

# Annex 5.3. “I am European” school prize – case study report

## 1.1. Overview

This case study report was developed as part of the study on prizes of the European Commission over the period June to August 2022. The analysis has been developed following consultation with the European Commission's Representation in Portugal, including those responsible for Casa Europa and managing the **“I am European” school prize**. Views were also solicited from participant schools to validate their experiences via an interview with the study team and as part of the contestants' survey. There were 12 responses to the survey.



The “I am European” (“Eu Sou Europeu”) school prize is an initiative of the European Commission Representation in Portugal, integrated in Casa Europa's activities. The prize is awarded to winners of a test on the EU, following an information session, which is provided to Portuguese school students during their visit to Casa Europa or, alternatively, via a distance learning session. To participate in the competition, schools must send an e-mail request to visit Casa Europa and participate in the competition.

This annual competition was set up in 2012. The competition runs between October and April, in line with the school year, and the results are announced in June. The most recent edition of the “I am European” school prize took place between 20 October 2021 and 30 April 2022. The winning school was the “Escola Secundária

de Azambuja”. The prize-giving ceremony took place on 23 June at the school “Escola Secundária de Azambuja” and was attended by the winning students and teachers, as well as members of the European Commission Representation and European Parliament Liaison Office in Portugal, and ED, among some stakeholders of the school.

This case study provides findings and analysis relating to the following aspects of the award:

1. design and set up
2. award management
3. award submissions
4. award promotion
5. external perceptions of the prize
6. summary key findings by evaluation criterion.



## 1.2 Design and set up

### Objectives<sup>1</sup>

While highlighting EU actions and opportunities for young people (Erasmus+/European Solidarity Corps/institutional campaigns), this initiative has two objectives:

- to attract and raise the interest in EU's subjects and encourage debate among young people; and
- second, increase knowledge on Portuguese integration into the EU and the impact of EU policies and actions on citizens' daily lives.

### Eligibility criteria

- The competition is only open to 3rd cycle students, preferably members of European Clubs<sup>2</sup>, who are at least 13 years old.
- Groups of up to 18 pupils may participate (including a maximum of two teachers).
- Schools that have already won the prize in the previous two school years are not eligible for the competition.

The "I am European" school prize is a part of the mission of the European Commission's Representation in Portugal, which aims to reach out to citizens, academia, civil society, social partners, and other stakeholders and to organise communication, dialogue, and other activities to raise awareness of EU priorities and policies. Since its launch, the objectives which led to the creation of this competition remain unchanged as do the target participants, given that every year there are new pupils within the target age range, who can participate. However, the questions (which are the basis of the evaluation for the award) are revised annually to ensure that they are up to date.

The competition is administered through questionnaires with 10 multiple-choice questions and one open-ended essay question, addressed to each member of the class on what it means to be a European citizen.

Each correct answer to the multiple-choice questions is awarded 1 point, with a maximum of 10 points per quiz<sup>3</sup>. Participants have 15 minutes to answer the quiz and an open-ended question. If there is a tie, the winner is the group with the highest number of quizzes with the maximum score (10 points). Remaining the event of a tie, the open-ended question is taken into consideration by the prize jury, which is comprised of representatives of the European Parliament Liaison Office and the European Commission Representation in Portugal.

The prize consists of a financial support<sup>4</sup> that covers travel and expenses of a two-day visit to Brussels. The purpose of the trip is to offer the opportunity to experience the atmosphere of the European institutions and other places of historical interest. The maximum amount of support provided in the past was EUR 10,000, with the reimbursement of travel expenses made after the visit upon presentation of the supporting document. Usually, the trip to Brussels takes place in July, before the school year ends. A nominative Certificate of Participation is also issued by the Representation of the European Commission in Portugal, recognizing the victory of the group/school.

1 Topics include history of the European Union, European symbols, EU enlargements (including the accession of Portugal), the role and functioning of the institutions, values, principles, and rights of European citizens

2 The "Clubes Europeus" are managed by the Portuguese government's Ministry of Education.

3 The classification of each group results from the total number of correct answers in relation to the total number of multiple-choice questions asked.

