



Brussels, 31.1.2018
SWD(2018) 40 final

COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT

Mid-term evaluation of the Erasmus+ programme (2014-2020)

Accompanying the document

**REPORT FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE
COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE
COMMITTEE OF REGIONS**

Mid-term evaluation of the Erasmus+ programme (2014-2020)

{COM(2018) 50 final}

Table of Contents

| | | |
|----|--|--------|
| 1. | INTRODUCTION | 5 |
| 2. | BACKGROUND TO ERASMUS+ AND ITS PREDECESSOR PROGRAMMES | 7 |
| 3. | IMPLEMENTATION OF ERASMUS+ UNTIL 2016..... | 12 |
| 4. | METHOD OF THE EVALUATION..... | 14 |
| 5. | FINDINGS..... | 20 |
| | 5.1. Effectiveness | 20 |
| | 5.1.1.Outcomes for learners and practinioners..... | 20 |
| | 5.1.2.Outcomes for organisations and systems..... | 31 |
| | 5.1.3. Transversal questions about effectiveness..... | 40 |
| | 5.2. Relevance | 44 |
| | 5.3. Coherence | 54 |
| | 5.4. Efficiency and simplification | 63 |
| | 5.5. European added value | 72 |
| 6. | CONCLUSIONS | 79 |
| | ANNEX 1: PROCEDURAL INFORMATION | 78 |
| | ANNEX 2: STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION | 82 |
| | ANNEX 3: METHODS AND ANALYTICAL MODELS..... | 91 |
| | ANNEX 4: EVALUATION: CRITERIA AND QUESTIONS | 103 |
| | ANNEX 5A: INTERVENTION LOGIC OF ERASMUS+ AND ITS PREDECESSOR PROGRAMMES | 107 |
| | ANNEX 5B: FACTSHEET ON ERASMUS+..... | 113 |
| | ANNEX 5C: SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES OF ERASMUS+ | 115 |
| | ANNEX 5D: FACTSHEETS ON PREDECESSOR PROGRAMMES | 117 |
| | ANNEX 5E: LEGAL BASIS INDICATORS..... | 127 |

| | |
|-------------------------|-----|
| ANNEX 6: GLOSSARY | 135 |
|-------------------------|-----|

Executive Summary

The 2014-2020 Erasmus+ programme and its predecessor programmes (2007-2013) have provided millions of people in Europe and beyond with opportunities to learn, volunteer or teach abroad. It is one of the EU's best-known successes. Its impact goes beyond individuals, as it also has a positive impact on education, training, youth and sport organisations or related systems and policies in developing cross-country cooperation.

This mid-term evaluation of Erasmus+ looks at the current programme until the end of 2016. It also includes an evaluation of the long-term effects of the predecessor programmes. It is based on a very reliable methodology (see 5.3 for its strengths and limitations) and over a million responses from interested parties. It shows that at mid-term, the programme is on track to **achieve or exceed the vast majority of the targets** set in the Erasmus+ Regulation (EU) No 1288/2013.

Effectiveness and European added value

1) The evaluation finds that the **Erasmus+ programme is highly valued** by the general public as well as by its stakeholders. This finding is linked to the available evidence that the programmes under evaluation – both under their intra-EU and external dimensions - achieve a broad range of concrete and positive impacts on their beneficiaries: **learners** (students, apprentices, volunteers, young people, etc.); **practitioners** (teachers, trainers, youth workers, staff, etc.); **participating organisations** (schools, universities, youth and sport organisations, providers of vocational education and training and of adult education, etc.).

2) Though less visible, the evaluation confirms the **systemic effect** of the evaluated programmes **on education, training, youth and sport policies and systems**, directly through the critical mass reached at least in the higher education sector or indirectly in funding policy cooperation (Open Method of Coordination). This systemic effect goes together with partial progress made in the area of **dissemination** of results of the programme. However, the evidence of the exploitation of project results by policy makers and the effective engagement of the latter when they are not included in the project itself is not always clear. In this sense, the evaluation found that the dissemination of results is one of the aspects of Erasmus+ where there is room for further improvement. The evaluation also noted that the impact of funded projects on national systems could be more systematic if there were more cooperation projects fit for mainstreaming, focussed on fewer priorities at EU level and further efforts made for mainstreaming these at national level. The systemic impact of the actions of a new kind introduced only in 2014 (KA3, alliances, etc) is meant to be evaluated at final stage, after 2020.

3) The evaluation considers there is potential for **better definition of actions** to maximise the programme's impact in Adult Education, sport, Jean Monnet activities and the Student Loan Guarantee Facility. Considering the funding available at EU level, evidence shows that: the contribution in the **adult learning** sector is diluted due to the wide size of the target population and the fragmented and diverse nature of the sector; in the field of **sport**, resources should not be spread too thinly to have meaningful result; the **Student Loan Guarantee Facility** has not yet lived up to volume expectations partly due to delays in its launch. Regarding **Jean Monnet activities**, there is a need to strengthen the youngest generation's (notably school pupils') awareness and understanding of European integration.

4) In light of the impacts achieved in all other areas, the evaluation highlights the **strong European added value of Erasmus+ and its predecessor programmes**, compared to what could have been achieved with similar programmes focused on separate geographical areas. This added value is the result of greater impact due to a much higher volume and wider scope of funded activities, fairer access to learning mobility, deeper EU integration, a clearer international dimension and mainstreamed best practices. However, the programme's potential for stimulating learning innovation seems to be lagging behind and could be further exploited in the future.

5) The evaluation concludes that, **in the absence of Erasmus+ and its predecessors, there would be clear negative effects** on learning mobility abroad, transnational cooperation among organisations, including with partner countries, integration between European countries as well as the attitude of participants towards the EU.

Erasmus+ is more coherent, more relevant and only partly more efficient than its predecessors.

1) The main structural change of the Erasmus+ programme, compared to its predecessors, is its **integrated nature** which has contributed to enhance the programme's internal coherence. **Erasmus+ covers learning in all its contexts** – whether formal or non-formal, including youth work and sport – and **at all levels of the lifelong learning continuum**: from early childhood education and schools, vocational education and training (VET), adult learning to higher education, including its international dimension. The evaluation highlighted the positive effects of this integrated approach underpinned by the lifelong learning logic.

The evaluation highlights the following positive consequences of the Erasmus+ design, which has resulted in:

- a sharp increase of **cross-sectoral cooperation** between education and training sectors, youth and sport;
- an improved **geographical balance** with small countries and countries from Central and Eastern Europe being better integrated;
- a **simplified architecture** in three key actions;
- a **single brand name** which has contributed to the programme's **increased visibility** and a progressively strong adherence by the sectors covered.

2) In terms of **policy relevance**, the evaluation shows that stakeholders see Erasmus+ as being more **clearly aligned with EU policies and priorities** than predecessor programmes. However, a majority of programme countries call for more flexibility at national level and the evaluation has shown that to maximize the impact of the programme priorities could be reduced and better focused.

3) The evaluation found a **high complementary between** Erasmus+ and other EU policies and programmes relevant to education, training, youth and sport (e.g. European Social Fund, Horizon 2020). Although the level of synergies differs, it is notable that the evaluation detected **very few overlaps**.

4) When it comes to **budget**, the evaluation concludes that **more is needed for the programme to reach a critical mass** in sectors other than higher education. The demand largely exceeds the funding available including in higher education. The evaluation, including the public consultation, suggests that a further reconsideration of the programme's financial envelope is needed. Without prejudice to negotiations on the next Multi Financial Framework, the evaluation shows that the budget could be differently shared between the programme sectors, in particular at the advantage of sectors showing

the highest performance, but which have received relatively less funding up until now, such as school education and vocational education and training.

5) The evaluation shows that Erasmus+ **mobility actions are clearly cost-effective**, especially learners' mobility (with a cost for the EU of 15€ per day/learner). Cost-effectiveness of other actions remains harder to quantify. The **management costs** (6% of Erasmus+ administrative and operational budget) **are deemed reasonable**, especially when compared to similar national schemes (14% in average). The overall efficiency stemming from the merge of 7 predecessor programmes is not yet clear. More efficiency gains are expected to materialise during the growing phase foreseen by the budget profile of Erasmus+ until 2020. This will have to be evaluated at final stage.

6) In terms of **programme management**, the division of responsibilities, as inherited from predecessor programmes, between the Commission, National Authorities, National Agencies and EACEA, is overall clear and fit for purpose. A majority of programme countries wish more flexibility in implementing the budget. A truly performance-based approach has been adopted, though some indicators need to be fine-tuned and less information collected while being better exploited.

7) However, there is clearly a **repeated call for further simplification**. Following a difficult transitional period/learning process, there is broad agreement that Erasmus+ has brought major improvements (e.g. simplified grants, digitalisation, VET Charter, linguistic support, etc.) but that procedures of application and reporting could be further simplified to reduce the administrative burden on beneficiaries. Applicants for small projects are too often expected to meet the same requirements as applicants for large ones. IT tools are not inter-operable and enough user-friendly. The application process could more clearly focus on those criteria that matter most for effectiveness. A specific challenge is to improve the efficiency of the decentralised international credit mobility action which includes more than 12 different budget envelopes for partner countries.

Overall, the evaluation found that **all** the evaluated predecessor programmes were/are **highly effective**, whereas Erasmus+ is **more coherent**, more **relevant** and only **partly more efficient** than its predecessors.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Union **Programme for Education, Training, Youth and Sport** for the period 2014-2020 'Erasmus+', and its predecessor programmes for the years 2007-2013, support learning mobility of individuals worldwide, transnational cooperation between organisations and promote Member States' reforms in the education, training, youth and sport fields. This is how the EU invests in people with a view to unlocking individuals' potential regardless of age or background, in support of Member States' efforts to develop human resources in Europe and beyond.

Erasmus+ contributes to the objectives of the Europe 2020 **Strategy**¹ and more specifically to the Strategic Framework for European Cooperation in Education and Training (ET 2020)², the European Youth Strategy³ and the EU policy in the field of sport⁴. Erasmus+ also contributes to the EU's more recent overall political objectives, such as the European Pillar of Social Rights and the EU Global Strategy on Foreign and Security Policy.

The Erasmus+ programme (2014-2020)⁵ **has integrated all previously existing EU programmes** in the domains of Education, Training, Youth and Sport, and includes an international dimension that is funded by different external action instruments. In the fields of Education, Training and Youth, the programme pursues its objectives through three types of actions: learning mobility abroad, transnational cooperation projects and policy support. Separately, the Jean Monnet activities promote teaching and research on the European integration⁶, while the Erasmus+ supports transnational cooperation activities in the field of sport, focusing in particular on grassroots level sport.

The Regulation establishing the Erasmus+ Programme stipulates that a mid-term evaluation report accompanied, if appropriate, by a legislative proposal to amend the Regulation, shall be submitted by the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions by 31 December 2017. Furthermore, the mid-term evaluation shall include the ex-post evaluation of the Erasmus+ predecessor programmes over the period 2007-2013 i.e. Lifelong Learning, Youth in Action, Erasmus Mundus, ALFA, Tempus, Edulink and sport preparatory actions, taking into account their long-term results and impact. Therefore, this report covers actions for the **period 2007-2016 in all programme countries** (Member States of the European Union, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Turkey) and **partner countries** (neighbouring the European Union and other partner countries). The **baseline for this evaluation is the period 2007-2013 unless otherwise specified**. In total, the period under evaluation corresponds to a total budget of **over EUR 15 billion**.

The objectives of the mid-term evaluation are to assess **five evaluation criteria** a) the effectiveness of the measures taken to achieve the Erasmus+ programme's objectives, including the contribution made to the realisation of the Europe 2020 strategy; b) the

¹ http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/index_en.htm

² http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/strategic-framework/index_en.htm

³ http://ec.europa.eu/youth/policy/youth_strategy/index_en.htm

⁴ http://ec.europa.eu/sport/policy/index_en.htm

⁵ **Regulation (EU) No 1288/2013** of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2013 establishing 'Erasmus+': the Union programme for education, training, youth and sport and repealing Decisions No 1719/2006/EC, No 1720/2006/EC and No 1298/2008/EC <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32013R1288>

⁶ Article 10 of the Regulation (EU) No 1288/2013; see ICF, stand-alone report on *Jean Monnet actions* ("ICF/JMO" hereinafter), ICF, vol. 2. The relevance of the institutions designated in Article 10(c) of Regulation (EU) No 1288/2013 and pursuing an aim of European interest and funded under Jean Monnet activities (about €29 million in 2016) has not been evaluated due to its discretionary nature.

continued relevance of all of its objectives; c) the Programme's internal and external coherence; d) the efficiency of the Programme and the scope for simplification; and lastly e) its European added value. The results of the evaluation will be used to improve the implementation of the current programme until 2020 where possible. They will also be used to feed into the impact assessment for its successor programme.

The mid-term evaluation assesses the performance of the different **(Key) actions**⁷ included in Erasmus+ and evaluates to which extent findings differ across **fields and sectors**⁸ included in the programme and across the different **target levels** (individuals, organisations and systems). It also assesses the extent to which the programmes have contributed to policy development and implementation in the participating countries. The evaluation does not cover actions that were discontinued during the previous programming period (2007-2013)⁹ as these were not to be evaluated, under the Terms of Reference. However, feedback from stakeholders on the interruption of actions discontinued with Erasmus+ was collected and analysed.

This Staff Working Document on the mid-term evaluation of Erasmus+ and predecessor programmes has been carried out according to a **Roadmap** published in January 2016¹⁰. It draws mainly, among other sources¹¹, on the National Reports submitted by the programme countries in accordance with Article 21(4) of Regulation (EU) No 1288/2013, previous evaluations and other studies¹² and the final deliverables prepared by **ICF Consulting Services** Ltd, (hereinafter ICF), under contract to European Commission (DG Education, Youth, Sport and Culture)¹³. The final report delivered by ICF provides answers to all **evaluation questions**¹⁴ defined in the Terms of Reference and related to the aforementioned five evaluation criteria. The final report of the contractor contains also recommendations addressed to the Commission.

⁷ The **actions** of the programme are defined in Articles 6-10 (education and training), 12-15 (youth) and 17 (sport) of Regulation (EU) No 1288/2013. They include Key Actions 1 (mobility for learners and practitioners), 2 (cooperation among organisations) and 3 (policy support), Jean Monnet activities, sport activities, and their respective specific actions.

⁸ The **fields** of the programme are defined in Article 1.3 of the legal base. They consist of education and training (including five **sectors**: school education, vocational education and training, higher education (HE), international higher education and adult learning), youth, and sport.

⁹ The external cooperation agreements in HE, training and youth with the USA and Canada were discontinued in 2011 following unilateral decisions by these two countries to interrupt co-funding in the aftermath of the economic crisis.

¹⁰ http://ec.europa.eu/smart-regulation/roadmaps/docs/2015_eac_014_evaluation_erasmus_en.pdf

¹¹ See annex 3 for sources, data collection and method of analysis

¹² The *Evaluation of the EU Development Co-operation Support to Higher Education in Partner Countries (2007-2014)*, August 2017, Particip, LeA, ECDPM, Ecorys for the Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development (European Commission) includes the ex post evaluation of the four predecessor programmes in the field of international higher education.

¹³ See annex 1 for evaluation process

¹⁴ See annex 4 for evaluation questions

2. BACKGROUND TO ERASMUS+ AND ITS PREDECESSOR PROGRAMMES

Erasmus+ is the **EU Programme in the field of education, training, youth and sport**, with a budget of **EUR 16.45 billion** for the period **2014-2020**¹⁵. It provides opportunities for people of all ages (university students but also school pupils, trainees, apprentices, etc.) to study, be trained, volunteer and learn in other countries. It also fosters the professional development of practitioners and supports cooperation on tangible results, networking and share of knowledge among organisation and institutions in the fields covered by the programme.

Through cooperation in formal, informal and non-formal learning, the Programme aims to address the following challenges: economic recovery and high youth unemployment; skills' mismatches, low employability and education poverty; global competition for talents; Information and Communication Technology potential and digital divide; social exclusion and intolerance; lack of trust in the EU and low participation in democratic life; threats to the integrity of sport and, more generally, to common European values.

The **general objectives**¹⁶ of Erasmus+ are to contribute to the **Europe 2020** strategy for growth and jobs¹⁷, including the headline education targets¹⁸, as well as the strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training ('**ET 2020**'), including related benchmarks. Erasmus+ also aims to contribute to achieving the objectives of the **EU Youth Strategy** and the **EU Work Plan for Sport**, to promote the sustainable development of partner countries in the field of higher education and youth, as well as to foster European values¹⁹.

Specific objectives²⁰ tackled by the programme include the improvement of the level of key competences and skills, with particular regard to their relevance for the labour market and their contribution to a cohesive society; the promotion of solidarity and participation in democratic life in Europe and the labour market; the improvement of quality, innovation, excellence (including in European studies) and internationalisation at the level of organisations and practitioners; support to the modernisation of education and training systems, in particular through evidence-based policy cooperation; the enhancement of the European/international dimension of its sectors, including with partner countries in complementarity with the Union's external action; the promotion of the Union's linguistic diversity and intercultural awareness; cross-border threats to the integrity of sport; support to good governance in sport and dual careers of athletes; and the promotion of voluntary activities in sport.

Erasmus+ results from the integration of the following **predecessor European interventions**²¹ implemented during the period 2007-2013: *Lifelong Learning* (LLP)²², *Youth*

¹⁵ The Programme has an overall indicative financial envelope of 14.774 billion EUR under Heading 1 "Smart and Inclusive Growth" and of 1.680 billion EUR under Heading 4 "Global Europe" of the EU Budget for the seven years (2014-2020), EU-28 appropriations, as well as 85 million EUR from the European Development Fund https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/programme-guide/part-a/what-is-the-budget_en

¹⁶ Article 4 of the Regulation (EU) No 1288/2013

¹⁷ https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/european-semester/framework/europe-2020-strategy_en

¹⁸ In EU average: rate of early school leavers below 10%; at least 40% of people aged 30–34 having completed HE.

¹⁹ In accordance with [Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union](#)

²⁰ Articles 5, 11 and 16 of the Regulation (EU) No 1288/2013

²¹ See Annex 5b and 5d for more detailed **factsheets on each programme**; see also annex 1 of ICF's final report for a comparative tables of Erasmus+ and predecessor programmes

in Action (YiA), *Preparatory Actions in sport* (as of 2009), as well as in the sector of international higher education: *Erasmus Mundus II* (as of 2009, with the rest of the world), *EduLink* (as of 2008, with African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States), *Tempus IV* (with neighbouring countries), *Alfa III* (with Latin America) and programmes of cooperation with certain industrialised countries.

The current Erasmus+ programme has the following architecture:

Key Action 1: Learning mobility of individuals (opportunities for students, trainees, apprentices, young people and volunteers, as well as for professors, teachers, trainers, youth workers, staff of educational institutions and civil society organisations to undertake a learning and/or professional experience in another country)

Key Action 2: Cooperation for innovation and the exchange of good practices (transnational or international projects promoting cooperation, innovation, exchange of experience and know-how between different types of organisations and institutions involved in education, training and youth or in other relevant fields)

Key Action 3: Support for policy reform (actions supporting national authorities and stakeholders in defining and implementing new and better coordinated policies in the field of education, training and youth).

Jean Monnet activities (actions aimed at improving the quality of teaching on European integration studies, as well as projects and operating grants aimed at promoting discussion, reflection on EU issues and enhancing knowledge about the EU and its functioning)

Sport (cooperation projects, events, studies and other initiatives aimed at implementing EU strategies and priorities in the field of sport)

Erasmus+ relies on **management modes** inherited from predecessor programmes.

The **European Commission** bears the overall responsibility for the supervision and coordination of the agencies in charge of implementing the Programme at national level. The European Commission manages the budget and sets priorities, targets and criteria for the Programme. Furthermore, it guides and monitors the overall implementation, and evaluates the Programme at European level after having received the National Reports from participating countries, as described under "method". It also manages directly few actions of the programme²³.

At European level, the **European Commission's Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency** (EACEA)²⁴ is responsible for the implementation of centralised actions of the programmes²⁵ (direct management) which account for a small share of the total budget.

The largest share of the budget is implemented through indirect management. The European Commission entrusts implementation and promotion tasks to **National Agencies** (NAs)²⁶

²² LLP accounting for 84% of the budget for education and training 2007-2013 comprised 4 sector-based programmes: *Comenius* (SE); *Leonardo da Vinci* (VET), *Erasmus* (HE), *Grundtvig* (AE), transversal programme (policy cooperation; language learning; ICT-based innovation, dissemination of results) and the *Jean Monnet programme*.

²³ These actions consist mainly of administrative expenditure (studies, external communication and dissemination, IT systems, etc.), policy coordination and support actions, politically sensitive and new actions, pilot projects and preparatory actions.

²⁴ https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/homepage_en

²⁵ Concerning Erasmus+ these actions are: Joint Master Degrees, large-scale European Voluntary Service under KA1, Knowledge Alliances and Sector Skills Alliances under KA2, most of the KA3 actions, Jean Monnet activities and sport actions.

²⁶ Currently, 57 NAs appointed and supervised by the National Authorities (NAUs). Since 2014, their performance is also controlled by Independent Audit Bodies identified in each country.

established in each of the 33 countries participating to the Erasmus+ programme (named hereafter "programme countries"²⁷) which implement those actions of the programme with the highest volume²⁸ so as to bring the programme as close as possible to its beneficiaries and to adapt to the diversity of national education, training and youth systems.

No direct support is given to individual beneficiaries²⁹; all support is channelled through participating organisations, which distribute it to individual learners or practitioners.

2.1. Main changes in the programmes over the period under evaluation

In line with the **subsidiarity principle** and Articles 165 and 166 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, the EU intervention aims at supporting and supplementing the actions of Member States, while fully respecting their responsibility for the content of education, training, youth and sport policies. Meanwhile, more than its predecessors, Erasmus+ has been designed with a view to better aligning spending actions with the **priorities set at EU level** in each policy area.

The integrated structure of the programme is the most noticeable change in scope brought by Erasmus+. Other important developments between the two programming periods have taken the form of an increased budget allocation (+40%); a simplified structure in 3 Key Actions; streamlined ways of implementation and systematic monitoring, as evaluated under "effectiveness", "coherence" and "efficiency".

a) Erasmus+ does not only draw on the legacy of its predecessors but also brings them altogether into a **single integrated programme**, including its international dimension funded by the EU external action instruments (2% of all Erasmus+ student mobility activities have involved partner countries)³⁰. The suppression of (sub-) programmes per field (sector) contributes to the "effectiveness", "efficiency" and "internal coherence" of the programme, as evaluated below.

b) Erasmus+ benefits from **increased resources** with over EUR 16.4 billion spread over seven years as opposed to a total budget of slightly more than a total of EUR 9 billion allocated to its predecessors over 2007-2013.

| Examples of changes with Erasmus+ ³¹ |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunities for over 4 million people to study, train, volunteer or gain professional experience abroad (1.8 million learners and practitioners over 2014-2016) • A stronger focus on improving young people's job prospects to tackle youth unemployment (more and shorter traineeships since 2014) • A more inclusive programme supporting people with fewer opportunities (11.5% of learner participants) |

²⁷ EU Member States, EFTA/EEA countries, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey.

²⁸ NAs manage KA1 mobility (except Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degrees), KA2 strategic partnerships, structured dialogue between young people and decision-makers under KA3

²⁹ Students, trainees, apprentices, pupils, adult learners, young people, volunteers, professors, teachers, trainers, youth workers, professionals of organisations active in the fields of education, training and youth

³⁰ *Development Cooperation Instrument (DCI), European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI), Partnership Instrument for cooperation with 3rd countries (PI), Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA), European Development Fund (EDF)*. The *Youth in Action* programme had already integrated its international component with the *European Voluntary Service* and *Youth in the World* opened to partner countries, with an emphasis on neighbouring countries.

³¹ See Annex 5b for more detailed **factsheet**

- Opportunities for participants to study **worldwide** (12% of all higher education participating organisations)
- **Language learning support** for mobility participants (14% of learners in long term mobility)
- New funding for actions in the field of **sport** (1,8 % of the budget – heading 1)

c) For simplification purposes, following the conclusions of the Impact Assessment for Erasmus+³², the current programme is based on **three cross-cutting Key Actions**³³ which apply to all education and training sectors and to the youth field: Key Action 1 (KA1) supports learning mobility of individuals; Key Action 2 (KA2) fosters cooperation for innovation and the exchange of good practices, including collaborative platforms, and Key Action 3 (KA3) supports policy reforms. This integrated approach does not apply to the two stand-alone strands for sport and for European integration studies ("Jean Monnet"). The fact that the nature of the funded activities has not fundamentally changed with Erasmus+, as reflected below, makes it possible, however, to draw conclusions about the likely impact of the current programme based on what can be observed ex post from the impact of its predecessors.

Main type of actions per Erasmus+ Key Actions

| Learning mobility of individuals (KA 1) | Cooperation for innovation and exchange of good practices (KA2) | Support for policy reform (KA3) |
|---|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mobility of learners and practitioners - Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degrees - Student Loan Guarantee Facility | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strategic Partnerships - IT support platforms - Knowledge Alliances (HE) - Sector Skills Alliances (VET) - Capacity Building (HE and Youth) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Open method of Coordination (OMC) - Prospective initiatives - EU transparency and recognition tools - Dissemination & exploitation - Policy dialogue with stakeholders, third countries and international organisations |

In bold: most significant novelties of Erasmus+

d) The integrated nature of the programme means that **cross-field approaches or tools** can be used for the purpose of grant application, monitoring, audit or dissemination.

This has materialised through on-line application, single audit system, generalisation of simplified grants (lump sums, unit costs), performance-based monitoring system, a single Project results platform, etc. In designing Erasmus+, specific attention has been paid to make it **more result-oriented** than its predecessors and more agile to adapt to policy evolutions notably in the light of the socio-economic challenges mentioned above.

2.2. Intervention logic

The EU mandate in the education, training, youth and sport areas sets the scope for the **intervention logic**³⁴. An overarching intervention logic was designed to cater for all the programmes in scope of the evaluation, irrespective of the programming period. This approach was followed in order to assess and compare more swiftly results across

³² Erasmus+ Impact Assessment, Commission Staff Working Paper, SEC(2011) 1402 of 23.11.2011

³³ For instance, the number of activities has been reduced from 75 to 11 in the sole case of LLP.

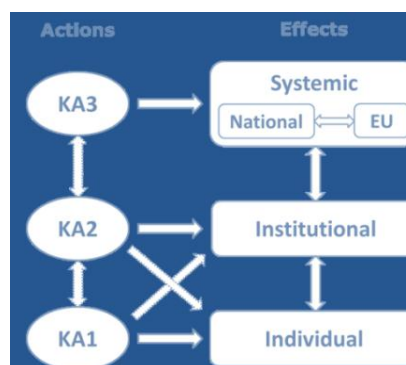
³⁴ See Annex 5a for a more detailed visualisation of the intervention logic

programmes in order to make a more comprehensive assessment of the impacts achieved during the baseline period. As a matter of fact, although each evaluated programme had different architecture, most of the supported actions (mobility, cooperation and policy reform support) were transversally implemented – although with a different level of intensity - under all programmes. For that purpose, the programme's specific objectives and actions have been grouped according to the level at which the results are expected³⁵.

Furthermore, considering the overwhelming dominance of the external factors of Member States' policy making and spending in these areas, it is not easy to attribute and quantify the specific effects of the EU intervention.

Spill-over between intervention levels is expected, as shown in the graphic below, explaining why most of the specific objectives are expected to deliver results at more than one level. For instance, the mobility of learners and practitioners (KA1) can – in addition to individual-level results – improve the performance of the organisations and have an impact on systems, especially in terms of outcome recognition. Also, the performance of individual organisations (KA2) is expected to benefit from European cooperation in the fields of the programme, including through its modernising effects on national systems and reforms prompted by the open method of coordination and KA3.

- **Systems**, to improve policies in programme and partner countries;
- **Organisations**, to promote cooperation and positive changes in work methods;
- **Individuals**, to increase participants' competences as well as change their attitudes, practices and perceptions;



Source: Roadmap for the evaluation, January 2016

³⁵ See Annexes 5a and 5c showing respectively at which level actions and objectives aim to produce results

3. IMPLEMENTATION OF ERASMUS+ AND PREDECESSOR PROGRAMMES UNTIL 2016

In the period 2007–2016, the programmes have funded mobility for more than **4.3 million learners and more than 880,000 practitioners**. Many more have benefited from short-term blended mobility and/or other forms of transnational exchanges as part of cooperation projects. In the current programming period (2014–2016) alone, at the time of the mid-term evaluation (i.e. without taking into account fully 2016 data), the programme had already benefited over 1.4 million learners and 400,000 practitioners. Approximately 67 000 projects have been contracted in the same period, which represent a reduction in yearly number by around 50% compared to 2007-2013. Erasmus+ has indeed been designed to fund **fewer, but more multifaceted projects with larger average numbers of participants**. Comprehensive information is available from the *Erasmus+ programme – Annual Report* (taking into account fully 2016 data) ³⁶.

The Erasmus+ programme has been **fully implemented as from 2015** without major difficulties³⁷. The international higher education strand and the *Student Loan Guarantee Facility*³⁸ were launched only in the second year of the programme, when arrangements were ultimately made respectively with the External Relations instruments and the European Investment Fund. The implications of the newly created *European Solidarity Corps* on Erasmus+, more specifically on the implementation of the *European Voluntary Service* under the Youth Chapter, only materialised in 2017; it is, for that reason, out of the scope of this evaluation.

Erasmus+ was allocated EUR 16.4 billion for the 2014-2020 period³⁹. Despite the overall significant budget increase compared to the previous programming period (+40%), Erasmus+ has only experienced a limited budget increase in 2014-2016 according to the programme's budgetary profile which concentrates the funding increase over 2017-2020⁴⁰, as shown below. It is therefore **too early at mid-term to evaluate the full impact of the additional resources** allocated to the current programme.

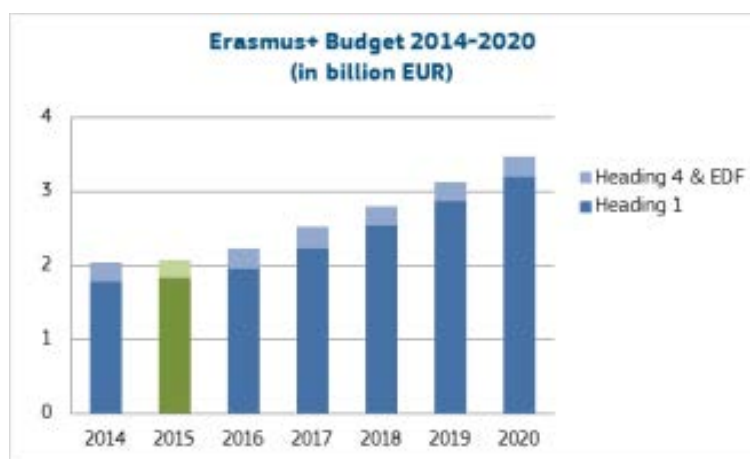
³⁶ http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/about/statistics_en

³⁷ The projects managed by the Greek National Agency for youth (0.22% of the Erasmus+ budget in 2015) were suspended from December 2014 to April 2016 due to an insufficient management assurance. Certain OECD-related activities could partially not be funded (€ 1 million) until the general framework for the cooperation between the Commission and the OECD was finalised on time. See DG EAC's AAR 2015.

³⁸ The Student or **Master Loan Guarantee Facility** (SLGF) is a new scheme under Erasmus+ (max. EUR 520 million budgeted), aimed at fostering HE *degree*-mobility by easing access to student loans, irrespective of socio-economic background. The guarantee managed by the European Investment Fund (EIF) enables students enrolled in a full Master's programme abroad to apply for a comparatively favourable Erasmus+ backed loan provided by participating financial intermediaries. ICF, stand-alone report on the Evaluation of the SLGF ("ICF/SLGF" hereinafter), ICF, vol. 3

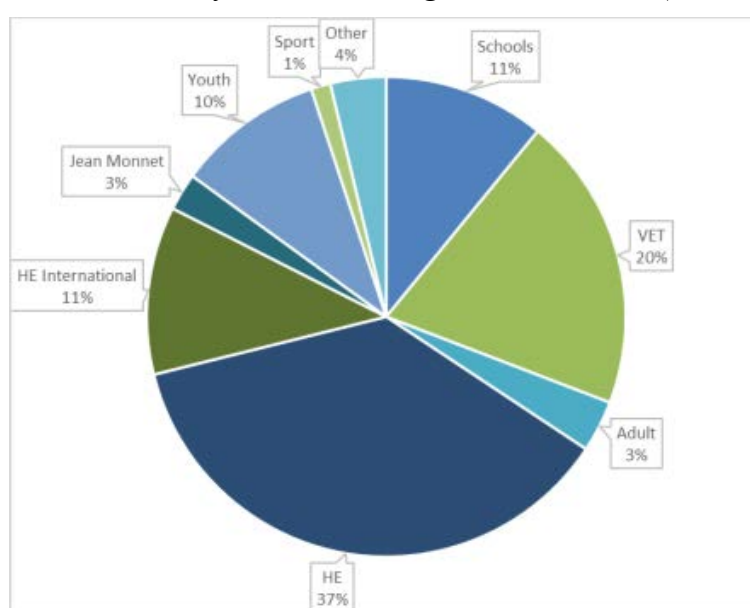
³⁹ The Programme has an overall indicative financial envelope of 14.774 billion EUR under Heading 1 of the EU Budget and of 1.680 billion EUR under Heading 4 and the EDF for the seven years (2014-2020), EU-28 appropriations.

⁴⁰ Consequently, the final budget available to cover Erasmus+ actions in 2015 - EUR 2.115 billion – represents only a slight increase compared to 2014 (+2.1%).



Source: Erasmus+ activity report 2015

Distribution of Erasmus+ budget across sectors (2014-2016)



Source: ICF calculations based on EplusLink

The most substantial part of the Erasmus+ budget is allocated to education and training and, within this field, to higher education, as shown in the graph above⁴¹. In terms of actions, mobility has the largest share of the budget, as displayed below.

Key data, 2014 - 2016

| | KA1 | KA2 | KA3 | Jean Monnet | Sport |
|--------------------------------------|-----------|-----------|---------|-------------|-------|
| Projects received | 108,904 | 34,298 | 4,456 | 2,425 | 1,325 |
| Contracted projects | 49,073 | 6,936 | 2,127 | 762 | 238 |
| Amounts allocated (in million EUR) * | 3,798.9 | 1,469.4 | 205.9 | 126.2 | 67.3 |
| Participants | 2,049,140 | 1,231,267 | 184,403 | 944,245 | - |

Source: Erasmus+ Programme Annual Reports 2014-2016 (taking into account fully 2016 data)

*Amounts not only for project grants but including also operating grants

⁴¹ "Other" is compound of operating grants to national agencies and administrative expenditure

4. METHOD OF THE EVALUATION

Considering the high quality of data collected through several complementary techniques from various sources, the sophisticated analysis and triangulation of evidence, the positive opinion of the Regulatory Scrutiny Board and the improvement stemming from its comments, as well as the significant feedback received (with more than a million responses processed in total), this **evaluation can be considered very reliable and valid**.

4.1. Evaluation framework

To undertake the combined mid-term evaluation of Erasmus+ and the final evaluation of its predecessor programmes, as outlined above in section 1, the Commission has drawn upon a set of **evaluation questions relating to five main criteria**: effectiveness, relevance, coherence, efficiency and EU added value, as per the evaluation Roadmap⁴².

To ensure comparable approaches, the evaluation framework developed by the external evaluator⁴³ classifies actions across the three *levels of intervention* of the programmes and uses that as the basis of comparison over 10 years, across all sectors and various target groups, namely:

- at **System** level
- at **Organisation** level
- at **Individual** level, divided into actions for **learners** and **practitioners** across all different *areas* (education and training, youth and sport) and – within education and training – different *sectors* (school education (SE), vocational education and training (VET), higher education (HE) and adult education (AE)). For the purpose of the evaluation, the overarching terms of *Learners* and *Practitioners* are used⁴⁴.

In addition, the analysis of effectiveness has been based on the intervention logic represented graphically in annex 5a accompanied by a detailed elaboration of expected **outcomes** (*results* directly for individual beneficiaries; *impact* indirectly for a wider population, participating organisations or education, training, youth and sport systems)⁴⁵. All specific objectives of the programme (annex 5c) are reflected in the outcomes or impacts of the intervention logic.

The purpose of the evaluation is to evaluate the outcome of the programme on target groups, not to audit each type of activities. Therefore this intervention logic is a powerful simplified model to develop questionnaires based on the most relevant levels of outcomes. It is worth noting that these three levels of intervention are not equivalent to the three Key Actions, as explained above⁴⁶. A given Key Action can indeed have an effect on more than one level of

⁴² http://ec.europa.eu/smart-regulation/roadmaps/docs/2015_eac_014_evaluation_erasmus_en.pdf

⁴³ ICF, Annex 14 (not published), where a matrix maps and compares the types of actions in the predecessor programmes and the corresponding actions in the Erasmus+ programme

⁴⁴ **Learners** refer to all individuals involved in formal, non-formal and informal education as pupils, students, apprentices, volunteers, young people, etc. **Practitioners** refer to those involved in the same respect as teachers (including prospective teachers), trainers, youth workers, educators, coaches, organisation leaders or staff, etc.

⁴⁵ See annex 5a. This framework of outcomes has resulted from a combination of review of programme documentation, literature on results and impacts of similar types of interventions and scoping interviews with policy officers in charge of the programme. ICF, 3.3

⁴⁶ For instance, individuals are also targeted within KA2 activities in the case of school pupil or adult mobility.

intervention (see 2.2). Key Actions have been set within Erasmus+ but these three levels of interventions apply to both programming periods⁴⁷.

This unprecedented **combination of the ex post evaluation of predecessor programmes and the mid-term evaluation** of the current programme is a legal requirement. It implies to evaluate differently the two periods, as laid down in article 21(2) of the Erasmus+ Regulation: [The mid-term evaluation report] "*shall also take into account the results of an evaluation of the long-term impact of the predecessor programmes (Lifelong Learning, Youth in Action, Erasmus Mundus and other international higher education programmes)*." Whereas Erasmus+ is evaluated against all aforementioned criteria, its predecessors are mainly evaluated in relation to effectiveness and relevance⁴⁸. However, since **the predecessors are systematically taken as a baseline for comparison with Erasmus+**, they have been evaluated also for comparison purposes in terms of coherence, efficiency and European added value.

Systemic impact as well as long term effects of projects should mainly be attributed to previous programmes, whilst short-term effects on individuals have rather been evaluated in the context of the current programme. The results at the level of individuals are unlikely to be different between the two programming periods as the types of actions are highly similar. What has mainly changed in that respect is the scale and reach of the programme as of 2014. The programme is designed so that the systemic impact of projects (Key Actions 2 and 3) should only be evaluated "*by the end of the programme*" as per article 21(1)b of the legal basis. At mid-term, **systemic and long term effects can also be attributed by extrapolation to Erasmus+** due to the continued nature of basic activities (mobility; cooperation).

4.2. Data collection and analysis

Evaluation findings have been based on **a wide range of data sources** systematically triangulated i.e. cross-checked against each other: programme documentation, programme data and views of the managing bodies, views of direct beneficiaries as well as non-beneficiaries, EU and national stakeholders, policy makers, programme countries, bodies in charge of implementation of other comparable programmes and the general public⁴⁹.

The evaluation combined a number of **techniques for data collection and analysis**. Most results are reached by a mix of evidence combining a quasi-counterfactual assessment based on beneficiaries' surveys (i.e. comparisons between beneficiaries and a control group), self-reported feedback of beneficiaries (i.e. monitoring surveys), as well as qualitative interviews and case studies. While monitoring surveys could only give findings as from 2014, evaluation surveys covered 2007-2016 and enabled the evaluators to compare the two programme generations. Monitoring data have been fully used and supplemented with surveys carried out by the external evaluator, providing more objective findings (with questions not based on self-perception), more comprehensive data (covering as well the 2007-2013 period and KA2

⁴⁷ The predecessor programmes in international higher education had a variety of intervention logics of which only some elements are reflected in the evaluation intervention logic. Doing an evaluation programme by programme would have fragmented the data collection and would not have allowed to use some of the more advanced analytical techniques.

⁴⁸ The Terms of reference of this evaluation specify that "*The questions are in many cases phrased in a general way, however the intention is that they cover the entire Erasmus+ programme (where applicable also the predecessor programme)*." For instance: "*What are the long-term impacts of the predecessor programmes? We are interested in the impact of all actions/elements of the predecessor's programmes, in particular those actions/elements that are continued in new Erasmus+ programme. We are also interested in impact of actions/elements that have discontinued to the extent that it might help to design the future programme.*" or "*What conclusions can be drawn on the likely impact of Erasmus+ programme given the fact that significant parts of their actions are continuation of predecessor's programmes?*"

⁴⁹ Primary data were mainly collected from November 2016 to May 2017.

participants) and more comparable responses (as questions were harmonised across sectors and periods for comparison purpose).

Collection tools presented below covered all programme countries, sectors and main types of actions (except where mentioned otherwise). The **quality of the one million responses processed** was in most cases exceptionally good. All quantitative data was statistically processed and presented using visualisation tools, while all qualitative data was systematically coded.

As required by the Erasmus+ Regulation, programme countries have submitted their own evaluation reports on the implementation and impact of decentralised actions of Erasmus+ in their respective territories. Their findings are summarised in the **National reports synthesis (NRS)** annexed to the external evaluator's report⁵⁰.

In line with Better Regulation rules, an **Open Public Consultation (OPC)** gathered the opinions of the general public and all interested groups on all evaluation criteria.⁵¹ Different questions were asked depending on the level and scope of knowledge of the programmes declared by each respondent. Consultation findings are presented separately in the synopsis drawn by the external evaluator⁵². More widely, responses from all sources are presented in Annex 2.

Box 1 provides an overview of the data sources from which the evidence was drawn. A detailed description of the individual methods is provided in Annex 3.

- **Literature review** (131 sources about 2007-2016)
- Key informant **interviews** (190 interviews about 2007-2016)
- **National reports** (34 countries mainly about 2014-2016)
- **Open Public Consultation** (covering 2007-2016 with 4,786 responses of which 1,800 responses were fully exploitable; 24 position papers submitted)
- **Social Media** analysis (725,678 posts over 12 months)
- **Benchmarking** (18 comparable national/transnational programmes)
- **Programme database** analysis (all beneficiaries 2007-2016) including network analysis
- **Monitoring surveys** (over 955,000 respondents - KA1 since 2014)
- **Online Linguistic Support** (523,238 participants since 2014)
- **Beneficiary surveys and control groups** (over 47,000 respondents over 2007-2016)
- **Survey of socio-economic organisations** (947 responses over 2007-2016)
- **Agencies survey** (130 responses from National Agencies or the Executive Agency EACEA)
- **Experts survey** (1,122 responses from project assessors over 2007-2016)
- **Case studies** (38 organisations or policy cases; 233 respondents over 2007-2016)
- Review of selected **projects' outputs** (386 project reports over 2007-2016)
- **Expert panel assessment** of projects' outputs (100 projects)
- Jean Monnet activities (2,350 survey respondents; 5 interviews)
- Student Loan Guarantee Facility (SLGF) (219 survey respondents; 33 interviews)

⁵⁰ **National reports synthesis (NRS)** hereinafter), ICF, vol. 6

⁵¹ https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/resources/consultations/erasmus-plus-mid-term-evaluation-2017_en

⁵² **Synopsis of the open Public Consultation (OPC)** hereinafter), ICF, vol. 5

4.3. Method strengths and limitations

Overall, **the quality of available data for the predecessor programmes was good, while for Erasmus+ it was very good.** This reflects improvements made in terms of monitoring since 2014. The evaluation used the wealth of the programme data available from the Erasmus+ management or monitoring tools, including some data on results (e.g. satisfaction-rate) since 2014. Although the period within the scope of the evaluation was 2007-2016, programme data was not fully available for 2007⁵³.

The main issues that affected the analysis of participation patterns include the following:

- i) the absence of a harmonised definition, across sectors, of people with fewer opportunities and from *disadvantaged backgrounds* (programme data were completed with other findings)⁵⁴;
- ii) the lack of a complete picture on the type of participating *organisations* (some 40% of organisations were classified as "other" in the programme dataset limiting the analysis of participation per type of organisation).

It should also be noted that the analysis over time of networking among participating organisations or repeated participation of individuals in the programme could not be fully pursued, as prior to 2014 the same organisations could be recorded under multiple names, which made such an analysis difficult to execute. These **limitations have however remained marginal** or have been overcome through the use of other sources.

The **monitoring surveys of beneficiaries** carried out by the Commission concern all learners or practitioners taking part in mobility under KA1 (since 2014 only)⁵⁵. All are requested to fill in an online survey on completion of their mobility. Therefore the **reliability of the data is strong**. Given the sample sizes (first two years of the programme) the data is considered to be strongly reliable even though it was too early to include 2016 data. This being said the link between the monitoring questions and the indicators they are supposed to measure can be weak in some cases. Above all, **most questions are based on the self-perception of beneficiaries** in contrast to more objective measurements such as the assessment of language proficiency after mobility (OLS⁵⁶). This is why monitoring data were supplemented with primary data collection, such as surveys carried out by the external evaluator, providing more objective and comparable responses.

Series of **surveys of beneficiary learners and staff** and related control groups covered all programme target groups and predecessor programmes as well (2008-2016 in total), both for mobility and cooperation, over 2007-2016. Overall, **findings could be generalised** to the whole programme with a **sufficient degree of confidence** because of the **sample sizes of all surveys** and the distribution of various background variables within the survey samples. Given the limited data available on the background of beneficiaries, it nevertheless remains

⁵³ Monitoring data for 2016, although not yet confirmed, were also analysed for outputs and participation patterns.

⁵⁴ See sections on effectiveness and relevance below for encouraging results in terms of social inclusiveness

⁵⁵ See annex 5e reporting on all output and result indicators from the legal basis against targets set in DG EAC's Strategic Plan. As these legal basis indicators are based primarily on direct beneficiaries' perceptions of the programme contribution, they are only meaningful when asked shortly after the mobility experience. It would not have been possible to reconstruct them even if the evaluation surveys had asked comparable questions to the beneficiaries of 2007-2013.

⁵⁶ The **Online Linguistic Support** (OLS) was introduced with Erasmus+. Before and at the end of their mobility, participants (HE, VET or EVS) take the language assessment to measure their level and progress in the language. Language courses are also provided to them on-line.

impossible to quantify the degree of comparability of the samples to the programme population⁵⁷.

A **partially counterfactual approach** ("quasi-experimental") was also used to quantify the contribution of the programme to the results measured. This was done by assessing the difference in results between Erasmus+ beneficiaries and their "peers" who did not take part. The challenge is to attribute the difference in outcomes between both groups to the programme isolating any other underlying factor (attribution). **Control groups of non-beneficiaries** were therefore set up. In an ideal world, these should be selected on random basis. However, a random allocation is neither feasible in practical terms nor desirable for ethical reasons. By default, a 'matched sample' was sought where individuals are similar in some background characteristics such as gender, age, etc. There were no significant differences between the control group and the treatment group for most variables, and where there were, they concerned variables that were not likely to strongly influence the findings. Most control groups reached a **significant size allowing comparison with beneficiaries, except in sport and Adult Education sectors** where the control groups were too small. As a consequence, the control group of VET staff was also used for Adult Education and the control group of Youth staff was also used for sport, as these were found to be sufficiently comparable against a range of background characteristics. However this counterfactual approach cannot exclude the possibility that the difference in a given variable between beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries could be partially due to the selection into the programme rather than the effect of the programme.

