&5. Do you feel like you accomplished your goal / Are you happy with the results for the collective goal?**

The overall collective goal did not seem to matter as much for the students, some of them didn't have a good recollection of the work that had been made, but this may have been due to the longer time between participation and these interviews. They said they thoroughly enjoyed (although exhausting when the workshop week was over) the project but overall did not seem as bothered about the result. The co-creation part, then, seems to have worked in the sense that the process was as important or maybe even more important than the eventual result.

The participants who stopped prematurely conveyed they would've remained active in the CoTalent crew if they could have but did not give the inclination they were disappointed with not being able to participate any longer either.

There were participants who felt the dissemination, as a final stage could have been done better and were interested to see how the project would end up.

“I'm primarily interested in where CoTalent will end up; if the site remains active, who will take care of the website, if school will implement the ideas. (...) The dissemination is still a difficult thing, getting more followers, getting people on the website...” (translated from Dutch)

Interviewee 4, from the Netherlands

The participants still active in the project were more engaged with how the CoTalent project would end up, but the participants who were no longer involved were excited about the ideas of CoTalent and wanted to improve education through these ideas.

### **Q6. What could have been done differently to get a better outcome for yourself (to perhaps accomplish the goals you set at the beginning but did not turn out the way you wanted them to?)**

Many of the participants were happy with the way it went and could not think of something that would have made the experience a better one. ‘The way it went was the way it went’ seemed to be the common mantra throughout the interviews, just being happy with the project overall. Again, the most critique was towards the end of the project in disseminating the products that are produced by the CoTalent team and not towards the experience for themselves.

“So, I think that we should have had like a social media group in the beginning, a fourth group that only cared for how to disseminate this project. And I think we should have done that way early on and put up content or input throughout these years, because this is how you gather followers and make sure this program goes on and doesn't end up on the graveyard”

Interviewee 8, from Germany

The interviewee above also mentioned the CoTalent project would have benefitted from having a professional web designer participate at the beginning of the project who could give information on how to best design a site and make use of the online platform most effectively. This could have been another hard skill for the participants on top of video editing and improving their teaching. Interviewee 2 says “*speculating about planning, that wasn't always that useful*” (translated from Dutch) when asked what they would like to have had differently in the CoTalent project.

**Q7. I assume you have heard of the concept of Co-creation; how would you define this in the context of this project?**

The equality between members, the loss of hierarchy that is present in normal circumstances between student and teacher was mentioned multiple times. The students were able to talk freely and felt at ease to speak with others that were in other circumstances 'above them'.

"As students, we were directly welcomed by the lecturers and we were really seen as equal partners in this all co-creation process. So, we were always able to voice our opinions to tell the others what we think about it"

Interviewee 1, from Germany

The consumer-producer collaboration that is also a key part of co-creation was never stated. This could be due to the fact that they don't see themselves as abstract 'consumers' in education as much as you might in, like the previous example given, in a developing video game.

**Q8. How did you experience co-creation?**

Most students noticed marked differences between the co-creation of the CoTalent project and their honours education in the sense that it was more intense on discussions and there was a bigger focus on bringing forward ideas. The CoTalent project put massive emphasis on making sure there was a different dynamic than the usual 'Teachers send, students receive'. There were apparent cultural differences mentioned by most of the participants regarding the hierarchy of students and teachers. This meant for the participants to experience the co-creation differently. German and Romanian students' participants were more impassioned by the co-creation and equality between the students and teachers due to the bigger student-teacher gap in normal curriculum situations. The involved teachers also responded differently to the ideas of co-creation that may have sometimes created some difficulties in group mixing.

"I mean, there were some well, some of the Romanian lecturers who were had difficulties to accept students who lead first. I think this is also something Well, due to the structure in Romania, which is also quite different, I realized then."

Interviewee 1, from Germany

Despite the interaction between teachers and students being 'smoother' than the normal honours education (interviewee 6), some still felt like there was more of a barrier between both these parties compared to student-student and teacher-teacher interaction. There were instances, that the students and the teachers intermingled but mainly due to age gaps, according to interviewee 8, were still in essence two clearly separate groups.

**Q9. Was it significantly different from the way you would usually conduct a project?**

The students in unison agreed the CoTalent project was a unique opportunity and a unique experience. They emphasized the plethora of discussion and feedback moments to be refreshing although some found it superfluous at times (see interview 2 for example).

The intensity of the project, predominantly during the workweeks was unmatched but not in a bad way. Interviewee 1 stated that they were happy to be back home after the workweek in Lași was done, but that they still thoroughly enjoyed the week. Co-creation, the international environment, it being an Erasmus + collaborative project were all key differences that made the CoTalent project a unique experience.

