

Executive summary

Erasmus+ remains the flagship programme of the EU. The findings of this evaluation confirm the continued relevance, effectiveness and popularity of the programme. The programme delivers high EU added value to direct beneficiaries (learners and practitioners) but also organisations and indirectly also to policies and systems. The evaluation also documents the improved coherence of the programme and positive cost-effectiveness of actions funded.

One quarter of Europeans consider that student exchange programmes such as Erasmus are one of the most positive results of the EU¹. This shows that the programme contribution goes beyond the immediate results for beneficiaries. The programme is perceived by Europeans as one of the pillars of European identity. In the eyes of many, it symbolises several of the concrete benefits that the EU provides to its citizens. The integration of several predecessor programmes into a single programme has helped an even broader group to relate themselves to the positive image associated with the EU. The integrated programme benefits from the brand of the predecessor Erasmus strand and the related recognition by the broader public.

This report summarises the findings of the evaluation of the Erasmus+ programme in the period 2014–2016 and the predecessor actions in the period 2007–2013. The analysis covers all sectors of the programme: education and training, youth and sport as well as Jean Monnet and the Student Loan Guarantee Facility. It also covers all types of actions funded. The evaluation furthermore offers a focused evaluation on an action currently piloted under the programme, eTwinning Plus.

The evaluation was structured around five evaluation criteria:

- relevance;
- coherence;
- effectiveness;
- efficiency; and
- EU added value.

In addition, the report is accompanied by the following self-standing volumes:

- Evaluation of the Student Loan Guarantee Facility;
- Evaluation of Jean Monnet;
- Evaluation of eTwinning Plus;
- Results of the Open Public Consultation (OPC); and
- Synthesis of Reports of National Authorities.

Headline findings

In the whole period 2007–2016, the programmes have funded mobility for more than 4.3 million young people and more than 880,000 practitioners. Many more have benefited from short-term blended mobility and/or other forms of international exchanges as part of cooperation projects. In the current programming period (2014–2016) alone, the programme has already benefited over 1.4 million learners and 400,000 practitioners.

Almost everyone who took part in mobility actions as part of Key Action 1 under the current programme stated that they are satisfied with their experience. Nearly all practitioner beneficiaries expressed full appreciation of the programme (98 % satisfaction). The figure is somewhat lower for learners (93 %) but it nevertheless remains very high.

A key element of the quality of mobility is recognition on learners' return. All higher education students receive formal recognition of their participation in mobility but, even

¹ *Standard Eurobarometer 87*, spring 2017.

more importantly, 80 % receive full academic recognition of learning outcomes and another 15 % receive partial academic recognition. Recognition is also being strengthened in the sectors of VET (88 % recognition of learning outcomes) and youth (80 % recognition).

The analysis of survey data using a quasi-experimental design shows that participation in the programme is associated with the following effects on learners:

- an increase in the feeling of being an EU citizen by 19 %;
- an increase in the willingness to move abroad on a permanent basis by 31 %;
- an improvement in the perception of the value of education by 8.2 % (as opposed to non-participants); and
- a shortening of the transition from education to employment. Those who take part in Erasmus+ are 13 % more likely to experience a shorter transition to employment (less than three months).

The evaluation used propensity score matching to assess the results and impacts of the programme. This technique analyses the differences in indicators between control group and treatment group by matching survey respondents according to a range of background characteristics. The technique as used here enables to minimise the effect of selection into the programme but it cannot fully exclude it².

The analysis of the data from the online language support pre-post foreign language tests shows that nearly half of the learners who took part in OLS have increased their score by at least 5 % or more.

Methodology

The evaluation combined a large number of data collection channels and analytical techniques. The main sources of data are presented in the table below.

Table 1.1 Summary of data sources

	Source	Type of respondent/source	Nbr of respondents/cases/records
Programme data	Programme databases	Extracts from Commission IT systems for programme management	Not applicable – the records concern all beneficiaries and in some case also applicants
	Monitoring surveys of beneficiaries (DG EAC data)	All beneficiaries of KA1 are surveyed on completion	730,254 learners and 227,319 practitioners
	Online Linguistic Support	Learners in KA1 (mostly higher education students)	Total sample size: 523,238 participants
- data collection	Beneficiary and control group surveys	Beneficiaries of mobility actions and cooperation actions as well as control groups	Learners: 24,037 beneficiaries and 2,695 from control group Practitioners: 20,155 beneficiaries and 928 from control group
	Experts survey	Assessors supporting project selection and those supporting evaluation of final reports (involved towards Erasmus+ National Agencies and/or the EACEA)	1,122 valid responses
Primary surveys			

² For example it could be that young people are already more attached to the EU when taking part compared to those who don't.