In addition to the above 'post' surveys (i.e. beneficiaries were surveyed after they took part in the programme), the external evaluator carried out pre-surveys in two sectors where short term mobility exchanges apply (i.e. school pupils and Youth exchanges). This was done as far as possible within the time frame of the evaluation assignment for the purpose of **pre/post comparison**. In spite of repeated recruitment efforts, the sample sizes suffered from a **high attrition from the pre to the post survey**, especially for the Youth sector where comparison of profiles prior to Erasmus+ mobility could not be done. Pre-post results for the **Youth sector** have therefore not been interpreted considering the **high likelihood of sample bias**. This allowed nevertheless for the school sector to draw conclusions on selection into the programme and to observe changes during the time of the mobility experience.

To get a better understanding of their quality and dissemination potential, a **review of selected project outputs**, mainly collected from National Agencies, was carried out. Given that only relatively few Erasmus+ funded projects were completed at the time of this evaluation, the sample remained inevitably **somewhat biased towards predecessor programmes**.

As for the **Open Public Consultation (OPC)**, a large number of partial responses only contained very basic background information on respondents and had therefore to be marked as unsuitable for analysis. In any case, in contrast to surveys, public consultation findings can never be representative due to the selection bias inherent to any open recruitment.

Lastly, some programme countries have delivered their **national reports** with a four month delay. This, in turn, has delayed the adoption of the Commission report to take into account all programme countries' views. The period of time between the deadlines set by the legislator

⁵⁷ There is no database that would provide data on the overall target population. Moreover for several surveys (pupils, young people, sport staff) or certain actions (KA2, predecessor programmes) there is often no contact database of direct beneficiaries, or not standardised ones, hence there is no background data on the total population of beneficiaries to compare with respondents' profile. This is why respondents have been recruited through organisations.

respectively for the delivery of the national reports and the Commission report was reduced from 9 months (LLP) to 6 months (Erasmus+), which has not allowed the external evaluator to make a full synthesis of all findings⁵⁸.

⁵⁸ ICF has delivered separate reports, respectively volumes 1 (main report) and 6 (separate synthesis of national reports).

4.4. Judgement on the validity and reliability of the findings

The **external evaluator (ICF)** contracted for this assignment⁵⁹ has carried out since May 2016 all tasks as required **under the scrutiny of an inter-service group (ISG)**⁶⁰ and the daily steer of DG Education, Youth, Sport and Culture (EAC). The only significant change compared to the initial work plan was a two-month delay of the (sub)contractor in launching the beneficiary surveys⁶¹. The ISG was consulted at each stage of the evaluation process and reviewed each deliverable produced by the contractor as well as this Staff Working Document⁶².

The Regulatory Scrutiny Board, responsible for the independent quality control of this evaluation, acknowledged in its **positive opinion** with comments the significant efforts of data and evidence collection and noted the good methodology used⁶³. This document has been improved following its comments.

Based on the above elements of the evaluation method and as further described in Annex 3, **the reliability and validity of the evaluation can be regarded as strong**⁶⁴.

| Elements of the method | Assessment of reliability and validity |
|--|--|
| Validity of overall judgements | Strong |
| Definition of results and impacts | Strong |
| Validity of measurement tools to collect data on results and impacts | Strong |
| Reliability of overall evaluation design | Strong |
| Collection of qualitative data | Strong |
| Interpretation of qualitative data | Strong |
| Generalisation of findings to the whole programme | Medium to strong |
| Counterfactual assessment | Medium |
| Surveys | Medium |
| Programme data | Medium |

Source: ICF, 3.5; see section above for assessment grounds

⁵⁹ ICF Consulting Services Ltd under specific contract – EAC-2016-0219 implementing Framework contract EAC/22/2013

⁶⁰ Commission services (BUDG, DEVCO, EAC, EACEA, EEAS, EMPL, FPI, HOME, JRC, NEAR, SG), and EESC

⁶¹ DG EAC wrote to ICF to mitigate that issue in March 2017. The delay had no consequence on the final report.

⁶² ISG meetings on 9 September 2015 (Kick-off), 18 July 2016 (Inception report); 21 November 2016 (Interim report 1); 24 March 2017 (Interim report 2); 10 July 2017 (Draft final report); 11 September 2017 (Final report). The ISG was thereafter consulted on the drafting of this Staff Working Document (29 September 2017) and informed of the Regulatory Scrutiny Board's positive opinion (27 November 2017).

⁶³ Ares(2017)5629740 - 17/11/2017

⁶⁴ ICF, 3.7

5. FINDINGS

5.1. Effectiveness

The assessment of the effectiveness⁶⁵ of Erasmus+ is **overall very positive**, especially when compared to the situation before the integration of predecessor programmes⁶⁶. It has been informed by 15 evaluation questions that looked into the extent to which:

- outcomes (i.e. outputs, results and impacts) were delivered with particular attention to disadvantaged groups
- spill-over, sustainable or unintended effects took place
- certain fields or actions were more effective than others (including discontinued actions)
- results were disseminated and exploited.

The programme **reaches or exceeds the vast majority of its indicator targets set in the legal basis**⁶⁷, **except in the case of the Student Loan Guarantee Facility (SLGF)** which is missing the target by a high margin, as detailed below⁶⁸. However, some output targets might have been set at a low level initially (sometimes below predecessor programme levels). The quality of the data on participation of disadvantaged groups although on target is unclear due to various definitions and practices (see below). Lastly, for Jean Monnet activities there is no exact data on numbers of students reached and this indicator is likely to be very overestimated. These limitations concern only a few indicators and the vast majority are without doubt on target.

Incoming mobility of students from **higher education international strand** is also below target but the action started in 2015 only and the **overall trend over ten years is positive**. Evaluated programmes have been important for the EU's global outreach, as elaborated hereafter⁶⁹.

The **Open Public Consultation confirms that the programme is achieving its objectives** to a (very) large extent. OPC respondents highlighted two elements as particularly helpful in terms of effectiveness: the new integrated structure of the programme⁷⁰ and the overall increase in funding⁷¹. One sustainable result of the programme and its predecessors is the cultural shift in the perception of mobility and its positive image, at least in the higher education sector and progressively in VET. These long-term changes are yet to fully materialise in the other sectors.

⁶⁵ **Effectiveness** analysis considers to which extent a programme has achieved its objectives, using appropriate points of comparison and elaborating an opinion on the role of this programme in delivering the observed changes.

⁶⁶ ICF, 6; NRS 5; OPC 3.3 and 5.1.2

⁶⁷ Erasmus+ annual reports: http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/about/statistics_en

⁶⁸ ICF, 6.2.1; tab. 6.3 and annex 3 JMO, 1.2.2

⁶⁹ *Evaluation of the EU Development Co-operation Support to Higher Education in Partner Countries (2007-2014)*, (2017), Particip, LeA, ECDPM, Ecorys for the Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development (European Commission)

⁷⁰ One EU level organisation representing over 30 HEIs; one sub-national organisation representing a region; and one national agency for HE cooperation.

⁷¹ One EU-level organisation representing over 30 HEIs.

5.1.1. Outcomes for learners and practitioners

Compared to the last three years of predecessor programmes, Erasmus+ has supported during the first two years⁷² a **much higher volume of mobility** within and outside the EU in higher education (the sector that has most beneficiaries overall), but also a higher number of *practitioners* in VET and schools⁷³. The repeated participation of individuals is kept reasonably low, indicating a continuous impact on renewed cohorts. In contrast, as intended with the design of Erasmus+⁷⁴ there has been a **significant decrease in mobility for pupils** - due to the fact that individual mobility of pupils was not embedded in the programme as such any more - and a **slight decrease for VET learners**⁷⁵.

5.1.1.1. Outcomes for learners

Beyond contrasted evolutions in outputs across sectors, drawing on a variety of sources⁷⁶, the evaluation found **positive and sustainable results for all individual learners** taking part in mobility⁷⁷. Firstly, monitoring surveys outline that most learners themselves are satisfied with their mobility experience⁷⁸. The rate of formal recognition of participation in Erasmus+ is high but, more importantly for those concerned; the rate of recognition of learning outcomes is also rather high⁷⁹. The vast majority agree that the programme helped them improve more than 6 competences out of a list of 9 (see fig.)⁸⁰. To be noted, higher education students are comparatively least positive in their self-assessment⁸¹.

Share of learners who (strongly) agree that they developed transversal competence

⁷² See section 3 for increasing budget profile as of 2017

⁷³ OPC: 84% agree that Erasmus+ provides more opportunities for mobility than predecessor programmes (n = 552).

⁷⁴ Erasmus+ no longer provides for (KA1) individual pupil mobility, which is now only limited to mobility activities embedded in (KA2) cooperation projects.

⁷⁵ However as mobility in VET is more dominated by traineeships in companies, it is likely that the programme now reaches more typical VET learners. The number of adults reached through mobility remained besides stable.

⁷⁶ Sources: monitoring surveys, evaluation surveys including control groups, case studies, literature review. For instance, the Erasmus impact study (2014) outlines how the programme has improved prospects for a successful career by giving HE students skills that are sought after by employers:

http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/repository/education/library/study/2014/erasmus-impact_en.pdf

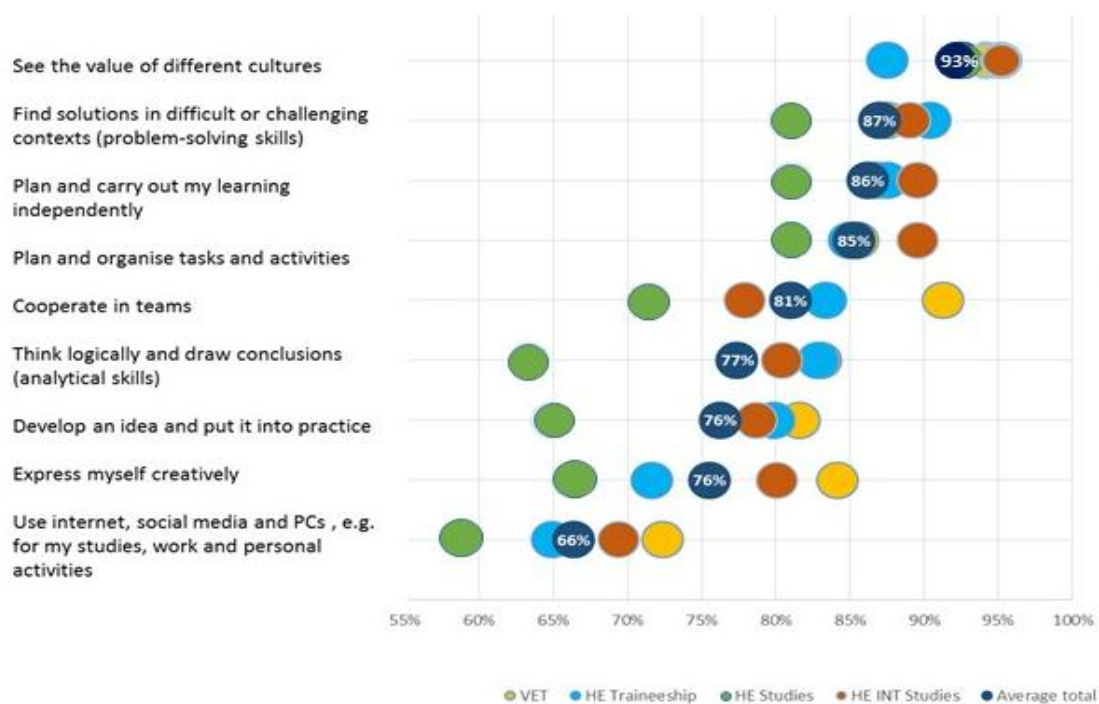
⁷⁷ For mobile learners but also for those taking part in KA2 blended learning mobility and its equivalent in the past

⁷⁸ 93% of learners were very satisfied or rather satisfied with their mobility experience; ICF, 6.4.3 per sector

⁷⁹ ICF, tab. 5.11: Over 2014-2016, formal recognition of participation in Erasmus + ranges from 80% (VET with Europass) to 87% EVS and 88% youth exchanges (Youthpass). Academic recognition is at 83% for HE.

⁸⁰ More than 80% learners declare having improved six or more competences from the proposed set of nine competences, except in HE (71%); ICF, fig. 6.4

⁸¹ This could be explained because their competences are already at higher level when entering the programme, if it was not for the fact that those HE students in traineeships show a different pattern. ICF, fig. 6.3 and 6.4). Moreover, HE learners within Europe are less satisfied than others; e.g. with mentoring (68% (rather) satisfied against 81%). ICF, fig. 6.7 to 6.9



Source: ICF calculations based on Erasmus+ participant monitoring surveys. Multiple answer question. N = 730,254

In line with the **intervention logic**⁸², all programmes under review are expected to contribute to changes in learners' skills and competences as well as attitudes. In the longer term, they are expected to result in better completion rates and more positive employment outcomes. Both have materialised as detailed below. As far as the general indicators of Erasmus+ are concerned, trends are also positive and the *Education and Training Monitor 2017* highlights a further decrease in the rate of early school leavers, and a tertiary attainment target that is within reach⁸³.

Most result indicators set in the legal basis of Erasmus+ are on or above target⁸⁴. The evaluation found, using a variety of sources, clear evidence of results for mobile learners in: foreign language skills development, especially for those with low entry levels; feeling of belonging to the EU; willingness to be mobile and to work abroad; shorter transition from education to work⁸⁵; positive perception of the value of education and positive feeling towards the sending organisation which are key precursors for retention and attainment in education and training. As evidenced for those benefiting from KA1 mobility, the programme is associated with stronger rate of completion of studies⁸⁶.

However the result indicators set in the programme legal basis and related targets set in DG EAC's strategic plan have some limitations in that they are mostly based on the self-perceived contribution of KA1 reported by beneficiaries. Some of the targets were exceeded and others not reached (e.g. participants declaring that they have increased their language skills; young participants declaring being better prepared to participate in social and political life). However, there are concerns about the plausibility of the target values in both cases⁸⁷.

⁸² Section 2.2 above and Annex 4a (intervention logic)

⁸³ http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/strategic-framework/et-monitor_en

⁸⁴ See annex 5e reporting on all output and result indicators from the legal basis.

⁸⁵ For mobile learners in KA1 only; this has not been demonstrated for other types of actions

⁸⁶ Measured as a proxy by the absence of repetition of a class within the typical duration of mobility

⁸⁷ ICF, 6.4.2 and tab. 6.10. As there was no comparable data from the predecessor programmes (no baseline data) for many indicators, "it seems that the targets were defined somewhat arbitrarily".

The evaluation does not permit isolating how many of these results are the direct effect of **the selection of the most motivated** into the programme. For instance, Jean Monnet students do show better results than other higher education students when it comes to knowledge of the EU. This however can be expected given that the programme reaches mainly those who have shown an interest in the EU topics⁸⁸.

The most successful objectives of the Programme, which are also the most relevant, according to OPC respondents, have been a) **developing the skills and competences of learners**; and b) promoting the European dimension of education, training and youth activities⁸⁹. Other studies also confirm this in the relevant sectors⁹⁰. Higher education who have participated in the programme are not only more likely to be employed, but also more likely to secure management positions. On average, 64% of Erasmus students, compared to 55% of their non-mobile peers hold such positions within 5-10 years from graduation. This holds even more true for Erasmus students from Central and Eastern Europe, where around 70% of them end up in managerial jobs⁹¹. The same can be said for the international dimension of higher education, with clear evidence of strengthened capacities and employability of individual students and scholars who have participated in mobility⁹².

Albeit mostly based on the self-reported perceptions of participants, most National Reports refer also to improvement of the level of key competences and skills of learners with a high level of similarity with the ones listed above. On top of technical/professional knowledge and skills⁹³, the impact of Erasmus+ on employability is underlined by several countries mostly in the case of HE and VET⁹⁴, transversal skills⁹⁵ or soft skills are also frequently identified. These include communication skills⁹⁶, social and civic skills⁹⁷, and more widely personal development⁹⁸.

The case studies confirmed the **strongly positive influence** the programme plays on **personal development and maturity** of young people. Both sources frequently outline that learners gain in confidence, independence, ability to cope with new environments and open-mindedness through their mobility. Participation in the programme also leads to development of learners' social capital⁹⁹. In contrast to very positive effects of all forms of mobility, there is less clear evidence of impact of transnational partnerships on learners (excluding their mobility component) except in the school sector¹⁰⁰. For example, a survey conducted as part

⁸⁹ Respectively 86% and 80% of OPC respondents (n > 1400) thought that these two objectives were achieved to a 'very large' or 'large' extent.

⁹⁰ ICF, tab 6.13 and 6.14 for analysis per sector; there is less evidence of positive impact of mobility in the Adult Learning sector, but it could be simply not researched.

⁹¹ Follow-up to the 2014 Erasmus Impact Study focusing on [regional analysis](#) of the benefits of the Erasmus programme, 2016

⁹² Evaluation of the EU Development Co-operation Support to Higher Education in Partner Countries (2007-2014), (2017), Particip, LeA, ECDPM, Ecorys, already mentioned

⁹³ BEde, DK, LU, HU, MT, NL, AT, PT, NO

⁹⁴ BEnl, FR, MT, NL, FI, SE, IS, NO

⁹⁵ CY, HU, NL, NO

⁹⁶ LT, PL, UK, IS

⁹⁷ DE, LT, LU, MT, NL, SK, UK

⁹⁸ BEnl, DK, DE, IE, EL, ES, CY, LT, LU, MT, NL, PL, PT, FI, SE, UK, IS, TR, (e.g. for learners and youth: self-esteem, self-awareness)

⁹⁹ 55.7% of beneficiaries were in frequent contact with persons they met during participation in the programme (at least monthly basis) and another 30.8% were occasionally in contact (at least once a year). VET beneficiaries have more occasional or rare contact with people they met through the programme.

¹⁰⁰ For instance, pupils who benefitted from partnerships have higher degree of independence, motivation and self-confidence, better communication skills, increased enthusiasm for learning European languages.

of the eTwinning¹⁰¹ evaluation, indicated that 55% of teachers believe that the platform is helpful in motivating their pupils¹⁰².

At programme level, the areas where learner surveys have identified **strongest positive difference between the results of participants and non-participants**¹⁰³ include: willingness to move abroad permanently (+31% likeliness compared to non-participants); **stronger feeling of being an EU citizen** (+19%); **shorter transition to employment** (+13%)¹⁰⁴; value attached to education (+8%) and also openness to immigration and minorities (+2.6%). The figure below gives an overview of all areas evaluated according to the degree of difference found¹⁰⁵.

¹⁰¹ **eTwinning** offers to the school practitioner community a platform to develop and share on-line their transnational projects (involving more than 183,000 schools in September 2017): <https://www.etwinning.net/en/pub/index.htm>

¹⁰² Education for Change (2013) *Study of the impact of e-Twinning on participating pupils, teachers and schools* <http://bookshop.europa.eu/en/study-of-the-impact-of-etwinning-on-participating-pupils-teachers-and-schools-pbNC3112371/>

¹⁰³ ICF, tab. 6.12 for estimations of treatment effect and statistical significance

¹⁰⁴ Measured for HE and VET beneficiaries only; not measured for school pupils as not yet relevant

¹⁰⁵ ICF, 6.4.4.4 - 7 and Annex 3 for detailed analysis per sector

Comparison of results for learner beneficiaries and control group

| Large positive difference | Medium positive difference | Statistically significant yet small positive difference | Medium negative difference |
|---|--|--|--|
| Short transition to employment (0-3 months) | Willingness to work abroad | Openness to other cultures and minorities | Active civic engagement in an organisation (in the past) |
| Feeling of belonging to the EU | Positive perception of the value of education | Problem solving behaviours | Civic competence - perceived importance of community engagement activities |
| | Completion of studies (in a typical duration) | Sense of initiative | |
| | Positive feelings towards their school/ education org. | Civic competence - perceived importance of civic behaviours and activities | |
| | Digital competence - use of various online resources | Learning to learn | |
| | Positive feelings towards the EU | | |

Source: ICF Beneficiary surveys: only areas where the difference is statistically significant i.e. unlikely due to a sampling interference

The share of beneficiaries who took **less than three months to find a job** stood at 68.5%, while the percentage of the overall control group was at 59.2%. This trend mirrors the positive expectation of most beneficiaries towards Erasmus+¹⁰⁶. This is particularly strong for the higher education¹⁰⁷ and VET beneficiaries, in contrast with the youth sector¹⁰⁸. Erasmus+ also leaves a positive effect on entrepreneurship¹⁰⁹. Overall, this confirms the findings of several previous studies about the effects of learners' mobility on employability¹¹⁰.

The **pre/post analysis for pupils** confirms the positive contribution of Erasmus+ in five similar result areas, the order of which appears nevertheless specific to the school sector. There are statistically significant differences in results across pre- and post-survey of school pupils in EU citizenship (+7 score points), digital competence (+4), racism and xenophobia (+3), self-confidence in education (+4), civic participation and volunteering (negative difference).

However, there is **likely selection of already more performant pupils into the programme at the level of schools**, since the pre-post survey also shows already a significant difference between participants and the control group at entry into the programme. Pupils participating in short-term mobility speak a foreign language more often than the control group (+13 percentage points or p.p.) and feel more often as EU citizens already before going on mobility (+9 p.p.). Cultural awareness (+7 points in index score or p.i.s.), positive attitudes

¹⁰⁶ They are 92% in general to believe so according to the beneficiary survey.

¹⁰⁷ 70% of Erasmus Mundus alumni found their first job within three months after graduation according to the tracer study in *Evaluation of the EU Development Co-operation Support to Higher Education in Partner Countries (2007-2014)*, (2017), Partecip, LeA, ECDPM, Ecorys, already mentioned

¹⁰⁸ Beneficiaries in the youth sector experience longer transition than the control group, which could be due to the specific profile of this target group.

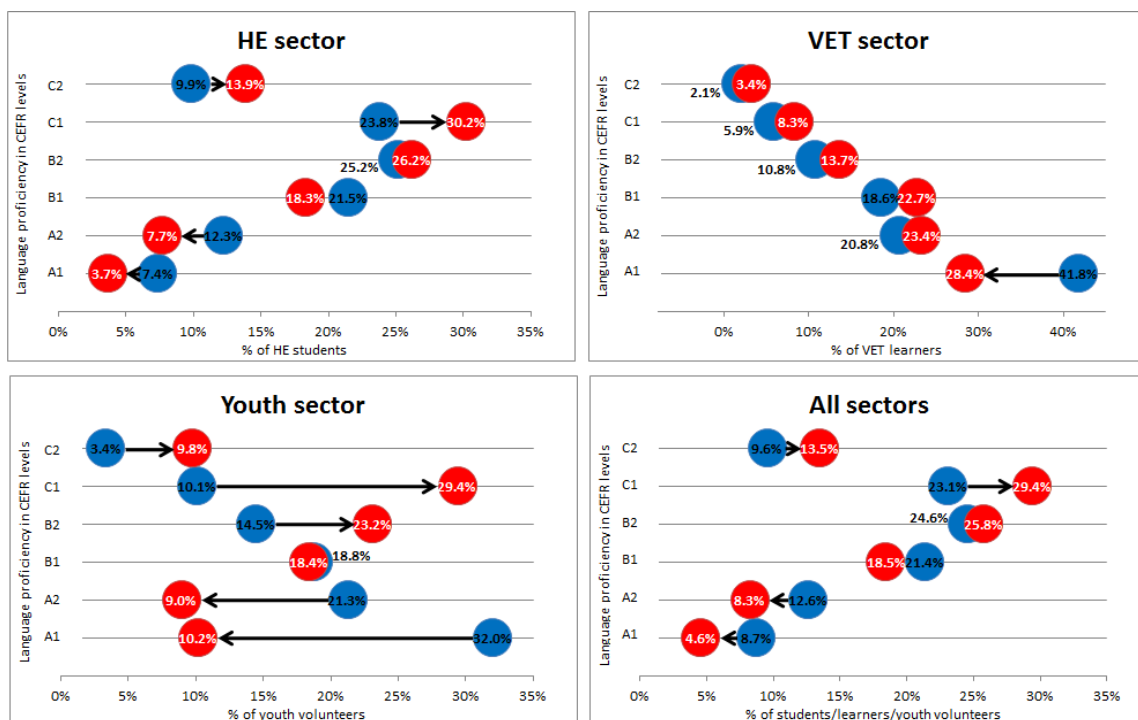
¹⁰⁹ The interim evaluation of the EIT indicates a self-reported rate of adoption of entrepreneurial skills of 69% for Erasmus mobile students compared to 83% for EIT-KICs. The foundation rate for new start-ups is 7% with Erasmus+ (6% with EIT-KICs).

¹¹⁰ ICF, 6.4.5 for findings of the literature review; ICF, annex 11 (literature reviewed)

towards immigration and minorities (+6 p.i.s.), digital competence (+5 p.i.s.) and perceptions of the value of their education (+4 p.i.s.) were also higher. This is confirmed by the case studies where some respondents claim that participation is seen as a certain form of reward.

Foreign language skills development is more important in those sectors where learners tend to have lower entry levels (i.e. in VET and youth more than in higher education). The analysis of OLS foreign language tests (pre/post mobility) proved that **the weaker the proficiency entry level, the stronger the linguistic improvement due to mobility**¹¹¹.

Comparison of levels of proficiency before and after mobility, by sector



Legend: share of learners in each sector at a given level of proficiency; blue: before mobility (first language assessment), red: at the end of the mobility (final language assessment)

Source: ICF calculations based on OLS data as of 31/08/2016. Higher education: n= 500,410; VET: n=19,441; EVS: n=3,387

Beneficiaries were asked in case studies to describe the most important contribution of the programme. The word-cloud below visualises the most cited testimonies.

What do you see as the most important contribution of the programme for yourself?



¹¹¹ ICF, fig. 6.5

When asked about reasons hindering the achievement of programme objectives¹¹², respondents identified the following barriers during the public consultation, in descending order of frequency: **linguistic barriers**; **financial difficulties** and **complex application process**¹¹³. The factors that enable positive results at the level of individual learners are related to their **motivation** to participate as well as the quality of the learning experience including foreign language learning support, the **support** received in the host organisation and their **integration** among other students and local communities¹¹⁴. Lastly, levels of recognition of learning outcomes vary according to types of actions¹¹⁵, but signing a learning agreement remains a strong predictive indicator for later recognition. Only a small share of learners does not sign one¹¹⁶.

Although financial barriers are a major obstacle to mobility¹¹⁷, the **Student Loan Guarantee Facility**, which was an innovation in Erasmus+, **has so far failed to attract** financial intermediaries in sufficient numbers¹¹⁸– especially for the incoming student segment¹¹⁹. First beneficiaries are, however, satisfied. The Student Loan Guarantee Facility already shows signs of social fairness¹²⁰, but its visibility at this early stage is far from being sufficient throughout the supply chain¹²¹.

5.1.1.2. Outcomes for disadvantaged learners

The current programme is rightly perceived as **paying more attention to the participation of disadvantaged people**¹²². To respond to the criticisms regarding the predecessor programmes – notably in the field of higher education – of being elite programmes, Erasmus+ has put in place actions to strengthen the participation of disadvantaged groups compared to predecessor programmes¹²³. In the period under review, 11.5% of participants under KA1 had special needs or came from a disadvantaged background. This share rose to 30% for learners in the Youth field between 2014 and 2016¹²⁴. The number of participants with special needs or fewer

¹¹² This question was only addressed to OPC respondents who indicated that they have detailed or some knowledge of the Erasmus+ objectives and actions’.

¹¹³ Other barriers mentioned in the OPC: lack of cooperation between actors involved at their level; differences in educational systems hindering their cooperation; lack of information about the Programme and poor quality of courses.

¹¹⁴ Monitoring surveys show that the integration of learners in local communities is more difficult than in the host institution. HE mobile learners (within programme countries) feel least well integrated to both; ICF, fig. 6.9

¹¹⁵ Recognition of learning outcomes is not compulsory. Europass is a tool helping to document and to make learning outcomes visible. In VET, where the most common form of documentation is Europass, recognition using ECVET credit remain small by nature (credits points are not commonly used in VET systems) but is progressing (3 percentage points between 2014 and 2015). The degree of recognition is highest in HE thanks to ECTS, particularly within programme countries and among students in traineeships. The degree of recognition within the youth sector is higher for those in youth exchanges, albeit of shorter duration, than for those in EVS.

¹¹⁶ In VET, 12% of learners did not sign a learning agreement prior to departure on mobility.

¹¹⁷ E.g. according to Portugal’s recent estimations the contribution of families to HE mobility can reach 50%; NRS, 3.4

¹¹⁸ After two years, 6 intermediaries in 5 countries and 162 students supported in 2016, well below initial expectations

¹¹⁹ ICF, stand-alone report on the SLGF, 4.4 for reasons and flaws in the design of the loan facility

¹²⁰ 71% of the first loan beneficiaries (n=65) said in 2016 they would not have been able to study abroad without the loan. 43% of SLGF beneficiaries (mostly from Spain) in 2015 or 2016 had parents not holding a university degree; ICF standalone report, 4.4.3 and 4.4.4 respectively

¹²¹ 93% of respondents met at student fairs (80% for the exhibitors) had no prior knowledge of the loan facility.

¹²² Several case study interviewees; NRS, 3.4 for national examples of promoting the participation of vulnerable groups

¹²³ Top up grants and grants to fund accompanying persons are now available for those who may need such assistance. A youth inclusion strategy entails financial incentives and specific project format to foster the participation of young people with fewer opportunities and from disadvantaged backgrounds.

¹²⁴ ICF, annex 2, section 2.2.3. However there are concerns about the reliability of data given the collection method and differences in the breadth of definitions used across sectors. Survey data suggests that the differences between sectors are much smaller. ICF, 6.3

opportunities has more than doubled since the predecessor programmes, i.e. more than proportionally compared to the overall budget increase. The indicator targets have even been exceeded¹²⁵, though data reliability is weak¹²⁶. This is why some countries call for more consistent definitions and rules for disadvantaged participants¹²⁷.

According to case studies, the programme **reaches out to those who are easier to reach among the disadvantaged**, and not to those who are disengaged or at risk of marginalisation. This is not specific to Erasmus+ as other benchmarked programmes struggle with the same challenge. This is partly due to the fact that the participating organisations, even under an action as inclusive as the European Voluntary Service (EVS)¹²⁸, tend to select the most motivated and performing individuals. In spite of the specific measures mentioned above to foster social inclusiveness, the evaluation found that more specific support and adequate funding would be needed¹²⁹. The lack of spending flexibility limits the capacity to face unforeseen situations inherent to vulnerable groups (see Efficiency)¹³⁰ 72% of respondents to the consultation indicated that there has not been sufficient progress in this area under the current Programme and that this aspect **deserves more attention and funding**¹³¹. This was also flagged by the majority of countries in their National Reports¹³².

To mitigate the limitation of the related programme indicator mentioned above, beneficiaries were personally asked about their social background¹³³. Evaluation survey responses indicate that the self-reported participation of people from a minority background or with learning difficulties is rather small. Yet, responses highlight that **disadvantaged learners show more positive results than the others**, in particular in completing formal learning and in boosting their self-confidence in their education capacities. However, no significant difference was noted for them in terms of benefiting from shorter transition periods to employment following their mobility experience.

These survey results are statistically significant¹³⁴, but the pre/post surveys of school pupils and the case studies indicate that they are likely due to selection into the programme, at least

¹²⁵ The numbers of participants with special needs or fewer opportunities supported were for education and training 8,000 in 2013 (LLP) and 15,000 in 2014 (Erasmus+) with a target of 40,000 in 2020 ; for Youth 18,700 in 2013 (YiA) and 43,000 in 2016 (Erasmus+) with a target of 37,000 in 2020 (Annual Activity Report 2016 of DG EAC).

¹²⁶ When compared with other sources of evidence (surveys, participation of disadvantaged schools) it seems that the programme data may have overestimated the participation of disadvantaged. Moreover the data from predecessor programmes is incomplete, hindering comparison over a longer period of time. See ICF, 6.2.2 about data limitations and 6.3 on other measurements ; ICF, annex 2 for details

¹²⁷ FR, IT, NL

¹²⁸ The persons reached through youth exchanges might be more varied but there is less data on their profile. NRS, 3.4

¹²⁹ OPC: According to the position papers issued by two national level organisations and one EU level organisation (representing 50 regional and local stakeholders in the field of education and training), the lack of funding has a particularly negative impact on beneficiaries from disadvantaged backgrounds. Disadvantaged people are less likely to participate on their own initiative in activities on offer without receiving pro-active guidance. Current traveling grants hinder the participation of certain targets groups (e.g. youth coming from rural areas) according to: one national level organisation representing 8 members in the youth and social work sector; one organisation representing 34 NGOs active in the youth and social sector; and one national organisation representing 22 religious organisations. NRS, 3.4

¹³⁰ OPC: positions of a non-EU ministry and 34 NGOs from 18 Member States active in the youth /social sector

¹³¹ OPC, fig 6.2: A few responses suggested to improve the communication towards people from disadvantaged backgrounds, especially in rural areas. However, around one-third of the respondents stated that Erasmus+ already does enough in this area.

¹³² NRS, 3.4: BEde, BEnl, BG, CZ, DE, EE, IE, EL, HR, IT, CY, LV, LT, LU, HU, MT, NL, AT, PT, RO, SI, SK, SE, UK, IS, FY, TR

¹³³ Learners were asked questions about possible disadvantage such as having a disability, the extent to which their parents were unemployed or families received social support or whether they repeated a class in the past.

¹³⁴ ICF, 6.8.2 for detailed survey findings

for a part¹³⁵ and cannot be confirmed with strong evidence from data collected or the literature reviewed¹³⁶.

Most interviewees in case studies believe in the potential of the programme to provide powerful results for disadvantaged groups. Several of them were clear that more than other groups, **disadvantaged learners would not have gone abroad to study had it not been for the programme**. Meanwhile, the participation of organisations with high shares of disadvantaged learners remains low. The case studies suggest that specific top-up points for organisations with high share of disadvantaged people should not have been discontinued in the current programme and that accompanying disadvantaged learners (e.g. in European Voluntary Service) requires a particular care and specific measures.

On the external dimension, the picture is somewhat similar. All the predecessor programmes promoted inclusiveness in higher education from a gender perspective. Some promoted other under-represented, disadvantaged groups. However their specific evaluation noted that the **mobility programmes only partly succeeded in achieving equitable participation**¹³⁷.

Beyond mobility, the other types of action have also **inspired new ways of working with people from a disadvantaged background, especially in sectors other than higher education**¹³⁸. This was reported by 44% of practitioner respondents¹³⁹, although only 19% stated that the activity they took part focused on integration of disadvantaged groups. This implies that there are **significant spill over effects** even where it is not the main purpose to target these groups (i.e. impacts beyond results).

Lastly, **certain actions perform better in terms of social inclusiveness**. Studies in the Youth sector found that international youth projects or mobility¹⁴⁰ have had significantly more impact on young people with fewer opportunities, especially in learning to learn, developing cultural awareness and building self-confidence (+3.6%), likely due to the lower starting points¹⁴¹. The collaborative platform eTwinning seem slightly more able to reach disadvantaged groups than the rest of the programme¹⁴². Some of the adult education actions are succeeding in engaging with hard to reach groups, but given the low budget share the scale of these actions have only been small.

5.1.1.3. Outcomes for practitioners

Within Erasmus+, **practitioner mobility has overall seen a significant increase** compared to the past¹⁴³. It remains **more common in higher education** than in all other education and training sectors put together, although higher education practitioners have comparatively more

¹³⁵ If the grant does not enable the full group of learners to join, it is unlikely that those at the margin would participate.

¹³⁶ Most of evidence from these two sources is about participation rather than results of disadvantaged groups. In the rare cases where their results were compared with other beneficiaries the results were positive. A particularly under-researched area is the multiplier effect from staff to disadvantaged groups.

¹³⁷ Evaluation of the EU Development Co-operation Support to Higher Education in Partner Countries (2007-2014), (2017), Particip, LeA, ECDPM, Ecorys, already mentioned

¹³⁸ Practitioner beneficiaries show greater use of strategies to enhance education attainment of students than their control group. Staff from organisations with high share of learners with disadvantaged background more frequently took part in activities focusing on disadvantaged learners. A majority of sport projects focus on social inclusion and physical enhancement activities.

¹³⁹ Evaluation survey of practitioners: even more true for sport (68%) and youth organisations (71%), but also for schools (57%) and AE (52%); less for HE (32%); ICF, 6.5.2.2 and fig. 6.32 to 6.34 for breakdown by sector

¹⁴⁰ RAY, 2015; Schroer, 2003; Sherraden et al., 2008

¹⁴¹ RAY, 2015a

¹⁴² ICF, 6.4.8.2

¹⁴³ Increase in all sectors where reliable data is available except the sector of adult learning where no additional funding was available in 2014. There is no reliable data on practitioner mobility for predecessor programmes in the sector of youth and higher education.

opportunities abroad through other schemes. It should be noted that an important share of practitioners in the adult education sector teach primarily young people (aged below 24)¹⁴⁴. This could also be related to the limited effectiveness of the programme in reaching out to practitioners who are not employed in large organisations.

In addition, **collaborative platforms expand participation in the programme** (eTwinning, School Education Gateway¹⁴⁵, EPAL¹⁴⁶) and are associated with positive results for beneficiary practitioners¹⁴⁷. In particular eTwinning, the platform for schools, attracts a very large number of teachers and pupils, in the EU and beyond, as mentioned previously. In 11 countries, eTwinning seems to be reaching to more than 10% of all school teachers¹⁴⁸. As a stepping stone into the programme, as noted by some interviewees, it does reach to a broader audience than other types of action¹⁴⁹. After stagnation in 2011-2013, its audience has been sharply increasing under Erasmus+, pointing at a strong potential of this kind of intervention for the future.

Practitioners are even more satisfied with their mobility experience (98% compared with 93% for learners) and very positive about the contribution to their competence development according to the monitoring surveys. For most of the competences the differences across sector are minor¹⁵⁰.

Practitioners who (strongly) agree that they developed a given key competence or skill

¹⁴⁴ ICF, 6.3 for highlights about the profile of practitioners: The teaching staff taking part in VET and HE sectors represents a more balanced sample of subjects than school staff, where nearly half are foreign language teachers.

¹⁴⁵ The **School Education Gateway** offers collaborative space and on-line resources to all professionals in the field of school education: <https://www.schooleducationgateway.eu/en/pub/index.htm>

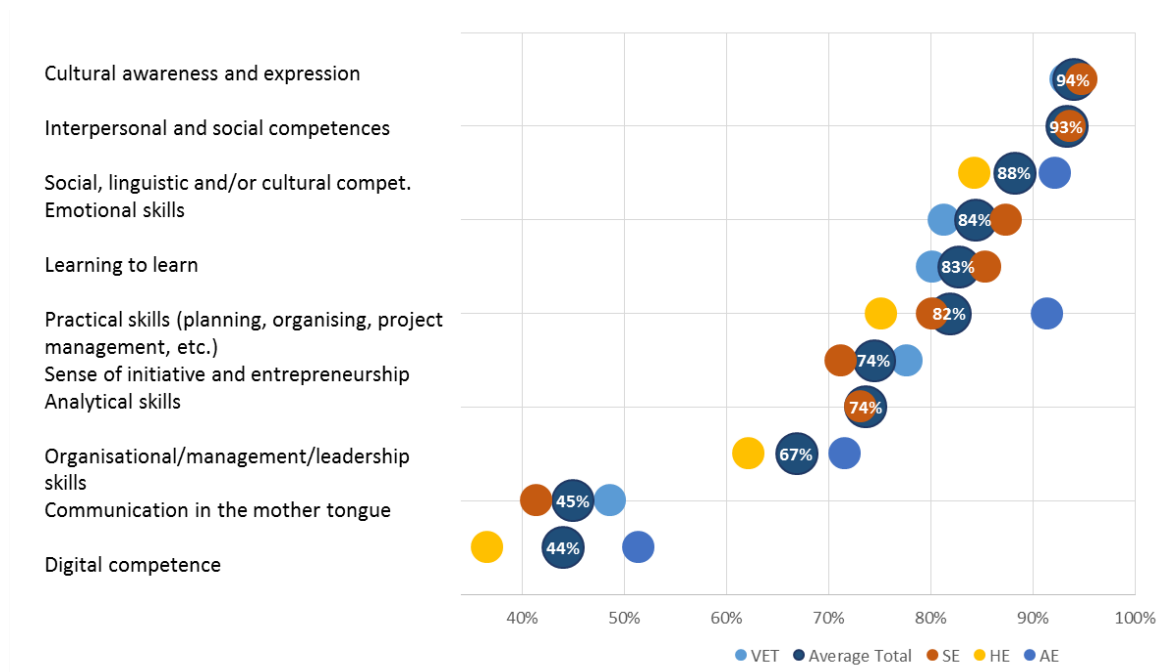
¹⁴⁶ **Electronic Platform for Adult Learning in Europe** launched under the LLP and animated by National Support Services for stakeholders to exchange and develop their professional practice: <https://ec.europa.eu/epale/>

¹⁴⁷ Based on extrapolation from eTwinning findings since primary data was not collected specifically about the School Education Gateway and EPAL platforms for this programme-level evaluation and even though it is difficult to differentiate their contribution from other actions of the programme

¹⁴⁸ BG, EE, EL, HR, CY, LV, LT, MT, RO, SI, SK, by increasing order; from 2,2% in Germany to more than 35% in Malta; ICF, fig. 6.24: CSS data on registered teachers per country and Eurostat data on the overall population

¹⁴⁹ More than 183,000 schools registered by September 2017 based on CSS Monitoring data. It does not mean that the registered users actually take part in a project every year. Only in 2016, 29,752 teachers took part in at least one project. ICF, 6.4.9 for profile of users compared to other participants

¹⁵⁰ ICF, 6.4.7.5 and fig. 6.17 for a breakdown per sector



Source: ICF calculations based on Erasmus+ participant monitoring surveys. This is a multiple answer question therefore the data does not add to 100%. N = 227,319

Most National Reports refer to results for practitioners with a high level of similarity with the benefits listed above, in particular for education and training staff: language skills¹⁵¹, new teaching methods¹⁵² and job satisfaction¹⁵³; as well as for youth organisations' staff: professional development¹⁵⁴ and new professional methods¹⁵⁵.

Evaluation surveys found in addition, when comparing with a control group, that participation in the programme is associated with **wider networking** and cooperation, **stronger attachment to Europe**, and **greater use of digital resources**, as shown below¹⁵⁶:

Main counterfactual results for practitioners

| Large positive difference | Medium positive difference | Statistically significant yet small positive difference | Medium negative difference |
|---|---|---|----------------------------|
| Networking - frequent contact with foreign counterparties | Feeling European | Job satisfaction | |
| Cooperation with international partners - exchange on topics and methods of professional interest | Involvement in volunteering or community activities | Perception of the importance of political and civic participation | |
| | Use of digital resources and media | | |

Source: ICF beneficiary survey for practitioners

¹⁵¹ DE, LV, FI, UK, IS, TR

¹⁵² BEnl, FR, CY, LV, LT, MT, FI, UK

¹⁵³ BEnl, FI, UK, IS

¹⁵⁴ BEnl, EL, CY, LT, PT

¹⁵⁵ BEnl, CY, LT

¹⁵⁶ Involvement in volunteering is also higher but can result from the programme selecting the most engaged staff.

From **virtual collaboration on Erasmus+ funded platforms**, beneficiary practitioners also observe positive results, though admittedly with smaller intensity than in the case of mobility or partnerships. Even though it is difficult to differentiate its contribution from other actions¹⁵⁷, in certain areas practitioners associate eTwinning with more positive results than the control group, such as international networking, but also digital skills (the collaborative platform might attract practitioners that are already digitally skilled, but can also enhance such skills). Findings of other sources support the positive results from ICF's general surveys: another distinct evaluation of eTwinning revealed that a vast majority of teachers find the platform helpful to network across Europe (64%) or to improve relationships between teachers and learners (62%)¹⁵⁸.

More generally, all practitioners interviewed cited **positive results for themselves as well as their learners and organisations**¹⁵⁹. They found their Erasmus+ experience as an opportunity to go 'outside of the ordinary' which can be important for retention in the teaching profession, a crucial issue in many countries¹⁶⁰. As practitioners appear mostly motivated by individual improvement, it is not surprising to find a clearer contribution to development of staff than hard evidence of evolution of pedagogical or institutional practices. Other studies point to positive impact on teaching practices, social competences and motivation for professional cooperation¹⁶¹.

Recognition is meanwhile less formalised for practitioners than for learners by nature. Only around half of the practitioner survey respondents recorded having received some form of recognition¹⁶². While a majority of practitioners noted informal recognition by peers, effective recognition by the hierarchy is less common. At the same time, nearly half of respondents state that participation in the programme helped them **achieve new roles or positions**, which is very positive.

It should also be noted that several of the results discussed in this section also have a spill-over effect from individual level to organisational level, as elaborated below.

5.1.2. Outcomes for organisations and systems

As for mobility (KA1), the evaluated programmes reached or exceeded the vast majority of the targets when it comes to the number of projects funded (KA2 and KA3). Compared to predecessor programmes, this represents a **strong increase in the number of higher education projects**¹⁶³, but also a strong decrease in all other sectors. This is due to the lower budget available at the start of the programme but also to the fact that **Erasmus+ aims to**

¹⁵⁷ ICF's beneficiary survey covered also eTwinning participants. However most of respondents who took part in eTwinning also took part in other activities funded by Erasmus+. It is therefore not possible to judge whether the difference is due specifically to eTwinning. ICF, fig 6.26

¹⁵⁸ Education for Change (2013), mentioned above

¹⁵⁹ Professional development, motivation, open-mindedness were commonly cited in the context of case studies (most significant change approach) next to a range of skills. The surveys also found an association (though a weaker one) with job satisfaction and, in the school sector, wider use of strategies to improve pupil attainment.

¹⁶⁰ This is particularly true in schools and VET; less in the adult education, youth and sport sectors where "out of curriculum" freedom is more easily available by other means.

¹⁶¹ In the literature evidence of impact on adult education is somewhat scarce and absent for sport and Jean Monnet; ICF, 6.4.7.

¹⁶² 85% of practitioners got international experience accepted as training; 58% state it was acknowledge by hierarchy or peers; 45% state that it helped them attain a new function/ level of seniority; 26% received a financial reward.

¹⁶³ Prior to 2014, the higher education sector was rather under-represented in the volume of cooperation projects compared to its share of mobility funding.

focus on funding fewer large-scale projects¹⁶⁴. Erasmus+ is nonetheless perceived as providing more opportunities for cooperation than it was previously possible¹⁶⁵.

However, the fact that Erasmus+ and its predecessor programmes have produced a high volume of intellectual outputs is **not necessarily an indicator of project quality**¹⁶⁶. The panel experts have pointed out several issues with the selection process. They consider that the quality of applications selected is in general quite average. According to monitoring data, applications are frequently scored higher than the final outputs. Many projects (other than KA2 Alliances) lack a continuous quality review, external support, or solid needs analysis. National Reports refer to some enhancing-effectiveness factors (e.g. experienced staff on the applicants' side - a condition more often met by large organisations and therefore in higher education, and good cooperation between partners); they also outline challenges which hinder effectiveness (e.g. high-quality projects rejected due to lack of funding).