4 A maximum of EUR 500 is paid per student and teacher.

During the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the trips to Brussels did not take place. Instead, the winning school groups received computers and 18 android tablets<sup>5</sup>. The prize consisting of tablets is intended for each member of the winning team, including teachers, if applicable, and does not have to be used in school. Although the competition rules referred that the delivery is made personally at the premises of the Representation of the European Commission in Portugal to the teachers of the winning team who participated and who distributed them to the winning group, the ceremony took place at the school's premises.

### 1.3. Award management

The prize is managed by the European Commission Representation in Portugal, under the responsibility of the Spokesperson and Head of the Press and Communication Office with the support of several other staff working on communication at the Representation and the representatives of the European Parliament Liaison Office, who participate in the prize jury. "I am European" school prize is integrated into the activities of the Casa Europa (House of Europe), which was established in Lisbon in 2008, as a joint initiative of the Representation of the European Commission and the Information Office of the European Parliament.

**Casa Europa** promotes knowledge of and debate on European Union issues to support active citizenship. It provides information to citizens, promotes and hosts debates, forums, conferences, training sessions and cultural events. It also offers **a range of educational activities** and welcomes schools from all over the country.

### 1.4. Award submissions

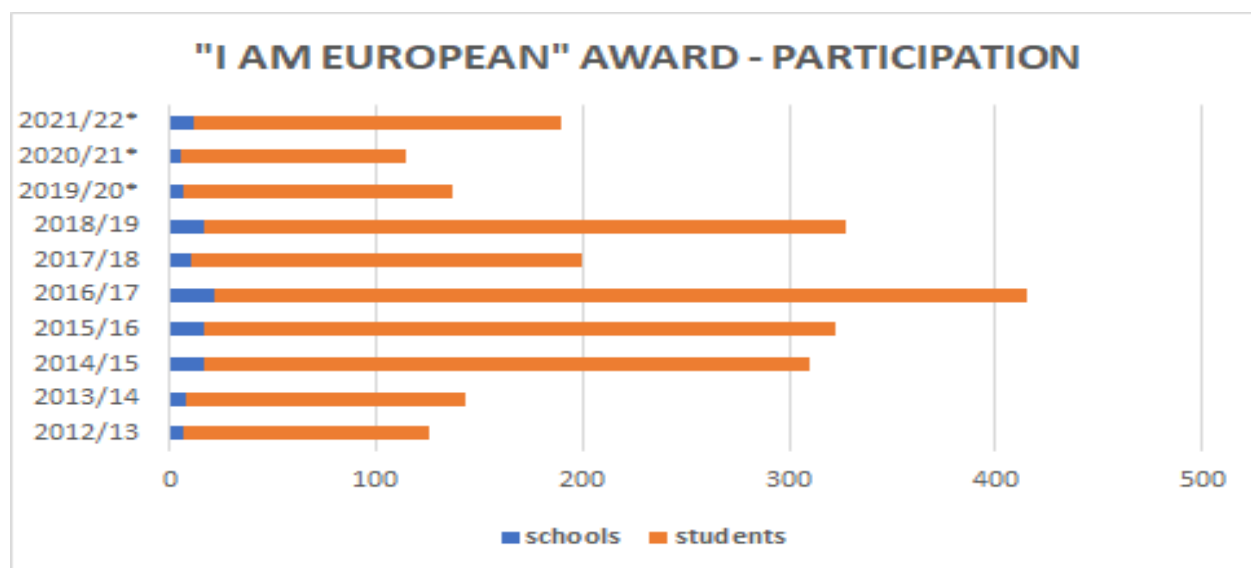
A review of participation in "I am European" school prize, which has been awarded on an annual basis since 2012, highlights that participation in the competition has been somewhat uneven. This unevenness relates to the number of participating schools and pupils, as well as their distribution across Portugal.

There was, perhaps inevitably, a decrease in levels of participation during the 2019/20 and 2020/21 editions, but since 2021/22 it is increasing again. In total, over the last 10 years, in total **124 schools** have participated, involving **2,161 students**.

The below graphic highlights the numbers of participating schools and students each year since 2012.

<sup>5</sup> The tablets were worth circa EUR 235 per tablet. Due to COVID, when winners did not travel to Brussels, tablets were issued for the last edition of the prize, with the implication that there was a cost saving of circa 50% of the total amount allocated to the award. In the first edition, the trip was replaced by computers.