"Traveling, that was something that was fun as well, so yeah the international aspect of it but then especially in combination with education and working with students and teachers at the same time" (loosely translated from Dutch)

Interviewee 2, from the Netherlands

The organization of the project was pre-planned, and the communication was done in an exceptional way having to take into account so many facets according to some of the interviewees. The planning overall is something that impressed many of the student participants (see Interview 4 and 7 for example) None of the participants had previously taken part in an EC-funded project before and they mentioned to experience this first hand was exciting on its own. Interviewees 2 and 3 were particularly interested to get a look behind the scenes of a project of this scale.

**Q10. Did you have new relationships built up because of the CoTalent project?**

There was not a single participant did not. Most of the interviewees mentioned each other in some way or had their contact information. In terms of existing ties through Honours or other education there were at most one or two people they already knew. These ties were usually the ones via which they got involved with the project in the first place. They stated they did mostly not cling to these people as interviewee 3 said (loosely translated from Dutch):

“I really only knew one of the students very well, but even though I entered the project much later than most I didn’t have to stick to him, people were very open”

All interviewees had some form of recent contact with other student participants, even the ones who had not participated for a while. Contact with teachers, conversely, was a lot more sporadic and with less international connections. Regardless during the CoTalent project the students did get into conversations with teachers.

**Q11. Do you feel like there are strong ties built up, people you felt particularly close with, had intimate conversations with, less functional conversations, had a more unique connections with or someone you hung around with a lot?**

The ties that were built existed predominantly between student to student, but there were in many cases also ties built between the teachers and students. An example used multiple times is the outside of work activities during the workshop week in Romania where the students and teachers would even party together late at night in cafes and clubs. These ties were not necessarily strong ones, though, as the students did mention to be mainly be part of a student group. There were some special cases that brought students and teachers closer together.

“I booked a plane trip to get to Salzburg, which turned out to be the same flight as one of the organizers of the CoTalent project, so I went with them on the plane.” (Paraphrased and translated from Dutch)

Interviewee 4, from the Netherlands

The teachers and the students were mostly on the same level in the amount of leverage and input they had on the project as previously mentioned, so intermingling did become easier.

**Q12. Did you manage to sustain these stronger ties?**

Most of the stronger ties built up were between students to students or people they had activities with outside of the CoTalent project like an honours program. These ties were usually sustained for the most part as these ties were not just linked via CoTalent. The linkages built up during the CoTalent period remained predominantly through social media and contact information. Some of the interviewees were eager to go to reunions if they were to present themselves (see interview 4). The stronger ties between students are mostly on a ‘friend’ level and are not working together on other project or anything like that, so it is mainly for enjoyment or emotional support.

“So, in when I was in Groningen for the first time, I met [...] and [...] and we had a really great time. And my friendship with [...] stayed very, very strong and I like to consider her one of my best friends now”

Interviewee 7, from Austria

These friends were not just people from the same country. Although some interviewees did mention to have a lot of contact with their fellow countrymen, they also mentioned to have new international friends because of the CoTalent project.

**Q13. In what way were the interactions with teachers different from the more normal curriculum lessons**

According to most participants the difference was noticeable when it came to regular lessons as well as the honours education. One of the participants recalled it as being more streamlined and smoother in the sense that all people were able to fill their role and participate without feeling out of place or having difficulty being a part of the group (see interview 6). Interviewee 8 from Germany did mention that it sometimes felt strange to be on ‘first-name base’ with the teachers when these had built a big reputation. It could be interpreted that they felt it was disrespectful to not talk to these esteemed people with some reverence.

**Q14. Do you think you could fall back on the people you worked with to and in what way could you 'use' them?**

The ties built up were mostly for the student participants' non-professional life. They had also built up a few links via social media sites (e.g., Linked-in or Facebook) with educators or coordinators of the project that could perhaps, hypothetically, play a role in their professional life as well (interviewee 2). Though, none of the participants gained direct job opportunities or career offerings through the CoTalent project.

"Like we got not friends. But like if I go to Romania, I would call her, like hey you want to hang?"

Interviewee 8, from Germany

So, the connections made with people from other countries could be 'used' as a place to stay when they go to their respective country. Perhaps they could combine their career duties with seeing them again for example.

**Q15. Did you lose time in other networks or was something 'sacrificed' for the CoTalent project? (Was the time you invested into the CoTalent project previously used for something else, did you miss out on other appointments or was planning CoTalent not an issue?)**

Most people didn't miss out on anything and managed to seamlessly make time for the CoTalent project insofar that they felt like no time was lost. Just a few participants had to move important assignments for university because of the CoTalent workshops. One of the interviewees had to miss some exams to be able to go to the CoTalent project.