On the contrary, the evaluators find that fewer outputs with clearer added value might possibly meet more clearly the innovation objective of the programme. According to the qualitative assessment of outputs carried out by the expert panel, an area for further improvement of Erasmus+ is the quality of KA2 (and to a more limited extent KA3 which cannot be fully evaluated at mid-term) outputs and especially their effective **potential for mainstreaming** beyond participating organisations. Although the programme often produces something new for participating organisations¹⁶⁷, this innovation does not enough follow the state of the art developments in a given sector. While the programme does fund good and innovative activities¹⁶⁸, these are relatively hidden among many standard projects. The vast majority of case studies identified some form of innovation or change in the organisations reviewed (e.g. use of materials or methods shared during the projects)¹⁶⁹. Yet often these innovations remain small scale or light touch and limited to a specific part of the organisation. For many funded projects, it appears that the main benefits arise from the participation process rather than the output itself. However, where there are instances of high quality outputs, these could be better supported upstream and thereafter mainstreamed building upon the appreciated precedent of the 2016 specific call in the area of social inclusion¹⁷⁰.

5.1.2.1. Outcomes for organisations¹⁷¹

Over 2007-2016, **more than 940,000 organisations** were contracted, at an average of approximately 115,000 organisations per year for the predecessor programmes but 80,000 under Erasmus+¹⁷². During the public consultation, 74% of respondents thought that the Programme improves the quality, innovation and internationalisation in education, training and youth organisations¹⁷³. When asked in the monitoring survey about **expected changes to**

¹⁶⁴ See above section 3

¹⁶⁵ OPC: 80% (n = 558) strongly agreed or agreed

¹⁶⁶ Sources to assess project quality: monitoring surveys, case studies, expert panel assessment of KA2/KA3 outputs

¹⁶⁷ European cooperation in education and training: added value and impact, L'Observatoire Erasmus+, Pluricité and Synoptic.Pro, note 6, November 2017

¹⁶⁸ 74% of higher education practitioners in the higher education sector reported the creation of new research projects and 37% the creation of new spin offs.

¹⁶⁹ Case studies were selected at random using a rather broad set of criteria; ICF, 6.5.2.4 and Annex 9

¹⁷⁰ An envelope of EUR 13 million was set aside to support the upscaling of good practices from grass-roots level in the area of social inclusion; Official Journal C 99/05 of 15/03/2016.

¹⁷¹ Results at organisation level were assessed mainly through monitoring survey, practitioner survey (staff were asked not only about their own development but also about changes in their organisation), survey of socio-economic actors and case studies, supplemented with more transversal sources (OPC, NRS, literature, etc)

¹⁷² ICF, Annex 2; multiple participation of organisations remains unclear, as detailed below in section 4.3 and annex 3

¹⁷³ n = 1333. Of significance for the Jean Monnet strand, 70% of respondents thought that promoting excellence in teaching and research in European integration activities had been effective to a (very) large extent (n = 888).

their institutions, more than 55% (up to 85%) of practitioner respondents stated that most such changes (10 out of 11) had indeed taken or were taking place¹⁷⁴. Later, when asked in the evaluation survey about changes that had happened after their participation¹⁷⁵, a vast majority of practitioners once again agreed with a high number of types of changes listed, such as the introduction of new teaching materials¹⁷⁶ or new assessment methods¹⁷⁷. In the youth sector, 75% of practitioners agreed with most statements about organisational results. Lastly, most of other socio-economic actors (companies, public authorities, civil society bodies) stated that their objectives were (fully) met¹⁷⁸. For them, the most commonly cited barriers concern the complexity of the application procedure and the low success rates in applications, which is due to budget availabilities¹⁷⁹.

Furthermore, the **level of cross-sectoral cooperation increased** under the current programme by 23 percentage points¹⁸⁰. Paradoxically, interviewees are often sceptical about the reality of this key evolution. This contrasts with OPC or agency respondents, whom, to a very high extent, recognise the effectiveness of cross-sector cooperation¹⁸¹. In the same vein, the network analysis shows promising results in the form of an increase in the number of sectors participating per project. There are notably many more higher education institutions taking part in other strands of the programme than in the past. Cross-sector participation seems more challenging in other education and training sectors where organisations are smaller in average. Reciprocally, youth organisations strongly contribute to the international dimension of the programme and sport organisations take part in other sectors of the programme even more than in their own strand of Erasmus+. This contrast between perception and observation suggests that there is a **need for better communication** to potential applicants about cross-sectoral opportunities.

In terms of **improved geographical balance**, the centrality of countries in the programme network is changing. Small countries and countries from central and eastern Europe are better integrated¹⁸². The main exception remains the country coverage of Jean Monnet activities, with about 25% of its grants going to two countries only¹⁸³.

The surveys also demonstrate a **clear internationalisation of organisations**, in and outside the EU¹⁸⁴. In the monitoring survey, practitioners in general¹⁸⁵ most strongly believe that their

¹⁷⁴ The indicator of DG EAC's Strategic Plan is “% of organisations that have developed/adopted innovative methods and/or materials, improved capacity; outreach methodologies, etc.” However, all findings are based on surveys of staff, not organisations. Hence there is only a partial match between the official indicator and available data.

¹⁷⁵ In contrast to evaluation surveys, monitoring survey ask shortly after participation about what mobile staff intends to do on return to their organisations. The findings are very positive but they can capture the intention rather than the actual effect.

¹⁷⁶ 81% SE, 72% VET, 72% HE, 77% AE

¹⁷⁷ 68% SE, 63% VET, 59% HE, 68% AE

¹⁷⁸ ICF, 6.5.2.3 and fig. 6.40: survey of participant organisations other than education, training, youth and sport ones

¹⁷⁹ Response patterns differ according to the profile of respondent. Companies cite as most important barrier the lack of knowledge about the programme. Public authorities first cite lack of staff available to take part in the programme.

¹⁸⁰ ICF, 6.10: with 47% of projects in the predecessor period involving multiple sectors/fields, compared to 70% of projects so far under Erasmus+. A similar finding holds for pairs of organisation linked in a same partnership, with one third of pairs under the predecessor programme being cross-sectoral partnerships, whereas half of pairs under Erasmus+ are cross-sectoral.

¹⁸¹ 80% (n = 471) of OPC respondents (strongly) agreed that the integrated nature of Erasmus+ has strengthened cooperation across sectors. 90% of agency respondents strongly or rather agree with this opinion.

¹⁸² ICF, 6.3 for participation patterns and fig. 6.3 as for the evolution of the centrality of the top 20 countries

¹⁸³ ICF/JMO, 1.2.3 and fig. 1.5: Italy (16% of grants, considering funding from Heading 1 only) and Spain (9%). Countries in Northern and South-Eastern Europe are not very often among the JM beneficiaries when compared to Western or Southern Europe. Meanwhile Jean Monnet covered 82 different countries since 2007 (with Heading 4).

¹⁸⁴ **Internationalisation** is a broad concept that has a variety of layers. It can mean simply the fact of having contacts with an organisation from another country but also integration of an international dimension into regular activities (for example through eTwinning), teaching in a foreign language, hosting staff/ learners from other countries, etc

mobility will lead (85%) or has already led (74%) to internationalisation of their sending institution, as shown in the figures below. For instance, 59% of concerned respondents believe that the Jean Monnet grant helped them to allocate additional funding for teaching or research about the EU. The fact that practitioners have developed strong networks, as demonstrated above, corroborates other findings on the internationalisation of their organisations. Participant organisations are significantly more likely than non-participants to be engaged in transnational cooperation, except in the sport sector¹⁸⁶. This holds true to the largest extent for higher education institutions¹⁸⁷ and to the least for schools¹⁸⁸, as confirmed in case studies. Specific findings for the international dimension of the programme underline the strong contribution of the predecessor programmes to the internationalisation of higher education institutions in partner countries through curriculum development and the improvement of management practices of universities¹⁸⁹. But even in the case of school education, a vast majority of respondents believe, for example, that Comenius transnational partnerships strengthened the European dimension of schools¹⁹⁰ and the survey conducted as part of the eTwinning platform evaluation has observed, as a result, a certain internationalisation of schools. It is particularly important for organisations in the youth and sport sectors which work on specific issues for which they have few counterparts in their countries¹⁹¹. Given their scale and the number of organisations reached, it can be concluded that the programmes strongly contribute to strengthening the internationalisation of education, training, and youth sectors.

Whether mobility has led or will lead to changes in the sending institution

¹⁸⁵ Higher education staff is more optimistic about the internationalisation of their institution, higher education international staff about spin-off effects, while school education staff believes more strongly in the use of new teaching methods and 76% of youth staff believe in the effect on the quality of the project they develop in their organisations. ICF, fig. 6.18 and 6.20

¹⁸⁶ In contrast to other sectors, there was no significant difference in the likelihood of engaging in transnational partnerships between Erasmus+ sport participants and non-participants but this needs to be taken cautiously as the control group for sport was reconstructed in combining the control group for VET and the too few non-participants who responded for sport. See Annex 3.

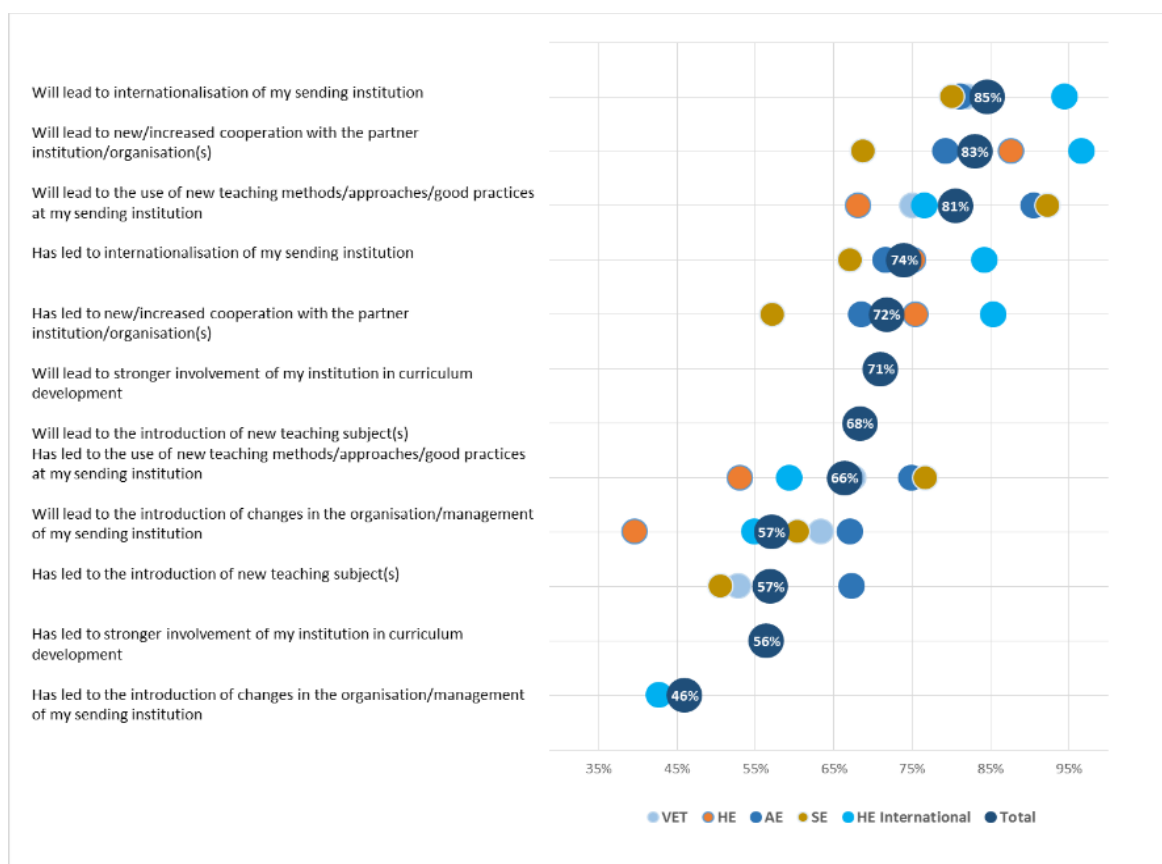
¹⁸⁷ In the HE sector, internationalisation is more advanced than in other sectors (ICF, Annex 11 on literature).

¹⁸⁸ ICF, tab.6.33 for share of organisation with an international strategy (79% v. 68% in control group)

¹⁸⁹ *Evaluation of the EU Development Co-operation Support to Higher Education in Partner Countries (2007-2014)*, (2017), Particip, LeA, ECDPM, Ecorys, already mentioned

¹⁹⁰ ICF, Annex 11 (GES and ZSB, 2010)

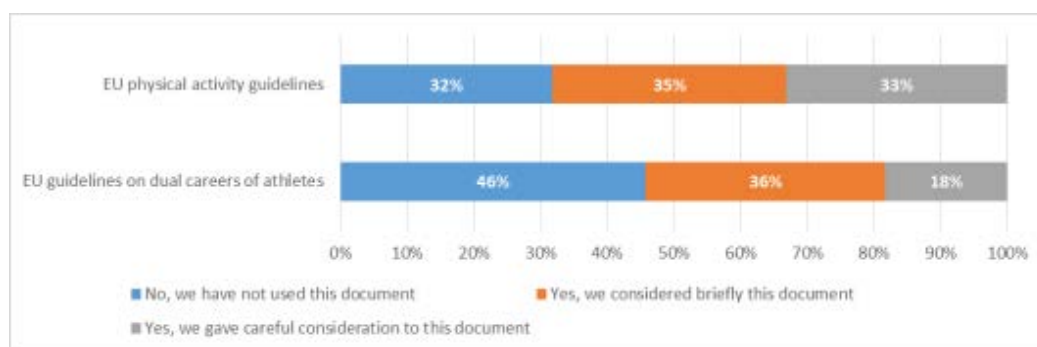
¹⁹¹ ICF, 6.5.2.4 and Annex 9 (case studies)



Source: ICF calculations based on Erasmus+ participant monitoring surveys.

In contrast, the internationalisation effect is less clear-cut on sport organisations. Competitive sport is already much internationalised independently from any EU intervention, whereas grassroots sport organisations have fewer international opportunities. In the latter case Erasmus+ has not reached the required critical mass. Yet, sport organisations' knowledge and usage of the sport guidelines promoted by the EU (on dual careers¹⁹² or health enhancing physical activity¹⁹³) suggest some **alignment of sport actions with EU policies** (see fig. below)¹⁹⁴. A total of 45% of organisations strongly comply¹⁹⁵ with the good governance in sport principles¹⁹⁶.

Usage of the EU guidelines in the field of sport



Source: ICF beneficiary surveys (among practitioner respondents aware of these guidelines))

¹⁹² http://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/sport/library/documents/dual-career-guidelines-final_en.pdf

¹⁹³ http://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/sport/library/policy_documents/eu-physical-activity-guidelines-2008_en.pdf

¹⁹⁴ ICF, fig 6.38 and 6.39

¹⁹⁵ ICF, tab. 6.23 and 6.24; organisations are the least compliant with the requirement of an appeal procedure

¹⁹⁶ http://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/sport/library/policy_documents/xg-gg-201307-dlvrl2-sept2013.pdf

Only 4 out of 10 participant organisations have strong measures in place to combat doping and violence, while almost half have measures to combat discrimination¹⁹⁷.

Share of respondents who comply with the anti-doping, violence and discrimination in sport principles (% of organisations)

| Principle | Strong measures | Medium measures | Low measures |
|----------------|-----------------|-----------------|--------------|
| Anti-doping | 40% | 27% | 33% |
| Violence | 41% | 38% | 21% |
| Discrimination | 48% | 33% | 19% |

Note: Index (1 (strongly agree)-4 (strongly disagree), 1-1.5=strong measures, 1.51-2=medium measures, less is low measures)

More generally, another very positive monitoring finding is that overall 91% of practitioners state that they have shared their own knowledge with students and/or other persons after their participation in Erasmus+¹⁹⁸. The programme is particularly seen as **transformational for youth organisations**, where members of staff are significantly more optimistic about the contribution of the programme to their organisations than in other sectors¹⁹⁹. Interestingly, 71% of practitioners in the sport sector state that the programme contributed to new cooperation with civil society²⁰⁰. The literature review points as well to strong positive impact, particularly on: internationalisation (all sectors), teaching capacity (school education, VET), and staff development (VET, youth)²⁰¹, although evidence of benefits for organisations on sport, adult education and Jean Monnet activities is somewhat scarce.

Other results are softer and there is **less evidence of deep changes of institutional or pedagogical practices**²⁰². The qualitative findings, however, suggest that a key contribution that was not measured quantitatively is the self-reflection and **soft-benchmarking** that happens through the opportunities for practitioners to see how other organisations tackle a given issue. In all case studies, concrete changes at organisational level were indeed cited²⁰³. In many cases these are light adjustments rather than major structural evolutions; however an accumulation of **light changes over time can result in a step change**. Frequently noted mentions include not only internationalisation (most commonly cited)²⁰⁴, but also soft benchmarking, implementation of new tools, materials, increased positive image and with that associated empowerment of practitioners and learners. Other effects for organisations include the development of national partnerships, cooperation with companies²⁰⁵ or quality frameworks specifically for youth work. On average, 58% of practitioners reported as an outcome the creation of quality assurance approaches²⁰⁶.

The National Reports confirm that Erasmus+ has three main impacts on participating organisations, namely their internationalisation²⁰⁷, the **quality of education and training** they provide²⁰⁸ and the **professionalisation of youth work**²⁰⁹. Both mobility actions and Strategic

¹⁹⁷ ICF, tab. 6.25 to 6.28

¹⁹⁸ ICF, Fig. 6.29; from 97% of HE International staff to 86% of practitioners of Adult Education.

¹⁹⁹ ICF, fig. 6.36

²⁰⁰ ICF, fig. 6.37

²⁰¹ ICF, tab. 6.30 and 6.31 and Annex 11

²⁰² Findings are less robust, in the absence of indicators of concrete change, such as improvement in student outcomes.

²⁰³ ICF, 6.5.2.4 and Annex 9 for a summary of case studies and effects identified at organisation level

²⁰⁴ ICF, tab. 6.29

²⁰⁵ 62% of VET staff report influence on cooperation with companies

²⁰⁶ Truer for sport (67%) and above all youth organisations (76%) than for education and training ones; ICF, 6.5.2.2 and fig. 6.35 to 6.37 for breakdown by sector

²⁰⁷ BEde, BEnl, CZ, DK, EE, IE, EL, ES, FR, HR, CY, LT, HU, MT, NL, PL, RO, SI, FI, UK, IS, FY, LI, NO, TR

²⁰⁸ BEnl, DE, EE, IE, EL, ES, FR, HR, LT, HU, MT, PL, RO, SK, FI, SE, UK, FY, NO, TR;

Partnerships allow for the development of new methods, often innovative at least for participating organisations, which can have a positive impact on quality. However, the evidence gathered at EU level in that respect is not sufficiently strong to assess whether the programme is transforming the practices of practitioners and organisations. Though practitioners are positive about the fact that they implement the lessons learnt and results from cooperation projects and mobility exchanges, there is only anecdotal evidence that the programme is changing institutions' approaches to pedagogy and their target groups. Deeper qualitative work of a larger scale would be needed to see these types of results at final evaluation stage.

5.1.2.2. Outcomes for systems and policies²¹⁰

The general literature shows **little evidence of system level impacts** of preceding interventions, in contrast to the abundant findings about individual impacts. Where such evidence exists, it is positive. But it is very fragmented in all sectors, although stronger in higher education, VET and youth.

This is why, since 2014, Erasmus+ focuses through KA3 on funding **actions that are specifically designed to have system level effects**²¹¹. Comparable actions existed under LLP and Youth in Action, but some new features were introduced under the current programme²¹², enabling the Commission to address more rapidly emerging needs (e.g. the Paris Declaration, the New Skills Agenda for Europe). The systemic impact of Erasmus+ is only expected "by the end of the Programme"²¹³ and therefore can only be evaluated at final stage²¹⁴. In particular, most KA3 projects were not finalised at mid-term. Nonetheless some National Reports outline KA3's policy effects although limited by the relatively small funding allocated to KA3²¹⁵. **Not all KA3 case studies could identify system level effects.** Although KA3 has the highest potential to produce systemic impact²¹⁶, further involvement of decision-makers is required. It seems therefore **too early to conclude on the additional systemic impact** brought specifically by Erasmus+.

However, even if effectiveness varies across instruments and countries (some use them much more strategically than others²¹⁷), **some policy networks financed through Erasmus+ have proven influential since 2007**: the national contact points for EQF²¹⁸ or EQAVET²¹⁹, the

²⁰⁹ BEnl, IE, EL, ES, IT, LT, NL, PL, SI, SK, FI, SE, UK, NO

²¹⁰ Results at organisation level were assessed mainly through monitoring survey, practitioner survey (staff were asked not only about their own development but also about changes in their organisation), survey of socio-economic actors and case studies, supplemented with more transversal sources (OPC, NRS, literature, etc)

²¹¹ Including support to European networks and tools fostering transparency and recognition of skills and qualifications

²¹² Under **Key Action 3 (KA3)** the programme funds Structured dialogue between young people and policy makers; national contact points in relation to EU tools (EQF, EQAVET, ECVET, adult learning, etc.) and policies (Eurodesk, ENIC); support to EU level civil society bodies; actions aimed to strengthen evidence-based policy making (studies, cooperation with the OECD); activities related to EU-level OMCs; forward looking projects and projects on specific EU-level priorities (apprenticeships, social inclusion, etc.).

²¹³ Article 21 (1) (b) of Regulation 1288/2013

²¹⁴ The vast majority of interviewees, who were provided with a list of KA3 projects, were not aware of them and many were unclear about the difference between KA2 and KA3.

²¹⁵ e.g. in the youth field: BEnl, IE, FR, LV, NL, PL, PT, NO, TR. However, a too low number of KA3 projects result in limited policy-effects (e.g. HR, HU, PT); NRS 5.1.6, 5.2 and 5.5

²¹⁶ e.g. LT, NO, TR

²¹⁷ The system level impact of policy instruments, such as the EQF or ECVET, is to a large extent determined by national policy factors and priorities. The fact that Erasmus+ finances the related networks makes for an indirect causality link.

²¹⁸ ICF (2012) *Evaluation of the Implementation of the European Qualifications Framework Recommendation*

²¹⁹ ICF (2013) *Evaluation of implementation of the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for Vocational Education and Training (EQAVET)*; EQAVET national points are only funded through the programme since 2016.

Bologna experts²²⁰ or the partnership between the Commission and the European Youth Forum²²¹. Studies and cooperation with OECD²²² funded by Erasmus+ and LLP have provided Member States with stronger evidence, according to the evaluation of ET2020²²³.

On the international dimension, the general finding is that the projects funded by previous programmes have **contributed to policy and institutional reforms in partner countries**, through improved quality assurance, standardisation of higher education and a rapid extension of EU-supported Bologna principles. This has had an evidenced impact on the harmonisation of programmes and curricula in partner countries as well as on mobility and the recognition of studies and qualifications within and between non-European regions and Europe²²⁴.

Furthermore, the effectiveness of the programmes evaluated should also be assessed through their **contribution to policies via the Open Method of Cooperation (OMC)**, which they have substantially supported over the period 2007-2016²²⁵. The evaluation of the OMC in education and training (ET2020) noted that according to national stakeholders the outputs of OMC activities have been used to influence national policies and practices. Therefore the programme plays a major role in supporting financially the OMC process, which in turn **influences national education and training policies**, including those priorities of ET2020 which are not easy to tackle through mobility and cooperation actions (e.g. policies on qualifications design or early school leaving policies). The programmes had also a certain systemic effect **in the field of youth**. The most recent evaluation of the European Youth Strategy²²⁶ concluded that the OMC was rather positive about the influence on national policies and structures in the youth field, while the results in the youth field might not always be measurable in a way that is easily comparable with the area of education and training. At the same time, the activities funded by Youth in Action and Erasmus+ were identified as strong pillars of the OMC, regarding the structural dialogue with young people and the increasing use of the *Youthpass* to promote learning outcomes of volunteers. Sport is too recent a programme sector to be evaluated at interim stage in relation to systemic impact²²⁷.

Overall, **88% of respondents to the consultation agreed that Erasmus+ has increased systemic impact compared to the predecessor programmes**²²⁸, whilst 46% estimated that the programmes had been effective in modernising education, training and youth systems²²⁹. As shown in the figure below, around **80% of the key informant interviewees saw some positive influence of the programme on policy**, of which half were able to cite concrete examples. This can be regarded as a good performance²³⁰. Interviewees tend to be more positive about the systemic influence of the programme **in smaller and less wealthy countries**. Generally, most frequent examples cited dealt with EU tools related to

²²⁰ ICF (2013) *Study to examine the impact of the national teams of Bologna experts on the implementation of the Bologna process*; National Reports mention also the support to the Bologna and Copenhagen processes (BEnl, IT, RO, FI, NO, TR)

²²¹ Ecorys (2013) *Evaluation of the European Commission-European Youth Forum Operating Grant Agreements*

²²² E.g. PISA and PIAAC surveys and their subsequent analysis, both highly influential sources of evidence

²²³ Ecorys (2014) *Interim Evaluation of the strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training*

²²⁴ *Evaluation of the EU Development Co-operation Support to Higher Education in Partner Countries (2007-2014)*, (2017), Particip, LeA, ECDPM, Ecorys, already mentioned

²²⁵ The programmes fund at EU level working groups and research and co-fund at national level the implementation of EU tools (e.g. National Contact Points for the European Qualifications Framework); ICF, 6.5.3

²²⁶ ICF (2016) *Evaluation of the EU Youth Strategy and the Council Recommendation on the mobility of young volunteers*

²²⁷ There is no formal OMC in the field of sport but similar activities take place under the EU Work Plan for sport. The Commission adopted [a report on its implementation](#) in January 2017. The responses of 105 policymakers and stakeholders suggest that the Work Plan is perceived as influential by the respondents, although no concrete examples of effects on sport organisations or sport policies were given.

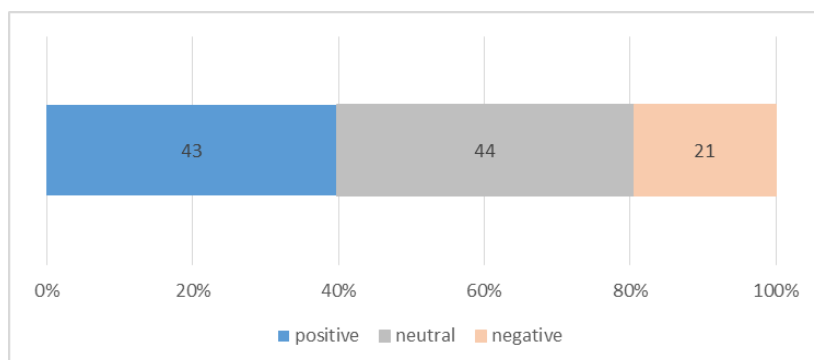
²²⁸ OPC: n = 424

²²⁹ OPC: n = 1,206; it must be noted nevertheless that 262 respondents rather selected “no opinion” and that, as seen under 5.1, no more than 44% regarded this objective as extremely relevant.

²³⁰ The interviews were carried out mainly with key policy-makers who generally were not directly involved in projects.

qualifications. It seems that interviewees no longer think of systemic changes as resulting from the scale of funded mobility. Lastly, the examples remained particularly rare in the sport sector²³¹.

Share of key informants interviewed who were able to cite concrete policy/ system changes linked to Erasmus+ or its predecessor programmes



Legend: As positive were coded responses which named a concrete and influential project or a clear area of influence supported via one of the programmes. As neutral were coded interviews that thought there was some influence but did not give a concrete example. As negative were coded interviews which said they are not aware of any such influence.

The interviewees mainly cited **four types of changes at system level**²³². Occasionally, even a single funded project can be used as a **strategic input** at national policy level (e.g. no alternative resource to design work-based learning legislation would have been available in Latvia). More frequently, examples were found where an effort has been made to pool together the findings of several projects to accompany a **systemic development** inspired by European priorities (e.g. the Polish reform based on ECVET). Thirdly, the **scale of mobility** actions can trigger a change in national policy to remove barriers (e.g. Erasmus+ beneficiaries are no longer charged a visa fee when going to Turkey). Lastly, programme funded activities can **raise awareness** of an issue at policy level (e.g. early development of Lifelong Learning Platforms at regional level in Spain).

System level influence via individual cooperation projects remains an exception. This does not so much depend on the type of action but rather on the own merits of a given project. Effects at system level are more likely to happen if the project is aligned with country priorities²³³. Even when small scale projects prove to be innovative, unless they had a high level influential stakeholder involved from the beginning²³⁴ they typically would not have had the capacity to reach out effectively to decision makers. It should nonetheless be noted that *Knowledge Alliances* and *Sector Skills Alliances*, two actions of a new kind and more ambitious within KA2, could not be evaluated at mid-term but might have a certain impact on systems at the time of the final evaluation of Erasmus+.

The evaluation shows that a better way for the programmes to achieve system level impact is by **reaching out to a critical mass of practitioners and organisations**. This has been the case in higher education where mobility actions, by their volume, led to system level changes e.g. implementation at national level of European credit systems (ECTS) and joint degrees (Erasmus Mundus). Erasmus increased the employability advantage for Erasmus alumni over their non-mobile peers by 45% and half of all European graduates who studied or trained abroad benefited from it according to ex-post impact research²³⁵. In several of the other

²³¹ Relatively few projects focus on systemic issues stated in the programme objectives (combating threats to sport, governance; dual careers of athletes). An high share of sport organisations taking part are besides small local bodies.

²³² ICF, 6.5.3.1 for more examples; ICF, 6.6 for effectiveness per sector and type of action

²³³ National Reports of FI, NO

²³⁴ Outlined in several National Reports, be it at local (LT, NL, NO, TR) or national (CY, IS) level

²³⁵ DG EAC's Annual Activity Report 2016; ex post Erasmus Impact Study (2014)

sectors, the programme is also close to reaching a critical mass. KA1 alone supported in 2014 1.6% of higher education students, close to 1% of VET students and 0.36% of school staff²³⁶. However the impact on VET and adult education systems is more difficult to detect because of the scale and the heterogeneous nature of these sectors, which would require more targeted actions considering available funding. In KA2, eTwinning is also instrumental in reaching out to a critical mass of teachers, as described above. Other types of activity do not reach the same volume, but can be influential in areas where system level changes are expected²³⁷. For the youth sector, although an impact on systems is observed through other channels, it is difficult to evaluate to what extent the programme succeeds in reaching a critical mass²³⁸. Other sectors such as adult education or sport remain too small to see system level results through this channel.

Last but not least, Erasmus+ is expected, in line with its legal basis, to contribute to the **Europe 2020 headline target in education**²³⁹, namely (a) higher education attainment and (b) tackling early school leaving. Though the EU countries seem well on target to deliver on these two dimensions, the contribution of the programme and its predecessor to their evolution is **mostly indirect**. The choice of these overarching indicators for the programme can indeed be questioned in terms of testability and plausibility. Though the programme recitals cover both targets, this is done together with many other priorities. It is true that, as seen above, some countries did make policy changes linked to these two benchmarks. The programme also reaches a high number of learners via KA1 and KA2, whose **attitude towards education/training is more positive** when compared to control groups. Such a positive attitude can be analysed as a precursor of education retention and as reducing the risk of drop-outs. However early school leavers or people not attracted by higher education are more likely to be found among disadvantaged people. As seen above, both the share of organisations targeting hard-to-reach groups and the share of individuals particularly at risk of exclusion are low within the programme. The programme does improve attractiveness of participating higher education institutions but it cannot be deduced that it attracts people who would not have otherwise studied at higher education level. Lastly, the review of selected projects reveals a weak alignment between the transnational partnerships funded and these two key priorities. Though some potential does exist, the causality link is only indirect.

As regards **other ET2020 European benchmarks** mentioned in the general objectives of the programme, employability of young people has also improved in recent past (77% are employed i.e. +1 percentage point from 2014 to 2015). In contrast, other impact indicators more related to social inclusiveness have registered deterioration over the last years, with worse levels of basic skills and with lower rates of participation in youth out-of-school or physical activities²⁴⁰, which could justify a strengthened focus on social inclusion.

5.1.3. Transversal questions about effectiveness

When considering all objectives together, **71% of respondents to the consultation thought that the programme is achieving its objectives** to a (very) large extent. Education and training providers who responded to the consultation claimed that lack of funding and

²³⁶ ICF, tab. 6.33

²³⁷ In the school practitioner survey, 61% stated that they improved governance and quality assurance approaches. In the evaluation sample, 7% of HE staff who is in departments that teach about the EU has applied for Jean Monnet grant.

²³⁸ The overall population of youth staff/organisations concerned is not determined (no comparator).

²³⁹ The Europe 2020 strategy aims to reduce early school-leaving rates to a level below 10% (10.7% in 2016) and to enable at least 40% of 30-34 year-olds to have completed tertiary or equivalent education (39.1% in 2016).

²⁴⁰ See DG EAC's Annual Activity reports: https://ec.europa.eu/info/publications/annual-activity-reports-2015_en

insufficient language skills are among the barriers hindering the achievement of Erasmus+ objectives.

5.1.3.1. Most effective actions and fields

The majority of respondents and countries²⁴¹ believe that mobility is essential **in ensuring the effectiveness of Erasmus+**²⁴². Actions cited as most effective by agency respondents are mobility ones²⁴³ and strategic partnerships, with the latter mentioned with more mixed views²⁴⁴. Moreover, longer term mobility actions are associated with stronger results for learners in beneficiary surveys and by a few countries²⁴⁵. For practitioners, what matters most seems to be participation itself, irrespective of the type of action²⁴⁶. Lastly, KA2 Alliances are perceived by agencies as being less effective for organisations²⁴⁷. It can meanwhile be noted that respondents tend to consider the actions closest to their interest as more effective.

Comparing the relative effectiveness of Erasmus+ fields cannot be done without keeping in mind the diversity of needs they address and funding available at EU level. Nevertheless, 30 years of Erasmus with a larger and targeted budget allocation makes of **higher education**²⁴⁸ the strongest field in effectiveness. In contrast, less funded or more recent fields, such as adult education or sport, not only miss the critical mass but also a similar strong focus to guarantee an equivalent level of effectiveness. **School education and VET** fields appear in an intermediary position, indicating at this stage the **highest potential for improving the overall effectiveness of an EU programme in the future**²⁴⁹.

More generally, the respondents to the consultation have considered **factors which could maximize the effectiveness** of the programme, as follows:

²⁴¹ NRS, 5.2 and OPC, 3.3 for nuances per objective: from developing skills (86%) or promoting the European dimension (80%) to modernising systems (46%). ‘No opinion’ responses were excluded. Slightly more respondents who had ‘detailed knowledge’ of the programme thought that objectives were being achieved than those who had ‘some knowledge’.

²⁴² BEnl, IT, CY, HU, MT, SI, FI, UK, TR whereas a few see KA2 as more effective due to long-lasting effects (RO, FI). Lastly, DK, EE and NO do not found KA1 and KA2 different in effectiveness.

²⁴³ Covering KA1 and KA2 mobility activities with the exception of the Student Loan Guarantee Facility

²⁴⁴ ICF, tab. 6.41 to 6.44 for details and breakdown per sector; the key reason why KA2 strategic partnerships are appreciated in the school and adult learning sector is that they offer mobility options. When asked about system level effects, only ¼ of respondents cited actions under KA3. The majority cited KA2 types of actions.

²⁴⁵ ICF, tab. 6.40; National reports of CY, NL, FI

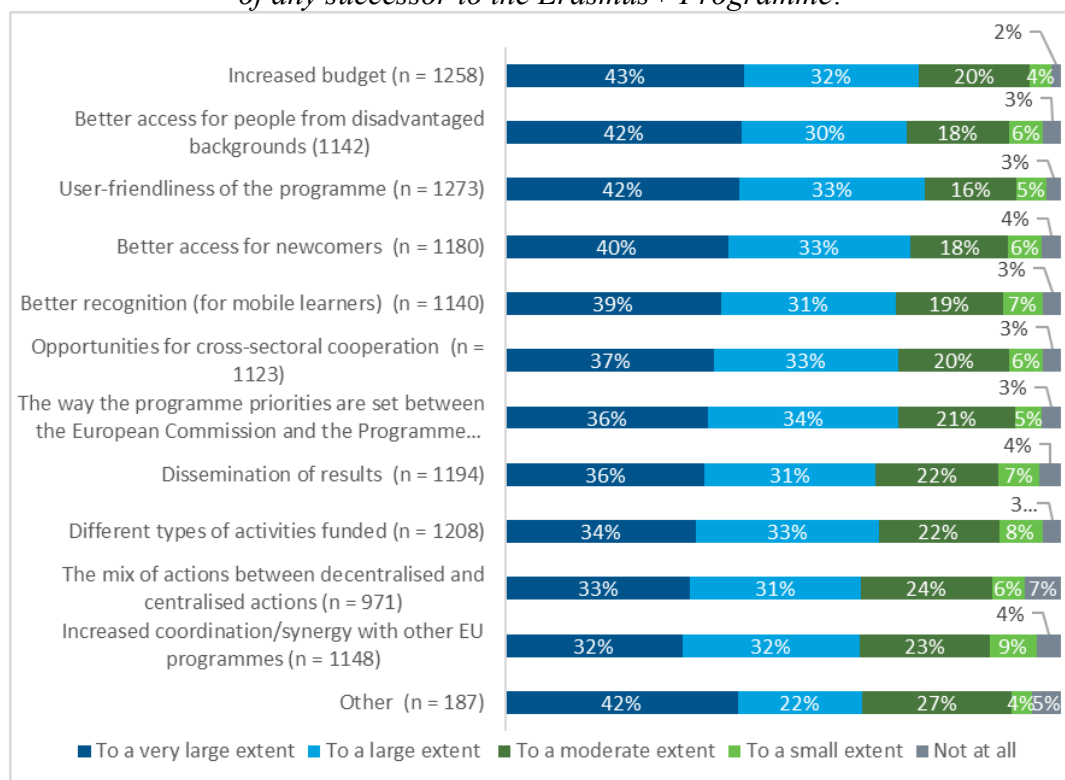
²⁴⁶ However two issues of method affect the breakdowns of preference per type of action for practitioners. Staff frequently participates in multiple types of actions and the sample sizes are rather small for some types of actions.

²⁴⁷ Less clear when it comes to reporting about least effective actions, as few respondents opted to name some.

²⁴⁸ Without including Jean Monnet activities and the Student Loan Guarantee Facility in this judgement

²⁴⁹ Confirmed by several National Reports (BE, CZ, LT, PL, RO, FI, NO, CH)

To what extent do you think the following topics need to be addressed to maximize the impact of any successor to the Erasmus+ Programme?



Source: Erasmus+ OPC survey, 28 February – 31 May 2017, ICF analysis. Base indicated next to each topic

According to the public consulted, **the programme should be better funded, more inclusive and user-friendly** while its opportunities should be better known and its outcomes **more widely exploited** and publicised.

5.1.3.2. Visibility and dissemination of results

Erasmus+ is **very well-known across Europe** and visible beyond. A majority of citizens have heard about Erasmus+ and student exchange programmes come third in the list of the EU's positive results²⁵⁰.

The dissemination and exploitation of project results are **much more effective and systematic with Erasmus+ compared to the predecessor programmes**, albeit with nuances according to the geographical level considered²⁵¹. The monitoring was much less performant in 2007-2013, when it was scattered over different tools covering only parts of previous programmes. Good practice examples are used to raise awareness of the general public; to guide potential applicants; to inform the work of practitioners, researchers, social partners, organisations and policy makers. This new approach has been recognised in the public consultation²⁵² and by the experts²⁵³. It addresses the objectives of transparency,

²⁵⁰ Respectively 53% and 25% of respondents to the standard Eurobarometer. Visibility is evidenced on social media.

²⁵¹ Sources: Desk research, KI interviews, case studies, expert panel assessment and agency survey; ICF, 6.9

²⁵² Number of OPC respondents mentioning the empowerment of policy-makers through dissemination when asked to indicate what changes happened for systems in each sector: SE (31); VET(41); AE (34); ICF, Tab. 5.1

²⁵³ A conclusion from the expert panel assessment workshop is that the branding enhances the attractiveness of outputs.

accountability and visibility²⁵⁴, drawing on the lessons learnt from the interim evaluations of predecessor programmes.

At *EU level*, the establishment for the first time of an overarching dissemination and exploitation **strategy**²⁵⁵ with regularly reviewed indicators and a single project results platform²⁵⁶ represent clear improvements in comparison to the past²⁵⁷. Specific steps have been taken both by the Commission and the Executive Agency to ensure that the exploitation of projects' results effectively serves to inform policy making²⁵⁸.

The **project results platform** offers a common and accessible space for disseminating most project results whilst also highlighting good practices and success stories (including from LLP and Youth in Action). Its value in comparison to the past lies in structured and selected material. Insights gained from EU interviews suggest that the platform is actually used to inform the work of policy makers at EU level. Content-wise, the main limitation is the lack of complementary external reference materials that could inspire users and a lack of success stories in certain sectors (e.g. adult learning) due to the insufficient quality of reports.

At *national level*, the assessment is also positive about the strategy, setting clear rules for the selection of good practice examples. However, the evidence of the **exploitation of project results by policy makers**²⁵⁹ and the effective engagement of the latter when they are not included in the project itself is not clear. The vast majority of National Agencies mainly disseminate examples of good practices to potential applicants or beneficiaries, and only rarely to inform policy making bodies. Moreover, though valued by over half of respondents as shown in the graph below, 37% of agency respondents do not agree that the dissemination platform is user-friendly. This sentiment, more mixed than at EU level, concurs with insights gained from national interviews and reports²⁶⁰.

²⁵⁴ 77% of agency respondents strongly or rather agree that the strategy has contributed to better communication of the projects results and 58% that it would have met its objective of transparency and accountability.

²⁵⁵ DG Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, March 2015; ICF, 6.9, table for a description per level of intervention

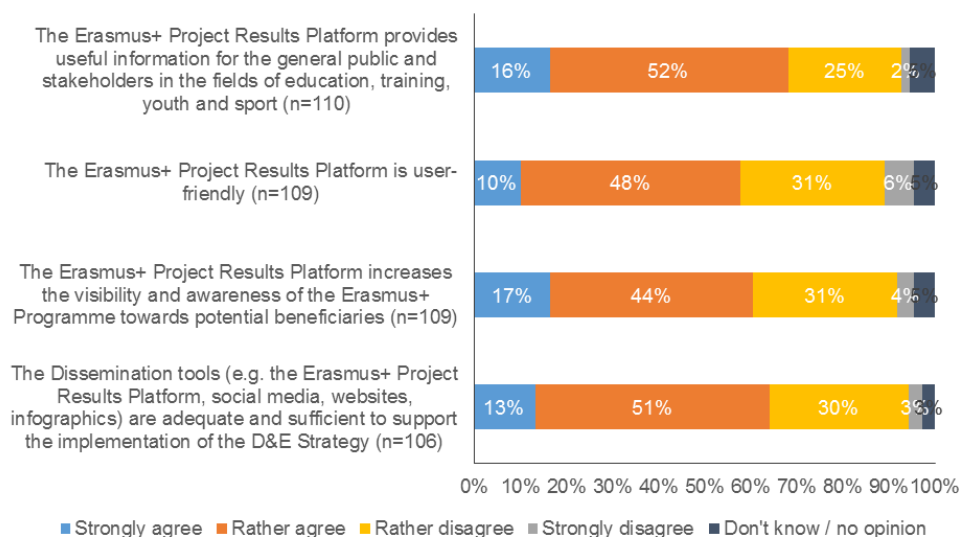
²⁵⁶ Initially named VALOR following the LLP interim evaluation and building on predecessors (ADAM, EVE), the **Project Results Dissemination Platform** acts as a repository for all funded projects under Erasmus+ and some of those funded under its predecessors, highlighting best practices and success stories in terms of policy relevance, communication potential, impact or design: <http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/projects>

²⁵⁷ Under Erasmus+, dissemination channels notably include in addition to the project results platform, DG EAC or EACEA's websites, social media, collaborative platforms (eTwinning, School Education Gateway, EPALE, Youth Portal), videos, newsletters, electronic and paper-based publications, etc. A distinct evaluation of this strategy was on-going in October 2017 and preliminary evidence seems to confirm these findings.

²⁵⁸ E.g. the project results platform enabled in 2015 to retrieve 160 projects that supported integration of asylum seekers. These were used for policy communication.

²⁵⁹ Only 6% of agency respondents actually strongly agree with the statement that the programme results are adequately exploited for policy purposes.

²⁶⁰ BEnl, IE, MT, FI. The search function of the platform, for example, was described as difficult to use.



Source: ICF experts' survey

Furthermore National Reports refer not only to the dissemination platform, but also to other dissemination channels (e.g. events, websites, social media). Despite all tangible dissemination efforts, some observe that the **results of projects are seldom further exploited**²⁶¹. While this can be due to factors that are external to the programme itself (e.g. professionals' lack of time) some regret a lack of concentration of resources on the most interesting projects²⁶² and an insufficient involvement of national authorities and/or municipalities in their dissemination²⁶³.

At *project level*, the expert panel confirmed that **dissemination is effective in 90% of the cases** they assessed²⁶⁴. The platform is also of use for people looking for partners. Interviewees and participants were aware of the dissemination and exploitation strategy requirements, but often perceived these as **burdensome**. Despite the standardised processes in place (except in the case of Jean Monnet activities²⁶⁵), project leaders often do not have the capacity to effectively exploit results. This might explain why, according to OPC respondents, the dissemination of results is one of the aspects of Erasmus+ that **should be improved** in the future.

²⁶¹ BEnl, DE, IE, HU, MT, NL, PL, PT, RO, SI, SK, FI, FY, NO, TR

²⁶² BG, CY, HU, FI, SE, FY, TR

²⁶³ SI, IS

²⁶⁴ The vast majority of projects reviewed: had all or some projects' products disseminated online (90 out of 100) and none of the projects without online outputs were funded under the current programme; 93 had several (55) or at least a few dissemination activities (38). Outputs were made available fully (57) or partially to the target group(s) and the wider public in most cases. 85 outputs were assessed as of high to good quality (41 and 39 respectively) and generally considered relevant and coherent, but nevertheless bringing rather limited innovation.

²⁶⁵ Even though there is a requirement of disseminating the JM results to audiences beyond the stakeholders directly involved, no specific targets are defined.; ICF/JMO 2.1

5.2. Relevance

The assessment of **the relevance²⁶⁶ of Erasmus+ is generally positive²⁶⁷** in regard to both its alignment with policy priorities and its adaptability to socio-economic needs. The relevance of the programme, compared where appropriate with its predecessors, has been assessed against 8 evaluation questions that overall looked into the extent to which Erasmus+ is:

- aligned with EU and national policy priorities
- responsive to the needs of stakeholders, sectors and society at large
- visible
- suitable for attracting different target audiences, including hard-to-reach groups

The vast majority of interviewees and most of OPC respondents²⁶⁸ consider that the programme shows a **high degree of alignment with key EU priorities** namely as set in the Europe 2020 Strategy, ET2020 Joint Report, the Youth Strategy, and to some lesser extent, the Union's external action, including its development objectives, and the EU Work Plan for sport²⁶⁹.

Erasmus+ is **strongly relevant to the rationale of the European project**: it fosters the intra-European integration through learning. For instance, Erasmus+ and its predecessors have played an important role in supporting the Member States and beyond in implementing the Bologna process with the introduction of the ECTS. Had it not been for Erasmus+, much fewer students would have benefited from learning mobility or would have been much more oriented towards non-EU English-speaking countries, according to interviews²⁷⁰. The consequences of a scenario where Erasmus+ would not exist are elaborated further in the section on its European added value below.

The international higher education dimension of the evaluated programmes has contributed to **achieving socio-economic development objectives**. The EU programmes for international cooperation in higher education have contributed to fostering regional integration as a key objective in the EU's relations with partner regions and supporting EU policies in the field of legal migration and mobility²⁷¹.