## Levels of participation in “I am European” school prize



When considered by autonomous region or district, the competition has engaged schools from **12 of the 20 regions**. The eight regions that have not yet participated are in the north and southeast of the country. The 12 participating regions are circled in the map opposite (red denotes higher levels of participation and green denotes lower levels of participation).

The chart below shows how schools in some regions have participated to a much greater extent than others.

To date 63% of participation has come from schools in four regions: Lisboa (23%), Braga (14%), Porto (14%) and Aveiro (12%) (red circles).



A key factor that skews participation relates to the **costs for schools and/or parents to cover the cost of a return trip to Lisbon** to visit the Casa Europa. Costs are inevitably higher for schools that are furthest away. Most of the participating schools come from large metropolitan areas where transport and travel are easier. If some students are disadvantaged by the location of the Casa Europa, the implication is that the Representation needs to take steps to bring the competition to the schools and students.

One way forward that is being considered by the Representation could be to **involve the 15 EUROPE DIRECT centres (ED)**, which are present in 12 districts of mainland Portugal (Bragança, Viana do Castelo, Porto, Viseu, Coimbra, Castelo Branco, Lisboa, Setúbal, Évora, Portalegre, Beja and Faro) and in the 2 autonomous regions of Açores and Madeira. This would reduce costs for participants and increase the scope of the prize so that it has greater national reach and impact.

A campaign is currently underway to inform citizens about the EDs (see promotional poster in the image). By enabling schools





to listen to the information session in the EDs<sup>6</sup> and complete the quiz in these locations, schools will not have to travel as far. This should lead to an increase in the number of participants, with more people knowing about the EDs in their areas of residence, thus meeting the objectives of the campaign, which is being carried out for this purpose. Promotion of the competition and the EDs could be mutually reinforcing.

## 1.5. Award promotion

Prize promotion starts in September at the beginning of the school year. The collaboration of the General Direction of Education (DGE) (Ministry of Education), in charge of the "Clubes Europeus" (European Clubs) is essential to the promotion of the prize. The Casa Europa reinforces the announcement in its September newsletter and sends reminders through specific email marketing to schools in October and January, using Casa Europa's link on the Representation website.

The European Parliament Liaison Office and the 15 EUROPE DIRECT centres<sup>7</sup> also contribute by providing information on the contest on their websites, as well as to other partners, such as the Centro de Informação Europeia Jacques Delors (Jacques Delors European Information Center - Ministry of Foreign Affairs), School Libraries Network and Programa Operacional Capital Humano (Human Capital Operational Programme).

There is **no dedicated budget for promotion**. The main information channel is the Representation's [website](#), where the contest rules are publicised, and its social networks. In addition, participating schools collaborate in promoting the contest on their website and social networks, as are local entities. However, as mentioned, efficiency could be substantially improved if it was possible to reach schools across the whole national territory, including the islands.

The information about results of the competition and the winning school are confirmed in an email to teachers who communicate this to students. The results are also presented on the Representation's website.

The **prize ceremony** takes place at the winning school or at the Representation in the presence of the school's partners (municipal entities, parents association, etc.) and local media. The photos and videos of the ceremony are published on the school's social networks and, after obtaining the authorisation to photograph from the school, on the Representation. Afterwards, these multimedia resources may be included in the promotion material.

The ceremony consists of the presentation of certificates and ICT equipment which is followed by a group photo. When the award was the trip to Brussels there was no award ceremony. In the 2019/20 edition, due to the COVID restrictions, the awards were given by the EUROPE DIRECT Minho, in Barcelos, to the school *Escola Básica e Secundária Vale D' Este (Barcelos)*. The number of participants is variable but can reach 40/50 people.

Usually, there is no interest from local media in covering the event given its size. Sometimes some regional media will devote a small space to report that a school in their locality has won, but in the case of big cities this does not happen. Whilst **the award ceremony** is not currently adding value to the promotion of the prize, it **is always positive for the students**.

To ensure media interest the prize should be bigger in terms of participation and better communicated, with special reinforcement of communication after the winners are known. It would also be very positive to make the post-award known to the media to increase interest in it and increase the number of participations. On the other hand, **social networks could and should have a much greater role in the promotion of the prize** given the ease with which they reach a very large number of young people, potential participants, and their schools.