"I'm interested to find out whether I receive a decent grade... It'd be quite something if I failed because of this project"  
(Loosely translated from Dutch)

Interviewee 4, from the Netherlands

The participants felt like it was worth all the time they spent on it and they did not mention, apart from school, any other activities they had to sacrifice. Some of the students did stop participating because of decisions made in their school career that they deemed more pressing, for example interviewee 2 who went to study on another continent.

**Q16. Did you find new opportunities in the CoTalent project because of the people you met for either obtaining information or obtaining possibilities, can you chime in to the CoTalent network for other parts of your life like your (future) job or internships?**

The majority of student participants had a career in education which made it easy to directly implement ideas of for example co-creation in their career. Also, theoretical ideas (interviewee 5) from other participants, as well as concrete tips (interviewee 8) were said to be useful. Conversing with people from other origins and disciplines gave the interviewees more insights and perspectives that were valuable to them in order to either change their own view or to confirm their own view. Some student participants still share ideas at times.

"And I just think it's she has an amazing attitude towards new things. And I love that. I like that. I know that, you know, if you have a conversation and after the conversation, you see the world a bit differently"

Interviewee 8, from Germany, talking about a Romanian participant

When the interviewer jokingly suggested they could add attending the project to their Curriculum Vitae they didn't seem to really care about that all too much. The soft and hard skills gained could be used as latent opportunities, having gained more knowledge that they could perhaps use in their future career, but that is more an indirect and vague opportunity. Interviewee 3, 5 and 6 were inspired or gained a better understanding of how organizations worked through participating with the CoTalent project and were able to utilise this knowledge in their businesses and organizations.

**Q.17 Did you notice yourself improving socially, working so closely together? [examples personal development]**

Here answers are divided, as some mentioned to have improved in skills like presenting, others were not so sure the CoTalent project necessarily made them 'better'. Interviewee 5 stated they were already confident in their abilities and the participation validated their skill more than anything. They figured the CoTalent project was more of a means to show their expertise than improving this expertise much further.

The ability to discuss and give feedback were the predominant points of improvement for the participants. These soft skills were said to be valuable to them in other activities as well such as school assignments and working with others in a work environment. Even when the skills were not necessarily being utilised at the current moment, they did feel

like there would in time be use for it as these soft skills are applicable in any work environment. Interviewer 3 also noticed that the communication in the CoTalent project sometimes wasn't as conducive as it could have been that made for certain difficulties.

“Once again it shows that communication is incredibly important.”

Interviewer 3, from the Netherlands

It's safe to interpret the participants were at the least inspired by the co-creation aspect of CoTalent to work in a similar way in future endeavours as well.

**Q18. Would you participate in another project similar to CoTalent?**

All participants would, if a project like the CoTalent project would present itself, be willing to participate if the time was right. The main reason for this is the willingness to grasp an opportunity if it came up. The participants unanimously felt like the CoTalent was a unique experience and would be able to utilise this experience in other projects as well.

**Q19. When looking back, do you feel like you make full use of the potential opportunities in the CoTalent project that you could've made use of?**

The participants that no longer participated all would've remained if they could have stayed in the project if it weren't for other parts of their lives taking precedence in their situation. Most people who no longer participate didn't stop because of their own choosing. Either they finished their honours program, or they finished the role assigned to them in the CoTalent project and were satisfied with their experience but would have liked to keep going. None of the interviewees had any concrete answers to this question and mainly stated they would have enjoyed being part of the CoTalent team longer.

## 6.2 Dissecting the network

This paragraph goes into the results that are relevant for answering the first couple of sub questions:

- What kind of network connections have been created and is there a way to distinguish these?
- What kind of 'dynamic' exists in the network?

### 6.2.1 Homogeneity in CoTalent

The network was tight but open to newcomers. In network theory this sounds like a metaphor. Interviewee 3, for example, was only involved during one of the workweeks and still felt very close to the others when they met a part of the CoTalent group a year later for just an evening. The warmth of the group is on the one hand created by a shared goal with hard working, motivated individuals. On the other hand, it is created by the convivial atmosphere at the end of a day of hard work. It is the balance between formality and informality that made for an effective dynamic during the workweeks especially.

The CoTalent network is based around students and lecturers that are involved with the education system more than most regular students and lecturers would be. The participants mentioned to have a background involved in or with interest for education in one way or another. Interviewees all mentioned to have an above average interest in the practices of pedagogy which made for an obvious point of conversation. Some interviewees had strong opinions on honours education and how it could be further improved, for example interviewee 3, from the Netherlands, saying (translated from Dutch)

"I was noticing that some educators barely know what Honours education even is."

Bringing together idiosyncratic individuals the commonality of education playing a big part in their lives made them easily feel at home and were welcomed as equal actors through the co-creation environment. Not only did they have common life experiences through being involved with education, they also had the same mindset. What mainly shone through from the interviews is that the students were all motivated and extremely interested, keen on learning the ins- and outs of whatever they are involved with and give it their all. This is compliant with the literature on honours students (Wolfensberger, 2014). All the students wanted to get to know each other and stated the interest in meeting new people.