	Source	Type of respondent/source	Nbr of respondents/cases/records
	Programme agencies survey	Agencies in charge of programme implementation One respondent per sector	130 valid responses
	Socioeconomic actors survey	Organisations other than the primary target group, i.e. companies, public authorities, civil society (other than youth organisations)	947 valid responses
	Jean Monnet students survey	Students studying about the EU – beneficiary students and non-beneficiary academic staff	332 beneficiaries and 1,015 non-beneficiaries
	Jean Monnet section in the beneficiary student survey	Students studying about the EU – beneficiary students and non-beneficiary academic staff	120 beneficiaries and 5,822 non-beneficiaries
	Jean Monnet practitioner survey	Practitioners teaching about the EU – beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries	560 beneficiaries and 443 non-beneficiaries
	Jean Monnet section in the beneficiary practitioner survey	Practitioners teaching about the EU – beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries	210 beneficiaries and 4,681 non-beneficiaries
	Student Loan Guarantee Facility student fair survey	Students participating in student fairs for future (mobile) master's students and exhibitors at these fairs	119 students and 100 exhibitors (for further details, see standalone SLGF section)
	eTwinning Plus pilot survey	Practitioners taking part in the pilot project	405 responses to partner countries survey 2,562 responses to programme countries survey (for further details, see standalone eTwinning+ section)
Interviews	Key informant interviews	Key stakeholders in all sectors	59 at EU level 131 in 15 countries
	Student Loan Guarantee Facility interviews	(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 (for further details, see standalone SLGF section)
	Jean Monnet interviews	Interviews with professors who have never applied for Jean Monnet (AU, CZ, UK, EL, US)	5 interviews (for further details, see standalone Jean Monnet section)
	eTwinning Plus interviews	Teachers in programme and partner countries, EU-level	31 interviews (for further details, see

	Source	Type of respondent/source	Nbr of respondents/cases/records
		actors and key stakeholders	standalone (section) eTwinning+
Case studies	Case studies	Practitioners, learners, leadership and other stakeholders if relevant	233 respondents 38 case studies
Other desk research	Review of selected projects' reports	Extract information from cooperation projects and system-level project actions	386 reports
	Expert panel assessment of projects' outputs	Assess projects' outputs against a set of criteria	100 outputs
	Literature review	Research about the results and impacts of Erasmus+ and predecessor programmes	131 sources reviewed (evaluations, studies, academic papers at EU, national, international level)

Relevance

Stakeholders largely see the programme as relevant in terms of addressing the needs of learners and practitioners. The opportunities for international mobility and cooperation address the needs of young people when it comes to skills development and personal development. They address the needs of practitioners and organisations when it comes to opportunities for sharing and learning and integrational exchange.

Stakeholders also see the new programme as being more clearly aligned with EU policies and priorities than predecessor programmes. However, there is still a certain gap in the level of alignment. The programming documents and project award criteria make clearer reference to EU policy priorities (and a smaller number of them). Projects are reasonably well aligned with the EU priorities when looking at how they themselves describe the topics they cover. Nevertheless, when looking beyond the rhetoric used by project applicants that receive funding, improvement remains possible in terms of the alignment with what the projects actually fund and the key EU-level priorities such as addressing early school leaving, enhancing higher education attainment or improving basic skills and key competences. In fact, some key challenges are only addressed marginally by the projects reviewed.

The various sources consulted show that Erasmus+ is well known to the audience in general and very visible among young people especially. The brand name is used broadly in relation to all the sectors. The initial concerns the adoption of a single brand name, taking over the brand associated with the higher education sector, would negatively affect the visibility of sectors other than higher education was not confirmed. On the contrary, three years after the launch of the new programme, there is strong adherence to the brand.