²⁶⁶ **Relevance** analysis looks at the relationship between the needs of participants and problems in society and the objectives of a programme and hence touches on aspects of design.

²⁶⁷ Consensus among key informants, at EU and national level, concurring with findings of the agency and experts surveys, the OPC and the synthesis of the NAUs reports; ICF 4, NRS 3, OPC 3.1 and 5.1.3

For instance, agencies' respondents perceive a clear alignment between the programme and the EU priorities, e.g. in improving the quality of education and training (74% of respondents perceiving this as strong alignment), increasing the number of those who benefit from mobility (70%), opening up education and training to the wider world (68%). Similar insights are also available for the youth field: support to volunteering and youth organisations (83% of respondents rated it as 'strong'), engaging participation of young people in policy making (55%), non-discrimination and access to social rights (52%). Conversely, least alignment is found in the following areas: increasing cognitive skills in reading, math and science (28% whilst 24% claimed they 'don't know'), increasing higher education attainment (44% whilst 33% 'don't know'), capacity building in higher education in partner countries (39%, whilst 39% 'don't know'), access to quality employment – youth strand (28% whilst 14% 'don't know'), capacity building of youth sector in Partner countries (34% whilst 14% 'don't know'). ICF, Fig. 4.1 and 4.2

²⁶⁸ 96% (n = 606) of OPC respondents agreed that Erasmus+ is well aligned with EU policies and priorities.

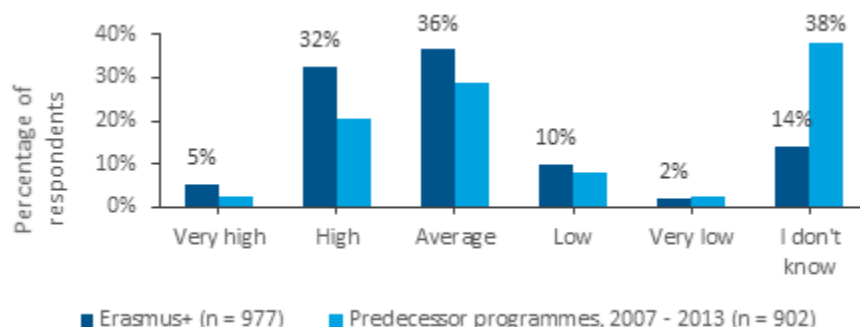
²⁶⁹ Sport pilot projects launched in 2016-2017 (dealing with health-enhancing activities or refugees) might help mitigate this lower perception of relevance.

²⁷⁰ ICF, tab.4.6 - Illustrative examples of perceived (mis-)alignment of Erasmus+ with national policies (KIIs and case studies)

²⁷¹ Many partner countries which are not members of the EHEA (European Higher Education Area) are influenced by Bologna principles through Erasmus+. See, *Evaluation of the EU Development Cooperation Support to Higher Education in Partner Countries 2007–2014*, Particip, LeA, ECDPM, Ecorys (2017), already mentioned.

Other evidence²⁷² and the consultation²⁷³ reveal in addition that **the alignment with European policy priorities is stronger with Erasmus+ than with its predecessors**, as shown below.

Share of projects that focus on issues that are high on the European policy agenda



Source: ICF, experts' survey

On the one hand, the **review of topic coverage** of funded projects undertaken for this evaluation and the expert survey confirm that these align to a high extent with EU-level *general* priorities, such as promoting lifelong learning, equity or social cohesion. For instance, 73% of expert respondents as opposed to 52% in the case of predecessor programmes, estimate that a high share of the funded projects which they assessed align with EU-level priorities. This is also consistent with the data analysis of cooperation projects, albeit with variations in topic prioritised before and after 2014, as shown in the table below:

First 10 topics of cooperation projects under the Erasmus+ and LLP

| | LLP | | Erasmus+ | |
|---|--|-----|---|-----|
| 1 | EU citizenship | 22% | ICT - new technologies - digital competences | 20% |
| 2 | Teaching and learning of foreign languages | 18% | Curricula/teaching methods | 18% |
| 3 | Creativity and culture | 18% | Creativity and culture | 11% |
| 4 | Environment / sustainable development | 17% | Teaching and learning of foreign languages | 11% |
| 5 | ICT - new technologies - digital competences | 15% | Skills and labour market issues | 10% |
| 6 | Health and wellbeing | 7% | EU Citizenship | 9% |
| 7 | Reinforcing links between education and working life | 7% | International cooperation, international relations, development cooperation | 9% |
| 8 | Comparing educational systems | 5% | Entrepreneurial learning - entrepreneurship | 9% |

²⁷² Stronger alignment than its predecessors according to agencies' respondents e.g. in opening up education and training to the wider world (64% of programme agencies' respondents perceive stronger alignment), enhancing creativity and innovation, including entrepreneurship at all levels of education (61%), increasing the number of those who benefit from mobility (56%), or in the youth field strengthening cooperation with policy makers (58%). Results are more balanced e.g. in improving the quality of education and training (52% as opposed to 44% who feel that alignment is the same), capacity building of higher education in partner countries (51% as opposed to 43%), increasing employability of young graduates (51% as opposed to 40%) or in increasing the transparency of qualifications and skills (48% as opposed to 48%). Conversely, areas where alignment is felt to be the same than in the past by most respondents include increasing cognitive skills in reading, mathematics and science (60% versus 34%), facilitating access to education and training for all (57% versus 32%), increasing higher education attainment (58% versus 37%), reducing early school leaving (53% versus 43%), increasing participation in lifelong learning (22% versus 55%), and in the youth field: non-discrimination and access to social rights (12% as opposed to 81%), access to quality employment (24% as opposed to 68%), access to quality education for all young people (27% as opposed to 68%); ICF, 4.2.1 and ICF, annex 4

²⁷³ 83% (n = 468) of OPC respondents (strongly) agreed that Erasmus+ has stronger emphasis on promoting youth employment compared to predecessor programmes.

| | | | | |
|----|------------------|----|---|----|
| | | | education | |
| 9 | Natural Sciences | 4% | Intercultural/intergenerational education and (lifelong) learning | 7% |
| 10 | Sport | 4% | Health and wellbeing | 5% |

Source: ICF calculations based on the Epluslink and LLPLink²⁷⁴ (% of total decentralised projects)

In red: significant decrease under Erasmus+. NB: most projects of the sport strand are centralised, so do not appear here.

On the other hand - when analysing projects more in-depth, beyond statistical data - some key challenges are only addressed marginally in practice. The extent to which the projects *reviewed* align with more *specific* priorities (e.g. early school leaving, higher education attainment, adults' participation in adult learning, etc.) is not clear enough. For instance, across the sampled projects in higher education, none focused on the attainment headline target²⁷⁵ and in school education, only a very small number dealt with early school leaving²⁷⁶. There is still room for improvement in the number of activities in topics on key competences and basic skills, even though these have been a priority in many calls for project applications. Lastly, in the sport field, respondents at national level often felt a gap between broad EU priorities and the need for more customised ones²⁷⁷.

Most interviewees also consider that Erasmus+ has proven to be **flexible in adjusting to new emerging EU-level challenges**²⁷⁸ (e.g. refugee crisis, intolerance or violent radicalisation were often mentioned), particularly through its annual work programming²⁷⁹. Several National Reports value as well the flexibility of Erasmus+ objectives to address emerging challenges²⁸⁰.

Examples of flexibility and relevance to the EU policy agenda

Following the **Paris Declaration on promoting citizenship and the common values of freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination through education**²⁸¹, the prevention of radicalisation through education, youth outreach and sport activities was identified as a priority within the updated EU Agenda on Security. More than EUR 200 million was allocated to support Erasmus+ projects fostering inclusion and promoting fundamental values, on top of a specific EUR 13 million call launched in March 2016 to identify and spread best practices.

In the context of the **refugee crisis** of 2015, Erasmus+ started as of 2016 to provide online language assessment and courses for newly arrived third country nationals, through the online linguistic support (OLS) in dedicating 100.000 additional licences for a period of three years.

²⁷⁴ Data included for all actions for which 'topic' information was available, including LLP (COM06, COM07, COM13, GRU06, LEO04) and Erasmus+ (KA200, KA201, KA202, KA203, KA204, KA205, KA219) mobility actions

²⁷⁵ Europe 2020 targets of "reducing the share of early leavers of education and training to less than 10%" and "increasing the share of the population aged 30 to 34 having completed tertiary or equivalent education to at least 40%" by 2020

²⁷⁶ Nonetheless it is the third most popular topic in the school field in the period 2014-2016: 553 projects were funded in total under the topic "Early school learning/combating failure in education" for EUR 84 million.

²⁷⁷ ICF, tab. 4.6, quotations from KIIs: "Erasmus+ seems to focus more on scientific issues or general issues in sports"; "At the grassroots level, there are continuing issues around retaining volunteers to support local clubs and local organisations (not reflected in Erasmus+ priorities)"

²⁷⁸ Particularly positive among EU level stakeholders in school and higher education sectors, whilst perceptions are more mixed among EU-level stakeholders in the sport sector and among national stakeholders. For instance, the good alignment of the programme with the Modernisation of Higher Education communication, the New Skills Agenda or the increased attention paid to work-based learning (ErasmusPro) were often valued.

²⁷⁹ Although challenges are not always explicitly stated; for instance, the 2017 Programme guide briefly presents the European Solidarity Corps (part describing EVS) as a means to help "resolve challenging situations" without specifying the latter.

²⁸⁰ EE, IE, NL, SI, NO, etc

²⁸¹ http://ec.europa.eu/education/news/20160316-paris-declaration-education_en

Meanwhile, 79% of OPC respondents indicated that in their view there are no **other priorities or actions that Erasmus+ should address**. For the remaining share of respondents, the main suggestions²⁸² included in descending order of frequency: i) promoting European *citizenship* and civic education; ii) fostering inclusion and *diversity*, especially the integration of migrants; iii) linking education more strongly with *enterprise* and promoting international internships.

In contrast, the context has changed radically since the Jean Monnet programme was founded. There is now substantial volume of teaching and research about the EU, particularly in EU countries, irrespective of Erasmus+ support. Because of their focus on higher education, the evaluation shows that the **relevance of Jean Monnet activities could be enhanced** by focussing more on other segments of the learning continuum such as schools and VET. Given the low turnout in the European Parliament elections²⁸³ and the lack of trust in the EU institutions²⁸⁴, there is a need to strengthen Europeans' understanding of the EU. This is the underpinning challenge that Jean Monnet aims to address. Overall, only 56% of Europeans state that they understand how the EU works - a number that has nevertheless improved by 9 percentage points since 2004. However, Jean Monnet activities target a population that has been tested as already more knowledgeable about the EU than non-beneficiaries. One third of staff respondents dedicate substantial share of their teaching to students outside EU-related fields of study. However, most of those reached remain students who would still have studied European integration²⁸⁵.

The extent to which all the ambitious objectives of the programme are achievable over time is also sometimes questioned. Some stakeholders **call for greater emphasis on the promotion of social inclusion**. In the aftermath of the 2008-2009 economic crisis, Erasmus+ was primarily focused on economy-related priorities. Since 2016, a shift towards social inclusion is observed in its implementation. Responses seem to indicate that the social inclusion objective could be explicitly defined and go together with a higher and more visible budget to achieve a more tangible impact²⁸⁶. However, views remain mixed on this issue. Many stakeholders, not only from the youth sector but also from education and training, believe that too much emphasis is put on employability to the detriment of the cultural value of education or the youth sector; whereas some other stakeholders insist on the continued relevance of employability. Some National Reports refer to needs that could be further addressed, including i) the objectives connected to the *Paris Declaration* and prevention of violent radicalisation²⁸⁷; ii) traineeships to enhance labour-market *inclusion*²⁸⁸; iii) transversal, social

²⁸² For more suggestions see OPC 3.1 and NRS 3.1

²⁸³ <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/elections2014-results/en/turnout.html>

²⁸⁴ Standard Eurobarometer 86 – Wave EB86.2

²⁸⁵ ICF/JMO, 2.1 and fig.2.1 and 2.3

²⁸⁶ Several interviewees welcome the KA3 call on social inclusion (13 million EUR in 2016) but a quarter of them see it as too modest to effectively achieve tangible impact. Other social inclusion-related measures (e.g. social inclusion emphasis recently put on Erasmus+ KA2 transnational partnerships) were very scarcely mentioned. ICF, 4.6 about the efforts to strengthen the social inclusion dimension of Erasmus+ since 2016

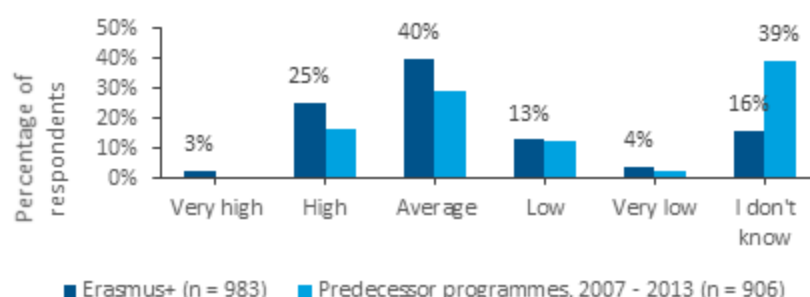
²⁸⁷ FR, LU, SK

²⁸⁸ BEnl, FI, IT, TR. In particular, VET-higher education permeability was felt insufficiently addressed. There is however no consensus on labour-market inclusion. CZ, EE, ES, HR, IT, LT, PL call for tighter link with companies. A number of interviewees expressed the view that Erasmus+ is probably not the best instrument for targeting the labour market.

and personal *skills* – hence aligning well with data collated by the external evaluation at national level.

The **alignment of Erasmus+ objectives with national policies** is almost equally recognised, by most of respondents²⁸⁹. Overall, a vast majority of experts surveyed estimate that a high share of the projects funded align very highly to fairly with national level priorities²⁹⁰. Experts felt that there has been an improvement on this matter between Erasmus+ and its predecessor programmes, as illustrated below.

Share of projects that focus on issues that are high on the policy agenda of my country



Source: ICF experts' survey

Nevertheless views from national interviewees are more mixed²⁹¹, with organisations being more complimentary than policy makers²⁹² or agencies' respondents²⁹³. The most noticeable difference is found in the sport field where no stakeholders and only one out of 4 policy makers see Erasmus+ as strongly relevant to solving national challenges.

Most of the national authorities²⁹⁴ consider as well that Erasmus+ decentralised actions²⁹⁵ are **relevant to country needs**, although fewer countries refer to national priorities in the adult education, sport and Jean Monnet sectors. Furthermore some countries ask for more flexibility to allow the programme to adapt better to local needs²⁹⁶.

Examples of relevance to national needs or need for more flexibility

| Relevance to national needs | Need for more flexibility |
|---|---|
| - In Denmark, the internationalisation of education is a national priority. The Danish higher education institutions receive an “internationalisation rate” for every student they receive or send, including under | - Hungary and Lithuania require more flexibility to local/national needs in the youth sector. |

²⁸⁹ 86% (n = 527) of OPC respondents (strongly) agreed that Erasmus+ is well aligned with national policies and priorities. Interviews, agencies and experts' surveys; for instance most of experts consider that the projects funded generally align well (from high to average alignment) with both EU and national policy priorities.

²⁹⁰ 68% vs. 46% under the predecessor programmes (p.m. Erasmus+ aligned with EU priorities: 73%); ICF, fig.4.11.

²⁹¹ Examples of alignment between national priorities and the programme were reported by at least half of interviewees and by at least one type of interviewee per case study. ICF, tab. 4.5 shows that Erasmus+ objectives or actions align well with the vast majority of policy priorities/needs commonly reported per sectors by KIIs.

²⁹² Except in the school education sector, where the share of policy makers with a strong positively feeling of the alignment was conversely slightly higher. ICF/Technopolis, fig. 4.5 to 4.10 for breakdown per sector.

²⁹³ 60% agencies' respondents disagree or strongly disagree with the statement that Erasmus+ is better aligned with national priorities than its predecessor programmes.

²⁹⁴ BEde, BEfr, BENl, BG, CZ, DE, EE, IE, EL, ES, FR, HR, IT, LT, LU, HU, MT, NL, AT, PL, PT, RO, SI, SK, SE, UK, FY, LI, NO, TR; NRS, tab 3.1 for details per sector

²⁹⁵ National Reports were not required to cover centralised actions (e.g. sport field, Jean Monnet, etc).

²⁹⁶ DK, DE, IE, LV, LT, HU, SI, SK, etc

| | | |
|--|---|--|
| Erasmus+. | - | Germany considers that call priorities should be regularly aligned with societal realities in a more targeted manner. It requests the possibility to set national priorities to respond better to the needs of national target groups. |
| - Ireland explains that Erasmus+ growing emphasis on youth employment has aligned the programme with the Irish national agenda allowing important synergies. | | |

Source: ICF 4.1, NRS 3.1

Most position papers collected during the consultation highlight that Erasmus+ is **one of the EU's most successful programmes** and that it remains highly relevant. The majority of the consultation respondents (59%) thought that the current **Erasmus+ objectives are extremely relevant to the current challenges and needs**, especially as regards the development of *skills* and competences, the *European dimension* of education and youth activities, *languages* and intercultural awareness. In contrast, fewer respondents saw the relevance of the objectives regarding the international strand, Jean Monnet, policy support and sports²⁹⁷.

Relevance of the programme can also be assessed in relation to its **capacity to fund innovative projects**, considering the needs for innovation in a context of global competition between economies and particularly between education systems. While evidence shows that a wide range of applicants are well targeted, the innovative capacities are rather limited²⁹⁸. The experts' survey indicates that the projects are most frequently (42%) moderately innovative with a relatively small share that was considered as highly or very highly innovative (15% and 2%, respectively). At the same time, similarly to the increased quality of applications²⁹⁹, an improvement can be seen in terms of innovation when comparing Erasmus+ with its predecessor programmes. This could further improve at the final evaluation stage when KA2 Alliance-type projects are sufficiently advanced or have been finalised to be evaluated.

More generally, key evidence suggests that the programme is **well suited to attract a wide range of target audiences** across the fields it covers. It is particularly suitable for reaching out to learners with different profiles³⁰⁰, **with one noticeable exception: disadvantaged groups**, as elaborated below³⁰¹.

A deeper analysis shows that the **needs of different stakeholders are generally well addressed**, albeit with variations according to sector, organisation size and level of intervention. The majority of the interviewees estimate that the programme strongly contributes to addressing the socio-economic needs of the **learners**³⁰². Monitoring survey highlights that the motivations of learners are fairly well aligned with programme objectives and related to key competences. Foreign language skills is the most mentioned need in all sectors. In VET, learners' motivations for participation are particularly well aligned with programme objectives on key competences, including technical skills (80%). At least 50% of

²⁹⁷ OPC 3.1; 'extremely relevant' objectives for the Programme include: skills and competences of individual learners (73%); the European dimension of education and youth activities (70%); the quality, innovation and internationalisation in education, training and youth organisations (68%); the teaching and learning of languages and intercultural awareness (68%); the skills and competences of practitioners (62%); the Union's external action (54%); excellence in teaching and research in European integration (48%); policy reforms at national level (44%); sports objectives of Erasmus+ (33%)

²⁹⁸ ICF, 6.13 and 6.18. The share of innovative methods considered low or very low was 24% and 5% respectively

²⁹⁹ ICF, fig.4.16 : according to the expert survey, improvement in application quality is found between Erasmus+ and its predecessor programmes; currently, almost one third of the applications is considered as of high quality by experts (18% for predecessor programmes), whereas most frequently (42%) of average quality (37% for predecessors). Caution: 37% of experts have no opinion as for predecessor programmes.

³⁰⁰ Beneficiary survey, ICF 4.4 and 6.3

³⁰¹ Drawing on the definition set out in Erasmus+ Programme guide (p.9)

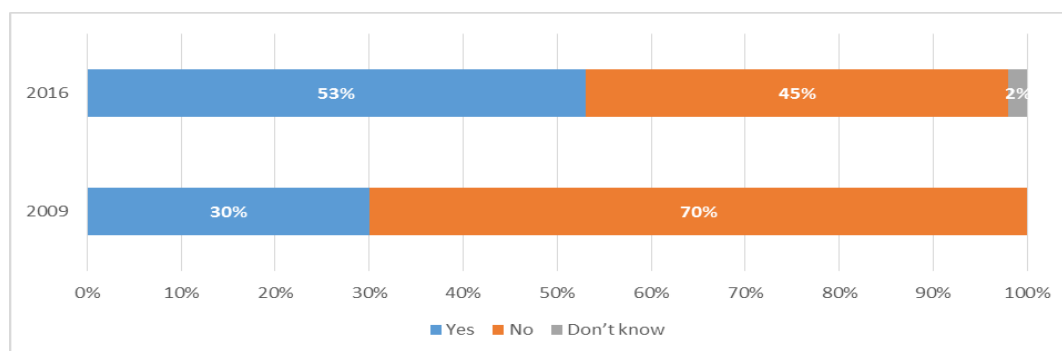
³⁰² ICF, 4.2 and 4.3

agencies' respondents believe that Erasmus+ meets the needs of target groups including **practitioners**³⁰³ better than its predecessor programmes. They all agree that learners' needs in higher education and VET are met by both KA1 and KA2, but the needs of school pupils are partially or weakly met by KA1, despite the fact that teachers take part in the action. On a qualitative note, many examples in interviews suggest strong relevance of the programme to learners' needs³⁰⁴. Lastly, as detailed above in the section on effectiveness, participants' satisfaction is very high (81% to 100% claiming being very or rather satisfied with their mobility experience). In contrast, interviewees have more mixed views on the programme's ability to meet the needs of **organisations**. The needs of small organisations especially are not met sufficiently³⁰⁵. Lastly, agencies' staff consider that the needs of schools, VET and youth **systems** are addressed by KA3 (highly relevant), while the relevance for higher education and adult learning systems would be more moderate.

The **discontinuation of a small number of (Lifelong Learning Programme and Youth in Action) actions** had only a limited impact on the extent to which stakeholders' needs were addressed, except in two areas:³⁰⁶

- many interviewees claimed that pupil mobility (and to a smaller extent adult learner mobility) should return to a KA1-type of funding, instead of under the more complex coverage of KA2³⁰⁷.
- discontinued local youth initiatives previously funded by Youth in Action were considered more accessible than current Erasmus+ transnational youth initiatives³⁰⁸. The former enabled young people to initiate their own projects, whereas the latter are seen as too complex for informal groups of young people, especially NEETs (young people not in Education, Employment, or Training), to apply³⁰⁹.

Knowledge about Erasmus(+) 2009 vs 2016



Source: Standard Eurobarometer 86 and Special Eurobarometer survey 316

All findings reveal that the programme is **perceived as increasingly visible and attractive**³¹⁰. Erasmus+ is well known to the audience in general (see fig. above)³¹¹ and

³⁰³ ICF, 4.3.3 about practitioners' needs

³⁰⁴ ICF, 4.3.2 and 4.3.3, text boxes with examples of responsiveness to needs reported by interviewees (case studies)

³⁰⁵ ICF, 4.3.4 about organisations' needs

³⁰⁶ Interviews at national level and National Reports

³⁰⁷ National reports of DK, FR, IT, CY, FI, CY,UK, etc; ICF, 4.3, including illustrative quotations from KIIs

³⁰⁸ BEnl, HU, MT, CH

³⁰⁹ ICF, 4.3, including illustrative quotations from KIIs

³¹⁰ Social media analysis, Agencies survey (76%), National reports, Eurobarometer survey and outputs to Erasmus+ 30 years anniversary campaign. See also section on coherence below.

especially to the young generations. Its large visibility also, including outside the EU, stands out when compared with that of other EU programmes such as Horizon2020, Europe for Citizens or EU Aid Volunteers³¹². It can also be positively noted that the degree of repeated participation appears to be low for learners (less than 10%), whilst it is expected for the more permanent population of staff³¹³. It is nevertheless found that the extent to which Erasmus+ reaches out to potential organisations varies across the different fields. The visibility of the Jean Monnet activities could, in particular, be stronger³¹⁴. A few National Reports³¹⁵ link the lower participation of primary education and early childhood education and care in Erasmus+ to a lower awareness of the programme in these sectors. Some National Reports make suggestions on how to increase visibility³¹⁶.

Furthermore, a number of **barriers to participation** are identified limiting the extent to which the programme addresses the needs of stakeholders. At the individual level, financial barriers³¹⁷ and administrative burdens³¹⁸ are more often reported than are geographical disparities³¹⁹. At the organisation level, the programme offers less room for small scale projects than in the past, reducing the extent to which it reaches grassroots level organisations in all their diversity³²⁰. Evidence suggests that smaller sized organisations often have neither the experience, nor the resource capacity that a successful application requires³²¹. Many stakeholders believe that funding has become too highly competitive, making it only accessible to the most experienced/largest organisations, preventing access to potential newcomers, hence reducing the number of those who may benefit from a European experience³²².

Despite the specific attention paid to social inclusion³²³ with varied results across sectors³²⁴ and to **widening the participation of disadvantaged target groups**³²⁵, recognised by a

³¹¹ Less visible in the sport community (e.g. HU) or in reaching dual VET (DE, AT)

³¹² ICF 4.5, 6.9 and annex 19 (not published). See Annex 3 about social analysis performed

³¹³ Based on the monitoring data, the vast majority of VET learners (95%) and students in international higher education mobility (91%) are first time participants in EU funded mobility actions (Erasmus+ or LLP). This is a positive finding as the benefits of mobility on attitudes are likely to diminish with repeated participation. Concerning staff mobility, while the majority of staff in schools, VET, adult learning and international higher education are first time participants, most staff in youth and higher education are repeated participants.

³¹⁴ Even among higher education practitioners who teach about the EU, only 55% have heard about the Jean Monnet activities; ICF/JMO, 2.5

³¹⁵ DE, RO, FI, etc

³¹⁶ NRS 3.3: SI, IS

³¹⁷ HU, PT

³¹⁸ Participants expressed concerns about complex administrative procedures related to application and reporting: BEnl, BG, CZ, DK, DE, EE, EL, ES, FR, HR, IT, CY, LV, LT, LU, HU, MT, NL, AT, RO, SK, FI, SE, UK, IS, FY, LI, NO, PL, PT, CH, TR; see section on efficiency below.

³¹⁹ Few countries report issues of unequal participation by regions. FR observes a reduction in the participation of overseas territories. BG and ES mention the specific needs of small towns and rural areas.

³²⁰ EE, IE as regards vulnerable groups; ES, EL, PL, FY concerning newcomers

³²¹ Large number of national interviews; also denoted across the National Reports BE, BG, CZ, DE, FR, HR, CY, LV, LT, RO, SK, FI, NO, etc

³²² Both data programme analysis and the expert survey identifies major unbalances in competition for grants among the different sectors; ICF, 4.4 and tab. 4.10 for success rates for Erasmus+ per sector

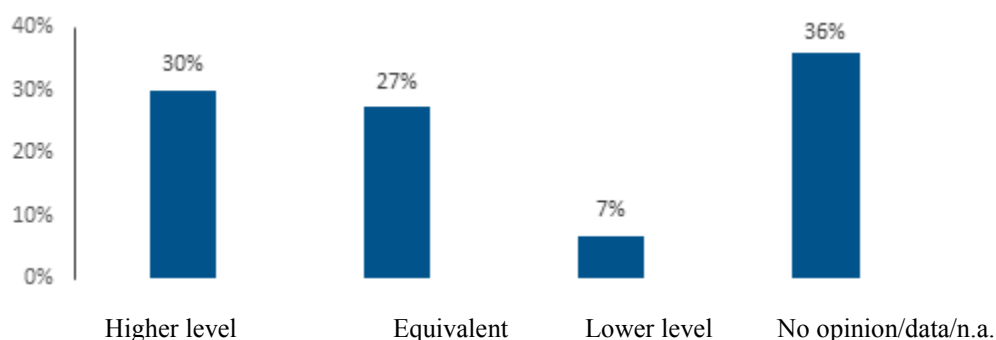
³²³ Interviewees most often referred to the call on policy experimentation (KA3) on social inclusion across sectors.

³²⁴ In the field of adult education, only 15% of agency respondents (lowest share) strongly agree that the programme offers more opportunities for disadvantaged target groups than in the past. In contrast, the highest share is found in youth (44%).

³²⁵ ICF, 4.6: 57% of agency respondents perceive the actual participation of disadvantaged groups in Erasmus+ as higher or the same compared to other national or international programmes. It should be mentioned, however, that for 36% of agency respondents, the absence of relevant statistical data was an obstacle to provide any estimates on this issue. ICF, Annex 10 for the most frequently targeted disadvantaged groups as per the expert panel assessment of Erasmus+ project outputs.

majority of interviewees³²⁶ and 30% of agencies, evidence suggests that there is room for improvement³²⁷. The share of disadvantaged groups represents almost 10% of KA1 participants (almost 25% in the youth field as well), as detailed in the section on effectiveness above, due to the programme's specific efforts in the area (see fig below). Erasmus+ has offered new experiences abroad to many people who would have otherwise not been able to afford it. In countries where there is no mobility programme targeting disadvantaged group, Erasmus+ is particularly appreciated. Where programmes supporting mobility do exist, they do not have such a priority or – if they do – they do not promote it to such an extent as Erasmus+ does³²⁸.

Perceived level of participation of disadvantaged groups (Erasmus+ compared to other comparable national/international programmes/initiatives)



Source: ICF survey with National Agencies (n = 117)

However, according to a vast majority of National Reports³²⁹ and a shared perception among all groups of respondents, **young people from disadvantaged backgrounds and with special needs are not sufficiently addressed**. The view prevails that Erasmus+ has even limited potential to reach those organisations that address specifically this group of people. Even the European Volunteer Service (EVS) remains strongly competitive. Most National Reports and findings from the public consultation welcome the additional funding available for disadvantaged participants³³⁰ but do not consider it sufficient on its own. Some countries³³¹ call for clearer definitions and streamlined rules applying to disadvantaged participants in Erasmus+. According to the expert panel, while a good share of projects viewed considered disadvantaged groups, this was often not substantiated with outputs suitable to them. Moreover, the Student Loan Guarantee Facility (SLGF) is commonly found to be insufficiently tailored to address the needs of the disadvantaged who are risk averse to go abroad for a full Master programme or to take up loans even if repayments are not income-contingent³³², although the first evidence from the beneficiaries surveys rather shows many beneficiaries are first-generation higher education students or coming from families with financial difficulties³³³. Despite some progress made in the programme design, it can be

³²⁶ KIIs (national level) assessed the relevance of Erasmus+ to hard-to-reach or specific disadvantaged groups positively almost in all sectors

³²⁷ ICF 4.3 and 4.6, similar findings from NRS 3.4 and OPC 3.1

³²⁸ The inclusion of disadvantaged groups is not specifically encouraged by the Baltic-American Freedom Foundation, Denmark-USA programme, the Fulbright programme, German-Turkish Youth Bridge and Prämienprogramm

³²⁹ BEde, BEnl, BG, CZ, DE, EE, IE, CY, EL, ES, FR, HR, IT, LV, LT, LU, HU, MT, NL, AT, PL, PT, RO, SI, SK, FI, SE, IS, FY, TR

³³⁰ In addition to the social inclusion dimension in mobility (e.g. top-ups), in 2016, more than €200 million were prioritised under KA2 as well as €13 million for dissemination and €14 million for policy experimentation under KA 3.

³³¹ FR, IT, NL

³³² According to literature reviewed, interviewed students and 79% of agency respondents

³³³ ICF, stand-alone report on SLGF and annex 8 on SLGF survey results

concluded that there is a certain dissonance between its ambition and actual project outputs specifically addressing the disadvantaged target population. The views whether more can be done at European level to address these challenges were nevertheless mixed among national policy-makers.

| Examples of support to disadvantaged individuals or hard-to-reach group |
|---|
| In Poland, the NA implements the ‘Foreign mobility of disabled and disadvantaged students’ project co-financed under Erasmus+ and the ESF. This project funds scholarships for students with disabilities and provides additional funds for disadvantaged students receiving grants from their home universities. |
| In Turkey, as a result of a KA2 project implemented by the Sincan Public Training Centre, adult training is delivered to inmates at the Prison using a tailored curriculum and method. |

Source: NRS, 3.4 (PL, TR)

5.3. Coherence

The assessment of the coherence of Erasmus+ is **overall very positive**, both internally (compared to its predecessors) and externally (compared to other existing interventions). It has been informed by 10 evaluation questions that looked into the extent to which:

- the programme's internal coherence improved compared to its predecessors
- the Erasmus+ objectives were consistent, mutually supportive across fields
- synergies or duplications between fields and actions existed and were dealt with
- the centralised and decentralised actions complemented each other
- Erasmus+ design provided appropriate support to the EU policy agenda
- Erasmus+ was coherent with relevant policies and programmes and complementary to other interventions in the same fields at EU or national/international levels respectively.

5.3.1. Internal coherence³³⁴

The merger of seven predecessor programmes into **Erasmus+ has improved the coherence of the EU intervention** according to the vast majority of respondents³³⁵. As mentioned before, **Erasmus+ now covers learning in all its contexts** – whether formal or non-formal, including youth work– and **at all levels of the lifelong learning continuum**: from early childhood education and schools, vocational education and training (VET) through to higher education and adult learning. The evaluation highlights the positive effects of this integrated approach underpinned by the lifelong learning logic. It underlines the necessity of the integrated approach in today's education and training environment, where the borders between the traditional education and training sectors have become less clear-cut³³⁶.

Different sources agreed on the **added value of the integration of several programmes** within a single structure. The **objectives are seen as mutually supportive** across education/training, youth and sports, as well as across actions³³⁷. These fields are seen as naturally fitting in a programme allowing **cross-sector fertilisation**, which - according to 90% agency respondents - was not always possible in the past. Around 3/4 of these respondents feel that the integrated programme enables increased synergies, while 2/3 estimate it avoids internal overlaps.

All these improvements are confirmed by desk research, national reports and a vast portion of the interviewees who appreciate that the programme has been designed with better logical linkages between objectives and actions³³⁸. It is very often valued for its clearer and **simplified architecture** with only **three Key Actions (KAs)**³³⁹, cross-cutting priorities (e.g. social inclusion, prevention of violent radicalisation, etc.) and a much lower fragmentation of

³³⁴ Source of this section (where not mentioned otherwise): ICF, 5.2; NRS 4.1; OPC 3.2 and 5.1.3. The evaluation of the coherence in relation to Jean Monnet actions was evaluated based on desk research.

³³⁵ Interviews, agency survey; ICF, 5.2.4: no contradiction in objectives noted between JMO and the rest of Erasmus+

³³⁶ ICF, Conclusion D: Many VET providers are falling under the definition of 'schools' (in school-based VET) but they can also be providers of adult education. Similarly, higher education organisations are also providers of adult education in many cases. The cooperation between education and training (in particular for schools but also beyond) and civil society (youth sector) is a common reality on the ground.

³³⁷ ICF, tab. 5.3

³³⁸ ICF, 5.2.1

³³⁹ See above section on background. 89% (n = 619) of OPC respondents (strongly) agreed that the structure into the three Key Actions is working well. 65% of agency respondents (strongly/rather) agree that it increases EU added value.

actions than denoted in the past (e.g. Grundtvig, international cooperation³⁴⁰), with only a few exceptions³⁴¹. Almost all country reports **call for stability** of the structure and scope of the programme in the future. The stronger attention given in the design and implementation of Erasmus+ to budget based on performance³⁴², monitoring of individual outcomes³⁴³ and dissemination of project results³⁴⁴ is also valued. As detailed under "effectiveness" above, actions are delivering at more than one level, with spill-over effects (e.g. individual staff mobility having impact on sending organisations) and common support tools (e.g. widening scope of transparency and recognition tools).

The **advantages of Erasmus+ programme** listed by the national respondents include its strong branding **and its greater visibility**³⁴⁵, especially among policy-makers. This is particularly true for VET, adult education and even for the youth sector in contrast to stakeholders' initial fears. European challenges (such as the integration of refugees or the attention to disadvantaged groups in higher or adult education) are now addressed at least in a more flexible way³⁴⁶. Moreover, **lifelong learning is approached more as a lifecycle** (including non-formal and informal learning) rather than in a segmented way. Even if there remains residual concern³⁴⁷ that the brand "Erasmus" is traditionally linked to higher education, the fact that the Erasmus+ provides **one place to look for funding opportunities** in the related sectors with a standardised and more transparent administration is appreciated.

Meanwhile, **some concerns have been reported at national level**. In two-thirds of the countries, different NAs continue to deal with distinct sectors, replicating the way they functioned under the previous programme generation³⁴⁸. Some National Reports confirm that there is no systematic exploitation of potential synergies between different types of actions³⁴⁹. The disadvantages inherent to any one-size-fits-all approach are naturally pointed out³⁵⁰. Respondents from various organisations and sectors noted that the **adult education** strand has shrunk in size and lost its specificity. The **youth** chapter would be less integrated, less visible for instance within KA2 (or would now link to more abstract EU policy targets than in the past). Whilst the objectives of the **sport** chapter align well with EU priorities, some potential applicants do not always see how to make them fit in their local perspective. More generally, an integrated programme is likely to offer less autonomy to sectors and less room for country-specific priorities compared to its predecessors. There is for instance the sentiment among

³⁴⁰ The merger of Tempus, Alfa III and Edulink into the Erasmus+ Capacity Building action allows for a strengthening of co-operation between different regions, however the focus on intra-regional co-operation for partner countries remains limited, according to the *Evaluation of the EU Development Co-operation Support to Higher Education in Partner Countries (2007-2014)*, (2017), Particip, LeA, ECDPM, Ecorys, already mentioned.

³⁴¹ NRS: mobility in the field of school education and VET is not included under KA1 but can be covered under KA2, creating some confusion among schools (e.g. DK, FR, IT, CY, LV).

³⁴² Article 18(7) and (8) of Regulation (EU) No 1288/2013 about **performance based budget**: in practice, around 25% of the funds allocated to National Agencies for KA1 are distributed on the basis of the level of implementation achieved, whilst the remaining budget is allocated essentially on the basis of the size of the population. For KA2 and 3, qualitative criteria to increase EU added value apply (e.g. link with OMC; resource commitments of project partners).

³⁴³ Article 21 (idem) on monitoring of performance and results

³⁴⁴ Article 22 (idem) on the dissemination of results

³⁴⁵ 76% of agency respondents strongly or rather agree that the integrated programme is more visible /better branded than the predecessor programmes; confirmed by social media analysis

³⁴⁶ ICF, tab. 5.9

³⁴⁷ CY, EE, HU, SI, etc. Besides, for a small portion (estimated less than 10%) of respondents Erasmus+ still remains viewed as associated with the mobility experience of HE students.

³⁴⁸ Nevertheless certain National Agencies have merged since 2014. Their number has been reduced from 63 in 2013 (with 12 NAs common to education and youth) to 57 (16 common NAs) in June 2017.

³⁴⁹ BEnl, EE, HU, SI, SK, UK, NO

³⁵⁰ ICF, tab. 5.9

national authorities that the integration of the programme committees has led to discussions becoming more abstract for each policy area integrated in Erasmus+.

When looking at specific examples, further nuances emerge. The **increased decentralisation was positively viewed** by the vast majority of respondents because it brings the programme closer to its beneficiaries and helps engage local partners, while centralised actions (e.g. in KA3) complement well other actions of the programme. Meanwhile, policy makers and NAs were clearly more positive than EU level organisations which look for a more direct access to funding. The **main critical perceptions relate to KA2** suggesting that too broad scope of the action and the decentralisation of strategic partnerships may result in differences in implementation or a prevalence of nationally-driven agenda³⁵¹. Some argue that this could even push partnerships or cross-country organisations to apply rather in larger countries. Besides to attract talent to Europe, some suggest it could make more sense to centralise international credit mobility. However, providing concrete examples of synergies or overlaps has proven more difficult than anticipated for most interviewees at national level or agency respondents. The only area where some overlaps have been noticed concerns those projects in the sport sector which focus on social inclusion and could be youth projects as well. However, **overlaps might be more often due to misunderstanding** at application stage than to the design of the programme as such³⁵².

Examples of internal synergies or overlaps

| Synergies | Overlaps |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Between fields: <i>"It is more likely that a young person who has done an Erasmus will also go on youth exchanges or EVS projects."</i> - <i>"An integrated programme stimulates cross-sectoral collaboration in a valuable way. Regional development projects are easier [...] to communicate and are also administratively simpler when all the target groups are part of the same programme."</i> (SE) - <i>"Our organisation takes part in an activity under KA 3 in the youth chapter and uses the outputs for advocacy in the education field."</i> (Structured dialogue with young people) - There is evidence of education institutions successfully applying to implement sport projects that are also tied to the education and youth field. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>"Yet, a significant difficulty has been experienced with the adult education and VET actions [...]. Coverage and scope of these fields mostly overlap and cannot easily be differentiated by the beneficiaries."</i> (TR) - The last example on the right column has a counterpart, as meanwhile it reduces the participation of purely sport-focused organisations. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Between KAs: Synergies are reported at organisation level between e-Twinning and KA1 and KA2 in the school sector. - <i>"The way in which KA1 and KA2</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>"Student mobility within the field of school education falls within KA2. This has led to confusion among the schools given that student mobility for all other sectors falls under KA1. It is</i> |

³⁵¹ Agency survey, OPC position papers from 3 EU-level organisations representing together some 70 organisations

³⁵² Common input for the mid-term evaluation 2017 from the NAs Erasmus+ Youth in Action, August 2016

| | |
|---|--|
| <p><i>complement each other provides opportunities for cooperation between long-term network partners."</i> (FYROM)</p> <p>- <i>"Within KA2, there is a close cross-sectorial cooperation, which benefits all sectors. [...] There are strategic partnership projects that have led to development of tools and databases to heighten the quality assurance of VET students' mobility projects, which have been implemented by the vocational colleges working within KA1"</i> (DK)</p> | <p><i>recommended that student mobility for pupils in the field of school education be moved to KA1."</i> (DK)</p> <p>- Mobility opportunities under KA1 and KA2 <i>"for Erasmus+ Youth in Action the logic is not kept. [...] KA1 and KA2 in Erasmus+ seem to be partly overlapping in practice, [...]. This leads to the point that applicants are partly going for their mobility projects to KA2 because of the higher funding"</i> (Youth NAs' input) <i>"KA1 could benefit from focusing on training and capacity building tackling learners directly and KA2 more on intellectual outputs that are tangible enough and with long term impact."</i> (Youth NAs' input) <i>"There is a certain overlap between youth worker mobility and strategic partnerships for good practices"</i> (BE-nl)</p> <p>- KA2 (Strategic partnerships) and KA3 (Forward looking cooperation initiatives) could overlap (ICF). <i>"KA2 is often used for policy reform too at national level"</i> (Youth NAs' input).</p> |
| <p>- Between actions: KA3 Policy experimentations and Forward looking initiatives: (one is top-down, the other is bottom-up) are meant in their design to be the two sides of the same coin. (ICF)</p> | <p>- <i>"The inconsistencies arise from differences in grants given per participant for training activities versus youth exchanges [two sub-actions in KA1]. The grants for training activities are higher, which increases the incentive to apply for funding for training activities."</i> (DK)</p> |

Source (where not mentioned otherwise): ICF, 5.2.2

Another area where findings are more contrasted concerns **cross-sector opportunities**. Whilst a significant number of respondents³⁵³ see this as a clear improvement under the new programme (e.g. for youth), many others³⁵⁴ remain more uncertain (e.g. unclear remit of adult education³⁵⁵) or have concerns about its actual materialisation (e.g. for sports³⁵⁶). A majority of respondents asked are either not interested or not convinced to take part in cross-sectoral projects (e.g. finding different partners require more efforts). However, as detailed under 5.1.2, the **level of cross-sectoral cooperation increased** under the current programme by 23 percentage points

5.3.2. External coherence³⁵⁷

At programme level, complementarities are mainly found with the European Social Fund³⁵⁸ (ESF) and the Research framework programme Horizon 2020, and to a lesser extent with

³⁵³ High share of agencies' respondents; DK, EE, NL, PL, PT, SI, NO, etc

³⁵⁴ Over half of interviews (at national level particularly), several OPC position papers, DE, EE, MT, NL, SI, SK, FY, TR...

³⁵⁵ Overlaps are observed between VET and adult education (CY, PT, TR); LLP interim evaluation COM(2011) 413, section 5

³⁵⁶ The borders between sport and other strands are rather blurred. There are more sport organisations participating in other strands than in the sport one. Reciprocally, more than 5% of participants in the sport strand are higher education institutions. Many grassroots sport projects could be funded under the youth strand.

³⁵⁷ Source of this section (where not mentioned otherwise): ICF, 5.3; OPC 3.2; NRS 4.2

³⁵⁸ The ESF legal basis recommends taking up good practices from Erasmus+ to further develop them under ESF. Erasmus+ mobility grants can be topped-up by ESF or followed by placement services financed by ESF. Under the ESF investment priority "Improving the quality of tertiary education", for instance, the ESF may support activities to encourage the development of Erasmus activities in a university.

INTERREG, Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs programme (EYE) and in the field of sport with the Third Health programme. For instance, in Greece, the participation of pupils in eTwinning was boosted nation-wide by the combined support of European Investment and Structural Funds to teachers' training (ICT skills) and classroom equipment (digital tablets)³⁵⁹. Potential **synergies** that were noted by interviewees include: Erasmus+ and the European Training Foundation (ETF); Europe for Citizens and Culture/Creative Europe programmes; the EU Programme for Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI) which has a component of entrepreneurship education, etc. Few potential **overlaps** were alleged by some interviewees (e.g. in the case of strategic partnerships) but without any concrete examples³⁶⁰.

The integration of the programme has also enhanced the external coherence in removing certain overlaps³⁶¹. Insights on the coherence of the programme against other EU level programmes were gained from both a majority of EU level interviews and the vast majority of agency and OPC³⁶² respondents. Those provided examples of (potential) synergies or overlaps, confirming desk research and benchmarking.

Examples of external complementarities, synergies or overlaps

| Complementarities | Synergies | Overlaps |
|--|--|--|
| With the European Social Fund (ESF), Youth Employment initiative | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - International visits, transfer of good practice from abroad, the training of teachers, etc are supported by the ESF. Topics which are dealt with include digital education, language training, and recognition of results from formal and informal learning, cooperation between schools and employers, etc (KPMG³⁶³) - Former LLP 'People on the labour market' initiative is now run through ESF, providing mobility opportunities for people after studies. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A number of projects under the operational programme 'Employment, Human Resources and Social Cohesion' are co-funded by the ESF, the Youth Employment Initiative and Erasmus+ (CY). - In Latvia, Erasmus+ and the ESIF in the field of education and science are managed by the same Ministry, helping to increase synergies. (KPMG) - In Sweden, the ESF is used to fund measures in preparation and as a follow-up on the Erasmus+ | <p><i>"For example, why does ESF funds projects to establish placement/internship structures if Erasmus+ has done so for the past 10 years (and beyond)?"</i></p> <p>NB: This might not necessarily be an overlap, as Erasmus+ supports transnational activities, whereas the ESF focuses on activities implemented in a national context.</p> |

³⁵⁹ Workshop DG REGIO/KPMG, 18 November 2016, organised in the context of the study mentioned below

³⁶⁰ Existing or potential synergies were most often reported than overlaps across the nine programmes discussed. In the OPC, only one EU level organisation identified overlaps between Erasmus+ and national funds in education and training, in particular in the case of Germany (DAAD funds for joint degree programmes) and Norway (national travel support for outgoing mobility). One organisation was concerned about potential overlaps between Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps. ICF, NRS 4.2

³⁶¹ Mobility of doctoral researchers to/from partner countries, which overlapped with Marie Skłodowska-Curie actions

³⁶² 80% of respondents (n = 1485) believed that Erasmus+ does not overlap with other funding opportunities, compared to 3% of respondents who believed it 'fully overlaps'.