"I think that we are from that part of the society that is from the beginning, more accepting. I think that the people who do the studies at universities and especially when they have a higher level of education, they tend to be more open towards others."

Interviewee 7, from Austria

In that sense all participants had either the intention to become more extrovert or were already extrovert to begin with. The intrinsic interest of novelty seems to be a strong incentive for the CoTalent participants to have joined in. Perhaps they do not share a direct focus, as previously mentioned, but they share a common mindset.

Although the interviewees mentioned the heterogeneity of CoTalent group it became salient there were commonalities between the students that were key in creating a staunch and tight network. The differences that most students noticed were cultural ones, but they also have their own personalities and perceptions of the world.

"She's just so different. Yeah. She is interesting. Yeah. Yeah. And that was also the potential of like seeing other people around because you had a whole rainbow of personalities. Talents and also areas where the people you know come from, yeah, disciplines. That was really amazing"

Interviewee 8, from Germany

The network is then based on the one side on homogenous traits that made for easy to build social ties and simultaneously the heterogeneity pervading through the culture from the provenance of the participants, which may have emboldened the network tightness even more thanks to the general interest in novelty the student participant possessed. Something that enabled CoTalent to have such a variety was perhaps thanks to the EU funding. Not having



to pay for traveling or sustenance made money no issue for the participants. The funding therefore made for a more equal footing and no discrimination in activities due to a lack of money for certain participants.

### 6.2.2 Project dynamics

It was also mentioned the project changed through time and with it the relationships that were built up. The initial phases of the CoTalent project, in 2017, were focused more on the structure and building a cadre in which to work with. This meant for the students that they had less to say than further into the project. For some this still didn't give the feeling of cooperation and togetherness that could be expected of co-creation.

“I still remember that we, as students, were saying to each other that there was a lot of talking going on. We didn't at the time have much to say because we didn't know what exactly was going on. It was a lot about the agendas and how the planning was going to pan out.”

Interviewee 2, from the Netherlands

As time went on, they felt more included and were allowed to give more input. Interviewee 4, who joined in further into the project, did not experience the superfluous planning and less efficacious deliberating.

For most of the interviewees the project was initially kind of vague in what exactly they were supposed to do. Perhaps this shared dearth of knowledge made the participants clump together and gave them more freedom to do whatever they seem fit. Through co-creation they were still able to contribute even when they had no clear idea of what to do. They could walk up to anyone at any time and they wouldn't feel strained to ask them for help or to give help.

Time spent on the CoTalent project did not mean for the participants to sacrifice any other foci or networks they were aware of. Interviewee 2 mentioned that the time investment, apart from the intense workshop weeks, was at most five hours a month on average. They did not feel like they had to make many changes in their daily lives in order to participate. Presumably because many of the participants experienced the CoTalent project as a unique opportunity no one felt like another focus was more important than the time they spent on CoTalent, therefore nothing felt as much as a sacrifice. Everything else, in terms of assignments and people's social lives could either be delayed or prepared beforehand. During the workshops and the multiplier events the participants were completely immersed; the intensity of the project was demanding but made for the participant to be focused on the task at hand and to be focused on the people around them who were working on the same project.

“the CoTalent project was very important to most of us. I think we all had the same goal and we all wanted it to turn out good and to become something useful and something good. So, I think that was very helpful for that, that we had this one thing to unify us”

Interviewee 7, from Austria

The collective goal united the participants, which confirms hypothesized network typology of the CoTalent project being the interest network, where there is a targeted goal that has to be reached is the focal point that brings the actors of the network together. The time span, especially for some, was less clear cut than they preferred, as interviewee 3 for instance wanted to be part of the CoTalent team but someone else took the role she applied for. Despite these aberrations the project had a clearly delineated point of beginning and end. The participants did mention they would have enjoyed more reunion like meetings with all the people (previously) involved to remain in contact more easily. The social capital in an interest network is predominantly ephemeral, and mainly used throughout the short existence of the network (Poucke, 1979). In the responses of the interviewees that seemed to be the general consensus as well. The network itself quickly dissipated for a participant when they were no longer involved apart from the friends they gained on the way. The participants assumed the ties they had with these people would most likely not remain strong or at all. This is congruent with the focus theory of Feld (1981) in which it is mandatory for a social tie to remain to also share a common focus. It is also congruent with the expected outcome, where the network was strong during the CoTalent project but would dissipate as soon as the CoTalent project either ended or when the participant would no longer be participating. The strong ties during the project were only strong when the workshops and multiplier events brought the participants together.