Coherence

The integration of several programmes into a single programme strongly improved the internal coherence of the actions.

The objectives of the different sectors within the current programme are seen as consistent and mutually supportive. The programme's legal basis and other programme documentation establish clear logical linkages between the programme's objectives and actions. The architecture of the programme has been simplified and the simplification is generally welcomed by all stakeholders. The current architecture largely avoids overlaps.

The only area where some overlaps have been noticed concerns a certain subset of projects in the sport and youth sectors (those focusing on social inclusion through sport).

The most commonly reported advantages of the integrated architecture are:

- a single programme is bigger and multidisciplinary, which gives it greater visibility among policymakers;
- standardised administration of the different types of actions across sectors;
- improved transparency, accountability and streamlining of rules within the programme;
- much greater visibility for the opportunities offered by the programme.

On the other hand, some respondents also found that the integration is not a win-win situation for all and that some sectors or types of actions have actually been slightly 'sacrificed' in the new programme.

- In particular, respondents from various organisations and sectors note that the adult education strand has shrunk in size and lost its specificity.
- The lack of possibility for National Authorities to define national priorities alongside EU priorities is lamented by some respondents. This could be seen as supporting greater alignment with EU priorities; however, countries could also be left the opportunity to choose which of the many EU priorities are of greatest relevance to them.
- The one size fits all approach may have gone a step too far. The standardisation of procedures and simplification of types of actions means that projects of different degrees of ambition (in particular under KA2) and scale have to comply with the same criteria.

The integration of the programme has also enhanced the external coherence, as some areas where certain overlaps existed have been addressed (such as mobility of doctoral researchers to and from partner countries, which overlapped with Marie Skłodowska-Curie actions).

When it comes to external coherence, the evaluation found that the programme is overall complementary with other EU programmes such as ESF, Horizon 2020, the Third Health programme in the field of sport, INTERREG, and the Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs programme (EYE). However, there is little evidence of clear synergies between these programmes.

Effectiveness

Outputs and participation

The programme reaches or exceeds the vast majority of its targets when it comes to outputs. The output indicators not met can be found in the Jean Monnet programme and the Student Loan Guarantee Facility, which is missing the target by a wide margin.

Key findings concerning outputs compared to the last three years of predecessor programmes are:

- a strong increase in higher education students participating in mobility and also in international mobility;
- a strong increase in mobility of practitioners in VET, schools and international higher education;
- a strong increase in the number of projects in the higher education sector (including international);
- a strong decrease in the number of projects in all other sectors. It should be noted, however, that the number of projects also decreased because the programme focuses on funding fewer but larger-scale projects; this is in particular notable in the sectors of school education, youth and adult education.

Selected other key findings concerning outputs are as follows.

- The programme produces a very high volume of so-called intellectual outputs. However, in this case the volume is not necessarily an indicator of quality. On the contrary, fewer outputs with clearer added value are arguably needed to enhance innovation through the programme.
- Higher education is the sector that has most beneficiaries overall. It is also a sector that has seen a strong increase in its presence in other sectors (i.e. there are many more universities taking part in other strands of the programme than in the past).
- The number of adult learners reached through blended mobility actions under E+ is comparable to those reached by volunteering actions in the predecessor programme.
- The youth sector strongly contributes to the international dimension of the programme.
- Actions in the sport sector remain small in number; however, sport organisations take part in other sectors of the programme.
- Adult education and the VET sector are the most diverse sectors in terms of types of organisations participating.
- The level of cross-sectoral cooperation increased under the current programme.
- The interconnectedness of countries in the programme network is changing. Small countries and countries from Central and Eastern Europe are better integrated in the current programme than in the predecessors.
- The multiple participation of individuals (learners and practitioners) in mobility actions seems to be reasonably low; multiple participation of organisations remains unclear.

Compared to its predecessors, the current programme includes new actions aimed at increasing participation of disadvantaged groups. Based on DG EAC programme data, the participation of disadvantaged groups (when taking into account those with fewer opportunities) is more than double the number set in the target. However, this follows a very broad definition of people with fewer opportunities. Furthermore, the comparison of different datasets (programme data, ICF surveys of beneficiaries and level of participation of disadvantaged schools) reveals some inconsistencies that suggest the quality of the data is, for some types of actions specifically, questionable³. The data from predecessor programmes is incomplete and there is thus not a sound basis for comparison across programme periods.