³⁶³ Study on the co-ordination and harmonisation of ESI Funds and other EU policies, DG REGIO/KPMG/Prognos, to be published in 2018

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | <p>mobility. Although Erasmus+ has a smaller budget, by combining the two funds, both objectives of labour mobility and labour market activation are better achieved. (KPMG)</p> <p>- Discussion between stakeholders of ESIF and Erasmus+ has increased in the Czech Republic since 2014. The Czech Ministry of Education has set up a centre (DZS) which co-ordinates EISF, Erasmus+, EQF, EQAVET or Europass. Beneficiaries find it easier to apply for Erasmus+; ESIF is only used to provide additional resources and authorities are trying to avoid financing the same beneficiaries twice. (KPMG)</p> | |
| With the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), INTERREG | | |
| | <p>- Some INTERREG projects prepare framework for mobility activities under Erasmus+ (e.g. Danish-German projects)</p> <p>- For instance, Erasmus+ supports mobility, whereas the ERDF support investments in infrastructure, such as the renovation of buildings. Due to these investments, Latvia became more attractive to students and academics from other Member States. (KPMG)</p> | ERDF is moving towards smart specialisation strategies for regions, which is related with training (ESF, Erasmus+). |
| With the Framework Programmes for Research and Innovation | | |
| On the international dimension of the previous programmes ³⁶⁴ , "the EU's approach to supporting higher education on the one hand and research and | <p><i>...and has created some synergies, for example:</i></p> <p>- Links between Erasmus Mundus and Tempus IV with the Seventh Framework</p> | <i>...However, formal and institutionalised attempts to connect the major programmes targeted at universities were very limited (they existed only in the case of ACP HE Institutions), and</i> |

³⁶⁴ Evaluation of the EU Development Co-operation Support to Higher Education in Partner Countries (2007-2014), (2017), Particip, LeA, ECDPM, Ecorys, already mentioned

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| <i>innovation on the other was complementary...</i> | <i>Programme (FP 7), the EU's main instrument for funding research; - Edulink's connection with the ACP Science & Technology Programme (ACP S&T)...</i> | <i>there is room (and demand) for creating more synergies."</i> |
| <i>"Erasmus+ complements Horizon 2020 very well [since the focus of each programme is rather complementary and partly intends to fulfil the same goals] e.g. Joint Master Degrees (Erasmus Mundus) in Erasmus+ and Joint Doctorates in Marie Curie Actions"</i> | The share of EU students in the EIT Label-programmes has slightly declined in recent years, which could be due to the alignment of the EIT programmes with Erasmus Mundus actions. (Interim evaluation of EIT) | Horizon 2020 (e.g. priority 6 on societal challenges) tackles same issues as Erasmus+, on larger scale but without synergy. For example, early school leaving was addressed in 20-30 projects under Horizon 2020 and with over 100 projects under Erasmus+. |
| With Young Entrepreneurs programme (EYE) | | |
| | Many EYE participants have gone through Erasmus mobility while they were students. Individuals are later more open to international mobility. | |

Source (where not mentioned otherwise): ICF, 5.3

Despite this promising picture, most of the examples supplied remained rather general. In particular, few examples were provided where ESF would have funded follow-up of Erasmus+ projects (KA2). More synergies should be encouraged between ESF and policy actions (KA3) for designated bodies. Considering the call for action set in the Erasmus+ legal basis³⁶⁵, some respondents suggest that communication between services in charge of given programmes could be strengthened at EU level. In particular, no clear example of dedicated coordination tools between EC services was reported.

At policy level, the topical coverage of the selected projects reviewed reveals a clear and **satisfactory alignment with different EU-level policies**³⁶⁶. Most interviewees (particularly at EU level) perceive Erasmus+ as supporting key EU policy agendas³⁶⁷, especially in education and training, similarly to its predecessors but **in a more streamlined manner**. Most of EU interviewees could confirm it with examples of complementarities. Out of the 80% of reviewed projects³⁶⁸ aimed at contributing to the main EU policies/strategic

³⁶⁵ Articles 3.2 (b) and 25 of Regulation (EU) No 1288/2013 define complementarity

³⁶⁶ Confirmed across the sources mentioned under this section by a high share of respondents or projects reviewed

³⁶⁷ Europe 2020* (for most interviewees), ET2020*(to a high extent), European Youth Strategy* (although perceived as a bit less visible), Copenhagen process and tools (often mentioned for VET), Modernisation of higher education agenda (strong consistency), EC Communications on 'New Skills Agenda for Europe'* or 'European higher education in the world'* (albeit both mentioned to a lesser extent), EU Work Plan for sport* (probably consistent although not as clear at national level as it is at EU level), etc. (*): *analysed through Desk Research*

³⁶⁸ ICF, Annex 10 (published) and 17 (not published)

documents analysed as part of desk research³⁶⁹, two-thirds focused on ET2020 topics, mainly **social inclusion**³⁷⁰. However, across the sampled projects, only a very small number focused on the Europe 2020 headline targets, despite these being the two first key indicators of Erasmus+³⁷¹. Lastly, the Jean Monnet projects reviewed appeared to be the least aligned, being perceived as too focussed on experts' needs³⁷².

| Examples of support to EU policy agenda | |
|---|--|
| - | ET2020 working groups (WG) : as per the reviewed ET2020 priorities for 2016-2018, the WGs have now a recurrent mandate to support and to follow-up the Erasmus+ KA3 policy experimentation. For instance, in 2016, synergies were found for the following topics: 'Strengthening teacher training and education by using the opportunities of new technologies' ; 'VET teachers and trainers in work-based learning/apprenticeship (VET)' ; 'Employment and Skills: validation of informal and non-formal learning in Education and Training', etc. |
| - | Building on the legacy of LLP, Erasmus+ support the review and implementation of several EU transparency and recognition tools , by (co-)funding the Secretariats and national bodies for ECVET and EQAVET, the Euroguidance network, the national Europass centres and EQF Coordination Points. |

Source: ICF, 5.3

Erasmus+ programme is also **coherent, to a high extent, with interventions pursued at national and international level** which have similar objectives. A vast majority of interviewees consider it to be overall well aligned with national priorities in all sectors. Benchmarking of comparable programmes³⁷³ but also National Reports³⁷⁴, interviews, agency survey and desk research did not detect any notable overlaps³⁷⁵ and provided interesting examples of complementarities at both levels. The area most often mentioned by VET interviewees in that respect is school and work-based learning. The higher education interviewees offered several examples of national-level programmes that show significant coherence with Erasmus+³⁷⁶.

The benchmarking confirmed a fair **alignment between Erasmus+ and national comparable programmes** in terms of objectives, target groups³⁷⁷ and duration of actions³⁷⁸.

³⁶⁹ Marked with an asterisk (*) in the footnote above. For instance, over half of the sport projects reviewed aligned with priority objectives listed in the EU Work Plan or sport. ICF, tab. 5.13

³⁷⁰ Only three of the 18 comparator programmes reviewed pay special attention to the participation of disadvantaged groups e.g. the Causeway programme, the Nordplus Higher Education and Adult programme programmes and the UK Sport's IDEALS programme in sport. Attention paid under Erasmus+ to widening participation was seen as complementary in most other cases.

³⁷¹ Early school leaving and Higher education attainment as per Annex 1 of Regulation (EU) No 1288/2013

³⁷² Project review, JMO beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries survey, desk review

³⁷³ Out of 58 national or international schemes shortlisted as supporting actions similar to those of Erasmus+, 18 were benchmarked against the programme. Action-wise, the vast majority support mobility. Several NAs run such programmes in parallel to Erasmus+ (ICF, Annexe 12).

³⁷⁴ NRS, 4.2

³⁷⁵ Few National reports (e.g. FR) mention cases where synergies could be improved. For instance, to avoid the duplication of similar tools at local level, the Europass could be made more flexible with a second part for information customised to local requirements.

³⁷⁶ Nordplus Higher Education (Nordic countries); CEEPUS (various countries); National Science Centre programmes (PL); Norway/EEA funds instrument (various countries), etc.

³⁷⁷ High alignment in higher education, VET and youth ; lower in school and adult education and in sport

³⁷⁸ ICF, tab. 5.15. For example, some comparator schemes, especially at the school level and in adult learning, offer much longer average mobility stays for the practitioners.

Although few overlaps were reported³⁷⁹ and efforts have already been made to clear them³⁸⁰, the existence of parallel funding opportunities³⁸¹ could likely be better communicated to the public at national level, considering the aforementioned call for action set in the legal basis. Indeed, despite the fact that several NAs run some schemes in parallel to Erasmus+, many beneficiary organisations and NA respondents³⁸² claimed they were not aware of any similar national support.

Countries themselves did not identify any specific overlaps between Erasmus+ and other national and international programmes, **but rather more synergies**. Erasmus+ is different from (inter)national initiatives in many respects³⁸³, e.g. wider number of beneficiaries and projects; wider geographical scope; different target groups or sectors than national initiatives; mobility for longer periods; no other initiatives in some smaller countries to support certain sectors (e.g. youth) or policy reform similar to Key Action 3. A few national reports even mention cases of synergies³⁸⁴.

Although aiming to achieve comparable goals in most cases³⁸⁵, **none of the national schemes reviewed can match the pan-European scope of Erasmus+**, not to mention its worldwide dimension, making it the best-placed programme to develop internationalisation. In most cases it is also more generous than other similar schemes. Furthermore **Erasmus+ offers some unique actions** that none of its comparators does (or, at least, not to the same extent), such as electronic support platforms (eTwinning, EPAL etc.), stakeholder dialogue or knowledge building for evidence-based policymaking. Over half of agency respondents strongly or rather agree that Erasmus+ is doing better than the latter in all five areas considered³⁸⁶. This can be regarded as a real added value of Erasmus+, as developed under the related section below.

³⁷⁹ 20% of OPC respondents considered that Erasmus+ is ‘fully’ or ‘partially’ overlapping with national funding opportunities (for student mobility or volunteering activities). However, most of them specified that even if there is a partial overlap, Erasmus+ is still very much required either due to: a lack of funding even with the overlap, different objectives of the funding even when targeted at the same beneficiaries or differences in geographical areas covered.

³⁸⁰ 54% of agency respondents declared their agency had taken specific actions to ensure complementarity between Erasmus+ and other programmes (e.g. joint events, information sessions)

³⁸¹ For mobility in education and training (DK, EE, CY, HU, FI, etc) or youth (EE)

³⁸² Case studies for the former; ICF, tab.5.16 for the latter

³⁸³ CY, EE, MT, NL, SI

³⁸⁴ FI, SE, NO. In Norway a number of VET schools, use Erasmus+ mobility strategically to offer students specialised training in a sub field that is not available at their own school or even in the country.

³⁸⁵ ICF, tab. 5.15. The level of alignment of goals is particularly high in formal education and relatively lower in the sport field.

³⁸⁶ Better alignment with EU policy priorities (especially in higher education and youth); broader geographical coverage; more opportunities for disadvantaged target groups (except in adult education); broader topic coverage; more funding for comparable activities.

5.4. Efficiency and simplification

When it comes to assessing the efficiency of the programme³⁸⁷, including in comparison to its predecessors, **the overall picture is positive**³⁸⁸, stemming from the analysis of 24 evaluation questions that cover the following areas:

- the cost-effectiveness of the main types of actions
- the efficiency of implementation and management modes
- the efficiency gains through changes in the integrated programme
- the efficiency of monitoring arrangements and measures to identify and prevent fraud and irregularities.

Overall the **costs of management for the EU of the entire programme are reasonable (6% of the Erasmus+ administrative and operational budget)**³⁸⁹. This is particularly clear when compared to other, much smaller, comparable national actions, which appear more costly (on average, 14% of their respective budget)³⁹⁰.

Most of respondents to the consultation believe that the **user-friendliness of the programme has improved over time**³⁹¹. However, work on simplification (e.g. online application forms) has already started in 2017. The level of dissatisfaction has decreased as of 2016 after a steep learning curve.

Nonetheless, **there is still room for improvement** in several features of the programme³⁹², especially concerning further simplification of procedures and tools (e.g. on-going development of e-forms), more flexibility on budget allocations, adjustment of the level of simplified grants as already proposed in 2017, as well as the reversal of the low success rates³⁹³ in some particular fields and sectors.

5.4.1. Cost-effectiveness

With regard to learning mobility of individuals under KA1, the relationship between the costs (*inputs*) and effects (*results and impacts*), indicates a **positive cost-effectiveness**³⁹⁴ **especially for learners but also for staff**³⁹⁵. Considering the positive outcomes identified above under "effectiveness", the costs per individual appear clearly reasonable. This is further supported below by the evidence of European added value of these types of actions, also compared to similar programmes reviewed at national level. The average cost of a mobility activity is

³⁸⁷ Efficiency considers the relationship between the resources used and the results of the programme with a view to maximise yield for given resource or minimise costs for a given output.

³⁸⁸ ICF, 7; NRS, 6; OPC, 3.4

³⁸⁹ This includes the operating grant for National Agencies as well as the administrative expenditure of the Commission and EACEA. In 2015, these management costs represented 19% of the budget managed directly by the Commission (mainly covering costs for the development of IT tools for NA as programme stakeholders), 10% for EACEA and 5% of the budget managed indirectly by NAs, which appears well in line with the different nature, complexity and volume of activities managed respectively at each level; ICF, 7.4, tab. 7.18

³⁹⁰ Share of administrative costs in comparator programmes, from 10% (EEA) to 20% (Causeway Ireland); ICF, fig. 7.15

³⁹¹ OPC, 3.4

³⁹² ICF, 7.1 and 7.2; NRS, 6.1; OPC, 3.4 and 5.1.4

³⁹³ Funded projects out of the total number of applications

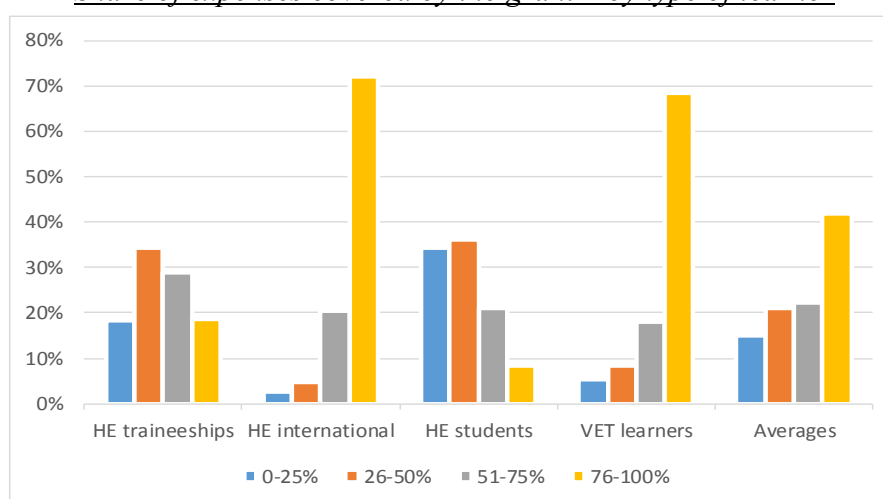
³⁹⁴ Cost-effectiveness analysis judges costs against the benefits achieved.

³⁹⁵ Although generally positive, more positive for learners than for staff: ICF, 7.3.4 and 7.3.5

1,500€ per learner (**15€ per day/learner**)³⁹⁶ and between 700€ and 900€ per staff member (**200€ per day/staff**)³⁹⁷. **An increase in costs per learner has been measured compared to the predecessor programme** as regards higher education (+9%) and VET (+1%)³⁹⁸. An increase in costs per staff member is similarly observed in higher education (+22%), adult education (+19%) and VET (+2%), while a decrease is noted in the case of school staff (-6%)³⁹⁹. Although the impact of a mobility activity is more significant by nature for learners than for staff, the effects on staff also create positive spill-over effects at the level of the organisations/institutions as well as on the learners who are not necessarily taking part in mobility activities. Hence, **the overall ratio of costs versus effects can be considered positive in all cases**. There is also an European added value of the programme actions for staff as for learners, since the comparison with national programmes is favourable for Erasmus+, as demonstrated below under "added value".

As the grant amounts mentioned above may appear low, the degree to which these grants cover expenses incurred has been examined. On average **for 42% of KA1 learners the Erasmus+ grant covered most of expenses** (76-100%), but as the graph shows below, wide differences are made between learner categories⁴⁰⁰. Erasmus+ is successful in leveraging complementary funding from national or regional budgets⁴⁰¹.

Share of expenses covered by the grant – by type of learner



³⁹⁶ Although the format of the mobility activities is quite standardised, the differences in average grant support are determined by several factors, such as the average duration of a typical activity, the contribution to higher subsistence costs in the case of staff mobility as well as the contribution to travel costs, which are normally higher in the case of mobility activities from or to Partner Countries. The cost-effectiveness of learner mobility is clearly shown when comparing the low costs to the results identified (see section on effectiveness). The costs per learner vary between roughly 900€ in the youth sector and 4700€ in the higher education international sector (average cost: 1,500€ per learner). The costs per day of mobility vary between 10€ in HE sector (programme countries) and 60€ in VET (15€ on average per mobile learner per day).

³⁹⁷ The cost effectiveness of staff mobility is also positive though the judgement is more nuanced. The average costs per mobile member of staff is between 700€ and 900€. The costs are lowest in HE (programme countries) and highest in higher education international. The costs per day of mobile member of staff are around 200€ (ranging between 100€ in youth and close to or more than 300€ in adult education, schools and higher education international).

³⁹⁸ IFC, tab. 7.7

³⁹⁹ IFC, tab. 7.10

⁴⁰⁰ The Erasmus+ grant covered the majority of expenses for HE international students (e.g. Erasmus Mundus scholarship is intended to cover all costs: travel, master participation, subsistence) and VET students (72% and 68% respectively), whereas this was the case for only 19% of HE trainees (whom are paid/ compensated by their employers) and 8% HE students (as the grant is not expected to cover all costs of living, but only the additional costs of mobility abroad).

⁴⁰¹ 9 to 15% of participating learners do not receive a grant from the programme (i.e. so called zero grant beneficiaries), which suggest an additional added value of the programme and a spill-over effect; ICF, 7.3.6

On the other hand, the conclusion is more nuanced as regards the **cost-effectiveness of cooperation projects**. This is because there are a **variety of multilayer effects** having a significant impact on the solid assessment of cost-effectiveness⁴⁰³. These include differentiated budget items, as well as variations between their types and sizes across and within sectors (around 180,000€ per project on average)⁴⁰⁴. In spite of efforts made for this evaluation, the conclusion on cost-effectiveness for cooperation projects cannot be generalised as for mobility activities. Although quantitatively, the cost-effectiveness ratio can seem positive at first sight (*widened participation, multiple layers of effects*), on a more qualitative note, there are elements that can be improved in terms of efficiency of implementation (*application process*) and effectiveness (*quality of project outputs*)⁴⁰⁵. As a general trend, cooperation projects seem to be very well designed and conceived at application stage although they are not able to keep the same level of excellence at the implementation stage. The majority of projects receive indeed lower quality scores on completion than at application stage. In contrast, given the relatively **low costs of collaborative platforms** for the EU, these types of actions appear as particularly cost-effective.

5.4.2. Size of budget

Budget envelopes for most of the sectors were regarded as insufficient⁴⁰⁶ and strongly correlated to low success rates⁴⁰⁷. In some actions or countries, this had led to a discouragement of applicants over the first years of implementation of Erasmus+. The potential of the programme for broader organisational and system level effects, as discussed under "effectiveness", could be enhanced by reaching a critical mass across all the fields of education, training and youth.

The **demand largely exceeds the funding available**. In KA2 the competition and the scores for successful projects are high⁴⁰⁸, which makes it more difficult for organisations with no or little experience to access the programme. Given the increased demand for the cooperation projects, the **budget allocated to KA2 and KA3 did not appear to be sufficient yet in absolute terms**. Even in KA1, success rates can be low depending on countries and actions, meaning that more learners could benefit from the programme if there were more funds

⁴⁰² The participants who did not receive grant (about 8,5%) are also included into these results.

⁴⁰³ ICF, 7.3.5 and 7.3.6

⁴⁰⁴ Depending on the year chosen the average project size varies from 160,000€ to 200,000€. The smallest projects (around 55,000€) are in the youth sector while the largest ones in higher education and VET (250,000€ to 270,000€).

⁴⁰⁵ These aspects refer mostly to the following: a) "one size fits all" regarding application forms (KA2 mainly) that is not proportionate, meaning that small projects have to supply the same information as much larger ones; b) the ratio between complexity of forms compared to the type of results expected that is not balanced (in KA2 mainly); and c) low success rates vs complicated application forms. ICF, 7.1 and 7.4; NRS, 6.1.2 and OPC, 3.4

⁴⁰⁶ The European Parliament (CULT committee) study, 2016, *Erasmus+: decentralised implementation - first experience* found that the views of the national agencies on the adequacy of programme funding to be almost equally split. The concern of insufficient budget size is also confirmed by the review of National Agencies' reports. The insufficiency of budget was mentioned in 67 of the 2007-2013 NA reports, the most problematic being Grundtvig. Over 2014-2015, the second most frequent problem reported by the national level related to the insufficiency of budget, especially for KA2. Two NAs suggested a greater flexibility in budget transfers. Only 51% of OPC respondents (strongly) agreed that the budget of the Erasmus+ Programme is sufficient to achieve the objectives set for the Programme (n = 584). ICF, 7.2.3

⁴⁰⁷ For instance, from 3% (Not-for-profit European sport Events), 4% (Knowledge Alliances) or 15% (Strategic Partnerships for Youth) to 43% (Jean Monnet strand) in 2014. However, the 2016 selection resulted in improved success rates; e.g. 31% for Strategic Partnerships for Schools; ICF, tab. 4.10 for full data.

⁴⁰⁸ No KA2 selection was above 25% rate over 2014-15.

available⁴⁰⁹. Without prejudice to negotiations on the next Multi Financial Framework, the evaluation, including the public consultation, points to the need for reconsidering the budget envelope and the need for reviewing the budgetary distribution between programme sectors to have a better alignment to their relative effectiveness. However, there is no evidence that seriously questions the current overall balance between Key Actions. The vast majority of respondents to the consultation agreed with the current budget distribution between the three Key Actions set in the Erasmus+ Regulation⁴¹⁰.

5.4.3. Implementation modes and user-friendliness

The division of responsibilities, as inherited from predecessor programmes, between the Commission, National Authorities, National Agencies and EACEA, is overall **clear and fit for purpose**⁴¹¹. It has not significantly changed over the two programming periods, if it was not for the decentralisation of the management of the higher education international (non-EU) programmes and some changes in the level of management of certain types of cooperation projects. The only outstanding challenge stems from the rigidity inherent to the addition of the development-related requirements of the EU external cooperation funds which are also used to promote the international dimension of higher education⁴¹². This requires a complicated management of multiple small budget envelopes with different rules at decentralised level and a disproportionate effort compared to the numbers of beneficiaries⁴¹³.

The guiding role of the Commission with regard to the programme management has been acknowledged by 63% of agencies, due to efforts made in terms of coordination and communication. However, many National Agencies expressed a need for EACEA to enhance its cooperation with the national level.

Above all, there is a **general call for further simplification** of the management IT tools. Lowering the burden of the application procedure through redefining the type as well as the volume of information required depending on the actions of the programme and making better use of the reporting system (see below) would contribute to continued improvement of the programme's implementation⁴¹⁴.

5.4.4. Efficiency gains and simplification through changes in the integrated programme

Overall, **efficiency gains were acknowledged by a majority of countries**⁴¹⁵, **sectors**⁴¹⁶ **and most of National Agencies**⁴¹⁷. In general, countries recognised a certain simplification of administrative procedures, while participants expressed concerns about application and reporting.

⁴⁰⁹ ICF, 7.1; NRS, 6.1.1 and OPC, 3.4

⁴¹⁰ 71% of OPC respondents (strongly) agreed that this distribution is appropriate (n = 480).

⁴¹¹ 80% of OPC respondents (n = 497) believe that the distribution of Erasmus+ Programme activities between centralised (through EACEA) and decentralised management (through National Agencies) is effective.

⁴¹² See above background section about the different external instruments

⁴¹³ ICF, 7.4.4 and 7.5

⁴¹⁴ ICF, 7.1 and 7.4

⁴¹⁵ In 19 countries a positive opinion seems to prevail (BE, BG, EE, IE, EL, ES, FR, IT, CY, HU, PL, PT, SI, SE, UK, IS, FY, CH, TR). In 6 other countries, stakeholders see insufficient efficiency gains or no gains overall (CZ, LT, MT, NL, RO, SK, FI). In a few countries, national authorities report different opinions depending on the NA, sector or key action; ICF, 7.5 and NRS, 6.3

⁴¹⁶ It is evidenced through a number of National Reports that the youth sector received least well the changes in the programme, claiming the new youth chapter to be less efficient than the Youth in Action Programme. NRS, 6.3

⁴¹⁷ 79% of agencies states that they have seen efficiency gains compared to predecessor programmes. Nearly two in five say they have seen large efficiency gains; ICF, fig. 7.19

Due to the **lack of time for adjustment between the adoption and the entry into force** of the legal basis (i.e. less than 3 months) and for business continuity reason (e.g. the constraints of the academic year), all players (the European Commission, the implementing bodies of the programme and a large spectrum of programme stakeholders) had to go through a **challenging inception phase** to adapt to the many novelties of Erasmus+ over the first two years of its implementation. This was mainly due to the late adoption of the Erasmus+ Regulation (end of 2013), coupled with the necessity to implement the majority of the actions already by the first trimester of 2014⁴¹⁸, which significantly reduced the time for the Commission, the National agencies and the Executive Agency to put in place the necessary normative framework and technical infrastructure to implement the programme smoothly. The new architecture of the programme, although it is now positively valued, led to an overhaul of previous administrative rules, definition of new criteria and new ways of operating. A new generation of IT tools has replaced the previous one and new automated support has been introduced for a number of management tasks.

National agencies and authorities recognised that initial challenges were gradually overcome and that there has been a steep learning curve with substantial efficiency improvement and simplification over the period 2014-2016. The challenge of digitalisation that was put in practice through the online management of applications and reports is a case in point, and so is the generalisation of simplified grants⁴¹⁹. The programme management has now reached cruising speed.

On the **positive side**, different stakeholders and countries have acknowledged the difference made with the introduction of: a) simplified forms of grants, mainly lump sums and unit costs⁴²⁰, b) uniform application forms, c) digitalised application procedure⁴²¹, d) possibility to apply as an institution instead of as a participant, and e) a single website to get easier access to all programme information

On the **negative side** some other stakeholders and countries did not consider that the integrated programme makes it easier for potential applicants to understand the funding opportunities and even claimed that the standardised approaches (e.g. applications, reporting) made work more time consuming than in the past⁴²². Although acknowledging some administrative simplification introduced with Erasmus+, according to National Reports⁴²³, participants express concerns about too complex application and reporting procedures. For instance, beneficiaries responded that forms tend to be repetitive and some questions are quite long and difficult to interpret.

⁴¹⁸ The first deadline for submitting grant proposals for mobility and cooperation actions under Erasmus+ was 1 February 2014

⁴¹⁹ Study *Mid-term review of simplified grants used in the Erasmus+ programme*, DG EAC/PPMI, July 2017

⁴²⁰ **Simplified grants** gave overall satisfaction to both National Agencies and projects' coordinators. They have reduced their workload, simplified budget planning, as well as project management and reporting. They give more flexibility to participants, who can manage what they receive according to their needs. Most respondents advocated against any major changes in the funding rules, due to efforts that were required to adjust to the current system. It has nevertheless been suggested adjusting the level rates in some cases, especially for the longest distance bands, as well as introducing a number of fine-tuning changes. See for specific evaluation findings: Study *Mid-term review of simplified grants used in the Erasmus+ programme*, DG EAC/PPMI, July 2017

⁴²¹ 92% of OPC respondents (strongly) agreed that the digitalisation of Erasmus+ is a progress (n = 338), and 89% that the user-friendliness of IT tools in the Erasmus+ Programme has improved over time (n = 597), in particular as from 2016, when IT tools were substantially streamlined.

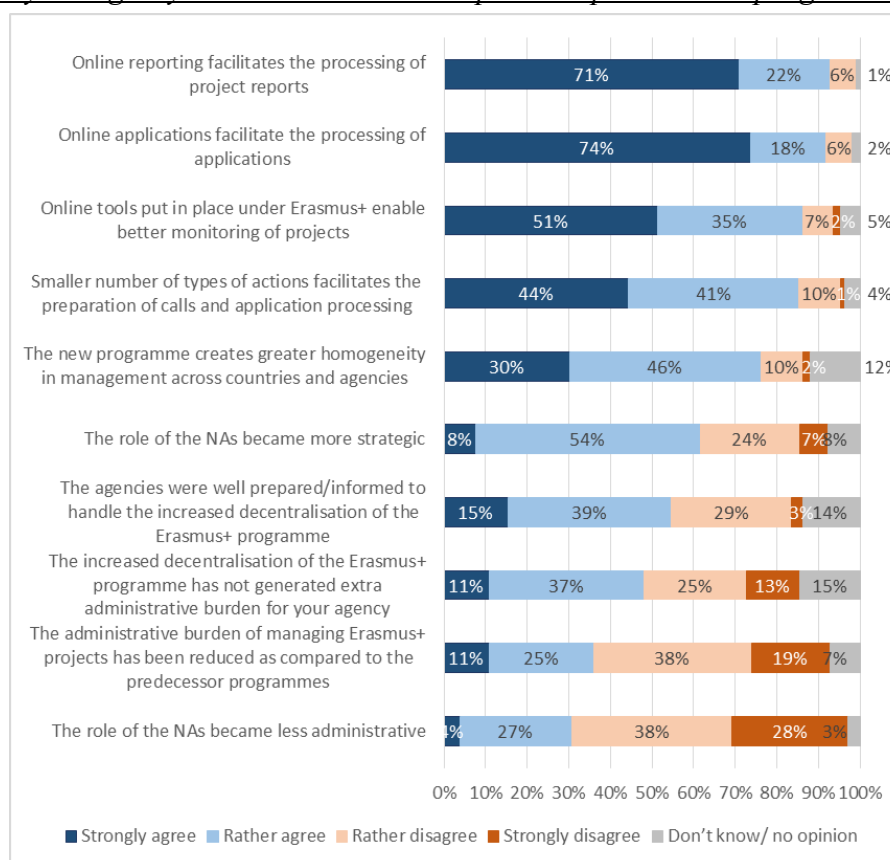
⁴²² 31% of agency respondents (rather/strongly) disagree that the integrated programme makes it easier for potential applicants to understand the funding opportunities. This negative sentiment is corroborated by several key interviews. A majority of interviewees (national) claimed that the standardised approaches (e.g. applications, reporting) make work much time consuming than in the past. Benefits were however pointed by several interviewees.

⁴²³ BE, BG, CZ, DK, DE, EE, IE, EL, ES, FR, HR, IT, CY, LU, HU, MT, LT, LV, NL, AT, PT, RO, SK, FI, SE, UK, IS, FY, LI, NO, CH, TR.

Overall there are a number of areas that **need further improvement and simplification**, such as: a) better **field-customisation** of the unified procedures, b) further simplification of the **application and reporting** procedures, c) making the programme more **accessible to smaller organisations**⁴²⁴, d) decreasing the time required for project management, especially in KA2⁴²⁵, and e) making the terminology used **more user-friendly**⁴²⁶.

In comparison with the previous programmes, the main changes which agencies associate with **efficiency gains** are **online applications and reporting** as well as the fact that there is a smaller diversity of types of actions to manage. However, the agencies are not very positive about the evolution of their own administrative workload. There is also **room for improvement** concerning the lowering of the administrative burden, as shown in the graph below⁴²⁷.

To what extent do you agree with the following statements about efficiency gains for your agency under Erasmus + compared to predecessor programmes?



Source: Survey of programme agencies

The rationale of the **economies of scale** expected from the consolidation of several programmes into one was that an integrated programme with fewer but bigger actions/projects

⁴²⁴ Regarding the performance of success rates, country reports (BENL, CZ, DE, EE, EL, ES, FR, HR, IT, CY, LT, HU, MT, NL, AT, PL, PT, RO, SK, SE, UK, FY, CH, TR) alert that success rates are very low in some of the actions and fields. Success rates appear to be particularly low in KA2, the youth field and adult education sectors.

⁴²⁵ Administrative procedures in KA2 are perceived particularly time-consuming (DK, LT, LV, HU, MT, NL, AT, LI, CH).

⁴²⁶ For instance, in the context of school education, references to "innovation", "intellectual outputs" and "multiplier events" cannot be expected to be well understood by stakeholders

⁴²⁷ ICF, 7.5

would be simpler to administer, while the use of unit costs would further drive the management costs down. If the model proposed in 2011 by the Commission to have a single National Agency per programme country had been adopted in 2013, it would have allowed according to estimates "to reach a cumulative effect of these simplifications to a productivity increase of around 40%"⁴²⁸. This objective however could not be a target for Erasmus+, as most countries continued to manage the programme through several National Agencies.

Management fees for NAs – LLP, Youth in Action and Erasmus+ (% of overall funding)

| | Management fees of NAs | | | | Total budget | | | | | | Annual increase | NAs fees as % of all budget | NAs fees as % of full LLP and YIA budget | Annual increase in management fees | Annual increase in budget |
|-------|------------------------|------------|---------------------|------------|---------------|-------------|----------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|---------------|-----------------|-----------------------------|--|------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| | LLP | YIA | sub-total LLP + YIA | Erasmus + | LLP | YIA | Erasmus Mundus | Other HEI programmes* | sub-total all predecessors | Erasmus + | | | | | |
| 2,016 | | | | 72,791,670 | | | | | | 2,229,266,699 | 7% | 3.27% | | 6% | 7% |
| 2,015 | | | | 68,717,000 | | | | | | 2,074,017,831 | 2% | 3.31% | | 5% | 2% |
| 2,014 | | | | 65,389,999 | | | | | | 2,033,366,330 | 10% | 3.22% | | 6% | 10% |
| 2,013 | 51,292,000 | 10,578,000 | 61,870,000 | | 1,395,926,941 | 211,000,000 | 111,423,622 | 128,801,407 | 1,847,151,970 | | 7% | 3.35% | 3.85% | 11% | 7% |
| 2,012 | 45,665,000 | 10,237,100 | 55,902,100 | | 1,362,137,516 | 170,000,000 | 107,308,604 | 86,855,371 | 1,726,301,491 | | 15% | 3.24% | 3.65% | 6% | 15% |
| 2,011 | 42,944,000 | 10,036,000 | 52,980,000 | | 1,193,068,189 | 150,567,720 | 97,090,052 | 64,534,783 | 1,505,260,744 | | | 3.52% | 3.94% | | |

Source: ICF calculations based on a review of annual work programmes (% of overall funding)

The **management costs of National Agencies** compared to the programme value are **smaller than under predecessor programmes**, when looking at LLP and Youth in Action. The comparison looks inevitably less positive when taking into account the overall budgets of predecessor international higher education programmes (*Erasmus Mundus, Tempus, etc.*), as their complexity reduces the average efficiency of Erasmus+. This is because the decentralised actions with partner countries have specific criteria and 12 different budget envelopes within the EU external relations funds. In any case, the comparison is not a simple one. There are important limitations in assessing the change of management fees: a) the base is not comparable between 2007-2013 and 2014-2016, as some actions that used to be grants managed by National Agencies have been moved to agencies' core budget and b) the comparison with management costs of the Executive Agency is not available since EACEA used to manage all international higher education mobility actions, of which an important share has been decentralised to National Agencies.

Nonetheless **more efficiency gains are still expected to materialise**, as the Erasmus+ budget will increase in the second half of the programming period whereas the management costs will proportionally decrease. It is therefore too early to conclude at mid-term and the actual cumulative effect on efficiency will have to be measured after 2020.

5.4.5. Monitoring mechanisms

The programme **monitoring has seen major improvements with Erasmus+** compared to the predecessor programmes. Much more qualitative (e.g. beneficiary surveys showing results beyond outputs) and comprehensive data is now available (e.g. international HE mobility being now covered as well)⁴²⁹. Data is also more systematically used and disseminated

⁴²⁸ *Erasmus+ Impact Assessment*, Commission Staff Working Paper, SEC(2011) 1402 of 23.11.2011

⁴²⁹ See respective sections on method and effectiveness, as well as annex 3

through new tools dedicated to Erasmus+, namely an on-line *Dashboard* for internal management purpose and an *Annual Report* for public accountability purpose⁴³⁰.

Erasmus+ was expected to have a **much clearer performance-based management** than predecessor programmes and indeed arrangements have been put in place to allow regular monitoring: **key performance indicators** have been defined in the legal basis as well as in DG EAC's *Strategic Plan*⁴³¹, data is collected on ongoing basis in relation to most of these indicators and targets have been set⁴³².

However, as partly discussed in the section on effectiveness, to lower the **reporting burden on beneficiaries**⁴³³, there is room for improvement when it comes to: a) clarity and relevance of some output indicators, as well as of the quality of the data⁴³⁴, b) robustness of the self-reported results indicators, c) proportionality between the related burden on beneficiaries and the actual use of the data, d) balance of monitoring efforts according to types of action, e) user-friendliness and further inter-operability of IT tools⁴³⁵, f) and promotion of truly performance-based management at the level of programme agencies. At Commission's level, the reporting is used primarily for accountability; greater use of the information should be made for programme monitoring and continuous improvement purposes⁴³⁶.

When looking at comparable national programmes, the monitoring arrangements of Erasmus+ are nevertheless **in line with existing practices** and perform well, given the size of the programme⁴³⁷. Availability of objective data for results (e.g. based on actual pre-post language proficiency assessment through the OLS), as well as availability of large volume of self-reported feedback collected through systematic beneficiary surveys are two areas in which Erasmus+ monitoring practice can even be considered better than that of other national comparable programmes⁴³⁸.

Overall, the **monitoring mechanisms are effective** when it comes to providing an up-to-date view of programme implementation to the Commission, the agencies and national authorities but also to the general public, in particular via the Erasmus+ Project results platform⁴³⁹, as discussed under "dissemination". However, there is **less evidence of the use of the data for management and planning** purposes, which may be due to the fact that the monitoring arrangements have only been enhanced since a couple of years⁴⁴⁰.

⁴³⁰ http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/about/statistics_en

⁴³¹ https://ec.europa.eu/info/publications/strategic-plan-2016-2020-education-and-culture_en

⁴³² See annex 5e reporting on all output and result indicators from the legal basis

⁴³³ Disproportionately more information is collected for KA1 compared to other Key Actions; ICF, 7.6.1

⁴³⁴ E.g. various definitions of disadvantaged learners or why is country coverage is relevant indicator for Jean Monnet

⁴³⁵ As a legacy of the past, several IT tools co-exist supporting various monitoring functions, such as control and detection of irregularities, accountability and transparency, as well as programme management. See annex 3 for description of tools

⁴³⁶ Only anecdotic examples have been found of agencies that take ownership of the data available and use it for their own purposes of management and evaluation; ICF, 7.6

⁴³⁷ Looking at the comparator schemes, the level of monitoring is highly variable. For instance, four programmes collect feedback from the participants (*CEEPUS*, *CTEP*, *Denmark-USA programme*, *German-French elementary school teacher exchange*); others gather regular annual monitoring data (*AKTION*). Some perform regular evaluations, for example, the *IACOBUS Programme* started in 2014 and its activities in 2014-2015 have already been evaluated. The final evaluation of the *International Inspiration Programme* (2007-2014) was conducted by an independent evaluator. *Prämienprogramm* has annual reports for 2013 and 2014 and was audited by the German Federal Court of Auditors.

⁴³⁸ ICF, 7.6.5

⁴³⁹ <http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/projects>

⁴⁴⁰ ICF, 7.6.1

5.4.6. Anti-fraud measures

Overall there is a **limited scope for fraud** in the types of actions carried out under the programme. The main concerns are project coordinators failing to honour obligations to other partners, and possible multiple submissions of project applications.

According to the programme legal basis, a system of controls has been in place to prevent fraud and irregularities at the EU and national levels⁴⁴¹. The number of fraud cases reported is **very low compared to the scale of the programme**, with agencies proceeding to recover the necessary amounts⁴⁴². The vast majority of National Agencies (71%) consider that the measures are fully sufficient⁴⁴³. Therefore the **anti-fraud strategy in vigour is considered appropriate**.

A few agency respondents made suggestions, such as using IT-tools to verify plagiarism⁴⁴⁴. As the programme moves to its later phases, more checks could be performed on the accumulated population of grants. In any case, the ratio of administrative burden compared to the low number of cases reported and the money recovered is to be carefully considered.

⁴⁴¹ Guide for National Agencies: Implementing the Erasmus + programme

⁴⁴² No more than one or two cases per country in average and an overall low error rate indicated through primary checks of less than 1%, in line with the predecessor programmes (DG EAC's Annual Activity Report 2016).

⁴⁴³ ICF, fig. 7.23

⁴⁴⁴ ICF, 7.7

5.5. European added value

The evaluation highlights the **strong European added value**⁴⁴⁵ of EU programmes in the fields of education, training and youth⁴⁴⁶.

The additional benefit of Erasmus+ was compared to what could be achieved at regional, national or other international level (see 5.5.1), to what was achieved by EU predecessor programmes (see 5.5.2) as well as to what would be the most likely consequences of discontinuing the programme (see 5.5.3).

The European added value of Erasmus+ has been informed by 6 evaluation questions and assessed against the following criteria that examined to what extent Erasmus+ supports:

- a scale of actions between countries which would not otherwise be achieved (*volume effects*);
- target groups or sectors that would not be otherwise covered (*scope effects*);
- processes which participating countries translate further into their own practice (*process effects*)
- cooperation between programme countries (*integration effects*)
- innovation which would not be otherwise mainstreamed so widely (*innovation effects*);

5.5.1. European added value as compared to what could be achieved at regional, national or other international level

Firstly, two evidence sources show **clear added value of the programme due to its strong volume effects**⁴⁴⁷, except in the cases of the Student Loan Guarantee Facility⁴⁴⁸, sport⁴⁴⁹ and Jean Monnet activities⁴⁵⁰. The programme manages to reach out to substantially more learners, staff and organisations than all comparable programmes reviewed taken together, as well as groups that are much more rarely covered otherwise. The benchmarking analysis shows in particular that the scale of Erasmus+ is much bigger than that of other comparable schemes reviewed in the fields of education, training, youth and sport. There are only few other actions that support credit mobility and they are of a much smaller scale⁴⁵¹. In terms of "market share", it is likely that Erasmus+ represents about half of credit mobility in EU higher education⁴⁵². It is also likely that the share of Erasmus+ in VET mobility is significant,

⁴⁴⁵ **European added value** analysis looks for changes due to the EU programme over and above what could reasonably have been expected from actions by other players let alone or from no action at all. It draws on the findings of the other evaluation criteria, to conclude whether the programme is still justified.

⁴⁴⁶ ICF, 8; NRS 7; OPC 3.5

⁴⁴⁷ The assessment of volume effects is mostly based on the benchmarking of Erasmus+ against comparator programmes and the agency survey.

⁴⁴⁸ For the Student **L**oan Guarantee Facility (SLGF), the European added value has not yet reached its full potential given the very limited scale of the action at the time of this evaluation.

⁴⁴⁹ In the **s**port sector, the assessment of European added value is made difficult by the fact that the strand is too recent. Another challenge is the fact that limited funding appears spread over too many different issues.

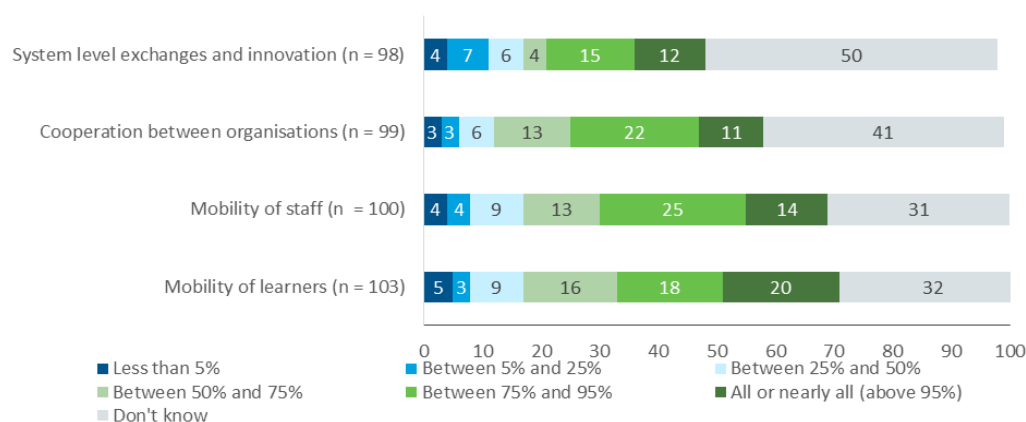
⁴⁵⁰ The European added value of **J**ean **M**onnet activities has declined over the years since the programme was initially launched, as the volume of research and teaching about the EU grew and has become a common practice in higher education within the EU. This growth cannot be related to Jean Monnet funding as this represents only a small share of research and teaching activities. There is however potential for greater European added value targeting other audiences which have fewer opportunities to learn about the EU.

⁴⁵¹ ICF, fig. 8.3: The comparable programmes comprise from 10 to 3,522 participants each.

⁴⁵² In 2015 the total number of EU higher education student who benefitted from *degree* mobility had reached 331,078 (Source: Eurostat (2017), Degree mobile graduates from abroad, figure lacks input for Spain, Greece and Poland. Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-datasets/-/educ_uae_mobg01). Higher education learner *credit* mobility

although available data is not of sufficient quality to calculate it⁴⁵³. Most respondents from National Agencies consider that Erasmus+ funds more than 75% of actions of a given type, as illustrated below⁴⁵⁴.

Perceived market share of Erasmus+ (number of responses)



Source: Survey of programme agencies

Secondly, three evidence sources point to the conclusion that **Erasmus+ scope effects are significant**⁴⁵⁵. Comparable national and international actions do exist (e.g. bilateral programmes, philanthropic actions, etc.) but these are more focused on mobility than on cooperation actions⁴⁵⁶. The Erasmus+ programme covers fields rarely covered by other international interventions except in higher education. Only in the latter sector was it possible for two-thirds of National Agencies to identify a number of comparable although much smaller programmes⁴⁵⁷. For all other fields or types of actions less than half of respondents could identify comparators⁴⁵⁸.

Erasmus+ has its own and unique boosting effect on mobility and cooperation in every field it targets. The findings from programme benchmarking⁴⁵⁹ and agencies' survey (see fig.

supported by Erasmus+ that year had reached nearly the same number (301,267 individual students). As these two modes are mutually exclusive it can be assumed that there were around 650,000 mobile students in total. However this calculation is only rough as the Eurostat data covers full degree mobility and not credit mobility. There is no comparable data about mobility for staff nor for students in other sectors. "Identifying mobile students, as well as their types of learning mobility, is a key challenge for developing international education statistics since current international and national statistical systems only report domestic educational activities undertaken within national boundaries" (OECD, Education at a Glance 2017).

⁴⁵³ A pilot study on IVET and general youth learning mobility (Eurostat, 2015) estimated that roughly 3% of VET learners from 16 countries (estimated as about 320,000 learners by ICF) benefit from mobility actions, but the study acknowledges that the data is not of sufficiently good quality to be extrapolated. ICF, 8.2.2.2: Erasmus+ supported around 150,000 VET learners in these 16 countries over the first three years (common duration of VET studies).