The YouTalent Spotter, MeTalent Mirror and E-library groups were told to be fairly separate from each other. Obviously, all groups had their specific set goal and it was therefore not useful for the project itself to mingle these

groups all the time. This did make for more intimate and smaller groups that were closely tied together but at the cost of possible weak ties being built up elsewhere. These were not the only groups the participants were sorted into. The participants were fairly free during the activities and were especially able to talk with all the people from other groups during the informal activities after a day of work. The participants had to work with people from their university to make videos too. This was not as clear cut as it sounds as some were able to chime in and help out. Interviewees also mentioned being excited to suddenly be placed in a work environment of over thirty people they had not known before during the multiplier events. One of the big advantages was that most of these people did not know each other which made it easier to meet new people. It was easier for participants to approach others because no cliques were built up and everybody was unknown to each other. Another advantage of this social environment was the previously mentioned safe space that is created by the semi-shared foci of the participants, in the sense that they were all related through education (Feld, 1981).

## 6.3 Impacts and experiences

The analysis in this paragraph is focused on the second set of sub questions:

- Are there short-term benefits or detriments to the network on the talents of the participating student?
- Are there long-lasting benefits or detriments to the network on the talents of the participating student?
- Is there a noticeable growth in social capital for the participants on a professional level?
- Has the project taken time away from the participants insofar that other networks they were part of may have dwindled?

### 6.3.1 Positivity all around

The participants were all remarkably positive about the project overall. The experience tended to be a good one even though some participants had some points of critique. The participants especially enjoyed the work environment and having the chance to have a look behind-the-scenes of an internationally funded and organized program. So, there was a clear precedence on the meta-level of the experience. Strong positive opinions also arose when it came to the international pedigree of the CoTalent project. Meeting new people from different countries as well as different places was a motivation for participation and a positive experience during the project itself. Having positive experiences in one's life can have long lasting benefits in other areas.

"I had some personal issues at the time. So, going there was like super-duper hard, but it was the best experience ever because it was like; 'hey yay, I can do this!'. Everybody was so nice that I felt completely welcomed and I was really not stressed for the whole week. That was a wonderful experience" (edited for privacy reasons)"

Interviewee 7, from Austria

### 6.3.2 Teacher-student dynamics

Previously it was mentioned the CoTalent project could have a lot of social capital in this student-teacher dynamic. The participants did not mention, without it being asked, the built-up relationships with the teachers as much as might have been expected from the co-creation environment. Student participants seemed to mainly be interested in their fellow students. Despite the co-creation the students and the educators remained, for the most part, in their own respective groups. This was especially true for the Romanian participants. The culture in Romania is mentioned to be more authoritarian and therefore the students tended to have a more distant relationship with the teachers. Although only one interview was undertaken with this group of students the other interviewed students noticed the difference between Romanian education and other countries in respect to authority.

### 6.3.3 Indirect social capital

The respondents did not mention the growth of social capital explicitly when asked what their personal goal was with joining into the CoTalent project. The main reasons instead given were the international experiences (so going to places they had not yet visited and meeting people from other cultures), being part of a unique project and their interest in education. Implicitly, however, the participants gave heed to the people they would meet, mainly to have conversations with people from other parts of Europe. This seemed to be mainly based on enjoyment, not so much for a professional gain, as some interviewees immediately recalled it being a lot of fun to be outside their normal clique of people. In terms of 'resources' one of the participants mentioned that staying over at another participants' place

was a great opportunity to also go by his dad and combine activities during his travels. This was enabled because of the informal environment that is facilitated by the co-creation. The three general aspects that define how much a person can gain from a specific network can be applied here. Stimulated by co-creation structural embeddedness was easily gained because of the welcoming environment. Accessibility of possibility, the usefulness of the network, varied throughout the participants. The most could be gained from the people working in education. The action-oriented use was also encouraged through co-creation.

“Everyone does get in the flow to voice their opinion. And then we do come to some sort of compromise in that sense. They value the student’s opinion quite a bit because in the end, this is also for teachers. But in the end, it benefits students as well. So, they do place our recommendations quite up there. So, I think in that sense, it was more we were heard. Listened to much more (compared to normal honours education classes)”

Interviewee 6, International studying in the Netherlands

People had to speak their minds, but no one ever got hurt because of their opinion thanks to the positive feedback of the other participants. Taking the initiative was in that sense sort of forced on the participants which made the participants take part in the network more intensely.

#### 6.3.4 Soft skills, hard skills and an understanding of business environments

Questions to gauge the impacts of the CoTalent project on the participants were initially asked without any narrowing down, so it could be freely interpreted. The participants in this circumstance did not mention improving on a social level, for example improving in communication. When asked directly though they did feel like they had gained personal experience in the fields of communication and social interaction from the CoTalent project. Some of the participants for example stated they became more confident in giving English presentations and became more adept at the English language as a whole. This skill could hypothetically permeate in their future professional life, especially because they didn't write off working in a foreign country where the English language is adopted as the lingua franca.