Results for learners and practitioners

The legal basis contains several result indicators for the programme. While some of the target values were exceeded, others were not reached. However, the evaluation found a number of inconsistencies in how the values for these indicators were set. Even for those indicators where the target values were not reached, the values of these indicators are rather high. For none of the indicators does the performance value appear to be particularly low.

The headline findings in the early part of this executive summary show the main programme achievements. Complementary findings are mentioned here. The majority of learners believe that the programme helped them improve at least six key competences (based on a list of nine competences used in the Erasmus+ monitoring survey⁴). However, there are notable differences between the sectors. While overall the scores reported are high, higher education students who go on mobility within programme countries as part of their studies are the least enthusiastic in their assessment of how the programme contributes to their competences.

In addition to the strong evidence of the programme's contribution to the development of learners' skills and competences, the case studies in particular emphasised the positive influence the programme plays in personal development, maturity and

³ This refers mostly to the data on participants with fewer opportunities under the youth exchanges, which accounts for a large share of the beneficiaries in this category.

⁴ Note that in the youth strand the number of competences in the survey is higher (13).

autonomy of young people. Confidence, independence and open mindedness were frequently emphasised.

When looking at the contribution of the programme to practitioners, a range of positive effects have also been identified. According to the evaluation surveys, which included a quasi-experimental design, the areas with clear differences for beneficiary practitioners are:

- networking, size and degree of cooperation with international peers;
- feeling European;
- use of digital resources; and
- involvement in volunteering and community activities (which could also be an effect of programme selection, as the programme attracts the more motivated and engaged practitioners).

Overall, the practitioners themselves strongly appreciate the fact that the programme gives them an opportunity to grow personally and professionally. It is an opportunity to go 'beyond the ordinary', which can be important in terms of retention and well-being.

However, recognition mechanisms for practitioners are less formalised than for learners. While most practitioners enjoy informal recognition by their peers and professional hierarchy, formal recognition is less common.

Organisational and system-level impacts

Internationalisation of organisations is clearly demonstrated by the surveys. Beneficiary organisations have much stronger and larger international networks.

Other effects for organisations are:

- national partnerships;
- development of quality frameworks for youth work.

Other results are softer and there is less evidence of deep changes of institutional or pedagogical practices.

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 institutions' approaches to pedagogy and their target groups are being changed thanks to the programme. Deeper qualitative analysis on a larger scale, analysing the effects on a larger number of organisations in each of the sectors, would be needed to observe these types of results.

A blind spot of the programmes is the quality of outputs produced under actions comparable to the current KA2 and KA3. While there is much learning, sharing and exchange that takes place through these projects, their innovative character is lagging behind and there is modest mainstreaming of the outputs produced beyond the direct beneficiaries of these actions. Participants in these actions do benefit from the process and the exchange funded by the programme, and they do use the outputs they produce directly. However, the programme also has the ambition to lead to effects beyond the direct beneficiaries. Examples of mainstreaming or learning beyond direct beneficiaries were identified but remain ad hoc. The review of selected project outputs shows that there is room for improvement in their transferability and potential to be used by others.

There is clearly scope for improving innovation within the programme, in particular in the context of strategic partnerships. Innovation does not necessarily need to be expected for all KA2 and KA3 types of actions. But where it is expected it should be supported in a different manner than for the other more process-focused cooperation activities. This finding is mostly based on the analysis of predecessor programmes and strategic partnerships under the current programme. Knowledge Alliances and Sector Skills Alliances were too recent at the time of data collection and no results were available.

The main legal basis impact indicators for this programme are related to the EU 2020 targets – higher education attainment and early school leaving. The contribution of the

programme to these is likely to be small and very indirect. Even if the programme does somewhat contribute to improving retention of direct beneficiaries in education and training, the numbers of learners reached are small compared to the mass of people that would be needed to make a notable difference. However, it is questionable whether these are the most suitable impact indicators for this programme. The areas where the programme appears to be making a substantial contribution, and not only for the individual learners who directly take part, are as follows.