<sup>6</sup> This implies that some training may be required to ensure that a standard approach is taken to the information session and administering the quiz.

<sup>7</sup> [https://portugal.representation.ec.europa.eu/contactos/em-portugal/encontre-um-centro-da-ue-perto-de-si-em-portugal\\_p](https://portugal.representation.ec.europa.eu/contactos/em-portugal/encontre-um-centro-da-ue-perto-de-si-em-portugal_p)

Promotion is an Achilles' heel of this prize. It is possible to reach target groups very easily, with a well-defined and organised 360-degree social media strategy. But there has been **no clear and consistent use of hashtags**. Variable hashtags are used, which makes it harder to follow posts about the competition (#EspacoEuropa; #EuSouEuropeu; #CasaEuropa). In consequence perhaps, and linked to the lack of involvement of EDs, the "I am European" school prize is largely unknown in the school community and among young people.

A review of "I am European" school prize on social media platforms of the European Commission Representation in Portugal - 1 Jan 21 to 1 Jul 22, confirmed that there were relatively few publications, which achieved limited numbers of views.

## 1.6 External perceptions of the prize

In general terms, the evaluation of the "I am European" school prize by the winners, contestants and stakeholder representatives is positive. Any competition that promotes knowledge about the history of the European Union, the European symbols, the enlargements of the European Union, namely the accession of Portugal, the role and functioning of the European institutions, the values, principles, and rights of the European citizens is appropriate for a school community.

Previous contestants confirmed that the eligibility and award criteria are clear, understandable, and appropriate for the competition and the competitors. The **major motivating element for participation in the prize is the trip to Brussels**, and a marked decrease in participation has been noted when this was not the prize<sup>8</sup>, with the winners of these editions being **less satisfied** than when the prize had been the trip. Some participants even suggested that the prize should not be run, whenever it is not possible to make the trip. But on the other hand, the last school to have won gave positive feedback that the students received the tablets.

The fact that the prize requires a trip to Lisbon prevents schools with less means from participating, but it was mentioned that having the possibility to participate in the region where the schools are located could lead to an increase in participation.

There is an added value recognised by the participants, since the prize is awarded by the European Commission, since it focuses on European Union themes, and culminates with a visit to the Capital of Europe and to the European institutions.

The impact of discontinuing the prize would be negative, as although there are other prizes and competitions for schools and pupils, these are not the same as the "I am European" school prize due to its scale. The prize is seen as positive by the more than 2,000 pupils who have taken part over the last 10 years.

Various stakeholders reported that the **promotion of the prize often goes unnoticed**. However, when schools and pupils find out about the prize, it was suggested that their motivation and commitment is immediate, and they want to participate without hesitation. In schools where there are European clubs, the awareness of the prize is higher, as well as the level of pupil participation. The perception of the prize is that it is appropriate for the age group for which it is intended.

On the issue of having prize money, the general opinion is that it is not an important factor, with travel and expenses paid being preferable. However, it was mentioned that it would be preferable for the payment to be made before the trip takes place, as the fact of being reimbursed after the presentation of proof of expenses requires a financial effort from the schools/students, which may also be prohibitive in some circumstances.

The winning teachers and pupils reported that they **felt fulfilled and happy to have won**. The teachers feel grateful and proud of their pupils' performance and the pupils themselves have become

<sup>8</sup> There was no trip to Brussel involved in the 2019/20 and 2020/21 editions of the prize.

more motivated and "curious" about European themes. It was mentioned that it would be an excellent initiative if the students could attend a plenary session of the European Parliament.

The issue of visiting the European institutions in Brussels and/or Strasbourg is seen as something very beneficial for both the students and the teachers, and that it could be something to be promoted not only within the framework of the "I am European" school prize.

## 1.6 Intervention logic

Based on the findings of the case study, we developed an intervention logic of the award. It is presented below. It is a visual presentation of how the prize is intended to work and achieve its short and long-term objectives. It does not reflect all the data gathered in the case study, but it reflects the result chain between objectives and impact of awarding it.

The intervention logic presents three levels of objectives, including the policy objective, objective of the Representation, as well as objectives of the prize itself. Inputs cover financial and human resources. Activities cover organization of the quiz and its promotion. Outputs are direct effects of the activities and include communication outputs, the award ceremony and the trip to Brussels (or computer/tablets provided to the winner during COVID-19 restrictions). Impacts are longer-term effects of awarding the prize and implementing communication activities.