A few of the participants felt like the co-creation environment was not completely on an equal playing field since the leading coordinators of the groups had the last say in important decision making. On the other hand, they simultaneously mentioned the superfluous discussions that led to very little at times where perhaps it could've been more productive or efficient to have someone take the lead and make a final decision. Finding the balance between democracy, giving everybody the chance to give their opinion, and making headway in taking actual actions seemed hard to find at times. The interviewees definitely got a close-up on all the ins and outs in a large-scale international project. The communication and planning being two of the focal points that made for the project to succeed but also at times struggle. Being involved in this process was a valuable experience for most of the participants’ professional lives when it came to a better understanding of communication on both macro (within institutions) and micro (between people) scale.

Opportunities can only be acted upon when you know they are there. One of the participants explicitly experienced this in obtaining hard skills for their career in education when she was given tips to make use of certain computer programs in class that could actively engage students in the subject-matter.

“And I ended up teaching a workshop about digital devices in school. I was just the intern, but it made a really, like a really good impression. And so I'm really thankful of the Danish students that showed me everything about that.”

Interviewee 8, from Germany

Other hard skills that were mainly mentioned were improvements in English, video editing, working with students in co-creation fashion and talent fostering for the interviewees who aspired to be a teacher/professor.

The CoTalent enabled the participants to show certain skills and make use of them. Even when they felt confident beforehand a case could be made that the CoTalent project brought them further with that skill (hard or soft).

“I'm rather comfortable with presenting. But this definitely gave an opportunity to really kind of enhance it, I guess, in a way, and present to different people, especially during the open event at Münster, where we had people from outside coming in and out. Yeah. Was a good way to interact with people outside. I don't know if I would say I've improved. Definitely more comfortable.”

Interviewee 6, international studying in the Netherlands

The CoTalent project challenged the participants in an active environment to make up and implement ideas with only a small amount of guidance. This bounded freedom put the onus on the participants to think out of the box. The added feedback, a more positive form of social monitoring, made for the participants to feel involved. It gave them deadlines where they had to show their ideas to others. People tend to not want to disappoint others and to show their worth, which may have been a subconscious motivator and kept everyone trying to make their product successful. This, in combination with the general interest or involvement for or with education made for positive moderators in making the participants put in effort. Being used to working hard and doing extra work is usually rewarded in building a career (Pohlman, Grayeb & Vohra, 2012).

## 6.4 Differences in experiences of the CoTalent project between participants

The students interviewed came from different countries, three of the interviewees came from the Netherlands, one from Austria, two from Germany, one from Romania and one studying in the Netherlands but originally came from Sri Lanka. This context seemed to be important for their experience of the project. Especially the latter who studies as an international was more attuned to working with people abroad. Regardless they still mentioned the international experience of working closely with others not just from one country but the whole of Europe was a more broadening experience. Other noticeable differences in experience mainly concerned honours programmes. In countries like Germany, Austria and Romania there aren't any established honours programmes available. This meant that the participants from these countries were more interested in finding out about the possibilities of having this as a part of their curriculum.

Considering Romania used to be under the influence of communism for a long time the participants saw Romania specifically as the most notable 'culture'.

"I know, we are the only different culture because all of the other ones, they are by they're part of like kind of the similar political and social and economic, you group, you can say, yeah. So, I think that they learn more about us."

Interviewee 5, from Romania

No other culture was mentioned as often as the Romanian. Like interviewee 5 mentions the other participants seemed to be most surprised by being exposed to people from Romania, but in a positive way. Certain stereotypes the student participants had were debunked or at least quelled. This is another example of how the participants were able to broaden their horizon. Interviewee 5, contrary to the previous quote, mentions the international network is also especially useful for the Romanian participants as they are slightly behind on ideas other countries might have already adopted.

The different roles the participants were assigned to seemed to also have impact on the amount of built-up social capital or the skills learnt. Working in the YouTalent Spotter group, the E-library group and the MeTalent Mirror group or having another role entirely made for different impacts on the participant and different experiences. The interviewees, however, seemed to share the same sentiment about the CoTalent project for most of the facets discussed during the interviews.

## 7. Conclusion

The participants were on the one side different from each other, so they were a heterogeneous group in the sense that they came from all over Europe, had different studies either as student or as lecturer, had completely different livelihoods and social networks. On the other side, though, they were similarly interested and involved in education, some with the aspirations to become a teacher, were similarly motivated to work in a team and be part of an international project, wanting to meet new people, have a unique experience and all around share a mindset of learning. These opposites and simultaneous points of homogeneity made for the experience to feel novel, but at the same time safe and welcoming. The co-creation aspect helped in the sense that all people got their chance to speak up and make their voices heard. When any disagreements came up it was not fought over, it was discussed, and critique was given respectfully. The acceptance of the participants was key to creating a respectable and accepting place for the network to grow tightly knit very quickly.