- Recognition of learning outcomes and opening up of education and training organisations to learning which takes place in another context (another country, another organisation). Learner mobility is the action that has reached the greatest scale within this programme. This action also has an indirect effect at the level of organisations and systems. In higher education, mobility was an important channel through which the provision of higher education became more flexible. Similar effects are progressively taking place in VET, where tools for recognition are gaining ground, and the use of learning outcomes is also found to be an important organisational effect of the programme.
- The European dimension in education, training, youth and sport and the interconnectedness of organisations within these sectors. This includes cross-sectoral cooperation within countries as well as internationally. This in turn is associated with a range of soft changes such as exchange of information, mutual sharing and learning.
- A positive attitude towards the EU. The programme is associated with a stronger feeling of belonging to the EU among beneficiaries. It is also well known and highly appreciated beyond the direct beneficiaries. It is a tangible example for many of what it means to be European and how the EU can benefit people directly.

Sustainability

The evaluation found positive and sustainable effects on individual learners taking part in mobility.

One sustainable result of the programme and its predecessors is the cultural shift in the perception of mobility and its positive image. This was already well documented in higher education sector where self-financed mobility has become rather common. These changes are long term but have not yet been fully evidenced in other sectors. Even though other sectors such as VET also have high demand for mobility grants this does not yet mean that mobility in VET has become a common practice.

The sustainability of the outputs from cooperation projects is a weak spot of the programme. The programme would benefit from differentiating between:

- cooperation projects that are about soft exchanges and where the main contribution is the scale effect (reaching out to participants who would not have been reached otherwise). In these projects less emphasis should be put on the output and more on making sure the process is of good quality; and
- truly innovative projects which should have a different approach (needs assessment, incubators or mentoring, top-up funding for mainstreaming). Knowledge Alliances and Sector Skills Alliances combine some of these elements but they focus very much on employability, competitiveness and 'new skills' without explicitly addressing social inclusion or key competences for all

Efficiency

Cost effectiveness

The cost effectiveness of learner mobility actions (period 2014–2016) is clearly shown when comparing the low costs to the results identified. The costs per mobile learner vary between roughly €900 in the youth sector and €4,700 in the international higher education sector. The average cost is €1,500 per learner. The average cost per mobile learner per day is around €15. There are clear effects for learners measured for these

types of actions. Considering the effects identified, the costs per learner appear reasonable. This is further supported by the evidence of EU added value of these types of actions and the high-level comparison with comparator programmes.

The cost effectiveness of practitioner mobility actions is also positive. The average cost per mobile practitioner is between €700 and €900. The costs per day per mobile practitioner are around €200. The costs per mobility per practitioner are higher than for learners. The effects on practitioners are less strong even though a number of clear effects have been identified. However, the effects on practitioners also create positive effects on organisations, learners and other practitioners, which are hard to quantify and measure precisely. Therefore, though the ratio between costs and effects measured is less overwhelmingly optimistic than for learners, it is nevertheless considered positive. There is also a clear EU added value of these types of actions and, as for learners, the comparison with comparators is favourable for Erasmus+.

The cost effectiveness of cooperation projects (KA2 and equivalent types of actions) is harder to assess as these have a variety of multi-layer effects.

Size of budget

The demand for Erasmus+ funding largely exceeds the funding available. In particular, in KA2 the success rates are low and the scores for successful projects high. This means that the bar for those who wish to enter the programme with no or little experience is very high. The highest share of the budget is allocated to KA1 and more specifically to learner mobility. This is the action that has the clearest effects on individual learners. The second budget item is cooperation projects, followed by practitioner mobility. Given the ambition for the cooperation projects, it is understandable that the budget allocated to these is rather high. However, it is not sufficient. Even in KA1, several types of actions have low success rates and high application scores, meaning that more learners could be recruited into the programme if the money was sufficient.

The OPC confirmed that the budget envelopes for most of the sectors are seen as insufficient by a large share of the public. The same can be said about the NA reports, which also stress low success rates linked to insufficient funding.

Furthermore, the fact that the funding is rather small prevents the programme from reaching a critical mass of persons and organisations in sectors other than higher education. This issue is clearest in the sectors of adult education and sport but it was also noted in the sector of schools. This hampers the potential of the programme for broader organisational and system-level effects.