**Policy objective:** Contributing to EC's communication goals of deepening students' knowledge of the EU, and at increasing the general public's interest in European Union issues and themes

**EC's Representation in Portugal objective:** reach out to citizens, academia, civil society, social partners, and other stakeholders and to organise communication, dialogue, and other activities to raise awareness of EU priorities and policies

| Objectives                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | Inputs                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Activities                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Outputs                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Individual Results                                                                                                                                                                                                         | Impact                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>To attract and raise the interest in EU's subjects and encourage debate among young people</p> <p>To increase knowledge on Portuguese integration into the EU and the impact of EU policies and actions on citizens' daily lives</p> | <p>EC Rep staff time</p> <p>Prize organisation (October and April, results announced in June)</p> <p>Budget, including 500 EUR per student and teacher to cover travel and expenses for a 2-day trip to Brussels</p> <p>Tables and Certificates of Participation</p> <p>Jury engagement (quiz review and evaluation)</p> | <p>Competition at Casa Europa for every school that visits and takes the quiz (October-April)</p> <p>Communication and outreach activities:<br/>Information session about the award and quiz process at Casa Europa and/or online</p> <p>Collaboration with General Direction of Education (DGE), in charge of the "Clubes Europeus" (European Clubs)<br/>Casa Europa newsletter announcement (September)</p> <p>Reminders through email marketing (October-January)</p> <p>Website and social media posts</p> | <p>Approx. 180 students participating in the 2021/2022 edition from 12 regions<br/>2-day trip to Brussels for the winning school (July) / computer and tablets</p> <p>"I am European" school prize ceremony (23 June 2022), at the winning school Escola Secundária de Azambuja: no. of participants</p> <p>No. of photos and videos of the award ceremony for school's and the Rep's websites</p> <p>Media coverage by local media where the winning school is from</p> | <p>Benefits for students and teachers:<br/>2-day trip to Brussels / computer and tablets</p> <p>Benefits for teachers:<br/>Teachers receiving recognition for their work<br/>Networking and meeting like-minded people</p> | <p>Greater awareness about prize and other EU initiatives (such as Erasmus+ or European Solidarity Corps)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EU values and history promoted to Portuguese youth</li> <li>• Improved knowledge of Portuguese integration into the EU</li> <li>• Cooperation created between schools and Casa Europa</li> </ul> |
| Target group                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Risks                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| Portuguese school students, preferably members of European Clubs, who are at least 13 years old, teachers, secondary schools                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Risks –Students that come from poorer areas or are far away from Casa Europa (Lisbon) will be underrepresented in the prize because schools/parents are not able to cover the travel costs to Lisbon; lack of promotion and inability to draw the media's attention                                                                                                                                                                                                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |



## 1.7 Key findings

### RELEVANCE

- **The "I am European" school prize is relevant to its target group** (students in the 3rd cycle of basic education, preferably members of European Clubs, at least 13 years old). There is no other competition or prize along these lines, which promotes a study visit associated with the completion of a quiz and the possibility of winning a trip to visit the European institutions outside Portugal.
- The relevance of the prize to its target group is reflected by **the high level of motivation and commitment with which the students participate** in the prize and how, in the schools where the prize is known, it generates interest among the student community as well as the teachers.
- **It is also relevant to the actions and scope of action of the European Commission Representation in Portugal**, in its presentation of the EU in Portugal and goal of reaching the largest possible number of recipients. The format of this prize is particularly significant to the target group, who are in the middle of learning and absorbing knowledge and have potential to become "ambassadors" of what they learn in the communities where they live.