⁴⁵⁴ Only when looking at system level actions a relatively high number of agency respondents thought the share of Erasmus+ was below 50%

⁴⁵⁵ Based on the agency survey, data about student mobility in general as well as data on comparable programmes

⁴⁵⁶ Out of the 58 comparable programmes shortlisted for benchmarking purpose, 2/3 supported mobility, while only 1/3 supported cooperation actions.

⁴⁵⁷ ICF, fig. 8.1

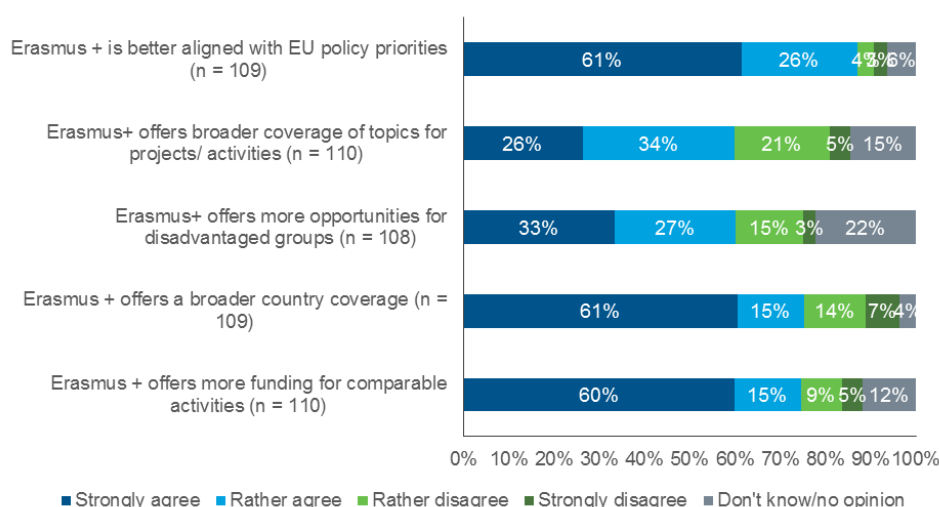
⁴⁵⁸ The agencies were asked about their awareness of other comparable interventions. The results as regards sectors shows that around two thirds of respondents were aware of comparable actions in HE, slightly less than half in SE or in the Youth sector, less than one third in AE, fewer in VET. As for types of action, 43% of respondents from National Agencies knew of similar programmes that covered mobility of learners; this share was only of 42% and 38% for mobility of practitioners and cooperation among organisations respectively.

⁴⁵⁹ Out of the total 58 benchmark programmes, around half cover SE, over 35% HE, below 20% VET or the Youth sector, 10% AE. Their target groups are students in nearly 80% of the 58 schemes, teachers at around 22%, youth at around 17% and adults only around 10%.

below) reinforce each other to provide a solid case in that respect. None of the comparable schemes combine as much as Erasmus+, in terms of country, sector as well as action coverage. Moreover with a dedicated strand (KA3) since 2014, the EU programme encompasses system level cooperation actions that are very rarely supported by other programmes.

In addition, the evaluated EU programmes show **specific added value to the benefit of disadvantaged groups** whose opportunities for mobility largely result from the EU intervention, more than from national initiatives. This is all the more true in the youth and sport fields where there are fewer comparable programmes⁴⁶⁰. Over two thirds of the agency respondents agreed with the notion that Erasmus+ offered more opportunities for disadvantaged groups in comparison to other similar schemes. In all comparable fields, Erasmus+ stands out as having the largest and most inclusive outreach⁴⁶¹.

Comparison between Erasmus+ and other comparable initiatives



Source: Survey of agencies

Both **volume and scope effects magnify the impacts** of the programme as detailed above.

Thirdly, there are clear examples that the **evaluated EU programmes have influenced other comparable programmes both in terms of process or types of actions** supported.

At national level, **Erasmus+ and its predecessors have contributed to shaping the framework for student and staff mobility or youth exchanges across Europe**⁴⁶². For instance, quality frameworks - in particular the concept of a European Quality Charter for Mobility introduced first for higher education and extended to VET due to its success - are also used for national schemes⁴⁶³. Best practices of EU programme management are often reported to be transferred to national programmes⁴⁶⁴. Other comparable actions sometimes follow the same rules⁴⁶⁵ as Erasmus+. Generally speaking, among National Agencies which manage programmes other than Erasmus+, 71% of respondents acknowledge a spill over

⁴⁶⁰ Only 1 out of 6 benchmarking programmes had specific measures addressing the needs of disadvantaged groups. Only 3% were directed at the sport field.

⁴⁶¹ See sections on effectiveness and relevance about the share of participants with a disadvantaged background

⁴⁶² E.g. At EU level, the "Bologna process" for HE or the "Copenhagen process" for VET. At national level, the European concept of youth exchanges has inspired for instance the national programme "Youth meetings".

⁴⁶³ E.g. The quality assurance and administration of Nordplus mobilities (among DK, EE, LV, LT, FI, SE, IS, NO) are inspired by Erasmus+.

⁴⁶⁴ E.g. accessibility grants for participants with special needs (NordPlus Higher Education)

⁴⁶⁵ E.g. Erasmus Belgica (among BE-de, BE-fr, BE-nl) follows the same rules as Erasmus+.

effect from the EU programmes under review to their own interventions⁴⁶⁶. These are good examples of unintended positive effects of the evaluated programmes. Furthermore, 91% of respondents to the public consultation strongly agreed or agreed that lessons learnt from the Erasmus+ actions (which they were most aware of) are being applied elsewhere. In particular, processes established to manage mobility have been mainstreamed into other national and European interventions.

Several spill-over effects on process have also been identified at EU level. Erasmus for young entrepreneurs shares comparable approaches with Erasmus+ mobility. Schemes launched recently, such as the European Solidarity Corps⁴⁶⁷ or the EU AID scheme for volunteers in humanitarian aid⁴⁶⁸, follow similar selection principles as the European Voluntary Service (EVS).

Fourthly, as discussed in the effectiveness section, the network analysis showed that there are overall **increasingly good levels of integration and cooperation between programme countries** with some that were initially more peripheral moving to more central positions. Trends in interconnections show that the programme is not necessarily dominated by large countries. From a systemic perspective, the greatest added value comes from cooperation at the level of staff and organisations and that of policy makers and stakeholders. As regards the latter, many Open Method of Coordination activities organised in the context of ET2020, the EU Youth strategy and the EU Work Plan for sport are funded through Erasmus+. The EU programmes reviewed definitely enable cross-country cooperation and integration at a scale that is incomparable to other actions.

While its volume, scope, process and integration effects are substantial, **the innovation effects of Erasmus+ appear to be more modest**. This is the only type of added value analysed where the results are less positive. The evaluation of effectiveness showed above that while there are some examples of innovations that emanate from funded projects, these are rather ad-hoc, soft and of modest scale compared to the volume of projects funded rather than significant and mainstreamed. Although Erasmus+ has potential to enhance innovation (collaborative approaches, specific KA3, brand attractiveness), its added value cannot be said as emanating significantly so far from a role model in that respect.

5.5.2. European added value of Erasmus+ as compared to what was achieved by its predecessor programmes

Compared to its predecessors, Erasmus+ manages to **reach out to more learners, practitioners and organisations**. This scale potential results from the integration of several programmes into one and from **a 40% increase in budget in comparison to 2007-2013**. This increase has not yet fully materialised as most of it will be observed as of 2017. Meanwhile the integration has generated efficiency gains⁴⁶⁹.

Through its well-known branding, the current programme benefits from **a better visibility** in media/social media⁴⁷⁰, but also in policy making accompanied with a **strengthened**

⁴⁶⁶ ICF, fig. 8.5. N.B. the number of agency responses (n=60) is particularly limited on this point.

⁴⁶⁷ https://europa.eu/youth/solidarity_en

⁴⁶⁸ http://ec.europa.eu/echo/what/humanitarian-aid/eu-aid-volunteers_en

⁴⁶⁹ In particular thanks to the decentralised management mode through agencies but also increasingly on the side of beneficiaries; besides certain processes (e.g. to manage mobility) have been streamlined from one sector to the others. See section on efficiency

⁴⁷⁰ See section on relevance

alignment with policy priorities⁴⁷¹. The fragmented nature of its predecessors did not give such a visibility. Increased attention has been continuously paid to synergies between the programme and policy priorities in education, training, youth and sport. In particular, the introduction of a Key Action devoted to system level support (KA3) is a novelty valued by most respondents concerned. It is nevertheless too early to evaluate whether this programme will have achieved stronger system level changes.

Thanks to the integration of several programmes, the degree of **cross-sectoral cooperation has increased** compared to the period 2007-2013. This is mainly due to the rising participation of higher education organisations in other sectors and to a lesser extent to some increase in participation of companies and public authorities.

The Erasmus+ programme has also been designed to pay **more attention than previously to information about performance**, which helps to allocate the budget more appropriately. The monitoring of Erasmus+ is much more developed than in the past. The dissemination and exploitation of project results is underpinned by a clearer strategy and more systematic publication on line. This represents actual progress, even though in both cases newly set-up tools are not all as user-friendly as expected and though data remains insufficiently analysed⁴⁷².

The **international dimension**, where it exists (i.e. in higher education and youth), has been **made clearer with Erasmus+**. The integrated programme has addressed the fragmentation issues raised in the interim evaluations of its predecessors (Erasmus Mundus, Tempus, Alfa). There remains room for improvement notably in the management, visibility and communication with regard to international actions.

From one programme generation to the next, the question of repetitive actions has to be assessed⁴⁷³. Here again **added value is reflected in the differentiated level of repetitions**. Each year, EU programmes reach out to a new cohort of learners (i.e. though mobility is repetitive it addresses different audiences each year), whereas the repeated participation of practitioners and organisations in the funded activities over time enables the respective actions to achieve deeper effect.

Overall, most of respondents to the Open Public Consultation value Erasmus+ for its undisputed benefits⁴⁷⁴. More than 95% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that it is funding **activities which would not have been made possible otherwise**, and that it contributes to improving what is already available at other geographical levels for the education, training, youth and sports sectors⁴⁷⁵.

Most of the National Authority reports confirm the above findings by stating that Erasmus+ and its predecessor programmes produce **effects that could not have been attained through actions at national level alone**. Country reports confirmed by the public consultation responses highlight the impacts of Erasmus+ on mobility within the EU and beyond, cooperation opportunities and internationalisation of organisations, quality improvements based on learning from others, as well as the promotion of common European values and

⁴⁷¹ See section on external coherence

⁴⁷² See section on efficiency

⁴⁷³ See section on effectiveness

⁴⁷⁴ OPC, 3.5 (n=1264 to 1044). Opinions among individuals replying in their private capacity and representatives of an organisation are consistent.

⁴⁷⁵ Meanwhile 86% (n=1111) agreed or strongly agreed that Erasmus+ is providing additional support to already existing activities at the national, European or international level.

intercultural awareness. Erasmus+ added value is more strongly praised in the youth sector, while in the sports field, the European added value is rather acknowledged where activities go beyond professional sport, such as cross-border cooperation between grassroots-level actors⁴⁷⁶.

5.5.2 European added value as compared to what would be the most likely consequences of discontinuing the programme

The absence of Erasmus+ would result in a steep decrease in the volume, but also in the quality, equity and efficiency of both mobility and cooperation among the programme countries and worldwide⁴⁷⁷. This would entail in turn a negative impact on education, training, youth and sport sectors, as detailed under effectiveness above.

As shown in the efficiency section, Erasmus+ is managed particularly efficiently due to economies of scale. **A decline in efficiency would result from the inevitable downscaling** of coordinating structures. According to National Reports, collaboration between institutions and organisations at European level would be more complex to realise without Erasmus+. If National Agencies⁴⁷⁸, European networks with central support function and European collaborative platforms would not exist, the efficiency of comparable schemes, not to say their mere existence, would probably be put at risk in many countries.

Both for mobility and cooperation actions, the absence of Erasmus+ might be compensated in certain countries and sectors (mainly higher education) only in scaling up other comparable schemes. However, when asked in a Delphi survey about plausible alternatives to Erasmus+, the experts consider that these partial and **uncoordinated compensatory initiatives would be highly unlikely to reach the scale of Erasmus+**⁴⁷⁹. To achieve the full range of its results, a greater variety of actions than the three main types of actions under Erasmus+ would be needed. No single alternative would result in comparable results.

Unequal access to mobility and cooperation abroad would once again become a reality, as was the case when these EU programmes did not exist. National Reports note that participation in alternative activities would probably be linked more directly to organisational or local resources. Therefore, differences in international opportunities between countries as well as between sectors would increase as some would not be able to afford funding international activities from national funds. As a consequence of the above, differences would also increase between wealthy and less wealthy organisations or individuals, as confirmed by the monitoring survey among higher education learners⁴⁸⁰ and the Delphi survey among experts⁴⁸¹.

⁴⁷⁶ See for instance National Report of FI

⁴⁷⁷ Source: Delphi survey and ICF, 8.4. extrapolating from evidence presented in part 5 of this document

⁴⁷⁸ NAs would certainly not survive a cut of EU programmes, even though they often manage other schemes since these are of a much smaller scale, as shown above.

⁴⁷⁹ Confirmed for the international dimension of the programmes in *Evaluation of the EU Development Co-operation Support to Higher Education in Partner Countries (2007-2014)*, (2017), Particip, LeA, ECDPM, Ecorys, already mentioned: "Probably no single EU MS or even group of MS on their own would be well placed position to take the lead in organising and managing a highly complex programme in support of global HE."

⁴⁸⁰ Two in five higher education learners would have not gone abroad without receiving the Erasmus+ grant (ICF, tab. 6.12). However, one in five would have probably gone abroad also without receiving it with the remaining one third being unclear. This suggests that there is some level of deadweight in the higher education mobility supported but this remains a minority of beneficiaries. Comparable data is not available for VET in Erasmus+ monitoring survey.

⁴⁸¹ According to the Delphi expert survey, given the budgetary constraints, alternative funding sources, including from organisations and beneficiaries themselves, would not compensate in the same scale. This would in turn deepen the financial barriers to access. Higher education would most likely see some compensation but inequality between sectors would increase.

This in turn would **lead to a decline in positive adherence to the European project**, especially among young people, and a much weaker international outlook of staff. It would also marginally negatively affect their transversal skills, especially foreign language acquisition, though other channels to develop these skills would continue being used. Over time the connections between organisations and staff would fade out, which would eventually have a knock-on effect on learners and outcome recognition. Together this would lead to much smaller international outlook of education, training, youth and sport sectors, including beyond the EU, which would generate negative externalities given the globalised nature of modern economies. In other words, **bringing Erasmus+ to an end would leave negative effects way beyond its direct beneficiaries.**

In a nutshell, it might be worth quoting the High Level Group on Education and Training concluding under the Estonian Presidency of the EU Council that "*The Erasmus+ programme and its preceding programmes have 'created the first generation of young Europeans and therefore have **the highest possible added value for Europe** as well as the potential to promote common European values, empower young people, tackle socio-economic challenges and foster competitiveness.*"⁴⁸²

⁴⁸² Meeting of the High Level Group on Education and Training, 14-16 June 2017, Tallinn

6. CONCLUSIONS

Overall, the programmes evaluated have proved to be **highly effective**. Erasmus+ appears **more coherent, relevant** and only **partly more efficient** than its predecessors.

The external evaluator made **11 recommendations**⁴⁸³ to the Commission to address weaknesses of the current Erasmus+ programme. These recommendations will be followed-up as stated in the Commission report on the mid-term evaluation of the Erasmus+ programme (2014-2020).

- Five recommendations are **cross-cutting** (with a view to boosting respectively: inclusiveness for more vulnerable groups; strategic investment in the sectors with highest potential performance (schools, VET, youth); policy prioritisation; relevance of innovation potential at sector level; systemic impact of projects through further involvement of policy makers);
- Four recommendations concern **specific areas** (aiming at addressing the relative weaknesses of the Student Loan Guarantee Facility; Jean Monnet activities; adult education; sport);
- Two recommendations are more **process-oriented** (aiming at simplification and better monitoring).

Effectiveness

The current programme and its predecessors deliver a **unique package of outcomes** in the field of education, training, youth and sport. When concerns are expressed, these relate to specific parts of the programme or to certain modalities of disbursement.

At mid-term, Erasmus+ is on track to **achieve or to exceed most of its performance indicators**, as set in the legal basis. Beneficiaries report above 90% satisfaction rates for learners and even higher for staff. In the period 2007–2016, all programmes reviewed have supported together more than 4.3 million learners and 880,000 practitioners as well as 940,000 organisations. In terms of volume of outputs, the **main exception concerns the Student Loan Guarantee Facility**. Even if the feedback received from its first users has been positive, it has not yet lived up to volume expectations due to delays of its launch, low take-up among financial institutions and lack of awareness among students.

The evaluation went beyond these indicators, which are not all equally relevant. A counterfactual approach (quantifying the contribution of the programme in measuring the difference in results between beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries) was used for the first time across the programme, making this evaluation very reliable and more valid than previous ones. However such an approach cannot exclude the possibility that the difference in outcomes between beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries could be partially due to the selection into the programme (in attracting the most motivated individuals for instance) rather than purely the effect of the programme. Based on this very sound methodology, the evaluation identified a broad range of results and impacts at the level of learners (with particularly outstanding effects of mobility), practitioners, organisations (in particular their internationalisation, including beyond the EU) and also, to a certain extent, systems and policies (fostering the recognition of learning outcomes across borders).

⁴⁸³ ICF, 9

At individual level

For most individuals, including when compared with the situation of non-beneficiaries, their experience abroad has contributed not only to their **skills'** development and future career prospects but also to deep changes to their **personal development**. The programmes evaluated have stimulated networking among both learners and staff. Finally, they have contributed to the development of openness to other cultures and **positive attitude towards the European project**. Yet the evaluation points to the **need to do more to reach out to the more vulnerable** in society and to facilitate the participation of smaller-size organisations.

At organisational level

The programmes reviewed have demonstrated a range of soft effects on organisations, particularly a clear internationalisation of organisations, in and outside the EU. The **changes at organisational level are however progressive and small scale** and continued participation is needed for deeper transformations.

At system level

In the long run, the programmes have led to **a cultural shift in Europe in the way learning mobility abroad is perceived and its learning outcomes are validated and recognised**. The programmes evaluated have also been **important for increasing the EU's global outreach**.

Though less visible, the evaluation also confirmed that the **programmes reviewed have had a direct impact on education, training, youth and sport policies** where the related budget was large enough or had an indirect effect by funding policy cooperation between authorities. The system level changes through critical mass are much clearer in the higher education sector than in other sectors which receive comparatively much less funding.

Systemic effectiveness is less in evidence for Jean Monnet, adult learning and sport, where funded EU actions lack the critical mass and/or a sufficiently relevant focus. The evaluation underlines in particular that the impact in the adult learning sector is diluted due to the fragmented and diverse nature of the sector.

More generally, the resources for mainstreaming project results are spread across too many topics at EU level and are insufficient at national level. Although local innovation (producing something new for participating organisations) is achieved by the programme, this **innovation does not enough follow the state of the art** developments in a given sector. Lastly, the evidence of the **exploitation of project results by policy makers is not always clear**, especially when the latter are not engaged in the project from the beginning.

Coherence

The evaluation found a **high external coherence** between Erasmus+ and other relevant EU policies and programmes (e.g. European Social Fund, Horizon 2020). Although the level of synergies differs, it is notable that the evaluation detected **very few overlaps**.

The **internal coherence of the programme resulting from the lifelong learning coverage** is strong as well. The further integration of fields often kept separate at domestic level into a single EU programme is increasingly perceived as facilitating complementarities and international outlook. This **consistent scope** sends the message that the learning opportunities offered are equally important for the development of people, be it through formal or non-formal and informal learning.

There is a **strong degree of cross-sectoral cooperation** within Erasmus+, which has increased sharply compared to predecessor programmes. The majority of cooperation projects in all sectors include at least one organisation which can be considered as coming from another sector. There is an overall consensus that **an integrated programme boosted the promotion of the actions** and the visibility of the different sectors.

Coherence **can still be improved in relation to sport** in reducing overlaps with non formal education activities.

Relevance

The evaluation showed that Erasmus+ is **better aligned with EU policies** than its predecessor programmes and entails sufficient flexibility to adapt to EU-level emerging needs. However, to maximise the programme's impact, the evaluation recommends that **priorities at selection stage be reduced and better focused**.

The **contribution of Erasmus+ to a more cohesive Union** is also clearly evidenced. The programme reaches out to disadvantaged people more than previous EU programmes or comparable national schemes, although more still needs to be done to reach out to the more vulnerable in society as outlined above. The geographical balance has also improved with small countries and countries from Central and Eastern Europe being better integrated than in the predecessor programmes.

The evaluation also noted that there is potential for introducing better targeted actions to **maximise the relevance of Jean Monnet activities**. Teaching and research on EU matters is now relatively wide-spread in higher education. In contrast, there is a need to strengthen the understanding of European integration and sense of belonging to Europe amongst the youngest generations.

Efficiency

The economies of scale linked to the integration of several programmes did not deliver all efficiency gains that had initially been anticipated in 2011 based on a "one agency-one country" model which was not adopted by the legislator in 2013. Nevertheless, the **costs of programme management appear reasonable** (6% of Erasmus+ administrative and operational budget) and, in any case, lower than for similar programmes at national level (14% in average). More efficiency gains are expected to materialise during the growing phase foreseen by the budget profile of Erasmus+ until 2020.

The hybrid combination of different **programme management modes** and bodies is **fit for purpose** with a good overall coordination and no major inefficiencies identified. Through decentralised actions, the programmes get close to their target audience and offer the possibility to align with national priorities. Very positive feedback was received on the support provided by and to National Agencies. Centralised actions align more with EU level priorities and help to respond to urgent political priorities. Some National Agencies report a need for more communication with the Executive Agency (EACEA) to maximise synergies between centralised and decentralised actions.

The first two years of Erasmus+' implementation were, however, very challenging for all players. This was mainly due to the **late adoption of the Erasmus+ Regulation** (end of 2013), coupled with the necessity to implement the majority of the actions under the new architecture and **with a new generation of IT tools already by the first trimester of 2014**, which significantly reduced the time for the Commission, the National agencies and the Executive Agency to put in place the necessary normative framework and technical

infrastructure to implement the programme smoothly. National agencies and authorities have recognised that **initial challenges have been gradually overcome** and that there has been a steep learning curve with substantial efficiency improvement over the period 2014-2016. Despite this difficult start, the programme has now reached its cruising speed.

Simplification

The **integration has led to greater simplicity of programme architecture**, notwithstanding the separate chapters for Jean Monnet and sport, which is beneficial for both beneficiaries and those in charge of management. It also makes programme monitoring more comprehensive and clearer, although there is **room for a smarter collection and a better exploitation of data**, enhancing transparency and accountability. The counterfactual approach (results compared between beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries) should be pursued and developed for evaluating the next programme.

The **procedural burden on beneficiaries** (application, reporting, etc.) is the main recurrent issue. Many agree that Erasmus+ has considerably simplified a number of processes (simplified grants, digitalisation, VET Charter, linguistic support, etc.). However, procedures and IT management tools impose a burden on beneficiaries which is not always proportionate to the grant they receive.

By contrast, the evaluation notes that the simplification process may have gone too far as regards cooperation projects. **Applicants for small strategic partnerships** are too often expected to meet the same requirements as applicants for large ones. Furthermore, it is hard to clearly assess the cost-effectiveness of these actions considering their **relatively average level of innovation**. There is not enough differentiation made in the way of handling smaller (mainly collaborative) and larger (innovative) projects. The evaluation recommends simplifying the application forms, reviewing the award criteria to better reflect key success factors for effectiveness and strengthening the review at mid-term in particular for bigger projects.

Another **challenge hampering efficiency is linked to the funding for international higher education**, which remains managed separately for each global region in a too rigid manner.

European added value

30 years after its beginnings in the field of higher education, **Erasmus+ has become a flagship programme of the EU**. The programme is highly valued by the general public as well as by all stakeholders. It is consistently identified by citizens as **one of the three most positive results of European integration**.

Erasmus+ remains unique. Whereas there are other schemes funding comparable actions at national level, these are much smaller both in volume and scope. It is unlikely that alternative measures would be able to compensate for Erasmus+ funding, demonstrating its **undisputable European added value**.

For the future, without prejudice to negotiations on the next Multi Financial Framework, the evaluation concludes that it would be relevant to reconsider the **overall budget**. It also suggests **modifying the share-out between the programme sectors**, whereby potential increases could be directed to sectors showing the highest performance, but which have, until now, received relatively less funding. **School education and vocational education and training (VET)**, where the impact is not yet as widespread as in higher education, were identified as **having the most promising potential** for an expanded participation in Erasmus+ activities in the coming years. The unmet demand and the potential for maximising effectiveness call for a stronger investment for the future development of the programme.

Annex 1: Procedural information

1. LEAD DG, DeCIDE PLANNING/CWP REFERENCES

- **DG Education, Youth, Sport and Culture (DG EAC)**
- EAC/2015/014

2. ORGANISATION AND TIMING

This evaluation has been steered by DG Education, Youth, Sport and Culture since July 2017⁴⁸⁴ under the scrutiny of an **inter-service group (ISG)** comprising of representatives of DG BUDG, DEVCO, EAC, EEAS, EMPL, FPI, HOME, JRC, NEAR, SG, as well as EESC.

The ISG was consulted at each stage of the evaluation process and reviewed each deliverable produced by the contractor as well as this Staff Working Document.

ISG meetings took place on:

- 9 September 2015 (Kick-off),
- 18 July 2016 (Inception report);
- 21 November 2016 (Interim report 1);
- 24 March 2017 (Interim report 2);
- 10 July 2017 (Draft final report);
- 11 September 2017 (Final report)

The ISG was consulted on the draft Staff Working Document on 29 September and informed about the Regulatory Scrutiny Board's opinion on 27 November.

3. EXCEPTIONS TO THE BETTER REGULATION GUIDELINES

None

4. CONSULTATION OF THE RSB (IF APPLICABLE)

The **Regulatory Scrutiny Board** was consulted on 16 October and met on 15 November 2017.

⁴⁸⁴ Ares(2015)3111961 - 24/07/2015 - Invitation to participate in an inter-service steering group for the evaluation of Erasmus+ programme

The Board acknowledged in its opinion with comments ⁴⁸⁵ the significant efforts of data and evidence collection. It also noted the good methodology. The Board gave a **positive opinion**, with comments to improve the document. All have been addressed.

The following changes have been made to this Staff Working Document, in response to the Board's main considerations:

| Regulatory Scrutiny Board's recommendation | Changes made to the Staff Working Document |
|--|---|
| <p>(1) The conclusions are not sufficiently balanced and precise. They do not accurately reflect some of the programme strengths and weaknesses that the evaluation and its supporting study identified.</p> <p>They also do not provide enough guidance for future decisions about the programme.</p> | <p>Both the Executive summary and the conclusions have been revised to outline more clearly the weaknesses pointed out by the external evaluator in its conclusions and across the Staff Working Document.</p> <p>Any evaluation Staff Working Document has to remain backward-looking according to Better Regulation guidelines. For that reason, the recommendations are addressed in the Commission report to Council and Parliament, without anticipating the conclusions of a future Impact assessment.</p> <p>The Commission can accept all 11 recommendations received from the external evaluator (section 9 of ICF's final report) to a smaller or larger extent.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 5 recommendations are cross-cutting (innovation; inclusiveness; strategic investment in the best place sectors; systemic impact of projects; policy prioritisation at selection stage) - 4 recommendations concern a specific sector (SLGF; Jean Monnet actions; Adult education; Sport) - 2 recommendations deal with process (simplification; monitoring) |
| <p>(2) The report does not clearly define the scope of the evaluation and the baseline/benchmarks against which it assesses the programme.</p> | <p>The baseline for this evaluation is the period 2007-2013 unless otherwise specified. This is now stated explicitly in the introduction and in the section about the evaluation method (4.1 and 4.2). In addition, it has been specified more systematically, especially across the section on effectiveness (5.1), where the scope of a given finding concern all evaluated programmes (e.g. findings from <i>evaluation</i> surveys of beneficiaries cover 10 years) or Erasmus+ only (e.g. findings from <i>monitoring</i> surveys concern by definition only the current programme).</p> <p>The choice of an intervention logic (2.2) covering the two programming periods has been further justified (4.1)</p> <p>To better support the claim that Erasmus+ has achieved or exceeded most of its targets, a new annex (5e) has been produced reporting on all indicators from the legal basis against targets set in DG EAC's Strategic Plan</p> |
| <p>(3) The report does not adequately</p> | <p>The Staff Working Document (5.1, 5.4.1, 5.4.4, 5.4.5) has been completed with more information about measures taken since 2014 to improve monitoring,</p> |

⁴⁸⁵ Ares(2017)5629740 - 17/11/2017

| | |
|--|---|
| address simplification and efficiency improvement. | <p>efficiency and to simplify the programme implementation. It is also explained now why the Impact assessment regarding efficiency gains cannot be regarded as a reference (5.4.4).</p> <p>The Commission has not waited for the mid-term evaluation to start working on simplification (e.g. application forms). The level of complaints about the administrative burden has decreased as of 2016 after a steep learning curve on the new programme.</p> |
|--|---|

5. EVIDENCE, SOURCES AND QUALITY

Sources of evidence

The following box provides an overview of the data sources from which the evidence was drawn. A detailed description of the individual methods is provided in Annex 3.

- **Literature review** (150 sources)
- Key informant **interviews** (190 interviews)
- **National reports** (34 countries)
- **Open Public Consultation** (4,786 responses of which 1,800 responses were fully exploitable; 24 position papers submitted)
- **Social media** analysis (725,678 posts)
- **Benchmarking** (18 comparable national/transnational programmes)
- **Programme database** analysis (all beneficiaries) including network analysis
- **Monitoring surveys** (950,000 respondents - KA1)
- **Online Linguistic Support** (523,238 participants)
- **Beneficiary surveys and control groups** (over 47,000 respondents)
- **Survey of socio-economic organisations** (947 responses)
- **Agencies survey** (130 responses from National Agencies or the Executive Agency EACEA)
- **Experts survey** (1,122 responses from project assessors)
- **Case studies** (38 organisations or policy cases; 233 respondents)
- Review of selected **projects' outputs** (386 outputs)
- **Expert panel assessment** of projects' outputs (100 projects)
- Jean Monnet actions (13,183 survey respondents; 5 interviews)
- Student Loan Guarantee Facility (SLGF) (219 survey respondents; 33 interviews)
- eTwinning Plus pilot action (2,967 respondents; 31 interviews)

Expert advice

National Reports

Programme countries have submitted their own evaluation reports on the implementation and impact of decentralised actions of Erasmus+ in their respective territories, as required by Erasmus+ legal basis. Their findings are summarised in the **National reports synthesis (NRS)** drawn by the external evaluator⁴⁸⁶.

| Source | Scope | Volume |
|---|--|--|
| National Reports (ICF, stand alone synthesis – "NRS") | Programme country reports on the impact of decentralised actions submitted by June 2017 as per Article 21(4) of Regulation (EU) 1288/2013 and DG EAC's guidelines ⁴⁸⁷ | 34 National reports (MT and UK transmitted their report to the Commission with a four month delay) |

Expert Panel

Erasmus+ and predecessor programmes fund a high number of cooperation projects which result in outputs (e.g. handbook, toolkits, methodologies, etc.) that are aimed to be used within the organisations that took part in the project but also beyond. To get a better understanding of their quality and dissemination potential, an **expert panel** reviewed collectively the actual outputs of a selection of 100 cooperation projects.

| Source | Scope | Volume |
|--|---|--------------------------------------|
| Expert panel assessment of projects' outputs (ICF, Annexe 18) | Assess projects' outputs against a set of pre-determined criteria | 100 projects (144 outputs) |

External consultant

The external evaluator (ICF) contracted for this assignment⁴⁸⁸ has carried out since May 2016 all tasks as required under the scrutiny of an inter-service group (ISG) and the daily steer of DG Education, Youth, Sport and Culture.

Primary data were mainly collected from November 2016 to May 2017.

⁴⁸⁶ National reports synthesis (NRS) annexed to ICF final report

⁴⁸⁷ Ares(2016)576506 of 2 February 2016

⁴⁸⁸ ICF Consulting Services Ltd under specific contract – EAC-2016-0219 implementing Framework contract EAC/22/2013

The only significant change compared to the initial work plan was limited to a two-month delay of the (sub) contractor in launching the beneficiary surveys⁴⁸⁹.

⁴⁸⁹ DG EAC wrote to ICF to mitigate that issue in March 2017. The delay had no consequence on the final report.

Annex 2: Stakeholder consultation synopsis report

This evaluation has drawn on data from direct consultations with various stakeholder groups involved in the implementation of the Erasmus+ and predecessor programmes.

A4.1 Overview of main stakeholders consulted

The table below provides an overview of the stakeholders consulted over the lifetime of the evaluation through: semi-structured interviews (for the purpose of the key informant interviews (KIIs) and the case studies), online surveys and an open public consultation. Other consultation activities are described at the end of the section.

Table 1. Overview of stakeholder consultation

| Type of stakeholders consulted | Method | Nbr of respondents/cases/records |
|---|---|---|
| Beneficiaries (learners and practitioners) of mobility actions and cooperation actions as well as control groups | Beneficiary and control group surveys | Learners: 24,037 beneficiaries and 2,695 from control group Staff: 20,155 beneficiaries and 928 from control group |
| Organisations other than the primary target group, i.e. companies, public authorities, civil society (other than youth organisations) | Socioeconomic actors survey | 947 valid responses |
| Assessors supporting project selection and those supporting evaluation of final reports | Experts survey | 1,122 valid responses |
| Agencies in charge of programme implementation One respondent per sector | Programme agencies survey | 130 valid responses |
| Key stakeholders in education and training, youth and sport (EU/national level) | Key informant interviews | 59 at EU level 131 in 15 countries |
| Staff, learners, leadership, project leaders and other stakeholders if relevant | Case studies | 233 respondents 38 case studies |
| Students participating in student fairs for future (mobile) master's students and exhibitors at these fairs | Student Loan Guarantee Facility student fair survey | 119 students and 100 exhibitors |
| General public including key stakeholders active in education and training, youth and sport | Open Public Consultation (OPC) | 1,800 valid responses |
| Other: focused consultation | | |
| (Non)-participating financial intermediaries and their representatives; national student loan schemes; HEIs and their representatives; National Authorities and agencies; representatives of students and the | Student Loan Guarantee Facility interviews | 33 interviews |

| | | |
|--|---|--|
| youth | | |
| Students studying about the EU – beneficiary students and non-beneficiary academic staff | Jean Monnet students survey | 332 beneficiaries and 1,015 non-beneficiaries |
| Students studying about the EU – beneficiary students and non-beneficiary academic staff | Jean Monnet section in the beneficiary student survey | 120 beneficiaries and 5,822 non-beneficiaries |
| Staff teaching about the EU – beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries | Jean Monnet staff survey | 560 beneficiaries and 443 non-beneficiaries |
| Staff teaching about the EU – beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries | Jean Monnet section in the beneficiary staff survey | 210 beneficiaries and 4,681 non-beneficiaries |
| Interviews with professors who have never applied for Jean Monnet | Jean Monnet interviews | 5 interviews |
| Staff taking part in the pilot project | eTwinning Plus pilot survey ⁴⁹⁰ | 405 responses to partner countries survey 2,562 responses to programme countries survey |
| Teachers in programme and partner countries, EU-level actors and key stakeholders | eTwinning Plus interviews | 31 interviews |

Source: ICF

Based on the above, 68,675 stakeholders' views were collated and analysed among which:

- 66,383 through the seven above-mentioned parallel online surveys⁴⁹¹ among which 47,815 through the sole beneficiary and control group surveys
- 492 through interviews
- 1,800 through the OPC

As the table also reflects, the range of stakeholders consulted was broad, encompassing both direct and less direct beneficiaries of the programmes at the individual (learners and practitioners), organisation and system level comprising (not in specific order):

- general public including a variety of key stakeholders active in education and training, youth and sport with different levels of knowledge and experience with Erasmus+ and/or predecessor programmes: addressed through the OPC⁴⁹²

⁴⁹⁰ The Staff Working Document does not address this part of the contractor's assignment, not initially set out in the Terms of reference, as eTwinningPlus pilot action is not funded by the Erasmus+ programme.

⁴⁹¹ The Jean Monnet separate student and staff surveys outlined in the table are counted here as one survey package.

⁴⁹² Overall, those respondents who replied as 'organisations' were primarily active (in order) in the higher education, school education, vocational education and training; adult education and youth fields. The remainder included respondents from other sectors and lastly from the sport field. Those who replied as individuals were for the majority (59%) employed in education and training, youth and sports. The remainder comprised learners (29%) in one of the fields above and 12% reporting they had a different role in relation to these fields. For further details, see external evaluation final report volume 6.

- all current programme target groups, both for KA1 (mobility) and KA2 (organisational cooperation): addressed through the surveys of beneficiary learners and staff and related control groups
- socioeconomic actors (i.e. companies, public authorities, civic organisations, sectoral bodies, etc.): addressed through the socioeconomic actors survey
- project assessors (i.e. experts contracted by the EACEA and/or the NAs to assess project applications and reports): addressed through the experts survey
- NAs and EACEA staff members: addressed through the programme agencies survey
- Selected EU and national level⁴⁹³ key informants involved with programme(s) implementation (EU level) or drawing on it and/or its predecessors: key stakeholders/ key stakeholder organisations representatives, EC officials (EC and agencies (EACEA and ETF), ministries' representatives (policy-making)⁴⁹⁴. Those were addressed through the Key informant interviews (KIIs)
- Selected national level⁴⁹⁵ informants benefitting from the programme(s) in the three fields above comprising: beneficiary organisations' leadership, practitioners and learners, targeted funded project leaders, other key stakeholders (where applicable). Those were addressed through the case studies

Next to the consultation methods above that were designed and implemented to collate stakeholders' opinions on the current programme's (and/or predecessors where appropriate) performance against all or several of the main evaluation criteria, the evaluation team also undertook ad hoc stakeholders consultation. This served to inform the evaluation of specific part or activities of the programme namely: Jean Monnet programme⁴⁹⁶ and the Student Loan Guarantee Facility (SLGF)⁴⁹⁷. In each case, the consultation methods comprised tailored surveys and interviews. For an overview of the types of stakeholders reached in both cases, see table above.

Besides, to gain complementary insights and to ultimately assess the difference in results between Erasmus+ beneficiaries and their counterparts who did not take part, control groups of non-beneficiaries (targeted at practitioners⁴⁹⁸ and learners⁴⁹⁹) were set-up.

⁴⁹³ Focusing on 15 Programme countries as per ICF proposal and agreed during the inception phase of the evaluation study: BG, CY, CZ, DK, ES, FR, DE, HU, IE, IT, LV, PL, SE, TR, UK

⁴⁹⁴ National Authorities in charge of the Erasmus+ programme were not consulted because they contributed to the evaluation directly through their national reports, as laid down by the programme legal basis.

⁴⁹⁵ Focusing on 15 Programme countries as per ICF proposal and agreed during the inception phase of the evaluation study: BG, CY, CZ, DK, ES, FR, DE, HU, IE, IT, LV, PL, SE, TR, UK

⁴⁹⁶ Considering the specific features of the Jean Monnet programme as one of the two standalone Erasmus+ chapters (with Sport), the evaluation Steering Committee agreed with ICF, during the inception phase, that the latter would be make the object of a standalone evaluation (for details, see external evaluation final report, volume 3) .

⁴⁹⁷ As one the novelties introduced through Erasmus+, the SLGF made the object of a focused evaluation (for details, see external evaluation final report, volume 2).

⁴⁹⁸ i.e. involved in all three fields and subfields (i.e. school education, VET, HE, adult education).

Overall, the mix of consultation activities described above enabled the evaluation to effectively address a relevant breadth of stakeholders. This in turn enabled the evaluation team to gain insights from a range of relevant key players on different and meanwhile complementary dimensions of the programme(s)'s performance and/or on suggestions towards the future programming period.

With regard to the representativeness of the data, sample sizes (more particularly applicable to the main surveys) and targets had been agreed upon by the ISG during the inception stage of the evaluation study. In practice, the number of responses received and processed have been on or above targets in most cases. In the case of the beneficiary and control group surveys the satisfactory response rate offered to the evaluation a solid and reliable basis for data comparison amongst beneficiaries and sectors. A noticeable exception though was in the sport and adult education fields where the control groups were too small. For details on the actual response rates against minimum sample sizes defined for the above-mentioned main surveys' target and control groups see evaluation final report, volume 1 (section 3).

Concerning the other surveys, the minimum sample sizes⁵⁰⁰ were attained. In the case of the programme agencies, no ad hoc target had been fixed, but all programme countries were covered.

In the case of the OPC, the number of total responses received and this of exploitable ones (i.e. complete responses) was considered statistically reliable.

With regard to the key informant interviews (KIIs) undertaken to inform the main evaluation report as well as accompanying standalone reports, the number of interviews foreseen at the start of the evaluation process was attained in all cases. The main types of pre-identified stakeholders were also consulted.

The same applied to the case studies (i.e. at organisational level (spread across all education and training, youth and sport fields), at system level and focusing on Jean Monnet). With the exception of one case study initially foreseen that could be not carried out, all the others were effectively conducted either on-site (organisation level case studies) or over the phone (system level and Jean Monnet ones).

In addition to the above, other consultation related activities are worth being mentioned. These have not been listed in table 1:

- **Expert panel assessment of project outputs:** experts in education and training, youth and sport fields were sub-contracted by ICF to assess a number of selected project outputs and take part in a virtual expert panel assessment
- **Delphi survey of experts:** experts in the fields above were sub-contracted by ICF to take part in the survey that whose main purpose was to inform the analysis of the EU added value and cost-effectiveness of the current programme
- **Informal workshop** organised by two EU-level organisations (EUCIS-LLLP and the European Youth Forum -EYF) in May 2017, prior to the closure of the OPC. It was

⁴⁹⁹ i.e. enrolled in school education, VET, HE and Erasmus+ Youth exchanges and EVS.

⁵⁰⁰ i.e. at least 200 respondents to the socio-economic actors and to the experts surveys. At least 200 students enrolled in JM courses or modules; at least 50 practitioners from Jean Monnet actions

agreed with DG EAC that the event could be an opportunity for ICF to grasp additional insights from key stakeholders ideally before OPC closure.

A4.2 Consistency of results across consultation activities

The table below presents key results per consultation activity, organised by evaluation criteria, as well as the level of (1) consistency of results across consultation activities and (2) complementarity of results across consultation activities.

Overall, there was a large degree of convergence in results from the different consultation activities.

Table 2. Main results of the consultation processes and level of their consistency and complementarity

| Evaluation criterion | Headline results | | | | Consistency of results across consultation activities | Complementarity of results across consultation activities |
|----------------------|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Surveys | KIIs | Case studies | OPC | | |
| Relevance | <p>Beneficiaries surveys:</p> <p>Learners with different backgrounds can benefit from the programme.</p> <p>The attractiveness of disadvantaged groups is an area for improvement though</p> <p>Experts survey:</p> <p>Most respondents estimate that a high share of projects funded align to high or average extent with EU-and national level priorities</p> <p>Improvement in quality of applications and project reports is found between E+ and predecessor programmes</p> <p>Programme agencies survey:</p> <p>Over half of disagree that E+ is better aligned with national priorities than predecessor</p> | <p>Most interviewees see strong alignment with key EU priorities and high to medium level of alignment of Erasmus+ with key national policies depending on sectors</p> <p>A vast majority of interviewed estimate that E+ best addresses learners' needs. Those at national level confirm that E+ actions are relevant in terms of their positive effects at practitioner level too.</p> <p>Learners with different backgrounds can benefit from the programme. The attractiveness of disadvantaged groups is an area for improvement though</p> <p>Mixed reports on the programme's ability to meet the needs of</p> | <p>Concrete examples of alignment of Erasmus+ with key national policies were provided though not by all respondents</p> <p>Several similar findings as those obtained through KIIs</p> | <p>The relevance of the E+ is positively rated by most respondents.</p> <p>Some programmes' objectives are perceived to be notably more relevant than others in addressing the current challenges and needs within education, training, youth and sport</p> | High | High |

| Evaluation criterion | Headline results | | | | Consistency of results across consultation activities | Complementarity of results across consultation activities |
|----------------------|--|--|--|---|---|---|
| | Surveys | KIIs | Case studies | OPC | | |
| | <p>programmes</p> <p>Mixed reports on the programme's ability to meet the needs of education, training, youth and sport at organisation and system level.</p> <p>Most respondents believe that the single programme is more visible</p> <p>A number of obstacles for disadvantaged groups to participate in E+ are reported.</p> | <p>education, training, youth and sport at organisation and system level.</p> <p>A number of obstacles for disadvantaged groups to participate in E+ are reported.</p> | | | | |
| Coherence | <p>Programme agencies survey:</p> <p>Most agencies perceive synergies and lack of overlaps across programme actions as well as externally (other EU or national programmes)</p> <p>The coherence of the programme between centralised and decentralised actions is valued by most respondents</p> <p>Respondents' views on the benefits of the integrated</p> | <p>Most interviewees (EU/national) consider that Erasmus+ objectives and actions are mutually supportive in the different fields.</p> <p>Not all respondents were able to give examples of synergies overlaps/duplications</p> <p>No clear consensus on increased E+ decentralisation: not</p> | <p>Not all respondents were able to give examples of synergies overlaps/duplications between different types of actions and in different sectors</p> | <p>Most respondents believe that E+ does not overlap with other funding opportunities</p> <p>Need to ensure synergies with EU level programmes is pointed by some respondents.</p> <p>Examples of complementary national schemes to E+ are supplied in some OPC</p> | High | High |

| Evaluation criterion | Headline results | | | | Consistency of results across consultation activities | Complementarity of results across consultation activities |
|----------------------|--|--|--|---|---|---|
| | Surveys | KIIs | Case studies | OPC | | |
| | programme are positive | positively perceived by all The integrated programme is valued by most interviewees | | position papers | | |
| Effectiveness | <p>Beneficiaries surveys</p> <p>Participation in E+ is associated with stronger attachment to the EU, networking, and greater use of digital resources</p> <p>The recognition of practitioners' achievement during mobility is uneven</p> <p>Disadvantaged learners show positive results on a few indicators</p> <p>Socio economic actors survey</p> <p>Most respondents agree that their objectives have been met</p> <p>Only a small number said their projects led to implementation of approaches to tackle disadvantaged group</p> | <p>Most interviewees have positive views on the effects of E+ in particular at individual and to varying extent at organisation levels.</p> <p>More mixed views on examples of system-level projects and related influence</p> | <p>Learners expressed a broad range of positive changes they associate with E+.</p> <p>All practitioners interviewed cited positive results on themselves as well as their learners and organisations</p> <p>In all case studies concrete changes at organisational level were cited</p> <p>A lot of the evidence is about participation of disadvantaged groups rather than results for them.</p> | <p>71% of respondents thought that as a whole, the programme is achieving its objectives to a 'very large' or 'large' extent. There were some notable differences between programme objectives, levels of intervention and sectors though</p> | High | High |

| Evaluation criterion | Headline results | | | | Consistency of results across consultation activities | Complementarity of results across consultation activities |
|----------------------|--|--|--|---|---|---|
| | Surveys | KIIs | Case studies | OPC | | |
| | Programme agencies survey The quality scores at project selection are not a robust predictor of quality at completion Most respondents value the D&E strategy. More mixed views on the project results platform | | | | | |
| Efficiency | Beneficiaries surveys The size of budgets is considered too small, in particular in the case of projects applying for KA2 Programme agencies survey Most respondents value the balance between centralised and decentralised actions Mixed views on E+ management tools Most respondents see efficiency gains compared to predecessor | Several key informants commented spontaneously on insufficient levels of funding for certain types of actions or sectors. Mixed views on efficiency gains are observed by the programme beneficiaries The set of monitoring tools is commonly viewed as rather complex | The majority of respondents welcome the use of unit costs Several findings concurrent with those collated under KIIs. | Most respondents see improvements in the user-friendliness of E+ IT tools and reporting procedures A slightly smaller majority of respondents agree that the management of the E+ has been simplified for them Mixed views on the budget distribution between the three Key Actions. In particular KA2 is considered as | High | High |

| Evaluation criterion | Headline results | | | | Consistency of results across consultation activities | Complementarity of results across consultation activities |
|----------------------|---|---|--|---|---|---|
| | Surveys | KIIs | Case studies | OPC | | |
| | <p>programmes.</p> <p>Mixed views on efficiency gains are observed by the programme beneficiaries</p> <p>The set of monitoring tools is considered rather complex</p> <p>Socio economic actors survey</p> <p>Vast majority of respondents are very positive about the support received by EACEA or NAs</p> | | | | | |
| EU added value | <p>Programme agencies survey</p> <p>The programme funds more mobility and cooperation actions than comparator programmes.</p> <p>It covers system-level cooperation actions that are very rarely covered by other programmes</p> | <p>ough less specifically, most interviewees see a clear European added value in E+</p> | <p>st respondents claimed that their organisation could not have developed similar projects/actions without Erasmus+ funding</p> | <p>Most of the respondents believe that E+ brings certain benefits to the actions implemented.</p> <p>Respondents also identified other areas where they believed E+ has added value to the actions implemented on the EU, national and international level</p> | High | High |

Annex 3: Methods and analytical models

As the differences in the architecture, objectives and activities of the current and predecessor programmes⁵⁰¹ made it difficult to make a straightforward comparison between their respective actions, the current evaluation did not look at programmes along their own types of actions but through a customised matrix. To ensure comparable approaches, the evaluation framework developed by the external evaluator⁵⁰² classifies actions across the three *levels of intervention* of the current programme (see fig. below) and uses that as the basis of comparison, namely:

- **System level**
- **Organisation level**
- **Individual level** divided into actions for **learners** and **practitioners** across all different *areas* (education and training, youth and sport) and *sectors* (school (SE), vocational (VET), higher (HE) and adult education (AE)). For the purpose of the evaluation, the overarching terms of *Learners* and *Practitioners* are used⁵⁰³.