Management and implementation structures

Erasmus+ relies on a management and implementation structure that is inherited from LLP and YiA. The structure is now well established and overall the relationships are clear to those concerned. Overall, the management structures appear to be clear and well accepted. The costs of management are also reasonable, in particular when compared to other, much smaller, comparator actions (at national level).

Efficiency gains

The ambition of a 40 % economy of scale⁵ due to consolidation of several programmes into one has not yet been achieved. The management costs of national agencies compared to the programme value are more or less stable between the programming periods.

However, the comparison between the programming periods is not a simple one as there are changes in what was covered by the national agencies' management fees across the programming periods.

⁵ Erasmus+ Impact Assessment, Commission Staff Working Paper, SEC(2011) 1402 of 23.11.2011.

Though the data on efficiency gains does not tell a clear story, the programme agencies are rather positive about the evolution of the efficiency of programme management.

The use of unit costs is overall welcome even though some regret the disappearance of lump sums, which were used in some parts of previous programmes and were deemed even simpler.

Monitoring and anti-fraud measures

The availability of monitoring data and the existence of monitoring systems have seen a major improvement compared to predecessor programmes. Much more and better data is available on the programme currently than in the previous programming period and better use of the data is made, in particular through the programme dashboard but also in annual reporting.

However, there is still room for improvement when it comes to the use of the data collected but also in terms of the relevance and clarity of some of the indicators.

The numbers of cases of irregularities and fraud are small (in particular considering the high numbers of projects funded). The anti-fraud measures in effect are considered appropriate but progressive improvements continue to be made at Commission level to further minimise these risks.

EU added value

Overall, EU funding for Erasmus+ has strong EU added value. In the sectors of education, training and youth, the analysis shows clear added value in terms of the following.

- Scale – other comparable actions in the areas of student and practitioner mobility as well as international cooperation are marginal compared to the scale reached by Erasmus+. Jean Monnet support to modules and research is however an exception (see below).
- Scope – the breadth of country coverage is not comparable to most other programmes funding similar types of actions. The sectoral coverage is also unique. None of the actions combine all the sectors covered by Erasmus+. Overall there are far fewer actions in the fields of youth and sport, which means that these sectors have fewer opportunities for international cooperation (outside competitive sport).
- Process – Erasmus+ has established trialled and tested processes to management of mobility in particular. Examples exist where these have been mainstreamed into other national and European actions.
- Cross-country cooperation – EU countries in particular are now all well integrated within the programme. There are interesting trends in terms of interconnection, showing that the programme is not necessarily dominated by large countries as one might expect. Smaller countries are also well connected.

The added value in terms of innovation is lagging behind compared to the above criteria. As presented in the effectiveness section of the report, the degree of innovation within the programme remains limited. Though there are examples of cases where the programme is used as ground for experimentation in view of policy learning at system level, these examples remain ad hoc.

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

In the sport sector, the assessment of EU added value is made difficult by the fact that the strand is new and being implemented very progressively, meaning that its scale in the period assessed was small. Another challenge is the diversity of issues tackled and the fact that the scarce funding is spread over multiple very different issues.

The EU added value of Jean Monnet (JM) grants has declined over the years since the action was launched. The volume of teaching and research about the EU grew and more people have been trained on the EU via programmes and modules not funded by the EU.

This growth is not related to JM funding as this represents only a small share of research and teaching activities taking place. Within the EU, the EU added value of funding teaching about the EU at higher education level focusing on students who primarily study several modules linked to the EU, is diminishing, given that teaching about the EU in this sector has become a common practice. The situation is somewhat different in countries outside the EU where the opportunities to study about the EU are lesser. Inside the EU here is potential for greater EU added value targeting other audiences which have fewer opportunities to learn about the EU.

The absence of Erasmus+ would result in the following.

- A steep decrease in mobility of learners, practitioners and international cooperation of organisations.
- Inequalities when it comes to access to mobility across countries and socioeconomic backgrounds.
- A decline in quality and efficiency of mobility as a result of radical downscaling of coordinating structures.

This in turn would lead to a decline in positive attitudes towards the EU among the target group. It would also lead to a much less international outlook among practitioners, which would negatively affect learners too.