### EFFECTIVENESS

- **The "I am European" school prize can be considered to meet its two objectives** of raising interest in the EU and encouraging debate among young people, as well as increasing knowledge on Portuguese integration into the EU and the impact of EU policies and actions on citizens' daily lives.
- **The design of this prize has been effective in terms of being highly desirable for the target group.** The ultimate prize of a trip to Brussels, is a strong motivator for schools and their pupils. In qualitative terms, the editions which enabled a visit to Brussels were the most successful in terms of participants' expectations and motivation. In years of COVID, the number of entries fell and interest in the prize decreased.
- **Getting involved in the competition is a positive experience for participants.** Both teachers and students that get involved in the "I am European" school prize are satisfied with their participation, as highlighted by the photos of many smiling student winners. The direct involvement of students is likely to reinforce satisfaction.
- Whilst the longevity of this competition is to be commended, **the competition has not yet achieved a national level in terms of scope and its impact on your people**, and this relates to the fact that participants must come to Lisbon to visit the Casa Europa; a trip which is beyond the means of some schools and students.
- **There is scope to improve communication about the prize and its promotion points.** Whilst there is no budget for promotion and it is unclear if this will change in the future, there is a scope to improve on what can be done using existing resources, for example, consolidate the approach to communication on social networks, using for example **one hashtag for the competition**. There is also scope for involving the EDs in the competition and its promotion, to broaden the current geographic focus. There may also be scope to reinforce communication through other related EC and European Parliament initiatives in Portugal, including "Euroescola-Portugal Europe" and "Europe at School - Training for Teachers". However, as highlighted by the Representation, the capacity and resources of Casa Europa nonetheless do not allow for a higher number of participating schools than the one registered in previous years.

## EFFICIENCY

- **The format of this prize represents good value for money**, considering the amount of direct and indirect costs associated with the prize and the number of contestants and schools who participate, as well as the implication that there is a **direct impact on each participant in terms of an increase in their knowledge of the EU and a likely indirect impact** on others who may be informed via word of mouth about the Casa Europa and the work of the EC Representation.
- **There is scope to update the format of the competition quiz and increase the efficiency of its implementation.** The quiz is paper based. It is manually corrected, and the results are then entered and stored in a computer. The whole process could be done electronically with the answers and data being automatically saved and classified to make it quicker to identify the winners. This will depend on the equipment used but could limit administrative burden.
- **The opportunity to increase synergies with EDs is clear. Involving the EDs in the running and promotion of the prize**, which would reduce the need for students to visit the Casa Europa in Lisbon, which is currently highlighting inequalities in terms of means to travel. This approach would also have the benefit of promoting the EDs to students, who from an early age become "consumers" of European information and future users and ambassadors of these centres, which also have challenges in terms of their profile.
- **There is a need to review the approach to the payment of expenses.** A problem pointed out by participants is the fact that the expenses with the trip to Brussels must be paid by the participants and are reimbursed after the trip against the presentation of the receipts. This situation is sometimes difficult for schools to cope, with the consequence that sometimes they decline due to lack of money, and the implication that the prize does not address these financial disparities
- **The prizes enable the creation of synergies between schools and Casa Europa**, which is a citizen-oriented service that promotes knowledge and debate on European Union issues, and a joint initiative of the Representation of the European Commission in Portugal and the Information Office of the European Parliament. In addition to schools, there is potential to create synergies with other stakeholders such as town councils, parish councils, parents' associations, European Clubs at school and even the EDs.

## COHERENCE

- **The prizes are aligned with the political priorities of the European Commission and are coherent with the EC's communication goals** of deepening students' knowledge of European integration and the European institutions, and at increasing the general public's interest in European Union issues and themes.
- Participants do not consider that there is an overlap between "I am European" school prize and other prizes / initiatives. Feedback from schools' own reports confirm that the two-day trip to Brussels is preferred over all other prizes. Teacher feedback also confirms that this competition is one of the only ways for many young people to learn about EU youth opportunities. The potential for schools in rural areas and small cities is also valued (even if in practice it is challenging for the most remote schools to join in).

## EU ADDED VALUE

- The European Commission's backing of "I am European" school prize adds value to this prize and the prize adds value to the European Commission. The whole prize revolves around the European Commission: it starts with a study visit to the European Commission Representation in Portugal, followed by a quiz on European Union issues, which will be evaluated, and the prize may be a trip to Brussels to visit the European institutions. The prize being offered by the EC is

a recognition of this whole process which is perceived as very positive by both students and teachers, and there is a clear recognition that the EC is the author of the prize.

- Schools and the student community would perceive cancelling the prize extremely negatively. This would be felt as an "abandonment" and disinterest of the EC in supporting education and young people in Portugal and a move away from the goal of getting closer to people. It was suggested that this might have a negative impact, which would demotivate people about EU issues and policies.