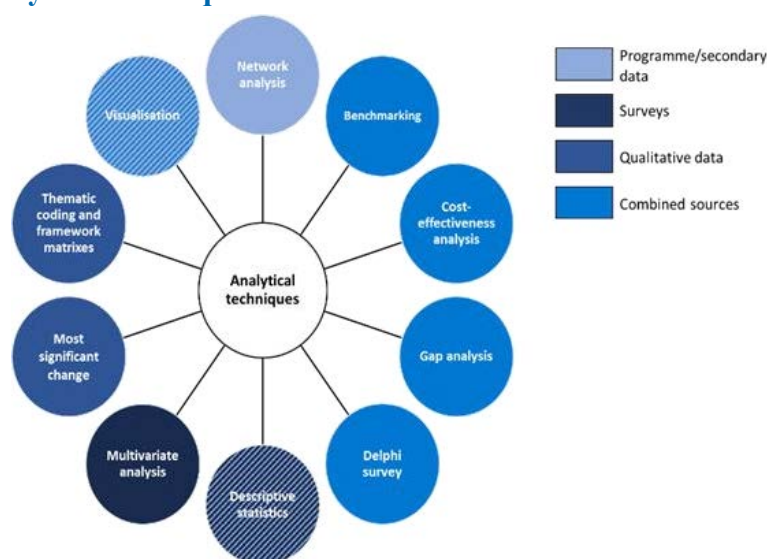


⁵⁰¹ ICF, 3 and Annexe 1; see section 2 above for background on Erasmus+; under the Erasmus+ the activities were simplified, (as a simple example among many others, ‘ad personam’ Jean Monnet chair is now integrated in the Jean Monnet Chair).

⁵⁰² ICF, Annexe 14 (not published), where a matrix maps and compares the types of actions in the predecessor programmes and the corresponding actions in the Erasmus+ programme

⁵⁰³ **Learners** refer to all individuals involved in formal, non-formal and informal education as pupils, students, apprentices, volunteers, young people, etc. **Practitioners** refer to those involved in the same respect as teachers (including prospective teachers), trainers, youth workers, educators, coaches, etc.

Summary of analytical techniques used



Desk research and interviews

An extensive **literature review** was carried out across varied sources. In addition to the contextualisation of other data, the main purpose was to review research notably on programme outcomes, including success factors and obstacles to learning mobility and transnational cooperation in the fields of education, training, youth and sport, mainly encountered through predecessor programmes. This helped to inform whether and where the programmes have had impacts at the individual, organisational and system levels and was central to the analytical framework underpinning this evaluation. A full account of the literature reviewed is annexed to the contractor's report. External statistics were also used to put the programme in perspective⁵⁰⁴.

Key informant interviews (KIIs) have been conducted at both national and European level targeting EC/agencies officials, EU key stakeholder organisation representatives, national policy makers and key stakeholders in 15 selected countries, as well as managers of comparable programmes for benchmarking purpose. All were selected using category based purposeful sampling⁵⁰⁵.

| Source | Scope | Volume |
|--|--|---|
| Literature review (ICF, Annexe 11 and 15 - not | Desk research: review of other evaluations, NA yearly reports (since | 131 sources reviewed More than 400 yearly reports |

⁵⁰⁴ For instance, although the market share of Erasmus+ was assessed in the HE field where more data is available, this calculation was rough as Eurostat deals with full *degree* mobility and not *credit* mobility mainly supported by the EU.

⁵⁰⁵ This means that interviewees were spread across each (sub-)field of the programme, at both EU and national level, including policymakers and key stakeholders. The country selection (BG, CY, CZ, DE, DK, ES, FR, HU, IE, IT, LV, PL, SE, TR and UK) took into account a variety of volume of participation in the programme; the country size (covering more than 50% of the population); geographical distribution (including one non-EU country) and the existence of national programmes for benchmarking in different sectors.

| Source | Scope | Volume |
|--|---|---|
| published) | 2008), studies, academic papers at EU, national, international, etc ⁵⁰⁶ | from National Agencies |
| Interviews of Key informants (ICF, Annexe 16 - not published) | Semi-guided interviews of selected stakeholders in all sectors, at EU level and in 15 countries | 190 interviews: 59 at EU level 131 at national level |

National reports

Programme countries have submitted their own evaluation reports on the implementation and impact of decentralised actions of Erasmus+ in their respective territories, as required by Erasmus+ legal basis. Their findings are summarised in the **National reports synthesis (NRS)** drawn by the external evaluator⁵⁰⁷. These reports involved the review of documentation and statistics concerning the programme and related policies and ad hoc consultations with relevant stakeholders. The most often used data collection methods were interviews and surveys (both used by 25 out of 34 countries). In addition 11 countries used focus groups.

| Source | Scope | Volume |
|---|--|---|
| National Reports (ICF, stand lone synthesis – "NRS") | Programme country reports on the impact of decentralised actions submitted by June 2017 as per Article 21(4) of Regulation (EU) 1288/2013 and DG EAC's guidelines ⁵⁰⁸ | 34 National reports (MT and UK transmitted their report to the Commission with a four month delay) |

Open Public Consultation

The objective of the **Open Public Consultation (OPC)** was to gather the opinions, including forward-looking perspectives, of the general public and various stakeholders, on all evaluation criteria⁵⁰⁹. Different (closed and open-ended) questions were asked depending on the level and scope of knowledge of the programmes declared by each respondent. Most respondents were either organisations or practitioners. In any case, consultation findings can never be representative due to the selection bias inherent to any open recruitment, but they can be triangulated with other sources to inform the evaluation. Alongside their responses, the OPC respondents submitted 24 position papers, which are included as well in the synopsis drawn by the external evaluator⁵¹⁰.

⁵⁰⁶ The Terms of reference set for this evaluation contain a list of literature references, which have been enriched thereafter.

⁵⁰⁷ National reports synthesis (NRS) annexed to ICF final report

⁵⁰⁸ Ares(2016)576506 of 2 February 2016

⁵⁰⁹ https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/resources/consultations/erasmus-plus-mid-term-evaluation-2017_en

⁵¹⁰ Synopsis of the open Public Consultation (OPC) annexed to ICF final report

| Source | Scope | Volume |
|---|---|--|
| Open Public Consultation (ICF, stand alone "OPC" synopsis) | To gather the opinions and perspectives of the general public and other stakeholders, the OPC was available in all official EU languages on the dedicated European Commission website from 28 February to 31 May 2017 | 4,786 complete (n = 1,219) and partial responses of which 1,800 responses were fully exploitable (53% answered in their personal capacities; 47% on behalf of an organisation) ⁵¹¹ 24 position papers submitted |

Social media analysis

Social media analysis was used to collect evidence about the awareness on the programme and its public image, globally and by sector. All relevant posts identified⁵¹² were analysed for trends in the **volume of conversation** about Erasmus+, **audience profile**, and content of discussions both in terms of **topic and sentiment**. The volume of information shared was compared with the volume for other EU programmes (e.g. Marie Curie, MEDIA, Citizens programme).

| Source | Scope | Volume |
|--|--|--|
| Social media analysis (ICF, Annex 19 - not published) | Twitter, Facebook and Instagram were analysed between 5 November 2015 and 4 November 2016. Limited for qualitative analysis to posts in English, French, Spanish and German. | 725,678 posts on the topic of Erasmus+ (almost 2,000 posts every day) |

Benchmarking

Erasmus+ was benchmarked across the different evaluation criteria against 18 selected comparator national and transnational mobility and cooperation programmes⁵¹³. Three different types of benchmarking were undertaken: **Strategic benchmarking** helped to

⁵¹¹ A large number of partial responses only contained very basic background information about respondents and were therefore removed from the analysis as unsuitable for analysis.

⁵¹² The Crimson Hexagon platform was used to identify the topics of conversations on social media according to the frequency of use in posts of certain selected keywords ("Erasmus+", "Erasmus+", "Erasmus plus" and "Erasmusplus"). Results for Erasmus+ were fine-tuned using secondary keywords, such as youth, school or schools, higher education or higher ed, VET or vocational, adult learning, sport, etc. Source: <https://www.crimsonhexagon.com/>

⁵¹³ 18 national or international schemes were selected out of 58 for detailed benchmarking purpose and spread as follows: HE (7), VET (5), SE (4), youth (2), sport (2), AE (1). Action-wise, the vast majority support mobility. ICF, fig 5.5 about geographical balance

compare the relevance, coherence and added value of the programmes. **Process benchmarking** compared efficiency and effectiveness of their management. **Financial benchmarking** assessed the respective financial efficiency and effectiveness of the programmes compared. The mapping was not expected to be comprehensive but to inform about the scale and profiles of comparable initiatives⁵¹⁴. The large difference in scope and size made comparison between programmes fairly complex. The contractor only had access to information available in the public domain, which means that in a few cases, it was not possible to collect data for some indicators.

| Source | Scope | Volume |
|--|--|---|
| Benchmarking with comparator programmes (ICF, Annex 12) | Strategic/ process/ financial benchmarking against national or international schemes sharing some similarities with Erasmus+ | 18 comparable programmes out of 58 shortlisted schemes 15 interviews |

Programme data

The evaluation used the wealth of the programme data available as regards *inputs* (funding) and *outputs* (numbers of projects, numbers of beneficiaries, etc.). Moreover data on certain *results* (e.g. satisfaction-rate) is available since 2014 directly from the management or monitoring tools set up for Erasmus+.

Overall **the quality of data was good for the predecessor programmes and even very good for Erasmus+**. This shows improvement made in terms of monitoring since 2014 (see table of monitoring tools below)⁵¹⁵, albeit with certain limits⁵¹⁶. The quality and completeness of the data⁵¹⁷ was best for the Erasmus+ programme, followed by the LLP and Youth in Action⁵¹⁸. Fewer data was available for Erasmus Mundus and Tempus and even less for the remaining higher education international programmes⁵¹⁹ and sport pilot actions⁵²⁰. The main

⁵¹⁴ The initial mapping identified across Europe 58 schemes which were comparable to Erasmus+. Around half covered SE, over 35% HE, below 20% VET or the Youth sector, 10% AE. Their target groups were students in nearly 80% of the 58 schemes, teachers at around 22%, youth at around 17% and adults only around 10%.

⁵¹⁵ Erasmus+ Dashboard, annual reports, Business Objects (BO) reports, Epluslink and Mobility Tool databases

⁵¹⁶ Data is not always available for predecessor programmes. The data on Jean Monnet participants is in general not very reliable. It reflects the intention as it is based on applications rather than the actual output, contains double counting where the same persons take part in more than one activity and captures indistinctly those involved in dissemination activities only.

⁵¹⁷ ICF, Tab. 3.3 and 6.2 for a summary of the datasets coverage

⁵¹⁸ Although data on YiA participants is only available for the European Volunteer Service, but not for Youth exchanges.

⁵¹⁹ For the remaining higher education international programmes, Alfa and Edulink in particular, only consolidated findings were available from their distinct evaluation: European Commission, *Evaluation of the EU Development Co-operation Support to Higher Education in Partner Countries (2007-2014)*, Revised draft final report (main report), March 2017.

⁵²⁰ For sport pilot actions only the funding and number of selected projects were available.

issues affected the analysis of participation patterns due to an incomplete coverage of data on i) organisations⁵²¹; ii) participants with few opportunities and disadvantaged backgrounds⁵²².

Overview of Monitoring arrangements

| Level and purpose | IT systems and tools |
|--|---|
| Project level – management | E+Link –main system for management of decentralised grants (NAs) Pegasus –main system for managing centralised grants (EACEA) Mobility Tool – system for managing individual mobility actions (NAs) |
| Project level – grant evaluation | OEET – online expert evaluation tool For project assessors |
| Programme level – reporting and management | Business Object reporting → ‘live’ Dashboard visualising key performance indicators according to criteria defined by each user For Commission services and agencies |
| Programme level – dissemination | Erasmus+ Project results platform – summary overview of all projects (KA2 and KA3) with success stories flagged - For all audiences |
| Other tools | EU Survey – online survey administered for all KA1 beneficiaries through the mobility tool |
| | OLS – pre-post testing on language competence |
| | PDM/URF – DGIT system for creation of unique organisational ID for all beneficiaries of EU programmes HERMES – DGIT system for management of application forms |

The **monitoring surveys of beneficiaries** carried out by DG EAC concern all learners or practioners who take part in mobility under KA1 over 2014-2016⁵²³. The **reliability of the data is strong**. Given the sample sizes (first two years of the programme) the data is considered to be strongly reliable even though it was too early to include 2016 data. This being said most questions are based on the self-perception of beneficiaries⁵²⁴ in contrast to the more objective OLS⁵²⁵ assessment of progress in language proficiency for instance; even for

⁵²¹ A unique ID for each participating organisation has been introduced only since 2014. Its absence beforehand has affected the comparison with predecessor programmes and limited the network analysis to Erasmus+ (without KA1). Furthermore, although the number of types of organisations used was very large, some 40% of organisations were classified as "other" in the programme dataset affecting the analysis of participation per type of organisation.

⁵²² See sections on effectiveness and relevance below

⁵²³ All KA1 individual beneficiaries are requested to fulfil an online survey on completion of their mobility. See ICF, fig. 3.2 for breakdown by sector.

⁵²⁴ The most factual question (programme result indicator) is the rate of formal recognition of participation in Erasmus+.

very similar questions the responses offered vary across sectors affecting the comparability across target groups.

In addition to descriptive and multivariate statistical analysis of programme data, a **social network analysis** showed more specifically how organisations cooperate and participate in Erasmus+ and assessed in particular cross-sector and trans-national cooperation. It is to be noted that the analysis of repeated participation in the programme could not be pursued, as it would have required substantial data cleaning across previous programmes' data sets (due to multiple names used for the same organisations prior to 2014).

The analysis of programme data has been **enriched with other secondary data**: contextual indicators from the Education and training monitor, the Youth indicators, relevant Eurobarometer studies or the Sport indicators available on Eurostat. Furthermore, external data sources on education and training institutions with high share of disadvantaged students have been compared across a sample of countries with the programme data to identify the schools that have (or have not) engaged with Erasmus+.

Most result indicators are based on self-perception and the link between the survey questions and the indicator measured can sometimes be weaker. That is why monitoring data were complemented through primary data collection such as surveys.

| Source | Scope | Volume |
|---|--|---|
| Programme databases (ICF, Annexe 2) | Extracts from Commission IT systems for programme management over 2008-2016 ⁵²⁶ | Records concern all beneficiaries and in some case also applicants |
| Monitoring surveys of Erasmus+ beneficiaries (Commission data) (ICF, Annexe 2) | All Erasmus+ beneficiaries of KA1 have been surveyed on completion since 2014 | Over 955,000 respondents of which: 730,254 learners 227, 319 staff |
| Online Linguistic Support assessment (ICF, 3.4.2) | Learners in KA1 (mostly higher education students) since 2014 | total sample size: 523,238 participants (95% in HE) |
| Network analysis (ICF, Annex 18 – not published) | Based on programme data for KA2 and KA3 (or equivalent actions) from Erasmus+, LLP, Youth in | Based on programme data from Erasmus + (KA2 and KA3), LLP, Youth in |

⁵²⁵ The **Online Linguistic Support** (OLS) was introduced with the Erasmus+ programme to help mobility participants improve their knowledge of the relevant foreign language, so that they can make the most out of their experience abroad. Before and at the end of the Erasmus+ mobility, Erasmus+ participants take the language assessment to measure their level and progress in the language. OLS provides as well online language courses.

⁵²⁶ Some indicators were unavailable for 2007. 2016 data for centralised actions were not yet fully available at the time of the data analysis. The sample for 2016 therefore represents a robust indication but not the final state of the respective indicators.

| Source | Scope | Volume |
|--------|--|-----------------------------------|
| | Action, Erasmus Mundus and Tempus ⁵²⁷ | Action, Erasmus Mundus and Tempus |

⁵²⁷ For International Higher Education, data was available only for centralised projects. For Tempus the data analysed only covered leading organisations as no data was available about partner organisations. Other Higher Education international programmes were not covered.

Surveys of beneficiaries and control groups

To collect more comprehensive, objective and comparable quantitative data on programme results, the external evaluator has carried out ten specific surveys of beneficiary **learners and staff** and related control groups **covering all programme target groups**, both for KA1 (mobility) and KA2 (organisational cooperation)⁵²⁸. The Erasmus+ monitoring survey shows a subjective valuation by beneficiaries themselves of their experience, whereas the external evaluation surveys show **more objectively**, through factual questions whether the beneficiaries demonstrate different attitudes, competences or beliefs than a control group that was asked the same questions. As often as possible the questions used in the survey had been previously tested in large scale surveys such as PISA, TALIS or Eurobarometer and in any case were as often as possible factual, so as to enable a comparison with the control group of non-beneficiaries. This means that to strength the validity of surveys statements about self-perceived contribution of the programme were as often as possible avoided. The latter surveys were disseminated to all contactable beneficiaries of Erasmus+ as well as predecessor programmes⁵²⁹. Overall findings could be generalised to the whole programme with **sufficient confidence** because the **sample sizes for all surveys were large enough** in all cases to make judgements and the distribution of various background variables within the survey samples was assessed as acceptable⁵³⁰.

In addition to the standard tests of significance and regressions, a **quasi-experimental approach** was used to assess the contribution of the programme to the results measured⁵³¹. As a proxy of **counterfactual assessment**⁵³², control groups of non-beneficiaries were set up⁵³³

⁵²⁸ Results at the level of organisations were measured through responses of staff

⁵²⁹ ICF/GfK, 3.3.3 on survey dissemination and recruitment methods as well as sample sizes (tab. 3.6)

⁵³⁰ However given the limited background variables about the beneficiaries it is not possible to assess how comparable are the samples compared to the programme population. For several surveys (pupils, young people, sport staff) there is no contact database of direct beneficiaries hence there is no background data on the population to compare with. Respondents have been recruited through organisations. For all the staff surveys though there is database for KA1 beneficiaries (Erasmus+ only) KA2 beneficiaries, for whom there is no database that would provide data on the overall population, were also surveyed. Respondents have been recruited among beneficiaries who took part not only in the current programme for which population data is available for KA1 but also predecessor programmes. Except learners in higher education and VET the information about background characteristics of the overall population for the other groups is weak or inexistent. Where available the background information is besides not standardised across datasets. For example, the database of HEI students who took part in Erasmus Mundus identifies their country of residence, whereas the HEI student database of Erasmus students identifies their nationality or the country they are being sent from. For all databases there are gaps in terms of the completeness of the information. Even where population variables of interest are available, there are missing cases, meaning that it is not possible to say with confidence what the profile of the population is.

⁵³¹ The analysis includes tests of statistical significance, regressions, pre-post measurement and propensity score matching; ICF, Annexe 3 for detailed statistical analysis of survey results; ICF/GfK, 3.4 concerning method of statistical analysis and counterfactual estimation applied for the post surveys and the pre-post surveys

⁵³² Counterfactual attempts to measure what would have been the outcome in the absence of the programme.

with similar profiles to compare their responses with those made by respondents who participated in the Erasmus+ programme. This has been achieved in matching respondents in the treatment group (i.e. Erasmus+ beneficiaries) with ‘similar’ individuals in the control group, to come up with a ‘matched sample’ where subjects are alike in some background characteristics, called covariates, such as gender, age, etc.⁵³⁴. Overall the comparability was considered satisfactory even if there are some minor though statistically significant differences on certain surveys and certain variables. For most variables there were no significant differences between the control group and the treatment group and where they were these concerned variables that were not likely to strongly influence the findings. In other words, this might not be considered as genuine counterfactual assessment, as the design cannot exclude that the differences in result variables measured between the beneficiaries and the control group would be **related to the selection into the programme rather than the programme**. Nevertheless it does control for various characteristics of both beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries when judging the differences in results. **Most control groups reached a significant size allowing comparison with beneficiaries**, except in sport and Adult education sectors where the control groups were too small⁵³⁵.

In addition to the above ‘post’ surveys (i.e. beneficiaries were surveyed after they took part in the programme), the external evaluator carried out pre-surveys in two sectors where short term mobility exchanges apply (i.e. school pupils and Youth exchanges) for the purpose of **pre/post comparison**. This allowed - for the school sector only⁵³⁶ - to draw conclusions on selection into the programme and to observe changes during the time of the mobility experience. The sample sizes suffered from a high attrition from the pre to the post survey, especially for the youth sector where comparison of profiles prior to Erasmus+ mobility could not been done. Pre-post results for the youth sector have therefore not been interpreted considering the high likelihood of sample bias.

The surveys of learners and staff were complemented with a **survey of socio-economic organisations** taking part in the programme: companies, public authorities, civic organisations, sectoral bodies, etc.

Other surveys and interviews targeting beneficiaries of specific activities were carried out in the case of **Jean Monnet** actions and the **Student Loan** Guarantee Facility (SLGF)⁵³⁷.

⁵³³ In addition to open recruitment through social media, control groups were recruited in asking either participating organisations or unsuccessful applicants to disseminate the survey respectively to non-participants or to their staff.

⁵³⁴ The match between co-variables was sought on: Age; Gender; Country; Academic level (i.e. whether they had repeated a grade); Socio-economic background; Rural/urban area; Objective migrant status (i.e. at least one parent born in a different country); Disadvantaged status (those who said ‘yes, and I feel disadvantaged by this’ to any of the statements in the question about disabilities, problems and obstacles); Highest parents’ education level (i.e. by either the mother or father); Volunteering experience (Youth survey only).

⁵³⁵ As a consequence, the control group of VET staff was also used for adult education and the control group of youth staff was also used for sport, as these were found to be sufficiently comparable against a range of background characteristics.

⁵³⁶ ICF/GfK, tab. 3.7

⁵³⁷ ICF, 3.3.4 and 3.3.5

| Source | Scope | Volume |
|---|--|--|
| Beneficiary surveys and control groups (ICF, Annexe 3 and 13 – not published) | Beneficiaries of mobility actions (learners and practitioners) and cooperation actions (practitioners) as well as control groups (non-beneficiaries) | Over 47,000 respondents ⁵³⁸ Learners: 24,037 beneficiaries and 2,695 from control group Staff: 20,155 beneficiaries and 928 from control group |
| Socio-economic actors survey (ICF, Annexe 6) | Organisations other than the primary target group, i.e. companies, public authorities, civil society (other than youth organisations) | 947 valid responses |
| Topic-specific surveys | | |
| Student Loan Guarantee Facility student fair survey (ICF, Annexe 8 and standalone SLGF section) | Students participating in student fairs for future (mobile) Master students and exhibitors of these fairs | 219 respondents 119 students and 100 exhibitors |
| Student Loan Guarantee Facility interviews (ICF, 3.4.5) | (Non)- Participating Financial Intermediaries and their representatives; National student loan schemes; HEIs and their representatives; National authorities and Agencies; Representatives of students and the youth | 33 interviews |
| Jean Monnet surveys (ICF, Annexe 7 and standalone Jean Monnet report) | Students studying and Staff teaching about the EU – beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries | 2,350 respondents Supplemented with 330 beneficiaries and 10,503 non-beneficiaries from the general beneficiary survey |
| Jean Monnet interviews and case studies (ICF, 3.4.4) | Interviews with professors who have never applied for Jean Monnet (AU, CZ, UK, EL, US) | 5 interviews 4 case studies |

⁵³⁸ Response rates are not available for these surveys, due to the fact that a large proportion of the responses were collected through institutions or by a snowball method. If there is no way of knowing how many people were actually contacted, ICF's technical report (ICF, annex 3a) maps how many invitations were sent to which contact list. For instance, for the sport sector 197 out of a total of 329 participating organisations replied to the survey.

Surveys of staff involved in the programme implementation

National agencies and EACEA, as key managing bodies in the implementation of the programme, were subject to a dedicated **programme agency survey**, especially useful to inform efficiency of the programme management.

To complement data on projects, in particular about the quality of applications and final reports but also the efficiency of the selection process, a **survey of project assessors** was also carried out. They are experts assessing project applications and reports.

Lastly, a so-called **Delphi survey** was disseminated among these experts to collect project assessors views about the added value of the programme and thus to provide inputs into the analysis of cost effectiveness. They were asked for each sector to elaborate about hypothetical impact of dismissing Erasmus+ and about alternatives⁵³⁹.

| Source | Scope | Volume |
|---|---|---|
| Agencies survey (ICF, Annexe 4) | Agency staff in charge of programme implementation (57 National Agencies and Executive Agency EACEA) One respondent per sector designated by each agency | 130 valid responses |
| Experts (project assessors) survey and Delphi survey (ICF, Annexe 5) | Assessors supporting project selection and those supporting evaluation of final reports (centralised and decentralised projects) | 1122 valid responses 213 responses (Delphi survey) ⁵⁴⁰ |

⁵³⁹ What would have happened in absence of Erasmus +? What are the most likely reactions when it comes to alternative/ compensatory measures? What would have been the most likely effect of the absence of Erasmus +? What alternative actions could lead to comparable results as Erasmus +?

⁵⁴⁰ That is to say between 25 and 40 expert responses per sector.

Case based and qualitative data collection

On a qualitative note, the **case studies** served to complement insights gained from key informant interviews and surveys, in particular about how the programme generates organisational and system level changes including spill over effects from individuals who are direct beneficiaries to other individuals and to organisations. Case studies were selected using a combination of criterion-based selection and random selection.

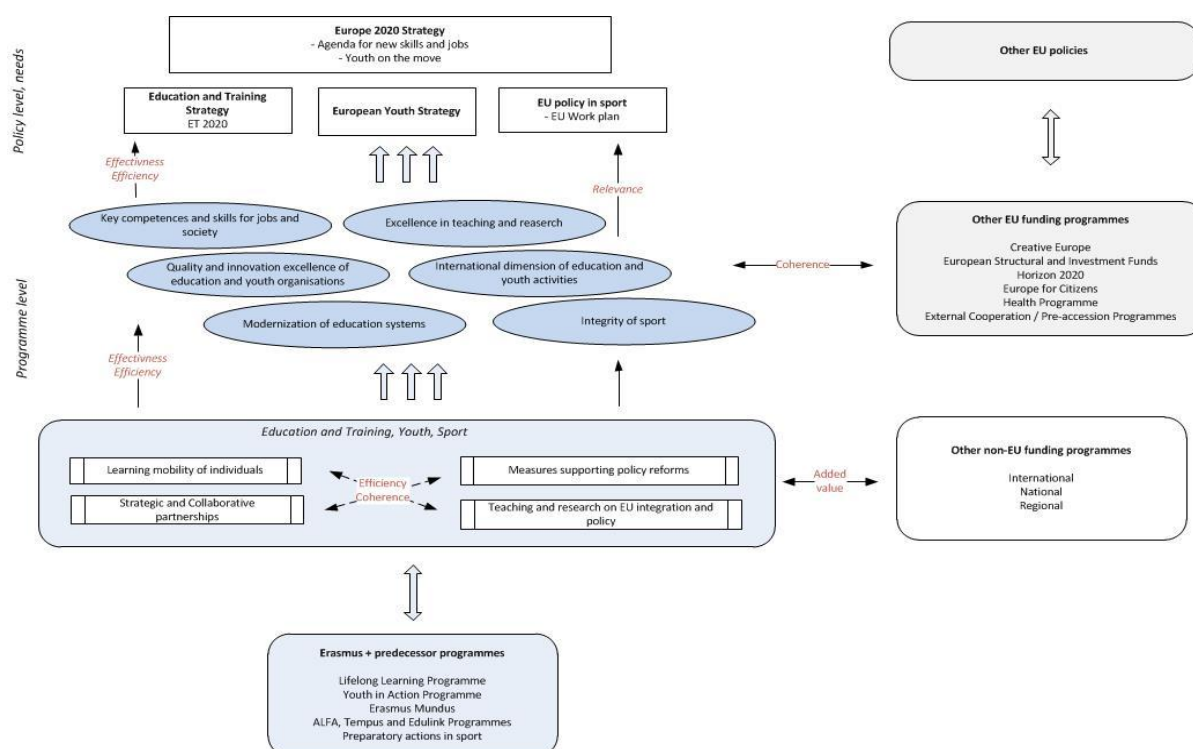
The **most significant change approach** was applied to case study interviews. It is based on open ended questions which ask beneficiaries to give account *in their own words* of the difference the programme makes to them. Indeed, the surveys measure always predefined results from the perspective of the programme design. However the participants themselves may judge how the programme has benefited to them differently.

Erasmus+ and predecessor programmes fund a high number of cooperation projects which result in outputs (e.g. handbook, toolkits, methodologies, etc.) that are aimed to be used within the organisations that took part in the project but also beyond. To get a better understanding of their quality and dissemination potential, a **review of selected project outputs**, mainly collected from national agencies, was carried out. Given that only relatively few Erasmus+ funded projects were completed at the time of this evaluation, the sample is somewhat biased towards predecessor programmes. All qualitative fieldwork was based on a standard protocol: the outputs were captured in standardised grids, reviewed and where appropriate enriched with feedback asked by interviewers. Lastly, an expert panel reviewed collectively the actual outputs of cooperation projects.

| Source | Scope | Volume |
|---|---|--|
| Case studies (ICF, Annexe 9) | Cases mainly at organisation level to assess spill over effects and changes at organisation and system levels Staff, learners, leadership and other stakeholders if relevant | 38 cases of which 32 at organisation level, 4 at policy level, 4 for Jean Monnet actions 233 respondents |
| Review of selected projects' outputs (ICF, Annexe 17 – not published) | Extract information from cooperation projects and system level project actions, mainly from predecessor programmes | 386 project reports ⁵⁴¹ |
| Expert panel assessment of projects' outputs (ICF, Annexe 10) | Assess projects' outputs against a set of pre-determined criteria | 100 projects (144 outputs) |

⁵⁴¹ The sample of 386 projects selected for review has the following characteristics: 292 projects are funded by LLP (of which 100 are transversal actions) and 70 by Erasmus+; 250 projects are centralised and 136 decentralised. The projects were spread across the sectors/strands as follows: school (65), VET (49), HE (25), adult learning (33), Jean Monnet (50), Youth (42) and sport (22).

Annex 4: Evaluation criteria and evaluation questions



Source: Terms of Reference for Mid-term evaluation of Erasmus+ (January 2016)

Effectiveness

- To what extent have the various programme fields (both within Erasmus+ and its predecessor programmes) delivered the expected outputs, results and impacts? What negative and positive factors seem to be influencing outputs, results and impacts?
- What are the long-term impacts of the predecessor programmes? We are interested in the impact of all actions/elements of the predecessor's programmes, in particular those actions/elements that are continued in new Erasmus+ programme. We are also interested in impact of actions/elements that have discontinued to the extent that it might help to design the future programme.
- Please identify, describe and quantify (if possible) the spill over effects between various actions (clusters of actions) of the Programme.
- What are the differences in impact of programme actions on specific disadvantaged groups of the population who traditionally do not engage in transnational activities as compared to other groups that benefit from the programme?
- Are there positive /negative effects that existed in the previous programmes, but that no longer exist with the new programme?
- What conclusions can be drawn on the likely impact of Erasmus+ programme given the fact that significant parts of their actions are continuation of predecessor's programmes?

- What have been the unintended effects and their magnitude of the Erasmus+ and the predecessor programmes if any?
- To what extent are the effects likely to last after the intervention ends?
- How effective are the forms of cooperation and the types of actions under the Programme for the purpose of supporting the political priorities? Which fields and actions of the Programme are the most effective considering the needs?
- How and to what extent is the existence of one integrated Programme a help or a hindrance in promoting greater effectiveness and visibility for the EU's activities in the field of education and training, youth and sport, compared with a sector-specific or target group-specific approach to Programme design, using sector-specific action names (e.g. Comenius, Leonardo, Grundtvig)?
- To what extent are the Programme results adequately disseminated and exploited?

Relevance

- To what extent are current and emerging key socio-economic needs and challenges that Europe is facing reflected in the policy priorities, objectives and actions/activities of the Programme?
- To what extent are needs of different stakeholders and sectors addressed by Programme objectives? How successful is the Programme in attracting and reaching target audiences and groups within different fields of the programme's scope? How well is the Erasmus+ programme known to the education and training, youth and sport community? In case some target groups are not sufficiently reached, what factors are limiting their access and what actions could be taken to remedy this?
- To what extent is the design of the programme oriented and focused towards the hard-to-reach groups or specific disadvantaged groups of the population who traditionally do not engage in transnational activities? In case some target groups are not sufficiently reached, what factors are limiting their access and what actions could be taken to remedy this?
- Based on the analysis of the impact of predecessor programmes, are there any elements that have been discontinued and could have a possible value added in future generation of programmes?

Coherence

- To what extent are the objectives of different programme fields within Erasmus+ programme consistent and mutually supportive? What evidence exists of synergies between the different programme fields and actions? How well do different actions work together? To what extent there exist duplications, overlaps, or other disadvantageous issues between the programme fields and how are they dealt with?
- To what extent are the centralised and decentralised actions coherent? How do they interact / complement each other?

- To what extent is the Erasmus+ programme coherent with relevant EU policies and programmes with similar objectives such as Creative Europe Programme, European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) or other EU's funding programmes such as Horizon 2020, financial instruments relating to justice and citizenship, health, external cooperation or pre-accession assistance programmes? To what extent has the Erasmus+ programme proved complementary to other EU interventions/initiatives in the field of education and training, youth and sport?
- To what extent does the Erasmus+ programme design (including needs, objectives, activities, outputs and effects) provide appropriate links and support to the EU policy agendas, in particular policy initiatives and political priorities within the EU 2020 Strategy, the Education and Training Strategic Framework ET 2020, the European youth strategy or the EU policy priorities in the field of sport?
- To what extent is the Erasmus+ programme coherent with various interventions pursued at national and international level which have similar objectives? To what extent has the Erasmus+ programme proved complementary to other Member States' interventions/initiatives in the field of education, training, youth and sport?

Efficiency

- What is the cost-effectiveness of various actions (clusters of actions) of Erasmus+ programme and its predecessor programmes? How the relative costs and outcomes (effects) of various programme actions compare within and across the programme fields? Provide quantifications.
- To what extent is/was the size of budget appropriate and proportionate to what the Programme and its predecessors set out to achieve? To what extent is/was the distribution of funds across the programme fields and Key Actions appropriate in relation to their level of effectiveness and utility?
- What is the prospect of other policy instruments or mechanisms in providing better cost-effectiveness ratio?
- To what extent is the implementation and management structure of centralised and decentralised actions appropriate, efficient, and well-functioning? How efficient is the cooperation between the different management bodies (Commission –Executive Agency –National Agencies –European Investment Fund – National Authorities – Independent Audit Bodies – Erasmus+ Committee), and to what extent does the Commission fulfil its guiding role in the process? How has this changed between the two programming period? What are the areas for improvements?
- Are there differences in efficiency of Programme management and implementation between National Agencies, the Commission Executive Agency, the European Investment Fund or between different programming periods? If so, what are the differences and what are the underlying reasons for them? Compare the strategies, approaches and outcomes of the different National Agencies.
- To what extent are the monitoring mechanisms applied by the Commission, the Executive Agency, the National Agencies and the European Investment Fund

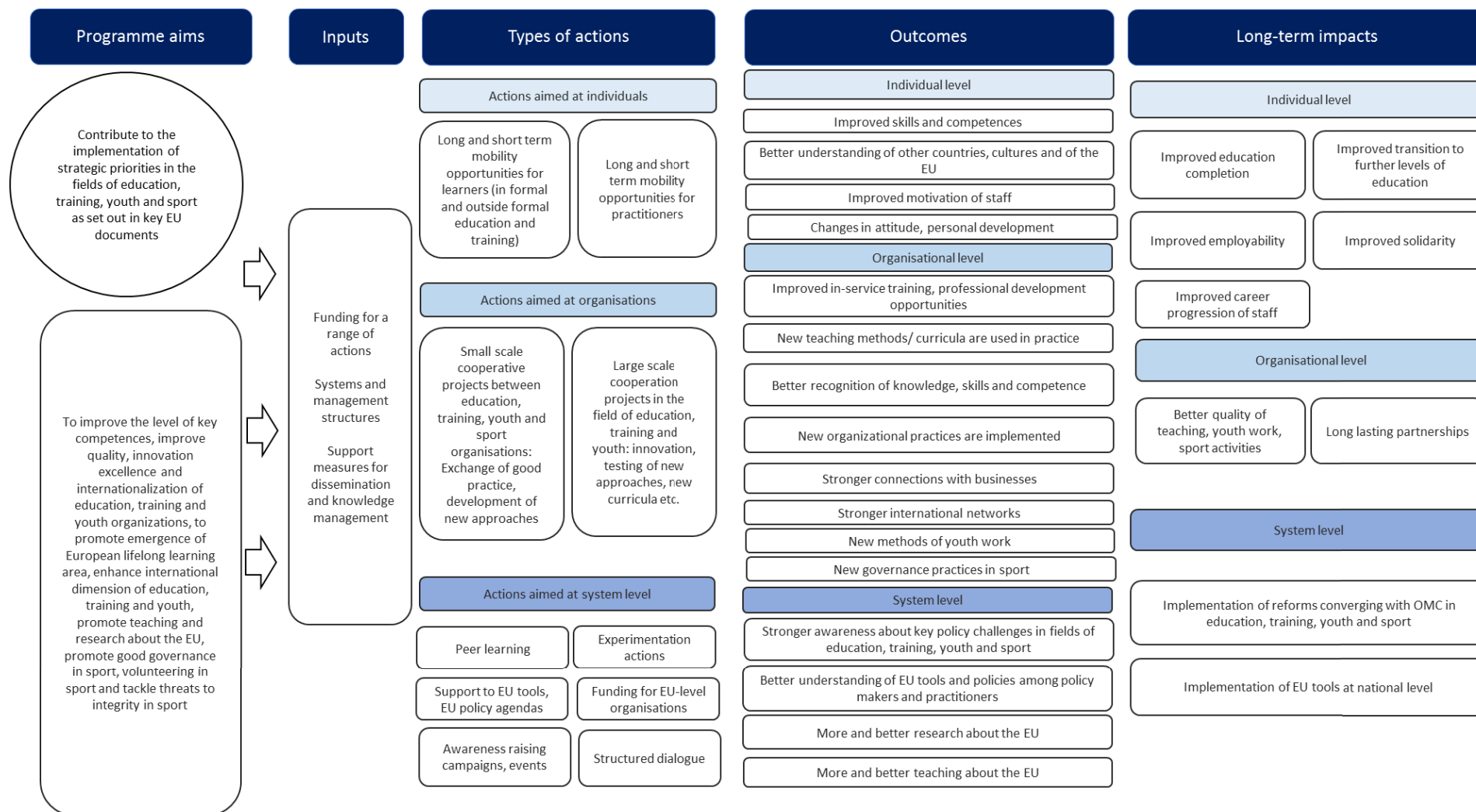
efficient/cost effective? To what extent are the monitoring mechanisms of the beneficiaries and participants by National Agencies and the Executive Agency effective and proportionate? To what extent are internal monitoring mechanisms of activities of the National Agencies and the implementation of the Programme at national level effective and proportionate? What are the areas for improvement, considering the need for a smooth and effective implementation of the Programme?

- To what extent do the indicators identified for the Programme in the legal base correspond to the monitoring purposes? How could the overall management and monitoring system be improved?
- To what extent are the management support tools (e.g. Epluslink, Mobility tool) adequate and sufficient to support a sound management of the Programme?
- What are the efficiency effects of the integration of previous programmes and actions/activities into Erasmus+ programme? What are the advantages and disadvantages of the integration of previous programmes and actions into Erasmus+ programme?
- To what extent has the system of simplified grants resulted in a reduction of the administrative burden for National Agencies, Executive Agency and programme beneficiaries and participants? Are there differences across actions or fields? What elements of the programme could be changed to further reduce the administrative burden and simplify the programme's implementation, without unduly compromising its results and impact?
- To what extent have the anti-fraud measures allowed for the prevention and timely detection of fraud?

European added value

- What is the additional value and benefit resulting from EU activities, compared to what could be achieved by MS at national and/or regional levels? What does the Erasmus+ programme offer in addition to other education & training support schemes available at both international and national levels?
- What is the benefit and added value of the Erasmus+ programme compared to the benefit of the predecessor programmes? What is the added value of repetitive actions/activities of the Erasmus+ programme and the predecessor programmes?
- What would be the most likely consequences of stopping the Erasmus+ programme?
- To what extent does the Erasmus+ programme promote cooperation between participating countries?

Annex 5a: The intervention logic of Erasmus+ and its predecessor programmes



Programmes' aims

Drawing on the legacy of its predecessors (Lifelong Learning, Youth in Action, Erasmus Mundus, Tempus, Alfa, Edulink and the Preparatory Actions in Sport), Erasmus+ aims to contribute to similar general objectives in the fields of education and training, youth and sport. As for its predecessors, these objectives have been defined based on EU level priorities set out in key policy documents (e.g. Europe 2020, ET 2020, Youth Strategy, EU Sport Action Plan and 'Increasing the impact of EU development policy: an Agenda for Change'⁵⁴² and since then confirmed through various European Commission Communications such as: 'New Skills Agenda for Europe'⁵⁴³ ; 'Renewed EU agenda for higher education'⁵⁴⁴, etc.). These objectives jointly with the programme's rationale are specified in the legal basis⁵⁴⁵ and the programme guide⁵⁴⁶.

Next to these overarching objectives, Erasmus+ is aimed to help achieve a number of specific objectives applying to the respective fields it covers. These notably relate to:

- improving the level of key competences;
- improving quality, innovation, excellence and internationalisation of education, training and youth organisations;
- promoting the emergence of European lifelong learning area;
- enhancing the international dimension of education, training and youth;
- promoting teaching and research about the EU;
- promoting good governance in sport, volunteering in sport and tackle threats to integrity in sport.

⁵⁴² October 2011: <https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/com3a20113a06373afin3aen3atxt.pdf>

⁵⁴³ June 2016: https://ec.europa.eu/education/news/20160610-education-skills-factsheet_en

⁵⁴⁴ May 2017: https://ec.europa.eu/education/sites/education/files/he-com-2017-247_en.pdf

⁵⁴⁵ Available at : <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32013R1288&from=EN>

⁵⁴⁶ Erasmus+ Programme Guide, Part A: http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/sites/erasmusplus/files/files/resources/erasmus-plus-programme-guide_en.pdf

The predecessor programmes and Erasmus+ share a number of specific objectives that remained common to both periods. Over both programming periods specific emphasis has been put for instance on:

- Competence development of participating learners;
- Professional development of staff; and
- Foreign language learning;

However, the predecessor programmes and the current programme were designed in quite different contexts. Hence, a number of differences in objectives can be noted:

- The Erasmus+ programme has stronger emphasis on high level policy objectives (and result-oriented approaches);
- The emphasis on employability is also clearer in the current programme which was designed in a period when young people were facing high unemployment, unlike the period of design of the predecessor programmes;
- The predecessor programmes on the other hand had specific objectives about the quality and volume of mobility exchanges and quality and volume of organisational cooperation. This ‘Europeanisation’ was perceived as an objective in its own right in the predecessor programmes while in the current programme it seems to become a means to achieve other ends rather than a goal on its own;
- The predecessor programmes also emphasised quite strongly the use of ICT in education and training and the introduction of ICT-based pedagogies was an objective of the programme while it does not figure in the Erasmus+ legal basis;
- The youth in action programme put much more emphasis on the objectives of youth participation and the citizenship dimension of the youth programme than the current programme.

There were also some issues that were topical at a given point in time for which specific actions were implemented temporarily. This is for instance the case of the situation of Roma population across the EU which was rather high on the policy agenda in the period 2009-2010. Regarding Erasmus+, the issue of social inclusion has become for instance prominent during the refugee crisis since 2015 and the issue of violent radicalisation became urgency after the terrorist attacks that started in 2015.

Overall, despite progressive adjustments as above, the aims of Erasmus+ have not radically changed in comparison to those of its predecessors. A noticeable difference between the current and the previous programmes is the integrated architecture of Erasmus+. Bringing together the education and training (including Jean Monnet programme), youth and sport fields into a single integrated programme is in particular expected to foster synergies, cross-fertilisation and to stimulate new forms of cooperation that did not or failed to materialise in the past.

Inputs

To operate the main types of actions and achieve the expected outcomes and long-last impacts discussed below, three main types of inputs underpin the Erasmus+ programme:

- funding range of actions;
- system and management structures, and;
- support measures for dissemination and knowledge management.

Whilst these do not differ much in theory from those offered under the predecessor programmes, Erasmus+ inputs are in practice rather different. A number of novelties have been indeed brought into Erasmus+. Besides the integrated structure mentioned above, the most noticeable changes have taken the form of: an increased budget allocation; a renewed internal structure of the programme; the introduction of new implementation and monitoring approaches and support measures for dissemination and knowledge management.