Conclusion and recommendations

The main transversal conclusions of this evaluation, beyond those cited above for each of the evaluation criteria, are as follows.

- Erasmus+ continues to be highly valued by the general public as well as by all stakeholders.
- The programme delivers a unique package of results.
- The integrated programme has become well accepted as it did clearly simplify the programme architecture.
- The internal coherence of the programme is strong as the programme offers funding opportunities for the full range of possible learning experiences (formal, non-formal and informal).
- The programme management structures are well established and fit for purpose, with no major inefficiencies being identified.

Furthermore the evaluation found the following areas for improvement and provided related recommendations.

Conclusion	Recommendation
The evaluation found relatively low levels of innovation in the cooperation actions funded by the programme in particular under Strategic Partnerships and comparable predecessor actions.	Differentiate between those types of strategic partnerships that are about mutual learning and sharing and those that aim at innovation. For actions focusing on innovation design a different approach to selection and ongoing monitoring.
System level effects in particular those stemming from grants remain ad-hoc	To strengthen impact at policy level, encourage national authorities to use the results of projects funded to identify 'what works' and to identify lessons learnt relevant to the national context by providing specific funding for national level thematic monitoring and sharing and learning.
Participation of hard to reach groups remains a challenge	To increase participation of disadvantaged groups, specifically target organisations which work with these audiences. Consider for example additional award points to such

Conclusion	Recommendation
	organisations. To do so, the programme would also benefit from a clearer definition of its ambition in the area of social inclusion and unified approach to defining this target group.
In practice, the alignment of projects funded with key EU priorities lags behind	The programme guide should clearly emphasise a smaller number of priorities. These should be prioritised in the selection process.
The current budget distribution across the sectors reflects the historical development of the programme whereby the budget increase allocated to Erasmus + compared to predecessors was spread proportionally across all sectors. As a result, the higher education sector receives the highest share of the funding. Significant investment in this sector has allowed to achieve positive results in transnational cooperation and mobility, making the sector more international than others and reaching a critical scale.	Depending on the overall budget allocation for the new programme, potential increases could be directed to those sectors which show good performance but receive substantially less funding. Furthermore, stronger cooperation between the sectors should be encouraged and other sectors would benefit in particular from the innovation potential of cooperating with higher education.
The application process creates important burden and does not clearly focus on those criteria that matter most for effectiveness	Simplify the application form, review the award criteria to better reflect key success factors for effectiveness and strengthen the review at mid-term in particular for bigger projects.
Student Loan Guarantee Facility is not currently living up to initial expectations	Review the ambition for Student Loan Guarantee Facility by recalibrating the budget, adapting the roll-out strategy for both incoming and outgoing students, exploiting synergies with national schemes that are not portable and correct the flaws in the design regarding the 'no-payment during studies' condition.
The place of sport in the programme is ambiguous as too many priorities exist for a small budget. Some of the projects funded are highly comparable to those funded in other strands (youth in particular). As a result scarce resources are spread too thinly to have meaningful results.	Review the positioning of sport actions. Clarify the purpose of sport projects. Consider merging the social inclusion part of sport with youth. Focus the funding that is strongly specific to sport to very targeted actions.
Strong share of Jean Monnet grants focus on teaching and research about the EU in the context of higher education. However the greatest need to strengthen understanding of the EU is outside higher education.	Refocus Jean Monnet grants on those target groups which show weaker prior knowledge and understanding of the EU (for example pupils in schools or VET).
The contribution of the programme in the adult learning sector is highly fragmented resulting in a dilution of the effect. The group of beneficiaries is very broad covering very different segments of the highly fragmented and very diverse adult education sector. The topics covered are numerous. As a result the intervention in this sector is not targeted enough to make a clear contribution.	Target the actions in the adult learning sector to a more specifically defined target group and focus on a much smaller number of priorities. Strengthen the social inclusion potential of this strand

Conclusion	Recommendation
The use of monitoring data is not proportionate to the data collection efforts. The monitoring process puts too much emphasis on KA1 types of actions.	Improve the monitoring process by expanding it to KA2 (and KA3). Better utilise and analyse the data collected to inform decision making.