The network the CoTalent network created was successful in having the positive sides of strong ties as well weak ties. Although the impacts the CoTalent project had were difficult to measure, for the participant as for the research itself. The main problem was dissecting correlation and cause as well as finding indirect influences. The impact of the CoTalent network is multifaceted and broad in the contribution to each participant's life.

What can be interpreted from the interviews is that CoTalent can be seen as more of a modifier-type experience where the participants already had international experience and refined social skills. Some participants more felt like the CoTalent project reaffirmed certain skills they had or were able to show these skills which gave them more confidence in that field. The CoTalent project itself (having international meetings and making products) as well as the participants involved made for a truly unique experience for the participants.

### 7.1 Policy implications

With this research' subject being the CoTalent project it is logical to mainly address policy implications for talent development or education as a whole. What this research shows in that sense is that international projects can enhance the experience and can help produce a more inclusive and well-rounded education system through multiple perspectives.

"I think from those different perspectives that the solutions for anything or the ideas have more value because they're richer in differences and grown from different roots. And also, I think it was good that we were not as much as I would have liked, but kind of from different fields of studies."

Interviewee 7, from Austria

With the success of this project stemming from the co-creation aspects as well as the driven people involved in the project it is recommended to continue these projects on a more regular basis. Interviewee 8 mentioned this as well specifically for teachers to refine their methods. These international collaborations have high productivity potential and with careful planning could be more structurally organized and boost the value of education. Sharing ideas in a changing world and a changing society is pivotal to 'keep up with the times'.

In times where the *Black Lives Matter* movement has reached critical mass throughout the whole world it is incentivised for governments to organize and fund international projects that will give people a higher acceptance of other cultures especially the marginalized groups. Perhaps talent development can have a bigger focus on these less fortunate groups in society as well.

Future projects similar to the CoTalent project can utilise most of the key values of the CoTalent project to make it similarly successful. Only a few points of critique were given and could be improved upon for creating a better and more wholesome network. Formal and informal, keeping work and life separate, these are currently still dichotomizations apparent in (western) culture. The CoTalent project has shown that integrating them in projects can make them not opposites of each other but can make them complementary.

What has become clear is that co-creation in the equal levels sense has many positives for reaching new people and can create networks previously unavailable or at least hard to reach. The co-creation aspect of a manufacturer and consumer working together on the product is not recognized when it is implemented in education. The students did perhaps not see themselves as 'consumers' and didn't see the workshops as 'producing products'. If this is made more clearly when using co-creation in education, it can be more inspiring for the participants in future work to also involve consumers of any product they might be making. Showing in what ways co-creation can also be used can give the participant a broader perspective and can then recognize more moments in which it could prove effective.

## 7.2 Discussion

Making a network is currently important for making a career. Nepotism and favouritism are persistent issues in the job market when it comes to equal opportunities (Wahlström, 2016). Therefore, it seemed relevant to research career impacts of a social event like the CoTalent project. This favouritism does not play everywhere, participant 8 even mentioned that, compared to certain countries like China, favouritism does not play as big a role in Germany. Even so, if you do not know something is there you will not try to look for it.

"All the information that you get. They are really different when if you are just checking the website or if you are speaking with former students or students which are really attending "

Interviewee 5, from Romania

This quote encapsulates the idea that being more directly in contact with unknown entities and gaining more information about it that way can positively impact a person's experience of said 'entity'.

The current research was attempted to reach participant from each participating country: Germany, Romania, Austria, the Netherlands, Belgium and Denmark.

In total there were 8 participants who were spoken to via video chat. Only representatives of the first four countries were interviewed. Despite this there was a high variety of information and viewpoints given, each interviewee having their own take on certain aspects of the CoTalent project. Nevertheless, there is still reason for more research in terms of specific questions that can narrow down the differences in experiences from members of each country. This might be better suited for quantitative research since questions can be normalized and can reach many participants on a short notice.

The choice to see if people would feel more confident and skilled in their professional career life is based on the recency of the project. It was impossible to see whether the participants would be better off monetarily due to the stage of the life they are in. Most of the students that participated in the project were still in college after they stopped working with CoTalent. If the research was done a few years later, it might have been possible to see a different outcome in career path owing to the connections made through CoTalent. The earnings of a person combined with the aspired goals in their life could then be further investigated.

## 7.3 Future research

The individuality in education is the main reason for the current thesis to remain on an individual level in the impacts the project may have had. Collective capital can be taken into account in further research. Questions like: 'Did the positive effects of the CoTalent project disseminate to others via the participants and to what extent are the benefitting?'