Types of actions

A major evolution compared to the predecessor programmes has been the change in programme structure. Rather than being structured by sectors with each sector having embedded a variety of types of actions each specific to a given sector, the programme was restructured according to main categories of types of actions (Key Actions - KA) which are common to the education and training and youth fields. The sport field and the Jean Monnet programme have made the object of separate chapters. While there are still some specificities in the fields and subfields, the main types of actions are shared. These are:

- Mobility of individuals: through KA1 (in education and training and youth);
- Cooperation partnerships: through KA2 (in education and training and youth) and other cooperation actions in sport and Jean Monnet) ; and
- System level projects: through KA3 and ad hoc actions in sport and Jean Monnet

This logic of these three main types of actions corresponds to those levels at which the programme aims to trigger change: individual, organisation and system. This is an improvement in the logic of the programme compared to the myriad of actions with different names under the predecessor programmes.

These broad categories of actions are further subdivided into a small number of types of actions which as often as possible share a common name if they are common to several sectors. This enables to cater for a variety of needs within a broad category of activities funded.

Expected outcomes and long-lasting impact

Erasmus+ aims to deliver outcomes and long-lasting impact at its three levels of intervention as the figure above illustrates. This can be further summarised as follows:

- At individual level: the programme is aimed to bring positive changes at both learners (students, trainees, apprentices, young people and volunteers) and practitioners (teachers, trainers, youth workers) in the form of (not exhaustive): improved skills and competences (including soft skills), self-empowerment and self-esteem, better awareness of the EU values, etc. For practitioners, additional outcomes are expected such as: enhanced motivation, opportunities to test and implement new practices, ability to address the needs of the disadvantaged, etc. The achievement of these outcomes is in turn expected to generate long-lasting impact at individual level (e.g. enhanced employability, entrepreneurship, active participation in society, participation in formal/non-formal education or training, etc.) but also at organisation and system levels (e.g. improved education attainment and completion rates, employability, transition to further levels of education, solidarity and career progression of staff).
- At organisation level: the transnational cooperation project opportunities offered by the programme are expected to generate the following types of outcomes (not exhaustive): development and/or implementation of new pedagogies or curricula, implementation of new organisational practices, enhanced networking with foreign partners (including outside Europe and from other fields), improving the dialogue between the academic research arena and policy makers. etc. The achievement of these outcomes is in turn expected to generate long-lasting impact at system level notably in the form of better quality of teaching, youth work and sport activities, sustainable partnerships, increased levels of participation in sport, physical activity and voluntary activity, etc.
- At system level: much greater systemic impact than in the past (e.g. KA3 clearly sets a framework for system level-oriented actions) is expected overall. Anticipated outcomes at both EU and national levels relate to achieving: stronger awareness about key policy challenges in education and training, youth and sport; enhanced mutual learning and good practice exchanges among policy makers and key stakeholders; better understanding of key EU tools and policies; supporting research and training about the EU, etc. This is in turn aimed to help achieve long-lasting impact in the form of:
 - Enhanced quality, efficiency and equity of education and training systems and youth policies through the OMC;
 - Effective implementation of reforms converging with the OMC at national level
 - Effective implementation of EU tools for assessment, transparency and recognition of skills and qualifications acquired through formal, non-formal and informal learning at national level;

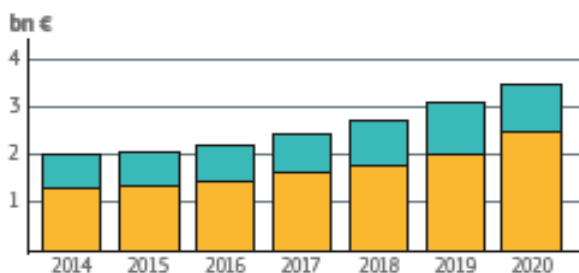
- Increased visibility of the external dimension of the programme (both within and outside Europe) and credibility to support structural reforms in partner countries, etc.

The different levels of intervention and related types of actions are not to be seen in isolation but on the contrary as aiming to contribute to commonly shared objectives and to generate mutually reinforcing outcomes and impacts. More than in the past, spill-over effects are expected to materialise across Erasmus+. Overall, the logic of the programme is that the simplification it offers should help reach greater and long-lasting impact at the individual, organisation and system levels and contribute to the achievement of the key EU strategic documents mentioned above.



ERASMUS+

The EU programme for education, training, youth and sport (2014-2020)



Source: see Erasmus+ 2014 annual report

€14.7 BN BUDGET

2/3 of budget: learning opportunities abroad for individuals
1/3 of budget: partnerships + reforms of the education and youth sectors

WHAT'S NEW?

- More opportunities for millions of Europeans to study, train, volunteer or gain professional experience abroad
- New funding for actions in the field of sport
- Stronger international dimension with more opportunities for participants to study worldwide
- Language learning support for all participants

WHAT'S BETTER?

- A 40% increase in funding compared to the Lifelong Learning programme = €14.7 billion in grants over 7 years = opportunities for 3.7 % of young people in the EU (i.e. around 3.3 million young people over the period)
- A stronger focus on improving young people's job prospects to tackle youth unemployment
- A more inclusive programme supporting people with fewer opportunities



MOBILITY EXCHANGES: WHO CAN BENEFIT?

Students in higher education:

Up to 2 million students, including 450 000 trainees, are expected to benefit from grants to study and train abroad. More than 135 000 students and staff can come to Europe – or go outside Europe. Master students can apply for an Erasmus-backed loan with more affordable conditions to complete a full degree (this is already available in Spain, France, the UK, Turkey and Luxembourg). Scholarships are available for students worldwide to take part in the 'Erasmus Mundus joint master degrees': study programmes run by two+ institutions in different countries.

Vocational training students and apprentices:

Up to 650 000 grants offered for vocational studies or apprenticeships abroad.

Young people taking part in youth exchanges and volunteering:

About 600 000 young people can go abroad as part of youth exchanges and the European Voluntary Service.

Teachers, youth trainers and other staff:

Opportunities for 800 000 teachers, lecturers, trainers, education staff and youth workers to gain new skills abroad.



COOPERATION PROJECTS: WORKING ACROSS DISCIPLINES

Facilitating the transition

between education and work:

Funding for more than 25 000 partnerships across 125 000 education, training and youth organisations and enterprises. These organisations work with peers in other countries in their own sector and other sectors to develop, transfer and implement innovative education, training and youth practices. For example, they develop new teaching practices or curricula, or allow students to study real-life cases in business and industry.

Boosting employment and entrepreneurship:

Support for more than 300 large partnerships among education institutions and enterprises to tackle skills gaps and foster start-ups.



EMBRACING SPORT: IMPROVING THE GAME, PROMOTING PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Erasmus+ promotes sports events and collaborative partnerships, with funding for up to 1 200 projects. Erasmus+ supports transnational projects involving grassroots sport organisations, and promotes – among other things – good governance, social inclusion, the fight against racism, dual careers, and physical activity for all.

EXAMPLES OF ERASMUS+ PROJECTS:

eTwinning: connecting European schools, supporting teachers

Through eTwinning, classrooms across Europe work together on projects using a common online platform. This helps pupils acquire new skills and competences, and supports teachers in their professional development. For example, in the "Migrants and Refugees" project, participating students – some of them refugees themselves – exchanged ideas about literature, shared their personal stories and reflected on what it means to be a migrant or a refugee. The project ran between 2015 and 2016, with participants from France, Germany, Norway and the Netherlands.

In just 12 years, eTwinning has connected more than half of European schools, involving over 2 million pupils and over 500 000 teachers, making it the biggest teachers' network in the world.

European Astrobiology Campus: building new networks to boost research

Exploring the origins of life on Earth, or whether it exists on Mars, requires cross-sectoral cooperation. With that in mind, the European Astrobiology Campus was established in 2014 by 10 higher education institutions and two non-academic organisations from nine European countries. It provides top scientists, educators and young



researchers from different disciplines with international high-level training and pushes them beyond the boundaries of their fields. Project partners are planning a European Astrobiology Institute, with the Campus as its training hub.

Green Light: bringing young people together

Youth exchanges allow groups of young people aged 13 - 30 from different countries to meet, live together and work on shared projects for periods of five to 21 days. The Green Light project, which ran in 2016 and 2017, raised awareness of household waste and drew attention to the importance of an environmentally sustainable lifestyle. During the youth exchanges, young people from four different countries learnt about different countries' ways of dealing with waste, equipment using alternative energy, and how to recycle creatively.

Erasmus Mundus Global Studies: Working together on big challenges

The Erasmus Mundus Global Studies is the first interdisciplinary university programme tackling global issues. It covers a range of topics from social sciences to culture and crisis prevention and management. Students choosing the programme study at two different European universities, spending an academic year in each. Since 2005, the programme has trained over 600 graduates from more than 50 countries. Universities offering Global Studies – including Leipzig University, the London School of Economics, Vienna University and Wrocław University – have also become centres of innovative research in the fields of Global Studies, Global History and Regional Studies. EU-funded scholarships are awarded to the best student applicants.

DID YOU KNOW THAT...?

... More and more young people are using Erasmus+ exchanges to gain valuable work experience abroad

... 1 in 3 Erasmus+ trainees are offered a position by the company they trained in

... Five years after graduation, the unemployment rate of young people who studied or trained abroad is 23 % lower than that of their non-mobile peers

... 1 in 3 youth mobility

Annex 5c: Specific objectives of Erasmus+ by level of intervention

| | | Envisaged effect at: | | | |
|------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|---------------------|----------------|----------|
| | Specific objective | Individual level | Institutional level | Systemic level | |
| | | | | EU | National |
| Education and training | | | | | |
| a | To improve the level of key competences and skills, with particular regard to their relevance for the labour market and their contribution to a cohesive society, in particular through increased opportunities for learning mobility and through strengthened cooperation between the world of education and training and the world of work | **** | *** | ** | * |
| b | To foster quality improvements, innovation excellence and internationalisation at the level of education and training institutions, in particular through enhanced transnational cooperation between education and training providers and other stakeholders | *** | **** | ** | ** |
| c | To promote the emergence and raise awareness of a European lifelong learning area designed to complement policy reforms at national level and to support the modernisation of education and training systems, in particular through enhanced policy cooperation, better use of Union transparency and recognition tools and the dissemination of good practices | ** | ** | **** | *** |
| d | To enhance the international dimension of education and training, in particular through cooperation between Union and partner-country institutions in the field of VET and in higher education, by increasing the attractiveness of European higher education institutions and supporting the Union's external action, including its development objectives, through the promotion of mobility and cooperation between the Union and partner-country higher education institutions and targeted capacity-building in partner countries | **** | **** | * | * |
| | | Envisaged effect in partner countries | | | |
| | | **** | **** | * | ** |
| e | To improve the teaching and learning of languages and to promote the Union's broad linguistic diversity and intercultural awareness | **** | **** | * | * |
| f | To promote excellence in teaching and research activities in European integration through the Jean Monnet activities worldwide | *** | **** | * | |

| | | Envisaged effect at: | | | |
|-------|--|---------------------------------------|---------------------|----------------|----------|
| | Specific objective | Individual level | Institutional level | Systemic level | |
| | | | | EU | National |
| Youth | | | | | |
| a | To improve the level of key competences and skills of young people, including those with fewer opportunities, as well as to promote participation in democratic life in Europe and the labour market, active citizenship, intercultural dialogue, social inclusion and solidarity, in particular through increased learning mobility opportunities for young people, those active in youth work or youth organisations and youth leaders, and through strengthened links between the youth field and the labour market | **** | *** | ** | * |
| b | To foster quality improvements in youth work, in particular through enhanced cooperation between organisations in the youth field and/or other stakeholders | *** | **** | ** | ** |
| c | To complement policy reforms at local, regional and national level and to support the development of knowledge and evidence-based youth policy as well as the recognition of non-formal and informal learning, in particular through enhanced policy cooperation, better use of Union transparency and recognition tools and the dissemination of good practices | ** | ** | **** | *** |
| d | To enhance the international dimension of youth activities and the role of youth workers and organisations as support structures for young people in complementarity with the Union's external action, in particular through the promotion of mobility and cooperation between the Union and partner-country stakeholders and international organisations and through targeted capacity-building in partner countries | **** | **** | * | * |
| | | Envisaged effect in partner countries | | | |
| | | **** | **** | * | ** |
| Sport | | | | | |
| a | To tackle cross-border threats to the integrity of sport, such as doping, match-fixing and violence, as well as all kinds of intolerance and discrimination | ** | ** | **** | *** |
| b | To promote and support good governance in sport and dual careers of athletes | *** | *** | **** | **** |
| c | To promote voluntary activities in sport, together with social inclusion, equal opportunities and awareness of the importance of health-enhancing physical activity through increased participation in, and equal access to, sport for all | **** | **** | * | ** |

Source: Terms of reference of the mid-term evaluation



Annex 5d: Predecessor programmes factsheet

ERASMUS+ predecessor programmes

1. The Lifelong Learning Programme

The Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP)⁵⁴⁷ was designed to enable people, at any stage of their life, to take part in stimulating learning experiences, as well as developing education and training across Europe. Nearly €7 billion, which ran from 2007-2013, funded a range of transnational learning mobility exchanges, study visits and networking activities. Most of the activities of the LLP continue under the new Erasmus+ programme 2014-2020.



Over the course of its lifespan, the LLP provided support to school pupils, university students, adult learners, and a variety of projects under the following main sub-programmes:

- Comenius for schools
- Leonardo da Vinci for vocational education and training
- Erasmus for higher education
- Grundtvig for adult education
- Jean Monnet actions, designed to stimulate teaching, reflection, and debate on European integration

Comenius

The Comenius sub-programme focused on all levels of school education, as well as the individuals involved, including pupils, teachers, local authorities, and education institutions, among others. It aimed to:

- Improve and increase the mobility of pupils and staff across the EU
- Enhance and increase school partnerships across the EU

⁵⁴⁷ http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-programme_en



- Encourage language learning, ICT for education, and better teaching techniques
- Enhance the quality and European dimension of teacher training
- Improve approaches to teaching and school management.

The total budget for Comenius in the 2007-2013 period was EUR 1,190 million and benefited to nearly 980,000 participants.

The sub-programme funded the following main actions:

- Mobility of pupils and school staff
- Bilateral and multilateral partnerships between various schools in the EU
- Multilateral projects and networks relating to improving language learning, ICT for education, and better teaching techniques.

Leonardo da Vinci

The Leonardo da Vinci sub-programme funded practical projects in the field of vocational education and training. The total budget for Leonardo da Vinci in the 2007-2013 period was EUR 1,820 million and benefited to around 590,000 participants.

The sub-programme was aiming to:

- Enhance the competitiveness of the European labour market by helping European citizens to acquire new skills, knowledge and qualifications and have them recognised across borders
- Support innovations and improvements in vocational education and training systems and practices.

Leonardo da Vinci funded the following main actions:

- Mobility of vocational education and training students and staff
- Bilateral and multilateral partnerships between various vocational education and training providers in the EU for transfer of innovation, experience or good practices.



- Multilateral projects and networks relating to improving the quality of training systems through the development of innovative contents, methods and procedures for vocational education and training.



Erasmus

The total budget for Erasmus programme in the 2007-2013 period was EUR 3.1 million. In addition to the 230,000 students supported each year (1.6 million over 2007-2013), Erasmus also provided opportunities for over 300,000 academic and administrative staff in higher education, with 4,000 institutions and 33 countries participating.

The Erasmus sub-programme supported student and staff exchanges and transnational cooperation in the field of higher education

The sub-programme was aimed to:

- Improve and increase the mobility of students and staff in higher education to study, teach and train across the EU
- Enhance and increase higher education institutions partnerships and networks, thus promoting innovation, quality and relevance of higher education across the EU.

The Erasmus programme supported the mobility through grants and provided co-funding to transnational cooperation projects and networks.

Grundtvig

The Grundtvig sub-programme focused on the teaching and study needs of adult learners, as well as developing the adult learning sector in general. The total budget for Grundtvig programme in the 2007-2013 period was EUR 420 million and benefited to nearly 170,000 participants.

Covering teachers, trainers, staff, and adult learners, among others, the sub-programme aimed to:

- Increase the number of people in adult education



- Improve mobility conditions in adult learning
- Improve the quality and cooperation between adult education organisations
- Develop innovative educational and management practices
- Ensure social inclusion through adult education
- Support innovative ICT-based educational content, services, and practices.

Grundtvig supported:

- Mobility of adult learners and adult learning staff
- Bilateral and multilateral partnerships between various adult learning providers in the EU
- Multilateral projects and networks relating to improving the quality of adult learning through the development of innovative contents, methods and procedures for adult learning and making adult learning more accessible to the potential users.

Jean Monnet

The Jean Monnet sub-programme was a component of LLP focusing on promoting teaching and research on European integration matters. The total budget for the Jean Monnet programme in the 2007-2013 period was EUR 140 million and benefited to over 1,100 practitioners.

It consisted of three key activities:

- The Jean Monnet Action, designed to stimulate teaching, research, and reflection on European integration, consisting of Jean Monnet Chairs, Centres of Excellence, and Modules, among others;
- Support for six specific academic institutions;
- Support for Europe-wide associations active in the area of European integration research.

These were complemented by conferences, thematic groups, and policy support within the European Commission.

7. Youth in Action

Youth in Action⁵⁴⁸ was the Programme of the European Union for young people from 2007 to 2013. It also aimed to promote out of school mobility within and beyond the EU's borders, non-formal learning and intercultural dialogue, and encouraged the inclusion of all young people regardless of their educational, social and cultural background.



YiA aimed to inspire a sense of active European citizenship, solidarity and tolerance among young Europeans and to involve them in shaping the Union's future.

The total budget for the programme in the 2007-2013 period was EUR 885 million.

Benefiting to close to 1 million participants, young people and youth workers, it had also contributed to the effective recognition of non-formal learning with 265,000 Youthpass - the Youth in Action learning opportunities certificate - delivered since 2007.

In order to achieve its objectives, the Youth in Action Programme implemented the following actions:

- Action 1 - Youth for Europe: groups of young people from different countries plan together their Youth Exchange to learn about each other's cultures; networking of similar projects in order to strengthen their European aspect; support to young people's participation in the democratic life at all levels.
- Action 2 - European Voluntary Service: young people take part individually or in groups in non-profit, unpaid activities, within and outside the European Union
- Action 3 - Youth in the World: cooperation with Partner Countries from other parts of the world (exchange of good practice, etc)

⁵⁴⁸ http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/youth/programme/about_youth_en.php

- Action 4 - Youth Support Systems: support for organisations and youth workers (training, networking, partnerships, etc)
- Action 5 - Support for European cooperation in the youth field: between those responsible for youth policy, those active in youth work and young people, (seminars, Structured Dialogue, etc)

8. Erasmus Mundus 2009-2013

Erasmus Mundus II⁵⁴⁹ was a cooperation and mobility programme in the field of higher education over 2009-2013. The total budget for the programme in the 2007-2013 period was EUR 950 million and benefited to around 13,000 participants in the 2007-2013 period.



The Erasmus Mundus programme provided support to:

- Higher education institutions that wished to implement joint programmes at postgraduate level (Action 1) or to set-up inter-institutional cooperation partnerships between universities from Europe and targeted Third-Countries (Action 2);

Erasmus Mundus aimed to enhance the quality of European higher education and to promote dialogue and understanding between people and cultures through cooperation with the third countries

field of higher education that wishes to develop projects aimed at enhancing the attractiveness and visibility of European higher education worldwide (Action 3).

- Individual students, researchers and university staff who wish to spend a study / research / teaching period in the context of one of the above mentioned joint programmes or cooperation partnerships (Action 1 and Action 2);
- Any organisation active in the

⁵⁴⁹ http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/erasmus_mundus/index_en.php



9. Tempus

Tempus programme⁵⁵⁰ supported the modernisation of higher education in the EU's surrounding area. The total budget for Tempus IV was EUR 258.7 million, with around 3,000 participants in the 2007-2013 period.

Tempus promoted a people-to-people approach.

The programme aimed to promote voluntary convergence of the higher education systems in the Partner Countries with EU developments in the field of higher education. With regards to the Western Balkans, Tempus contributed to preparing the candidate and potential candidate countries for a participation in the integrated Life Long Learning Programme.

Tempus promoted through institutional cooperation the modernisation of higher education systems in the Partner Countries of Eastern Europe, Central Asia, the Western Balkans and the Mediterranean region.

In addition, Tempus provided support to consortia of institutions composed mainly of universities or university associations. Non-academic partners could also be part of a consortium.

The Tempus programme was implemented in close coordination with the Erasmus Mundus programme which provided scholarships also to third country students allowing them to participate in top-level Master courses and Doctorate programmes outside the EU.

⁵⁵⁰ http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/tempus/programme/about_tempus_en.php

10. Alfa

The ALFA III Programme⁵⁵¹ aimed at the modernisation of Higher Education in Latin America with a view to promoting sustainable and equitable development in the region. The total budget for the programme in the 2007-2013 period was EUR 950 million (EU contribution of EUR 75 million) and benefited to 153 participating institutions from the EU and 341 from Latin America.

This programme aimed to ensure a process of ownership by the Latin American countries through the creation of networks and synergies between universities in Latin America and Europe.

In this regard, ALFA III aimed at strengthening bilateral and multilateral relations between the two regions, where

higher education institutions play a leading role in the process of improving the quality of national education systems which in turn enables the socio-economic development.

The third phase of the programme – ALFA III 2007-2013 – financed a diversity of projects to improve the quality, relevance and accessibility of higher education in Latin America and further regional integration through the creation of a higher education area. The participating countries were the 28 Member States of the European Union and 18 countries of Latin America: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay and Venezuela. Non-government organisations, chambers of commerce, professional associations, private companies had an associate role.

⁵⁵¹ http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/where/latin-america/regional-cooperation/alfa/index_en.htm_en

11. Edulink

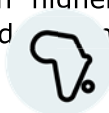
The total budget for Edulink⁵⁵² in the 2006-2013 period was EUR 58.3 million.

The programme aimed to increase access to quality education that will enable ACP students to undertake postgraduate studies, and to promote student retention in the region, while increasing the competitiveness of the institutions themselves, through regional and multilateral networking between higher education institutions, capacity building and intra-ACP academic mobility of students and staff.

The scheme provided support to:

- Higher education institutions to set up inter-institutional cooperation partnerships between universities from different countries within the ACP regions;
- Individual students, researchers and university staff to spend a study / research / teaching period in the context of one of the cooperation partnerships.

The programme was designed to foster co-operation in higher education between the countries of the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States (ACP States) and the EU




⁵⁵² <http://www.acp-hestr.eu/>

12. Preparatory actions in sport 2009-2013

The main objective of Preparatory Actions⁵⁵³ was to prepare future EU actions in the field of sport. The funding in the 2007-2013 period for the preparatory actions was EUR 14.5 million.

The actions funded transnational projects put forward by public bodies or civil society organisations in order to test suitable networks and good practices in the field of sport. The preparatory actions also served to support knowledge-base in the sport area through studies, surveys and conferences.



Those were mostly aimed to support cooperation among sport organisations, through small scale partnerships and the organisation of raising awareness events.

For instance, the areas covered in the preparatory actions in 2012-2013 included:

- Strengthening of good governance and dual careers in sport through support for the mobility of volunteers, coaches, managers and staff of non-profit sport organisations,
- Protecting athletes, especially the youngest, from health and safety hazards by improving training and competition conditions,
- Promoting traditional European sports and games,
- Supporting the 'fight against match-fixing',
- Promoting physical activity supporting active ageing,
- Awareness-raising about effective ways of promoting sport at municipal level,
- Trans-frontier joint grassroots sport competitions in neighbouring regions and Member States.

⁵⁵³ http://ec.europa.eu/sport/policy/preparatory-actions/preparatory-actions_en.htm



Annex 5e: Indicators of the Erasmus+ programme legal basis

Overview of outputs (legal basis and strategic plan indicators)

Legend: D = DG EAC dashboard; AR = Annual report; ICF survey = ICF survey of beneficiaries; O = Other Commission data (annual reports)

| Target | | | | | State of play | | | | | Definition |
|--|------|---------|---------|-----------------------|--|-----------|----------------------------|--|---|--|
| Legal basis | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | Total (if applicable) | 2014–2016 | Judgement | Comment | Source | | |
| <i>Learning mobility opportunities through Erasmus+</i> | | | | | | | | | | Number of students and trainees participating in the programme, by country, sector, action and gender |
| - Higher education (without international) | ☐ | 236,000 | 239,000 | 248,000 | 723,000 | 869,615 | Substantially above target | | D | |
| - VET | ☐ | 78,000 | 78,000 | 80,000 | 236,000 | 279,982 | Substantially above target | | D | |
| Student Loan Guarantee | | | | | 200,000 (full period) | 247 | Substantially below target | | O | Number of students who received the guarantee |
| <i>Practitioners supported by the programme (Erasmus+, education and training)</i> | | | | | | | | | | Number of practitioners supported by the programme, by country and in the sector of education and training |
| - HE practitioners (excluding international) | ☐ | | | 50,000 | Assuming even distribution across years: 150,000 | 159,177 | Above target | No target was set for years 2014 and 2015 so it is assumed that it was the same as in 2016 | D | |
| - VET practitioners | ☐ | | | 11,000 | As above: 33,000 | 50,556 | Substantially above target | Idem | D | |
| -Schools practitioners | ☐ | | | 15,000 | As above: 45,000 | 54,341 | Substantially above target | Idem | D | |
| - Adult learning | ☐ | | | 3,000 | As above: 9,000 | 12,971 | Substantially above target | Idem | D | |

| <i>Participants with special needs or fewer opportunities</i> | | | | | | | | | |
|--|--------------------------|--------|-------|---------------|---|---|---|---|--|
| Education and training | <input type="checkbox"/> | 15,000 | | | Assuming even distribution across years: 45,000 | Special needs (4,034) Fewer opportunities (9,580) Disadvantaged background (51,852) Outmost regions (9,148) - used in HE | Substantially above target according to programme data but issues of data quality | The categories are not mutually exclusive. Summing up the different categories would lead to double counting. However, indicator of disadvantaged young people in higher education alone is substantially above the target | D Number of participants with special needs or fewer opportunities supported by the programme |
| Participants with special needs or fewer opportunities (youth) | <input type="checkbox"/> | | | 21,600 (2017) | Assuming even distribution - 64,800 | Special needs - 6,551 Fewer opportunities - 76,737 | Substantially above target | | Number of participants with special needs or fewer opportunities supported by the programme (Erasmus+, youth) |
| <i>International higher education</i> | | | | | | | | | |
| Involvement of non-EU higher education institutions from partner countries | <input type="checkbox"/> | n/a | 1,000 | 1,100 | 2,200 | 2,523 in 2015 alone | Substantially above target | Data concerns numbers of organisations in general including EU ones (capacity building and international student and practitioner mobility). Considering that in 2016 there were more grants awarded than in 2015 the number is likely to be significantly over target even given that not all the organisations captured in this indication are from partner countries (some are from programme countries) | A R The number of partner country higher education institutions (HEIs) involved in credit and degree mobility and cooperation actions, i.e. capacity-building projects under the Erasmus+ programme and having signed an institutional agreement with an EU HEI |
| EU students and practitioners going to partner countries and vice versa | <input type="checkbox"/> | | | | 38,800 | 39,448 | On target | | D Number of higher education students and practitioners (134) receiving support (a scholarship) to study in a partner country, as well as the number of students and practitioners coming from a partner country to study in a programme country |
| - Outgoing total | | n/a | 3,800 | 4,000 | 7,800 | 11,016 (2,670 learners) | Substantially above target | The cap on number of outgoing students towards neighbouring countries was lifted in 2016 | |

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---------|---------|---------|---|---|----------------------------|--|--------|---|
| - Incoming total | | n/a | 15,000 | 16,000 | 31,000 | 28,432 (16,413 learners) | Below target | Where the numbers for incoming mobility are not used the budgets are used to fund outgoing mobility | | |
| Youth mobility | | | | | | | | | | |
| Learning mobility opportunities through Erasmus+ (youth) | <input type="checkbox"/> | 69,000 | 70,000 | 70,000 | 209,000 | 277,913 | Substantially above target | | D | Number of young people engaged in mobility actions supported by the programme, by country, sector, action and gender |
| Practitioners supported by the programme (Erasmus+, youth) | <input type="checkbox"/> | 21,000 | 21,000 | 22,000 | 64,000 | 101,437 | Substantially above target | | D | Number of practitioners supported by the programme, by country and for the youth sector |
| Involvement of EU and non-EU youth organisations (Erasmus+) | <input type="checkbox"/> | 5,500 | | 5,600 | Assuming 2015 is the same as 2014: 16,600 | 87,773 (mobility) and 3150 (Strategic Partnerships) | Substantially above target | | A R | Number of youth organisations from both programme countries and partner countries involved in international mobility and cooperation actions under the Erasmus+ programme |
| Services/information networks | | | | | | | | | | |
| Number of users of Euroguidance | <input type="checkbox"/> (this indicator is not included in the strategic plan) | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | Approx. 62,000 (2014–2015) | | The exact indicators reported differ according to reports. This data reflects participants in activities | O | Number of users of Euroguidance |
| Users of Eurodesk (enquiries answered) | <input type="checkbox"/> | 140,000 | 140,000 | 140,000 | 420,000 | 524,566 (2014–2015 - n/a for 2016) | Substantially above target | The average per year is around 250,000 rather than 140,000 | O | The number of users of Eurodesk (as a support organisation to Erasmus+, Eurodesk, a network of 1,200 youth professionals, worked with Eurodesk in 34 countries in 2016, making information on learning mobility accessible to young people and youth professionals) |

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---|--|---|--|
| <i>Jean Monnet</i> | | | | | | | | | | |
| Students trained through Jean Monnet activities | □ | 215,000 | 235,000 | 260,000 | 710,239 | 667,199 | Below target according to programme data and issues of data quality | The indicator on number of participants is not reliable (double counting) and inconsistency with other sources of data on participants reached | D | Number of students receiving training through Jean Monnet activities |
| Worldwide scope of Jean Monnet activities | | 78 | 80 | 81 | 81 | 81 | On target | | D | Number of countries where Jean Monnet activities have been performed successfully, increasing knowledge in partner countries |

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|--|--|-------------|--|----------------------------|--|----------------------------|--|--|
| <i>Sport</i> | | | | | | | | | | |
| Size of membership of sport organisations | □ | | | 30 % (2017) | Estimates based on survey: - 75 % of respondents have 100 or fewer members (including no members) - 58 % have 10 or fewer employed practitioners | Substantially above target | This data is not captured in Erasmus+ monitoring systems | ICF survey (practitioners) | | Size of membership of sport organisations (% of small grassroots organisations with fewer than 1000 members) applying for, and taking part in, the programme, by country |

Overview of results (legal basis and strategic plan indicators)

| Result indicator | Legal basis | Target | Definition in strategic plan | 2014–2016 performance | Comment | Judgement | Source of data |
|--|-------------|------------|---|---|--|--|--|
| Education and training | | | | | | | |
| Better skills for participants (Erasmus+, education and training) | □ | 83 % | % of Erasmus+ participants declaring that they have improved their key competences and/or their skills relevant for employability | <p>87 % of beneficiaries state that they have improved six or more competences from the proposed list</p> <p>More than 80 % of learners agreed that they improved the following competences: cooperation in teams, planning and organisation tasks, planning and organising learning activities, problem solving skills, seeing the value of different cultures</p> | <p>Responses range from 71 % for HE studies (long-term mobility) to 88 % long-term mobility in VET</p> | On target | Erasmus+ monitoring survey of beneficiaries (learners) |
| | | | | 83 % of learners state that they believe they improved their professional skills | The responses range from 72 % for HE studies to 89 % for VET | | |
| Employability of participants (Erasmus+) | □ | 44 % | % of Erasmus+ participants indicating that participation in the programme contributed to finding a job | <p>88 % believe that their chances to find a job improved</p> <p>92 % of respondents agree that their opportunities for finding a job improved</p> <p>Beneficiaries from VET and HE experience shorter transition to employment than control group</p> | <p>From 82 % for HE studies to 90 % for international HE</p> <p>Ranging from 90 % for pupils (blended mobility) to 94 % for higher education</p> <p>Taking part in an Erasmus+ intervention appears to improve the transition from education to employment with a 13 % increase in the indicator</p> | Above target | Idem |
| | | | | | | | ICF survey of beneficiary learners |
| Innovation from participating organisations (Erasmus+) | | 55 % | % of organisations that have developed/adopted innovative methods and/or materials, improved capacity; outreach methodologies, etc | <p>When asked about expected changes to their institutions, for 10 (out of 11) changes more than 55 % (up to 85 %) of practitioner respondents state that they agree these changes have or will happen</p> <p>When asked about changes that have happened after the mobility of project, more than 55 % of respondents agree with a high number of types of changes asked about</p> <p>Introduction of new teaching materials (81 % schools, 72 % VET, 72 % HE, 77 % adult education)</p> <p>New assessment or evaluation methods (68 % schools, 63 % VET, 59 % HE, 68 % adult education)</p> | <p>The Erasmus+ monitoring survey as well as ICF survey is based on a survey of practitioners taking part in the programme not organisations.</p> <p>Hence there is only a partial match between the definition and this data</p> | On target (possibly above) There is not a perfect match with the definition but the data collected from mobile practitioners gives very positive feedback | Erasmus+ monitoring survey of practitioner beneficiaries |
| | | | | | | | ICF survey of beneficiary practitioners |
| Formal recognition of participation (Erasmus+, education and training) | □ | HE – 100 % | % of Erasmus+ participants who have received a certificate, diploma or other kind of formal recognition of their participation in the programme | <p>100 % (estimate)</p> <p>The monitoring surveys of beneficiaries do not ask the question about whether learners received a certificate, etc. However, considering that the issuing of a transcript to mobile learners is one of the requirements of the HE University Charter which is a precondition to receive Erasmus+</p> | Recognition of learning outcomes (academic recognition) is at 83 %. It ranges from 75 % for international students to 89 % for traineeships | On target | Erasmus+ monitoring survey of beneficiaries (learners) |

| Result indicator | Legal basis | Target | Definition in strategic plan | 2014–2016 performance | Comment | Judgement | Source of data |
|---------------------------------|-------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | funding, it can be assumed the rate of recognition of participation rate is 100 % | | | |
| | | VET – 68 % | | 88 % (2015) | The most common tool for recognition is Europass which is received by 80 % of participants | Above target | Erasmus+ monitoring survey of beneficiaries(learners) |
| | | Practitioners (not part of the targets) | | 85 % of practitioners got international experience accepted as training (from 83 % in HE to 89 % in schools) 58 % state it was acknowledged by hierarchy or peers (53 % in HE to 65 % in AE) 45 % state that it helped them attain a new function/ level of seniority (36 % in schools to 48 % in adult education) 26 % received a financial reward (21 % in schools – 28 % in HE) | | | ICF survey of practitioners |
| Language skills of participants | ☐ | HE – 95 % | % of Erasmus+ participants in long-term mobility declaring that they have increased their language skills | 84 % HE studies 77 % international HE 76 % HE traineeships Note: 14 % of students are fluent in the language of the mobility before departing on mobility | Given that HE students start with a higher level of foreign language skills it would be expected that the improvement is more modest than in VET where the entry level is lower. The indicator has been set assuming that the duration of mobility makes the biggest difference but the entry level makes a very important difference | Below target if taking as share of all students/ above target if excluding those who were already fluent before starting mobility | Erasmus+ monitoring survey of beneficiary learners |
| | | VET – 87 % | | 86 % VET learners Note the data for VET does not cover only long-term mobility as suggested by the indicator | | On target | |
| | | | | According to OLS data: HE – 34 % large improvement, 14 % small improvement, 34 % no change and 19 % regressed score VET – very similar trends - 34 % large improvement, 13 % small improvement, 35 % no change, 18 % regressed score | This data measures actual change in a score on a before and after language test It shows that there is a big difference in self-perception values and actual competence development | | OLS data on pre-post tests |

| | | | | | | | |
|--|---|------|---|---|--|--------------|---|
| Youth | | | | | | | |
| Better skills for participants (Erasmus+, youth) | ☐ | 77 % | % of Erasmus+ participants declaring that they have improved their key competences and/or their skills relevant for employability | 87 % of young people in youth exchanges state having improved six or more competences More than 77 % of young people in youth exchanges state having improved problem solving (78 %), practical skills (planning etc. – 78 %), learning to learn (82 %), interpersonal and social competence (92 %), cultural awareness and expression (93 %) and intercultural competences (84 %) | | Above target | Erasmus+ monitoring survey of beneficiaries(learners) |

| | | | | | | | |
|---|--------------------------|------|---|--|---|--|--|
| Social and political participation of young people (Erasmus+) | | 80 % | % of Erasmus+ young participants declaring being better prepared to participate in social and political life | <p>74 % of EVS participants state that they intend to participate more actively in social and political life of their community</p> <p>73 % state that they are more interested in knowing what happens in the world daily</p> <p>71 % are more aware of social and political concepts</p> | <p>The question asked in the Erasmus+ monitoring survey does not exactly correspond to the definition</p> <p>It is not clear why the target was set so high</p> | Below target | Erasmus+ monitoring survey of beneficiaries (learners) |
| | | | | <p>There is a statistically significant difference between young people who took part in youth exchanges or EVS when it comes to active citizenship (voting, etc), participation in community activities and attitude to protest strategies.</p> <p>According to the ICF survey: 55 % of youth beneficiaries think it is important to engage in political discussions (50 % control group), 89 % believe it is important to participate in local community activity (69 % control group), 77 % believe active membership in an association is important (62 % in control group), 80 % believe that organising a local-level community activity is important (69 % control group)</p> | <p>The data used for the analysis in this report is an index which combines responses on the perceived importance of a range of civic and political activities</p> <p>When looking at the detailed responses the differences with the control group are large in some cases (see left cell)</p> | | ICF survey of learners |
| Language skills of participants (Erasmus+, youth) | <input type="checkbox"/> | 90 % | % of Erasmus+ participants in voluntary actions declaring that they have increased their language skills | <p>81 % of participants in EVS state they improved their foreign language skills</p> | Though the self-perceived improvement is below the target the improvement based on OLS is large and substantially greater than for other groups | Below target according to Erasmus+ monitoring data but strong improvement based on OLS | Erasmus+ monitoring survey of beneficiary learners |
| | | | | According to OLS data 79 % of young people taking part in youth actions improved their foreign language skills (69 % large improvement and 10 % small improvement) | | | OLS pre-post language tests |
| Formal recognition of participation (Erasmus+, youth) | <input type="checkbox"/> | 35 % | % of Erasmus+ participants who have received a certificate (for example a Youthpass), diploma or other kind of formal recognition of their participation in the programme | 77 % of EVS volunteers and 88 % of young people in youth exchanges state having received some form of formal recognition | The vast majority receive Youthpass (87 % EVS and 88 % youth exchanges) | Substantially above target (but target was set very low) | Erasmus+ monitoring survey of beneficiary learners |

| | | | | | | | |
|--|--------------------------|-------------|--|---|---|--------------|-----------------------------------|
| Sport | | | | | | | |
| Results increasingly used to improve good governance in sport and dual careers | <input type="checkbox"/> | 50 % (2017) | Percentage of participants (expressed as % of Erasmus+ sport organisations) who have used the results of cross-border projects to improve good governance and dual careers | <p>67 % of respondents state that they used the results to improve governance or manage quality</p> <p>27 % of respondents state that their project focused on the topic of good governance</p> <p>31 % state that their project focused on dual careers (multiple choice question)</p> | <p>Data is not available through Erasmus+ monitoring surveys which are not carried out among sport beneficiaries</p> <p>The indicators are developed based on survey of sport organisations practitioners</p> | Above target | ICF survey of sport practitioners |
| Results increasingly used to fight against threats to sport | <input type="checkbox"/> | 50 % (2017) | Percentage of participants (expressed as | 62 % of respondents state they used the results to combat threats to sport | Idem | Above target | ICF survey of sport practitioners |

| | | | | | | | |
|--|--------------------------|-------------|---|--|------|--------------|-----------------------------------|
| | | | Erasmus+ sport organisations) that use the results of cross-border projects to combat threats to sport | <p>10 % state that their project focused on combating match fixing</p> <p>12 % state the project focused on combating doping</p> <p>32 % state the project focused on combating racism and violence</p> <p>(multiple choice question)</p> | | | rs |
| Results increasingly used to enhance social inclusion, equal opportunities and sport participation rates | <input type="checkbox"/> | 50 % (2017) | Percentage of participants (expressed as % of Erasmus+ sport organisations) who have used the results of cross-border projects to enhance social inclusion, equal opportunities and participation rates | <p>68 % of respondents state that their organisation introduced new ways of working with disadvantaged young people</p> <p>73 % report that they implemented new ways to reach out to people</p> <p>53 % state the project focused on social inclusion and equal opportunities</p> <p>67 % state the project focused on encouraging participation in physical activities</p> <p>(multiple choice question)</p> | Idem | Above target | ICF survey of sport practitioners |

Source: ICF, tab. 6.3 and 6.13

Annex 6: Glossary

| <i>Term or acronym</i> | <i>Meaning or definition</i> |
|------------------------|---|
| Action | A strand or measure of the Erasmus+ Programme. Examples of Actions are: Strategic Partnerships, Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degrees, Sectors Skills Alliances, etc. |
| Activity | A set of tasks carried out as part of a funded project. An activity can be of different types (mobility activities, cooperation activities, etc.). In the framework of Jean Monnet, an Activity is equivalent to an Action (see definition above). |
| Adult education | All forms of non-vocational adult education, whether of a formal, non-formal or informal nature. |
| Adult learner | Any person who, having completed or is no longer involved in initial education or training, returns to some forms of continuing learning (formal, non-formal or informal), with the exception of school and VET teachers/trainers. |
| Applicant | participating organisation or informal group that submits grant application. Applicants may apply either individually or on behalf of a other organisations involved in the project. In the latter case, the applicant is also defined as coordinator. |
| Beneficiary | If the project is selected, the applicant becomes beneficiary of an Erasmus+ grant. The beneficiary signs a grant agreement with – or is notified of a grant decision by – the National or Executive Agency that has selected the project. If the application was made on behalf of other participating organisations, the partners may become co-beneficiaries of the grant. |
| Europass | Europass is a portfolio of five different documents and an electronic folder aiming to contain descriptions of the entire holder's learning achievements, official qualifications, work experience, skills and competences, acquired over time. Europass also includes the European Skills Passport, a user-friendly electronic folder that helps the holder to build up a personal, modular inventory of his/her skills and qualifications. The aim of Europass is to facilitate mobility and improve job and lifelong learning prospects in Europe. |
| Fields | Education and training, youth, and sport. |
| Key Action (KA) | The actions of Erasmus+ for education, training and youth include Key Actions 1 (mobility for learners and practitioners), KA2 (cooperation among organisations) and KA3 (policy support). |
| Informal learning | Learning resulting from daily activities related to work, family or leisure which is not organised or structured in terms of objectives, time or learning support; it may be unintentional from the |

| | |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| | learner's perspective. |
| Learners | Learners refer to all individuals involved in formal, non-formal and informal education as pupils, students, apprentices, volunteers, young people, etc. |
| Level of intervention | Three levels are distinguished to evaluate the effects of the programmes: individual level, divided into actions for learners and practitioners, organisation level and system level. |
| Lifelong learning | All general education, vocational education and training, non-formal learning and informal learning undertaken throughout life, resulting in an improvement in knowledge, skills and competences or participation in society within a personal, civic, cultural, social and/or employment-related perspective, including the provision of counselling and guidance services. |
| Majority /vast majority / most of | "Majority of ..." is used for [50 to 60%[of the respondents "Vast majority" for [56 to 75%[; "Most of..." for 75% and more |
| Non-formal learning | Learning which takes place through planned activities (in terms of learning objectives and learning time) where some form of learning support is present, but which is not part of the formal education and training system. |
| Participants | In the context of Erasmus+ participants are considered those individuals fully involved in a project and, in some cases, receiving part of the European Union grant intended to cover their costs of participation (notably travel and subsistence). Under certain Actions of the Programme (i.e. Strategic Partnerships) a distinction is hence to be made between this category of participants (direct participants) and other individuals indirectly involved in the project (e.g. target groups). |
| Participating organisation | Any organisation or informal group of young people involved in the implementation of an Erasmus+ project. Participating organisations can be applicants or partners (also defined as co-applicants, if they are identified at time of submission of the grant application). If the project is granted, applicants become beneficiaries and partners may become co-beneficiaries if the project is financed through a multi-beneficiary grant. |
| Partner (organisation) | Participating organisation involved in the project but not taking the role of applicant. |
| Partner Countries | countries which do not participate fully in the Erasmus+ Programme, but which may take part (as partners or applicants) in certain Actions of the Programme. |
| Practitioners | Practitioners refer to those involved in formal and non-formal education as teachers (including prospective teachers), trainers, youth workers, educators, coaches, organisation leaders or staff. |

| | |
|---|---|
| Programme Countries | EU and non EU countries (FY, IS, LI, NO, TR) that have established a National Agency which participate fully in the Erasmus+ Programme. |
| Sectors | The education and training field is compounded of five sectors: School education, vocational education and training, higher education, international higher education and adult learning |
| Vocational education and training (VET) | Education and training which aims to equip people with knowledge, know-how, skills and/or competences required in particular occupations or more broadly on the labour market. For the purpose of Erasmus+ projects focusing on initial or continuing vocational education and training are eligible under VET actions. |
| Youthpass | The European tool to improve the recognition of the learning outcomes of young people and youth workers from their participation in projects supported by the Erasmus+ Programme. |

Abbreviations

- **AE: Adult Education**
- DG EAC: Directorate General for Education and Culture
- EACEA: Educational, Audiovisual & Culture Executive Agency
- EaSI: Employment and Social Innovation
- EC: European Commission
- ECAS: European Commission Authentication System
- ECHE: Erasmus Charter for Higher Education
- ECTS: European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System
- ECVET: European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training
- EECS: European Economic and Social Committee
- EIB: European Investment Bank
- EIT: European Institute of Innovation and Technology
- EMJMD: Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degree
- EP: European Parliament
- EPAL: Electronic Platform for Adult Learning in Europe
- EPRP: Erasmus+ Project Results Platform
- EQAVET: European Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training
- EQF: European Qualifications Framework
- ERDF: European Regional Development Fund
- ESF: European Social Fund
- ESIF: European Structural & Investment Funds
- E&T: Education and Training
- ET 2020: Education and Training 2020 strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training
- ETF: European Training Foundation
- EU: European Union
- EUR: Euro
- EVS: European Voluntary Service
- EYE: Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs
- **HE(I): Higher education (institution)**
- HERE: Higher Education Reform Experts
- Horizon 2020: The EU Framework Programme for Research and Innovation

- **ICF: Consulting Service Ltd**
- **ICT: Information and Communication Technology**
- **INTERREG: European Territorial Cooperation (ETC)**, also known as Interreg
- **ISG: Interservice Group**
- **JMO: Jean Monnet Operation** (subject of a stand-alone evaluation report)
- **KA1: Erasmus+ Key Action 1**
- **KA2: Erasmus+ Key Action 2**
- **KA3: Erasmus+ Key Action 3**
- **KII: Key Informant Interview** ("interview" in the text)
- **LLP: Lifelong Learning Programme**
- **NA: National Agency**
- **NGO: Non-governmental organisation**
- **NRS: National Report Synthesis** (subject of a stand-alone evaluation report^o)
- **OECD: Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development**
- **OER: Open Educational Resources**
- **OLS: Online Linguistic Support**
- **OMC: Open Method of Coordination**
- **OPC: Open Public Consultation** (subject of a stand-alone evaluation report)
- **SE: School Education**
- **SLGF: Student [/Master] Loan Guarantee Facility**
- **VET: Vocational Education and Training**
- **WG: Working Group**
- **YiA: Youth in Action**