This research was solely targeted towards the students in the project, despite the other actors that were also present. They might deserve a look at too, as they make up for a large part of people involved as well. Teachers especially would be an interesting look at although research has been previously conducted on social capital of teachers (de Jong, Moolenaar, Osagie & Phielix, 2016).

A question important to ask in social network research and not talked about in the current research is how the participants were able to enter the network of the CoTalent project. Literature suggests individuals seek, not necessarily mindfully, for 'pools' of people who match their preferences (Mollenhorst, Völker & Flap, 2008). Participants were, of course, only teachers, students and the trainers. The CoTalent network is therefore unavailable for the majority of the population to benefit from. The opportunity given to the students and making use of this advantage is a compounded benefit of being in university (of applied sciences) and could be compared with the Matthew effect in social research where the people most embedded in resourceful networks continue to gain more and more in social capital whereas the opposite is true for people who are not at all imbedded in these networks. This snowball effects of opportunity in these kinds of social circles could be a relevant question for future research.

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## 9. Appendix

### 9.1 Interview topic list

#### **Subsection: Objectives in the CoTalent workshop**

- What was the goal for you in participating with the CoTalent project?
- What did you gain from the project now that it has finished (i.e. Skills, competencies, connections, knowledge)?
  - ➔ Did it comply with the goals you set?
  - ➔ Was there more or less gained than expected?
  - ➔ Do you feel like you accomplished your goal?
- What was the collective goal in the CoTalent workshops?
  - ➔ Were the collective goals congruent with your own personal goals?
  - ➔ Are you happy with the results for the collective goal?
- What could have been done differently to get a better outcome for yourself to perhaps accomplish the goals you set at the beginning but didn't turn out the way you wanted them to?

#### **Subsection: Co-creation**

- I assume you have heard of the concept of co-creation, how would you define this?
- How did you experience the co-creation environment?
- Was it significantly different from the way you would usually conduct a project?

#### **Subsection: Networks and connections**

- Did you have new relationships built up because of the CoTalent project?
- Do you feel like there are strong ties built up, people you felt particularly close with?
  - ➔ If so, how many people would you say?
  - ➔ If so, were there also teachers you got close with?
    - Do you feel differently about teachers generally?
    - Do you feel differently about the teachers you spoke to during the CoTalent workshops compared to the standard curriculum?
    - Did you feel like there was a more equal footing between you and the teachers?
    - If so, how did this affect you?
  - ➔ If so, did you manage to sustain these stronger ties?
- In what way were the interactions with teachers different from the more normal curriculum lessons
- Do you think you could fall back on the people you spoke to and in what way could you 'use' them nowadays? (for example: for information or if you are looking to find a job)
- Did you lose time in other networks or was something 'sacrificed' for the CoTalent project?
  - ➔ Did you spend less time on hobby's?
  - ➔ Did other social settings change?
  - ➔ How did you feel about the time you lost because of the CoTalent project?
- Did you find new opportunities in the CoTalent project because of the people you met for either obtaining information or obtaining possibilities (latent advantages)
- Did you notice yourself improving socially, working so closely together (in a tightly knit group)?

#### **Subsection: Rounding off**

- Would you participate in another project like CoTalent?
- When looking back, do you feel like you didn't make full use of the potential opportunities in the CoTalent project that you could've made use of?

## 9.3 Concepts To Look For In Interviews

- Exchange of opinions
- Exposure to new ideas
- Sharing of experiences
  
- Snowball effect
- Short-term Connections
- Latent resources
- Job opportunities
  
- Competencies
  - Skills
    - (Purpose-driven) Communication
      - Manipulation
      - Bargaining / Negotiation
      - Teamwork
      - Persuasion
    - Out-of-the-box thinking
    - Entrepreneurialism
    - Problem-solving
    - Creativity
  - Knowledge
    - New perspectives
    - Job related
  - Attitudes / Stable competencies
    - Motivation
    - Satisfaction in work/teamwork
    - Engagement
    - Perspective (on working in groups)
    - Empathy
    - Decisiveness
    - Commitment
    - Responsibility
    - Open-mindedness (in i.e. culture)
- Social constructs of personality (Miller & Neumeister, 2017)
  - **Extroversion** (describes the extent to which individuals are excitable, talkative, social, and emotionally expressive)
  - **Agreeableness** (characterizes the extent to which individuals are trusting, kind, compassionate, and exhibit prosocial behaviors)
  - **Conscientiousness** (describes the extent to which individuals attend to details in their work, have high levels of effortful control, and demonstrate goal-directed behaviors)
  - **Neuroticism** (describes the extent to which individuals display negative affect, unstable moods, and low emotional control)
  - **Openness/intellect** (describes the extent to which individuals are curious, creative, and open-minded.)